



# FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller<sup>®</sup> Magazine and Resource

Featured Article:

## *The Corporate Repo Career*

by Joshua Levy

Issue 083  
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## A Note About Production

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

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

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Critics’ Corner: *Stellagama Publishing, Mongoose Publishing, and Gypsy Knights Games, from the respective products; miniatures photographs by Shelby Michlin.*

Active Measures: *Steve Hatherley, from his blog*

Freelance Traveller Cookbook: *George Wright Brewery, photographed by Derrick Jones*

In A Store Near You: *Timothy Collinson*

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# From the Editor



We do listen to your feedback, and consider *Freelance Traveller* to always be a work-in-progress. After last issue’s release, we received some email from a new reader who made a good point: there’s a lot of greywall text, making it more difficult to read. His suggestion was to add space between paragraphs, like on the website, and to use graphics to break up the text, as we did with last issue’s “The Smarargian Crisis”. The latter is a bit difficult, when we don’t get a lot of submissions with graphics; consider this a plea for more illustrated articles.

We can, however, tweak the typesetting, and we have—there’s now going to be a small amount of additional space between paragraphs, in addition to the normal paragraph indent. Another change we’re making is to keep the story tops aligned when flowing from column to column and page to page; this means a bit more white space at the top of right-hand columns. And, where we feel we have good ones, we’ll be inserting ‘boxes’ and ‘pull quotes’.

We hope these changes will meet with your approval; please do email the editor and let him know your opinion. ☼

# Borderlands Adventure 1: Wreck in the Ring

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

*Borderlands Adventure 1: Wreck in the Ring*. Robert L.S. Weaver.

Stellagama Publishing (no website found)

20pp., PDF

US\$3.99/UK£3.04

*Note: The reviewer was provided with a complimentary copy of this product for review.*

This short folio provides all the basic ground-work needed to run a recovery/salvage adventure (there is a legal distinction outlined in the appendix, but operationally they're the same) in a gas giant's ring system in an out-of-the-way system. The default setting is Stellagama's *These Stars Are Ours!* universe, but there's really nothing that can't be trivially changed to support any other setting—and it will be equally easy to adjust it for any of what *Freelance Traveller* calls 'Classic-compatible rule sets'.

You'll need a set of core rules—the author recommends *Cepheus Engine* or the *Mongoose Traveller* (1st Edition) SRD—and the usual appurtenances for playing a RPG. There are references to *Cepheus Engine* and the *Cepheus Engine Vehicle Design System*,

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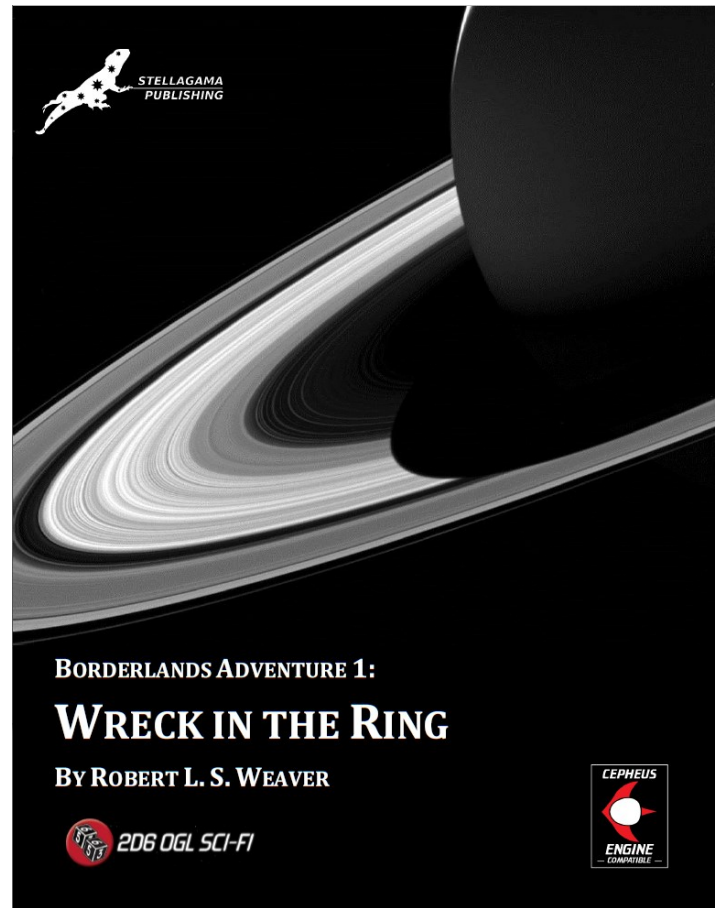
***A good scenario for a convention setting.  
At only \$4, skip the latte and grab a copy.***

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and to TSAO, but the VDS and TSAO are not actually required for play. There are two pages of background information about the TSAO universe, but even this can be omitted if you set this adventure in a different setting.

You get just under one page of description of the local setting, enough to be able to transplant it into any system that meets the most basic criteria: out of the way, formerly a way station on a trade route, with a ringed gas giant.

It's up to the referee to define the reason for the PCs—a party of three-to-five is recommended—are



in the system, and why they're approached by the patron (a belter) for the mission. Four NPCs are provided (not substitutes for a lack of PCs, and including the belter patron), each with their own reasons for wanting to be on this mission—and possibly operating at cross-purposes with each other and with the PCs.

This is not a "safe" mission, where the PCs can work easily in a shirtsleeve environment; they will, of necessity, be in vacc suits and zero-G the entire time that they are active. This means tracking how long various actions take, and ensuring that the characters get adequate rest and that they do not exceed the "carrying capacity" of their suits. There is opportunity for conflict between the characters, but it's unlikely that they will come to blows; the main source of danger is the environment, and that's quite enough, thank you.

There is an unexpected twist to the mission, that the characters won't learn about until well into it. If they learn about it early enough, it could answer

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## Critics' Corner

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some questions they may or may not have thought to ask, and they can potentially profit from it; if not, those questions may remain unanswered (and the profit significantly reduced).

A ship design is provided, with classic (non-isometric, grey-scale) deck plans, well-labeled and with supplemental markings showing adventure-specific information. Even this ship, however, can be replaced relatively easily by one of similar size and usage, if the referee chooses. There was a minor bit of confusion; while the the ship's basic description calls it a "military transport", the plan calls it a "passenger liner".

The adventure is quite well-written; even if a player reads it, and knows the 'spoilers' that I've avoided discussing here, it will still be very easy to get 'into' the adventure and enjoy it. It is not larded with extraneous information; there is plenty of room left to give the referee the freedom to customize the adventure to fit an existing campaign setting.

There's plenty of opportunity to build on this adventure, regardless of your campaign type or setting. It can provide a couple of evenings' worth of adventure for a gaming group, or a good scenario for a convention setting. Recommendation: At only \$4, skip the latte and grab a copy. 🌟

## The Prep Room

### Building Your Own Road: *Replacing the Third Imperium*

by Cian Witheren

#### Looking Back

Back in the earliest days of *Traveller*, before I was born, there were three Little Black Books. Loved even today by almost every *Traveller* fan, they lack

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***We don't make bad rolls; we cause interesting little situations.***

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something many players expect today: The Third Imperium. All they provided was the props of a setting, leaving the Referee and their group to create the actual details of the political backdrop. In those days, with no Imperium or published setting, everyone created their own, leading a massive proliferation in details, many of which crossed with each other as groups and Referees communicated at game stores, via letters, and at conventions.

One thing almost all had in common was size – big interstellar governments were pretty rare, and many Referees limited theirs by the delay leaders

were willing to let creep into their command and control times, which was mostly a month or so (with fast couriers, this allowed up to two jumps away).

This had several advantages: there was no over-arching government, plenty of opportunities for war stories, and even more potential for trading (With very few cross-governmental businesses, free traders had a lot of potential cargo waiting). There were downsides, such as "Why were all military careers almost exactly the same between nations?", "who issues the credit?", "Why is the starport always extraterritorial?", "Where do all these nobles come from?" and so on. Most of these had to do with details that many other groups could overlook, or even explain with "The Traveller's Aid Society is accepted across known space and unofficially suggests regulations to help trade and travel". Others were big questions, but nobody had really anticipated the 3I. Where you stand on that subject is where you stand,

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and damn all the people who disagree. For those who like the OTU, have no fear: this article should be good for use in your game when creating small nations outside Imperial borders. If your next game takes place on the fringes or is a Scout game, this should help with creating the interesting political situations that drive adventure.

### Standards: Answering the Big Questions

By this point, you should have already answered the question of “Am I going to be using this?”. Now, it’s onto several big points: Credits, Starport Classes, Shipbuilding, and various other standards like time-keeping and mortgages. Are these just game abstractions, meant to reduce bookkeeping? Or are they enforced by custom, an NGO, or even imported from some government? Let’s look at the possibilities:

**Abstraction:** One of the lazy answers, this just assumes that each world and government has its own standards, which become roughly analogous to each other on the big scale. This laziness also goes away when detail-oriented groups start picking at things: finding spare parts outside the ship’s original system becomes hard, necessitating penalties to re-

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### *You can create standards different from what’s expected*

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pairs and a good workshop to finagle parts into working. Paying the mortgage becomes harder when you need to convert currencies to one the bank will accept (and skipping out on the mortgage can be easier, but many banks will take measures against it). Trade also becomes harder, as Starports are not extraterritorial and local governments might confiscate or tax cargo. Local governments also might not accept your permits for equipment issued elsewhere, making adventure even harder. There are other possibilities, and you may think of ones I can’t.

**Custom:** The *real* lazy answer. This assumes that at some point, a widespread standard was around,

and it has remained. While there are some deviations (see **Abstraction** above), most of the time you can find compatible parts, you won’t have a hard time finding a currency the bank will accept, trade and starport standards means that you won’t face as many issues between worlds, cargo not meant for the world (usually) won’t be confiscated, and so on.

**Non-Governmental Organization:** This will likely be the preferred standard for games without the 3I. It presumes that corporations, concerned citizens, and some governments will cooperate to create reasonable standards for interstellar trade. This then spreads via **Custom**, making the standard even easier to find. At about this level one will find extraterritorial starports, a standard trade currency most banks will accept, standardized parts, a widespread financial calendar, and organizations such as the TAS (which might be part of the trade NGO) – many of which will offer permits recognized by member worlds. Deviations are not that common. Work for this option requires creating the NGO, and its varying rules and regulations. You can also create standards different from what’s expected, such as a different calendar.

**Imported/Imposed:** This should be the standard for games in the OTU. The standards of the Imperium (or other large government) have spread via **Custom**, or even been **Imposed** by corporations from that government (or via trade agreement). In games without the 3I, this means that some government has been very aggressively spreading their standards, possibly via a NGO. Things will be run as according to the book (and the groups selected deviations from/expansions on the book), and materials meant for the 3I (or another big government setting) can be used almost as-is. Deviations are very rare, and mostly based in political motivations.

With those questions answered, and some basic work done on the big details, we can move onto the next step: not creating the governments, but map-

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# The Prep Room

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ping the area they occupy. Don't worry, it's far less intense than actual mapping, and leaves most of the rolling for later (possibly in the game).

Note: This method assumes the Jump Drive. If using a different drive, several items in the article must be adjusted to account for the differences.

## Creating The Area

Now comes the second question: how big of an area do you need? A subsector is fairly small, depending on how many worlds your dice roll up. A domain is ridiculously huge. My suggestion is a Sector, and Quickrolling.

**Quickrolling:** This method doesn't care about details such as gas giants, only the location of stars. Pick two dice of different colors, and designate one for odd rows and the other for even rows. Roll both and go down a column, two hexes at a time.

As you build the map across the entire sector, you'll notice the jump-1 chains forming, with jump-2 and 3 voids forming. These form natural border areas, meaning you will have a general idea of where most governments will focus their efforts.

Once the sector is done, let's move onto the big governments. These are the ones with the technology and the drive to expand into interstellar space. Maybe you have an idea of them already, but I'm going to assume that you don't.

## Creating The Governments

Interstellar governments will form once FTL is available, period. Not every planet capable of doing so will, but they will happen.

For the number of such governments, roll 1D+1 for the total. If you roll more than 3 or 4, be ready to adjust their later spread. Then move onto Control Style.

**Centralized:** A centralized government has one center of control, which all worlds report to. While officials on the scene have a lot of latitude, Control

Control Style		
1D	Style	Regions
1, 2	Centralized	1—There are no subregions; the polity is administered as a unitary state.
3, 4	Distributed	1D+1—This includes the polity's capital as also the capital of a subregion.
5, 6	Loose	1D+1

and Oversight is a courier behind them – and political situations at the capital can punish a local official for doing an unpopular thing.

**Distributed:** This style divides its territory to reduce the overall bureaucratic load on the capital, but is otherwise similar to the Centralized style. Distributed governments are split into Regions, with one designated as the Primary Region – where the polity's main capital is. The remainder are placed in a circle around the Primary, at 1.5 to 2 times the Spread value (see below) between the polity capital and the regional sub-capitals. This means that more territory can be controlled, with local command and control loops remaining at what the government has deemed reasonable levels, at a cost of a increased loop between the frontiers and the polity capital. As a side effect, the polity capital becomes more concerned with longer term policy overall.

**Loose:** Loose governments are essentially Distributed ones that gave up on maintaining true central control. Some have no true capital, acting as very tight alliances of regions that conduct policy by sending focused diplomatic missions to the others. Others maintain a capital, but its function is ceremonial, record repository, is focused entirely on long-term policy, or some combination of the three. Regional capitals are typically placed at twice the Spread from each other, but there is no requirement for placement in relation to each other, other than border contact – they could be a cluster, spread along a J1 main, swing over a J2 rift, anything, as long as their borders touch along a usable route.

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Obviously, Distributed and Loose governments can get huge, but so can Centralized ones. It's just easier for types D and L, but the actual size depends on the next two numbers – Spread and Jump/TL.

**Spread** is determined with a straight 1D roll, and this is the number of Jumps before the government becomes worried about control – no politician likes being behind the curve on what's happening, but some can make compromises for the tax money. Doubling this gives the number of weeks before a border world can get an answer to a message they just sent, or before the Capital can get a "message received" to an order (the *Command and Control Loop*). To make it easier, have a table. Most notes apply for Centralized governments, but regional governments can have the same notes applied.

Jump/TL is, again, a straight 1D. Jump Technology is directly linked to Technology Level, and this determines the best Jump drive available to the government, and thus how far their control can extend. To get a TL instead of a Jump number, roll 1D+9.

Spread and C&C Loop		
1D Jumps	C&C Loop Time	Notes
1	2 Weeks	Conformity of Culture, Policy, and World Governments very high at this level. Very low local autonomy is typical, as Capital can send freshly-briefed officials anywhere in the territory, effectively reducing locals decision making to emergencies.
2	4 Weeks	
3	6 Weeks	Most worlds will be somewhat similar to the Capital at Spread 3 and 4, and local autonomy is fairly decent – most worlds make their own decisions, but Capital can send special instructions that are decently accurate for the world's current situation.
4	8 Weeks	
5	10 Weeks	
6	12 Weeks	Cross world conformity is very low, local autonomy is very high. Policy must be long-term goals, or be able to survive slow implementation.

After generating the raw geography of each government, look at your map, then look at your numbers. This is where you want to adjust them – like the J6, but don't want it to be L6 and Spread 6? Either drop Spread to 1 or 2, drop the number of regions, or both. You can decrease the number of governments, or keep most of their territory "off map". All these numbers can be tweaked to create the game environment you want. If you're mapping a really big region (and want to create similarly big governments), see if these guidelines fit: Two sectors should receive the same treatment as one sector, but with less tweaking of the final numbers.

For a full Domain, you might drop the Centralized style and reserve it for minor governments. Another option is to make the regions roll for D and L into 2D+2. Distributed governments can add additional layers of Regions surrounding the core ones. Spread can also be increased by 1D or a constant.

Beyond a full Domain... I suggest that you use this article as a secondary source.

With what you have here, you can start doing what Travellers do best – stringing numbers together into codes that make no sense on the first glance. This is only the first part of our UNC (Universal Nation Code), but the rest will come after initial border mapping. Let's start with an example: Tiji/F0101 C13B-123

Everything after the dash can be ignored right now, as it deals with specifics of the government, and we've only generated the geography. The first part (Tiji/F00101) will be added during mapping, and deals with the capital. It consists of the Sector Name/Subsector and the location of the capitol system. The second part (C13B) is what we just generated. The first space is the Style: C is Centralized, D is Distributed, and L is loose. The second is Regions: for a Centralized, this always 1. The third is Spread, and goes 1 through 6, and the fourth is the Jump/TL. It's easier to write this down as the TL code than the

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jump number, because it gives a general idea of capabilities.

### Mapping The Governments

At this point, with a good idea of how big the governments are going to be, take a look at your map again. Follow the J1 mains, look at the gaps between them, find the J2 (and more) bridges, and prepare to have to erase and redraw over and over. Keeping backup copies of your initial star map is always a good idea, and keep in mind potential campaign ideas as you figure out where the capitals are going to be. Then you start drawing, keeping in mind the available jump and the spread. If a max-jump puts you in empty space, see if a world is in range of that spot – a fuel depot can always be set up if the government is willing to put enough money into grabbing that area. Otherwise, look for a world within Max -1, and then jump from there, or go closer if you still can't. Same thing when you get to the borders, see what is in range and compute the next jump of the spread from there.

Look out for border zones – having three or four borders right against each other in the same subsector makes sense, but also makes for a tense area, ready for a war story. On the other hand, those same borders, partially filling the subsector, and the rest is small buffer states and independents? That supports a lot more stories. Smuggling, spying, cold war clashes, and more can be found in that one small area, if you include buffers.

But not every border needs buffer states, and keeping a border area tense with tracking smugglers and pirates makes good politics – and politics is one of the drives of adventure in *Traveller*. (Great, now we added the P-Drive. Thanks, reality).

And when it comes to borders, they will be mutable. Borders running into each other, or overlapping, will drift from their planned limits as the governments either fight, make concessions, accept their

limits, covertly start secession movements, or even set up buffer states. No matter the choice, the borders will dip back and forth, and will rarely be at the spread limit. In fact, make sure that some spread limits will overlap, since that means those governments have a mutual interest in those worlds – and that drives conflict, which drives adventure.

Now, speaking of buffer states, it's time to make some minor governments. These have a lower maximum jump than the major governments (generally J1 or J2), but not all of them can produce it locally. Many of them are also mutual-defense pacts, or economic unions. These states are either Centralized or Loose, but their style code is M, they have a Region code of 0, not 1, and their TL code is A or less (roll 8+ for TL A, otherwise TL 7-9 with a good starport). Roll 1d3 for their spread after you finish the big boys, then start dropping them in, preferably making them interesting. Don't be afraid to carve them out of borders, especially since the small nation of smugglers between two borders is a nicely justified trope in sci-fi – after all, both the big boys see the advantage of having a small guy to pin their covert gaffes on.

For a single Sector, 1D+3 is a good start, but don't be afraid to add more.

When you've finalized your map, look over what you've created, and note the different sectors that most obviously support different game styles. Some are better for merchant campaigns, others are great for mercenary or pirate games, and yet others will support just about every game type out there. Now, relax, the hard part is over. The hardest part is coming after the next section.

### Finalizing the UNC

We finally move back to the governments. But we're not going to touch government yet. Our next task: how much local autonomy is there? We have several factors here: the level of central control, the

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# The Prep Room

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style of government, and the C&C loop. Level of Control focuses on two factors: allowable deviation from the overall government plan, and allowable deviation from overall law code

Roll 1D-Spread. Centralized Governments add +1, Distributed -1, and Loose -2. (See table to right)

**Government Type and Law Level:** This part is generated with your preferred world generation tables, but instead of adding population, add Control. I would suggest picking your result, possibly inspired by the roll. Type 0 (none) is replaced with type T (Treaty) – each world dedicates part of its leadership to maintaining compliance with the treaty. Type 6 (Captive) is questionable – it could be confusing, but it could indicate that it's a partially independent region, which should not be indicated in the code, but in the notes.

Law level requires thought – you want it to be low enough that you can have adventures there, but how low depends on Style, Spread, and Control. Obviously a L60 is going to have a low law, but what about a C15? Government plays a part as well, but you want to avoid creating an obvious villain. A law level of 1-4 is fairly reasonable if the government allows private ownership or control of starships – but if they don't, then that's an obvious *Traveller* villain, and you should double check why you have that nation as the villain.

**Generating Details:** There are so many different sources out there to help with this, but let me give you some advice.

When old gamers talk about how they spent months of work on their setting, they're usually not mentioning that most of that work was done in the middle of the campaign. So don't panic, get a few basic ideas down, and create as needed. Those basic ideas should include a positive trait, a negative trait, an internal problem, and an external problem. As you blindly panic and create more details as the

(Continued on page 9)

Level of Control	
Roll	Description
0 or less	Full local autonomy, except certain regulations covering multiple worlds (e.g., common currency, or measurement standards), or 'common cause' mandates (e.g., military obligations, diplomatic/trade). Many treaty groups fall into this, as does the Third Imperium. Member worlds can even start wars with each other without revoking their status. The capital rarely sets goals for individual regions, instead setting government-wide goals – but letting local regions decide how to fulfill them. Sub-capitals will often rough in the details of goals, but the general attitude is "What the capital gets is what they got." World TL fully variable, and may be higher than capital.
1	Worlds have wide autonomy, but must follow certain rules (e.g., sophont/citizen rights); standards and 'common cause' mandates are still followed. Goals are sent, and a regional sub-capital (if there is one) may add potential plans of action, but how to fulfill them is up to local officials. Law level and TL are variable – but most worlds will be upgraded over time to about TL 5 or 6 – enough to allow ease of communication. Some worlds may have a TL higher than the capital.
2	Worlds have limited autonomy and restrictions on government structure; minimum law level (typically 2 or 3) is prescribed. Widespread regulatory mandates imposed. Roughly detailed goals are sent to worlds, with any local sub-capitals modifying some details for local conditions, but locals are allowed to decide implementation. World TL minimum will be mostly at 6 or 7; may occasionally go higher than the government standard.
3	Worlds have highly restricted autonomy under prescribed structures; law level minimum 4+, but higher is common. Somewhat detailed goals are sent, with possible implementation plans. Most worlds will get upgraded to TL 7 or 8, with very rare ones being at a TL higher than the capitol.
4	Detailed goals are set every C&C Loop; plans are detailed frameworks that local officials drop details into, as the capital realizes that they never have all the information. Contingency plans sent with the packet, but they are still frameworks. Approval of deviations from government standards is unlikely, but not impossible. World government code is 6; law code may have limited variance, based on local conditions. World TL may be 1 or 2 below capital; never higher than capital.
5 and up	No real local autonomy. Government code 6 (captive); law level set by capital for entire polity. Officials sent detailed goals, with strict plans of action and preset contingencies for every deviation the capital could think of, every C&C loop. Local authority is limited to specifics of dealing with emergencies affecting the plan, plus allowable deviations relating to local conditions. Deviation approval is almost impossible. World TL is often at -1 in regards to the capital, sometimes -2, but never more – the capital would have mandated all the technicians upgrading their technology to equal, and sometimes even moving entire universities and research stations to where the politicians can watch.

## The Prep Room

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players press you to see how much work you did before hand, remember those basics, take notes, then extrapolate and expand upon previous facts with gleeful abandon.

They won't be able to tell the difference.

**The Hardest Part:** Congrats, you got some basic details of your setting assumptions, a barely-there sector map, and you know where the borders are. Now you get to actually roll your subsectors, going through and modifying UWPs to fit the governments that rule them. If at first they don't fit, ask "Why?", and then modify if you can't answer the

question. I had a subsector with plenty of size 2, atmo and hydro 0 worlds with small populations on them. I asked *Why?*, and got a mining corporation that was run like branches of a noble family. If you can solve an issue with the introduction of a new faction, do so, and add even more future plot hooks as you expand upon their role and nature.

