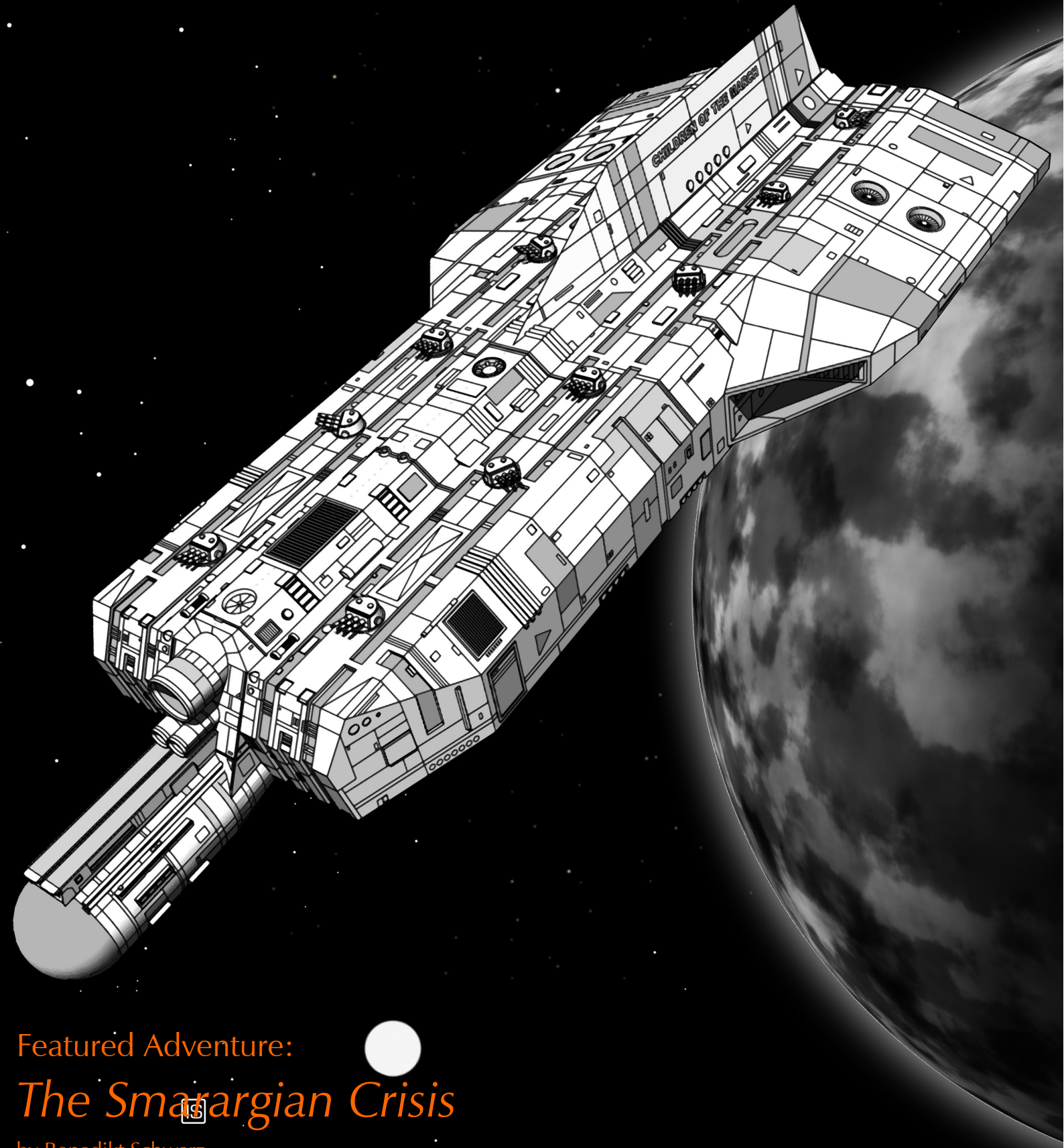




FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Adventure:

The Smarargian Crisis

by Benedikt Schwarz

Issue 082

July/August 2017

A Note About Production

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

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

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Contributors: Jeff Zeitlin, Omer G. Joel, Steve Hatherley, Timothy Collinson, Joshua Levy, Sam Swindell, Bill Hand, Benedikt Schwarz, Shelby Michlin, Christopher Kubasik

Artwork

Cover: *Ian Stead*.

From the Editor: *Jeff Zeitlin*

Critics' Corner: *Dagudashaag Publishing/Signal GK*, from the product; *Stellagama Publishing*, from the products; *Out of My Mind Games* and *Gypsy Knights Games*, from the *DriveThruRPG* website.

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From the Editor



It's rare that I end up with two articles in an issue that both deserve to be featured, but that's what happened this issue. I was hard-pressed to decide between this issue's feature, The Smarargian Crisis adventure, or the runner up, the Repair Tugs. The latter is most definitely an interesting idea for a ship, and one that hasn't, to the best of my knowledge, been attempted previously in any *Traveller*-related publication or forum. The adventure, on the other hand, was well-thought-out, extensive, and had the potential to affect a campaign in which it was included, beyond the immediate denouement of the adventure.

So, how to decide which one gets the "feature" billing? What it ultimately came down to was that the Repair

Tugs, while they had good statistical information for both *Classic Traveller* and *Cepheus Engine*, didn't supply it in any of the standard formats for either. The extra work in providing the standard formats, while not onerous, was enough to be a tie-breaker.

This actually pleases me quite a lot: It means that the overall quality of submissions is increasing, and to get submissions like these from new contributors suggests that perhaps I'm starting to reach new audiences—because this level of quality suggests a level of writing ability that doesn't come without experience elsewhere.

Give me dilemmas like this more often, please! It's the hard decisions, alongside the positive feedback, that keeps this fun! ☼

Clement Sector Core Setting (Second Edition)

reviewed by Omer G. Joel

Clement Sector Core Setting (Second Edition). John Watts.
Gypsy Knights Games <http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com>
272pp, print and PDF
US\$19.99

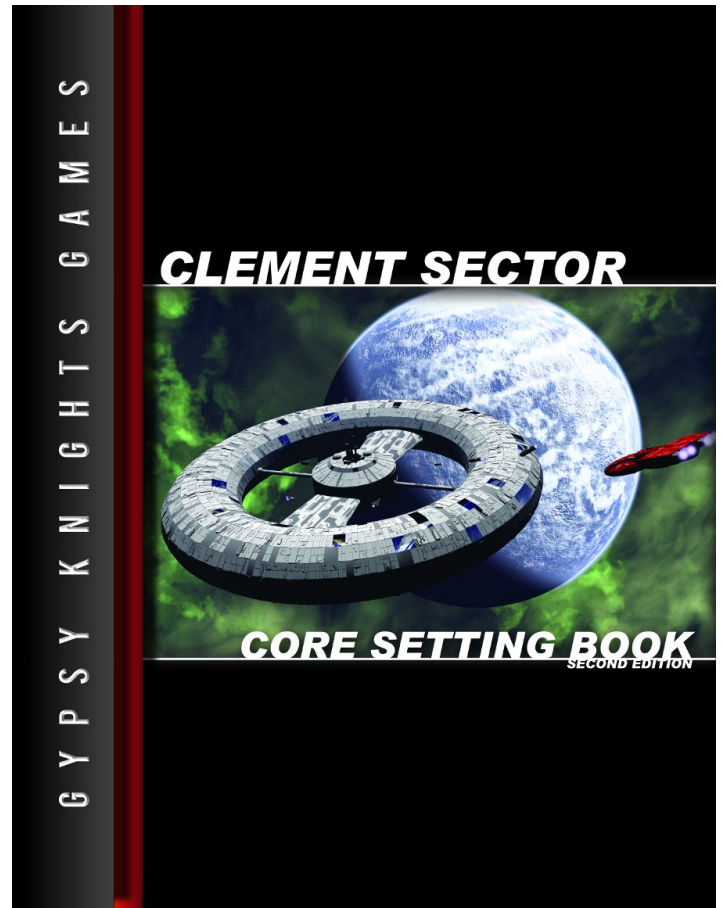
This review originally appeared on the author's blog in Nov. 2016.

Reading through the *Clement Sector* book brings back fond memories. The author, John Watts, wrote a book in the spirit and general format of my old *Outer Veil*—my first published product. His setting is different, of course, but the overall atmosphere and product design are similar. Great minds think alike!

The Clement Sector is an independent setting for the *Cepheus Engine*, and, by extension, for *Traveller*. It is set in a remote sector of the galaxy which was reachable from Earth only by means of a wormhole. The wormhole collapsed relatively recently, stranding the colonists on the far side of the galaxy. By its very nature, this sector is underdeveloped. Much of it is open frontier and a many of the subsectors are either unsettled (some are even unexplored) or very sparsely inhabited. I like that—there is room for exploration and colonization and many, many lawless frontier worlds—perfect for adventuring.

I must say that I love the setting's grand vision and overall atmosphere—a wide-open frontier inhabited by people cut off from Earth and forced to fend for themselves.

However, the main weakness of the *Clement Sector Core Book* also lies in its setting. It describes sixteen subsectors—one full sector—with full star-maps and UWPs. However, it barely describes the worlds themselves. Similar to Classic *Traveller's Supplement 3: The Spinward Marches*, it presents a few of them very briefly. The book does not describe most worlds and instead refers the reader to other products, costing \$19.99 each. This would probably have been acceptable in the 1970's or the early 1980's, but when today's gamer pays \$19.99 for a setting core



book, he often expects more than this. As a side note, this was one of the greatest weaknesses of my own *Outer Veil*, which had a similar format even though I (very partially) covered for it by adding five Patrons and a short adventure.

A short introduction and 20 pages of setting history precede this expansive but rather empty astrophysics chapter. While it is a good read, for the most part it is of relatively little relevance to the setting itself—the politics of the 21st century United States have little effect on events set in the 23rd century on the other side of the galaxy. Sure, some of the states created by this crisis, such as Cascadia, did affect the setting, but I feel that two or three paragraphs, instead of a dozen pages, would have been sufficient for the history preceding the sector's colonization.

The real value of this *Core Book*, however, lies in its massive character generation chapter. This is, in my opinion, one of the best treatments of 2d6 OGL or *Cepheus Engine* or *Mongoose Traveller* character generation. The chapter oozes color added to your character and ensures that each character will have a

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Critics' Corner

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detailed and unique background. It greatly expands on the regular character generation rules. It includes detailed tables to generate your character's childhood and youth; a mind-boggling number of careers with d66 event tables and 2d6 mishap tables; and pre-enlistment options, again with their own event tables. There are homeworld skills tailored to the various Clement Sector colonies, but the *Core Book* does not describe their vast majority. However, it would be easy to replace those with homeworld skills for the planets of your own campaign. There are no known alien species in the setting (though there is some evidence of their existence), but humanity did "uplift" a number of animals, from dolphins to bears, and the book provides detailed rules for generating and playing members of these species (You can play a sentient, upright grizzly!) as well as genetically-modified humans. I must emphasize again: this chapter is amazing. You will also find it extremely easy to adapt it to any colonial sci-fi setting. The character generation chapter alone—which takes a whopping 45% of the book(!)—is well worth the \$19.99 price of this product.

A few additional rules and a short discussion of technology in this setting follow the wonderful character generation section. There are quite good experience and character advancement rules and some alterations to the *Cepheus Engine* skill list. The technology section is relatively unremarkable except for the Zimm Drive—this setting's Jump-2 Drive equivalent—and the Mindcomp. The former is very similar to a jump engine, and could jump any distance up to two parsecs, with reduced transit time for closer destinations (e.g. 3.5 days to jump one parsec away), unlike the default *Cepheus/Traveller* J-Drive. The latter is a cybernetically-implanted computer, presented in a relatively interesting manner with its own unique rules and software. Oh, and there is a Handcomp which looks like a combination of the Pip Boy from *Fallout* and the Omnitool from *Mass Effect!*

The *Clement Sector Core Book* includes five setting-specific starships: a 300-ton Merchant, a 400-ton Yacht, a 300-ton Scout, a 800-ton Freighter, and a 1,200-ton Destroyer. The chapter does not provide TLs but all designs are seemingly TL11 and generally useable with whatever *Traveller* setting you prefer. All include excellent-quality deck plans and good renders. The merchant has an interesting design with a "saucer" lower deck and an engine nacelle/bridge section above and behind it (slightly reminiscent of the USS *Enterprise* of *Star Trek* fame); its lower deck does utilize its round shape for a less-orthodox radial layout. The Yacht is a traditional wedge and carries a 50-ton Cutter. The Scout is a round "flying saucer", but for some reason, its deckplans, for the most part, fail to utilize its oval shape and instead opt for a rectangular layout surrounded by fuel. The freighter is excellent and interesting—an unstreamlined dispersed structure carrying six detachable cargo pods—a bit similar to the common freighters of *Babylon 5* and *Mass Effect*. The destroyer is also top notch—a classical *Babylon 5* or *Halo* elongated, unstreamlined design; it is also satisfyingly armed and armored with 8 points of armor, Meson bays, and Fusion bays - just as expected from a *Traveller* warship. The ship chapter concludes with a handy starship identification and size comparison diagram.

There are also handy, but mostly run-of-the-mill, starship operation rules, the highlight of which are wonderful wilderness fuelling mishap tables (applicable to almost any *Traveller* universe).

There is a short, 27-page setting information section at the end of the book—vastly dwarfed by the subsector charts and character generation rules. It presents seven corporations and four other organizations and only(!) four pages of setting politics. The corporate descriptions are mostly corporate history and contain a few good plot hooks. There is a *Traveller's Aid Society* equivalent (the Captain's Guild). The highlight of this chapter is a group called

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Critics' Corner

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(surprise!) the Gypsy Knights who are “a group formed to travel across the colonized worlds helping those who are in need”. There is also a religion/cult/terrorist organization called Solar Purity who are opposed to human presence on the Clement Sector side of the Conduit, or (in the case of moderates), preserve nature as far as possible. It reminds me of the “Reds” in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Mars Trilogy*; you can use them both as terroristic villains and as patrons hiring the PCs to protect this or that planet from human environmental destruction.


Politically, the Clement Sector is—for the most part—a collection of independent worlds. The only multi-world polity is the six-world Hub Federation. Unfortunately (from a Referee’s standpoint), the Federation has an insular policy, missing the adventure opportunities presented by expansionism. The far more interesting (one-world) polity is Cascadia of the eponymous Cascadia Subsector, which has a strong interventionist and expansionist policy fuelled by a faith in “Manifest Destiny”; I would have preferred, though, that it would have had several colonies or at least vassal/client worlds for more interesting politics. There are also two new religions presented in this book—in addition to all the Terran faiths which came with humans to the Clement Sector; both present opportunities for conflict, especial-

ly the second one, Caxtonism, which is, in a nutshell, an expansionist proselyting cult.

There is a brief discussion of aliens in the Clement Sector. There are no known live aliens but a few alien artifacts have been found, hinting to alien life present somewhere in the universe. The big plot here is the Alien Research Network (ARN) a crackpot (or so people in the setting believe) group following various alien-related conspiracy theories. Still, the opportunities for serious xenoarchaeology are very limited in the canonical Clement Sector.

The book ends with a four-page discussion of possible campaign ideas. Most are typical *Traveller* ones—active military service, mercenaries, exploration, crime, trading and so on—but there are also plot hooks about working as a Gypsy Knight or trying to find the way back home despite the Conduit’s collapse.

Visually, the book is very readable and well laid-out. All art (and there is plenty of it) is CGI, similar to *Outer Veil*. This is understandable, as color CGI is far more affordable than color hand-drawing, allowing the author to put more art into his book. The art is always relevant to the topic at hand and the book is very readable if a little ‘heavy’ on older tablets. All artwork and maps are excellently high-res.

The bottom line: An excellent character-generation book paired with a bare-bones frontier setting. 

In a Store Near You

The Promenade

The Jewel of the Jewel

by Bill Hand

Glisten is known as the “Jewel of the Marches” and this exclusive restaurant located above the shopping complex in Banfi Starport is surely its brightest facet.

Most of the clientele are human, except for the occasional Aslan businesswoman. The Duchess Muktheswara has a table reserved at all times and makes frequent use of it.

The dress code is formal and exotic, ranging from suits and gowns of both the simplest and the most elaborate designs, and reproducing and echoing styles from archaic to current, all the way to droid-applied skin-paint outfits scarcely less impressive for their precision and elegance.

Clientele arrive via wall-tram or chauffeured electric car and give their names to a *maître d’*, then are admitted to an elevator with a single glowing jewel in lieu of floor buttons. Pressing it will close the door, activate a simple gravity compensator, and

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In a Store Near You

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hurl the car several dozen floors to the outer shell of the starport. The diners are greeted by name and led past digital artwork (created and wiped in real-time) and shown directly to their table.

The ceiling is transparent steel with a non-reflective coating which enhances the illusion that there is nothing overhead but the stars themselves. Lighting is subdued, and tables are spaced comfortably with noise dampeners to ensure that even enthusiastic conversation nearby is not disturbing or intelligible.

The tabletops are datapads, where the sommelier appears to discuss vintages and planets of origin and to take beverage orders. A chef replaces the sommelier to discuss the huge variety of appetizers, and to offer entree specialties and discuss preparation details. Preferences and allergy data are tagged and saved for automatic use on any subsequent visit. Touching the edge of the table is answered immediately by staff who dispatch servers. A hovering droid brings warm rolls and refills drinks whenever diners' attention is elsewhere.

The menu has meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables from throughout the Imperium and beyond, and countless styles of preparation are available. Some of the vegetables are grown in the hydroponic farms in the station but everything else is imported fresh (many of the animals are brought in cryogenic sleep and revived shortly before meal preparation).

Of course, a rich selection of desserts is available. The house specialty is Jellied Smoke, which is prepared at the table: a tray of delicate sculptures is brought out, each a different translucent color. A flame is touched to each and they burst into what appear to be bite-sized clouds of colored smoke, although the "smoke" doesn't drift away. Closer in-

spection reveals each to be a mass of extremely fine strands. The moment one is placed inside the mouth, it melts away almost instantly, leaving behind a powerful but transient burst of flavor; exotic fruits expertly combined into unique and wonderful tastes and aftertastes. Each color is a different blend. Some other restaurants have offered "Glisten Jellied Smoke" which turns out to be something like fruit-flavored cotton candy, but the original (only available here) is unmatched and unforgettable.

The restrooms are an experience in themselves. No sinks or stalls are visible, only a single exposed toilet. When one approaches it, the wall behind opens and the toilet/bidet retracts into a small chamber and another extends out for the next user. Once inside, the wall slides shut providing privacy, then all sides light up with holographic images. One could suddenly be sitting on a crowded sidewalk, or among of pride of lions, or underwater surrounded by sharks. The scenes are initially chosen at random but can be selected by touching the wall. Afterward, the "sink" turns out to be a section of wall that turns into a waterfall when one's hand nears it, and withdrawing causes vortices of hot, dry air to converge on the wet appendages from several directions.

The restaurant has a club attached called "J-Squared". Talent from throughout the sector appears here, and the drinks range from the traditional to exotic jellied suspensions which can be puzzling to consume (especially after the first). Booths can be raised into fitted dimples in the roof, isolating the party upon request and providing an unparalleled view of the Spinward Marches.

While reservations are mandatory, the premium prices ensure that tables are normally available with a single day's notice. If you find yourself near Glisten and can afford it, the Jewel of the Jewel is an experience not to be missed. ❁

The Derelict

by Steve Hatherley

Players' Information

Time during Jump is usually fairly routine. The process is so well understood that only rarely do malfunctions occur. Usually these are fatal—mis-jumping often places the ship in deep space and without fuel while jumping close to a planet ends in a fiery death. Sometimes there are other problems...

The players are relaxing while their ship is making the necessary transition through Jump-Space to reach its destination. Everything has gone smoothly, with only a couple of minor problems. Abruptly the computer begins to blink a warning, there seems to be a gravitational disturbance which could endanger the ship. Before the crew have a chance to react, the computer pulls the ship out of Jump (and danger) and into normal space. There is a large explosion and bits of the jump drive splatter across the walls of the drive room. The ship is stranded...

The source of the gravitational anomaly rapidly becomes apparent. There is a huge alien derelict starcraft present, around which are orbiting the re-

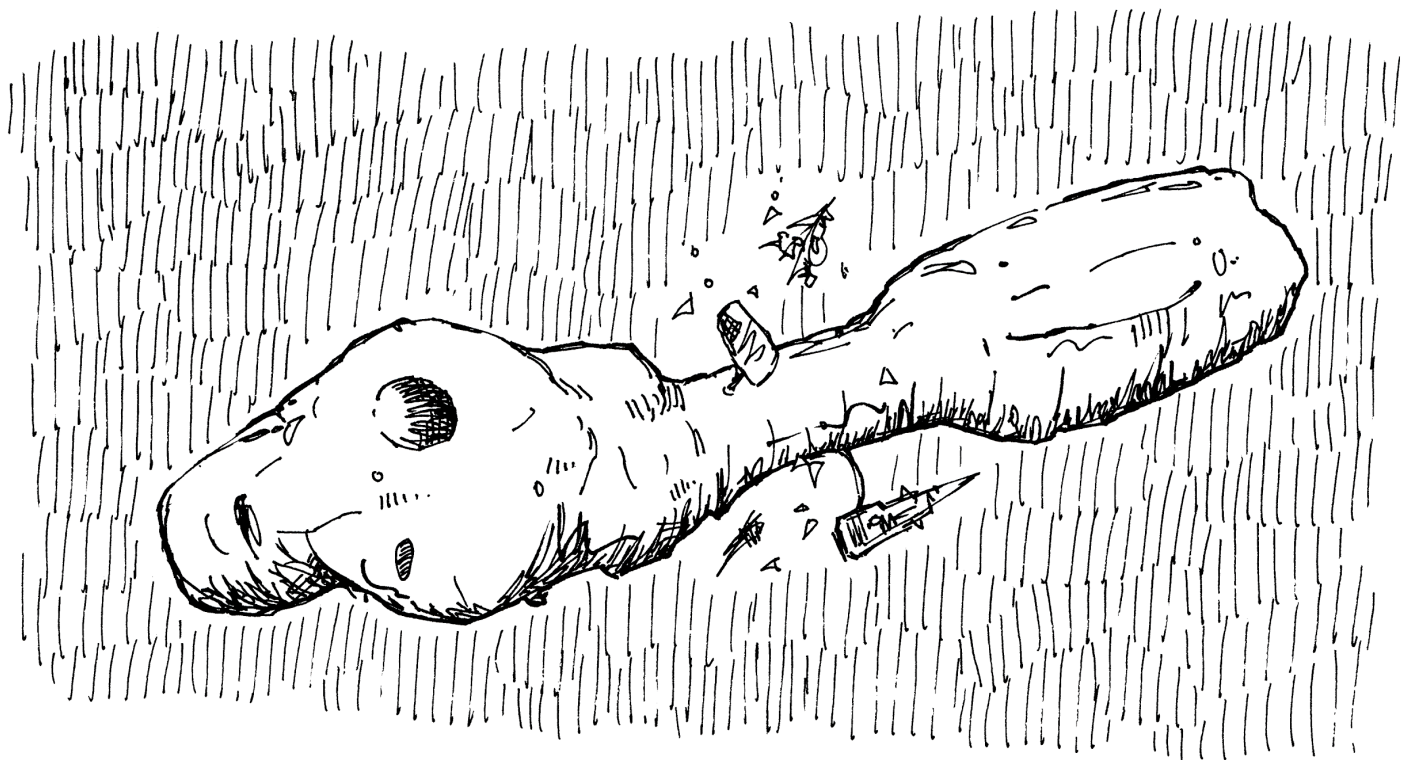
mains of other, more familiar, starships. Perhaps there are enough components amongst the wreckage to repair the fatally injured jump drive.

Referee's Information

The derelict is an alien starship of a type never encountered before. Where it is from the players can only speculate. Its purpose and destination are equally unknown. The design is distinctly organic in texture, and is based overall upon the aliens themselves. Chambers within the ship are filled with a thick, watery liquid and represent parts and organs of the aliens' bodies.

The ship has been dead for many centuries and the power plant is inactive, but might be recovered. There is no computer as such, but certain members of the crew seem to be genetically grafted into the structure of the ship. The craft is closer to an animal than a starship.

Although the craft is inactive and the crew dead it is far from lifeless. A parasitic organism known as the Vang inhabits the ship. The Vang is very dangerous, and remarkably intelligent. It can take over the nervous system of a host and control all bodily functions while the host watches on helplessly. It adapts



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Active Measures

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and changes its own structure with alarming rapidity to account for new eventualities.

During the ages that the derelict has drifted it has gathered a number of ships about it. All have attempted to fathom the derelict, but all succumbed to the Vang. There is wreckage of five ships in orbit, two of which are still intact and are connected to the main ship by a sinewy cord. This is part of the Vang.

Of these two ships only one has an active powerplant. The Vang is not sentient and only by trial and error has managed to preserve this power source. It could sense the power in the others, but destroyed them while trying to get to it. The secret of jump drive is completely beyond the Vang. However, if a small part of it is carried to a planet by the players then it will spread.

The players have several important tasks. First they have to identify the components in their drive that require replacement. Then they have to search and cannibalize the other ships for spare parts. Finally they have to find enough fuel to make a jump to the nearest system. Everything they require is present, but with the Vang complicating matters it may take a bit of finding.

