



WELCOME TO THE DONUT

We are a society of functionally immortal, cybernetically modified, telepathic infovores. Our culture is centered on a reputation-based economy in which all basic needs—sustenance and shelter—are accounted for. If you wish to do more than just survive—if you wish to create, perform, build or destroy—you must win the approval of your friends and the community at large.

Our “community at large” is currently over 80,000 strong. It is contained in a Stanford Torus-style space station parked at the L5 Lagrange point of Titan and Saturn. Our habitat was designed to hold 40,000 comfortably. We’ve modified it to accommodate our expanding numbers. There are no laws in our society, yet there is also no crime and no death. So we think we’re doing a fair job.

You are now one of us. Welcome!

WHAT DO YOU DO IN UTOPIA?

Offmarket folks always ask us, “What do you do up there?” They can’t imagine how one would live in utopia. Just like you, we have families, passions and hobbies. And while we don’t labor to earn money for food and housing, we each have a cause, a philosophy or a purpose to which we dedicate ourselves. We do what we love and we’re very passionate about it. Sounds like a nice life, eh?

Now that you’re one of us, you’re going to join a group of like-minded individuals and you’re going to energetically pursue your agenda. You’re going to build technologies, create ideas and probably step on



SUPERUSER



I'M LUKE. JARED AND I ARE GOING TO RUN A SESSION UP HERE SO YOU CAN SEE HOW FREEMARKET WORKS. THE EXAMPLE WE GIVE IS RATHER BRIEF DUE TO OUR SPACE LIMITATIONS. YOUR SESSION WILL BE MORE ELABORATE.

JARED



HI. I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS FROSTY BEVERAGE WHILE LUKE DOES ALL THE WORK.

RAY



WHILE JARED AND LUKE ARE RUNNING THE DEMONSTRATION, OTHER USERS LIKE ME WILL POP IN WITH ADVICE AND COMMENTS.

a few toes. You're going to earn recognition and favor from your friends and, we hope, from the rest of the station.

Of course, station resources are limited—particularly space—so not every idea or dream can be brought to fruition. Therefore, users spend their reputations to ensure that their ideas are produced, seen or heard. With 80,000-odd contestants, the competition for status and resources is intense.

FREEMARKET JARGON

Before you go on, there are a few terms that we use on the station with which you're unfamiliar. We'll give you a brief rundown here so you'll be better prepared for the instructions and guidelines that follow. This should be enough to get you started.

Flow: Flow is the name of our reputation-based economy. It's our currency, sort of.

MRCZ: This acronym is pronounced "mercy." MRCZs are ad hoc groups formed for specific purposes.

Key: A key is a nanological digital interface implanted into the nervous system of every user. It allows communication with the station and other users. It monitors your health and your flow. It runs all of the software you need to interact with station technology.

Aggregate: The Aggregate is the friendly computer that helps us run this place.

FREEMARKET STATION

A Quick Tour

Imagine a spoked wheel over three and a half kilometers wide. In the center is a zero-g hub of research labs, docking stations and engineering platforms—the Hole. Eight spokes radiate from the hub, tethering it to a massive ring. Above this floats a giant mirrored disc, focusing and re-directing sunlight to the inner rim of the wheel. A

long spindle juts out from the bottom of the hub. Affixed to this, is the communication relay's array of lasers and antennae. The wheel is surrounded by an immobile wall made from lunar concrete: the mass shield. This shield protects the residents of the wheel against heavy ions, cosmic radiation and micrometeorites.

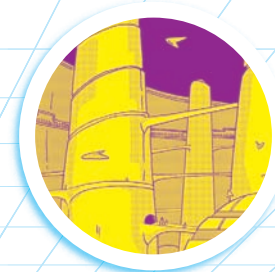
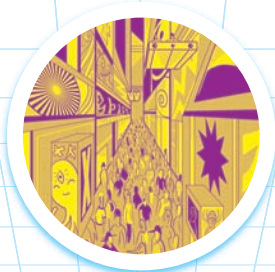
This is FreeMarket Station.

The space station rotates at 0.69 revolutions per minute, allowing for Earth-like gravity—though the gravitational pull decreases as one moves toward the Hole. High above, light filters in through angled mirrors and quartz glass windows set facing the inside of the ring. There is no east, west, up or down. There is spin and antispin, in and out. While the ground seems flat enough, gazing spin or antispin offers a dizzying view of the wheel's curve.

