



# FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource

Featured Article

## *TravCon 13 Report*

by Timothy Collinson

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## A Note About Production

*Freelance Traveller* is prepared using Microsoft Office Publisher 2010 running on a Windows 7 Ultimate x64 system. The program is reasonably easy to use, and produces good results with moderate effort; it also supports advanced typographic features such as typographic quotes and apostrophes, small caps, ligatures, swashes, and stylistic alternatives (if the advanced features are implemented in the font). Generation of the PDF files is built in to this version of Microsoft Office; no additional products are needed.

The title and heading typeface is ZapfHumanist BT, a Bitstream adaptation of Hermann Zapf's digital redesign of his 'hot lead' typeface Optima, chosen as a 'tie-back' to the title typeface of the original edition of *Traveller*. The black-and-orange of the section headings is also a tie-back to *Traveller's* origins, though we felt that the 'correct' red was too dark. The heading sizes vary from 12 to 16 points. Body text is set in Palatino Linotype, also designed by Hermann Zapf, and is set at 11 points for most body text, giving approximately the same text spacing as Times New Roman at 12 point (which was the original *Freelance Traveller* body text), but a lighter 'color'. Palatino Linotype also 'balances' better as a body text typeface to Optima as a titling typeface.

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Raconteurs' Rest: *Timothy Collinson*

Critics' Corner: *Terra/Sol Games (from DriveThruRPG), Gypsy Knights Games (from their website)*

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# From the Editor



With the earliest production copies of *Traveller*<sup>5</sup> having shipped in May, this seems like a good time to announce that *Freelance Traveller* will offer the same level of support for it that we do for other versions of *Traveller*—that is, you write for it, we'll use it.

This latest version of *Traveller* has a long development history, and there is ongoing debate as to whether it is the product promised these many years ago, or even a usable one. *Freelance Traveller* feels that the market will measure its success, as it has for every other release of *Traveller*, and our support will be measured the same way.

On another topic, we're still accumulating material for Theme Issues; it's been a while since we put out an explicit call, so we'll mention it again—we have theme issues planned for the interstellar cruise, for psionics,

for the spaceport city, and for *Prime Directive* when it's released for *Traveller*. If you have ideas or articles for any of them, please write and send them in—we'd like a good four or five worthy articles on the theme for an issue, but the more the merrier.

Finally, those of you who download our PDFs in A4 format will notice that the top and bottom margins of this issue are a bit larger than normal, and the left and right margins are a little smaller than normal. That's because we really didn't have enough time to reformat everything like we have in the past; we're also going to tweak the margins of the US Letter format for July so that we can just change the paper size, and the margins on all four sides won't be unreasonable regardless of whether you download the US Letter or A4 format. Doing so will speed up production, and let us get back onto the schedule we'd originally planned. ☺



## Clement Sector

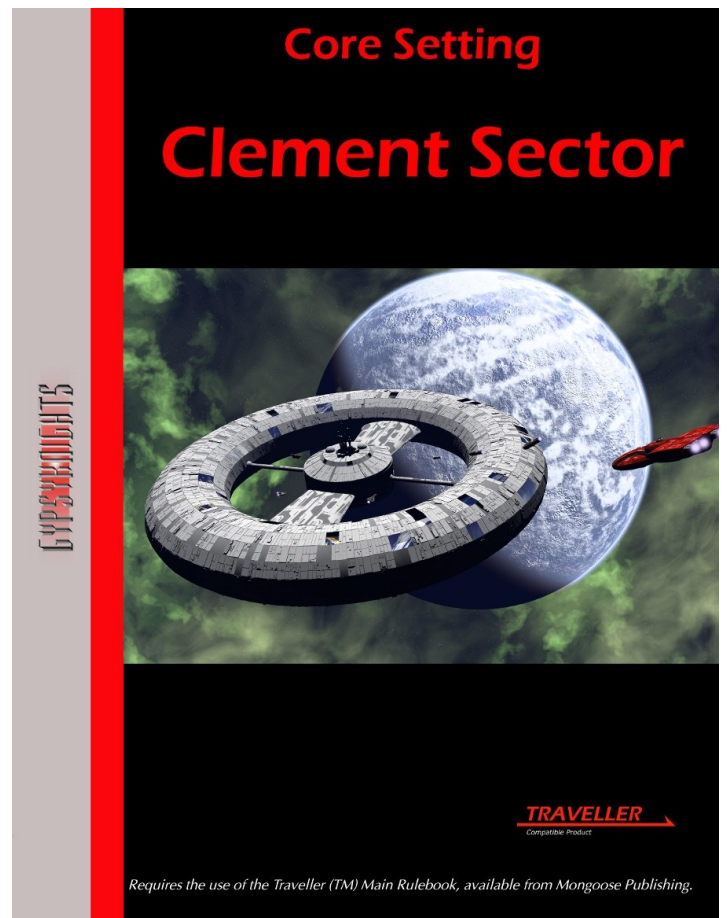
reviewed by "kafka"

*Clement Sector*. John Watts and Matt Adams  
Gypsy Knights Games <http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com>  
137pp,  
US\$29.99

One of the first *Traveller* products that I could examine was GDW's new *Atlas of the Imperium*, which featured a beautifully rendered starship on its cover and pages filled with countless dots. I had seen the FASA boxed sets of deck plans with their wonderful Keith illustrations but AotI sunk the *Traveller* ship, as I could not understand how could they make a product so boring and not living up to the product name – Imperium. Sure, I wanted something like the *World of Greyhawk*, a sandbox with lots of juicy bits thrown in for good measure. So, GDW lost my support for another year and I continued to play *AD&D*, *Runequest*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Champions*, etc. – *Traveller*, I had decided, was lame.

Fortunately, Gypsy Knights Games has decided not to follow GDW's bad example: Their campaign notebook, *Clement Sector*, does right everything that GDW did wrong with that initial encounter with their milieu. As a quilt of worlds, subsectors and adventure plots, GKG has managed to assemble some coherence into their *Alternative Traveller Universe* (ATU) and rebrand it into the *Clement Sector*, forming a primary document in which everything from the sandbox can be created. The book is a distillation of the work that has been scattered throughout its different products and improves upon them thus giving firm muscles to the workhouse of their ATU.

The product provides an overview of the history, keeping our near future vague and mercurial and distant. So, far, so good; there is nothing worse than reaching the "date" in a game and realize that the world did not come to an end or the aliens that are among us – do not represent our most repressed sexual perversions but maybe something all together different. The backstory plays nicely into the milieu – essentially the re-emergence of nationalism



with national and corporate exploration of the Solar System after a series of crises. I still do question the fact that if Germany does come out on top in this struggle for hegemony, why are there not more German institutions in the ATU? Similarly, it does help Americans relate to the ATU as one of the other major powers is the United States – though other powers are present. *Traveller* has often been criticized as: "Yanks in Space", and, yes, there is great diversity within the United States – but there are core things that are simply American and often enough, many of the worlds of this ATU suffer from being shades of the American experience, rather than German or other nations that could offer similar and different experiences such as Mexico or Argentina. That is not to say that one needs to have Planet Mar del Plata, as the consummate "beach planet" but taking slices of history and geography to build better worlds.

And that is where we move to the next section. We get 34 pages of subsector maps, with scant yet tantalizing details of some of the worlds found

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## Critics' Corner

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there. Those wanting more details need to buy the different subsector guides. The most interesting concept is the worlds that have yet to be explored – a region appropriately and evocatively named 'The Darkness'. Naturally, this is a considerable lot of sand for any Referee to construct the unknown or exploratory campaign. Thus, even if one would do a *Star Trek* (after all, Mongoose promises a *Prime Directive* for *Traveller* in the near future), if the wormhole can send someone to the Gamma Quadrant – why not to Clement Sector (though the Zimm Drive is no warp engine)? The whole approach to this section is just to provide the taste that later subsector supplements or the referee will fill in. A nice feature that Mongoose products have thus far neglected is stellar data. Not that it adds much – but it does add more of the flavour that could be found in the original *Traveller* and confers a sense of wonder, as the referee describes the rise of the binary suns on the barren moonlet where the distress call was last heard. Kudos and thanks to Gypsy Knight Games for their inclusion.

Then what follows is a large section entitled Characters. What makes the characters different in this ATU, as opposed to standard *Traveller*? For this is what *Traveller* has lacked for a long time, humans were the same humans that they were in 1977 (or the Golden Age of SF 1940s and 1950s which *Traveller* draws a lot of its inspiration from). Thus, there is not much room for transhumanism (though it creeps in) or cyberpunk (though it, too, creeps in) let alone neo-Space Opera or neo-Hard SF in standard *Traveller* (yes, though it creeps in). The section on characters is there to update *Traveller* to an ever changing world yet remain true to some of the basic rules. Sounds impossible? It's not. This is how Gypsy Knight Games does it.

Like *MegaTraveller*, it grounds players within a home planet, and as such home planets confer skills that might not be present on other worlds. A simple

heuristic but establishes an identity that can be praised or derailed as homeworldism. But, as the ATU has no overarching polity for the whole sector, you get more reasons to make things more local and immediate. *Traveller* has often had a problem of scale, but one consistent fact will be that people in the future will be born and their surroundings will affect their characteristics/skills as much as their genetic inheritance. Then comes tweaking of the aging rules believing that superior medicine will extend life spans and consequently negate some of *Traveller's* aging rules, thus, giving credence to the wise-saying that 40 is the new 20, or you are not ready for retirement when you are 60... This is true and confirmed in fact, but, it does seem like it a certain pandering to the aging *Traveller* community—it was fun to play a 40-year-old when one was 14 years old; it's just as much fun to play a 20-something, now that one is 40-something. I think the original aging rules are there to keep that balance. To recreate the balance, this ATU has a skill cap of 4 which represents an interesting compromise. Another related compromise is the lack of aliens (more about that later) and uplifts. All referees have toyed with uplifts in their adventures/campaigns; it is just part and parcel of anthropomorphizing the natural world/universe. It is natural that our technology will augment our animal companions to speech but what will they say? Yes, we might yet understand how to augment their brains, bringing true sentience to them. These rules are left open, but I fear that many referees will use this as an excuse to populate worlds with furrries.

Next up are some modifications to skills and career paths that represent core paths in this ATU: modification to the Naval (or Spacer) Career and the addition of a new career rooted in exploration and colonization. As many of my campaigns have revolved around exploration (damn *Star Trek*, again) more than trade or fighting these career paths are a welcome addition – until I can see how Starfleet shapes up. *Traveller* has always had Scouts but I always felt that it needed something more that would

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give expression to the frontier—the Scout path seemed to be too urbane and scientist too much of a bolo. Thanks, Gypsy Knight Games for providing an additional path more in line with how I see *Traveller*.

Next up is a large section devoted to Technology. And, because, this ATU is a much more underpowered milieu than the Third Imperium (in its glory); it provides some of the justifications for the technological tone of the milieu. That is not to say that there is no chrome (in fact, there is more chrome than 1977 *Traveller*) in this milieu. But, the technological curve has been rectified to account for the miniaturization and computer revolution that has taken place of technology and more importantly within Speculative Fiction. What's more, the technological base is relatively consistent thus preserving a "Shotguns in Space" or *Firefly* vibe that *Traveller* has spread across its different worlds. A major part of any Science Fiction game is Starships; this book is no different. It does deviate from certain "classics" by introducing new workhorses that deviate somewhat from the Classic *Traveller* mould but not radically so, so that most grognards will simply say: "cool, more ships" and yes, they do include the deck plans. Newbies will simply adjust their *Traveller* Universes to populate them with these shiny starships that have a very different vibe than "tanks in space" (as my wife once called Classic *Traveller* starships).

Following Starships is the Travel and Starship Operations section, wherein is discussed the workings of starships. These are all the things that you wanted to know about hailing frequencies, where to get fuel (and the means to buy it) and greater evils such as piracy. *Traveller* has been often cited as recreating the Age of Sail, a difficult task considering we live in the Atomic/Diesel Age. And, while *Traveller* may have many conventions from the Age of Sail, most players can relate to the Modern Age and this chapter brings it all nicely together. As one knows, the first transnational corporations were set up as

charters in the Age of Sail; in the Clement Sector this is no different. Thus, what follows is a discussion of the megacorporations that dominate the Clement Sector. They are in no way as powerful as the Third Imperium megacorps, but neither are they a force to be treated lightly. Balanced and sometimes pitted against the megacorporations are formal and informal organizations by which corporate power is curtailed in the absence of interstellar governance. These are organizations that form the basis of mutual aid. Sometimes, they are self-interested; sometimes they serve a greater good. Just like the megacorporations: they are containers or pails for the Referee to fill with sand.

Next is a section on the politics of the largest power in the sector. The Hub Federation, which has a supplement unto itself, is a nascent interstellar polity gradually expanding outward and making contact with many lost colonies. Long time *Traveller* players will see this parallels T4's *Milieu 0*; those not familiar with T4 may still see parallels to *Star Trek*. Though the Hub Federation is weak, it is gradually growing and establishing itself. Time will tell how it grows and comes to dominate its neighbors.

Religion often plays a divisive role in SFRPGs. The best games, like *Fading Suns*, put it front and centre by postulating the advent of religion as both refuge of the oppressed and tool of the oppressor. The key to crafting this balance is never to include too much real world discussions. The problem with fictional religions is that someone is bound to find a real world analogy. Religion in *Traveller* has often played the role of the antagonist to the rational, scientific future, yet as *BITS' 101 Religions* shows, *Traveller* has as many religions as it does worlds. Gypsy Knight Games maintains this equilibrium of religion being an important motivator for both good and ill and steadfastly avoids the pitfalls of calling one religion good and virtuous and another the work the dark powers. Shades of grey are what dominate. Naturally, when we go to the Stars, we might expect aliens to become the new gods (for some that al-

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ready occurred). But, what happens when there are no aliens, yet... That is the discussion of a science fiction universe where there certainly are signs that we are not alone, but those fellow sentients are no longer even on the other end of the galaxy... There are no overarching god-like aliens on this side of the Darkness. What lies beyond will be revealed in future supplements. I found the approach to be highly sophisticated and reminiscent of my favourite TV Show of recent memory – *Outcasts*. And, this vibe is entirely consistent with Classic *Traveller* until someone in GDW went back to Imperium board game and started populating *Traveller* with aliens.

Lastly, there is an expanded discussion about the adventures that can be had in the Clement Sector. Here you find a breakdown of what types of adventures can take place, providing juices for the imagination of any referee that wonders how Mercenary adventures can be played alongside Merchant trade runs that dabble with a bit of science on the side. Every milieu book ought to have a portion devoted just to the nuts and bolts and Gypsy Knight Games has done a great job in providing lots of food for this section, so that new and old referees are able to see how Gypsy Knight Games sees the fit between the different types of campaign with the Clement Sector and the ATU as a whole.

