

FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Articles

Old Reliables

by Sam Swindell

Issue 032
August 2012

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From the Editor



This month, we're somewhere between having a Featured Article and a Theme Issue: Sam Swindell has provided us with a set of three articles that go together, centered around a game originating in the Imperial Navy. Those articles, taken together, are enough of a focus to form the core of a Theme Issue, but (a) they came together somewhat unexpectedly, and (b) the Editor isn't convinced that they form enough of a framework to hang other articles on, to fully "stock" a Theme Issue. Nevertheless, we're grateful to Sam, and hope that our readers enjoy his work (and the rest of the issue as well).

Registration for this year's TravellerCon/USA is now open to all—vendors, referees, and general participants. Your Editor has already registered, and is planning on being there from opening moment to closing. Come join us; there will be plenty of *Traveller* for all. (See <http://www.travellercon-usa.com> for more info.)

We've decided that the next Theme Issue is going to be our Cruise issue. To that end, we'd like to see submissions focused on the idea of a one-week-in-jump trip to a "resort" world, two weeks on that world, and a week in jump back home. Articles of all types are welcome and encouraged, so please start thinking about it. We'll be posting to the *Traveller* sections of the Mongoose and SJGames forums, and to Citizens of the Imperium and the Traveller Mailing List, with some basic setting information, and there will be a more "formal" call for articles in our next issue.

Reviews! Whether it's any of thirty-five years of Official *Traveller*, other system's supplements that can be used with *Traveller*, or sit-in-a-comfy-chair-and-read fiction that makes you think of possible *Traveller* scenarios, pick your favorites—or least favorites—and write reviews. Would you recommend it? Why? Do you regret purchasing it? Why? Please add to that collection of reviews with your own thoughts!





Spinward Encounters

Reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Spinward Encounters. Various authors.

Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>

150pp. softcover

US\$39.99/UK£29.99

Avenger Enterprises and Comstar Games team up with Mongoose to deliver a set of adventures suitable for parties on the Imperial Spinward frontier.

On the Shelf

Spinward Encounters is a setting-specific set of adventures for the Third Imperium setting. As such, it maintains the branding established by previous Third Imperium titles, with the embossed-steel “Third Imperium” logo over the title and a full-width graphic, with the standard *Traveller*-with-arrow line logo below.

Initial Impressions

In general, the volume is well-laid-out; paragraphs are set off by blank lines before-and-after rather than by first-line-indentation. This mitigates the ‘grey wall of text’ issue that limited artwork tends to emphasize. The sans-serif typeface is not difficult to read, though perhaps a serif typeface would have been a better choice.

The adventures found in *Spinward Encounters*, naturally enough, take place in the Spinward Marches. A minimum amount (only three pages) of prefatory material is followed by fifty pages of ‘Patron Encounters’, short adventures in the typical “short summary of situation and pick one of six outcomes” not unfamiliar to the experienced *Traveller* player/referee from past collections of ‘adventure seeds’ or *Free-lance Traveller*’s ‘Getting Off The Ground’. Following the ‘Patron Encounters’ is a set of ‘Amber Zone’ adventures, and that’s it. No index, no library data section, no set of generic characters, no advertising of other Mongoose publications.

On Closer Inspection

One thing that I very quickly noticed was that page numbering does not conform to industry standards—the odd-numbered pages are on the left, not the right, and page numbering seems to treat the inside front cover as page one.



The Patron Encounters are grouped by subsector, running from A (Cronor) to P (Trin’s Veil) in order. Each encounter lists the type of patron (Agent, Diplomat, Researcher, etc.), the skills required (but no specific level of skill), and any equipment required (e.g., weapons, starships with/without specific cubage of available cargo space or staterooms and passage types, vehicles, etc.). This is followed by as much information about the situation as the author felt was needed to establish the scene. Finally, each Encounter has the usual six options for denouement.

The Amber Zones—sixteen of them—are more extensive. Each has several paragraphs of setup material, followed by sections on keys to various parts of the adventure, chronologies, profiles, and so on. Most of them can stand alone; three of them are specifically noted as being the segments of a three-part campaign, and two others are called out as suitable for ‘stretching’ the campaign if needed or desired.

Artwork is line drawings, some of which have textured shading, others with basic grey-scale flood-fill. None of it is bad, but neither is it inspiring—the most one can say is that it breaks up the monotony of text.

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The typesetting is visibly inconsistent—part way through the Amber Zones, the line height (baseline-to-baseline) measurement increases noticeably from the default for the font, and this makes it just a little more difficult to read, even though the text is more ‘open’ as a result.

Conclusion

For adventures in the Spinward Marches, the ‘index card referee’ (keeps much material on file for immediate use with little or no modification) will find

Spinward Encounters indispensable. Referees who don’t mind doing a little bit of tweaking and filing-off of serial numbers can also take good advantage of this volume. The more ‘self-generation’ a referee does, or the less like the Spinward Marches a campaign setting becomes, the less useful this book becomes—but it can always serve as a bit of quick inspiration or a source of ready-made adventures for when a referee has one of those “Oh My G-d, the game’s *tonight*, not next week like I’ve been thinking!” moments. Make your own decision as to its worth, but don’t dismiss it out of hand. 🌀

Doing It My Way

Impressment

by Richard Morey

The Civil Augmentation of the Navy Act (CANA), a.k.a. “The Press”, authorizes the Imperial Navy, in time of war, to impose involuntarily service requirements on privately owned vessels and their crew. Any Subsector Duke, acting as the Emperor’s local representative and in cooperation with the Imperial Navy, may invoke CANA as needed to deal with situations within his domain. Vessels and crews so pressed become part of the Subsector, and by extension the Imperial Navy.

In order for a civilian vessel to be subject to CANA, the following conditions must be met:

1. The vessel is under Imperial registration;
2. The crew are Imperial citizens. Any non-Imperial personnel are allowed to leave the ship, though they are on their own from that point forward. Alternatively, so long as they are not citizens or nationals of a power deemed hostile to the Imperium they may remain onboard in service to the Imperium, possibly earning Imperial citizenship thereby.

The Imperial Navy must pay for:

1. All costs associated with support of Imperial Navy operations and orders to include (but not necessarily limited to):
 - a. Fuel;
 - b. Life Support;
 - c. Expendable Munitions (Sand and missiles);
 - d. Maintenance
 - e. Repairs;

2. The monthly mortgage payments for any month or part thereof during which the ship was in Naval service, *not* prorated for partial months;

3. Crew salaries plus 25% hazardous duty pay, for the duration of impressment;

4. Medical care for crew injured in the line of duty.

While civil vessels and their crew so pressed into Imperial Navy service are subject to the orders, rules, and regulations of the Imperial Navy, they are meant to serve as auxiliaries. They are not meant to be placed in the line of battle, members of their crew may not be reassigned to another vessel, nor may other crew be assigned to such a vessel without the owner’s permission (other than a single commissioned officer as Naval Liaison, who, regardless of rank, is not in command of the ship. Command continues to reside in the ship’s legitimate master at the time of impressment).

Civilian personnel so pressed into Imperial Naval service are transferred to the Naval Reserve. Merchant Marine personnel of rank 0 – 2 are assigned the equivalent Navy NCO Rank. Merchant Marine personnel of rank 3 – 6 are assigned a Navy Commissioned Rank 2 lower (A Merchant Marine 2nd Officer, Merchant Marine Rank 4 becomes Navy Commissioned Rank 2, Sublieutenant). Free Trader personnel are assigned Naval NCO Rank 1 lower than their Free Trader Rank (minimum Naval NCO Rank 0, Crewman) except that the Master

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Doing It My Way


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is assigned a Navy Commissioned Rank 3 lower (minimum of Navy Commissioned Rank 1, Ensign).

The Imperial Navy may make alterations to the subject vessel at Naval expense, and may provide additional equipment for use of the vessel and crew while in Imperial Navy service.

Any equipment provided by the Imperial Navy shall not be used for personal, commercial, or other purposes not in direct support of assigned Imperial

Navy operations or orders. Additionally, the Imperial Navy is not responsible for any expenses, damages, or injuries arising out of actions or activities not in direct support of Imperial Navy operations and orders.

When the pressed vessel is released from Imperial Navy service, any equipment provided by the Imperial Navy shall be returned, except as permitted by the Navy on a case-by-case basis and upon application by the ship's Master. If this requires modification to the private vessel, such modification will be at Imperial Navy expense. 



Active Measures

The Quality of Mercy

by Michael Brown

Synopsis: A starliner's emergency stopover at a frontier starport spells trouble for the PCs as they find themselves opposing hijackers.

Setting: Any world with a Type D or E starport.

Players' Information

While the PCs are taking care of business in port, one of the few admin staff of the port—most likely, the Portmaster himself—approaches them with an emergency proposition: a starliner, the *Duchess Nyeri*, has just arrived in orbit. Her captain relays that one of the passengers has fallen ill with a particularly stubborn virus and may have contaminated others. Imperial quarantine protocols require that the starship not land or disembark passengers under any circumstances until medical personnel have had an opportunity to board and assess the severity of the outbreak. So far, only one passenger has the disease, but in the close quarters of a starship, that will not be the case for long.

Fortunately, a group of medics was passing through the port en route to another world beyond. They are willing to board the liner and provide medical care in return for passage. The PCs' ship is the only other ship currently in port. The port master is willing to sign a voucher good for free fuel and services in return for transporting the medics to the starliner if the PCs have their own ship; other-

wise, the port can loan them a 30-ton ship's boat, with an explanation that the local pilot is on compassionate leave, and cannot be reached to recall. If the adventurers express concern about exposure to the disease, the medics can assure them that they need not worry as long as the airlocks are in good condition and reasonable precautions are taken.

The medical team consists of a doctor, three nurses, and an assistant. They are fully equipped to tech level A, and their equipment—which can be transported by two individuals with ease—does not take up much cargo space. Statistics for the medical team are easily obtained from *Supplement 1: 1001 Characters* or generated from the Doctor tables in *Supplement 4: Citizens of the Imperium* if necessary.

The transit to orbit and docking with the liner proceeds smoothly. The liner itself is undamaged and nothing seems out of the ordinary except that most of the viewports have their shutters closed. Any crew member observing the *Duchess Nyeri* at the time of approach will notice an odd occurrence on an throw of INT or less: one of the few ports with open shutters shows a small human (possibly a child) within, watching the PCs' ship approach. Suddenly, the figure disappears from view and another figure with what appears to be a submachine gun slung over his shoulder briefly appears before the shutter closes.

Obviously, something is amiss.

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Referee's Information

The *Duchess Nyeri* is a *Stellar*-class subsidized liner, of the type seen in *Adventure 12: Signal GK*. Deckplans from that publication are invaluable for use during the adventure. As always, the referee can substitute another type of ship.

Unknown to the PCs and their medical charges, the liner was boarded by a group of terrorist hijackers at its last port of call. Making their move while the ship was in jumpspace, the attackers have completely taken over the ship and killed several passengers to both demonstrate their resolve and serve as a warning to others. But unknown to the hijackers, one of the survivors was unknowingly carrying the virus within him and succumbed just after the captors gained control. At the time of the PCs' arrival, the number of passengers infected (not counting the original victim) is approaching six, with two of those beginning to present symptoms.

