

The 572nd meeting of the colonisation committee

After their spaceship crashes onto a planet, some of the remaining passengers and crew form a committee to discuss what to do next. They meet regularly in the Captain's bathtub to decide.

But these lucky survivors are perhaps not ideally suited to rebuilding civilisation...

The secret

Golgafrincham is, or rather was*, a planet with a problem. A problem common to many an "advanced" civilization.

An overabundance of useless idiots.

Unlike other "advanced" civilizations, they had a cunning plan to deal with this dreadful situation. Get them onboard a mighty spaceship. Send it off to crash into another planet.

Get rid of them.

The story

Golgafrincham was doomed, and the population had to leave.

Three mighty ships were to take the people of Golgafrincham far, far, away. To colonise another planet. An obscure body in the S-K System. The A Ark was to contain leaders, thinkers, and artists. The C Ark to contain workers, the people who made things, and did things. The B Ark to be filled with the rest of Golgafrincham: the telephone sanitisers, hairdressers, management consultants, marketing directors, tri-d auteurs, self-facilitating media nodes, stakeholder managers, growth hackers, and innovation facilitators.

This larp is their story. No, not the leaders. Or the workers.

The rest.

After the ship took off, no word was heard from either Golgafrincham or the A and C Arks. After five years of travelling, two interlopers teleported onto the B Ark. Number 2 - the third in command of the vessel - apprehended and interrogated them, learning of their fondness for little cheesy biscuits. After an unfortunate difficulty with the automated controls, the ship crashed onto the planet Earth and was wrecked. Many of the passengers and crew survived, and now confront the reality of their position as the beacon of the Golgafrincham people.

A colonisation committee was quickly formed, taking advantage of the skills of passengers and crew to manage the resources they had available. Their aim? To bring civilization to the planet, and prepare the way for the people of the A and C Arks when they arrive.

The interlopers escaped custody.**

* Postscript: The fate of Golgafrincham

A notation in the Hitchhikers' Guide To The Galaxy about Golgafrincham after the departure of the B Ark states that the entire remaining population subsequently died from a virulent disease contracted from a dirty telephone.

** Postpostscript: The fate of the interlopers

The interlopers, a supposed ape-descendent called Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect, from a small planet somewhere in the vicinity of Betelgeuse, returned during the 573rd meeting of the Colonisation Committee. They had discovered that the B Ark had landed on Arthur's home planet Earth. Furthermore, it did not matter a pair of foetid dingos' kidneys what the Committee decided. In two million years, the Earth would be demolished by the Vogons to make way for a hyperspace bypass.

Additional reading and watching

To say this larp owes much to the work of Douglas Adams is a huge understatement.

The Golgafrincham Ark Fleet Ship B appeared in:

The novel [The Restaurant at the End of the Universe](#).

The sixth episode of the [1981 television series](#).

Fit the Sixth of the [Original Radio Series](#).

The film will [not help you](#).

If you haven't come across any of these, the larp is likely to make no sense whatsoever. Give it a go anyway, and let me know how it worked out.

However, I strongly recommend you buy them all.

Even the film version.

How to run the larp

The characters in this larp form the colonisation committee. They know The Story, but not The Secret. Each character, except the Captain, has a suggestion for what the survivors should do next.

- Number one suggests they start a religion
- Number Two suggests they declare war on the next continent
- The Marketing Director suggests they focus on the Wheel Project.
- The Management Consultant suggests they adopt the leaf as legal tender.
- The Hairdresser suggests they form the Hairdressers' Fire Development Sub-committee.

The larp is designed to be played in a hot-tub, indoors or outdoors, but could alternatively be played through your video conferencing system of choice. Running the larp takes 6 steps.

1) Assign the Captain, plus 3-5 of the other characters, to the players.

2) After reading their characters and making up a name, players decide two character relations:

- everyone points at someone they dislike and will undermine at every opportunity
- everyone points at someone they want to impress and gain the approval of

A little time should be allowed here for people to change their pointing if needed to strengthen the potential narratives of the larp. If the larp has 5 or 6 players, each should point four times, twice for dislikes, and twice for likes. Feel free to generate relations randomly, say by pulling Scrabble letters from a bag, if you prefer.

3) Players should then start a 25 minute timer.

4) The larp begins as the Captain calls the meeting to order.

5) During the larp, the characters discuss the pros and cons of possible courses of action.

6) Shortly after the timer goes off, the Captain decides what the survivors should do next, and the larp ends.

No props or costume are required, but players might wish to allocate the role of Captain to a player who owns the nicest or most suitable hat.

The members of colonisation committee

Captain

"It's probably time I was getting out of this bath in fact. Oh, I don't know though, why stop just when I'm enjoying it."

Aim: Make the right decision. Or indeed any decision. As long as everyone is happy. The Captain has a very relaxed attitude towards everything. It's important to present a calm outlook on the situation, they believe. From their bathtub. Or, as it is now, a frightfully handy natural hot spring. Helps morale.

After all, the B Ark was the core of the Ark Fleet, the first to stretch out into the depths of space, and now its crew are the welcome for the rest of the Golgafrincham population. When they arrive that is. They're bound to show up soon. For some, the burden of command would weigh heavy, but as the Captain is fond of saying: "You're never alone with a rubber duck." Or, indeed, a nice "jynnan tonnyx."

