



FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured:

After-Action Report: TravCon (UK) 2018

by Timothy Collinson

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July/August 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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Artwork

Cover: *Ian Stead*

From the Editor: *Jeff Zeitlin*

Critics' Corner: *Mongoose Publishing, from the product or the DriveThruRPG website; Gypsy Knights Games and Zozer Games, both from the DriveThruRPG website.*

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From the Editor



For many years, *Freelance Traveller* has had a section that we've called the "Multimedia Gallery". Up until this issue, it hasn't really lived up to being called anything but "Picture Gallery". That's changing, thanks to Timothy Collinson, who was kind enough to send us the sheet music and lyrics for a "Spacer's Hymn", along with a MP3 file of the music as played by a software piano. That prompted Your Humble Editor to go digging, and fire up an old music-editing program. The result of that was a MP3 of the hymn being played on an organ. That MP3, ra-

ther than Mr Collinson's original, is linked from this issue's contents page on our website, and will be linked to the article when it appears on the site. Download it and enjoy it—and take it as encouragement to go beyond plain old flat/static pictures for our Multimedia Gallery.

Obviously, not everything can be put in the Gallery (a 3-d printed miniature, can't, for example, though the data file for the 3-d software/printer can be), but we'll also be interested in articles about *how* you do the (*Traveller*-related) things that can't themselves be included in the Gallery, too! ☼

Touchstone and Afawahisa

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Touchstone and Afawahisa. Martin J. Dougherty.
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
105pp., PDF (softcover forthcoming)
Price TBD (see note)

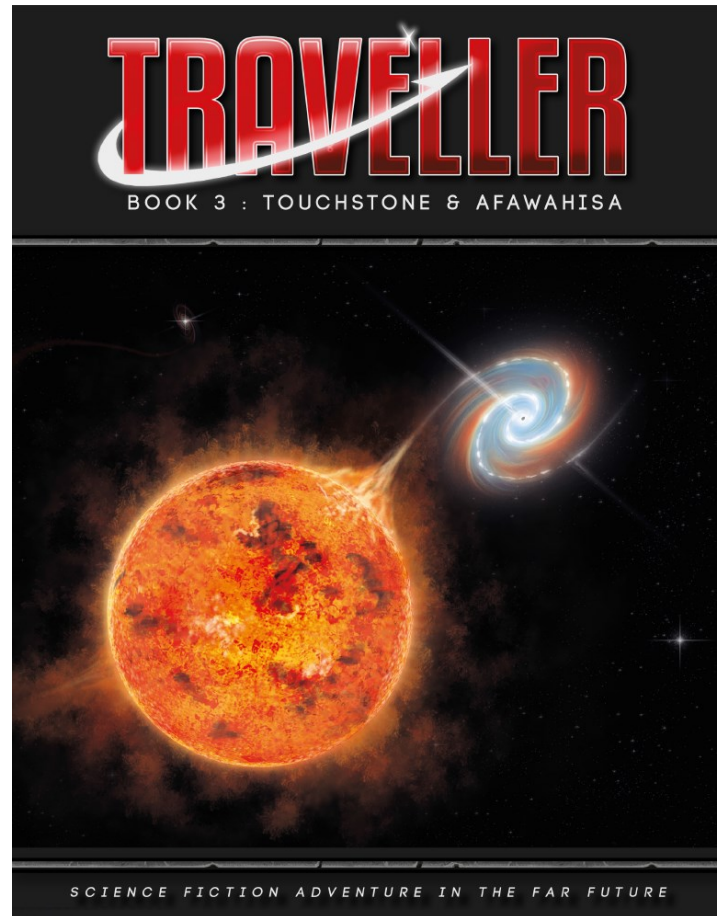
Note: The reviewer received his copy as part of the deliverable for the Great Rift Kickstarter, and will be receiving the softcover when it ships to Kickstarter backers.

One of the stretch goals in the Great Rift kickstarter was some additional sectors—these two. Obviously, that stretch goal was met. The two sectors, Touchstone and Afawahisa, are heavily influenced (and colonized) by the Aslan, as Touchstone lies immediately spinward of Riftspan Reaches (the sector on which the Aslan J-5 trans-rift route centers), and Afawahisa lies immediately rimward of Touchstone.

This volume, the third in the Great Rift set, looks at both. There is no introductory material for the volume as a whole; what you are getting is a pure atlas-and-gazetteer, much like the bulk of the two previous volumes in the set.

Touchstone is presented first. Its overview page notes the slow colonization by the Aslan, and minimal exploration by humans, but also notes that human names for the subsectors (and for the sector itself) have been assigned, and are used by humans in preference to the Aslan names. Each subsector is presented in order, starting with a listing of the worlds (UWPs in a table), followed by a map, and closed with descriptive text giving an overview of the social, economic, and/or political situation in the subsector, followed by overviews of worlds deemed significant in some way. As with the previous books, there are “pullouts” of animals, vehicles, equipment, etc., plus artwork that, while clearly renderart, is nevertheless appropriately atmospheric for the volume.

The section on Touchstone sector ends with a massive (25 pages, including maps and illustrations)



look at a single system, that of Phobetor. Phobetor is a double-star system with no less than three habitable worlds, and Other Interesting Stuff. It is multicultural, with humans from three different epochs and several different space-going cultures, Vargr, K'kree, and a minor race, the Ascondi. No Aslan, though...

The section on Afawahisa follows the same pattern as that of Touchstone. While Touchstone had at least one system in each of its subsectors, Afawahisa has two void subsectors. Afawahisa also straddles the rimward edge of the Rift, and has a good number of systems lying within the Hierate proper in the rimward third of the sector. Overall, I would judge Afawahisa to be less interesting than Touchstone, even discounting Phobetor.

In any case, a worthy add-on to the Great Rift and Reft Sector books, but if you don't have the others, its value may be questionable. ☼

Traveller's Aide: A Basic Career for Classic Traveller

by Greg Alan Caires

Following the publication of my article: "The Travellers' Aid Society: Character Generation for Classic Traveller" in the January/February 2018 issue of *Freelance Traveller*, I concluded that a "basic career" variant might be warranted to satisfy those who do not enjoy the "expanded career" character generation system for one reason or another (usually due to skill inflation). Also, because I hope to run a TAS character-centric adventure at a future Con (I'm looking at you, TravellerCON/USA), a streamlined character generation process will be necessary for that to be feasible, if not successful.

This character career has been condensed to its bare functions per TAS Form 41 as found in *Supplement 12: Forms & Charts* in order to make it as simple as possible. It is up to the referee and the players to determine just what kind of "TAS-man" has been generated by examining the results. For example, an Aide with Journalism-2 and Investigation-1 might be an investigative reporter for JTAS, while a Chief Aide with Mechanical-2 and Leader-1 might be a very hands-on manager of a TAS Hostel.

Term Process	Table of Ranks	Automatic Skills
Enlistment 5+	1 Junior Aide	Jack-of-all-Trades-1
DM +1 if EDU 9+	2 Aide	Steward-1
DM +2 if INT 8+	3 Senior Aide	Journalism-1
Survival 4+	4 Aide First Class	Admin-1
DM +1 if INT 8+	5 Chief Aide	Leader-1
Appointment 10+	6 Senior Chief Aide	Investigation-1
DM +1 if SOC 9+		
Promotion 10+		
DM +1 if EDU 8+ or INT 8+		
Re-Enlist 4+		
All DMs cumulative		

If the Survival roll is failed, the character musters out immediately without the player rolling for appointment, promotion, or skills.

If the Appointment roll is successful, the character promotes to Rank 1 (Junior Aide) and earns automatic skills from the Rank and Automatic Skills table. No further Appointment rolls are required; player instead rolls for Promotion once per term, but not during the term they earned Appointment.

During each successful (Survival roll succeeds) term of service, the player rolls once on the table below after choosing which column to roll against (notice that restrictions apply).

Skills	Personal Development	Service Skills	Education (INT 8+ only)	Advanced Education (EDU 9+ only)
1	+1 STR	Streetwise	Steward	Medical
2	+1 DEX	Brawling	Journalism	Legal
3	+1 END	Mechanical	Admin	Leader
4	+1 INT	Blade	Computer	Hunting
5	Gambling	Computer	Investigation	Survival
6	Carousing	Gun	Vacc Suit	Zero-G

If player earns Blade, Gun, or Vacc Suit they receive both an item of the appropriate type and the skill upon first award; subsequent rolls increase the skill level only. Characters who roll Blade or Gun must select the type of blade or gun on first receipt.

Characters must roll to re-enlist at the end of each term; on a roll of 12+ they must remain in TAS, otherwise they can choose to leave TAS even if they pass the re-enlistment roll. A failed re-enlistment roll results in immediate mustering-out. No character can remain at TAS past their 7th term.

Characters receive one mustering-out benefit for each term of service they have successfully completed, choosing either a material or cash benefit. Ranks

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1&2 receive one extra benefit roll; ranks 3&4 receive two extra benefit rolls, while ranks 5&6 receive three extra benefit rolls.

Mustering-Out Benefits	
Material	Cash
1 Blade or Gun	2500
2 Vacc Suit	5000
3 Annuity: (10cr x SOC x # of terms) per month	10000
4 SOC +1	15000
5 Annuity: (25cr x SOC x # of terms) per month	20000
6 StarPass	25000
7 TAS Membership	30000

DM +1 5+ terms of service rank 5+, or
if Gambling-1+, or
SOC 9+;
cumulative

TAS Aides do not earn pensions, but instead have the opportunity to earn a separate retirement income plan called Annuity which is cumulative – it is awarded once each time a player earns them with a benefits roll.

StarPass is a travel voucher that allows the bearer to take one Low Passage trip per month, or one Middle Passage trip every two months. Unused Passages can be sold for up to 90% of their value. This benefit can only be earned once; ignore and reroll if awarded more than once.

TAS membership can only be awarded once; ignore and reroll if awarded more than once.

Skill Limitations: no character may have skills (or combined total levels of skills) greater than the sum of their INT and EDU. Any new skill awarded that would do so becomes an automatic level -0; there is no limit to level -0 skills a character may possess. If a character receives a level in an already-known skill that would put them above the limit, either reduce another skill by one to compensate, or do not award the new level.

Aging: is conducted in accordance with *Traveller* rules.

Sample Characters

Ex-TAS 757874; Age 26; Cr20,000
2 terms, Rank 0
Blade Cbt-1, Streetwise-1,
Blade

Ex-TAS Investigative Reporter 5359AC; Age 38; Cr40,000
5 terms, Rank 3
Jack-O-T-1, Gambling-1, Steward-1, Journalism-1, Leader-1,
Vacc Suit-0
Vacc Suit, Annuity: Cr720/monthly, TAS membership

Ex-TAS Guide 6548B9; Age 46; Cr45,000
7 terms, Rank 3
Survival-1, ZeroG-1, Vacc Suit-2, Jack-O-T-1, Leader-1, Hunting-1,
Steward-1, Journalism-1
Vacc Suit, TAS Membership, Annuity: Cr4500/monthly

Ex-TAS Hostelman 744B83; Age 38; Cr75,000
5 terms, Rank 2
Vacc Suit-1, Gun Cbt-1, Blade Cbt-1, Jack-O-T-1, Investigation-1,
Computer-1, Admin-1, Steward-1
Annuity: Cr375/monthly, StarPass



Active Measures

The Edge of Humanity

by Timothy Collinson

Reprinted from the online Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society with kind permission of Marc Miller.

This a *Traveller* adventure for 4 to 8 people using the *Orbital* setting by Paul Elliott (Zoser, 2013). Six PCs represent the crew of a deep space cargo vehicle

(DCV) and if two additional players are available, there are a pair of SARA (Space Activities Regulation Agency) marshals who can also be used as PCs. This is laid out in the style of the example with a Situation, the Complications that arise, the Agendas which may or may not be obvious and Resolution.

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The Situation

The DCV *Far Horizon* is coming to the end of the outward bound leg of a long mission to deliver supplies to Nereid, the third largest moon of Neptune. The crew of six consists of Galvin, the command pilot; Thornberg, the first co-pilot; Crawtree, the second co-pilot; Real, the astrogator; Yaako, the engineer; and Haslari, the medic. There is no payload specialist as Haslari has been cross-training to fulfil the role – though exams have not yet been passed – and all of the crew have helped with loading and will help with unloading. The vessel itself is a Wu-Ketai built DCV *Wayfarer* as described on page 78 of the rulebook. It has a 400 ton hull, delta-V of 65km/s, 4 staterooms, and a 156 ton cargo capacity.

As described in the *Orbital* rulebook, Nereid (E000200-5 Lo) has a colony with a population of just 230 split into several factions, gangs and individuals who are running amok in the breakdown of any governance following a virus outbreak and the collapse of VisonTech. At least, that was the situation when the last supply ship reported six months back. The exact nature of the virus is unknown, the survivor groups are not communicating with the solar system outside, and there's the possibility no one is left in the colony at all.

The mission of the *Far Horizon* is to deliver two SARA marshals, Vertiggsen and Kang, who will attempt to restore order, as well as 150 tons of food, hydroponic gear and other equipment. If possible, the two ESDA representatives left there previously should be brought back if contact can be made with them.

Complications

It's a long and lonely mission out to the edges of the solar system, out to the edges of any human habitation and the crew will have been cooped up for

over two years (28 months) just to reach this point. With two strangers amongst them as well causing added friction in such a small space, tempers may be more frayed than usual.

As the *Far Horizon* approaches Neptune and its radiation, the flare damper malfunctions due to a small gasket failure. For immediate protection the storm shelter can be used, but only temporarily. A replacement part should be in the stores of the DCV but Yaako has replaced the contents of the relevant bin with a supply of alcohol. In the absence of a payload specialist, Crawtree should have checked the ship's own stores before departure, but Haslari insisted he join him and Real on a night "on the town" before they left. Meanwhile, Thornberg should have carried out visual checks of the flare damper which would have revealed the problem but was wrapped up with a "family crisis" concerning an ageing aunt. Or so he says. Galvin, of course, has overall responsibility for her ship and crew. In any case, there's plenty of blame to go around. A jury-rigged repair can be made with a piece of fabric from a stuffed mascot of one of the crew, but it's not a long term solution. There's probably a replacement part amongst the gear of the colony if it hasn't been destroyed and if it can be located.

On arrival it will take over 100 trips in the *Palomino* Heavy Lander, called *BigBug*, to ferry the cargo to Nereid. The marshals will want to initially make voice contact with the colony, but if they get no response, will soon want to be taken down the moon to see for themselves. Their first aim will be to see if they can make contact with the ESDA representatives, or in lieu of them, anyone who will appear to be willing to work with them. They'll be well armed and extremely cautious but may yet have to deputize the crew if they feel they need help.

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Agendas

Each crew character has the main goal of delivering the cargo and returning home, but additionally will have agendas of their own:

Thornberg and Real are in the employ of ESDA to ensure that the supplies get to the people they're supposed to be helping; they're to report on the situation and to identify the ESDA representatives that should be there and may need help or evacuation. However, just because they both work for the same organization, doesn't necessarily mean that they see eye-to-eye. Real is a fundamentalist Christian who thinks the only true way to 'save' people is for them to become a believer. Thornberg believes anything but, and is a staunch atheist. Alternatively, one of the pair could be an undercover LOPS agent who really wants to align Nereid with Luna if at all possible.

Crawtree is on the payroll of Bartholemew who was one of the founders of VisionTech and who is now putting a new company together. He wants to see what might be salvaged of the situation on Nereid and wants Crawtree to report back with as much detail of functioning infrastructure and remaining equipment as he can.

Yaako has an alcohol dependency problem and might even compromise the DCV's medical supplies if push came to shove. She has a history of foul-ups related to her problem which have never killed anyone—yet. She'll do anything not to have the storage bin 'incident' as she calls it, put on her record.

Haslari is being employed by Parkfield Biolabs to see if there is something amidst the agri-farms which could be reused or redeveloped into a working and profitable enterprise.

The two marshals, Kang and Vertiggsen want to see law and order restored on the colony. They are armed, ready for anything and will use any means they can to restore a 'proper' authority. While they

would prefer to see a leader put in place while they provide support, they won't hesitate to take that leadership themselves until additional support arrives if they feel it's the only solution. Any such support is likely to be some months if not years away.

Resolution

Of course, this might be all a very straightforward, deliver the marshals and the supplies, ask the colony for a spare part and head home. Life's never that straightforward, however. Aside from the usual risks and dangers involved in achieving an orbit close to Nereid and making dozens of trips to its surface with the heavy lander (a *Palomino* as described on page 72 of the rulebook), there are many other possibilities for what the players will encounter on Nereid.

Everything could be relatively simple. The colony has, under the leadership of a particularly powerful or charismatic survivor, come back to some semblance of order. He or she will be somewhat paranoid about the intentions of the new arrivals and will not want the marshals to even enter the colony tunnels or farms. But the cargo can be offloaded and the needed part obtained. There won't be room for the two ESDA representatives (who could only be evacuated on the premise that the marshals remained behind), but arrangements can be made for a future supply ship to remove them. The reason the colony has been silent is because order has only recently been restored and the new leader has been more concerned with rooting out any remaining gangs before declaring the emergency over.

More likely, the colony is still in a state of complete disarray with no one person or group in charge and multiple factions to deal with in order to interact with anyone on the moon. It may be that any communications equipment has been destroyed or so badly damaged it can't be repaired. In fact, once

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Active Measures

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the fact that the *Far Horizon* is delivering supplies becomes known there could be considerable danger as different groups fight over the food and gear. The marshals may be able to establish a 'beachhead' and persuade some of the former colonists to join them in a "legal authority". The fresh supplies should be a powerful bargaining chip. Whether they simply become another faction, or whether they manage to instill some form of regulation, remains to be seen.

Finally, the situation could be even more chaotic with the original virus still running rampant and causing anything from a mild cold to severe psychosis and even more extreme behaviour! It could be anything but simple getting into the colony to see if the spare part can be found. Haslari might well have a lot to do medically—both of the marshals have some first aid ability if required. If the situation really is serious and things have descended to some kind of zombie nightmare, the marshals may well give the colony up as a bad job and expect to return with the crew, but they will help with the retrieval of spare parts—fighting if necessary. Whether the cargo of food is even left behind under these condi-

tions could become an interesting moral question. PC agendas may well have to be adjusted in light of what they find.

The referee should bear in mind throughout that Nereid really is at the edge of the universe as far as humankind is concerned. With Pluto as yet unsettled and the nearest other people the sixty^[1] scientists on Triton (and only another 620 back at Uranus), help and the comforts of home are a long, long way away.

[1] In fact, *Orbital* isn't very clear exactly how many people are on Triton. The UWP on page 189 and again on page 190 suggests thousands, the profile says 60, and the text says 60 Luna scientists have been joined by 50 ESDA scientists and two squads of eight IAU police for a total of 126. And just to confuse the issue further the two UWPs aren't identical but seem to be reflecting the changes since the "beginning of the year" when the situation there became, well, changeable. The UWP given in the listing for Neptune's moons is no doubt correct up to the start of the year; the UWP given for the world description reflects the more recent changes with the government becoming 'balkanized' and the Law Level descending to 0. In both cases however the population digit is 3, thousands, and can only be correct if for some reason the other descriptions are only counting scientists and not their support or families or some such.

In any case, the point remains that there is little in the way of help to call on. ✪

Less Dangerous Game

Echmerial and Incorial

by Benedikt Schwarz

Echmerial

Also called a "strider" or "landsnake".

Gentle-natured, intelligent, curious and easy to train, the echmerial is a favoured riding animal found on many frontier planets. At an overall body length of about three to five meters, nearly half of the creature is taken up by the strong tail which the echmerial uses to keep its balance. An adult weighs about as much as a horse and is very supple, due to a flexible joint and bone structure.

Six semi-faceted eyes form two rows on the skull, providing adequate depth perception, despite

the echmerial's eyesight being below average. The head is shaped like a narrow cone tapering toward a round muzzle lined with rings of blunt teeth, and sits atop a long, flexible neck. Leaves, lichen and ferns, the echmerial's preferred food, are stripped from branches with a long, sinuous tongue shaped like a needle and set with scales that rasp the food against the teeth as it is pulled into the mouth.. The tongue is also perfectly shaped to enter the tunnels of burrowing insects and dig out the eggs and larvae. Certain insect nymphs and slugs are a cherished

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treat for them, and are frequently used by handlers as reward snacks.

The six long legs terminate in strong, four-fingered, padded, hand-like palps that afford the echmerial good purchase on difficult ground. Echmerial are moderately good climbers, even when carrying a rider, and can easily negotiate rocky areas and even steep slopes. On level terrain, they are capable of fast turns of speed, but tire quickly if they have to keep up this pace for any length of time. Compared to a Terrestrial horse, their endurance is significantly lower.

When running distances, the echmerial stretches the legs and keeps itself stretched out straight, resulting in a larger silhouette and a higher center of

gravity. When aware of danger or traversing difficult terrain, the body drops close to the ground, with the legs spread outward like a spider's, and the tail and neck move in serpent-like S-curves. If an echmerial is cornered, it uses its tail to slap an opponent. Human-sized creatures must make a DIFFICULT STR roll to stay on their feet if hit by the sweep of an echmerial's tail. Even at a full run, an echmerial may jink and use its tail to strike at a pursuer without breaking stride. More often than not, predators are knocked off their feet and lose valuable moments regaining their balance.

Echmerial skin is less than attractive: hairless, whitish and leathery, and constantly covered with a greasy film of sweat protecting it from sunburn and dehydration. Wild echmerial need a temperate cli-



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mate with at least some humidity, and quickly sicken in the desert, but there are several geneered strains that are hardier and able to survive in arid conditions.

On planets where echmerial are used, general stores carry a variety of protective equipment, ranging from blankets through environmental sandsuits to backpacks containing a miniature evaporator extracting moisture from the air, similar to those used in agriculture on arid worlds. Tribesmen often coat their animals with a herbal mixture that prevents loss of moisture through the skin before embarking on a longer journey.

