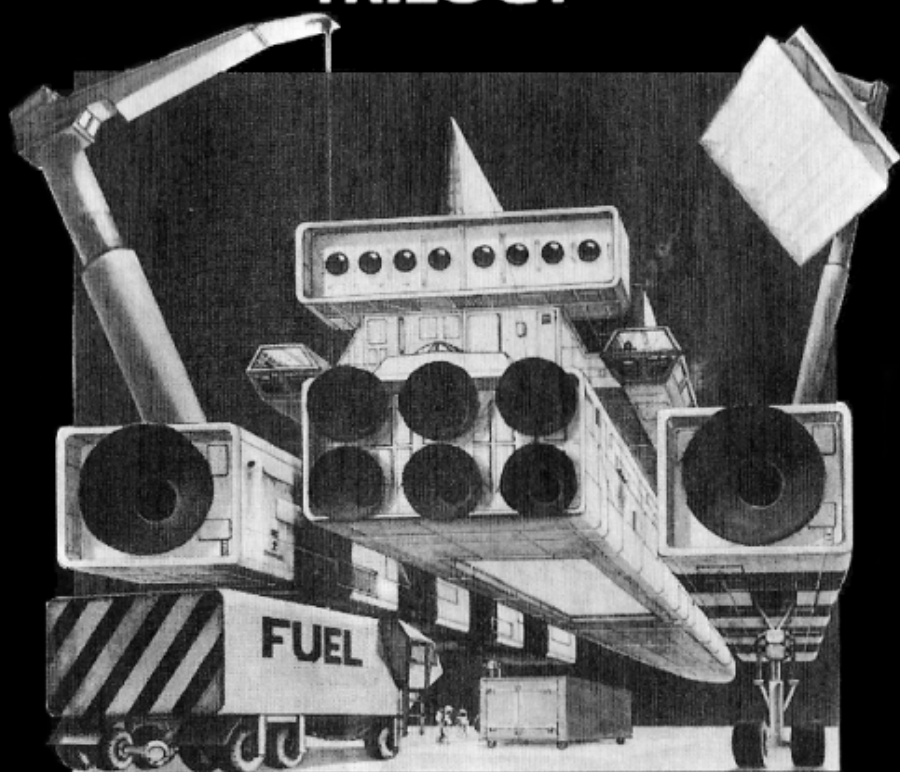


THE TRADER

TRILOGY



A GUIDE FOR
TRADERS IN THE
MERIDIEN SYSTEM

PIXEL

THE TRADER TRILOGY

TRADER LOADING INSTRUCTIONS

'Trader' is loaded in three parts. Continuity of variables is achieved by transferring them into a secure memory space whilst reloading and then recalling them in the next part of the program.

ZX81 (16K x 3). First load 'T' which is a short loading test and sets up the protected block of memory.

Don't forget to switch off your recorder when the program has loaded or you will have to rewind and search for the beginning of the next part. Enter replies with 'newline'.

SPECTRUM (48K x 3). Load 't' and follow the instructions on screen. Enter replies with 'enter'.

VIC20 (16K x 3). You can load 'Trader' the usual way by typing 'Load T' but if you just hold down the shift key and tap the run/stop key, the program will load and run automatically. Enter replies with 'return'.

At the end of each part, there is a prompt to load the next one. Don't switch off the computer between parts or the variables will be lost. Similarly, no part will run properly if not preceded by the correct part. If you get mixed up it is best to start again.

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BACKGROUND

Meridien is a beautiful gas giant in the Altair system some 16 light years from Earth. It is not unlike our own Jovian system with six main satellites plus the usual amount of space debris.

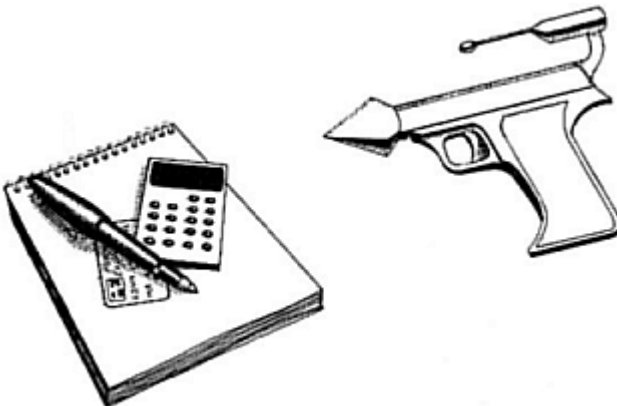
Of the six moons, all but one are inhabited. Beta, Delta and Epsilon have been terraformed and settled by ex-Terrans and Alpha has a mechanoid population left over from forming days.

