

FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



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Freelance Traveller is published monthly in PDF form by the editor. The current issue is available from the Freelance Traveller web site, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com>.

From the Editor



A new year is starting, and with it, some changes. We spoke of most of them in brief in this slot last month; we’ll recap some of them this month.

Essay Question turned out to be less of a success than we would have liked, so we’re dropping it from the magazine as a regular feature. When we get the new forums up—that’s in progress, and will be discussed separately, next month—there will be a section for Essay Question, and we’ll only print in the magazine those questions and answers we feel are particularly well-written and interesting. Up to now, the various questions have been directed toward players’ and referees’ fundamental views of *Traveller*; we’d like to see it change direction to the “work” of *Traveller*—identifying problems that come up in actual play, and what others may have done to overcome them.

Back when *Freelance Traveller* was a website without a magazine, our Critics’ Corner section had

two kinds of reviews: *Traveller* products, and *Traveller* websites. We wouldn’t mind seeing more *Traveller* website reviews, and we’ll continue reviewing *Traveller* products, new and old, from any publisher. But we’re also going to expand on it: A new subsection, “Other People’s Toys”, will be for reviews of non-*Traveller* RPG products that the reviewer feels would be of use or interest to the *Traveller* player or referee—the reviews of Hyperlite, the 100 SF Plots book and Starblazer Adventures will be moved here, with other products to follow—and a second new subsection, “Not On The Table”, will be for reviews of fiction that the reviewer believes has relevance to *Traveller*, for any of several reasons. The specific applicability to *Traveller* must be a major theme in the review, and spoilers are discouraged (but not prohibited; sometimes, there’s no way to avoid them).

Finally, getting last month’s articles up on the website is going to be slightly delayed, but we’ll get it done as soon as possible. We apologize for the delay.

Mongoose Traveller Compendium 1

reviewed by "kafka"

Mongoose Traveller Compendium 1. Multiple authors
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
176pp, softcover
US\$34.99/UK£20.00

The Good, Bad and the Ugly

This is a product that Mongoose released some time ago but due to the vagrancies of Amazon cancelling my order after several months, I was forced into buying it at my FGLS – located some 800km away – therefore, it is new for me. As noted, it is a sturdy hardcover comprising of a collection of articles from Mongoose's free trade ezine – Signs and Portents. Therefore, why should anyone plunk down £24.99 for what they can get free? I, for one, hate reading PDFs and while I could print them off and collect them in a binder – having them all in one place without advertising and in durable hardcover is a value added service and hence worth my money. Do I feel that I was getting value for my money – initially no. For the cost of printing this out would have been just over £6 which could have included some nice binding. That is a difference of £19... So, what makes this special?

The Good

The book is well selected for the articles are designed for taking the very beginner to the level of expert progressively. That is not to say that a seasoned Traveller referee (and this book is clearly aimed at the Referee/Game Master) will not find lots of good gems. The adventures selected are solid and have a real old school Traveller feel to them – gritty and grey. So, if your game is vanilla Space Opera, one might have some trouble adapting these into one's game. Traveller has always been about the average Joe trying to make it in an uncaring universe. In fact, I found the adventures to be better than the mini campaign – Tripwire (which I found to be utterly juvenile) in reflecting the spirit of Traveller.

The articles that augment players' skills, equipment, etc. are thoughtfully done and are no way a Monte Haul cornucopia for power-ups – in keeping

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Compendium 1

with the basic Traveller philosophy – of the acquisition of knowledge takes precedence over the accumulation of things.

I found no errors in the sequencing of pages; however, it would have been nice to see an addition of an index. The print is clear and concise, and as I indicated above there is a logical sequence to the articles. Not only tracing the Traveller line to date but to bring the player in line with understanding the Traveller universe – for example, one adventure would naturally act as a prequel to Adventure 2 – Prison Planet.

The Bad

As noted above. There was a lack of an index which, while it would have contributed to the page count, is necessary in a product that is merely reproducing articles already in publication.

I also was disappointed that the Babylon 5/ Traveller crossover campaign was omitted from the compilation. I understand that they no longer have

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Critics' Corner

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the Babylon 5 licence but there were plenty of ways to rewrite the adventure, so as to 'file off' the Babylon 5 references.

Also, there were deck plans, I know the Traveller community for years clamoured for deck plans (and I have to admit that I was one of those who had...) But, Mongoose has provided with more than enough deck plans in S&P and other publications that we should be up to our gills in deck plans – especially deck plans that do not had add anything to the product (yes, I am looking at you – Tigress in Fighting Ships). In a publication such as this, one hopes that deck plans would complement the adventure on offer. And, Traveller deck plans are also stuck in the 1970s and deck plans have moved on. So, Mongoose, if there is going to be a Compendium 2, no unnecessary deck plans – please... Perhaps worse than having deck plans, is that there was no illustration of the starships in question. One of the things that was fantastic about Mongoose Traveller is how they took the old tired renditions of Traveller starships and makes them pop using discreet penciling and shades to create a product that took the familiar into the 21st century.

Given that this was a compilation of existing articles – the art reflected the existing art which was sometimes naught. One perhaps would have hoped that Mongoose could add more art and not just filler art from existing products to spruce up the content a little more. Given the ability to create world CGI maps is now so easy with the software out there – why not expand upon the adventures by the addition of some world maps? Similarly, every gamer loves color centrefolds. Why not have selections of some

of the best Traveller covers or possible covers commissioned as a colour centrefold?

Due also to no real fault to Mongoose but one that could have easily added; there should have been a brief introduction of what Traveller is. Reproducing Marc's seminal article or at least some variation of it would have gone a long way in reacquainting the newbie reader to Traveller.

The Ugly

There is one criticism that constantly appears with Mongoose Traveller line that appears here as well – poor editing. I realize that different writers have different styles but the application of a single consistent style to the product would have been appreciated. For instance, some writers added Library Data in the middle of their text and others at the end (the proper place). This confusion of styles makes it hard for the Referee to have a coherent feel for the adventures. Minor typos and paragraph errors carried on over into the new product which is unacceptable.

Conclusion

Glaring errors such as calling the Imperium – the Third Imperium of Humaniti/Mankind which were early errors of the Traveller rulebook were reproduced here. This indicates a mere cut-and-paste approach to the articles. If one is going to pay more than what it would cost to print out the original articles – then the publisher does have to add something more. Overall, this is a solid work and welcome addition to my Traveller library. I sincerely hope that Mongoose will take these criticisms to heart and improve – so that when Compilation 2 does come out that we see more value for money.

Style 3/5

Substance 5/5

Multimedia Gallery

The Burrowwolf

At the time this issue of Freelance Traveller "went to press", no new chapter of The Burrowwolf was ready for inclusion due to other pressures. We are assured that the comic will resume as soon as possible.

Essay Question

As of this issue of Freelance Traveller Magazine, Essay Question will be appearing on the Freelance Traveller Forums. The Editor will occasionally pick out some good answers to questions posted there, and print them in the magazine.



This column is intended to be a referee's guide to Mongoose's *Traveller*, the fifth incarnation of the *Traveller* game system. Often it'll talk about the many printed resources out there and available to the gamemaster, supplementing my own reviews on those topics, but sometimes it'll offer more specific advice for GMing the game.

Editor's Note: The initial Fifth Imperium column was published on the RPG.Net website in July 2009, and appeared in Freelance Traveller's initial issue in November 2009. This column originally appeared on the RPG.Net website in December 2010.

Over the last year and a half I've been running a Spinward Marches *Traveller* campaign using the Mongoose *Traveller* rules. You can now read the complete AP of all twenty weeks of play at <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=451150>.

Having closed things out (or at least having ended "Season One"), I've decided to take some time to write about it.

First up, I'm going to be talking about lessons learned. I've roughly divided my lessons into five that concern the publisher(s) of *Traveller* and their products (which I'm talking about this month) and five that concern the elements of a *Traveller* campaign (which I'll talk about next month). Then, in a third article on the topic, I'm going to offer up the plot seeds for my 20 sessions, as possible plot hooks for your own campaign.

A Few Lessons Learned: About the Publishers

1. Mongoose has created a robust and clean *Traveller* System. I have to admit that I had some complications when I first approached Mongoose's *Traveller* system, primarily because it was so close to the original. You see, I'd gone down that path once before, with Imperium Games' T4, and I wasn't happy with the results. Fortunately, Mongoose ain't Imperium.

Mongoose's *Traveller* is definitely a simulationist game, full of simple mechanical systems that don't have many storytelling elements hung upon them. But, it's done that very well. The system at its core is very clean and consistent. For task resolution and combat I barely have to think when I'm adjudicating.

That's all to the plus.

In my old age, I might have preferred a game with more storytelling elements, like those found in FATE, but if that's really what I want, maybe I should be playing *Diaspora* or *Star Blazers*.

2. The best Mongoose books have crunch. Or at least, I should say the books that got used most in my campaign were the crunchiest ones. That'd be in large part the Mongoose "Supplements" line: *Traders and Gunboats*, *Fighting Ships*, *Central Supply Catalogue*, *Civilian Vehicles*, *Military Vehicles*, and *1,001 Characters*.

I'll make an exception to my rule of crunch for Mongoose's series of *Third Imperium* books—which I thought were the strongest element of the entire Mongoose *Traveller* line. Without a single rule in it, *The Spinward Marches* provided excellent background. The three *Alien Modules* were even stronger, because you had more great background, but this time backed up by some crunchy rules.

3. The other best Mongoose books are what you need. Considering the entire collection of Mongoose *Traveller* books can be very daunting. Fortunately another thing that I learned is that you only really need the ones relevant to your campaign.

This is most true for the "Books", each of which covers a different set of careers within *Traveller*. Before I read them, it wasn't evident to me that they tended to go further than being just about careers and ended up being genre books. Thus, if you want a military command, get *Traveller Book 1: Mercenary*, if you want to put lots of focus on psionics, get *Traveller Book 4: Psion*, and if you want a criminal campaign, get *Traveller Book 6: Scoundrel*.

This applies equally to those *Supplements* and *Third Imperium* books that I spoke so well of. Great or not, if the players are just passengers on star liners, you probably don't need the starship books, and if you're far away from the coreward side of the Third Imperium, *Vargr* is equally irrelevant.

4. The huge backstock of *Traveller* publications remains very relevant. One of the reasons that I started my campaign was because I'd started reading through my collection of *Traveller* books that ex-

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Fifth Imperium

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tends back over 30 years. I wanted to use all of that old material, and I was delighted that I could.

Over the course of the game, I ran two classic adventures, *Nomads of the World-Ocean* (TA #9) and *Research Station Gamma* (TA #2), half of a double adventure in *Death Station* (TDA #3), and a few Amber Zones from *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society*.

I also pulled background material out of the great *GURPS Traveller* line (especially their *Spinward Marches* book, which got used almost every week) and some of the DGP *MegaTraveller* books (their *Vilani & Vargr* book comes to mind, as it's one of the very few looks at the Vilani anywhere in the literature).

This material all worked best as background. There's more than one evening that I searched through books to find an adventure seed for the next day's gaming. However, for the *Traveller* and *MegaTraveller* books, I could pretty easily convert the systems (on the fly, by the end of the campaign). *Traveller* was a pretty straight conversion, while skills got a little higher in *MegaTraveller* and thus needed to be toned down a little.

With that experience in hand, I heartily suggest a good library of old *Traveller* books if you want to

expand any Mongoose *Traveller* game.

5. The classic *Traveller* adventures are generally weak as adventures. Though I just wrote that it's easy to use the older material, and that I had used several different Classic GDW *Traveller* adventures, I should mention that I feel like they're very weak as adventures.

What GDW called adventures back in the late 1970s and early 1980s are largely what I'd call setting books. They tended to describe terrific and evocative settings. I love the world revealed in the World-Ocean book. However, they fall down not only in figuring out ways to get the players involved in the plot, but sometimes even in offering up much of a plot at all. Several of the earlier adventures are particularly bad because they're just a step above dungeon crawls.

That doesn't mean that I don't suggest using them. I think there's something inherently cool about presenting an adventure to players that was written three decades ago and has been run by people all around the world. Just expect to do some work.

Conclusion

That's it for this month. Next month I'll be back with another five lessons learned from my recent *Traveller* campaign—this time talking more about game and plotting styles, including some of the challenges that *Traveller* presents.

In A Store Near You

The Gun Shop

Specialized Grenade Types

by Scott Diamond

The grenade has a long history, with the term itself dating to the XVI century (Terran calendar) on Terra—but there are records suggesting that the weapon itself predates the term by about 800 years. As technology progressed, the grenade became more effective, and variations on the theme, involving differences in the “load”, developed for different objectives. In all cases, though, the basic anti-personnel purpose remains. This article gives a brief overview of some available types of grenades and how to apply them in a *Traveller* game.

(Cpl. Shortstraw says, “Always throw a grenade into the room before you enter it!”)

Concussion (“Flash Bang”)

Wt.: 0.5kg Price: 20Cr TL-5

Burst radius is 5 meters, and all personnel within it that are wearing “soft” armor are stunned for one round and suffer 1D6 temporary reduction to their Dexterity for 2 rounds after that. Combat or Battle-dress wearers who have open (or no) helmets on are treated as if in “soft” armor. Otherwise hard armor gives 100% protection against the stun effect. The flash causes anyone who fails a saving roll of 10+ on 2D6 to be blinded for 3 rounds, double if they are wearing thermal or IR imaging devices in low light

In A Store Near You

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conditions.

