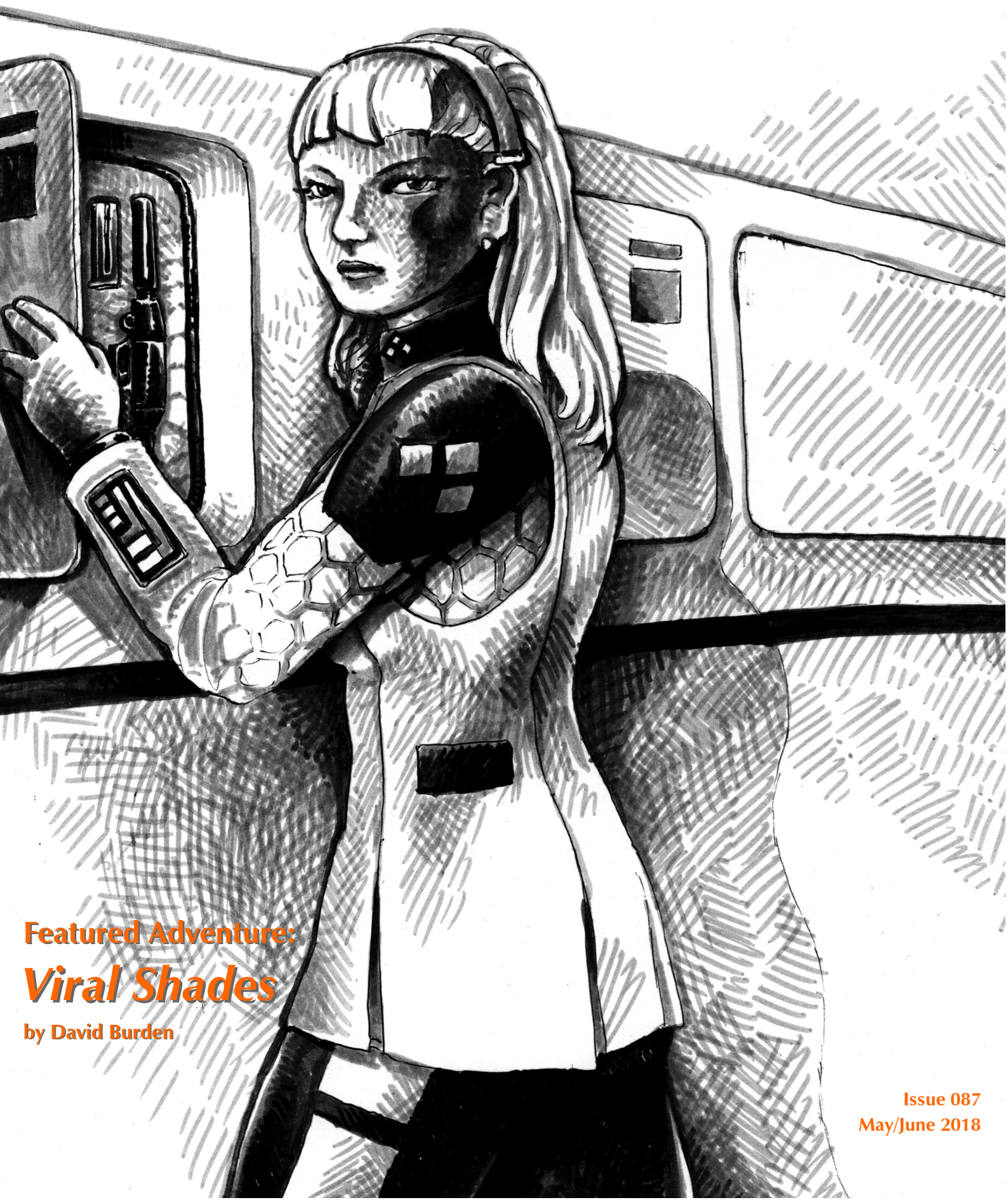




FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Adventure:

Viral Shades

by David Burden

Issue 087
May/June 2018

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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Editor: Jeff Zeitlin

Contributors: Jeff Zeitlin, Megan Robertson, Timothy Collinson, “kafka”, David Burden, Jonathan McDermott, Michael A. Cessna, Robert Weaver, Bill Cameron, Sam Swindell, Benedikt Schwarz, Robert DeVoe, Joshua Levy.

Artwork

Cover: *Benedikt Schwarz*

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Less Dangerous Game: *Benedikt Schwarz*

Kurishdam: *Robert DeVoe*

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From the Editor



In discussions of *Traveller*, there often seems to be a perceived dichotomy, of play versus ‘gearheading’ or ‘worldbuilding’. While I will concede that ‘gearheading’ isn’t for everyone, I’ve come to the conclusion that ‘worldbuilding’ overlaps—or perhaps subsumes—both play and ‘gearheading’.

A referee can spend hours and hours rolling up and writing (and reading) about worlds, cultures, characters, trade goods, and so on, and in doing so, paint a picture of his (her) *Traveller* universe. That’s the ‘gearheading’, and it’s an important part of worldbuilding.

But a world is more than an encyclopedic compilation of places and things. It’s a *living and dynamic*

collection of all those, plus people and their actions, thoughts, hopes, dreams, fears, and nightmares. And it’s all *connected*. Nothing really happens in isolation; what you do today influences what the people you interact with will do tomorrow.

Traveller and some other games try to emulate that, at least partially, in both the ‘reaction roll’ and having contacts (and allies, enemies, and rivals, in recent versions of *Traveller*). But the real worldbuilding happens when the players and the referee, and the characters and NPCs, start actually interacting. That’s when a world stops being a binderful of facts, and comes to life. And that’s when you’ve actually *built* a world. Even if you haven’t written a single thing about it. ☼

Three Supplements from Mongoose Traveller, 1st Edition

reviewed by "kafka"

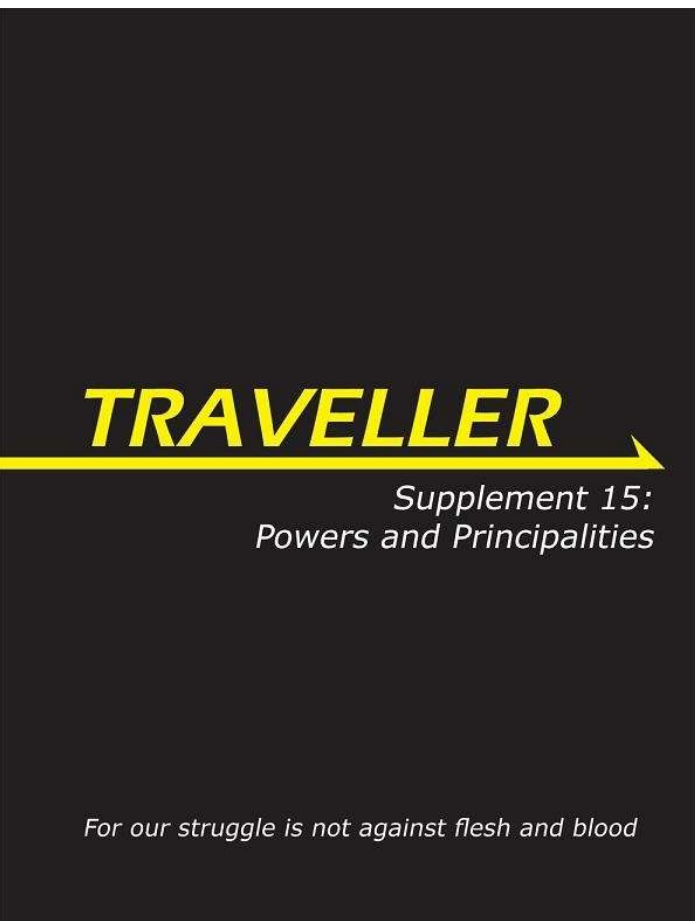
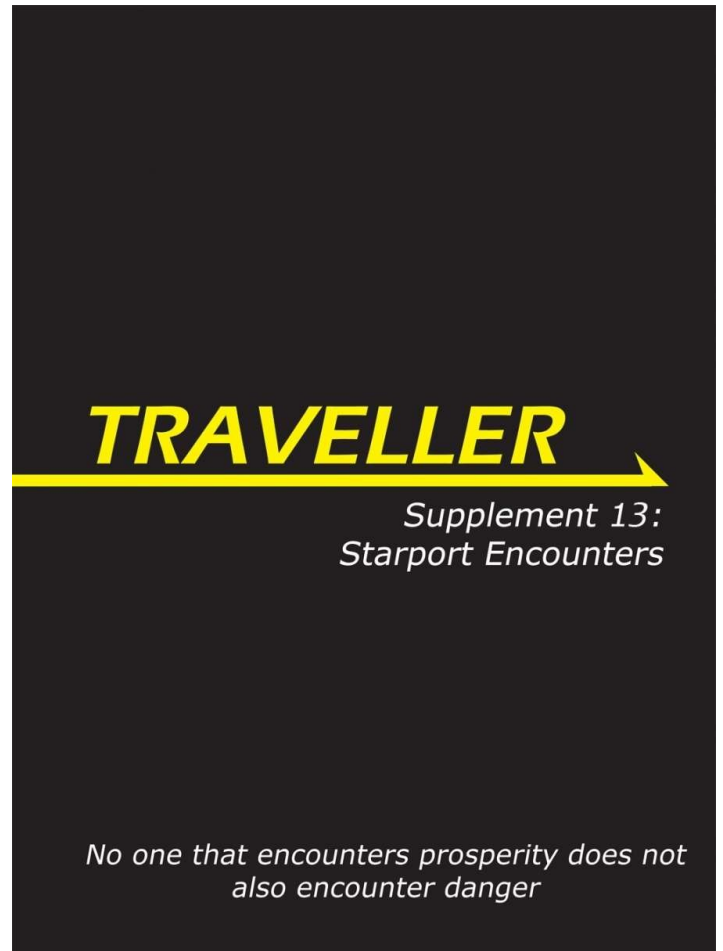
Supplement 13: Starport Encounters. Andy and Sarah Lilly.
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
113pp., PDF
US\$14.99/UK£10.61

Supplement 15: Powers and Principalities. Andy Lilly et al.
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
160pp., PDF
US\$17.99/UK£12.73

Supplement 16: Adventure Seeds. Andy Lilly et al.
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
113pp., PDF
US\$14.99/UK£10.61

This review originally appeared on rpg.net in March 2015

I must say that I have very mixed feelings about the latest supplements from Mongoose. On one hand, they are truly excellent because they represent a binding together to many of the BITS (British Isles Traveller Support) 'Little White Books' into nice ref-



erence volumes. On the other hand, having sunk money into those 101... books and found them delightful and invaluable in idea generation – but I, kind of disappointed that Mongoose did not go for a larger enterprise such as giving more artwork and more weight to these books. For the Little White Books were a scarce item in the dark ages between the misadventure called *T4* and rise of *GURPS Traveller* – they kept the flame alive and renewed with a distinctive British sensibility – as opposed to “Yanks in Space” of the Imperium Games and GDW editions of the game, thus paving the way for a more international feel that the game has inherited especially through its *2300AD* line.

Maybe, because *Traveller* is so generic and so old nobody really wants to write for the Third Imperium setting outside the “Alien” modules, as they are immediately attacked by the ‘canon police’. Thus, it behooves Mongoose to actually commission Marc W. Miller or one of the other founders of *Traveller* to fi-

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Critics' Corner

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nally settle the dust, and say what this Imperial Campaign is and what it is not. Critics allege that this would take away from the sandbox opportunities in play; I would disagree: both the *Rebellion Sourcebook* (MegaTraveller) and *Milieu 0* (T4) which did this for other time periods than the default "present" of the game merely gave a vast canvas on players could paint in their own actions. With over 11,000 worlds, the Imperium is vast enough to contain numerous tropes, exceptions and vagrancies that will allow for sandbox play, just as it did in Classic *Traveller* when the game established those principles that the 'canon police' hold so dear.

And, that is where we come back to the supplements. I can think of no better authority than BITS to commission to write such a bible, overseen perhaps by a review committee that can check against the vast abundance of documents that are canon, quasi-canon, and outright heresy. They have shown consistent and fervent dedication to *Traveller*, as I said earlier, in the game's darkest hours. These supplements merely reinforce their authority to write such a volume.

One of the major drawbacks of cutting-and-pasting is that all sorts of errors do creep in. The main one being that all previous editions to Mongoose *Traveller* used the Universal Personality Profile, where you could find your stats in a snap. For whatever reason, Mongoose *Traveller*, opted against using it – it still has the same format – did not employ this neat heuristic – yet these books employ it – leaving the newbie-to-Mongoose-*Traveller* confused, as I was before I obtained a set of the rules. It is also dumps said newbie into the full glory of the Imperial Campaign – whilst I do understand that Mongoose is going to be coming out later this year with a Third Imperium Writers' Bible, again, the newbie is left with all these great adventure seeds that have long sprouted into a forest. And, without adequate bread crumbs, it is easy to become lost in the forest.

TRAVELLER

Supplement 16:
Adventure Seeds

Life is either a great adventure or nothing

These nitpicks aside, it is excellent to see that the BITS works getting the larger recognition they have long deserved and to see *Traveller* slowly being put on a different footing that is neither *D&D*-based, doing "Yanks in Space", nor simply rehashing CT's former glory by tweaking things. I would caution many newbies that it does conform to the *Traveller* and OSR tradition of Tables & Charts – something that Mongoose should be trying to get away from and create truly new *Traveller* content. But, the mood that these short trips create is extraordinary. For they take a number and build a story around it. In this era where narrative is seen to clash with fly-by-the-seat of one's pants this formulation seems a bit of out sync with the times. However, I have noticed many 'indie' games adopting a similar formula – so perhaps what is old can be new again, something borrowed might not be blue – but something that is true. I personally prefer more narrativist and well-illustrated supplements rather than endless charts, but as a Gamemaster, I do also appreciate tools in

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which I can generate a scenario in the course of a day or two. And, as these are essentially BITS products, when it comes to Traveller – as the song goes: “Nobody does it better”. Well, there may be some who do it better, but certainly BITS counts as one of the best carriers of the flame during the dark ages between TNE/T4 and what the OGL of Mongoose Traveller has spawned.

This book is essentially a reprint of different ‘Little White Books’, minus some of the extraordi-

nary cover art but with some nice filler art. If you liked the 101... Series but found that you were always losing the LWB, then this represents an excellent investment for an experienced Traveller player. If, however, you are a newbie, these will become more relevant after the Third Imperium Campaign book is released. For these are adventure seeds that have already spouted a forest, although they can be used with a non-Imperial Campaign, so long as it shares the same ‘Space Opera grandeur’ vision. 🌀

Active Measures

Viral Shades

by David Burden

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 1997.

RCES Briefing Document 130/34/XW: Life in the Wilds During the Early Years of the Collapse.

Aubaine - 1207/7 NE

INTRODUCTION

This document has been pieced together from personal records discovered during the past few years’ operations in the Wilds. Whilst the sources were many and varied they have been synthesised here into the single story of life on a TL8+ world, as the Virus attacked, and as the world tried to survive.

In reading this account, particular attention should be paid to the changing norms for: energy, transportation, food and water supply, shelter, health, information, and currency. Assimilation of this information will help considerably in your dealings with both remnants and survivor groups, as well the people of the Wilds at large.

IMMEDIATE EFFECTS

“I was drinking in Esta’s bar when there was this deafening noise. Explosion? Everybody made

for the doors and windows, and a few blocks away we could see a column of smoke rising, An air-raft had crashed onto the roof of the Sallan building. I remember somebody screamed ‘look-out’ and I looked up and saw what must have been a Free Trader falling from the sky. We hit the floor and the noise that came was like the end of the world. The power failed as it hit and we were plunged into a long dark night.”—Bradley Pasquale, Deckhand

“As I picked my way home through the rubble-strewn streets I still kept a weather eye out for falling craft or debris. The Metro-Net had ground to a halt, so everybody was on the streets. I’ve never seen them so full. Or so quiet. It’s odd—you’d have thought that the panic would have continued, but people were now far too frightened for that. I thought of the poor people trapped in the tube-train tunnels or on the monorails. From the top of Mulsi hill I could see a thousand fires, stretching out into the night, each making the point where some air-raft, plane or spaceship fell to earth. Occasionally I’d hear screams high above, as an air-raft performed an endless pirouette against the night sky. Who were the lucky ones? Once or twice a ground car rumbled passed me. I tried to hitch a ride, but the car was either sealed tight or else there were so many people hanging on that it was impossible to gain a handhold. Anyway their

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ride would end when the fuel cell ran dry. I wonder what was left in the gas station tanks?” — Frootie Wendkosl, Reporter

SHORT-TERM SURVIVAL

In those first few days and weeks after a Virus attack, survival was all that mattered. The potential for death was generally directly related to the hostility of the environment, though ultimately the greatest losses often happened on the more benign but advanced worlds.

“It wasn’t long before looting was wide spread. As people realised we were in for the long haul they switched their attention from consumer goods to food. But since they only carried a day or so’s stock of food, that didn’t take long or provide much. Some shopkeepers tried to defend their premises, but most just took the best stuff for themselves and then headed out. With the Net down there was no way they’d get any money out of anybody anyhow. With the carnage here in the city it was a fair bet that even if the farms were still producing, which I doubted, that there wasn’t the transport to bring food in. So once we’d scavenged what we could we knew we’d have to start looking further afield. The initial problem, though, was how to cook the food. It must have taken us most of the first day to get a fire going; just finding flammable stuff was hard, and to work out how long to cook these things for. Man was I starving by the time the food was ready. But it wasn’t going to be the food running out that would make us move. It would be the water. We had about 10 bottles of the stuff from the S-Mart. When that was gone we would be saying ‘bye bye city’.” — Sehold Foxboro, Student

“We were lucky. We lived on the ground floor of a small building. With no power the lifts were out, and stairs were a rarity, so thousands of people found themselves trapped at the wrong end of a dead lift shaft. Even worse off were those in the

arcologies. I passed one on my way out of the city. A giant dark hulk, with no lifts, no heating, no air-conditioning and no lights. It smelt of death. The first few days were lived in darkness. Most people didn’t even have matches or lighters to light fires with. Most didn’t even know what they were except for a few hiking enthusiasts. Many people had battery or chemical lamps, but they only lasted a few days. The world was eerily dark and still.” — Keerashii Shadirrii, Administrator

“Death was all around us in those first days. As the air-raft fell, so did the ambulances. A few ground cars were pressed into service but not enough to make a difference. And anyway, the hospital was as unusable as the mall or the starport. No power again. Instead we gathered around the community centres where there was at least usually some natural light, or at least a grass area that could be used. But even then we couldn’t deal with many of the trauma casualties. And as the hours turned to days the anesthetics ran out. But by then the patients weren’t suffering from traumas but from diseases I’d only ever read about—hepatitis, tetanus, typhoid. And with the Net down, the only way I was going to learn any more about them was by experimenting.” — Jasmin Catraz, Doctor

“For a few days we still saw ground cars around as we headed out on our foraging trips. But they became rarer and their occupants more crazy as time went on. A local gang managed to get hold of a couple of cars and used them to chase people, firing as they went. It was getting so you could get killed out there. I guess somewhere there were service stations with stocks of gas, petrol, or hydrogen, but these must have been running out, especially with the looting or hoarding that must be happening. In the air it was a different story. It was only a couple of days before the skies became uncomfortably silent. I’d never seen a sky without

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an air-raft or a aircraft flitting across it. I once saw a air-raft sat by a dead charging point, I bet she'd have gone like a dream if anybody could have found some juice to put in her. Anyhow, whose ever piloted an air-raft with no city traffic control computer to guide you? The big craft were grounded for the same reasons I guess. In one fell swoop the radius of physical communication had been reduced from thousands of miles to little more than ten."—Dici Meithrin, Surveyor

"With the loss of the power net making access impossible and interiors dark, we decided to move outside. Many people joined us. We were lucky that we lived in Hiba's temperate zone; I pitied those people in the polar south. I suppose we still expected power to be restored, and we still thought our hi-tech possessions important and so we didn't go far, just out into the woods on the edge of the city. There was a nice river there, too. The police? Well, they and the City were mostly concentrating their efforts in finding accommodation and protecting and distributing food supplies, but without communications, and with the tide of lawlessness, they found it hard going. It was over those first few weeks that the citizen action groups got going and we began to work together, trading skills and knowledge. Even the medics came out to these makeshift camps, it being easier to move them here than to try and re-activate the hulk of metropolitan medicare. Communications? For the first few days communications was by word of mouth only. The police and Army were soon on patrol with bullhorns and loud-hailers, but they didn't know much anyway, just appeals for order and calm. In the weeks that followed we got some small presses going, and so did the city, producing news-sheets, often from solar powered portable PCs."—Pugin Imbali, Electrician

MEDIUM-TERM SURVIVAL

As days became weeks, and weeks became months it soon became clear that Imperial huscarles weren't going to come charging out of jump space to restore civilisation. People had to learn to make do with what their planet had to offer. And make do they did, or face certain collapse.

"After a month or so of futile attempts to get power stations and power grids going we started to turn our attention to alternate power sources. As with almost every development at this time the emphasis was on decentralisation. Even without access to info-banks most of us real engineers could get small scale mechanical wind or water power generators going, and a few could even get electricity out. Wood was a valuable commodity for fires. Oil and gas, if available, remained in store for a long time; without the distribution networks it was useless. Coal, though, was a different matter, and coal traders were soon a common sight, distributing the stockpiles, and even scavenging around the mine workings. For worlds without such organic energy sources I guess they'd have found it a frantic, and often futile, race against time to get solar or nuclear plants going, and cannibalising every combustible in the mean time. Anarchy or tribalism must have often been the end result."—Cud Veniste, Engineer

"A few people or organisations hoarded motor fuel, so ground cars were always to be found somewhere, but public transportation was practically nonexistent due to the lack of power sources. For most of us, transportation now meant walking or bicycling. Pack animals soon became a valuable commodity, and all sorts of beasts found themselves pressed into service. We were lucky to round up a couple of verings, which stood us in good stead for the next couple of years."—Tomas Reming, Analyst

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“On the coast, we had it better than most, I suppose. Sailors of whatever tech level had always maintained the skills of sail and oar, so we were far better able to maintain our links to valuable skills and resources. The rivers, too, became vital routes. I hate to think what happened on dry worlds where they didn’t have the water of life.”—Owner, SS Gerous Dawn

“With the collapse of transportation and distribution the supply of food and water to the city ground to a halt. Once the hyper-marts and malls had been looted and the stockpiles consumed, they all started heading out to the country and the farms. There they found that conditions were little better. Us hi-tech farms had been brought as much to our knees by the virus as much as any other facet of the high technology Imperium. With the initial arrival of the ‘mallies’, violence broke out, and briefly there were good opportunities for para-military farm protection teams. But soon it was obvious that a deal had to be struck. We had lost their robot workers but still had livestock and crops, the mallies had no food, but had muscle-power. So over the course of a few months our farms became hives of human activity, as robotic processes were converted to manual ones, tools were improvised from cannibalised machinery, and as the seasons wore on the food processing methods were developed. And it was here on our farms that distributed power made its mark as we set up local water and wind mills, initially for mechanical power, but later for electricity. We were lucky though. We had an Agricultural world, and I’m sure such an idyllic transition to pastoral living would have been possible elsewhere. Those farms which relied heavily on an artificial environment, be it by weather control, genetics, chemicals or hot-housing had less chance or survival, and there agriculture was likely to collapse, and barbarism not far off.”—Harrell Kelner, Farmer

“It took only a week or so for our arcology to become uninhabitable, and this was the final spur to drive us out into the country. Our survival was then dependent on the environment. But in seeking shelter outside we were keenly aware that on our advanced world shelter had already been partly replaced by weather control. In the Virus strike this control inevitably failed and opened the way for a host of natural disasters. I heard of a typhoon that wiped out Prea District, and Nollo City was struck by a huge tidal wave. As we joined the human river heading out of the city we swapped notes with our fellow travellers. A lucky few brought with them the knowledge of how to make clay or sand bricks, some could put a wooden hut together (if the wood was there). But all most of us could expect to do was to cannibalise existing building materials to build makeshift shanty towns around the fetid cities and agro-complexes. Our only heat and light would come from firewood.”—Maometto Gasdia, Shopkeeper

“With the collapse we were faced with a whole host of diseases that we thought were extinct. Hepatitis, cholera, dysentery, the list was almost endless. With medical databases and genelabs lost, we, like most of the professions, were forced to fall back on our most basic training and even historical knowledge. For much of the first few years the emphasis was very much on primary health care rather than advanced anagathics. One of the sorriest episodes of the collapse was that of the deaths of people reliant on unsustainable technology. The most striking cases were anagathics users, who found themselves suddenly ageing by years for every month that passed, many to certain death. I remember one woman...” [breaks down in tears]—Koopman Starker, Paramedic

“As we left the city, we made a final trawl for any information that could be taken away and

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used. Some of the shanties were doing it, too. In retrospect, we took many inappropriate or inaccessible data archives, but at the time we just took anything we could carry. [RCES Note: It was often these that became the 'holy relics' of TEDs and other techno-cults]. Of most use were the paper books, generally the older the better, so museum looting was common, and little was left by the time we got there. We generally disseminated this and other information by word of mouth, although in a few enterprising places a hobbyist printer or a 'crier' could improve the information flow. It was a strange role for us, from defenders of information to suppliers of it."—Nicola LeFanu, City Policewoman

"At that time barter was very much the name of the game. As it became increasingly clear that recovery was a long way off, probably generations away, the old wealth and status hierarchies broke down. In their place rose new ones, founded on resource ownership (crops, vehicles, mills) or skills (weavers, farmers, engineers). These people found that they could trade their assets for whatever they wanted, and the necessities for survival could then trickle down from them to the rest of society."—Fritsch Verdale, Economics Lecturer

LONG-TERM RECOVERY

After a year or so the situation on most planets had stabilised. Those totally dependent on high technology for a livable environment had mostly died. On those blessed with more benign conditions the populations had generally redistributed themselves from the cities to the country. Urban had become agrarian. Once the business of survival had been sorted out people began to wonder about how they could do more than survive. Could they re-establish a thriving culture? Could they re-discover some of the lost technologies? Could they once again reach for the stars?

