



FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Adventure
The Sounding
by Michael Brown

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May 2014

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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Contents

Freelance Traveller #053: May 2014

Editor

Jeff Zeitlin

Contributors

Jeff Zeitlin, Ken Murphy, Michael Brown, Timothy Collinson, Paul Walker

Artwork

Cover: *Brian Ronnle*

From the Editor: *Jeff Zeitlin*

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From the Editor

Jeff Zeitlin 1

Critics' Corner

Mongoose Traveller Special Supplement 4: Rescue Ops *reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin* 2

CD-ROM: Traveller20 *reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin* 27

Doing It My Way

The RCES Rating System *by Paul Walker* 3

Active Measures

The Sounding *by Michael Brown* 5

Getting Off the Ground: The Wing by Which We Fly *by Michael Brown* 29

Raconteurs' Rest

Drop Out *by Ken Murphy* 18

Confessions of a Newbie Referee: A Column by Timothy Collinson

#10: Curse or Blessing? 28

From the Editor




This month's table of contents is a bit scanty. We've still brought you a full issue, though, because this month's featured adventure is *quite* elaborate.

One of the constraints that I, as your editor, have imposed on myself with putting the magazine out is that I want to have about the same size issue every month—not sixteen pages this month, fifty-eight next month, and thirty the month after. That means juggling articles for size, rewording, and other stuff that's the province of an editor. That's generally invisible to you, though; you just see the issue.

What's not invisible to you, and is also a constraint on me, is the selection of articles. I want each issue to have a good spread of articles by type—I won't put out an issue that's all reviews, or all adventures, or all house-rules, or all stories. (Nor do I want more than two or three articles over my own byline in any issue.) This issue, that started causing problems—while I have plenty of adventures, and the serial stories still have quite some time to go, the selection of other articles is getting a bit thin, and I'm resorting more often than I like to reprinting the oldest articles on the site. That's where I ask for your

help: please, exercise your creativity, and write more for us! Reviews, animal encounters, house rules, starship designs, PC and NPC character profiles, worlds and their cultural traditions... it's all good. Don't let the efforts of others scare you off from attempting an article; just because Scott and Sarah Diamond do very well-thought-out animals doesn't mean that you can't—I don't award franchises on a section, so your animals or adventures or reviews or stories or... are considered on the same basis as those of Scott and Sarah, or Michael Brown, or "kafka", or Ken Murphy or Andrea Vallance, or And if you're one of those people, don't stop writing—but consider branching out into other sections.

There've also been comments to the effect that some readers would like to see more artwork. That falls into the above suggestion; don't let the likes of Ian Stead, Ndege Diamond, the late Andrew Boulton, etc., scare you off from trying your hand at art.

All of which is sort of a roundabout way of saying that we need more community support, in the form of material for publication; I'd hate to have to do an entire issue of reprints, or go on hiatus because of insufficient material. 

Special Supplement 4: Rescue Ops

Reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Special Supplement 4: Rescue Ops. Jacob DC Ross.
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
19pp, PDF
US\$4.99/UK£2.98

Note: The author kindly provided Freelance Traveller with a review copy of this item.

Special Supplement 4: Rescue Ops caters to the kind of adventure that occasionally pops up in *Traveller* (the rescue/relief mission) but which previously hasn't really had focused character generation—the characters use a hodgepodge of skills and hope to muddle through.

Broadly speaking, there are two groups of people that get involved in rescue operations: the actual rescuers, who go in, find the people, and bring them out; and the healers, who deal with the medical (including psychological) aftermath. This Special Supplement provides careers for both. The skill set resulting from a Healer career will be heavy in Medic and related skills, though there is opportunity to earn skills that have only indirect benefits to the Healer (e.g., Computers or Investigate, which won't help the Healer heal, but can help the Healer identify what needs to be healed and how). The Rescuer skill set is broader, and focused on dealing with the environment that the rescue operation may occur in, to get the people out. Some Healer-related skills are also part of this career, representing the ability to stabilize a patient for evacuation. Both careers seem—to my lay eyes—to be reasonable profiles.

The focus of the section on Rescue Ops briefly discusses some medical aspects at the beginning, but the bulk of the section focuses on the rescuers, their organization, and the conditions that they might encounter. A paragraph or two for each of many types of rescue situations, from fires to accidents to natural disasters to epidemics, outlines what PCs may encounter. There isn't, however, very much on the roles of the various career tracks.

TRAVELLER

*Special Supplement 4:
Rescue Ops*

Rescue Me!

While there is a page of discussion of rescue adventures and campaigns, it's a bit disappointing—it only mentions the possibility of PCs playing as workers for a private emergency management company, and suggests the possibility of combining the Rescuer career with a military career, but there are no actual adventure ideas.

The final section, on Tools of the Trade, provides a few tools and a bunch of vehicles that could be useful in a rescue operation. Most of them are oriented toward planetside adventures, though some of the vehicles could also be usable in a large orbital spaceport. More devices, such as mobile surgical facilities, stretchers or gurneys for use in space to e.g., move patients through vacuum, would have been nice to have outlined.

Editing had some minor slip-ups; the most notable is that in the Rescuer career, one of the assignments is called 'Controller'; in the tables, 'Drone' is used instead.

(Continued on page 3)

Critics' Corner

(Continued from page 2)

The d66 Events table for the Rescuer career seems to be a bit fuzzier than that for the Healer career. It's possible that this is because many table entries are longer, and the entire table is done with a smaller font.

The author falls into the trap of assuming that nurses and nursing require less education than doc-

tors, differentiating them in the career only by designating EDU 11- characters as Nurses and EDU 12+ characters as Doctors. As this only affects rank skills and cash benefit rolls, I'm not convinced that the distinction is necessary—or appropriate—in a *Traveller* context.

Overall, while I don't rate this as "*must have*", if you're interested in running adventures with this sort of character, it's definitely worth the coin. 🎲



Doing It My Way

Character Detailing Rules

The RCES Rating System

by Paul Walker

This article originally appeared on the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2003.

With the future success of the Reformation Coalition based on a successful return to the stars, the RCES (Reformation Coalition Exploratory Service) devised a standard testing process for the crucial positions of a starship crew. The system was initially designed to aid a prospective captain in hiring a crew without requiring extensive individual testing.

The original rating system was designed during the Dawn League's final years. Based on systems used by the starports of several member worlds, the ratings covered the broad categories of piloting, en-

gineering, and communications. To augment the testing process for use in the newly established RC Navy, a combat category was added to the ratings.

By early 1201, the RCES and RCN had both adopted a modified version of the plan that divided the ratings into six distinct categories containing 2 to 6 specialties each, as outlined in the table below. All current and future members of these agencies were tested in their areas of expertise and offered free testing in other areas.

Each of the categories included five skill levels (E to A) that would indicate the relative ability of the individual being tested. With each level the tests were more difficult and more hands on. Also, the higher level tests required experience in order to be administered and took longer to complete.

Space	Navigation	Combat	Communications	Engineering	Interpersonal
Environment Suit	Astrogation	Gunnery	Communications	Computer	Leadership
Zero-G Environment	Pilot	Screens	Sensors	Gravitics	Marketing
				Electronics	Service
				Ship's Engineering	Medical
				Machinist	
				Mechanic	

In order to help integrate the system into common use, an RCES sponsored testing facility was established at all class A, B and C starports throughout the Reformation Coalition. Any individual could simply make an appointment with the testing staff to be tested. After several months of skepticism, the testing centers were overwhelmed by requests.

Many of the tested individuals had no real qualifications and failed even the most basic tests. By mid 1201, the testing facilities, now run by the RC government, began charging for the tests given. (Despite the changes made in the civilian program, the RCES and RCN maintained the free tests as a benefit of service.) In addition to the fee, the RC began insist-

(Continued on page 4)

Doing It My Way

Rating	Description	Test Fee	Task Difficulty	Required Skill
E	The applicant has limited understanding in the skill area. The applicant can perform basic functions with supervision.	Cr10	Automatic	0+
D	The applicant has a basic understanding in the skill area. The applicant can perform very basic functions with no supervision.	Cr50	Easy	1+
C	The applicant has a good understanding and basic experience in the skill area. The applicant can perform routine functions with no supervision.	Cr100	Average	1+
B	The applicant has a detailed understanding and extended experience in the skill area. The applicant can perform routine tasks automatically and difficult tasks without supervision.	Cr250	Difficult	2+
A	The applicant has extensive understanding and widely varied experience in the skill area. The applicant can perform difficult tasks automatically.	Cr500	Formidable	3+

ing on a recommendation by a certified individual before the initial tests could be given.

Application requests dropped off to a trickle. While alleviating the pressures of abuse, the fees involved in the new process defeated the purpose of the system.

After a short month of miniscule requests for testing, the RC modified the policy. One test for each skill at each level would be administered for free. After the first test, the applicant would be charged only for failed tests. Payments were required before the second and subsequent tests, and would be refunded if the test was passed. In addition, applicants could only reapply for a test they failed 72 hours after their original application.

As with all thing bureaucratic, the rating system soon became more than an information exchange. Investors and banks began requiring certain minimums in the crew before they would provide the loan or investment into the ship. Eventually, even the RC began requiring certain minimums before ships were allowed to fly. Most RC controlled starports require a minimum of a B rating in Pilot and Engineer before a ship is allowed to lift.

Rules

Most players are reluctant to reveal their skill and/or stat level to another player. However, it is often vital for a Commanding PC to know how well his crew is trained. This information is also important to PCs interested in hiring NPCs into crew positions on their ship. Rather than simply dictate to PCs the stats and skills of NPCs and other PCs, the rating system can be used. Additionally, since nu-

meric skill valuations are unrealistic (i.e., they don't really occur in real life), providing rating information instead allows for more immersive role-play.

The tests are simply a group of task level checks at a certain level. Because *Traveller* characters enter the game with skills and experience, skill levels are used to simulate the experience needed to apply for a certain test. The table above shows the definition of each rating level, the test fee, the test task difficulty level, and the minimum skill level required for eligibility to take the test.

Characters with a skill level of 0+ will automatically receive a Level E rating. All other ratings are by test; the character must have the minimum skill indicated above to be permitted to take the test for the indicated rating.

Each of the tests consists of ten task rolls against the appropriate skill at the indicated difficulty level. Seven or more successful rolls indicate the character passed the test. At the referee's discretion, the test can be five task rolls with three successful rolls indicating the character passed the test.

Special Considerations

Characters with admin/legal, bribery, computer, persuasion, etc. may, at the referee's discretion, attempt to "fix" the results of the test in their favor. These should be dealt with as standard tasks with the difficulty and results defined by the referee.

Test Results

Outstanding Success: At the referee's discretion, a roll of outstanding success on any individual test roll can allow a +2 DM to be applied to any prior or

(Continued on page 5)

Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 4)

future roll for the same test (the same skill and same rating level). This signifies that the character being tested did so well the tester can overlook a few errors in a prior portion of the test.

Catastrophic Failure: At the referee's discretion, a roll of catastrophic failure on any individual test roll may result in the character being accused of cheating and future tests refused without further experience. In extreme circumstances this act may be punishable by other laws. This is an additional

method to prevent PCs from taking all the tests whether they have the skills or not.

Other Versions of *Traveller*

While the 'in-game' background may be different, there is no reason that the game mechanics could not be transferred into other versions of *Traveller*, allowing for differences in available skill levels and task systems. Again, doing so would allow for the more immersive role-playing experience while allowing players to not reveal exact skill levels to other players. ❄️



Active Measures

The Sounding

by Michael Brown

The adventurers, as members of a livestock drive on a water world, face danger from predators, rustlers, and a terrible secret.

"The Sounding" is intended for 2-5 Classic *Traveller* characters of varied career backgrounds, assumed to have been working together for some time prior to the adventure. The setting can be any Imperial water world (Hydrographics A) with Population 5-; for purposes of the text, the world is referred to as Doris. The referee can, of course, substitute a similar world of his or her choice.

