Featured Articles

Crimson Folly

by Sam Swindell

Contents

From the Editor

This is our second 'double issue' this year. We hadn't originally planned it this way, but sometimes Events happen, and throw serious kinks into our plans. This time, the Event went by the name of Sandy. We were about ready to go to press when the storm hit, and the net connection at our editorial offices—where we do all the important stuff—went down, except intermittently, when we were seeing very high data loss. That meant that there was no way in hell we could manage a successful upload. Since we couldn't get an estimate of service restoration, we decided to combine the November and December issues, and not worry too much unless it took too long to restore service.

TravellerCon/USA this year… wasn't. Sadly, between the date change and the state of the economy, the organizers couldn't get enough pre-registrations, and had to cancel. We're looking forward to the 2013 TravellerCon/USA, and hope you can join us there.

While the *Traveller5* Kickstarter was an amazing success, the same can't be said for the Terra/Sol *Six Guns: Lasers* Kickstarter. This was the one that prompted last issue's call for the community to provide feedback not just to Terra/Sol, but to *all* of the publishers regarding what you want to see in *Traveller*'s future. We'll reiterate that call here, and hope that the failure of the Kickstarter doesn't discourage one of the best third-party *Traveller* publishers from continuing to build on their past work. ✦

The Third Imperium—Alien Module 5: Solomani

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

The Third Imperium—Alien Module 5: Solomani. David L. Pulver
Mongoose Publishing. http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
180pp, hardbound
US$39.99/UK£29.99

Mongoose has been on a humans-as-aliens kick, with this Alien Module being the third that focuses on a human society.

On the Shelf

As with the other Alien Modules to date, *Solomani* sports the embossed-steel Third Imperium masthead at the top and red *Traveller*-and-arrow logo at the bottom, surrounding a full-width art panel which for this volume depicts three people on a desert world with a war-damaged city and several spacecraft in the background.

Initial Impressions

The book is reasonably organized, starting with Solomani character generation for those who want to get right into playing (and likely have some knowledge of the Solomani from material from previous versions of *Traveller*). After the character generation material, background material on the Solomani, including an entire sector and some adventure ideas, is presented, for those who have never previously encountered the Solomani and for those who need a refresher.

On Closer Inspection

The inclusion of Solomani Party and SolSec (Solomani Security) careers is predictable and necessary; these two careers and the parts of Solomani society that they represent are very much part of what makes the Solomani different from the Imperium. The inclusion of a revised Navy career is, perhaps, surprising - but it's necessary given that the Confederation Navy also subsumes duties that in the Imperium would be handled by the Scout Service.
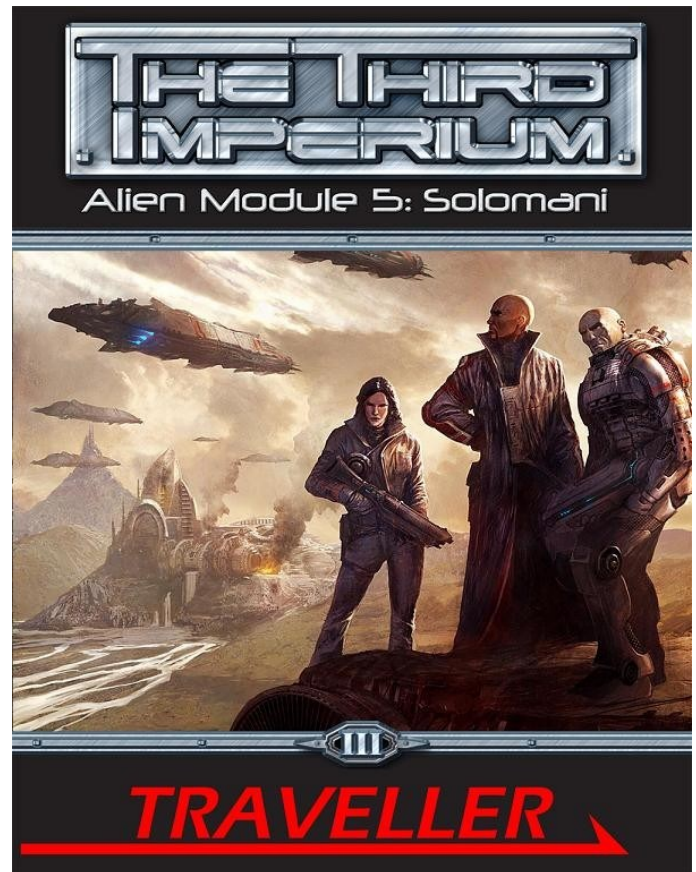
An additional surprise is the inclusion of careers for uplifted dolphins. There has been little if any previous material regarding uplifted animals as characters - an omission that should be addressed even beyond this volume, as it offers potentially interesting opportunities for role-players who 'get into character'. Uplifted dolphins are known in the Imperium as well as in the Confederation; it stands to reason that the long association with humans would lead to similar recognition of the delphine advantages in aquatic environments.

The deliberate designation of the Home Guard as a non-career rings slightly false to this reviewer's American sensibilities; without going into detail, even an 'all-volunteer' organization needs a professional core to keep it running smoothly, and to provide the training that the part-timers need. Additionally, there is material here that suggests that the Home Guard also subsumes duties that are handled in the US by the Coast Guard, and the USCG is definitely a valid career choice in American society. Granting that the Solomani aren't

"Yanks in Space" (but see below), a Home Guard career option would still not have been a bad idea.

Many people complain about *Traveller* in general - that is, "Imperial" *Traveller*, mostly in the Spinward Marches—being played as "Yanks in Space", and to a great extent that's a valid complaint. However, that thread runs much more strongly through Solomani society as written by Mr Pulver, with strong admixtures of both fascist totalitarianism (in the ubiquity and purpose of the Party and SolSec) and apartheid-era South African Anglo/Boer attitudes on race, transplanted to be Solomani-vs-non-Solomani racism rather than white-vs-nonwhite. The overall portrayal ends up not being entirely sympathetic, but neither is it entirely hostile, and provides a good basis for good role-playing of Solomani characters, either as protagonist or antagonist.

Following the career material is a well-written description of overall Solomani society. This includes fairly detailed discussion of the structure of the Confederation government, of the Solomani Party, of the Confederation Armed Forces, and of SolSec. The discussion of the Confederation Armed Forces expands on the descriptive material included in the career section, and includes the Marines, Army, and Home Guard. Much briefer overviews of the economy and Confederation law are included. A one-page overview of each of Terra and Home are included; the Terra overview includes a world map in the standard *Traveller* unfolded-icosahedron format. The section on Home lacks such a map; I'd have preferred it to be the other way around, since there are plenty of maps of Terra available that one could adapt for use in a *Traveller* campaign.

The overview of the Confederation government and society is followed by an extensive history section. This information is mostly repeated from earlier versions of *Traveller*, but that shouldn't be taken as criticism, as the repetition isn't verba-

tim and is necessary for players and referees to understand the Solomani in context. As with the rest of the book, it's well-written.

The history section is followed by a section on Solomani equipment and technology. For the most part, Imperial and Solomani designs are stated to be different only cosmetically; it should be noted that Solomani equipment (max TL 14, common TL 12-14) is generally one or two TLs behind Imperial equipment (max TL 15, common TL 12-15). Designs for three versions of Solomani battle dress are included, one for SolSec urban use, one for delphine use, and one for Solomani Army jump troops. Capsule descriptions of additional delphine equipment follow. Several grav vehicles are statted out as well, ranging from limousines to APCs and Tanks. Finally, a page on biotech discusses Solomani attitudes toward augments, but does not present any specific augments or other biotech.

The section on Solomani spacecraft starts with two pages of discussion of Solomani social attitudes toward space travel. It is noteworthy that the institutionalized racism in Solomani society does have an effect on the availability of passages to Confederation nationals who are not racially-pure Solomani. Implicit in that discussion is the suggestion that Low passage is perhaps more commonly used in the Confederation, and the Low Lottery is more popular in Solomani space (at least among pure Solomani) than it is in Imperial space. Several Solomani starship designs are included, with stat blocks, deck plans, profile views, and perspective drawings.

A section of encounters starts with tables for various Solomani encounters and reactions, followed by a series of specific encounters expanded into adventure seeds such as appear in *Freelance Traveller*'s "Getting Off the Ground" section. These encounters cover a wide spectrum of adventure types, offering opportunities for many types of characters.

Critics' Corner

A section on the worlds of the Solomani Confederation starts with an explanation of how various types of government are compatible with the Confederation requirement that the Party be the governing entity. Explanations of differences in base placement, travel codes, and the lack of starport extraterritoriality lines give the Confederation stellar landscape a slightly different flavor from the Imperium. There is also an overview of the different regions/sectors of the Confederation and Confederation foreign policy.

In previous versions of *Traveller*, the sector focussed on has been the Solomani Rim, containing Terra (under Imperial occupation). Mongoose has broken with that tradition, providing world profiles and stellar data for Alpha Crucis sector instead (Solomani Rim sector is still provided, as a separate supplement).

The final short chapter presents ideas on role-playing Solomani, presenting Solomani as NPCs, and campaign types that are suitable for Solomani characters. The presentation is superficial at best, but a good referee can develop the ideas further.

Conclusion

If you play *Traveller* in the official Third Imperium setting, there is no question that this volume is a worthwhile addition to your collection. It's less useful if you don't play in that setting, but can still provide a useful outline for a culture to integrate into your own campaign.   ✪

Doing It My Way

Travelling Light: A *Risus* Conversion for *Traveller*

by S. John Ross with Christopher Thrash

Risus is a complete Role Playing Game (RPG) designed to provide an "RPG Lite" for those nights when the brain is too tired for exacting detail. *Risus* is especially valuable to GMs assembling a quick convention game, or any late-night beer-and-pretzels outing. While it is essentially a Universal Comedy System, it works just as well for serious play (if you insist!). Best of all, a *Risus* character takes about two minutes to create!

Character Creation

Characters are defined by Cliché (sometimes several of them). Clichés are a shorthand which describe what a character knows how to do. The "character classes" of the Neolithic Period of RPGs were Cliché: Fighter and Magic-User, Space Marine and Star Merchant. You can take a Cliché like that, or choose a more contemporary one, such as Biker, Spy, Computer Nerd, Supermodel, or William Shatner (formerly an actor—now just a Cliché). Which Clichés are permitted are up to the GM.

Clichés are defined in terms of Dice (by which we mean the ordinary six-sided kind). This is the number of dice that you roll whenever your skill as a Fighter, Supermodel, or William Shatner (for instance) is challenged. See "Game System", below. Three dice is professional. Six dice is mastery. One die is a putz.

Characters are created by naming and describing them, and listing their Clichés. When designing your character, you have 10 dice with which to define his Clichés (a Normal Schmoe would be built on anywhere from 3 to 5 dice). A straightforward 'Star Viking' character might look like this:

Grolfnar Vainsson the Swordworlder

Description: Tall, blond, and grinning. Likes to drink and fight and drink and chase blonde women and fight and rove among the stars and raid. Wants to write great sagas about himself.

Clichés: Armsman (4), Soldier (2), Rogue (3), Poet (1)

A character may have any number or combination of Clichés, but more than 10 different Clichés would be odd, considering the number of dice you get. Characters shouldn't begin their career with more than 4 dice in anything, but *Traveller* characters (other than Psionics) are rarely beginners, however, so the maximum of six dice is available.

Sample Clichés

Following are some examples of Clichés and actions that they might be good at:

Agent/Investigator (Sneaking, spying, being paranoid, resisting torture)

Armsman (Shooting people, blowing things up, patrolling, intimidation)

Barbarian (Killing people with pointy objects, drinking, riding animals)

Belter (Prospecting, mining, being alone, not puking in zero-G)

Bureaucrat (Paperwork, boring repetitive tasks, avoiding responsibility)

Colonist (Eking out a precarious existence, being attacked by alien creatures)

Cop (Enforcing law and order, catching criminals, eating donuts)

Corporate (Making a ton of money at all costs, flagrant careerism, dressing well)

Dilettante (Having lots of money, throwing wild parties, sleeping it off)

Diplomat (Persuading other people to do things your way, and like it)

Engineer (Fixing starships, performing miracles, speaking with an accent)

Entertainer (Dancing, juggling, telling jokes, doing it *your* way)

Gunner (Blowing things away at long ranges using very big weapons)

Hunter (Following tracks, training animals, living off the land)

Jack-of-All-Trades (Just about anything, but *always* Inappropriate, *q.v.*)

Journalist (Uncovering the facts, slanting them for publication)

Marine (Boarding actions, assault from orbit, snappy cutlass salutes)

Medic/Doctor (Patching up your less fortunate teammates, buying drugs)

Merchant (Finding sellers, buying low, finding buyers, selling high)

Pilot (Dogfighting, not blacking out at high-Gs, bragging)

Pirate (Preying on unarmed merchants, fencing goods, running away)

Robot (Following orders, boring repetitive tasks, feeling no pain)

Rogue (Conning people out of their money, stealing things, evading cops)

Sailor (Sailing, not getting seasick, painting bulkheads)

Scientist (Discovering Things Man Was Not Meant to Know, publishing them)

Scout (Exploration and survey, drinking Scout Brew, not following orders)

Spacer (Crewing starships, wearing vaccsuits, painting bulkheads)

Technician (Fixing everything except starships, breaking and entering)

Thug/Tough Guy (Beating people up, speaking with an accent, intimidation)

These are just examples to get you started - players should feel free to make up their own Clichés (subject to GM approval). In particular, note that the GM will require the "fine tuning" of any Cliché that he considers too broad. If the game is about Merchants (for example), then "Merchant" becomes too all-encompassing for the game, and Clichés like Broker, Ship's Captain, Cargomaster, and Smuggler are more the order of the day.

The Game System

Whenever anybody wants to do something, *and* nobody is actively trying to stop him, *and* the GM doesn't think that success would be automatic, the player rolls dice. If the total rolled beats the

Target Number that the GM sets, success! If not, failure!

Target numbers follow this scale:

5: **Simple**. A snap. A challenge for a novice. Routine for a pro.

10: **Routine**. A challenge for a Professional.

15: **Difficult**. An Heroic challenge. Really inventive or tricky stunts.

20: **Formidable**. A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.

30: **Impossible**. You've *got* to be kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.

Proper Tools

Every character is assumed to be equipped with the Tools of His Trade (at least the portable ones). Military types own field gear and good (civilian) weapons. Belters have vaccsuits, radscanners, laser drills, and claim beacons. Jacks-of-all-Trades have Swiss Army knives. Dilettantes have expensive speeders and funny designer clothes.

If, through the course of an adventure, a character *loses* any of these vital totems, his Cliché operates on half the normal number of dice (or not at all, if the GM rules that the equipment was *required*) until they are replaced.

A Barbarian(5), for instance, can fight without his sword as a Barbarian(3), but a Scientist can't analyze a sample without his lab. If the Scientist manages to find another lab to play with besides the kind he's used to, he can operate at half-dice.

Some special tools (high-tech artifacts, military ironmongery, and so on) may give bonus dice to your Clichés when used. Characters never begin the game with bonus-dice gear; they must be acquired in adventures.

Whether or not a Starship is a "Proper Tool", and for what Clichés, is entirely up to the GM.

The Combat System

"Combat" in this game is defined as any contest in which opponents jockey for position, utilize attacks, bring defenses to bear, and try to wear down their foes to achieve victory. Either literally or metaphorically! Some examples of combat include:

Actual physical combat: People trying to injure or kill each other.

Arguments: People using whatever verbal weapons they have at hand to make their points. Truth is the first casualty.

Bargaining: People trying to convince one another that the deal of the century is right before their eyes, if they would only see.

Courtroom antics: Prosecution vs. Defense. The goal is victory. Justice is incidental.

Dogfights: People in airplanes or spaceships flying around and trying to blow each other out of the sky.

Dueling banjos: Musicians using strange melodies and trying to outdo one another.

Dueling: Opponents square off with archaic weapons to decide questions of honor.

Seduction attempts: One (or more) characters trying to score with one (or more) other character(s) who is(are) trying to resist.

Trade war: Rival corporations (actually, their regional management teams) attempt to force trade concessions by any means, fair or foul.

The GM decides when a combat has begun. At that point, go around the table in rounds, and let each player make an attack in turn. What constitutes an "attack" depends on the sort of combat, but it should *always* be role-played (if dialogue is involved) or described in entertaining detail (if it's physical and/or dangerous).

Attacks require rolls against character Clichés. The GM must, at the outset of combat, determine what *type* of Clichés are appropriate for the fight. In a physical fight, Clichés like Armsman, Gunner, Hunter and Soldier are appropriate. Clichés like Bureaucrat and Dilettante are not (but may still be used; see next section).

An attack must be directed at a foe. Both parties in the attack (attacker and defender) roll against their chosen Clichés. Low roll loses. Specifically, the low roller loses one of his Cliché dice

for the remainder of the fight—he's been weakened, worn down, or otherwise pushed one step towards defeat. In future rounds, he'll be rolling lower numbers.

Eventually, one side will be left standing, and another will be left without dice. At this point, the winners usually decide the fate of the losers. In a physical fight or duel, the losers might be killed (or mercifully spared). In Courtroom Antics, the loser gets sentenced by the judge, or fails to prosecute. In Bargaining, the loser gets taken to the cleaners.

You needn't use the same Cliché every round (unless you're part of a team; see below). If a Barbarian/Scout wants to lop heads one round, and swing on chandeliers the next, that's groovy, too. However, anytime a character has a Cliché worn down to zero dice in combat, he has lost, even if he has other appropriate Clichés left to play with.

Dice lost in combat are regained when the combat ends, at a "healing" rate determined by the GM. If the combat was in vehicles (space fighters, battlesuits, grav tanks) then the vehicles themselves are likely damaged, too, and must be repaired.

Inappropriate Clichés

As stated above, the GM determines what sort of Clichés are appropriate for any given combat. An Inappriopriate Cliché is anything that's left. In a physical fight, Bureaucrat is inappropriate. In a Psionics duel, Armsman is inappropriate.

Inappropriate Clichés may be used to make attacks, *provided the player role-plays or describes it in a really, **really**, **really** entertaining manner*. Furthermore, the "attack" must be plausible within the context of the combat, and the genre and tone that the GM has set for the game. This option is more valuable in silly games than in dead-serious ones.

Jack-of-All-Trades is a special Cliché; it is possible to use it in *any* type of combat, but it is *always* Inappropriate, and its use must be carefully (and entertainingly) described.

All combat rules apply normally, with one exception: If an inappropriate Cliché wins a combat round versus an appropriate one, the "appropriate" player loses *three* dice, rather than one, from his Cliché. The "inappropriate" player takes no such risk, and loses only the normal one die if he loses the round.

Thus, a recalcitrant Bureaucrat is dangerous when cornered and attacked unfairly. Beware.

When in doubt, assume that the aggressor determines the type of combat. If a Hunter attacks a Barbarian with his rifle, then it's Gun Combat! If the Barbarian attacks the Hunter with his sword, then it's Melee Combat! If the defender can come up with an entertaining use of his skills, then he'll have the edge. It pays in many genres to be the defender!

Note: If the Hunter and Barbarian both obviously want to fight, then both are aggressors, and it's "Physical Combat", where swords and firearms have equal footing.

Teaming Up

Two or more characters may decide to form a team in combat. For the duration of the team (usually the entire combat), they fight as a single unit, and are attacked as a single foe. They roll a number of dice defined by the most powerful Cliché in the team (the "Team Leader"—a title that must be designated if there is a tie), plus one die for each team member beyond the first.

Clichés being added together need not be identical, but they all must be equally appropriate or inappropriate. This means five Marines could band together in physical fight with no problem. It also means that a Bureaucrat, an Entertainer, and a Dilettante could team up in a physical fight if they have a *really* good description of how they'll use their skills in concert to take out the Marines!

Whenever a team loses a round of combat, the team's dice-value is reduced by one (or three!) normally. In addition to this, one team member's dice are reduced, as well! Any team member may "step forward" and voluntarily take this personal

"damage" to his dice. If this happens, the noble volunteer is reduced by twice the normal amount (either two dice or six!), and the team gets to roll twice as many dice on their next attack, a temporary boost as they avenge their heroic comrade. If no volunteer steps forward, then each member of the team must roll against the Cliché they're currently using in the team: Low-roll takes the hit, and there is no "vengeance" bonus.

Disbanding: A team may voluntarily disband at any time between die-rolls. This reduces the Cliché each team-member was using in the team by one, instantly (not a permanent reduction—treat it just like "damage" taken from losing a round of combat). Disbanded team-members may freely form new teams, provided the disbanding "damage" doesn't take them out of the fight. Individuals may also "drop out" of a team, but this reduces them to zero dice immediately as they scamper for the rear. Their fates rest on the mercy of whoever wins the fight!

Lost Members: If any member of the team leaves the team for any reason (either dropping out or having his personal dice reduced to zero), the team's value is instantly reduced by one die to account for the loss. If the team leader ever leaves the team for any reason, the team's value is not affected: rather, they must disband immediately (or after their next attack, if the team leader was taken to zero by volunteering for personal damage!).

Conflicts That Aren't Combat

Many conflicts that arise in the game cannot be defined as "combat"; they're over too quickly, defined by a single action. A classic pistol-duel isn't combat—the two duelists simply turn and fire, and then it's all over. Two characters diving to grab the same gun from the floor isn't combat. Two cooks preparing chili for a cookoff isn't combat; there's no "wearing down of the foe" and no jockeying for position. Such "single-action conflicts" are settled with a single roll against appropriate Clichés (or inappropriate Clichés, with good role-playing). High roll wins.