After reading this review, you might get the impression that I am enamored with this product... and you would be partially correct. I think this is a fantastic product in doing what the Atlas of the Imperium failed to do all those many years ago. It provides a solid basis for any adventure and milieu – it is truly the organized sandbox that *Traveller* has been so missing in all its incarnations. That said, it is still a collection of campaign notes. There is much more work for the referee to fill in those details – for the devil does lie in the details. Gypsy Knight Games has done some of the work for the referee in its numerous offerings to date, but those who buy

this believing it to be a consolidation of all Gypsy Knight Games' efforts to date will be mistaken.

This is an excellent product to start a campaign with, but, it is not going to tell you how to run your *Traveller* games. That takes place around the gaming table. The art is Poser art and for the most part create a real sense of mood befitting the text. There is a slight *Star Trek/Firefly* vibe to all the pieces. What perhaps is missing – and the problem with much computer art – is showing people doing things. For *Traveller* is about action, and action taking place in many different hostile environments and computer art does not quite convey that. Of course, there are many cool renderings and there is a right balance between art and text. But, the art does not speak to the reader; the reader doesn't say, that's me in the picture. Similarly, the absence of purple prose means that the rules are on the dry side, giving more weight to the thought that *Traveller* is an outdated game of charts and tables without any narrative core. Purple prose in moderation goes a long way in conveying how an author sees their ATU – and sometimes, more than the rules themselves. For we all do learn from example, as well as doing.

So, what Gypsy Knight Games has done with this volume is taken the patches and provided the thread to knit these together to form a quilt. The invitation is to all players and referees alike to take this quilt and use it where you will. I will steal large segments but unfortunately still feel more work has to be done before I take this ATU and make it My *Traveller* Universe (MTU). But, indeed, that shows the resilience and strength of Gypsy Knight Games' efforts – that this is not some generic universe but a fully realized and "realistic" one that is worthy to bear the name of *Traveller*. I certainly look forward to seeing how this ATU evolves and changes – as Gypsy Knight Games has provided the template for others to create their own adventures. So, my verdict: Buy this product – it is a goldmine of ideas for *Traveller* or any SFRPG (with some tweaking) – it builds a frontier and a human-centred universe. 🌟





# The Imperial Secret Service

by Harry Bryan

Based on an article by Rob McMahon from *White Dwarf* #27, with some additions from the *Environment* series by J. Andrew Keith.

Covert operations and agencies often hold some fascination for players. This article provides a way to bring them into your game as a prior career choice.

## Introduction

Although every service of the Imperium maintains its own intelligence section, such as the Covert Survey Bureau, Naval Intelligence, etc., the Imperial Secret Service (ISS) carries out most Imperial intelligence work. This is a massive organization employing millions of sophonts throughout known space.

The service is divided into three sections: *Special Intelligence*, which undertakes the more important and secretive missions; the *General Duty* Branch, which performs the "dirty work" and general operations; and the *Detached Duty* Branch to which all retired members of the Service belong.

**Imperial Secret Service Ranks:** Although the ISS uses the standard E- and O- grades for its personnel, the terms 'Enlisted' and 'Officer' are not used. Instead, personnel in grades E1 to E6 are termed Field Operatives, while personnel in grades O1 to O6 are referred to as Controllers. Grade titles are shown in the ISS Grade Table.

| ISS Grade Table  |                      |             |                      |            |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|------------|
| Field Operatives |                      | Controllers |                      | Basic Rank |
| Grade            | Title                | Grade       | Title                |            |
| E1               | Operative            | O1          | Analyst              | 1          |
| E2               | Special Operative    | O2          | Senior Analyst       | 2          |
| E3               | Mission Specialist   | O3          | Case Officer         | 3          |
| E4               | Mission Commander    | O4          | Area Controller      | 4          |
| E5               | Special Agent        | O5          | Desk Officer         | 5          |
| E6               | Operations Commander | O6          | Intelligence Advisor | 6          |

The general term for Imperial Secret Service personnel, regardless of rank, branch, or any other factor is 'agents'.

## Initial Activities

Initial activities include pre-career options, enlistment, and initial training

**Pre-Career Options:** The ISS is different in that there are no Pre-Career Options. The only way to enter the ISS is to transfer into the ISS.

**Enlistment/Transfer:** Characters may not enlist directly into the ISS. After a character has completed one term in another career, they may attempt to transfer into the ISS. Successfully transferring commits the individual to a term of service of four years.

- Transfer in 9+
  - DM +1 if INT 8+
  - DM +2 if Intelligence School Graduate
  - Special DM +1 if Intel skill 1+ and no other DM applies

If a player fails the transfer-in roll, continue in the current career, and apply a DM of -1 for promotion for this term only. Further attempts to transfer in to the ISS may be made, but no more than once per term, and a DM of -2 per failed attempt to transfer must be applied.

**Draft:** The ISS does not participate in the draft.

**Automatic Enlistment:** Not applicable.

**Initial Training:** There is no initial training for ISS characters.

## Career Resolution

### Assignments

Each term, a character carries out four assignments. Each one-year assignment is resolved separately using a two-step procedure; the specific assignment is selected, and the assignment is resolved in terms of survival, promotion, and skills.

In the first term, roll 1D for branch assignment:

- 1-3 General Duty
- 4-6 Special Intelligence

DM +1 if college graduate or Intelligence School Graduate; College graduates with Honors may choose their branch.

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**Specific Assignments:** The ISS Assignment Table determines the character's specific assignment.

| Assignment Table |                    |                      |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2D6              | General Duty       | Special Intelligence |
| 2                | Military           | Military             |
| 3                | Military           | Infiltration         |
| 4                | Infiltration       | Infiltration         |
| 5                | Communications     | Infiltration         |
| 6                | Communications     | Communications       |
| 7                | Base               | Base                 |
| 8                | Training           | Training             |
| 9                | Surveillance       | Surveillance         |
| 10               | Special Assignment | Surveillance         |
| 11               | Special Assignment | Special Assignment   |
| 12               | Special Assignment | Special Assignment   |

These assignments may be as follows:

**Military:** The character is posted to an active military unit as an intelligence officer/operative.

**Infiltration:** The character is planted in hostile territory to infiltrate the enemy's command structure, survey planetary defenses or some other dangerous mission.

**Communications:** The character serves in a communications unit linking intelligence units in the field with subsector command. This frequently involves starship travel.

**Base:** The character is held in reserve for future operations and is often used for administrative work for the service.

**Training:** General training to improve the character's specialist skills.

**Surveillance:** Observation of enemy agents; military units and fleets, both within the Imperium and beyond.

**Command Determination:** Any Controller may consult the Command Duty table to be placed in a command position for their assignment. For each branch, success placed the Controller in a command

position; failure (or not consulting the table) places him or her in a staff position.

| Command Duty                                   |     |
|--|-----|
| Training                                       | 11+ |
| DM +1 if Instruction 1+ and any other skill 3+ |     |
| Base   | 10+ |
| Communications                                 | 7+  |
| Surveillance                                   | 6+  |
| Military                                       | 8+  |
| Infiltration                                   | 8+  |

**Special Assignments:** Characters who receive a special assignment are sent to service schools or given unusual duty. Roll on the Special Assignment Table for the specific assignment.

| Special Assignment Table |              |                      |                   |                      |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Special Assignment       |              |                      | Specialist School |                      |
| 1D6                      | General Duty | Special Intelligence | General Duty      | Special Intelligence |
| 1                        | Survival     | Survival             | Demolitions       | Academic             |
| 2                        | Cross-Svc    | Cross-Svc            | Communications    | Legal                |
| 3                        | Survival     | Specialist           | Forgery           | Space                |
| 4                        | Specialist   | Medical              | Admin             | Instruction          |
| 5                        | Cross-Svc    | Ground Ops           | Technical         | Economics            |
| 6                        | Ground Ops   | Space Ops            | Computer          | Linguistics          |
| 7                        | OCS          | Attaché/Aide         | Interrogation     | Liaison              |
| DMs                      | +1 if E5+    | +1 if O1+            | +1 if E5+         | +1 if O2+            |

Special Assignments are as follows:

**Survival:** Roll 1D for 3+ for each of Mountaineering +1, Survival +1, Hunting +1.

**Cross-Svc:** Roll 1D to determine service, then roll for one skill on the Service Skills table for that service.

|   |         |   |                 |
|---|---------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Navy    | 4 | Merchants       |
| 2 | Marines | 5 | Army            |
| 3 | Scouts  | 6 | Law Enforcement |

**Specialist:** Roll 1D on the Specialist School table, and receive +1 in the listed skill.

**Medical:** Roll 1D for 3+ for Medical +1, and roll 1D for 5+ for each of Admin +1, Computer +1.

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# Doing It My Way

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**Ground Ops:** Roll 1D for 4+ for each of Recon +1, Forward Observer +1, Admin +1.

**Space Ops:** Roll 1D for 5+ for each of Pilot +1, Navigation +1, Sensor Ops +1, Vacc Suit +1.

**CCS (Controller Candidate School):** Promote to rank O1. No additional skills are awarded. If character is in term 5 or later (of all careers *in toto*) (age

38+), s/he is ineligible to attend; reroll on Special Assignments table; if second roll is also CCS, a waiver is granted.

**Attaché/Aide:** Roll 1D for 5+ to be assigned as Aide to an Admiral; otherwise, assigned as Naval Attaché. Receive +1 SOC in either case. Attachés are promoted one grade; Aides may select next assignment command duty or special assignment other than Attaché/Aide.

## Assignment Resolution

In each assignment, four aspects must be resolved: survival, decoration, promotion, and skills.

| Assignment Resolution |   |      |                |              |          |              |
|-----------------------|---|------|----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
|                       | Training                                | Base | Communications | Surveillance | Military | Infiltration |
| Survival              | auto<br>DM +1 if Streetwise 3+          | auto | 4+             | 4+           | 5+       | 6+           |
| Decoration            | none                                    | none | 10+            | 9+           | 7+       | 6+           |
| Promotion             | (7+)<br>DM +1 if Command for assignment | 8+   | 10+            | 9+           | 6+       | 6+           |
| Skill                 | 6+                                      | 9+   | 7+             | 9+           | 5+       | 4+           |

**Survival:** The throw for survival determines whether the character survives the current year of assignment. Failing the survival throw forces the character to end character generation and muster out (the optional survival rule may be implemented: a character who fails the survival throw is dead). If unsuccessful, the character must leave the service immediately. The current term of service does not count when determining the number of mustering out benefits, but the character does receive a yearly pension no matter how long they have been serving (they are “medically pensioned”). If the indicated number is thrown exactly, the character has received a wound or injury; if the injury occurs while serving on an assignment to the Military, it is officially classed as a combat wound, and the character is awarded a “Wound Ribbon”.

A character may take a negative DM on survival and then apply it as an equal positive DM for decorations during the next step.

**Decoration:** Characters may receive decorations for their heroism. If a character rolls the indicated number or higher, he is awarded the Meritorious Conduct under Fire (MCUF). If the character rolls a number at least three higher than the stated number, he receives the Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry (MCG) instead. If the player rolls at least six higher than the number indicated, he receives the Starburst for Extreme Heroism (SEH) instead.

If a negative DM was taken on survival, an equal positive DM may be used to attempt to win a decoration. For example, a character might take a DM -2 for survival, increasing the chance for failure. If he survives nonetheless, then DM +2 is allowed when rolling for decorations.

The reverse of this procedure (positive DMs for survival; negative DMs on decoration) is also possible, but if the decoration throw fails by six or more (for example, rolling a 4 when 10+ is needed), he must consult the Court-Martial Table.

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# Doing It My Way

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Note that because of the covert nature of the job, in most cases, decorations cannot be publicly acknowledged, and any reaction roll DMs derived from them only apply when interacting with other Agents.

**Promotion:** A character may receive a promotion by throwing the indicated number or greater (2D). Where a number is in parenthesis, special intelligence agents may not roll for promotion.

Normally, a special intelligence agent may not receive more than one promotion per term. However, the promotion received from Controller Candidate School, [CCS] does not prohibit another promotion during a four-year tour, and the automatic promotion given an attaché does not prohibit another promotion during the term.

Field Operatives may be promoted as often as once per assignment. They may not be promoted beyond the rank of E6 except through attendance at CCS.

**Skills:** A character may receive skills because of his assignment. If the character rolls the indicated number or higher, then he or she becomes eligible for one skill to be determined immediately. A character may roll for a skill on any skill column or table available to him.

**Retention in Assignment:** At the end of each assignment, roll one die – if the result is 6, then the next assignment will be the same as the previous one. However, no one can be retained in the same assignment involuntarily at the end of a four-year term, even if he reenlists; retention does not occur on a special assignment.

Skills Table

| ID  | Service Skills                   |                                 |                                  |                                  |                                  | Branch Skills                    |                                 |                                  |                                  |
|-----|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|     | ISS Life                         | Space Skills                    | Combat Skills                    | Underground Skills               | ISS Skills                       | General Duty                     | Special Intelligence            | Command                          | Staff                            |
| 1   | Brawling                         | Zero-G Cbt                      | Gun Cbt                          | Gun Cbt                          | Vehicle                          | Handgun                          | Handgun                         | Leader                           | Computer                         |
| 2   | Carousing                        | Ship's Boat                     | Gun Cbt                          | Streetwise                       | Brawling                         | Brawling                         | Liaison                         | Mental                           | Electronic                       |
| 3   | +1 STR                           | Vacc Suit                       | Heavy Weap                       | Disguise                         | Streetwise                       | Hand Cbt                         | Computer                        | Computer                         | Instruction                      |
| 4   | Gambling                         | Commo                           | Tactics                          | Intrusion                        | Medical                          | Forgery                          | Forgery                         | Leader                           | Bribery                          |
| 5   | +1 END                           | Turret Weap                     | Medical                          | Forgery                          | Recon                            | Electronics                      | Bribery                         | Liaison                          | Admin                            |
| 6   | Mental                           | Engineering                     | Stealth                          | Recon                            | Linguistics                      | Demolitions                      | Leader                          | Inborn                           | Legal                            |
| 7   | +1 EDU                           | Pilot                           | Grav Belt                        | Bribery                          | Admin                            | Interrogation                    | Admin                           | +1 SOC                           | Academic                         |
| 8   | Vehicle                          | Exploratory                     | Interrogation                    | Liaison                          | Interpersonal                    | Admin                            | Legal                           | Ship Tactics                     | Economic                         |
| DMs | +1 if rank E4+<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E6<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E4+<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E5+<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E4+<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E4+<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E6<br>+2 if rank O1+ | +1 if rank E5+<br>+2 if rank O3+ | +1 if rank E5+<br>+2 if rank O3+ |

All characters are eligible for all Service Skills columns. Characters of all ranks are eligible for the column matching their branch assignment (General Duty or Special Intelligence). Controllers with Staff assignments are eligible for the Staff column, Controllers with Command assignments are eligible for the Command column.

