Featured Article:

After-Action Report: TravCon 17

by Timothy Collinson

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.

Contents

From the Editor

I've not left myself much space for my usual comments here, so I'll come right to the point: I'm quite pleased to see all the new authors that have submitted material, and you all have my thanks, even if I'm still not quite as good about acknowledging as I promised I'd try to be. The same goes for all the repeat authors who have been sending in new material; once again, thank you. I feel like a bit of a failure when I have to dig back into the archives to fill out an issue; the less of that I do, the better I like it. I just put this magazine together; you make it what it is, and as long as you continue to generate material, I'll do my best to keep printing it. Thank you, again! ✸

Hub Federation Navy

reviewed by "kafka"

Hub Federation Navy. Michael Johnston
Gypsy Knights Games http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com
94pp., softcover and PDF
US$19.99/UK£15.99

This review was originally posted to RPG.net in May 2004, and refers to the first edition of the product, which is no longer available. UK price is based on a current conversion rate of US$1.25=UK£1.00

    Traveller frequently gets criticized for being a game with numerous tables and charts and not enough role playing action. Nowhere is this truer than in the character generation. Character generation in *Traveller* is heavily oriented toward a simulation of reality, where characters are not young ones who have been ejected from the home and must seek adventure but adults who have left their careers (or, under some variations of play, never leave their career) to engage on adventures.

    Nowhere is this sediment stronger than in games that centre on naval campaigns. The lure of a space navy is the *Star Trek* and Golden Age of Sail aspect of *Traveller* that gets often referenced. Gypsy Knights Games have now brought out a supplement that deals with their own Interstellar Navy – it is nowhere as impressive as the Grand Fleets of the Third Imperium and well suited to a scaling sort of play where small squadrons co-exist with massive battle tenders. In Classic and Mongoose publications, there was a supplemental set of rules called *High Guard* that patched together this dynamic of a big ship universe while giving room for a small ship universe, as well as fleshing out the Navy than just an option. Classic *Traveller* did a great job for its time, but, it remained grounded in a sort of 1970s and 1950s sensibility. Mongoose did a good job of renovating and updating those same rules, but did not really alter the feel.

    Gypsy Knights Games have come forth with a new feel that is superior and incorporates the new vibe to be found in military Science Fiction of the likes of David Weber, Timothy Zahn, John Ringo, or
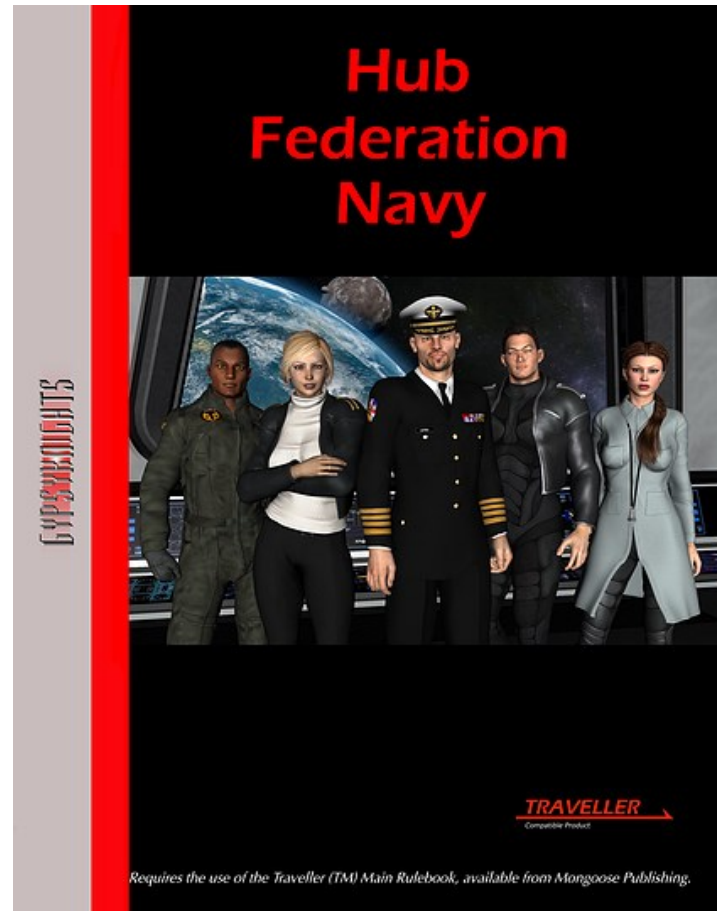
S. M. Stirling. This is a universe of where starships, while large and bulky, can make death-defying maneuvers and operate fully in a three-dimensional battlespace, and will have characters who can truly rise through the ranks and become heroes in battle or in death. There lies the most interesting part of this supplement – it can be viewed as just a boring book of chargen or it can be used a jumping off point in which referees create the campaign to live or role play out the dice rolls. Littered throughout the book are fabulous Poser art pieces that give the right vibe for the book's descriptions. They remain grounded in the Alternative *Traveller* Universe of the Clement Sector, which is a combination of Space Opera (*á là Star Trek*) and Hard SF. Thus, the uniforms harkening back to current uniforms of the armed forces (namely of the NATO bloc) with a little bit of a twist. Subsequently, it is nice to see that there are not people strutting around in pajamas (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) but sad that the art is not more original. However, the artist has managed to capture one important element – action. Previous

Traveller art has been rather stale, as it captures just portraits or just stills of potential characters completing an action or just like they are looking to be photographed. The art, here, even, though it is computer generated is highly realistic and raw. Well done, Gypsy Knights Games for capturing the excitement of *Traveller*. And, it does so without being cartoonish or gory.

So, if you like the *milieu* of the Clement Sector, you most certainly should rush and get this book. If you are not certain about *Traveller* and need a good way of making your space naval games realistic, you should pick up this game. If you want a book that will fill in the works of Martin Dougherty dealing with the Imperial Navy details with chargen (though you'll have to tweak it for Imperial ranks), then this is a book for you. However, if you want a vanilla *Traveller* universe, stick with what is already there. Gypsy Knights Games are re-inventing *Traveller* and undertaking the much needed modernization that has long been asked for by fans of this Grand Old Game – one supplement at a time. ✪

The Lab Ship

Exotic Chemicals in *Traveller*: Hydrazine

by Brett Kruger

This article is on a chemical called hydrazine, an extremely toxic and dangerously unstable liquid that smells a bit like ammonia—probably because it's made from two ammonia molecules joined together (with the loss of H_2). Its formula is N_2H_4 and its structure somewhat resembles the skewed structure of hydrogen peroxide.
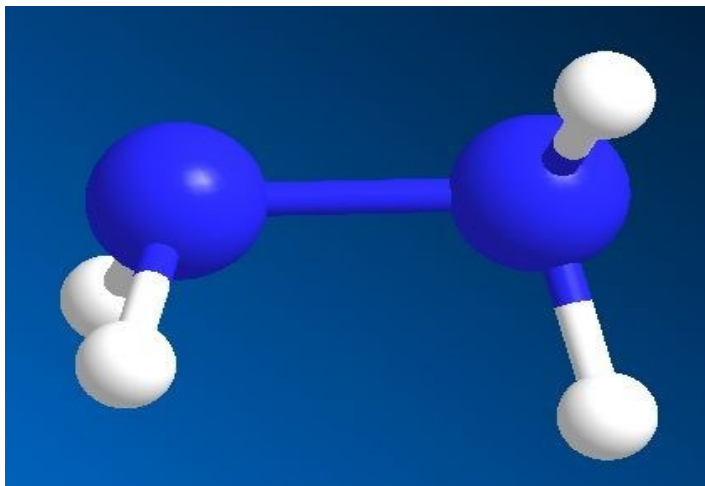
The following is an extract that's found on multiple web sites about car racing, and kicked off my thoughts on how to use this chemical in my Traveller adventures. Here is hydrazine, the fuel enhancer:

It's the liquid so potent, so deadly, so illegal that those in Drag Racing who have unleashed its wrath dare not speak its name in public. In the pits, even to this day, it's known simply as H. *Hydrazine has been around, and used as an "exciter" for nitromethane for as long as we've had Drag Racing. Actually, its use as a racing fuel predates even the Dry Lakes. Hydrazine is rumoured to have been used by the Nazis as an additive in the Mercedes Formula 1 cars of the pre-war era.*

Here's the basics of how it works. Nitromethane is a monopropellant that carries its own oxygen supply. Hydrazine is an oxygen scavenging agent. When you combine the two…even with just a tiny percent of H *in the mixture, you get an unstable fuel that is at war with itself. Insanely dangerous, yes…but internal combustion nirvana of the highest order is a guaranteed result.*

Lakes-era racers who experimented with H *found that a stock 90 horsepower flathead would pump out better than 300 horsepower simply by sucking this stuff through its Stromberg. These same racers also discovered Hydrazine's major drawback for practical use. After running it through an engine, the carbs would start to cake up with a substance that resembled soap flakes. This nasty little by-product was a shock-sensitive explosive called the Methazodic Salt of Hydrazinium Acid, and was the result of allowing vapours from the Nitro/Hydrazine mixture to condense in a closed environment. Right, never mind this stuff will throw your crank on the ground after just a couple of runs, but if you happen to tap the carb with a wrench, it'll blow your face off. Let's go racing!*

Hydrazine had its big moment in the sun back in 1960, during the height of the NHRA fuel ban. Barnstorming Top Fuel racers were all clustered together in the 180-mph range,

The Lab Ship

when out of the blue, at a small track in Alton Illinois, the Greek shoved a big gulp of H down the throat of his Chrysler and ripped off an unheard of 204 MPH pass, boiling the hides and wheel standing right through the lights.

The Ramchargers were known for experimenting with all sorts of fuel, including hydrazine.

Several years later, during the dawn of the Funny Car era, many injected cars were known to brew up a batch in order to keep up with blown Fuelers. Shotgun like exhaust notes, bright green header flames and crewmen frantically draining fuel tanks in the shutdown area were tell-tale signs that H was in the house.

Even though Hydrazine has been on perma-ban by every sanctioning body that has ever existed, its use in times of extremely tight competition, or when a barrier is on the verge of being broken has continued right up to the modern era. We can remember one night-time qualifying session back when the 300 mph barrier was about to fall in Funny Car, when one of the cars in contention for the honour made a lap with those freakish header flames dancing up over its roof. It was so obvious that a sudden buzz amongst educated onlookers erupted. Even the announcer that night took note of the unusual site. Officially, it was played off as burning copper from a failed head gasket…but then, the very next pair of cars, there it was again. Eight bright green candles lighting up the night time sky, and yet another barrier crushed. Was it really hydrazine at work? Only the guys mixing the fuel that night know for sure.

Yeah, it's dangerous stuff. Handled improperly hydrazine will kill you in ways you can't even spell, but it's a glorious part of the history and heritage of the thing we call Fuel racing.

So, I can't really use hydrazine as a fuel additive without messing up how space travel works in *Traveller* (or can I? maybe in a future article), so how is hydrazine used in space travel today? Well, as it turns out it's actually used quite a lot.

Hydrazine's use comes about due to the other important property it has: it burns very exothermically in the presence of oxygen (or oxygen-containing compounds) generating a lot of hot gases, which can be used to produce the exhaust thrust for a rocket. This was first exploited in WW2, when the German Me163B *Komet* became the world's first rocket-powered fighter plane. Various fuels were used including a 1:1 mixture of hydrazine and water (known as hydrazine monohydrate), "*C Stoff*" (57% methanol, 30% hydrazine, 13% water) and "*T Stoff*" (80% H_2O_2, 20% water), which were kept in separate tankers at opposite ends of the airfield and were always at least half a mile apart. These were highly explosive mixtures, so it's no surprise that more German pilots were killed in this plane by fuel leakages and/or explosions than were shot down by the Allies.

To lower (slightly) the risk of unwanted explosion, other variants of hydrazine have been used as rocket fuels, such as monomethylhydrazine (MMH), $(CH_3)NH(NH_2)$ and unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine (UDMH), $(CH_3)_2N(NH_2)$. These are often mixed with dinitrogen tetroxide (N_2O_4) with the advantage being that no ignition source is needed—the two compounds spontaneously combust on contact. These mixtures are normally used in military, orbital, and deep-space rockets because both liquids are storable for long periods at reasonable temperatures and pressures, but not generally for civilian spacecraft due to the toxicity and explosion risks.

More often nowadays, hydrazine is used for manoeuvring thrusters or for slowing spacecraft down on re-entry. Hydrazine-fuelled thrusters were used to land spacecraft on Mars, including the *Viking* spacecraft in the 1970s, the *Phoenix* lander (May 2008) and the *Curiosity* rover (August 2012). In these thrusters, an iridium catalyst, supported on an inert alumina matrix, decomposes the hydrazine to produce large quantities of ammonia, nitrogen, and hydrogen gases from a small amount of liquid hydrazine, and the pressurised hot gas is expelled from the spacecraft producing thrust.

In the movie *The Martian*, Mark Watney (played by Matt Damon) explains how to make water using hydrazine fuel from the lander's fuel cells. For a rocket engine, hydrazine is passed through a catalyst which causes it to decompose into ammonia, nitrogen gas, and hydrogen gas according to the following reaction: $N_2H_4 \rightarrow N_2 + 2\,H_2$

In the movie, Mark Watney used that same reaction to produce the hydrogen gas and then, in combination with the oxygen in the habitat, he burned the hydrogen and made water. OK, I've read the articles and I know the scientific issues with this. First, hydrazine is incredibly toxic. In reality, technicians who handle hydrazine wear full-body safety suits. That's OK, as most *Traveller* PCs takes risks getting out of bed every day. Second, decomposing the hydrazine into nitrogen and hydrogen is *highly* exothermic. It gives off a *lot* of heat, 800°C in a matter of milliseconds. But hey, this is *Traveller* and we hand-wave away heat anyway.

So far so good, we have a highly explosive fuel additive, as amply shown in the movie by Watney's first attempt that nearly blows him through the side of the habitat. So how do we use hydrazine to make a game of *Traveller* more interesting? I think the key statement from the original drag racing story is Hydrazine is an oxygen scavenging agent.

Where do we want to scavenge oxygen in *Traveller*? Why, fuel processing, of course! I give you the poor starship engineer's fuel purification plant.

Hydrazine, when mixed with a few other ingredients, makes an ideal "quick and dirty" fuel purification additive for starships with fuel scoops and either no fuel purification plant or a faulty one. Just add the inline injector between your fuel scoops and your fuel tanks and the additive removes all those pesky contaminates from the water or gas giant gases you're sucking up for mis-jump free fuel.

Cost of Hydrazine Injector "Purifier"

- 100 Kg inline injector: Cr20,000 at any class A, B or C starport.
- DIY install: Cr15,000; roll 2D6 8+ DM+Engineer. Failure means the injector explodes the first time it is used, DM+5 for waste cartridge failure. Roll on the Injector Use Table for results.
- Hydrazine additive: Cr100 per litre.
- Waste cartridge disposal and replacement: Cr50. Roll 2D6 8+ DM+Engineer on Hydrazine Waste Cartridge Disposal table for result if not changed at Class C or better starport.

One litre of hydrazine additive is enough to purify 1000 tons of fuel. After the litre of additive has been put through the injector the waste cartridge must be emptied. This can be done safely at any class C or better star port.

Using the Hydrazine Injector "Purifier"

Roll 2D6, DM+1 for each 200 tons of fuel processed (cumulative), additional DM+5 if the waste cartridge has been used past one litre. Do not apply any other DMs. On a natural 12 (only), raw hydrazine is sucked into the power plant or jump drive, causing an explosion or misjump; damage is at the referee's discretion. If the modified roll is 11-, there are no untoward effects. Otherwise consult the Hydrazine Injector Use Table.

Hydrazine Injector Use	
Roll	**Result**
2—11	Injector works as intended, no damage
12—14	Injector explodes; 2D6 damage to anyone within 6 meters
15—17	Injector explodes; 4D6 damage to anyone within 6 meters
18—19	Injector explodes; 6D6 damage to anyone within 6 meters; fuel scoops damaged
20—21	Injector explodes; 8D6 damage to anyone within 6 meters; fuel scoops destroyed.
22+	Injector explodes; 10D6 damage to anyone within 6 meters; fuel scoops destroyed; fuel vented and dumped to space.

Hydrazine Waste Cartridge Disposal	
Roll	**Result**
2—3	Waste Cartridge explodes, causing 6D6 damage
4—5	Waste Cartridge explodes, causing 4D6 damage
6—7	Waste Cartridge explodes, causing 2D6 damage
8+	Waste Cartridge successfully change and disposed of

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https://www.quora.com/In-movie-The-Martian-how-does-he-make-water-on-mars

Where Eagles Dare

by Steve Hatherley

Player Information

Sabitha Tomksh is an authority on the Jala'lak primitives on Gaea and author of several books on the subject. Now, for her definitive work she wants to confirm a theory that she has recently formed.

Recently a temple ("The God-Monster", *Freelance Traveller*, Mar/Apr 2017) was discovered on Gaea/Albadawi 0702 which implied that humans had transplanted the Jala'lak across space to two separate worlds. In that temple references were made to a certain point upon the world of Jada, in the Hieronymous/Esperance 0506 system.

Sabitha is a very sick lady, on the verge of death that even the combined forces of her wealth and modern medicine cannot stop. Knowing that her nephew, one of the players, is on the planet, she calls him. Sabitha wants him (and his companions) to go and survey the area on Jada.

The Hieronymous system is interdicted, and she knows that the players will be more willing than her employees to break interdiction. She can provide a pinnace (or ship's boat of some sort) jam-packed with electronic evasion gear to slip past the interdiction satellites. The equipment is strictly illegal and very expensive.

Once at the co-ordinates, they should record what they find. A comprehensive survey of the area and anything of interest should be made. Artifacts must be brought back for analysis.

Sabitha will give them a ship to travel in, and should the players complete their task to her (or, should she die, her lawyers') satisfaction, they can keep the ship.

Referee's Information

Hieronymous is a system with two habitable worlds, Hieronymous itself and the uninhabited Jada. Upon Jada is an Ancient pyramid, a massive construct reaching several kilometres high. All efforts to investigate the artifact have ended in failure, often with the expedition members falling victim to the 'Jada Curse', as it has become known.

The players put themselves into a parking orbit around one of the outer planets, and then head inwards in the pinnace. The interdiction satellites have the armament to utterly destroy the pinnace, but fortunately ignore it.

The co-ordinates are on the edge of rocky, mountainous terrain, thick with vegetation. At the exact centre of the co-ordinates is a temple exactly identical to those on Gaea, and about a kilometre away is a village. The Ancient pyramid is on the other side of the world.

The village (and others nearby) are populated by Jala'lak transported here at approximately the same time as the ones on Gaea. They have not been discovered by the Imperial authorities because of the presence of the ancient artifact. Jada possess no precious minerals and, because of the interdiction, has never been settled.

The Jala'lak here are similar to those on Midway in temperament—and completely unlike the Gaean type. Each day they used to walk to the temple and pray to their gods. They lived a peaceful life until the arrival of the Rule of Terra.

About one terran year ago, the Rule of Terra (Eagle Squadron) established a base in the system, just behind the temple. Amongst their crew were several Vargr—immediately hailed as gods by the Jala'lak. Consequently they have been enjoying their
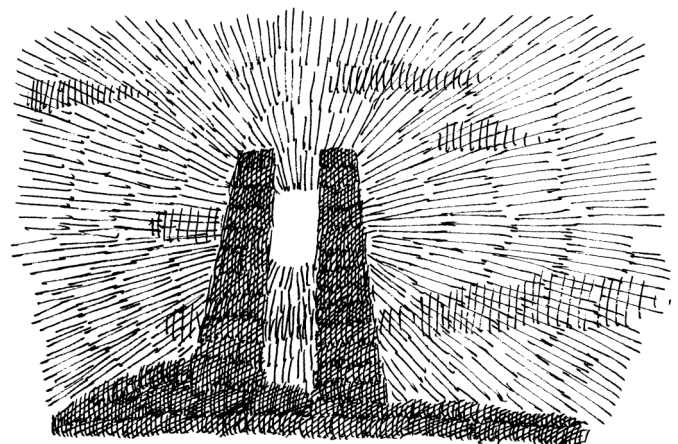
role as gods, and sacrifices have become common amongst the previously pacific people.

Eagle Squadron has a fair-sized base here, with two Close Escort gunboats hidden under camouflage netting. One is in Imperial colours, the other sports the Rule of Terra's crest. The surveillance system is mostly automatic—robots patrol the area. The number of terrorists present is no more than can be carried by the two ships, both of which possess the codes enabling them to pass the interdiction satellites safely.

Unfortunately the world is home to one of the 'lint' plants. These are moss-like plants that grow in sheets and hang like curtains from branches of trees. At certain periods they suddenly 'go lint' whereupon the air is filled with the seeds from these plants. Anywhere it settles and finds nutrients, it grows. Nutrients include machine oils and the grit and grime that accumulates in machinery.

The Jada plants have just gone 'lint', and most of the Rule of Terra's base is out of action because of it. One of the Close Escorts is infested and the other is under quarantine to prevent contamination. All of the surveillance devices are out of action, as are the robotic sentries.

The players arrive at the end of this period, however their pinnace may still become contaminated—requiring a very thorough overhaul. Should their pinnace (or the electronics) become contaminated they will be stranded unless they can hijack the working Close Escort.

It is unlikely that they will escape the Rule of Terra's attention. Naturally, the terrorists do not want anyone to know about their base and will try to eliminate the players. However, this would have been easier had their sentries been active.

When the players get around to examining the temple, they find that in the rear chamber there is an inscription quite unique to this temple. Carved on the wall is a star map (of Poseidon/Suleiman 0110, once they run a computer check) and a few words.

The language is translatable, but the message is indistinct: "Go To (obscured) Every (obscured)."

Sabitha will be fascinated by all aspects of their adventure once they return, and they will immediately be asked to go to Poseidon. This time, they can take a couple of archaeology experts, but she would be happy if the expedition was in the players capable hands.

However, Sabitha has grown worse and may die soon. If she does then the players will be required to complete her forthcoming book. Otherwise they will not own the ship.

Library Data

Hieronymus: Esperance 0506 X530622-6. Hieronymous is a system with two habitable worlds. One is populated, the other is dry and desolate.

The system is interdicted. Ships requiring to refuel from the Gas Giant may do so, but insystem travelling is forbidden.
(http://travellermap.com/?x=9.959&y=-95.5&scale=64)

Interdiction: This is the practice of isolating a single world from the rest of the Imperium. There are a number of methods of interdiction, all involving an orbital presence of some kind. These can range from several huge, heavily armed, automated satellites to a full naval presence.

Lint Plants: Lint plants (typified by Ponsonby's Velvet) reproduce by means of spores which drop away from the plant. Blown by the wind, they will eventually find a source of nutrients—often in the most unlikely of places—and start to grow. This can become a hazard, especially if the plant feeds off the lubricant used by delicate machinery.

Areas where the plants have gone lint are usually a no-go zone for any type of machinery. There is no simple cure apart from cleaning the affected machinery thoroughly, then isolating it.

There are several types known to the Imperium, found upon a variety of worlds.
(http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Ponsonby%27s_Velvet)

Rule of Terra: A violent pro-Solomani terrorist organization.
(http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Rule_of_Terra)   ✺

Science Fiction and Monocultures

by Ed Ortiz

This article originally appeared on the author's Blogspot in February 2017 and is reprinted with permission.

Despite my constant fantasy gaming, I've always had a special place in my heart for science fiction. A lot of it stems from watching and reading about *Star Trek* as a kid, and from there, I've read different science fiction books. However, there has always been something I was never a fan of in sci fi. Monocultures. Mostly found in space operas, it tends to take an alien race and oversimplify them to a couple of traits. Klingons are the honorable warrior race. Vulcans are the logical scientist race. Romulans are super imperialistic and machiavellian. Ferengi are space merchants. And so on.

In a way, it simplifies the races for the viewer to be able to understand and makes it easier to differentiate between them. And when you have 5+ alien species in your universe, it can be tiring to consistently add different factions and nations for every single alien race. However, I've always felt a disconnect in monolithic world governments with a single culture. I feels like it pigeonholes an alien group into a certain niche and can make it difficult or even jarring to add differing characteristics to someone of the same race. Try imagining a pacifist Klingon. It's a bit weird. It also doesn't feel very realistic. If you look at humanity, there are so many different governments and idiosyncrasies between different nations that it can be weird just to have everyone on one planet the same.

In the game I'm going to run with *Stars Without Number*, I am endeavoring to have at least three factions for each alien race to give the races more depth and complexity. This will make first contact and continued diplomacy more nuanced with the players. Here is how I want to do the different cultures. Much of it is inspired by rudimentary knowledge of politics as well as the video game *Stellaris*, a grand strategy sci fi game which I have really enjoyed. Since this blog is talking about politics, I'd like to stress that nothing down below is meant to push any agenda or offend anyone of a particular political bloc. This is just for entertainment purposes only.

Nature and Nurture

Since I'm working with aliens, the first thing I start with is their biology. Making aliens mean you can really go crazy with how their biology works. Looking at Earth creatures is a great way to make some truly alien-feeling sophonts. How do your aliens eat? Are they carnivores, herbivores or omnivores? How do they reproduce? Are they like humans, with XY chromosomes? Is it something more akin to asexual reproduction, or something like parthenogenesis? Can their genders shift, like some amphibians? Do they have more than four limbs, or multiple eyes? Maybe they have alternate ways of certain biological functions, like using antennae for smell and hearing, or spiracles down their sides for breathing, or organs that can sense bioelectricity. How are their family units set up? Or communities? These are all good questions to ask yourself when developing an alien race for your setting. What I generally do is pick an animal and do some light research on their biology. Then, I use that to extrapolate how a society of sapient creatures of that biology would function.