Whilst the local hydro or wind station could provide for local survival needs it was no good if industry on any large scale was to be attempted. With solar and nuclear power ruled out it was only on those planets with petrochemical resources that new high capacity stations could be contemplated. Local conditions decided whether old plants were re-opened or cannibalised to create lo-tech plants. For the old plants the big challenge was always the control system, either trying to resurrect the computers or convert it to manual operation. Numerous obstacles had to be surmounted to get even the simplest power plant and distribution system going again. Some worlds, through choice or necessity, shunned petrochemicals and developed large but relatively simple, hydro or wind plants, or branched out into wave or geothermal power. A decade after the collapse many worlds again had a power net, although usually it was far more limited in scope and suffered from the more than occasional brown out.

"It was like stepping back into a story book. For those first years human and animal powered vehicles dominated transport. Animal carts, rickshaws, handcarts; even bicycles were too complex for us then. But I suppose we were luckier than most. The world's native life had left us bountiful supplies of fossil fuels. The coal was the easiest to extract, and soon huge mining camps were established and we got some steam driven transport going, both on wheel and track. We even toyed with things like alcohol and vegetable oils as options, but the processes were all either too complex or too poorly remembered. Keep it simple! Even today the sight of a steam powered tractor brings a lump to my throat. What we went through..."—Isola Scalachi, Scientist

"Since farms have always had a long and steady history of technological development, and a reputation for self-reliance it was not too long before our farm technology began to recover. First

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we converted the old automatic equipment to simple sentient and animal tools, hoes, ploughs and the like. Luckily old Zilia still knew how to get a forge going. Then we improved on our designs the next winter, making more use of animal power. Then as the steam engines and tractors became available we developed into motorised and towed machinery. We stopped short of recovering the electronics and robotics. We'd learnt our lesson. It was a similar story on the water side. We put our trust in local springs and rivers, and even local filtration plants proved simple to develop."—Musen Chailly, Farmer

"With our survival more assured we could put more effort into building sturdier housing. Whilst up on Gehamme's Farm they turned to basic brick manufacture we continued to use reclaimed material from the towns. It was from our foraging teams that the local towns regained their first returnees. The deciding point as to whether to stay on the farm or return to the town came when we decided it was easier to transport food and build local water supplies than to try and move ever increasing amounts of building supplies."—Gabrile Fero, Lawyer

"We sent those first explorative forays into the cities for information and just to find out 'what had happened'. What we usually found were lawlessness and death. We even undertook long distance trips to re-establish contact with other communities, but we were more inquisitive than most. It seemed weird, how we'd gone from a global village to a real one almost overnight. Our social radius had shrunk from 10,000km to at best 20km. Now trying to push it back out to 200km seemed like the most daunting thing in the world. Needless to say, the re-expansion and the re-integration that followed brought with it its own problems. The old struggles for influence and supremacy were re-enacted. Key players in

this were the guilds. In those dark years when skills had been everything, those people with the key skills had banded together, realising they could command a higher price if they didn't undercut each other. Also they could make from training others, only a few others, the skills. Soon the guild encompassed not only the craftsmen themselves, but also their families and their households, the cooks, cleaners, labourers and others they needed to prosper. Guild halls became common sites, and impressive sites, in the farm shantys. Many people belonged to a guild and the guild provided for their every need. The guild obtained its 'needs' through a high level trade of its resources and expertise with other guilds. Mixed trade guilds, or communes, were also common. In such societies there ceased to be a need for money and 'wealth' meant the holdings of your guild and your position in it. As we pushed our boundaries beyond the confines of the local town and village the guilds were increasingly in conflict with each other, as they saw both challenges to their monopoly, and a threat to their very existence."—Carmin Uilan, Sociologist

[RCES Note: Some races found such arrangements easier to adapt to than others. For Aslan and Lancians who had always had strong clan or team motivations it was "alien" to withhold or exploit skills that were needed by the group. The close relationship between the surviving guilds and the Star Guild is also worthy of further study.]

"It must have been 10 or 15 years after the Death that we felt that we'd come through and that a new life had begun. Our old TL13 world seemed like a dream now. Our new world was so different, and in many ways far more satisfying. Yes, the work was hard, I still don't think my hands have recovered, but it was a slower and more pastoral existence. You'd talk late into the

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evenings, or over a pint of Rmer at lunch time like you'd never have done before. The only sounds apart from birds and the wind was the occasional steam tractor, or the creaking of the watermill. You know it reminded me of nothing more than some old Terran novels I'd read, set in a place called, I think, Wesx. The only difference was that where they had the dark satanic mills of industrialisation lurking over the brough of the hill we had the deathly relics of our decayed cities. And there was always those marvellous anachronisms. I remember that Oki used to delight in building really small mechanical devices to mimic the electronics of the past. I'm sure he must have copied some of his designs though, like that punch card and silver disc'd videoscreen."—Pugli In-dee, Teacher

Adventure Nuggets

Stranded in Space

Scene: Given these hard times it had been a relatively peaceful journey in from the jump point. We'd got a lot of routine stuff out of the way and just under an hour ago the good ship *Ventsa* docked at Crosof High. I was gazing out of the bridge viewport at the glistening lights of the space station when they went out; the lights, every one of them. As I gasped my surprise turned to fear as the lights of the *Ventsa* went out and we were plunged into darkness. Thankfully the red emergency lights came on, but the ship sounded ominously dead and I could feel my feet lifting from the floor. We were in zero-gee!

Action: When the Virus arrives in system its attack on ships can be frighteningly swift. The players first concern is likely to be to recover the computer, for without it they cannot startup the main or standby power supplies. Although a hopeless task the players should be encouraged to try and led into the sense of desperation which is the hallmark of

this scenario. Things are going to get bad! After a few minutes the players will see lifeboats being launched from the space station. The ship's radio is out of action, but if a player thinks of using the suit radios they'll find the channels awash with voices, some panicky, some cool. Everybody is in the same boat. The players should soon realise that if they stay put they'll die and should therefore plan their escape to the world's surface. The main options will be to use their own small craft/lifeboats/emergency shields or to EVA to the station or another ship and appropriate theirs. In both cases remember that the lack of almost all power and light in the whole of near space will make the task very difficult, with a need to jury rig manual overrides, and that there will be several thousand other people with the same idea. And even when the players get dirtside all is not likely to be over, especially if they made an uncontrolled descent into a remote part of the world...

The Night the Lights Went Out In Georgeene

Scene: We'd been enjoying a nice quiet drink to celebrate the end of a run when the vid-screens went blank. "Hey, where's the vid?" came the shouts. The bartender looked perplexed but dutifully tugged at cables and pushed switches. Nothing. Dead. Our conversation strayed back to the run but was soon distracted again by a commotion at the bar. Some guy's phone wouldn't work, and another couple were having problems with a credit transfer. Then the lights went out. After the initials 'oohs' people started shouting at Forin to get her act together, others suggested she'd better pay those bills. 'The lights. They're out all over the city' somebody shouted from the doorway. Then there was an almighty crash and the windows blew in....

Action: Moving out from the bar the players will be met by a darkness that previously they've only met in deepest space. No lights, but panic there's lots of. The crash was from an air-raft that now sits in the ruined remains of the building opposite. Up

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Active Measures

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and down the street flickers of fire bear witness to similar happenings. For the players their choice will lay between heading back to the ship or to a more local refuge (friends, hotel, etc). Either way the journey will be adventurous, and encounters should be rolled regularly.

Possibilities are:

- Another craft crashing nearby and the players are asked for help to rescue a trapped person, or to assist with first aid. Maybe even one of the party is hit.
- The players run into a gang of looters who are taking advantage of the chaos.
- The players run into security forces who are blocking their way as part of a security cordon (especially if heading back to the port).
- The players encounter a dangerous animal/person who has escaped in the chaos.
- The players have trouble navigating in the darkened city with no Auto-guide to assist them.
- The players route is blocked because the automatic lift/gate/bridge/tube has failed.

If the players are heading anywhere other than their ship they'll find their destination no better than the streets. The nugget will then either continue with their return to their ship, or follow on to the escaping from the city nugget. If heading for the port the players will almost certainly have trouble getting in. If this does not come from the port authority then it will almost certainly come from the hoards that rapidly gather seeking a passage off planet. When the players do get to their ship they'll find it dead, like everything else. Manually blowing the hatch is the only way in, and once within it's an eerie place. The players may camp out in the ship and await the return to 'normality'. But it's going to be a long wait....

Mall-Fever

Scene: After two days it was obvious that things weren't going to get better. Our stocks of food were running low and it was mayhem still outside. The local foodstore had stopped selling stuff as soon as the net went down, and it was only yesterday it started bartering its stock. Then last night it was looted. There's a foul stench in the air and a couple of ham operators we've been monitoring talk of lawlessness and death. The troops around here have kept the mobs away from the starport, but the body count is high and the troopers are getting uneasy. Their food's running low and there's no prospect of pay at the end of the month. Another radio op says that the best bet is to head out to the farms to the south of here, at least we'll be close to the food and away from the smell of death.

Action: Once the PCs decide to make a move they'll need to strip their ship of everything they'll need and can carry. If they have some non-grav personal transport it should still work, but refuelling may be a problem and it'll also attract a lot of attention. Also anything rechargeable (like power armour!) could cause problems later. Once kitted out the PCs can head off. Encounters would be similar to the "Night the lights went out..." nugget but with the aggro stepped up a notch or two. Additional encounters could include:

- A roadblock set up by a gang that's taken over a few city blocks.
- A roadblock set up by security forces trying to prevent people from entering and area/leaving the city.
- A pack of rabid animals
- Violent anarchists joy-riding a paramilitary patrol wagon and shooting everything in sight.

As the players move through the city they'll find that they come across ribbons of people all heading out, carrying their belongings or using make-shift

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carts. The appearance of a powered vehicle or a pack animal is the cause of aggro or even riot. Gradually the ribbons merge and soon the main arterial routes are crammed with refugees. On the march out petty theft and stress induced violence is common. The players will need to watch their backs as well as their possessions. They may also stand a chance to gain some kudos by helping fellow refugees with medicines or route-finding/making problems. For their own future it will be in the players interest to ingratiate themselves with the locals; off-worlders who 'brought this plague' are not very popular at the moment and the players could be the target of xenophobic attacks. Within the refugee band natural groupings and leaders will soon emerge and the players might ally themselves to one of these. After several days march (left to the referee) the players and their fellow travellers arrive at the Hedula Agro-combine.

Out of the Fire

Scene: It had been a rough descent but the re-entry packs got us all down safely and within a few tens of kilometres of one another. I unloaded my gear from the canister and then stuffed my pockets with rations and ammo. I pulled the pack and the canister to a convenient ditch and threw some brushwood over it. Finally I threw my pack on and headed up to the top of a nearby hill. I couldn't see a soul. On the radio I heard the other guys checking in. We had problems working out who was where though because the planet's NAVSAT system was out, but in the end our navigation skills won through and we chose an RV.

Action: The players should be individually and randomly placed on a wilderness map. They should then make their own ways to the agreed RV. During this time roll for encounters for each player. Once they have met up at the RV the players should head on for civilisation. There are two options, a small

town about 100km distant NW, or a worksite about 60 km distant to the SW. During the march to the site encounters should be rolled for as usual, but any 'human' encounters should use one of the following:

- One of more survivors from a similar drop from orbit from another ship.
- The crash site of a air-raft. All are dead.
- The crash site of an orbital shuttle. There are two survivors, one of whom has lost both legs, the other has a chest wound.
- A 'madman' screaming about the revenge of the Ancients

On arrival at either site the players will be appraised of the situation on the planet. Out in the sticks old fashioned radio is still keeping people informed. The reception will be slightly warmer at the work site, the townsfolk being more insular. At the worksite there's local power but food supplies only have a week left, they are usually flown in monthly. If things don't change the site leader is going to move on the town. They have a number of vehicles which they can charge locally. The players will only have the choice of moving on alone or joining in. At the town there is only sporadic power and little (most came in from outside), although most families have their own vegetable plots. There is very little independent transport. The town could survive alone in terms of food and shelter, but the extra bodies which arrive there over the coming weeks will put a definite strain on the situation. The PCs could try and make a living here, or alternatively try and build up support for a journey into the nearest large town (80 km away) using the transport. Villagers will be wary about this as one team has already left and is unheard from, and there have been stragglers coming in from near there with tales of chaos and lawlessness. The PCs could also make the journey on foot. If they do so they'll find a smaller scale of the "Mall Fever" nugget, and will end up joining a simi-

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lar exodus to a farm. If the players stay in the village then life will develop along similar lines to the farm based nuggets.

Down on the Farm

Scene: It had been another hard day, and by 2300 we were almost ready for bed. We'd been out since 0600, some of us riding gryhorse rounding up the cattle, others had been working in the fields harvesting the last of the Carravence crop. Schofi and I were playing cards, whilst Onybe mended a tear in her jacket. Then there was a commotion at the door and Cheno burst in. "We're under attack, get your boots on and report to the armoury. We've got a farm to protect!"

Action: As the farms grew in size, so rivalries too grew. Initially these would be verbal disputes, or at worst bar-room brawls. But soon rustling began, fences would be wrecked, crops damaged. Finally the war got hot, with lone workers being murdered, then out-stations, till eventually some farms established standing security forces, private armies, or hired one of the new bands of mercenaries.

In this adventure the attackers are the security force of the neighbouring Simonsto farm. Both the Simonsto and the players' Blue Light farm cover about 300 square kilometres. Whilst Blue Light only has about 3000 people living in and around the farm, the Simonsto is almost twice that size and growing fast. It's now feeling desperate for more land and stock. There's been a long running dispute over the Redeshe Valley, and now in the early evening Simonsto have sent a combat team of 30 in to seize Blue Light's station in the valley.

The Simonsto are equipped to a tech level above the local norm. They have two ground vehicles with them. They have taken the stations 15 homesteaders hostage, and are now digging in. Simonsto plans to send a workteam of 100 into the valley the next morning to erect new fences and to take full control of the valley.

The Blue Light will be able to muster a force of only 10 - 20, but can equip half of these to two tech levels above the local norm. The players can either be made squad leaders, or placed in a squad of their own and given a key task. Only animal transport is available, and the players should be able to reach the area of the homestead by midnight. Thereafter its all in the players hands...

Back to the City

Scene: It seemed so odd being surrounded once again by such huge man-made structures. On the farm we'd got used to more pastoral structures, and few were more than two stories high. Now all I could see was ruined metals, plastics, and composites. It had taken us 8 days ride to get to the city, but even a day or so out you could begin to sense the death. It had been almost 3 years since we'd left, but the ground was still littered with decayed bodies and skeletons. Most of us threw up. Our target was the old museum, and then the university. We figured they be the most likely places to have stuff of use, old books, tools, pictures. Anything we could learn from or use. We moved gingerly through the streets now. We hadn't actually seen anyone yet, but you could just feel those mutant eyes watching you....

Action: This nugget follows the players as they move through a ruined city, visiting the museum and university. The action should be followed on a real city map, but keep on emphasising the destruction and dereliction around. The following encounters should be used to spice up the trip, both inbound and outbound:

- Pack of rabid animals
- A crazed survivor armed with a simple firearm
- A lone sniper hiding some 6 floors up
- A survivor family without food but obviously diseased who pester the team for food and medicine. If the players make to get away the woman

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will throw down caltrops in front of a horse which will go lame.

- A search team from a Guild. Inter-personal skills should be played to decide whether this evolves into a 'hot' contact.
- The players make a minor discovery in deserted building along the route (e.g. food, a tool, a paper book, etc)
- An animal borne survivor gang attacks, carrying simple firearms and bows, and wearing jack armour. The gang should be half the size of the players party.
- A survivor encampment, with some 10 - 20 families. Again inter-personal skills should be played to see whether the survivors help and act as guides, ask the players to get lost, or pick a fight (either then or in ambush later).
- A lone survivor, really talkative will attempt to befriend the team and act as a guide. He'll be hopeless, but will keep on going on about Dean, and how he's afraid of Dean, and may also offer some gossip about the museum's guardian.
- At the museum a survivor family has made home. The elder is slightly mad, and considers herself the guardian of the muses. Her family are loyal and will help her stop the players getting in/around unless they can win her over. In the museum the players will find a selection of useful displays (which must be hand copied), and a few tools or examples of craft.
- At the university the players will become aware that they are being watched. And as they move across the campus figures will be seen scurrying from bush to bush. Eventually the players will be ambushed by about twice their number. Sharp eyed players will also notice that amongst the simple firearms, bows, and pikes there are also personal energy weapons! The players will be taken to the Central Hall of the university

where they'll have an audience with "The Dean", a TED in the making. The Dean has secured the university as his power-base, and has looted it of any working technology, and most of the fancier looking non-working technology. He will be generally benign towards the players, saying that he too wants to 'expand' into the country some day, and that perhaps they'd like to swear allegiance now. As long as the players play it cool they should get away with their lives intact, even if not with much of their collected relics. If the players decide to get violent (either before or after meeting the Dean), then they can expect to be fighting a force totalling four times their size, of whom 40% have blades, 30% have bows, 20% have firearms and 10% have lasers. The Dean will attempt to defend his holy of holiess, the old physics lab, at all costs. If the players defeat him and break in to the lab, they will find a fine array of artifacts although most are high-tech and useless. The TED and his tribe have vandalised most of the really useful material in the university.

The return to the Farm can be as eventful as the referee wants to make it. The success of the mission is largely dependent on the artifacts and knowledge brought back, and experience points should be dependent on this.

Reaching Out

Scene: We'd been travelling for over month. We'd left behind us the farms and hamlets and had headed up into the mountains, hoping to get to Gusin. In the old days Gusin had been the technological centre of the world. Dozens of research centres, universities and leading edge companies laid out around the blue expanse of Lake Gusinoro. If there was anywhere were we'd find the information and perhaps even the people to help us rebuild our civilisation it would be there. Our expedition numbered some 50 fifty people, drawn from a selection

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of local farms. Even the guilds were pulling together on this one. The route was a tortuous 1000km across the Sima mountains. Who knows what we'd meet.

Action: This adventure gives scope for a whole array of encounters, of both the wilderness and the 'collapse' variety. Most of the events described in previous nuggets could provide inspiration, but additional options include:

- Ambush by a guild force anxious to prevent any 'recovery'
- A large survivor camp, short on food and possessions
- A TED in the making
- A large crashed spaceship or even a space station fragment
- A military unit gone 'wild'

On arrival at Gusin the players will find that the death there was greater, the local climate not offering the farming opportunities on which survival depended. A few people make their living fishing the lake, but native marine life is poor. These fishermen will act as guides and the players can then explore the Gusin area. They will find though that there is almost less here than they found at home, the Virus recognised this as a key target and did a good job of destroying it. The players shouldn't be allowed to go home empty handed though, and few valuable nuggets will be unearthed. Perhaps the best prize will be to persuade Obil Adil, an ex-scientist, to accompany them back. Obil has an excellent memory and had a keen interest in 'archaic' as well as contemporary technology, and would be a valuable boost to any recovery effort.

Like a Second Coming

Scene: It had been a hard day in the office. After almost a years work the recovery effort was beginning to take shape, with sustainable programs established on housing, health, communications, and transport. We'd got the telegraph lines working to

Ceive and Semsfor, and the new steam engines were passing their tests with flying colours. In the hot-house the guys were even making progress on restoring the computer net we'd brought back from Selelchal. I looked up at the stars, and thought "one day we'll return". Then my eye was caught by a flash on the horizon, and then a huge spaceship came sweeping over the hill and across the fields. "My God! The stars have come to us!"

Action: The arrival of RCES or even a free trader would be a traumatic event on a world. Whilst most *Traveller* literature explores such contacts from the RCES point of view it would be interesting to explore the same from a survivor point of view. At its most simple the arrival of such a technologically superior force is likely to split survivor groups between those who want to reclaim the stars and those who are now confirmed xenophobes. Both camps would in turn divide between those who are motivated by altruism, and those who have only self interest at heart. The players should represent one group and then through either persuasion or force try and win the other groups over. The adventure could use a 'political influence' points scheme as some other *Traveller* political adventures have done, or it could be a more limited shoot-'em-up. The guilds could be expected to be particularly xenophobic, although the timely rival of a Guild craft could lead to an interesting stand-off or possible civil war. Either way, the players will soon be reminiscing about the good old days when they only had their natural survival to worry about!

Virus Attack Vectors

As the Hivers now understand it the Virus crossed the immensities of interstellar space through the transponders of manned craft and the XBoat network. The latter would have been key in ensuring that the Virus arrived at the same time as news of itself at most major worlds. Subsidiary XBoat and packet boat feeds then brought the Virus to most

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lesser worlds. Amongst the last to be infected were those worlds which had little interstellar contact. Indeed it is likely that some of these will have totally escaped the Virus, interstellar travel collapsing before they could be infected. Obviously the discovery of these would be a valuable prize for the Coalition. One might expect a similar argument to hold for interdicted worlds, but the Hivers think it likely that the scout interdiction service vessels would have carried the Virus out to these, the Virus deliberately sending response and resupply ships out to them shortly after infection.

Arriving by XBoat, the system's E-mail net provided the ideal vector for the Virus to spread through the planet's systems. If arriving by transponder the Space Authority network supplied the conduit to each world in system, then through COACC networks and eventually into the local data networks. Since the Virus was originally an anti-ship system it found it easy to cripple a world, since electronically a world looked just like a giant distributed starship. Command and control systems generally went first (including a planet's governmental and administrative systems), then weapon systems (the SDB network, planetary defenses, and military installations), then information centres (media, business, and academic centres), life support (medical and food production facilities), transportation nets, then almost simultaneously the power and communications networks. The Virus disabled each node with either a software kill (overwriting all data and programs and tying up all processor time) or a hardware kill. The latter was potentially the most devastating, and often involved taking control of a system's real world presence—weapons, satellites, power sources—and using them to cause the physical destruction of their own and/or other systems.

Energy

What energy sources existed on these worlds? Whilst on worlds with native life they would have

had coal, oil, and gas the fact is that the vast majority of the Imperium's worlds, and practically 100% of its 'settlements' had no such natural power sources and were dependent on nuclear or solar power. These were in turn totally dependent on control systems, which made ideal targets for software or hardware kills. The effects of deliberate meltdown, or of SPSS transmission beams being used as weapons, or the SPSS themselves being hurled from orbit do not bear thinking about, and the remains are not a pretty sight even today. On some worlds alternate power sources existed, but again they were usually dependent on computerised control systems. For instance wet worlds usually had hydro-electric stations, and those with large moons had tidal power. Many worlds with standard or dense atmospheres had wind farms. Worlds with a high vulcanisation indexes often had geothermal stations.

Even if the power sources survived the virus attack the distribution network was still at risk and unlikely to survive the onslaught intact. Either way the loss of power crippled almost any world of TL8 or greater. The loss of power sources was the most likely cause of eventual failure of non-terran standard worlds.

Survival in Space

If surviving dirtside was tough, think about what was happening in interstellar space:

Ships in jump: Immune from the Virus, a ship was safe until it emerged from jump. Then if the Virus was active in system it was probably be infected mere seconds after its first transponder transmission. Then, stuck out at a 100 diameter jump point it had little chance of making it to safety and few could drop dirtside with no computer control of the M-drive. In these cases alternative means of transport became necessary, using ships boats or even survival globes or re-entry shields to make the journey to safety. The general rule was that the simpler the craft the more chances there were of it oper-

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ating. Either way most craft survived at most 90 days before victuals and power gave out.

