



# FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource

Featured:

*The Influence Game:*

*Running a Meeting of the Moot*

by Matt Frisbee

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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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# From the Editor



OK, I have to admit it; I'm easily distracted. LOOK, A SQUIRREL! Where was I, right, easily distracted. This time, though, it was due to looking through the archives and seeing just how much *Freelance Traveller* has published over the years—we're coming up on twenty years just since the redesign to the present look, which means there's probably 25 years of material posted.

There are, however, some weak sections: I'd like to see more material in Kurishdam, Less Dangerous

Game, and In A Store Near You—these are the sections that are most likely to be usable in *any* campaign, and I'm a big fan of making the magazine/site usable to as many people as possible. That also means that you don't have to stick strictly to 2D6 *Traveller*; TNE, T20, GURPS *Traveller*, and HERO *Traveller* are also fair game (if only for the Third Imperium setting). If you're a fan of one of those, and feeling a bit left out, I apologise—but I can't print what isn't sent. Why not try your hand at writing?☺

### The Great Rift

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

*The Great Rift.* Martin J. Dougherty.

Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>

128pp., PDF (softcover forthcoming)

Price TBD (see note)

*Note: The reviewer received his copy as part of the deliverable for the Great Rift Kickstarter, and will be receiving the softcover when it ships to Kickstarter backers.*

The Great Rift is an important astrographic feature in the Third Imperium setting for *Traveller*, and with the release of this book and the other books that are part of the Great Rift Kickstarter, it finally gets a bit of attention.

The introductory material gives a broad astrographic overview of Charted Space, and how the system of rifts shapes it, from the galactic inter-arm gulfs down to the miniature 'rifts' that separate the Jump-1 mains. Following this is a discussion about exploring rifts, with a shout-out to TravellerMap (<https://travellermmap.com>). This section also discusses the difficulties of operating around the fringes of a rift, where there may be worlds that are accessible only with high-jump ships, and also the logistics of actual rift crossings.

The next section is the first that focusses specifically on the Great Rift, the so-called "claw" that the Spinward Marches is "behind". This section discusses two "well-known" crossings of the rift, the Jump-5 Aslan route through Riftspan Reaches, and a Jump-4 route through Reft Sector's Islands subsectors. A brief summary of the Aslan crossing and a somewhat more detailed overview of the Islands crossing are given, and hints about other crossings and rumored in-rift installations are summarized.

Some areas of the Imperium—and in fact of Charted Space generally—have sentient species, extant and extinct, that are peculiar to that area; the Rift is no exception. Three races are described, one extinct, one that (unusually for Mr Dougherty) pretty much breaks my suspension of disbelief, and one that has enough information provided to be usa-



ble as player-characters (much like a "Contact!" article from the original *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, or a Club Room article in *Freelance Traveller*). The pictures of the playable race are clear, but do look like Poser art, and there is no human figure or silhouette to use as comparison.

Although the Rift is mostly empty space, even more so that the areas with denser stellar distribution, there are still things of interest. Chapter Four, Features of the Great Rift, touches on some of those, including a neutron star (complete with a quite unusual set of accompanying satellites), a trio consisting of two black holes and a large star, several areas where Jump "doesn't work right", and some (possibly mythical) oddballs, including a habitable planet orbiting a brown dwarf, a rogue gas giant moving at high (sublight) speed, a derelict spaceship, and a region of apparently sourceless gravity.

No sourcebook discussing an area of space would be complete without a stellar atlas of the re-

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## Critics' Corner

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gion, and this volume is no exception. Two complete sectors, Corridor and Riftspan Reaches, are presented, rounding out the volume; each sector gets an overview of the sector as a whole, plus subsector-by-subsector listings of the worlds therein, each with a subsector overview and quick profile of the most significant worlds in each subsector. Accompanying this material are inserts and sidebars presenting sig-

nificant or interesting companies, fauna, vehicles, spacecraft, and starships. (Notable by omission is Reft Sector; this wasn't included in the Great Rift sourcebook because it gets an entire separate sourcebook of its own.)

A definite buy, when it becomes publicly available—but you'll want to get the entire Great Rift set, not just this book. 

## Doing It My Way

### The Influence Game: Running a Meeting of the Moot

by Matt Frisbee

*This article originally appeared on 31 Jan 2018 on the author's blog, <http://wayhaventraveller.blogspot.com>. References to Narmada subsector and Baronet Atopia pertain to the author's ongoing campaign.*

If you would like to try a politics session or three with your players, here are some guidelines on how to set up and run a Subsector Moot scenario.

#### It Starts With an Agenda

A typical Imperial Subsector Moot will run ten to twenty standard days, depending on the number of agenda items that are expected. Total the population digits from the UWPs for the worlds of the subsector (Narmada's total is 248) and divide it by 12, dropping any fraction. This produces the total number of agenda items for the Moot. (In Narmada's case the total is 20, so I fudged a bit.) Schedule 1D/2 items per day. For every five to seven days allow for an open day so that any agenda items that have to be tabled can be completed without disrupting the schedule too much.

So what items could be on an agenda? Anything the characters have been involved with recently—directly or indirectly—along with any subplots that have been percolating. If there are planetary issues that are outlined in a world's description, the Moot might be forced to intervene. Assessments and re-

views of the military branches of the Imperium—Army, Marines and Navy—are needed as well, along with “nobles only” briefings from the intelligence gathering units of the Navy and Scouts.

There should also be a day or two for items being brought up by the nobles themselves—ranging from requests by planetary governments forwarded to the Moot through the Imperial Liaisons, to more personal items such as recommendations to the Subsector Duke/Duchess on policy, enfeoffment and acclamation requests, Ducal pardons and/or clemency for private citizens, etc.—basically, anything a noble thinks should be brought to the Moot's and/or the Duke's/Duchess' attention—as long as a noble can get at least 10% (rounding up) of the Moot in attendance to agree it needs a vote (and therefore an *ad hoc* committee to work on it).

Finally, there should be pomp and circumstance—these are nobles, after all. The first day of the Moot should be ceremonial. The Narmada Moot starts with The Grand Promenade where each noble in attendance is formally announced to the media and onlookers. Then the Duke addresses the Moot with a “State of the Subsector” speech. After a break, the nobles then have the opportunity to address the

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Moot, airing whatever personal observations, statements of support, motions they intend to make during the Moot, etc. The last day of the Moot should also be mostly ceremonial.

## How Many Nobles Attend?

I go with the guideline that there is approximately one noble for every population digit in the subsector's world—the higher population worlds tend to have more to make up the slack for lower population worlds. Since it is unlikely all of them will show for a Moot, throw  $[(1D/2)+5] \times 10\%$  for the total number. Narmada has a pop digit total of 248 and I threw 4 on the die for 70%, or 173.6. The actual total for the 1107 Moot was 181, though only 179 actually were voting—The subsector Duke/Duchess doesn't vote in the Moot. Their spouse is generally tasked with being the chairperson of the Moot and cast a tie breaker vote if one occurs.

To determine the makeup of the Moot, you can either throw 2D on the table below for each noble, or you can go with the rough percentages provided.

Moot Composition by Rank			
2D	%	Ranks	Influence Points
2-8	70%	Knight/Dame	1 Influence Point
9-10	20%	Baron/Baroness/Baronet	4 Influence Points
11	6%	Marquis/Marquesa/Marchioness	9 Influence Points
12	4%	Count/Countess/Contessa	16 Influence Points
X	XX	Duke/Duchess	25 Influence Points

For comparison, the 1107 Narmada Moot had 138 Knights, 27 Barons (one of whom was Baroness Selene, Duke Darius' wife, who chaired the Moot and would only vote to break a tie), 10 Marquis, 5 Counts and Duke Darius (though he doesn't vote, he's still a factor).

## PCs' Voting Bloc

The nobles among the players will automatically have themselves in their voting block, plus any good noble friends their characters have made during the period since the last Moot (two Imperial years

IMTU). Characters should also note which nobles are favorable to them, though not in their bloc, as the characters arrive for the Moot—preferably a week or so before it starts.

Baronet Atopia had 14 nobles in her bloc when she arrived on Narmada—five knights/dames, eight barons/baronesses/baronets (including herself) and a marquis. She also had nine nobles who were favorably disposed toward her that were not in her bloc—a knight, three barons/baronesses/baronets, a marquis, two counts/countesses/contessas and Duke Darius.

## Influence Points

The characters and their friends will have total influence equal to the sum of the squares of ten less than their Social Standing characteristic (as indicated on the table above). The influence from favorable nobles is totaled and divided by four, rounding up. Atopia got 49 Influence Points from her bloc and 20 more from those favorably disposed for a total of 69 Influence Points to start.

Influence Points are used to increase the total of dice throws made during attempts to influence or sway nobles to join one's voting bloc. Expending one point gives a +1 to the throw, three points gives a +2, six points gives a +3, and ten points gives a +4.

## Increasing the Voting Bloc

Characters wishing to bring nobles into their voting bloc have to meet with them. For game purposes, there are six time periods during the day to meet with people—morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, evening, night, and late night. The Moot normally meets during the morning, early afternoon, and late afternoon. Characters can meet with 1D/3 random nobles when the Moot is in session, 1D/2 random nobles in the evening, and 1D random nobles during each of the night and late night periods.

For random nobles, throw 2D to determine their rank on the table above and another 2D for their initial disposition, as indicated on the following table.

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Noble Disposition on Approach	
2D	Initial Disposition
2, 3	Negative: The noble doesn't like the character at all.
4, 5	Unfavorable: The noble is cool and stand-offish toward the character.
6-9	Neutral: The noble has no opinion of the character one way or the other.
10-12	Favorable: The noble likes the character or admires the character in some way.
XX	In Bloc: The noble is a friend and agrees to vote with the character.

The character then engages in a discussion with the noble, represented by each throwing 2D and adding +1 if a knight, +2 if a baron, +3 if a marquis, or +4 if a count. If the character's total is greater, he/she may attempt to sway the noble. If the noble's total is equal or greater, then the character is unable to sway the noble. Note that Influence Points may be expended to alter the character's total.

To sway a noble, the character throws 2D, adding his/her Social Standing characteristic modifier (+1 for 9 or A; +2 for B or C; and +3 for D, E or F). If the total is 8+, the noble moves one level of disposition closer to being in the character's bloc; if the total is 12+, the noble moves two levels of disposition closer to being in the character's bloc. Note that influence points may be expended to alter the character's total. In general, if a noble starts with a negative disposition, the characters may be advised to simply exchange pleasantries and move on.

If the noble is of favorable disposition, the character may add one fourth of that noble's influence points to his/her pool immediately—in the case of knights, the character will need to have four favorable before gaining an influence point. If the noble moves into the character's block, the character adds the noble's influence points to his/her pool. Once a noble is in the character's block, there is no risk another noble will woo him or her away. So, some of the higher ranking nobles are well worth the effort of courting heavily, though there will be other blocs angling for them as well!

## Events

There are a number of social events that coincide with the Moot, providing opportunities the nobles to mix and mingle, and possibly blow off some of the stress of a demanding schedule and weighing important moral and social issues. Events are typically held during every evening and nighttime time block, with the nighttime blocks often running into the late night block as well.

Some of the events are traditionally hosted by the Subsector Duke/Duchess. Typically, there are formal dinners for The Upper House (Counts and Marquis), The Lower House (Barons and Knights with hereditary titles), and The Honors (Baronets and Knights who aren't hereditary—that is, cannot pass their title on to their offspring). There is also a Mixer or Ball which is a large cocktail party or formal dance held for all nobles regardless of rank.

Most of the events are not hosted by the Duke/Duchess, however. They are slightly more private affairs hosted by nobles looking to increase their presence, status and influence. On top of all that are the acclamations—the bestowing of a noble title upon someone, or bestowing a higher ranking title upon a noble. Such events are typically hosted by the Subsector Duke/Duchess.

An event adds a number of potential nobles to meet based on the ranking noble hosting it: knight +1, baron +2, marquis +3, count +4, duke +5. Events also add the possibility of a random event occurring.

## Random Events

To spice things up, you can create the possibility of something unusual coming up. For each event a character attends, throw 2D—if the result is 8+, throw d66 on the table below and reference the result. Note that a particular event (with the exception of an "X" result) only occurs once, so cross it off the table once it happens, and reroll if the same result is thrown later on. This throw should be made once the

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character has completed all attempts at swaying nobles at an event.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	A	X	K	X	Q	X
20	X	B	X	L	X	R
30	G	X	C	X	M	X
40	X	H	X	D	X	N
50	O	X	I	X	E	X
60	X	P	X	J	X	F

X) **Nothing Special:** No random event after all. Proceed as normal.

A) **Duel:** One member of the Peerage calls out another for bloody satisfaction – one of those affected is somebody the character tried to influence (select randomly). The duel will be resolved during the following morning's time block. Throw 2D for the result of the duel; a result of 5- means the noble was slain and is removed from the bloc (along with an appropriate number of influence tokens for him/her); 6, 7 or 8 indicates the noble was wounded but survives, with the character losing one-half (rounding up) of the influence points that noble provided; and 9+ indicates the noble won the duel, gaining the character an influence point bonus of one-quarter (rounding up) of the noble's normal amount.

B) **Confrontation:** Two nobles have a small scuffle over a difference of opinion – and one of those affected is somebody the character tried to influence at the event. While nothing comes of it, all attempts to influence either noble will be unsuccessful for 1D-3 days. All influence points expended in the attempt are lost.

C) **Personal Affairs:** A noble the character tried to influence has some matter that is more pressing. The noble will be unavailable to sway for 1D-3 days, and all influence points expended on that noble are lost.

D) **Crossed Up:** A noble the character tried to influence misses the meeting/event. The noble will be

apologetic and arrange a personal meeting after the Moot is recessed the next day.

E) **Belongs to Somebody Else:** A noble the character tried to influence is already part of an opposing bloc (select randomly). All attempts to sway this noble will automatically fail, but all influence points expended on the noble are lost.

F) **Favorable:** A noble the character tried to influence at the event wants to meet him/her for personal reasons. The character may shift a noble that was formerly favorable or neutral into his/her voting bloc.

G) **Heard Good Things:** The character's reputation has preceded him/her. A favorable noble the character tried to influence at the event may be shifted into to the character's voting block.

H) **Veteran:** If the character has former military service (Army, Marines or Navy), a noble who was formerly favorable turns out to be a veteran of that service as well and is shifted into the character's voting bloc.

I) **Upstart:** The character's reputation has preceded him/her, not in a good way. Shift a noble who is favorable at this event to neutral; any influence points gained from that noble are lost.

J) **Unfavorable:** A noble the character attempted to sway has a very negative impression of him/her. Shift a favorable noble from this event to unfavorable, losing the influence points gained from that noble as well.

K) **Flat Refusal:** A noble the character attempted to sway refuses to meet with her or flatly rejects her attempts. Select a favorable noble and move him or her to negative, losing any influence points gained from the noble. All further attempts to influence this noble will automatically fail.

L) **Holding Court:** A noble the character attempted to sway, actually used the encounter as a means to embarrass the character. The character must

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make a Social Standing task throw of 8+ or lose 1D influence points. On 12+, the character turns the tables on the noble and gains 1D influence points instead. Select a random favorable noble and move him/her to unfavorable, but the character keeps any influence points initially gained.

- M) **Whispering Campaign:** A favorable noble is actually a plant by another voting bloc who attempts to discredit the character and nobles in his/her block before the character or one of the nobles in his/her block discovers it. Throw 2D-7; if the result is positive, throw that many dice and reduce the character's influence pool by the total thrown. Move this noble from favorable to negative. The character is also within his/her rights to call this person out for a duel of honor.
- N) **Just Happy To Be Here:** A favorable noble is just here for the good times, not to do any actual work. This noble cannot be placed into the character's voting bloc.
- O) **Head of a Bloc:** A favorable noble the character attempted to sway controls a block of 2D other nobles. Successfully bringing this noble into the character's voting bloc will bring all of the others into the block as well! However, all further attempts to sway this noble require three times the normal amount of influence points to alter dice throws.
- P) **Head of a Small Bloc:** A favorable noble the character attempted to sway controls a block of 1D other nobles. Successfully bringing this noble into the character's voting block will bring all of the others into the block as well! However, all further attempts to sway this noble require two times the normal amount of influence points to alter dice throws.
- Q) **Party Invitation:** The character gets an invitation to a social gathering the next night. If the character accepts, he/she will get the opportunity to influence 1D nobles above the normal amount.

- R) **French Politics:** A favorable noble is interested in a little more personal one-on-one during the late night time block. If the character agrees, the noble will automatically be the character's voting bloc the next morning. If the character refuses, all other attempts at swaying this noble will automatically fail.

### How Things Are Done In The Moot

For major agenda items, the nobles most directly affected or those nobles representing the planet(s) directly affected will make a presentation to the Moot. Nobles are permitted to query the presenter(s) after the initial presentation. Usually, this isn't the first anyone has heard of the item, and any noble who stands in opposition to it may present his/her case to the Moot as well. The floor is typically opened for questions from the nobles not on one side or the other. Finally, when all questions have been answered, it takes a simple majority vote to close debate, and then a motion to vote on the measure is made. A simple majority vote determines if the measure passes or fails.

For assessment/review items, which are typically reports and budgetary requests from the major parts of the Imperium that operate in the subsector, the Moot first hears the report (usually lasting no more than one hour) and then accepts nominations from the nobles present to form a committee to review and make a recommendation to the Moot on discretionary budgeting items. These committees consist of five members of the Moot and typically meet for part of each of three days. At the end of that time, a full resolution is formulated for presentation to the Moot, which takes a simple majority to pass. If the resolution doesn't pass, the matter is left to the Duke's/Duchess' discretion.

For submissions items, which are submitted by members of the Moot, the procedure is slightly different. Initially, the noble makes a ten-minute presentation of the item to the Moot. Then, there is a

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call for support. If at least ten percent of the Moot shows support, the item then goes to a committee. Again, there are five people on the committee, and they must come from the nobles who indicated they support the item. After meeting to draft an official resolution, the committee issues the resolution, giving it time to circulate among the Moot. When it is time for a vote, a simple majority decides if the items passes or fails.

## Conducting a Vote

Each vote in which the characters' voting bloc participates, starts with determining how much of the Moot is represented by the character's voting bloc. Divide the total number of voting nobles present in the Moot by twenty, rounding any fractions up. This represents 5% of the total votes in the moot. In Narmada's 1107 Moot, 5% of 179 is 9 votes. To determine the influence of the character's bloc on voting, divide the total number of nobles in the bloc by the 5% figure, dropping any fraction. The result is the modifier to add to the voting results roll (detailed below) when determining the total number of votes in the character's favor. At the start of the moot, Atopia's bloc had 14 votes, giving her bloc a +1 to voting rolls. As soon as she acquired another four votes, it increased to +2.

Before the Moot begins, determine the overall disposition of the Moot toward each item on the agenda by throwing 2D and referencing the result on the table below.

Moot Disposition for Agenda Items		
2D	Moot Disposition	Vote Modifier (in favor/against)
2-3	Negative	-3/+3
4-5	Unfavorable	-1/+1
6-8	Neutral	0/0
9-10	Favorable	+1/-1
11-12	Positive	+3/-3

Votes of the Moot will be measured to the position of the characters' voting bloc. The roll determines how many voted the same way as the characters' bloc. Throw 3D-3, factoring in the Moot's Disposition Modifier and the modifier for the characters' bloc. The result is steps of 5% of the vote that went the characters' way. The result must be 55% or greater for the vote to go the characters' way.

**Example:** By the time it came around to vote on whether the Moot should recommend the Imperium help Teleajen investigate three murders there, Baronet Atopia's bloc numbered 51 (!) votes, giving her block a total modifier of +5. For the vote, Atopia's bloc was against the resolution. The Moot had started out Unfavorable, but enough blocs supported the measure to move it to a Favorable position. (Teleajen's influence, perhaps?). Since Atopia was against the measure, the modifier for the roll is -1, dragging her modifier down to a total of +4. The vote throw of 3D-3 was 7; so the total was 11 with Atopia's bloc modifier. That becomes (11 × 5% =) 55% of the vote against the resolution. The measure is not adopted and Atopia manages to avoid putting more suspicion on Marquis Toyama (who by that time was part of her bloc).

Any vote of less than 10% becomes 10%—it is assumed there was at least that much support to bring to the Moot for a vote in the first place. Any vote of more than 100% becomes 100%.

## What Do the Rest of the Non-Nobles Do?

There's always intrigue going on at a Moot. The non-noble characters can be checking up on the blocs opposing theirs, getting dirt that can leverage the higher ranking nobles who are still uncommitted, running interference for the nobles in the bloc, making media releases for the bloc to influence public opinion, etc. Who knows, maybe one of the characters might even rub shoulders with some of the elite under the right conditions...



### Here Be Dragons

By John Clifford

#### Chapter Three

**5712 CE / 1194 Imperial**

**Spinward Marches 1126 Orcrist B8A6733-C FI  
3-645th battalion E company Orcist Militia Ar-  
mory, Fjerntby**

After waiting almost two months for another ship to relieve them, the *Jorvik* had limped back to the Sword Worlds Confederation for major repairs. Sometime during the voyage an anonymous crewman had put together a holovid using sensor readings, security video, helmet cam footage and even some gun camera images. The audio was mostly intercom recordings. Then a rather well done musical track was added. When the ship made port in Narsil the holovid was loaded to the data net. It was entitled, 'The battle of Singer'. Within a week it had been sent throughout the confederation. When the press got a hold of it, they dubbed Myra 'the Laughing Valkyrie'. She seemed to enjoy her fifteen minutes of fame. (Although she repeatedly said that if she ever found out who made the video, she'd murder them.)

As soon as Grev (Count) Stev Brun heard of the video, he downloaded a copy and watched it with his wife Caroline. He thought she was going to pass out when their daughter had jumped on the back of the warbot. But by the end of it they both cheered. Then Stev decided that this would best be viewed with an audience. He rented the local militia armory hall; it was larger than the great hall in the Brun estate. During peace time the hall could be rented, and often was, for social occasions. Then he had invited, basically, the entire town of Fjerntby. Almost everyone had seen the holovid already, but everyone that could be there was. After all, Myra was one of their own, a local girl made good. The count and his family provided food and generous amounts of beer. Some of the townsfolk had put up a banner and dec-

orations around the hall. Everyone seemed determined to make an event of the showing.

And an event it was. Food and drink flowed freely and a general party atmosphere prevailed. That is, until the holovid started. Then, silence fell over the crowd, broken only by the occasional gasps and the odd whisper. Stev watched the crowd and was amazed by the rapt attention the audience was paying, even though he knew that most of them had seen it already. When it ended, with an image of Myra thrusting the broken laser rifle and the head of the warbot into the air, her face lit by the vampire ship's nuclear destruction as she shouted, the music continued, but it was drowned out by the roar of the crowd. Stev jumped to his feet with the rest of the crowd and roared in celebration. Even his wife, normally reserved and prim, shouted with the rest. Then a thought occurred to her and she sat back down. A wistful smile crossed her face.

For most of Myra's childhood Caroline had tried to turn her into a proper lady, a refined noblewoman, beautiful, graceful and nurturing. She had failed miserably, obviously. But until this moment she hadn't understood why. Some centuries past the Sword worlders had gone through a 'Viking' revival. They had tried to remake their society based on a highly romanticized vision of their ancient Scandinavian forebears. When Caroline was younger she had been a huge history buff and she had read some copies of the surviving history texts about the original Vikings. She had realized that they had gotten some of the major details of the real Vikings badly wrong. By modern standards most of the Scandinavians that had actually gone 'a Viking' would be classified as having serious mental illnesses. But, during the dark ages, what later generations would consider insane, were merely survival traits. Even admirable, heroic.

(Continued on page 10)

## Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 9)

One of the other things that had stood out to Caroline in her studies was that those ancient peoples tended to see the humor in life. They lived, for the most part, short brutal lives. Yet they tried to, as much as possible, enjoy life. Somehow the Sword Worlders had missed that part. Her people tended to be grim, stoic, even humorless. But as she had watched her daughter laughing at the vampire ship it showed her the simple truth of Myra. She wasn't a Sword Worlder trying to be a Viking. Myra Stevdatta Brun was a *real* Viking. She was a throwback to their ancestors. Replace her vacc suit with chain mail, the laser with a broadsword and the robot head with a troll's head. Send her back in time five thousand years and she would fit in perfectly. Caroline's precious little girl belonged on a longship raiding the coast of Europe.