There are 18 passengers remaining, including four children; fifteen low passengers; and eight remaining crew, including the captain. So far they are all physically unharmed, but have been cowed by the deaths. Three were killed for not following the assailants' orders, and a ship's steward was killed for attempting heroics. All of the bodies have been unceremoniously dumped into one of the aft passenger staterooms. The adventurers cannot count on any help whatsoever from the passengers, and no overt aid from the crew. Likewise, the medics accompanying the party cannot be counted on for undisguised help—they are doctors, not soldiers!

The referee should adjust the number and abilities of the enemies to the adventurers' strength, but they will not number less than five. At the time of docking, the hijackers have taken up certain stations: the leader shadows the captain at all times, and is allaying suspicion by posing as a ship's officer in a stolen uniform. One hijacker is in the engine room, two are guarding the surviving adult passengers in the midships common area; and one is guarding the children in a forward luxury stateroom. If the referee felt it necessary to add to the

enemy forces to match the PCs' abilities, then additional opponents will be placed strategically, including one guarding the captive crew members currently held in the low berth area. The terrorists are armed with SMGs except for the leader, who has a concealed auto pistol. If the referee added other opponents, they may be placed wherever needed.

When the adventurers call on the liner, they will be met by the ship's captain and what appears to be the ship's purser (actually the terrorist leader in disguise). The captain will be appreciative of the prompt help, but will do his best to get rid of the team as quickly as possible by whatever subtle means he can. Observant adventurers may notice that he seems to be especially agitated about something but is trying hard not to show it.

The referee should decide how best to give the team the information about the ship's takeover; while they may guess something is not right, a cautious team may be reluctant to act without more info.

It is up to the team how to act against the terrorists. The enemies are fanatical but not nihilistic. They prefer not to become martyrs to their cause, but will fight to the death if engaged in combat. The referee should determine the flow of subsequent events.

The Disease

The referee may use a suitable malady of choice or use the following, created with the rules presented in the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, issue 13, pages 33-37:

The sickness affects the respiratory tract of its victims, similar to the Terran flu. It is spread by airborne particles (by sneezing, coughing, etc.) and touch. It is contracted on 8+ (apply the modifiers below) and has an incubation period of 1D days. Once symptoms start, it is moderately incapacitating, inflicting 2D wounds on the victim through internal hemorrhaging. With proper medical care (skill of Medical-3 or better), patients can expect to recover in around 12 days. Untreated, the disease can kill, especially the very young or very elderly.

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The Shipyard

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Contagion DMs: The following modifiers assume that victims have not taken antiseptic or anti-pathogen measures such as face masks, strict attention to hygiene, etc:

- 1 if character has END 10+, or has been inoculated, or is an ex-Scout
- +1 if character has END 6-
- +12 if character has END 4-

Other Disease Ideas: The situation can be made more muddled and uncertain if one of the symptoms of the disease is light-sensitivity. This could account for the shuttered ports; in such a case, when the team and medics come aboard, they should find (and expect) that all ship's lighting is very subdued, in addition to previous description. 🌑

The Shipyard

Earth Alliance Light Shuttle

by Richard Page

| Earth Alliance Light Shuttle (Cargo Shuttle Variant) | | | Tons | Price (MCr) |
|--|---|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Hull | 80T | Hull 1 | 80 | 1.8 |
| Armour | None | | 0 | 0 |
| Manoeuvre Drive | sP Reaction Drive | Thrust 4 | 3.5 | 7 |
| Power Plant | sG Fusion Plant | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| Control Cabin | 3 Crew + 1 Passenger | | 9 | 0.4 |
| Computer | Model 2 | Rating 10 | 0 | 0.16 |
| Electronics | Standard Sensors | -4 DM | 0 | 0 |
| Weapons | None | | 0 | 0 |
| Fuel | 40T + 1.5T (Fusion Plant 14 days endurance) | | 41.5 | 0 |
| Software | Manoeuvre/0, Library/0 | | 0 | 0 |
| Extras | Airlock, 4 Firmpoints | | 2 | 0.6 |
| Cargo | 21T | | 21 | 0 |
| Total Tonnage and Cost | | | 80 | 15.96 |

The Earth Alliance Light Shuttle is one of the most common small craft seen in the Earth Alliance and its colonies. It is not only used by the Earth Alliance military in several forms, but it is also used by many civilian operators as well. The standard STG-19 'Hammond' class Light Shuttle has been in service for the last 40 years in one form or another – the current military model is the STG-19e version, which differs only slightly from the original design or from the subsequent civilian ones.

Features

Firmpoints: Each Shuttle is equipped with 2 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 2 fuel modules to the front pair and 2 cargo modules to

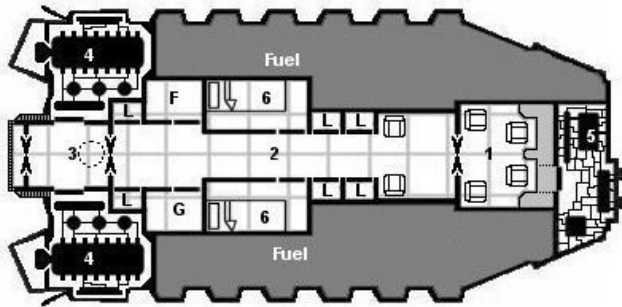
the rear pair). If you have any modules attached to a shuttle, the hull counts as being distributed rather than standard. The 2 most common modules used are 5T cargo and fuel modules (not interchangeable – you can't use the cargo ones for fuel and vice-versa), which cost 0.01 MCr empty, have negligible mass and hold either 5T of cargo or fuel respectively.

Landing Struts: Landing Struts – The STG-19 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 – it takes up 1T of cargo space and costs 0.2 MCr.

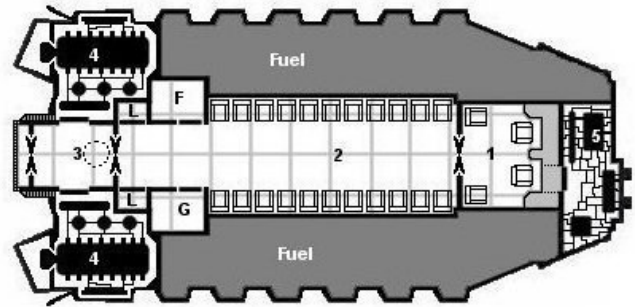
Other Features: Each light shuttle is usually equipped with 2 or more lockers for EVA suits

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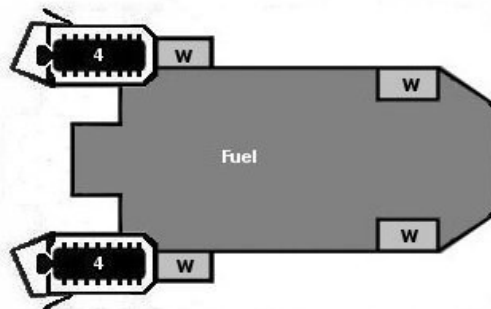
The Shipyard



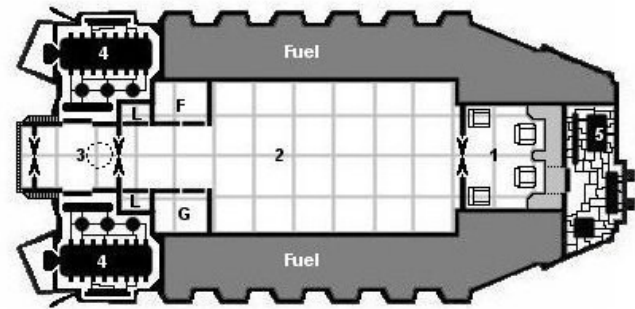
Long Range Shuttle



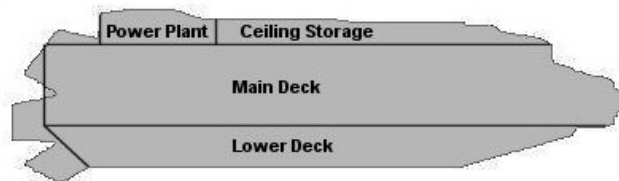
Crew Shuttle



Crew/Cargo/Long Range Shuttle
(Lower Deck)



Cargo Shuttle



Deck Plans for the STG-19, all variants, main decks labeled for the relevant variant.

(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.

Standard Variants.

Although the light shuttle is not modular, it 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-19e Military Shuttle: removes 10T of fuel and 2T of cargo in exchange for 8T of reinforced hull and 4T of reinforced structure. Add +1 point of Hull and Structure for +1.6 MCr. This model may be armed with a single light pulse cannon for +1 MCr, losing an extra 1T of cargo space

to do so. This configuration is not available for civilian use.

STG-19p Passenger/Crew Shuttle: this configuration converts 11T of cargo space into cramped seating for 22 passengers (uses 0.5T and 0.3 MCr per passenger) at a cost of +0.66 MCr.

STG-19l Long-range Shuttle: somewhat of a misnomer, this configuration adds 2 basic double-occupancy staterooms, 2 seats and +5T of fuel by reducing the cargo area by 14T at a cost of +1.6 MCr.

Both the STG-19p and STG-19l configurations can be modified with the same reinforcements and armament as the STG-19e, at the indicated costs/penalties (Military availability only; designations become STG-19ep and STG-19el respectively).

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The Shipyard

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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. Basic double-occupancy cabin.
- F. Fresher.
- G. Galley.
- L. Locker for EVA suit.
- W. Landing strut well.



Critics' Corner

Off the Table

Musica Cthulhiana: "Fragment"

reviewed by "kafka"

Fragment. Musica Cthulhiana.

Original Publication: 2010

Current Availability: CD or MP3 download (album or individual tracks)

Playing Mongoose *Traveller: Chthonian Stars*? Check this out...

I would like to extend a grateful note of appreciation to the creator, Götz Müller-Dürholt, who was kind enough to send me a complementary copy of the Deluxe Limited Edition 2 CD set for the purpose of this review.

Music and gaming have a mixed relationship. Not many gamers have not got heavily into the first two titular vices, but, usually have had no problem with getting into "Rock-'n'-Roll". Music surrounds us. Whether one is at the cinema, watching TV or just walking down the street, one can scarcely avoid it – so why should it not enter into the realm of gaming as well? Fortunately, I am not the originator of that said idea; it has a lineage almost as old as tabletop games themselves.

In the very distant past, in the 'Dark Ages' at the dawn of gaming, Gamemasters had to rely upon combing and mixing through a multitude of albums and selecting tracks (CDs made this task infinitely easier) but this suffered method from either recognition by the players or worst yet non-recognition when the music was placed in as a clue to action.

In gaming's 'Middle Ages', many companies experimented with musical/spoken word accompa-

niments to adventures. These were on the whole a good effort for the time but suffered when players – as they often do – think/play outside of the box. Furthermore, compositions were usually simple and played with familiar tropes.

