



COLONIAL TIMES

THE JOURNAL FOR THE 2300AD SCI-FI ROLE-PLAYING GAME

STATION ALPHA

A STATION WITH DECKPLANS AT THE EDGE OF THE DARK

'OPERATION BACK DOOR' PART ONE

PATRON: MONIQUE ROUSSEL

BELTER!: MINING THE RUBBLE OF DEEP SPACE

ARMS OF 'THE INTREPID ARROWS': POLICE WEAPONS IN MANCHURIA

YOUR WORLD: NEWS FROM THE CORE & THE COLONIES

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AUTUMN 2013





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SIGNALS FROM THE DEEP DARK

TOPICS BEING DISCUSSED ON FACEBOOK, G+, AND ELSEWHERE

FACEBOOK

Mark Lucas

Interestingly the first time I saw the concept of supporting airborne drones were those tethered drones on the 2300AD tanks. I'm guessing by 2300 we'd see re-purposed insects carrying true 'nano' cameras...

For the benefit on the non-UK members, Sgt Boyd is sporting the beloved 'Geordie' accent of the North East of England.

Army test next generation nano drone - the Black Hornet

<http://youtu.be/d5TdbMu8xc4>

Robert Moore

Does Nicholas Ruffin (Nicholas I) need a biography or is he best (un) defined as an "everyman" figure, depicted as required for whatever style of French Empire that's wanted for a setting?

Ian Stead

Quick question. Has there ever been a logo created for Bridgeport Swift?

GOOGLE+

Mr Teufel Esquire

Based on a conversation in FB (which I can't access at the moment):

Given the history of 2300AD, how would English print and language change? I'd say French would have a greater influence; perhaps the difference between Commonwealth and American spellings would be merged. Emoticons might become accepted punctuation in formal communications. And colonies that have been set up more than a century ago would already be developing audible accents and, if not dialects, local slang. If a character comes from a world that has a colony from a non-anglophone country, they may litter their speech with words from that language.

Michael Thomas

For those of you that don't yet know, there is an officially sanctioned conversion document for 2300AD on the Basic Roleplaying Central website.

<http://basicroleplaying.com/downloads.php?do=file&id=387>



Q EDITORIAL

On occasion, with people who feel passionate about something, blood pressure can rise and sometimes flare up into disagreements and outright slagging matches. Sometimes it's hard to keep perspective and objectivity when something you hold in high esteem is called into question.

2300AD is not immune to this because this game, more than some, is unique enough to grow a devoted number of fans who prefer it to stay the same over the years (minus some cosmetic advancements). I'm one of these fans.

On the 2300AD facebook page much has been said, argued, shouted, and bitched about 'canon'. That solid black line where nothing changes for a particular setting.

Or does it?

A lot has been posted to the 2300AD page that is not canon. new ships, different star maps with different routes, new weapons and vehicles, and yet when the subject comes up either side seems willing to shout across this seemingly large divide that their view of the O23U is paramount, almost sacrosanct, and that's that.

However, all is not as it seems. I may be known as the 'Crusader of Canon', to quote a well meaning Facebook contact, but my 23U also contains the world of Poseidon from FASA's excellent and

much loved 'Blue Planet' RPG. A water world with varied aquatic life (which I suitably placed at the border of Human and Pentapod space at DM+27 28217), Human settlers, and a touch of the unusual in the form of a native sentience that can have a weird effect on Humanity. A little spot of paradise at the end of the French Arm.

The truth of the 'Canon Debate' is that, at the heart of it, it's a spectrum of opinion with no one being at the ends. Virtually no one is 100% canon (unless all they've run are published adventures) and no one is 100% variant (then it wouldn't be 2300AD at all).

When we argue about posting variant or canon material we should really ask ourselves why we get upset at the criticism and even if we should. We should check whether we feel it's the subject matter or the post that is getting the criticism, or whether we feel it's being aimed at us personally. Despite the views of others I don't mind variant info as long as it doesn't become a majority of the page or become all that's posted. As long as there is a slight tip in the balance of posts towards canon I don't mind what's posted as long as it's relevant.

The truth of the matter is we are, all of us, 'mostly canon'.

Steff. J. Worthington
Editor



OPERATION BACK DOOR

THE COMPLETE ADVENTURE BY CHARLES E. GANNON

EPISODE I: CAT'S FEET OR CATSPAWE?

An introduction

For many geeks, movie buffs, and fanboys & girls we often wonder 'What if?'. I'm not talking about the alternate realities of Philip K. Dick or Harry Turtledove but those precious comic books, tv shows, and games that got cancelled way before their time (I still weep over Firefly & Pushing Daisies - sniff!)

In gaming terms the path to success has been littered with books that never made it and adventures we could've had. Most of the time it's just conjecture but here, on the following pages and issues, we have 'Operation Back Door', Chuck Gannon's adventure into the Kaefer Sphere. It rests here, complete for the first time, thanks to Chuck's kind permission.

- Steff



After two successive Kafer offensives into human space, it may finally be time to take the fight back to them. But first there may be a little trail-blazing to do and a new alien race to meet --all inside Kafer space.

OPERATION BACK DOOR is a three-episode 2300AD adventure that is designed for a group of 3-6 players with considerable skill diversity, although some level of skill in ship operations is advisable for all. These characters should no longer be 'in' a career per se, but working as 'freelancers' of one sort or another.

Operation Back Door is written in a format consistent with the scene structure suggested in the Director's Guide of the 2300 AD rules set. In this case, each scene is named and is described in terms of location and the basic action that occurs. Because of the scope of the adventure, specific statements and definitions of tasks have been limited to a bare minimum. The referee must assign all other tasks, their difficulty rating, and modifiers. The adventure can be expanded into a mini-campaign with ease, and referees will be advised how to accomplish this at various points during the course of the adventure.

Operation Back Door is set shortly after the last phase of the Kafer offensive into human space that was mounted by the Kafer Suzerain *Triumphant Destiny*. Although Triumphant Destiny was defeated and killed, humanity is sure (correctly so) that the Kafers will be back before too long. Consequently, Earth and its colonies are entering a critical phase of political reconsolidation as they attempt to hammer out a workable joint response to the Kafer Threat.

While not strictly necessary, it is recommended that the referee own the 2300 AD modules KAFER SOURCEBOOK, and INVASION, as well as the STAR CRUISER rules. These resources will add depth and enjoyment to the situations presented in 'Operation Back Door'.

Lastly, during the course of this first episode, the characters will visit a number of stellar systems that have not been outlined in any 2300 AD materials. Information for each system is included which provides all the data needed for subsequent adventures in these regions. All planets in each system are defined in terms of orbital order, AU distance from their parent star, world type and core, diameter in kilometers, and density. From this data, all other necessary information can be extrapolated.

PROLOGUE

This adventure begins on November 30, 2302. The Kafers have been resoundingly defeated at the Battle of *Beowulf* (Queen Alice's Star) about four months ago (see the *INVASION* supplement for more complete details). Since then, as a tired and unnerved humanity has regrouped and studied the events of the Kafer Conflict, increasing dissatisfaction with the de facto French leadership has been growing in most nations.

Only a few months ago, the overall military command structure was shaken up from top to bottom, with British *Admiral Charles Graham* now in overall command.

The most decorated and daring units of the Kafer war were Germans, Americans, and Australians, whose contributions to humanity's narrow victory were much weightier than the forces these nations had been able to commit to the fray. In many cases, --such as at Adlerhorst and Tithonus-- the units of these nations had provided shining --and rare-- examples of international cooperation in repulsing the Kafers.

These battle-forged bonds were not forgotten in the ensuing months. American, German, and Australian commanders continued to work together, share intelligence, and look for opportunities that emphasized joint operations.

The AAEC's (Australian-American Exploratory Council) confidential discovery of the brown dwarf BD-111 094307 in late September 2302 laid just such an opportunity on the collective doorstep of these three new allies.

IN THROUGH THE BACK DOOR

On September 23, 2302, famed Australian astronomer Helen Asweath discovered evidence of a brown dwarf in a fairly barren region of space just beyond the American Arm. However, the strategic initiative made possible by the position of her find BD (Brown Dwarf)-111 094307--sent a shock wave through the command staffs of America, Germany, and Australia. BD-111094307's astrographic location offered units from the American Arm a path enabling them to end-run the current French Arm salient of the Kafer conflict. Instead, units using the route that passed through BD-111 094307 could enter the rear flank of suspected Kafer space by emerging at system SS-27 6854.

This attack from the rear option helped to give BD-111 094307 its lasting nickname--it was indeed the back door into Kafer space. The stir created by the discovery of Back Door was strong enough to prompt a series of secret meetings that resulted in the formal declaration of an alliance between America, Australia, and Germany (dubbed the Alderhorst Alliance by the press). The leaders of the member nations quickly appointed an integrated command staff to explore the strategic opportunities afforded by the (as of yet undisclosed) discovery of BD-111 094307.

Non-Kafers on Kafer Ships:

It was at the first meeting of this integrated command staff that AIA (American Intelligence Agency) *Deputy Director Shamus Larkin* started the morning with yet another information bombshell. AIA forensics experts had just discovered, along with their counterparts from Britain's MI-5, signs of a non-Kafer species on board the wreckage of an Improved Alpha-class battleship that had been bat-

Fuel Purification

As players of both 2300AD and Star Cruiser are aware, there is a discrepancy between the 2 rules sets in so far as the ratings and requirements of fuel purification systems are concerned. To resolve this, the following compromise is suggested:

As per 2300AD, each fuel cracking plant requires 1 solar array to power it, not the 10 solar arrays required by Star Cruiser. Also, each purifier produces 1 ton of fuel every 8 hours, not every 10 hours (which is the rate delineated by Star Cruiser). This produces a weekly output from a continuously operating plant of 21 tons of fuel (an even 3 per day), which falls fairly close to the 23 tons per week in 2300AD.

However, when making mass and volume allowances for the plant, be sure to add on the volume and weight of the solar array separately. Note that in MGT2300 fuel needs depend on what kind of engine you have and in all versions of 2300AD, fuel can be gained by cracking ice and water from 'local' sources but not by skimming gas giants as per the main Traveller rules.



NPC Dossiers

Helen Asweath (2300ad)

Position: *Communications / astrophysics*

Nationality: *Australian*

Homeworld: *King*

Gravity: *High*

Frontier/Core: *Frontier*

Looks and Gender:

Plain female

Birthdate: *June 6,2270*

Mass: *86 kg*

Eyesight: *Excellent*

Hearing: *Poor*

Body Type: *Normal*

Throw Range: *32 m*

Coolness: *6*

Encumbrance: *32*

Native Language:

English

Other Languages:

German

Size: *12*

Strength: *8*

Dexterity: *8*

Endurance: *5*

Determination: *12*

Intelligence: *14*

Eloquence: *17*

Education: *17*

Consciousness: *4*

Life Level: *8*

Careers: *Ship's Crew, Astronomer (Academic).*

Skills: *Computer-4, Information Gathering-3, Bureaucracy-1, Ground Vehicle-1, Communication-3, Remote Pilot-2, Pilot-1, Ship's Drives-1, Melee-1, Survival-1, P-Suit-1, Sensors-2, Writing-1, Astronomy-6.*



tered into nonfunctioning junk at the Battle of Beowulf. The clues recovered were fairly sparse, mostly food and body tissue that had literally been incorporated by explosions and drilled into nearby plastic components.

As fragmentary as the evidence was, however, it was tremendously enlightening. Of particular interest was the fact that neither the food nor the cellular material had any similarity to Kafer biology. Nor did it resemble the general biochemical composition of any organic materials that had ever been discovered with Kafers previously. The food was discovered to be some sort of protein and vitamin enriched vegetable paste-hardly Kafer fare. Lastly, the remains were discovered in two areas that had no control panels or weapons. Instead, from what the naval architects could infer from the wreck's overall layout, the sites where the alien remains were discovered were probably accessways to key computer or electronic control junctions.

Mystery Race

Speculation immediately centered on the existence of a mystery race which served the Kafers in some technical capacity. Analysts pointed out that Kafer supercomputers (and Kafer computers in general) were not consistent with the rest of their technology. Kafer

equipment was known for being brutish, rugged, and effective, but it could hardly be considered of sophisticated or elegant design. And that was how human computer experts viewed the Kafer computers. It didn't add up.

However, if the Kafers had enslaved, or worse yet, were allied to, a more advanced civilization, a fusion of the two races' technologies might indeed produce the results that had been puzzling human analysts for some time.

It was doubted that the mystery race was allied to the Kafers in a coequal sense. Kafer rejection of cooperation with non-Kafers was a well-documented fact. However, there was no guarantee either that the mystery race would be a willing, or even grudging, ally with humanity. It was altogether possible that it now lived only to serve and help its brutal and fearsome Kafer overlords.

The nations of the Adlerhorst Alliance immediately made their combined discoveries of Back Door and the mystery race known to the heads of other nations. The rest of the world's leaders tended to agree with the analysis of the Adlerhorst Alliance, but counseled those nations not to open a second front using the back door-not without a global consensus. However, it was also felt that more information was needed regarding the mystery race and that Back Door offered the ideal way to attempt to scout it out.

The heads of the Adlerhorst Alliance's member nations responded that no second front was under consideration currently, but that they had appropriate assets on site and the area could be considered secure. The time had come for a scouting mission through Back Door.



WHY US?

Where: Complex, DM+5 3409.

What: Job offer for participation in Operation Back Door.

The characters should be in (or near) system DM+5 3409 at the start of this adventure. Once in system, they will be requested to meet with a Mr. Larkin on the small orbital port complex that orbits the tidally locked main world of Erie. Once there, the PCs will be ushered past a number of security checkpoints to meet with a man who introduces himself as **Commodore Shamus Larkin**. In actuality, this man is the AI-ADeputy Director in charge of security for *Operation Back Door*. However, he and his agents are posing as naval security specialists in order to prevent giving the operation a high-importance intelligence profile by overtly admitting that the AIA is involved.

Larkin (a description can be found at the end of this section) will apologize for the mysterious summons and express genuine appreciation for the characters' willingness to comply. Larkin will remark that he came across the group's dossiers while searching for locally available troubleshooters. He made special note of the party's credentials; reputations which make its members excellent candidates for an upcoming job that Larkin is currently hiring for.

If the characters express interest, Larkin will inform them that if he continues to divulge information, the PCs will either have to agree to lead the mission he's outfitting or remain in protective naval custody for a couple of months in order to ensure the continued confidentiality of the mission. Larkin will also mention that part of the pay for leading the mission would be the deeds to the ship that is going to be used to

conduct it. After hearing this, the characters should be fully committed to hear the rest of what Larkin has to say.

Larkin will go on to tell the group about the brown dwarf known as Back Door and the strategic significance of its location. He will also reveal that this substellar object was recently discovered independently by an Australian astronomer working in conjunction with the AAEC's Inter-System Baseline Interferometry Program.

Next, he will tell the PCs about the discoveries having to do with the mystery race, and how the Kafers may in some way be dependent upon this probably enslaved species. Larkin points out the need to explore the usability of the back door into Kafer space and the strategic potential of the mystery race-which might be interested in an alliance with humanity. This, he explains, led America, Australia, and Germany to decide that a joint operation was in order, code-named Back Door.

Mission Objectives

The mission's objectives are really quite simple: trailblaze the path into Kafer space, take a quick look, and then come back to report. If asked why the armed forces of these nations aren't conducting the operation, Larkin will explain that the militaries of the three involved countries are still mostly unaware of *Operation Back Door*. By using civilian operatives (i.e., the characters) and nonmilitary vessels, the navy (actually, the AIA) hopes to keep the operation as sanitary as possible.

Mission Profile

The mission's profile is as simple as its objectives. First, the group will meet with the other members of the mission team and get acquainted with the vessel they've all been assigned. Next, the entire team will travel to DM4 4225, using a stutterwarp tug assist to cross the 8.286 ly distance.

NPC Dossiers

Helen Asweath
(MGT2300)

Position: *Communications / astrophysics*
Nationality: *Australian*
Homeworld: *King*
Gravity: *High*
Frontier/Core: *Frontier*
Looks and Gender:
Plain female
Birthdate: *June 6,2270*
Mass: *86 kg*
Eyesight: *Excellent*
Hearing: *Poor*
Body Type: *Normal*
Encumbrance: *9*
Native Language:
English
Other Languages:
German

Strength: 5
Dexterity: 5
Endurance: 4
Intelligence: 8
Education: 10

Skills:
Computer-2,
Investigate-2,
Admin-1,
Ground Vehicle-1,
Comms-2,
Remote Pilot-1,
Pilot-1,
Engineering-1,
Melee-1
Survival-1,
P-Suit-1,
Sensors-1,
Art (Writing)-1,
Astronomy-3.



Morgan Lindsdrom (2300ad)

Position: *Helm*

Nationality: *American*

Homeworld: *Tirane*

Gravity: *Normal*

Frontier/Core: *Core*

Looks and Gender:

Good-looking male

Birthdate: *April 7, 2267*

Mass: *89 kg*

Eyesight: *Exceptional*

Hearing: *Average Body*

Type: *Normal*

ThrowRange: *96m*

Coolness: *10*

Encumbrance: *50*

Native Language:

English

Other Languages:

French

Size: *13*

Strength: *12*

Dexterity: *14*

Endurance: *14*

Determination: *18*

Intelligence: *13*

Eloquence: *13*

Education: *17*

Consciousness: *4*

Life Level: *8*

Careers: *ALA Agent*

Skills: *Information*

Gathering-4, FirstAid-2,

Electronics-2, Com-

puter-5, Forgery-1,

Sidearm-5, Melee-2,

Bureaucrat-1, Stealth-2,

Ship's Drives-2, P-Suit-

I, Interview-1, Ground

Vehicle-2, Psychology-1

Hovercraft-1, Track-

ing-2, Survival-2.

Special Equipment: *1*

S & W ISP 106 with six

magazines of ammuni-

tion.



At this point, the ship will be refueled by naval elements already in that system and then continue onto L-989-20, where it is advised that it refuel using native materials such as Jovian hydrogen or comets.

The next stop is then Back Door itself, lying at xyz stellarcoordinates -9.0, -43.4, -7.0.

The team will deploy a variety of orbital sensors, cache a recording of the entirety of the mission log at that point, and once again conduct frontier refueling. The last stop on the trip will be a cautious step into what may very well be Kafer space-system SS

27 6854. Here, the team is simply to look around to the degree that it seems prudent. It will then retrace its steps back to system DM-4 3409, where it will be debriefed during a precautionary quarantine.

Larkin points out that the team has a lot of latitude within these objectives and procedures. For instance, if things in system SS-27 6854 look interesting, particularly if there might be a possibility to gather data on the mystery race, then the team can opt to stay on site and continue its reconnaissance. While it will not be essential to refuel at every system, Larkin strongly recommends it. Frontier refueling takes quite a bit of time, and if the team bumps into some unfriendlies, it will help to have already full tanks.

Danger Quotient and Payoff

Larkin will be completely honest about the potential dangers of the mission. He will also be quite frank regarding how lucrative the payoff he's offering—a fast hull, good cash (Lv10,000 per person), and plenty of fame (two to three renown points) for all, once the operation and its results are declassified.

Once the characters accept the offer, Larkin will be able to provide clearances

for any questionable or restricted equipment that the characters might have (and wish to take along). He will also be able to fill any reasonable equipment requests, although no heavy combat gear is deemed necessary. As soon as it's ready, Larkin will take the group on a guided tour of the ship it'll be using for the mission. a Merkur 116 named Cat's Feet.



About Shamus Larkin

Shamus Larkin is an Elite NPC. He is a deputy director in the American Intelligence Agency (which will be covered in depth in the third episode of this adventure). Larkin is 52, in fine shape, and one of the keenest minds in the American intelligence community.

As overseer of security for Operation Back Door, Larkin's powers are unusually broad. Along with his direct superiors in the AIA and the American Space Forces (as well as their counterparts in the German and Australian services), Larkin is one of the less than 50 people who are aware of all the details of the mission.

