

Taking the absurdly implausible...



If you are Canadian, at some point in your childhood you will have encountered Rocket Robin Hood; a Canadian animated science fiction television series made in the late 1960s. The programme was a space opera, retelling the classic Robin Hood legend in a futuristic, outer space setting.

It is the astonishing year 3000. The asteroid belt is part of N.O.T.T (National Outer-space Terrestrial Territories) ruled by the despot Prince John and policed by the Sheriff of N.O.T.T. and his guards. Prince John subjects the peasant farmers of the asteroid belt to high taxes collected by the Sheriff and his guards. Meanwhile, on New Sherwood Forest Asteroid, Rocket Robin Hood and his Merry Men reside and are determined to foil the evil plans of Prince John and the Sheriff. Rocket Robin Hood and his band fly in spaceships and rocket packs and use weapons such as "electro-quarterstaves" and traditional space opera blasters.

Rocket Robin Hood and his Merry Men are supposedly the literal descendants of the original Robin Hood and his band. Other implausible things are, that every asteroid is spherical and has

an Earth-like atmosphere. There also appears to be air in space, thin but breathable.

Over a decade ago, a producer that I knew was interested in rebooting Rocket Robin Hood, and he asked me for my thoughts on the project. Over the evening of beer and singing karaoke (including the theme song for Rocket Robin Hood) we both thoroughly trashed all of the absurdities and holes in this series that we both loved as kids. Before we headed our separate ways, my colleague asked, "But, could you make it work?" I said, "Maybe. I'll give it a look."

In the light of day, I immediately dismissed the possibility of making Rocket Robin Hood work. But a couple of weeks later, I did have an idea. The original treatment was centred on a reboot of Rocket Robin Hood. The project did not move beyond this stage. There was some initial interest that then faded.

and making it plausible.

In the Pocket

In the Pocket, is based on the treatment for a Rocket Robin Hood reboot. This is that fictional world...

Sometime in the late 21st century or the first decade of the 22nd century, there is a Singularity event. And that event is in the "Hard Rapture" form. It is uncontrolled, and chaotic, and involves conflict between transhuman beings and superhuman general purpose AIs, with all sides uploading, by force, the majority of the human population into virtual realities. The transhumans are losing the war and leave the Solar System before they are destroyed or absorbed into the Essence. But, before they do, they create a pocket universe and populate it with unaugmented humans (ordinary Homo sapiens sapiens).

This is the world of the story.

It is a region of space that is called TAT. Nobody knows why, that is just its name. TAT has always been there and has always been as it is. It is a large volume of space that is a torus 1

aay-oo thick and 2.1 to 2.5 aay-oo wide. Nobody knows where the measurement term aay-oo came from, it is just used for measuring space. This torus is the entirety of this pocket universe, if you attempt to venture beyond the torus, you reach an invisible wall and just slide along it.

Within TAT the volume of asteroids is higher than in our universe. All asteroids are actual minor planets; each a mini-Earth, complete with Earth-normal gravity, atmosphere, water, plants, livestock, and some unique forms of animal life.

Some of the plant life is strange constructions of the transhumans, that the people of TAT view as just the way things are. There are plants that grow solid rocket boosters, used in spaceships and rocket packs. Plants that grow spaceship hulls. Plants that can be tapped for sap that makes the hulls airtight. Plants that grow swords made of a strong, non-metal fibre that has a sharp edge that will fade with time, no matter how often you sharpen it. Plants that grow fruit that if placed in a dark dry place for a year, when left out in the sun for 1 day become a power supply. Plants that grow the pistol structure of a blaster out of a similar strong non-metal fibre. Plants that grow Guards, humanoids with very limited intelligence and memory that are best suited for being guards and foot soldiers (if you have a large number of them). Plants that grow non-reaction drives. Plants that grow blaster units. And so on. However, there are not a lot of these strange plants, they are not rare, but they certainly are not common. And it takes time for a spaceship hull to grow to maturity, then it has to be cured, then the sap has to be gathered and the hull coated. The same goes for making a blaster, or a rocket pack, or an electro-quarter staff...

There are many different human populations within TAT. So there are diverse cultures and religions, but the social structure is basically the same; feudal. And the level of technology is early medieval. Most of the population is engaged in agriculture. There have been no technological developments since TAT was created. The people all talk of the Teacher, who first instructed them on how to live on their world and what tools they had been granted so that they could visit the other worlds of TAT. On each asteroid the Teacher gave the same teachings, and part of the teachings was to not improve the technologies that the people had been granted; to do so would summon the Evil One who would destroy them all. The Teacher stated that it is best to keep things as they are, as that is

what the Creators intended. And then, the Teacher just disappeared.