## Re-enlistment and Mustering Out

At the end of a four-year term, the character must either reenlist or muster out. If the reenlistment roll fails, the character must muster out.

**ISS Reenlistment:** Reenlistment in the ISS is never compulsory and requires a throw of 6+.

**Mustering Out Benefits:** At the conclusion of a player's last term, roll on the Mustering Out table on the following page. Characters with Gambling 1+ may use DM +1 on Cash rolls. Controllers (rank O1+) may use DM+1 on Material Benefits rolls.

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## Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 9)

| Mustering Out Benefits |                         |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1D                     | Material Benefits       | Cash              |
| 1                      | Mid Passage             | Cr1,000           |
| 2                      | Mid Passage             | Cr1,000           |
| 3                      | +1 EDU                  | Cr5,000           |
| 4                      | Weapon                  | Cr5,000           |
| 5                      | Covert Kit              | Cr10,000          |
| 6                      | Travellers' Aid Society | Cr20,000          |
| 7                      | High Passage            | Cr50,000          |
| DMs                    | +1 if rank O1+          | +1 if Gambling 1+ |

### Material Benefits

**Covert Kit:** This is a set of devices, the exact nature of which are to be decided by the player and referee together, that provide the player with various capabilities, including weapons and surveillance. The devices typically appear as innocuous items. Examples of items that might be in a Covert Kit appear in Jeffrey Schwartz's story "The Old Scout: In the Pawn Shop", which appeared in *Free-lance Traveller's* September 2012 issue.

**Weapon:** This is any *personal* weapon (blade or gun, but *not* laser weapons, PGMP, or FGMP) that the character has at least skill 1 in. Subsequent rolls of this benefit are taken as an additional level of skill in that weapon.

### Special Rules

The following special rules apply to the ISS:

**Detached Duty:** Characters who retire (not fail the re-enlistment throw) are retained on Detached Duty. At the beginning of each game year thereafter the referee rolls 2d6 to determine if the service requires the character to perform any mission: On 8-, no task assigned; 9, mercenary service; 10, surveillance; 11, kidnapping or rescue; 12, assassination. The service pays well for work done in this way; additionally, personnel on Detached Duty draw a pension of Cr5000 per term of service beyond the fourth. Should a character fail in a task, they are removed from the Detached Duty Branch.

## New Skills

(From J. Andrew Keith's *Environment Series*)

**Mountaineering:** The character is familiar with one of several forms of climbing techniques, and understands the problems and procedures of activity in mountainous terrain.

Mountaineering skill, when received, is taken as one of three specific skills: *Mixed Climbing*, *Rock Climbing*, or *Ice Climbing*, discussed further below.

Skill levels in these areas are used as DMs to avoid specific dangers related to climbing and mountain survival.

*Mixed Climbing* is also known as 'route finding'. It indicates the general knowledge of charting a route up a mountain that will involve the least difficulty and/or danger and the maximum speed. Mixed Climbing skill is a sort of 'catchall' for the vague collection of knowledge, expertise, and intuitive understanding that makes for a good climber.

*Rock Climbing* is much more specific. It relates to the process of scaling a steep or sheer slope, either with or without artificial assistance. Rock Climbing differs from the 'route finding' of Mixed Climbing in that route finding generally attempts to avoid such steep approaches, in favor of picking out easier approaches; the rock climber simply goes over the obstacle in question.

*Ice Climbing* is similar to Rock Climbing, but deals with techniques of climbing in snow or ice. A rock climber might face a steep cliff; the ice climber would be more accustomed to scaling a glacier.

For most mountaineers, a mixture of two or more of these cascade skills is more advisable than heavy expertise in only one. The character with Mixed Climbing skill will eventually be confronted with a steep slope that must be scaled; the rock climber working at high altitudes will eventually be faced with snow and ice, and so forth. If individual characters don't have such a balanced knowledge, and then mountaineering parties should be mixed to include each type of expertise - unless the object of a

(Continued on page 11)



## Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 10)

particular climb is highly specific - say to scale a particular cliff to accomplish a commando raid in a temperate climate. In this case, rock climbing alone would be necessary listing: Mountaineering skill must frequently be taken as a total, rather than as individual cascade skills. Because of this, it is recommended that the total mountaineering skill be listed first, followed by the various cascade skills in parentheses - i.e., *Mountaineering-4 (Mixed Climbing-2, Rock Climbing-1, Ice Climbing-1)*. It should be noted that a level-1 skill will be held in all cascade skills once the character holds any Mountaineering skill at all.

**Survival:** Survival becomes a cascade skill, with the following cascades:

*Arctic Survival:* The individual is familiar with both the theory and practice of slaying alive in sub-zero conditions.

Characters with Arctic Survival expertise have a better chance of coping with arctic conditions. This is shown as a modifier on endurance loss due to cold and other survival-oriented processes. The skill also should use it as an indicator and/or modifier to the chances of locating food and water, constructing or

finding natural weapons and shelter, and finding their way across country under arctic conditions.

Finally, it should serve as a DM in averting or noticing specific hazards before they threaten the character.

Where groups are cooperating, all characters can be assumed to have a survival skill one less than that of the most experienced character (where their skill is lower to begin with), representing the guidance and assistance of the expert of the group.

*Desert Survival:* The character is familiar with the special problems of surviving in arid and semi-arid environments.

Desert Survival skill is used as a DM in many situations where that skill could reasonably be applied - such as in attempts to locate water or avoid the effects of extremes of temperature, or in travel.

The referee can also pass special information to any character with desert skill to direct the course of an adventure or to warn the party of danger. Thus, a character with this skill will be the first to see and recognize signs of an approaching sandstorm or of heat exhaustion in a companion character, and may be given special tips and insights by the referee. ☼



## In A Store Near You

### Mokaberi

by Jeff Zeitlin

Among the more sought-after products in the market are those made from the fruit of the mokaberi tree. The mokaberi tree grows on virtually any temperate Terra-normal world with moderate rainfall, achieving a height of up to 5m. The lowest branches of a mature tree are generally about 0.5m from the ground, making the trees appear almost shrub-like. The fruit answers best to the terrestrial classification of berries, though at maturity the seed has a hard shell within the flesh, similar to drupes such as peaches or apricots, though thinner. Unlike

true drupes, though, the shell around the mokaberi seed is edible in certain preparations.

The flesh of the berries is a deep purple in color, and edible directly from the tree. The shell of the seed is a dark brown, indigestible but non-toxic without processing, and the seed itself is a pale green, and contains mild nerve toxins which are removed in processing.

Mokaberis can be processed in several ways, yielding both sweet and savory flavors. In general, the overall flavor has been characterized as being reminiscent of a combination of chocolate and coffee, with overtones of cinnamon and other aromatic spices. Humans and Vargr find both sweet and savory preparations to be enjoyable (within the

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## In A Store Near You

(Continued from page 11)

normal range of human and/or Vargr sensory variation); Aslan and K'kree both find the odor of the berries and any preparations to be noxious, and class the tree as an invasive weed. Several minor non-human species ban or tightly control the importation of mokaberis or their derivatives.

Although "raw" mokaberis can be shipped (3,000kg/Td in special environmental-control containers), it is far more common to pre-process them and ship the processed product. Many processes are closely-held secrets, and some produce intermediate products that yield unique final products that com-

mand high prices in the marketplace. One such is the Popok Process, whose granulated intermediate product is used to produce confections which have a deep blue color.

"Raw" mokaberis can be purchased for a base price of Cr5,000 per 1,000kg; processed berries can vary based on the particular process in question, but rarely command a base price less than Cr6,000 for the output from 1,000kg of "raw" berries. A moka-beri "farm kit", containing mokaberi trees, irrigation equipment, and soil preparation chemicals, costs Cr5,000 per hectare; a kit for planting one hectare requires 2,000Td shipping capacity. ☼

## Raconteurs' Rest

### After Action Report: TravCon13

by Timothy Collinson



TravCon13 saw the annual UK get-together of *Traveller* enthusiasts bigger and better than ever! Better may be subjective, but it certainly seemed to go extremely well with a huge variety of games of high quality which just seems to improve each year. Bigger? Certainly. For the first time we entirely filled the Redwings Lodge hotel (see picture above) on the old A1 near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire: 36 booked in. Not only that but instead of the usual four games running concurrently, there were five. More choice! More games I couldn't play! With the usual Friday night slot, three slots on Saturday, and one slightly longer one on Sunday (6 hours instead

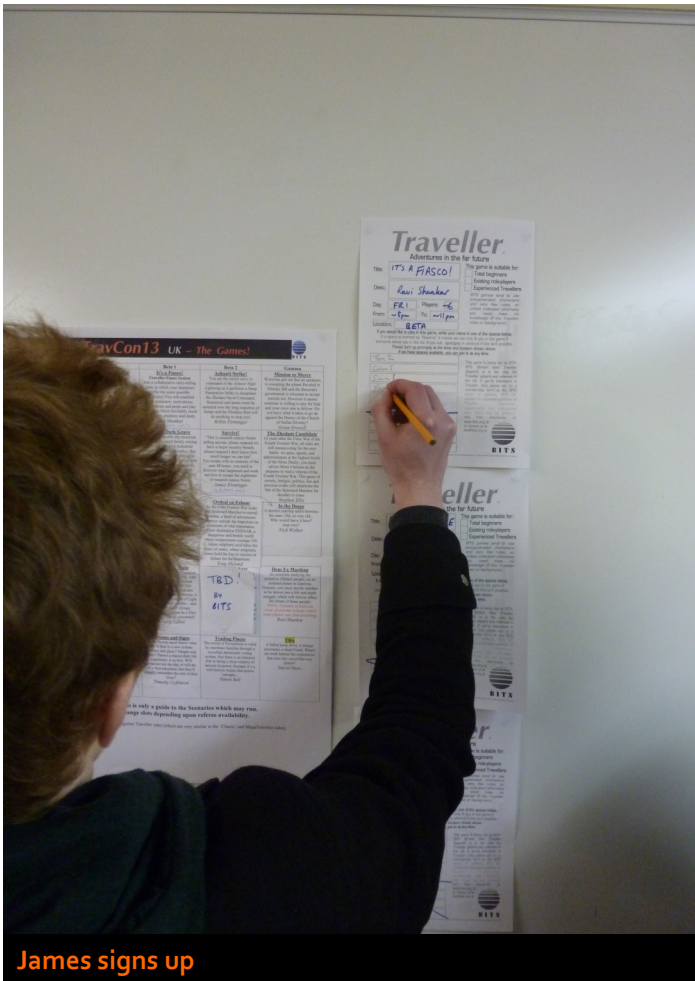
of 4), that meant a total of 25 games on offer! Not only were there 25 game slots over the entire weekend, but the initial schedule showed that there were *no* repeats. Andy Lilly, the conference organizer, is to be congratulated not only on meeting the growing logistical challenge but also for encouraging, training, and leaning upon(?) so many people to get involved in refereeing.

As ever, there was wide variety of choice. Whether you're into role playing, storytelling, live action, variants such as FIASCO or *Travellerised Battlestar Galactica*, miniatures combat, or simply want weird sound and light shows from a real life

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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James signs up

appearance by Yaskodray – there was something for everyone. Rules heavy, rules light, or even *rules-wot-rules*? For the most part games were recognizably Mongoose based and as usual referees provided pregenerated characters so everyone could jump right into the action.

Last year, I reported on my first experience of running a game at TravCon. The whole thing had been so encouraging that I was determined to give it a second go and see if was just a fluke. I didn't expect lightning to strike twice, but this time I wasn't going to leave writing it until a month before; I was determined to get going sooner. Unfortunately, that simply meant that I spent pretty much all year developing material for the game and was close to fed up with the whole thing by the time the convention arrived! I'd also prepared way too much material and I think someone counted over 30 handouts on

top of the 100 page booklet of my own notes. Memo to self: it's *role*-playing, not *read*-playing. This year, my idea was to place six dilettante nobles into the thick of things culminating with an auction which would be a little more exciting than they'd bargained for. I'd actually had the original idea some 18 months before but the real life auction at the end of TravCon12 convinced me that what I was planning would work dramatically.

Once again I went through the nervous anticipation of whether it would 'work' as an adventure, whether any would want to play, and in addition I'd made life even more complicated by wanting to incorporate both a little live action role playing and also produce one of the courses at a banquet for the players to actually consume. This time there was no quick fix and I had to wait until Saturday afternoon to see six players signed up for "The Second Scions' Society". However, it seemed to go well enough that I asked Andy if I could run it again on the Sunday instead of the rerun of last year's game that he had me down for. Yes, I'm afraid I spoiled his 25 different games record.

'The Handout' this year (after my daughter's 10,000 word diary last year) would be a fully worked up, colour printed, glossy catalogue from one of the finest auction houses in Core sector. On and off it took the best part of the year to write 60+ entries based firmly in the official *Traveller* universe history and astrography. To be honest I thought it would be more fun to write than it turned out to be! It also included the biography of an old fashioned explorer and his three major expeditions around different parts of Known Space with charts of his route and lists of every world visited (some 382). Once the printers had done their work, the finished product was worth the effort and not one of the 12 players across both games left their copy behind.

The food element was more of a pain than I'd bargained for. I couldn't prepare it before the convention so non-existent gaps between games saw me desperately trying to soak hazelnuts in rum, grate

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## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 13)



The Scions tuck into the final course of their banquet—the Vargr merd board

chocolate, and chop up liquorice. Not to be recommended. The live action segment seemed to work, however – with a co-opted attendee not involved in a game sitting in the hotel corridor playing the part of a beggar that the dilettantes had to pass<sup>1</sup>. While each player took their turn, it gave the others a chance to make some notes for another element I wasn't sure would work. The idea was that at a banquet of their small select society, each PC would tell an after dinner story. The players, however, threw themselves into this more wholeheartedly than I expected and rooted their stories in *Traveller*, some with humour, some with horror, and some utterly



Grant referees "Mission to Mercy"

heartfelt. The highlight of the convention for me was the joy of listening to their tales with a couple of them standing out as jaw-droppingly spell-binding. I wish I'd recorded them.

Unfortunately, running two games meant that I could play in only three games out of the 23 possibilities remaining. On the upside, I was in for a treat on each occasion. Friday night saw my first encounter with Richard Talbot refereeing 'Snow Drops', an innocuous sounding cargo run for the PCs as free traders. Of course it turned out to be anything but innocuous as we delivered 100 tons of chilled snow to a noble's birthday party for his daughter. Saturday morning I saw a whole new level of refereeing as Steve Ellis – with only 3 pages of notes and 6 single sided character sheets – wound us all up, set us off and then sat back to watch us run in *The Zhodani Candidate*. The title may give a hint at the psychological complexity but the characters had been cleverly designed to interact with each other at several different levels and while difficult to get your head around at first, paid off in spades as we got into our roles. A real highlight for me – playing a female character – was not only finding that I was pregnant, but also getting to meet the father at the end of the game. A very high powered *Traveller* character of some note!