Another thought occurred to the countess and she looked around at the celebrating crowd. The Sword Worlds were going through another dark age, surrounded by enemies, with little hope of surviving much longer as an independent people. Perhaps what they needed was people like her daughter. Maybe, in order to survive, they needed to be-

come Vikings again, wading into battle for the sheer joy of it. Then another thought came to her and her face changed. She remembered reading about the very first Viking raid ever recorded\*. She reached out and tugged on her husband's sleeve.

Stev looked down at his wife and was taken aback. He had never seen her smile like that. Her face was a mirror of the evil grin Myra had flashed her men in the battle. He asked her tentatively "Are you alright?" She nodded her head, "Tell me, do you think the vampire ships have any monasteries we can raid?" All he could do was look at her with a confused expression as she threw her head back and laughed. She was sure Myra would get the joke.

Caroline's laughter joined the general sounds of the celebration as they echoed through the hall. And as they did, they also echoed through time and space, melding with the distant echoes from a small town in Norway. Some would suggest that the age of the Viking was returning, but truthfully, had it ever really left? ❄️

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\* The first Viking raid was at the island monastery of Lindisfarne, off the Northumbrian coast, in 793 C.E.

## Active Measures

### The Rime of the Ancient Traveller

by James Ramsay

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

#### Introduction

The following is mostly an adventure hook for a Classic *Traveller* adventure, although it could be easily adjusted to other eras. It is meant to be full of conspiracy with the PCs not even trusting each other, and would be great if additional horror elements could be worked in (what will happen if they encounter a hostile alien organism?).

#### Outline

The party (a group of scouts and marines seconded to two scientists) set out to investigate rumors of a functional ancient starship. Various other groups and factions also are interested in the starship; they may have inserted moles in the group or may shadow the group. The group has the *Mial Narshian*, a *Dononsev*-class Survey Scout (possibly with an upgrade to J-6) with suitable weapons.

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## Active Measures

(Continued from page 10)

### Crew

12 PCs or NPCs as follows:

**Scouts or Navy (4):** Pilot/Commander, Co-pilot/boat pilot, Engineer/Computer, Medic/Computer/Science.

**Marines (5):** Leader/Sqd Leader, four troopers with various specialties.

**Scientists (3):** Historian, Jump Space Theoretician/Archaeologist ("JST/A"), Weapons designer.

### Background

Two scientists (the Historian and the JST/A) who for several years have been tracking what they believe to be an ancient starship of unknown origin, operating near the frontier, have used their connections to get a crew for their second-hand *Donosev*-class survey scout. The Navy has also assigned a "liaison officer" and a marine squad due to the high numbers of corsairs operating in the region. The Historian and JST/A are in mission command, Scouts have ship command and Marines have combat command. Unknown to anyone else, the Naval officer has a limited Imperial warrant that grants him power over any discoveries the expedition may make. There will be several parties providing opposition, including but not limited to Pirates, intelligence agencies, military factions and MegaCorps.

### Character motivations

#### Scouts

Mainly just doing their jobs, though one or two may be doing it for the fame and fortune. Some may be resentful of this baby sitting exercise. They may also be IISS intelligence (IISS-IB) either covertly or overtly or they may have an intelligence plant.

#### Marines

Like all grunts through all time and space just doing what they're told by the brass. However, one never knows what they have been told to do! They

could be wet works operatives (either permanent or temporary) of an Imperial intelligence agency (IISS-IB, IIA, IM-I, IN-I). Or there could be a plant from an intelligence agency.

#### Scientists

**Historian:** Wants hard evidence to prove his theory that there were many "ancient" species, and that the "ancients war" was not a civil war but a war of extermination by the Droyne. He jumped at the chance when his close friend (JST/A) told him he may have discovered an active ancient ship. So they "borrowed" one of the university's lab vessels to try and triangulate the location of the possible ancient ship. When they had it fixed down to a sub-sector or two they decided to call in some favors.

**Jump Space Theoretician/Archaeologist:** He is not very good as a JST nor an Archaeologist. But if he can prove his theory (Technically, it's somebody else's, but they're dead now so what does it matter?) on how to track ships through jump space, he will be famous and get published in all the major journals. He only discovered the ancient vessel because its drive signature was so different from all the other ships. If he can find the ancient ship he will be famous and rich from the royalties the Imperium will have to pay for the ship and his theory.

**"Liaison officer"/Weapons designer:** He is actually a weapons designer only sent on this mission because it is as far from civilized space as possible. So what if the accelerated tritium injectors he developed leaked a bit, they boosted power by 13%. So what if a bunch of engineering goons got radiation poisoning, it's not his fault the Admiral's daughter worked in engineering. However, Intelligence has given him a limited Imperial warrant in case those two mad men actually found anything.

### The Ship

The ship may be nothing, a sensor error or wishful thinking. However it may also be some new

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## Active Measures

(Continued from page 11)

drive someone has developed. Or it could be a fully functional alien ship. Certainly there have been rumors out here the last few years of some big unidentified object. But no matter what some people may not like an Imperial ship poking round in this area.

### Opposition

Because the mission has received some coverage by TNS, a fair number of groups are aware of the existence of the mission and its intent. The following groups believe they can exploit it for their own ends:

#### Pirates

- One Ship raider
- Cartel (independent or sponsored by an Intelligence agency)
- Privateers (sponsored by a Government, a Mega-Corp, or an Intelligence agency)

#### Other Governments.

- Civilian intelligence (interstellar or planetary)
- Military intelligence (interstellar or planetary)
- Navy (interstellar or planetary)

#### Imperial

- Imperial Intelligence Agency (IIA)
- Scout Intelligence Branch (IIS-IB)
- Navy
- Navy Intelligence (IN-I)
- Marine Intelligence (IM-I)
- Rogue faction (i.e., no oversight)

#### MegaCorps

- LSP (operatives or ships)
- General Products (operatives or ships)
- SuSAG (operatives or ships)

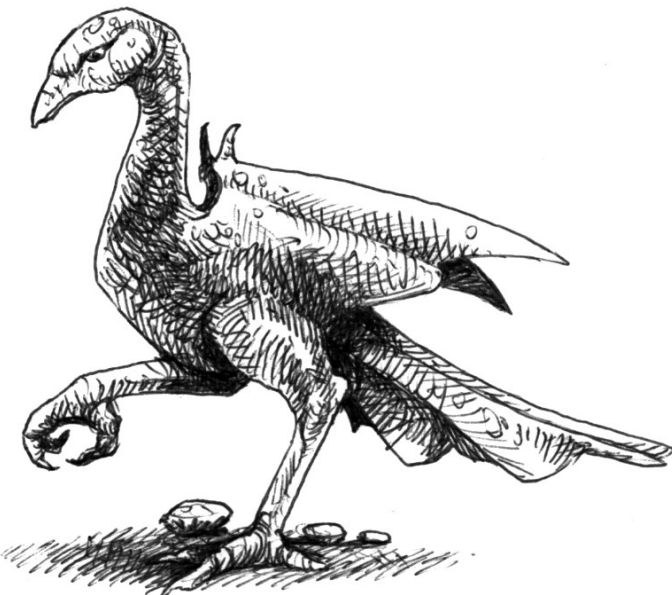


## Less Dangerous Game

### Sargmay

by Benedikt Schwarz

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Sargmay	5	10m
SKILLS	Recon 1, Survival 0	
ATTACKS	Beak (1D) [Attack 12+, Flee 9-]	
TRAITS	Fast Metabolism (+1), Small (-2), Glider	
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore, Intermittent	



<b>Morphology</b>	Bilateral symmetry, tetrapod (four-limbed), biped (two hind limbs used for locomotion), winged (two winged forelimbs with grasping)
<b>Biochemistry</b>	C/H/O/N, Broadly compatible with human
<b>Respiration</b>	Oxygen-nitrogen inhalant, Carbon dioxide exhalant
<b>Ecology</b>	Diurnal (active during the day)
<b>Habitat</b>	Forested areas, underbrush
<b>Diet and Trophics</b>	Herbivore/intermittent, homeothermic (keeping a constant body temperature)
<b>Reproduction</b>	Two genders, moderate sexual dimorphism, conjugal intercourse, oviparous birth (laying a clutch of five to seven leathery gray eggs), iteroparous (reproducing more than once in a lifetime). Progeny are cared for by the mother for about half a standard year.
<b>Lifecycle and ontogeny</b>	One year to sexual maturity. Lifespan about 3 years in the wild, about 10 years in captivity.

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## Less Dangerous Game

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The etymology of the word “sargmay” is somewhat obscure; it has been argued that it derives from the Bilanidin *sargu* (“upper garment, robe”) and *maii* (“red”), meaning “redcoat”. Other sources suggest that “sargmay” is a contraction of “sergeant major” in a Solomani dialect, and that the creature was named after the chevron-shaped marks on its wings that are reminiscent of sergeant’s stripes. In the Sword Worlds, the creature is known as a *rooihaan* or *brandhaan*.

Like the terrestrial pheasant, the sargmay was prized by hunters, both for its skill at evasion and for being a colourful trophy. Introducing the creature to other ecosystems proved relatively easy, so nobles and wealthy citizens exported them to many different worlds throughout the sector to stock their hunting grounds. There are now many different wild breeds of sargmay that differ mainly in size, colour and the pattern of their wings.

Recently, breeding competitions and shows have sprung up on many worlds independent of the hunting angle, where sargmay are bred mainly for colour and variety, and a very active community of breeders has formed around those events. On the occasion where prize sargmay are bought, the buyers are usually nobles or well-to-do wishing to populate their gardens with the pretty animals.

Sargmay are winged lizard-like creatures, about fifty centimeters tall when standing level. Their head terminates in a large beak-like mouth. The teeth are tiny and vestigial; the creature’s preferred diet—roots and nuts—are cracked with the hard edges of the beak. The body is covered with tiny scales; in the original strain, those are a mottled dull red, russet or ruddy brown in colour.

The well-muscled hind legs are used for running and digging for food. The claws are three-fingered, with one finger reversed (pointing backwards). The front limbs have membranes that are stretched taut when the limbs are extended. It is those membranes

that give the creature its appeal as a trophy, as they are covered with shiny fibrils, like a butterfly’s wings, that serve the same way as feathers and make a paper-like rustling sound when the creature glides. Brightly scintillating, jewel-like red with the characteristic “sergeant’s stripes”, the sudden display of the wings of a male is a splendid sight. Females are less gaudy, but still sport patterns that are considered very aesthetic by the majority of sophonts. Although the sargmay’s ancestors were probably capable of flight, today’s sargmay can only glide for a few paces before having to land.

The colourful wings serve a double purpose; they are employed in the mating dance to impress the female, but more importantly, they are a means to startle and distract a predator when the sargmay is fleeing. A running sargmay is very nimble and able to abruptly change its direction, but when gliding, the creature travels in a straight line and is vulnerable to attack. The sudden snapping open of the wings at the start of the glide is accompanied by a sharp crack and presents a pattern similar to the face of a very large creature, intended to startle/frighten a pursuer for the few moments that the sargmay needs to land again.

A single palp (finger) juts out from the upper edge of each wing; sargmay are very dexterous in picking up objects with their palps and holding them while gnawing on them with their beaks. The beaks are strong enough to crack nuts, but sargmay are primarily flight animals and only the most ill-tempered will actually bite even if threatened. Easily domesticated and gentle towards humans, they are good companions for children and would make perfect pets if it was possible to house-train them.

The eggs and young are incubated and raised by the mother, while the male keeps watch and provides food. If a mother and her young are threatened, the male will try to draw the predator’s attention and lure it away from the nest, occasionally

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## Less Dangerous Game

*(Continued from page 13)*

flashing a bit of colour to keep its pursuer interested. Birth rates are two or three males to every female, but attrition by predation in the wild means that fewer males survive and the numbers balance out. In captivity, the greater number of males makes for some problems, as the competition for mates is often resolved in aggressive fights that can damage the pretty wings. Currently, most sargmay keepers try to breed for less aggression. On less civilised planets and in certain ghettos, though, sargmay fights are a popular form of entertainment, and there are a few breeds of “fighting ‘mays” with increased aggressive potential.

A killed sargmay will yield about two kilograms of meat, which is considered a delicacy in some places. It spoils quickly, however, and cannot be preserved without compromising the taste. The meat of captive sargmay is somewhat drier and lacks the rich flavour of wild specimens. Connoisseurs invariably demand freshly hunted animals.

### Adventure Seeds

1) The travellers are heading back to the ship from an expedition in the forest. Their ATV startles a group of sargmay. One moment, they are surrounded by running animals, then suddenly—CRACK!—they all take flight and snap their wings open right in front of the windshield. It takes a very difficult driving check to avoid swerving in shock and hitting the underbrush.

2) The annual festival in the city sees thousands of live sargmay released in a dazzling orgy of colour. The travellers, along with many other teams of helpers, are hired to catch and cage several loads of them for the ritual. However, several environmentalist groups picket their ship and try to hinder them at every turn, claiming animal abuse and pressuring for abolishment of the festival. Many of the citizens are sympathetic, but the festivities draw thousands

of tourists that provide a good deal of the planet’s income, so the authorities are turning a deaf ear.

3) A breeder hires the travellers to protect him and his prize sargmay—he is heading to a convention where he can rightfully expect to make first place in the “most colours” category, and he expects a certain rival to try and steal or poison his animal. It turns out the rival has hired a team of spacers just as tough and resourceful as the travellers. The conflict will run behind the scenes, and everyone needs to put on a nice face in public or risk being expelled from the grounds.

4) Abroad in the sleazier parts of the starport, the travellers meet their patron at a ‘may fight. The gamblers are very excited, and large bets are being made. Everyone’s attention is riveted on the fighting sargmay in the pit, making it easy to do some discreet business in the back row. Just as the deal gets down to brass tacks, someone accuses the pit’s proprietor of rigging the bets. The ensuing brawl turns nasty as weapons are drawn, and the travellers’ employer catches a stray bullet. If they still want the deal, they must avoid the police rushing to the scene, get him to safety and arrange medical treatment at an unregistered clinic (public hospitals ask too many questions).

5) A noble contacts the travellers. He has spent large sums of money to have his hunting preserve stocked with a certain very expensive and beautiful breed of sargmay. However, it lies next to a large sargmay farm, and the farmers have had trouble with the surplus males fighting among themselves. Their answer was to release part of the male population into the wild, where they are now mating uncontrollably with the noble’s game and producing non-purebred offspring. The noble is furious and wants to hire the travellers to do something about the situation.

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## Less Dangerous Game

(Continued from page 14)

6) One of the passengers travelling on board the travellers' ship has a sargmay pet sharing his state-room. Unfortunately, the animal starts shedding its fibrils as a nervous reaction to space travel. The room looks like a can of red glitter exploded. First the dustbot gets clogged, and then some of the fibrils are sucked into the life support system, creating a maintenance nightmare. The passenger is a six-foot-eight barrel-chested Sword Worlder and very fond of his pet; he will fly into a rage if anyone criticises or bullies the poor little thing.

7) A group of noble gourmands is visiting the planet, and the travellers are hired to go out into the wilderness and catch or shoot wild sargmay for the restaurant the nobles are expected to be visiting. An eco-terrorist group decides to turn the tables, and stalks the hunting party with sniper rifles.

8) A traveler's wallet is stolen while they are on a maglev train. The culprit flees from wagon to wagon. If they follow, they are able to corner xir—in a freight wagon full of scared sargmay snapping their wings, running around and tripping people. Not to mention the floor is slippery with a thick coating of nervous sargmay excrement.

9) The compound the travellers are breaking into should be an easy target: they got a computer key that will completely disable the security system. Everything goes as planned, until they have to cross the landscaped garden. Unbeknownst to their employer, the garden was recently stocked with decorative sargmay to enliven the scenery. The males start making a terrible racket as the travellers come too close to the females and the nests.

10) A prestigious Marine regiment proudly bears a sargmay displayed as its badge. The regimental staff, by tradition, keep a tame sargmay as a mascot, which is displayed on its own perch at parades. At an important function, the regiment is supposed to render military honours to a high-ranking noble. Unfortunately, the Marines' mascot falls ill. The regimental quartermaster sergeant contacts the travellers and asks them to get a replacement sargmay of the correct breed (!) from the neighbouring planet at all costs. Time is very short - the function is in four weeks -, so the travellers will have to get the sargmay quickly (the merchants smell their urgency and will try to gouge them for every credit they can get), then they need to train the creature while in jump to stay on its display perch. ☼

## Critics' Corner

### Hostile: A Gritty Sci-Fi RPG

Reviewed by Omer G. Joel

*Hostile*. Paul Elliott.

Zozer Games <https://www.paulelliottbooks.com/zozergames.html>  
307pp., PDF

US\$19.99/UK£14.30

*Hostile* is the real deal.

Admit it—you watched *Alien* (and *Aliens*), *Outland*, *Blade Runner*, and many other 1970s and early-1980s sci-fi films. You loved them. You've always wanted to run role-playing games in their settings.

There was once a relatively obscure *Aliens* RPG published in 1991. Classic *Traveller* also comes quite close to *Alien/Aliens*. However, none of them captures the spirit of these “retro-industrial” hard-line 1970s universe as brilliantly as *Hostile* does.

The entire thing oozes atmosphere. It is clear that the author knows the milieu like the back of his hand and has analyzed it, dissecting it to its most basic elements: a focus on work and working-class heroes; industrialization and an “industrial” look and feel; danger lurking in the many corners of space; anthropocentric milieu; retro-futurism; and a hearty dose of cynicism. It provides a list of several

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movies inspiring *Hostile* games, from *Alien* to *Elysium*.

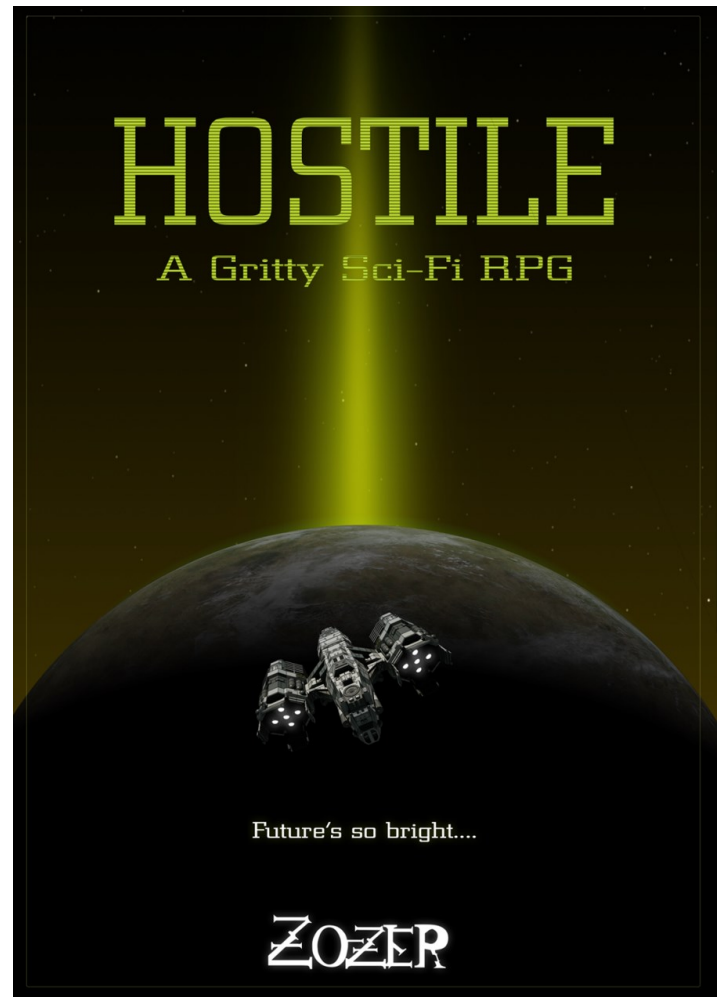
Also, it lists *Red Dwarf* as inspiration! And also mentions it again as a source of adventure inspiration! BONUS POINTS!

*Hostile* comes in the form of five PDF files:

- 1970s-style Classic *Traveller*-inspired rules. These are almost exclusively combat rules, which supplement the many rules included in *Hostile*. However, ship combat is still absent.
- A PDF with 15 floor plans of various “space colony” locations, from *Aliens*-style colonial corridors to a warehouse.
- An in-universe starship-trade “magazine” showcasing the *Hercules*-class tug, which is, in a nutshell, the *Nostromo* (of *Alien* fame) with its serial numbers filed off.
- A *Hostile*-specific character sheet, in the shape of an in-universe PERSONNEL Form.
- The *Hostile* book itself.

After this introduction, there is a 9-page setting overview, out of which 3 pages are setting history, 3 are nation-state and corporate overview, and the rest is mostly art. I love this: short and to the point. History serves the setting. No need for long fluff here. Just the bare bones necessary to provide context to the rest of the book. Excellent game-design choice, in my humble opinion.

After that comes astrography. This is meaty - 54 pages, most of which describe worlds. As in *Aliens* and *2300AD*, *Hostile* organizes space into “arms” of human expansion into the stars. This book focuses on the American Arm. It also divides space into “Zones”, i.e., *Traveller*-style subsectors. The book includes six of these, in excellent blue-and-dark maps. Before the worlds, it overviews the standard *Cepheus Engine/Traveller* world generation rules, with minor



modifications. The book details 23 worlds, all “Core” worlds, and then mentions “Frontier” worlds in a passing, without details. This is a shame—frontier colonies are a hotbed for adventure.

A major point of divergence from standard *Cepheus Engine/Traveller* is that of tech levels. *Hostile* combines TL15 in computers, robotics, and ship drives with TL10 in everything else. It also totally lacks cybernetics—remember, this is *Blade Runner*, not *Johnny Mnemonic*. Other than a short table on p.38, the book does not mention tech levels. As in *Aliens*, colonies have similar technology to that of the Core.

After this come the actual setting details—those of the “Big Seven” mega-corporations, the obligatory spacefaring USMC, the United States Space Command (refreshingly, a development of the Air Force rather than the Navy), starlines, NGOs, mercenaries

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## Critics' Corner

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("Private Military Contractors" (PMCs)—*Hostile* uses the real-world contemporary term), non-profits, and criminals. Ah, and Antarctica Traffic Control! It also has the equivalent of *Bladerunner* Replicants, that is renegade psychopathic clones which authorities are trying to hunt down.

As in most third-party *Traveller* and *Cepheus Engine* settings, such as *Clement Sector* and *These Stars Are Ours!*, *Hostile* has a sizable character generation chapter. This follows standard *Cepheus Engine* rules, though with 15 new careers such as Corporate Exec (the replacement of a Noble), Marshal (frontier lawman), and Roughneck (space miner). There is also an option to play *Alien/Aliens*-style androids. They have several limitations, such as Asimov's rules they are programmed to follow and limited skills, but still—playing an android is cool!

Also, there is this:



A perfect Classic *Traveller/Cepheus Engine* "character sheet" if there ever was one! Just add equipment on the back and start chasing star outlaws!

Similar to my own *Outer Veil*, *Hostile* provides equipment, complete with in-world brand names. Expect Pulse Rifles and an AK-equivalent. The equipment chapter also discusses technology as a whole in this setting. This is straight 1970s-mid-

1980s sci-fi. No cellular phone, no flat or touch screens, no nanotechnology. Video-phones rule the day, as well as data cards and minidisks. A great addition is in-universe "medicinal" names for the otherwise dry *Traveller* drug names; you will find ACE Inhibitor and Dexamphetamine here, not Slow Drug and Combat Drug. There are all sorts of equipment, as well as guns and vehicles. There are no gravitic vehicles in *Hostile*, so vehicles are restricted to pretty realistic ones, from cars to tilt-rotors. This chapter is very long, and has its fair share of "Gun Pr0n".

Oh, and the Referee/GM is called here... The "Manager"!