The players need not explore the derelict at all, indeed, it is safer if they do not attempt to approach it. There are enough warnings around for them to heed, in particular one ship—the *Virgin's Promise*—holds several important clues.

The *Virgin's Promise* was caught by the derelict only a week before the players' ship. It is the ship that has the active powerplant, although the jump drive is in even worse shape. The computer is still active, and can be communicated with by radio without entering the ship. Aided by computer skill the players will be able to find the captain's log and discover the threat of the Vang. They will also discover that there might be a survivor.


In the final battle against the alien parasite, one of the crew sealed himself in the bridge of the *Virgin's Promise*. As the Vang broke through he found himself without weapon and, in desperation, grabbed a fire extinguisher. The resultant emptying of the extinguisher over the Vang caused it to die immediately—but unfortunately the crewman was trapped.

The computer registers that one crewmember is in the bridge, but cannot tell whether he is still alive. If he is, then he cannot last long. It also knows that the *Virgin's Promise* is infested with an alien lifeform, one that is tapping the power supply.

If the players can make it to the bridge they can destroy the Vang with enough fire extinguishers. It does not seem to be able to resist to the chemical fire retardant and dies quickly, amputating itself to prevent further infection. Destroying it gives them a fascinating ship to explore and removes a menace to the spacelanes.

Library Data

Jump Drive: This is the means by which ships are propelled to the stars. By jumping into hyperspace starships can cross gulfs of many light years in little over a week. The method does have its problems, and is particularly susceptible to gravitational fields, such as planetary bodies. More on the *Traveler* wiki. (<http://wiki.travellerrpg.com>)

A note on the Vang: The Vang is taken directly from Christopher Rowley's *Starhammer*, *The Vang: The Military Form*, and *The Vang: The Battlemaster*. It is described in more detail in the novels, which are rich with other science fiction inventions. In the book, the Vang was combatted by razing the entire surface of the infected world from orbit. Strangely enough, one of the interdicted worlds in a neighbouring sector is rumoured to have been totally nuked from orbit by the Imperial Navy... 

The Adventures of Gerry Fynne

by Sam Swindell

Chapter 3: Meeting the *Maid*

He awoke in the dark, unaware of having dimmed the lights. Then he realized he was in a starship, and this was probably automatic. He remembered locking his door. He did not remember where the door was, though he had a vague idea it was behind him. He almost shook himself: "Lights on!"

The rising lights revealed his four Bigsofts standing and secured in a locker, one door of which was left ajar. He was hungry, and realized that this was probably what had awoken him. 0430. He *had* missed lunch and dinner in his escape; well, he had chewed a couple of snack bars on the shuttle, but that would have been a meager breakfast. He rummaged the Chandlers bags until he came upon the Stayfresh sandwiches, and pulled two out. He ate the first one so fast he found himself breathing hard, and went to the fresher to get some water. He went to the desktop console, "Ship itinerary, progress to jump. Show on screen."

They had only a few hours until they jumped, at 0853 Imperial. Having eaten, he put away his things, and put the vacc suit manual in the reader slot of the monitor, and went through the basic functions. It said that he should spend some hours in it in a shirt-sleeves environment before venturing forth in vacuum. Well, he had no idea when he would have an opportunity to get into vacuum, but he would work on the general familiarity once they had boosted. He sliced open his second sandwich's robust, unmarked wrapper, and began to nibble: Pesto Ham and Swiss. Lovely girl! She had squeezed sandwiches for half an hour to find ten of these in a bin of thousands while he watched in rapt attention. Then he noticed the little heart on the wrapper, in the same marker as the number. Crazy bitch!

He watched the viewport for the jump when the clock said it was approaching. The jump klaxon was more subdued than on the Trivids, and there was no feeling of motion, except in his head. The light from

the viewport was all wrong, then a piped-in image of a starscape covered the swirling madness of jumpspace. He had felt everything sort of flicker, and then he was fine, visually, mentally, but feeling a bit nauseous. He drank a bit of water and lay on his bunk. The nausea was gone, and it felt safe to explore the ship.

He was aware of being a middle passenger suddenly. He was allowed into the middle lounge, the corridor up to it, and that was it. The middle lounge was not bad, he noticed. They were always depicted on the Tri-vids as seedy and grim. He remembered the small, round, clouded viewport that Flynn had looked out the last time he saw his home while shipping out in *Scout Flynn*. The reality on the liner was a striking contrast: the whole port and starboard walls were taken up with video.

He noticed that there was only one other passenger in the lounge, a man of maybe 30 standard years, who was taking his food out of the warmer, and noted that the video screens were playing a travel video on one side, and canned news on the other. Both were filled with young women, scantily clad. He went to his food locker, and pulled out a cold pack without really looking at it, picked up a fork, and moved over to flop in front of the news. The other man had set himself in the corner, farthest both from the entrance and Gerry, and had something on the table other than his food. Without looking, Gerry could not tell whether it was a hand comp, a player, or something else. He did not look, but ate his cold dairy and vegetable breakfast, pretending he was unaware of the man.

The story ended, and new news announcer came on, "Thanks, Terry. On a more somber note, there was an explosion on a mining station on..." Gerry noticed that the announcer was a handsome, respectable looking man, just like the other man: married with children, early thirties, he thought before turning around to see the woman with her toddler daughter who had entered noiselessly. He shifted in his chair to look at the other screen. Sure enough there was now a family in the travel video.

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Raconteurs' Rest

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An Imperial tech ship tracked everybody aboard, and this was certainly a commercial vessel; he could expect busty babes on every available screen, trying to soften him up towards buying a vacation, a Tri-vid, another breakfast, though not too obtrusively when other women were around. The ad mix was tailored to the demographics of the lounge at that moment, and back in his stateroom it would be tailored to a male, mid-adolescent.

"Mommy, is that what daddy looks like?" The question cut Gerry, even though he knew he was invisible here. Here, in the lounge, he was cloaked in the social anonymity of long distance travel.

"Here Kitty: you remember," the young mother said, as Gerry took a casual glance at the holobase she put on the table. It was a naval officer, handsome in his dress blacks, with an easy smile. Gerry had been hoping it wasn't a Scout. Except in a major war, the navy was usually pretty safe. The Scouts died all the time, usually alone, and without immediate explanation. He had read about it in a book, *Behind Scout Flynn*, that he assumed was not Imperially subsidized. It had made him bitter about his sister's death, that they had sent her into such danger with no warning of the odds.

Gerry scooped up the last of his breakfast, and went to get up. He wasn't sure what role to play here, and he really did not feel comfortable with young children. He made a trip to get a drink, and left the lounge. He returned to his cabin, did some research on the route the liner would take, and his route after that. He watched three of the Tri-vids he had bought. He grabbed another sandwich, and went to sleep.

For the rest of the jump, he spent most of his time in his cabin, and talked to no one. He remembered to pray. He slipped a small "tip" to the purser to get him in touch with someone on the crew to work with him on the vacc suit. Clyde was a crew member from the 'black gang', the engineering staff,

and he looked young, maybe early twenties. He was soft around the middle, and wore his hair too long to keep out of his eyes and too short to tie back.

Clyde offered him some comments on the donning and fitting. "You gotta get the cuffs tight so's the gloves are tight. Everythin' that is going to keep you alive you'll have to touch with those gloves."

Clyde was a moron, but Gerry knew what he was trying to say. He could see it: hatches, tools, life-lines, ladders, and even the controls to the life support on the suit all would need to be manipulated with the suit's gloves. He was used to being able to take off a glove to do anything that really needed dexterity. While he was able to get the basics of optimizing the fit, he still felt like he was trying to sew in oven mitts. Clyde somewhat imperiously insisted that Gerry spend three hours a day in the suit. Gerry asked about working in vacuum and zero gravity. "Not for a while, Mr. Fynne! You get where you can write your name where's I can read it in pencil with the whole mess on, then we'll talk." The first meeting passed mostly like this, with Clyde giving tips while explaining to his student with an overabundance of drama how difficult the future tasks were. Gerry tried to be patient, and they worked out a schedule. Clyde would message his student again for the next session. Gerry slipped Clyde a tenner, to his parting admonition: "Work like yer' hide depended on, groundhog, and I'll see ya."

Gerry thought about writing a message to his aunt. It would have to be sent much later, so as to not give her any evidence to use to have him stopped. The express boat network could well outrun a liner like the *Maid*, let alone the free traders that he would have to take once he reached the Ohasset Main at the Baakh system. He mused over his route: he was on the liner from Griik Maeii, which he had left behind to Nundis, a jump of 3 parsecs. She was owned by a Nundis company, to keep a reasonably cheap supply of foodstuffs flowing for Nundis' 70 some billion souls. They were scheduled to dock at the Nundis Highport, he would continue

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aboard for another 3 parsec jump to the parched little world of Lirshe, and then another such jump to Baakh. The Nundis liners, though built at Baakh, were subsidized by Nundis to keep markets for their manufactured goods, and also to provide a reliable return conduit for food. At Baakh, the liner would turn back, bringing foodstuffs and passengers back from this critical trading hub. He wished he could stay with the line.

Baakh was not up to Imperial tech, but it was much more advanced than Nundis, and Gerry was looking forward to seeing some of the local technology. Baakh was also his entrance into the Ohasset Main, a chain of some 19 worlds all lying on a 1 parsec route, accessible by the cheaper, lower tech free traders. These were smaller merchants who generally stuck less to schedules than following the best trading opportunities, and had a reputation in the Tri-vids of being run by free spirits with little respect for propriety, morals, or any law but the invisible hand of the market.

He mused about what travel on a free trader would be like. A bit more dangerous, he imagined, because they often sought trade at the smaller starports which were not as patrolled; thus they were far more likely to be attacked by pirates. He had read the story of one free trader who had his cargo taken by a pirate. The captain had two good turrets, to the pirates' eight. The captain had agreed to let his whole cargo be taken without a shot if his vessel, crew and passengers could continue; he would otherwise have lost the fight, but caused more damage than could be repaired for what his cargo was worth. It did not always go like that, though. Sometimes pirates would take an unarmed ship, with all aboard disappearing. Some would be taken as slaves, and frozen. A few might be taken as slaves for the pirates themselves. The Imperial penalty for piracy was death, which was the same as for slavery. Once a pirate then, becoming a slaver was not much of a jump. Low berths were poorly regulated,

though, and it was rumored that many of those in low berths for a longer transit would be diverted into a slave market in some corner of space. There was, however, a service offered by the Travellers' Aid Society, where X-boat messages would be sent to track a low passenger. This service was, however, an additional tenth the price of the low passage itself, so many poor enough to trust themselves to the low berths could not afford the extra 100 cruds.

Gerry thought further of the fates of those sold into slavery. He knew that children and young women were a large portion of this slave trade, according to the Scout Service news feeds. That being said, for the children to be diverted without legal outcry, the parents would have to disappear too. He thought of the classic Tri-Vid *Scout Flynn*. Flynn had followed news of pirates to their base, where he freed 14 beautiful young women from the clutches of a pirate band who had just woken them from cold sleep to use for their own pleasure. He thought of the one petite redhead wearing the remnants of a green negligee, and then of Sandy. He suddenly needed to leave his cabin. He said a quick prayer on his way out, also realizing it had been a few days since he had truly prayed.

He went and got a breakfast. It was late so he had a hot breakfast of eggs and sausages, and watched the news feeds for hours. All of this was days old, at least, and some coming from other systems would be weeks and even months old. There was a story about a pirate ship destroyed by a naval patrol, and he thought about who the pirates may have had in their low berths. Would the navy check the hulk? It was a silly question, he thought. They would comb the wreck for anything of use in finding the next bunch, including the low berths. The search would likely take days, and if the ship was in a naval battle, a low berth was probably the safest place to be.

He went to a terminal to message Clyde. Clyde said he was going on break in a little over 15 minutes. Gerry realized that although bored and a bit without direction, he hadn't worked a bit on

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practice with the suit. He types back, "Haven't practiced, but I'll buy you a sandwich." He really did not enjoy Clyde's company, but felt a little trapped; he could plan very well when he put his mind to it, but when he acted on impulse things often went sideways fast. He did not want to embarrass himself further backpedalling on the meeting.

Clyde bounded up shortly and Gerry offered, "I've got a store of Stayfresh sandwiches, we can open two, and you can have your pick."

"Alright, groundhog. Whatever your pleasure. I'll take what you feed me." Gerry had no trouble believing this, but he grabbed the sandwiches from his cabin and went back to the lounge. Gerry wanted to ask Clyde about himself, but hesitated; how would he answer Clyde's questions? He knew it was better to start with someone like Clyde, as sympathetic and nonthreatening as possible.

He realized that he had thought of the story until now, in its' verbal form, but it was the same as his passage indicated; as the somewhat boring conversation wound around to it though he simply said, "My father left when I was young, and he has sent for me to work his mining claim on Khii-43 in the New Konigsberg system."

Clyde, for the first time looked impressed, "You know how dangerous mining is out in the black?"

"Well, I've seen the numbers. Sure I know." Gerry sounded like he was trying to reassure himself.

"Well, think about it!" Clyde almost squeaked.

"I've done a lot of thinking, and I'm going, Clyde. I have to." Gerry paused awkwardly, as he wanted to steer the conversation away from his father, and away from the risks of giving away his real status or too much of his fear. "Show me about powered EVA."

Clyde pulled a holocrystal out of his belt case, and put it into a viewer. It was manufacturer's video of EVA training, with some commentary. It showed beginners fumbling in zero gravity making some obvious mistakes, a few of which had serious conse-

quences. Commentary was voiced over, and in a few places the action was frozen to highlight certain important aspects of form with graphics. The two boys watched for half an hour and Clyde got up. "Got to get back to the black crew, groundhog. Thanks for the sandwich." There was none of the bravado in his manner this time, and he waved his hand at the player, indicating Gerry could keep the crystal, "I'll get that next time."

Gerry watched the rest of the film, another hour and a half, and felt somewhat stiff getting up. He went back to his cabin, but took a detour back towards the engineering section. The corridor was blocked at the aft end by a hatch he didn't have clearance to. He had known he couldn't go farther, but just went, just to see. To see what exactly, he didn't know.

When he got back to his cabin, he pulled his manual up on the player and put on his suit. There was actually a place where he could plug the suit's umbilicals into the cabin life support. He did this so he would be able to close the suit, and he spent a couple of hours browsing through the manual on his reader. He rose and did the drills Clyde had given him for almost another hour. He looked up some information on mining and in-system traffic on New Konigsberg. It felt a bit like doing the research for a school report or a Guides cultural presentation, rather than preparation for going alone out to some small satellite of a barren rockball world in a backward system. Well, not entirely alone.

He sat there, listening to his breath on the inside of the facemask as he thought, *no – not alone*. Eve would be there. He hadn't thought of her for a few days. She seemed more unreal than the rest of it. The claim on Khii-43 did not feel real, but he was not sure he even imagined Eve to be real.

As the days passed, Clyde met him every couple of days to work with the suit, and much more often just to talk or share a sandwich. The purser was seldom seen in the passenger areas of them ship, but they both noticed when she was. There was another passenger, a lithe, athletic, dark-skinned girl of pos-

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sibly 16 or 17 who did a form of yoga-like dance in the lounge, it being the largest area open to the passengers. Clyde and Gerry managed to notice when she set up, and by unspoken agreement met then for their lunch, for the last few days in jump.

Neither actually spoke to her, as they had no reason to, and they actually tried to be fairly discrete with their gawking. She had set up six small pylons that marked the corners of her elongated hexagonal dancing area, which made a tone when something approached the boundaries, about 10 cm from the inside, and about a meter on the outside. These pylons also created a lattice of visible light lasers between them, establishing a visible boundary. A slight mist was emitted from each, just enough to allow the laser web to be seen as it spread from the pylons and perceived where it was essentially invisible between them.

The girl danced, if you could call it a dance, with a dark scarf across her eyes. The tempo was slow, almost painfully slow to watch, and the moves all seemed to be an exaggeration of something. Her body remained low, and she used almost all the space in her long, narrow arena, with legs sweeping wide. Gerry thought of a frog doing martial arts, and then wondered if this was some sort of martial art. She leapt, doing a midair roll and twist, and landing catlike in a low, lopsided crouch. The smooth twist rotating herself from facing away on one heel, to facing towards them on the other seemed painfully slow. The young mother with her daughter gave up, apparently, on trying to keep her quiet, and ushered her out of the lounge. Clyde seemed to realize that the three youths had the lounge to themselves, taking a quick glance over his shoulder and they stepped out, and dipped quickly into his belt pack. He held a small, covert camera that fit in the hollow between a couple of fingers, and took a few pictures of the girl, then gave Gerry a quick wink as her dropped the tiny device back in his belt pack.

As Clyde checked his watch and hurried to get back to his shift Gerry followed him out. He was feeling much more comfortable with Clyde, but the sneaking pictures of the beautiful, young dancer made Gerry feel a bit guilty. Without fully forming the thought, the fragment of a quotation played in his mind, "...that good men do nothing." Him, a good man? As he arrived inside his cabin, Gerry thought he'd settle for man, but he thought of the idea of do unto others. He felt a tightness in his throat and thought he should read some scripture.

After really not thinking about God for days, Gerry sat on his bunk and read his bible for hours. He needed to obey his father; he needed to be kind to auntie; needed to be respectful of Clyde and the dancing girl both; did not want to displease Clyde; did not want to think about the dancer that way; did feel about the dancer that way, though he'd never even spoken to her or heard her voice. He prayed, but his mind wandered. He read from Maccabees until his eyes got heavy, and he napped. He woke with the remnants of a dream that involving Sandy, Auntie with a Tri-vid camera, and a Stayfresh sandwich with a nonelectric detonation system.

He put on his suit, and unpacked his clothes from a squatting position. He was almost through his first bag when he fell over. He thought of the dancer, and then imagined Sandy watching him; he worked through it. His legs burned, and his breath steamed the inside of his facemask, briefly as each puff of condensation was whisked away by the fresh air he inhaled. He was pleased that he remembered this was a passive system, operating in the absence of lifepack power. He was removing the clothes, re-folding where necessary; some he had to do three times over, but he stayed down until he was done. He did a quick ten pushups, then took the suit off with his eyes closed. He lay on his bunk, and fell asleep again.

Chapter 4: Troubled Awakening

He was awoken by a tremor, more of an internal tremor, and felt completely disoriented. The cabin lights were on dimly, and he had a vague feeling

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that his aunt was going to bustle in and ask in her chirpy voice what sort of nonsense was going on. Confusion on waking: this never happened to Gerry; no matter where he was, he had an innate sense of where he was the instant he woke. He rolled out of bed to his feet, and lurched a bit before he got his balance. This, at least, was a familiar feeling, but it did nothing to bring clarity to the situation. Seeing the vacc suit piled around the desk caused only a fraction of a second's further confusion, then it all came back in a flood. The familiar anxiety about Auntie fled, and left a sense of loneliness. Jump. They must have exited jump. He waved his hand over his hand comp, and the greeting scene showed *jump exit* in the ship status, ship position. News was being uploaded. He stumbled to the fresher and was violently ill.

"If you suffer from jump sickness, take an LSPill, by the sink." It all seemed a bit surreal. Sometime after the heaves that came after sensation and reason insisted his digestive tract was long empty (proving them wrong), in short pause before the heaves that acquiesced that now the tract was completely voided, Gerry realized that this was the computer, cuing off his entering the fresher so soon after jump exit. He thought that there was no way he could hold down a pill or the water to wash it with. The LSPill was tongue-dissolved, though, and despite tasting like some sort of toxic mistake, left him with one half-hearted abortive heave as the only sign that he had ever been sick. He felt confused and exhausted, but no longer sick.

He again remembered his status as an illegal runaway. Within a few hours of jump exit, with another 75 hours of in-system maneuver before they hit the massive high port of Nundis, a Purser's Message rolled onto his hand comp, and simultaneously across the PA in his cabin. "Passenger Fynne: We hope you had an enjoyable passage with us on Ley Lightning's *Scarlet Maid*. We have had an administrative inquiry about your passage, and would like

to have the Purser address this with you soon to avoid any delay. Please contact Third Officer Garciablackburn or another member of the crew to indicate when a short meeting would be possible."

He felt the lump in his throat, and it felt like he was pulling back into his head, his field of vision getting a little narrower. He solidly sat on the desk chair, looked away from the message, and went over his story again.

Gerry placed the handcomp on the desk surface and typed, "I can meet you guys in my cabin right now" on the holographic keyboard. He could type in midair well enough, but he felt he needed the solid surface to steady him just then. He wanted to check the news, but shut it off again quickly. He picked up the glove of his vacc suit. He looked at the number on the inside of the cuff; he could send her a message. It would take a while to get there, and the reply would take longer to catch him.

The raps on the door were light, but rapid. "Come in!"

It was the purser. He had barely seen her the whole trip, but here she was. There was another crew member, the large Fourth Officer, whom he'd seen just once since he had brought him to his cabin a little over a week ago. "Please give us a minute, Jack, and I'll meet you in the lounge," the purser said to him as the door opened. Gerry thought this was no accident: he's the muscle in case I go nuts, but she is just letting me know he's nearby. She doesn't think I will freak out, though, or she would have had him stay in the room.

"May I come in?" She was in the same uniform, but the jacket was on, bodice mostly concealed, and she looked much more official.

"Please."

"We have received an official message from the Starport Authority that your Legal Guardian has alleged that you are a runaway from Griik Maeii."

"But I'm...."

She held up a hand sharply, in a motion the seemed almost about to cover his mouth, and had a

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similar effect in interrupting him, "But before you say anything, you might want to understand our obligations. Sit, please. May I?"

He nodded, flopped on the edge of his unmade bunk, and she perched on the edge of his desk chair. Paused, and made a little soothing gesture with her hand before beginning.

"You are legally documented as traveling under your father's direction. We are required to inquire into this allegation and respond, and we are only required to take any action if our inquiry makes it obvious that the documents are false. The only practical way we would know this is if you told us." She gave just a hint of a smile, and he saw that twinkle he saw before, "Now, are these documents false?"

"No. No, ma'am!"

"OK. So you are Gerry Fynne, and your father Hugo Fynne authorized you to travel on this ship."

"Yes, yes, he did."

"Alright then. Thank you." Her hand was warm and soft. "I should tell you that if we receive another such allegation, we are required to treat it as a new inquiry. I may end up asking you the same questions. Regulations." She pronounced the last word with a small shrug, and a disdainful tone. Then rising without ceremony she strode towards the door. "The dancer will be leaving us here on Nundis. Her name is Shih-Ya." A twinkle and she was gone down the corridor. He took a parting glance as the cabin door slid shut.

He said a prayer of thanks, then buried himself in the news for hours before wolfing a Pesto Ham and Swiss Stayfresh and laying down to sleep. He woke feeling rested, and sent Clyde a message before he realized that it was 0430 ship time. He had not worked out what time Clyde's shift was, but he figured that was likely a mistake. As he was the junior member of the ship's black gang, his shift got moved around largely at the whim of the other members, or so it seemed.

He noticed that there were arrivals in the ship status, small craft that would rendezvous with the *Maid*. She was bringing her vector in slowly to zero out at the Highport parking orbit, but had relatively small maneuver drives despite her long legs in jumpspace. While this was occurring, though, high passengers and freight could be transferred to outgoing ships by much faster small craft. Really middle passengers could do so as well, but they were further down the list of priorities, and would often not be willing to pay the extra fees. A fast shuttle bound for the highport had met them 6 hours earlier, he saw. That had taken 6 passengers and 118 tons of cargo on towards the highport. And would beat them in handily by some 48 hours. That was listed openly, as anyone could have booked passage on it. There was no immediate answer from Clyde.

He noticed that there was a private docking set for just under 2 hours. It did not list the purpose. He briefly panicked: the ship had sold him out, the authorities were sliding in to pick him up for further questions. He took his three breaths. He actually prayed, this time a prayer of surrender: *whatever You want*. He was powerless to do anything.

He opened his eyes and realized that as well as being futile his fears were off here: it was certainly not a vessel after him. First, he did not rate a vessel; they'd just wait until the *Maid* docked and pick him up. Secondly, if for some unlikely reason they had sent a vessel after him, they would not even list the rendezvous as a private docking; they would let the crew know, but listing something would just project the possible action. Lastly, if they had wanted to trap him, the ship would not have involved the crew in a charade. No, he was suddenly wrapped in the realization of his own insignificance like a warm blanket. He had so often wanted to be somebody of note or importance, in the phantasies of youth. Now he saw what a blessing it was to be largely unimportant to those plying the star lanes. Not that no one cared at all...

To the extent the crew could take any discretionary action with him, it would be to make sure he

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stayed in his appointed berth through the next two jumps; if he was removed, the vessel would lose the money for future passages. He could not help noting that they were running with a couple of passenger cabins open. The purser's manner had begged him to keep his mouth shut, he reminded himself. Just as he was feeling more comforted by these thoughts, his breathing settling down to an unnoticed normal cadence, his handcomp beeped with a message, from Clyde. "Dancer's leaving in 90. Lunch? I got a deal for you, but you'll need to leave the ship soon after we dock"

"Deal? What sort?"

"Cost you a bottle of booze, but not for me. Get a chance to do some EVA. Pick up a bottle of Megan's Mist from the duty-free before we dock. We need to haul over to a free trader, meet a buddy of mine from their black crew who'll let us EVA, but they've due to leave two hours from when we dock."