Of course, biology is only part of the equation here. A creature's surroundings play a huge part in their cultural ethics. Terrain and climate are two of the largest factors in this. If their surroundings are harsh with terrible weather, you can bet that their communities would be smaller and more insular. They may be nomadic, moving to better areas. They could also be raiders, attacking other civilizations that have more resources to supply their own tribes. Aliens living in arable land would be able to support larger cities and boast walls and armies to protect them from raids. Religion and culture can be affected by one's surroundings. A nation of peoples that live in pastures and steppes may revere a god of the great sky, while those living in mountainous areas would venerate the peaks themselves as gods. People living along the oceans would have festivals cel-

ebrating fish caught, or those living on pastures would have harvest festivals come autumn. Just look at Earth cultures to see different cultures and try and work them with the biology of the creature.

Surroundings don't just include the terrain and climate. Look at the people and animals that your race has around it. Are their neighbors fairly friendly, or is there a sort of rivalry going on? Is warfare endemic or more structured? What about the animals? Are there any animals that the race hate and fear? Or hunt and revere? Or keep as pets or livestock? The relationships with other creatures can go a long way to making your aliens feel real.

Ethics

Ethics are the core principles and beliefs of the alien race. Whenever I describe a government, settlement, or faction, I like to use a set of ethic tags to describe the organization. I find that doing so can organize and show what the different ethics are for a group of people or aliens. I have a set of seven categories, each with two opposite tags to describe a group of sapient creatures. They are purposefully vague to incorporate a variety of sub-ethics under one tag. Just remember that there is a wide spectrum of beliefs that could fit under one tag. They are inspired by the ethics of *Stellaris*, with some more added or renamed for more clarity and depth.

Insular/Cosmopolitan: This category is how well a group of aliens deals with outsiders and foreign ideas. An insular group tends to not trust outsiders and will shun beliefs that are different from their own. Some are friendly but want outsiders to assimilate into their beliefs to maintain a tightly-knit community. Others can be cruel and petty and will drive deviants out by force if necessary. A cosmopolitan group has a wide variety of cultures and differing beliefs are simply a way of life. Most places tend to be large cities or trade hubs that see different aliens. While there is a general integration and acceptance of different peoples, sometimes cultural

friction can happen between two or more groups. This can make it hard to let go of old grudges.

Authoritarian/Libertarian: This is the category on how a species may prefer to be ruled. Some may want a more decisive rule by a singular autocracy or a group of elite oligarchs. Others may prefer a bottom-up democratic or anarchist rule where everyone has a say. Some may want the government to intervene and regulate things, while others want the bureaucracy to stay out of their way of life.

Spiritual/Secular: This is how much religion and spiritualism affects the every day lives of an alien. Spiritual aliens may place an importance on religion and worship in their personal lives, or perhaps they make it more of a part of the government and culture (like a theocracy). Secular aliens may simply have some spiritual beliefs but leave it in private, keeping it away from their public lives and society. Others may believe spirituality to be harmful to the individual and to society and will outright shun religion.

Militaristic/Pacifist: This is how aliens approach warfare and peace. Militaristic aliens may be imperialistic hawks that wish to spread their control over other countries for their resources. Or, they may instead be more casual with warfare as a good option against enemies, but remain relatively peaceful with allies. Pacifists tend more towards diplomatic solutions, but may still have a good military for defensive wars only, or may only engage in wars of liberation. On the extreme end, they may simply eschew a military, both formal or paramilitary, and instead focus on peaceful and diplomatic solutions.

Collectivist/Individualist: This is how sophonts view themselves as a part of a whole. Collectivists see themselves as a cog in the machine, or their society as a sum of its parts. Many can focus on the greater good and can vary in limited individual freedoms (or outright ban them). Individualists place an importance on individual rights and abilities. They see it as something to be celebrated and use individual talents to better the community. They can vary on altruism to their peers, or simply focus on their

own goals and happiness (sometimes at the expense of others).

Isolationist/Expansionist: This is how aliens view themselves in the Great Game of interstate diplomacy. Isolationist species want to be left alone. They generally do a policy of unilateralism, keeping a safe distance even from their allies. Some may simply close their borders to some or all trade and immigration. Expansionists keep up with the political scene and remain big players in it. Some may expand via more diplomatic and economic means, saving military action for proxy wars. Others may go full military imperialist, ruling over entire planets.

Ascetic/Materialist: This is how much importance a race places on material things and wealth. An ascetic race of aliens believe that life is fleeting and 'stuff' isn't as important as people. Many eschew material goods for a lifestyle of self-improvement, or for community bonding. Materialists love their wealth and living the good life. Many see wealth as a way of improving living standards and technology for the betterment of their society. Some may also have a love of seemingly trite things, like lifestyles of celebrities.

From these ethics, you can start building a culture based on them. How would a race of spiritual materialists work out? Or militaristic isolationists? Mix and match two or more of them and try and build how a culture would form around those tenets.

Government

Once you get ethics, you can look at the styles of government. I use the Wikipedia listing here to look at what could fit for a race. Governments vary a great deal, so it's hard to really categorize them. Below is a super simplified list for the sake of RPGs, not for actual political discourse. Generally I look at the following categories (again, credit to *Stellaris* for this)

Who rules the state: This is probably the first question I ask. Is it a rule by an elite class of people (aristocracy), or ruled by a singular group or person (despotism)?

Who empowers the leader: This is the second question. Who empowers the mantle of leadership for a state? Is is a democracy, where the leader is elected? Is it authoritarian, where the leader claims the title through might? Is it oligarchic, where a select group of people choose to run things?

The power structure: How is power distributed? Is it a highly centralized unitary state, a more open federation, a decentralized confederation, or a casual alliance of like-minded states? Maybe they are fragmented nation-states in a never-ending cold war. Is it a republic, where political matters are public, or are legislative and executive matters private?

How the state handle certain processes: There are categories that a civilization has under control. Things like economics, social issues, class stratification, foreign and domestic policies, citizenship, immigration and emigration, military and security, law enforcement, jobs, resources, and means of production are all good examples of what a state needs to handle. Using the ethics from above, you can figure much of this out.

Control of the state: How much authority does the state have over the above processes? Is it anarchy, where the authority is light and comes directly from the people? A minarchy with minimal control? A lighter, more libertarian touch? Is is more centralized like a unitary state, or more decentralized like a federation or confederation? Is it authoritarian, where the people have few individual freedoms, or totalitarian, where the government have full control of every aspect of their peoples' lives? Does the government only handle matters of security and defense, or do they also control economics and social policies?

Relations with other: No state exists in a vacuum. What do other governments think about your alien race? Are they seen as true friends, allies of convenience, or enemies? What do your alien gov-

ernment's own people think of their masters? Do they see them as a benevolent force, or a coercive and malevolent entity?

Those are the questions I ask myself when building an alien society. When making governments, it's always good to have conflict that can add story ideas for your adventure. One thing I stress for making a believable government that is foreign to one's beliefs is to try and look up both the positive and negative aspects of it, then apply it. It's really easy to insert your own political bias when coming up with a group. Remember that these are aliens with their own way of thinking. Of course, if you want your aliens to be the bad guys, or you are just tired of politics in general, then you can certainly simplify their government. Sometimes you just want to topple an evil military dictatorship and free their people. That's fine for an adventure I feel.

Deviants

Of course, even with everything above, there are always bound to be those that do not conform to ethics based on anything from above. Just by looking at humans, there is a huge variety of cultures, sub-cultures, governments, ethics, philosophies, and communities. This is where making an alien species can get really hard. Generally, after I've done the

above, I then treat sub-cultures as a sort of spectrum of the above beliefs. For example, if I've made a race of aliens that lived in colonies not unlike ants, I would have them tend to more autocratic or oligarchic societies. This represents their collective community ruled by a queen or a group of breeding drones. However, I could have sub cultures and factions that want to enact change. Maybe they desire less authoritative rule and want a more republic government with individual freedoms. Or alternatively, maybe they want to centralize their government more to an autocratic rule with a focus on the greater good and stratification. Some may want a less insular society while others demand to remain isolationists. Really, I'll take the above ethics and see how I can fit the opposite with a society. So if a culture is more secular, I try and see what would make some more spiritual while sticking to several of the factors that made their culture who they are.

That's my thought process when I'm fleshing out alien races. While it seems like a lot to do, once you get used to it, it's a fairly intuitive process. Everything leads to the next, and the more that you detail your creatures, the more life you truly breath into them. In the future, I want to show and example or two that puts this method into practice.   ✸

Donohue-class Cargo Hauler

by Brett Kruger

Originally built as a light supply vessel to support Imperial fleets out of the naval base on Syrim, the *Donahue*-class Cargo Hauler proved to be a rock-solid performer and has only been replaced by newer designs in recent years. A large-capacity cargo ship, the *Donahue*s were snapped up by shipping companies that needed a good-sized cargo hold for haulage between medium-population worlds. The cargo hold is also large enough that several companies use them for hauling smaller ships between systems, with bow cargo doors that fully open to expose the full length of the cargo hold.

When operating in Imperial space the ships were rarely armed, leaving 3 staterooms spare for incidental passengers. However, those companies crossing the borders will often arm them to warn off casual bandits. This, plus the hardened store room with independent computer core, is enough for most companies to be awarded mail contracts. The *Donahue* is also equipped with fuel scoops and a fuel purification plant, allowing for both unrefined fuel use in frontier areas, and wilderness refuelling, both options that are popular with cross-border shipping companies.

In total some 800 *Donahue*s were constructed and many are still in service across Old Expanses and

neighbouring sectors. Three are known to have been lost in Imperial Navy service, cause is still classified. Two are lost, assumed due to misjumps due to proximity to main worlds, and one has been scrapped after a collision with another vessel. All others are still in service with one company or another, and Karse Transfer Lines is known to operate 50 of the *Donahue*s.

Though the *Donohue* design is neither new nor innovative, it has proven to have staying power, and the construction at Syrim's shipyards has proven durable. This is one of the reasons that so few have been taken out of service, and many of the current operators of *Donohue*s have no concerns about putting them onto long runs.

Karst Transfer Lines has made a fleet of *Donohue*s the mainstay of their business. Their Jump-3 performance and large cargo capacity has made them ideal for shipping in frontier areas and across borders where scheduled shipping may be problematical or uneconomic. They also do a good business in shipping small craft from various shipyards to worlds where they are needed.

Like other ships in the *Donahue* class, the Lucky Lady is not a spacious ship but the crew does have all the modern conveniences. Given the long runs out from their home ports that many of these ships do, this is almost a given.

```
Ship: Lucky Lady
Class: Donahue-class Cargo Hauler
Type: AP Merchant, Provincial
Architect: William Morgan
Tech Level: 13

     AK-A131331-030000-20002-0 MCr522.030 1 KTons
Bat Bear          1    1    1   Crew: 10
Bat               1    1    1   TL: 13

Cargo: 447 Crew Sect: 1 (10) Fuel: 360 EP: 30 Agl: 1
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops, On-Bd Fuel Purification

Architects Fee: MCr5.220  Cost in Quant: MCr417.624
Port of Const: Syrim/Bascoj/Old Expanses 2835 in 1080
Construction Company: Yuing Tong Heavy Industries
```

Detailed Description
Book 5 High Guard Design

HULL

1,000 tons standard, 14,000 cubic meters, Needle/Wedge Configuration

CREW

Pilot, Navigator, 4 Engineers, Medic, 3 Gunners

ENGINEERING

Jump-3, 1G Manuever, Power plant-3, 30 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS

Bridge, Model/3 Computer

HARDPOINTS

10 Hardpoints, 5 Empty

ARMAMENT

2 Single Missile Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-2), 1 Single Beam Laser Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-2)

DEFENCES

2 Single Sandcaster Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)

CRAFT

None

FUEL

360 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 60 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS

10 Staterooms, 447 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS

None

COST

MCr 527.250 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 5.220), MCr 417.624 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME

120 Weeks Singly, 96 Weeks in Quantity ✷

Adventure 1: The Kinunir

reviewed by Michael Thompson

Adventure 1: The Kinunir. Michael Johnston.
Game Designers' Workshop http://www.farfuture.com
94pp., softcover and PDF
US$3.99/UK£3.22 or included in the *Classic Traveller CD-ROM*

This review was originally posted to the author's blog in March 2017.

Note: This is the cover included in the Classic Traveller CD-ROM. The version from DriveThruRPG includes a large white Helvetica "A01" in the upper right corner of the black area of the cover.

Adventure 1 The Kinunir was the first official adventure published for *Traveller* in 1979, two years after the release of Classic *Traveller*. It's an interesting read, and it has some ideas. But here's what I got from it

For running, it's a very bare-bones set up. There's three entry points, and it's largely up to the referee to get the characters from the entry to the adventure itself. It's a more bare-bones approach than the current ideas on how to write an adventure. This is less the modern adventure with everything scripted out, more of a frame work to build into your universe.

In a fundamental difference, the Imperium is not as pleasant in this incarnation as it is later on. The Imperium disappears politicians it doesn't like and locks them in prison hulks. They ruthlessly use Ancients technology and Anagathics for the ruling class, and make it difficult for lesser nobles and players to get access to it.

Warships are built with imported components. The scrapped *Adda Dubsar* lays on its ways on Regina, a TL A world, fitted for a Model 7 computer. At least for its own purposes, the setting is implicitly allowing for equipment on a world to be produced outside of its stated tech level. It can either be a plot point or something like current-era ships built in China but fitted with Western weapons and sensors. I see "Tech Level" as mostly relating to what is commonly available on the world.

Also, we begin to see information about the wider setting. Somewhere in this Imperium is a Vegan Autonomous District—this won't be detailed until 1982 when *Solomani Rim* is released. For a J-4 ship presumably built in the Spinward Marches, it's a long journey in the Official *Traveller* Universe. There's also mention of the Fourth Frontier War, and Express Boats. It's starting to merge the small ships of the initial release into the large ships of *High Guard* and later editions. Also, Strephon and Iolanthe are mentioned, complete with UPPs.

Generally, this is an interesting addition to any *Traveller* collection, and a fodder for ideas as well. The *Kinunir* and similar ships can make give your Free Traders a real threat without a big ship, or be Big Daddy for merc campaigns, especially if the Marines are deployed. It's setting neutral for the most part, and easily adapted. A lost starship is a great adventure hook in any science fiction setting. ✸

Planetary Assault Operations: A White Paper

by Rick Stump

Overview

There are a number of references to planetary sieges and the taking/retaking of planets by opposing navies in the *Traveller* Canon, especially during the Frontier Wars. And while the Imperium mainly controls the space between the stars, there are times when the enemy isn't only in space. And while a hostile planet can be interdicted, bombed, and talked to from orbit, only troops on the ground can truly control it. This is my attempt to explain how I think a planetary assault would work and how one could be set up in a campaign as background, plot device, or adventure. I have also included a brief glossary of terms at the end of the paper.

Assumptions and Givens

1. This is my opinion; your game setting may well be different and this material of limited applicability. Much of this is based upon my knowledge of airborne operation as a former member of a U.S. Army Airborne unit (the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion (Tactical Exploitation) (Airborne), where I worked with [*Freelance Traveller* author] John Groth).

2. I am using the Third Imperium from about the time of the Fifth Frontier War as a baseline for the assaulting force; this implies an average TL-13 with a top TL-15. Switching this to other races should be relatively simple and I will include some notes.

3. I primarily play and referee Classic *Traveller*, but I will include references to other milieux. I hope to keep this as generic as possible.

4. I am assuming that the Imperial Army will undertake large-scale planetary actions. I view Imperial Marines as 'johnny-on-the-spot'; they are the visible might of the Imperium and deal with brush fires. In large-scale actions they will concentrate on 'traditional' marine roles—boarding actions and quick assaults. With 'organic' support (artillery, medical units, etc.) and heavy units the Imperial Army and its colonial units are going to be the major players in ground actions. *[Editor's note: For those unfamiliar with the term, the military use of 'organic' in this context means that it is part of the unit, or of the same parent unit, rather than supplied by an independent unit.]*

5. The relative superiority of near-space by the navy of the attacking force is a given. Without close orbit superiority planetary assaults are effectively doomed. This does not mean that the attacker must absolutely control close orbit, just that they must be capable of projecting great force into near orbit at specific times.

6. Specific tactics will vary based upon the tech level of the planetary forces. Against foes of TL-0 through TL-5 or so the Marines just set down in grav vehicles and move out. While a large TL-5 army with heavy support could actually mount a credible defense against TL-15 marines in battle dress, they will not prevail. At higher tech levels, however, you can face serious opposition as those large armies gain nuclear weapons and more sophisticated armor and aircraft. I have divided assault procedures into TL-6 through TL-10 and TL-10+.

7. I am taking it as a given is that military forces will generally be smaller as tech level increases. This will, of course, vary based upon law level, political stability, war footing, etc. But just as many modern armies are smaller than they were in previous generations, I am assuming that the increased efficiency of higher tech levels will reduce the number of sophonts under arms.

8. This all assumes that the attacking force actually wants to capture the planet mostly intact. If there is no interest in preserving the structures, resources, or population, I assume that a heavy orbital bombardment until the defenders were unable to resist would be sufficient.

Planetary Assaults

Objectives

A clear military objective is the key to clear military success. The ultimate goal of a planetary assault is to control the planet. In order to do this, the military objectives should be (not necessarily in order):

1. Render defending military forces unable to effectively resist ('combat ineffective').
2. Control or neutralize the defender's governmental or administrative functions.
3. Control or contain major population centers.
4. Secure means of resupply/reinforcement of attacking/occupying force.

Methods

Initially naval forces will conduct ortillery ['orbital artillery'—ed.] attacks against strategic targets. Defensive emplacements, command and control centers, sensor clusters, military bases, and downports will be primary targets. It is also highly likely that general infrastructure will be targeted to reduce the enemy's will to resist. Civil engineering (dams, mass transit, etc.) will be targeted. Depending on the level of resistance and the volume of ortillery fire available it is possible to reduce a planetary population to using flashlights and shipping water in trucks in a week. The initial phase of ground assault is usually the use of drop troops (also called jump troops). Inserted from orbit, drop troops rely upon surprise, speed, and violence to secure a landing zone ('LZ'). Once secured, the landing zone is used to land heavy weapons, grav vehicles, landing ships, etc., etc. A secured LZ is called an 'orbit head'. The orbit head(s) are the start points for ground attacks against defenders and can quickly transform into the equivalent of a class C starport. The main ground assault is performed by a mix of light and heavy infantry, mechanized infantry (infantry and g-carriers), armor, artillery, and support units. Because of the mix of units the force

as a whole is called a 'combined arms army' or just 'combarm'. Assuming the ground assault is successful, there are follow-on units that help secure the planet. Ranging from psychological warfare units to military journalists, these units strive to replace the destroyed or removed infrastructure and government of the planet with the tools of the Imperium.

Tactics

Although it may be unusual to think of an operation as large as attacking a planet as tactical, but to a military force capable of such an action it is. The most critical decision is; where to insert drop troops? While this should remain fluid to allow changes based upon the differences from one operation to the next, it is often very advantageous to insert an orbit head near a population center of the defenders. In addition to allowing the operation to immediately threaten defenders, it will reduce the ability of the defending military to respond with full force without endangering their own populace. The simultaneous insertion of multiple orbit heads is also preferred. This will force the defenders to split their forces and the attention of their command staff. The use of deadfall ordnance at the same time can add confusion since gravity bombs can easily be configured to produce the same sensor imagery as drop pods.

Drop Troop Insertion

The most critical period of planetary assault is the insertion of drop troops. Although supported by orbital fire the drop troops are very exposed to defenders and can suffer significant losses before reaching the ground. To increase their chances of securing an orbit head they are accompanied by a number of tools configured to resemble troop pods to sensors. The first such tools are 'Landing Zone Preparation Devices', also known as 'daisy cutters' or 'Sylean scythes'. These explosive devices are the first pods fired and are designed to mimic troop pods. About one third of these devices detonate about the LZ and use gravity lensed explosives to direct a concussive cone toward the surface. The

massive overpressure is designed to detonate any mines in the LZ and knock down most plant life and structures. The remaining devices detonate on impact and are grav-focused to concentrate their force in a 3-meter high plane parallel to the surface, flattening any remaining foliage and obstacles. The most common devices that drop amongst the troops are jammers. In addition to radio and radar jammers, there are also meaconers (devices that distort navigation signals, i.e., give false GPS results), repeaters (devices that record defenders' radio communications and repeat them over on over on a number of frequencies), and mimics (devices that send electronic and radar 'chatter' that resembles the defender's communications but give false data). Also accompanying the drop pods on the outer fringes are defense pods. These grav-stabilized devices have radar/lidar sensors and a laser cannon, all powered by a fusion generator. These air defense systems are designed to shoot down enemy aerospace fighters, missiles, etc. Once they are on the planetary surface they will continue in this role until out of power or shut down by the drop troops. Last but not least, each squad will have an equipment pod. The equipment will vary based upon each squad's particular mission, but will include heavy weapons, air defense systems, telecomm gear, and combat engineering tools.

Tech Levels 6 through 10

Overview

While never easy, planetary assaults against worlds at tech levels 6 through 10 are less difficult. Defending forces do not have access to meson weapons or powered battle dress. Also, the heavier man-portable weapons are not found at these tech levels. As mentioned above, however, a large force with the support of nuclear weapons can mount a stiff resistance. The attackers must be sure that orbiting ships can provide nuclear damper support until the drop troop can set up their own. The drop troops

themselves will be optimized to repel a large number of attackers with little special attention to heavy weapons. The average trooper in battle dress with an FGMP can deal with a great many main battle tanks of a TL-8 army, after all. The defenders will also have less sophisticated sensors, making deception more effective. Combined, these make it likely that there will be more deadfall ordnance attacks and fewer actual orbit heads (no more than one per continent, likely only one or two).

Tech Levels 11 and higher

Overview

When the defenders approach or equal the technical ability of the attacker the risks become greater. The inherent advantage possessed by the defenders forces the attackers to take greater risks. The high mobility and concentrated firepower of high-tech forces almost compels the attacker to try and overwhelm defenses with the number of attacks. The best option for the attacker is to release a near-flurry of troop drops and deadfall attacks combined with heavy ortillery barrages. Preparatory ortillery must especially focus on meson sites and aerospace fighter bases. The drop troops must be prepared to face a number of threats, including grav armor and meson gun artillery.

Special Note

The use of nuclear weapons to generate an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) effect is very common during planetary assaults. Against TL-6 through 10 defenders this can be a devastating attack. And the effect against high tech opponents can be more severe than may be assumed. Although most TL-11+ electronics (especially military electronics) are shielded against EMP effects it will still temporarily overload most sensors, increasing the survivability of drop troops as they enter the atmosphere. Also, while civilian communications systems may be shielded, often their antennae are not. While the means of communication will remain intact after an EMP attack, large areas of communications blackout

will exist until antennae are replaced. This will add to the fear and confusion of the defenders.

Support Operations

Intelligence

Intelligence preparation can be a critical force multiplier in planetary assaults, especially against high tech level defenses. In addition to the routine strategic intelligence gathered by Imperial Intelligence, a planetary assault requires an in depth analysis of tactical response measures, apparent willingness of defenders to endanger their own populace, and overall readiness of the defenders ground forces. Effective counter-intelligence operations can also increase the levels of tactical and strategic surprise of the attacking force.

Commando

Commando operations in support of a planetary assault are extremely dangerous and prone to failure. However, when they are successful they can have a considerable impact upon the defender's will and ability to fight. For these reasons, they are often popular with players. If strategic surprise can be obtained commandos can be infiltrated and supplied in a large number of ways. Their initial targets will generally be command and control, telecommunications, and strategic defense systems. The following scenario is a demonstration of the potential impact of successful commando operations in support of planetary assault: Three commando squads are infiltrated onto a TL-13 world in advance of a planetary assault. Arriving as workers, tourists, and ship crew, they are supplied with a full combat load, including battle dress, smuggled in by intelligence operatives. In a coordinated series of attacks, two major telecomm hubs are sabotaged by pre-set explosives, a similar attack damages the refueling facilities of the major aerospace defense center, and teams of commandos in battledress armed with FGMPs assault the members of the planetary government, planetary

defense commanders, and a deep meson site that defends a section of the planet. During the resulting confusion reports are received that an enemy fleet has jumped in-system and is on vector for planetary orbit. In addition to potentially neutralizing the defender's civil and military commanders and seriously disrupting planetary defenses these actions could very well panic the defenders, degrading their ability to fight.

Logistics

While the first step is getting troops on the ground, the key to winning is supplying and reinforcing those troops. As soon as the orbit head is secured the follow on forces must begin to arrive. Initially these forces will be as 'heavy' as possible, i.e., g-carriers, grav tanks, and artillery pieces, preferably in large landing ships. This will be followed by a mix of combat and support units.

Naval

The job of the Navy is not over once the troop pods are fired. Without continued naval support the ground offensive will almost certainly fail. In addition to continued ortillery, naval aerospace fighters can provide direct close support to ground troops and engage tactical targets in the enemy's rear areas. Marines can conduct assaults against orbital facilities and can even be deployed by drop ships in support of threatened ground forces. If done properly, combined Army/Navy operations can achieve true vertical envelopment.

N-Hour Sequence

The N-hour sequence is a planning tool for military commanders, logistics planners, and political leaders. It is a rough outline of what will happen and when during a particular type of attack. The initial letter may change to determine what type of attack the sequence is for (for example, a ground attack plan can be called a G-hour sequence while a boarding action against an orbital spaceport could be an M-hour sequence). And certain times can be very broad or based entirely upon the success or fail-

ure of a different operation. They key to using an N-hour sequence is to remember that it is a tool, not the plan.

This N-hour sequence is, by necessity, abbreviated. It does not include frontier refueling, naval actions on approach to the planet, or orbital combat and boarding actions. It also omits a great many logistical steps that would be included in a 'real' sequence, as well as the preparatory steps that occur before the assault fleet enters jumpspace. Again, this is a rough estimation to give an idea of the flow of battle (*note: times are given in the form days:hours:minutes or hours:minutes when one day or less. Negative times are before N-hour, positive after*):

N –14:00:00: Assault squadron enters jumpspace.

