Featured:

After-Action Report: TravCon 2019 (UK)

by Timothy Collinson

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.

Contents

From the Editor

Lots of little articles is as good as a few long ones. They fill up the magazine, with lots of different things to cover a lot of different *Traveller* interests. Lots of little articles *isn't* as good as a few long ones. They deplete the article reserve, making it harder to find enough material for the next issue without begging even harder than usual. Or cutting the length of an issue. I don't like either of those alternatives. Over the next weeks, I'm going to be posting ideas and requests on the TML and in the forums; I'd *really* like it if I got a good response to them. Please? ⚙

Great Rift Adventure 3: Flatlined

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Great Rift Adventure 3: Flatlined. Martin J. Dougherty. Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com 41pp., PDF (Softcover forthcoming) Price TBD (see note)

The Author received the PDFs as part of the deliverables for the Great Rift Kickstarter, and will receive the printed editions when available.

Most *Traveller* adventures start out with the characters having knowledge of their own capabilities, and a selection of useful equipment, often with the opportunity to acquire more, and a general idea of what they'll be up against.

"Flatlined" is different. The player-characters start by waking up from cold sleep (low berth), with partial amnesia, and no possessions at all. They are in a ship – or a small craft; they don't know which, yet – that seems to have crashed. So now what?

The introduction to this adventure specifically calls out the flexibility built in to this adventure, noting that the described events is only one way that things could go. This is not going to be a blast-any-obstacle adventure; resources (and information) will be strictly limited in several ways, so the player-characters will have to creatively think their way out of their many problems.

The referee, on the other hand, has plenty of information available, including the story behind the player-characters' presence in this adventure (which won't really be relevant if this is played as a one-off at a convention, but could have implications if used as an Episode in an ongoing campaign).

The craft that the player-characters find themselves on is an in-system "Smallhauler", not a starship, and is well-described (including the damage that it sustained in its crash). There is the usual specification sheet and isometric-view deckplan; top-view playmat plans might be useful in the early part of the adventure, before the player-characters make their way out – as they will have to, since the crashed craft is sinking.

In addition to resource limitations, the player-characters will discover that there are time limitations, as well, due in part to a beastie that is profiled in the module and which can be quite nasty. On the other hand, taking some time to learn about them could make it easier to deal with the problems they pose… provided that you don't take enough time for *them* to deal with the problems *you* pose.

This adventure has the player-characters moving from crisis to crisis, often under-informed and lacking resources. At key points, the referee should want the player-characters to react fast, rather than taking time to think – and the actions they end up taking could well define what options will be available later in the adventure.

There is no real *denouement*; once the adventure is "over", the player-characters will still be in a difficult situation and lacking resources, though they will be in a better position to get help.

There are a number of characters profiled; the player-characters should not be told everything

about those they encounter, but should be allowed to form their own opinions based on their incomplete knowledge and the way the characters react to them, to each other, and to the situation.

All in all, an interesting concept for an adventure, and one that need not be associated with a Rift campaign – pretty much any backwater area away from trade routes can serve. For the referee who likes to have pregenerated adventures on hand, this is a definite buy; the creative referee who rarely uses pregens can still mine this one for ideas to incorporate into self-gens. Players who dislike having adventures spoiled by preknowledge should, of course, avoid this. ✹

Doing It My Way

Converting Worlds from Milieu 1100 to Milieu 0

by Bill Prankard

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine website in 1996.

This process is designed to convert the old Classic *Traveller* or *MegaTraveller* year 1100 worlds to something that should plausibly represent the worlds as they were in Year 0. If you want to use this to create your own Milieu 0/First Survey sectors, go right ahead. Personally, I am using them for the "Referee's Playgrounds" of Zarushagar, Fornast and Delphi sectors, which will not have anything published by Imperium Games (so claims *First Survey*), but did have data published by GDW.

Bear in mind that these rules could probably use some adjustment; I invite any comments or additions you may have.

1. First, find the tech level for all former Vilani Empire/Rule of Man worlds (which is most of what the Imperium has gotten to by now). The documented maximum TL is 13, so reduce anything higher than that to 13 (D); if you want a higher tech world, that's your prerogative.

2. Now that your world's tech has been capped off, or left alone if not greater than 13, it's time to retrogress that tech level.

If current TL is...	Subtract...
10-13 (A-D)	1D6
7-9	1D3 (or 1D6 / 2, round up)
0-6	no change

3. Now use the TL reduction to degrade the starport.

If the tech level was reduced by...	Reduce the starport class by...
1	no change
2	1 (A to B, B to C, etc.)
3-4	2 (A to C, B to D, etc.)
5-6	3 (A to D, B to E, etc.)

Special note: Personally, I don't like the idea of low tech societies (i.e., non-stellar or non-space-faring) without interstellar contact having high level starports. If you wish to incorporate this idea in your retrogression, use this rule:

If the world is in the Imperial Sphere (i.e. claimed by the 3rd Imperium) leave the starport as you have it now at this stage.

If the world has been contacted(i.e. within the merchant or scout contact areas), cap off the Starport using this chart:

If the Tech Level is...	The Starport should be no better than...
7-8	C
6	D
5	E

If the world has not been contacted, reduce the Starport Caps by one additional level (D, E, X)

Again, if you want to make a world that has a higher level starport, go ahead; I would suggest it be part of a Pocket Empire, though.

4. Next, figure population: For those worlds that have reliable tech levels needed for surviving on a harsh world, you don't need to worry about "maximum sustainable population". Those TLs are 7+ for tainted atmospheres, and 9+ for Exotic, Corrorsive, or Insidious atmospheres. If you have a world with these atmospheres, and the TL has been reduced below the indicated levels,

'nuke' the world (make it X---000-0 Ba).

Find the maximum sustainable population for TL 7- worlds; I used the same method that *Traveller: The New Era* used for preparing a world for the Collapse:

Assume that the maximum sustainable population for the world is code A (billions), then

If the world is…	reduce the maximum sustainable population by…
Size 4-	2
Size 5-7	1
Atmosphere 4	2
Atmosphere 5, 7, or 9	1
Hydrographics 0	2
Hydrographics 1-2	1
Hydrographics A	1

This gives a cap for population of a lower tech world; I assumed that higher tech levels could sustain more people, and TL 8 or 9 should be sufficiently reliable to sustain life in any planetary environment.

5. Next, reduce the population to account for 1100 years of population reduction: Subtract the tech level reduction from the world population multiplier. If that would result in a population multiplier of 0 or less, reduce the population code by 1 and add 10 to the population multiplier, then do the subtraction.

   If the resulting population code is 5 or less, reduce the tech level by one more point; if either the population or tech reduction would also require reducing the starport class as well, do it.

6. Now, the only thing left to do is determine the government and law level codes. Use the reduced population figure to find the government and law levels as you would for a newly generated world:

   Gov= population-7 + 2d6

   Law=Gov-7 +2d6.

7. Next, determine the presence of Naval and Scout bases. Ignore Year 1100 data, and recalculate with the new retrogressed starport using the basic world building rules:

A Naval Base will only appear at a class A or B starport, only on 8+ on 2D6.

A Scout Base will appear on 7+ on 2D6 at a class D starport, 8+ at a class C starport, 9+ at a class B starport, and 10+ at a class A starport. Scout Bases do not appear at class E or X starports.

Example

1100 data: Shalishii A584998-F Im 310 G2V

Shalishii is in Vland sector, in an area actively claimed by the Third Imperium in Milieu 0.

1. Cap the world's tech level: Since the 1100 TL of F (15) is higher than D (13) reduce it:
   A584998-D Im 310 G2V

2. Since the reduced tech level is still greater than 10, reduce it by 1D6; I roll a 4:
   A584998-9 Im 310 G2V

3. Reduce the starport. Since the tech level was reduced by 4, reduce the starport by 2 steps:
   C584998-9 Im 310 G2V

   This world is in Imperial space (Vland sector) and its tech level is high enough to support the current starport, so no further reduction in the Starport is necessary.

   This world also has a high enough tech level to avoid a population cap due to environment, so there is no need to cap the population. (If the tech level had been 7-, the maximum sustainable population would be 9, due to size 5)

4. Reduce the population multiplier by 4: 3-4 is -1; reduce the population code by one (to 8) and 10-1 makes the population multiplier a 9:
   C584898-9 Im 910 G2V

5. Redetermine the government and law levels according to the standard rules: For government, roll 2D6 (result 7) - 7 (result 0) + population (8, result 8); the new government code is 8.

(Continued from page 4)

6. For law level, roll 2D6 (result 9) - 7 (result 2) + government (8, result 10); the new law level is a strict A (and they must have relaxed it somewhat over the next 1100 years).

    C58488A-9 Im 910 G2V

7. Determine the presence of bases: Since the starport is a class C starport, we do not roll for a Na-

val Base. We do roll for a Scout Base; since we have a class C starport, we need to roll 8+ on 2D6; we roll 5, and there is no Scout Base present either.

Now we have our downgraded world:

Year 0:   Shalishii C58488A-9 Im 910 G2V

Year 1100:   Shalishii A584998-F Im 310 G2V

❂

The DiGroat Packet Line

by Bill Cameron

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine website in 2007.

Overview

Headquartered on the Imperial border system of Grote/Glisten, the DiGroat Packet Line operates tightly scheduled transports between that world and the Caladbolg, Glisten, and Strouden systems. The fact that those three systems are part of the Imperial X-boat network is no coincidence as the line's vessels are meant to carry information first, with passengers and freight second. The line currently flies six vessels, each capable of jump-4. There are four 1,500 dTon packets, a single 1,000 dTon "swing" packet, and a single 400 dTon courier which is leased from the Marches Auxiliary Naval Service.

Current Operations

The DiGroat Packet Line is a wholly owned subsidiary of DiGroat Holdings, LIC. Grote's Clan Addakumak is the majority shareholder of that parent company; however, several other clans, individuals, and companies hold positions in the firm, too. As with all DiGroat Holdings subsidiaries, Clan Addakkumak observes an extremely strict policy with regards to operation of the line. The Clan and its businesses receive no favors, price breaks, or other considerations when dealing with DPL. This policy has stood the Addakkumak well for centuries, first

being applied to Grote's Herreshoff Yards prior to the Third Frontier War, and is the centerpiece of the clan's reputation as fair, if sharp, business dealers.

The hallmark of DPL's operations is the tight scheduling of its transport's flights. Every 400 hours, a DPL packet leaves Grote for Strouden or Glisten, and every 400 hours, a packet leaves those two worlds for Grote.

Also, every 400 hours, the DPL courier will leave either Grote or Caladbolg for the other system. A packet departs when it is due to depart. Only equipment breakdowns can affect the schedule, empty staterooms or empty cargo holds do not matter.

The line's Strouden route passes through Havrosette. DPL owns part of an orbital refueling/resupply business in that system to support its operations there. The Glisten route passes through Weiss where a Class A starport and its orbital components are available. There is no intermediate stop on the Caladbolg route so no support on that route is required.

DPL's four 1,500-dTon *Viscount Rhyl*-class transports fly the Strouden and Glisten routes exclusive-

ly. Laid down after the Fifth Frontier war, these vessels are each capable of jump-4 and 1G acceleration. The line's sole 1,000 dTon packet, the nearly one hundred year old *Gertrude K. Skib*, has the same drive performance. Acting as the firm's "swing ship", *Skib* fills in on the Glisten and Strouden routes whenever the other packets require maintenance downtime. The same vessel also flies the Caladbolg route four times each standard year while *Zaunkoenig*, DPL's 400-dTon courier, flies the Caladbolg route solely.

Every DPL ship carries a communications suite modeled on the IISS systems found aboard X-boats and tenders. These suites are backed up by extensive data storage modules. Those modules are theoretically capable of storing upwards of 500 hours of X-boat message traffic but they rarely do so in practice. Instead, a portion of this data storage is rented by various commercial concerns, concerns which range in size up to megacorporations. The security surrounding these data modules is quite high.

Passenger accommodations aboard DPL's packets are officially limited to double occupancy middle passages. Passage is also officially sold on a first come basis. Naturally, there are occasional exceptions to this and DPL will try to accommodate passengers with certain status. Passages already sold will bought back at a premium to create however many single staterooms are required and the stewards will be instructed to cater to the occupants. None of the packets have dedicated low berth facilities. Low berths and their occupants are carried between systems as freight, however, so the number of low passages on any given trip will vary.

DPL almost never engages in any speculative trading, although they routinely carry speculative goods as freight for other parties. Nearly all the freight the line carries is of some priority, usually unique or irreplaceable high-tech goods and equipment, and thus is freighted at a premium. This is where DPL's tight scheduling pays off; customers who absolutely require certain items by a certain time can depend on the line to deliver.

Nearly all of the passengers and freight the line handles are moved along the Glisten and Strouden routes. While the Caladbolg courier only carries small parcels and carefully vetted passengers, DPL's larger "swing" packet does fly the Caladbolg route four times each year.

History

The end of the Third Frontier War found Grote newly admitted to the Imperium and economically devastated. The Sacnotian Occupation had lasted longer than the war and during that period many of the system's mercantile clans had either fled or gone bankrupt while most of the population had either left already or was planning on leaving. The Addakkumak, returning to Grote to rebuild their economic empire, worried constantly that they would not be able to pull the system out of its downward spiral.

It was immediately apparent that Grote's postwar economy would require strong links with the Imperial economy it had formerly kept at arm's length. If this reconstruction and rebuilding were to succeed, businesses on Grote would need timely information about Imperial markets, policies, and politics. Accordingly, the Addakkumak launched a private data service by mid-990. The service initially flew jump-3 routes to Marastan and Caladbolg with the express purpose of connecting Grote with the Imperium's X-boat network. The Addakkumak regularly sold data space and small cargo aboard the vessels while following their strict "No Preferences" policy because any economic growth in the system was by definition good.

The system's economy had rebounded enough by the mid-990s for a jump-3 route between Grote and Forine to be added. At this point, the Addakku-

(Continued from page 6)

mak reorganized the data service into a fast packet service. The new company, DiGroat Packet Line, was a subsidiary of DiGroat Holdings LIC from the first and investments by clans and individuals on Grote were solicited. The additional capital, plus a growing economy, allowed the new company to begin a scheduled 1000-hour service between Grote and Glisten with jump-3 vessels.

DPL began its first jump-4 service between Grote and Glisten in 1000 with vessels that flew an 800-hour schedule. The line's Marastan service was dropped the same year.

In 1022, DPL began 400-hour, jump-4 service between Grote and Glisten with three *Hamtramck*-class packets built for that purpose. Jump-4, 400-hour service between Grote and Strouden followed in 1025 with an additional three *Hamtramck*s.

Built with the help of the Marches Auxiliary Naval Service, nearly all six vessels of the *Hamtramck* class proved to be successful ships. The MANS subsidies meant that DPL's packets could be imperialized at need. *Hamtramck* herself was lost to enemy action during the 5th Frontier War, while *Clawson* suffered a major action during the 4th Frontier War. Only one of the vessels is still in service with DPL, the "yard queen" *Gertrude K. Skib*. The other three have been sold to governments and businesses in Foreven and the Trojan Reaches.

DPL's jump-3 Forine route was dropped in 1071 when the political climate on Forine meant service to that system was no longer profitable. The final jump-3 route, which serviced Caladbolg, was replaced with jump-4 service after the 4th Frontier War with the purchase of the courier *Zaunkoenig*.

After 1111, with the loss of *Hamtramck*, the purchase of the courier, the abandonment of Forine service, and Grote's growing economy, the four vessels of the 1,500 dTon *Viscount Rhyl*-class were laid down, replacing the older packets as they became available. Like their predecessors, the new packets also received a MANS construction subsidy.

Editor's Note: Specifications for the Hamtramck- *and* Viscount Rhyl-*class Provincial Packets appeared in the Feb/Mar 2015 issue and may be found in the Shipyard's Classic Traveller Designs section.* ✪

Traveller At DunDraCon 2019

by Joshua Levy

The Setting: DunDraCon 43 at the San Ramon (California) Marriott over President's Day weekend. It is a four day convention focusing on RPGs, but also including miniatures, CCGs, board games, and live action role playing (LARPs). The con started in the mid 1970s, and is now over 2000 people, completely taking over the hotel, and with many people staying at nearby hotels as well. I love DunDraCon for many reasons, but here are the top three: First, there are no extra fees. Once you pay for the con, you can register for all the official games, attend all seminars, watch movies in the anime room, walk the dealer's room, etc. Second, they use a "no waiting" sign up system for games, where you submit your first, second, and third choices for games in a session, and software randomly chooses who gets their first choices. But after the first session, it remembers if you've been lucky in past sessions, and adjusts your odds. If you have not gotten your first choice in the past, you are more likely to get it in the future. Third, every official game is in its own room; No shared noise.

There are three types of gaming: official games (described below), open gaming (free tables in a large room and flags which say "players wanted"),

and organized gaming (D&D, *Pathfinder* and *Star-finder* organized by Wizards of the Coast or Paizo).

DunDraCon attempts to fill each official game with people who signed up ahead of time, but if there are empty seats they are filled "first come first served" from people waiting at the game (this is called "crashing"). Time slots are available from 4-10 hours in length, but 6 hours are the most common for RPGs. In addition to actual gaming, there are seminars, swap meets, Protospiel (testing games under development), freecycle tables, miniature painting, a dealer's room, etc. There is a special room for kids and another room set aside for teenage gaming. Both of these have some level of adult supervision.

The Adventurers: The Levy Family. I started going to DunDraCon in the late 1980s. My girlfriend – later wife – started going in the late 1990s, and our daughter has been going for over 10 years. This year is a little bitter sweet, however, since our daughter is a senior in high school, and this is likely the last year that we will be attending as a family.

Plot Summary: This year DunDraCon had just over 180 official RPGs. Four of them used *Traveller* rules and two more were set in a *Traveller* Universe. At first glance, 6 out of 180 RPGs doesn't sound like a lot of *Traveller*. But this is your schedule if you only want to play *Traveller*:

- Friday, 6pm, for 6 hours:
  "Arrow of the Gods" (Classic *Traveller*)

- Saturday, noon, for 12 hours:
  "You Can't Take The Stars From Me (*pts 1 & 2*)"
  (*Savage Worlds Traveller*)

- Saturday, 6pm, for 6 hours:
  "Lost in Space" (*Traveller* Edition V 1.0)

- Sunday, 10am, for 6 hours:
  "A Hostile Rescue" (Mongoose *Traveller*)

- Monday, 8am, for 8 hours:
  "Liberty Port: Renovis" (*MegaTraveller*)

You could play *Traveller* every day, and use a wide range of *Traveller* rules and adventures.

The *Traveller* Game: I only played in one *Traveller* game, but it spanned two sessions: "You Can't Take The Stars From Me" run by Paul Coulter. This game appealed to me because I like *Traveller* and was curious about the *Savage Worlds* rule system. Most *Savage Worlds* games are a little "cartoony" and superhero/superpower oriented, and I don't like those, so this looked like a good opportunity to experience the *Savage Worlds* rules in a setting I like. It was amazing and interesting in many ways:

The *Savage Worlds* rules are slightly more complex than *Traveller* rules, but not as complex as D&D, *Pathfinder*, *Warhammer*, etc. They worked well in a *Traveller* setting. (Since we were given characters to choose from to play, I have no insight into the character creation process.)

The setting was clearly *Traveller*, but with a lot of stuff added in from other science fiction settings. We had Wookie/Yeti, light sabers, and an ion cannon from *Star Wars*, Klingons from *Star Trek*, and Androids from *Aliens*. I really loved this. I've been adding aliens, weapons, and general tech from other science fiction settings to my own *Traveller* Universe for years, but this Referee had done more of it, and integrated it better. This setting was an inspiration to me for where my setting could go, and how much fun it was to add more into it.

The adventure was classic *Traveller*: take this type-S scout and deliver it to a secret base before you muster out. What could possibly go wrong?

The plot involved fighting, rescuing, exploring, aliens, tech, starship combat, etc. Good choices in one scene could make future scenes easier, and my character was interesting to play. (My character had been created by Paul's daughter, and she deserves a shout-out for that.) So the game had what I would call the "good trifecta": A good setting, a good plot, and good characters.

The Referee had created his own starship combat system which was based on *Battlestations* (I think). I found this intriguing, because I am in the process of beta-testing my own starship combat system as a drop in replacement for *Traveller*'s system. Although my system was based on *Starfinder* rather than *Battlestations*, I thought we had converged on very similar design ideas: two dimensional hex battle maps, all characters active/important in starship combat, a greater variety of starship weapons, faster combat, etc.

Sidenote: I do hope to publish my system in some form in 2019. If you are interested in beta-testing it, send me some email: `publicjoshualevy@gmail.com`.

The Referee had a big screen TV, which he placed screen up on the table, and used to display floorplans and images. For the past few years, some Referees at conventions have displayed images on TVs, but this was the first time I've seen this used as a "smart table". At the time, I thought it was very cool, but in retrospect, I think a display screen and a standard battle map might be better. There was some switching back and forth when showing images during times when the floorplan was also active. On the other hand, we never needed to wait for the Ref to draw a floor plan. Obviously, the future is a Referee with one computer driving at least two big flatscreens one of which is the floorplan and the other is a display screen for images.

I had never seen a "one game, two sessions" organization at a convention before. Basically, there were two sessions: part 1 from noon to 6pm and part 2 from 6pm to midnight. They were separate official games, in separate sessions. You registered separately for each, and could register for just part 1, just part 2, or both. Plus, depending on your luck, you might actually get into one or the other or both.

