Session 1

The group begins their journey on the Planet Ezra. This backwater planet has become a dumping ground for demobbed soldiers from sides of the unification war, refugees from the carpet bombed moon Shadow, as well as other more nefarious types drawn by rumours of a seriously unstaffed federal law force and the growth of a very powerful crime syndicate....

After completing the usual start to the day with breakfast, the group decides to check out the town bulletin board for any serious and well paying work. A couple of jobs get their attention, one being an appeal from the local sheriff for some hired help, and the other being from a Mr Lighter looking to put a ship's crew together. Deciding that being on the good side of local law enforcement is always a good start they head down to the local sheriff's office to offer their services.

As they enter they are met by the rather nerdy looking Deputy and directed to the sheriff's office. Sheriff Hancock is a man in his mid 40's, a browncoat vet, and seen locally as a good man trying to do his best at stemming the rising wave of organised crime on Ezra. Hancock explains his problem....

"We've got a real problem with bandits round here, heck, they've even started hitting fed run convoys taking goods for shipment off world. I got a wave from the Fed Marshall over in Felixstowe to get control of the problem, but how the heck does that *Feh Feh Pi Goh* think I'm going to stop a bunch of bandits who have got strong enough to tackle Fed convoys when it's just me and The Kid out front covering the whole of this area?? The biggest problem 'round here has always been the Johnson gang, but they must have done some serious recruitin' to grow enough balls to start going after Feds rather than the locals. Not surprising though given how many wasters have settled round these parts lately. We got real lucky though and managed to bag the youngest one of the Johnson brothers that run the crew. Problem is I can't spare the men to take him over to the Fed station in Felixstowe for processing so I'm looking for some help, I'm authorised to offer anyone willing to help out 100 credits to be paid on their return."

After some negotiating Hancock agrees to loan one of his shotguns which Steve the Mariachi takes gleeful possession of, and produces a credit note for the livery stables next door and the general store authorising the group to hire horses and a wagon, and buy supplies on his account for their trip. He estimates that the round trip will take about 2 days..... if they don't have any trouble on the road.....

The crew sets off having left a note on the door of the slumbering Harvi. They encounter no problems to begin with, with only the twanging guitar of Steve and his dulcet tones singing an old earth-that-was tune... something about "Rawhide" and "Rollin'".... breaking the silence.

They reach a canyon that they recognise as being the quickest route to Felixstowe about halfway through the afternoon and decide to take the quickest possible route by following the canyon rather than detouring around. After an hour or so they come up to a rockslide that has blocked the canyon. They decide with the day getting on that it would be best to clear the path and continue rather than waste time heading back the way they have come.

Using tools from the wagon they quickly set to clearing the rubble urged on by Hawthorne, with Quentin choosing to act as lookout rather than risk getting his hands dirty. As they work to clear the blockage '"Mr Smith" (Hannibal to his friends) notices indications that the rock fall might not have been a natural occurrence and further investigation leads to him finding an unexploded stick of dynamite in a hole drilled into the rock face which he removes and pockets for later use.

 Quentin notices that the area seems oddly quiet, no sign of animals, birdcalls, or even tumbleweed blowing.... However the group continue to press on....as Twilight falls... until Steve notices dust falling from the edge of the canyon behind them and alerts the others. Sensing danger they whip their horses into a gallop causing Quentin to fall from his rapidly moving mount but he is grabbed athletically by the Doc hanging from the back of the wagon and hauled aboard with the help of Steve. Hawthorne sets off in pursuit of the now rider less horse while some expert driving from Hannibal gets the wagon through a very narrow choke point with only the loss of some paint. The grin on the face of John-Bob Johnson is soon wiped off in a rather crude manner by Steve relieving his rather full bladder.....

Hawthorne succeeds in catching the riderless mount but is forced to stop as he rounds a corner to find another rock fall blocking the way, Hannibal screeches the wagon to a halt... BANG! The canyon behind them drops in a cloud of dust and rubble. Reacting quickly Mr Smith drops off the seat at the front of the wagon and takes shelter underneath, grabbing his cigars as he goes. Steve attempts to do the same but slips in a puddle of his own making and faceplants into the ground, causing him to drop his shotgun before rolling under the wagon., luckily with only his ego wounded. Hawthorne dismounts taking cover between his horse and the rock fall, while the Doc disables the prisoner with an expert 'judo chop'. Quentin hunkers down in the wagon, drawing his sidearm.