Now, in more recent times, there has been a raft of composers (Nox Arcana, Midnight Syndicate, James Semple, Sonic Soundscapes, Allicon, Alex Otterlei, and (of course) Musica Cthulhiana) that have taken inspiration from their own tabletop games and put it to music. The outcome of this 'Third Generation' is usually fantastic both in terms of complex orchestration and familiar tropes as they themselves had to live through the offerings of the 'Dark' and 'Middle Ages' and have avoided most of those pitfalls.

Fragment, by Musica Cthulhiana, is such an offspring. It is available in three formats: Deluxe Limited Edition 2 CD set (which is the one I am reviewing); a 20 track downloadable album (€11.99, but check your source for other pricing); and 5 tracks for *free*. The downloadable album is also on the iTunes and Zune catalogues. More information is available at their website: <http://www.cthulhumusic.com>

The music on *Fragment* is neoclassical dark ambient with elements of bleak and doom laden jazz. It is wonderfully appropriate to the *Call of Cthulhu* RPG or similar dark and foreboding game. The whole album is composed on synthesizers, but one can hardly detect that fact save in the seamless transitions. It is very much in the similar mode of apex twin or a Lustmord, save that it does have the jarring Metal interludes.

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Fragment easily seeps into one's stream of consciousness through gentle unassuming and discreet sound. Its genius lies in a more insidious and terrifying way, for what they have done is insert a number of small ambient musical cues into the flow whether it is the beat of a heart or weirdly sounding screeches. The effect is unnerving and unsettling as these almost organic textures haunt you while you listen and long after you put away the music. The pacing is neither slow nor rapid but dreamlike descending to the depths of a shared nightmare. Favourites of mine would include "Madness", "13:37", "Deep Orbit Anvil", "Omnium Void", "Avril Noir (Exposition)", and "The Bell Fragment". Music, of course, is subjective.

Nevertheless, the great novelty this album offers is that it is perfectly suited to creating the right mood for *Chthonian Stars*, *Call of Cthulhu* or *Kult* RPGs – combined with dimmed lights, as the music is not there to scare your players but just to add to the 'spooky' vibes you are trying to create. Another interesting innovation is that the tracks do not follow a firm musical narrative/journey; this in turn has its advantages and disadvantages: the advantage is that one can mix up the track and not necessarily play them in any specific order. Indeed, the album is composed in such a way that the ending of any piece ties-in nicely with the beginning of any other (especially useful if you have a 'wonky' player). Players will thus not feel railroaded by the music. The big disadvantage is that, even in a game like *Cthulhu* (usually at the beginning, long before everyone either dies or goes insane) there are moments of whimsy and frivolity – but this album will not have any truck or trade with this idea: the music remains dark and doom-laden throughout.

What would one use this album for? It is very much for creating atmosphere; to be played in the background. Segments and certain tracks might be used as clues, but the pieces are generally a bit too long to be used this way or as scene changers (James Semple's "Eternal Lies Suite" is good start in this direction). There is always a danger that one might have a group non-musical players, thus wast-

ing all the clues. Hopefully, *Musica Cthulhiana* will remedy that with their next release, but, given that it has been seven years since their last release, a new album (however desirable) will likely not be on the horizon for some time. This is clearly a labour of love and the care and thoughtfulness that the composer put into each piece show it. It is a pity that more is unlikely to be available soon, as I would love to hear more of these original compositions.

Although the music has *Call of Cthulhu* plainly on its radar, almost any 'darkish' game could use this music with suitable modification and additions. So it would be perfect for the Ghost Stations of *Maschine Zeit*, Bug hunts in *Traveller*, tracking a serial killer from the *Crime Scene* RPG, and, of course, *Ravenloft*.

What is the future of gaming and music, if one might speculate...? I think we are likely to see a proliferation of more albums like this as gaming takes on more multimedia aspects just as the eBook will slowly transform our reading experience, e.g., by means of the addition of animation and interactivity. We are on the cusp of something new and exciting, and *Musica Cthulhiana* is among those paving the way forward.

This album gets 8 out of 8 tentacles for both Style and Substance.

Anyone looking for dark, evocative music to set as background for their *Call of Cthulhu* need look no farther than this album; the Deluxe Limited Edition 2 CD set is recommended. 🌟

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.

War Chariot (TL1)

designed by Ewan Quibell

CraftID: War Chariot, TL1, Cr 75.06
 Hull: 1/1, Disp=0.25, Conf=4USL Open, Armour=0W
 Unloaded=0.105 tons, Loaded=2.467 tons
 Power: External=0.00149 Mw
 Loco: 1/2, Simple Wheels x2, P/W=0.6, Road=10 kph*, Offroad=1.5 kph*
 Comm: -
 Sensors: -
 Off: Wheel Sword Blades x2
 Def: -
 Control: Direct
 Accom: Crew=1 (Driver), Passenger=1
 Other: Cargo=2.362 klitres*, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=None
 Comment: not intended to carry cargo; designed to run at full gallop (Road=56 kph, Offroad=16.6 kph) for extended periods.

This TL1 wooden, livestock drawn, war chariot can be found on almost any low tech planet. The hull is 3cm thick wood interlaced with hide in an open configuration with 50% of the vehicle open to the rear, front and top allowing the driver and passenger to step into the chariot from the rear. The driver uses direct controls to the livestock, reins, while standing, and the passenger is expected to stand. There is no break or any accommodation for cargo. Theoretically the platform where the driver and passenger stand could conceivably carry cargo, however it is not intended to.

The suspension is an integral part of the vehicle and is of sophisticated hide design directly holding



the platform, giving a relatively comfortable ride and relatively steady firing platform. The chariot is designed to be raced at the enemy where the curved sword blades mounted on the wheels are a deterrent to directly attacking the chariot. The passenger will usually throw missiles (spears or javelins) at the enemy before dismounting, while the chariot is at speed, and then engage as infantry. Collection of the passenger during battle is also undertaken while the chariot is moving. The vehicle is designed to be pulled at full gallop (56kps) for extended periods of time.

The chariot is drawn by two animals; in the above case the external power source was calculated using the standard Terran horse thus producing 2hp. The livestock are arranged side by side each with direct reins to each. ☼



Raconteurs' Rest

Down Jump Blues

by Jim Fogarty

A pounding headache woke me. I felt just as bad as I did the morning after my first night's liberty in boot camp. Only I hadn't had a drop this time. I'd fallen asleep on my bunk reading a book on my handcomp. Just like I do most nights. A quick look around the stateroom showed me everything in the same place as last night. Glancing at my wrist chrono I saw we were due to exit jump space in about an hour. I'd slept in. Normally I rose with the sun, when there was a sun. But today I'd slept in late, much later than I ever remember doing. I

crossed over to the fresher and splashed some cold water on my face. That cleared some of the cob webs. I just needed coffee to get set for show time.

My stateroom opened onto the passenger lounge on the main deck of the *Silver Dollar*, a 500-dton exploration ship. It was a sweet ride, the kind of opulent toy only a megacorp could afford. Smith General Transport spared no expense in outfitting this girl. Though registered as an exploration vessel, her real role was as an armed escort for SGT merchants. A 4G M-drive meant she could get to the scene of a fight in a hurry. The heavy armor and fusion cannons loaded into four double turrets

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Raconteurs' Rest

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meant she could hold her own once she got there. The luxurious interior outstripped all those naval scows I spent too much time on during my Marine stint. The empty lounge struck me as odd. An hour before down jump, most of the crew would be at their stations, but I expected Rayburn to be here chowing down on the gourmet grub from stores. Carlisle, that damned fop, should have been here too, looking down his nose at us and complaining about the small size of his deluxe double state-room. If I wasn't being paid to protect his ass, I would've kicked it to the next parsec soon after we entered J-space.

I programmed the dispenser for a hot cup of Joe. No instant on *this* boat. While it brewed I thumbed the intercom, "Bridge, this is O'Quinn. What's our status? Everything green for down jump? Over." No reply. "Bridge, this is O'Quinn. Please acknowledge. Over." My hackles were up. Crewing the command station on the bridge was SOP, even in J-Space. I hit the alarm button on the chrono to warn my team and raced to Carlisle's cabin, drawing my mini SMG from the shoulder holster as I went.

I used my security override to open the cabin door. Carlisle looked at peace laying in his silk sheets. I swept the room and crossed to the pompous executive's bed. He was at peace, alright. Two small caliber entrance wounds and powder burns at his temple told me all I needed to know. I heard a sound behind me and spun bringing the SMG to bear. The wrong end of a gauss rifle pointed right at my chest. I relaxed a bit seeing the Professor—John Lee, my second-in-command—behind the sights. We called him "the Professor" because before signing up with me, he quit his post as a full professor at the prestigious Regina Technical Institute. I never thought it was a smart move on his part considering he was the smartest guy I ever met. But he proved himself indispensable on more than one occasion. The best move a commander can make is name a more intelligent guy than himself as 2IC. "Carlisle's down," I said, "Autodoc won't help."

"The case?" he asked scanning the room.

"Unknown," I replied. "The team?"

"All accounted for and backing me up. What's the call?"

"There's no reply from the bridge. Priority one is getting up there. Second, ascertain the status of the rest of the crew. I exited the cabin and saw my team had taken up positions around the lounge covering the room in a defensive circle. They were all there. All three of them. The job only called for a small team and paid cherry for a milk run. I should have known. "Sandy, you're with me. Professor, take Emmett and search the boat. See who's left. I'm going to the bridge."

Just the four of us were left alive. Grim. The entire crew of the *Silver Dollar* had been killed just like Carlisle, double tapped up close with a small caliber weapon. Probably a silenced body pistol. The only one missing was Bakku, the gunnery chief. According to the posted roster, Bakku had bridge duty. And the bridge was buttoned up tight. We couldn't get in. Sandy found the case under the sheets with Carlisle. No surprise his Nibs would keep it close to him. We sat around the dinning table in the lounge with the case resting square in the center. "Analysis?" I asked to no one in particular, but the Professor knew I was talking to him.

"Not good, Sully", he said. "We're still alive."

"I don't see being alive as a major drawback, Professor," growled Emmett Rayburn. He was a thug, but he was my thug. Rayburn was the first associate in Dark Lightning Security, the firm I started after mustering out of the Corps. Angry was his normal state, but right now he was the kind of angry that would only be abated by strangling the life out of Bakku once we got on the bridge.

"The Professor's right, Rayburn," piped in Sandy. "Whoever killed the crew could have—should have—killed us too." Sandy Parkinson, my systems expert, knew her way around electronics and computers better than anyone I'd ever met. I hired her on the night I caught her breaking into my supposedly secure offices to steal a copy of a proposal I planned to submit for a large security job.

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Raconteurs' Rest

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The lady was a gifted industrial spy. Dark Lighting didn't land the job, too big for my firm anyway, but we landed a much better asset in her.

"No, Parkinson, they need us to be alive. We've been set up. We couldn't be the patsy if we're dead," the Professor said. "We all woke with headaches. It's clear we've been dosed. Maybe an aerosol in the ventilation. They waited 'til the last night before down jump, when we'd be least on guard."