Concussion grenades will work in vacuum or trace atmospheres, but only the flash effect will affect personnel. In dense atmosphere (or underwater) the flash effect is the same, but the concussion effect causes 1D6 actual wounds to a random characteristic and the stun lasts for 2 rounds instead of 1.

Pin Grenade

Wt.: 1.0kg Price: 50Cr. TL-8

Canister grenade consisting of a cylindrical metal shell filled with 30 pressure sensitive bomblets fused to detonate at 50kg+ pressure. Each bomblet has a contact-only penetration of 4 (Striker value) and will disable the personnel who detonated it if in soft armor (or hard armor if the PEN roll causes damage). With Classic Traveller combat rules each bomblet attacks the target who stepped on it as if it were a regular HE hand grenade for 2D6 damage, and the target is disabled.

The bomblets scatter over a 10m radius and all personnel must roll an 8+ on 2D6 to avoid stepping on one when passing through the area. When used

within an enclosed area (like a corridor or room) each target within the area is hit on 8+ on 2D6, with 3 chances to hit each person. Each is a separate attack as described above and doing 2D6 damage.

Black-Out Riot Grenade

Wt.: 1.0kg Price: 150Cr. TL-10

Anti-riot gas grenade loaded with a selective nerve agent that directly affects the optic nerves to induce temporary blindness for 1 hour. The burst radius is 10 meters and the gas is non-persistent; typically it is safe to enter the area without protection within 30 minutes of use, or after using copious amounts of water to wash the biodegradable agent away (riot cannon are dandy for this). The gas is effective if inhaled or absorbed through the mucous membranes, so a gas mask is usually sufficient to protect someone from the gas effects, but caution must be used while the gas is active to avoid inadvertent exposure. A common use of Black-Out is in conjunction with anti-hijack systems on many star liners since it has no lasting ill effects and allows the crew to don vacc suits and safely round up exposed troublemakers. It can also be substituted for gas rounds fired from snub pistols.

Raconteurs' Rest

A Passage to Extolay

by Chris Wright

As he strolled down the starport concourse the security guard scanned the sparse crowds.

Dav Geddis looked down at his plate of food as the officer's gaze passed over him, forcing himself to relax. He mustn't blow it now by looking suspicious.

He felt the tension within rise as the security officer drew closer to the food bar. It didn't appear that the man was looking for anybody in particular, but the stress was nearly unbearable. Dav pushed his mind outwards to touch the guard's thoughts.

«Two more hours and I'm outta here. Can't wait to see her again and...»

Dav withdrew from the man's mind. He didn't need to know any more than that. Knowing too much

was what had got him into trouble in the first place.

They'd warned him that returning home would be difficult with his newly found abilities. But with the Frontier War over, he'd longed for the simpler farm life he'd lived on Rech before joining up with the army. He'd thought he could conceal his gifts, but the temptation to use them had proved too great. When he had found his sister crying and distraught, it seemed to be the most natural thing to read her thoughts and find the cause of her pain, even to ease that pain a little. The look she had given him when she realised that he knew too much shocked him.

It was fear. Pure, unreasoning fear.

He'd pleaded with her not to tell anybody, hoping she would understand, but those hopes quickly evaporated. Within hours he was chased from the settlement by an angry mob of people he had known

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since he was a child. What hurt the most was to see his own family, his sister and his parents, at the forefront. Some in the crowd had even worn shielded helmets to protect themselves from him, as though he were a monster.

He couldn't really blame them. A few years ago he would have been at the head of such a mob himself. It wasn't natural to poke around in another man's head, it just wasn't right. That was what they had always been taught. How could he expect them to abandon a lifetime of conditioning?

His remaining hope was that they wouldn't contact the authorities, but how could he rely on that after what had happened?

The security officer had continued on his rounds of the concourse and Dav returned to eating his meal, a bland mix of unknown meat and local vegetables. D class starports were not known for their luxurious fare. He took his time over the food, and the call for his ship came shortly after he had finished.

"Passengers for the *Empress Catharine*, bound for Dinomn, please report to Bay 3."

Dav allowed himself to entertain the hope that he might get away, that his family and former friends did not wish him lasting harm. He gathered his few bags together and followed the signs for Bay 3, joining the end of a short queue of people showing their tickets to the ship's steward.

At the head of the queue were a man and woman, obviously travelling together. The quality of their clothing and an unweathered softness to their skin marked them as wealthy MegaCorp types; the sort who wouldn't last five minutes on a low tech world. The man wore a look of pained boredom whilst the woman presented their paperwork to the steward.

The woman who followed them was a contrast. Her clothing was designed for comfort and practicality, and included a utility belt which sported several electronic gadgets and an autopistol. She was probably no older than the couple before her, perhaps in her early forties, but a harder life had left its marks.

Following her was a man of about thirty. Everything about him, his bearing, his build, even his hair-

cut marked him as military; probably, like Dav, another soldier demobbed after the war.

The man just ahead of him, a tall smartly dressed fellow of indeterminate age, seemed to take forever when he reached the front, and Dav had to exert all his willpower to keep from butting in and hurrying the man up.

"Thank you, Mr. Andrish, that's fine," the steward said. "If you'd just like to wait with the others, I'll process our last passenger."

Dav spotted two more security men a hundred metres or so away. They seemed to be scanning the crowd methodically as if looking for somebody.

"One last thing," Andrish said, "I have a crate being brought over. I'd like to make sure it's secure in the cargo hold before we take off."

Hurry up! Dav screamed in his mind.

"Of course," the steward said, "As long as the paperwork is in order that shouldn't be a problem."

Finally, it was Dav's turn. The guards were still coming closer. He handed his ticket to the steward.

"Ah, Mr. Geddis," he said. "On a Middle passage ticket. I understand that you're on your way to Extolay. We'll be heading that way ourselves if you want to stay with us."

"Don't see why not," Dav said, trying to speak as calmly as he could. All that really mattered for now was getting off Rech.

The steward glanced at the cased rifle slung over Dav's shoulder. "You'll need to deposit any weapons in the ship's locker, but we'll deal with that once we get on board."

The security guards were still some fifty metres away as Dav and the steward turned and made for the doorway to Bay 3. Everybody fitted filter masks; the irritant atmosphere making them an unfortunate necessity for any outdoor activity on the planet. They then exited the building onto the bay itself. If the guards were looking for him, they'd have come straight here, Dav reasoned. His name was on the passenger list after all. Even so, such watertight logic didn't stop him hurrying just a little on the walk to the ship.

The *Empress Catharine*, despite her high sounding name, was a typical Far Trader. Standing in the

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Raconteurs' Rest

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center of the bay, the curves of the design were quite pleasing to the eye, but from the wear and tear visible on the exterior, she had obviously seen more than a few years of service.

The steward led them up some stairs to the already opened airlock and once inside, he took the passengers' weapons from them and stowed them in the ship's locker. It was mostly the expected autopistols that many carried when they travelled. The only exceptions were his own Advanced Combat Rifle, a faithful friend he'd been allowed to keep when he left the army, and a Gauss Rifle handed in by Meldan, the other military man. He glanced over at Dav and they exchanged a nod of acknowledgement.

Getting all seven of them into the lift down to the passenger area was a bit of a squeeze, but soon they were in the lounge, a functional mix of a small galley, eating area and assorted chairs. There was even a large entertainment screen on the front wall but it, like the rest of the furnishings showed signs of age and use.

It took a couple of minutes for the high passengers to choose their staterooms. The couple, a Mr. and Mrs. Megguran, took the front two rooms on one side, whilst Andrish took the front room on the other. That left the rear rooms for the woman, Meldan and himself.

Dav gratefully closed the door behind him, threw his bags to the floor and settled onto the bed. It was a long half hour wait for the ship to lift off and only then did he finally begin to believe that he had got away safely. Now he could think forward to Extolay. They'd said he might have to start a new life, and had given him a name and address of a contact there. He'd hoped he wouldn't have to use it, but then things had a habit of turning out differently to the way he wanted. They always had.

Almost out of habit now, Dav pushed the senses of his mind outwards through the ship, noting the minds of each of the other people on board. Two up in the ship's bridge; the pilot and navigator, no doubt. The engineer right at the back tending to the drives as they moved out towards their jump point.

Also towards the rear, the almost still minds of the Low passengers, and finally close by, the five that would be the steward and passengers.

Wait. *Five?*

There should be six. Maybe the steward had gone to the bridge? Dav got up and opened his door a fraction to peer out. The steward working in the galley.

Either one of the minds on the bridge was a passenger or somebody wasn't showing up on a life scan.

Dav's first thought was that this was somehow related to his flight from Rech. Reason told him otherwise. Why would anybody follow him onto the ship? Somebody not showing up on a life scan meant one of three things: the person was dead, which was unlikely; they were wearing a psionic shield helmet, or they were psionic themselves, naturally and unconsciously shielding themselves as Dav himself was.

Whichever it was, he would be in the best position to learn more once his strength returned. That was going to take several hours and it had been a long day, so he decided to sleep for a while.

* * *

When he awoke, he checked the room's computer and found that they had already entered jump space. That was one piece of good news at any rate, though it closed a chapter on his life.

Stewing on it would do no good, and he had something else that demanded his attention.

Leaving his room, he headed for the galley to get some food and drink. The lounge area was empty apart from the steward, who was checking his stock levels in the galley, and Meldan who was half-watching something on the entertainment screen.

"Hello, Mr. Geddis," the steward said, "I hope you slept well?"

"Yes thanks," he said opening a random cupboard to try and find a cup. "Please, skip the formalities, though. I'm happy for you to call me Dav if you let me call you something other than 'steward'."

The man smiled. "I'm Jared," he said. "And cups and plates are there, pre-packed meals there and

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Raconteurs' Rest

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drinks over there,” he continued, gesturing at several cupboards in rapid succession.

“Thanks Jared,” he said, reaching for a carton of mango juice from one of the cupboards.

“So, what takes you to Extolay?” the steward asked.

“A new life,” Dav replied. “I went back home to Rech after the war, but things weren’t the way I thought they would be.”

Jared nodded, though Dav knew he didn’t really understand.

“A war can do things like that; make a place you’ve known forever seem different, somehow.”

Dav looked over towards the ex-soldier sitting across the room.

“Do you know his story yet?” he asked Jared.

“Mr. Meldan...? We’ve had a brief chat. He’s on his way to Efate to join a Merc unit after being demobbed. Probably to help with the troubles there.”

Dav thanked Jared and wandered over to the couch where Meldan was sitting. It offered a reasonable view of the room and the doors to the state-rooms.

“Mind if I join you?” he asked.

Meldan looked up. “Sure, take a seat,” he said. “I’ve seen this vid at least three times before but there’s not much choice on this old crate. The name’s Karl Meldan.”

“I’m Dav Geddis. Jared tells me you’re joining a Merc unit on Efate? You obviously don’t want a quiet life.”

Meldan grinned.

“You know what they say about an old dog and new tricks. Soldiering is what I know. Can’t really see myself doing anything else.”

“Maybe you’re right,” Dav said. “I tried going back home to the farm. I lasted all of three weeks. Where did you serve?”

“Sword Worlds mostly. How about you?”

“Would you believe I spent most of the war guarding a research station? They spent all that time and money teaching me how to shoot straight and then stuck me in the middle of nowhere for two

years. The Swordies put up quite a fight by the sounds of it?”

“Didn’t they just,” Meldan said. “We had the tech advantage; it should have been a walk in the park. They just didn’t know when to give up. There was this time on Biter when we caught two squads of them separated from their unit...”

Meldan started off on an old army story. Half listening and nodding in the right places, Dav used the opportunity to perform another life scan, this time just keeping to the passenger area. To the port side of the ship, he sensed two people in one cabin. There was the three of them in the lounge and one more mind in the central starboard stateroom. That left Andrish’s cabin empty and no sign of him in the lounge. He would need to wait and watch to confirm it, but it looked like Andrish was his man.

“... and even when there was just two of them left, they kept coming, like they were the ones hunting us!” Meldan said, drawing to the end of his tale.

Dav had been paying just enough attention to have a vague idea of the story. “Yeah, I’ve heard things like that from a few people,” he said. “They have a weird approach to war, and most other things too by the sounds of it.”

“So, what were they doing at this research station of yours?” Meldan asked.

“Research,” Dav said, smiling. “They never really told us much about it. Some uber-weapon to use against the Zhodani was all we got out of them. They soon gave us the idea that we shouldn’t ask too many questions. There was the usual...”

Andrish’s door opened and the man made his way over to the galley to speak to Jared. Dav tried not to stare but felt his eyes drawn towards the man, and he was sure he caught Andrish glancing over to him a couple of times. Andrish was psionic and knew that Dav was too, but then that was no surprise; he’d probably been doing his own scans.

“Usual what, Dav?”

Meldan’s voice brought him back to the conversation and he realised he’d stopped in mid-sentence.

“Huh?... oh, the usual guys in white coats, but they never let us anywhere near the interesting stuff.

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Probably wouldn't have understood it anyway, I suppose." Dav paused for a moment. "What do you make of the other passengers?"