There is one major fact that Larkin has not revealed to the characters—one of the NPC crew that the PCs will be in command of is actually an undercover AIA agent. This individual, Morgan Lindstrom, is not on the mission to control, manipulate, or spy upon the PCs. His primary task is to make sure that no one does anything excessively stupid and that the essential scientific personnel on the mission survive to conduct their studies and make their reports.

Merkur IIb

The Merkur IIb is a joint German-American modification of a military variant of the commercial Merkur design (data appeared

in Ships of the French Arm). While the German all-military variant (the IIa) retains a somewhat secret status, the IIb is designed to meet a number of wants that had heretofore been considered difficult, perhaps impossible, to deliver in a single hull.

The Kafer War has engendered a growing perception that there is an increased risk (and therefore, cost) connected with exploration. Consequently, interstellar trailblazing has largely become a corporate or foundation venture. Over the years, survey vessels have shown a steady increase in size and specialization. The only organizations that could afford to own and operate them were the organizations that could directly or indirectly profit from any discoveries made by such vessels.

Unfortunately, along with the support of big business came the conservatism of big business. The German government, in cooperation with the AAEC, found a way to solve this dilemma—the Merkur IIb. By giving it a laser turret, a missile tube and bay (which can also be used for deploying independent sensor platforms), and an integral fuel-cracking capability, the German-American design team produced a vessel of modestly increased price and vastly increased exploratory potential in a high-threat environment.

It can hardly be denied that the Merkur IIb has significant failings. With the crew complement cut to 11, the captain/sensor workstation and computer/gunnery work station must be left unmanned during the “night” watch. While these stations do not generally need constant manning, this situation does reduce the crew’s ability to respond with optimum speed and efficiency if surprised during this watch.

The addition of the Hyde Dynamics EA-122 laser in a masked turret gives the Merkur IIb a little bite, but use of the weapon steals power from the stutterwarp drive. When firing the laser, the ship’s warp efficiency is reduced to 2.57 (move of 5, in terms of Star Cruiser ratings). And of course, the low-comfort, spinless quarters are as unappealing as ever.

However, although the Merkur IIb does no one thing very well, it does reopen the gates for cursory small-team exploration of potentially hazardous systems. The fuel-cracking plant can completely refuel the vessel in about 19 days.

While this might seem like a long layover, the effective range of 7.7 LY suggests a maximum of about 2.5 days of operation between system stops. This is equal to approximately 130 tons of fuel or, about 6.5 days of fuel processing, a perfect stopover period in a new system that’s being given a quick once-over. In short, the Merkur IIb facilitates the more aggressive exploratory style of the nations of the Alderhorst Alliance. Stats for the Merkur IIb in 2300 house rules and MGT appear at the end of this part of the adventure.

In the likely event that there are fewer than six PCs to crew the ‘Cat’s Feet’, simply generate more NPCs for inclusion in the crew. The NPCs should be of Australian, German, or American nationality (or of value to those nations).

Also, if the PCs have skills that needlessly duplicate the primary mission skills of one or more NPCs, simply change the NPCs’ redundant mission skill to a mission skill which is currently lacking.

After their tour of the ship, Larkin will escort the group to a large, private lounge on the uppermost level of the orbital port facility, where the rest of the team for Operation Back Door is waiting.

Morgan Lindsdrom (MGT2300)

Position: Helm
Nationality: American
Homeworld: Tirane
Gravity: Normal
Frontier/Core: Core
Birthdate: April 7, 2267
Mass: 89 kg
Eyesight: Exceptional
Hearing: Average
Body Type: Normal
Throw Range: 96m
Encumbrance: 16
Languages: English, French

Strength: 7
Dexterity: 8
Endurance: 8
Intelligence: 8
Education: 9

Skills:
Investigate-2,
Medic-1,
Electronics-1,
Informatics-3,
Deception-1,
Gun Cbt (slug pistol)-3,
Melee-1,
Admin-1,
Stealth-1,
Engineering-1,
Vacc Suit-1,
Streetwise-1,
Drive (wheeled)-1,
Drive (Hover)-1
Psychology-1
Recon-1,
Survival-1.

Trait: Cool Under Fire

Special Equipment:
1 S & W ISP 106 with
six magazines of ammunition.



Franchot Dumaine
(2300ad)

Position: 2nd pilot/
xenosapienologist
Nationality: French

Homeworld: L-5
substation

Gravity: Low

Frontier/Core: Core

Looks and Gender:

Good-looking male

Birthdate: May 1, 2266

Mass: 82 kg

Eyesight: Average

Hearing: Average

Body Type: Normal

ThrowRange: 112m

Coolness: 5

Encumbrance: 56

Native Language:

French

Other Languages:

English

Size: 14

Strength: 14

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 11

Determination: 19

Intelligence: 9

Eloquence: 15

Education: 13

Consciousness: 4

Life Level: 9

Careers: Xenologist,
Agent for Tricolor

Skills: Computer-2,
Info. Gathering-4
Bureaucracy-1,
Biology-6,
Anthropology-2,
Writing-1, Streetwise-1
, Forgery-1, Sidearm-1,
Melee-1, Stealth-1,
Security Systems-4,
Pilot-2, Electronics-1



NPC Back Door Team Members

The following are the first impressions that the PCs will receive of their NPC teammates. This introductory conversation begins in the lounge, but will continue over dinner. It will begin to break up with Helen excusing herself, claiming fatigue, and the rest of the gathering will leave quickly after that. NPC descriptions follow, but their 2300 & MGT stats will appear at the end of



this part of the adventure.

Helen Asweath

Helen, the Australian astronomer who discovered Back Door, comes across as a somewhat shy person who seems ill-at-ease with so many people. Any of the characters who have exploration or astronomy backgrounds will know her name instantly: Helen is a famous author and lecturer on her topic. Indeed, if the conversation gets around to Back Door or anything related to stellar objects, Helen will immediately brighten, her animation and enthusiasm suddenly overcoming her reclusive demeanor.

Helen Asweath's life is astronomy and astrophysics. Plagued by a body that never fully adapted to the rigors of King's awful gravity and opportunistic childhood illnesses (one of which impaired her hearing significantly), Helen turned to intellectual pursuits at an ear-

ly age. Her love of the stars and of new horizons of knowledge may have had some roots in subconscious escapism, but by the time she was 16, it was clear that she had a tremendous ability in astronomy and astrophysics. Guided by an almost spooky instinct that she simply shrugs off as good guessing, Helen has racked up an impressive list of first finds and garnered a prestigious advisory position on the astronomy planning board that set the mission agenda for the Bayern. In the years since, she

has made a nice living teaching, writing, and lecturing about the wonders of the heavens.

It came as no surprise to the AAEC when Helen notified them of her tentative discovery of BD-111 094307: If anyone was capable of finding brown dwarfs, it was she. But it was a huge surprise for Helen when the first response to her discovery was a visit from four very serious men from the AIA who politely but firmly insisted that she accompany them to "more secure living arrangements."

Alternating between shock and disgruntlement, Helen's grudging cooperation became whole-hearted and joyous when she learned several days later that the AIA and her government were both asking her to consent to being on the first exploratory team being sent to Back Door.

Helen's unpopularity as a sickly, overweight child has made her very sensitive and sympathetic to the pain and difficulties of other people. She abhors (with uncharacteristic vehemence) cruelty and deceit, and can exhibit extraordinary personal courage when trying to defend others. Helen also has learned hard lessons about medical costs, owing to the chronic problems that developed during her earliest years on King. She is consequently an assiduous saver and keeps one eye on the bottom line at all



times

Morgan Lindstrom

An American drive specialist (actually, an AIA undercover operative), will introduce himself with a handshake and a broad, good-natured smile. Lindstrom is as outgoing as Helen is introverted; he'll express a polite interest in the characters and their backgrounds. If asked about himself, he will reveal that he started out with a naval commission, but left it after his first hitch was up, preferring the freer lifestyle aboard commercial vessels. Morgan's history reads almost too much like the all-American success story: athletic, boyish good looks, excellent student, outgoing, affable, and of course, patriotic. Morgan has been with the AIA since he was 20, and while no longer bright-eyed and ingenuous, he has retained his ideals and deep sense of concern for the fate of America and humanity as a whole. Morgan was a natural choice for the Back Door mission and his familiarity with computers and drives qualified him for a spot at the

helm where he could keep an eye on the crew. He will have been fully briefed on the PCs and NPCs, although his information does not mention that Franchot Dumaine is a Tricolor agent.

Morgan's easy manner also makes him very easy to trust, particularly in combination with his common sense and unflappability in the face of a crisis. He will pointedly reinforce the PCs' position as the mission's leaders, but when he has a suggestion to make, the NPCs will listen closely and generally agree (with the possible exception of Dumaine). Morgan is not a violent man, but he has been in his share of firefights and is not afraid of another one. However, his easy relationship with violence also means that he will

approach it rationally and not get into fights he doesn't have to get into. He will attempt to steer others away from violence until and unless it seems the only



effective course of action.

Franchot Dumaine

Franchot, a French xenosapientologist, handles introductions with reserved charm. He is affable in a quiet way and will be eager to learn if any of the characters have any skills in life sciences. Finding such a common interest, he

Franchot Dumaine (MGT2300)

Position: 2nd pilot/
xenosapientologist

Nationality: French

Homeworld: L-5
substation

Gravity: Low

Frontier/Core: Core

Looks and Gender:

Good-looking male

Birthdate: May 1, 2266

Mass: 82 kg

Eyesight: Average

Hearing: Average

Body Type: Normal

Throw Range: 112m

Encumbrance: 56

Native Language:

French

Other Languages:

English

Strength: 8

Dexterity: 8

Endurance: 7

Intelligence: 6

Education: 8

Skills:

Informatics-1,

Investigate-2

Admin-1,

Biology-3,

Xenology-1,

Art (Writing)-1,

Streetwise-1,

Deception-1,

Gun Cbt (Slug Pistol)-1,

Melee-1,

Stealth-1,

Computers-2,

Pilot-1,

Electronics-1

'Hanne' Spitmacher (2300ad)

Position: Engineer
Nationality: German
Homeworld: BCV
Gravity: Normal
Frontier/Core: Frontier
Looks and Gender:
Good-looking female
Birthdate: July 6, 2253
Mass: 78 kg
Eyesight: Average
Hearing: Excellent
Body Type: Normal
Throw Range: 80m
Coolness: 10
Encumbrance: 40
Native Language:
German
Other Languages:
English
Size: 10
Strength: 10
Dexterity: 12
Endurance: 8
Determination: 12
Intelligence: 11
Eloquence: 4
Education: 13
Consciousness: 4
Life Level: 8
Careers: Ground Military, Space Military
Skills: Streetwise-1, Swimming-1, Trader-1, Mechanic-3, Electronics-4, Computer-2, First Aid-1, Appraisal-1, Combat Rifle-2, Heavy Weapons-1, Melee-2, Ground Vehicle-1, Demolitions-1, Survival-1, P-Suit-2, Hovercraft-1, Sidearm-1, Prospecting-1, Aircraft Pilot-2, Ship's Drives-7, Communications-3, Gunner-1.



will immediately tend to gravitate toward the character(s) possessing them. He expresses the hope that the team will encounter some sign of the mystery race during its mission.

Franchot Dumaine is one of IEX's best field experts in xenobiology, and he has an impressive record in decoding the interplay between physiology and culture in the Sung, and most recently, the Kafers. However, Dumaine is also a secret ultranationalist who became an informer and field agent for Tricolor six years ago. Embittered by the way in which the bright successes of the Kafer War kept eluding France, Dumaine began to dabble in extremist politics. He attracted the attention of a Tricolor agent who slowly recruited the disheartened scientist into the ranks of this dangerously fanatic organization.

In many ways, Dumaine has been ripe for such a picking for some time. More a tireless worker than a brilliant mind, Franchot has spent the last 10 years resenting the unfailing tendency of the media limelight to prefer geniuses over dedicated, highly competent workers (such as himself). His dedication and precision began to turn into an almost neurotic fastidiousness, even as his ardent patriotism changed into a desire for vengeance upon other nations.

However, Dumaine still believes in what he is doing, and can be both charming and convincing. His looks and silver tongue often allow him to manipulate members of the opposite sex without their being aware of it. Dumaine knows that Morgan Lindstrom is with the A.I.A. Tricolor activated the one mole it had in that agency in order to learn about the AIA's role in Operation Back Door. Similarly, Dumaine's appointment to the mission team was accomplished by Tricolor string-pulling.

Dumaine is a fairly nice fellow, and his charm and (now intermittent) warmth are quite genuine, unfortunately, his amiability and helpfulness are completely subordinate to his duty as a Tricolor agent. He will do anything to accomplish his mission. There is an obvious conflict between his innate prosocial tendencies and this absolute ruthlessness. If under constant stress, the emotional fatigue caused by living with these conflicting drives may begin to show up as excessive or even hysterical behavior and sudden (perhaps dangerous) mood swings.

About Tricolor

Tricolor is a secret organization of French ultranationalists. It is dedicated to ensuring that France rises to true superpower status once again and retains absolute dominance over human affairs. Not surprisingly, Tricolor wants to make sure that 'Operation Back Door' benefits France more than it does the nations of the Alderhorst Alliance (American, Australia, and Germany).

A much more detailed background will be given on Tricolor in the final episode of this adventure. Here, the referee only needs to know that Tricolor is, thus far, a completely unknown organization, and that its agents and directors are ruthless fanatics.





Carson Murrrough & Hannelore Spitzmacher

Hannelore and Carson are both recently retired naval drive specialists from the German and Australian navies, respectively.

Hannelore is direct and no-nonsense, but is otherwise pleasant to be around. Carson, who is clearly very attached to 'Hannah', seems to be her opposite, easy going and soft-spoken.

"Hannah" Spitzmacher is a no-nonsense career military type who has seen combat in the Kafer conflict, and before that, in the War of German Reunification. However, after the Battle of Beowulf, she decided she had had enough of the military life, particularly when the pitiless vacuum of deep space

was just on the other side of the thinly armored hulls that she called home. She began the process of getting out. The German command learned of Hannah's intentions, as well as her hope of making a living as a trader with her longtime friend and intimate, Carson Murrrough. Hannah's rather improbable hope became a reality when German officers guaranteed her 30% shares in a hull if, upon retiring, she undertook one voluntary mission as a specialist. That mission was 'Operation Back Door'.

Hannah snapped up the offer without a moment's delay. Hannah is as mulish as they come and right now, that means that she is absolutely dedicated to making sure that 'Operation Back Door' succeeds. She wants her shares in a commercial starship, this mission is how she's going to get them, and that is that. Hannah is not interested in leading, but if others won't or can't, she will take charge and give the orders. Indecisiveness is not one of her problems.

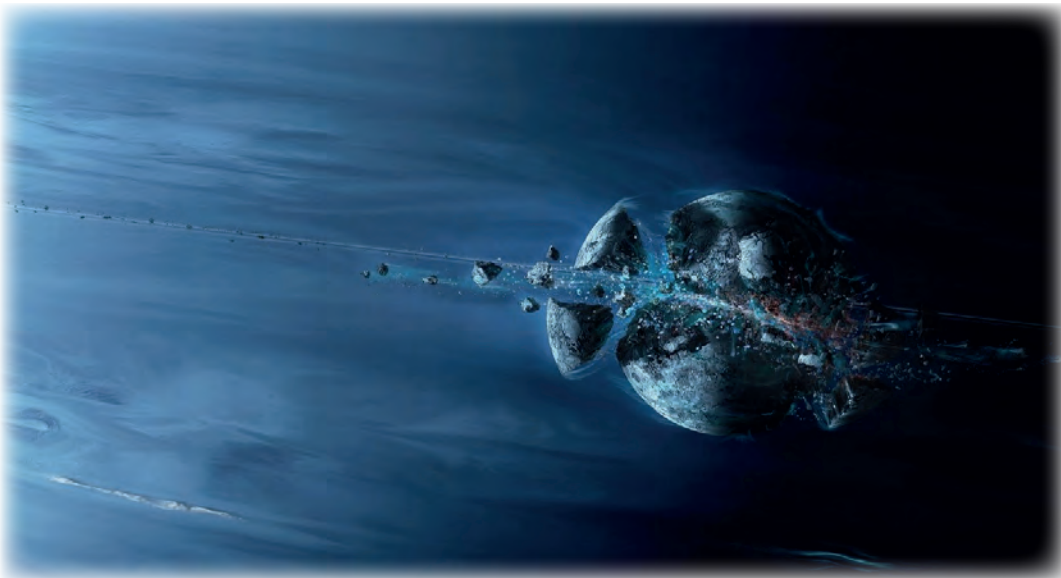
Carson Murrrough grew upon an out-back robot farm with nothing but time and open space on his hands, and the attitude engendered by that atmosphere is still with Carson today. Where as his longtime companion Hannelore Spitz-

'Hanne' Spitzmacher (MGT2300)

Position: Engineer
Nationality: German
Homeworld: BCV
Gravity: Normal
Frontier/Core: Frontier
Looks and Gender: Good-looking female
Birthdate: July 6, 2253
Mass: 78 kg
Eyesight: Average
Hearing: Excellent
Body Type: Normal
Throw Range: 80m
Encumbrance: 40
Native Language: German
Other Languages: English

Strength: 6
Dexterity: 7
Endurance: 5
Intelligence: 7
Education: 8

Careers: Ground Military, Space Military
Skills: Streetwise-1, Athletics (Swimming)-1, Broker-1, Mechanic-2, Electronics-2, Computer-1, Medic-1, Trade-1, Melee-1, Gun Cbt (Slug Rifle)-1, Heavy Weapons-1, Explosives-1, Drive (Wheeled)-1, Survival-1, Vacc-Suit-1, Drive (Hover)-1, Gun Cbt (Slug Pistol)-1, Zero-G-1, Flyer (Rotor-1, Engineering (Stutterwarp)-4, Comms-2, Gunner-1.



Carson Murrough (2300ad)

Position: Engineer

Nationality:
Australian

Homeworld: Earth

Gravity: Normal

Frontier/Core: Core

Looks and Gender:
Good-looking female

Birthdate:

February 4, 2253

Mass: 80 kg

Eyesight: Average

Hearing: Average

Body Type: Normal

ThrowRange: 80m

Coolness: 9

Encumbrance: 40

Native Language:
English

Other Languages:

German

Size: 10

Strength: 10

Dexterity: 13

Endurance: 9

Determination: 12

Intelligence: 12

Eloquence: 8

Education: 13

Consciousness: 4

Life Level: 8

Careers: Ground Military, Space Military

Skills: Swimming-1, Mechanic-3, Electronics-4, Computer-2, First Aid-2, Appraisal-1, Combat Rifle-2, Heavy Weapons-1, Melee-3, Survival-1, P-Suit-2, Hovercraft-2, Sidearm-1, Prospecting-1, Aircraft Pilot-2, Ship's Drives-7, Communications-3, Pilot-1, Remote Pilot-I.

macher is intensely goal-oriented and energetic, Carson is easygoing and relaxed. Carson is an Australian veteran who saw a small amount of action in the Kafer War. Upon hitting 50, he decided it was time to leave the service, prompting Hannah to think similar thoughts. Carson likes her idea of their becoming part owners in a ship, although in all-truth, he would have been just as happy raising sheep or fixing broken engines. However, as always, Carson is willing to follow Hannah's lead, particularly in light of the fact that he too has been offered a 30% share in a hull.

Carson is truly amiable and cooperative, but will not do anything that is contrary to his considerable conscience. Carson also likes a little bit of excitement now and again, even though he won't actively seek it out. He was never one to turn down an offer to spar. Nor is he likely to try to talk a bully out of a confrontation. Carson will just smile and put the jerk's lights out.

Considerations

The previous information on the five NPC crewmembers of the 'Cat's Feet' is subject to modification at the discretion of the referee. However, the abilities of this group must always remain germane to the mission at hand. If the NPCs are not given distinct personalities and a substantial presence in the adventure, much of the enjoyment of 'Operation Back Door' will be lost. If the referee finds that he cannot portray all five NPCs thoroughly, the two engineers (Hannah and Carson) can be relegated to the role of supporting cast members without damaging the essential drama.

