FREELANCE TRAVELLER

Contents

From the Editor

As expected, we're a little late this month, but we do expect to be back on our normal schedule next month. Thank you for your patience and for bearing with us.

Sadly, this issue sees the last installment of Shannon Appelcline's *Fifth Imperium* column. Shannon's not leaving our pages, however; his series of fiction reviews, currently running under the subtitle "Off the Table" in *Freelance Traveller*, still has a good backlog for us to catch up on, and there have been indications that he intends to write more.

The Two-Space *Traveller* project is getting organized; we're inviting you to participate—please email the editor, and we'll get you on the list, and send you the current notes and comments. We'd like to get into high gear on this by the beginning of 2012, so join now!

As always, we're looking for submissions to the magazine, of all types. Please, send them in, and don't be discouraged if you don't hear from us, or don't see your article. We have several submissions that are good bases for articles, and we're looking to formulate our thoughts to be able to provide the authors with *good* guidance on improving their work. That sometimes takes some time. We *will* try to drop you a timely note saying we got it and that we're looking at it. If you have questions about submitting that aren't covered on the inside back cover, write to the editor and ask; we'll get back to you quickly on those.

As always, thanks for your continued support, both reading and writing!

Book 9: Robot

Reviewed by "kafka"

Book 9: Robot. Uri Kurlianchik.
Mongoose Publishing: http://www.mongoosepublishing.com
102pp, softcover
US$24.99/UK£16.99

Editor's Note: This book and the German supplement Roboter *from 13Mann are independent treatments, in English and German respectively, of the same topic. They are not in any sense translations of each other.*

This is one book that I was really looking forward to reading, as there was a great gap between the early GDW/DGP Robot books and the present day. Those early books were like a toolkit for building mechanical aids like semi-aware automatons or at the very best crude robots that one might encounter in staple traditional Science Fiction before the new wave. And, as Mongoose seems really up on making things in *Traveller* more current plus all suggestions dropped by various publishers that robots were going to be fully integrated into *Traveller* – I was naturally excited. However, my excitement was rather short-lived.

To this book's credit, it is an excellent construction kit for robots but reading it, one gets the impression that it is not *Traveller* or at least not the Original/Official *Traveller* Universe (OTU). True, I have in the past heralded many of Mongoose *Traveller*'s innovations but this just was wrong on many different levels. It read like a combination 2000AD comic, with sprinkles of Anime and Pixar's Robots thrown in. Perhaps, it is culture shock, as we have gone from a universe that had virtually no robots and very human-centric to robots of all descriptions racing all over the place without not so much a nod back to either Classic *Traveller* product or the history of the Grand Old Game.

The rules for construction are easy to follow and make construction less about spreadsheets and complex calculation than about letting one's imagination flow. That said they tended toward building clunky robots of which Marvin the Android comes to mind. In fact, I would say much of the robots were inspired by *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, although, nods in the form of quotes sprinkled throughout the text from different Science Fiction novels/films give weight to some of the descriptions – but not really. I can read the quote from Rachel in *Blade Runner* or get a Number Six (Cylon) vibe but nowhere in the rules provided for the creation of said robots; at least the original Classic *Traveller* had something called pseudo-biological robots…when I read these rules they could be the same as the rules for Androids but then again, I would understand Androids to have a different meaning based upon my reading of *Traveller*. Therefore, players hoping to build droids as well as drones will find a solid set of rules here. It was also interesting how the rules were able to integrate Education and Intelligence as different facets of the Personality Protocol or Command Algorithm. With slots and money being the prime requisites for one's robot character – a good compromise between those used to the Golden Age of SF and those who grew up in Star Wars' long shadow.

I absolutely loved the notion of the inhibitor – which hardwires Asimov's famous Laws of Robotics into the brains of robots but I found it not very well

described. For at the core of Asimov's work is the notion that robots may lack free will – they have all sorts of trouble with the laws which in turn would lead to expansion of role playing opportunities – highlighting some of these "conflicts" would be most welcome.

Next up we have a couple sections on careers (pursued by the organics) that may touch upon robots or be directly influenced by robots. These are some of the weakest chapters in the entire book. I am not sure how it could be made more exciting but it struck me as fundamentally not *Traveller*. Robot Activist or Robot Fugitive seems distinctly like 2000AD – not the OTU although it could be just the style in which they were written. The impact upon existing careers is minimal but it adds another layer of complexity onto Mongoose's *Traveller* Universe. I found this part very interesting along with the small section on role playing robots.

What follows is "The Science of Robots". It starts with a discussion about the differing levels of Drones those robots with command algorithms and Droids those with personality programs. A very interesting aspect of the rules, that has been long been a common Science Fiction trope is that some Drones can develop into fully self-aware and suddenly function like they have high personality programs. The segment produces rules for hacking, inhibiting, fixing, damaging, and protecting your robots including from the elements – which sort of has the function of under powering robots compared to previous versions of *Traveller*. In which, a robot may not suffer damage from being immersed in water – it would certainly sink but not blow its circuits. True, the rules do offer a work around but still they are rather crude.

Next is something of fan boy concession or at least some clarification – which is a section of micro robots. *Traveller*, unlike, much contemporary Science Fiction does not have magical nanotech rather it has a concept called micro-engineering. This treads the fine balance between this (having tiny machines that work) and nanotech. It does this quite well. Although, I can see how many a newbie expecting nanotech will be disappointed – as the author really

does not make clear that nanotech is verboten. And, why it should be stuck all by itself and not more fully integrated with the rest of the rules is a mystery.

After that there is section is a general History of Robots as it associates to common Science Fiction tropes. This had to be the strangest of chapter of the entire book. And, because I do like my fluff and chrome in sourcebooks this chapter was the most alarming and not consistent even with the rest of the book but also because it completely ignores any reference to any of the *Traveller* Universe or histories to this date. The history of robots is divided into five periods. These periods are: The Age of Service, Age of Slavery, Age of Equality, Age of Dominance, and the Post-Biological Age. For the most part these ages are self-explanatory. During The Age of Service robots are not self-aware, and have been built as tools. The Age of Slavery is when Robots are newly self-aware, and their rites become the hot topic with many a fight between both sides. Equality is when the prejudices of the past are now forgotten, and robots take their place besides all other free species. Dominance is where the robots have gained control over the other species and are now the authority. Post-Biological is just that, after the biological is gone.

Notwithstanding, this disclaimer: "None of these sections are specific to the Third Imperium or part of its canon." I could see how some of this could be forced into a larger narrative with things like Virus standing in for Post-Biological Age. It could be said that the antebellum or worlds like Vincennes slowly becoming an Age of Dominance. But, because these are not grounded in any living history either the OTU or even keeping it constant with the literary quotations sprinkled throughout the book – it leaves a funny feeling in one's gut. Sort of like when a small child tries to walk around in a grown-up's shoes and clothes; they might succeed for a while but ultimately they will look funny, stumble and fall. The OTU had not much to say on robots but what it did was certainly interesting. Maybe I am just reading too much into this but as a Traveller grognard, I was disappointed by the lack of OTU examples or add-ons.

To compound this error, the book ends with several Patrons write-ups which cannot possibly take place in the OTU. For those unfamiliar with *Traveller*, patrons are a persistent concept in *Traveller* in which each patron is basically an NPC with an adventure idea and several charts for what could happen in the adventure. The patrons on offer do offer reasonable job offers that nicely explain out some of the rules outlined but they are in no way grounding the rules into a history of single polity or setting. Which is good but given how I found the History of Robots section rather repugnant because it repudiates history of *Traveller*; therefore I found patrons are rather flat and are 2 dimensional.

Furthermore and not really a fair criticism is that there is no discussion of where a robot begins and a computer ends. For certainly in the Far Future, as *Traveller* postulates computers will certainly be HAL-like – are they robots capable of Artificial Intelligence. And, the whole concept of AI is dealt as a software issue which I am not entirely sure is the correct approach for a Hard Space Opera game like *Traveller*. It is not a fair criticism, as this debate raged on the Mongoose forums for a while and the book manuscript had already been submitted and vetted – so it was too late for its inclusion but it would have been nice.