The only natives to the system are to be found on Psi. They don't bear much resemblance to life as we know it. They are telepathic and tolerate humans in the way that a Rigellian hyperpotamus does ticks.

ADVICE TO TRADERS OF THE MERIDIEN SYSTEM. SOURCE INTERTRADE (OE)

Before setting off on your business trip, check that you have the following -

A notepad and pen, a pocket calculator, your Pangalactic Express Credit Card and, if you are smart, a well hidden atom blaster!



THE COMMODITIES

Petrochem . . . A liquified mineral with lubricating properties and also a raw material for the manufacture of Plastiron on Alpha. Prices fluctuate according to demand.

Munch . . . Organically derived foodstuffs available in

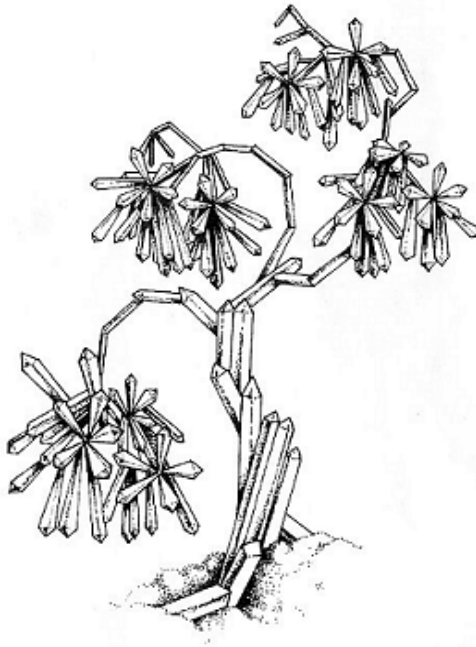
sweet (red) and savoury (green) varieties. Price fairly stable.

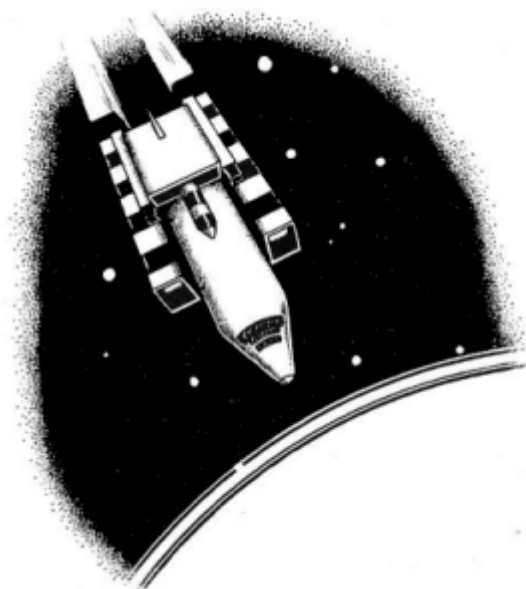
Synthomunch . . . Synthetic foodstuff. Disgusting to eat but highly nutritious and bought by the less wealthy settlers. Price fairly stable.

Boosterspice . . . A narcotic. A less refined form of Hi-Lyfe but with unpredictable side effects. Outlawed on most planets but used openly on Delta. Price most unstable.

Gold . . . Common noble metal of little value but used as an anti-corrosive plating. Price stable.

Raw Fuel. . . Radioactive ore scattered over the surface of Gamma. Refined and liquified for hopper fuel. Price fairly stable.





THE CUSTOMERS

On arrival at Epsilon Dock, you must buy one fill of fuel for your hopper. This will get you to the next port of call. You start with 1000 Credits and should buy as much of each commodity that you can afford. Don't be tempted to put all your eggs in one basket though, that can be fatal!

You will not be allowed credit at this stage but you will probably go into the red later. Remember that you have to spend money to make money. .

Make a note of your buying prices so that you can set your own profit margins.

Your first port of call is Psi. As you may have gathered, Psions set themselves above our materialistic existence so don't be surprised if they humiliate you with stupid questions. Use your calculator if necessary, they can't think any less of you.