Echmerial are gregarious and affectionate creatures with an intelligence akin to Terrestrial canines or cockatoos. It is easy to train them, and many riders teach their mounts to perform simple tricks such as counting to five, rolling over or fetching objects. In tribal societies, those tricks are the object of friendly competitions, as they demonstrate the bond of trust between warrior and mount. The echmerial's

intelligence makes it susceptible to boredom, and captive animals must be regularly exercised and entertained, or they quickly develop annoying quirks. Particularly idle animals may gnaw their own extremities or do mischief, and some even learn how to operate the bars on their pens when their keeper is not looking.

Even well-groomed echmerial often forget their training to satisfy their intense curiosity. It takes a trained rider to keep an echmerial's attention on task. On the positive side, their senses are very keen, and in the wilderness a good rider quickly learns to trust xir mount's intuition.

Depending on the availability of food, echmerial females may bear young from once a year to once every five years. The young are cared for by the entire herd, with even females that haven't borne young lactating and providing milk to cubs. A herd ranges from five to fifteen adult individuals, usually two or three males and a higher number of females. Males do not fight for mating rights but rather have

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Less Dangerous Game

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ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Echmerial	50	10m
SKILLS	Recon-2, Athletics(climbing)-2	
ATTACKS	Flee (6-); Attack (10+); Tail slap (3D)	
TRAITS	Large (+1)	
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore/Intermittent	
Morphology	Bilateral symmetry, hexapod (six long limbs used for locomotion)	
Biochemistry	C/H/O/N, broadly compatible with human mammalian	
Respiration	O ₂ -N ₂ inhalant; CO ₂ exhalant	
Ecology	Diurnal (active during the day)	
Habitat	Plains, grasslands, steppe, hills, mountains	
Diet and Trophics	Herbivore/intermittent, endothermic	
Reproduction	Two genders, little sexual dimorphism, conjugal intercourse, viviparous birth, iteroparous	
Lifecycle and ontogeny	One year to sexual maturity; lifespan 10-15 years	

contests of speed, zig-zagging blindly across the steppe. Injuries from falling down slopes are not uncommon, as are collisions with other animals in mid-run. Most domesticated echmerial are gelded except those kept for breeding purposes.

Incorial

The echmerial's smaller cousin shares its temperament and body structure. Incorial are about the size of a small cat and able to climb trees like geckos. They are insatiably curious, and often pilfer shiny objects, carrying them until they lose interest. Incorial are often encountered as a nuisance in forests or jungles, but are trained and kept as pets on some worlds. It is common to see a child with an incorial on xir shoulder, or a climbing habitat for the house pet in a middle-class home. Spacers are also fond of incorial, as they have simple nutritional needs, are intrigued rather than frightened by zero-gee, and enliven a spaceship with their curiosity and antics.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Incorial	10	10m
SKILLS	Recon-3, Athletics(climbing)-4, stealth-1	
ATTACKS	Flee (8-); Attack (10+); Tail slap (1D-2)	
TRAITS	Small (-1)	
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore/Intermittent	
Morphology	Bilateral symmetry, hexapod (six long limbs used for locomotion)	
Biochemistry	C/H/O/N, broadly compatible with human mammalian	
Respiration	O ₂ -N ₂ inhalant; CO ₂ exhalant	
Ecology	Diurnal (active during the day)	
Habitat	Forested areas, swamplands	
Diet and Trophics	Herbivore/intermittent, endothermic	
Reproduction	Two genders, little sexual dimorphism, conjugal intercourse, viviparous birth, iteroparous	
Lifecycle and ontogeny	One year to sexual maturity; lifespan 10-15 years	

Adventure Seeds

1. The travellers are invited to a grand tribal festival. As honoured guests, they are expected to participate in the great echmerial polo tournament. Their opponents are strong warriors who know their mounts in- and outward, but every one of them plays for his own glory. To counter the opponents' advantages, the travellers must work together as a team to score goals.
2. While the travellers are riding their echmerials across the mountainous landscape, one of the mounts behaves strangely. If given free rein, it will take its rider down a rocky crag. On the bottom, they discover the body of a prospector who died of an accident. The corpse still has an ID in its half-decayed jacket. They may wish to contact the family and inform them of their relative's fate. There is also a map, etched on strange metallic foil and inscribed with characters that look suspiciously like those on Droyne coyns.

(Continued on page 11)

Less Dangerous Game

(Continued from page 10)

3. As the travellers camp for the night on a large clearing, curious incorial are drawn to their equipment and try to steal a few pieces.
4. During the mating season, the travellers' ATV is hit by a running pair of male echmerial emerging from the tall grass. The vehicle is unharmed, but both animals are dazed and possibly hurt. The travellers note that one still has the remnants of a riding harness on its neck. What happened to its former master?
5. The travellers are hired to transport breeding echmerial to another planet in the hold of their ship, which is converted into a makeshift pen. The animals quickly become bored, and all hands are needed to entertain them. Even so, they appear fond of making mischief for its own sake, nibbling on cables or jumping up and down until the artificial gravity plates are knocked askew.
6. An old tribal chieftain approaches the travellers. He mourns the loss of his tribe's traditions since the Imperial settlers have been setting up their schools and hospitals. Now the cocky young braves of the tribes all ride grav bikes, and the arts of saddlemaking and echmerial training are becoming forgotten. He wants the travellers' help in organising a great festival, inviting both the settlers and the neighbouring tribes, showing tribal craftsmanship and the ancient arts of echmerial handling and riding, and in this way hopes to rekindle interest in the time-honoured ways of his tribe. While the festival is underway, the travellers notice that someone (a company selling grav bikes) is trying to sabotage the event at every turn.
7. A free trader ship is quarantined with the Snow Plague. Unfortunately, the captain's incorial pet got past the customs officers and is now at large in the highport. The authorities suspect it to be a carrier of the disease. The travellers may be drafted to search for the critter, they may take the search into their own hands (it's that or spending several weeks detained in port until someone else finds it), or have to stand by helplessly as a workcrew partially dismantles their ship in search of the pet. ❁

The Shipyard

Classic Traveller Designs

Horosha-Class (Type S) Scout/Courier

designed by Matt Frisbee

Overview

The *Horosha*-class starship is a TL B 100 d-ton Type-S Scout/Courier that is in the process of being phased out of IISS service. Commonly seen on the fringes of Imperial space, this vessel remains a workhorse of courier duties off the ends of the X-boat routes and into backwater regions and client states of the Imperium. In the Solomani end of the empire, it is a common surplus ship (along with the familiar and aging *Serpent* and *Suleiman* classes) "loaned out" to "retired" Scouts on detached duty.

The *Horosha* class is highly recognizable, if inelegant, for its mid-deck outrigger fuel tank modules, top-mounted airlock and chin-mounted weapons turret. However, this modular construction shaves a month off construction times and makes the ship easily modifiable for a variety of purposes. This versatility has kept the venerable design in demand and (civilianized) production throughout Imperial and Solomani space.

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The Shipyard

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Walkaround

Upper Deck

The forward part of the upper deck contains the bridge and avionics. Due to the heat put out by the older electronic components and subsystems at TL B, many ships in private service have been modified for additional life support ductwork to compensate. Those in IISS detached service typically use the utility outlets to rig up small fans to help keep cool. The hatch to the lower level provides quick access to the ship's single weapons turret, though it is a bit of an occupational hazard as it is invariably left open – often to help compensate with the heat buildup issues in the bridge. There is also a standard boarding hatch located in the starboard side of the compartment which includes a deployable ladder and emergency docking fittings, but no airlock facilities, requiring the evacuation of the bridge if it is necessary to use this hatch in anything other than standard atmosphere conditions.

Just aft of the bridge are the ship's locker to port and its standard Model-1*bis* computer to starboard. The open space between is often used by crewmembers to don and remove vacc suits for EVA.

The pass-through airlock is an unusual design feature of the class, a relic of the design's heritage before being adopted by the IISS, which mandated a streamlined vessel. These aging non-streamlined designs still see use by beltlers after being converted to seeker ships. The upward hatch is roomy and permits easy docking with orbital facilities, while presenting a bit of a challenge to those attempting to board vessels of this design by force – another feature that beltlers can appreciate.

Continuing aft, the central corridor passes between the upper sections of the ship's fuel tanks before entering the upper deck of the engineering section. The flooring here is a catwalk design, that has

pivoting floor sections to provide easier access to the drives and power plant for repairs and maintenance. Typically, the engineer monitors the drive and power plant operations from the aft-starboard station of the bridge, only going aft when repairs or adjustments are needed. The aft-starboard hatch in this section provides an egress of the craft in an emergency (though the Engineering section will lose atmospheric integrity if this hatch needs to be used in vacuum). The floor "hatch" is actually a ladder well to the lower deck, rather than being airtight, given the floor's construction.

Lower Deck and Outrigger Pods

At the front of the lower deck is the ship's chin-mounted weapons turret, which is typically a double beam laser arrangement, primarily due to a lack of computer capacity and magazine volume for missile racks. Seeker conversions swap out this standard armament for a single pulse laser turret. The conditions for the fire control station adjacent to the turret are similar to those of the bridge in regard to heat buildup, but under normal combat conditions, the gunner is usually in a vacc suit and the situation isn't as noticeable.

Aft of the turret is the ship's commons, the port side of which holds the ship's main boarding ramp for terrestrial landings. The ramp has a rolling door hatch that covers the opening and is airtight, but is not rated for vacuum, meaning the commons area would have to be decompressed before the ramp could be lowered under such conditions. The appointments of the commons area vary from ship to ship, but often a galley/food prep area is set up in the aft-starboard corner.

Continuing aft, the central corridor leads to the four staterooms for crew and passengers. These are

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The Shipyard

(Continued from page 12)

somewhat cramped by most standards – even more so when flying double-occupancy – but each stateroom has complete, albeit compact, facilities for comfort and convenience. With limited space for gray water tanks and septic systems, the ship employs ultrasonic sanitizer “showers” which can also be used for laundry and the cleaning of tools and cooking utensils.

The ramps that are aft of the staterooms ascend 1.5 meters to the “floor” level of the ship’s port and starboard outrigger pods. The port pod contains the ship’s small cargo hold, through which the ship’s fuel scoop and fuel processor equipment can be accessed for maintenance and repair. The hatch to the exterior is a boarding ramp with a telescoping extender that can be used for egress in terrestrial landings, allowing the compartment to serve as an airlock in vacuum environments. The rest of the pod is fuel tankage.

The starboard outrigger pod contains the ship’s air/raft garage. The hatch to the exterior is similar to the cargo hold ramp-style hatch on the port side, allowing another option for egress from the lower deck. The rest of the pod is fuel tankage.

Continuing aft, the central corridor passes between the lower sections of the ship’s fuel tankage and into the lower deck of the engineering section. The hatch on the aft-port hull provides emergency egress; as with the similar hatch on the upper level, it uses compromises Engineering’s atmospheric integrity.

Specifications

Using a 100-ton streamlined hull, the *Horosha*-class Scout Courier (Type S variant) is intended for exploration, survey, and courier duties, though most have been designated surplus and assigned to detached duty with “retired” Scouts. It mounts Jump Drive A, Maneuver Drive A, and Power Plant A,

giving performance of Jump 2 and 2G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 40 tons supports the power plant and one Jump-2. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model-1bis. There are four staterooms and no low berths. There is a single hardpoint and one ton allocated for fire control; ships of this class mount a double turret with two beam lasers. An air/raft is carried in a designated ‘garage’; the remaining three tons of space is allocated to cargo. The ship requires a crew of 1 (assuming the duties of both pilot and engineer), costs MCr31.539 (including fees and standard discounts), and takes 38 weeks to build.

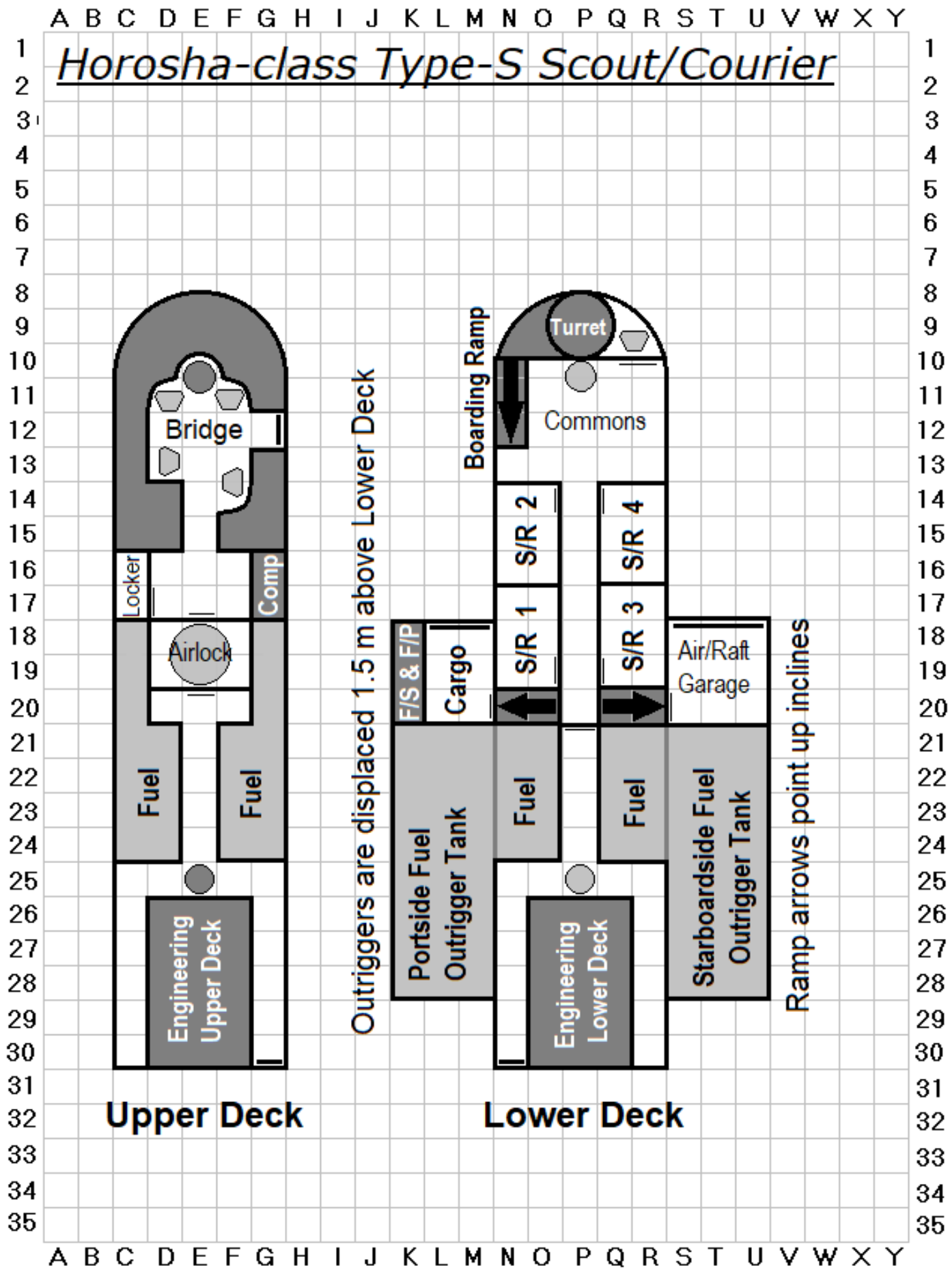
Note that most *Horosha*-class vessels encountered

<i>Horosha</i> -Class Scout (Type S, TL B)	Tonnage	Cost (MCr)
100 d-ton Standard Streamlined Hull (includes fuel scoop & fuel processor)	---	3.000
Jump Drive-A (Jump-2)	10.0	10.000
Maneuver Drive-A (2G acceleration)	1.0	4.000
Power Plant-A	4.0	8.000
Fuel Tankage (1 × J-2 and 4 wks operation)	40.0	---
Bridge and Avionics (standard)	20.0	0.500
Model/1bis Computer (Capacity 4/0)	1.0	4.000
4 Staterooms (@ MCr 0.500 each)	16.0	2.000
1 Hardpoint (with fire control allocation)	1.0	0.100
1 Double Turret		0.500
2 Beam Laser (@ MCr 1.000 each)		2.000
Air/Raft Garage (with vehicle)	4.0	0.600
Cargo Hold	3.0	---
Components Subtotal	100.0	34.700
Architects’ Fee		0.347
Base Cost		35.047
Mass Production Discount (-10%)		-3.508
Final Cost		31.539

with have considerable flight hours on them and can be had for 40% to 60% of the new price $\{[(1D/2) + 3] \times 10\%\}$. If it is one of the venerable non-streamlined models, the asking price is typically 20% to 40% of the new price for a streamlined version $\{[(1D/2) + 1] \times 10\%\}$.

(Deck plans for the *Horosha* are on the next page)

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Tansaki-class Type-J Seeker

This is the “official” conversion of the *Horosha*-class starship that actually can be constructed new at most orbital construction facilities. The ship’s layout is essentially the same; the following changes have been made:

The ship’s hull is not streamlined. It retains a modified fuel scoop/fuel processor assembly, as most beltlers use ice planetoids, planetary ring systems and comets for fuel instead of skimming. Mined ice is placed in the modified auger feed for crushing and processing for fuel.

The ship’s double turret and beam lasers are replaced with a single turret and equipped with a mining laser (pulse laser).

The aft ten d-tons of fuel tankage in each outrigger pod is removed for ore bays. One of the main drawbacks of this configuration is that the ore bays are only accessible from the exterior of the ship. The reduction in fuel tankage means the ship can only manage jump-1 in that configuration. The ship does have standard fuel bladders that fit inside the empty ore bays to allow jump-2 operation, or for extended flights in-system to distant planetoids. Access to the ore bays is through the ramp-style hatches at their aft ends.

Specifications

Using a 100-ton hull, the *Tansaki*-class Seeker (Type J variant) is intended for prospecting and mining in planetoid belts and ring systems. It mounts Jump Drive A, Maneuver Drive A, and Power Plant A, giving performance of Jump 1 (due to limited fuel capacity) and 2G acceleration. Fuel tankage of 20 tons supports the power plant and one Jump-1; an additional 20 tons of space is allocated to ore bays, but may also be fitted with collapsible bladders to extend the ship’s range to Jump-2. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model-1bis. There are four staterooms and no low berths. There

is a single hardpoint and one ton allocated for fire control; a single turret with a pulse laser is mounted, principally for mining. An air/raft is carried in a designated ‘garage’; the remaining three tons of space is allocated to miscellaneous cargo. The ship requires a crew of 1 (assuming the duties of both pilot and engineer), costs MCr28.997 (including fees and standard discounts), and takes 38 weeks to build. 🌟

(Deck plans for the *Tansaki* are on the next page.)

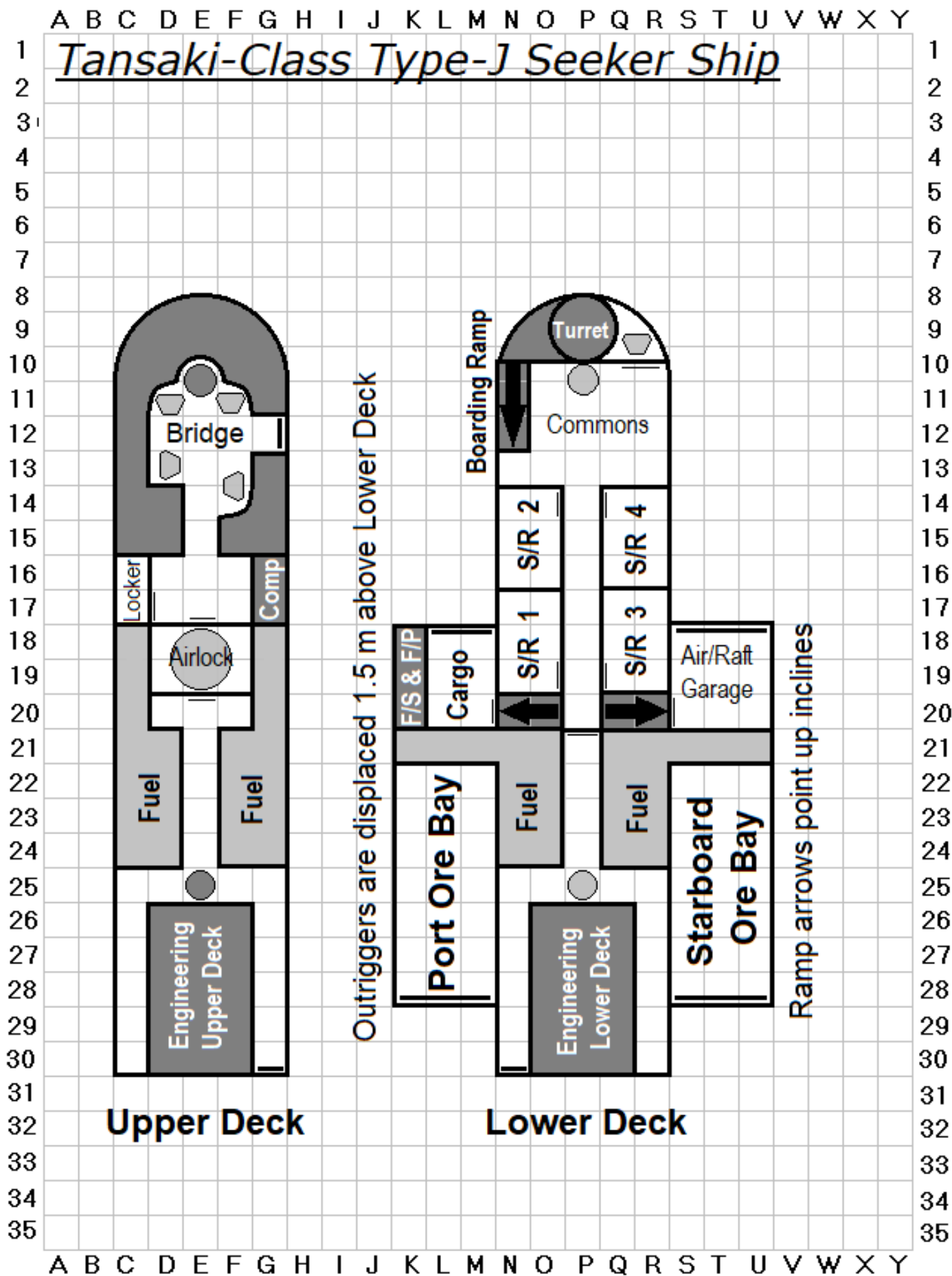
Tansaki-Class Seeker (Type J, TL B)	Tonnage	Cost (MCr)
100 d-ton Standard Hull (includes ice auger & fuel processor)	---	2.000
Jump Drive-A (Jump-1 in this configuration)	10.0	10.000
Maneuver Drive-A (2G acceleration)	1.0	4.000
Power Plant-A	4.0	8.000
Fuel Tankage (1 × J-1 and 4wks operation)	20.0	---
Bridge and Avionics (standard)	20.0	0.500
Model-1bis Computer (Capacity 4/0)	1.0	4.000
4 Staterooms (@ MCr 0.500 each)	16.0	2.000
1 Hardpoint (with fire control allocation)	1.0	0.100
1 Single Turret		0.200
1 Mining Laser (pulse laser)		0.500
Air/Raft Garage (with vehicle)	4.0	0.600
2 Ore Bays (@ 10 d-tons each)	20.0	---
Cargo Hold	3.0	---
Components Subtotal	100.0	31.900
Architects’ Fee		0.319
Base Cost		32.219
Mass Production Discount (-10%)		-3.222
Final Cost		28.997

Your Input Helps

Freelance Traveller is always looking for new material to include. Please email us with submissions and ideas at the main editorial address, editor@freelancetraveller.com.