So, this is a fine book but not the book that I had hoped for. It covers very well the mechanics of introducing robots into *Traveller* beyond just something that one would expect to find in Popular Mechanics (a la Original GDW *Robots* book) or Sears Catalogue (a la *101 Robots*). It does bring them along the path of what we think of robots in science fiction but does not go nearly far enough in creating an integrated whole with the rest of the Mongoose line. Although, I am given to understand later this year or in 2012, they do plan to release a sourcebook based on one of the 2000AD franchises, perhaps this book is meant as a warm-up exercise for that… And, we will have to wait for a Third Imperium sourcebook – to get the definitive integration of robots into the Third Imperium Campaign setting.

The artwork contained within is good but minimal. Sadly, again, I would have expected more given the quality of art in *Darrians* and Cybernetics – and a large corpus of work that could be found in Classic *Traveller* that includes robots. Notwithstanding, *Robot* is a first-rate add-on to the Mongoose *Traveller* line and well worth a purchase. It can be hoped an article or two in S&P might remedy some of the shortfalls of the product.

Doing It My Way

Options for the X-Boat Network

by Mel White

Although commonly described as a 'Pony Express' type system, with messages transported virtually non-stop by one-person Express Boats, the X-Boat Network actually employs a number of different formats throughout the Imperium. These formats (known as 'message protocols' in Scout parlance) are implemented on a case-by-case basis by the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS) based on criteria such as cost, regional significance, projected urgency of messages, and X-Boat availability in the applicable sub-sector or grouping of sub-sectors. In addition to the "Pony Express" model or Rush Protocol, the IISS typically uses the Scheduled Protocol, the Flash Protocol, the Package Protocol, the Independent Protocol, and the Isolation Protocol. Each of these is described below, along with a summary of the advantages and disadvantages for each, and some discussion of the types of situation in which each might be used. First, however, a discussion of generally applicable X-Boat procedures is necessary.

X-Boat Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

X-Boat SOPs are applicable to most of the message protocols employed by the Scout Service. Sequentially, the X-Boat network SOP is:

- Inbound X-boat arrives in-system.
- Inbound X-boat transmits messages to a "Message Center" (which may be aboard an X-Boat tender, on a remote station, or located at the system's primary starport).

- Message Center accepts the newly transmitted messages from the inbound X-boat, and combines those messages with other messages already in the outbound queue. If necessary, the messages are sorted by destination, and placed in outbound message queues for the next X-Boat that will get them closer to their final destination.
- Message Center transmits outbound message packet either direct to an outbound X-boat or to an X-boat tender servicing X-boats in the system.
- If necessary, the X-boat tender re-transmits outbound message packet to the outbound X-boat, either through radio, laser, or physical connection depending on the X-boat's location and status.
- Outbound X-boat receives message packet.
- Outbound X-boat commences Jump per appropriate message protocol.

While the sequence of activities in this SOP remains constant regardless of the message protocol in use, the timing of each action will vary.

X-Boat Message Protocols

The message protocols applicable for a given system will determine the specific timing of X-Boat procedures. The most common message protocols are:

Rush Protocol (also known as the '**Pony Express Protocol**'): Inbound X-Boat message is transmitted direct to outgoing X-Boat (possibly through a relay by message center or tender) and the outgoing X-Boat Jumps as soon as the message is complete.

Advantages: Minimal delay of the message in system if an X-Boat is available.

Disadvantages: If used as the standard protocol in a region, there is no guarantee an X-Boat will be available for onward movement; requires large number of X-Boats (and supporting tenders) to ensure constant flow of two-way message traffic.

Primary Use: Rush Protocol is most effective in areas of high X-Boat density, large numbers of available tenders, and a large volume of messages travelling both ways on the X-Boat Network. The Rush Protocol may also be used as the standard message protocol in areas of particularly critical fleet or Imperial government information that will need immediate passage up and down the chain of command if Naval fleet couriers are not available. A Rush Protocol may be assigned to a particular message by the sender (usually at a premium), perhaps as the result of a war declaration (or surrender), first contact, discovery of high tech level artifacts, assassinations, or other significant information.

Scheduled Protocol: Messages are delivered via regularly scheduled X-Boats conducting Jumps to specific destinations.

Advantages: Allows synchronization of reports and message distribution with X-Boat schedule; maximizes X-Boat efficiency with regards to amount of data carried per Jump.

Disadvantages: Messages may be delayed depending on frequency of scheduled X-Boat Jumps.

Primary Use: Scheduled Protocol is used in areas where there is a relatively low density of available X-Boats, such as frontier sub-sectors. Alternately, Scheduled Protocol will also be used in areas where constant reports are to be expected, such as a war zone or a system undergoing colonization. In those instances, regularly spaced reports provide sufficient information for administrative and logistical follow-up and support. (Critical operational messages and order will travel via Naval fleet courier).

Flash Protocol: Inbound X-Boat physically transfers its message data drive direct to an outgoing X-Boat. The transfer occurs as soon as the inbound X-Boat arrives and the outbound X-Boat Jumps as soon as the transfer is complete. The message data drive is approximately the size of a (contemporary) laptop computer. The outgoing X-Boat will carry multiple message data drives to destination (its own and those received from inbound X-Boat signaling Flash protocol messages). The message data drives are mounted in receptacles in the X-Boat's message computer. Upon arrival at a new system, the messages from both data drives are transmitted to the Message Center separately, and sorted as necessary by the Message Center. The message data drive continues to transfer to an outgoing X-boat until it reaches a designated destination where it will be delivered to a specified recipient.

Advantages: Preserves the integrity of the original data drive as no new data will be added in transit.

Disadvantages: Transition time in-system increased relative to an electronic-only transfer of data; extra-

vehicular activities are required to move the message data drive between X-Boats.

Primary Use: The Flash Protocol is used when there is an identified need to avoid risking the contamination of the message data drive with new information—in other words, the information from the data drive is transmitted, but no new information is ever loaded onto the data drive. Flash Protocol will also be used to avoid possible data loss or scrambling as a result of multiple transmissions and retransmissions. The final recipient receives the message data drive with the information intact as it was originally loaded at the origin Message Center.

Package Protocol (also known as **Courier Protocol** if the 'package' is a person requiring transport): Inbound x-boat transfers a physical package for further movement (may be combined with other protocols).

Advantages: Allows the speedy movement of small, critical items such as original documents, heirlooms, symbols of sovereignty, even individuals!

Disadvantages: Transition time in-system is increased, extra-vehicular activity required to transfer the item from X-Boat to X-Boat.

Primary Use: The Package Protocol is used when some physical object must reach a specified destination as quickly as possible. This protocol is also used when a messenger is carrying critical information that is so sensitive that it cannot be entrusted to digital or even written form, but is instead intended for oral transmission at the recipient's location.

Independent Protocol: This is an X-Boat management protocol that can be combined with any of the other in-system message handling protocols. With the Independent Protocol, X-Boats are not associated with a specific X-Boat tender. While usually an X-Boat Jumps from one system to another, and then back to the original system, with the Independent Protocol the X-Boat will be dispatched to whatever destination is required as soon as the X-Boat is available. Using this protocol, the X-Boat and X-Boat pilot are normally kept together.

Advantages: There is increased flexibility for the deployment and movement of X-Boat tenders, which no longer have to coordinate Jumps with integral X-Boats. In addition, increased familiarity of the pilot with a specific

X-Boat can potentially improve preventative maintenance practices and troubleshooting.

Disadvantages: There is increased difficulty in predicting the demand for X-Boat spare parts and consumables at each X-Boat tender because X-Boats will arrive at various points in their maintenance cycle. In addition, the X-Boat pilot faces long periods of time away from any 'home' system, requiring a certain mindset in order to avoid low morale.

Primary Use: This protocol is used in regions where the X-Boat network has a high number of contract pilots using surplus X-Boats on semi-detached duty (similar to Retired Scouts operating S-Type Scout Ships). It is also used where the available X-Boat tender hangar space is limited but the volume of message traffic is high.

