

aLIEN dECEPTION

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jAMES wOODLAND

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Chapter Two

“The Little Diner In The Agridome”

By

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If at anytime confusion reigns, look in the glossary at the end of the chapter for a list of people, places, things and terms. If all else fails please contact ChinookBreeze at chinookBreeze.com or James Woodland at jameswoodland.com

aCKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Electro-hover technology
- Roadside Diner technology
- Roadside Diner Cook, Waitress and Busser technology
- Wheat Farming technology
- The game of Baseball
- Walther Bauersfeld, pioneer of the geodesic dome

dEDICATION

To all those who get it

tHE sTORY sO fAR

The colonization ship “Starship One” (S1) cruises through deep space towards a new world for its inhabitants.

As she changes in a locker room, Security Sgt. Anne Brown remembers the last time she saw her best friend, shuttlecraft pilot Kim Manners. She broods over her possible death in a long-range shuttle named the “McCall” that has disappeared looking for a malfunctioning probe. The probe was sent out to investigate strange signals being picked up intermittently, coming in from beyond the range of S1’s communications equipment...

aLIEN dECEPTION

Chapter Two

The Little Diner In The Agridome

Bathed in soft white light On the deck of shuttlecraft bay Thirty-Six on the eve of their departure to bring in the malfunctioning Brooks probe stood the three-person Crew of the long-range shuttlecraft McCall. Pilot Kim Manners, Co-Pilot Mike Seaver, and Communications Officer John Wendon were being sent off to retrieve the probe that possibly had valuable recorded information concerning something it may have met. The machine appears to have malfunctioned and was unable to send off its information.

The McCall was larger than a regular shuttle, one of three modified to explore out beyond the immediate boundaries of S1. It's identification markings read "McCall S1". It was a tight fit in the small bay and would need an expert pilot to maneuver it out without demolishing parts of the walls, deck or ceiling.

Any chance a shuttle Pilot had to take one of these monsters out for an extended flight was not only jumped on but wrestled with from other Pilots equally eager to make a name for themselves. These S1 Crew Members called themselves fearless. Sane Crew Members called them suicide jockeys. At any rate, if a job like this needed to get done, these were the people to do it. And after all is said and done it's steak and beer at Barker's roadhouse club. Pilot heaven.

Kim glanced over at the entrance to the shuttle bay ready room and saw Anne Brown walking out of it. She called back to Mike and John as she walked away towards her. "Get 'er warmed up. I'll be right there".

Kim walked up to Anne smiling that million kilowatt beamer only the best of the best Pilots knew how to do.

"Guess there's no stopping you now" Anne said to Kim in an even tone belying her worry.

"There never was." Kim replied, trying to keep an even tone as well but displaying a slight expression of enthusiasm.

"Then I'll see ya when I see ya."

"Yea...you will..."

Anne waited a few seconds before the awkward silence between Kim and her exploded like a nuclear blast. She wasn't buying this whole scam.

"Cran it, why does this feel like the start of something really bad?"

"Bad for who? I do this and I'm on top of the flight deck, lookin' down on all the wannabes wishin' they were me."

"You're pretty calm for someone risking her life for a can of spam"

Kim smiled. "That can's got alphabet soup in it and Communications wants a hot shot pilot to get her rear end out there and come back with the dinner." She shoved a thumb to her chest. "This hot shot pilot."

"You've gone out before and hauled injured Crew back. Humans. This is different."

Kim's smile faded slightly. "You bet it's different. This time it's not about the cargo..."

Anne got upset. "Are you going to give me that smack about honour, glory and some cran steak dinner at a broken down roadhouse?"

Kim smirked. "Don't need to. You already know it."



"Then I'll see ya when I see ya."

The white light of the bay was suddenly thrust into red as the sound of a klaxon and the flashing of several emergency lights came up. Time to fly.

Kim glanced up and around "Hey. Gotta go." She looked back at a very worried Anne.

Anne could barely get the words out. "No you don't."

"You worry too much. Me and the Guys go out, get some soup and come back. Then it's Barker's for both of us. Dinner on the best pilot you ever saw."