The next chapter details styles of play and the general milieu, with adventure hooks aplenty. The three recommended play styles are **Work**, that is, playing corporate troubleshooters solving all sorts of nasty frontier problems; **Fight**, where the PMCs and the said obligatory space USMC come in; and **Explore**, which is boldly going where no man has gone before and probably getting eaten by a xenobeast as well. *Hostile* then gives many tips about how to run and describe an *Aliens*-style setting. This includes visual and auditory cues, as well as the main themes of the game. There is also an excellent discussion of horror gaming, with tips to the budding horror Referee ("Manager"). Including Xenomorphs. And Hyperspace anomalies! *Hostile* mentions *Red Dwarf* in the latter, which, again, is wonderful. I love that series!

There are also stats for various dangerous xenomorphs, including, as you expect, a Reticular Parasite, i.e., an *Alien* (in TSAO!, of course, a "Reticular Parasite" has another meaning ☺) and a creature inspired by the one from John Carpenter's *The Thing*. The next section discusses environmental hazards, including radiation and a realistic depiction of vacuum exposure. Everything is well-detailed and clear: from extreme temperatures to poisonous atmos-

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## Critics' Corner

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pheres. I think that this chapter will be perfectly useful in other settings as well, as it is, in my opinion, superior to the discussion of these subjects in *Mongoose Traveller* or the 2D6 Sci-Fi SRD. The only downside is that the chapter only lists the amount of rads a given radiation source causes, but does not list their effects on the human body; this sends the player to browse the *Cepheus Engine*.

There are belting rules, along with some new equipment, which is very well thought out. The mining rules themselves remind me of my own old rules, a version of which appeared in *Outer Veil*—these are OGL, of course, and this pleases me very much.

The next big chunk of *Hostile* is starship construction. This is a major point of divergence from the *Cepheus Engine* core rules. *Hostile* ships are big; as big as those of old *Classic Traveller Book 5: High Guard*. Up to a million tons! However, maneuver drives are plasma reaction drives. Hyperspace engines require no fuel, but M-Drives require fuel similar to that of a *Cepheus Engine* core rules J-Drive. Thus, you can use ship designs from other 2D6 OGL-compatible products in *Hostile*, including their deck plans, with minimal adjustments.

This is “not-*Alien/Aliens*”, so while in Hyperspace transit, everyone must hibernate in Hypersleep or suffer horrid effects. Ships still have staterooms for in-system flight, though, and

Hypersleep seems much safer than vanilla *Traveller* Low Berths. There are also shipboard medical facility rules (possibly) inspired by my own, but sadly no hydroponics, which would be, in my opinion, highly appropriate to this setting. Finally, the chapter clarifies the *Cepheus Engine/2D6* SRD missile rules, which is a boon.

The book provides several ship designs, from tugs and refineries (ahem, *Nostramo*) to Naval patrol ships—similar to cruisers in *Mongoose Traveller*, I think. There are no deck plans, but there are beautiful renders of some of these ships.

Finally, there are adventure seeds—they are short, but there is a large number of them.

The book ends with some NPC stats—including a very well-known crew with its serial numbers (and names) filed off—and a filled character sheet example.

The bottom line is that this is a wonderful product. I think that, far more than a setting book, it is a genre toolbox. If you want a gritty, *Alien*-esque near-Terra, near-future setting, this is the book for you. If you want to build your own near-Terra, near-future setting, this book would also be of immense value to you.

Highly recommended!



## Confessions of a Newbie Referee

A Column by Timothy Collinson

### # 33: Missing Players

I've touched on the problem of missing players previously and I thought I'd mention how we've dealt with the issue. (Note Lindsay Jackson's excellent 'Apologies for Absence', *Compendium 2* from Mongoose Publishing.)

We've had it happen three times in nine sessions. One player missing in the penultimate session

and two in the last session. I hope this isn't a trend or sign of things to come!

On the first occasion we used the traditional 'the character is sick' for Fred – our teetotal, 7ft, gunbunny – which in fact is the first of Lindsay's options. This was quite handy as we'd had a new player start and he'd taken on the role of the NPC medic. Having a sick crewmate gave him something immediate

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## Confessions of a Newbie Referee

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to do. In fact he could have a lot of fun with it and as the player wasn't there and therefore the character really wasn't participating in any events, the medic could declare the character was really sick and, in fact, it was touch and go whether they'd recover. That naturally gave our doctor the chance to really shine as kept his patient going.

What also worked out well was that the character had missed a dinner of the local 'Townswomens' Guild'<sup>[1]</sup> and so it seemed natural to start the next session with a couple of ladies turning up at breakfast with some heart-warming broth. That one of the ladies was the Pretty Young Thing the Captain had been chatting up at the dinner just made the whole thing even better.

On the second occasion we decided, by mutual agreement, that we'd play the sick characters as NPCs, allowing them to fade into the background. It was tempting just to say that Fred's bug had spread, but where's the fun in that?

Our Captain, has been beautifully portrayed as an unlucky in love die-hard romantic who is constantly looking for *The One*. We'd had a lot of fun with him chatting up the Pretty Young Thing at the dinner only to be taken aback when mother descended from a nearby table afterwards to snatch his comm number offering. It was easy enough to have

him cower in his cabin when the pair turned up with the soup. On the day trip to the mine, the PCs took lunch in a cafeteria and the Captain naturally sat apart from the crew with three female miners.

Lily on the other hand, an archaeologist working passage, had been part of the drive to visit the mine and nearby archaeological remains. With her player missing, rather than make the dig site the focus of the adventure, I simply made that segment a bit of a bust which fit in neatly with the planet Carsten being a backwater of little interest. I also took notes from the player beforehand to get some reactions – particularly in regard to another NPC who'd been trying to get her to go on a date.

Two features of interest are worth noting. Firstly, when playing PCs as NPCs the fact that strong "characters" (in every sense) had been created helped. The other players were consulted at certain points as to how they felt their crewmates would behave. Between the two, we think we did them proud.

Secondly, it was fun and engaging for me and the players to fold their absences (or 'quietness') back into the ongoing story so it felt quite natural, gave things to play off and has even given players false memories of being there! Fred for example, over coffee in the staff room, still talks about missing the dinner because he was so ill!



[1] This adventure was published by March Harrier Publishing, <http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/225723/Two-Days-on-Carsten>

## The Lab Ship

### BY Draconis-type Variable Stars

by Ken Pick

Some stars are "variable stars" whose brightness varies on a regular or irregular cycle. Mark McCabe's article "Variable Stars and Dwarves: An Overview for Non-Astronomers" (*Freelance Traveller* #67, July 2015, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/science/variables.html>) listed and ex-

plored the various types of variable stars for *Traveler* use – regularly-pulsing Cepheids, irregular Mira-type dying stars casting off their outer layers, and "flare stars" intermittently wracked by mega-flares like miniature nova eruptions.

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That article omits one type of variable – a type most likely to host habitable (or at least settleable) worlds: BY Draconis-type variables.

### The BY Draconis Type Variable Star

BY Draconis-type variable stars are main-sequence orange/red dwarves (spectral class K or M, luminosity class V) afflicted with mega-starspots. The starspots are distributed irregularly, the star's rotation bringing them in or out of view; the more (or larger) sunspots visible, the dimmer the star. Otherwise, they are normal main-sequence stars, the K-class orange dwarves having the best chance to host habitable or superhabitable life-bearing worlds, even more so than G-class yellow dwarves like Sol.

### Sunspots

Sunspots are caused by interactions in a star's magnetic field. A star's rotation tends to "kink" its magnetic field, causing localized magnetic buildup and "reconnection" of the lines of force through pairs of sunspots. This is the same mechanism that causes solar flares; a flare is just a major explosive reconnection ejecting thermal and radioactive energy and (in the big ones) coronal matter.

These stellar dynamo effects are a "spectrum disorder"; on one end of the spectrum are "normal" stars like Sol (which varies about 4% on a 22-year sunspot cycle); at the other extreme are flare stars whose solar flares approach miniature nova explosions on an irregular cycle. BY Draconis-type variables are midway between these extremes, with heavy sunspot activity and frequent flares, but not the massive explosions of flare stars.

This is probably a continuous spectrum with much overlap; "normal" stars shade into BY Draconis-types which shade into flare stars. Age and size are a factor; younger stars tend to rotate faster which probably leads to stronger and "kinkier" magnetic fields. The younger/faster-spinning and less massive the star (like K-class orange dwarves and M-class

red dwarves), the more it goes up the spectrum into BY Draconis-type/flare star territory. BY Draconis-type variables are almost all "cooler" K/V or M/V orange/red dwarves and flare stars almost entirely M/Ve red dwarves with unusual emission lines in their spectra.

### Effects

BY Draconis-type stars have so much sunspot activity their sheer number/size cuts into the star's brightness. These could be extremely large sunspots, clusters of a lot of smaller sunspots, or a combination of both.

Since sunspots are cooler and dimmer than the rest of the star's photosphere, the star effectively dims as the spots cover more and more of its surface. Since sunspots are irregularly-distributed across the surface, a BY Draconis-type star is "rotationally-variable" as its rotation brings the spots in and out of visibility. And since sunspots are always changing – appearing, disappearing, growing, shrinking, moving around – the amount of dimming is randomly different when that side of the star once more rotates into view, making a BY Draconis-type an "irregular rotational-variable", i.e., a semi-regular variable with a regular period component determined by rotation.

This variability has the effect of short-term climate and seasonal changes, stacking with other seasonal effects caused by the usual suspects: axial tilt and orbital eccentricity. The difference is the seasonal effects caused by solar variability are much shorter-term and more irregular than the predictable effects of axial tilt and orbital eccentricity.

Note that a BY Draconis-type star, on average, is slightly dimmer than a "normal" star of the same spectral and luminosity type.

### Adaptation to *Traveller*

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# The Lab Ship

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To adapt a BY Draconis-type star to a *Traveller* system, some initial questions must be answered:

## What is the rotational period of the star?

From Kepler observational data, K-class orange dwarves have rotational periods between 3 and 30 days; M-class red dwarves between 10 and 30.

Roll 2D and multiply by 3 for the rotational period; note that the 3x multiplier results in periods in even 3-day increments; this simplifies things later on.

Depending on the age of the star and whether it has large planets (gas giants) to brake its rotation, a DM of -1 to +3 could be applied to the 2D roll before 3x multiplication. The younger the star and less massive its planetary system, the faster it rotates and the smaller the DM.

## What is the range of sunspot activity (minimum to maximum)?

This is an arbitrary decision, setting the maximum and minimum levels of sunspot intensity on a scale of 1-6. What are the seasonal equivalents of Intensity 1 (clear sun) and Intensity 6 (dark sun). How crazy do you want to go?

Sunspot Intensity Range Example (Extreme Difference)	
Sunspot Intensity	Season Equivalent
1 (no naked-eye visible spots)	"Extreme Summer" (max. brightness)
2 (some spots noticeable)	"Mild Summer"
3 (visibly-larger spots)	"Slightly Warm Temperate"
4 (even larger/more spots)	"Slightly Cool Temperate"
5 (~30-35% spotted over)	"Mild Winter"
6 (50%+ spotted & dark)	"Severe Winter" (min. brightness)

There are six levels of sunspot intensity; the more/larger sunspots, the dimmer the sun:

(NOTE: This example is a large range; a "normal" star's Intensity 6 would only be Intensity 2 on this scale; 1-6 represents the entire spread for the star regardless of severity.)

To generate the sunspot intensity and its changes, divide the sun into three longitudinal sections and roll 1D for sunspot intensity for each. Each of these sections has a duration of 1/3 the sun's rotational period (which is the reason for the 3x multiplier for rotational period above; each section will be 2D± any DMs long). Whenever a new section rotates into view, the sunspot intensity changes; go to the

"Seasonal" Change in Sunspot Intensity	
Die Roll	Change
2-	-1 intensity (minimum 1, "clear sun")
3-4	No change
5+	+1 intensity (maximum 6, "dark sun")

next section's intensity number, roll 1D for any change in that number on the table below, and apply that seasonal variation until the next section rotates into view.

Alternately, a roll of 6 when already at "dark sun" maximum could indicate a major solar flare. This is most likely when:

- The star is young and fast-spinning (short rotation period).
- The star has a wide range of maximum-to-minimum brightness.
- The star has a large planet in a Close orbit causing tidal stress.

The more of these conditions, the more likely the star is to flare when going to Intensity 6/dark sun maximum. These are not the pseudo-nova mega-flares of a true flare star, but are powerful enough to cause EMP effects on-world and radiation hazard effects off-world.

Even without triggering flares, light and dark sun causes random chaotic seasonal effects, from clear-sun summer to dark-sun winter. These effects usually take a couple days to surface, and grow in severity until the next section (with different intensity) rotates into view.

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The longer the rotational period, the more time the effects have to grow in severity; if the star has a rotational period of less than a week (less than two days between change of intensity), the seasonal effects do not have time to set in and the brightness changes (except for the occasional major solar flare) will be mostly cosmetic.

If the rotational period is slow enough and the “bright sun” and “dark sun” are extreme, the result is chaotic seasons, from summer-winter whipsaw over a period of one to two weeks to (if all three segments are similar intensity) single seasons that could last from months to years.

*NOTE: This effect stacks with seasonal effects from other causes (orbital eccentricity and/or axial tilt). Combined with other seasonal cycles, the change in solar intensity could stack for randomly-mild to extreme winters or summers, or cause random variations in the beginning or ending of seasons.*

## Examples

### BY Draconis System

Exemplar of the type, BY Draconis itself is a young trinary system some 16 parsecs distant from Sol; on the *Traveller* master map, its position roughly corresponds to Ayling or Baytapik along the Imperium-Solomani border in Denebola Subsector, Alpha Crucis Sector.

The system consists of two orange dwarves, BY Drac A (K5V) and B (K7V) with a separation of .05 AU (Close) and an orbital period of only six days. BY Draconis A is the BY Draconis-type variable, with a rotation period of only three days. (Other sources list BY Drac A as a K6V orange dwarf and B as an M0V red dwarf flare star; if so, B’s flaring is probably caused by a more extreme BY Drac effect.)

The third component, BY Drac C (M5V) is a non-descript red dwarf in Orbit 11*bis* around AB. Though gravitationally-bound to AB as a trinary, at

that distance it’s more like a separate red dwarf system flying in formation.

There are no known planets, at least none that have been detected from TL9*bis* Earth. Any stable orbits around AB would be a minimum of Orbit 1 or 2 and a maximum of Orbit 6 or 7. C has no such minimum-orbit restrictions, but there are probably no gas giants insystem and any planets are probably newly-formed primeval rockballs.

### Kapteyn’s Star (VZ Pictoris) System

Kapteyn’s Star (VZ Pictoris) is another BY Draconis-type variable only four parsecs from Sol; on the *Traveller* master map, its position corresponds to either Ililke or Markhashi in Dingir Subsector, Solomani Rim Sector.

The system consists of an M1V red dwarf about twice Sol’s age with two known planets:

#### Kapteyn b

5 T-mass @ 0.16 AU, period (year) 48 days. *Travellerizes* as...

**Kapteyn I**, a Size C (12) super-Venus in Orbit 0 (hab zone), tidally-locked with no moons. Though nominally in the hab zone, its size and dense atmosphere traps heat in a runaway greenhouse effect resulting in a Cytherean world.

#### Kapteyn c

7 T-mass @ 0.3 AU, period (year) 122 days. *Travellerizes* as...

**Kapteyn II**, a Gas Dwarf (7 T-mass) in Orbit 0*bis* or 1 (outer zone) with a few small moons (none above size 1 or 2). Any insystem activity/settlement will be on these airless moons. Because of its tidally-braked rotation, the planet’s cloud decks are arranged in “swirls” instead of the bands of a true gas giant. The gas dwarf’s atmosphere can be skimmed, but the resulting raw fuel is Contaminated (one step

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## The Lab Ship

below Unrefined); normal fuel refining results in Unrefined fuel.

Kapteyn's Star also has a real-life *Traveller* tie-in: The system is the setting of the 2012 SF novel *Singularity*, by William H Keith Jr (under the pen name of Ian Douglas).

### Variant: RS Canis Venaticorum-type Variable

An RS Canis Venaticorum (RS CVn)-type variable is a close binary system (*Traveller* orbit Close) of two BY Draconis-type variables whose rotation has "synced up" in a tidal lock.

Note: BY Draconis itself is *not* an RS CVn-type variable; despite their six-day Close orbit, BY Drac A & B are too young to have tidal locked. BY Drac A has a definite rotation period between 3 and 4 days.

As such close binaries are tidal-locked, their rotation period is the same as their orbital period (usually 14 days or less). RS CVn components are also slightly larger and brighter than true BY Dracs; the brighter/hotter A component of the pair is usually an F or G-class yellow dwarf star and the dimmer B component a G or K yellow-to-orange dwarf.

BY Draconis-type sunspot variability in an RS CVn is probably proportional to tidal stress and inversely proportional to size, the smaller B component having more sunspots/variability. For *Traveller* purposes, this proportion could be approximated by the inverse of the relative component masses; if A is twice as massive as B, B would have twice the BY Drac sunspot activity and brightness spread as A.

As RS CVn stars are slightly larger and brighter than true BY Draconis-types and orbit each other in

Close orbits, stable planetary orbits are possible starting around Orbit 2. As these Close orbits are short-period binaries, the BY Draconis-type rotational variability cycles too fast to have significant climate/weather changes on any planets; the main effect would be appearance (slight brightening/dimming of sunlight) and mild heat waves/cold snaps lasting a day or two. The closest of close binaries (period less than a few days) would not even have the latter effect, as the luminosity would vary too quickly.

### Adaptation to Traveller

Since an RS CVn is two tidal-locked BY Draconis-types, just roll starspot intensity for both stars, sync up the rotations with the orbital period, and roll/apply the changes simultaneously to both stars. The combined sunspot intensity will be the average of the two; since sunspot changes are random, it's possible to have a change on one offset or negate the change on the other.

Orbital and rotational periods are the same; roll 1Dx3 instead of 2Dx3 with no other DMs.

In such close binaries, the stellar hemispheres facing each other are usually brighter; sunspots will tend to be on the "dark" hemispheres; this damps out the more extreme effects, as the visible hemispheres will be "dark sun" for the nearer and "clear sun" for the farther as they orbit each other. (When rolling the initial sunspot intensity, start out with the lowest intensity on one and highest on the other.) The short orbital period also damps out the effects.☼

## The Prep Room

### Jottings #3: Kinship

By Jeff Zeitlin

The vast majority of *Freelance Traveller's* readership come from Western European-derived backgrounds, postindustrialization, where the primary kinship structure is that of the nuclear family, or

possibly the extended family. Many are well-read enough to be aware of the existence some other structures, and possibly have a basic idea of what those structures are. This Jotting is intended as a

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brief overview of kinship structures, some real-world, others documented in fiction. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, or to present a comprehensive view of any individual structure; it is merely a starting point for one's own efforts to flesh them out, or for further research. *Recommended reading:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinship>

1. **Nuclear family:** Familiar to most readers, the nuclear family is a two-generation, close-consanguinity structure: parents and children. The parents are related by marriage or a similar partnership agreement; the children are related by blood (direct descent) from both parents.
2. **Extended family:** Additional generations and/or avuncular consanguinity are added to the nuclear family.
  - a. 'Lines' or 'Lineages' is used here, somewhat inaccurately, to refer to a group of families that, over the course of several generations, maintain a single name and traceable blood relationship. All of the currently-living members of a line can be collectively viewed as a 'hyperextended' family.
3. **Clan** is a badly-defined word, used for many structures that are only superficially similar. The superficial similarity can generally be described as 'a set of nuclear and/or extended families that may not be closely consanguinous in the currently-living generations, but which all claim descent, either actual or fictive ('stipulated'), from a 'founding member' or 'apical ancestor''. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clan> (especially links to specific instances), but also see specific instances, following.
  - a. The canonical example is that of the Scottish clans. Actual or stipulated blood ties to the Chieftain of the clan is not necessary; families that look to the Chieftain's family for protection or other solidarity ('septs') are considered members of the clan, and subject

to the Chieftain's authority.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish\\_clans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_clans)

- b. In the Liaden Universe® by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller, Liaden society is organized around what are called clans. Membership is not universal; there are lines that are not known to be incorporated into clans. In general, a clan consists of two lines, collectively exogamous in the general case (but under certain circumstances ['lifemates'] endogamy within the clan but across lines may be accepted). A mutual common ancestor to both lines is not required; rather, it is acknowledged that the lines are separate and that the founding of the clan was a conscious act between apical ancestors of each line.  
*Recommended reading:* see the books listed at <http://www.baen.com/categories/books-by-series-list/liaden-universer-series-by-sharon-lee-and-steve-miller.html> and <http://www.baen.com/categories/books-by-series-list/liadenr-universe-collection-by-sharon-lee-and-steve-miller.html>
- c. In the Jao Empire series by Eric Flint, K.D.Wentworth, and David Carrico, the *Jao kochan* is actually a fairly good match for the technical definition of 'clan', though there are strong indications that rather than a single apical ancestor, they claim descent from a small group. *Kochan* are strictly endogamous, and there are facial markings of genetic origin that the knowledgeable observer can associate with specific *kochan*. The Jao also have a structure called a *taif* that is functionally identical to a *kochan*, but lacks the experience to self-manage within Jao society. A *taif* is under the sponsorship of a *kochan*, but will eventually become a *kochan* in its own right, affiliated with the *kochan* that sponsored it.  
*Recommended reading:* see the books listed at <http://www.baen.com/categories/books-by-series-list/jao-empire-by-eric-flint-and-k-d-wentworth.html>

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## The Prep Room

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- d. The Luriani familial *ami* (the term is also used for e.g., the crew of a ship) appears to be a hybrid structure similar in some ways to the Liaden clan, and in other ways to something that partakes of some of the elements of both the nuclear family and the extended family. Recommended reading: Mongoose Publishing, *Minor Alien Module 1: Luriani* <http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product/107917/Minor-Alien-Module-1-Luriani>; *Freelance Traveller, Funny Fish*, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/funnyfish/index.html>
4. **House Societies** are difficult to explain; it is perhaps the best course to refer the reader to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House\\_society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_society) for an explanation. Some discussion of uncertain canonicity suggests that elements of this model are present in the Vilani 'caste' system.
5. **Caste:** Key to the definition of caste are social stratification, limited or no mobility, (usually mandatory) endogamy, and ritual inclusion/

exclusion based on notions of purity/pollution. The Vilani 'caste' system does not appear canonically to have the two latter features, though some canonical material suggests that the first two are strongly present. Start with <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste>, and search the web for *Vilani* with other keywords that would tend to limit the search to *Traveller*-related pages.

6. **Tribe:** Weakly consanguinous, may be either exogamous or endogamous. Common ancestor may not be acknowledged, or may be fictive (e.g., divine or animal descent). Often strongly associated with place, and may consist of several units generally described as clans, but usually more like hyperextended families. The Biblical "Twelve Tribes of Israel" would, given their ostensible origin, be more accurately described as 'clans' in the technical sense. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe>

It should be noted that adoption is a possibility in any of these basic structures, though specific instances (e.g., *Jao kochan*) may restrict or disallow it. Under most circumstances, an adoptive member of the kinship structure is treated as a blood relative.☪

## The Shipyard

MegaTraveller Designs

### Pawel-class TL10 Modular Cutter and Modules

design by Ewan Quibell (based on original design by Alan Spik)

The Pawel-class Modular Cutter and the basic cargo module originally appeared on the pre-magazine *Freelance Traveller* website in May 2011. The other modules appear for the first time in this article.

The Pawel-class 50 ton Modular Cutter was designed by Walisak Yards to be a direct replacement for the *Cumin*-class Cutter with the ability to carry different 30-ton modules. Its utility as a starport spacecraft has been shown in its current 10 year production run, and while demand for the Pawel is not strong it is consistent. The class is currently operating at all starports on Home and New Home and sporadically throughout the County. The County

Navy is currently evaluating the class for possible use. Manoeuvre over 1.5G without a module installed will cause buckling to the cutter's spine.

What has seen some demand is different types of modules for the cutter to carry. The standard module supplied is the basic cargo module.

The module draws 0.828 Mw from the Cutter to provide for basic environment and life-support. The six connections for reefer cargo containers increase the draw to 1.152 Mw allowing the remaining 0.268 Mw from the Cutter to recharge their batteries as needed. This allows all batteries to be recharged to full capacity in 38.7 hours or less.