N –07:00:00: Assault squadron enters normal space in target system.

N –02:00:00: Ortillery bombardment begins.

N –16:00: Decoy deadfall ordnance attacks begin.

N –08:00: Naval aerospace fighters increase tempo of attacks against tactical surface targets.

N –06:00: Decision phase: commanders determine if planetary defenses are suppressed enough to allow close orbit insertion of drop ships. If so, drop ships move into close orbit. Bombardment ships direct their fire to both overwhelm defenders and clear a number of possible landing zones.

N –02:00: Drop troops finish insertion preparation.

N –00:30: Decision phase: commanders determine if landing zones are prepared and the drop troops are likely to secure an orbit head. If so, drop troops are secured for insertion and troop carriers prepare for drop.

N –00:15: Naval forces trigger EMP effects.

N –00:05: Secondary EMP effects are triggered to disable automated responses. Naval forces begin blanket jamming from close orbit.

N-Hour: Simultaneous insertion of drop troops begins, accompanied by numerous decoy inser-

tions with deadfall ordnance accompanied by jammer pods. Naval aerospace fighters deploy for close air support.

N +00:01: Naval bombardment shifted to cover approaches to landing zones.

N +00:04: Landing zone prepped by daisy cutters.

N +00:05: Drop troops begin reaching surface. Drop ships begin move to high orbit.

N +00:07: Drop troops begin deploying to secure orbit head.

N +00:10: Drop troops finish landing on surface. Drop troops begin deployment of heavy weapons and support equipment. Aerospace fighters initiate close air support.

N +00:15: Decision phase: commanders determine if orbit head is secure. If so, landing ships with armor and mechanized forces begin planetary insertion.

N +00:20: Drop troops complete deployment of heavy weapons and support equipment.

N +00:25: Drop troops complete initial defensive positions.

N +00:35: Landing ships begin to reach the planetary surface. Mechanized and armor forces begin to deploy.

N +00:45: Decision phase: commanders determine if orbit head is ready for deployment of support elements. If so, landing ships begin cycling support units and equipment to the orbit head.

N +01:00: Combarm begins offensive operations.

It should be obvious that the N-Hour sequence needs to be flexible. Planets with dense atmospheres will require more time for drop troops to reach the surface than planets that have no atmosphere, for example. Deployment of follow on forces may be delayed if there is a threat of significant air defense by the defenders. The number of changes that may need to be made are almost infinite. Recognizing this uncertainty, called 'the fog of war', and being able to anticipate and react to change without panic is what separates good commanders from great generals.

Non-Imperial Forces

Zhodani

The Zhodani are very likely to use warbots exclusively in their initial insertion. They have very good warbot technology and prefer to risk machines over their own soldiers. With the capabilities of their elite psionic troops, they are also highly likely to mount a number of commando raids in support of their use of drop troops.

Hivers

While the Hivers are unlikely to ever engage in planetary assault, if it necessary they will almost certainly use a variety of warbots in every phase of the operation.

Solomani

After the Rim War the Solomani have a fair amount of experience with planetary assault operations. They will probably use tactics very similar to Imperial forces, but with a greater emphasis on commando operations to offset any advantages in manpower and technology.

Aslan

Aslan forces are very professional and capable. They will tend to have more landing zones in an attempt to overwhelm defenders with the number of threats rather than with a small number of highly massed forces.

Vargr

The nature of Vargr command and control means that their planetary assault operations will be less organized. They may actually have waves of insertions coming at different times rather than a mass drop and may have trouble coordinating naval support for ground troops. On the other hand, their desire for personal glory and achievement means that they are more likely to initiate 'breakout' actions where they focus on specific target rather than engaging defenders directly. This can force the defenders to commit a significant portion of their forces to protecting targets rather than repelling invaders.

Mercenary Units

While it is extremely unlikely that mercenaries would undertake a full-scale planetary assault, they may occasionally be hired to perform small-scale operations that are very similar in execution, if not scope or breadth of support. And mercenary units in the wrong sub-sector at the wrong time may end up 'assisting' colonial or imperial units during a planetary assault.

Glossary of Terms

Aerospace fighters: Space fighters capable of atmospheric operations.

Air Defense: All defensive measures designed to destroy attacking enemy aircraft or missiles within a planet's envelope of atmosphere, or to nullify or reduce the effectiveness of such attack.

Armor units: Refers to tank forces.

Artillery unit: A military unit composed of artillery pieces and their support crews.

Assault ships: Heavily armed and armored small craft capable of atmospheric operations, usually capable of transporting ground forces. Often used to escort landing ships when there is a high threat of air defense. Sometimes used to land ground troops in enemy-controlled terrain.

Close aerospace support: The use of aerospace fighters and assault ships to attack enemy ground forces that are close to or in combat with friendly ground forces.

Combat ineffective: A unit or group of units that is not longer capable of combat operations for any reason.

Combined arms army: A large ground forces unit composed of infantry, armor, mechanized infantry, artillery, and support units capable of extended combat operations without external support. Often abbreviated **Combarm**.

Command and control: The issuance of orders by military commanders. Can also refer to the military commanders themselves.

Deadfall ordnance: Explosives devices that have no internal propulsion system. They can be launched on specific trajectories, but are usually released into a gravity well and allowed to fall.

Decision phase: A pre-planned time or place where a choice must be made between two or more military options by commanders.

Heavy infantry: Infantry with a greater than standard percentage of heavy weapons per unit. Usually refers to battle dress armored infantry.

Heavy units: In general refers to units with heavier weapons or with the ability to concentrate a great amount of fire in a small area in a short amount of time. Generally used to refer to battle dress infantry and tank units.

Intelligence: Information about an opposing force gathered through observation and analysis. Also refers to the process of gathering intelligence.

Jamming: The deliberate radiation of electromagnetic energy for the purpose of preventing or reducing an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum, and with the intent of degrading or neutralizing the enemy's combat capability.

Landing ships: Small craft or spaceships capable of atmospheric operations and surface landings that are configured to carry ground troops and equipment.

Landing zone: An area designated for drop troop or landing craft insertion.

Light infantry: Infantry units with a smaller than standard ratio of heavy weapons per unit. Such units also usually have a lighter than standard equipment load.

Logistics: In its most comprehensive sense, those aspects of military operations which deal with:

- design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposition of materiel;
- movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel;
- acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; and
- acquisition or furnishing of services.

Meaconing: The process of broadcasting false navigation signals to give inaccurate measurements of locations, speed, distance, etc.

Mechanized infantry: Infantry units that enter combat zones riding in and fighting from lightly armored vehicles. Such units often have organic armor units.

Mimicking: The broadcast of radiation designed to appear as the broadcast of an opponent, but conveying false or misleading information. Also called Electromagnetic Intrusion.

Orbit head: A designated area in a hostile or threatened territory which, when seized and held, ensures the continuous landing of troops and materiel from orbit and provides the maneuver space necessary for projected operations. Normally it is the area seized in the assault phase of a planetary assault operation.

Organic support: Elements assigned to and forming an essential part of a military unit.

Ortillery: Heavy weapons fire from orbit; an abbreviation of orbital artillery.

Repeaters: The rebroadcast or reflection of electromagnetic energy for the purpose of preventing or reducing an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Superiority: The degree of dominance in the aerospace battle of one navy over another which permits the conduct of operations by the former and its related forces at a given time and place without prohibitive interference by the opposing force.

Supremacy: The degree of aerospace superiority wherein the opposing force is incapable of effective interference. �

The Old Scout: The Danger Club

by Jeffrey Schwartz

The old Scout leaned back in big overstuffed chair, enjoying the rich leather and the comfort almost as much as he was enjoying the fine brandy in the elegant glass in his hand. The "Danger Club" had offered him a Cr50 honorarium—and free drinks!—to come chat with the members about some of the creatures he'd seen over the years.

"The magni-pie is very dangerous, albeit accidentally. Ran into them during the Fourth Frontier War…

"They're kinda like a beaker with wings, capable of gliding more than flying. Call it a flying-squirrel-monkey. They have a magnetic sense that lets them navigate, but it's also used in evaluating the gifts a male offers a female during courtship. The purer the magnetic signature, the more attractive the gift.

"Since the colonization of Gougeste, the little buggers have a habit of stealing any small bits of metal—nuts, bolts, nails—that aren't… uh… nailed down. So to speak."

He paused and took a sip of the brandy. "During the war, the bastards would swarm over battle fields, picking up the empty shell cases, magazines, all the expendable stuff used up in a modern battle. An in the course of this, they discovered that the ring from a grenade pin was just the right size to go around the foot and rest on the leg of a female, like a pretty bracelet.

"The females discovered jewelry.

"Nature being what it is, the males of course locked on to the best gift to gain a mate… which was ok as long as they contented themselves to sweeping through after a battle and picking up the dropped grenade pins.

"When they began sneaking in on bivouac sites and stealing them, it got dangerous."

The Scout leaned forward a bit, his voice drawing the listeners in, "It's 0200. You're trying to run a silent camp as part of an infiltration mission. There's the normal animal sounds, a little rattle of the tree branches above the camp. Nothing out of the ordinary, and the sentries are on watch with thermal and lowlight…

"One of the little critters you've been seeing all day runs down a tree trunk, but who cares? You lose it in the underbrush and camo around your sleeping teammates… a few moments later it scampers back up another tree trunk. "

The Scout held his breath for a dramatic pause, "Then … Boom."

It wasn't a yelled "Boom!"—it was a sad, maudlin way of saying it.

"Dave, the same Dave that you've been marching with for a month, explodes. Yeah, I know, the restraining loop over the spoon on the grenade… but from the times a soldier woke up before the magni-pie stole the pin, they snip through the strap with their beak so they can get to the pin easier."

The Scout took another sip, savoring the brandy. "Dangerous, but they don't intend to be, and if you're not carrying grenades then the problem isn't there. I think the real topic on the table is creatures that are intentionally dangerous.

"On Forboldn, in the highland mountains, the natives hunt the Trellkatan. Picture a sort of arboreal mountain goat… like a goat with the hands and feet of an ape. About 1.5 meters tall when they stand on their hind legs, about 60cm running on all fours. The backs of the hands are covered with … like turtle shell, or super thick sharkskin, so when they fold the fingers into the palm the hand works like a hoof.

"The natives hunt them for the pelts—they grow long, thick coats that are chemically really similar to spider silk or kevlar. There's a couple companies that pay nicely for them and make really elegant Cloth armor from the stuff.

"The problem is the fur gets twisted, tangled and matted, like a sheep's… and three to four centimeter thick tangled mats tend to stop a lot of incoming fire. It's hard to cut, it's hard to stab through it, bullets tend to hit strand after strand and slow down. Gauss needles work, and energy weapons. But hitting them

with energy weapons ruins the pelt, which is the whole point of the hunt.

"The locals use a kind of a long spear, with a thin stiletto head to it. About a third of a meter of needle, with a crossbar like a boar spear, and then about another meter and a half of metal rod.

"The Trellkatan have a very powerful grip, and if they get a hand on you they'll crush your throat. Or the bones in your arm. Or pull the arm out of its socket. Their main weapon, though, are the curved horns, like a goat's, except the outside and inside of the curve of the horn is razor thin and very sharp. It won't cut deep, but the creatures are very big on hitting in the face and neck with the horns. When they hunt , they hold their prey down and slit its throat with the horn-edge.

"That's the other difference between them and goats—or apes. They're extremely territorial, irrationally so. No other animal can live within about 1500 meters of their lair. They'll hunt and kill everything they find there. Another 5 km or so is hunting range, where they'll let things live but go through hunting for food.

"They are like goats in that they're a herd animal or a pack animal, depending on how you look at it. The hunting parties are between 4 and 24 of them, usually all males. Maybe a couple young near-adult females.

"The Lairs are mountain caves, or cave complexes, where dozens of them live. The females have a nursing organ that is like a tap that branches off where the stomach and the intestines join. A tube from the tummy that the young nurse semi-digested food from. They have litters of 2 to 5 kids every spring, and all the males hunt like crazy to feed them. They mate in the fall, and gestate all winter, deep in the cave where the temperature is the same year round. They gorge all summer, and the females are sort of hibernating while gestating.

"Trying to hunt them in the lair is… dangerous. They climb up into the tops of the cave, find niches.

They hear really well, and will tap their hoof-hands on the rock to make a clicking sound that they range-find on in the dark. Not as good as a bat's sonar, but good enough they can find their way around even in the deep-dark. And that hearing lets them know you're coming, so they can get to the side, or above, the opening between one part of the cave and another. As the hunter crawls through, they just snatch him and slash.

"Some people will gas the cave—smoke grenades, or riot gas—but the twists, niches, and occasional water-filled tunnel stop that. Mostly they throw the smoke in to drive the Trellkatan out—although that's not usually a problem. Get within 500 meters or so of the cave, and every adult male will mob you since you're in their exclusion zone."

The Scout noticed his brandy snifter was empty—and the noticing was because of the well groomed and dressed waiter who'd held off filling it until there was a pause in the story. The tall man poured another helping, the amber liquid making the cut crystal sparkle in the light of the elegant fireplace behind and to the left of the old man's chair.

"The Trellkatan… they're dangerous, but we hunt them. By 'we' I mean sophonts, humaniti. We make the choice to go up in the mountains and hunt them. It could be worse.

"I was doing a survey on… well, I'm not going to name it. It's Red Zoned for a reason.

"We landed in badlands—not desert, not mountain, not a nearly-dry riverbed canyon, but some kind of hellish mix of the worst qualities of all three. Strange regoliths worn by wind and rain and, once upon a time when the river was more than a trickle of a stream, by rushing waters.

"Binary system, a pair of … no, I think mentioning spectral types would be bad. Let's just leave it at a pair of dim stars, so there was never really night, and never really day. Fast rotational period, less than 14 hours, which contributed to the winds that whistled through the rocks, and made ever shifting patterns of light and shadow that tricked your eye

and made you see things that weren't there. Or, worse, made you ignore things that were there.

"Radiation was fairly high, both from the stars and from radioactive cobalt dust in the atmosphere. Yeah. Not naturally occurring, and from the half-life about 50 years back, the civilization nuked itself. Long Night colony that everybody forgot about. We found some wreckage, bits and pieces of documents.

"They'd broken with their parent world because of a dispute over genetic engineering ethics. The parent world subscribed to views similar to the enlightened, sensible, dare I say *sane* kind of thoughts that are common in the Imperium as a whole. Praise the Emperor and all his predecessors for wisdom."

With that toast, the Old Scout raised his glass and took a sip, and the listeners echoed the toast.

"The… freethinkers… no, that's too weak a word. 'Fanatical whackjobs' is closer, but lacks the dispassionate social professionalism so prized by the Scout Service, so I'll avoid that term. Let's just go with 'people'.

"The people who colonized wanted to make… well… Von Neuman machines. But they wanted *biological* Von Neuman Terraforming Servitor Creatures. At first, this was just peachy. There was enough land they could all spread out, grow some landscaping slave-critters, and have their own little Gardens of Eden.

"Until there got to be too many people. And then they started to argue over the choicest bits of land. And arguing turned to duels, but that wasn't enough, so there were skirmishes and then custom-built fighting critters in arena combats. Then there were the sore losers who decided not to go along with the arena trial by combat's result, and there were battles between estates. And then estates banded together, and… and someone decided that they were going escalate, and 'win', and they dusted off the old physics books and made nukes.

"Which shattered the infrastructure enough that the people were no longer in their manicured estates, and the critters were loose across the world.

"The really big ones weren't so bad. About 15 metric tons mass, three to four meters at the shoulder. Scales? Plates? I don't know what to call them. Size of a dinner plate, thick as your thumb and overlapping like a shark's teeth. Ablative to energy weapon fire, and HEAP would just blow that one plate off. Trunk like an elephant, tail like a scorpion—with a stinger!—and six big legs like an alligator that let it move while keeping the soft belly near the ground. Claws that let it climb the soft limestone rock of the badlands. Eight tentacles off a mound in the middle of the back, each ending in a stinger like the one on the tail.

"Those weren't so bad, because at least you could see them coming. Well, no, you could hear them coming as they crunched up the terrain. In the shifting shadows and twisty regoliths, they could actually sneak up on you, because your eyes would sometimes think they were just a big, weird shaped rock. They'd stalk in nice and slow, crawling just a little at a time, until they were close enough.

"The Big Ones would dig down into the mud in the stream bed, and just let all the water run through their mouths—filter feeding like whales. They could sit still, waiting like that, until they noticed something to kill. The shape of their mouths was such they couldn't even eat animals they killed—they'd toss the bodies in the stream, and filter up bits that came off or the little minnow-sized fish that came to eat the carrion.

"Worse were the bunnies. Little fluffy bunny rabbit things, with soft fur and cute bunny bodies."

The Scout shuddered, looking off into space, and took a swig of his drink. Then steadied himself, whispered a couple of words, and said more clearly, "Absent friends" raising his drink in a toast, before sipping again. A few other people echoed the toast.

"The bunnies would roll in the dust, their fur picking it up and camouflaging them near perfectly.

(Continued from page 23)

They were small—shoe box sized—and fast as all hell when they sprinted. Inside 100 meters, they'd be on you in a heartbeat.

"Two long, sharp incisors. Two long, sharp claws per paw… and the belly has a thing like the Hunter's organ in an electric eel, with specialized conductors to the incisors and paws. If it could get through the HazMat suits we were wearing because of the cobalt, it could zap hard enough to stun you.

"When nothing was there to hunt, they moved like a herd of herbivores, eating the lichen and bits of plant that grew between the rocks, or digging out insects. Like watching a flock of chickens sweeping the area, nibbling here and there, while the ones on the edge of the flock keep watch. They'd go slow, stay stealthy and quiet, and feed… until the ones on the edge caught sight of real prey.

"Then the whole flock would go into stalk mode, and when they got close enough, sprint and pounce. Thirty or forty of them hitting almost at once, like land piranha. Stop one, and another is ducking around to stab at your heel, the back of your calf… and once those little needles get through, down you go. The bastard would shock and shock and shock and make sure you couldn't get up to push its friends off."

The Old Scout paused a bit, staring down into his glass, and then gulped the brandy down in one swallow before asking, "How about a little break? Maybe some cards?"   ✦

[Author's Note: If you choose to introduce the 'bunnies' to your game, the stun effect should be rolled as 2d6 vs. END.]

Dawn Adventures 2: Hell's Paradise

reviewed by Megan Robertson

Dawn Adventures 2: Hell's Paradise. Michael Johnston.
Gypsy Knights Games http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com
46pp., PDF (Currently out of print)
US$5.99/UK£4.79 (last recorded price)

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Rooting around Dawn subsector—next door to Cascadia subsector of the Gypsy Knights Games alternate *Traveller* universe Clement Sector—this adventure sees the party in a Cascadia Colonization Authority search-and-rescue ship looking for an exploration ship that has gone missing. The *Trailblazer*-class scout ship the party is in is the same as the one provided for *Dawn Adventures 1: The Subterranean Oceans of Argos Prime*—and indeed the adventure starts on Argos Prime. Nine pre-generated characters are also provided, as well as a map of the Dawn subsector and listing of the systems therein. Naturally, you can use your own characters and ship, and indeed set the adventure somewhere in your own *Traveller* universe without too much amendment necessary, if you prefer.
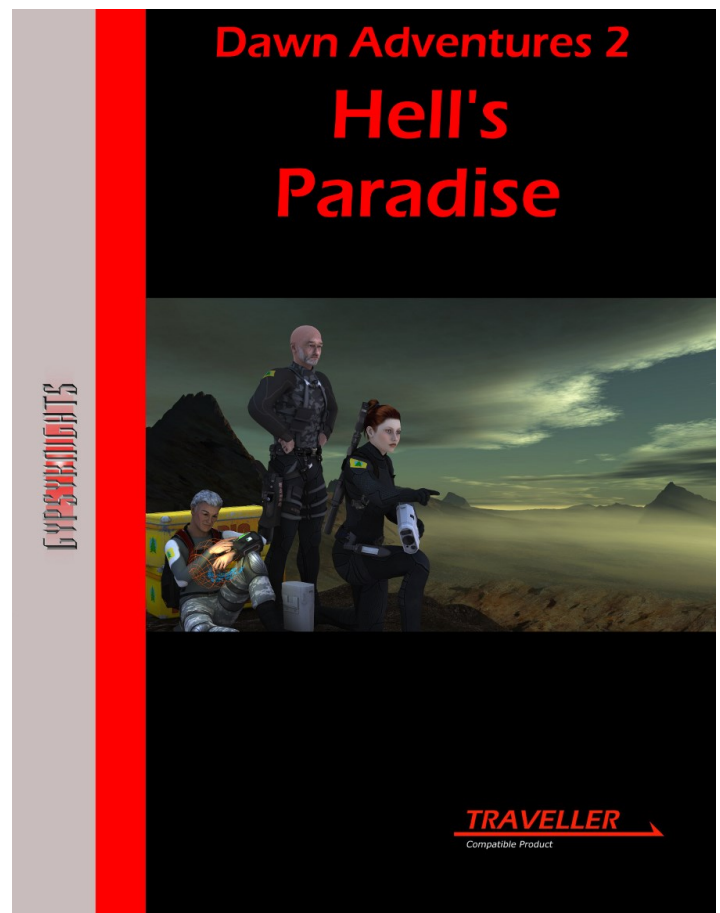
The target system of Calliope is detailed extensively—at least, what is known of it—with the main-

world shown as being largely covered with water with just three small land masses. There is extensive sea life but little to be found on the land. It is not yet settled by anyone, but the Nordic Exploratory Society have been surveying it with an eye to locating suitable sites for a colony. It is their survey ship that has gone missing.

In a neat tie-in to *Dawn Adventures 1: The Subterranean Oceans of Argos Prime*, the search-and-rescue ship complete with the party on board have been sent to Argos Prime to assist with the disaster that befell the planet during that adventure. If you want to use the same party you did for that adventure, you'll need to have them reassigned to new duties in order to get them involved in this adventure. Representatives of the Nordic Exploration Society request help, and the party is tasked to investigate. There's a fair bit of background about the Nordic Exploration Society; how much actually needs to be shared with the party is unclear, but this may be made available if they are interested.

They will have to stop and refuel at Biocca, which is a friendly frontier world. As well as fuel, they can pick up some information and a meal whilst here, but they ought to be on their way to Calliope quickly.

Once there, the investigation can begin. The ship itself can be found quite easily… but where are the crew? There's a deckplan of the survey ship, assuming the party decide to search it, with full descriptions of all that is to be found there. Eventually the reason for the ship being here, rather than returning as scheduled or even reporting in, will become apparent… but will the party be able to figure it out and how to deal with it before suffering a similar fate?

This is a nice treatment of what is, once discovered, a fairly standard risk of interplanetary exploration, with a few neat ideas to make it less predicable. It proves good fun to run, but is possibly more suitable for a one-off game using the characters provided than as part of an ongoing campaign with cherished characters... yet, it's dangerous out in the black, sometimes parties need to be reminded of this. ✪

The Blades Mercenary Unit

by Richard Perks

The Blades are a battalion-sized and -organized mercenary unit that originated on Kryslion (Pax Rulin 0402/Trojan Reaches). It is a light grav/ACV mobile battalion that specialises in Internal Security/Cadre missions. The battalion is made up of four companies and a headquarters unit. The Battalion HQ and the 4th Company rarely leave their base on Kryslion. The 4th Company consists of rear elements such as long term repair crew, training elements as well as admin support and the unit's dependants. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Companies are regularly deployed on independent security missions throughout the Marches. 1st Company has better quality troops and more reliable equipment; the others get what's left.

The Blades are equipped to fulfil security tickets on habitable worlds, permitting the use of cheaper ACV vehicles. Worlds with environments that require full life-support are less likely to have large scale revolts or rebellions or areas under rebel control, as the ruling government has control of life-support and the rebels cannot run for the hills to escape government troops.

In their short five-year history, they have already gained an unsavoury reputation. They have been hired by a number of ruthless planetary governments and corporations to help suppress uprising and tales of excessive brutality are starting to follow the unit. Since the commander of 2nd Company was arrested for war crimes, it is rumoured that the Imperial authorities are investigating the unit with the potential for its mercenary licence to be revoked.

Despite their appearance as an independent unit, the Blades are supported and controlled by the government of Kryslion. Kryslion is a charismatic dictatorship, and the mercenary unit provided valuable hard currency as well as a place to reward loyal officers or former members of the security forces.

The unit's troops are almost exclusively made up of veterans of Kryslion's internal security divisions. They are hardened security troops with good morale. The officer corps is more mixed. Most are veteran officers from the internal security divisions. The remainder are a mix of young and potentially naïve sons of the current elite who are destined for future command positions, political appointees and even the occasional famous exile. Such exiles tend to be very popular with the general public which prevents them simply being put to death, but their outspoken views prevent them simply being shuffled into a desk job.

The government of Kryslion also uses the mercenary unit as an exhibition for their vehicle designs. Combat experience is a valuable selling point in the sale of arms. The vehicles are also small and cheap, which helps generate exports.

2nd Company Organisation

The 2nd company consists of five platoons and a headquarters element. Platoons one and two are infantry platoons, platoon three is the direct support unit, platoon four is an artillery unit, and platoon five is a supply unit. The Headquarters element consists of the HQ vehicle and several miscellaneous support vehicles.

Infantry Platoons

The infantry platoon is arranged into two sections each equipped with two APC ACVs. Each APC ACV has a crew of three and carries eight troops. The unit is lead by a command APC ACV (with no additional equipment). The troops on the command APC are replaced by the Platoon Commander, the Platoon NCO, a medic, and five engineers. The platoon consists of five APC ACVs and 55 personnel including 32 troops, 15 vehicle crewmen, a medic, five engineers as well as the Platoon Commander and NCO.