"Just...come back."

Kim turned around and walked towards the McCall. She didn't get far when she stopped, searching for something in her pockets. She turned back to Anne. "Oh, hey. You got somethin' to chew on while things are happenin'?"

This caused Anne to chuckle. Kim was always asking her for some of her Ms. Lowe mints before shuttle launches. "I think I have a roll," she said as she reached into her jacket pocket and took out the used one she was already working on. She tossed it at Kim. Kim caught it and backed

away. The Two looked at each other then Kim turned around and walked on. Anne held up a hand saying goodbye. Without looking around Kim did the same.

One month later, back in the medicell locker room where she was changing, Anne came out of the memory of her last time with Kim. She looked at the roll of Ms. Lowe mints she held in her hand then threw them across the floor. "Dreamer. Lost and trying to get home," she mumbled as she grabbed a large towel from her locker, slammed its door shut and walked off to the showers.

Hector, her Computer Holographic Interface, watched her and felt as sorry as a computer-generated image could for a human being.

In a distant area of S1 Sector five the agridome "Lethbridge" was about to explode with sorry frustration from two sides of the same coin: the Farmers who worked the soil and produced S1 with it's food supply and the Maintenance Crews who made sure the dome was running properly. For some reason neither could get along with the other.

Like most structures, buildings and areas on S1, the Lethbridge was one of ten massive enclosed agricultural environments spread out around the ship. It was a huge twenty-five square kilometre domed enclosure connecting a central town with farms through a series of roads and two large highways running north-to-south and east-to-west.

The Lethbridge simulated what was once a western prairie landscape with surrounding mountains and was used to grow the food to feed the population of S1. When it was functioning properly the “roof” over the base of the dome simulated a beautiful blue sky, complete with rising and setting sun and moon for a day/night affect on the biological clocks of the People who lived there. Each agridome was managed by Farmers particular to the food grown there. The Lethbridge developed a wide variety of vegetables but it's main crop was wheat.

More often than not everything ran smoothly. The temperature was a constant twenty-two degrees celsius. Water and air filtration kept the soil hydrated and the atmosphere clean.

What didn't usually run smoothly were the attitudes of the Farmers and the Maintenance Workers towards one another. Case in point: a rather

large hole in a quarter-section of Hank Bartel's wheat field. It was surrounded by a twenty-five-person Maintenance Crew and eight maintenance trucks floating above the ground on charged currents originated by small generators underneath them. They were loaded with equipment needed to repair the hole. Crew and Equipment that's destroyed almost half the crop in the field.

Under the field a filtration tank had overheated and ruptured, causing several water tanks to collapse. The result a hundred feet above was a sinkhole that swallowed a huge harvester whole.

Like the maintenance trucks, the mammoth harvesters used by the Farmers floated above their fields and were used to plant, grow, then harvest the crop.

Ted Saunders, the Foreman of the Maintenance Crew responsible for the Bartel wheat field repair job watched as a massive winch slowly brought the harvester out of the sinkhole. Beside him was Hank Bartel, extremely upset but trying to keep his emotions in check.

Lucky for Hank and his farming Crew no one was on the harvester at the time but the inconvenience of getting another machine, fishing out

the damaged one, and waiting for the Maintenance Crews to patch everything up started an emotional kettle boiling.

“How long to get another harvester?” Hank asked Ted.

“The rec was put in as soon as we heard what happened. Should be about a day,” replied Ted carefully. He knew Hank wasn’t going to like his answer.

Hank shook his head and sighed. “There’ll be hell to pay with the shipments to the elevators this afternoon. We’ll be backed up at the service ports.”

“We’ll get things patched up as soon as we can.”

Hank grabbed Ted’s arm as Ted tried to walk away from him.

“As soon as we can” isn’t going to cut it anymore. This is the second time in a month the water tanks in this acreage alone have ruptured because of some incompetent repair job. How are we supposed to feed this boat if we can’t get it’s food out?”

Ted shook off Hanks grasp and looked at him.