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## Specifications: *Pawel*-class Modular Cutter

CraftID:	Modular Cutter, TL10, MCr 35.702
Hull:	43/113, Disp=50, Config=3SL, Armor=40E, Unloaded=753.14 tons, Loaded=763.34 tons
Power:	5/10, Fusion=414 Mw, Duration=12/36
Loco:	5/10, Maneuver=4, NOE=140kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1,000kph, Agility=0
Comm:	Radio=System, Laser=System
Sensors:	Active EMS=FarOrbit, Passive EMS=Interstellar, ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout, PasEngScan=Rout
Off:	Hardpoints=1
Def:	DefDM=+3
Control:	Computer= <i>Ibis</i> ×3, Panel=Dynamic Linked ×158, Special=HeadsUp display, Electronic Circuit Protection, Environ=basic env, basic ls, extend ls, grav plates, inertial compensators
Accom:	Crew=2, (Pilot=1, Commander=1), Seats=Roomy ×2, Small Stateroom, Airlock
Other:	Cargo=6 klitres, Module=405 klitres, Fuel=60 klitres, ObjSize=Average, Fuel Scoops (fills tanks in ½ hour, fills module in 3 hours), No Fuel Purification Plant, EmLevel=Faint, Flotation Bubbles
Comment:	Construction Time=24 wks single, 20 wks multiple, 1.42Mw spare power for module, Grav plates and inertial compensators cover all 50 tons, Computer multiplier for module=15, Loaded weight does not include module weight

The following modules are designed for the *Pawel*-class modular cutter:

### Basic Cargo Module

CraftID:	Standard Cargo Module, TL10, MCr 2.608758
Hull:	27/68, Disp=30, Conf=3SL, Armour=40E, Unloaded=169.956 tons, Loaded=570.546 tons
Power:	0.828 Mw draw
Loco:	-
Comm:	-
Sensors:	-
Off:	Hardpoints=1
Def:	-
Control:	Control=Dynamic Link ×18
Accom:	Environ=basic env, basic ls
Other:	Cargo=400.59 klitres, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint
Comment:	Construction Time=24 wks single, 20 wks multiple, 6 std "Reefer" Cargo container connection points

## Open Frame Recovery Module

CraftID:	Open Frame Recovery Module, TL10, MCr 1.10142
Hull:	27/68, Disp=30, Conf=0USL, Armour=40E, Unloaded=83.863 tons, Loaded=83.863 tons
Power:	0/0, External=1.007 Mw
Loco:	-
Comm:	-
Sensors:	-
Off:	Hardpoints=1
Def:	-
Control:	External, Panel=Dynamic Link ×7
Accom:	-
Other:	SubCraft=20 ton Vehicle bay, Grapple, Winch, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint
Comment:	Construction Time=24 wks single, 20 wks multiple

The module draws 1.007 Mw from the cutter and uses the cutter's computer to run the winch and grapple. The unstreamlined frame limits the cutter to 300kph in atmospheric flight. Vehicles and Spacecraft up to 20 tons can be recovered and securely fastened into the frame. The module's loaded weight does not include the weight of the vehicle recovered.

While designed for recovery this module also provides stability to the *Pawel* by having a module installed to allow up to the cutter's 4G acceleration.

### Fuel Purification Module

CraftID:	Fuel Purification Module, TL10, MCr 2.521138
Hull:	27/68, Disp=30, Conf=3SL, Armour=40E, Unloaded=378.021 tons, Loaded=378.021 tons
Power:	0/0, External=1.95 Mw
Loco:	-
Comm:	-
Sensors:	-
Off:	Hardpoints=1
Def:	-
Control:	External, Control=Dynamic Link ×18
Accom:	Environ=basic env
Other:	Fuel=297.585 klitres, Fuel Purification Plant (9.3 hours), ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint
Comment:	Construction Time=24 wks single, 20 wks multiple

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# The Shipyard

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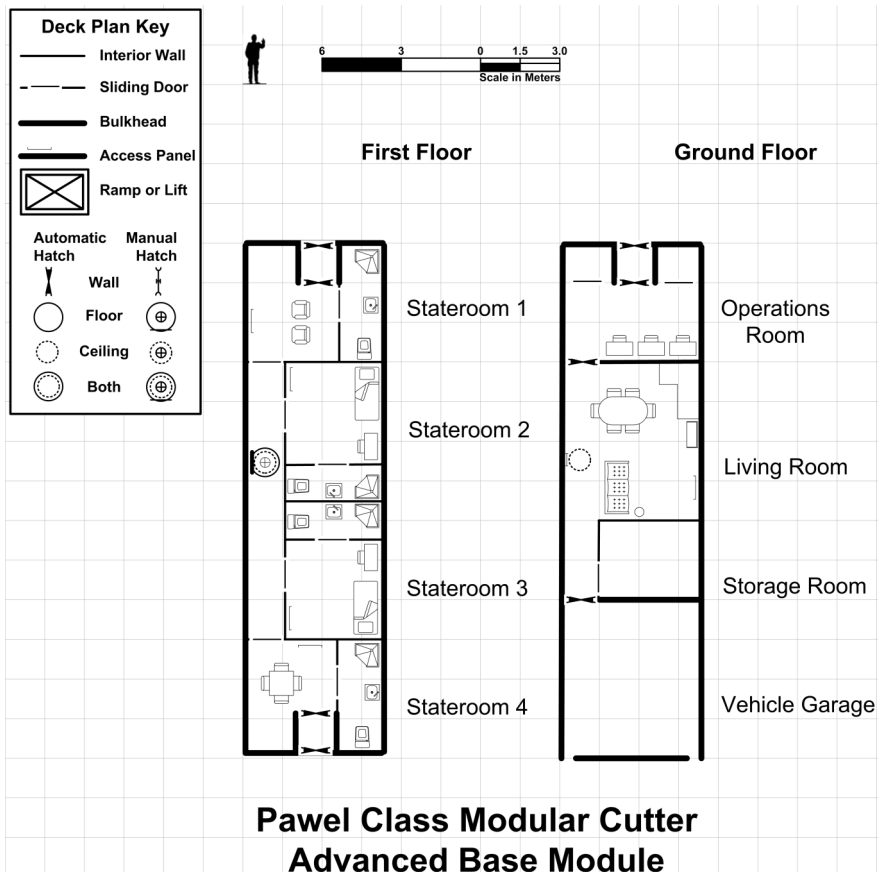
The module draws 1.95 Mw from the cutter to provide for basic environment, and uses the cutter's computer to run them. The purification plant can purify the cutter's fuel tanks as well as the fuel tank in the module in 10.2 hours. The fuel scoops on the cutter can fill the fuel module's tanks as well as the cutters tanks in 2.2 hours.

## Advanced Base Module

The module provides its own sealed environment, and grav plating to ensure a normal environment where ever it's located to provide shelter. The base can be deployed in deep space or on a planetary surface. The base is provisioned for up to 8 occupants at double capacity, and had a 4 ton vehicle bay with enough space for the vehicle's complete maintenance. The cargo space is usually used for storing additional life-support consumables for long duration missions. The long duration fusion reactor provides an additional 0.3786 Mw over and above the needs of the base. The computer provides for the

needs of the occupants as well as the equipment installed and its back-up can be utilised independently if needed for additional computing power as necessary. 

CraftID: Advanced Base Module, TL10, MCr 6.198858  
 Hull: 27/68, Disp=30, Conf=3SL, Armour=40E, Unloaded=226.1394 tons, Loaded=247.3076 tons  
 Power: 1/2, Fusion=22.5 Mw, Duration=90/270  
 Loco: -  
 Comm: Radio=Regional (500 km) ×2  
 Sensors: PassEMS=Regional (500 km), Pass Audio, Environ, Magnetic, Radiation, Video Recorder ×2; PassObjScan=From  
 Off: Hardpoints=1  
 Def: -  
 Control: Computer=0 ×2, Panel=Dynamic Link ×59  
 Accom: Seats=Cramped ×8, Stateroom ×4, SubCraft=4 ton vehicle bay, Environ=basic env, basic ls, extend ls, grav plates  
 Other: Cargo=21.1682 klitres, Fuel=48.6 klitres, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint  
 Comment: Construction Time=24 wks single, 20 wks multiple



## In a Store Near You

### Scout PAC (Planetary Assistant Controller)

by Mark S. McCabe, Sr.

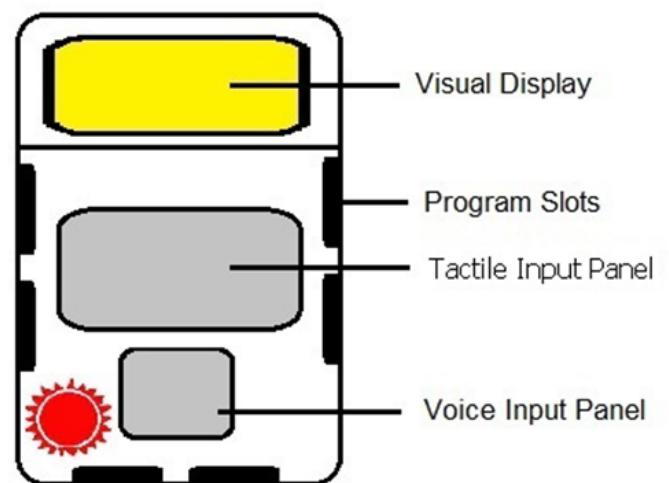
The Scout PAC (“Planetary Assistant Controller”) was originally conceived of and the initial design based on a “ruggedized” version of the common hand computer. Though useful from the initial release to field scouts, many reported that it lacked some useful capabilities, and some of the built-in functionality was not useful (and in at least one case, reported as obstructive). Over time, the design was refined based on reports from explorers and survey teams, finally resulting in a design with minimal on-board functionality and maximal configurability via add-on/plug-in modules.

The Scout Service has deployed three models of PAC, distinguished by the production Tech Level and the number of add-on modules that can be supported. The Mark I (TL-A, 4 modules) is no longer in active production, and is being replaced by the Mark II (TL-C, 6 modules) and Mark III (TL-E, 8 modules); those that are still functional at time of replacement are generally sold as surplus into the civilian market. The Mark II is still in production, and Mark III is starting to go into wide deployment, but while both can use the modules from the Mark I, modules designed for the Mark II or III cannot be used in the Mark I, and the Mark II cannot use modules designed for the Mark III. Modules replaced by higher-TL versions may be sold as surplus into the civilian market if they are deemed non-sensitive and useful in a civilian context—for example, the chemsniffer and mediscanner modules are often sold into the civilian market; the crypto scrambler and self-destruct are considered “sensitive” and thus not sold; and the nanodetector and neutrino sniffer are viewed as non-useful, and are not generally available to civilians (though they may be sold on specific request).

All three models have the basic input/output capability (touch-sensitive input, microphone,

speakers, high-resolution color display), rechargeable battery (24 hours of continuous use), basic security provisions (text password), and an Emergency Position Reporting Beacon (EPRB, estimated broadcast range 25km).

A number of companies produce modules useful to various civilian industries—LSAgri, Ling Standard Production’s agribusiness division, for example, manufactures and sells modules useful for ‘dirt farming’; Johnson/Red Diamond, in the Imperial portion of the Solomani Rim, specializes in medical modules, including interface modules to allow the PAC to control larger medical equipment. Civilian-produced modules conform to the Scout Service’s interface specifications, but are generally not considered sufficiently “ruggedized” for Scout Service purposes; where civilian-designed modules are found to be useful to the Scout Service, a special design/build will be ordered.



**Scout PAC - Planetary Assistant Controller**

*TL-C version shown; TL-E version adds two program slots on top edge; TL-A version omits those on bottom edge.*

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# Active Measures

(Continued from page 28)

PAC (Planetary Assistant Controller)					
Type	TL	Size	Kg	CR	Notes
PAC Base Units (includes touch screen, mic/speakers, power[24hrs continuous use, rechargeable])					
Scout PAC, Mk. I	A	2	3.0	3,000	Supports 4 modules, EPRB/range = 6 (25km)
Scout PAC, Mk II	C	2	2.0	5,000	Supports 6 modules, EPRB/range = 6 (25km)
Scout PAC, Mk III	E	2	1.0	8,000	Supports 8 modules, EPRB/range = 6 (25km)
PAC Modules (unless listed, consider range to be range = 4 (750m))					
Supplemental Power Unit	A+	1	0.5	200	12 hrs continuous use, rechargeable
Envirosniffer	A	1	0.2	300	Air and water tester (without wand, identifies safe to breathe/drink only; with wand, identifies specific contaminants)
Biosniffer	A	1	0.2	300	Detects "life"
Chemsniffer	A	1	0.2	300	Provides a detailed chemical analysis of a sample (needs wand)
PAC Sample Wand	A	2	0.3	500	Breaks down sample for reading
EM Sniffer	A	1	0.2	400	All EM detection, including radiation
Inertial Locator	A	1	0.2	200	Personal SINS unit; set a waypoint and it tracks location
Densitometer	A	1	0.2	300	Gives metallic composition and scans underground (R=2; 25m)
Wafer Jack plug-in	A	1	0.2	100	Can link with personal wafer jack
EM Jammer	A	1	0.2	400	(range = 3; 300m); solo operator
Communication relay	A	1	0.2	100	Range = 6 (25km)
Crypto scrambler	A	1	0.2	200	For use with commo codes; sends encrypted messages
Self-destruct	A	1	0.2	200	Causes 2D6 damage for 1m radius
Data storage	A	1	0.2	100	Can handle one simple program like a Computer-1, or 12 hours of combined audio/video or equivalent other data
Nanodetector	A	1	0.2	200	Finds nanites at Range = 2 (25m)
VoxLock	A	1	0.2	100	Password security for voice password
Electric torch	A	1	0.3	100	Shines LED light for 3m (comes with 1m lanyard)
Neutrino sniffer	D	1	0.2	400	Detects presence of a fusion reaction
Mediscanner	D	1	0.2	500	Provides vital statistics to an emergency responder
Holovid Recorder	D	1	0.2	300	Needs data storage for 12 hours of video feed or commo feed
Holovid Communicator Feed	D	1	0.2	400	Provides "live" vidfeed
Translator	E	1	0.2	400	Fluency level 1 in 2 languages, or fluency level 2 in one language (other than Galanglic)

## Author's Comments on Development

One of the things I do when dealing with science fiction gear is try to bridge the gap between current technology and future technology. One of the most iconic pieces in sci-fi history is the "tricorder" from *Star Trek*, portrayed as extremely useful device when conducting a personal survey planetside. In the *Traveller* universe, this item would be exceptionally useful and desired by the IISS (Scout Service).

Today with the advent of the Raspberry Pi™ and other low-cost single-board computers, and not-

ing the popularity of modular programs for children (such as the Innotab™ Learning system) I looked into bridging the gap between the *Star Trek* level of technology (assuming it to be around TL-H+) and standard Imperium technology (TL-D to TL-F) I came up with the Scout PAC.

I have found this to be a useful tool to use for the Scout and adventurer alike. I find the different combinations to add additional flexibility to those who venture off the ship. Enjoy! 🌟

### Wet Goods, Dry Goods

by Bill Cameron

#### Introduction

While drumming up passengers and freight for their next scheduled jump, the PCs are approached by a local exporter. While the exporter, his business, and his credentials are perfectly normal, the goods he's shipping most definitely are not.

#### Players' Information

While drumming up business around the port, the PCs are contacted by Nodwengu Exporters. They will be asked to confirm their announced destination and, when that is confirmed, will be asked about available staterooms and freight space. If the players have two staterooms and ten tons of cargo space still open, Nodwengu Exporters will ask to make an appointment. It doesn't matter whether the appointment is at the PCs' ship or the exporter's offices; either choice will be satisfactory to the caller.

Nodwengu Exporters' offices are in a smart section of the port and are well furnished in an understated way. Checking Nodwengu with the port's commercial office will reveal that the firm has been in business for decades, deals primarily in organics, has an excellent credit rating, and has no complaints or liens currently lodged against it.

Wherever the appointment is taken, the PCs will meet with Torquil dy Coe. Dy Coe is a professional, but pleasant, individual who will get down to business after the usual local courtesies; wishing the other party good health, offering light refreshments, presenting a small gift, and so on. Nodwengu Exporters wishes to ship 20 tons of freight aboard the PCs' ship for which they'll pay normal freight charges. The shipment will consist of two 10-ton containers, one of which will be refrigerated. The refrigerated container will have its own power supply, but common shipping practice will have it also connected to the ship's power distribution system for the voyage.

The firm also wishes to purchase a high passage and two middle passages for the same destination. The firm's owner, Mayhill kwa Nodwengu, will be traveling on the high passage while dy Coe and kwa Nodwengu's valet will travel middle passage.

If the PCs agree to accept the shipment, dy Coe will already have the necessary contracts, letters of credit, and other paperwork at hand. All the paperwork; export declarations, insurance certificates, routing slips, etc., will be in perfect order. On all of the forms, the shipment's contents will be listed as "mixed organic compounds". Dy Coe will describe the shipment in the same terms.

Aside from being a pleasant hour or so, completing their business with Nodwengu Exporters should take the players little effort.

#### Background

The predominant religious belief of the local population assigns no great sanctity towards human remains. Once a death occurs, it is believed that the deceased's soul or *wathan* moves on to a different reality. The physical body is thought of as little more than the cocoon or pupa the new transcendent being has left behind. This doesn't mean that corpses are tossed out in the trash, however.

After death, either excarnation or cremation is usually practiced as both of those practices are seen as returning the body's constituent elements to the world's biosphere. Organ donation had been the norm, but tissue-specific cloning and advances in prostheses mean that such donations are no longer needed. In addition, local funerary rites do not require the presence of the deceased's remains. Corpses are removed by municipal services to central handling facilities with all the efficiency and reverence afforded the pick-up of recyclables which, essentially, is exactly what they are.

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Off-world visitors naturally express some disquiet about the locals' seemingly callous attitude towards the bodies of the dead. In turn, the locals point to the fetish-like handling of human remains elsewhere and the financially predatory practices that necessarily follow such beliefs.

Local law and custom do not prohibit the funerary rites of other faiths. Temples, graveyards, and all the other facilities associated with several other beliefs are present and all operate freely with their own funerary practices.

In contrast to the belief of the world the players are currently visiting, a nearby world treats human remains with a great deal of reverence. The predominant religion on this world has a genealogical fixation that verges on ancestor worship. The past and future generations of a worshipper's family are believed to be reunited in an afterlife. With such an emphasis on generational continuity, it is no wonder that family, marriage, and children are greatly prized by the religion's adherents.

Another, lesser known, tenet of this religion holds that people can be converted to the faith after death.

The primacy of familial continuity and the belief in 'retroactive' conversion have led to a practice that seems odd to those not of the faith: the idea of corpse spouses. When an unmarried young adult or child dies it is commonplace for a marriage to be contracted. Another recently deceased person of the proper gender and age range is located and a ceremony performed. Then, the remains of both "participants" are interred together and local religious proprieties are met.

This "funerary marriage" process isn't always a smooth one, however. A "spouse" of the proper gender and age range isn't always readily available. Some families do not wish to be linked with others even in a "funerary marriage". While families also prefer their corpses be married to another that is al-

so recently deceased, that is more of a matter of social scruples than religious mandate.

This planet's need for fairly fresh corpses of both genders in a narrow age range has led to an economic opportunity that many are happy to fill.

### Referee's Information

When the freight belonging to Nodwengu Exporters arrives at the PCs' berth it will be exactly as dy Coe described: two 10 ton containers, one of which is refrigerated. Examination of the transfer company's paperwork will reveal an anomaly, however: the shipments' contents are listed as "mixed organic compounds—human remains". The PCs' reactions should be interesting.

The refrigerated container carries "wet goods", the well-preserved more "fresh" corpses which bring higher prices as "corpse spouses". The other container carries "dry goods", preserved but more decayed corpses that get lower prices.

If contacted, dy Coe will seem baffled by the PCs' reactions. The shipment does contain human corpses, but it is perfectly legal, correctly documented, and packaged in accordance with all required biological precautions. He doesn't understand the PCs' problem and, if they threaten to break the contract, will take all appropriate measures.

If contacted, the port's legal department will review all the paperwork (for a small fee) and then repeat everything dy Coe has said. The shipment and its contents are entirely legal and the players are running no legal or medical risk carrying it. Because the port administration is more used to dealing with off-worlders, a friendly clerk in the legal department may inform the players about the lack of funerary customs in the planet's primary religion.

The referee should warn the players that they face penalties if they break the contract and refuse to carry the shipment. Along with the return of the freight fees, Nodwengu will file for punitive pay-

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## Active Measures

(Continued from page 31)

ments with the port. The PCs' reputations as trustworthy businessmen will also be adversely affected.

If the players decide to carry the shipment (it is only mixed organic compounds, after all), the voyage to their next stop should be uneventful. (Note: please see the complications listed below.) Mayhill kwa Nodwengu, his valet, and dy Coe will all board at the required time. All will be model passengers throughout the voyage. Kwa Nodwengu, a fairly nondescript man in his sixties, will spend most of his time in his cabin. His valet will cheerfully assist the players in not only meeting kwa Nodwengu's needs but with the other passengers also. Dy Coe will have some business with him that will take up some of his day; he'll be a charming passenger in his free time however.

One request the Nodwengu personnel will make is regular reports concerning the refrigerated container's temperature and humidity. Such monitoring is standard with any such containers so providing the information will be trivial for the players.

After the ship arrives at its next destination, the odd freight will be off-loaded without any problem. When disembarking, Dy Coe will thank the PCs and ask that they remember his firm the next time they are in the region. Nodwengu Exporters deals with many worlds in the region, handles many kinds of goods, and has a constant need for shippers.

### Complications

Referees can further complicate the adventure with the options listed below:

- 1) After Nodwengu Exporters' shipment has been loaded, the port police will contact the players. The port has been contacted by local authorities and has decided to honor their request. It seems the shipment mistakenly contains a body whose family is not of the local majority faith and they want it back. The port police and medical personnel will be arriving soon to identify and remove the body. Dy Coe will contact the players either immediately after the police or at the same time. He will inform them that he has documentation that will allow the rapid identification of the body in question. While potentially distasteful, the process will be finished without incident and Nodwengu Exporters will pay any costs the players incur.
- 2) As in #1 above but the family in question does not make their request through the local legal system. They may contact the PCs directly or attempt a break-in to find the body they want. If the family contacts the PCs first, they may contact dy Coe to forward their request. Dy Coe will arrange to identify and remove the remains in question, and also pay any cost the PCs incur.
- 3) A slow climb in temperature inside the refrigerated container has kwa Nodwengu and dy Coe concerned. They'll request that the PCs investigate and correct the problem. The reason for and solution to the problem is up to the referee. The Nodwengu personnel will ask for more frequent updates after this and will show concern over changes within the container's normal operating range.
- 4) As in #3, but refrigeration for the container fails for some reason. The Nodwengu personnel will request immediate repairs naturally. The cause of the failure, how it can be fixed, and how long the container's internal environment can be maintained without refrigeration are all up to the referee. If the container's contents "spoil", but the PCs made every effort to prevent that, kwa Nodwengu will honor the contract despite a clause saying he needn't do so.
- 5) Another passenger aboard will learn of the contents of the Nodwengu shipment and take extreme exception to those contents. That passenger's behavior towards and interactions with the Nodwengu personnel will worsen to the point where physical violence may or does occur. The

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## Active Measures

(Continued from page 32)

PCs will be forced to take some action to preserve the peace among the passengers.

- 6) During unloading at the destination system, an extremely forceful woman with two bodyguards will walk up the ship's open cargo ramp and begin looking for the Nodwengu shipment. A death occurred in her family a few days ago and, when negotiating for a "corpse spouse" with a local marriage broker, she was told there were currently no "high quality wet goods" available. She next learned of the arriving Nodwengu shipment and is determined to acquire the spouse her dead relative needs. The fact that all of Nodwengu's "wet goods" are spoken for is of no consequence to this woman. Used to getting her way in all things, she intends to select the goods she wants, pay the players what she feels is a fair price, and be on her way. How the players can stop her, whether they call for assistance from the port police or Nodwengu personnel, and just how much local political influence the woman has are all left up to the referee.

### Design Notes

I stole the idea for this adventure from a recent issue of *The Economist*. You can't beat the real world for this kind of stuff. Reality is always infinitely weirder than even I can imagine.