"I've only really talked to Larissa," Meldan said, nodding over towards the door next to Dav's. "She seems alright. The high passengers have hardly been out of their rooms, too good for the likes of us. I was beginning to have my doubts about you," he added with a grin.

"No fear of that," Dav said. "I know my place. Listen, I've got some stuff I need to get on with. I'll speak to you again, soon."

He got up and made his way back to his stateroom. He had some thinking to do.

* * *

The discovery about Andrish had left Dav with a dilemma. He didn't really know the ways that psionics interacted, outside a secret research base at any rate. They'd happily developed his abilities and then cast him aside when he failed to match up to their hopes. Now he was on the outside, liable to be lynched, or worse, if he made a false step.

The safest option would be to ignore Andrish, wait till he got to Extolay and seek out the contact he'd been given. However, there was no telling what Andrish would make of that, and the thought of talking with someone who was in the same boat as him was compelling.

For three days, Dav wrestled with the issue, spending much of his time swapping war stories with Meldan and Larissa, who'd served in the Scouts, or dodging probing questions from Jared. The steward seemed to view it as his mission to have a comprehensive life story of every passenger who boarded his ship. Jared's inquisitiveness did help in one way; he learned that Andrish was a representative of a large corporation from Deneb seeking to expand into the Marches now that things had quietened down. Dav couldn't help wondering if there was more to it than that, given what he knew. Throughout, Andrish spent almost all of his time in his stateroom, surfacing only occasionally to get something from the gal-

ley or to speak with Jared. Each time, he and Dav shared brief glances and a tension built between them.

By the end of the third day, Dav could stand it no more. He had to talk to the man, if only to reassure Andrish that he was no threat and maybe get the same assurance in return. He waited for a quiet moment when Jared was out of the way and all the passengers were in their rooms. Sitting in the lounge by himself, he ran through a few possibilities for what he might say.

Dav got to his feet and walked towards Andrish's stateroom. The 'Do not Disturb' sign clicked into place on the door, bringing Dav to a standstill just a few paces away.

Damn, he thought to himself. Why now?

He turned to go back to his own room, but then decided he'd do it anyway. Whatever Andrish was doing he couldn't have properly started yet. He knocked on the door and then waited for a few seconds. There was no response.

Dav knocked a little louder. "Mr. Andrish, can I speak with you, please?" he said. But again there was no response at all. Without consciously deciding to do so, he used his mind to look beyond the door. He began to berate himself for his lack of consideration. What right did he have to invade Andrish's privacy like this? It was the reason he got into such trouble back on Rech. But then he realised the import of what he had just seen: the room had been empty, Andrish had not been inside.

Good God, he's a teleporter.

Returning to his own room, Dav considered what this might mean. Teleportation was the rarest and most difficult to master of the psionic gifts. It was the thing they had been most hoping to find at the research station, along with telekinesis. It meant that Andrish was a heavy duty psionic. It also raised the question of just what he was doing. What could he possibly gain from teleporting round a ship in the middle of jump space? Theft was the most likely explanation, or maybe some sort of snooping. Whichever, it made the idea of contacting Andrish dramatically less appealing. How could he trust the man?

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Dav considered going to the Captain with what he knew, but quickly thought better of it. What was he going to say? That he used clairvoyance to probe through another passenger's door and discover Andrish had psionically disappeared? If he was believed he'd be in a heap of trouble, and if he wasn't they'd assume he had a screw loose. No, whatever he thought, Andrish deserved Dav's loyalty more than the Captain. The Imperium's laws and the research station had seen to that.

* * *

Jared exited the lift and doubled back on himself, heading towards the cargo area. He hadn't expected to need these extra supplies on this jump, but the high passengers had an unusual liking for large quantities of fruit juice. Still, at least the ship was almost ready to drop out of jump space at Dinomn so there was a chance of staying inside his budget.

Making his way through two iris valves, he reached the main cargo bay. He paused at the second doorway before heading towards the corner where he kept his stash of supplies. He had never really liked visiting the cargo area when they were in jump space; being alone with the crates allowed the imagination to run wild. He walked that little bit quicker down the aisles as a result. It was stupid, he knew. But not even a decade of experience could quite rid him of his lingering superstition.

He almost missed the open crate down one of the side aisles.

Jared stopped and backed up to get a better look. He hadn't been mistaken; one of the crates was open with the lid lifted at an angle.

The seal must have come loose, Jared thought, and walked along to the crate to close it up again. As he got close, he caught a glimpse of the contents.

"What the...?"

He didn't get the chance to finish his sentence as a sharp explosion of pain erupted in his head and everything went black.

* * *

Dav flipped through a few screens on the terminal in his stateroom. The ship had dropped out of jump and it wouldn't do any harm to remind himself of the layout of Dinomn since he might be spending up to a week there.

The ship's comms system sprang into life.

"Attention please. This is the Captain. Would all passengers please make their way to the lounge. Thank you."

Odd, Dav thought. He'd never heard of passengers being brought together at this stage of a journey. He left his room and immediately noticed two new faces standing near the lift. Both looked to be in their forties and wore hardened looks. One had a bearing about him that marked him as an officer. Dav noticed that they both had pistols holstered at their sides, something that did not bode well.

Meldan and Larissa were sitting already, and Dav shot a questioning look at Meldan who responded with a shrug. Andrish and the Meggurans emerged from their own staterooms, sporting puzzled expressions that reflected his own feelings.

After allowing a few moments for everybody to settle, one of the men took a step forward.

"I am Captain Sidnar," he said. "Before I explain anything more, I must ask if any of you have seen Jared in the last four hours or so?"

"We called for him about two hours ago," Mr. Megguran said after talking briefly to his wife, "but he didn't respond. It wasn't urgent and this isn't a proper liner, so we didn't try again."

Sidnar nodded in acknowledgement, ignoring the barbed comment, and looked round the rest of the group.

"Has something happened?" Larissa asked.

"Jared has disappeared," the Captain replied, to exclamations of disbelief.

Dav shot a glance at Andrish, and found him gazing directly back at him before looking away. He looked calm enough but this was too much of a coincidence.

"We have already conducted a search of the rest of the ship," Sidnar continued. "We will now search your staterooms before..."

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“What?” Mr. Megguran interjected. “You can’t just go through our belongings. We have sensitive goods and...”

“You are mistaken,” Sidnar said with cold ferocity. “Until I know what’s happened to Jared, I don’t give a damn about your sensitivities.” His hand rested on his pistol in readiness. “Josh, search the staterooms.”

The other crewman quickly went from room to room, only needing a few seconds in each to confirm that the steward was not in any of them.

“Nothing,” he said as he came out of the last.

“You haven’t heard the last of this,” Megguran snapped. “What you just did was out of order.”

“You are of course welcome to complain,” the Captain said. “However, you are all confined to your rooms until we dock at Dinomn and the authorities there can deal with this.”

“Captain Sidnar,” Dav said. “Might I have a word with you?”

«Shut the hell up, Geddis! Say a word and I'll snap your mind like a twig.»

Dav suppressed a shudder as he looked over to Andrish, who still betrayed no emotion on his face, and blocked any further contact. Could he be that powerful?

Sidnar’s hand was firmly around his pistol, tension evident on his face as he looked at Dav with suspicion.

“Wait till the others are in their rooms,” he said, “and keep your distance.”

Perhaps he should back down. If he did nothing then the problem would just go away. His thoughts shocked him and he didn’t like the look of the direction they led. Could he really sink so low in just a few weeks?

After the passengers had departed for their rooms, Sidnar turned to Dav. “Now what did you want to tell me?”

Dav picked his words carefully.

“Andrish may have something to do with this. I have reason to believe he is a psionic with teleportation ability.”

“What? You’re saying Andrish is a Zhodani?”

“I’m not,” Dav replied, “though I suppose he could be.”

“That’s quite a claim to make. You saw him teleport?”

“No. I saw his ‘do not disturb’ sign being turned on just as I was about to knock on his door. There was no reply, so I tried the door and he wasn’t inside.”

“That’s not exactly concrete evidence,” Sidnar replied, rubbing his chin in thought. “Are you sure you couldn’t have missed him coming out? He’d hardly have left his door unlocked if he was up to something like that.”

Sidnar had spotted the flaw in his version of events, but Dav knew he couldn’t give the real account.

“I’m sure he couldn’t have walked out. I know it’s not proof of anything and that’s why I said nothing till now. But Jared’s disappearance changes things.”

“It does indeed,” the Captain said. “Alright, I’ll bear it in mind and I’ll speak to Andrish. Now if you would return to your room, please.”

Dav sat on his bed and heard the lock click into place. The wait seemed interminable as the minutes passed at a crawl. Then it struck Dav that he might be able to work out something of what was going on. Although, he couldn’t detect Andrish’s whereabouts, he should be able to find and recognise Jared... if he was still alive.

Closing his eyes, he reached out mentally, noting each of the nearby minds. He focused on each in turn, hunting for the missing steward. Soon, he found his target. One mind, faint as if unconscious, was Jared’s. It was located in the cargo bay and right next to him was another mind, also virtually still, which he didn’t recognise at all. What the hell was going on?

The door to his stateroom opened again.

“Well,” Sidnar said. “It looks like you’re right. Andrish wasn’t in his room. And I saw him go in and watched Josh lock the door.”

“He’s in the cargo bay,” Dav replied.

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“What makes you say that?”

Dav realised that he'd said it too strongly and tried to recover the situation.

“I was behind Andrish when we boarded. He made a point of mentioning a crate of his that was being delivered. He must have something important in there. It's the obvious place for him to go.”

The Captain nodded thoughtfully.

“That makes sense. It also means he could be armed by now and we know he's dangerous. I heard that you put a serious piece of weaponry in the locker. You know how to use it?”

“I know which end to hold. We could use Meldan as well...”

In little over a minute he and Meldan had been taken up to the ship's locker and retrieved their weapons. Dav quickly checked his ACR over and snapped a clip of discarding sabot rounds into place. He wasn't happy at doing this without any sort of protection, but there wasn't the time to go and retrieve his cloth armor.

With Meldan in front, they quickly reached the iris valve that led into the cargo bay and took up positions on either side of it. Sidnar and Josh stood a little further back, their autopistols drawn.

Dav mouthed a countdown and opened the valve. He and Meldan, each with their rifles readied, looked into the bay keeping as much cover as they could. An empty aisle stretched ahead, with crates on either side, leading to the iris valve at the opposite side of the bay some ten metres away. Two main aisles, running the length of the cargo hold, branched off at right angles to the left not far from each side. There was no sign of Andrish.

Meldan move forward to the first of the main aisles and signalled the all clear. Dav moved quickly to his shoulder, indicating that he would continue straight on. He moved quietly, stopping a metre or so short of the second main aisle. Although he wouldn't be able to spot Andrish himself, it seemed like a good time to use his psionic ability to see who was where. This time there was no sign of Jared, but the unfamiliar mind was moving slowly along what must

be a parallel aisle a few metres away.

Dav moved right to the corner and glanced round, leading with his ACR. There was still no sign of anybody yet. The sight that greeted him a few seconds later was not what he expected, however.

A figure in a vacc suit came into view from the next aisle, backing round the corner and dragging another, similarly suited, figure. It only took Dav a second to recover from his surprise.

“Hold it, Andrish!” he shouted.

The figure stopped and glanced round at him, emitting a roar of anger.

“Back off Geddis,” the figure replied, “or Jared gets hurt.”

«We both know that's not Jared. You're not going to do anything.»

He sent the thought direct to Andrish. It was something Dav was not going to say out loud.

Further down the aisle, Meldan came into view, Gauss rifle trained on the vacc suited pair.

“Stand down, now, Andrish,” he called. “Place Jared gently on the deck.”

Glancing at both of them, Andrish lowered the other figure to the floor and stood slowly up again. He raised his arms in surrender and glared angrily at Dav.

And then he wasn't there anymore.

“He's teleported again,” Dav shouted. “Everybody check around themselves!”

He wheeled around, scanning the full 360 degrees but there was no sign of his quarry.

“You might want to make sure your pilot's ok,” he said to Sidnar, “and then we need to search the ship again.”

When he looked back to the fallen figure, Meldan was already kneeling and detaching the helmet. When he pulled it away, it revealed an unconscious, older man, probably in his late fifties.

“Who...?” Meldan asked in shock.

“I haven't the faintest idea,” Dav replied.

The Captain and Josh joined them, uttering their own expletives when they realised that the figure wasn't their steward.

Dav pondered the situation. How could Jared

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have been here and then gone a few minutes later? And how could this man have appeared out of nowhere?

"It has to be Andrish's crate," he said out loud.

"What does?" Sidnar asked.

"Jared," Dav replied. "He has to be in Andrish's crate."

Dav raced down the aisle to a large crate that stood out as different to the others, noting Andrish's name on the outside. It was closed but not locked and when Dav pressed the release, the lid rose in slow automation. The crate was heavily padded but there was still a substantial space inside. Lying at the bottom was the unconscious figure of the missing steward with an ugly bruise visible on the side of his head.

Sidnar had reached his side and was looking in.

"Is he alive?"

Dav reached in and sought out a pulse in the steward's neck, quickly finding a slow, steady beat.

"Yes, thank God," he said. "Andrish must have drugged him to keep him out this long."