Swimming, Diving, and Herding skills (not covered in the basic *Traveller* rules) will be essential. The referee may assign a skill level based on a throw of 1D-3, which gives a range of -2 (unskilled) to 3 (strong skill). Diving skill cannot exceed Swimming skill. This and other methods of assigning the needed skills are found in *The Undersea Environment* (J. Andrew Keith, Gamelords Ltd., 1983; available from Far Future Enterprises on the *Apocrypha-1* CD-ROM). Herding skill is assigned per the text.

The use of underwater gear will also be essential; see *Book 3: Worlds and Adventures* or *The Undersea Environment*.

Background

Doris is a backwater world—you may take the 'water' literally; the surface is only 3% land—that nevertheless benefits from sporadic trade. There are hardy souls willing to call it home, and aquaculture finds ready markets on other worlds. Early on, Doris served as a submarine weapon testing ground, until activist pressure shut down the programs.

Although numbering only in the hundreds of thousands (with 1% being members of aquatic races such as Dolphins and Githiaskio), the Dorians pride themselves on having tamed the global ocean without benefit of interstellar technology. The local tech level is 7, with a few scattered tech level 8 devices. Rare is the Dorian who can't swim; children learn to swim before they can even walk. Native Dorians automatically have Swimming skill of 1-3. Also, most of the population can operate watercraft.

About 80% of the citizenry is engaged in aquaculture in some fashion: fishing, seabed farming or oceanography. The work can be hard, sometimes brutal – and the Dorians wouldn't have it any other way. This is an area where they look down on offworlders, who are assumed to be *shallowfed* (see the Glossary) until they prove themselves.

A highlight of the Dorian lifestyle is the annual viscudi drives. Viscudi are a species of fish consid-

(Continued on page 6)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 5)

ered a delicacy on surrounding worlds (and on wealthier worlds farther away—when they can get it). The fish normally range in the seas of the tropics; the installations that process them for consumption and export are located on the few islands dotting the northern latitudes. Because factory ships are outlawed on Doris, schools of viscludi are rounded up and driven to the processing centers, much as herds of cattle were once driven across ancient Terra’s North American continent. The distances involved and the conditions of the drive also cause the fish to produce a stress hormone that renders their flesh especially tasty while keeping their fat-to-muscle ratio within acceptable limits.

Viscludi self-defense consists of a tail slap that delivers a fair amount of force.

Drover outfits of all sizes participate in the lucrative viscludi trade. And there are occasionally opportunities for offworlders to join in, as long as they can deal with the challenging work involved.

No.	Animal	Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds & Weapons
4D	Viscludi (Grazer)	25kg	10/6	—	12 fins A7F3S4

Rule: Reputation

One item of information the referee should track is Reputation. As noted before, Dorians tend to look down on offworlders until they prove themselves. The heroes will need to prove themselves as tough and capable as any Dorian if they want to be taken seriously and perhaps given more responsibility.

Each PC should be given a temporary Reputation score; initially this is zero. Each day, there are opportunities to gain or lose Reputation depending on the character’s actions. Every ± 10 points in Reputation equals a corresponding ± 1 on Reactions from the NPCs. Some adjustments to Reputation appear on the list following; the referee should feel free to add and subtract from the list as desired.

Any reactions that cause an NPC’s reaction to a hero to adjust down to 2 (Violent) or up to 12

(Genuinely Friendly) become permanent; the NPC is thus disposed automatically to the hero thereafter.

Cause	Adjustment
<i>Brawling</i>	
Winning a fight	+1
Losing a fight	-2
<i>Working</i>	
Taking on extra work/shifts	+2
Working through illness or injury	+3
Shirking work	-4
<i>On a Viscudi Drive</i>	
Preventing a scatter	+2
Causing a scatter	-4
Recovering less than 30% of a scatter	-2
Recovering more than 70% of a scatter	+2
<i>Heroism, Cowardice, and Villainy</i>	
Saving a native Dorian’s life	+4
Causing a native Dorian’s injury	-4
Causing a native Dorian’s death	-8
Backing down from a challenge	-4
Displaying cowardice	-8

I: Big Globe Swimmers

While seeking work, the PCs find a viscludi outfit willing to take on outworlders. The trail boss, Ransim Kalduun—a plainspoken man with the lean, streamlined figure of a lifetime swimmer and eyes that miss nothing as he looks the team over—is willing to train them to fill roles within his outfit. He expects the job to last 1-2 months. Payday is at the end of the drive, and depends on the final price of the livestock; the minimum salary is Cr25 a day, plus board and (if the viscludi fetch a good price) bonus.

Assuming the heroes agree to the terms, the following week is filled with familiarizing the PCs with the vehicles and equipment they will be using (see Ship’s Locker, below); teaching them to coordinate with the other drovers; and drilling them in handling common underwater dangers. The coordination with the other drovers is the most important part, as radio communication underwater is limited (30 meter maximum) and the drovers must work together using gestures and anticipation of move-

(Continued on page 7)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 6)

ment. The heroes are also familiarized with the daily drive schedule (see below.) At the end of training, each PC must throw to successfully retain the knowledge:

To successfully complete the drover training:

ROUTINE; Vehicle, Zero-G Combat; 9 hrs.

REFEREE: Award skills and reputation as follows:

Success: SEAbike-0, Magrod-0, Herding-0.

Critical Success: Success plus SEAbike-1, +2 Rep.

Failure: no skills, -6 Rep.

Critical failure: As failure, also results in the PC causing an injury to a native Dorian, and the additional -4 Rep resulting from that.

PCs whom Kalduun deems unfit as drovers may be assigned to help on the sub on a Reaction throw of 8+.

The positions of the drive consist of two Lead Swims (drovers responsible for setting the drive's direction and pace), four Outswims (responsible for keeping the visculdi in a coherent group), two Drag Swims (who bring up the rear of the drive and watch for predators and any strays the Outswimmers miss), two Night Swims (that guard the fish overnight from predators and rustlers; they stay aboard the sub during the day), the cook/sub pilot and his assistant. Kalduun and his second, Dragana Kasun (see below) take a Lead Swim and a Drag Swim position, respectively. The PCs may be assigned to fill any other role.

A week later, the fish are rounded up and the drive moves out. The chucksub leaves in advance to find suitable anchorages and set beacons to guide the drive to them. After lunch, the vehicle repeats the process for the nighttime anchorage. A drive herds about 70 tonnes of fish, roughly 2,800 fin. The school forms a rough cylinder 12 meters across and 200 meters long. It is kept coherent through the use of magrods.

For the duration of the drive, a set schedule and protocol will be followed: two dives of three hours'

duration each alternating with two two-hour rest/meal periods. Equipment checks are the first thing done each morning and the last thing done each evening. At night, equipment is set up that operates on a similar principle as the magrods, but is a portable fence that effectively keeps the school penned up in the form of a large ball.

Kalduun expects to cover up to 25 kilometers per day at a depth not exceeding 20 meters. The total distance to be traveled is $600 + (2D \times 100)$ kilometers, culminating at a processing facility based in the northern hemisphere. Therefore the drive will take anywhere between 24 and 72 days, assuming the schedule is kept. A map is not provided here; the referee may create or download a suitable map.

Likewise, the referee may want to create animal encounter tables for use during the drive per Book 3. If so, two tables should be created, one for Ocean Shallows (depths of 1-10 meters) and Ocean Depths (depths greater than 10 meters.) Carnivores encountered will ignore the drovers and go for the visculdi.

Each day of the drive, the referee should make a throw 2D for an event to occur:

Roll	Event
6-	None
7, 8	Animal Encounter
9, 10	Incident (Consult Incidents table below)
11, 12	Event (Consult Events table below)
13	Rumor (Consult Rumor table below)

DM +1 if within a raft village or aboard a ship

The drovers will make several task throws in the course of doing their jobs. They are grouped here, for convenience:

To round up visculdi:

DIFFICULT; Herding, SEAbike; 15 min.

To integrate wild/scattered visculdi into existing school:

ROUTINE; Herding; 15 min.

To find the anchorages:

ROUTINE; INT; 18 min.

REFEREE: DM +6 if a beacon is present and operational

(Continued on page 8)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 7)

Incidents

The following results, once used, are crossed off the list and not reused. Throw 2D:

- 2 **Maelstrom:** While the drive is traveling through a narrow underwater channel, a powerful maelstrom created by opposing currents appears in their path. The subsurface vortex will capture the SEAbikes on 5+ and/or the chucksab on 10+. The viscludi will scatter on a 7+; even if they don't, they will refuse to approach the maelstrom. The phenomenon will smash objects or creatures caught in it against the channel walls or floor for 4D damage.
- 3 **Religious Group:** The oceangoing vessel of a peaceful religious sect has become the unwilling base of operations for a gang of pirates and rustlers. When encountered, the cleric will make every attempt, subtle and overt, to get the drovers to leave. The brigands have promised violence if the worshippers disobey them. Unfortunately, the criminals are planning to attack a ship full of valuables they know will soon be passing nearby. Plus, the head pirate has been making crude and blatant advances on the cleric's beautiful daughter. The pirates' numbers equal the drovers' plus 1D; they are similarly equipped.
- 4 **Disease:** Some of the viscludi begin showing signs of a common local fungal disease. This version is unusually virulent, however, spreading to other fish in a matter of hours. The drovers must cut the sick fish from the school (numbering 1D% of the total school) before they infect the others, using the integration task above.
- 5 **Homestead:** The drive passes near a small island that is the site of a private homestead. If the drovers and their charges come too close, they will be fired upon by the distrustful occupants. There is a reason for their paranoia: in recent months they've fended off attacks from "hideous things from the bowels of Hell." The best description the family can give the heroes is that of large, humanoid creatures with powerful limbs, tails, and large maws filled with sharp teeth. The family is adamant they will not quit their home, but they warn the drovers to be careful, as they believe the danger is widespread.
- 6 **Frontier Raft Town:** The drive comes upon a floating city (population 6D × 20), a very rough-and-tumble place designed to part drovers from as much of their money as possible. Illicit activities of all sorts are found in town, along with legitimate places to resupply and refresh. While the drovers are in town, throw 1D for a minor event to occur, resolved as the referee sees fit: 1=invitation to gambling; 2=invitation to sexual liaison; 3=opportunity for bargaining; 4=barroom brawl; 5=falsely accused of crime; 6=riot.
- 7 **Castaways:** A group of shipwreck survivors have been holding out on a remote atoll for the past few months. There were two dozen; something on that atoll that has been stalking them and picking them off one by one. No one who saw the mysterious assailants lived to tell the tale; others only caught a glimpse of a vaguely humanoid form in the shadows. The attackers won't follow anyone who is rescued.
- 8 **Sunken Starship:** As the drive makes its way through a narrow canyon, the PCs catch sight of a familiar shape in the gloom: a Type S Scout/Courier is resting on the bottom. The ship is intact, although its wilderness refueling equipment is extended; apparently the ship sank during refueling. Inside, the craft is completely without power and is (1D × 10%) flooded. The unflooded portions bear evidence of a great deal of violence, with long-dried blood and smashed equipment. The referee may decide if there are still valuables in the cargo hold and whether or not the ship is salvageable.
- 9 **Ship Under Attack:** A battered trawler is under attack from pirates in speedboats. The all-female crew of the trawler is putting up a spirited defense using water cannons and other non-lethal weapons, but they are outmatched by the pirates, who are packing automatic weapons. If the drovers interfere, the pirates put up token resistance, but have little stomach for a real fight against increasing odds and flee at the first opportunity. Left unopposed, they will eventually commandeer the ship. The women are on their way to a remote raft town to become the equivalent of mail-order brides.
- 10 **Range Wars:** The drovers encounter an assault in progress—a group of divers in unmarked SCUBA gear are harassing a group of aquafarmers. The farmers are badly outclassed, but the drovers' intervention turns the tide in their favor. Afterward, they tell the heroes their tale: they are tenant farmers for the owner of several sea farm tracts in the area. He wants to sell out to one of the big aquaculture firms, but the tenants, fearing they'll get the short end of the deal, refuse to sell their shares. Bad blood is brewing on all sides, and the attack the PCs stopped wasn't the first.
- 11 **Sea Cave:** a school of wild viscludi is spotted ducking into a cavern. Despite the danger of going in after them, there are enough viscludi to bring in a handsome additional profit once integrated with the main school (1D-3 × 10% of the main school). The referee may make the cave system as simple or as complex as necessary. Throw 2D to determine exactly what is in there: 2-7=empty; 8-11=predator (generate as normal using the tables in Book 3); 12=valuables (amount and nature of the items are up to the referee. The previous owner will doubtless want them back.)
- 12 **Sea Monster:** As the drive passes over a deep crevasse, they will get a glimpse of something stirring in the depths. The thing soon launches upward at the school of viscludi, devouring 10% of them with one bite and causing the survivors to automatically scatter. The intruder is possibly the largest creature on Doris -- one generally regarded as a myth. If not destroyed or driven off, it won't stop until it has consumed all of the fish.