"Who set us up? Bakku?" Rayburn said. "I got some TDX in my kit. We'll set a breaching charge and take care of that bastard."

"My guess is that Bakku is already dead and whoever set us up wants us to blow the bridge."

"We're in J-Space, Professor," said Rayburn incredulously, "Even I know there's no getting off in J-Space. We don't down jump for half an hour. We just searched the boat. He killed 'em and wants to make a deal with the pirates himself. He's a double crosser. It has to be Bakku. There ain't nobody else on the ship."

"That's the mystery now, isn't it?"

"If Bakku is dead then it has to be one of us," said Rayburn quickly glancing around at the team.

"Infighting is another thing they're counting on. Whoever did this made a big mistake and left us alive. This job was sketchy from the get go, but the money was too good," I said. "Sorry I got you stuck in this mess."

"But the old lady hired you herself, didn't she?" asked Sandy. "I thought this was on the up and up. Are you sure it was the Marquesa?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. We've kept in touch ever since I helped her out with that situation with her great grand nephew. It's always a smart play to keep on the good side of the richest person in the sector." Smith General Transport was getting hit hard by a band of pirates operating throughout the subsector, costing them big. Even for a company worth multi-trillions, losses had to be minimized. Dealing directly with the pirates was strictly illegal. Going through back channels, a deal was struck and a meeting arranged. On paper nothing led back to SGT. Although he was a distant cousin to the Marquesa, Carlisle had retired from the family business

long ago. The *Dollar* was registered as an independent, and all of her crew had no official ties to Smith. All we had to do was accompany Carlisle to his meeting with the pirate commander and act as body guards. Simple. Piracy was just like any other business, only maybe more honest. And if they could get a score and not face any risk they would jump at it. SGT and the pirate faction would sign an accord and for a 50 Megacredit payout Smith could ply the subsector trade routes in peace. Dark Lighting Security would get paid 50K for what amounted to a 2 jump cruise on a luxury yacht. The only downside was putting up with Carlisle.

"OK we've got half an hour till we exit J-Space. That means we have half an hour to catch the killer, get back the 50 mil and make the deal with the pirates. If they show up and don't find a payday they won't like it. It would be long odds indeed if they don't just kill us and take the ship."

"But how do you know the money's not in the case? It's still intact. This is a premium security sealed hard case. Any tampering and the contents get fried."

"The money's gone, but if we're lucky the accord they were supposed to sign is still in there. Sandy, get your tools. You and the Professor open this case. Emmett get down to engineering and bring back a cutter. We're going to the bridge."

The *Silver Dollar* was a custom ship from landing gear on up. Based on a 500-dton streamlined, flattened sphere hull, most of the ship was laid out on a single deck. A much smaller command deck housing the bridge, computer, sensors and avionics bays rested above the main deck along the center line. Rayburn and I took almost a full half hour to cut through the hatch leading to the bridge. Bakku was there, and sure enough, dead as the rest of the crew. Same way, too. At his feet lay a small silenced pistol, presumably the one used to execute the crew. Both the ship's nav computer and fire control systems were riddled with bullet holes. Things were looking up.

I slid down the ladder from the command deck to the lounge, "Any luck with the case?"

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Raconteurs' Rest

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“Almost done, Sully,” said Sandy. Deep in concentration, she manipulated the controls on the case. The latches popped and Sandy opened it, pausing for a second to be sure nothing exploded. “Ta da!” she said.

“You just earned your pay for the week. Now let’s get a look at the contents.” I lifted out a folder from the top of the case and what I saw beneath it stunned me. I expected to see bearer bonds, but the stack was ten times larger than I thought it would be. A full five hundred bonds each with a face value of one million credits. I’d never seen a bigger stack of money. I handed the contract to the Professor, “John, give this a read and see what it says. Sandy, check the bonds out. They’re probably fake.” She picked a sheet at random from the middle of the stack and got to work. My chrono beeped—two minute warning for down jump. “Emmett, quit staring at the money. It ain’t yours. Man the comms in the bridge, and if the pirates hail us stall them.”

“Sure. I’ll just tell ’em that the crew is taking a nap and to call back later.”

“I don’t care what you tell them. If they think the deal’s gone spinward they’ll ventilate the hull and keep her for scrap. The four of us won’t put up much of a fight, and with the main comp down we don’t have any fire control. And watch your back up there, there’s still a killer on board.” Rayburn drew his sidearm and made his way up to the bridge.

“Well after a quick check these look good.” Sandy said, putting her hand scanner back in her tool satchel. “The stock is high grade laminated polymer embedded with security fibers and radioisotopes. There’s fully animated holographic printing on both sides. These look good. Best fakes I’ve ever seen.”

“How can you tell?”

“The mix of isotopes is wrong. Each bond series is embedded with a specific set of radioactive molecules. Based on the date of issue and the rate of decay it is easy to tell if they are genuine. The mix is way off. It’s like they didn’t try. These may be pretty, but they won’t fool any bank. And I

doubt our pirate friends will fall for them either.”

“The contract looks good. It’s like you said. SGT is contracting with the pirates to provide security services for their transports. In essence it is protection money but the amount is a full five hundred million payable biannually. Smith is buying protection for their fleet for the whole sector. These pirates must be better organized than we ever thought possible. Half a billion, that’s some flash.”

The ship shuddered as it made the transition from J-Space to normal space. “Whoever planned this humped us good and hard. It had to be someone high up at Smith. Somewhere on this boat is a killer with 500 million in untraceable bearer bonds and we’re set up to take the fall. The crew is dead and we, the hired gun security, are still drawing breath. It’s obvious we cut our way on to the bridge. And even if the pirate skipper buys our outlandish tale and doesn’t vent us, we don’t have his coin, not real coin anyway. We sure as hell can’t pay them with this crap. His only play would be to take the *Dollar*. Our only play is to find the thief, get the bonds back and pay off the pirates according to this contract.”

“O’Quinn,” Rayburn shouted down from the hatch leading to the command deck. “The pirates are not far out. They were sitting here waiting. They got a fleet, alright. Transponders indicate three 800-dton broadswords. I told them the J-capacitor blew on jump and fried the M-Drives. It should take them about an hour to thrust on over. Unless you got a plan I’m gonna break into the bar and down some of that aged hooch Carlisle sipped on every night.”

“Break in. That’s it!” I said. “We had to cut our way into the command deck because the hatches were both dogged from the inside. Not just locked electronically, but physically barred. Whoever locked them had to do it from the command deck. Everybody up.” I raced over to the ladder followed by my team.

Compared to the main deck, the command deck was tiny. A small corridor ran fore to the bridge and aft to the computer and sensor bays. There were two hatches in the ceiling, each leading to one of

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the dorsal turrets. I thought someone might be hiding in the turrets. I motioned the team to check them. Sandy and the Professor, both with gauss rifles, covered Rayburn as he opened each hatch. Both compartments were empty. "Search everything. The killer got on the bridge, dogged the hatches and left somehow. We've got to get that money back before those happy fun balls get here." We started pulling panels and equipment and didn't take long 'til we found a small passage behind some of the avionics gear. Retrofitted into the ship after construction, it was good. "Pros did this, and it must have taken time," I said. Sandy handed off the gauss rifle to Rayburn, shed her armor, drew her pistol and crawled into the passage. She never would have fit, armored up. "If you see anyone shoot first and then shoot him again."

She wasn't in there more than a minute when she called out. "It's empty. There's a nest in here. Whoever it was has been here since we lifted. There's a second exit. Looks like it leads to the cargo bay."

The three of us were down the ladder and double-timed it to the cargo bay. The hold was empty, but the opened locker next to the aft air lock was missing a vacc suit. I ran to the locker and began pulling on a suit of my own. "Emmett, get to my cabin; in my locker you'll find an accelerator rifle. Get it, and bring the HUD goggles." He ran off.

"Just what do you think you'll accomplish, Sully" the Professor asked.

"I'm getting the money back and killing that bastard," I said, sealing the suit and grabbing the helmet.

"Are you nuts? Do you know how big space is? We're in empty interstellar space. There isn't any sun nearby to illuminate anything. That guy could be 10 kilometers away, or just 10 meters and you'll never see him."

"I'm the only one with any zero-G combat experience. I've got to try something. We're dead if I don't." Rayburn returned and I donned the goggles before sealing the helmet. The heads-up display in the goggles was connected to the sights on the accelerator rifle and would help with aiming the

weapon by projecting a computer enhanced sighting image on to the lenses. It was the best way to aim the zero-G rated weapon while wearing the bulky vacc suit.

"Anything I can do to help?" Rayburn asked.

"Just get to the bridge. Maybe Sandy can get the sensors working and we can get a bead on our guy."

"Even if we could, unless he's running electronics, or broadcasting a beacon we're not likely to pick up anything. He'll be dark, and radar won't bounce back from a vacc suit."

"Just do it." I told them the frequency I'd be on, slipped on the thruster pack, and began to cycle through the airlock.

I always loved going EVA. There is nothing quite as peaceful as floating free in open space, only I wasn't in a peaceful mood. The stars were bright pinholes in contrast to the black of space. The Silver Dollar blotted out the stars behind me. I switched the visor to IR in the hopes I could see a heat signature. No luck in any direction I looked. I checked the timer on the HUD and it had been about 40 minutes since we were first contacted by the pirates. Twenty minutes and all I had to do was find one man hiding in all of infinity.

"Sully," said the Professor's voice over the comm. I think we have something."

"You got the sensors working?" I asked. Finally a spark of hope.

"Not really, but we got something. It's weak, about 20 clicks out and moving away at a steady pace. It's got to be our guy." He gave me a bearing and I headed off at full thrust. It was the only shot we had.

A few minutes later I drew near the point the Professor had given me. I started to see a faint form in the IR. "I think it's our guy. I see him. There is a human form and he's got a duffel tethered floating along side, about 10 meters to his right." This guy was taking a risk. In a best case scenario a man could last 96 hours or so in a vacc suit, maybe longer with additional O2 tanks, scrubbers and power cells. He must have planned to wait it out while the pirates took care of us and have a

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ship of his own jump in to pick him up later. Risky plan, but what a payday.

At 500 meters out I cut thrust and drifted in, closing at 10 meters a second. I raised the accelerator rifle and placed the electronic reticle over the form and waited as I got nearer. Specifically designed to be used in zero-G, the accelerator rifle fired projectiles in a two stage process. First the bullet is fired at very low velocity producing negligible recoil easily compensated by a thruster pack. Then a small rocket would kick in accelerating the round to a much higher velocity reaching maximum speed about 50 meters from the muzzle. The small shaped charge in the bullet nose would blow a large hole in any vacc suit, venting the air and killing the wearer.

I waited till I was close before firing. Oblivious to me he faced away and drifted peacefully, content his murderous theft had been successful. As I closed distance I could see he had an accelerator rifle of his own. I had to make sure my shot counted. I kept the sight square on his torso and watched as the range finder in the HUD counted down to 50 meters.