Characterisation: Promoted above their ability, and then chosen precisely for their incompetence. Vague, dithering, and prone to agree with whoever spoke last. There's always another opinion to be heard, and a decision to be put off for as long as possible.

Number One

"Perhaps it'll keep him happy for a bit."

Aim: Start a religion

The Captain wasn't terribly good with figures, so all the B Ark's systems were automated. During the flight, that left Number One in charge of clipboards and communications. Unlike Number Two, they were nearly as relaxed as the Captain, but since the Crash, they have become more thoughtful. They've heard nothing from the A Ark or the C Ark, so Golgafrincham clearly has been destroyed, as the prophecies foretold. Only the B Ark has survived, and it must be providence. But which Divine Entity saved the B Ark? Careful reading in the Ark's rapidly-decaying databanks, led Number One to the only logical candidate. The Great Green Arkleseizure, beloved of the Jatravartids of planet Viltvodle VI.

The Arkleseizure is believed to have sneezed the entire universe out of their nose. The truly faithful, in whose number Number One now counts themselves, are terrified by the Coming of the Great White Handkerchief. Number One is now firmly of the belief that it was the Divine After-sniffings of Great Green Arkleseizure, which gently wafted the B Ark down to an almost entirely soft landing, with the barest minimum of fatalities. They must be propitiated, praised, and thanked for their Divine Intervention, lest the Great White Handkerchief come sooner than convenient.

Characterisation: Every street preacher ever.

Number Two

“May I respectfully remind you that you've been in that bath for over three years?”

Aim: Declare war on the next continent.

Number Two was one of the officers on the Golgafrincham B Ark. They were the only officer on the ship to seem less than entirely relaxed, wanting to interrogate the interlopers as their prisoners. While they hadn't learned much of military significance, it doesn't hurt to stay in practice.

The Captain remains Captain. Number Two believes in authority. After all, it was their commander back on Golgafrincham who'd told them the reason everyone had to leave was because the planet was in imminent danger of being eaten by a mutant star-goat. They stayed back, and Number Two hopes they got out OK. That commander made Number Two the professional officer they are today. Efficient. Effective. E... Err...

Anyway. The one thing the Captain is not, is sufficiently informed about military strategy. There are enemies, or at least potential enemies, everywhere. Strike first, strike fast, and strike hard. The next continent may not be a threat yet, but it is only a matter of time. Their military installations may be unsophisticated now - they may only be potential military installations as yet. Yes, at the moment they may only be trees. But one day! The threat is real.

Characterisation: Thucydides, Sun Tzu, Clausewitz. None of these people have been born yet, nor would Number Two really understand anything they'd written, but they speak the language. Military jargon at its finest and most impenetrable.

The Marketing Director

“Ok wiseguy, you tell me what colour it should be?”

Aim: We should focus on the Wheel Project.

The Marketing Director has been leading the Project for some time now. They're ready with an update on the development of the wheel. Awkwardly, it is unclear what colour it should be. That's the question on their mind, and if there's a pause in conversation, they'll be asking someone else their opinions about hue theory and saturation psychogenetics.

The Wheel is clearly the most important project to be completed, and people must just focus. Without the Wheel, how will we have motor racing? Without motor racing, how will we raise brand awareness for other projects? Everything must be done properly, with proper market research and strategising. Much better that nothing is done at all, than anything is done wrong. If any other project looks like it's getting any traction - question the fundamentals. What did the focus groups say? What message does the project send?

Characterisation: Imagine your worst nightmare of a buzzword-compliant stereotype. No, they're worse than that.

The Management Consultant

“Sorry, but speaking as a management consultant, I must insist on the importance of the committee structure.”

Aim: Get the leaf adopted as legal tender.

The Management Consultant spies a chance to better themselves. At first extremely disappointed not to be included on the A Ark, they look around and see only nincompoops and imbeciles. If they can apply all their experience of corporate manoeuvring to this new world, why they could come out on top!

Their first need, of course, is money. Cash, and lots of it. Can't lubricate the wheels of commerce without cash. The problem? There's no printing presses here, no available goldmines. Luckily, they're a seasoned veteran of blue-sky thinking and ideation techniques. They've been in such thunderous thought showers, their pants were soaked right through. These puny minds hold no fear for them, for the management consultant holds the key to riches! If the Captain would simply adopt the leaf as legal tender, everyone would become immensely rich. Easy.

Characterisation: Supercilious and self-satisfied. “What's first on the agenda?” “Address the chair, please!”, “Point of order!”, “Point of information!” - they'll use every trick of meeting management to frustrate the others, and get their idea adopted

The Hairdresser

“Fancy a light trim, sir?”

Aim: Form the Hairdressers' Fire Development Sub-committee.

Honestly, the Hairdresser is feeling a little out of their depth. Hairdressers need hot water; else they just can't do a proper cut-and-blow-dry. They've chosen one of them to represent them to the colonisation committee, and get a proper sub-committee formed to discover the secret of fire itself. Once they've got hot water, they can move on to developing heated curling tongs and maybe one day even the blow dryer!

But until then, this particular Hairdresser is just a bit overawed by being in the presence of all these important and knowledgeable people. That won't stop them speaking, though. No hairdresser can work without easily available hot water, and people need haircuts.

Characterisation: They are everyman. The normal amongst the abnormal. The ordinary in the extraordinary. The Martin Freeman in almost every film role of his ever.