Featured Article

A Jolly (Roger) Good Time

by Rick Morey

Contents

Freelance Traveller #031: July 2012

From the Editor

Once again, we apologize for the magazine being late. As has been common recently, it's because of other commitments—ones which *can't* be ignored—getting in the way of spending time where we'd *like* to, instead of where we *have* to.

Last month's double-plus issue seems to have been well-received, with a good amount of positive feedback on our stated commitment to supporting *2300AD* for *Traveller*. We'll continue that support to the extent that we get material for it, and the same is true of other *Traveller* settings, such as *Babylon 5* (which has two articles in this issue), the *2000AD* properties (*Strontium Dog* and *Judge Dredd*), and the forthcoming *Prime Directive*. To turn around a well-known line from a popular movie, "If it comes, we will print it.".

Shannon Appelcline's reviews of fiction, published under the subheading of "Off the Table", appear to have been exhausted—at least, we've not found any new ones, nor has he sent us any. That doesn't mean that "Off the Table" will disappear; Your Humble Editor will be turning his pen to some similar reviews, and we have hope that others will be doing so as well—a recent conversation on one of the many *Traveller* forums holds out hope for some others from yet another reviewer.

As usual, we can always use material of any sort—we've got several sets of guidelines, on the website and the inside back cover of each issue (and someday we'll rationalize them all into one consistent posting. Meanwhile, if you have ideas or questions, and aren't sure… write and ask. The answer will probably be something along the lines of "*gimme!*"). Don't worry about size; we can use short articles to fill out small gaps, and large articles have a richness all their own, possibly earning them "Featured Article" status.

*Traveller*Con/USA is in November (Armistice Day weekend) this year, a little later than it has been in past years. Your Humble Editor is planning on being there, for the third time, and this time, there *may* be an "official" *Freelance Traveller* presence. We encourage everyone who can get to Lancaster, PA, to do so and join the fun; you'll get to meet new and old friends, play *Traveller*, and make the Con organizers, vendors, and hotel happy. ✪

Three for *2300AD*

Reviewed by Timothy Collinson

The Tricolore's Shadow. Colin Dunn. 10 pages, PDF.
Terror's Lair. Colin Dunn. 10 pages, PDF.
Special Supplement 1: Biotech Vehicles. Colin Dunn. 8 pages, PDF.
Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
US$2.99/UK£1.89 each via DriveThruRPG.

These three small PDFs from Mongoose provide additional material to supplement the core *2300AD* book reviewed in *Freelance Traveller*'s May/June 2012 issue. Two are adventures branded for the *2300AD* milieu. The third is a supplement and not specifically *2300AD*; it is styled to fit the *Traveller* core line. Given the Pentapod penchant for biotech, it seems relevant to include it here.

The Tricolore's Shadow

Fans of the original *2300AD* material will recognize the two adventures. *The Tricolore's Shadow* appeared in the original *Traveller: 2300* box as a starter adventure. The PCs have been hired by RebCo SAR to survey part of the French continent on Beta Canum 4. It involves conflict with the French – and perhaps set the pattern for the French often being portrayed as the 'baddies' by *2300AD* players – travel across Beta Canum, an alien vessel, and contact with the Pentapods. The alien vessel connects this book directly with *Special Supplement 1* as the 'Archie' vessel description, stats and illustration are present in both volumes. Also included with the adventure is a map of Beta Canum 4 together with other material provided as a two page player handout.

Differences between the original version of the adventure and the present one are minimal with the exception of the addition of the whole 'Archie' presence, and the more modern presentation of the world map – although it's less clear, the addition of a map of the valley being surveyed and the loss of the Bradstreet illustrations. What little 'rule' based material there is has been updated – e.g. the vehicle hull and structure points. Oh, and pay has been tripled which is in line with other revisions to Livre amounts for the core rulebook. The world map is that of the core *2300AD* book but unfortunately the opportunity has been missed to either present it in colour or to make it somewhat clearer.

Terror's Lair

Terror's Lair is the adventure which was provided with version 2 of the GDW game. Now retitled as *2300AD* and dropping the *Traveller* connection, the boxed set virtually doubled the page count of the original, revised some of the rules and was laid out more clearly. The adventure (included with the Forms booklet) is a rarity in *Traveller*: a solo adventure with 70 numbered paragraphs of varying length and the reader/player able to choose an option at the end of each paragraph which leads onto the next segment. This has been retained in the Mongoose version and again American Marshal Obadiah Thomas is on the trail of a drug smuggler on a ship in Earth orbit. Various outcomes are possible depending on the choices made and each numbered paragraph contains a time element so that the passage of time can be tracked.

On this occasion the adventure is identical in both versions except where the rules are involved. Basically, Tasks have now become Skill Checks or Characteristic Checks. The description of Obadiah Thomas is, of course, given in *2300AD* style. The illustration and sidebar describing the ship the adventure takes place on have gone and the illustration of the marshal is new: he looks younger and much gaunter in his new incarnation.

As an introduction to *2300AD* both of these adventures introduce various aspects and are set in two very
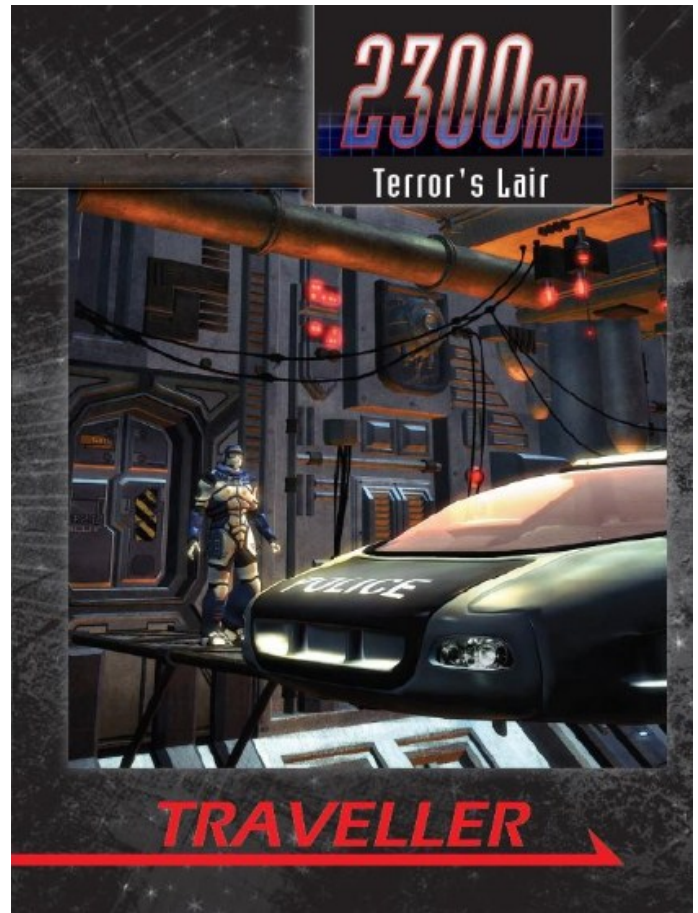
typical settings and thus are definitely worth the money for anyone interested in *2300AD*. For those who have the original material, their (additional) value is less certain and purchase will probably depend on how completist you need to be, or how much work you're prepared to do on the Checks of *Terror's Lair*.

Special Supplement 1: Biotech Vehicles

Finally, *Special Supplement 1: Biotech Vehicles* is a short PDF which adds the ability to design biological craft to *Supplement 5-6: Vehicle Handbook* designs. It notes that: "Since the *Traveller* vehicle design rules found in *Supplement 5-6: Vehicle Handbook* are effects-based, they can be used to design biotech vehicles in addition to standard 'hard' vehicles." On seeing the PDF for sale this reviewer was instantly reminded of the biotech of the Yilané in Harry Harrison's *West of Eden* (misnamed in the PDF without mention of the author as *East of Eden* – a completely different book by John Steinbeck!).

The book outlines changes to the basic vehicle design process to accommodate the special aspects of using biotech; this covers such things as agility, vertebrate vs. invertebrate structure, endo/exothermy of metabolism, and environmental limitations and effects. Also included is material on refuelling (eating!), healing, intelligence, and control modifications. There are notes on additional drive systems which are possible, more armour and defensive possibilities, and electronic (or cognitive) modifications. Lastly, the 'Archie' biotech airship is repeated from *The Tricolore's Shadow* as an example.

In short, for those wishing to introduce this kind of tech to their *Traveller* universe, or want to extend the Pentapod vehicles which are available in *2300AD*, this is worth a look. A missed opportunity – perhaps it will be a later supplement – is any mention of biotech starships in the fashion of Moya from *Farscape* or the living ships of the Vorlon in *Babylon 5*. This is particularly odd as the latter get a specific reference in the PDF.

It should be noted that the page counts above don't include the PDF 'covers' which in the case of the *2300AD* branded items are attractive full colour illustrations and in the case of the supplement is the plain black cover of other *Traveller* material.

In summary, three small but useful and interesting PDFs to support your travelling. ✿
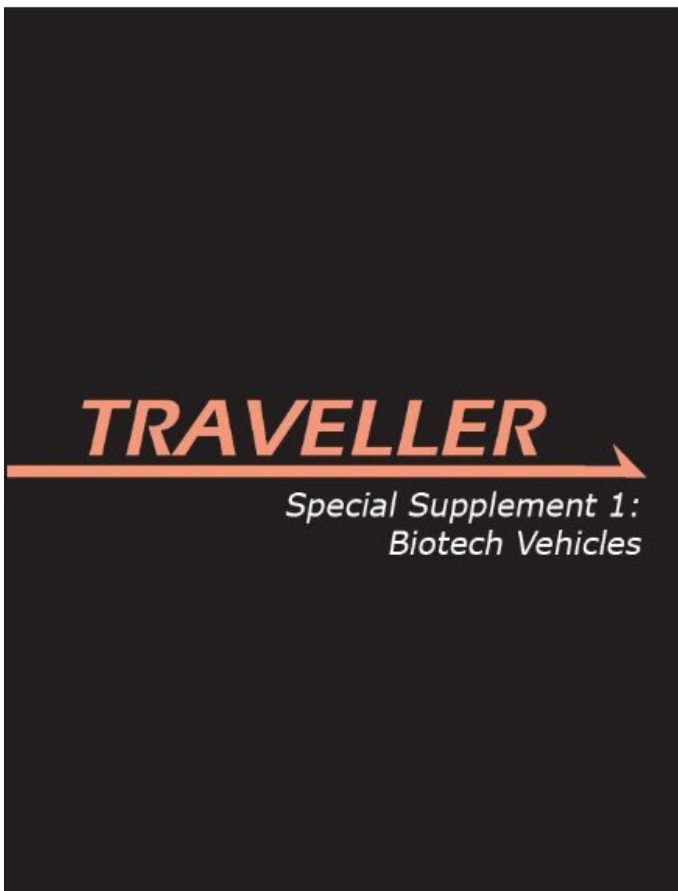
Mongoose Traveller Lite: Simplifying Skill and Task Checks

by Sam Lockwood

Introduction

The latest edition of *Traveller* has some pretty solid rules with its skill and task system, but I do feel it's a bit over-complex. The rules listed here are intended to simplify the complexity of the skill system and make task construction faster. I also wanted to cut down on some of the "DM Escalation" that destroys the bell curve of the 2d6 task system. In particular, I've liked certain aspects of the task system developed by Digest Publications Group, and implemented in *MegaTraveller*.

Difficulty Levels

There are only four base difficulty levels instead of seven, with broader differences between each difficulty level. Unskilled tasks have an additional -3 DM, as in the core rules.

Task Difficulty Definitions		
Difficulty	Use for Mongoose Difficulty	DM
Simple	Simple, Easy, or Routine	+3
Average	Average	0
Difficult	Difficult or Very Difficult	-3
Formidable	Formidable	-6

Mundane Tasks

Any mundane everyday tasks succeeds as long as the character is either skilled or has an applicable characteristic DM greater than -1 for tasks that don't require a skill. The effect (if it needs to be known), is equal to either the skill level or the positive characteristic DM for characteristic-only tasks.

Equipment DM Limits

Characters (particularly rich ones) will often be tempted to stock up huge amounts of gear in order to take advantage of all the lovely DM's. However, this can quickly get out of hand if you let them all stack.

Instead, allow only the best and worst DMs for equipment to apply to any given task. That is, only count the highest positive and lowest negative DM.

Haste and Caution

(Or, doing it faster or slower)

This is more limited than in the core rulebook, and more dramatic. If you shift up on the time scale (Caution, or going slower), you decrease the task difficulty one step. For instance, if a Routine task has a time increment of 10 minutes, you can go to an increment of 1 hour to make the task Simple.

Haste, or going faster, increases the difficulty one step in exchange for the next-lower time increment. If a Difficult task has a time increment of 10 minutes you can shorten the time to 1 minute and make it Formidable.

Tasks that are already Simple can't be performed more slowly, and tasks that are already Formidable can't be performed more quickly.

The Task Rolls

The maximum effect allowed is ±6, with aid-another benefits and half-effect numbers altered as follows. You can now put all possible task roll effects on a single table like so:

Task Roll Effects				
Total Roll	TaskResult	Effect	Half Effect	Aid Another
2 or less	Total failure	6	3	-3
3		5	2	-2
4		4	2	-2
5	Exceptional Failure	3	1	-1
6		2	1	-1
7		1	0	0
8	Success	0	0	0
9		1	0	0
10		2	1	+1
11	Exceptional Success	3	1	+1
12		4	2	+2
13		5	2	+2
14 or more		6	3	+3

Reduced Basic Training Benefits

This rule is intended to reduce the relative bloat of 0-level skills in Mongoose *Traveller*. The char-

Doing It My Way

acter gets three instead of six skills in basic training. This rule is particularly helpful if you're using the "Life Less Ordinary" rules for character creation.