I pulled the trigger expecting a three round burst, but nothing happened. "The damned gun misfired!" I yelled into the comm as I slid closer. He would be aware of me soon enough. I raked back the charging handle to put a fresh round in the chamber. At about twenty meters from him I fired again. Still nothing. "The gun's not working," I cursed into the comm, "He must have sabotaged it. Our guy's good," I said, pivoting so I could face the assassin when I passed and hit full thrust. If I could get close enough I could still try to beat him to death with the rifle. That was all it was good for at this point.

The killer jerked in surprise as I slid past him. He hit his own thrusters and started towards me. For a few seconds the distance between us grew until we started getting nearer to each other. We were about 100 meters apart and I could see his accelerator rifle pointed right at me. I expected to see a puff of rocket exhaust in the IR before I cashed out, but he waited wanting the optimal 50

meter range. I consoled myself that at least I would be killed by a professional. I raked another fresh round in the chamber but still nothing.

I watched the range finder count down again. 70 meters. 60 meters. A brilliant flash filled the IR visor then it went black for a second, overloaded. When my vision returned I saw an expanding cloud of heated gas where the killer used to be. "What the hell!" I yelled into the comm.

"Glad to see you're still with us, Sully," the Professor replied. "Do you see an object floating about 50 meters to your upper right?"

"Affirmative," I said. It was the duffel. "Can you explain what just happened?"

"Collect that. It's the bonds," he said. "We used the *Dollar's* fusion cannon."

"But the ship's computer and fire control were shot. How did you manage all this?" I asked grabbing the duffel clipping my own tether to it.

"Well, the computer is useless and it would take hours to repair. So I had Sandy bypass the computer and patch her currency scanner directly to the sensors. We scanned for the isotopes embedded in the bonds. That's how we found him. I wrote a quick fire control app on my handcomp and patched it in to run the cannons. We couldn't zero in on him till he activated his own HUD, then we caught the electronic signature. You can thank Rayburn for taking the shot. He insisted, and I don't think I could have talked him out of it even if I tried."

Yep, putting the smarter guy as second-in-command paid off again. ☼

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller News and Findings

July 2012

- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Deneb Sector* and *Solomani Rim*.
- **Gorgon Press** has released *Ship Book: Chiron-class Hunter*.
- Last month, we reported that **Stargazer Publishing** had released the *Aegis-class Scout*. This was an error at DriveThruRPG; the correct publisher is **Gorgon Press**. ☼



Old Reliables

by Sam Swindell

In a recent naval recruiting poster, KiKi Dish, the most popular Shugashi Metal scene singer in the Spinward Marches, and more recently well-received Hologvid actress, wears a small jade amulet in the shape of a *Rampart* fighter on an iridium chain, an enticing smile and little else. There is no text. There does not need to be, for the totem KiKi wears is far more famous than she, and the fact that her eyes match the color of the little ship just highlights this powerful confluence of images that makes this wordless poster one of the most effective recruiting tools since the Imperial Navy has been counting. The poster's real star is the playing piece for a game about two and a half centuries old, the limelight of which KiKi has been lucky to share.

Indeed, what game? In 857 the commander of the 1158th Imperial Heavy Fighter Squadron ("Old Reliables"), then-Lieutenant Commander Baron Alfred Thayer Mahan Ling, worked with the research and development group of Ling-Standard Products to develop a space flight simulator in a small gaming console that was eventually to make a colorful, wide mark on the habits of many starfarers across centuries. LCDR Ling's idea became the "Old Reliables" game, quickly being dubbed the "ORbox." The ORbox was a portable console, played by players who each use their own playing piece, or "ORbit." He had a number of prototypes made for the 1158th, and required the 1158th's flight crews to always have one with them whenever on pass, at the officers' club, or off the base at a social engagement while in uniform. This requirement quickly passed from being treated as a noble's bizarre eccentricity to a mark of pride for the Old Reliables.

The initial designs of the ORbox and ORbits were crude by current standards, with the original ORbits being not much more than a cut-down version of a standard data crystal, and the ORbox only being able to project the scene to standard wearable HUDs. This lack of polish and the limited initial manufacture are often cited as likely reasons that the spread beyond the "Old Reliables" was so slow.


While favored watering holes of the Old Reliables were lent a few ORboxes, they generated little outside interest until one pilot, whose identity is lost to history, managed to reshape his ORbit into a crude representation of his *Rampart*. That provoked some interest, and when word got back to the Baron and to LSP, a quick redesign of the ORbox and ORbits was pushed through, and the second manufacturing run released, much more polished, though still lacking any spectator projection capabilities. The increased attractiveness and word-of-mouth advertising as pilots transferred in and out of the 1158th led to the gradual spread of the "Old Reliables" game to other naval pilots (and their watering holes and hangouts). By 950, many naval veterans, and a few scout veterans, in civilian service carried ORbits. This glacial spread continued, though, into pilot ranks generally, spurred by Ling's making ORboxes standard equipment in starship lounges, and a trend for veteran scouts to tout themselves as the "real pilots" during and after the Fourth Frontier War; the genesis of this latter trend is obscure. By 1025, there was not a pilot bar in any starport without an ORbox, and by 1050, there was not an A starport or Naval or Scout base without an automated kiosk for turning out ORbits. Still, most of these were bought by pilots and gunners; it was a rare crewmember who did not have a few that followed his career through the ships they represented. The real catalyst for the spread of the "Old Reliables" game was the release of the third-generation console—the first to incorporate the ability to project a spectator's view of the game—by 1065. Over the next half century, the mystique of these electronic jousts, carried out by those whose skills were the stuff of glory and survival, steadily rose. While other games and entertainments bloomed and faded like wildflowers, the ORbox steadily gained market share among those in the Imperium who felt the pull of the stars but could not follow or return to them. The spread was probably hastened by Chandlers' decision to start carrying them in 1075, spreading to all their stores by 1084, though some claim that the sea change came with the central role that ORduels played for the star of the blockbuster 1074 hologvid drama *Scout Quinn*, the tragic hero played by Umu

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Meagher. That Umu was killed in an apparent pirate raid on his yacht a few months after the drama's release magnified his mystique, and even spurred a somewhat tasteless marketing campaign by Chandlers of Regina to "buy one for Umu." This crass ad campaign led to an acrimonious outcry and an ugly lawsuit by Meagher's heirs; it also spurred record-breaking sales for ORboxes and ORbits throughout most of 1075 and 1076. The ORduel was by then well-known throughout the Marches, and the popularity of *Scout Quinn* continued to spread throughout the Imperium, by then bound up in the story of Meagher's death, the Chandlers ORbox lawsuit, and the romance of the ORduel.

The present version of the ORbox is a squat, 20 cm square console, designed to be placed or mounted in the middle of a table. It monitors and interprets player hand movements that mimic actual manipulation of ships' controls, and transmits images of each crew display to any standard HUD worn by a player, while a stylized version of the battle is projected holographically in the air about 1m above the ORbox for the benefit of spectators. It allows 2-4 players to play simultaneously, each placing an ORbit into a small cradle on their face of the ORbox. The ORbit's manufacture records, in addition to the ship characteristics, the actual crew station setup of the ship in question. Crew stations can therefore be played as either pilot or gunner stations, and more than one crewmember can play the same ORbit. Tradition is that the pilot uses his own ORbit, but gunners typically carry one as well. Up to 4 ORboxes at a time can network to accommodate up to 16 players, but the spirit of head-to-head competition usually keeps contests small. This character of direct competition was probably the impetus leading such contests to be called "ORduels." Usually, they are played on a "gentleman's bet," or for a drink. Less often, in commercial or mercenary circles, they may be played for money. The greatest challenge is a "bit-for-bit" challenge to an ORduel, with each pilot playing for the other's ORbit. It would be an eccentric pilot indeed who headed to his favorite water-

ing hole with an ORbox, because the ORbox has become a given fixture in any such establishment; it would, however, be quite normal for a pilot to sally forth with one or several of his ORbits. The bar usually has some to lend, of course, to cater to the neophyte who the serious types haven't scared off, and while not universal, kiosks for purchasing one's own ORbit are common.

The ORbox can and often does pit unequal ships against each other, but it scores the ORduels on the skill exhibited, rather than strictly on the ultimate outcome of the contest. Thus, a Patrol Cruiser facing a *Suliemán* would be expected to win the battle, but the Scout can prevail in the ORduel by taking longer to perish or by doing more damage than the odds would have predicted. Like many cultural practices, the ORduel can appear odd to the uninitiated: the participants of any ORduel resemble twitching idiots locked in some bizarre hallucinatory trance, but the bystanders typically focus on the holographic ballet occurring midair above the contestants, rather than the contestants themselves. Fighter pilots, free traders, big ship gunners, and scouts all come together in the dark back rooms of places with names like *Decayed Orbit* or *Rampart's Bane*, filled with those who understand. There is not a concourse in any major starport without at least one automated kiosk, that can carve and program ORbits, in brass, titanium, jade, aluminum, quartz, iridium, crystaliron or sapphire. The ORbox has become wildly popular with hobbyists, fans, and "wannabes." Many family members or sweethearts of spacefarers have souvenirs, in the form of ORbits, sent to them of the ships their loved ones have been posted to. In fact, the College of Social Sciences in Rhylanor University estimated that only 34% of ORbits are ever actually used; the rest are gifts and mementos. Further, of those 34% that are used, 95% of those are used by those with no rating. It is rare that the cargo space in any starship heading out from a world with a Naval or Scout base does not contain a few kilos of ORbits, sent to family and sweethearts back home, usually at greater cost to ship than to manufacture. By 1100, the ORbit had become a true, enduring cultural icon in the multicultural jumble which is interstellar society. 



The “Old Reliables game”

by Sam Swindell

ORbox

The ORbox is squat 20 cm square console with a trapezoidal profile. It is traditionally black, though for an additional Cr 10, any color can be ordered through Chandlers, for pickup about 24 hours later. It is designed to be placed or mounted in the middle of a table, and has a magnetic base. It has internal batteries, but is normally directly powered from a thin base that is built to be recessed into the surface of the table and hardwired, but can also be simply plugged into any shipboard or standard TL10-13 residential electrical outlet. All ORboxes have the ability to network a total of 4 units. The basic console shape and functions have remained the same since the initial prototype ORbox for the 1158th, though the holographic projection of the scene for spectators appears only in models manufactured in 1065 or later, and only those manufactured in 1097 or later have the interface allowing the ORbox to be used in conjunction with a TL13 hand computer, for recording a game or playing larger scenarios. While Chandlers has the exclusive contract with LSP for custom-color ORboxes, and the 1158th gets their exclusive emblem-embazoned ORboxes directly from LSP, the basic black model is commonly available in other entertainment outlets at starports and startowns. The TL 13 ORbox masses 1 kg, displaces .5 liter and retails from Cr 125. As a cargo, 24,000 ORboxes and packaging fit into a 1dton standard container, and cost MCr 1.0 if purchased in dton lots from LSP.