Finally, on Saturday evening I joined Andy Lilly's game "Taking Prisoners", the TP title a hint that his wife Sarah was continuing to develop her writing skills after "Thorny Problem" and "Trading Places" of previous years. This time we were a team of crack medics called in after a major earthquake trying to help out at a prison full of dangerous inmates. Of course, it wasn't that simple; it never is – but in the only game of the weekend that wasn't noble related for me, we had a terrific time saving lives,

<sup>1</sup> The pretext for the trip down the corridor was the 'need' to time how long it took them to make a certain detour. And so eleven players walked at varying speeds to the front door of the hotel and back. The twelfth player however, much to everyone's amusement, had specified four additional servants as "palanquin bearers". His stately movement out of the room at about a quarter of everyone else's speed was a delight! Thank you, Nick.

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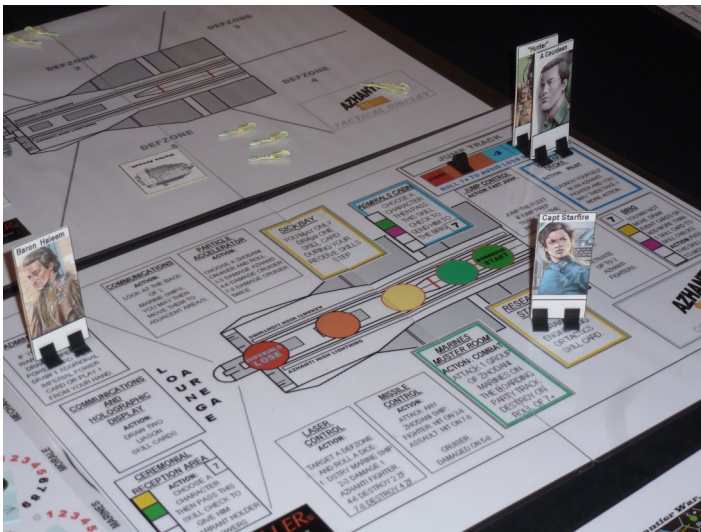
# Raconteurs' Rest

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**Andy Lilly, convention organiser, at the helm of "Taking Prisoners", written by his wife Sarah**

treating injuries, and all the while adding to the mayhem around us. A wonderful moment of roleplaying came when our glorious leader, played by Keith (leftmost in the photo of Andy refereeing), who had spent ten minutes debating with the prison governor over whether the marines we had as security could bring their weapons, finally browbeat the governor into seeing it our way. The governor's last ditch attempt to assert some authority with a "Who's in charge here?" was instantly met without a batted eyelid from Keith with "you are" as he moved the - armed - marines into the prison.



**Game aids were as spectacular as ever - this from "Azhanti Strike!"**

As ever I've neglected to mention the other games I wasn't part of - 20 of them this time! But from the general intensity, mirth, strange noises, excellent miniatures, handouts and so on it was all going as well elsewhere in the three lounges we call home for two and half days. An "Azhanti High Lightning" was in action against the Zhodani, scrap merchants were getting more than they bargained for, and the Navy were trying to rescue a Noble and his 400 bottles of champagne from a war zone. Classics such as "Ordeal by Eshaar" and "Cold Dark Grave" were being run and completely disrupting play everywhere was the moment the room darkened, stars swirled in the ether and Yaskodray appeared with booming voice to instruct the players involved in Paul Thornbury's miniatures spectacular in the casting of the coyns.



**Yaskodray with sound and light show**

The weekend flew past and all too soon it was time for the final wrap up, thank yous, auction and for us all to vote on the awards of the Ping, F\*\*\* It! prize for the biggest moment of either stupidity or "oops" along with the Starburst for Extreme Heroism for an act of outstanding bravery. Congratulations went to Andy Lilly and his family for the time and effort they put into organizing the convention, snacks throughout and a host of other things we probably don't even notice. The auction saw my notes, handouts, and large deckplan of a noble yacht making £50 for charity (\$78) which was very gratifying. TH managed to win the PFI award. His character needed to cross to a hulk in space and set off

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# Raconteurs' Rest

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some shaped charges in lieu of a jetpack. He used broken hull plating to protect himself but overestimated the force and went bouncing off the hulk like a pinball. He survived the first explosion but had to try again to get to where he needed to be. He did finally reach it but was now travelling at high velocity and no longer had any means of slowing himself down! Chris won the SEH for, as the citation had it, "emergency tailoring" in a critical situation under fire. I think you had to be there. 🌟



Chris and his SEH award

|                              |  |   |  |   |  |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| SAT 9 am                     | <b>Taking Prisoners</b><br>As part of an experimental medical team, you're afflicted. You can cope with a minor wound, but you can't cope with a major one. You'll need the Spawards team to assist in an emergency zone.<br><i>Andy Lilly</i>   | <b>Vic's Boss</b><br>Vic Barrow off-world team comes for bulk scrap doctors to the stars.<br>It's a simple job: go to the bulk, strip off what's valuable, make money, go home!<br><i>Foal Barker</i>   | <b>A Cold Dark Grave</b><br>A post-war double dip recession threatens the small family mining concern, Emison Industrial Minerals, with bankruptcy. But then a Hal Mary job has come through from a family friend with an investment in the business. Legal Salvage out in the deep. What could possibly go... No, let's not go there.<br><i>Graham Spearing</i>   | <b>Survive!</b><br>This is research station Neme calling anyone, please respond we have a major security breach, please respond I don't know how much longer we can last!<br>You awake with no memory of the past 48 hours, you need to discover what happened and work out how to escape the nightmare of research station Neme.<br><i>James Firminger</i>   | <b>The Zhadani Candidate</b><br>14 years after the False War of the Fourth Frontier War, all sides are still maneuvering for the next battle. As spies, agents, and administrators at the highest levels of the Mora Duchy, you must advise Mora's heir as she prepares to wade a vortex of the Fourth Frontier War. This game of secrets, intrigue, politics, lies and precious truths will determine the fate of the Spawards Marches for decades to come.<br><i>Stephen Ellis</i> |
| SAT 2 pm                     | <b>Barred Secrets</b><br>A mysterious group with a nice, easy racket to protect some archeologists from the native wildlife on a backward planet outside the Imperium. What could possibly go wrong?<br><i>David Shaw</i>  | <b>RETURN TO THE STARS</b><br>A group of alien pilots are stranded on a planet. They're stuck. They're stuck. They're stuck.<br><i>David Shaw</i>   | <b>The Second Scions Society</b><br>Once every three years the Second Scions' Society gathers to enjoy a banquet and merrymaking. This year it is no exception for the dilettantes and they've chosen a busy neighborhood for their get-together.<br><i>Timothy Collinson</i>  | <b>Ordeal on Eshaar</b><br>As the Fifth Frontier War looms, the Spawards Marches in mortal combat, a band of adventurers journeys outside the Imperium on a mission of vital importance. Their destination ESHAAR, a dangerous and hostile world where temperatures average 150 C, where sulphuric acid takes the place of water, where enigmatic aliens hold the key to success or failure for the Imperium.<br><i>Tony Hyland</i> | <b>In the Deep</b><br>A distant starship alerts between the stars. Old, so very old... Who would have it here?<br>And why?<br><i>Nick Walker</i>   |
| SAT 7 pm                     | <b>The Tailors of Alicia</b><br>New Ambidge is a small settlement on the fringe of the British colonies on Alicia dedicated to opening up new agricultural lands. The colonial administration has lost contact with New Ambidge, and an expedition is being sent to investigate. It's almost certainly just another boring mission to fix a broken radio transmitter. What could possibly go wrong?<br><i>Simon Beaver</i> | <b>The Library of Four</b><br>While the ancient look on the lesser races fight for the future of the galaxy, can you be the first to uncover the secret at the heart of the Library of Four...?<br>A choice, either skirmish warlike. Elements of competition and flashing lights.<br><i>Foal Barker</i>  | <b>The "Merry" Light</b><br>The built-up world of Canuck is being ripped apart by war, with a series of escalating nuclear strikes being launched. The Imperial Navy must evacuate Imperial personnel and citizens, it is left to one brave squad of Light Infantry to go save a noble... and his 400 babies of vintage champagne. It's gonna be a Very Merry Xmas for all concerned!<br><i>Richard Talbot</i> | <b>Deus Ex Machina</b><br>An accident studying the primitive Dilantian people, on an isolated planet in Gateway Domain, you must decide whether to be drawn into a life and death struggle which will forever affect the future of these people.<br><b>NOTE: Contains at least one scene of extreme violence which some players may find disturbing.</b><br><i>Ravi Shankar</i>   |  |
| SUN 9.30 am (repeats to 3pm) | <b>Under the Cat's Claw</b><br>A new had the surviving wreckage of the Squalid Empire, but nothing compared to the day the Atilan came. Somehow you survived the critical bombardment and the slaughter in the cities, but now the evil cat is hunting you down as slaves or worse. Road to the light back, get word out to the Imperium and beg for help.<br><i>Tom Zander</i>  | <b>Downtown</b><br>"Downtown, Sunday 16:01. Start of the Library shift. Maintain vigilance and patrol zone of the now-secure zone, enforcing Colonial Law and authority of the New Home Government.<br>Remain vigilant for French and German military elements and neutralize Imperial efforts to exert control. You are authorized to dispense summary justice... No credits out there..."<br><i>Timothy Collinson</i> | <b>Portents and Silks</b><br>Fifth Scions' Society... what are they doing? They're doing... They're doing... They're doing...<br><i>Timothy Collinson</i>  | <b>Trading Places</b><br>The world of Persephone is ruled by merchant families through a so-called democratic voting system. But there is an inherent risk in being a close relative of anyone in power, because it's a well-known truism that power corrupts.<br><i>Simon Bell</i>   | <b>TBA</b><br>A failed jump drive, a strange encounter, a dead friend. What's the truth behind the corporation that runs this out-of-the-way planet?<br><i>David Shaw</i>  |

# News About Traveller

## Recent Traveller News and Findings

May 2013

- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Dawn Adventures 1: The Subterranean Oceans of Argos Prime*.
- **DSL Ironworks** has released *Quick Decks 5: Salient-class Patrol Frigate*.
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Pusher Propeller Fighter*, *Light Walker: Pistolero*, and *Starships Book 10101: Sleipnir-class Scout*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Judge Dredd: Apocalypse Dawn*.
- **Avalon Game Company** has released *Kit Bag 3: Swords and Blade Weapons*.
- **Jon Brazer Enterprises** has released *d66 Atmosphere Taints*, and *d66 Reasons Why the Planet Is Dead*.
- **Terra/Sol Games** has announced that they have reached and exceeded their final stretch goal for the *Six Guns: Lasers* Kickstarter.



## Up Close and Personal

### Chuck Chambers

profiled by Sam Swindell

**Chuck Chambers** C682CA Age 46 Cr110,000

7 terms Rogue

Cutlass-2, Forgery-3, Ship Tactics-1, Streetwise-1, Snub Pistol-0  
Cutlass, 2×Auto Snub Pistols, 6 Magazines HEAP, Low Passage

Chuck is a big man, with limited social skills and a penchant for off-color humor, good (or at least expensive) food, much drink, and especially any media of a military or naval character. His favorites are naval tactical simulations. He carries a cutlass wherever he legally can, and fancies himself somewhat of a pirate. He is in fact a fairly good forger, who is sought after throughout the subsector. Chuck is dangerous with a cutlass, in all senses of the word. He has been taken care of by a number of underworld leaders, who have need of his services, but realize that he needs watching. It is not unusual for him to have a sidekick, who is actually a minder. It is not that Chuck is naïve, but rather that he does not have any sense of where he himself fits. He is very well-read on history, especially military and naval history, and in fact can be rather a bore about it; he also understands the types of forgery and forgery de-

tection methods across the various tech levels, from TL4 to TL15. In spotting or evaluating a potential forgery, he is to be treated as Forgery-5.

His father was, he was told, a pirate captain who was killed in a raid while leading his crew in a boarding action. The details may have been embellished, but Chuck's reality centers around his father as a mythical and heroic pirate, which he has unsuccessfully emulated. He was never able to be a pirate, but had a gift for both the written word and falsifying it; he has become in fact a pirate in the sea of documents. He is also rather a buffoon, however valuable he may be to his minders.

Aboard ship, if he is on a commercial vessel, he will often be mostly kept in his cabin, often playing at commercial simulations of fleet combat. More frequently, his "mission" will require him to go "incognito," so his minders will have him go by low berth. It is about the only way that these poor souls can keep him from doing something criminally stupid. He has a record of arrests and charges for assaults, assaults with a deadly weapon, brandishing, and disturbing the peace; most have been dismissed, under suspicious circumstances. ☸

## Critics' Corner

### Traveller<sup>5</sup>: First Impressions

by Timothy Collinson

*Editor's note: At the time we printed this review, there was no 'official' cover image for this product, nor had the editor had received his copy.*

It's been a long time coming and much anticipated, but the new *Traveller<sup>5</sup> Core Rules* are finally here. This reviewer understands that the Kickstarter funding broke records for speed of achieving its goal and the amount by which it surpassed it, but by any measure it's certainly been a project that has come through in spades following a long gestation in Beta form. Marc Miller's labour of love it clearly is and it shows the maturity and extensiveness of over 35 years of thinking and planning. Landing on door-

steps and desks of *Traveller* fans around the world is a truly monstrous volume – some 656 pages of hard-back gorgeousness and weighing in at just a shade under 2kg! There isn't a *Traveller* book that is physically bigger. Or more daunting.

Externally, the plain black cover of *Traveller* continues with the red strip and title 'Core Rules' above; the *Traveller<sup>5</sup>* logo and 'Science-Fiction Adventures in the Far Future' below with 'Far Future Enterprises' in red along the lowest edge. Interestingly, the PDF version of the volume has the red trim as a near magenta colour on screen. The back cover of the book is largely plain black with the red strip continued around from the spine. Three logos (*Traveller<sup>5</sup>*, FFE Games and 'Zirunkariish') together with a QR

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code for [www.traveller5.net](http://www.traveller5.net) and the product barcode adorn the lower edge. The inside front cover has the T5-001 blank character card (front and back) while the inside back cover and endpaper has a double page spread of a map of Known Space marked with many but by no means all sector names and the icons of key polities or personalities – from the Aslan to 'Zarunkarish' [sic]. The final 15 pages of the book are ship illustrations on glossy paper – one of the stretch goals of the project – that are extremely attractive and nicely round off the otherwise plain paper and black and white illustrations of the rest of the book.

For the main contents there are seven chapters: introduction, basic information, characters and life, combat, starports and starships, stars and worlds, and adventures. These quick and early first impressions can't possibly hope to do justice to all the detail that's offered here, nor the implications for gameplay that multiple dice, varying characteristics, the task system and other rules will have. There is such detail in the book that's been glossed over rather quickly in what's to follow. Many sections could sustain entire reviews and analysis by themselves, but that will have to be left to a later date and those more experienced in the nitty-gritty of certain systems than this reviewer. However, a brief overview of what's here may give some guidance for those thinking of investigating further.