“Listen Hank, this is the third call we’ve gotten this week to repair internal ship damage. Your call was given priority. Be thankful all this machinery was available for the job!” He calmed down. “You know we’re overworked and understaffed. Until Command does something about that you’re stuck with things the way they are.”

Hank also calmed down. “Sure. I know you’re doing your best. Did you get the stabilizer shielding in place so this hole doesn’t get any bigger?”

Ted backed up. “I’ve got a Crew down there setting it up now. While they’re doing that I have to take a run to the Plowshare. Want anything?”

Hank looked concerned. “Yea. For you to watch out for Lester. He’s down there now and I have a feeling he’s drinking with his friends.”

Ted didn’t like the thought of having to deal with the Son of the Man who’s wheat field he’s trying to repair but his crew needed to be fed and the Plowshare was the closest diner.

Inside the sinkhole jury-rigged lights exposed Maintenance Crew Members Patty Reed and Craig Howard. They struggled to swing a large

piece of machinery attached to a reinforced metal cord line across an open space and up onto a ledge with a maintenance area attached to it. The rope line came from a machine outside the hole that fed the line down.

Around the Two were signs of a massive upheaval that erupted up from far below them: broken pipes, severed electrical wiring, damaged portions of infrastructure.

“One more swing!” called out Patty. The machine missed the ledge. “Okay, two more swings!” The machine made it up and onto the shelf. Craig started to attach it to a number of pipes with more reinforced metal cord line.

Patty popped a Ms. Lowe Mint into her mouth then slowly made her way around to Craig. “Once this last one is secured I’ll get the electrical lines ready!” she said to Craig. “I’ll check the other units while you’re doing that!” Craig shouted back to her.

Patty looked around. “Did you get the measurements yet?!”
“Dianne’s working on them! Looks like it might be thirty, forty metres square!”

Patty took out her Data Block and punched up a number. A few rings and a voice came from it. A voice Patty couldn't make out.

“Say again! The systems down here are causing interference! I can barely hear you!” Another try. Another failure. “I’m a piece of what?!”

Finally success.

“Reed! How’s the shielding coming along?” came a distinctly gruff voice.

“We have the last stabilizer in place! I’m coming up to get out the power! Get the crew ready!” Patty shouted.