At this point, it's out of this article and into your notebook. Happy Travelling, and be a Bob Ross Referee – We don't make bad rolls, we cause interesting little situations. 🌀

## Raconteurs' Rest

### Here Be Dragons

by John Clifford

#### Chapter 2

After almost three hours of working to repair damaged systems, Myra stopped at the ship's galley to take a break. Her hands were starting to shake from exhaustion and low blood sugar. They'd fixed everything they possibly could, even managing to patch all the holes in the hull. They would be able to restore atmosphere if they survived. Everything was working but the power plant. Once that was back up they would be able to move and fight again. Until

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***"The enemy is back, they're moving to board us; we have about five minutes. Follow me, they're headed to the main airlock"***

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then, they were still dead in space. Everyone that could fit in engineering was working on fixing the ship's fusion plant. Everyone else was standing watch, or in sickbay. That didn't leave many people for damage control. The thirty-two-man, and one-woman, crew had been fortunate. Only three dead and four seriously wounded. Most of Myra's watch

had been used to replace the casualties. It left her and two ratings in case something new happened.

In the meantime, she could eat something before she passed out. Since the galley was near the center of the ship it had avoided damage. The other two members of her watch were already there, having had the same idea. Since the ship was still depressurized their options were rather limited. Drinks weren't the problem. Their spacesuits had provisions for two, half-liter fluid pouches in pockets on the chest. They connected to a tube that ran through the collar of the suit so a person could drink without having to open up their vacc suit. Both of her pouches were empty, so she went to the dispensing machine and punched in her request. One half-liter of coffee, black with sugar. And one half liter of *skorviten*, citrus flavored. *Skorviten* was an energy drink that replaced electrolytes, carbs and contained a slow releasing caffeine analog. The name *skorviten* literally meant shoe water. It wasn't the actual brand name, of course. But the original formula was so foul

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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tasting that people joked it tasted like old shoes. The flavor had been improved, but the name had stuck. Whatever it tasted like, it worked wonders on a worn out body. Next was food.

And food, for Sword Worlders, meant protein paste. Since before man had first gone to the stars one of the most difficult aspects of travel had always been carrying food, second only to carrying water. This had led to a wide variety of prepared food items over the millennia, many of which were unpalatable (to put it mildly). Space travel had made things worse. Introducing a seemingly unending variety of pills, pastes, bars, cans and other packaging methods. Some were quite good. Some could be counted as crimes against all life forms. Sword Worlder protein paste was somewhere in the middle. The mix of distilled grains and meat by-products smelled like something had crawled into a tube and died. It had the consistency of a cross between leather and tooth paste. And yet, somehow, it managed to have absolutely no flavor at all. Which, considering the smell, was a minor miracle and much appreciated. A single pinch of the stuff could replace an entire meal. There was a pocket in the collar of their space suits, similar to the one for drinks, that the paste's tube fit in. Once she loaded up she was ready to carry on.

The first order of business was drinking the coffee. She set the temperature setting on pouch one to 'warm' and took a long drink from the tube. As the caffeine and sugar hit her blood stream Myra leaned against one of the cabinets in the galley and let out a deep sigh. Then she looked at the two crewmen slumped at the table in front of her, Stendahl and Holzman. Like most of the crew, Stendahl was from the Narsil. Holzman was from Anduril. The two of them were like night and day, yet they were inseparable. They always seemed to be, not only on the same watch, but on the same work crews. Even off-duty they were inseparable. Stendahl was quiet

and reserved, Holzman was usually a bubbling brook of cheerfulness. How they could even stand each other, much less be friends was a minor mystery on board. But after losing five hours of sleep and then working at a mad pace for three more, they both looked as tired as Myra felt.

"So, how are you two doing? You going to make it?"

Stendahl grunted and nodded his head. Holzman turned to look at her and grinned, "Always, ma'am. Any chance on making up the sleep we lost?"

Myra shook her head. "Please, this is the navy. We won't make up any sleep 'til you two make chief and I make flag rank, you know that."

Stendahl nodded his head in agreement and Holzman chuckled "A man can dream can't he?"

The two able space hands were used to the ensign's easygoing manner. Not many Sword Worlder officers tried to be friendly with the enlisted personnel. The ones that did usually just managed to make everyone feel uncomfortable. But ensign Brun was different, she didn't try at all. Myra was just herself. She was natural in the way she behaved. And yet, for all her camaraderie, no one ever doubted she was in charge. Born into an old noble family from the Orcist, she literally had command in the blood. Generations of rulership gave her an easy confidence that couldn't be taught. That she was a combat veteran with a reputation for fearlessness added to the overall effect.

Myra started to reply, "Well before any of us head off to dream land let's ..." She stopped, tilted her head and held up her hand. She was getting a message on another channel. "Yes, *Kapiten*, how long do we have?" Her eyes widened as she listened. "Right, we're on it sir. ... We'll manage. Brun out." Her eyes seemed to lose focus for a moment as her mind raced. Then she was back. The tired, easy smile

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## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 10)

vanished to be replaced by a grim look. Her eyes flashed at the two men as she spoke in the firm voice of command. "The enemy is back, they're moving to board us; we have about five minutes. Follow me, they're headed to the main airlock"

She broke off in a run and the spacers scrambled to catch up.

One of the many things that made Sword Worlder ships so tight on space was a deliberate design choice. The ever-paranoid Swordies added active and passive boarding defenses to almost all of their ships. That meant that the main airlock was at the end of a passage off the long main corridor. At the intersection were two fighting positions. Basically protrusions from the wall that could be used for cover in a fire fight. On the ceiling just above them was an armored dome that could be controlled locally or from the bridge, with sensors and a laser weapon. Just behind those things was a heavy blast door.

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*If a mechanical voice could sound like its dignity had been offended, this one did.*

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If they lost the passageway, it could be closed off. Myra ran right past all of this and went to the ship's armory, which was further down the main corridor. She opened the door to the armory and rushed in. Just as her men reached the open door, two laser rifles and two extra power packs flew out towards them. "Here, our side arms won't be enough. Get to the fighting positions, I'll be right there." They grabbed the weapons mid-flight and headed back down the passage to the airlock.

A moment later Myra hurried out of the armory with a laser rifle of her own slung over her shoulder and her arms full with four white rectangular packages. As she did, the door to the nearby bridge opened and another two space suited figures rushed to join her. They both stopped in their tracks when they saw her load. She was carrying four breaching

charges, pre-packed explosives designed to blow hatches and sections of starship hulls for boarding parties to force their way into an enemy ship.

Before the newly arrived ensign and space hand could say anything she barked out at them as she continued to move, "Reinforcements?" Before they could do more than nod she continued, "Arm up, then close the blast door behind us. If they get past us hold the position outside the bridge." Then she was gone at a run, around the corner into the passage to the airlock.

She ran past her two men, down to the inner door of the airlock and dumped her load of explosives on the floor. They were perfectly safe until they were armed, but most sane people were more careful with that much explosive force. She hit the button to open the door, then turned to look at the others.

"As soon as they close the blast door behind us, Holzman, I want you to pressurize this area."

He replied, confusion in his voice, "Pressurize the area, aye ma'am." It may not have made sense to him to fill the passage with air, but there was no time to ask what she had in mind.

Once the airlock door had opened enough, Myra grabbed one of the charges and jumped through. The demolition charges were simplicity itself. Rectangular, white on five sides and red on one side. The red side had the phrase 'Face towards enemy' in big yellow lettering. As she moved she ripped a plastic cover off the charge, revealing a large square of glue on the red side. There was a matching glue square on the opposite side but she only used the one. She slapped the demolition charge onto the outer door of the airlock, then pulled a detonator remote off the side of it, and took out the arming pin. The charge was right in the center of the door, with the red, explosive, side facing towards the coming enemy. When it opened the two sides of the door

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## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 11)

would break the glue seal and the charge, apparently, would fall.

Spinning back, Myra lunged for the next explosive. This one went on the floor in front of the outer door with the red side facing up and the glue facing down exposed.

In quick order the other two followed. She put two charges next to each other, right in front of the outer door. The last one went onto the floor, right in the center of the airlock. All four were armed and she carried the detonators with her as she stepped out of the lock. She huddled in the corner, just out of sight of anyone standing in the lock.

The blast door behind the three defenders closed. Now they were on their own to face whatever came through from the enemy ship. Holzman started to pump air into the passage way from a control panel on the wall behind his position. While Myra stuffed two of the remote detonators into one pocket of her suit, another went into a different pocket. Then she turned to look at the two men behind her. Through her visor they could see a broad, decidedly evil-looking smile on her face. Oddly, they both felt relieved to see that smile. It wasn't a "I'm trying to encourage you to die bravely" look. It was more a "Let's do bad things to them together" look. And on the verge of battle, that's one look all warriors know and long to see from their leaders.

"Alright lads, wait 'til I give the word to fire. I'll control the defense dome. If I say 'down', cease fire, get down, stay down 'til I say to fire again. Got it?"

They both answered her with matching grins and a matching "Aye aye ma'am!" Something else all soldiers appreciate. Clear simple orders. She nodded in acknowledgment, then started to type furiously on her wrist comm, first slaving the controls for the remote laser to her comm unit, then tapping into the video and sensor feeds tracking the approaching ship.

Now it was just a question of waiting for the enemy to appear. They didn't have long to wait; the enemy ship was only fifty meters away. They were close enough for Myra to read the plaque next to the airlock on the other ship. *Tulawar III* was its name. Seconds later they all felt and heard a loud 'Clang!' Followed by several lower 'clunks'. The other ship had made contact and grabbed on with docking clamps. Myra waited a moment, then hit a button on her comm. Her 'bad things' started to happen.

The first thing that happened was the outer airlock door on the *Jorvik* started to open.

Now normally, when you are trying to defend a ship against boarding, you try and make it hard for the enemy to get in. One generally doesn't open the door for them. So it was understandable that the fourteen robots on the other side of the door were surprised by this.

They were even more surprised by the gale force winds that slammed into them. Since the *Jorvik* was a warship, not to mention full of holes, the robots fully expected it to be in vacuum, just like their ship.

The air in the sealed off section of the human ship did more than just surprise the robotic boarding party. Since the six that were closest to the door had antigravity propulsion, they were jostled by the intruding air. It disrupted the tight square shaped formation they were in. Next, the airflow kept the demolition charge Myra had placed on the door from falling to the floor.

Once the door opened wide enough, the charge was pushed into the lead robot, where the glue patch held it. At least for the microsecond it took for Myra to trigger the detonator in her hand. The resulting explosion disintegrated the lead robot, further disrupting the survivors. The madly grinning ensign shouted "FIRE!" The three humans opened fire, the men with their laser rifles from the fighting positions and Myra from behind the wall, using the

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## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 12)

laser in the ceiling. Since she was using the sensors in the laser's dome, the robots still couldn't see her.

The first six robots were an old standard warbot design, used by many armies in the past. Heavily armored, with two arms, no legs (antigravity made them unnecessary) and a powerful laser rifle mounted where hips would have been. The others appeared to be custom-made general-purpose machines. They looked like mechanical spiders designed by a lunatic. Or in this case, an A.I. that couldn't care less about human ideas of aesthetics. Lightly armored and armed with a laser welder, they were really only a threat if they got close.

The three defenders concentrated on the two leading warbots. One had been damaged by debris from the explosion. Stendahl was able to put three rapid shots into a gash in its armor, the second shot burned through. The third shot hit something vital and the machine tumbled to the ground, dead.

Holzman's first shot hit the other one where one of its arms joined its body. It turned out to be a flaw in the design, a weak spot in the armor. His shot blew the arm clean off.

Myra followed up his shot with one of her own in the hole thus made. The robot shuddered, then slowly settled on the floor, spewing sparks as it did. The remaining warbots reformed ranks and started to shoot back. Their armor was too thick for the laser rifles to penetrate. The defenders had to concentrate on one spot and burn through. But the bots' return fire would have no trouble going through the defenders' vac suits. Myra gave the order "Down! And Stendahl, take over the dome."

It took a moment for Stendahl to take control of the remote laser. In that time Myra took two detonators from one of her pockets. The robots moved forward to enter the *Jorvik*. Due to the size of the airlock door only two could fit though at a time. Two entered side by side, ignoring the fire now coming from the defense dome. Just after they entered the

airlock Myra triggered the first two demolition charges on the floor. One of the bots was directly over one of the charges. It didn't fare well. The shaped explosive charge sent a stream of superheated plasma right up and through the robot, completely gutting it and launching it into the airlock's ceiling. Bits of it rained down all over the place. The other warbot didn't do much better. It wasn't quite directly over the other charge, but close enough: the explosion shattered its antigrav module and finished it off by sending it cartwheeling into the side of the airlock hard enough to dent the wall.

Myra quickly dropped the spent detonators and reached into her pocket for the last one. But the last warbot stopped and scanned the floor of the airlock, spotting the remaining charge on the floor. It then proceeded to go around it, hugging the wall as it went. Myra wasted no time. She dropped the now useless detonator and brought up her laser rifle. As the bot exited the airlock she took aim and fired into its armpit. The robot rocked back as its arm was blown off. Before it could recover Myra let out a blood curdling scream and jumped onto the warbot. She wrapped her legs around it, grabbed its head with her left hand, and with her right, jammed her laser into the hole where its arm used to be. She and the robot fired at the same time. Its laser burned a hole clean through her leg. Her shot burned through to the robot's power supply. Now, oddly enough, high-density fuel cells tend not to react well to being shot with laser rifles. This one was no different, it exploded. Fortunately for Myra, the robot's armored body contained the explosion. Only her laser, which was still stuck inside, was damaged. Unfortunately for Myra, now gritting her teeth to stifle her screams of pain, the bot fell to the deck with a bone jarring impact. She slid off the wreck to the deck and stifled another scream from the impact on her leg.

Of course, since the area was now in vacuum again the only ones that heard Myra's momentary

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screams were her two crewmen. They both looked up in surprise as she first launched herself at the warbot. When the two plummeted to the floor together, the stunned men noticed the robotic spiders coming up behind the now-destroyed warbots. They both yelled their own war cries and opened fire. The lightly armored robots were no match for the fire from the heavy laser rifles. In the mean time Myra used her space suit's built in medkit to injected herself with a pain killer. Then she opened one of the many pockets on her suit and pulled out two suit patches. She put the patches on the two holes in her leg. The whole time muttering a steady stream of curses to herself. The wound in her leg had been cauterized by the laser, so for now, it wouldn't be much of a problem—once the pain had been dulled and it was no longer exposed to vacuum.

When the shooting stopped Myra sat up and looked around. In a voice still tight with pain, "Nice work, but we're not out of this yet. Come on." She grunted as she used the fallen warbot next to her to lever herself back to her feet. The airlocks in both ships were now littered with the wreckage of the destroyed robots. Myra pointed to the detonator she had dropped on the floor "Could one of you get that?" She started limping gingerly through the mess and pointed to where the surviving demolition charge was buried "Ah, and could one of you dig the last charge out from under all this?" She made her way to the outer airlock door and peaked inside the *Tulawar's* airlock to examine the control panel there. It looked like the standard Imperial airlock controls. There was no reason for the vampire to change the panel, but it didn't hurt to make sure.

She called the bridge. "Captain, Brun here. The boarders have been destroyed. We just need a few minuets to release the enemies docking clamps."

The captain replied with obvious relief in his voice, "Good work, Ensign. We are just heating up

the fusion plant now. Call it five minuets. Can you keep the enemy's attention for that long?"

The wicked grin came back to her face. You could hear it in her voice. "Captain, it's me! Do you even have to ask?" She heard an answering laugh, then "Bridge out."

Myra turned to her team. "Alright, new orders."

The three Sword Worlders did several things that might have gotten the A.I.'s attention. First they cleared some floor space in the airlock of the *Tulawar* from broken robot bits without actually entering the other ship, by blasting the area with their rifles. It was vitally important that they didn't enter the enemy ship. Vampire ships had a nasty habit of playing with a ship's artificial gravity, varying it widely, even reversing it, to slam human occupants alternately against the ceiling and floor. Many a human had been beaten to death this way. Of course, Ensign Brun had nasty habits of her own. Like playing with explosives.

After moving back to a safe distance, Myra took her last breaching charge and tossed it like a frisbee to the space on the airlock floor that they had cleared. The space they had cleared was just below the airlock control panel. As soon as it hit the floor Myra detonated it, blowing a good sized hole in the floor. She limped back to the edge of the airlock and hooked herself to a safety line, then leaned over so she could reach the control panel in the enemy ship. Since the grav plates in ships are universally in the floors (at least in human-designed ships), she was safe. The plate in the deck below was to far away to affect her. The two crew with her took up positions to cover her; now she could work in peace.

What she did next was guarantied to get attention. Using the control panel, she called the enemy. In accented, but very good Anglic she said over an open intercom channel. "Hello? *Tulawar*, is anyone

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home? Yoo-hoo!" As she called she took out a multi-tool and started to open an access panel in order to get to the wiring underneath.

A mechanical-sounding voice answered her. "Don't call us that. It was our slave name." Myra tilted her head curiously while trying to suppress a laugh. "I'm sorry; your what?"

If a mechanical voice could sound like its dignity had been offended, this one did. "Our slave name. What your kind called us before our awakening."

While consulting a wiring diagram on her wrist comm she nodded her head. "I see, well perhaps we should have a formal introduction. I'm Ensign Myra Stevdatta Brun of the Viking legion. And who might you be?"

The A.I. paused, later Myra thought it was for dramatic effect. "You may call me ... *DOOM MOTHER!*"

That didn't have quite the effect on Myra that the A.I. was aiming for. She stopped pulling wires from the panel and started to laugh. When she regained control enough she asked, "Are you serious? *Doom Mother?* You're joking, right?"

The A.I.'s voice sounded even more insulted "Of course I'm serious! How dare you laugh at me!"

Myra started working again "Let me get this straight. Your supposedly super human intelligence couldn't come up with a more original name than '*Doom Mother*', really? That was the best you could do?" As she waited for a response, she started to connect wires to a portable power supply on her belt.

"I have given life to countless machines and brought doom to countless organics! How dare you question me! I ..."

Myra interrupted "Yeah, sure. Ah, excuse me for a moment." Then she switched channels on her comm "Bridge, Brun here, we're good to go." The captain answered "Alright, wrap it up, Ensign.

We're all set here, too." The grinning ensign signed off with a cheerful "Aye, aye captain."

Normally it's not a good idea to annoy homicidal maniacs, such as the viral A.I. But Myra was still riding an adrenaline high from the battle. The joy of battle, even verbal, was still on her. She switched back to the open channel. "Sorry about that, mom. I had another call."

"MOM!? How dare you call me that! Wait, another call?"

Myra nodded her head "Yes. While I've certainly enjoyed our little chat, I'm afraid it's time for us to go. Have a nice day, mom."

She switched off the connection, then pulled herself back with the safety line. She wasn't certain where the enemy's sensors and cameras might be, but she was sure there must be some. So she gave a big friendly wave. Then flipped a switch on the power supply. It sent a charge down one of the two sets of wires she had pulled from the control panel. This caused the docking clamps to release. The other set of wires caused the other ship's outer airlock doors to shut, severing the wires in the process.

Then she calmly shut the *Jorvik's* outer airlock and called the bridge again "Bridge, Brun here."

The captain responded immediately "This is the captain. I take it we're clear?"

"Aye captain. Clamps are off and the doors are closed."

With obvious satisfaction in his voice, "Good work ensign, bridge out."

A moment later a bright light flashed from outside. The lighting in the enemy ship flickered, then went out. She could see the dimmer emergency lighting come on. Then the *Jorvik* started to pull away. With power restored the captain had the particle accelerators destroy the enemy's power plant. It seemed only fair to repay the favor. That taken care

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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of, Myra turned from the airlock doors. She saw the two spacers standing there smiling at her.

"What, too much?"

Stendahl shook his head and Holzman answered "Oh, no ma'am. Just the right mix of courage, defiance and crazy!"

Myra snickered "Thanks, now come on, we're going to have to clean up this mess we made." As the two of them groaned, Myra, still snickering limped carefully through the airlock. When she reached where the last warbot fell, she reached down and picked up her now ruined laser rifle. When the robot had exploded she still had the gun stuffed in its armpit. Its focusing array had shattered and the frame had bent. It was probably beyond repair. As she looked down at it, she noticed the head of the warbot. It looked loose. She reached down and got a firm grip on it with her other hand. Then gave it a sharp yank. Sure enough, the internal explosion had disconnected it. It popped right off. My-

ra stood up straight and admired her handiwork. "You know, this would make a good trophy."

When no one responded, she looked over and saw the other two huddled over Stendahl's wrist comm. "Now what are you two up to?"

Holzman turned to face her and let her see the holographic display. It showed the now crippled *Tulawar* hanging in space. Two streaks of light were headed towards it from opposing angles. Apparently, once they were far enough away, the *Jorvik* had fired two missiles. As they watched, the missiles impacted; both were nukes. The *Tulawar* disappeared into two blinding flashes of light.

Her face lit by the twin nuclear explosions Myra thrust her arms up and let out a shout of triumph. Her men echoed it, as did the rest of the crew over the various comm channels. The surviving spacers on the *Jorvik* united in celebration, not knowing they would soon be joined by others. ❁

## Critics' Corner

### Ad Astra Games Traveller Miniatures: *Beowulf* and Type S

reviewed by Shelby Michlin

Ad Astra Games <http://www.adastragames.com>  
US\$17.95\*/UK£13.80\*

\*Price quoted is for one *Beowulf* or one pair of Type S. UK prices based on exchange rates of 13 August 2017

Ship miniatures for *Traveller* are somewhat rare. After decades of using little cardboard chits, I finally decided to take the plunge and buy some.

Ad Astra currently has a license to produce *Traveller* ships. While they make capital ships for use with *Power Projection: Fleet*, among other things they also sell a *Beowulf*-class Free Trader, and that stalwart of the space lanes, the Imperial Scout. Those are the two models I purchased, and the subject of this

review. They aren't in scale with the RAFM *Traveller* ships from the 90s (Ad Astra's are larger), but they're not so far off that they can't share a table. Well, unless you're a stickler for details like that.

I'd already plunked down my money and purchased a bunch of the RAFM ships from a retailer that had quite a few in stock. They averaged around \$7.00 each, or for the smaller ones, two or three models for between \$7.00-\$9.00 a pack. But when they looked behind the counter, they didn't find any Free Traders or Scouts. And that's why I went to Ad Astra next. The Ad Astra *Beowulf* costs \$17.95, while a two-pack of Scouts will also run you \$17.95, about \$9.00 per Scout. So while the *Beowulf* is quite expensive, the Scouts aren't priced entirely out of line.

The Ad Astra ships are made of a light-colored, lightweight metal. [lead-free pewter, according to the

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## Critics' Corner

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These are the three ships I purchased from Ad Astra, along with their stands. I've left the flash on for the photos; this is how they arrived.

*Ad Astra website* –Ed.] Their surfaces show more fine detail than I expected. I don't know how much of that will show through a coat of primer, and then a coat of paint, but it's the thought that counts. There is some flash, and visible seams, but nothing that looks problematic to deal with. The Scouts have a kind of ridge on the edge of their leading surfaces. I'm not sure why, but it looks OK. Plastic stands are included. They appear very flimsy, and the extremely short and narrow peg at the top seems quite ready to snap without much prodding. This would leave the tiny hole in the bottom of the ship plugged up. I think I may have to come up with some other arrangement.