ORbit

The instrumental token of the Old Reliables game, the ORbit itself is custom ordered from an automated kiosk, or from an attendant at Chandler's. Chandler's has an exclusive contract to manufacture ORbits within their stores, though the process involves an attendant using a cut-down kiosk behind the counter. The ORbit is either a scale model or a stylized totem of an actual ship or small craft, usually varying from 2 to 2.5 cm. They are never more than 4 cm long, for representations of ships larger than 5,000 dtons; representations of

smaller ships are smaller as well, with ships less than 5,000 dtons topping out at 3 cm, ships less than 1,000 dtons topping out at 2.5 cm, non-starships being 2 cm. The proportions of the ship or small craft are accurately portrayed, but the relative sizes are only ordinally accurate: a 200 dton *Beowulf*-class free trader will be smaller than a 1,200 dton *Kinunir*-class, which will be smaller than a *High Lightning*-class cruiser, but not in correct proportion.

The ORbit is made from an alloy mimicking the appearance of hull metal or from other special materials. Gold, silver or other precious metals, semi-precious stones, synthetic gems, or even commoner metals such as brass or aluminum are all common materials. Local signature gems are often offered as an option in a given locale. The ORbits are laser carved in 45 seconds or so after the customer inputs the standard class ship or a provides a holocrystal with imagery and specifications; selects the material; enters any modifications or options to standard designs; and pays. The embedded chip containing the ship's specs can be read by the ORbox, but is not reprogrammable or capable of modification. The price for an ORbit in standard material (including brass, titanium, or aluminum) in Cr 15. Prices rise up to Cr 175 for silver, Cr 1,500 for gold, Cr 2,500 for iridium. Common jade is Cr 100, but various semi-precious stones are in the hundreds; fairly convincing synthetics can be had for less than Cr 100 in most cases.

When manufactured, or afterwards, the ORbit can be drilled, usually at the nose, to be worn as jewelry. ORbits are commonly worn this way, but seldom by rated pilots or crew members; it is a bit ungainly to put an ORbit attached to a chain into the ORbox. Small leather pouches, containing one or more ORbits are commonly worn. A popular method for pilots is a leather cuff, with pouches for several ORbits; fighter pilots will commonly carry a group of all the fighters they have flown, including variants and trainers. This often requires a separate case, or “wallet,” fashioned of leather, metal, or synthetics. One true eccentric had a walking stick fashioned from a large bone, with recesses carved in for 12 of his ORbits, each covered by a

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In A Store Near You

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transparent scale from the large reptilian donor of the bone, each of which slid aside to allow the ORbit to be removed. ORbits, like so many items that have initially become popular for a specific use, have become popular far beyond this original utility.

(ORbits, because of their on-the-spot manufacture at the retail point-of-sale, are not available as a trade good. For cargo rates on the carving substrate “blanks”, see below.)

ORbit Kiosk and blanks.

These somewhat gaudy pillars are ubiquitous in A and B starports throughout the Imperium. This is a fully automated kiosk, 50 cm square, and 2 meters high, that is intended to be unattended, hard-wired to power, and replenished as necessary. The top of the kiosk mimics the trapezoidal prism of the ORbox. The front is mostly taken up by a touchscreen bordered by inputs for either hard currency, or physical interface with credit/debit device, and a tray into which the finished ship totem (ORbit) is deposited. While the other 3 sides are

taken up by screens depicting scenes of starship battles and daring-do, which change with the whims of the newest advertising campaigns, the corners are finished in crystaliron with a distinctive circular brushed pattern. The customer inputs the class of ship and other specifications into the touchscreen on the front, or slips a holocrystal with the specifications into the side; the rapid production by laser and robotic arms is then flashed to all the screens on the kiosk, making the buying of an ORbit a spectator sport.

Each kiosk masses 350 kg, displaces 500 liters, and costs Cr 5,500. It is TL 13. A standard selection of 1,600 ORbit blanks is Cr 8,000, and with packaging take up 100 liters of volume. As a cargo, 24 kiosks and packaging fit into a 1dton standard container, and cost Cr 50,000 if purchased in dton lots from LSP. As cargo, a selection 208,000 ORbit blanks displaces 1 dton and costs MCr 1.0. Normally, though, such large quantities would not be trading openly, but shipped as ordered by Chandlers. A 1 m³ “small cube,” containing 16,000 blanks and wholesaling at Cr 80,000, would be a more likely shipment. ☪



Up Close and Personal

Mindy Loon

profiled by Sam Swindell

Mindy Loon 3AA9B6; 3 Terms, Age 30

ex-Imperial Navy Ensign

Pilot-4, Navigation-1, Ship's Boat-1, Ship Tactics-1, Commo-1, Pistol-0

Body Pistol, MilStd Vacc Suit, Cr 10,000

Mindy is a redhead of willowly build. She is attractive, though her demeanor, accent, dress and mannerisms in an off-duty setting scream “bimbo”. She is currently unemployed, and spends her tiome hanging around various bars favored by flight crews, especially military pilots, but is very careful not to select one that offers what are euphemistically called “other services”. She will flirt with a male pilot who seems sure of himself, and inexpertly challenge him to an “ORduel”. When the duel is accepted (more often than not), she will take the

Rampart she wears on a chain, and make a show of fumbling to get it into the cradle of the ORbox before using the challenged pilot as a plaything; it is a rare pilot who can best her. This old act of hers from the navy is now the centerpiece of her job search. Once she reels in and trashes one pilot, she will take all comers. In such a setting, an equal or even better pilot is likely present, but may take a few rounds to step up to the challenge. Once she has been bested, she will let on to the victor that she is looking for a job, and give him or her a card with her contact information on it, and beat a hasty retreat. She has gotten plenty of offers, but all so far have been boring commercial affairs.

Mindy comes from a naval family, of enlisted technicians in her father's and grandfathers' generations. She is the first to achieve officer rank, and perhaps felt the weight of their expectations of greatness; her brother and only sibling is a disso-

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Up Close and Personal

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lute drunk who flunked out of high school, and her two minor cousins swear a loathing for any government service. Despite making honors in the Naval Officers' Training Corps at Mora's prestigious Spinward Technical University, and doing well in Flight School, Loon's assignments in the Navy amounted to training, patrols, and shore duty. She became bored and even a bit burned out on paperwork; she also chafed at the assumption that as a wispy redhead with a name like hers, she was some sort of lightweight. Her last job was as an instructor in the classroom portion of Flight School, which was the last straw for her desire to continue in the navy. Mindy is looking to land a flying job with some excitement, and have some fun. She's not a bimbo, she just plays one on the weekends. It appeals to her somewhat dry, but slightly vicious sense of humor to use the macho pilots' egos against them.

Mindy has mixed tastes. She has an intense, and very private, interest in classical and obscure folk music. She will neither talk about this, nor even share her music with others. She has a peculiar interest in Vargr military history, though she dislikes Vargr and historians alike. In another manifestation of her perverse sense of humor, Mindy is fond of telling overused jokes in a deadpan style, as if talking to herself, cocking her head and pausing

briefly after the punch line to briefly flicker a half-smile before plunging back into whatever task is before her. She is both quietly confident in her ability as a pilot, and realistic about her limitations elsewhere. She is rated as a more-than-competent navigator, but will avoid using this skill without some supervision or support. She will avoid dirt-side scraps if at all possible. She carries her body pistol in a discrete rig, but only if the situation unavoidably calls for it.

If she ships out, she is all business; the copious bright orange curls are all spartanly bound up and tucked into a bun that appears bombproof. She will typically only smile on the job if someone says or does something stupid enough. She is sharp enough, but quite close about her abilities. She is an expert pilot, but does not act cocky or take unnecessary risks on the job. That's not to say she is faint of heart; far from it. She is looking for a dangerous job, but she will approach the risks this job as a surgeon approaches cancer, knowing a professional's job is to coolly excise every possible bit, partly because she knows lives depend on it, but partly because—and she would never admit this—she fears 'freezing up' if she got into a situation and things started to 'go south'. She knows she has never been 'in a crunch', and has great admiration for those who have proven themselves capable of handling it, especially those who have faced it in battle. ☼



Raconteurs' Rest

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 18

As the throbbing double-tone of the N-Space Klaxon sounded, Gibby sat at his stool, this time a pillow clenched over his head as the *Chicken and Waffles* tore itself free of the chaotic vortex that is Transit Space and dropped, like a rock into a pool of water, back to Normal Space. A few seconds later, the automated, cool, female voice of the *Waffles*' Heimdall-5600 computer decreed "Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time eight thousand eight

hundred forty seven minutes. Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time 6 days, 4 hours, seven minutes."

The *Waffles* had dropped out of Transition fairly close to what the purchased navigation chip had promised; though at some thirty seven degrees below the System Plain.

"And there she is, everyone," Brodie, who'd been monitoring the Sensor board, announced over the com. Flicking a switch, the Tri-V displays all over the ship lit up with the display of red Auge-reau, with its single planet, Heimdall.

One down side to visiting very wealthy worlds

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like this was that the ship's comm was already being assaulted by hundred upon hundreds of messages advertising any and all manner of goods and services to be had the second *Waffles* had entered the system.

One of the computer's security subroutines would be busy for a majority of the ship's advance toward Heimdall, chewing through a virtual mountain of messages and determining just what may be of interest to the ship or its crew.

As the *Waffles* approached, the massive Highport could be seen orbiting the planet. Its main structure was a cylinder showing thousands of lights and hundreds of different-sized bays. At the top of the cylinder was a structure vaguely resembling a reaching, eight-fingered, double-thumbed hand with ships docked all round.

Communicating with Heimdall System Control, Tam, on the stick, was told to dock at Ring Number 10725; maybe seventy meters above the knuckle joint on what passed as the index finger, starboard side.

As the port bridge airlock was mated with the docking ring, the airlock light went to green, and a docking clamp closed over the mated pair, showing a solid connection with the Highport and making it decidedly difficult for the ship to tear off anywhere without the proper clearance.

Some Captains were enthusiastic brokers in their own right, sweating and squabbling over half a percentage point, or a handful of credits. Captain Nordel Fyyg was not one of these.

When Fyyg had first come aboard *Waffles* under Captain Peel, he found she was a woman who believed in letting a brokerage house earn their money doing what they do best.

After several back-and-forths with Lanning, Murrow and Jericho, the brokerage house Fyyg continued using after Captain Peel had gone, the *Waffles'* shipment of silica and crystals from the mines of Nordic Prime had reached a best price of KCr360; a respectable profit on the cargo. LM&J's fee of KCr72 on the deal left Captain Fyyg and the *Waffles* with more than a quarter-million credits.

Setting aside Port Director Hobson's traditional 'Patron's Cut' of one third as the Founder of the Feast, as it were, and Crew Salaries, Fyyg was still looking at something like KCr148 of pure, golden profit after the lighter came to take the load off the *Chicken and Waffles*.