Each asteroid is a principality or something similar. Each has an absolute monarchy. The social structure is this: The Prince, the Nobility, the Artisans, and the Peasants. Different asteroids may have different names for these social ranks, but they have the same social ranks. Peasants are NOT serfs or villains; they have no obligation to their local lord. They are freemen tenant farmers on their lord's land. The lord has granted these farmers, and their families, a piece of land upon which the peasants can build a village. However, the peasants have to pay rent on their land and taxes. There is little currency in circulation and this means the peasants pay their rents and taxes in a share of the crops harvested being given over to the local lord.

Artisans are freemen who have been taught a trade, they are skilled labourers. And usually in high demand. However, they are subject to poor growing seasons the same as the peasants; too much rain can impact the growth of new power supplies. The artisans are also not restricted to these items. They also build the mills, the irrigation systems, the roads, as well as the strange technologies. And the strange technology plants do not grow everywhere on the asteroid. You may live in a region where spaceship hulls grow and blaster units grow, but not where the hull coat sap trees grow. And you carefully guard the secret as to where your trees are located. Artisans have to trade with other artisans. Artisans are also merchants. And some wealthy artisans are primarily merchants who hire other artisans to do the work. Some wealthy artisans have purchased their way into the nobility.

The nobility own the land and operate the land. They are skilled in managing their people and most are not despotic. They are trained by their parents in the trade of politics and management. Some are very skilled at both. And the politics are medieval, intricate, and deadly. As is becoming Prince.

One becomes Prince through ruthless politics, manipulation, and assassination. You have beaten the other nobles and claimed the throne. Now, you have to keep it. Some of the more successful Princes have managed the artisans well, especially the wealthy artisans. And sometimes a Prince will have created large armies and spaceship fleets, and have attempted to usurp the power of the local lords and to expand their realm to other asteroids. But they end up exhausting the resources on their home world

(Guards, spaceship hulls, blaster units) and the artisans on the asteroid you are invading are the only ones who know where you can resupply, and they are not going to co-operate. All attempts to expand an asteroid's realm have failed and the Prince deposed and everything slowly returns to normal.

For this reason, the worlds of TAT, created the position of Prince of Princes. There is a Grand Council of Princes (which usually convenes once every eight years), where the assembled Princes elect one of their own to be the Prince of Princes for a term of eight years. This is a position wherein the Prince of Princes is technically the Head of State for all of TAT, but where they have little power. The major power they have is as an arbitrator. They arbitrate disputes between the worlds of TAT in the hope that this will reduce, or better still, eliminate any future military adventurism by the Princes. The current, and recently elected, Prince of Princes is Prince John of Nottingham asteroid.

Now, not all freemen support the social system the way that it is. Some have become outlaws, choosing to live outside of the law in intentional communities. These are on some of the smaller asteroids (that still have gravity, just Mars or Lunar level gravity, and Earth-like atmospheres, and water, and tend to be forested). On those with gravity similar to Mars and higher, some of the forests are cleared to make farms and villages. And here, we find communities experimenting with different social systems, and the limits of technology. The neighbouring Principalities take a dim view of freemen establishing their own communities outside of their rule. AS some of these rogue asteroids engage in most horrible practices, such as direct democracy, these intentional communities are often attacked and destroyed. And on asteroids with Lunar level gravity, have been established other communities that serve to protect the intentional community asteroids from authoritarian predation. One of these asteroids is Holland Landing where our protagonists reside.

In the first season, our protagonists and Prince John both discover clues to where the Teacher is. And both are in a race to find the Teacher. Prince John believes that the Teacher will grant him the power to rule all of TAT permanently. Our protagonists want to find the Teacher to gain power to protect the intentional communities from the Princes and to discover the origins of TAT. They succeed, having to work together at the end. The Teacher is a humanoid robot, who they have awoken. It explains the origins of TAT and what it is, and that they are in

great danger, that the Essence is now aware of them. The peoples of TAT must work together and put together the Device that will transform TAT from a pocket universe into a universe of its own, that would be free from the Essence. Filaments of energy appear out of nowhere behind the Teacher and begin to surround it. The last words of the Teacher are, "It knows where you are. Work together or it will destroy you all." The Teacher is pulled out of the pocket universe by the Essence.

Future seasons deal with the major arcs of working together with Prince John and the other worlds to discover the pieces of the Device so that they can save TAT from the Essence. We see Prince John develop from being a villain into a hero. And we also see that our original protagonists have dark sides as well.

Individual character development was not performed as those persons were being drawn mostly from the Robin Hood legends and Rocket Robin Hood as per the original version of the treatment.

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