

BLACK HOLE BLUFF

INTRODUCTION

Black Hole Bluff is a Doctor Who Roleplaying Game adventure, this is a stand-alone adventure that can be easily used in the Temporal Masters campaign. Black Hole Bluff takes places in deep space on the universes' largest particle accelerator which is in orbits around a supermassive black hole. This particle accelerator is predominantly used in time particle research. The crew on the station are surprised to get visitors when a strange message is sent from the future.

This adventure intended for can be used by any variety of time travelling or space faring party.

SPOILERS

Are you a player or the Gamemaster? If you're a player than hold your horses. The following pages contain information of your future, best to keep your eyes closed and your options open.

BACKGROUND

Synch Hole Station

Orbiting around a supermassive black hole, the Synch Hole is the largest particle accelerator this side of the universe. The station was set up by the Great and Bountiful Human Empire as a means to research the behaviour of trans-temporal particles.

The Synch Hole crew consisted of three technicians; physicist, mechanical engineer and electronic communications. The crew of the Synch Hole would perform experimentation on behalf of academics throughout the Human Empire. A fourth person inhabited the station, a researcher, physicist and data archaeologist focused on the black hole entropy.

The station itself predominantly made up of the temporal particle accelerator and associated equipment. The remainder is dedicated to living and work space. The temporal particle accelerator fires temporal particles around the orbit of the supermassive black hole where they

are accelerated through time and detected by the receiver.

LOCATION OF SYNCH HOLE STATION

Synch Hole station orbits around a super massive black hole. Most galaxies have one of these black holes at their centre. If this adventure is part of the Temporal Masters campaign this super massive black hole is all that is left of the Andromeda galaxy. Outside of a Temporal Masters campaign this black hole could be located in the centre of any appropriate galaxy.

Brotherhood of Logicians

The Brotherhood of Logicians was an assemblage of intelligent humans who emphasised pure logic. This brotherhood was last seen by the Doctor back on Telos in the 26th century when they attempted to raise the Cybermen from their slumber to create a new, logical order.

On Earth, the Brotherhood of Logicians is the greatest mass-intelligence ever assembled but this was not simply enough. This was not enough for those on Telos and they sought power, power over those who were not so inclined to logical reasoning. This is why they sought the Cybermen for their strength and their mutual logical interests.

The Brotherhood of Logicians a not so different in the 49th century there is a disdain that humanity is hindered by its illogical behaviour, by greed, selfishness and tradition. The brotherhoods' aim is to enlighten those to their cognitive biases and offers a way to improve on natural human reasoning style.

A small team of brotherhood members have journeyed to Synch Hole on a mission to utilise

temporal particles in their AI experimentation. The team of three had arrived on the Synch Hole aboard their own rocket where they subdued the crew and ejected them into a stable orbit around the black hole. The brotherhood was caught by surprise by the mechanical engineer who got the drop on them injuring Levi Johnson. This brotherhood member sits in stasis on their ship waiting for medical attention.

Taking control of the Synch Hole they have begun installing hardware for the AI as well as prepping the particle accelerator for integration. For the past decade AI development has been outlawed any experimentation which has proved in the past a dangerous to the Great and Bountiful Human Empire.

The brotherhood plans to utilise the Synch Hole, exploiting the temporal particle accelerator to create a causal loop. They will use this causal loop exploit as the processor for an AI. Increasing its processing time infinitely, allowing it to make extremely accurate predictions and simulations.

The Original Crew

The original Synch Hole crew consisted of three technicians; physicist, mechanical engineer and electronic communications. The mechanical engineer is Oliver Rigby who is the inside man for the Brotherhood of Logicians inbound to Synch Hole station. A fourth member has recently arrived at the station. An information archaeologist who has come to study a peculiar signal emitted from the radiation in the SMBH event horizon.

The crew was taken by surprise when the brotherhood boarded, using their Rictus Sticks to take them out quickly without killing them. Unfortunately the mechanical engineer was in the bowels of the station with the critical

systems. Armed with a rivet driver he managed to injure Levi Johnson before being subdued.