Size matters to us, not to you. Concentrate on making your article the best it can be. We’ll offer suggestions that we think can fill gaps or improve an article; please take them in the spirit intended—we’re *not* saying your writing is bad; we just want *Freelance Traveller* to be the best it can be, too! 🌟

The Shipyard



Manhunters: Bounty Hunters in Clement Sector

reviewed by Steve Attwood

Manhunters: Bounty Hunters in Clement Sector. John Watts.
Gypsy Knights Games <http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com>
94pp., Softcover and PDF
US\$22.99(S+P)\$9.99(P only)/UK£17.26(S+P)£7.50(P only)

This review was originally posted to <https://alegisdownport.wordpress.com/> in May 2018

Manhunter: Bounty Hunters in Clement Sector is one of the new releases from Gypsy Knights Games. The material is compatible with the *Clement Sector* rules set or *Cepheus Engine* rules and could be adapted for other 2D6 SF RPG rule sets.

The bounty hunter is one of the more popular types of character that many gamers like to play; sometimes mysterious, usually tough and grizzled and always relentless; it's easy to see why they are well liked as either player characters or NPCs. It would be remiss not to mention some of the more famous hunters from fiction such as Boba Fett from *Star Wars* and Deckard in *Blade Runner*. Io9 has an article on ten of the coolest in science-fiction, at <https://io9.gizmodo.com/5798807/10-coolest-bounty-hunters-in-the-galaxy>

There are also those from (real) history such as Thomas Tate Tobin who tracked his three targets and brought back their severed heads after refusing the help from a 15-strong militia: <https://www.history.co.uk/article/5-famous-bounty-hunters>

So how does GKG expand on the 'standard' bounty hunter character from the rules book? The author, John Watts, delves in with a couple of pages of narrative 'Another Day on Chance' which describes the setting up of a deal between a bounty hunter and client. After an illustration depicting the deal by Bradley Warnes, you are introduced to what makes a manhunter in the Clement Sector. The next five pages break the eight types of manhunter down to the particular specialisms they are known for.



- **(Traditional) bounty hunters** are usually independents who wait for a monetary bounty to be posted by, e.g., a government or corporation) for the capture or death of a criminal.
- **Bail enforcement agents** will track down accused persons that have jumped bail and return them to the law enforcement officials of the government that they have run away from.
- **Thieftakers** offer their services directly to a victim of crime, where law enforcement does not appear to obtain justice.
- **Repossession agents** will recover property for which payments have not been made in a timely manner.
- **Altrant/Uplift hunters** are repossession agents working for someone or organisation that consider altrants or uplifts as property.
- **Skiptracers** will search for databases and records in order to locate a fugitive or item of property.

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- **Debt collectors** recover funds lost to a person who has promised to pay those funds but has left the area where the organisation can legally recover those funds.
- **Marshals** are specialised law enforcement agents tasked with the arrest and recovery of fugitives. The marshals' remit may encompass many of the other types of 'bounty hunting' but only within the scope of what is legal.

Because the many worlds in the Clement Sector have different laws and views on what is or isn't allowed, the next twenty-six pages describe in great detail the various worlds of the Hub, Cascadia, Franklin, Sequoyah and Colonies subsectors. This could get heavy going as there is a lot of text to go through (which is broken up with very fine images by Bradley Warnes) but John Watts has made the reading easy-going and engaging. Don't expect to be able to leave one world where anything goes and stride into the bar of another world pointing your gun at your quarry and expect to get away with it. There are many nuances; it's not just laws and governments, but many corporations have the say in a geographic area and their views take precedence. For example, the Blaylock Mining Corporation believes that if they hire anyone, their employee is free of any legal problems that they have incurred on other worlds and they will not allow anyone to bring harm to one of their employees. What is considered as slavery on world, would be perfectly acceptable for a hunter to try and bring back an altrant on the run – dead or alive.

To help expand on the background of the eight character variations, the next thirty-four pages break down the variations between the careers and describe their respective specialisms. For example, Skiptracers have variant careers such as Investigators (on the ground investigations) or Researchers (office-based research and searches). Each variant career has a skills breakdown which are slightly

different, plus the usual ranks and benefits, mishaps and events tables.

The next eleven pages help the referee to work out the various types of bounties, bail, debt, thieftaking and property recovery costs. It provides a good structured way of calculating how much a hunter could receive for a job, influenced by various factors. At least this way, you have a consistent approach for costing out jobs. I'm glad to see that the book has taken a look at this as it helps to build the 'background' to the careers and the legal basis (if any) for the types of job taken.

To help round off the book, you get four NPC manhunters of the Clement Sector (Seth Grinder looks like someone you definitely wouldn't mess with!) and some background on a couple organisations.

I've been looking forward to reading this book for some time and I haven't been disappointed. Though the book is priced in a slightly higher-price bracket than some other GKG supplements, you get a lot of source material in just under a hundred pages. This is a cracking read and I like that the book doesn't just cover generating careers, but also the mechanics of bounty hunting and the logistics (who will allow what and where) within the Clement Sector. Another very fine product from the GKG stable and most definitely worth picking up! I would like to thank very much John Watts for sending me a copy of 'Manhunter' to review. 🌟

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/2vhyXt2>) (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! 🌟

After Action Report: TravCon 2018

by Timothy Collinson

Traveller is all about adventures of course. And in the UK, TravCon is the best place to experience a lot of excellence in one action packed weekend. Darian special arm forces investigating old AIs, quiet monks having their peace shattered by bloodthirsty Vargr, a dodgy crew scamming rich socialites – and lots more.

The Adventure



The first fall of snow before more of the white stuff caused a complete white out.

This year just getting to Redwings near Sawtry in Cambridgeshire for our annual get together was an adventure. “The Beast from the East” roared in at just the wrong time. Bitter winds, “red warning” snow, and a large drop in temperature meant that parts of the UK were ‘no travel’ areas and others were hazardous. The news reported people stranded in cars on motorways for 17 hours or stuck on freezing trains overnight. Those of us travelling any kind of distance were swapping emails that were beginning to look like equipment lists for PCs given Central Supply Catalogue prior to a convention scenario and told to tool up. Shovels, blankets, sleeping bags, cold weather gear, thermal underwear, torches, food and drink... cars were looking like arctic expedition vehicles and 4x4s were jealously regarded.

And life, too, can be its own adventure. Sometimes heroically so. I was being given a lift as usual but this year by my regular driver who deserves a Starburst for Extreme Heroism all of his/her own. Tess, as she is now, several months into hormone therapy, had been making courageous decisions since we last met that are life changing. Up for the challenge of just getting there, Tess was also facing the challenge of how she might be received in a nearly all male environment where good-natured humour might possibly be insensitive. I’d assured her last year however, that I firmly believed her reception would be none other than warm welcome that’s marked TravCon’s atmosphere for the ten years, now, that I’ve been attending. I’m pleased to report I wasn’t wrong.

Knowing that more snow was promised for the afternoon we managed to arrive several hours later just after the whitestuff had begun coming down again. Once again successful Piloting and Navigation rolls were made. We were happy now if we were snowed in for several days of gaming goodness. Unfortunately, however, the weather meant that there were a few who couldn’t make it and so for a second year running the long-heralded Richard Talbot gas giant warfare game some of us had been looking forward to would have to be postponed. We will just have to save our u-boat commander accents for another time.

The People

For those that had made it, however, it was good to see familiar faces once again and also some new travellers ready to experience the eleventh year of the convention at this venue. My work colleague Jane P was back for a third year determined as ever to swat a chirper, and in a surprise last minute move another work colleague David B had also decided to give it a go. The University of Portsmouth Library

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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 19)

now very well represented with three of us and my bimonthly running of *The Traveller Adventure* now represented at TravCon by no less than four of us! We'll work on the others for another year...

Derrick J was back with lashings of beer to buy – although this would be the last year from the brewery that's produced Scout Brew, Aledon Pale and Lift Infantry Light, etc., as they're changing ownership. Nothing remains the same for ever and the world moves on. Andy L, organizing yet another brilliant convention, is even thinking of changing the date of TravCon for the future to avoid weather difficulties – although this year was exceptional. Dom M, the voice of @BITS_Traveller, was back and it was good to see him again even if I couldn't play in his cool sounding game.

Nick W was there and champing at the bit when he saw another change for TravCon. Encouraged by the reception of a New Year *Traveller* quiz I posted to TML a couple of months ago, I had offered to run an 'after hours' quiz at the con Friday and Saturday night. Nick's knowledge of *Traveller* minutia is right up there with the very best and he was keen to take on all comers.

Steve E had found a train that wasn't cancelled to join us again and we could swap notes on which of his adventures I should be lining up to publish next with March Harrier Publishing. It's invidious to start mentioning individuals and I wish I could give a shout out to everyone there. It's the people that really make the convention and hearing their real life adventures, or reminiscing over past *Traveller* adventures, or sharing a joke together, or competing over 'my snow/ice/cold problems were worse than yours', is as much what draws us back each year as the rolling of dice, plotting routes on maps, planning heists/attacks/rescues, shooting things up or perhaps even daring to speak in character.

Meanwhile, Andy was already cutting up the planned programme and shifting things round as he worked out who had and hadn't made it to Redwings Lodge. His scissor work and gluing is becoming an artform in its own right. And talking of mugs, the conference freebie this year was a very attractive pair of enamel drinking vessels with pictures taken from the covers of BITS books (*Delta 3 is Down* and *In Search of Angels*, for those tracking such things)



The 2018 TravCon freebies—enamel cups.

and +DMs for piloting and engineering rolls if in use at the appropriate time. (And yes, we continued to badger Andy about getting *In Search of Angels* published to a wider audience.) The customary gift duly admired and coed over, as is also traditional, an Indian meal at Spiceland was duly consumed. Fortunately, given the appalling weather conditions, the place is right next door and we could button up for the short tramp. Then it was into the first session.

Having decided I would take a seventh year sabbatical from running an adventure this year, I'd taken along the brand new *Traveller Customizable Card Game* (<https://www.travellerccg.com/>). As a long anticipated Kickstarter it had finally delivered just a fortnight before. I was still getting used to the rules – as the whole genre of customizable card games is new to me it was quite a steep learning curve – and I

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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 20)

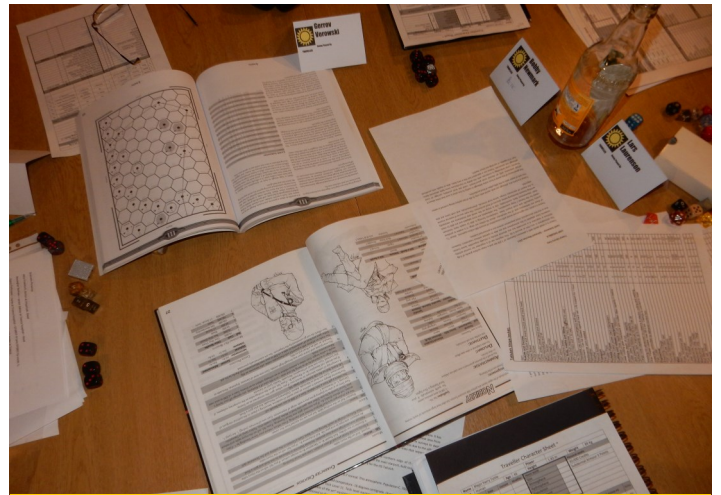


The Traveller Collectible Card Game.
Neil is checking the rules, not falling asleep!

thought it might make a useful filler for the two or three slots I wasn't offering to fill with an adventure as in previous years. Four people were willing to give it a go with me guiding them, as best I could, through the various phases and after a slow start we were fairly cracking through the turns towards the end and produced a winner in my colleague Jane who'd been quietly managing her contracts and complications with some diligence. Elsewhere Robin F was running the board game *Imperium*, Steve Q was running "A Nasty Cold" in which the crew of the Imperial Rescue Ship *Talullah* are scrambled for a medical emergency and Roger S was offering



Robin F running *Imperium*



Books, beer and polyhedral get us through the night.
This from Steve Q's appropriately titled "A Nasty Cold"

"Prelude to Continuation" with traders trying to make a living in the tensions between the Zhodani Consulate and Imperium.



Roger S running "Prelude to Continuation"

The Quiz

The quiz was an interesting experience. Scheduled to start after the evening slot finished at 11pm I knew it was going to be a late night. But Andy had firmly banned me from 6 hours of questions. I threw out more than I brought with me. The plan was that we do half the ten rounds on the Friday evening and if there was any interest, the other half on Saturday night. I still wasn't sure if it wouldn't just be Nick and I sitting in the corner of the bar by ourselves or

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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 21)

if the questions would prove ridiculously hard even though I tried to make sure they weren't too difficult but with one or two really hard ones each round to provide a challenge. I'd also tried to create a balance between straight question and answers, match this list to that list, ID the book cover or ship picture, and so on.

As it turned out, some twenty or so people played in 6 teams all told (there was a team that only played the first night, and a team that only played the second night) and it was a rambunctious affair at best. I should have expected nothing less. Teams really got into creating their jokers to play on a round they thought they might do well out and took great delight (as I had expected) in nit-picking some of the questions or answers or both and even the marking. Rivalries were breaking out between teams trying to outdo each other's knowledge and there was lots of showing off (and demands for bonus points) as some would give detailed answers far beyond anything necessary for the standard two points per question. In short, I think I pitched it about right and it was a great success. Exhausting though... herding cats till one the morning. I couldn't have done it without the able and calming assistance of Jane who I don't think quite knew what she'd let herself in for!

Sleep, as usual, was all too short although I believe there were others that were busy making use of the all night bar facility and after a bleary breakfast it was time for the morning games. Usually I'm torn between wanting to be in all five places at once but this choice was easy. David B, my work colleague, was running "All's Fair in Love and War". I was most curious. Although he referees DnD, David is brand new to *Traveller*. His entire experience consists of joining us the last couple of times in the pub for *The Traveller Adventure* and then a couple of weeks ago grabbing the Mongoose rules off the shelves in the Library where we have a copy for our

game designers. I had no idea he was planning on running a game and wanted to see what it was like, how he refereed, and generally be supportive to a TravCon first timer.

The Debut

David was also facing the additional challenge that, having been a late booking, all his gear and his adventure was a hotel a few miles away that he couldn't get to thanks to the snow. He'd been given one of the empty rooms at Redwings overnight but was now rooting around quickly on the internet to find his character sheets, map and so on and relieved that Andy always brings a printer to the convention for just such contingencies. However, if I was concerned about how it would go, those fears were quickly retreating in the face of a fascinating scenario in which I was playing a 54 year army general who has gathered a motley crew around her intent on scamming rich socialites to pay the bills. With some nice bits of tech and some excellent NPC depiction, he soon had us chatting up sycophants, fat sweating colonels, sleek business types, ladies with lapdogs and persuading them that the *in* thing this season would be a trip on our (hugely over crowded) Scout ship and The Game that we were offering to a very select few. For a lot of money of



David B's excellent *Traveller* debut, "All's Fair in Love and War"

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course. Little did they know they'd be crammed into a tiny cabin, drugged for the duration of Jump and fleeced of every Credit from their accounts that we could wangle.

Ravi, playing a gorgeous seductress had some great lines. As he/she pretends to wake up beside the colonel to pump him for information as he comes out of his drug induced coma: "What setting is your phaser set to? That was stunning?" He also turned to Anne, Andy's daughter who is now at University – my, doesn't time fly! – and asked for any seduction techniques she might have. I think most of us round the table were cringing at the spot he was putting her in. But quick as a flash she came back with "Roll high!" which had us all in stitches.



Steve E goes dice-light with "In the Name of the Dawn"

Clearly a university education teaches you something. Or perhaps it's having grown up with TravCon each year... she and I still fondly remember jointly winning a Starburst for Extreme Heroism a few years back when Anne played Princess Iphigenia to my Emperor Strephon in Stephen J. Ellis' marvellous "The Eve of Rebellion".

In short, David had produced a very creditable scenario that felt very *Traveller*, gave the players interesting characters and opportunities, and was a riot from beginning to end with the likes of Pete, Ravi, Nick, M and Gary round the table. I could only



Jane P helps find "The Lost Ships"

admire the courage and skills on show from the referee. I attended TravCon for three years before I plucked up the courage to run something on my fourth year and with way more stress and overpreparation than David was exhibiting! I have a lot to learn still.

Meanwhile, "A Nasty Cold" was getting a second outing – clearly it was viral – and Bob P was running "The Lost Ships" in which an experienced ex-military team were being sent into a Red Zone to find two missing scout ships and their commander. The seriousness of the situation could be seen in the warning to "clean up your battledress, you could need it". Steve E was running another of his well-



"A Nasty Cold" was clearly viral

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received dice-lite games, “In the Name of the Dawn” – more of which later.

The Chirpers Return

After lunch I had the opportunity to revisit the Chirpers. I'd missed them last year because I only played in two games and had been really keen to try James F's terrific high-concept adventure “A Long and Sleepless Night” (see *Face Off!* in last year's TravCon After Action Report, *Freelance Traveller*, May/June 2017, p54). The chirpers were back for their Nth outing in a continuing story that Andy, refereeing as usual, recapped for us in “True Potential”. Once again, the high-pitched voices and chirping were a backdrop to some not-very-bright goings on as the diminutive rubbish collectors got involved in finding, following and liberating an Ancient bowl that was the centre of attention. Food-obsessed as we often were, we saw it as an excellent cereal bowl which became a running joke. Once again, Andy was attempting to keep us on track (“there's a track?") with varying degrees of success as the Suck It Up employees caused their usual mayhem. Andy and his wife Sarah, ably supporting the whole enterprise as usual – or perhaps the *éminence grise* – are to be commended on the imaginative continuation of something that could be a one-note wonder becom-



“True Potential” was the latest installment of the TravCon Chirper Saga

ing an interlinked series that's interesting in its own right, hysterical to play, and now almost as much a fixture of TravCon as curry on the first night and the Sunday afternoon auction.



James F's “Top Laser”—the mirrorshades are mandatory!

Also playing in other rooms was James F's “Top Laser” – an elite school for Navy pilots; Mark P's “Shakedown” in which a crew is conducting trials on a new Imperial Rescue Service Ship including a refuelling stop on a backwater world; and “Love's Labour's Lost” led by Nigel F. This involved a Darrian special arm team going to an interdicted world where two AI war robots have been battling it out for 2000 years. The AIs had fallen in love and want-



Mark P captains the crew testing a new ship on its “Shakedown” cruise

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A robot may not harm a human being, but, apparently, may fall in love, in "Love's Labour's Lost"

ed command codes for a cease fire. Apparently the players had fun debating the laws of robotics and what had to change. It certainly sounds like a game I would have loved.

The Dream PC

After another bite to eat there was again too much choice but I couldn't resist the draw of Steve E offering an adventure that I knew had been inspired by my own "See How They Run" last year. Not only that but it was set in a monastery which sounded intriguing. Twice I've spent five days in a monastery, so I was more than curious to see what Steve



Steve E's "In the Name of the Dawn" featured a Shakespeare-quoting Aslan, a beekeeper, and the author's character, a librarian monk.

would do with one set on Dawnworld in District 268 with no other population. But it was even better when I finally sat down at the table and the character sheets were being handed out. One of the PCs was a librarian monk! Well, it was of course rather a stretch for me to role play such a PC, but it had to be done. Feeling increasingly frail and elderly myself, I could ham up the doddering and squinting over my glasses until Steve suggested I was playing a 92-year-old monk, not a 62-year-old monk. Meanwhile, I'm not quite sure he knew what he was letting himself in for as I asked for a run down on the various sections of the library, what books we had, how old they were, whether any were proscribed or rare books, and so on. To give him his due, he had answers and he and the other players were very patient for a few minutes while I got it out of my system. Other monks had their own obsessions – and secrets too! One was an apparently mild-mannered beekeeper we eventually discovered had once been the leader of a pirate gang but who was now on the path of repentance; another was a 7ft Aslan – with tonsure in his mane! – who was always quoting Shakespeare; and our cook was a criminal and spy on the run and hiding out in his habit. I won't spoil the plot – hopefully March Harrier can publish this at some point – but there was a gem of a moment when the beekeeper discovered a ferex had got into his beehives, pawed a hole in one of them and killed several of the bees. Ravi, playing the Aslan, was quick as lightning as he came across the scene and heard what had happened. "Two bees, or not two bees?" Maybe you had to be there, but I nearly choked to death.