I had registered for part 1, but had not gotten in. At noon there were 5 crashers hoping to get into a 6

person, fully registered game, but I was crasher #1. One registered player did not show up, and the Referee had two extra characters, so three of us got to play. For part 2, I had not registered, but out of the 6 players who registered in part 2, only 3 showed up, so 5 of us from the first part got to play in the second. This worked perfectly, since 5 out of 8 of the players in part 1 wanted to continue their characters in part 2. However, the 3 players who joined part 2, without playing in part 1 were definitely less connected to the adventure than those who'd started earlier. I think they had a little less fun, as they needed to get up to speed on what was happening, from both plot and setting points of view.

Cautionary tales from other con games: I've played a lot of convention games over the years, and a lot of *Traveller*. I think that *Traveller* as a system and setting has a lot of advantages for convention use. In particular, it is easy to play and the setting is intuitive and usually doesn't require a long explanation of technology, history, setting, etc. However, I do think there are a few pitfalls for a *Traveller* referee to avoid when organizing a convention game:

Especially in classic *Traveller* characters, there are often few skills to use. Therefore, it is important for the referee to make sure those skills really can be used in the adventure, and to explain the "breadth" of a *Traveller* skill. Also, since even one point of skill is a big difference, for skills that only will be used once or twice, it is also important that if one character has skill X, that no other character has it at X+1. If they do, the first character might as well not have it at all.

Because there are a lot of *Traveller* players out there, a Referee needs to expect that for any given convention game some players are going to know the setting details, and some are not, and handle both situations. You don't want to make knowing the details of the technology or setting critical to the

game, because that excludes/frustrates the players without *Traveller* experience. On the other hand, you do want to leverage the background, so that the players who know *Traveller* will get the experience they are looking for.

Point 2 is especially important for the "crunchy" military details. *Traveller* seems to particularly appeal to people who like military equipment and tactical details, and so the Referee needs to appeal to those folks without making it boring or frustrating

for the other gamers who are less interested in them (or who don't know them).

The Next Adventure: As usual, DunDraCon was a great gaming experience this year, and I'm already looking forward to next year.

Sidenote: I do sometimes wonder if there is a way to make any generic RPG convention more *Traveller* friendly, by adding a poster listing all the *Traveller* games, having a *Traveller* meet up, and/or having a public Slack channel to discuss *Traveller* at the Convention. Something to think about. ✦

The Prep Room

Jottings #9: Penalties for Transgression

by Jeff Zeitlin

Society represents a contract between its members individually and collectively. Violations of that contract will be judged according to the rules of the society, and penalties exacted. This jotting is meant to give a quick overview of such penalties.

Terminology

Transgressor refers to an individual who has committed acts that are deemed unacceptable under the terms of the society's contract.

Transgression refers to the act so deemed.

Penalties

Shaming

The transgressor and transgression are made public, and the members of the society publicly rebuke the transgressor for the transgression. The transgressor may be restrained, often in an uncomfortable and/or embarrassing position, and the form of the rebuke may not be strictly verbal, though it is rarely (physically) damaging. Shaming continues for either a set time, or until the transgressor expresses

contrition (and is so judged to have by the members of the society).

Examples:

- Stocks[1], Pillory[2], and related items such as the German *pranger*[3], the Shrew's Fiddle[4], the Scold's Bridle[5], the Jougs[6], and so on.

- The "badge of shame"[7] is a form of this, where the transgressor need not be restrained. One of the best-known examples of this is the "scarlet letter" of Nathaniel Hawthorne's eponymous novel[8]; recent "creative sentencing" in modern Western jurisprudence revives this idea, where a transgressor is required to appear at a specified location wearing or otherwise displaying a sign describing in the first person the transgression,

1. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stocks*
2. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillory*
3. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pranger*
4. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrew's_fiddle*
5. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scold's_bridle*
6. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jougs*
7. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Badge_of_shame*
8. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scarlet_Letter*

(e.g., "I am a thief who takes expensive toys away from small children."), and sometime including self-critical statements (e.g., "I was very stupid and selfish")[9].

- It is increasingly common for certain transgressors, most notably those who have committed sex-related transgressions, especially such transgressions against children, to be required upon establishment or change of residence to notify the authorities of their transgressor status[10]. In most cases, the record of notification is public and available on request; some municipalities may actively publicise the notification to the local community.

- The practice of self-criticism often described in fiction that purports to be realistic portrayals of life under Communist rule[11] would fall under this heading; the transgression is often some sort of failure to conform to orthodoxy of thought.

- It could be argued that the practice of Confession in many churches[12] is a somewhat mitigated version of this. The penalty is generally neither onerous nor public, but the acknowledgement of transgression must be voluntarily made to the authority who will pronounce the penalty.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment may be considered a severe form of shaming (as it is almost universally administered publicly), in which the rebuke is definitely physical, and may (but need not) result in permanent physical effects.

Examples:

- For adults, caning, flogging, whipping; for children and adolescents, spanking, switching,

9. *https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/04/15/crime-public-shaming/*

10. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Sex_offender_registries_in_the_United_States*

11. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-criticism#Communist_states*

12. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confession_(religion)*

birching, paddling. Historically, keelhauling, 'running the gauntlet', and foot-whipping (bastinado) have also been used.

- In Sharia Law polities, certain crimes classified as *hudud* may carry a sentence of severance of hands or feet[13]. The visible stigmata of having been subjected to this penalty could be considered a "mark of shame", as well.

- Orson Scott Card's story, "Unaccompanied Sonata", imposed the loss of fingers and the loss of voice on the protagonist, as a penalty for multiple transgressions of the society's law.[14]

- Branding[15] combines the "mark of shame" shaming penalty with corporal punishment.

Exile

The society requires the transgressor to leave the territory under the society's control, or to live within a defined area, generally where one must work hard and very nearly continuously just to survive. Exile may be for a limited period, or it may be permanent.

Examples:

- If an unpopular tyrant is forced to abdicate (rather than being killed in an uprising, revolution, or civil war), the terms of the abdication generally include living under the protection of a foreign government which may have historical connections with the tyrant's country, or which may simply be a regional power that is willing to protect the tyrant in exchange for the abdication.

- Commercial establishments in many places may require an undesirable customer to leave the premises; where permitted, the transgressing customer may be barred from ever returning, for any reason. This is common with casinos, where

13. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudud*

14. *https://www.sindark.com/LaTeX/unaccompanied-sonata.pdf*

15. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_branding*

the customer in question is familiar with techniques that reduce or negate the 'house' advantage in their games, most notably 'counting cards' in blackjack or similar games.

- **Self-exile** is a mirror image of this. Here, the society is viewed as the transgressor, and the person engaging in self-exile finds that due to the nature of the transgression, remaining in and a part of that society is intolerable. Voluntary emigration for reasons other than the purely economic may be viewed this way; a different example appears in Robert A. Heinlein's short story "Coventry"[16].

Shunning

A lesser form of exile. The transgressor is not required to leave the territory, but members of the society avoid intercourse with the transgressor, either for a fixed period, or (more commonly) until the transgressor chooses of his/her own will to cease the activity that prompted the shunning, execute a shaming ritual, and/or make restitution.[17]

Examples:

- Many religious sects, especially those that are considered most "orthodox" or "reactionary", practice this as a penalty for various transgressions. Specific types of shunning include excommunication[18] in many Christian churches; other forms of shunning are used by Amish, Mennonite, and other similar communities; the Jewish practice of declaring someone *herem*[19] is similar; the Church of Scientology's practice of "disconnection"[20] falls into this category; as does the practice of "disfellowshipping"[21] by Jehovah's Witnesses, and there are many others.

- In secular society, boycotts[22] (the practice of specifically avoiding purchasing goods or services from a transgressing provider) are a form of shunning, as is divestment[23] (the selling of investments in a transgressing corporation or government bonds – note that the formal term for the penalty use is actually 'disinvestment'). More common are such expressions of displeasure as the 'silent treatment'[24], snubbing[25], or estrangement from family[26] (for example, when a certain relative is specifically not invited to family gatherings, or even expressly ordered to stay away therefrom).

- Individuals with certain chronic diseases have been shunned at various times; historically, leprosy[27] was one such for centuries, while AIDS[28] is one that has led to ostracism in recent times.[29]

Custody

Also a less extreme form of exile. The transgressor's movements and activities are restricted and continuously monitored.

Examples:

- Imprisonment[30]. The transgressor is lodged in a government-controlled facility, and their activities more or less rigidly controlled depending on the nature of the transgression. This includes commitment to psychiatric treatment facilities[31];

16. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coventry_(short_story)
17. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shunning
18. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Excommunication
19. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herem_(censure)
20. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disconnection

21. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Jehovah's_Witnesses_and_congregational_discipline#Disfellowshipping
22. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boycott
23. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disinvestment
24. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_treatment
25. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snub
26. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_estrangement
27. http://medicalhistory.blogspot.com/2014/09/history-of-leprosy.html
28. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS
29. https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/hiv-teen-shares-community-shunned-article-1.1382966
30. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imprisonment
31. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Involuntary_commitment

the principal difference is in the nature of the restrictions and monitoring of activities.

- A lesser form of custody is the requirement to wear a monitoring device[32], but still be permitted to conduct normal (and lawful) day-to-day activities in society. Those normal activities may be circumscribed in certain ways; for example, the transgressor may be prohibited from entering certain classes of public establishments (commercial or otherwise).

- Probation[33] and parole[34] represent a lesser form of custody as well. The transgressor is still prohibited from certain activities, but is merely required to avoid further transgression and 'check in' with a designated individual at regular intervals.

Outlawry

A more extreme form of exile, which may be for a limited period, or permanent. During the period of outlawry, anyone may harm or kill the transgressor with no repercussions[35]. Used where society could not generally afford to maintain transgressors in custody, due to general hardship or low population. Its use as a penalty is mostly historical.

Execution

May be regarded as an extreme form of exile/outlawry, where the transgressor is not given the opportunity to attempt to survive outside of society; the risk to society is deemed too high, and the transgressor's life ended[36]. There is at present an ongoing debate about the propriety of this penalty; if society errs in applying this penalty, there is no way to correct the error, whereas any of the other penalties can be revoked.

Restitution or Recompense (Compensation)[37]

The transgressor is expected to "undo" the transgression. Where this is not possible or practical (for example, if property has been irreparably damaged, or stolen goods have been destroyed), equivalent value is expected to be submitted.

Indenture[38]

A specific form of restitution. Where the transgression involves the loss of life or of capability to work within society, the transgressor's own life or capability to work may be required to replace it. May be for a limited time or permanent; may or may not be transferrable. If permanent and transferrable, may be indistinguishable from slavery.[39]

Confiscation

Related to restitution/recompense. Money or property is involuntarily (on government demand) given over to the party against whom the transgression was committed, or to the government[40]. An important distinction between confiscation and restitution is that the former does not rely on actual damage/loss of assets.

Fines

A type of confiscation where the transgression is deemed insignificant enough to not warrant a custodial sentence, and shaming, shunning, or corporal penalties are unavailable or deemed inappropriate. Fines are generally established as fixed amounts based on the nature and/or severity of the transgression, and do not vary based on the transgressor's ability to pay. Fines may accompany other penalties, or may be the sole penalty imposed, depending on the transgression.[41]

32. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ankle_monitor*
33. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Probation*
34. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parole*
35. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outlaw*
36. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment*

37. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restitution*
38. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indenture*
39. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery*
40. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confiscation*
41. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fine_(penalty)*

Forfeiture

A type of confiscation where the stated intent is to deprive the transgressor of the gains from the transgression, or to punitively remove from the transgressor's control any tools or other assets used to enable the transgression.[42] It is occasionally used in place of fines (where the court has such discre-

tion) to ensure that the penalty is meaningful to a transgressor that has significant assets. There is at present an ongoing debate over the use of this penalty and the allocation of forfeited goods or their value; there is suggestive evidence that where the confiscating government directly benefits from the forfeiture, the penalty is used more often, and the value of such forfeitures may be more than can be justified by the transgression.   ✷

---

42.   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asset_forfeiture

In A Store Near You

Wetzler Medical's Pocket Defibrillator* (Model H180/10c)

by Craig Glesner

Editor's note: This product description is written from the point of view of the author's own Traveller *universe setting, rather than the standard setting.*

TL: C (12). **Mass:** 0.25 kg. **Cost:** Cr 700.
Dimensions: 12 cm × 6 cm × 1.75 cm.

Description

Wetzler Medical's Pocket Defibrillator (Model H180/10c) is one of the most common brands of human rated pocket defibrillators seen in the Permatic Imperium. The device is manufactured at an interstellar tech level and has a ruggedized form factor designed for use by both medical professionals and untrained personnel in field situations such as first response or combat operations. This device is rated for a three (3) deck fall and continued functioning as well as up to 4 hours unprotected use in hostile environments such corrosive atmospheres (after which point the insulation on the leads is eaten through and short circuits are likely). It is not designed to be used in conductive liquid environments but can be submerged, it can also be exposed to vacuum conditions as the form factor is sealed when properly closed. It is part of every human's personal first aid kit issued to regular members of the Permatic Impe-

rial Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Marines); Commandos and the Royal Armed Services (Navy and Marines) carry a much more complicated and proprietary device. It can also be found in most Medic kits sold on high tech worlds and on Guild Liners for use till the ship's professional crew can get to the emergency. In addition it is popular with Travellers who can carry one in those instances when a professional medic isn't available.

Advances in energy storage brought about by a society's rise to the stars allows this device a form factor that is compact and still capable of holding 10 charges at maximum charge. The Pocket Defibrillator comes in a self contained case which includes the base unit with battery, a dedicated Model/0 preloaded with cardiac diagnostic/treatment software with text, voice, and graphic user prompts, 15 sets of sensor/charge pads, and a wire set with clamps to connect the pads to the base unit. Pocket Defibrillators can be easily purchased from medical supply companies either on worlds with TL-C or better as well as most Class A or B starports.

Replacing the consumables (pads and battery) costs Cr 150.

Models with rechargeable batteries can be purchased for an additional Cr 100 and come with a va-

In A Store Near You

riety of the most common recharging connectors. In some locations this item can also have an electrical stunner installed for Cr 50. It takes 2 hours to complete the modification by a Certified Armorer (Exotics) and is compliant with Law Level-6 standards for use and carry.

*Other brands as well as lower tech versions are available without the ruggedized features and fewer charges down to TL-A and of course higher tech versions with better features, more charges, and

tougher form factor are available as well. Variations are available for non-human and non-standard human species which also have a cardiac system for blood or its analogs but is not consistent with standard Type-T human anatomy.

This device meets the minimum form factor, usability, and technology level (medical device) standards required for issue to human (Type-T, standard) members of the Imperial Armed Forces.   ✪

Confessions of a Newbie Referee   A Column by Timothy Collinson

#38: A Job Ad of Sorts

There are three parts to every entry in my bibliographies: The 'easy' descriptive stuff – the core of the bibliography – title, author, issues, pages, etc. Pretty much anyone who can read and has eye for detail could learn to do this. In academic library terms it might be done by a non-professional library assistant. It's the quickest job and just takes a minute or three per entry.

Then there's the harder contents analysis: choosing what to include and what to leave out; as well as deciding what section of the bibliography to put the entry in. This would require a bit more training and an understanding of what *Traveller* authors write about and what readers would most likely want to find. It also requires the skill of being able to write a very short summary. Again, in library terms, it might be an assistant librarian role for those just starting out after a library degree. It takes anything from a few minutes per entry to perhaps quarter of an hour or longer if it's not clear what era some rules or character have been written for or is a piece of fiction that needs to be read in its entirety to summarize adequately.

Finally, there's the descriptive bit that contains meta information about the article and/or connects the work to the larger corpus of published *Traveller*.

This is the hardest to do, as it requires a good working knowledge of everything that's gone before, now several thousand items. Occasionally an article will include some of this information itself, which helps. There's also the need to revisit old entries to add their connections to the new items. It's perhaps no surprise to learn that I would equate this with an experienced subject librarian's role—someone who knows the field. You could say it takes a lifetime per entry.

I should add I don't claim mastery of that last item. I can strive for perfection on the first and aim for it on the second – I'm still pleased that the first edition of TTB only had 7 known errors in it, all of them typos – but it's all too easy to miss some connection to a book or article I've not read in a while, or to simply not know a piece of information that would be interesting. A recent example: for all that I watch out for such things, I'd never heard of the Italian edition of Mongoose *Traveller* until I happened to put a question on languages into the quiz at last year's TravCon. (Yes, I've slapped with a wet kipper the person who knew but hadn't mentioned it – despite being the publisher of the bibliography!)

As I get older or more tired or both, perhaps I'm moving to the 'next' level of librarianship where I

have to recognize it can't all be done by one person and needs some kind of management or a small team. So if there is anyone who'd be interested in helping out the *Traveller* community in this way, get in touch. I don't do it for money or for fame – and a good job too – but there is the quiet satisfaction of a professional job and a finished result which I hope is useful to others.   ✪

Critics' Corner

Reach Adventure 1:
Marooned on Marduk

reviewed by 'the Guvnor'

Reach Adventure 1: Marooned on Marduk. Martin J. Dougherty. Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
33pp., PDF
US$8.99/UK£6.95

Author's Note: I received this as a complimentary copy from Mongoose for review purposes.

Overview

"*This adventure takes place on the world of Marduk, in the Oghma Cluster which lies at the Rimward (bottom) end of Sindal Subsector. The adventure is suitable for almost any group of Travellers, with or without a starship.*

"*Inventive Travellers can get through this adventure using almost any skills set, though 'planetside' skills such as survival and combat skills will be useful. No matter how much weaponry the Travellers possess, they will be deprived of most of it, and will find themselves outgunned if combat breaks out. Clever tactics and use of the environment will be necessary to level the odds.*"

This an adventure book that explores the oft explored 'lost on a hostile planet' adventure. This scenario is not novel, but the author, Martin J. Dougherty, expands and delivers it well, and in doing so reveals more about the wider setting in which Marduk lies. Whilst quite linear, and using a limited set of components, the book delivers an excellent evening's gaming, with re-use and links to further

travelling in the Sindal sub sector. It is well illustrated with recognisably *Traveller*-like 3D images, shuttle plans, and competent character illustrations. It follows the high quality of *Traveller* 2.0 layout and graphics, and has no apparent typos or grammatical problems.

It is comprised of the following chapters:

Introduction: a top level introduction and a potential hook linked to GeDeCo, the Imperial corp of note in the Trojan Reaches.

Referee's Information: This is an excellent and concise summary of the Trojan Reach, the role of the

Critics' Corner

Aslan Hierate and the Third Imperium; as well as a summary of GeDeCo's role as starport builder and operator through the Reach. The Sindal Subsector is then described and mapped, before moving onto the 'collapsed' worlds in the Oghma Cluster: the titular Oghma, Marduk, and Borite. The adventure is set on the ultra balkanised world of Marduk, but the raiders of Oghma prove to be key. The detail on the Marduk Highport is crisp and useful, and gives insight that can be used elsewhere.

This is a great introduction to the setting. I have read and run the Reach extensively, from the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign and elsewhere, and I appreciate how Dougherty delivers such flavor in 8 pages.

Arriving on Marduk: a 3 page arrival introduces 3 NPCs that will travel with the PCs, they are interesting, and in fact they would also make perfectly good pre-generated PCs if the referee wanted to deploy them as part of a one-off.

Downed on Marduk, **Into the Wilderness**, **Rule The Ruins**, and **Holding On For Daybreak**: These are the key Acts of the adventure. The core is set in a dark, rain swept night; cunning and vicious preda-

tors roam long abandoned ruins; xenophobic locals stumble into offworlders; translation comm computers struggle with barely recognisable dialects. Above, debris from a fatal collision light up the sky as shooting stars, and all the emergency comms channels are silent… Without spoiling anything, all is here for a tense, genre appropriate SF adventure that could be from *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* or H.G. Wells. All the bits are there… and Dougherty keeps the advice coming: the sidebar entitled "Going Off Script? What Script?" is quite charming.

Characters: Stats and ships and all you need… as mentioned before, many NPCs would repurpose as a PC. The system details are light, this would be useable with any previous or parallel version of *Traveller*, with utility declining the further one went from 2d6…

Summary

Well crafted, well illustrated, well laid out, well written, high potential for an evening of tension, great for a con one-off.

5/5   ✵

In A Store Near You   The Gun Shop

Advanced Lasers: TL-13 Laser Weapons for *MegaTraveller* and *Striker*

by Ken Pick

An edited-down version of this article originally appeared in Challenge #65

To many, the weapon most associated with high-tech civilizations is the personal energy weapon, usually a laser. In *Traveller*, laser small arms are introduced at TL-9, and are given a major upgrade at TL-13.

Besides the improvements listed in *Megatraveller* (such as firing beams of X-rays instead of visible/near-UV light), TL-13 lasers incorporate several oth-

er features which make them more competitive. A TL-13 laser is less fragile than a TL-9 model, though still not quite as rugged as a conventional firearm. They also incorporate a modular solid-state construction with common power feed protocols, which allow power packs to interchange between various sizes of weapon.

However, nothing is mentioned about lasers intermediate between small arms and auto-cannon size—the size range used for infantry support weap-

ons and Battle Dress. Under the existing firearms lists, only High Energy Weapons (the PGMP- and FGMP-series)—with their high-signature handicap—are available in this size and power range.