Isolation Protocol: With the Isolation Protocol, a single X-boat carries a message for the entire trip with immediate refueling and re-provisioning en route. Pilots may or may not switch out depending on Service instructions.

Advantages: Minimizes risk of scrambling or garbling the message through re-transmission, as well as minimizing the risk of the message being intercepted while being retransmitted.

Disadvantages: Complete loss of the message is possible, if the X-Boat itself is lost through a mis-jump or accident. Places high stress on the X-Boat and pilot since maintenance and downtime may be delayed pending completion of the journey.

Primary Use: Most frequent use of this protocol is to transport special envoys and couriers who become, in effect, the 'message' in transit. This is similar to the Package/Courier Protocol except the message or item is so important that even the movement between X-Boats cannot be risked. This protocol will be used in sub-sectors with large numbers of tenders or tender-like support, but low numbers of X-Boats. This protocol is also used in systems that serve only as refueling and provisioning stops for the X-Boat—typically uninhabited systems that generate few messages of their own.

Making and Breaking the Protocols.

The Scout Service establishes the standard Message Protocol for use in a sub-sector; typically, a regional X-Boat network manager (a civilian Scout Service em-

ployee, often a retired Scout or naval officer) responsible for these sorts of decisions is located at a Class A or B starport on the X-Boat route within the subsector. In any given system, a local manager (again, typically a Scout Service civilian) is charged with implementing the protocols and procedures laid out by the regional manager.

X-Boats deviate from the default protocol under two conditions. In the first condition, the origin Message Center, based on instructions from local managers, identifies the outgoing message packet as requiring a protocol different from the default protocol in use in the sector. This determination is often made in conjunction with local political officials or at the behest of the nobility. In that case, the X-Boat carrying the message packet transmits a special code when it arrives at its destination system. The code may indicate the requirement for a Flash Protocol, Rush Protocol, or other. The receiving Message Center and the supporting X-Boat tender at the destination system respond to the special code by taking whatever actions are necessary to fulfill the required protocol. For example, if an arriving X-Boat is transmitting the code for the Rush Protocol, then the servicing X-Boat tender will immediately prepare a second X-Boat to receive the message and Jump as soon as it is ready. This only works, of course, if there are X-Boats that can quickly be made ready to Jump.

In the second condition, deviation from the standard message protocol occurs when the potential recipient of an expected message informs all Message Centers 'upstream' (i.e. between the recipient and the expected source of the message) that messages from the source must be handled with a specific protocol—typically the Rush Protocol. This may require the allocation of additional assets (X-Boats and tenders) to ensure an X-Boat is available for any potential message. Again, this is usually done in response to local political requirements as determined by planetary, system, and subsector-level Imperial bureaucracy or by the nobility.

Protocol Priorities

In some circumstances, Scout Service administrators need to adjudicate the priorities between messages indicating different protocols. In those instances, the priorities, lowest to highest, are (1) *Scheduled*; (2) *Rush*; (3) *Flash* or *Package*/*Courier*; (4) *Isolation* or *Independent*

For example, if a region defaults to *Rush* protocol rather than *Scheduled* protocol, a message with *Scheduled* priority headers would be handled as *Rush*, the local default, but a message with *Flash* priority would override the *Rush* protocol and be handled as *Flash*. In the event that other messages of lower priorities are waiting for service to the same destination, they will be prepared for immediate transmission and will "piggyback" on the higher-priority message.

Package, *Courier*, and *Independent* can be seen as modifiers to other protocols and in general would be used only for high-priority messages (or items) operating in accord with the similarly-handled protocol.

Adventure Hooks

Adventures involving the X-Boat network can use the idea that politicians, businesspeople, criminals, or other unsavory types might want to intercept and either manipulate or delay the information being transmitted.

Who's Tampering With The Mail? An X-Boat manager of the PCs' acquaintance has circumstantial evidence that X-Boat messages are being intercepted by persons unknown—but this is supposed to be a physical impossibility because of the tightbeam and meson communicators used by the system. The PCs' friend suspects an inside job, and hires the PCs to go undercover to identify the infiltrator, who may be (1) an X-Boat pilot with expensive tastes who is copying sensitive business information from other systems and transferring it to a corrupt executive for a subsector-wide corporation; (2) a bored Message Center operator with fast fingers, high Computer skill, and a taste for gambling who owes a bundle to a planetside bookie, paying off his debt by delaying messages about outsystem sporting events to everyone but the bookie so she can place last-minute bets that offset her payouts; or (3) the captain of an X-Boat tender with family ties to a rebellious noble house in a nearby system who is using his influence to insert rebel propaganda in messages destined for the system.

Can You Tamper With The Mail For Me? The PCs are approached by a smarmy-seeming nobleman who is willing to pay them to infiltrate the X-Boat network somehow and insert a fake message into the message packet for a nearby high population world before a scheduled mes-

sage from "upstream" arrives. The fake message misrepresents agricultural or resource extraction production information so that the nobleman can get an advantage in an interstellar commodities market on the destination world.

The Mail Must Not Go Through! The PCs are hired to intercept a package being transported on the X-Boat network. IISS officials have implemented the use of the Package Protocol for the shipment. The patron is aware of the origin and destination system, and the general timeline for when the package will depart the origin. The PCs are either located at a system on the X-Boat network route, or have a limited amount of time to get into position to intercept the package. The package consists of 1) an alien artifact discovered at an Imperial archeological site; 2) powerful anagathics destined for influential and wealthy users; 3) experimental pharmaceuticals intended as a vaccine, destined for a planet suffering from a horrific plague; 4) a sports trophy for an annual multi-system competition, now en-route from last year's winner to the site of this year's finale.

The Mail Must Go Through! The PCs have been contracted the complete the final, one-Jump leg of a lengthy message trail. The PCs either have their own ship or are part of a crew conducting this mission. At the link-up point with the X-Boat, the X-Boat is uncommunicative. The pilot, having operated under the Isolation Protocol (without substitution) fails to transmit the message for final delivery. The pilot is 1) physically ill as a result of defective food supplements in the last legs of the journey; 2) mentally ill due to long periods alone and now seeks only to protect the message and his boat; 3) deceased—with the X-Boat now controlled by an increasingly aware automatic pilot that will defend the X-Boat from intruders using attitude control thrusters, control of lighting, vents, hatches and airlocks, and electronic jamming or deception while awaiting recovery from a legitimate X-Boat tender. Per normal procedures, the X-Boat tender can take up to three days to reach the X-Boat. The PCs are expected at the final destination within one week (give or take the normal margin of error in a jump), and will face financial penalties for each day of delay.

What's The Mail Doing HERE? As a variation of the previous scenario, the PCs could encounter a derelict X-Boat in a system off the X-Boat network in similar circumstances. In this case, the X-Boat suffered a Jump malfunction due to insufficient maintenance. The pilot is likely dead and the ship is now controlled by the automatic pilot.

When It Absolutely Positively Has To Get There (For one or two PCs; recommended attributes include Pilot, and either Noble or Merchant backgrounds.) A local noble has an urgent need to get to the sub-sector capital within 30 days. The sub-sector capital is three legs away via the X-Boat network (requiring two link-ups with X-Boat tenders), but five legs away via standard passenger liners. The noble has come to doubt the loyalties of his proxy on the sub-sector council, and has learned that the proxy will vote inappropriately on an upcoming council decision affecting Imperial subsidies for the noble's planet. Knowing the PC pilot to be reliable, he will arrange the loan of an X-Boat for the journey, piloted by the PC. Alternately, the noble will entrust a second PC (preferably a related noble or merchant associate) to travel to the sub-sector capital and replace the proxy for the vote. A condition of the loan is that the X-Boat carry out normal messenger duties—which are highly automated but do require monitoring. The mission will involve any or all of 1) successful piloting, navigation, transition and messenger functions en route; 2) attempted interception of the noble while in transit by opposing political forces; 3) confrontation with the proxy and his new cohorts; 4) the actual vote on the subsidies—which may require a persuasive argument in order to sway the rest of the council towards the noble's point of view.