When Somebody Can't Participate

It will often occur that characters will find themselves involved in a Combat or quicker conflict where they simply have no applicable Clichés, even by stretching the imagination. Or maybe *one* character will have an appropriate Cliché (or Jack-of-All-Trades), while the others feel left out. An example might be a pie-eating contest. One character was wise (or foolish) enough to take "Disgusting Glutton(2)" as a Cliché. The other characters are Diplomats or Corporates, neither of which traditionally engorge themselves on pie.

In situations like this, give everybody two free dice to play with, for the duration of the conflict. This *includes* characters who already have appropriate Clichés (or Jack-of-All-Trades). In the example above, the Diplomats and Corporates would get Pie-Eating(2), while the Disgusting Glutton would be temporarily increased to Disgusting Glutton(4), and the Scout with Jack-of-All-Trades (1) would get Jack-of-All-Trades(3) (which is still Inappropriate, and must be described). The Glutton, naturally, still has the winning edge, but anyone can *try* to eat lots of pie. This "temporary promotion" applies only in opposed conflicts, not in challenges based on Target Numbers.

A Word Or Two About Scale

No standard time or distance scale is provided for *Risus*; it really depends on what kind of action is happening. However, the GM should endeavor to stay consistent within a single conflict. In a physical fight, each round should represent a few seconds, and characters should act accordingly. In a long-term trade war between rival Corporates, each round might represent an entire Month (Month one: Corporate X's "pirates" destroy assets belonging to Corporate Y; Month two: Corporate Y's adventurers uncover evidence linking Corporate X to "pirates"; and so on until one side drops

from exhaustion or the affair becomes Unprofitable).

Character Advancement

At the end of each adventure, each player should roll against one Cliché that was used significantly during the game (player's choice) using their current number of dice. If the dice land showing only even numbers, this indicates an increase by one die for that Cliché. Thus, advancement slows down as you go. No Cliché may go higher than Cliché 6), although if Pumping is allowed (see below), they can be pumped past (6).

Anytime you do something really, really, really spectacularly entertaining that wows the whole table, the GM may rule that you may roll instantly (in the middle of the game!) for possible improvement, in addition to the roll at the end of the adventure.

Adding New Clichés: There may come a time when a character has grown and matured enough to justify adding an entirely new Cliché to his character sheet. If the player and GM agree this is the case, and agree on what the new Cliché is, the player rolls for Character Advancement as usual, but any of the new dice earned may be put toward the new Cliché instead of the ones that earned them. This can also be applied to "in-game" improvements, if the situation warrants it!

Hooks and Tales

Normally, a character is created using 10 dice. Players can bargain for extra beginning dice by giving their character a **Hook** and/or a **Tale**.

A **Hook** is some significant character flaw—an obsession, a weakness, a sworn vow, a permanently crippling injury—that the GM agrees is so juicy that he can use it to make the characters life more interesting (which usually means less pleasant). A character with a Hook gets one extra die to play with.

Playing an Alien is a Hook in a mostly-Human campaign, so long as the "alienness" significantly restricts the character compared to others in the campaign. Playing a Human in a mostly-Alien campaign can have the same effect.

Psionics in *Traveller* are **required** to take some kind of Hook, such as Secret, Outlaw, Traitor, or Sociopath.

A Tale is a written "biography" of the character describing his life before the events of the game begin. The Tale needn't be long (two or three pages is usually just fine); it just needs to tell the reader where the character is coming from, what he likes and dislikes, how he became who he is, what his motives are. Some Tales are best written from the player's omniscient perspective; others are more fun if written as excerpts from the character's own diary. A character with a Tale provided before gameplay begins gets an extra die to play with.

Pumping Clichés

In an emergency, any character may pump his Clichés. If the Hunter(3) comes face to face with a Monster(6), it might be necessary.

When a Cliché is pumped, it received a temporary boost in dice. This boost lasts for a single round of combat, or a single significant roll otherwise. However, after that round or roll is resolved, the character loses a number of dice equal to the number he gave himself in the pump. This is treated like "injury" to the Clichés sustained in combat, and must "heal" in the same fashion.

Example: Rudolph the Hunter has come face to face with a Monster, who attacks him. Rudy doesn't have much of a chance against such a powerful foe, so he opts for a tricky tactic: Since the Monster has attacked physically, Rudolph decides his first round will use his skill as a Cajun Chef(3)—a decidedly Inappropriate choice! He also opts to pump it by two dice up to five. He's *really* putting his all into his cooking for this fight.

So, the first round happens. The Monster rolls six dice, and the Hunter (quickly whipping up a tempting Gumbo spiked with tranquilizers and offering it to the monster) rolls five dice.

If the Hunter loses, then he is instantly defeated. His Cajun Chef Cliché drops by two to Cajun Chef(1) just for the pump, plus another die for losing the round. The Monster decides to eat Rudolph instead of the Gumbo.

If the Hunter *wins*, however, the Monster(6) is dropped to Monster(3), and his Cajun Chef(3) drops to Cajun Chef(1). In the rounds that follow, Rudolph will switch back to ordinary Hunter tactics—and be on equal footing with the sleepy Monster!

A risky maneuver, but worth it.

Pumped Clichés are legal in any situation except single-action conflicts.

Double-Pumps

Characters may be created with double-pump Clichés. These Clichés, when pumped, give you *two* dice in the pumped roll for every die you'll lose at the end of it. Thus, a Psionic[5] could be a Psionic[11] for a single combat round, at a cost of three dice. This option is *required* for Psionic abilities and Noble status (which are too universally powerful to be treated normally). It is also appropriate for any other Clichés the GM approves.

Double-pump Clichés cost twice as many starting dice to buy. Thus, the following would be a legal starting character:

Sinzibrlozhiepr the Zhodani

Description: Thin, spindly and mysterious, with a tired beaker on his shoulder. Likes to poke around where Man Ought Not, discover secrets unobserved, and the like. Likes the woods.

Clichés: ESPer [3], Scientist (2), Hunter (2)

The [square brackets] indicate a double-pump Cliché. Since it costs double, Sinzibrlozhiepr is effectively a 10-dice character.

Each Psionic ability—Telepath, Clairvoyant (or ESPer), Telekinetic, Teleport, Aware, each Special—is a *separate* Cliché, and must be bought separately. Most characters should start with a maximum of one (double pumped) die in any Psionic ability.

Noble titles are awarded on the basis of the *initial* number of dice. Subsequent increases from experience improve the Noble's ability to make use of their title and influence, but higher titles are only granted by the GM under extraordinary circumstances. Titles corresponding to initial dice are:

Noble [1]   Knight
Noble [2]   Baron
Noble [3]   Marquis
Noble [4]   Count
Noble [5]   Duke

Overall, double-pump dice are less useful than ordinary dice at the beginning, but since they improve at the same rate as ordinary dice, they are a good "investment." ✿

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.

About *The Burrowwolf*

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

Victoria Glider-Wolf

by Scott and Sarah Diamond

Victoria Glider-Wolf
Carnivore Chaser 50kg
Teeth 2D6+2
Claws 2D6
Hit point = 12/6
Armor = mesh

The glider-wolf of Victoria was discovered and cataloged by Lady Victoria Challenger of the Imperial Scout Service while surveying the Fijord Subsector. They are pack animals living in extended family groups with an Alpha male/female bonded (for life) pair leading the group. Commonly two pups are born to a pair and are cared for by the entire pack for the year it takes them to reach maturity.

Glider-wolves live on a relatively low-gravity world (0.7G Earth standard) with an unusually dense atmosphere for such a small world,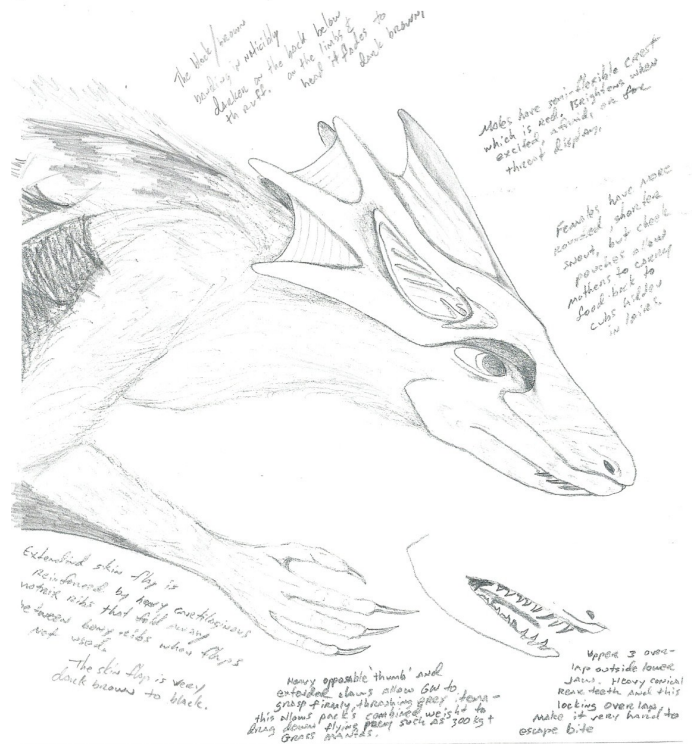 just above Terra-standard. A large number of the animals who live here can either actually fly, or glide short distances to try to escape from predators or catch prey. The glider-wolves are among the latter.

The wolves have a long streamlined build, relatively light for a predator. Their front paws have 3 long fingers with semi-retractable claws and a semi-opposable thumb. They are not tool users, but domesticated ones can manipulate specially-designed tools. They learn quickly and have an intelligence equivalent to a 5-6 year old human child. They are quite social animals and are easily domesticated if adopted when young. Lady Victoria trained hers to handle communications equipment and activate the turret weapons in her scout ship.

They are brownish grey in color with black lateral banding covering their upper side, shading to light tan on the belly. A semi-rigid cuticle "helmet"-like structure with four fin-like flat extensions extends over the back of the neck and appears to help the animal steer in its short flights. It also helps the animal by protecting its neck and head from the larger flyer predators. In males this structure has red marbling through it that brightens when the animal is excited or angry.

When chasing prey the animal will run and then just before catching up to the prey item will leap into the air and extend a flap of skin connected from its front legs to the rear ones and along its sides. Several extensible ribs attached to a low ridge along the top of the spine and give the flap some rigidity. This allows the wolf to come down on top of the prey with its full weight and cling to its back for the kill. Since several wolves will do this at once they can bring down even low flying gliders like the Grass Mantas that graze over the flatlands. The front claws extend to their full razor-sharp length (5cm) when the animal spreads out its claws for the attack.

The wolves have a tough hide and thick, though sleek fur that provides excellent protection from predator and prey bites and claws. The wolf also exudes a slightly musky (though not unpleasant) oil which makes the animal slightly slippery to hang on to, so they can be tough to catch and hold long enough to hurt in a fight. The long, sleek body with its highly flexible build, long round tail, and long head with the laid-back large ears all

combine to give it an appearance akin to a wolf/weasel mix.

Though diurnal, glider-wolves have large, bright eyes with light gathering adaptations to enable them to see extremely well in the dark. The adaptations also give them the long distance visual ability and clarity they need to help them survive in on the wide hilly expanses of the mountain lakes regions of Victoria where there is little cover other than rocky shelves and the tall grasses. Glider-wolves on the hunt will often stand up on their hind legs to see over the grasses, which can reach up to 1.2 meters in height, and some pack members will do so while the rest are sleeping in order to protect the pack from attacks by Grass Mantas cruising for prey.

The packs have an average of 8-12 members at any given time, including young. An Alpha animal will lead the pack but their social construct is looser than that of the usual Earth models. Males and females alike will compete for Alpha status, but as males have the heavier bodies only they will participate during hunts. Since they form life-long mated pairs, a pair-bonded Alpha unit will lead the pack together—the male hunting and the female organizing the pack, and when one of the pair dies the other may lead alone. How Alpha status is transferred is not fully understood but it appears to be conferred by some mutual agreement among the pack members. Some ritualized dominance behavior has been reported but it is unclear if this is play or actual dominance behavior. The current theory is that the wolves have some type of low-range sub vocalization to cooperate within the pack. Researchers who have studied the wolves in the field for a long time have reported that the wolves make few sounds when interacting during a hunt, and show an unusually high degree of cooperation without any audible vocalizations. Cooperation between several packs has been observed when the wet season brings out large numbers of Grass Mantas. Unlike terrestrial wolves, glider-wolf pack territories overlap, though the actual social mechanism for inter-pack cooperation is unknown at this time.

What vocalizations there are make for a short list and are, with the sole exception of the alarm howl, specifically social comfort sounds. When greeting each other glider-wolves make a loud "yawp-yawp" sound, typically when the pack reunites after a hunt or after having scattered on the defense. Pair-bonded mates and females caring for the pack's pups will make soft clicking sounds deep in their throats as a greeting and comfort sound. Pack members on watch for threats to the pack in order to sound the alarm for the others who may be scattered across the sloping hills will make a surprisingly loud, long piercing howl. The howl is also used when hunting Grass Mantas to coordinate the pack when changing hunt strategies. It is not used for hunting other prey.

The glider-wolves live among the highland lakes on the major continent of Victoria in temperate-to-alpine climate zones. The lakes form near the edges of cliff sides and have waterfall drop offs that can be over 100 meters tall. Rivers and wetlands that drain the rolling hills of the region during the spring and mild summer interconnect the lakes. During the heavy rainfall of the winter Grass Mantas are most active and both the glider-wolves and mantas hunt each other during this time. During the dry seasons the mantas are less plentiful and only come out of the lakes for far shorter times since they are more vulnerable then, so the wolves mainly prey on the burgeoning Tick-Tock herds at that time and have their pups.

The hunting strategy depends on the prey item: for ground animals like Tick-Tocks (so named because the small ungulates make a "tick-tock" sounds as comfort noises when hidden and grazing in the tall grasses) are surrounded by pack members who slip low and silently through the grasses, but no flight is used. The flying abilities of the wolves are reserved solely for escape and

avoidance, and the hunting of, the fearsome Grass Mantas that fly out of the lakes in search of food.

Typically the hunting of the Grass Manta is as follows: the pack splits into two halves and the members crouch low among the grasses along a steep slope. Rocky shelves pepper the hills and some young members of the pack – pups of about 8-10 months, will play around and under one of these when a manta is spotted flying out from a lake's cliff side waterfall. The manta will fly upslope of the pups to gain speed when it dives down to snatch one up and carry it to the lake to feed. The adult wolves will position themselves perpendicular to the down slope, one pack higher up the slope from the other and with the pups in between the two groups. When the manta swoops low to attack the pups, the pups scatter to the shelter of the rocky overhangs and the manta flies past the first group of wolves. This group sounds the howling hunting call and accelerates towards the rocky overhang.

As they accelerate, the wolves' bodies release adrenals that shift their metabolisms into chase mode and allow them to accelerate from a dead stop to 75kph in just a few seconds – a speed which they can maintain for up to a 200m distance before slowing to a 30kph lope. As the wolves head for the rocky shelf, their bodies also use a cartilaginous banding along the spine to help their acceleration and flight: the adrenal surge com-

bined with the increased flexing that running provides triggers this banding to stiffen like a steel spring. This mechanism is analogous to the Earth Cheetah: the stiff spine acts as a spring to builds and releases extra energy during the high-speed dash, but unlike the Cheetah's it only does this during the chase. Once at the edge of the rocky shell the wolves dive into the open air and expand their ribs and wings to glide down towards the grass manta. Using the ground effect principle that enables sports enthusiast to glide down mountains wearing wingsuits, the wolves close on the manta.

The second, downslope part of the pack accelerates as the manta approaches and times its dive off the shelf it had positioned itself near in a maneuver timed to put its members parallel with the manta. Now both groups will attack the manta by landing on its wings and body, using their long claws and locked teeth to anchor their bodies to the slippery manta. The combined weight and drag of the wolves causes it to crash into the grasses, where the wolves tear it apart to feed. The lead male of the hunt howls to call the rest of the pack in to feast off the kill, which is shared first among the hunters and pups, then among the rest of the pack.

Glider-wolves have not shown themselves to be dangerous to humans studying them, or camping near their territory. They have been known to silently enter and investigate the campsites of researchers in the night when everyone is asleep, which can be disconcerting to someone who has to get up in the night to use the latrine. A very few of the animals have been kept and trained by Scouts to act as companions and it is reported that the wolves seem a lot smarter than most think, almost enough so that Lady Victoria lobbied for them to be declared as semi-sentient.   ✿
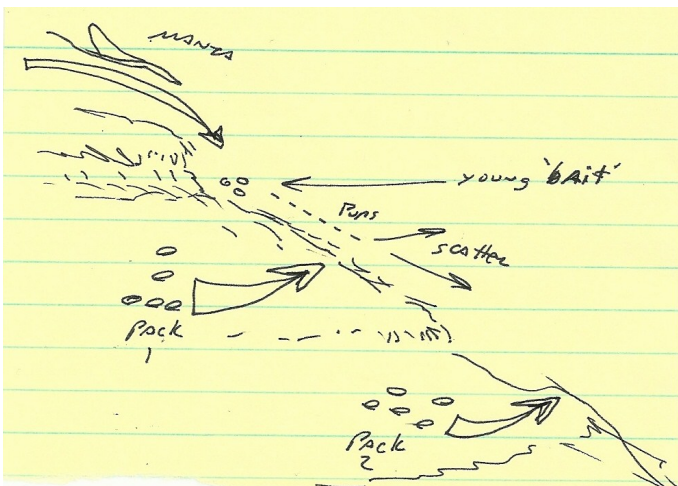
Kelly B'Wa and 'Gerbil' Goodepaster

profiled by Sam Swindell

Kelly B'Wa 4B2CE7 7 Terms Age 46 Cr61,000
Merchant Captain, Owner of Free Trader *Crimson Folly*
Navigation-3, Electronic-3, Medical-2, Jack-o-T-2, Pilot-1, Vacc Suit-1, Gunnery-1, Dagger-1, Pistol-0
Free Trader, Dagger, Body Pistol

Kelly is a short, attractive woman with jet-black hair cut short. She wears her jet black hair cut short, and dresses in surplus IISS coveralls, with ship patches on both shoulders for the *Crimson Folly*, the Free Trader she has acquired. Over 28 years, she has worked her way up to ownership of the *Folly*, taking her lumps along the way. She is glad to finally have something of her own to show for her efforts, and will do what she can to keep the *Folly* flying, with her on board and in charge. When speaking of the *Folly*, her face lights up, and one might believe her to be about to giggle. Clearly, she loves her *Folly*, and considers it her pride and joy.

When the PCs encounter her, however, she will look badly stressed, with a pinched look and deep bags under her eyes. She walks or sits hunched in on herself, smokes furtively, and is on a few different medications for stress. A few minutes conversation will reveal that death, thievery, and incompetence have brought her to the point where she has an un-crewed ship, and no means to make next month's payment (which is due in 3 weeks).

Kelly has no family to speak of. Her mother passed away on Ruie almost a decade ago, and her older brother never survived his first term in the Scouts. Despite a generally crestfallen look, Kelly is sharp as a tack; from an enlisted cargo hand, she worked her way up, often with the benefit of correspondence courses, through all the ranks to Captain. In fact, she has a graduate degree in Astrogation, though that never translated into any commercial opportunity; the practicalities always fell towards taking care of the ship she was on, and the Free Traders rarely used navigators let alone paid extra for one. She still makes it a habit, however, to always personally lay in the best course for the *Folly*.

Kelly tries to melt away from any physical violence, but she is not squeamish. She carries her dagger in a boot sheath, and her body pistol in a discreet torso rig; both essentially disappear in the folds of the coveralls she wears. In the few times that Kelly has resorted to deadly force to get out of scrapes, it has been without warning or attendant drama, and therefore as a complete surprise. Kelly feels that is how death comes out in the black, and sometimes one must quietly help it choose another subject.

'Gerbil' Goodepaster 5A6A35 7 Terms Age 46 Cr7,000
Merchant 2nd Officer
Mechanical-4, Dagger-2, Electronic-1, Snub Pistol-1, Gunnery-1, Medical-1
Dagger, Snub Pistol

'Gerbil' was the medic, gunner and general Mr. Fix-it on the *Crimson Folly* for several years, until his addiction to Yixter got the best of him. He absconded with Cr 178,540, and has spent almost all of it on his habit. Gerbil is aggressive and verbally abusive, virtually shrieking his demands, and threatening to have the authorities lock everyone up. When first seen, he will be in the manic phase that follows awakening from a Yixter coma. Gerbil has been consistently using Yixter for 3 months. He will, if given any opportunity, commit sabotage or other acts designed to distract or cause confusion, and in the resulting chaos, he will attempt to locate and steal cash or salable valuables to feed his Yixter habit. He wears the dagger like a short sword, his snub pistol in a shoulder rig, and is clothed in an extensive pink muumuu-like robe. ✦

Crimson Folly

by Sam Swindell

Patron: Merchant Captain Kelly B'Wa
No. of Players: 3-6
Required Equipment: Capital
Required Skills: None

Players' Information

The Offer: Kelly B'Wa approaches the party looking to sell shares in a speculative trading venture to raise capital. Up to Cr 450,000 will be taken in, with the investors owning 90% of the profits after expenses. She is putting in Cr 50,000, plus the use of the ship; the investors will retain no rights over the ship once they "cash out." The terms are that this is to be a commercial, non-military trading venture. While she is only due 10% of the profits, the one owner's prerogative Kelly would retain is the right to cash anyone out for their share, as soon as that exceeds 300% of their investment. Those on working passages add their salary to their payout once they cash out.