The following TL-13 laser weapons fill this size gap, allowing a variety of zero-g support weapons and low-signature Battle Dress energy weapons. Except for the grav-assist harness, volume in liters equlas weight in kg.

Heavy Laser Rifle

The Heavy Laser Rifle is an oversized laser rifle intended for use by Battle Dress. Non-powered troops use it as a support weapon (like a laser Light Assault Gun or heavy sniper rifle), fired from an integral bipod.

Heavy Laser Rifle-13: TL-13, 17.6kg, Cr16000. Uses TL-13 Laser Rifle, PGMP-13/14, or FGMP-14/15 power pack.

Tripod Lasers

Tripod lasers are essentially laser machineguns, formed by ganging four carbine or rifle-size lasers together into a Gatling-style arrangement. Each laser "barrel" fires once in a four-shot burst; the complete weapon is about the size and weight of a heavy machinegun.

The first tripod lasers appear at Tech Level 9; because of their expense and fragile construction when compared to conventional firearms, they see only limited production and use—mostly in Zero-G applications where their lack of recoil offsets their limited effectiveness.

By Tech Level 13, both light and heavy tripod lasers come into use, primarily for Battle Dress (as a low-signature complement for the PGMP and FGMP) and as vehicular-mounted support weapons. In the latter role, they provide high-penetration "machineguns" that run off the vehicular powerplant without any need for ammunition.

Tripod Laser-9

Early tripod laser formed from four TL-9 laser rifle tubes. Uses its own special power pack, four times the size and weight of a TL-9 laser rifle's. Not very practical for the expense. Very rare.

Tripod Laser-9: TL-9, length 1.0m, weight 24kg, Cr14000.

Power Pack (100 bursts): 16kg, Cr6000. Can use TL-9 Laser Rifle power pack (25 bursts).

Light Tripod Laser-13

Advanced tripod laser formed from four TL-13 laser carbine tubes. Used as a support/Battle Dress weapon at TL-13 and obsolescent afterwards due to introduction of Bonded Superdense armor at TL-14.

Light Tripod Laser-13: length 0.8m, weight 17.6kg, Cr16000. Uses TL-13 Laser Rifle, PGMP-13, or PGMP-14 power pack or .8 Mw power feed.

Heavy Tripod Laser-13

Laser heavy machinegun formed from four TL-13 laser rifle tubes. Most widely used of tripod lasers, either as a Battle Dress "light" support weapon or as a vehicle-mounted "machinegun".

Heavy Tripod Laser-13: length 1.1m, weight 35.2kg, Cr32000. Uses TL-13 Laser Rifle, FGMP-14, or FGMP-15 power pack or 1.6 Mw power feed.

Grav-assist Harness

Tech Level 14 Grav-assist harness similar to that used in the PGMP-14 and FGMP-15, incorporating a minimum-sized Low Power L-Grav module (100kg maximum thrust) powered from the fusion power pack. With the harness, a heavy laser rifle or tripod laser can be carried and used as a "rifle" or light support weapon by troops without regard to Battle Dress. When activated, the grav module cuts the apparent weight of the weapon and its power pack by 90%.

100kg Laser Grav-assist Harness: TL-14, volume 3 liters, weight 2kg, Cr30000

Interchangeable Power Packs

Tech Level 13 laser weapons (except for the special-purpose integral laser pistol) incorporate a modular design of power pack, allowing interchangeability of power packs between TL-13 laser weapons. These power packs are based on arrays of 100kw "cells" that can be linked either serially (for peak power output) or in parallel (for number of shots). The serial/parallel selection is controlled by ROM chips in the laser and power pack circuitry which automatically adjusts the power pack output to the weapon when the pack is connected.

The TL-14 Integral Laser Pistol—intended as a "hideout" laser weapon—is a special case, and uses only its own integral power pack.

Pistol Power Pack: 100kw; 200 pistol shots, 100 carbine shots, 50 rifle shots.

Carbine Power Pack: 200kw; 400 pistol shots, 200 carbine shots, 100 rifle shots, 50 heavy rifle shots, 12 light tripod laser bursts.

Rifle Power Pack: 400kw; 400 carbine shots, 200 rifle shots, 100 heavy rifle shots, 50 light tripod bursts, 12 heavy tripod bursts.

PGMP-13/14 Fusion Power Pack: 800kw when set for lasers; infinite ammunition for heavy rifle and light tripod laser. power pack also powers grav-assist harness for weapon.

FGMP-14/15 Fusion Power Pack: 1.6Mw when set for lasers; infinite ammunition for heavy rifle and all tripod lasers. power pack also powers grav-assist harness for weapon.

Tables for Use with Classic *Traveller* Books 1 and 4

Armor Matrix

Weapon	Nothing	Jack	Mesh	Cloth	Reflec	Ablat	Combat
Heavy Laser Rifle	+3	+3	+3	+3	-6	-5	-4
Tripod Laser	+6	+6	+4	+4	-4	-3	-3

Range Matrix

Weapon	Close	Short	Medium	Long	Very Long	Wound Inflicted
Heavy Laser Rifle	-4	+2	+3	+3	+1	6D
Tripod Laser	-8	+1	+4	+4	+2	5D

Tech Level 13 Advanced Lasers do not mesh well with Classic *Traveller*. For CT TL-13+ lasers, use the standard tables with the TL-13 durability and interchangeable power packs.

Tables for Use with *MegaTraveller*

Personal Energy Weapons

Weapon	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/ Atten	Dmg	Max Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Heavy Laser Rifle-13	-	*	28/2	3	Distant	-	Low	Low

Crew-served Energy Weapons

Weapon	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/ Atten	Dmg	Max Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Tripod Laser-9	-	*	9/2	3	Distant	2	Hi	Low
Light Tripod Laser-13	-	*	12/2	3	Distant	2	Low	Low
Heavy Tripod Laser-13	-	*	20/2	3	Distant	2	Low	Low

* Rds: See section on power pack interchangeability.

All weapons use Rifle skill when in Battle Dress and Heavy Weapons skill otherwise. All weapons have difficulty as Rifle.

(Continued from page 19)

Tables for Use with *Striker*									
Individual Weapons—Energy Weapons									
TL	Weapon	Magazine	Effective	Long	Extreme	Targets	Ammo	Weight	Price
13	Heavy Laser Rifle	100	80(28)	160(20)	800(12)	1	-	17.6/ 4	16000/ 28000

Crew-served Weapons—Energy Weapons										
TL	Weapon	Shots	Effective	Long	Extreme	Targets	Ammo	Setup	Signature	Weight	Price
9	Early Tripod Laser	400	18(9)+2	36(4)+2	180(1)+2	2	-	4	+2	24/ 16	14000/ 6000
13	Light Tripod Laser	**	20(12)+2	40(6)+2	200(2)+2	2	-	4	+2	17.6/ **	16000/ **
13	Heavy Tripod Laser	**	40(20)+2	80(12)+2	400(6)+2	2	-	4	+2	35.2/ **	32000/ **

** See rules for power pack interchangeability.

Tables for Use with D20 *Traveller*									
Weapon	Cost	TL	Weight	ROF	Range	DMG (Crit)	Size	Type	Recoil
Early Tripod Laser	KCr14	9	24kg	0/4	60m	3d10 (x2)	Large	Laser	No
(Advanced Laser Pistol)	KCr3	13	2.2kg	1	40m	3d8 (x2)	Small	Laser	No
(Advanced Laser Carbine)	KCr4	13	4.4kg	1	60m	3d10 (x2)	Medium	Laser	No
(Advanced Laser Rifle)	KCr8	13	8.8kg	1	80m	3d12 (x2)	Medium	Laser	No
Heavy Laser Rifle	KCr16	13	17.6kg	1	100m	4d10 (x2)	Large	Laser	No
Light Tripod Laser	KCr15	13	17.6kg	0/4	60m	3d10 (x2)	Large	Laser	No
Heavy Tripod Laser	KCr32	13	35.2kg	0/4	80m	3d12 (x2)	Large	Laser	No

() Not covered in article; from *Striker* and *MegaTraveller*.
Ammo: See above for power packs and interchangeability.

✵

Less Dangerous Game

Skrafolg

by Benedikt Schwarz

When the Imperium took the planet Feldspar from the Sword World Coalition, the first Imperial settlers called this ugly and potentially dangerous part of Feldspar's ecosystem a "bloatbag creep", "undertaker's daughter" or "carrion bug", along with other unkind names. None of the epithets stuck: The Sword Worlder-descended minority refused to give up the original name, "skrafolg" (plural: "skrafolgar"), and the rest of the population finally adopted it as well. ("Skrafolg" or "skraffie" subsequently became a common insult for

a lowlife person or someone of Sword Worlds origin throughout the subsector. Few of the non-Feldsparites who use it today know what creature it refers to, though.)

The IISS survey still lists the creatures' name as "backpackers", named for the large food bag that makes up their dorsal region.

Crawling along on eight segmented legs, the skrafolg resembles a large roach carrying a lumpy bag of slimy pinkish-gray skin. This bag may lie flat against the oval dish-shaped abdomen if empty, but

(Continued from page 20)

usually it will be distended with undigested food and may rise in a grotesque, roughly ball-shaped dome above the creature if fully stuffed. The head sports a single large, sharp horn, two segmented eyes and a short, wrinkly flexible trunk of a vivid pink colour that can be extended to half a meter. Set in the front end of the trunk are muscular jaws capable of cracking bones.

The skrafolg lives in dependent symbiosis with the extensive fields of Ondax fungus which cover large parts of the land area of Feldspar's main continent. Above the surface, Ondax appears as a whitish-gray, fluffy, moss-like carpet, with large, wool-like strands of thallus descending deep into the earth. Bundles of large, pale, flute-shaped fruit bodies grow in places out of the whitish mycel. Within its area of growth, the fungus covers and smothers all forms of plant life and quickly leaches the soil, turning the area into a gray wasteland barren of life. In the center of such areas, the Ondax finds no nourishment and dies away, creating a ragged ring of fungus centered on an area of blackened, wiry strands (dead Ondax thallus). In an area about five kilometers around the living ring, skrafolgar patrol in search of carrion.

The skrafolg is a typical hijacker, chasing away other animals from a carcass with its horn and a caustic bile secretion it is able to spit from its snout. It then dismembers the carrion and eats it piecemeal – although in this case, "eating" may be entirely the wrong term. IISS biologists use the term "harvesting" instead.

Skrafolgar have only a rudimentary digestive system. Their atrophied major intestine can absorb only very simple amino acids that have already been broken up. Food that the skrafolg harvests is not digested, but stored in the large, bulging bag on the creature's back, which can expand to five times its original size, a bloated, lumpy ball that can reach up to two meters in diameter in large specimens when
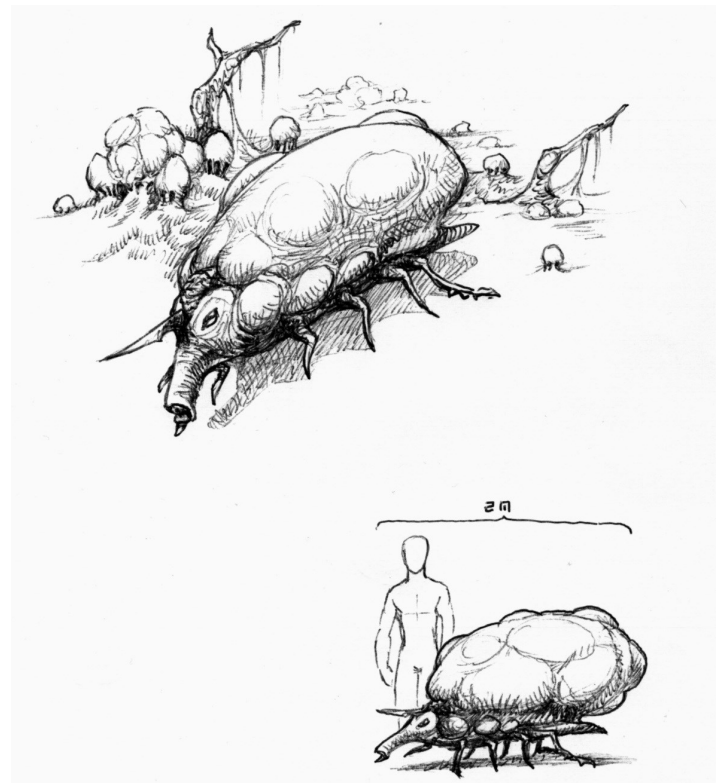
full. Once the skrafolg's hump is filled, it lumbers back into the Ondax-covered area and regurgitates. The fungal thallus quickly pre-digests the food, and part of the deconstructed protein is then re-ingested by the skrafolg. The rest goes to feed the fungus.

The process also seems to serve as a substitute to mating, as the skrafolg leaves some of its genetic information in the fungus and is in turn impregnated with other skrafolg's DNA. About once per year, a skrafolg will lay a clutch of about three eggs in a patch of fungus. The young feed on the mycels until they are about as long as a human arm, at which point they leave their birthplace and take up their wandering existence.

When the skrafolg reaches about eight or nine years of age, it begins to age rapidly. At this point, the Ondax will inject it with spores that slowly grow through the entire body of its host and trigger metabolic changes. The skrafolg feels an uncontrollable urge to wander as far from its parent fungus field as possible. In this state, it is hardly able to feel or see and will often blunder into rocks or creeper patches.

(Continued from page 21)

It will not defend itself, but is intent only on moving further away from the field. After two days it perishes, and the mycels in its body will spread to the earth, laying the foundation for a new Ondax field. A last set of eggs will ripen in the skrafolg's carcass, providing the new fungus with its own guardians.

"Seeder" skrafolgar can be spotted by their deflated carrion bags. Their carapace takes on a whitish appearance, as if dusted with flour, and their eyes are misted over. Jerky, uncoordinated movements are also a good indicator. The Feldsparites maintain a corps of rangers that keep a watch on the Ondax fields, shooting any skrafolgar that show signs of becoming seeders, because the fungus is one of the main obstacles to agriculture – and the IISS warns that the continent's ecosystem is on the verge of being irrevocably damaged by the uncontrollable spread of Ondax. Already the habitable area of the continent has diminished by 30% over the last hundred standard years, and several species of large animals are thought to be extinct as a direct result of the fungus' spread.

While an "empty" skrafolg is reasonably nimble, a full bag encumbers the creature and makes it slow to respond. Also, skrafolgar with filled "backpacks" usually have been outside their parent fungus field for a longer time and tend to be undernourished, making their movements less coordinated and very sluggish (-2 to all skill checks and attacks at the Referee's discretion). Empty skrafolgar may attack a group of travellers, especially if they are defending a carcass or other source of food, but full skrafolgar will usually try to flee and fight only if cornered.

If encountered in a fungus field, a skrafolg will be highly territorial and will attack trespassers on 4+. Skrafolgar defend the Ondax viciously, and while in the vicinity of the field will refuse to be driven off even if reduced to half their total hits.

At a range of five meters, a skrafolg intent on attacking uses its bilious secretion, which it can spit with appalling accuracy. If a hit is scored, roll 2D. On 9+, the face was hit, and the target is blinded for 2D rounds unless wearing protective goggles or a faceplate. Otherwise, the substance is harmless, save for a nasty itch (-1 to all actions) if it gets in contact with skin, and a noxious smell that may cause those without filter masks in the vicinity of the target to retch if they fail to roll under their END (again, -1 to all actions). The smell has an uncomfortable way of clinging to equipment and won't wear or wash off, even after several weeks. It takes industrial-strength detergents to get it off, and even then, a slight unpleasant whiff may remain. If bare skin was affected, one or two weeks of obsessive personal hygiene will get the person presentable again.

If the bile does not drive its enemies off, the skrafolg may follow up its attack with its horn. The strong jaws and rending teeth look formidable, but are never used in a fight.

Depending on the amount of food it has harvested, a large percentage of a skrafolg's body is made up of its food bag. An attack on the skrafolg will hit the bag on a chance of 11+ (empty), 9+ (half full) or 7+ (completely stuffed). Hitting the bag will cause no damage unless explosive rounds were used, but will rupture the skin. Those nearby may be splattered with bits of harvested, partly putrefied food (NORMAL AGI check to avoid).

On a roll of 8+, the skrafolg may carry a disease. Being hit by the horn or splattered food may contract the disease. Dead skrafolg may also be contagious and should not be touched.

Fighting a skrafolg in its Ondax habitat is a difficult proposition. The fungus gives off a faint mist that may obstruct or limit vision, even in the infrared spectrum. Filter masks are also a must, or a mycotic infection of the lungs will develop within a week of exposure. (The mist is also soporific, so breathing it for half an hour or so may result in vivid hallucinations.)

Within the field, the footing is slippery (unless you are a skrafolg); there are potholes and crevices that are covered with thallus and virtually undiscoverable until a traveller steps into one. The mycels snag feet and impede movement. A fungus field offers little cover except for a few ridges or tree trunks too large to vanish completely under the cotton-wool thallus, so successfully stalking the skrafolg takes an expert.

After leaving the field, care must be taken not to carry the mycel elsewhere and start a new fungus field. The stuff has a nasty habit of getting into suits' joints and clogging them, impeding movement after a while. The same goes for mechanical devices. The environmental suits issued to the Feldsparite Rangers, as well as all weapons carried by them, are coated with an antimycotic film. Aerosol cans with a similar protective substance can be bought in hardware stores everywhere on the continent. The agricultural settlements use tractors and air/rafts fitted with large fungicide tanks and spray nozzles to establish fungus-free perimeters; the long-term effect of these substances on the health of sophonts is currently investigated by the IISS. Still, no one has come up with a better solution, so the practice is continued, even though the preliminary findings indicate a definite danger to infants' health and development.

Adventure seeds:

1. The travellers are pursuing a miscreant. The culprit has spent several terms in the Feldsparite Rangers and is intimately familiar with Ondax (+2 to all Survival and Stealth rolls while in an Ondax field). She will lure the travellers into a large patch of fungus and try to snipe at them with her carbine while they fend off the attacks of Skrafolgar defending their territory. Did the travellers remember to bring specialised equipment, spare filters and antimycotic film? The ex-

Ranger did, and may be at a huge advantage if the travellers didn't come prepared.

2. In an outlying town, skrafolgar have been spotted rummaging through the garbage containers at night. The school has been closed, and the fearful citizens keep to their homes. Meanwhile, the city council requests the travellers to scour the surrounding forest areas for the budding Ondax fields that must have sprung up nearby.

3. Skrafolgar have been spotted near an expensive boarding school located in a rural area. The travellers are hired as schoolyard security to protect the students. Fending off the occasional prowling skrafolg proves easy enough, but they are beset by the teenage students playing pranks, overly fascinated by the travellers' guns, and the occasional schoolboy/schoolgirl crush on the one or two travellers with the most roguish appearance. Several students may approach a traveller with a military background and ask for counsel whether they should defy their parents' wishes and join the Marines/Navy/Scouts/other service branch with a nimbus of adventure. Parents complain petulantly (via long-distance commlink) about the travellers ordering their children around, and are ready to pounce on every mistake the team makes. Generally, the job feels uncomfortably like herding ants.
Finally, a band of five students leave the school grounds on a dare at night, and become lost in the woods; the travellers will have to mount a quick rescue while still defending the school—and seeder skrafolgar have just been sighted moving toward the school's main yard.

4. A homeless person has stumbled into a large Ondax field. Breathing the spore-tainted mist, he was beset by intense hallucinations which convinced him that he had had a conversation with

the Galactic Spirit. Now he is back in the city, preaching in the streets to the disaffected youth and starting his own religion. The experience has made him a charismatic speaker, and he has managed to unite many of the gangs of street kids into a veritable army of converts despite his failing health (fungal pneumonia contracted in the Ondax field). The travellers are hired by desperate parents who want them to rescue their son and his fiancée from the sect's clutches. The boy may not be willing to be rescued, as he has joined willingly and risen to the position of the preacher's right hand man!

Just as the travellers are staking out their mission, a vociferous local faith affiliated with the Eschaton Movement sends armed agents to eliminate the preacher. The boy and his fiancée will be in the line of fire. If the travellers act quickly, they can foil the Eschaton agents long enough for the preacher and his aide to flee.

The injured preacher will take one of the gangs' gravbikes and head for the fungus patch with the boy—he feels that his life is ending, and he wants to expose the boy to the same enlightenment that he experienced so he can continue his mentor's work. The final confrontation with the dying madman, his teenage follower and the Eschatonics in the Ondax field is interrupted by several skrafolgar attacking at the least opportune moment.

5. A scientific expedition has been missing for more than a month. The travellers are hired to investigate, and discover that the expedition's Type S scout/courier is stranded in a patch of Ondax and already partially overgrown by thallus. The fungus has clogged the exhausts, and aggressive skrafolgar are mounting a veritable siege of the ship's hatches. The travellers need to come up with a way to rescue the researchers trapped in their own ship.

6. A courier carrying a vital message was intercepted by pirates/enemy agents/terrorists in the Feldspar system, and xir ship was disabled by a direct hit. Xe managed to escape in an emergency capsule and survived by going into freezer berth. The capsule landed near the center of a large Ondax patch. The travellers need to reach it before a group of mercs or pirates hired by the opposition does. Once their enemies catch up with them, some skrafolgar do so as well, and break the standoff by attacking everyone.