Space stations: The biggest graveyards were the space stations. Even the artificial habitats, with their dependence on computer-regulated lighting, recycling and shielding were not immune. A mass evacuation program was started using the few small

craft that had escaped the Virus, or else habitants moved into the docked craft where there was more scope for jury-rigging survival systems, although conditions on them proved little better. The sad fact is that an estimated 90% of all people in space at the time of a Virus strike perished within 3 months, with 70% dying in the first 72 hours. ❄

Critics' Corner

Central Supply Catalogue

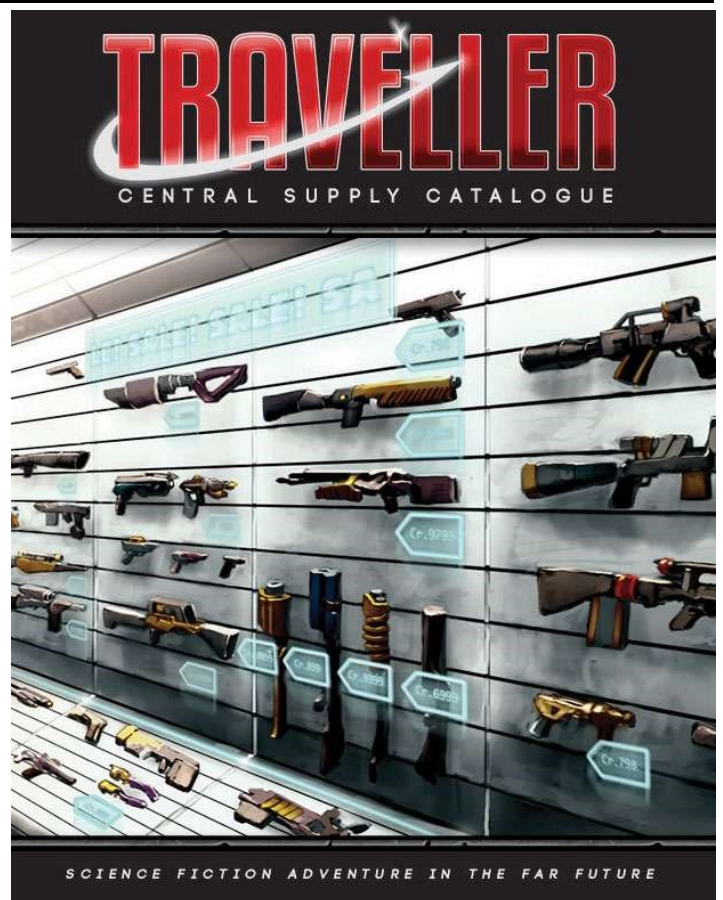
reviewed by Megan Robertson

Central Supply Catalogue. Matthew Sprange.
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OK, so what can be said about just another equipment guide? The Introduction begins by explaining that it contains an updated collection of items from earlier editions of *Traveller* as well as new ones, it is not designed solely for use with the Third Imperium setting and indeed has things that don't exist there, and that there are rules for item use, availability and even permits as well as the things themselves. However, with all that said, it's still a shopaholic's dream of everything the well-equipped Traveller might want or need—or wish he had picked up—during his travels.

After a full-page advert for an equipment store, Chapter 1: Equipment Availability looks at various ways in which the Referee can control how easy (or difficult) it is to get your hands on any item desired. Law Level is the obvious one; if an item isn't legal it will at best be very hard to find and involve dealing with other than conventional retail outlets. However, even if an item's legal that doesn't mean to say every store stocks it, or even if they do carry it, do they have any right now when our Traveller wan-



ders in looking for it. There's a system for determining whether or not that item is there, better than just having the Referee make it up (not that there's any reason why the Referee *shouldn't* make it up; it's his game after all). Availability can be modified when the item is illegal, with the party having to access the black market which may or may not have what they are after. There are various categories of item modelling how, just as in the real world, some items are only available (legally at any rate) to individuals

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with certain jobs or qualifications. Then follows a basic system for handling black market deals that go wrong, as in, the authorities notice what's going on—this begins with investigation and goes right through to penalties handed down.

Next come more rules in Chapter 2: New Rules. This introduces a few new weapon traits and explains what they mean. Just a single page, then we are on to "The Travellers' Aid Society Central Supply Collection". This is semi-in-character, although rules bits do intrude a little... and it's replete with loads of illustrations. The first part is devoted to Personal Protection—body armour, of course, in a wide range of styles including historical stuff and exotics designed to protect against fire and energy weapons and even one that protects against psionics. Naturally this includes both powered and unpowered suits, and a wide range of vacc suits. You can also get an electronics suite to add to the suit of your choice, other modifications and additions are also available... and that's before you get to battle dress.

The next chapter is Survival Gear, which starts with parachutes and continues through atmospheric protection, cold- and hot-weather gear, underwater kit and the like—all these include both clothing and other equipment you need to survive and function in a range of extreme environments. Go mountaineering, venture into vacuum, or just make use of a range of survival items including a 'fusion stile' (did they mean 'still?') that produces potable water and an almost-edible gloop out of whatever organic material and liquids you load in. This section ends with wilderness housing, from tents to full-blown bases.

Next up, Electronics. This begins with vision and detection devices, then looks at communications, and a collection of gadgets and essentials. If you didn't think a laser-emitting ring was a vital piece of equipment before you read this, it might just change your mind! Computers get an entire chapter to themselves, covering both hardware and software.

A chapter on Robots follows. There are rules for using them covering everything from how much damage they can take to programming them, and a variety of useful ones are presented. Do you want a protocol droid? Or a robotic assassin? Or even a sanitation droid to keep your living spaces clean and tidy? It will even wash your clothes for you! If you'd rather do your own work, head on to the next chapter of Tools, full of general hardware, toolkits and even welding torches.

Another essential in the next chapter, Medical Supplies. This looks at medical equipment and drugs and pharmaceuticals—some have, er, non-medical uses. Staying on a kind of medical theme, the next chapter is about Personal Augmentation. This allows for cybernetic or biotech upgrades (or replacements for lost body parts) to all parts of the body—but the treatments can be painful, and medics can get confused if they do not understand how a patient is augmented.

A chapter on Home Comforts (which include such interesting items as an alien cosplay kit and fully-animated miniature wargames) is followed by the large final section many Travellers will have been waiting for: Weapons! Starting with Close and Personal, there are sections on hand-held melee weapons, blade weapons (if you want a lightsaber, go for the arc-field weapon), other melee weapons, and shields. The next chapter is Self-Defence and looks at handguns, slugthrowing rifles, energy pistols and rifles, grenades, and archaic weapons. Then there's a whole chapter devoted to Heavy Weapons of all sorts: man-portable, crew-served, vehicle-mounted, and rockets and missiles.

The last weapon chapter, titled For the Discerning Weapons Specialist, contains all manner of exotic items that don't fit in the preceding categories. Bolas and boomerangs to backpack nukes. Then we move on to Ammunition and finally Sighting Aids and Accessories—some interesting odds and ends here.

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Critics' Corner

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This makes for a very comprehensive selection of items that the party might need, especially when equipping for exploration or military expeditions.

Keep track of spending; it's easy to rack up a hefty bill... and it can be embarrassing when your ship gets repossessed because you haven't paid your debts! 🌟

Confessions of a Newbie Referee

A Column by Timothy Collinson

#34: Onwards, Upwards, Outwards

Tired. So tired. Mind aching, body burning, even my fingers feeling like they're competing in an Olympic endurance event. I can hardly move, my brain is in a fog and even drinking a cup of tea takes more energy than I have.

The chronic fatigue is playing up today and I've come home from work early. Thankfully, due to a reduced working week, I don't have to move tomorrow. I'm planning on doing just that. Work has been a busy few weeks, I've had more than my usual social activities in the evening or at weekends, so perhaps it's unsurprising. On top of that, I have the low level but ever present anxiety about my every other month running of *The Traveller Adventure* or my roughly every other week lunch time *Traveller* games with colleagues. (That I'm finding this limited refereeing difficult is a clear sign of how much I'm struggling at present.)

I'm not far off how bad I felt on the Sunday morning of last year's TravCon which is a bit disturbing as it's only two weeks now to this year's convention so I'm worried about starting at a low level. But after six years of running a minimum of two games each weekend, I'm taking a seventh year sabbatical and haven't offered to fill a slot. (I'll probably take some characters and a bit of plot. If the organizer gets desperate to fill slots as he did last year thanks to referee sickness, I could offer to see how 'off the cuff' I can really manage.)

I'm still thankful however, as I know others with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (or Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) have it much worse and are bedridden and can barely move. The film *Unrest*, recently released, captures one such sufferer and her experiences.

I know that remission or healing can come and I remain optimistically hopeful that that might yet be in my future, but after nine years or more have to accept that I need to deal with where I am. Unsurprisingly, it impacts my family (of course) although even those close to me find it difficult to "understand", particularly if I'm in less debile phase. Many find it hard to understand that even sitting talking with people can be exhausting.

This could be a down phase, it could mark further decline, it's difficult to tell. If the latter it may mean difficult decisions. Reducing my working week further (which of course impacts on pay and pension); limiting my social life even further—although it's pretty much already down to just church and a bimonthly book group; or perhaps even reducing my involvement in *Traveller*—no longer running games would be an obvious step or maybe reducing the writing I do. The latter has been a valuable 'escape' into other, pain-free worlds; something I can do in my own time at my own speed and without having to talk to anyone.

But it's not come to that yet. So, *per ardua ad astra*. 🌟

Less Dangerous Game

Shaduquaram

by Benedikt Schwarz

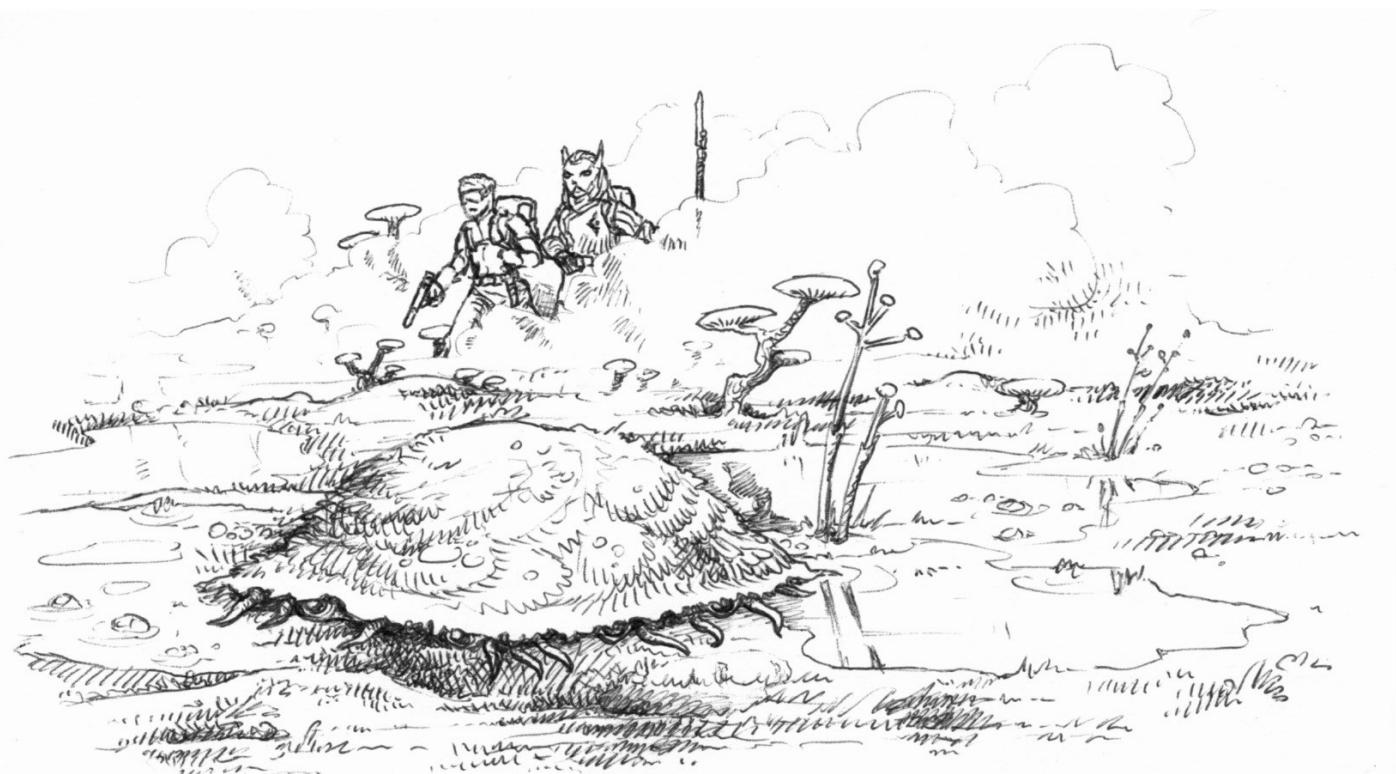
ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shaduquaram	20	0.5m
SKILLS	Stealth 3, Recon 2	
ATTACKS	Acid (1D) [No Attack, Flee 2-]	
TRAITS	Slow Metabolism (Initiative -5)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger, Reducer	
NOTE	Figures given are for 10-year-old specimen. See end of article for age-related variation.	

The shaduquaram, also called a Solmar blanket (after the IISS biologist Tawm Solmar, who first catalogued it), is native to the Northern swamplands of the planet Olivin. It has been introduced with varying degrees of success to several other planets, mainly in attempts to harvest its cells for anagathic research, but at times just to complement other fauna on newly terraformed planets.

The shaduquaram is a pentalateral pseudamoeboid, having a five-sided body symmetry. They appear as a round or oval flattened mound surrounded at floor height by irregularly-spaced short tentacles and ocelles (light-sensitive proto-eyes). The tentacles house the very keen olfactory organs and are not

Morphology	Pseudamoeboid, pentalateral symmetry, numerous pseudopods (short tentacles)
Biochemistry	C/H/O/N, Broadly compatible with human
Respiration	Tracheal, amphibious. Oxygen-nitrogen inhalant, carbon dioxide exhalant, methane absorbed through the skin
Ecology	Diurnal (active during the night)
Habitat	Marshland, swamps
Diet and Trophics	Scavenger/reducer, ectothermic (body temperature determined by environment)
Reproduction	One gender, sporal intercourse, mitous birth (the young splitting off from the parent), iteroparous (reproducing more than once in a lifetime).
Lifecycle and ontogeny	Lifelong growth. No upper limit to age.

limbs *per se*, but can be used to paddle the creature forward at a leisurely pace when submerged or drifting in water. The rounded dorsal region is completely covered by several symbiotic species of moulds and moss, which live off by-products of the



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shaduquaram's digestive processes that are excreted through the skin. The moss, together with pieces of decaying branches or ferns, gives the creature almost perfect mimetic camouflage in its native environment—which is enhanced still by the fact that shaduquaram are ectothermic, and their bodies are at ambient temperature and hard to detect with infrared vision. Except when feeding, a shaduquaram will try to stay submerged in water, with only the top of its dorsal region breaking the surface.

During the warm season, adults (10 years or older) will release spores into the water, which drift until they can latch onto another adult. Over the next three months, the shaduquaram will grow a second hump, which will fall off after the gestation period and become an autonomous creature—in effect, mitosis on a larger scale.

The creatures can smell blood or a decaying carcass over long distances (Solmar postulated that the symbiotic moulds may assist in perception) and will be drawn to the spot where an animal is wounded or killed. They then attempt to crawl over the carcass, "blanketing" it and excreting a mixture of enzymes, gastric (hydrochloric and nitric) acid and potassium chloride. The denaturated and partially digested carrion is then sucked into the creature's numerous stomach sacs for final processing.

The acid will smoke and turn a vivid orange or red if exposed to air. It takes 2-12 seconds to eat through clothes or armour, with ceramic or specially treated composites (such as in combat armour or hazmat suits) being proof against the effects. Damage is applied only after the covering has been eaten through, but it is applied again every round for D3 rounds after exposure unless the acid is washed off.

A shaduquaram attempting to blanket a wounded person can be easily fought off with moderate force; they are only dangerous to unattended patients that are asleep, unconscious, restrained or otherwise prevented from moving their limbs. This

does not discourage the natives of the marshlands from spinning tales of horror about flesh-eating shaduquaram blanketing and suffocating travellers—mainly for their own amusement to see the gullible foreigners jump at every imagined danger, or as a means to sell services as knowledgeable guides.

The danger to travellers comes in a completely different form. Shaduquaram, as amoeboids, lack the resilient hide of many other creatures. A foot that inadvertently steps on a shaduquaram will tear the skin and likely step into one of the food sacs that comprise most of the creature (causing 2D damage to the beast). The digestive acid is strong enough to eat through most materials in a few rounds, and is furthermore miscible in water, so if spilled it can turn a stagnant pool into an acid trap. Depending on the amount of water in the mixture, the effects can range from mildly irritating to highly caustic.

People accustomed to the dangers of the swamp will probe the ground ahead of them with long sticks (often colloquially known as "carbys", short for "carpet beaters", because their tips are flared to avoid piercing a quaram's skin).

Shaduquaram are not aggressive and will not even attack to defend themselves. Most animals are wary of the shaduquaram's acid and will shun their vicinity. Some species of small creatures (light enough not to break the skin) have learned this and will come to roost on a shaduquaram's back in relative safety from predators. On Olivin, certain specialised grazers approach the creature to nibble off the moss, causing bald patches that may attract parasitic fungi. If those parasites can take hold, their mycels will permeate the shaduquaram's flesh over the course of a few years and slowly restrict its digestive capability, in the end starving their host to death. Even if not, the remaining light gray 'scar tissue' will compromise the shaduquaram's mimetic ability (-1 to Stealth) until the moss grows back.

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If not killed by parasites, shaduquaram are, in theory, immortal. Their cells do not age, being very simple in structure. This and the surprising similarity to human digestive chemistry have prompted research by many independent institutes into possible anagathic uses of their cells. Shaduquaram continue to grow throughout their long lives (although their mass is reduced every time they bear young), and some very old shaduquaram have been spotted covering areas of over 100 m². Most shaduquaram, however, die at an age of about eighty to ninety years as their organs become too heavy and crush the tracheal breathing ducts.

Attacking a shaduquaram is a difficult proposition. Blades, explosives, shotguns and energy weapons do full damage, and the beast's slow locomotion means that a hit is guaranteed if the combatant takes time to aim. Projectile weapons and blunt objects do half damage. If the shaduquaram is hit, anyone adjacent to it (including the attacker if using a melee weapon shorter than a spear) may be splashed with digestive acid (8+, VERY DIFFICULT DEX roll to avoid). The creature has no way of attacking and will not offer any resistance other than its passive acid defense. Most swamp dwellers' advice is to steer clear and leave the creatures in peace.

Adventure Seeds

1) A tribal society living in the remote swamps is ruled by shadowy and secretive "elders" who are said to be the immortal tutelars of the families. A pharmaceutical corporation hires the travellers to shed light on the secret of those elders: are they perhaps ancestors of today's tribesmen who have managed to extract a crude anagathic from the shaduquaram of the swamp? The travellers will have to gain the tribesmen's trust to get an audience with an elder.

2) A failed Survival check while negotiating the swamp means one of the travellers has inadvertently stepped on a large shaduquaram hidden in the

mire. The foot is unharmed if xe removes the smoking boot quickly—but the prospect of crossing the stagnant, parasite-infested bayous barefoot is not exactly prepossessing.

3) The travellers are looking for a missing Scout. They find the remains of his equipment and his half-eaten bones—obviously, he died in the swamp and was digested by a shaduquaram. Unfortunately, the memory chip he was carrying has been sucked into the creature's stomachs (hopefully still within its ceramic sheath). They need to find the shaduquaram, kill it and carve the chip out of its digestive tract.

4) A prototype anagathic derived from shaduquaram cells has been tested on several volunteers on a backwater world. The experiment has been declared a success, and the serum is already scheduled for introduction to the black market. The Imperial authorities received leaked information and are investigating the corporation. They ask the travellers to round up the test persons as witnesses, all of whom have since returned to their jobs in the inaccessible swampy countryside, and none of whom are exactly cooperative.

5) As 4), but during the mission, the travellers learn that the prototype has some serious debilitating psychiatric side effects that only become apparent after a few years of ingestion. The CEO confesses that the anagathic has been sold to several members of an Imperial noble family. The travellers will have to break the news to them—very carefully, since the family will stop at nothing to eliminate them as witnesses if there is the least possibility of the travellers going to the press or a certain rival noble clan with the information. Anagathics, after all, are illegal in the Imperium, and no one is above the law.

6) After a fight in the swamp, one of the travellers is wounded and unconscious. As they camp for the night, a shaduquaram approaches and starts blanketing xir.

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7) On a planet in the process of terraforming, shaduquaram were released as part of an attempt to regulate the newly introduced fauna. Unfortunately, things are not turning out as planned. The shaduquaram are reproducing faster than the other animals, and, lacking predators to cull them, are now too much competition for the other scavengers introduced to the planet. The travellers are asked to enter the swamp regions and help inject as many shaduquaram with parasitical fungi as possible. They are to wear protective suits at all times—the fungi, while mostly harmless, have a nasty habit of bonding with human skin and disfiguring it.

8) There have been cases of tourists stepping on shaduquaram on guided tours through the bayous. A few have actually resulted in injuries: acid burns on a leg, an itching hand, superficial nerve damage. Nothing deadly, but enough to ruin a holiday, and certainly enough for a damages claim. As a result, the resort's tourism value has dropped sharply. The tourist board needs volunteers to enter the swamps with a bioscanner and stick "marker harpoons" with a blinking light and transponder in as many shaduquaram as possible so tourists can keep clear of them.

9) The open area the ship's boat landed on is actually a very old and very large shaduquaram. The landing struts and motors are reasonably acid-proof, but the cables are not, and now the struts will stay extended until someone goes out into the smoking acid mire and fixes the power connections. Taking off with the struts extended will probably mean ripping them off. Meanwhile, the acid-laced water is slowly rising up to the lower edge of the airlock.

9) The tribal warriors chasing the travellers through the swamp suddenly break off the chase and fall back. They have reached a region thick with shaduquaram: everything that looks like an island in the mire may actually be an acid-filled hump. The

travellers have to choose between braving the hazardous terrain or confronting the savages.

10) A rich noblewoman hires the travellers as help for a swamp hunting safari. Excitedly chasing a large predator through the swamp, the party is split. The travellers rejoin their patron just in time to see her younger brother shooting her in the back (settling a long-standing succession dispute). The culprit then carries the body towards a pair of shaduquaram to dispose of the evidence. The travellers can either confront him, blackmail him or agree to keep quiet in exchange for a lucrative position in the household.

11) The travellers are asked to get cell samples of shaduquaram from several different regions of the planet for a pharmaceutical company. Their aid could be instrumental in saving the lives of thousands of children in the subsector who suffer from an as-yet-untreatable cellular aging disease. They encounter surly local settlers, natives unwilling to let them enter the sacred swamp (which is taboo to anyone but the tribal shamans for their spiritual journeys), and hostile wildlife, as well as a team of unscrupulous spacers hired by a rival corporation—one that wants to suppress research into a cure because it is already making a fortune selling expensive symptom-suppressing medication.

12) The travellers are hungry and have successfully stalked, killed and cleaned a grazer. Just as they are setting up camp and prepare to cook the carcass, a few young shaduquaram emerge from the swamp and try to blanket the meat.

13) A local crime lord has a shaduquaram pit. As a particularly gruesome example, his enemies are paralysed and thrown to the shaduquaram, to be slowly dissolved alive. A friend of the travellers' has been captured by the lord's minions and awaits his fate. A daring rescue operation is in order.

14) A resistance movement against Imperial occupation has been bloodily defeated. The rebel rem-

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nants have been driven into the inhospitable marshlands, where they continue the fight with poisoned arrows, spiked traps and thrown glass phials filled with shaduquaram acid. The travellers have to cross the area warily to get to their destination. 🌀

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shaduquaram	10	0.5m
SKILLS	Stealth 3, Recon 2	
ATTACKS	Acid (1D3) [No Attack, Flee 2-]	
TRAITS	Small (-1), Slow Metabolism (Initiative -4)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger, Reducer	
NOTE	Figures given are for 5-year-old specimen.	

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shaduquaram	30	0.5m
SKILLS	Stealth 3, Recon 2	
ATTACKS	Acid (2D) [No Attack, Flee 2-]	
TRAITS	Large (+1), Slow Metabolism (Initiative -6)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger, Reducer	
NOTE	Figures given are for 15-year-old specimen.	

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shaduquaram	40	0.5m
SKILLS	Stealth 3, Recon 2	
ATTACKS	Acid (3D) [No Attack, Flee 2-]	
TRAITS	Large (+2), Slow Metabolism (Initiative -6)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger, Reducer	
NOTE	Figures given are for 20-year-old specimen.	