Amongst the other crewmembers, Lindstrom is the characters' undercover "ally" and Dumaine their undercover "enemy," although circumstances may

definitely make the reverse appear true at some points in the adventure (where-in lies half the fun!).

A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

Where: En route to and in system DM-4 4225.

What: Witnessing the interstellar tug assist and refueling.

Early the next day, the entire team will be awakened by Larkin who hands them a packet containing communication code words and all known data on the different systems they are about to enter. Beyond their next destination (DM-4 4225) that data amounts to broad hypotheses, guesswork, and academic doubletalk, which all boils down to "we haven't got a clue." In accordance with the enclosed instructions, the group will take the *Cat's Feet* into the outer system, where it will wait for a rendezvous with an unspecified ship. And wait it does.

Four hours go by before a Hudson-class transport shows up. Communication is audio only, and all references are by the code words provided via Larkin's packet. The Hudson-class vessel is unmarked, not running a transponder or navigation radar, and begins to come very close. As the freighter continues to approach, its massive cargo bay doors swing wide, giving the characters a sudden sensation of being eaten alive by a cavernous black maw. Dumaine mutters a wry comment about feeling like Jonah meeting the whale. The *Cat's Feet* is literally swallowed into the cargo bay, which the PCs will note has been substantially modified. Massive robotic manipulators clamp on to the ship and maneuver it toward something that looks like a huge harness. Any character with a background in fighter opera-



tions will recognize it as an overgrown version of the external slings that some fighters use to carry missiles.

This sling however, is large enough for the *Cat's Feet*!

An adjacent, larger structure becomes visible as the bay's internal working lights come on. This is an even more gargantuan sling, with a (comparatively) enormous ship in it. Hannah, Carson, and Morgan (feigning a bit of uncertainty at first) will be able to identify it as a German Sachsen-class frigate. (Any PC with a naval background would also be able to identify it.)

During the next three days of travel, attempts to communicate with the crew of the Hudson-class freighter will be discouraged in a cordial fashion. Requests to leave the *Cat's Feet* will be politely refused, and the bay is kept in vacuum. Any attempts to communicate with the frigate will be fruitless (no response). At the end of the three days, the bay doors will once again swing wide, revealing the twinkling panorama of deep space. The huge robotic manipulators -Carson has identified them as the new American Centiherc design (the first automated cargo handler that can also be used to launch bay vessels)- once again take hold of the PCs' ship and swing it out into space. The taciturn communications officer on board the unmarked Hudson wishes the team well and recommends immediate transit to its destination. If the PCs can't take the hint and insist on asking if the frigate is heading to the same destination, the comms officer will politely but tersely tell them that they really don't need to know that and should proceed toward their destination without further delay.

Carson will remark that everybody out here seems to enjoy what he calls the "Dr. Mysterioso act." With a chuckle, he heads aft toward the drive section.

Arriving at DM-4 4225

The characters have about six lightyears left to travel, after which they will arrive in system DM4 4225, where they encounter plenty of traffic-unusual for a system that can only be reached by tugs. The harbinger of this traffic hangs silent in space some 20 AU out, a massive vessel (over 40,000 tons) that Dumaine, and eventually Spitzmacher, will be able to identify as an old Metal-class modular freighter. The presence of this ancient French design earns a raised eyebrow from Dumaine and a respectful whistle from Morgan, who notes that this vessel, like the Hudson class, is unmarked and is not running any transponder or navigation beam. Attempts at communication will meet with silence, punctuated only by the background static of cosmic rays.

As the *Cat's Feet* moves deeper in-system, the characters may be interested in some of the system data (and may swing by some of the detailed system objects), which appears below. Helen Asweath will quickly become immersed in the scientific details of the system, taking gravometric readings and collecting as much stellar data as her equipment permits. As the first nongovernment surveyor on site, the unusual features of this binary system are an academic gold mine.

As the courier draws near to Ploughshare (the world occupying orbit three in the system), the characters will be hailed by local forces. In addition to whatever else may be hiding out of sight or is lurking in the cargo modules of the Metal class freighter, two American FS-17A fighters and one Krupp 821 cargo carrier are encountered before the *Cat's Feet* is guided to a berth at a small orbital complex.

Carson Murrough (MGT2300)

Position: Engineer
Nationality: Australian
Homeworld: Earth
Gravity: Normal
Frontier/Core: Core
Looks and Gender: Good-looking female
Birthdate: February 4, 2253
Mass: 80 kg
Eyesight: Average
Hearing: Average
Body Type: Normal
ThrowRange: 80m
Encumbrance: 40
Native Language: English
Other Languages: German

Strength: 6
Dexterity: 7
Endurance: 6
Intelligence: 7
Education: 8

Skills:
Athletics (Swimming)-1
Mechanic-2,
Electronics-2,
Computer-1,
Medic-1,
Broker-1
Gun Cbt (Slug Rifle)-1,
HeavyWeapons-1,
Melee-2,
Survival-1,
Vacc Suit-2,
Drive (Hover)-1,
Gun Cbt (Slug Pistol)-1
Zero-G-1,
Flyer (Rotor)-1,
Engineering (M-Drive)-4, Comms-2,
Pilot-1, Remote Pilot-1.

Icebreaker

An icebreaker is slang for a credit card sized expert system that can be hooked up to a simple computer to assist with the cracking of any security codes that might be protecting the system. In essence, icebreakers are very sophisticated random code generators combined with a dedicated system that uses safecracking logic to defeat multi-part locks. Icebreakers are generally used to defeat multipart locks. Icebreakers are generally used to overcome simple combination locks, code word restrictions, etc. When using an icebreaker to assist with such a task, decrease the difficulty of that task by one level. Price L₇250 and up.

Naming Worlds

Upon discovery of new worlds (such as Ploughshare) it is the Captain's privilege to name the new planet. However, many captains enact a lottery system amongst the crew allowing a member to name a world with the Captain holding the veto (in case of any ridiculous suggestions). There also naming rights for many investors who put their

(cont.)



This time, both communications and debarkation are freely permitted, and some of the air of secrecy drops. Although the personnel encountered in this naval outpost don't have the exact specifics of the characters' mission, they have a pretty good idea of why the group is out here and where it's going.

If the referee desires, this would be a good place to expand the adventure into a small campaign. Dumaine, like Asweath, is the first non-government researcher in his speciality to enter this system. Ploughshare offers him an unparalleled opportunity for the study and sampling of a completely new biosphere. The renown and book contracts that are almost sure to result are the answer to every academicians chronic dilemma of publish or perish. Consequently, he will be eager to head down to Ploughshare (both in order to pursue this genuine opportunity and to reinforce his cover as the mission's life scientist)-but the naval commanders will not let him go planetside without an armed escort. And, if any of the characters are scientists, this may be a golden opportunity for them as well.

If this sidetrip isn't desired, the referee can simply have the refueling completed in a couple of hours, and send the crew of the *Cat's Feet* hurling off into the unknown that lies beyond the edge of this system.

DM-4 4225

Location: (-8.9, -34.6, -3.2)

Stellar Type: K5 V

Absolute Magnitude: 7.53

Radius: 0.59

Mass: 0.71

Luminosity: 0.08

Temp. in Degrees K: 41 00

Number of Orbits: 8 (however, the outer three are occupied by dust and rubble only).

Note: Star DM-4 4226 shares identical coordinates with DM-4 4225, but it is not a binary companion. It is at a distance of 9300AU.

Orbit	AU	World and Core Type	Diameter	Density
1	0.10	Hothouse, rocky	13,011	1.0
2	0.13	Gas giant, rocky	72,551	1.0*
3	0.24	Cool Gdn, rocky	12,044	1.0
4	0.49	Failed core, icy	25,327	0.1
5	0.79	Failed core, icy	14,101	0.3
6-8,	-	Dust and rubble	-	-

UWP

X 7 6 7 0 0 0 - 0

*This gas giant's initial diameter was approximately 18,000, but was doubled twice, according to the "snowballing rule." The listed density would therefore only apply to the world's core.

System Overview

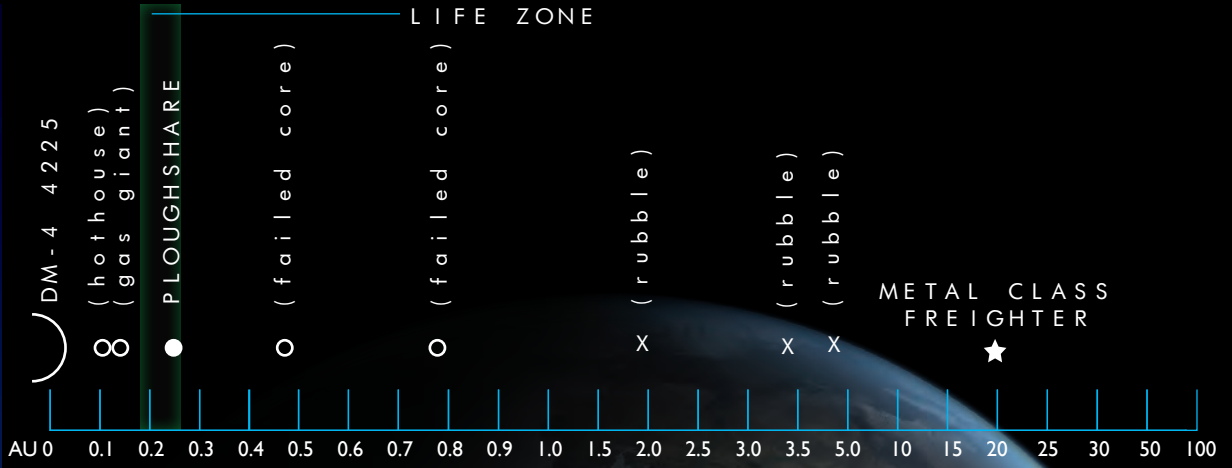
Astrophysicists have long been eager to journey to this system in order to study the interactions of DM-4 4225 and DM-4 4226 which are not a binary pair despite their proximity (9300 AU). The first mission, intended to scout the area before a final commitment was made to the stutterwarp tug operations, discovered that the outer three orbits of DM4225 have been either disrupted or pulverized.

This is sure to galvanize academic interest in this system, which may hold clues as to how binaries may either break apart, or what happens when two separate stars pass close to each other.

Planetary Overview

Regardless of the astrophysical fascination that DM-44225 will generate, it is sure to take a back seat to the keen political interest in the system. Not only has DM-4 4225 recently emerged as a

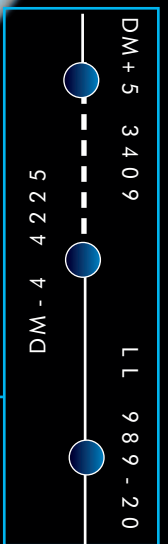
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P L O U G H S H A R E X767000-0

WORLD TYPE: COLD GARDEN
 MASS: 1.21
 SIZE: 13,805km
 GRAVITY: 0.97
 ATMOSPHERE: NITROGEN/OXYGEN
 HYDROSPHERE: 32% ICE/38% WATER
 CLAIMED BY: AMERICA/AUSTRALIA
 LY FROM EARTH: 41.9 (one route via tug)

ROUTE



(cont.)

hard earned cash into exploratory missions.

*Regardless of how a new world has come by its name and what it's called, it still has to go in front of the board of the **Interational Astronomical Union** for approval (since 1919).*

The board will throw out any names such as "Bob" (in such occasions using names derived from their relation to the parent star until it is settled - Gliese 667 Ib for example).

The board meet every 3 years and finalise all names. Names that have common sense meanings, are named after august figures, or pay reverence to either minority Earth cultures or local indigenous features or sentients are favoured over others.

'Ploughshare' is likely to be approved.

IAU 



possible gateway to Kafer space, but it has revealed itself to be the answer to American and Australian colonization dreams. The world at orbit three, tentatively dubbed Ploughshare by the Yank-Aussie crews of the ships in system, is the find that both nations have hoped for on the American Arm.

Despite Ploughshare's partial (32% overall) glaciation, the rest of the planet is one of the ripest colonial plums yet discovered by humanity. Gravity is almost earth normal. The temperate zone offers a climatological range reminiscent of Maine to Georgia. Thirty-eight percent of the planet's 68% unglaciated surface is water, producing a land to ocean ratio of almost 1:1.

The planet evinces luxuriant growth and a wide variety of animal life, none of which seems to contain any viruses or bacteria that would be especially lethal to terrestrial biots. In short, the discovery of Ploughshare represents a major upswing in Australian- American colonization potential and portends intensified interest in this area of space, despite the system's tug-only access.

History

The only drawback to finding Ploughshare is that both the Australian and American leaders who are now aware of the garden planet and eager to initiate precolonization studies are being forced to sit on their hands due to the confidential nature of the forces in the DM-4 4225 system and their relationship to 'Operation Back Door'. Despite the solid commitment of the American and Australian governments to the secrecy concealing these military initiatives, there is now a major economic motivation to resolve those initiatives quickly in order to get on with more profitable colonizing ventures.

UNSCHEDULED DETOUR

Where: Near system L-939-20
(-8.9, -39.3, -1.3).

What: A mysterious system failure.

The referee should require a task roll from the on-duty navigator to see if that individual can keep the navigational system from crashing 100%, but in fact, the outcome is inevitable, the system loses all its data and goes off-line.

The lack of a navigational system has serious repercussions. Guiding a stutterwarping vessel requires constant navigational attention. Initial navigation coordinates need constant refinement as the system grows nearer. Additionally, since the ship is not under acceleration, but is in effect travelling under pseudo-velocity, one can only be sure that of travelling the desired direction by checking the current position against earlier ones. This is done by taking bearings via stellar objects after every individual stutter and comparing them to the readings which immediately preceded it with the current one. This process, including the data records of the ship's bearings, is stored in and handled by a navigational subsystem referred to as the *Sequencer*.

If the Sequencer die's, and takes the previous navigational records with it, the ship is effectively lost. A new course can be plotted, but the chance of error is very high, since the new starting coordinates are only estimates. Precise information can only be obtained from extremely accurate astrographic bearings. Eventually, a ship could certainly navigate to its destination by error averaging (the process of reducing inaccuracies by correcting in ever smaller increments). However, by that time, the charge built up in the stutterwarp drives would almost surely have killed everyone off.

Helen Can Help!

The chief navigator/pilot will be faced with a Difficult task if he attempts to plot a new course from the ship's current estimated position to LL 989-20. Dumaine will remain very calm as he attempts to help with this task, but he will be sweating noticeably.

If one of the characters doesn't think of it, then Morgan or Helen will, there's an expert astronomer onboard. Given a day, Helen's skill will allow her to significantly increase the accuracy of the bearing estimation (her help reduces the above task level to Routine). If the task fails, the PCs will only be able to realize it after two days of travel, at which time they will have to let Helen take another try. This attempt will succeed (it has to if the group members are to reach LL 989-20 before the accumulated charge on the stutterwarp drive kills them).

Secret Sabotage

The one important piece of information that will not (or should not) be immediately evident to the PCs is that the trouble with the navigational sequencer was not an accident. It was caused by a self destroying computer virus in that system, which was implanted by Franchot Dumaine. If one of the characters decides to run a systems check after the failure, Dumaine will volunteer to help out, just to make sure that his tampering is not discovered. However, if a character runs the check without informing anyone else, he has a chance of finding a tell-tale clue that something or someone onboard is playing deadly games with the crew of the Cat's Feet (see sidebar).

If the task is successful, the character will note some irregularities in the subroutine governing user access to the navigational programs.

It seems as though someone "jimmied" their way into the guts of the system. This is usually impossible to do, except as authorized by the captain or XO of a ship who hold the access codes to this restricted area of the system's programming. If a saboteur were to enter the system and put a few digits in the wrong place, the calculating ability that governs the assessment of navigational bearings could be rendered useless, possibly stranding the ship in deep space. The discovering character will be able to tell that someone nevertheless managed to get into the program and plant a virus bomb that crashed the system.

If the NPCs are Confronted

If the PCs decide to confront the NPCs (which is not likely, considering the difficulty of discovering the sabotage at this point), all will deny any knowledge or involvement in such an act of sabotage. However, a search of the NPCs' stowed gear will turn up an icebreaker in Morgan's cargo. Morgan will be (genuinely) stunned and claim that the icebreaker is not his and was obviously planted in his luggage. The characters can believe what they will. Dumaine will evince a quiet doubt in Morgan's story, but not engage in any direct character assassination. Such behavior could center some suspicion on Dumaine, if the characters decide to investigate the possibility that someone did plant the icebreaker in Morgan's luggage (which Dumaine of course did, in order to deflect any suspicion from himself if his sabotage was discovered). It is important to realize that Dumaine is not suicidal: His sabotage of the navigational sequencer was not intended to strand the ship in space and defeat the mission. Instead, it was important for him to establish a sense of doubt in the reliability of the ship's guidance systems. This must be achieved so that a subsequent act of sabotage, which

To discover a clue to the sabotage:

2300AD Task: *Formidable, Computer, 2 hours* (one try only).

MGT2300 Task: *Formidable (-6), Computers, Intelligence, 2 hours.* (one try only).

BRP 2300AD Task: *Special Success (20% of skill), Technical Skill: Computer Use/Computer Programming/Electronic Security, Mental, 2 hours.* (one try only).

GURPS 2300AD Task: *Formidable (-5), Computer Operation / Computer Programming, 2 hours.* (one try only).



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involves crippling the ship after the mission but before return to DM+5 3409, might be interpreted as a second and fatal failure when the ship fails to return. At this point in the adventure, Dumaineis not yet sure whether he will have to utilize this treacherous final option.

Arriving in LL 989-20

The team will arrive, somewhat nerve-racked, in system LL 989-20. Save the physical descriptions of objects for actual PC visits to those features of the system. Refueling will take some time, during which automated sensors can be deployed and their results analyzed-the PCs can be given access to the system data given below once the sensors are deployed.

Refueling

The best insystem refueling spots are on several of the second gas giant's moons, or refueling could be accomplished directly from the second Jovian's atmosphere.

After completing their refueling, the crew of the Cat's Feet should be ready to head through the back door and into what may be Kafer space.

L 989-20 B (Secondary)

Stellar Type:	MO V
Absolute Magnitude:	I 1.7
Radius:	0.54
Mass:	0.48
Luminosity:	0.04
Temp. in Degrees K:	3500
Number of Orbits:	3

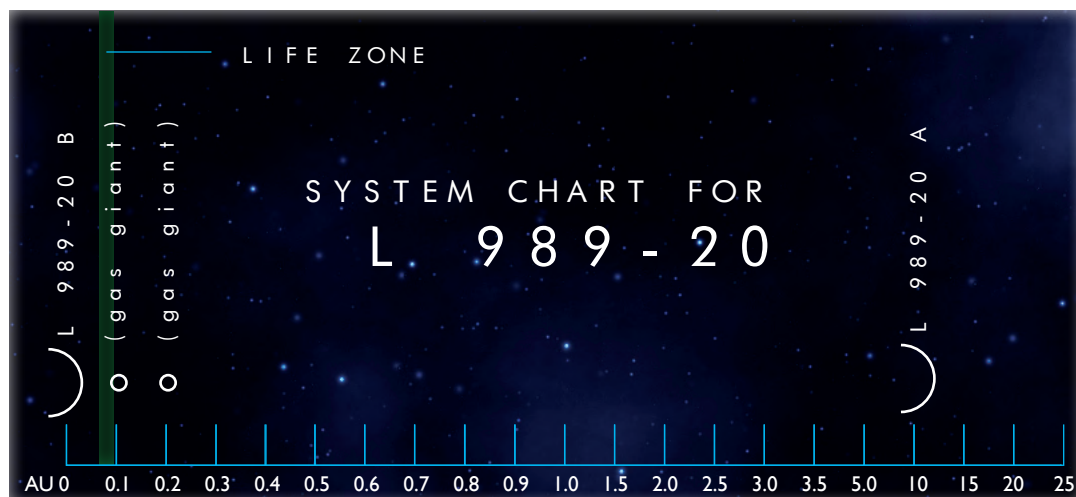
Data on the star's companion, L 989-20A (perihelion of 10.1 AU), can be accessed directly from the appropriate tables in the 2300AD Director's Guide/MGT2300 Corebook. It is a classic (standard) GO VII star without planets.