The Ship: The *Crimson Folly* has 4 years paid off on the standard purchase note, discounted 20% for her being an 8 year old repossession when Kelly bought her. She is 12 years old, painted bright red with lavender striping and highlights; the paint is faded, but not badly so. She is a sound ship, well looked-after. The *Folly* is set up for middle passengers only, and there are two turrets: a triple missile and a dual beam laser. Kelly's stateroom is converted to a sick bay, with just a few of her things in a locker; she sleeps in an upper bunk that folds up out of the way, with the lower one used for patients. She has a small desk in the corner of the crew's commons which functions as her office.

Referee's Information

The *Folly* has one month until an annual overhaul is due. There are no reloads for the HE missiles in the turret. The ship's locker is stocked only to what Imperial regulations specify, plus three shotguns and 12 magazines of slugs for them. Ad-

ditionally, there are an extra thirty person-weeks of life support laid in.

If potential investors inquire too closely into the ownership of the *Folly*, Kelly will answer evasively, claiming legitimate possession, and showing that the ship is up-to-date on the note, with payments having been made on time. Anyone with Legal-1+ or Admin-3+ will suspect that Kelly does not hold the *Folly* outright, even subject to the purchase note. The reality is that she only owns a one-third share of the *Folly*. One third is owned by "Gerbil," the gunner who fled emptying the safe 2 months ago, and the last by the deceased engineer. At this point, it is extremely unlikely that anyone who could assert these interests will show up. It is a secret that Kelly will guard closely, though, for risk that it will somehow get the *Folly* entangled in some legal morass. Under the contract, if the venture is going well enough, however, any seizure of the ship might not be fatal to the business; Kelly is required to provide transport for the cargo and members of the business, after expenses are deducted for fuel, maintenance and miscellaneous expenses. The partnership could pay for these things commercially, with Kelly owing for any additional expenses.

This is intended as an intro into a basic trading campaign. The players do not have to have Cr450,000 for the deal to fly. NPCs may make up the difference, and provide wonderful chrome, useful skills, and fodder for various encounters. The following options may be added at the referee's discretion:

1. Gerbil, the missing felonious owner shows up, with a copy of a will deeding him the deceased engineer's share. The will—and the ship—must be taken to Class A or B starport where the Imperial authorities will put a probate lien on the ship. The lien would restrict the movement of the ship to worlds with Class C or better starports, and would additionally require the ship to file a Notice of Intent to Travel indicating the specific origin and destination of the move-

Active Measures

ment, at least two weeks in advance of that movement (one week if the origin world is an X-Boat node). The will must be probated at a world 2D parsecs away, straight-line distance. Gerbil can be "bought out" for 2D×Cr20,000. A player with any medical skill can roll 10+ to spot that Gerbil is addicted to Yixter, DM+2 for each level of Medical. Gerbil only has 1D+5 days of his normal fix with him, at his current rate of 3 doses a day. Gerbil states to the party that he has made a claim to Imperial law enforcement of being forcibly evicted from his share of the *Folly*. In fact, he has made no such claim (and if pursued, the claim would fail on investigation), though he presents a copy of the complaint form. If the will is to be probated, pick a world with Law Level 5+ to be the destination world.

2. As above, except the will is a forgery. Roll 9+ to identify it as such, DM+2 for every level of Forgery, DM+1 for every level of Admin over 1, or DM+1 for every level of legal. Each character may check, but only use one DM (DMs are *not* cumulative).

3. An underworld type offers to sell Kelly Gerbil's whereabouts for Cr75,000; he is in a locked-down government rehab facility on a world 2 parsecs away, of law level 5+.

4. As 3, but the information is false—Gerbil's location is unknown.

5. An underworld type threatens to tip off local pirates as to the *Folly*'s destination and cargo if not paid off, for Cr 10,000×(2D-Bribery skill).

6. As 5, only the underworld type is an undercover agent who will arrest anyone trying to bribe him for "material support to piracy." Roll 10+, DM+Streetwise skill, to spot that this a trap.   ✪

☀ In A Store Near You

Yixter

by Sam Swindell

Yixter is a physically-addictive drug with narcotic, hallucinogenic, and stimulant properties. Onset after dosing is 2D4+2 minutes, at which time the user falls into a coma lasting 1D4-2 hours (minimum 1 hour), during which s/he will experience elaborate and realistic dreams, which seem to last for weeks. Upon awakening, it is difficult for the user to determine that some of the dreams are false. A manic period follows awakening, lasting for 1D6-2 hours (minimum 1 hour); consistent long-term users will experience the manic phase for 1D4+2 hours, and it will include psychotic episodes which become more intense and of longer duration with continued use. Permanent hospitalization for the psychosis will be required on 8+, subtract the END DM, and add DM +1 for each END (not END DM) doses ever taken. The 'street' price for Yixter varies based on the availability of the pre-

cursors, but is typically around Cr500 per dose. The 'hard-core' addict will use 2-3 doses per day, or as much as can be afforded (whichever is less). The dealer in Yixter typically pays one-third to one-half of the 'street' price. Yixter requires production apparatus at TL 12; such apparatus can be manufactured by anyone (or two) with plans, Mechanical-2, and Electronic-2 using Cr 1,000 worth of parts, taking about 100 man-hours in a well-appointed machine shop. Completed apparatus (400kg and 1kl) or plans can't be purchased openly, but may be commissioned on the black market for delivery in 1D6 weeks for Cr80,000 on 8+, subtract (world law level–4, minimum 0). With an adequate supply of precursors, 1,000 to 6,000 doses of Yixter can be manufactured per week. The precursors are available at TL 10+, for Cr25 per dose, in batches of 1,000 doses or more. Tracking of apparatus components (clandestinely) and precursor chemicals occurs on separate rolls of 8+ on any world of TL 10+ and law level 5+, DM law level–5.✪

Outer Veil

reviewed by "kafka"

Outer Veil. Omer Golan-Joel with Richard Hazlewood
Spica Publishing. http://spicapublishing.co.uk
154pp
US$24.99

This review originally appeared on RPG.Net in December 2011, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Allow me, first and foremost, to thank one of the writers/publisher (Omer Golan-Joel of Spica Publishing) for gifting a copy of this PDF for the purposes of this review. Thank you very much.

Outer Veil is a complete Alternative *Traveller* Universe completely removed from the Third Imperium, but uses many of the technological assumptions that mainstream *Traveller* does yet at a much lower tech level. As a result, you get a wonderfully crunchy Hard SF milieu to play *Traveller* in.

Outer Veil takes you back to the early days of *Traveller* and indeed much of Science Fiction of the 1970s and early 1980s where worlds were unknown dangers and one could not simply engage the warp drive and just run away. If danger and adventure need to be confronted, it must be done so on the spot without communication with any centralized authority. Because it is also at a lower tech level than mainstream *Traveller*, it retains the "shotguns in Space" feel of early *Traveller*. Also, while there are nods to the Space Opera genre such as the retention of Jump Drive (though the Tech Level essentially limits you to J-1) and gravitics, many of the Space Opera tropes are more plot devices than common technology. The whole feel of the milieu is that of gritty Hard SF. Worlds are not nice places with white picket fences and manicured gardens but dirty, hostile, balls of rock orbiting realistic stars. There is alien life but no sentient aliens, though it is clear from numerous alien ruins found on different planets that "We Are Not Alone"—but the nature of those aliens is a mystery and provides a great enigma. Careers are not soft
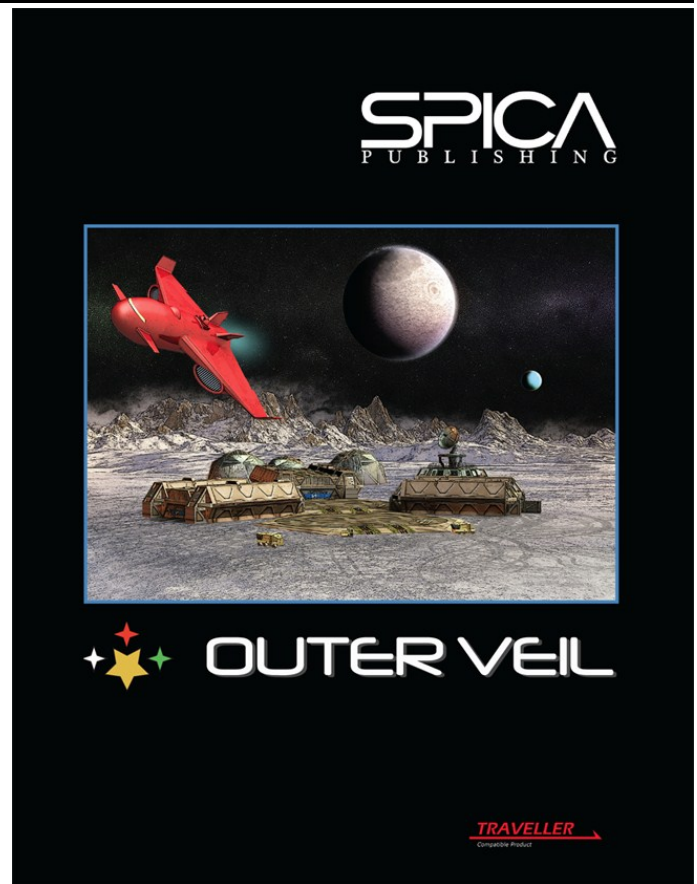
and comfortable save in the Core Worlds (though then one has to fend through a serpent's pit of politics) but rugged individuals who must cooperate or perish, as support is virtually non-existent thus allowing for great individual initiative. There is lots of room for traditional cultures to exist among the stars (albeit taking on new forms as they adapt to alien worlds) but also room for new cultures based upon rigors and tests that confront societies on the frontier. But make no mistake, this is not a Space Western dressed up differently; it is refinement of the best Science Fiction writings of the likes of Jack McDevitt or Alistair Reynolds with a dash of *Outcasts* or *Earth 2* thrown in.

The supplement unfolds organically with an extensive and believable history; particulars are deliberately left vague lest it fall into the trap of not reaching benchmark *x* in year *y*. Essentially, what is important that a breakthrough has occurred and the world of 2159AD is recognizable but also radically different than our own time. Earth's Solar System has long become a settled region where Space travel is commonplace, outside of the

Solar System the frontier more or less begins and beyond that lays the Outer Veil (the true frontier). Players may start in the frontier or the core worlds both are areas ripe with adventuring possibilities. Corporations and the private sector do most of the legwork for the exploration of space due to the possibility of unlimited resources to exploit thus giving very Alien feel to the milieu. This is not to say that there is not a central government of sorts—there is, in the form of Federated Nations of Humanity, as a sort of coordinated global mechanism that allows for enough things to get done and provide the bare minimum and then rely upon the private sector or philanthropic organizations to fill in the rest. What is nice is that the Core worlds are not high tech marvels where every want is sated but rather polluted, foul, dingy places where the frontier has real appeal (here I am reminded of *Blade Runner*). All-in-all, very believable and the writing in this section is superb and really shows that the author spent a lot of time to make it all internal consistent and coherent. The frontier is populated by very small populations essentially start-up colonies that can be prey or home to raiders, separatists, or worse dangers. They range from prefab structures to small arcologies in a hostile environment—even if relatively Earth-like (reminding you that you ain't in Kansas anymore).

Next comes a section on character creation and the recommended rule variations from the basic *Traveller* chargen to make characters more compatible with the *Outer Veil* milieu. The supplement also uses the Careers found in the Career Books put out by Spica Publishing which highlight some of the other careers that may not be found in the standard rules, thus, giving a richer texture to the choices that players may be. That said, there is a truncation of careers available for players to choose to reflect the smaller universe which is good but might have the reader ask about certain things. For instance, I was struck by the lack of ro-

bots, but then thinking of the overall milieu, robots (other than in the form of robotic assistance) really don't fit in. This is Hard SF at its best. Similarly, those accustomed to Space Opera games where players represent the best of the best might be disappointed. This takes *Traveller* back to its roots of ordinary people doing ordinary jobs that suddenly get called upon to do the extraordinary. Bravery, courage and honour as exemplary traits and turning a profit are all necessary.

Following is discussion of the thirteen starships (complete with deck plans) that are the workhorses of the milieu. Initially, this section needs more of a transition from the rest of the text; it takes a while to recognize how to play these starships—not as "push the button and go" starships, but as haulers and carriers of goods, services, and the military. Because of their truncated range, one is very quickly on the frontier and on your own thus requiring things like Cold Berths. This very much goes back to the old Classic *Traveller* of tramp traders doing most of the work; it's very much a small ship universe—which is good, as it makes the scale and magnitude of the frontier that much more believable. Related somewhat to the discussion of starships are the methods of belting (or recovery of value from rocks) most of the time rather than settling for manufactured goods (as the trade rules in regular *Traveller* are biased toward); in the Outer Veil, players are hauling raw materials and semi-finished goods. Very good rules are to be found here.

That discussion leads to a section entitled Astrography. This is a section that tells you of some of the worlds of this milieu, as they exist in 2159. The emphasis (as the astute reader will notice) is on 'some'. Most worlds remain unexplored or marginally explored. Some systems may not even possess worlds. All of this done with the aim of creating realistic worlds that has adventure built in. The recent invention of Jump-2 (only 13 years ago) means that the possibility for change in these worlds will come about slowly but dramati-

cally, akin to the way the introduction of the railroad in the American West or Russian East changed the social geography. Plenty of places will not be fully connected but change will happen nonetheless. In spite of the relatively slow speed of change, it shows how the geography presents the real essence of the frontier—there is lots of room on the map where 'dragons' may reside and civilization exists on a very thin tether or completely on its own. Great detail is paid to make these worlds' realistic, even adding extensions to the UWP that I wish other *Traveller* products would have.

Then we get to the 'Secret' Sections or, at least, guarded sections: Referee's Information. This is the section reserved for Game Masters that explain some of the major themes that run through *Outer Veil* and suggestions on how to run them and some things about the setting that are hinted at, along with sample Patrons (employers) and an adventure. As more products come out in this line, hopefully we will see more things developed for Referees exclusively, as what is suggested here is not going to 'spoil' things for the players (save the adventure). So those hunting for spoilers will have to wait. As a result, this section feels somewhat incomplete compared to the rich detail of the rest of the supplement. However, it is enough for any Referee worth their salt to take up the themes and start immediately in crafting adventures.

What was bad about this product? Not very much, save, it was a PDF and being bereft of an eBook reader – a chore to read. Sometimes, you got the feeling that you wanted more detail than what was presented in the text, and then you realize that feeling of wanting more is more a reflection of the excellent writing. It is engaging the reader, not spoon-feeding him/her, encouraging the reader to look for more depth. It would have been nice had there been a list of resources that inspired the author at the back of the text (I have already suggested SF of the 1970s and Hard SF), but those things

could possibly be found on the net with ease (http://www.hardsf.org/index.htm is a great place to get seeds). Also, it is not dated only in the 1970s, no more than *Traveller* is lodged in the SF of the 1950s. It just has the right level of grit sullying the chrome. That said, perhaps some more bells and whistles need to be added should it go dead tree/hard copy.

The art is computer art generated by Poser or similar program. Generally, this type of art annoys me but here it worked wonderfully, perhaps because it not overstated. As one can tell, the writing is marvelous in that it is crisp, well written, and engaging. I found myself wanting more and more – so I hope Spica Publishing is planning further support for this milieu. And, if they issue a revised (as I said, a little more bells and whistles) edition coming out in dead tree – I want it to be part of my precious *Traveller* collection.

This is an excellent product and deserves further support by *Traveller* fans who do not want to use the kind of soft Space Opera premise that sometimes exists in *Traveller*; it is clearly an Alternate *Traveller* Universe but still has some fuzzy feel-good things. This is a lower tech alternative that is more grounded in Hard SF (and in many ways like the early days of *Traveller* before the Imperial Campaign…before the Dark Times…wait a minute; I like the OTU), so players and referees looking for the 'hard and gritty' should certainly check this out. Conceivably, if one wants to mix and match the OTU with this ATU (as I have done), it can be done, but only with rewriting a good portion of *Traveller* history. The result will be satisfying, as Outer Veil does provide sufficient flexibility and areas where the dragons (or Vilani) may be hiding beyond the Outer Veil. However, I would encourage long time *Traveller* players to set aside the OTU for a few sessions to explore this fascinating milieu – it has many things that we hold dear about *Traveller* yet incorporates the new Hard SF conventions that some of us crave. �v

Economy Passage

By Jason Barnabas

Economy Passage is an alternative to Low Passage, eliminating the need for cryoberths in commercial ships. I do not see them eliminating cryoberths completely, as cryoberths do have advantages in some situations, such as preservation of the mortally ill or wounded during transport to competent medical attention.

Two well-known *Traveller* elements combine with some easily-designed custom equipment to create the Economy Passage: Fast Drug and Med Scanners already exist; the transfer bunk and the grav gurney are custom-designed.

Fast Drug

Fast Drug is described as a survival drug that slows the metabolism of the recipient, causing time to seem to speed up by a factor of 60:1, so for each minute of perceived time, an hour actually passes. Standard Fast Drug comes in pill form and a single dose lasts 60 days. Fast Drug is available at TL 9 and has a retail price of Cr200 per dose.

As Fast Drug is well-established in the milieu, there are no intrinsic dangers to the passenger from its use. Sleeping in a protected environment, monitored by machines, significantly reduces the physical dangers to one living at such a slow rate.

A technology not discussed in *Traveller* material to date, but available today in the 'real world', is Non-Invasive Drug Administration (NIDA). Most readers will be familiar with it in the form of the hypospray from *Star Trek*. At current technology levels, the apparatus is bulkier than depicted, but works on the same principle, and can be used to replace injection or intravenous administration. Here, rather than pill form with binders, fillers, and time-release agents, the drug is supplied in pure form, shipped as molecular powder, and dissolved or suspended in a liquid for administration as required. Because it is not pressed into pills it requires less processing by the pharmaceutical manufacturer, it is available in the *Traveller* milieu

in lots of 222/9 dose equivalents for a base cost of 4kCr which works out to 3Cr/day.

Med Scanners

Med Scanners				
TL	Compact		Regular	
	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr)
8	1.5	7500	11.25	30000
9	0.5	1500	3.75	6000
11	0.2	500	1.50	2000
13	0.1	250	0.75	1000

Med scanners come in two sizes, compact and regular. The compact med scanner can provide vital readings in a matter of seconds, record those readings, and be set to alert on certain conditions, for example if the breathing rate, blood pressure, heart rate, or blood glucose drops below or climbs above a particular range. They include a NIDA function and are capable of administering up to three different drugs. A compact med scanner is used with a single patient. The regular version can do what the compact one does, and can interface with and monitor a large number of compact scanners on a rotating basis. It also includes a complete expert system diagnosis computer, which allows individuals with limited medical skill to diagnose and treat illness and injury on an emergency basis.

Transfer Bunks

Transfer Bunks	
TL	Cost (Cr)
9	1,750
11	750
13	500

The accommodations for our economy passengers take the form of what I call a transfer bunk. In the design sequences for seats in *Fire, Fusion, and Steel*, the only difference between the first three types of seats is volume. I interpret this as providing flexibility for exact size. I therefore decide that the mass of a transfer bunk will be about 75kg including the med scanner, air circulation equipment, enclosures, a specialized low power computer, comm gear, and the magic fingers in the mattress to prevent bedsores. The

transfer bunk also contains a power source so that it can be disconnected from ship power and relocated to a ground facility if needed. The cost is Cr250 plus the cost of the med scanner. Add the mass for the passenger and baggage allowance and you have what you need.

The baggage allowance can be whatever you decide; perhaps 10kg like Low Passage. I allow up to 125kg for passenger and baggage for a total mass of a transfer bunk of 200kg. The volume for baggage stowage is included in the transfer bunk.

The computer interfaces with the med scanner and comm gear and can access the ship's computer to download (only) entertainments such as books, movies and music. The only output device is a "cloth" touch screen, typically mounted over the head of the bed which can produce flat images, low-res 3D, and sound.

Transfer bunks are typically 0.8m wide × 2m long and stacked four or more high (depending on deck heights). They are usually spaced 1m between the opening side and any obstructions at a minimum to allow for operational room. On ships with large Economy Passenger sections, the bunks can be placed on tracks so they can be slid from side to side to share the 1m between multiple racks of bunks.

Grav Gurney

Next, we need a gurney to move the economy passengers from where they go to sleep to the transfer bunk assigned to them for the voyage. If a starship has a sickbay then there is probably already a gurney onboard. If not, you can use my design or design one of your own.

Grav Gurneys			
TL	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr)	Lateral Thrust
9	91.216	11,726	8%
10	47.936	11,025	12%
12	28.821	10,528	16%

All grag gurneys are 70cm wide by 2m long with a height that varies with TL, and have 5kN of CG thrust, a portion of which can be used laterally as indicated in the table. The integrated electronics package includes a CM 1.00 CP 1.00 computer, gyrocompass, radar altimeter, transponder, voice activation system, follow-along radar, and inertial positioning.

Gurneys come with a set of preprogrammed commands for basic operations. Programming new commands only requires a basic computer task. Combining commands can allow more efficient operation, such as using 'find center of gravity' with 'follow tilt' to allow the operator to ride on the gurney with the patient at a faster rate than would be possible with a simple 'follow operator' command.

Costs

We need to account for life support usage during passage. If life support for a normal passenger or crewmember costs 2kCr per trip (2 weeks) then 24 minutes of life support would be 2.38Cr. Economy passengers are asleep with lowered metabolic rates and do not eat during passage. So reducing that to 2Cr/day would be reasonable. Add 3Cr/day for Fast Drug and the total upkeep for an economy passenger would be just 5Cr/day.