(Continued on page 9)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 8)

The Sea Monster from Incident 12 has stats as follows:

No.	Animal	Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds & Weapons
1	Hijacker	44000kg	65/33	jack	30 teeth A7F8S1

II: Mysteries of the Deep

At the midway point of the drive, the drovers come upon a small raft village similar to the one in Incident 6 above. One look tells them that something is amiss: the town seems to have been attacked by parties unknown. The place looks deserted and there is substantial damage to buildings near the water. If the drovers have encountered Incident 8 above, they will notice the violence follows the same pattern as that events. The difference this time is that are bodies bearing horrible bite and claw marks. The violence looks to have happened recently, perhaps even within the past hour. The drovers may look for survivors:

To find survivors of the attack:

EASY; INT; 1 min.

REFEREE: This task may be repeated; each success will result in 1D survivors being found each time, to a maximum total of 30 survivors.

The surviving settlers will be in shock and grief. Accounts of the attack differ somewhat, but they all describe the assailants as powerfully-built bipedal creatures with tails, sharp claws, and huge, tooth-lined maws. Several survivors relate watching people being ripped to shreds by the creatures. No one knows why the attack occurred and no one had ever seen similar creatures before.

While the drovers are in town, they may become aware of being watched:

To detect the spy:

ROUTINE; Recon, INT

The intruder flees upon detection. If the drovers give chase, they quickly realize that their quarry is large and injured—a blood trail gives the individual away.

If the PCs catch up to their quarry, they are met with a horrific sight—the referee should describe a Doriform Warrior (see below.) Injured and cornered, it attacks immediately. It doesn't stay to finish off defeated heroes, instead making for the water at the first opportunity.

III: Claws of the Abyss

Some time may have passed in the raft village. If it is near planetary sunset, Kalduun will call a halt for the night. He admits not wanting to stay in an area where dangerous creatures might be lurking, but he also knows better than to push the drovers past their limits. The villagers have no objection to the drovers staying the night.

The PCs may suspect that more Doriforms aren't far away and thus wish to help the surviving villagers prepare for them:

To help fortify the raft village against attack:

DIFFICULT; Combat Engineering, Tactics, Leader; 30 min.

REFEREE: Success gives the defenders a blanket +2 in any subsequent combat vs. attacking Doriforms.

Sometime during the night, 4D+1 Doriforms attack the village again. This time, with the PCs' help and preparation, the fight should go against the Doriforms, who will disengage and flee once they've taken 2/3 casualties. Anyone watching them escape will see them regroup and swim off in a particular direction.

The frustrated and angry village leaders want something done about the Doriforms once and for all. They ask Kalduun for help, who in turn asks the PCs since they have more experience dealing with such exotic circumstances. He can't offer them more money, but suggests they can negotiate a deal with the village elders. He urges all due haste, though. If the drive spends more than a few days in the area, they may not be able to make the time up later.

(Continued on page 10)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 9)

IV: Into the Moray's Den

The team's first order of business is to find the Doriforms:

To find the Doriforms:

FORMIDABLE; Recon, Navigation, INT; 15 min.

REFEREE: Using sensors to help in the search adds a DM of +2; having observed the direction of the Doriforms' escape adds a DM of +1.

If the search is successful, the team discovers a site 16 kilometers from the raft village at a depth of 80 meters. Intel reveals a structure 80 meters down at the base of a small seamount. Partially buried by mud (the result of a seaquake-induced mudslide) the unburied part features a dome clear of the mud, connected to another, much larger dome that is half-buried. Two connecting structures branch out at angles from the smaller dome, running into the muck beside the large dome. A tunnel aperture can be seen under and forward of the smaller dome.

Finding the destination is one thing; getting there is another. The depth means that unprotected dives will mean subsequent (and substantial) decompression to avoid getting the bends. The chuck-sub can easily reach that depth, but the cook is reluctant to risk the vehicle. The team must convince him to take them to the pyramid:

To convince the cook to take the group to the enemy site:

ROUTINE; Liaison

REFEREE: The Reputation modifier (see above) applies here as well.

The tunnel opening's shape prevents the chuck-sub from docking with it; the heroes will have to swim over to it. They shouldn't have to worry about decompression unless they dive for more than 90 minutes.

Three meters into the opening, the heroes encounter a large iris valve, operated by a simple pressure plate beside it. Once they are inside, the referee should refer to the accompanying map and key.

The base heavily uses biometric locks, which scan the palms of authorized personnel before granting access. The only ways to access locked areas are to get an authorized staff member to admit them; bypass the lock using an electronic tool set (see task following); or by gaining administrative access to the complex's computer system, which gives indirect control over the locks. All portals are biolocked unless stated otherwise.

To bypass a biometric lock:

DIFFICULT; Electronics, EDU; 1 minute.

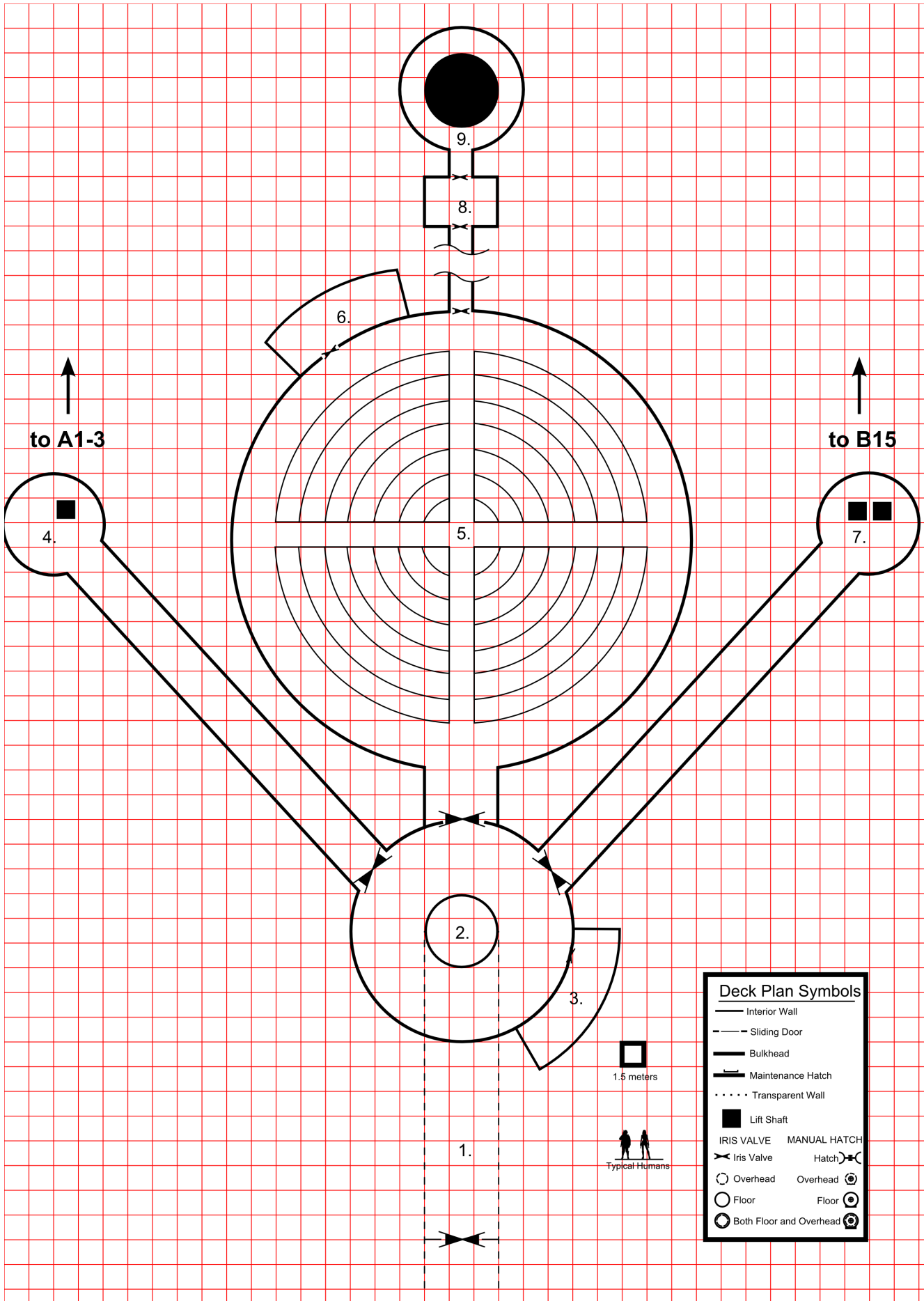
REFEREE: The locks are all of standard manufacture. Each attempt to bypass a biolock after the first lowers the time required to 15 seconds, as the PC has learned which systems to access to achieve deactivation.

Main Level

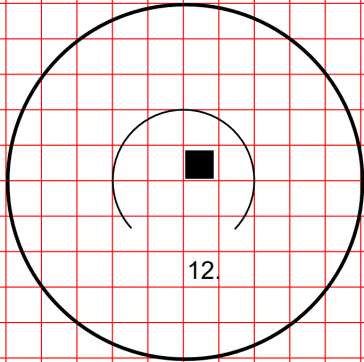
1. **Entry Tunnel:** This featureless, water-filled tunnel is initially unlit. Lights will come on automatically as the group moves through it.
2. **Moon Pool:** The surface of the pool is 6 meters above the tunnel level. The walls of the room are covered with promotional posters and holograms for a bioengineering firm, indicating that the pool room doubles as a reception area. Signs direct visitors to the Laboratories (left); the Offices/Dormitories (right); and Operations (center).
3. **Storage:** This room is not biolocked. It holds various diving equipment—including 1D sets of SCUBA gear—and tools.
4. **Lift to Laboratories:** A small security station is in this area, which smells of rotted flesh. Near the lift, a severed human hand still clutches an auto pistol with 2D rounds in its clip. The wounds are ragged, indicating a violent removal with something other than surgical tools. The lift cannot be called without the lock being first disengaged. Using the dead hand will also open the lock, with a DM of -2 due to decomposition. The lift puts the group on level A1 (see map).
5. **Transformation/Hibernation Chamber:** The room is laid out amphitheater style, with ter-

(Continued on page 13)