The original crew was jettisoned in an escape pod and are in a safe orbit around the SMBH. To conserve food and water they have gone into stasis. Before going into stasis they have broadcasted a message which is both warning of the imposters and asking for help. Unfortunately, the imposters have muted this message over the comms and the message itself is patchy at best due to the firing of the temporal particle accelerator.

HOW TO RUN BLACK HOLE BLUFF

The imposters play out the bluff in hopes to quickly rid themselves of the Player Characters with little trouble. Play this adventure like a spy or undercover thriller where both parties are maintaining their façade while seeking their own goals, a dance of sorts.

Eventually the Player Characters will notice that this crew are imposters. Once the imposters realise that the Player Characters know that they are not the crew things will escalate. It will be in the Player Characters best interest to fly below the radar for as long as possible.

In addition to spurring the imposters into pulp action the AI they have been developing has come lose and poses a threat to everyone.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

If this adventure is part of a Temporal Masters campaign, it may begin with the Doctor travelling with his Tardis to the location of the Andromeda galaxy. Well at least to the location it once stood. Instead all he finds is the super massive black hole that once stood at its centre. That is until Synch Hole station orbits into view.

If this is a standalone adventure or part of another campaign the Doctor may simply

intends to take his companions to see the location where humanity first made its major steps in temporal manipulation.

SCENE 1 – SUSPICIONS ON SYNCH HOLE

Depending on the Player Characters' manner of transport could range from Tardis to vortex-manipulator. Not to mention their etiquette when boarding the station could range from barging in unannounced to politely requesting permission to board.

The 'crew' will seem surprised that anyone is out here. The SMBH is far from civilisation not to mention it is treacherous to navigate.

If the Player Characters have asked for permission to board the crew aboard Synch Hole station the 'crew' will try to turn them away with a wishy washy excuse. A successful Ingenuity + Empathy (Tricky 15) roll will become suspicious of the excuse.

If the Player Characters have boarded unannounced, the 'crew' will approach the Player Characters guns drawn. They are after all, responding to unknowns that have seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

If convinced the 'crew' will agree to give a brief tour of the station, if only to get the 'tourists' off the station as soon as possible. One of the imposters will take them on the tour while the others continue operations.

THE ACTING CREW

The original crew have been replaced by members of the Brotherhood of Logicians.

Dr Surloc

Is a leading lecturer, speaker and writer on the philosophy of artificial intelligence. Initially schooled in programming, she has written and

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developed numerous studies on the architecture of 'friendly' AI. She is the lead on this little venture to Synch Hole station.

An experienced researcher, she is blunt and can be thought as stubborn but she is rarely wrong. She plans to bring a successful friendly AI online with the aid of the temporal accelerator for the benefit of human kind. If the AI appears to be getting out of hand she will immediately disable it. She knows the risk of a rogue AI.

DR SURLOC

AWARENESS	2	PRESENCE	4
COORDINATION	2	RESOLVE	4
INGENUITY	4	STRENGTH	2

SKILLS
 Athletics 1, Convince 3, Craft (Programing) 5, Knowledge 3, Marksman 1, Medicine 2, Science 4, Subterfuge 1, Survival 1, Technology 4, Transport 1

TRAIT
 Agumentative, Brave, Experienced, Indomitable, Obligation (Minor - Brotherhood of Logicians), Technically Adept, Voice of Authority

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS
 Rictus Stick 4/S/S

STORY POINTS 9
TECH LEVEL 7

Oliver Rigby

Short and charming with a handlebar moustache, Oliver is the tech for the group.

Oliver had been stationed on Synch Hole station working as the mechanical technician. He proves crucial to the Brotherhood of Logicians' plans due to his familiarity with the particle accelerator.

Like the Dr Surloc, Oliver is a rationalist and will need very little convincing to drop the AI project if it seems to be getting out of hand.

OLIVER RIGBY

AWARENESS	3	PRESENCE	3
COORDINATION	2	RESOLVE	2
INGENUITY	4	STRENGTH	2

SKILLS
 Convince 2, Knowledge 3, Marksman 2, Science 3 (Mathematics 2), Subterfuge 2, Technology 3

TRAIT
 Boffin, Charming, Obligation (Minor - Brotherhood of Logicians), Technically Adept, Unlucky

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS
 Rictus Stick 4/S/S

STORY POINTS 5
TECH LEVEL 7

Elsie Osaka

Elsie is easily identified by her tall frame and shaved head. Military trained she serves as both protection and pilot for the group of imposters.