Target: The Post Office The PCs are recruited by a nascent pirate organization seeking to takeover an X-Boat tender in the current or a nearby system. The pirates seek individuals with Scout Service experience, skills in physical ship deception and electronic spoofing, plus combat skills for boarding actions. The general plan is to approach the tender in an S-type Scout, X-Boat, or disguised system boat that has been modified to hold a boarding team. Alternately, the PCs may be approached by Imperial Intelligence operatives and recruited to infiltrate the pirate group planning an operation of this kind.

Myra Wall

profiled by Sam Swindell

Army LtCol Myra Wall 4C64B7 Age 30 Cr15,000
Admin-2, Rifle-2, Leader-1, Air/Raft-1, SMG-1, Vacc-0
MCUF×2
153 cm, cropped brown hair, olive complexion.
Homeworld : Efate
Combat Armor (chameleon),
Gauss Carbine, sling
"Mini" SMG (SMG-1, ex. close, SMG+1), sling
Combat Harness ("LCE" or "Webbing") (4kg)
3 Gauss Mags or 4 SMG mags (*not both*)
Multitool, in pouch w/10m fine "piano" wire, 10m
of .5mm synthetic cord
Medkit, individual
    2 doses "strong" Combat, 4 Medical Slow, 1 liter canteen with sterilizing filter
Rucksack (8 kg)
    1 set combat utilities, 2 sets underwear, 4 pair socks
    Short Range Communicator (TL13), extra 1 liter canteens (2), 2 days dehydrated rations, 1 day field rations
    Combat computer, Long Range Communicator
    Cable/transformer set to recharge communicators, gauss mags from common power sources
    240 gauss needles, IR goggles, 6 cold lights
Duffle bag
    3 sets combat utilities, 8 sets underwear, 8 pair socks
    2 sets air tanks
    Holocrystals and reader:
        General purpose and military reference library set
        Trashy romance "chick flick" set, ~10 years old.
    A few (very few) civilian clothes, well-made, including "the little black dress"
Bandoleers, 1 with 12 gauss mags, 1 with 12 SMG mags
Picture of a young scout and a young CPT Wall, laminated, with bludgeon marks in lamination
Body pistol with 2 HEAP mags

Raised on Louzy, Wall moved to Efate at age 13, and joined their Army at 18. She is a petite woman, not unattractive, but as an officer cultivated an "ice queen" demeanor, which made her effective in the high-testosterone society of the Efatian army. She is well-read on military doctrine and procedures, but knows her limitations and will always look for a good staff officer or three to do analysis. She is a logistician, focusing on transport. During the insurgency on Efate, however, transport involved a good deal of combat.

She is good with a Gauss carbine, but prefers a mini-SMG in rear areas. If in a situation where neither is permitted, she will carry her body pistol somewhere concealed, accessible, and secure, and let others do the talking, using steely silence, noncommittal looks, and terse questions to mask the fact that she may not get all the nuances. She is not above using a little feminine charm *in extremis*, but she knows this has to be "away from the flagpole," or it'll blow her ice queen cover. She got the nickname, part derogatory, part grudgingly admiring, "The Wall" when it was determined that theory and subtlety—and whining, badgering, flirtation, and enemy fire—often had the same effect when plied on her as they would have on a wall…

It is rumored that Wall was captured by Ine Givar when a convoy was ambushed and overrun, back when she was a lieutenant. She allegedly used her gender to some advantage before her one guard was killed in her escape. Her gunny, GSgt Imbala, mumbled something about it while wounded and heavily drugged, during a rescue that she led. Subsequently, he would flatly or angrily deny any knowledge of the rumor. Wall interceded when later, Sergeant Major Imbala bludgeoned into unconsciousness a young trooper who mentioned the incident, inadvertently within earshot. The trooper was apparently connected, and Imbala was going to be court martialed. Inexplicably, Imbala was transferred to the Scouts the night before his court, the charges against him dropped, and the trooper was sent on a diplomatic mission to Regina. Imbala was killed three years later on a scout mission, and the trooper is rumored to have asked a noble relative to retaliate against either Imbala or Wall. One version of the story has the noble relative—occasionally said to be as high as a subsector Duke—making a bland (possibly insincere) refusal on grounds of propriety; another has him smashing a chair and threatening to finish what Imbala started.

Wall will avoid staff positions for command. She will seek to stay close to a vehicle, if possible, as she knows her physical limitations well. Indeed, she will stay seated if she possibly can, even bringing her driver well up into danger's way before dismounting. Her drivers tend to either become very devoted, or quickly transfer. She will keep her rucksack in the vehicle unless taking drugs; the latter will only occur when the incoming gets hot. Wall has cashed out, and is looking to put together a small mercenary outfit. She has become a habitué at a bar known for merc types, and is stretching her money as much as possible, waiting for an opportunity.

JTAS Online

reviewed by Ewan Quibell

Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society. Steve Jackson Games.
Steve Jackson Games http://jtas.sjgames.com
$20/two years; includes access to full archive

When Steve Jackson Games took on a *Traveller* license and started to produce and release *GURPS Traveller* books it also started to publish *Traveller* articles in its in house magazine, *Pyramid*. However they took this one stage further and revived the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* magazine, but this time it did it on line.

1st February 2000 saw the premier issue released, and this is still available as a sample issue at http://jtas.sjgames.com/archives/2000/02.01.html

It has been over 10 years since that first issue and the zine is still going. It started with weekly releases, but after about a year and a half went fortnightly. Its standard format is three articles and an editorial by Loren, or the editor at the time, but this has changed recently to two articles and an editorial as Loren recovers. Not only do you receive new articles every two weeks you also gain access to the archive since the first issues, and so far there are over 1,350 separate articles.

The content of the webzine cover that of the original *JTAS* and a little more falling into the following categories; Amber Zone, Bestiary, Casual Encounter, Contact, Ship's Locker, Deck Plans and Maps, Variant, From the Editor, Campaign Setting, Short Adventure, Designer's Notes, and Reviews. And it is predominantly based in *GURPS Traveller*, however there are significant numbers of articles that also provide additional stats for Classic *Traveller* and *MegaTraveller* as well.

Don't let the *GURPS Traveller* focus distract you too much; as it's *Traveller* it's very easy to convert between systems, and the good people of BITS have provided quick and easy references to do just that with the BITS' Task System and the BITS' Non Player Characters Attributes and Skills Table.

The quality of the vast majority of the articles is good to excellent including ones such as "Primitive, But Not Stupid" by Paul Drye, that explains that even if a culture is low tech doesn't mean its population lack intelligence; "The Rule of Man" by Kurt Brown and James Maliszewski, setting a framework to adventure in the second Imperium; and "Things Grandfather Never Told You" by Joe Webb, a variant on the history of the ancients. There are also a host of NPCs with their motivations for your to use/borrow/steal for your own games, hundreds of adventures, campaign settings, and adventure seeds to use or spark your imagination, and equipment and deckplans for you to use and adapt. Loren provides insights into roleplaying, refereeing, GDW and life in general, while reviewers (myself included) provide their opinion of various *Traveller*-related products. There is just such a wealth of varied and interesting material that any *Traveller* referee can use to enhance their games.

Check out the sample issues and see what you think; in addition to the one mentioned earlier, there's http://jtas.sjgames.com/archives/2000/02.08.html.

Not only can you receive great content, you can create it as well. Loren takes articles from all *Traveller* versions, not just *GURPS*. Timothy Collinson recently submitted a Mongoose *Traveller* Gravhome. Not only might you get published but you'll also get paid for it, in cash or product.

Most people want to know if the product they are thinking of buying is worth their money. They want to know its value. $20 provides you with more quality *Traveller* content than you will be able to purchase anywhere else for the money. Yes, it's a subscription and you don't get a file or a book, but you do get two years to go through the back catalogue, pick the bits that give you inspiration and use them to enhance your games, and on top of that you get more content every two weeks. To me, a subscription to *JTAS* is superb value, and I have no problems about recommending it to any *Traveller* referee.

Medievalist Society

by Mike Cross

This article was originally posted to the TerraSol Games blog at http://terrasolgames.com on June 24, 2011 and is reprinted in Freelance Traveller with the author's permission.