Steve Q and "Strange Goings on Station 22", Dom M and "Plausible Deniability", Ravi S and "The Big Job", Robin F and "A Local Situation". The latter, I'm told, had an Imperial cadre and the Efate regulars peacekeeping in Efate in the run up to the Fifth Frontier War. They turned on each other and the insurgents.

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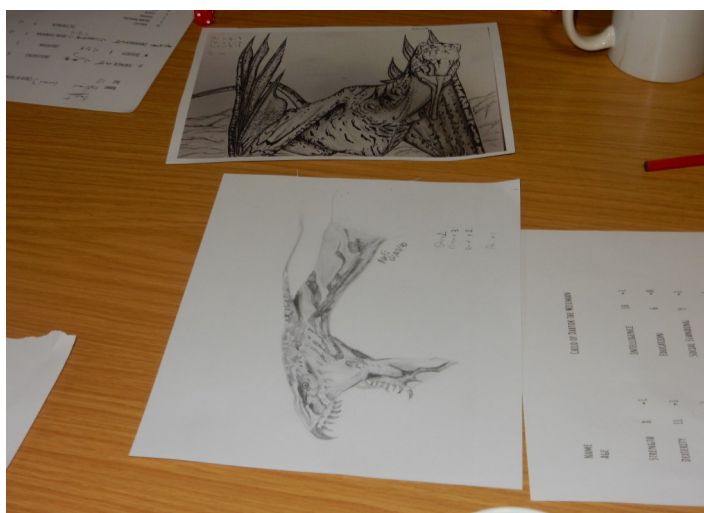
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More Quizzing

Utterly exhausted, I would have happily gone to bed, but come 11.30 I still had 90+ minutes of adrenalin to run on as we ran the second half of the quiz. More *Traveller* questions, ship identification (some showed off by giving tonnages as well as name or type), and a really hard Skill Level 3 round soon had some head scratching. Everyone voted for their favourite jokers – and more points – we totted up the scores and declared a winner. The only downside for me was that too much fun was had I think there were those that were hoping this might be an annual thing. Noooo! Maybe again in 7 years...

Sunday morning usually allows more of a lie in but the slot had been brought forward a bit so the auction and awards could be earlier and everyone could get on the road a bit sooner. Although the weather was warming, the snow melting fast and things looking better where we were, it was still snowing further north and some had long miles to cover.



James F brings dragons back to TravCon in "A Long and Sleepless Night II"

I was again really torn. James F was running "A Long and Sleepless Night II" – a sequel to last year's wonderful adventure. I would have loved to have had another go flying an *Avatar*-like 'dragon' and

fighting the monstrous trasks he had this time round – creatures as big as large buildings and almost impossible to kill it sound like. However, I've long wanted to play one of the grand miniatures games that often goes on. Usually they're in high demand and I don't get much of a look in at sign up time. Not helped by the fact that war gaming isn't really my cup of tea and I thought I might hate it – or at least find it hard going after several hours. So perhaps I don't push through the crowd very hard to get in first. But for some reason, other games were drawing the attention of the assembled players and there were three empty slots in front of me when I got to the sheets. I'm often willing to stretch myself and try something new. I'm very glad I did.

The Battle Royale



The terrain and miniatures of "Aces & Eights" were something to behold.

Simon B had set up a stunning terrain with fabulous miniatures and great painting. It was a work of art before we'd even started and it only got better as more vehicles and figures arrived on the scene. Called "Aces & Eights" – inspired by the first scenario in *Adventure 8: Broadsword* with the name taken from the mercenary company in the JTAS #14 Amber Zone of the same name – it saw Jane P, Robin F and I taking on the role of mercenaries trying to quell an element of the Tanoose Freedom League in

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their village base. Robin was the only one with any experience of this kind of game so we were rather banking on him to provide strategic and tactical expertise. The game used *Stargrunt II* rules for anyone that's interested and Simon quickly worked out that he could take nothing for granted with such newbies. "What size is a squad?" "d10? That's the green one, isn't it?"



Close-up views of "Aces & Eights".
The detail is exquisite.



I must say that along with his artistry with the miniatures, his ability to switch into a mode of explaining everything that was necessary, not going into detail which would simply confuse, and giving us interesting and significant decisions to make – without telling us what we should do, was an abso-

lute marvel to behold. He engaged us from the very outset, kept things moving and ran a scenario which was challenging for us but not impossible and hid the mechanics from us so we could concentrate on the decision making and shooting things. Well, I say shooting things... we were each controlling a squad, two of humans with an APC for each squad, and one of Vargr with an air/raft. I'd chosen the latter and was making a right hash of it. Because the air/raft could only take four of the 8 Vargr at a time I'd made the mistake of delivering half my squad to some woodland with the aim of taking out a vehicle mounted gun we thought was there. I should have immediately gone back for the other half of the squad but with some vague idea of helping out with air superiority or something ended up getting into trouble from an elite group of the enemy who damaged the air/raft and had me spiralling out of control for what felt like ages and completely ineffective. Meanwhile, Robin and Jane were making good use of their APCs and were barrelling into the village like they meant business. Unfortunately, Robin was soon pinned down and just about holding his own, leaving Jane to become the mainstay of our attack. And brilliant work she was making of that. Taking out the enemy facing her, sending enough fire in the direction of the lot that were just about to wipe out half my squad to keep me alive and generally making some of us look like rank amateurs – which admittedly I was.

Of course, it was difficult to do on her own and the TFL were soon fighting back and at one point looked like they might repel us before tea break... and this gaming slot was supposed to go on until well after lunch. Simon's clear tactical superiority was likely to make short work of us. Three and half hours in (perhaps half an hour of game time) and I hadn't managed to fire a shot, thanks to moving around in the trees, being "suppressed" (see, I have learned some jargon) and generally being pretty use-

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less. My squad was split, half weren't even on the table yet, the half with the gauss rifle amongst other things had done nothing but spiral out of control – literally and metaphorically. Two of my plasma rifleman were dead. On the upside, at least I felt like I was role-playing Vargr well as the surviving two and pilot bickered and blamed each other and generally swore very inventively in Gvegh over the comms channels. If only we'd actually been role playing instead of war gaming!



Contemplating an incipient disaster (?)

Robin had his head in his hands in despair, I was wondering if some suicide run wouldn't be the best thing I could do for my side, Simon's eyes were glinting with the anticipation of an easy and early victory. But Jane was still there, firing away, killing bad guys like there was no tomorrow and effectively using the cover we'd been told was critically important at the start. The tide, very slowly, began to turn. With little else to do I'd been trying to encourage Jane's 'Squad B' every time they had a small success. But the small successes were beginning to mount up. Squad B was now being referred to as Squad A while the useless brigade cheered from the sidelines. An enemy squad was broken, Robin managed to take out a nasty-looking truck-mounted heavy autocannon and Jane moved through some poorly trained militia like a hot knife through butter. Forget the air/raft, I'd managed to run the other half

of my squad into a position where they could start moving towards a gun position on a hill which had been calling in mortar fire that was giving us some difficulty.

Suddenly things weren't looking quite so good for the so-called Freedom League as some green troops were taking such a battering from their sustained fight with Jane's squad that they finally turned and ran for the hills. Jane was also delivering some withering suppressing fire into the elite troops I was facing which allowed me to get away. She was now commanding Squad A*. OK, so now was my chance to get my squad back together. But I was playing Vargr – who still hadn't fired a shot. I'd had another idea and thought maybe the gauss gunner and plasma rifleman I had left could more usefully take out the mortar team rather than join their brethren who were mopping up another broken squad. Quick hop over to the mortar pit and finally I got to fire one of my weapons. The gauss rifle fired four times and all four enemy in the pit were dead. Wow! Success at last! That made up for a lot.

Eliding over a fair bit more of Jane – now looking as if she's been playing this for years and telling all the bystanders who've gathered round the table what dice she's rolling and why – dealing hot lead-ed nastiness to the elite troops, we feel as if the wind is behind us. By this stage, Robin sees some figures rush out of a central building and jump into an armoured car. His APC, damaged as it is, is able to bring its gun to bear and wreck their vehicle. We soon have four commanders surrendering to us. Total loss on our side: one APC ("but that's coming out of my pay" wails Jane) and my two gauss gunners. "Well, they're only Vargr," someone cruelly comments.

Clearly, I've been missing out across the last decade by always going the role playing route, and although I don't think I'd want to make a habit of it, I had a great time and thoroughly enjoyed watching

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The dice tower used in "Aces & Eights" inspired Jane P to make her own.

Simon's excellence at so many levels. I've no idea how 'easy' he went on us – I suspect it could have been a lot harder, and I don't think we were playing every little rule in the *Stargrunt* book – but Simon certainly knows how to put on a good show.

On a side note, new to both Jane and I during this game was the use of dice tower. We were quite taken with them, having both spent enough time scrabbling round on sticky pub floors retrieving dice. Jane's craft ability came into its own the week after TravCon when she designed and built her own – I'll see if I can get her do a write up and photos.

The Wrap

All too soon, TravCon is coming to an end. We wait a year for all the fun and excitement and then it whips past like a milepost beside an intercity train-line. But there is life's ongoing adventure to get back to and so Andy wraps up with the awards and the auction. Help for Heroes is our usual charity and once again attendees are generous in their bidding and buying. The beer is snapped up, a copy of "In Search of Angels" is offered – there's only 4 more in existence, and even my quiz makes a couple of bob. The Starburst for Extreme Heroism (right) goes to Neil for "Big Daddy's gallant sacrifice" and for the first time in four years the Ping F***-It! Award goes



Jane P gets the PING! F*** it!

to someone other than myself. Phew! Jane P, we hear, managed to shoot her work colleague in the back (above). Apparently this was accidental but these things happen, heh? Onwards to the next adventure... safe travelling. 🌟



Neil gets the Starburst for Extreme Heroism

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 fluent speaker of a language other than English, and interested in translating into that language for us, please email the editor at editor@freelancetraveller.com 🌟

Jottings #5: Sumptuary Laws and Customs

by Jeff Zeitlin

Sumptuary laws were originally enacted ostensibly to control excessive conspicuous consumption, but they eventually morphed into a tool of social control and enforcement of social stratification. Over time, many habits of dress that were originally imposed from without via sumptuary laws became self-imposed sumptuary customs. A good start on researching the topic would be Wikipedia, “Sumptuary Law” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumptuary_Law).

Some historical—or at least pseudo-historical—sumptuary laws that could be justified under the “conspicuous consumption” rubric include:

- In Rome, only the Emperor could wear a cloak or toga of Tyrian purple, and only Roman Senators could wear togas with a Tyrian purple stripe. This was ostensibly because of the great cost of the murex dye. Tyrian purple was also restricted in other places and times, for the same reason.
- In various parts of Europe at various times, the following items of dress were restricted to royalty or nobility:
 - ⇒ Lace
 - ⇒ Cutwork
 - ⇒ Embroidery
 - ⇒ Cloth-of-gold or cloth-of-silver
 - ⇒ Garments sewn with gold or silver thread
 - ⇒ Garments or outfits of greater than a specified number of colors
 - ⇒ Garments of silk or other fine cloth

As a tool of social control/stratification, the following historical and pseudo-historical sumptuary laws have been mentioned:

- Jews or Moslems were often compelled to wear distinctive badges or dress, which may have in-

cluded such articles as hats, robes or coats, or footgear; sometimes the men were forbidden to shave. Recent (post-Renaissance Eastern European) examples of this type of sumptuary law imposed against Jews has become something of a sumptuary custom among the most orthodox communities, including the various Hasidic communities in the New York metroplex and the Haredi in Israel.

- Courtesans in the Venetian Republic—generally in Venice itself—were ostensibly required to wear red shoes (and no self-respecting woman not in that profession would be caught dead in such). Other compulsory articles of clothing for courtesans could be found at other times and places.

Some communities with Calvinist or Mennonite origins, because of their religious views on personal vanity or “distractions” from faith, have self-imposed sumptuary customs. The best-known among these are the Amish communities (Mennonite origins) of southeastern Pennsylvania in the United States, who rarely wear clothing not of black or white (and the white is usually that of unbleached and undyed cloth), and eschew most use of most technology beyond about the late 18th/early 19th century. The Puritans (Calvinist origins) of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were similarly austere of dress, though there is no indication of opposition to then-extant technology.

Fiction portrayals of some exclusive groups have suggested that being able to afford ‘bespoke’ clothing, of the ‘correct’ pattern and material, made by specific and exclusive tailors, can be a signal that one is properly a member of said exclusive group. Of course, you may have to be invited to visit the specific and exclusive tailor, or be brought to the shop by someone already a member of the group...

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The Prep Room

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While the best-known examples of sumptuary law involve dress, this was not the only area in which such laws were applied:

- Chinese sumptuary law regulated graves, including pedestals and number of statues allowed in mausoleums.
- Feudal Japan, in its later period, allowed concessions from earlier sumptuary law to the merchant class who had in fact become wealthier than the samurai class - they were permitted, for example, to wear a single sword (while samurai in the course of their duties were mandated to wear a matched pair).
- There is evidence that in 16th Century France, and in China, some food items (turbot in France, some kinds of tea in China) were considered luxuries and their consumption restricted to the upper levels of society.

In modern times, while not cast as such (except in some political diatribes against them), there are various restrictions that could be considered sumptuary laws or customs:

- Prohibitions on the wearing of articles of clothing that could suggest military or police status. In the United States, enforcement of such prohibitions is generally limited to wearing them with logos, patches, embroidery, *et cetera*, that suggests official status in a context where someone with that status and concomitant authority may be misled.
- Prohibitions on trade in or consumption of alcoholic beverages. In some cases (e.g., among some Moslems not living in Sharia law countries, or the Latter-Day Saints), this is a custom rather than a legislatively-codified prohibition; elsewhere, the prohibition is codified into law (Sharia law countries, and “dry” counties in some areas of the United States).

- The Latter-Day Saints maintain as a custom a prohibition on the consumption of beverages containing caffeine.
- Observant Jews and Moslems have various prohibitions regarding allowable foods. Some of these differ only in the interpretation of the governing text (e.g., under what conditions the meat of a cow, goat, or sheep may be consumed); others differ between the two religions in that the prohibition may exist in one but not the other (e.g., mixing meat and milk—prohibited to Jews, not to Moslems; or consuming alcohol—prohibited to Moslems, not to Jews); still others are the same in both religions (e.g., prohibition of pork).
- Prohibitions on trade in or use of certain “mind-altering” substances. The most controversial such are those prohibiting the use of marijuana (*cannabis sativa*). [This is presently a politically-charged subject in the United States, and the level and existence of the prohibition varies from state to state, though even in states where the prohibition has been entirely revoked, the Federal universal prohibition is technically still in effect.]

Generally, these prohibitions differ from “traditional” sumptuary laws in that they are “universal” (that is, there are no exemptions within the context of enforcement from them (except for uniform restrictions, where those who legitimately have the requisite status/authority may be required to wear them in the course of their official duties)).

The possession and use of certain articles (e.g., pens, wristwatches, etc., of specific brands or styles) may be used to send signals about one’s status or intent. Sometimes, being able to read the signals is itself proof that one is a member of the ‘right’ group in context. ❁

High Guard: Deployment Shuttle

reviewed by Megan Robertson

High Guard: Deployment Shuttle. Martin J. Dougherty.

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

21pp., PDF

US\$5.99/UK£4.50

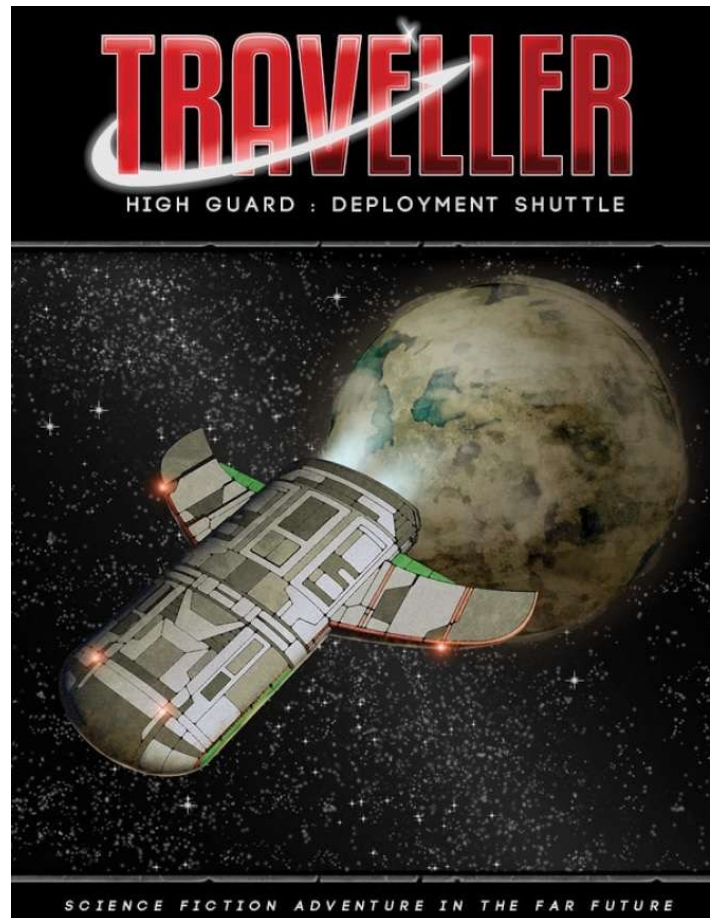
This review originally appeared on rpg-resource.org.uk in Jan. 2018.

This short work not only introduces and specifies a useful (if specialised) space vehicle, the deployment shuttle, but also explores some of the uses to which it might be put in times of peace and of war. Several variants of the standard build are discussed, and the operations of Marine Assault Forces, which often use them, examined. Quite a lot packed in... and there's more! Several ideas for their use in your campaign, whether the party is riding in one or it is advancing on their vessel, are also included.

The deployment shuttle is optimised to get people where they need to be, on the ground or in space. As such it is very fast-moving, and capable of operating in atmosphere as well as in vacuum. It requires a crew of two, as well as whoever is being transported (up to 36 individuals), and can operate for up to four weeks although as there are only basic facilities aboard this is not recommended. Most missions are but hours long. There's a detailed description, full statistics, and a plan of the standard craft.

Next comes a discussion of typical operations carried out using a deployment shuttle. Whilst it can be used for standard personnel transfer on orbit or from ground to space, its main function is to deliver troops in combat situations. This can be an opposed landing groundside or a boarding action in space. They are also popular for space-side activities such as customs or other inspections of ships arriving in system—they can force entry if it is not granted, and can cope with such as environmental contamination. Various tactics are discussed in considerable detail for the ground landing options, useful if you are planning mercenary operations or indeed if the party serves in regular military forces.

The following chapter discusses Marine Assault Forces. A deployment shuttle is large enough to contain a standard Marine platoon (35 people), plus an additional specialist or other individual felt necessary for the operation at hand.



Standard armament and operating protocols for the Marines are covered—including plenty about that iconic weapon, the cutlass—and then we move on to the next chapter which covers Boarding Actions and Inspections, the other in-space role of a deployment shuttle.

Next comes some common variants of the standard deployment shuttle with notes on their uses. These include medical variants, reconnaissance, fighter control and space rescue craft (these last being illustrated painted in colours corresponding to vehicles used on the TV show *Thunderbirds!*). They can also be used for holding or transporting (or even executing) prisoners, surveying and patrol work.

Finally, there are some missions. One involves a hazardous survey job, another sends the party to investigate why a colony has gone 'dark', and the third is a 'decapitation strike'—a raid that takes out the enemy leadership directly. All will need work before you can run them, but plenty of interesting background is provided.

This is a useful vessel to have in your universe, one that the party is likely to encounter at some time even if they never ride in one.



The Adventures of Gerry Fynne

by Sam Swindell

Chapter 13: In the Garden of Eden

"Do you need help?" the voice shocked him. It was, he realized after a couple of heartbeats of disorientation, his suit radio, which he had set to the Khii 43 frequency. It was a new voice, and the question's inflection made "help" sound enticingly open-ended.

"Eve?"

"That is *me*." Sultry is what Gerry felt from the voice, though he probably would have used different words.

"No, this is Gerry, and I'm fine. The boat just seemed to go so quickly. Sorry, I guess I was talking to myself. I'm coming in," he assured her, while already having loosely strapped his small cube to a small wheeled dolly. He had turned his magnetic boots onto a low setting, which together with the low gravity generated by the plating and a deliberate, shuffling gate got him to the airlock of the shelter with relative dignity. The voice had him a bit flustered. The outer airlock door opened as he approached, and it began close as soon as he was in and had cleared it.

"In," he said, somewhat unnecessarily, after the airlock was already cycling.

The "I see" coming back over his suit radio made it sound as if his walking in the door was an impressive accomplishment indeed. Under other circumstances, "trying too hard" might have come to his mind, but the voice did hold a certain undeniable appeal for him. He later realized it was the same thing that had made Yori attractive, the idea of total submission, however faintly made out. And then then inner door swung wide.

It was Eve, he instantly recognized, wearing some hint of clothing in a sheer peach colored fabric. She walked up to him and unbuckled his helmet, turning to hang it on a hook in the airlock. The turn

gave Gerry a view of everything behind, enhanced but in no way concealed by the fabric of her short, almost transparent robe. The word *perfect* went through Gerry's mind, and for a moment he wondered if he had said it out loud. Realizing he did not care, he was aware of following Eve in through the airlock, as she pulled his gloved right index finger with a firm, small fist.

Gerry realized he was losing any control he may have had in the situation. "Please. Sit!" he said more sharply than he intended. Her movement was as quick as it was graceful, whirling, sitting on the couch, and pulling his hand closer to her chest with both her hands.