Four bandits show themselves at the edge of the rock face above, two on each side of the canyon. Their leaders attempts to persuade their targets to surrender are met with derision by Hawthorne and a fire fight quickly erupts. Both sides blaze away but the heavy cover of both sides defeats most of their shots with the exception of the Mariachi who recovers from his fall to drop two of the bandits cursing to the floor. Hawthorne and the leader of the bandits engage in a spot of verbal abuse that leads to the leader promising that he'd light up the whole canyon followed by some unseen activity on his part. Hannibal bravely sprinted from cover and threw the recovered stick of dynamite at the bandit leader and his ally causing them to run in opposite directions in search of cover. This caused the leader of the bandits to forget the lit fuse coming out of the dynamite he'd been preparing to throw down into the canyon... with predictably messy results.

The remaining bandit attempted to flee but was forced to dive prone when winged by another expert shot from Steve allowing his capture by Hannibal. The crew quickly finds the bandits camp and expertly loot it, coming away with some ammunition, a couple of six shooters, food supplies, and 4 horses to replace the unfortunate animal that Hawthorne took cover behind.

Having cleared the final rockslide they move on until they reach a swift flowing river and are faced with the choice of either backtracking and taking the southern route to Felixstowe that would result in another 3 days travel or attempting to repair/rebuild the bridge that was been swept away.

They decide to abandon the wagon and attempted to build a makeshift bridge using planks and nails taken from a nearby fence which they succeed in doing despite Hawthorne taking a couple of unplanned dips in the river. However, night has caught up with them and they decide to find a good camping spot and lay up for the night rather than press on for Felixstowe. They sleep uneventfully until during his turn on watch, Hawthorne hears a twig break underfoot......

Session 2

Hawthorne quickly kicked awake his closest ally, Mr Smith, and the pair quickly spotted shapes moving stealthily though the scrub towards the camp. After a brief standoff it turned out that the approaching men were not bandits bent on revenge or Harvi finally catching up with the group but a local farmer and a couple of his ranch hands who had been trying to track down whoever had broken his fence and let his cattle loose. After a bit of bluffing and verbal sparring the Rancher is convinced that "some other folk heading in the other direction" must have done it and offers all those awake a swig of his moonshine before heading off.

The party makes its way to Felixstowe without further incident, dragging behind them John-Bob Johnson, their original prisoner, and the two surviving bandits that had been patched up by the Doc. They locate the Marshalls office and take their prisoners along. The Federal Marshall greets them and takes John-Bob off their hands, signing the docket and instructing them to return to Sheriff Hancock for payment. He's not at all interested in the two surving bandits as they are not wanted for any federal crime and waves them away in the direction of the local sheriff's office. He also hints that he might have work available for people as obviously capable as them.

The group hands over the two bandits to the local sheriff who seems a rather elderly chap for his office but is happy to take the bandits off their hands along with taking statements, etc. By now the rather dirty and smelly crew thinks that cleaning up before going back to see the well groomed Fed would be a good idea and head off in search of a bath house.

Arriving back at the Fed office they are again met directly by the Marshall rather than any of his deputies. When they remark on this he states that all his men are either out on patrol or on guard duty for convoys carrying products from the main abattoir to the docks in Felixstowe for shipment off world. At this point the Fed leans in conspiratorially and offers the crew "significant remuneration" if they would be willing to do some "off the books" work for him.

http://www.filmdope.com/Gallery/ActorsM/11469-21114.gif

He's looking for people willing to go out and find out some more information on the bandit groups that lately seem to be much better organised and equipped than ever before. The party agrees and heads into town to sell off the spare horses and buy up some supplies to help them with this job including some extra body armour, a rifle for their sharpshooter, and some non-lethal shotgun rounds.

The Marshal is sending out a party to repair the broken bridge that he has been informed of and agrees to pick up the abandoned wagon at the same time. He also offers the use of one of the small number of trucks in town to aid with their plan of looking like a convoy waiting to be ambushed.... he does however turn down their request to "borrow" some of his small arsenal of automatic weapons.

The group sets out the next day, taking the Southern route though wooded areas that avoids the canyon they had trouble with and that seems to have been the site of the most brazen and well equipped bandit attacks as indicated by the Marshal on a sketch map of the area.

As they travel Hawthorne notices that an area they travel through seems to have seen some action. After some investigation they find that although some effort seems to have gone into covering the ambushers tracks there are still traces of fighting in the area and a search of the area reveals a selection of cartridge cases including 5.56mm and 7.62mm rounds and also shotgun shells. Quentin examines these and the bullet marks on the trees and deduces that the attacking group is armed with at least some military grade weapons, likely assault rifles.