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shaduquaram	50	0.5m
SKILLS	Stealth 3, Recon 2	
ATTACKS	Acid (3D) [No Attack, Flee 2-]	
TRAITS	Large (+3), Slow Metabolism (Initiative -6)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger, Reducer	
NOTE	Figures given are for 30-year-old specimen.	

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Shaduquaram	60	0.5m
SKILLS	Stealth 3, Recon 2	
ATTACKS	Acid (4D) [No Attack, Flee 2-]	
TRAITS	Large (+5), Slow Metabolism (Initiative -6)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger, Reducer	
NOTE	Figures given are for 40-year-old specimen.	

The Shipyard

Pham's Gunboats

By Joshua Levy

"That's a tough little bugger." — Unknown

Señor Pham was a scout on the barely populated fringes of a large empire. After a few terms he married the daughter of a ship builder. In his retirement he helped design several spaceships for use on the fringe of civilization, but this gunboat was his most successful design, by far.

Pham realized that a low population planet on the fringe did not have a good choice when it came to system defense. They could wait and save their money and buy a 400 ton system defense boat, but even if they did, if that boat happened not to be in service, then they had nothing. Also, while these systems wanted defense boats, they also needed search and rescue services, outpost resupply ships, and anti-smuggling patrols, all of which did better

with more, smaller ships, rather than fewer, larger ships.

So Pham designed a 100-ton system defense boat, with the idea being that more systems could afford one, and then they could incrementally increase their fleet. Even a system that could afford two would still always have one in service, which would be an advantage over a 400-ton ship that sometimes wasn't available at all. This basic concept was phenomenally successful. Smaller systems could afford something, and as they grew they could afford more and more. The one downside is that you need more pilots, since a single, large system defense boat, requires just one pilot, while the smaller gunboats will require 2, 3, or 4 pilots for the same firepower.

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But Pham had worked on the fringe for decades, and designed a ship well suited to the “way out there” environment. He understood clearly that people were at the mercy of their ships, and that even a minor malfunction could be deadly far away from help. No corners were cut in design or construction. For example, instead of fitting one C class plant powering a C class maneuver drive, he designed three A class power plants linked to three A class maneuver drivers. Sure, it took up more space, but an engine failure or maneuver drive accident could never leave you stranded. He designed in the ultimate in redundancy, a maneuverable, armored G-carrier to serve as a lifeboat. Hull and computers had full redundancy. Higher quality parts were used throughout, resulting in a 2% higher cost, but also a much more dependable ship. Finally, he added an inner armored ring around the pilot’s station, so that a lucky shot would not take him or her out.

This led (eventually) to two other classes of ships: “Knock-Off Phams” and “Phrankenstien Phams”. Seeing the success of these gunboats and knowing that governments on the fringe were often short of money, other manufacturers starting making ships in the same class, but cheaper. These ships had one C class power plant powering one C class maneuver drive. They didn’t have the high end G-carrier/lifeboat. They had light armor or no armor, and nothing special around the pilot. And so on. These became known as Pham knock offs, and not in a good way, but they are cheaper and see widespread use on the fringe.

Meanwhile, Pham realized that he could sell these gunboats in “kit form”. Some systems had the facilities to assemble a ship, even if they could not produce the components. Also, the components for a gunboat could be shipped in about 80 tons of space, while a completed ship would take up at least 100 tones. Obviously, quality varied based on assembly. However, the big break through was when

some planets started requesting partial kits. A planet that could construct power plants would buy a kit without a power plant. Planets that made their own computers or staterooms would buy kits without those, and add domestically produced components. These ships, which varied in quality, became known as “Phrankenstien Phams”.

Pham System Defense Boat, Space Guard Multipurpose		Tons	MCr
1	100 tons (1) wedge streamlined (Hull 2, Struct 2) Bonded Superdense x2 (12 points)	10	2.2 2
2	M6 = 3xA	6	12
3	No Jump Capability		
4	PP = 3xA	12	24
5	Power Plant Fuel Tankage = 8 tons/56 days x3	24	
6	Bridge Armored	11	0.6
7	Model 2/fib (Rating 10)		0.3
7a	(Basic software suite unspecified)		
8	Basic Military Sensors	2	1
9	Pilot, Gunner, Doctor, Engineer		
9a	Staterooms x4	16	2
10	Fuel Scoops (included in hull)		
	Fuel Processors	1	0.1
	Lifeboat Berth	10.4	2.1
	Sickbay (3 beds)	9	2.2
	Detention Cells x2	4	0.5
	Ship’s Locker	1	
11	Triple Turret	1	1
	Particle Beam x2		8
	Pulse Laser		0.5
12	Cargo	0	
13	Total Cost	107.4	58.5

Using a 100-ton hull (Hull 2, Structure 2), the Pham System Defense Boat (Space Guard Multipurpose configuration) is designed for piracy suppression, anti-smuggling operations, and search-and-rescue operations. It mounts no Jump Drive (being for in-system use only), three maneuver drive A, and three power plant A, giving performance of 6G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 12 tons supports operation of all three power plants for 28 days. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model 2fib. The ship is

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equipped with basic military sensors (DM 0). There are four staterooms and no low berths. The ship has one hardpoint and 1 ton allocated for fire control. The turret mounts two particle beam weapons and a pulse laser. No screens are mounted. There is a hangar for a G/Carrier used as a lifeboat. The hull is a streamlined wedge, armored with 12 points of Bonded Superdense armor. The ship requires a crew of four: Pilot, Gunner, Engineer, Medic. No provision for passengers is made. The ship costs MCr58.5 requiring 36 weeks to build.

Pham System Defense Boat, System Defense		Tons	MCr
1	100 tons (1) wedge streamlined (Hull 2, Struct 2) Bonded Superdense x2 (12 points)	10	2.2 2
2	M6 = 3xA	6	12
3	No Jump Capability		
4	PP = 3xA	12	24
5	Power Plant Fuel Tankage = 8tons/56 days x3	24	
6	Bridge Armored	11	0.6
7	Model 2/fib (Rating 10)		0.3
7a	(Basic software suite unspecified)		
8	Advanced Sensors (DM +1)	3	2
9	Pilot, Gunner, Fighter pilots x2		
9a	Staterooms x4	16	2
10	Fuel Scoops (included in hull) Fuel Processors Detention Cells x2 Fighter berth x2 Ship's Locker	1 4 26 3	0.1 0.5 5.2 0.5
11	Triple Turret Particle Beam x2 Pulse Laser	1	1 8 0.5
12	Cargo	0	
13	Total Cost	117	60.4

Using a 100-ton hull (Hull 2, Structure 2), the Pham System Defense Boat (System Defense configuration) is designed for piracy suppression, anti-smuggling operations, and system defense (not against Regular Navy ships). It mounts no Jump Drive (being for in-system use only), three maneuver drive A, and three power plant A, giving perfor-

mance of 6G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 18 tons supports operation of all three power plants for 42 days. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model 2bis. The ship is equipped with advanced sensors (DM +1). There are four staterooms and no low berths. The ship has one hardpoint and 1 ton allocated for fire control. The turret mounts two particle beam weapons and a pulse laser. No screens are mounted. There is hangarage for two fighters. The hull is a streamlined wedge, armored with 12 points of Bonded Superdense armor. The ship requires a crew of four: Pilot, Gunner, and two fighter pilots. No provision for passengers is made. The ship costs MCr60.4 requiring 36 weeks to build.

"Knock-off Pham" System Defense Boat		Tons	MCr
1	100 tons (1) wedge streamlined (Hull 2, Struct 2) Titanium Steel (2 points)	5	2.2 1
2	M6 = C	5	12
3	No Jump Capability		
4	PP = C	10	24
5	Power Plant Fuel Tankage = 24 tons/56 days	24	
6	Bridge	10	0.5
7	Model 1 (Rating 5)		0.03
7a	(Basic software suite unspecified)		
8	Basic Civilian Sensors (DM -2)	1	0.05
9	Pilot, Gunner, Doctor, Engineer		
9a	Staterooms x4	16	2
10	Fuel Scoops (included in hull) Fuel Processors Lifeboat Berth Sickbay (3 beds) Detention Cells x2 Ship's Locker	1 26 9 4 3	0.1 5.2 2.2 0.5 0.5
11	Double Turret Beam Laser Pulse Laser	1	1 1 0.5
12	Cargo	0	
13	Total Cost	115	52.28

Using a 100-ton hull (Hull 2, Structure 2), the "Knock-off Pham" System Defense Boat is designed for piracy suppression, anti-smuggling operations, and search-and-rescue. It mounts no Jump Drive

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(being for in-system use only), maneuver drive C, and power plant C, giving performance of 6G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 24 tons supports operation of the power plant for 56 days. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model 1. The ship is equipped with basic civilian sensors (DM -2). There are four staterooms and no low berths. The ship has one hardpoint and 1 ton allocated for fire control. The turret mounts a beam laser and a pulse laser. No screens are mounted. There is hangarage for a lifeboat. The hull is a streamlined wedge, armored with 2 points of titanium steel armor. The ship requires a crew of four: Pilot, Gunner, Engineer, Medic. No provision for passengers is made. The ship costs MCr52.28 requiring 36 weeks to build.

Variants

Rules notes: if your *Traveller* universe has a more powerful turret type weapon, such as a "Barbette" then the Pham Gunboat is likely to carry that weapon. Also if drones or mines are common in combat, then those may be carried instead of the fighters. Fuel storage will be sacrificed to make room.

Variants of this design usually replace the sickbay and/or detention cells with something else. For example, systems focused on search and rescue will enlarge the sickbay and increase the sensor package. Systems focused on law breaking will have larger or more detention cells. Some systems may add a research lab and space for science drones, while those with far flung installations may opt for cargo space.

An occasionally seen version is the "Stealth Pham". This version has a pop-up turret, a two-window bridge configuration, a camouflaged boat hatch, a dual exhaust system, and an electronic camouflage package. The result is that it looks just like a type-S (if operated at accelerations of 2G or less).

Occasionally 3 tons of fuel will be traded for more sensors and/or a larger ship's locker, reducing the ship's duration to 7 weeks instead of 8.

Civilian Uses

Genuine Pham gunboats are in great demand for civilian uses on the fringe. They come on the market when replaced, or when a system becomes wealthy enough to replace their fleet with larger, more specialized system defense boats. Knock-Off Phams are less in demand, but more common.

Weapons are almost always removed; the armored G-carrier is sometimes gone, sometimes replaced with something cheaper. Sometimes one (occasionally even two) of the drives are no longer functioning.

Tactics

It is important to remember that a Pham gunboat "punches above its weight" in combat. One gunboat is unlikely to lose to a non-military ship, even a larger one. (It may not win, either, but it is unlikely to lose.) Players who count turrets ("we have 4, he only has 1, we're gonna win") are going to be badly surprised.

Because Pham gunboats are faster than most civilian craft, they are going to decide both if there will be a fight at all, and when it will occur. They can leave any time. In combat with a freighter, even if an engine or power plant is completely destroyed, they are still likely to be the fastest ship in the fight. Their long range weapons mean that they will get off the first shots, and combined with their higher speed and maneuverability, mean the another ship (with only turret weapons) may never get into position to attack, but be picked apart by long range shots. No pirate wants to get into that kind of fight; they are far more likely to leave, if they can.

Finally, remember that a Pham gunship crew is likely to be braver than other crews, and more willing to take risks. They know they can leave any time. They know they have the longest range turret weapon(s) available. They know they have best armor and a better lifeboat (more quickly at hand) than the oth-

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er ships. And the pilot (who is making the basic attack/retreat decision), knows that he or she has that extra bit of armor.

Some Quick Adventure Seeds

(These can actually be used for any small ship, but the Pham gunboat works for all of them.)

Dude, Where's My Ship?

The adventurers are in a bar (near a University, although they may not know it). They are approached (or overhear) a fellow drinker complaining that their ship has been stolen. This is their patron, the collage aged scion of a big noble/industrial/famous family currently going to school at the local University. He or she had a falling out with a previous friend, who had the access codes to the spaceship your patron was using at college. This previous friend has absconded with the ship. Good thing it doesn't have jump. It's gotta be around here, somewhere. The patron doesn't want the cops involved, both because he doesn't want his friend in serious trouble, and also because he doesn't want the embarrassment of his own family finding out he lost his ship. The characters will need to track down the location of the ship, and grab it while it is not in flight. They'll never catch it in flight.

Old Treasure

The adventurers are in a bar (different bar) listening to some old alcoholic tell stories about the adventures of their youth. It seems they were part of a pirate crew who (at one point) captured a Pham gunboat. They were so successful, that at one point they filled the gap between the two primary hulls with pelleted gold, just to hide it. Eventually, they got caught. The main pirate ship jumped out system, the gunboat was captured, the other crew were put to death (dirtside firing squad), and that was the end of that. He survived by convincing the naval guys that he was a 16 year old galley slave, not really part of the crew. Anyway, the next morning, one

of the adventurers (good with computers) realizes that records were kept of the disposition of captured pirate ships, and of subsequent sellers and buyers. By using various skills, the adventures can find the current owner. Another adventurer (good with engineering) can rig up a miniaturized vacuum cleaning drone and send it between the hulls to suck up all that gold gravel. All that remains is to track down the current owner and get him or her to let them "clean out" the gap between the hulls. If the gold hasn't been found, the characters will find a wind-fall!

Research reveals that the ship has had a varied career over the last 30+ years, with several different owners, however the most recent buyer is in his or her late twenties and the child of a rich family. Apparently, he or she ran "into the woods", moving away from civilization and other people. He or she hasn't been heard from for years. The family is unhappy, but they are keeping a "stiff upper lip".

When the characters finally track down the ship, the owner is camping in it. The engines will be unused, and maybe unusable. The owner will be suspicious of the characters, and might be paranoid or have other mental problems.

Dead Raccoon Trap

If you, as referee, want to destroy the character's ship, you can run the following encounter. Just be careful not to kill the characters, unless that is the goal. The characters' ship comes across a type-S. Maybe it is damaged, or abandoned, or actively sending out a distress call. In any case, when the characters approach, it's a trap. The ship is really a Stealth Pham gunboat. Unless the adventurer's ship does a lot of damage to it quickly, the gunboat will be able to escape if the combat goes against them. Once the combat is underway, the gunboat will use the tactics described above (i.e., out maneuver, out range, etc.)



Cat and Mouse

by Michael A. Cessna

This adventure was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2006.

The following strictly unofficial documents fall into the PCs' hands:

Suudy,

I had to pull a few favors to get this for you; I hope it helps.

Good job on quashing the story about the theft of the Galipoli; that's a nightmare waiting to happen... Actually this is the worst case of piracy I've ever seen: at a stroke, this guy managed to steal a fully loaded Marine assault transport.

There were only an ENS and a couple of ratings, and a Corporal and two Pots aboard—everyone else was ashore; Reesbäker's team boarded via an access hatch behind the bridge (remember that he lived on one of those things for almost ten years?), using a Mercy-class rescue boat to board her. Incredible: 230 suits of Assault B-Dress, 6 Sunbeam sleds and 2 Intrepids, complete with full kits of spares and reloads, planetary bombardment missiles—gone in under five minutes.

But here's the interesting part: he didn't kill the skeleton crew—he marooned them on a rock in Trin's outer system... complete with cargo containers carrying the crew's personal effects, and an emergency locator beacon. Apparently, once he outran Trin's picket boats and Jumped, he micro'd into the Oort cloud, refueled and headed out... There's been no sign of him since. Weird.

I'm including a summation of his file below. The public want¹ doesn't include his decorations. I understand that D is frothing at the mouth over this—you know he killed one of her "pet nobles", right? Shot the broad in the face, in public, with no challenge; very nasty dude. I don't know N's mind on him... it's kind of creepy: he just takes the report, says "Thank you", and you're dismissed.

Something in this sounds like he might still be working for N, but I'm just not sure.

One more point: Reesbäker may have become involved in one of those "Droyne" cults that have been gaining strength of late. I personally think it's unlikely, but there are certain aspects that would appeal to him, per his psych profile.

Sorry I can't be of more help.

Your Chum,

Marko

*****FILE: REESBÄKER, Mäarten*****

Known Aliases: Lev Dahlgren, James Martin, Angus McTiernan, "Far-Reaching Thunderer"

DESCRIPTION

Date of Birth: 148-1180

Place of Birth: Vincennes/Deneb

Hair: Brown

Eyes: Green

Height: 172 cm

Weight: 100 Kg

Gender: Male

Race: Human

Occupation: Mercenary

Scars and Marks: Surgical and shrapnel scars on Right Arm and Right Side of Torso

Remarks: Former Master Sergeant, Imperial Marines; five (5) campaign ribbons, Combat Action Ribbon, five (5) MCG's, six (6) Wound Stripes; starship pilot/navigation ratings from unk. extra-Imperial source; last seen departing Trin/Trin's Veil/SM; considered armed and extremely dangerous.

CAUTION: ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Full crime list:


Murder of an Imperial Noble, Theft of an Imperial Warship, Unlawful Marooning, Repeated violation of Imperial interdiction protocols, smuggling of dangerous cargos to developing/emerging cultures, murder, assault, espionage, theft, embezzlement, robbery, breaking & entering; suspicion of commission of terrorist actions.

1— <http://www.trisen.com/sol/wanted.asp?iWanted=REESBÄKER>

Active Measures

(Continued from page 29)

Possible directions to take this seed

1. Reesbäker is a former Imperial Naval Intelligence agent gone rogue; he hi-jacked the *Gallipoli* to sell it outside the Imperium, most likely to a foreign government.
2. As 1, but the most likely buyer is pirates.
3. Reesbäker is still working for Imperial Naval Intelligence; the details are known only at the highest levels of Sector Intelligence.
4. Reesbäker is working directly for Archduke Norris; only Norris and certain members of his personal staff know the details of Reesbäker's mission(s).
5. As 4, but Reesbäker appears to have gone rogue.
6. Reesbäker is a former Imperial Naval Intelligence agent gone rogue; he hi-jacked the *Gallipoli* with the intention of setting himself up as a 'king' on a low-tech planet beyond the Imperial frontier.
Subsequent events are should be determined by the referee. 

The Prep Room

Jottings #4: Education

by Jeff Zeitlin

Education can be carried out in many different ways, and still have the same results. The *Traveller* rules generally assume that it will be conducted in a way that can reasonably be mapped to the current Western postsecondary model—that is, the student attends classes at an institution of education for roughly four standard years, and comes out with a piece of paper certifying that Eneri Gaashiba has met the requirements of the University of Gamuusha-Rakii, East Iish-Kabiibal Campus, to be called a Disciplined Lettered-Scholar of Theoretical Thumb-Twiddling, or what-have-you.

Other models are possible. Herewith some basic description of those models, with type-names of convenience, to add flavor to your education:

Medieval/Renaissance model: Colleges are largely communities of scholars, teaching and exchanging knowledge without regard to specificity of discipline. Students study under one or more masters, for specific subjects, paying the masters rather than the institution, and moving on when they feel they have learned an adequate amount, or if they feel that the master is no longer the appropriate

teacher for them for a subject. A degree is conferred by a college upon examination of the student by a board of masters (all of whom hold the highest degree possible); if the student demonstrates an acceptable level of mastery of the subjects associated with a degree, the degree is conferred. (In the Renaissance, the subjects were those of the Trivium and Quadrivium, *q.v.* on Wikipedia.) The student need not have studied under any of the masters on the examining board, nor under any of the masters at the particular college that has convened the examination board.

Talmudic model: In pure form, students study written works on subjects in pairs (*chavruta*), each reading independently, then debating the meaning of what they have read, their understanding thereof, and what the significance of the differences in interpretation are. A master is available to provide answers to questions that the students feel cannot be resolved in debate, but such answers are intended to provide data for further debate. In modified form, small groups (*chabura*) may meet, rather than pairs, and in further modified forms, the bare essence and

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The Prep Room

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raw facts may be presented by the master prior to reading and debate. This model is used almost exclusively for philosophical subjects, rather than “hard sciences”, but can have a place where there are multiple interpretations of observed fact, with no current conclusive thought on which is correct.

Tutorial model: One-on-one instruction, using whatever methods of knowledge acquisition seem appropriate in the instructor’s view. May include travel, employment or other “learn-by-doing” opportunities, multimedia presentations, debate, and so on. The instructor’s role is that of a teacher, mentor, and advisor. This model is rarely used as a complete education; the award of a degree would need to be by examination, as with the Medieval/Renaissance model.

Apprenticeship model: Generally used for crafts and professions, rather than for pure academics. The student is bound to a master (and is treated as a member of the master’s household) for a period of years, during which time he learns the craft/profession under the master’s tutelage. The master is also responsible for seeing that the student spends adequate time learning supporting material (e.g., book learning/theory). The student/apprentice works for the master and under his direction as payment for tutelage, room, and board, and when the master judges that the student has adequate competence to work under minimal or no supervision, the student is granted journeyman status. As a journeyman, the student may not open a business of his own, but may work for other masters than the one under whom the apprenticeship was served. The journeyman is not part of the master’s household, and works for some combination of wages and commission, depending on normal usage for the craft or profession. The journeyman generally may not work independent of a master (may not open a shop, or take on independent contracts), nor may the journeyman take on apprentices. During the journey-

man period, further study will be undertaken, under different masters, to learn techniques and gain broad but intense experience in various subdivisions of the craft or profession. At some point, the student will face an examination by a board of masters of the craft/profession, with the objective of demonstrating sufficient competence to be declared a master of the craft or profession. Masters are entitled to work for themselves (i.e., open a shop of their own, for crafts; act as an independent contractor rather than working as an employee, for professions), and may also take on apprentices and teach them the craft/profession.

The **Industrial University model** was partially described, somewhat dismissively, and definitely unfairly so, at the beginning of this Jotting. This model represents the default assumption for *Traveler*, and is essentially a continuation of the “one-size-fits-all” large-group instructional model of the primary and secondary educational systems: Students are gathered in groups large enough to preclude more than minimal one-on-one instruction, and are presented the material to be learned in lectures or through textbooks. Progress is measured by examination, and eligibility for a degree is automatic when sufficient study in requisite subjects is successfully completed. Which subjects are studied (and how many of them) depends on the particular specialization of degree desired; in most cases, the student studying “full time” can complete a degree in three to five years. In many institutions, the instructor-of-record delivers lectures to very large groups, and students later meet in smaller groups, with an advanced student expanding on the lecture material, referencing supplemental material in the textbook, and providing a limited amount of one-on-one assistance or acting as a leader and moderator in discussion.

Hybrid and Transitional models can—and do—exist: while the Industrial University model is essen-

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The Prep Room

(Continued from page 31)

tially as described for the lower tier of degrees (generally called Associate and Bachelor in the United States), the Master's degree is a hybrid, with both group classes and independent research, advising, and one-on-one instruction from a faculty 'advisor', and the highest degree, the Doctor of Philosophy, is almost exclusively self-guided study with one-on-one instruction and advising, followed by examination by a board of masters, in the form of submitting a dissertation and defending it before the board.

Some of the so-called "Learned Professions"—most notably medicine and law—start with the Industrial University model ("pre-law" and "pre-med"), and then switch to a hybrid of the Medieval/Renaissance and Apprenticeship models, requiring a long period of effective apprenticeship under the

most stressful conditions (as "on-the-job training") before being allowed to practice without close supervision.

Once information-management technology and data communications infrastructure have both reached sufficiently-sophisticated levels, it becomes possible to, in effect, mix the Tutorial and Industrial University models. Instructors record presentations as though they were being made to large groups; the students access these presentations (and any associated supplementary materials such as textbook readings) at individually convenient times, and submit any written exercises and/or assignments for evaluation when completed. Advisors may be on call to answer questions, though no particular student is assigned to a particular advisor. ❁

Critics' Corner

Reft

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Reft. Martin J. Dougherty.