7. While out hunting, a young Feldsparite noble is attacked by a skrafolg. The travellers arrive in time to help xir, and are graciously rewarded on the spot with xir antique duelling sabre, a heirloom of inestimable value. The noble turns out to be very charming and sociable, and seems to take a genuine liking to the travellers; xe may become a valuable Contact if the travellers are similarly polite and mind their manners.

In the course of the fight, the noble was spit on by the skrafolg, and now develops an ugly rash within half an hour—not to mention that xir skin now stinks to high heaven. Xe is dismayed: in a week, xe is supposed to attend a very important social function and meet with offworld dignitaries—unthinkable to appear there reeking of carrion! The visiting notables will be deeply offended. Fortunately, one of the travellers looks superficially similar to the poor noble and may be able to play xir role at the ball. If the travellers agree, they have one week to learn proper etiquette, courtly dance, terms of address and the necessary background knowledge.

The noble will helpfully suggest wearing a miniature communicator disguised as a brooch or earring, so xe can give valuable input if the traveller stumbles—but once the traveller and xir "retinue" arrive at the function, they find that the Imperial Marines responsible for building security run random scans for listening devices,

and they are forced to turn the gadget off or risk being discovered. They are on their own now.

8. The IISS or a local biological institute hires the travellers to stalk and kill several skrafolgar, and to open their food sacs and catalogise the contents for an extensive study on the creatures' feeding habits. They will be accompanied by a young biologist and be responsible not only for his well-being, but also for the half ton of fragile equipment necessary to analyse the pieces of carrion. The job is smelly and dangerous, and soon the biologist's cheerful manner grates on their nerves—as well as his tendency to get himself into trouble in the wilderness. Worst of all is the unanticipated fact that a dead skrafolg (or rather, the dead contents of its hump) will draw lots of other scavengers, which have to be kept at bay until the lengthy analysis is finished.

9. There is a disturbing tendency for the Ondax fungus to develop a resistance against the types of fungicide used to spray the perimeters around the agricultural areas. Larger and larger doses are necessary. Now a human health NGO has started an independent survey, and they find that the traces of fungicide in the soil lead to higher infant mortality, growth issues during prepuberty, an impaired immune system in adults, and a host of minor illnesses. The local authorities tried to shut the NGO up with various methods, ranging from bureaucratic obstacles and confiscation of equipment to bribes, and when the attempts failed, they quietly sent in a mercenary team disguised as local separatists to kidnap or kill the doctors and their staff.

There is already a possible solution to the fungus' unchecked growth: a trained Psionicist would be able to control the mycel's spread easily. The NGO has found this out—and discovered that the authorities knew all along. Faced with the choice between continuing to use the harm-ful fungicides and training citizens in psionics (thus violating the planet's Imperial Charter), though, the administrators decided to disregard the latter option and hush the issue up.

The travellers are hired by the government to rescue the NGO's research team from the "insurgents". In truth, the administration wants them to botch the rescue attempt so the blame for the "hostages'" deaths can be laid at their feet. They will be given false information, and the mercenaries will be ready for them.

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Skrafolg	30	4m (3m(F), 2m(S))
SKILLS	Brawling/horn-1, spit-0 (none (S))	
ATTACKS	Flee 6-(9-(F)), Attack 7+(11+(F)); Horn (2D), Bilious spit (special) (will not attack (S))	
TRAITS	Diseased 8+ (END check: Avg(8+)/Dam(2D)/Int(2D days), IR Vision (blind(S)), Large(F), Slow metabolism(-2 to initiative)(F)	
BEHAVIOUR	Scavenger/hijacker	
NOTE	*Values suffixed by (F) apply when the food sac is full, those suffixed by (S) apply when in seeder part of life cycle.*	

Morphology	Bilateral symmetry, decapod (eight short limbs for locomotion, two limbs for handling of food)
Biochemistry	C/H/O/N (broadly Human-compatible), pseudinsectoid
Respiration	Oxygen-nitrogen inhalant, carbon dioxide exhalant
Ecology	Circadian (active day and night), solitary
Habitat	wide range of climates and habitats, tundra to tropics, semiarid to humid
Diet and Trophics	Scavenger/hijacker, ectothermic (cold-blooded)
Reproduction	One gender, sporal intercourse, oviparous birth (cluster of three to four eggs), iteroparous (reproducing more than once in a lifetime). Progeny are not cared for.
Lifecycle and ontogeny	Six months to maturity. Lifespan of about eight to ten years.

Rites of Passage

by Roger Barr

This adventure originally appeared in response to an informal adventure contest on the (online, now defunct) Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society (JTAS) at SJGames in 2001, and was posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller in 2002 with the permission of SJGames and the author. It may not be distributed elsewhere without the express permission of SJGames and the author.

Criteria: The adventure should concern a BASE and a COURIER. The type of base (naval, scout, local, megacorp) is up to you. A courier should figure somewhere in the adventure (PCs, NPCs). This is general enough for you to place it in any portion of charted space you're most familiar with and use any race of creatures you're comfortable with.

A *Traveller* "Plug In" Adventure (Inserts fairly easily into any campaign, just place it on a remote starport between two agricultural worlds.)

Players' Information

Gillarté Station,
Yorbund/Regina Spinward Marches

(Gillarté Station was profiled in 'It's Just Business' in the online JTAS issue of January 9th, 2001)

The line for entering the station's entertainment mall-plex is a long one, but the excitement of the rugged corporate miners eager to enjoy a three day pass is infectious. Before long, the lighthearted banter and laughter of those hard working "rock hounds" makes even the most serious merchant crewman crack a smile. Imperial navy crewmen, scouts, and civilian crews all stand together in line, waiting to pass through the security checkpoint to enter the station interior. Once past the overworked security staff, (who secure any ranged weapons in a storage facility until departure), the line moves faster carrying everyone along toward the clubs, restaurants, and gambling parlors in the mall-plex. When entering the crowded main concourse of the mall-plex, the spacers quickly notice a pungent smoky scent coming from somewhere up ahead. Moving along with the crowd of miners arriving on the station, they cannot help but notice the excitement fading as the crowd moves toward the main concourse.

In moments, the reason for the quiet is clear. Along one side of the corridor stand three young human females, all barely old enough to be considered adults. Every member of the trio is dressed completely in black, from boots to hooded cloak. Each bears an old and elaborately designed sword carried in a scabbard on the left hip. They stand silent and watchful, with arms crossed in a form of military precision. They surround a shiny metallic canister as if guarding a most precious treasure. Those who would be tempted to mock them have only to see the expressions of complete dedication and lethal intent to change their minds. Three black censers sit on the floor next to the canister, emitting an irritating thin smoky haze. As the crowd passes slowly from view from the odd, funeral-like gathering, a portion of the belters' original joviality returns. Smaller groups disperse toward the entrances of assorted establishments. Some comments can be overheard as they depart regarding the odd group of young sophonts, some conveying curiosity, others making rude jokes.

As the group of spacers stand waiting for a seat in one of the crowded restaurants, a security officer known to some of the crew members approaches the crew. He cheerfully greets his friends, and then with a word to the hostess, they are immediately taken to the next open table. He sits down, and as the waitress takes orders for drinks, he gets quickly to the point. The head of security and the station administrator are both eager to get that trio of young women off the station. The station already has a problem with too few women available for carousing with the crowds of miners, and the presence of these young women is making matters worse. They have been the center of attention in three altercations with drunken miners looking to somehow impress the young women. Two of GenTech's belters are in the infirmary from those encounters, and the shop steward is screaming for the sword wielding young

women to be locked up. The chief of security verified with witnesses and the sensor logs showing the actions were self-defense, so no charges have been filed. They are waiting for a ship to purchase passage for Heya, which looks to be a minimum of a few days off. If the crew will leave immediately, the station is willing to provide a few bonuses like free fuel for both directions, a particularly costly commodity for this area of space. They also will agree to pay for shipping fees for up to twenty tons of kavic grain from Heya. The young women have already placed the price of three mid passage tickets on account with the travel office, they just need a ride. Will the crew accept the offer and travel to Heya? It isn't a flood of credits, but it is for a good cause.

Referee's Information

The young women are actually part of an elaborate pilgrimage involving a fertility ritual in Heya's rich traditional heritage. They have been selected from hundreds of applicants to honor their ancestors on this trip. They are the guardians of a shipment of grumac grubworm larvae and kavic seeds. Every year, a delegation of three adolescents travel from Heya to Kinorb to re-enact the original mission of their forefathers, the struggling survivors of a devastating grain blight centuries ago. They, too, traveled to Kinorb, and bartered with the wealthy farmers of that land for a sample of these precious creatures who were able to bring life again to Heya's soil. The worms thrived in the Heyan soil, and aided the growth of the kavic cereal grains that are now the primary agricultural source of wealth of that world. This ceremony is an annual reminder of how precious their world is to them, and how the delicate balance of the ecosystem must be protected.

The travel will be easy, as the three are quite focused on their mission. They will be no trouble for the crew, remaining in their staterooms for most of the journey. If asked, they will explain that they wear black to remind them of the deaths on their

world, which caused the need for the original expedition. There are respectful and quiet at most times, but a one or two might be engaged in conversation if approached politely. None of them will be open to anything more than general conversation, and only while in the presence of another of their peers. One of the group will watch over their cargo on an eight-hour shift while the other two rest. This watch is maintained without fail during the entire trip. The only annoyance will be the scent of the incense burners, which must be continuously lit during the journey. The only time that might be difficult is if other passengers of crew harass them in any fashion. Then they turn to their swords for protection. They are rather skilled in using them, but they are not masters. They will not relinquish the blades during the trip, and they have no other weapons.

Planned Encounter (Station Docking Ring)

Friends of the injured miners decide to attack the group for revenge as they leave the security post and head out to the outer docking rings of the station. A group of suitable tough belters with melee weapons will attack the young ladies and the crew who are aiding them. The fight should be dangerous, and should reveal that the pilgrims are not as skilled with those swords as they might first appear. Intervention of the crew will be required to keep them from serious harm. The attack will occur on the docking rings, as that is when the belters have been able to regain their weapons from security.

Upon arrival at the Heyan starport, the elders waiting for the young ones to arrive will greet the crew. Hearing as how they have aided the pilgrims in defending themselves while carrying out this sacred tradition, they will honor them as well. The crew will be treated as special guests, and will enjoy several days of hospitality as guests of the church. Each crewman will be given a small black wooden pendant, carved in the shape of a single kavic grain engraved with several religious symbols. This indi-

cates that each is an honorary member of the Heyan community. If the crew chooses to leave fairly quickly, within two to three days, they will be offered up to their entire hold in kavic grain, at a quite reasonable purchase price. (If they choose to remain over two weeks or more and truly take full advantage of the hospitality of the religious order, then this additional offer will not be made.) They will also be known as friends to those in the religious community, should they return again to Heya.

Optional Additional Ending

One of the crewmen has managed to charm one of the girls in a strong case of infatuation, and now that she has finished her pilgrimage, she wants to run away with him and become a crew member on the merchant vessel. Being that she is an adult by Heyan standards, there is no legal problem with this situation, but the church might be most displeased and consider it a scandal. After all, they would assume that the relationship began during the pilgrimage, a most holy time of service. Any action other than a most diplomatic of responses would engender a long-lived hostility, earning the crewman and possibly the ship itself a new set of enemies. The level of insult offered by the crewman and the ship's officers would be a direct measure as to the dedication of the church and the girl's family to seek retribution.

The Heyans

Liceena Bracks 787979 Human Female Age: 18
Sword 0, History 0, Leader 0

Ulia Zanders 698777 Human Female Age: 17
Sword 0, Ground Craft 0, Dance 0

Wilmara Chismar 8788A9 Human Female Age: 19
Sword 0, Computer 0, Medical 0 ✿

Smoke Test: Once In A Blue Moon

by Michael Capriola and C. A. Pella

This story was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller web site beginning in 2003.

Chapter One

Jai Hanuman gyan gur sagar Jai kapis tihu lok ujagar.

A policeman stopped Vishnu Lubbock at the entry to the *Grendelsbane*'s berth. "Captain Lubbock?"

"For Good and bad." The policeman drew a notepad from his pocket and consulted it. "We are looking for two females. The human is about one and a half meters tall with a bowl-cut hairdo dyed pink."

Lubbock nodded thoughtfully as the policeman described the *Grendelsbane*'s First Assistant Engineer. "Doesn't ring any bells."

"She was in the company of a Vargr female of approximately forty years of age with a limp."

"I have no Vargr in my crew." *The last time I checked.* "What did they do?"

"They were allegedly involved in an altercation that caused severe damage to the 'Bar None', not to mention the Duke's Peace."

"Well, if I spot either of these dastardly villains I'll be sure to contact the Whipsnade Planetary Police at once."

The policeman stared at Lubbock with a critical eye, as though he suspected sarcasm. Lubbock tried not to sweat.

"That would be appreciated." He snapped his notepad shut and tapped it to his forehead in a salute. "A good day to you, Captain."

Lubbock flipped a hand up in a casual farewell salute. *I'm going to ask Chief Garcia to install a plank in the airlock and then make Pepper walk the frapping thing.*

The civilian guards placed at the berth's dockside doors by *Grendelsbane*'s client confirmed Lubbock's identity and allowed him entry. He could hear the work crews on the far side of the *Beowulf-*class ship fitting a pair of small docking arms at the starboard cargo hatch. Other crews inside the ship labored to install the probe cradle and the laboratory module. Vaughan-Payne Research & Development, Inc., a local firm here in Larsen system, needed to retrieve a survey probe orbiting a large moon of the outermost gas giant where it'd spent the last one hundred twenty days performing an extremely detailed survey and analysis of the moon's geophysical nature. Vaughan-Payne R&D stood to make billions from licensing fees and sales if the test model of the firm's new autonomous, orbital, geophysical surveyor proved successful. Following the age-old principle that it takes money to make money, Vaughan-Payne had offered *Grendelsbane* a very lucrative contract to ferry a technical team out to the probe.

The Captain fought down the urge to go and watch the workers. Instead, he sauntered up the ramp to the open personnel airlock and went into the ship. At the end of the long corridor he turned left and passed through the crew lounge and into the control room.

Two signs hung from the bulkhead beside the main console. The first said, "HAIL HANUMAN", the monkey god being the patron deity of travelers. The other read, "Whereever You Go, There You Are". First Mate Mohammed Ivanovitch Smith had the watch. While in port, the watch commander mostly had to monitor communications and keep track of the comings and goings of the crew and civilian workers. A tall and broad-shouldered man with sandy hair and a trim mustache, Smith's hobbies included vodka and trying over and over to beat the ship's computer at 3-D chess. He was losing a game right now.

"How are things, Moe?"

"Ah, Captain! We are far ahead of schedule. The lab module is all set, and the cradle is nearly ready."

Lubbock hesitated a moment, then took a deep breath and blurted out the question uppermost in his mind. "Pepper back aboard yet?"

"Yes. But, Captain, she bring Vargr comrade aboard. With luggage."

Luggage? Crap. "I'm not surprised. The police are looking for the two of them."

"Pepper damn fine brawler, but cannot hold her vodka. They went to the galley for breakfast."

Lubbock glanced at the chronometer built into his thumbnail. The time was 1206 hours. *Breakfast?* "I better go read her the riot act."

"I do that for you, Captain, if you like. I yell louder than you."

"No, I want to see this Vargr for myself. Catch you later."

Lubbock went back through the crew lounge and took the stairs up to the passenger level. To his left, in the galley, Steward Isabelle Nguyen argued menu with Second Assistant Engineer Fu Quan. It was an on-going battle. Nguyen specialized in stir-fried French cuisine and experimented a lot—her meals varied between bliss and blah.

Pepper Sprey and the Vargr were seated at a tables at the far end of the passenger lounge. Lubbock strode up to them and loomed over the table with fists on hips. The small, wiry engineer, dressed in a crumpled jumpsuit, shot to her feet. The Vargr followed her example, but more slowly because of her bad leg. The alien, who stood half a meter taller than

the engineer, had short, rust-colored fur and a long tail ending in a flaring brush.

"Captain, I—"

"That's quite a shiner you've got there, Engineer. I'm astonished that I haven't had to bail you out of jail."

"That's because of Arghaz here, sir. Captain, this is Arghaz Grurrdzarg. She came to my aid and got me out of the bar. She's a Vargr, sir."

"I'm glad you told me that, Engineer. I might have mistaken her for a hamster." Sprey's face reddened. "So, you at least had the good sense to come straight back to the ship."

"No, sir. That is, Arghaz helped me scrounge up a new phase inducer and a water pump. Saved us a bundle of money, sir."

I am not going to ask where they stole those things from. I am not going to ask where they stole those things from. I am not going to… Lubbock turned to the mangy looking Vargr and nodded his head in a bow. "You have my thanks."

"Captain, she's looking for working passage out-system."

"No doubt, with the police on her heels and all. But we're not going out-system for quite a while yet. Have you forgotten our contract?"

"Captain Lubbock," said Arghaz, "I work hard. I scrounge good. Room and meals and passage is all I ask." Her words were half a growl, half a plea.

"Captain, may I speak to you privately?"

"Certainly, Engineer. Freelady Grurd, Gru—"

"Grurrdzarg, Captain."

"Freelady Gruurdzarg. Why don't you go to the galley and help yourself to seconds?"

"Thank you, Captain Lubbock." The Vargr female walked away from the table with a noticeable limp. Lubbock claimed her seat.

"Captain," the First Assistant Engineer said as she seated herself and leaned towards him. "Arghaz has had a rough life. The rest of her litter died at birth. She's been slightly disfigured since then and considered unlucky by her clan. They eventually drove her out. She's spent the past twenty years or so just traveling around."

"I'd consider her being the sole survivor a stroke of good luck, not bad. But she's, what, forty? Do you want me to take on a forty year-old apprentice spacehand?"

Sprey set her jaw firmly. "Yessir. She's worked dockside and tramp freighters. She has basic skills in computers, vacc suits, grav vehicles—"

"Scrounging."

"Yes, scrounging. And infighting. She's a walking terror in defense of her friends. She has some weapons skills, too."

"Just how long have you know this Arghaz?"

"About twenty-six hours, sir. We did a lot of talking before the fight started."

"And a lot of drinking. Just how did the fight start?"

"A group of Nihon men came over to our table and started to hassle us. 'Hey, pretty girl, dump the dog and come party with us.' Well, there are four levels of politeness in Nihongo. I used level one—the most familiar and rudest—and addressed their spokesman as 'You Fellow'. He said something equally unkind to me, so I busted my chair over his head."

Lubbock held up his hands. "I don't want to hear any more. Not another word." He lowered his hands and rubbed them across his face. *Pepper owes this Vargr a favor. Pepper is one of the best engineers and hardest workers I know. And I owe her a favor or two.* "Okay. We'll take her on, but she's your responsibility."

Sprey gripped one of Lubbock's hands in both of hers. "Thank you, Captain. You won't regret this."

"I know I won't. You might, but I won't. He rose and started to leave, paused and turned back to Pepper. "You can tell your new apprentice that I said I think she'll be good luck for us."

Lubbock headed to the galley for a sandwich to take back to his quarters. He needed to finish the books for the month. He also needed to figure out exactly how he was going to inform the rest of the crew about their new lucky mascot.

To be continued…   ❂

Critics' Corner

Mongoose Traveller 2nd Edition' Referee's Screen

reviewed by Megan Robertson

Mongoose Traveller 2nd Edition Referee's Screen. Matthew Sprang and Amy Perrett.
Mongoose Publishing http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
13pp., Cardstock or PDF
US$11.99/UK£9.02

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

The usual: pretty picture for the players and all manner of useful charts on the referee's side.

Despite the picture of a starship bridge that's rather reminiscent of the Space Shuttle's controls on the cover, the pictures your players get to gaze at are a circular galaxy viewed almost edge-on, a spiral galaxy viewed from above, someone engaged in an EVA (Extra Vehicular Activity or spacewalk), and an interstellar dust cloud. The astronomical features are delightful images, the sort you get from the Hubble telescope. The fellow on EVA appears to be a contemporary astronaut judging by his space suit, but it's a nice picture nevertheless.