Firmly attached to the Highport like some sort of lamprey, the *Waffles*, temporarily a parasite, was getting its juice from the Highport, so the ship's power plant was running at its lowest level. An anchor watch rotation was assigned, and Liberty on Heimdall followed, with the spacers typically spending as fast as they could, while Gibby, who only rarely left the ship, stayed behind, tinkering with the drives and other systems aboard, and reading his ancient, Atomic Era, Elmore Leonard Westerns.

Unlike the law in Leonard's shoot-'em-ups, the law on Heimdall was strict, and weapon possession of any type by offworlders was prohibited. Even possession by natives was itself fairly limited.

As the *Waffles'* crewmembers waited to go through the pat-down, Captain Fyyg, stood arm-in-arm with Second Officer Frielander. Nordel laughed to himself, wondering at just how many of his crew might try something as juvenile as to sneak something past the Customs officials.

The officials let the Captain and Second through with a nod, unmolested, but all the others, including First Officer Hertzog, were stopped and given a thorough going over. Three of the crew ended up being disarmed but let through.

Once through Customs, the crew were in the Highport proper, with its multiple galleries and shops and restaurants and stores, designed, like their counterparts everywhere, to separate a softphont from his hard-earned credits. They scattered, some in groups and others singly, to the four winds, to succumb to that purpose.

The Highport must have had at least five hundred restaurants of all kinds, as well as street corner kiosks and wandering carts.

Brodie wanted a sit-down meal somewhere. The Captain, Ilsa, and Dave all agreed. The only

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problem eating with Brodie was the fact that, given a choice, the big chimp always went with the same thing every time—Wu's House of Larb.

"No!" Ilsa put her foot down right away. "We just ate at the Wu's on Nordic Prime," she said, laughing at the remembered writhing penis on the joint's billboard.

"And it was great, right?!" Brodie asked.

"Well, it was very good, I must admit," Ilsa admitted.

"Need I say more?" Brodie asked.

"Just because a place is good, doesn't mean..." she reasoned, only to be cut off by both the Captain and Dave with almost simultaneous "NO!"s.

Crestfallen, Brodie put his hands in his coat pockets and sulked. "Okay then, where do all the rest of you want to eat?" Brodie asked as he fished a handful of pistachios from a pocket.

"Well, let's get off of this slidewalk and see if we can get our bearings, *ja*?" Captain Fyyg said, stepping off the moving sidewalk with Ilsa still arm in arm. Then Dave jumped. Then Brodie hopped off the mechanized sidewalk.

"All right then," Captain Fyyg said, patting Ilsa's arm. "Look!" he said.

Within their immediate vicinity alone there was a Galaxy Pizza behind them and a Monster's Mongolian Beef directly across from them. Two doors from the pizza joint was a kiosk called Taste of Mexico, selling hot pretzels and churros. Three more doors down was The Thai House, a Thai restaurant. Next to that was another kiosk called Thai Palace, selling Larb and Spring Rolls. On the next floor across sat Cleveland's Real BBQ, selling BBQ in many different forms (including the popular mix with spaghetti). Next to them was Chicago's Old World Dogs and Spirits, a restaurant with the Windy City's best. In a kiosk next door with a sign reading Jamaican was a Caribbean stew place. A few doors down from them was The Glazed Hole, a Donut and Beer stand, and at the end of the corridor, where it turned off towards the right, sat an old Olde Earth Diner (where there were no robots, ever), a very small joint called Cajun Place, and finally, two small food carts, one with a sign

reading Gyros, the other reading Yakitori.

As they all looked around, stunned at the choices in just this small bit of the place, Captain Fyyg asked "So where do we go?"

"All I know is I want a hot pretzel. Beyond that I don't care." said Dave as he looked behind him at the Taste of Mexico kiosk. Dave, who also spoke Spanish, attempted to speak to the employees, only to discover no one at the kiosk spoke it.

A few minutes later, munching a pretzel and holding another in reserve, Dave asked "So where do we go?"

With the ball firmly dropped in the others' court, the decision fell to Fyyg and Ilsa, since Brodie would automatically vote for Wu's.

Taking the lift up a level, the gang soon settled in at Chicago's Old World Dogs and Spirits; with drinks all round. The restaurant was a cathedral to excess, with large eight-inch-thick beams overhead and rows of sturdy tables made of the same wood, ten meters long, jutting out from both side walls. A wide lane ran down the middle, patrolled by servers, both human and robot, armed with pitchers in an effort to keep the customers' cups full at all times. The place featured several dozen different dogs, as well as chili and cheese fries, deep dish pizza, and a willingness to happily add cheese (or even double cheese) to any order.

After an enormous and elaborately fixed dog, some fries and several beers each, it was time to go.

Of course, once ready to go, the others were set waiting for ten or fifteen more minutes for the endless pit that was Brodie to gnaw through three more dogs, the rest of the table's fries and two more beers, before he ordered a wedge of Fried Cheesecake on a Stick.

As Dave and the Captain read a large, wall-mounted map and discussed the best way to get down to the planet, Ilsa begged the giant chimp for a bite of his cheesecake.

"Oh fuck that!" he said, shooing her away with a large hand. "You were there. You know you could've bought one of your own at any time." The ape protested.

Hugging the big ape, she looked deeply into his

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brown eyes with hers and the big chump felt as if a charge had passed between them. Then she smiled sweetly.

"HmMMM." he mulled, "Okay, you can have a bite, but just a little one..." he answered, hesitantly passing the sharp-featured little woman the treat. Ilsa, never one to pass up free food had somehow mauled the treat with a single, massive bite; turning Brodie's Cheesecake on a Stick into some mangy-looking bit of something on a stick.

"Uh, no thanks," Brodie offered, "you can finish it off."

Hugging the ape close, raven-haired Ilsa thanked him again after taking the last bite and tossing the stick into a nearby trashbin.

"It kind of reminds me of Ras Malai, a sweet my mother makes during Diwali, back home," she smiled.

"Home. And just where do you call home, doll?" Brodie asked, taking in her striking features.

"Calcutta on Olde Earth is my home, proper. But I haven't been there in years."

"And what's this 'Diwali' anyhow?" He asked.

"A Celebration of Good over Evil, which falls, I think, on Day 284 this year..." she started.

"Oh, Good over Evil is fine by me." Brodie said, concluding he didn't really need to hear all the particulars as he took a sip from a mug he'd brought out of the restaurant with him.

After a thorough study of the convenient yet highly-confusing giant wall map, it was decided that in order to reach Heimdall proper, they'd have to get on the Grav train, which was handily identified on the map by a wide yellow line. The train came down, at least two kilometers straight down the inside starboard wall of the finger they were in; stopping a hundred meters or so from their current location before heading down for at least another twelve or fifteen kilometers before getting lost in the haze down near the arboretum.

The gang got to the turnstyle not too far from the front of the line and waited. When the train stopped and passengers disembarking stepped from the gravity holding them to the starboard wall's

down, to the gravity of the deck's down, things looked peculiar.

With many seats empty, Captain Fyyg and Ilsa took the odd steps from deck to wall and sat in their seats. Brodie had a bit of trouble with his drink as he made the transition, but soon they'd all made the adjustment to the Grav train's orientation, and down was now the starboard wall beneath them.

A few minutes passed and the Grav train tore noiselessly down the length of the finger; passing through ring after ring of mercantile sprawl and warehouses mixed with housing areas. They quickly entered the deep green of the steamy forest habitat, then slowing, came to a large, wooden landing where the yellow line finally terminated inside a huge, ancient-looking pagoda.

As Dave and the Captain looked at the confusing artwork that was the large map outside the grav train station, they heard a familiar voice not too far behind them. Sitting in a red Adirondack chair a few meters back was Tam, spectacles on as she read through an Audubon book, *The Birds of Olde Earth (pocket edition)*. Finishing with a drink order to a serverbot, she turned her attention to her crewmates.

She sprung to her feet suddenly, giving the rigid, double-stomp salute she'd learned as a kid, greaves clacking.

"Sir!" she barked, freezing until answered by the Captain's very casual salute.

"And just what brings you here, Miss Murnisagli?" Fyyg asked.

"I saw this big green area on the map." she waved at the greenness all around them with both hands. "I wondered what it was, and rode on out on the Yellow Line, same as you, darlin."

"And?" Ilsa asked.

Tam cocked her head to the side slightly and listened. "Birds, baby, birds!" she whispered, smiling. "Been so long since I heard me a real, honest to goodness Earth bird!...Now I'm not saying they're all from Olde Earth here, but a lot of them are." She smiled wider, smoothly taking the Long Island Iced Tea from the serverbot and tossing half a handful of jingly Fen onto the thing's serving tray as a tip.

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“So where we headin’ off to, hon’?” Tam asked as she sipped her drink and gave Ilsa’s arm a squeeze like she was a 12 year old at her first sleep over.

On the map a narrow green line separated the yellow line from the Landing Field.

After several kilometers of hiking, the *Waffles* crew found the green gave way to industrial sprawl buzzing with airborne activity. The place was whirling chaos, with vehicles and small craft of all size and types landing, taking off, or in flight, with all jockeying for position, no apparent rhyme or reason to their traveling.

Fyyg tried hailing a cab, but his existence at one of obviously many clearly-marked taxi stands wasn’t acknowledged and the mad rush continued to whirl about them.

Then Brodie stepped to the taxi stand and putting thumb and index finger to his teeth, let loose with a high-pitched squeal of a whistle which, to Tam, almost made it seem as if time had stopped.

Dropping neatly to the stand with safety lights blinking to inform any ground traffic of a landing, as if on cue, was one of those old, heavy, powerful, streamlined, classic-looking Archers with the bulbous fenders and suicide doors, the kind you always see on the Tri-V.

The driver hit a switch and the door kicked opened; the *Waffles’* group pouring inside.

“Right! And where are we headed to, this glorious day?” the shaggy, raspy-voiced fellow asked from around a toothpick. With the manipulation of a button on the dash, the door closed quietly and the cab took slowly to the air.

“Well, I suppose The Showroom.” Captain Fyyg told the driver, as he looked close at the hack license on a clear glassteel partition a few centimeters opposite.

“The Showroom it is then.” the scruffy driver in the Hawaiian shirt answered. Then he asked, “Will you be wanting to go there direct, or by shuttle?”

“I had thought you could drop us at a shuttle pad. But if you’re telling me you can get us to the

surface directly, why, I’m all for that!” the Captain decided.

“It is, in fact, quite doable, Master.” the cabbie answered, “But fast and direct costs.”

“And what sort of fee is it that we are dancing around, Herr Fugatti?” the Captain asked, remembering the driver’s name from the license.

“For strangers, rubes, and chumps, it’s three thousand credits. But for friends who take the time to read my name off my hack plate, there, it’s only two thousand,” Fugatti replied.

“But that’s for one of us through the door.” said Brodie. “How much extra are we looking at?”

Fugatti rapped on the door of his cab, saying over his shoulder, “It’s all listed right here on the door, plain as mayonnaise if you’d looked. But okay, as we’re airborne I’ll summarize before we really get started: Each additional passenger is two hundred creds. You need to put anything in the trunk, that’s another hundred.” said the beady-eyed Fugatti.

