

The Free Asteroid, Bacchus

Several thousand years into the voyage of the 2nd Fleet, a major asteroid (officially given the name Bacchus) was discovered closing on their course through the 'void;' close enough to warrant exploration. Preliminary probes showed promise, leading to manned visits, which proved the 'planetoid' held considerable wealth in valuable minerals, and mining and transport operations were begun.

As the asteroid began to recede a military mission was sent to attempt a trajectory adjustment sufficient to bring its course somewhat into alignment with the heading of the Fleet so that they might continue to exploit the worldlet's natural treasures.

That mission was eminently successful, such that a flourishing colony was established there, and Bacchus remained sufficiently close for several centuries of mining. Eventually, its wealth exhausted, the colony was essentially abandoned and the asteroid practically deserted.

That is the condition Mythokrates inherited when he was appointed its governor. With backing of mostly Mercurian financiers, and limited grants and loans from governments of several of the starship city-states (Fleetsectors), he transformed the asteroid into a combination amusement park and vacation resort, which became known affectionately as Pete's Planetoid, (in honor of the military engineer, Technology-Major Petrovious, conceived a way of rescuing it and earned his immortality by realigning its course).

Later, after Mythokrates retired to the monastery at Crucifixius, subsequently to enter into suspended animation, the resort at 'Pete's' was further renovated, this time by its own denizens. At the time depicted in this volume, slowly turning in free space well beyond the governmental embrace of any of the nearer cities, it thrives on its gambling casinos, nightclubs (it is always night at Pete's), houses of prostitution, and unusual financial institutions with secret books and coded accounts—a kind of Monaco of the Exodus.