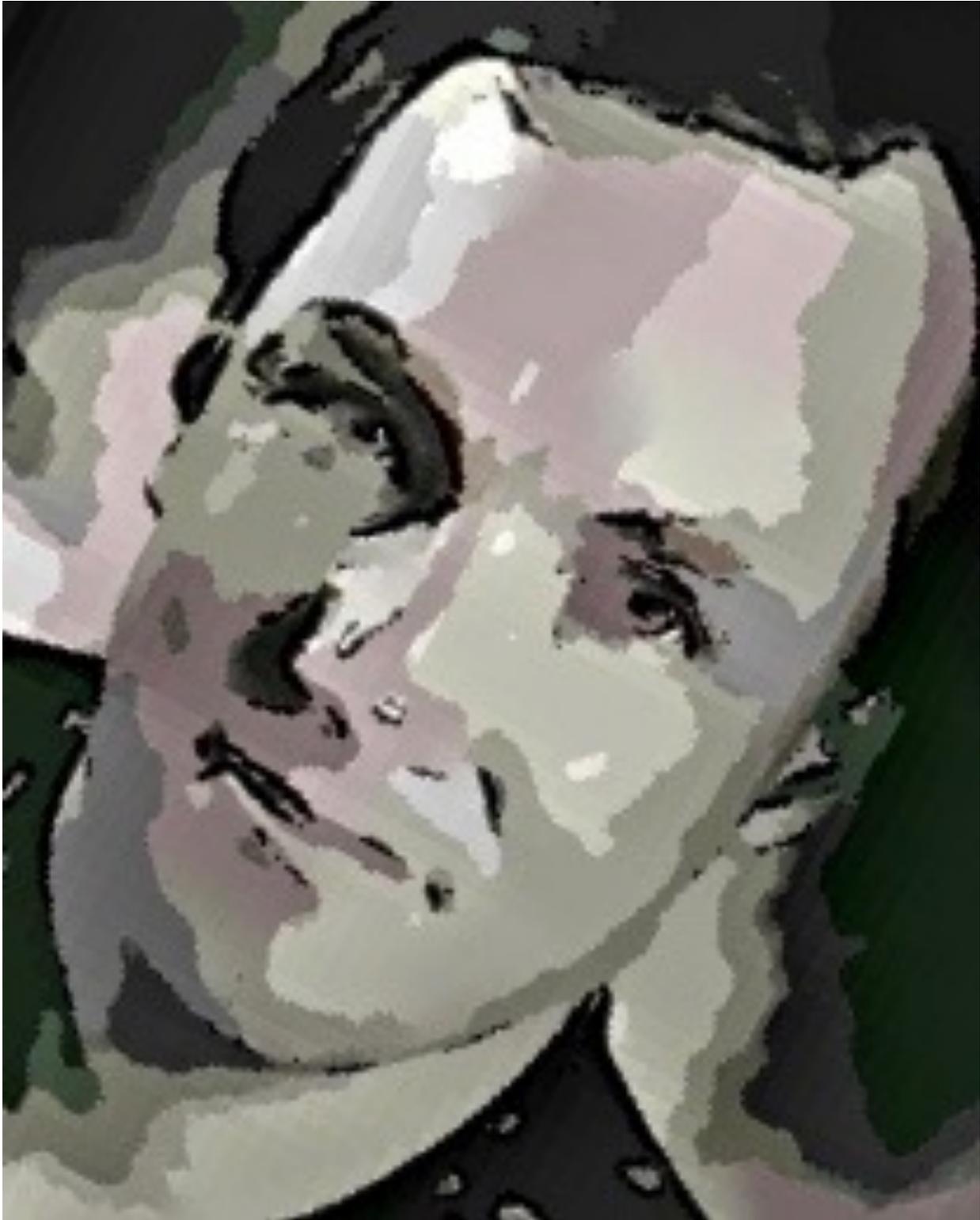
“Will do.”

“What?!”

“Just get up here before -” came half a reply before it was garbled.

Patty gave up and put her Data Block away. She called out to Craig as she started up a metal rope ladder. “Hey! Make sure all the stabilizing units are secure this time! We can’t afford another incident!”

“Last time was a freak accident!” Craig yelled back at her.



“You mess this up and I’m going to make sure a freak accident sends you to the hospital!”

“Can’t get here fast enough! I’m starving!”

“You mess this up and I’m going to make sure a freak accident sends you to the hospital!”

The Plowshare Diner was a typical refuelling stop for vehicles and their Occupants on their way to work in the fields. There were fifteen of them in the Lethbridge. All of them were shaped like large transport shuttles without their engines and painted bright yellow, green and blue. A neon sign in the shape of a half-diamond and the moniker “The Plowshare Diner” embedded into it stuck out from a corner of the front of the building. The main building was surrounded by a parking area in front and space that ran around it past an electrical generator in the rear to two electrical refuelling pumps for any vehicles that needed to be re-energized.

An S1 sector five maintenance truck glided off the highway and stopped down from several trucks and cars owned by Lethbridge Farmers. Ted got out of the truck with Crew members Kyle, Riza, and Chris. The group gathered at the front of the vehicle before they went in.

"No trouble. You get into anything, walk away," Ted told the others.

"Not like last time, eh dad?" said Riza. Fifteen years younger than Ted, Riza always called him "dad" when he gave her orders.

"Last time wasn't our fault," said Chris.

Ted, Riza, and Chris glanced at one another and snickered. Kyle looked confused. The group followed Ted as he walked off towards the entrance to the Diner.

Inside the Diner middle-aged Alice Bird cleaned tables amongst fifteen customers. She was the owner and, along with her family, one of the operators running the restaurant.