The Introduction comprises some 12 pages and provides a useful overview of *Traveller* as a game and its setting – listing many of its eras. Basic information covers nearly 40 pages on subjects such as 'ehex' – the extended hexadecimal system, the ton, range, distance and various benchmarks such as cost, size and temperature. There are several pages detailing how dice work in the game and listing the probabilities of throwing up to 10D (ten dice). The concept of *flux* is also introduced.

Characters and Life is easily the biggest segment of the book with nearly 150 pages devoted to it. Here you'll find explanations of the six standard characteristics but also their variants for detailing aliens of one sort or another; the 13 careers on offer; tasks and skills as you'd expect; but also pages on genetics, clones, androids and more. 'Personals' revisit the *MegaTraveller* idea of opposed tasks and there are also additions such as 'Knowledges' (replacing or adding to the strict list of 64 skills); 'Talents' (for example hibernation, or morph) generally set aside for non-humans; 'Senses'; and QREBS which is a system for evaluating the quality, reliability, ease-of-use, burden and safety of equipment and objects.

The Combat section covers, as do each of the remaining chapters, some 100 pages. It's probably best left to those much more expert to offer a detailed analysis but it appears to be comprehensive running from personal combat right up to weapons of mass destruction and even includes 'Behind-the-Screen Damage' for moments when the rules don't cover a situation and reasonable results are needed quickly. The chapter then goes on to include the GunMaker, ArmorMaker and VehicleMaker whose purpose should be obvious and consist of rules and then tables for creating all manner of weapons, armour and vehicles. The latter would include civilian as well as military transportation.

Starports and Starships has a marvellous few pages on starports before moving onto the bulk of the starship design sequence and tables including a couple of pages on missions. Then there are short sections on fuel, Jump Drive, Manoeuvre Drive, Sensors, Weapons, Screens and so on. Finally starship combat is dealt with in ten pages or so.

Stars and Worlds also cover familiar ground starting with The Galaxy and some intriguing hints about things we don't (yet?) know about. It then move on through Known Space to how to build individual systems and then worlds. Perhaps the most striking novelty here being different world maps for

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## Critics' Corner

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each different sized world. This has the advantage of making world hexes a standard size of 1000km or so, but the disadvantage of producing what must be some of the ugliest looking blank world maps imaginable (size 1 and size 15 or 20 as prime examples). It will be interesting to see if they're widely adopted. Also in this section are notes on trade and commerce, technology and computers, an intriguing couple of pages on 'The Lifespans of Intelligent Species' and finishing up with 'Personalities and Brains'.

The final chapter on adventures includes nine pages of rules on psionics – which seems an odd placing – why not immediately after 'The Senses' for example? – and material on sophont creation and robot construction before moving on to the Beast-Maker and general animal notes as well as a Thing-Maker – a dozen pages on creating and describing any equipment that can be imagined. Some 22 pages of equipment is then listed but this is clearly intended to be a 'starter' with sections explicitly omitted which might presumably be covered in future work. The last few pages on types of adventures and designing 'EPIC' (easy, playable, interactive, checklist) adventures looks particularly useful to this reviewer as a newbie referee!

Throughout the book there are illustrations ranging from classic old pictures which are a delight to see again to more modern work. Just occasionally the reproduction from a coloured page has 'shown through' in an unsightly background fill, but there's good range, good quality and a mixture of the familiar and the new. Some of the illustrations can be found in colour in the PDF version, although oddly some of the colour of the Beta version of the PDF has now become black and white or greyscale (for example the terrain type graphics).

There are omissions – perhaps to be saved for later volumes – such as no alien races descriptions or alien character generation even though there are

25 generic pages on generating sophonts. Often there are large sections of tables which could have used much more in the way of explanation and descriptive text or examples – although one appreciates that the book probably couldn't have been realistically much larger as a single volume. Creating believable plants and vegetation receives the short shrift it has in every edition of *Traveller* – i.e. none at all to speak of – which always seems odd for a game which encourages the design of complete alien worlds. And there are no sample adventures although there are ten wonderfully helpful pages on designing adventures. There are also curiosities such as *Traveller*<sup>20</sup> being missed from the otherwise exhaustive list of previous editions, odd pink spots on the map of Known Space included in the PDF, and the use of NAFAL for Not as Fast as Light rather than STL (Slower than Light) which was new to this reviewer – although that may only show his ignorance! These however are nit-picking at the edges of a volume that's a delight to browse through and fascinating at every turn. What's most intriguing are the detailed looks at things that have been covered very cursorily or not at all in previous editions of *Traveller* even though they might be considered fairly crucial aspects of the game. Noble land grants, fame, the Senses, and even alien genders might be examples.

Some of the material will of course be familiar to users of T4 (or *Marc Miller's Traveller*). This is clearly a hugely extended version of that edition of *Traveller* rather than the return to the roots of *Traveller* that the Mongoose edition represents. This may be more or less attractive, depending on your view of the two flavours. What is clear is that the length of time in production would at first glance mean that this edition has been done 'right' in terms of attention to detail. Whether it's 'right' in the larger sense of being playable and/or attractive to new players is perhaps more debatable. For newcomers there is a vast amount of detail and in places some considerable complexity to absorb. While it can be used lightly,

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## Critics' Corner

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you'd need to be familiar with previous incarnations of *Traveller* to be able to pick and choose wisely. There's very little in the way of guidance here as to how to get going quickly, or how to navigate around the various segments.

There is, however, much to be admired and this reviewer hasn't failed yet to open the book and find something new and eye-opening about either the universe of *Traveller*, or rules to help the imagination along when it's struggling, or even simply new

ways of thinking about life, the universe and everything in some of its systems which will be helpful. For experienced referees there will be deep veins to mine for some time to come. But it's certainly to be hoped that the widespread interest in this edition and encouraging start to a whole new universe of adventure, both inspires those who've been around for any number of previous editions as well as attracts a new generation of Travellers to what must still be counted as the premier science fiction role-playing game of all time. 🌟

## The Shipyard

## MegaTraveller Designs

### Mpeara- and Npeara-class System Defence Boats

designed by Ewan Quibell

CraftID: Mpeara Class SDB, Type SB, TL7, MCr422.0476  
Hull: 900/2250, Disp=1,000, Config=8USL, Armor=50P, Unloaded=24,611.16 tons, Loaded=27,158.49 tons  
Power: 3/6, Fission=47Mw, Dur=365/1095 days  
46/92, Loco=544Mw, Dur=25.925 min  
Loco: 46/92, HiPerf Rocket=27,200 tons thrust, Max Accel=1G, Agility=0  
Comm: Radio=Planetary×3  
Sensors: Radar=Planetary, Radar Jammer=Planetary, Radio Jammer=System, Radar Direction Finder, Light Amplification Sensor, Radiation Sensor, Passive IR Sensor ActObjScan=Diff, ActObjPin=Diff  
Off: Missile=x70  
Batt 1  
Bear 1  
Def: DefDM=+3  
Control: Computer=2fib×3, Panel=Electronic×3653, Electronic Circuit Protection, Env=BasicEnv, BasicLS, ExtLS  
Accom: Crew=17 (Pilot=3, Commander=2, Engineer=3, Gunners=9), Seats=Adequate×10, Cramped×7, Staterooms=17, Airlock=2, Magazine=5 battery rounds  
Other: Cargo=43.3858kl, Fuel=7113.8462kl Cryo, 1.128kl Radioactives, ObjSize=Average, EmLevel=Moderate, Battery Rounds=100 Missiles  
Comment: 100-ton Bay Missile-7; Construction Time=120 weeks single, 90 weeks multiple; Cost is MCr376.32 in volume

CraftID: Npeara Class SDB, Type SB, TL7, MCr314.3535  
Hull: 900/2250, Disp=1,000, Config=8USL, Armor=50P, Unloaded=24,356.7 tons, Loaded=25,923.19 tons  
Power: 502/1004, Fission=7543Mw, Dur=182.5/547.5 days  
22/44, Loco=260 Mw, Dur=7.2 minutes  
Loco: 22/44, HiPerf Rocket=13,000 tons thrust, Max Accel=0.5G, Agility=0  
Comm: Radio=Planetary×3  
Sensors: Radar=Planetary, Radar Jammer=Planetary, Radio Jammer=System, Radar Direction Finder, Light Amplification Sensor, Radiation Sensor, Passive IR Sensor ActObjScan=Diff, ActObjPin=Diff  
Off: BeamLaser=xx8  
Batt 1  
Bear 1  
Def: DefDM=+3  
Control: Computer=2 fib×3, Panel=Electronic×2727, Electronic Circuit Protection, Env=BasicEnv, BasicLS, ExtLS  
Accom: Crew=21, (Pilot=2, Commander=3, Engineer=2, Gunners=14) Seats=Adequate×20, Cramped×1, Staterooms=21, Airlock=2  
Other: Cargo=99.04382kl, Fuel=960kl Cryo, 90.516kl Radioactives, ObjSize=Average, EmLevel=Moderate,  
Comment: 10 Triple Beam Laser-7 turrets; Construction Time=120 weeks single, 90 weeks multiple; Cost is MCr251.4828 in volume

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## The Shipyard

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The designers of the *Mpearas*- and *Npearas*-Class SDBs did everything they possibly could to maximise their ability to stand up to raiders of higher tech levels.

Using a planetoid hull means the crew can stay on station for extended periods of time without the need of extra radiation protection, as well as allowing an additional factor of 15 armor above that

which can normally be built at TL7. The 100 ton Missile bay in the *Mpearas* and the 10 triple beam laser turrets in the *Npearas*, while only one battery on each ship, allows the highest concentration of fire to be delivered, while the fibre optic computer and electronic circuit protection give the highest survivability that can be achieved.

*Mpearas* and *Npearas* are normally deployed together in mixed squadrons to maximize flexibility and effectiveness. ☼

## Critics' Corner

### Six Guns Rescue Organizations

reviewed by "kafka"

*Six Guns Rescue Organizations*. Martin J. Dougherty.

Terra/Sol Games. <http://terrasolgames.com>.

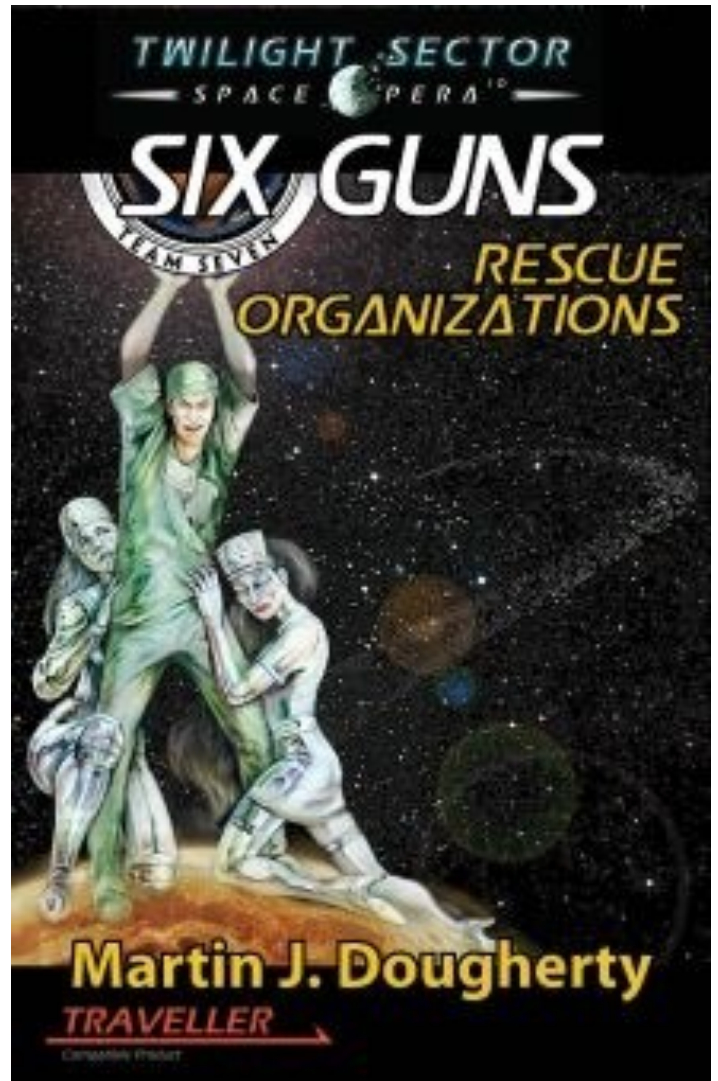
50pp., PDF.

US\$6.99.

*Traveller* has long suffered from many gaps with referees having to make do and create their own workarounds. One of those gaps is what the future's equivalent of the Coast Guard is. Part of you, might think the Scouts whereas, others, say Navy and still others COACC. However, in almost any *Traveller* as everything does revolve essentially around a profit, why not the business of saving lives?

In steps Terra-Sol Games with an excellent *Six Guns* Supplement that highlights different rescue organizations of the Twilight Sector (although, these can easily be adapted to any *Traveller* milieu including the OTU). For those who are not in the know, *Six Guns* is the generic name for their supplements - whether they feature guns or not. And, it is best described as a mini-supplement for it has more meat than a 'zine yet not enough for a full blown book or treatise.

Rescue organizations, as outlined above are driven mainly by the profit motive, although, altruism is expected from its members. Much as some communities have privatized fire fighting or gar-



bage collection—*Traveller* rules the State (i.e. the Third Imperium) has no business in the affairs of Planetary Governments and the same is true for much of the Twilight Sector.

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## Critics' Corner

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First, there is a description of the myriad of organizations that can be found. Whether they are the future's Boy Scouts, heroic rescuers, or just people just above scavengers in the food chain or somewhere in-between, they are lovingly described. They are presented with all their glory and flaws giving lots of inspiration to referees to create their own based upon these archetypal organizations. The descriptions are sound and based upon a good sense of the Space Opera aspect of the milieu yet achieving the right balance for those who favour a harder edge. So once again, TSG achieves the balance between Hard and Soft Science Fiction that makes *Traveller* work.

Some gear is thrown in for good measure. The gear is what constitutes a rescue ball and a wilderness survival kit. Both are essential for this supplement. They do have deck plans also of typical rescue ship along with the description of a rescue missile here—this is where it got to be a bit too much Gerry Anderson for my liking. But, as with all TSG products, it is completely for the referee to decide to incorporate it into her/his campaign. So, I think I will

pass on the rescue missile. Good thought has been placed into creating these lists, as all too often one thinks of a future survival kit as a type of futuristic Swiss Army Knife... not so here. There is enough equipment that people will not die... but peril remains a real threat.