Brodie quickly added the numbers. “Twenty eight hundred credits.”

“Definitely doable, Herr Fugatti,” Fyyg said.

As if a racer given a signal, the fierce, old Archer took off like a rocket; muscling its way among the hectic flow of traffic; taking unscheduled lane changes and bypasses with studied familiarity, though the passengers would be hard pressed to see any sort of order in the melee.

Then the cab had made it through the swarm and Ilsa was thrilled to be alive. The cab did a few quick maneuvers, and suddenly the machine was cruising through what appeared to be back alleys, closed galleries, and even tight maintenance access tunnels. Everyone seemed nervous with the combination of the tight quarters and the speeds being traveled, until at last the ancient cab broke out into the velvety blackness of space; busy Heimdall turning below.

“Now, a shuttle is a fine way to travel, but it’s gonna land you kilometers from your destination. And it’s slow,” the cabbie said, looking over his shoulder at his passengers. With a push of another button the glassteel partition that separated operator from passengers receded. “My cab here,” he

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Raconteurs' Rest

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motioned to the surroundings, “can set you on the bloody front steps of The Showroom!”

“Now, straightline travel ’twixt here and the ground should take around four hours at three thousand creds. If I push the pedal here, I can get you there in two hours, if you think that sufficient,” the hack said, “But two hours demands a lot out of the old Archer here...”

Captain Fyyg interrupted, “Would ten thousand Credits total handle all eventualities?”

Setting the cab on auto pilot, Fugatti reached into a cooler on the seat next to him and passed back several bottles of tonic water to whoever

wanted one; keeping the one and only bottle of Dhali Lama for himself.

The remainder of the trip passed uneventfully as everyone chatted. When the big Archer pierced the cloud cover, Fugatti flashed the cab’s warning blinkers briefly as he descended, landing just as he said he would, right on the steps of the massive building.

As the others headed inside, Brodie decided to stay out on the steps, sitting and watching the people and vehicles move about as he sipped his water. Watching the old Archer rise and eventually vanish out of sight, Brodie decided, “Man, that’s one swell ride. I’ve gotta get me one of those!”

In A Store Near You

The Showroom

Racing Chariot (TL1)

designed by Ewan Quibell

CraftID: Racing Chariot, TL1, Cr 141.25
Hull: 1/1, Disp=0.25, Conf=4USL Open, Armour=1W,
Unloaded=0.176 tons, Loaded=1.02 tons
Power: External=0.00298 Mw
Loco: 1/2, Simple Wheels×2, P/W=2.92, Road=20kph*, Off-
froad=3kph*
Comm: -
Sensors: -
Off: Hardpoints=1
Def: -
Control: Direct
Accom: Crew=1 (Driver)
Other: Cargo=0.83 Klitres*, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=None
Comment: not intended for cargo; designed to run at full gallop
(Road=56kph; Offroad=16.6kph) for extended periods.

This TL1 wooden, livestock drawn, racing chariot can be found on almost any low tech planet. The hull is 10cm thick wood in an open configuration with 50% of the vehicle open to the rear and top allowing the driver to step into the chariot from the rear and control the animals over some considerable protection at the front. The driver uses direct controls to the livestock, reins, while standing. There is no brake or any accommodation for cargo. Theoretically, the platform where the driver stands could conceivably carry cargo; however, it is not intended to.



The suspension and transmission are an integral part of the vehicle but with very little heed to comfort. The chariot is designed to be raced around a hippodrome, and is constructed purely for this purpose. Hippodromes have very good surfaces that allow the vehicle to be pulled at full gallop (56kps) for extended periods of time.

The chariot is drawn by 4 animals; in the above case the external power source was calculated using the standard Terran horse thus producing 4hp. The livestock are arranged line abreast each with direct reins thus needing considerable skill from the driver to control them proficiently.

Locating Jump Gates

by Richard Page

Mongoose *Traveller* uses a fairly arbitrary and relative system to determine where planets are in a system, relative to each other and the system's sun. This works fairly well when you use the standard gravitic drives and are prepared to 'hand wave' away the exact distances travelled – giving a rough idea of how long it will take to get from point A to point B is enough. However, when you use reaction drives in the *Babylon 5* setting, it can become critical – making sure you have enough fuel and time to get from point A, through a Jump Gate, and to point B in another system can be tricky to work out when you have no other points of reference. Hopefully, this article will help to sort out a few of those points of reference.

Jump Gate Positions

Jump Gates are large structures consisting of three, four (most common), or five, ten-km-long vortex arrays arranged around a central point where they generate a hole or gate connecting normal space with hyperspace. The vortex arrays are not connected to each other, so rely on small station-keeping thrusters to maintain their alignment. Because of this, they are always found at Lagrange points oriented on a single planet within a system, where they can maintain their position and orientation with the minimum of effort. Similarly, because of their size, they need a Lagrange point that is large enough to accommodate the whole structure – this is why they are never constructed at Lagrange points oriented on small planets or moons.

Lagrange points are five points around a planet or moon where the gravitational forces of the sun and other planets in that system roughly cancel out, meaning that anything in those positions will orbit around the sun but will stay (more or less) in the same spot, without being pulled into the sun or another planet. They are normally identified as "L1" through "L5". The relative locations of the Lagrange points are shown in the diagram to the right.

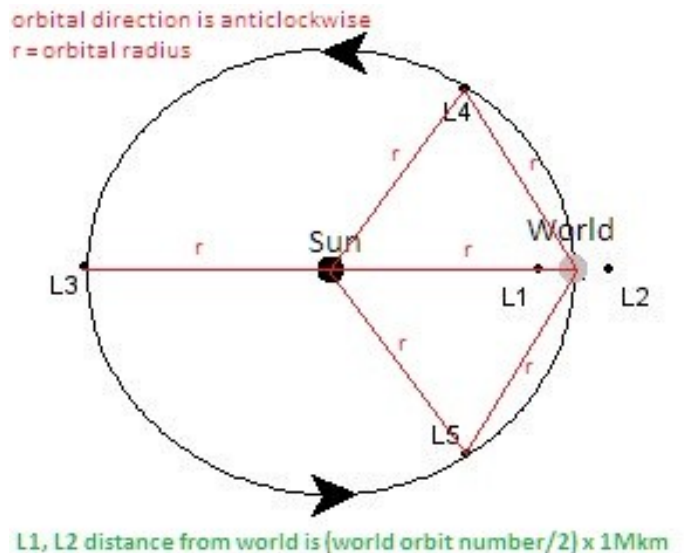
All of the jump gates in the explored galaxy fall into two main types: those built by the original gate-builders, which are between 6,000 and 10,000

years old; and those built by the younger races, which are less than 1,000 years old (about when the Minbari discovered hyperspace travel and the gate system). The original, older gates are found in many systems and are located at any of the Lagrange points, but all usually around a planet in the outer zone – leading many scholars to believe that they were built primarily as a means for the builders to explore the galaxy.

Of the gates built by the younger races, those in the race's home world system are often located in the outer zone for security reasons, as it gives any defences several days to prepare for an invasion (indeed, when Earth finally gained jump gate technology it shut down the Centauri-built gate in Earth orbit and built a new one near Jupiter). Gates built by the younger races in colony systems are often built around one of the planets in the habitable zone, where ships going to and from the inhabited planets will have less distance to travel.

L3 jump gates are rare and are usually older gates built in uninhabited systems. The younger races prefer not to build gates at this point as they are too far away from any inhabited planets and, if in the same orbit as an inhabited world, have the star between the planet and the gate – from a security point of view, this gives hostile ships a big advantage.

L4/L5 jump gates are quite common, and are usually older gates, although due to the nature of these points, occasional asteroids or dust clouds are found nearby. Many of the younger races prefer



Doing It My Way

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this position when building a gate in a colony system as it is reasonably close to the planet, but far enough away to give warning if hostile ships come through.

L1/L2 points are fairly common in inhabited colony systems as they provide a fast transit from the jump gate to the planet, which maximises the potential for trade in the region.

Most planets will have at least one, if not several, space stations in orbit around the nearest planet to the jump gate – as transfer points between ships coming from hyperspace and ships coming up from the planet or other planets in the system. Some planets even have space stations in retrograde orbits (i.e., opposite to the normal rotation of the planet) so that the station remains facing the jump gate at all times (such as the Babylon 5 station). These space stations can be quite exotic, being a meeting (and trading) place for the local race and aliens from all over the explored galaxy.

Planet Locations

First, use the rules on pg 92-93 of *Book 3: Scouts* to determine the numbers and positions of your planets in a system. Once you have done that, work out the distances of the orbits from the systems sun – to do that, use the (extremely arbitrary) system here:

Inner Zone planets all have orbits roughly 0.25 AU apart (so the first planet would be 0.25 AU from the sun, the second 0.5 and so on).

Habitable Zone planets all have orbits roughly 0.5 AU away from the Inner Zone planets and each other (if there aren't any Inner Zone planets in your system, assume that the first planet orbits 0.5 AU from the sun and work out from there).

Outer Zone planets start 1d3 AU from the Habitable Zone planets, and then double each orbital distance after that.

Example: having worked out a system on the *Scouts* system, we end up with 9 planetary orbits: 2 Inner Zone planets, 2 Habitable Zone planets and 5 Outer Zone planets:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|----|----|
| Orbit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| * | I | I | H | H | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 0.25 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 2.5 | 5 | 10 | 20 | 40 |

For simplification, I round the Astronomical Unit (AU) measurement to 150 million km.

Determine Jump Gate Location

Once you have worked out the planets and their orbits it's time to find out where the jump gate actually is and how far away it is. Roll 1d6 on the Focal Planet table to find out which planet the gate is oriented on:

Having done this, roll another d6 to find out in what position the gate is in:


| Focal Planet | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Roll | Type of Planet |
| 1 | Inner Zone |
| 2 | Non-Mainworld Habitable Zone |
| 3 | Mainworld |
| 4 | Mainworld |
| 5 | Non-Mainworld Habitable Zone |
| 6 or more | Outer Zone |
| DM +1 if major system; DM +2 if racial Home system (not cumulative) | |

From this, you can work out the distances from the gate to the planet that it is oriented on:

| Gate Location | |
|---------------|--|
| Roll | Lagrange Point |
| 1 | Roll 1d6: 1-3, L1; 4-6, L2 |
| 2-3 | L4 |
| 4-5 | L5 |
| 6 | Roll 1d6: 1-3, Choose; 4-5: L3; 6: Choose, and place a second gate on a different focal planet.. |

The distinction between L1/L2 or L4/L5 is only important if the GM wishes to use that info to flesh out additional details.

| Gate Distance | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lag. Pt. | Distance |
| L1, L2 | Orbit Number/2 × 1 million km |
| L3 | 2 x Orbital Radius in millions of km |
| L4, L5 | Orbital Radius in millions of km |

For our example system, L1/L2 are 1.5 million km, L3 is 300 million km, and L4/L5 are 150 million km from the world. 

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 Drive-ThruRPG). 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 Sceptune 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 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”.