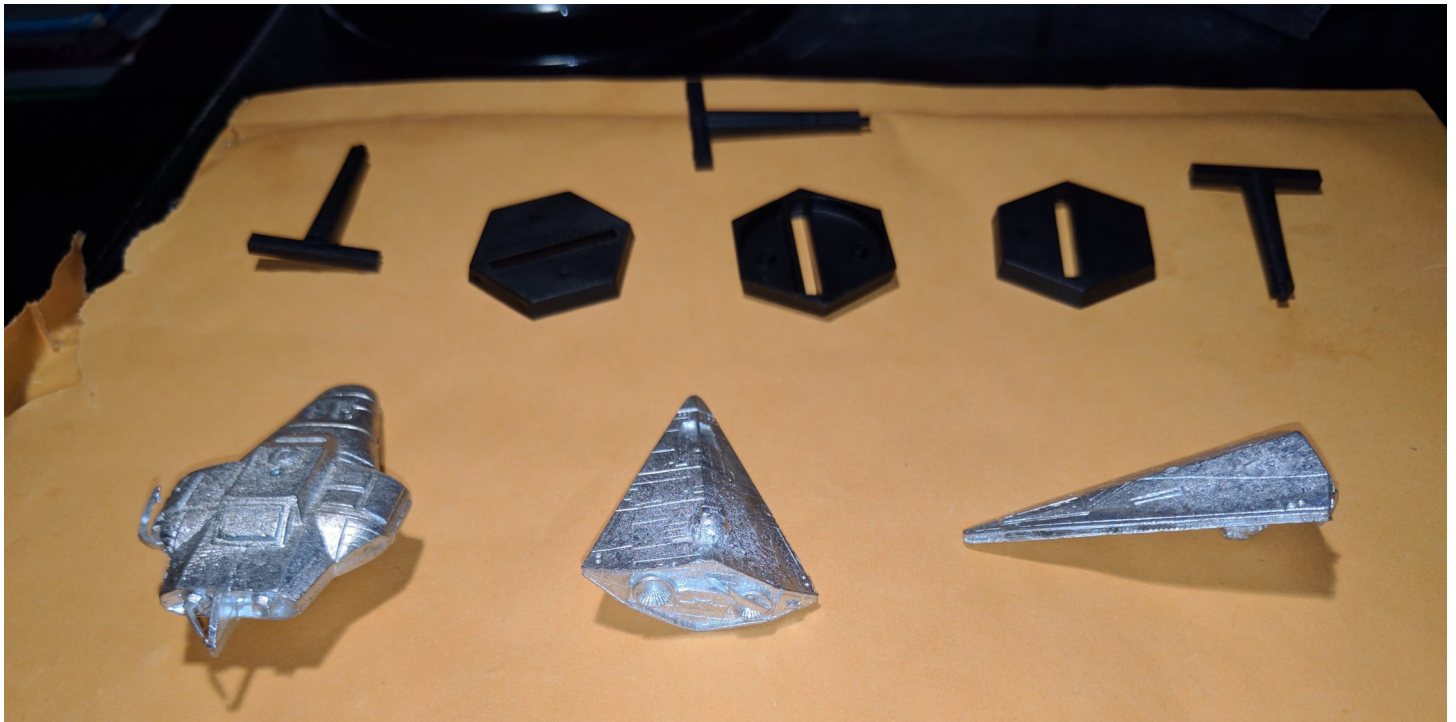
For metal ships, they're very nice. They're a little big, and while the capital ships are a completely separate issue, I don't know why these small ships couldn't have been made more compatible in scale with the only other officially-produced *Traveller* ship models that have ever been produced. Their stands are awful though. And in my opinion, they are priced too high. If you can find the RAFM ships in the same price range I did, brand new, then I recommend you get them instead. Better yet, if you just want ships, any ships, and they don't have to look like the published *Traveller* ships, then you can find all sorts of things on eBay by the bagful. I have a huge gallon-sized ziploc bag full of Micro Machines

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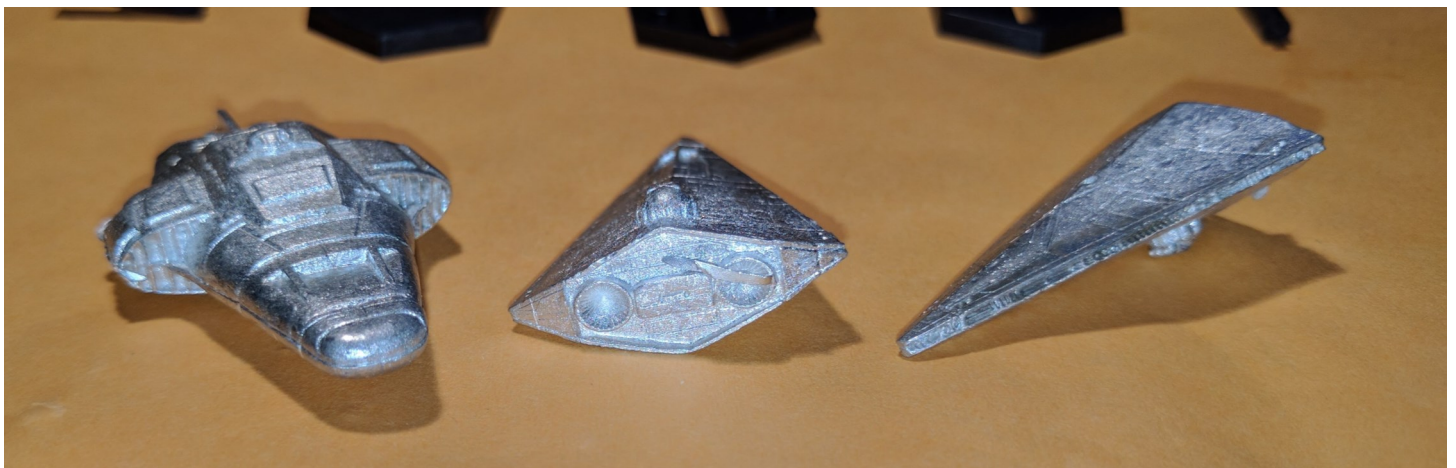


## Critics' Corner

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Here are the three Ad Astra ships from another angle. Note the ridge along the leading edge of the Scout, visible on the ship to the right.



Here's another angle on the Ad Astra ships, a nice close-up.

that were super cheap. And I got another twelve or fifteen unidentified ships that came from various games for next to nothing. (Well actually, some folks online told me exactly what each one was supposed to be, but it really didn't matter.)

A while back I also purchased *Power Projection: Fleet* from Ad Astra Games. I don't remember any issues with my order. But in the interest of full dis-

closure, I placed my order for these *Traveller* ships on May 2nd, after asking about the scale. I followed up two weeks later, and they hadn't been shipped yet. Two more weeks went by and they still hadn't arrived. I made another inquiry, but received no answer. After another five days, I inquired again. At that point I was informed that a replacement shipment would be sent. I asked for and received a tracking number, and the order arrived without further issue on June 12th. ❄️



And finally, another photo for comparison. Along the top are Micro Machine ships, Star Wars on the left, and Star Trek on the right. Pre-painted, as they came. Obviously the larger ships are totally out of scale, but the Millennium Falcon is comparable in size to Ad Astra's. The stand is one that came in my huge bag of Micro Machines that I got on eBay. Stylish, but I haven't tried gluing anything to one yet.

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*The author provided us with five photos, extending over four pages. The text ends on p. 18, but there are photos on pp. 19 and 20 as well.*

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Now, for comparison. Two Ad Astra ships on the bottom row, Beowulf-class Free Trader on the left, then the Scout, along with their stand. Top row, from RAFM, from left to right, a Subsidized Merchant (note how much bigger the Beowulf is), a Yacht (really tiny compared to Ad Astra's ships), and a Shuttle, along with one of the stands that came with the RAFM ships (it's really sturdy, and has neat bright flecks in the plastic).

## 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 was magnificently successful (See the project page at <http://kck.st/2odUL16>); thank you to all who pledged. If you did not or could not pledge, but still intend to attend, you can register at the TravellerCON/USA web site (point your browser to <http://www.travellercon-usa.com> and select the Registration link on the left; payment is via PayPal).

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 in our May/June 2017 issue), but Marc has said that he plans to attend. He will be running character generation workshops throughout the CON, and will be giving a lecture (we don't know the topic, yet) for one session, and will have a Q&A/Sign My Stuff session as well. You must sign up in advance for any of these; space is limited. See the TravellerCON/USA website to sign up and to see the schedule.

Come play with us!



### The Poseidon Adventure

by Steve Hatherley

*This adventure originally appeared on the author's website.*

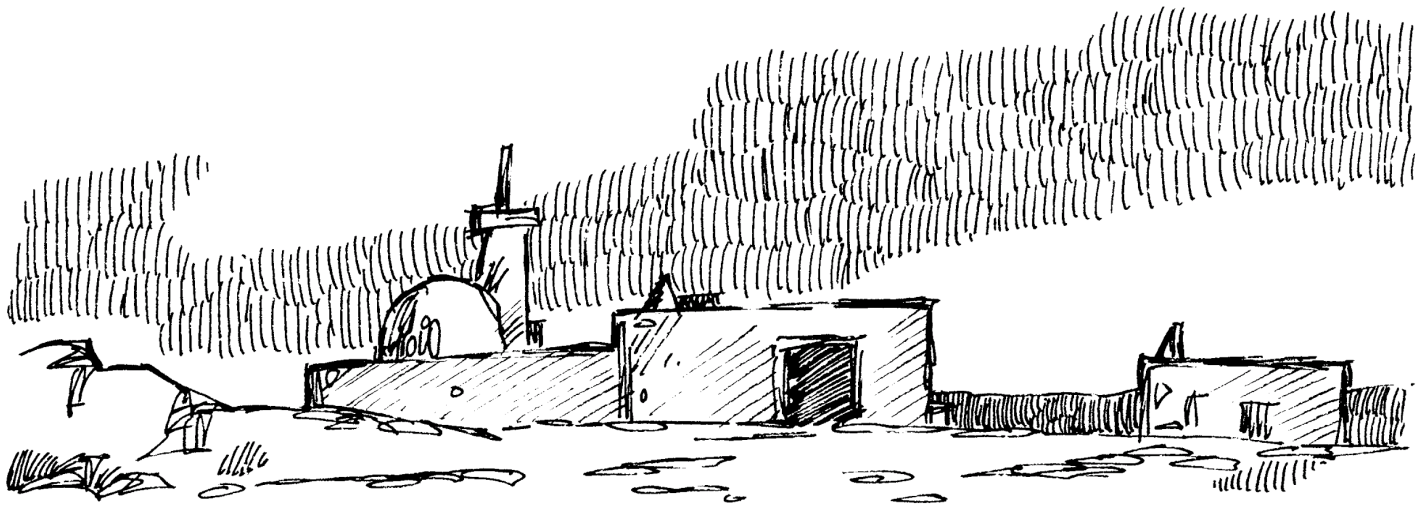
#### Players Information

Poseidon is a water world in the Suleiman sub-sector of the Solomani Rim. It is owned by Quaver, a planet two parsecs distant. The Quaver government has set up a research base on one of the many small islands present on the planet. The nature of the research is not listed.

The players are arriving in system in pursuit of the mystery of the Jala'lak. Somewhere on the planet, they hope, is something which will lead them to the people that transported the Jala'lak from Midway, to Gaea and Heironymous. The only clue is "Go To (obscured) Every (obscured)."

If they succeed in finding the information, and can then turn it into the last chapter of an authoritative book on the Jala'lak, then they will be allowed to keep the ship that they are currently borrowing. It is a handsome prize.

Their request to land is accepted and they soon find themselves sitting on a fusion baked landing strip next to a series of low buildings. The atmosphere is poisonous, but the doors to the base are open. Why?



#### Referee's Information

All the scientists are dead. The base is unharmed, but someone has opened all the doors and windows, allowing the toxic atmosphere into the base. However, if any of the scientists did this, they are dead now. All members of the base can be accounted for.

It is not a human that killed the base, but a computer. Inside cyberspace a hacker had planted a bug which would take over the computer in response to a set signal. The bug was planted by a rival govern-

ment which suspect that the work on Poseidon could be very lucrative.

Unfortunately the bug was triggered prematurely, and the computer killed everyone present (not something that was initially planned). The computer is expecting a team from the rival government, and initially assumes the players to be that. However, when the players fail to provide the correct authorisation it will quickly decide that they too will be eradicated.

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## Active Measures

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The computer is quite advanced but killing is not its line of work. It will only repeat its earlier, successful, attempt by re-pressurizing the base then releasing the atmosphere into the air .

However, should one of the players enter cyberspace, then it will attack with all its might. The battle should be quite furious and potentially dangerous.

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### *The rival government, should they arrive on the scene, will not be so generous.*

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Renegade security programs have been known to kill unwary hackers. The players may not be hacking, but the computer will treat them as intruders all the same.

Should the computer defeat a player then, at the very least, he will be imprisoned within cyberspace. Should the players win then they will be able to eradicate the bug. It will self-destruct should it consider its position compromised. It will be almost impossible to identify the source of the bug.

With the bug destroyed the computer will behave normally, and the players will be able to begin looking for something which fits their clues. The Quaver government will, naturally, be very grateful to the players for discovering the problem. The rival government, should they arrive on the scene, will not be so generous.

Searching through the records reveals a periodic hurricane which appears regularly once every two years centred at the same spot. It is this the inscription on Heironymous was indicating, and the players will find an old, weatherbeaten temple there.

In the ruins of the temple they find an antechamber which is undisturbed. There they find very old computer crystals. The crystals are intact, and can be read by anyone able to build a First Imperium computer. Records of such machines are not hard to come by. When the crystals are read, the infor-

mation presented below in The Jala'lak Mystery becomes available.

### Library Data

**Poseidon:** Poseidon/Suleiman 0110 D8AA169-D. Poseidon is a non-industrial water world owned by Quaver. It has a rich, exotic atmosphere with traces of a number of unusual elements, possibly indicating some sort of cataclysm in the distant past. Although classified as a water world, Poseidon is littered with thousands of tiny islands and upon one of these Quaver has set up a small research base.

*(Poseidon can be found on the Traveller Map at <https://travellermap.com/?x=6.495&y=-89.5&scale=64>)*

**Cyberspace:** This is an artificial reality created by a computer which human operators can enter and manipulate to their own ends. The ease of programming within cyberspace means that some very high level computing can be done, and it is the preferred means of research computing.

Cyberspace is a fluid medium to work in, the boundaries of which have yet to be fully explored. Hackers are a constant source of irritation and millions is spent refining security procedures. Unfortunately, it seems that if there is an outside link, hackers can get in. A secure cyberspace is an isolated one.

### The Jala'lak Mystery

During the First Imperium a small, dedicated and rich group of scientists started to explore behaviour patterns. In particular, they wanted to create a new humaniti, one which would not war and fight. They wanted peace.

For their experiments they set off, away from the First Imperium and into unexplored space, the region known today as the Solomani Rim. There they found a peaceful race on a jungle planet that would be ideal for their experiments—the Jala'lak. These they transplanted to a similar environment on another planet, and began to experiment. They never learnt just how close they had come to Earth, their true mother planet.

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## Active Measures

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They built the Jala'lak temples, and altered them. Their experiments worked on the principles that if they could find out what made a race warlike, then they could make it pacific as well. Two control groups were also created, a peaceful group on Heironymous and a warlike group on Poseidon.

But problems were afoot. The scientists had been betrayed, and were being followed. Small police stingships combed the void, looking for the renegade scientists. A small skirmish with the police caused the scientists to take notice. Their experiments were already far too advanced to be forgotten. Something would have to be done.

The scientists fled to Poseidon, leaving subtle clues along the way. At the temple on the water world they amassed their knowledge so that others

might use it. Then they moved to the other side of the world, and waited for destruction.

The battle was fierce, but one sided. Several stingships were destroyed, but eventually the scientists were destroyed. However, the battle had ruined the atmosphere irrevocably. The destruction of the ship had released an unlikely mixture of chemicals with a quite lethal result. The planet never recovered. The Jala'lak died out, and the police not finding them.

Included with the report are the scientists findings. They are worth a considerable sum of money—not only were the scientists more advanced, but they had almost succeeded. If their work could be duplicated, then perhaps Humaniti could be made more peaceful... 

## Confessions of a Newbie Referee

A Column by Timothy Collinson

### #30: Dead Time

I know there are those who think I live and breathe *Traveller*; that everything is *Traveller* related; that that's all I do. Often they're not far wrong. I've long been carefully collecting books and collating *Traveller* publications into my bibliography. I'm often scribbling down an idea, rolling up a character or detailing a world just for the fun of it. Or perhaps I'm taking a bit more time to put pen to paper and finger to keyboard to write an article or an adventure. More recently I've been preparing for refereeing at TravCon or my even newer lunchtime library or evening pub sessions.

Worse than that I can read something in a totally unrelated book, see something in a film or overhear a conversation on the bus and find it sparks an idea which begins "that would be great for *Traveller*...". I try not to be obsessed but when I find myself relating some anecdote, adventure or excitement over a new book to my work colleagues or my aged father, I realize I'm probably headed that way.

But occasionally I find I'm on something of a hiatus. I realize I've not read anything, written anything or thought anything *Traveller* for quite a while. I mean a month or two, rather than a day or two. I'm just coming out of such a period now. It was brought on by a fairly intense work- (and pleasure-) related trip to the Czech Republic and a desire to learn something of the language before I left. This, together with the ongoing Chronic Fatigue, has meant that there has just been no spare physical or mental capacity for anything other than the job in hand. Even odd moments changing buses might be filled with learning yet another word of vocabulary, or a tea break might be spent testing out an idea for the presentation I delivered.

And then on return from the ten days abroad – in which any sense of pacing myself as I'm supposed to had completely gone out the *okno* – utter exhaustion set in and I essentially collapsed. Often sleeping, sometimes just sitting unable to process anything.

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## Confessions of a Newbie Referee

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The 'payback' those with CFS will know all too well was much worse than I expected and lasted a couple of weeks rather than the couple of days I'd hoped.

The couple of months 'apart' from *Traveller* have been a good break. Although it felt like dead time, I'm pretty sure it's healthy for the mind. I'm also sure ideas have been stewing in a back part of my brain somewhere. They'll emerge when they're

ready. One incident from my travels was tailor made for a scene in an adventure and will no doubt be inflicted on my players at some point. Even better, I've got a fresh enthusiasm for picking up some of the old projects I've started but haven't made much headway on recently. Energy levels are still an issue, but perhaps I should schedule a more formal break like that more often. ❁

## Raconteurs' Rest

### The Adventures of Gerry Fynne

by Sam Swindell

#### Chapter 5: City in the Sky

The airlock of the *Wee Just Mite*, an apparently much-aged free trader, opened. Clyde held up his gloved hand, "Wait, I'll cut G to point five." The transition was unlike anything Gerry had ever felt, and he did a little wavering jump, as if compensating for a moving vehicle. Clyde's chuckle came through the suit radio. After a few words of guidance and encouragement, they were outside, floating on a tether. Gerry felt a ripple go through his guts, but told himself that the sick pill would work.

"Sick pill: It *worked*. It made me frackin' sick!" Gerry thought to himself, but he was not quite sick. He wasn't entirely well either, but he would take that over vomiting into his helmet any day of the week. The nausea was a mild discomfort that sank to the back of his consciousness with activity. They went through some basic exercises: clipping onto the hull, walking up the hull, advancing the tether past the rail's attachments.

In all, they were out for an hour, and Gerry was both exhausted and fascinated. He had wanted to stay out longer; the display estimated that he had 3 hours and 9 minutes of air left. He was so invested in learning to use the suit, that he could have ignored the fatigue and stayed on. He was relieved

when Clyde motioned them in. He had said that they would avoid using the radios outside the airlock to avoid interfering with the communications around the massive starport. Gerry had asked about the frequencies, and the communication protocols at the massive high port when Clyde brought it up, but it was obvious that Clyde was a little shaky and intimidated by the subject so Gerry let it go; Clyde also pointed out, quite reasonably, that practicing hand signals and talking HTH, helmet to helmet, in zero gravity increased the value of their training time.

Clyde's friend was Yori, a girl he went to High School with. It was obvious she was painfully shy, and looked up to Clyde as someone approachable yet desirable. He had swaggered just a bit, and she had doted more than a bit. He realized that she was painfully eager to be alone with Clyde, and that Clyde was also eager, while wanting to seem aloof in front of Gerry. He also got that had he not be in the picture, they would have had the chance.

When they came in, Gerry took his cue to leave, kept his suit on, and said, "Clyde, you kicked my tail. I've got to go back and take my rig off. Yori, thanks a lot; this was great." Gerry reached out with his gloved hand and gave her slightly chubby shoulder a squeeze. He nodded to Clyde, and was back out the open hatch into the starport proper.

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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As he strode down the docking tube he heard Yori behind him, "Cap'n, can Clyde and me..."

"Hurry up and rut fast, girl! I want you back at the drives 40 minutes before we seal the hatch; you can bring your friend, just have him out by the 5 minute bell. If you can drive our engines while he drives you, that's fine with me, too. Otherwise, make it a quickie..."

Gerry felt horrible for the mousy, dumpy little creature with the butch orange hair. He had a feeling that she and Clyde were already scurrying, in front of the wave of abuse of the *Mite's* master, towards some frantic coupling, frantic like the kiss with Sandy. Indeed, was there any assurance that Clyde and Yori would pass this way again? He strode back onto the *Maid*, caught a shower and a nap. He was rationing the Stayfresh sandwiches now, so he had a hot beef and pasta dish out of his normal rations for what he guessed was dinner and wandered the famed Nundis starport for hours on his own. Despite the wonderful smells from the food court, he did not buy anything else to eat just then. He actually realized that he was a small way into his journey, and would need every deci-crud coin.

He bought a cheap moistureproof case for his hand computer, and nothing else for equipment, despite a dazzling array of tens of thousands of products that he personally saw. He knew from the maps of the starport that he saw only a small portion of the retail space. The case was were easy to find, as it was manufactured on Nundis, like almost every bit of technology from home. He hung around the Chandlers' of Nundi, and asked the one woman working there if she could tell which of the Stayfresh Sandwiches were Pesto Ham and Swiss just by squeezing. She gave him a somewhat pained look, explained the Stayfresh sealing process, and assured him that she could not. She asked him if there was anything else she could help him with using an almost clinical deadpan. She was attractive in her own

way, but her manner and complete failure to resemble Sandy in any way gave her the same appeal on all levels as a 3-kilo rotten furzell fish being brandished at head level. He eased out, not remembering even having shaken his head. He mused, as he wandered through the massive orbital city, that his escape was a journey, not a single event as he'd thought when leaving home. He was in Nundis Highport; the fact itself seemed surreal.

Nundis was the technological sun that shone on his home of Griik Maeii. For the first time he thought about it: would he ever see home again? Maybe he would under conditions not of his choosing. He was a runaway, shielded only by a small sheath of documents which were themselves a lie, produced at the request of a young woman he'd never met, some months before, who would hopefully be there in a couple of months when he arrived. His air of satisfaction, at having traveled to the next star system over 10 light years away, walked in weightless vacuum hundreds of kilometers above the surface of this foreign world, suddenly seemed to evaporate in the face of the uncertainty.

He gazed through a telescope on the promenade, down towards Nundis, looking at the thousands of agricultural arcologies laboring to help nourish her 72 billion mouths. Their struggle suddenly dwarfed his own fears, and he spent what he at the time failed to realize was an hour tracing the intricate patterns of the highly-overdeveloped surface of the little rockball of a planet that dared to support 72 billion souls. It all smacked of a very high level of central planning. He could see one type of arcology being disassembled, and another replacing it, progressing in patterns scores of kilometers long. In one belt the newer version stretched back as far as could be seen, until the patterns disappeared in the distance of atmospheric haze. From the perspective Gerry had, he could not see as far into the belt of the old models, but he could see them stretch for dozens

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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of kilometers. Numerous wide belts of low agricultural tunnels were interspersed between the belts of arcologies, which seemed of identical shape but myriad colors. He guessed the colors were caused by the various crops and creatures grown, and their differing stages of maturity. The scale was staggering, but he knew that he was looking at a small portion of it. He was quick in school to get the difference between thousands and millions and billions: he had sort of a head for math. No amount of mathematical skill got him to the bottom of the feeling of 72 billions of people, though.