His breathing was back up. He knew, when he imagined Clyde as some pawn in a police plot to trap him, that he was really dipping into paranoid thinking. He briefly envisioned Clyde in a tailored suit with a low-profile covert model needler in a shoulder rig. He snorted, and the paranoia left so quickly that the blink of an eye seemed glacial. ❁

Critics' Corner

The Space Patrol

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

The Space Patrol. Richard Hazlewood.
Stellagama Publishing (no website found)
93pp, hardbound and PDF
US\$21.99(H)/11.99(P)/UK£17.25(H)/9.41(P)

Reviewer's note: The publisher provided a complimentary copy of the product for review.

Canonically, the Imperial Navy is responsible for anti-piracy operations in the Third Imperium, and this, presumably, is *de facto* the main source of operational experience for ships and crews.

Mr Hazlewood and Stellagama Publishing propose another alternative: As piracy and certain other activities represent *criminal* problems rather than *military* ones, they should be handled by an organization that is more of a "police department" than a military force. Enter the Space Patrol.

The introductory material in this volume sets out the nature of the Space Patrol, and outlines its organization, mission, and jurisdiction. The limitations of the Space Patrol's mission (and the definitions of the various classes of crimes that the Space Patrol



has jurisdiction over) are carefully set out to avoid turning them into a general-purpose police force and bogging them down in local crimes. As a result,

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the Space Patrol is cast as an agency quite different from the Navy or Starport Authority.

Because of these differences, and the effect that they can have on play, a discussion of planetary legal systems is included. A definition of the characteristics of a world's legal system and a method of rolling it up are both provided; this profile focuses less on "what's allowed and what's not, and how likely are you to get hassled" and more on "how (and how well) the legal system works for a law enforcer doing law enforcement". The characteristics thus selected are "Bureaucracy", "Corruption", "Repression", and "Cruelty". Each is broadly classified as "minimal", "low", "average", "high", and "extreme", with a general description of how the level can be interpreted. There is an explicit invitation to adjust the definitions to fit the referee's image of the world, and with some of the characteristics, it's not impossible to conceive of expanding the rating into a "profile" of its own.

Much of the discussion of legal systems appears to start from a basis of what is often called "Western liberal democracy", which decision is not difficult to understand, as it will be the likely background for most *players*, regardless of the world that the *characters* may find themselves on. Concepts such as separation of powers, rule of law, burden of proof, the necessity for warrants in appropriate contexts, and so on are treated as defaults. However, variation from the "Western liberal democracy" defaults are mentioned as possibilities, and enough information is provided that one can design a legal system that matches any present or historical system, or one that is completely novel. It should be noted that some variations *are* missed; for example, there is no discussion of the distinction between an adversarial system (such as is used in the United States) and an inquisitorial system (such as is used for some types of prosecution in France).

Basic rules for handling the entire investigation, charging, trial, appeal, and sentencing process are

provided; most modifiers are based on relevant ratings from legal system profile rather than the raw Law Level from the UWP.

The book to this point is quite well-written, and can serve as an introduction to (or clarification of concepts related to) legal systems for the layman.

As an interstellar organization in a presumed setting where the speed of travel is the speed of communication, the Space Patrol faces the same issues that other agencies of the canonical Third Imperium – or, in fact, any multiworld polity of any significant size – face. As written, the organization of the Space Patrol more-or-less parallels that of the interstellar polity as a whole, with the rank of the head of the Space Patrol organization normally being two ranks below the political head of the polity's corresponding subdivision. The size of a Space Patrol organization on the world is generally determined by the importance of the world and the amount of interstellar traffic it receives; there are four types of Space Patrol "Bureaus" defined, from a small office with only a handful of Patrollers up to the largest with hundreds or thousands of Patrollers, training facilities, nearby courts and ship, vehicle, and equipment construction and repair facilities, and so on. Where internal borders are an issue, the Space Patrol establishes liaison offices to deal with cross-border matters; the criminals do not, after all, honor those internal borders. As with the overall interstellar polity, the Space Patrol's ability to act is limited within a system's own jurisdiction, though when actively pursuing an investigation or attempt at apprehension, there are exceptions to those limitations. Normally, agents of the Space Patrol will work with local law enforcement, and (as much as possible) within the local rules, to accomplish their missions.

Within the Space Patrol, there are four operational divisions, covering administration and politics (Secretariat), Investigation (including undercover work), logistical support (Operations), and active enforcement (Marshals). Agents working for the Investigation Division are what most people think of

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as “the Space Patrol”. To draw parallels between the Space Patrol and real-world police organizations, the Secretariat is clerical and administration personnel (and political liaison); Investigation is “beat cops” and detectives, Marshals are special enforcement units (e.g., SWAT teams, Counterterrorism, Vice Squads, political bodyguard details, and so on), and Operations is everything else.

All of this is useful background to give the player or referee a “feel” for what the Space Patrol is, and how it works. But by now, the reader is going to want more – and more there is.

This volume frankly admits that the standard *Cepheus Engine* careers of Agent and Navy could serve adequately for Space Patrol characters, but why settle for ‘adequate’? Mr Hazlewood has worked up four careers for the Space Patrol, one for each division. These careers actually extend the basic career rules from *Cepheus Engine* with concepts borrowed from various other compatible game systems (separate advancement tracks for enlisted and commissioned officers, decorations, mishaps and events, and allies and enemies), but otherwise conform to the basic career structure. Any one of the four careers can generate a character that will be useful in many ways, but each of the four career options has its own distinct flavor.

The Space Patrol, like any police department, needs vehicles – and in this case, spacecraft and starships – that are designed to meet their special needs. Several vessels are described, and three include deck plans (in the traditional monochrome plan view, not the more recent color isometric view). Most of the designs described are modifications of such familiar ships as the Modular Cutter, the Free Trader, or the Subsidized Merchant, and the latter two are deliberate mimics (“Q-ships”), with the intended mission of luring pirates into attacking an apparently unarmed or lightly-armed merchant, only to find the ‘victim’ to be more heavily armed than believed, and to have the tables turned.

The Space Patrol has standard equipment customized for its particular needs, and there are descriptions of a selection of Patrol equipment. Obviously, if the referee feels that additional equipment should be available, it can be added.

While the creative referee can certainly take what’s been presented to this point, and develop Space Patrol adventures without further reference to this volume, the author discusses several campaign settings and campaign types that mesh well with the described Space Patrol, and which are easily adapted to the referee’s preferences. A broad selection of generalized NPCs is also provided, capable of filling virtually any needed role in a Space Patrol campaign. Most can also be converted into player-characters if desired. There are even complete crew workups for a corvette and a Customs cutter, and a selection of Most Wanted criminals.

In addition to the generalized discussion of campaign types, a set of adventure seeds, in the traditional format, are provided. Two of the provided seeds can be linked together into a mini-campaign. These seeds do suffer from the “minor variations on a theme” problem with traditional *denouements*, but are still well-designed for the Space Patrol.

Overall, this volume is worth the price, even if you decide that the Space Patrol functions are folded into the Navy in your universe. The perspective that it provides on interstellar crime and law enforcement can enrich any setting. ❁

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. ❁

The Hospitallers

by Sam Swindell

The pair of Hospitallers, somber in combat armor in black with white pectoral crosses, swords, and well-travelled gauss rifles over their shoulders, is a rare sight in the highports of the Marches, but so remarkable as to be famous, almost as some mythical creatures. These warrior monks are very real, however, though the glamour stems from the trivids, not their reality. Their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience supplement the lives of soldiers always in the meanest of environments, constantly campaigning in a war that never ends.

The Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (the Hospitallers) are a military ecclesiastical order, with roots in the Terran medieval period, specifically the Crusades. The decentralized, semi-feudal nature of the Third Imperium, and the numerous starfaring forms of states both under it and coming before it, have made the Hospitallers as relevant now as in the turbulent, violent times of their genesis. The Grand Priory of the Spinward Marches, for instance, is an essentially independent body with control nominally exercised by the Grand Master on Terra. While the Grand Master, on Terra, approves the Prior General that the electors of the Grand Priory choose in the Marches, who serves pending this approval, the fact that the message round-trip is essentially close to a decade makes such "controls" illusory. It has been relatively rare in recent decades for a replacement Prior General to be sent out to any of the fourteen Grand Priories in the Imperium by the Grand Master. There are, however, Priors Auxiliary, who spend often decades visiting throughout Order's far-flung Priories to make reports to Priors General and the Grand Master.

The Order is unapologetically Roman Catholic, though not evangelical in the proselytizing sense. In every environment, the Order will rather seek to ease suffering and protect the most vulnerable, by a combination of force of arms, the healing arts, and such other direct aids to health and safety that they

find most urgent in a given situation. Usually, this involves choosing worlds whose populations are most at risk from disorder and banditry where the most impact can be made by a small, highly disciplined, high-tech, lightly-armed force, allowing health-care, and other essential services to be organized and provided sanctuary.

While harking back to the chivalric orders of old, there are very specific differences. The Hospitallers never hold anything really worth taking, as far as lands, wealth, or secular power. While they, with the help or volunteers and retainers, may run dozens of hospitals and clinics in a given commandery, none of these will be owned by them, however well they may be under the Order's protection. The Knights of the Order always provide their services for free, surviving on donations, though local activities that they set up, like hospitals, schools, farms and even transportation links will often charge for goods and services. It is the practice, however, that funds in the Order flow down, sideways, but never up: the arms of the order are provided by high level donations, which also fund local projects, while local projects may help fund themselves, and other similar projects in the same system. The Order owns dozens of small craft, but no starships, and as such has no expeditionary self-sufficiency: by design they rely upon the transport of others to move from system to system. As such, they are in an interstellar society, a potential asset but never a threat to those in power.

While the Order is strictly apolitical, they have historically recognized that to help they must work in tacit cooperation with the ruling parties, while observing neutrality in strictly military matters or any rivalry between governments. Thus, while the Order may fight pirates, they will not fight a foreign invader that leaves them to tend the poor and wounded. The Grand Priories and Priories will therefore generally follow political divisions, usually sectors and subsectors in Imperial space, and there is a small but highly skilled diplomatic corps which tries to spot feudal rivalries of which the Order may run afoul. This leaves the Order an invaluable asset

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to the average Subsector Duke with worlds that need development, populations that need relief, and corners where piracy may lurk. Rarely will such a noble, whatever his views on their faith, spurn the help of the Hospitallers.

Their uniforms are universally combat armor, which has a finish that is set for either matte black or chameleon. In normal conditions, the Order keeps their armor black, with a white cross of Malta centered on the chest of brothers, or reduced in size and centered on the left breast for adepts. In combat, the chameleon finish is programmed to display the appropriately placed cross in black outline, visible only from well inside pistol shot. The arms are worn at all times, except when at worship. Each chaplain's vestiments are made to fit over his armor, and his sword fits inside his own processional cross. The combat armor, while natural in the field, on campaign, is worn even in incongruous settings, like the dinner party of a noble or in the office of a wealthy patron. Only in death is a Knight separated from his armor: He is buried in a black robe with the white pectoral cross, his sword upon his breast, and his other arms and armor in the armory, to be passed on to another adept.

The arms of the Order are the only vestiges of personal property that the brothers have any real possession of, or that the adepts take temporary possession of. The Knight, once passed from adept to full brother, is entrusted for life with the armor, sword, and rifle he has borne as an adept. Other personal effects are allowed, in only such Spartan character and quantity as befits a warrior monk, but any other personal possessions, including especially any money or other things of value, is entrusted to the Order or otherwise donated, during the initial term as an adept. Before being accepted as a full brother, however, the entrusted goods must become the property of the Order, to be liquidated and to fund their works. Any adept may resign from the Order at any time, leaving his arms at the commandery, and both regain his property and obtain a certificate

of good conduct from the Prior of the Priory. Any brother or adept may be expelled from the Order for criminal acts or unrepentant violation of his vows. Such expulsion is accomplished at the Priory level, though the Commander has the power to provisionally do so, giving the expelled Knight recourse to the Prior. Most lesser lapses are dealt with local discipline, or simply sacramental absolution when contrition is genuine and timely.

The Order, however, share the quality of their historical forebears of being a highly effective fighting force, man for man. When other soldiers are at leisure, the Knights are at drill or at exercise. When other soldiers are on leave, or in schools, the Knights remain in their backwater posts. If poverty, privation, and want are the schools of the soldier, they are indeed the chapel in which the Order worships. Likewise, as most military contests at the local level are decided by one side deciding that their position has become too dangerous, having a skilled group who really see death as a sweet release on one side radically alters the balance in most cases. By confining their arms to those whose use depends most on skill and individual moral force, the Order increases its effectiveness on the micro level.

Their size is small, however, and rarely are more than 8 knights ever in a single engagement, though such a small group may employ dozens of armed retainers. Throughout the whole of the Imperial Spinward Marches, there are just over 3,700 Knights, though they employ or organize tens of thousands of auxiliaries, in security, medical, and other services. Tens of thousands also are involved in activities that, while not directly organized or controlled by the Order, have flourished within the enclaves created by their services.

The Knights of the Order are divided into adepts and brothers, most typically, though technically initiates exist in very few numbers. The demands of interstellar travel being what they are, a period of initiation is very short, such that the role of initiate is one of a few weeks, usually awaiting and embarked

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on transportation to an initial posting on some back-water world the Order serves. The initiates are tested by a brother before being taken to a commandery, based on physical prowess, military experience, faith, and social standing. The latter is a generally minor consideration, but since the Order essentially “gentrifies” its knights, there is at least a consideration that its recruits be amenable to adopting the manners of polite society.

Even when sitting at a rough-hewn table, eating a locally-produced gruel in a leaky log-walled barracks, the Knight is expected to eat with manners fit for court, for it is recognized that in addition to good manners being mostly originated as a manifestation of concern for the other, a given knight may end up sent as an emissary on some local or even a distant mission. Manners are much easier taught than skill at arms, however. Military experience (including naval and IISS) is therefore almost a necessity to join, though some skilled civilians with outstanding traits and skill at arms have been accepted. Medical training is a given as an adept, as is skill with sword, and both laser and gauss rifles. The basic pattern of the Order is that all receive at least a passing skill with each activity, and specific skills are then developed as requirements dictate. A Knight will have as his arms a laser rifle or a gauss rifle, as his skill indicates, but each adept at the end of his term will possess at least Combat Rifleman-1, Laser Weapons-1, Sword-1, Medic-1, and Ship's Boat-0, and Air/Raft-0.

While more visible, the “naval” Knights are actually a relatively small portion of the Order. Only full brothers can apply for flight duty, either as a crew for a St. George class ship's boat, or as a gunnery crew. A St. George uses the speed and space of the standard ship's boat to provide a crew of 2 long-term accommodations, suitable for relatively long patrols, including a full stateroom at double occupancy. The Model/3, triple missile rack, and small craft bridge allows a decent performance as a medium fighter. New, such a rig would, when provisioned

with the standard load of 30 missiles as reloads, cost just shy of MCr 39, but they make heavy use of surplus boats and armaments. When deployed in the normal flight of 2, it is a rare pirate who will choose to stand and fight the Hospitaller flight; no booty to be gained, and a likelihood of expensive repairs at best, if not a crippling injury, make immediately jumping out prudent business decision, despite the flight chaplain's offer of general absolution...

There are three basic divisions of labor in the Knights: brothers martial, brothers infirmarians, and brothers chaplain. While each Knight can, by training, perform each function at some level, most of the brothers chaplain are specially picked, normally after two terms as a brother, and further trained at seminary before receiving major orders; they will then often taking over either as Commander or Vice-commander of a small Commandery. While each Commandery must have at least one chaplain, a few have several, who will use their calling along with their other talents among the Order and the people. Flight crew are members of the brothers martial, though a flight will often include a brother chaplain as part of the crew.

For working passages, double-bunked on a ship otherwise unarmed, a gunnery crew will bring their pair of turrets, requisite fire control, and tools for installation, and become a part of the crew, albeit a temporary and reserved part. The installation will often be made while underway, to reduce its signature, but may remain for months, or just a few jumps. The Order uses these gunnery crews and its “George boats” to upset local piracy where local government forces are spread too thin on the ground. In return, surplus weaponry is often donated from subsector, sector, or even the Imperial Navy, based on local needs.

While there is no formal retirement in the Order, Knights will be moved to softer postings when they can no longer campaign in the same manner. Often a progression is to flight crews, then to a diplomatic or educational post, as the Knight ages. Such is the ordering of their operations, that many never make it

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to the softer berths, but lie instead in a rough coffin in some far-flung corner of a troubled world. Yet others will, after a normal military career, serve a term as an adept, and move on to another career with no regrets.

It is very true that the Order wins converts by the edge of the sword, but this is not as it is accused of doing by those in the lower media or even of other persuasions. The Order will, with the assent of whatever government is in power, establish an outpost in some troubled corner of a troubled world, paying locals for labor to build barracks, defenses, clinics, and gardens. A usual force of about ten brothers and a pair of adepts will be given this task. Often, such an outpost must be actively defended against raids by the locals, especially at the beginning. A chapel is established, and it serves the small garrison. Any local banditry is actively put down once defenses are sufficient to warrant such offensive action. Refugees are housed and protected, while being expected to pitch in. Clinics are put up farther afield. Medics are trained and equipped among the locals. A local constabulary is trained, established, and equipped, and local courts established or expanded.

Once there are some competent local security forces in place, the Knights will be thinned out by about half. The chapel is supplemented by a full-fledged church, which is a center for social and educational events. Villages are provided with sanitary facilities by trained retainers. Foundlings are raised in a newly built orphanage. While converts are given the choicer jobs, no one is ever required to convert. All these activities are protected by retainers, who are lead and very significantly supplemented by the hand-full of Knights present. Thus while the eventual widespread conversion in the expanding enclave is voluntary, is enabled by the Knights and their retainers' arms.

The role of the Order in spreading their faith, while passive, is thus pronounced. Part of this ap-

proach is their institutional reaction to other faiths: they will countenance no persecution on the basis of religion by any within their power. They will not pretend to give any other faith parity with their own (indeed, why would one die for something that was most likely false?), but will not allow disrespect to be shown them, as long as the practices do not harm those under the Order's protection. They will cooperate with local pagan shamans to bring about works of charity, but never participate in any joint worship. To any who suggest their Savior was a great man, the average Knight will snort that either he was a liar, a lunatic, or the son of God, and leave it to the speaker to choose.

Never will the Order seek to establish any sort of Theocracy, however, in even the most lawless province where they are the sole de facto rulers. When no government exists they will encourage the formation of one, to include a provision for freedom of religion, other basic human rights, etc. The lessons of history, where earthly wealth and power allowed the Hospitallers to become tied to ever-smaller territories, and allowed jealousies to foment against them and the Templars, have been well-observed. Thus, in relative humility, the Hospitallers seek ever to be spread thinner on the ground, a ground belonging to others, to serve their fellow men, and thereby spread their faith.

In an empire largely run by atheists and agnostics, home to myriad faiths that are in the aggregate still in the minority, the novelty of the Hospitallers, who forsake all the pleasures of life save that of service, to die far from home for those who still hate them, is indeed a small candle in the vast dark of space. Their influence is far out of proportion to their numbers, but still is quite minor, a quirky side-show. They have, however, spread their faith into small pockets of devoted followers on primitive worlds, while spreading their reputation and throughout the spacelanes, to the grateful but bemused passengers and crews of the small ships they have kept safe. ☸

Speaking in Tongues: Simulating Dialects in Your Game

by Jeff Zeitlin

It's likely that in your games, whether you are a referee or 'merely' a player, that you don't worry about language difficulties, or if you do, it's only by rolling a task for understanding what's being said once every three minutes or some such like that.

In a universe where Galanglic, represented by English, is the *lingua franca*, you still may well have dialects and local idiom, and while you may not need to have a lot of "Do I understand what he's saying?" rolls, it's still an opportunity to throw the occasional curveball at the player-characters.

There are several ways you can give your NPCs a 'sorta foreign' flavor, simply by changing their speech patterns. We'll look at a few that are relatively easy to do.

When choosing rules for a dialect, try to be consistent – but not slavishly so. Natural languages tend to accumulate exceptions to their 'rules', often because the exception can trace back to something borrowed from another language. If you can't make a phrase fit the rules you've chosen, do the best you can while keeping the intended meaning intact.

Word Order

English sentences normally use Subject-Verb-Object order. Change that to something else. There are six possible permutations of Subject, Verb, and Object; if you recast an English sentence into most of them, it will still be understandable. Most languages are ordered Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) or Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). Sometimes, the word order may depend on other features of the sentence; in such cases, a foreign flavor can be imparted by simply applying the rule for one of the special cases to a "normal" sentence.

In the *Star Wars* movies, Yoda's speech was rendered in English, but used OSV order: "*Much to learn, you have.*" "*The water, you must drink.*"

German has a reputation for putting the verb at the end, so in the Third Imperium setting, you can perhaps simulate Sword Worlder usage by using Subject-Object-Verb order: "*You the book must read.*" "*We to the ship go.*"

Verb-Subject-Object can also work in English, and sounds different enough to be a 'foreign' usage: "*Read you the instructions.*" "*Loads he the cargo.*" "*Requires the ship zuchai crystals.*"

Questions and Answers

There are several forms that a question can take in English – but other languages use forms that don't normally occur in English, or are interpreted differently. Some languages change the word order slightly between statements and questions; some merely add indicator words.

Some questions in French have a construction that is difficult to describe in English, but can be made somewhat clearer by example: "We need zuchai crystals for the jump drive, right?" becomes "It is that it is the zuchai crystals that are necessary for the jump drive, yes?"

Japanese and some other languages are sometimes claimed to have no words for the simple 'yes' and 'no'. Instead, in answering a question, the verb is repeated for the affirmative, or negated for the negative: "Do you have the money?" "I have it." "Have you loaded the ship?" "I have not loaded it."

At least one language that the author has read about phrases questions such that the phrasing indicates whether the 'expected' answer is in the affirmative or the negative. If that construction is expressed in English by converting the question to a statement, and then appending ", yes?" for an affirmative inquiry and ", no?" for a negative, then the answers can seem odd or even wrong when cast appropriately: "We do not need zuchai crystals for the jump drive, no?" expects an answer "No, we do not need zuchai crystals for the jump drive." (or "Yes, we need zuchai crystals..." if we do in fact need them) – but if the question were asked as "We do not need zuchai crystals for the jump drive,

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yes?”, the expected answer would be “Yes, we do not need zuchai crystals...” (or “No, we need zuchai crystals...” if they are needed).

Vocabulary and Idiom

Sometimes, you can provide the sense of “foreignness” by appropriate word choices from a regional dialect not local to your gaming group. For example, instead of using ‘pharmacy’ or ‘pharmacist’ or ‘drugstore’ if you’re in the NYC metropolitan area, choose ‘druggist’ or ‘chemist’ or ‘apothecary’. Use ‘require’ instead of ‘need’, ‘desire’ instead of ‘want’, and so on. Omit contractions (say ‘will not’ instead of ‘won’t’, ‘cannot’ instead of ‘can’t’, and so on). Use archaic words and phrases (or archaic meanings for words and phrases still in use) or word-forms and phrase constructions (‘I like it not’ or ‘I dislike it’ instead of ‘I don’t like it’). Phrases from other regional dialects – or translated from other languages – that mean the same thing as what you want to say, but starting from other cultural associations, can also do the trick. For example, a common phrase from the northeastern US to refer to a woman as being pregnant is ‘she has a bun in the oven’. The equivalent in French translates as ‘She has a puppet in the drawer’.

If you’re the type that likes to borrow cultures from literature and just file off the serial numbers, borrow their idioms, too. If the culture has a rite of passage, and someone from that culture wants to say that another is [English idiom] acting like a child, perhaps the idiom makes reference to the rite, instead – ‘You’ve run with the feldgroat; act like it!’.

Many languages sport more complex conjugations of verbs than English, and it’s not unusual for native speakers of those languages to translate their verb forms literally while still unfamiliar with English, resulting in constructions like “John he went to the store.”

Applying “regular” verb conjugations (is there actually such a thing in English?) to verbs that are

normally irregularly conjugated is also something that isn’t uncommon among non-native speakers. You can also omit conjugations entirely, and just use a single form of a verb for all purposes (I be here, she be at home tonight, we be at the mall yesterday, etc.)

Grammatical gender doesn’t exist in English; except where an inanimate object is personified (ships, for example), pronouns match natural gender – males are ‘he’, females are ‘she’, everything else is ‘it’. That’s not true of other languages; for example, in German, trains are all masculine (der Zug), but the railroads are feminine (die Eisenbahn), and the young girls travelling aboard them are neuter (das Mädchen). Combine this with the use of specific pronouns as part of the verb conjugation as described before, and you get perfectly reasonable constructions like “The girl it rides him the train.” (And if you ‘Yoda-ize’ the word order, “The train, him, the girl it rides.”)

Some constructed languages (most notably Esperanto), and even some natural languages (most notably Arabic and Hebrew), have word fragments that carry a ‘core meaning’, and then generate specific words with specific related meanings by changing prefixes, suffixes, or possibly other features of the word. While English doesn’t lend itself to that directly, it can be simulated by using various words as parts of speech that they don’t normally get used in. This already happens to some extent; consider “Did you google it?” or “We lunched at Joe’s Eats.”. It’s possible, though, to go quite a bit farther in doing so, while remaining generally understandable – consider the *Calvin and Hobbs* comic strip where Calvin asserted that “Verbing weirds language”, or the descriptions of Newspeak in George Orwell’s *1984*, where a perfectly legitimate instruction was “... rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling”.