Travel to and from the Hole is handled via the spokes. Trams carry passengers and technology



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back and forth with ease. In the ring itself, above-ground traffic is reserved for pedestrian travel, smart cars and a maglev rail that runs along the inner circumference of the ring.

The walls and floor of the ring are meters thick, to allow for easy transmission of energy, water and waste throughout the station. Water is reclaimed, garbage is recycled, and toxic waste is scrubbed clean and repurposed as bricks of reusable matter. Even airborne particles like dust are collected and recycled using biological vacuum cleaners affectionately named “dust bunnies.”

FreeMarket Station contains a compact metropolis of 83,679 human beings. The original structure was meant to house 10,000 people in spacious comfort, with large swaths of agricultural space, parks and natural elements such as lakes, rivers and forests. The surprising abundance of space and efficiency in resource management prompted

an overhaul, raising the practical population limit to 40,000. With the advent of printing technology and other innovations, this limit was doubled to 80,000. We transformed the station from pastoral dream to urban wonderland. But the one thing we can't make more of is space; we're a bit cramped up here.

Housing is wildly divergent, both in scale and in form. Age-old cultural styles and modern fashions converge and mutate, creating an eclectic jumble of aesthetics. Some MRCZs flaunt their wealth and status with whole structures built from smart materials. Others subsist as literal hangers on, living in scrap metal domes welded to titanium stanchions and epoxy moorings. The idyllic apartments and roomy domiciles of science fiction novels are quaint notions here. To an outsider, much of FreeMarket looks like a chaotic urban cluster echoing Manhattan, Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro.

Because of the short distances and dense habitation, FreeMarket has the air of a busy neighborhood rather than a sprawling metropolis. Remain in one place long enough and everyone you know will pass by and ping you. You'll frequent your favorite cafe, or loaf about in your capsule, meeting with clients while you finish projects on your to-do list, all without antiquated tech like a screen, mouse or keyboard. Using your key, you squirt data to your MRCZ mates, design new tech to print later, ping a friend to synchronize your calendars or view thousands of news and gossip feeds. And if you grow tired of your surroundings, you can wander over to a fresh, phase-III location custom-built that day and start all over again.

Welcome to your new home.



SUPERUSER



HI. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM MY USER NAME ABOVE, I'M THE SUPERUSER FOR THIS SESSION.

JARED



I'M THE USER. JUST LITTLE OLD ME.

RAY



I'M JUST WATCHING. OH, AND MY PARENTS WERE DEPORTED FOR ASKING FOR A SPACESHIP.

FREEMARKET SESSIONS

FreeMarket is played in sessions. A session lasts from two to four hours and accommodates one to five users. In order to get started, one of you must elect to be the superuser for this session; the rest of you are users. This arrangement can change in the next session, but for now it stands.

The users all create unique profiles and form a group—a MRCZ of their own. The MRCZ will then confront rivals and other problems in an attempt to gain individual and collective recognition.

The first time a group sits down together, the superuser walks the users through the profile creation process. If this is your very first time on the station, the superuser will also walk you through a challenge before starting the session in earnest. Otherwise, after each user has generated a profile, the superuser presents the users with a

challenge to overcome. They are challenged to effect a small change on the station, increasing their status and reputation.

Bolstering your rep is never as simple or as easy as it sounds. Good luck!

THE ONE RULE

Now that you're aboard, we should tell you the one rule we have. If you want to leave the station at any time, all you need to do is ask. We'll give you a lifeboat and send you anywhere you want. But you can't come back, ever. We burn out your key and keep lots of tricky biometrics on file so that we'll always know you if you do come back.

Most new arrivals are shocked by life on the station; it's never quite what they expect. Many will request deportation, but after some initial bumps, some remain to lead productive lives. We hope you'll want to stay.

CAT PEOPLE AND COMPUTER BRAINS

Despite our advanced science and technology, we haven't been able to figure out how to make cat people or sentient and sapient robots. We discovered that when you put a consciousness in a non-human shell—like an animal or a robot—it ceases to be human. Rather, it becomes what it is, inhuman. And history has given us a term for when a human becomes inhuman: It's called "crazy."

The robots you meet on the station are smarter than your average bearbot, but they're not alive. I hope you're not disappointed. And while we print out all sorts of strange nanological animals to play with, we can't load your consciousness into one. It's tantamount to murder, and it's cruel to the animal.

More importantly, we'd get a frownie for it, and our flow hasn't been too good lately. We spent most of it creating this document. 📄

