

Game Report: The Twilight Zone "Know Thine Enemy"

13th March 1999

On the 13th march, I made my first attempt at running a tag game, after many years of playing in other people's games.

The Background

The original idea for the Twilight Zone game came to me about 1½ years ago at a Merdon weekend. There would be three teams plus a few NPCs. Two teams, one each from the Federation (Team A) and the Alliance (Team B), were to meet on a disputed planet to decide its ownership. The NPCs were saboteurs from an obscure religious cult. Team C were to be crew-members of a Federation ship 100 years from the future. In the end, the NPCs were named *The Fist of Light* and converted into a proper player team (Team D).

The Plot

This could be difficult to explain.

Teams A and B thought that they had a simple job to negotiate a treaty between themselves. That was until each received a (bogus) news report claiming that the other side's government had broken off the negotiations. To make matters worse, both their shuttlecraft were downed by huge radio pulses. Of course, the *Fist* was behind all this.

Team D should have had it easy. Using their fake IDs, they could claim to be lost members of a survey team and spread more false rumours. Once the peace negotiations had been scuppered, the Federation and Alliance would go to war over this planet. The *Fist* could build up a huge space fleet and attack once both sides had been sufficiently weakened. Unfortunately for them, Team C had been on a resupply flight to the battlefield against the *Fist's* forces before they were sucked into a wormhole. So although they had no idea where they were or who anyone was, if they found out then Team D could be in trouble.

To complicate the game further, the *Fist* had spies in each of the other teams, The Federation and Alliance had spies in each other's teams, and a member of a peaceful religious cult (*The Seekers of the Spirit*) had infiltrated the *Fist* team.

The Game

I spent most of the game sitting in the car-park listening to Enya tapes and drinking coffee. But I suppose you want to know more than that.

Well, at the debrief, it transpired that the *Fist* team had eventually been rumbled (and let's face it, being caught in possession of a burned-out radio transmitter must have been a bit suspicious). The Alliance and Federation had negotiated a deal where each owned part of the planet, and as a bonus, they now knew of the *Fist's* clandestine activities.

Finally the team from the future had found out where (and when) they were. The only problem was that the *Fist* spy in their team had evaded captivity and taken their shuttlecraft, so they are now stuck in their past. If you want to know any more, ask someone who actually played the game.

The Paradox

Since the negotiations succeeded, the Federation and the Alliance aren't going to go to war and the *Fist* can't mount their surprise attack. So there won't be any Federation ships supplying the battlefield to get sucked into a wormhole, and Team C can't have existed. Now you know why it was a Twilight Zone game.

Lessons Learned

Never having run a game before, there were a few things I had to learn.

Make sure that you have places spare on the teams for late bookings, even if it's only extra security guards. Conversely, expect a few people to drop out at the last minute. It wasn't until I was briefing the players that I found out that Team C was down to two people. And one of them was a spy. This is a particular problem if you mail out individual player briefs in advance.

Don't assume that all taggers have a huge armoury of different sized guns, or that people who have spent a large sum of money on a new assault rifle will want to run around with nothing but a Starlyte. In the end, I decided to scrap all weapon restrictions in my game.

If you ask people in advance what teams they want to be on, then 75% of them will pick the team whose uniform is DPMs. Similarly, 75% of respondents will want to be security guards. Only one person will volunteer to lead a team.

Would I do it again? Perhaps. Now what was that idea I had for a Captain Scarlet game ages ago.....

Simon Barker