Red China's "One Child" policy has the best of intentions, but we all know just which road is paved with those. Naturally, there have been many unintended, and completely nasty, consequences of that policy. The best known has been a hugely expanded slave trade which involves women primarily from Southeast Asia. Those unfortunates are lured to China by the promise of jobs, kidnapped locally, or simply purchased outright to end up as brides for Chinese men. Another lesser known, but equally appalling, consequence has been an explosion in the trafficking of *dead women*.

While dying single is unthinkable for much of the Chinese population, being male and dying single is considered especially heinous. Historically, parents took steps to ensure their dead sons didn't go gently into that good night without the comforts of a 'bride'. Matchmakers, while also handling marriages for those still breathing, didn't mind finding dead brides for dead grooms either. Depending on how much money was available, your dead son could be married to 'wet goods' or 'dry goods'—with the 'wet' and 'dry' labels referring to just how long the 'goods' had been dead. After the marriage ceremony, the happy couple would be interred together to begin their eternal dirt nap honeymoon.

Currently, the lack of women in China, coupled with a rapidly rising industrial death rate for men and relative prosperity, has brought inflation—and much worse—to the corpse bride market. With marriage brokers as the middlemen, the usual suppliers like mortuaries, funeral homes, and body snatchers have been getting as much as 4,000 to 5,300 USD for a, to quote *The Economist*, "top quality piece of wet merchandise". Prices have been so good that murderers are getting into the act because Adam Smith's hidden hand works in all markets.

Seeing that live brides are already being 'imported' into China, I figure it's only a matter of time before dead brides get imported too; hence this adventure.

The idea of 'retroactive' conversion to a religious faith is another stolen idea. It's part of the tenets of the Mormon faith. One reason why they emphasize genealogical research is that they routinely 'baptize' those who are long dead into their faith. This then allows a non-Mormon ancestor into the Mormon afterlife. In fact, until repeatedly asked by Israel to desist, Mormon congregations were regularly 'baptizing' the names of Holocaust victims. Like I said, you can't make this stuff up. ❁

## The Mote in God's Eye

### The Gripping Hand

reviewed by Michael Thompson

This review originally appeared on the author's blog in February 2017.

*The Mote in God's Eye*. Jerry Pournelle & Larry Niven.

Original publication: 1974

Current availability: Mass-market paperback

*The Gripping Hand*. Jerry Pournelle & Larry Niven.

Original publication: 1993

Current availability: Mass-market paperback

During the winter of 2017, I read both *The Mote in God's Eye* and *The Gripping Hand*. While *The Gripping Hand* postdates the publication of *Traveller* by over a decade, Mote can be considered a forebearer, as it was written shortly before the release of *Classic Traveller* in 1977. Beowulf Shaeffer from Niven's Known Space stories was profiled in Supplement 1 from 1978, so I think it may be a good influence. *The Mote in God's Eye* is the first part, and *The Gripping Hand* is the after the break.

#### The Mote in God's Eye

Fundamentally, *Mote* is a book about events, and not people. The Second Empire has arisen, and in the process of establishing its rule. A daring action leads the dashing noble officer Roderick Blaine into command of the battle cruiser *MacArthur*. Heavily damaged in this pacification action, it is sent back home, with two important passengers, Lady Sandra Bright Fowler, a young woman from a prominent family conducting field research, and Horace Bury, a merchant suspected of starting a revolt. It is the only starship on the scene as an unknown solar sail spacecraft appears, and *MacArthur* disables the unknown ship. Finding out it's from a non-Terrestrial race, and this is the first time chance for a First Contact, the *MacArthur* and its passengers are reassigned, to the first first contact with an alien intelligence.

And what an alien intelligence the Moties turn out to be! A biologically-casted species, who must reproduce or die, they are an excellent foil to humanity. They understand the technology of Alderson Drive for interstellar travel, but do not have the Langston Shield that allows human ships to take more damage and even enter the photosphere of a star. Neither party really understands that the other is hiding something, like the Imperial Battleship *Lenin* at the only Alderson point that leaves the system, or the Motie Warrior Caste. Humanity is just as alien to the Moties psychologically, especially when the *MacArthur's* engineer meets them. Humanity's lack of specialization drives some of the Moties mad, as well as our reproductive biology. Locked into their star system, the Moties are in an eternal Malthusian Trap.

The characters are not particularly memorable, as they fill roles in the story, and are archetypes for the most part. The big character development moment is for Bury seeing a dead man's space suit filled with Watchmaker Moties, causing him to radically change his position, from resentful of the Empire, to knowing it is the only force that defends humanity from the aliens. The final resolution involves a blockade being established at the request of one of the Motie mediators once the truth of the Moties is known. The book ends with Bury getting blackmailed into becoming an agent of the Empire with an officer, Kevin Renner, formerly of the *MacArthur*, reactivated from getting out as his minder.

#### The Gripping Hand

Twenty-five years later, Renner and Bury have been ensuring stability and the expansion of the Em-

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pire. In hearing the unusual idiom “The Gripping Hand”, it starts the action. It turns out the mostly Mormon world they are visiting has a governor who was one of the spacers from the *MacArthur* expedition, and there has been clandestine trade with an unabsorbed world. This drives Bury into a panic, which is not good for an old man who goes through space to the Imperial Capital and then to the area around the Eye. Upon examining information from the original expedition, he realize that a new way out of the Mote system may occur very soon rather than when they were told (see, sneaky Moties), and seeks to prevent expansionist Motie Leaders from invading the Empire. The ending has a *deus-ex-machina* in the form of a contraceptive parasite, allowing for peaceful coexistence.

### What good ideas can this offer a *Traveller* referee or a science fiction author?

Well, the nature of the Imperial Navy is a good one. The officer corps has two elements. There’s the sons of nobility, who can move quickly in the ranks, but if they fail, they fail hard. Blaine is pretty much told that if he had lost his gambit, he would have caused more death in the opening. He’s also a young man sent to high positions quickly, while some of his officer subordinates like Jock (the Chief Engineer) and Kevin Renner are older men, but still in line for command.

Another is the nature of the Imperium, especially in the days of Cleon and Artemsus. Vibrant, expansionist, and willing to use the velvet glove as much as the mailed fist. Vice-Admiral Kutuzov, commanding the *Lenin*, is assigned because he is a man who will do his duty, even if it means sterilizing a world. It is a good reminder that empires are not built by nice men. The leadership does what must be done to save humanity when dealing with

the Moties. However, working to peacefully bring worlds and regions in is just as good, if not better, as it means there is much less bloodshed and more good will.

A third is religion. A difficult subject in games, the presence of faith is important in Niven and Pournelle’s empire. The Chaplain is a major character, because he’s also a linguist as well as a priest. The sights of the beyond inspire reverence, and even a new religion; in this case the Church of Him. And finally, we come to why Bury was funding a revolution in Mote: it was to ensure that Islam would continue to be practiced, out of a fear the Church, vaguely Catholic, would unfairly dominate it. I think that faith, as a touchy subject, should be avoided in some ways, but on the other hand can add an interesting dimension. It is another factor that can push or pull characters. A man leaving a theocracy can still have links to the belief system.

Finally, make your aliens different. Biology, psychology, all ways to vary them radically from the norm. I am not much of a fan of the Official *Traveller* Universe’s Vargr and Aslan, as they are far too much ‘humans in rubber suits’ aliens. I like the Hivers as an idea much more. Some of the best ideas come from something really out there, like the Moties. If you’re going to have aliens, make them As Weird As Possible, not just people in funny suits.

More about the model used to design the *MacArthur*:

**Project Rho:** <http://www.projectrho.com/SSC/model.html>

**Frank Henriquez:** <http://frank.bo1.ucla.edu/1e.html>

As a bonus, Rob Caswell’s rendering of Blaine: <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Commander-Lord-Roderick-Blaine-152430464>



### At the Bar: Places to Interact

by Timothy Collinson

*Try getting a drink on Clovis. Well, when I say drink, I mean alcohol. Fortunately we had a good supply on board. Peet did mention a vague plan to see if he could find the illegal jynjoints he was absolutely sure must exist, but the Captain nixed that idea. "We're just here for the trade, nothing more. We can get as inebriated as you like next Jump." The way she said 'inebriated' so precisely made it clear she wouldn't, as usual, be joining in. "Besides, I hear the tea shops here are the place to be."*

*She wasn't far wrong. If anyone had any ideas of chintz and ladies of a certain age, they were soon disabused of the notion. Main Street out of the starport gate must have some of the roughest tea shops in the subsector. The first one we hit, The Miner's Pick, was crowded with overalls, beards and the kind of grime it takes years to build up on furniture and faces. At the counter we were faced with a vast array of options and even when we'd narrowed down the flavours there were still the brewing methods or the temperatures to pick from. Guywun or Aslan-style; scalding hot to iced. One blend even claimed to be served at absolute zero. Our ship suits marked us out as transients so we got some good natured ribbing from nearby patrons along with sensible advice from the tealad. It wasn't long before the Captain was deep in conversation with a local that involved dates and Credit values and wincing all round.*

*On one side the walls were papered with some abstract faux-industrial design, on the other there was a large schematic map of the region around the starport. Claim markings were clearly delineated and at least three groups of drinkers were gesturing at various sections. I began to wonder if the toilets would just be an open pit.*

*The Captain re-joined us with a sour face I didn't think came from the Eastern Appleseed concoction she was sipping from a large mug. "That's not going to work out," she said nodding vaguely at the table she'd just come from. "This place is a bust, let's move on."*

*"Not so fast." Peet, just coming back from the far end of the counter, put his hand up to slow her down. "You*

*know the selection of additives at the bottom of the menu? I've worked out what the dark galactose really is." And he smiled broadly as he took a long pull.*

When running regular *Traveller* games in which the characters are frequently visiting cities, towns, ports or stations, the need for places to look for patrons, search for trade deals, pick up rumours, or just spend some downtime can place considerable demands on referees trying to avoid 'just another starport bar'. Given the variety of worlds and cultures assumed to exist in Known Space, it may well be that something other than a bar is a more common watering hole or meeting place. At various times in history coffee shops, tea houses, or gin palaces have been possibilities. Elsewhere around the world it might be anything, even something as basic as casual gatherings under a tree at a crossroads or a village square or a city gate. Even if alcohol-friendly taverns or pubs are the best places to make friends and influence people, it seems a missed opportunity to assume that they're all cut from the same mould and identical in size, ambience, clientele, et cetera. (Brubek's excepted, naturally.)

In the course of a single session the players might wish to hit several locations trying to track down the person or snippet of information or mcguffin that they need and that could just be on one street or tunnel or corridor. Another part of town or station might reap rewards in having entirely different patrons. Consider the difference, for example (in the United Kingdom at least), between a village tavern and a city centre pub, or a big sprawling former manor house providing food and accommodation compared with a cosy little den in the corner of a fishing port. Even several bars within a few hundred metres of each other in a university or navy town might have very different ambience. Translate this into the central section of a domed city or an out of the way nook on a small orbital station and it's

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# The Prep Room

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clear that few *Traveller* adventures have even scratched the surface of the possibilities.

Table 1 can be used to get an overview of the kind of common meeting places on this world, at this port, or in this town. It may only be the predominant feature of the establishment and other facilities are available: the table can be used multiple times to establish secondary or tertiary functions. The table can be used in conjunction with Table 2 to further define the options, or Table 2 can be used directly as a d66 without reference to Table 1. Referees may wish to adjust the chances of certain types of establishments appearing on Table 1 depending on their own settings. This is not to suggest that that table represents the proportion of, say, eateries vs public spaces on the world, city or habitat, but gives an idea of their proportion in terms of places where characters could meet locals or other travellers in this location.

Information on what's available may well be available to travellers as part of standard information packs on arrival in well-travelled systems, or part of the gossip orbital controllers and the like might pass on. The characters can be planning their first night on the town as they travel in from the Jump point. In more backwater areas, finding out what's available at a port may form the first evening's entertainment as the PCs get a frosty reception or even thrown out of somewhere that really isn't meant for them. Or perhaps evenings aren't the best time to find these venues open. Characters looking for patrons, rumours, contacts and trading options may find that they're thin on the ground in some locales or coming out of the woodwork, or plastisteel, in others. Doing their homework or their legwork should pay off. Naturally, the kind of place a patron might be found could well determine the kind of patron they are: high Social Standing, low Social Standing; legal, illegal; conman or straight up. As ever, these tables are simply meant to inspire im-

agination and role playing opportunities rather than be binding.

Table 1: General Types of Meeting Places		
2D6	Description	Table 2 Group
2	Semi-public spaces	5
3	Drug usage	2
4	Drug usage	2
5	Drinking establishment	1
6	Drinking establishment	1
7	Drinking establishment	1
8	Eatery or Club	3
9	Eatery or Club	3
10	Specialist locations	4
11	Specialist locations	4
12	Other	6

These tables should not be considered exhaustive or to substitute for a referee's imagination (or inspiration taken from the real world), but may help those who need something quickly on the fly, or who feel their creative juices failing when the PCs are on a first-night-in-port pub crawl of epic proportions. Not every table from 4a onwards needs to be used but perhaps two or three to give just a flavour of a particular setting.

As usual, these should be used for inspiration rather than seen as limiting imagination. For example, other names are possible for many of the early entries: alehouse, grog shop, honky-tonk, nineteenth hole, roadhouse, saloon, speakeasy, taproom, or watering hole. Mixing 'locations' – or the functions of the locations – is, of course, also possible (e.g., a guild combined with a gym or a market square with smoking hut).

The referee may also wish to determine the legality of any of these options. At one time, for example, opium dens were legal in London, or perhaps a high law level limits the potency of alcoholic drinks or quantity of caffeine intake. Consider also the

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changes in law and social acceptance of smoking in some parts of the world in recent years. Perhaps tea is very heavily taxed...

Items 41-56 particularly may be social spaces in their own right but may also have previous venues on the table – from bars to cafes – within them (For example, a theatre with a bar, or a church with a café). Some of the entries may also, in typical Terran

western cultures, not appear at first sight to be meeting places, but consider the wide variety of planets in Known Space and use such venues to show the differences from norms. Alternatively, take typically social spaces such as a public house and have a reason why no social interaction may take place there, or social interaction only between certain races, genders, job types, or whatever.

Table 2: Specific Meeting Place Types

D66 Location	
<b>Group 1: Drinking Establishments</b>	
11	<b>Bar:</b> often a smaller space with the actual bar the main feature although there may be tables or diner-style booths running alongside it
12	<b>Speciality bar:</b> wine bar, cocktail bar, gin palace, or other local alcoholic tippie <i>du jour</i>
13	<b>Tavern:</b> typically slightly larger than a bar with more table seating and possibly additional rooms; snack type food may be available
14	<b>Pub:</b> homelike atmosphere, multiple nooks and rooms, may be separated into 'bar' and 'lounge' or 'saloon'; basic meals may be available
15	<b>Inn:</b> fully-featured public house of some size, offering a range of food and accommodation; at lower tech levels there may be stabling for animals
16	<b>Hostel:</b> more focussed on accommodation and possibly food but also providing a place to meet and drink
<b>Group 2: Drug-imbibing Establishments</b>	
21	<b>Coffeeshouse:</b> place for consuming local stimulant drink (e.g., coffee, tea, cocoa/chocolate, guarana, ginseng, yerba mate, etc.). Likely named after preferred stimulant (e.g., tea parlor, cocoa bar)
22	<b>Smoke bar:</b> place for tobacco or other local mild stimulant taken by smoking. May be called by smoking style catered to, e.g., cigar bar, hookah lounge.
23	<b>Chewie:</b> betel nut, kola nut, khat, or other natural mild stimulant taken by chewing nuts, wads, or sticks; sometimes called spittery or chewbar.
24	<b>Drug den:</b> places for more serious drug use where the social element may begin to be more limited due to the effects of the drug. Drug(s) catered to may be of any type or strength, not just mild stimulants. May identify specific drug (e.g., opium den <sup>2</sup> , crack house)
25	<b>Casino or Gambling den:</b> possibly combined with any of the above; possibly illegal. May be game of chance based, sports based (with the sports piped in via comms or live in the house), animal baiting, etc.
26	<b>Klatch house:</b> literally "gossip" house – referee's choice as to beverage, leaf, drug, etc., that is commonly consumed (see previous five entries) or whether 'klatch' is an entirely separate category of shared social culture
<b>Group 3: Dining Establishments</b>	
31	<b>Fast food joint:</b> cheap and cheerful food and simple décor. Emphasis is often on ensuring high customer turnover (hence 'fast')
32	<b>Café:</b> straightforward food but a step or two better than fast food
33	<b>Restaurant:</b> a more formal establishment for eating
34	<b>Club:</b> gentlesophont's club, working sophont's club – like-minded people gathering together socially, probably including food, possibly including some of the options offered by establishments listed above (such as accommodation or gambling); also Fraternity, Lodge or Trade Union Hall.
35	<b>Guild:</b> a form of club based around a skill set or trade; e.g. Captain's Guild, Spacer's Co-operative, Astrogator's Guild, Travellers' Aid Society. May be a meeting place, eating place and offer accommodation as well.
36	<b>Cafeteria<sup>3</sup>:</b> a large communal eating space possibly free to eat at due to government subsidy, as an organizational/business benefit, or military provisioning etc.

1. There are of course many other ways that these could be arranged – strength of drug, effect on the system, ingredients etc. But consumption method often implies supporting infrastructure – from delivery taps or kegs for drinks to spittoons for chewing products – such that locations designed for social ingestion would group around what's required for service. It should also be noted that several drugs can be imbibed in a variety of ways – e.g. tobacco can be smoked or chewed, kratom may be smoked or made into tea, and chocolate can be eaten or drunk.

2. See the Sherlock Holmes short story 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' for a description of an opium den. Despite Conan Doyle's sensationalism however they were really more rooms where, typically, Chinese might gather to smoke, gamble and gossip.

3. See, for example, the 'Terias and the use of them made in the adventure 'All in the Genes', Freelance Traveller, 47, November 2013.

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**Table 2: Specific Meeting Place Types (Continued)**

D66 Location	
<b>Group 4: Specialty Locations</b>	
41	<b>Brothel:</b> a space in which intimacy can be purchased; may be illegal or licensed or simply part of local life. Note that such a venue can only arise if a culture has a tabu around such intimacy in the first place.
42	<b>Fat Club<sup>4</sup>:</b> possibly simply social gatherings celebrating size, possibly weight loss gatherings
43	<b>Health Club:</b> Gymnasium, sports centre or spa – fitness and health venue. Includes ‘gym(nasium)’, ‘spa’, ‘sports club/center’ (or specific sport, e.g., tennis, golf, etc.)
44	<b>Theatre:</b> entertainment venues which may have associated rooms, bars or balconies for social interaction besides the main events. Consider ‘boxes’ not for a good view but to be ‘seen’ in society. Includes ‘playhouse’, ‘opera house’, ‘cinema’, ‘concert hall’, etc..
45	<b>Sporting arena or religious venue:</b> ‘Sporting arena’ may be enclosed or open to the elements, depending on the preferred spectator sport(s) of choice. See <i>101 Religions</i> (BITS, 1998) or <i>Supplement 15: Powers and Principalities</i> (Mongoose, 2014) for examples and ideas for the latter
46	<b>Library:</b> may be public or private, university or corporate, free or paid for, hushed or rambunctious, print or electronic – or perhaps mixtures of all of these
<b>Group 5: Semi-public places</b>	
51	<b>Business or workplace:</b> may have atria or foyers for networking and social intercourse
52	<b>Hospital:</b> (or other medical facilities) perhaps recognizing that mental health is as important as physical, provision may be made for gatherings and interactions of all kinds as the ‘only place in town’
53	<b>University:</b> (or other place of education) age demographics may be skewed towards the younger in such places, depending on local culture
54	<b>Transport hub:</b> grav park, bus/train/monorail/tram/underground station
55	<b>Pop-up venues:</b> some cultures or habitations have transient barrows, stalls, shops, etc., that spring up in various locations and at various times; this might be to maximise customer access, communication links, spotlight local products or services, or to avoid certain legal requirements
56	<b>Private homes:</b> perhaps in high law level communities or in space stations with very limited public space these might be the only or the best places to meet; there may be ‘celebrities’ who are known to put on the best gatherings and invites hard to get but contacts made there may be very, very beneficial. May be called ‘salons’, ‘discussion groups’, ‘study clubs’, etc., and possibly have a preferred ‘main topic of discussion’..
<b>Group 6: Other venues</b>	
61	<b>Crossroads:</b> whether it’s a low tech meeting of paths, or an orbital station’s main corridor concourse, people will meet, barrows spring up, kiosks line the edges, and transactions will be carried out
62	<b>Allotments:</b> a group of small gardens located together in urban environments where dwellings are on footprints too small or crowded to have their own back/front yard. May be called parks, greenblocks, etc.; some overlap with ‘Village green’(q.v.).
63	<b>Village green:</b> an open area for fayres or trading or auctions in the centre of a village or city suburb or orbital station with room and culture for such a space. Includes ‘boardwalks’, ‘promenades’, etc.
64	<b>Market square:</b> a larger version of a village green in a bigger conurbation
65	<b>City gate<sup>5</sup>:</b> essentially this is what startowns start as; may well be an airlock rather than gate. May be outside the city’s technical jurisdiction for legal or regulatory reasons.
66	<b>Asteroid 555:</b> with beltors being dispersed throughout an asteroid belt, planetoid belt or ring system, finding a common place within a system – particularly if there is no mainworld – can be vital for social interaction of all kinds. Most such collections of rock and ice will have at least one, probably more, sites commonly known to be the place to meet.

Note that many of the above could also be locations within larger locations, such as a café in a workplace, place of education, or hospital; a gymnasium in a starport lounge or sports arena; a bar in a Guild or trade union; a library in a hotel or TAS hall;

a brothel in a club or place of religious worship<sup>6</sup>; a fast food joint in a transport hub.

Alternatively, many of the above may have festivals dependent on season or celebration either widening the reach of the locations or intensifying their

4. These really existed in the US at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>. You had to be over 14 stone 3 lbs to attend and activities included a large meal followed by some form of physical activity such as leappfrog. (See <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/03/07/469571114/the-forgotten-history-of-fat-men-s-clubs> for example)  
 5. see the book of Ruth 4:1-11, as well as other Biblical references, for a low tech example of the importance of such a location for meeting and social affairs.  
 6. See, for example, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred\\_prostitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_prostitution)

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usage. Examples might include Oktoberfest, a city's Christmas market, summer carnivals, Women's World Day of Prayer, or arts festivals. Use Table 3 as a foundation to build on, rolling once for each column of interest.

**Table 3: Special Events**

D6	Basis for event	Style of event	Duration
1	Season	Festival/Feast	Day
2	Religious season	Carnival	Days
3	Celebratory event	Market	Days
4	Class/race/gender	Outing <sup>7</sup>	Week
5	Profession	Competition	Month
6	Celebrity/Ruler	Commemoration	Year

## How does this help role playing?

As well as the function of a place directly affecting what may be going on in a venue and feeding into where PCs may choose to go and what they may choose to do, the variety and descriptions of establishments can help in the running of a scenario as well giving players something to play off. As an example, in 'First Call at Zila', a chapter in *The Traveller Adventure*, a hostelry of some kind is a major part of the scenario. The players learn more of the ongoing plot, the PCs get involved in a bar fight, and that leads to them ultimately meeting a patron who is none other than an in-universe avatar of *Traveller's* creator Marc Miller. It was all too easy to simply assume The Dead Spacer was just another non-descript bar. But picking up on the name of the place and the signage outside – which is gruesomely given in the text – it wasn't hard to build on the limited interior description "a clean place with a friendly atmosphere". Continuing the theme, I described the walls as decorated with dozens and dozens of images of starships of all different kinds. An Intelligence or Education check then allowed one of the more experienced spacers in the crew to realize that

7. Some kind of jaunt or journey is involved – perhaps a 'day out' or perhaps a month long pilgrimage

they recognized many of the ships pictured as ones that had been the victim of some disaster or another in which lives were lost. It wasn't a stretch for the players to then assume that all the pictures represented something similar and gave a very macabre feel to the place for those who knew but nicely played against the relatively complex tale of the she-nanigans with the Titan and the Mammoth and the crash of the latter. When the bar fight broke out, the pictures were then an additional bit of furniture that could be used as a dramatic, if lightweight, weapon – although I hadn't specified whether they were digital images on the wall or framed photos or something else. On another occasion, it was the patrons of a bar that came to the fore and resulted in 'The Denizens of Marburg' (*Freelance Traveller*, 79, January/February 2017).