"I'll deal with Jared," Sidnar said. "You and Meldan go with Josh and find out where that damned Zho went. If you see him, take him down, or this could go on forever."

The three of them combed the ship twice, finding no sign of Andrish. They reported back to the Captain, who had managed to pull Jared from the crate.

"So," Sidnar said, "he could be anywhere. Teleporting around to avoid us?"

"I doubt it," Dav replied. "That's not how it works. Even the best Zhodani can only teleport a few times and we know Andrish did so at least four times in the past few hours. He was in a vacc suit. I reckon he's probably left the ship."

"But what's the point of floating out there in a vacc suit?" Sidnar asked, looking at Dav thoughtfully. "It's just a recipe for a slow, unpleasant death..."

"Unless somebody is expecting you?" Meldan suggested.

"You're not saying that Andrish planned this, are

you?" Sidnar asked incredulously.

"Why not?" Meldan replied. "Andrish only had time to suit himself up. The other guy must have already had his vacc suit on."

"Then who the heck is he?" Dav asked. He knelt by the prone figure of the stranger and hunted for identification. He found it quickly enough in the form of a dog tag round the man's neck. "Good God, he's a Captain in the Imperial Navy!"

Sidnar's jaw dropped open. "What...?"

"An Imperial Navy Captain. Karmesh von Shirmarkhan," Dav said reading the dog tag. "With a name like that he could be a noble."

He considered the implications of this twist.

"Captain," he said. "This is still very dangerous. Andrish is probably Zhodani and almost certainly has a ship out there. He might want this Shirmarkhan guy back."

Sidnar nodded and activated his communicator.

"Anya, have you got any ships on the sensors?"

"Nothing unusual," a female voice replied. "Just a Free Trader."

"Will its course bring it anywhere near us?" Sidnar asked.

"Negative," Anya replied, "though it will intersect with our position from about twenty minutes ago."

The Captain looked straight at Dav.

"Did you hear all that?" Sidnar asked.

Dav nodded. "That's no merchant ship."

"Full acceleration, Anya," Sidnar ordered.

"Contact the Navy and tell them we've recovered a kidnapped officer and need immediate assistance to deal with possible pursuit."

They moved Jared and von Shirmarkhan to the crew's quarters; neither showed any signs of coming round yet. Then they could do little more than wait and watch. From the acceleration it displayed, the 'Free Trader' clearly had a much greater maneuver drive than it should, but the time it took to slow and pick up Andrish made any realistic pursuit impossible. The *Empress Catharine* was too close to the safety of Dinomn's starport and its SDBs.

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Raconteurs' Rest

* * *

As he strolled down the starport concourse the security officer scanned the crowds, but Dav barely noticed him as he finished his drink.

“Could you use another of those?” Jared asked, rising from his chair.

“It’s alright, you know,” Dav replied. “I can afford the odd round...”

“I know,” Jared said, his face becoming a bit more serious. “It’s just my way of saying thanks. Who knows what Andrish might have done if he’d

had more time. I owe you.” With that, he made his way over to the bar.

What a difference a week makes, Dav thought. Maybe he was getting the hang of this at last. He’d used his abilities and done some good. This time he hadn’t got into trouble over it; had even made a friend. A new life on Extolay beckoned and it might not be so bad after all.

The author wishes to extend his thanks to Fritz Brown for his very valuable comments and suggestions.

Raconteurs' Rest

An exciting night

an after-action report by Andrew Brown

So, for several months, I had been running a Serenity RPG game. Nothing special, just having a crew explore the system, trading, taking on odd jobs, getting themselves shot at. Then, several of the players became unavailable for game, due to non-game related issues. So I figured, “Hey, perfect chance to force the rest of my group to learn Traveller instead!” So, to ease the rest of the group into the new rules (and speed up gaming) I rolled them up three characters and set up an adventure for them. They said they wanted to try being pirate hunters, so I set their first adventure as obtaining a ship. Easy enough, right?

Game night rolls around, and I show up at the hosting apartment and BAM! The whole group is there. The ones who I created characters for, the ones who had dropped out, and the ones who were occasional cameo appearances during the Serenity game. I went from having 3 players (a decent size group to teach rules to) to having 9 players (a couple of the kids felt like playing too).

Well, thinks I, we could just play Serenity instead, I guess. Wait, no, I don't have any Serenity adventure set up to use. I could roll them up a few

characters real quick like. What should I do? Then, the bright idea hit me: Why not just let them RP out a pirate vs pirate hunter fight? So, I quickly made up some pirate characters, printed out some ship stats, and GMed by the seat of my pants. Wheee!

Setting up a scout ship for the Hunters, and a Corsair for the Pirates, any number of things could have happened. I set up the scene that the Hunters had gotten a rumor of a pirate operating in this system, and that they had just jumped in to the system. From there, it was interesting. First, there was the item of the two different crews, who knew each other as people, but not as characters, trying to get together and quickly sort out their crew dynamics. Then, there was the on-the-fly act of instructing the players in the rules. Finally, there was the constrained chaos that comes from having two opposing teams in the same room together, with the furious passing of notes, whispering, and Out of Character information gathering.

So, the two crews fought each other, RPed with themselves and each other, and all had a good time, with me just acting mostly as a referee to interpret the weapons hits and damage. The moral of the story: A GM doesn't necessarily have to run what he has planned, if something else will be more fun.

Organized Opposition

by Bruce Johnson

The party is approached very obliquely by a representative of Tukera Security, the Vermene, to investigate labor unrest on a major ship of the line, a Tukera *Majesta*-class freighter, the *Catherine the Great*.

This adventure takes place before the Solomani Rim War (990 - 1002) but long after the Great Merchant Strike of 904—perhaps some time about 985. This could be part of the events and provocations leading up to the Solomani Rim War.

Introduction

Tukera Security is concerned about the possibility of another general strike aboard the megamerchant class ships. Many of the gains achieved by the crews in the Great Strike have eroded over time, particularly in the face of the many planetary depressions and recessions experienced in the wake of the Strike.

Rumors of another Strike have surfaced. Vermene has little concrete evidence of any plot, simply a single report from an agent who has since vanished, concerning a possible labor action possibly involving Solomani influence, and a hunch by Mildur Troygvan, head of Vermene. Troygvan's hunches have played out before, so Sildas Tukera heeds his security chief on these matters.

The Great Strike cost Tukera a great deal, both financially and politically, and Sildas is determined to avoid another at any cost. He has authorized Troygvan to carry out 'black' operation of the highest order. Sildas simply wants Troygvan to enlist agents entirely outside of Tukera to infiltrate, if possible, the plot, and either expose or neutralize the leaders. Tukera has had some problems with Solomani infiltration of Vermene in the last few years, so Sildas wants things to be extremely tight on this mission. The entire affair is to be his and Troygvan's eyes only. In reality, Troygvan cannot handle all the matters himself, so some of his most closely trusted staff will also be involved.

Player-Characters

The player characters have to have never had any substantive dealings with Tukera, or else such dealings have been very well hidden. They should also be racial Solomani, be able to pass for such, or have homeworlds in the Solomani sphere of influence. If the PCs do not fit this profile they will have to give Troygvan very good reason to believe they can still accomplish this mission.

Contact

Troygvan will, if possible, contact the party through a patron they have dealt with previously. He will come to this patron with impeccable credentials...all false, but the head of security for one of the largest megacorps has awesome resources at his command.

Troygvan will at first attempt to convince the PCs that he is merely a middle man dealing for an anonymous corporate client, perhaps an upper manager in the Tukera organization, attempting to keep a blemish off of his bottom line.

However, if the PCs are observant, they will soon notice some touches that belie this notion. Troygvan habitually travels with a security escort, three ex-Marine commandos, and two ex-Scout special forces recon specialists. The security will 'make' the PCs long before the PCs will 'make' them (if the PCs ever do).

Troygvan himself will travel armed (small silenced autopistol) to any meeting, and his guards will be heavily armed, sawed off shotguns, silenced smgs, and flash-bang grenades, and wearing 'bulletproof' trench coats. Any outdoor meeting, or one accessible from the outdoors, like a restaurant window setting, will be covered by one of the Scout recons acting as a sniper with a heavy gauss rifle.

Troygvan is not a well known person; however, if one of the characters gets a picture of him, and feeds it through a large enough photo database, Troygvan will be identified as an executive for Tukera. At any rate, his expensive clothes, manner-

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isms and clear attitude of command make it clear that he isn't just any middleman. With extensive research, if the player characters can actually access the data sources they need, they may even be able to identify him as the probable head of Tukera security.

Troygvan will readily agree to more than one meeting; the first will be more 'feeling out' for both parties, no substantive information will be given to either side unless all parties agree. Troygvan is looking for a cautious, methodical, professional group to do this. If the party seems to ready to agree to anything sight unseen, he may back out; given the current state of political affairs in the Imperium, with rising tensions with the Solomani Confederation, some major planetary systems fighting recession, Tukera cannot afford anything that could spark a strike, or give it bad press.

The only thing Troygvan will say about the assignment is that it is an internal security matter on a starship, and the PCs are being recruited for an undercover operation, the pay will be generous, and that while there are very real dangers associated with the mission, it isn't anticipated to involve combat, that the PC's are primarily being asked to gather intel.

Mission Briefing

If the group agrees to work for Troygvan, he will suggest a meeting aboard his ship, a Tukera executive vessel. The PCs will be searched politely but firmly, on boarding the ship. Any weapons, recorders, etc, will be taken from them. They will receive a receipt, and be asked to sign it, for 'Items in the Ships Locker', listing anything taken from them.

The PCs will be shown to the wardroom, and offered refreshments. Soon the lift warning comes over the ship's intercom, and the ship will lift from the planet and head off into interplanetary space. The two marine commandos will be in the room with them at all times, clearly guarding the PC's. They will not be talkative.

About 15 minutes after lift, Troygvan will come into the room, and dismiss the guards. and begin

talking.

"I'm sorry for the rude treatment, but this is a matter of the highest importance to Tukera Lines, and the utmost precautions must be taken. We have reason to believe that an illicit labor group is organizing on a major ship of our line, possibly to provoke a strike. I want you to go on board as employees of Tukera, and determine if there is such a conspiracy, and if so, who is involved. We do not know how high the conspiracy reaches, so you are being introduced as complete outsiders. You will be in under very deep cover. Vermene has agents working in the ships looking for these people. They will not be told of your existence, indeed, you will have to avoid them, since I cannot compromise your cover by interfering with this or allowing anyone else to know about it.

"The following is for your eyes only...No one else but myself and Sildas Tukera himself know of your relationship to Tukera, and I am prepared to take the most extreme measures to ensure that this remains the case."

Troygvan has not changed expression, but the tone in his voice is clear, the PCs will be killed before they can expose anything.

"Naturally, I'll reward success, even partial success, handsomely...I know that I am putting you in an extremely tight position, and potentially in great danger, but if you succeed I can bring all the resources of Tukera to bear in your behalf.

"The ship involved is the *Catherine the Great*, a *Majesta*-class freighter currently in the Diaspora sector. There is a scheduled layover of five weeks at their next port of call, more than enough time for us to get there. You will be put on board as part of normal crew replacements, into the sections that we suspect of having organizing activity. From there on, you will be entirely on your own. When you have achieved your mission, you will bring the evidence to the one of the designated Tukera offices on the list in your packets, get off the ship and stay there."

He hands each of the PCs a package. It contains a folder with the outline of their identities, ID cards,

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Active Measures

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and ship's transfer papers assigning them to positions appropriate to their skills, aboard the *Catherine*. The PCs will be assigned to areas and shifts in the ship close to them; this way they will be able to maintain some contact. About two thirds of the party will have identities that show they worked on another Tukera ship, quite a distance away from the *Catherine*'s regular route. Their personnel files will also show that they were transferred for unspecified disciplinary reasons. Tukera takes a rather hard stance toward labor organization, and it will be inferred from their files that they were suspected of being involved in either labor problems or smuggling. There will also be a list of ports that the *Catherine* will be calling at, which have Tukera offices that the PCs can report at.

The disappearance of his agent has Troygvan suspecting that the conspiracy, if there is one, has access to the ship's personnel records, either through illicit means, or by a highly ranking co-conspirator with legitimate access, since the agent had a classified personnel docket identifying them as a security agent.

Troygvan gives the PCs a moment to look through the materials, then continues.

"It is vital that you do not lose your identity cards—they have a special code that will identify you as a high ranking agent, reporting only to a few people within the Vermene organization. If you are successful, report to the Tukera office at any of the ports on that list, and *only* at those offices. I cannot guarantee your safety anywhere else. From there, you will be taken to a Vermene safe house for debriefing. I, or one of my associates will debrief you.

"One final bit of assistance. Your quarters on the *Catherine* will contain a silenced snub pistol, with eight rounds of ammunition. Recognize that this is highly illegal, and if these are found while you are on board you will be arrested and interrogated. Use them only as a last resort, as I cannot guarantee your safety aboard the *Catherine*, high security clearance or not.

"You will use the information in this packet to develop a detailed identity for yourselves while we are in transit to the *Catherine*. Upon arrival, you will be given new clothing, what possessions you would be expected to have, and your identity card and papers. Your belongings on this ship will be returned to you upon the mission completion."