One can broaden the meaning of a word by having it ‘absorb’ concepts that are either close in meaning, or which can be argued as such from a psychological view. For example, in the *Funny Fish* stories published in *Freelance Traveller*, Luriani uses the

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Doing It My Way

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word ‘ami’ to refer to both a family and to a ship’s crew. Doing so with English words still gives an insight into the mindset of the society that supposedly created that usage. You can also do the opposite, and separate overlapping meanings from different words to create a more rigid definition – one example that comes to mind is the use of the word ‘need’ by Simes in the Sime~Gen universe created by Jacqueline Lichtenberg and Jean Lorrah: it refers specifically and only to the necessity of taking ‘selyn’ from a Gen; all other current English uses of ‘need’ have been eliminated and merged into ‘require’, or rephrased entirely to avoid the word: I require air and water to live; I must go to the store and purchase food.

There’s no real bar to either borrowing or creating your own words to merge (or separate) meanings and incorporating them into the English (or rather, Galanglic) that your non-mainstream culture speaks – borrowing quite definitely frequently happens in English anyway, and there’s no reason to assume that it won’t continue to happen even after English becomes Anglic and then Galanglic.

Pronunciation and Accent

Sometimes, the local accent is all that’s needed to add that air of foreignness, even if the local language really *is* Galanglic – as an example, many English-speakers from India will pronounce the word ‘develop’ to sound like ‘devil up’. Subtle changes in syllabic emphasis and/or vowel pronunciation can leave the speech understandable, but still make it clear that ‘yer not from roun’ here, are ya?’.

Some languages don’t have sounds that English does – or vice-versa. Substitute a sound that the language *does* have for the one it *doesn’t*. For example, German doesn’t have the semivowel sound represented in English by the letter ‘W’; that glyph carries the sound in German that is generally written as ‘V’ in English. Similarly, the glyph ‘V’ in German carries the sound written in English as ‘F’. Make those substitutions (The stereotypical example is ‘Ve haf

vays of making you talk.’). Japanese seems to not have the ‘L’ sound, and Chinese seems to lack ‘R’; the stereotypical substitution for each is the other – and I regularly hear native speakers of Chinese (Fujian dialect) use the sound written ‘SH’ in English where native English speakers would use ‘S’ – ‘sheafod shoup’ is a dish made from vegetable broth with chunks of krab (the artificial stuff, not real crabmeat), scallop, clam, shrimp, and vegetables. Another sound to play with is the ‘hard J’, as in ‘jack’ or ‘jam’ – many languages lack that, but it’s easily replaceable with the sound heard in the French ‘jardin’ – approximately the same as the ‘Z’ in English ‘azure’ or the ‘S’ in English ‘measure’ – or ‘consonantal Y’, as in ‘yellow’ or ‘yam’ (and both of those sounds are associated with the ‘J’ glyph in other languages).

Putting It All Together

There’s no one “right way” to put these ideas together to present your player-characters with the “sound of foreignness”. There are two important things to remember:

- For any particular NPC, be consistent with the way you mangle English. It’s entirely possible that your players will remember the NPCs by their accents and speech patterns, so it’s best not to confuse them with unexpected changes. My recommendation: Keep some clear notes about how you choose to adjust the NPC’s speech patterns, and consult them as needed. If nothing else, writing down your ‘rules’ for adjusting the NPC’s speech may help you remember them.
- Don’t overdo it. English is a very flexible language, and can remain understandable in the face of some *serious* rule-breaking. But that flexibility isn’t quite unlimited; trying to apply too many of the ideas here at once really can take you beyond the boundaries of comprehensibility, and make your players waste too much time trying to figure out what the characters are saying. A bit of ‘Huh?’ can reasonably be part of the game; too much of it stops being fun, and when a game isn’t fun, people don’t want to play. 🎲

#29: Slow Time

I don't know how many other Referees run games in 45 minute chunks but I'd warmly recommend it. You don't get quite enough time to really immerse players in more than a scene or two but there are benefits which I wasn't expecting.

A subset of my every-other-month-in-the-pub-after-work group which is running through *The Traveller Adventure* were keen to try a little more gaming. So we also play every other week (or so) in lunchtimes, holed up in a part of the library where we can't disturb anyone.

One of the original aims was specifically to allow me to try 'making it up as I go' and we had a very successful romp through some city scenes followed by some desert scenes as the PCs attempted to retrieve a missing batch of anagathics – although the nature of what they were after only became apparent later. Though the adventure worked well, taking it in short chunks with a week or two between gave me plenty of opportunity to 'think up the next bit' – once we'd got started – so the improvised nature of the sessions wasn't quite so successful.

Following that, the players decided to try something I'd written and planned out. They opted for *Into the Unknown* which we're just finishing now. Well, I say finishing, but in the last session there was such consternation that I was going to wrap it up

they demanded we play out the journey home, with all the villagers, in detail. I've not done this before with any group. (All my previous runs through this have been in four hour sessions.)

Although I haven't had to write anything between times, we've mostly taken the adventure as published, the intervals between sessions have allowed me to create details and intricacies that are either not present in the book or only briefly alluded to. For example, some of the villagers taking a dislike to the PCs (partly because one intruded on a relationship, partly because some fear change) and attempting to sabotage the *Kankurur* is completely new. Alternatively, we've had time to explore some of the detail I only mentioned in passing and have never had time to play out before – such as the birth of a baby (the PCs and players were delighted to get to name the child) or the finding of the bodies up river. For the first time through this, some of the villagers have really come alive as people in their own right and the players have had fun with bits that I've never touched before. It's not a different adventure, but in moments I thought it might have been tedious it's gained a freshness for me.

The 45 minutes may fly past all too quickly but it means we can play relatively frequently as it's 'only' a lunch break, it lets me see my own adventure in a new light, and it's a good way of giving my *Traveller Adventure* merchant crew another side of *Traveller*. 🎲

Critics' Corner

Encyclopedia Dagudashaag

reviewed by Timothy Collinson

Encyclopedia Dagudashaag. Jae Campbell (editor¹).
Dagudashaag Development Team and *Signal-GK* Productions
http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Encyclopedia_Dagudashaag
382pp, PDF

Free

Editor's Note: The reviewer has advised us that there is also a 46-page referees-only supplement to this item, containing additional data.

Availability of this supplement is at present unknown.

1. *Duncan Law-Green and Leighton Piper are also credited as editors of the original Signal-GK.*

Occasionally *Traveller* books come along that are astonishing for their conception, their content or just their sheer size. The Encyclopaedia Dagudashaag manages to score on all three of those fronts in what is an outstanding piece of work. I'm sure many of us would like to see more of this kind of thing. Imagine every Imperial sector done in this kind of detail?!

This hefty 382 page PDF (A4 sized) is the masterwork of Jae Campbell. It was first proposed as a project back in the early 1990s in *Signal-GK*, no.7 and it's perhaps not surprising that it's taken a quarter of a

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Critics' Corner

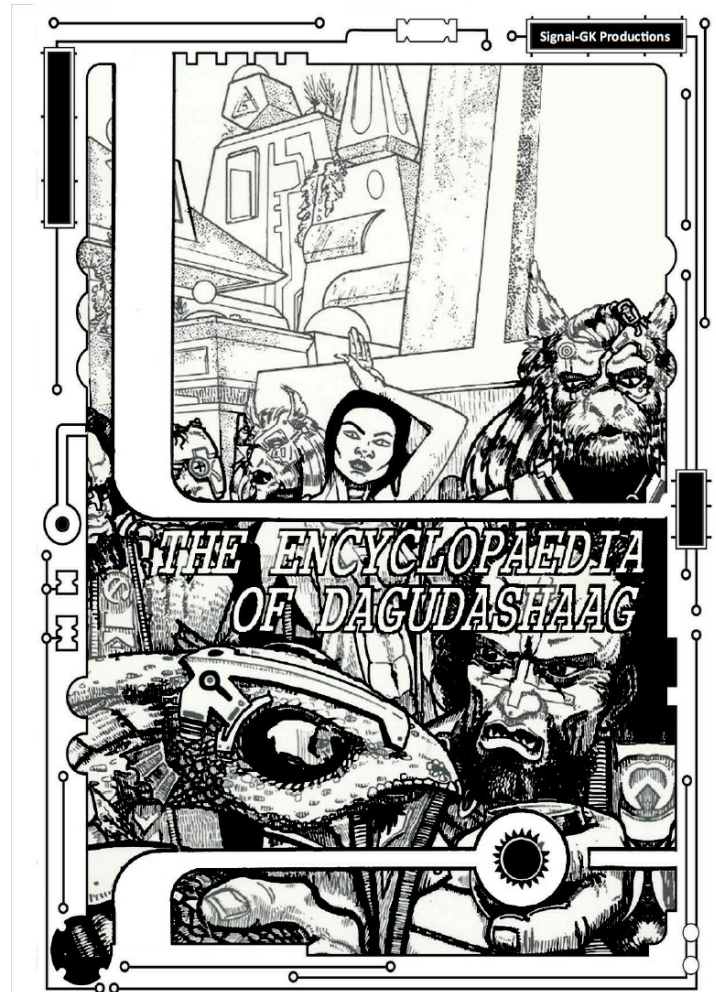
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century to come to fruition with Jae working on it for the last couple of years.

This is the logical extension of books such as *Supplement 10: The Solomani Rim* (GDW), *Behind the Claw* (Steve Jackson Games) or *The Spinward Marches* (Mongoose Publishing) but where every world, race, or significant individual gets a decent description. In 1,077 entries (excluding 'see' references) varying from just a line or two to a couple of pages, an entire sector is detailed and described for hours of role playing adventure or even just immersive reading.

I'm sure I'm not alone in having dreamed of lovingly detailing a sector in this fashion. But I doubt I'm alone in finding that, once the UWPs were generated the project would get bogged down in just the sheer enormity of an entire sector, 16 subsectors, hundreds of worlds. The imagination begins to flag; the scale of the Imperium begins to become a reality.

This is the genius of this encyclopaedia; it effectively crowdsourced a solution in the days well before that became a thing. Between 1993 and 1997 Messrs Campbell and Piper produced 13 issues of the UK-based fanzine *Signal-GK*, which covered *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, and *Traveller: The New Era* and (Marc Miller's *Traveller* just getting a mention at the end) with articles, adventures and most particularly the issue by issue revealing of Dagudashaag sector in supplementary booklets. Although the *Spinward Marches* and sectors such as Theta Borealis were given time and space, Dagudashaag was *Signal-GK's* home, as it were, with data for classic *Traveller* and the rebellion era. Readers of *Signal-GK* including many members of BITS (British Isles Traveller Support) contributed to both the articles and the sub-sector development and it is (mostly) the latter that forms the greater part of The Encyclopaedia Dagudashaag. [I should perhaps at this point declare a tiny interest and mention that although I came to it rather late in the day, just in time for one of the very last subsectors (Iraadu), I contributed some seven



minor pieces to the periodical that have all made it into the encyclopaedia. This is, I believe, my earliest published *Traveller* work and I should credit the car-share team of Ann Hindson and Barbara Lucas for their contributions and all the fun we had on the motorway across several years.]

This is not, however, merely a re-presentation of the fanzine in alphabetical order. In fact, all 13 issues have recently become freely available on the internet and those interested are highly recommended to take a look. Not everything that graced those pages have made it into the encyclopaedia. Adventures in particular and some of the smaller filler material aren't included; technology articles from ship designs to weapons haven't been included either – although there are some short items where they were subsector library data rather 'zine articles. Other rules based articles have not made the transition for obvious reasons.

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So what is in the Encyclopaedia? Well every single world in Dagudashaag for a start. All 559 planets. Where the world was the subject of an extended profile in *Signal-GK*, these have been considerably reduced in size and scope; gone, also, is all the World Builders' Handbook style data. However, all the other worlds, the vast majority, that only got a brief paragraph of treatment in the subsector booklets that were published with the periodical have been somewhat extended. Although the loss of useful data is a slight pity, it would have been a mammoth task to produce such data for every planet and it would have made for a mammoth book. What has been added is *Traveller*⁵ style extended UWPs for every world. This means that the volume can essentially be used with every rule set of *Traveller* and many of its Third Imperium settings – although not perhaps, *Milieu 0* and TNE.

Instead of the wide variety of entry styles that might be expected from its origins, the encyclopaedia now has a much more balanced coverage which is all to the good. Nothing feels skimmed over and nothing dominates in an overbearing way. Also, the editor has taken the opportunity to tidy up some of the text of the original so the entries feel more 'full' where they might have been mere notes and more even in tone which is definitely an advantage over the varied voices of the original authors. The sector itself has an entry of course of just over a page, as well as a colour-on-white sector map at the start of the PDF and a white on black overview of the subsector names, planet locations and x-boat routes. Each subsector has a full write up along with a nearly paged sized colour-on-white map produced from *travellerm.com*. A loss from the originals, however, is a key to the information on the maps which could have been rectified, if not on every map, with one master key in the preliminary pages. The maps are the only colour in the whole volume except for the red lettering of the large capitals placed at the start of each letter of the alphabet.

Another swathe of entries cover the sentient beings of the sector. For some reason these have their

headings in ALL CAPS which does make them stand out a little but seems an odd variation and is slightly confusing mixed in with acronym entries such as INDISS and SIDDIS. The race entries are some of the longest: a quick glance suggests that the S'mrii have the longest entry at four pages long. But this length is useful for referees who want mini-alien books which could easily be adapted for use outside of Dagudashaag if desired although there are no character generation style rules for any of them. As well as alien races, there are entries for various empires and polities within the sector and on five occasions these include short timelines.²

Also liberally spread through the volume are major players in the sector from Aliskhander VIII [sic] to az-Rabayr Mehrban Zabeh. These entries bring a lot of life to the book which might otherwise feel a little dry. Having said that, even if you're not adventuring in Dagudashaag, it is nigh on impossible to open this at any page and not be inspired in some way to think of a piece of colour, an adventure seed, or even a full blown scenario. There is so much here of interest and of use to players and referees alike. There are languages and short entries of spacer slang; there are animals, plants and drugs; there are technology entries, companies and even legends. The scope of this is indeed impressive. Readers may want to refer, in some cases, to the original articles or Library Data entries however, as there are significant variations. As well as editing the text for stylistic purposes, and in at least one case, the Legends and Lore of Dagudashaag Sector for example, splitting a longer article into constituent entries, much text has been lost. Sometimes this is mere detail, sometimes it might be more significant.

A nice touch is the intrusions of a hacker, CyJac, which could have been overdone and spoilt the effect but in fact are a useful way the editor can, often wryly, provide commentary on any particular entry. Again, this adds some life to otherwise po-faced entries. Naturally CyJac has inserted an entry

2. For the Aakri Empire, Guukian Federation, Kimalled Collective, The Medurma Pact and the Ustran Empire.

(Continued from page 27)

on themselves. On the other hand, one omission which is to be slightly regretted is the lack of 'which see' or *q.v.* references where something mentioned in the text actually has its own entry which might be useful to refer to. Examples include Benjamin Ra'Scania, Broadleaf, Colect and Shampka which are all mentioned in various places but unless you happen to think of it, you wouldn't know that they also have their own entries which give further information. Some such *q.v.* references have actually been removed from the original texts.

The Encyclopaedia Dagudashaag is illustrated throughout with pictures and logos from the original *Signal-GK*. Many of these are really excellent and deserve a second, wider audience. The likes of Tim Osbourne, Nik Piper, Duncan Law-Green and Paul Sanders to name a few, have produced work that feels very *Traveller* and really helps both players and referees visualize an alien being or scene. Some of the artwork is a little more so-so but helps break up the pages and was still worth including. Just occasionally some pictures have lost some clarity from the original *Signal-GK* versions – a shame but perhaps inevitable given the passage of time and magnitude of the job. On at least one occasion, illustrations have been changed – for example, the Jala'lak don't look quite the same as the original, but in this case I think it brings the description and the pictured example more into line with each other. The one suggestion I might have made would have been to colourize the front cover. All of the interior illustrations are black and white or greyscale and none the worse for that. However, the cover – a wonderfully busy collection of buildings, people, aliens and emotion that somehow does justice to the encyclopaedic nature of the work – cries out for the vigour and attraction of a full colour treatment. I'm tempted to set my daughter to it with a box of pencils.

A couple of details I've not mentioned: the text is unjustified throughout which isn't critical but ar-

guably detracts from the impression the whole volume gives of being a seminal work of Third Imperium publishing – nicely treated in not one but two imprint pages. One is the real one and the other an 'in-universe' page revealing it's the 127th edition dated to 1114, edited by one Tobias Lei Han and published by Sherver Press of Ushra. This page also warns of the CyJac '13 intrusion. It's also worth noting that apostrophes are ignored for alphabetical order but accented characters may be at the end of the alphabet Swedish style, or ignored.

I cannot praise this book enough. As a resource for Dagudashaag sector it is of course now the go to work. As a resource for any sector, it is without parallel in *Traveller* publishing. Even if you're not interested in this particular sector, as a resource for people and places, religion and races, and a host of other bits and bobs, you can't help but take inspiration from entry after entry after entry. Like any encyclopaedia it is not really something to sit down and read in large chunks but as a reference book or as something to dip into and travel through and to simply savour and enjoy, it's an absolute delight. Given its nature it's not the simplest way of getting the kind of overview we're more used to but some Britannica style study guides could ameliorate that somewhat. The only way this volume could be bettered would be for a physical book but I understand print on demand will not be offered. Still, a trip to the local copyshop should produce a handsome volume for the shelves. If going this route, however, you might want to consider an A3 version of the sector map folded in as an endleaf. The one page version is fine in PDF form where it can be enlarged and read quite easily but it is rather small to give anything other than overview when printed on A4 or US Letter.

All this and I haven't even mentioned the best part. The Dagudashaag Development Team as they style themselves are offering this labour of love and tour de force absolutely free. You can pick up a copy at http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Encyclopaedia_Dagudashaag and you'd be remiss not to.



Michlin's Guide to the Planets

By Shelby Michlin

Brought to you by Michlin Fuel Cells, Don't Leave Home Without Them!

a Sternmetal Horizons Company

"We love to see you smile."

Introduction

Welcome to Michlin's Guide to the Planets! This guide will be of great use to you, the traveller, in your planetside excursions. We endeavor to provide insider information on local points of interest, accommodations, dining establishments, hazards, and of course all local Michlin Fuel Cell Stockists! Whereas *some* organizations, *private* organizations, provide travel information only to their members, we here at Michlin's Guide provide our extensive research for the benefit of *all* travellers, completely

free of charge. Find us at your local Michlin Fuel Cell Stockist!

Dedication

Michlin Guide to the Planets is dedicated to the memory Gregory Lee, whose *Lee's Guide* proved so very helpful to travellers across Known Space. Although the Lees are now gone, we wish to continue to provide a similar service in our own small way.

Disclaimer

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Michlin's Guide to the Planets: The Charming Keekwee of "Ekhono"

by Shelby Michlin

The Keekwee are a warm, gracious people who are proud of their culture. And with good reason! Music, dance, art and a delicious cuisine you'll enjoy no matter how experienced your palette.

They call their planet Ekhono, which means Haven in the local language. The lowlands are tropical swamps, which is why the natives made the sensible choice to live in the mountains. Cities are terraced affairs, with buildings made of stone and often recessed into the slopes. Herds of Branna, a long-haired herbivore, are moved seasonally in traditional patterns from one grassy slope to another. The Branna are notable for their extreme flexibility and the accuracy of their jumps from crag to crag! They rarely fall, and can prove a challenge for their shepherds to control; but they seem to easily avoid any native predators.

Singing and dancing, as well as elaborate costumed dramas, are performed in massive square amphitheatres. Hipball, the local sport, is all the rage! You'll thrill too as you watch the players use their waist-yokes to move the ball up and down the court. Betting is encouraged, but a wise traveller is sure to be wary of the generous credit terms to be found.

If you're the more adventurous sort, you'll want to hire an expeditionary group and tour the jungles and swamps of the valleys, deep in the wilderness. Of course, we've already done the research, and the best guides may be found listed later in this chapter. The well-armed, well-prepared hunter will have their choice of magnificent trophies to amaze and astound!

The main starport is located on a plateau adjacent to the planet's largest city, Kuakona. Adjacent warehouses hold trade goods ready for export: spices, liquor, textiles and other craft items are the most popular. And the Keekwee are always eager to bargain for your technology!

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The city of Nomeræ is the home of the world's leader, the Priest King. Yes, the natives have an elaborate traditional culture based around their mythology, and this is his holy city. The Priest King is believed to be descended from the chief god in their pantheon, the giant called Axar. The center of their religion, the Temple of Exenar, is a gigantic stepped pyramid. It faces the palace from across the Grand Plaza.

Inside the Temple of Exenar is the most significant artifact of the Keekwee culture, the idol of Lord Axar. He is depicted with great wings unfurled, wearing the distinctive feathered headdress also worn by the Priest King. It is truly impressive, a massive bas-relief deeply etched into the native stone of the mountain. His Fist of Salvation is poised in mid-thrust above the Anvil of Creation. This construction is so ancient that scaffolding has been constructed to prevent the stone Fist from actually plummeting down to smash the Anvil, for tradition forbids the clan of stone-masons from actually making changes to the idol—thus no repairs may be made to the structure itself. But the artfully-carved supports in no way detract from the experience of visiting on a High Holy Day, the only time the Inner Court is accessible to the public.

Goru is home to the greatest natural wonder of Ekhone, the Pliscern Falls. Don't miss the rainbows that surround the falls day or night in its plummet of almost one mile into the great inland Mirror Sea. But be wary of the broad-winged Setas, birds that can remain aloft for many standard hours, despite their large size and voracious appetites! The government maintains a battery of safety equipment to keep the falls safe for visitors.

Don't forget to sample the cuisine native to each of the major cities while you are there, Kuakona, Nomeræ, Plestin and Goru. Nomeræ is known for its spices, especially Meuno, ground into a dark powder, both sweet and spicy at the same time. The kitchens of Plestin are redolent with the scent of

whipped Kruun eggs. Curiously, the egg shells are semi-soft when first laid. The crag-nesting Kruun mother holds the egg steady with her claws as it hardens, and its bottom surface actually flattens to prevent it from rolling away! Kuakona is where you can sample one of the population's staples, Corbie meat. The Corbie is a large, shaggy burrowing rodent that is widely scattered in the mountain ranges, and its burrows are masked by the low shrub growth that is common on the slopes. Corbie meat is pulled into strings, grilled or fried, which are then molded into fanciful shapes and mixed with savory tubers and spicy yellow ball-peppers.

Of course, visiting the major cities will require crossing the shallow green seas, and you may anticipate a lovely trip on one of the planet's luxury hover-cruisers. The sunsets are magnificent, reflected in the smooth surface of the waters, whose bioluminescence seems to mirror the light from the sky. You may be lucky enough to see a Ghora, one of the world's aquatic megafauna. They're quickly reminded that approaching the hover-cruisers is unwise; nevertheless, when the crew instructs you to return to your cabin during an appearance, you're well advised to do so—reminding the Ghora of wisdom is not without its own dangers.

Each major city has a hub of six hotel "Palaces" for visitors, and hospitality is Rule Number One. Dining is a social event in special clubs, even for the simple worker, but the clubs attached to the visitor palaces will treat your senses to at least twelve varied courses! Don't use the wrong condiment though; you'll need to depend on your designated Culinary Adviser. (Tips gratefully accepted!)

Please see our detailed ratings below for the best, most reliable vendors who will provide the most value for your credits. And be sure to share recordings of your adventures with us, because "We love to see you smile!"

Referee Notes

Use this world description on whatever planet seems suitable in your game; the description should

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Kurishdam

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allow you to tailor it to fit various UWPs. Even the Keekwee themselves can look like anything at all, not necessarily Humaniti. There are several opportunities for adventure, including discovery of ancient Keekwee ruins, safaris and similar monster-hunting, rescue operations, underworld activities regarding the sports world, even scientific studies if players realize that the Keekwee have virtually no diseases (attributable to a spice that grows in the jungle environment). There are large mountain pouncers that are not described in the Michlin Guide, huge sea-creatures to menace the luxury liners, the large carnivorous flyers, the Seta; of course, the researcher could've been unaware of any number of things. I envision a rebellious faction among the worker classes, both urban and agricultural, that has been slowly brewing against the rule of the Priest-King and his caste (which again can be tailored to whatever Government Type fits your UWP). Players might get swept up in something, there may be a kidnapping event (off-worlders are great targets because the incumbent powers don't want a fuss).