Skill Specialties

Rather than creating a whole series of extra skills within a skill, the skill specialties system works differently.

The various cascade skills (Gun Combat, Drive, etc) are learned without a specialty at level 0. When a character learns that skill at level 1, the character must choose a particular specialty.

The character gets full use of their skill levels for tasks pertaining to a given specialty, and may also access other specialties at half their skill level (rounded down).

Specialty skills may only be advanced one level per term, regardless of rolls. This means that if you gain 1 level of, say, Gun Combat due to rank or event, that skill may not be advanced by a roll on the skill table. That advance is simply "lost."

If you're using the point-buy system, double the cost of buying skill ranks above 0 for specialty skills.

Converting Existing Characters

Most skills will convert directly, the only difference is going to be with the specialized skills & with 0-level skills.

For 0-level skills, simply eliminate the extra skills from basic training. If the skill was subsequently raised above 0, this becomes a moot point.

For specialty skills, first use only the highest single specialty, eliminating the others. Second, pay attention to the "1 advance per term" limit. If your character had 3 terms in the Marines, his Gun Combat (slug rifle) skill can't be above 3 unless he had some other career that allowed for that advance.

Obviously, if the character has multiple specialties with equal skill levels, you get to pick. ✪

The Shipyard

Earth Alliance Heavy Shuttle

by Richard Page

The STG-21 'Nordkapp' Military Heavy Lift Shuttle was an expensive failure as far as the Earth Alliance was concerned. Originally designed as a heavy lift supplement to the Light Shuttle fleet; it was slow, ungainly, and didn't live up to its potential of 'bigger is better'. Of the 1200 originally planned, only 352 were ever produced; of those 38 have been scrapped, 40 have been converted to Fighter Transit Shuttles and the remainder are in service with the largest ships in the fleet: Explorer ships and carriers.

Features

Firmpoints: Each Shuttle is equipped with three pairs of Firmpoints (0.5T, 0.2 MCr per pair) which can be used to attach different types of modules to the shuttle. Each pair of Firmpoints are on either side of the shuttle and must use the same type of attached module (for example, you could fix two fuel modules to the front pair, two cargo modules to the middle pair and another two fuel modules to the rear pair). If you have any modules attached to a shuttle, the hull counts as being distributed rather than standard. The two most common modules used are 5T cargo and fuel modules (not interchangeable – you can't use the cargo ones for fuel and vice-versa), which cost 0.01 MCr empty, have negligible mass and hold either 5T of cargo or fuel respectively.

Landing Struts: The STG-21 Shuttles are designed to operate from ships, stations and prepared landing areas. Because of this, the landing struts are unsuitable for landing on unprepared or uneven ground. An 'All-Terrain' extendable landing pad system is available, taking up 2T of cargo space at a cost of 0.5 MCr.

Other Features: Each STG-21 is usually equipped with two or more lockers for EVA suits (located near the airlock), as well as many small compartments located in the overhead area or under seats to store light hand luggage. The galley is suitable for preparing light meals, snacks, and hot or cold drinks suitable for zero-g consumption from pre-packaged stores.

(Continued from page 5)

Earth Alliance Light Shuttle (Cargo/Personnel Shuttle Variant)			Tons	Price
Hull	100T	Hull 2	100	2
Armour	None		0	0
Manoeuvre Drive	Reaction Drive B	Thrust 4	3	8
Power Plant	Power Plant A	2	4	8
Bridge	4 Crew		10	0.5
Computer	Model 2	Rating 10	0	0.16
Electronics	Standard	-4 DM	0	0
Weapons	None		0	0
Fuel	35T + 2T (Fusion Plant 14 days endurance)		37	0
Software	Manoeuvre/0, Library/0		0	0
Extras	Airlock, 6 Firmpoints		1.5	0.6
Cargo	44.5T (Personnel Variant: 12.5T plus Seats/Cramped×64)		44.5	0/1.92
Total Tonnage and Cost			120	19.26/21.18

Standard Variants.

Though not modular, the STG-21 lends itself to different configurations quite readily and there are several different variants of this shuttle available as standard. The most common ones are:

STG-21b Armed Military Shuttle: removes 1T of cargo in exchange for a single light pulse cannon (fixed forward) for +1.1 MCr.

STG-21p Crew Shuttle: this configuration converts 32T of cargo space into cramped seating for 64 passengers (uses 0.5T and 0.03 MCr per passenger) at a cost of +1.92 MCr. This configuration can be used with the STG-21b Armed Military Shuttle.

STG-21f Fighter Transit Shuttle: This configuration removes 30T of cargo space and adds six double-occupancy bunks (four flight crew, eight support crew), an all-terrain landing system and four (30T) docking clamps at a cost of + 5.5 MCr. It is designed to enable ships and stations to be rearmed with fighters quickly and efficiently, and has a flight control station on the bridge for launching and recovering fighters as well as in-flight ops. This configuration is suitable only for the Starfury fighters and can not be used with the newer Thunderbolt fighters. It is believed that Psi Corps has at least 4 of these Shuttles to support the Black Omega fighter wing.

Deck plans for the STG-21, STG-21p and STG-21f may be found on the next page. ✻

Deck Plan Key (for all variants pictured)

1. Cockpit/Control Cabin.
2. Main cargo or transport cabin.
3. Airlock with fold-down powered ramp and ceiling access to Power Plant.
4. Engines (access panels located in airlock area).
5. Sensors and Computer/Electronics (access panel in crawl-space under co-pilot control console).
6. Double bunks.
F. Fresher.
G. Galley.
L. Locker for EVA suit.
W. Landing strut well.

About *The Burrowwolf*

At the time this issue of *Freelance Traveller* "went to press", no new chapter of *The Burrowwolf* was ready for inclusion due to other pressures. We are assured that the comic will resume as soon as possible.

The Freelance Traveller Forums

Our connectivity issues appear to be mostly resolved; the main issue at this point is having the time to put everything together. We hope to have something set up for limited testing soon, and are seeking volunteers for testing and discussion of various features. Interested people should contact us at *tech@freelancetraveller.com*. We apologize for the continued delay in restoring this service.

The Shipyard
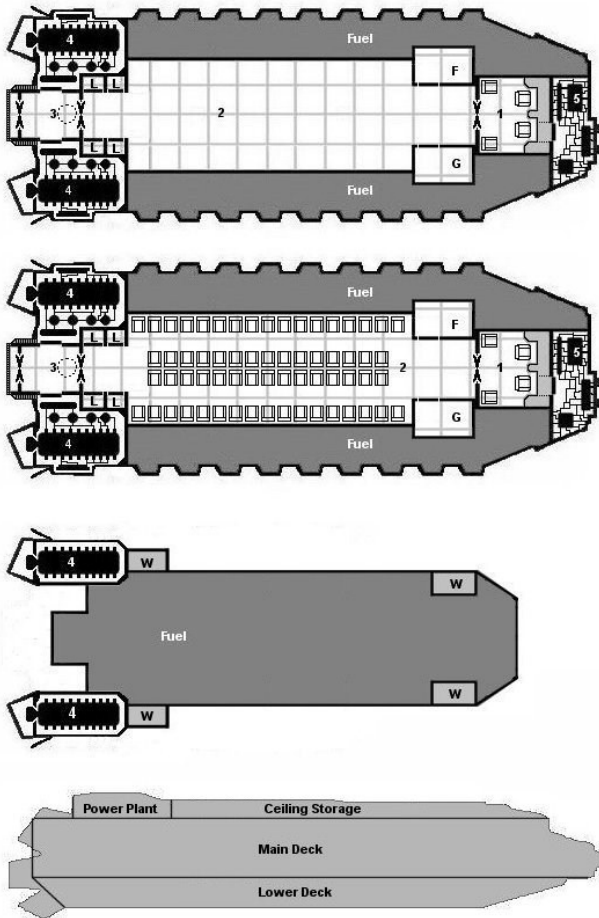
Deck Plans for the STG-21 and STG-21p. The top plan is the main deck of the STG-21; the second plan is the main deck of the STG-21p, showing the arrangement of the seats occupying the majority of the cargo area in this variant. The Fuel Deck and side elevation are common to both variants.
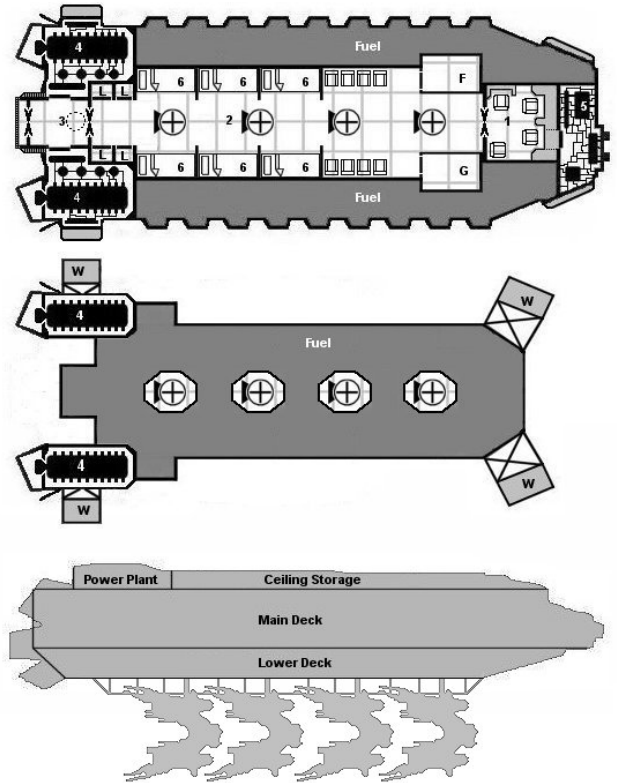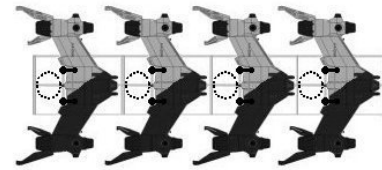
Deck Plans for the STG-21f. The top diagram is a view from below of the mounting brackets with fighters mounted. The bottom diagram shows the side elevation with four fighters mounted.

☀ Raconteurs' Rest

A Most Unfortunate War

By Andrew Vallance

Part 1

Historical Note: The Luriani War is one of the forgotten wars of the Imperium, barely known outside the Domain of Gateway, it was received scant attention from Imperial authorities even at the time. However amongst the Luriani it is an immense source of pride, where they managed to humble the might of the Imperium. Ralpiamm Garintylil (Armistice Day, 347) marking the end of the war is a holiday on most Luriani worlds and Igo Garintylil (Iguu Day, 267) is their usual day for the remembrance of war dead. The war itself was very fiercely fought and one of the bloodiest of the Pacifi-

cation Campaigns. The ferocious and fanatic nature of the fighting is a major factor in the delicacy with which the Imperium now treats Luriani sensibilities.

188th of 2024 (014-93)[1]: The Battle of Rurur

I sat in my chair, my harness chaffed and I was bored. "So why are we doing this yet again?" Manoeuvres were supposed to have finished days ago. Siish looked peeved. "Because Sherin *Adtmral*[2] didn't like the way we did it the first three times."

"Siish, the *Adtmral* never likes the way we do it."

"*Lekhtenant*, it's *Kaptan* if you please, though it

wouldn't kill you to say sir." I could hear the irritation in his voice, *Mmarislusant*[3] are always so stuffy.

"Sorry *Kaptan*, sorry I mean Sir" I mimed choking to death. Jane was sniggering by the main engineering console.

"I'm sorry too *Lekhtenant*. Now, you are about a *baish*'s leg[4] away from charges. So quit playing the *irpel*[5] or I'll choke you to death myself!" Siish's patience and tolerance of us never ceased to amaze me. Besides, you can't choke a Luriani[6] to death.

Siish put on his best *don't push me any further* voice: "Now *dinkir*, if you would be so kind as to set course so we can get this over with and go home!"

"Yes Sir! At once Sir!" I even saluted for good measure, Jane could control herself no longer and burst out laughing.

Siish was not amused; his voice was sickly sweet: "*Lekhtenant*, will you kindly see me in my ready room when we are finished." I'd pushed too far; I'd be cleaning out the waste tanks for a week, most likely. Siish then looked over at Greg: "Number One, Alexon *Komant* appears to suffering from excess exuberance. I believe a jog 'round the boat deck later might help her work some of it off. I'll let you decide how far." Jane shot me a look that would kill. Definitely too far.

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Shadta was on sensors "Sii... I mean *Kaptan*, I'm detecting multiple jump exits?"

"What?" Siish had been caught by surprise "Where?"

Probably another of old man Sherin's surprises, he liked to keep us guessing. 'Maintain combat efficiency, prepare for anything, the Imperium could invade any day.' Oooo scary, the evil Imperium was coming. He's what the *Verasti Dtareen*[7] call a hawk.

Shadta got it quickly, always sharp: "Between red and blue."

Ora spoke, she sounded frightened. "We have an emergency priority message from flag: 'Not part of exercise, intruders hostile, set condition red, weapons free, engage at will. *Pae Verasryn*[8] *ravel tan shi*, may Verasryn smile on you.'"

Siish look stunned, then started barking orders "I want confirmation on that, Ora, and I want it now!" All pretense at formality was gone, but none of us were playing any more.

"*Martinez* to flag, request you confirm."

Siish was still barking orders "Bring up screens, drives to maximum, weapon safeties off. I want range and targeting ready, if they confirm we go in. So make me proud *ami*[9]." There were definitely ships out there; I was already plotting intercepts, I could see Shadta drawing lock on potential targets.