Lastly presented is the Chargen for a typical rescue organization. The rules follow what they did in *Tinker, Spacer, Psion, Spy*—a variant on the Mongoose rules but still perfectly serviceable with the Mongoose *Traveller* rules. So it is a 'lite' version.

Terra Sol Games was good enough to throw in some details of their FTL system. While this is specific to their variant, it still presents some ideas for referees who might be toying with leaving the OTU or at least expanding experimental technologies available to the OTU.

The art continues to generate the WOW factor in me. Although, by all accounts it is excellent, it is clear like the writing was motivated by impish imagination. Although, the art does repeat itself it can hardly be expected that a 50 page supplement would not have some repeating art from a small publisher. The writing is standard MJG: clear and concise with a measure of wit thrown in. ☼

## Raconteurs' Rest

### Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

#### Part 23

While in Transition there wasn't a lot to do, really. The Captain kept a skeleton crew on the bridge and in engineering in the event of a Gravitational Anomaly or Distress Signal showing on the Sensor board. Generally it was the Kitchen and Purser's departments that were the busiest, tending to the whims of the passengers.

Several days of relative inactivity later. the deep, insistent, double-tone of the N-Space Klaxon sounded, telling one and all of the ship's elapsed time

spent in Transition—the Heimdall saying “Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time seven thousand, eight hundred, sixty six minutes.”

Then, “Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time five days, eleven hours, six minutes.”

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Not believing his ears, Captain Fyyg went to the navigator's cabin and pounded on the door.

“Eljin, you magnificent bastard! You did it!” the Captain screamed, laughing at the results the N-Space Claxon had provided.

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Sitting on a stationary bike set in the back corner of the Crew Lounge, Tower, the navigator, heard

## Raconteurs' Rest

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none of the Captain accolades as he peddled his way toward a virtual win of the Tour de France; stopping his pedalling just short of a win to hear the Klaxon repeat "Return to Normal Space Elapsed time seven thousand, eight hundred, sixty six minutes."

Smiling, he opened a bottle of mineral water and sipped it, happy with his Navigation and his time on the exercise bike. One more than the other.

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In the cabin shared by Tam and Kalifra, the big blonde was laying face down on the big yellow couch, her gigantic braid having been released and combed out as the blond grooved to Middle Eastern Standards on the Micro and took in the familiar details of Tam's print of *The Triumph of Death* by Pre-Industrial artist Peter Brueghel the Elder.

Kalifra wore no top, and Tam straddled the woman's wide hips, greaves on even here, as the thick brunette leaned forward, massaging the blonde's neck and shoulders.

"Oh, that feels good!" the Aretiusian purred as Tam went from massaging her right shoulder down the muscles of her upper arm; the ones repaired by Doctor Wong only a few days ago. Tam continued slowly massaging down to the fingers of Kalifra's right hand, then slowly back up to the shoulder again.

"I still can't get over the lack of a scar..." mused Tam, looking closely at the arm.

"Baby," the blonde cooed, "that was great!" She flexed her right arm, "My arm feels fantastic! Where'd you learn to...?"

Then they heard the N-Space Klaxon sound "Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time five days, eleven hours, six minutes. "

Tam cheered and clapped, hopping off the couch and Kalifra, and dancing around the room like someone possessed.

"I won! I won! I won it! Five days and eight hours, sister!" the brunette yelled, taking a swing at

the empty air in front of her "I won the lottery!" she smiled as she imagined the Captain opening the box in which the lottery money was kept; going to a winner if ever someone was close with their prediction—which was rare—or going to help stock the Beer Locker when it wasn't.

---

As the *Waffles* popped into existence 0.7AUs from the system's red dwarf, Nordic System Control seemed to burst to life "Inbound ship entering Nordic System at 0526 Hours Local Time. Configuration and type give an eighty percent likelihood that ship is the *Chicken and Waffles*, owned and operated by Captain Fyyg!"

"Aye," Brodie agreed, "Your Prescience is phenomenal."

"Thank you, Captain," System replied dryly, "We have fuel and entertainment facilities available, free of charge, by order of Port Director Hobson Simply follow the homing beacon. Cleared for landing at your leisure at Bay zero one."

"At current acceleration," System told them, "we show your ship arriving in 16 hours; approximately 2126 Hours Local Time. Welcome back, *Waffles*."

"Umm. Thanks." Brodie replied.

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Once landed, Second Officer Frielander oversaw the Roosters' offloading of the Knobb-White cargo as the First Officer and Captain headed to the Port Director's Office; the Roosters' own force temporarily increased by the hiring of stevedores from the Downport

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The Director had figured his cut would be somewhere in the neighborhood of eighty thousand Credits, and was prepared to hear nothing less.

As Number One stared down Hobson's liveried guards, Captain Fyyg began his explanation.

"We thought if we did well, we would be paying you something like eighty four thousand Credits. As it happens we did very well indeed, and instead of the ninety six thousand Credits we were going to

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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pay out in tribute, we are instead gifting you with one hundred twenty eight thousand Credits."

The Captain did a slight bow, and Number One, who'd been holding a pair of large satchels, placed them on the Port Director's desk.

"Good day!" the Captain said as they left.

"Aren't you going to count it, boss?" asked one of the guards.

"No indeed, Simon," replied Hobson, smiling. "Fyyg is an honest man."

"Really. But aren't you going to count it?" asked the guard again.

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"Number Two," Captain Fyyg said into his comm unit, "Liberty for everyone, Ilsa, and I mean *everyone*. Since we're on the Port Director's dime, we might as well leave the computer on Anchor Watch, and take full advantage, pet! A full week 'til Lift Off."

---

Later, with most of the crew already ashore, the Captain was putting on his dress uniform, to be sure he went ashore looking spiffy (as he'd be accompanying Ilsa in her dress uniform).

Ilsa asked, "By the way, Figgie, what's a dime?"

"Oh," replied the Captain, as he adjusted the crush cap on his head just so, "it's an old-timey coin, darling. Like a Jiao."

Scattered again to the four winds, many of *Waffles'* crew said they'd meet again later that evening in Ponchitos, a local watering hole and knock shop several of the crew had frequented the last time the *Waffles* was dirtside.

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The *Chicken and Waffles* had hit Nordic Prime's atmosphere at 2132 Local Time, and by 2215 Brodie was already sitting at the bar in his natty tux; sipping a second small shot of Uzo as he waited around; listening to the introduction then watching the act of each dancer in turn.

A few of the girls he found, piqued his interest, but none were his Salome.

Dejected, Brodie got up to leave, and about half-way across the place, he accidentally caught a Server-bot in the main sensor grill with his right shoulder; knocking the tall, wispy robot off its casters; the thing spilling its serving tray full of drinks onto a couple sitting at a table nearby.

In a flash a short guy, wearing a dirty blue boiler suit with a patch reading *Triple Sixes* which sported a trio of dice, sprang to his feet, soaked with ice in his lap. Enraged, he flipped the small table; trapping his leggy blond date beneath.

The balding crewman smashed Brodie square in the face with a large fist; causing the ape's eyes to water and his nose feel like it had been stuffed with pepper.

Through watery eyes, Brodie grabbed the guy by an arm and hurled him into one of the mirrored walls behind which the girls normally performed, producing an explosion of mirrored shards as the fellow first hit the wall, then the floor, unconscious.

"Gustav!" Someone yelled, rising to his feet from a nearby table. "Look what that hairy thing did to Gustav!" A trio of others sporting similarly patched boiler-suits rose; one pulling a heavy wrench from her pocket and smiling at Brodie, while another pulled a large boot knife.

"Look," the big chimp said, "this seems a bit extreme, people. Going for weapons over a spilled drink." Reaching into a pocket, he continued "How about I buy the three of yez a drink, then you can tend to your little pal over there." Brodie nodded toward the unconscious spacer on stage.

As the serious-looking fellow with the boot knife was closest of the approaching trio, and took another step or two closer, Brodie pulled free a set of keys and fired the tiny key-ring pistol, the thing barking loudly as it hurled its single load of .410 shot at the knifeman's unprotected chest, shredding both suit and wearer and knocking him into a couple at another table; wrecking their evening.

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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Several customers as well as hostesses, instead of hugging the floor, ran for the door.

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As the Captain and Ilsa walked toward Ponchitos they could hear yelling and a sudden boom, which Ilsa felt pretty sure was a .410 firing, followed by more screaming as some of the customers and dancers ran out of the place.

As Fyyg and Frielanders entered, they could see the face off between Brodie and the remaining pair from *Triple Sixes*.

As Brodie tried to make for the door, the woman with the wrench cut off his exit while the other, large and tattooed, closed on Brodie, pushing chairs and flipping tables aside as he came.

"Now look, bub..." Brodie began.

"Frank," the tattooed man replied.

"Frank," Brodie corrected, as the huge Pig launched himself at the chimp.

Frank slammed into Brodie's shoulder, and in a flash put him into a choke hold. Brodie tried slamming his tattooed opponent against a partition wall, trying to shake him free. The wall tore up, in turn tearing clothes and putting splinters into the pair as they wrestled.

"You dick!" Brodie yelled, "That was my best suit!"

"Doesn't say much for your tailor then, does it?" Frank asked, laughing. Then, tripping over a table, the pair went down.

Suddenly, Frank felt the small, smooth metal barrel of a needler pushed into his ear.

"You've suddenly seen the error of your ways," a statuesque blonde told him, "You and your friends will leave, I don't care how."

Within a few minutes the pair had wrangled their shipmates and left Ponchitos.

By the time Brodie was back on his feet, the Captain and Number One had come over, thanking the big blonde for saving their friend.

"Really, it's nothing," the blonde said, "Is it, Brodie?"

"Well, I guess not. I suppose I coulda beat him eventu..." Then, in mid-sentence, the stunned ape said, "Salome? I didn't know you were a blonde, baby! Hot damn, but it's good to see you!"

Suddenly the engaged in a passionate clinch and kissed.

"You, too, lover," she replied, chuckling as she put her pistol away. "I'm really a brunette, by the way."

"And these are my associates..." Brodie started.

"Captain Fyyg, no doubt, and Second Officer Ilsa Frielanders: Brodie's told me so much about you." Salome said, shaking hands.

"And how'd'ja get so wet, my pet?" asked Brodie, putting a long arm around her.

"I was sitting at one of the tables discussing business when this robot up and turns his entire tray of drinks on us!" Salome laughed.

Everyone laughed.

"A brunette, huh?" Brodie asked, arm in arm with Salome.

"Don't'cha worry Brodie," Salome told the chimp, patting an arm to comfort him, "I'd stay a redhead for you all the time, if you want me too."

Brodie had a big, goofy grin, smiling contentedly.

With Ponchitos off-limits to them after the night's festivities, they went out by cab to the Eitr Regency, a nice hotel some fifty kilometers from the downport in upscale Hector. A local landmark, it was thirty six floors high, and known for its famous restaurant, Odin's, on the twelfth floor. As they were sitting down, Fyyg flashed Brodie with Zero-G hand signals, telling him "My Party".

Noticing the interaction, Salome asked Brodie "What was that?"

"Oh, nothing... Private Joke," he replied, chuckling.

Not knowing what to do, they each ordered the special: Nordic Snow Hare, an animal native to Nor-

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## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 25)

dic Prime not too dissimilar to rabbit, an au gratin using Peruvian blue potatoes to match the color of the meat, and broccoli. The meal would have come with a red wine, but since Brodie wanted Zobravka, the table settled on a bottle, instead.

The fine food and excellent drink soon had the diners relaxed and talking at length.

When Captain Fyyg asked Salome her name, she gave it as Salome Le Boucherre, which broke up the table.

As they were settling up with the Maître d', Captain Fyyg decided, "Let's set aside a pair of bottles for the ship, shall we?"

When the fifty-three-hundred-Credit bill arrived, Nordel didn't bat an eye; simply deciding he'd never dine there again. Though everyone did have a wonderful time.

Later, after spending time in the hotel bar, exchanging platitudes with with the old, red-velvet coated Bartenderbot, the quartet called it an evening, with the Captain and Number Two heading to their room on the top floor, Brodie and his companion taking the elevator up to the 14th floor.

For the next several days Salome acted as the trio's tour guide, showing them local wonders, sharing bits of history, and knowing where to find the deals that most ship's crews would too easily overlook. Deals the Brokerage Houses might have a line on, but with their considerable fees.

Fyyg was a creature of habit, and dealing through Brokers was the way it'd always been. However, after persuasive attempts by Ilsa, Brodie, and Salome, the Captain decided, "why not," and within a few days the *Waffles* was to receive a dozen double-pallets of local spices, four double pallets of assorted melee weapons, and three triple pallets of manufacturer's grade crystals. All acquired for something in the neighborhood of KCr200. A third of the *Waffles'* nest egg, but a third without Lanning, Murrow and Jericho's hefty Brokerage Fee of eighty thousand Credits.

With only a few High and Middle Passengers, and a couple of dozen down in Steerage, the *Waffles*, with belly full of both fuel and cargo, lifted off soon after the Last Call Klaxon rang out at 1200 Hours at week's end, the ship skipping like a stone through Transition to Heimdall to sell-off its load of crystals, and take on a few small crates of computer programs, the Chief Engineer laid up in the Med Bay, sedated on IV during the craft's Transition. 🌟

## Less Dangerous Game

### Eightball Puppeteer

by Scott Diamond

| Forest Terrain |                             |           |      |       |  | Eightball                                       |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------|------|-------|--|---|
| Qty            | Animal                      | Mass (kg) | Hits | Armor | Wounds and Weapons   |   |
| 1              | Puppeteer (carnivore siren) | 70        | 14/5 | Jack  | Spiny Tentacles (Claws) 1D6 + special; Mandibles (Teeth+1) 2D6+1 | A(Surprise; see text) F(Surprised; see text) S1 |

The Puppeteer, whose scientific name (*insidator horrificus*) means "Lurking Horror", is a large ambush predator found on the dark world of Eightball. The animal is solitary, territorial, and scientists are split about its level of intelligence but no one can

deny it is extremely curious, cunning, and highly dangerous to stumble upon one while it is lurking in its burrow or creeping about the dark forests.

The Puppeteer is a warm-blooded animal with reptilian characteristics (scales, R-strategy egg-layer)

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## Less Dangerous Game

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and mammalian characteristics (warm blooded, high metabolism), but it is not classifiable as either. Nor is it a monotreme or mammal-like reptile. It even has arthropod and cephalopod characteristics. The animal has both an internal skeleton and external cuticle layer where it is not scaled or covered with a leathery hide. It is truly alien and highly advanced for its evolutionary development.