The various lists and recommendations alluded to in the article are omitted; the referee is urged to make up such lists as needed to fit your particular perception of the world

The major secret of the planet is that an Ancient civilization (not necessarily *that* Ancient civilization) has installed a means to move the planet into an orbit further from its growing sun. (The climate wasn't always this hot, you know.) The Temple of Exenar is atop a plug that reaches well down into the crust, tapping the heat of the mantle to power the concealed machinery. The city itself is on an island within a ring of island volcanos; though they appear normal and natural, the concealed machinery once could actually control them as a reaction drive. The means to control the Fist of Retribution has long since been forgotten and has probably become inoperable, but if it were to be released to strike the Anvil of Creation (which is made of a highly-volatile, unknown alien substance, impervious to sampling by any known means), the impact would result in a massive outburst from the volcanos that would launch the planet into a more distant orbit. The Control Center is located under the Mirror Sea, near Goru. Of course, the only knowledge that has survived to this late date is that the Sea is sacred to the giant, Lord Axar. This secret can be used in many ways, including having the thing ignite and move the planet, or turn it into a dead world. Or perhaps someone would like a sample of that volatile Anvil of Creation... In any case, good adventuring! 🌀

Active Measures

Saving the Throne

by Jeff Zeitlin

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2002.

The player-characters are on the resort planet of Carlsmont, perhaps taking a break from routine, perhaps waiting for their ship's annual maintenance to be completed, perhaps something else—the referee should use discretion in fitting this adventure to the party. One of the party should have a connection

to Carlsmont or the neighboring planet of Lumyere; the exact nature of the connection is up to the referee, but should allow for close acquaintances. They should arrive at Carlsmont before 119-1105 (by the story calendar), and still be on-planet at that date. While they're there, if they check the news archives, they'll see the following stories.

NewsNet Special Alert

CARLSMONT CITY, 110-1105: Grand Prince Isharii, Prince Royal of the Principality of

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Carlsmont, has been seriously injured in an air-raft accident while returning from a ski holiday in the northern mountains. He is undergoing surgery at ...

Grand Princess Eloise was also injured in the accident, though apparently not seriously. She is remaining by her husband's side during this ordeal. Doctors are maintaining a close watch on her, to ensure that her unborn child, the heir to the Principality throne, is healthy. ...

The young couple, celebrating their second anniversary, had taken this holiday as their last opportunity to enjoy their favorite recreation before Her Highness was to be prohibited by her pregnancy from engaging in overly strenuous physical activity. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 111-1105: A weary-seeming Dr. Theo Kamehameha-Galishakaa reported that Grand Prince Isharii's condition has been stabilized, although His Highness is in a coma. His condition has been upgraded from Critical II to Critical I, and he is on full life-support in the Critical Care Unit at the hospital. The medical team assigned to His Highness are reporting that they have every hope that he will make a recovery, but caution that His Highness's injuries are quite severe. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 113-1105: Doctors for Grand Princess Eloise have announced that Her Highness will not be able to give interviews in the immediate future. Her personal physician, rushed to the hospital on short notice late last night, refused to do more than say that she is in no danger, although weak from the stress of recent events. ...

NewsNet Special Alert

CARLSMONT CITY, 115-1105: Although no official word has come from doctors or the Royal Household, NewsNet has learned that Grand Princess Eloise miscarried two days ago. Although distraught, Her Highness is apparently healthy. ...

Doctors remain optimistic about Grand Prince Isharii's prospects, although he is still in a coma. His Highness is progressing well, and there is every likelihood that he will improve enough to be removed from full life-support within the next few weeks. ...

NewsNet Special Alert

CARLSMONT CITY, 118-1105: Unofficial reports from sources at the hospital indicate that Grand Princess Eloise was rushed into surgery early this morning. One hour later, hospital administrators banned the press from the premises, and the Royal Guard assisted in the expulsion. ...

Reports from the Diplomatic Quarter and from Government watchers seem to indicate that both the State and Foreign Ministries have cancelled all appointments, and called in all personnel who are on leave. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 119-1105: Duke Shaamika, the Ambassador to Carlsmont from Lumyere, was abruptly summoned to the Ministry of State this afternoon. He emerged a short time later, but refused to answer any questions concerning his summons. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 121-1105: A spokesman for the Ministry of State today officially announced today that Grand Princess Eloise had indeed miscarried eight days ago, when she stopped giving interviews. He professed no knowledge of any subsequent surgery,

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although he stated that the doctors had Her Highness under close observation. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 123-1105: The Ministry of State announced that His Highness, Grand Prince Isharii, had been moved out of the Critical Care Unit and into the Intensive Care Unit, although his condition has not as yet been officially upgraded from Critical I. Grand Princess Eloise is reported to be in good condition, though she continues under observation. The Ministry spokesman again denied any knowledge of surgery subsequent to Her Highness's miscarriage. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 124-1105: Although no statement has come from the Ministry of Defense or from the Lumyere Embassy, observers have reported to NewsNet that the Carlsmont Detachment of the Lumyere Combined Arms appears to have recalled all personnel from leave. ...

NewsNet Special Report—125-1105

Although Carlsmont and Lumyere have had a close relationship these past three centuries, few people realize just how close—and how fragile—that relationship is. NewsNet's Historical Research Section has obtained a copy of the Charter granted by the King of Lumyere to the first Grand Prince of Carlsmont, and direct ancestor of Grand Prince Isharii, Lavrenti Artekata. The charter specifies that if the Artekatas cannot produce a male heir to the throne of Carlsmont, the grant shall be revoked, and Carlsmont shall revert to being a province of Lumyere. ...

CARLSMONT CITY, 127-1105: The Ministry of State announced today that Grand Prince Isharii has been removed from full life-support, although he still requires assistance

to breathe. He has not regained consciousness as yet, though his doctors remain guardedly optimistic. Grand Princess Eloise remains in good condition under observation; the Ministry expressed hope that she will be willing to give at least a short interview in the near future. ...

At any time after the report of 119-1105, the PCs may be approached by someone representing either Lumyere or the Carlsmont Ministry of State. The contact should be a close personal friend of one of the PCs, and both the contact and the PC should have a history of trusting the other to be discreet when necessary. The contact emphasizes that this is certainly necessary this time, to the extent that all of the other times are public announcements in comparison. He then hands the PCs a packet containing a photograph and other information, and briefs the players as follows:

“His Highness is in worse condition than has been made public; his doctors generally agree that it is unlikely that he will regain consciousness. This would not have been a problem had Her Highness not miscarried, as an heir to the throne would have been assured—in-vitro fertilization was used to assure that her child would be male. Normally, even the miscarriage would not be a problem, as we could repeat the procedure to produce an heir. However, Her Highness was indeed rushed into surgery on 118; internal injuries sustained in the accident made it necessary to perform a hysterectomy upon her. Thus, we have no way of producing another heir descended from His Highness.

“However, a re-reading of the Charter, and a consultation with the Ambassador from Lumyere, has given us an interpretation of the Charter that we can use to preserve the independence of Carlsmont. Discretion in this is necessary solely because of the need to avoid panic; while most Carlsmontites would have no objection to Carlsmont becoming part of Lumyere, there is a small nationalist move-

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ment that would resort to terrorism to prevent it, if possible. The Ambassador from Lumyere has agreed that stability is essential, and has indicated that his government takes the position that, except to the extent that national defense requires, what Carlsmont does is up to Carlsmont, as long as all laws, treaties, et cetera, between Carlsmont and Lumyere are upheld. The local defense forces were put on a low-level alert at Carlsmont's request against the possibility of terrorism were we to be forced to announce the full state of affairs with no heir to step in.

"The information you have been given in this packet will hopefully be enough for you to find the Grand Prince's exiled brother, Ramduur, and secretly bring him back here to take over as Grand Prince. His Highness would have brought Ramduur back after his mother's death last year, but the Privy Secretary, who had served His Highness's parents until His Late Highness's death, and supported Ramduur's banishment, advised against it. The Secretary is fully aware of the current situation, and agrees that Ramduur must be brought back, although he has expressed distaste for the man.

"You are not the only ones attempting to find Ramduur. We have agents on most planets in the area; orders have already gone out. Wear these collar pins at all times; they will identify you to the other agents, who will be wearing similar pins. They will help you to the best of their ability; you must help them to the best of yours. Nobody who is not wearing one of these pins must know of your mission; not even Ramduur, when and if you find him.

"Obviously, speed is of the essence; while we don't know how long we can keep the subterfuge up, there will be a point beyond which people will be suspicious, and from there, things will go downhill. If you can manage to find Ramduur, we can present him right up to the moment that Lumyere accepts that we cannot produce an heir; after that, it won't matter.

"The packet actually contains information on several cadet branches of the Artekata family; if Ramduur turns out to be dead without male issue, any of the individuals listed as eligible may be brought back instead. The individuals are marked in order of preference, but if you find one who's not at the top of the list, don't waste time—bring him in. I'd say to do that even if you're not sure about Ramduur, but there are political nuances that I'm not prepared to go into right now. Go for Ramduur, and grab one of the others only if Ramduur is an impossibility.

"I can guarantee you a payment of Cr100,000 from the Ministry of State's discretionary budget if any heir is presented, whether you're the one that brought him back or not. If no heir is brought back, there won't be a Carlsmont to pay you. Further payment would necessarily be at the Grand Prince's discretion.

"I wish I could do more for you on this, but I'm definitely bending—hell, breaking outright—the rules as it is—and quite frankly, the only reason I'm sure I won't be shot for treason for telling you the situation is because only His Highness can pronounce the death sentence. The agents off-world won't question you, with the pins, though, so once you're out of here we're both safe. Good luck!"

Notes to the Referee

This is obviously suitable as a background for other adventures, and it can develop in any direction that the referee wants. Further developments in the news are at the referee's discretion; remember jump lag in dating them if they go off-world at all.

Ramduur was exiled by the current Grand Prince's father because of a sex scandal. It will be trivial for the PCs to learn this. By now, most Carlsmontites have forgotten the scandal, or would brush it off as a youthful indiscretion, so if Ramduur can be found, he will readily be accepted as the new Grand Prince, if the populace of Carlsmont know that the Grand Prince is unlikely to recover, or as Regent if they don't. Lumyere will accept him, as

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well. Other heirs will not gain such easy acceptance; Lumyere will insist on verifying the lineage, and the populace won't trust the heir or the Government. If this comes to pass, there will be an upsurge in nationalist feeling, and growing unrest that can only be assuaged after the people have seen that the new Grand Prince is fair and friendly, like the old, and in control of the Government, not under the Government's thumb.

While he has not been prominent, Ramduur has made no effort to hide his identity, and it should be easy to pick up his 'trail'. However, he joined the Imperial Navy about seven years ago, and at last report was a Lieutenant in a squadron that has seen action and taken casualties recently. It is up to the referee's discretion whether Ramduur—who is/was serving under his own name—is dead, alive, or somewhere in between. If Ramduur is alive and in possession of his faculties, there will be no problem persuading him to return to Carlsmont, although he will question the circumstances of the revocation of his exile. It is up to the players what to tell him, within the limits of their mission.

Several of the other individuals are quite suitable as heirs, being business, government, or military leaders; others may be adequate, being followers rather than leaders; a number of them are absolutely unsuitable (but may be the only ones available), being 'dropouts' of one type or another (convicted criminals, substance abusers, etc.) or incapable of even understanding the situation (mentally retarded or victims of brain damage/injuries, etc.). Physical handicaps are no problem (and several of the cadet candidates have them), provided that either (a) they already have male issue to be their heir, or (b) they are capable of siring children so that they can have an heir after ascending the throne. Note that if a heir is incapable of siring children, it would naturally be advisable for the PCs to bring back both the heir and the heir's male issue (who will be children), although this wasn't said or implied in the briefing.

At the referee's discretion, an added twist can be that Ramduur is Isharii's twin brother, which opens up the possibility that Carlsmont can use him to make the Grand Prince have a "miraculous recovery". If Ramduur is a twin, the players will not be told this, although if any of the PCs knows what the Grand Prince looks like (referee's discretion), it will be evident from the (old) photograph that there is a strong family resemblance. In order for this to work, Lumyere must be kept from knowing that Ramduur has been found. In that event, it is entirely possible that the Government of Carlsmont will feel it necessary to take actions to ensure that the PCs do not blow the plot.

In generating further events on Carlsmont, remember that crises like this seem to have a flurry of activity at the beginning, when the situation is first developing, then they settle down to a stable state, where everyone is waiting for a change, and then either they degrade slowly when it is apparent that things aren't going to change, but those in charge aren't willing to acknowledge it, or they rapidly come to a head, when something serious happens, possibly (though not necessarily) making it clear that the truth had not been told earlier. The Carlsmont government will try to keep the lid on as long as possible, but the longer they do so, the more complex the lies have to get, and the more pressure from Lumyere will be brought to bear.

Other possible twists:

- There may be a nationalist spy in the Carlsmont Ministry of State. The spy may cause conflicting orders to be issued to the agents offworld, or may pass information to nationalists to allow them to try to interfere with the PCs' mission.
- The PCs' contact's statement concerning the acquiescence of Lumyere to Carlsmont's efforts may have been false, and Lumyere is preparing to revert Carlsmont to their control. More, the Lumyere government is currently headed by a militantly irredentist party, who do not want

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any possibility of Carlsmont finding a heir to the throne. Lumyere has far more resources to throw at stopping the PCs than any Carlsmont nationalists.

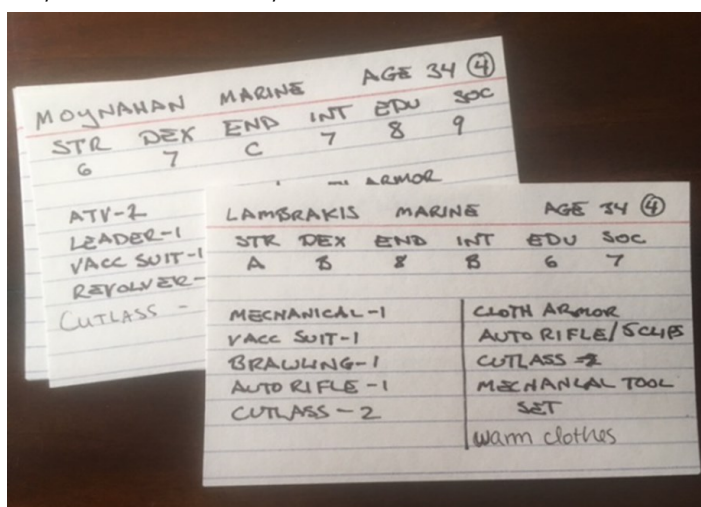
- As the PCs are bringing back a heir, news reaches them that the Prince has made a miraculous recovery. Depending on the story that the PCs told the heir, the whole plot could start to collapse around their ears at this point.

The Prep Room

An Improvised Classic Traveller Convention Game

by Christopher Kubasik

This article originally appeared on the author's WordPress blog on 3 July 2017. The original article links to other blog entries on that site. (<http://talestoastound.wordpress.com/>) .



I was at a local convention a couple of months ago and decided mid-way through the day I wanted to run some *Classic Traveller* during one of the gaming blocks. I went to the sign up desk, grabbed one of the templates, and wrote out a quick description about hunting for treasure on a war-torn world. Then, during lunch, I set about hacking some notes together.

- The PCs' contact may not be as safe as he believes. While it is true that only the Prince can pronounce the death sentence, imprisonment for treason is not a problem for the government. The PCs need not worry about treason themselves, but they are certainly liable for charges of attempted subversion (for supporting the purported heir's attempt at usurping the throne). Instead of getting a Cr100,000 (or more) payoff for their help, they may end up on the run, or in a jailbreak attempt to save their contact.

I've moved to index cards for my *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* game. I have come to prefer them for two reasons:

- They make me keep my information, ideas, and descriptions short. And I've learned brief chunks of information are more practical for my RPG play. I need data I can grasp at a glance and move on. I need something brief that can inspire me for more ideas in the moment and that I can relate to the Players (via their Player Characters) through specific interactions. Lots and lots of detail means I am sitting there reading a bunch of stuff that I can't get out all at once. So for now I'm in the habit of jotting down what can fit on an index card per subject and moving on.
- I love that I can pull the cards that I need out from the index card file box, set them out in front of me for reference, and then when I am done put them back.

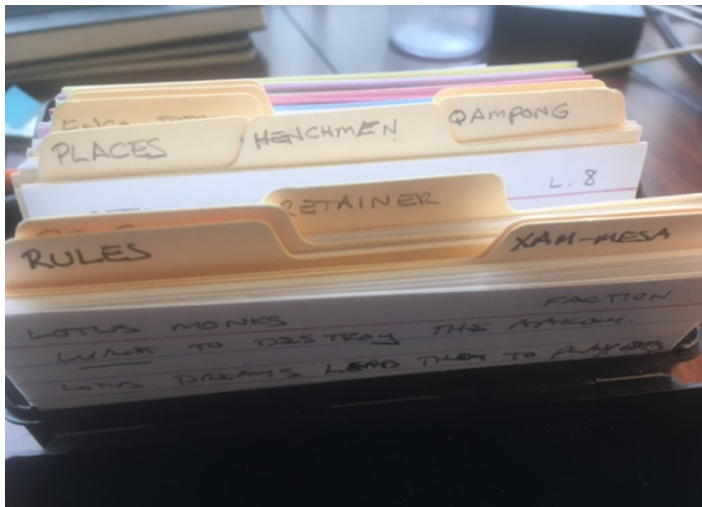
I got myself some index card tabs that I use to divide the cards into different categories, most of which are NPCs and Encounters divided by location. Here's an image from the cards from my *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* game (top next page).

I had no other *Classic Traveller* material with me. But luckily I have stored a ton of stuff on this blog as PDFs and images. So I pulled up this blog on my iPhone and got to work.

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The Prep Room

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I grabbed some pre-made Player Characters from a file I had shared before¹. I transferred four Player Characters to index cards. Each player would choose one. I made them all Marines so that the Players would have easy hooks to each other. (See the cards at the beginning of the article.) Normally I love having people roll up Classic *Traveller* characters. But I've learned that simple as the process is the first time someone does it takes a while. And I really wanted to have more time to play the adventure.

While I was working on that I was back-burnering some thoughts for the adventure.

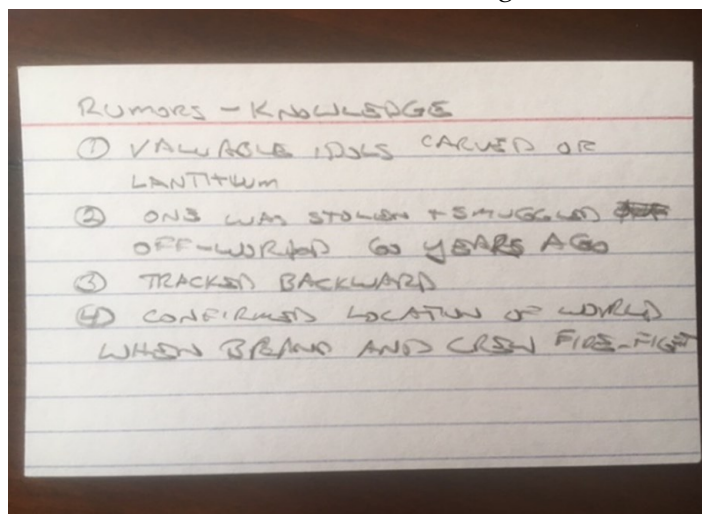
I wanted a clear goal out of the gate. (It was a four hour convention slot after all). So there was a treasure the PCs were after. I decided we'd go *in media res*—the PCs would already be on the trail of the treasure and were closing in on it when the game started. This way we could just get on with it instead of spending that first hour of everyone trying to figure out if they were on the “right path” for the adventure.

So I hacked together a few facts for the Players to have before we began:

The Player Characters would be chasing down rumors of an idol that was smuggled off a world decades ago and sold for a great fortune. It became a

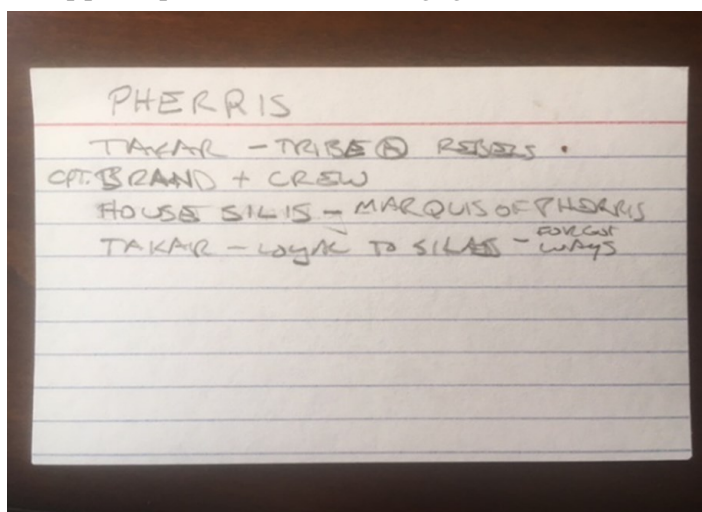
tale told in the culture of travellers, but no one had yet found the world where it had come from.

I decided the Player Character would already know about the idol, already had competition also looking for the world to see if there were more valuable idols (Captain Brand and his crew). Further, before play began I would explain to the Players their PCs had found a descendent of the man who had found the first idol, were meeting with him and



got map of where his great-great grandfather had found the idols, but that Brand and his men arrived, killed their contact in a fire-fight, and escaped with the map. Thus, the race was on.

The name of the world was Pherris, and I whipped up four factions to engage the PCs:



House Silis were the noble house that ruled Pherris in the name of a failing, ancient empire. The Takar were an humanoid-insect race that the hu-

1. <https://talestoastound.wordpress.com/2016/08/classic-traveller-hard-light-pregens.pdf>

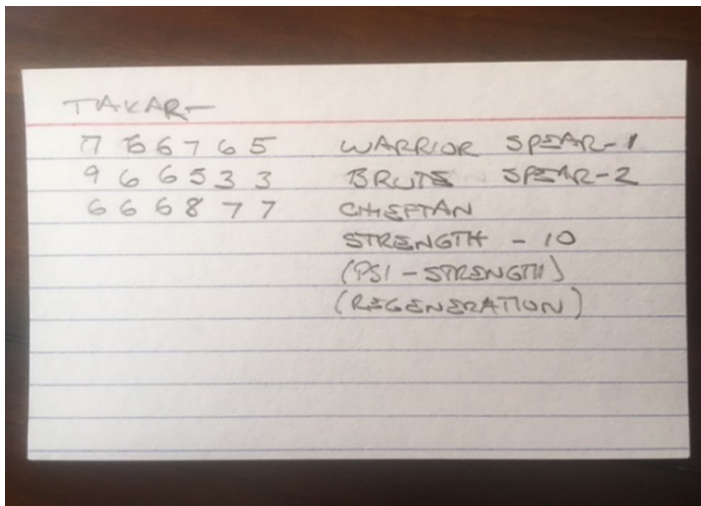
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The Prep Room

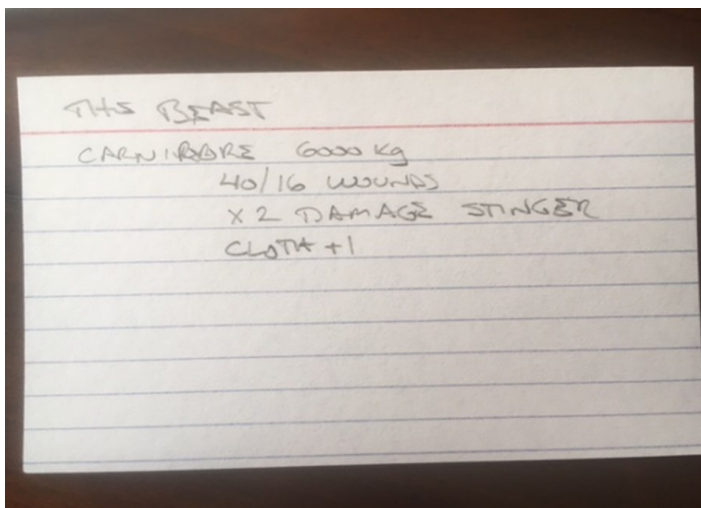
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mans had conquered decades ago. Some Takar were loyal to the humans, but others were beginning to revolt against human rule. And then there was Captain Brand and his men.

I started up three types of Takar really fast:

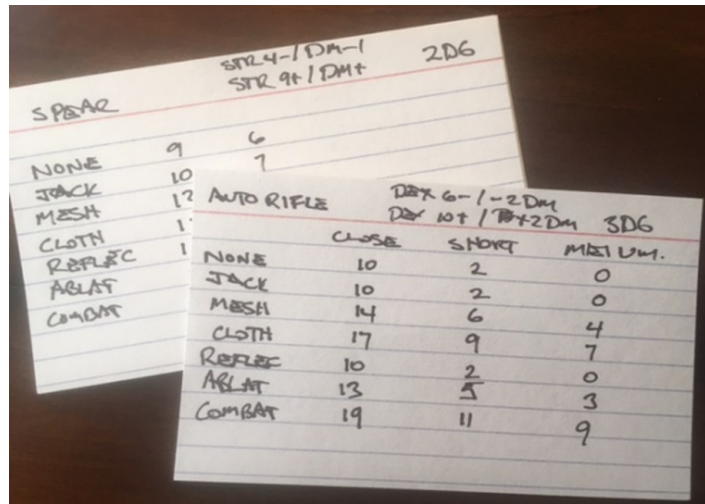


I decided the idols were made by an aboriginal culture and that the properties of the crystals keep a great beast in a great cavern in a state of suspended animation:



I have already designed Classic Traveller Weapon Cards² for ease of play, but didn't have them with me. But using my phone I jotted down some common weapons we'd be using during the game to have them on hand. I didn't give them to the players. I simply gave them the Throw values as needed.

