

I discovered RPGs at a fairly early age, sort of like those kids in *Stranger Things*. Unlike them, I ended up playing with people twice my age, and I became infamous in my gaming community for making poor choices. Some examples:

*Traveller* was a really fantastic Space Opera game brought to you in the 1970s by Game Designers Workshop. It has since passed from one publisher to another over the years until the rights were procured by Mongoose Publishing. It is the only game I ever played in which your character could die in the act of character creation. I found a group of college-age guys playing it at my friendly local game store. Having made some regrettable choices while creating the character, I ended up with very few useful skills in regard to combat or space exploration, but I was excellent at trade and marketing. Thinking back on it, I was Ferengi before Ferengi were a thing.

So there I am, playing a weasley little merchant among these hearty space explorers. They decided that they could supplement their mercenary income by taking on passengers. And to that end, I was appointed ship's steward. I might not be much good in a fight, but if we wanted to sell tickets for a flight between planets, I was your guy. All I had to do was keep the passengers happy and alive.

Cue the "bad decision" theme music.

The GM tells me that one of the wealthier passengers is interested in some forms of recreation that are not legal on the planet we are headed to, but assures me that I will be well compensated for my efforts. All I needed to hear was "well compensated". As soon as we touched down in the spaceport I started working my connections. The passenger was looking for a particular recreational pharmaceutical for personal use. It didn't take long for me to make contact with the local Black Market and discover that they had significantly more than my passenger required. But seeing as I would be imprisoned for a very long time no matter how much I was caught with, I decided to make an investment and see if I could sell the surplus off-world.

Having discussed this idea with my crewmates on previous occasions, I knew that they were against the idea. If we were caught, it could mean that the ship would be impounded and we would be arrested or possibly executed, depending on the planet. So I did what any early teenager would do; I ignored the advice of people with more experience and completely disregarded any consequences to the people around me.

The rest of the crew is negotiating a contract with a local political leader to carry out some legitimate business. All the while, I am frantically passing notes to the GM and conducting unscrupulous business with unscrupulous people. Role playing is difficult. Role playing on paper while trying to keep the rest of the players unaware of your activities is nearly impossible. I made it back to the ship with local law enforcement close behind me. The crew took my word for it that we needed to lift off as quickly as possible. The consensus was that they didn't want to know what I had gotten myself into and that plausible deniability was the best course of action.

I finished my transaction with the wealthy passenger and put the remaining amount in the cargo area. Unfortunately, one of my fellow players discovered it during a routine maintenance check and confronted me. He was rather put off by my antics and said that he was going to recommend that I be left on the next planet if I caused any trouble at all, and that I had better get rid of that contraband

immediately. So I did what any early teenager would do; I decided to try and hide the contraband in the engine room.

Now I had absolutely no education in the science of interstellar engines. I just figured I could hide the contraband in various nooks and alcoves until we made planetfall again. Unfortunately, one of those nooks and alcoves happened to be part of the life support system. Hilarity ensues as psychotropic powder gets mixed in to the atmosphere of the ship. By pure luck the ship happened to be on autopilot, so the rest of the crew made it to the planet. I got very close, but karma got the better of me as the resulting hallucinations prompted me to jump out the air lock before we actually landed. I am probably still orbiting the planet to this day.