It is usual to travel from Psi to Beta using an old Epsilonian dodge known as 'gravity diving'. As it is downhill in a manner of speaking, you can fall towards Beta using Meridien's gravity and just give a little correcting thrust at the last moment to take you into a catch orbit. Although you can save hopper fuel this way, be warned, if you miss your catch orbit you could be 'meeting the Meridiens for munch' as they say.

Now for glory's sake, watch out for the Betans, they will have the shirt off your back. Keep an eye on that new ship of yours too, there's little law in those parts.

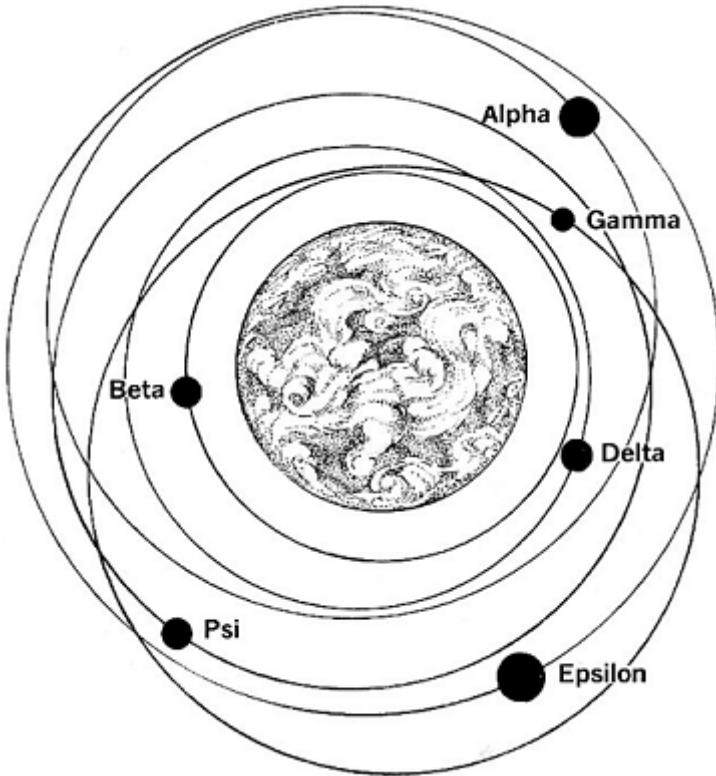
Alpha is the next stop. It's a sod of a place to get to. You have to guide your ship into the middle of a hollow asteroid, so make sure you get your approach angle right. The Alphans are not what you would call businessmen. Their robot mentality will just allow you the option of selling, or not, at their price. It has to be said though, they are usually fair.

Then there is Gamma, lovely Gamma. All the Raw Fuel that you can carry just lying around on the surface for the taking. It's a pity that the radiation levels are so high, you could stay longer. You can use the vacuum tube beneath your ship to suck up the nuggets into your hold.



Delta. Now that is where you can really make a killing. Deltans are totally hooked on Boosterspice and will pay almost anything for a unit of the stuff. They will also go to any length to get it for nothing. And watch out for their pets down there . . . very nasty!

When you get back to Epsilon, you can sell what you have left in your hold and if it has been a good trip, you should have a fat profit. If not . . . c'est la vie . . .



TRADER

TRENTOR MERCHANT EXTRAORDINAIRE AND THE PSIONS

Trentor, the trader: merchant extraordinaire, guided his ship through the outer orbital belt of Meridien. The huge gas giant glowed through the port porthole; a fury of silent clouds awash with all colours of the rainbow; enormous planet-wide storms raging for day after day, blue lightnings illuminating their progress. Trentor, though a practical man outwardly did have philosophical leanings and would spend long hours staring out at the giant gas planet, dreaming of the size of the universe compared with this huge complexity of planet hanging in the inky void below him. "How could such a monstrously beautiful thing exist at all in a universe so large as to defy imagination".