In the 30th century human culture is more productive and far richer than at any point in its history, yet at the same time has higher unemployment than at any other time in history. To avoid the breakdown of society social safety nets are also the most generous they've ever been in human history. Most people live at least a lower middle class lifestyle unless there are some extenuating circumstances. With the average unemployment rate at 30% in most of the Stellar Nations people have to find something to do with their time. One of the things that have proved popular is lifestyle groups.

Lifestyle groups take any number of forms, from Tango dancing clubs to amateur geology. But perhaps the ones that draw the most attention in the Tri-dees are the so-called simulationist groups. Modern technology allows the recreation of any number of environments to simulate everything from historical eras to literature settings. These groups can be all consuming with individuals living full time within the simulation. Let's look at one such group.

The Medievalist Society is a lifestyle/simulationist group that according to their mission statement provides members with the opportunity to study and experience Earth's Medieval Northern European culture. In truth the Society more accurately provides members the opportunity for live action role-playing.

The Society has several venues scattered across Terra/Sol: One where Boulder Colorado exists on Earth, another close to Middleborough in England and one just outside of GrossBerlin. Members have access to any of these venues but must create a "character" an alternate personality for each. Membership requires dues based on the level of public subsidies that an individual receives up to a specified maximum level (currently 24,000Cr.). Additional in-game accouterments can be purchased—things like titles, specific weapons and armor, businesses and residences. It's estimated that as much as a quarter of the Society's income is derived from these sales.

Let's take a look at the Colorado-based Pax Britannia setting. Obviously the society has already got their periods mixed but apparently the boys in marketing decided the name sounded cool and it has indeed become quite popular. The setup is on a 7,225 square kilometer piece of land in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Pax Britannia represents a medieval Duchy with a number of small towns, villages, castles and fiefs. Position within Pax Britannia can be achieved by involvement in the setting itself or to the level of Knighthood via those in-game accouterment purchases. Part of the land is set aside as a Viking Kingdom which within the parameters of the setting (or as mentioned previously more aptly titled live action role-playing game) wars with Pax Britannia. Nearly 300,000 people participate at any one time in this setting.

How does this affect my game?

Well as usual its background, but very usable background. Perhaps the guy with the key piece of information in the investigation you're conducting is a resident and won't talk to anyone out of character. Or maybe the retired scientist who discovered the formula you need is now a resident (playing an Alchemist persona, of course).

Another avenue would be a murder investigation within the setting. Perhaps you're called in to determine if a battle accident was indeed an accident or murder. You must go undercover within the setting. Another cool idea (I've been watching too much *Criminal Minds*, I guess) is a serial killer loose within the setting with the players having to track him down.

Those are just a few ways you can use this setting to spice up a game and make it feel deeper to your players. Enjoy!

Norge GLP-15

designed by Scott Diamond

A spiritual descendant of the LeMat pistol of the Terran 19th Century, this finely crafted firearm is designed for close combat for professionals in law enforcement, corporate security, and the military. The concept is simple: the GLP-15 has two weapons systems in one.

The primary weapon is the laser pistol built to use either the standard laser carbine power pack or the rapid-cycling battery pack (inserted in the user-configurable grip) which provides 15 shots. One shot is fired per pull of the trigger. This is usually sufficient for most defensive purposes but if something with more power is needed then the second system is where this weapon excels as a premier sidearm: the 30mm grenade launcher.

The 30mm grenade is loaded into the upper barrel by releasing the hinged breach from the rear of the weapon's receiver, swinging it up towards the front using the release button on the back of the grenade breach cover. The grenade is dropped into the breach and the weapon is closed. This reloading takes one combat round. The grenade can then be fired by merely using the thumb to depress a lever on the left side of the receiver. The backstrap-type safety means the grenade launcher cannot be engaged while the weapon is in the holster or if dropped, but only if held securely by the operator.

The 30mm grenade has an maximum range of up to 75m, though it is most effective at 50m or less. The HEAP and flechette versions are available, as is a gas round which makes it an ideal choice for law enforcement personnel.

Required DEX	DM	Advantageous DEX	DM
8	-2	11 (B)	+1

Physical Data		
Item	**Mass**	**Cost**
Pistol (Unloaded)	700g	Cr1,500
Laser Magazine	200g	Cr300
HEAP Magazine		Cr75
Flechette Magazine		Cr50
30mm Grenade	(each) 80g	Varies depending on load
Length	250mm	

Combat Modifiers for Armor						
	None/Jack	**Mesh**	**Cloth**	**Ablat**	**Reflec**	**Combat**
Laser	+2	+1	+1	-6	-9	-7
HEAP	+2	+2	+2	+3		-1
Flechette	+5	+2	+2	+3		-5

Combat Modifiers for Range						
	Close	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**	**Very Long**	**Damage**
Laser	+1	+2	+1	0	N/A	3d6
HEAP	+2	+2	+1	0	N/A	5d6
Flechette	+4	+4	+2	-1	N/A	3d6

The Death of Wisdom

reviewed by Shannon Appelcline

The Death of Wisdom. Paul Brunette.
Original Publication: 1995
Current Availability: eBook

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared on RPG.Net in September of 2009, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

I think that one of the best ways to prepare yourself to run a game is to immerse yourself in its fiction, and thus get a real sense of its milieu. Thus, this series of reviews, which looks at some of the fiction that influenced Traveller, was influenced by Traveller, or is actually set in the Traveller universe.

It was in 1995—almost 20 years since the release of Traveller and well after the first appearance of gaming fiction in the mid-1980s—that GDW finally decided to enter the field with its own stories about the *Traveller* universe.

This ninth review covers *The Death of Wisdom*, a *Traveller: The New Era* novel by Paul Brunette, and the first of a trilogy.

About the Story

The Death of Wisdom starts off aboard the ship of Coeur d'Espirit, in the middle of a desperate battle during the *MegaTraveller* Rebellion. Perhaps the introduction is meant to bridge the timespan between the Rebellion and The New Era in the *Traveller* universe; whatever the case, d'Espirit soon finds herself misjumped to far between the stars and thus forced to take a one-way low-berth trip to the New Era.

The actual story of *The Death of Wisdom* is about d'Espirit (or "Red Sun", to use her New Era callsign) returning to the stars aboard a merchant trader newly built by the Reformation Coalition. As she jumps from world to world, we learn a bit about the New Era.

However, it's on the planet of Ra that everything truly changes. That's where Red Sun discovers a plague that's annihilating the Hivers of the area. Her ship may be the only hope for the survival of the species within the Coalition ...

Genre & Style

Unlike any of the earlier *Traveller*-related books that I've reviewed, *The Death of Wisdom* falls very squarely into the category of "gaming fiction". By this I mean not fiction set in the world of an RPG (for which *Force of Destiny* would have met that criteria), but instead fiction that could have been drawn straight from a roleplaying game.

I'm not convinced it's a particularly appealing genre. Among other things, it tends to have two pretty notable flaws. First of all, it tends to be pretty rambling, with the group of adventurers randomly bouncing from one location to another rather than a solid plot driving the book. Second, characters tend to be pretty cardboard.

The Death of Wisdom definitely matches up with these expectations. The book is a travelogue, and though there is a tiny bit of differentiation between characters, they're still quite shallow, and any personality they might have isn't taken advantage of. Though I don't see it as often in gaming fiction, this book had one other weakness: an insistence on using in-game jargon, a topic I'll return to.

Despite this weak start, *The Death of Wisdom* is still a fair book. Brunette's plotting is as strong as the structure allows and if his writing doesn't shine, it doesn't detract either. Comparing it to something like the first two Swycaffer books, I find it better polished, but less compelling.

Overall, I feel some ambivalence toward this book. I doubt I'll ever read it again, but other than the book being a bit longer (and/or slower) than the story supported, I enjoyed reading most of it. I've thus given *The Death of Wisdom* an ambivalent "3" out of "5" for both Style and Substance, with Substance edging out Style by just a bit.