Direct Support Platoon

The Direct Support platoon is arranged into two sections, each equipped with two direct support grav sleds. The lead sled in the first section acts as platoon leader. The platoon commander must also operate his own direct support grav sled. Each direct support sled has a crew of four consisting of a commander, a driver, and two gunners. A single grav supply sled with a two man crew provides additional fuel and ammunition supplies to the platoon. The platoon consists of five vehicles (4 direct support grav sleds and 1 grav supply sled) and 18 personnel (all vehicle crews)

Artillery Platoon

The Artillery platoon is arranged into two sections. The first section consists of two artillery ACVs. Each ACV has a crew of five and carries three troopers. The second section consists of two supply ACVs each with a crew of two, which carry additional fuel and ammunition. The platoon is lead by an artillery fire direction centre ACV. The Artillery FDC ACV commander acts as platoon commander.

The FDC ACV carries the normal crew associated with an artillery ACV as well as three fire direction centre technicians.

The three troopers carried by each artillery ACV provide security for the platoon and also transfer ammunition from the supply ACVs to the emplaced artillery. The platoon consists of five vehicles (one artillery FDC ACV, two artillery ACVs, & two supply ACVs) and 28 personnel (6 troopers, three FDC technicians and 19 vehicle crew)

Supply Platoon

Platoon Five is the general supply unit using grav supply sleds to move supplies across all types of terrain. The platoon is arranged into two sections, each equipped with two grav supply sleds. Each

grav supply sled has a crew of two. The platoon is led by command grav supply sled (no additional equipment). The platoon commander acts also acts as vehicle commander of his own vehicle. The platoon consists of five vehicles (5 grav supply sleds) and 10 personnel (vehicle crews).

Headquarters Platoon

The Headquarters element is a mixed bag that provides leadership to the company and miscellaneous support services. The unit is equivalent to a platoon and is arranged into two sections.

The first section consists of a cook ACV and a grav supply sled. The second section consists of a medical ACV and an engineering ACV. The unit is lead by a single grav command sled with a crew of two, which carries the company commander and executive officer. The HQ element consists of five vehicles and 22 personnel.

Individual Equipment

All personnel are equipped with coveralls and cloth armour including a riot helmet. The helmet itself includes a 10km radio, light intensifier goggles and integral filter mask/respirator. Vehicle crews are armed with snub pistols. Trooper weaponry changes according to their mission. Demonstration control activities see troops equipped with riot shields and batons as well as snub pistols equipped with tranq rounds. If the riot situation worsens, troopers may also be equipped with shotguns firing buckshot or stun rounds. If the unit is involved in the active suppression of insurgents, the troopers will swap their other weaponry for TL9 versions of the standard 7mm assault rifle.

Unit Tactics

The unit's tactics vary with the seriousness of the riot or revolt and the lack of morals displayed by their employers. For simple police actions against unarmed demonstrations, the troops are usually equipped with riot shields and clubs, and most of the vehicles do not use their weaponry. The artillery units may occasional fire star-shells for illumination. The grav direct support sleds will be held in reserve. As the mob gets more aggressive or determined, the troopers will supplement their firepower with tear gas grenades, and bean-bag and tranq rounds. The vehicles will use their grenade launchers to deploy tear gas and paint grenades, and where necessary the artillery units will fire paint or tear gas shells.

Only during armed riots will the troops and vehicles use live rounds from their rifles and machine guns. Artillery will use flechette rounds, and the direct support section will be deployed to provide security for rear elements/force protection duties.

If the company is in operations against armed rebels in the countryside, then the gloves come off. Troopers are equipped with rifles; the vehicles will use their machine guns and grenade launchers freely. Both vehicle launched grenades and artillery shells will typically be high explosive rounds. The direct support section with their auto-cannons will be used against strongpoints or improvised armoured vehicles.

Unit Deficiencies and Quirks

The 2nd Company has a wide range of issues that affect its effectiveness.

The most significant problem is the overloading of its officers. There is precious little support for platoon or company officers either in the terms of support staff or electronic help. There are no separate personnel to handle communications, intelligence, logistics, or general day-to-day admin. The officers have to handle these tasks themselves or get the crews of their command vehicles to perform these tasks, which ultimately stops them operating their vehicle. As the vehicles are designed to be cheap, there is a lack of electronic support such as secure comms, mapboxes, or battle computers. The lack of comprehensive sensor coverage also makes it harder for the officers to determine the location of the enemy or their own units. Even worse, platoon commanders have to commander their own vehicles

during combat as well as trying to run their platoon. For some of the rear element vehicles like the supply vehicles, the vehicle commanders also have to acts as gunners – only the low probability of these vehicles being in combat makes up for this problem.

The cheapness and small size of the unit's vehicles do make them popular exports, but the desire to drive down costs has lead to some poor design decisions. Expensive items like fusion power and all grav propulsion have been excluded, as have other expensive items such as sensors, heavy armour, electronics, secure communications and military grade weapons. The unit has been lumbered with low-tech machine guns, and fuel-hungry MHD power units, but at least some of the equipment is so low-tech it is very easy to maintain.

Only the FDC artillery vehicle and the company command sled have secure comms and a mapbox. The FDC centre is so primitive it can only control one fire mission at a time. The constant need to provide fuel and ammo to keep the unit moving ensures that the supply section is constantly on the move. The unit would be in serious trouble if it ran into a properly equipped military unit.

Several vehicles have large amounts of waste space that cannot be used due to the limited output of their grav generators or ACV propulsion. Vehicle crews have taken to filling these spaces with low weight loot or using the space as additional room in their cramped vehicles. Several crews have set up bunk areas in this unused space.

With the problems of poor equipment fit-out of the vehicles and the work overload experienced by the officers, several officers and vehicle crews have taken to supplementing their equipment with salvaged items and equipment bought out of their own wages. Items include IISS surplus equipment like PRIS goggles, and comdots, local satnavs, small hand computers, and voice activation upgrades for some of their equipment.

Finally, the unit also has a problem with discipline and morale. Whilst the troopers are seasoned professionals who have good levels of morale, especially when dealing with poorly equipped rebels, the unit's morale is brittle and may crack if they ever faced a comparably equipped, determined enemy. Certain units are run by officers who are either political appointees or 'wet behind the ears' young officers straight out of the academy. This is never good for morale.

The unit's personnel have become contemptuous of poorly equipped rebels and local citizens, and there have been several reports of breakdowns in discipline to non-combatants and prisoners such as fights, beatings, accidental shootings and the occasional rape of civilians. Discipline within the unit itself is good.

2nd Company Personnel

Pelos Beaumont is the new commander of 2nd Company after the arrest of the company's former commander. He was formerly the artillery platoon commander in 3rd Company. Whilst he is an honest and capable officer, he has not had too much experience of the messy front end work done by the infantry and direct support units. He accepts that firm and often bloody tactics are required to eliminate threats and to comply with the instructions of his employers, but he is anxious to avoid the fate of his predecessor. He has no desire to spend the next twenty years in an Imperial prison.

He is also starting to worry that the reduced amount of cash coming into the unit will result in him not being able to fill vacant positions, or allow the troops to use as much ammo as they would like. The orders to the Direct Support Company to limit their ammunition usage have made him even more unpopular with that unit and its commander.

Andre Thurn is the Direct Support Platoon commander. He is a veteran hard-line officer from Kryslion's internal security division. He is more than happy to use the fire power of his section to eliminate threats to the company and their employ-

ers regardless of collateral damage or the deaths of innocent civilians. In Andre's eyes there is no such thing as a neutral. Those collaborating with rebels are rebels themselves, and if loyal citizens are accidentally caught in the cross fire then they should have had the good sense to flee the area. Loyal citizens killed in the company's actions are merely the unfortunate but inevitable cost of war.

Andre is extremely unhappy that the former commander of the company is currently languishing in an Imperial prison. Even worse was the appointment of Pelos, a former artillery platoon commander as the new company commander, despite Andre's seniority. Whilst Andre still considers himself bound by military discipline, he will not go out of his way to alert Pelos to a threat or to rush to his aid.

Harou Aboim is a member of 4th Company's commercial section and is responsible for the negotiation of contracts for 2nd Company. He is also in charge of a handful of support staff who handle things like the payroll, private mail from company troopers to family back-home, off-world transport and general interfaces with the local government or corporation who have hired the unit. Harou is also corrupt. He has been skimming cash from the costs of the recent mercenary tickets. Towards the end of contract negotiations, Harou drops hints that he is ready to agree a lower price in exchange for a kickback. He has told Pelos that the recent reduction in mercenary ticket values is due to the reputation of 2nd Company after the arrest of their former commander.

Adventure Seeds

The following adventure seeds are associated with the 2nd Company

- Pelos has grown suspicious of Harou and will hire the PCs to investigate him.
- Andre has finally grown impatient with Pelos. As their current deployment is a quiet cadre training mission, Andre feels that Pelos can be removed without endangering the unit, and is looking for PCs who can make Pelos's death look like an accident.
- The PCs are approached by a local man whose son was crippled in a beating by troops from 1st Platoon. He wants them to suffer.
- The PCs are caught in a riot on the way back to the starport and 2nd Company is hired to put down the riot and halt the looting.

Vehicles

Vehicles used by 2nd Company are all built to the same baseline, with needed customizations for their roles. The baseline specifications are given first; for individual vehicle designs, only the differences from the baseline are given.

Baseline Sled

```
TL=9; Disp=3.1;Crew=4
Chassis:   Ht=2m; Wid=3.5m; Len=6m; Vol=42m³;
           Usable=25.2m³;
Move:      GravGen=30t Thrust; Man=0.15G;
           Top=180kph; Cruise=135kph; NOE=40
           (45)kph.
Armour:    Front=23; Sides=20; Other=15; 2cm
           composite laminate.
Power:     3MW MHD Turb w/intake comp, 900l/hr;
Equipment: SealedEnv; LS=4; Pass=0; Cargo=0;
           Waste Sp=5.68m³
```

Grav Command Sled

```
Cr182,985; Wt=26.191 tonnes; Crew=4 (Driver;
           Vehicle Commander/Gunner; Company
           Commander; Company Executive Of-
           ficer)
Chassis:   Slope: Front=Rad; Sides=Mod
Turret:    Ht=0.5m; Wid=1m; Len=1m; Vol=0.5m³;
           Target Size DMs: +2 Low; +0 High;
           MovEff on Fire: Move >½, -2EFP.
Power:     Fuel=2,925l; Dur=3.25hrs.
Equipment: 500 power radio; 1,000km Laser Comm;
           Binocs; Searchlight; Inertial Loca-
           tor; TL9 Mapbox;
Weaponry:  Remote turret on chassis deck
           equipped with TL9 weapon stabiliza-
           tion; Dual LMGs w/10,000rds; TL9 4cm
           RAM Grenade Launcher w/120 grenades
           (typically 60 HE and 60 Smoke / Tear
           Gas).
```

Grav Direct Support Sled

```
Cr172,390; Wt=25.986 tonnes; Crew=4 (Driver;
           Remote Gunner, Main Gunner, Command-
           er)
Chassis:   Slope: Front=Rad; Sides=Mod
Turret 1:  Ht=0.5m; Wid=1m; Len=1m; Vol=0.5m³;
           Usable=0.3m³; Slope: Front=Rad;
           Sides=Mod; Armour: Front=23;
           Sides=20; Other=15
Turret 2:  Ht=0.5m; Wid=1m; Len=1m; Vol=0.5m³;
           Usable=0.3m³
           Target Size DMs: +2 Low; +1 High.
           MovEff on Fire: Move >½, -2EFP.
Power:     FuelCap=1,800l; Dur=2hrs.
Equipment: 500 power radio; Binoculars; Search-
           light; Inertial Locator;
Weaponry:  Remote turret 1 (rear): TL9 Weap-
           Stab; Dual LMGs w/4,000rds; TL9 4cm
           RAM Grenade Launcher w/60 grenades
           (typically 30 HE and 30 Smoke/Tear
           Gas).
           Remote turret 2 (front):TL9 Weap-
           Stab, TL9 DirFC: 2cm SingBarl Elec
           Autocannon; 917rds(turr)(3.5 Fire-
           Turns)+917rds(chass)(3.5 FireTurns);
           Autofire=+4/+3/+1; Targ=8; ROF=262/
           Turn(132/fire phase); Range:
           Eff=2km; Long=3km; Ext=4.5km;
           Sig=+1; KEAP 13/11/9
```

APC ACV

```
Cr119,480; Wt=36.145 tonnes; Crew=3 (Driver;
           Remote Gunner; Commander)
Chassis:   Slope: Front=Mod
Turret:    Ht=0.5m; Wid=1m; Len=1m; Vol=0.5m3
           Target Size DMs: +2 Low; +0 High.
           MovEff on Fire: Move >½, -2EFP.
Move:      Air Cushion; P/W Ratio=74;
           Top=124kph.
Armour:    Front=20; Other=15; 2cm composite
           laminate.
Power:     2.7MW MHD Turbine w/intake comp,
           810l/hr; FuelCap= 2,025l;
           Dur=2.5hrs.
Equipment: LS=11; Pass=8; 500 power radio; Bin-
           oculars; Searchlight; Inertial Loca-
           tor;
Weaponry:  Remote turret: TL9 WeapStab; Dual
           LMGs w/10,000rds; TL9 4cm RAM Gre-
           nade Launcher w/120 grenades
           (typically 60 HE and 60 Smoke/Tear
           Gas).
```

Artillery ACV

```
Cr161,417; Wt=39.728 tonnes; Crew=5 (Driver;
           Remote Gunner; Main Gunner; Loader;
           Commander)
Chassis:   Usable=34.02m³; Slope: Front=Mod
Turret 1:  Ht=0.5m; Wid=1m; Len=1m; Vol=0.5m³
Turret 2:  Ht=1.25m; Wid=1.5m; Len=2m;
           Vol=3.75m³
           Target Size DMs: +2 Low; +1 High.
           MovEff on Fire: Move >½, -2EFP.
Move:      Air Cushion; P/W Ratio=67;
           Top=117kph.
Armour:    Front=20; Other=15;
Power:     2.7MW MHD Turbine w/intake comp,
           810l/hr; FuelCap=2,430l; Dur=3hrs.
Equipment: LS=8; Pass=3(troopers); 500 power
           radio; Binoculars; Searchlight; In-
           ertial Locator;
Weaponry:  Remote turret 1: TL9 WeapStab; Dual
           LMGs w/10,000rds; TL9 4cm RAM Gre-
           nade Launcher w/120 grenades
           (typically 60 HE and 60 Smoke/Tear
           Gas).
           Main Turret 2: TL9 WeapStab, TL9 In-
           dirFC; 7.5cm mortar; 5 specrds
           (turr), 420rds (20 FireTurns)
           (chass); ROF=21, Range=5.75km;
           Acc=0/-4; Sig=+2; Set-Up=4 Turns;
           HE=14/2/3; HEAP=36; KEAP=25/23/21;
           KEAPER=23/21/19; Flechette: Pen=2,
           ToHit=+5, DangSpc=5cm; Illum/
           Chaff=65cm; Smoke=2×2cm, Burn 4.
```

Variants

Artillery Fire Direction ACV:

Cr 283,581; Weight = 39.601 tonnes.

A standard artillery ACV equipped with a TL5 Fire Direction Centre, a 1,000km laser communicator and a TL9 mapbox. The crew is expanded to eight as the three troopers are replaced with three fire direction centre technicians. Ammunition capacity in the chassis is reduced to 399 rounds (19 turns of fire). Waste Space = 0.44m³ in chassis. P/W Ratio = 68, Top Speed = 118 kph. Fire Direction Centre allows 1 Target to be engaged with indirect fire.

(Continued from page 30)

Supply ACV

```
Cr109,980; Wt=39.345 tonnes; Crew=2 (Driver;
        Commander/Gunner)
Chassis:   Slope: Front=Mod
Turret: Ht=0.5m; Wid=1m; Len=1m; Vol=0.5m³
        Target Size DMs: +2 Low; +0 High.
        MovEff on Fire: Move >½, -2EFP.
Move:      Air Cushion; P/W Ratio=68;
        Top=118kph.
Armour:    Front=20; Other=15; 2cm composite
        laminate.
Power:     2.7MW MHD Turbine w/ intake comp,
        810l/hr; FuelCap= 2,025l;
        Dur=2.5hrs.
Equipment: LS=2; 500 power radio; Binoculars;
        Searchlight; Inertial Locator; Car-
        go=14m³; Waste Sp=7.5m³
Weaponry:  Remote turret: TL9 WeapStab;Dual
        LMGs w/10,000rds; TL9 4cm RAM Gre-
        nade Launcher w/120 grenades
        (typically 60 HE and 60 Smoke/Tear
        Gas).
```

Variants

Medical ACV:

Cr136,280; Weight = 39.044 tonnes

A supply ACV fitted with a Company Clearing Station. Life Support has been expanded to include 6 additional passengers – six medics. The original two vehicle crew-members are also medical personnel.

Cargo = 0, Waste Space = 0.37m3. P/W Ratio = 69; Top Speed = 119kph.

Cook ACV:

Cr114,117; Weight = 29.748 tonnes. Usable Volume = 42m³.

A standard supply ACV fitted with two field kitchens. The chassis moderate front slope has been removed to provide the space for the two kitchens. Life Support extended for two additional passengers – two cooks. All vehicle personnel are considered to be cooks. Cargo = 0; Waste Space = 0.34m³. Armour: All Faces = 15; P/W Ratio = 90; Top Speed = 140 kph.

Engineering ACV:

Cr162,880; Weight = 32.244 tonnes.

A standard supply ACV fitted with a workshop, and a crane. Life Support has been extended for two passengers – two additional engineers. All four personnel are considered to be engineers. Cargo = 2 tonnes (slung load capacity). Waste Space = 0.57m³. P/W Ratio = 83; Top Speed = 33 kph.

Acknowledgement

Grav vehicles – command supply and direct support and artillery ACV designs based on vehicle concepts presents in *Encounter in Ventura Quadrant* by Group One. ✸

#28: Keeping Track

One further bit of evidence that I'm still relatively new at refereeing is that I really struggle to keep track of the logistics of an ongoing campaign. I'm a librarian so you'd think it would come as second nature but what with making things up on the spur of the moment (and thus not having them written down anywhere), trying to get the players to do some of the record keeping (such as purchases) and my own skill level of Disorganization-3, it's a recipe for scraps of paper, Post-Its, odd emails, various Google Keep notes and scribbles in odd places that I can never find again.

When you factor in now trying to run two ongoing campaigns, still tending to over prepare with notes and dragging along *Traveller* books I absolutely need for a session, and then players giving me their character sheets etc to look after between sessions, you can see why I'm vaguely amazed that we ever manage to get through a session at all. It's not surprising that I've handed out referee maps to players, overwhelmed them with handouts, or still not nailed down the actual name or spelling of an off-camera NPC we've referred to multiple times.

I've tried different solutions. All paper – I quite like this as I'm a tactile sort of person and generally a piece of paper can only be in one place and can be

Confessions of a Newbie Referee

annotated nicely. (I made the mistake of annotating the cabins of the March Harrier with their occupants on the plastic wallet the deck plan was stored in. But it rubbed off too easily!)

I did try a bespoke piece of software but unfortunately it was still in beta testing so there were some issues, plus I hate having to sit with a laptop live at the pub table. Mainly because I'd have to keep pausing to type in the relevant data. But I might give it a try when it the software settles down.

Google Keep, I mentioned above, is fast becoming a favourite as it works really well for short items like an NPC picture, world map, or whatever. I often have these bits in electronic form and better yet I can tag something as both for *The Traveller Adventure* campaign and also the lunchtime off-the-cuff sessions. My tablet is easy enough to hand to players to view and it doesn't feel as intrusive as a laptop.

I'm very grateful to J who has taken to producing short write-ups of our sessions immediately afterwards. That's been invaluable.

The actual mechanism, however, is probably of secondary importance to just having better practices and habits. Keeping things in one place rather than three or four, accepting that I don't actually need my entire *Traveller* collection to hand during play, trusting that players don't mind a pause in my attention, making notes immediately after rather than leaving it a day or two. The snag is that this is where refereeing butts up against real-life habits. ⊛

Active Measures   Getting Off the Ground

The Corporate Repo Campaign

by Joshua Levy

This campaign idea was originally envisioned using the *GURPS* rules, but will work with any version of *Traveller*. The adventurers are a corporate sponsored starship repossession team. They might work for a megacorp, but more likely are a freelance team who are hired by different companies as-needed. These adventurers do not go after the little people who have skipped out on loans. Rather, they work for the owners of starships that have been seized by companies, governments, and criminals, via corruption, bribery, or other criminal acts.

In a galaxy with different governments on different planets, and different governments ruling different parts of space, and some space unruled by any government, this can happen more easily than you might expect. To give a flavor for how, consider the following situations:

- A criminal organization, dictator, or rebel group has seized the starship.
- The rightful owner has lost the starship due to some local law, custom, political situation, or governmental corruption that is unlikely to be recognized in other parts of the galaxy.
- Some bureaucratic nonsense (maybe fueled by prejudice, stupidity, greed, etc.) has made it impossible to move the ship out of the star system.

In all of these cases, if the corporate owner can simply move the ship to a new star system, it will become theirs again. In these situations, the starship's rightful owners can hire the adventurers to recover their property.

The Setting

This campaign can be run in almost any *Traveller* Universe. There are two key points about the setting: First, there needs to be a lot of different governments strewn around the setting, and even better if there are some completely lawless areas too. Some of these governments should be suitably corrupt so that their laws are not enforced elsewhere. Second, there has to be enough freedoms so that people can steal a ship, at least for a little while. This campaign cannot occur in a total police state. Classic *Traveller* Universes where communications travel slowly (i.e.,

the same speed as starships) are particularly well suited for this kind of campaign.

The Characters

At a minimum, the characters will (taken together) need the skills to operate spaceships, and enough skills to liberate those spaceships from their captivity. The best teams will have a wide "palette" of skills so that they have many different spaceship liberation techniques available.

When thinking about characters for a corporate repo campaign, it is important to consider the vast breadth of possible repo scenarios. On one extreme, the characters could all be mercenaries, and each adventure a ticket to combat. On the other extreme, the players could be a bunch of lawyers, accountants, lobbyists, and publicists, who work "behind the scenes" to liberate ships. But there is a wide area of adventure between these two extremes, and that is where most of my campaigns have operated. Since many of the bad guys in these scenarios are either criminal or corrupt (or both) there are a lot of opportunities to use social/criminal skills against them, and you want a range of characters, so that all these are available to the adventurers.

Consider the classic issue of "getting past the guards". All of the following might work: use a gun, distract them, bribe them, con them, trick them with media, use fake documents or authorizations, or pretend to be someone you're not. Plus, the characters may have contacts or specific knowledge that helps out. This same palette of options is available for research and preparation tasks which occur prior to the main move of grabbing the ship.

In most versions of *Traveller* you will need several engineers in order to move a large ship. In this case, give all the characters a low level engineering skill, so that they can help out when the time comes. Alternatively, the ship owner could provide some "engineering red shirts" to crew the ship, but otherwise cannot help the team. Or, the ship's crew might

be on the ship, and willing to help out, when the time comes. Of course, this might itself take a character with specific leadership or command skills.

Finally, you will need to have one or more characters who act as contacts between the group and their employers.

The characters need not have a ship for this campaign. Indeed it might be easier not to have a second ship "in port" when your goal is to abscond with one that's already there. If the characters do have a ship, it is likely to be a tug, repair ship, or both.

The Structure of Adventures

In the simplest form of corporate repo adventure, the clients will already know where the ship is, who is holding it, why it is being held, etc. The adventure (often just one session) is all focused on liberating the ship and making a clean getaway. Even in these simple cases, the referee can create a longer or shorter scenario by having more or fewer hurdles for the characters to overcome, or by having more or fewer problems come up during the run.

But the adventure does not need to be handed to the characters "on a silver platter". Maybe the corporation does not know something important about their ship. They might know where it is, but not why it was impounded. Or maybe it has just disappeared, and they don't know anything about it. In these situations, the characters will need to spend time investigating the situation or researching the disappearance. This can easily lead to a multi-session adventure prior to the actual liberation of the vessel.

Similarly, there will often be preparation tasks or research, which must be done prior to making the attempt and these will take time (often whole sessions) as well. This preparation can be combined to fashion more complex adventures as well. In the most extreme case, the referee could have each repo be a mini-campaign of its own, starting with some detective adventures to find the ship, and then some research/surveillance adventures to learn enough to plan the extraction, and then some spy/operative

adventures to setup up the eventual caper adventure, which liberates the ship.

One of the advantages of corporate repo adventures is that the result of complete failure will often be imprisonment, rather than death. The referee can end the adventure with the characters sitting in a filthy jail (maybe acquiring exotic diseases), and start the next one in the shuttlecraft, with the characters being chewed out by their corporate lawyer/fixer about how much time this cost, how much time was lost, etc. Obviously, you don't want to do this too often, but as a referee, it gives you a "do over" instead of a "total party kill".

Adventure Seed: The *Local Maxima*

The starship *Local Maxima* was owned by a very wealthy guy who lives in the next subsystem over. Unfortunately, he died a few months ago. That caused some confusion in the small trading company that he owned (who expects to die?) and they missed a few mortgage payments on the ship. A competitor got wind of these events, and hired the ship to carry cargo to a large, highly populated, but poor system, known for cheap starship maintenance and heavy/polluting industries of all kinds. It's always been corrupt, but things have been getting worse lately.

When the ship arrives, the competitor has arranged for it to be seized and then quickly auctioned off, to pay its back mortgage. The competitor will pay the required bribes to make sure he (and maybe one crony) are the only bidders, and will end up owning the starship for less than 1% of its real value (bribes and purchase price included). The original owners will get nothing, and the mortgage bank will get almost nothing (the auction purchase price, which is fraudulent, minus whatever the local corruption can cut out). One of these companies will hire the adventurers.