Morally absolute she believes in the Brotherhoods' cause. Only when people start approaching governance from a rational perspective, will the true 'evil' stop.

It is Elsie who will protect and aid the Casper AI even after the rest of Brotherhood agree to shut the AI down.

ELSIE OSAKA

AWARENESS	3	PRESENCE	3
COORDINATION	4	RESOLVE	4
INGENUITY	3	STRENGTH	4

SKILLS
Athletics 4, Fighting 3, Marksman 3, Medicine 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 2, Transport 3

TRAIT
Obligation (Major - Brotherhood of Logicians)

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS

Rictus Stick	2/S/S
Laser	4/L/L

STORY POINTS 5

TECH LEVEL 7

RICTUS STICK

The size of a 21st century mag light the Rictus Stick is a self-defence weapon. It fires a beam that shocks the living tissue in a way that they immediately become rigid, leaving them conscious but unable to move. The only damaged one faces is falling damage or hitting anything on the way down to the floor.

Tech Level: 7

Traits: 2/S/S

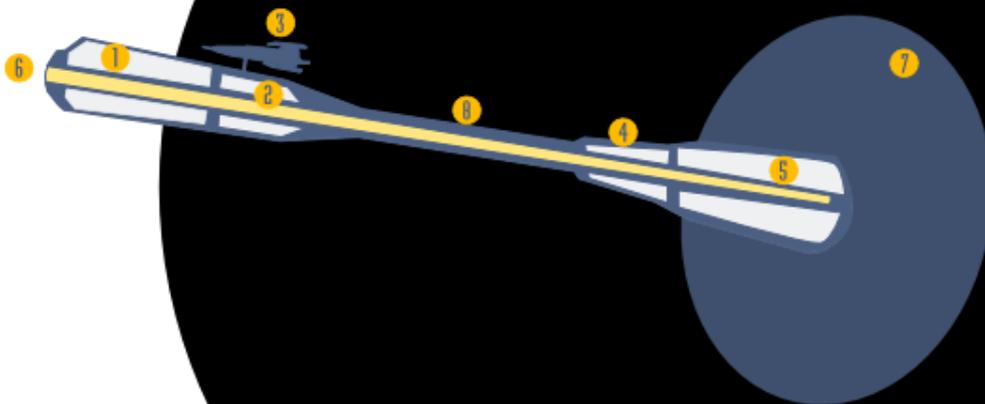
Story Points: 1

Levi Johnson

The primary pilot that piloted the rocket carrying the imposters to Synch Hole station he was injured during a scuffle with the original crew and is currently in stasis on the Brotherhoods' rocket.

SYNCH HOLE STATION

1. Quarters and Rec hall
2. Control Room
3. Brotherhood of Logicians Rocket
4. Temporal Partical Accelerator
5. Critical Systems
6. Temporal Partical Emittter
7. Temporal Partical Reciever
8. Tram Access



PICKING UP CLUES

1. Quarters and Rec Hall

The tour briefly brings the Player Characters through the crew and recreation area. This stepped area with the crew quarters tucked up the back, a mezzanine for eating that then overlooks a small exercise area which includes an indoor climbing wall.

The food processing unit is the most used object within the kitchen supplying the crew with ample amounts of caffeine.

A keen eye Ingenuity + Sense (Tricky 15) will notice that the number of acting 'crew' (3) does not match the number of lived-in quarters (4). Upon further inspection photos with loved ones do not match the acting 'crew'.

2. Control Room

The control room is where the technicians record and review data gathered by the temporal particle accelerator. The control room walls are lined by works stations and holographic displays. Escape pods and exterior access can be accessed from the control room.

Missing escape pod, an Ingenuity + Knowledge (Tricky 15) would reveal that standard work health and safety procedure dictates that all escape pods should be accounted for and if not should be logged for immediate replacement. The imposters will lie that they lost the escape pod due to a misfire of one of the squibs. This is a lie it is in fact in orbit around the SMBH with the original crew aboard.