The room was small but not too crowded with ten tables scattered throughout it. Along one wall a door lead to the kitchen in the rear and a five metre long counter stretched out beside it. Behind the counter was a massive mirror with shelving in front of it holding cups, saucers, and anything else needed to serve food or drinks. A radio played old-style country music to add to the down-home atmosphere.

Hanging from the roof and walls were framed photos of visitors and important Lethbridge figures as well as an odd assortment of farming

tools. There was no indication of anything outside the dome ever having visited the Diner.

A quaint visual clue that all was not well with the inhabitants of certain parts of S1.

Slumped in a chair at a table behind Alice sat twenty-nine year old Lester Bartel, the son of Hank. Heavy, Tall and wide Lester would be a lot to handle should he get out of control. With Nothing to do while the field was being repaired he came drinking with a few of his equally tall and wide Farming Crew.

Unfortunately he picked the wrong time to do so.

"Alice! Another round."

Alice stopped what she was doing and turned and faced Lester. "I think you've had enough to drink, Lester," she told him with authority.

"Me and my friends will be the judge of that," he snarled back at her.

Alice paused and thought, looking at the tough young Farmers before her. Most in their late-twenties with little more than one thing on their minds: getting back to their precious fields. Growing up with more

respect for their family's parcel of land than anyone or anything else, they thought they could do whatever they wanted to.

Fireworks ready to go off.

"Okay. Coming up." said Alice. She walked to the counter as her husband Earl came out of the kitchen with a large box. She looked at him wearily and glanced back at Lester and the others. He stopped and put the box down on the counter top in front of a poster-size photo of himself when he played for the local baseball team. In a team uniform on home plate he holds up an orange bat, ready to swing.

Alice set up a tray of soft drinks and brought them over to Lester's table. She set them down but Lester wasn't impressed.

"What's this? I asked for something to drink!"

"You've had enough. Drink this."

Lester sat up in his chair, agitated. Alice stepped to one side revealing Earl. From under the counter Earl took out the orange bat from the large photo. It was slightly modified with red smiling faces on it.

"Relax and enjoy your drinks or the Rob Ducey comes out."

Lester sat back in his chair.

Alice slowly went back to cleaning tables. She looked up as Ted, Kyle, Riza, and Chris walked into the room. In behind the other People in the room looking at the Strangers, Lester and his Friends also saw the foursome. Everyone at the table sat up in their seats.

Ted cautiously looked around. He locked eyes with Lester for a second then herded his crew to a table as far away from him as was possible.

Alice wasn't impressed. She knew Ted but not the others and now was not the time for strangers. She Reluctantly walked to the group.

“Ted... Not a good time to be coming in. Lester's on a tear after what happened in his family's field.”

“Not our problem Alice. We just came to fix it. Right now we'd like something for ourselves while we order takeout for our Crew.”

“How many?”

“Twenty-two. Burgers, fries, grilled cheese sandwiches and drinks.”

“Having something while you wait?”

“You bet.”

“I know what you want. I’ll let the others look at the menu.” Kyle picked up the only menu on the table. Riza playfully took it from him. “Pros before rookies”.

Alice walked off towards Earl. He was watching her as he took packages of stock out of the box he brought out and put them on the shelves below the counter. When she got to him he had finished what he was doing and stepped beside her.

"Crew order?"

"Twenty-Two Burgers, fries, and grilled cheese."

Earl picked up the Rob Ducey and put it under the counter. He looked at Alice then started off for the kitchen. “I’ll get on it.” He looked at Lester and Ted. “You going to be okay out here?”

Alice started to set up coffee for Ted and his Crew. “You hear the screamin’ just come a’ swingin’.” Earl walked off.

Lester slowly got up from his seat. As he did so he took a drink from one of the bottles of pop on the table. He had forgotten it wasn't beer and spit it out. The others at the table quickly backed up in their chairs to avoid getting wet. "Hey! Watch it!" said one of them.

Lester got halfway through the Crowd to Ted before Alice noticed him. "Here we go...". She quickly finished with four coffees and took the tray of them to Ted's table.

Ted glanced around and saw Lester walking towards him. He straightened up in his chair. Lester stopped in front of him, furious. Ted glanced at him then looked away.