Meanwhile the Referee can refer to a range of useful tables (although do you really want him looking up radiation damage?)—timeframes, encounter ranges, healing, weapon traits, vehicular actions, turn sequence and the like. It should save a lot of looking-up in the heat of battle.
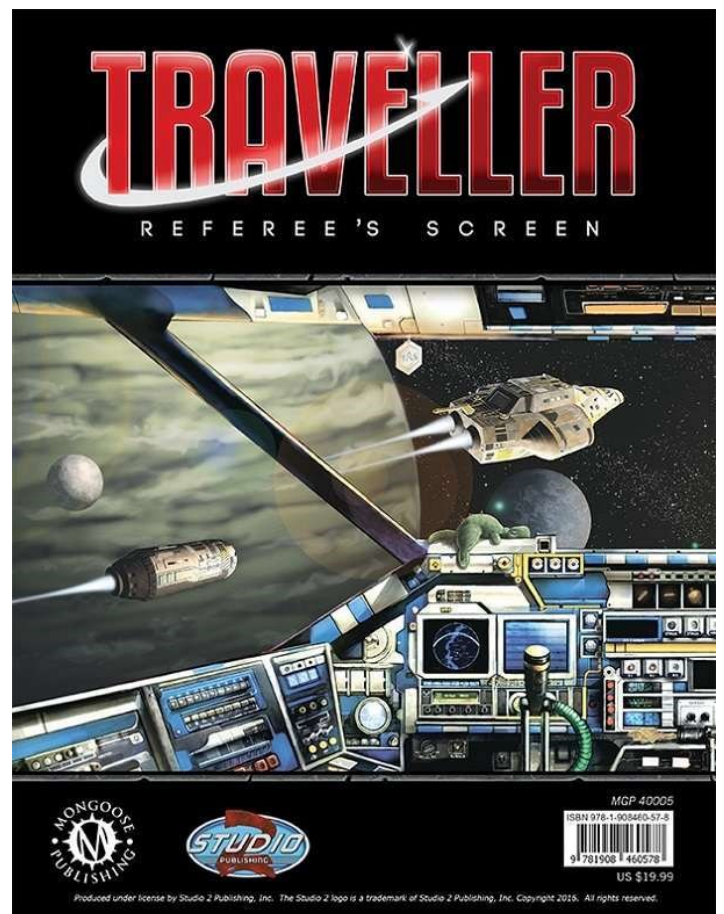
Useful, as well as a place to hide your notes and your secret die-rolls, but nothing remarkable. If you Referee regularly, it's worth picking up.   ❂

TravellerCON/USA 2019

TravellerCON/USA 2019 is planned for the weekend of 11-13 Oct 2019 at the Holiday Inn Morgantown. The theme is yet to be decided. The kickstarter is expected to go live in April or May, but start thinking about it now and be ready to pledge and join the fun!

Come play with us!   ❂

Eliason Class Snowmobile

Designed by Ewan Quibell

CraftID:	Eliason Class Snowmobile, TL7, Cr 4,749
Hull:	1/1, Displacement=0.185, Conf=0USL Open, Armour=4C, Loaded=0.3996 tons, Unloaded=0.1725 tons
Power:	1/2, Gas Turbine=0.02 Mw, Duration=5/15
Loco:	1/2, Track, P/W=30, Road*=109 kph, Off Road=43.6 kph
Comm:	Radio=V Dist (50 km)
Sensors:	Headlight, Passive IR
Off:	Hardpoints=1
Def:	DefDM=+2
Control:	Panel=Electronic x1
Accom:	Crew=1 (Driver), Seats=Cramped x1
Other:	Fuel=0.096 klitres, Cargo=0.22035 klitres, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Moderate
Comment:	Price in Quantity=Cr 3,799

The Eliason Class Snowmobile is a passenger transport vehicle intended for crossing snow and ice. Built by Hess Motors of Udesh, although similar specification vehicles can be found across the old Empire, the Snowmobile is a utility vehicle for anyone needing to travel in the winter. The Snowmobile is not intended to travel on roads(*) unless they have been covered with snow and ice, and the performance of the vehicle is dependent on the terrain conditions. Where the terrain is flat and consistent such as crossing frozen lakes speeds approaching its listed road speed can be achieved, and snowmobile racing is a recognised sport on Udesh.

The minimal cargo capacity allows for small loads to be carried without the need for a rucksack to be worn by the driver. The radio can be used both for two way communications as well as to listen to broadcast news and entertainment, and the passive IR sensor was installed to better identify living creatures against the cold of winter.

Editor's note: The image was not included with the article submission, and was available from Pixabay.com as "free for commercial use, no attribution required" ✵

Raconteurs' Rest

After-Action Report: TravCon19 (UK)

by Timothy Collinson

For all that TravCon is in its 12th iteration at Redwings Lodge and this was my 11th outing to the annual UK *Traveller* convention, this year saw a lot of firsts:

- first time it's started on Friday morning, not Friday evening
- first time I've run an adventure at TravCon not written by myself
- first time ever (that I'm aware of) another referee has run one of my adventures

- first time that my work colleague Jane has run an adventure (twice!)
- first time referees haven't been given a (small) price reduction for running something but:
- first time referees have had a first option on which game they'd like to play in
- first time I've tried to run a "Zero Prep" game
- first time I've ever run four games (and very nearly five)
- first time we've not had an auction at the end

- first time I've ever flown (and captained!) the *Beowulf* free trader, and

- some other personal firsts of attendees that are stories more appropriate for them to tell

In another small first, Tess had a new car – with a delightfully *Traveller*esque Signal GK number plate. After last year's worries about the 'Beast From the East' storm moving in, the 150 mile, three-to-four-hour drive was a straightforward as could be; though I nearly managed to forget my hearing aids. Fortunately, only a mile from home or the convention might have been a real strain for myself and for others around me with even more 'pardons?' and loudness than they already get.

We were welcomed as usual by Andy Lilly, the convention organizer looking a little less strained than last year. Perhaps the much balmier weather had lightened the load of concerns about whether anyone would be able to make it. He also had much to smile about in the terrific convention freebie he was handing each of us after we'd dumped our bags. Sarah L had come up with the lovely idea of a microfibre towel printed with the artwork from the cover of *In Search of Angels*. This had also adorned

A resplendent microfibre towel as the convention gift

one of the mugs we had been given last year and gave us yet another chance to encourage ISOA to see

light of day as a book more widely available to Traveller fans everywhere[1]. If Andy got a Hitchhiker's Guide quote once as he handed them out, he got it 37 times as once again we'd filled Redwings for the Friday and Saturday nights. We'd not quite filled the place on Thursday night however, to the bemusement of some non-delegates in the bar later on.

An Earlier Start

As promised at the end of last year's event, this year's convention was scheduling its first slots at 9am on Friday morning rather than the usual 7pm. This meant two extra games, although it also meant that to participate some of us were arriving Thurs-

---

1—*For newcomers to these annual write ups, the convention freebie three years ago was a fabulous printed volume collecting the first half of the adventures of the Angel's Share which had been run across the years at TravCon. And yes, we also lobbied for the other half of the book to be written and published. If only this pesky thing called real life didn't get in the way.*

Raconteurs' Rest
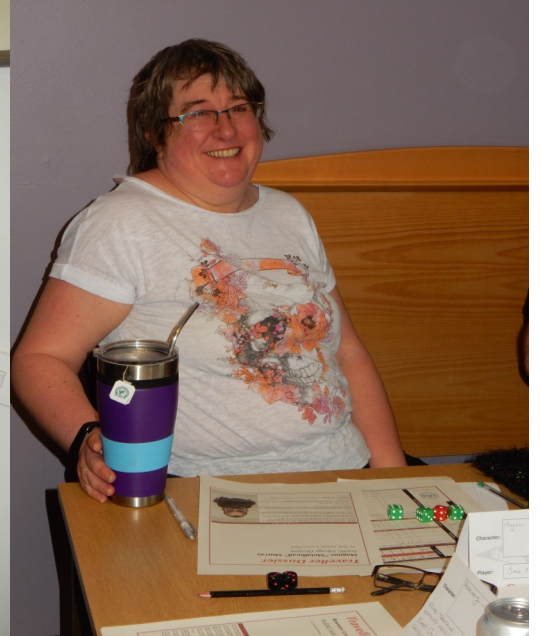
Clockwise from top left: Hugh, Robin, Jane, Jeff and Robin

day and needed to take two days off work. But what's not to love? An extra day of Travelling… more time to meet old friends… more opportunities to chat and chirp and channel our inner divas… more exhaustion…!

Figuring that there would be others that would arrive early enough on Thursday to fit in an evening game, even though none were scheduled, I'd had the bright idea of running a Zero Prep game. I'd save all my preparation for the 'formal' games I was running and for this game, anyone who was interested – or

Raconteurs' Rest

not that fussed about sitting in the bar all evening – could generate a character, fit their character in with everyone else, and I'd use their character gen and some random tables to just see where we ended up. Great idea in theory but in order to be ready for anything I probably put more effort into the Zero Prep game than I did anything else: digging out all the supplements I thought would be useful for detailing people, planets and plots on the fly; preparing (or finding) d66 tables; producing some die drop forms to randomly select certain things (or provide a discussion starter for players); inventing a Lego die drop tray to use with those tables; going mad and deciding I wanted an *Atlas of Charted Space* so we could set our adventures anywhere.

Ah, yes, the atlas. This perhaps deserves a bit more explanation. Those of you who recall the old *Atlas of the Imperium* from GDW may recall that it was somewhat disappointing in only including the system positions of all the worlds it included. I've long fancied something more comprehensive thanks to the ever wonderful travellermap.com (and if you don't know this resource, get along and take a look now). It's great while sitting at a computer, but what if you just want to browse through a print volume or don't have an internet connection? I'd done some experimentation and seen that printing a sector in colour (but not on black) at A3 size (a little larger than twice US letter) meant a map that was quite usable even with aging eyesight. I couldn't quite squeeze on the UWPs at that size – although TravellerMap allows the possibility – but I can't easily print at the next size up, A2, and didn't particularly want to start sticking together two sheets of paper. My plan was to take a reasonable chunk of Charted Space, maybe 125 sectors worth, print out the maps and bind them together to make an atlas. It would have been a bit rough and ready however as there'd be no sector title on each map unless I added it manually, pages would be printed single sided which

would bulk the thing out, I'd lose sections of the map along the binding edge, and I'd have the UWPs separately in electronic booklet files that can be created from TravellerMap. Then I discovered the site allows you to actually generate an 'atlas' of most of the sectors I was interested in. Although you lose a little bit of size as it doesn't print to the edges of the paper, the layout and look would be much smarter, and it would include UWPs on separate pages; including the full extended T5 data. That last wasn't critical, but is nice to have. A visit to a printshop and I had a rather lovely 'one off' kind of handout that I doubt will be replicated in too many other places. Of course, my dream would have been to print the whole thing at A2 size, with UWPs on the maps themselves, and bind the whole thing between hard covers like some old-time map folio. But I was being quoted prices upwards of £300 just for the printing.

In the end it was quite fun to at least offer the option of setting an adventure pretty much anywhere in Charted Space. I could also introduce the other adventures I was running by starting with a galaxy map and extolling the natural beauty of creation; moving down to the Charted Space map in the atlas and pointing out the wondrous beauty of so many polities inhabiting the same space and (mostly) getting on; turning to the Spinward Marches and describing the fascinating beauty of so many many many individuals (and naming three of them from other adventures I've run across the years); and then zooming in on a map of Aramis subsector and the deck plans of the *March Harrier* – anything but beautiful as I handed out various ship faults the crew had to deal with.

Zero Prep – hah!

The actual Zero Prep games, one on Thursday night for anyone interested and then the formal one that Andy had scheduled on Friday morning, were two different beasts. I had imagined that character generation might take half an hour – I can knock

Raconteurs' Rest

through Mongoose 2nd edition in 20 minutes – but actually took nearer an hour as I'd underestimated most people's familiarity with the rules. However, a chunk of that was taken by characters agreeing events together and connecting their characters which made it more fun. That still left us with three hours for me to quite literally make things up as we went, riffing off the choices the players were making with regard to their characters or decisions they had made using the Lego die drop table earlier. Thursday night went really well with players united in their aim as out of work 'citizens' deciding that they were going to try and stake a claim in the rush to prospect for lanthanum in a belt that's just opening up. They encounter an Aslan who's looking for missing relatives and end up helping her locate the wreck of a ship in a little explored planetoid belt. Sequels were presenting themselves in the possibility of then pursuing the reason the ship had been wrecked and what had happened to the relatives. Somehow it flowed, the players worked together and seemed to have fun, my random decision tables managed to look almost coherent in retrospect.

On Friday morning it went well enough, but not quite as smoothly. A couple of the players were tugging in different directions as PCs (and possibly as players as well, it was hard to tell) and I was finding it harder to get a focus. But eventually, it turned into a heist of sorts as the PCs burgled a ship of some military drugs right under the noses of its crew. There were some great moments here as Sarah chatted up the Captain, got him drunk and her crewmates slipped off to explore an elevator shaft to find the small cargo they were after.

I felt I'd exorcised the lesser demons of knowing whether I could make up an adventure on the spot, but was kind of glad it was over and I'm unlikely to tread the same ground again in quite the same way. If I did it again, I would limit options somewhat, have much better organization of all my tables and
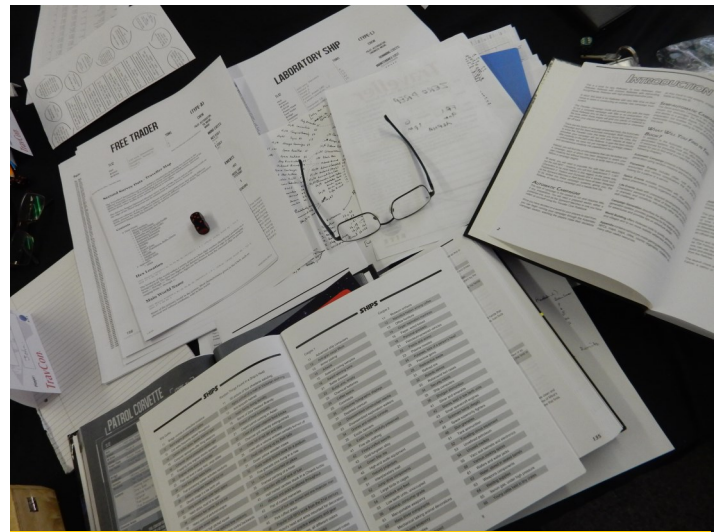
Charts, tables, mindmaps, books, etc.—and not all that were used…

generators, and hopefully relax more knowing that it wasn't impossible! I should take this opportunity to thank the players who so gamely gave it a go.

Dive! Dive! Dive!

After a bite to eat from the nibbles BITS kindly provides, I was able to 'relax' and actually play a game for a change. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite as restful as I might have hoped. I'd signed up for Richard Talbot's game *Till Depths Do Us Part*. This had been long awaited. It must be at least three years if not four since Richard mentioned the possibility of running something along the lines of an SDB under attack in a gas giant. Cue a nifty diagrammatic representation of said gas giant with different levels and 'sectors', as well as the possibility of clichéd submarine captain accents. For various reasons, Richard had not been able to make TravCon one year for this reason, another year for that reason, last year because of the Beast from the East. So, he was finally here, finally running it, and finally I could see what it was all about. I wasn't disappointed; it's an instant classic and full of atmosphere – no pun intended. Without giving too much away the Captain of the SDB is utterly incompetent. I was playing the XO and suddenly found my non-existent tactical prowess under severe pressure as Simon B brilliantly role-played an over-educated,

Raconteurs' Rest

under-intelligent captain who fortunately managed to completely miss his crew's subtle, and not so subtle, interpretations of his orders. My favourite moment was when several enemy ships hove into scanner range and the order came "Dive, Dive, Dive". The rest of the bridge crew knew this would mean almost certain death for various Reasons, so I signalled the pilot to 'dive' at the absolutely shallowest orbital reduction that could be managed.

Given my lack of tactical ability as a player and given the dysfunction of the crew generally, I perhaps shouldn't have been surprised that this adventure finished in what may well have been my first experience of a Total Party Kill. But boy did we go out gloriously, taking a lot of the enemy with us and being memorialized in statues. Well, everyone except the Captain who somehow got missed off the records thanks to an administrative error. Great fun.
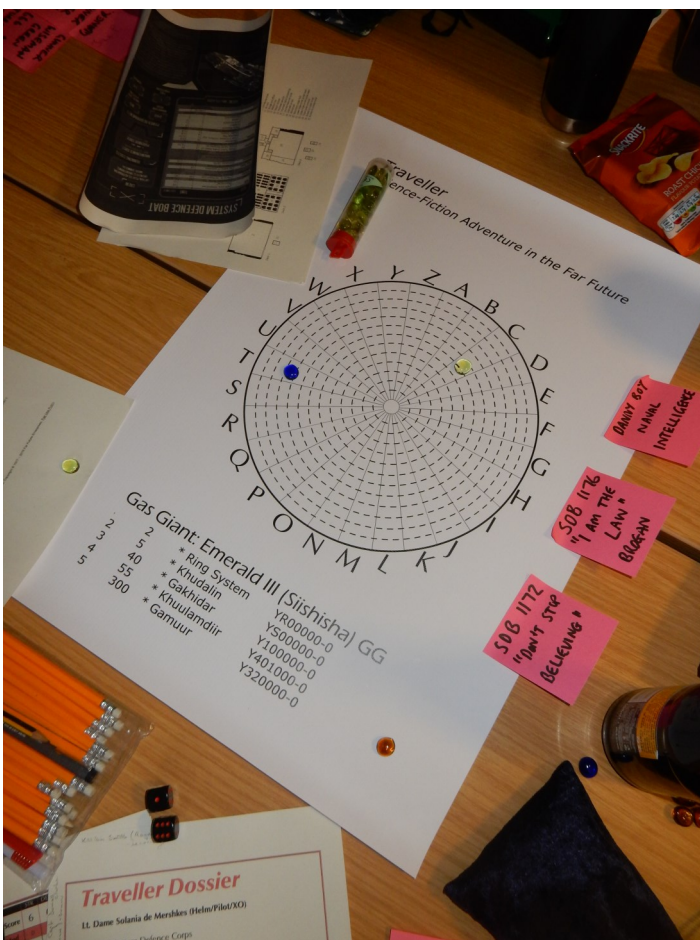
Charting the Depths

Traditionally on Friday it's arrival evening and a trip to the curry house next door. Some had actually gone on Thursday night and would go again on Saturday. For those of us who feel one curry in a week is quite sufficient, thank you, this was the night most chose to go. On Saturday night we'd make do with local takeaways. It wasn't as if we were about to starve with all the lovely BITS nibbles available in any case.

Bob and Nigel poring over a map

The Traveller Adventure Revisited

After supper, it was time to run my first 'proper' game. Ironically, preparations for my Zero Prep games, had rather distracted me from spending much time actually going over my notes for *The*

The Author, centre, refereeing, with Karl (left) and Nick (right)

Traveller Adventure, not helped by losing a weekend unexpectedly following the death of my father-in-law. I was only thankful funeral plans hadn't cancelled my attendance at TravCon altogether. My plan was not to try and run the entire campaign over the weekend, but just to offer 'Scenes from *The Traveller Adventure*' in two slots, or three if Andy was struggling to fill spaces. I'd dug out what I considered the more interesting early scenarios. I could save later ones for another year. So I had 'Leedor on Aramis' (still a dull title) to kick off with, 'Pysadian Escapade' and 'Wolf at the Door' lined up. I noted on arrival Andy had me down for all three and was glad I'd brought everything with me. The snag was that it is actually something like three years since my little group in Portsmouth started out back on Leedor so it's hardly fresh in my mind. I had at least, however, prepared the handouts I thought I'd need and I'd just about had a chance to read through the chapter and study my original briefing notes, which helped a lot. The one thing I hadn't managed to do was prepare a bit of detail for how Gvoudzon might get smuggled into the starport and up into orbit which is supposed to happen towards the end of the first chapter. Having already spent three sessions on Leedor back with my group we'd not gone into this in any detail for fear of never finishing. In fact, the book itself doesn't give you much support for this section, which makes me wonder if it was something of an afterthought with the authors.

I slipped into the role of Weekea-da the Bwap broker with his enthusiastic welcome to Aramis: 'Bakaka!' I fear there may be photos somewhere of me using my convention microfibre as a prop to play the 'towelhead'. But in fact, once I got started and the players were responding, I found it kind of ran itself and we had such fun with meeting Gvoudzon and doing the heist that it both filled the four-hour slot and obtaining the brooch felt like a

satisfactory ending in itself so lots of detail after that wasn't really necessary.

Keen to do it 'by the book', I'd gone back to the original (unnamed) book characters and converted them all from scratch to Mongoose *Traveller* 2nd edition. Thus I was handing out the eight characters found in *The Traveller Adventure* for the six conventioneers to pick. I did ask (beg? insist?) that someone take on the Captain's role so I wasn't directing things too much, and I suggested it would be more fun if someone took Gvoudzon on rather than me trying to run him as an NPC. We then, also, decided we would lose the two weaker PCs that are offered. (The ex-Army Captain and the ex-Marine Captain).

So far, so good. Thinking that it would help my connecting with the characters and speed up response times as I'd better know their names and characteristics, I'd added the PC names we've been using for three years down in Portsmouth to the new character sheets. Although I was happy for players to change them if they wanted, no one did. In retrospect, this was probably my one mistake. I thought it would make things easier; in fact, it was just plain weird having 'characters' I knew well being played by completely different people – however much they stuck to the descriptions I'd added to the back of the sheets which were, again, optional. I think if I do this again next year (i.e., more scenes from TTA), I might be inclined to let the players provide their own names. Then again, that might be as confusing…

When playing this back in Portsmouth we'd been without our Gvoudzon player for the first session so it made sense to let the others roam the city, get used to role playing, and check out some of the attractions before finally getting to the museum in the second session. This made no sense for the convention game and I didn't want Gvoudzon's player to sit around for half the evening waiting for his big entry and scripted lines. However, there was an easy 'fix'. The campaign starts at New Year so I had

Raconteurs' Rest

the Marquis doing his New Year speech from the balcony as before but on this occasion determined that pretty much everywhere in the city was shut on New Year's Day. Except of course for the Museum of Aramis which has provisions in its charter to provide education and entertainment 365 days of the year. As it happened, Gvoudzon had been taken by an experienced role-player I've admired in other years and other situations (he was the useless SDB captain above, for example) and he took the whole introducing-himself-to-the-other-players-after-he-gets-beaten-up in his stride. It was really quite moving hearing his backstory passionately delivered. I was desperate by then for a cup of tea and could have easily slipped out to make it as I knew all the content, but it was far too much of a privilege to watch Simon perform to miss a second of it.