The referee can have the characters arrive either right before or right after the auction. If just before the auction, the thuggish, poorly trained ship guards will be government soldiers (or maybe private port security, but there is little difference). If they arrive just after the auction, the thuggish, poorly trained ship guards will be private security hired by the competitor (or maybe the competitor's local affiliate, a criminal gang).

The referee can throw in a popular uprising which might cause changes in the law, the operations of the port, or ownership of the ship. In any case it will raise havoc with normal activities like travelling around town, eating dinner at a restaurant, buying even normal goods, etc. If you go with this option, think about exactly when the riots start. Before the ship arrives? After it arrives but before seizure or auction? Maybe just before or after the characters arrive? Each timing choice changes the adventure.

For a slightly longer adventure, the adventurers will need to scout out the ship, and its location, to plan out the extraction. The referee can create situations which they can learn things which will help them later. For example: The guards are selling the ship's fuel for cooking, 20 liters at a time, which might provide cover to get on board. Radio communications are garbled or unreliable in some parts of the star port at certain times, because of the poorly maintained heavy equipment in use. The port control tower isn't really crewed during shift three. Those guys punch in and go to sleep in a back room, except for one guy who plays video games and responds on the radio. Or maybe they just have a piece of software listening to and replying on the radio "Roger that!" "Wait 10 minutes before proceeding." "That's a little over my pay grade, can you ask that question during the day shift?" And so on. The referee could have a lot of fun with this.

Or you can just skip to the extraction part of the adventure. There will be guards on or near the ship. The ship may be disabled or restrained in one or more ways. The characters will need to pilot the ship "dark and slow" out of the port. Mistakes may cause tense moments with port operations, trigger the port's defensive systems, or attract the attention of

the local police. Certain mistakes might trigger a civilian riot or a union action, not to mention criminal retaliation if the competitor is "mobbed up" locally.

For added complexity, put the crew in a different place, so they need to be moved to the ship (and maybe freed from captivity as well).

The Last Minute Curveball

If you are going to run this kind of campaign, then you can use the following tables when the adventurers are having too easy a time. If it looks like the adventure will end prematurely, choose (or roll randomly) on the following chart:

1. **One more tie-down!** Most of the ships that the repo team are going after are going to be disabled in some way (computer locked, physically tied down, parts removed, etc.) Part of the adventure will often be finding out which restraints have been used, and preparing methods to defeat them. However, the referee can always decide that one more method was used than the characters know about. Maybe the characters knew that the jump regulators had been removed, but did not know some punk had physically welded the landing bay doors shut.

2. **Around the corner walks…** If you want some randomness, just have a random person, alien, robot, or animal walk around the corner. If running a repo campaign, you may want to create a table of these (or just have one or two) ready to go at all times. If so, in addition to the basic description, make sure you know what their first reaction will be, when confronted by the characters, and a list of the equipment they have handy.

3. **It's gone!** The classic "oh, shit" moment, the character arrive where the ship is supposed to be, and it's not there! Most of the time, the characters will just want to get out of there and try again another day, but the referee could always

leave a bread crumb pointing them to another way of getting the ship.

4. **You do realize, today is a local festival.** So when the day comes, and the characters are actually moving on the ship, they might unexpectedly find out that it is no ordinary day. Sure, they read all about this planet in their "Lonely Planets" guide book, but it did not go down to the detail that today is the festival of the port's patron saint. Or maybe it was the day of Bay-To-Breakers, or the local equivalent of World Cup Finals/Super Bowl. These things might make the repo easier, or maybe harder, but certainly not as expected, and much less predictable.

5. **But we're just guilty bystanders!** In these campaigns, the characters are going to be dealing with crooks and corrupt officials all the time, both right around the ship, and while researching the repo and gathering the needed tools. They could easily end up as extras in someone else's adventure gone wrong. Obviously, any of their illegal contacts could get arrested for something that has nothing to do with the repo. Or the gang leader's mistress, who the characters are blackmailing for access codes, could get executed (or overdose), just when the characters need her. Maybe on the evening before the characters are set to bribe the official, the local media runs an exposé on bribery.

6. **Another creditor could send their own repo team for the starship.** This could lead to all kinds of complexity, depending on when and how the two groups meet. They are unlikely to know each other "from before", but they could, and if they did, they could be friendly competitors, or not so friendly competitors. Conceivably, they might even work together to split the fee and lower the risk. On the other hand, if the PCs know about the other team, but not the reverse, then the existence of the other team may force the PCs to move more quickly or in a different way than they initially planned.

Active Measures

7. **Many repossessions will involve a tug.** If that's the case, then anything that happens to the tug, happens to the repo plan. Tugs can have physical breakdowns, problems with the crew, problems in transit, etc.

Whether you are planning one corporate repo adventure, or a whole corporate repo campaign, these adventures can be a lot of fun. They are easy to set up, can be adjusted for difficulty, length, and adventuring genre. Best of all they can serve to introduce the characters to the sci-fi elements of your universe: strange planets, aliens, cultures, governments, etc.   ✧

Raconteurs' Rest

The Adventures of Gerry Fynne

by Sam Swindell

Chapter 1: License to Fly

Gerry looked at the packet in disbelief; he did not think to close the door as he read the hard copy of the X-boat message:

Gerald Fynne

78,329 Hirukar Aser, 2C

Ley / Griik Maeii

Dear Gerald,

I regret to inform you of your father's death on his claim on Khii 43, Ley / New Konigsberg.

I am enclosing a facsimile of your father's last will and testament, leaving his entire estate to you. It is necessary that you proceed to the claim, however, to establish and maintain your rights to it. Only then will it be possible for you to make arrangements to sell or work the claim, and effectively take charge of the considerable property located there. I am enclosing appropriate Middle Passage vouchers, along with the appropriate shuttle ticket to the Griik Maeii highport. They may be redeemed at your convenience, but I urge you to make no delay. When arriving in the New Konigsberg system, it will be necessary for you to hire a small craft to transport you to the claim; there is a regular route that visits it monthly, but it is unlikely that your arrival date will make this expedient. The enclosed check should cover the in-system trip, as well as allowing an additional 25% for sundries. You should require no additional funds while embarked on your middle passage, but you may bring whatever additional funds or goods seem appropriate for your trip.

The enclosed vouchers each contain a parental authorization from your father; these are necessary for you to travel. I have taken the liberty of causing your deceased father's signature to be attached; I am unsure of the legal ramifications for myself, but there is no official record of your father's death. The only record of it is this note. All the enclosed documents are self-supporting: they give you the authorization to make the trip as a minor, traveling in obedience to a parental order. Only a conflicting parental order could countermand this parental order. As you are now unfortunately an orphan, this is unlikely. The enclosed plat locates the claim sufficiently for the purposes both of astrogation and legal description, but again your presence is required under the local mining ordinances to secure your claim. I regret that I cannot, in my capacity, do these things for you. Any further questions you have are best answered when you arrive.

Sincerely,

Eve

Servant to Hugo Fynne, deceased.

The thin sheath of the message and vouchers trembled in his hand. Each voucher had in the Memo section the following, *"To my dear natural son Gerald Fynne. I am ordering you to travel without delay to Khii 43, New Konigsberg, where I will take immediate and permanent custody of you. Signed, Hugo Fynne."*

His father was dead.

Well, he had seemed almost so for as long as Gerry could remember. There had been no visits, no correspondence, and certainly no money. His older sister had mentioned speaking with the old man,

some eight years ago, but she was now dead, lost to the Scouts as they say.

Gerry was alone on the stoop of his aunt's comfortable flat. The coolness provided by the vines overhead, still moist from their pre-dawn misting, made the plasticrete landing comfortable even though it was likely 33 degrees down in the street. He was, despite some street noise from some unsilenced construction floaters, quite alone. He got that the claim was some asteroid, or planetoid, some 14 parsecs away. He knew little about the New Konigsberg system, recognizing it only as a name he had had to memorize as part of sector geography; he could not even place the subsector. He knew little about mining in general other than that it was a quick way to die. Quicker than the scouts. He turned to close the door after what must have been several minutes. He went into his room (still his aunt's sewing room these nine years after momma had passed), hoping to collect his thoughts. He saw the veritable jungle of manicured vines outside the floor-length window continue to sway as he again stood stock still. He darkened the glassteel. For some reason, he took three deep breaths that he was very conscious of, while saying a silent prayer of which he was oblivious.

He had to flee. He knew that one whiff of this would have his aunt on the phone to lawyers, social workers, notaries, and bureaucrats of every stripe. It would be weeks or months before whatever needed to happen would be initiated, likely too late from what Eve said; whatever there was to his father's likely meager claim would be pecked away by the red-tape vultures. He would have never left the flat, and it would be gone. His father would be even farther gone than he was this minute, when he was both farther gone and in some odd way closer than he had been for as long as Gerry could remember.

He did not know who Eve was, though an enclosed 2D picture showed her as a very attractive young woman. That did not make sense, but she

seemed well-spoken—almost as well-spoken as a teacher or a senior bureaucrat. The offer of a remote mining claim so tenuous that a 15-year-old had to rush to save it did make a certain amount of sense, however, at least knowing what little he knew of his father from his mother's stories. Gerry's wanting it to make sense made it more so.

He grabbed his backpack and started shoving things in: combo knife, cold light, multi tool, para cord, emergency blanket, Youth Guides book, extra socks, and belter tape. He started to go over in his mind as if this was a Guides trip: environment, activity, outing length, patrol size, patrol resources. He dropped his 2-liter semi-soft canteen and he stopped his frenetic, almost furtive, activity to think.

Environment? Vacuum with likely high radiation and close to absolute zero.

Activity? God only knew, quite literally, at this point. This Eve might be able to guess, but she was not available as a Senior Guide right now was she? The Length of his "outing," was likewise unknown, but the patrol size was simple: just Gerry. Oh, as Father Kii-O'Mally would say, he was never alone; God would be with him. Gerry did not feel very close to God right then, though, but was sure that his demons would be along for the ride, riding in his pack and weighing him down, whispering doubts in his ear. Thinking of demons, wasn't this whole thing sinful, running from Auntie, running like a fugitive, before she could tell him to stop? The Fourth Commandment?

"She's *not* my damned mother, and my father has called me, called in his final testament!" his voice croaked aloud. Woah, where had that come from? Gerry rarely spoke aloud to himself, and only then not to speak to himself, but to practice speaking, or hear how his voice sounded.

This did not dispel Gerry's doubts, but it did dispel one: his reason for going. He was going because his father had called him. s Father K.O'M. would say, he had to know the reason leading his action, the primary reason, and if he knew that, then the

reasons that followed could be dealt with in turn. Yes, he wanted the money, he wanted an adventure, he wanted to be out from under this old woman's doting eye, and, well, he wanted to meet this Eve. All of those were not justifications, but reasons; his father's order, however indirectly transmitted through the wispy synthetic paper of the Xboat envelope ordered by his servant, was a justification. Indeed, this was his way of doing what he had been commanded to by God, but had never been able to, had been ashamed to in front of Aunt and late mother, had felt ashamed for secretly wanting: honoring his father.

That Gerry felt far from God, but very readily grasped the convenient commandment was a distinction lost to him right then. He was a young man on a mission. He did remember that his Guides' longsuit was a good undergarment for a Vacc Suit, and shoved that into a larger bag. He bitterly thought of his Auntie's forbidding him from doing Guides Space Camp; he could have used the Vacc Suit orientation, the EVA, and maybe even the "Porthole Astrogation" training. He stuffed in his dress-down clothes, a math book, some packaged shelf-stable food from the pantry. He looked at the knives and other utensils in the kitchen, and settled just on a can opener. A little old-school, but he had no idea what or how he would end up eating. Eve looked well-fed, but Eve could be a dream.

What if his father wasn't dead? What if this were some trick of his? Well, Gerry didn't know anything about his father, really, other than he was some kind of bum; he was the kind of bum who leaves his kids without support, without Christmas presents, without a scroll on Ramadan, without a song on Riki-kigon…without a fracking word. Well, this was the type of man who did not care for his kids, but not one who hated them or even desired to get them back. Why would he set a trap? Gerry couldn't conjure a reason, but that didn't stop the doubting.

He put his hand computer in his backpack, in a zipbag, and wrapped in a towel; he wished it was a Rugid or at least waterproof. It felt vulnerable, and he felt more so. He was done with packing. Packing had been still relatively easy, even under these conditions, for it was a noncommittal act. He could just put it all away. He did not stop to think further, for what he needed now was thankfully in his head.

He knew there was a gap between the security cameras' coverage just below Auntie's window. It was a three-to-four meter drop onto the GrassGrid of the alley, but he barely thought about it. Gerry flipped the Guides' BigSoft so it landed flat and did not roll, then remembered Gunny Wright's words, "Feet and knees together and hit like a bag of crap anyway" as he jumped. The impact was hard but he had already scrambled over the back fence of the breaker's yard three meters across the alley before he noticed. He sat there, looking at the rather large pile of battery harnesses in front of him.

Before he really had his wind back, he jogged toward the front office and door to the outside. He pulled out a 2 crud disk, and put it down on the corner of the desk, "ye'din see nuthin'…wanna check my bags?"

"Nah!! Ee know yah yah bastahd. Git …'fore dah cops pay me mah!" the crusty yard owner said, sweeping the disk into the drawer without looking back from his monitors; he had, of course, seen Gerry enter the yard from one of his video feeds, right next to several other camera feeds, two channels of porn, and the system finals in university grav-ball. Gerry was headed toward the door by the third syllable, and then headed down the street, keeping his head down toward the graffiti at the base of the breaker yard's East wall before the crusty codger was done. He hid his face deep under the desert camo cap he liked to wear for Guides. He knew the police surveillance video cameras would capture him, but without facial biometrics automated searching would be harder. He was wearing no patterns or logos on his clothes, and had no skin ink

or jewelry. He would be logged as an "unidentified contact" by the automated systems that processed video feeds for later, human-directed analysis, should the need arise.

As a mental problem, escaping detection had been running through his mind since he decided to run, but only in the background of his thoughts, as it was not a new problem. When he could not do Space Camp during winter break last year, Auntie fronted him the 35 cruds to do his Digital Forensics Achievement Badge, level II, with the Guides. This had been the start of this mental problem; it put him, in some small way, inside the detail and planning of security of Griik Maeii, and the Imperial systems it had adopted. Inside not necessarily to aspire to run, but with a sense of avoidance born of adolescent rebellion and a somewhat technical bent. As his civil engineering teacher, Imperial Marine Gunny Wright, retired, had told the distracted boys in the class, "If you know how to build it, you're a lot closer to knowing how to blow it down!" The boys had perked up their ears at that, and for the rest of the vertical construction phase they rivaled the "goody girls" in their attention to the material. Well, as Gerry was learning police automation in the Guides, he was thinking along the same lines. That same principle that Gunny applied to defeating physical structures applied as well to defeating security systems, an intriguing interface of planning, hardware, software, data, and analysis, all held together by the flaccid sinews of human nature. Not that he had had any reason to, but it had seemed a fascinating exercise, planning ways of committing and escaping from crimes.

Once Auntie came home, in five hours or so, she would read the somewhat ambiguous note, and it would hopefully take her a couple of hours before annoyance led to panic; the police would not commit resources to a missing persons until 2300 curfew was passed. Then they would ask the standard questions, about clothing, markings, skin ink, and permission to run biometrics. Without some indication of foul play, they would normally not do a port check for 24 hours.

He had easily thirteen and a half hours to cross the ET into the Highport proper; best case, he could comfortably be booked, boarded, and boosting on a liner by then. Eve had known what she was doing: by ordering a middle passage voucher through the Travellers' Aid Society, in his name, with his 2D emblazoned on the hardcopy, and the parental order in the Memo, she had given his travel the mark of official approval that would keep anyone from thinking he was a runaway. Minors could only travel unaccompanied with parental approval; the parental approval box was clearly checked, with his father's name and digital signature listed. She had access to the old man's chop, then, and she was therefore strait that the death was not noted in Imperial, thus TAS, databases.

In forty minutes, his shuttle boosted. He knew that about a dozen cameras that he hadn't seen or couldn't avoid had caught his face by the time he had gotten from the transit hub into his shuttle seat; they had not caught him before he got in the tube seat, though, and he kept his cap over his face until getting out in the hub station. He had no way of knowing how quick they would actually check the biometrics on the missing persons overnight or tomorrow, beyond the local precinct. He caught himself clacking his teeth quietly, a "stress reaction," as the Guides would say. He saw the blue curve of the atmo, and thought of all the people within it who would love to stop him, a runaway. Gerry, Guide Youth Leader Second Class, took inventory of his chances…again.

He knew that law enforcement was like trauma medicine in a mass casualty situation: triage was the order of the day. Resources were put first to where they could do the most good in the most serious cases; a 12-hour-old missing persons report would likely not have the priority to do more than a cursory

sweep in the neighborhood, he hoped. If he boarded a starship before the time they marked him for a runaway likely to leave the system, then he had almost made it; he had the advantage of the middle passage and parental order against his Auntie's word, and she didn't know, let alone have any proof that his father was dead. She had a document that said she could act as a guardian, not counteract a parental order. He would think it an unlikely event that a liner captain would turn around, or a naval officer divert a patrol craft, to investigate such an ambiguous situation, even if they caught on. They might not put enough resources towards this to even do the analysis necessary before his ship had jumped. When was that? That question vexed him, but he did not dare do an electronic search of scheduled departures; it would redflag his investigatory file, and mark him all the quicker. Before they even did the that, the data entry for logging the complaint would automatically cue a redflag search, looking for other reports, and that would boost the priority of the routine missing persons to a potential "running out-system."

He did not see the Highport on approach, but it was not of great interest. He had been there on vacation once, and for medical treatment a couple of times. He had certainly seen it hundreds of times in news holos, and locally-made entertainment. He would have liked to take in the view anyway, but he was running it all through his mind, over and over. As the shuttle came in to dock, though, the bulk of the Highport docking arm they were approaching filled the viewport. Gerry quietly started, just a bit. The shuttle's maneuver had not been noticeable with the internal compensation, so there wasn't a sense of movement without looking out. His vision seemed to narrow, and it seemed like everything got a little farther away. Somewhere, he registered a baby crying and everyone began to stir in their seats, getting ready to move on. He realized that he was

quite afraid. If someone was going to grab him, then the starport is where it would happen. There was no reason it should happen, as Auntie would not even be home for hours yet, as far as he knew. Gerry told himself this again, and it helped just a bit.

Chapter 2: Loosed from *Griik Maeii firma*

The air of the starport hit him as he exited, and he smelled a new, somewhat foreign *mélange* of the odors of food, goods, and sophants from far away from home; the smell was somewhat understated, the filtration in the life support being excellent, and he would have to have been far more travelled to know that it was actually quite carefully mixed from the different areas and supplemented (after sterilization) to give Griik Maeii Highport its own distinctive aroma. The base odors, though, were in fact quite foreign, however carefully cultivated, and the irrational dread of discovery receded behind a schoolboy giddiness. He picked up his larger bag, and headed a few meters past a Griik Maeii Planetary Police contact point, staffed by officer who was trained not just in law enforcement but also in public relations, towards a portal with the Imperial sunburst on either side of the words "Entering Imperial Territory."

The queue to enter Imperial territory, and exit Griik Maeii territory, led between stanchions with red belts between them. Gerry knew these stanchions were part of a network of sensors, looking for contraband, weapons, toxics, and radioactives. They were Imperial technology, imported because of the size and importance of Griik Maeii Highport, to make the security of this major trade hub as unobtrusive as it was effective. He felt his pulse increase. A little nervousness was alright, as it was natural in such a setting, especially for one presumably facing an armed Impie checkpoint for the first time in his young life. The Marine was just doing a casual scan of ID documents at this point, not even apparently imaging them; there was no point at this much lowered level of security. He was really just the welcoming committee, and his very minimal "undress" ar-

mor projected this. He was the smiling face of the Imperium, with just enough casual muscle in the soft armor and gauss pistol to remind the locals that Impie strength was very real. He was also a decoy, something to focus on while the sensors did the real work. Gerry had nothing to fear from the sensors, though, as his baggage was about as clean as one could hope for.

As he was about seven back in the queue, he noticed that a pair of Impie Marines, dressed like the first, stepped up, and stood flanking the portal. Gerry tried to think what he could have done. He didn't care if they strip searched him; he was clean. He had the voucher, and nothing in any government system to contradict it. They was nothing he knew of documenting his father's death…except Eve's letter. In his pocket! The fact hit him in a wave of panic, and he felt stupid, afraid, and undone in an instant. He thought of throwing it away, but could not imagine how without drawing attention to himself. He looked over his shoulder without thinking, instinctively looking for an escape. He unconsciously started a prayer, then realized he was mentally repeating Grace Before Meals to himself. Gerry realized that panic could unhinge everything now. "Look at some unimportant object and breath, deep and slow," the voice came from Gunny again, this time in his role as a Guide Trainer. He breathed deeply. He suddenly remembered Guides Color Guard practice. He didn't remember who said it, but he remembered the advice, "Do it slowly, and deliberately. If it is wrong, they'll never notice…unless you rush to fix it." Still looking at the ceiling panels, he started to hum *Ode to Joy* ever so faintly under his breath.

The second in line, a woman with quite unnaturally red hair, suddenly started to turn completely around in line. The ID-checking Marine, in a motion as fluid as that of a ballerina, handed the card back to the man ahead of her in line, "Welcome!," and moved him quietly but very firmly through the portal with his hand in the small of the man's back. "*Please* step forward, Ma'am," he stated to the panicked back of the red-haired woman, in a firm, pleasant voice that no one could have possibly interpreted for anything but a command. His face had a frozen smile, his left hand was extended in a slightly strained welcoming gesture, and his right was held discretely near the grip of that elegant-looking needler pistol.

It seemed, for those close enough to catch the whole scene, to be a long time before she turned around. "Your ID, please." His voice was routine now, and he barely gave a cursory glance at the document before handing it back, "Welcome. These gentlemen will escort you. Please step forward."

Whatever the sensors had picked up she was caught so quietly that only a handful of people realized anything had happened. Gerry realized how slickly it had been set up. The sensors must have picked up something while she was in line; the ID-checking Marine was given a audio cue, and the backup dispatched, so there would be no delay or scene in the line. It may indeed all just be a minor matter; some agriculturally quarantined produce. No, probably not, Gerry thought; her panic seemed a bit much for that.

He did not really even notice the next bit in line, or even the Impie "Welcome," for him, just following the queue along without thinking: second nature to a student from a large, urban lycée. He took out his hand computer in front of the Departures board, but did not turn it on. As he searched for the next thing leaving in the general direction of Khii, he did a pantomime with the hand computer's screen as if to check. An unaccompanied minor would be taking a planned trip, verifying what he already knew, not searching for the next thing smoking. A liner! A liner with eight open cabins, leaving in 170 minutes. Almost too good to be true. He realized this was great news, but there was still a chance of it going wrong.

Auntie would get home 35 minutes before the airlock closed; that was conceivably time for her to

get hysterical enough, and for a policeman to get helpful enough to break procedure, doing an expansive run of his biometrics, mark him as a runner, and have him put off the ship before the airlock closed. The purser was in the black livery of the Ley Lightning line, with its red and yellow lattice; in the female crewmen's uniforms, the lattice formed part of an enticing bodice. Gerry felt the attraction hit him hard; she was quite a specimen, and had likely not hung her jacket on the back of her stool just for comfort. He caught himself imagining her cabin, her, tried to suppress the thought, and then let himself go with a short fantasy. Better the lustful adolescent scenarios than thinking of the possibilities of her growing suspicious. "Welcome to the Ley Lightning *Scarlet Maid*. Have you purchased a cabin, sir?"

The check-in proceeded without a hitch. He had been instructed to wait in the middle lounge until 30 minutes before boarding, with his checked baggage in a secure holding area, in case a passenger with a High Passage bumped him off. This was an unlikely contingency, as there were five seats still unsold, and any middle passengers checking in after him would be bumped first. Of course, there were sixteen middle passengers, and platoon of mercenaries flush from a golden ticket could possibly show up in 15 minutes and bump the lot of them.

Gerry normally would have spent such a two hour wait on his handcomp, but he dared not. He did not need to stay in the middle lounge, of course. They did not need him there to bump him, but it was a matter of convenience for the lines to have him nearby; if he was bumped, he had the legal option of upgrading to a High Passage, and bumping another middle passenger. He would likely not have that money available, though. All of this was best negotiated at the line's leisure. If he still had a cabin within a minute of the airlock closing, the purser would cheerfully scan his ticket—as he scanned the holes in her bodice—and whisk him aboard. He felt

more secure staying close to his ride out from Auntie's skirts, but he realized that the waiting and watching would probably be a bit much. He suddenly realized that he did have more resources at his disposal: He had a blessed 16,000 cruds in his college fund; it was started by momma, and he and auntie had added to it over the years. On Griik Maeii, he needed his Registered Guardian's signature, but he believed that as an unaccompanied minor travelling with parental permission in Imperial space he could access any funds in his name for travel expenses.

Travel expenses: Gauss carbine. Trivid holocrystals by the score. Lots of real meals for transit. An ORbit of the ship he was travelling on, in Griik Maeii blue jade. A five months supply of Stayfresh sandwiches. The mind raced. Well, none of that would save his life, with the exception of the weapon which was at best a dangerous fantasy. He would likely need a vacc suit, though. While not probably important shipboard at this stage, he would need to get familiar with a vacc suit at some point before reaching his father's mining claim, and there was no time like the dead time in jumpspace.

He had reset his chrono to Imperial time; by the time he reached Chandlers', there was almost an hour and a half until the *Maid* left. He wanted to shop first, then move the money twenty minutes before the ship's 1930 hours Imperial boarding. Moving the money would leave a big digital trail, but then he was counting on being able to be aboard before that trail could inspire any effective reaction. Moving it late might open him up to some commercial hangup with the funds, but that wouldn't prevent him from boarding. If the transaction went bad, he could just leave and get on the ship.