Applicability to Mongoose Traveller

The Death of Wisdom was arguably the first-ever *Traveller* novel. In fact, it offers a pretty good argument because the book says *Traveller: The New Era* right on the cover (and the spine and the back cover and the second page and the third page and the fourth page ...). Unlike *Not in Our Stars*, it's set square in the *Traveller* universe. Unlike *Force of Destiny* it was published shortly after it was written, and it was set in an area ac-

Critics' Corner

tively undergoing development from GDW. Of course some folks might not really consider "The New Era" *Traveller* ... but the Classic *Traveller* era still hasn't attracted much writing today, let alone back in 1995.

I think *The Death of Wisdom* does quite a good job of portraying the New Era world of the Reformation Coalition. It's perhaps not as desperate as the RPG made things out, but you get a good feel for a group rebuilding the universe and the troubles that they face. This novel made me much more interested in gaming in The New Era universe than the RPG ever did.

So how does that translate to Mongoose Traveller players?

I think *The Death of Wisdom* is just about as useful as anything else I've reviewed for giving a feeling for the *Traveller* setting. It's pretty enmeshed in the society and technology of the *Traveller* RPG. If anything, it's a little too enmeshed, as Brunette's decision to throw around terms like "TL" (Tech Level) and "Law Level" as in-world concepts set my teeth on edge. Even beyond that we get a good feeling for the different sorts of ships, for the vastness of space, and for the way the one interacts with the other (though I still don't know how Red Sun's merchant ship manages a few jumps to empty space en route to other locations; I guess it must have been fitted out with extra fuel space to allow two jumps).

The Hivers are the *Traveller* element which shines the best in *The Death of Wisdom*. You get quite a good impression of their nature—of their twinned cowardice and need to control. Even moreso, you really understand how people can be suspicious of them. There's some dialogue near the end of the book that suggests that the whole Reformation Coalition might be a "manipulation" intended to drive humanity to its death against the Vampire Fleets. Though I have more faith in the good will of the Hivers than that, it makes one wonder what their purpose is, and makes it easy to understand why they could be distrusted.

Generally, I think a Mongoose GM would get something out of *The Death of Wisdom*. However, it's not a good enough book to be worth a whole lot of effort to find ... unless you're particularly wanting to read about the hivers.

Conclusion

The Death of Wisdom—the first novel to actually carry the *Traveller* logo—is an adequate book that offers an interesting look at both the New Era and the Hivers race.

The *Traveller: The New Era* Trilogy
1. The Death of Wisdom
2. To Dream of Chaos
3. The Backwards Mask

Editor's Note: The Backwards Mask may be available in print. The others do not seem to be in current print, but are available both in Amazon's Kindle store and in PDF from DriveThruRPG.

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

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

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

The Freelance Traveller Forums

We're continuing to have problems with connectivity at the intended server site, but we think we have almost everything we need on the software side to get the Forums back up and running. We hope to have something set up for limited testing soon, and are seeking volunteers for testing and discussion of various features. Interested people should contact us at *tech@freelancetraveller.com*. We apologize for the continued delay in restoring this service.

Heiress

By Ewan Quibell

This adventure was written as a side plot for the Sydymic Outworlds cluster, and is possibly best played as an aside to the main campaign or adventure as either a sub plot or a completely unrelated event. Many things go on in chartered space that happen even if the players are concentrating on their current escapade, and can interrupt just when the PCs don't need them to, or just when they need them the most.

The choice is of course up to the individual Referee, but having a couple of different possibly unrelated plots happening in a campaign at the same time can make the game more realistic. In real life unrelated events happen all the time, why not in your *Traveller* universe?

Location

Brightlett, an Imperial system in the Sydymic Outworlds cluster on the border of the Imperium, although this adventure can be easily adapted to fit into any frontier area of the Imperium or just about anywhere else.

Situation

The players are in Startown on Brightlett, waiting for whatever reason. They may be waiting for cargo, life-support, a new Patron, a contact in the current adventure, or the results of an analysis, a computer hack or just about anything. They have enjoyed a meal in a restaurant where the owner has put on some live entertainment. This consisted of a nondescript human female of mixed origins who has been singing old romantic ballads and not doing too bad a job of it either. One of the songs, probably a favorite of the singer, was delivered so well that all the PCs stopped eating to listen. The singer finished her set and the PC set about finishing their meal. Just as the players are about to ask for the bill the singer comes up and enquires if the players are the crew of an Imperial ship. If they reply in the affirmative she asks them if they would send an Xboat message for her next time they are on a route. In the Sydymic Outworlds cluster that means Shurril Gami. This type of small private message business is not unusual and is usually unremarkable. If the players agree then she hands them a data packet addressed to Eliay and an address on Annapabar (Ley/Diamond Prince 1936), and Cr800. She smiles and says "This should be more than enough to cover the cost and any that is left is yours of course. Dinner is on me," she indicates the meal that the PCs have just had and then leaves. If asked her name she just says "Jane." The data packet is encrypted although not to such a high level that the players can't break it in not too long a time. The data is a holo of the woman who gave the players the data packet that just records her saying "Mother, Father, I'm fine and in good health. I'm doing what I am happy doing. All my love. Goodbye." Nothing else is on the data packet and there is nothing hidden in the holo image even if the players persist in looking.

Sending the message from Shurril Gami will cost Cr620. The clerk at the desk will tell them that it will take around 21 weeks to reach Annapabar if they so enquire.

What the players don't know is that Lady Cellinna Annar Llevoh is the third child of Baron Sir Eliay Huthrn Llevoh and Baroness Ishirri Gruurii Annar, and as such stood little chance of inheriting the Barony and small chance of marrying well. Not wanting to take the normal career path for noble children, joining the Navy, she decided to go against her parents' wishes and pursue a career in entertainment. She knew she didn't have an empire-inspiring voice but she knew she would be able to make a living. On her way to the Naval Academy in Ley Sector she decided to change routes and ended up heading for the border.

Thinking that her parents may make a small effort to find her she decided to ask someone else to send the Xmail informing her parents that she was well and then to head out of the Imperium using what portable wealth she has and her voice to pay her way. Lady Cellinna has so far managed to find singing jobs that have paid for her to get to Brightlett, and has just signed up on a liner for a working passage to Irdashdis. She leaves two hours after she gives the players the message.

Active Measures

Unknown to her, her family have been involved in a grav vehicle accident that has left her father in a coma, and killed her mother and her two brothers. The accident was caused by a drunken driver taking his speeder off auto-pilot because he thought it was flying too quickly. As the auto-pilot came off the drunk accelerated and crashed into the Baron's limousine, causing it to plummet 200 meters to the ground.

Resolution

The Imperial government have been looking for Lady Cellinna ever since the accident and have exhausted their search on the direct route to the Navy Academy. Once the Xboat message reaches the residence a fast courier will be dispatched to Shurril Gami (or wherever the players sent the Xboat message from) and will arrive 28 weeks after the message left. Finding out who the person who sent the message will be no problem for Sir John Atkins, who has been tasked with finding Lady Cellinna, as he will use the Xboat and SPA recorded data and their listed flight plans to track the PCs.

Sir John will eventually catch up to the PCs and ask about Lady Cellinna. He is likely to be cautious about revealing information at first until he has persuaded himself that the PCs can be trusted. If he does so he will inform them that the woman who asked them to deliver the message is the heir apparent to the Barony of Baakh, a not insignificant world in Outreaumer subsector of Ley.

While Sir John will be looking for the future Baroness, the players have a chance to find her as well. While Sir John has the advantage of being able to have the government assist him, it is likely that the players will be able to obtain information from those areas that dislike government involvement, and Lady Cellinna is likely to be trying to dodge government attention because she is a runaway.

Lady Cellinna can be found on Irdashdis under the name of Susan Willkins where she has found some steady work around the capital and startown in some up and coming night spots. She found that an Imperial Client state suited her needs quite well as it's next to the Imperium but there would be no one who knew her personally, and with a quick change of styling it would be likely that people would think that she had a resemblance to Lady Cellinna as opposed to actually being her.

It is likely that Lady Cellinna will look favorably on the PCs if they inform her of the news although she may not believe it at first, and could possibly charter their ship to get her to Annapabar before anything further happens to her father. She will insist on leaving messages for Sir John on the way home, so if he is able to catch up he may take her home quicker.