A Referee's seat at the table, Roger style

When a Woman Loves a Man…

Meanwhile, the captain role had been taken on by young Karl with his real life Dad next to him in the *March Harrier*'s pilot seat, as well next to him round the table. Ordinarily this might have passed without comment but Karl picked up the biography line about Loyd searching for his 'one true love' and not having much success. Out came the old 'Loyd's Ladies' tables (see TML reports *passim*) and he could chat up any females he encountered to his heart's content. There was an added frisson though with his father sitting next to him watching this in action. And sometimes wishing he wasn't as Karl began rolling a series of high numbers for the success of his endeavours. Our captain back home in Portsmouth had singularly failed to have any sort of luck like this across the 15 or more sessions we've played.

In this session it came to a climax, ahem, when the captain found a museum guide who was rather pert and pretty and saw a way to get information about the brooch, etc., without going anywhere near hacking into the computers as is traditional. I rolled a double six for the guide's reaction to him. Watching Karl outline how he'd prepare for a date, what he would arrange, what chat up lines he'd use and so on with his Dad, Nigel, sitting next to him was a picture. Not to mention Nigel teasing him for so blatantly using the poor woman. We did have to fade to black at one point. But it got worse. As the PCs got to the actual heist, Captain Loyd realizes that his newfound lady friend – who he has persuaded that he is both a ship captain and a secret agent – wants to join in with the robbery. "For the excitement." She still has romantic visions of a secret agent's life of adventure. Karl/Loyd does his best to dissuade her with all sorts of reasons why it's a bad idea: danger, losing her job, getting hurt, prison, etc. Given his

Pilot and Captain; father and son: Karl and Nigel

multiple high rolls but also given my NPC's initial reaction to him, I decided to go all in. "But I love you," she says for the first time. Karl's face for just a split second as he processed how to deal with this in player terms and how to deal with this in character terms was just fantastic. A look of horror, fear, astonishment and probably more all rolled into one. Or perhaps it was just really excellent role-playing… In any case, with just that split second of hesitation he bravely returned an "I love you," took her on the heist and eventually the *March Harrier* departed Aramis with an additional passenger tucked up in the captain's stateroom.

My fears about running an adventure that could quite easily be well known by players and possibly hijacked by anyone wanting to make things difficult were completely unfounded and I'm very glad I decided to give it a go. It was certainly interesting revisiting old, familiar territory but with a new set of players which was a first for me. It seemed the players enjoyed it as well – despite the 'issues' with the adventure as published. Perhaps the railroading is of less concern at a convention. My thanks to them for throwing themselves into it so wholeheartedly.

I'd love to have stayed for after hours' talk and games in the bar, but it had been a full day and I knew there were two more action packed days to come. I decided to retreat and call it a night. Come the morning I was very glad of that decision as the sleep period seemed short enough as it was. But I chatted with Nigel over breakfast and appear to have found a long-lost twin. In our shared – or at least not dissimilar – boarding school experiences; shared love of a comfy hat; shared experiences of facing fairly serious medical issues; shared attempts to write *Traveller* fiction; and perhaps shared styles of role-playing and refereeing, we hit it off very quickly which ended up having interesting implications for the Sunday game.

Memory Loss and Memory Capture

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I'd been persuaded, over breakfast, to sign up for *Love's Labours Lost* in the morning slot. This was being run by Nigel and once I heard it was Darrian scientists I couldn't resist. Curious to see how it differed from (or was similar to) my own *Ashfall* trilogy which features Darrian scientists, I jumped right in along with Tess and Sarah and three others. One difference is that in *Ashfall*, all the PCs are university lecturers; here, just one was. A random distribution had given me a female engineer and I happened to know that Tess really likes those, so I offered to swap and end-
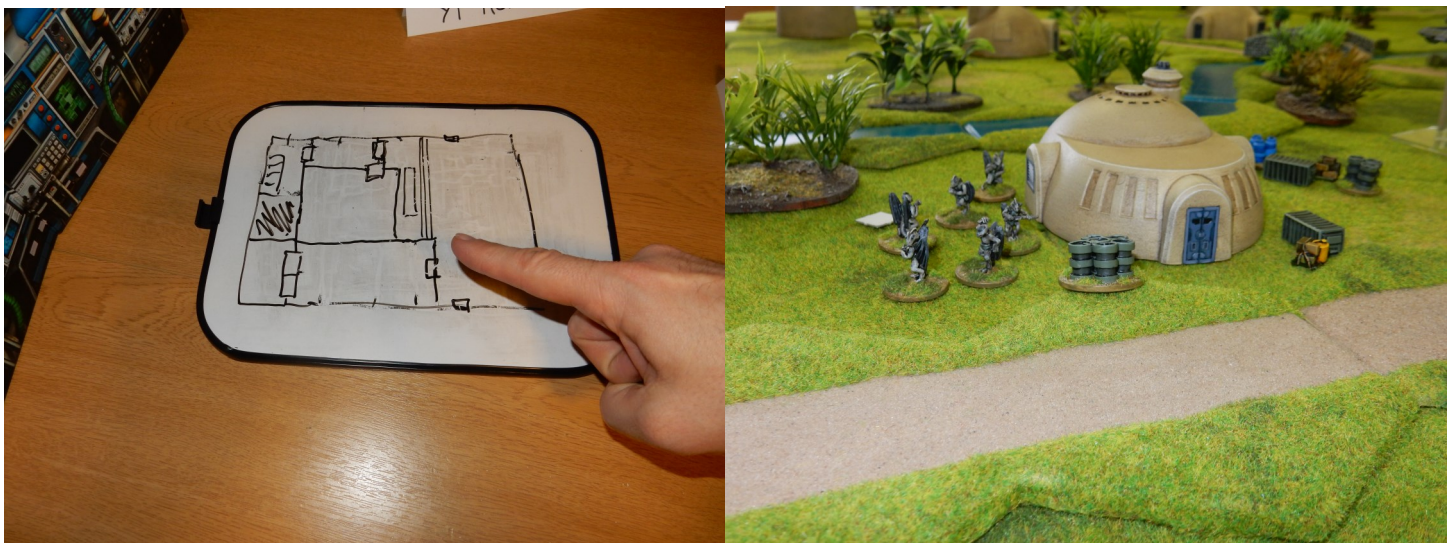
Extremes of mapping/preparation: Left, from "The Experiment"; right, "Iron Hammer" miniatures game.

ed up with a professor character. Well, that suited me just fine. One of my first experiences at TravCon more than a decade ago was playing a professor in Dom M's terrific *This Fear of Gods* and the role fit me like a glove. I cranked up my channelling of all the university types I work with and had a lot of fun. Given that Sarah L was playing the ship captain in charge for the first portion of the adventure, she was perhaps quite right to put me in my place a couple of times about being a bit in everyone's face and "just wanting to be worshipped". The problem was, I wasn't 100% sure whether she was in character or talking about me as a player. My guilty conscience perhaps as I'm aware that I can get a bit boisterous – particularly when excited, which is pretty much the norm for the entire convention. I tried to rein it in a bit particularly as I noticed that Tess had gone remarkably quiet and wasn't saying very much. This didn't change however, even after I bit my tongue a few times. Anyway, I won't spoil the plot save to say that it involved AIs and an old war and despite the professor having to take over leadership of the expedition once on the ground, we managed to see our way through to a conclusion, even if my 'solution' at the end had been over-ruled by everyone else only for us to find out what we'd missed by not following my suggestion. Ah well. As a complete aside, there was also another first here as instead of trying to take notes, I thought I would take the opportunity to continue my 'drawing a day' attempt to improve my (non-existent) artistic skills. A photo may exist but I'm a long way yet from being brave enough to share my efforts.

What amused me as the game concluded was something ringing a lot of bells as Nigel wrapped it up. I couldn't quite place what the connection might have been, until Tess revealed that she'd gone quiet earlier because an hour or more in the memory had surfaced that she'd actually played in the same adventure last year! Indeed, I reported in these very pages a year ago – albeit very briefly – on the adventure being run which is why it was sounding familiar to me at the denouement! [See second paragraph and photo under *The Chirpers Return* in the after-action report from the July/August 2018 *Freelance Traveller*]. So much for wetware memory cells.

Afterwards, I felt I had to apologize to Sarah if I had been a bit much as a player rather than a character. Although I don't quite think I want to be worshipped, I am aware I'm driven by the hope of some kind of appreciation or admiration. Perhaps not finding it elsewhere, I've come to enjoy TravCon providing that kind of encouragement. Poor Sarah was a bit mortified that I'd not been sure about real vs play when she'd definitely only meant the latter, but it did give us a good laugh!

What I've missed out in that description however was a rather surprising first. At some point, I forget why, I was being teased for owning some obscure *Traveller* book and referee Nigel made a quip about that being nothing compared to having the *Beowulf* tattooed to your leg. I initially thought he was just joking and continuing to tease me. However, I slowly twigged there was something more going on and probed further. It turned out he does indeed have quite a large tattoo of the *Beowulf* on his leg. A friend of his had been dying of cancer and helped Nigel pick out a design as a memorial to be remembered by. Well, that was too good a secret to keep. And as shy isn't a word one could use about the tattoo's owner, it didn't take much for Nigel to pull down his trousers and reveal all! (This must be a first for pretty much any Traveller convention…) Suitably impressed and pausing for a moment to remember Nigel's friend Phil, we got back to the game, but I suspect there were many of us round the table questioning the extent of our own fandom in the light of this devotion to the cause and tribute to friendship.

Proof that Nigel is a real fan of Traveller

The Traveller Adventure revisited. Again.

The afternoon slot was back on the *March Harrier* as a new set of six players signed up. Well, there were a couple of repeat offenders to whom I gave the option to continue with the same characters as before if desired. 'Pysadian Escapade'… and yes, "those b***** anolas" as one experienced referee described them saying he'd drop them if he ever ran the adventure. Back in Portsmouth, for anyone who's not been following the after-action write-ups on the *Traveller* Mailing List, we'd had the player with the marine captain feeling so disconnected with her character that we'd killed him off and replaced him with a much more dynamic – and pretty – archaeologist. The whole conceit of the fussball game with the vargr on the starport landing pads leading to a bad head injury on the plascrete and the eventual death of poor old Fox Hogan, had worked so well previously that I wondered if it mightn't be worth trying again. So I nabbed the player who'd taken the Fox character and asked he was up for a bit of shenanigans. It turned out he was and so poor old Fox, even in this universe, didn't make it out of the port, but Lily Lee signs on with the crew instead. And a good job too, with her Explosives skill for mining, sorry, harvesting howood.

I couldn't resist rerunning the three day trip on the train once again – although not quite at such length and another favourite moment of the weekend was the player whose character had missed the information about the train's departure time. To be fair, I think the player had missed it as well. So said character stops off for a drink only to discover he's supposed to be at the station a mile away in just a few minutes. This was definitely a moment to role-play as he ran to the station, races onto the platform only to see the old steam train is just pulling out. Tearing after it, with most of his crewmates laughing through the window, he then manages to fail three Dexterity rolls in a row as the train is slowly speeding up. Finally, a crewmate gets to the door, offers him a hand, they make contact and he was pulled rather wildly onboard. We nominated Neil for a PFI at the end of the convention but it didn't quite get enough votes to win.

I also did the whole bit at the Baraatsu homestead again. I thought it would be nice if he offered them each a howood carving from a basket. Each player got to describe their own small carving. Baraatsu then explains the 'meaning' or significance of the carving relating it to his faith and Mother Pysadi. It's hard thinking so quickly on your feet as you respond to whatever the players have come up

Jane appears not to be having any trouble running A Troubled Case

with for their carving, but at least to my mind, it makes the gifts more memorable.

We took a break, I grabbed a mug of tea and I charged round the other rooms with my camera to take photos as I do. Only to get to the room where Jane was bravely running *A Troubled Case* a second time. Now I desperately wanted to stop for a little while and see how it was going but seeing Jane suddenly reminded me that we still had the whole harvest the howood and rescue whoever from the church at Itzeny and we were already three hours into the session. Arrrgh! I charged back to our room and picked up the pace a bit. After all, we'd spent ¾ of the time doing 'other' stuff and now had only a bit over an hour to do what's actually in the book!

The players didn't seem to mind, however, and we had fun harvesting the howood. The anolas do their thing and I can only presume that the reticence of everyone at the table to get anywhere near the things is because they all knew just what trouble they are. Perhaps it was metaknowledge on their part, perhaps it was railroading on mine, but I used the two NPC crew (there are eight characters and only six players in a typical TravCon slot), plus one randomly determined player to receive the affections of the creatures.

Gvoudzon, still played by Simon, made a valiant effort to persuade the Salvors that they hadn't even seen the anolas, much less touched them and he was so passionately lying through his teeth I actually felt a bit bad producing the evidence of animal droppings on their carts and Baraatsu's witness statement. As something of a sop, I had the animal loving NPC offer to stay in place of the PC who'd been 'selected' to stay on at the church. This meant the players could reasonably just take off and leave said NPC to it. But no, they were in for a penny, in for a pound and there was just time before close of play for them to hatch a plan to rescue the player and execute it very nicely – even picking up the kitchen

maid who has been chatted up in the intervening three days. The crew is swelling by the moment! It's almost a shame we're not running it as a campaign for the ongoing humour and role playing that might offer.

"This is the Free Trader *Beowulf*, calling anyone…"

Meanwhile, whilst running the previous session I'd been accosted by a referee who had not been able to run the game he had planned because someone, we'll mention no names, had managed to wander off with his bag of notes/rules/dice/handouts/etc. It was a genuine mistake but I'd have been irritated to have spent time preparing only to find it had been wasted. I'm presuming someone directed him to me as he was asking if I'd be prepared to give up my Sunday session (and third 'scene' from *The Traveller Adventure*). Well, a small part of me was rather disappointed not to get to the fun of that romp in the woods now I was mentally geared up for it, but a much larger – and very very tired – part of me was aware that I'd really overcommitted to this TravCon and that running five slots might just finish me off. I was quite relieved to be able to say, fine, take it!

Time for supper. Fish and chips for me, courtesy of Steve and Neil who kindly made a run into Sawtry while I got some much needed rest. Way down on the usual three stops a day I do to manage the chronic fatigue, I was really struggling. There was a temptation to skip the final session of the day and just go to bed. But it's *Traveller* – my one opportunity a year to play – how can I miss out? Plus, I knew it was a Stephen J. Ellis game and I really couldn't resist. They're invariably interesting, emphasise role playing and often become talking points at later conventions.

So, what was on offer this year? Well, I'd had a tiny bit of a sneak preview in social media discussions a week or two before. That had just whetted

Raconteurs' Rest

my appetite and made me even more determined to get a seat if I could. Fortunately, it was being run twice which helped. In addition, there was the new system at the convention this year that referee's running games could have first dibs on a game or two depending on how many they were running.

You may recall my after-action report of five years ago – can it really be a decade? [The TravCon 14 AAR in the September 2014 issue of *Freelance Traveller* – see under A Second Highlight] – when Steve had run *Eve of Rebellion* [then called *Imperial Intrigue*] and I'd been able to play Emperor Strephon. In what is beginning to look like an attempt to corner the market on taking really iconic bits of *Traveller* and somehow making them accessible to play, this adventure, *The Grendel Problem*, was set on the *Beowulf*. Yes, **that** *Beowulf*. Better yet, as Steve offered up the different roles, all the other players stepped back from wanting to play the captain. Well, I could relate to that having had to play captain/leader/boss in both the games I'd played in so far. But at the same time, it was the *Beowulf*! As I didn't step back as quickly as the others, Hobson's choice was mine. But the *Beowulf*! Captain of the *Beowulf*! Gamers tend to know one thing about *Traveller* – you die in character generation. If they know two things, it's the distress call of the *Beowulf*. There can be little that's more iconic across almost every edition of *Traveller*.

But our referee, being as experienced and skilled as he is, wasn't just leaving it there and letting us get on with it. That would have been far too easy and ho-hum. The conceit of this adventure was that we were the crew of the ship but also being filmed for series 18 of the holodrama that is based on the ship, its crew and its adventures. This is what has made it so famous across Charted Space. This really worked as an in game idea and also as a convention idea. One player was the producer/director on board, one was the ship's doctor and female lead who is a bit

fed up with the whole enterprise, I as the captain and pilot was only there because I'd been pressured into it by uncle, and so on. (Also, I quite fancied the doctor but didn't want to make that public for fear they'd write it into the show and cheapen my true love.)

The background briefings, which included all this and more were very convincingly put together and even better, read like a wikipedia article on the ups and downs of a long running tv series. It was quite brilliantly conceived and really helped us get into character.

On top of all this, to try to improve flagging ratings and avoid the possible cancellation of the show, we were being sent into Sword World space to find excitement and adventure. So we also had an attaché and a Sword Worlds security officer on board. A local Jarl had a problem with a monster attacking his mead hall, which gave us something to look into. Thus the title of the adventure and a neat play on the *Beowulf* tradition of old. It really was very well thought out and to add to the verisimilitude, Steve had really done his background homework on Viking culture, the *Beowulf* epic, Sword World culture and throughout maintained a really impressive Nordic accent (as did Ross playing across the table to be fair). There were other touches too as he dimmed

Steve Ellis isn't a Sword Worlds Jarl, but he plays one on HD…

half the lights when night fell and the Sword Worlders were regaling us with terror tales around the flickering fireplace. In short, before we'd even started, and increasingly as we went on, I was hugely enamoured of the whole thing and it only got better as we role-played, engaged in derring-do, and tried to solve the puzzle(s) on offer.

The only downer of this session was that I was so exhausted I was in considerable pain by about half way through and come 10pm or a little after was seriously thinking I might have to call it a night. I pressed on but very rudely asked Steve if he could predict an estimated finish time which felt very out of order. But it seemed as if we were making progress and stuffing some analgesics down me sort of helped. I saw it through to the end. I'm glad I did, I think, because at the denouement brave Captain Dafydd Wanatabe was supposed to be flying the ship out of a swamp after we've successfully tackled the monster. Only to roll double 1. Our backup pilot (the former "Miss Foreven 1100" beauty contest winner) takes over and she rolls double 1. We're in trouble and basically crash the *Beowulf* into the swamp rather ignominiously. "This is the Free Trader *Beowulf,* calling anyone…" Sadly, some of the crew are not only injured but killed and I'm feeling hugely responsible. Of course, all this makes for great holovision. Especially when I get to the injured doctor and declare my, ahem, concern and the director is getting it all recorded. With a bit of judicial cutting she is able to make an entire love scene out of it.

There is more but I don't want to spoil the plot for folk if it gets run again or published. Suffice to say that disgusted with myself for killing friends and crewmates Dafydd tells his uncle to stuff the job and goes off to explore the Spinward Marches desperately hoping the doctor might follow. However, in a really nice – and possibly unique – epilogue, Steve had primed the director's player to take it off

his hands and to do it as a description of the finished production that gets broadcast. My work colleague Jane, back for her fourth year, and not a public speaker by nature, rose to the challenge and with an audience of the other players and one or two other conventioneers who had wandered in, stood in front of a board and dramatically recounted our exploits neatly adding her directorial touches to show how it came out on broadcast. Painting us all in the best possible light, of course.

An Idea For Another Time

Saturday night I was not even slightly tempted to stay up after hours, but I was really glad that my other bright idea of a couple of weeks before the convention hadn't come to pass. Here in the UK – and I'm willing to bet it's translated across the Atlantic *[It has —ed.]* and further afield as well – we have a number of tv shows along the lines of *The Great British Bake Off* and *The Great British Sewing Bee*. I happened to notice that they have almost identical formats: a 'signature challenge', a 'technical challenge' and a 'showstopper'. There's a theme for the episode, the participants have to bake or sew (or to do make up I just saw a couple of nights ago) according to the directions given, judges rate them and pick a 'best of' for the show who gets kudos, and a loser who goes home. Eventually, across a series, just three are left for a final.

It wasn't a great leap to think, why couldn't we have a *Traveller* equivalent? Take a four-hour slot and do something similar. Pick a theme – say, Darrians, or Scouts, or 'Eve of War' or 'Merchants on the Edge'. I quite liked the latter as it allowed multiple interpretations – edge of space, edge of bankruptcy, edge of morality… Spend an hour (or 45 minutes if judging is included) creating a character; spend an hour (or 45 minutes with judging) on a technical challenge such as creating a world, or ship, or vehicle, or animal according to certain criteria; spend two hours creating the outline of an adventure with,

say, three interesting locations, two antagonistic NPCs and a plot point twist.

I'd suggested the *Great Traveller Make Off* as an option a couple of weeks before the convention and also suggested it could be an after hours thing like the quiz of last year if all the gaming slots were filled. The only doubts I had about that were that I thought it would be quite a niche interest. In the event, although I took blank paper and sections of rules to make it work if we did it, all the slots were filled with adventures so it would have had to have been after hours. I'm not entirely sure that there was anyone with the interest or capacity to try that kind of brainwork and pressure at that time of night, but in any case, I was in no fit state to run it. So maybe another year. Or perhaps TravellerCon in the US would be interested in giving it a go.

Chirrup!