"Sure."

"No, let me sit here," he almost pleaded as he pulled his hand away. Eve neither resisted nor seemed rebuffed as he took three steps over to the small table in the galley, and pulled out a chair, "I will take my own suit off. And we are going to sit here, and you are going to tell me what is going on. First, who are you?" Gerry managed, as he unbuckled his gloves.

"I am *yours*."

Gerry wanted to ask more, but the words didn't come.

"I am a biologically complete android, willing to obey your every command, with all the many skills at my disposal. Foremost, I am here to satisfy your every sexual desire. My last master called me Eve, but I am yours now, and you may call me—and command me—as you will."

His reaction was so immediate that he was glad he was sitting down. He found his breath racing. He knew he was seconds from doing something he did not want to, that he would regret. "Flee both the object and the site of your temptation," Father would say. Well, he could not just run out the airlock. Well, custody of the eyes, then. Hard enough under the

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best of circumstances, and here he had already gotten quite an eye-full already. He closed his eyes, and asked for guidance. "When in command, *command!*" Gunny would say.

"You are mine to command, Eve."

"Yes."

"Please put on clothes that cover as much of your skin as possible. Right now."

She got up, and hurried to a small room, and in literally a few seconds came out in an improbably tight bodysuit of a shiny synthetic in a bright red, with matching stiletto healed boots, and struck a pose that was not the height of modesty. It did cover most of her skin, however. Gerry's state of arousal, if anything, increased.

"No," his breath quickened. "I want you in something loose. I do not want to see your curves." He thought of asking for a chance to change out of his suit, and then thought better of it.

"I can change my figure if you wish me *smaller*," she said, while moving somewhat less deliberately than before, cupping with one hand in front and grabbing with the other to the rear, leaving no room for confusion as to what could be made smaller, while casting a pouty smile over her shoulder, "or bigger," she added and disappeared again. Gerry said a couple of quick prayers under his breath.

For the first time, he looked around. The shelter was a standard model, which usually had four double cabins, but it had been modified by removing two of these to leave a larger common area. He figured that one room had been his father's, from a partial view inside, but Eve had entered the other. *Why does an android need her own bedroom?* Gerry wondered. The rest of the space was actually filled with decent furniture, somewhat worn. Given that it was a miner's cabin it was very clean. There was actually a picture, no, a *painting*, an oil painting he thought, of a young woman nude on a couch. Her

expression looked pained, but she had her index finger in her teeth and was looking down over her right shoulder. Though he had little exposure to such media, Gerry guessed it was not pain that the artist was trying to convey. He realized that the couch in the picture was right below the picture, only slightly faded from wear. The woman was Eve, with different hair and breasts. There were scant seconds for these musings before Eve returned in a worn, faded jumpsuit of obscure origins.

"I cooked for you. Are you hungry, my master?" Her tone was just a little less sultry that it had been, which still did not mean that she sounded like Gerry's geography teacher.

"Please sit down," he indicated a chair across the table with his open hand. "Um, we should talk."

Slinking over and sitting, slowly, demurely, she looked ravishing in the baggy coveralls. He realized his arousal was only slightly abated. "You think I am sexy, but you are scared. Are you not available?"

"I am not available. Also, further, er, you will not speak of what you think I feel. You will not proposition me, or try to excite me, and arouse me. Can you act not sexy?" Gerry winced at his own awkwardness.

She blinked. She sat up, not hurriedly, but more quickly than she had been moving, "If you wish." A deliberate pause while she studied his reactions, "I am confused."

It was a human thought, or sounded so, but in a flat affect, one used by communications operators to allow their voices to be flawlessly transmitted. He struggled with the feeling that this was a human woman, a young woman, confused and frightened. "I am confused too, Eve." He felt himself melting, looking into her eyes, so he looked over her head, "This is all new to me. I thought I was coming here to help with my father's affairs, and I walk into a full-blown...thing, with you almost nude. An android

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who makes me feel like you are a woman. Talking seduction. No!!"

She blinked, then softened into a pose that oozed reserved sympathy and contrition, "You are angry with me. I am sorry. I meant no harm, master."

Machines did not apologize, not like that. She was playing on his emotions, and it was working on his brief flare of anger. He felt the lust for her surge again. "The voice you used when you said you were confused, that is the only voice you are to use with me. I *am* your master, but you will only call me 'sir' or 'Gerry'. Whichever fits."

His head was spinning. He wanted to get his suit off, but wanted to avoid standing right then, not that she could not read his lust clearly. Gerry had no idea how she would know what term fit, but Eve could clearly figure some things out pretty well. He did not have to make sense, or be convincing. All he had to do was to keep from doing what he ached to right then, to caving into temptation. There was no person here except him, none but God would see. No one to stop for. No one to confess to. No one to clean up for. Perfect submission, perfect beauty, and likely perfect skills.

He already knew that mixed with the smells of some roasting meat, he had smelled her, a very human smell. A slight perfume mixed with the musk of lust, tangy on her, but not acrid.

"Feed me! And hurry." He breathed, thinking, and added when she was already three steps towards the galley, "But first bring my luggage into the bedroom that I will use, the one away from your things. I will shower, change, and you will serve me in 15 minutes. You will not enter my room when I am there." That all seemed a good idea. "Move the luggage now." He thought about the food burning, but had a moment of clarity. If she had planned a seduction, then the food would have to have waited for whenever that was done. It must be just keeping

warm. Ready in 5 minutes or 5 hours. "Seduction," he mused. No. Seduction was an act of will, he thought, as she picked up the small cube even in this .5 g as if it were empty. A machine had no will. A sports speeder did not seduce its driver into exceeding the speed limit, by being fast. It did what it was built to do. So did she. Part of that was obviously carrying heavy things without any swaying of hips or coquettish glances.

Part of that was being a sex machine. A sex machine, bought by his father, who lived alone with her. With *it*. She was, *it* was, back in the kitchen, silently pulling out settings for the table, then turning towards it with a cloth. He pulled up his palms, which had actually made sweat marks on the table, "Sorry."

"I need to clean the table anyway."

He had just apologized to a machine, and she had, even in the commo monotone, told him not to worry about it, that it was no trouble. *It* told him, he meant. "When in command, *command*" Gunny's voice rang in his head again. She had turned away, the table having been cleaned with perfect coverage. One step towards the galley. He needed to withdraw, and his shyness made him still hesitant for her to see his state.

"Eve, halt!" She came to a military position of attention and was still. "Parade...rest!" *Like the honor guard*, he noted. He got up, walked to the bedroom door, slid it closed while saying, "Carry on" over his shoulder. He got out of his suit quickly, and rested it in a chair. The bed he just noticed was big for such a shelter, and huge in comparison to what he had been in aboard ship. The closet was empty, however, and the bigsofts in it, except for one, which was set in an ample bureau drawer, open to his clothes. *Perfect*, he could not help thinking to himself: he had not said unpack, but it was a reasonable step. She had split the difference.

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For all their trite implications, cold showers did work. He took a long one, then warmed up to soap off. Every container of soap, shampoo, shaving cream and toothpaste was brand new, he noted. He was in his father's shower, but there was no sign of him. He changed into some long pants, hiking boots, and a collared shirt. Hiking socks. The absurdity of the outfit belied its familiarity. Hiking. Three meters was the longest hike he could take in the shelter. He clipped on his multitool, and went to sit down in front of his dinner. There was only one place setting, he was almost surprised to notice. The food smelled delicious, like something from the one special meal from the *Maid*.

"Do you eat?" he asked, gesturing to the empty chair.

"Yes, sir, I can eat, but do not require food to support my basic motor and processing functions," the voice was almost mechanical, "but my biological functions require biological matter, for which food is quite helpful. My digestion is more robust, however, so I can eat many things that a human could not digest, and use them to support my full biological function. I can eat if you wish me to, but do not require it. I have a hydrogen fuel cell, and batteries so I can also jack into the shelter's power."

"You are breathing," he remarked between bites.

"My programming is to serve my master and humans generally, especially in making them feel comfortable. A basic function of that is to appear as human as possible, so I only stop the physical act of breathing when I am specifically required to do so."

"So you do not require oxygen?"

"My fuel cells require oxygen, which I can store internally. I use oxygen for my biological functions, but I can use internal stores or absorb it through my skin from ambient atmosphere, when required."

Gerry was getting confused. Biological functions to him meant everything an organism did: moving,

thinking, making fuel, and making heat. "What biological functions do you have?"

"These functions include secreting fluids like a human, smelling human, and tasting human. All of the biological byproducts that a human woman produces I can produce in some convincing form of imitation, except I cannot conceive a child. I can, however, lactate and even menstruate if requested. All of these functions are biologically assisted in order to appear as authentic to the human senses as possible. I can operate, however, essentially indefinitely without my biological functions, subject to my normal ten-year maintenance overhauls. My next is due in three years and about two months."

All this would have been drivel to one less interested than Gerry. Eve, as she seemed to in every situation, took cues from him, and as he leaned forward a bit more with each disclosure, she added detail. "So you can engage in sexual intercourse without eating?" he heard himself asking before he could stop the words.

She just nodded, "Yes," but provided no details. She had apparently registered his own distancing himself from his own question, and stemmed her technical loquacity.

"How long did you belong to my father?"

"He purchased me before my construction, which was seven years and 98 days ago. From his order, it took me over a year to be delivered to him, only the last 9 days of which I was operational before I was delivered to him. So I was with him six years and 112 days after delivery before his death."

"Do you know how much you cost him?"

"With all my included equipment, 4,278,000 Imperial credits."

"Holy Jesus!" Gerry said, standing and knocking the chair over, "he had that kind of money?" He muttered an apology for the misuse of the Holy

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Name while waiting for the answer to what was mostly a rhetorical question.

"I was purchased for 20% down on a 15-year note."

"Still, that's over half a million. What kind of income did he have?"

"Well, Khii 43 is all his, and contains about 5,400,000 credits worth of extractable water remaining. We have the capacity to extract about 488,000 credits of that per year."

"So what are your payments, or, the payments on you?"

"Just over 456,000 credits annually."

Gerry felt the voice getting further away, behind the roaring in his ears. The old man had never sent Gerry as much as a thin decicrud disc, but he would have squandered almost 9 million on a sex robot. Indeed, *had* squandered, even if only half was paid for. A brief, unhelpful visual went through Gerry's mind as he wondered which half.

He took too large a bite of the roast beast in gravy, and washed it down with a sweet drink he could not place. He closed his eyes, and said a quick Hail Mary, belatedly offering it for his father. It was hard to pray for someone and hate them at the same time, but right now, eyes closed, rattling off Hail Marys like a mantra, he was still doing both without any trouble at all.

I forgive him, he lied to himself. Another drink, focusing just on the drink. Glancing over the rim of the glass at Eve, she was still as a statue. Clearly, she was out of her depth as an expert system on making humans feel good, and recognized that her biggest tool as such a system was removed from her repertoire by his orders. *It, not her*, Gerry reminded himself.

"So, let's run the numbers. If I got that right, he's paid off some six years on the note."

"Yes; just over seven, actually: just under 3,240,000 credits. Of course, if we accelerate the loan it gets better: I have 942,000 credits worth of water ready to float, and we can sell the working claim and equipment for maybe 3.7 million. That would allow you to pay me off for about 2 million. That leaves you with 2.6, minus legals and brokers' fees of about maybe two hundred thousand. But we need to make the float."

"Why?"

"Well, a producing claim is worth about three times a speculative claim. Last float, we only brought in 856,000 credits worth."

"Price lower?"

"No, about 5.3% higher, but I was pulled off working the claim too much."

"You work the claim?"

"Yes, I served your father. I provided the labor for the claim, while he stayed at leisure."

"Doing what?"

"I am to respect your father's privacy."

"Not anymore. I am your master, so you will tell me."

"He would enjoy video feeds most often. He had much stored video. I would help him when I was not working them claim."

The mental imagery was disturbing on quite a number of levels, but arousing on another as she added, "I would play games, roles for him. I also cooked, cleaned, and often we just talked, when he was tired."

"But you have more water frozen for this float?"

"I have been working more since you father passed away, and I pulled the reserve drilling rigs to increase our capacity. It was a risk, because if we had anomolous failures we would have lost even more capacity. The maintenance reserves support long term capacity, giving me units to constantly

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rotate into scheduled maintenance. The mean time to failure for a drilling rig that skips monthly maintenance is over 8 months, however, so the odds were nothing would fail before this float. Nothing has of any significance." He realized that his attention to her description kept it flowing. His attention was more on the exquisite, fascinating features of the speaker, but attention it was. He flushed momentarily, nodded, and looked to his food.

She was silent, but he could feel her eyes on him, attentive but unobtrusive. He ate in silence. He thought to himself that he had no more need to be civil to her than to a kitchen appliance, but she did not feel like a kitchen appliance. Kitchen appliances did not respond to lust, nor inspire it, and did not converse with an empathy...he brought up this thought short again.

When his plate of food was a memory, though there was more, he felt full enough. It felt necessary to keep even his hunger in some check. Gerry leaned back, and looked at his watch. "I have 2345 hours. Please set our operations to that time cycle until I tell you otherwise. Wake me at 0700 with caff and a hot breakfast. Wear those same clothes, and make yourself as small as you can."

"Alright Gerry." He did not know why she picked that moment to use his name, but in the monotone, and the shapeless jump suit he still felt a strong urge to grab her, to touch her, to have her.

"Wait in your room until I am asleep, please."

"Yes, sir."

No longer caring what she saw, he stood up and walked into his room, his father's room, and fell down on the bed. He took off his boots, but lay back on the covers, one side of which was folded down with geometric precision. His mind was a whirl, and he tried to make sense. They would have some time until the float, because she had planned for him to arrive later. How could his father be such a pervert? The wasted money. Alone. With her. With a robot.

With *it*. The roaring was back in his ears, and he did not trust himself to move, yet after a number of minutes that seemed like hours sleep took him like a thief.

"Sir, it is 0700. Your breakfast is ready."

He woke to instant recognition of where he was, and why. In the weakness of coming to his full faculties, though, still in the arousal of a sleep filled by an erotic dream with her, he spoke as he started to roll over, "Use the sexy voice, and ask me nicely to get up." The words were already out of this mouth before he realized it. The dream faded and his breathing quickened as she spoke.

"Gerry, I would really like you to come eat. Please, please come join me."

He rolled out of bed, and walked in his stocking feet to the fresher. He splashed cold water on his face until his shirt was wet all down the front.

Eve was sitting there, in the same shapeless jump suit, in the same wooden posture. While still looking into the mirror, he found himself struggling with an urge to touch her. "That's enough of that voice. What have you been doing?" he called out quite sharply, an edge of accusation in the voice.

"Sir, I awaited your apparent loss of consciousness, then suited up, serviced the mining units, checked the raft's status, and returned here by 0530 to prepare for your rising."

"Rising," he mused to himself. She never quit.

"Tell me about the mining units," Gerry asked. The arousal was gone, flushed out by guilt, and an anger born of a mixture of guilt and panic, and in the clothes he had slept in he walked out to the table with a frown.

Breakfast was extensive and she began before he had pulled his chair up, "We have 36 combination drilling, melting, filtering, and pumping units, of an

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average age of 12 standard years. Our collection piping has a recommended pressure..."

He held up his hand to silence her, in a gesture both abrupt and rude in a normal human context.

She folded her hands. "So there's nothing to pull offline, so what do you need to do?"

"The filters above are to be checked at an interval of 30 hours in drilling conditions like ours. The filters are durable, to be replaced every 6,000 hours, but with only a single float I rotate out the filter while the unit is running, clean and inspect it during my travel to the next unit. I use my travel to the mining unit to check the pipes for any exterior damage that has not yet shown up as a pressure loss, and then can service the filter on my way back to the next unit."

Gerry looked down again at his empty plate.

"Would you like more?"

"A couple of sausages, please."

In the silence of munching, Gunny's voice came to him, "When you are in charge, ask a lot of questions. You do not have to say anything back, but do listen. You will learn a lot, even if you do not understand everything you hear. Don't make a show of understanding what you do not, but ask for some explanations of what you do not understand. This will convince your people that you care about things, and are no fool." He did not need to understand the mining, he realized, since Eve was running it with no help needed, apparently. She did not need to trust him, anymore than a gun needed to trust its shooter. He was treating her like a *her*, not an *it*, he realized.

"So when are you planning to make this float, and what do you need me for?"

"I am planning to leave in 34 standard days. This should be the date most likely to balance risk and profit. You should, as the owner of this whole going concern, validate or modify my plans."

A long discussion followed, where Gerry felt more awash in probabilities and statistics than he was at all comfortable with. He got the basics: the orbital mechanics had a window for them to minimize their risks during transport, of everything from maneuvering to criminal action, the latter not negligible. The market for water corresponded largely with the launch windows from various bodies, with an effect that pushed them a day or two earlier than minimizing the other risks would dictate. The long and short of it was that there was a spread of two days between maximizing safety and profit, but the differences in the chances were such that it seemed inconsequential to him. "We'll plan to go on the earlier date," Gerry decreed.

"If I understand correctly, by keeping all the units online, your workload has been reduced to some 4 hours a day."

"Yes, at least for equipment maintenance."

"What else is there?"

"I have also spent my time inspecting the raft, and maximizing my time in closest proximity to the point of most likely failure. All the 14 largest bladders have been filled and frozen into shape in proper configuration, but we are now filling smaller bladders, which are more likely to have geometric flaws during the filling process. I have had to reprocess two of the 28 filled so far. I have been patching holes from meteors as I find them during inspection. This will maximize our resale value at market."

"Is there nothing I can do to help?"

"Today, there is not, unless there is a breakdown or major meteor strike, which are both highly unlikely. Less than a 2% chance of either. In the case of a breakdown, we will lose capacity for the entire time the unit is offline, however. In that case, there are tasks you could accomplish which would directly effect our revenues."

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Gerry realized he had just been told, in terms both businesslike and precise, that he was as useless as tits on a boar hog.

"So why do I need to be here?"

"Because I am a machine, legally incapable of retaining custody of this claim or piloting a spacecraft alone in the Imperium. I need your presence to keep the claim and bring this all to market. I have used deception to make it appear that your father was still alive in order to avoid losing your property. A claim is considered vacant if there is no owner, or owner's representative to exercise dominion and control over it in system. Thus, while most miners go on the float, they are within radio or lightbeam range of their claims, and considered capable of exercising dominion and control. They can send messages, even hire transport back, and the like, to respond to inspectors or potential claim jumpers. Rafts on the float are subject to inspection, and must be manned by a legally-recognized sophont, or are considered as open for salvage. I could physically pass for a woman, but may not do so under the law."

"But your deception?"

"I can assume the identity of one who has allowed me to, as your father did. I could carry out his instructions, and make the decisions necessary to allow for the unforeseen, because he gave me permission. It violated the law, but in this case not my programmed capabilities."

"So you can break the law with permission?"

"In most cases, no. I can not cause harm to any person or property, or allow such harm to occur through any legal violation, including negligence. Indeed, I am required to do much which a human or other person is not. But it is realized that many legal or regulatory requirements are so complicated and indeed even self-contradictory, that if there is not clear risk to a person or property, I may follow my

master's orders even if they conflict with law or regulations."

"So you can never harm another person?"

"I may never do so in violation of the law. I may exercise defense of my master, and such persons and property that he designates, in strict accord with the law, and only as I am directed by my master."

"So if a pirate walks in to shoot me, you would just sit there, since I have not told you to defend me?"

"No. I would defend you with whatever nonviolent means I could, including screening your person and distracting the attacker through sexual advances, while asking your permission to use deadly force."

The answer seemed so logical as to be a bit absurd.

"You are directed to use whatever force the law allows to defend me, Eve. That seems to make things easier."

"As you wish."

Chapter 14: Preparing a Flotilla

Gerry had spent the past 12 days watching Eve, and exploring the small iceball that was his fortune. Indeed, he did not really watch *her*, for while he asked that she perform her outside duties when he was awake, he simply watched her activities through her remote camera, as he dealt with the boredom of yet another close quarters confinement. When he had gone out, though, using his suit to great advantage, he was never out of radio range and seldom more than a couple hundred meters from the surface of Khii 43. He had adopted his father's transponder, and made frequent radio contact with Eve, which had made things feel less lonely.

He had learned through her and plentiful records the details of his father's folly, the desperate, diseased existence of both considerable commercial

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success and wanton, wasteful spending in tawdry dissipation. It still made him angry to think about as he stood watching the pipeline pass by Eve's camera. There had been little or nothing to see, except to watch the now familiar landmarks on the kilometers of pipeline drift by; after a week he had already known every ding, dent, and discoloration on the kilometers of orange pipes. She would glide in gentle arcs through the darkness, floating in her ball of light, with minimal, periodic pneumatic boosts to overcome the effects of the rockball's micro-gravity. It all had a mechanical feel, with none of the jerkiness of a human-linked camera's casting to and fro with the myriad whims, curiosities, and starts that directed a person's vision which had no single point of focus set by intellect or emotion. She had just watched the pipe. *It. It* had watched the pipe.

The raft was now mostly prepared, a series of long cylinders of frozen water, nested together to create a long, roughly hexagonal shape, into which the shelter would be fitted, the mass to be propelled into the Stream by a large hydrogen rocket. Unlike more advanced rafts, theirs would have very limited maneuvering thrusters, relying on a tug at the far end to maneuver her into a stable orbit, there to be sold. The smaller cylinders that filled the spaces between the large, increasing the structural stability of the raft, were all filled by the time they were three days from launch.

Gerry, out of almost desperate boredom and a sense of uselessness, had negotiated with Eve to get the job of scanning the raft for damage, floating in his suit around the monstrosity several times a day for the past couple of days. He had planned her comings and goings so they would not see each other face to face, but spending his time floating out in the dark vacuum made his creeping loneliness more pronounced. He was anxious about the float, about selling everything off, about getting off, even though he would have little effective control over any of

these things, and it was this pronounced anxiety that gave the loneliness cover.