The small convoy continues, coming across several further ambush sites, until they are forced to halt by a man standing alone in the road holding what appears to be a military spec weapon and wearing the remains of an Independent Infantry uniform under a long brown duster. He asks the group to drop their weapons and dismount. Hawthorne considers riding the man down before stopping and attempting to intimidate the man into stepping aside. The man, who appears to be wearing sergeants stripes, speaks a quick verbal order and three shots ring out over the heads of the convoy. Unperturbed Hawthorne draws his pistol at the head of the man and instructs him to stand aside. At another order from the browncoat, well hidden troops on either side of the track reveal themselves, holding a mixture of military spec weapons and shotguns and wearing a mix of ghillie suits and spec ops issue camo suits. Hawthorne backs down and the group allow themselves to be escorted off the road. The browncoat who seems to be referred to by the others as "Sarge" questions the group as to why they are out here driving a fed owned vehicle when they are clearly not federal officers.

Over the course of the questioning the 'Sarge' seems to bond with the military types very well especially Mr Smith and agrees to take them back to the main camp to meet his boss who can explain the situation a lot better than he can. Quentin notices that their escorts appear to be wearing a mixture of Alliance and Independent uniforms and that their movement and bearing seems to indicate that all of them are Veterans. He even overhears one of the men speaking in the accent of Osiris his home planet.

They arrive at a small but well organised camp having parked the truck under guard a mile or so away. The Sarge leaves them under guard and approaches a small figure who seems to be giving orders and talks to her, indicating the group with a wave of his arm. The small figure approaches and is revealed to be a woman in the uniform of an Alliance Infantry Captain.

http://sfstory.free.fr/images/StarshipTroopers/57.jpg

After questioning the group again she reveals that this group of Vets was formed from locals who were determined to end the stranglehold that the Feds had placed on off world trade, forcing the local ranchers to sell their cattle and other goods to the local Feds for cut prices due to a ban on off world transport that does not hold a federal pass. She believes that the local Federal Marshal has been bought by a powerful but shadowy crime syndicate that is attempting to take over but has been unable to uncover any further information or concrete evidence to back up her suspicions. She has noticed that most of the local law enforcement officers have either retired or 'quit' to be replaced by others who seem to be little more than thugs. Her group has been hitting federal convoys enroute to Felixstowe Docks and selling the goods to transport captains willing to break the trade embargo, both to fund their own efforts and support the local families that are living off the bare minimum of processed protein tubes while their herds are bought up for next to nothing by the only federal licensed abattoir planet side and shipped off to the core worlds.

As night falls, realising that the Federal Marshal might have been double crossing them and intending for them to be captured or killed along with the valuable truck, Quentin decides to check over the mule and quickly finds a small but powerful tracking device wired into the engine of the truck. He calls for backup and is joined by Smith, the Sarge, and a small squad. The rest assist in packing up the camp and preparing to move out.

A group of 5 arrive and begin to look over the truck, watched by the hidden Smith/Quentin group. They appear to be searching the truck for something. Smith and Sarge circle around and pick up the tracks the 5 made on their approach, following them back to the road where they find a wagon with one guard who is smoking and not taking his job very seriously. They easily capture him and Smith takes his ear mic to listen in on the other 5 identifying the leader as a man named 'Garrett'.

Quentin continues to observe the 5 going over the truck and notes that 2 of them seem to be in the uniform of Alliance Deputies while the other 3 are dressed in the usual local manner. They get the truck started and begin to drive it slowly back towards the road, weaving in and out of the trees. Quentin follows leading the small squad with him, while Hawthorne and Steve arrive with the Captain and another group of the Vets and begin to circle around to close the trap on the unsuspecting deputies.

Sarge and Smith dispose of the man they had captured before springing the trap, Sarge hammering shots into the engine block and lights of the truck. Smith pauses to light up a cigar before advancing on the passenger side door. Hawthorne sneaks up behind the truck while Steve circles around to the driver's side. The small squad with Quentin shoot out the tires of the truck while he scans the area with his rifle looking for targets.... which appear as all bar the man in the passenger seat bail out of the truck, 3 leaping over the tailgate and blasting away at shadows and muzzle flashes and the driver diving out only to stumble and land at the surprised feet of the Mariachi who promptly blasts him with a non-lethal round from his shotgun to ensure that he stays down. Quentin takes a snap shot as the 3 men leap out of the back of the truck, dropping one with a well aimed round.

While Smith and the Sarge work their way towards the passenger side door with the intention of capturing the man they believe to be the leader of the recovery team, Hawthorne and Quentin drop the remaining 2 men at the back of the lorry with shots to the arm and knee cap respectively. Steve, not being one to let others take all the glory, sprints up to the truck and vaults through the open driver's side door to drop the last man with a point blank shot to the head with another non-lethal round.