2. <https://talestoastound.wordpress.com/2016/09/01/prepping-for-my-classic-traveller-convention-game-weapon-cards/>



As for the game, it went gangbusters. Three players signed up. (One was from my regular Monday Night Group, the other two were strangers.)

The Players (by their own accounts) had a really great time. A loose premise, a few notes, a loose structure for an evening's entertainment... and then winging it in terms of both the players' choices and the pacing as seemed appropriate.

Lots of fun world-building on the fly. It was a world dominated by high tech humans lording over an aboriginal humanoid-like insect population that lived at a Tech Level 0 capability. But I found I was adding solid details beat by beat to fill out the sense of reality as we went. I described the cold of the world. How the Takar could essentially hibernate as needed to conserve food and energy. I told the Players, "Because you've all served you know the imposing architecture of the Silis Palace is not there to defend against attacks from space but to be imposing to the natives of this world." What I was looking for was not a "Hard SF" but enough details that made sense and an internal logic to give a patina of logic and science fiction—just like the fiction that inspired Marc Miller to create the game³.

The experimentation I had done with other con games with Traveller paid off here as I knew the limits of the game and when to simply move things along. I was, per all my blog posts and comments

3. <https://talestoastound.wordpress.com/2015/012/13/traveller-was-never-supposed-to-be-hard-science-fiction/>

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thereon⁴, a Referee who adjudicated the “logic” of the world and actions of the PCs quickly, often without requiring rolls, and then came up with Throws on the fly⁵. No player blinked at that.

Because I had the pre-generated Player Characters I used my time at the top of the session to do a preamble about how the game was going to play differently than most games from the mid-80s on. I talked about the role of the referee. I talked about how they should not limit themselves to the skill list of what they can do but to look at the first line of the PC Index Card in front of them that listed their service branch (former Marines for all), age, and terms of service. “Remember,” I said, “if there is something you think a marine should be able to do, you can probably do it.”

Then came characteristics. And then skills under all that. I described how Throws could be made for almost anything. That they might not be able to try some things at all, but other times they could make a throw and sometimes an expertise rating might be a DM, or a very high or low characteristic might be a DM, or having been a Marine might be a DM. And other times they might simply do what they want if they have the right qualities of skill or characteristic or background without even having to make a roll.

I explained that Classic *Traveller* has no Experience system for activities or deeds done during play. Which means the Players have to set up their own goals or agendas and judge for themselves if they are getting closer or further way from what they want only through the details of the fiction. This makes it a unique game within the range of RPGs as far as I know. If the Players don’t know what they want the game might well grind to a halt.

I explained the notion that space travel between the stars is relatively slow compared to what we are

used to in most mass-media. I watched eyes widen with both sudden comprehension and delight at this notion. I will admit this delighted me — as I could see this novel aspect pulled all of them closer to core conceit of the game and the idea that it could take weeks, if not months, to travel a vast chain of star systems. The idea that space was **BIG** and travel between the stars was a **BIG DEAL** was beginning to take hold.

Then I broke the news that communication only moved at the speed of travel. Eyebrows went up. Smiles appeared. This was apparently **A REALLY COOL NOTION**. “No faster than light communication at all?”

“Nope,” I replied.

“Like ships have to carry messages and communications between worlds?”

“Exactly,” I said. “Like packet boats in the Age of Sail.”

And with that, the three players really *got* the core conceit of *Traveller’s* one core setting element and seemed *delighted* with this notion.

I asked them to tell me what one item they still carried with them from their time in the service (A jacket; a footlocker; pistols with handle grip designs commemorating a field action of great import).

I asked them to look at their age, terms of service, characteristics, and skills and think not in terms of what their character could *do* but how this informed the characterization of the character. “Looking at these details, who is this character? How do they see themselves? What do they want? Why are they traveling between stars when most people never do?”

I asked them how they met (after each of them mustered out, kicking around the stars and lacking focus), and what they sought.

One had been a quartermaster, always working to make an extra buck. I handed him the background details: Rumors of a crystal statue of great wealthy sold by a man 60 years ago for a million

4. <https://talestoastound.wordpress.com/2017/01/06/traveller-out-of-the-box-an-approach-to-refereeing-and-throws-in-original-traveller-part-i/>

5. <https://talestoastound.wordpress.com/2017/05/15/traveller-out-of-the-box-a-summation-of-my-thoughts-on-throws-in-original-traveller-part-ii/>

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credits. The world was unknown, but rumor was he meant to go back years ago and get more.

I explained they had met up as this marine pursued this rumor. They were going to be meeting with the man who claimed to be the long dead man's great-great-great-grandson to get more details: the name of the world, a map.

The crew of a free trader charged into the bar during the meet. The man with the map was killed during a firefight. The map stolen from them.

The PCs worked passage on ships with greater jump capability than the free trader to beat their adversaries to the world. There they worked themselves into the planetary forces dealing with an uprising of "the abos" (aboriginals) who were now fighting against the abos who were loyal to the human ruling class. This allowed them to scope out the situation before the other crew arrived on planet, and gave them authority to take action against the crew when they arrived. (The arriving crew made the mistake of looking like they were trying to sneak onto the planet to smuggle weapons to the rebels.)

Lots of adventure, the Players being smart, unexpected mysteries. They realized there was a rebellion happening—and got themselves hired into the local militia. With their imperial training they were a cut above the local forces and managed to get themselves wide leeway going out on 'patrols' (but really trying to track down the location of the idols) without having anyone keeping too close an eye on them. (Please note: I did not think of this as a plan or expect it at all. This was something the Player Characters came up with on their own... and it was

quite smart. I had no "adventure" planned. Just a situation. It was up to the Players to figure how they would move their characters forward. It was up to me to provide obstacles and opportunity.)

They found the crystal statues and figured out they were used to keep a buried creature in hibernation through psionic energy. They stole the crystals, awoke and unleashed what was pretty much a T-Rex. Hijinks ensued.

It was a solid old school game that could have been expanded greatly both in play time at the table and as a campaign. The players were coming up with all sorts of smart ideas that would have paid off for a longer campaign and I had to say things like, "That's really great. But we have forty minutes left for a con game. What is your objective *now*?"

One player (former Army, as it happens), as we took a break halfway through the session said, "I have to tell you... I am having a *great* time."

So everyone thought it rocked.

And I type all this up to say—the game was written and designed to play this easy, fast, and loose play⁶—and you can play this way too. No long, details about politics that the Player Characters can't influence anyway. No thoughtfully pre-planned adventure the Player Characters are supposed to follow. No expectations of what the Players will do.

I simply came up with some notes. Let the Players move forward with their plans. Made rolls to see how things turned out when required, let them succeed without rolls if that made sense. And everyone had a great time.

Just sayin'.



6. <https://talestoastound.wordpress.com/2016/05/31/traveller-out-of-the-box-the-casual-and-improvisatory-nature-of-early-traveller-play/>

These Stars Are Ours!

reviewed by Timothy Collinson

These Stars Are Ours!. Omer Golan-Joel, Richard Hazlewood, Josh Peters.

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Cepheus Engine isn't yet a year old and already has much exciting material being published for it. However, in dropping the direct *Traveller* connection for Open Game Content, it also means that the Third Imperium is no longer a setting that publishers can support. That hasn't meant, however, that *Cepheus Engine* hasn't got places to go, worlds to visit and backgrounds to provide a wealth of adventure. Gypsy Knights Games immediately converted their Clement Sector over to the *Engine* and Zozer revised their near future solar system setting to bring us *Orbital 2100*. Both of these are very different in location, time and feel, but both give plenty of potential for travellers of all kinds looking for excitement, fame and wealth.

These Stars Are Ours!, however, is the first setting built for *Cepheus Engine* from the start and comes from Stellagama in hardbound, softcover, and PDF. I'm reviewing the hardcover version which looks terrific (and smells great too!) although a couple of comparison points with the PDF are noted. For those who don't recognize the publisher, they've also produced *The Space Patrol* and *From the Ashes* for *Cepheus Engine* as well as support material for the *Stars Without Number* role playing game.

For your money you get a 204-page book that covers the usual ground you might expect in such a setting book: history and politics, aliens, careers, starships and a dozen patrons to kickstart adventures. There's an index which has some glitches in it and would benefit from a hanging indent but is useful nonetheless. An appendix lists books, films and videos that have provided inspiration. The cover is



an attractive Ian Stead illustration of a Reticulan saucer and a Terran military transport above a planet. Internally, the illustrations are all greyscale in the hardcover but many are colour in the PDF.

TSAO, as it styles itself, is set in 2260AD so it joins the likes of *Outer Veil*, *Cthonian Stars*, *2300AD*, *Hyperlite* and *Clement Sector* in being nearish future rather than far future. The first of those, the sharp-eyed reader may spot, is a previous setting from Golan-Joel and Hazlewood published by Spica back in 2011 which has similarities in providing space with 'edges' to explore and a real opportunity for PCs to make a difference. *TSAO* describes itself as a "space-opera setting for the *Cepheus Engine Core Rules*... two years after the Terrans took Keid and forced the Reticulan Empire to capitulate." The Reticulans being the alien Greys (or sometimes green as a result of life extension treatments) of science fiction so their ships as flying saucers are entirely appropriate. They have subjugated Terra for more than a century but are now on the defensive since a revolution and success-

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ful liberation has left Terra in the ascendance against the odds. Yes, you could read the Reticulans as short Vilani females who emphasise contemplation and logic. Or perhaps given their looks and their relationship to the Precursors, Vilani/Droyne. Many other aliens exist and give additional complexity to politics, personal interactions and even role playing as players are encouraged to use them just as much as humans. The Cicek – reptilian and could be read as a cross between Vargr and Aslan, Zhuzzh – nomadic insectoids and the religious Ssesslessians – think snakes! Notes are provided on role-playing these as characters which is helpful. Standing in for the Ancients of the official *Traveller* universe there are the Gardeners and the Precursors. Nowhere near as old and perhaps not quite as enigmatic, these are again used to explain some of the similarity of life and environments on multiple worlds. They also add to the texture of role playing and provide further avenues for adventure or conflict. Lots of history, politics and corporations are provided for humans. Much briefer details for the alien races – perhaps we'll see more on them later. For those who will inevitably ask, psionics are included in this setting, although much like the official *Traveller* universe they're kept relatively restricted. Religion also plays a part in various ways as well but is handled sensitively and appropriately. It would be easy enough to play this up to be a major part of the game if desired, or allowed to fade into the background if preferred.

Moving onto character generation, always a staple in such books, *These Stars Are Ours!* does nothing exceptionally different in its 53 page chapter (a quarter of the book) and lays them out in a similar way to the core rules of *Cepheus Engine*. First off you can use several of the careers from the *Cepheus Engine* core rulebook directly – which is in any case required for play. Secondly, *TSAO* offers 20 new careers (although it claims only 16) specifically for the setting. From aliens to intelligence operatives and

from nobles to the 'standards' of scouts or navy or merchants. As with the core rules, instead of each career following each other, they're described and then *TSAO* rules are detailed followed by tables that collect all the careers into groups of four. This would work quite well except that each career as usual takes two tables which are on two back-to-back pages which maximises page turning. *Cepheus Engine* doesn't follow *Mongoose Traveller* in including events tables, but *TSAO* does. It provides 2D6 tables for each of their careers (but not the relevant core rulebook careers) as well as a 2D6 table for War Events and one for Civilian Events. Rules for augments, cybernetics, cyborgs and body modifications are also given.

The chapter on starships offers some variant rules the authors recommend following to better convey the flavour of the setting (advanced sensors for example, or steerage passage). A table of ship quirks further gives variety to games using *These Stars Are Ours!* The 23 page chapter includes deck plans, illustrations, details and descriptions of two small craft and five starships: a 30-ton Reticulan Civilian Saucer and 30-ton Reticular Military Saucer; a 200-ton Ssesslessian Infiltrator, 300-ton Terran *Shaka*-class Light Military Transport, 300-ton Zhuzzh Scavenger, 400-ton Cicek Raider and 600-ton Reticulan Abductor. The deck plans are the usual clarity and quality of Ian Stead's work. His illustrations are good enough in greyscale but are much more striking in all their coloured glory in the PDF.

Chapter 5 covers astrology, starting with the spectral classes of stars and the temperatures of worlds with a useful table to generate the latter for any world. Worlds in *TSAO* all have temperatures added to their name and UWP string which is such a fundamental to adventuring on any given planet it seems surprising that this hasn't become standard before. The authors should be commended for this innovation alone – although there are some instantly adoptable bits throughout. The 'Known Space' of *TSAO* is large but described rather than mapped.

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This volume provides a map for about two subsectors worth of worlds along the border of the United Terran Republic and the Reticulan Empire, with three other polities just about making an appearance. This is plenty to be going on with and one of the key features is that there is room for scout explorers to go off to unknown worlds. The map is unrelated to the Third Imperium setting unsurprisingly but is otherwise virtually identical in design with similar *Traveller* maps. It's perhaps a little surprising, however, that Stellagama didn't choose to use their own Near Space work as a basis for the setting given that it is based around Sol (Terra). My guess would be that it didn't give the authors quite what they wanted in the way of star placement which is fair enough. Unfortunately for the printed version of the map, the distinction between the symbols for 'water present', 'no water present' and 'fluid oceans' is invisible. It is clear enough in the colour PDF version of the map although that in turn is slightly larger on the page because it's without a key. The key is a welcome addition to the printed version, but different markings should be used for future editions. An electronic version of the map, in colour, is in any case available as a download if purchasing print and PDF. The remainder of the chapter gives a paragraph of description to each world. These are short but adequate for the purpose and will give referees enough to hang visits on, if perhaps not longer duration stays on a world.

The final chapter details a dozen patrons, some alien, with name, title and what they need the PCs to do (but no UPP strings which isn't a major problem); the skills and equipment needed for the job; a description of the job; referee information and six complications apiece. These act as 12 adventure starters and provide a variety of beginnings that would get players going without too much difficulty. There are no fully blown adventures for the setting but given the publisher's track record, they may be coming in supporting material. Four Terran

News Agency Dispatches are given in the style of TAS news items and they're worthy enough but feel a little detached from anything else. It might have served better if there had been more of them and maybe spread them out through the book. Or perhaps more clearly linked them with the history and politics of chapter one.

The single column layout of text is clear enough although a double column design might have looked more contemporary. The overall design can best be described perhaps as 'simple' but personally I'd much rather that than the totally over-engineered practice in some role playing books of shaded backgrounds, nearly impossible to read text and much wasted space. Less easy to give a pass to on the other hand are the page numbers on the insides of pages making them hard to read and with even numbers on the right for some reason – although as it happens, this follows the *Cepheus Engine* core rules example which does the same thing. If this were corrected, it would mean that the related careers tables would appear on facing pages which would be a great boon. On the upside, the text size throughout is good – though some tables are quite small – and the font choice for body text, titles and subtitles is clear and attractive.

These Stars Are Ours! is a great addition to the *Cepheus Engine* universe and provides a setting that will be at once not unfamiliar to long time *Travellers*, and yet offers much that is fresh and novel to give old-timers and newcomers a solid platform from which to base all the usual types of adventure: exploration, merchant, military, noble and much, much more. It should also be possible for those who've used *Attack Squadron: Roswell* from Zozer to make this setting a kind of future for that timeline without much work. Unless you have your heart fixed on creating your own universe – no small task – or are already wrapped up in any of the established settings, then this is definitely worth a look and I hope is well supported by the publisher or others in the future. 🌟

Collapsible Fuel Tank and Jump Drives “On Rails”

by Joshua Levy

This article describes two new fittings for starships. The examples are provided using Classic *Traveller* and *Cepheus Engine* rules, but the fittings can be used with any *Traveller* ruleset.

Collapsible Fuel Tanks

Though the name has been used before for a variety of alternative fuel-carriage mechanisms, this version of collapsible fuel tanks are a spaceship fitting generally used by ships that need more maneuver fuel than jump fuel. Ships which need extra jump fuel generally use external drop tanks or internal temporary fuel bladders, which are described elsewhere.

The collapsible fuel tanks described here permanently use 10% of the tank size (minimum 5 tons) to store the tank itself, when empty. Even when in use, this space is not part of the tank. When in use, or “deployed”, the tank expands to its full size to store fuel, making the ship that much larger. The tank can be used over and over. Deployment and takedown are automated and can be controlled from the ship’s bridge. The process is not quick, taking about 1 minute per 100 tons of tank size, with a minimum of 4 minutes. The tank must be empty, and any tiny scraps of fuel left in the tank will be vented to space. Finally, the ship cannot jump with the collapsible fuel tank in use; the temporary hull around it is not jump capable. Referees should decide if the jump drives just won’t engage or if a misjump results.

Collapsible Fuel Tanks can be included at build time at a cost of Cr10,000 per ton of fuel capacity. Retrofitting Collapsible Fuel Tanks to an already-built ship costs 10% of the original hull construction cost, plus Cr10,000 per ton of fuel capacity.

Consider, for example, the Classic *Traveller* Type S Scout modified with an 8-ton collapsible tank (perhaps by removing two staterooms). When deployed, the tank can hold 80 tons of fuel. It takes 4

minutes to deploy or take down the tank. If the ship is sent to explore a large system, with only one fuel source, it will jump in system with the fuel tank collapsed, but can fill up after arrival. It now has a total fuel capacity of 120 tons, but a total size of 180 tons. Therefore, it has 1G acceleration, but a range of 6 months, rather than the normal 2G, 1 month range. (The advantages are even larger for a 400 ton exploratory ship with a 100 or 200 ton collapsible fuel tank.)

A *Cepheus Engine* TL9 Courier would end up with a fuel capacity of 108 tons (giving it an in system endurance of 54 weeks). The design would probably sacrifice 8 tons of cargo space, rather than 2 staterooms.

Jump Drives “On Rails”

When a spaceship operates in only one system, but needs to be built in a different system, it may be built with jump drives “on rails”. The formal name is “Jump Drives Removable on Arrival”. These ships are built with room for Jump drives, however instead of new jump drives, used drives are installed, and the general design of the ship allows for relatively easy removal in zero-G. Usually a modular replacement for the jump drive is also constructed. When the ship is delivered to its final destination, the jump drives are removed and the modular replacements installed. The swap takes a week or two, depending on the situation. The referee may roll 2- for a catastrophic failure of some kind. (This roll, and the reverse roll discussed later, both assume that the people doing the swap have Engineering skill, and at least half the people involved have done it before. If they don’t have the experience, apply DM -2; if they lack both skill and experience, DM -8.) Jump drives “on rails” end up wasting 3% (minimum 1 ton) of the jump drive space in the engineering section. So a B Jump drive installed “on rails” would take up 16 tons of space, but when replaced, gives back 15 tons of space.

Because the jump drive is in the engineering area of the ship, whatever replaces it will also be there.

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The Shipyard

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Some stellar governments may ban this, as it is dangerous. Others may allow it, but limit what is put in engineering in ways they think are safe, or require a post-conversion inspection. Obviously, if fuel is safe, then replacing the jump drive with fuel is straight forward. Cargo space or a small craft hanger may be good choices, if there is a reasonable way to get the cargo or craft in and out of engineering. This space cannot be used to upgrade to a larger power plant or maneuver drive, as that is a replacement, not adding new equipment.

Putting in staterooms (especially for engineers) might sound like a good idea to someone who does not spend time in space, but it's not. Engineering spaces are usually bad places to work, and terrible places to live. There is often extreme noise, smells, vibrations, and hazardous materials. If people are living in engineering, it might be a good application of the Sanity Rules (published as "A Sanity System for *Marc Miller's Traveller (T4)*", *Freelance Traveller*, March/April 2016). Indeed, a whole horror themed adventure could be built around the engineering crew's gradual loss of sanity. Maybe there will be rats in the walls...

A ship built with a jump drive "on rails" will be subject to two types of malfunctions that other ships are not subject to:

First, there could be a failure of the hull in engineering which was previously removed to replace the drive. This section could fail catastrophically, or could spring a leak, or generally show signs of imminent failure. Since it's likely to be large, and will certainly be in engineering, any problem is likely to get the crew's attention quickly (if it does not kill them outright).

Second, there could be a problem in the linkage between whatever replaced the jump drive, and the rest of the ship. These sections could lose power, life support/comfort conditioning, or networking con-

nections, or they may start physically sliding around or vibrating.

If a spare jump drive is available, the swapping process can be reversed later, but this is unusual, and much more difficult than the initial swap. It will take the same one to two weeks, but the referee should roll 2d6 with a failure occurring on 3-, or even 4- for particularly old starships.

The delivery process for these ships typically works as follows. When the ship is ready, the buyer sends a pilot and engineer (and possibly more crew) to the shipyard. The shipyard provides some crew, and a cargo ship. The two vessels travel to the destination system. The buyer uses this as a shakedown or acceptance flight. Once at the final destination, the shipyard crew removes the jump drive and loads it back in their cargo ship, and then loads in whatever is replacing the jump drive. The buyer crew does the final shakedown/acceptance flights, and the spaceship is delivered.

This assumes a fair amount of trust between the shipyard and the buyer. If such trust is lacking, things can get more complex. The shipyard may provide the transport crew. The buyer may insist that the cargo ship stay at the destination system while the shakedown cruise is made. Since there are many millions of credits involved, things could get tense.

When the ship is designed with Jump Drive "on rails", the additional cost is 0.1% of the hull cost, times the displacement of the drive to be so mounted. The drive itself costs "book" price.

It is unlikely that a *Classic Traveller* Type-S or a *Cepheus Engine* TL9 Courier would be built this way, but if either were, upon arrival at its final destination, its 15 ton Jump-B drive would be removed, giving the ship 14 extra tons of space. (Probably for cargo, but possibly for a small craft hanger, fuel, or even to carve out more staterooms.)

The author thanks Darrel Strom and John Redden for reviewing a draft of this article. All mistakes are my own.



Repair Tugs

by Joshua Levy

The Repair Tug is a specialized spaceship type, found most commonly in systems which have extensive spaceship construction and repair facilities, routinely move heavy cargoes throughout the system, or have a large ship salvage industry (often due to a previous naval battle). Systems which see heavy traffic may also use these tugs as “rescue ships” to assist or tow ships in operational distress.

If you are playing in a Corporate Repo campaign (*Freelance Traveller*, May/June 2017, page 32), this class of ship is perfect for the repo team. It combines lots of tools, parts, and space in order to repair (or otherwise free) disabled ships, plus it can physically move them if needed. The ships’ high acceleration when not acting as a tug is a bonus.

Obviously, if the PCs’ ship issues a mayday/GK call in a populated system, a ship of this type might be dispatched to help, especially if the distress call mentioned problems with the ship itself.

An interesting campaign could be built around the crew of one of these ships, out on the fringe of space. A low population world might even modify one of these ships to add weapons, and operate it as a combination emergency response, Traveller’s aid, border patrol, and defense service.

In more standard *Traveller* campaigns, these ships will be seen assisting ships along high traffic stellar shipping lines.

Most repair tugs are spaceships (not starships), thus not jump capable. However, some variants do include jump drives and are thus true starships.

Note that all of these designs are non-standard for Classic *Traveller* in that they have larger maneuver drives and power plants than are usually allowed. They are covered by a house rule that says over-powered ships such as these can only produce 6G of acceleration (and use the appropriate amount of fuel) unless pushing/towing another ship, in which case they use more fuel and are limited to the acceleration of the combined ship mass. Attempting

more than 6Gs of acceleration will destroy the drives, the power plant, or the ship.

The *Cepheus Engine* does not have this limitation, so these ships are standard under those rules. Note, however, that the *Cepheus Engine* tables do not show performances greater than Jump 6, 6G acceleration, or Power Plant performance 6, and thus even under *Cepheus Engine* rules, the fuel usage and maximum acceleration is assumed to be 6G/Power Plant 6.

All the ships described below are commonly built with a “jump drive on rails”, in addition to the jump capable versions described here. These “on rails” versions will typically have 1 ton less workspace/cargo area and 15 tons of something in the engineering area. That is usually fuel, but could be a monster computer, a larger workshop, a designated vehicle storage area, and/or more storage for specialty tools and replacement parts.

As these are specialized ships, very few are built in any given year, and those only to specific order (no yard constructs these “on spec”), and the average age in service, for all of these types, is well over 70 years, with some hulls exceeding a century.

Longhorn-Class Repair Tug

Classic Traveller

Using a custom 400-ton hull, the *Longhorn*-class Repair Tug is designed for local system operations involving towing or performing minor repairs on operationally-distressed ships. It mounts Jump Drive *B*, Maneuver Drive *V*, and Power Plant *V*, giving performance of Jump-1 and 6G acceleration. There is fuel tankage of 200 tons, supporting up to three Jump-1s and five weeks of operations, or one Jump-1 and up to ten weeks of operations, or thirteen weeks of operation without jumping. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model/4. There are 8 staterooms and no low berths, plus 29 tons of workshop and cargo space. There are no hardpoints and no allocation for firecontrol nor are any turrets or weapons mounted.

The ship requires a crew of 6: Pilot, Navigator, and 4 Engineers. The ship costs MCr336 (plus fees

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and the cost of the workshop) and takes 64 weeks to build.