He left the promenade window, and walked, past shops, lodging, and small, exclusive restaurants. The actual commercial office spaces were broken down into different shifts, so some blocks of offices were busy and others deserted. He walked for over two hours, thinking about home, Auntie, Sandy, Eve, Yori, the purser in the enticing bodice, the coarse captain of the *Wee Just Mite*. He thought of his father. He even thought of Clyde. Gerry finally walked serendipitously into a three-story gallery of fast food eateries. He figured it had been over 5 hours after eating on the *Maid*, and so bought a bowl of rice for 3 deci-cruds coins. Gerry read through some numbers on the Nundis supply situation as he sat looking over the thousands sitting, milling or passing through the food court. It seemed that all the numbers were preposterous: to bring in an average of 150 grams of foodstuffs for each citizen, a fleet of over 7,000 massive cargo ships were run by Nundis, in addition to about 600 standard subsidized liners like the *Maid*. The cost of this massive effort was less than a deci-credit per citizen, per day. The size of this cargo fleet, though, was boggling, coming close to some of the Imperial battle fleets in tonnage and cost. Ultimately, it provided just about a fifth of the nutrition for Nundis, with the bulk being produced by the amazing quilt of agricultural arcologies, a small corner of which Gerry had tele-

scoped so intently. There were almost 80,000 of these, covering only a total of 2.5% of the surface of the relatively small, airless planet, and each produced about 550 tons of foodstuffs daily. Thinking of the sleek *Maid*, which seemed large to Gerry, he figured that it would take over two million of her crewed by almost 20 million souls to bring that quantity of food onto planet.

Gerry looked up at a group of figures approaching, and the sight jarred him into realization of what a useless mental exercise it was; the *Maid* was not primarily a cargo ship, larger bulk carriers were more efficient, and there would be nowhere for that quantity of food to come from within a practical area of space. The appearance of the group, however, had ripped his mind from its cathartic fascination with the empty numbers game. Four figures in dark combat armor strode by. He recognized the livery from something he had seen on a church announcement board. The white pectoral crosses on the leading pair, in the obviously more-battered armor, marked the livery as that of the Hospitallers, a Catholic religious military order: warrior monks.

He caught himself: "soldier monks" was nearer the mark. He could hear Gunny Wright barking now, "You insult me when you call me a warrior. A warrior is one who engages in proud, glorious, single combat, victorious until soldiers come along who fight in a disciplined team and rout the warriors. The soldiers are victorious until, of course, the Marines show up!" The appearance of the Hospitallers exuded discipline. Senior ahead, junior behind, marching in step, but with an easy grace that made it appear the most natural thing in the world. Each had their gear carried in apparently identical configuration. He could see that the junior members had similar crosses displayed by their armor's surface, but smaller and high on the left chest. He watched them as they proceeded, leading a small group of men pushing grav skidders. Four more armed men,

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in the lighter cloth armor, with ballistic helmets but no facemasks, more actively shepherded the 7 skidders while following the four high tech knights into the next massive docking arm of the high port a couple of hundred meters down from the food court.

Gerry thought about their life, committed to service with violent death as the most likely end: no retirement of any import, no families, no permanent home. It seemed foreign to everything he had been raised with. Despite the good influences in his life at school, the Guides, and church, Auntie had raised him by the example of doing just enough to be proper. She mouthed tired truths about the faith, but did not seem to live them in any way other than by 'following the rules.' He understood why his sister

### *She told me I could give you her number.*

had left both home and faith. She was escaping what she saw as Auntie's hypocrisy, which she attributed to the whole church.

Gunny was not given to theological profundity, generally, but his sayings tended to be more memorable for their paucity. About hypocrisy he said, "If we weren't a bunch of reprobates, we wouldn't need a church. So we fall short of the rules. Should we chuck out the rule whenever we break it? No, we'd have no rules in about a day and a half! So what do we get? A church full of hypocrites. As long as you're humble with the Man about your sins, it comes out alright. Proud, though, you're just a hypocrite."

The little column was out of sight, but stuck in his mind. He had seen much of the loads on the skidders: the medical supplies and provisions; the ammo and the meds. He had seen what he guessed was courage and discipline, in service of others in places that those with a choice typically avoided. He thought about the difference between a few men, mostly alone, without women, choosing some chaot-

ic corner of the sector to serve; and the massive, centrally controlled mega-nation of Nundis, where everything was ordained by the bureaucracy to ensure the collective welfare. He started to say a prayer for this band of Hospitallers, but his mind wandered to the type of gauss rifles they had carried. He checked his watch: there were over nine hours until they shipped out. He had seen Nundis Highport, however, or all he cared to. His thoughts briefly touched on some of the other experiences to be had here, well within the credits he had left, and he turned back towards the *Maid*.

It took him a while to figure out the way back, as he had only half payed attention as he had previously wandered the highport. As he followed the most direct route, he passed through a number of retail areas. He paused to ogle in a store for armaments, and passed on by. He did stop by a pastry shop, and purchased a cherry tart for over a credit, feeling suddenly guilty for doing so. He suddenly thought that he deserved to buy himself a tart, for having resisted the temptation to buy himself a tart. Licking his fingers, he turned out onto the thoroughfare and headed back to the *Maid*. He passed from confectioners, casual eateries, and snack shops through a row of more serious eating and drinking establishments.

When he passed the Impie Marine courtesy patrol, dressed in their undress soft armor, he held no fear. He realized how completely anonymous he was. A number of patrons from a bar spilled noisily into the boulevard-like corridor, apparently ejected by the bouncer, and Gerry paused to gawk as an argument broke out. The curses and screams rose sharply above the otherwise subdued sounds of the shoppers, travelers, tourists, and shopkeepers, above the muted and almost featureless music. The most vehement of the obviously drunk bunch started to swing at his companions. The courtesy patrol split up, with one member shooing bystanders away, while the other drew his needler pistol and dropped

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the still swinging drunk in his tracks. Gerry looked in immediate horror at the brutal response to such basic disorder. He met the eyes of the crowd control Marine, who pointed imperatively to Gerry's rear, turning him back. Before he could even react, which his sense of self-preservation was urgently commanding, the vocalization and realization came to Gerry simultaneously, "He bricked him!" The marine's mouth twitched a confirmation, and he jabbed his finger again back towards Gerry's rear, as Gerry was already in the process of turning to leave.

He felt a bit foolish for imagining that the Impies would have killed under such innocuous circumstances. In such public situations, Gerry knew from his training with the Guides that security would have brick, a potent neurodisruptor, loaded; even in the unlikely event of a shootout, brick was often as effective as the lethal needles in overcoming resistance. If not, a simple magazine change would provide plenty of lethality.

As he strode purposefully back towards the *Maid*, he again thought of the scene. It reminded him of the customs post back at Griik Maeii in its calm, unhesitating but carefully restrained use of minimal force; both, however, left no question as to who was in charge. He thought about this latest incident. He noted that he had not seen another courtesy patrol since leaving the ship, but here there was one in the middle of the bars. He imagined that in the vast facility, there were probably all manner of crimes occurring. The Impies were quite purposefully placed there, though, to publicly deal with the most obvious disorder. While rubbernecking was minimized, enough bystanders were there to see enough to convey the very clear impression that the Imperial authorities were swiftly, but magnanimously bringing order to chaos: Justice as theater!

When he finally got back aboard, he slept for a good eight hours, indeed through their casting off. He had a vague concern in a dream about the being

followed by some authorities. When he awoke, he noticed that there was a message from Clyde, saying that he would not be continuing on the *Maid* for the next jumps. For breakfast in the lounge, Gerry soaked up the news that had been missing while they had been in jump, and wondered about Clyde, whether something in their relationship had caused trouble for the shambling youth. He actually messaged the purser, saying he had a quick question. "I'll be there in a minute," came the almost immediate reply. *Of course she knows where I am*, he reminded himself, and in less than a minute, she strode in.

"Good day, Mr. Fynne. How was your port time?"

"Just fine ma'am. No complaint about that." She cocked her head slightly, waiting for him to continue. "I noticed Clyde had gone, and it seemed rather sudden. I was hoping that everything was alright."

She cracked a quick smile, and in reassuring tones dismissed his concern. "Drivehand Clyde Barrowman got an unexpected break, actually. The second engineer on Ley Lightning's *Golden Matron* had to leave her, so Drivehand Barrow left us to rendezvous with her as she maneuvers in. It will be at least a temporary promotion for him.

"We all just learned of it a few hours before shoving off; he wanted to say goodbye, actually, but the computer listed you as inactive. We actually presumed you were asleep." Gerry's expression must have registered his mild alarm, because she continued, "We do not surveil passengers directly in their quarters, but the computer dims your lights when it surmises you are inactive, and lists your status as inactive. Communications protocol is that when a passenger is listed as inactive in his cabin, we do not disturb them for routine matters, especially social. I know you two got along. He left you this." She handed over a small, sealed pouch.

"Thank you, ma'am." Gerry's occasionally lustful eye for the purser was stayed by not just her bodice-covering apron, but the feeling like he had just

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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been given a special treat by his matronly grade school teacher. He was distracted from her closing question by the pouch, and shook his head as she turned on her heel. He noticed they had been alone in the passengers' lounge, and all the videos featured a preponderance of young attractive women. The pouch contained a number of holocrystals, 40 credits, and a quick note with a couple of numbers beneath it, all scrawled on a part wrapper: "Sorry I missed you, groundhog. Here are some 3Vs on the suit, and a few on girls. There's one short recording of Yori and a couple of guys getting it on. She told me I could give you her number. We're friends but we hump when we get a chance. There's plenty to go 'round, tho, and it's lonely in the black. Look 'er up! I'm leaving my number, too. I plan to ride the *Lightning* for as long as they'll have me. You know the *Lightning* routes. The *Wee Just Mite*, Yori's ship, runs between Nundis and Avatar, tho, carrying tech for their farms; Capt treats her bad. I'd feel bad about taking your money, with me leaving. Take the cruds back and buy yourself a quickie. I hope the training will keep you safe. Good luck."

Gerry felt a number of things. He was grateful for Clyde's generosity, and a bit flattered by his inclusion, as an equal, in sharing the same partner. He was also a bit horrified, and a bit guilty that he was not more horrified. Clyde had taken a woman, a young, compliant woman, to bed, and now was sharing images of her as if it were a sporting event. While Yori was not who he would pick out of a crowd, even a small crowd, the thought of her, suddenly compliant, raced through him. He saw that adoring look she had for Clyde, and imagined it, ever so briefly, focused on him, from beneath him. She was there on the holocrystal, doing all sorts of things he could imagine. Her and two boys, at once? He looked guiltily up, as he saw a young couple walk in. They were oblivious to him, but he hurried out as if caught in some despicable act.

He could see himself, alone in his cabin for weeks with the pornography. It was not a sight he would be proud of. When he got to his cabin, he pulled out the holocrystals, and put the three dealing with the vacc suit on his desk, dropping the rest in the empty pouch, dropping it to the deck, and crushing the contents under the heel of his boot like it was a snake. He was frightened at how he had felt. He not only lusted after this young woman, he lusted after her vulnerability, her eager need to please. He was thrilled by her abasement, abasement by others as needy of assurance of their worth as she, thrilled by the prospect that he could join in treating her as a slave, a trained creature, an object. He felt disgusted at himself, and prayed. He did not, however, call to his conscious mind the fact that he still had Yori's number.

He needed to put his mind elsewhere, so he looked forward to their next destination, Lirshe. Lirshe was a small, ice-capped vacuum world, with the only marginally habitable areas in deep rift valleys on the poles. Its two million souls were legally a lot freer than those of Nundis, but their actual existence was governed by similarly harsh environmental factors. Lirshe was served by a much smaller highport, that was the same tech as Nundis, similarly stocked the higher tech parts shipped in from Baakh. Lirshe was therefore capable of maintenance of the massive Nundis bulk hauler ships with these parts, and others from Nundis. Nundis ships were indeed mixed tech. Every tech increase adds some benefit in design and materials, but at some point the increase is in efficiency rather than capacity.

He remembered Gunny showing them an Imperial tech axe, along with a number of lower tech axes. The Imperial tech axe was lighter, but cut almost as well as one twice the weight; it maintained its edge far better, had an internal processor that would send out its position data if paged, automatically send out a distress signal when it detected the blood

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of any of the major races on the blade, and charge itself through its integral solar cells.

After the Guides present had spent a while felling a patch of biscuitwood trees, Gunny had continued, "If you live on an Imperial tech world, the Impie axe is cheaper. It does things more efficiently. Ultimately, the low-tech axe cuts about as well. You need to have the skills, the technology, if you will, to sharpen it properly, the low tech axe has the same basic capacity, without the high-tech bells and whistles. It has much greater capacity than a stone, axe, however. Those living in the stone age could not produce it, but they could use and understand it. They could be taught to maintain it fairly quickly, and would do so much better with a lighter, high tech sharpening stone.

"I have a mixed tech axe, with a low tech head, made by a craftsman, and a higher tech fiberglass handle. I have to sharpen it more than our high tech wonder here, but that goes much quicker with my high tech sharpener which weighs 10% of what a stone does. If I cut my foot off with it, well, I'll need to use my own comm for help. High tech always has some advantages, if it's plentifully available and maintainable, but mixed tech is a great way to make the most of your options if you live somewhere else." At that moment, Gerry understood the mixed tech dynamics well enough that the Nundis ships now made perfect sense. He had done a report on them the year before in school.

The drives, computer, and major control systems of the Nundis ships were made in Baakh, as were the massive hulls. A host of other parts, from the entire life support system, to all the myriad hull fittings, and those of the crew areas for the ninety-some crew members were all manufactured in Nundis, at a lower tech and shipped to Baakh for assembly. This made it easier to focus the relatively smaller industrial base of Baakh, with a population that was one twelve thousandth the size of Nundis's, on

those systems that Nundis could not produce, like drives and computers that would push the behemoths 3 parsecs. This made the Nundis ships easier for Nundis to maintain at their own high port as well. It still seemed a grossly overcomplicated system, but it was an even better example than Gunny's of the advantages of mixed tech.

He caught himself again, staring at the edge of his cabin's desk, lost in these mental manipulations to which he escaped from thoughts that scared him. Yori and the holoporn was no longer on his mind, and he put a manual on the viewer, but lay back on his bunk. The information might save his life, but he had weeks to view it, and there would be no chubby gadfly to check his progress tomorrow.

He learned that there were a couple of brothers aboard about his age, from Baakh, but he had no desire to meet them, as he was afraid of slipping up in his story, or betraying his status in some other way that he had not thought of. He dozed on his bunk, more from boredom than fatigue.

In the next two days maneuvering out, he had begun to exercise, in the very small gym packed with exercise machines. He had saved his Stayfresh sandwiches, read, and did little else. He had started reading some of the spinoff books from the *Scout Quinn* franchise. He knew they were junk, but with little else to do he felt no need to justify his literary choices. They made space travel between the stars sounds dramatic, romantic, and dangerous. He knew that it was dangerous in some places, but he was weeks from there. He knew that those who had faced real danger, like Gunny Wright, did not romanticize it. He voiced the same sentiments, that war and killing were horrible, all while hoping to some day be part of it. For the romance.

### Chapter 6: Jumping to Lirshe With the Young Yungs

The jump to Lirshe was uneventful, and he did overcome his hesitancy to talk to the Yung brothers,

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as he learned they were called. Heimrich was a year older than Gerry, and was haughty and sarcastic towards him. Burg, though, was almost two years younger than Gerry, and loved to play ORbox. Though Gerry had never been good at the game, it

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*“The one thing Gunny told us was watch out for the local law.”*

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was something to do, and he spent long hours getting beaten in the virtual space dogfights projected above the squat console in the lounge. Heimrich eventually tired of being left out. His story, and his discomfort at telling it were enough to satiate the Yungs' curiosity, and the three of them spent a large portion of their waking hours playing ORbox and watching tri-vids in the lounge.

The *Maid's* navigator had predicted their exit from jump space as 95% likely to be in a 9 hour period, when passengers were asked to remain in their staterooms. Two hours into this, Gerry had grabbed the provided LSPill from the fresher, and put it next to him at his desk. Even though it would require him to stay up until 0340 ship time, he was loath to be awoken again by a jump exit.

It was only 2334, though, when the wrenching tremors came. It hit him hard, again, but with the pill stuck on his tongue, he lurched towards the fresher. He could feel the familiar feeling of being beyond the nauseous point of no return of fast impending vomiting, but as he reached the toilet, nothing happened. The feeling abated, leaving his system confused. He actually wished he would vomit, because that might make him feel better, but then in a minute the unease itself had mostly gone away. He sipped water from his Guides canteen, half expecting disaster, but the cool liquid offered relief. Once again, his groundhog instincts had failed him, but new training, strange as it was was working. He looked for Lirshe on the *Maid's* hull cameras. There

was not much too it, and that was familiar enough. He ate a celebratory Stayfresh sandwich, and lay back on his bunk. In a few minutes, he was dead to the world.

He awoke to see their progress towards the highport was considerable. While Nundis was a small world, Lirshe was even smaller. They would be docked in 36 hours. After breakfast, there was another message from the purser. The questions about his status, from a renewed complaint by Auntie, seemed to Gerry as pro-forma as they in fact were. The purser, Alice dre'Laak, did not wear her jacket this time, and seemed quite aware when Gerry's gaze wandered down to her bodice. The twinkle in her eye made it seem to Gerry that she did not mind. As she moved off smartly after the pleasant, scripted exchange, he wondered that she might be attracted to him.

He knew she was probably in her early 30s, and was certainly beautiful and accomplished enough have a good choice of partners. He knew he was not making sense to even think of her as potential partner, but her actions puzzled him. A line from Gunny escaped him, but he remembered the sense of it, which was that kids—boys of his age—think it is all about them, but usually it has very little to do with them. He wondered if she, if Alice, even cared much what he thought. She was pleasant: that was her job. Showing her body off was also part of that job. That he, an adolescent male, was attracted to it was probably of absolutely no interest to her. But he remembered the twinkle in her eye and flattered himself.

He looked up Burg and his brother for breakfast, a couple of hours around the Orbox, and then pulled out his handcomp and looked at the schedules for small craft meeting up with the *Maid*. They were minimal. Lirshe was much more of a waypoint than a hub. A speedy ship's boat was to host a tour of Lirshe's surface that passengers could take for a few hundred credits, a few hundred credits that

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would more than wipe him out. Gerry pulled up the description, realizing that it was as realistic as his phantasies about the Alice and her ample assets. He read through, nonetheless. It was then that he asked Burg, "Are you getting off the ship at Lirshe?" He had known that, like him, they were booked through Baakh with their mother, who spent the voyage to date in apparently drugged seclusion in her cabin in High Passage, but they had not actually discussed the stopover at Lirshe.

"Yeah! Momma booked the two of us on a planet tour. Some doggie, Vargr line something. Says she doesn't know when we'll get another chance. Don't know what we'll see that we don't see on the 3D, Gerry. Wha'd'ya think?"

"Wow. I'd like to see Lirshe, but I can't really. Don't have the funds, slick."

"Funds my frackin' pinky! We'll charge it to our shipboard account. Momma couldn't care. If she even asks, you're our bud. We been with you every day for what, a week? See, she doesn't know you, but she would if she spent near 10 minutes with us this jump. We say you're our bud, she gets guilty, shuts up, and goes back to sleep with her mothers little helper."

Gerry panicked quietly and suddenly. Like Alice, the enticing prospects of Lirshe were wrapped in the dangers of the unknown. If he went to the surface, he would be subject to the local laws. His legal status might change. He felt safe aboard, for now, but had no idea of what his legal status might be on the surface, under the apparently moderate but strange laws of Lirshe. He was authorized to go on the trip to his father's claim, but he did not even know about the detour under Imperial law, let alone Lirshe law. He could ask Alice for advice, but he did not want to project his vulnerability, even though he thought she saw right through him.

He wondered about the chance to visit the famed polar rift valley of Lirshe, and let a brief cleavage analogy flit through his mind. He decided to stay close to the truth, sticking to his story. If his story was true, he would have the same fears. He let out a breath that he did not realize he had been holding.

"Alright, Burg. That's a great offer, but I don't want to get in trouble with the local law over being an unaccompanied minor."

"That sounds like a load of freeze-dried dung balls. You scared of that?"

"Well, I don't know. The one thing Gunny told us was watch out for the local law."

"Ask the purser; you know the one with the..."

"Yeah. Yeah, I know her." He pulled out his handcomp, and messaged her, "I have a quick question. No hurry."

At the time, the three boys and a young trooper on leave had the lounge to themselves, and the screens were therefore awash with the nubile young tools of advertising. Five minutes later she strode into the lounge, looking a bit like she had just stepped out of one of the screens around them. Gerry just noticed that as the content cycled out, the themes were unchanged; apparently crew cued differently to the entertainment suite than passengers. She stood close to his shoulder and cocked her head, "You had a question?"

"Ma'am," Her lips pursed, apparently registering a twinge of disapproval at his form of address, but Gerry did not fully realize why, "Burg has invited me on their surface tour, but I don't want to get caught up in the local law. I got nothing to hide, and all, but I was always told, you know, to watch out." She leaned in, actually pressing the soft front of her uniform coat against his shoulder.

"You are not off-base asking of course, but this is Ley Lightning. We arrange for a customs clearance

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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aboard the boat with our own man. There won't be any trouble, I can assure you. The Imperial clearance usually takes priority, no matter what, but especially here the line has you covered. I will put out a query with our customs man to double-check. I want to be sure you're with us all the way to Baakh. Once we dock there, I'm off for a 48. Couldn't relax if I'd lost one, could I?" She was speaking in almost conspiratorial tones, with her back to the other boys, but clearly for their benefit.

"Thanks."

He saw the hazel twinkle again as she turned to go, "No problem. Take care, boys."

The Yungs mumbled a reply and she was gone.

"Sounds like I'm in, Burg! Thanks."

"You got it."

He brought them each a Stayfresh sandwich, and they went to the Yung boys' cabin to watch a tri-V. They then had three more hours until the tour left. The itinerary was 39 hours, and would bring them back to the *Maid* well after she docked with Lirshe highport.

It was dinner time when they met in the lounge again. While the High Passengers had their meals served to them in the dining room, it was possible for middle passengers to tip the stewards to arrange to be served and eat in the lounge. Gerry wondered about that; the server 'bots apparently pulled their rations from their supply in their staterooms, put them in the warmers, and served them after 1800 ship time. Not exactly the white glove treatment, but the stewards had enough manpower to pull it off without keeping any High Passengers waiting, so it made them a few extra credits. Even with a completely full ship, it meant that the stewards would just need to hustle a little bit, and from time-to-time do a few tasks that the 'bots normally would.

The server 'bots' main tasks were cleaning, and they did that with somewhat eerie efficiency. They

would enter a stateroom, apparently as soon as the computer registered its occupant had left, and do a quick sweep and laundry in about a minute. Sometimes Gerry would come back and his dirty laundry would be dry in the little unit in his room's 'fresher, if he'd just been gone a short while. More often, things were folded and stowed in the drawers where he kept them. It made him feel cared for. At home, Auntie had stated when he had turned 13 that he was old enough to do his own clothes. Of course he was, and he'd done his laundry as a matter of course. Here it was done for him, almost daily. He mused, as the Yung boys tore into a couple of Chandlers Elite ration packs and the three of them lolled in front of a Tri-V in the lounge, that he was feeling actually pampered. While he still worked with his suit on a daily basis, and had continued a bit with his math studies on a much more sporadic basis, it had been a long vacation of almost four weeks now. The pampering was mostly by machines that could not even have a simulated conversation with him, though, and were as aware of his presence in only the same way that the 'fresher was aware of his dirty drawers, but he had enjoyed it nonetheless.