If the players are not interested in looking, they will eventually receive an Xmail from Sir John thanking them for their information that helped him locate Lady Cellinna.

In A Store Near You

Portable Chemical Detector, TL9-TL11

by Sam Swindell

TL9 Chemical Detector, Handheld, Laser-based 1.0kg, Cr500, 100m range

This unit has the ability to classify an essentially limitless number of molecules of chemical elements and compounds, but must be programmed from a hand computer to scan for up to 50, based on the data on their molecular vibration frequency. The unit will list these on its screen. The data may be later transferred to another computer for detailed analysis.

This is a strictly line-of-sight affair, with an inertial positioning system, and can be set for the approximate range of detection; alternatively, it can function at a range from the solid object lased. This allows the operator to point it at a readily observed reference point, and designate the range within which detection should be registered. It can be mounted coaxially on any weapon with an electronic sight, with a remote switch that can be used to trigger operation; the last reading remains on the screen.

The unit can just be operated without any range

setting, but it will report only what chemicals (within its detection set) have been found, without indicating distance or direction from the detector.

TL11 Chemical Detector, Handheld, Laser-based 0.3kg, Cr300, 300m range

As with the TL 9 unit, but the unit can be used to feed data in real-time into analysis computers, HUDs for vehicles, battle dress, or those (usually optional) units in combat armor. It may be set to scan for up to 1000 compounds, but must be told to prioritize by range, concentration, or other criteria (such as toxicity, or uses). Can be mounted and bore-sighted in 2 combat rounds using standard mounting attachments to any TL9-11 long arm using electronic sights. This unit has a more sophisticated inertial positioning system, or it can be slaved to receivers/computers for other position reference systems (e.g., a satellite-based system) using the same data link as to provide its findings to other computers or displays in real-time.

The unit has different modes which will scan for certain compounds, including Ground Combat, Counterinsurgency, Shipboard Combat, Hunting, Mine Safety, Medical Safety, Chemical Warfare, Biological Warfare, Engineering, Electronics, and Mechanical, among many others. These modes will change not only the compounds scanned for, but the weights afforded in prioritization. The display will also give interpretations, that may vary by mode; methane in Counterinsurgency mode, for instance, is more likely to be interpreted as indicating a booby trap, than in Chemical Warfare or Engineering. The modes can also be tweaked, with a hand computer, by TL; those ground combat facing a TL 9 enemy would give different weights and interpretations than that facing a TL 11 enemy. Note that the results must be scrolled through. Thus a unit in Ground Combat mode might pick up the same methane that one in Counterinsurgency Mode would, but prioritize it far lower (number 217 instead of number 3), and give other interpretations. Using a Hand Computer, and multiple measurements, a 3D model can be constructed in 10 combat rounds to better predict the type and location of the source. The modes use combinations of chemicals to cross-reference readings and provide more accurate interpretations. Access to data up to TL15 can be used to program the unit to make predictions based on chemical employmen patterns up to TL15.

A Sampling mode exists, which can remotely lase a creature or object, and store the chemical signature. The Tracking mode can then be used to track the organism or object closely if out of direct sight. For organisms, the closer in time between the Sampling and Tracking, the better the tracking, based on environmental and biological changes. ["O.K. I am trying to break contact. I run around the corner and attempt to break wind. Do I see any cheap perfume in any shop windows?"]

Critics' Corner   Off the Table

The Universal Prey

reviewed by Shannon Appelcline

The Universal Prey. Jefferson P. Swycaffer
Original Publication: 1985
Current Availability: Print (used)

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared on RPG.Net in September of 2009, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Author's Note: I think that one of the best ways to prepare yourself to run a game is to immerse yourself in its fiction, and thus get a real sense of its milieu. Thus, this series of reviews, which looks at some of the fiction that influenced Traveller, was influenced by Traveller, or is actually set in the Traveller universe.

Among the *Traveller*-influenced books were seven by Jefferson P. Swycaffer that were published in the 1980s. Though these books didn't take place in the *Traveller* universe, the physics, technology, and feeling of the stories were all straight *Traveller*.

This tenth review covers *The Universal Prey*, also the third of Swycaffer's books set in the Concordat of Archive.

Critics' Corner

About the Story

In his books, Swycaffer seems to enjoy spinning off a minor character from one book as the protagonist of the next, thus clearly linking his stories into a coherent universe, but at the same time making each standalone and fairly unique.

The Universal Prey is about an assassin names James Tyler, who appeared somewhat briefly in the previous book, *Become the Hunter*. Herein, we learn that Tyler reports to the mysterious Black Book, which assigns him assassinations of importance to the Concordat.

On a balkanized planet that's recently been shaken by nuclear war, Tyler is ordered to kill the man who started that war. But, Tyler's growing conscience and the growing attention of higher-ups in the Concordat threaten to make the mission more dangerous than ever.

Genre & Style

Swycaffer keeps shifting his genre from book to book. Though I continue to have some issues with his craftsmanship (which I'll return to later), I respect his willingness to constantly plunge into new arenas, and I think it strengthened a series that was meant to describe a huge, *Traveller*-sized universe.

Herein Swycaffer offers up a moralistic espionage book of the sort you might find in the 1970s, where the spies aren't necessarily the good guys, even when working for the government. It's the conspiracy-soaked world view that originated into the 1960s, made large here. It reminds me the most of Michael Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius books which had a similar theming (though *The Universal Prey* is much more normative than Moorcock's tetralogy, not that that's saying much).

Generally, I think that Swycaffer's writing style continues to improve from book to book. Here his characters are stronger and more often their emotions seem real. The plot is just a bit more fully realized as well.

However, there are a lot nuisances that keep from loving the book. First of all, a lot of the emotional undercurrent of the book has to do with reassessing one's life and being one's own worst enemy. It feels like a lot of the "new world" SF books from the period and earlier—which I never liked. We'll call that a personal preference.

I'm also not fond of the entirely unrealistic, fall-in-love-from-first-sight plot that repeats from *Become the Hunted* and if anything is considerably worse here. That I'll call not just a personal preference, but a viewpoint of the world that can only strike falsely.

Though characterization has improved, sometimes characters still act in ways that seem inscrutable to the reader.

Finally, Swycaffer's insistence of suddenly involving the leaders of the Concordat halfway through the book is really frustrating. It knocks me straight out of the book (here thanks to a 20-30 page digression, much like in the previous volume), and it also hurts my disbelief because of the way that it implies that the rulers of a humongous Empire involve themselves intimately in the minutia of individuals worlds.

Generally, I thought this book deeper and better polished than the last volume. I still give it a "3" out of "5" for both Style and Substance, but those ratings are both edging toward the high side of that scale.

Applicability to Mongoose Traveller

Like *Become the Hunted*, this is a pretty small story, about one man's triumphs and trials on a single planet. Unlike *Become the Hunted*, I think it's got some topics of interest to *Traveller* GMs.

First up is the nice depiction of a balkanized world—and how it interacts with the Concordat as a whole. It's believeable and thought-provoking.

Connected is the issue of planetary independence versus galactic rulership. The Concordat seems to truly control its planets—in a way that the Imperium of the *Traveller* Universe doesn't. However this book offers up an exception for the Concordat—a world that's been given its own rulership. The fights

Critics' Corner

that occur when the planet has proved itself unable to govern itself are exactly the sort of fights that could occur over a balkanized world in the Original *Traveller* Universe.

Finally, though The Universal Prey deals with the Concordat's Black Book assassination program somewhat unrealistically (when the Naval Commander who's at the top of the chain of command involving the Black Book saying she's "shocked, shocked" to find assassinations going on), the general concept is an interesting one. Could the Imperium have such a program? If so, who would know about it?

Don't expect to see the trademark physics or technology of *Traveller* to be forefront in *The Universal Prey*, but do expect to get an interesting look at how the governments of a planet and the Concordat/Imperium could interrelate. If that sounds like an inspiring topic, you should consider picking the book up.

Conclusion

The Universal Prey is an average book—with high-points and faults alike—that takes a good look at how the government of an individual world can work within the purview of an interstellar government.