You could hear Ora trembling: "Siish, they've confirmed, the code is valid."

It was real, they were coming.

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The *Toblin*'s bridge was quiet, the monitors showed the jump field was decaying, they'd be arriving soon. Commander Godaval studied his crew, they were relaxed, calm, it was just another routine cruise to them. But Godaval was concerned. The fleet had been sloppy going into jump, they'd be spread well over an hour coming out. You shouldn't walk into to somebody's living room with a loaded gun lightly, especially when eighty percent of those somebodies are hot-headed maniacs. Of course it was all just a show, a bluff, show them the mailed fist in the velvet glove. And it was all over some words, a family of worlds. The Protectorate was quite willing to join the Imperium, they just wanted a guarantee their family of worlds would be kept intact. Apparently the discussions over exactly what this meant got rather heated and it was agreed to allow a little time for tempers to cool. That's when Archduke Ishargi[10] came up with his plan, a quick tour of the Protectorate while their fleet was dispersing after manoeuvres should soften their position. Duke Sirean had called him a fool, playing with fire, but most agreed if carefully coordinated the risks were minimal. Engineering spoke "Field collapsing, exit imminent sir." Commander Godaval was cautious "Bring up external cameras, I want to see what's out there." A brief view of the sanity tearing ripple of jump space, then clear. The XO was first to speak "My god, they're on fire!"

326th of 2024 (152-93): End of the 'Luriani Rampage'

Duke Sirean looked over the latest reports. It was an utter disaster. The Protectorate had ripped Ishagri's fleet to shreds at Rurur[11], then fanned out and overrun the frontier. What was left of the Ley Fleet had been

destroyed before they even knew there was a war on and Fornast was being wiped out piecemeal. Vital worlds surrendered without a fight, at best token resistance on the rest. The navy those fool admirals had dismissed as a undisciplined rabble before the war was now handing those admirals backsides to them on a plate. The Luriani were running riot over three domains[12] destroying bases and communications wherever they went. And those admirals kept looking for the 'main thrust of the invasion.' And the huge joke was, there was no invasion. The Protectorate's strategy was purely defensive. It was a classic move, disrupt the rear areas and keep your opponent off balance while you form a solid set of defensive lines. It's just Ishagri had let the Protectorate form their lines in Imperial territory. The Luriani would raise hell as long as they could and wait for the counter-attack. They'd have to grind them out of every metre of space they took. The idea was simply to let the body count force negotiations. Of course the Protectorate's mistake was to assume they would negotiate. All Aamku[13] could talk about was avenging his father and the prestige cost of talking while they held Imperial ground would be judged too high[14]. This was going to be a nasty war, very nasty.

36th of 2025 (227-93): The Battle of Gaisaaru

They built their ships like a *gabalail*[15], big and hard to kill, but lumbering and slow. And they put jump drives in them, why the hell did they do that? Why waste that much space in a liner[16]? They seemed to have trouble manoeuvring in more than two planes at the same time. They came at us at Gaisaaru, past the front line and smack into us. It was a *beel*[17] hunt, we flew rings around them and they died. I'd watched as one those big *gabalail*s flipped end over end till it hit the atmosphere and burnt up. It made me sick to the stomach; this wasn't war, it was murder. Even Siish was crying as we watched it. Siish had scheduled a dance[18], he likes to get at least one in a week, but none of us felt like celebrating. It wasn't only the battle, but Greg and Jane were leaving. Greg had his own ship now. Command might be having to split crews to man the new ships, but they'd never split up a matched couple.

The music was pulsing and people were dancing, I saw Ora with Oloku, there'd be babies there, soon, I'd bet. Greg and Jane were locked together as usual, I envied her sometimes. "So Greg, who was the *irpel* that called your boat *Cleon Two*? What kind of name is that?"

"Greg *Kaptan* to you *Lekhtenant*" He put on his best I'm oh so important voice "And you say it *Cleon the Second*. It's an ex-Impie ship, one of the ones we captured at Rurur. We need every ship we can get in the line, so they're refitting them." The idea of Greg and Jane in one of those flying coffins chilled me to my soul.

Jane could see the look in my eyes "Don't worry deary, Enli's going with us, he's almost as good a pilot as you."

"*Cleon the Second* is a stupid name too."

"One of their Emperors, apparently, deary."

"Well, they should have changed it."

"Bad luck, deary, bad luck. We *Verasti Dtareen* get to keep our traditions, too, remember?"

"Jane, darling" Greg always called her darling when he wanted something.

"Yes, my love?"

"You know, there's nobody singing at the moment, darling."

"I do believe you're right, Greg, there's nobody singing." Jane already knew where this was going, but she'd put up a show first. I chimed in "Yes, Jane, nobody singing"

"I *could* make it an order, darling."

"Yeah, you got a squad of Guards[19] handy, my love? Okay, I will sing, but," and she turned to me "*you*, deary, have to dance with my darling Greg."

We lost ourselves in the dance and music and forgot awhile the horrors that awaited.

Greg and Jane left next day, along with almost a quarter of the *Martinez*'s *ami* to form the cadre of the *Cleon II*'s *ami*. We weren't the only ones, Command was having to raid *tami* all over the fleet. An *ami* is a family, you shouldn't break up a family.

93rd of 2025 (284-93): The Darant Strategy

Sector Admiral Phitos Darant was having a bad day, he had reports up to his neck giving him suggestions on what was needed to stabilise the situation. What was actually needed could be summed in two simple words—'more ships'—and he had been sum-

moned to 'advise' the fool Archduke he had to answer to now. The aide-de-camp showed him into Aamku's sumptuous office. "Ah, Phitos, so how goes the war?"

The fool knew very well how it went, he got all the same reports Darant did. "Poorly, I am afraid, Your Grace. Our offensive was broken at Gaisaaru with heavy losses," and by heavy he meant nearly crippling.

"And the rear areas?"

Why did he play this game? "The situation is grave, Your Grace; we have rebellions on a number of worlds, the raiders are still operating and..." he tired of the game, "...we need more ships! They're running riot, inciting rebellions on at least ten worlds and we're too thinly spread. Next time they hit us they'll roll right over the top of us again."

Aamku seemed shocked by Darant's candour "Darant, there are no more ships. There are issues on other fronts as well, a campaign in Massila, revolts in Lishun, Vargr in Corridor and don't get me started on Antares. Even if I went cap in hand to Artemsus, there are no more ships." His eyes fell to the ground "I know; I've already asked. Darant, what are we to do?"

Darant sat heavily. "We need to secure the rear areas first. There's no chance of concentrating sufficient force to break through until we deal with the raiders and rebellions. Split up several cruiser squadrons into individual units. A single cruiser is more than capable of dealing with a raiding group and they'll cover more ground that way. Most critically we need intelligence to find where the raiders and supply dumps are. After that, pure weight of numbers will win it for us."

Aamku pondered, "I think you may be right, Darant; do it. And pass the word down the line, get this job done."

125th of 2025 (316-93): Raid on Pirese

It had been close, damn close, but we were safe. They were learning; I suppose that was inevitable. Their cruisers weren't patrolling in groups any more, which made the raiders' lives much shorter. Bad thing. So Command has started attaching a liner to a handful of raider groups. The idea apparently is something like cruiser sees raiders and goes 'yummy', then liner goes 'hello, guess what?' and smack! no cruiser. It

works for the most part, too. The only problem is the liner doesn't have anything to cover it if it goes bottomwards. Run into something bigger than you and you got to dock with your jump shuttle and get clear with nothing but five raiders between you and it. That gets messy, we'd already lost two liners that way and it was our turn to play. It had all gone fine till we got to Pirese. We jumped in, cautious like Siish likes; the system seemed clear, so we dropped. We went to hit the main world when they appeared. Three armoured cruisers, way too much for us to handle. Siish managed to take out one, but we needed to get clear. I should have known he was up to something

"I have an idea. De Maris *Vebant*, if you would be so kind as to relinquish the chair to Number One." Siish had made me his number one when Greg left, a *Komant* now doing a *Komanda*'s job.

De Maris was confused "*Kaptan*?"

"Fine pilot that you are, no one is as good as my *dinkir*, so if you please."

I took the chair; what was he up to?

"Now *dinkir*, that nice gas giant over there: Do you think you can get us into its atmosphere and out the other side at maximum G?"

I laughed; he was insane—you do not take over six hundred thousand cubic metres of badly damaged ship into an atmosphere at speed. "I can but try Siish." You could see the faces on the bridge turn white.

"I thought you might, *dinkir*." So that was Siish's plan, bet the other guy wasn't as crazy as he was and lose him in the atmosphere, probably a safe bet.

So there we were, a hypersonic mountain hurtling towards imminent disintegration. "Now *dinkir*, fast and steep—but I would appreciate it if we stay in one piece." I don't know how, but I managed it, a glowing fireball straight in one side and out the other.

We made it back to our lines, but the *Martinez* would need months in dock. They gave Siish the Silver Cross[20]; I think they should have given him a smack 'round the head for being a lunatic. They gave me the Protector's Gallantry Medal as well. Siish came to me after the ceremony. "I have something for you, *dinkir*." He looked sad; I was puzzled. He handed me my next orders. Command of the *Lucknow*, a raider. "You'll be leaving us, *dinkir*."

I hugged him. Then I kissed him. I don't know why.

There were tears in his eyes "Now, *dinkir*, you are not to get yourself killed and that is an order."

I saluted "Yes, sir."

Notes

1. **Luriani Dating:** The Protectorate calendar was introduced in -1454 Imperial during the First Luriani Protectorate. It uses the same 365-day year inherited from the Rule of Man as the Imperial calendar and starts dating from the foundation of the Luriani Cultural Region by Empress Juliana on 174 -1932 Imperial. Unlike the Imperial calender it does not feature a zero year. Imperial dates are given in brackets.

2. **Admiral (later Fleet Admiral) Kamees Sherin**, senior commander of the Protectorate forces during the Luriani War. One of the most controversial characters of the war, regarded as a hero by the Luriani at the time and acknowledged to have been one of the finest naval commanders of the Pacification Campaigns era. His reputation was tarnished by his post war political ambitions and extremist positions. Later analysis generally hold him to be equally as responsible for the war as Archduke Ishagri.

3. *Mmarislusant*: One of the four branches of Luriani culture, the *Mmarislusant* are descended from Vilani colonists left on Luriani worlds during the Long Night. While somewhat influenced by Luriani culture, they retain much of the traditions and language of the original Ziru Sirka (Vilani Empire). The differences between *Mmarislusant* and Vilani are very slight and predominantly linguistic. However both the Luriani and *Mmarislusant* choose to see the two as quite distinct.

4. *Baish* are a tiny eight legged flying reducer endemic to much of the Ley and Fornast sectors.

5. *irpel*: Standard Luriani word usually translated as fool or clown (plural *tirpel*).

6. **Luriani:** An aquatic minor human race native to Daramm in the Ley sector. Noted for their achievements in arts and music. They have reputation as being emotional and unpredictable. While human, they are not interfertile with other branches of the race. Their adaptations to the aquatic environment include the ability to remain without oxygen for up to an hour and sensitive lines of nerve ending that detect minute changes in pressure. This heightened sense of touch forms a central part of most Luriani social interactions. Their society is built around tight knit family and communal bonds. The Luriani's natural affinity for a three dimensional environment has lead them to be greatly valued as pilots and astrogators.

7. *Verasti Dtareem*: Descendants of Terran soldiers and administrations stranded on the Luriani worlds during the Long Night. They have absorbed much of Luriani culture, but are distinct from it. They, together with the *Mmarislusant*, form the bulk of the Luriani administrative structure.

8. **Verasryn the Guardian**, one of the major Luriani deities. The others are Basijk the Smith, Daramm the Mother, Aryn the Minstrel, Mrai the Huntress, Sesh the Traveller and Yasant the Teacher.

9. *ami*: Standard Luriani word meaning family, it was/ also used within the Protectorate Navy to refer to a warship crew (plural *tami*). It and *yassin* (children of) form the roots of virtually all Luriani words relating to groups and nations.

10. **Archduke Ishagri** of Gateway, killed at the battle of Rurur. At the time seen as an incompetent and sole instigator of the Luriani War. Ishagri appears to actually been a competent, if uninspired commander who was let down by a combination of poor political judgement and simple bad luck.

11. **The Battle of Rurur** was one of the worst defeats ever suffered by the Imperial Navy. Arrival in the Protectorate required a maximum jump for the fleet and Ishagri was aware of the risk of being caught in potentially hostile territory with empty jump fuel tanks. He had elected therefore to set the arrival point very close to one of Rurur's gas gaints, intending the fleet to refuel immediately. Unfortunately, not only had Admiral Sherin extended manoeuvres, the exercise he was conducting was opposed refuelling over that gas giant. Ishagri's fleet had the bad luck to arrive between the two Protectorate forces. Many Imperial captains, realising the situation was utterly hopeless, choose to surrender their vessels rather than face certain destruction. The full extent of the disaster was not known until several months later when a handful of battered vessels finally managed to escape from Protectorate space.

12. **Three Domains:** One of the major problems faced by the Imperium throughout the war was that, unlike the Protectorate with its single command struc-

ture operating on interior lines, the Imperium never had a unified command. The war was always acknowledged to fall under the purview of the Domain of Gateway, but the battlefield actually spread over three domains (Antares, Gateway and Sylea). No effort was ever made to unify the civilian administrations and it took over nine months before the Archduke of Gateway was given even limited military control over the portions of the Domain of Sylea (roughly a quarter of the Fornast sector) where the war was actually being fought. The shattered Ley Fleet was never reinforced and no attempt was made to advance from Antares. This prevented any threat to the Protectorate's vulnerable flanks and allowed them to concentrate their forces on a narrow frontage facing the weakened Fornast Fleet.

