



The Seed Ships

Pre-game - Day 3/20

The last 50 years has seen the evolution of the current approach to galactic exploration. Huge 'Seed ships' are constructed in far orbit, near Quoar and Oort cloud bodies, by a mix of human and robotic workers. The Sol nations all provide material and skills to aid in the construction of these vessels, and provide voyagers to operate the vessels by means of population lotteries, held whenever crews are needed. Ratios of participants in voyages strictly reflect Sol demographics at time of vessel launch, though the ages of individuals is fixed to be between 25 and 55. Captains and crew positions are filled by selecting the most capable and appropriate from the lottery 'winners' - though given the level of computer technology, these positions are perhaps of notional importance.

Seed ships cast off from the solar system on extended voyages of both exploration and colonisation. Each vessel is equipped with many hundreds of 'seed pods' - single use landers which can be used to drop explorers to a new planet, to gauge the usefulness of the world for either resource collection or colonization. The explorer spends a few weeks at their task before returning to their pod and blasting back to meet the seed ship, which has spent the intermediate time charging the spin drive for its next leap. If a world is considered suitable for colonization, one or more colonizing units is dispatched downward before the seed ship continues on its journey. If a world has been found to be suitably rich in a particular resource, or not, this information is despatched by automated micro spinship messenger, along with an updated cruise report, to the Sol system for assistance with future mission planning.

Seed ships continue until attrition renders their crew with the binary choice to either return to Earth or to settle down in totality on a distant world. Both these options have been taken by a percentage of extant ships, though a roughly equal percentage have simply vanished in the unknown. These disappearances are of concern to the Sol nation governing bodies, though the explicit facts of these losses have not been broadcast readily to the Sol populations.

Is there an aim to all this busy human activity and action? Has there ever been?