The time frame Troygvan has given the PCs, gives them 1 to 6 months to achieve their goals, based on the itinerary of the *Catherine*. Transit time to the *Catherine* will be two jumps. While in jump-space the PCs will be required to develop their identities; they will be grilled by Troygvan and his associates, until they have everything perfect. If not, the failing PC will be left behind, or the mission will be aborted, the PCs will be compensated lightly for their time, and returned to where they met Troygvan, with the warning to forget that the episode ever happened.

Aboard the *Catherine the Great*

The PCs, if they have never been aboard a merchant of the *Majesta* class, will find themselves hard pressed to maintain their cover the first time they are on board. The crew is larger than the population of many small cities, and the ship itself is huge. When a *Majesta* comes into port, it takes over. Often Imperial Navy auxiliaries clear all non-Tukera or Naval vessels from the starport. The crew then takes over the starport. Depending on the ship's schedule, the crew's disposition, and the number and nature of the dependents on board, the port is either flooded with crewmembers shopping and enjoying a few days' shore leave, to a wild carousal.

The PCs, however, should be able to settle down rather quickly into the routine of shipboard life. Naturally, as the newbies on board, they will get questions regarding their previous ship, why they're now on the *Catherine*, etc.

After about a week on board, if the PCs are observant, they will notice that they have occasionally seen someone who looks remarkably like one of the bodyguards who accompanied Troygvan to the meetings, and may have been aboard Troygvan's ship. If

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Active Measures

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contacted the person will deny ever having met them before, and unless the PCs talking to the woman makes a difficult perception check, will come away thinking that it is merely a case of mistaken identity. In reality, it is one of the scouts sent by Troygvan to keep an eye on the PCs.

Troygvan's tactics are clear: there are three layers of investigation going on simultaneously on the *Catherine*: The "official" investigation, the PCs deep cover investigation, and the scout, whose only job is to watch the PCs. If the PCs are blown or killed, it is the scout's job to get off the ship and return with the information to Troygvan. If it has become clear that the PCs have uncovered a conspiracy, the scout will attempt to assassinate any identified leader, then escape the ship. In either case, the scout's escape route is a specially prepared scout/courier in one of the cargo modules. Using this escape route will gather a great deal of attention, since it will involve blowing the doors of the module open with explosives and firing the scout's thrusters to leave the ship. This will cause considerable damage to the ship, but Troygvan considers the risks worthwhile, if another Great Strike is averted.

What Will They Find?

From here the adventure could follow several scenarios:

The Solomani Provocation.

The PCs are soon contacted by a person who hints that they might well be able to continue their labor organizing. If they express interest, they will be slowly drawn into a conspiracy, led by a SolSec team, to foment a Solomani-centric strike by the crew during the ships closest approach to the Solomani Confederation some ten ports along the itinerary. SolSec has four or five agents placed throughout the ship, including one agent in the higher command structure, such as an assistant chief security officer.

The PCs will be asked to recruit others in preparation for the strike, or to perform some act of sabo-

tage on the ship as proof of their bona fides. If they are successful at this, they will be allowed access to the higher levels of the conspiracy.

The SolSec agents are quite ruthless, and the PCs could well have a fatal "accident" if their covers are compromised.

The "Molly Maguires"

There is an anti-Imperial labor movement underway aboard the ship, but it has nothing to do with SolSec. A group of engineers are plotting a violent strike against Tukera for the gradual loss of the concessions gained in the Great Strike. They feel that success in this will encourage other starship crews to strike, and that another Great Strike will ensue. This time they hope to gain permanent concessions from Tukera, the other megacorps, and even the Imperium for the labor movement.

The conspiracy does not have any assistance from the command structure of the ship, but have hacked into the data systems for their detailed knowledge of personnel and other files.

Captain Raimo

The ship is carrying classified Naval hardware in one of the cargo containers. The ship's captain is aware of this, and being a Solomani sympathizer is desirous of hijacking the ship to Solomani space. The strike (with accompanying sabotage) is a ruse to draw the 25 Imperial Marines out of their specially prepared cargo module, whereupon in the confusion the captain will hijack the ship, put the crew out in the lifeboats, and fake the destruction of the *Catherine*.

He has the absolute loyalty of the upper levels of command, except for the highest ranking security officer.

Norma Rae

The PCs discover a labor movement afoot, but it is one that addresses real abuses by Tukera. In fact, if the labor organizers are persuasive enough, the PCs

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Active Measures

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could well decide to side with them. The organizers want to set up a legitimate, recognized union to negotiate with Tukera. Tukera wants to squash it. In this case, the PCs will have been largely lied to by Troygvan, particularly regarding the involvement of Solmani interests. He is using the players to find the leaders. Their subsequent murders will be blamed on the PCs.

“Run-run-run-run runaway!”

The PCs discover that the original agent, whose report and disappearance started this whole affair, is simply a ruse. The agent had embezzled a great deal of money from Tukera, and filed the report and staged his disappearance to hide his trail. The PCs get involved in no conspiracy greater than a scheme to win a g-ball game between two engineering shifts, since one of the PCs resembles a semi-pro player known by the captain of one team.

This will not go over well with Troygvan, who really wants to believe there is a conspiracy afoot. He could well decide the PCs are lying, at worst, covering their own part in the conspiracy, or simply incompetent at best, and they were unable to find what was “right under their noses”.

GM Notes

The main thing for GMs to keep in mind is the sheer size of one of these ships. It’s over one and a half *kilometers* long. It has a crew larger than the population of many small cities. No matter what scenario the GM chooses, the ship should be a signifi-

cant player in any plot. The PCs, for instance, could hide on one for months, scurrying from place to place. They could find interesting ways to bug various parts of the ship. Also, since this ship should really be run less as a ship than as a company town, there are ample roleplaying opportunities beyond the normal shipboard stuff. The conspiracy could, for instance, take place in conjunction with the the ongoing g-ball tournament between different parts and shifts on the ship...what better excuse for people to travel around the ship without attracting attention? There could be entire shipboard cultures unique to one of these class of ships, or even an individual ship. There could be things like luxury hotels built into standard cargo modules, along with power supply, life support, etc. A “cruise” company contracts with Tukera to transport their modules along, and avoids ship maintenance or construction costs, all of which are covered in the lease, which Tukera shouldn’t charge too much for, because in their minds, a cargo container is a cargo container.

With these behemoths in service, suddenly the trade tables from the various incarnations of *Traveler* start (notice I said only start) to make sense. Anyone on the scale of a PC is only going to be getting the odd spot shipment or charter...the big trade goes on these things. It would be sort of like attempting to figure out how current maritime trade makes economic sense if all you knew about were ships like the dhow that Michael Palin rode across the Indian Ocean in “Around the World in 80 Days”. When someone tells you that there are also giant kilometer-long container ships cruising around, it makes much more sense.

NHR Multifunction Robot

by Ewan Quibell

NHR Multifunction 1000 Robot Chassis

This is pretty much the basis of all Robots designed to replace humans in the short term, until such a time as a more efficient design is created.

The chassis, PSU, legs, radio, and arms are all form the MT design sequences. The contouring, interfaces, voder and sensors are from Book 8.

NHR Multi Function 1000 Robot Chassis

Robot ID:	NHR Multi Function 1000 Robot Chassis, TL10, Cr12,430 UPP=F6xxxx
Hull:	1/1, Size=0.1klitres, Config=Contoured, Armour=4B, Unloaded=133.9kg, Loaded=135.823kg
Power:	1/2, FuelCell=30 kw, Duration=95/285 hours
Loco:	1/2, Legs=2, Road=15kph, Off Road=4.5kph
Commo:	Radio=Very Distant (50 km), Voder, Interface=Brain,Program, Power
Sensors:	BasicSensorPkg (2 visual, 2 audio, 1 olfactory), Touch
Off:	-
Def:	-
Brain:	-
Append:	Light Armx2, Head, Rotating 10%
Other:	Cargo=13.6 litres, Fuel=36 litres, ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=Faint

The NHR multifunctional robot chassis is a standard chassis appropriate for tasks using human designed tools in human designed work environments requiring standard dexterity. It stands 1.75m tall to the top of its head, and the torso, legs and appendages are contoured to approximate standard human dimensions with no possibility of being mistaken for human. Its weight is at the high end of the normal human range without being overly heavy. The basic sensor package and voder are placed in the head in the same positions as humans, and the touch sensors are positioned to enable the sensors to receive the same data as humans.

The cargo space is designed for a robot brain up to 13.6 litre volume. The interfaces present allow the user's choice of brain to be programmed with their skills of choice, and allow for sensor feed back directly to a computer via direct cable connection or radio. The power interface allows the robot to draw power from external sources, removing the need for refuelling or increasing the duration of the internal fuel load as may be necessary.

Stated unloaded and loaded weights are exclusive of the weight of any brain, as is the cost.

NHR Low-Function Robot Brains

There are two low-function brains manufactured for the NHR Multifunction 1000 Robot Chassis: The NHR Low-Function 100 and NHR Low-Function 200 Robot Brains. These brains both provide INT 0 and EDU 2, allowing for two skills (of size 4 for the NHR 100, or of size 8 for the NHR 200) to be run and stored.

NHR Low-Function 100 Robot Brain

Robot ID:	NHR Low Function 100 Robot Brain, TL8, Cr9,400 UPP=xxx02x
Hull:	11.4 litres, Unloaded=2.7kg
Brain:	CPU=Linear×7, Storage=Std×20 FundLogic=LowData, FundCmd=LimitedBasic Software=See Below
Other:	ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=None

The NHR Low Function 200 Robot Brain

Robot ID:	NHR Low Function 200 Robot Brain, TL8, Cr11,400 UPP=xxx02x
Hull:	12.2 litres, Unloaded=3.1kg
Brain:	CPU=Linear×11, Storage=Std×20 FundLogic=LowData, FundCmd=LimitedBasic Software=See Below
Other:	ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=None

For both brains, Power, Loco, Commo, Sensors, Offense, Defense, and Appendages are provided by the chassis.

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In A Store Near You

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Available programs for these brains are a combination of any two skills from the table below; any single available skill may be upgraded Level 2 for the NHR 100, and in some cases, both skills may be so upgraded in the NHR 200.

The price of the software is not included in the price of the brain.

The NHR 100 and NHR 200 are standard designs usable with any manner of robot chassis or vehicles

to provide relatively good skills at a very reasonable price. The NHR 100 is based on the design for the NHR Agro 4200 Robot that was successfully redeployed into the Kaast Container Carrier to create the Kaast-A Class Robot Container Carrier. The NHR 200 is based on the design for the NHR 5200 Heavy Agrobot using the NHR Low Function 100 as a starting point. Both designs have been adapted to be able to take any manner of programs and standard fittings have been designed to make integration into robot or vehicle chassis a simple procedure.

NHR Low-Function 100 and 200 Robot Brain Software Availability

Programs Available for NHR 100 and NHR 200		Programs Available for NHR 200 Only	
Program	Cost (Cr)	Program	Cost
Steward	600	Pilot	1,000
Vacc Suit	400	Navigator	1,000
Survival	600	Medical	1,000
Grav Vehicle	800	Survey	1,200
Ship's Boat	800	Engineering	800
ATV	600	Gravitics	800
Gunnery	800	Naval Architect	1,200
Electronic	800	Prospecting	1,000
Mechanical	800	Interrogation*	1,000
Communications	800	Gambling*	800
Forward Observer	800	Administration*	800
Demolition	800	Vehicle	800
Recon	800	Close Combat	800
Hunting	400	Rescue	400
Forgery	600	Performer*	600
Valet	600	Agriculture	600
Weapon Handling	600	Athletics	800
Security	400	Meteorology	1,000
Cargo Handling	400	Terraforming	1,000
Emotional Simulation	800		
Janitorial	400		
Lab Tech	800		
Construction/Fabrication	800		

* This program requires Emotional Simulation

The Shipyard

Vagrant-class X-boat Service Hull

By Donovan Lambertus. Based on an idea and input from "Patron Zero" and Citizens of the Imperium discussion thread <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/showthread.php?t=23105>

Introduction

Gan Kuuda looked at the specification sheet on his desk and shook his head. "That's, uh, very nice, but what do you want me to do with it? I don't really have time for another project, sir. The final design for that Oberlindes lighter is due in a month and someone..." The pause was obvious, as was the stare at his supervisor. "...keeps adding things to the final specs. And I told you that a PAW, even a small one, wouldn't fit in that Spectre-class fighter, so now I've got even less time to straighten that mess out." His voice rose in pitch and volume before he could stop himself. He stopped, his mouth clamping shut audibly.

There. He'd probably sealed his fate and fully expected to be unemployed in the next few moments.

His boss, Eneri Uurkamm, simply smiled back across the desk at him. "Now, now," he chided gently, knowing how to massage talent when it needed it. "You're the best I've got, and this has to happen fairly soon. Look, here's the deal." Eneri said, running a hand through his hair. "Do you remember that redhead I was dating? You know, the one with ... anyway, she's a secretary over at IISS sector headquarters, works for Scout Leader Tollefson. He's the senior procurement officer over there." Eneri glanced around conspiratorially, and then leaned over the desk. "She says she's seen several memos come through talking about the fleet upgrading to the R series X-boats because the M series has developed a problem with structural metal fatigue. So they're selling off all of the M series in service, across the sector. That's where this beauty comes in." He finished, jabbing a finger down on the data slate.