## Establishment Descriptions

The following tables are primarily aimed at describing bars and public houses but could be used for other entries on the above table as the referee sees fit.

### Table 4a. Quality & Cost

Choose one column on Table 4a to describe the establishment; or use both and explain any 'discrepancy' between quality and cost.

D6	Quality	Cost
0	Exclusive	Very expensive (+1D × 10%)
1	top notch	Expensive (+10%)
2	Better than average	Standard (+5%)
3	Standard fare	Rulebook standard
4	Standard fare	Cheap (-10%)
5	Serviceable	Very cheap (-20%)
6+	Poor quality	Free

*DM +1 for startown or poorer areas of a city/habitat, DM -1 for upmarket areas*

Stars or other symbols may be used in place of numbers with 1 as ★★★★★, 2 as ★★★★, 3 as ★★★ etc., or letter codes may be used – A to E.

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No attempt has been made to link quality and cost. Expensive places may be poor quality and vice versa. The Referee may wish to use just one column and use it to cover both options. Or go the whole hog and use QREBS from *Traveller5* to create more detail.

**Table 4b. Size**

D6	Establishment size
1	Large and multiple sites
2	Large and multiple floors/decks
3	Large and spread out at one location
4	Typical for vicinity
5	Small and snug
6+	Tiny – very cramped
<i>DM +1 for orbital stations or small enclosed habitats</i>	

**Table 4c. Ambience**

D6	Ambience
1	Enthusiastically friendly
2	Friendly
3	Neutral
4	Neutral
5	Uncomfortable with strangers
6	Actively unwelcoming
<i>(Note: Traveller5's Acceptance figures under the Culture heading could be used as a modifier.)</i>	

**Table 4d. Service Time**

D6	Time until served
0	Instant
1	A few seconds
2	Up to a minute
3	1D6 minutes
4	1D6 minutes
5	1D6 + 10 minutes
6	1D6 x 10 minutes
7	PCs won't be seen until after a reminder to staff
<i>DM -1 if at bar rather than table</i>	
<i>DM +1 if eating (service time is time until order is taken, not food delivery)</i>	

**Table 4e. Clientele**

Roll on one column on Table 4e as desired.

D6	Crowd	Predominant Clientele
0	Almost impossible to move	Antagonistic ruffians or criminals
1	Heaving – over capacity	Low-life
2	Busy – at capacity	Blue collar workers or white collar 'city' types
3	Busy – near capacity	Students or other identifiable social group
4	Lively – 75% capacity	Locals (many will know each other)
5	Buzz – 50% capacity	Foreigners*
6	Quiet – 25% capacity	SOC 10+
7	Currently empty	SOC 11+
	<i>DM -1 for startown or city/habitat centre</i> <i>DM +1 for backwaters</i>	<i>DM -1 for startown or city/habitat centre</i> <i>DM +1 for better class areas</i>
<i>* This may mean anything from the next town/habitat over to out-of-system travellers or out-of-polity aliens. Typically, clients would be unlikely to know anyone other than those they're with.</i>		

**Table 4f. Landlord**

D6	Landlord
1	Owner ever present on premises
2	Owner often around
3	Absentee landlord, stable staff
4	Absentee landlord, various staff
5	Cheap labour, high turnover
6	Automated/Robotic service

**Table 4g. Salubriousness**

D6	Salubriousness
0	Wrecked – fight guaranteed
1	Rough & tumble – fight on 2D 4+
2	Rough – fight on 2D 7+
3	Lively – fight on 2D 10+
4	Calm – fight on 2D 12+
5	Genteel
6	Utter probity – disruption might have you thrown out
7	Utter snobbishness – some subtle behaviour or failure will have you thrown out
<i>DM -1 for startown or city/habitat centre</i>	
<i>DM +1 for better class areas</i>	
<i>DM (Law Level+3, round down)-2</i>	

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## Table 4h. Décor

Choose one column on the following table. (Alternatively, see 'Off the Wall', *Freelance Traveller*, 79, January/February 2017 for more detail although not all options would be appropriate).

D6	Décor	Feel
1	Retro: Local TL -1D	Old
2	Rustic: Local TL -1	Fading
3	Contemporary – cosy	Tired
4	Contemporary – urban	Serviceable
5	Futuristic: Local TL +2	Attractive
6	Themed (1d6): 1 = alien 2 = military 3 = merchant 4 = space 5 = worlds and exploration 6 = memorabilia	Smart

The observant will note that Tables 4a to 4h could effectively create a Universal Bar Profile<sup>8</sup> (think size, ambience as atmosphere, service time as time to get hydrated, etc.). However, the intention isn't that referees would use every table on every occasion – either pick one or two to set the scene or use those which are relevant to the adventure. Some examples will give an idea of how these numbers might be used:

## Examples

### *The Void and Vegan C-123456-3*

This is fairly typical hostelry in the more rimward sections of Solomani space. They're large and will have several establishments in one city or the larger orbital stations. Generally regarded as friendly; you'll be served in just a few minutes even when there's quite a crowd. You'd be unlikely to get to know the staff, even in a venue you visited frequent-

ly, as there will be a lot of them coming and going. Typically they're known as family friendly and they're generally decorated in contemporary styles with snugs and nooks throughout for private conversation.

### *The Seedspitter's Nest E-444452-2*

This is startown bar of barely mediocre quality although you'll be charged some 5% over standard prices for the privilege of eating and drinking there. However, the under the table deals you may be able to find make it worthwhile in many spacer's eyes. Its size is typical of the area and although it is not known for a friendly atmosphere, strangers are tolerated. You'll usually be served fairly quickly although the locals who make up most of the clientele will know how to catch the barstaff's attention more quickly. The barstaff are cheap, often off-world labour who don't usually work in the Nest for more than a few months – so serving jobs will be easy to come by for less-choosy travellers. It's not a place to bring your date as fights often break out and the décor looks tired and worn.

### *Old Wynne's Tea Shop B-523316-1*

Probably the best of the tea shops in the main corridor immediately after clearing the customs airlock. Old Wynne's is snug but welcoming and Old Wynne herself is often on hand behind the till – although a young sophont in frills is usually serving and may take a moment or two to get to your table. At meal times and midway between, the tea shop will be busy with starport workers from stevedores to inspectors. At other times, it will be somewhat quieter and you might find admin personnel having a short meeting, or nearby shop owners taking a quick break. The décor has seen better days and is reminiscent of times past but that's more than made up for by Old Wynne's excellent seaweed scones and weedcakes.

8. After writing this, I finally tracked down an article I'd been looking for for some time. See 'Universal Bar Generator' by Bill Burg in *Space Gamer*, II(1), July/August 1989, pp.42-43 for another approach.

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### Venue Names

Names of establishments can be drawn from real life, imagination or the several 'pub name' generators that can be found on the internet and perhaps tweaked somewhat to fit a science fiction setting. Here are some patterns that may help kick-start thoughts:

#### The <noble title> <body part or noble's name>

e.g., The Emperor's Arms, The Duke's Head, The Duchess Delphine

#### The <alien name>'s <noun>

e.g., The Aslan's Pride (or Htatei Ahriy)

#### The <random noun> and <random noun>

e.g., The Black Hole and Carnation

#### The <random noun> and <random alliterative noun>

e.g., The Rake and Robot, The Star and Sceptre

#### The <random matched pair of words>

e.g., The Slug & Lettuce, The Xeeboo and Yoke

#### The <(possibly historical) description of pub function>

e.g., The Coach & Horses, The Fisherman's/ Traveller's Rest, The Scout's Landing

#### <place name> <random word for venue>

e.g., Jamaica Inn, Spinward Steakhouse, Gvurrdon Lair

#### The <adjective/adverb> <animal>

e.g., The Running Kian

#### The <military/mercantile job> <random word for venue>

e.g., The Armourer's Tavern, The Meson Gunner's Sight, The Commander's Café, The Captain's Guild, The Purser's Place

#### <proprietor's name, optionally possessive> <word for venue (optionally misspelled for 'alliteration'; possibly selected for wordplay)> (order reversible)

e.g., Joe's Eats, Philbin's Pholly, Bar Nunn, Wolfe's Lair

My thanks to David, Emily and Jane for both inspiring the need for this in our lunchtime games and suggesting a place or two. Who knew that allotments were hotbeds of gossip and intrigue? 🌟

## Active Measures

### Winter of Discontent

by John Watts

*This adventure was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2004.*

The players must solve a murder. The PCs can be part of the mystery or just the investigators. While set on Gateway in the Gateway Sector, it could be easily changed to fit into an existing campaign or just a different venue.

#### The Victim

#### Thorne Winter 6798AA Age 81 (looks 35)

Admin-3, Carousing-3, Chemistry-2, Engineering-2, Computer-1, Legal-1, Streetwise-1

Thorne Winter is the head of Winterkorp, a shipping corporation centered on Gateway. Thorne inherited the company five years ago from his father and has since allowed the company to make a bit of a slide. He is a brute and a womanizer.

Winter is found lying dead in his bed at home. He has a pillow over his face and three stab wounds (one in the chest, one in his right arm, and one in his left leg). There is very little blood. A cursory examination of the room will find his bed appears to have only been slept in by Winter. He has a hand computer and a pack of antacid tablets on his nightstand.

A more detailed search will turn up a broken fingernail with pink nail varnish beside the pillow.

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### The Crime

Thorne Winter has spent the last five years angering a great many people and some of those people have now returned to haunt him. Chief among these is his executive vice-president, Vaskar Indigo. Three years ago, Winter attempted to diversify the corporation from just shipping to starship repair parts. One of the new innovations was a two-part epoxy that would seal leaks. It was to be cheap, effective, and able to be made on a variety of tech levels. This plan was a disaster but Winter wants to try again. Indigo is in charge of reformulating the epoxy and putting it on the marketplace to replace the original formula. Although the epoxy reformulation has been a success (the first part of the epoxy is a colorless fluid that cannot be washed off by anything, once applied, until the second expanding agent can be applied), Indigo still feels that diversification is a mistake. Further, Indigo feels that the stockholders would make him the president of the corporation once Winter is dispatched.

Following a morning meeting with Winter, his valet, Reginald Maudlin, and his chief financial officer, Leo Sanchin, Indigo invites Winter to his office for brandy and a cigar. The brandy given to Winter is laced with part one of the epoxy. The part one epoxy is now stuck to the inside of Winter's esophagus. This will cause Winter to feel unwell the rest of the day, but causes no real medical distress.

That evening, after Winter leaves a Holiday party, he goes home, where his valet Maudlin gives him part two of the epoxy mixed in another drink. The epoxy expands in his esophagus, killing Winter.

However, Winter has other enemies who also want him dead. His estranged wife Karyn also wanted Winter dead and believes that she has indeed killed him. After Maudlin left Winter's home for his own, Karyn Winter snuck into Winter's home and shoved a pillow over his face. After Winter did

not struggle against the pillow, Karyn believed she had killed her husband and leaves the scene.

To complicate matters further, a man who has had shady dealings with Winter and has not been paid also thinks he has killed Winter. After Karyn Winter had left, Gerald Amberson breaks into Winter's home and stealthily stabs Winter three times and then flees the scene. Amberson also believes he has killed Winter.

### The Timeline

This assumes a standard Imperial day; adjust as needed. The 24-hour "military" clock is used.

#### 364-1117

Karyn Winter reconciles with her husband and spends the evening with him.

#### 365-1117

0500: A visitor, Leo Sanchin (this is covered in his suspect bio), enters Winter's home and Karyn confronts him. Winter sleeps through the encounter and Karyn goes back to bed.

0800: Karyn and Winter have an argument over Sanchin's arrival. Winter ends the argument by physically abusing Karyn. Karyn leaves.

0900: Winter goes for a business meeting with Leo Sanchin and Vaskar Indigo. Maudlin attends with him. After the meeting, Indigo invites Winter to his office for brandy and cigars. This is where Indigo gives him the first part of the epoxy.

1100: Winter and Maudlin go to the Star Spire restaurant. While there, his ex-business partner, Albert Hill, threatens him. Hill is currently the president of KlimberKorp, his own company, which has declared bankruptcy. Hill blames Winter for this. Winter only dabbles at his food and eats little complaining of nausea.

1200: Winter and Maudlin go to a meeting with Winter's son from a previous marriage. His son, who calls himself James Russell now,

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## Active Measures

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meets them at the Blue Parrot. Winter drinks nothing. Russell asks for money, but Winter turns him down. Both men storm out with Maudlin in tow.

1300: Winter and Maudlin have a clandestine meeting in the startown with Gerald Amberson concerning a stolen art artifact. Amberson needs a large amount of credits to pay for storage of the artifact. Winter declares that this is not part of their original deal and refuses to pay him. Winter and Maudlin leave.

1500: Complaining of nausea, Winter lays down for a quick nap before the Holiday party later in the evening. Maudlin does his laundry and puts out his clothing for the party.

1700: Karyn Winter arrives at Winter's home and has discussion with Maudlin. Karyn decides to attend the Holiday party with Winter.

1800: Winter and Karyn go to the Holiday party. Due to Winter's complaints of nausea, they stay only two hours and then return home.

2000: Karyn Winter leaves Winter's home for her apartment.

2100: Maudlin offers to get Winter an antacid for his nausea, Winter refuses.

2200: Devorah Winter Archon arrives at Winter's home and confronts him asking for more money for their son James. Winter refuses and goes back to bed.

### 001-1118 (Holiday)

0000: Winter calls for a prostitute with whom he has had dealings in the past. She stays for three hours and then leaves. During her stay, she gives Winter an antacid for his nausea and leaves the medication for him. Maudlin goes to bed as she arrives.

0400: Maudlin wakes Winter and gives him another medication for his nausea. This is the second part of the epoxy. Winter dies soon after.

0500: Karyn Winter uses her keycode and enters the residence without Maudlin realizing. Karyn covers his face with a pillow and after he doesn't resist, feels she has killed him. Karyn goes home terrified of being caught.

0530: Bumbling criminal Amberson breaks into the Winter home without waking Maudlin. Amberson quickly stabs Winter three times and after Winter does not fight back, believes he has killed him. Amberson runs back to his apartment, tossing the knife into a small pond on his way home.

0800: Maudlin awakes and is shocked to find Winter stabbed, but calls the police department and informs them of Winter's death.

## The Suspects

### Karyn Winter 586679 Age 28

Admin-1, Carousing-2, Equestrian-2, Steward-1

Karyn Winter is a former exotic dancer whom Thorne Winter married soon after his divorce from Devorah Winter Archon. Karyn had always wanted to better herself, but never did. She has had an unhappy marriage to Winter and has consoled herself by buying material goods and learning to ride some of the riding animals on the world.

Over the past two years, she has been confiding in Reginald Maudlin, Winter's personal valet and Maudlin has developed quite a crush on her. The last problem was the secret of Winter's bisexuality, which is what caused their latest breakup.

Karyn Winter has been living in an apartment for which Winter has paid. The night before Holiday, she spent the night with Winter, only to be surprised by the arrival of Leo Sanchin, Winter's financial officer and lover. She throws Sanchin out of the house and then confronts Winter about the visit. Winter then goes into a rage and beats her. After the physical beating she received before Holiday and the verbal abuse on Holiday, Karyn has decided this

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## Active Measures

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is her time to act. She used her keycode on Winter's door and (so she believes) smothered Winter to death. During the attack on Winter, she broke a fingernail and left that behind. Later, upon getting home she realized that she had lost it. She is now very scared and worried that she will be caught. She has been hiding in her apartment and refuses to come out unless it is absolutely necessary.

### **Devorah Flenton Winter Archon 566778 Age 62**

Admin-2, Engineering-2, Pilot-2, Leader-1, Liaison-1, Vacc Suit-1

Devorah Winter Archon was a former naval officer in the Galian Federation Navy when she met Thorne Winter. Winter swept the younger woman off her feet and she left the navy to become his wife. They were married for twenty years but were never happy. Devorah finally divorced Winter and took their child, James. Now she is living on Gateway with her husband Johann Archon.

Devorah's father is still in the Galian Federation Navy and is a member of the Admiralty. Admiral Chester Flenton also lives on Gateway and exhibits a great deal of influence over matters there. Admiral Flenton will protect his daughter at all costs.

### **Reginald Maudlin 887986 Age 54**

Steward-3, Stealth-3, Admin-2, Liaison-1, Equestrian-1, Handgun-1

Maudlin has worked in Thorne Winter's employ for the last thirty years. He became his personal valet twenty years ago. Only recently has Maudlin come to the conclusion that his employer is a man who needs to be killed.

Maudlin, in conjunction with Indigo, have created the plan to kill Winter. While Indigo is doing it for business purposes, Maudlin is doing it for love. Maudlin has fallen in love with Karyn Winter and believes that if he eliminates Thorne Winter, he will be her knight in shining armor.

It is thus Maudlin who has agreed to administer the final part of the epoxy to kill Winter.

Maudlin is a very mechanical man, appearing almost without emotion. He is the perfect servant who is seen little and not heard at all. He will often pass without notice in the household unless the PCs are not specifically watching him.

### **Karolin Berlioz ("Merlot") 8A9884 Age 32**

Carousing-3, Streetwise-3, Admin-2, Legal-2, Artisan (Erotic Art)-2, Interview-2, Handgun-1, Small Blade-1

"Merlot" is a tall, light skinned beautiful woman. She is a prostitute on a world where prostitution is legal. She is a professional, but she refuses to use her real name of Karolin Berlioz.

She has been called to Winter's house on several occasions, and the night of the murder is no different. She is staying in an apartment for which Winter is paying. When she hears of the murder however, she will fear for her own life and safety.

### **James Russell Winter 897866 Age 23**

Carousing-3, Streetwise-2, Intrusion-2, Handgun-2, Small Blade-2

James Winter, who goes by the name James Russell to avoid connection with his father, is a failed college student who has now turned to a life of crime. He has become a petty thief and has been caught on several occasions by the security forces.

After his latest arrest on petty burglary, his father totally cut him off from the family wealth. The two have since met three times, including the day before the murder, with James asking for money. Each of those three times, he was refused. After the last time, he went to his mother, who then pleaded with Winter on his behalf.

James spent all of the night of the murder in bed with a stripper of his acquaintance. He never left her home.

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### **Leo Sanchin 787AA6 Age 45**

Admin-3, Broker-3, Trader-2, Legal-2, JOT-1

Leo Sanchin is one of the true forces that are keeping Winterkorp afloat. While Winter is off being a playboy, the actual day-to-day workings of the company are being run by Sanchin.

Sanchin is in love with Winter. Sanchin is probably the only person on Gateway who is truly sorry that Winter has been murdered. He has been Winter's secret lover for years. He often goes to Winter's home in the night secretly and then leaves secretly in the morning. The last time however, he found Karyn Winter in Winter's bed and the two confronted each other. Sanchin went home and then met Winter at the business meeting the next day.

Sanchin will be the PCs' best hope for finding out about anything inside Winterkorp. Sanchin will be eager to help find the killer in any way possible.

### **Albert Hill 5769A8 Age 81 (looks 65)**

Admin-3, Legal-2, Broker-2, Trader-2, Naval Architect-1

Albert Hill is Thorne Winter's former business partner after the death of Winter's father. Hill was then ousted from the company by legal action and Winter assumed sole ownership of the corporation. Afterwards, Hill founded Klimberkorp, which has recently declared bankruptcy due to poor earnings.

Hill hates Winter with a passion and if the PCs see Hill, they may very well believe he killed Winter. He is quite capable and certainly has a motive. He will be open about his desire to see Winter dead, but will state that he did not kill him.

If it becomes public who the suspect is at any time, Hill will buy them the best lawyer he can find and actively work to see the suspect cleared of the charges.

### **Arvin Landau 7579A9 Age 86 (looks 56)**

Admin-3, Legal-3, Broker-2, Trader-2, Leader-1, Carousing-1

Arvin Landau is the owner of Gatekeeper Enterprises. Gatekeeper is currently the leader in shipping on Gateway and is taking most of Winterkorp's business away from them. Landau has no reason to kill Winter, but the PCs may wish to check him out.

Landau will be superficially sorry to see Winter dead, but if pressed he will admit it doesn't hurt his feelings at all. Landau sees this as the ignoble end of a man who should have been dead long ago.

Landau will be friendly, but has little time to spend with the PCs. He will help them very little.

### **Vaskar Indigo 656AA7 Age 71 (looks 45)**

Admin-3, Chemistry-3, Legal-2, Engineering-2, Broker-2, Trader-2, Biology-1, Liaison-1, Robotics-1

Indigo has worked for Thorne Winter for years with little thanks. He hates Winter but loves Winterkorp and its employees. Indigo feels Winter has destroyed the company, especially by attempting to diversify it. Indigo knows that if Winter were dispatched, he would be able to bring Winterkorp back to greatness and destroy its rivals.

It is thus with a pleasant irony that Indigo has killed Winter with the product of his diversification, the epoxy.

Indigo will be indignant if questioned, and seem offended that the PCs would even consider questioning him. He is however, the expert concerning the epoxy, and if the players learn of the epoxy's relation to Winter's death, he will be the first suspect.

If questioned and pressed hard, Indigo will explode and tell the details of his plan and expect the PCs to revel in his genius as well. Needless to say, they will not.

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## Active Measures

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### Gerald Amberson 788553 Age 32

Streetwise-3, Intrusion-3, Gambling-2, Small Dagger-2, Broker-1, Trader-1, Carousing-1

Amberson is not a very intelligent man. He is a petty thief, turned stolen art fence, who came up with an art piece that he thought would interest Thorne Winter and make him rich. He was right, it did interest Winter. However, instead of paying Amberson for the piece, he just hired other thieves to break into Amberson's apartment and steal it.

The day before the murder, Amberson convinced Winter to meet with him. During the meeting, Winter refused to pay Amberson and left the man sitting at his table cursing.

That night, Amberson decided to get revenge and attack Winter in his sleep. He expertly defeated the keypad and entered the home, only to quickly stab Winter three times in fright and run from the house. In his hurry to get away, he tossed the knife used in the murder into a small pond.


He is now on the run in Gateway's seedier districts. He is not very clever though, and should be easily found by the PCs if they look for him there.

### The Investigation

The biggest clue to your PCs that something odd is happening should be the lack of blood at the crime scene. Many who are mystery buffs or have medical skill will instantly realize that the stab wounds did not kill Winter. The other clues, such as the fingernail left by Karyn Winter and the dagger dropped in the pond by Amberson can also be found by forensics and investigation techniques.

Most of the clues should be distributed to the players through interviews with the many suspects. In some cases, suspects will lead to other suspects (e.g., an interview with Maudlin might lead to questioning Albert Hill).

If you are playing this without changes, consider making some of the PCs part of the mystery. When I ran this for my gaming group, the prostitute was one of the PCs and another PC was working with Amberson. The others were investigators and one was a journalist trying to get the story.

Hopefully, this will lead to an entertaining night of sleuthing and interviewing NPCs. The game's afoot! 

## Critics' Corner

## Off the Table

### Designers and Dragons

reviewed by Megan Robertson

This review was originally posted to [rpg-resource.org.uk](http://rpg-resource.org.uk) in 2011.

*Designers and Dragons*. Shannon Applecline.

Original Publication: 2011

Current Availability: Out of Print (see note at end)

This is a monumental work, a comprehensive and scholarly history of the role-playing industry from its inception in the early 1970s to the present day. The focus is interesting, concentrating on the individuals and companies that have made role-playing what it is today rather than looking at the games themselves.

Whilst detailed, the writing flows well, making it eminently readable and often entertaining, a fascinating survey of the companies and people who have shaped role-playing and are responsible for most of the books on my shelves (or, these days, lurking on the RPG hard drive)—and who have provided me with years of entertainment and passion. If your interest in role-playing goes anywhere beyond the next dungeon delve, if you like to know the

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## Critics' Corner

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background and history of the games you enjoy, you should find something here catches your attention... and once caught, be warned, it may be a while before you can tear yourself away!

The chosen approach gives an overview worthy of the most epic campaign showing how the waxing and waning of public interest in role-playing has affected and been affected by developments within the industry as a whole. Depending on your particular interests, you can follow a particular company's or designer's fortunes, explore the state of play of the industry at a time of your choice—an interesting place to start, perhaps, is what it was like when you first took die in hand—or see which developments or innovations in role-playing or even the world around it had the most significant effects.