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

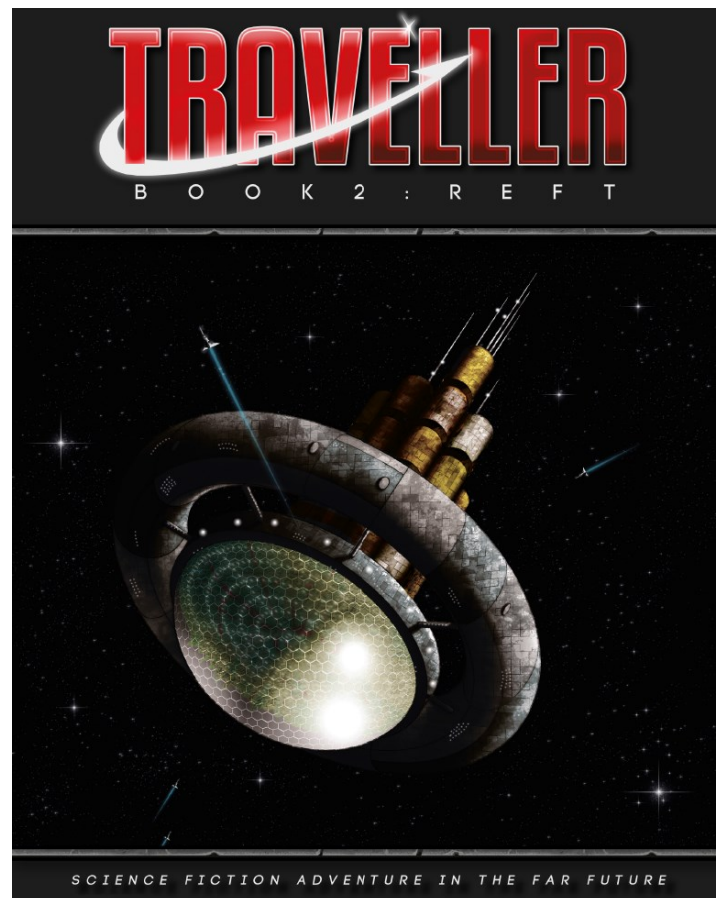
113pp., PDF (softcover forthcoming)

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.

Reft Sector, while not properly part of the Imperium (except for two areas on opposite corners), has always looked like it *should* be important to the Imperium. With the publication of *Reft*, it becomes so.

The introductory material gives a brief historical overview of Imperial involvement with the Islands, in the central subsectors of the sector. It then goes into a description of the Islands' trade patterns, outlining trade routes and shipping patterns—unlike the general case in the Imperium proper, the cultures of the Islands see no problem with the slower shipping of two Jump-1s for many trade links that



Imperial trade would use a single Jump-2 for. A

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Critics' Corner

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nicely rendered map, showing the two main trade routes in the Islands, is included. Following this trade overview is a capsule history of the sector, starting with the ESA colonization mission of 2050AD, and including the discovery that there were multiple colonizable worlds, the settlement thereof, and the exploration of and expansion into the rest of the Islands. The history continues, recounting the arrival by misjump of the *Eldorado* at Serendip Belt, the effective trading of repairs to *Eldorado* for Imperial technology in weapons and the Jump Drive, and the later dissemination of Imperial technology by the Scouts, in a strategic decision to prevent a single state from becoming too dominant (and perhaps costing the Imperium too much when/if a trans-Rift trade route might be created). The section wraps up with an overview of the current political state of affairs in the Islands, and suggests that war may be on the horizon.

The core of the volume is an encyclopedic atlas of the sector, much like those found in *The Great Rift*. Each of 13 subsectors gets a complete listing of its worlds, an overview of the “character” of the subsector, a closer look, amounting to about a page each, at certain worlds in the subsector deemed interesting, and a map of the subsector. (The three omitted subsector all have zero worlds in them.)

Following the atlas is a section on the “Mysteries of Reft”. These are all non-worlds, and all have some sort of mystery—possibly only legend—attached to them. Most are marked on the subsector maps, but those that are not have no locations given for them. Each of them has up to a full page of description, much like the ‘interesting’ worlds in the atlas.

The final chapter is on the politically and economically powerful entities of the sector. Each gets a descriptive article like those for the ‘interesting’ worlds, running between one and two pages.

Artwork is plentiful, and only ‘suffers’ (if you can call it that) from being clearly rendered rather

than photographic. Deckplans of starships and spacecraft are in the color isometric view standard for Mongoose publications, rather than the black-and-white line-drawing plan views from older versions of *Traveller*.

A surprising omission in this volume is any discussion of the two deep-space stations constructed by the Imperium to make it possible for Jump-4 ships (or Jump-2 ships with double fuel) to cross the Rift through this sector. A trade route across the Rift here would have significant economic ramifications (a friend actually worked this out for *GURPS Traveller*—though he actually proposed *four* stations, bringing the route down to Jump-3), and those stations would be critical in making it happen.

Recommendation: With a little extra work on Mongoose’s part, this could have been worth buying on its own. As is, though, you really should get the remainder of the Kickstarter package with it. 🌟

Freelance Traveller Goes Multilingual

Although the PDFs will remain English-only, we have had offers—and will entertain others—to translate selected (by the translator) articles into languages other than English. Each translation will be linked to its English original in our website, and each language will have its own index page listing all articles translated into the language. If you are a native speaker of a language other than English, and interested in translating into your language for us, please email the editor at editor@freelancetraveller.com 🌟

TravellerCON/USA 2018

TravellerCON/USA 2018 is happening the weekend of 5-7 Oct 2018 at the Lancaster Host Resort. This year’s theme is “Solomani”. The Kickstarter is active now (See <http://kck.st/2JH77c1>) (and has been fully funded); pledge now and join the fun! More info as it becomes available at Kickstarter and at the TCUSA web site (<http://www.travellercon-usa.com>).

Come play with us! 🌟

The Adventures of Gerry Fynne

by Sam Swindell

Chapter 11: To Pause in Preparation

Gerry Fynne went forth into the muddled main corridors of the Guarda Highport. The route was simple: one level up, and three tubes counter-clockwise to the *Ivanovich's Pride*. He barely noticed the hawkers, the mixed smells of a handful of eateries, and the come-on from an exceptionally tall, thin Vilani prostitute. He had eyes only for his ship, the *Pride*: he must get aboard. He'd glanced at her dingy bulk through a hazy (or grimy) viewport while coming down the corridor with a feeling of relief. Grey and haggard looking, she was not an impressive ship. The blast doors to the corridor that led to the *Pride's* docking tube were open only a meter or so, and a man dozed in a chair that occupied the gap, a grubby ship's cap pulled low over his eyes.

"Excuse me sir, do you have a any room left for passengers?"

"Some," The man said, without raising his head enough to see Gerry's eyes.

"Just me, middle passage."

"We got two bunks open in double rooms with male humans. Middle passage with a 500 Credit rebate, and 1,000 more cruds towards on-board entertainment."

"Entertainment?"

"We got a couple of whores. Girl and a boy. I think you'd like the girl?"

"Probably would, but unless she's licensed for juvies, I don't think I want the trouble."

"I wouldn't know about licenses or trouble. They're my gunners, and what independent social arrangements they make are all off the radar. Alright, 1,500 for on-board. That's enough for three whole nights and a few quickies."

Gerry was both disgusted and intrigued at the same time; he felt himself yearning to meet this 'girl'.

"No, ah, no. I'm not interested in that. I'll take a 800 credit rebate."

"Seven fifty."

"Seven fifty and the food's not been picked over. Chandler's 44?"

"Butt end of a 99. There'll be others along who'll jump on that deal, but I'm not getting a new 44 for you. Plus I'll throw in a couple hundred for the girl. You don't have to use it."

"Deal," Gerry said, stepping forward. They shook on it. He did not want the thought of the girl, but it was still with him. He tried to hand the middle passage voucher over, but the man, getting up, waved it away. "Give it to Patsy: my purser, gunner, and 'the girl'. I'm Captain Red Justiss," he said, still grasping Gerry's hand in his.

"Gerry Fynne, sir...Captain." Gerry met his eyes. Tired, jaded, and a little dangerous was his first impression. They walked in, knowing that the 1 meter gap was enough for the skidder to pass once the Captain kicked his chair to the side.

He saw the *Pride* again through the large corridor viewports. She was worn down to the dull gray of her hull, but the starboard triple turret gleamed. It looked to be two missile racks and a beam weapon. Its partner wasn't visible on the obscured port side of the hull, but he had no doubt it was there. No need for a second gunner without a second turret.

The Captain led him to a stateroom, where he called out to a large flaccid mound of a man who lay on the port bunk and made no pretense of rising, "Wore you out, did she? Well, here's your new roommate: Gerry." The BigSofts rolled off the skidder behind Gerry, as he caught a flash of colorful movement and he turned just in time to see a young woman in pink dreadlocks and little else straddle the last bag and squat on it, facing him directly.

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"I'm Patsy! How you payin'?"

Patsy was covered, barely, with a pink top and bottom that clung but provided little else in the way of support or concealment. "Hi," Gerry croaked, "here," and passed over the middle passage voucher. She smiled, took it, and drew out an impossibly thin oval device from her bosom, scanned the voucher, and stood up.

"C'mere," she intoned, still straddling the bag. He stepped forward nervously. She put her hand on the back of Gerry's neck, and drew him in, and did a quick iris and facial scan with the oval. She took her hand from the back of his neck, traced his jaw with a finger, and rubbed it faintly over his lips before spinning and padding out almost silently. He watched until she bounced out of sight.

"Alright, stow your gear. The boy swings both ways, if it matters," the captain growled.

"No, sir. No, it doesn't. Thanks."

Gerry turned to stow his gear as the captain left.

"I'll give you 10 cruds every time you let me watch you do her," the flaccid mound rasped.

"I'm Gerry," he said holding out his hand to the man who had yet to open his eyes, let alone make eye contact.

"Fracker already said that, didn't he?"

"Well, he did, sir. Just trying to be polite."

The flaccid mound uttered a wheeze that Gerry recognized as conciliatory. He stood in somewhat stunned silence. He realized he should have asked his roommate's name, and had almost mustered the resolve to ask when the mound commenced a snore. After two almost sonorous wheezes, the reverberating bass rumble began at full force, spurring him into action. Gerry guessed which lockers were his as his roommate's were still partly open, with various belongings flopping out of a bag that itself had flopped out of the starboard set of lockers. Despite

the fact that the formerly flaccid but now heaving and cacophonous mound occupied the port bunk, Gerry knew with a moral certainty that he should stow his gear in the port locker. He also intended to use the lock, albeit a primitive mechanical combination device.

Checking and setting the lock, he remarked on the sheer energy required to heave the mound's bulk for every rumbling breath, let alone produce that much sonic energy. He checked over his rations. It was indeed the butt of a 99, but there were 45 meals there, and it looked like no repeats. For the first time since entering the *Pride* he felt a sense of ease. These people were rough, licentious, and depraved, but in the small particular of rations, so important to one who had been months aboard ship, Red had been honest. And the purser had been, in her own slutty way, friendly and efficient. He locked his locker, and left the cabin, going back out into the passengers' commons they had passed on their way in, musing on the confluence of pursers and temptations of the flesh...

The furniture had a earthy, domestic feel to it, which is to say that it did not look to belong in a star ship. Wood, bare skins, sapphire tabletop, hollowed lava bowl chair, and half a dozen other mismatched chairs spanning a handful of cultures around the dining table. There was a flat-screen playing a movie, and the equipment all seemed functional.

A man was sitting back on the furry couch, with his boots up on the brass smallcube that served as a coffee table. He had a gunbelt still on, but the holster was empty. He looked back to the screen before Gerry even realized the man had taken his measure. He had close-cropped hair and wore an mixture of field uniform parts, patched and faded. A bottle sat beside him on the couch with an actual cork in it.

"I'm Drew. You're safe among these perverts, but I'd stay away from the boy. He looks like he's got something to me. Could be something genetic,

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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 35)

but I wouldn't bet my pecker on it. You're shipping out alone?"

"Well, my father has sent for me, sir, and..."

"Drew! Drew, I work for a damn living. Yeah, whatever. You are alone and I shoot people for a living. Or shoot at them, more often. Actually, I most usually just use violence to induce others to change their priorities. In concert with others is my preference, but often enough alone. Not to scare you; I'm the good guys right here. If you find you have a need while we're shipmates, you let me know. I'll do you a freebie: No blood, but I can have a prayer meeting with any one of these sonzabitches, and they'll not bother you again. Maybe you tip me later, maybe not, but I'd consider it an honor requiring no remuneration."

Drew had drawn out a large, matte-finished blade from a hip scabbard, waved it ever-so-slightly in the direction of the lift down to the crew's level as he was talking to emphasize the point, and stowed it, all in a second or two.

"Thanks, sir, um, I mean, Drew."

"You're welcome. Drink?"

Gerry nodded, and Drew bent forward to pull a couple of mismatched glasses from the side of the smallcube-cum-table, placed them on it, pulled the cork with his teeth, and poured a couple of fingers into each. He set the bottle down next to the glasses, and then sprung up with feline grace that belied his two meters' height. He covered the three meters of deck between them swiftly, while without seeming to rush, and handed one to Gerry.

"Absent comrades!"

"Absent comrades!" Gerry echoed on cue, and drank. It was a strange liquor, burning but smelling wonderful. He gasped, and thought how odd it was. He had no desire to drink with this man a few seconds before, but had done so without hesitation, indeed with enthusiasm.

"So where are you heading, sir?" Gerry asked, realizing his failure to use Drew's name too late.

"I have a security job in New Konigsburg. Meeting a team and we're working security for the float."

"The float?" Gerry asked.

Drew had now resumed his recline, and Gerry sank into a mesh and polished pipe chair. He noticed that although the furniture was not intended for shipboard use, it all appeared to have been bolted down. Functional.

"Well, the water on Prime is all shipped in from moons in the next orbit out. It is not cost effective to supply all the millions on that little rockball by running proper ships, let alone boats, but miners will raft the ice together, and about every 700 days there's the float, a slingshot orbit from one to the other which makes the journey only about 82 days. Some hire tugs, but many more just use a rocket to push their rafts of ice into this orbital path, 'the stream,' they call it. Coming from different moons, the stream is actually not a single route, but a cluster of them. Piracy among these beltters is not unknown, nor is the odd settling of scores, while in the stream.

"So, a group of miners has hired our team to protect their flotilla of rafts. Eight million, five hundred seventy thousand some d-tons of ice, with six miners and nine of us on it."

Drew sounded like he was trying to impress, but was also himself awed or impressed by their task at the same time.

"Have you worked with these men before?"

Drew nodded, "A couple. We are all zero-G rated, which is critical for this. We have also worked in the black before, all of us. Marines, mostly."

"I had a leader in the Guides who was a Gunny."

"They are good troops. Not great dirtside primarily, but they do sing along in boarding actions.

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Not bad, dirtside, mind you, but just not their specialty."

"So when does this float begin?" Gerry wondered.

"Three weeks after we drop out of jump, but the tracks are staggered so that whole thing is over three months long."

Gerry thought the timing was pretty close if he was going to be involved in this float. It seemed incredibly coincidental if he was not. An idea dawned on him.

"I've got an EVA rig that I have never had a chance to practice with. I could pay you to take me out and work with me for a bit."

"Really? What the hell for?"

"Father's a miner, and called me to help him on his claim on... well, in the next system. I picked up the suit with the rig because I thought I would likely need it."

Drew considered, and finished his drink.

"I get suited up, it's 50 cruds the hour for a short job, a minimum of two hours. You would also pay for a launch, but I'll lay it on. We have to get away a little ways. We are not doing vector work around a working starport, son, not even out here. Alright?" Drew looked at Gerry with mild intensity.

"Yes. That will be fine."

"Suit up and we meet up here in three hours. No more drink until then."

Gerry agreed and they lapsed into silence for the better part of an hour watching the movie. He started to doze, set his alarm, then let himself go. He dozed on and off in the chair, and when his alarm woke him, Drew handed over small drink. It was a booster: vitamins, electrolytes, and just a little stimulant. He had not realized that the small cube table actually had a small cooling unit within, but the coolness of the drink was very welcome.

Seeming to read Gerry's expression of mild delight Drew said, "Steward leaves some, passengers leave some. It's not a bad little setup. I have the two other team members I have worked with on this ship, so I do not think there will be much pilfering. Everyone else is a bit intimidated by us, even with all our real hardware locked up."

Gerry mumbled his thanks and when back to his cabin with mild trepidation. He was hoping that mound had not rallied to dally further with Patsy, and more especially that he would not interrupt them. The rumbling came mildly through the door as he approached, however. He had not thought of that raw sound as comforting until just then, he mused.

He quickly checked the news. He had noticed that there had been no alert for him the past two jumps, and that was a comfort. He was hungry now, and picked out a meal that sounded bad, and heated it in his room. For all the wear, the *Pride* was still better appointed than the *Mahid* or even the *A* had been. Things were fixed or added in an *ad hoc* fashion, but they were fixed well.

He ate the warm casserole of what he guessed was seafood of a very different sea. It was odd. Good. He blessed Chandler's once again, and thought of her. He was thinking of her less and less. He showered, and donned his suit. At two minutes to go, he entered the passenger commons and Drew was standing there with two others.

"This is Eddie and Brewster," he said. Each was wearing what appeared to be combat armor with an EVA pack on. Gerry was a little taken aback, but shook their hands.

"I'm just paying for the one, right?" Gerry asked, only partly in jest.

"This lump of dung did not try to imply he was capable of independent action did he?" Eddie asked Gerry, pointing to Drew with the last two fingers

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(Continued from page 37)

that military men sometimes used as a dismissive gesture.

"Well, he did seem to."

"They're just bored, and we can all use the practice. Come on." Drew smiled.

Gerry noticed that Eddie and Brewster also carried what appeared to be laser rifles, but whose bright blue reflective finish contrasted heavily with the mottled matte camouflage of their powerpacks. As they started towards the main airlock, Gerry remembered blue was a color used to designate training mock-ups, distinguishing them from their lethal counterparts. They re-entered the starport. The blast doors of the corridor were now watched by a dour-looking, very short man, whose trim appearance contrasted starkly with everything else on the *Pride*. He was wearing pristine grey coveralls, and a grey gunbelt with a snub pistol, and what Gerry guessed was a pouch for tools. He had a comm collar on his throat, and rose from chair as soon as they came into view. "Misters Fynne, Joo... errr... Brewster, and Dreamscape. Good morning." he said glancing quickly down to a datapad and back up after checking his notes.

Drew spoke for them, as seemed natural, "Hey, Second Officer Stadtkrug. The four of us will be entering a chartered Launch and performing EVA training at some distance from the Highport." The small man listened intently, and Drew continued in an official-sounding tone, "We should be back on the Highport within two hours. In the mean time, you have our personal freqs. Arrangements have already been made, of course, but I would appreciate that no one outside the crew and any entitled authorities know our business. I implicitly trust your discretion."

"Very well sir." The small man nodded, and waited to sit down until they moved a dozen paces down the corridor and entered the lift to head down to the civilian boat level, the lowest deck.

"He is an efficient but officious little prick, Stadtkrug, but I have no beef with anyone who does his job well and takes himself seriously. Treat Stadtkrug as if he were a professional colleague and he is pleased and cooperative. That may well come in handy some day. Even if it does not, it's still free."

Eddie chimed in, "You have to respect one who remains the diligent professional in that ship of fools, any road."

"May be just his way of staying sane," Brewster wondered as they stepped off the lift onto the boat deck.

There were a collection of about 8 small cubes that looked like they had seen better days all piled in front of a full-sized cargo lock. It seemed overkill to use the cargo lock, which would fit a full 54 of them, and between the four of them they could have carried these through the regular hatches in a half a minute, but a man standing there in a worn, lime green vacc suit indicated them with a sweep of his somewhat stubby-looking arm, "These suitable, gentlemen?"

"Quite," Drew replied.

"Stow the cubes in the hold," the man spoke, and a small dolly slid out from behind him, and started to scoop them up.

Drew spoke to Gerry when they had strapped in, "These two yahoos are doing a bit of practice, with and without the launch. I will be chattering to them on our own freq and dealing with you on yours. No problem, but sometimes it may take be a few heartbeats before I come back up on your push. I will hear you, but just may sometimes delay responding. Don't panic, and don't repeat yourself unless I failed to answer for a good 10 or 15 seconds."

Gerry nodded.

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"So, tell me what you know of EVA, and what you have done."

Gerry told of never having made it even to the simulators on Baakh, of only having been actually outside in Zero-G once. Drew motioned him up, stepping back into the cargo area, "And you're going to a mining colony."

Gerry nodded, dropping his eyes.

"Alright, take it all off!"

Gerry was mentally taken aback by the request, but dropped into the innately comfortable, brisk routine of taking off the suit without resort to any conscious thought.

"Alright," Drew said, closing the iris to the passenger area behind him when Gerry had gotten all off except his long suit. "There is an object in one of these small cubes, I want you to find it."

Gerry hesitated, more from the strangeness of the request, then began opening the small cubes closest to him. As he was turned away from Drew, looking into the fifth such, he heard "Hull breach, suit up!!" in an amplified voice. He turned around, and saw Drew had his helmet on. There was a hissing sound, and he saw one of his gloves sliding across the deck. He bounded toward the main part of his suit, which was in the other direction, and started pulling it on. Suddenly, everything went a wrong. He was floating, and had inadvertently pushed off the deck while starting his body in a rotation forward towards it, even as it receded. He felt a thin nausea begin as snapped his helmet to. It had been tethered to the left hip of his suit, belter-fashion. He pulled the cuff constrictor on his left wrist, even as he put on his right glove. He went scuffling for his left glove, now floating against the forward bulkhead, and made it fast, having to push himself off the top of the cargo bay. Something was indeed wrong. He had hit the "pressurize" button on the chest of his suit, and was breathing free, but

there was not indication that it was filling out, as in vacuum.

He was beginning to think that the breach must have been small indeed or already patched when Drew's voice came across the comm, "Spankin'! That was 27 seconds. No landsman's time, even under full gravity. We're secure, laddie. Gravity coming back in 20 seconds."

Gerry looked to Drew, now to his right rear, somewhere above him. His helmet was now off, and he was smiling. Gerry thought he was the butt of a joke, as he worked to get his legs under him.

"Well done." Gerry did not feel like it was well-done, as he staggered from an off-balance position when the gravity returned more quickly than he would have liked. He felt like he had been humiliated for the man's sport.

"No sign of panic or lack of familiarity with your suit. You are straight that you are no great shakes in zero-G, but you do know getting that suit on."

Gerry nodded. This was not hazing or harassment, then, but a check on his training.

"You good?" Drew asked, in an almost conciliatory tone.

"Yeah. Scared me."

"That was the intent, groundhog! You don't get to run into a standing long jump. Training is what you have when your mind is elsewhere, or when there is no time to think about it!" Drew nodded, while bending to shut off the valve to an air tank that had caused the ominous hissing which had given the chilling realism to the mock bogus hull breach, while being directed so that the high pressure escaping air pushed the errant glove away across the deckplates. "If the training is there, though, it will move your body while your mind is crapping itself. It has to be that muscle memory for that, though. No 'I saw it in a book,' gorbierstuff, but the repetition of actual physical action. You have got

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that for donning and doffing, based on your cabin work. We are going to get that for unpowered zero-g, and then powered EVA."

Gerry nodded, sitting on one of the small cubes that had come down somewhat askew after being kicked by him while flailing around with the gravity off.

"We're on station," came through his comm.

Eddie and Brewster had been out of sight for a while as Drew and Gerry worked in the open cargo bay. The other two mercs had taken the small cubes, connected into a couple of irregular shapes, as training aids, and left.

Though the nausea had abated, and was no longer much of a distraction, after the Z-pill, Gerry still felt strange. They left the cargo bay, and Drew had Gerry repeat some basic unpowered maneuvering without visual cues, having shut off all the lights. The nausea felt more real, but did not increase. The lights came back on, and Drew rigged a couple of light sticks on opposite corners of a small cube.

They began the thruster work slowly. It seemed almost familiar to Gerry, having seen the training holos so many times. There was a part of his mind to which these were familiar, but like one pronouncing a word for the first time he has often read but neither heard nor spoken, there was still a profound awkwardness. They worked for a while, and Gerry could feel himself sweating, despite the suit's internal climate control.

After what seemed quite a long time, building, bending, and breaking down vectors to and from the small cube and the launch, Drew gave him a much farther leg to do, in a strange direction, "Fast as you can." The suit's inertial guidance system said it was 120 kilometers, and as he shot in that direction, following a reticle in his faceplate, he watched the distance while maxing out his acceleration. The

pressure in his thighs from the tightening of the suit kept his head clear enough from the effects of the acceleration, and he watched the range tick down to 70 kilometers, at which point he said "compute deceleration," stopped the rockets on his back, and flipped over, about 180 degrees. It had seemed like a long time, but he realized it had only been over a minute of burn. He had 12 seconds to start his burn, but began it in just over 6. He adjusted his attitude to match that proposed by the suitcomp as he came in; by the time he had the actual reticle centered in the proposed he was only 12 kilometers off, and had only a few seconds to burn. He stopped the burn at the safety line, taking his velocity down to around 50 meters per second, just inside 800 meters. Then bled it off to 10, then 7. He hit his proximity lidar, and saw three objects still below him. It seemed the little computer in the suit wanted him to go towards the center, so he settled down to 1 meter per second, then turned to pneumatics, and settled down towards the small platform of small cubes, now illuminated by his suit lights.

"Bravo!" he heard Drew say, "But how much jump juice you have left?"

Gerry panicked, as he had not been watching that, nor had he made a calculation before setting out.