13. **Archduke Aamku** of Gateway, son of Archduke Ishagri.

14. **prestige cost of negotiation:** The regions adjacent to the Protectorate had only been recently integrated into the Imperium and resentment at incorporation was not uncommon. Indeed during much of the war, the Protectorate would exploit this restlessness to incite uprisings and tie down considerable Imperial forces.

15. *gabalail*: Large species of whale native to Daramm. They, and several other Terran marine mammals, were transplanted to Daramm by the Ancients at the same time as the Luriani. It is believed they served as the model for many of the modifications to the Luriani.

16. **Liner:** A Protectorate term for a ship designed to stand in the line of battle. Unlike the Imperial Navy's jump capable battleships, Protectorate liners relied on a jump shuttle to provide strategic mobility. An early form of the battlerider concept.

17. *beel*: A herd animal common on Luriani worlds, regarded as easy to catch.

18. **Music and dance** are central to the Luriani psyche; they could not imagine a world without them.

Virtually all Luriani music features the human voice and is strong and upbeat. Luriani dance is always as partnered and usually very intimate and sensual.

19. **Protector's Guards**, served the same role as Imperial Marines.

20. The **Silver Cross** (SC) was the second-rank Protectorate award; it ranked below the Star for Valour (SV) and above the Protector's Gallantry Medal (PGM).

Language

The official language of Imperium at this time was Sylean Anglic, though Vilani and other varieties of Anglic were common. The Protectorate had two official languages, Luriani Anglic (also known as Lurglic) and Standard Luriani. Approximately 70% of the population spoke Standard Luriani as their first tongue and this was the default language of the Protectorate, though childhood exposure made virtually all citizens bilingual. In addition to these two official languages, the Mmarislusant retained their original tongue of Old High Vilani, instruction in which was compulsory in all Protectorate schools. The Luriani and Sylean dialects of Anglic were broadly mutually intelligible, but Lurglic had picked up Standard Luriani's strong tendency toward metaphor making direct translations problematic.

Note for Referees: In game terms, Sylean Anglic and Luriani Anglic default to each other at -1. Similarly, Modern Vilani and Old High Vilani also default to each other at -1. Skill level 3 indicates native fluency, level 2 gives accented fluency, level 1 is strongly accented competency and level 0 indicates familiarity.

Protectorate rank structure

Protectorate rank was technically bilingual in Lurglic and Standard Luriani, but by the time of the Luriani War the Lurglic forms were essentially obsolete. In contrast to Imperial tradition of prefixing the title to the name, the Protectorate titles were suffixed to the name. On the next page is a table of Protectorate ranks with their then-contemporary Imperial equivalents. Some Standard Luriani titles were abbreviated; these abbreviations are bracketed after the full title. ✪

Luriani Protectorate Ranks and Imperial Equivalents				
Rank	Military Title		Naval Title	
	Standard Luriani	Imperial Equivalent	Standard Luriani	Imperial Equivalent
Enlisted Ranks				
E-0	Rekhot	*None*	Rekhot	*None*
E-1	Piaviadt	Private	Sesharyn	Spacehand Recruit
E-2	Vebee Korpail [Vebpail]	Lance Corporal	Gisesharyn [Giaryn]	Spacehand Apprentice
E-3	Korpail	Corporal	Yosesharyn [Yoaryn]	Able Spacehand
E-4	*None*	Lance Sergeant	*None*	Petty Officer 3rd Class
E-5	Serganet	Sergeant	Bayanshet [Bashet]	Petty Officer 2nd Class
E-6	*None*	Gunnery Sergeant	*None*	Petty Officer 1st Class
E-7	Mmier Serganet [Mmieret]	Leading Sergeant	Gibayanshet [Gishet]	Chief Petty Officer
E-8	Serganet Majkor (ia) [Seror]	First Sergeant	Yobayanshet (ia) [Yoshet]	Senior Chief Petty Officer
E-9	Serganet Majkor (cee) [Seror]	Sergeant Major	Yobayanshet (cee) [Yoshet]	Master Chief Petty Officer
Officer Ranks				
O-0	Kadt	Officer Recruit	Kadt	Officer Recruit
O-1	Korneet	Second Lieutenant	Ensin	Ensign
O-2	Lekhtenant	First Lieutenant	Vebee Lekhtenant [Vebant]	Sublieutenant
O-3	Kaptan	Captain	Lekhtenant	Lieutenant
O-4	Majkor	Major, Force Commander	Komanda-Lekhtenant [Komant]	Lieutenant Commander
O-5	Kolnel-Lekhtenant [Kolant]	Lieutenant Colonel	Komanda	Commander
O-6	Kolnel	Colonel	Kaptan	Captain
O-7	Mrigadeer	Brigadier General	Kommadtur	Commodore
O-8	Geenal-Majkor [Geenor]	Major General	Vebee Adtmral [Vebmral]	Fleet Admiral
O-9	Geenal-Lekhtenant [Geenant]	Lieutenant General	Reer Adtmral [Remral]	Sector Admiral
O-10	Geenal	General	Adtmral	Grand Admiral
O-11	Marsheel	*None*	Felet Adtmral [Femral]	*None*

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Babylon 5 - The Trouble With Drazi

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Babylon 5 - The Trouble with Drazi. Greg Lynch, Bryan Steele
Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
32pp, softcover
(currently out of print; was UK£5.00/US$9.95)

Editor's Note: This article is a lightly-edited version of one that was originally posted to the Freelance Traveller website in 2009.

Mongoose gave up their *Babylon 5* license shortly before the original writing of this review, so this is the only adventure that we will see for this universe in the Mongoose *Traveller* line.

On the Shelf

As with the other two *Babylon 5* items for *Traveller*, this volume sports a black cover with the Babylon 5 logo at the top, the *Traveller* logo at the bottom, and a CGI image between, this one of a space battle. [*But see "A Note About The Cover" at the end of this review. -ed.*] The battle illustrated has only a tenuous connection with the adventure; the adventure starts in the aftermath of a raid in which the ship the PCs are on is rendered into so much scrap, and the rescue of the PCs from the hulk is the start of the adventure. Unlike other *Traveller* releases to date, this book, weighing in at a mere 32 pages, is thin enough to disappear if shelved so that only the spine, rather than the front cover, is visible.

Initial Impressions

Although the production quality is generally consistent with all contemporary Mongoose *Traveller* products, the *Babylon 5* sourcebooks get a downtick for the grey background over the entire page—it reduces the readability of the text. Some of the subtitle fonts are also difficult to read. I approached this volume with some skepticism because of its light weight; 32 pages simply is not enough for an adventure of the quality of (for example) *Prison Planet* or *Beltstrike*. It does, however, appear to present enough information to be useful to an "index card referee"—one who keeps a pile of miscellaneous characters, location maps, special equipment, and so on handy to grab when needed in any scenario.
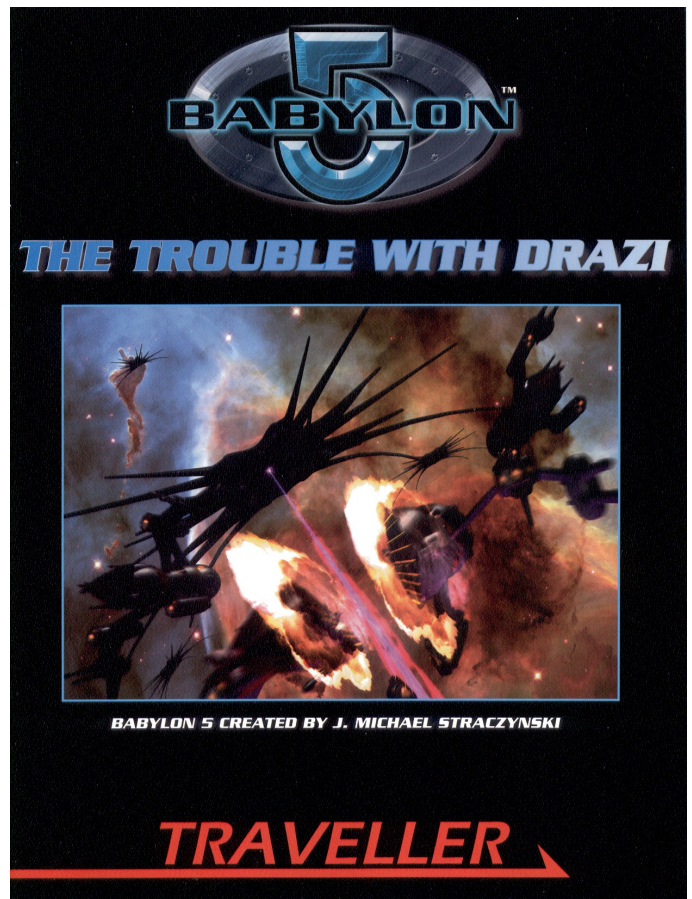
On Closer Inspection

There are indications that this product was originally intended to be part of Mongoose's *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* line for the d20 system, rather than for *Traveller*; the "Designation of Product Identity" paragraph on the title page makes reference to the d20 SRD and omits any reference to the *Traveller* SRD. There are also a couple of explicit references to the *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game*.

During the initial rescue of the players by the Drazi, a case of mistaken identity develops, and this is one of the keys to the adventure. Even if the PCs successfully correct the impression, a key request will be made, to all appearances because of the reason for the initial mistaken identity, and even once it is firmly acknowledged to be an error, a key Drazi character states frankly that he intends to use it to his advantage, if the players are willing.

There is one section where the PCs appear to be in a position to influence the adventure greatly, but even there, they are practically guided to the necessary information to resolve the situation fa-

vorably, and avoid derailing the adventure.

As a result, experienced players—of any system, not just *Traveller*—will feel that they are being 'railroaded', even if an experienced referee is running this adventure. The hobby has, in large measure, matured, and while this sort of adventure was acceptable in the early days, players and referees today will be expecting more, and will find this sort of adventure somewhat disappointing.

In its favor, there is very little in this adventure that is really "hard-wired" to the *Babylon 5* setting, potentially allowing it to be used, with little more than name changes and some minor changes to elapsed times, as a side adventure during a 'break' in a longer non-*Babylon-5* campaign, or as a transitional adventure to introduce the PCs to potential future contacts, adversaries, or patrons.

Summary

The Trouble With Drazi is better as the summary of a story than as an adventure—it isn't long enough to be more than a short-story as-is (though a good writer could flesh it out into a decent novel), there are too few options for the PCs to make meaningful decisions or learn relevant information, and the course of the adventure is essentially preordained. Within those limits, however, it is well-written—it "reads well"—and offers some good potential for a referee who is unafraid to 'tinker' with the material as provided.

A Note About The Cover

The cover described (and reproduced) at the beginning of this review represents the printing that the reviewer owns. In locating a cover image for this product, another image that appears equally valid was located, depicting an armed Drazi. This alternnate cover is reproduced here.　✪
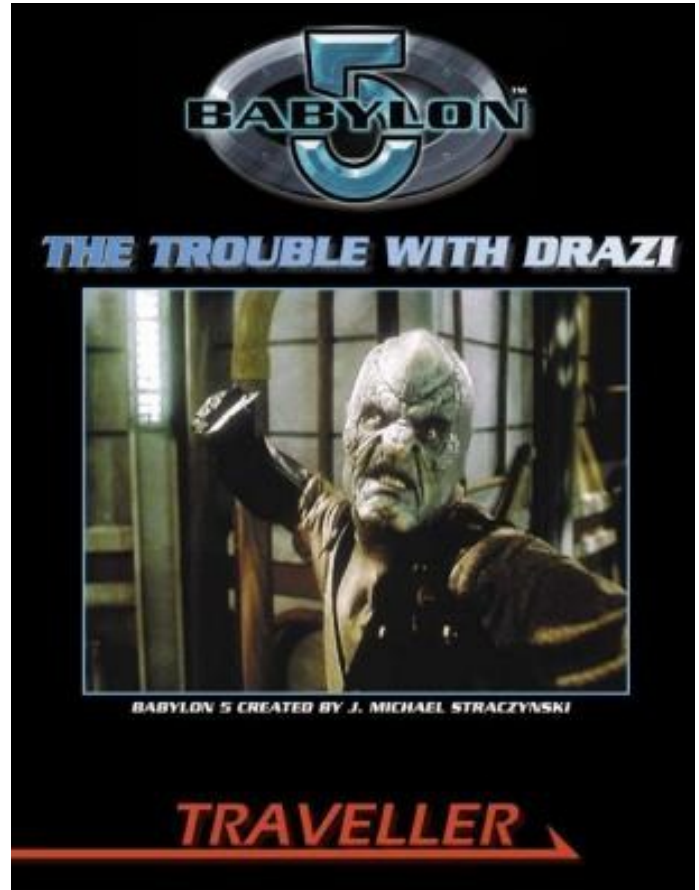
Ove Measures

A Jolly (Roger) Good Time

by Rick Morey

This scenario should be set in a backwater system that sees little traffic, situated two to three parsecs off the Spinward Main or one of its branches. There should be a research station in the system, though it may be affiliated with the subsector capitol university rather than be sponsored by the Imperium. The PCs need not have their own ship; in fact, it may be better if they don't. If such is the case then at least one PC should have established friendships among the crew sufficient to permit him to be on the bridge when the ship emerges from Jump.

What's Going On?

Pirates have been using a minor planet in the system, the one the research station orbits, as a 'cooling off' spot for their booty. They regularly bring stolen cargoes here to fall off the authorities' radar before retrieving them for later sale elsewhere. The pirates are just returning from a raid

when the PCs' ship detects them, though only momentarily; the pirates use the 'terrain' to mask their movement to the planet.