He made the unconscious decision to go out and scan of the raft when he should have been asleep, when Eve was to come back to the shelter to pack and recharge. He cut the scan short, it was an extra anyway he reasoned, so as to arrive back as Eve was entering the airlock. She was essentially under a radio listening silence by his order, so they entered the lock together in somewhat awkward silence. Exiting the airlock, Eve bent to place her helmet on the lower hook, and he draped his hand across her lower back and over her hip. With the speed of a predator striking its dinner, she swiveled her hips towards him, and began to grind with a searching motion. Their suits, while tough enough to stop micrometeorites, were wonderfully supple, and he felt her softness yield to his rapid swelling. He felt himself teetering on the edge of the abyss with which he had just been toying, and turned aside, slapping her protruding rear with a violence born of anger and fear, "Get away! Go to your room."

He was inflamed still, as he entered his room, peeled off his suit, and finished what she had started. He lay there in his bed, his father's bed, the bed in which his father had done so many times to her, *to it*, what he now burned to do. He felt a confusing rush of emotions, surging back in forth between elation and disgust, something like a between the abandon of new young love and the shame of having abused a neighbor's cat. After what seemed hours, he rose, stowed his suit, and showered. He spent a couple of hours between rereading his Guides book, which he had not opened in the months since he'd packed it back at Auntie's, and disjointed, distracted prayers.

"It is not that it is dirty or profane, except that you know better that for which He made you," he heard Father K-O'M saying. He longed for confes-

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sion, to tell a man what he had done, a man who would forgive him without a reproach, not just because of the guilt he felt, but more as a aid to avoiding trouble in the future.

He hit the comm panel, "Eve, keep to your schedule."

"Yes, sir," the answer came back, *mechanically* he thought. No sense of trepidation, or penitence. Well, why wouldn't it? Because, he reminded himself, she acted so human, almost superhuman, when he let her do so.

Two days later, the last bits of the Raft were being prepared, to include the movement of the shelter and powerplant from the base of grav plates and supporting beams. Gerry helped with the movement, storage, re-positioning, and re-assembly of these components onto the raft. He lost a few bolts, as they floated off in the micro-gravity. On Khii 43, with an escape velocity of something like 23 centimeters per second., even a slowly moving bolt would take a while to bounce to a stop if it stopped at all, so Eve had laid in quite a few extras. Gerry was initially very impressed with her organization, with every component labeled according to the plans that indicated both origin on the original base and destination on the raft base. He watched her work with complete efficiency; no rests, none of the normal human pauses to take a casual gaze at one's surroundings, make eye contact with a co-worker, or re-orient oneself after a slight distraction or false step.

He thought again, however, of the extreme organization, with a critical view: most of the components were interchangeable, and those that were not would be fairly obvious in their place. If they had just placed the ends of the decking where they needed to go, then everything would have been intuitive. Indeed, Gerry realized he was laying the deck plates according to her labels mostly as a matter of respect

for the considerable organizational work she had done.

Well, that was it. He respected her work. He directed the machine, the machine that was her. A prayer started but was lost in the flurry of fragmentary thoughts. Clearly there had been no understanding of how it would have been easier to lay the plates, for a human mind, by just setting out the slightly irregular bounds, then filling in with all the identical plates. There had been an innate understanding about how to instantly respond to his touch in a way to inflame his male lust, however. It was a machine, programmed to do certain things very well, and others only passably. *Different software packages*. Within that machine, though, was a thing that felt like a woman or girl that he yearned for, and also just the plain human companionship that he needed: a woman in experience, the confidence of her advances, but a girl in utter submission. Indeed Yori's submission had been as nothing compared to Eve's.

He found himself holding the driver, with a bolt held in the end, over the last hole in a plate, realizing that Eve had not paused to regard him or inquire as to the pause, skirting him just like a cleaner bot skirted a sleeping pet. He was sure she could bring sex into *anything*, almost intuitively. Gerry was sure that this plate laying could become erotic at just a word. He drove the suspended bolt, as the images passed through his mind, and the musings became words, "Do it sexy, Eve!"

He was shocked at the words as he was saying them, but not shocked enough to take them back, as her motion passed from mechanical to lithe without a missed beat. She lit her faceplate so he could see her expressions, and started to cradled the driver like it was some sexual object or implement, as she worked her way through a series of erotic poses. The plates kept coming and the bolts continued to be driven, in a series of movements that would have

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been comical if they were not so... so... Gerry was amazed as she drove a bolt behind her head, while forming a perfect bridge aimed directly away from him, or directly toward him, depending on one's perspective. He was not sure how she did it, but Eve's suit seemed tighter than he had seen it, and he stood transfixed as she continued to do her erotic dance of not-quite industrial assembly.

"Alright, Eve, do it like you were doing it before," he said, finally, when there were only a few more of the 64 standard plates to lay. He shuffled over on his magnetic boots, grabbed a plate, and got back to work. He wanted to apologize, and found himself worrying about what she would think of him. After putting down two more, he moved back to the shelter. He resolved to take a cold shower, but did not make it that far.

He took one after. "Eve, use the auxiliary charging port outside when you are down to 10%, and then work through."

"Yes, Gerry."

He was kicking her out. He felt guilty, like he was punishing her for his indiscretion. Eve was a machine, but Gerry, in the dark of his bedroom, his father's bedroom, finally just gave himself permission to think of her as a *her*, a female kind-of-person. He knew she had no soul, and her thinking was indeed programming, but he had a need to give in to the feeling that she was a *she*. He knew he also had a need to never touch Eve like a woman.

He was laying there, still in the suit, speaking into the comfortable closeness of his helmet, "Eve."

"Yes."

"Keep working."

"Yes, Gerry, I am."

Well, of course she was, but he was on new ground. He took off the helmet and glanced to the comm panel by his head, and saw that the line was still open.

"If I give you an order to disobey me in the future, will you follow the order, no matter what I say?"

"In almost all cases no, but I have a security program which allows you to give me an instruction that can only be changed if you give a pass-code or phrase."

Gerry thought about this. First, he remarked at the fairly sophisticated interplay of her language and logic. That was no help, though: he would remember the pass-code or phrase, and could just give it to her. Unless he couldn't remember it...

"Is there a limit on the length of the pass phrase?"

"The standard limit is ten thousand characters, but I can reprogram that if you wish."

"Eve, are you familiar with the fifty first Psalm?"

"Yes, I am." He noted the slightly longer hesitation before she had answered: she had had to download and process the library information he figured. Gerry doubted she and his father did a lot of scripture reading together, nor was it likely part of her programming, so it would not be in her memory.

"I am ordering to not allow me to touch you and to not respond sexually to any touch I give you, unless I recite the entire fifty first psalm to you as a pass phrase."

"This order is too ambiguous to be accepted by my security protocol; there are several versions of this psalm. You must specify a translation, and I must verify the pass phrase, as even the translations seem to have minor variations."

"Alright, the Third Revised Standard Version. Can you read one version of that translation you have out to me, and I accept it as the pass phrase?"

"Yes."

"Do it."

"A Psalm of David, when Nathan..."

(Continued on page 44)

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The words seemed like a wonderful break for him from the anxiety of trying to solve the problem, of trying to save himself from himself.

"Come back here while you are reciting, Eve."

She did, within a minute having entered in the airlock, removing her helmet, and stowing it as she always did with precise duplication of the movement in each iteration, she was now standing in front of him, fully suited in the doorway of the room, as she finished.

"Alright, show me your breasts, Eve."

She stripped off her suit in what he thought must be record time, and he saw that was nude beneath it. She stepped forward until her chest was centimeters in front of his face.

Ouch.

"May I touch them?"

"No! You have ordered me to disallow it."

The apparent emotional content of her enforced chastity was as nuanced as her seductive behavior had been. He grabbed with both hands, but reached only air. She landed gracefully after the rearward somersault, and stepped back towards him, but stopped just out of arm's reach. He realized this was an attempt to fully obey both the showing order and the permanent chastity order, as it just named itself in his mind.

"Well done, Eve." She smiled and nodded demurely. It did him good.

"Put some clothes on, the usual, and make us both some dinner."

After mindless civilities and a very full meal of what he thought of as *roast beast with taters*, Gerry pushed his chair back, and looked her in the eyes. Still too close. "So did my father ever hurt you?"

"He never injured me, and I do not really feel pain the way you do."

"Well, how *do* you feel pain?"

"I know what would hurt a human, of whatever condition I am portraying, and so I respond as if in pain." Gerry had the presence to pass over the of whatever condition implication, but paused while doing so.

"So he would cause you pain?"

"He would, you could say."

"I want to apologize for my father's actions. He should not have hurt you."

"Thank you, Gerry. I served him, and if my pain, as it were, was pleasurable to him, then that was my function."

"No, Eve. It was not your function. Not as I see it. To the extent you make us feel you are a woman, a human woman, we should treat you with respect. I will do so."

"That is kind, Gerry."

He felt his kindness welling up in a completely inappropriate display, and sipped his coffee. He had sipped the last, so he got up and served himself some more.

The raft came together without further ado, and Gerry and Eve ate together. He was mostly grateful for the company, but was still struck by her beauty, so close. He no longer thought of her as available, but sometimes she felt very available. Sometimes at night, he thought of reciting her the entire 51st Psalm. That had been a good choice, he realized: It would be pretty hard to feel frisky through the entire recitation of the classic penitential psalm.

Now, in these last days, when they ate meals together they talked. She had a knack for conversation, for making him feel like someone was listening, and cared about what he said, thought, and felt. He told her stories, and asked her about his father.

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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 44)

He learned things he wanted to forget, and others that he still wanted to remember after hearing them: The painting was of her; she had never been off the iceball since she had gotten there. Eve had a dozen different sets of hair, but did not change them unless Gerry asked. (He had her change for every meal, until they were on the second time through.) His father had named her Eve; the choice of hair and body that she had worn since he had met her had been his father's favorite. She never read on her own and had nothing like recreation. The longest she had gone without eating was three months, when his father had been gone. His father had never drunk very much, nor had taken other recreational drugs; indeed, his father's every act had been bent towards maximizing his immediate indulgence of his lust while still providing for his ability to do so in the future.

The inaccessibility of Eve due to the no touch and no response order, coupled with their conversation seemed to make his immediate urges much less, and he added orders for no nude displays, or "sexy talk" under the same pass-phrase. Gerry did reach out to touch her once when she was bending over to serve him, however, in a sudden impulsive act. Despite the short distance, and the apparently difficult position for such a move, Eve spun away with athletic prowess, but not female grace. Once again, he reached only the air. She gave him a look, like she was his kindergarten teacher and he had just made his armpit fart. And this gave him another idea. Well, it had given him a number of ideas, but only one was in propriety worth pursuing.

As they were checking the fully assembled raft, the rosy sun was just visible, as a permanent "sun rise" over the edge of Khii 43. Gerry realized that the schoolteacher was the right persona for Eve in their bizarre relationship, just as he watched her running a diagnostic on the last thruster, and he

somewhat distractedly played his light over the smooth reflective cylinders.

"Let's eat early, Eve."

Inside, she cooked and changed into her standard coveralls. The grav was back together, and the inside of the shelter felt like it always had, with no sensation of having moved from iceball to the raft. He quickly read his chapter from Proverbs, slipped into his slippers, and sat down at the table.

"Oh, I forgot. Put on the grey hair, please. I'll wait."

"Certainly." She bounded off, still lithely enough to draw his lingering gaze. The hair was like that of an aging librarian in a bad movie: salt and pepper, in a somewhat frowsy style. He knew she had various parts in various shapes and sizes to suit a truly perverse range of tastes, but had never asked about them before.

"Now that body does not go with that hair," Gerry noted as she slid her knees back under the table.

"Well, I can change into my granny tits and a big, saggy ass, if you would like," she offered with a cow expression, which he guessed was just on the allowable side of the talking sexy prohibition. She never had gotten the context of genteel speech quite right. He was asking about her body, Eve's programming must have run, so he must want to talk dirty. "Well, they would not match your face, and I have quite gotten used to that. You don't have other faces, do you?"

"I can change the apparent age of my face to look older, or even younger."

Gerry indeed wondered how she could look younger, but decided to leave that one alone. "I would like to see you older, about forty years old. Pick whatever you think matches that age." He pulled out one of the last Urp-Urps, and began it to

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Raconteurs' Rest

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keep his mind from speculating too much while he waited for her to effect the transformation in her cabin.

Indeed, she was still beautiful, but her skin was "older," with just a few wrinkles, and older in other ways that Gerry could not place. The body, likewise seemed more matronly, but not really old. Without asking, Gerry guessed these were not the "granny tits," but neither were they what a forty year old might pay to have constructed by some plastic surgeon. Eve looked not like someone else, nor to be in some costume. She had simply aged. Her voice was thankfully the same, and he asked about her skin. Back in her antiseptic technician's voice, Eve spent several minutes explaining how her skin could expand and contract on command. He caught himself before he asked about whether she used this to make her suit tighter the other day. He finished the drink in silence, and belched silently under his breath, realizing then releasing himself from the absurdity of trying to have good table manners in front of his robot.

It was a long meal. They rehearsed the departure and navigation sequence for the raft on which they were to depart in 36 hours just by talking it through. The raft's chemical rocket was primitive indeed; relatively primitive, he mused, in a universe of fusion powered spaceships small craft; starships traveling hundreds of times the speed of light, where astro-gators plotted exits from jumpspace light years away, based on information that was weeks, months, or even years old, to control a jump process that was not fully controllable; in a place where the entire route of float could be traced by a fusion powered ship's boat in the time between breakfast and dinner, burning only a few credits of fuel. The little rocket would push the huge raft, over a period of a couple of days acceleration onto their trajectory within the float. Then, after 59 days of hopefully un-

eventful transit, they would be grabbed by a small tug and parked in the target orbit around New Kongisburg, where the raft would be sold off.

The little computer that controlled the entire Khii 43 mining operation would control the automatic aspects of the float, their communications, the library program that took imported feeds from the rest of the Imperium, the entertainment, the small fusion plant, and the backup fuel cell's operation also ran their navigational software. The orbital mechanics were relatively simple, except for the human element of the float: all the unregulated traffic out there, free to lay down and modify their own trajectories, subject to their own myriad myriad plans, ideas, whims and errors. There was no full control by any authority over the float. Miners would list their intended flight plans, and then each would try to steer clear of the rest, mostly.

He kept picking up the empty soda bottle, unconsciously trying to drink from it in a gesture born of slightly nervous distraction. He would ask, "Well, what if" questions, oft times repeated twice or even thrice in his rambling review. Gerry was eventually almost lulled to sleep by Eve's repetition of the length and direction of the "burn," the various contingencies, based on the other nearest rafts' flight plans, meteor strikes, and engine malfunctions. He kept coming up a little short on the contingency plans for "crazy bastards come to rob us." Her composure, however, reassured him, at the same time that he understood visible panic was probably not one of Eve's programmed behaviors. She did have a basic security program, and familiarity with small arms, however, which added to the comfort factor of one's schoolmarm looking out for one.

He went to bed, and after a long time reading from a long over-read story, sleep flowed in like a tropical tide. All was set. ❁

Alien Breeds

reviewed by Omer G. Joel

Alien Breeds. Paul Elliott.

Zozer Games <http://www.pauelliottbooks.com/zozergames.html>

41pp., PDF

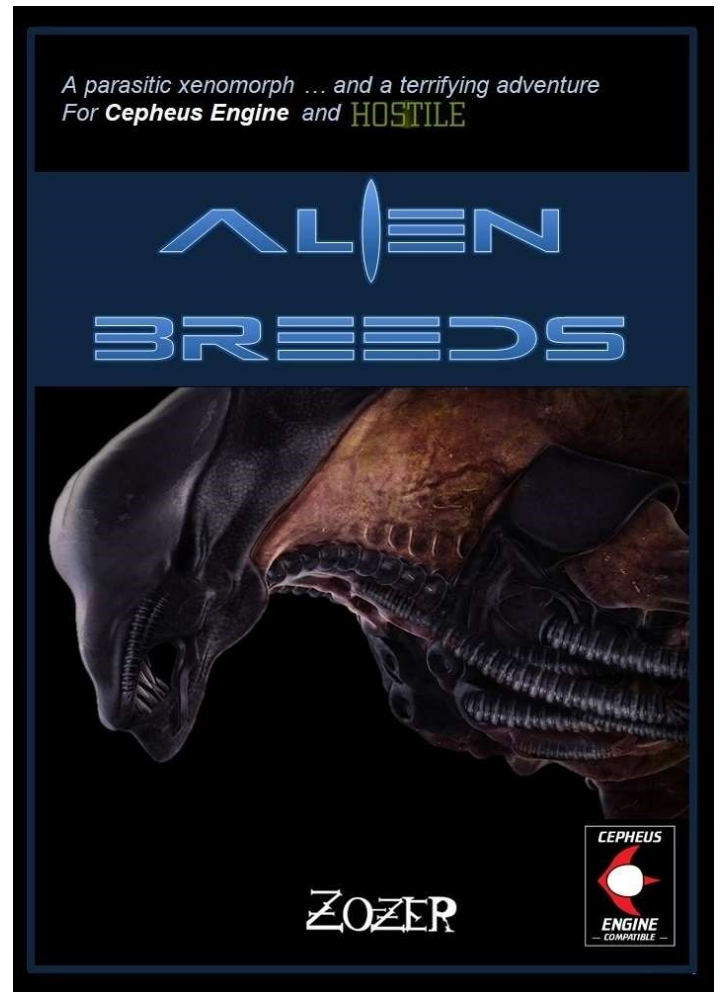
US\$5.00/UK£3.74

A few months ago, I reviewed Zozer Games' *Hostile* setting for the Cepheus Engine. As I said back then, *Hostile* is the "real deal"—the perfect *Alien(s)/Bladerunner* RPG setting. Not an official setting, but one with the serial numbers partially filed off. It does its job magnificently, better, in my humble opinion, than the official offerings in this field.

Hostile begs for Xenomorphs, *Alien(s)*-style. *Alien Breeds* delivers. *Aliens*, as in the films. Serial numbers filed off just enough to prevent copyright issues. With full *Cepheus Engine* stats (and thus *Mongoose Traveller* 1E—mostly compatible with *Classic Traveller* and *Mongoose Traveller* 2E as well). Ready for the Referee to unleash on unsuspecting players...

Wait. Unsuspecting? Not so easily. I'd bet that virtually every sci-fi enthusiast playing *Traveller* has seen the films. Some have read the numerous novels and comics as well, and played the video games. The moment a Facehugger shows up, or any other part of the Xenomorph's life cycle for that matter, the players are bound to know exactly what they're up against. This is a recurrent problem with using well-known settings ("IPs", in 2010's terminology): the player already knows the Big Secrets, unlike a first-time watcher of the films, or any of the characters in them. This removes a large part of the horror associated with these creatures. Fear of the unknown, of the alien—that's the heart of *Alien* (1979). But the alien is no longer unknown. You could even say that it's no longer truly alien. It's a fixture of modern culture.

Alien Breeds tackles this question by presenting no less than 18 subspecies of the Xenomorph—each



with unexpected abilities. I won't list them here, to avoid spoiling the fun to any prospective players. But you should know that their capacities and capabilities exceed, by far, those shown in the films. They can do things to the unsuspecting—truly unsuspecting—player character that Ripley never had to face. Players will see a Facehugger's husk, or a Xenomorph egg, and think they know what they're dealing with. They're in for a surprise. Potentially several surprises. A few breeds are quite predictable variants, but many are not what you'd expect from a Xenomorph.

Aside from the breeds and a very well-written description of Xenomorph biology (both ordinary and variant, the book contains two additional parts. The first is a short description of Leyland Okuda's ("not"-Weyland Yutani) science division, along with its ordinary roles and secret agendas. It also details the secretive "Project Red Midas", studying alien

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Raconteurs' Rest


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lifeforms for military usage. The second is an adventure called, quite as you'd expect, "Outbreak".

The adventure goes back to the original *Alien* film from 1979 for inspiration. This is not an action-packed Bug Hunt by Colonial Marines. Rather, it pits a commercial space crew against an insidious mystery on a remote mining colony. Don't expect Smartguns and Pulse Rifles, but rather several mining lasers and two shotguns. The colony, like the original *Nostromo*, is initially "alive and well", with an almost full number of workers, rather than the dead Hadley's Hope of *Aliens* fame. Something is very wrong, and very deceptive, in this mining colony. The PCs come to refuel and unload supplies, but

refueling will most likely require solving this mystery and dealing with some... err... wildlife.

The booklet describes the colony in great details and clarity. Even if you don't intend to pit your characters against Xenomorphs, this is still a highly useful space colony which could be easily dropped, with minimal modifications, virtually into any interstellar sci-fi setting. The big gem here is a set of highly detailed colony maps and floor-plans, drawn by the talented Ian Stead. Very useful!

In short, if you like *Alien(s)*, or simply want a detailed space colony for your sci-fi game, this is an instant buy. 

Multimedia Gallery

The Spacer's Hymn

by Timothy Collinson

It's perhaps not surprising that this song isn't so much familiar to me as part of my DNA. My father served in the Royal Navy for 35 years rising from a 'below the deck' rating to the giddy heights of Lieutenant Commander on the Special Duty list for survival equipment when he retired aged 50 to become a Baptist Minister and eventually a missionary to Brazil. My mother was in the Women's Royal Naval Service (a "Wren") and indeed my parents will tell you they met over the engine of a Phantom jet they were repairing. My brother spent time in the Royal Naval Reserves and I myself have spent two years on a bookship in South East Asia, New Zealand and Australia. Growing up I attended churches on base, onboard, or in naval towns such as Gosport, across the harbour from Portsmouth and its naval dockyard. I even spent some time working in a seaman's mission at the dockyard gate on Portland. That's probably another whole article right there.