Trentor was two days out of Epsilon Dock with a full cargo hold. Epsilon Dock, a legend in the Meridien System. Epsilon Dock, a maze of confused passageways

around a huge landing apron. Many races had visited Epsilon Dock over the past two centuries and many had left some of their crew members behind so that now every corner you turned in Epsilon Dock would reveal strange and diverse new life forms, all with their own secure niche in the complex social structure of the Dock. Each with their own peculiar trade or service. Trentor had wandered the Dock many times before but never tired of the variety to be found there, he had explored a new area on each return and was still far from having even covered a tenth of all the Dock had to offer. Trentor was in extremely high spirits having just completed a singularly successful deal with the cold calculating Alphans of the Alpha moon. The Alphans had just succumbed to a moon-wide craze of erecting huge statues outside their living quarters all made of Plastiron, each Alphan trying to out do his neighbour with the size and complexity of his statue. This had led to a shortage of Petrochem. Fortunately Trentor had a hold full of Petrochem and so a lucrative (for Trentor) transaction followed his arrival and he left carrying a good number of the strange statues.

On arrival at Epsilon Trentor had found the statues very popular and was able to complete a favourable deal with a large art gallery.

So now Trentor was well on the way to Psi. Psi, a moon of atmospheric mists out of which the graceful Psions would glide, their shapes shifting and transforming as you watched. The Psions are natives of the Meridien System, surprisingly only to be found on this one moon, though artefacts have been found over all the moons which may have originated from the enigmatic Psions. There is a legend that they had once swum free in the atmosphere of the giant gas planet, vast creatures which communed with the stars themselves and engaged in complex dances which encircled the gas planet. Then, through some evolutionary imperative, they had found it necessary to leave their home. As a race they had shed their old gassy forms and swum up through the layers of Meridiens'

atmosphere until they found themselves in space. Here they travelled on the solar winds, pulled this way and that by the giant magnetic belts which surround Meridiens metallic hydrogen core, until at last they came upon Psi where they drifted down to earth and accepted their new heritage. The Psions adopted their present forms to survive but still dreaming of their days on Meridien they were unable to fix their forms and so they now lack material stability and they shift and change as you watch, fragments of their lost dances . of communion with the stars.

Trentor liked the Psions but found them infuriating to do business with, they never said what they meant and seldom meant what they said but despite all this one could come away from Psi with a great deal of money, if the Psions took a like to you. Trentor moved away from his reverie at the porthole to make some course adjustments, it was rumoured among traders that the way you handled your ship on the approach to Psi could affect your dealings there. Clumsy pilots almost invariably left Psi poorer than they arrived. Trentor's ship swung round in an arc so that its main motors pointed 'down' towards Psi. Once this was done Trentor could decelerate smoothly into a stable orbit. Meridien now shone in through the starboard porthole. At this stage Trentor could just make out the disc of Psi, a green blue crescent against a background of sharp constant stars.

Trentor approached Psi rapidly now. The final course adjustments were made and he sank into a comfortable elliptical orbit whose perigee sat above Psi's main space port. An area of flat bedrock blasted to a smooth surface by the many ships which had visited this planet. Surrounding the landing area there is a strange assortment of the dwellings of the Psions: crystal trees into which the amorphous Psions merge when they need to dream (they do not need sleep as we know it, they enter a dream state for a few hours each day).

Meridien was just creeping over the horizon as Trentor

set down his landing craft, the majority of his ship being left in orbit; main motors living quarters, recycling plants, fuel reservoirs, navigation equipment and so on not being needed for a brief excursion to the moons' surface. Altair at the other side of the sky was just setting, casting long multicoloured shadows across the bleak landing area. Trentor waited for the area around his ship to cool then donning a warm orange and green coverall stepped from his ship. He stood and watched the play of light over the crystal dwellings of the Psions. A thin mist seemed to rise out of the ground to about knee height lending an eerie quality to the landscape Trentor relaxed deliberately, watching the distant figures of Psions moving among their dwellings.

Presently a group of four Psions appeared at the edge of the landing area and drifted towards Trentor. He bowed low and greeted them in their own language. They turned a pleased shade of purple at this and indicated that he follow them to a stone of blue white marble set into the rock at the side of the landing area. This was the negotiating stone, the Stone of Loss the Psions called it. Trentor laid out samples of his wares: a block of gold, a nugget of Raw Fuel sealed in a lead container with a quartz window, and a pinch of Boosterspice in a twist of tissue placed to one side of the other commodities as though it had dropped there by accident. Trentor waited while the Psions looked at the samples. Then bowing politely moved away so that the Psions could discuss the price and worth of the goods.