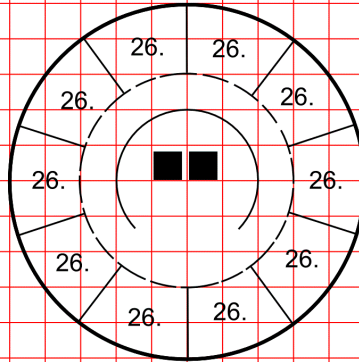
Active Measures



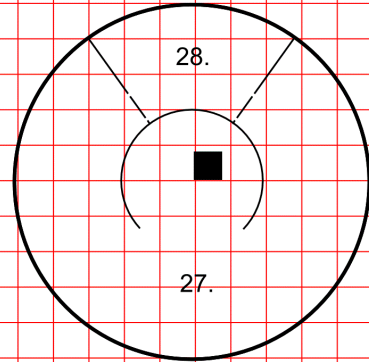
Active Measures



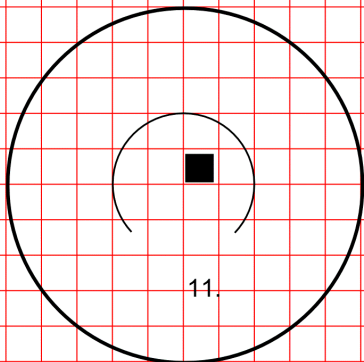
A3



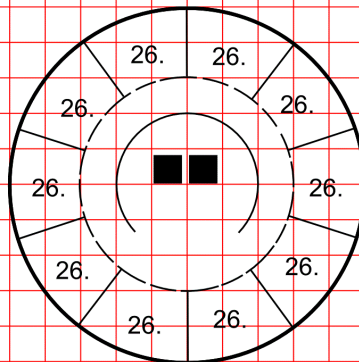
B4



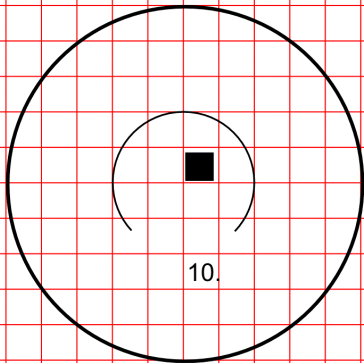
B5



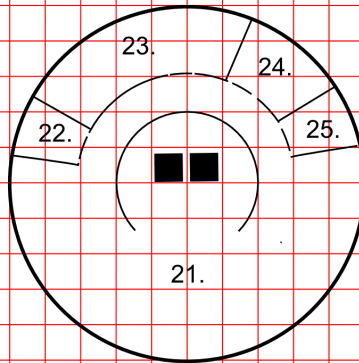
A2



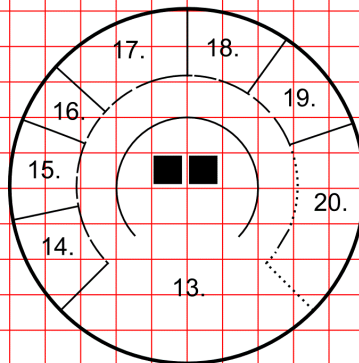
B3



A1



B2



B1



Deck Plan Symbols	
	Interior Wall
	Sliding Door
	Bulkhead
	Maintenance Hatch
	Transparent Wall
	Lift Shaft
	IRIS VALVE
	MANUAL HATCH
	Iris Valve
	Hatch
	Overhead
	Overhead
	Floor
	Floor
	Both Floor and Overhead
	Both Floor and Overhead

Active Measures

(Continued from page 10)

raced levels. Arranged upright on each level are 256 large glassteel tanks, each filled with a murky fluid. Yet the team can still see that half of them hold hibernating Doriform Warriors. Another 30 are occupied by creatures that seem to be in various transitional states between Human and Doriform. Close examination of the tanks reveals the recirculating pumps for the fluid filling the vessels and the smaller attached tanks that hold nanomachines; the fluid is apparently their transport and growth medium.

If the heroes spend more than 30 consecutive minutes in this area (including area 6 below), the base's computer begins waking up the full Doriforms, ten at a time, until they are all awake. Each batch will awaken 60 seconds after the one before it. Awakened Doriforms immediately attack the intruders. Leaving the room will not cause the Doriforms to go back to sleep; once awakened, they pursue the party anywhere within the complex. Captured heroes will be sealed in one of the empty tanks, with the obvious eventual result.

6. **Observation Booth:** This area is not biolocked. It is dominated by a glassteel wall and sparsely furnished and equipped. What furniture there is has been smashed and there is blood on the walls. A small control panel under the observation window allows the group to control the Doriform chambers below, preventing them from awakening, awakening at a slower rate, or even allowing all the Doriforms—even the transitionals—to awaken simultaneously.
7. **Lifts to Offices/Dormitories:** This area is laid out in similar fashion to area 4 above. The lifts are governed by the biometric locks as in area 4 and take the heroes to level B1 (see map).
8. **Power Plant Monitoring Station:** The walls of this room are covered with indicators and controls easily read by anyone with Engineering skill. The controls allow engineers to determine

the status of the geothermal power plant (currently nominal); give precise control of the power plant itself and its peripheral systems; and even set for self-destruct, with chain reactions eventually destroying the entire complex. Once triggered, the base will be destroyed in ten minutes.

9. **Power Plant:** The area shown on the map is only a catwalk; the area in solid black is taken up by machinery for the plant. The equipment rises up into the shadows (sensors or the monitoring station's displays can tell the group the apparatus reaches up 50 meters) and descends into the planet's crust to a depth of at least a kilometer. Maintenance hatches in the ceiling and floor (not shown) allow access.
- 10-12. **Laboratories:** The labs are dedicated to bio-engineering and equipped to Tech Level 12. Communications and computer equipment both dedicated and portable are everywhere. The central computer is running, but the team must have the proper codes to access it. Alternatively, they can try to hack the system from any of the computer workstations:

To hack the computer from a workstation:

FORMIDABLE; Computer, Electronics, EDU; 5 minutes.

As the PCs search the labs, the referee should throw 2D every ten minutes; on 7+ the group finds something significant. Throw 2D on the following table:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2-6 | Minor valuables (loose credits, personal items, etc.) worth Cr(1D × 10) |
| 6-8 | Valuables (jewelry, personal equipment, etc.) worth Cr(2D × 100) |
| 9-10 | Notes on ongoing laboratory work. Valuable to corporations such as SuSAG |
| 11 | Handgun (referee's choice) with 1D × 10% of rounds left. |
| 12 | Body, obviously the victim of massive violence. |

If the heroes gain access to the computer system, Scientists or Medical-4+ can read through the research files. The gist of them is related below under The Doriforms' Story.

(Continued on page 14)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 13)

13. **Office Reception Area:** The space is obviously built to impress. Posters and holograms of the company's success adorn the walls, and the seating is plush. The receptionist's computer holds files on all company personnel, as well as comm contact numbers and information on the laboratory's patron (referee's choice, although stereotypically this is SuSAG.)

14-15; 18-19. **Offices:** These areas are all similar: desk, chair, comm, hardcopy files, and computer workstation. They differ only in personal items and the exact arrangement of the furniture. The main computer can be accessed from any of the workstations, using either the proper codes or the hacking task above. As the group searches the offices, the referee should throw 7+ once for each office to determine its contents; use the table for Area 10-12 above with a DM of -1 and a Valuables result of Cr(1D x 50). The computer workstation is smashed and thus useless on a further throw of 8+.

16. **Fresher.**

17. **Executive Office:** This office is very well appointed, with a real wood desk and paneling, plush seating, tasteful décor all around, and even a small bar stocked with expensive spirits. The computer workstation allows administrative access to all other workstations in the complex. It also holds detailed personnel information and the complex's financial records. A small safe is hidden in the wall behind the desk; only the facility director's palmprint grants access to it:

To find the hidden safe:

DIFFICULT; INT; 1 minute

REFEREE: Only players who make a declaration that they're looking for hidden items can try this task. This task is NON-REPEATABLE; no retries allowed, although other PCs can make an attempt.

To bypass the safe's locking mechanism:

FORMIDABLE; Electronics, EDU; 5 minutes.

The safe contains hardcopies of the facility's charter records, financials, and personnel records; and Cr750,000. Accessing the computer in this office gives the PCs a chance to discover a video recorded by a transitional Doriform; the contents are related below under The Doriforms' Story.

20. **Conference Room:** This room is almost as well-appointed as the Executive Office above. The glassteel walls allow for full viewing of the Reception Area, but can be rendered opaque via computer command. The table and the ceiling overhead include a state-of-the-art integrated tactile holographic interface. A small bar, similar to the one in the Executive Office, is at the back of the room. A large bloodstain is on the wall near it; apparently someone died here, although there is no sign of a body.

21. **Commons:** Pandemonium reigned here; the entire room has been thoroughly trashed. Anyone with prior military combat skill can determine a very violent battle occurred. Blood spatter is everywhere, and several severed limbs are still scattered about. A headless body in a lab coat is sprawled in one corner of the room.

22. **Fresher:** The door to this room is badly damaged. A mutilated body is wedged between the toilet and the wall.

23. **Galley:** Like the commons area, this room has been thoroughly trashed, although a dead Doriform in the middle of the floor (the victim of a meat cleaver) attests that someone went down swinging.

24. **Pantry:** Most of the prepackaged and perishable food has been eaten. There are still hermetically-sealed foodstuffs on shelves. The referee may determine just how much and its value using *Book 3*.

25. **Storage:** Only office supplies and spare small equipment are in this room.

26. **Staterooms:** These rooms are similar to those found aboard starships, complete with small freshers. Each has personal items worth Cr(2D x

(Continued on page 15)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 14)

100); clothes of varying worth; and personal mementos of one form or another. For each room searched, the referee should throw 2D for 7+ to find anything else of significance; if so, use the table for Area 10-12 above.

27. **Executive Suite:** The facility director's stateroom can only be accessed from level B4, and then only with his personal palmprint; no other print will work, although the biolock can be bypassed as above. The apartment is the most sumptuous area in the complex. The referee may simply consider it similar to a high passage starship suite. A fully-stocked wet bar and a cutting-edge entertainment system is in the room. The kitchenette stores exotic foods from all over the subsector. There is a hidden safe; PCs may use the tasks given above to find and access it. Inside are valuables worth Cr(3D × 10,000).

28. **Bedroom:** The former occupant is here, a victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Beside him is a recorder detailing what happened to allow the Doriforms to escape, his confession to allowing protocols to be violated, and an apology to anyone that the Doriforms end up hurting.

V: The Tail End

However the team resolves the mystery of the undersea biolab, the drive can subsequently return to its course and schedule. If none of the Doriform Warriors escaped, the attacks on the surrounding areas will cease. The referee still should implement Incidents, Encounters, and Rumors as usual, but any result that mentions or hints at the Doriform Warriors may be ignored.

Once the drive reaches the processing plant, the sale of the viscludi begins. Recall that the school originally measured 70 tonnes, or 2,800 fish. This figure should be adjusted based on gains or losses incurred on the trail. Conversion from number of fish back to tonnes may be necessary. The processing plant will offer Cr1,500 per tonne; the outfit may hire a broker per the rules in *Book 2* to get a better price. Once the

adjusted total price is calculated, Kalduun divides the money equally among the drovers. In addition, the PCs get their promised wage of Cr25 per day.

The referee must determine the flow of subsequent events.

NPCs

Note that Swimming, Diving, and Herding skills have been assigned per the method described above

Ransim Kalduun, Skip 767646 Age 38 Cr30,000
5 terms Ex-Sailor (Captain)

Revolver

Water Craft-3, Demolition-1, Communications-2,
Forward Observer-1, Electronics-1, Gun Combat-1,
Swimming-3, Diving-2, Herding-2

Kalduun is the archetypical "man's man." Tough but fair, he takes a dim view of laziness, slackers, and anyone he deems soft. But he is willing to alter his views to fit the subject of them. He runs the drive with an iron fist, but the resulting efficiency ensures that his workers make a lot of money.

Dragana Kasun, Torpedo 88CA47 Age 26 Cr15,000
2 terms Ex-Sailor (Commander)

Auto Pistol

Battle Dress-1, Water Craft-1, Navigation-2, Demolition-1, Swimming-2, Diving-1, Herding-1

"Dragon" Kasun is Kalduun's closest friend and the drive's torpedo. Having served with him in the Wet Navy, she followed him when he resettled on Doris and is a very effective second-in-command on the viscludi drives. Possessed of a fiery temper, she amply lives up to her nickname.