A quick search of the truck leaves the team with an old looking but functional field radio set, enough ear mics for all to take one, and a shotgun. Quentin decides to attempt to disable the tracking device but is worried by a strange wire that Smith confirms is part of a booby trap designed to destroy the device by remote or if it is tampered with. Smith disarms the anti-tamper device and Quentin removes the tracking device safely.

The prisoners are treated for their wounds by the Doc at the new location of the Vets' camp and the group prepare to interrogate them...

What will happen at the next session of Walk the 'Verse? Will the prisoners reveal all? Will we find out who is REALLY behind all the troubles on Ezra? Will Harvi finally catch up with her friends? Is the Marshall or the Captain playing the crew for fools.... or maybe they both are.....?

Session 3

Well... what DIDN'T happen in this session? I'm not even going to try and write up every single thing that happened because there is a character limit and because I was too busy trying to keep up with you bunch of nutters to take many notes so I'll just give you the highlights :)

Blowing small holes in people with C4 turns out to be an effective but messy interrogation method.

Everyone taking the hint when all 30ish NPC's hit the deck and hid as the Skiff flew over with is searchlights ablaze... accept for our resident adrenaline junkie who leapt into the saddle to 'draw it off', leading the skiff a merry dance to the canyon you met in session 1... and then jumping over it just to show off.

After a fairly well executed ambush and fire fight with 6 Feds that only left poor Steve flat on his back from a gut shot and the Doc with a light flesh wound, some bright spark had the bright idea of attempting to nick the parked skiff... somewhat to the surprise of the 6 Feds still in the back and the two pilots.

The epic brawl in the back of the Skiff that had just about everyone dangling over the edge at some point, in one case due to a knife pinning his foot to the floor.

The Sarge managing to aim and hit the pilot of the Skiff... which made the ride in the back even more bumpy for everyone.

Steve finally recovering from his wounds (thanks to the Doc) enough to join in... by blasting the Skiff with a ground launched missile. Which made the ride in the back EVEN MORE bumpy for everyone.

Someone 1st managing to hit the foam fire extinguisher in the skiff causing the footing to be even more treacherous.

Steve reloading the rocket launcher and hitting the Skiff again... a fairly ballsy move when he wasn't too sure he'd put the rocket in the right way up (50/50 chance).

Everyone somehow still being alive... although STILL hadn't managed to actually finish any jobs yet and get paid. Or even get back to town in order to wake up Harvi.

Session 4

Session 4 began more sedately than the previous episode with the crew concentrating on actually finishing some jobs and earning a bit of cash. And also finding somewhere to perform some much needed surgery on the digestive tract of Steve the Mariachi which was currently being held together by a few stitches and a couple of plasters. However things soon kicked off again in the usual manner that is quickly becoming the standard method of operation for this group.

The two current jobs were quickly finished, the Deputy of Horrickville paying up the cash for the original job as the Sheriff was off investigating stories of a massive fire fight and Skiff crash outside of town \*cough\*.

The 2nd job was also finished. The crew had accepted some work as ship's crew from a man recommended to them by the somewhat cheesed off Captain O'Hara. Marcus Lighter had been looking for some crew to handle the cargo and negotiation side of things aboard one of his vessels and rather foolishly accepted O'Hara's recommendation that these folks were up to the task. The crew took the Stagecoach to the Felixstowe Docks to meet up with the ship and its cargo, stopping off to do a little shopping and for Mr Smith to drop by to see Marshall Kim, giving him enough info to earn a nice little packet of 100 creds but not enough to actually harm the 'bandits'.

Having met the highly skilled but slightly 'interesting' crew of the Lan Jing, they head off into the black, choosing to take a scenic route to Persephone to hopefully avoid any Alliance entanglement due to their slightly illegal cargo.

9 Days into the trip they come across a floating ship in the black, venting plasma from its drive section and missing most of the cockpit. The intrepid crew decide to board and perform a search and rescue. No doubt they were hoping to 'rescue' something valuable.

Wing Hang pilots the shuttle close to the spinning vessel and Mr Smith, Hawthorne, and Harvi take the 3 suits and attempt to board the stricken vessel. Hawthorn seemed the only truly enthusiastic member of the boarding party, with Harvi only finally volunteering after Steve put himself forward on the provision that he would be allowed to touch firearms again.

Quentin fired up the Lan Jing's rather old fashioned cortex access and managed to squeeze some general info about the standard layout of a craft of the correct class, a Mid bulk transport adapted for passenger travel.