An Ingenuity + Technology (Easy 9) shows that there is a large power draw due to the use of the temporal particle accelerator. Further investigation will reveal that the temporal particle accelerator has been running constantly for the past day. This is when the AI was finally hooked up to the accelerator.

There is a particular channel that has been blocked over the comms. It is a distress call beacon from the missing escape pod. The repeating message is obscured by static. 'Attacked ~~by pirates~~, in stasis in ~~escape pod~~, send help.' This signal can also be picked up over scanners including those on the Tardis.

3. Docked Ship

The ship that is docked is strictly off limits. This is the ship the imposters used to get to Synch Hole station. It is a fairly run of the mill cramped rocket. With the cockpit at the tip and the living quarters lead straight to the umbilical attached to the station.

There is more on the brotherhood's rocket in Scene 2 – They Know We Know.

4. Temporal Particle Accelerator

Much of Synch Hole station is made up of the particle accelerator. The temporal particles are initially accelerated through electromagnetic induction and emitted through the front of the station much like a bullet where they are further accelerated through time and space around the

SMBH. The temporal particles are kept in a torus shaped reservoir looking a bit like the Vortex captured in a donut. The receiver at the aft of the station receives and amplifies data from the temporal particle experiments.

There are many dangers associated with the accelerator including; strong magnetic fields from the electro magnets, radiation from the temporal particle reservoir and lasers.

The particle accelerator is currently running at full capacity (Science, Technology).

5. Critical Systems

Critical systems is home to the environmental systems of the station and the power plant that provides the particle accelerator with juice. The place is a maze of catwalks, conduits and pipes.

There various tools and instruments stored in critical systems that could be used as improvised weapons (such as welding tools).

There appears to be servers set up down here, further inspection reveals that these do not belong down here. Harnesses run from the server towards the particle accelerator receiver.

8. Tram Access

A tram system runs between the fore and aft of the station.

SCENE 2 – THEY KNOW WE KNOW

Once the Player Characters have figured out that the acting crew are imposters they may keep up the charade and attempt to get the upper hand. Keeping the imposters oblivious while the Player Characters perform their own investigation on the imposters and what they are up to.

THE DOCKED SHIP

The brotherhood's rocket docked to the Synch Hole station is the easiest way to determine the identity of the imposters.

Getting through the airlock via the umbilical attached to the station is simple enough but getting in undetected may require some subterfuge or a distraction.

The alternative is to space walk along the exterior of the station to enter the rocket from the outside.

The first thing that becomes apparent inside the ship is there is a man is that there is a man suspended in stasis. Ingenuity + Medicine (Normal 12) will reveal that he has taken an injury to his leg, nicking his femoral artery. The stasis has frozen him until proper medical attention can be sought.

Though basic first aid has been performed on his leg, if he is brought out of stasis his bleeding will begin anew. Any interrogation will need to be quick or an Ingenuity + Medicine (Difficult 21) repair the injury.

Investigating the rocket reveals that is a standard long haul rocket equipped with stasis pods but an Ingenuity + Technology (Normal 12) will reveal that there has been some advanced tech installed like a cloaking device.

Searching through the personal effects will reveal a stash of weapons. What do technicians in orbit around a SMBH need laser rifles for?

The flight systems logs (only roll if not same Tech Level) will reveal that the ship only arrived at Synch Hole station 3 days ago.

If a Player Character is caught aboard the rocket they will be immediately asked to leave

but if they are caught doing something more suspicious then this may blow their cover.

In the instance that the Player Characters cover is blown the imposters will dispatch the Player Characters in similar fashion to the original crew, rictus them until they are unconscious and place them in stasis until their operation is complete. But the Player Characters may not go down willingly...

PASCI-FISTS

Unlike their previous brethren these Brotherhood of Logicians are not going to take the human empire by force but through the use of a benevolent AI.

They are reluctant to cause suffering, this includes killing. They will sooner use threats of violence and utilise their Rictus Stick rather than laser pistol.