A Puppeteer is a long (2m average, but some have reached 3m), bilaterally symmetrical animal with what appear to be (but not actually, only in appearance) three segments. The head is spherical and has two pairs of 1.2-1.5m spined tentacles on either side at the edges of the mouthparts. The mouth is jawed, but with the addition of two pairs of jointed mandibles, resembling large chelicerae similar to those found on some arthropods. Four protruding, globular black complex eyes are stacked in two pairs above the mouth and situated for excellent vision forward and above the animal. Ears are present on either side of the head behind the tentacle base, well protected under a thin but tough layer of membrane. Overall, the head is covered by a smooth layer of leathery dermis colored tan with brown and black banding.

The head swivels around on a gristly base of heavy muscled neck protected by a ring of dark cuticle layers. The neck is more flexible than it appears and allows the animal to bite down on a prey animal that might thrash around and otherwise strain the Puppeteer's neck enough to cause it to have to either leave its burrow or release the prey without having to do either. It cannot survive a full 360-degree twisting, but it can come close to that.

Around the base of the neck, there is a fleshy collar that wraps around the back of the neck and provides a sheath for the two dozen fine fronds that the animal extends or retracts to both sample and expel scent in the air. The fronds can retract to about .5m and extend as far as 1.2m. They are very

thin, yet tough and flexible enough to resist damage. The very tips are brightly bioluminescent and range from yellow to yellow-green.

Behind the head and neck is the second "segment": this contains the vital organs and is sheathed in a thick cuticle layer for protection. Puppeteers breathe with lungs and make a wide range of vocalizations, both for communication with other Puppeteers, and for mimicking prey animals. This section has two pairs of legs for locomotion that have the same leathery hide that the head does. Each thick, heavily muscled leg ends in a sharp bony spur that serves as a foot. The Puppeteer uses these legs for movement and digging, plus, by sinking the sharp foot into the soil around it the animal can resist being pulled from its burrow. The midsection is a darker tan color with black banding.

The last section is a long, fat, cylindrical tail that tapers to a blunt tip. Large amounts of fats are stored here and used for surviving the planet's period of bright sunlight when the Puppeteer buries itself in its burrow and hibernates. The tail is strong but not used as a weapon. When the animal moves along the surface the tail is dragged along behind it, protected by fine scales along the upper half, and wide, smooth ones with a thicker cuticle below.

To understand and appreciate the Puppeteer one must also take into account the unique environment of the world it evolved on and the biome it lives in.

### Eightball

**Eightball** (E787100-0) is so named for having a north polar cap that is the only readily seen feature on an otherwise dark gray world when approached in space. For most of the year, the dense atmosphere hides the two major landmasses. The average temperature is 21°C, though the high humidity makes it seem much higher. Violent storms frequent the vast oceans and impressive lightning storms rage over the northern, larger landmass' mountainous north region. The heavy, damp heat is relieved during half of the planet's 300-day year by rains ranging from monsoon to a steady, warm drizzle.

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## Less Dangerous Game

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Because of the dense atmosphere and near-continuous cloud cover, the level of light during the daytime hours (averaging 10) is the equivalent of the urban limit of twilight (3-4 Lux), while the night hours (averaging 12) are so dark that it has been described as having substance. There is a brief period of the year, between the wet and less-wet periods, when the daytime light reaches as much as 40 Lux for 90 days. During this time, there is explosive growth among the flowering plants and most of the animal life seeks shelter by hibernating or only moving about in the night even if of an otherwise diurnal habit. Molds and fungi of all types abound on Eightball, and the oceans have vast mats of mosses covered in various molds, and fungus clusters like islands drift across the surface.

Due to the rapid growth and dense clouds of spores, pollen, and seeds expelled by all types of plants during the brightest season of the year, the atmosphere becomes hazardous to breathe unless anti-allergens are taken regularly. Filter masks and respirators are mandatory in addition to the anti-allergens, and the filters must be changed every day. During the rest of the year, anti-allergens are advisable, but masks are not needed.

### Predation and Survival

Because of the near year-round level of darkness on Eightball, the animals have adapted with several strategies for predation, defense, territoriality, and reproduction that are fascinating to researchers. One of the most common adaptations is the use of scent and sound to lure prey, or camouflage intentions. Other forms are bioluminescence of various intensities and enhanced vision. Sometimes several methods are combined for effect as in, for example, the Signalman, an arboreal mammal that emits a blinding flash of luminescence combined with a startling loud croak to stun either an attacking predator or tasty prey. Or the False Martin, a large ambush carnivore that only has bioluminescent patterns on its

face that mimic the overall body patterns of the female Red Martin in estrus (a 20kg ungulate), allowing the predator to hide along trails with only its face poking through the brush to attract males Martins looking to mate, which it then engulfs and eats with its gaping jaws. Others mimic the glowing fungi and plants they live among for camouflage.

The Puppeteer uses vocalizations, scent, and bioluminescence making it one of the most adaptable, successful, and disturbing predators on Eightball.

The Puppeteer lives in a burrow it digs vertically into the soil, usually near the base of large trees – it is believed that this provides protection from any predator that would try to attack the Puppeteer from the rear. The animal coils its tail at the bottom of the burrow, jams its spiked feet into the sides of the burrow, and its head fills the entrance. The animal then extends its scent fronds high into the air above it and emits the odor of the surrounding plants to cover its own scent. This scent varies among Puppeteers based on the local plant life so the theory is that the animal eats the plants when young and so absorbs chemical samples in the same way as with its kills.

The Puppeteer lures, by using vocalizations mimicking distress or comfort sounds made by local prey, animals that live in the area while keeping all but its top set of eyes below the rim of the burrow. If no large animal comes near, the Puppeteer will not starve since the trees it makes its burrows near also usually have the ubiquitous Leaper-Creepers living in them. These arboreal, hopping mammalian insectivores (about the size of a rabbit) will often be fooled by the bright tips of the Puppeteer's scent fronds and leap at them thinking they are a swarm of insects. The Puppeteer will snatch the Leaper-Creepers out of the air as they fly by and eat them as the time passes, while waiting for larger prey.

When a large prey animal, or even an opportunistic predator, comes near looking for the source of the mimicked sounds, the Puppeteer will lunge out of its hole and capture the animal with its tentacles, pulling the prey closer to the crushing, slashing

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## Less Dangerous Game

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mandibles. The Puppeteer will bite down on the prey and hold it down until the prey dies of suffocation if it was not killed outright in the violent attack. The Puppeteer will not completely leave its burrow to pursue prey, since not only will this make it vulnerable to attack, but Puppeteers cannot run any faster than a human can for more than a few meters, and definitely not when dragging a prey animal in its jaws. Since the Puppeteer cannot risk some larger predator being nearby (a frequent case in some parts of the lands they live in) the animal will never leave its burrow to attack.

Puppeteers do sometimes wander about in the times of total darkness when it rains to avoid a flooding burrow, and dig up the burrows of small animals for food, and shelter under the massive root bundles of some trees. Researchers have told of hair-raising encounters with Puppeteers during these rainy seasons when the animals have found their way into tents and portable shelters, having manipulated the flap tie-downs and latches. A few cases resulted in the death of the researcher, but most merely woke to see the Puppeteer's shining eyes staring at them surrounded by the bright tips of the scent fronds.

If the Puppeteer has made a kill, it consumes the prey, hollowing out the carcass. The Puppeteer then pushes the top of its head into the carcass and lifts it over the burrow entrance so it can see out of the former prey's torso through slashes made during feeding. The Puppeteer uses its tentacles to move the head and body around a little while it also mimics the prey's sounds of distress or comfort noises. Since the prey is usually a social herd animal this almost always entices another one to come close out of curiosity or social instinct. The Puppeteer may also enhance the effect further by exuding pheromones or scents sampled from the prey when it was eaten, many of which are used as sexual attractants by the prey animal.

Sometimes this will also attract opportunistic predators, particularly since the scent of blood and organs accompanies the kill. Puppeteers are not choosey eaters, so if the predator is of a size that the Puppeteer can kill, the Puppeteer will do so and happily eat it. Puppeteers have been observed to kill predators half again their size.

After two or three kills, the Puppeteer will abandon its burrow and take up residence in one of several it has dug out around its territory. Scavengers will eventually dispose of the remains of kills left behind and the Puppeteer will return to a cleaned hunting area later. Puppeteers, while not social, can sometimes be found clustered near each other in especially rich feeding grounds. They will tolerate each other so long as they each keep to their own particular burrows. If prey is scarce, smaller Puppeteers may be attacked in their burrows by larger ones, who then eat them with as much relish as anything else they consume.

Puppeteers are hermaphroditic and mate once every two years. Two Puppeteers will perform a pattern of ritualized behavior involving tentacle waving and screeching vocalizations, then each will slip a "packet" of sperm encased in mucus webbing into a receptor duct behind the head with a tentacle. After this, the two will proceed on their mutual ways while making low grunting croaks until well away from each other. The entire process takes about half an hour.

The sperm is stored for up to two years and the Puppeteer will fertilize and lay 30-60 eggs once every 6 months. The eggs are buried in shallow holes dug by the adult and then left to hatch on their own about 4 days later. The young Puppeteers emit a pheromone that discourages adults from eating them, but a few predators will home in on the odor to consume the fully formed juveniles. Out of an average of 40 eggs, five hatchlings will survive to reach adulthood in eight months. The lifespan potential is up to 30 years for a Puppeteer, but few live for more

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than 5 or 6 years in the wild, since competition among large predator species on Eightball is fierce.

### Puppeteer Intelligence

Puppeteers are considered by some to be at least semi-intelligent and on a level with a human 8-year old in terms of puzzle solving and manipulation of complex objects. In the wilds, Puppeteers have been observed using rocks and wood as tools for digging out and killing prey found in the giant root tangles at the bases of many of the trees they live near. While chasing the prey out of the hiding places with one or two tentacles, the other tentacles would hold rocks or sharp sticks to impale or smash the prey trying to escape, allowing the Puppeteer to kill more prey than it otherwise would if it reached in a dragged them out. Puppeteers will puzzle out latching and locking mechanisms on shelters and of their enclosures when in captivity.

Puppeteers will use sharp and levering tools, and will test several newly encountered items against the known suitability of the currently used tool. If a superior one (sharper, lighter but works as well...) is found, the Puppeteer will swap tools.

While they do not appear to have any language, Puppeteers can mimic the voices of researchers that sound amazingly accurate when the animals have only heard them once or twice. They do not construct sentences or anything like that, but by motions with their tentacles combined with mimicked words that they have seen connected to something they want (such as a prey item) Puppeteers have been able to make some very basic communication with their keepers. No creative processes have been observed, though the animals are highly curious, often manipulating and staring at some complex item given to them by keepers. Puppeteers are, however, very dangerous and cunning in captivity, and have been known to patiently wait for a chance to attack a keeper it has lulled into thinking the Puppeteer had become tame and docile.

### Puppeteer Encounters

If a Puppeteer is encountered, its response will depend on the environment and situation. If the Puppeteer is hunting from its burrow then it will always attack if the person is close enough (about a 3m "lunge limit") and it has surprise on its side. The Puppeteer will consider surprise valid if the person approaches within the lunge limit and has not shown himself to be a threat by attacking the Puppeteer.

If the Puppeteer is out of its burrow and moving about in the rainy season it will flee if surprised, and attack if it feels cornered and cannot at least protect its tail under something. The same response happens when encountering one in a shelter or in captivity if the Puppeteer is surprised. They have been known to use air ducts and access ways as burrows if the opening is at floor level. In such cases, the Puppeteer will not attack outside its lunge limit but will back into the duct to protect its hindquarters while seeking a way to escape.

Encountering a Puppeteer out of its burrow when it is hunting and has surprise on its side (as in the earlier mentioned shelter or tent examples) will find the Puppeteer on the attack more often than not. Sometimes, rarely, the animal seems to be merely curious and will not attack so long as no sudden or threatening moves are made but one never knows what is in the animal's mind.

When attacking the Puppeteer will lash out with its tentacles and attempt to hold the person down so it can bite. If the tentacle attack was successful, the Puppeteer will bite with its mandibles in the same attack. If the tentacle attack failed, the Puppeteer will not bite in the same attack. For it to bite, the Puppeteer has to have successfully attacked with its tentacles.

If the attack fails the Puppeteer will try to escape if an escape route is possible to the rear to the animal. If not it will be considered "cornered" and attack until killed. If it is possible to escape the Puppeteer will try to do so. 🌀





### Formerly Known As...

by Michael Brown

**Required Skills:** None

**Required Equipment:** None

**No. of Players:** 1

While in the planet’s Startown between flights, the PC will notice a large gathering of children nearby; it looks like some local entertainers are putting on a mini-carnival for them. A few booths are included, wherein the kids can play simple games for prizes or receive free treats. The visitor, in glancing at the booths’ proprietors, will be shocked to see that one of them is Xan Aarlen, a notorious terrorist s/he clashed with years prior! Aarlen, responsible for much death and destruction before the hero brought him to heel, is now blithely passing out edible treats and small toys to a group of children, while the parents look on approvingly!

Startown is outside the extrality gates, so reporting Aarlen to the Imperial authorities does no good. The crowd makes it easy to get to Aarlen relatively unseen by him.

### Possible Directions to Take This Scenario

1. Aarlen has changed his ways, undergone extensive therapy and behavioral modification, and now seeks only to do good. He will not recognize the PC when approached, treating him or her like any other customer.
2. As 1, except Aarlen will instantly recognize the PC and—thinking (s)he has come to settle old scores—try to escape, incidentally creating a massive disturbance.
3. As 1, except Aarlen is accompanied by his therapist/guardian, who will immediately call police on the adventurer at the barest hint of trouble.
4. Aarlen is fomenting a plot, using innocent children for some nefarious purpose. The adults around him have no idea of his true nature.
5. As 4, except he has disguised agents circulating through the crowd. They will react to any action against Aarlen with deadly force
6. As 4, except he is being closely watched by plainclothes planetary agents trying to see what he is up to. They will not brook any interference by an interloping adventurer. ☼



### Fuel Harvesting Stations

by Paul Hillers

Ling Standard Products is the largest manufacturer of the Remote Hydrogen Collection and Transport System (RHCaT). The RHCaT system is the most cost-efficient way found to date to provide hydrogen fuel at the lowest cost. It consists of three separate units: a collection station to collect and process raw hydrogen, unmanned pods to transport the fuel, and pod tugs to launch and collect the pods.

A RHCaT may not be present in every system. It is most economical to operate where at least one gas giant is present. If there is no gas giant, then an ice moon, planetary ice rings, or even the Oort cloud can be used for the raw materials. The base TL of the RHCaT system is on the lower end of the Imperial

average TL (12). This is done to ensure that most systems can operate and support their infrastructure without costly imports of parts from other systems.

Typically, the RHCaT is operated by the local Starport Authority, and while there is no restriction on the number of RHCaTs that may be present in any one system, it is rare to find more than one in operation. On occasion large Megacorps may operate smaller-sized facilities for their own uses.