How much should Economy Passage cost? I use 1kCr per jump, just like Low Passage. A transfer bunk takes up much less room than a cryoberth, requires only normal life support (at very minimal levels), and the upkeep is less than half that of a cryoberth. Because Fast Drug puts the patient at less risk than cryoberthing, you could reasonably charge more for the added safety factor, if you choose.
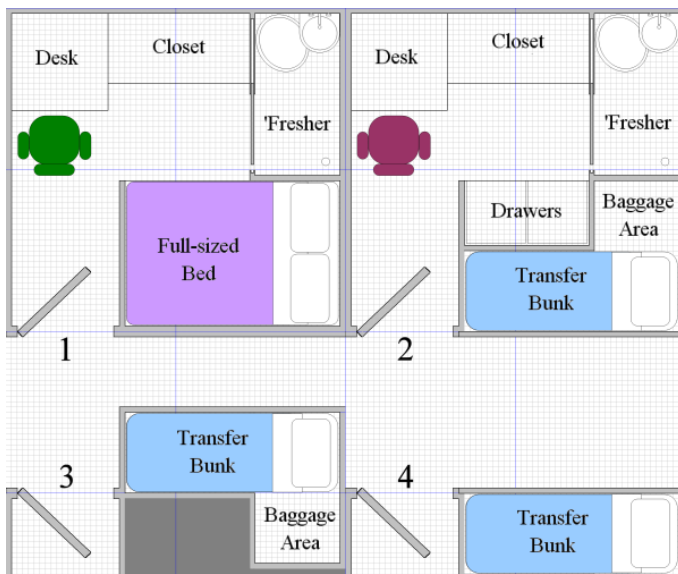
Tips and Tricks

Sleeper Under the Bed

You could add a transfer bunk for each stateroom without any added volume requirement if your staterooms have built-in beds on the same wall as the door. Consider the illustration on the following page: The four numbered doors open

into identical 3m × 3m staterooms. #1 shows the normal layout. #2 shows what is under the bed: two sets of 50cm × 55cm drawers, and a baggage area and bunk for an economy passenger to hibernate the trip away.

All you need is 60cm or so clearance beneath the bed. #3 shows the transfer bunk slid out into the passageway for access. This could be crew country or passenger territory.

The Fast Watch

Fast Watch could replace Frozen Watch. The Imperium could use a slightly different formula or dosing which gives a ratio of 61:1.

For a trooper a year of Fast Watch will seem like 24 days. Standing what feels like a 6-hour watch in battledress ready for action will actually be 15 days and 6 hours, which will be followed by 18 hours off-watch and off the drug. For each year of Fast Watch the actual age of the trooper will be 342 days less than the chronological age. It is important, of course, to determine how long it takes for the body to return to normal after drug administration stops—in case the trooper is actually needed for action.

Dose Timing

If a typical passenger sleeps 8 hours per night, that would translate to 20 days real time. Howev-

er, dosing could start several minutes before sleep begins. After all, how many people lay down and go right to sleep? If the dosing starts as soon as the bunk is closed and it takes them 24 minutes to fall asleep, that's an extra day.

As the computer provides entertainment, each hour the passenger lies awake is 2½ days ship time.

Administration of Fast Drug need not stop immediately upon the passenger waking. If Economy passengers are required to wait in their bunks until an attendant comes to let them out, a half-hour wait would not be too much of a problem for most and the extra 1.25 days could make a big difference in ship's operations.

Most soporifics put the user to sleep or keep them asleep but interfere with normal sleep patterns, which is why most doctors don't recommend using sleep aids for extended periods. However, if a soporific were used on an Economy passenger, it could be used to extend the normal sleep time, especially if the drug regimen were tailored to avoid interfering with a good night's sleep in any major way. Each additional hour of sleep for the passenger represents 2.5 days for the ship's crew.

You would probably want to board economy passengers the day before lift so they are sleeping when the other passengers embark. They could arrive in the evening after they have eaten and just before they are ready for sleep, or earlier to enjoy some entertainment before the trip starts (for them) at bed time.

Depending on how you choose to make things work, they could board several days early to enjoy themselves before Fast sleep starts and the ship's company could earn a few extra credits feeding and entertaining them.

Editor's note: Clearly, there's nothing stopping you from ruling that the Fast Drug time ratio is something other than 60:1 for Economy Passage. However, using that ratio, the Economy Passenger that sleeps under the influence of Fast Drug for eight days of 'ship time' will only experience a bit over three hours of 'personal time'. Proper timing of administration of Fast Drug after sleep begins may allow for more psychological comfort for the passenger on one-Jump trips.

Look Away Home

by Michael Brown

Patron: Parent
No. Players: 2-6
Required Equipment: None
Required Skills: None; Diplomacy may be useful.

Players' Information: A distraught mother approaches the party. Her daughter has disappeared along with a substantial portion of her mother's savings. All indications are that she has run away with her on-again, off-again lover. The mother will pay the group Cr5,000—all she has left—to find her daughter and bring her home.

Referee's Information: The mother has two clues as to the destination and intentions of her daughter: a receipt for a starliner ticket and travel brochures for a neighboring world.

Possible directions to take this scenario:

1. All is as represented. The daughter has decided to elope with her lover to a neighboring world. She will not willingly return home. Starport Security will come down hard on anyone creating a scene.

2. As 1, but the lover has no idea of the girl's plans. He thinks they're just taking a vacation.

3. As 1, except the pair are already aboard the liner, and it will depart within the hour. The referee should determine the chances for the PCs to get aboard regardless, especially if it is unstreamlined and therefore cannot land.

4. The lover is actually a con man, running an extended scam. He has been grooming the girl for over a year, scheming to get his hands on an inheritance he is convinced she has coming. Meanwhile, he's milked as much money out of her as he can and will abandon her at the next port.

5. The lover is actually a kidnapper. When he has the girl in the next port, he will imprison her and send a ransom note back to her mother.

6. As 5, except the "mother" is actually the would-be kidnapper, using the party to remove the girl's bodyguard, whom the kidnapper is falsely painting as the girl's lover. The bodyguard was hired to protect the daughter by her real mother, a successful businesswoman.

The referee should determine the flow of subsequent events. ✵

The Artemis Files: #1: Elysium

reviewed by Ravi ('ravells') Shankar

The Artemis Files: #1: Elysium. Bradley Warnes.
Original publication: 2012
Current availability: print (mmpb) and ebook

Traveller to the rescue! In his book, Warnes uses *Traveller* terms of art to deal with the problem of 'info-dump' (exposition which has the unwanted effect of stopping a story dead in its tracks) when describing far future gadgets. Characters are armed with gauss pistols and laser rifles. They fly grav cars to high ports where they board System Defence Boats and far traders which are powered by manoeuvre drives. For a reader not familiar with *Traveller*, the names of the items are sufficiently descriptive of their use. Better still, if the reader *has* played *Traveller*, he knows exactly what the item is. Warnes has not adopted *Traveller* terminology wholesale; starships 'transition' rather than 'jump' and (in this book at least – there are two more on the way) there are no air-rafts or exotic races. The use of some *Traveller* terms and a space opera genre are pretty much the only areas that the *Artemis Files* and *Traveller* have in common.

Warnes' books are not fiction set in a *Traveller* universe. There is no central Imperium-like power. In 'the Core' (which one assumes are star systems centred about Earth) various cultural extensions of

'Old Earth': British, French, Indian, Yankee and Deep South Americans battle against each other for power and influence. Beyond the core, in the 'Hinterlands' are thousands of independent colonies beyond the reach of the main political powers. It is in these Hinterlands that our Brittanic hero, Bren Montclare, merchant, rogue and contract mercenary plies the space-lanes in an ex-military starship, *Diana* (a princess of ships!), re-configured as a Free Trader and tricked out with a super-advanced onboard computer, courtesy of the Brittanic Empire, in return for which he is to deal with threats to Brittanic sovereignty as one of many ships comprising the eponymous 'Artemis' project. This is serious—so don't for a moment compare Bren Montclare to Captain Henderson of *HMS Camden Lock* in the TV comedy series *Hypderdive*. Bren Montclare is not out in the Hinterlands to persuade Aliens to move their starship manufacturing bases to an industrial estate in Milton Keynes because the tea tastes nicer there, but to perform feats of derring-do and roll natural double sixes when the chips are down.

The story opens *in media res*, with our hero about to lose his family jewels. Just as everything seems lost, we flash back to his arrival at Elysium, a Hinterland world which makes its living by supplying every dissolute pleasure a depraved mind can conceive of, and it is on the surface of Elysium that most of the novel unfolds. The story is a simple tale of cross and double cross with a reasonably predictable plot, but that's OK.

It's OK because Elysium is a first novel from an author writing space opera and you expect (nay, *demand*) reasonably predictable plots in space opera. This is unapologetic pulp fiction with all the gender and race stereotyping that pulp fiction brings with it. It is the sort of book you read once and leave on the train, or in the case of the e-edition (a snip at US$4/UK£2.50), a dark corner of your hard drive. If you are after Charlie Stross-esque future projections of human existence or Richard Morgan's superbly rounded characters and gritty yet polished prose, you are not going to find them here. There are typos, clumsy and inconsistent uses of language, and repetition, but thankfully these are not sufficiently serious to derail the story (they add extra pulp!).

To succeed, pulp fiction must above all else tell a good story at a cracking pace, and Warnes manages this with a couple of tiny, and probably unavoidable, info-dump lapses. After a skeptical start (the first chapter does not do the rest of the book justice), I was hooked and I wanted to know how the story would end. I consider myself an 'average' SF reader so I think most SF readers will be hooked, too. That said, I have to ask whether it really is necessary to describe in detail the hair of every character in the story (Yes, hair. George R.R. Martin does this too – and look where it got him, so there must be some advantage to it that escapes me).

There are also, in keeping with the pulp-fiction style, a couple of sex scenes which, are capably written. Initially I had thought that as a hard-bitten Mercenary, Bren Montclare was proving to be a bit of a prude in his approach to the wanton sex that Elysium offered, reflecting reservations on the author's part channeled through his protagonist. I was relieved that once Bren got stuck into his first sex scene his reticence vanished and Bren, together with Warnes' writing, lost their inhibitions for the remainder of the book. Getting a sex scene wrong can really kill a novel; intended arousal becomes amusement and even mockery—it's the author's equivalent of having a girlfriend titter at one's manhood. Even the greats end up winning 'bad literary sex' awards, as Robert Heinlein did in *'The Number of the Beast—'* for this description by a female character of a kiss: "Our teeth grated and my nipples went *spung!*". I'm happy to say that Warnes did not in his sex scenes have any '*spung!*' moments, although the sexual suggestions in the first chapter were to my mind clumsy and ap-

peared to be juvenile and gratuitous without having the advantage of reaching that point of the story at its proper time. This was, in part, why I found the first chapter disappointing.

It hardly needs to be said this is not (thank God) a book which reads like a home brew *Traveller* scenario cast into written fiction. That said, referees might find Elysium, den of vice that it is, good reference material for their own scenarios. Warnes has some cool gadgets up his sleeve which

can be dropped into *Traveller* games. I particularly liked the 'mute cube' which allows people to converse without being overheard, aurally or electronically. Cool invention.

The teaser chapter of the second book takes the story on a new arc altogether – Space Pirates! I'll be waiting to see what the future has in store for Bren Montclare and *Diana*. As long as Warnes keeps his stories gripping, pacey and pulpy with a *Traveller* flavour, I'll be reading them—even if I have to be told about the hairstyle of everyone that I meet.   ✪

Raconteurs' Rest

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 20

The following morning, Doctor Wang, fresh from a night charging, was on the comm interested in speaking with his registered owner, Captain Noedel Fyyg.

The 'Professor', on the bridge, routed the Doctor's communique to the Captain's private comm.

Snuggled among tousled sheets in the Captain's large, cool cabin, Nordel and Ilsa lay amongst a mass of real, twenty-six-hundred-count, white cotton sheets from Talouse; neither one awake quite yet this early during Liberty.

The insistent tone of the comm was lost on Fyyg, who was dead asleep; lying on his back and snoring. Ilsa slept on her stomach; head resting on Fyyg's chest; the young woman snoring as well.

Ilsa was suddenly jerked out of bed; standing on the floor trying to walk-off a wicked leg cramp. As she tried putting weight solidly onto her right foot to stretch the cramp away, she could hear the comm's tones.

Easing herself over to the bedside table, the dark woman picked up the comm.

"Frielander," she said..

"Oh, good morning. I need to speak with my owner Captain Fyyg, please," said Doctor Wang.

"I'm sorry, Doctor Wang, the Captain is currently unavailable," she said, smiling at Nordel,now flipped onto his stomach and drooling into a pillow. "Can this wait 'til later?"

"I'm afraid not, Miss Frielander," the metallic-green robot replied. "What I've assumed to be the entire stock of meds on a ship this size, has apparently been stolen," Wang said.

"The Captain will be there shortly, Doctor. Freilander out," Ilsa replied, closing thecomm.

Within the hour, the Captain and Second Officer stepped into the Med Bay.

"Well," Captain Fyyg said, looking around at the empty drawers and cabinets that'd been left opened after Wang's search, "You know, we've never had a lot on the *Waffles*, but this is ridiculous!" Looking for the larger equipment, Fyyg was surprised to find the Bone Knitter missing from its adjustable, swivel-mount.

"I'll check the duty roster and computer logs, Sir…" Ilsa started.

"No need, Ilsa. No need. I can tell you who did this," the Captain said. "Herr Doktor Billings! That miserable bastard!"

"Wang, you be sure and make a list of what you'll be needing, Give it to myself or Miss Frie-

25

lander, and we'll see to it that you receive the contents," Fyyg told the robot.

"Yessir, Captain Fyyg. Thank you," Wang replied, a trio of his arms extending toward the Captain;one to grasp his shoulder, another to grasp his forearm, and a third to actually shake his hand. Fyyg stood there and took the gesture, but inside he found the whole thing unsettling; as if a gigantic wasp had landed on his arm and was intent on tearing it off.

———————————

Doctor Billings had come out of the pawn shop near the Terminal on Nordic Prime with much less than he had hoped everything the *Waffles* had had in the way of valuable medical equipment and pharmaceuticals might go for. He had sold everything to the pawnbroker for what he felt was a paltry fifteen thousand credits.

Sitting now on a stool at the rear of Ponchito's, between rows of booths, Doctor Billings had his back to the sex workers, intent on the small bank of gambling machines before him.

He broke open several rolls of the thick, golden Yuan and poured the coins, for convenience, into a large cellulose cup, for easier handling and loading into the hypnotic machines.

———————————

Sitting in his office, feet up on his desk, Captain Fyyg talked with the Heimdall Offices of Brokerage House LM&J, trying to line up a double cargo pallet of pharmaceuticals.

Several holds, transfers, and callbacks later, the firm had worked their magic; funds were transferred, and the locally-produced meds were slated to be moved to the *Waffles* the following day; the brokers taking their cut; leaving Fyyg and the Waffles with only KCr36 in communal funds.

———————————

After a couple of foamy. deep red bottles of Apatebi Ifa, Doctor Billings was starting to feel a little less bothered about his dismal beginning losing streak, and as his mood improved, so did his playing.

After four hours glued to the blinking machines, his initial cash, once reduced to only KCr6, had been parlayed by a lucky break, into more than KCr36.

Another large Apatebi Ifa and the good Doctor's sense seemed to leave him. Instead of cashing out and leaving, as anyone with an iota of sense might do, Billings decided to double his wager on a trio of different machines; the old man seeing only the possible payoff.

No one was more surprised than Doc Billings himself, when, forty five minutes later, he was almost flat broke.; a handful of shiny Yuan clutched in his bony hand.

When one of the House Girls offered to cheer him up, the Doctor spun around frantically, and facing a tall redhead, screamed, "No!",and with all the pent-up resentment and frustration he could muster from losing everything, slammed his bony fist into the redhead's nose, breaking it.

He also managed to break his own hand, which made it difficult to ward off blows from the club's bouncers as they slugged and kicked the stuffing out of the aging Doctor. They then grabbed him up and threw him bodily into the street; his small number of Yuan getting lost somewhere during his trip out the front door.

"Fuck you!" he screamed from where he lay, broken, in the street, glasses missing, "Your whores are ugly!"

"What a prick!" the redhead said, tempted to go outside and give the old man a kick or two more.

"Don't let him bother you, Salome," said Gary, one of the bouncers. "I heard that Doc Hebert over at the Clinic just got himself a new Bone Knitter today! He'll have your nose back to right in a few hours."

———————————

The next morning, Heimdall time, Ilsa waited nervously for the cargo lighter to arrive and

offload the *Waffles'* double pallet of meds; the new Roosters nervous to show the Second Officer their ability at wrangling cargo.

———————————

Doctor Billings, lately of the *Chicken and Waffles*, found himself in a beaten heap when he came around, lying in the gutter; a narrow stream of brackish water from God only knows where wetting the left side of his face and providing some small amount of water to drink. The Doctor decided to give himself a physical assessment from where he lay. Going down the checklist he determined he had a broken hand, at least three broken ribs, and a number of lacerations and bruises consistent with the beating he'd received. Heinz Billings figured he needed a month's convalescence in a proper medical facility, rather than lying in the gutter. He passed out again and lay there getting rained on all night.

———————————

Some hours later, the lighter finally arrived and mated with the *Waffles'* cargo hatch. With the two ships sharing a common atmosphere, the Roosters from the Waffles wrestled the cargo to the desired destination using one of the lighter's spare Pallet Masters. When the transfer was completed and the paperwork signed, the lighter quickly moved off toward its next delivery, in the bustle forgetting their Pallet Master.

———————————

With very few of the crew on duty, the Captain, Dave Trajillo and Tam loaded into the Chilton and accelerated away from the *Waffles*, foregoing the Highport entirely and simply chugging through black space headed for a Medical Supply House some kilometers from the cyclopean Showroom on Heimdall-proper; the trip taking four hours.

As the Sled accelerated, Tam took a Yuan from her pocket, kissed it and touched it to the forehead of the large white Cochina—The Ogre of Pressure

Leaks— on the dash before her, then dropped the coin into its bowl for good luck.

"Hear, hear!" the Captain said, dropping several coins into the bowl as well.

Dave did nothing, sleeping the whole trip.

———————————

Ilsa and the Roosters carefully opened one of the pallet-sized crates of pharmaceuticals, only to find four identical boxes within, Taking the top box, Ilsa opened it, comparing the contents to Wang's wish list. Aside from a shortage on metabolics, the box held everything the robot had wanted. Cannibalising the second box, it wasn't very long before Wang's list was met fully, all but for one item.

———————————

After several attempts spent flying over the Medical Supply House's massive, circular parking lot, looking to find a parking spot closer to the building, Captain Fyyg decided that Tam was wasting her time, and ordered her to land at the next available space, wihich she did. Right about two meters from the lot's outer wall. Which meant a long walk in for the crew.

"I don't care!" said Captain Fyyg, "Just so long as you've stopped that dreadful Park Sharking! Gods! The circling and circling and circling!"

"That's how you get the good spots, baby," Tam replied. "Not this dog on the backside of nowhere!"

———————————

With the help of Doctor Wang, Ilsa and the Roosters soon had the Med Bay looking itself again—or actually, more than itself, since Ilsa thought it had never looked this good to begin with. Doctor Wang was apparently excited, with all ten sets of his fingers programmed to move nervously. "Oh my!" he declared, "This is a fantastic day, to be sure, Second Officer Freilander!" he said, giving her the three-armed shake while expressing his gratitude.

Then, secret-like, he put a hand on Ilsa's shoulder and stepped a bit closer to her.

"Ummmm, I don't see the Bone Knitter, Second Officer Frielander," he said in a quiet tone, lights

around his voder changing configuration to ape a frown. "That was on my list, you know."

"Yessir, Doctor., it was," Frielander answered. "Captain Fyyg's still hunting one down as we speak," she said in normal tones.

"Hmmmm. My Owner is a resourceful man, Second Officer Freilander, I'm convinced he'll be coming back any time now with my Bone Knitter," the robot speculated.

"Uh huh," Ilsa answered.

───────────────

Following a forty-five-minute crossing of the massive parking lot, the trio of Spacers took full advantage of free drinks before deciding they were ready to look at the place's selection of Bone-Knitters.

The devices ranged in size from something as large as a Cryoberth, to a handheld version the size of a wand.

The size of machine Captain Fyyg was looking for was about the length on an arm, so it'd fit on the mounting brackets already in the Med Bay.

There were several different models that size available, but all were prohibitively expensive.

Then Captain Fyyg saw the model they'd had on the *Waffles*. It was a decidedly older model with a healing rate one and a half times better than normal, and a cost of thirty two thousand credits; the model wasn't even in production anymore, and any versions to be had would, like this one, be made from re-conditioned equipment.

With just barely more credits than the device cost, the Captain paid for the mechanism and left the building immediately; with Tam and Dave providing security in the unlikely event they'd be jumped by bandits.

The Chilton passed through the atmosphere, then the deepness of Space, Captain Fyyg piloting. Both Tam and Dave were sacked out on the return trip; with Dave's head hanging down, and Tam's head resting on his chest. On the Micro, Fyyg

listened to soothing, bell-heavy, Cambodian folk tunes.

───────────────

That evening, with the new Bone Knitter in place, the Doctor thawed out Miss Kalifra Donaldson, giving her a battery of injections to get her prepared for surgery in the morning.