For their part the Psions find Trading in commodities pointless but humour the beings which visit them for their own reasons. Over the decades the Psions have come to their own way of pricing commodities brought to them. This is largely dependent on how much the trader amuses them, though still no one suspects this. Trentor they remembered from before when they had bought a large amount of Synthomunch off him. They had thought it a great joke for him to try to sell this commodity to them as

they had no use for this form of nourishment in the end Trentor had explained at great length how animals could be fed Synthomunch and kept as pets.

The Psions had never heard of such a thing but intrigued had spread the Synthomunch around their dwellings and had derived a great amount of pleasure out of watching the wild things that came to feed. Now Trentor was trying to sell them raw fuel, of little use to the Psions who rarely if ever left their moon, gold a useless boring metal which just sat and never changed. The Psions found it amusing the clumsy way Trentor had dropped the Boosterspice onto the slab as though by accident. This was worth further investigation, they would question Trentor further. They could feel a joke coming. Already Psions were beginning to gather outside their crystal dwellings to watch. Some were already turning leaf green, the colour of laughter among the Psions.

Trentor watched the Psions looking over his goods he wondered what they were thinking, wondered if they had ever used up all that Synthomunch he had left here on his last visit. Trentor looked at the Psions at the edge of the landing area watching him. He stood straight then bowed deeply at them. Strangely they started to turn green when he did this. So Trentor turned the other way facing the opposite side of the landing area and bowed again. The Psions on that side of the landing area started to turn green. "How strange" mused Trentor.

Trentor walked carefully back over to the Psions and bowed respectfully, little suspecting that his bowing gesture was similar to one of the signs of affection used during advanced stages of courtship by the Psions.

The Psions regarded Trentor and his amorous overtures, one of them produced a psuedopod from somewhere in the region of his stomach and prodded the bag of Boosterspice. Trentor realised he would now need to furnish them with a reason for buying Boosterspice. He thought for a moment, then another. The Psions would have no use for the Boosterspice themselves, they could

use it to entertain visiting spacemen perhaps. No, Psi was not a regular port of call. Trentor looked toward the Psions clustering round the edge of the landing area for inspiration then seeing the animals gathered around them he had the answer. Pets, a remnant from his last visit when he sold them all that Synthomunch.

Trentor led the delegation of Psions from the Stone of Loss to the nearest animal, a strange affair with too many legs. He got a bag of Boosterspice from his pocket and broke it open in front of the creature. The Brangle (for this was the name of the creature) moved forward and sniffed the Boosterspice, then finding it pleasing to the scent, ate it.

Trentor and the delegation waited pensively and to the surprise of the delegation the Brangle began to dance. A clumsy but rhythmic dance. Trentor laughed showing the delegation the humour of the sight. The delegation turned bright leaf green. They returned to the Stone of Loss and sealed a deal for all the Boosterspice he was carrying. Trentor thanked the gods that he had once had a pet Rafnerb (a native rodent of Delta) to which he used to feed Boosterspice.

The Psions for their part thanked Trentor for the humour he had brought to them. What a joke! To create pets in their society, then to make them dance! The Psions were pleased with Trentor for having taken something very sacred to them: dance and given it to the dumb animals that they had made their pets. However by far the biggest joke of all was making it humorous. They would have months of pleasure from this introducing humour into their own dances, humour might be the very thing which would help them stop brooding on their past greatness.

Trentor returned to his ship, bowed deeply and solemnly three times to the gathered Psions and entered the small cabin. He could never understand why whenever he left Psion all the Psions would turn leaf green. He must ponder further on this when he got back in space gazing out through the porthole at Meridien, the great gas planet.

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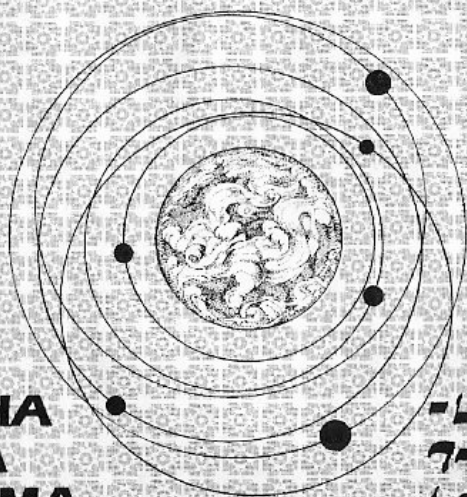
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MERIDIEN SYSTEM

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