There is even material here that could attract the sociologist or social historian, or the budding game designer who seeks to understand the heritage of his craft as well as learning the nuts and bolts of game design. Should anyone offer a course in role-playing games, this is likely to feature on the reading list! And if that isn't enough, it does not presume any

prior knowledge of the role-playing industry, introducing and explaining even the people who—to grey-haired ladies like me who grew up with role-playing and have been involved in it all their adult life—are notable industry personalities or even friends. None of the insider deigning to enlighten you here, but a clear exposition of the industry and those who shaped it.

For the scholar, there are quotes and references aplenty—but entertaining and informative enough that the more general reader is not put off. If you delve far enough you can find out the context in which your favourite games or, often, individual books were published—fascinating insights that will ensure I return again and again as I develop my RPG Resource website.

Authoritative, entertaining, a fine and detailed survey of the development of this fine hobby from its earliest days to the present, filled with personalities and drama... this is a triumph of a work worthy of the highest praise. ✪

*Editor's note: This was originally published as the single volume reviewed here. It was expanded into a crowdfunded four-volume set in 2014 under the same title, currently available in softcover.*

## Raconteurs' Rest

### The Adventures of Gerry Fynne

by Sam Swindell

#### Chapter 9: Onto the Ohasset Main

The trip in to the high port was still 12 hours, so Gerry was soon out of questions. They watched a few Tri-vids from Baakh's small but prestigious entertainment sector. Runch had another *Querro* at the beginning of the first one, but then stopped drinking. They both napped, and had two meals and a snack which were notable for the fresh produce, and slightly alien flavors. Gerry was anxious in the last few hours, though, and kept re-reading the *Scout Quinn* book to no avail. It neither calmed nor dis-

tracted him. His mind was wandering, but after a eternity they approached the highport.

Runch got his bag together, and checked Gerry's ticket for his next leg of the trip. He was headed to Marda, down the mining arm of the Ohasset Main, and there were a dozen ships leaving with open passages. They headed off the boat quickly and got a skidder for their bags.

"Is your handcomp off?" the man asked him.

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"Yeah. That seemed like the thing." Gerry realized his voice sounded squeaky. Runch pulled out a small tablet of his own and waved Gerry to get the skidder loaded.

"Mine on the bottom, please, Gerry. Alright, here we go: a fat trader on G217."

Gerry had lifted the 9 Bigsofts on to the skidder, and turned to follow Runch, who did a couple of half turns in different directions before he fully got his bearings and route figured between the small, rotating holo display and the busy corridor they had entered. They made a couple of turns, into one large corridor after the next and entered into a huge lift that took them two levels up. After what Gerry guessed was another couple hundred meters down another corridor, they pulled up to the entrance to the docking arm G217.

Outside on the arm, Gerry could see a subsidized merchant painted in an almost iridescent green. Inside there were two crew standing by the desk that controlled the access to the docking arm; one had on gray coveralls and the other a bomber jacket of a similar shade. The wiry redhead in the coveralls held a small wand scanner, as if he were about to play the match point in some racket game on which much was riding. The woman in the bomber jacket leaned on the edge of a counter, and looked languidly at a battered hand terminal. The board behind them read, "Awaiting passenger."

"How many you waiting for?" Runch queried, at a louder volume than Gerry had ever heard him use.

"You two'd fill us. Give you private cabins'n everythin'!" the redhead said, changing the cant of his paddle, as if sizing up his opponent's serving posture.

"Not what I asked, son," Runch fairly barked, though they were at the desk by now.

"Frak, the Cap'n will take one, or keep us here another two hours!" the woman in the bomber jacket cracked, only briefly looking up before gazing back at her terminal with a mildly sour expression.

"Well, your wait's over then," Runch smiled, "if you make sure he's your last." He slid Gerry's middle passage voucher over the counter, with a 50 credit disk underneath it, to the now mildly-interested woman. She took the passage while deftly sweeping the fiftydisk into her other hand, scanned the passage, did a quick iris scan of Gerry, and waved him towards the now exuberant paddle-wielding inspector. Gerry pulled his bags off the top of the skidder as the woman engaged in a somewhat heated interchange over a small com on the collar of her jacket:

"We got one, and we're leavin'... Cap'n, we're leaving or I'm leaving. I got two months' pay coming, if you remember. You said we wait for one. We've got one."

"Any weapons? Incendiaries? Hazardous materials?" the spry crewmember barked as he sprung on Gerry's bags, waving the wand scanner, while pecking at its controls and not waiting for any answers.

Gerry turned to Runch, to thank him.

Runch took his hand, "I'm not done 'til this can's buttoned up, young'un. If they'll double stack cabins on this boat, they could still fit both of those bottom feeders in before you left."

For some reason, Gerry at this moment caught sight of the lieutenant, lurking back in a small corridor opening. The hood and sunglasses made no difference and he recognized the tawny officer immediately, who turned away. Runch followed his gaze, and nodded when Gerry looked back to him, "Always bring help if you can."

"Thanks."

The enthusiastic inspector was finishing, as Gerry caught the woman wind down her comm interchange with an acid, "Yeah, I thought so... well... maybe."

He waved Gerry forward for a wand of his own, then pronounced, "Welcome aboard *Miord's Mahid!*" He slammed the door of a small cube shut with Gerry's bags inside, and grabbed the handle of the small skidder it sat on. Gerry looked up to see

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that the board now read, "Departed," turned to wave at the two officers, and shuffled briskly into the docking arm, more to escape the now brusque woman's glare than to follow his bags down the short passage to the airlock's open hatch.

Gerry had no idea what *Mahid* meant, but she had a pleasant smell of spices and cooking that met him at the hatch. The two of them made a tight fit in the lift with the skidder, and a couple of the crewmen wearing gray bomber jackets met them when they got out of the lift on the bridge deck. One wore captain's pips, basic pilot's wings embroidered in emerald thread, and a wispy, unkempt beard that was a little grayer than his receding hair. He sneered and turned back towards the bridge. The other, younger crewman was larger, dark, and muscular, holding a compact shotgun at a good port arms: he jerked his head ever-so-slightly aft, "This deck is off-limits during passage." His jacket had "Security" in large letters on the breast.

Gerry nodded and turned away as he followed the ginger crew member aft with his bags. They went all the way back, to a cabin opening into the second of two small passenger lounges. The fore lounge had a long, narrow table at which a family was sitting, having apparently finished eating, their pans still in front of them. The father was idly playing a small stringed instrument Gerry had never seen, while the four of them studiously avoided looking up. The aft lounge had six over-stuffed chairs arrayed in front of two flat-screens, one of which was right beside his cabin door.

The crewman dogged the smallcube to the bulkhead, and was gone without a word. There it was nested under some other storage cabinets, beside the fresher. Gerry turned towards the closed door, as an announcement came that they had cast off, and pre-jump maneuver was projected to be 74 hours. He noticed the desk was a fold-down from the bulkhead across from the bed, with two folding chairs in

a locker beside. The configuration was a familiar one, from trivids and flatscreen images, as it was essentially standard in smaller ships' cabins; this room was about 20% smaller than his on the *Maid* had been. He checked his rations in the cabin's locker, and he was two meals short. It fit: everything about the ship are crew seemed seedy, stretched, or ambivalent. No one would be smiling and trumpeting the name of the line here, Gerry mused. The standard provision was 42 meals for a jump. Now usually a jump took less, from castoff to docking than 14 days, but that was the standard for rations. That's where Chandler's 44 became so popular: for the normal life support cost for a jump, Chandlers put in a couple extra meals, and none of the 44 were the same. It reduced the tedium of transit. Of course, a number of meals were often left behind, and after a while a crew saving up the leftovers could save on life support, if just by a small amount. It meant, however, that there were repeats of the often unwanted meals, but it was legal.

He unpacked his clothes, and toiletries. The fresher was smaller than the one aboard the *Maid*, but it appeared clean. There was a placard inside the door saying, "Passengers are responsible for room maintenance. Questions should be directed to the Second Officer." He noticed that there were containers of cleaners, neither new nor empty, in a labeled locker. The word hit him, like the forgotten name of an acquaintance that pops up in the middle of the night, "Adequate." Everything was adequate, neither impressively good nor infuriatingly lacking. He knew he would not dare whine about two ration trays: maybe for three, as that was a whole day. But what of two? If he complained, they would probably just give him two packs, and a nasty look.

This was not a free trader, but a fat trader, usually subsidized for cargo hauling by worlds that needed the trade. That meant that they were a lot safer financially for the owners, and less worry was spent

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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on speculative trade or trying to seek out business in the dangerous corners of the black. As a result, they were not as dangerous, and so less often the subject of romance in the media. She was twice the size of a free trader, but carried two and a half times the cargo, and had her own launch. She was also able to carry outsized cargo. She was smaller, and slower than a liner, however, and certainly not as elegant.

Gerry went to sleep, and woke at a strange time. There was a really small terminal in his room, and he did not want to turn his handcomp on. He was not confident in the security of whatever network this ship was running. He remembered passing a couple of terminals in the lounge. He grabbed a tray of something with a Vilani-sounding name numbered 34, of which there were three, and went out into the lounge. There was a small child watching a war movie on the flat screen, but otherwise the lounge was empty. He popped his tray into the warmer, which had unfamiliar controls. He realized this was a local repair, using a console from some other device, on which he typed in the manual numbers from the package, and hoped for the best.

While watching the movie, a well-known one about Imperial armor in the Fourth Frontier War, he heard a cabin door open behind him, and voices comes out that caused his heart to skip a beat, "...we just had time to explain this deal to him before he was nabbed. Then he would sing when he was interrogated, and they went looking for 'Mr. Big', with nary a thought of us. It worked like clockwork!"

It was one of the two con men that Runch and the lieutenant had spirited him away from. They had not, it would seem, followed him, but he had unwittingly followed them! Protecting him from being accosted, or followed onto a ship, the good Captain Runch had delivered him instead. It was a blow, and he felt like there was a weight suddenly on his chest. He still believed it was an honest mistake, the officers making the same mistake Gerry

had, in assuming that the trouble was behind, not coincidentally ahead. Gerry was at least thankful for his location, though, with his back to them.

Sir Geoffrey said to his companion, "Yes, yes. I remember you told me of that once or twice." and Gerry could tell they were moving to his right, towards the other screen. He tried to be casual in turning a little to his left, and vargring down his last few mouthfuls of his meal. He pulled up his hood, turning more to his left as he made his way back towards his stateroom. He said a quick prayer under his breath, and made himself dispose of his meal tray at the galley station before making his way the long three meters back to his stateroom. As soon as the door latched he locked it and threw himself onto his bunk. He let his breathing go now, not aware he had almost been holding it in his forced nonchalance. His lungs heaved as he surrendered to the panic: They know who I am, where I'm going, and there's no one on this ship to help me.

The first thing like homesickness hit him, but it was not for home; he wanted to be back on the *Maid* with her protective crew and big, beautiful, familiar spaces. There were some meds in the 'fresher. A pair of LSPills, and 10 sleeping pills. He took one of the latter, and placed an LSPill and a bottle of water next to his bunk, in a recess in the paneling seemingly designed just for this purpose. It seemed like a while until sleep took him, but his sleep was sound. He dreamed of Jack the Fourth Officer, and Gunny chasing Auntie around the scrap yard. Then suddenly it was Auntie being taken away by Sir Geoffrey and a Vargr in matching purple velvet suits with short capes. He awoke with an abdominal lurch, and surprised himself in how quickly he grabbed the LSPill on first opening his eyes.

His memory came back as he sucked down the water, the pill just a memory of a now-pleasant taste under his tongue. He downed another water from a bottle in his bag, and pulled out a tray without look-

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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ing to see what it was. He ate it cold in his cabin, though it was one made to be eaten hot, as it turned out. Some meat casserole dish that reminded him of Annapabarian influence. Their restaurants were scattered across the sector, though to hear Father tell it the restaurant food was unlike anything from their home world. He opened the grubby little terminal inside the fold-up desk, and looked for a book.

Some six hours later, stiff from sitting in the small folding chair reading on the droyne-sized monitor screen without break, Gerry got up and stretched. He busied himself with some calisthenics, which he had not done for weeks. He did them in his suit, but he still felt the workout was not so much to tax him, but rather to busy his mind. As Gunny had told them about, he did his pushups in the suit, with the EVA kit on, and the bigsoft full of rations across his shoulders. As ungainly as it was, this at least worked these muscles to failure in the half gravity of the ship. The running in place with this getup on was tedious, and after 15 minutes he felt chafed and a bit like he was going to go out of his skull. After a shower, and another cold meal, he took another sleeping pill. This time he noted that he had slept for 11 hours. He spent another 4 days sequestered in his cabin like this, and was about to go stir crazy. He decided that he would chance heating his meal, and bringing it back.

There was, in fact, little more to do in the somewhat paltry lounge than in his cabin, but he felt he just needed to get out. He put on his Guides workout shirt with the hood again, this time with some protective glasses, picked his meal well, and ventured out. He did not see the two men he feared. After he had heated his meal he heard them, though, and he felt panic rush in. He realized they were gambling in their cabin, as he was quietly removing his tray from the warmer/cooler. They had apparently left the door open, and he marked its location in his mind. He could not see them from this angle, but the voices were unmistakable.

Gerry relished his meal. The steak was hot, the ice cream cold, and the salad pleasantly cool. Chandler's meals, while not the best available, were certainly the best value. Anything better required extra expense over the normal life support package. When food was the only thing that would necessarily vary from day to day on a long voyage, the quality and variety was of palpable importance. Cabin fever was very real, and was a threat to safety and sanity aboard, to say nothing of morale and efficiency. Gerry had found himself looking forward to each meal with anticipation now bordering on obsession. While Chandler's 44 was a stand-by, there were larger packages: Chandler's 99 and 222 were also available for longer voyages, but usually only by special arrangements. On the *Maid*, he had been given a 99 to start with, and it was another luxury he had gotten used to: no repeats for a month.

He prayed now, once more, to avoid the two con men, whoever they really were. He realized the fact that he had recently been musing over the inadequacy of his rations, and was now focusing his gaze into the empty dinner tray made for an interesting synergy of images and thoughts. Was he praying in his heart for better food, while his mind's voice asked for the more respectable gift of safety? Out loud he simply stated under his breath, "You know what I need better than I. Help me now, Lord."

Turning away, he washed his tray in the fresher, and dumped it into the receptacle there. He plumbed the ship's really pretty wretched entertainment library, and came up with the flat version of *Scout Flynn*. He could not count the number of times he has seen it, but it was soothing on a very basic level. He replayed it 97 minutes later, and dozed somewhere in the credits. Waking, he put on his hood and glasses, heated another meal, returned to his cabin, ate while watching a newsfeed some 5 months old, and drugged himself into the longer sleep that brought another day in jump to closure.

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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Two days later, while heating dinner it came: "Master Flynn, Gerry Flynn, I believe it is!" He turned to the agonizingly close voice. It was Geoffrey, that damned vulture, standing virtually at his right shoulder. He heard another chair scrape back to his left.

"Do sit down with us, boy!" the other barked.

"You gave me start, sir. I am unwell, and it would be rude to eat alone in front of you. Please..." Gerry said, maneuvering around the two while almost dropping his precious seafood tray. He almost bolted into his cabin, and locked the door behind him. He was aware of them speaking and calling to him as he did so, but the words were like so much malignant static. Indeed, he would have as likely been able to reproduce the exact sounds of specific snarl from a police dog, and as unlikely to miss its' malignant content, as to reproduce whatever words the pair was throwing up in his way and after him.

He sat on his bunk, and found some small comfort in scarfing down his meal. He drank a full two liters of the slightly metallic water, while taking his daily drugs. He did not sleep easily, but rather tossed and turned in tormented semi-consciousness. He had been afraid of the pair when they had first approached him. That is to say, when he was on a friendly ship, with a crew he trusted, before he had turned them in. It was unclear to him whether they had guessed his role in having them removed from the *Maid*, though he had certainly feared that they did. Now with his reaction, there could be no doubt that they must know.

In the morning when he woke, Gerry ate a random meal cold, while again checking their projected time to drop out of jump: less than 40 hours away. He prayed distractedly while looking up the messaging procedures for the ship. He went and re-packed his bags while running some laundry, contemplating what to do. It was unlikely that this ship's crew cared about any of the pair's past alleged sins enough to do anything drastic with them. They could not be put off the ship until it exited jump, and after that would potentially cost the ship

extra, and was thus highly unlikely. The crew just cared about their fares. He had some ideas, but they all depended on the crew's participation. Then he struck it: the crew just cared about their fares!

He passed the next 43 hours on edge, but hopeful. He had a plan, that was a bit of a long shot, but he waited until they came out of jump to see whether it was feasible. The jump exit, LSPill at hand, passed as an almost comforting event, and as he got on the terminal there it was: He could rendezvous with an outgoing ship's boat in 16 hours if he paid the transfer passage. It was 128 cruds: a very small price. He asked in a message for the ship's security officer to meet him in his cabin. The brute strode in some 19 minutes later, and agreed after a slight hesitation to shut the cabin door.

Gerry took a while before he could make himself understood completely. He was afraid of the two men, though, and whatever the crew said about it mattered not: Gerry made clear that they would follow him off the ship if they knew he had left. It was in the ship's interest, therefore, to let on that he was staying aboard, but had asked for protection. Obviously, if the ship sold his cabin to another for the next leg of the trip, that was a problem, but even if that happened, then it was only likely the ruse would be discovered, and not inevitable. The ruse was somewhat self-supporting. By taking the two in to have a "talk" about staying away from Gerry, the crew could keep his departure and absence under wraps. Likewise, if they manipulated "guarding" the empty stateroom well enough they could disguise its status. Even a new passenger might take a bribe to stay under wraps until the fairly quick transit to the jump point.

Gerry was desperate, talking high and rapidly. The security man said, "Alright. I'll take this crap to the Captain, but it will cost you two hundred." Gerry nodded, too quickly, then said, "A hundred now, and a hundred if he agrees." He held out the bills.

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The hulking man spat on the deckplates in disgust, but took the bills and strode out. After a long, anxious wait, a message came back. Gerry was to have his small cube packed and be ready to move in 14 hours 23 minutes, and would take the launch to dock with a ship's boat that would take him to the *Anxious A*, a far trader heading on. He should leave 5 ration packs in his room. He naturally picked the ones that no one liked...

Gerry was ecstatic. He ate and then slept until his alarm woke him 11 hours later. He had been told to stay in his cabin until they came to get him, and did so, watching the clock. The time then started to grind; despite his initial relief, now that Gerry was watching the clock, he was thinking of all the things that could go wrong. Number one place for it to go wrong, the crewman had just taken his money, and would do nothing. Or, he could be spotted by the con men while being moved, and either stopped or followed. The crew could have sold him out, but that was doubtful: it would have cost the con men a lot to make up for the fares the ship would lose. He was not even sure how the con men would stop him; he did not want to underestimate their guile, however. They had already proven very adept at getting past security.

Maybe the *Anxious A* had sold both its empty cabins already; it was the only ship that would work. It would work well, though, if Gerry could just get there. Being a far trader, it would jump right past the *Mahid's* next destination on the main, Gidikurda, and put in at Guarda. Unless the con men caught another far trader with two empty berths, and none was showing up on the Starport Authority's feeds, then they would be about two weeks behind him. As he saw the clock tick several minutes past when he thought he should have been boarding the launch, though, his heart sank. The security goon had just taken his money, and he was sure that there was nothing he could do about it.

His mind wandered from his prayer, indeed, he could not have even told what prayer it wandered

from. Gerry jumped when he heard the hard knocking on the cabin door, but then he realized it was not his; it was another door. The voice was clear and loud enough for him to hear through his door, "We need to talk to you two gentlemen. It's a matter of ship's security. Please follow us."

Gerry shouldered his bag, and undogged the small cube from the bulkhead while he heard some muffled words of protest, and then "Captain's office," and no more. In a minute a rap had come on his cabin door, which he opened. The same two crew members, the bitter looking woman in the bomber jacket and the animated, wiry man in the coveralls swept in. The man wordlessly locked the small cube in the skidder, and she asked directly, "You ready?" in a tone more of command than solicitation. Gerry nodded and stepped after them. They turned aft, through a bulkhead door, and the man clamped the small cube to the open lift to the launch, then sprung up the ladder ahead of it. Gerry turned toward the woman, "Thanks."

"We save a couple of fares, and screw with those two *mirotu*-suckers in the process. That's a good day for me. You must have been scared, though, 'cause I never saw you."

Gerry for some reason noticed that her eyes were a dark hazel, and had an almost kind look. "Good day for me too, Ma'am." Her expression had just started to shift when he looked away. He would later wonder in what direction it had been shifting. The open cube lift had stowed, and he clambered up into the launch. The floor iris closed and before he could get to his couch and strap in, he realized they had already cast off. It was just him and the thin man, who was engrossed in a transmission about the quick rendezvous with a fast boat. He turned partly around, after Gerry had already strapped in and barked, "Strap in. We're going to turn off the deck plates to move the cargo quicker. You'll go last, so stay here 'til I get you."

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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The docking happened quickly, the frenetic ginger crewman shut off the grav plates, and then flew down the access below the floor iris. Gerry felt a couple of subtle vibrations through his feet as hatches were slammed open and closed, then the crewman reappeared, "Ready?" He reached out to Gerry from the open hatch, pulled him from his seat, and with a "Watch yer head," launched him head-first down the combination lift, airlock, and docking hatch into the fast boat below.

Apparently, there was some other cargo that was going as well, as there were four other small cubes dogged to the bulkheads of the boat, which was at 90 degrees to the launch he just left. A Vargr crewman in a vacc suit fairly caught him, and swung him towards a couch. He could tell that something was odd about this, as they were still in zero gravity. It was not until later that Gerry realized that the Vargr must have been wearing magnetic boots to have been able to swing him through the turn like that in zero-G. The hatch closed, and an automated announcement came across PA of the craft, "Strap into your couches. Ten seconds until gravity restored. Five seconds." The gravity actually came back more gradually than he had expected, and the transition left him queasy. He could tell from the stars out the cockpit windows that they had flipped, and he imagined they were doing a fast burn to catch up with the *Anxious A*.

The Vargr had undogged his helmet (Gerry noticed a pun there), and explained, "That will be 135 cruds, unless you got a ticket?" Gerry noted that this was 7 credits higher than the reserved price, but was in no posture to haggle. He dug for the money while the crewman noted, "We should be there in about three hours. There's sandwiches. One's included. Two cruds apiece after that." After handing over an untidy stack of bills and disks, he grabbed an Everfresh from the basket, and vargred it down.

He read an old book that he had forgotten he had stowed on his handcomp months before until

they docked with the *A*. As they pulled up to dock, Gerry could see a somewhat battered-looking white hull with green trim. A docking tube extended to the starboard airlock, a casually dressed crewman with an auto snub pistol in a leg holster entered with a skidder, an older man with the remnants of an old Vilani-style cook's tunic over military uniform trousers was following. "You'd be Mr. Fynne..."

Gerry went to stand up and realized he was still belted in. He limbered himself somewhat awkwardly, arose and dug for his Middle Passage vouchers, all the while confirming that indeed he was Gerry Fynne. The older man did a retina scan and scanned the two vouchers while droning on, "I am Fred Goode, your steward, cargo master, and purser for the voyage. I will be happy to be of service for any of your needs while aboard." Just as quickly, the steward spun on his heel, motioning Gerry to follow. He led him in through the airlock of the starship, and they rose in a small lift that adjoined it. Gerry noted that they were not sharing the lift with his luggage, and was pleased to see he had one of 6 staterooms around a lounge with a large window facing forward. It was the standard layout for a far trader, which he hadn't really thought about until entering.

Gerry knew that the glassteel window was about as sturdy as the rest of the ship's hull, but it gave him a somewhat eerie feeling. As they were heading out to their jump point, there was nothing to see but stars of course, and those only very faintly with the lounge lights even partially on, as they were. The steward was still showing him his cabin, in a mindless routine when the small cube was wheeled in. The slightly larger cabin had drawers for all of his things, and he started to unpack the essentials for the next ten days or so. He then checked his ration locker, and was pleased to see an unadulterated Chandler's 44 waiting for him. He locked his stateroom door, and lay down on his bunk.