A petite, strawberry blonde sales associate approached Gerry to help him spend it all. He got fitted for an Imperial-tech vacc suit, an import from Aarirshir, that cost a premium. It had powerful radios, and had an optional EVA kit that could use either onboard air, extra tanks, or small Hydrogen

rockets to provide varying levels of thrust. This, of course, was far beyond his ability to operate. But the vacc suit was a good idea, and once he was out in the black with a chance to learn and his funds cut off, it would be a bad time to go shopping or hoping for the best as to what was at hand. He did not have to connect the EVA kit to operate the vacc suit, he learned.

The salesgirl at Chandlers' was apparently on some kind of commission, and seemed to be working hard both at being helpful, and getting herself into fetching poses while doing so. He had a cart with about 30 Stayfresh sandwiches. Sandy, as her shirt labeled her, said she could tell the Pesto Ham and Swiss, just by squeezing. It took a tantalizing 35 minutes of squeezes to find 10 that Sandy claimed were these favorites of Gerry. She also helped loading the vacc suit, the EVA pack, and 3 extra sets of bottles onto a small skidder. He was entranced by her tight strawberry curls, light freckles, and infectious smile, and wished he had time to ask her to share a kaff with him. They picked up 3 Bigsofts that Sandy said would carry it all. He looked down quickly at his chrono: 1855.

"Any recommendations on Trivids, Sandy? I'm going to my dad's place out in the black, and I'm not sure what's on the way or there that would be worth watching."

He had 15 minutes, and 765 cruds of college money still at large plus the roughly 17 in disks in his pocket. In 12 minutes they had done for another 45 credits of that, and they floated it all towards the purchase point. Chandlers' was full service, in all senses of the word, so he was able to access his college fund, check out, buy an extended warranty on the suit, help Sandy bag his goods, pocket the remaining 582 credits for "sundries," and still have 17 minutes to make it to his ship. It had taken him 6 minutes to make the trip "up" the central mall to Chandlers' from the *Maid* and he was feeling just a bit full of himself as he headed back.

"Help me to my ship with your skidder? I'll buy you a kaff on the way."

"Can't snack with customers on the job. But…" her 'yes' smiled as she hesitated. "Computer: Sandy 3451 going on break! Cover me, Larry, I've got a long one coming." She smiled that smile at the purchase point boy, not much older than Gerry, as she moved the Bigsofts somewhat hurriedly onto the skidder, and bounced out. "Which way?"

"Down, um, down that way." Gerry did seem a bit overwhelmed. Her answer had undone his swelling confidence.

"Fresh smoothies, over there on the left. Huerta Strawberry for me, and hop to it, groundhog!" she said with a smirk he hadn't seen before. He tried not to seem too eager, as he eagerly struck out for the kiosk. Three scouts, in IISS coveralls were ambling up to the kiosk, though obviously ahead of him. The two men, wearing more the faded coveralls were grabbed by the third, a small ebony woman who seemed inexplicably young, one collar in each impossibly small hand.

"Gentlemen, *please*! Make way. Get the lady what she wants, groundhog, and be snappy." Then she winked. Thankfully, the anthropomorphic server 'bot was apparently used to sputtering customers, and Sandy had her Huerta Strawberry in what seemed to have been seconds flat. Gerry was normally hardly ever aware of blushing, but he felt blood red on the back of his neck.

He stumbling for something to say, "Do you live on the Highport?"

"Yes. My father's head of internal security for the Imperial Intelligence Services. Why, there he is now!"

Time seemed to stop, as they walked down the mall quietly for a few more steps. Gerry wouldn't focus, didn't want to try to focus, on whoever Sandy had pointed at. The silence was apparently too much for her: "Grab the skidder!" she squeaked before doubling over in an explosion of laughter. Thankfully, the skidder was somewhat intuitive in function,

and so as Gerry grabbed the handle of the yoke, he was able to bring it to an almost gentle stop, while tears flowed freely from Sandy's eyes as she rolled onto her back, heaving in the fetal position. For whatever grace she had in all other movement, this spasm of laughter caught Sandy in complete candid abandon, for what seemed to Gerry to be minutes. Gerry could see her ribs stand out as her chest heaved.

"That… that… that… *here*…"

He pulled her up, as she again attempted speech, "That usually…usually gets 'em…but I've never…"

A little coughing and she straightened up, "I've never seen someone go from so red to so white so quickly."

She leaned in, way in, and kissed him on the cheek. "Good job on the skidder." A whiff of something familiar, but a little exotic. She retrieved her Huerta Strawberry, which had remained where she half-placed, half-tossed it between two Bigsofts, spilling just a bit from the straw.

"Sorry 'bout that" she said.

"Yeah, you look pretty sorry…ah, contrite."

He went to grab the skidder but she waived him off. "How are we on time? You're cutting it close, from what you said."

"I…didn't say. And yes, I am, but I've still got 12 minutes to get to A142." Gerry was a bit confused.

"You did say, just not with words. Good luck, Gerald Fynne, runaway. You're an open book, but I like the plot so far."

"You *can't*—"

"I won't! Actually, you're right: I can't. What do I know? Nothing, except you're on legit travel. Anyone asks, that's all I know. Anything else, it would be my pretty butt in the sling as well, for letting you through the purchase point. Your docs are legit; no sensitive purchases. You never uttered a word to contradict the status your documents confirmed."

He was terrified. How she knew what she knew was a mystery to him, but then girls were all sort of a mystery and women more so. Sandy suddenly seemed to have the mind of a great-granny in the body of a seventeen year-old.

She was breathing almost evenly by then. "We may never come this way again, Gerry. If you look me up, we'll have changed."

A138: four gates to go. "Is that bad?"

"No. You'll change a lot more than me, though. I've already had to grow up more than a girl should have to. I lied about my father in more than one way; I never knew him. I don't think my mom ever did."

A142. He had to be honest. He had no business with this girl; she was nice to him so he would spend his money, and she was probably on commission. Whatever the commission was on sixteen thousand was not a sum to be sneezed at. He had needed to buy a vacc suit, but she had him eating out of the palm of her hand on all the extras. But that just got him to the checkout. As she rolled the bags off the skidder at the luggage point he mused: Why was she here? Did she just enjoy toying? She turned toward him as he puzzled.

The kiss caught him completely by surprise. It was almost savage: deep and sloppy as she pulled him to her, grabbing his hips with both hands and grinding just a bit. Then it was over. She took a half step back, and gave him just a slight smirk, a twitch of the corner of her mouth. "Don't try to say anything, Gerry, you'll frak it up. We…well, we may never come this way again." She kissed him on the cheek, tousled his hair, and turned to leave.

"But how can I…can we…"

She paused, smirked once more, pulled out a marker from the front her shirt between those petite breasts he'd just felt pressed against him, grabbed his hand, and wrote a number on the inside of his wrist. She shushed him with her finger, wheeled around and strode off down the mall like a stevedore on an errand.

"Mister Fynne? Five minutes, sir." The purser. Right!

"Yeah, yeah I guess I'm late." He actually looked her in the eye this time, light hazel, and there was just a twinkle there.

"We've got your bags. Follow the Fourth Officer to your cabin, please."

Gerry wound into the liner, following the officer into a small cabin. He just then realized that he had made it. He hadn't thought of it since he had stopped into Chandlers', and certainly not when he'd been with Sandy: getting bumped, getting grabbed, Auntie. None of it had really registered until he saw his bags on the very small robotic skidder in what the large man was saying was his room. He asked the man a few things. He forgot what he asked and forgot the answers. The man opened a screen on a small desktop console, pointing…meals.

Two minutes.

He locked his cabin door, and flopped down on the bunk. He thought briefly of his day, of Sandy, of the purser with the amply-filled bodice, of the now narrower chances he had of being stopped. At some point, he thought vaguely of the challenges ahead. Not even out of the system. Strawberry curls. A number on his wrist.   ✪

Critics' Corner

Caennai-Class Merchantman

reviewed by Omer G. Joel

Caennai-Class Merchantman. William Byrd.
Out of My Mind Games (*no website found*)
24pp., PDF (TAS Imprint)
US$5.00/UK£3.99

This review originally appeared on the author's blog in Nov. 2016.

Caennai Class Merchantman is a ship book published for Mongoose *Traveller*, 2nd Edition, by Out of My Mind Games. It describes a 500-ton armed and armored merchantman capable of carrying an additional 250 tons in an externally-mounted cargo pod (for a total tonnage of 750 tons, which reduces drive performance). The purpose of this ship seems to be the secure transport of expensive (or dangerous!) cargos, or transport through dangerous space.

The product provides full *Traveller* stats for the ship and its potential cargo pods, as well as deck plans and a render of the ship. The ship itself has an interesting design—an elongated, blocky design reminiscent of the Sulaco from *Aliens* or of the Earth starships from *Babylon 5*, as opposed to the vastly overused "wedge" shapes. This is a good, refreshing change. However, the author missed an opportunity to design a non-streamlined ship—and the ship does look unstreamlined in its render—with integral

hangarage for interface craft. Instead, it can fly through an atmosphere but not really land (though it can hover over the ground by anti-gravity). I find this somewhat sad, as the *Traveller* deck plan market

Critics' Corner

is flooded with streamlined ships; unstreamlined ones are much less common—and thus interesting.

Personally, as a Referee, I would have removed the streamlining and reduced the common area and the cargo bay a bit to fit in a Ship's Boat.

The deck plans are low-res and unlabeled. The product describes the general contents of each of the three decks below the deck plan itself, but the deck plan is not always clear—which is a shame, as this ship is interesting in its design. The layout is very basic but readable.

The great thing about this product, however, is its cargo pod system—a welcome unorthodox fea-ture of ship design. This also allows for all sorts of interesting uses, including using this ship for explo-ration with a large laboratory/sensor pod, for exam-ple. It can also mount a "Docking Jig" carrying small craft—and I'd bet that some creative captains would convert the entire cargo pod into a fighter bay for an instant carrier (or pirate "Battlewagon"!).

Other very good features include a fully-detailed sample ship with a full crew, good adventure seeds for using the ship in a campaign, and flavorful de-tails about the ship itself.

The bottom line is that this is an interesting, though flawed, product. This ship can be an excel-lent addition to any *Traveller* campaign.

Grade: 3.5 out of 5   ✪

Doing It My Way

Self-Improvement

a new career by Daryl Frewing for Traveller: The New Era

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Trav-eller website in 2007.

Every once in a while everyone feels that they need to take some time for themselves to improve their skills, whether for professional or personal ad-vancement. It takes a certain kind of person, howev-er, to actually *succeed* at doing this. This career rep-resents taking on a mundane job to pay the bills while trying to improve other areas of your life.

Prerequisites: Willpower asset 10+. Upon choos-ing this career, but before selecting skills, make a difficult Willpower check. On Success, you follow the career path normally. On Failure, you try, but quit halfway through (select one quarter of the skill points normally available (round up), but only add two years to your character's age). On Catastrophic failure, add one year to your character's age and *no* skill points. On Outstanding success, you earn two more skill points than normally available.

All Terms

Skills: Gain 1D6 + your willpower skill level (not asset) in skills of your choice as deemed appro-priate by the referee. Appropriate skills are those that you could reasonably learn *without the need for special equipment*. For example, Medical (Trauma Aid) would qualify, but Medical (Surgery) would not. Work with the referee to determine your charac-ter's particular situation and know what might be available. You can spend two skill levels to improve any basic stat, three to improve SOC (PSI can not be improved in this manner unless you live in a society where psionics are not only accepted, but are com-mon place).

Contacts: None. At the referee's discretion you may spend a skill point to acquire a contact; howev-er, the type of contact will be up to the referee to de-cide based on the background story that you create for your character.

Other Effects: No income is received while "self improving" (your income from your mundane job covers living expenses and the cost of your courses); no secondary activities are allowed (they are as-sumed to be included in the skills acquired); there are no commissions, promotions, or special duties in this career path.   ✪
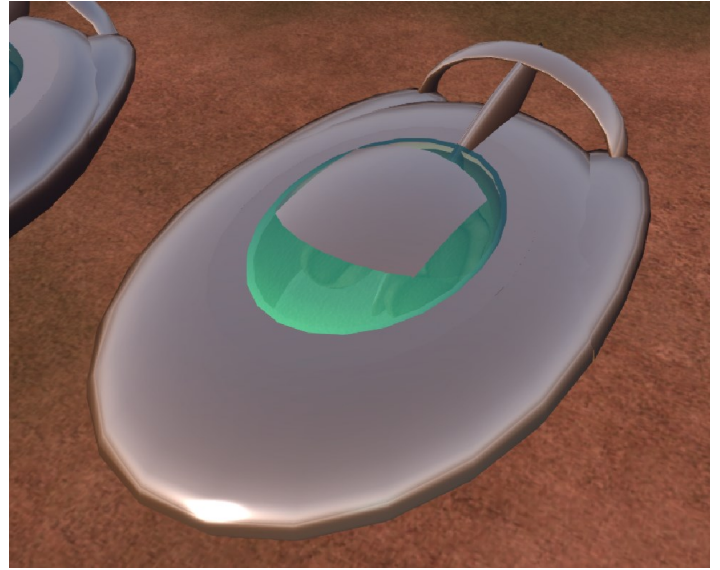
Vehicles: A *Second Life* Portfolio for *Traveller*

artwork by Niles Calder; text by Jeff Zeitlin

Second Life is a 'virtual world' where participants (called 'residents') can create many elements of the virtual environment relatively easily and quickly. These pictures are examples of the artist's efforts at bringing his vision of *Traveller* vehicles to life.
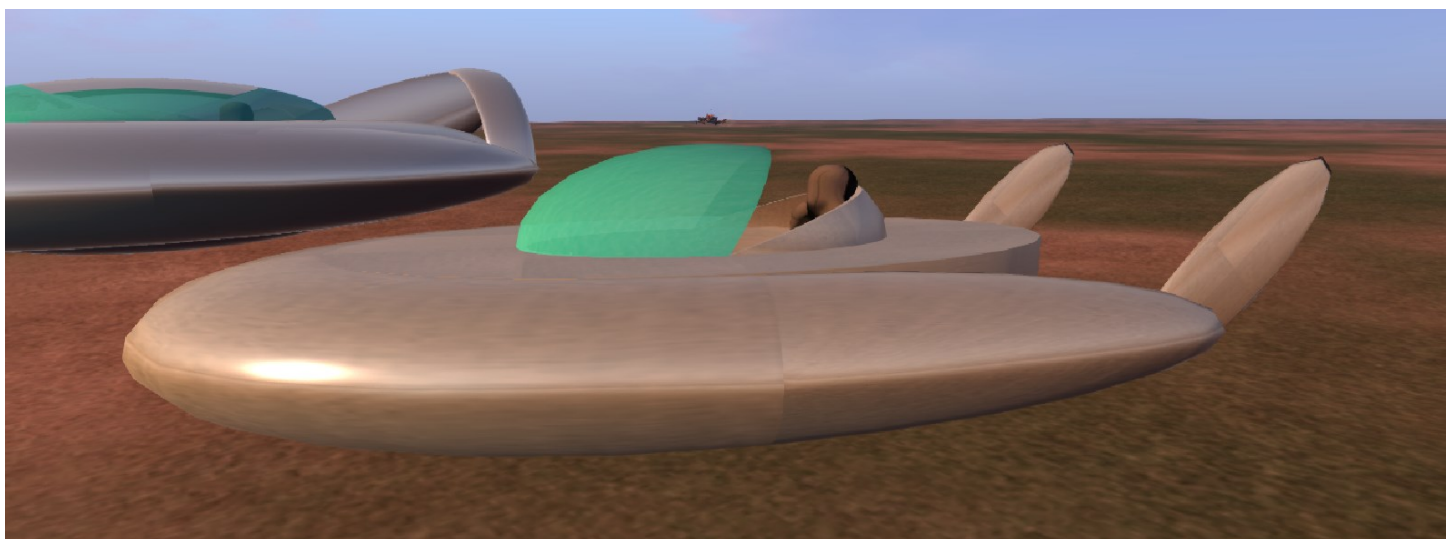

Sport Skimmer. Fast, maneuverable, and comfortable
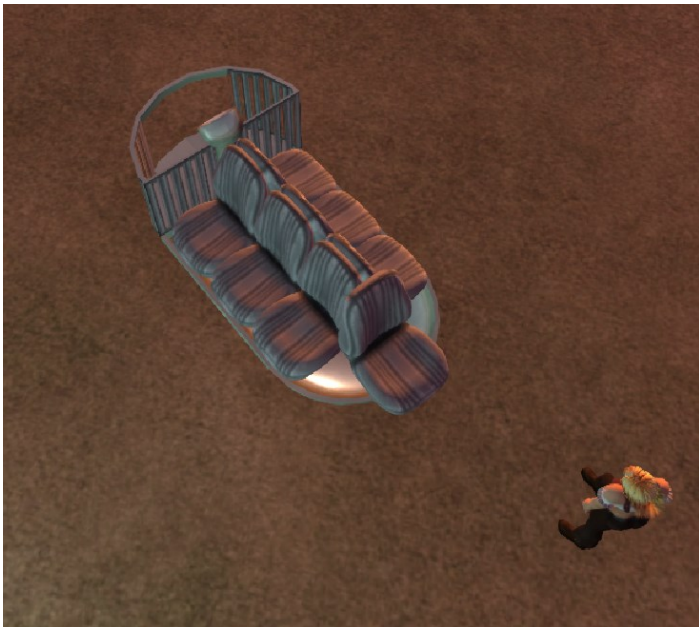
Personnel Carrier, with a human figure to scale
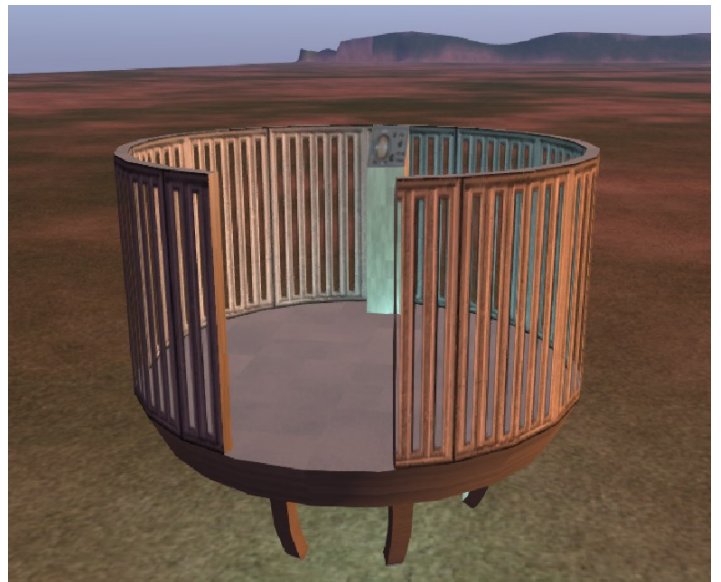
Flying Platform

The Racing Skimmer is a one-seater that meets the need for speed.
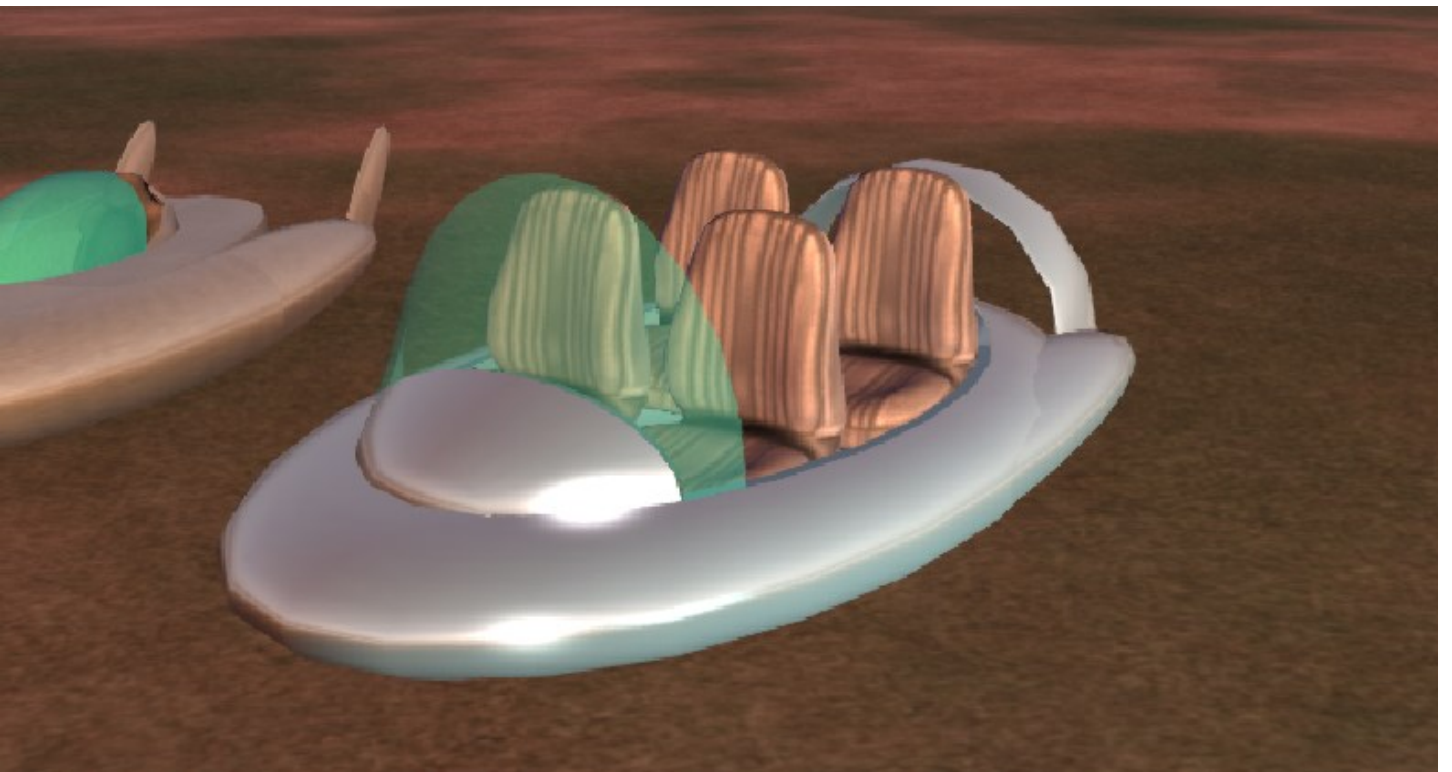
Doing It My Way
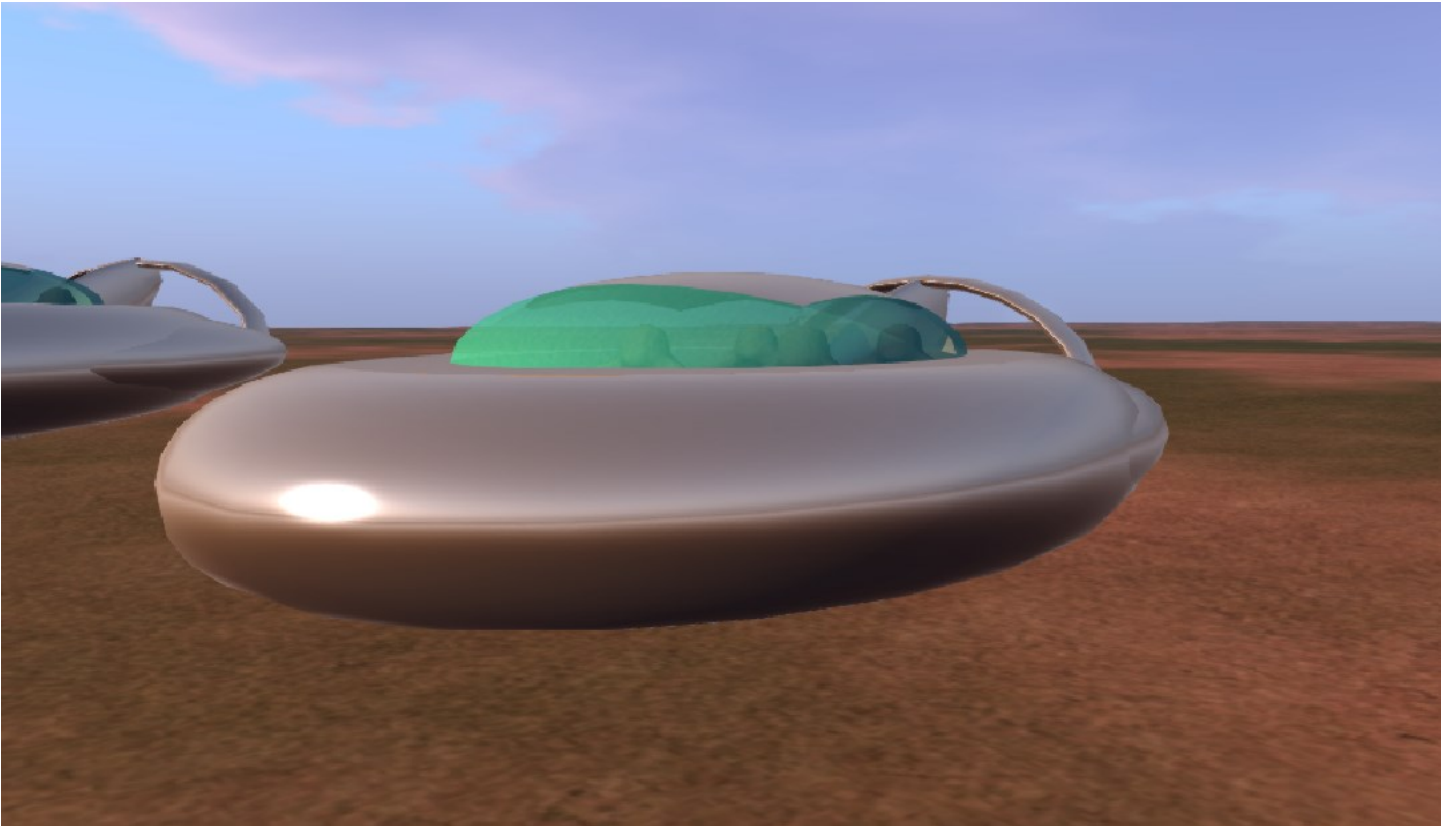
Skimmer. Think of this as a family sedan.