"No visitors is what you need, Miss Donaldson," the robot said, before switching himself off for the night.

Of course such orders were immediately disregarded by her friends aboard, and she and Tam and Ilsa sat up late into the night, talking; with other friends and well-wishers stopping by for a bit.

"Give us a taste, precious…" Kalifra said to Tam "My arm hursts like blazes!"

Pulling a small hip flask from a pocket, Tam handed it to the big blond. "Now don't hit it too hard, hon', it's pretty powerful…" Tam was saying as Kalifra knocked back the small container and took several long pulls. Following up with several more, Kalifra smiled.

As the pain killers slowly mixed with the alcohol, the big blond wasn't feeling anymore pain the rest of the night.

───────────────

Heinz Billings woke to find himself not lying in a gutter any more; though still soaked to the skin. Blinking, Doc Billings found himself staring up at the dark beams in a small room.

Looking around, he could see the heavy wrought-iron cell door of the local lock-up.

Billings lay there, still too sore from the beating to do much moving from the relatively comfortable cot someone had dropped him onto.

"What are the charges, Officer?" the Doctor asked, spying a woman in brown and orange livery sitting at a desk on the office-side of the lock-up.

"Vagrancy, mister. A charge dealt with quickly here on Nordic Prime. You gonna want some breakfast?" the woman asked, passing Heinz a full platter.

"No, no thank you, Miss. I feel dreadful," Billings replied.

The officer replied, "Officer, not Miss." Setting the offered platter down on the corner of her desk, the woman went on, "All the same to me, really, but I thought with you sentenced to the mines, you'd want a good breakfast."

"Mines? What in the devil are you talking about, Officer?" the elderly Doctor asked.

"You're a vagrant, brother. And all vagrants go to the mines," the Officer replied, matter-of-factly.

"And how long is the sentence for, Officer?" the Doctor asked.

"If you have the four hundred creds to pay the fine, it's considered time served and out you go. Otherwise, it's still a four hundred credit fine, only you pay it off at one day per credit by working. A happy prisoner is a productive prisoner!"

Doc Billings thought of the close to 40KCr he'd had only hours before, and tore great handfuls of his black hair from his head, crying.

"They'll be here in two hours. Straight up at six. Shift's seven to three, but it'll take an hour for you to go deep enough to reach the mines-proper." the liveried woman said.

As she prattled on, Doc Billings tuned her out. All he needed to know was he was in Hell.

While staring blankly at the wall, he eventually noticed numerous names written on or carved into it. Reading them to take his mind off of his problems, he noticed the name of someone he actually knew, and it cheered him up for a second—Thom Trajillo.

Well, Billings reasoned, *Maybe I'll see Thom in the mines*, he thought. Hopeful and terrified at the idea at the same time. ✪

Doing It My Way

Roll-and-Keep Task Resolution for *Traveller*

by Derek Wildstar

One of the things that I don't like about most task systems for *Traveller* is that they require a decent amount of mental math, and the target number is different for each attempt. For example, the *Traveller[5]* task system involves computing a target number (attribute + skill), adjusting that number up or down by adding and subtracting modifiers, and then rolling a number of dice based on the task difficulty.

I think that a task system that features less math and consistent target numbers might be better. I'm also favorably impressed by the "roll-and-keep" mechanic used by *Legend of the Five Rings* and *7th Sea* (among others). So, here's an attempt to bring that sort of game mechanic to the *Traveller* task system.

The basis of this task system is a roll-and-keep mechanic. Players roll a number of dice, keep some of the "best" dice (discarding the rest), and count up the pips. If the total matches or exceeds a target number, the attempt succeeds. If it does not, the task attempt fails. Target numbers are set by task difficulty, and do not change.

Preparation

Before we can use the mechanic, players need to note some values on their character sheets for future reference—in essence, pre-computing key information needed to resolve tasks. This is necessary because *Traveller* uses different scales for attributes (2-12, with exceptional values up to 15) and skills (0 to 3, with exceptional values up to about 6).

To make the attribute values better align with skill levels, divide the attribute by 2 to find the equivalent number of dice. Drop fractions, or optionally represent the "half die" with a +1; record this value on the character sheet for future reference.

Example: Eneri Shugilli has DEX 7; he computes 7/2=3 and notes "DEX 7 (3D+1)" on his character sheet.

The number of dice for each skill is equal to the skill level plus 1. Skill-0 becomes 1D, Skill-1 is 2D, Skill-2 is 3D, and so on. Record these values on the character sheet as well.

Example: Eneri has Pilot-2 and Pistol-0. He records "Pilot-2 (3D)" and "Pistol-0 (1D)" on his character sheet.

Tasks are stated the same way as in *MegaTraveller* and *Traveller[5]*, with a difficulty, duration, attribute, skill, and other information. The difficulty of the task determines the target number, as follows:

Task Difficulty Target Numbers			
Difficulty	**Target**	**Difficulty**	**Target**
Easy	4+	Staggering	20+
Average	8+	Hopeless	24+
Difficult	12+	Impossible	28+
Formidable	16+	Beyond Impossible	32+

Rolling Tasks

The attribute and skill determine the number of dice rolled and kept. Look at the attribute and skill named in the task, and use the larger dice value as the number of dice rolled, and the smaller value as the number of dice kept.

Example: If Eneri attempts to shoot a target with his pistol, the task is based on DEX and Pistol skill. The dice value for his DEX is 3D+1, so he will roll 3D6 for the task attempt. His Pistol skill is worth 1D, so he will keep the best one of those three dice, and add one to it. If the total exceeds the difficulty target, he succeeds. Shooting from the hip like this, Eneri can hit the target on a pistol range (an Easy task) almost all of the time (96.3% success rate), but still has no chance of succeeding at an Average task.

Exploding Dice

Any kept dice that show a 6 "explode", and the player may roll an additional kept die for each 6. These additional dice may also explode, resulting in more kept dice.

Favorable Modifiers

Favorable modifiers add additional dice to the player's roll:

Add an additional *unkept* die to the roll for minor advantages.

Example: Bracing against a railing or building to steady his aim might give Eneri an additional unkept die. Now he will roll 4D6 for his pistol, but still keeps and counts up only one of those four dice.

Add an additional *kept* die to the roll for major advantages, such as a careful or cautious task.

Example: Taking a round to stand still and carefully aim might give Eneri an additional kept die. Instead of rolling 3 dice and keeping 1, he can now roll 4 dice and keep 2, dramatically improving his chances to hit.

These modifiers can usually stack:

Example: If Eneri braces and aims, he could roll 5 dice and keep 2, and now has a chance of hitting a Difficult target.

Unfavorable Modifiers

Remove an *unkept* die for minor obstacles. If the character has no unkept dice, these modifiers have no effect.

Example: Eneri is fighting in a dimly-lit warehouse, which costs him an unkept die. Now, instead of rolling 3 dice, he rolls 2 (and still keeps the best one).

Increase task difficulty for major obstacles, such as a hasty task.

Example: Eneri's target is taking cover behind a cargo container; only the character's head and arm are visible. This increases the task difficulty from Easy to Average. Eneri still rolls and keeps the same number of dice, but now must make a higher to-hit target.

Marginal Results

Most task attempts result in normal success or failure. If the task attempt hits the target number exactly, optionally treat this as a marginal success—the task very nearly failed, and only succeeded by the smallest possible amount. The referee should reduce the benefit of success if possible, for example by providing partial information.

Doing It My Way

Example: In combat, Eneri rolls a 4, against an Easy target of 4+, for marginal success. The referee rules that he has grazed the target, for half damage.

If the task attempt is only one below the target number, treat it as marginal failure: the task almost succeeded. The referee should minimze the negative effects of failure.

Example: In combat, Eneri rolls a 7 against a target number of 8+ for marginal failure. The referee rules that Eneri's shot ricochets off the cargo container, mere centimeters from the target's head—and forcing that particular henchman to duck behind the container and make a morale check next round.

Exceptional Results

If any of the kept dice show a 1 (single pip), then the task result is exceptional. If the task succeeds with a 1 showing, it is a critical success. The referee should award extra damage or other beneficial effects as appropriate to the task. Critical success trumps marginal success, so if a task succeeds in meeting the target number exactly with a 1 showing, it is critical success.

If the task result fails with a 1 showing, it is a critical failure, and may cause extra complications for the player. Marginal failure trumps critical failure, so that if a task is one short of the target number with a 1 showing on any of the kept dice, it is a marginal failure.

Comparison To Standard Traveller

In the *Traveller⁵* task system, a character with an attribute of 7 and a skill of 2 will succeed an Easy task 100% of the time, Average 83%, Difficult 38%, Formidable 10%, and Staggering 2%, with effectively no chance (less than 0.3%) at harder tasks. Using this roll-and-keep system, the same character would roll 3D+1 and keep 3, and would succeed an Easy task 99% of the time, Average 75%, Difficult 36%, Formidable 11%, Staggering 3%, and effectively no chance (less than 0.3%) at harder tasks.

With a minor favorable modifier (+1) in the *Traveller⁵* system the odds are Easy 100%, Average 92%, Difficult 50%, Formidible 16%, Staggering 3%, and Hopeless 0.5%. Using this roll-and-keep system, an additional unkept die results in Easy 99%, Average 90%, Difficult 52%, Formidable 22%, Staggering 6%, and Hopeless 1%.

With a major favorable modifier (+2) in the *Traveller⁵* system the odds are Easy 100%, Average 97%, Difficult 63%, Formidable 24%, Staggering 6%, and Hopeless 1%. Using this roll-and-keep system, a major advantage is an additional kept die, so rolling 4D+1 and keeping 4 results in Easy 100%, Average 95%, Difficult 65%, Formidable 33%, Staggering 11%, Hopeless 3%, and Impossible 0.5%. ✹

☀ Raconteurs' Rest

A Most Unfortunate War

by Andrew Vallance

Part 3

102nd of 2028 (293-96): Mikur

The old man waited politely outside. The young secretary looked up and again apologised. "I am very sorry, Your Grace; I'm sure he'll be here shortly." The old man smiled kindly; her solid build and bright clashing clothes marked her very clearly as Luriani[31] "No, I am sorry; It's quite alright, I do understand." She returned his smile appreciatively. Duke Sirean entered, muttering "Idiots, fools, *tirpel*..." He saw the old man and froze to the spot. "Your..." The old man interjected "Grace."

Duke Sirean nodded, "Of course, Your Grace. I am honored."

"No, I am the one honored, Duke Sirean."

"I believed you had retired."

The old man mused for a moment, "In my line of work, one never retires. But I take it your latest efforts did not go well?"

Duke Sirean sighed, "No, but after three years I should not expect better. Would you care to join me in my office?"

"What a splendid idea. That is why I am here." Sirean smiled to himself, the old man was always allowed a certain latitude. They entered the well appointed office and sat. They chatted politely while the young secretary prepared refreshments. The old man spoke first. "Have you seen the reports from Iguu[32]?"

"No, they keep me away from such things now, I believe I am not fully trusted, something to do with being *Verasti Dtareen*." The old man handed him a file, Sirean studied it "It was worse than they let on."

"Yes, but we broke through."

"And they fell back to their next line, which is shorter and better prepared. We will have to do it again and again."

"They must know they can't win?"

"They do, they always have, it doesn't matter to them."

"We will be swimming in blood by the time this is over" The old man looked sad.

"We already are."

"There is another matter." The old man handed him another file, much thicker; it started with Agent Vu's report. Duke Sirean read it at length, then looked grave. "This is bad, very bad. How could they allow this to happen? They will never give up if they learn of this."

"I talked with one of the victims, a *Komant*, she must have been quite beautiful once. She said the way to end it was to 'stop fighting.' Is it that simple?"

"Yes, I've been telling them that for years, but Aamku is as big a fool as his father, can only think

of vengeance and victory. The very idea of negotiations while they hold Imperial ground is heresy."

"Yes, I do believe you are correct there. Fortunately I have a little influence." He handed Sirean an embossed sheet of vellum "Do you think you can end it, Archduke?"

Sirean was stunned "I will try. It will likely require some unpalatable concessions on our part."

"And the other matter?"

"It will be very difficult, depends how we handle it, but it is possible. Oddly enough, for such a passionate people, they are naturally inclined to forgive. Perhaps because of their passion."

"I noticed that when I talked with the *Komant*."

"We will need an Imperial apology, of course."

"That will be a formidable task, but he does owe me a few favours."

"It will take decades."

"If we get peace, we will have the time. And Vu's report?"

"Burn it, twelve died, that they must never know."

"And those that know?"

"Most of them will die, they will hunt them down and kill them when they find out The rest we must trust to keep silent."

198th of 2028 (024-97): A Bar on Daramm

Siish was looking for someone. He found her in a bar, singing, a slow[33] song, full of sadness. He waited politely for the song to finish and her to return to her seat. He approached and stood before her "Jane Elizabeth Charles Peterson Alexon *Komanda*, my deepest sorrow and sympathies on your loss." She look up and sighed, she hated formalities. "I thank you Siishubuu Manish Khaadii *Mmarislusant Vebmral* for your kindness and concern." She took a drink. "But it's not *Komanda* any more, Engineer now, I was given a compassionate discharge with the armistice."

Siish nodded "And I'm just *Kaptan* again; I resigned, I've had my fill of it."

"So you have a ship, then?"

"Yes, Mother arranged a surplus courier, the *Raledenet*; I find I wish to wander."

"And her price?"

"Several evenings in the company of Iniish Markiid"

"Ah, a respectable young woman from an impeccable family. She's back on the *bulis*[34] again; did she even wait for her to be cold in the water?" There was more than a hint of contempt in Jane's voice.

"Mother is many things, but she is neither unfeeling nor cruel." Jane could hear the hurt in his reply "She waited a most respectable time before resuming her offensive. And she's years gone, Jane, longing won't bring her back. Or any of them."

"How many of us are left?"

"Ora and Oloku are still with us, expecting twins apparently, too."

Jane chortled, "Ora always did want a large *ami*, trust her to make a good start."

"Jane, you look like crap. You need to get on with your life."

"Oh, don't mince words, there, Siish." She was amused. "And? There's an 'and' there; I can hear it."

"And I need an engineer."

"No point in saying no, I suppose?"

"None whatsoever, Jane."

317th of 2028 (143-97): Final discussions

In a room somewhere in on a neutral world a senior diplomat from the Third Imperium met with a senior diplomat from the Second Luriani Protectorate to finalize the last remaining matters to bring an end to hostilities. They exchanged pleasantries, then got down to business. It was mostly formalities, a few loose ends, the things that always wait to the last. Somewhere near the end, the Imperial diplomat finally raised what they thought might be a somewhat delicate sub-ject. "There is also the matter of final prisoner repatriations."

There was a raised eyebrow. "Final? I thought that was dealt with some time ago?

An awkward silence. "Yes, well, there were some unfortunate complications. But there are a small number of Protectorate personnel still awaiting repatriation."

Their counterpart pondered "How many are we talking about?"

"Thirty seven; I have the list here." A file containing thirty seven names was handed over.

"And the nature of the complications?"

"There was a most regrettable incident, an oversight of judgement by a field commander, resulting in an inappropriate interrogation technique being applied. I can assure you it was stopped as soon as we became aware and the officer concerned severely disciplined. And in the circumstances we thought it best to delay their repatriation."

"'Inappropriate interrogation technique'? Would you care to elaborate?"

"I believe it is known as *sishgukhidtar*."

"My apologies, I must have misheard. I could have sworn you said *sishgukhidtar*."

"No, I must apologise and regrettably inform you, I did."

And that's when hell broke loose.

347th of 2028 (173-97): Dirir

Archduke Sirean had been summoned to the Protectorate embassy. It was phrased as an extremely polite invitation for informal refreshments, but given the circumstances and the individual concerned, it was a summons. And even in the Imperium there were those who would rather face down a pack of rabid boarwulf[35] than take light refreshments with Madam Manish. He was met by the Ambassador himself. They exchanged formal introductions and the ambassador escorted him to a waiting room. The ambassador knocked, waited for the door to open and announced "The Arch-

duke is here, my lady." He wished Sirean luck as he entered. She sat, regal and imperious, the grand dame of the Lord Protector's Council "Archduke Sirean, so kind of you to come." *Anglic? And informal?* It was going to be worse than he had anticipated; he'd spent hours practising the correct Old High Vilani declinations.

"It is a pleasure, Lady Councillor[36]."

"I have taken the liberty of arranging traditional *Verasti Dtareen* refreshments." A smartly dressed naval aide brought a silver tray and placed it very carefully on the table.

"Please sit, Your Grace; this is, after all, just a social call." Sirean sat, slightly unnerved. "I believe the correct opening to the ritual is, 'Shall I be mother?'." She slowly swirled the pot and delicately poured two cups. "Your family, they are well, I hope?"

"Quite well, my lady, and yours?"

"Well, you know, children." He nodded politely. They exchanged a few more pleasant observations on the weather and the trip. He made a note to ensure whoever had showed 'such commendable efficiency implementing customs regulations' at the starport was properly 'commended'.

"The Lord Protector has asked me to, informally, raise a matter of concern. He believed it was best dealt with by a *Mmarislusant*." Down to business. "I am of course referring to the unspeakable atrocity inflicted on our prisoners by your forces." Clearly Madam Manish had no intention of being too diplomatic. "I assured Pookie and the entire Council that Artemsus and the Moot would have had no knowledge and been as horrified by these barbarities as we were.

"Indeed, my lady, the Emperor himself felt the need to apologise personally."

"Mmmm, yes, written by machine, with his signature, once."

"He is… Ageing, my lady, the strain of penning so many letters."

She pondered a moment "Of course, age is such… an unfortunate burden to us all."

"I, myself, however, my lady, felt the need to individually pen an apology to each victim of these… despicable persons."

"'Despicable persons'? Personally, I would call them *jkomovaa*."

Sirean choked on his tea. One did not usually hear such language from such a lady.

"Too bitter, Your Grace? …Your tea."

"No, my lady, just a little hot, perhaps." He carefully replaced the cup on the table.

"And these… despicable persons. They have, naturally, all been punished?" She very deliberately stressed the 'all'.

"Yes, my lady, as far as is possible."

"'As far as is possible.'" She rolled each word as if it were a worry ball in her hand. "Yes, 'possible' can be… troublesome, on occasion. I feel sure the Council will forgive and forget; as far as is possible."

"That is most gratifying, my lady." Sirean knew the matter was far from forgotten or forgiven, but there would be no renewal of hostilities.

"We will, of course, be repatriating the survivors individually," she continued.

"Individually? Surely they all need to be brought home as soon as possible."

"Individually, Your Grace." There was a tone of absolute finality in her voice that lead Sirean to suspect there was more to this. But it seemed politic to agree, best to let anger run its course "Well, I am sure it can be arranged."

She nodded her acknowledgement. "I have a personal request, Your Grace."

Sirean saw an opening and seized it: "Anything within my power, my lady."

"The survivors, one of them," she pointed out a name, "served with my youngest son. He feels a… degree of warmth towards her." Sirean detected the slightest indication she did not entire approve of her son's warm feelings. "I would regard

it as a great favour if she were to be treated with the utmost compassion and kindness."

"I will see to it myself, my lady."

"That is most kind, Your Grace. Now, they tell me your daughter is to be matched; you must tell me the details."

"Karen and Tranian have been practicing for some time, but wish to start a family[37]." The matter was most definitely now closed.

24th of 2029 (215-97): Lunch With Mother on Daramm

Siish paced anxiously. Mother had called him, immediately on her return from the Imperium. Luncheon with Mother was never to be taken lightly and rarely *just* lunch. He was ushered in by Blandii, his air as quietly superior as ever. "Ah, Siishubuu, you are looking well." She paused, "You have no kiss for your mother?" Siish kissed her lightly on the cheek. "Now, Siishubuu, have you called on Gubashiidi *Wa*[38] again, yet?"

"I have not been able to find the time, yet, Mother." Sharik Gubashiidi was attractive and pleasant company, but somewhat pedestrian.

"Well, in that case, I am most grateful you found time to lunch with your mother. And you sister, she is… herself again?" Siish recalled his mother's last disastrous attempt at matchmaking.

"She has recovered from her heartache, if that is what you mean, Mother. Though she shows no interest in obtaining a new suitor." He thought it wise to nip any new plans in the bud.

"Most reassuring, hopefully given time." Siish detected something perhaps a little more than his mother's usual concern.

"So, Mother, what are you up to? I am sure you didn't ask me here just to enquire as to your children's love lives."

"I am hurt, Siishubuu, can't a mother simply wish the pleasure of her son's company?"

"In your case, Mother, generally no. Besides, I still have a few friends in the Navy and you have just returned from the Imperium."

"A brief holiday, Siishubuu." his mother feigned a look of innocence.

"Yes, Mother, in a jump three naval courier."

She sighed "Siishubuu, you grow more and more like your late father every day." Siish's father had been one of the few people who would regularly stand up to Madam Manish.

"I will take that as a compliment, Mother."

"As you should, Siishubuu." She picked up a pad. "But you are, sadly, correct." She handed the pad to him. "It contains a list of our prisoners still awaiting repatriation; I believe you may find it of interest."

Siish was confused. "…prisoners?"

"Yes, and you should read the list, Siishubuu."

He read and a look joy spread across his face "Mother! This is wonderful; she's alive!"

"Yes, but you need to read further, dear one." Again he was confused; not only was her voice grave, she had not called him 'dear one' since he was a boy. As he read, the joyous look turned to anger and then rage. He sat stunned. "What kind of monsters would do such a thing?"

"Not monsters, dear one, just men." Her voice was kind and soft, that of a mother comforting a hurt child.