"I have 17 seconds full burn left. That's not enough to get back!!" his voice cracked.

"Close your eyes, go to your ruttin' happy place, and work the problem, groundhog," Drew's voice chided. Gerry could hear Drew's soft sneer, though he had opaqued the faceplate on his helmet.

Gerry did so. He started a quick prayer, and opened his eyes. He had 492 minutes of air left by one gauge. The other, "immediate rate" rose from 408 to 421 to 434 as his breathing settled down. "Goober!" he said out loud to himself. "I burn half of that, and coast, I can get there in minutes."

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"Well, yes. I want you to keep all that 12 seconds jump juice as a reserve, though. What are you going to do?" Drew answered, though Gerry had just been talking aloud to himself.

"Pneumatics!"

"Do you have enough?"

Gerry had to do some scratching, and to leave himself with 60 minutes of reserve air he could just barely make it, in an hour and a half. He discussed this with Drew, who then set him another spot to return to on a two second burn, and then pneumatics for deceleration.

"Keep some jump juice and your air. Jump out fast with the burn, then do the deceleration with the air. The closer you get, the less you need the air, and the pneumatics are better for fine maneuvering."

Gerry followed this, and about 200 meters from the launch, which was at the new rendezvous point set by Drew, the small craft started to pull out away from them. "Catch it!!"

There was no time for the computer and no need. Gerry shot off toward the launch, and a converging vector. He had more acceleration than it did, but needed to match vectors with it. In 10 seconds he reached it, bumped off, settled in with a blast from his thrusters, and switching to pneumatics, he grabbed the rail before the crew air lock, hit the stud without thinking, and swung inside, where .5g slammed him to the deck. Three more bodies piled on top of him, and Drew barked, "Endex!" The airlock cycled green, and the inside iris opened to them fairly tumbling out. "Take us back to port there, pilot."

"You got it. ETA 4 minutes."

Gerry was ecstatic. He had used his suit to shoot around in the black, while keeping panic from overwhelming him. He had a certain basic competence,

and had apparently passed Drew's last couple of tests.

The three men slung their EVA rigs on the deck behind the seats, and Eddie pulled a few small bottles out of a thigh pocket. They were beers, and he handed them out to the others. Gerry drank feeling like he was in a man's world.

"Hundred and fifty cruds, youngster."

"I've got two hundred credit with Patsy?" Gerry offered, in an almost giddy tone.

"Barter, eh? No, she could be my daughter. Ship's whores are an ugly business anyway," Drew replied, half chiding and half amused, "Plus I come out to the black to make money, not spend it."

Gerry fished into the small inner thigh pocket of his suit meant for valuables, and pulled out the disks and paper.

"That said, these apes' training shouldn't be on your dime, even though that was agreed." Drew handed back a twenty and a ten. Gerry nodded.

"So you think I passed?"

"No time for retraining, so I'd lie and say you had even if you hadn't," Drew smiled, "but you did fine. The books, or whatever you have used must have helped a bit, and you know enough not to hurt yourself, long as you retain a healthy fear. Always remember that the black wants to kill you." They docked on the boat dock of Guarda highport again, but on a passenger-only stem. Drew quietly called Stadtkrug to let him know they were back on the highport.

Swinging by Chandler's of Guarda they switched out their air bottles. Drew had said, "They should be able to do that aboard ship, but I trust Chandler's more, and I do not relish having that little pink git trying to peddle her wares while I am trying to get my damned air."

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Gerry noted with no little irony that the sales staff here was all female, and dressed somewhat less modestly than the 'little pink git' had been. Chandler's of Guarda was a largely utilitarian establishment, however, lacking a lot of the luxury goods for passengers and tourists. The selection of utilitarian equipment and provisions was on the other hand if anything greater. There were also lots of trinkets for workers to take back home to families, while returning with largely intact paychecks. The really important business was the parts desk, worked by two young women who looked to be twins, and dressed the part. Automated inventory distribution systems had virtually every part for dozens of makes and models of vacc suits and their accessories. The selections of rations was similarly quite impressive. The sales staff, despite their distracting display of flesh were also very competent.

Gerry realized that this was the last chance to stock up, as New Konigsberg was their next destination. He thought about some kind of weapon. He had been trained to use a shotgun by the Guides, busting clay pigeons. He was strictly a novice, though, and it had been a couple of years ago. He asked Drew, who looked at him seriously, then softened, with a wink, "You going to cap your old man then?"

"No," Gerry smiled, "I just do not know what I will find when I get there."

"Scattergun's a great choice for dirtside for one not licensed, like you: Least skill required, least legal restrictions. In the black, it has more issues. You are best with a gyro barrel and gyro rounds, but they're often illegal even in places where the gun isn't. When you need it, it is likely to be in a damned duffle bag. On a starship, it will be locked up. Plus shooting people is not like busting flying ashtrays. Unfortunately, I know this. But...you buy a training barrel for it, and I'll help you out, for half my normal rate," Drew finished, his voice softening again,

"Low recoil rounds are a good, cheap compromise for it."

Gerry noticed this recurring pattern in Drew's speech: conflict then co-opt. He wandered over to the arms displays. He realized that he was underage for Imperial space anyway, and moved back to the Everfresh sandwiches. He bought another twenty of the ubiquitous silver packages, a used tank rack for his vaccsuit, and a small zero-g mug in a yellow ceramic showing the Guarda Highport, with a sign labelling it with Guarda crossed off, and New Konigsberg written beneath, crossed off, with Egran and Kishimaa likewise appended. The local joke was clear enough, for while the mining arm of the Ohasset Main was said to end with New Konigsberg, the Main continued on for three more jumps before the next proper High Port was to be had.

Jerry had had weeks to study up on this backwater. He knew well that New Konigsberg Starport itself had only a few pressure domes on its small rockball of a main world, and there was little better for ports until three jumps later, on Landing, which was itself really just a starport—in an otherwise undeveloped system—to support the needs of the branching trade. There the Main continued to a new group of more backward worlds, and the Xboat route intersected it. Guarda and Landing were thus the only two Imperial starports of note for a cluster of seven other worlds on the Main.

Gerry noted they had only five hours left, then remembered Mass. He felt guilty for not thinking about it before in this system, and indeed the others they had stopped in. He took his leave of Drew with an unceremonious wave, and asked the fetching attendant checking him out about a chapel. She smiled widely, and circled it on a small hard copy map, while writing what he assumed was her name and number on the bottom, "Rosie." He grabbed the SmallSoft, nodded, and hurried off. The chapel was just below the government deck, and he checked the

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board outside; he was still loath to turn on his hand-comp in a starport.

The board showed that a service of some sort was going on that he did not recognize, but that confession and daily mass were to be held in three hours and some minutes. He trundled back to his ship, wondering who this Fr. Melvin Bowie, SMOSM, was, doing the catholic service. He knew the initials signified a religious order, but was never good with remembering even the most common ones, and this was not a common one. He went back to the *Pride*, doffed and stowed his suit. The mound was still making his reverberant ruckus, so Gerry again showered quickly, put some clean clothes on and went to sit in the lounge again. There was a pair there at the sapphire-topped table, apparently father and son. The son was slouching while the father was rattling off facts and maxims to him about interstellar trade. While the boy, probably Gerry's age, was obviously disinterested, he nonetheless listened somewhat deferentially, bobbing his head from time to time. They had listened like that to Gunny sometimes, as he told them the the basics of something particularly unglamorous, like field hygiene. They would sulk, and kick bits of bark with bored, booted feet. At some level, though, they were picking it up, or at least some of it.

Gunny was someone else's father, though, as was this man. He thought about his own father: Never a visit, a message, nor even 10 cruds for Christmas. His father certainly had the 10 cruds if he had enough for all these tickets. "Enough for Eve!" Gerry stewed; if she was real, a girl like that did not go out into the black to live with a poor man he thought.

His father had not been around to bore him with hot air. He thought of his friends that hated their parents; even they were lucky to have someone to hate. Billy's old man was an occasional drunk, and kept getting fired from jobs for laying out drunk af-

ter payday. Sometimes he hit Billy, who said he despised his father. He took Billy fishing, and was a very kind man when sober; he sung in their choir, and worked hard on their old groundcar, showing Billy how to fix and maintain it. Billy knew his father, and learned from him, even though he said he did not respect him. There was much to despise, but there was something to admire, as well. At least he was there.

He wandered back to the chapel, doing his "examination of conscience" as he walked. He had a lot to confess. He thought briefly of the map, and Rosie's number. He thought she was probably a prostitute, but he felt an urge to call anyway. He crumpled the map, and tossed it towards a trash bin that looked like it had been left open in the process of being emptied, then abandoned. Much about Guarda Highport had the look of being highly functional, but slightly disheveled.

He had not been to mass when he could have, had not even thought of his weekly obligation at Lirshe or Baakh. Well, he could not have likely had anyway to stop for mass in Baakh, but he had not even thought to try. The good officers would likely not have let him delay for it, but regardless, he could have asked. More significantly, he could probably have attended twelve times over in Nundis Highport.

He thought of his lust for the Purser Alice and others. Most significantly, he thought of running away. Auntie was not his parent by blood or adoption, but she had cared for him and loved him in her own stiff, desiccated fashion. He had decided to follow his father's wishes, itself a justifiable choice, but he had done so in his own way. He could have given her word earlier, even if it increased the chance that he would be caught. He could have stood on the power of his parental order vouchers, all be they forgeries, and trusted to God, sending word from

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Nundis that he was alright. He could have left word on Griik Maeii Highport: a simple hardcopy note, in the local mail. He had not, though, because he was scared. He remembered someone having said, "The real enemy of Love is not hate but fear." He wished he could remember who.

He had not loved her as he should, the dry old bitch. No, she was not the parents he wanted, or even the warmer caregiver he would have hoped for. Gunny had more of the motherly in him than Auntie did, but he was called to love her, to be kind, and he had not.

There was a line at the confessional. He saw battered men, probably miners, and a family of four. He looked at his watch. The line moved rather quickly, making him wonder whether this was going to be a whitewash, like those of that visiting pastor when Father K-O'M was on vacation; but those coming out looked different. He had been to confession often enough, but this was different. His turn. He spoke halting, then fast. The questions were quick, insightful, and often monosyllabic, "Touch?"

"No."

"Desired?"

"Yes."

Past his lust, his missed masses, he told of his running away. He dreaded the hearing in the penance that he would have to go back.

"You dread me telling you to let her know?"

"Yes, father."

"For your penance, you will pray for your Aunt, with the intention of doing so daily. You will write her, and give the note to me. The Lord will tell me when to send it. The sin is in taking it into your own hands, in not trusting Him. And the number on the part wrapper of that poor young woman: pray for her and get rid of it. The near occasions of sin are swirling about you like a whirlwind. Pray for Eve, and pray for discernment about how to approach

her. It is a trap of some sort, clearly, though it is likely not what you might think. Like our Lord, sometimes we must go into the trap, with a prayer on our lips.

"God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Go in peace my son. Your trainer has bought you the shotgun; use it wisely."

Gerry was a spectator within his own heaving form, drenched in sweat, leaving the little closet in which he had been with the aged Hospitaller father, vestments over worn combat armor. An anachronistic warrior who stood out even here, in the bizarrest of settings. He knew the cross in the corner carried the Father's sword inside, and the divots visible on the armor were had in combat, likely from slug throwers. He waited for mass, a quick one, but nonetheless intense for its brevity.

He remembered a line from some literature about the order that was repeated in the Mass, as some sort of antiphon, "Cry if you must kill, pray over it, but let not the lost sheep be devoured. Let your own blood be spilled to save them, and trust in the Lord."

The Eucharistic prayers flowed with a staccato cadence that belied the tearful reverence that Father Bowie exuded. The near orgiastic fervor with which he raised the host seemed to infect the small gathering. Gerry was returning to his seat when the Hospitaller standing by the rear door, a white surplice over his black combat armor, leaned in and whispered, "Return to your ship, gentlemen; they are waiting." Only then did Gerry realize that Eddie was right behind him. They jogged down the hall to the lift, and sprinted for the docking tube.

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"Only coin you're getting from me, girl. Thanks!" Eddie said, flipping the waiting Patsy a disk, as she stood by the bulkhead doors with a pained expression on her face.

"They're in! Dicks the size of yorda nuts... but they're both in!" she shrilled into a com on her collar and the doors slammed behind them with a blessed finality.

Chapter 12: *Pridefully Proceeding*

On the way maneuvering out to their jump point, Gerry had a message sent back to Fr. Bowie, for Auntie. While he had already sent a message through the mail drop to her, that was not "putting it in His hands," but trying to maintain control over it himself.

Their jump was largely uneventful, which was a blessed relief. Gerry had met the snoring mound in a state of mutual consciousness, and found his name was, somewhat disconcertingly Jerome Finley. Gerry had offered him a sandwich and asked that he let him know if he was planning any liaisons in their cabin. This Jerome, the mound, had indeed promised, and was almost—almost—successful in delivering. In the one transgression, someone had indeed at least pulled the shade on the mound's bunk, so although the only answer to Gerry's knock had been soprano sighs, he at least had been forewarned enough to resolve to grab a sandwich and hurry back out without further conversation. The incident did not leave him unmoved, however; he had more than once thought about the two hundred credits he still had for Patsy. She left the mercs alone, but she would still flirt with him in passing: the odd stroke of his shoulder, or brush of her softness against him as she passed to pick up a dish that did not need to be picked up. He was tempted on a few occasions. Thankfully, there were other diversions.

Drew had, in fact, bought a shotgun for him, without direction. It was cheap, less than 200 credits, and he let Gerry know that he was under no obliga-

tion to pay him; Drew would keep it and sell it later if Gerry did not want it. Gerry took it, however, with something like relish. They had used the practice barrel to work in Drew's stateroom using a holo program from his handcomp, but only for about three hours together. The proper barrel was secured in the ship's locker, so despite its wonderful feel in his hands, the gun was about deadly as a canoe paddle in its current form. Gerry did not care; he was enthralled, and overall spent another 20 hours practicing on his own.

He spent some time just socializing with the mercs, especially Drew. They played a lot of cards, and he learned an obscure card game which they played with him for money, though they did not let him lose much. Despite the occasional intervention to wave him off bad bets, as a neophyte Gerry lost badly, so Drew also made further curative interventions.

In a typical interchange, Gerry was chasing a bad hand with a bad bluff, "I'm staying!"

"No, yer not."

"But, yes, I am. Why am I not staying?"

"Because you can't bluff, and we all know it but you!"

"How do you know I'm bluffing?" Gerry asked, an edge of indignation in his voice.

"Well, everyone's got a tell, some physical reaction that shows when he's bluffing. Some guys, it takes several games to catch what it is. Not for you, boy: your 'tell' is more like a fracking interpretive dance. We're worried you might just fall out of your seat onto the floor. Poor bastards down in cold sleep know you're bluffing, man. You're folding!" Drew said, as an order more than advice. Gerry folded, and watched hands that would have shredded his being played by the other three.

He adored the mercs, because they reminded him a bit of Gunny. They tolerated him. He could

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not know their reasons, but they were much the same as Gunny's: too many young faces, with the life draining out of them from stupid, preventable mistakes, haunted the dim times between their productive wakefulness and the true solace of their sleep. And still intruded there sometimes.

In his cabin, fingers sore from a four hour practice while wearing his suit, he showered and flopped onto his bunk in his PT shorts. He needed to look at his plan on arriving in his destination system of New Konigsberg, which he had been putting off. He realized he did not want to think about his arrival. The monotony of his weeks aboard ship had come to be a comfort. Each starport was a bridge to the next; the physiological lurch of jump itself an entry into a cocoon of time and space where he was cut off from all but his fellow travellers.

They were due to exit jump in 16 hours. There were no tenders to meet them, so they would go right into to the NK starport, a downport on the surface of the the small rockball itself. There was a scheduled shuttle to Khii and its satellites (including Khii 43) every month, for 58 credits, that would leave 16 hours after they were predicted to hit the starport. He realized that Eve had assumed that he would miss this scheduled route. If he had not had expeditious transfers, he would have indeed missed it. He would have had to hire a small craft to take him, or miss the float.

He also realized that if he had not make the fast transfers at Baakh and Marda he would not have even made the convoy, let alone beat it by over a day and a half. He was getting to Khii 43 before Eve figured he could, and hoped that would not throw off whatever plans she may have made.

Drew looked down at the three cards he had just drawn, and frowned.

To break the silence Gerry prodded, "Tell me about these gunners; the turrets looked pretty new,

expensive, and they were triples. The gunners do not seem to be gunners, though. I mean Patsy and that kid, gunners?"

Drew frowned just a bit deeper and bet. A paltry bet, and then he grinned, "They are certainly listed on the ship's papers as that. Maybe they even have certs, though certs aren't required. If Patsy has a cert, I would be willing to bet she got it using her other skills. No the real gunners are robots."

"ROBOTS?" Gerry burst out, his voice breaking.

"Frak, kid, be quiet! Lots of people get emotional about... certain hardware."

"...sorry," Gerry said, chastened and embarrassed.

"Your reaction is just the type of thing that is both dangerous and to be expected. These would not be like Zho warbots, mind you. Likely Ballard Astromechs. Your ever see the turrets open?"

"No, but why would I?"

"Well put it this way. You said you were on a liner, right?"

"Yes the *Maid*, the *Scarlet Maid*."

Drew grinned, "Only three turrets for six hundred tons, but you saw the inside of the turrets, and gunners, or at least one?"

"Yeah. How did you know? I never told you that." Gerry almost accused. He somewhat resented being toyed with.

"Marketing, Gerry. Same as I'll bet the purser had a uniform that displayed her assets well?"

"Umm-huh."

Drew caught Gerry's expression. "Oh! You liked her?"

"Hard not to. She helped me out with those two con men."

Drew nodded, "Nothing wrong with that. Good marketing works. Look at us three. We could just travel in gym shorts and flip-flops, but there is a

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studied certain marketing in our badassery," Drew grinned, jerking his head slightly towards the other two mercs. Gerry realized somewhat foolishly that the rough look—blades, leather, ballistic glasses, and studiously random uniform parts—was marketing.

"Everyone's got an angle, Gerry. Even the Hospitallers."

It was Gerry's turn to frown, but he was at a loss.

"Father is traveling with us, you know," Drew fairly broke his face with a toothy, most un-badass grin.

"Not on the *Pride*?!"

"No. In formation, though. Scout rider with two boats."

"Scout rider, what's that?"

"Well, you know the Scouts surplus their old ships with detached duty Scouts."

"Yes."

"Well, they have been used for everything from grey passages to mining Seekers, even to merchants. A lot of it is shady, but the Service does not care. They just want their eyes and ears out, even if a few regs are broken." Gerry nodded a little vacantly, because all of the this was well-known to any high school boy with an even passing interest in spacers. "Well, a completely unlicensed mod is the Scout Rider, which is a collar that carries nothing but extra fuel and two docking collars for fast boats. The whole thing can then do only jump-1, but has the fuel for two jumps. The Scout can transport small craft between systems much cheaper than they would be on a commercial ship. Their transponders still say they are a Type-S, one turret. But they end up with three. Or they dump the whole rider rig and boats out in the black and come in. The boats hang around the jump point, looking for trouble. So the rider comes in a little before the convoy, looking to

clear out the jump exit point of any opportunistic pirates looking to get lucking with an early exit from the convoy. If it is known that they navy isn't sending anyone in system out to the jump point, some pirate might just get greedy. They only have to once in their lives."

"So there'll be pirates?" Gerry asked, his voice rising. Part of him knew this was a silly question, and another part hoped after such fantastic confrontations.

"Likely not. This kind of 'op' makes contact maybe one time out of 20 or 30, and then it is usually unclear, a distant contact that turns tail. Pirate smells something and lays low. It makes it too expensive to pirate, though. Remember how I said, in my badass intro, that I mostly just changed peoples' priorities using violence?"

"Yes."

"Same principle. Deterrence. The most effective armed force is the one that keeps the other side from trying anything. Bad-enough-assery, and no one dies."

"What kind of pirate is going to be scared by just two boats, though?"

"Well, it's not an even comparison if it's a stand-up fight, if he's got any size ship. Only one pirate in a hundred wants a stand-up fight, though, and Bowie and his boys aren't afraid of damage. They aren't trying really hard to even stay alive. They are happy to meet their maker. Some pirate, he's gotta get away clean; he has to scare some trader into giving up his cargo without spilling any blood. Can't afford to get dinged up far from home. Can't do that with these Jesus freaks in the black armor, though. No cargo to be had, and you can't scare them. Same as the Navy, only the Navy costs a lot more, and may actually run away easier from steep odds. Live to fight another day, and all that."

Gerry thought about the intense little priest as a pirate hunter, buttoned up in his armor, his fast boat

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depressurized for combat, waiting in the black to defend the flock.

"So they are looking to be martyred?"

"Now I wouldn't say 'lookin' to be'..." Drew shook his head, somewhat thoughtfully, "More like looking to protect the flock, and not flinching from that with any thought of safety. No, those little buggers will sell their lives dearly, and they are not looking to die. That's my rub. Never actually fought beside them, but I have heard stories. A lot of stories."

Gerry let that sink in, then realized he was still curious about the original thread of the conversation. "So we got good, well, gunners?"

The betting made its way around, and Gerry dumped his cards, catching a flicker of approval from Drew.

"I do not know the specifics, but here's what I guess. Something like a basic Astromech can out-gun about 98% of human gunners. They do not sleep, have an overdeveloped sense of duty, and they do not scare. As long as they are kept under wraps, and no official freaks out about illegal uses of cybernetics, then it is a great deal. If there is an inspection, there are rated as medical and mechanical assistants, and there are human gunners for the turrets."

Gerry thought about the killer robots in all the tri-vids and books he had grown up on, Zho warbots incinerating placid nursery schools, slaughtering whole hospitals full of patients. They loved to hate and fear robots, though really they were ubiquitous throughout Imperial space in their usually unanthropomorphic servile legions.

Gerry passed the next couple of days in rather a haze. Drew helped him send a message to Eve when they exited jump, and it was a quick maneuver into NK. They had come out of jump nine hours late, but

he would still make the shuttle by several hours. Gerry asked the Second Officer, in a deferential voice about security procedures, and how to get on to the shuttle. The efficient bantam called ahead, and reserved him a spot, telling him that as long as he kept the shotgun disassembled, and locked in different bags, no one would stop him in the starport.

The starport had no comprehensive security to speak of, being essentially a set of docking tubes in crudely excavated pads, linked together by tunnels. There would be a couple of Marines, however, to shut down any open weapons carry of anything more than a blade, by those not licensed as mercenaries. There was a small dome over an open plaza, about 50 meters across, which was the hub of the wheel that was the crude facility. He said his good-byes to the mercs, and dragged his bags onto the rental skidder outside the docking tube. He wished he could linger aboard, but departing passengers were expected to debark as soon as they hit the starport, to ready the cabins to be resold.

Drew and his bunch let him know they were meeting the rest of their group, and really did not have room for a mascot. He understood that he was not a sufficiently badass mascot to keep up appearances. Nonetheless, he followed them at a discrete distance, and ate where they stopped to wet their whistles; it was the only place to eat, essentially a cafeteria, which also sold liquor, with some vending machines to the side.

Gerry hurried ahead to purchase his shuttle ticket, and then went back to sit against the wall with some warm rice dish in a cardboard tray. It was rather a wait, and he eventually ate three, then dozed against his bags until the shuttle allowed check-ins. The mercs, he saw, were decked out again in armour, though no laser rifles were in evidence. The sidearms were carried visibly, however, and there were a couple of shotguns in the group, now num-

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Raconteurs' Rest

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bering over seven. Merc credentials were strapped to biceps, and casual scowls abounded. Badass marketing.

He took his bags, and checked them in. The shuttle took 80 passengers, and appeared sold out. He would actually transfer to another boat that would drop him on Khii 43, as the route connected a potential 65 sites. Of these, 47 seemed active though only 36 for passengers, with and cargo drops or pickups at the other 11. Looking at the complex schedule, Gerry realized that it would take him 29 hours from departure to make it to Khii 43.

There were other small craft departing for Khii, but Gerry realized that most of the milling humanity in the dark little starport was headed for the same shuttle he was. He boarded and took a sleeping pill shortly after settling in his seat. Waking he realized he had almost another 20 hours to go. He thought briefly of the excursion on Lirshe, which now seemed so long ago, but realized there was no pavilion here, no debarking, no walking. There was likewise scant service: a little garbage chute at each seat, as well as a filler station for the water bottle that was marked "retain for journey." The cereal bars in the otherwise empty food locker at Gerry's seat were marked for shipboat survival rations, and past their date. The only crewman to whom one might complain seemed to be acting more in the vein of security; ready to quell anyone making trouble (like asking, "Please, sir, could I have some more?") with the stunner he carried in a prominent chest rig. Not exactly Ley Lightning he thought. He gnawed the cereal bars, still groggy from the sleeping pill, drained the water bottle twice, and watched a quick flat-screen feature. Then the second pill took him.