Personnel working at the research station detect the pirate corsair's energy emissions and, recognizing it as anomalous, decide to investigate. The professor, one of his students, and a tech head planetside to investigate. When the researchers stumble upon the pirates they are taken hostage. The pirates then use the research station ship's boat as a Trojan Horse to gain access to the research station and take the rest of the personnel hostage before they can notify anyone of the pirates' presence. The captive research personnel are thrown into cold sleep berths onboard the corsair for later sale into slavery. No longer considering their position secure, the pirates are in the middle of loading the most valuable of their prizes when the PCs arrive.

Complicating things for the pirates, they are taking advantage of the visit to overhaul their J-Drive. It is currently scattered over the lower engineering deck and will take some time to reassemble. This may provide the PCs the chance to recover their own ship and have another go at capturing the pirates if the GM so desires.

Ghost

When the PCs' ship emerges from J-Space the person at the sensors notices a phantom contact; phantom, because almost as soon as it registers it disappears. If a PC is not at the sensors, then the NPC stationed there will comment sufficiently to catch the nearest PC's attention. The reading was short and uncertain enough to have been a 'ghost', a false reading. However, based upon its position, it *could* be another ship using the stellar system's configuration and makeup to mask its presence—an unusual (and therefore unlikely) move given the lack of traffic within the system. Time is money, though, and if the ship is to make a profit it can't spend time chasing down ghost sensor returns. The PCs proceed to the local Starport.

Request for Help

At the Starport the PCs are approached by a representative of the SPA. Communications have been lost with an installation housing a team conducting research in orbit about one of the smaller planets in the system and, being short of staffing, the SPA would like the PCs to check and make sure the researchers are OK. The SPA will loan the PCs the use of a pinnace (Mongoose *Traveller Core Rules* p. 133) and a pilot if necessary. If the PCs have their own ship, point out that it needs to refuel and reprovision, and again offer the use of the SPA pinnace. If needed, the SPA will also offer the PCs the use of TL 8 vacc-suits and EVA gear.

The SPA provides brief dossiers on the station personnel. There are three techs to operate the station and a research team consisting of a professor from the subsector capitol university, a graduate student assistant, and three undergrads. If asked, the SPA official shrugs and denies all knowledge of the nature of the research, saying that he never inquired. He doesn't believe it to be classified or secret, though. The official also provides the coordinates of the station. It is in orbit above a small, barren, airless rockball of a planet.

Any of the PCs who are aware of the earlier phantom sensor reading and who make an INT 8+ roll will realize that the research station is in the vicinity of the mystery contact. If they inquire, they will also learn that the last communication with the station occurred shortly after the time of the phantom contact.

Anybody Home?

Approaching the station, sensor scans with anything other than a NAS, which the SPA pinnace does not have, will reveal nothing unexpected. Visual inspection will not show any damage or external activity, though if someone thinks to check, they'll notice that the ship's boat assigned to the station is not at its docking port, or anywhere to be seen. Attempting to communicate with the station, even from the closest safe range, will go unanswered.

The PCs will have no problem gaining access to the station. They may dock the pinnace at the empty ship's boat dock, or stand off and enter it via EVA. Alternatively, the PCs may enter the cargo bay hatch via EVA. Whatever method they choose, once on board the PCs will find the station's envi-

ronmental systems operating normally. What they will not find is any sign of current human activity.

They will also find signs of a firefight. Some of the equipment has been damaged, though it appears to be collateral damage rather than intentional. Judging by the marks on the walls there was a mixture of slug and laser fire. Any of the PCs who make an INT 6+ roll, +1 DM for those with prior combat careers, will notice that the battle damage is unidirectional; all of the fire seems to have originated at the ship's boat dock and proceed through the station from there. There does not appear to have been any return fire. If any of the PCs bother to check, there is nothing in the station personnel files indicating they were armed, and no sign of personal weapons—other than the signs of the firefight—will be found. A call back to the Starport will be inconclusive; all they will be able to tell the PCs is that nobody said anything either way, and there was no reason for the SPA to ask.

Checking the station computer log, Computer EDU 8+, reveals the ship's boat returned from the planet's surface about the time communications were lost. For each additional point by which the roll is made, or each subsequent attempt, learn one of the following items, in order:

1) Two hours prior to its return, the ship's boat was dispatched to the planet's surface with one of the techs as pilot, the professor, and one of the undergrad students;

2) Before the ship's boat was dispatched, anomalous energy readings were detected on the planet's surface. On an INT 8+ roll, +2 DM for Pilot or Astrogation skill, any character aware of the phantom sensor reading will realize that the time of this discovery coincides with the time it would take a ship with a thrust 3 M-drive to reach the planet from the phantom contact point;

3) Coordinates of the anomalous readings on the planet's surface. They are near one of the volcanoes venting gases that, due to the planet's low gravity, escape into space.

Delving Deeper

If the PCs choose to investigate the situation on the planet below, they have two options: They may fly directly to the location of the anomalous readings, or they may land on the opposite side of the volcano, using it to mask their approach, and travel to the site overland. They may also try to contact the planetary surface via radio, receiving no answer.

If the PCs choose the direct approach (if the pilot is a NPC SPA employee he will not agree to this option) then they are detected by the pirates.

If the PCs opt to use the volcano and its outgassing as a mask for their approach then the pilot must make a Pilot INT 8+ roll. Failure means the pirates are alerted. The PCs land approximately one-hour's travel by foot from the site.

If the PCs choose the direct approach, attempt to contact the surface, or fail in their attempt to 'hide' behind the volcano, the pirates will be alerted; see "Alerting the Pirates" below.

Due to the fact that there is no atmosphere off which to bounce signals, all communications are limited to line-of-sight. The volcano will soon block communications between the pinnace and anyone going to investigate the site. Additionally, the vacc-suit radios do not have sufficient power to transmit a signal off planet. Anyone remaining on the pinnace may attempt to bounce a signal off the gases being vented by the volcano by succeeding at the task chain: Engineering (Electronic) INT 8+ or Physical Science (Physics) EDU 8+, followed by Communications INT 8+. This will take 1D6×10 minutes and if successful, they will be able to communicate with those on the other side of the volcano. They will also hear the pirate transmissions as described below.

X Marks the Spot

As the PCs travelling overland approach the site of the energy anomaly, they will hear radio transmissions. There are multiple people talking as though coordinating some kind of work. The PCs hear snippets of conversation such as, "Not that one, leave that one for next time." "Aghayt, Tune, everything quiet out there?" "Marco, how're the repairs coming?" as well as joking and kidding around. This should alert the PCs to several things:

1) If they can hear other people's radio transmissions then other people will be able to hear theirs. (Non-radio communications are possible by touching helmets together while talking.)
2) Whoever is talking doesn't seem to know the PCs are there.
3) There is at least one set of sentries on duty.
4) Some piece of equipment is currently non-operational.

If the PCs continue they crest a rise and see before them a valley. One hundred meters into the valley a pirate corsair (Mongoose *Traveller Core Rules* pp 129 - 130, but mounting one beam laser and one sandcaster in each turret rather than two beam lasers) is grounded. Alongside it is parked what must be the research station ship's boat. There is a structure that looks to be a warehouse sitting ahead of the corsair and people in vacc-suits are moving cargo containers between the warehouse and the ship. One figure appears to be directing the action (the pirate captain, Dallaat Mor). He is wearing a TL 12 vacc-suit and is armed with a laser pistol (TL 9). Another figure, armed with an accelerator rifle, seems to be standing guard. Those moving the cargo containers are armed with snub pistols.

If the PCs chose to approach stealthily and succeed, Stealth DEX 6+, then they also see two figures directly before them. One is armed with an accelerator rifle with underslung grenade launcher. The other has a rocket launcher. These sentries are not initially aware of the PCs. If the PCs can take out the sentries in one combat round then no alarm is raised.

If the PCs succeed in taking out the sentries without raising an alarm they may attempt to sneak up on the pirates using the limited cover available. Each PC must roll Stealth DEX 8+. If successful the PC gets within 50 m of the pirates. If a PC fails, he is (6×effect) meters further back. Failure by any of the PCs also alerts the pirates and immediately sends the action into combat rounds, though the pirates will be surprised for the first round. If none of the PCs fails the Stealth roll, roll again with a target of 10+ to make it within 14m of the pirates, and with the same penalties for failure. This will

bring the PCs up to the ship's boat. If they check, the PCs will find the ship's boat empty of personnel, powered down, and its drive, communications, and controls disabled. If the pirates still have not been alerted to the PCs presence, go into combat rounds anyway at this point. In addition to the pirates outside, there is at least one (the pirate lieutenant, Crag Jorgenson) in the open cargo bay, two (Tan Marco and Kalinda Bjell) on the lower engineering deck, and another on the bridge.

Once alerted to the PCs' presence, Jorgenson will activate the cargo bay doors (they will take 1D6 combat rounds to close), order the ship powered up (taking 1D6×10 seconds) and head to the bridge. Any gunners onboard will make their way to the turrets. However, the weapons will not be functional until the ship is powered up. (See the "Notes on Combat" below for using the ship's weapons against close-in personnel.)

Alerting the Pirates

This section pertains to alerting the pirates before the PCs arrive on site; either by transmitting an inquiry or heading for a landing at their camp. For the consequences of alerting the pirates once the PCs are present at the pirates' location see "X Marks the Spot" above.

If the PCs broadcast a message to the planetary surface the pirates will not respond, nor will they abandon their treasure. Instead, they will power up the ship and have one of the turrets manned and ready by the time the PCs arrive. In addition, any stealth rolls required in "X Marks the Spot" automatically have a target of 12+ and the pirates do not suffer surprise.

Should the PCs steer directly for the pirate camp, by the time they arrive the corsair is fully powered, manned, and ready to lift planet. Use the space combat rules with the ships starting at Adjacent range.

Playing the Pirates

There are between ten and twenty pirates, assuming a mix of single and double occupancy onboard the corsair. Tailor the number to fit the size and ability of your PC party. Other than specified above, all pirates will be involved in transferring cargo between the warehouse and the corsair's

Active Measures

cargo bay. Designate three of the cargo handling pirates as the gunners, giving them Gunner (Turret) 1 in addition to the normal pirate skills.

With the exception of Tan Marco and Kalinda Bjell, who are lovers, there is no cohesion or sense of loyalty among the pirates and they have no problem abandoning their fellows if it will mean their own escape. In fact, Dallaat Mor and Crag Jorgenson are in direct competition and would welcome the opportunity to sacrifice the other. If the fight seems to be going against them, pirates guaranteed amnesty will surrender. As loss appears more certain, individuals may well surrender in exchange for offers of leniency. If either Tan Marco or Kalinda Bjell take damage to the point of serious injury or unconsciousness the other will initiate surrender negotiations. Conversely, if either is killed, the other will never surrender. Likewise, Dor and Jorgenson will fight to the death unless guaranteed full amnesty.

Should the PCs need help taking the corsair, you can incorporate Dr. Arisa Gaanirrii, who is being forced to serve the pirates as ship's doctor against her will. While she will not take any offensive combat action, Dr. Gaanirrii will sedate any injured pirates that come to her for help and will work to grant the PCs access to various parts of the corsair.

Once aware of the PCs' presence, the pirates' primary motivation will be to escape. Their secondary goal will be to strand the PCs on the planet, preferably to suffer a slow death as their oxygen supply runs out. Toward that end the pirates will seek to disable or destroy the SPA pinnace if aware of it. They have already rendered the research station ship's boat inoperative.

Pirate NPCs:

Note: Those pirates shown as having Cutlass will not have it in their possession; it is stored aboard the ship.

Dallaat Mor: Human male, 34. 97A886
Pirate Captain
Athletics(Coordination) 1, Leadership 2, Recon 1, Gun Combat(Energy Pistol) 2, Melee(Unarmed) 1, Comms 1, Zero-G 1, Astrogation 1, Pilot 0, Vacc Suit 1

Vacc-Suit (TL 12), Laser Pistol (TL 9), Cutlass
Dallaat is egotistical, sadistic, pragmatic, and amoral. He likes to control people through fear and hates his lieutenant, Crag Jorgenson.

Crag Jorgenson: Human male, 30. 576B96
Pirate Lieutenant.
Gun Combat(Slug Pistol) 1, Comms 1, Zero-G 0, Pilot(Spacecraft) 1, Astrogation 0, Computer 1, Sensors 1, Vacc-Suit 1, Leadership 0
Vacc-Suit (TL 8), Gauss Pistol, Cutlass
Completely self-serving, Crag is looking for a way to supplant Dallaat Mor as leader.

Tan Marco: Human male, 43. 888CA5
Pirate Chief Engineer.
Gun Combat(Slug Pistol) 1, Vacc-Suit 1, Melee (Unarmed) 2, Engineer(Power Plant) 2, Zero-G 2, Carouse 1
Vacc-Suit (TL 8), Snub Pistol, Cutlass
Tan prefers dealing with machines over people, except for Kalinda Bjell (with whom he is involved romantically). He will not abandon Kalinda, placing her welfare above everything else.

Kalinda Bjell: Human female, 27. 8679A5
Pirate Engineer.
Gun Combat 0, Melee(Unarmed) 1, Engineer (Maneuver Drive) 2, Mechanic 1, Physical Science (Electronics) 1, Physical Science(Physics) 1 Vacc-Suit 0, Zero-G 1
Vacc-Suit (TL 8), Snub Pistol, Cutlass
A wizard with machines and science, Kalinda is socially inept. She is romantically involved with Tan Marco and will not abandon him, placing his welfare above everything else.