Orbit	AU	World and Core Type	Diameter	Density
1	0.1	Gas giant, rocky	15,965	0.9
2	0.2	Gas giant, rocky	36,023	0.9*

**This gas giant's initial diameter was approximately 18,000, but was doubled once, according to the "snowballing rule." The listed density would therefore only apply to the world's core.*

System Overview

L989-20 is a generally unremarkable system, except for the fact that the presence here of two gas giants of different types offers some interesting military options. Planet 1 is a dark, cloudy world, dominated by browns and charcoals and occasional flecks of dull red. It has a proportionately massive core for a gas giant and its atmosphere is fre-



quently veined by split-second bursts of lightning. Planet 11 is more diffuse, dominated by stunning reds and yellows and surrounded by a number of large moons.

History

Remote probes sent into this system three weeks ago revealed no evidence that it has ever been visited before. Both gas giants were briefly scanned (in order to ensure their usefulness as frontier refueling spots). While there has been no time to study any of planet II's many satellites, there is considerable interest in doing so, since this larger gas giant lies directly at the center of the system's life zone.

UNLOCKING THE BACK DOOR

Where: System BD-1 I 1 094307.

What: First glimpse of 'Back Door'.

When the team arrives in the Back Door system, it will be relieved (though hardly surprised) to find that the reputed brown dwarf is there, waiting patiently to absorb the discharge from their stutterwarp drive. Helen will want to take a day or so to deploy her automated sensors with the greatest of care. Meanwhile (if a character is not already thinking of it), some of the NPCs will point out that Larkin has requested that a copy of the log be stashed somewhere in system. Also, the group is going to have to find a fuel source. But before doing all that, the PCs will get the opportunity to behold the strange wonders of a brown dwarf system up close, learning the below data as they do so (see the system data).

Prospecting

After Helen lovingly places her sensors

in orbit around Back Door, it will be time to go prospecting "iceteroids," the only likely fuel source in this system. Back Door's pseudo-planetary family is not particularly cooperative in this regard. Discovering a suitable fueling site is determined by a task roll (see sidebar).

Depositing the Copy of the Log

After finding a suitable refueling spot, Morgan will observe that it probably would help any follow-up team if the group put the log recording right on the iceteroid it would save them the trouble of finding a refueling site themselves. Morgan will volunteer to place the log copy (a secure recorder), and Dumaine will quickly offer assistance. Dumaine wants to make sure that Morgan doesn't add a message of his own. If Morgan has suspicions of Dumaine (which he doesn't), then Dumaine wants to make sure that the American does not have the opportunity to record them for later discovery by follow-up teams that would come in the event that the Operation Back Door team never returned.

Secure Recorders

Secure recorders are often left behind by vessels which fear imminent destruction and/or have an enemy on their tail who wants to prevent them from making a report on what they have seen. Secure recorders incorporate a low-power, high-sensitivity radio receiver that searches for a key code of radio emissions. The code "units" are defined by frequency and duration of signal. When the recorder receives the correct sequence of transmissions, it activates a broad-band transponder. This guides friendly forces to the recorder and its data storage.

Discovering a useful iceteroid

2300AD Task:
Difficult, Sensors, 8 hours.

MGT2300 Task:
Difficult (-2), Sensors, Intelligence or Education, 8 hours.

BRP 2300AD Task:
Modified Success (skill -15%), Technical Skill: Sensor Systems, Mental, 8 hours.

GURPS 2300AD Task: **Difficult (-2), Electronics Operation (Sensors), 8 hours.**

Helen is the only NPC with Sensors skill (level/2).



¥ ~ Japanese Yen

£ ~ British Pound Sterling



Brown Dwarfs (from Wikipedia)

Brown dwarfs are substellar objects too low in mass to sustain hydrogen-1 fusion reactions in their cores. They occupy the mass range between the heaviest gas giants and the lightest stars, with an upper limit around 75 to 80 Jupiter masses (MJ).

Brown dwarfs heavier than about 13 MJ are thought to fuse deuterium and those above ~65 MJ, fuse lithium as well.

Dwarfs are categorized by spectral classification, with the major types being M, L, T, and Y. Despite their name, most brown dwarfs would appear orange/red to the human eye.

Some planets are known to orbit brown dwarfs: 2M1207b, MOA-2007-BLG-192Lb, and 2MASS J044144b. Brown dwarfs may have fully convective surfaces and interiors, with no chemical differentiation by depth.

The nearest known brown dwarf is WISE 1049-5319 about 6.5 light years away, a binary system of brown dwarfs discovered in 2013.

BD-11109.4307 **'Back Door'**

Location: (-9.0, -43.4, -7.0)
Stellar Type: Brown Dwarf (Y)
Absolute Magnitude: 0.0
Radius: 227,243 km
Mass: 0.02 (Sol)
Luminosity: 0.000028
Temp. in DegreesK: 1350
Number of Orbits: 0

System Overview

BD-111 094307 is a modest-sized brown dwarf with a sparse, unresolved planetary accretion disk that extends out to 0.72AU. The largest object in that disk is a roughly spherical planetoid with a diameter of approximately 320 kilometers, orbiting at a distance of 0.16AU.

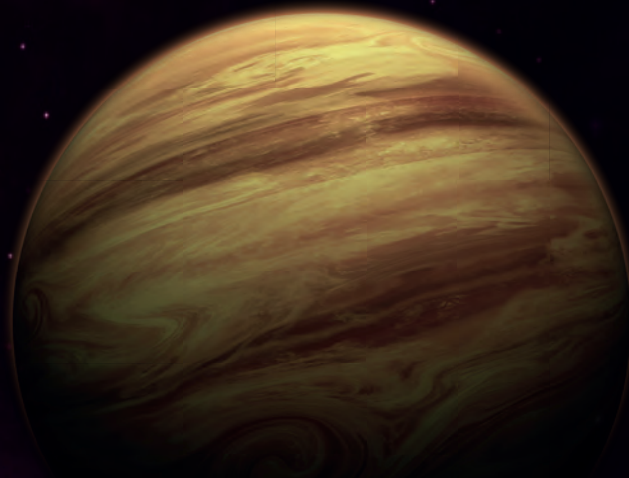
Back Door is predominantly ochre and

dull-red in color, mottled with smears of amber and brown. The surface appears to be churning in slow-motion, although in actuality this represents massive (and violent) meteorological conditions on the surface.

History

Back Door is the second useful brown dwarf "system" that has been discovered via the Intersystem Baseline Interferometry Project. Subsequent to its discovery by Australian astronomer Helen Asweath, Operation Back Door and the arrival for the Cat's Feet represent the first follow-up studies of the substellar system.

"Operation Back Door" continues in Issue #3. The second episode, 'First Contact,' begins with the PCs entering the last stop on their exploratory jaunt, system SS-27.6854, home of the Ylii.



BD - 11109 . 4307
' Back Door '



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PATRONS

by DAVE ELRICK



MONIQUE ROUSSEL

ON

JOI

Classic Traveller had a supplement called **76 Patrons** which included 76 adventure seeds, each with six potential outcomes. Later on, *BITS* (British Isles Traveller Support) published a similar book in their 101... series for any version of *Traveller* called **101 Patrons**. When Mongoose Publishing took over the Traveller licence, they took the format a little further with their book **760 Patrons**.

The patron encounters published in the above books were useful for referees who need an idea or a short filler adventure for an ongoing campaign.

Typically, the entry would include some idea of the world type (if the entry was planet-based) and a suggested set of skills that the player characters would find useful to successfully complete the adventure.

Below is the first in a collection of patron encounters for 2300AD. The following entry specifically uses the background of one of the worlds in the 2300AD universe, although with a little work referees should be able to port the situation to other worlds in the 2300AD universe or even in their Traveller (or other science fiction game) universes.

Patron 1: The Conservation Issue

World: Joi, French Arm (C965675-9)

Required Skills

Stealth, survival, weapons skills, vehicle skills

Situation

Joi (page 56-57 of the 2300AD rulebook) is a garden world in the French arm with

Joi (61 Ursae Majoris)

Joi is a garden world extremely well suited to Humanity's needs. It's crops, while basic, are edible. It has four colonies and 1 newly independent state (Elysia).

It has a wide variety of life for scientists to examine and may even have an indigenous sentient species known as 'Clever Dragons'.

27

Joi as a player haven

Joi is a pleasant world with differing cultures and nationalities. It's on the cusp of becoming a major world and is starting to see an increase in trade, visitors, and infrastructure so it might behoove decent Games Referees to think about setting up Joi as permanent base for their players. It's far enough away from the Core and major worlds along the French Arm to still feel like the frontier in parts but is populated well enough to have all the main requirements of a civilised world. The main cities have hospitals, a modern infrastructure, and travel hubs to not only other parts of the planet but also off-world.

It's open to possibilities of civil war (Elysia), espionage, exploration, reconnaissance, and urban adventure. If your players learn more about Joi once they've established there (maybe brought from Earth by healthy start-up incentives from one of the colonies), they can have several adventures before the Kaefer's invade.

five separate colonies – German, British, Japanese, Azanian and a former French colony called Elysia. Elysia split from France only 9 years ago and is still trying to establish a completely stable government, as such they are keen to avoid further problems with their neighbours on Joi – particularly the Japanese who are aggressively expanding their colony at Samurai Bay and, if rumours are to be believed, working with the French to destabilise Elysia so that the French can

nese colony's exposed southern border (or coastline as the Japanese insist their hegemony extends to the sea on that side) campaigners have used the sea route from Elysia to access the disputed areas and, as a result, tension has grown between the Japanese and Elysia.

The Japanese have increased ranger patrols throughout the continent and have spread small, fast military boat patrols along the southern shore. While they



regain control of their former colony. The Japanese colony has been the target of environmental campaigners for some time following their policy of introducing Terran crops on a massive scale. Environmental campaigners believe this will damage the local ecosystems and have taken steps, including 'positive action', to stop the spread of Terran crops. The Japanese, never very welcoming of outsiders, have taken an increasingly hardline approach against outsiders trespassing on 'their' continent. Because Elysia is the closest colony to the Japa-

insist that they arrest and deport or jail all trespassers, rumours suggest that they have committed some atrocities.

The situation is complicated because the mountainous central area of the continent is the home of a native animal species colloquially known as 'Clever Dragons'. Research has shown that this species is at least as intelligent as Terran great apes and one controversial Japanese scientist (now in exile from Samurai Bay) suggested that they may be a sentient species, claiming that he taught a cap-

tive Clever Dragon over 1800 words of Japanese sign language. Environmentalists have seized on this and are pressing for the area where the creatures live to be protected – a claim resisted by all the governments on Joi, except for Elysia.

Player's Introduction

The player characters are currently in Elysia. Depending on their backgrounds, they may be residents of Elysia or just passing through. They have either been contacted by, or have answered a job advertisement placed by a well-dressed woman called Monique Roussel and have arranged to meet her in a private office.

1 - News Reporter

Monique is a news reporter for a major news syndicate (*InterPlanetary*). She is following up a story that the Japanese response to what they see as trespassing has turned more brutal and they are beating and sometimes killing, rather than jailing or deporting, outsiders they catch in the disputed areas. She has a small team (her and two camera/sound operators), but she needs people to guard her team while they pursue this story. This will involve running the naval blockade and living rough while they track environmental groups and film their interactions with the Japanese.

2 - Criminal P.R.

Monique represents a gang of poachers who have been offered big money to retrieve body parts from Clever Dragons for use in the herbal medicine trade. They don't need whole carcasses, just a small internal organ from each animal. Naturally, they not only have to avoid the Japanese ranger patrols but also environmental campaigners who want to protect the Clever Dragons. She needs some muscle to protect her throughout the expedition.

3 - Sapientologist

Monique leads a small science team from Earth who want firm evidence that that the Clever Dragons are sentient. This will require anything from gathering evidence from their camps and filming them in their natural habitat all the way up to potentially abducting one or more live specimens (she can supply tranquiliser rounds which match what they already know about the physiology of the Clever Dragons – of course, that isn't a great deal so they might not be completely effective...). She

InterPlanetary



with Tara McKenzie

What's Really Going On

Roll a D6 or select whichever one of the following situations appeals to you the most:

The Kaefer Invasion

Once the alien menace lands in the German & Japanese colonies, players can take the roles of defenders (now that they know Joi as 'their' world they may feel compelled to fight for it), supply runners from New Cornwall, Elysia, or another location, aid the evacuation, or just plain old Kaefer hunters. They will get to witness first hand the valiant but faltering defence by the Japanese (saved by the timely arrival of Rochement's fleet).

The actual heavy resistance may only last five days but there will be plenty of the enemy to hunt down and kill as they flee into the hinterlands of Joi.

After the battle for Joi players will have a wealth of useful experience to use against the enemy on other worlds. 'Advisors' coming from a world that beat back the Kaefer in 5 days will be in demand, if only for the morale boost it will bring to those who live on worlds like Dunkelheim & Aurore.

After The Kaefers

War can build reputations as well as shatter lives and as the Kaefer War draws to a close, those players who took the fight to the alien menace may be remembered by some as 'The Six Ronin', 'The Approaching Thunder', or 'Honest Abe's Company'. This could have benefits when seeking freelance work after the war. Reputations travel far and can grow beyond expectation and might bring it's own set of problems (difficulties moving incognito for example).

Any war stories attached to the players may get them a little cash in return for interviews, book deals, or from a patron who wants to hire 'The Heroes of Joi' for a 'special kind of job' that requires delicate discussions in the medium of violence.

The actual battle on Joi only lasts a few days so it's for the Referee to prompt gently his players into using those few days well to do something truly spectacular. Something that will serve as a beacon of hope for all those in danger. "See that bug's tank? I'm having that."



needs people to guard her team while they gather evidence and potentially assist in getting live animals away.

4 - Environmental Agent Provocateur

Monique represents a group of environmental campaigners who are interested in gathering evidence of Japanese ecological crimes and possibly destroy some of the Terran crops being cultivated in the disputed areas. They need extra muscle to get into and out of the disputed areas and help to destroy crops.

5 - Elysian Customs Agent

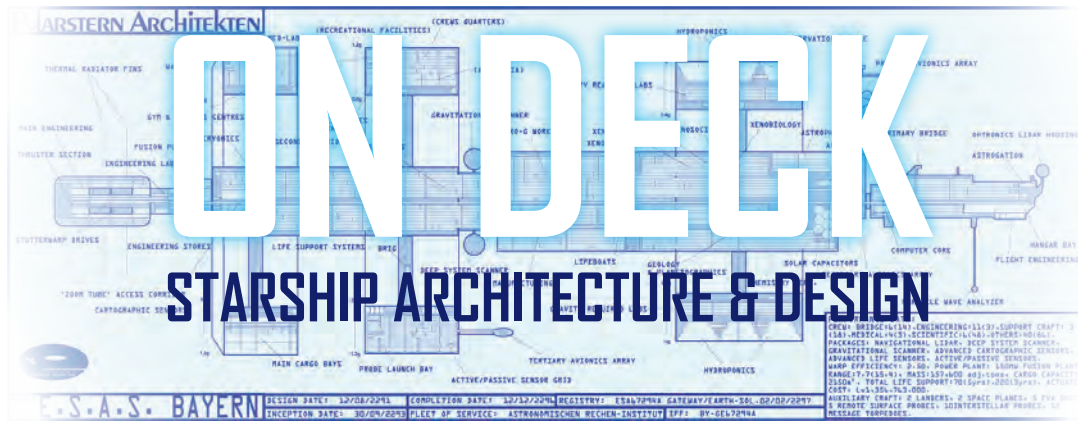
Monique represents the Elysian provisional government. Their previous attempts to stop environmental groups using Elysia as a back door into the Japanese colony have so far failed. They have managed to stop some of the more obvious ones as they arrive in the colony, but even the thickest campaigners aren't going to put their real reason for visiting Elysia on their immigration paperwork and there isn't the organisation or information to identify and stop them all.

She needs people who are not affiliated to Elysia or to the environmental groups to investigate and catalogue the scale of the problem and preferably identify the ring-leaders permanently based in Elysia. She also needs some idea of what is happening to the groups when they encounter the Japanese and how the groups respond – the last thing the Elysian government needs is environmental campaigners shooting it out with Japanese rangers and giving the Japanese an excuse to escalate the tension between the two colonies by claiming Elysian support for 'armed aggression'.

6 - Secret Agent/Patsy

Monique is actually secretly working for the Japanese government, although her cover will be as one of the options above. The Japanese are looking for an excuse to escalate tension against the Elysians and cut off the flow of outsiders who illegally cross from Elysia to the Japanese colony. As an added bonus if they can neutralise (or, better yet, engineer a reason for them or the French government to take over) Elysia, they also flank and weaken the position of the German colony which they are currently disputing territory with. They are recruiting small groups of people to 'infiltrate' Japanese territory where they can be arrested committing atrocities (the actual atrocities are staged by the Japanese – they only need the bodies of the 'culprits') or, better yet, can be killed resisting the Japanese authorities – all of it conveniently filmed by Japanese news teams working with the rangers and the colony military. Further events are up to the referee.





Space Station Alpha-14 by Mark Lucas

This article takes a detailed look at a common type of modular habitat that can be found throughout human space. Included is a description, full deck plans and an encounter idea that referees could work into an existing scenario.

History

The Alpha-14 is a typical example of the ATA-Alpha class medium sized space station, constructed by the now defunct Anglo-French manufacturing giant, Ashwell Tessier Astrosystems. The initial design for the Alpha class was first laid down in 2233, during an economic boom that saw many nations and organisations scrambling to set up space facilities to support exploration, mining and colonisation efforts.

The customer for the first Alpha station, a French research institute, repeatedly changed its design specification, leading Ashwell Tessier's architects to add multiple fixing points and universal elements in an attempt to preempt further configuration changes, so although the Alpha wasn't originally intended to be a modular design, it ended up that way. After the completion of the first station, Ashwell Tessier received a flurry of orders for similar stations that could be designed and built very quickly through the use of various combinations of the

Alpha's core components - and so the ATA Alpha-class station was born.

Basic Arrangement

Common to all Alphas is the head-to-tail arrangement with a command module at the 'top' and a power plant module at the other end. Between these two components runs the station's 'backbone', consisting of a series of interconnected 8-ton modules from which countless possible combinations of modules can be hung. The standard arrangement for accommodation is a pair of 600-ton 'hamster wheels' that are spun at 4RPM to simulate a gravity of 0.5g. These habitats are usually deployed in a counter-rotating pair with a sizable anti-torque engine nestled between them. In theory the anti-torque engine has sufficient rating to allow the station to function with only a single habitat, although in fact such an arrangement wouldn't get certification without back-up systems that would be more expensive than just fitting the second habitat.

Alpha-14's Layout

Getting on board...

Alpha-14 can be boarded through the following entry points:

Port/Starboard Docking Arms - At the end of each of the two arms is a standard airlock, allowing entry either from a

List of Operational Stations

Format:

Name

Location

Mission

Alpha 1

L5

Now on display as part of a collection of historical stations

Alpha 12

Sol-Asteroids

Survey drone repair station owned by Ceres Platinum Holdings.