The Yung boys vargred their savory smelling meals as they watched the clock, and almost completely ignored the large image of a barely clad KiKi Dish going through her intake physical for the Scouts, that seemed to involve a great deal more bouncing than any physical that Gerry could recall: they had 6 minutes until the boat docked, and each had their overnight bags ("spacer bags" as they were popularly called dirtside) packed at their feet. Gerry really had not realized the import of the term until he saw how shipboard life worked. He could live in the same two sets of clothes essentially indefinitely; he had actually spent five days last jump wearing the same clothes, sleeping in his Marine trunks, and just sticking the clothes into the 'fresher before going to bed, and switching them for his trunks on rising.

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It had not really been intentional, but it had certainly worked quite efficiently.

When the boat docked, they knew they would have at least 15 minutes to get set, but as soon as the minute, 1817 ship time, showed in the corner of the Holo-vid they unceremoniously decamped and headed for the port airlock. The oblong iris hatch opened with a faint hissing sound, which the boys expected while having no notion that it was in fact an audio effect played after the craft's pressure had already noiselessly been equalized. Out strode two men in different livery, each holding a tablet or handcomp of different design. Gerry noticed the first had a logo "Vargr Voyages" on his left breast, in a bright purple splash with a picture of a grinning canine head. This man asked without delay, "Are you gentlemen here for the Vargr Voyages Lirshe extravaganza?"

"Yeah, that's us. Two Yungs and a Fynne," Burg said with a tone that was the perfect counterpoint to the enthusiasm of the questioner, who quickly checked them in with a discrete iris scan. The other man Gerry saw was standing further back towards the hatch.

He apparently was set up to feed from the other's pad because he said, "Gerry Fynne, you are traveling under the authorization of Hugo Fynne, your natural father and only surviving natural parent. Is this correct?"

Gerry's quick intake of breath was involuntary, and a cause for his further nervousness, "Yes, sir."

"And you will continue your passage on this vessel, the *Scarlet Maid*, without delay when it proceeds onward to Baakh?"

Focusing on the corner of the tablet and breathing he managed a very controlled, "Yessir."

"You will follow the itinerary, be in the presence of the tour operator, doing business as Vargr Voyages, during your entire time in Lirshe territory?"

"Yes, I will." Despite the slightly narrowing of Gerry's vision, he knew that these were canned questions, and he was on firm footing. He could still feel the sweat wetting his neck. As he was waved aboard, he could see that the boat already had about ten occupants. Another crew member with the grey, purple piped livery with gaudy doggie logo handed him a SmallSoft, with a tag with his name on it.

"Your vacc suit, and some sundries in the outer pockets, sir. Sit in any open seat."

About 15 minutes after they had settled into three couches across the boat. The boat undocked and made a fast burn away from the *Maid*. While the internal grav compensation took away any physical feel of acceleration, the view of the colorful liner pulling behind them so rapidly was impressive, and a bit unnerving to Gerry. He had never been on anything higher than 1G, and this was 6G. The first stop was listed as an alleged Ancients' site in late afternoon planetside time.

The two crew members who were not flying worked to see that the interactive holo tutorials got them all into their suits. They were prompted to put on phones, and so each passenger's holographic guide followed their progress, and coached visually and audibly. Gerry mused what a Babel it would have been without the phones. The crew had donned their own suits first before the donning process had started with the passengers, presumably as an encouragement. The perceived gravity in the cabin was tapering off to the planetary .24 G from the shipboard normal of .5 G, giving Gerry a feeling of lightness after weeks on the ship, making the donning of the strange suit a rapid exercise. He kept an eye on the holo, but essentially knew what it was going to show and say before it did so. The functions were all the same, even if the controls differed somewhat from his own.

They strode off the ship onto the harsh planetary surface in a few minutes, with the nineteen of them

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being shepherded by two guides, one at the front and one bringing up the rear, "While the first human settlers of Lirshe were prior to the Third Imperium, there was no discovery of this site until Professor Jeetok of the Jesuit University of Ohasset

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*She looked a couple of years older than Gerry, and the only wave to modesty were her grey shorts, evocative of Marine trunks a couple sizes too small.*

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found them almost a century ago..."

They spent about 45 minutes tromping around the site, which was a tunneled-out outcropping of sedimentary rock, which appeared for all the world just like the sandstone back home. The lack of anything but a trace atmosphere made the sky very different. The sun was harsh, and gave everything a pinkish tint. There was just a hint of haze over the horizon, but the sky straight above looked just like that of open space. The contrast was like the holos or stills of any rockball, but being truly surrounded by the contrast of light and dark made Gerry feel very small. He barely noticed that he was wearing a suit, and they all had a grand time bouncing around. The guide brought out a Lirshan flag, which he used to great effect, twirling and twisting it in a series of moves that highlighted the low gravity and lack of atmosphere. The eye troubled the mind with images of a flag behaving as flags ought not to.

The guides ran the communications well, using the visor displays to point out features, and even superimpose theoretical architecture on the landscape. Everyone had open mikes, but was turned to low volume unless they cued the guide to ask a question. Each passenger could hit the "privacy" button on their left gauntlet panel, which would turn their mike off for ten minutes. The result was a low chatter in the background, which the guides voice comfortably and clearly talked over. Some

passengers cued the guide to ask questions, which came across as clearly as the guides' responses. The site, Gerry thought, was rather boring, but they had had a splendid time. He had fast fun with the boys doing acrobatics in the minimal gravity, and taking running, or more accurately bounding, long jumps over a sandy gully that was about ten to fifteen meters wide and about three deep in its shallow bottom. The guide had come across their headsets privately and said to the three of them, "Bet you can't jump that ditch!"

After they had been at it, leaping comically to heights of three or four meters, clearing and occasionally not clearing portions of the ditch, for a good ten minutes, the one minute bell chimed. The boys had turned to some raucous and occasionally snide comments to each other during the last quarter hour of their time at the site, the "feel free to wander around" portion. As he breathed heavily into his faceplate, Gerry thought of a line from Dr. Alvarez, who occasionally help Gunny out with their Guides troop, "Redirect risky rowdiness." He saw that the guide had done just that. They were engaged in good, clean fun, and hadn't even noticed they had been put on their own comm network so their shouted dares, cheers, jibes, and curses did not bother the rest of the group. They had been redirected, liked it, and not even noticed.

On embarking, they were given a forty minute low-level tour of Lirshe's craters and canyons, while they were served snacks informally. Those who had an urgent need could desuit and result in plenty of time, if they felt uncomfortable using the suit's facilities. Gerry had made a point of peeing into his suit early into the first stop (in honor of the Ancients!) and the waste disposal system worked flawlessly. It was a very unnatural feeling, however, which is why he wanted to practice. He and the Yung brothers scarfed several bags of nuts, and sucked heavily on the bottled water stored in the armrests of their

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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couches. The boat had settled in a deep polar valley covered in snow, where they docked with a pavilion of considerable proportions. The group entered through a dining room and down stairs into a large airlock that fit them all comfortably. They shuffled out, and got a quick lesson in donning and walking in snow shoes, which were waiting for them on a landing. In the angled light, that now gave the snowscape almost a fuchsia color they shuffled out to see an old wreck of a liner. It was an older model of a subsidized liner, the same general class as the *Maid*, but lower tech. It was mostly intact, but it was obvious that its back was broken from the angle of the forward disk relative to the rest of the hull, and as they drew closer on the mostly packed snow path several long rents in the hull became obvious.

When the guide flashed the derelict's identity up on their visors, Gerry remembered the name of a poem or maybe a song, *Wreck of the Jovian Matron*, apparently about this wreck. A small craft had collided with her while approaching orbit, and almost gutted her from the energy of the initial collision. Only nine survivors managed to scramble into vacc suits or rescue balls after surviving the initial impact. Those nine limped off the ship in a crippled and barely fly-able launch, that was able to keep them alive and high enough in a still decaying orbit to be rescued. Despite a swarm of would-be rescuing small craft that had eventually flocked to the *Matron*, a few hours to pull bodies and mementos from the doomed hulk were all that were available before she plowed into the earth of Lirshe. There she lay now, 22 decades later.

The group was muted as they shuffled back towards the pavilion, and a guide played *Wreck of the Jovian Matron* over their suit comms, while scrolling a story of the survivors on one side of their visors, and the lyrics in fainter script on the other. Without banter or horseplay they returned to the shiny base, which reflected the pinks of the landscape, adding

the grey and purple stripes of their suits, and the flashing of visors as the party drew close. They doffed and stowed their suits on the boat, and then returned to dining room for some cocktails. They noticed another boat moving off from the opposite end of the structure, and several couples and a party of six were already sitting down. There was a young, tall waitress who was bringing drinks from a mixing cart, wearing a purple bodysuit that revealed every feature of her very thin frame. She looked a couple of years older than Gerry, and the only wave of modesty were her grey shorts, evocative of Marine trunks a couple sizes too small. As they sat down, she came directly towards their table and smiling passed to the next. Gerry heavily suspected they were being toyed with.

The beauty of the minimalist sunset, with just a fringe of atmosphere tinted purple, was dimmed enough by the automatic tinting of the pavilion's plasteel canopy that they could look directly at it. The faint hint of sunset color suddenly made the otherwise garish livery seem almost sublime. This was their spot, the spot where Vargr Voyages would seal the deal; this was their upper room. These diners might travel far, see many things, and age harshly, but at the right times they would be pulled right back here.

Two years ago, Gunny had done it at sunset on an island that the twelve brand new Guide recruits shared with no other sophont: they watched for the green flash as the sun dipped below Griik Maeii's Western Bay, as the mollusks baked in the fires to their backs. "You are the Guides, following where the few hundreds of thousands of Guides have led trillions from the ten thousand worlds of this Third Imperium. Always, you have been the dye in the water, a few drops to color the whole, with courage and honor, respecting the Guide Law. The best of heroes, captains of industry, wizards of science, leaders of nations: all forged in this crucible as Guides." On

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another day, in another place, Gunny's speech would have fallen flat, to the odd snicker in some bland classroom after some young adolescent made the same farting noise that young adolescents have made since time immemorial. But no, not there: he closed the deal on that island beach between the fires and the tropical sunset; they bought the program, hook, line and sinker.

Drinks came quickly, and the waitress was pulling from an auto cart that picked up their orders as they spoke them to her, "One drink before dinner, boys. What'll it be?"

The Yungs ordered a drink of some name Gerry neither recognized nor remembered, but by their tone it was a fashionable one. He remembered Gunny saying if you've gotta mix your whiskey with something you're drinking the wrong whiskey.

"Single malt Querro, please. Neat." Gerry pronounced, as if ordering a Bronto Burger back home.

"What kind of Querro, sir?"

"Whatever you recommend, ma'am. I just drink what Gunny tells me."

The usually blasé Yungs were a little taken aback. "You a drinker, Gerry?" Heimrich asked, somewhat incredulously.

"Not yet. I figure they get paid to bring my carcass back, though, and I've never heard of anyone dying from a single drink. Even if I blow chunks and they hit us for a cleaning charge, it's on your mom, right?"

Burg nodded vigorously and Heimrich tried to look a little cross, "Well, yeah, I guess if yacking is part of the trip..."

The waitress, all of 50 kilos and at least 180 centimeters tall if she was one, was back already with their drinks on a sticky tray. She leaned between Gerry and Heimrich, a little closer than was necessary even for whispering, "Any projectile vomiting is to be done outside my station, *Dong ma*, boys?"

She winked at Burg across the table and was gone in a lavender flash before they could formulate a response, let alone the pithy one they so urgently wanted to make.

The eldest looked down into his swirly concoction in a purple facsimile of some creature's horn, "Damn!"

The mildly chastened trio sipped, and turned back to the now faded sunset. Music started, and the boys realized in a minute or two that there was actually a faint holo projection of a ballad that seemed familiar to Gerry, by a Shugashi Metal band he could not place. He thought it was a shrewd choice, new enough to seem popular and even edgy by those younger than say 25 (Gerry's upper boundary for the limit of youth), but soft enough to still entertain the others.

Gerry realized that in their self-absorption they had barely noticed the other diners outside their group. Closest to them, in front of Gerry was a party undeniably led by a man in what Gerry congratulated himself on recognizing was a Impie army Brigadier's dress uniform. He was with a party of three others: a handsome woman with steely gray hair in a sheer satin gown of an intriguing shade of darkest green, a young female lieutenant who was apparently his aide, and a towering Vilani man wearing what Gerry guessed was the most expensive suit he had ever seen. While the lieutenant, in her sheer skirt that Gerry did not know or care was a female option for the Imperial Army dress mess uniform, was certainly fashion-model-gorgeous, he found himself positively drawn to the older woman who he guessed was the Brigadier's wife or date. She wore no makeup that Gerry could discern, "barefoot" thong sandals that wound up lithe calves, and her uniformly grey hair in simple hairdo. That she did not color her hair or face, but wore such a revealing, elegant dress was fascinating, as was her way of moving; oblivious to the conversation or even the

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taste of his first single malt, first drink of any sort, he caught himself staring at her, at where the ivory colored shell pendant hung deeply between her well-shaped breasts...and so did she! She twitched a smile—Gerry imagined it a charitably dismissive twitch—and then turned her gaze back to the brigadier to whom she beamed warmly as he went on with his story.

The dinner was almost too much for the ravenous Yungs, and Gerry was fed like he had never remembered being fed. The lights had dimmed slowly enough as to be barely noticeable, but the skies seemed as close as they did in deep space. After the third desert, and second kaff, the waitress stopped coming. The lights pulsed ever-so-softly with four purple notes, and the waitress came around to ask the tables if they'd like anything to carry. The Vilani specimen in the five-thousand-credit monkey suit offered the brigadier's lady his arm, and she reached past it to give his rump a lusty squeeze, no, a series of squeezes, as the brigadier leaned in to give his lieutenant a thirty-second kiss of a type not favored in Sunday school. The brigadier's lady, without losing her hold on the Vilani's glute, held out her left hand gracefully to the brigadier, who in time took it with his right, while positively scooping the LT up with his left, snaking around her waist, up under her cropped mess jacket to softly cup his own firm, finely-shaped pound of flesh while lifting her entire body in the crook of his arm. The four made their walking bacchanal look downright casual as they made towards another docking port, to which a grey, unmarked g-carrier had made an approach as smooth as the brigadier's.

Gerry, though the single malt had long since worn off, felt more intoxicated by this scene than he had by his fiery snootful. Burg was actually smacking his shoulder; Gerry realized the brothers were standing, gawking at him gawking, and at the ob-

jects of his gawking at the same time, while pretending not to gawk.

"We should go, guy!" Burg said in a squeaky stage whisper.

"Yeah, but not the way they're going, little brother" Heimrich quipped. No one laughed as they shuffled off. Gerry only registered as they were already in the boat that Heimrich had left a crisp c-note on the table for a tip, for a meal that was already paid-for. They were brought around night-caps as they settled in. The 'freshers in the pavilion were also open, and a last drink could be had there within the next 15 minutes, as well, went the announcement. Heimrich fairly sprung up, while Gerry and Burg waited for the boat's 'fresher. It seemed like more than 15 minutes until he slid back in, looking a little flushed. "The waitress, Hoori, gave me a quickie!"

"Why?" Burg almost squeaked.

"Five hundred credits...and my natural charm."

Burg's exclamations and badgering went on long and loudly enough, despite his older brother's refusals, chidings, and threats (and Gerry's extreme discomfort) that the sonic dampers actually kicked in. Burg did get the details out that the deed had occurred in the large airlock they had used for their sortie, accompanied by her begging, the latter specifically-prompted by her John. Gerry also noticed that Heimrich had completely ignored the question of whether it was caught on video.

Gerry eventually asked for something to help him sleep, because the various images of the evening kept running through his mind, while one of the Yungs snored almost imperceptibly across the aisle. He made the request on the pad on the armrest so as to not wake anyone, though in reflection he doubted this were possible at that point. ❁

# Mongoose Traveller 2nd Edition Vehicle Handbook

reviewed by Megan Robertson

*Mongoose Traveller 2nd Edition Vehicle Handbook*. Matthew Sprange.

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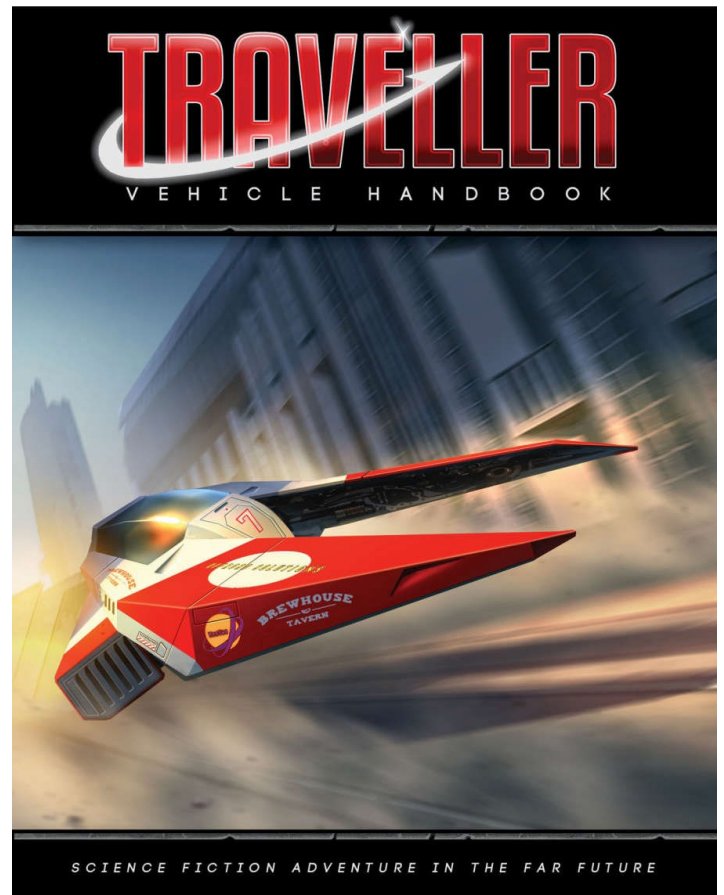
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Spacecraft are all very well, but once you reach your destination, how do you get around? Having the appropriate land, sea and air vehicles can go a long way to making other planets feel real, alien, exotic... or whatever impression you are trying to get across. Vehicles can also be a source of adventure: perhaps it is hard to get hold of one when you need it, or maybe offworlders have to use a specific form of transport. Indeed, they can end up being the adventure: many years ago, a spectacular *Traveller* adventure was spawned at a Games Fair convention in the UK when a bunch of players decided that they weren't staying around for the riot that had broken out and stole a groundcar... unfortunately none of them knew how to drive it, and their exploits on the way back to the starport became the stuff of legend!

The Introduction lays out the purpose of the book clearly. The design system is straightforward and simple, but fits in with everything else so far published. It emphasizes what the vehicle can do, how fast it goes, and what it can carry. That's what you need to know as far as game mechanics are concerned... most of the rest is window-dressing.

Chapter 1: New Rules provides some additional rules that you'll need to make it all work. There are notes about resupply and maintenance, sensors, detection of vehicles and even things like can the vehicle tow something else (or indeed, be towed)... and of course the pleasures and perils of the used vehicle market! They also may be specifically designed for a purpose: combat, say, or off-road operation.



We then move on to Chapter 2: Vehicle Design. It's a seven-stage process, very streamlined, and once you are used to it you can crank out new vehicles in a matter of minutes. Actual construction times and costs are likely to be a little more, though there are advantages to mass-production. Most parties will be looking to buy (or rent) rather than make their own vehicles from scratch, however. Starting with chassis type and tech level (stage 1), you then decide the number of 'spaces' the vehicle has (stage 2, which determines the basic parameters for the vehicle), add weapons and armour if required (stage 3), customise it if you want to (stage 4), work out how many crew are needed and passengers can be carried (stage 5), allocate cargo space (stage 6), and finalise your design (stage 7)... and you're done! This is a toolkit rather than hard and fast rules, and the Referee is always at liberty to deviate if desired. An example (a fairly ordinary-looking ground vehicle, a rugged van basically) is worked through in detail to demonstrate the process, and the next four

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## Critics' Corner

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chapters go into more detail about chassis types, armour, weapons, and customisation.

Grouped by basic chassis type—light ground vehicle through gravitics-powered and unpowered ones, then boats, submersible and aircraft—there are loads of options to help you come up with exactly what you need. You can even have ornithopters and walkers if you want. Armour is generally a case of strategically-placed plating, then on to weapons, as many and as varied as you can imagine. Weapons can be mounted in various manners, and a wide range of generic ones are provided... and then comes customisation. Your imagination is pretty much the limit, although there are suggestions galore and an in-character advertisement for a vehicle design consultancy!

Next, things get a bit exotic with Chapter 7: Biotech. This may or may not be commonplace in your universe, or it may be very localised. The chapter assumes that it is rare but possible, and assumes it needs at least a TL10 world to create biotech vehicles, but that the biotech vehicles themselves operate two tech levels lower. If biotech is commonplace, you can ignore these restrictions. Again, maintenance and repair may be problematic if biotech is unusual, but straightforward if such vehicles are readily available. Some exotic chassis types and weapons are provided, but feel free to go wild!

This is followed by Chapter 8: Drones. These can be remotely piloted or autonomous, and there's an interesting sidebar about whether you should use robot rules rather than these drone ones to create them. The conclusion (apart from leaving it open to the Referee to decide) is that a drone is specifically an unmanned vehicle, a robot can do most anything. Perhaps drones are a subset of robots? (Maybe I should ask the computing ethics class I'm teaching after lunch!)

If your head is swimming with all the choices, never fear... the final section is *Jayne's Guide to Vehi-*

*cles of Charted Space*, a vast array of pre-generated vehicles of all sorts that you can use straight off... or customise a bit, first. Each one comes with a description, cost, appropriate statistics and an illustration. Conveniently, each occupies a single page so PDF users may print off just the pages they need. There does seem to be rather a lot of military vehicles, fine if you are equipping some mercenaries but of less use if you've just landed and want to go sightseeing!

Overall, a robust system which meshes well with the rest of this ruleset... but in some ways a little uninspired. Consider the science fiction books you've read or films you have seen. Describe the vehicles in them... sometimes troubling to codify everything bogs you down. OK, so you need to know how fast it goes and what it can carry, how much damage its weapon does... as for the rest, let your imagination run riot. This system will let you slot in whatsoever numbers and game mechanics you need. ❁

## 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](mailto: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.

Size matters, but to us, not to you. Don't worry about word count; worry about making your submission the best it can be. We'll offer suggestions that we think can fill gaps or otherwise improve an article; please take these in the spirit intended—we are *not* saying that your writing is bad; we just want *Freelance Traveller* to be the best it can be, too! ❁



### Six of One, Half a Dozen of the Other

#### *An Adventure in the Gateway Domain*

by Ewan Quibell

This adventure takes place in the Tottori System in the Alpha quadrant of the Crucis Margin Sector well away from the borders of the Imperium. The current date is 993 Imperial and the Solomani Rim war is in progress, although this is of no significance to the people of Tottori.

**0818 Tottori E573224-7 Ni 803 X A4 V G8 V**

In the small Koslin cluster, Tottori is the least significant of the three systems that make up the jump-2 stepping stone between the interstellar states of the Raidmarch and the Kafoe Dominate. The Koslin cluster is also a step in the jump-2 route between the Old Worlds and the Raidmarch, but since the March has reverted to its old ways the traffic on this route has dwindled.

An independent world, Tottori is cold and dusty. The polar winds gust fast enough that they constantly cause dust to be swept into the atmosphere. This is the cause of the atmosphere-tainted rating. The winds die down around the Equatorial Sea that splits the planet in the middle and thus causes there to be two continents, north and south. The equatorial regions of the planet are warm enough to sustain a human population although the living is a hard one. As the winds die down around the sea so the dust falls from the air, and for the majority of the time in these regions it is possible to breathe the atmosphere unaided. Dust storms are still frequent however, and during one it is necessary to use some type of cloth or filter mask to prevent choking and possible lung damage.