Longhorn-class Repair Tug (Classic Traveller)			
Component	Description	Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	Custom 400 Tons	400	40
Jump Drive	B (Jump 1, 40 t. fuel/Jump)	15	20
Maneuver Drive	V (6G acceleration)	39	80
Power Plant	V 60 t. fuel/4 wks, inc. Maneuver)	61	160
Fuel		200	
Bridge		20	2
Computer	Model/4	4	30
Staterooms	8 standard	32	4
Cargo		29	
Extras	Workshop, cost unspecified, volume included in cargo		
Total		400	336

Cepheus Engine

Using a 400-ton hull (8 Hull, 8 Structure), the *Longhorn-class Repair Tug* is designed for local system operations involving towing or performing minor repairs on operationally-distressed ships. It mounts Jump Drive *B*, Maneuver Drive *V*, and Power Plant *V*, giving performance of Jump-1 and 6G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 200 tons supports operations for 4 weeks and up to 3 jump-1s, or 1 jump-1 and up to 8 weeks of operations, or up to 10 weeks of operations without jumping. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model/4. The ship is equipped with Basic Civilian sensors (DM -2). There are 8 staterooms and no low berths. The ship has no hardpoints or fire control, and no weapons or screens installed. There are no provisions for small craft. Cargo capacity is 27 tons. The hull is standard, and unarmored. Special features include a workshop, included in the cargo space. The ship requires a crew of 6: Pilot, Navigator, and 4 Engineers. The ship can carry up to 8 additional passengers at double occupancy, and no low passengers. The ship

costs MCr287.1 (plus fees and cost of workshop) and takes 60 weeks to build.

Longhorn-class Repair Tug (Cepheus Engine)			
Component	Description	Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	400 Tons (8 Hull, 8 Struct)	400	16
Jump Drive	B (Jump 1, 40 t. fuel/Jump)	15	20
Maneuver Drive	V (6G acceleration)	39	80
Power Plant	V (20 t. fuel/wk, inc. Maneuver)	61	160
Fuel		200	
Bridge		20	2
Computer	Model/4	4	5
Electronics	Basic Civilian Sensors (DM -2)	1	0.05
Staterooms	8 standard	32	4
Cargo	(inc. workshop [cost unspecified])	27	
Extras	Fuel Purification	1	0.05
Total		400	287.1

The *Cepheus Engine* version of this design allocates 2 tons less to the workshop/cargo space, to allow the installation of Basic Civilian electronics and fuel purification equipment. Alternative designs may substitute a Model/3 (recovering 1 ton and saving MCr3) or even a Model/2 (recovering 2 tons and saving MCr4.84) computer and not lose the workshop/cargo space.

Description

The *Longhorn* is a standard repair tug to handle small and medium-small ships. It represents a conservative choice found along all major trade routes. The Power Plant *V*/Maneuver Drive *V* combination allows it push/tow anything up to 3600 tons, with maneuver performance reduced per the combined hull tonnage of the towed ship and the tug; under maximum load, this is 1G. An unburdened *Longhorn* can achieve an acceleration of 6G, and Jump-1. It does not carry passengers commercially; additional personnel for rescue operations, such as repair engineers and medical personnel, are often carried.

If jumped into a system, it will not arrive in system with enough fuel to take full advantage of its maneuver drive and power plant; it will need to re-

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fuel for that. Though not listed in the specs, operators often use a Launch, G-Carrier, air/raft, or Gig to act as a spotter when moving large ships or debris. When carried, this is stored in the workshop space, and must be removed before the workshop is used.

Note that this is non-standard in terms of installing size V maneuver drive and power plants in a 400-ton hull.

The class and its variants are normally named after large multi-role domesticated animals, generally from their port of registry.

There are a number of common variations on the *Longhorn* design, to extend its capabilities in different ways. These variations generally result in a higher displacement for the “workings” of the ship; generally, this is compensated for by reducing the size of the workshop or cargo space, by eliminating staterooms, by using a smaller computer, or by some combination of these. Duration recomputations may use less fuel than total allocation; the overage will not be sufficient for a full week of operation, and in no case will less than 4 weeks of operation (in addition to jump fuel usage) be accepted.

Double Wide: Maneuver Drive W (+2 tons), Power Plant W (+3 tons), and extra fuel (+10 tons); eliminates 3 staterooms and 3 tons cargo; can push 4600 tons at 1G, extends duration to $3\times J1+6\text{wks(CT/CE)}$, $1\times J1+11\text{wks(CT)}/1\times J1+8\text{wks(CE)}$, or $0\times J1+14\text{wks(CT)}/0\times J1+10\text{wks(CE)}$. Cost +MCr11 (CT/CE).

Bigger in Texas: Maneuver Drive X (+4 tons), Power Plant X (+6 tons), and extra fuel (+20 tons); eliminates 3 staterooms, 16 tons cargo, and reduces the computer to Model/2; can push over 5000 tons at 1G, extends duration to $4\times J1+4\text{wks(CT)}/3\times J1+4\text{wks(CE)}$, $1\times J1+12\text{wks(CT)}/1\times J1+8\text{wks(CE)}$, or $0\times J1+14\text{wks(CT)}/0\times J1+10\text{wks(CE)}$. Cost +MCr11.5(CT)/+MCr17.66(CE)

Far Repair Tug: Jump Drive D (+10 tons); eliminates 2 staterooms and 2 tons cargo; can now jump-2.

Extends duration to $1\times J2+8\text{wks(CT)}/1\times J2+6\text{wks(CE)}$, or $0\times J2+13\text{wks(CT)}/0\times J2+10\text{wks(CT)}$. Cost +MCr19(CT/CE).

Armed Repair Tug: Two concealed turrets (+2 tons) and a sick bay with 2 emergency low berths. Crew requirement +2 Gunners. *Converts* 2 staterooms to sickbay/emergency low berths (no tonnage change). Eliminates 2 tons cargo. These are sometimes euphemistically referred to as “Rugged Repair Tugs”. Cost +MCr0.8-MCr2.4, depending on type of turrets, plus cost of weapons installed in turrets(CT)/+MCr2.6-MCr6.2, depending on type of turrets, plus cost of weapons(CE). No change in operational duration.

More Workshop: *Convert* 2 staterooms to workshop/cargo, so end up with 37 tons (no total tonnage change). Cost -MCr1(CT/CE).

Human Problems: *Converts* 2 staterooms to sickbay with 2 emergency low berths (no tonnage change). Crew requirements +1 medic. No change in duration; no change in cost.

Stretch Repair Tug: Jump Drive F (+20 tons) and extra fuel (+20 tons); can now jump-3. Eliminates 4 staterooms, 23 tons of workshop and cargo, and reduces computer to Model/3. Crew requirements +1 Engineer. Extends duration to $1\times J3+6\text{wks(CT)}/1\times J3+5\text{wks(CE)}$, or $0\times J3+14\text{wks(CT)}/0\times J3+10\text{wks(CE)}$. Cost +35MCr(CT/CE). Crew must double bunk. This configuration should not be called a *Repair Tug*; just a Tug.

Home Improvement-Class Repair Tug

Classic Traveller

Using a custom 400-ton hull, the *Home Improvement*-class Repair Tug is designed for local system operations involving towing or performing minor repairs on operationally-distressed ships. It mounts Jump Drive B, Maneuver Drive Z, and Power Plant Z, giving performance of Jump-1 and 6G acceleration. There is fuel tankage of 100 tons, supporting one Jump-1 and 4 weeks of operations, or 7 weeks of operation without jumping. Adjacent to the bridge is

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a computer Model/4. There are 8 staterooms and no low berths, a sickbay with 2 emergency low berths, a 15-ton small-craft hangar, plus 71 tons of workshop and cargo space. There are no hardpoints and no allocation for firecontrol nor are any turrets or weapons mounted. The ship mounts collapsible fuel tanks, taking 15 tons when collapsed, but adding another 150 tons of fuel when in use, allowing for an additional 10 weeks of operations.

The ship requires a crew of 6: Pilot, Navigator, and 4 Engineers. The ship costs MCr386.7 (plus fees and the cost of the workshop) and takes 64 weeks to build.

Home Improvement-class Repair Tug (Classic Traveller)			
Component	Description	Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	Custom 400 Tons	400	40
Jump Drive	B (Jump 1, 40 t. fuel/Jump)	15	20
Maneuver Drive	Z (6G acceleration)	47	96
Power Plant	Z 60 t. fuel/4 wks, inc. Maneuver)	73	192
Fuel		100	
Bridge		20	2
Computer	Model/4	4	30
Staterooms	8 standard	32	4
Cargo	(Inc. workshop, cost unspecified)	71	
Extras	Collapsible Fuel Tanks (150 tons)	15	1.5
	Sickbay (incl volume of ELB)	8	1
	Emergency Low Berth × 2		0.2
	Small Craft Hangar	15	
Total		400	386.7

Cepheus Engine

Using a 400-ton hull (8 Hull, 8 Structure,), the *Longhorn*-class Repair Tug is designed for local system operations involving towing or performing minor repairs on operationally-distressed ships. It mounts Jump Drive B, Maneuver Drive Z, and Power Plant Z, giving performance of Jump-1 and 6G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 100 tons supports 1 jump-1 and up to 2 weeks of operations, or up to 4 weeks of operations without jumping. Adjacent to

the bridge is a computer Model/4. The ship is equipped with Basic Civilian sensors (DM -2). There are 8 staterooms and no low berths. The ship has no hardpoints or fire control, and no weapons or screens installed. There is a 15-ton small-craft bay; no small-craft is included with the ship. Cargo capacity is 69 tons. The hull is standard, and unarmored. Special features include a workshop (included in the cargo space), a sickbay with two emergency low berths, fuel purification facilities, and collapsible fuel tanks for 150 tons of fuel, allowing an additional 6 weeks of operation. The ship requires a crew of 6: Pilot, Navigator, and 4 Engineers. The ship can carry up to 8 additional passengers at double occupancy, and no low passengers. The ship costs MCr340.8 (plus fees and cost of workshop) and takes 60 weeks to build.

Home Improvement-class Repair Tug (Cepheus Engine)			
Component	Description	Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	400 Tons (8 Hull, 8 Struct)	400	16
Jump Drive	B (Jump 1, 40 t. fuel/Jump)	15	20
Maneuver Drive	Z (6G acceleration)	47	96
Power Plant	Z (24 t. fuel/wk, inc. Maneuver)	73	192
Fuel		100	
Bridge		20	2
Computer	Model/4	4	5
Electronics	Basic Civilian Sensors (DM -2)	1	0.05
Staterooms	8 standard	32	4
Cargo	(inc. workshop [cost unspecified])	69	
Extras	Fuel Purification	1	0.05
	Collapsible Fuel Tanks	15	1.5
	Sickbay (incl. volume of ELB)	8	1
	Emergency Low Berth × 2		0.2
	Small Craft Hangar	15	3
Total		400	340.8

Description

For corporations, shipyards, and high star ports that want to live on the edge, there is the *Home Improvement*-class repair tug. These tugs provide more power, from the largest-in-class Power-Z/Maneuver-Z combination available, plus they have enough

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workshop space to fix most ship problems, and enough sick bay space to fix most crew problems. A winning combination to fix just about anything, and tow the rest back to a repair yard.

The *Cepheus Engine* version has two less tons of workshop and cargo space, for civilian basic electronics and fuel purification equipment. Alternatively, it may be a Model-3 or even a Model-2 computer and not lose the workshop/cargo space.

Jump 1 and 6G acceleration; can push a 5000+ ton ship at 1G. Required crew is a pilot, navigator, and 4 engineers. Often carries repair engineers, small craft pilots, and sometimes a medic. The hangar can support two air/rafts as spotters, repair aides, or medevac.

This ship will not arrive in system with enough fuel to take full advantage of its Z maneuver and power plant; it will need to refuel for that.

Note that this is non-standard in terms of installing Z size maneuver and power plants in a 400 ton hull. The max size of a ship that can be pushed by this tug is also unknown in the Classic *Traveller* rules. This is left to the individual referee, maybe even to leave to a real time skill roll, but the author's best guess is 7000 tons.

This ship shares the same basic hull as the *Longhorn*-class, and the two types are hard to distinguish from the outside, unless the *Home Improvement's* collapsible fuel tank is deployed.

There are a number of common variations on the *Longhorn* design, to extend its capabilities in different ways. These variations generally result in a higher displacement for the "workings" of the ship; generally, this is compensated for by reducing the size of the workshop or cargo space, by eliminating staterooms, by using a smaller computer, or by some combination of these. Duration recomputations may use less fuel than total allocation; the overage will not be sufficient for a full week of operation, and in no case will less than 2 weeks of operation (in addition to jump fuel usage) be accepted.

Far Repair Tug: Jump Drive *D* (+10 tons(CT/CE)); can now jump-2. Eliminates 10(CT)/28(CE) tons of cargo (reallocated to fuel) to support minimum 2 weeks operation, or 40 tons of cargo (CT) to support 4 weeks operation. Cost +MCr20(CT/CE)

Stretch Repair Tug: Jump Drive *F* (+20 tons (CT/CE)), larger fuel tank (+50 tons(CT)/+68 tons(CE)), and extra engineer; can now jump-3. Reduces computer to Model/3, eliminates 5 tons of hangar (supports only 1 Air/Raft), 1 stateroom, and 40 tons (CT)/58 tons(CE) of workshop/cargo space. Cost +MCr27.5(CT)/+MCr35.5(CE)

Armed Repair Tug: Two concealed turrets with gunners. Eliminates 2 tons(CT)/4 tons(CE) of workshop/cargo space These are sometimes euphemistically referred to as "Rugged Repair Tugs". Cost +MCr0.6-2.2(CT)/+MCr2.4-4(CE) depending on type of turret; plus cost of weapons.

This class was named after a pre-spaceflight Ter-ran vid show called "Home Improvement". The lead character solved many problems with "More power!", and would have completely approved of shoe-horning a Z class maneuver drive in a 400 ton hull. There never was a ship called *Home Improvement* but early examples had simple first names from the show: Tim, Jill, Brad, Randy, Mark, Wilson, Binford, Detroit, Tool Time, Lisa, Heidi, and Al are known. (The *Tool Time* has a particularly storied history.)

Yard Goat-Class Repair Tug

Classic Traveller

Using a custom 200-ton hull, the *Yard Goat*-class Repair Tug is designed for local system operations involving towing or performing minor repairs on operationally-distressed ships. It mounts Jump Drive *B*, Maneuver Drive *L*, and Power Plant *L*, giving performance of Jump-1 and 6G acceleration. There is fuel tankage of 50 tons, supporting one Jump-1 and 2 weeks of operations, or 3 weeks of operation without jumping. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model/3. There are 6 staterooms and no low berths, plus 26 tons of workshop and cargo space. There are no hardpoints and no allocation for

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firecontrol nor are any turrets or weapons mounted. The ship mounts collapsible fuel tanks, taking 7 tons when collapsed, but adding another 70 tons of fuel when in use, allowing for an additional 4 weeks of operations.

The ship requires a crew of 4: Pilot, Navigator, and 2 Engineers. The ship costs MCr194.7 (plus fees and the cost of the workshop) and takes 48 weeks to build.

Yard Goat-class Repair Tug (Classic Traveller)			
Component	Description	Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	Custom 400 Tons	200	20
Jump Drive	B (Jump 1, 20 t. fuel/Jump)	15	20
Maneuver Drive	L (6G acceleration)	21	44
Power Plant	L 60 t. fuel/4 wks, inc. Maneuver)	34	88
Fuel		50	
Bridge		20	1
Computer	Model/3	3	18
Staterooms	6 standard	24	3
Cargo	(inc. workshop, cost unspecified)	26	
Extras	Collapsible Fuel Tanks (70 tons)	7	0.7
Total		200	194.7

Cepheus Engine

Using a 200-ton hull (4 Hull, 4 Structure,)), the *Yard Goat*-class Repair Tug is designed for local system operations involving towing or performing minor repairs on operationally-distressed ships. It mounts Jump Drive *B*, Maneuver Drive *L*, and Power Plant *L*, giving performance of Jump-1 and 6G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 50 tons supports 1 jump-1 and up to 2 weeks of operations, or up to 4 weeks of operations without jumping. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model/3. The ship is equipped with Basic Civilian sensors (DM -2). There are 6 staterooms and no low berths. The ship has no hardpoints or fire control, and no weapons or screens installed. Cargo capacity is 26 tons. The hull is standard, and unarmored. Special features include a workshop (included in the cargo space), and

collapsible fuel tanks for 70 tons of fuel, allowing an additional 6 weeks of operation. The ship requires a crew of 4: Pilot, Navigator, and 2 Engineers. The ship can carry up to 6 additional passengers at double occupancy, and no low passengers. The ship costs MCr166.75 (plus fees and cost of workshop) and takes 44 weeks to build.

Yard Goat-class Repair Tug (Cepheus Engine)			
Component	Description	Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	200 Tons (4 Hull, 4 Struct)	200	8
Jump Drive	B (Jump 1, 40 t. fuel/Jump)	15	20
Maneuver Drive	L (6G acceleration)	21	44
Power Plant	L (11 t. fuel/wk, inc. Maneuver)	34	88
Fuel		50	
Bridge		10	1
Computer	Model/3	3	2
Electronics	Basic Civilian Sensors (DM -2)	1	0.05
Staterooms	6 standard	24	3
Cargo	(inc. workshop [cost unspecified])	30	
Extras	Collapsible Fuel Tanks (70 tons)	7	0.7
Total		200	166.75

Description

The Repair Tug for the rest of us. The smaller *Yard Goat*-class repair tug's 200 ton size means it is nimble enough to get in where larger tugs can't. But its beefy Power-L/Maneuver-L combination means it can push (or pull!) starships 10 times its size. These are found on frontier starports and shipyards all over the Imperium.

Jump-2. Can push a 2000 ton ship at 1G, but if alone can do 6G. Required crew is a pilot, navigator, and 2 engineers. Often carries repair engineers and sometimes a medic.

The *Cepheus Engine* version has slightly more workshop and cargo space, even including a ton for basic civilian electronics, due to a smaller bridge.

This ship will arrive in system with enough fuel to do 1G only. Before attempting higher G maneuvers or any tug actions, it must deploy its collapsible fuel tank. This tank can be transported in 7 tons of

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space but expands into a 70 ton tank. The ship can not jump with the tank deployed. Once full of fuel, the tug can use its main engines to push large ships or move at 6G. It often has an air/raft to act as a spotter when moving large ships or debris. When carried, this is stored in the workshop space, and often must be removed before the workshop is used.

Note that this is non-standard in terms of installing L size maneuver and power plants in a 200 ton hull, and in the assumption that an L maneuver drive can move a total of 2200 tons.

Some variants of this design give up workshop/cargo space for a sick bay, turrets, low berths, etc.

These ships take their names from a variety of sources; generally, names representing small, powerful animals or vehicles used to assist in moving large, heavy vehicles are chosen. Spacers often refer to them as “Lead Pipes” since they are often thought to resemble short, heavy pipes.

The author thanks Darrel Strom and John Redden for reviewing a draft of this article. All mistakes are my own.



Critics' Corner

RHI Sandpiper Light Trader

reviewed by Omer G. Joel

RHI Sandpiper Light Trader. William Byrd.
Out Of my Mind Games (no website found)
18pp., PDF
US\$5.00/UK£3.99

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

RHI Sandpiper Light Trader is a ship book published for *Mongoose Traveller*, 2nd Edition, describing three varieties of a 100-ton starship originally intended as a trader—the original trader, a militarized gunship, and a “star ambulance”. It includes a good description of the ship with enough flavor and color to make the ship unique. Each variation has a description, MGT2 stats, a deck plan, and a render. The deck plans are very simple but serviceable and the renders are solid but nothing to write home about. The layout is very simple but readable.

For some reason, the book does not mention the ship's size (100 tons) until you reach the stats on p.5—neither on the cover nor in the introduction nor in the technical details section on p.4.

The one thing which I love in this otherwise unremarkable ship book are the clever designs—the author managed to cram a Jump-3 drive, its fuel, and 30 tons of cargo into a 100-ton trader, and eight marines (!) on a 110-ton gunship.

RHI Sandpiper Light Trader



William Byrd
Out Of my Mind Games



TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY

All in all, a solid, useful booklet about an interesting small starship which you can drop into almost any *Traveller* campaign.

Grade: 4 out of 5



The Smarargian Crisis

by Benedikt Schwarz

Synopsis: A chlorine-tainted atmosphere, sentient plants, a murder, and a philosophical question that will decide a planet's further development.

Recommended skills: Computer, Contact. Tracking, Investigate and Medic might come handy as well. As with most investigative adventures, Telepathic/Empathic characters may ruin the fun, but a crafty Referee may find ways around this issue.

Setting: Smaragd, a medium-to-high-technology Imperial world with a tainted atmosphere – it is breathable, but traces of chlorine are irritant to human lungs, eyes and soft tissue, and may cause damage with longer exposure. The inhabitants have filters and air locks on their buildings, and wear goggles and filter masks when out of doors. A parliamentary democracy is assumed to be governing the planet for the Imperium; the elected president ("Connat") gains the Imperial honorary title of Baron for the duration of his term of office. The spectacular emerald sky and sheer mountain ranges shrouded in roiling clouds of all hues of green draw tourists from all over the subsector, but the main source of prosperity is the export of mid-tech industrial components to the neighbouring planets.

Preparation: Deckplans for at least part of a large colony ship capable of carrying a sizeable number of families and their equipment.

I. At the Starport

The travellers dock at Smaragd Highport, when they receive a call from the office of Secretary Coerhardt Selkine, the local Scout Service representative (and Imperial advisor to Parliament). If the group includes a former Scout, xe is activated under the IISS emergency protocol. Otherwise, the travellers may be hired for their expertise as investigators, medics or (though Selkine's undersecretary will not mention this) just because they're offworlders with no ties to local interest groups.



A quick Law check (*ROUTINE; Law; EDU; UNCERTAIN, SAFE*) will reveal that Selkine, as *de facto* Imperial consul, would be within his rights to enlist any Imperial citizen's help (and commandeer their ship) for the duration of a state of emergency. That he asks the travellers nicely and offers an incentive means he is trying to get their willing co-operation.

The highport is a favourite place for family excursions, furnished with a zero-g recreation park and huge faux-glass domes that offer breathtaking views of the cloudy blue-green planet and the stars. The travellers notice that there are many large exotic plants placed at strategic intervals, and may be intrigued when they notice the plants handing out leaflets or refreshments to the tourists. Everyone is well-behaved, relaxed and unfailingly polite; Smaragians generally seem to have a good outlook on life.

Any or all of the following may happen while the characters wait for their ride to the surface:

1. A child, holding a translator box, yells at a plant, telling it to bend over. The plant obeys, awkwardly, and the delighted child starts ordering it about, forcing the plant to wave its arms as if dancing, and finally to spill the sugary drink it is holding over itself. At this point the child's parents arrive, and xe is reprimanded; the father tries to clean the dripping plant with a handkerchief and apologises profusely. The plant seems unmoved by either abuse or apology.

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2. A university student in off-worlder clothes tours the observation deck, noting down the positions and number of plants, the number of people who interact with them, and the nature of the respective encounters, on a hand-held computer tablet. Some of the information in part II. may be gotten from xir if the travellers stop to chat.
3. A nondescript person is apprehended by Starport security for trying to distribute leaflets to the tables of a diner. The police politely but firmly escort him from the premises, and one of the officers collects the pamphlets, stuffing them into the bag the person was carrying before the travellers can get a good look. There might have been one of the plants on the cover, but one cannot be sure. Observant characters may notice the young man was wearing a labour union badge. If they ask the diner's patrons, they will be told that the local unions are against the plants' employment as labourers, which they see as stealing jobs from humans. No one seems to take the unions seriously.
4. A family of four brought their own plant (pet? butler?) in a floating grav bowl. All of them are very excited, pointing out sights to each other and to the stoic plant. They seem very affectionate, with the little daughter riding in the arms of the plant and hugging it every few minutes. One is reminded of a beloved aging grandparent in a wheelchair dragged along on a family excursion.
5. Two starport personnel make the rounds of the dome, emptying garbage cans into a trolley. A third checks the plants' earth, patting each in a slightly condescending but friendly manner and drenching the soil with a greenish liquid smelling faintly of chlorine. If asked, xe will explain that the plants are native to the planet but can exist indefinitely in non-chloric atmosphere as long as they can take up the necessary traces of chlorine through the soil.

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6. An elderly doctor, who is waiting for his shuttle flight back to Smaragd after attending a physicians' convention on one of the neighbouring planets, treats a fellow traveller in the waiting area; the ten-year-old boy just arrived from downport with his parents and seems to have developed a severe irritation of the eyes and oral mucosa from exposure planetside. A subsequent check of the boy's mask (painted with garish tiger stripes) reveals a leaking filter. The boy's father scolds him for being careless.

A quick trip on an IISS pinnacle (or the travellers' own ship or boat) to the downport, and the travellers are brought into Sec. Selkine's office. The Secretary and his assistant Elvo Ganaress will explain their predicament.

II. The Backstory

Smaragd was settled by a huge colony ship from a neighbouring system that had become gradually uninhabitable during the Long Night. Unfortunately, a stray meteor damaged the ship, forcing it to crash. Most of the colonists survived, but much of the specialised equipment was lost or damaged. The survivors had a hard time of it and would have died out if the native species had not helped them out.