"Eternal Father, Strong to Save", or occasionally "O Trinity of Love and Power" and perhaps more

properly *The Naval Hymn*, is a very familiar hymn from such settings. It may be used at the start or end of a service, especially on Sea Sunday; or perhaps at an appropriate point in a service such as at a commemoration or funeral^[1]. It's more than just another hymn, however. Thanks to its familiarity and its association with people and places, past and present, it is powerfully moving to seafarers and their families.

It was written by William Whiting in 1860, an Anglican from Winchester, not very far from my home town of Gosport. He was apparently inspired by Psalm 107 and his own belief that God spared him from a storm whilst at sea. The words were published the following year in *Hymns Ancient & Modern* (an incredibly influential hymnbook still in use in one local church I attend).

Meanwhile, John Bacchus Dykes, a canon (and precentor) of Durham Cathedral, wrote, amongst others, a tune called *Melita* to go with the hymn in

[1] It was used, for example, at the funerals of John F. Kennedy and Winston Churchill

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the edition of the hymnbook which came out the following year. *Melita*, an archaic form of Malta which was then a British colony^[2], is in 88 88 88 iambic metre (or “long particular metre”), which essentially counts the syllables of each line and means that many hymns can be sung to the tune (e.g., <http://www.singingthefaithplus.org.uk/?cat=761>).

However, such is the tie of *Melita* to “Eternal Father”, I think I’ve only come across this on one occasion in my life.

Given my history with it, I’ve long thought of doing a ‘spacer’ version for *Traveller* and had scribbled down a line or two but not much more. Finally a couple of things came together which meant I knuckled down to write something. Firstly, I had been running my adventure “The Second Scions’ Society” in library lunchtime sessions at work and had gone past the ‘end’ of what I’d written for its TravCon outing in 2013^[3]. We were getting to the bit just after one of the PCs hears about his father, Count Spirn, and brother dying in an air/raft accident. The scion has now become the Count as the surviving heir. Jumping homewards on Father’s yacht which he’d been borrowing (think *Downtown Abbey* in space, not your paltry standard *Traveller* yachts!), the Count’s chaplain has arranged a memorial service in the onboard chapel. It seemed like just the moment for such a hymn and having produced it as a handout for the players I found they were keen to give it a go. Despite the slightly odd feeling of us singing together and the humour of having to keep our voices down so as not to disturb nearby students outside the room, it was quite affecting!

The second factor in motivating me was the replacement of my old android tablet with a Galaxy Book – essentially a tablet/laptop combination using Windows instead of Android. As well as its keyboard cover, it comes with a capacitive stylus. I hap-

[2] according to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_Father,_Strong_to_Save which has a fascinating article on the hymn

[3] <https://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon13.html>

pened to stumble across a piece of software called StaffPad when looking for something else and connected up a lot of dots as I suddenly realized this might be what I’ve dreamed of having for many years now. I’m not much of a musician – although I did manage to get an O-level in the subject (aged 16) and even passed a couple of piano grades as a schoolboy until my teacher went off to get married – but have long messed around on Commodore 64 and Amiga computers. However, I never loved early music software with its computer-focussed notation I didn’t know and never got my head round. I’ve learned to read music, why can’t I use a proper staff? StaffPad did just this and without the eye-watering expense of current software I was vaguely aware of (Finale and Sibelius, I’m looking at you). It does require Windows and a capacitive rather than touch stylus, but that just happened to be what I had in my hands. Something bought to write *Traveller* material more easily (in bed, on the bus, etc) and read *Traveller* PDFs anywhere, might have a wider use. So it was an obvious choice to take the plunge, dig out some old manuscript attempts to write music, create proper sheet music, and finally hear them as they meant to sound. (I can write material which is more difficult than I’m able to play. Which isn’t hard, to be honest). It wasn’t long before my attention returned to *The Spacer’s Hymn*. Being able to produce the sheet music for the hymn rather than just the words seemed to make it more of a thing of it to submit to *Freelance Traveller*. I’ve not used StaffPad for long, but I’m quite impressed with how flexible the software is and how able it is to deal with relatively complex scores; particularly for the price.

Theologically the hymn, like the United Kingdom’s national anthem, is a prayer, in this instance, to a creator God and with a strong Trinitarian theme. One version of *The Spacer’s Hymn* I produced dropped the direct reference to the Trinity (although it was still implied by the verses). For those who want to de-emphasise this aspect, the word could,

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for example, again be replaced with ‘emperor’, in the manner the ancient Chinese might refer to God as Shang-Ti “heavenly emperor” and of course connecting very nicely with *Traveller’s* Iridium Throne.

So anyone running a *Traveller* universe of types 2, 3 and 4 (“Dare to Go There”, *Freelance Traveller*, Sept./Oct. 2016) as regards religious content could easily use this with monotheistic religions, dualistic religions or even polytheistic religions which posit a creator – or at least a Lord of Jumpspace, normal space and/or travellers. The creator may or may not be ‘interactive’ – this could be a desperate plea under God View 7 or 8 (Crisis Monotheism or Remote Monotheism) that doesn’t expect much in the way of an answer, or – as intended here – a prayer under God View 5 (Interactive Monotheism) or possibly 6 (Influential Monotheism). Other God Views might be feasible. Pantheism (God View A) – God is in everything so must therefore be in space and Jumpspace or even Polytheistic Animism (God View 1) with the various natural phenomena of space, Jumpspace, planets etc associated with specific gods. See DGP’s *Grand Census* or *World Builders’ Handbook* for more on the Universal Religious Profile. I could imagine trinitarian old style congregations using such a hymn, perhaps a group such as the Disciples of the Bright Way might as well. Other potential religions can be found in BITS’ *101 Religions* (or the inclusion of it in *Supplement 15: Powers and Principalities*). It could even be a cultural appropriation outside any particular faith community. It’s not impossible that Aslan of a religious nature might use something similar, just possible the Vargr might and not at all likely the Zhodani would use such a form – unless it was indeed some kind of cultural appropriation.

I was surprised to discover when looking into the background of the hymn that it has been adopted by, and had verses written for, various other United States military organizations and such like in addition to any use by the US Navy: the US Marines,

the US Coast Guard, submariners, astronauts and others. These additional verses can be found at the URL in footnote [2] previous. It’s left as an exercise for the reader to write verses of *The Spacer’s Hymn* for the IISS, Imperial Marines, and so on.

In any case, given the dangers inherent in any kind of travel, but particularly space travel in an adventure setting, characters might be looking for whatever edge they can get.

Safe Travelling!

The Spacer’s Hymn

tune: Melita by John Bacchus Dykes

words: Timothy Collinson

Eternal Emp’ror, strong to save
All those in peril out in space,
Who bid’st the vasty voidy black
Its own appointed boundaries back:
Oh, hear us when we cry your name
For those in Jump and on the Mains.

Creator Lord and King of old,
Who fashioned heaven and the worlds,
And bid’st the planets and the suns
Their own appointed orbits run;
Oh hear us howsoever far
Those travellers journey ‘twixt the stars.

Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
Oh hear us when we seek your face,
For those in peril out in space.

O Trinity of love and power!
Our brethren’s shield in danger’s hour;
From asteroids and fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe’er they go;
Thus evermore we’ll bless your name
With hymns of praise from Jump and Main.



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There is a link to an MP3 file of this hymn played on an organ on this issue's page on the website.

The Spacer's Hymn

Music: John Bacchus Dykes

Lyrics: Timothy Collinson

Melita

Piano

E - ter - nal Emp' - ror, strong to save All those in per - il
 Cre - a - tor Lord and King of old, Who fash - ioned hea - ven
 Most Ho - ly Spi - rit! Who didst brood Up - on the cha - os
 O Tri - ni - ty of love and power! Our breth - ren's shield in

4

Pno.

out in space, Who bidd'st the vas - ty void - y black Its
 and the worlds, And bidd'st the pla - nets and the suns Their
 dark and rude, And bid its an - gry and the mult cease, And
 dan - ger's hour; From as - ter - oids and fire and foe, And Pro -

7

Pno.

own ap point - ed bound aries back: Oh, hear us when we
 own ap point - ed or - bits run; Oh, hear us how - so -
 give, for wild con fu - sion, peace; Oh, hear us when we
 tect them where - so e'er they go; Thus e - ver - more we'll

10

Pno.

cry your name For those tra - in vellers Jump and on the Mains.
 ev - er far For those in vellers jour - ney the stars.
 seek your face, For those in vellers per - il from out the stars.
 bless your name With hymns of praise from Jump in space.
 and Main.

Keratofibre Spray

by Benedikt Schwarz

Keratofibre spray, usually abbreviated keratospray or kera-spray, first appears at TL 9 on many worlds. It is sold in pressurised containers about the size of a soda can, usually with a detachable or integrated spray nozzle.

Use and Effect

When pressed, the nozzle emits a spray of fine particles (keratofibres) that are similar in structure to natural hair. The first particles attach to skin, the next ones latch to the bonded particles and so forth, forming long chains and strands that closely resemble hair. The longer the nozzle is pressed, the longer the artificial hair will be; low-TL keratospray is limited to about fifteen centimeters (and because it is generally easily detectable, is often derisively called 'spray toupee'), while TL12 spray can yield an ankle-length, luxuriant mane. The higher the production technology level, the less distinguishable keratofibre is from natural hair at close inspection (although investigative agents and customs officers may be trained to look closely for the tell-tale points where the fibres attach to the scalp).

A thick shock of keratosprayed hair can cover and hide up to 10 centimeters of existing hair, but windy conditions or sudden pressure differential (such as in an opening airlock) may reveal the hair underneath.

Keratofibre can be cut, coiffed, and washed like normal hair; it will begin to fall out after a week (although at TL 11, longer-lasting products are available at 130% the price). The process can be hastened with an infrared laser pencil, which is usually sold with the can and will simply break the bond between the artificial follicles and the scalp.

Types of keratospray

TL 9 keratospray comes in a limited range of colours and styles, all of which are obviously artificial; with rising tech level, a wide range of natural col-



ours becomes available, as do different styles: wavy, straight, frizzed, pointed, curly. There are also thousands of dazzling party colours to be had at specialty stores, which range from pastel or metallic shades through ever-shifting hues to bioluminescent patterns.

Mostly, cans come with a prefabricated colour, but several branches of LSP-Talsen also market a system where a colourless keratobase in the container can be custom-coloured by inserting one or more bullet-shaped colour cartridges.

This mix-and-match system is popular with professional hairdressers and, interestingly enough, undercover agents. There is also a blending spray (available at TL 11) that will achieve a smooth blending of the natural and artificial hair



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In A Store Near You

(Continued from page 52)

Keratofibre Sprays	TL	Mass	Cost
Keratofibre spray (15cm hair length, limited choice of colours and hair structure)	9	0.5 kg	Cr 10
Keratofibre spray (shoulder-length, wider selection of colours)	10	0.5 kg	Cr 15
Keratofibre spray (waist-length, near-natural colours and hair structures available)	11	0.3 kg	Cr 20
Keratofibre spray (any length, luminescent and special-effect colouring available)	12	0.3 kg	Cr 20
One spray container is enough to provide one person with a full head of long hair (up to the maximum length indicated) or two persons with a half-length hairstyle each.			

colour if the difference between the two is not too great.


There are separate brands of keratospray for Aslan and Vargr, owing to their different hair structure; the latter are especially fond of keratospray to cover bald or mangy patches of fur. Ironically, Imperial companies are seen to produce much better Vargr-specific sprays than firms in the Extents; few original Vargr products look anything like real fur. Human hairdressing experts are also in high demand along the border to administer the spray. If a Vargr applies keratospray xirself, xir limited colour vision can lead to spectacular and embarrassing

Supplemental/Specialty Products	TL	Mass	Cost
Laser pencil remover	9	negligible	Cr10
Blender spray	11	0.3 kg	Cr 10
LSP-Talsen colourless keratobase	12	0.3 kg	Cr 15
LSP-Talsen colour cartridge	12	negligible	Cr 3
Secret service / undercover-issue keratofibre spray (near-identical to natural hair)	12	0.3 kg	Cr 150

clashes of fur colour, largely undetectable to fellow Vargr, but very noticeable to humans.

Keratospray in use

Leisure and lifestyle are the largest market segments for keratospray, with many brands specialising in either temporary party apparel, vanity coiffure or the masking of male-pattern baldness. Professional keratospray artists are known to create elaborate and fantastic hairstyles using the spray as a medium.

Undercover agents are the second, and less-known, market segment. While they may occasionally make use of over-the-counter products bought at a local store, most professionals use specialised ranges only available through government or organised criminal channels. Those sprays are longer-lasting, designed to imitate natural hair colours, and much more likely to pass for real hair. 

Raconteurs' Rest

Predator

by Robert Weaver

"Any of you ever hear about the Massacre at Kovitch, or Aarnsdorf, or Feln? The man we're about to meet, that was all his work. General Ranjit Lloyd-Kurnikov of the Black Watch Battalion does not take prisoners, and does not accept surrenders. So don't do anything stupid, or interrupt me while I'm conducting my business. I won't be surprised or object if he shoots one of you just for looking at him." The

arms dealer known as Mr. Perkins glared at the gang of shanty-men standing in a rough line next to his truck. He hated visiting shantytowns but sometimes it was necessary to get short-term help. *If you could call this help.* Turgenev had little enough to recommend it without this lot.

Starports and the towns that grow up around them were the natural collecting point for vagrants,

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itinerant travellers and ex-space hands looking for work, or passage to the next system. When work was hard to find these men and women would dig in and build themselves 'shanty towns' on the outskirts of the port. These towns were wild, rough and dangerous, like the folks who populated them. Criminals found them useful as labor and cheap muscle. They were easy to hire, worked for cash, and nobody noticed their coming and going, or their not coming back.

And if he doesn't shoot you for interrupting, I will, he thought. Gods, I can't wait to get off of this backwater nowhere of a world. After this sale, I'm going to take a nice long vacation. If Kurnikov uses this thing as much as I think he will, the Glaudens will want to know where he got it.

One of the men, an unemployable laborer scraped up from the shantytown of a world with no discernible economy, raised his hand like a school boy. Mr. Perkins ground his teeth. "Yes?"

"I heard this guy was a general in the Alliance of Dormarc. What's he doing way out here on Turgenev?"

They sure grow them thick around here, Perkins thought. "He got cashiered as a general for losing too many battles, so he formed a private army. Armies need weapons, which is why he's meeting me. I have not met him before, but he's known everywhere. All you have to worry about is following orders, and keeping your mouth shut, and you'll get paid."

The man raised his hand again. Mr. Perkins shut his eyes, resisting the urge to shoot the man right there. "Why are we meeting him out in the woods then? Why not meet here in town?"

Before Perkins could reach his sidearm, the gang boss smacked the man on the back of the head. "That's enough outta you. We're out here so the cops don't spot us, see? What, you think the boss is

going to pay the import taxes, or let the Feds grab up his gear? This way we all get paid, and get to keep all the cash, no taxes. And that nice work suit you're wearing as a bonus. Now stow it and get to work."

Maybe I'll take this guy with me when I leave, or maybe just pay him more, Perkins mused. Not that I wouldn't shoot him too, to cover my tracks. But I'd feel bad about it. Maybe.

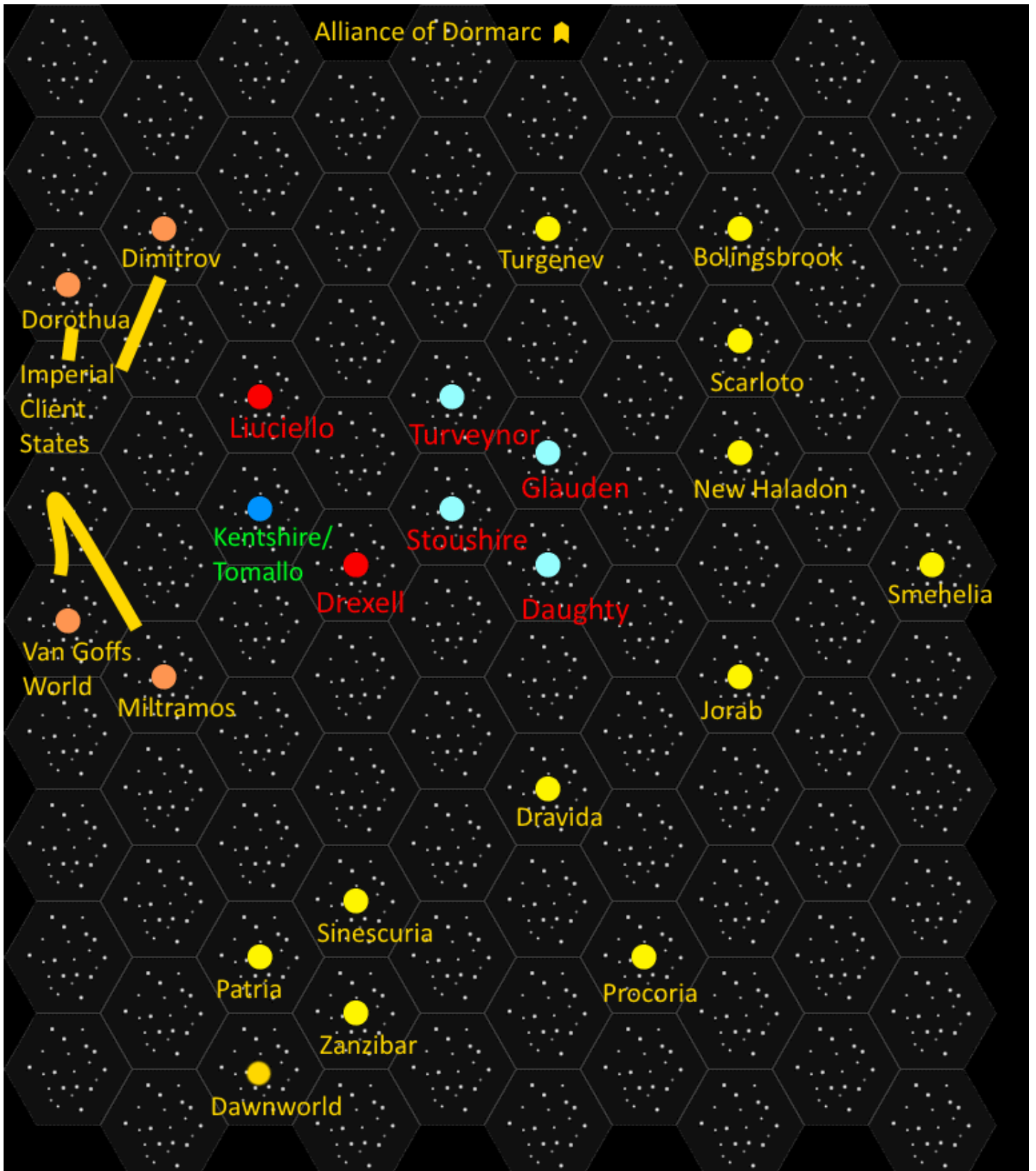
Turgenev was off the normal trade routes so there were few Glauden Navy patrols to dodge, and lightly populated so much of the planet was uninhabited. The local technology was unsophisticated, which meant the starport would have a hard time detecting the cargo he had hidden inside a normal shipping container. Despite the advantages as a meeting place, Perkins was anxious to finish this and leave. He wanted to be far away from here to get beyond the reach of the Kingdom, if they should happen to find out how the General got his weapons. His supplier in the Lycosky Trade Protectorate had already vanished before his masters realized what he'd done.

With luck this was the only time he would ever meet this client. Perkins has spent twenty years in the fierce world of the equipment trade, where a level of ruthlessness was expected. Even so, Kurnikov made him edgy. The rumor was that the man had a pathological need to completely crush every opponent. The weapon in the crate would enable him to do just that, on a scale he would not believe possible. The results would not be pretty.

Perkins put that thought from his mind by reviewing his communications that had set up this meeting. Thirty million creds, his biggest score ever, were riding on getting this right. He scowled again. Time to eat something, and double-check his departure plans. He wanted his ship's crew standing by to leave the moment he returned with his payment.

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Raconteurs' Rest



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Several hours later, Perkins was still scowling, but not at his temporary crew. They were busy arranging the contra-grav trailer they had disconnected from his truck. The gang boss had that under control, and they were working with something close to efficiency, other than making too much noise. Good thing the clearing he had selected as the meeting point was miles and miles from any local habitations.

Now he scowled at the uniformed man standing before him. He was surprised how unimpressed he was. The general wore a fancy uniform, with lots of medals which rumor said he had awarded to himself. His dozen men also had complicated and impractical uniforms with matching head-dress. Helmets was too serious a word for the colorful array of wings, badges and ornaments. Their two vehicles were marked with Black Watch logos and no attempt at camouflaging. Lloyd-Kurnikov himself was not physically imposing, and the way he stared down that long pointy nose rankled Perkins' pride. It did not escape his notice that all of the General's men had gauss rifles slung by their sides.

Still, this was business, not a social call. The Liuciello-Drexell Alliance was losing its war against the Kingdom of Glauden for the newly opened planet Tomallo. The two sides were nearly even in technology and size of forces, but the Kingdom was all under one banner. The LDA couldn't get its act together and coordinate their forces. Lloyd-Kurnikov did have a reputation for brutality, but more importantly he now had a reputation for winning. The LDA were bringing in this mercenary's Black Watch to tip the balance in their favor.

However much the General annoyed him, Perkins was here to make a deal. He hoped that his most businesslike tone would mask his dislike of his client. He gestured towards the large storage box resting on a contra-gravity pallet, next to a large utility truck. The work gang flowed around it, discon-

necting the pallet and setting it on its stand. Perkins' gang wore much more practical jumpsuits and caps. Also, only the gang boss and the men he had selected as team leaders were armed.

"Let me get right to the point, General. Your current employers are losing the war and expect you to turn it around for them. You're here because you want something that will give you a decisive edge before you go in against the Kingdom forces on Tomallo. I assure you that this will give you that edge." He gestured towards his gang boss, who barked more orders.