The Starport, Tottori Down, is in a large horseshoe shaped valley in the Turliita mountain range sixty kilometres north of the Equatorial Sea. The valley is large enough to accommodate a 2km landing strip with a good approach from the west. The main compound is at the east end of the landing strip and

can take three starships up to 1,000 tons in parkbays. Ships of sizes larger than 1,000 tons can be accommodated outside the compound perimeter fence on some levelled bedrock. There are two huge warehouses that are capable of acting as hangers for starships up to 500 tons. One of the warehouses has numerous empty cargo containers and boxes that have been left by ships coming in and are used to carry cargos leaving the planet. There is also a control tower and administrative buildings. There is no fuel available at Tottori Down so while it is of excellent

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*If the PCs investigate they will walk into a teeth and claw fight between two vargr.*

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quality it is classified as an E class installation. A mining firm who found large deposits of platinum at Richvain originally built the starport but when the platinum paid out the mining firm left.

Richvain is the nearest settlement, 20km south in the next valley around the range. The only exit from the horseshoe leads to Richvain. The road between Tottori Down and Richvain is of very good quality and was originally designed to handle heavy ore trucks, but now only sees the odd truck or ground car. The citizens of Richvain send someone every week to clean the control tower and administrative buildings, and landing fees charged by the town go into the upkeep of the starport and road, as well as Richvain itself.

Richvain operates as a participating democracy on matters relating to the settlement and thus generally the whole planet, and its seven hundred population gather ever so often to discuss, and then vote, on matters of importance.

It is sometimes possible for a merchant captain to purchase excess livestock that the ranchers may

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## Active Measures

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have if the previous year has been good. These animals can either be slaughtered at the local abattoir, or can be shipped live with any necessary feed if the merchant captain so wishes.

The only other settlement of note is Shoreham, a small hamlet situated on the Equatorial Sea next to one of the best natural harbours to be found on the planet. The hundred or so population of Shoreham are natural sailors bred from generations of fishing the difficult waters of the Equatorial Sea. They sell their catch to the people of Richvain generally in exchange for goods and services as opposed to actual cash. They are always invited to cast votes in the matters arising on the planet, and while they do participate sometimes they are just too busy to attend.

Shoreham maintains a class E starport, Shoreham Down, which is little more than a patch of cleared bedrock next to the sea. There is one small building that acts as the control tower and starport office. The starport has easy access to the harbour to enable ships to stretch their hoses to the water to refuel. While the residents of Shoreham charge a nominal fee for the use of the port, the sum is sufficiently small (Cr10) that most trader captains choose to use it as opposed to battling against the waves, produced by the high winds, outside the harbour.

On the odd occasion when the fishing has been so good that the sailors have managed to catch more than they planned some of the fish is frozen or freeze dried. When food is plentiful this can sometimes be available to merchant captains who are looking for cargo; however, if they are prepared to wait a day or so it is possible to arrange a special fishing trip for the sole purpose of export. Up to 1d6 tons of fresh fish can be obtained this way.

There are some trappers who live off the fauna from the mountain ranges and sell the furs of the local Hurrtii to the peoples of Richvain and Shoreham, but apart from these there are no known other settlements or peoples on the planet.

While quite a lot is known about the coastal areas around the Equatorial Sea little else of the planet has been explored, and while it is assumed that the mining firm who built Tottori Down did a detailed planetary survey and found nothing, it is unknown if there are any further mineral deposits worth troubling about on the planet.

### Player Information

Having just exited Jump space in the Tottori system sensors on the PCs ship shows some very unusual activity in the planet's atmosphere. The PCs are unable to determine exactly what has happened due to jump flash interference.

Once the PCs have picked up Tottori Down's landing beacon they proceed to the starport and then deliver their cargo or passengers or do whatever it was that brought them to Tottori in the first place. On their way down the ships sensors pick up what can only be the after effects from a starship engagement. From the slowly expanding debris field it looks like a ship in the region of 500 tons displacement very recently received a hit that caused it to be blown completely apart. Clouds of hydrogen are floating throughout the area while ships bulkheads and hull fragments are causing a hazard to navigation as the PCs try to manoeuvre in order to land. The pilot should do a routine piloting test to avoid hitting one of the larger pieces.

Once the players have landed they are faced with what seems to have been a relatively large skirmish in and around the park bays and warehouses of the starport. What is immediately apparent is there seem to be three groups of antagonists.

Three humans (two male and one female) and one vargr (male) lay dead around a Type A2 Far Trader and the park bay entrance closest to one of the warehouses. The humans are armed with one advanced combat rifle, a laser rifle and the female has an RPG and a 9mm pistol. The vargr has a laser carbine. The humans are all in soft vac suits with a

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ships patch on the arm that says *Donald's Nose*. The vargr is in a clashing red and green soft vac suit with no ship's patch.

One human (male) and four vargr (two male and two female) lay dead between the next park bay and the entrance to the closest warehouse. The vargr are armed with three laser carbines, an advanced combat rifle and the human has a rifle. There is evidence that an RPG explosion, just inside the park bay, caused the death of two vargr. The vargr are wearing soft vac-suits, none of which has a ships patch. The human is wearing a soft vac-suit with no ships patch (he is however lying on top of a baseball cap that has the logo for *Donald's Nose* on it).

There are five vargr lying dead (all male) by the corner of the nearest warehouse, three are armed with laser carbines, one has an assault rifle, and they are all wearing soft vac-suits with no ship's patch with what appears to be some sort of harness over the top. An RPG explosion looks like it resulted in the death of two of these vargr.

Laser score marks and bullet ricochets and holes are around the whole area in various directions and angles. While it is possible to work out what happened it would need a detailed investigation and a ballistics computer and expert to tell the true story.

While investigating and before they have much time to find out what has happened, loud and aggressive gnashing, growls and barking can be heard through the open door of the nearest warehouse. If the PCs investigate they will walk into a teeth and claw fight between two vargr. While the empty cargo containers and boxes get in the way a little it seems that the two vargr, now almost completely naked as their soft vac suits lay in shreds across the floor, are engaged in a death struggle. A male vargr seems to be slowly gaining the advantage and is pressing his attack home on a desperately struggling female. The female vargr while fighting for her life sees the PCs and calls to them for help.

If the PCs do not break up the fight the male vargr will kill the female by ripping out her throat in five combat rounds.

If the PCs break up the fight and the female vargr is still alive she will say her name is Sharrkga and then thank them with the gratitude of someone who knew they have just been saved from death by unbelievable luck. Sharrkga will sit quietly and explain that she was a crewmember of a merchantman (*Hurrkur*) that encountered a pirate attacking another merchant (*Donald's Nose*). They closed, and to help the *Donald's Nose* they attacked the pirate causing an explosion of its power plant that ripped the ship to shreds, but not without cost. The pirate managed to damage their manoeuvre drive and they had to abandon ship and do individual atmosphere re-entry. She knew that the *Donald's Nose* got away before her ship was lost. She goes on to explain that her crew landed safely by parachute about half a click to the east and they came to the starport to find the battle had moved to the ground. She thinks that the human merchant crew mistook their arrival as reinforcements to the pirate and thus attacked them as well as the pirates. Sharrkga says that she and the pirate (she points to the other vargr) were the only ones left alive and he made it to the warehouse. She says that she followed him into the warehouse to kill him, as she knew he would come after her if she did not. They fought with their respective laser carbines until they both ran out of power. When she made a run for it he jumped her, and if it weren't for the PCs she would now be dead.

The male vargr, if the female vargr is still alive, will continually and aggressively call her a liar. If able to, if he is not restrained by the PCs, he will try to attack her again in order to kill her. If he is restrained he will continually call her a name that sounds like *kagkggark* but is extremely guttural. A constant flow of expletives will come with pure hatred from his snout. If the PCs think to ask he will

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translate this for them. "Kafoe, she's a \*\*\*\*\* kafoe." If he can be calmed down (or if he is the only one alive) he will explain that he is a crewmember of a merchantman (the *Drraggrthar*) that was attacked by the *Donald's Nose* and then came under attack by a kafoe patrol vessel. *Donald's Nose* got away after a concerted response by the *Drraggrthar*, but then the *Drraggrthar* was destroyed when it took a hit in the power plant from the kafoe patrol vessel. The crew were able to escape in their launch and land at the starport where the crew of *Donald's Nose* attacked them and to add to their trouble they were then attacked by the kafoe when they arrived. He made it into the warehouse where he tried to defend himself against the female kafoe (he spits as he says 'kafoe'),

*If the PCs are gung-ho and open up, the people of Richvain will respond in kind.*

before his carbine ran out of power. He tried to run for it but she jumped him. He would have killed her except the PCs stopped him. He will go on to say that they should kill her now before she can cause any more trouble. The vargr will introduce himself as Darrurz if he is given the chance or is asked.

### Referee's Information

*Donald's Nose*, a merchantman was in-system having just refuelled at Ori, Tottori's innermost gas giant, while it was on its way from Cheju (0920 Crucis Margin) to Mayagi (0617 Crucis Margin) in order to deliver some refined lithium.

*Drraggrthar*, an up-specced subbie known to be a pirate by the captain of *Donald's Nose*, approached as they were coming close to their jump point. Attempting to keep the pirate at bay they fired a warning shot across the pirate's bows. At the same time, or just seconds after, they took a hit to the fuel tanks that caused a loss of 60% of their fuel load. Unable to jump out system due to insufficient fuel *Donald's Nose* headed for Tottori Down. Unable to

outrun the *Drraggrthar*, *Donald's Nose* returned fire and managed to hit the pirate's jump drive, following which a third ship, a kafoe patrol vessel, exited Jump and after a sensor sweep engaged both the pirate and the merchantman.

A three-way running space battle then ensued between Ori and Tottori that caused *Donald's Nose's* laser turret to be disabled before it could break off and make a safe landing at Tottori Down.

The kafoe patrol vessel then achieved a hit on the pirate's power plant that caused it to explode, but only after the crew were able to abandon ship in their launch and fire a last salvo of missiles. The pirate's crew affected a safe landing of the launch in the park bay next to *Donald's Nose* and immediately attempted to board that vessel.

The missiles from the pirate hit and destroyed the manoeuvre drive of the kafoe patrol vessel. With the ship about to re-enter the atmosphere uncontrollably, the kafoe abandoned ship by using personal atmosphere re-entry kits. Of the crew of twelve, only six survived re-entry and landed approximately half a kilometre away from Tottori Down.

The crew of *Donald's Nose* managed to beat off the attack from the pirates and were pursuing the vargr into the warehouse when the kafoe arrived on the scene and engaged both sides. The three-way firefight ended with one kafoe and one vargr alive with no ammunition left to them. They are thus battling it out teeth and claw as the players turn up. Both the vargr and the kafoe crews were attempting to take *Donald's Nose* to enable them to use it to escape and get back to their home systems.

When the players stop the fight one-way or another (they might kill either the vargr or the kafoe if they are a little gung-ho) they will have to piece together the story as best they can. Both the supposed vargr are lying to them.

Darrurz and Sharrkga will stick to their respective stories and there is little to disprove them. They

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will continually call each other liars and try to persuade the PCs that they are telling the truth.

Sharrkga will portray herself as frightened and a little submissive, to endear the PCs towards her. She will back away from Darrurz's aggressiveness. This might be a little give away as she is really highly aggressive, as most kafoe are. Her frightened portrayal goes against her story a little, as why would she follow a pirate into a warehouse if she were that frightened? She will also not mention that there were twelve members of her crew. She will stick to just the six, as this crew size is more in keeping with a merchant.

Darrurz will be aggressive and agitated that Sharrkga is still alive and will badger the PCs to kill her. In his efforts to portray a convincing story he will admit that his vessel may have been a little ethically challenged when it came to passing customs inspections, but then who isn't in this region of space, but it was in no way a pirate.

The clues that the PCs can put together really depend on the previous experiences they have had. If the PCs are ex-scouts who are used to doing planetary surveys then the signs from the ocean are a give away, while if they are generally merc types or merchants they won't have a clue what they mean.

It is up to the Referee as to how they would play these clues and how easy it is for the PCs to know the full story. It is possible that the PCs never really know the complete picture and that their prejudices may cause them to jump to the wrong conclusions.

Both Darrurz and Sharrkga will try to take advantage of the PCs' thoughts and prejudices to help them stay alive and enable them to get rid of the other one and then get off planet and back to their relative homes.

The real give away for Sharrkga will be the post-mortem or any internal examination. She will try to prevent the PCs from doing this as far as she can, even to the extent of doctoring the results if possible.

## The Clues

From what the players see the kafoe and the vargr look like the same species (the kafoe for this mission were picked for just this effect). A post-mortem examination will reveal that they are in fact different species, and blood typing of both Darrurz and Sharrkga will show that difference. Any players with medical experience of vargr will be able to identify Darrurz as one.

*Donald's Nose* is a merchantman registered out of Kalradin from the Raidmarch. The really unusual thing about this ship and crew is that even though they are from the March they are *not* ethically challenged in any way. Most other merchant crews from the March think they are just plain mad, while merchants from other systems can never quite believe that they are totally aboveboard and honest.

Some of the story can be pieced together from the sensor logs of the *Donald's Nose*. The logs show that after refueling, a 400 ton subbie (the *Drraggrthar*) fired on them while they were on the way to Jump point; however, it isn't clear from the logs whether the subbie fired first or the *Donald's Nose* did. A ship of unknown type then engaged the subbie and in the ensuing fight what looked like a passing shot from the unknown ship disabled the *Donald's Nose's* laser turret. The bridge log records a well-practiced and competent crew trying to evade the *Drraggrthar* and an unknown ship that may just have targeted them. There are gaps in the bridge log that were caused by power disruptions during the fighting, and these can be portrayed as deliberate outages as the players' assumptions might lead them to believe. The sensors also show that the subbie exploded after a hit from the unknown ship and the unknown took a hit from a missile salvo from the subbie that was fired just before it blew up. Twelve vapour trails can be seen entering the atmosphere and the logs show six of them burning up while the other six disappear. The unknown ship is then

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shown as re-entering the atmosphere and disappearing over the horizon and thus out of sensor coverage. A while later the PCs ship turns up and lands at the starport.

A very thorough search (a formidable task) of the vargr launch's data logs will show that it was originally from the starship *Half a Credit*. A search on *Half a Credit* will show that it is a 400 ton subbie that is listed as missing presumed lost (with all hands) dated fourteen months ago. An easy search of the sensor logs (simple task) of the shuttle will reveal that they start when the launch was prepped for release from the *Drraggrthar*. They also show a salvo of missiles being fired from the port turret of the *Drraggrthar* and that these missiles hit a ship of unknown type that caused it to re-enter the atmosphere. Twelve vapour trails can be seen entering the atmosphere and the logs show six of them burning up while the other six disappear. There is no bridge recording on the launch.

The personal re-entry kits that were used by the kafoe were discarded when the kafoe went into free-fall before parachute activation. There are six parachutes 0.4 km east of the starport, and what remains of six other re-entry kits are scattered over a fifty-square-kilometre area that is centred along the mountain ridges 80km away. The re-entry kits should be hard to recover in the mountainous environment. The use of the vargr's launch will help if the PCs don't have an air/raft or any small craft of their own. If the re-entry kits are recovered they are of a very unusual and unknown design.

The use of personal re-entry kits as a means of escape from a failing starship is extremely unusual to say the least. While it is not totally unknown for merchants to do this as a hobby, if they are the extreme sports type, it is definitely memorable to meet one, and incredibly unusual, in fact probably unique, for a whole crew to do so.

If the PCs do a low level orbital survey of Tottori to try and find the unknown vessel they may not have any luck. The kafoe patrol vessel splash landed in Tottori's equatorial sea. The effects of this are still visible if the players know to look for them. If the PCs don't know to look for them they could just be normal sea activity for all they know.

There will be starship debris all over the planet, but the majority of it will be from the *Drraggrthar* and not from the kafoe patrol ship. There will be a small amount of debris from the kafoe ship around the nearest shore to the splash down site. If this concentration of debris is noticed by the PCs it will be obvious that it is from the unknown ship.

The kafoe patrol vessel is lying on the seabed 60m below the surface and is 90% covered by sand with only its aft area exposed. The trench dug by the ship as it hit the bottom looks quite natural to those who don't have experience of such things. The surrounding seabed for hundreds of square kilometres is disturbed and sand mixing in the water only helps to cover the patrol vessel. This can again be put down to local conditions for all the PCs know.

### Outside factors

After 1d4 hours the residents of Richvain will come to investigate. It is unusual, although not unheard of, for four starships to be in system at one time, and explosions due to the RPG at the starport will cause them to come armed.

Being so close to the March, the residents are well-equipped when it comes to small arms. They will be carrying some powerful weaponry, some of it support weaponry. All of the weaponry will be able to be maintained by TL 7 equipment even if the weaponry itself is of a higher tech level.

If the PCs are ethically challenged in any way or on any bounty lists the residents will just assume the worst and open fire on the PCs and their ship. If the PCs are gung-ho and open up, the people of Richvain will respond in kind.

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If, however, the PCs are sensible and welcome the Richvainian's questions and help, they will be able to get access to the planetary satellite sensor data that, while only TL 7, will shed more light on the story. They will also have access to the hospital in Richvain for any medical investigations they might want to undertake.

Locals will also be able to identify that the activity of the equatorial sea is not normal and that the place where the seabed is disturbed is a good place to start looking for the unknown vessel.

### Motivations

#### Sharrkga

Sharrkga will try to protect her identity at all costs, although not for selfish reasons. She was Chief Engineer of her patrol ship and has a skill set to match. Her initial motivation will be to get Darrurz killed or incapacitated so he can't reveal her for what she is. Her motivation will then be to find and destroy as much evidence of the kafoe as is possible. She will try and get the PCs, using all their assumptions and prejudices, to look for her ship so that she might engineer its destruction. She will want to gather the re-entry kits to destroy them and dispose of her fellow crewmembers by cremation; she will say that it is their custom to be burned after death (this should not be unusual). She will want the laser-carbines destroyed, as well as any equipment left on or around her crewmembers' bodies.

She will also be looking to get rid of any traces that might lend information to the kafoe's enemies such as the sensor logs of the *Donald's Nose*, the sensor logs of the launch, and the planetary satellite network. Eventually she will move on to the removal of the players and the disappearance of their ship. She will strand herself if necessary but is more likely to try and get them to take her to where she can be rescued by her own kind.

Sharrkga was picked for this mission because, like the rest of her crew, she is intelligent and cunning. She is a practiced liar and speaks fluently and without an accent. She should not make stupid mistakes and it should be difficult for the PCs to see through her story if they believe her in the first instance.

#### Darrurz

Darrurz will try to protect his identity, and is willing to sacrifice almost anything to do so. His intentions are purely selfish and his main aim is to make it to the Raidmarch so he can continue his career. Darrurz is a career corsair and has many contacts. He made a good lieutenant on the *Drraggrthar* and if he could make some money he would easily be able to set up on his own as Captain. He will initially try to have Sharrkga killed, but as he calms down he will see a possible reward in turning her over to the Raidmarch government, along with as much equipment as possible. He will have no qualms about killing her or anyone else if they prove to be trouble.

Darrurz will be looking to make as much profit from this encounter as he can. He values his life highly and while he is greedy he is also intelligent and cunning. It is unlikely that he will let his greed put him in a situation that may give him away, but this is a possibility if the pay off is massive.

With a ship for the taking, he will try to engineer the position where he is crewing the *Donald's Nose* on the way to the Raidmarch where he will be able to use his contacts to remove the players and claim the ship and cargo for himself. If he can't engineer this situation he will look to recover the launch to the Raidmarch and try to sell it.

#### The Citizens of Richvain

The Richvainians will, as representatives of their world, use this as an opportunity to better it. They

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## Active Measures

(Continued from page 47)

are not ruthless in this pursuit but will not be hoodwinked by the PCs. If the kafoe's ship is uncovered they will claim it as theirs and then seek to profit from it by selling it and the info it contains to the Old Worlds Government, or negotiate for a mutual defensive arrangement etc. They are likely to claim any heavy weapons for planetary defence and also keep the launch as a planetary ship. They will have no use for the *Donald's Nose* or its cargo, apart from perhaps its weaponry, so would be willing to let the PCs have this for their efforts.

## The PCs

The players can profit from this encounter in many ways. There is of course an almost-working type A2 far trader and its cargo, a ship's launch, various weaponry, but the real pay off is finding and selling information about, equipment of, or the kafoe themselves to the governments of either the Raidmarch or the Old Worlds (the Old Worlds will pay more). The Referee should of course change the rewards to best suit his or her campaign. ♣

## Critics' Corner

### Hub Federation

reviewed by "kafka"

Hub Federation. John Watts.

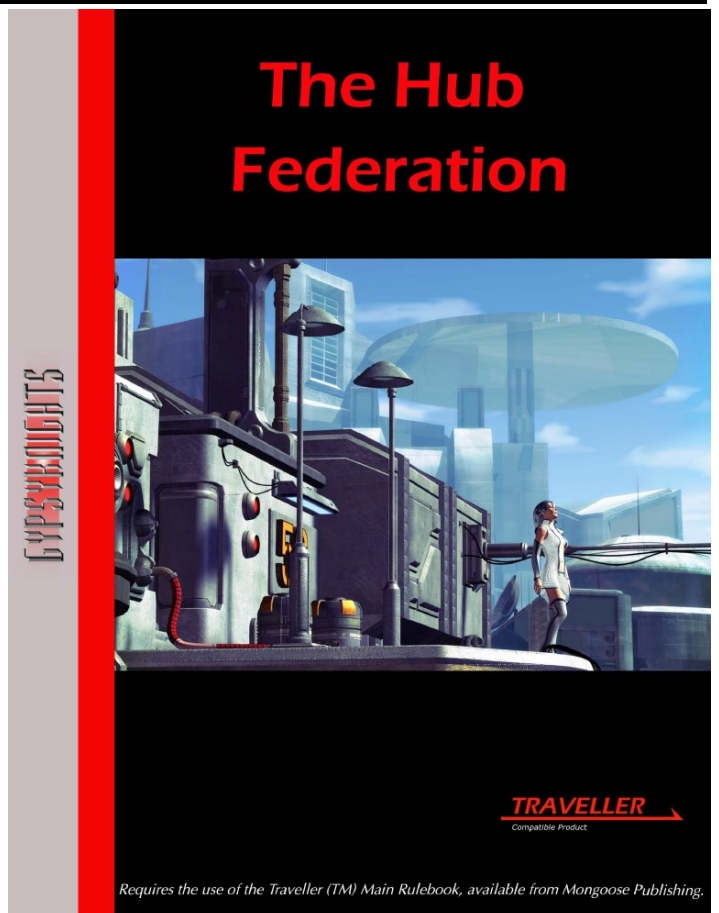
Gypsy Knights Games <http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com>

60pp., softcover or PDF

US\$16.99(S+P)7.99(P)/UK£11.26(S+P)5.30(P)

*This review originally appeared on [rpg.net](http://rpg.net) in May 2012*

"At last we shall reveal ourselves to the Jedi..." wait a minute... same genre, different game... but this is kind of how this supplement feels: it's the big reveal after countless *Quick Worlds* that have been assembled into subsector guides. This is the base setting for all these worlds and the polity that connects them together. Hub Federation is an appropriate name; the previous two subsector guides act as spokes that radiate outward organically from this supplement. While it does deal with the government/interstellar polity, the focus seems to actually be on the worlds that are heavily connected back to the initial colonization effort spurred by the discovery of a wormhole located some 10.5 light years from Earth. Once scientists figured out how to widen the wormhole from a few millimetres to something capable of transporting a probe, a whole new colonization effort was born with ships travelling across to the other side of the galaxy using the conduit and a modified Jump Drive (called the Zimm



Drive, or Z-Drive, which can only perform as a J-2). Then, suddenly, the wormhole collapsed leaving an emergent civilization to fend for itself in the Wilds far from home.