Pirate Crewman. 697665
Gun Combat(Slug Pistol) 1, Gun Combat(Slug Rifle) 1, Melee(Blade) 1, Streetwise 0, Carouse 1, Vacc-Suit 1, Zero-G 1, Gunner(Turret) 1 for the three gunners, Heavy Weapons 0 for the two sentries.
Vacc-Suit (TL 8), Snub Pistol and/or Accelerator Rifle (with underslung Grenade Launcher for one sentry), Rocket Launcher for one sentry, Cutlass
"Every man for himself" is their motto.

Dr. Arisa Gaanirrii: Human female, 37. 576CC9
Pirate Medic (reluctant)
Admin 0, Medic 3, Life Science(Biology) 1, Sensors 1

Vacc-Suit (TL 8), Med Kit
Dr. Gaanirrii is a pirate captive and serving as ship's medic against her will. She will not actively cause injury, but will otherwise help the PCs.

Notes on Combat

The corsair's lasers are not meant for use against personnel sized targets at virtually point-blank range, being unable to track the targets fast enough. However, they can be used to target static locations, such as rock formations being used for cover. All such targets are at Adjacent range (Space Combat Rules) and because of the extreme proximity suffer an additional -1 DM to hit. If successful, roll on the "Normal Damage" column of the Crew Damage table in Mongoose *Traveller Core Rules* p. 151. Treat Sandcasters as having eight dice for autofire, each hit doing 2D6 damage.

Vacc-Suits are, to a limited extent self-sealing. A vacc-suit may be penetrated a number of times equal to its TL and remain sealed. The next penetration after that requires immediate action (roll Vacc-Suit EDU 8+) to seal the breach manually. To keep the breach sealed does not require additional rolls, but does require a minor action each combat round. Additional breaches cannot be sealed. Damage from explosions or sandcasters cannot be sealed, either manually or through the suit's self-sealing function.

Because of the planet's low gravity, any action more vigorous than a walk (spending more than one minor action/round on movement), firing a weapon with recoil, making a melee attack, dodging or parrying, requires a Zero-G DEX 8+ roll to remain in control. For rolls resulting from firing a weapon, apply a negative DM equal to the recoil. Firing a weapon with a negative recoil still requires a control roll, but without the negative DM. For rolls resulting from a melee attack or parry, apply the heft of the weapon as a negative DM. Even if the weapon has a negative heft or none at all a control roll is required, but without the negative DM. This is a free action. Failure means the character can perform no other actions until they regain control (another Zero-G DEX 8+ roll with a cumulative +1 DM for each successive round). Attempting to regain control is a significant action counted against the character's allotment for the round.

The Joy of Victory

There are a number of potential, not necessarily exclusive outcomes for the PCs.

If the PCs succeed in rescuing the research team the professor becomes a contact and the SPA waives their berthing fees. It is up to the GM to determine the professor's field of study that will prove most useful to the PCs while being consistent with his involvement at a research station circling the planet.

If the GM brings Dr. Arisa Gaanirrii into play and the PCs rescue her, she will become an ally. She may also end up a romantic interest for one of the PCs.

Capturing the corsair is worth Cr 50,000 for taking it out of circulation. Should your players prove as mercenary as the ones I'm familiar with and want to keep the ship for themselves, remind them that taking a ship by force is called piracy, not salvage. The same holds true for any of the recovered cargo, though the insurers may pay a reward for its recovery; figure Cr (1D6×10,000) with it taking (6 + 1D6) months for the paperwork to go through and the cash to show up.

There is a Cr 1000 bounty for every pirate returned to stand trial and Cr 250 for every dead pirate that can be proven to have been one. Remember any deals the PCs may have cut with the pirates regarding amnesty or leniency. Any pirates turned over to the authorities may well come seeking revenge should they ever escape or be set free.

If the PCs end up stranded at the pirate camp, they can find sufficient materials among the left behind booty to create a temporary habitat to keep them alive (task chain: Engineering (Life Support) INT 8+ then Survival EDU 6+) and to build a radio (Engineering (Electronic) EDU 6+) to call for help.

If the PCs fail to rescue the hostages or capture any live pirates, they will be held on suspicion of piracy. It will take (1D6×4) weeks before they are eventually exonerated.   ✵

Twilight Sector Setting Update Alpha
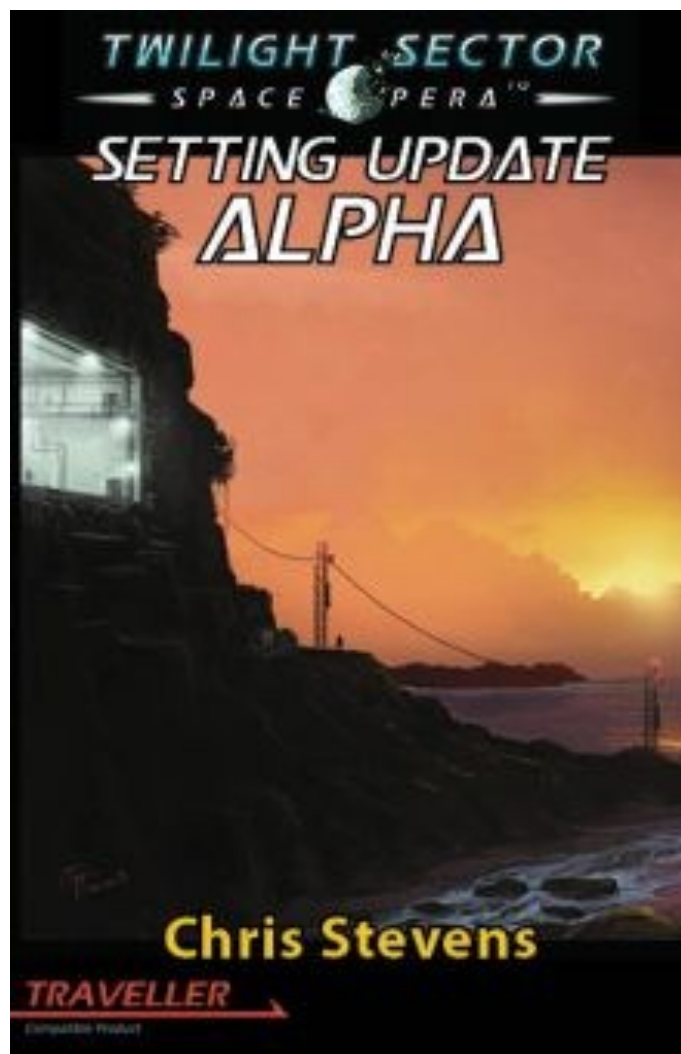
reviewed by "kafka"

Twilight Sector Setting Update Alpha. Chris Stevens
Terra/Sol Games LLC http://www.terrasolgames.com
32pp, PDF
free download

This slender volume carries a great deal of punch despite its small size. It is an enhancement to the supplement entitled the *Twilight Sector Campaign Setting Book: Revised* for Mongoose *Traveller* in which a pair of Alternate Earths located in a different region of space are determining the history of humanity. The original *Twilight Sector Campaign Setting Book* was viewed as incomplete by most players/Referees; TSG has remedied this by this short volume that ironically leads you to wanting more. Contained within are the useful tools that would have added value onto the original book. It contains things like an integrated timeline and brief synopses of the stellar nations, and in-depth examples of the Transluminal drive (which is a core difference between the OTU and this milieu; despite the Core *Traveller* rules accounting for this, it is always necessary to spell out how one does Jump in Space Opera). Ironically, I found this chapter somewhat redundant as I did understand it from the main book but I could see where many would be confused. Kudos to TSG for making this process even more clearly defined in a free supplement. Lastly there are even more adventure seeds. I will not give away contents lest players should be reading these reviews. Needless to say, they are as solid as the ones in the primary book.

Criticisms? Well, for one the volume does recycle much of the art of the original *Twilight Sector Campaign Setting Book* after one gets past the excellent cover. While that book had exceptional art, to see it twice and in some cases thrice repeated is really too bad. Their choices were good, in keeping with the text, but, unfortunately, these were not some of the best pieces in the *Twilight Sector Campaign Setting Book*. So, seeing bad art repeated *is* too bad, but something I believe will be remedied in future supplements, as I can see *Twilight Sector: Beyond the Open Door* returns to the tradition of having phenomenal art. I could maybe criticize the lack of even more content – but we gamers are always trying to get more from a publisher. I certainly look forward to future releases and hope that they will indeed consider POD with a multitude of international partners to bring this fantastic milieu to an ever larger audience that may be stymied by the large print costs associated with PDFs and POD publishers in the United States. Having said that, eBook readers and tablets are getting better so maybe in the future, all RPG products will be some form of PDF or e-inked paper. As much as I embrace the future, though… I hope not. I love paper, especially when the lights go out.

The fact that Terra-Sol Games LLC released this for free really shows their commitment to the game and to gamers as a whole. Maybe it still leaves the Twilight Sector incomplete but I do not think so. If the function of a supplement and a game company is to spur the imagination of Referees and thus create vivid visual and audio land-

scapes rife with adventure, then Terra-Sol Games LLC has done a great job with everything in this line to date. The line and milieu should not be viewed as competitors to the more established OTU as complementary adjuncts in the best of *Traveller* products that have gone on before it.

Maybe some would consider me a tired grognard, but most of all I count myself as a player/referee of the greatest SFRPG – *Traveller*. Nothing that Terra-Sol Games LLC has done to date has altered my belief in that *Traveller* is the ultimate in providing a flexible framework for adventure and a heuristic to tell the stories that we cherish and encapsulate in our hopes and dreams.   ✪

Conteur's Rest

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 17

The pair of huge Sleds approached to within about two meters of Tam and one another before setting down, unnerving the little brunette.

"You out of your *fucking* minds, parking so close!?" she yelled up at the drivers, as she vacated the crate she'd been sitting on, and tossed a half full Eryth Cola she'd been sipping at one of the drivers, missing him, but spraying the sticky mess all across his glassteel windshield.

A man riding in the cab next to the driver motioned with his hands for her to take it easy, then he stepped down from the cab, dressed in the orange and brown livery of the Port Director's Guard.

"I apologize if you've been startled, ma'am" he said, removing his Corinth-style helmet, and smiling at her. "Sometimes women have a difficult time handling something so large."

Oh brother! Tam thought, *this sort of conversation could easily turn into a long string of double entendres. If I let it… Guess I'll have to shut down this swaggering jerk! Kinda cute though…*

"And your business here?" she asked, taking a drag on her C&J.

The Guard tapped his forearm-mounted data pad for emphasis, "Cargo delivery for the *Chicken and Waffles*." he said.

"Oh, well in that case, you are most welcome." she said, standing and bowing before sitting down on the crate once more.

"So you would be Captain Fyyg then, Miss?"

"Hardly…" Tam answered, laughing and flicking the cigarette butt out to bounce off the side of the massive Sled to her right.

"But I can still sign for the shipment, even if I'm not the Captain, Mister…?" she said, pulling a stylus from behind her left ear.

"de la Crioux, Ma'am." he answered. Stepping forward, he held the data pad steady. "Bottom of the document, Miss…?"

"Murmisagli." she answered after signing the electronic document. The Guard looked at the sig, trying to see if he was able to read 'Murmisagli' out of the tight scrawl the brunette had provided.

Clapping the Guard on the shoulder, Tam told him, "Just put it in there." as she thumbed toward the inside of the opened cargo hold. "Crew's out on Liberty." she explained.

The Sled drivers bitched, but not too much longer after complaining to de la Crioux, who offered them a choice between their cushy Sled driving jobs and working in the mines, they'd offloaded the heavy pallets using their Pallet Masters and quickly maneuvered them inside the *Waffles*' empty cargo space.

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Captain Fyyg had been on the bridge, and was reviewing the document within moments of Tam signing it. Satisfied with it, he left the bridge and went to do some thinking.

Sitting at the desk in his office, staring at the frosted glass in the door a few meters away, he sipped the last shot he'd ever have from the thirty two year old bottle of Newton & McCenna single-malt Scotch that he'd had in a drawer for the last twelve years as the *Chicken and Waffles*' Master.

Setting the shot glass down still half full, he put the bottle back into its battered rectangle of a box

and wrote on a small card to go with the bottle:

Friend Hobson,

I am grateful for the trust you've put in my crew and myself, and will, of course, save a Patron's Share of the profits for you.

Enclosed you'll find a bottle which I've found comfort in during both good times and bad (Here's to good times!), and I hope you will enjoy it!

Your Friend in Commerce,

-Nordel-

Finally finished wrapping the box, Fyyg summoned a trio of his available crew to deliver the package to Port Director Hobson's Office. Ilsa Frielander once again wore her dress whites that showed off her perfect mahogany legs, and had her needle pistol in a holster on her right hip. Dave Trajillo was in his dress uniform, didn't appear to be armed, and carried the wrapped box with the reverence of a scepter at some coronation. Tam, dressing for trouble, wore a trio of pistols one could easily see; a pair of needlers in a cross-draw rig, and a laser pistol in a quick-draw holster low on her left hip. She also had a concealed, four-shot magnum in a holster at the back of her belt. Tam Murmisagli, as it turned out, was a very good shot; possibly the best aboard the *Waffles*; having been taught back when she was still a kid, by her Uncle Tiger.

"A cross-draw rig, Tam? Do you not think it a little much, girl?" asked Number Two.

"A little much?" Tam asked back. "I don't know this little World. Just because the Port Director is apparently a chummy type makes no never mind to me, sweetie." She checked one of the needlers and put it back. "The Port Director is in his Office, with a cordon of liverymen. According to the ship's Library program, this little world we're tromping on is a hardscrabble Frontier Installation with a mine that uses conscript labor, amongst other things. I don't see it as a very nice place.