Alpha 13

Nyotekundu

Prospecting Station

Alpha 14

Referee's discretion

Research Station

Alpha 17

Alpha Centauri

Training facility for The Life Foundation

Alpha 19

DM+15 4733

Ship repair and refueling station

Alpha 20

Vega

Research Station

Alpha 23

61 Ursae Majoris



Interface Transfer station for New Cornwall, Joi

Alpha 24

Beta Canum-4

Research Station near Premiere Orbital (Orbital beanstalk station)

Alpha 25

Haifeng

Oceanographic observatory/ Interface transfer station

Alpha 29

DM+36 2219

Research Station

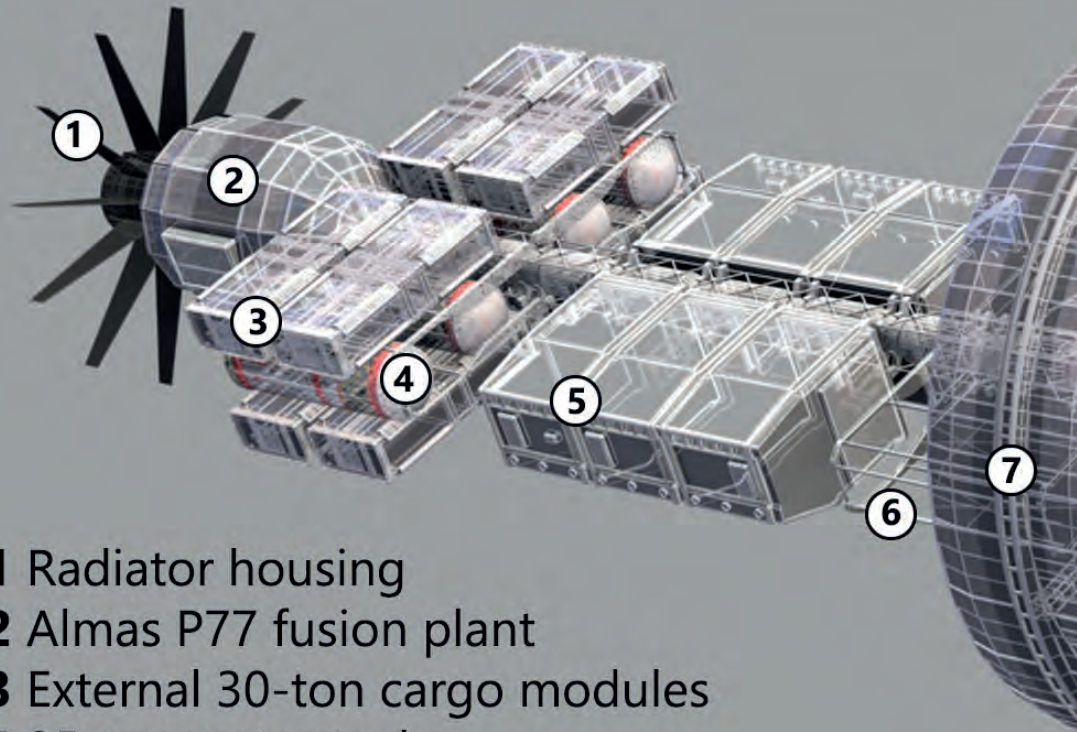
Alpha 30

Hochbaden

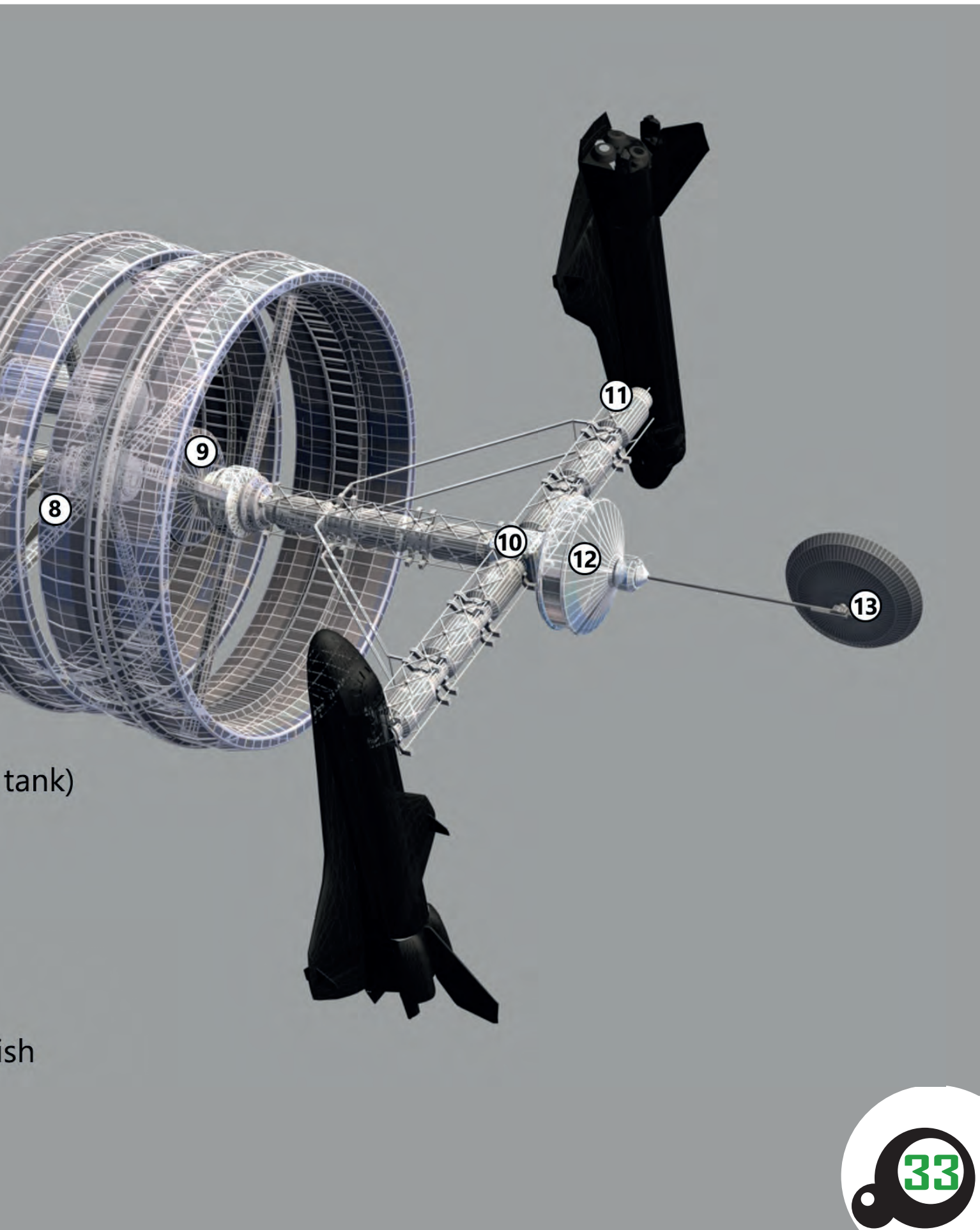
Prospecting Station located in the system's asteroid belt.



General Arrangement



- 1 Radiator housing
- 2 Almas P77 fusion plant
- 3 External 30-ton cargo modules
- 4 25-ton water tanks
- 5 Operations modules
- 6 Module rack (shown with a single 25-ton water tank)
- 7 Spin habitat 1
- 8 Spin habitat 2 (counter spun)
- 9 Spin machinery
- 10 EVA / Primary access pod
- 11 Docking arm
- 12 Command module/sensor suite
- 13 Yan Palos LR9 long range antenna / receiver dish



tank)

ish

CERES
PLATINUM
HOLDINGS



ALPHA
12

ALERT

THERE IS
NO CAUSE
FOR ALARM

PLEASE
RETURN TO
YOUR
STATIONS



docked ship or through direct 'extra-vehicular' access. Normally the docking airlocks will only allow entry when confirmed by someone on the station's command deck, although it's possible for access to be hacked, overriding the control centre, this will result in explosive decompression of the entire docking tube as the door is forced open. If the would-be intruder didn't move out of the way before the door opened they'd be fired off into space by the resulting blast of air.

EVA Airlock - At the hub of the docking arms is the entry point intended for spacewalkers. Again, this airlock can be locked from the command deck, although it's not standard practice to lock entry unless the station's inhabitants feel under threat. The chamber contains two spacesuits attached to donning frames.

Emergency Airlock / Access Door - Each spin habitat has either a large cargo airlock or an emergency access door. These are included as a means of bringing large machinery or cargo aboard while the habitat is not under spin - usually when the station is first fitted out. On habitat 1, at the A4 storage area there's an access door. When the station is in use, the door is secured against opening as doing so would vent the entire habitat. Some stations feature an inflatable lifeboat that can be launched from the door, although this is not equipped on Alpha-14.

On habitat 2 there's a cargo airlock that can be used when the habitat pressurised. Usually the habitat must be brought to a stop in order for cargo to be brought aboard, although there are emergency protocols for using the cargo airlock when the habitat is spinning, these require the use of climbing ropes and a pulley system that draws cargo or passengers up a spoke and over the hab-

itat surface and is definitely not a means of entry for the faint hearted.

Power Plant Capsule - At the top of the power capsule there's another EVA airlock, intended to allow engineers quick access to the outside of the power plant, it's also usable as an emergency access point.

Station Description

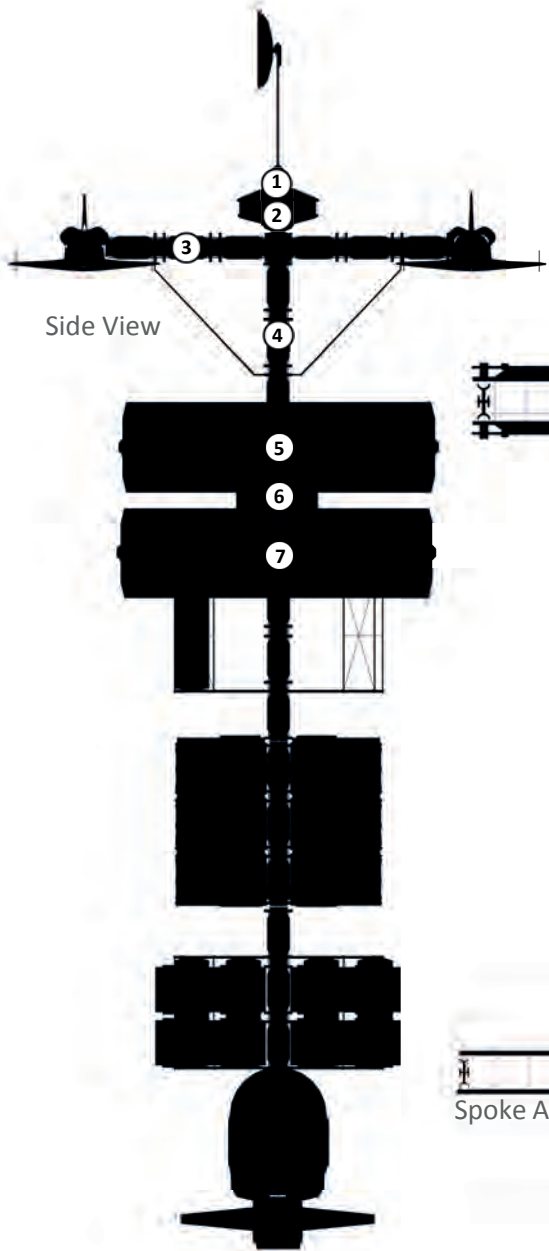
Communications / Sensors Deck - At the top of the command capsule is a small work area with two crew stations. One station is used to control the long-range radio system while the other controls a basic civilian-grade sensor suite. Control of both comms and sensors can be handed off to the command deck, however, doing so takes up one of the three command crew stations.

Command Deck - The main compartment in the command module houses three crew workstations for monitoring and managing all the station's systems. The three crew stations are identical multi-function consoles that can switch between traffic control, station systems, security, communications and crew management. Built into the command deck is the station's vault, a secure chamber for storing weapons, valuables or anything that needs to be locked away.

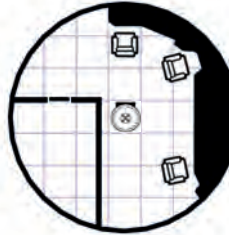
Docking Arms - Two 20m long braced access tubes that allow starships or space vehicles to dock with the station.

Access Tunnel - The stations 'backbone' access tube runs from the command capsule all the way down to the power capsule, a distance of 180m. Along this stretch there are open emergency hatches every 20m that automatically close in the event of an emergency - or if triggered from the command deck.

STATION ALPHA-14



1. Communications/
Sensors Deck



2. Command Deck
Station Vault

3. Port/Starboard Docking Arms
Suiting Bay/EVA Airlock



4. Access Tunnel

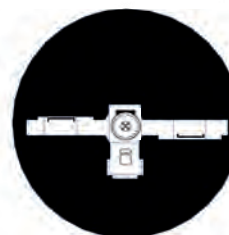
Spoke A1

5. and 7. Spin Habitat
Hub and access spokes
(One for each spin habitat)

Spoke A4

Spoke A2

Spoke A3



6. Spin Machinery

Deck Key	
	Wall Hatch
	Floor Hatch
	Ceiling Hatch
	Floor & Ceiling Hatch
	Bulkhead
	Maintenance Hatch
	Sliding Door
	Ladder
	Workstation
	Console

when
you
have a
giant
thirst



Americola

is all
you
need!

Americo

\$ ~ American
Dollar

36

Spin Habitat Access Spokes - Each spin habitat has an access hub with four spokes, each spoke providing ladder access 'down' to the spin habitat. At the centre of hub there's no simulated gravity, it isn't until about halfway down a spoke that an occupant starts to notice a tug. At the hatch at the end of a spoke the simulated gravity is just less than 0.5g.

Spin Machinery - The cylindrical hub module contains the machinery that is used to drive the spin habitats. It also runs fly small, rapidly spinning fly-wheels to ensure that no spin leaks into the station's main hull. There's a crew station in the capsule, although it is only used for maintenance or emergency actions.

Spin Habitat 1 - Contains 60 staterooms, all equipped for double-occupancy. However, as 6-month tours are not uncommon, all staterooms are actually used for single occupancy. Staterooms contain bunk bed, two wardrobes, a single desk, chair and computer terminal as well as a shower, sink and toilet cubicle.

Along with a galley and various open spaces, habitat 1 also includes a sickbay, office and briefing room, which also doubles as the station commanders office.

There are 4 overhead hatches (A1,A2,A3 and A4) that lead to the station's hub, there are also two floor hatches (One near A1 and the other near A3) that lead into an under-floor duct. This duct provides access to various cables and pipes and can also double as an emergency access tunnel. Also near B4 is an emergency cargo hatch that can be used to load and offload cargo or equipment that can't be carried down an access spoke. This hatch can't be opened while the habitat is pressurized.

Spin Habitat 2 - Is nearly identical to habitat 1 in layout, although it's open spaces are arranged differently. It has a lab instead of a sickbay, more offices and instead of an emergency cargo hatch it has a full cargo airlock that can be used while the habitat is pressurized.

Access Tunnel - running a length of 20m from the hub of the second spin habitat to the start of the first set of mission modules.

Mission Modules - Each module provides 85-tons of space, split over three 'floors' that can be configured to handle whatever tasks are required. As these modules operate in zero-g, all surfaces (floors, ceilings and walls) can be kitted out with equipment and consoles.

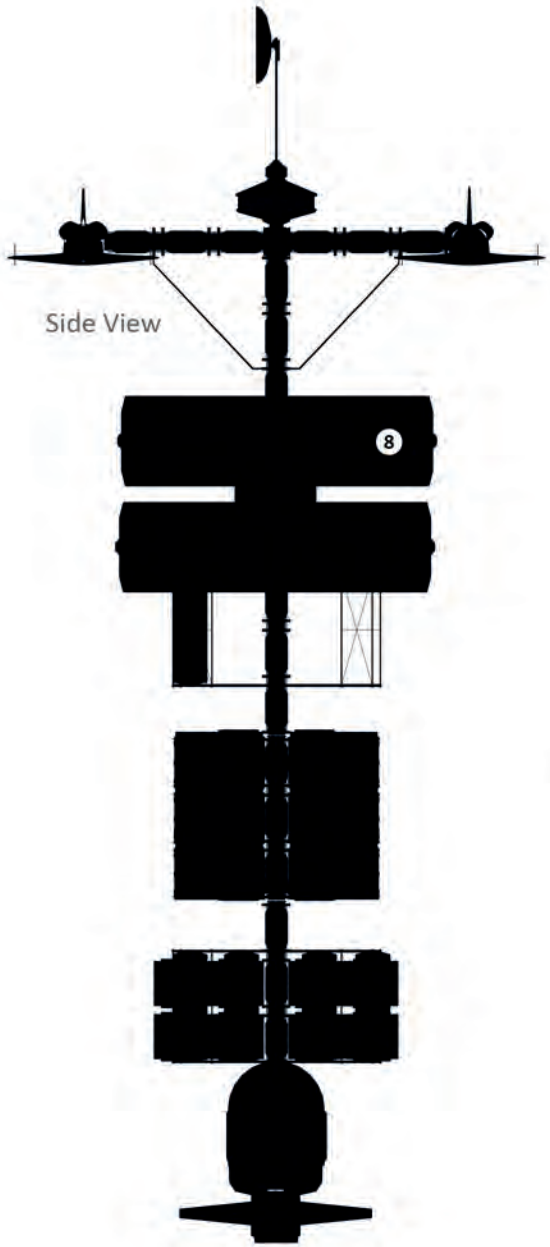
The modules are docked on the central access tunnel with hatches connecting to the module's top floor. Passage between the module's 3 floors is via doors that are cut into the floors, rather than via hatches, although there is an emergency hatch available as a secondary means of moving between floors. Note that on the second floor there's a corridor that runs under the station's access tube to the adjacent mission module.

Alpha-14 carries 6 mission modules, currently configured with various systems for mineral analysis through advanced spectroscopy and quantum rippling.

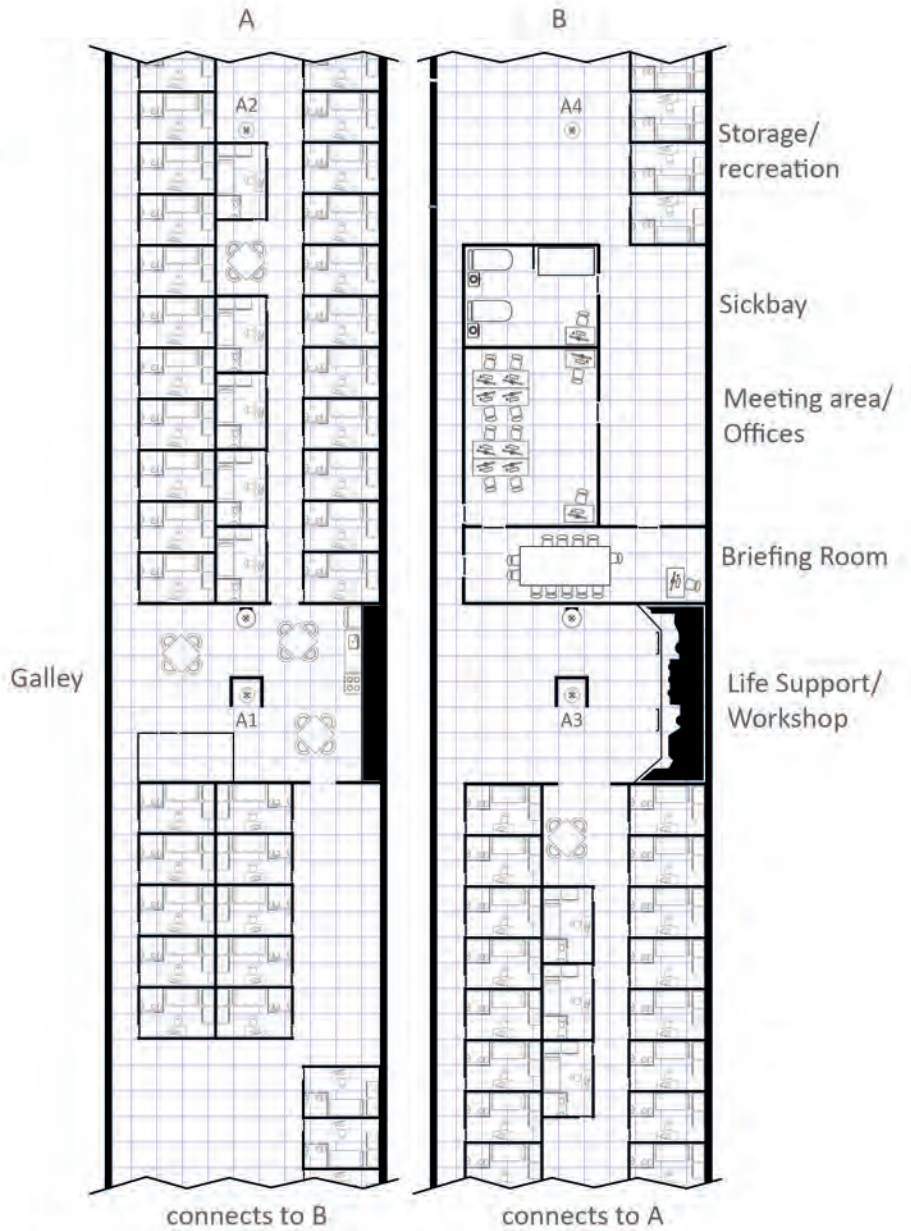
Cargo Modules - Alpha-14 has a rack on which larger water tanks and cargo pods are attached. The water tanks supply various needs - although not usually powerplant fuel (the fuel for which is sealed inside the plant) or life support which runs on a nearly closed system where 95% of waste water is recovered. Some stations use these tanks to support fuel processing to refuel interface craft of visiting starships.