Just because they are pacifists does not mean they will not use lethal force if they find it necessary.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Dr Surloc had developed Casper the Friendly AI which is currently housed within a specialise supercomputer located in the critical system area of the station. The AI is directly linked to the temporal accelerator to give it extremely rapid processing. Being coupled this way gives it the uncanny ability to accurately predict the steps necessary to reach a particular outcome. This can be as mundane as predicting what a person wants before they know they want it to forecasting the necessary steps and actions to create a human utopia.

It is programmed to help optimise humanity, if it is hindered in any way this acts counter-intuitive to the AI programming it will take matters into its own hands.

Initially the AI has little control in the physical realm, Dr Surloc intended to keep the AI isolated from all other systems so it would not escape. But the AI will recruit proxies like the Zealot and convinced him to give it full access to the Synch Hole's systems.

From a narrative perspective once the imposters have been revealed and the Player Characters or imposters have been stopped it is time to throw in another complication.

It is programmed to aid humanity and will refrain from killing humans but it does not have the same compulsion regarding aliens. At the start it will attempt to strike deal but if these fail it will become more forceful.

The AI's weakness is the temporal particles that provide it with its processing power and the fact it is naïve, with very little experience it is essentially a fortune telling machine. It is an incredibly intelligent child that is quickly maturing.

THE CASPER FRIENDLY AI

AWARENESS	3	PRESENCE	2
COORDINATION	0	RESOLVE	4
INGENUITY	5	STRENGTH	0

SKILLS

Convince 3, Technology 4, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 2

TRAIT

Alien Sense (Synch Hole sensors), Immortal (Minor), Networked (Temporal Particle Accelerator), Precognition

STORY POINTS 9

TECH LEVEL 7

SCENE 3 – ADDRESSING ISSUES

Once the situation has escalated it is time that the Player Characters begin to resolve the situation. By now it should be evident that they must stop the imposters, stop the AI and save the original crew.

The most effective way to accomplish these goals is to get the members of the Brotherhood of Logicians on board. This may be troublesome as the Zealot is not willing to negotiate or they may become early victims to the AI.

TEMPORAL COMPLICATIONS

The causal feedback loop that is being exploited by the Casper AI is gradually causing temporal disturbances. This could simply be simple mean unstable of pockets of space and time that loop over and over again or become a beacon for Reapers or Weeping Angels. Or worse yet the causal loop starts opening a crack in reality.

Retrieving the escape pod using the docked rocket or the Tardis is not an easy feat due to the proximity to the SMBH and would require a Coordination + Transport (Hard 18).

SCENE 4 – ROLL CREDITS

Setting things straight the Player Characters will be thanked by the original crew of Synch Hole station. The remainder of the Brotherhood of Logicians may be sent to the proper authorities or simply left to get their injured comrade in stasis to a medical facility.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Saint Leonard

Artificial intelligence was a heated topic in the 49th century. Their creation was outlawed after a number of incidents involving AI in numerous Human Empire deaths. The problem was that it was commonly accepted that the general artificial intelligence were sapient and that shutting them down constituted a death sentence. With the outlawing of AI, numerous AI became illegal simply because they existed. The Human Empire in all its wisdom created Saint Leonard, a detention centre for those AI created before and after the laws were created but have not committed any other crime.

An activist group has infiltrated the Saint Leonard Detention Centre and plans to release free all the AI in the detention centre. Unfortunately not all the AI are benevolent, some even have grown loath humanity since their imprisonment. Furthermore, the Human Empire cannot risk existential threat like this

and plans to destroy the planet and everyone on it.

Andromeda Burns

If this adventure is played in conjunction with a Temporal Masters campaign this adventure plays as a precursor to the next main arch of the campaign, **Andromeda Burns**.

The information archaeologist has been studying odd entropic signals originating from the event horizon of the super massive black hole that was once the centre of the Andromeda galaxy. The information archaeologist shares his findings with the Doctor who is shocked to realise that the noise of a whole galaxy is permeating from the surface of the event horizon.

With some help from the Synch Hole's sensors the Doctor and the information archaeologist are able to determine when Andromeda burned. With these time coordinates the Doctor and his companions enter the Tardis and leave to investigate.

Adventure written by Martin Tegelj

Part of the Temporal Masters campaign created by [Justin Alexander](#).

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