Kuuda sighed and picked up the slate, wishing that Uurkamm would come to the point. The specs were mildly interesting – a service hull that could be mated to an X-boat, giving it maneuver capability and additional cargo space, while the X-boat gave the service hull jump capability. "Okay, it's an interesting idea," he said, tossing the slate back onto the desk with a clatter. "But who's going to buy what is essentially a 100 ton ship's boat that doesn't dock to anything but an X-boat?"

Uurkamm smiled wolfishly. "We make it modular, and then let them figure it out. Who knows, we can market it to beltlers, free traders, adventurer types, the salt of the earth...you know, morons." The hook had been taken, and now it just needed to be set. "I'll throw in a 20,000 credit bonus, if that'd help."

Sighing yet again, Kuuda nodded. His wife had wanted to visit her mother on Jazep anyway, so he could give her a high passage for her birthday. "All right, all right. I'll see what I can do."

Background

Since its inception, the X-boat has been a single purpose design – to carry messages as efficiently as possible along the communication routes of the Imperium. Normally, X-boats reaching the end of their service life are parted out and scrapped. Some few are sold to client states and megacorporations, but this has been the exception, rather than the rule. This was the situation in late 1070 when circumstances changed somewhat.

The IISS sector commander in the Gushemege sector ordered an upgrade of X-boats currently older than 20 years when it was discovered that some models were showing signs of metal fatigue. There is some speculation that the commander had contacts with some of the shipyards in the sector, and was perhaps getting kickbacks for such a move. Later investigation did reveal that the majority of the shipbuilding contracts went to Ling Standard Products shipyards, but no criminal charges were filed.

Regardless of other circumstances, this created a massive surplus of X-boats in the Scout Service's inventory, far more than could be used for parts locally. In an effort to 'clear the books', many of these X-boats were sold cheaply (some as low as 10-20% of their original value).

A minor naval architect's office on Kamurinmur got advance notice of the surplus boats, and gambled on an idea. In an effort to make these surplus X-boats useful for other tasks, a secondary hull was designed, incorporating maneuver drives, additional cargo area, weaponry, and capability for fuel skimming and surface interface operations. This design delivered all of the above, but as with all such add-ons, had a few issues.

Designs

Game statistics are included for several of Travellers' rule sets. Included below are stats for Book 2 CT, High Guard, and GURPS: Interstellar Wars.

Base Statistics

Annular wing/ring - 24 m diameter, 5 m tall, 3 m wide. Volume 750 m³, 55 dtons.

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The Shipyard

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Drive pods (x3) - 6.6 m diameter, 11 m tall. Volume 250 m3 (x3), 55 dtons.

The pods and ring overlap 150 m3 total, for a total volume of 100 dtons.

The airlock on the service hull connects directly to the existing airlock on the boat; the only real modification required to an X-boat is the addition of the control, power, and fuel lines that are contained in the 3 retractable docking clamps.

Classic Traveller – Book 2

Using a 100-ton hull, the X-boat Auxiliary Service Hull is a companion ship sold to better utilize surplus and retired X-boats, giving them maneuver capability, gas giant refueling, and atmospheric landing capabilities. It has maneuver drive-A, and power plant-A, giving performance of 2-G acceleration on its own, and 1-G acceleration when mated with an X-boat. There is fuel tankage of 10 tons supporting the power plant. When docked with an X-boat, the pair can perform Jump-2. Adjacent to the bridge is a computer Model/1. There are three staterooms in the standard configuration. One turret is installed, mounting a mix of beam laser, missile launcher, and sandcaster, with 1 ton of fire control installed. The ship has no vehicles. Cargo capacity is 51 tons, although typically this space is used for job-specific customization. The ship is streamlined.

The service hull requires a crew of 3: pilot, engineer, and gunner. The pilot also acts as the navigator. The ship costs MCr47.1 and takes 9 months to build.

Classic Traveller – High Guard

Ship: X-boat Service Hull

Class: Vagrant

Type: Auxilliary Boat

Architect: Navanod

Tech Level: 13

USP QB-16023111-030000-20002-0 MCr 35.180 100 Tons

Bat Bear 1 1 1 Crew: 2

Bat 1 1 1 TL: 13

Cargo: 45.000 Emergency Low: 1 Fuel: 3.000 EP: 3.000 Agility: 2

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Architects Fee: MCr 0.352 Cost in Quantity: MCr 28.144

Detailed Description

Hull: 100 tons/1,400m³, Annular Wing

Crew: 2 (Pilot, Gunner)

Engineering: Jump-0, 2-G Maneuver; (Jump-2, 1-G Maneuver when docked to X-boat), Power plant-3, 3.000 EP, Agility 2

Avionics: Bridge, Model/1 Computer

Hardpoints: 1 Hardpoint

Armament: 1 Triple Mixed Turret with: 1 Beam Laser (Factor-2), 1 Missile Rack (Factor-2).

Defenses: 1 Single Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)

Craft: None

Fuel: 3.000 Tons Fuel (0 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance), On Board Fuel Scoops and Purification Plant

Miscellaneous: 3.0 Staterooms, 47 Tons cargo

User-defined: None

Cost: MCr 35.13 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.351), MCr 28.104 in Quantity

Construction Time: 38 Wks (30 Wks in Quantity)

GURPS Traveller: Interstellar Wars

Tech Level: 11

Hull: 100-dton Annular Wing Airframe hull, dDR 10 armor.

Systems: 5 Maneuver Drive, Small Bridge, Model-1 Sensors (Scan 16), 1 Light Turret, 1 Beam Laser, 1 Missile Rack, 1 Sandcaster, 8 Fusion Power, 3 Stateroom, 69.5 Cargo

Statistics: EMass 163.3 tons, LMass 167.3 tons, Cost M\$35.91, SM +8, ASig +1, Hull dHP 27, Life support capacity=6, sAccel 5.98 (~3 G when docked with X-boat), no jump capacity (Jump-2 when docked with X-boat), Top Air Speed 4,400 mph.

Crew: Pilot (1 officer), Gunner (1 rating). Total 1 officer, 1 rating.

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The Shipyard

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Construction

The Vagrant-class Service Hull is built as three oblong spherical pods arranged around a central annular 'wing'. The central wing is built as a torus (outer diameter 24 meters, inner diameter 21 meters) with an elliptical cross section 3 meters wide and 5 meters high. The main deck forms a corridor roughly 3 meters tall, with the approximately 2 meters below the deck being utilized for fuel tankage, fuel purification, grav plating, and other sundry wiring and plumbing.

Each of the three pods is an egg-shaped spheroid 6.5 meters in diameter and 10.5 meters tall. They are divided into 3 separate decks with roughly 3 meters of separation. The portion of the pod below the lowest deck, roughly 1.5 meters high, houses a single large landing gear well, the actuation hydraulics, and additional power plant machinery. Iris valves in the floor and ceiling are located in the center of the pod, with access ladders mounted as required.

The Annular Wing

The central wing mounts a variety of ship systems. Beneath the deck plating are mounted 3 – 1 dton fuel tanks, located adjacent to the fuel scoops on the outer edge of the hull and the fuel purification systems tied into each tank. The inside of the wing mounts an airlock with an extendable passage tube that connects to the airlock on a standard X-boat to allow personnel transfer when the ships are docked. Also mounted on the inside of the ring are 3 docking/umbilical arms. These arms lock the X-boat in place, and special fittings connect to the X-boat to allow the transfer of fuel as well as allowing the joined ship to be controlled from the X-boats bridge. A cargo hatch is located counter-clockwise next to Pod One, opening in the lower hull. Temporary deck plates cover this hatch; they are taken up and stowed when loading cargo.

Pod One

Pod One is designated as the pod carrying the ship's bridge on the upper deck. If the ship mounts weaponry, it is mounted on the hardpoint located outboard on the central deck, with the gunners' position located adjacent to the turret. Also found on the central pod deck are the ship's computer, the ship's locker, and a fresher for use by the command crew. The lower deck contains a pair of maneuver drive units, one of the ship's three power plants, life support equipment, and an airlock for use when the ship is landed.

Pod Two

Pod Two is designated as the pod counter-clockwise from Pod One. The main deck of Pod Two is typically used as a stateroom (typically the Captains', due to its larger size and walls that are almost vertical). A wall divides the stateroom from the pods' iris valve, and provides a privacy door as well. The upper deck of Pod Two is typically a stateroom as well, although the dome shape of the upper deck limits usable space, making it seem cramped even with the two large windows looking inboard and outboard. As with Pod One, Pod Two's lower deck contains a pair of maneuver drives along with another power plant and airlock.

Pod Three

The remaining pod is designated as Pod Three. The upper deck contains another stateroom, similarly cramped as described above. The main deck of Pod 3 is allocated typically as a crew lounge. The lounge houses the provisions, cooking appliances and materials, laundry facilities, and various entertainment devices to keep the crew occupied. The lower deck is similar to that of the other pods.

Complaints

No design is perfect, and the *Vagrant*-class is no exception. The most common complaint is the cramped quarters of the upper pod deck staterooms.

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The Shipyard

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Only a 4 meter diameter circle in the middle of the room allows an average sized man to stand upright due to the slope of the walls, a significant portion of which is taken up by the iris valve in the floor. The fresher is a particular problem, with the design requiring one to sit to use the toilet facilities, and stoop while using the shower.

Another issue is that of cargo space within the central wing. It is rather narrow, a fact not helped by the slope of the walls. Standard cargo containers cannot be used at all; the standard cargo hatch is limited to objects less than 1.5 meters wide and 3 meters long, generally limiting it to carrying cargo in crates or on pallets. Special half-dton containers have been developed for this class of ship, but are very uncommon. The fact that this cargo area is the only connection between the pods further complicates the matter, making bulk cargoes difficult to haul. Machinery from the docking arms and fuel scoops intruding into the corridor space complicate matters further.

Benefits

Despite the shortcomings listed above, the *Vagrant*-class does have some substantial benefits aside from the design specifications it was built to.

The most obvious benefit is the arrangement of drives, power plant, and fuel tanks. All of these systems are basically triple-redundant, giving the ship a reputation for durability. Generally, only a catastrophic failure renders all drive systems inoperable.

The ships large circular landing pads give it a relatively low ground pressure, allowing it to land on many unimproved surfaces. This makes it very useful for travels in the wilderness.

The *Vagrant*-class was designed from the ground up to be as customizable as possible. When it was designed, several basic variants were included in the plans, allowing the user maximum flexibility. Attachment points for additional partition walls or bulkheads are placed every 4 meters on the ring to allow the creation of holds, fuel tanks, rooms, and more. Deck attachments exist for passenger couches,

wall lockers, and various other equipment. The *Vagrant* is designed to be whatever it's owner needs at the moment.

Variants

System Transport: Given its lack of jump drive, some *Vagrants* have been outfitted for orbital and short system transport. The central ring is outfitted with up to 70 passenger couches (including life support), leaving 12 dtons of cargo space for luggage and cargo. The crew lounge and captains stateroom are converted into passenger lounges, while the upper decks of pods two and three are set up as observation lounges. The turret and fire control are removed, with the resulting space being converted into a galley for the ship's stewards.

Mining Rig: Some beltiers have converted *Vagrants* into mining ships by replacing the docking arms with manipulator arms. Both sets are designed to utilize the same controls, so a mining rig usually attaches the docking arms for transport to its work area, then switches them out for the manipulator arms. When stowed as cargo, either set takes up 5 dtons. Typically, the weapons in the turret are replaced with a mining laser, and the ring section has additional hatches added to receive the raw ore. The ring between pods one and three is left open for normal passage; walls are added to section off the remaining area into ore holds. Pod two is either used as additional ore storage, a hangar for a mining buggy, or set up as a mini-refinery.

Fuel Tender: In some cases, the *Vagrant* is converted to a flying fuel tank for an X-boat. The ring section between pod one and the main airlock is sectioned off, and the rest of the ring (along with pods two and three) are converted to fuel tankage and fuel purification. Such an arrangement reduces available cargo space to 16 tons but adds an additional 40 tons of fuel and 1 ton of additional purification equipment to the paired craft, allowing two successive Jump-2s as well as faster fuel purification. A few of these have been used as rift couriers.

Lab ship: Several *Vagrant*-class hulls and X-boat pair hulls were purchased by various science

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foundations and converted to small lab ships. On these, the captain's stateroom and crew lounge are converted into labs, while the other two staterooms are retained for use by researchers. Fire control and the turret are removed and the space converted to additional computer hardware or storage. While not nearly as effective as a full-sized lab ship, this option is significantly cheaper.

Case Study: The *Hippity-Hop To It*

One example of the *Vagrant*-class in action is a ship operating in the Islands Cluster, known as the *Hippity-Hop To It*. Originally built on Ethbray (1722 Gushemege) in 1095, the service hull was purchased by Captain Lewis Tolliver, a belt miner. Outfitted as a mining rig, he worked Ethbray belt for ten years until he fell victim to radiation poisoning from a solar flare. Before he died, he willed the ship to his first mate, Eneri Gaetano. Captain Gaetano worked the belt for an additional year, finally hitting his 'big strike' – a rouge planetoid in the outer system, loaded with precious metals. Using his most of his newfound wealth, he purchased a surplus X-boat, hired a crew, refit his ships, and set out to find adventure. He renamed the service hull *Hippity*, and the X-boat *Hop to It*.