"Why, we could get jacked up at the next corner here…"

And rounding the next corner, the group ran smack into a small group of armed toughs. Looking at the manner in which the leader was dressed, it was obvious he was from Caruthers.

"Ladies," the leader began, bowing with a flourish, and ignoring Dave in his address, but not when it came to covering him.

"Traveling the neighborhood here after dark can be a trip fraught with danger, m'lovlies…" he smirked, "An escort, methinks, is what you'll be needing this night, and I'll not hear a word agin' it!."

"And how much will this protection cost, Mr…?" Ilsa asked.

"Peachtree. Obadiah Peachtree as ever was, darlin'!" the thug answered, pulling his cutlass a few centimeters from its scabbard to show he meant business. "So it's a deal we haves then." the leader decided. "Two thooosands when we gets you to your destination, then, pretty pollies!" Peachtree decided.

"Mr. Peachtree, as thoughtful as your offer of protection is, I'm afraid we'll have to pass, as we have no two thooosand anything. Now please, make way, sir!" Ilsa tried reasoning. "Accosting women on a street corner seems most unseemly…"

"Boys!" Peachtree said, and his gang suddenly bristled, wicked-looking bludgeons and swords swinging free, a variety of pistols ready to be drawn, or had already been drawn. Passers-by stopped to watch the melee.

Breathing slow and even like her uncle taught her, everything seemed to slow down for Tam as she pulled first the right pistol from her cross-draw rig, then the left; firing a burst into a thug who'd already drawn a heavy snub pistol, and a second into an individual near Number Two armed with a length of pipe wrapped in barbed wire. They might have been statues for all the difficulty Tam had. A third burst, and a thug trying to draw his LeMat went down sans arm.

As a thug raised his homemade shotgun toward Dave, Trajillo went back, almost flattening himself against the ground as the gun fired over him and missed. Springing back, he leapt up and did a spin kick that struck the gangster a savage blow to the face, knocking him senseless.

Freilander fired her needler on automatic, sending a shower of darts into a pair of Peachtree's remaining gang, until there remained only the leader.

Drawing a cutlass, he came at Ilsa, who blocked his mid-leg chop with her now-broken pistol.

Quickly drawing her own cutlass, Ilsa countered, with the thug parrying wildly. Ilsa's blade was deflected away from his throat as she stomped his instep.

Peachtree's riposte bound Ilsa's blade for a moment and the thug's momentum pushed her blade downward, leaving her unprotected. In that second, the limping hood grabbed a long knife and laid open the dark woman's forearm and wrist, but missed slicing any tendons.

Ilsa thrust upward from below, the wide blade catching his off-hand holding the long knife and taking off two fingers, the thug dropping the blade to the ground.

They circled and attacked and parried, using power and light poles, and even an illegally-parked grav car as a shield. Having a few centimeters' reach over the shorter Caruthersian, Ilsa pressed her attack, driving her shorter opponent back until he twisted his foot in a drain cover and went down clumsily, her blade laying open his scalp on the way down.

"Hold now! Hold! You've bested me! Plain as plain to see, darlin'. I surrenders." Peachtree admitted, as he wiped blood away from his eyes before eventually tying a kerchief around his head. Sitting there on the cobblestones, the wounded thug was fiddling with a knee.

"Get your winding-sheets, Peachtree." said Ilsa, as she cleaned and re-sheathed her cutlass.

Peachtree was staunching the flow of blood from having lost two fingers with another kerchief, carefully dropping the missing digits into a coat pocket for later medical treatment.

"Everyone all right?" Freilander asked her companions. "Alright then, lets get out of here and complete our mission."

Reaching into the top of his boot, Peachtree pulled a heavy derringer. "Before we parts company, I haves a little something for ya, darlin'!" the gangster said, smiling.

Tam watched as the little guy pulled a pistol free of his boot. Before he even knew he was dead, she'd fired with both needlers; the burst from one sawing his gunhand off, and the other unzipping him from shoulder to hip in an explosion of gore.

"Here," Tam said, "Lemme get this." as she pried the derringer from the severed hand as delicately as if she were picking a flower. Taking a kerchief of her own, she wiped down her new possession before tucking it away.

As the trio continued down the block, Tam said, "See? I told you this place could be dangerous," as they walked past a pair of liveried officers.

"'Ere now. Where do you think you're going?" one of the officers asked Frielander, noting the wound and blood.

"We were trying to make a delivery to Port Director Hobson when we were waylaid by bandits no more than a block past, Officer." Ilsa said, winding a kerchief around her wound and cursing the blood spattered on her dress whites.

"And this package?" the other officer asked.

"Of a personal nature, and unknown to us." replied Dave.

"The Port Director you say?" the first officer asked. "Well maybe we can get you folks there more directly." he told Ilsa before getting on the comm and calling for a wagon.

Within about fifteen minutes a large, boxy grav sled arrived at their location, blaring lights and sirens to clear the spot on the ground.

"Now the *Helot* here isn't the most comfortable thing in the world, but it'll get you going where you need to go at a nice clip." He rapped on the thick armored side twice and the rear hatch started opening. "And of course, she's armored, so no one should mess with you!"

As the Sled rose, and the rear hatch was closing, the officer on the ground yelled up at them "Welcome to Nordic Prime!" and laughed.

Within a few minutes the *Helot* touched down in the same courtyard in which the pirates had been executed previously. One of the liveried officers led the crewmembers through a confusing warren of small streets until they were standing at the building holding the Port Director's Office.

Hobson, a friendly fellow, was especially happy to see the beautiful Ilsa Frielander once more, though not in such a shocking state. Fawning over her wound, he said "No, this will just not do!"

Looking about, he spied the functionary he sought. "Dellroy! Fetch my personal surgeon, and be quick about it, would you?" he almost snapped.

Dellroy bowed and ran off, returning in a few minutes with Hobson's personal physician.

The Doctor introduced itself as 'Doctor Isenburg', multiple limbs moving to grasp shoulders and shake hands with the contingent from the *Waffles*. His finish was a metallic green, and his shoulders were narrow and his neck overlong, supporting a block of a head with a ring of visual sensors.

"Your arm, my dear." he said smoothly as he embraced the injured limb in a pair of arms, disinfecting the wound with a third, and a pair of smaller ones providing the medical sealant.

"And how did you come to injure yourself?" he asked as he worked.

"Knife fight with gangsters." Ilsa replied.

"Oh my… Did you know that eleven point seven percent of all homicides are caused by edged weapons?" And suddenly he was done. "There. That wasn't so bad, you must admit," the robotic Doctor said as he cleaned all of his limbs at once in a fog of disinfectant that made Tam wheeze and cough.

"Thank you for allowing me to serve you." The Autodoc said before turning to walk away on his three legs.

"Oh my!" Ilsa said, looking at the hairline scar left behind by the Doctor. "Fine work!"

"Of course, the work is quite fresh." Hobson said, "Within a few days you'll not be able to tell you'd even been cut."

"A most wondrous device, and that is to be sure, Director Hobson." she said, rubbing her arm.

"And quite the bedside manner," Tam laughed, thinking on her last interaction with Doctor Billings, and saying, "That's for sure!"

Leaving the package with the Port Director, the trio from the *Waffles* soon found themselves back at Launch Bay Zero One; the *Helot* which had brought them quickly becoming a speck high above.

Watching the vehicle vanish, Dave rubbed his shoulder, sore from maneuvering, saying "Me, I can't wait to get off this rock…"

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Sitting behind the desk of his small office, Port Director Walter Hobson opened the package, finding the battered Scotch box inside. Taking the bottle Walter poured himself a shot, neat, and sipped it; enjoying it all the more knowing it was Twenty-Credits-a-Shot Scotch, and had obviously been one of Fyyg's prized possessions

Lying in bed, half-wrapped in a sheet, Ilsa lay there, smiling sweetly as Nordel looked at the arm she'd had damaged by the knife. "Well, the Port Director was right, Ilsa, there's no scar at all."

"We would be fools not to make use of it, Nordel!" she said , "For Kalifra."

"No." the Captain answered. "We're already under this Hobson's thumb by accepting his cargo, baby. Sure this RobotDoc could set Kalifra up right nice, but at what cost?"

"But Kalifra's not just anybody, Figgy. She was with the *Waffles* long before you'd ever come aboard."

"Aye," the Captain answered. "But we can find the big dyke the help she needs on Heimdall."

"As you probably already know," Nordel said, "Heimdall is a computer and software giant, my sweet."

"Of course." Ilsa replied, pouting at the thought that maybe the Captain told her like she didn't know her stuff.

"And were you aware that one of their subsidiaries also produce robots?" he asked.

"Makes sense, really, but no…" the mahogany woman said as she kissed across his chest.

"NorthStar Systems has a contract for all the robots for the Navy. That AutoDoc you encountered is Navy issue or Navy surplus; one of the two. And…" Nordell trailed off as he kissed down Ilsa's stomach.

"And Northstar is Heimdall!" Ilsa said.

"Yes!" Nordell answered, happily as he went back to kissing along her inner thigh..

"And we'll use our cut of the cargo shipment to

get our own AutoDoc straight from the source!" Ilsa suddenly concluded.

After the tale of the fight had been told several times, Dave got cleaned up, then went to the same room at the Terminal he'd been in previously. He dutifully prepared the coffee, got out the free packs of smokes and stim stix, and the pile of Big Books. Sitting there alone for awhile, he skimmed through the book, reading bits and pieces.

About a half hour into the meeting's hour, a few miners showed; apologizing for being late.

Dave welcomed them with a handshake and coffee. No one particularly felt like chairing the meeting, so Dave volunteered. The subject, always one close to his heart, was Gratitude.

Dave was grateful for another day of sobriety, as always, and particularly grateful for having lived through the thugs' attack earlier in the afternoon—which in turn made him keenly aware of his own mortality and the transitory nature of existence.

Sitting around one of the larger tables in the Crew's Lounge, Ilsa was being called on to tell the tale again by the kitchen staff, Li'l Mary wanting every detail, the Captain and Number One having heard the thing first go round.

As Ilsa illuminated, Tam merely nodded "uh-huh." several times during the narration as she knocked off a bottle of 'Robot Steam' Li'l Mary had squirreled away in her stash.

"And then he called on his boys, by heavens! And about a dozen thugs must have been there," Freilander said. "And we'd have been in a sorry mess had Tam not been there. Moving like the proverbial greased lightning, Tam laid out three or four in the blink of an eye! I wager some of these fellows didn't even know they were dead."

"Muscle memory, hon'." Tam replied, laughing. "It's all muscle memory and adrenaline! I'm convinced anyone could have done the same is those circumstances."

"Oh, bullshit!" Li'l Mary said, turning to her oven to retrieve a batch of cookies.

"Okay," Tam added, "and eight years of ballet. But otherwise…"

At around thirty hours various crewmen started making their way back to the *Waffles*, many having had enough of shore leave, while others simply wanted top be back at the ship by the time the Last Call klaxon sounded.

At thirty four fifteen hours, Brodie came walking up, arm in arm with a big redhead and carrying a few sacks of groceries. Kissing and hugging her goodbye, promises were made about keeping such and such a date open, but they both knew it was unlikely.

The redhead got into a small motorized cab and disappeared.

Over the next couple of hours the habitual late comers showed, until only a single crewman was missing. There was no need to bet on who it might be, as it was always Thom Trajillo.

Thom had woken looking at stout wooden beams across the ceiling of the lock up where he was lying down. Looking to his left he could see the elaborate wrought-iron of his cell door.

These two facts alone made it clear that he was not aboard the *Chicken and Waffles*, locked up for some minor infraction incurred while no doubt drunk.

But as to where in the hell he was right now, Thom had no clue, aside from still being on Nordic Prime.

As Thom sat there, a man in brown and orange livery brought him a platter almost overflowing with local foodstuffs, "Eat up!" the Guard said.

Thom took the platter and plowed into the meal, needing no encouragement to eat after an all-nighter.

A few bites from finishing, Thom asked "So what's the charge this time, Officer?" Thinking he might have busted up some joint, or gotten into a couple of fights. Something he or Captain Fyyg were always able to throw money at as a solution.

"Murder. Three counts." the Guard said, "As well as several counts of assault."

Thom threw up his huge breakfast.

With lift off time fast approaching, First Officer Hertzog went to the Terminal looking for safe, pre-generated flight plans from Nordic Prime to Heim-

dall. Finding several to choose from, Milo bought the one with the purported least time for Crossing. Taking the nondescript little chip, he returned to the ship.

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At the thirty six hour mark, the deep, quad-tones of the ship's Last Call klaxon went off for five minutes, then was silent for five minutes before sounding again; the klaxon going like this for an hour.

At the end of the hour, Captain Fyyg stood at the airlock hatch near the bridge, looking out on Nordic Prime. With a sigh of regret he closed the hatch and informed First Officer Hertzog, "Okay Milo, All aboard. Lets get out of here…"

The big, grimy mass of the *Chicken and Waffles* rose into the sky, straight up until at a point specified by System Control for Outbound traffic.

Advancing out to beyond .7 AUs, the Transition Drive was engaged, causing the Chief Engineer to vomit into a trash can; almost blind with pain as the *Waffles* entered Transit Space.

The *Waffles* would be riding light this trip—no passengers—since their cargo would more than make up the cost of a few empty staterooms.

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The following day, Thom was offered a bowl of broth, which he turned down. Later he was mana-cled and taken at gunpoint before the Port Director. Wiping his sweating bald head with a kerchief, Director Hobson looked in a not very forgiving mood.