Along with the tanks, Alpha-14 is

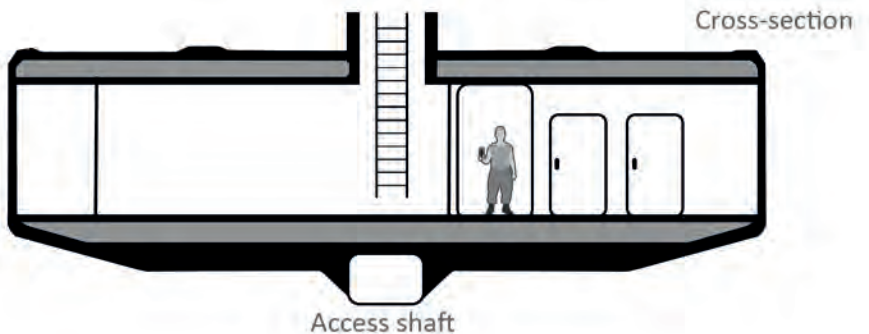
STATION ALPHA-14



8. Spin Habitat 1



Deck Key	
	Wall Hatch
	Floor Hatch
	Ceiling Hatch
	Floor & Ceiling Hatch
	Bulkhead
	Maintenance Hatch
	Sliding Door
	Ladder
	Workstation
	Console





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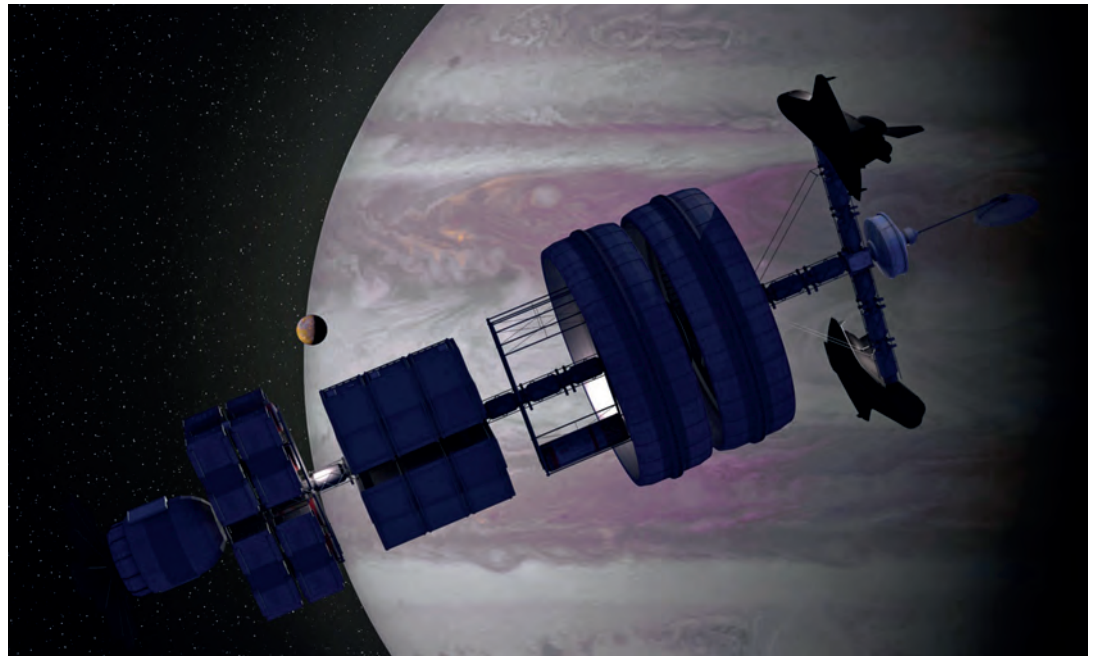
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equipped with four 45-ton cargo modules. On some stations these are bolted into place without any means direct access from the station.

Alpha-14 is equipped with cargo modules that have extra hatches installed, allowing the modules to be used as extra space or for storing supplies. Each cargo module as a main door at one end, there's no airlock though, so the door can only be opened if the module has not been pressurised.

Power plant capsule - The 300-ton Fusion plant is 20% smaller than a corresponding fusion plant designed to power a starship. This more compact model has been optimised for greater automation and easier maintenance, although it only offers 50% of the power output of a starship power plant.

On the top floor there are two crew stations and an EVA airlock which is equipped with two spacesuits, attached to donning frames - allowing a single member of crew to suit-up in less than a minute. The rest of the capsule is dominated by the tokamak ring of an Almass 77MW fusion reactor.

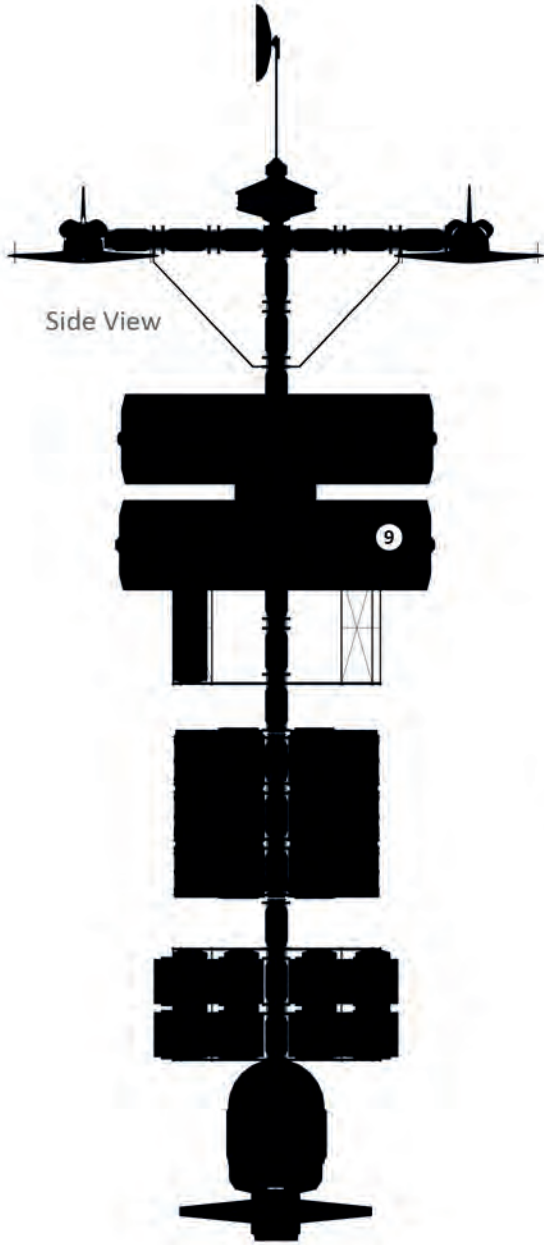
Scenario idea

While travelling through Aliceport the PCs are asked if they'd be prepared to take a short-term contract to investigate the goings-on aboard a research station. Three days ago the station's director logged that staff were starting to suffer an acute onset of sickness. A few hours ago the station stopped sending updates and isn't responding to calls. The PCs need to get onboard the station, identify what's happened. If none of the PCs have medical training then a medic NPC will be assigned to the group.

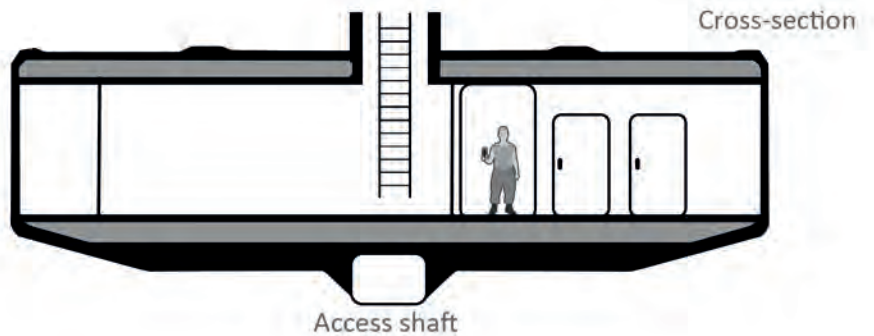
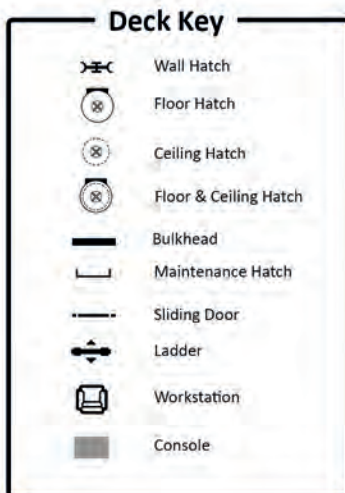
Optional Alpha 14 location and background

Alpha 14 is located in orbit around Beowulf and is currently under the joint control of The Royal Society and the University of Alicia. The station is occupied by sixty three personnel, split into two teams: one team studies Beowulf's meteorology and climate using an array of geostationary satellites, controlled from one of the mission modules. The station's second team is responsible for tracking comets and asteroids and maintaining a catalogue of

STATION ALPHA-14



9. Spin Habitat 2

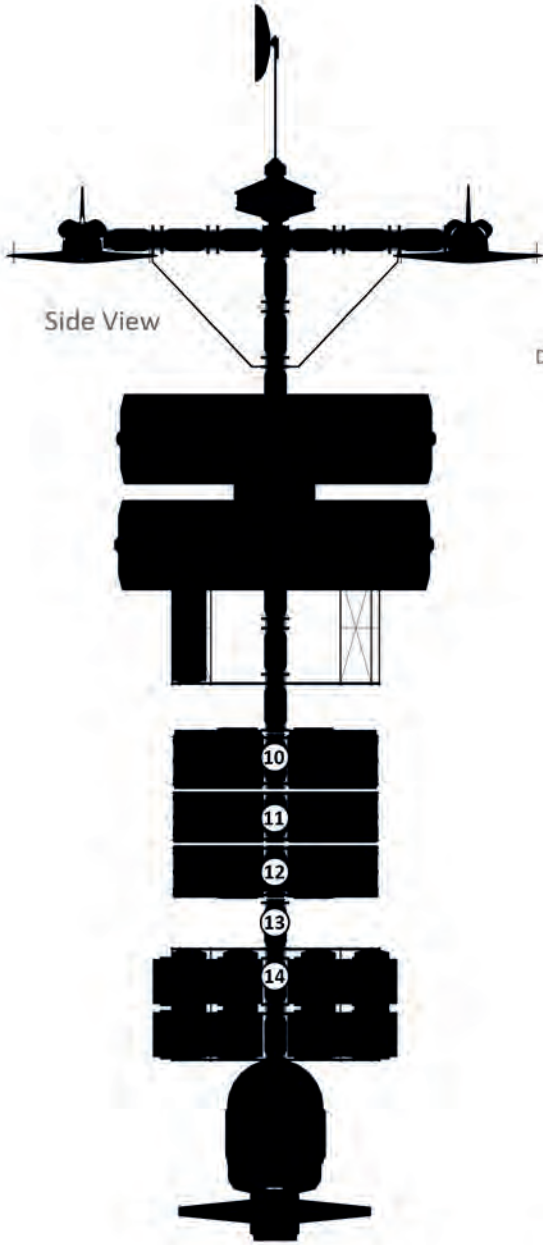


STATION ALPHA-14

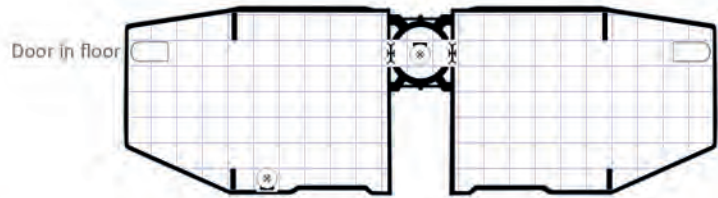


Cross-section view of Mission Module

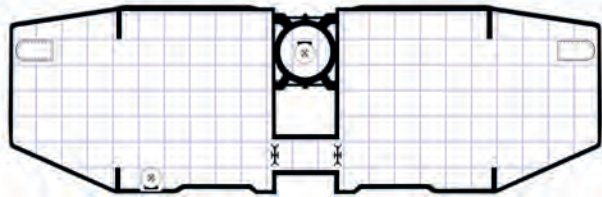
10., 11. and 12. Mission Modules



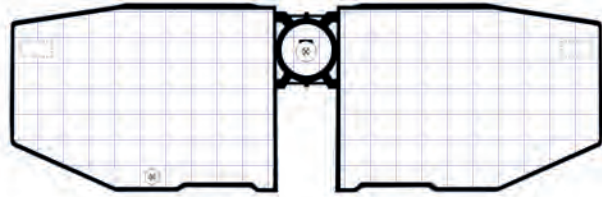
Side View



Deck 1



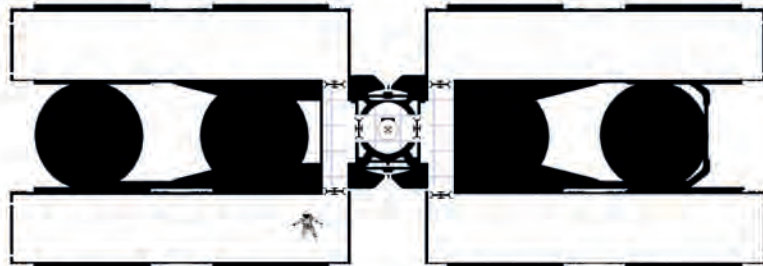
Deck 2



Deck 3

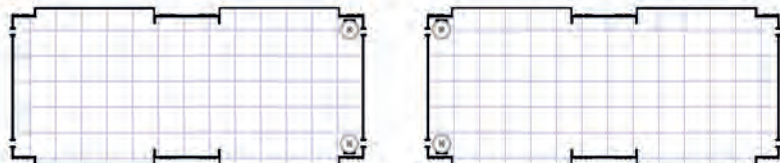


13. Access Tunnel



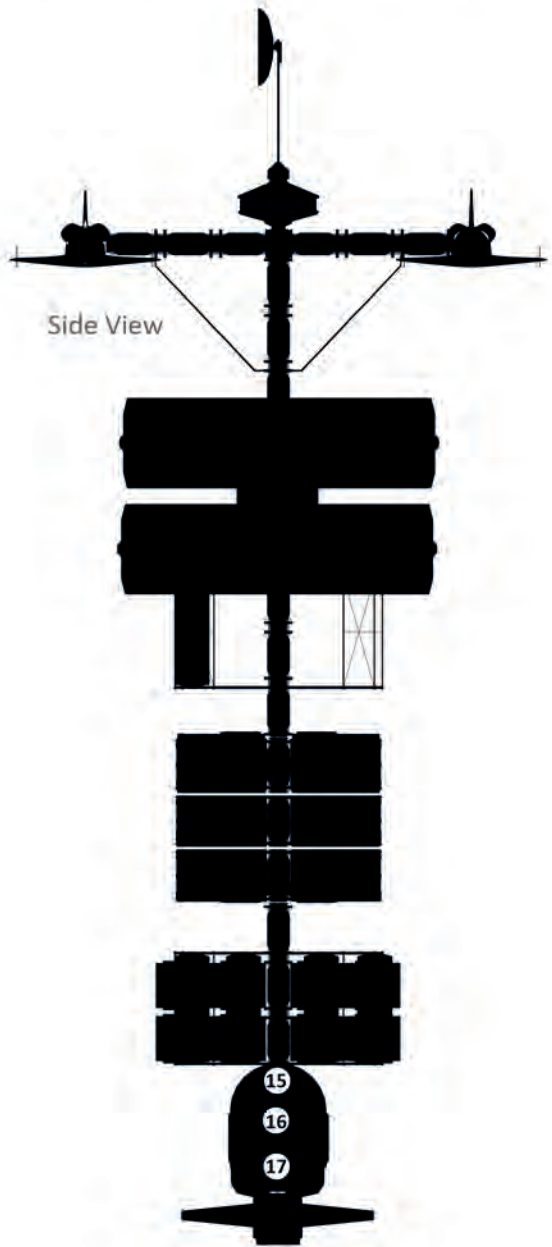
Cross-section view of cargo pod access

14. Cargo Pods



Deck Key	
	Wall Hatch
	Floor Hatch
	Ceiling Hatch
	Floor & Ceiling Hatch
	Bulkhead
	Maintenance Hatch
	Sliding Door
	Ladder
	Workstation
	Console

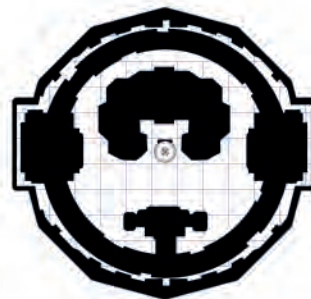
STATION ALPHA-14



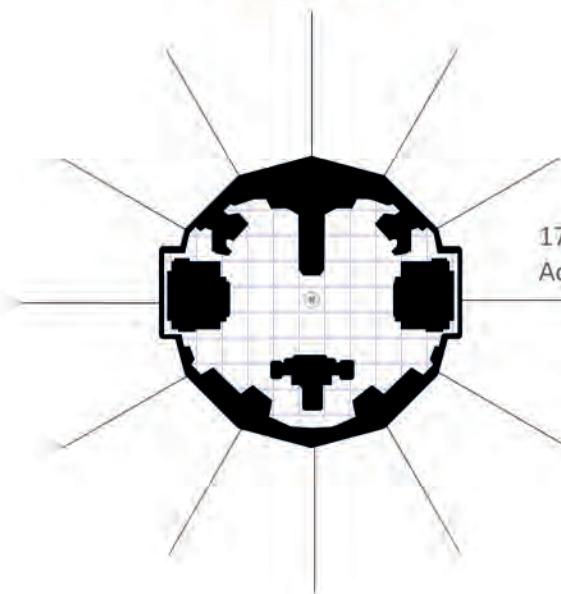
Power Plant Capsule



15. Power Control/
EVA Airlock

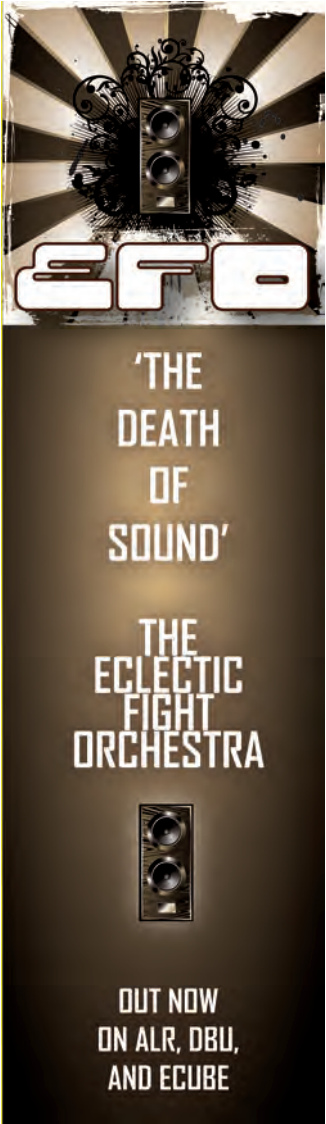


16. Engineering Bay



17. Power Plant
Access / Workshop

Deck Key	
	Wall Hatch
	Floor Hatch
	Ceiling Hatch
	Floor & Ceiling Hatch
	Bulkhead
	Maintenance Hatch
	Sliding Door
	Ladder
	Workstation
	Console



near-Beowulf objects using a separate set of outward facing satellites. Most of the station's mission module space is taken up by satellite maintenance and repair equipment. On the external storage racks are two spare satellites.