"How can we make peace with these animals?" His rage was boiling, blinding him to all reason.

"Siishubuu Manish Khaadii, you are a *Mmarislusant* of high birth, and you will *please* control yourself!" Siish drew breath, considering if to reply, but remained silent. "Yes, those that did this are barbarians and savages, but they are not the Imperium. And we will make peace with them because the alternative is annihilation."

Siish's voice was almost pleading in reply "But Mother, what they did…"

"…Was an unspeakable horror that I assure you will neither be forgotten nor forgiven. But we will not add to that horror or disgrace their suffering by sacrificing the entire Protectorate to it." She took his hand, speaking once again as to a hurt

child "More death will not change anything, dear one; we cannot undo what has been done."

Siish had regained control, though Madam Manish could still see the anger within him.`

"However, Siishubuu, I did not ask you here to discuss politics. It has been decided that each survivor will be repatriated individually…"

Siish, rather uncharacteristically, interrupted his mother. "Individually?" a note of both confusion and hope in his voice.

"Yes, Siishubuu, individually." Her irritation was obvious. "They will need to be reunited with family and friends as soon as is possible. And since you are still, I believe, a suitable reserve naval officer," Madam Manish's displeasure at Siish's retirement was clear, "I had considered that you may wish to assist in their repatriation."

Siish was suspicious. "And the price, Mother?"

"Price, Siishubuu?" She feigned hurt.

"Price, Mother."

"No 'price' Siishubuu, but Gubashiidi *Geenal-Lekhtenant* has informed me his daughter has no prior engagements this evening. I have taken the liberty of making reservations for two at Gimkaesh's."

Notes

The notes numbered 1 to 20 appeared with Part 1, and those numbered 21 to 30 with Part 2.

31. The Luriani's additional fat layers (both to store oxygen and provide insulation against the cold) give them a heavy set look and their fashions feature strong interlocking blocks of discordant colours.

32. The Battle of Iguu, the last major action of the Luriani War. It paradoxically convinced both sides their position was hopeless. The Imperium were successful in securing the world and breaking through the Protectorate's defensive line. However the resulting casualties were immense, crippling the Fornast Fleet and requiring large scale reinforcements from surrounding sectors. The prospect of having to break through several

more such lines resulted in changes to the Imperial political leadership and the abandonment of the previous policy of not entering negotiations while the Protectorate occupied Imperial territory. What was unknown to the Imperium at the time was that while the Protectorate had managed to withdraw their fleet in good order, the damage inflicted on the vital jump-capable covering forces had been huge, leaving the Protectorate convinced they would be unable to extract their fleet a second time.

33. Luriani music is noted for its fast tempo and 'slow' is a relative term. Virtually no Luriani music is paced slower than *andante*, with most being *allegro* or faster. Indeed pieces at *presto* or more are common. This has lead to the slightly disparaging comment that Luriani music is best performed by demented chipmunks.

34. A beast of burden, analogous to a horse.

35. A large aggressive pack predator native to the Ley sector. Noted for its bad temper.

36. The government structure of the Protectorate evolved from the nobility of the Rule of Man and as such their terms of address were one of the few exceptions to Luriani norms. They were always referred to using Anglic forms and the title prefixed the name. The Protector would be referred to as *Lord* or *Lady Protector*, a Council member as *Lord* or *Lady Councillor* and an Assembly member as *Lord Assemblyman* or *Lady Assemblywoman*. Imperial protocol accorded the Protector the courtesys of an Archduke, a Councillor those of either a Duke (if from one of the seven great houses) or Count, while an assembly member is treated on par with a Marquis or Baron depending on seniority.

37. This refers to a committed romantic relationship short of a full match. It comes from the Luriani phrase *vusis fi tyassa*, 'practice for children'. It refers to attempting to create an environment suitable for raising children. Such relationships are encouraged amongst young Luriani, but to have a child in one would be regarded as scandalous. The person being referred to is the future Archduchess Karen of Gateway.

38. *Wa* a general honorific for woman, translated as 'Ms.', literally means 'Woman'. The male equivalent is *Lul*, literally 'Man', translated as 'Mr.'. Teenagers under the age of eighteen take the honorific of *Daiwa* and *Dailul* respectively, while younger children take *Vawa* and *Valul*. ✲

Recent Traveller News and Findings

October/November 2012

- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Gvurrdon Sector*, *Minor Alien Module 1: Luriani*, and *2300AD: French Arm Adventures*.
- **Wildfire** has released a hardcover print edition of *Chthonian Stars Core Rulebook*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *21 Plots III*, *84 Plots Bundle*, and *Cascadia Adventure/21 Plots III Bundle*.
- **DSL Ironworks** has released *Hot Spots 1: Drifters Dock*.
- **Terra/Sol Games** has released *Twilight Sector Podcast*.
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book IOOI: Heavy Escort Fighter*, *Starships Book IOIO: Maintenance Tug*, *Starships Book IOII: Pirate Terrorship*, and *Starships Book IIOO: Cruise Ship*.
- **Avalon Game Company** has released *Slices of Life* and *Diaspora Phoenix*, both *Traveller* fiction, and *Kitbag 1: Universal Weapon Systems*.
- **Bradley Warnes** has written and published *The Artemis Files 1: Elysium*, a SF novel set in the author's *Traveller* universe (available from Smashwords and Amazon, not DTRPG)
- **Jon Brazer Enterprises** has released the *d66 Complete* bundle.
- **Zozer Games** has released *Vacc Suit*.
- **Art of War Games** has released *100 Exotic Materials*, *100 Exotic Medications*, *100 Japanese Male Names*, *100 Japanese Female Names*, *100 Chinese Male Names*, *100 Chinese Female Names*, *100 Arabic Male Names*, *100 Arabic Female Names*, *100+ Space Based NPCs*, *10 Star Systems*, *100 Cyberpunk NPCs*, *100 Cyberpunk Jobs and shadowruns*, *100 Cyberpunk MegaCorp Names*, *100 Cyberpunk Location Names*, *200+ Star System, Planet and Location Names*, *100+ Starship Names*, *100 Technobabble Phrases*, and *100 Cyberpunk Netrunner Handles*. ✪

Mike Cross of Terra/Sol Games writes:

It wasn't that long ago that I would never have imagined that so important of a friendship could be struck via the internet. Maybe that's the way the future will be. That sounds like something that John and I would discuss via our almost daily emails. We talked about what the future would hold as much from a sense or curiosity as the desire to flesh out what had become our joint passion the Twilight Sector Setting.

At first it was odd that someone would buy into something not of their own creation with such passion. But that was a clue revealing the true genius of John. For it was in the perfection of the form not necessarily in its creation which was his special skill and frankly I'm not sure I could imagine any human who could be better at that task.

It was the happy accident of a chance internet encounter that lead to our friendship as well. I only had the pleasure of meeting John in person twice. Both occurred at GenCon, once in 2010 and again in 2011. It was there I learned much about the man. As much as the internet has extended our reach so that a man in Flint, Michigan and one in Kansas City, Missouri might meet and exchange ideas I believe it is by meeting someone in person that you can take their true measure. It was here that I was introduced to John's warm nature, quick wit and a palpable intelligence that could not be denied. I'll be the first to admit that John could be prickly at times. His opinions he held dear but the beauty is that he always approached them with a determined logic. It was often disagreements that lead to our best work.

We were in the midst of just such an occurrence this week shooting emails back and forth discussing how best to approach a design issue. I received his last email at Midnight and by the next morning my colleague and friend was gone. John D. Lees passed away on October the 2rd, 2012. For me the world is a much dimmer place. A man who might have been unknown to many but who is the very embodiment of the best that is tabletop role playing has left us.

Techbook: Chrome

reviewed by Richard Hazlewood

Techbook: Chrome. John Lees.
Terra/Sol Games http://www.terrasolgames.com
136pp, PDF
US$8.99

Techbook: Chrome is an OGL supplement for the Mongoose version of the *Traveller* RPG published by Terra/Sol Games, the producers of the *Twilight Sector* setting book. The book is written by John D. Lees with interior art by Emel Akiah, John Lees and Jeff Uryasz; the cover art is by Phillip Simpson. As the book states, it is "An alternative take on cybernetics, with rules for bionics and other bio-replacements, cyborgs and cyrgeware thrown in for good measure."

Interestingly enough, on the back cover, in one place, the book is referred to as *Techbook: Implants*.

The artwork is primarily black and white pencil drawings with some simple computer-generated color artwork by John Lees. The color artwork is a bit jarring, both in its simplicity and that fact that these six pictures are the only color art in the entire book, but overall, the art does a good job of illustrating the text it is tied to and continues the semi-Space Opera feel of the Twilight Sector setting.

Texbook: Chrome is in many ways similar to Mongoose Publishing's *Supplement 8: Cybernetics*. However, I feel that the options provided in *Chrome* are better organized and better thought out than the information provided in *Cybernetics*. Both books cover a wide range of cybernetic implants, but where *Cybernetics* handled biological/bionics with a few sentences, *Chrome* spends thirteen pages discussing biological replacements and bionic upgrades.

Chrome spends quite a bit of time discussing the advantages and disadvantages of cyber vs. biological implants. This reasoning makes sense and provides both players and referees with in-game reasons for selecting either cyber or biological replacements or upgrades.
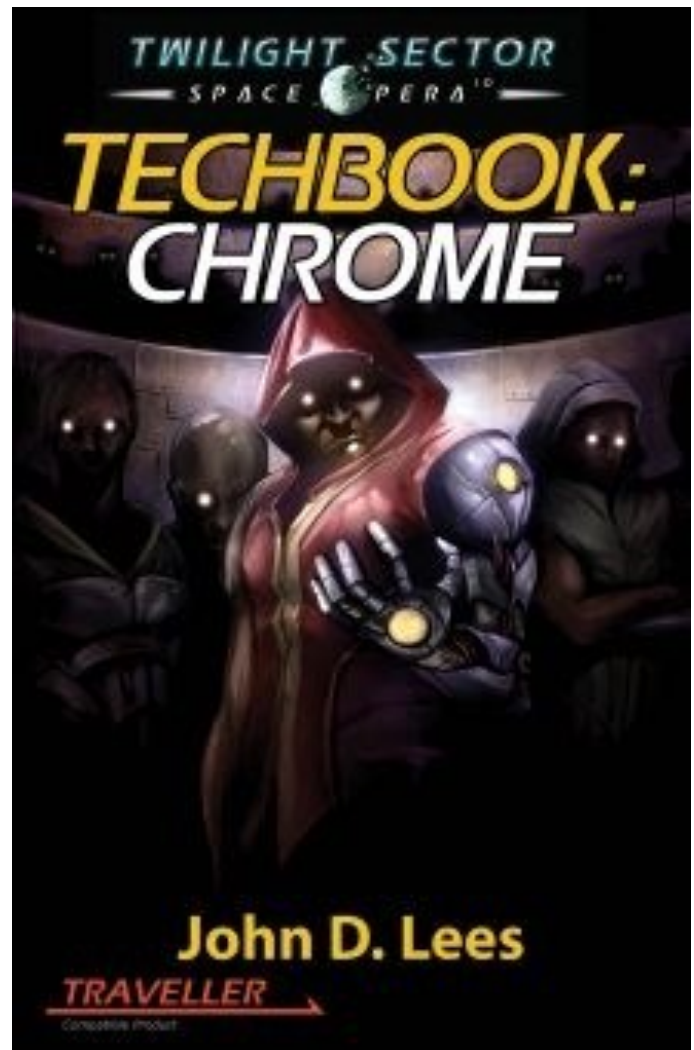
Additionally, *Chrome* provides several "packages", groups of upgrades that work together to provide a certain desired result. Sample packages are the "sportsman" and the "allure" packages. The drawback to this excellent chapter is that there were no rules or guidelines for Referees to develop their own packages.

One of the complaints of *Cybernetics* when it came out was that the costs were out of alignment with the costs listed in the core rulebook. In a side-by-side comparison of the three books, I found that the costs between *Chrome* and the *Traveller Core Rulebook* were close on some things (skills and vision) but very different on others (characteristic upgrades and subdermal armor). *Chrome* was much cheaper on limb replacement than was *Cybernetics* and I agreed with the *Chrome* values.

The last area where *Chrome* is different from *Cybernetics* is the discussion of 'cyrgeware'. Cyrge-

ware is a high tech way for characters to slowly alter their physical forms. In game terms, a character can vary the physical characteristics, and appearance, of their character on an 'as needed' basis. It isn't cheap and it isn't perfect, but it is a way for a character to grow an extra limb when needed, or add a tail for a while.

Overall, I felt that *Techbook: Chrome* presented the material of cybernetic and biological augmentation in a much easier to read format and covered each topic a bit more in-depth than the material covered in Mongoose's *Supplement 8: Cybernetics*. I also felt that the ideas within *Techbook: Chrome* were better integrated with each other than those of *Supplement 8: Cybernetics*.

Rating: 4 out of 5 Stars ☸

In A Store Near You

Rikarunasha's Peers, Precedence, and Protocols of the Third Imperium

by Jeff Zeitlin

This article was originally posted to the Freelance Traveller website in 2008, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Rikarunasha's Peers, Precedence, and Protocols of the Third Imperium (generally shortened to "*Rikarunasha's*") is considered the definitive reference to the nobility of the Third Imperium. The publisher's researchers are warranted by the Emperor through the Historical and Genealogical Section of the Office of Calendar Compliance, and a request for an interview in connection with *Rikarunasha's* is treated for all intents and purposes as an Imperial command. *Rikarunasha's* has been in continuous publication since at least the year 350, and its various historical antecedents can claim a combined history of over 4,000 years.

Rikarunasha's is divided into three main parts:

The Peers: Each title, from the Baronage all the way up to the Emperor, is set out with a historical outline, including the circumstances of the original grant, a complete list of holders (with the current holder emphasized), and the fief as currently recognized. Extinct and abeyed titles, and the circumstances of extinction or abeyance, are also included. Where available, the text of the original grant has been reproduced. Each title is indexed by the name of the fief, and cross-referenced by the name

of each holder. Updated annually, shortly after the proclamation of the Holiday List.

The Precedence: A complete list, in order of importance, of every current Imperial noble title. Nobles holding multiple titles are listed individually in the correct place for each title separately. *The Precedence* also contains sections with guidelines for when noble titles other than the one bearing the highest precedence are used, for the use of courtesy titles, and for determining precedence of certain Imperial non-nobles and foreign nobles. Updated annually, shortly after the proclamation of the Holiday List.

The Protocols: A complete description of every public ceremony for the Imperial court, including those presided over by members of the Imperial family other than the Emperor. Historical background and associated nonpublic ritual descriptions included. Updated annually if needed.

Additionally, in some sectors, *Rikarunasha's* publishes a guide similar to *The Protocols*, but focussing on the Archducal and Ducal courts, and similar guides for other courts may be commissioned. Supplements to these volumes and to *The Protocols* cover non-ceremonial protocols, such as forms of address and reference, both in conversation and in writing.

The core *Rikarunasha's* can be purchased in data module format (only) for Cr10,000 complete; the additional *Protocols* guides are available only in the specific sectors of focus, and cost Cr1,500 each. ☸

Broken Arrow

by Bill Cameron

This article was originally posted to the Freelance Traveller web site in 2007

Introduction

The players find themselves involved in a frantic search for an imperial warship in a backwater region. The ship in question, a patrol cruiser on deployment, is carrying munitions that may become extremely dangerous over time. Unbeknownst to the players, the munitions are part of a highly secret project within the Imperial Navy. They will begin their search unaware of the real reason behind it and unaware of the danger the munitions present.

Players' Information

The players will receive immediate orders to report to the system's naval base. The players may have only arrived in-system aboard their courier, may being thrusting for the jump limit on a mission, may be in the middle of a stand down period, may be on leave, or any other situation the referee desires. Whatever situation or condition the players are currently in, the orders they receive take precedence.

Once the players report to the naval base, they'll find themselves part of a frenetic scene. Several small vessels are being repaired and supplied with their crews running errands all over the base. A group of officers and senior enlisted men will take the players to a briefing room and begin asking questions about the players' ship's readiness level. Whatever the players' answers, the group quizzing them will express relief. Apparently, the players' ship is the one most readily available. They'll be leaving on a vitally important mission as soon as the ship can be made ready.

The players will find themselves split up into several groups while chasing whatever supplies, stores, and spares they require. Their ship will be quickly fueled, the life support systems flushed, and other jobs finished. As the players help base personnel prep their ship, another party will arrive with a small amount of cargo. The leader of that party will be wearing the uniform of an Imperial Navy captain. He'll pass over a handcomp with orders to the players' leader and then begin directing the storage of his team's gear.

When the players' leader finishes reading the orders (they read, in essence, "Immediately do whatever this man tells you"), the captain will tell them they're to be involved in a search for a patrol cruiser that departed on a deployment three weeks ago. He'll then ask if there are any questions. He won't expect any other questions and he'll provide no real answers.

The captain and his team will board the players' ship, telling the crew to inform them when the departure is scheduled. As preparations continue, a high ranking base officer familiar to the players will arrive and pull the players' leader to one side. He won't have any answers either, but he'll impress on the player that these orders come with the highest authorization. He'll wish them all good luck and will let slip that other vessels will be sent out on the same mission once they can be readied.

The Imperial Navy Team

The size of the IN team the players transport for the search will depend on the size of the players' party and the passenger capacity of their starship. It is suggested that the IN team have three members at a minimum. This will allow the team to both have the necessary skills and maintain a 24 hour watch communications watch with undue fatigue. A three-man team of NPCs has been pre-generated for the referee and is listed below. The skills of these NPCs are not complete; each can be "tweaked" by the referee. Three or four skill "points", each representing a skill or one level in a skill, should allow the referee to customize the NPCs for their needs.

Captain "Adler Bayreuth", Imperial Navy
UPP 766BB8, apparent age late 30s
Liaison-3, Computer-2, Interrogation-2, Leader-2, Vacc Suit-2, Demolition-1, Handgun-1

(Continued from page 40)

Lt Cmdr "Calvin Dehmel", Imperial Navy
UPP 76CED7, apparent age late 20s
Computer-3, Demolition-3, Electronics-3, Vacc Suit
-2, Handgun-1

Force Cmdr "Eliot Froude", Imperial Marines
UPP ABB997, apparent age late 20s
Combat Rifleman-2, Vacc Suit-2, Zero-G Combat-2,
Demolition-1, Electronics-1, Grav Vehicle-1

It should be apparent to even the most dim-witted player-characters that the names of the IN team are pseudonyms. The team members will never slip when using those names, however. All their identification and authorizations will bear those names and be in perfect order. The team members will also behave according to their rank, but none will act overbearing. When the team begins to work their supposed ranks will become moot. Bayreuth will stand 4 hour comm watches like the others and Dehmel's orders to the others will be obeyed with alacrity when the certain events transpire. The players should only be able to surmise the personal characteristics and ages of the team members. The same should hold true for the team's skills.

The team members will be polite, genial, and aloof. They'll deftly redirect with small talk any conversation that might reveal the nature of the mission or any other sensitive information. Players that ask direct questions about topics which they have no need to know will be reminded of their orders. If any players insist after being reminded, the referee should feel free to impose any penalties deemed fit.

Aside from the special equipment previously mentioned, the team will bring aboard a normal amount of personal kit. Each will have a standard issue vacc suit, an EVA pack, personal communicators, a hand computer, and military clothing appropriate to their rank. Bayreuth and Dehmel will have handguns. Froude will have an ACR, an ac-celerator rifle, and a handgun. All three will have a normal amount of ammunition for those weapons. The referee should feel free to give the team any other weapons or equipment that they feel a team of "spooks" should have.

Dehmel will have an extremely sophisticated electronics tool and diagnostics kit, Beyreuth will have a series of electronic authorizations that stop just short of being an Imperial Warrant, and Froude will have very nice guns. The team as a whole will have very detailed dossiers on various SPA and local government officials throughout the cluster.

The Search

INS *Pulawy*'s mission: The patrol cruiser has been ordered on an independent deployment through the Zyra cluster. She will leave one of the naval bases and report to the other after 24 weeks. During that period, she is to visit every world in the cluster with the exception of the two which hold naval bases.

In the nine systems involved, the patrol cruiser will engage in collecting signals intelligence data. She is to lay doggo off a gas giant or planetoid belt for one week while observing and recording as much of the activity in the system as possible. All the SIGINT she collects is to be encrypted and a copy passed to the system's SPA for analysis and forwarding.

After collecting SIGINT for a week, the cruiser is to transit to the local port for resupply, shore leave, and courtesy visits. In the six of the nine systems that do not have naval bases, scout bases, or x-boat links, the cruiser is to engage in previously scheduled commerce inspection exercises with both SPA and local forces.

When the SIGINT has been collected, port visit made, and local exercises finished, the cruiser is to jump to another system and begin the process all over.

The order in which the cluster's systems are visited is left up to the patrol cruiser's command-

ing officer. Naval command hopes this "randomness" will increase the effectiveness of the mission.

How we'll look: The IN team will lay out an in-system search procedure the player's ship will follow. They will not suggest which systems should be visited in which order however. Given her mission orders and jump rating, the patrol cruiser is jumping within the cluster somewhat randomly. The players' best chance of intercepting her is to rapidly determine which systems the cruiser has already visited.

Naval command will be dispatching other search vessels within days of the players' departure. To prevent a duplication of effort, command will require the players to choose the first three systems they will check.

Once in a system, the search for the cruiser will be pretty straightforward. The IN team will select a point in the system where the vessel should leave jump space. That point will be, as much as possible, equidistant between the system's gas giants, belts, and mainworld. This will limit comm lag between the search vessel and all the potential locations of the patrol cruiser.