Was it three years ago that I arrived at breakfast on the Sunday and could barely walk? I'd completely overdone it. That was before I was doing my 'stops' during the day to manage energy levels. Fortunately, my efforts to take breaks meant I wasn't that bad, but all the same, the morning came all too soon. Between packing up the ridiculous amount of stuff I'd bought (essentially a crate of stuff for my Zero Prep games, another crate for the GTMO and another crate for *The Traveller Adventure* and other assorted bits – not to mention my big box for A3 books like the atlas and the geomorphs), trying to fit in breakfast, and gearing up for the final session, I never quite caught up with myself. So I was quite pleased when the dilemma of which game to pick was resolved for me. I'd thought, if I was running a game on Sunday, I'd not be able to fit in a session with the chirpers. Yes, they were back for another outing and Andy had already run it twice to the usual acclaim and the sound of six players chirping their slightly demented way through it. I'd be sad to miss them but wasn't regretting the choices I'd al-

ready made. With Sunday now free, I could sign up for the third chirper slot. Except that Robin F was also running *Rescue on Galatea*, the classic FASA adventure, and I was really torn by that too. In the end, I was so slow, Andy had just put my name down for his session.

Andy takes charge of the chirpers

As it happened, I really glad he did. Firstly, because only three of us were signed up and less might have made it difficult; secondly because the chirper games really are fun – although they're not everyone's cup of tea I'll admit; and thirdly because the other two players were Richard T who I always enjoy watching in action and Nigel. I mentioned before that we'd discovered a like-mindedness that was a joy. As we got underway with Chirpy McChirpFace (what happened to the T- P- title pattern of yore?), it became apparent that despite the reduced numbers of players, Nigel and I were going to go full chirper and make up for any lack all by ourselves. If I'd had any doubts or disappointment about not getting the full experience with just three players, I was completely mistaken. If nothing else we got two character sheets each – well, actually four but it's a long story. Poor Andy – he's very patient with the mayhem these games usually involve and Richard was too – but they both deserved medals for spending the best part of a Sunday with the

almost constant stream of demented gaming going on. Indeed, at one point Andy paused in a description till we'd finished our undercurrent of nonsense chittering but we pointed out that we really were listening and could keep up the stream of high pitched warbling and backchat while he talked and still be concentrating. The four of us looked at each other in astonishment when on two occasions Nigel and I produced the same lines at exactly the same time using the exact same words in sync with each other. What was that about? The real highlight of the session came, however, when Andy produced his d66 list of rubbish that the chirpers roll on to determine the random bits of trash they've got on their person. A glue stick here, a broken toy pistol there, a smelly cheese over that way, or whatever. On this occasion Richard rolled and was told he had an unused packet of sleeping tablets. Quick as a flash Nigel came back with a "what would a packet of used sleeping tablets look like?". That was enough to crack us up – it was perhaps funnier at the time – but when Andy at that point remembered that he'd planned on recording some chirping, we decided we'd recreate the sleeping tablet line to start it off. This of course became impossible as we tried retake after retake of the lines with anything but a straight face. There always seems to be a moment in chirper games that gets to laughing that is actually painful. Anyway, the (human) Captain of the ship we were on, which was being hijacked, had ordered everyone to remain in their cabins and not cause the hijackers any trouble. Well, as I was leader – with the usual low intelligence of chirpers – I had to point out to the party that we weren't in our cabins therefore we couldn't stay in them, and by that logic we were to cause trouble as well. Andy had me roll for how that piece of logic chopping had gone down with the other chirpers and the stewardess who we'd come across and for once I rolled high. Still, a lot of not staying in our cabin and a fair bit of causing trouble later, we managed to save the day and can look for-

ward to the next instalment another year. I suspect Andy will ban Nigel and I from playing in the same session however.

We wrapped it up and moved to the main lounge for the closing session. No auction this year – I keep meaning to ask if there was any reason for that – but we had the awards as usual. The PFI

Time to vote for the awards

award for that awful sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach went, quite deservedly, to Karl for his "I love you moment". I always feel like a proud parent when something I've triggered or nominated gets an award.

The Starburst for Extreme Heroism was a tie between Jane P who was nominated for bravely running one of my own adventures as a newbie referee and the in-game heroism of two engineers staying on board their crashing ship to avoid further loss of life. Just as Andy was considering how to break the tie, Richard T came into the room as he'd been elsewhere. He was told to put his hand up and the engineers, played by Pak and Pete, won the day. In football parlance here in the UK, "Jane wuz robbed".

As ever, this has been a personal journey through TravCon and I can only wish I could do justice to all the other fun stuff that was going on in games, between games, after hours. The photo of the

Doing It My Way

Pak (L) and Karl with their prizes

schedule should be good enough quality for you to zoom in and see the other games that were on offer with brief blurbs and the referees running them. One day perhaps we'll have full-spectrum drone cameras in every room recording all the action!

With no auction, we were free to get on the road to our various homes, but not before thanking Andy in the customary manner. Ravi, who usually proposes the thanks and offers the hug, was absent this year, so it fell to me to do the honours. Once again, the organization had been superlative and if there were any hitches this year, our commander-in-chief was keeping them well buried. Another great week-

The Schedule, after four days of updates

end, another great convention and another year to be inspired, challenged and amused. Now we hatch our plans for what we might do next year. I hear there's already the thought that there will be an official Thursday night game next time. Another first. ✪

Critics' Corner

Cepheus Light: Three Formats

reviewed by Steve Attwood

Cepheus Light. Omer G. Joel and Josh Peters.
Stellagama Publishing https://facebook.com/StellagamaPublishing
164pp., softcover POD, PDF, or MS-Word
US$18.99/UK£15.10(S)US$10.00/UK£7.87(P,W)*
* *The price given for the PDF (P) or MS-Word (W) format of the product is the suggested price on an item that is listed as Pay What You Want.*

This review was originally posted on Alegis Downport in December 2018.

Right, its time to do a three-pronged review of *Cepheus Light*, by Stellagama Publishing. I'm going to be taking a look at the PDF version, the printed book and the editable Microsoft Word document. The PDF and MS Word document are both available to download from DTRPG; both the PDF is available for a 'pay-what-you-want' cost, with a suggested price of $10, along with the MS Word version for the same suggested cost. The printed book can be purchased from Lulu.com (on-demand printers) for £15.10 currently, though I think it cost me a bit more

just before Christmas, so the price is worth watching as there are sometimes discounts available.

Cepheus Light, as the name suggests, is a cut-down version of the full *Cepheus Engine* rules set published by Samdarin Press. Omer Golan-Joel and Josh Peters have taken the core components of the CE rules and rewritten them as their interpretation (which is allowed under the *CE System Reference Document* and license). Why do this you may ask? There is an advantage in stripping out the core rules of CE and making only the core mechanics available in order to make a game more accessible, easier to set up adventures or enhance the main parts of the system. As a comparison, the original CE rules set is 207 pages long, whereas *Cepheus Light* (I'll call it CL from now on) is 164 pages. At 80% of the original size, its not that much of a difference in page count; so what is the difference between the two?
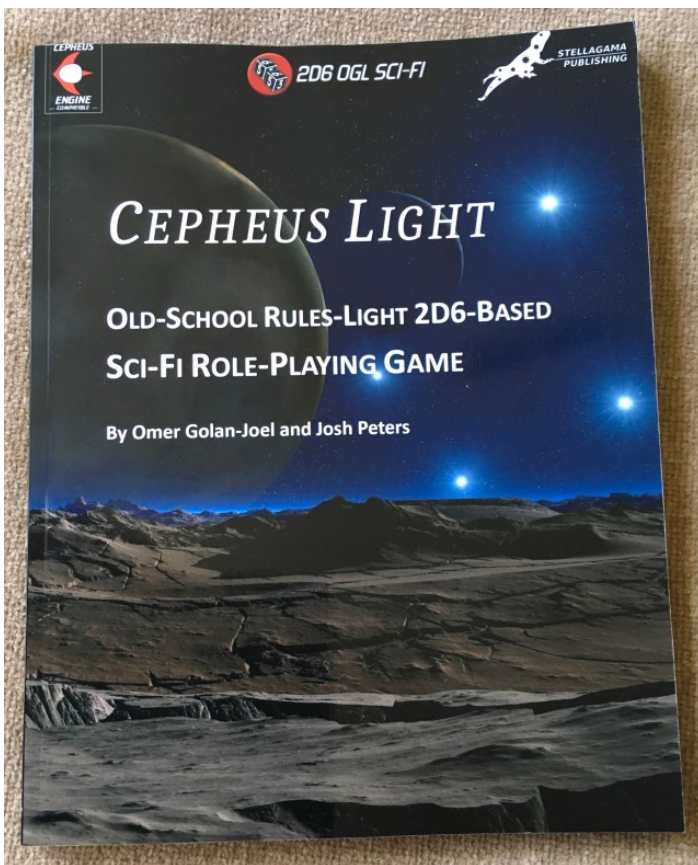
CL starts with a brief introduction about the book and the system including basic games mechan-

ics. Page 9 kicks off with character generation and this is it becomes noticeable in the difference between CE and CL; the number of careers has been reduced from 24 down to 12, namely: Agent, Army, Belter, Colonist, Elite, Marine, Merchant, Navy, Pirate, Rogue, Scholar and Scout. The generation process follows the same familiar structure (survival, skills, promotion, etc.), but the authors have added six detailed examples of how to follow the creation process.

Skills are slightly different in that some have been amalgamated or altered slightly, but they are compatible with CE and skill levels work in exactly the same way.

Equipment has all the essentials and there is plenty to choose from, covering 22 pages including personal armour, weapons, kit and vehicles across a variety of tech levels.

Combat is broken down into the basic steps to follow, with additional detail on the different actions and attacks available such as using ranged weapons or hand-to-hand combat. Again, another nice touch is two detailed examples of combat, using characters from the previous section. This is spread out over eight pages where the authors set the scene, describe how each character places themselves in position and the actual combat rolls and resolution. Great stuff! You also get a section on vehicle combat, spread over five pages.

The section 'Off-World Travel' introduces interplanetary and interstellar travel. Another example of how the page count has been reduced is the table of typical interplanetary travel times; the table in CL is roughly half the size of CE, but still feels just as functional because instead of exact distances in kilometres, you're given destination names such as 'Small Gas giant to Jump Point'. Interstellar travel and running a starship is still just as bloody expensive (unfortunately though the page count is less in CL, you still have to pay off your starship for 40-odd

years, sigh…) You can still play the 'solo' trading game in the same style as the original Classic *Traveller* rules, using the 'Trade Goods' table which has been transposed from the CE rules. The starship design rules still cover starships and small craft and the build process is clearly described. Pages 105 to 107 include an example of building a 300-ton TL10 Light Military Transport, which is followed by sixteen pages of example spacecraft most of which have some very nice colour illustrations.
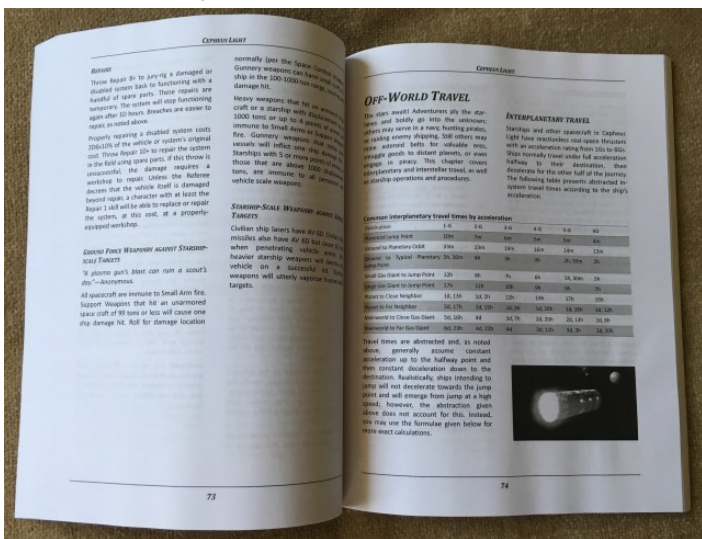
Space Combat is something that has divided some players, in that it has felt either overly complicated (those formulas in Classic *Traveller*…«*shudder*») or overly simple. CL addresses this by describing the rules and actions available, backed up with a seven page example of a deadly space combat between a trader and a pirate.

Generating worlds feels like it has been shortened so that it feels like Classic *Traveller* again (Book 3), functional but not overly complicated and not to the level of detail as in *Book 6: Scouts*. I'm not sure and I haven't tried it, but I wonder if you can get some of the weird results as in CT, where you can end up with an airless planet with a population in billions? Only way to find out is to try it… World generation is rounded off with a two page example.

Appendix A looks at Aliens and Psionics with a few examples of the types that could be encountered and the modified game stats (Greys, Reptiloids and Insectoids – a little bit of crossover from Stellagama's *These Stars Are Ours!*). Does anyone actually use Psionics in their games? Can't say I ever have, but this section has been moved from near the front of the CE book to this appendix in CL.

Finally you have Appendix B which lists sources of inspiration, such as books, games and films. The main parts that appear to have either been moved around the book (a bit) or removed completely are chapters 13 onwards from the main CE book, namely 'Planetary Wilderness Encounters'; there are no rules for animals. Social and starship encounters, some of the more detailed refereeing tips and ideas for adventure formats have also been removed.

There are plenty of illustrations in a mixture of colour and monochrome by a variety of artists which help to break up the text. I found the change in layout and size of font made the book much easier to read, which plenty of white space without it feeling like it was lacking in content. CE is a very detailed book and it covers a huge amount of material, but I found it hard going sometimes and it felt like there was a bit too much information to wade through. *Cepheus Light* extracts the key components and presents them in a clear, easy to understand manner. My favourite part? I love the examples which help to explain and apply the rules and because there are so many, this is what helps to bring up the page count to 80% of the CE book. The examples address what I have felt was a big shortfall in not just the CE book, but also Classic *Traveller* in helping you get up to speed with the rules. I find these useful as I have gaps of several months between remembering rules and they are a useful reminder!
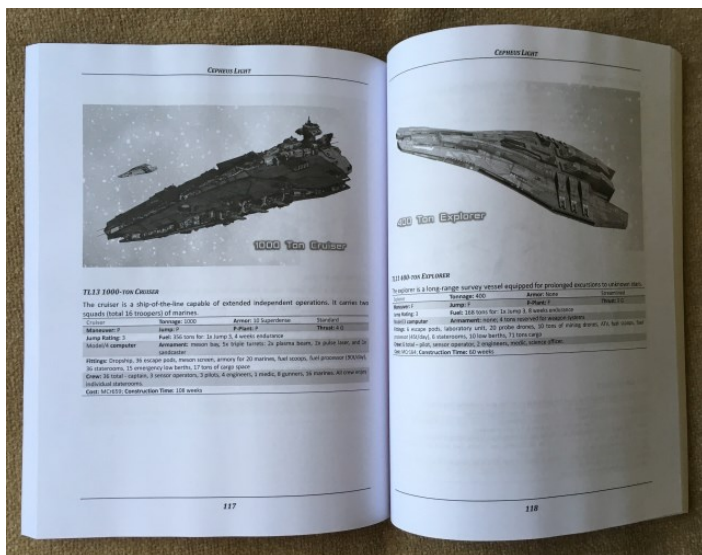
Cepheus Light Softcover Book

I also managed to get a copy of *Cepheus Light* in printed form, ordered from Lulu (and funded by my mon-in-law) as a Christmas present! The quality of the book is excellent and is presented in softback format, 210mm wide and 279mm tall, so it is slightly smaller than A4. You have a glossy card cover with matt white pages, text in black or grey for headings and monochrome or greyscale pictures. The only flaw I found in the reproduction was that the *Cepheus Engine* logo at the top of the cover was slightly cut-off; however the inside of the book shows correct spacing / no problems at all. Some of the images differ from the PDF version I guess so that the printed version would look better in greyscale.

I'm thoroughly impressed with the print book version of *Cepheus Light*; the authors have done an excellent job of producing the book and I'm impressed with Lulu.com's final output. It took about 6-8 days from order to delivery, which I think is very reasonable.

Cepheus Light Microsoft Word Document

This is available from DTRPG as a downloadable MS Word document file which can be fully edited; it is listed as pay-what-you-want, with a suggestion of $10. The file is roughly 300kb in size and retains all the colour editing and tables from the PDF version. All images have been removed, so you can use it as the basis for your own RPG rules. I think this is an excellent idea to make this available and would consider using it myself for a few ideas I have.

Overall, I really like *Cepheus Light* and think it hits the right balance between an introduction to 2D6 SFRPG games or you don't want to read through all of the CE full rules set. I think this will be my 'go-to' modern gaming handbook for my own writing for now on – I highly recommend that you get a copy, I don't think you will be disappointed! I would like to thank Omer Golan-Joel for very kindly sending me a copy in PDF format to review.

An Ancient Mystery: Darrian Ruins in the Sacnoth Dominate

by David Johnson

In 25 D.E.*—4359CE by the Old Terran calendar— the Sacnoth Dominate government announced it would sponsor several exploratory expeditions into the frontiers surrounding Sword Worlds space. The Sacnoth Dominate Exploratory Expeditions marked the first major interstellar expansion since the original settlement of the Sword Worlds. This essay appeared in a special issue of the Journal of Diplomatic History *(a publication of the University of Ny Kalmar on Gram) devoted to the history of Sword Worlds settlement and expansion, released following the exploration announcement by the Sacnoth Dominate government.*

> *Effective 15 Februar 25 D.E., this decree prohibits government- and privately-funded exploitation or settlement in any system in the Pilgrim frontier in which evidence is discovered of ancient Darrian ruins, with the sole exception of minor facilities established well-away from any such ruins to provide for the wilderness refueling of starships transiting through the system.*

Within two years of establishing formal diplomatic relations with the Darrian Confederation to spinward of Sword Worlds space, the Sacnoth Dominate, while preparing for an extensive program of exploration of the Pilgrim, Sepireld and Danuuz frontiers, has banned any exploitation or settlement in newly-explored systems which are found to have ruins of the mysterious ancient Darrian civilization. What could have led the Dominate government to make this remarkable decision? Was some secret accommodation made with the Darrians? Did the Darrians offer an explanation of the mysterious *Maghiz* which sparked the ban?

Long before we encountered actual Darrians, Sword Worlders had discovered ruins of the ancient Darrian civilization destroyed in the interstellar cataclysm called the *Maghiz* by the Darrians. That an ancient star-faring branch of Humaniti had been present in the region where the Founders had come to make our home was an unsettling mystery which framed Sword Worlder conceptions of security from the very beginning of our history.

The first discovery of ancient Darrian ruins in Sword Worlds space occurred on Gram in 2 F.E.* during the early surveys following the original settlement of the planet. We know now that the Darrian settlement on Gram had suffered no direct harm from the *Maghiz* itself but failed in the years afterward as contact with other Darrian worlds was lost. (The ancient settlement seems to have been a small scientific outpost which was possibly studying Gram as a potential colony world.) Because the Founders had no knowledge of the *Maghiz* or its effects on ancient Darrian civilization, the reason for the failure of the settlement remained a mystery. Thus, the initial discovery was suppressed by the Gram Admiralty in order to forestall fears about potential survivors on Gram or of star-faring Humans in nearby space or even of some as-yet-undiscovered harmful aspect of Gram's ecosphere which had caused the failure of the settlement.

The discovery of the Darrian ruins on Gram was a key motivation for the early surveys of nearby worlds that led to the discovery of surviving Darrians on Cunnonic in 3 F.E. and sparked the establishment of small settlements on Joyeuse, Colada, Tizon and Hrunting to pre-empt Darrian expansion into Sword Worlds space. (The large population of Darrian survivors on Entrope also led to a decision to forego settlement of Ansehelm** in order to maintain an informal "buffer zone" with Entrope.)

It wasn't until after the discovery of the failed Darrian mining colony on Excalibur in 108 F.E., somewhat better-preserved because the settlement had suffered from the disruption of communications

and computing systems caused by the *Maghiz*, that formal efforts were made on other Sword Worlds to discover ancient Darrian ruins. The Excalibur discovery led to the subsequent discovery of ruins of Darrian settlements on Joyeuse, Colada and Tizon, all of which had apparently been unscathed by the *Maghiz* itself but failed in its aftermath. The Darrian settlement on Gram was also revealed in this era—presented publicly as a recent discovery, as Sword World archaeologists began to piece together the widespread collapse of ancient Darrian civilization (and as our covert reconnaissance began to establish that the Darrians had only recently returned to interstellar space).

Though the first Darrian traders from Mire began to appear in the Sword Worlds in 135 F.E. they were reticent to discuss their ancient history. With time, in bits in pieces, some of these traders confirmed that the ruins in Sword Worlds space were indeed the remnants of ancient Darrian settlements but no explanation was offered for their failure. On the other hand the Darrians were also careful not to press any territorial claims in Sword Worlds space.

The colonization of Anduril in 183 F.E. led to the discovery of the most well-preserved Darrian ruins in Sword Worlds space, the ancient settlement there having failed after suffering from the destruction of a large proportion of electronics and gravitics modules caused by the *Maghiz*. With the discovery of Darrian ruins on Hofud and Sting in this period as well, we developed a newfound appreciation of the scale of destruction experienced by ancient Darrian civilization and a greater foreboding of its causes—though the details of the *Maghiz* itself still remained unknown. The most recent Darrian ruins in Sword Worlds space were discovered on Morglay in 209 F.E. It was in this period that we also learned of the Darrian ruins on Caladbolg.