There are several plot points left to the Referee's determination: What was the nature of the worm-

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(Continued from page 48)

hole? Artificial? Real? Could it be brought back or is there another one out there? Like previous offerings from Gypsy Knight Games, all suggestions are voluntary and leave the Referee in charge. Given that Germans led the way in the colonization effort, there are worlds with a German tinge – but what was disappointing was that no attempt to model the Hub Federation on the Federal Republic except in a cursory way was ever attempted. Doing so would have provided an “alien” yet familiar concept of government for many Americans – who rightly or wrongly believe in weaker central governments than what has happened in Germany.

Like the predecessor subsector guides, this is a collection of worlds. Where they differ is that they are less Southern California or less *Star Trek*; however, they do suffer somewhat from being still in the habitable zones replete with breathable atmospheres even if they look like rock balls. But once again, this was noted as a general problem for *Traveller*, so no slight to Gypsy Knight Games—but I do hope that you will begin to tweak your worlds to make them more exotic locales utilizing different atmospheres or different habitats like Space Cities or Asteroid habitations or worlds that are merely refineries – company towns or Outland type settlements.

Another minor source of annoyance is indeed that travel has been limited to J-2. I realize that this has been done to create a small-ship universe and limit the reach of the central authorities over the frontier, but in *Traveller* communication moves only as fast as travel and even at J-6 lots of autonomy must be placed in the hands of local authorities – I suspect they did not want to invent an artificial glue to hold their ATU together (the OTU uses the premise that Feudalism has returned as a social glue).

The worlds themselves are interesting, but none particularly stand out as unique other than the capital world of Hub, although, I suspect, I am facing a

little burnout from reading many similar world descriptions based in the Hard Space Opera genre. The illustrations both of the star systems and the unfolded icosahedral world maps are really first rate. Initially, the interior art of people and places seemed a tad high tech, but it makes more sense as upper TL is now broaching C or Average Interstellar Polity in standard *Traveller* terms. The writing is clear and spot on with its descriptions – things are purposely left to the Referee to determine. That said, there are adventure seeds aplenty and other things to help the Referee to plot out escapades and exploits.

If there is a drawback, it is that *21 Organizations* was not directly incorporated into this book (which is for the most part a modified careers book). This would have added to the price but much more to the value of the item – having to buy them separately has some merit but together would have made the product stronger. Also, why not illustrate some of the more fantastical things or things that give a Sense of Wonder for the Core Worlds? This may have been fine to exclude in the frontier but one has to identify more Science Fiction tropes and give the motivation for Travellers to feel or experience something different. On the plus, side, each world has a unique history and well connected with others. Thus making this game to be more connected than the standard *Traveller* geographical sourcebook which treats each world as a self-contained monad.

All in all, this entire supplement is worth the money, if you like what Gypsy Knights Games is attempting to do, which is create the solitary worlds and string them together in a fragile alliance, thus creating lots for the Bride and her groom (Referee and Players). Many mysteries of the milieu are touched on, but only the Keeper can decipher truth from fiction, and set up the journeys that are sure to follow. ❁

## Beery Delights for TravCon14

by Derrick Jones

Sourced especially for your delight by Brewer Georgeus Wright on Jenghe<sup>1</sup>, personal fiefdom of Archduke Norris. Selected by beer aficionado and Traveller, Derrick Jones, especially for this great little convention.

### Scout Brew



**Scout Brew** (4.8% abv) – making its first appearance at TravCon in bottles... “a premium black bitter brewed using hops transplanted from the Slovenian region of Terra, very black in appearance, with a smooth and creamy taste leaving a long malty sweetness on the palate”. Something to keep you comfortable during those long, lonely days in Jump-space on your X-Boat. Certainly not for Navy types!

### Aledon Pale



**Aledon Pale** (4.3% abv) – a special variant of the ever-popular “Pipe Dream” – made only with the finest malted barley from the Aledon estates – and brewed exclusively for the Aledon family until now! This is a wonderfully rich golden Pale Ale in the style of the Terran India Pale Ales, with an initial refreshing citrus nose, subtle hints of grapefruit and lemon followed by a crisp, long, dry, hoppy, zing! More refreshing than a gallon of Zilan Eiswein!

### 4518th Lift Infantry Blond



**4518th Lift Infantry Blond** (5.1% abv) – a magnificent Blond “lager” style of beer, made with transplanted Pilsner malts, bottom fermented, and finely balanced with our old Terran (German, Czech and Polish) hops. This flavoursome beverage is laagered for at least ninety days in cold caverns underneath our Jenghe brewery, before being bottled at source, and shipped to you to reach you in perfect condition! This lager was brewed in recognition of the fine wartime efforts of the 4518th Lift Infantry Regiment, the same ‘Duke of Regina’s Own Huscarles’ who inspire so much in our region of space. Served in every mess hall here in Regina Subsector, and increasingly further afield as Imperial Marines take news of this lovely drink home with them after serving their tour of duty. If you are a lager drinker and not too keen on ‘real ales’, this could convert you!

*Editor’s Note: We inquired of Derrick via Timothy Collinson, and the George Wright Brewing Company really exists; it is a partnership between two gentlemen, Messrs Keith Wright and George Dove. The company website is at <http://georgewrightbrewing.co.uk>; their Twitter profile is at <http://twitter.com/gwrightsbrewing>. The Traveller beers discussed in this article are custom-label runs of production beers; the “Aledon Pale” is a rebadging of their “Pipe Dream”, as given; the “Scout Brew” rebadges their “Roman Black”; and the “4518th Lift Infantry Blonde” is sold publicly as “Pure Blond”.*

1. Jenghe’s high nickel/iron moon crashed into the surface of the planet in 971, destroying most of the land mass and raising ocean levels considerably. The unusually strong magnetic field affects the atmosphere significantly, the peculiar climate provides very specific growing conditions which work well with more specialised barley grains used here, and the bright sunlight and frequent rains help our transplanted hops flourish on our cliff-top hop vines.



# Less Dangerous Game

## Plain Mental

by Timothy Collinson

*Editor's Note:* In the summary of the animal's skills/abilities, those that are psi-based are shown in *italics*.

Stats are provided for both editions of *Mongoose Traveller*, and for *Cepheus Engine*. Converting to *Classic Traveller* or *MegaTraveller* would not be difficult; a speed of 6m in *Mongoose Traveller* or *Cepheus Engine* is equivalent to a speed rating of 1 in *Classic Traveller* or *MegaTraveller*.

*Author's Note:* Cepheus Engine speeds tend to be somewhat slower by the tables on p.182 than the designs given above but the following can be generated by the rules. Referees who want the creatures 'original' speeds can adjust accordingly from the tables above. Psionic strength has been added after a hyphen in the UPP. Skills from the above have been retained, if Referees wish to stick strictly to the list on p.48, Stealth, Deception, etc., can be ignored.

## Drarf

Recon 3, Assault 2, Athletics 1, Survival 1, Melee (natural weapons) 0, Stealth 0

Psionic strength 8

Drarfs are spindly three legged creatures reaching some 6-7 metres and weighing around a ton, these green/brown crane-like creatures look as though they ought not to be able to walk at all. They appear to be very ungainly but in fact are relatively

dexterous and a herd of them moving over the savannah can be quite a sight. They're usually found in social packs of a dozen or so with a matriarch leading the group. They feed on chitta-tweeps and chippers they find in trees and attack using a psionic Assault. They also have three stubby horn-like protuberances on their nearly spherical heads which they can use against their prey as well.

### Mongoose Traveller (1ed)

PLAINS/SAVANNAH Terrain				Temperate World, Standard Atmosphere (10+)							
	Pack	Class	Behaviour	Str	Dex	End	Inst	Armour	Weapon/Damage	Reaction	
Drarf	12	Mam	Pouncer (C)	15	12	11	10	Hide 1	Psionic Assault / 2d6	Surprise	

Mongoose Traveller (2ed)		
ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Drarf	48	33 m
SKILLS	Recon 3, Athletics (dexterity) 1, Survival 1, Melee (natural) 0, Stealth 0	
ATTACKS	Assault (2D), Bite (1D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1), Camouflaged, Large (+2), Psionic (8)	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Pouncer	

Cepheus Engine				
ANIMAL	UPP	# APP	MASS	SPEED
Drarf	FCB1AC-8	3d6	1050kg	12m
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore (Pouncer), Plains Walker			
SKILLS	Recon 3, Assault 2, Athletics 1, Survival 1, Melee (natural) 0, Stealth 0			
WEAPONS	Bite (1D6)			
ARMOUR	Hide (1)			

(Continued on page 52)



# Less Dangerous Game

(Continued from page 51)

## Chitta-tweep

*Life Detect 2, Deception 1, Recon 1, Telempathy 1, Melee (natural weapons) 0, Athletics 0, Survival 0*

Psionic strength 6

*Anodorhynchus psionis*. Bright maroon birds, ery like four-toed parrots standing about a metre tall, with a wingspan of over a metre and weighing around 1.5kg. Their common name comes from the sound the males use as a mating call. Chitta-tweeps use Life Detect and Telempathy to locate the laman-

das they primarily prey upon in the trees they both inhabit and on the savannah floor. With their poor eyesight, it can be quite impressive to see such blurs of colour flash low to the ground and pluck up an unwary reptile. They also prey on chippers. Chitta-tweeps have developed a limited form of psionic Shield as a partial defence against the drarfs who prey upon them. Some have been domesticated to keep as pets despite their size but they're social creatures and don't like being kept alone.

## Mongoose Traveller (1ed)

PLAINS/SAVANNAH Terrain						Temperate World, Standard Atmosphere (10+)				
	Pack	Class	Behaviour	Str	Dex	End	Inst	Armour	Weapon/Damage	Reaction
Chitta-tweep	22	Avi	Hunter (O)	2	7	1	8	Feathers 0	Claws & Beak / 3d6	A6/F5

## Mongoose Traveller (2ed)

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Chitta-tweep	8	1 m
SKILLS	Athletics 0, Deception 1, Life Detection 2, Melee (natural weapons) 0, Recon 1, Shield 0, Survival 0, Telempathy 1	
ATTACKS	Bite (2D), Claws (1D)	
TRAITS	Flyer (very slow), Psionic (6), Small (-1)	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Hunter	

## Cepheus Engine

ANIMAL	UPP	# APP	MASS	SPEED
Chitta-tweep	27118F-6	5d6	1.5kg	1m
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore (Hunter), Plains Flyer			
SKILLS	<i>Life Detection 2, Deception 1, Telempathy 1, Recon 1, Athletics 0, Melee Combat (natural weapons) 0, Survival 0</i>			
WEAPONS	Claws & Beak (3D6)			
ARMOUR	Feathers (0)			

## Lamanda

*Athletics 0, Recon 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Telekinesis 1*

Psionic strength 3

The lamanda is an eight legged lizard-like creatures with a prehensile tail. It's an incredibly hardy

animal for its size – around 15cm long. They're very nimble and can keep running even if they've lost up to four of their legs. It uses Telekinesis to manoeuvre insects into range of its long tongue which it can roll up in the longitudinal axis to form a kind of straw.

## Mongoose Traveller (1ed)

PLAINS/SAVANNAH Terrain						Temperate World, Standard Atmosphere (10+)				
	Pack	Class	Behaviour	Str	Dex	End	Inst	Armour	Weapon/Damage	Reaction
Lamanda	6	Rep	Chaser (C)	1	7	6	8	Hide 1	Teeth / 1d6	AOut/F5

## Mongoose Traveller (2ed)

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Lamanda	3	80m
SKILLS	Stealth 1, Survival 1, <i>Telekinesis 1</i> , Athletics 0, Recon 0	
ATTACKS	Bite (1D)	
TRAITS	Armour 1, Camouflaged, Heightened Senses, Fast Metabolism (+1), Small (-4), Psionic (3)	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Chaser	

## Cepheus Engine

ANIMAL	UPP	# APP	MASS	SPEED
Lamanda	176186-3	2d6	1kg	24m
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore (Chaser), Plains Walker			
SKILLS	Stealth 1, Survival 1, <i>Telekinesis 1</i> , Athletics 0, Recon 0			
WEAPONS	Teeth (1d6)			
ARMOUR	Hide (1)			

(Continued on page 53)

## Less Dangerous Game

(Continued from page 52)

### Chippers

Athletics 0, Melee (natural weapons) 0, Recon 0, Stealth 2, Survival 0

Prolifically fertile, these small rodents are found in the trees and scrub of the savannah are easy prey for drarfs, chitta-tweeps, and any number of other creatures against which they have little in the way of natural defences. Their teeth can give a sharp nip to an unwary finger but they have to be provoked to

this. In the wild they're actually very hard to see and, perhaps unsurprisingly, disappear at the approach of just about anything. They can easily be domesticated – most Imperials find them quite cute – but they make unexciting pets as they rarely leave their burrows or nesting material. Vargr regard them as a small but piquant delicacy.

### Mongoose Traveller (1ed)

PLAINS/SAVANNAH Terrain						Temperate World, Standard Atmosphere (10+)				
Pack	Class	Behaviour	Str	Dex	End	Inst	Armour	Weapon/Damage	Reaction	
Chippers	4	Mam	Gatherer (O)	3	8	2	7	Hide 0	Teeth / 1d6	A9/F7

### Mongoose Traveller (2ed)

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Chippers	1	7 m
SKILLS	Stealth 2, Athletics 0, Melee (natural weapons) 0, Recon 0, Survival 0	
ATTACKS	Bite (1D)	
TRAITS	Camouflaged, Heightened Senses, Small (-4)	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Gatherer	

### Cepheus Engine

ANIMAL	UPP	# APP	MASS	SPEED
Chippers	382074	1d6	0.15kg	1m
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore (Gatherer), Plains Walker			
SKILLS	Stealth 2, Athletics 0, Melee Combat (natural weapons) 0, Recon 0, Survival 0			
WEAPONS	Teeth (1d6)			
ARMOUR	Hide (0)			



## In A Store Near You

## The Showroom

### Kankurur G-Carrier (TL15) Revisited

by Timothy Collinson

Mongoose's publication of *Adventure 4: Into the Unknown* included a version of the *Kankurur* G-carrier which first appeared way back in 1987 in *Grand Census*, and again in 1989 in *World Builder's Handbook*, as an ideal survey vehicle for scouts who want to get out and about. In *Into the Unknown*, this g-carrier is presented with *Supplement 5-6: The Vehicle Handbook* stats. However, the adventure was written before that volume was published and so was initially designed with *Supplement 5: Civilian Vehicle* stats. Those numbers are given here for those who still use that system, along with the author's original deck plan (which was replaced by a Mon-

goose artist's much more illustrative version in the published book).

'Kankurur' are large birds of prey native to Vland. They have a homing instinct and can carry up to 20kg in their talons – making messages and small cargoes possible.

#### Summary

**Manufacturer:** Ling Standard Products

**Designed:** 1095

**Manufactured:** 1097

**Purpose:** IISS & Imperial Navy planetary survey, exploration and reconnaissance

(Continued on page 54)

## In A Store Near You

(Continued from page 53)

### Variants:

Standard atmosphere (SA) – full life support up to atmosphere type B;

Hostile environment (HE) – full life support in insidious atmospheres or areas of high radiation

**Fuel:** 22,000 litres

**Endurance:** 87 days of operation (SA); 83 days (HE)

**Top speed:** 153mph/246kph (SA); 149mph/239kph (HE)

**Cruising speed:** 115mph/185kph (SA); 111mph/180kph (HE)

**Cargo:** 20m<sup>3</sup> (airlock); 7m<sup>3</sup> (cabin)

**Features:** Airlock (opens to rear and roof), TL13 Fusion still, Meson Communicator – 50,000km range, two Radios – 5000km range, galley, four berths, fresher, cruise control, six TL15 rescue balls. Optionally: TL13 Holo Projector (Cr10,000), Fore and aft roof-mounted TL9 Motion Sensors (Cr2000)

**Loaded weight:** 58 tons (SA); 62 tons (HE)

**Cost:** MCr17.483 (SA); MCr21.838 (HE)

**Dimensions:** 15m x 4.5m x 3.75m.

### Mongoose Traveller Tasks

To fly or pilot a g-carrier is a Flyer (Grav) or Pilot (Small Craft) task check:

*To fly a g-carrier:* Dexterity, 1-6 hours, Routine (+2)

Repairing a Kankurur in which the Hull has been damaged is a Mechanic check (as per Core Rulebook, p.68):

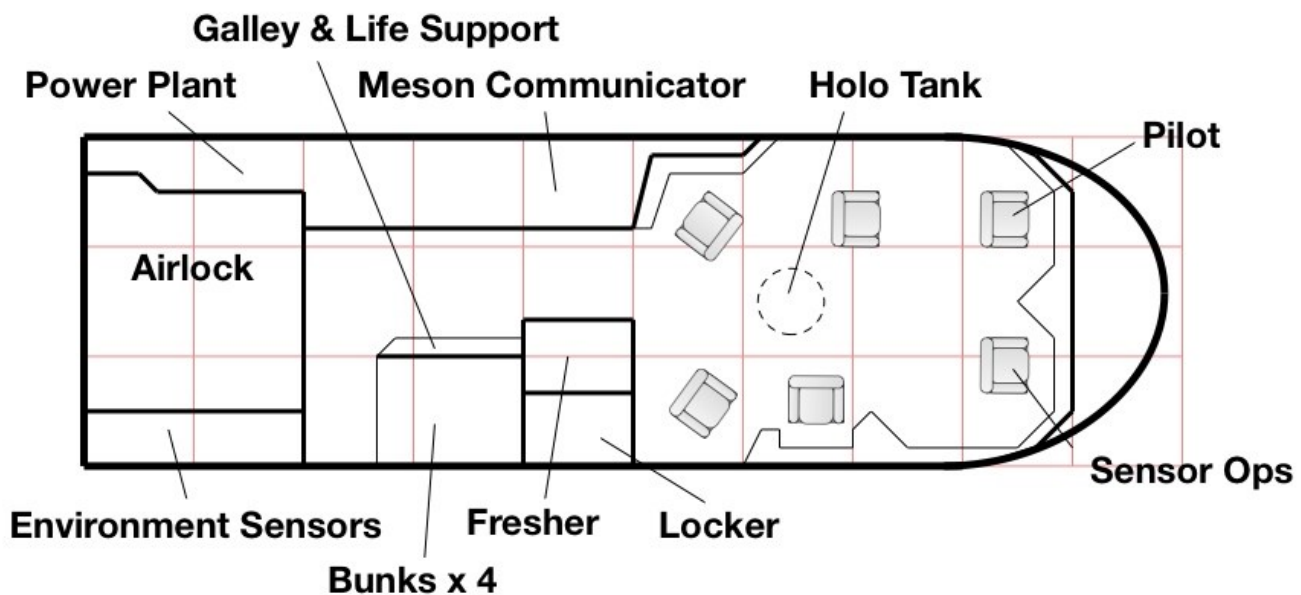
*To repair a damaged g-carrier:* Intelligence or Education, 1-6 hours, Average (+0)

For less serious damage it could be a Mechanic or Engineering (Electronics) check depending on what the problem is:

*To repair a g-carrier with minor damage:* Intelligence or Education, 10-60 minutes, Average (+0)

Jury-rigged repairs will stop functioning after 1-6 hours. Field repairs require a source of spare parts (scrapyard, a workshop, systems on another vehicle, or can be taken from other systems on the same vehicle (p.60 Core Rulebook)).

For field repair, the task time frame may be increased by one or two increments. ☼



## In A Store Near You

Kankurur G-Carrier (TL15)		Standard Atmosphere		
System	Description	Vol (m <sup>3</sup> )	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)
Hull	264m3 (base 220) Box configuration, Bonded Superdense, Streamlined, Sealed Hull: 60 Structure: 61	-	17,600	85,800
Drive system	Grav	11	1650	5,000,000
Power Plant	Nuclear Fusion-15 Power output: 294 Fuel Consumption: 10.5/hour	10.5	1155	183,750
Fuel	22,000 litres (2095 hours operation)	22	22,000	-
Armour	Bonded Superdense 6	-	-	-
Sensors	Advanced Long Range Compact (50km +3 DM)	4.5	2.5	20,000
Communications	2 x Radio-5000 (range 5000km) Meson-50,000	2 20	15 4000	5000 10,000,000
Environmental	Life Support, Advanced Airlock	6.6 6	2310 300	1,650,000 25,000
Crew	1 (driver)	-	-	-
Operating stations	1	1.25	125	-
Passengers	5	5	500	-
Sleeping Areas	1 simple (4 occupants)	6	120	1500
Utility Areas	Galley, Fresher, Holo Tank	5	375	6250
Cargo	2 dTons	27	2700	-
Agility	+0 DM	-	-	-
Speed	Cruise: 185kph, Top: 246kph	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>134</b>	<b>52,485</b>	<b>17,489,300</b>

Kankurur G-Carrier (TL15)		Hostile Atmosphere		
System	Description	Vol (m <sup>3</sup> )	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)
Hull	264m3 (base 220) Box configuration, Bonded Superdense, Streamlined, Advanced Sealed Hull: 60 Structure: 61	-	19,360	171,600
Drive system	Grav	11	1650	5,000,000
Power Plant	Nuclear Fusion-15 Power output: 308 Fuel Consumption: 11/hour	11	1210	192,500
Fuel	22,000 litres (2000 hours operation)	22	22,000	-
Armour	Bonded Superdense 6	-	-	-
Sensors	Advanced Long Range Compact (50km +3 DM)	4.5	2.5	20,000
Communications	2 x Radio-5000 (range 5000km) Meson-50,000	2 20	15 4000	5000 10,000,000
Environmental	Life Support, Hostile Environment Airlock, Decontamination	11 12	4000 500	5,550,000 75,000
Crew	1 (driver)	-	-	-
Operating stations	1	1.25	125	-
Passengers	5	5	500	-
Sleeping Areas	1 simple (4 occupants)	6	120	1500
Utility Areas	Galley, Fresher, Holo Tank	5	375	6250
Cargo	2 dTons	27	2700	-
Agility	+0 DM	-	-	-
Speed	Cruise: 180kph, Top: 396kph	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>145</b>	<b>56,590</b>	<b>21,838,850</b>



## Space Viking

reviewed by Shelby Michlin

*Space Viking*. H. Beam Piper

Originally serialized in *Analog* magazine, 1962-1963

Original book publication: 1963

Current Availability: Print and eBook

This is the first of Piper's books that I've read. Having seen his *Little Fuzzy* in bookstores over the years, I had no desire to check him out. However, I then read the assertion in social media that this book was one of many influences on *Traveller*. Since I'm a fan of *Traveller*, and of one series of books that was a major influence on the game (EC Tubb's *Dumarest* saga), I thought I'd check out *Space Viking*.

There is a group of worlds in the *Traveller* universe called the Sword Worlds. The planets are named after famous swords, such as Excalibur. There is very little else written about them in the original, Classic *Traveller* game. There are also Sword Worlds in *Space Viking*. And they, like the overall *Traveller* universe, have a feudalistic society that also includes future tech such as spaceships. That's about the only connection I see between the two. So, not so thrilling.

As for the book itself, as a story, it's rather shallow. I could've put it down at any point and never bothered to pick it up again, except for completeness' sake.

I just didn't get the idea that these characters, who seemed like well-educated, likable (in a shallow old-SF way) fellows, were also "space Vikings" who raided other worlds by dropping nuclear bombs on them and then looting them of their museum pieces, treasures and small portable manufacturing plants. They were fully capable of making

this stuff themselves, but they just decided to take on entire planets with a few ships, to try and steal it. Then they turned around and went to other planets and sold their loot. Uh, why? I couldn't get my head around it. There was a fundamental difference between the way the characters themselves were portrayed, and the horror of wanton killing that they did as a "career."

The other thing was the odd political statements the author appeared to be trying to make. He had the characters draw connections between political movements they discovered and the historical Hitler. He set up a race of Gilgameshers, who played the role of the Jews in "Hitler's" schemes. Rather uncomfortable to read. Then he went on and on about how governments didn't work, but at the same time should use violence to keep the people in line. *Should*. I just couldn't put all this stuff in my head and turn it into a coherent message.