After exiting jump space, the IN team will immediately communicate with the local port asking about the patrol cruiser. They will then direct signals to all possible locations ordering the patrol cruiser to break her comm silence and immediately contact the player's vessel.

The distances involved means that the players' vessel will have to remain in system for up to 100 hours. (The "recall" signal must first go out, the patrol cruiser could also be behind a gas giant or moon for some period, and then the cruiser's reply must come back.) The number of belts and gas giants, plus their orbits, will determine the exact amount of time required. Referees with no life can calculate the exact time required in each system. Other referees can vary the time needed in each

system with a die roll. (How about 40hrs + [2D6 × 5hrs] for a 50 – 110hrs period?)

During the entire period that the "recall" signal is being transmitted and an answer awaited, a member of the IN team will be on the ship's bridge. Each team member will stand a four hour watch, take eight hours off, and then stand four hours watch again. This will be in addition to the players' normal watches.

Once the "recall" signal period is over and if refueling is required, the IN team will direct that the players refuel at the closest source; port or gas giant.

Practice makes perfect: Along with the comm watches, "Calvin Dehmel" will also train some or all of the players to assist the team with the evaluation and "safe-ing" of 'certain experimental' warheads. Players with any level of gunnery, electronics, mechanical, or computer skill will be trained. (He will *not* explain or even hint at the nature of the 'experimental' warheads.)

The players will only be trained to assist "Dehmel" and a mockup of the warhead is part of the teams' equipment. The training will consist of exactly following a lengthy procedure as they open warhead sensor ports, attach diagnostic equipment, take several precise readings, attach other equipment as required, and make then the determination whether the warhead can be "safed" or must be destroyed.

The procedures will be listed on hand comps "Dehmel" provides and he will *not* allow the procedures to be copied. Each session will be two hours long. "Dehmel" will conduct two each day in normal space and four each day in jump space. This training will be constant and, after a player has been through ten sessions, the training will simply begin again.

Referee's Information

Location

This adventure is set in the Zyra Cluster of the Trin's Veil subsector in the Spinward Marches.

System information for the cluster can be found below.

The Zyra Cluster				
Hex	Name	UWP	Bases	PBG
0303	Edenelt	A-4638BD-B	X	934
0305	Conway	D-894586-7	S	311
0402	Leander	E-695244-5		801
0403	Pepernium	D-567530-3		503
0404	Traltha	B-790630-6		410
0503	Raydrad	E-99367A-6		303
0504	Zyra	B-555448-7		301
0505	Murchison	B-544433-6	N	305
0506	Hammermium	A-5525AB-B	X	535
0602	Katarulu	B-252665-B	XNW	201
0605	Prilissa	B-985588-6		510

The Zyra Cluster: The cluster consists of eleven systems in the rimward half of the Trin's Veil subsector. Only four of the cluster's worlds have populations over one million. There are several starports of good quality or better. Trade volumes are low within the cluster, but a few major routes do skirt the region. Two x-boat routes run along the rimward and coreward edges of the cluster. There are two small naval bases at either side of the cluster, plus a scout base and way station.

The largest population is 8 at Edenelt, the highest TL is B at Edenelt, Hammermium, and Katarulu, and the best starports are A at Edenelt and Hammermium. Bases codes are: N = Naval base, S = Scout base, W = Scout way station, X = X-boat route. Edenelt x-boat routes connect with Ffudn and Katarulu. Hammermium x-boat routes connect with Robin and Trin. Katarulu x-boat routes connect with Edenelt, Trin, and Nexine. Major trade routes pass through Edenelt, Katarulu, Prilissa, and Traltha. The PBG numbers are the population multiplier, number of planetoid belts, and number of gas giants for each system in that order.

Other Locations: If the referee wants or needs to set the amber zone elsewhere, the region being searched for the deployed patrol cruiser should resemble the conditions found in the Zyra Cluster. There should be no high population worlds, medium or low technology levels, limited interstellar trade handled by small ships, few or no x-boat links, few if any Imperial bases of any sort, and few or no Class A starports. In short, the region should be a backwater in which a small naval ship can get lost.

Background

The Shionthy Projects: Research is an unending pursuit within the Imperium. Individuals, corporations, governments, and the Imperium itself all engage in research aimed at a myriad of different goals. While research is usually conducted in a low profile manner so as not to lose the advantage it creates, research into weapons is exceptionally secretive and is especially so at the Imperial level.

The benefit of using contra-terrene matter in warheads was first noted before jump drive was developed. The safe production of such material is currently beyond the Imperium's ability and the ability of her enemies. The Imperium has an enviable edge in CT research, however: the Shionthy system.

Situated in the Regina subsector, Shionthy is interdicted because of the contra-terrene matter found in one of the planetoid belts there. The public explanation for that interdiction is the hazard CT matter presents to shipping. The actual explanation is that the Imperium gathers CT matter there for its own use alone and wants to keep it that way. A small number of civilians still exist within the system; their ancestors arrived before the interdict was put in place. However, the great majority of the population listed in the IISS' piloting guides for the subsector are there working for the Imperium.

All of those thousands are either directly involved in the various CT-centered activities the Imperium runs or provide support for those operations in some manner. Safely transporting CT is fiendishly difficult at any time and carrying it

aboard ships for the weeks or months an interstellar voyage would require is risking suicide. For this reason the Imperium has for centuries placed in Shionthy nearly all of its research projects which require the CT harvested there.

Contra-Terrene Warheads: Developments in the last decade from Vincennes/Deneb recently allowed Imperial researchers at Shionthy to begin producing experimental contra-terrene warheads. Limitations in the technology have kept the warheads small, small enough to mean that they are not an improvement over many of the warheads already in the Imperial inventory. Other requirements, primarily involving the necessary containment field, meant that the warheads would best be used aboard ships. Given those strictures, the only advantages occurred when the CT warheads were used with the smallest of Imperial shipboard weapons; the civilian, turret launched, 250mm, missile.

The Shionthy warhead project staff constructed a few dozen 250mm-compatible warheads for evaluation purposes, ran all their tests, and then turned their attention to the problem of making larger versions. When their reports reached certain ears in the Imperial Navy, the black ops boys put down their stilettos, sat up, and took an intense interest. A civilian missile that isn't a civilian missile can always be useful and a civilian missile that packs a contra-terrene punch is doubly so. Orders were sent and the Shionthy production team began producing a small, but steady, number of CT warheads for all sorts of deniable purposes.

Lost in the Marches: Through a series of unflattering events, the Imperial Navy has lost a shipment of contra-terrene warheads. They weren't hijacked or stolen by third parties either; the Navy has lost them within its own supply system! The warheads were shipped out from Shionthy and then unaccountably mixed with a shipment of regular naval stores. They passed unnoticed through the supply chain until they arrived at a naval base in the Trin's Veil subsector.

When the CT warheads failed to arrive at their destination, the Imperial Navy immediately began looking for them. Teams first back tracked the shipment route and then branched out to cover all the other possible destinations. Time was critical, but so was secrecy. Teams of Navy investigators armed with high-level authorizations chased the warheads' needle through the haystack of the Marches' naval supply system. Clerks were frightened, officers broken, and every lead, no matter how small, run to earth.

Meanwhile, at a base in the backwater Zyra Cluster, nine of the lost shipment's warheads were mated to missiles and palletized as reloads for a patrol cruiser there. When the IN team tracking down the warheads found the lost shipment, they also immediately learned that nine of the warheads were aboard the recently deployed patrol cruiser INS *Pulawy*.

The search now entered a new phase. The deployed patrol cruiser must be found and contacted as soon as possible. If the warheads are aboard her, the IN team will board and immediately examine them. The team's first concern during the examination will be the condition of the warheads' contra-terrene containment field. The condition of that field will determine whether the IN team can "safe" the warheads or whether the patrol cruiser will be evacuated before a failing containment field causes its destruction.

Broken Arrows: A missile's subsystems require power in some fashion. That power is drawn from the propulsion system after launch, naturally, but power is also needed when a missile is only awaiting launch. When staged in a turret, a missile's power requirements are met by the turret's power system. When a missile is stored in a magazine or armory, it is not attached to any constant power supply. In that case, a rechargeable battery onboard the missile provides what is needed. In Imperial Navy service it is standard procedure to

connect stored missiles to the ship's power distribution system and "top off" their batteries every 72 standard hours. (Routine preventive maintenance is also performed at this time.)

None of the Imperium's standard 250mm missile warheads require power, but the experimental CT warheads are not standard. Whether attached to a missile or not, they use power to maintain their containment fields. Batteries in the warhead can maintain that field for a varying amount of time but, when the warheads were shipped, it was mandated that each by connected to an outside power supply with redundant back-ups. When a CT warhead is attached to a missile, its field draws power from either the missile's internal systems or the source currently supplying the missile with power.

The IN team's great concern regarding the warheads' containment fields are predicated on three facts. First, no one has yet been able to determine when the "lost" warhead shipment was separated from its outside power source, so no one knows how long the internal batteries had to provide the required power. Second, while the warhead's field is designed to draw on a missile's power when attached to one, the batteries do not recharge at the same time unless told to do so. Third, the drain on a missile's internal batteries caused by the containment field can be great enough to drain those batteries in less than 72 hours.

If the CT warhead-armed missiles are not loaded in a turret where they can receive power constantly, the warheads will completely draw down their missiles' batteries during each of the standard 72 hour charging cycles. That will require the warheads' own batteries to power their containment fields for varying amounts of time until the missiles are recharged on schedule and those warhead batteries have a completely unknown amount of charge left in them.

The IN team can only make educated guesses about when the first field collapse will occur. In the worst case, INS *Pulawy* is already destroyed; the best case gives her 25 weeks, and the median case has the first field failure occur in 15 weeks.

The ship and her story

INS *Pulawy*: INS *Pulawy*'s mission has been described in the Players' Information section. The patrol cruiser is commanded by Lt Cmdr the Right Honorable Bazzul R. Moncreefe. On a ship with only twenty crew, everyone wears several "hats". LCDR Moncreefe is also the piloting officer. The executive officer, Lieutenant Kikka Bannerjee, is also the weapons officer. The navigation and operations officer is Lieutenant Haumel Gallinas. The engineering officer's billet is being filled by Chief Petty Officer Donal Ngiva. As an enlisted man, he is referred to as the "Main Propulsion Assistant" rather than as the CHENG.

LCDR Moncreefe is the third son of a fairly prominent sector noble. As neither the heir nor the heir's "spare", this "spare's spare" is a barely competent nonentity more concerned with the social opportunities his naval commission affords him than anything else. LT Gallinas is Moncreefe's "running buddy". He's attached himself firmly to the "spare's spare" with the hopes he can use the relationship to gain some influence with the nobility. Fortunately for the patrol cruiser, LT Bannerjee and Chief Ngiva are both exceptionally competent and handle nearly all the warship's day to day operations. Far more than the very limited influence Gallinas doesn't know the captain actually possesses, it's the efforts of Bannerjee and Ngiva to keep the patrol cruiser functioning that have kept the Navy's hierarchy from removing Moncreefe from his command.

The ship's current deployment threatened to end the social whirl Moncreefe loves so much for 20 weeks, but he came up with a plan. Whether the patrol cruiser is lying doggo off a gas giant or planetoid engaged in SIGINT collection or wheth-

er she is exercising with local forces, her captain plans on spending as much time as possible on the system's mainworld engaged in either "public relations" or "purchasing supplies". Moncreefe put his plan into action in the first system INS *Pulawy* visited and continued it throughout the deployment. It is while using the ship's gig as his personal taxi that the accident occurs.

Accident and Cover-up: While his patrol cruiser was collecting SIGINT off a local gas giant, LCDR Moncreefe was busily engaged in "public relations" on the system's mainworld. The SIGINT portion of the warship's mission here was nearly over, so Moncreefe decided to return to the ship before she traveled back to the port for her scheduled exercises with the locals. Aboard the *Pulawy*'s gig for the trip back were Moncreefe, Gallinas, a crewman, and two local "friends" of the officers. Moncreefe had the crewman pilot the gig for most of the voyage while his "public relations" efforts continued.

When it came time to dock with patrol cruiser, Moncreefe took over so he could show his local friends his piloting prowess. He also disengaged most of the computer functions that assist with docking in order to exhibit some "old school, seat of your pants" flying.

The resulting docking attempt was a disaster.

The gig contacted the patrol cruiser so hard that the warship's boat bay was essentially wrecked, the gig itself was badly damaged, the crewman in the copilot's position was gravely injured, and the two locals shaken. Moncreefe then compounded his error by trying to back the gig away from the damaged boat bay. The gig did break free, but all his decision really did was further damage both vessels while leaving the gig in an uncontrolled tumble.

The Imperial Navy has a procedure for nearly every occurrence and Strephon's Boys train hard. The crew of INS *Pulawy* responded to the accident immediately. Damage control responded to the boat bay's deck and began operations there. The ship contacted the gig and, when told that vessel no longer had thruster control, began rigging "bump booms". The patrol cruiser sealed her leaks, began repairs, bumped the gig to a near stop, and recovered all the people aboard within a half hour.

As bad as the collision was, the damage control party had worse news. The ship's armory, which is next door to the boat bay, was so heavily damaged it was open to space. After surveying the damage in a vacc suit, LT Bannerjee reported that the armory would have to be emptied. The compartment could no longer be used store the ship's small arms, munitions, and other sensitive equipment. More importantly, he believed the compartment would not be safe to enter while the ship was in jump. Space aboard a patrol cruiser is in short supply. Only a portion of the less bulky contents in the armory could be shifted elsewhere and there'd be no room for the ship's palletized missile reloads. When it was suggested that the locals could be asked to help offload and store those items the cruiser could no longer carry, Moncreefe panicked.

Citing "operational security", he forbade all but the briefest contacts with the locals. The gig would be abandoned and the armory items that could not be carried – including the palletized missile reloads – would be jettisoned and recovered after repairs could be made. Moncreefe's orders were carried out and then *Pulawy* orbited the mainworld just long enough to drop off his friends and cancel her scheduled exercises with the locals. After that, the patrol cruiser jumped away to make repairs in another system. Fearing a heightened local interest thanks to his two bruised "friends", Moncreefe didn't want the cruiser's damage seen where too many questions could be asked and certain conclusions reached.

A successful search?

The Cruiser Located: The players and the IN team they are transporting will eventually contact

Active Measures

a local starport and receive interesting news regarding INS *Pulawy*. The patrol cruiser was operating in the system until an accident occurred. She contacted the port canceling the scheduled exercises and informed them she was traveling to another system to effect repairs. The locals have no additional information regarding the accident. If questioned further, they'll report that LCDR Moncreefe spent time—a great of time—on the planet and that the accident occurred after he had returned to the cruiser. (Note: As suggested before, the referee should choose where in the cluster this occurs. They should also choose where INS *Pulawy* went for repairs while keeping the following in mind. Any A or B class starport will be able to make the repairs but, given the details of the accident, LCDR Moncreefe will not choose any system with a base or x-boat route. He's hoping to keep things quiet for as long as possible.)

When the players arrive at the system they were told about, they will finally find INS *Pulawy*. She'll be grounded at the local starport while repairs take place. After directing the players to start a minimum time course to the port, the IN team will contact the patrol cruiser as soon as possible and order her captain to make a full report regarding his vessel's condition, the accident she suffered, and the munitions she has on hand.

The players will notice that the IN team is more on edge than usual. This is because the team believes there are nine CT warheads with containment fields waiting to fail sitting at the starport! The tension aboard the players' ship will continue build with the IN team heatedly debating whether to order INS *Pulawy* to orbit or not. The players should have been picking up hints concerning what the mission is really about during the voyage and the IN team's discussion now should provide several more clues.

When LCDR Moncreefe sends back his terse and, frankly, unconvincing story of the accident, the IN team will be elated, incredulous, livid, and relieved all at once. A constant debate, sometimes furious, will continue between the team members during the flight to the port. The team will also monopolize the ship's communication systems as they continue to question LCDR Moncreefe. Their interrogation will grow easier as the comm lag shortens, they will also begin questioning other members of the crew.

With the IN teams' high-level authorizations, the local SPA will grant landing clearance to the players' ship as soon as it makes orbit. After landing, the IN team will board INS *Pulawy* immediately taking their special equipment with them. Within an hour, several things will happen in rapid succession.

First, most of the IN team will return to the players' ship with LCDR Moncreefe. He will be placed in a stateroom and the players will be told he is to be confined there until further notice. Next, much coming and going between the players' ship, INS *Pulawy*, and the local shipyard will occur. The patrol cruiser will be made ready for departure as quickly as possible. Finally, within 24 standard hours, both vessels will lift then thrust for the 100D limit to jump back to the system where the accident occurred. The highest ranking member of the IN team will be in command of the patrol cruiser while the rest of the team will remain on the players' ship. Moncreefe will "share" a stateroom with one of the IN team and will take his meals there. (Inventive referees should gleefully use the disgraced officer to create more problems for their players. Moncreefe could snap and attack someone, he could fall into a depression and attempt suicide, or he could do any number of other things.)

The Warheads Located: After arriving in the system where the accident occurred, the IN team will use the sensors aboard both ships to try and track down the jettisoned armory items as quickly as possible. The patrol cruiser's 4-gee acceleration probably means it will be able to reach the search

area after jump breakout faster than the players' vessel. Any suspected missile reload pallets could be identified before the players arrive, but the skills and equipment needed to "safe" the contra-terrene warheads are traveling still aboard the players' ship.

Just how quickly the reload pallets are tracked down, how many need to be examined before the nine CT warheads are located, what condition the warheads are in, and other such factors are left to the referee's discretion. The IN team hadn't exactly planned on finding the warheads floating in deep space. Given the training they've received during the search, the players will definitely be assisting the team. The patrol cruiser's gig is gone, but the players' ship could be carrying something similar to a seeker's "belter buggy" or a g-carrier. Whether a vehicle is available or not, the players should find themselves making several EVAs with member of the IN team.

Checking the warheads will be done exactly like "Dehmel" and the players have trained, just in deep space while wearing vacc suits. (The IN team will *not* take the missile pallet aboard the players' vessel until the warheads have been "safed".) The zero-g environment will make the task difficult but not impossible. As with the mockup, a warhead's access panels will be opened first, then diagnostic tools and probes attached. The containment field strength of all the warheads will be determined first, before any other work is attempted.

The IN team will then make a determination about what to do next, discussing the question over a suit frequency they'll instruct the players not to monitor. If the situation warrants, more equipment, including a special power supply, will be attached to the warhead and the containment field recharged. Some of the equipment, including the power supply and diagnostics, will remain attached to each warhead after it is "safed".

The procedure to check and "safe" each war-head will be performed very slowly. There should be no difficulties involving the warheads them-selves; "Dehmel" knows exactly what he is doing, will not deviate from the procedure, and will not be rushed. There could be problems with vacc suits and the zero-gee environment, however.

The problems presented by the CT warheads can be solved in several ways. The warheads may be all "safed", all destroyed, or a mixture of both performed. Because *Pulawy*'s armory compartment is still not repaired, any "safed" missiles will be brought aboard the players' vessel. At least 2dTons of cargo space will be required whether one or nine missiles are recovered. Aside from their special equipment, the IN team will dump anything aboard to create the necessary space.

After the missiles are recovered or destroyed, the IN team will order both ships to the nearest of the cluster's two naval bases. If the travel time to either is the same, the team will choose Katarulu as a destination.

Additional complications are listed below, but the referee should feel free to develop their own. A fluttering containment field or trouble with the team's power supplies while in jump space are good, if nasty, examples of this.

Possible Complications

If desired, the referee can further complicate matters by using one of the following options.

1. The jettisoned missile pallet is located, but one or more warheads explode due to collapse of their containment fields. The referee should determine how near the players, their vessel, or IN team is to the pallet when the explosion occurs.

2. The jettisoned missile pallet is located but the warheads are of the normal high explosive type. The information leading the searching IN agents to INS *Pulawy* must have been incorrect and the search must begin again.

3. The jettisoned missile pallet is located but one or more of the warheads are too near contain-

ment field collapse. They must be removed from the pallet and placed at some distance before the others can be "safed".

4. The jettisoned missile pallet is detected and salvaged by a third party before the players can find it. The other salvagers may have transported it to a starport, moved it to a safe location, or reported it to local authorities all in the hopes of receiving a finder's fee.

5. As in 4 but the other salvagers decide to keep the missile pallet for their own use or later sale. Local records; transponders, port traffic, etc., can suggest who the salvagers are and where they may have gone.

6. The jettisoned pallet is never recovered. Instead, the IN pickets the system where it was lost waiting for the inevitable explosion!

Conclusion

Unless the referee has other ideas, the players should find themselves safely back at a naval base once the search is concluded. LCDR Moncreefe will face a court martial and the players may find themselves giving evidence during the trial. Depending on how much the players were able to learn about the true nature of the mission they were on, or depending on how much the IN team believes the players learned, the players may find themselves either working for or pursued by the black ops boys because of their knowledge of the contra-terrene warheads.

Referee's Notes

Where to begin: The adventure should begin at either the Katarulu or Murchison naval base. With a larger population, x-boat routes, and scout way station, the Katarulu system is the better choice. It is likely to have a larger naval base, and is also closer to where the warheads and IN team originated.

Who to use: The adventure all but requires that the players should be on active duty. They could

currently be serving in the Imperial Navy, a colonial navy, or a duchy navy. They needn't be regulars in any of those services. In a placid backwater like Trin's Veil, the players could be reservists recently recalled to the colors for a fixed period. Naturally, given the length of time the search will take, any reservists will find themselves serving for longer than they planned.