Doriform Warriors

No.	Animal	Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds & Weapons
2D	Hunter	200kg	18/11	--	claws+1 and teeth+1

These creatures are genetically engineered nightmares built with nanotechnology, hominid, and lamniform DNA. Intended as aquatic shocktroops, they have gone rogue and now mount attacks on any other sentient that approaches their territory. They somewhat resemble the samebito (shark-men) of ancient Terran myth: powerfully-built, 2-meter tall hu-

(Continued on page 16)

Active Measures

(Continued from page 15)

manoids with large, tooth-filled maws, long arms ending in clawed hands, powerful legs ending in webbed feet, and sharklike tails. They can leave the water for short periods of time. They can swim at speeds of up to 20 km per hour, and detect prey through an electromagnetic sense. They are vicious fighters, attacking in the water with a ram and a bite, and on land with teeth and claws. Their ability to resist water pressures manifests as a high strength-to-mass ratio. Despite their apparent bestiality, they actually have INT approaching human.

The Doriforms' Story

The laboratory was contracted by military interests in yet another quest to create the perfect warrior. The scientists, after several years' work, succeeded beyond their intended hopes. By combining hominid and lamniform DNA at a molecular and genetic level, they created a species of "shark men" that could withstand ocean pressures, breathe water, and bear natural weaponry while still being smart enough to use tactics.

The military contractor was so pleased that the scientists decided to fast-track the rest of the work in order to collect a bonus. Big mistake. The usual problem of choosing speed over quality meant that subtle neural flaws crept in, compromising the Doriforms' personalities. The warriors became mentally unbalanced, prone to fits of rage and possessed of murderous impulses. Worse, they developed a biological imperative to kidnap people and subject them to the transformation. Some of the Doriforms, not yet given over to their brutal natures, tried to moderate their fellows' urges by sealing the entire complement in the seabase and only taking victims from among the scientists who weren't killed (which would also serve the purpose of stopping the research.) But the compulsion eventually became too great, and the Doriforms began leaving the base to take victims from the surrounding waters. A seaquake buried the base in mud, halting the Doriforms

for a while, but they managed to escape again and recently resumed their attacks and kidnappings.

The notes relate some of the above story; a recorded video in the Executive Office relates a good deal of the rest of it, along with an apology/warning to anyone who finds it.

Resolving a Scatter

A scatter is the aquatic equivalent of a stampede, with panicked viscudi swimming in all directions. It is possible, although difficult, to round the fish up again; with the possibility of some loss.


The referee should first determine a percentage: $1D+3 \times 10\%$. This is the percentage of the school that scatters. This number then divided equally by the number of drovers attempting to regain control; the result is the number of fish each drover is ultimately responsible for. The drovers then throw the Round-up task above. The number of viscudi recovered by each drover is $2D-2 \times 10\%$ of their responsibility. Reintegration into the main school is automatic.

Glossary

Fin	A unit of viscudi count (head, as "head of cattle").
Scatter	A sudden panicked rush of fish in all directions (stampede).
Shallowfed	Euphemism for inexperienced worker (tenderfoot).
Skip	The leader of the drive (trail boss).
Swim	The position of drovers within a drive.
Torpedo	The assistant drive boss; the second-in-command (ramrod).

Ship's Locker

SEAbike: (Subsurface Extravehicular Activity bike) A single-operator, propeller-driven submersible vehicle that is best described as the aquatic analogue to the land-based motorcycle. The craft offers reasonable speed and maneuverability. A 27-liter fuel tank gives it an operating time of 6 hours. While delivered unarmed, a special mount allows for the attachment of a light weapon, usually a speargun. Speed: 35 km/hour. Features: headlamps, weapons mount. Cr3,600.

Magrod: An essential tool on viscudi drives, the "gun" consists of a 2m long tube with a battery pack at one end. It emits a low-power magnetic beam that affects Dorian sea life as a cattle prod. The resulting unpleasant sensation causes sea creatures of a certain size to immediately move away. The devices are rated for creatures of 100kg and under; they are ineffective on larger creatures. Length: 2m; Weight: 1 kg. Good for six hours of continuous operation. 

Active Measures

Events

The referee should apply DM -1 if the current depth is 0-10 meters.

- 2 **Storm:** A powerful storm moves over the area. Throw 1D for the storm's intensity. Each point of intensity means the following effects at a depth of 15 meters per point: strong currents that sweep the drive in a random direction for (intensity × 3) combat rounds; reduced visibility (-1) from silt stirred up; temperature inversions that may cause hypothermia (see Event 4, below.) A throw of 12 exactly, made as frequently as the referee likes, means a lightning strike that deals 5D damage to anyone swimming at less than 3 meters' depth. The storm lasts (2D × intensity) × 10 minutes.
- 3 **Rustlers:** 1D+3 rustlers, based on a nearby ship, try to steal part of the drive's school. Half of them will distract or attack the Night Swim while the rest cut out as many viscudi as they can (per the integration task, above). Determined resistance will cause them to abandon the fish and run.
- 4 **Hypothermia:** the drive passes through a layer of seawater that's much colder than the surrounding waters. The sudden temperature drop inflicts 1D END damage on any drover wearing a wetsuit or otherwise exposed to the water.
- 5 **Malfunction:** A device of the referee's choice suffers a malfunction. Throw 1D; on 5+ the malfunction is major or catastrophic (increase the repair task difficulty by 1 or 2 levels) New equipment isn't immune to this, though older or previously damaged equipment is more prone to breakage.
- 6 **Scatter:** Something panics the school and causes a scatter. See Resolving a Scatter, above, to remedy the situation.
- 7 **Subsurface current:** A powerful current runs through the area. Throw 1D for its strength and another 1D for its direction (1-3 is in the drive's direction, 4-6 is the opposite direction). The current's direction determines whether the drive is helped or hindered by its presence; the heroes will gain or lose a daily distance equivalent to the current's strength times 10%.
- 8 **Wild viscudi:** A school of wild viscudi is encountered, numbering 1D × 10% of the drive's school. They can be rounded up and integrated into the existing school. Use the integration task above.
- 9 **Old weapons:** The drive encounters an old weapon systems abandoned as supposedly inactive, but in fact still live. The referee should determine exactly what the weapon is and the damage it can inflict. The stereotypes are sunken torpedos or live mines, but possibilities are nearly endless.
- 10 **Seaweed:** A large mass of floating seaweed blocks the drive's way. Going around it will cost 4D hours. It is possible to swim through it, but it is thick enough that the SEAbikes' propulsion systems will be fouled on a throw of 4+; the fish will stop to graze and be very difficult to move (resolve per a Scatter, above); and visibility will be cut in half, masking the approach of enemies. Predators may also have taken to hiding in the 'weed, waiting for just such an opportunity.
- 11 **Silt:** A large cloud of silt has been stirred up directly in the drive's path. The drive will need to make a choice of whether to go around (costing 4D hours) or try to swim through. The fish will balk unless driven; if they are driven through, the silt will asphyxiate 20% of them; 50% of the rest will be injured enough that their value will be halved at market. The cloud will also block visibility, making enemies impossible to spot.
- 12 **Seismic activity:** Nearby seismic activity creates danger for the drive. The nature of the danger depends on their location. For instance, in shallows near the coast they're in danger of being washed ashore by a tsunami for 12D. At depth, they're in danger of being crushed by a undersea landslide for a like amount. The viscudi automatically scatter as the quake begins.

Rumors

- 1 * The Scouts are considering designating Doris as an Amber Zone due to all the still-active weapons systems scattered about.
- 2 Doris' population is mostly concentrated in the northern latitudes on a chain of islands. There are some diehards that live in isolation, and others who have banded together to form raft towns.
- 3 The raft towns are rough places, in many ways even worse than any Startown. Visitors should keep one eye over their shoulder at all times.
- 4 * There is a gigantic creature lurking in Doris' abyssal depths. It is hundreds of feet long with a maw that can swallow entire schools of fish at once. It once sank a trawler that stumbled into its territory.
- 5 * Many people think Doris has a problem with piracy, but that's actually not the case. After all, what is there to pirate?
- 6 There's a certain place in the lower latitudes where living things get...changed.
- 7 * A Darrian scientist has proposed to use recovered TL 16 Darrian equipment to create new islands. Prospective settlers are signing up in droves.
- 8 Along with conventional weapons testing, some bioengineering projects were going on as well.
- 9 Doris was once used as a proving ground for undersea weapons. Mostly by the Imperial Navy, but the Darrians and even the Sword Worlders had a few projects going on at one point.
- 10 Doris is a big planet, and there are huge stretches of open sea where anything could be lurking.
- 11 There have been scattered reports of shipping being attacked and disappearances of entire crews in and around a certain area in the lower latitudes. Investigations (when there were any) have come to nothing. No one knows who's responsible, but the assaults are uniformly vicious.
- 12 The starport is based at the 45th parallel, on an artificially built reef. This is unusual, as most starports are built closer to a world's equator.

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 28

The *Chicken and Waffles* splashed into whirling, chaotic Transitional Space in a blink, escaping pursuit. In another split-second blink, the *Waffles* was wrenched back from the brilliant mandala, and dropped into Normal Space by a sudden, mysterious, massive impact along the little ship's starboard side as the Gravity Anomaly Claxon sounded; the sudden, jarring shift between the two dimensions throwing everyone in the crew to the deck, dizzy, nauseous, and leaden, with several members experiencing wracking seizures.

Rooster and part-time cartographer Ishmael Murken woke, lying in a puddle of his own vomit, right cheek pressed against the deck of the elevator as the Gravity Anomaly Claxon continued to blare; the tray he'd been carrying to the bridge had its contents scattered everywhere.

Staggering to his feet, Murken activated the elevator again and eventually made it to the bridge, empty tray clutched in his left hand.

The bridge was a shock, with the crew lying around; some face down on panels, others on the deck like broken dolls, or in the fetal position; the smell of puke heavy in the air.

Ishmael found the Captain slumped in the Big Chair and shook him back to consciousness.

"M-Murken? Report!" the Captain ordered, though he didn't seem really focused on anything.

"The ship's suffered some sort of event, Captain. I think we're the only crew in any sort of condition to do anything." replied the cartographer.

Eyes focusing, Fyyg took a quick look around; Claxon still sounding. Pointing toward the navigator lying on the deck, he said "Get Mr. Tower to his feet, please, Murken, while I turn off that damned Claxon!"

The Captain moved to the controls and saw the Sensor board showing some type of impact rear-

ward; the Gravitational Anomaly that probably caused the event, along the ship's ventral starboard rear quarter, near one of the landing legs.

With the Gravity Anomaly Claxon silenced, the deep, double-tone of the N-Space Claxon sounded, the ship's computer reporting impossibly, "Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time two seconds."

"Gods be praised, we're still alive!" Captain Fyyg said, "We've gone off the tracks, Murken! There's no telling where we are!" Fyyg said.

It was a wonder that the little merchant hadn't been torn to pieces with such a short, violent Transition between dimensions.

Within an hour, most of the crew had commed and reported in, though few were actually fit for duty; most still suffering from extreme vertigo.

After several more hours, the bridge crew had managed to locate the position of the *Chicken and Waffles*. The battered ship lay now more than twenty light-years to spinward of their last location, and two point seven light-years coreward of white Procyon, in what the navigational charts identified as an empty hex; an area with no prominent features besides the possibility of an occasional meteor shower or hydrogen cloud.

A few days later the crew of the *Waffles* had convalesced, and was again engaged in its various tasks.

Gibby, who'd just come from the Med Bay, and the black gang were busy working on getting the dual Garabaldi-Singh reactors back to working status after the micro-Crossing had melted a third of the unit's power cells to slag; using parts taken from the Burr to set things to right.

While the Crossing had taken only a mindblowing, few seconds, it had still required the normal fuel mass, and left the fuel tankage devoted to the Transition Drive high and dry here in the middle of nowhere. Second Officer Frielander and 'the Profes-

(Continued on page 19)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 18)

sor' joined on the task of searching out suitable frozen hydrogen-carbon asteroids to be used as fuel.

Checking the status of the *Waffles* after the jump, Captain Fyyg assigned Brodie to examine the outer hull using the 'Mk 1 Eyeball'. Nothing like having a man on the ground at the scene; the small flight of commobots coming along more as an afterthought. In vacc suit, Brodie left the ship through the port bridge airlock. Once standing on the ventral surface he moved slowly as he looked about.