The Morlaic are a pentalateral species (having a five-sided body symmetry) and appear much like a two-metre-tall, somewhat pear-shaped cylinder of tightly furled leaves (much like a rotund palm tree trunk) with a sense-organ bulb on top and five tentacle-leaves branching out from the bulging lower half. They can extract their roots from the earth and move about, but their locomotion is painfully slow.

Usually, Morlaic gather in "copses" of between thirty and one hundred individuals, sharing work to overcome their relative lack of mobility. Materials or tools will be passed from hand to hand (or rather from leaf to leaf) until they reach the individual who requested them. This kind of assistance is an automatic instinct that cannot be countered or resisted; a

Morlaic will always obey a request. Since all Morlaic work for the good of the copse, there obviously never was a need to develop a counter-instinct. In this rather cooperative way, the Morlaic technology has advanced to TL 2, with basic metallurgy and similar techniques. Their civilisation never developed weapons, but they have devised a series of defensive mechanisms to protect themselves from the more nimble herbivores on the planet, such as barbed fences. (All information up to this point can also be found in the Imperial Almanac entry on Smaragd.)

The plant-sophonts' selfless assistance proved to be a boon for the early settlers. As soon as a communication device was developed (Morlaic communicate via heat spots on their central stalks, making the translator box an infrared emitter and sensor with interpretative software), the plants helped build shelters and plant fields – one needed only say, "I need assistance", and they would pitch in. The early settlers relied heavily on the Morlaic to survive.

On modern Smaragd, those Morlaic who live in government-protected reservations are still at TL 1 or 2 and are left in peace; their contemporaries in the human cities are employed in almost every job conceivable that is simple (communication is still limited to basic concepts) and does not require much moving around; they work the conveyor lines in factories, or as domestic servants. No chance of encountering one as a vendor or barista: they have no concept of money and would cheerfully give away the goods to anyone who said they required them.

Still, the current prosperity of Smaragd rests largely on the inexpensive labour of the Morlaic. The humans' standard of living is fairly high, with little social difference; society is very stable due to everyone's modest wealth, and the crime rate is so low that policemen go unarmed.

The Imperial charter prohibits slavery. The trade unions and the political opposition in Parliament claim that the Morlaic are exploited as slaves (they work for free) while others insist that the plant-sophonts work there of their own will, are not owned and never forced to do anything they don't

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like. It's just that they won't say no and will happily follow any request. This faction is supported by the majority of the Smaragian populace, who (rightly) fear that prohibition of Morlaic work will cause an economic depression and destabilise their society.

The case has been brought before the Imperial consul (Selkine) by the Parliamentary opposition parties. Unwilling to make a decision that could severely affect the planet's economy on insufficient data, he decided he needed experts on both Imperial High Law and ethics to assist him. He sent a message to the leading university in the sector, and last week received Professor Ildiko Elisheva and her team of several graduate students from the Faculty of Intercultural Ethics as his official guests.

With the help of an IISS staff, Professor Elisheva has started investigating the Morlaic matter. She was promptly murdered, apparently with an automatic pistol at short range, while on a tour of one of the reservations. Selkine suspects political motives behind the killing.

Murder is unusual on Smaragd, with most crimes of violence having a domestic background, so Selkine can cite the local police's lack of experience to justify bringing in a team of outside consultants (the PCs). He'll also force a preliminary writ from the Connat stating that the police are to support them in all matters pertaining to the investigation.

III. The Investigation

Starting Points

The characters have several points where they can start their investigation:

1. Professor Elisheva's body is in an improvised morgue at the base, and the official autopsy has been very superficial; Selkine will give permission for a more thorough examination provided his aide Ganaress is present to bear witness.
2. Only a few people know where Elisheva was bound on the day of her death: her assistant Sunje Sendak, a few of the students, Selkine and

Ganaress, a corporate trade agent named Adam Descant, and the Baronial government liaison Flavia Roergarden. They are all available for interrogation at the base, although Selkine would prefer a more oblique approach.

3. Elisheva's personal computer was left in her air/raft.
4. The murder site is within a Morlaic reservation, and off-limits to tourists and the general populace; obtaining permission from the police is relatively easy if the characters produce the Connat's writ. The police chief will admit that his agency lacks experience with murder cases. A certain reluctance on his part to comply with the request may be attributed to embarrassment, nothing more.

Findings

1. **The body:** Elisheva, currently stored in the IISS base's medical ward, is not a pretty sight. Her suit was breached by the bullet, and the insides of the wound have been eaten away by the chlorine-laced atmosphere. Her mask was off, so her eyes and mouth are similarly affected. Using the extensive medical facilities at the IISS base adds +2 to all Medic rolls if the operator is proficient (Medic-1 or better).

Tasks

1. *ROUTINE; Medic; EDU, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* The angle of entry can be deducted; somewhat surprisingly, she was shot from below. The round entered her stomach and continued into the left lung before exiting at the shoulder. The killer must have fired from a position below her.
2. *DIFFICULT; Science/Chemistry or Investigate; EDU, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* There are no powder residues, meaning she was shot from a distance.
3. *DIFFICULT; Gun combat/any slug; EDU, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* The killer must have been about ten meters away, judging from the penetration pattern.
4. *DIFFICULT; Gun combat/any slug or Investigate; EDU, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* Using a computer to

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match the bullet with guns' performance data on the planetary net (woefully inadequate as there've been precious few incidences of gun violence on Smaragd) indicates the type of weapon as one of two models of small automatic pistols made by LSP.

5. *SIMPLE; Administration; INT, SAFE:* Both models are standard issue to plainclothes police and government agents; planet-wide, 362 are registered with civilian owners. The weapon is popular throughout the subsector as a rugged and inexpensive self-defense weapon.
 6. *ROUTINE; Science/Chemistry or Investigate; EDU, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* There is gun oil residue in the hip pocket of Elisheva's suit—she may have been carrying an automatic pistol or revolver. Either LSP model would fit into the pocket.
 7. *DIFFICULT; Medic; INT, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* Hair fractures in two ribs may have been caused by a person trying to resuscitate Elisheva.
 8. *FORMIDABLE; Medic; INT, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* The rib fractures occurred before the disruption of tissue by the gunshot.
 9. *FORMIDABLE; Medic; INT, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* Difficult to ascertain because of the tissue damage by the chlorine, the distribution of blood indicates that Elisheva was already dead for one or two minutes before the bullet hit her.
 10. *ROUTINE; Investigate; INT, UNCERTAIN, SAFE:* The filter mask found near Elisheva's body was taken off her in a hurry and carelessly thrown aside; one filter has been knocked askew and is filled with dirt.
2. **The staff:** Interrogation of the people present at the IISS base reveals that several people may have had a motive. Depending on the travellers' angle, have them roll Carouse or Interrogation, or play out the conversations.

Adam Descant, trade agent:

Descant likes to show off his good looks and broad shoulders in a well-tailored suit. He is a mar-

keting agent for Swift Robotics, an influential corporation on a neighbouring world, and was sent to report on the survey's findings and assess the market. The Referee should not point it out too obviously, but Swift RC has a vested interest in stopping Morlaic labour and selling their robots as substitutes.



Nobody on the base trusts the agent. Selkine had to take him on as a favour to Swift RC (the firm supplies the Scout Service with robotic exploration probes) but isn't all that happy about his presence. With his confident demeanour, ready smile and athletic physique, Descant looks like a corporate spy rather than a trade official; it is conceivable that he would kill in the interests of his corporation. He denies owning a weapon, but a quick check (*DIFFICULT; Administration; SOC, SAFE*) reveals that he indeed registered a firearm with starport security. If confronted, he claims it is in a rented locker at the highport.

Several of the students say they have been approached by him with questions about their findings, and one female graduate student reports a rather obvious attempt to seduce her in a local bar, which she turned down. He was polite enough not to insist, though.

On the day that Elisheva was killed, Descant was on a tour of local trade unions, and will admit (with an impudent boyish smile) having agitated a bit for abolishment of the Morlaic slavery. If the

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characters follow this lead, some of the union leaders will admit having seen him; it turns out he used the unions' resources to hire a private investigating service to shadow Elisheva and dig into her past for possible blackmail.

Sunje Sendak, Dr. IntCultEth.:

Elisheva's postgraduate assistant. A slender young woman with a quick intelligence and precise memory, Sendak has a tendency to be contrary for argument's sake. She now seems rather subdued and a bit frightened of her new position as the delegation's leader, but that could be an elaborate fake. She is known to be ambitious, and a few of the students have heard her complain vehemently about the Professor deliberately stifling her (Sendak's) career. Sendak does not own a weapon but, when pressed, will reluctantly confirm she holds a small arms permit and is proficient in the use of guns—leisure fowl hunting on her home planet.



Sendak drove Elisheva's air/raft on the excursion where the professor was killed, but claims Elisheva entered the reservation alone.

Flavia Roergarden:

The Smaragian government liaison is a member of the Connat-Baron's staff of troubleshooters, and

has served several Connats during their respective terms of office. (The staff is "inherited" by each elected Connat-Baron and is seen to serve the office rather than the person.) A strong, dominant woman in her fifties with an angular face and short hair, she dresses impeccably but practically. If one of the characters has ties to the Psionic Institute, they may learn that Roergarden discreetly supports the local branch even if she is not psionic herself.



Roergarden could presumably have decided that Elisheva's findings were too dangerous and might have had her killed. She definitely has been in the study delegation's hair about the slavery issue, though nowhere as clumsy and obvious as Descant. Her position, naturally, is the opposite of Swift RC's, and she is determined not to allow the "absurd claim of slavery" ruin the planet's prosperity for the sake of an intellectual technicality. On the day of the murder, she claims to have been at her office (and her secretary will, of course, vouch for it), though, yes, she has a government-issue air-car that is untraceable by the local traffic net.

On the first day the travellers meet her, Roergarden's voice will be a bit hoarse, and her eyes are watering slightly; she claims someone inadvertently knocked her mask askew when she was attending an outdoor function, and she got a whiff of the tainted atmosphere. The symptoms will be gone on the next

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day, though she still carries remedial eye-drops in her jacket's pocket.

3. **Professor Elisheva's computer:** A latest-model scientific computer of TL 15. This slab of shiny technology, purchased for her by the university, has been woefully under-used; much of Elisheva's work has been stored in her own head. Fortunately, what data there is has been archived in a very organised manner by the Professor.

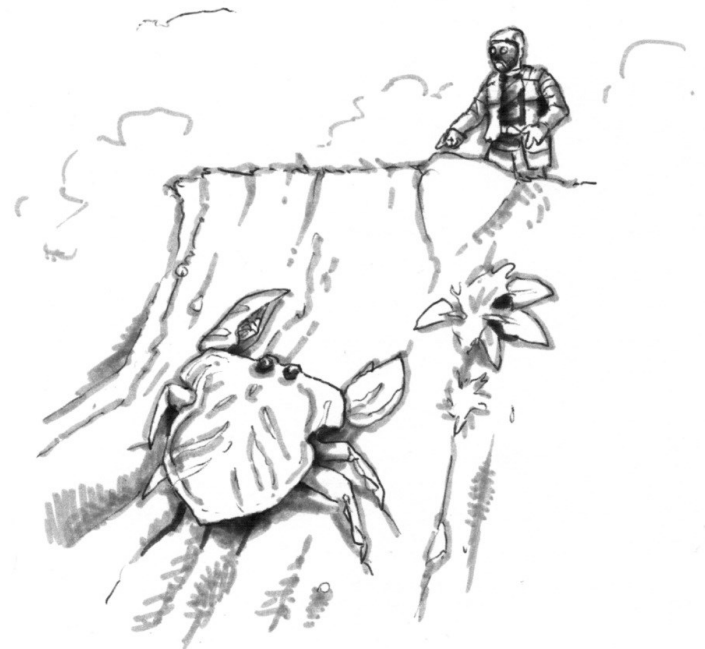
Tasks

1. *ROUTINE; Computer; EDU:* Cracking the password and accessing the data. Currently stored is a huge library of philosophical, ethical and linguistic books and articles, including several by Elisheva herself, rough drafts for a treatise on Human-Aslan cultural exchange, and annotations to the delegation's current findings—mainly tables of interaction times and student reports. Her personal organiser notes "Log may be still at ship; try to retrieve", along with Sendak's name, on the date of her death.
2. *DIFFICULT; Computer; INT; SAFE:* Cross-indexing the "log" in question with the rest of the data brings up a passage in a student's report, mentioning that the original settlers may have kept a diary of their first year on the planet (possibly including their contact with the Morlaic) on the colony ship's log.
4. **The crime scene:** Elisheva had Sendak park the air-raft at the reservation's fence, and entered alone and on foot. (The reservations' air space is barred to flying vehicles by law.) She seems to have been shot at a place where the dry riverbed she followed is overhung by a tall scarp; the holographs from the rescue team show that her body was found lying at the bank's foot.

The rescue team fouled up much of the traces when they extracted the body. The police chief will be very apologetic; his agency has very little experi-

ence with murder cases, he explains. (He owes Flavia Roergarden a huge favour and was told to eliminate her tracks, which he did by discreetly parking the police air-car over them.)

On the scarp's top, a copse of Morlaic can be discerned. This is an opportunity to watch the plants interact; a local scavenger, a large crab-like animal, slowly climbs the bank and starts mauling the closest Morlaic. There will be an agitated rustle before panels of barbed mesh wire are passed from leaf to leaf to the scene. Two plants will tend to the injured Morlaic while the others fend off the crab with the mesh until it wanders off in search of easier prey.



There is a small smelting oven and workbench under a sturdy roof where the copse is currently making wire for more fences. The copse looks rather sedentary; it should be obvious to the PCs that those same plants may have been witnesses to the murder.

If the travellers draw weapons, they may be conscious of a pressure; they imagine they can feel the copse becoming watchful. If they shoot at the crab, the pressure intensifies; those with high INT may develop a mild headache half an hour later.

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Tasks

Interrogating the Morlaic: DIFFICULT; Contact; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: The plants are very helpful, but can only communicate basic concepts. Several integral parts of their communication (such as passing tiny electrical currents through their roots where they touch each other) cannot be reproduced by the translator box. They also tend to talk and listen simultaneously, and several plants will talk at the same time, which makes it difficult to reconstruct the order of events from the narrative:

Human came, went there (followed the riverbed), came back. Other human came. Humans pointed things at each other. (No weapon was found with Elisheva's corpse, but if one knows what to look for, a shallow groove near her right hand may be where a pistol struck the ground and was subsequently removed by the other person.) Much bad. Humans bad. Humans opened mouths wide, showed teeth. (The Morlaic have no ears and could not hear the argument, but they have a fair idea that the two humans quarrelled.) Then bad too much—one human died. Bad went away. It is good that the bad went away. Now good and peace again. Other human removed masks, tried to gnaw at dead human's mouth and struck at dead human's middle. (The other person tried to perform CPR on Elisheva.) Other human pointed thing at human—thing spit a little fire, then took things from dead human and went away this way.

Note that the plants will not say that one human shot and killed the other. When pressed, they will say that the human died from “too much bad”, “bad became too much, and human died”.

Examining the crime scene: SIMPLE; Investigate, Hunting or Tracking; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: Elisheva's body left a fairly large impression in the dirt. A rectangular object (a briefcase or computer terminal) dropped near her left hand.

(The police: no such object has been found at the crime scene.)

(Sunje Sendak: Elisheva left her personal computer with her in the raft, it's still there.)

ROUTINE; Investigate, Hunting or Tracking; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: She didn't climb the scarp. Perceptive travellers might notice that if that is this case, she wasn't actually shot from below—she must have been shot by a standing person while already lying down.

SIMPLE; Hunting or Tracking; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: The other person's tracks were obscured by an air-car stirring up dirt and several persons walking back and forth between the air-car and the corpse. The obscuring tracks are from safety boots commonly employed in the public service—policemen and paramedics both use this model.

ROUTINE; Hunting or Tracking; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: Elisheva was returning to the fence gate; her tracks lead down the riverbed and back.

DIFFICULT; Hunting or Tracking; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: The other person was also returning from roughly the same direction. Xir footprints can be discovered if the travellers scour the underbrush.

DIFFICULT; Hunting or Tracking; INT; UNCERTAIN; SAFE: Whether the travellers follow Elisheva's set of tracks or the other person's, they end up at a derelict colony ship nearly completely overgrown with vegetation. (If they botch both rolls, they will also find the ship when scouring the whole area; it is invisible from the air through the thick covering of soil and foliage, though.)

The colony ship is the original vessel that brought the first settlers here, and now is nearly completely covered with vegetation. Power is long gone. Several rooms are overgrown with slimy weeds, the footing is treacherous, and the travellers might have a few tense moments with collapsing floors; if the adventure has been too placid up to now, add a few violent encounters with local fauna. One of the dark elevator shafts is used as a breeding chamber by the crabs, and the characters are suddenly swamped with thousands of palm-sized crablets (which are harmless, but the characters

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don't know that). If they run into too much trouble, you might have Adam Descant (who followed them) suddenly appear and help them out.

If the characters follow the trail of disturbed vegetation inside the vessel, they discover that someone (Elisheva) has entered the bridge and removed the black box from its slot (which is about the size of the missing briefcase). The black box contains flight data and the captain's log. A decrepit emergency power unit has long ago been rigged to the slot, so it is obvious that the log has been used for recording until some time after the crash.

IV. What Happened

When Professor Elisheva found hints that the original log might still be in the wreck, she flew to the reservation with her assistant Sunje Sendak. Leaving Sendak and the air/raft at the fence gate, she entered the wreck and removed the black box.

Government agent Flavia Roergarden, who is one of the few people on Smaragd who know about the Morlaics' telepathic ability (see below), feared that the ship's log might contain clues to the secret. If the Imperium knew, they might interdict the species in order to protect their human citizens. Smaragd's economy would suffer, families and interspecies friendships would be torn apart, and the peaceful co-existence would come to an end. There might also be Imperial investigations that could endanger the local Psionic Institute. The Connat's agents are sworn to prevent all this. So Roergarden followed Elisheva and finally caught up with her on her way back; the professor and the government agent quarrelled when Roergarden demanded the box. Elisheva drew a pistol, and Roergarden followed suit.

Unknown to the human population, the Morlaic are a naturally telepathic species; they can read each other's minds and discern rough surface thoughts in other species. Their society is very dependent on co-operation; those Morlaic with anti-social tendencies

are euthanised by telepathic assault by their fellows. Humans are treated the same as copse members, but since the Morlaic are rather puzzled by human behaviour, only the most blatant and terrible acts will be sanctioned in this way. When Elisheva resolved to kill Roergarden and was about to pull the trigger, she overstepped that line and dropped dead with a stroke—the first human to be killed by Morlaic in the history of Smaragd.

Roergarden, aghast, tried to resuscitate Elisheva (getting her face exposed to the atmosphere in the process), but to no avail. When she realised that the investigation would show how the professor died, she shot the corpse to fake a violent death. She then departed the scene with both weapons and the box.

V. Conclusion

The travellers now hold the facts that decide Smaragd's further fate.

If they make their findings public, a wave of horrified anti-Morlaic activity will sweep the cities, with people suddenly afraid that their friends and servants might kill them in their sleep. Some will turn violent in their panic, leading to more telepathic assaults in self-defense (possibly even on humans resorting to violence to protect Morlaic!) and the eventual banishment of Morlaic from human settlements. In the end, the reservations will be closed, with Imperial garrisons established and an uneasy peace enforced at gun-point. The travellers might make a fortune providing the Smaragian market with psi-helmets, protective children's psi-cradles and labour robots, profiteering from both the panic and the rapid economic downturn.

Meanwhile, the effects will be felt throughout the subsector as prices for the planet's export products rise sharply and worlds formerly dependent on cheap Smaragian industrial parts start looking for other suppliers.

Depending on the implication of the Connat-Baron's staff in the keeping of the secret, the enraged citizens may demand that the Connat retire from office. Emergency elections will be chaotic, and

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eventually the Imperium may step in, dissolve the Parliament and assign an off-world noble as hereditary planetary governor. The planet is in turmoil, and anti-Imperial sentiment will be rampant. The noble may need to deploy house troops to contain the unrest, further feeding the population's feeling of oppression.

The travellers might instead come up with a credible cover story for the supposed murder, which would enable them to keep the Morlaics' telepathic ability secret. Roergarden will be very cooperative, and may pay them a large bonus as hush money. As is obvious from her reluctance to kill Elisheva, she is averse to murder and will only try to eliminate the travellers if presented with no other option. Others in the Connat's office may not be so squeamish.

Sunje Sendak, now head of the delegation, will rely heavily on the characters' testimony in her final decision and even ask for their advice. Making the drafts on Elisheva's computer available to her will immensely help her career (she will finish the Aslan treatise and publish it under her own name). She may become a useful Contact in academic circles if the characters help her out.

If the Morlaic are officially defined to be exploited as slaves, Roergarden will grudgingly consent to a gradual phasing-out of Morlaic labour, to be replaced by robots. The Smaragian economy will still take a dive, and again, crafty traders might make a good credit off the situation. Smaragd will need mid-technology goods to retool their factories and robots to replace the Morlaic. Knowing those needs in advance means the travellers will have a definite lead on the competition.

Adam Descant may offer the travellers money or lucrative exclusive contracts (or offer to become a Contact) if they support his company's position with Sendak and the delegation.

If Secretary Selkine is taken into the characters' confidence, he will agree to the least damaging course for the planet and the subsector. He's a very

perceptive man, though, and if lied to will try to get to the truth of the matter by himself. That may get pretty awkward for the travellers, as well as for Roergarden.

VI. Further adventures:

Depending on the outcome, the social and economic upheaval on Smaragd may provide a lot of opportunities for further adventure (possible patrons are mentioned in brackets):

1. Different corporations and free traders trying to muscle in on the new lucrative Smaragian market and looking for ways to sabotage their opponents (Adam Descant).
2. Smuggling Psionic Institute staff and students off-planet before the Imperial investigation hits (Flavia Roergarden).
3. Escorting Morlaic from the cities to the reservations through an angry mob—without getting violent (Police chief, Flavia Roergarden, Coeurhardt Selkine).
4. Introducing cheap robot labour to the factories over the heads of the trade unions, who should have known better but now feel cheated by Descant. Industrial action, sabotage, threats, and robot-smashing ensue (Adam Descant, Police chief, Union head).
5. Contact work for the IISS or University, who want to study the Morlaic in detail once they are confined to reservations. Possibly polite resistance by the Imperial Marines who now man the fences (Coeurhardt Selkine, Sunje Sendak).
6. Contact work for the Psionic Institute who had their own clandestine research on the Morlaic underway and want to continue even with the reservations closed off. This involves sneaking into the reservations past Marine patrols and then dealing with the suspicious Morlaic (Flavia Roergarden).
7. Helping a family find their Morlaic friend who became lost when their house was attacked in the civil unrest (Acquaintance at starport from part I).

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8. Finding an unscrupulous trader crew who sell fake tinfoil psi-helmets or “anti-psi drugs” and incite panic to push their product (Police chief, Flavia Roergarden, Coeurhardt Selkine).
9. Gathering evidence on illicit enterprises who still employ Morlaic in underground sweatshops after the ban on Morlaic labour (Police chief, Flavia Roergarden, Coeurhardt Selkine). May be combined with 7) if the family’s friend has been enslaved at one of the ‘shops.
10. Helping or hindering offworld corporations trying to get specimens of Morlaic off-planet—to be employed as slaves on other worlds where the Imperium isn’t looking or where the officials can be bribed (Police chief, Flavia Roergarden, Coeurhardt Selkine).
11. Run-ins with the new riot control branch of the police—to help contain the civil unrest and labour guild action, the police had to take everyone they could get (including the characters?), and some of the impromptu policemen have let their new-found power get to their heads. Now they terrorise entire neighbourhoods, and some even extort protection money from the citizens (Police chief, Flavia Roergarden, acquaintance at starport from Act I).
12. Rivalry between several noble houses over whose younger offspring will be selected as Imperial governor; the characters may be approached by a noble to gather (or create) incriminating facts to damage a potential candidate’s reputation—or by a corporation who would prefer a certain noble candidate who will grant them exclusive contracts. (Noble house or corporate representative, Adam Descant) ✪

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/2odUL16>); 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.) ✪

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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

May/June 2017

- **Michael Brown** has released *Passage, Demon's Realm, Res Judicata, and Nearer The Gods*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Hub Federation Ground Forces (2nd Edition)*, and *The Cascadia Adventures (2nd Edition)*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Spinward Marches 2: The Lunion Shield Worlds*.
- **Mike Leonard** has released *Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 1: Humaniti Security, Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 2: Imperial Marines I, Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 3: Imperial Marines II, Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 4: Imperial Marines III, Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 5: Vargr Adventurers, Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 6: Aslan Adventurers, Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 7: Vargr Pirates, and Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 8: Belters - Humaniti I*.
- **Stellagama Publishing** has released *50 Wonders of the Reticulan Empire*.
- **Vanishing Goblin** has released *The Draconem Subsector*.
- **PPM** has released *Random Classic Traveller Dice Tables*. 

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), *Traveller*⁵, and both editions of *Mongoose Traveller* as “Classic Compatible” or “2D6”. This includes Sceptune 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 Discordia, Clement Sector, Hyperlite, Twilight Sector, Orbital, 2300AD, Foreven Sector, Mindjammer, and I’m sure I’ve missed others.

Other rulesets, such as *GURPS Traveller*, *Traveller*²⁰/*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.