The General Utility Skimmer.

Active Measures
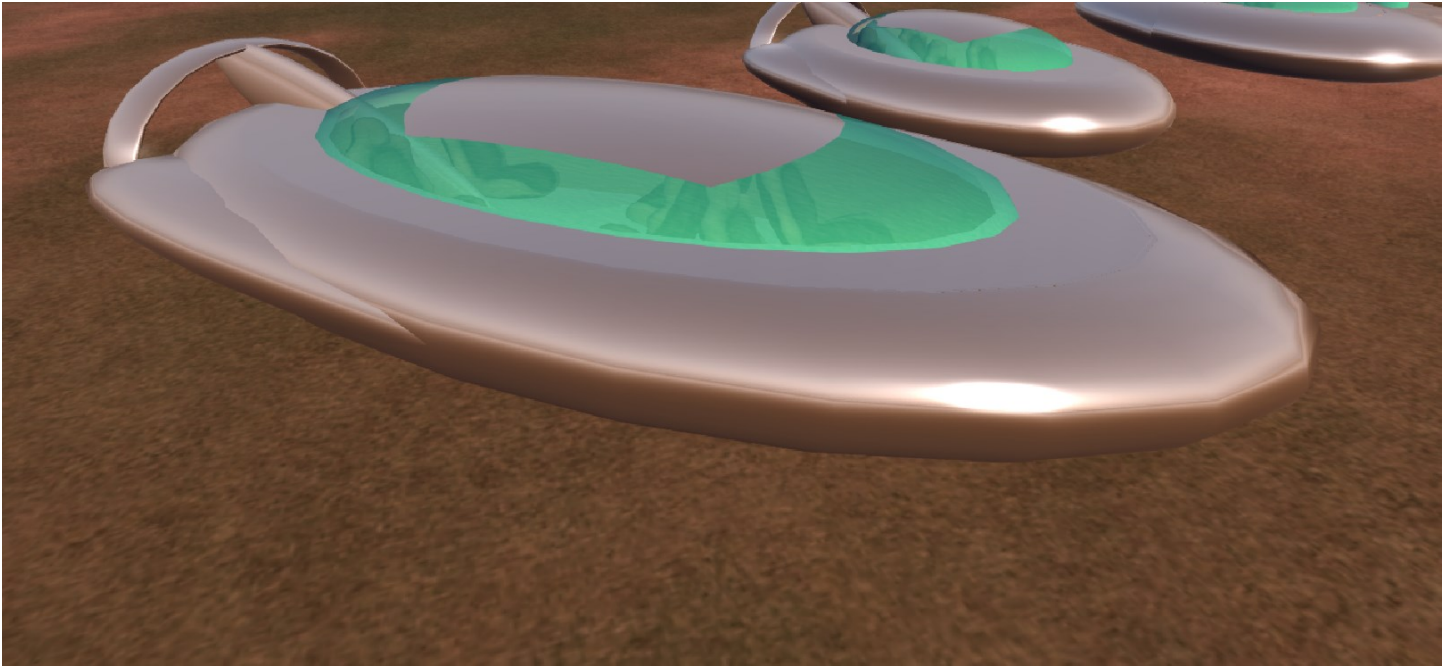
The Luxury Skimmer is larger and more comfortable.

Air/Raft, with a human figure to scale

After-Action Report: TravCon17

by Timothy Collinson

The best *Traveller* adventures have at their heart some form of conflict. Perhaps the obvious run down starport bar brawl; noble dukes duelling at dawn; or battle armour and gauss rifles in a frenzied energyfest. Maybe it's a battle for survival where nature is the enemy – on the ground or in the depths of a gas giant; or taking the moral high ground against racists who can't see past your culture. Or perhaps it's the more subtle psionic confrontation with a winged beast you're determined to tame and ride to save the tribe; or government leaders politicking over the priorities of resource allocation on a world at the edge; or the more ordinary struggle to make a credit in the face of difficult trade situations, a decrepit starship, and desperate merchants.

And layered on top of all this are the personal trials we bring to the game table. Perhaps physical limitations such as the chronic back pain I was told about in the bar between games; it could be family or work issues getting in the way of a bit of down time we heard about as the convention started; or perhaps private battles too personal to even talk about save with close friends.

This year, the excitement started early as a harassed looking Andy Lilly arrived at the convention with not one or two but *four* referees having had to pull out for one reason or another: sickness, work

See How They Run in full psionic swing – note the use of www.travellermap.com on the laptop – also in evidence in other games

demands, family crises. Organizing three dozen travellers, a convention and a small hotel (under new management?) that had also shrunk the playing area unhelpfully isn't easy at the best of times, but this year seemed particularly fraught. Still, hands set to in helping set up and referees offered whatever they could run at short notice, and things were soon looking shipshape. With a bit of cutting and sticking a schedule for the weekend came together. As ever, throughout all this it was great to catch up with old friends, make new ones and look forward to another 48 hours or so of *Traveller* fun and adventure.

Andy bravely sets to work on his schedule - being cut up within minutes of being put up.

See How They Run

I had considered taking a break from running a game this year so it was a good job, perhaps, that I'd had a bunch of ideas over the intervening months and had developed a couple of them enough to make them workable. As usual, I couldn't resist the opportunity to try out something new. One of my bright ideas – which I'll save for another year – was to use the setting of a novel I'd really enjoyed as a world for adventure. I'd produced almost all of a sourcebook and had a few ideas, but I knew back in December that while I could probably finish the job and get it ready in time, it would be very demanding to do so. Instead, I decided I'd run an adventure I'd written not so much as a sequel to *Three Blind*

Raconteurs' Rest

*Mice* but as a long intended companion piece coming at it from the other end as it were. Titled *See How They Run*, it would be a group of merchants exploring District 268 but with the wrinkle that it would be Zhodani traders looking for opportunities to make an Abradlnad or two and also reporting back to the Consulate on conditions, attitudes and shipping. Of course, if I was going to bother with Zhodani, why not have them all with psionic abilities to give the players additional interest and to explore what an 'ordinary' merchant adventure might look like with such extra Talents. Thus five Intendants and one Aspirant fresh from crossing the Sword Worlds arrive at the spinward end of District 268 with the subsector before them.

This is, I would say, quite the most sandboxy adventure I've tried writing. (Perhaps *Ashfall II* comes close.) Although there was plot – and way more than could comfortably fit into a four hour slot – I had also put together a 90+ page sourcebook covering all 32 worlds in District 268 and I fully intended to let the players as well as the PCs have a completely free hand in where they went to after departing Dawnworld. I should add that I cheated somewhat in producing the sourcebook by using the terrific resource of wiki.travellerrpg.com which itself combines material from a wide variety of published sources as well as other writing. A bit of 'tidying up', correction and adding a subsector map and the UWPs (including *Traveller⁵* 'Acceptance' figures) and it made a very attractive printout which I had combbound with covers. (The Acceptance figures were there in order to give some approximate guidance on how welcome the Zhodani might or might not be on any particular planet.) Given the propensity for *Traveller* referees to set adventures in the District I really shouldn't have been surprised at the interest this handout and reference work drew. The snag with the whole approach was that it made it difficult to know what the PCs and players would choose and thus what they'd encounter and which
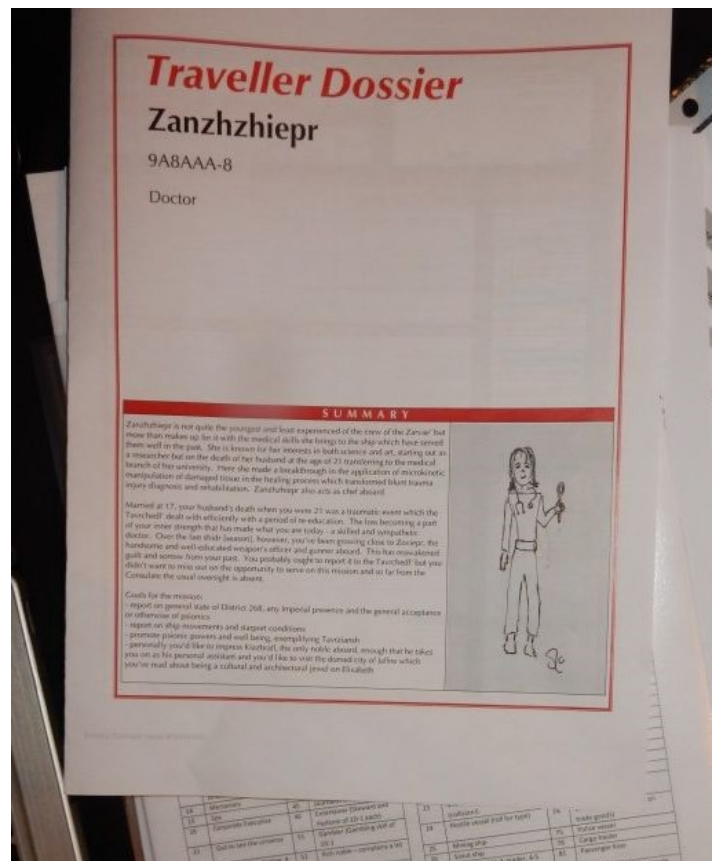
One player even provided a sketch of the character! More, please!

bits of plot we'd run with. I tried to mitigate this somewhat by having several 'scenes' that could run in multiple places and I had lists of passengers and NPCs that were designed to fit in with the theme but could be encountered anywhere. It was still, however, more stressful and I think next year – if I don't have a seventh year sabbatical year off – I'll be back to the rather more directed sort of adventure.

This was also the first time I'd attended TravCon having refereed *Traveller* in the intervening year. Between the six sessions once-every-other-month of *The Traveller Adventure* two TravConners and three colleagues were going through in the pub, I also had three work colleagues playing roughly fortnightly lunchtime sessions for an hour at a time. I had really hoped that this would contribute to me being much more relaxed about running a game at TravCon. Sadly, that didn't pan out and I was as on edge as ever and very glad Andy's chopping and pasting of the schedule meant that it didn't feel too unreasonable to put in a request to give *See How They Run* its first outing Friday night so that I could sleep easy.

Raconteurs' Rest

In the event, the game seemed to go well enough although once again I think I could fairly be accused of having too many handouts. Nothing like the levels of *The Second Scions' Society* however! Once again I was surprised by just how different it could be with two completely different groups of players. Once again I loved how my paltry words really come alive in the hands of six or more skilled players breathing reality into them. Having learned from previous years, I had a couple of NPCs prepared which could 'upgrade' to PCs in case Andy was struggling to fit in a latecomer or balance game tables or something. And on this occasion it paid off as one player's son arrived half way through and it was simplicity, from my point of view, to accommodate him. Poor K! He was not only completely new to the convention and to *Traveller*, but he was faced with one of my games and a ton of information to absorb, a choice of not one but two PCs to pick from and a four page handout on psionic Talents (perhaps around 80 of them!) from which he needed to pick a couple. It's a testament to his bravery that he didn't abandon hope on the spot.

The first time through on Friday interestingly didn't use the psionic talents quite so much but did spend considerable time on the ethics of using them and how best to do so. They spent a chunk of game time on an early scene in which they have the opportunity to rescue a poorly educated, low class, unemployed guy – one Stinford Glass – who's been accused of killing his girlfriend psionically. A court has convicted him and the mob are turning against him. A direct rescue is a possibility, ignoring him is an option or a more diplomatic negotiated release is a third approach. The players spent some time discussing the possibilities and eventually opted for the talking and, I think, felt some satisfaction, in being able to save him from his lobotomy.

The second group, playing in the longer Sunday game session, played it completely differently and left poor old Stinford to his fate bypassing the scene entirely. This did give us a chance to fit in a scene the first group hadn't had time for (a rescue of buried survivors after the collapse of a section of a domed city) and gave a wonderful moment in which a teleporter made a *big* impression on the locals as he brought someone out of the rubble apparently magically. Both groups went for the scenario I had as a climax in which some free traders who had previously been racially abusing the PCs and had shot at them near the 100 diameter limit, now needed rescue in a gas giant's atmosphere as one of their drive coils failed. I'd like to think that with a variety of task rolls tied to some tight timing rolls, it kept up the pressure of the hull failure being imminent but it was hard to judge how that segment actually went.

Also difficult to judge, was that this was the first game I've ever run in which I thought it might be wise to warn players there were sensitive issues contained within. Mainly due to the overt racism that was part of the theme of seeing how the Zhodani would behave but also because each of the PCs had in their back story some form of mental trauma which they could make as much or as little of as they wished. Back in the Consulate these issues would likely have involved a visit from the *Tavrchedl'*; this far from home, that wasn't necessarily an option. Ironically, none of the players seemed to have any issues with anything – but it was me who was choking up as I described a class of school kids nearly buried in the rubble of the dome collapse but safe for the moment in a void below a concrete slab.

Freelance Traveller had very kind words to say about *Three Blind Mice* (although one experienced Referee told he'd "take it apart" if he ran it – Thanks T!) and I can only hope that *See How They Run* eventually finds a publication outlet and is as warmly received.

An Alien Intruder

As my contribution to filling in an empty refereeing slot, I'd specially brought with me a game of *Star Trek Expeditions* I'd bought a couple of months

before. I debated running an old adventure again. I thought about trying something truly off the cuff where we just set off with some quickly generated characters and saw where we ended up. I could have given *See How They Run* a third outing. But in the end, energy levels made me take the easy option, although I tacked on a couple of minutes at the beginning and end of *Traveller* 'framing' just to make it feel kosher. The conceit being that a bunch of scouts on the edge of Solomani space had come across an old training simulation and had to evaluate it for use with newbies. My thanks to the four who signed up for this in having a go at a *Star Trek* game which wasn't too difficult in its 'cadet' level but proved nearly impossible at 'captain' level and goodness knows how you succeed at 'admiral' level. Fun nevertheless.

Once again, I can't describe all the other great games that were going on. I wanted to play them all but without clones or a time machine I could only

A relaxed Neil M gets players into A Family Business

admire them from afar. *Strange Goings on at Station 22* and *In Search of Justice* both run by Steve Q, *In Search of Lost Knowledge* by Nick W, *Return to Research Station Gamma* by Ravi S, *Star Vikings* and *Formula 3000* with Robin F (the latter looked most dodgy from the scantily clad artwork on the table!), *The Lost Colony* by Bob P, *A Family Business* under Neil M, and the Vargr were back in *Pack of Trouble* by Nigel F and two slots from Simon B: *Spacedogs* and *Return of the Spacedogs*. At one point all the chirpers, supposedly on a break from their game, came around the various other games going on in different rooms in character. At least it gave those of us who were missing out a chance to respond in kind. Although it also gave my work colleague J – back for her second year – the chance to brandish the actual chirperswatter she's made and had bought with her.

Mirabilis

Running games in three slots meant that I could only play in two of course. One was a no brainer.

Nick W makes it up on the fly!

Raconteurs' Rest

Steve E keeps some semblance of order in Mirabilis

I'd heard via social media that Steve Ellis was running *Mirabilis* again. He'd run it last year and I hadn't been able to get into it, but I was intrigued by the idea that it contained absolutely no dice rolls at all and involved the five leaders of a government having to make decisions about (limited) resources. I managed to book a seat this year and wasn't disappointed. It was a cracking game although the first half hour was stressful as you tried to weigh up possibilities and options. Once we were into it though, it was very immersive and I really felt the failure of assigning, in one turn, too little to maintenance and having a grav city fall out of the sky killing ten million people! I was the Chief Scientist and got to channel some of my knowledge of university academics which was fun, but I was particularly delighted that over the five turns of the game (representing a number of years) we managed to raise our tech level to nearly 17! Definitely a success for me. Perhaps less successful was the poor head of security who ended the game in one of his own cells with a bunch of uplifted apes he'd been abusing for a long time. (The initial and final scores on the board, for anyone that cares, were: Population 9→7, Law Level 8→6+, Tech Level 14→16+, Economy 10→9, Military 7→9+.)

This is the third high level, 'interaction' game that Steve has come up with. All of them are corkers and to fill in scheduling gaps he was running all three across the weekend. So for anyone who had missed them previously – or wanted a rerun (I was sorely tempted to have another go at *Eve of Rebellion* and play against Emperor Strephon this time) – you could collect the set in one convention. *The Zhodani Candidate*, *Eve of Rebellion* and *Mirabilis*. The emotional energy that would have taken would probably have been prohibitive though! I was impressed however, that my colleague J – attending for her second year – bravely signed up for *Eve of Rebellion*. She ended up playing Norris and, perhaps very accurately, captured the 'out of his depth' nature of his interactions with Strephon, Iphigenia, Dulinor and the twins. Sarah Lilly, Andy's wife, was playing Iphigenia in a nice counterpoint to Anne, their daughter, having played the princess in the game where I was Emperor a couple of years back.

Face Off!

Sarah, of course, had written a fourth Chirper adventure *Temptation's Pull* and while some people ran a mile from the high pitched, enthusiastic chirping, others were signing up in droves. Andy was running it no less than three times across the weekend and I believe it was full each time. This gave me a really hard dilemma as I've so enjoyed playing these humorous games the last three years. But I've also heard good reports of a young referee's games and decided I would use the last precious slot I had for playing to give James F's *A Long Sleepless Night* a go. And I'm so glad I did. This was a cracking game which appeared to be a fairly normal *Traveller* adventure. We were young tribespeople hunting down 'dragons' to bond with psionically in a coming of age trial so we could fly on them and help protect our people. Perhaps my highlight of the weekend was watching P – who was playing the son of a beastmaster and thus wanting to prove himself, facing down the largest beast after the rest of us had settled for average size animals. P as a player was

Raconteurs' Rest
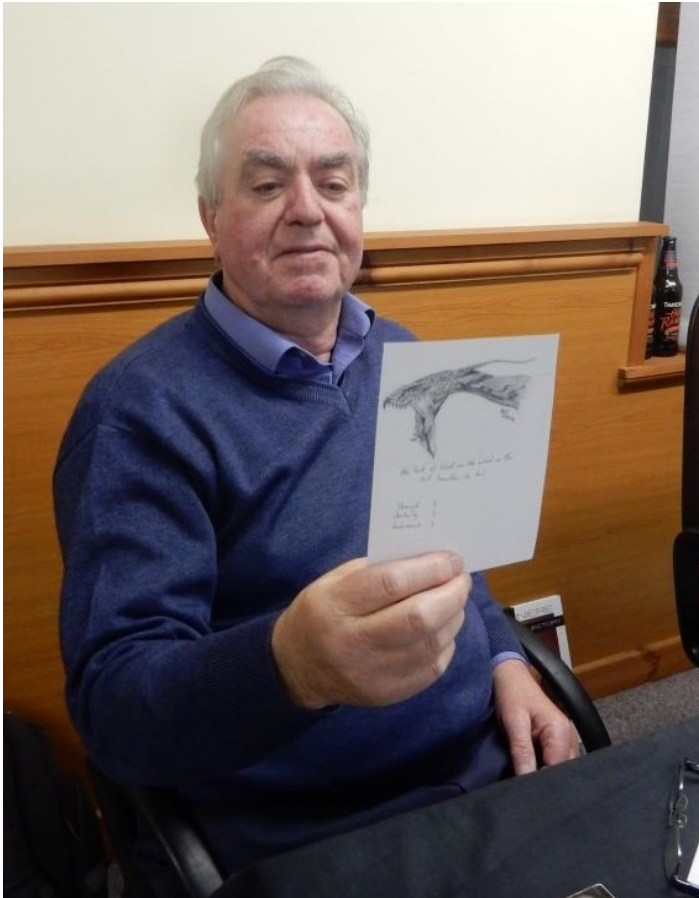
B and his dragon-like creature—no prize for spotting James F's inspiration

determined enough and his character was even more so. James as referee certainly wasn't going to let him – player or PC – have it easy. In a fifteen or twenty minute segment of the game, the two squared off in a showdown that I could have watched all evening. Two alpha males determined to get their way, not letting up despite the damage they were doing to each other, and pushing the edge of what either could stand. And that was just referee and player…! It was fabulous stuff. Eventually the two in-game characters came to a shared understanding even if neither achieved complete dominance. We weren't finished however. Towards the end of the adventure it all got much more complicated as we discovered a rogue AI and camouflaged Droyne and began to realize just how limited our understanding of our situation was. Indeed, by the end, the players if not the PCs became aware that their decisions had caused, many many millennia

later, Virus to be unleashed on an unsuspecting Third Imperium. Kai! Did that ever put the 10 million deaths of my grav city into perspective! I don't recall playing in such a high concept game ever before (perhaps excepting Dom Mooney's wonderful *This Fear of Gods* back in my first ever TravCon) and James is to be commended on his excellent idea and execution, as well as his fascinating use of some grand sf artwork to help set a key scene.

I should add that I constantly ask Sarah and Steve to get their terrific – if very, very different – adventures published and I'm sure many others would be worth making more widely available as well. Perhaps we could have a TravCon anthology collection. If only I had the energy.

And that was my biggest frustration with the weekend and a battle I knew I would face and nearly lost. The Chronic Fatigue I struggle with has not improved over the last year but I had thought I could make it through to Sunday afternoon and collapse on the journey home. CFS has its ups and downs both over the weeks and on any given day and I had clearly overdone it by Sunday morning. I might try to hide it but was clearly failing and as I stumbled downstairs and round the cereal and tea making, it was being suggested I didn't attempt to run *See How They Run* again. But in for a penny, in for a pound – I didn't want to let anyone down and besides, I thrive on the buzz! Once the painkillers and adrenalin kicked in I was able to get through. But for those who tease me about over-preparing I was very glad I had every word I needed written down once my brain had turned to custard along with my body. And I should publically thank all those who provided both practical and emotional support when I was close to the edge. In particular Sarah Lilly for her encouragement and the cups of tea which kept me going and to Steve Ellis for his in-game support helping with rules I couldn't remember or deal with easily, or in moving luggage etc when I could barely traverse the few feet between game rooms.

Raconteurs' Rest

All too soon it was time for the wrap-up, thank yous and awards. It's getting pretty slick now with nominations and voting swiftly dealt with. The PFI award went to Simon Beal and it was no surprise that the SEH went to Larissa and her little one who was just 15 weeks old. A tiny thing who had completely discombobulated our big strapping ex-air force traveller in a game of *Striker* every time he rolled the dice! To add to the bravery of having a babe in arms and coming to TravCon, Larissa had fallen over and broken her wrist so was learning *Striker* rules, managing gaming, breast feeding and everything else with a cast on. (See *Star Vikings* picture with Robin R refereeing and babysitting simultaneously). Our thanks to her husband who in driving her to Redwings, attended his first TravCon, and

Star Vikings Striker *miniatures game in full swing*

appeared not to be too daunted by the experience. Andy may need to have a special category of award in future for such devotion above and beyond! As ever we're indebted to Andy and Sarah for organizing and running a great convention! Thank you!

As has become something of a tradition, I'd put all my notes, handouts and District 268 book into a pack to auction for charity. Andy had various other lots from awesome beer to autographed books. Once again the generous bidding of attendees raised a substantial sum for Help for Heroes and motivates me to keep bothering to prepare beforehand. Though I was very impressed with the Referee I

found kicking an idea around just a little while before running a game, and then doing so with just a few scribbled sentences. Kai!

Larissa and Gracie-May win a well-deserved Starburst for Extreme Heroism!

I'll continue to deal with conflicting pressures over the coming year and I'm certain there will be few fellow Travellers from the convention who won't be facing their own struggles – external or internal, ongoing or new, small or life changing. But in coming together for a weekend of gaming we're able to have a few moments of escape and shared experience; a short time of stretching our boundaries and believing we can fly; and the wonderful camaraderie and support of friends who know the future is brighter if we overlook our differences and celebrate what unites us. ✪

Your Input Helps

Freelance Traveller is always looking for new ideas for sections of the magazine, as well as new material to include. If you have ideas you want to propose or discuss, please email us at the editorial address, *editor@freelancetraveller.com*.

Our updated submission guidelines are on the inside back cover of each issue; we're working on putting together a writers' guide and some document templates so that we can better judge from the files you send how they'll best fit in an issue. ✪

Building a Culture

by Jeff Zeitlin

Introduction

"Humans in rubber suits". "Two-dimensional (or even one-dimensional) characters". "Flats for the main characters to act in front of". How often have you heard these phrases or similar used in descriptions of stories or minor characters in them? Or in games?

Truthfully, it's more common – at least in my perception – among older games and stories than in more recent ones, but even in modern stories and games, it's all too common.

The biggest offender, in my experience, is "alien" cultures, which for the purposes of this article includes humans who are not of the prevailing assumed culture of the setting. The most common failure in alien creation, especially in role-playing games, is to seize on a few prominent characteristics – or even just one such characteristic – that will make the aliens Different From The Prevailing Culture Of The Players, and use those characteristics to define them. Thus, you end up with the Honorable Samurai Felinoid alien, the [Evil] Thought-Controlling Psionic alien, the Cute, Furry, Primitive alien, and so on.

In order to "get past" this, the designer of aliens must do additional work – specifically, the alien culture must be defined, to give a context to the characteristics chosen for them. This article is intended to present some ideas concerning the process, rather than presenting an actual culture.

Concepts

Past rules have provided tools to select cultural characteristics randomly, often giving the world-builder a short phrase describing the characteristic without specifying in detail who in the culture is affected. You can use those rules or you can come up with characteristics on your own. It's not the details of deriving the characteristic(s), but putting everything into a more-or-less coherent whole.