As Brodie advanced toward the stern, the big ape noticed something peculiar wedged in the mechanism for one of the rear landing legs.

Brodie activated his imager and looked closer at the object, the commobots providing multiple POV to the object.

Using the comm, the ape volunteered "Now it looks like a missile to me, but it appears to be much larger than any of the missiles *Waffles* carries. Diameter looks to be, oh, something like 50 centimeters. I think it's a torpedo, Captain. Guess the Navy tossed it at us as they chased us, and it didn't go off, maybe?... or maybe we ran into it as a piece of old space junk?"

"Well, don't touch it, Brodie!" Number One ordered over the comm as Brodie watched the inert explosive. "We'll have someone out there in a minute!"

Kalifra had been relieved from bridge duty by the Captain and Number One earlier that morning. Going to her shared cabin, she found a sleeping Tam lying face-down on the couch, naked except for her greaved boots, dead asleep.

Wrapped in a towel after a shower, Kalifra sat on the edge of the small, yellow couch, drying as Tam slept. Reading a book of lesbian erotica; her outer thigh pushing slightly against Tam's shoulder was really starting to become a distraction. About a

dozen pages in, the overhead squawked, calling Kalifra to the bridge. "Goodbye, Little Sister," the blond whispered to Tam, using the honorific all Arethusians did when addressing a younger woman. She bent down, and, giving the brunette a kiss on the ear, turned to dress.

Soon the blond was in a vacc suit of her own, standing next to Brodie on the ship's belly.

After an update from Brodie, Kalifra nodded, "Yes, I have to agree with you, Brodie, it appears to be a torpedo, alright."

She showed him the tells: the colored bands and the numbers at the tail, explaining the various codes used in the IN to him. "I think it could be old Imperial gear, or maybe it's Rebel hardware. Back then they often had the same manufacturer."

Brodie found it all very fascinating.

"So by what I've told you, what do you think it is?" she asked the big chimp.

Wishing he could rub his chin, Brodie said "The rings say it's an Armor Piercing round, but the tail numbers say it's a cargo pod. I don't get it, luscious. Unless there's a guy in there... Is that it? There's a guy in there?" Brodie asked, bewildered, but still maintaining enough sense to draw his laser pistol.

"Close, Brodie. The thing's loaded with a boardingbot...It's like an octopus or a squid. You know what any of those things are?" she asked.

"Never seen one, but I know what you mean," the chimp replied.

"Well, make it float, all metal, all lethal, and set it loose in you enemy's ship, and you have a boardingbot!"

"That just ain't cricket, sister!" Brodie huffed.

"No, but it's here. Don't think it was a deliberate attack from the *Humphreys*, though. Just wouldn't make sense firing one of these after someone whose broken salvage law. I think we just happened to pick the thing up as we plowed into it, Brodie!"

"Great..." replied Brodie, as he took a draw on his suit's hydration pack.

(Continued on page 20)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 19)

"Let's get a closer look at this torpedo's casing, see if the thing is merely crashed into us, or has actually penetrated our hull. The thing's gotta be ancient!"

The pair closed on the torpedo wedged up in the landing gear; Brodie with his laser pistol, and Kalifra with a heavy autorifle. At Kalifra's urging, Brodie put all of his considerable strength behind it and pushed the torpedo's body.

As the body of the torpedo came away, then split into a half dozen segments, they could see where a neat hole had been made through the landing gear into the hull in Engineering that'd been sealed over with some type of metallic resin.

The boardingbot had gained access three days ago, but hadn't struck yet; which made Kalifra, and Number One when she reported to him, think that the 'bot must be damaged in some way.

The damaged 'bot was curled up, like some big cat, its tentacles wrapped around it like a tail as it waited in its new den. It could hear the goings-on of the black gang nearby, but remained unobtrusive for now.

As Brodie watched the shards of the torpedo's case drift off, he could hear the Captain announcing over the comm, "Attention, all hands! Intruder Alert!"

At the call, the crew turned out with axes and pikes, and swords and pistols and rifles of all types.

"C'mon, Le Boucherre," Kalifra said, "We'll go in through the port cargo airlock—it'll get us close to Engineering!"

As one of the Flints came around a short corner in Engineering, checking a board located in a crawlspace too small for a human, the waiting boardingbot lashed out, grappling and dismantling

the little engineeringbot and repairing itself in a few minutes.

Once as close to optimal as possible, the boardingbot gave a green light to its mission—the destruction of the enemy crew.

The big metallic thing rose to a meter or so in the air and unwound until long, gangly tentacles were stretched everywhere, groping along walls, overhead and deck, and feeling for objects to use as weapons. The heightened-performance sensors of this robotic killer looked for life forms.

Moving from its improvised cave, the tentacled thing leaped onto two of the black gang; wrapping each torso with a trio of spiked or saw-edged tentacles, before slamming them together, head-to-head.

As a third member of the black gang drew a snub pistol and fired at the robot, it whip-sawed back with another tentacle and sliced the top of the pistol-holder's head off a centimeter above his right eyebrow, blood splashing everywhere as another tentacle wrestled the pistol free and fired into a crowd of the black gang running for their lives, the heavy rounds THUD-THUDing and SPANGing off conduits and machinery as crewmembers took refuge among the small spaces in Engineering, hoping to avoid being hit.

To break the killer's momentum, Engineer's 3rd Mate Geisel closed on the thing with a boarding pike, attempting to jam the electrified blade into the robot. But the mechanized thing had wrapped four of its tentacles around the shaft of the pike, and so, kept the point from making contact.

Another of the black gang joined Geisel, and together they jammed the spear forward, deep into the boardingbot's chassis, where the two right uppermost tentacles attached, a huge flash of electricity arcing as the joint was compromised, blowing the tentacles off in a blast that shook the 'bot as well as scorching Geisel and his workmate.

The boardingbot floated by the scorched men, picking up the pike and, wrapping a trio of tentacles

(Continued on page 21)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 20)

around it, gripped it and stabbed a scorched Engineer right between the shoulder blades.

Trying to shake the body free of the electrified spear took the boardingbot's attention off Geisel just long enough for him to start to crawl away. The 'bot made a clumsy throw with the spear and missed.

Sighting on the crawling Geisel, one of the boardingbot's eyes irised open, revealing the head of an oxyacetylene torch.

Geisel had gotten to his feet and was running for all he was worth when a gout of flames jetted across Engineering and lit him up. It was awful to hear him screaming as he ran, aimlessly, until he slammed into a heavy ceiling support

As the boardingbot focused its main eye on the last of the Engineering crew as they left, it erupted in stuttering invisible laser fire, cutting crewman Enzo's legs off at the knees, as the access door to Engineering had just about closed.

With the door closed, Gibby went to the weapon storage in the hall and grabbed a heavy EMP rifle, or 'Robot Gun'. Ordering the two remaining healthy members of the black gang to get Enzo to Doctor Wong, the Chief Engineer loaded the rifle.

"That damned thing has emptied Engineering out, Captain!" Gibraltar commed the Captain. "There may be someone still hiding in Engineering. I dunno. It was pretty hectic, but I think the four of us are all that made it out!"

Suddenly, the hatch in the floor outside Engineering started turning. Gibby, aiming his heavy 'Robot Gun' at the clatter, was surprised when the hatch lid lifted to find Kalifra staring him down with her heavy 15mm auto rifle, Brodie still nervously holding onto his laser pistol.

"You almost got yourself shot, Wyeth," Kalifra said, climbing onto the deck with Brodie following.

The boardingbot traveled through the ship, up the elevator shaft to the Crew Deck, taking an as-

sortment of weapons from the weapon stations as it moved. As the machine advanced to the galley serving station, its sensors picked up a trio of heartbeats and heat signatures crouched behind the serving station—Chef Degrasse, Li'l Mary, and Tam Murmisagli hoping against hope that they'd be overlooked.

Li'l Mary commed to the rest of the ship in a whisper, "It's here in the galley!"

Aiming at the trio of targets, the boardingbot let go with a heavy SMG, the rocket slugs easily blowing through the counter; with one of the slugs slamming into and detonating in Li'l Mary's left hand, blowing off three fingers and spattering everyone with blood.

The rocket slugs missed top-knotted Degrasse as he popped up, a heavy 15mm revolver in each hand. He emptied the pair at the thing's large rectangular head, rendering the 'bot's eye/torch useless. Dropping down again, Chef was reloading the pistols, when, with a swing of a tentacled arm that'd make a Drill Instructor proud, the boardingbot hurled a frag grenade in a 20 meter arc to clatter behind the serving station within a meter of Degrasse, who threw himself on the explosive before it could go off and injure his comrades.

Tam took a few slow, even breaths, as she centered herself, hearing the killer's slight movements on the other side of the counter in the room's center.

Moving like a racer through a wax museum, the little brunette launched herself over the counter onto the black-and-white tiled floor, surprising the lethal robot, and firing a burst from her flamer at the thing while still in mid leap. The phosphorous rounds of the flamer exploded across the boardingbot's face and chassis as Tam landed like a cat.

The 'bot tracked Tam with its laser eye and stutter-fired after her as she threw herself back in a desperate but futile attempt to avoid having holes burnt through her upper left side and shoulder.

Hitting the deck, left arm useless, Tam drew her left heavy needler from her cross-draw rig with her right hand in a blink, and emptied its magazine into the boardingbot's face; blowing out its laser eye.

(Continued on page 22)

Raconteurs' Rest

Finding a medkit, Li'l Mary wrapped her shattered hand with an emergency dressing and squeezed it, activating the pain killers and coagulants.

Picking up one of Chef's heavy, blood-spattered pistols with her good hand, Mary began firing on the boardingbot, yelling, "We'll get it, Anton!" as a half dozen rounds slammed into its carapace, with a damaged tentacle being blown off by a lucky shot.

Blind and clumsy now, the robot, using its remaining tentacles to grope about for its enemy directed by its Life Sensors, gave Tam an instant to get to her feet and run toward the galley where Li'l Mary crouched.

Grabbing Mary by the shoulder, Tam pulled on the diminutive blond, yelling, "C'mon! Let's haul ass!"

"But Anton!" Mary yelled, trying to pull away.

"He's gone!" Tam replied through clenched teeth. "Move!" the brunette panted, as she got Li'l Mary in front of her and gave her a weak push.

Halfway across the Crew Lounge, Tam thought the floor felt like it heaved and she pitched forward into blackness.

Gibby, Kalifra and Brodie were in the elevator on their way up to the Crew Lounge and the galley, the last place the intruder had been reported. They could hear screaming and gunfire.

"It's coming, goddamit! It's coming!" Mary was crying as she tried pulling the injured brunette to her feet.

As the boardingbot skittered over the tiles toward the two women, Li'l Mary fired her last shot from Anton's heavy pistol.

One tentacle wrapped around one of Tam's salmon-colored greaves, while another began wrapping itself around Mary's shoulder. Not wanting to see it happen, the little Chef's Apprentice looked away; catching sight of distant, white Procyon out the large viewport overhead.

As the elevator hit the Crew Lounge, its passengers opened up on the mechanized terror, Kalifra the marksman severing a metal tentacle only 5 centimeters from Li'l Mary's neck as Gibraltar fired into the robot's mass twice with the 'Robot Gun', rendering most systems inoperative.

As the tentacle winding around Tam's leg quit working, Brodie dropped his laser and sprung among them, effortlessly grabbing up both Tam and Li'l Mary and carrying them to the elevator.

Kalifra and Gibby continued firing into the robot as it thrashed about. When the 'Robot Gun' was empty, the Chief Engineer leapt in close with the thing, beating the boardingbot to misshapen junk with heavy butt-strokes from the empty rifle.

As Brodie prepared to bring the wounded girls via elevator to the Med Bay, Donaldson motioned for Brodie to wait one, until she could open her faceplate and get close enough to Tam to give the brunette a hug, muttering something to her cabin mate before signally for the elevator to proceed.

When the elevator cycled back up to the Crew Deck, Kalifra tugged a thumb at the wrecked robot, and motioned for Brodie to seal his suit up again, as they had to get the boardingbot off the *Waffles*.