He was woken from a dream by the vibration of his seat. "Gerald Fynne, your transfer is in 10 minutes. Accept the beverage with our compliments, and proceed to the aft, port hatch." The mes-

sage flashed across his screen and played from the speakers in his headrest, looping until he took the cup of green fizzy liquid from the seatside console and scarfed it. "Deposit cup in chute before leaving, please," followed until he did so. It tasted like UrpUrp gone horribly wrong, but he could feel the stimulant working. He rushed to make a fresher before the rendezvous.

He worried about his bags, and waited in a small queue for the fresher. He didn't have time, and shuffled to the airlock, almost forgetting his shoulder bag in his seat. He had remembered that the luggage transfer was automatic as he had done a groggy peepee dance in the second queue. He realized he was being iris scanned, but could not tell from where.

"Anderson. Dorner Anderson!! Two minutes to transfer!"

There was jostling and pointed cursing a few rows back. Despite some serious air scrubbers, the shuttle still smelled heavily like the acrid body odor of anxiety, stale urine, with a subtle undertone of dried vomit.

An unconscious form, smaller than Gerry but looking four times his age, and smelling as if he could single-handedly be the source of all the shuttle's bad smells, was being dragged by the shoulders up to the end of the queue, two behind Gerry. The dour-looking crewman bent over him with a small handcomp. He looked like he was both doing an iris scan and checking vitals as another crewman came up, spraying some disinfectant on the diminutive, unconscious, stinking form, "I already got his seat," he said, unrolling what appeared to be a cheap cleansuit stuck to a semi-rigid backing. They slid him on top, and zipped the limbs of the suit around his noodle-like appendages.

Gerry was feeling almost giddy from his little green shot of stimulant, and forgot about peeing for a while as he watched this darkly comic scene un-

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fold. They were treating him almost as leaking cargo, which nonetheless had some value. The suit could be removed from the backing, but they had not done so. As soon as they had pumped a liter of fluid into him through an auto-sleeve, the second crew member left, and the last limb, a scarred and somewhat emaciated arm, was zipped in. The airlock cycled to open, and they stepped through, with Mr. Anderson dragged behind, and strapped into the first open seat.

Gerry had started to smile when he realized the pathos. The crew had done what they had to: transferring the passengers, while making sure that none died on their watch and the seats were not unnecessarily soiled. Mr. Anderson was well into drinking himself to death, it would appear. Gerry felt no more like smiling, dropped his shoulder bag on a seat, and almost bounded to the fresher. This was a much smaller boat than the shuttle, and thanks to Anderson's containment in the cleansuit, smelled reasonably clean.

Gerry was moved to the "window seat" by a woman in bright blue coveralls, who was apparently the second crew member. The pilot was standing just outside the cockpit door, making a short speech to the effect that we would each be given twenty minutes before the airlock cycled to get our suit on. No ship-compatible airlocks were to be expected for individual stops this far out into mining territory, so getting out the airlock had the quality of a low level bombing run. There were eight stops listed on the seatback comboscreen, giving the time for each. He scowled, and looked like he would be happy to use his stunner on all of us, given the least provocation. A nametag said, "Joan," and though she was all business, and probably in her thirties, Joan smelled good, a subtle perfume, and had her coveralls zipped down enough so just the top of a green lace camisole peaked out, behind her own diminutive stunner.

She smiled, as someone else's mother might who didn't know him. "Need anything, son?" He shook his head no. She checked the airlock, took a look through a hatch in the rear of the passenger compartment, dogged it again, cast her eyes once more over the ten passengers, and said, "We're up" into a collar com unit to the captain who had already retreated back into his cockpit..

Gerry could actually see out of his window, and the view was even a bit interesting, as the back-lit launch broke away from the sanded-gray side of the shuttle, flipped backwards, and was suddenly off under its much higher maneuver thrust. Gerry turned on his handcomp, thinking that any electronic trail he left this far out was a risk he was willing to take. In a few minutes he had synched with the on-board passenger information software, and had a holo image of their flight path, and that of the shuttle they had just left.

"We're selling some food to make the payments on this bucket, along with some other comfort items."

Joan's voice had surprised him, and he noticed she was leaning slightly onto his seatmate, a fairly young-looking tall, blonde miner who studiously avoided eye contact, like they all seemed to, holding a basket of sandwiches, some drinks, pens, a suit patch kit, some toiletries, and a box with some tri-vid crystals. The sandwiches appeared to be Everfresh, opened, halved, and rewrapped, he got two, just to see her smile again, and because although he was more bored than hungry, he was still hungry.

Back to the software, he could see their approach. He was to get up to suit-up in another three hours and some minutes. He went back and got a tri-vid, for 3 cruds: too much, but he wanted something to occupy his mind. He was only vaguely conscious of being scared of what came next. He really had no idea what came next. Eve, some unknown

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challenges, a mining claim of unknown character, life in the black. What else?

There was a hailing freq for Khii 43, and he asked Joan to have Khii 43 hailed to say there was one passenger and luggage inbound at the landing point. Her warm smile made him feel like sending some more messages. Returning a few minutes later, "Joan" related that the response to the radio message had noted that he was expected and should follow the path to the airlock.

"What path?"

"Well, it's a standard stop, monthly, so let me see what I can pull up." Straightening, and turning half away from Gerry, she pulled out a thin, flexible terminal from a thigh pocket, tapped three times, and turned it so he could see an enhanced color image of a pair of pads, linked with the passenger transfer and cargo transfer symbols respectively. A pathway of decking formed a tall, narrow "T" that linked them and a shelter burrowed into the rock, some 30 to 40 meters distance; the decking was bordered and center-lined with standard industrial markings. It had all the look of a very small, permanent belt miner's camp. Overprinting on the image noted that the decking was ferrous and had grav of .125 g. Looking at the image, Gerry realized that it made the return message unnecessary; there would have been no question where he was to go, even if he was coming out the airlock with no preparation.

"We drop cargo here most months. Probably rations and sundries. You are the first person I recall coming in," she turned the terminal back toward her, and pecked a few more times, "Sometimes the miner would boost out with us, according to the records of the past few years, but never back. We only go monthly, so he likely chartered a boat to get him back. I'm guessing, just guessing, mind you, he did not go outsystem in the past few years. That is all I have records for, sweetie. Are you family?"

The familiar tone she slid into took Gerry a little by surprise. He realized that she was looking at him in what he thought might be maternal, or flirty, or a teasing mix. It was more personable, whatever it was.

"I am his son."

"Oooh. From where?"

"Coreward a few parsecs." Gerry said casually. He was feeling a little anxious about giving away details, and the vagueness was taken by "Joan" to mean that he was a little uncomfortable.

"Belters keep their own counsel, sweetie. You do likewise with those who aren't kin." she brushed his cheek in a maternal gesture and was off.

There was jumpseat by the airlock where passengers suited up. Gerry's bigsoft with the suit was by the seat when the twenty minute warning came for him. He casually finished his drink, went to the fresher, showered, and changed into into his IM PT shorts there. As he washed quickly, Gerry wondered about Eve. Wondered about how he smelled. What Father K-O'M would counsel. How she smelled. They would be far away from everybody...

On the heels of thoughts of lust and morality came barely formed anxieties. What if it was a trap? Why would it be a trap? Why else would she want him out here alone? He imagined some scam, like the two con men. He could put the shotgun together on the pad, he realized, but that sounded silly. A sarcastic line came back from one of his teachers, his stock reaction to some misanthropic gaffe, "How to win friends and influence people!"

He had 7 minutes and a bit remaining when he left the fresher. "Joan" gave him an inquisitive look, glancing back to his suit bigsoft. He shrugged, went back to his seat, packed and checked his hand luggage. At 3 minutes out he sat down in the jumpseat, after she had given him a 5 minute warning in a nagging tone that would curdle most dairy products. He had his suit on and airtight a leisurely 45

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Raconteurs' Rest

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seconds after he unzipped the bag, and gave "Joan" a shrug. It had been a self-indulgent little bit of showmanship, but she gave him an admiring smirk. Not a belter time, but not a groundhog fumble either. It was a matter of clinging to his little patch of competence out here.

The cargo lock spat out his small cube seconds before his airlock door opened. As he had been told, it was a 2 meter drop at .125g, and he made it look almost graceful. He looked to his left, to see the small cube and shuffled his feet to look back at the boat, but it was already gone. "Well, thanks!" 🌟

Critics' Corner

Variant Psionics for the Cepheus Engine

reviewed by Robert Weaver

Variant Psionics for the Cepheus Engine. Omer Golan-Joel and Richard Hazlewood.
Stellagama Publishing <http://facebook.com/StellagamaPublishing>
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US\$2.79/UK£1.98

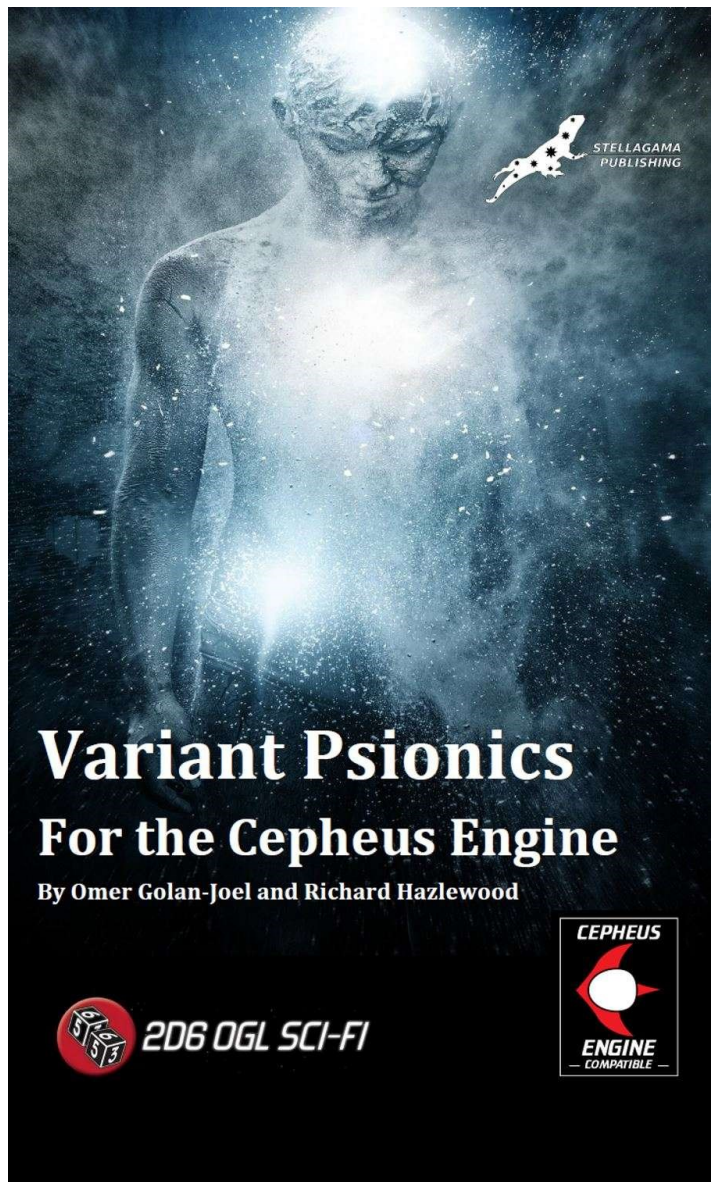
The reviewer provides this disclosure: "I am listed in the credits as a Consultant. I suggested a few ideas for the book, but I earn no royalties."

As it says on the tin, this is written for the *Cepheus Engine* rules set, but with only minor tweaking, these rules will work for *Classic Traveller* as well. Which is good news for me, still being a CT kind of guy.

What does this book offer? Let's have a look, shall we?

The first section explains how to fit psionics into any *Cepheus Engine* setting. How often do psionics appear, and more importantly, three possible societal responses to the existence of psionics, friendly, neutral and hostile. In CT, the assumption even before the Third Imperium or the Zhodani Consulate, was that psionics would face a negative reaction.

Next we have details on how Psionics are a part of Stellagama's *These Stars are Ours!* campaign setting. Most psionics end up working for the government, but not necessarily as spies or secret police. Still, Terrans' attitude towards psionics leans heavily



ly toward the negative. Life for a government psion will not be easy.

The middle of the book contains the detailed rules for the available psionic abilities. All the talents from CE (and CT) are here: Awareness, Telepathy,

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Critics' Corner

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Clairvoyance, Teleportation, Telekinesis. Each talents has a number of powers associated with it. The Variant part is the new powers that have been introduced for most talents. Clairvoyance still has only the powers listed in the *Cepheus Engine* rules. Some of the standout new powers are:

- Telepathy: Drain Health and Empathic Healing
- Telepathy: Invisibility, Fear, and Domination
- Telekinesis: Choke and Microkinesis
- Teleportation: Blinking

Here I have a few things that I would change. The Telepathic power Life Detection has a maximum range of Short (12m). That's well within visual range, making it not really useful. Extend it to Medium or Long. The Choke power has a range of Close; so a psionic has to almost be near enough to physically choke the victim. Again, greater range should be allowed. I do not understand the point of the Memory Block power, so I doubt I would include it.

In the Telepathy table the fear power is listed as Emotion, but in the descriptive text it is Fear. However, I really like the table of Fear effects, and I am swiping it for my games – those Frightening Animal Encounters should cause the PCs some hesitation.

I also like the rule that telepathy allows cross-language communication, at an increased cost in Psi strength. Another pleasant surprise is the rule for telepathic Shields being extended to cover nearby non-psionics.

I would like to see more unusual or 'special' powers such as pyro/cryokinesis, precognition, illusions or atomic manipulation. Still, for the enterprising referee the rules given are enough to define such powers. Too much power can possibly unbalance a game or setting, but for me, the fact that all characters are vulnerable to ordinary weapons is enough to allay fears of out-of-control psionics.

A welcome section on psionic technology comes next. I say welcome because in my own TU I have been experimenting with crossing technology with psi power. The psionic shield (personal) is mentioned in both *Cepheus Engine* and *Classic Traveller*; here we are introduced to room- and vehicle-scale shields. Telepaths now need to be wary of their targets having a Psi Trap backlashing at them! There are other devices described as well.

The optional Psion career path is presented next. The career format is the same as with other *Cepheus Engine* careers. Skills, ranks, events, mishaps are all there, including the possibility of going to prison for psionic crime!

The last section explains how a psionic character can improve their talents and powers in the game (as opposed to during character creation). These rules are closely copied from *Classic Traveller's* Experience rules, which I use a lot. They are simple and easy to use.

At only \$2.79, it's easy on the gaming budget, and well worth the price. Check it out! 🌟

Active Measures

Getting Off the Ground

Border Crossing

by Jonathan McDermott

This adventure was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2005.

The PCs are transporting passengers into the Solomani Sphere, and one of their passengers—a

man by the name of Mohammed Chang—is arrested on suspicion on being a part of a well-known pro-Imperial terrorist group. Ah, but “Mohammed Chang” being the most common Terran name out

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Active Measures


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there, (at least according to 'what everyone knows,')
Things Are Not As They Seem....

Possible Directions to take this Adventure

1. Mr. Chang is on the SolSec watch list for activism he participated in as a youth, but is not a member of the terrorist group.
2. The name 'Mohammed Chang' being on the SolSec watch list was a prank by a group of computer hackers. I mean, come on, who's *really* named 'John Smith,' for example? No chance of anyone coming in to the SoloConfed with that name. Oops.
3. The name 'Mohammed Chang' being on the SolSec watch list is because of bureaucratic stupidity in measuring productivity—some bureaucrat decided that the number of names, or the number of people investigated at the border, is an appropriate way to measure the effectiveness of the SolSec Border Security and Customs unit.

An officer padded the list using a Model/1sub computer and a poorly-written algorithm to generate random names. 500 instances of 'Mohammed Chang' found their way into the million-name-long watch list. Oops.

4. Mr. Chang is indeed an operative of the terrorist group.
5. Mr. Chang is indeed an operative for the terrorist group, but he is not the Mr. Chang that SolSec is looking for. He's a completely different Mr. Chang who happens to also be an operative for the terrorist group. His paperwork is in order, and a routine check will clear him through customs, and the SolSec BSC officer smiles politely as she hands him back his passport. That is, if the PCs remain calm and cool and Mr. Chang does not panic.
6. As in 5, but Mr. Chang panics. 

Kurishdam

Lecture Hall and Library

Jump Destination: Alnimes

by Robert DeVoe

The League of Antares

The League of Antares is a common-interests alliance within the Third Imperium, in Antares Sector and Subsector. The twelve member worlds were originally collectively known as the Antarean Cluster, prior to the Julian War, during which they were occupied by the Julian Protectorate. Upon the conclusion of that war, and the return of the worlds to Imperial control, the peace terms required that these worlds be given limited autonomy for local control of trade and commerce, and internal affairs. The League sits astride the junction between the coreward and rimward lobes of the Antares Main, and is also a gateway between the rimward portions of the Imperium and the sector capital at Antares proper.

Alnimes

Alnimes (Antares/Antares 2326)

C587732-7 Ag Ri

Im 304 G1V

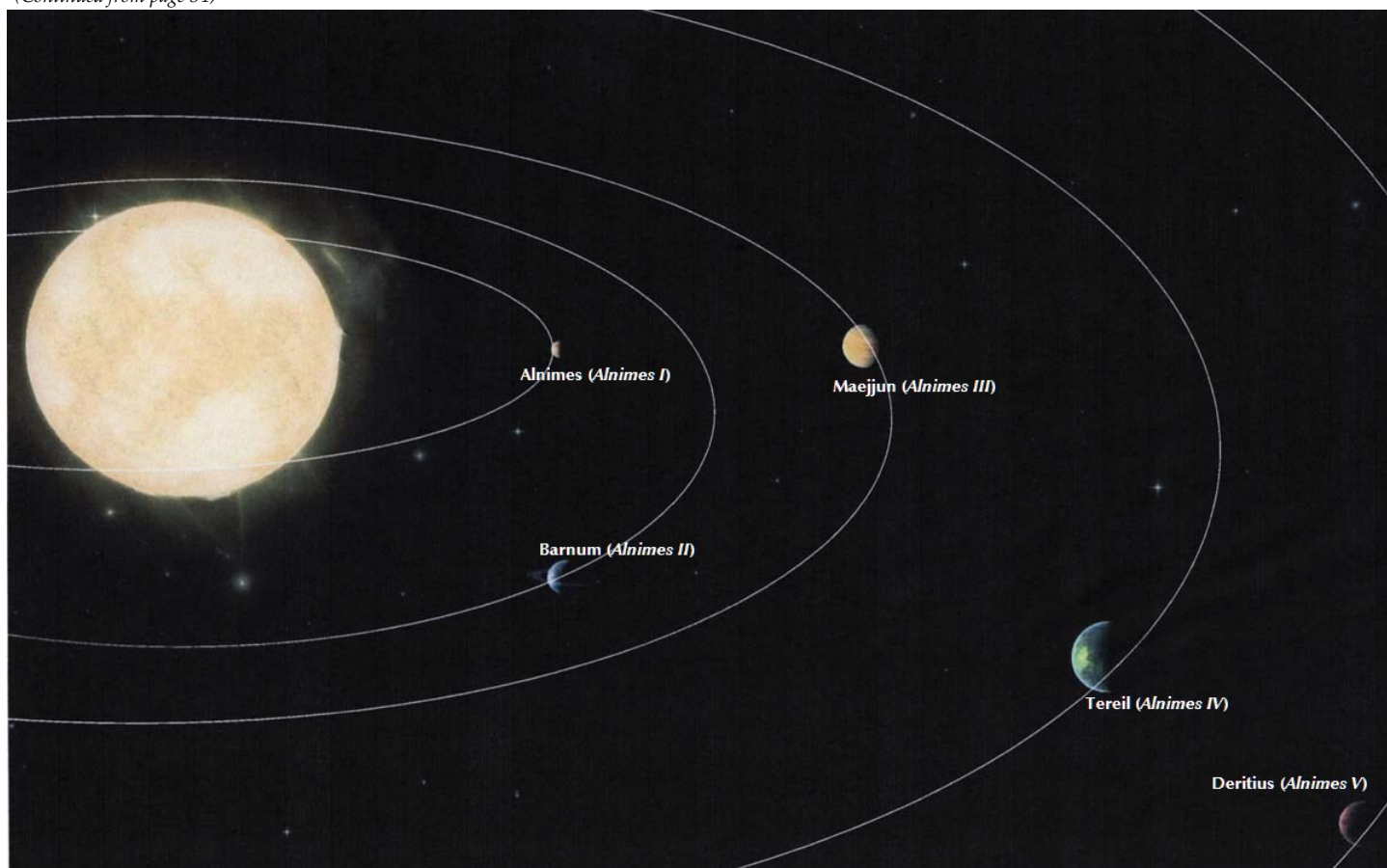
Alnimes is a member of the League of Antares. The Alnimes system has a main sequence white sun (G1-V) and five planets, four of which are gas giants suitable for skimming fuel. The only habitable planet in the system is Alnimes I.

Alnimes II – Barnum (Medium Gas Giant)

Barnum is a medium gas giant composed mostly of hydrogen and ammonia, with other trace elements. High amounts of tritium (³H) in the atmosphere make it a prime planet for skimming fuel. It has a ring composed of frozen water and frozen ammonia. Barnum is approximately 5 AU from the sun.

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Alnimes III – Maejjun (Medium Gas Giant)

Maejjun is a volatile gas giant with raging storms in its upper atmosphere, that may extend downward hundreds of kilometers. The atmosphere is composed mostly of nitrogen, helium, and hydrogen, with other trace elements. It possesses 13 moons none of which has any atmosphere. Maejjun is 11 AU from the sun.

Alnimes IV – Tereil (Large Gas Giant)

Tereil has an atmosphere composed mostly of chlorine, methane, hydrogen (with a high fraction of deuterium (^2H)) and trace other elements. It has 16 moons all of which are barren and largely unexplored. It is 19 AU from the sun.

Alnimes V – Deritius (Medium Gas Giant)

The atmosphere of Deritius is composed mostly of ammonia, bromine, hydrogen sulfide, and methane with some other trace elements. It has no moons and lies 28 AU from the sun.

Alnimes I – Alnimes (C587732-7)

- C Routine quality space port, unrefined fuel only, Berthing cost 200 credits, routine repairs
- 5 Planet diameter 8,250km, gravity .62 of normal
- 8 Dense atmosphere 1.6 of standard. Low gravity coupled with the denser atmosphere leaves the sea-level pressure essentially standard, but the rate of pressure decrease with altitude is slower, with scale height at 1.6 of standard.
- 7 Approximately 70% of the surface is covered with water.
- 7 Population ~32,000,000, 99% human, 1% Vargr
- 3 The hereditary oligarchs are led by one of their number holding an Imperial Barony; the remainder receive Imperially-recognized knighthoods.
- 2 Known as an open planet, most personal weapons are unrestricted.
- 7 Planetary manufacturing is relatively low, this is by choice. All goods of TL8+ are imported, with tariffs that effectively double the cost.

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A temperate world located in the middle of the habitable zone (orbiting at just beyond 1 AU), Alnimes I has an axial tilt of 17 degrees providing moderate seasonal shifts and wide temperate zones with long growing seasons. The one natural satellite is a small, irregularly-shaped rock in a two-day orbit which has little influence on local tides. Alnimes is an agricultural world rich in resources.

Culture and History

Alnimes was largely settled by a 'back to the land' movement. The society is ecologically-aware, and wishes to keep the planet free of pollution; local development, including energy production, is developed along clean lines. There are many solar and wind farms near the major cities, and all roofing and street material is composed of solar capacitors in some form.

The population is primarily farmers, ranchers, and deep-sea fishers built on strong family/clan lines. It should be noted there is no open animosity among the various families or communities. All work at their profession and all strive to ensure their work is in cooperation with nature. While the population prefers an agrarian lifestyle they are not blind to the advances of technology. They just do not see the need to have a high degree of technology in their lives. Every family is headed by a hereditary noble.

The inhabitants trace their heritage back hundreds of years, and yet, despite all the time that has passed and the many changes that have taken place in society, they still live and work much as their forefathers did. For the people of Alnimes, family and farm are top priorities. Communities give freely of their time and skills to help each other, often coming to the aid of those in need. This in turn has kept the cost of an actual government to low levels, something the planetary nobility has encouraged.

Over time the 'natives' have adapted to the lesser gravity, and generally run taller and slimmer than

the theoretical 'Imperial norm'. Visitors are often referred to as 'shorties', and are easily discerned from natives by their poor coordination as muscles adapted to normal gravity often over-react in the lighter environment.