"Lester..."

"When the hell am I going to get my field back?"

"When it gets repaired."

"How's it going to get repaired if you're here stuffing your face?"

Kyle tried to get up but Ted held him down. "Don't do it," he said to him.

Kyle calmed down.

"Why's he so angry? We're only doing our job."

"If I had someone come into my house to fix something that I didn't break I'd be a little upset. On the other hand if I had to go into a

strangers house to fix something from my company I would be equally upset that that person would be upset with me," Ted replied to him.

"That makes absolutely no sense."

"It never does." He nodded toward the menu. "What are you having?"

Lester shoved Kyle out of the way and grabbed the menu. Kyle fell to the floor.

"He's not having anything! You're all going back to work!"

The crowd in the room all stopped and stared at the volcano about to erupt. Some of them left. Others backed away.

Riza and Chris got to their feet. Ted rolled his eyes and slowly got up with them.

He stood face-to-face with Lester.

Alice got to the table, coffee cups in hand. She wedged herself between Lester and Ted and put the coffees on a table.

"Everyone calm down!"

"I'll calm down when I'm back hauling wheat!" yelled Lester.

Kyle got up off the floor ready to fight.

Lester turned and slugged Kyle, sending him back down on the floor. He turned to Ted to say something but was greeted by a fist connecting to his nose!

Alice backed up. "Smack!"

Lester's Friends came running to Ted's table. Kyle got up off the floor again. Lester's group and Ted's group squared off.

Alice ran back to the kitchen. "Earl! Batter's up!"

End Of Chapter Two

Stay Tuned For The Next Exciting Chapter In The

“aLIEN dECEPTION” Saga!

Coming Friday, March 22, 2019, 4:15 PM PST:

Chapter Three

“Never Pick A Fight With A Stranger”

gLOSSARY

People, Places, Things and Terms

A) People

1. Ted Saunders

- Maintenance Chief in charge of the Crew responsible for repairing a sinkhole under a wheat field in the Lethbridge agridome. He ends up causing a huge fight in the Plowshare diner.

2. Hank Bartel

- Owner of the wheat field Ted Saunders and his Maintenance Crew are destroying to fix a sink hole under it

3. Patty Reed

- Maintenance Worker with the Ted Saunders crew working on stabilizing the inside of the sink hole in Hank Bartel's wheat field

4. Craig Howard

- Maintenance Worker with the Ted Saunders Crew working on stabilizing the inside of the sink hole in Hank Bartel's wheat field

5. Kyle, Riza, Chris - Members of Ted's maintenance crew

6. Alice Bird

- Owner and Operator (with her family) of the Plowshare Diner

7. Lester Bartel

- Son of Hank who gets into a fight with Ted in the Plowshare. A fight that escalates into total chaos.

B) Places

1. Starship One

- S1. A generational ship carrying hundreds of thousands of colonists to the Gliese 581 planetary system twenty light years away from earth

2. Biospheres

- Massive geodesic domed enclosures that simulate environmental conditions on earth. Some are forest, some countryside. They are twenty-five square kilometres in circumference

3. The Lethbridge

- An agricultural biosphere called an “agridome”. A rupture of water and liquid filtration tanks below a wheat field in it needs repairs

4. S1 Sector Five

- The Lethbridge's sector of S1

5. The Plowshare Diner

- A Roadside Diner and vehicle re-energizing station in the Lethbridge situated out in the countryside

C) Things

1. Data Blocks

- "D.B's". A device similar to a twenty-first century cellphone that data is kept on

2. Ms. Lowe Mints

- Candy S1 Crew members love to chew on. Anne swears by them

3. Stabilizer Shielding

- An electrical force field surrounding an area that keeps anything within the area contained

4. Rob Ducey Baseball Bat

- Used by Plowshare Diner Management to quell arguments and settle fights
- Rob Ducey was a Canadian MLB player and 2004 Olympic baseball player.

D) Terms

1. Smack

- Sh*t, Nonsense. B.S

2. Cran

- Hell, damn