The boarding party began a swift search using their suit lights as much as the weak emergency lighting of the dying vessel. Their search turned up nothing unusual but they were unable to access the crew quarters and cockpit area due to a sealed and welded bulkhead door. Access to the engine room and the ships computer terminal was also blocked by a bulkhead, in this case slightly warped.

Hawthone became bored and returned to the shuttle, leaving Smith and Harvi to decide which area to attempt to access first. They decided that restoring full power and getting access to the computer core would be their best option so they used some scrappers gel to open the door to the Engine room.

They were greeted by the bright full power lights of the engine room, what appeared to be burn and scorch marks around the whole room, one VERY burnt out and desiccated corpse that was almost fused to the engine core, and some very noisy clicking from their Rad counters.

They decided that maybe the crew quarters would be the best thing to check out and headed that way using the last of the scrappers gel to get through the bulkhead door. The search went well until Smith dropped into a crew members bunkroom to find the remains of at least one, possibly as many as 3 people spread around the whole of the room. The bones appeared to have been gnawed on. Swearing rather fluently Harvi and Smith made a sharp exit in the direction of the Airlock.

As they moved through the ship the emergency lighting began to die, becoming more and more erratic and forcing them to relay almost totally on the beams from their suit lights. As they reached the airlock they banged on the controls of the one man 'lock eager to escape.

Unfortunately, it appeared that the power used by their cycling the airlock on entry had drained the last dregs of power from the ship and left them stranded. Their only option was to return to the engine room and try to return main power in order to open the lock, Mr Smith cursing the empty Scrappers Gel canister.

Noting their extremely raised pulse rates and other vitals, along with the heavy levels of radiation in the engine room, the Doc advised the boarding party that they would be able to resist only a further 10 minutes exposure before beginning to have serious effects from radiation poisoning. They needed to move fast.

The ships computer proved to be out of action with Quentin being able to extract remotely only minor information about the vessel and it's course, cargo, etc from the computer before it overloaded. Wing Hang advised them that a power reroute from the overloaded and breached engine core was the only possible chance, urging them to look for the needed tool.

They found it. Fused to the hand of the corpse that had either been trying the same trick or tampering with the engine in some other way. Quentin attempted to talk Smith through a manual bypass instead, however Harvi had a gut feeling that plugging the feed lead from the engine into the power relays would be a bad move and Quentin had a rethink, coming up with another idea that succeeded and restored partial power... and not a moment too soon!

Running for the 'lock, the two arrived to find the lock already going through it's opening cycle.... someone had activated the airlock! A panicked call to the shuttle established that none of the crew had done so, Hawthorne hurriedly suited up to check the outside of the shuttle for uninvited guests, but drew a blank.

Mr Smith graciously allowed Ladies first and Harvi stepped into the now ready airlock and after cycling through began a search for the mystery spacewalker whilst Mr Smith waited for the 'lock to reset, sweeping his weapon nervously from side to side. Unfortunately he failed to detect the creature that had been waiting for its chance to single out a member of the herd... and pounced!

pic

Smith screamed as the thing grappled him from behind and plunged a long knife through his suit and into his shoulder. Crazed with fear he began to have flashbacks of an almost déjà vu type, fighting some hideous creature like the one attacking him now.

He managed to get a hand to his pistol as the creature stabbed him again, this time it's blade opening a deep wound down his back close to his spine. He managed to get off three rounds but with his vision and mobility restricted by the bulky space suit, the bullets clanged uselessly off the bulkheads.

As the 'thing' raised its blade again for the killing blow, Smith saw the welcome sight of the airlock opening to reveal the returning Harvi who seized he chance to attack the distracted 'thing' and slit it's throat to the bone, killing it instantly.

Despite that brown trousers moment the crew decided that they were damn well getting something for their trouble and raided the ship's cargo bay, aided by Quentin aboard the Lan Jing who did some more computer wizardry to find a well hidden secret area of the cargo bay.

The stash recovered turned out to be 8 crates of Alliance issue settlers equipment including a large quantity of specialised crop growth supplements. 1 of the crates turned out to be filled with unusual electrical equipment and unmarked vials that neither Quentin, Wing hang, or the Doc could identify. This crate was marked inside as for delivery to 'Station - Whitefall'.

The secret area was filled with the remains of 4 crates of 'illegal substances' known on the streets as 'drops'. The 'thing' had clearly consumed a far amount of the small packets but Mr Smith tossed the rest out of the airlock. Well. Those that weren't taken by the rest of the crew whilst his back was turned.

The crew will continue their journey to meet their mysterious contact on Persephone next episode. Does the poor guy know what he's letting himself in for? Will they find a buyer for the valuable but Alliance marked stash? Will they actually find out what the password 'Plates of meat' was all about?