The players could also be members of the IISS, either active or on detached duty. The navy wants to keep their mistake quiet however, so asking another service for help will only be done if there is no other option. Further options, in order of increasingly implausibility, would have the Navy using an Imperially-subsidized "star merc" outfit, hiring the players to crew a ship, or chartering the players' ship.

As previously mentioned, the Navy's desire to keep the incident quiet would make the IISS or civilian options hard to "sell" to any thoughtful players.

What ship to use: Aside from holding the search party and players, the ship should be at least capable of jump2. The *Empress Marava*–class far trader, with fully armed turrets, naturally, is a good choice as would be the jump2 version of the Type R subsidized trader. The jump6 naval courier from [Classic *Traveller*] Supplement 9 will most likely have too limited accommodations. If the players are in the IISS, the *Suleiman* scout/courier is a good choice. If the players are in one of the naval services, a "stretched" navalized version of the *Suleiman* is presented below. Built at TL13 for provincial forces like colonial or duchy navies, the vessel is capable of jump4, has five staterooms, and has 7dTons of cargo space. This ship can carry as many as seven players plus the minimum suggested three-man IN team.

(Please note that the ship's name and class designation follow the customs of the author's personal *Traveller* universe. The class designation of PC refers to the type; provincial naval courier, the tech level at which it is designed; D or 13, and the year

the design was frozen; 950. The ship's name refers to the type; PC, the subsector it is based in; Trin's Veil, and the number of such vessels that have been built their since the design was first used; 112. Small ships like this are routinely nicknamed by their crews IMTU and this vessel is known as "Petey 12".)

Ship: PC-TV-112

Class: PC-D-950

Type: provincial naval courier

Architect: SpinMar BuShips

Tech Level: 13

USP

PCSC-1142441-030000-20002-0 MCr 124.180 150 Tons

Crew: 2 at a minimum

Staterooms: 5

TL: 13

Batteries: There are one battery each of lasers, missiles,and sandcasters each of which bear.

Cargo: 7 Fuel: 66 EP: 6 Agility: 2

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Designer's Notes

The reader should notice that this adventure seed is quite unlike my usual efforts. It's very "chatty" for one. Also, the players' actions are strongly "directed", if not "railroaded". The reason for this is that I found the bulk of this material while rummaging through some old computer disks.

I'm not sure when I first wrote this idea up, some internal evidence suggests it was over 20 years ago. I'm also not sure if I ever actually ran the adventure. While GM-ing I had a habit of writing and saving "quickies" I could use right "out of the box" as needed; most of that personal slush pile never got used, however. This material definitely started out as a "quickie". I apparently added to it over the next few years, another habit of

mine. I know this because one of the "easter eggs" refers to an incident that occurred a few years after the bulk of the original material was first written.

The adventure was meant to be self contained and, as I was writing it for myself, it includes far greater detail than I now normally include. Unlike my more recent adventure seeds, this material was written when I wasn't worried about the ease with which another GMs could 'port' the material into their personal campaigns. After adding the topical hook, updates, and few other pieces, I left this material relatively untouched as I believe the nature of the adventure requires it to be so. (That decision also saved me from rewriting it!) My excuses are that the subject matter, location, and possible complications do require more explanation than normal; requiring more "chatty" bits, and the player-characters are under orders of their superiors; leading to the "railroad" bits.

All of these reasons mean I didn't quite wield my "Editing Machete" as ruthlessly as usual.

The idea behind the adventure was suggested by actual military training exercises in which I participated. The topical "hook" that made me salvage the material is an actual incident from August of 2007. USAF personnel at an airbase in Minot, North Dakota mistakenly loaded six nuclear armed cruise missiles aboard a B-52. The aircraft then flew a lengthy training mission over the US Midwest between Minot and an airbase in northern Louisiana without knowing the missiles were aboard.

In military parlance, the USAF lost "control" of those warheads for 30 hours. Although the warheads were always aboard the B-52, the Air Force wasn't aware of that. More importantly, the Air Force wasn't even aware that the warheads had been moved out of wherever they'd been stored. Amazing as it may seem, no one knew the warheads were aboard the bomber and they weren't even aware that the warheads were no longer in storage.

As a result many officers lost their careers and several courts martial, all with possible prison sentences, are still pending [as of the time this adventure was originally posted –ed]. Dozens of the others involved, both officers and enlisted, have lost security clearances, lost job qualifications, been reassigned, received disciplinary action, or have been punished in other ways.

As a former naval nuclear reactor operator, I find such a lapse in operational control, procedural compliance, and institutional cross checking almost inconceivable. The multitude of actions necessary to move the cruise missiles out of storage, deliver them to the flight line, load them on an aircraft, and then fly away should have all provided any number of "check points" where the mistake should have been found.

The fact that the mistake wasn't noticed points to an incredible and, far more damning, systemic failure in both the training and work habits at the Minot base. It was entirely correct, then, that, when the mistake was finally detected, the overall commander at Minot was immediately relieved and will be forcibly retired after his court martial.

There are a few "easter eggs" in the adventure for those who enjoy ferreting things out.   ✪

Less Dangerous Game

Devil Squirrel

by Scott Diamond

This article was originally posted to the Freelance Traveller website in 2009, and is reprinted here with permission.

Devil Squirrel								Classic Traveller Statistics	
Temperate Forest Terrain						Standard world, dense atmosphere, 40%-80% hydrographics			
	# Enc	Mass	Hits	Armor	Woulds	Weapons			
(Glider) Pouncer	3d	2-3kg	2/5	None	1d + Poison*	Sting	A(surprise)	F(surprised)	S2

*Poison causes paralysis and damage to tissues as follows:

For the first sting that INFLICTS DAMAGE (meaning it got through the armor) the player must make a roll of END or less on 2D6, add one die to roll for every round after the first and for every sting after the first.

If the player fails then the character falls unconscious and requires emergency medical care to avoid cardiac arrest and keep them breathing. The character takes 1D6 damage every turn – per sting until medical care has been provided and antidote has been administered. Damage is then healed normally per Traveller Book 1: Characters and Combat.

An arboreal mammal that lives in temperate forests, the Devil Squirrel is a gliding pouncer carnivore that lives in large social groups of up to 15-20 adults and a smaller number of juveniles. There is no alpha group or individual *per se*; rather, the mob (as they are called by xenobiologists) lives in close cooperation with each other with some forms of social hierarchy exhibiting itself only during mating season (late autumn) and when feeding (as a pecking order forms from largest to smallest). The Devil Squirrel has an elastic skin flap that is stretched between the wrists of the front legs, along the body, and terminates at the wrists of the hind legs. With full extension of its legs, the flap is opened to form a sort of parachute to allow it to "fly" out of, or across to another, tree. When running along the tree limbs or the ground, the flap's elasticity keeps it tight against the body using a series of cartilaginous bands extending from the ribs to the edge of the flap. The flattened tail acts as a rudder for steering the Devil Squirrel in flight.

The average male is 40-45cm long (excluding the long, flattened tail of another 25-30cm), and the average female is slightly smaller in mass, but the same length. A Devil Squirrel weighs about 2-3kg, and is covered with a fine coat of gray-green fur that is highly prized for its luxurious feel in the high end garment industry. The sexual dimorphism among the Devil Squirrel is extended to the fur coats' color patterns: the males have a pattern of black bands, while the female has a mottled black pattern. Both of these patterns aid the Devil Squirrel in hiding from other arboreal predators by mimicking the shadow play among the branches and leaves of the trees they live in. Because the female pattern is more subtle and its fur is denser and softer, the female is more valuable, often bringing as much as Cr500/pelt.

The face is long, with a pointed snout, and the ears are extremely large. When extended the ears allow the animal to hear sounds and track its prey from many kilometers away in the dense atmosphere of the Devil Squirrel's world. The Devil Squirrel emits ultra high-pitched squeaks and clicks to communicate with others of its kind when declaring territorial rights, searching or mates and young, or for cooperating with others in a hunt. An expanding sac in the throat also allows the Devil Squirrel to emit very low frequency croaking that can carry even farther in the dense atmosphere than the clicking and is used to warn off other mobs and attract mates by display. When hunting and travelling the Devil Squirrel lowers its ears tight against its neck and head to protect them from snags in the trees.

The Devil Squirrel is a carnivorous daytime pouncer that uses a venomous spur in its fore claws to subdue prey much larger than the individual Devil Squirrel. The spur is retractable and located inside the inner wrist; it extends out 1cm when the Devil Squirrel uses it for striking or threatening. The venom is a potent mixture of a curare-like protein with a necrotic compound.

When envenomed the prey is paralyzed and dies of suffocation, while the necrotic compound breaks down the tissues for easier digestion and disarticulation of the prey item by the Devil Squirrel.

The typical prey of the Devil Squirrel is a large (30-50kg) rodent-like herbivore living on the forest floor. The Devil Squirrel mob will swoop down one at a time and scratch the back of the prey with their spurs, and then glide to a landing on a nearby tree trunk. The mob then waits above the prey until the prey collapses and dies. The mob then glides or runs down to feed. The mob will drag portions it can tear loose up the tree trunks to females with young. A typical prey of 30kg can feed a mob for 2-3 days, but often they are chased off by a scavenger species that has armored plating on its back to protect it from the poisoned spurs of the angry mob.

Humans have sometimes been attacked by mobs when they have tried to approach what they take for a "cute" little animal (especially when a juvenile found on the ground is thought to have fallen out of a tree or been abandoned) and the mob swoops down to protect its territory or what it perceives as threatened young. Hunters who harvest the Devil Squirrel for fur wear mesh armor and closed helmets to protect themselves from the poison spurs. If the animal is destroyed per the rules for animal combat in *Traveller Book 3: Worlds and Adventures*, then the pelt will be of no value.

A Devil Squirrel will live about ten Terran years and females will bear 2 pups a season. The females breed in autumn and give birth in the spring. Since the pups cannot fend for themselves until they are about 3 months old, the females will nest with them in a hollow branch or trunk, protected by the rest of the mob and having their food brought to them while they nurse the young on milk. The pups are weaned off the milk onto regurgitated meat at 2 months old, and capable of feeding on their own at 3 months. Once the pups leave the nest they are capable of flight and are fully venomous. In fact, the juvenile from 3

months until they are 1 year old are more venomous than the adults. The venom is far more potent and it is believed that this is because they are less capable of defending themselves through threat displays or by flying than the larger, more experienced adults.

The main predator of the Devil Squirrel is another arboreal mammal that lacks the ability to fly in any way but uses a harpoon-like dart to capture and paralyze the Devil Squirrel with venom similar to the Devil Squirrel's, but lacking the necrotic inducing component. The bony "dart" is attached to an elastic cartilage-like ribbon anchored inside the mouth under the predator's tongue. The predator has three pairs of legs and will hang upside down by 2 pairs above a Devil Squirrel mob. The dart is propelled by a puff of air "coughed" out by the predator with a bladder located in the neck. The dart will paralyze the Devil Squirrel instantly and the predator will then run to avoid any attack by the mob. Since this ambush predator attacks from above the mob, the Devil Squirrel are hampered by not being able to fly towards the predator, but will frequently "bail" from the tree and fly elsewhere for safety if they sense an approaching predator.   ✪

In A Store Near You

NHR 1000 Multi Function Robot Chassis

designed By Ewan Quibell

This is an author's revision of an article that originally appeared in the January 2011 issue (#013) of Freelance Traveller magazine, and on the website in February 2011. The earlier version will be replaced by this version when this issue's articles are posted to the website. The data on the robot brains has been incorporated unchanged from the earlier version.

```
Robot ID: NHR Multi Function 1000 Robot Chassis, TL10,
          Cr12,168, UPP=F6xxxx, STR=15, DEX=6
Hull:     1/1, Size=0.11kl, Config=Contoured, Ar-
          mor=4E, Unloaded=0.1165 tons, Loaded=0.1171
          tons
Power:    1/2, FuelCell=0.03 Mw, Duration=2/6 days
Loco:     1/2, Legs=2, P/W=83, Road=142kph, Off-
          Road=85.2kph
Commo:    Radio=VDist (50km), Voder, Interface=Brain,
          Program, Power
Sensors:  BasicSensorPkg (visual×2, audio×2, olfacto-
          ry), Touch
Off:      -
Def:      -
Brain:    -
Control:  Requires 1.208 Control Point Units
Append:   Light Arm×2, Rotating Head=10%
Other:    Cargo=0.016kl, Fuel=0.0096kl, ObjSize=Small,
          EMLevel=Faint
Comment:  Excess Power=9.4Mw, Cost in volume=Cr 9,735
```

The NHR multifunctional robot chassis is a standard human replacement chassis appropriate for tasks using human designed tools in human designed work environments requiring standard dexterity. The robot chassis stands 1.75m tall to the top of its head, and the torso, legs and appendages are contoured to approximate standard human dimensions without any possibility of being mistaken for a human. The weight of the robot is at the high end of the normal human range without being overly heavy. The basic sensor package is placed in the head in the same positions as humans, as is the voder, and the touch sensors are positioned across the chassis to enable the sensors to receive the same data as humans.

The cargo space is in fact space for a robot brain up to 16 litre capacity flexible to the needs of the user. The interfaces present allow the users choice of brain to be reprogrammed with their programs of choice, and allow for the sensors to feed back directly to a computer via direct cable connection or via the radio. The power interface allows the robot to draw power from an external source to remove the need for refuelling or increase the duration of the internal fuel load as may be necessary.

The power to weight ratio takes into account the needs of running the brain and all other equipment before applying the remaining power to the transmission. This configuration allows all equipment to be fully functioning while the robot is moving at its top speed.

Stated unloaded and loaded weights are exclusive of the weight of any brain or control points, as is the cost.

The CP requirement is normally provided by the Brain, however 8 Slave CPs can be installed as well.

NHR Low-Function Robot Brains

There are two low-function brains manufactured for the NHR Multifunction 1000 Robot Chassis: The NHR Low-Function 100 and NHR Low-Function 200 Robot Brains. These brains both provide INT 0 and EDU 2, allowing for two skills (of size 4 for the NHR 100, or of size 8 for the NHR 200) to be run and stored.

NHR Low-Function 100 Robot Brain

```
Robot ID: NHR Low Function 100 Robot Brain, TL8,
          Cr9,400, UPP=xxx02x
Hull:     11.4 litres, Unloaded=2.7kg
Brain:    CPU=Linear×7, Storage=Std×20, Fund-
          Logic=LowData, FundCmd=LimitedBasic, Soft-
          ware=See Below
Other:    ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=None
```

The NHR Low Function 200 Robot Brain

```
Robot ID: NHR Low Function 200 Robot Brain, TL8,
          Cr11,400, UPP=xxx02x
Hull:     12.2 litres, Unloaded=3.1kg
Brain:    CPU=Linear×11, Storage=Std×20, Fund-
          Logic=LowData, FundCmd=LimitedBasic, Soft-
          ware=See Below
Other:    ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=None
```

For both brains, Power, Loco, Commo, Sensors, Offense, Defense, and Appendages are provided by the chassis.

Available programs for these brains are a combination of any two skills from the table below; any single available skill may be upgraded to Level 2 for the NHR 100, and in some cases, both skills may be so upgraded in the NHR 200.

The NHR 100 and NHR 200 are standard designs usable with any manner of robot chassis or vehicles to provide relatively good skills at a very reasonable price. The NHR 100 is based on the design for the NHR Agro 4200 Robot that was successfully redeployed into the Kaast Container Carrier to create the Kaast-A Class Robot Container

Carrier. The NHR 200 is based on the design for the NHR 5200 Heavy Agrobot using the NHR Low Function 100 as a starting point. Both designs have been adapted to be able to take any manner of programs and standard fittings have been designed to make integration into robot or vehicle chassis a simple procedure.

The price of the software is not included in the price of the brain.

NHR Low-Function 100 and 200 Robot Brain Software Availability

Program Availability			
For NHR 100 and NHR 200		**For NHR 200 Only**	
Program	Cost (Cr)	Program	Cost (Cr)
Steward	600	Pilot	1,000
Vacc Suit	400	Navigator	1,000
Survival	600	Medical	1,000
Grav Vehicle	800	Survey	1,200
Ship's Boat	800	Engineering	800
ATV	600	Gravitics	800
Gunnery	800	Naval Architect	1,200
Electronic	800	Prospecting	1,000
Mechanical	800	Interrogation*	1,000
Communications	800	Gambling*	800
Forward Observer	800	Administration*	800
Demolition	800	Vehicle	800
Reconnaissance	800	Close Combat	800
Hunting	400	Rescue	400
Forgery	600	Performer*	600
Valet	600	Agriculture	600
Weapon Handling	600	Athletics	800
Security	400	Meteorology	1,000
Cargo Handling	400	Terraforming	1,000
Emotional Simulation	800	** Requires Emotional Simulation*	
Janitorial	400		
Laboratory Technician	800		
Construction/ Fabrication	800		

From the Source

by J.E. Geoffrey

There is a world with human inhabitants. It is uncontacted, xenophobic, and heavily balkanized. It is also advanced enough that it can front up a few nuclear warheads for any threat that comes its way (which is why it is interdicted). Normally, not many threats do come its way; a regular Navy patrol is making sure of that, for the sake of both visitors and inhabitants of the planet. There were a few incidents in the past when merchants and scouts were killed by the inhabitants of this world. For the inhabitants these occasions seemed to be harbingers of alien invasions that were barely averted.

Though the interdiction patrol is handled by the Navy, the interdict was requested by the Scouts, and there is a senior Scout liaison who has oversight (but not operational command) of it.

However, the world is also the source of one of the most sought-after (if clandestinely) luxury goods in the sector. That information known only to the Scout liaison, and to a few 'retired' Scouts.

The Scouts, technically on detached duty, managed to get the loan of a ship with somewhat more cargo cubage than a Type S, and they use it (and the ship's stealth capabilities) to land in a backwoods area of the planet to transact their business. The Scout liaison is getting a 'cut', in exchange for periodically telling the Navy to let them through, ostensibly to review whether the interdict is still needed. They bring out limited amounts of the goods, which command a *very* high price among those who know the sellers.

The PCs are approached by someone claiming to represent 'interests' that have learned where the goods come from, and who are backed by sizeable amounts of money. They are offering the PCs enough trade goods to fill their hold, all supposedly of value on the world, with the expectation that the PCs will acquire as much of the 'stuff' as they can for the goods. When they turn the 'stuff' over to the patron's representatives, they will have all of their expenses paid, plus a healthy 'finder's fee' amounting to 20% of the difference between the 'retail' price of the 'stuff' and the presumably lower price that the PCs will pay to acquire it.

It can't be that hard, can it?

Well… it can. Naturally, neither the 'interests' nor the PCs are going to know everything they need to, and the lack of knowledge will inevitably complicate things. For example, they might not know about the xenophobia, or that the local detection capabilities are better than might be expected from the tech level, or how rare or common the luxury good is, or…

Possible directions to take this adventure

1. The PCs are detected entering the atmosphere, causing major alarm. Fears of alien invasions, fueled by sightings of earlier spacecraft and some cold war paranoia make the characters an easy target on the bomb screens…

2. The PCs are actually welcomed by one of the nations. They'll sell as much of the luxury good as the PCs want, but only for advanced (to them) weapons or weapons technology. If the PCs don't have or won't sell what they want, they may have trouble leaving.

3. As 2, but an opposing nation becomes aware of the PCs' presence as well, and threatens global holocaust if the PCs don't leave at once.

4. The PCs are not noticed when entering the planet, but getting the local goods nevertheless proves difficult: they've landed far from where they come from, and cold war paranoia makes it nearly impossible to buy the goods locally.

5. As 4, but the local government's secret agencies are looking to kill or capture them as alien invaders

6. As 5, but secret agencies from opposing countries are also after them, to get on their side for the coming invasion.

As always, further events are at the referee's discretion.   ✹

Consolidated Listing

This listing is by section; an individual article is listed giving its name, and the article author's name in parentheses, followed by the issue and page number, separated by a colon. For example, in Critics' Corner, the review of Mongoose Traveller: Scoundrel was written by Jeff Zeitlin, and appears on page 2 of issue 000 (November 2009). Issue 001 was the January 2010 issue, and subsequent issues are numbered sequentially. Note that the May and June 2012 and November and December 2012 issues were combined, and carried the numbers and dates for both; the issue:page data for that issues articles will appear as 029/030:pp or 035/036:pp.

Critics' Corner

Consolidated Listing

Active Measures

Doing It My Way

Raconteurs' Rest

In A Store Near You

Kurishdam

The Shipyard

Less Dangerous Game

Other Roads

Feedback

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

    Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:

- e-mail: *feedback@freelancetraveller.com*.
- feedback form at *http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html*.
- Forums:
    Traveller Fanzine section of SFRPG: *http://www.sfrpg-discussion.net/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36*
    Lone Star at Citizens of the Imperium: *http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13*
    Note: you must be registered with the forums to be able to use this method.

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

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

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

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

Information Center: Request for Information

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

List of Traveller/compatible Publishers

Avalon Game Company
Avenger Enterprises
Christian Hollnbuchner
D.B. Design Bureau
DSL Ironworks
Expeditious Retreat Press
FarFuture Enterprises
Forever People
Game Designers' Workshop(!)
Gorgon Press
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
Zozer Games

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 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*, and any others we may have forgotten.

…Hyperlite?

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

… Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

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

How should I submit my article?

What needs to be in the submission?

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

What format should I submit it in?

That depends on what you're submitting. Generally:

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

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

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

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

How do I get it to you?

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