*I made it*, he thought, but his relief was much more tenuous than he had over seven weeks before, when first boarding the *Maid*. He had just two more

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jumps to New Konigsberg, but he thought that the final stages of the journey held he knew not what. If the con men had found out about his father's claim, and if there was some urgency that drove Eve to bring him there, what did that mean he would face when he got there? As the more known threats from being caught leaving receded, the more unknowable threats of arriving at the claim grew more distinct.

That said, the threat of being caught by Auntie, or her agents seemed still real, if minor. If the con men had found out about the claim, might not some private investigator? He mused that their route was actually bringing them closer to home. A liner like the *Maid*, had it traveled that way, could have made New Konigsberg in two jumps. Of course, there was no reason for a Nundis liner to go that way, really, and he had been in quite a hurry to get on the first thing jumping out. He could almost hear Gunny, "Could'a-would'a-should'a, sunshine!!" He had made the right choice, however, even if panic had been the prime motivator. The mining arm was really a backwater, and no fast ships would go directly there from Griik Maeii. The trade routes existed for a reason: raw materials back to the manufacturers; manufactured goods to the agricultural worlds, backhauling foodstuffs on the route. Unpredictable wanderings were the province of the free traders, often taking their single parsec jumps in new directions dictated by speculative cargo overlooked by larger trading concerns, but the long-legged liners stayed on their published routes.

He rose from his bunk again. He pulled the last UrpUrp bottle from his pack, and went out into the lounge. He was tired of skulking in his cabin, and decided to meet some of the passengers. This ship had a different feel from either the *Maid* or the rattle-trap fat trader: it was worn, but cared for. The crew looked neither polished nor ambivalent, but at least pretended to care. There were two square tables, bolted to the deck, and capable of being linked to-

gether, to seat a maximum of about ten, a couch, and a couple of lounge chairs. It made for a somewhat cramped but cozy feel. While the *Mahid* had the feel of a bus station from back home, this felt more like someone's basement recreation room, if a basement opened onto an endless vista of the black of space, that is. There were four men watching a fairly new holo in the corner with the couch, but they took no notice of him. He pulled up a chair; he did not know much about the holo, but it seemed a new one from Baakh. He drank his last UrpUrp in quiet celebration of making it this far, and watched, forgetting.

### Chapter 10: Anxiously absconding

The men seemed oblivious to him, when the holo ended and they got up. Gerry was going to introduce himself, but his resolve faltered. The same old fears returned; he would make some mistake, and they would guess something...tell somebody. There were only seven more hours until they jumped, and he was anxious that, somehow, the con men would catch up. He had already figured it was impossible: by the time they had figured out what was up, they would then have to arrange for another boat, which then would take hours to make the trips. They just would not have time, even with everything going their way. The prospect still chilled him a bit, however. He could have seen it wrong, somehow.

It had been a few hours since his sandwich, and Gerry felt ravenous. e grabbed a tray from his cabin, warmed it, and took it back in to eat in isolation. The ship was actually, though worn, a little higher tech than the *Maid* had been, especially in the interior fittings; after going through a tutorial for about 20 minutes, he had figured out how to use the in-cabin holo-projector to project one of the tri-vids over his bed. He could lie on his back in his bunk and watch holos! He was happy to learn that there were also scores of holos that were new to him in the *A's* computer. He showered, and lay back on his bunk, with an LSPill and water bottle on the shelf next to his

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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head, and cued up two more full-length holos. Taking a pee break before the second, Gerry set an alarm to pause the holo, vibrate the bed, and play a bar from one of KiKi Dish's more popular ballads 2 minutes before they jumped.

Predictably, he dozed during this tri-vid, a well-known comedy, and found himself sitting up while swigging from the water bottle, the pill already under his tongue, before he either realized what was going on or KiKi's bar of baleful strings was finished. He remembered that Gunny had said their brains had a autopilot for waking, which they could train: thinking about the deliberate placement of their gear just before sleep would allow them to grab it before they were fully awake, perfecting this with repetition. If they cared about getting up, they would not sleep through their alarms. If they set alarms they did not care about, they would train themselves to ignore alarms. His initial bout of jump sickness back on the *Maid* had been enough to impress on him the importance of getting the LSPill down quickly, and now he was doing it in his sleep.

The wave of jump sickness washed over Gerry, without really having any effects. He then checked the Starport Authority's last listing of outbound commercial ships, looking for any that could even theoretically catch up or outdistance them, and he found only one extremely long shot. A liner like the *Maid* could have done it, but there were none, and none would jump into New Konigsberg without an escorted convoy anyway. There were a number of free and fat traders jumping a single parsec, but the next far trader—the *Lucky Shot*—was due to jump out in four days, and had not yet even docked with the highport. As a fantastical exercise, he tried to think what would be necessary for that lone ship to catch them: turning around, a rendezvous with tankers, other small craft to transfer passengers and cargo; another thirty-some hours of maneuvering back out to any safe jump point. Then, the *A* would

have to make a 90th percentile jump for length of time in jumpspace, and the *Lucky Shot* a 10th percentile jump. Thus, the Duke of Ley himself would have no better than about a 1% shot of catching them with the ships then available. There were certainly other variables, and the con men were no dukes or millionaire traders, to be able to command such instant, very costly, support. They would furthermore need some luck to even realize what happened before the *Mahid* left Marda Highport. There was thus a good chance that they would be not just 4 days behind, but two weeks or more.

For the first time in quite a while, Gerry felt a little smug.

Unlike his having been shepherded by the sympathetic Runch, and Purser Alice, he had in this case convinced the ambivalent *Mahids* to help him in a plan of his own making, and this was really his accomplishment. Running from Auntie onto the *Maid* had been a lot easier in effect, and seemed far behind him: all he had to do was avoid well-known cameras. This felt like playing in an adult world, though, with the deck stacked against him...and still coming out ahead.

He went out and heated up breakfast, and watched 5 men at a card game that he did not recognize, and could not figure out. He was mildly interested, but his ignorance meant less to him than it probably would have a few weeks ago. His fear was less pronounced than it had been in the weeks since leaving the *Maid*, and he actually wished almost yearningly that Gunny could see him right now.

He did not introduce himself to any of the men; they all seemed to know each other, and pay no attention to him. He took time over his breakfast, though, pulled up a group of four *Scout Flynn* novels that he had not read on his handcomp, and sat back down on the couch to read the one that had the most appealing damsel in distress on the cover. With a quick break for lunch, he sat there and read the

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whole thing, "cover-to-cover," as Auntie would say. That phrase always seemed odd with electronic books. The book took his mind away from it, mostly. As the fear receded, jubilation had flared up then fizzled, leaving him with a loneliness that was very real. The tedium of star travel had been broken up on the *Maid* by his time with Clyde and then the Yungs; even the oppression of his fearful isolation on the *Mahid* had been a distraction.

"Fear is the big kid on the block; when he's there, ya don't pay attention to anyone else. Until you get fear under control, you really can't assess your situation." Gunny had believed in repetition. He also believed in using emotion to imprint information. He brought them to the carnivore viewing tank of the aquarium, and made them hold their noses against the glass for two minutes, while the doorsharks had swooped in to gobble morsels just centimeters in front of their stationary noses. (Gunny had paid off an attendant for the well-choreographed feeding.) After he had picked an oblivious Kelly, George, and Gerry's pockets, Gunny had called the boys back away from the tank, given them their knives and wallets back, and given them the line. They then sat down to study carnivore defense techniques, the opening chapter of Gunny's training for the Aquatic Survival badge. Previously, when they were bored, he had tried to pick their pockets, and they had usually caught him. He had repeated the lesson on a rappelling course, and by a campfire that he fed some flash powder to. They got it: fear eclipses and makes us forget or ignore the obvious.

Now, however, the fear was gone and the previously ignored loneliness was palpable. He thought of all the people in his life he would never see again: Guides he would never see, schoolmates, Gunny, Father Ki-O'Malley, his father, Sandy, the other girls who had never been his...even Auntie. He was there looking distractedly at his empty ra-

tion tray when Goode startled him, "Everything alright, Mr. Fynne: Food not spoiled, crapper working? I made your bunk, even though all of you are middle passages. Angling for a fat tip, eh?!"

The grungy steward's interruption was both unnerving and welcome. "Oh, yeah. Yes, sir, everything's fine."

Goode plunked a bag of snacks and a bottle of what Gerry imagined was a local version of UrpUrp on the small table in front of him. "Let me know if you need anything. I will go over routing you onto any connections later in the trip. You're getting off at Guarda?"

Gerry nodded. "We have no small craft, so you'll need to pay for any transfer, of course, but Guarda Highport is a nice enough place," the ruddy-faced purser went on, giving the table a cursory wipe "We continue on to Egran, you know, to pick up the groceries. Funny route." Gerry nodded, and Goode wandered off, wiping a few surfaces somewhat vaguely with the rag that he was apparently mostly using as a prop, flipping it onto his shoulder before making a few bawdy comments to a pair of men playing gin for money at the other end of the lounge. Was it just coincidence that Goode had come by? Had he known Gerry was lonely? He gazed at the canned stellar image projected on the front viewport to mask the unsettling visual chaos of jumpspace, and he wondered.

There had been a number of lucky breaks along his journey. Luck? He had gotten, in this run of his, what he needed. The fact that the con men had been caught for computer intrusion, thrown off, and that there had been just the combination of ships, greedy crewmen, and available small craft to allow him to dodge them again seemed very lucky indeed. He had prayed for deliverance, and he had been delivered. Not when and how he had asked for it, but it had come. Father K-O'M.'s voice, in its unmistakable

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ble coreward lilt, sounded in his head, "Have you prayed for your Auntie, then? Your dad?" He realized that indeed he had been self-absorbed through the whole of his voyage.

He felt vaguely uncomfortable, shifting in the couch. Gunny's voice spoke up, "You can go to your maker with your pagan prayers, 'Save me-save me!' and being a loving God, he will answer, and it may even be in a way that you imagine is good for you. But if you want to be safe, go to him with Christian prayers, 'Save them-save them.' You'll need it. We all do. Live for yourself and you'll die alone!" Damnation. Gerry mused briefly on his choice of interior invective, then said a half-hearted prayer for Auntie. He had thought a lot about her, but it had been about how to escape her. How to abandon her. She was not affectionate, and in fact was neither pleasant nor generous. She did care, though.

"Does she love you?" Father again.

Well, Gerry guessed that she did. She cried when they talked about Space Camp, and had forbade him to go. That was not meanness, surely. It certainly was not sentimentality: Auntie was one of the least sentimental people, let alone women, that Gerry thought he knew. That was her love, a love that forbade to protect. he loved him, and he had left her. Had there been reasons? Certainly. But she had loved him, and he had left.

He felt a little catch in his throat. He had felt compelled to leave, but it was not necessary. What of Eve? Well, he did not know her, and Auntie was family. He went back to his cabin and wrote her. It took a while; the final text seemed elusive, difficult.

*Auntie,*

*I am alright, but have gone to seek my fortune. I had not planned this, but a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity arose, and I felt I had to take it. I did not want to hurt you, but I knew that you would try to stop me if I told you. I felt this was the only way. I am well, though, and I*

*am grateful for all that you have done for me. God Bless You.*

*Love, Gerry*

He looked up mail drops on the ships' computer. The idea was, of course, to break the traceability of the origination of a message. In the holos, it was always some seedy free trader crewman who picked up the message in a bar, to mail it from their next port of call, usually for the price of a shot of cheap whiskey. Though Gerry was sure that this happened, the more common and certainly reliable method was a commercial drop. The X-boat message (courier message from Guarda) would be sent to the drop, usually at a highport on the X-boat routes, which would initiate an X-boat message with a useless return address. He figured it out, that it would actually be best to have the ship carry the message for the next two jumps, to Egran and thence to Landing which was on an X-boat route. The purser would send an X-boat message from there to a mail-drop on Darksky, which would send it to Auntie.

All of this would mean that it would take a minimum of two months for the message to reach her, possibly nine weeks; any legal response could theoretically get back quicker, in as little as a month. This would still give him a minimum of nine weeks on Khii 43 to settle whatever needed to be settled with his father's estate, claim, and the like. If he was hauled off after that, well so be it. He would just have to see what that would bring. How she would figure out where he had been or was going from receiving such a note was beyond Gerry, but he still had enough paranoia about being caught, which in turn mingled with his training that any electronic trail gave law enforcement enough to go on.

He sent the message to the purser, along with his instructions. In what was obviously an automated response, he was given an acknowledgment and the price tag: less than 10 credits. Even though it required jump capable ships to do so, moving infor-

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mation around space was much cheaper than moving people or cargo, though only slightly quicker. He settled in to read a bit in his bible, feeling like a wretched soul. He also realized just then that he had not hit a Mass in weeks. Very few ships had a priest available, so the church had centuries before excused the Sunday obligation as long as Mass was made at the first available opportunity after a given Sunday. This almost always meant at a highport. There were a few backworld installations with a priest who would come onto the starport to say mass once or twice a day, but in the absence of such it might legitimately be weeks between opportunities. With a decent highport at Gaurda, though, he would need to. He was genuinely contrite about Auntie, and he would just have to take his chances that his confessor would not give him turning himself in as a penance. He was not sure he would turn himself in, but he was not ready to do so before getting to Khii 43, anyway. These things turned over and over in his head, and it was 3 more holos before he fell asleep.

The rest of the jump on the *Anxious A* passed without incident. He had made a point to talk to Goode whenever he saw him, and actually introduced himself to one of the group of men that made up all the rest of the passengers. The belter Kanshu Stevens was in his early 20s, and had nothing good to say about mining. He was a belter working for a mining company out of Baakh, which essentially controlled Guarda. Gerry asked him a lot of questions about mining. The company paid him reasonably well, 1,700 credits a month he was proud to say, but only gave them a couple of middle passages per year back and forth between work and Baakh. Even that would have been unlikely, but the company owned the far trader as well. Kanshu was actually a mechanic who fixed massive robotic mining platforms *in situ*, along with whatever other equipment needed fixing. Gerry told him he was going to visit

his father, but that he was not sure what his father did. Kanshu looked a bit incredulously at Gerry, but let it go. He let it slip into conversation later that, "Secrets keep a belter healthy and rich. That's a hard enough proposition, let alone for something free."

He went on to tell tales of beltlers who died in various ways, from the mundane accidents to bizarre or mysterious circumstances. Some piqued Gerry's morbid curiosity about his father's work, and some just left him anxious. He tried to ask about EVA work, but nothing that Kanshu shared with him seemed to be new information. The conversation left Gerry exhausted.

Loneliness was still there, though he spent a lot of time praying for Auntie, and of course worrying. The anxiety now was more and more about what lay ahead, as opposed to what lay behind. He practiced with his suit, and even fasted a couple of days, squirreling away the extra ration trays into his Bigsofts, leaving just the "3 squares" a day for their calculated time until docking at Guarda highport.

The jump exit was going to be more significant, and so he had looked at the Star Port Authority's information on Gaurda's highport traffic to prepare, because they would have a very short predicted run-in from their jump exit. There was a convoy to New Konigsberg due to cast off 48 hours after their most probable docking. He would, he imagined, be shipping on that convoy.

This convoy was weekly, and would have an escort of a small warship from Outreaumer or Diamond Prince subsector navy, or even from the Ley sector navy. Some of the ships would likely be armed, and a scheduled Scout/Courier would be traveling with the convoy. This would provide a decent amount of firepower. Of course, without navy navigators and synched jump programs, the jump exits could be a bit scattered, but another navy or scout ship would be staged to meet them as they exited jump, and to reform the convoy. It made pira-

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## Raconteurs' Rest

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cy a very dicey proposition against any convoy members, and that was the intent. The mining arm of the Ohasset Main joined two X-boat routes, and was a critical trade link, even if it passed through backwater worlds, so Gerry had about as lucky a backwater route as one could hope for he mused as he lay in his bunk for the last night before jump exit.

Their exit from jump was eight hours early, and then Gerry had more information to deal with. As luck would have it, the nine ships registered to travel with the convoy listing passenger service were already booked. The convoy would leave just under 40 hours from their docking. There had even been a couple of middle passages bumped by high passages. There had been a free trader that was down indefinitely for maintenance that had dropped from the convoy, and her 12 passengers had tied everything up looking to make other arrangements. There was another free trader, *Ivanovich's Pride*, due to leave almost 31 hours before the convoy; it was listed as traveling with a Scout ship. Since the active Scouts were supposed to travel with the convoy, and an urgent mission would likely be gone long before, it seemed likely that this was a detached duty Scout/Courier, possibly carrying "grey passages," unsanctioned but not strictly illegal passengers. Gerry sat looking at his screen, his palms beginning to sweat. He would not be able to use his middle passage for that.

They would dock in less than 5 hours, so Gerry started packing the last of his gear into his BigSofts, as he reviewed what he knew, and what it meant to him. He contemplated his options.

Grey passengers violated a number of Imperial regulations, but such was the need that often the local, subsector authorities either passed regulations that made loopholes for them or simply looked the other way. As long as the fares were not predatory, and the basic safety issues taken care of, there might be a few minor fines and bribes, but no drastic steps

were taken. A detached duty Scout might be given a letter of reprimand, and a small suspended fine, but this was in the face of a lot of profit. There might even be three double-stacked staterooms in the scout ship before it went.

None of this bothered him, but then Gerry remembered he could not use his middle passage on the Scout even if, as he assumed, it was running gray passengers. Gerry also did not want to try to reserve anything remotely on the *Pride*, though, because he did not want to make any more of a signature than was necessary. It sounded like a hasty "duffle bag drag" through highport, then.

He noticed his teeth clacking, for the first time in a while, a sign of anxiety. He pulled out his vacc suit, and did a full don, including the longsuit and the EVA pack. He talked himself through the radio controls, without locking on the helmet, and thought about those for the pack. The batteries were in the suit, so the radios would start to drain them if he put everything on. Similarly the pack had the fuel canisters in place, which would be "live" if he put the helmet on without an umbilical, which both fed the suit and told it that a manual over ride was necessary before it "fly" anywhere. He put on the umbilical, then his helmet, and began some of the Guides' "daily dozen," to loosen up.

He had finished, and was packing the last things in his small desk when there was a rap on his helmet. He half-jumped, half-stumbled aside, while twisting in an ungainly fashion towards his presumed assaulter. There was the purser, with a somewhat bemused but friendly look. As Gerry pulled his helmet off the purser chirped, "Sorry! I did knock on the door, and then page you on the intercom when you didn't answer. The cabin coded you as active, which obviously you are. I figured you could be in the death throes of fatal jump sickness. Good to see you're not, but I do find your lack of confidence in our hull integrity a bit distressing."

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(Continued from page 62)

"Err...oh, no, this; I'm just practicing." Gerry stammered.

"I can see you are, sir. Good idea, but I came to see if there was anything we could do about making further travel arrangements, and getting your luggage ready to go."

"Well. Well, I would like a skidder an hour before we dock. No other arrangements."

"Very well sir."

"Can it be sent to return to the ship? I may be in a hurry once I debark."

"I'll see to it. Sorry I interrupted your training."

"Not at all. Just didn't hear you."

The purser smiled, and nodded his head as he left. Gerry closed and locked the door, then took off the suit and packed up. He even checked through the BigSoft with nothing but the extra tank sets. He realized he was being silly, and lay down for one more holo. Actually it was a repeat, the one with a scene of which Father K-O'M. would definitely not have approved. He actually dozed after the credits until a somewhat peculiar knock came on the door.

"Come in," he managed, still mostly asleep.

The door opened, and a couple of indistinct noises came before a cheerful voice chimed in, "Mr. Finn, you may load your bags onto me, and tell me when you are ready to leave. Please!"

The robotic skidder caught him a bit by surprise: Those on the *Maid* had mutely followed you around like a dog and obeyed voice commands, but they had not come, knocked on the door, and given you marching orders. Gerry rolled off his bunk, and rolled the four bags onto the skidder, while keeping his backpack with him. "Stay here until I tell you otherwise."

"Surely, Mr. Fynne."

He walked out into the crew lounge, and a long-range visual of the highport was being projected on

one flat screen, and schematic of it on the other. Guarda Highport had a rawer feel to it than the other four Gerry had been to. It was smaller, with only 24 docking tubes on the main, public level, and those had a generally varied look. There appeared to be no drydocks, and as they approached the visual clearly showed a patrol cruiser, a scout ship, and two ship's boats on the upper, government level. There was a smattering of crude flat plasma screens visible on the outside, and a few ships and small craft in odd positions. The docking tubes seemed of three different designs, and the whole effect was one of eclectic, ad hoc collection. Goode brought around some drinks as they approached, and Gerry traced his route to the *Ivanovich's Pride*; the ship had not listed how many staterooms were available, so Gerry imagined getting stuck there in the high port, possibly until the con men showed up.

He went back to his cabin, did another quick sweep—probably his fourth—and then prayed somewhat distractedly. Gerry went back out into the lounge. He made some idle comments to Kanshu, then actually felt them dock. Had he not been so focused, he would not have realized what it was, the almost subliminal shudder of docking a starship. He opened his cabin door, and said to the skidder in his best parade ground voice, "Meet me just outside the ship in the High Port!"

The captain, a soft, kindly looking man with a scar on his cheek, was there to see them off, along with the grubby Goode. Gerry palmed him a 10 crud disk, and thanked him. When the last of the passengers had debarked the skidder came swooping slowly out. "You come back to us, you damned machine!" Goode barked at it as it passed out into the starport corridor. Gerry smiled in one more brief, fond look back at the *Anxious A*, and spun on his heel. ❁

## 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

January/February 2018

- **BadBadTiger** has released *BBT: Alien Artwork #1*, *BBT: Alien Artwork #2*.
- **El Cheapo Products** has released *El Cheapo Minis Vol. 3 Future Folk*.
- **Michael Brown** has released *Angle of Incidence*, *2D6 SF Adventures*, Vol. 7, *Thrill of the Thirties! 2D6 Adventure in the Pulp Era*, *A Cemetery by the Moon Unblessed*, *Thrill of the Thirties! The Martini Street Peril*, *Night of the Fuufi*.
- **Zozer Games** has released *Pioneer-class Station*, *Zaibatsu*.
- **DM Philosophy** has released *VTT Battlemat—Desert Planet Cantina*, *VTT Battlemat—Desert Planet Security Outpost*, *VTT Battlemat—Desert Planet Town*, *VTT Battlemat—Desert Planet Spaceport*, *VTT Battlemat—Desert Planet Deep Desert Farm*, *VTT Battlemat—Desert Planet Sale Pack (Bundle)*.
- **Cyborg Prime Publishing** has released *Free Trader Deck Plans for Virtual Tabletop*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Great Rift Adventure 1: Islands in the Rift*, *Great Rift Adventure 2: Deepnight Endeavour*, *Great Rift Adventure 3: Flatlined*, *Marches Adventure 2: Mission to Mithril*.
- **Stellagama Publishing** has released *TSAO: Stationary and Heraldry Pack*, *TSAO: These Stars Are Ours! Pack (Bundle)*, *Trauma Surgery for the Cepheus Engine*, *Cybernetics for the Cepheus Engine*.
- **Fat Goblin Games** has released *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Space Fuzzling (race)*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Antenna Alien (race)*.
- **Azukail Games** has released *No Questions Asked*.
- **Pyromancer Publishing** has released *Slower Than Light Colony Ship*, *Ships of the Conformity: Resupply Ship*, *Ships of the Conformity: Exploration Ship Alpha*, *Ships of the Conformity: Exploration Ship Beta*.
- **March Harrier Publishing** has released *Catalogue 2017*.
- **Luca Oleastri** has released *Space Forces Volume 1* stockart.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Wendy's Guide to the Fleets of the Colonies*, *The Wendy's Guide Bundle (Bundle)*, *Manhunters: Bounty Hunters in Clement Sector*.
- **Greg Wilson** has released *Operation Choke Point*.
- **Tom Chlebus** has released *Under the Storms*.
- **Game Designers' Workshop** has released *TNE-0331 Belly of the Beast (Adventure) -2*, *TNE0332 Into the Darkness (Adventure) -3*.
- **Christopher Griffen** has released *Traveller: The Tktk Convergence*, *Iron Spine*.
- **Grey Matter Games** has released *Deadly Missions 4th Edition: Technowars Assault*.

# 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.