A year of travel and trade led the ship to the Cyclone system at the very edge of the Great Rift. During the jump to Eskandor, a largish micro-meteorite penetrated the hull of the X-boat and struck the jump drive, causing a misjump. The *Hippity-Hop to It* emerged from jumpspace in a remote section of empty space. While the rest of the crew began to attempt repairs, Captain Gaetano calculated their new position and was surprised to discover that they were in hex 2025 in the Old Islands subsector. The engineer managed to patch up the damaged drive, and luckily the *Hippity* was configured to carry an additional 20 tons of fuel. Holding their breath, the crew plotted the course to New Home and fired up the jump drive. Upon arrival, it was clear there had been a second misjump—the *Hippity-Hop To It* had been in jumpspace for nearly a year, although it had

seemed only the normal week to the crew.

Winding up in the Islands presented a major problem for the crew – they had precious little cash to pay for repairs. They did, however, have a cargo hold full of silk and alcohol purchased on Cyclone, which was sold off for a moderate profit. The *Hop To It* was repaired in short order, and the ship began trading in the Islands full time. The pilot, Urlikar Gashmme, left the crew to return home to the Imperium, and a replacement pilot, native Islander Tal Anderson, was hired. Since then, the group has managed to become entangled in Island politics, working occasionally as eyes and ears for the New Home government.

The Crew of the *Hippity-Hop To It*

Captain Royland Gaetano (876B87)

Belter 5 terms Age 38 Cr60,000
Shotgun-1, Computer-1, Electronic-2, Jack-o-T-1, Navigation-1, Pilot-1, Navigation-1, Prospecting-1, Vacc Suit-1

Pilot Tal Anderson (7A4B86)

New Home Navy 4 terms Age 34 Cr3,000
Computer-1, Jack-o-T-1, Medical-1, Navigation-1, Pilot-3, Vacc Suit-1, Autopistol-2

Engineer Alia Kishhush (7B86C6)

Imperial Navy Age 34 4 Terms Cr 11,000
Cutlass-1, Engineering-2, Mechanical-2, Forward Observer-1, Laser Rifle-1, Gunnery-1

Gunner Valeen Eshemii (737695)

Merchant Age 34 4 Terms Cr 15,000
Shotgun-2, Auto-rifle-1, Gunnery-3, Mechanical-1, Vacc Suit-1, Steward-1, Trader-1

Details of the *Hippity-Hop To It*

The *Hippity-Hop To It* has been extensively modified over the years. The most extreme modifications have occurred on the X-boat *Hop to It*, mostly for increased living space and comfort. The data banks on the bridge deck and the living deck have been replaced with staterooms, the pilot's on the bridge deck and the Captain's on the living deck. The common area on the living deck has been rebuilt

(Continued on page 28)

The Shipyard

(Continued from page 27)

using fairly luxurious components, and the second airlock has been converted into additional space for the ships' locker. It mounts a dual beam laser turret in place of the standard beam/missile/sand mix.

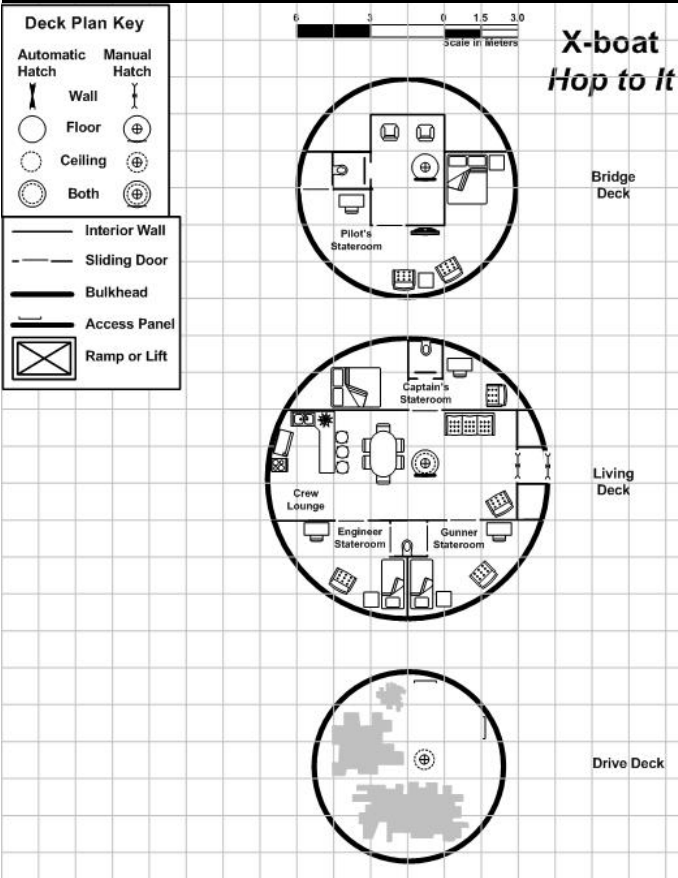
The *Hippity* service hull has been used in a variety of ways in the past. At one point, the ring between pods two and three was sectioned off for use as a fuel tank. Currently, that area is used to store various fittings to easily convert areas to other functions besides cargo; these fittings, including a full set of mining manipulator arms, takes up 10 dtons of cargo space. The staterooms in pod three have been

removed, and the entire pod set up as a secure hold. The stateroom on the main deck in pod two is retained, but the upper deck stateroom has been converted into a cozy crew lounge. Occasionally, if one of the crew feels the need to get away while in jump-space, they will come aboard the *Hippity* and stay in the guest stateroom.

Should the *Hippity-Hop To It* be encounter problems (pirates, hijackers, etc), those individuals would be well advised that the crew tends to err on the side of paranoia, and most nooks and crannies tend to have a minimum of two weapons tucked away in them. One attempted hijacking in the Islands during a passenger run resulted in a 20 minute firefight and 3 perpetrators being spaced.