Taking the elevator to the service entrance at the ventral access hatch, where, exposed to the black of space, Brodie attached a rocket motor to the mangled robot and fired it off toward Procyon, with a beacon stating the thing was a Navigational Hazard.

The crew was surprised to learn that the device's swath of destruction had actually lasted a little closer to three and a half minutes, total.

At Captain's request, the crew turned out a few days later for the funeral service, to be held in full dress uniforms. Salome and a few helping hands filled-in for Chef Degrasse and helped out with the different platters of food at the after funeral gathering. A fine selection of fruit from who only knows

(Continued on page 23)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 22)

where made its appearance, as a gift of Second Officer Frieland.

The plundered alcohol from the *Burr*, as well as the booze from the *Waffles* was made available to those desiring it.

By the end of the week the crew of the *Waffles* was back at work, with individuals often working additional or different jobs entirely. The Engineering Department was now, after the bloodshed of the boardingbot, reduced to a skeleton crew of one man per shift. Once Doctor Wong had the Engineering crew fabricate a pair of legs for Enzo, there was a floater for the shifts. In addition, a few Roosters were reassigned to Engineering as Drive Hands.

In the galley, Salome La Boucherre, once more a redhead, took over the tasks of Chef, while Li'l Mary, hand just mended, decided she'd make a better follower than a leader, and remained Chef's Apprentice; even though Salome had repainted the galley sign to read 'Li'l Mary's Kitchen'.

Deep in the no-man's-land of sprawling nothingness that the previous Crossing had dumped them in before it all started, 'The Professor', Roy Hobbs, with his small round head and very big ears, worked with the raven haired Second Officer and Brodie at the Sensor Board to find suitable sources of fuel, the three Mosquitobots ready for deployment. At one time there had been only two working Mosquitos, but the new Rooster, 'The Kid' Garafalo was an excellent mechanic, and had, to everyone's surprise, gotten the finicky old Mk11 working again—but only temporarily—as it succumbed to clogs and overheating again and again.

"Captain," Garafalo reported over the comm after a few hours, "The Mk 11 is a no go, sir. We'll have enough fuel to make Transit in approximately twenty eight hours using the pair of Mk 12s. Not counting time for purification. Which'd be very late Friday or Mid-Saturday."

Hearing this admission over the comm, Brodie chuckled.

Once the necessary amount of fuel was processed, Tower's flight plan to Procyon was figured, with a twenty percent variance for running with the damaged reactor. Eventually the Captain liked what he saw and the word was given by the Captain, then by Chief Wyeth from a bed in Med Bay to the black gang, who managed more than twenty-six hundred raw Megawatts into the Transition Engine. The kaleidoscope of crashing colors at Transition shifted toward red-orange with the damage to the reactors. A few panels blew, unable to quite handle that much power, and the Chief was knocked out cold, some swearing they could see a blue flame burning above Gibby's head.

The deep, double-tone of the Normal Space Claxon sounded, followed by the computer's voice coolly informing all of the total time spent in Transitional Space before the *Waffles* had popped back to a volume of Normal Space.

"Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time one million, twenty five thousand, five hundred and twenty seconds."

"Return to Normal Space. Elapsed time Eight days, seventeen hours and fifty two minutes."

During the Crossing, it was apparent that Salome and Li'l Mary had gotten to be friends, walking with hands wrapped around one another's waist as they whispered and giggled.

One evening, as Brodie manned the Sensor board while one of the Roosters, Johansen, trained for a Flight Officer position, the girls had brought the bridge crew dinner from the galley.

Johansen just couldn't contain his enthusiasm for the female form as presented, and as soon as they'd left, the old guy regaled the giant chimp with all the lurid details he could imagine, ignorant of the fact that Brodie and the redhead were married.

(Continued on page 24)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 23)

Near shift's end, Brodie offered to buy Johansen a drink in the galley, which the bearded Rooster happily accepted.

In the middle of handling Zen pilot Johansen a bottle of Robot Steam, Brodie held off for a second, saying "Now you would enjoy this beer, if you were given a chance to drink it... Like this!" the ape said, chugging down the big bottle in a few swallows.

"But," he continued, deftly dropping the empty into a nearby can and quickly picking up one of the old folding chairs in the Crew Lounge, hefting it for weight as he considered smashing his co-worker with it. Setting the chair back down, the chimp finished, "the li'l blond is a friend, and the big redhead is my *wife!*" Brodie smiled as he laid into Johansen with a quick uppercut, knocking Johansen out of his seat and to the checkered deck in a heap, unconscious.

Brodie sat next to the unconscious Johansen on the deck, the ape going through pockets for cigarettes as he waited for Ship's Security to show.

Number One arrived some minutes later with Rooster Brewster acting as back-up. Hertzog had a needle pistol, while Brewster carried an old, stockless laser carbine.

Hertzog motioned for Brodie, who'd smoked three cigarettes already, to get up.

"Sure, Hertzog," the ape replied as he stood up, yawning with his arms raised. Brewster eyed Brodie suspiciously.

Brodie nodded at him. "Hiya, Milo."

"What was it this time, Le Boucherre?" asked Number One.

"The old guy there," Brodie nodded toward where Johansen lay, "couldn't resist sharing every lurid thing he'd like to do to a couple of women in the crew during our shift together."

"And?" Hertzog asked.

"And I felt I had to defend their honor," Brodie explained, as if it were the most reasonable answer in the world. He then motioned for a butt from Milo.

Lighting the cigarette for the giant chimp, Milo asked, "And let me guess, one of them was your wife, I'm thinking?"

"Ya!" Brodie replied, grinning. "Exactly right, Milo."

Milo looked at Johansen laying in a heap. "And the other?"

"Li'l Mary," Brodie answered, "Who's like a sister to me."

"HmMMMMM," hummed the First Officer as he looked at the spot where Johansen had hit the glasteel overhead before falling to the deck. "Can't say as I blame you, Le Boucherre." He handed the cuffs to Brodie, allowing the chimp to put them on comfortably in front of him.

"Some jerk starts regaling me with tales of what he'd do to my wife, I can't say as I wouldn't do a little body and fender work myself." Milo thought of his wife back on Driscoll's World.

"Now, c'mon Brodie," Hertzog continued, "you know the drill."

"Brig. Two weeks?" Brodie divined as he clasped his hands behind his head.

"Yup," replied Number One, motioning from Brewster to Brodie.

"Get moving, Le Boucherre!" the raven-haired Brewster insisted, pointing the autolaser in the direction he wanted the prisoner to go.

As Brodie tromped his way to the Brig, he could hear the First Officer comming for Pharmacist's Mate Fahad and a stretcher team for Johansen.

"Don't worry 'bout Johansen; Doc Wong'll have him back to making poor decisions again, any day now."

Opening the brig, Brewster pointed the carbine at Brodie then at the opened cell door. Unquestionably getting the picture, Brodie stepped into the cell.

With Brodie safely behind bars, Brewster removed his handcuffs, and the ape hopped up onto the rack.

A short time after bearded Johansen had made it to the Med Bay, Dr. Wong commed that Johansen had a dislocated jaw.

(Continued on page 25)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 24)

"Must be losing the ol' pepper!" Brodie decided, pulling out a pack of smokes Number One had snuck into a jacket pocket. "Thought for sure I'd have broken the damned thing!" Brodie chuckled, "Maybe next time, I guess!"

On pulling out a pair of the smokes, Brodie held them both in his teeth, and lighting them, offered one to Kelowna.

"You want one, doll?" he asked smoothly. "Full of vitamins, y'know?" he smiled as he offered the smoke. The small woman reached out and accepted the butt.

Johansen stayed in Med Bay for a day on the mend after Doctor Wong reset his jaw. He received a visit from Captain Fyyg, with his bottle of Newton & McCenna, as well as visits from his gang of Heimdall coworkers: neckless Ermette, young Garafalo, and Gothic Brewster.

Brodie, by far, seemed to get more sympathy visits, especially from the *Waffles'* female crewmembers bringing snacks. Even fresh fruit from Vishnu only knows where, from Freilander.

By the time Brodie was released from the brig, the *Waffles* had already performed turn-over at mid-point, and was now fourteen hours into its fifty two point eight hours of deceleration to Layettmeyer, one of several medium moons orbiting the large gas giant Vishnu, which circles Procyon A. Less than two days later, the *Waffles* was being brought in to the orbital facilities at the Grishamm Highport by Johansen's light touch.

Checking the duty roster for the week the *Waffles* was to be at Procyon, Brodie figured for sure he'd have anchor watch or help in the mess, but neither were the case.

Salome and Li'l Mary were still in the middle of cleaning up the kitchen when Brodie arrived, the big ape getting a pair of warm hugs.

"Baby!" he said, embracing and kissing his wife. Then, "Mary, doll!" he said, hugging the little blond and getting a peck on the cheek. "And how's your hand, precious?" Brodie asked.

Li'l Mary held up her once-maimed hand, showing all five fingers and smiling. She then made a fist. "Prosthetic. Works well enough to knock you on your ass, monkey-boy!"

They all laughed.

With Brodie pitching in, the mess was cleaned about forty-five minutes ahead of time, allowing the trio to be among the first off the *Waffles* to use the huge, ancient, orbital elevator to reach the surface of Layettmeyer.

Selling various small units of salvage goods to local merchants, the Captain, and soon the crew of the *Waffles*, were rolling in Credits, with some of the wheeling-and-dealing being enough to address one of Captain Fyyg's main concerns: getting the five salvaged lasers mounted into a single turret to replace the triple mount lost to pirates. The accommodating technicians at the Van Ness Shipyard at the Highport were happy to help.

Layettmeyer was a medium-sized world, with a Starport capable of repair and manufacture of both Spaceships and Starships. Industries included mining for heavy and precious ores

Traveling down the orbital elevator, the promising flash of blue caught Brodie's eye, and he signalled for the platform on which they were riding to stop. It was an honest-to-goodness swimming pool; the extravagance was at least two or three times the size of an official Olympic pool, with various drink kiosks encircling it. There were even a few restaurants as well.

"Girls," Brodie said, clapping his palms together, "let's go for a swim!"

The trio secured lockers for their gear and clothes and made the change, Li'l Mary to a little yellow bikini, and Salome to a burgundy one-piece. Salome kept her six-inch heels on, however, as she decided she was here to lounge, not swim.

(Continued on page 26)

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 25)

Brodie had run down the steps approaching the pool and thrown himself in with abandon before first one, then a second lifeguardbot noticed that Brodie was entirely naked.

The lifeguardbots were there both to save lives, if need be, and to subdue rowdy and dangerous behavior.

As the first robot addressed Brodie, one of its arms, ending in a large, fork-like device lowered toward the ape, and the bot advanced to within Brodie's personal space.

"My dear chimp," it said, "Modesty will prohibit the continuance of your swimming pleasure..."

Brodie had never really grasped the twin concepts of nudity and modesty and how they seemed to be interrelated in some folks' minds. Brodie usually attributed such beliefs to a thinner-than-normal skull, or an overabundance of religiosity in a so-phont's upbringing.

"...unless you don these," the robot said, pulling a nice pair of trunks from a compartment. "Loaned to you at no charge, sir."

"Well, thanks, I guess..." Brodie began, bewildered. Running two sets of letters on the robot's carapace together, he called the robot "Iggy."

With Brodie now in a bright blue pair of trunks with a yellow stripe down the side, the lifeguardbots peeled away to protect other swimmers.

As Brodie lay on his back, head and shoulders supported by a float, and sipping a fruity drink he'd

gotten from a serverbot, he marveled again at the size of the pool and surroundings.

"Man, not even back when I was a Rooster aboard the *Queen* (meaning the ancient *Queen Catherine*, of course) was there an expanse of water anywhere near this size!" Brodie chuckled.

In one of the voluminous work bays of the highport, Fyyg, Number Two and the Chief Engineer sat in a lounge, watching through plasteel as the station's crews worked on the *Waffles*.