The situation

The station's food supply has been contaminated. Over the course of 2 days almost the entire staff suffer acute food poisoning, however one in five of the staff (currently 12 personnel) suffer from a form of delirium, the main symptom for which is paranoia and violent hallucinations. While it is serious enough that the station's personnel are sick, these twelve individuals have made things dire.

One staff member has barricaded herself on the command deck, she believes that the whole station is a giant alien organism is taunting her - the taunts are in fact the increasingly desperate calls from Aliceport orbital for a status update.

Another member of staff has attempted to cut his way out of the station using power tools. A number of sick staff managed to wrestle the tools from him before he pushed himself elsewhere in the station, leaving one of their number gravely injured.

Boarding the station will be contested by the member of staff who has taken control of the command deck. The PCs will need to come up with a plan for getting onboard. Once on the station they'll quickly identify that almost the entire crew are suffering some form of food poisoning, or have been left weak and disoriented from its after effects. Sooner or later they'll also encounter staff who are suffering from paranoid delirium. The encounter will be resolved when the PCs gain control of the station allowing for a larger team of medical personnel and relief staff to be safely shipped in.



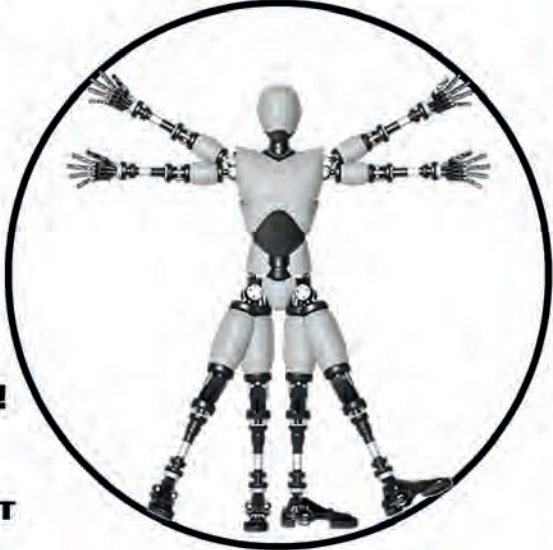
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BELTERS!

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED
TO KNOW ABOUT BELTERS BUT
WERE AFRAID TO ASK

by RM RHODES

One of the most interesting trends in the early part of the 22nd Century was the exodus to the Asteroid Belt that fills the orbit between Mars and Jupiter. For a variety of reasons, a large number of people chose to leave Earth and seek their fortune and settled in the Belt. There was no particular demographic – women were just as likely to head to the frontier as men.

The average length of time that any of them spent there was three months, but those that lasted a full year were more than likely to spend the rest of their lives floating through the rubble – a trend that holds true today. An interstellar drive was rumored to be coming “any day now” for about twelve years, during which the Belt accumulated its largest ever population – almost a million individuals at any given time. By 2200, at the end of the second age of exploration, there were only ever 100,000 individuals at any given time. Those that were just looking for a frontier left en masse when the colonies opened up, leaving

those who truly loved the kind of lifestyle the Belt forced people to adopt.

The early sponsors of Belt enterprises were national entities, but corporate interests piggybacked on the effort as contractors and quickly established their own facilities. It didn't take long for wildcat miners to take off for less crowded portions of the Belt and/or set themselves up as independent sub-contractors. As the focus shifted from Belt activities to virgin colony worlds and the concept of a Core began to develop, the various corporate and national activities were scaled back, leaving rump facilities that have been on the verge of shutdown for over a century.

Because of this, Belters in the Core do not look back on the boom times with nostalgia and even now exhibit a large amount of disdain for anyone who has not “put their year in.” Aside from crews that are rotated in and out on a regular basis, the majority of the Belt inhabitants are there by choice and outsiders

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often feel as if they were being treated like baggage. This is out of pragmatism – in the event of an emergency, locals will have to take care of making sure newbies survive. A common put down is “Not worth the time,” which is short for “not worth the time it would take to save your ass,” implying that the insulted has no survival skills.

Over the course of the past 185 years, the belter communities have perfected the conversion of small asteroids into small zero-gravity, nearly self-sufficient habitats that house anywhere from a dozen to several dozen inhabitants. These advances were completely ignored during the planning for the Kolonie Zwei debacle, which many beltters watched with great amusement. In contrast, both Boise and Ellesmere were built following belter best practices.

There are larger habitats – what the public refers to as belter cities. This is a misnomer, because they can usually only hold a few hundred people at a time and nobody really lives in them permanently. They are typically built in larger asteroids that have been spun to provide gravity and hollowed out to make several self-contained spaces connected by a series of airtight tunnels. These spaces are used to stage live entertainment. Concerts and travelling performers typically make a point to stop in these cities

when passing through a system. They are few and far between – most of them are in the Core, and one each in Vogelheim, Delta Pavonis and Tau Ceti.

After the big corporate mining and housing installations, the most common type of habitats are small settlements of 40 or 50 individuals where most of the inhabitants are engaged in farming, domestic activities or running kleinfabriken to make anything

and everything. Although the typical stereotype is that all Belters are miners, it's not entirely true. Almost all Belters have worked in mining at one time or another, but that's not really the point. The focus in these communities scattered throughout the Belt is not on financial gain – luxury goods are generally too expensive to even contemplate – but survival.

Belters have a love/hate relationship with vacuum. It's a majestic, impersonal environment that has the capacity for great beauty and will kill in an instant if given a chance. The biggest threat is depressurization and the standard environmental safety training course includes a short period of exposure in controlled conditions so that students know what to expect. The chuff of exiting atmosphere is almost iconic in popular culture and it has almost become a cliché for a story to start with a depressurization accident.

Sociologists who have studied Belter communities (and there haven't been many) describe them as intentional communities where privacy is more important than almost anything else. The focus is on living a simple life – not because they don't know what luxuries await them on Earth (they watch the same 3-V everyone else does), but because they have simply chosen to reject them. There aren't a lot of Cracks in the Belter communities, although some would say that every Belter has cracked.

Somewhere between a third and a half of Core Belt inhabitants were born there, although it is becoming more and more common for adolescent groups to head for less crowded belts in the frontiers instead of settling in the Core. This number goes up in the frontier belts to almost 100% because colonists are far less likely to seek belt living than inhab-

itants of the Core. The population density in the Core Belt isn't very high – it's basically the city of Fargo spread across the circumference of a planetary orbit.

Although it is the largest fringe community in the Core, inhabited largely by people who just want to be left alone, the Belt is a fairly calm place. Most authority figures regard the Belt as a haven for multitudes of escaped and wanted criminals and they're probably not wrong – but few actually stay in the Belt and instead just pass through en route to a place that understands the luxury of a real bed. There may be one or two pirate bases and perhaps a Provolution safehouse in the Core Belt, but it's not really a good place to do business of a clandestine nature. Most of that activity occurs in the other asteroid belts throughout human space.

Around about the early 2200s, a large group of Belters decided that the Core Belt was too crowded and set out for Queen Alice's Star – the only extra-solar asteroid belt in a system with a colony world. It was reasoned that proximity to a colony world was probably a good thing, just in case. Unfortunately, this migration was not discussed with either the British or French Colonial Offices and the British Colonial Office protested – loudly. For their part, the beltlers (the capital B differentiates Core Belters from frontier beltlers) ignored the British and went about their business of building habitats.

The British sent in the Royal Navy to do periodic sweeps of the belt, looking to disrupt asteroid construction, which taught the beltlers better clandestine skills. This led to a decades-long-running PR war between the immigrant beltlers and the British Colonial Office, who were not interested in supporting a population that chose to live in an ex-

traordinarily difficult environment and were not necessarily from the British Commonwealth. This ignored the fact that the immigrant beltlers were not interested in claiming colonial rights or resources and just wanted to be sure they had a planet with a breathable atmosphere to aim for in a pinch. The situation got so extreme that beltlers in QAS showed up as a recurring villain on a popular children's video series. (The French seemed bemused by the whole thing.)

What many did not realize is that the beltlers had set up a series of communications satellites that allowed the community to tap into the British communications satellite network. This provided them with access to communications feeds from the Core brought by each incoming ship, the same system used by the British colonists. This led to overutilization of very carefully calibrated resources that tended to crash more often than they should have. Every time the British shut down a pirate link, another one sprung up.

The whole thing never quite came to a head, but it abated in the 2220s when the Bavarian government allowed companies to set up licensed operations at Gerrollblock in DM -56 328, adjacent to Rho Eridani. It was a given that asteroid mining companies could not afford to be picky when it came to nationality, so many left QAS and the Core seeking honest work. Many more followed when commercial opportunities in Ross 863 and Henry's Star opened up in the 2230s.

As the beltlers left, the Royal Navy conducted sweeps to chase out malingerers and made the whole place rather inhospitable for most of the next few decades. While it wasn't until the late 2270s that beltlers began to visit QAS again with the

**CAN
YOU
FILL
THIS
SPACE?**

**THEN
COLONIAL
TIMES
NEEDS
YOU!**

**WE
NEED
ART
AND
TEXT**

**SEE
CONTACT
INFO
ON
CONTENT'S
PAGE**



STYGIAN FOX

45

Spurious Rumours

There is a strain of conspiracy theory that posits various extremist groups in these places, plotting or preparing a long-delay comet aimed at one world or another. The truth is that these locations are so distant from their primaries that the solar cells every belter habitat relies on are next to useless.

There are also rumors that some crazies have spent decades transforming asteroids into works of art or that they're sitting on tantalum or platinum strikes – but these are always from a friend of a friend who heard about something in a distant system. Stranger things have been known to happen, though. Unsurprisingly, there are few true loner crazies in the Core Belt – it's too crowded.

Further rumors are of a top secret supermax prison facility in Proxima Centauri's Oort Cloud, but then again, there are also rumors of completely artificial humans living in secret installations in Sol's Kuiper Belt. It's hard to know what to laugh at and what to be intrigued by. Both locations are large enough to house any number of habitats that nobody would ever know. Which is, as every belter knows, the whole point.



intention of settlement, young beltlers have been sneaking into the QAS belt on a dare since the 2240s, to the point where it has become somewhat of a rite of passage. There are persistent rumors that small pockets of beltlers never really left QAS back in the day and that forgotten habitats are still floating out there, waiting to be found.

In addition to the commercial enterprises, a few other systems opened up in the 2230s and absorbed a great deal of the diaspora from QAS. Belts in Vogelheim, Delta Pavonis, Mu Herculis and Tau Ceti were visited with a great deal more discretion, so as to not inflame local tensions unnecessarily. Only the American Navy in Mu Herculis took any notice of the newcomers and have occasionally deployed the fleet to sweep out the usual suspects under the guise of “naval training exercises.”

Every twenty years, a new generation of beltlers scouts out a new belt, driven by the same sense of overcrowding that drove people to QAS. In the 50s, it was Omicron 2 Eridani. In the 70s, it was Queen Alice's Star. In the 90s, it was Procyon. To date, the Brazillian naval base in the Procyon belt has been the only indication that anyone has noticed the incursions.

Because of the discreet nature of the belter communities in the frontier, it was inevitable that pirates, smugglers and other not-entirely-legal enterprises would spring up in their vicinity. Most of the activity that authorities suspect is occurring in the Core Belt can be found in the frontier belts – beltlers are often hired to build asteroid facilities for men with no name willing to pay in frozen food. Beltlers are reclusive to begin with and the extra-legal spaces are not interested in being counted, which makes it difficult to get exact numbers, but the

best guesstimates are somewhere in the nature of 100,000 people scattered across all ten extra-solar belt, including the commercial enterprises.

Of these, nearly a third of the population in any of the non-commercial belts are loners who have found refuge in their own private planet. These are often characterized as extreme Cracks, wild-eyed crazies who have run as far away from the pressures of the Core as it is possible to run. There is no way for anyone to watch them if nobody knows where they are. Sometimes a small community will provide supplemental food or emergency resources to their local crazy, but these individuals do their best to remain self-sustaining.

Libertine traders are the primary lifeline between the various belt communities. These primarily bring food supplements and specialty parts that cannot be fabricated with existing materials. It is very common for libertine families to marry into belter communities and vice versa. When beltlers move from one system to another, it is usually via libertine ships so as to leave no trace of their movement.

Libertines are the primary market for whatever precious metals beltlers come across – these generate credit that can be used in a pinch or for buying entertainment. Money is only used in external transactions because there is nothing internal to the community that is valuable enough to pay money for.

Libertines are also the source for most of the colonists that decide to run away to the belt (another common trope in popular entertainment). They hitch a ride with a free trader and get off at the next asteroid habitat, completely unprepared for the life they think they want. It is not uncommon for criminals to es-

cape to what they believe is a free haven. Those that can adapt to a place without laws will probably not “die in an accident” soon after they arrive. It is also equally common for law enforcement types to follow the same path in search of their suspects.

The significant difference between belt-ers and libertines is that belt-ers have found a place where they want to stay. Libertines have a desire to travel everywhere and see everything. Both find the rampant materialism in the Core to be silly – belt-ers know that there are plenty of rocks to live on and if you wanted to have one for yourself, people would help you build it. The only real property that the libertine owns is the ship. Everything else is just stuff that you have to

store in your living space.

Nearly all belt-ers (except for some of the crazies) have the Micro G DNAM. Those that don’t have very specific reasons for their exception. A sizable population of the belt-ers were born with it.

Belt-ers are from everywhere – mostly from Tier 1 and 2 nations, with an even spread from Tiers 3 and 4. National identity means very little in belter communities.

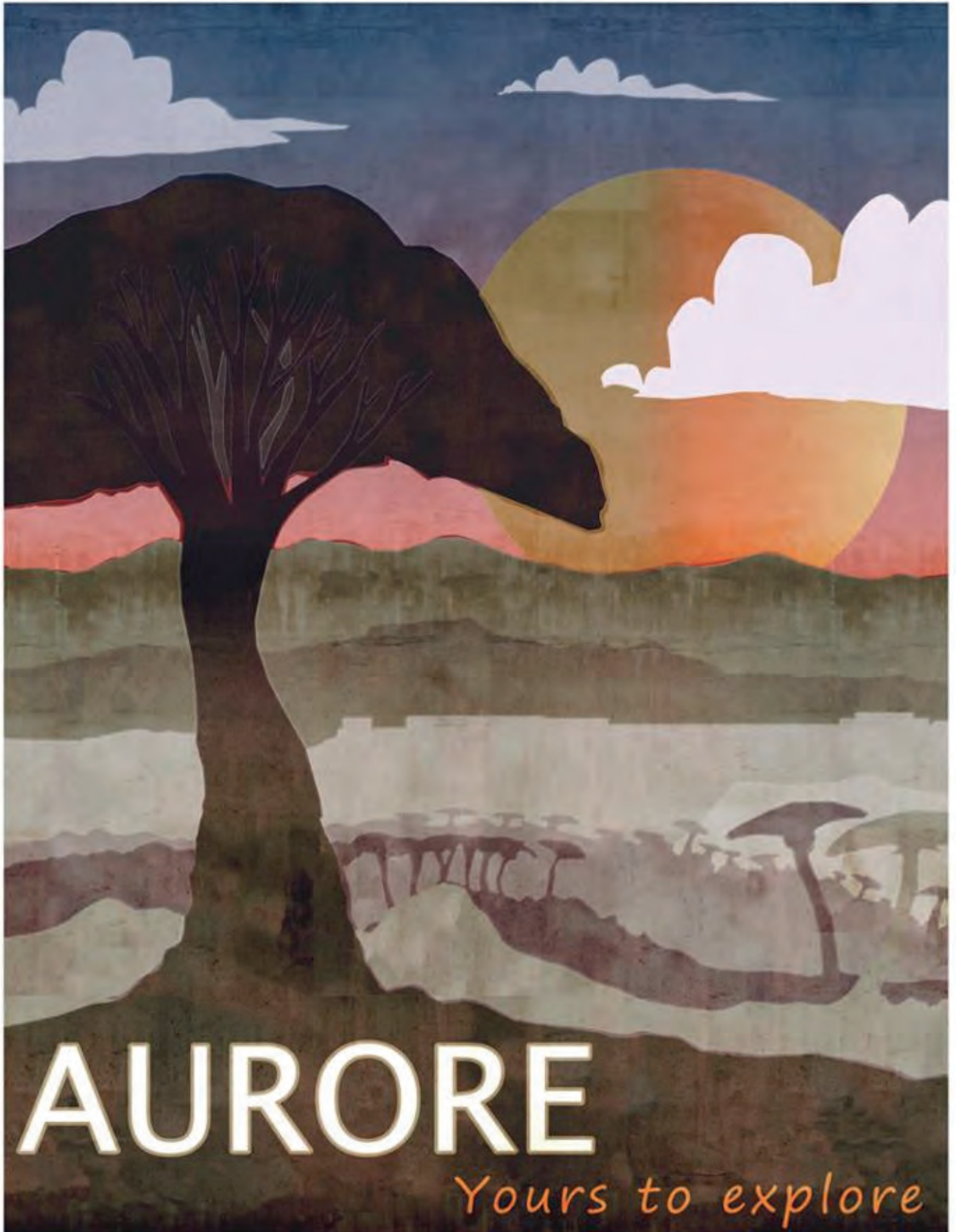
Nearly every star has both a Kuiper Belt and an Oort Cloud, yet neither is considered for long term habitation in any system in Human Space.



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ARMING 'THE INTREPID ARROWS'

THE WEAPONS OF MANGHURIA'S POLICE FORCES

BY COLIN DUNN

Manchurian police forces are tasked with keeping the peace. However, the Manchurians are mindful that armed, local police can become the focus of a rebellion, either as member, or simply to get their weapons. For that reason, the police forces are limited in the weapons they can deploy. They have to be effective enough for use against civilians and criminals, but not so effective that they become a military threat.

Tenshang State Armoury Police Pistol Type 55

The Type 55 is a light-weight, small-calibre semi-automatic pistol. While legally it is only available to police and state-sponsored paramilitary forces, it is a common personal weapon on Manchurian colonies across the Chinese Arm. While the light 7mm round is not much of a man-stopper, it is better than nothing.

Type: 7mm semi-automatic pistol

Country: Manchuria

Length: 23 cm

Action: Single shot

The Intrepid Arrows

The Manchu people inhabit the northern and western areas of the area of Asia traditionally known as greater China. They are the 4th largest indigenous group in that area and 1st largest in present day (AD2300) Manchuria itself with Hans coming a close second



The Manchurian National Flag



and Tibetans and other Himalayans a distant third.

Throughout their history the Manchu people have been known for their resilience and defiance in the face of those attempting to subdue them by force.

The Manchurian people are descended from peoples that first inhabited the interior of north Asia as early as 2800 BC and who later became known as the Jurchen.

Successive centuries saw the Manchu's fortunes wax and wane from being conquered by Genghis Khan, to establishing the Qing dynasty in China, to having their culture diluted by Han influence and being seen as backwater 'yokels', to Japanese domination, then communist domination, the Manchu's fortunes rose again in the ruins of greater China.

Freed from the cultural and military domination by Beijing (at the time a significantly flat and radioactive piece of ground), the Manchurians used their resources and industry to dominate the north of greater China and spread out to the west after (cont.)

Mass (empty): 0.6 kg

Ammunition: 7x18 mm fixed cartridge ball

Muzzle Velocity: 480 mps

Magazine: 10 removable box magazine

Mass of loaded magazine: 0.15 kg

RoF: 60rpm

Price: Lv250, Lv20 per box of 100 rounds.