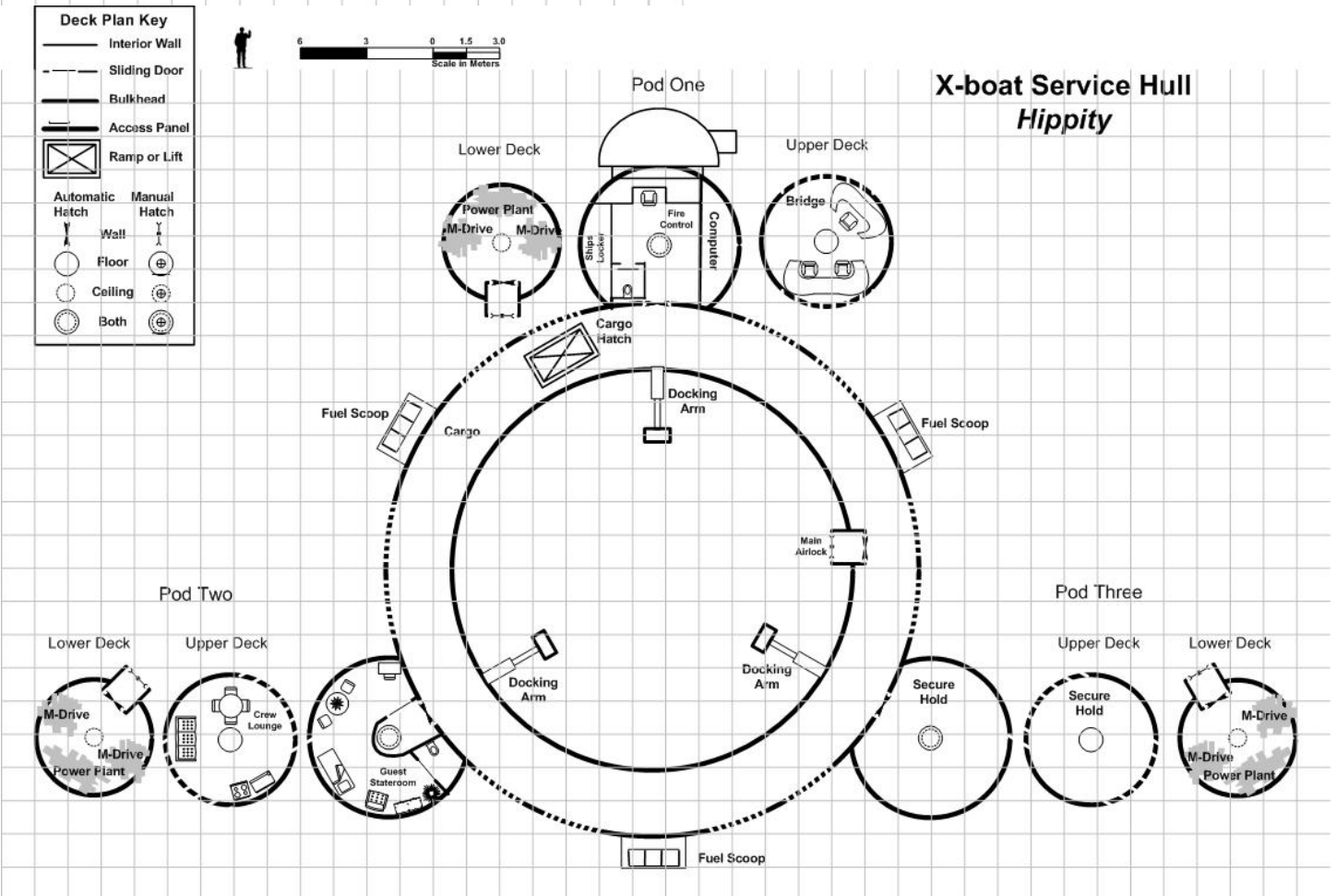


The Shipyard

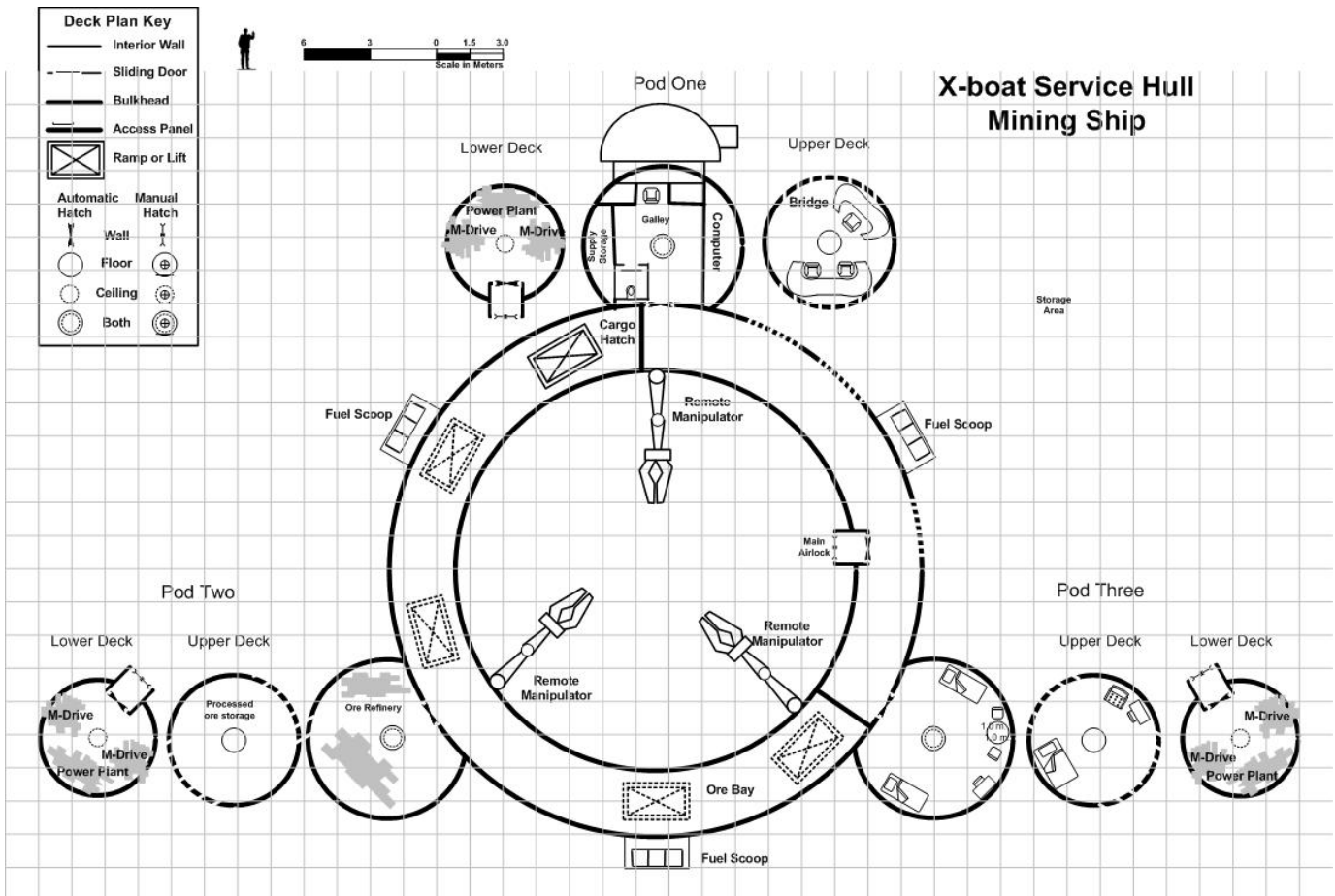
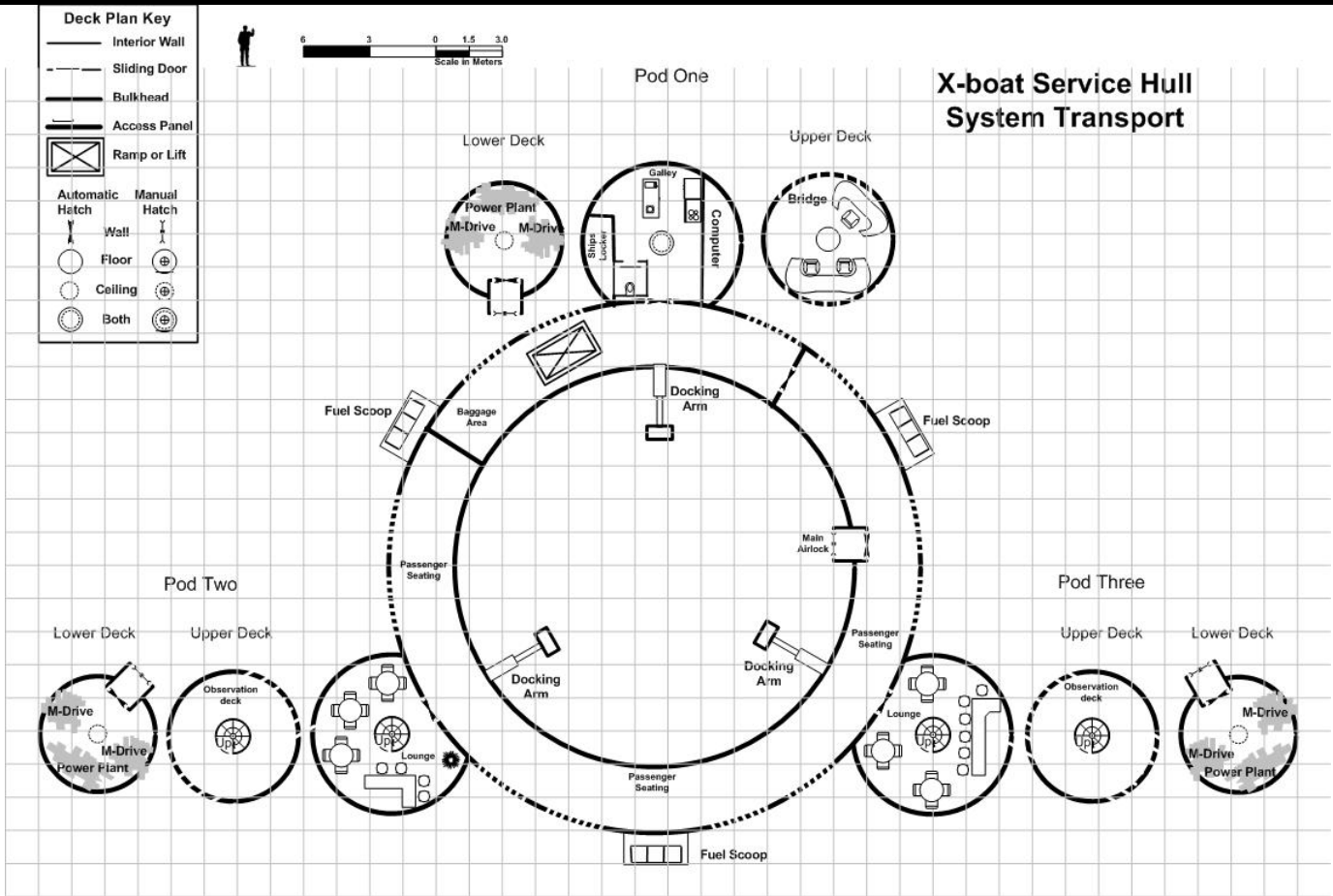


The image on the previous page is of the X-boat Service Module mated with an X-boat; this is the *Hippity-Hop To It* pair discussed in the article. The plans on this page represent the current deckplans of the *Hippity-Hop To It* pair; those on the following pages are common modifications. The final image, on page 31, shows the *Hippity* Service Module (alone) landed at a starport; the mated pair cannot be landed.

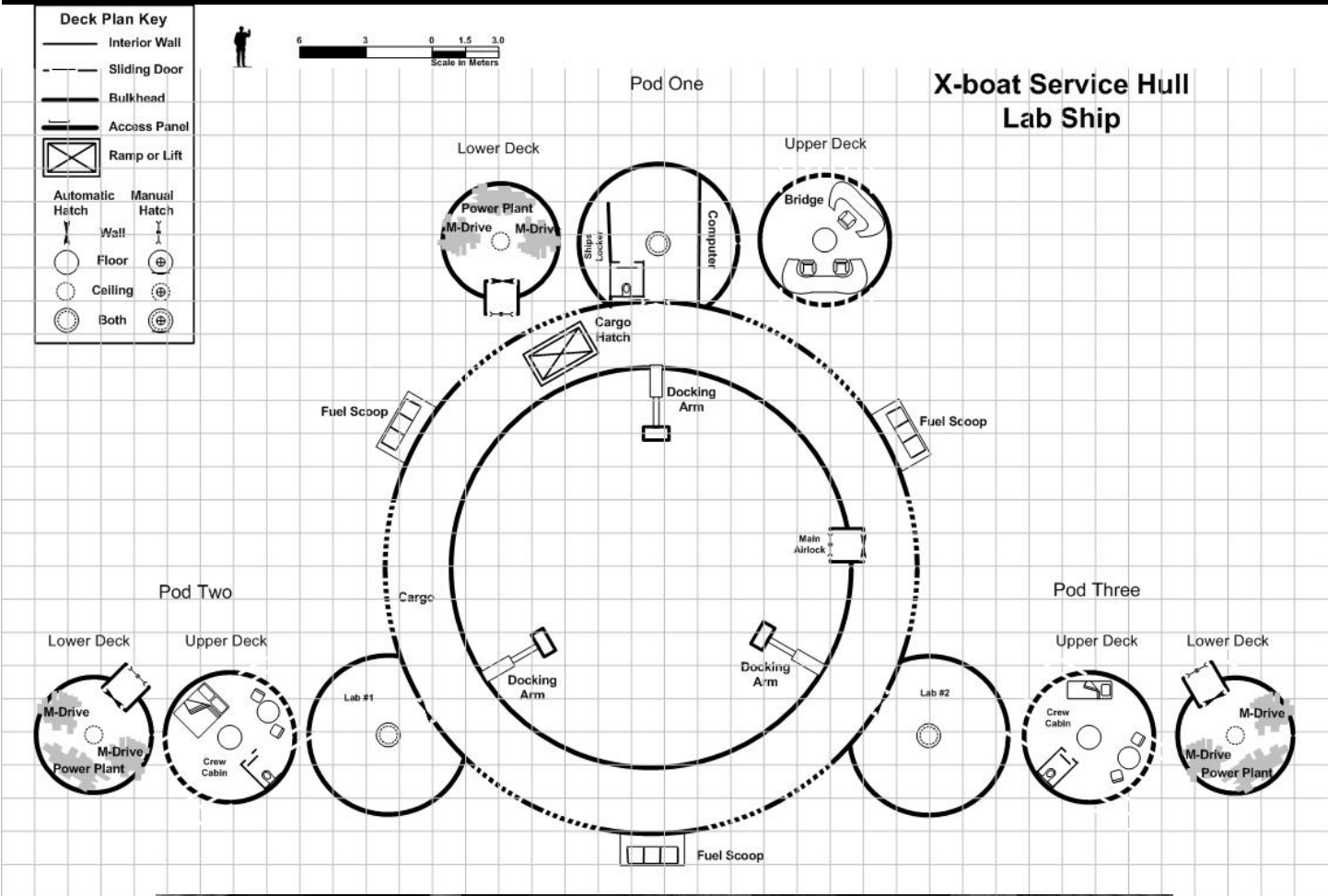
All plans and images were created by the author of the article, Donovan Lambertus.



The Shipyard



The Shipyard



P. Hunley Marsters

profiled by Ken Murphy

P. (Piter) Hunley Marsters (UCP 6448CA)

Human Male Age 38

5 Terms Journalist

Handgun-0, Grav Vehicle-1, Computer-1, Brawling-0, Cudgel-1, Writing-4, Imaging-3, Interview-4, Persuasion-2, Carousing-1, Streetwise-2, Anthropology-2, Electronics-2, Mechanical-2, Linguistics-2 (Russian, Chinese), Motorcycles & Grav Cycles-4, Poetry-3, Bowling-1

Piter grew up on hot, sticky, Xerxes, some hundred kilometers from the Downport at Armagh, in Weems, one of more than two dozen fairly unremarkable cities that ran along the coast, one into another, to make up the massive sprawl that ran the length of the Washington peninsula.

Following several unproductive years at a wealthy College, Piter was recommended by one of his Professors for a job he'd heard might be available—as a fact-checker at the prestigious Imperial Explorer.

While proven to not be cut out for College, Piter proved to be exceedingly well-read and quite knowledgeable in a wide number of different subjects, as well as being quite good at tracking down various bits of information. Soon Piter was editing copy. When the Managing Editor asked what Piter might consider an interesting story, Piter figured any such stories would be farmed out to others, but wrote up a list of his best ideas anyway, and handed it in.

“Hmmmmmmm”ing while he looked over Piter’s proposals, the Editor followed up with “Okay now, Piter, Take a story, and be sure to bring a cameraman and an intern to carry bags. Due date is six weeks from today. GO!”

And that was the first of many articles Piter would write for The Imperial Explorer. Soon after publication of Piter’s first article, he decided that *Piter Marsters* was the name some factchecker

would use. A *real* writer, on the other hand, should have a real *writer’s* name—and Piter began using the monicker “P. Hunley Marsters” instead.

P. Hunley Marsters spent many years traveling across the Imperium covering stories, and became a fairly recognizable face on the Tri-V.

When faced with the progressing effects of a genetic malady, P. Hunley’s contributions dropped, and he became only an intermittent correspondent to the magazine, and moved to Olde Earth to be closer to the source of medical treatment.

The pieces he wrote around this time were well received; showing the idiosyncrasies and oddities of Earth’s various cultures seen through the eyes of a short, balding, beer-swilling offworlder.

Based on Olde Earth now, P. Hunley has wound up becoming something of a media darling, and can often be found on any number of programs on the Tri-V; doing everything from offering insights into other cultures, to calling on his vast knowledge base to skunk celebrities at triva games, to discussing favored beers or Grav cycles, to bowling.

One of P. Hunley’s passions is the history and operation of ancient motorcycles, as well as the more familiar, modern Grav cycles.

P. Hunley is a font of obscure and esoteric knowledge—an information broker—and, providing he has time in his schedule, may be able to help a group of characters with some vital bit of arcana.

P. Hunley has a robotic left arm, from just above the elbow; the result of an injury acquired covering the world of the mercenary for the magazine.

These days, P. Hunley Marsters can usually be found somewhere in the New York sprawl,

P. Hunley is a better writer than he is a photographer/cameraman, but if pressed, is able to take decent shots himself. He’d rather leave the imaging work to his long time collaborator, renowned photographer Luisa Weiss-Ramirez (Imaging-6).

In addition to standard Anglic, Martsers speaks Chinese, and as a result of growing up on Xerxes, Russian.

Feedback

We'd like to hear what you think of Freelance Traveller, both the magazine and the website!

We want to know what you think of the basic idea of Freelance Traveller as a magazine, not just a website; what you think of the articles we publish, and how we can make our magazine better and how we can make our website better.

We want to know what kind of articles you want to see, and what you *don't* want to see.

We want to know what you think of our look, and how we can make it better.

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

You can send e-mail to us at feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

You can use the feedback form on our website, at

<http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html>.

If you're a member of the SFRPG Forums, we monitor them, so you can post comments in the **Traveller Fanzines** section, at <http://www.sfrpg.org.uk/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36>. Please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

If you're a member of the Citizens of the Imperium forums, we monitor them as well, so you can post comments in the **Lone Star** section, at <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13>. As with the SFRPG forums, please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

Traveller on the Internet

Freelance Traveller sponsors a channel for Traveller fans on the Undernet IRC network, and RPGRealms sponsors one on the Otherworlders IRC network—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

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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. It's generally quiet in both channels—but you can change that, and make both channels “jumping” places to hang out!

Traveller on the Internet

Effective November 1, the Freelance Traveller Forums will be taken off-line, with the intent of returning, completely revamped, at the beginning of 2011. Although the revamped forums will have areas for general Traveller discussion, and for general off-topic discussion, the new forums will be more focused on the magazine (and website), with areas specifically for feedback and discussion of published articles, and for ‘slushing’ (and discussing) possible future submissions. We will be using new software to support them, so expect a different experience when we return.

The Freelance Traveller Forums

Because of the changes, we will not be able to reload the old system's message or user databases. However, we expect to be more feature-rich in the new version, and hope that you'll be willing to join us anew and make the Freelance Traveller reader community as vibrant and active as the Traveller community as a whole.

Thanks for your patience!