Replacing her destroyed laser turret with a massive military salvage one was a relatively simple operation for the *Waffles*; the new turret projected intimidation.

Repairing the damaged powerplant would take longer, probably several days, so Van Ness assigned the trio guest quarters.

With the ship being worked on, Captain Fyyg had given the crew ninety six hours Liberty.

Still feeling a little shaky after the disappearance of his brother, Dave Trajillo sought out the gruff comfort of a regular meeting of the Friends of Bill Dubbaeyah.

Milo, on the other hand, spending just like a sailor, sought out the companionship of a bevy of working girls, who, if paid enough, showed apparent real enthusiasm

Quentin Isaacs and a few people from the Purser's Department, again, spending like sailors, wound up in a series of Alternative joints. 🌀

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller News and Findings

April 2014

- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Career Companion* and *Hub Federation Navy*
- **Spica Publishing** has released *Through the Veil Part 10*
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book IOIOII: Derelict Fighter*, *Starships Book IOII0I: Pilot Boat*, *Steam Freighter*, and *Seaplane Spotter*
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Judge Dredd: Heroes and Villains of MegaCity One*
- **Jon Brazer Enterprises** has released *Foreven Worlds: Massina Subsector*

CD-ROM: Traveller²⁰

Reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Traveller²⁰: The Canon on CD-ROM. Various authors.

FarFuture Enterprises <http://farfuture.net>

PDF and other files on CD/DVD, ~310MB

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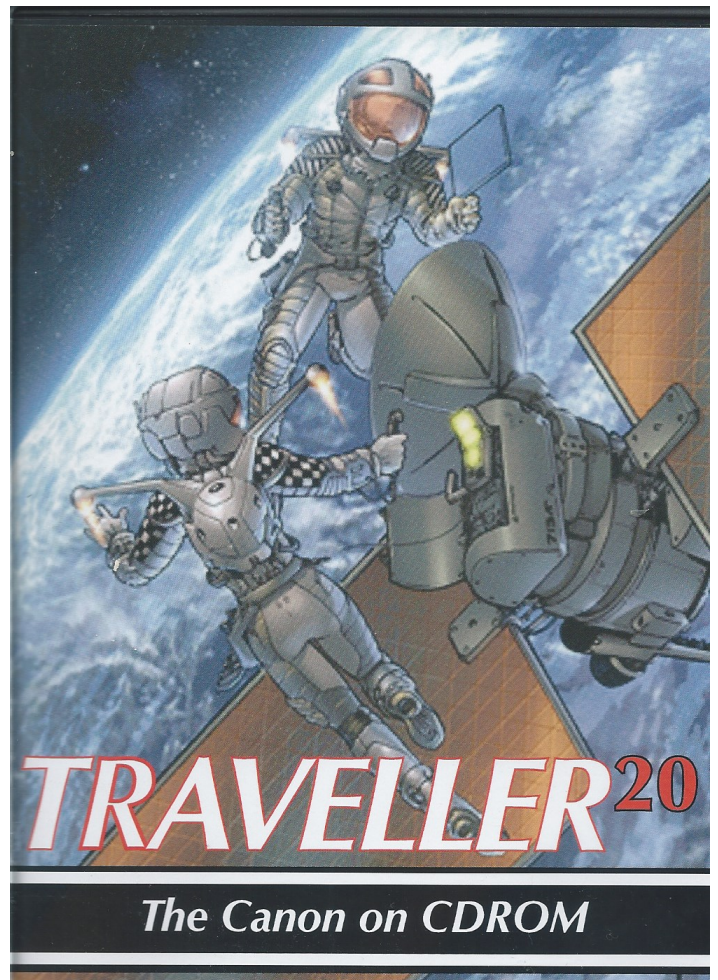
The creation of this CD comes long after the previous *Traveller* Canon CDs from FarFuture Enterprises (FFE); while no actual reason has (to the author's knowledge) ever been given, it is surmised that issues regarding license status and the death of the proprietor of the original publisher (Quiklink Interactive) may have complicated things. Nevertheless, the Canon for *Traveller²⁰* (*Traveller* for the d20 system) is now available on CD, under the same terms as prior FFE CDs.

On Inspection

Unlike previous CDs, the *Traveller²⁰* CD is a commercially-prepared CD—silver on the data side, rather than the blue, green, or purple of most user-writable CDs—and the label is full-color artwork applied directly to the disc, rather than color printing on a paper label subsequently pasted to the disc or monochromatic Lightscribe image burning.

With your computer's AutoRun capability enabled, your browser will be launched with the index.html page from the disc's root directory. This page presents you with a nicely-formatted array of thumbnail images of the covers of the various products, each linking to the PDF document proper. In addition to the 45 *Traveller*-specific PDFs, you also get a folder containing the Microsoft Office RTF format documents making up the *d20 System Reference Document*, which defines the basic rules for the d20 (D&D Third Edition) system. You need this, or one of the various core rulebooks (such as *d20 Modern*, frequently recommended) put out by Wizards of the Coast, to play *Traveller²⁰*.

The PDFs are informatively, if tersely, named, so you don't actually need to use the index page as a 'switchboard' to get you to the document you want. Readers for PDF files and RTF files are required.



If you're not using the index page as a switchboard, you'll see that a few of the PDFs are labelled "(Print)", and that there is a similarly-named document that omits that indicator. The difference between the two documents is the absence in the "(Print)" copy of internal page border art, making it more printer-friendly. A quick check seems to indicate that the remainder of the content is the same, and pagination is not altered between the two.

As with the other CDs, the PDFs are "text-behind-scan". The scans are quite readable, but the text behind them isn't fully edited, so text searches, while possible, may not return all the results they should, and you'll want to look over any text you choose to copy-and-paste.

The *Traveller²⁰* milieu, like the versions of *Traveller* that came before it, offered plenty of opportunity for adventuring. Like other milieus, it had its own 'flavor' due to both astrographical and political factors. Sadly, it never really caught on with either the

(Continued on page 28)

Critics' Corner

(Continued from page 27)

Traveller community or the d20 community; one can offer several hypotheses for the reason why, but whatever the reason, the support for extensive development wasn't there—and the development that likely would have brought community support wasn't there, either.



Confessions of a Newbie Referee

Timothy Collinson

#10: Curse or Blessing?

I've been struggling with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, or Myalgic Encephalomyelitis as it's often known in the UK, for the last four years or so. It appears to be getting worse, though the decline is very slow. My workplace has made accommodation for three 'stops' a day, where for half an hour I'm supposed to lie down, relax body and mind, and not even read or listen to music. (This is remarkably hard to do for several reasons.) I've had to reduce my involvement in church activities, from leading an AV team to drumming and occasional preaching. I'm finding physical things (exercising or driving), and social things (big or small) increasingly exhausting. And, sadly, there's no cure. Exercise regimes, special diets, drugs—nothing appears to work. The best the medical profession can offer at present is 'management' of energy levels (such as the 'stops'). At least there's general recognition now that it's not "all in the mind"—an attitude you might have encountered a decade ago. I assure you it's not. But you can imagine how difficult this is for someone in their 40s who ought to be in the prime of life, or how much it also impacts wife and children.

However, out of the darker moments I've experienced, there has been a surprising upside. I wrote last time about tablets as an aid to writing and creativity and that's certainly been one factor. However, as I've reduced other activities in my life and had much enforced thinking time—sometimes I just can't switch off!—as well as lying awake in the small hours unable to sleep because of pain or, ironically, tired-

Conclusion

Getting this CD wouldn't be a waste of money; if you're willing to do a bit of conversion work, much of what's here can be used in a Classic era game, opening up a new area for play where even veteran *Traveller* players might not know 'spoiler' information. ☼

ness, I've had more time to come up with *Traveller* support material from adventures and animals to vehicles and worlds. Indeed, I can fill ideas folders with far more than I can keep up with writing. I'm also sure I share with other writers the fear that one isn't producing anything of quality, but I've been encouraged by the acceptance of articles by *Mongoose*, *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, and of course *Freelance Traveller*, to name but three.

It remains to be seen whether I can continue to referee at TravCon, given the drain of travel to the venue, attending the con and the utter exhaustion of running a four or six hour game. Booking a day off following the con helps, but not enough. But I'll keep at it while I can. Meanwhile, one great thing about writing is that I can do it in my own time and at my own speed as strength permits. Of course, I would give up the CFS/ME tomorrow if I could, and healing may yet come, but it's interesting to note this one unexpected positive that's come out of it and I can only hope that readers have enjoyed some little piece or another to read, or to use, or perhaps even as an inspiration for their own creations. ☼

TravellerCON/USA

TravellerCON/USA 2014 will be taking place October 10–12, at the Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center in Lancaster, PA. Registration is open; the full weekend is \$30 for referees or participants (age 12+ only); \$35 for vendors. There is a discounted room rate at the Resort; mention TravellerCON when making your reservation. Further information can be found at the TravellerCON/USA website, <http://www.travellercon-usa.com> ☼

The Wing Wherewith We Fly

by Michael Brown

Synopsis: The adventurers smuggle teachers and intellectuals onto a repressive world that quashes education and the arts.

Setting: Any Imperial world with Population 8+, Government 3 or 5, and Law Level 8+.

Equipment and Skills Required: Starship.

Players' Information

The group is approached by a man dressed in a clean but rumpled suit. Introducing himself as an independent passenger agent, he wants to book all the staterooms on the PCs' ship for a group traveling to a nearby world. The group must stay together, which is why he needs to book all the cabins at once. He is willing to pay standard middle passage rates, plus a 10% incentive bonus. The passengers appear average in every way, but comprise a diverse group.

Referee's Information

The world the passengers are bound for is ruled by a repressive government that maintains control by banning free artistic expression, placing harsh restrictions on free speech and assembly, and even tightly regulating education and information. Education beyond the minimum the masses need to perform their designated social functions is illegal, and reserved only for the planet's ruling elite. Independent teachers are considered *persona non grata* on the planet, and criminals of the worst sort. Naturally, the leaders are themselves all highly educated.

In response to the restrictions, smuggling operations have arisen which involve getting intellectually-gifted individuals onto the planet. The emplaced individuals secretly teach the common people the higher education and critical thinking skills they need to question the government and thus encourage change. The government considers such activity subversive and insurgent; its response has been brutal. Frequent counter-operations round up as many of the instructors as possible, and "coyotes" caught

bringing in undesirables are summarily executed. The authorities have not yet shut down immigration to the world, because they badly need the trade any such action would also shut down.

Trained handlers typically arrive at the starport to receive smuggled individuals; coyotes are in no danger as long as they stay on Imperial property.

Possible Directions to Take This Scenario

1. All is as represented. The passengers are met on the destination world, and the PCs can walk away with some easily-earned cash.
2. Due to a paperwork snafu, or just plain laziness, some of the passengers are not intellectually gifted, and are in fact below average. The PCs may not discover this until they are well underway. They will only be paid for transported academics.
3. As 2, except the subpar passengers were pretending to be literati in order to get free passage off the original world. The referee will need to supply a reason why they were willing to leave under such circumstances.
4. As 3, except the subpar passengers are agents of the destination world's government, returning from a mission to penetrate a source of smuggled mentors. Upon landing, the agents will try to seize the ship and arrest the PCs.
5. The passengers are not adults, but incredibly precocious children, extensively trained in teaching methods and critical thought. The government will try hard to kill the youngsters; the heroes will have to keep close watch on them.
6. The handlers fail to make the appointed rendezvous. The adventurers must help the group get to a safehouse where another team of handlers is waiting for them. This means the PCs will have to leave the safety of the starport and help what the rulers consider criminals. The government will consider them coyotes if they are caught. ❁

Feedback

Please tell us ...

- what you think of both magazine and website
 - what you think of the articles we publish
 - how we can make our magazine better
 - how we can make our website better
 - what kind of articles you do or don't want to see
 - what you think of our look
 - how we can make it better
- Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:
- e-mail: feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

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

Traveller on the Internet

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

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

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

Information Center: Request for Information

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

List of Traveller/compatible Publishers

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
Scrying 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”.