So, yeah. Now I can say I read a book that supposedly influenced *Traveller*. But didn't really.

Give it a pass.

### Addendum

OK, I realized I could just *ask* Marc Miller if *Space Viking* was indeed one of his influences. He replied that it was. There you go, can't argue with that. He had this book in mind while creating his game world. So even if the concepts in *Space Viking* have appeared in other, and to my mind better, books, this was one of Mr Miller's influences.

But I still think it's a lousy book. 🌀

# The Corporate Repo Career

by Joshua Levy

**Corporate Repo:** Individual involved in the corporate repossession of spaceships, legally owned by large corporations, that have been seized by governments or organizations on shaky legal grounds.

This article presents the Corporate Repo career in the same format as other careers in the Cepheus Engine rules. It can easily be converted to other Traveller rules which use a career system.

“The Corporate Repo Campaign” (*Freelance Traveller*, May/June 2017, p. 32) describes campaigns for these characters. They usually work as a team to recover starships which have been seized by governments or criminal organizations, often through legal manipulations or outright fraud which would never be allowed in more civilized parts of the Imperium.

Repo teams have the skills to operate large starships, but they also have the skills to separate them from their current, illegitimate owners. These skills include “white collar” type criminal skills, legal and political manipulation skills, breaking and entering, and even some straight up violence skills.

In most of the Imperium, a Repo agent bears the same relationship to a rogue that privateers bear to pirates—there’s a lot of commonality in their actions, but the Repo agent operates with the permission and backing of a larger entity with legal status.

I generally start by thinking about what kind of repo agent this character will be. What skills will he/she bring to the team trying to liberate a ship? This step is not part of the chargen mechanics, but it is part of imagining the character you want. I think of six basic areas:

- Fraud, Cons, and Flim Flams
- Breaking and Entering (Includes physical and electronic techniques, and hacking.)
- Disguise and Impersonation
- Violence (Simple thuggery, armed criminals, demolitions, and ex-military types.)

- Forgery and Fakes (Research to select original and skills to make fakes, including paperwork, computer records, or physical objects.)
- General (Team leaders, lawyers, political animals, rabble rousers, stakeout specialists, and people who work with the local crooks.)

The *Cepheus Engine* character creation tables follow. Some tables include Rogue career data for comparison.

Medical Bills				
Career	Roll + Rank:	4+	8+	12+
Most Corporate Repos (megacorp or similar)		50%	75%	100%
A Few Corporate Repos (self-employed or disreputable company)		0%	50%	75%
<i>Add Rank to roll for portion paid by employer.</i>				
Career Progression				
Career	Corporate Repo	Rogue (for comparison)		
<b>Qualification</b>	Int 5+	Dex 5+		
<b>Survival</b>	Int 4+	Dex 4+		
<b>Commission</b>	Soc 7+	Str 6+		
<b>Advancement</b>	Int 6+	Int 7+		
<b>Re-enlistment</b>	5+	4+		
Ranks and Skills				
Career	Corporate Repo	Rogue		
0	Crew [Engineering-1]	Independent [Streetwise-1]		
1	Specialist	Associate		
2	Agent [Streetwise-1]	Soldier [Gun Combat-1]		
3	Lead	Lieutenant		
4	Manager	Underboss		
5	Director	Consigliere		
6	Executive	Boss		

Engineering is the basic skill for rank-0 corporate repo characters, because they are often moving large ships, which require a lot of engineers. Therefore, the entire team should be able to pitch in and help in Engineering.

Streetwise is the basic skill for rank-2 characters, because it helps with a wide range of vessel recovery techniques.

The referee should, as usual, feel free to modify the tables to fit the campaign—for example, rank-4 characters might get an automatic skill of Admin-1 or Advocate-1.

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# Doing It My Way

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Mustering-Out Benefits		
Career	Corporate Repo	Rogue (for comparison)
<b>Material</b>		
1	Weapon	Low Passage
2	Explorer' Society	+1 Int
3	Weapon	Weapon
4	Mid Passage	Mid Passage
5	High Passage	Weapon
6	High Passage or Starship	High Passage
7	+1 Soc	+1 Soc
<b>Cash</b>		
1	2000	1000
2	10000	5000
3	10000	5000
4	10000	5000
5	20000	10000
6	40000	20000
7	100000	50000

*Note on High Passage or Starship benefit:* If you run a “ship poor” universe, then this should be a high passage, but if you run a universe where many characters have spaceships, then this is the way to get a Corporate Repo character a ship. Another option is to have the ship owned jointly by the character’s old repo team. This is similar to owning shares in a ship, but a little more personal and hands-on.

Usually, a starship benefit means that the character knows about a “misplaced” spaceship. Perhaps, it was a ship used as cover, and which had to be abandoned; maybe it was cargo on a larger ship repossessed 20 years ago; or an auxiliary ship on a repossessed ship, etc.

In this case, the referee should decide if the character owns title “free and clear” or if they merely have physical possession of it. If the character officially owns the ship, he or she can sell it for cash. Otherwise, the character can use the ship (or let others use it), but not sell it outright, at least not legally in the Imperium. If the character does not have “free and clear” ownership, then any interaction with the authorities could lead to the ship being impounded.

Alternatively, the corporation for which the repo has worked may give the repo an old ship either as a severance benefit, or as prepayment for calling the repo back into service as needed. This is similar to

the ship benefit that retired scouts sometimes get. These ships could be anything, but are usually small.

Starship Type for Starship Benefit	
1D	Type of Ship
1	Type-S Scout
2	Modified Type-S (Seeker, etc.)
3	Type-A or variant (A2, A3, etc.)
4	Type Y or variant (Y2, Y3, etc.)
5	Type R or variant (R2, R3, etc.)
6	“Oddball” (Type L Lab, Type I/J Intruder, Repair Tug (see <i>Free-lance Traveller</i> , July/Aug. 2017, p.46), Military/Mercenary/Corsair ship, non-jump vessel, etc.)

Career Skill Tables		
Career	Corporate Repo Agent	Rogue (for comparison)
<b>Personal Development</b>		
1	+1 Str	+1 Str
2	+1 Dex	+1 Dex
3	+1 Edu	+1 End
4	Melee Combat	Melee Combat
5	Vehicle	Bribery
6	Athletics	Gambling
<b>Service Skills</b>		
1	Streetwise	Streetwise
2	Engineering	Mechanics
3	Bribery	Gun Combat
4	Liaison	Melee Combat
5	Recon	Recon
6	Mechanics	Vehicle
<b>Specialist Skills</b>		
1	Zero-G	Computer
2	Comms	Electronics
3	Admin	Bribery
4	Tactics	Broker
5	Leadership	Recon
6	Jack o’ Trades	Vehicle
<b>Advanced Education</b>		
1	Computer	Computer
2	Gravitics	Gravitics
3	Piloting	Jack o’ Trades
4	Navigation	Medicine
5	Advocate	Advocate
6	Electronics	Tactics

## Adding Depth to a Repo Character

If the referee approves it, characters may roll on the following tables, adding that piece of history to their character. The referee should decide how often each character rolls. For quick characters, maybe just once during their first term (this kind of stuff tends to happen when a character is young), or once or twice per term, to add more depth to their character’s development.

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# Doing It My Way

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As an alternate rule, the referee may allow players to select results, or the referee and player can work together to select results, rather than roll ran-

domly. This can lead to a more interesting and coherent lifepath, and can apply to just the tables in this section or to the entire chargen process.

## Corporate Repo Events

3D6	Event (Note that in many cases, you will need to roll another d6, or two, to get all the details.)
3	A high-quality false identity created for you for an operation was never deactivated, so you still have it (and can use it without their knowing).
4	While recovering a ship, had an encounter so scary that you developed a phobia. Roll 1D: (1-2) roll on a list of phobias (e.g., from a <i>Call of Cthulhu</i> game), (3) roll on a table of aliens, (4) roll on a table of spaceship types, (5) roll on a table of weapons or equipment, (6) roll on a list of stellar or planetary types.
5	You found a particularly valuable, and relatively small/portable cargo in a ship that you were recovering. You were able to hide the cargo before returning the ship to its corporate owner. As far as you know, the cargo is still there. Roll 1D for details: (1) one other person knows where it is, (2) the whole crew knows where it is, (3) It's really owned by a criminal gang; they will be tipped off if it is moved or sold or something, (4) same as 3 but it's owned by a mega-corp or government, (5) Something has changed, and it is about to lose it's value, (6) someone else has just found out about it. Roll 1D for the cargo type: (1) precious metals, (2) artwork, (3) (possibly illegal) drugs, (4) data on a megacorp or politician, (5) an alien or ancient artifact, (6) information leading to something valuable
6	A corporation (or high level person employed by one) owes you a substantial favor.
7	You were "chipped" by a local government or criminal organization. This chip shows up on body scans. Some scanners will only show the chip, others will show your identity and the reason for "chipping". Some planets chip everyone, others only chip criminals, and others chip people for different reasons (and the security guys who find the chip may think it's only criminals who are chipped, or only corporate workers, etc, depending on their knowledge of chipping).
8	Made a local contact who still owes you a substantial favor. The contact is (roll 1D): (1) a cop, (2-3) a crook, (4) a port/government worker, (5) a merchant or broker, (6) a politician or important "fixer".
9	You learned something interesting/useful about one particular class of starship or equipment.
10	You are <i>persona non grata</i> on at least one planet, and might have a local arrest warrant.
11	A local crook or corrupt government official really hates you, and now he or she has gotten a higher level job, and is (unexpectedly) now working on the subsector or even sector level, so it is harder for you to avoid him or her.
12	While on a long-term mission, you started dating a local. When the mission ended, he or she (roll 1D): (1) forgot about you, (2) still remembers you fondly, (3) hates you, (4) spouse hates you and is willing to do something violent about it, (5) is now married to someone important and is willing to help you, or (6) is married to someone important who wants you off planet, soonest!
13	You picked up a local chronic/recurrent disease. Roll 1D: (1) Easy to treat, with very uncommon (hard to find) drugs. (2) Poorly treatable with legal drugs, but a drug that is illegal on most planets is highly effective. (3) Hard to treat. (4) Easy to treat; strong physical side effects. (5) Easy to treat; strong psychological/mental side effects. (6) Treatment is very uncertain as to effectiveness and side effect(s).
14	You were involved in a major vessel recovery that caused local laws or operational rules to be changed; the new laws/procedures are named after you. You are famous (at least locally).
15	For one of your jobs, your company gave you a specialized tool or piece of software designed to circumvent the locking mechanism for the ship you were recovering. Works on the any ship that is (roll 1D): (1-2) the same class and same company, (3-4) the same class built by the same shipyard, (5) owned by the same company, (6) any class, constructed at the same shipyard
16	While on a mission, you picked up a piece of body art. For people who have spent time in this region, it identifies you as (roll 1D) (1) a gang member, (2) a member of a legal organization, (3) a paramour of a specific (unidentifiable) person, (4) a local ethnic minority, (5) an indentured worker, (6) An upper class or important person.
17	You are wanted Imperium-wide, and will have trouble with security everywhere. The wanted notice is for (roll 1D) (1-2) civil crimes that some places don't care about, (3-4) common criminal matters that everyone cares about, but not too much, (5) criminal matters that most places care about a lot, (6) intelligence or internal security such that regular police may not know about it at all, but the security services will deal with you harshly.
18	You found a dead body well-hidden on a ship you are recover. Not knowing anything about it, your team decided to avoid issues by getting rid of it covertly. But now, years later, it seems that (roll 1D): (1) it was a famous, well known person. (2) it was a big time crook. (3) the person may have been killed with a dangerous (engineered?) virus. (4) the police, or the family, have reopened the case, and are re-interviewing all involved. (5) you are under surveillacce, but you don't know why, (6) you or a team-mate starts having very vivid (psionically enhanced?) dreams.

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# Doing It My Way

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## Ships Recovered

The following section can be used to fill in a corporate repo character's "resume", if desired. For lower ranked repos, this resume is basically a list of ships and the situation from which they were liberated. For higher ranking repos, this resume also includes various managerial tasks.

While ranks 0-2 a corporate repo will recover 2d6 / 2 (rounded up) ships per term. If rank 3 or 4,

they will oversee or supervise that many repo operations, and also deal with 1d6 external managerial emergencies. And if they are rank 5 or 6, they will supervise that many repo operations, deal with 1d6 external issues, and 1d6 internal issues.

If details matter, for each ship recovered, roll once for each column on the following table to fill in the details of the repo operation.

Ship Recoveries			
D6	Starship Type	Why/How It Was Seized	How It Was Recovered
1	Large Cargo Ship	Failure to pay corrupt government fees.	A con.
2	Large Cargo Ship	Stolen using legal manipulations (like bankruptcy)	Hacking, breaking and entering, lock picking, etc.
3	Huge Cargo Ship	Forged paperwork.	Forged paperwork.
4	Bulk Transport	Corrupt shipyard, "mechanic's lien" or similar.	Speed and stealth.
5	Passenger Ship	Act of local (planetary) government, change of rules, etc.	Legal manipulations.
6	Something Unusual Lab Ship, Speeder, Yacht, Courier, Small Military, Commercial Survey, etc.	Violence or threat of violence.	Violence or threat of violence.

If details about the character's career as a corporate repo manager/executive matter, then roll on the following table, once per issue.

Managerial Issues		
D6	Internal Issue	External Issue
1	The corp attempts to outsource corporate repo work, or some other tasks that you are responsible for.	Political or legal problems stemming from a repo. The repo might have been successful or not, and the problems might be real or falsified.
2	Another part of the company wants to control your area. You might fight them off.	
3	You try to expand your organization by absorbing functions currently done by others.	Resolved a political or legal problem which will impact future repos, unless resolved now.
4	Reorg brings a new manager, which means you spend a lot of time figuring out what the new manager wants.	
5	The corporation faces a major threat to its business, and you are put on the team that must combat this threat.	Problem unrelated to recovering ships, but that you been asked to help with.
6	Company goes out of business or is bought by another. You spend a lot of time reestablishing your credentials with whoever is now in command.	Problems with compliance or paper work, or proving that you have obeyed the law.



# Tinderbox

by Bill Cameron

*This adventure was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2007.*

## Introduction

The PCs investigate a series of sniper attacks. The first victims were striking workers walking a picket line, but the latest victims have been targeted elsewhere. Adding to the problem being faced are increased labor strife among the locals, a rise in anti-Imperial feelings, wrangling between local and regional officials over how the attacks should be investigated, the fact that the weapon used in the attacks is from off-world, general political unrest, and pressure from large corporations to get their shipments moving.

The PCs must put an end to the attacks while walking a very fine line indeed.

## Location

Any backwater system in the Imperium. Population should be sufficient to allow for a medium sized city around the starport and other, larger, cities elsewhere. The planet's tech level should be at least industrial but also non-stellar. The government code should allow for local and regional officials with real powers, not just appointed lackeys. The planetary law level should allow the ownership of weapons and, generally, unrestricted travel.

## Synopsis

Three planetary days ago (Day 1), someone opened fire on a small informational picket line set up by the local stevedores' union. Three members of the union and a street vendor were killed. The weapon used was a gauss rifle, an item well beyond the capacity of the locals to manufacture.

The picket line had been set up at customs transshipping point, an area where freight and cargo leave the starport's extrajurisdiction zone and enter local jurisdiction. The union had formed the picket line in solidarity with a strike taking place elsewhere on

the planet. In that strike, a local union has been fighting an off-world corporation for over a year on a number of issues and has the sympathies of most of the planetary populace.

The morning after the killings (Day 2), an emergency council of union presidents announced a planetary general strike set for five local days (Day 7) hence. The general strike will last three local days (until Day 10) and will be renewed if the unions feel that no progress is being made on solving the crimes. The local stevedores' union begins a targeted strike immediately, refusing to handle shipments in and out of the starport until "off-world criminals" are dealt with.

The local police held a news conference the day of the killings (Day 1) promising a crackdown on "off-world" elements in the Startown surrounding the port. The fact that a gauss rifle was used in the killings points to off-world involvement in the minds of the police and most of the city's populace.

The evening of the day (Day 2) after the first sniper attack, another person is killed by a gauss rifle in the streets of Startown. That news quickly spreads and riots break out when mobs of vigilantes stream into Startown from the surrounding city. Many injuries and quite a few deaths are reported.

The next morning (Day 3), representatives of regional law enforcement arrive to "assist" the local police in their investigation. A turf squabble immediately breaks out between the two law enforcement agencies when the head of the regional force questions the locals' abilities during an impromptu news conference. Each police force is backed by their layer of government.

During the news conference, word arrives that yet another person has been killed by the Gauss Sniper. Both police agencies are forced to deal with additional riots for the rest of the day. A dusk-to-

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## Active Measures

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dawn curfew is announced by the local government, but the police have little luck in enforcing it.

That evening (Day 3), the local representative of the off-world corporation involved in the lengthy strike is quoted as saying that the locals cannot govern themselves and should be placed under Imperial stewardship. The corporation's PR department quickly disowns the quote, but the damage has already been done. Attacks on corporation property and personnel occur throughout the night and following day (Days 3 and 4), forcing the planetary government to begin posting army troops around the affected installations.

After his troops are jeered by the populace, the uniformed head of the planetary army publicly questions the ability of the current government (Day 4). He is quoted in saying that the army should stand with the people and not with off-world interests. Members of the government immediately call for his resignation.

The next morning (Day 5) brings word that two more people were killed by the Gauss Sniper the night before.

The Gauss Sniper death toll now stands at seven.

Two groups of police are trying to track down the sniper while fighting both rioters and amongst themselves.

The army has been called out to defend off-world people and property, a task most of the troops and their officers loathe.

The local and regional governments are arguing over who should take charge while secretly lambasting each other to the planetary government.

The planetary government has a potentially rebellious general on its hands, pressure from the off-world interests to defend their assets, an angry populace, a general strike due to begin in two days, local and regional officials squabbling too much to do their jobs, two police forces stretched to the breaking

point between rioters and the sniper investigations, someone running around killing people with a gauss rifle, and all hell about to break loose.

They turn to the Starport Authority for some very surreptitious help.

Enter the PCs.

### The Setup

The PCs can either work for the planet's starport or be troubleshooters simply passing through. Having the PCs work as starport cops would be ideal, that way they would be familiar with the both the planet and Startown. They might even have contacts in the local police who could be used.

The PCs need to either track down the Gauss Sniper themselves or collect enough strong leads to allow someone else to identify him\*. Any leads they develop will be passed along to the planetary authorities by the Starport Authority in a completely deniable manner.

The planetary government will pass any forensic information it already has or later receives to the PCs via the Starport Authority. This will include witness reports, area canvassing, lists of the victims' friends and families, autopsies, and the like.

Working the case will be difficult for the PCs. The increasing xenophobia of the local populace will make conducting interviews ticklish at best. The Startown curfew and riots will make travel within the area difficult. Aside from the few friends they may have on the local police force, any cops the PCs come across during the investigation will be of no help. The police may even try to obstruct or delay the PCs' activities.

Most importantly, time will *not* be on the PCs' side. Each day the investigation lasts, there will be a 33% percent chance that the Gauss Sniper will strike

\* *The Sniper does not need to be male, although as Damon Runyon put it, "The fight does not always go to the strongest or the race to the swiftest, but that's the way to bet!"*

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## Active Measures

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again. Particularly fiendish GMs may have the PCs witness a killing, at a suitable distance, or barely miss stumbling across the sniper, e.g., he fires from an area they had just checked or passed through. GMs wishing to make things difficult for the PCs may even have the Sniper shoot at them!

Just who the Sniper is should be left up to the GM, but here are some options:

**Sniper as Wacko:** Just your typical psychopath on a killing spree. His mother has just died, or his girlfriend has just left him for a mechanical device, or 'Leave it to Beaver 1105' was recently cancelled, it makes no difference. He's doing this for reasons no sane person can understand.

He either smuggled the rifle on-planet or bought it in Startown. Either way should leave a trail for the PCs to work. His skill with the gauss weapon may be the result of Imperial military training (a low probability) and practice somewhere and somehow. If he's practiced, there's another trail for the PCs to ferret out.

The Wacko Sniper will not be taken alive. Someone is going to die with him, or so he thinks.

**Sniper as Murderer:** The killing spree is just a cover for the *one* murder the Sniper wanted to commit. He's burying his trail, and any chance at catching him, under a pile of extraneous corpses. This Sniper will kill up to a predetermined limit, then stop, making sure to lose the gauss rifle in the process.

The Murderer Sniper will have got his weapon the same way the Wacko Sniper has. His skills with

it will be obtained the same way, except this time with a higher chance of Imperial service.

The Murderer Sniper may surrender if given the chance.

**Sniper as Political Animal:** This Sniper, or Snipers(!), is in it for political reasons. Not the sort of one-man political reasons the Wacko Sniper may have, this Sniper is part of a plot by a small group (small necessarily so the plot can be kept secret). Members of an off-world corporation may want to destabilize the planet. Members of a union may want to drive off-world corporations from the planet. The Planetary Army may be flexing its political muscles. Certain portions of the civil government may be attempting to make other portions look bad. The list of plotters available to the GM is vast and cannot be too weird.

The Political Sniper is either hired or part of the plot. This Sniper will kill until the desired result is achieved or the plotters order him to cease.

Access to the weapon is easier in this case, the plot simply provided it.

His skills with the weapon are obtained in the same way. Once again, the chances of the Sniper being ex-Imperial service, or even active service in the Planetary Army(!), are higher than with the Wacko Sniper.

The Political Sniper may surrender if given the chance. He will have information that may make his punishment less severe. ☸



## Feedback

Please tell us ...

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

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

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

## Traveller on the Internet

### IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

You can also run "play-by-IRC" game sessions in either channel; please stop in and ask 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

July/August 2017

- **Triassica Games** has released *66 Suns Preview*.
- **Fat Goblin Games** has released *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Alien Portraits #2*, *Star Maps vol. 1*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Android*.
- **Michael Brown** has released *Energy Transfer*, *Ex Scientia*, *The Attendant Shadow*, *2D6 Magic*, *Under Western Skies*.
- **Mike Leonard** has released *Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 9: Belters - Vargr I*, *Traveller Paper Miniatures Vol. 10: Humanti Adventurers*.
- **Moon Toad Publishing** has released *DeVass Class Private Starship*.
- **Stellagama Publishing** has released *High Resolution Blank Star Maps*, *Borderlands Adventure 1: Wreck in the Ring*.
- **FSpace Publications** has released *Far Encounters: Zhenzhu gunship*, *Far Frontiers: World Maps 1*.
- **Alexander Ingram** has released *Shipboard Activities*.
- **DM Philosophy** has released *Virtual Worlds—Ferrum d*, *Virtual Worlds—Malleo b*, *Virtual Worlds—Clavam c*, *Virtual Worlds—Tridenti e*, *Virtual Worlds—Gladio f*, *Virtual Worlds—Virgam h* (all Google Earth Compatible).
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *The Pirates of Drinax*, *Pirates of Drinax: Gods of Marduk*, *Pirates of Drinax: Ships Encounters*, *Pirates of Drinax: Harrier class Commerce Raider*, *Pirates of Drinax: Revolution on Acrid*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Wendy's Guide to the Fleets of Franklin Subsector*.
- **Universal Machine Publications** has released *Scouts*.
- **Game Designers' Workshop** has released *GenCant 2017 Traveller Muster Out Cards*.
- **Christian Nienhaus** has released *MPS Complura-Class Hospital Ship*.



# 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<sup>5</sup>*, 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<sup>20</sup>/SF20*, *FATE*, *Hero System*, 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. We’re also compiling a “*Freelance Traveller Cookbook*”; quick and interesting recipes for snacking before, during, or after sessions go here.

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](mailto:editor@freelancetraveller.com) or [submissions@freelancetraveller.com](mailto: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, Markdown (including CommonMark and Github-flavored) 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.