Type 55

**Tenshang State Armoury Security
Pistol Type 66**

The Type 66 is a small-calibre suppressed pistol only available to Imperial intelligence forces, though in practice it is often also used by regional security forces as well. This short-barreled weapon uses cased contained-piston rounds, where the propellant burned is completely contained within the cartridge. While damage is low, it is effectively silent. It is capable of semi-automatic fire, but the ejected cases are very distinctive.

Type: 8mm contained-piston pistol

Country: Manchuria

Length: 23 cm

Action: Single shot

Mass (empty): 0.6 kg

Ammunition: 8x40 mm contained piston round



Type 66

Muzzle Velocity: 200 mps

Magazine: 7 removable box magazine

Mass of loaded magazine: 0.35 kg

RoF: 40rpm

Price: Lv2,000, Lv2 per round

Wu-Beijing Type20 Shotgun

The Type 20 is a basic pump-action shotgun used for riot control and door entry. Rubber shot and shock rounds are available for riots, and slugs or small explosive rounds for blasting locks and hinges. Though it is classified as a police weapon and so not technically available for civilians, the Type 20 is a common weapon with colonists on the Chinese Arm.

Type: 18mm shotgun

Country: Manchuria

Length: 23 cm

Action: Single shot

Mass (empty): 2.4 kg

Ammunition: 18x40mm fixed cartridge shot (10x6mm shot)

Muzzle Velocity: 410 mps

Magazine: 6 round internal tube magazine

Mass of 6 rounds in magazine: 0.40 kg

RoF: 40rpm

Price: Lv780, Lv20 for 200 loose rounds.



Type-20



Type-715

Tenshang State Armoury Police Rifle Type 715

Like most police weapons in Manchurian territory, the Type 715 is a semi-automatic weapon. It fires the standard Wu-Beijing 7.5 x 32mm round, which is effective but suffers from poor terminal ballistics. It is also used to fire bullet-trap rifle grenades, usually with some sort of irritant gas for crowd dispersal. Also unlike most modern weapons, the Type 715 has a mounting lug for a bayonet, which is often used to carry a stun-

stick.

Type: 7.5mm police rifle

Country: Manchuria

Length: 23 cm

Action: Single shot

Mass (empty): 3.1 kg

Ammunition: 7.5x32mm fixed cartridge ball

(cont.)

encountering some little resistance from farmers collectives in what si now known as China. Over time Manchuria has stabilised and grown into the star faring state we know today.

When the ancient Jurchen paid tribute to the great Emperor Shun in the 23rd century BC they did so in arrows and finely crafted bows. While experts are divided on the etymology of the name Manchu, it is thought by many (including the Glorious Historical Bureaux of Anthropological Enlightenment) that the word 'Manju' (or 'Intrepid Arrows') gave rise to the name of the people.

Many local police in Manchuria during Twilight fought off roaming bandits, nationalist rebels, and the occasional Russian marauder by forming small militia groups and calling themselves 'The Intrepid Arrows' in honour of the forebears. The tradition continues to this day and the name is used as a by-word for the state police.

Muzzle Velocity: 970 mps
 Magazine: 20-round removable
 box magazine

RoF: 40rpm

Price: Lv200, Lv10 for a box of 100
 rounds.

Mass of loaded magazine: 0.2 kg



Type-B Bullet-Trap Rifle Grenades

While rifle grenades are a rare sight in military usage, many Manchurian police forces use them in riot-control to fire irritant gases and other crowd-control agents. It

is worth noting that Manchurian police also receive training in how to effectively use armour-piercing rifle grenades against armoured vehicles and walkers in urban settings. All anti-armour rifle grenades are equipped with a chip that prevents them being used against Manchurian military targets.

Wu-Beijing Type-91 Storm Cloud

The Storm Cloud is a long-range anti-personnel/anti-material rifle based on the old Type-81 Storm Gun. Instead of the huge 20mm round, the Storm Cloud fires a tight cluster of 7 6x60mm flechettes, with an effective range of over 1000 meters. Dispersal of the darts over that range is less than 30 cm, virtually-guaranteeing a hit. It is not considered an effective weapon for hostage situations.

Type: 20mm binary propellant
 flechette gun

Country: Manchuria
 Length: 172 cm

Action: Single shot
 Mass (empty): 10 kg

Ammunition: 20mm flechette
 (7 6x60mm flechettes)

Muzzle Velocity: 1,020 mps

The Storm Cloud has a +2 to hit at all ranges, but aimed fire at specific targets (like head, or a vehicle sensor) is effectively impossible. Or rather, aimed fire at only a specific target is impossible.

Magazine: 10 removable box magazine
 Mass of loaded magazine: 2 kg. 2 kg for
 propellant bottles for 100 shots.

RoF: 40rpm

Price: Lv2,200, Lv80 for 20 loose rounds

WEAPONS STATISTICS

Bullet Trap Rifle Grenades (Original 2300)

Round	Damage	Mass	Price
Smoke	EP=1, 10x20 cloud	0.5	Lv12
Irritant Gas	20x40 irritant cloud	0.5	Lv20
HE	As Explosion, EP=5	0.5	Lv10
Anti-Armour	As Tamped Explosion, EP=6	0.5	Lv25



Type-91

Mongoose 2300AD Stats

Weapon	TL	Range	Required Skill	Damage	Magazine	Auto	Recoil	Cost	Mass (loaded)	Ammo Cost
Type 55	8	Pistol	Gun Combat	2D6+1	12	No	0	Lv900	1.35 kg	Lv30/200
Type 66	11	Pistol	Gun Combat	2d6-1	6	No	0	Lv1200	1.75 kg	Lv40/60
Type 20	9	Shotgun	Gun Combat	4D6	6	No	2	Lv1800	2.2 kg	Lv50/200
Type 715	10	Rifle	Gun Combat	3d6+1	20	No	1	Lv600	0.6	Lv20/200
Bullet-trap Rifle Grenade	10	Shotgun	Heavy Weapons	Varies	1	No	2	-	-	-
Type 91	11	Rifle	Heavy Weapons	6d6	10	No	2	Lv2,200	0.73	Lv80/20

Original 2300AD Stats (note that prices do not conform across both versions of 2300AD)

Weapon	Size (Bulk)	Aimed Fire Range	Area Fire Range	Area Fire Burst	DPV	ROF	Mag	Cost	Ammo Cost
Type 55	0	50	30	3 (AFV=0.5)	0.4	5	10	210	5/300
Type 66	0	30	19	3 (AFV=0.3)	0.2	3	6	710	5 each
Type 20	2	120	80	3 (AFV=0.5)	0.3(x10)	2	6	380	2/100
Type 715	2	500	300	3 (AFV=0.25)	0.7	2	20	280	1
Bullet Trap Rifle Grenade	+1	200	-	-	Varies	1	1	Varies	Varies

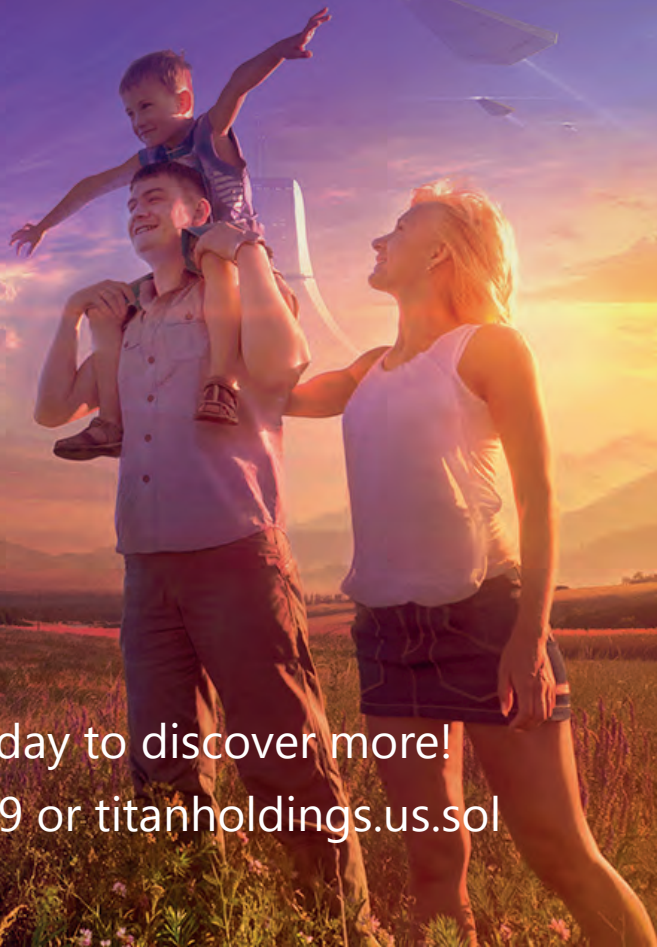
Bullet Trap Rifle Grenades (Mongoose 2300)

Round	Damage	Blast Radius	Range Increment	Mass	Price
Smoke		12m	3m	0.5	Lv12
Irritant Gas	3d6 stun	12m	3m	0.5	Lv20
HE	7d6	6m	3m	0.5	Lv10
Anti-Armour	6d6AP	1m	-	0.5	Lv25

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YOUR WORLD

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Out into the cold

“We’ve known for a while” said Simone Cassel, Elysia’s Intelligence & Security Minister, regarding the revelation that 3 French spies had been arrested in the Parliament Building.

“They (the French) will try anything to destabilise Elysia and bring harm to it’s people.” The President jean Fournier declined to detail further saying that “Security matters are the purview of the security minister.” Franco-Elysian relations had been warming of late but this scandal may see any co-operation dwindle.

Terror on the slopes

Few of us know the horror of a wildfire out of control but those who do, spare a thought for the residents of Cold Mountain. Having to fight of predators is one thing but having to fight the weather and the atmospheric fires it brings is something else entirely.

An unusual weather disturbance occurring roughly every 5 or so Terran years has seen oxygen levels creep up near the colonies. Naked flames can spark off large fires and may lead to what the locals call ‘raging wind’ or a tornado that is ablaze. Leaders are hoping the levels will return to normal within the next few weeks.



A new threat on Aurore



Reports are coming in from the Tanstaafl Health Ministry that a new hitherto unknown microbial infection is affecting some outlying farms in the eastern hills near Mt Phaeton. Medics have been dispatched but are so far unable to explain the infection which has spores that grow a strange fuzzy fungus like carpet choking out the lungs, eyes, and throat of both livestock and humans.

Doctors and medics are currently examining the life cycle of this new affliction to determine if there is anything threat after the host is dead. The ministry and the Tanstaafl Rural Police are urging the populace to be vigilant and report any signs of infection by sat-com immediately.

YOUR WORLD



Robo-Cat!

Guerlain (Robotics) have revealed their latest model... called Henry. It's a robotic cat that acts just like a real cat. It meows, snuggles up to you, and feels warm and living. At L_v12,000 it's obviously aimed at the rich and those who love cats but have allergies to cat fur (the fur on Henry's back is nano-glass) but I think we can all agree that the results are impressive. This reporter wasn't told Henry was artificial until I'd been stroking him for ten minutes. They can be fully tailored to the customers needs. If I had the money mine would be rainbow coloured and called Lovecraft. If anyone wants to buy me an early Christmas gift that is ..

More on robotics and artificial life next issue.

Uniting species through punk

Lucy Glass, lead singer with the band Wetblade, stopped by the Colonial Times office this week to talk to our sister publication 'Rock Core'. Lucy, a Crater native, told RC that her aggressive style, screeching guitars, and heavy and fast drum beats echoed back to the pre-Twilight 'punk style' and gave a voice to the billions of angry and frustrated youth throughout human space.

"It's really an outlet for all of us. I've spoken to businessmen on a Tokyo train, a captain on a Ukranian warship, and an art collector on Tirane and Wetblade means something different to all of them. It's not restricted to what the media like to call 'the angry youth'. I seem to be a muse for many, an outlet for some, and an object of desire to a few."

Lucy was alluding to the legal case against Mickael Goetz, an unemployed builder who stalked her home on Crater for 2 months before being arrested and sentence to 2 years. Wetblade has seen their popularity rise on Kormoran as coastal Ebers regard their tunes

as 'Battle Poems' and their latest album 'Rise' has also been released in an 'Eber friendly' version.



YOUR WORLD



Green Warriors

'Friends of the Worlds' campaigner Melissa Brant has told CT that she intends to set up a human body blockcade against any attempt to "improve" (as she puts it) the Hadley River in Wellon (seen left). Lysander et Folie have been given permission by the colonial government to extend the downport into the river basin, angering locals and worrying environmentalists across the sphere. A case of appeal is currently going through Wellon High court but FotW are unlikely to win despite several notaries offering support.

Money for old radio

At a recent auction in Napoli, an old Sattori radio went for L,45,000 to a private collector... despite not working. While the pre-Twilight radio is in remarkable condition considering its age (and being only 2 miles from a nuclear airburst in 1998), many of its internal components are beyond use. Still, it appears the bidders were more interested in its looks than what little radio reception these units used to have. Time to check your attics, who knows, you could have a fortune stored away up there.



A festival of waves

Once again the crowds gather in north-west Wales for the annual wakeboarding and surfing festival 'Wakefest'. Nearly 100,000 tourists will gather in the small town of Abersoch this weekend to surf, wakeboard, buy surfing goods, and to watch the Interstellar Wakeboard Championship.



After the competition has finished and the gold spoons handed out, the town comes alive in a festival of light, lasers, fireworks, and floating light fields as the musical side of the festival begins.

Headlined this year by 'Short, Controlled Bursts' the festival also has some of the most famous acts around including Wetblade, EFO, Daany Sanchez, Maria Serenity, Antoine Jarre, Arthaus, and the band at the current number one spot, Sanctify. There'll also be family areas and entertainments plus beer tents and a separate DJ and groove zone on the beach. All those wishing to attend should call 44-7989-2222 but hurry, the festival is nearly at capacity and starts in 3 days.

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YOUR
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REVIEW



Initially planned as a single large fashion book, such was the orders that Guerlain fashion decided to make *élan* a short series fashion magazine. Now, after 14 years and 196 issues, the woman who started it all, Marie King, is stepping down.

She has proved without doubt that there is a marketplace for old style magazines for those who appreciate the actual over the virtual. King was once called “a lunatic” by an unkind advertiser who promptly pulled his advertising as soon as it was revealed that *élan* would be print only.

“A good magazine is like good silk. you need the tactile sense to know that you are holding something of worth.” She wasn’t wrong. The magazine proved to be a hit and is now *the* fashion magazine throughout Human space (with Vogue Interstellar a close second). Fans hold their issues in binders and in special collections around their home like rare and valued books and everytime there is a special edition

(roughly two per year) the retailers can’t keep them on the shelves long enough. Still, it was this very fact that has made King’s position difficult. the owner at guerlain, John Blacksmith, has decreed that *élan* must now have an online edition in order to reach customers on distant worlds for who the price of shipping a paper copy is out of reach. Still insisting it was a wrong move, Ms King tended her resignation.

It’s not clear how the magazine will fair without her as the issues we see were planned months ago and it may take more than a year for Ms King’s influence to disappear but no one is in any doubt that *élan* is her baby.

The Issue

It is fitting that this month’s issue deals with another departure as they look at the closing of the French fashion house Oubliette. It has long been whispered that the company was overstaffed after it lost so heavily on trying to appeal to a younger market and that it was only a matter of time before the doors would close, but still we read the article on their demise not so much as fashion news but more as an obituary and a warning to all fashion houses that no matter how good their lines are, commerce will out.

The biography on Pierre-Louis Spearing was well written and inciteful (I never knew he had a robot cat!) and of course, it’s coverage of Milan Fashion Week™ was superb (Denis Nino was in lightning form!) but where the magazine takes a wrong turn is it’s summary of current trends on Tirane. While informative it nonetheless repeats ideas and forms that were all the rage on Earth 2 years ago. I’m not sure why we need to know that. Still, grab Ms King’s genius while you can as her stock is sure to rise.

~Susan Mason



SCI-FI GAME REVIEWS
IN POOKIE'S POCKET

ASHEN STARS

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(Click Pookie To
Access His Blog)

From Star Wars and Star Trek to Traveller and the Firefly Role-Playing Game, we have been roleplaying Space Opera for over thirty-five years, usually in semi-military or independent ship operator campaigns. Ashen Stars takes its cues from both, but makes its campaigns investigative in nature, the reason being that televisu-

al Space Opera are essentially mysteries to be solved. For example, the 1967 classic Star Trek episode, 'The Devil in the Dark' has the Enterprise crew determining who is killing the workers and destroying their machinery on a mining planet.

The setting for Ashen Stars is the Bleed, a wild frontier to The Combine, a post-utopia recovering from a war with the mysteriously forgotten Mohilar that devastated system after system using unknown technologies. A decade later, and unable to police the Bleed, The Combine contracts peacekeeping missions and criminal investigations out to independent ship operators known as 'Licensed Autonomous Zone Effectuators' or 'Lasers'. As Lasers, the player characters crew and operate a ship on a tight budget, hoping to complete Reputation enhancing assignments that will lead to better and more profitable assignments. Each crewmember undertakes a role aboard ship and off ship for efficiency's sake. For example, Communications Officer is a Warpside role, while Survey Officer is a Groundside role. A Lazer is usually one of 'The Seven Peoples' of The Combine, from ordinary humans and the uncannily beautiful Balla who love nature, but fear all emotions to the Durugh, short alien humanoids that can phase through solid matter



(Click Image For Links To Pelgrane Press)

and the warrior locust-like Kch-thk who used to eat other species and can transfer to new bodies when their old ones die.

Character generation is a collective process. Once everyone has decided upon their Warpside and Groundside roles, the division allowing each Laser a moment to shine, each player assigns points to his character Investigative and General Abilities, the amount dependent on the number of players. The various alien species also have their own Special Abilities. Every character needs a Drive and the team must choose a ship and purchase any modifications, including personal cyberware and vioware. Lastly, each character needs a personal development arc, such as identify the Mohilar, which can be highlighted in each investigation's B-story.

Mechanically, *Ashen Stars* uses the Gumshoe System. This has the Lasers expending ratings in Investigative Abilities, like Bio Signatures and Evidence Collection, to gain extra clues during an investigation. If a Laser has a rating in an Investigative Ability, he gains the base clues related to that Ability, whereas points in General Abilities, like Communications Intercept and Scuffling, are expended to modify simple d6 rolls. The idea here is that Investigative Abilities give a Laser the equivalent of screen time and prevent the story from stalling due to failed skill roles that prevent clues from being found.

To this unfussy treatment of the GUMSHOE System, *Ashen Stars* adds a cinematic, if surprisingly gruelling starship combat system. Initially it looks complex, so needs the very full example given in the book. Also included is an array of nasty threats; a description of the

Bleed that leaves room aplenty for the GM to add his own material, backed up with good advice designed to keep each episode unique; and an entertaining scenario that puts a knowing twist or two on the genre.

With no dice to roll for Investigative Abilities, the GUMSHOE System initially feels odd. It is easy to adjust to, especially in the very straightforward *Ashen Stars*. Its treatment of Space Opera is refreshing, its setting is rife with story potential, and its use of investigations as a framing device is intriguing and intelligent.

~ Matthew Pook



NEXT ISSUE

WEAPONS
WORLDS
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NEWS

..and maybe something from you?
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See the Contents page for the e-mail address to send your submissions ideas to.

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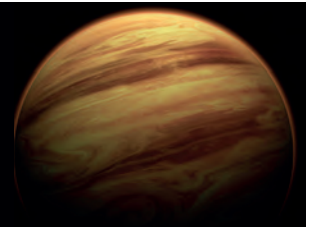
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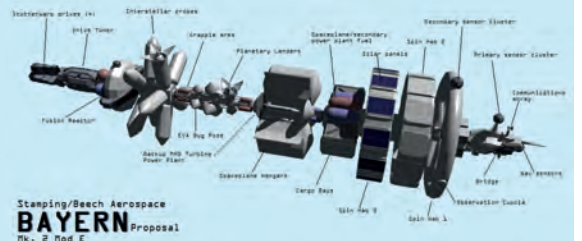
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