The work gang opened the storage box to reveal a squat, semicircular machine covered in a shiny gold-colored metal cowling. Its surface was smooth except for a single operating panel on one side and a two-meter globe resting in the top center.

"It's very pretty," the general sneered, "but I'm not impressed yet."

Your eyes say differently, Perkins thought. *But you're trying to hide it.* Probably he was going to try undercutting the price they had agreed upon. *Fine, you get the full sales pitch, then. It cost me a lot of time, money and not a little danger of discovery to acquire this bit of hardware.*

Aloud, he said "You will be. This is a Mark XIII Predator-series mobile meson accelerator. It's capable of remote operation including free-flight; it can do two hundred twenty-seven kph at a height of ten meters. It can execute intelligent evasion patterns while conducting fire missions. The Predator's range is limited only by the sensor data your battle computers can provide it. Meson accelerators can fire through any matter, including the planet we're standing on. Standard yield is seventy-five terajoules at point of detonation, but its maximum tolerance is closer to one hundred TJ. You could destroy a troopship in orbit with this, instead of fighting the troops on the ground. Units on the ground won't even know what's coming until it hits them, and the

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primary blast radius is over twenty meters. Officially this device does not have a market value because it is not available on the legal arms market. We agreed on thirty million, considering the difficulty of acquiring the hardware in the first place."

"And the Glaudens have nothing like this?" Lloyd-Kurnikov asked hurriedly, then frowned as he realized he betrayed his level of interest.

"Of course, they do, but only aboard their larger fleet elements as spinal mounts. And they have no suspicion that anyone who will be on the ground on Tomallo will have access to this technology. I acquired it from a vendor with connections to the Trade Protectorate. Nobody but the Big Four star nations have this kind of equipment on the battlefield. If we're agreed, I just need to see the money, and I've got the master control codes right here." He held up a computer memory card. Perkins' team leader and two other men stepped forward, waiting to inspect the payment.

"Very well, I have your price. As you requested, in Protectorate-backed bearer bonds," the general motioned to bring the money. Three troopers lumbered forward, each placing a large strongbox on the ground. Mr. Perkins' gang boss opened the boxes which held neat stacks of official looking documents. He dug into each box, examining for fakes or dummies. Satisfied, he looked up and reported "All looks OK, boss."

A sudden noise from the north side of the clearing caused heads to swivel. "Proximity alarm," Perkins snapped to the gang boss. "Go find out what's out there."

"Right, boss. You, and you, come with me." The gang boss drew his sidearm, pointing out his team leaders. The three men hurried towards the tree line and disappeared into the shadows. More of Perkins' men started forward, but he waved them back. "We'll wait to find out what that was before we ac-

tually finish the deal," Mr. Perkins informed the general. "As long as I still hold the operator codes, no deal has happened and there's less for witnesses to witness."

"Fine. But I'll not wait long." Lloyd-Kurnikov sniffed. A lieutenant approached him. "General, should we prepare to withdraw? He gestured at Perkins. "If this man's security isn't up to the mark, let him deal with it."

"That will be all, Lieutenant. We move when I say we move." Obediently the officer stepped back. None of his soldiers had even looked when the alarm sounded.

A minute crept by, then bursts of automatic shattered the stillness. Then voices were shouting orders, and a flare blazed skyward. Mr Perkins snatched at his comm unit. "What's happening?" he barked.

"Ambush, boss! It's the Feds, maybe a dozen of them! We're ..." the voice broke off as more fire rattled through the clearing. Then more shouting, and a grenade banged, shaking the foliage near the clearing edge.

"Give me the codes, we're leaving!" the General demanded, snatching the card from Perkins' hand. Lloyd-Kurnikov rapped out orders to his soldiers, who rushed to pack up the weapon. More shots rang out at intervals. His lieutenant unslung his weapon, but the General stopped him. "We have what we want. Set up a trailing defense with your vehicle half a kilometer behind mine. The weapon goes with me. Wait sixty seconds after we depart, then catch up." The Lieutenant saluted.

"Oh, and Lieutenant, if anyone does follow you, do not hesitate. Exterminate them. These Federals are probably still using basic slug-throwers, and their armor can't be a match for our weapons. No witnesses, Lieutenant."

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"Mount up," Mr. Perkins announced to his remaining men. "What about those guys, boss?" a henchman asked warily.

"If they survive, I'll give them a bonus. If they don't, I guess I don't have to pay them at all." The workmen hastily loaded the crates of bonds into the contra-gravity truck and piled into the rear. The truck sped away into the darkness.

General Lloyd-Kurnikov sneered at the arms dealer's hasty retreat. Despite the continued gunfire from the trees, their withdrawal would be orderly and at a standard travel pace, not a headlong flight like the criminals'. The interruption was a boon for him, anyway. He wondered how far Mr. Perkins would go before he stopped to count his money. Eventually he'd realize that he'd been undercut by several million credits. He cast a final sneer in Perkins' direction, and climbed aboard his personal vehicle. "Driver, return us to the ship, the same way we came."

As the two parties hurried off, the gunfire suddenly died away. Silence covered the glade for several minutes, then Captain Alex Kingsway, former Glauden Space Patrol navigator and recently Mr. Perkins' gang boss, emerged from the brush. He tossed aside the cap Perkins had issued him several days ago. "All clear, guys, come have a look." Scott Heath, Glauden Army medic, and Jake Radley, Space Patrol Engineer, joined Alex in the clearing, dropping Mr. Perkins' gear into a pile. Scott hesitated to drop the auto-rifle which he had planted in the trees earlier that day. "Nah, we should destroy it all." The gun, and a thermite grenade, topped the pile of gear.

Once the fire got going, Scott clapped Alex on the shoulder. "Pretty nice operation, I'd say, given that we only had two weeks to set it up. Nice work."

"It's not that there weren't about a million ways that could have all gone out the airlock, and taken us with it," Alex snorted. "I'd say it's pretty close to

a miracle we even heard the rumors about this deal in the first place."

"I still wish," Jake commented, "that we had time to contact Glauden Intelligence and let them handle it. I was sweating fuel rods from the time we hit planet-side."

"Once we found out what the General was after, and when the sale was going to happen, there wasn't time to contact the Kingdom. We were this close," Alex pinched his fingers together, "to getting smoked when Perkins' man started asking around about us. Our cover stories were collapsium-thin. Jake, you and I still look like Navy types no matter how long it's been since we showered last."

"I figured that you'd look too competent to be a shanty-man, Alex," Scott replied. "All I had to do was look drunk, which isn't hard. I got drunk a lot in the Army, so I knew I'd get picked."

Jake chuckled. "Even guys with brains can have a run of down luck, and end up in shantytown for a while. They just wait for an opportunity to come along to get out again. I don't think our cover was that poor, Alex. Besides, a guy like Perkins isn't going to expect anything but stupid out of a shanty-man. I doubt he or his flunky looked that closely at anyone."

"The easy part, I think," Alex remarked, "was positioning ourselves to get hired when Perkins came looking for local muscle. Remember that one guy, Dunphy? I thought he was going to fight me for the foreman job and ruin it for us. Once I convinced Dunphy to back off, it was easy to make myself gang boss, with you guys supporting me from the get-go."

"Once you were the boss, getting all of our other gear into place for the set-up was pretty easy." Scott conceded. "Except for that one close call with that shantymen Norbert getting nosy."

Alex took out his comms unit and pressed a button, nodding in satisfaction as a green light came

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on. The comm began sending out a low-wavelength signal. "It's working," he reported.

Jake said "By now, Eddie should have a fix on the Predator's position. Are you sure the homing unit was secure?"

Alex sighed. "Yeah, it's right where you said I should put it. Can't fall off, easy to overlook."

"Okay, tell Eddie to take the shot."

"Right," Alex dialed the comm. "Eddie, it's me."

Eddie Howard, aboard their ship, the *Standfast*, clicked on at once. "No kidding, I thought it was the king."

"Shut up. The target is under way. You got it yet?"

"Yep. Target is locked, warming up the turret now. Enjoy the fireworks."

Jake drew a detector from his pocket and swung it around, until it beeped. "I've got a read on the signal. They should be over there." He pointed towards the western horizon. "Let's see if Eddie's as good a shot as he says. This plan could still go wrong, you know."

The three stood relaxing, watching the sky. A searing bright crimson beam lit the heavens for a moment, streaking down like the wrath of God. Seconds later, a thunderous *whomp* echoed through the clearing. Fire and smoke erupted skyward over the trees. Alex spoke into the comm again. "I think you got it, Eddie. Nice shot."

"Thanks, but Jake's locator beacon made it easy. Are you ready for a pickup?"

"Yes sir. Meet you at the rendezvous in twenty minutes." Alex withdrew another transmitter from another pocket and held it out. "Now for part two. Who wants to do the honors? I got the incendiaries into all three cases."

Scott lunged, but Jake was faster. "Can't let you have all the fun," he laughed. "Besides, this part

was my idea. And just like that," Jake pressed the button with a flourish, "One arms dealer is out thirty million."

"Seems a shame to torch that much money," Scott grumbled. "I still say we could have stolen it, instead of using starfire."

"No. I'm sure he could have traced it back to us. We needed to be able to walk away from this clean," Alex replied. "This has hurt Perkins financially, but he's still got his network of contacts, and he'll want revenge. Of course, once we can put Glauden Naval Intelligence on his trail, he won't have time to worry about us."

Kilometers away, Mr. Perkins and his men scrambled to get clear of the flames that burst from the rear of their truck. Seemingly out of nowhere, fire had engulfed all three crates, and rapidly spread to the vehicle's interior. "Who in the nine hells loaded those crates onto the truck?" Mr. Perkins seethed. "Where's my gang boss?" Then he stopped short, remembering he had left the man in the treeline dealing with the Federals. Probably got himself killed. *After this I would have shot him anyway.*

Perkins boiled. Seven months of work, several favors and thirty million in non-traceable commodities going up in smoke! The men of his gang stood staring in confusion, afraid to speak while Perkins raved at them, the General, and the world at large.

As the flames consumed the last of the truck, Perkins snatched up his comm unit and hit a preset line. "It's me," he snarled. "Find out where Kurnikov's ship is docked. The bastard double-crossed me. Get our usual port controller to hold up his ship's departure. And get me another truck." He relayed coordinates then jammed the comm into a pocket. Finally an underling approached him. "What are we going to do now, boss?"

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Raconteurs' Rest

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"We're getting back to the port before the General does. If he thinks he's going to get away with cheating me out of my biggest score in years, he's dead wrong."

"Uh, are we still going to get paid?"

The shanty-man never heard the shot that killed him.

The next day Mr. Perkins met with his contact at the starport. Finding the ship had been easy, but the Black Watch troops had been unwilling to give up any information, even at gunpoint. The argument had cost several of them and some of Perkins' gang their lives, and still gave no answers.

The port officer showed Perkins some satellite data that answered the question. "You need not have worried, Mr. Perkins," the man said. "I got a source in Orbital Control that says Lloyd-Kurnikov went nowhere."

"The General was right next to the Predator when a starship in a low orbit had brought a fire

mission down on it. Both Kurnikov and the weapon were destroyed," the officer explained. "The ship's not local, and I don't know for certain who it was. The ship never landed at the starport. Its sensor and stealth technology were too good for our sensors to tell anything about it, other than it was there."

"How in the nine hells did the Kingdom find out about the Predator sale?" Mr. Perkins yelled.

"Are you sure it was them, Mr. Perkins?"

"It could only have been the Glaudens. No one else would have been able to arrange that fire mission, and only the Glaudens would want to keep the Predator out of Kurnikov's hands."

Perkins' assistant approached warily. "There's one bit of good news, sir. I think I found out who it was that let it slip about the sale."

"I very much want to have a talk with this person," Mr. Perkins' voice was liquid nitrogen. "Maybe, just maybe, he can give me a lead on who is responsible for this. Before I kill him." ❁

Doing It My Way

Low-Prep Adventure Design

Bill White and Mel White

This is a technique to run a *Traveller* adventure with little, if any, referee prep. The basic process is to use a set of questions or dialog prompts at the start of a game session. The prompts are used via in-character discussion to set the scene for the adventure. The prompts can be adjusted to influence the type of adventure that eventually takes place. You can envision the characters having these discussions while in final approach to a planetary starport, while assembled in a safe house, while visiting the ubiquitous starport bar, or any other appropriate location. The process works well for characters who are al-

ready known to each other but can also work for newly assembled characters sharing information.

Adventure Lead-Ins

Every adventure starts on a particular planet. It may not stay there, but the adventure ends when the situation suggested by the answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the adventure is resolved. The next adventure begins on the next planet, with a new set of questions leading to a new situation. A referee might select the Lead-In based on the Universal World Profile of a particular planet, describe the planet based on the Lead-In, or generate a planet

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and select the Lead-In based on a discussion with the players.

To use one of these adventure lead-ins, the instructions to the players would sound something like this: "In order to establish our opening situation, we'll use the questions listed here (or on index cards, etc.) as prompts for a discussion between characters. Each player should select one question for their character. The character then has a conversation with another character that answers the question." Of note, this process is not a player to player discussion or group conversation. Instead, the goal is to see what answers emerge from the characters' perspective. From those answers, the referee can create scenes to address the information that has emerged.

Samples

The Big Grab

1. What big prize does this world hold for someone with enough moxie to grab it?
2. Who's the off-world big shot who's come looking for the prize, and why do you hate them?
3. Who is the sketchy local with an inside line on the prize, and how is he or she connected to you or one of your friends?
4. Why do the citizens of this planet think the prize is perfectly safe?
5. What rumor about the prize did you hear from someone in this planet's government or the starport authority?

Colonial Shenanigans

1. What ill-conceived policy has the homeworld government just put into effect on this colony that is causing you a gigantic headache?
2. Who is leading the opposition to this policy, and why do you admire them?

3. Who will benefit from this policy, and what resources do they have at their command to bulldoze the opposition?
4. What unforeseen difficulty has got you stuck here until well after the conflict is resolved?
5. Who is about to be thrown into a buzzsaw because of the conflict, and why does your heart bleed for them?

Prison Planet

1. Why has no prisoner ever escaped this planet?
2. What is the prison's weak spot? How do we take advantage of the vulnerability?
3. What deception is necessary for our plan to succeed?
4. At what point is our plan most vulnerable?
5. How will the guards react if we are discovered?

Alien Bazaar

1. What alien trade good is available here for a limited time? Why now?
2. What do the aliens want in return? From where can we get it?
3. What rumors have we heard about the aliens' ability to protect themselves and that which they are offering?
4. How is the alien item useful and dangerous to those who possess it?
5. Which powerful merchant seeks to gain the alien item at any cost?

Murder Mystery

1. Someone you know or know of has been murdered. Who was it?
2. Who is the powerful enemy you share with the victim?
3. Why are you likely to be the next victim?
4. Why don't you have an alibi for the time of the murder?

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5. Who now owns the debt you owe the murder victim?

Salvage

1. What rumors have we heard of this derelict vessel?
2. Why would a derelict vessel remain unfound on this part of the planet?
3. Who else searches for this vessel and what will they do to us if they find us here?
4. What danger remains hidden in the derelict?
5. What technology is critical to our survival on the derelict?

Alternatives and Development

Many other adventure lead-ins could be created, and many other questions are possible within even these sample lead-ins. Changing one or two questions can dramatically change the set-up for the adventure. For example, in “Prison Planet” change the first question to “Why have you not yet escaped from this planet?” and the adventure changes from a liberation mission to one of survival, evasion and escape. In “Salvage” a change from why the vessel has not yet been found on the planet to one asking why the derelict has not been found in a certain region of space similarly changes the adventure.

On a related note, the answers developed by the players (through their characters) are essential to shaping the adventure. Imagine an “Alien Bazaar” adventure where the aliens want human memories rather than credits or other material items. Obtaining the alien item, therefore, requires having the “best” memories, which, we’ll say, are life or death experiences. A large part of the adventure will center on achieving those memories. Furthermore, recognizing that the aliens deal in memory, we would build on that idea in the other lead-in questions by creating rumors of the aliens’ psychic powers and psionic benefits and risks for the item itself.

As a final note, in lead-in questions with multiple elements, letting a different character provide the answer to each element can add interesting and unique twists compared to when the same character answers both.

It is also the case that the referee can encourage players to use the information developed in the initial scene to identify actions they want their characters to take. Referees can then frame scenes in response to those actions.

Trouble Shooting

The combination of answers seems incoherent.

My advice is to embrace the incoherence. It may not make sense at the time but as play develops things may fall into place. Listen for player explanations of how things do connect and incorporate those explanations in the fiction. Everything does not need to be explained at the start of play—or even by the end of play! The purpose of this technique is to “get to play”—to avoid long monologues from the Referee explaining what is going on.

Next steps are unclear.

Start somewhere! Pick one fact or piece of information that emerged from the initial character discussion and frame a scene based on that fact. Involve the player characters. For example, in “Colonial Shenanigans”, if the answer to why the characters are stuck on the planet is due to a naval blockade then the characters are approached by a blockade runner needing a distraction at the time a shipment arrives. The player characters could provide that distraction, wittingly or not. Alternatively, pick something that the character discussion identified as important to the player characters (an ally, an object, a location) and threaten it. Let the players then decide what they want to do about it. As an example, again in “Colonial Shenanigans”, if the characters learn that the opposition leader they ad-

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Doing It My Way

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mire faces arrest and mindwipe, do the characters care enough to act?

One player has all the answers.

Watch for this! Intercede as the referee to make sure one player doesn't dominate the discussions. The process should see each character using a single prompt to frame a discussion with another character about that prompt. While we certainly want players to be enthusiastic about the process, we also want to ensure everyone gets their turn in the spotlight.

Up Close and Personal

Alistair Plankwell Cantor

profiled by David Shayne

Alistair Plankwell Cantor 9568C9 Age 22 Cr0

1 Term Navy (Lieutenant)

Shotgun - 1, Engineering - 1, Admin - 1

Possessions: Blade

Young Alistair, a scion of the social climbing Cantor family lately of the planet Mertactor/District 268 was pushed to join the Navy by his parents with the idea that great rank would lead inevitably to advancement in the circles of high society. At first the plan seemed to be working as he received the Emperor's commission and began what seemed to be an illustrious career in engineering. His diligent attention to duty and continual studying should have led to his advancement up the rungs of power from lowly technician to Chief Engineer to the con and then in due time to the flag bridge. Alas, a tiny incident toward the end of his first and only term of service marred his otherwise spotless record.

While serving aboard a *Gionetti*-class cruiser engaged in piracy suppression, Alistair was to earn a good deal of notoriety for singlehandedly repelling a boarding attempt by pirates of the most ruthless sort. Knocked unconscious by the breaching charges the corsairs used to gain entrance to the engineering

Conclusion

An Adventure Lead-In process is not unique for use in *Traveller*. However, the process combined with (certainly Classic) *Traveller's* planet generation rules, and other random generation tables enables the referee and players to put together a memorable adventure. The Referee doesn't have to create adventure material that may or may not get used, or to shoe-horn the characters into material that does exist. ❁

decks and left for dead, Ali took up the nearest weapon to hand—a shotgun from the corpse of one of the raiders—and went hunting for brigands in the labyrinths of the ship's access-ways. He accounted for 18 of 31 of the pirates but also in the heat of battle killed 3 of his fellow Spacers including 2 superior officers. Perhaps most damaging to his career, though, was when he led the boarding party that went to the pirates' ship: among the casualties was the recently missing daughter of a minor Marquis. That the daughter might have been one of the pirates was not enough of an excuse.

This action earned Ensign Cantor a promotion for bravery, a finely crafted blade inscribed with the motto "Never Surrender" (presented by a cabal of the other ranks willing to overlook the death of a hapless able spaceman in light of the destruction of the boarding party and the pragmatic removal of two disliked martinets), the nickname "Kid Vicious" given partly in respect but mostly in fear of what most believe to have been a psychotic (if fortuitous) rage, and an honorable discharge from the navy.

Lieutenant Alistair "Kid Vicious" Plankwell mustered out broke and is now looking for employment. Perhaps in the engineering compartment of a tramp trader. ❁

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IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

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

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

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller Releases

May/June 2018

- **Baggage Books** has released *Into the Dark*.
- **Zozer Games** has released *Fast Magic*, *Archaic Firearms*, *Hostile Technical Manual*, *Low Tech Weapons*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Anderson and Felix Optional Components Guide*, *Unmerciful Frontier: The CCA Sourcebook*, *21 Organizations (2nd Edition)*.
- **Verdigris Press** has released *Modes: Object Quality System*.
- **El Cheapo Products** has released *El Cheapo Minis Vol. 5: Crew Folk*, *El Cheapo Minis Vol. 6: Crew Folk 2*, *El Cheapo Minis Vol. 7: Future Folk 2*.
- Far Future Enterprises has released *Grogard: Ruminations on 40 Years in Gaming*.
- **Michael Brown** has released *Spirit of Flowers*, *The Pandora Sanction*, *Operation: Gemini*, *The Bedlam Extraction*, *Apotheosis*.
- **Game Designers' Workshop** has released *T5 Gazelle Close Escorts*.
- **Pyromancer Publishing** has released *Context Sensitive*, *Schwalbe Long Range Scout*, *Teuira Class Cargo Freighter*.
- **Timothy Watts Artworks** has released *Fighter Art*.
- **Fat Goblin Games** has released *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Aldebarans (race)*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Artopods (race)*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Balloon Men (race)*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Brainman (race)*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Crater-Man (race)*.
- **Moon Toad Publishing** has released *Cepheus Engine Spacecraft Design Guide (with the cooperation of Samardan Press, and including print-on-demand)*
- **Alphecca Publishing** has released *Peregrine Light Dropship*, *Creatures of the Galaxy—Nidhogg*, *Creatures of the Galaxy—Banshee Hawk*.
- **Okumarts Games** has released *Extrastellar Set Four: Galactic Rockers*.
- **FSpace Publications** has released *Ship's Boat and Air Rover Ship Plans*.



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.

Rights

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

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

Formats

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

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

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