Reading over the case, he seemed to get more and more angry, until finally he spoke.

"Mr. Trajillo, according to this, you visited one of our Bawdy Houses, of which we have many," he said, an obvious air of pride in the statement. "You apparently beat a girl after visiting with her, and beat up the house bouncers." he and Thom both smiled, familiar with the excesses of Spacers.

"When the Madame, a he/she came to intercede, you threw him out of a third story window; killing him. Now I went to school with Antonio, and he was an alright guy," Hobson said.

"And if that weren't enough, when Port Officers came to apprehend you, you managed to disarm one and shoot them both—one dead."

"I don't remember anything…" Thom said, bewildered.

Shaking his head, the Port Director asked "Do you know what we do with rabid dogs, Mr. Trajillo?"

"You put them down," Thom answered.

Within an hour, Thom Trajillo's body was swinging on a gibbet outside the Terminal building.

✪

Whoops! Reformatting from Letter to A4 (sometimes leaves unexpected space— you're not missing any content, though!

Vatta's War 1 - Trading in Danger

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Trading in Danger. Elizabeth Moon.
Original publication: 2003
Current availability: Print (mmpb) and ebook

Shannon Appelcline established a useful goal in his series of reviews that have previously appeared in this section of Critics' Corner. However, there are only a limited number of books that truly have the sort of direct connection to *Traveller* that Shannon used in choosing which books to review. I felt that there were more than a few stories that, while having no discernible direct connection with *Traveller*, nevertheless felt—at least to me—like they could happen in a *Traveller* universe, even if not the Official one. *Trading in Danger*, the first book of the five-book *Vatta's War* series, is one such book.

Story

Kylara Vatta, ordered to resign from the Slotter Key Spaceforce Academy for unwittingly facilitating a scandal, is sent out as Captain of a Vatta Transport ship on a 'milk run' that is to end with the ship being scrapped at Lastway and the crew returning to Slotter Key by commercial carrier. At Belinta, the first stop of the run, Ky exceeds her orders, taking a spec contract that she hopes could ultimately lead to saving the ship from the breakers.

At Sabine, where the contract leads, the ship's FTL drive fails, stranding them in the system (with apparently insufficient funds to both fix the ship and execute the contract) as a local war breaks out and the system ansibles are destroyed. There is a mercenary company involved, and Ky's ship is boarded, leading to the death of a crewman, and nearly to hers. The mercenaries had planned to use the ship as a courier, but since it has no working FTL drive, they instead contract with Ky to use her ship as a temporary internment facility for the officers of other ships in the system. After the mercenaries unexpectedly have to leave the system, some of the interned officers subvert the ship's drive and comm systems, and attempt to take the ship. Ky and her crew put down the attempt almost instantly, killing the ringleaders in the process, but losing

another crewman taken hostage. Regaining mechanical control of the ship proves more difficult, however, and several days go by (putting everyone, crew and interned 'guests' alike, on short rations) before they can restore even the most rudimentary communications. The return of the mercenaries and the arrival of ISC (the ansible company) represents rescue, and ISC's takeover of the Sabine system government leads to getting the ship restored to usable condition essentially gratis—plus a comfortable chunk of change. They then head back to Belinta to finish executing the contract.

Style

Trading in Danger is written from a 'third-person limited' viewpoint; the viewpoint character for most of the book is Ky. There are some 'side scenes' in the story involving Ky's Aunt Grace's fruitcake, a model sent to Ky from a Master Sergeant at the Spaceforce Academy, and the knowledge of Ky's father and uncle, the CEO and CFO of Vatta, of Ky's taking the Belinta contract and going to Sabine. While the specifics of Ky's actions weren't anticipated or planned, it's made clear that her attempt to save the ship from the breakers wasn't unexpected, and that the assignment was in fact a test of some sort, with the initial verdict being that Ky is likely to be one of Vatta's better captains. (The father-and-uncle scenes also make allusion to the fruitcake, and how for them it was sausage, without actually telling the reader *why*.) Moon adheres to the "Checkhov's Gun" rule, though, and by the end of the story, the reader—and Ky—know why she had the fruitcake and the model.

Moon does an excellent job of portraying Ky as the 'different' one in the family, the one who elected to try for a military career instead of going into the family business. The various episodes through the story, including Ky's after-action reflections and some flashbacks when events or conversations remind her of her childhood, show her differences from the 'typical Vatta', how truly Vatta she ultimately is, and her growing self-knowledge and reaction to it.

Why is it *Traveller*?

The technological differences between the set-

Critics' Corner

ting of *Trading in Danger* and early 'stock' Classic *Traveller* are essentially irrelevant; the action doesn't really depend on them. The setting has a frontier-like feel, with no overall government, and interstellar agreements being multilateral and adhered to only to the extent that the signatories feel it's in their own best interests, with no real enforcement. The adventure that forms the centerpiece of this story could easily have been written as an early adventure module for Classic *Traveller*—and could easily be used as a framework for an adventure in late-*Traveller* areas such as Reaver's Deep, the trailing sectors between the Imperium and the K'kree or the Hivers, or spinward of the Great Rift and the Spinward Marches.

All in all, a recommended read, both for its own entertainment value, and as a *Traveller* adventure.   ✪

News About Traveller

Recent *Traveller* News and Findings

June 2012

- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Cowboys vs. Xenomorphs* and the print version of *Alien Module 5: Solomani*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released a hardcover version of *Sector Sourcebook 2: Franklin*, a print edition of *21 Organizations*, and *Cascadia Adventures 1: Save Our Ship*.

- **Zozer Games** has released *Outpost Mars*.
- **DB Game Design** has released *tIG TPT-133 "Fat Cat" Logistics Transport*.
- **Spica Publishing** has released the Astrogator's Map Pack.
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book IO: Pirate Barge*.
- **Avalon Game Company** has released *The Actions of Many*.
- **Stargazer Publishing** has released the Aegis-*class Scout*.   ✪

Store Near You

Hot Judy and Ice Judy

by Jeff Zeitlin

Wherever humans go, they'll find *something* to ferment into ethanol, and then they'll drink the ethanol. One particularly interesting find was the stem-pulp of a Vilani succulent, the *shuudii* plant, which is edible when boiled three times, casting the water away each time, then pressing the leavings into cakes and heat-drying. It is not considered pleasant fare, and is regarded only as something to be used when travelling and nothing better available. Military personnel tried using the starchy *shudii* cakes—intended as emergency rations—in their stills. They found that the initial fermentation was undrinkable and mildly poisonous, but heat distillation yielded a drink that was both pleasantly flavorful—often described as "kind of like pomegranate-and-avocado, if pomegranate was a citrus fruit"—and mildly euphoric, beyond the normal effects of alcohol. "Judy", named from mis-hearing the name of the plant, became popular among troops serving where *shuudii* grew.

An accident with a food-storage unit being used as a support for a Judy still resulted in a batch of Judy being produced by freeze distillation. One person tried it, and died within seconds; the autopsy found that the Judy had contained a highly-lethal neurotoxin—although the indications were that it had the same flavor as normal Judy. The two forms were named "Hot Judy" (safe) and "Ice Judy" (poison), and strong cautions against Ice Judy went through the grapevine, even as an official total ban on Judy went out (which was ignored as often as any ban on stills).

Hot Judy is exported from worlds on which *shuudii* grows, and commands high prices—often more than Cr15 per 100ml single servings, or over Cr100 per liter in retail shops. (For spec trade, assume a base price of Cr65 per liter (bottled) to buy and Cr80 to sell, 10k bottles per displacement ton.) Ice Judy is not acknowledged to be produced, but has been named as the cause of certain prominent deaths; now, few people will accept an offer of Judy without seeing the seal on the bottle broken in their presence.   ✪

Feedback

Please tell us …
- what you think of both magazine and website
- what you think of the articles we publish
- how we can make our magazine better
- how we can make our website better
- what kind of articles you do or don't want to see
- what you think of our look
- how we can make it better

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:
- e-mail: *feedback@freelancetraveller.com*.
- feedback form at *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html*.
- Forums:
Traveller Fanzine section of SFRPG: *http://www.sfrpg-discussion.net/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36*
Lone Star at Citizens of the Imperium: *http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13*
Note: you must be registered with the forums to be able to use this method.

Traveller on the Internet   IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

Freelance Traveller sponsors channels for *Traveller* fans on the Undernet and Otherworlders IRC networks, and the two channels are "bridged" so that if you're visiting either, you can see what's going on in the other, and talk to people there. For more information about both channels, see our informational pages at *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC* and *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travchat/index.html*. Come talk "live" with other Traveller fans about anything at all, Traveller or not, and make both channels "jumping" places to hang out!

You can also run "play-by-IRC" game sessions in either channel; please stop in and ask one of the channel operators (FreeTrav or EMT_Hawk) to schedule it, so we can ensure that the 'bridge' and the 'bartender' are set into a nondisruptive mode.

Please watch the Traveller Mailing List, the Mongoose Traveller forum, and the Lone Star section of the Citizens of the Imperium forum for announcements of Topical Talks!

Information Center: Request for Information

Here is a list of all of those publishers that we are aware of that are currently putting out material for Traveller (any version) or Traveller-compatible material not specifically for Traveller (this list is based on products that the editor owns, and notifications from "follow your favorites" from DriveThruRPG). If you know of others, or if any of those on this list are not in fact currently operating/publishing, please write and let us know. We'd also appreciate either lists or pointers to lists of all of the Traveller and Traveller-compatible material put out by any of these companies, or any companies that we may have omitted from the list. If you have contact information, we'd appreciate that as well.

List of Traveller/compatible Publishers

Avalon Game Company
Avenger Enterprises
D.B. Design Bureau
DSL Ironworks
FarFuture Enterprises
Forever People
Game Designers' Workshop(!)
Gypsy Knights Games
Jon Brazer Enterprises
K-Studio
Loren Wiseman Enterprises
Mongoose Publishing
Postmortem Studios
QuikLink Interactive
Samardan Press
Sceaptune Games
Scrying Eye Games
Spica Publishing
Steve Jackson Games
Terra/Sol Games
Toxic Bag Productions

Submission Guidelines

What is *Freelance Traveller* looking for?

We're looking for anything and everything to do with *Traveller* – reviews of products, house rules, alternate settings, NPC profiles, world write-ups, adventures, equipment, starships, fiction, "color" articles… If you see it in *Freelance Traveller*, or on our website, we're interested in it. Even if you don't see it in the magazine or on the website, we might be interested; write to *editor@freelancetraveller.com* and ask.

Some things that we want that you might not think of as "*Traveller*" would include reviews of non-*Traveller* products that easily lend themselves to being 'mined' for ideas for use in *Traveller*, or reviews of fiction (in any medium) that "feels" like *Traveller* in some way. In these cases, your article should focus on the *Traveller*-esque aspects of the item. There may be other things, as well; if you're not sure, write to *editor@freelancetraveller.com* and ask.

What about …

The rule of thumb is "If it's a *Traveller* ruleset, or a setting that has been published for use with a *Traveller* ruleset, go for it!". That includes the non-Official *Traveller* Universe settings that have been published for use with any version of the *Traveller* ruleset, including (but not limited to) *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Babylon 5*, *Reign of Diaspora*, *Twilight Sector*, the two *GURPS* variants on the Official *Traveller* Universe, Avenger Enterprises' *Far Avalon*, and the forthcoming *Traveller Prime Directive*.

…Hyperlite?

We've made the decision to support *Hyperlite* as though it were an alternate *Traveller* setting, much like *Twilight Sector* or *Reign of Diaspora*. The changes that Sceaptune Games has made to *Traveller* to get *Hyperlite* aren't really much more than the differences between Classic *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller*, and Mongoose *Traveller*, and converting between any of those systems and *Hyperlite*, in either direction, should be 'trivial'.

… Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

If your article is about "crossing over" between these products and any of the "standard" or supported *Traveller* rulesets or settings, by all means, submit it! If it's support for those systems beyond *Traveller*, we'll accept and hold the submission, but will not print it unless/until we've had a reasonable level of expression of interest in such support from our readers.

How should I submit my article?

What needs to be in the submission?

At the very minimum, we need the submission itself, your name (for credit), and a valid email address to contact you at if we need to.

What format should I submit it in?

That depends on what you're submitting. Generally:

Text should be submitted in Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word 2003 (DOC) or 2007/2010 (DOCX), OpenOffice Writer (ODT), or plain text (TXT). Most word processors will support one of those; if yours seems not to, please write to us for assistance. Avoid PDF if at all possible; it is difficult to reformat PDFs for our magazine or website.

Graphics should be submitted in the format that's best for the type of graphic. Most of the time, that will be GIF, PNG, or JPG/JPEG. Submitting in higher resolutions is better; we have tools to resample a picture to make it smaller if we need to – but it's not possible to make a picture larger without it becoming pixellated.

If you're submitting a graphic that you'd like to see us use for a cover of an issue, please make sure that it will fit nicely on both US Letter and ISO A4 pages—we'll crop the picture to fit, to avoid distorting shapes, so please leave reasonable "margins"; don't run "critical" imagery right to the edge where it will look bad if we crop it. A good resolution is 100 dpi or more.

Plans (deck plans, building plans, maps, etc.) may be better submitted in a vector-based format such as CorelDRAW! format (CDR) or any format that can be imported into CorelDRAW! X4. Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG), Windows Metafile (WMF), Enhanced Metafile (EMF), Encapsulated PostScript (EPS), or Microsoft Visio (VSD) are some common vector formats that can be imported.

How do I get it to you?

Email it to us at our submissions address, *submissions@freelancetraveller.com*. Your subject line should specify the type of article that it is, and what section you think it should be put in, e.g., "Combat Rules for Doing It My Way".