Alnimians wishing to travel off planet usually spend up to six months in special gravity domes (only available at the starport) to try and acclimate themselves to a near normal gravity field. The governor's palace and most of the hereditary nobility have facilities built in the residence to generate a normal gravity field as they often travel off planet.

Planetary Geography

There are three continents on Alnimes. The largest continent, Kershan, stretches across the northern latitudes and has two significant projections toward the equator. Western Kershan has two major mountain ranges. There are several farming and ranching communities scattered throughout Western Kershan.

The major manufacturing center of the planet is located in the city of Barant, south of the equator on Western Kershan, with about 10% of the world's population. Most of the Vargr population live in Barant.

Eastern Kershan is significantly smaller than Western Kershan but has a higher concentration of farming and ranching communities.

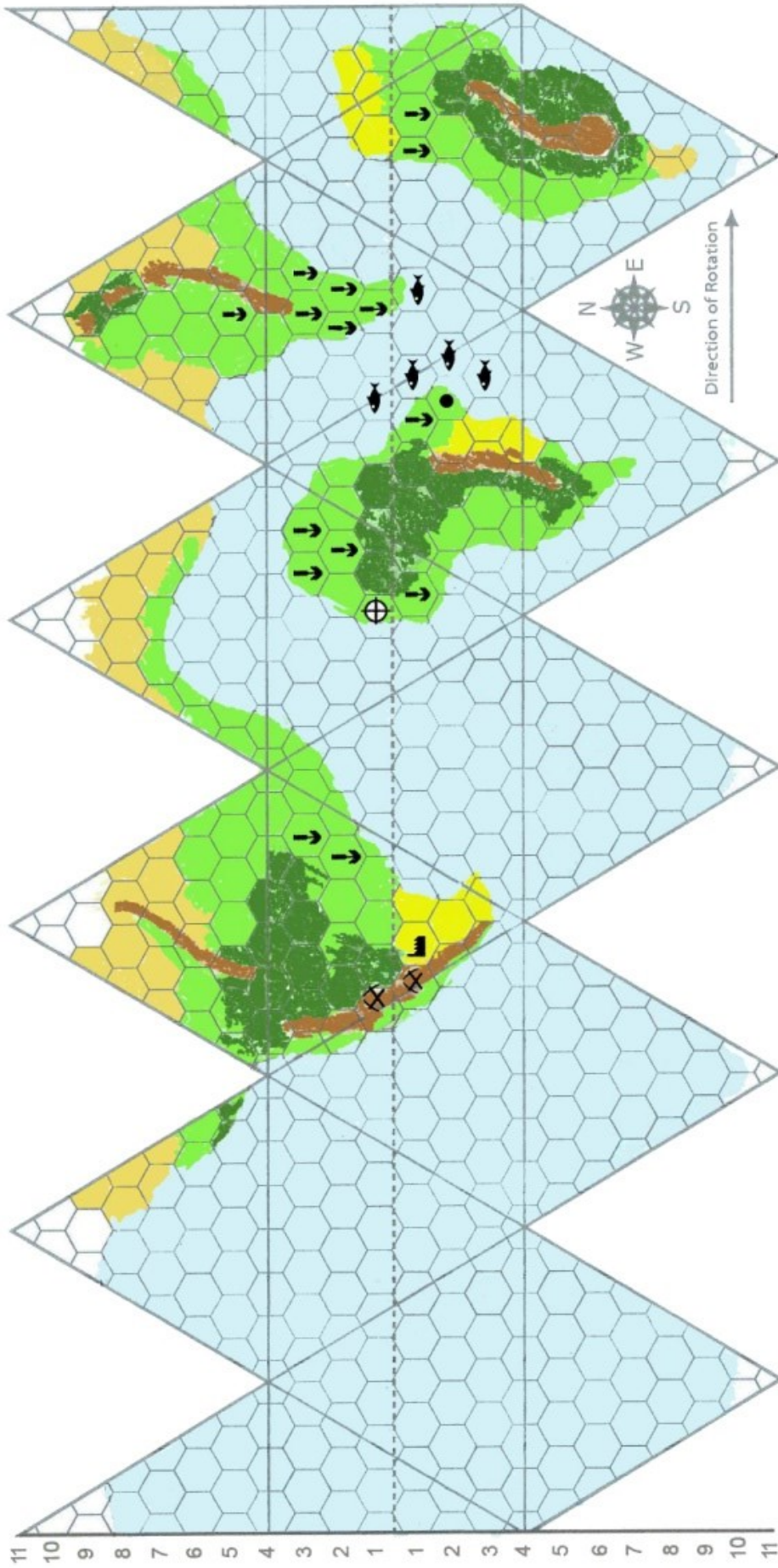
Between Western and Eastern Kershan lies the continent of Salliant. There are several farming and ranching communities on the continent. The planetary capital, Mimarrt, is also the site of the spaceport. About 12% of the population can be found here. The class C starport only offers unrefined fuel, but is capable of handling most repairs short of jump drive issues. There are no bases on the planet, and no TAS.

Avinor, with about 10% of the planetary population, is located on the eastern shore of Salliant.

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NAME: **Alnimes**

UWP: **C 587732-7**



- city
- spaceport
- mining
- farming
- industrial
- fishing
- mountain grassland
- forest
- desert
- tundra
- water
- snow/ice

Hex size	740 km
Circumference	25,918 km

(Continued from page 56)

Avinor has an extensive food processing and packaging industry as well as a growing textile industry.

The continent of Morgenz is located east of East Kershan. It is not significantly settled though there are some ranching communities established here.

Flora and Fauna

Two noted fruits that grow only on Alnimes are preciples and orangles. Both are exported throughout the League of Antares.

Preciples

Preciples are a fruit native to the planet. They have yellow-green skins and a taste that is reminiscent of an apple with cinnamon.

Orangles

Orangles are descended from a sweet orange introduced when the planet was initially settled. Over countless years it has now adapted to the habitat and hybridized over multiple generations to become the fruit it is now. Still retaining its orange color, it has a sweet flavor with hints of cocoa.

Kuhfel

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Kuhfel	60	4m
SKILLS	Melee (horns) 0, Recon 1, Survival 2	
ATTACKS	3D	
TRAITS	Large (+3), Armor 2	
BEHAVIOR	Herbivore/Intermittent	

The kuhfel is a long haired xenobovinoïd animal, native to the plains and low hills. It stands 2.5 meters at the shoulder and has 3 horns on its head. Two major horns extend out from either side of the temple and a third smaller horn juts up in front of the nostrils. The two primary horns have an average span of 2 meters. Unlike many bovinoids, the kuhfel does not have hooves, but has three toes on each of its six feet with shovel-like nails to aid in keeping traction in the low gravity of Alnimes. The kuhfel is normally a passive creature preferring to run than to

fight, but it has been known to turn and fight if the young are endangered, or if it has nowhere in which to run. In domestication it is used for its meat, hide, and hair. The hide and hair are used in the textile industry. Some ranches also use the kuhfel as a beast of burden. The average kuhfel has a mass between 2,500 and 3,000 kilograms.

Arelian

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Arelian	40	6m
SKILLS	Melee (bite 3, claw 2), Recon 3, Stealth 4	
ATTACKS	Bite 3D+2, Claws 2D+2	
TRAITS	Large +1, Heightened Senses, IR/UV vision	
BEHAVIOR	Carnivore/Stalker	

The arelian is a large xenofelinoid predator inhabiting the plains and some mountain regions. They sport thick coats striped in light brown and pale yellow, though running somewhat darker among mountain arelians. The arelian is approximately 1.8 meters tall at the shoulder and masses 1,500–2,000kg. Like most native animals, it is a bilaterally-symmetric hexapod. The arelian is not a sprinter, but does possess a sudden burst of speed it uses when it has snuck up on its prey. Ranchers and farmers have to keep a wary eye for arelians as the beast hunts not on only kuhfel but human and Vargr as prey. They have been known to hunt by day or night. Arelian are predominately territorial and solitary creatures. They are favored creature for nobles to hunt; they are considered 'good sport', and the locals will encourage Travellers to go on safari to hunt the arelian.

Gotanaffe

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Gotanaffe	35	5m
SKILLS	Athletics (STR) 3, Melee (claws 2, grapple 2), Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2	
ATTACKS	Claws 3D	
TRAITS	Large +1, Heightened Senses	
BEHAVIOR	Omnivore/Hunter	

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The gotanaffe most closely resembles arboreal homindae such as the orangutan, though it, like most native animals, has six limbs. Its two upper arms stretch out longer than its body—over two meters from fingertip to fingertip—and are used to employ a “hookgrip”. The secondary arms are not quite as long but still quite strong and used in locomotion. When on the ground, they walk on their feet and primary arms, using their palms or their fists. Gotanaffe are covered in coarse hair ranging in color from brown to grey. They have tremendous strength, which enables them to swing from branch to branch and hang upside-down from branches for long periods of time to retrieve fruit and eat young leaves. Their brachiating is aided by having four upper arms. They are mostly solitary; however, dependent offspring will stay with their mother for the first two years. Fruit is the most important component of the gotanaffe’s diet; however, they will also eat vegetation, and smaller animals. Males range from 1.5 to 2 meters in height and can weigh between 130 to 180 kg. They are aggressive and often hunted for sport by nobles and travellers.

Economics

A rich agricultural planet, Alnimes’s main produce exports are wheat, barley, and fruits. There is also a thriving export business in meat and seafood as well as some lumber. There are no travel or trade restrictions. As a member of the League of Antares the planet has limited autonomy for control of trade, commerce, and internal affairs. With the relatively low gravity there are many larger than normal predators on both land and sea. This has made for a thriving hunting industry with the baron promoting several safari excursions every year.

Alnimes is something of an open port because of the relatively low law level. Many cargos are traded and moved from ship to ship. There may be an above average amount of pirated goods being exchanged at the port.

Farming on Alnimes often produces bountiful yields because of the lower gravity, long growing season, and relatively normal atmosphere. Produce, in the form of grain and native fruit, is the number one export of the planet. In addition, the slow falling rains (due to the lesser gravity) often make the growing season beautiful to watch.

Military

The active military of Alnimes is relatively small. There is a single Patrol Corvette that the planet is responsible for manning and maintaining. In addition, the League keeps at least one additional Patrol Corvette in system to help maintain the space-ways, and collect refueling taxes if a ship tries to refuel at one of the gas giants. The space navy is bolstered by one squadron (24) of light fighters based at Avinor.

The active ground military is practically nonexistent. However, there is a vast militia scattered about the planet. Due to the independent nature of many of the inhabitants almost everyone has some form of firearm at their home. Many will carry a weapon with them, as the wilderness is still largely untamed. For some reason inhabitants of Alnimes do not feel the need to maintain a low tech level with regards to their weaponry. Therefore, when the militia is called out the ground forces can easily reach 5 million, assembly can range from a few hours to a day.

The extensive farming communities are serviced by a constabulary based out of each major city. These police people offer aid and carry mail as often as they enforce the few laws of the land.

Cautions and Hazards

Off world visitors will suffer a DM-1 to all physical skill checks until they acclimate, a process which takes 1D weeks. Travellers with the Athletics (dexterity) skill do not suffer this penalty. It is recommended that travellers not staying for a protract-

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Kurishdam

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ed period, or planning to travel off-world frequently, maintain a program of physical exercise and sleep in normal gravity environments or suffer re-acclimation requirements when returning to their normal gravity.

Because of its out of the way location and its low law level, visitors are advised to go armed but be civil.

Adventure Hooks

- The adventurers could be contracted to bring in a group to go on Safari in the 'back' country. They could be drafted to help with supplies and portage and may want to go hunting themselves.

- An off planet industry has been granted lots of favors and tax breaks to set up on the planet. It is conducting pharmaceutical experiments on the native flora to find new drugs. But they could also be involved in illegal research or testing on some remote farms or ranches that the gets discovered by the adventurers.
- The adventurers have heard that the spaceport is a place where pirated cargo is transferred, bought, or sold. They could be hired to find a special cargo.
- The adventurers decide to stake out the port to try to cash in on some high end bounties from visiting pirates and/or criminals to try and extract them for Imperial justice. 🌟

Up Close and Personal

Jan Haakon Mattiason

profiled by Bill Cameron

This profile was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2006.

Jan Haakon Mattiason 678CC8 Age 38 Cr: A lot (5 terms, ex-Sword Worlds diplomat)
Interrogation-3, Trader-3, Handgun-2, Liaison-2, Linguistics-2 (Ganglic, Daryene, Sagmaal as native), Admin-1, Blade-1, Computer-1, Electronics-1, Streetwise-1, Vacc suit-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0

Born in 1072 on Sacnoth to an upper middle class family, Mattiason's early life was typical of its time and place on that balkanized world. His above average intelligence was noted early and he was quickly slotted into his nation's advanced academics program. Mattiason attended university at the planet's prestigious multi-national campus near the main Sacnotian downport. He read both economics and statistics there and participated in Sacnoth's combined naval officer training program.

Mattiason's post-university naval career was short. He only served the four years for which he was legally obligated and reached the rank of lieutenant. During this period, he received intelligence training and worked for a short time in the Navy's investigatory office. While still in the Sacnotian Navy, Mattiason was recruited by the Confederation's foreign service. He resigned his commission as soon as allowed and immediately joined the diplomatic corps.

During the next twelve years, Mattiason was posted to several embassies and consulates in District 268. There he specialized in gathering and analysing economic data. The manner in which some of this data was collected meant that Mattiason was considered a borderline 'spook' (intelligence officer) by many District governments, including the Third Imperium. Although economic data is usually not thought of as being as important as military and po-

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litical information, it is just as necessary for strategic planning. Mattiason's work was well-received by his superiors and he was promoted regularly.

The latter half of Mattiason's diplomatic career was colored by war and the preparations for war. To most thoughtful observers (and Mattiason was one), signs of the looming war were easily evident by 1105. The types of analysis his superiors began requesting was one such sign. Mattiason's views on the utility or desirability of the war at that time can only be guessed at, but there were hints from other neutral diplomats that his ideas on the war were not those of the Sword Worlds' leadership.

Whatever his views on the war, Mattiason's efforts during the war were as excellent as his pre-war work. He began the war on Forine and ended it on Trexalon. There are periods for which his whereabouts are still unknown. What is known is his work to purchase critical supplies and strategic resources for the Sword Worlds' war effort. Mattiason continually arranged for shipments in the face of the Imperium's increasingly effective economic warfare campaign in the District. As the Imperium slowly pressured shippers and independent worlds to apply end-user certificates, Mattiason's successes became fewer. Another of his efforts involved the resupply and repair of Confederation commerce raiders. There, too, his successes slowly dwindled as the war went on.

At war's end, Mattiason was part of the Sword Worlds' diplomatic community on Trexalon, a vaguely anti-Imperial independent world in the District's rimward reaches. It was there he learned about the Imperium's destruction of the Sacnotian fleet and subsequent occupation of the trailing half of the Confederation. In the months that followed, the Sword Worlds diplomats lived an almost monastic existence in an overcrowded embassy, putting off creditors, and waiting for any concrete news.

When the news finally arrived, it was the end of Mattiason's diplomatic career.

The new, smaller Confederation was to have a new, smaller foreign service. The axe fell on as many as three quarters of the personnel scattered across District 268 and Mattiason was one of them. Most of those let go returned to the Sword Worlds, with many hoping to join the newly formed Border Worlds' diplomatic service. A few took their severance packages and began building new lives. Mattiason was one of those few. He arrived on Grote; that long time destination for refugees and remittance men alike, in mid-1111.

Mattiason did well on Grote from the very beginning. First, came a series of increasingly more important and more lucrative consulting positions for single clients. The end of the war brought a resurgence of trade in District 268 and Mattiason put the detailed knowledge of the region he had gained over 12 years to very good use. Next, he founded Mattiason Associates, a firm dealing in economic forecast and analysis for a variety of clients. Again, Mattiason's knowledge and analysis was in demand and was now sold more widely. Finally, he began building an information gathering system for his firm. Although he'd arrived on Grote with a detailed economic picture of District 268, he also knew how rapidly that picture would grow out of date.

The data gathering by Mattiason Associates is the most shadowy and most controversial part of that business. Some claim that Jan Haakon Mattiason is nothing more than a spy hiding in plain sight, although no one agrees just which government he is spying for. Others admit that, while Mattiason is spying, he's spying for anyone who has money to buy his reports. Both the firm and the man refuse to comment on any of this and reiterate that Mattiason Associates is simply an economics consulting company.

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While originally focused on District 268, Mattiason Associates now also consults and reports on economic issues in the Sword Worlds, Lunion, and Glisten subsectors. The company has formal, if small, offices at the starports on most important worlds in that region and cover nearly all the rest with information from a series of independent firms and factors. For instance, while worlds like Collace, Narsil, and Ffudn have Mattiason Associates offices, the Walston cluster is covered by a group of local brokers and Harvosette by a local news agency.

One of Mattiason Associates' regular information gathering techniques does betray Jan Haakon Mattiason's earlier career as a 'spook'; the debriefing of recently arrived merchant ship crews. All of the firm's offices have standing offers to all ship crews to visit and talk about where they've been and what they've seen and heard. The firm prefers to debrief free traders, then subbies, then corporate crews, in that order.

Because they often must live on what they can make from each and every jump, free traders are seen to be more interested in collecting and sharing the odd bits of information they come across. Mattiason Associates makes these debriefings worth the crews' time and even hands out occasional bonuses for reasons known only to the firm. A crewman can earn a hundred credits or so for an hour or so of chatting with a pleasant person in a comfortable room. Mattiason himself regularly debriefs crews, both to keep himself sharp and to train firm employees.

The firm is interested in items like which ships were seen in port, where they were from, where they are going, what cargos they bought and sold, and the like, plus any purely planetary gossip a crew may have picked up. Crews usually approach a Mattiason office and make an appointment for an interview. The firm has been known to approach crews first, however. Observers point out that this

relationship between Mattiason Associates and free traders gives the firm thousands of 'operatives' at little expense.

Now in his forties, Jan Haakon Mattiason is a fairly nondescript man, average height, average weight, and average clothes, the sort of fellow who never stands out and can blend into any crowd. His detractors naturally take this as more evidence of his active espionage status. He's a well known workaholic who keeps long hours at either the firm's Cor-One headquarters or its starport offices. He has a large suite in a residence hotel near the Travellers' Aid Society facility along the Common's Rimwalk. He entertains rarely, but can often be seen at the theatre and symphony with a mistress he keeps in New Town.

Mattiason normally travels once a year to Glisten, Strouden, and Collace, staying about a standard week in each system. Two years ago he spent nearly four months travelling and working in the Glisten subsector. Last year, he did the same for just over three months in District 268 and this year his plans seem to be for Lunion. He hasn't been back in either the Sword or Border Worlds since before the war.

Author's Notes

I've been messing around with *MegaTraveller* chargen lately, thanks to the freebie offered at DriveThruRPG last year. I've also been exploring the idea of 'split' or 'mixed' prior careers. JHM was the result.

I rolled the usual six 2D6s, arranged them into a likely UPP, and then put JHM through *MegaTraveller's* advanced Navy chargen. I planned on seeing what skills he came up with in a single term and then shifting him into a likely 'civilian' career. JHM easily went to college, rolled for success and NOTC, and earned honors. I aimed 'low' with his naval career opting for the easier to enter system navy career. He served in the Line, went on 2 patrols and attended Intelligence School all in four years.

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MegaTraveller has a lot of cascade skill results on its skills tables. As part of JHM's initial naval training, he got an **Interpersonal** result. I chose Liaison, one of my favorite skills. That, plus the later roll for Intel School, determined which career I'd try first for JHM's post-naval charges, Diplomat.

JHM entered the Diplomats with a 12(!); I planned on Bureaucrat or Scientist if he failed. He lasted three terms with position, two promotions, and two special duty rolls before failing his reenlistment roll with a 2(!). Five of the nine skill rolls he earned led to choices from skill cascades. I chose to give him fluency in two languages beyond his native Sagmaal (Galanglic and Daryene, because he was a diplomat) and used the other three cascade choices which were all in **Economics** to give him a strong Trader-3.

Other skills JHM received were the level 0 homeworld skills, another level 0 from the navy career, and Liaison-1 from the diplomat career. (I'd rolled up JHM's homeworld along *MegaTraveller's* nifty broad stat categories; only 4 hydro descriptions, 4 size descriptions, etc., at the start.) One level 0 homeworld skill, Computer-0, became Computer-1 from a skill roll.

I put him through the Mustering Out tables after each career. He got two handguns, a +1 bump to INT, 40KCr, and a low passage. Whoopee...

At the end, I had a 38 year old ex-diplomat who had spent a single term in the navy after taking NOTC in college. Pretty normal sounding huh? Coming up with JHM's backstory was fun. His rolled *MegaTraveller* 'homeworld' stats fit Sacnoth/Sword Worlds like a glove, as did his service in a 'system' navy. The short diplomat career (I'd wanted to retire him after 5 terms as a diplomat or 7 total for *MegaTraveller's* retirement pay) was easy to fiddle; JHM lost his job when the Sword Worlds lost the war.

With Trader-3 and Handgun-2 joining his Interrogation-3 and Liaison-2, JHM was an odd diplomat. Real espionage types, not the munchkin IRIS/James Bond combat monsters, have always been hard to stat out in *Traveller*, but I felt I had a good one in JHM. He was obviously an intel analyst complete with an area of expertise (Trader-3), the skills to gather data (Interrogation-3), and the ability to be a case officer (Liaison-2 and Handgun-2). So I wrote JHM up as an econ spook which also gave me a great idea for his post-5th-Frontier-War life.

Mattiason Associates can be one of those continual bits of background chrome in your campaign. They won't be shipping cargos or running ships. They won't be hiring the players to find Mrs. Teasdale's purloined Pekinese, either. They will pay for certain information and they may send the players out to find certain information too. Nothing Imperium-shaking, no governments toppled, either, but stuff that some folks wouldn't want bruited about. Is someone trying to corner the rubber neck sleeve market on Dallia? Why is Forine dumping polymers at below market prices on Tarkine? What's behind the 9mm ammo shortage on Tarsus?

Other than the home office on Grote, I'd put a Mattiason office on every X-boat link world, every hi-pop world, and every world with a class A starport in the Sword Worlds, Lunion, Glisten, and District 268 subsectors. There could easily be offices on other worlds that don't meet those requirements but that are important economically. Each office will consist of a dozen or so researchers, interviewers, and data collectors with maybe a more hard edged, shadowy type or two. Mattiason subcontractors on worlds without a Mattiason office will be businesses or businessmen in their own right; brokers, trading companies, news agencies and the like.

Of course, whether JHM is still a spook and whether Mattiason Associates is just part cover and part network is entirely up to you. ☼

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

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

Traveller on the Internet

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

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

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

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller Releases

March/April 2018

- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Manhunters: Bounty Hunters in Clement Sector, Grand Safari (Second Edition)*.
- **Fat Goblin Games** has released *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Gray Alien (race)*.
- **Michael Brown** has released *The Sons of Rudurgu, Sacred Duty, Caecis Manibus, Perfect Saathi, 2D6 Martial Arts, Antivenin, The Deliverancer of Reine*.
- **Moon Toad Publishing** has released *Cepheus Engine Core Rules (with the cooperation of Samar-dan Press, and including print-on-demand)*
- **Stellagama Publishing** has released *Uranium Fever: Asteroid Mining Rules for the Cepheus Engine*.
- **Tangent Zero** has released *No GM's Sky*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Reach Adventure 5: The Borderland Run*.
- **Time Rover Press** has released *Clip Art Sampler 1*.
- **Colin Dunn** has released *Edge of Space: Grav Vehicles*.
- **Pyromancer Publishing** has released *Hard Shell*.
- **Zozer Games** has released *Alien Breeds*.
- **BadBadTiger** has released *BBT: Alien Artwork #3*.



Submission Guidelines

Content

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

We refer to the rules defined in *Classic Traveller*, *Mega-Traveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller* (T4), *Traveller*⁵, and both editions of *Mongoose Traveller* as “Classic Compatible” or “2D6”. This includes Sceptune Games’ *Hyperlite*, and Samardan Press’ *Cepheus Engine*. For these rulesets, any setting, whether official, commercially-published-but-unofficial, or house setting, will be supported. A partial list of published settings supported under 2D6 *Traveller* includes the Third Imperium setting (including polities other than the Third Imperium proper), Reign of Discordia, Clement Sector, Hyperlite, Twilight Sector, Orbital, 2300AD, Foreven Sector, Mindjammer, and I’m sure I’ve missed others.

Other rulesets, such as *GURPS Traveller*, *Traveller*²⁰/*SF20*, *FATE*, *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 or submissions@freelancetraveller.com. All submissions should include the submission itself and a full name and valid contact information for the submitter. If you wish the material published under a “handle”, please give the preferred handle and explain why publication under your real name is not acceptable—we prefer to publish under the real name, but realize that this can be a problem in some cases.

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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.