The main point to remember is that characteristics like those generated are not isolated; they are woven into the entire culture, and the attitudes and emotions that underlie a particular characteristic will affect others throughout the entire culture. You, as the world-builder, need to be prepared to explore the ramifications and adjust details to fit.

The best way to start is to ask yourself questions, and then answer them. Ideally, you will have a notebook handy to jot down the questions and answers as you ask and answer them, and to refer to later when looking at other questions.

Almost always, the first question you should be asking is "Why is this a characteristic of the culture?", followed closely by "What effect does <reason> have on the culture beyond <characteristic>?". This second question should lead to defining additional characteristics. Repeat the process for each characteristic that you include in your notes, regardless of how the characteristic was created. When you're done, you should have sufficient notes to give a good look at the culture (and if you clean them up and organize them, you might even end up with an article for *Freelance Traveller*, or maybe even a sourcebook).

A word of caution: When working through your reasons and ramifications, don't allow yourself to be 'blinded' by your knowledge of extant cultures that share the characteristic (or something closely similar); take some time to think about the characteristic, the reasons behind it, and the ramifications, so that you don't end up with a clone of an Earth culture from the present or past. Such a 'clone' isn't necessarily a bad thing, but think about whether it's really what you want for your story or game.

When you take the time to think about the reasons and ramifications, you may find that you're getting into areas that might seem irrelevant to culture-building for *Traveller*. You're not; *everything* is relevant. You may end up not *using* some of the material you develop, but it still helps you develop the culture, and when you think about reasons and ram-

ifications of the "irrelevant" material, you may well find yourself coming back to "relevant" material – or even unearthing a contradiction.

Using the Culture

So, you've done the work, you have a ream of notes about it, and you want to use it. How are you going to do that?

That's going to depend on context, and on what information your notes contain. For example, if you have notes on the culture's architecture, they can be used to describe what your player-characters see when they leave their ship on the culture's homeworld. If your notes contain information on dress styles, speech patterns, or food requirements/taboos, those can be used as part of the "personality" of an NPC. Those notes can even provide information that would lead to identifying points where two cultures come in contact and … fail to accommodate each other peacefully. If they do, use them. It's an opportunity for bringing the culture to life, and providing some conflict in your story or game.

An Example

It's documented in some *Traveller* materials that on Dlan, those not of the Virasin religion wear black, as a symbol of mourning the fact that they are not Virasin. Why would this be the case? We decide that on Dlan, Virasa is the dominant religion, so dominant that it has strong influence on – if not outright control of – the government. They have thus managed to impose this as a 'sumptuary law'.

FACT: Virasa wields power over the Dlani government. QUESTION: Besides sumptuary laws directed at non-Virasin, what does this mean?

If a religion can force non-believers into following sumptuary laws, they can also likely require that the tenets and attitudes of Virasa can be taught in the schools, and enforced there (and in public in general). Since non-Virasin are 'in mourning', they are also expected not to display positive emotion – "Just what do you have to be so happy about?" While no objection to the display of sadness or associated emotions by non-Virasin occurs, there will be

a tendency among non-Virasin to minimize the display of all emotion, just to be on the safe side and not incur disapproval. We thus decide (and add to our fact list):

FACT: Non-Virasin are very subdued (at least publicly) about emotional display. QUESTION: What effect does this have on their social interactions?

We stick with the idea of not giving offense to Virasin, and decide that phrases that might suggest the speaker's emotional state are more-or-less taboo – a non-Virasin will not say "I am pleased to meet you"; rather, his response upon being introduced to someone (or having someone introduced to him) might be along the lines of "you are gracious to offer your time to me; my time is equally yours". Similarly, subjects which normally generate much emotional energy will be avoided or discussed only analytically – the non-Virasin won't gripe about a bad call by a referee, or otherwise indicate partisanship toward one team; instead, his part of the discussion will tend toward neutrality and analysis, discussing the technical merits (or lack thereof) of the game. In order to do that competently, the non-Virasin will have to know about the technical aspects of the subject. This applies not just to last night's broomstone match, but about virtually any topic. We extrapolate this into another fact:

FACT: Non-Virasin take extra pains to thoroughly 'know their stuff'. In the 'hard studies', they tend toward academic excellence, and are ranked high – except where they are subject to discriminatory evaluation practices. QUESTION: How does this affect their roles in society?

Answering this gets complicated, because it can be directly affected by the earlier fact that says that Virasa has serious influence over Dlani society. We have to decide how that fact interacts with this one. We decide that perhaps Virasa, in spite of their dominance, takes a more liberal view of the role of non-Virasin in society, and doesn't actually bar them from any of the trades or professions, nor from political office (except where secular political office also overlaps with ecclesiastical office – a non-Virasin, for

example, could not be Minister of Justice, who oversees both civil courts and ecclesiastical inquests). Nevertheless, most non-Virasin go into the learned professions or the technical trades, and eschew political leadership – they might become supervisors or technical managers, but they are underrepresented in the executive ranks.

I'm going to stop here; this is enough to get the flavor of what I'm trying to get you to do. But there's always more that you can do – including going back to one of the broader questions, and coming up with another fact to answer it. Repeated iterations of this process will build a bigger 'fact book', and help you paint a clearer picture of the culture – and of the basic character of a PC or NPC from that culture.

Now, take off the latex facial prostheses, pick up a pen, and start writing cultures.   ✺

Up Close and Personal

Sir Ferdinand Berry

profiled by Sam Swindell

Sir Ferdinand Berry 96C63B   Age 22   Cr 90,000
1 Term Noble (Rank 1/SOC B [Knight])
Skills: Large Blade-3, Ships Boat-2, Brawling-1, Engineering-1, Small Blade-1, Tactics-1, Computer-0, Laser Weapons-0, Hunting-0, Survival-0, Vacc-0, Sail Boat-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0
Possessions: Vacc Suit (Civilian Standard TL13), Reflec, Sword (TL13, +2), Cutlass (TL11, +1), Ceramic dagger (TL13, +1), Laser Pistol, Laser Rifle, Reptilian Armor (as Cloth)

Sir Ferdinand "Fur Berry" Berry is a tall, wiry, blonde-headed man, with an erect posture, the face of boy of 17, and the light grey eyes of a veteran who has lost one friend too many. His is a springy step, high-pitched voice, and easy manner remind one most of the local school's grav-ball star. Really it is only in a few social situations that the average person would notice anything other than the simple ebullience of youth. That is just how he would have it. He is always happy to be the junior in any group, and is the quintessential optimist. He is generous in minor matters, happy to pick up the drinks, the cab, or send small gifts. While his jokes are not the sharpest, they are good enough, and sometimes they bring a smile just from their enthusiasm. Indeed, they are a good analogue to his social presence generally. While not a great wit, conversationalist, or the life of the party, his unflappability make him a spark in any room. This all, however, is how things are "at play," as Fur Berry, would call it.

At work, the approach Fur Berry (or just "Fur") takes is deadly serious, and his gear tells a good part of the story. He has a civilian standard vacc suit and coveralls both with the livery of the family line where he worked as a supervisor of interface operations at Efate for four years, which he will wear aboard ship as appropriate. He is a solid engineer, and happy to fly any small craft, as needed. For security work aboard, he has a rig for both cutlass and Laser Pistol that he can wear with his vacc suit. He will wear his reflec over the Vacc suit, or under his dirt-side gear, if in a security posture. The ceramic dagger is never far from his skin, as he takes off the soft leather belly holster only to bathe.

This dirtside gear, however, involves a bed-roll of reptilian skins wrapped around a sword of archaic design but highly advanced construction. The roll in fact contains a cloak of this dark brown, dappled reptilian hide, which—along with the matched bone-faced greaves, bracers, and composite helmet—acts as Cloth. Though it weighs a full 3.5 kg, the ensemble is positively buoyant in water at up to 1.1g . He has a Marine cloth boarding vest he wears under this. The sword is lighter, sharper, and more durable

Up Close and Personal

than even the best blades of archaic manufacture; the sheath has some other survival items, including a mirror, some medical drugs, and a discrete fire maker. Even the wire wrap of the handle is a super-dense alloy of exceptional usefulness in both survival and destructive scenarios. The cloak armor ensemble and sword are left over from his days at Camp George, on the Elstrian Islands of Knorbes, with the boarding vest a recent substitution.

His first four years of adolescence were spent based at the Camp, and these were formative and brutal. While some tutors did support academics, the primary energies of students were directed towards learning the way of the blade and some military tactics. He in fact killed the one-and-three-quarter-tonne amphibious reptilian pouncer whose skin he wears as armor, and spent the last 18 months of his time on Knorbes, while nominally at the Camp, actually campaigning to keep the mountain roads of the main island of Elstria clear of bandits, and making raids against pirates up the shore, to protect the primitive shipping. These adventures were under the supervision of a cadre of two Hospitaller adepts from Camp George. The last raid they pulled was, however, cut short by a laser blast coming from the wooden pirate ship that took down the mast of their schooner in the dead of night. They fought their way clear of the burning wreck as its momentum brought it close enough to grapple with the pirate ship. The Hospitallers, two armed retainers, and the schooner's captain made a point of drawing the fire away from their younger charges while this went on, taking out the heavy laser and most of the pirates before going down. This allowed Fur and four surviving students to cut their way hurriedly across the docked pirate's deck, jump to the pier, and plunge off into the dark shallows.

The action was an ambush and rout instead of the raid they had planned: Instead of facing a dozen pirates with a handful of black powder weaponry,

they had run into over double that many, with a heavy laser backed up by several bolt action rifles with low-light optics. The ACRs wielded by the Hospitallers and their retainers had still eventually swept the decks, but not before a well-placed shot dropped Fur's best friend into the gap of water between the ships before he could dive in. The musket balls from the shore then began whizzing past them as the flames from the schooner backlit the boys. Something grabbed another youth, Henry, as he swam for the tangled vegetation; Ferdinard guessed it was a grendelfish, but he could not be sure. Of the six students on the raid, then, only four made the relative safety of the jungle, and they fled blindly into the night.

With only their swords, knives, and no food, they hid away from the pirate patrols and made their way slowly back toward their base, 120 km away as the jeterd flies. It took them seven weeks, though, and hundreds of kilometers of evasion, backtracking, and hunting. One more died of an infection from an unidentified bite, and a fourth from a wild shot from a pirate separated from his patrol. Fur's blow cleaved the pirate shoulder to hip, but his own spirit was shattered. The last four months of time on Knorbes—after the raid that was to have been their graduation exercise—was supposed to be spent on academic work. Instead the time was spent on their grueling escape, further evacuation by primitive means, medical treatment, recovery, and the investigations whirling around the two shattered nobles who limped into Camp George.

Fur's golden passage into manhood had been unhinged and replaced by a cacophony of fear, confusion, and resentment. He then disappointed his family by failing to get into college, any college. His productive 4 years with the family line bolstered the effect that his toughening on Knorbes had to keep him in relatively good graces with his family, though certainly not as the favorite son. He in retrospect resents their sending him to "grow up" on Knorbes, a tradition among a few noble families on

Up Close and Personal

Regina to keep their stock tough and aggressive, able to rule in governments filled with noble fops and playboys.

Fur is now looking to reconcile his mundane time on the family line with his early martial training, while leaving his family behind. He is also looking for his suffering to have some meaning. He is not really sure how this is going to happen, but is open to offers where force of arms will be part of his service to a crew. The Hospitallers have attempted to recruit him, so far unsuccessfully; he has been alienated from his faith these past years, and perhaps in part blames them for it. He has ended a romance of some years, and is looking to ship out.   ✪

In a Store Near You

Vibro-knife

by Jonathan Clark

This type of blade is very illegal in almost all jurisdictions where there is actually a functioning law level, and requires its owner to either be a Noble, or to have a permit signed by one (usually the character must be working for the Noble as a bodyguard or equivalent). These blades differ from 'normal' knives in two ways:

First, the blade is made from some sort of exotic material. There are three main options, in order of (significantly) increasing cost:

CrystalIron (first availability TL12): Iron treated at the atomic level to form a single crystalline complex. This metal is commonly used for starship hulls. The crystal matrix is unstable, so requires a stabilizing field, supplied by a power system set into the handle, and a realignment system, usually a stand into which the blade must be inserted every so often (after use, and every week or so).

Loss of power to the stabilizing system causes the blade to suddenly lose its edge and shape, at which point it cannot be repaired. Typical standby battery life is 90 days.

Diamond (first availability TL14). The actual diamond blade is usually set into a three-layer construction with tungsten side plates. Diamond is statically stable, so requires no external stabilizing field. Lightest of all the listed blade types.

Bonded Superdense (first availability TL16). Military starship hull material, usually set into a five-layer construction with crystalIron internal, and tungsten external, side plates. Requires two powered stabilizing fields, supplied by a power system set into the handle. Loss of the stabilizing field leads to loss of the blade by (relatively minor) explosion. Typical standby battery life is 60 days. Heavier than CrystalIron.

A simplistic measure of relative cutting ability is that bonded superdense cuts diamond, which cuts crystaliron, which cuts everything else.

The second change from a regular blade is that the power supply, in addition to any necessary stabilizing effect it may have, also (when the 'on' button is pressed), causes resonant vibrations in the blade itself. This allows it to cut through anything it could normally cut through without any real effort, just rest the blade against the surface, turn it on, and it will usually cut through using only its own weight.

Obviously the more you use the vibro facility, the more you use the battery, but these are typically equipped with warning lights, buzzers, and so on.

When the vibro is turned on, the blade typically hums, unless it is damped somehow. Holding the blade in a "chef's grip" (thumb and forefinger holding the actual blade, not the pommel) is a quick and easy way to silence it, although this may cause stress fractures in the thumb- and finger-bones, and impairs the blade's efficiency.   ✪

Explanator

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Program Author: Peter Kreft
downloadable from http://www.mediafire.com/file/97b5wlwhe9blxgn/
Explanator26.zip

Note: The program has been updated frequently; there may be a later version available. Check Peter's Google+ postings for more information.

When travelling from world to world, the first thing that most players (or their characters) find out about the world is its Universal World Profile (UWP). This is a string of numbers whose meaning can be looked up in several tables. Once all of the numbers have been looked up, you have a reasonable overview of the world.

The problem with looking up all that information is that doing so during a game session has a tendency to cause the players to "break out" of the character mindset—that is, instead of playing the role, they're spending time on the game and rules.

Explanator represents an option to avoid this breakout. You identify a world of interest, and Explanator generates a four-page document in Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF) with prose descriptions providing the same information you would get from the UWP, and some of the derived information generated by extended rules. The information is based on the T5 Second Survey data format, as posted at TravellerMap.com, including the Economic, Cultural, and Importance extensions.

While most of the information presented would be at home in an encyclopedia entry, it does generate—as the first paragraph of prose—a "First Impressions" description of what you might see/hear/feel/etc. as you exit your ship after landing. This paragraph is intended to be suitable for the referee to read out loud to the players.

The program is distributed as a zip file containing one folder with about 65 files in it. The executable and a handful of DLLs are for Windows; you also get the source code to compile or run under op-erating systems other than Windows (QB64.net, the QB64 website, offers QB64 for Windows XP-Vista-7-8, Linux ("most Linux distros"), and Mac OSX (Snow Leopard, Mountain Lion, and Yosemite). I used the Windows executable on a maxed-out Surface Pro 3 (8GB RAM, Core i7) running Windows 10 Professional.

Program Presentation

The program is written in QB64, a BASIC inter-preter/compiler/runtime system with cross-platform availability and generally source-compatible with Microsoft's QuickBASIC 4.5, QBASIC, and Microsoft BASIC Professional Development System 7.1. As such, its capability for presenting a "point-and-click" user interface (as is now common in most operating systems) is limited, and Mr Kreft has chosen not to jump through the necessary hoops to generate one—instead, you get a purely text-based interface, though not what is now called "console mode" in Windows. The user interface couldn't be simpler than it is; you are prompted for the name of the world you are interested in; once you provide that, the program searches its entire database for worlds whose names match the provided name. If more than one is found, it lists them, numbered, with their sector names, basic UWPs, and full names. You select which one you're interested in by number, it loads the data for the sector (and the world), and presents the world with its hex number, UWP, and trade codes (it automatically goes to this point if your entry matches a single world). You are then asked if you wish to "change randomized values". If you decline, the RTF will be generated immediately; if you accept, you are prompted for "base temperature" (in degrees Celsius), axial tilt, day length in hours, and gravity (in units of 1g). It then generates the RTF file, which only takes a second or two.

Program Strengths

In two words, simplicity and speed. For what it does, it does it quickly, and the results are useful, though in most cases they read like fill-in-the-blanks

Critics' Corner

boilerplate. The results are automatically saved (because it writes them out to a RTF file, rather than displaying them on the screen), so that you don't have to keep coming back and re-generating them, though you can do so if you wish to change one of the randomized values previously noted.

Program Weaknesses

The program is shipped with data files for much of Charted Space as documeted at TravellerMap. However, you can't add your own sectors to the data, and your ability to add additional worlds is rudimentary—you will have to hand-code the data into one of the sector files (one such, "0-TEST.DAT", is provided for this purpose to allow you to preserve the "official" sectors). The RTF is generated with some rudimentary formatting; however, in most cases, you will want to at the very least apply some alternate fonts to some sections. The RTF files are saved in the program directory, which means that on Windows 7 and later, you do not want to install the program into a subdirectory of Program Files, as it is a protected directory, with UAC requesting authorization to write, even if you're logged in with an Administrative account.

Overall Evaluation

Not Bad. It does what it purports to do, it does it reasonably well, and it neither hogs computer resources nor user time to do it. There is room for improvement, though, both in data handling and presentation, and one hopes that Mr Kreft will follow through with some of that improvement—a relatively easy one would be to go to HTML output instead of RTF, or at least allow that as an option. Overall, though, as a labor of love rather than a commercial product—and one that seems to be updated fairly frequently—there is little to complain about, and the price is certainly not going to be a dealbreaker. ✸

TravellerCON/USA 2017

TravellerCON/USA for 2017 will be held the weekend of 29 September to 1 October 2017—this is because the con site, the Lancaster Host Resort (same place as last year) is completely booked for our normal weekend. They have continued the renovations that were in-progress last year, and expect to be fully upgraded by the con date. The Kickstarter is active now (`http://kck.st/2odULl6`); pledge now! There are more rewards and different pledge combinations, to offer more flexibility for those who wish to support TravellerCON/USA but cannot attend.

This year, TravellerCON/USA originally expected to have two special guests: Greg Lee, of *Lee's Guides* and *Cirque* fame, and Marc Miller. Sadly, Greg will not be able to attend (see the obituary, right), but Marc has said that he plans to attend.

Come play with us!

(*Please see the Kickstarter page, above, and the con's website* [`http://travellercon-usa.com`] *for registration information and costs.*) ✸

Absent Friends

While we were working on preparing this issue of *Freelance Traveller* for you, we received some sad news: On April 16, 2017, Gregory P. Lee passed away suddenly. Mr Lee had been involved in Traveller for many years, authoring such well-received products as *Lee's Guide to Interstellar Adventure* (for Classic *Traveller*) and *Cirque* (for *Traveller⁵*). He also contributed to other *Traveller* publications and products (occasionally inserting himself as a character, Aramis P. Lee), including *Imperiallines* and the Galaxiad setting outlined in *Traveller⁵*. ✸

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 the channel operators (FreeTrav) 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!

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller Releases

March/April 2017

- **DSL Ironworks** has released *Quick Setting 1: Event and History Generator*.
- **Stellagama Publishing** has released *These Stars Are Ours!*, and *A Primer to These Stars Are Ours!*.
- **Zozer Games** has released *Solo*.
- **Michael Brown** has released *Nine-Tenths of the Law*, *The Affairs of Dragons*, *Marque and Reprisal*, *Elegy*, and *The Shadow of a Dream*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Hub Federation Navy* (2nd Edition), *The Slide*, and *Wendy's Guide to the Fleets of Cascadia Subsector*.
- **Samardan Press** has released *Cepheus Engine Vehicle Design System*.
- **Game Designers' Workshop** has released *Traveller Guidebook for Players*,*Traveller20 EPIC-1: Stoner Express*, *Traveller20 EPIC-2: Into the Glimmer Drift*, *Traveller20 EPIC-3:* Chimera, *Golden Age Starships for Traveller20 1– Fast Courier*, *Golden Age Starships for Traveller20 2– Sword Worlds Patrol Cruiser*, *Golden Age Starships for Traveller20 3– Archaic Small Craft, Shuttles, and Gigs*, *Golden Age Starships for Traveller20 4– Boats and Pinnaces*, *Golden Age Starships for Traveller20 6– Corsair*, and *Traveller20 EPIC-7: Merc Heaven*.
- **Universal Machine Publications** has released *Skills List (1e)*, *Skills List (2e)*, *Advantages and Disadvantages (2e)*, and *Skills List (2d6)*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Traveller Starter Set*, *The Fall of Tinath*, and *Reach Adventure 4: Last Flight of the Amuar*.
- **Fat Goblin Games** has released *Publisher's Choice– Science Fiction: Alien Rhino*, and *Publisher's Choice– Science Fiction: Alien Reptile*.
- **DM Philosophy** has released *VTT Battlemap—Forest Moon Planetary Defense*, *VTT Battlemap—Forest Moon Power Station*, *VTT Battlemap—Forest Moon Research Facility*, *VTT Battlemap—Forest Moon Refinery*, *VTT Battlemap—Forest Moon Orbital Map*, and *VTT Battlemap—Forest Moon Landing Pads*.
- **Assassin Games** has released *Ataraxia Sector Map*.
- **Moon Toad Publishing** has released *Ship Files: Atticus Class Freelancer*.   ⬤

Submission Guidelines

Content

Freelance Traveller supports *Traveller* in all of its incarnations, rulesets and settings, both. However, there are some limitations on the combination of ruleset and setting that we will enforce:

We refer to the rules defined in Classic *Traveller*, *Mega-Traveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller* (T4), *Traveller⁵*, and both editions of Mongoose Traveller as "Classic Compatible" or "2D6". This includes Sceaptune Games' *Hyperlite*, and Samardan Press' *Cepheus Engine*. For these rulesets, any setting, whether official, commercially-published-but-unofficial, or house setting, will be supported. A partial list of published settings supported under 2D6 *Traveller* includes the Third Imperium setting (including polities other than the Third Imperium proper), Reign of Diaspora, Clement Sector, Hyperlite, Twilight Sector, Orbital, 2300AD, Foreven Sector, Mindjammer, and I'm sure I've missed others.

Other rulesets, such as *GURPS Traveller*, *Traveller²⁰/SF20*, *FATE*, and so on are different enough from 2D6 *Traveller* to make conversion more difficult, and will only be supported for the Third Imperium setting (including polities other than the Third Imperium proper)—we feel that combining these rulesets with a non-Third Imperium setting makes the game something other than *Traveller*. The Third Imperium setting includes *all* eras and polities of the Third Imperium, however, so mixing (for example) the "Milieu Zero" Third Imperium with *FATE* rules would be fair game, as would be playing out some of the Zhodani core expeditions using *SF20*.

Send us any type of article—house rules and rulemixes; animals you've created for encounters; adventures (both long form and short); after-action writeups of conventions or your gaming night; equipment; vehicles; starships; other consumer goods; character profiles (NPC or PC); reviews of *Traveller* products, of products for other games that you feel can be "mined" for use in *Traveller*, of fiction (or non-game non-fiction) that "feels" like *Traveller*, or presents ideas that would be of interest to *Traveller* players or referees; new races or organizations or societies; artwork; or pretty much anything else you can think of. Articles on real-world science are of interest, when accompanied by rules for applying that science to *Traveller*. Tools and techniques you use for preparing for a session or a game are also welcome.

Published *Traveller* has generally been kept to a rating approximating the MPAA "PG-13" rating, or the ESRB "T" rating, and *Freelance Traveller* respects that, but does not draw a hard line. Mature themes may be addressed, but explicit or excessively violent/bloody material will not be accepted for publication.

Where To Send It, and What To Send

Except in very rare cases, all submissions must be through email, sent to either editor@freelancetraveller.com or submissions@freelancetraveller.com. All submissions should include the submission itself and a full name and valid contact information for the submitter. If you wish the material published under a "handle", please give the preferred handle and explain why publication under your real name is not acceptable—we prefer to publish under the real name, but realize that this can be a problem in some cases.

Rights

By submitting material, you grant *Freelance Traveller* a non-exclusive perpetual right to use the material in our PDF magazine and website (and mirror sites authorized by us), with minor editing for space and other suitability issues. While we generally will only use an article once, if we feel it appropriate, we'll reprint it.

The right applies to *Freelance Traveller* magazine itself, not to specific individuals associated with it. If the current management of *Freelance Traveller* finds it necessary to withdraw from association with the magazine or the *Traveller* community (not gonna happen as far as we can see), and others take over the operation of the magazine and website, the rights granted above stay with the magazine and permit the then-current operators to exercise those rights.

Formats

Text material can be submitted in any common textual or word-processing format, but we prefer (in no particular order) Microsoft Office, Open Office or one of its forks (we currently use Libre Office), RTF, minimally-formatted HTML, or plain text, all with full Unicode support. Our readership is principally English-speaking, however, so foreign languages and scripts should be used sparingly, and if not intended as purely decorative, an English transcription of pronunciation (and possibly a definition in English as well) should be included.

Graphics should be submitted in an appropriate format for the subject matter—in most cases, that will be GIF, JPEG, or PNG at 100dpi or higher. If it's principally line-drawing material, it may be more appropriate to submit it in a vector format; most common vector formats can be imported by our tool of choice, CorelDRAW! X4 or X6. Please try to leave some space around the edges for cropping, especially for covers. We publish in PDF in US Letter and ISO A4 sizes, and columns in the magazine are roughly 3.5 inches (actually a little more) wide.

Avoid submitting in XPS or PDF format; these are generally seen as "output-only" formats, and trying to extract material in usable form from these formats is problematical.