### RHCaT Components

**Hydrogen Collection Station (HCS):** The HCS is largest and most expensive portion of the RHCaT system. Stationed near a fuel source, the HCS collects the raw fuel, prepares the shipment, supports half of the system fuel pod tug fleet, and also often acts as the primary source of fuel outside of the pri-

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mary world(s) of a system. A HCS is typically comprised of one or more orbital stations that provide living accommodations, engineering support for all assigned vessels, and fuel tankage equivalent to seven days worth of collection. Some stations may actually consist of a ground base (on a planet, moon or planetoid) with an orbital component. Some HCS facilities are actually part of a much larger facility that serve as a primary trade and transport hub. A HCS may also have an accompanying refinery facility present to create refined fuel.

**Fuel Collection Tanker:** Each HCS maintains its own small fleet of fuel collection ships. The standard design consists of a heavily-modified 25,000 dTon tanker for gas giant mining. If the primary source of fuel is ice then instead of tankers there would be ice mining ships, also in the 25,000 Dton range. The fuel collection ships are heavily automated and designed to be operated by a minimal crew of 4 (Pilot, Co-Pilot, 2 Flight Engineers). The ships are capable of 1G fully loaded. Because the ships are meant to be operated for short periods only (average mission 12hrs or less), they only have 3 days of fuel tankage. All ship maintenance is performed by HCS crews.

**Fuel Pod Tug:** Like their larger brethren, the pod tugs are optimized to perform only one job: launching and catching fuel pods. Also like tankers, they are heavily automated, have minimal sensors, small crew and carry a 3 day supply of fuel onboard. Pod tugs are, in essence, a set of controls strapped onto a very large set of engines. Each pod tug is capable of moving a 25,000 Dton fuel pod at 1G. They are capable of 6G maneuvers when not attached to a pod.

Tugs are designed to work individually or as a group when maneuvering the larger fuel pods. The mission planner will determine if additional tugs will be used for larger pods, if the tug(s) assigned will accelerate for longer than the standard 8hrs, or if the fuel pod will simply take longer to arrive due to a slower transit velocity.

**Fuel Pod:** The heart of the system consists of the fuel pods which move back and forth among all the planets and stations of a system that require hydrogen. Fuel pods come in five standard displacements: 10k, 25k, 50k, 100k and 250k. All fuel pods carry basic navigation sensors, maneuvering thrusters, communications, automated control systems and fuel purification equipment sufficient to refine the entire cargo in 30 days (the average transit time).

| Fuel Pods    |                               |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Size (dTons) | Fuel Storage Capacity (dTons) | Fuel Processors (dTons) |
| 10,000       | 9,500                         | 15                      |
| 25,000       | 23,750                        | 40                      |
| 50,000       | 47,500                        | 80                      |
| 100,000      | 95,000                        | 158                     |
| 250,000      | 237,500                       | 375                     |

Note: One dTon of fuel processors can purify 20 dTons of fuel per day. The average duration of a delivery is 30 days (20 dTons fuel × 30 days = 600 dTons purified fuel per dTon of fuel processors).

Fuel pods constantly broadcast a warning beacon to all system traffic, announcing their location, heading, velocity and destination to all vessels nearby. Onboard thrusters allow controllers to maneuver the pod if required. The onboard system can also perform emergency maneuvers if it determines that a pre-defined scenario has occurred. The thrusters are able to tap into the onboard fuel and basically use the hydrogen as fuel. They are inefficient (it takes 10 minutes to alter the course of the fuel pod by 1 degree), but their performance is acceptable since they are meant for emergency use only.

The pod also contains a series of explosive charges that can be detonated remotely, effectively turning the fuel pod into space-borne flotsam, albeit potentially moving at fairly high velocity. The debris resulting from a destroyed fuel pod is no risk to any starship, and there is a very high likelihood any materials would burn up in the atmosphere of a planet.

Five percent of a pod's mass is devoted to external hull attachments, internal hull bracing, fuel tanks, control systems and fuel processors. The hull is sufficient to protect against meteorites, but is con-

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sidered to have an armor factor of 0 against any starship weapon. Each pod also is subdivided into 10 smaller fuel cells to protect against leaks. Fuel from each tank is routed through the on-board processors during the voyage.

## Operations

An HCS station is crewed to operate on a continuous basis. Replacement crews and most supplies are delivered by in-system cargo transports. Most stations will be located about 90 diameters from a gas giant to allow jump-capable ships to more quickly dock, fuel up, and depart. The 10-diameter margin is to offer some protection from ships dropping out of jump directly onto the HCS.

HCS are rarely armed or armored (most are civilian stations). Depending on their location or local conditions, they may have an attached group of armed ships and/or fighter squadrons. Some stations have enough traffic to the gas giant (or have nearby colonies or mining outposts) that the HCS doubles as the local high port and is the primary transit point for that region of space.

Fueling stations may also have onboard fuel purification systems or a nearby orbital refinery supplied by the HCS. If the HCS also regularly services military ships, then the refinery capacity will be sufficient to refine all stored hydrogen within 48hrs. Storage tankage generally is sufficient to deliver fuel for seven days without replenishment. Actual volume is dictated by system-wide consumption.

Fuel pod tug(s) pick up loaded fuel pods at the station, and then begin their acceleration towards the intended target. The average fuel tug will accelerate for 8hrs toward the pod's destination, and then de-couple from the pod. The trajectory of the pod is calculated to avoid major shipping lanes as much as possible. The pick-up area at the destination is also designed to be well-away from the fuel pods final destination. Typically a pod's trajectory will take it 'above' or 'below' a planet's orbit to provide an ad-

ditional safety factor. Tugs that are designated to capture in-bound pods will rendezvous with the designated pod 12hrs out from its intended destination. This is to ensure that the tug has sufficient time to capture and decelerate the pod safely. Once captured the tug will decelerate for the same length of period that it was accelerated for, and then bring the pod to the station where the fuel is to be offloaded. It is very common for a tug to accelerate one pod towards its target and then capture an inbound pod a few hours later.

Fuel pods in transit follow a very predictable and pre-designated path. The actual path is calculated months in advance and refined up to the day of departure. System authorities upload the expected path and location of all fuel pods into the planetary data net and transmit schedules and navigation paths to all system stations on a daily base. Each pod monitors its own path and area around it (up to 25,000km) and regularly broadcasts its velocity and location to any ships in its area. Collisions between pods and ships in a system are extremely rare. The onboard systems have a number of pre-determined scenarios loaded that can influence the actions of the fuel pod while it drifts towards its intended destination, up to and including self-destruct. Pods transmit their status to controllers every 4hrs, and may receive updated trajectory and maneuvering instructions at any time.

## Adventure Possibilities

A RHCaT offers a number of possible adventures for PCs and the clever referee. This list should by no means be considered exhaustive:

- 1) The PC's are hired to interrupt fuel supply deliveries. (The patron may be a rival government or corporation, or a shady individual, possibly acting as a cutout for someone else.) They are given the task to destroy as many fuel pods in transit as they can without getting caught. Fuel pods are able to perform basic sensor scans of ships in their vicinity, so the PC's must figure out a way to destroy the pod and any evidence. To keep things more challenging

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the referee can declare that a destroyed pod has a 75% chance of ejecting a buoy containing all records up to the time of its destruction, including a sensor profile of the ship that attacked it. Finding a buoy, which are designed to be stealthy, is a difficult task (-4 to -6DM) to detect it. Because the buoy can take any trajectory from the destroyed pod, PC's basically only have minutes to find it before its lost in space. If they have the right codes, they can transmit a signal that will cause it to emit a homing signal.

2) The PCs are approached by a third party and are asked to attach a small 'package' to a fuel pod outbound from a gas giant towards the mainworld of the system. The PCs need to come up with a plan that would get them close enough to the pod to attach the package (1/2 dTon) in an area that would not be detectable to a cursory sensor sweep or visual scan. They may need to actually board the pod and attempt to re-program the onboard system so that no record of their ship exists. The referee can determine if the sensor logs are able to be edited, or if the players need to somehow generate a system 'wipe'... which will trigger backup alarm systems and notify controllers the primary system has gone offline. PC's may or may not be made aware of the secondary systems and their functionality.

3) The PCs are recruited to interrupt the fuel supplies of a remote outpost in the system. They can elect to simply destroy inbound pods, but their pay will be based on how successful they are able to interrupt the fuel supply without a) getting caught, and b) drawing unwanted attention to the activities from the authorities. Small 'accidents', mechanical 'failures', etc., that seem to be random are what the patron is looking for. They want the facility to have insufficient fuel (for some reason, not shared with the PC's).

4) The PCs are hired as a small commando team. Their task is to infiltrate an inbound fuel pod approximately 3 days from the target, hide onboard

the pod while it is captured and brought to the facility (a remote asteroid base, space station or planetoid). The facility is highly guarded, but the bulk of the security is designed to detect intruders before they get there. The PCs will need to move from the fuelling area, enter the installation and retrieve certain information/items, and then get back onboard their fuel pod within a 24hr period. The pod will be fully unloaded in 24hrs and the tug will boost the pod back towards the fuel station by then. The PCs cannot be picked up from the pod closer than 3 days from the target. Their pickup ship will have the necessary command codes to modify the sensor logs so that the pickup ship is never recorded.

5) The PCs arrive in-system and are immediately contacted by the system authorities. A rogue fuel pod is inbound towards the station/planet that the PC's are at and they are the only ones in range to prevent a possible disaster. The pod is not responding to any commands and the controllers cannot trigger its onboard self-destruct system. The pod is already within the 100-diameter limit of the planet and the PCs will have to make a decision to provide assistance or not. Their choices are to try and destroy it with weapons fire (difficult, since it's a 50,000 dTon fuel pod), or match course and velocity and 'nudge' the fuel pod into a newer, safer heading. No in-system military craft or remote weapons platforms are near enough to respond in time. This scenario is best sprung on the players without warning and force them to come up with a plan after they are already committed to the mission. To make it more interesting, the pod may be under the control of a terrorist organization that will use the onboard thrusters to make life more difficult for the adventurers. 🌟

### About *The Burrowwolf*

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



# Exeter TL8 Low Cost Fighter

designed by Richard Perks

During the 4th Frontier War several Vargr raiding bands attempted to take advantage of the general confusion to raid worlds along the coreward edge of Deneb and Corridor sectors. Whilst raids against the heavily defended worlds in Corridor failed, the raiders did hit several worlds with modest populations and pre-stellar technology.

After the war the Imperial COACC group identified a gap in their standard design provision. At TL8 the Imperium made several attack aircraft designs available but only one high priced fighter. The worlds hit by the Vargr had insufficient military budgets to buy such high priced designs. By 1089, a new low cost TL8 fighter design, the *Exeter*, was made available.

The *Exeter* is a basic single man fighter armed with 4 missiles and a single auto-cannon. Its simple electronics and transonic capacity keep the costs to an affordable level. Given its lack of advanced flight aid generally considered necessary for an agile dog-fighter, the design includes an unprecedented 30% of its weight as manoeuvre enhancement, making the fighter surprisingly agile. The rakish lines of the fighter have proved popular with pilots and especially the Vargr. Limited numbers of these fighters have been sold to friendly Vargr border worlds.

Despite its low cost the aircraft is designed for all-weather operations and provides life-support to allow it to be used in a wide variety of atmospheres.

The design includes a slightly over-powered engine for the airframe, and its ready supply of weapon hardpoints exceeds its actual lift capacity. This led to several crashes shortly after take-off when the *Exeter* was pressed into ground attack roles and inexperienced ground crews loaded the aircraft beyond its normal capacity.

The *Exeter's* standard fighter configuration includes two 100kg infrared homing missiles on the

wing launch rails as well as two 200kg semi active radar homing missiles on the inboard wing hardpoints. A non-standard 1750 litre fuel tank is available to allow long range transfer flights between bases. Several worlds have developed an unofficial variant, where a standard 1000 litre fuel tank is added to the basic fighter configuration. This allows an additional hour and a half of additional loiter time for patrolling aircraft before they jettison the tank on the approach to a target.

## Configurations

### Baseline Configuration

Craft ID: Exeter Fighter, TL8, Cr576,040  
Hull: 20/50, Disp=22, Clean Weight=5 tons, Airframe=Transonic, Armor: Cockpit=8  
Power: 4/10 Gas Turbine 0.1224Mw, End=1.44 hours on internal fuel.  
Loco: Light Turbofan×1, Thrust=6.12 tons, Top=1100kph (airframe lim), Cruise=825kph, Min=123kph, Agility=4, Range=1192km  
Commo: Radio, Regional×1  
Sensors: VDist All Weather Radar, PassIR, ImgEnh.  
Off: Plumb fuselage hardpoint, inboard wing hardpoints×2, wing mounted launch rails×2, 20mm autocannon fixed forward firing with 100rds (10 shots). Maximum External Stores=1.75 tons.  
Control: Boosted, 1 Manoeuvre Point.  
Accom: Crew=1 (Pilot), Complex Cockpit, Cockpit Armour, Ejection Seat, BasicEnv, BasicLS.  
Other: Fuel=991 litres. Manoeuvre Enhancement 30%

### Fighter Configuration

Hull: Weight=5.6 tons  
Loco: Top=1100kph (airframe lim), Cruise=825kph, Minimum=123kph, Agility=4, Range=1192km

### Transfer Configuration

Hull: Weight=6.75 tons (1750 litre fuel tank)  
Loco: Loaded Top=1022kph, Cruise=766kph, Min=123kph, Agility=3, Range=1955km (tank fuel only), Dur=2.55 hours (tank fuel only)  
Comment: After this period the fuel tank can be jettisoned and the fighter resumes its clean configuration allowing an extra 1.44 hours duration and 1192 km range.

### Extended Duration Fighter Configuration

Hull: Weight=6.6 tons (1000 litre tank and standard missile load)  
Loco: Loaded Top=1003kph, Cruise=752kph, Min=123kph, Agility=1, Range=1097km (tank fuel only), Dur=1.46 hours (tank fuel only)  
Comment: After this period the fuel tank can be jettisoned and the fighter resumes its normal configuration allowing an extra 1.44 hours duration and 1192 km range.



## 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](mailto: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

3Hombres Games  
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  
Screaming Eye Games  
Spellbook Software and 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 Sceptune Games has made to *Traveller* to get *Hyperlite* aren't really much more than the differences between Classic *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller*, and *Mongoose Traveller*, and converting between any of those systems and *Hyperlite*, in either direction, should be ‘trivial’.

### ... Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

If your article is about “crossing over” between these products and any of the “standard” or supported *Traveller* rulesets or settings, by all means, submit it! If it's support for those systems beyond *Traveller*, we'll accept and hold

the submission, but will not print it unless/until we've had a reasonable level of expression of interest in such support from our readers.

### How should I submit my article?

#### What needs to be in the submission?

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

#### What format should I submit it in?

That depends on what you're submitting. Generally:

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

Graphics should be submitted in the format that's best for the type of graphic. Most of the time, that will be GIF, PNG, or JPG/JPEG. Submitting 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”.