While the Darrians have been reluctant to provide details about the cataclysm they call the *Maghiz*, scientists have reached a consensus that it must have been some sort of high-energy, electromagnetic phenomenon emanating from somewhere in Darrian space. Some have posited a solar nova but there do not seem to be any remnant stars in Darrian space which could have been the source. Still the patterns of destruction across the various known ruins sites, with those settlements closer to Darrian space having apparently suffered more severe electro-magnetic damage than those which are farther away, indicate a wave of destruction spreading out from a single point. (Scientists are reasonably certain this origin point is somewhere among the cluster of Darrian systems which include both Mire and the Darrian homeworld.) It seems reasonable to conclude that it is the *Maghiz* which was responsible for the collapse of the ancient interstellar civilization of the Darrians.

If the source of the *Maghiz* was not a natural one, the prospect of an artificial source is a chilling possibility. Obviously, such an artificial capability would represent a terrible weapon of mass destruction on an interstellar scale. It seems unlikely the Darrians would be reticent to speak of their experience of the *Maghiz* had they been the victims of an attack by an adversary with such a weapon. On the other hand, if the ancient Darrians inflicted this cataclysm on themselves perhaps the security concerns of the Founders provoked by the discovery of those first Darrian ruins on Gram over two centuries ago were not misplaced after all.

— Professor Erika Narankha
Department of Anthropology
University of Foerstaberg, Sacnoth
25 Mars 26 D.E.

(Continued from page 53)

* *Note on Sword Worlds calendars:* When Gram was settled the event was marked with a new calendar system. The Founding Era (F.E.) calendar begins with Year 1. (The Old Terran "Gregorian" calendar was maintained for dates prior to the Founding Era, with no efforts made to connect the two dating systems.) When the Sacnoth Dominate was formed the Dominate government again established a new calendar system, beginning the Dominion Era (D.E.). Founding Era dating continued to be used for dates prior to the establishment of the Sacnoth Dominate, resulting in two distinct calendar eras: Founding Era from the settlement of Gram—in the year 4122 of the Old Terran calendar—to the establishment of the Sacnoth Dominate—in what had been 214 F.E.—and then Dominion Era restarting at Year 1. With the shift from Founding Era to Dominion Era, the calendar system became similar to Old Terran "era name" systems which numbered calendar eras from the year of accession of each successive hereditary monarch.

** *Note on Ansehelm:* When the Imperium began to expand into Sword Worlds space, this world was identified in Imperial astrographical documents as "Anselhome".

References:

Alien Module 8: Darrians—Secret of the Star Trigger, Game Designers' Workshop, 1986.

Sword Worlds: The Day After Ragnarok, Steve Jackson Games, 2004.   ✪

Gaming with Diabetes II—Keeping Control At Cons

By Joshua Levy

Low-Carb gaming at cons may sound like an oxymoron to many, but I've successfully eaten low-carb at four-day gaming conventions for years, and often come back from these without gaining any weight at all. I use many of the tricks described by "Phil" in "Gaming With Diabetes: A Guide to Low-Carb Snacking" (*Freelance Traveller*, Jan./Feb. 2019), but I wanted to add a few of my own:

- Hard boiled eggs are great low carb, low cost snack, and they don't need refrigeration for a four-day con. I bring home-mixed spices so that each egg can taste different. The spices are all 50% salt, but the other 50% can be any combination of paprika, dry mustered, pepper, dill, etc. If you're afraid they will smell, then make "tea eggs", which are really hard boiled eggs, peeled and marinated in soy sauce for about 10 hours; you can add tea leaves and/or other spices to the marinade if you want. (These do need to be refrigerated, and they look really scary too, which is good for cons.)

- I also make "home mixed" nut assortments for gaming snacks. I use a mix of peanuts, pistachios, and cashews, but you should make whatever you like. (Peanuts will make any nut mix cheaper…)

- For drinks, I often bring those little "single serving" packets of diet drink mix, and add them to the water that most cons provide.

- But my favorite drink (I use just over a gallon a con) is iced coffee. It has more caffeine than most soda, but you are running to the bathroom less. You can cut it with heavy whipping cream (if

low carb) or lowfat milk (if low calorie), and your favorite sugar substitute. It's much easier on my stomach than soda, as well.

For me, the key insight for not gaining weight at conventions was simple: eat at a convention as often as you would eat on a normal weekend. For me, on a normal weekend day, I eat two meals and a snack, so that is what I eat at a convention as well. (If I stay up past about 11pm, which is common at conventions, but uncommon at home, then I have a second snack.) But the key idea is simple: eat at a con, as often as you would eat at home. Don't eat at a convention game the way you would eat at a home game. Why? Because most of us game once a week or even less often. So pigging out during a game is bad, but it is a limited bad. I generally play in 6 or 7 games during a 4 day convention, so even if I only half pig out in one game, it is still a big problem after I've done it 6 or 7 times in just a few days. ✿

In A Store Near You

PersonaCore Expert System

by Scott Diamond

PersonaCore is a mixed firmware and software system that forms the core of an advanced computer network for a starship (or ground installation of equivalent complexity) which allows the user to replace or supplement skilled personnel with automated systems built on the latest expert systems and software. Although some skills cannot be replaced by this system, most of the tedium and time-consuming work involved in routine tasks can be reduced dramatically by restructuring your network around one of the PersonaCore lines.

The PersonaCore line includes a wide assortment of pre-generated standard personalities for enhanced ease and efficiency when interacting with the system. Some manufacturers are licensed to build custom personalities based on client needs.

It should be noted that PersonaCore systems are more flexible replacements for standard expert systems and intellect emulation programs; such programs cannot be used to supplement a PersonaCore.

The basic PersonaCore system can be constructed and installed in TL-12 computers. The skills available are limited by the TL of the computer in which the PersonaCore system is installed:

TL-12: PersonaCore "Expertware" allows for basic skill level (0) in limited skill areas. The system acts mostly in an advisory capacity and has limited decision making capabilities but can present accurate predictions based on the knowledge base and some user input. It cannot control or interact with robots or weapons systems, and is not certified for medical use beyond reference consultation by a Doctor. This level of PersonaCore is particularly useful in areas such as Legal, Admin, Mechanical, Electronic, etc.

TL-13: PersonaCore "Advanced Expertware" allows for skill level 1 in a wider range of areas. Less input is required from a user, and the PersonaCore system can make intuitive predictions and diagnosis. Can be used for medical diagnosis, but is not certified for surgical assists.

TL-14: a Semi-Autonomous PersonaCore functions to replace skill level 1 as TL-13, but adds a personality core to the routines which, based on the personality type used, can make independent decisions based on the system's own observations and experience. Skill areas that may involve potential safety risks (Pilot, Navigate, for

example) have an inbuilt interrupt that requires the user to explicitly choose from a list of program-recommended actions. PersonaCore personalities are capable of operating under minimal supervision within the areas of expertise of the personality, with a low level of supervision in areas peripheral to the area of expertise, and as a TL-13 PersonaCore Advanced Expertware system in all other supported areas. The PersonaCore personality defines the system's central and peripheral areas of expertise—for example, a PersonaCore Combat Medic personality would have core expertise in such specialties as trauma/injury medicine and field-expedient surgery, with peripheral expertise in e.g., routine diagnosis and pharmacology.

TL-15: The Fully-Autonomous PersonaCore can act independently within the personality's area of expertise and peripheral areas, and with minimal supervision in all other supported areas, making the personality more of an interface aid and a skill set facilitator than an expert system. User override is available for situations where a higher skill level is needed, and is enforced in safety-critical situations, but the system can replace most skills at level 2. The personality can make suggestions, carry on conversation, and learn from experience. It has been suggested, but never conclusively demonstrated, that a Fully-Autonomous PersonaCore is fully sophont.

The following basic parameters apply to all PersonaCores:

A Model/2 computer or higher is required. PersonaCore will use half of the computer's capacity, giving it the ability to replace skills at one level below half of the computer's rating (e.g., a Model/2 or Model/3 with PersonaCore can replace skill-0; a Model/4 or Model/5 can replace skill-1; a Model/6 can replace skill-2). This effectively reduces the model of a computer with a PersonaCore by half.

PersonaCore requires all ancillary software needed for performing the required tasks. For instance, if the ship is going to Jump, then the needed level of Jump Program is required. All rules of program space and use limitations apply.

PersonaCore can replace crew in most positions (remote robots may be required for some applications, e.g., Steward, that require mobility and/or interaction) at the PersonaCore's skill limit.

Because of the safety interrupt built in to the Semi-Autonomous and Fully-Autonomous PersonaCore, a sophont with relevant skills at a minimum of one level above the PersonaCore's must be available to supervise the PersonaCore system.

Weapons stations may be "manned" by the system, but will only be able to fire on one target at a time. PersonaCore cannot exceed skill level 1 for any weapons, and acts only defensively when manning weapons (see below). Gunner Interact is required. The system presents a list of target choices and the user selects the target from that list each round.

All success rolls are made by the referee.

Manual override is possible from any crew station for that skill.

Evade programming limited to Auto-Evade if that program is present.

PersonaCore sets priorities to starship operations based on user-defined limits, but at all times the system checks the logic of those tasks against the following rules:

Ship and crew safety is paramount and the system must take no action that will place those two categories at risk while operating.

The system will engage in combat only if no means of evasion or escape is available. If combat is engaged the first rule will be applied by continuously searching for a means of escape or evasion while using the ship's weapons and defenses to protect the ship and crew.

An Alternate Task System for *Traveller*

by Matt Stevens

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine website in 2000.

Ken Bearden and Glen Grant point out similar problems in *Traveller*'s task resolution system. They note that ability scores affect task probabilities far more than skills do, so that a high-ability, low-skill character can beat a low-ability, high-skill one. They also note that the half-dice in T4's task system are clumsy and inelegant.

I agree with Ken and Glen on both counts, but I'm not completely happy with their solutions to these problems. Both require a fair amount of math before play, and neither of them are as simple as the original T4 task system.

Here I offer my own alternate task system. It does away with the half-dice in 4th edition *Traveller*, and it makes the chance of spectacular success and failure directly dependent on skill levels, rather than ability scores, ensuring that skills are much more important in task resolution.

The Target Number

The target number is equal to the sum of the appropriate characteristic and the appropriate skill level. If the character is unskilled, treat his skill as zero; the target number is exactly equal to the characteristic. (Don't divide by 2 as in the published rules; we'll adjust for this later.) A character will succeed if his die roll is less than or equal to his target number; otherwise, he will fail.

The Dice Code

The number of dice you roll depends on the difficulty of the task; check the Task Difficulty table below. Unskilled characters roll 1 extra die (or 2D if the task is Easy), but only if the skill has a "default"; otherwise the attempt automatically fails. (Optionally, the referee can add an extra die to the "unskilled" column for a non-default skill, so an Easy task for a character without e.g., Medical skill would call for a 3D roll against Intelligence.)

Task Difficulty Dice Codes			
Rating		**Skilled**	**Unskilled**
Easy	(EAS)	Auto	2D
Average	(AVG)	2D	3D
Difficult	(DIF)	3D	4D
Formidable	(FOR)	4D	5D
Staggering	(STA)	5D	6D
Impossible	(IMP)	6D	7D

[As you can see, I've done away with half-dice. Dice codes are slightly higher than in the published rules, but we'll adjust for this by changing the rules for Spectacular Results, as shown below.]

Spectacular Results

Spectacular Success: A task succeeds spectacularly whenever all die results are *less than or equal to half the character's skill rating (fractions rounded up)*. For example, a character with a skill of 4 attempting a Staggering task (5D) would succeed spectacularly if he rolled a 1, 1, 2, 2 and 2, because all dice rolls were 2 or less. *Optional rule:* The referee may change a spectacular success to an ordinary success if the total of all dice is above the Target Number.

Spectacular Failure: Attempts fail spectacularly when the number of sixes rolled is *greater than the half the character's skill rating (fractions rounded up)*. Thus a skill 3 character attempting a Difficult task (3D) would fail spectacularly if he rolled sixes on all three dice; an unskilled character would fail spectacularly if he rolled a six on *any* of the three dice.

The probabilities of spectacular success and spectacular failure are shown in the following tables:

Probability of Spectacular Success						
Skill	**EAS**	**AVG**	**DIF**	**FOR**	**STA**	**IMP**
0	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
1-2	16.67%	2.78%	0.46%	0.08%	0.01%	0.00%
3-4	33.33%	11.11%	3.70%	1.23%	0.41%	0.14%
5-6	50.00%	25.00%	12.50%	6.25%	3.13%	1.56%
7-8	66.67%	44.44%	29.63%	19.75%	13.17%	8.78%
9-10	83.33%	69.44%	57.87%	48.23%	40.19%	33.49%

(Continued from page 57)

Note that spectacular success is impossible for unskilled characters. I admit this is a flaw in the system, but I think it's minor enough to overlook for now.

Probability of Spectacular Failure						
Skill	EAS	AVG	DIF	FOR	STA	IMP
0	30.56%	42.13%	51.77%	59.81%	66.51%	72.09%
1-2	0.00%	2.78%	7.41%	13.19%	19.62%	26.32%
3-4	0.00%	0.00%	0.46%	1.62%	3.55%	6.23%
5-6	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.08%	0.33%	0.87%
7-8	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.01%	0.07%
9-10	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Characters with skill levels over 4 will almost never roll spectacular failures, while unskilled characters will roll them all the time.

Additional Rules

The following rules are optional additions to the task system presented here.

Jack of All Trades

According to the 4th edition rulebook, unskilled characters can add one-half of their Jack of Trades skills to their ability scores when they aren't trained in the standard skill for the task. Under these rules, the Jack of All Trades skill can be used in a different way. Instead of adding half of JoT skill, add the whole skill, but assume the character has a skill rating of zero when determining spectacular successes and failures. The Jack of Trades has a good chance of barely succeeding at a task—but there's also a good chance he'll completely foul things up.

Skill Pools

If you feel that this task system still undervalues skills, here's one fix. Every character gets a "skill pool" equal to his highest skill rating (if more than one skill qualifies as "highest", the player can choose one). When the character is using that skill in a task, he can reroll one die for every point spent from his pool. For example, a doctor with Medicine-3 rolls 3 sixes on a skill attempt, a Spectacular Failure. If the character spent one point from his skill pool, he could reroll one of these sixes, probably changing the result to an ordinary failure (if not an outright success). Once spent, the points in this pool are lost until the end of the session. ✴

Pembroke Colton Krankheilt

profiled by Rob Miracle

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

Colt was born to a family long loyal to the Imperium. The Krankheilt family has prospered for several generations, with several successive heads of the family being inducted into the Order of Delphi. The senior Krankheilt is the CEO of the Delphi Interstellar Bank, LIC, one of the larger interstellar banks to stretch through the Gateway Domain to the Old Expanses. Colt's father, however did not follow the Senior into the banking business, but instead joined the Imperial Navy and became a fleet admiral with the 108th Battle Riders before retiring to Thanatos (1415 Old Expanses) to ease back from the high tech, high speed life in the Imperium. It is here Colt was born and raised as a member of this knightly family.

Colt has never responded well to his father's required discipline. He was always looking to have a little more fun. He has learned some banking from the Senior on trips to visit him on his corporate home world. Colt has tried many different things trying to find out just where he fits in. He never seems to stick with one thing long enough to get good at it. He has, however, excelled as a hunter and

Up Close and Personal

has gone on some big game excursions as a youth. He learned early on how to stalk prey and fell it with a single shot.

As Colt turned 18, it seemed logical to head off to college. The University of Galiano (Galiano (1519 Old Expanses)) did not want him until his father pulled some strings. The Dean of Admissions knew of Colt's wanderlust and his inability to stick things out. An affair with the Dean's daughter, excessive partying, and complete lack of discipline found Colt out of school. His father, upset at Colt's behavior felt a dose of military life would do him good. His father persuaded him to join and after searching around, the Marines seemed like it would be fun. Boy was Colt wrong. He constantly butted heads with his commanders and his issues kept him from advancing beyond a training detachment. Colt finally shined on the marksman course and was trained to be a sniper. He received a promotion to E2 near the end of his term and he decided to stick out another term in the Marines.

The second tour of duty took him from port to port as part of a Ships Troop battalion. It was during this term he met Captian Claudious Parks, a mercenary with the Sky Stormers. He convinced Colt that his shooting ability was going to waste on board ships and that he would do much better in the private sector.

And he did; he was quickly promoted, spent several campaigns as a sniper before peace hit the region and he was relegated to office and recruiting duty. Enough was enough. He wanted to get back to his playboy ways, so he borrowed the family yacht and spent the next four years touring the Old Expanses, looking for good hunting sites, casinos with wild women, and a good bar fight.

While carousing around on Montero (1010 Old Expanses), he met up with Fineous Trandler. Fineous and Colt spent some time hunting the Silver coated Oxbear and got to know each other. Trander introduced Colt to some friends at the "The Organization" and they were impressed with his skills as a sniper. They hired him on and have finished his training cycle. Thus the adventure begins.

Sir Pembroke Colton Krankheilt "Colt" CR 50,000
Ex-Marine(2) Noble(2) Mercenary(2) Traveller (1) Yacht
St: 12, Dx: 16, Co: 14, In: 15, Ed: 14, Wi: 11, Ch: 10, SS: 16
Stamina: 46 Lifeblood: 14.; Level 7 (27000/28000)
Feats: Brawling, Stealthy, Pt. Blank Shot, Armor Prof (Light), Vessel (Wheeled), Sniper, Tactics, Weapon Prof (Marksman), Weapon Prof (Swordsman), Trust Fund, Armor Prof (Medium), Obscure Knowledge, Weapon Focus (Cutlass), Sneak Attack, Armor Prof(Vacc Suit), Weapon Prof (Combat Rifleman), Tracking, Precise Shot.
Skills (inc. Stat Mods): Move Silently-9, Hide-9, Driving-7, P/Hunting-6, Navigation-6, T/Computer-4, Pilot-4, Spot-4, Survival-4, Appraisal-3, Gambling-3, K/Homeworld-3, K/Imperial History-3, K/Interstellar Law-3, Leader-3, Listen-3, T/Mechanical-3, K/Psionics-3, Search-3, K/Xeno-sociology-3, P/Banker-2, Gather Info-2, Sense Motive-2, Use Alien Device-2, Bribery-1, Bluff-1, Innuendo-1, Intimindate-1, Liason-1, Read-Write K'Kree-1, E/Singing-1.
BAB: 8 (5 + 3 dex) Fort: 9, Ref: 4, Will: 8 ✪

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*✪

Your Input Helps

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

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! ✪

Feedback

Please tell us …

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

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

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

Traveller on the Internet   IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

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

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

News About Traveller

Recent *Traveller* (and *Traveller*-compatible) Releases

March/April 2019

- **Baggage Books** has released *Wallwichen: Three Clusters World Book 01*, *Sapphal: Three Clusters World Book 02*.
- **Darkwoulfe's Digital** has released *Darkwoulfe's Token Pack Vol51: Heavy Armored Star Explorers*.
- **DungeonPrint** has released the following 3D STL Models: *Tycho City: Uptown*.
- **El Cheapo Products** has released *El Cheapo Minis Vol. 12—Navy Folk*.
- **Fat Goblin Games** has released *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Alien Swordfighter*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Alien Monk*, *Publisher's Choice—Science Fiction: Krills*.
- **FSpace Publications** has released *Far Encounters Vanity Rose yacht*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Almighty Credit: Corporations in Clement Sector*, *Hercules-class Heavy Freighter*.
- **Jon Brazer Enterprises** has released *Foreven Worlds Single Ship: Fessor Cargo Multipurpose Ship (MGT 2e)*, *Foreven Worlds: Creatures of Distant Worlds (MGT 2e)*.
- **Lucas Bru** has released *Planets of the Universe: Za'um*, *Planets of the Universe: Xothan*.
- **MaggottIISS** has released the following *Spinward Marches Subsector Guide*s: *C Regina*, *D Aramis*, *E Querion*, *F Vilis*, *I Darrian*, *J Sword Worlds*, *K Lunion*, *L Mora*, *M Five Sisters*, *N District 268*, *O Glisten*, *P Trin's Veil*, the following *Vland Sector Subsector Guides: A Voshkod*, *B Vhodan*, *C Anarsi*, *D Theton*, *E Lalaki Kharir*, *F Kagamira*, *H Shiigus*, *I Dusa*, *J Akumid*, *K Kasear*, *L Anakod*, the following *Trojan Reach Subsector Guides*: *A Menorial*, *B Egyrn*, *C Pax Rulin*, *D Gazulin*, *E Yggdrasil*, *F Dpres*, and the following *Spinward Marches World Guides*: *2124 Lunion*, *3124 Mora*.
- **Michael Brown** has released *With Eyes Cast Skyward*, *The Asklepios Recovery*, *Night of the Forgotten*, *Career: Sex Worker*, *Ad Astra*, *At the High Places*, *2D6 SF Adventures, Vol 10 [Bundle]*.
- **Mike Henry Publishing** has released the following executable programs: *Alien Name Generator*, *Ironmongery*.
- **Old School Role Playing** has released *In the Darkness of Space*, *Antioch Station*, *Wet Work*, *Gold Rush*, *Break Out!*, *A Collision of Worlds*, *Contact!*.
- **Stouthearted Games** has released *Cepheus Modern*.
- **Tobias Deißler** has released *Wenden Class Escort Cruiser*.   ⬤

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*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller* (T4), *Traveller[5]*, and both editions of Mongoose *Traveller* as "Classic Compatible" or "2D6". This includes Sceaptune 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 nonfiction) 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.