The Concordat Books

1. Not in Our Stars
2. Become the Hunted
3. The Universal Prey
4. The Praesidium of Archive
5. The Empire's Legacy
6. Voyage of the Planetslayer
7. Revolt and Rebirth

Editor's Note: At present, we have been unable to find any evidence that the books of this series are still in print.

Multimedia Gallery

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.

#23: Aliens of the Marches: The Jonkeereen

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 October 2011.

Although I loved the setting detail found in *The Spinward Marches*, I was disappointed by the lack of crunch. I wanted to have rules for the races and careers of that corner of Charted Space! So, I set out to create my own. My first article "Aliens of the Marches: The Sword Worlders" appeared in *Signs & Portents* #80, which you can download from Mongoose. My follow-up article, on the Jonkeereen, fell through the cracks as S&P changed editors, and I got obsessed with a history book. With the hiatus of S&P, I've instead decided to offer it here, as the final article of *Fifth Imperium*'s run.

The Spinward Marches and the sectors that surround it are some of the most diverse in all of Charted Space. This article describes one of the many peoples that inhabit that part of space—the Jonkeereen, a genetically-engineered race of humans who were created in the Deneb sector and have since spread across the Marches.

About the Jonkeereen

The Jonkeereen are a genetically engineered race of desert dwellers. However, their purpose is long irrelevant, and genetic engineering is once more out of favor. As a result, the Jonkeereen have become one of the most alienated peoples living behind the claw.

The story of the Jonkeereen starts with that of the Suerrat, a minor human race of the Ilelish sector. They were conquered by the Vilani during their early Consolidation Wars, renewed their freedom during the Long Night, joined the Third Imperium during its early days, and later threw the whole sector into revolt.

By the 500s, the Suerrat were once more members of the Imperium, but they were still trying to improve their position among the stars by colonizing any remaining planets in the Ielish and Gushemege sectors. One of those was Hillaladi (Gushemege 2438), a desert planet that had previously been considered worthless due to its inhospitable climate. The Imperium moot decided to oppose this new Suerrat expansion, but rather than using the techniques of brute force that had quashed Suerrat insurrection following their sector-wide rebellion, they instead opted to out-compete the Suerrat in the colonization of Hillaladi. To accomplish this goal, they geneered a new human subrace—one that would be specially adapted to the desert environment. Ironically, the end result would be a race of humans at least as alienated as the Suerrat and possibly as rebellious, if recent events are any indication.

The creation of this new human subrace was overseen by the Imperial Ministry of Colonization with work subcontracted to SuSAG, a pharmaceutical megacorp with experience in the geneering field. After three generations of testing and controlled genetic evolution, the first of these desert humans were settled on the testbed planet of Jonkeer (Deneb 1324) in 600. Shortly afterward, in 637, the Suerrat abandoned their attempts to tame Hillaladi, leaving the Jonkeereen without a purpose.

For decades afterward, SuSAG and the Ministry of Colonization both tried to find new uses for the Jonkeereen. Most notably, the Ministry began their "non-optional transplantation operations" in 700, seeding desert planets across Deneb and the Spinward Marches with the Jonkeereen race. This only increased the alienation that the Jonkeereen felt toward the rest of humaniti.

This was the story of the Jonkeereen for the last 400 years: long spans of being ignored followed by short periods of interest when geneering, desert survival, or similar topics came to the forefront of Imperial life.

Though the Jonkeereen are scattered Behind the Claw, and thus have no unified political stand, the 400 million who still live on Jonkeer number enough to

make a statement. In 1083 they did so by staging the first of two uprisings led by the Jonkeereen leader Tabali. After it was put down, a second uprising occurred in 1101. The more recent uprising was the resulted from the discovery that the Ministry of Colonization was in the process of creating a retrovirus that would inhibit the reproduction of Jonkeereen. When this second uprising was put down, Imperial Marines killed Tabali under very suspicious circumstances.

Though the other Jonkeereen scattered across Imperial space have not come into such extreme conflict with the Third Imperium, there has been constant tension over the centuries on most of the planets they cohabitate with the rest of humaniti. Meanwhile, in the Glisten subsector of the Spinward Marches, the Ministry of Colonization continues work on the Jonkeereen genome, trying to prove that their geneering work, now 600 years old, was not a waste.

In an unfriendly universe, the only friend of the Jonkeereen might well be the megacorp SuSAG, who has advocated for them against the Ministry of Colonization following both of the uprisings on Jonkeer.

Culture

The desert is vast and open. Though in constant motion, it is unchanging. It is harsh and uncaring. In all of these ways, it is the mirror of the Jonkeereen who were geneered to live within it.

The most prominent characteristic of the Jonkeereen culture is its independence. Even when the Imperium was planning to use the Jonkeereen to vie for Hillaladi, this geneered race was pushing their benefactors away. Some of this desire for independence comes from the internal mindset that the Jonkeereen require to live amidst the deserts. But much of it comes from the Jonkeereen's feeling of alienation. They were created for a purpose that they never fulfilled. Now they are adrift in the universe, sometimes used to colonize desert planets, but even then they often contend with ungeneered Imperials who do with technology what comes to the Jonkeereen naturally. Thus the Jonkeereen have drawn inward, away from the rest of Charted Space. They find strength within.

The harsh nature of the desert also drives the Jonkeereen's conservatism, for progressive ideas in the desert get one killed. It also makes them stoic. Even with the best adaptations and the best traditions, some die in the deserts. There is nothing that can be done about that.

When mixed with other peoples—as is the case throughout the Spinward Marches—Jonkeereen lose some of their most conservative nature. They become willing to interact with other people, perhaps even to listen to their views. But always, there is still distance—caused by the Jonkeereen's knowledge that they are unwanted relics from another time.

Creating a Jonkeereen

Though Jonkeereen can be created using only the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, the following rules allow for the creation of more realistic (and perhaps more interesting) Jonkeereen.

Character Generation Modifiers This article offers variant character creation rules for making Jonkeereen characters. Following is a listing of all the new rules in this article, organized by the steps shown on the "Character Generation Checklist" in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* (page 5). Only the steps that contain Jonkeereen changes are listed here.

1. **Characteristics**.
   - *Characteristics*. Jonkeereen have a + 1DM to Endurance.
2. **Background Skills**.
   - *Homeworld*. Generate a random Jonkeereen homeworld.
   - *Background Skills*. Take background skills based on your homeworld and the education list (*Traveller Core Rulebook*, page 6).
3. **Careers**.
   - *Careers*. Jonkeereen have modifiers to enlist in certain careers. They may also suffer modifiers to advancement (see step 8) and benefits (see step 10).
   - *The Draft*. Jonkeereen use a different chart for the draft, primarily due to racial prejudice.
7. **Events**.
   - *Life Events*. If your Event roll indicates a Life Event, use the Jonkeereen Life Events chart.

9. **Aging**.
- *Aging*. Jonkeereen have a -2 DM to aging rolls.

Physiology

Physically, the average Jonkeereen is tall, thin, and dark-skinned. At a glance, he doesn't seem that different from the average human whose family has lived in a desert environment for several generations. However, when you look closer you can see a number of genetic variations that were built into the Jonkeereen genome over several generations of geneering.

Looking carefully at a Jonkeereen's eyes you might notice the protective membrane that helps keep them clear of windblown sand. However, the most important changes are entirely invisible. They include a Jonkeereen's improved ability to retain water, his increased ability to reclaim energy from food, and his more efficient body cooling systems.

Everything comes at a price. The average Jonkeereen lifespan is just 60-65 years, even outside of the harsh desert environment. In addition, normal anagathic drugs have little effect, though a certain plant on Jonkeer called *zaerkee* has similar effects.

Character Creation: *Characteristics*: Jonkeereen have Notable Endurance (+1). Though members of the Third Imperium, no Jonkeereen has ever been given a noble title. They may have Social Standing of 11+, but no title is conferred.

Character Creation: *Aging*. Apply a -2 DM to all rolls that a Jonkeereen makes on the Aging Table. The *zaerkee* plant that the Jonkeereen use as anagathics are free on Jonkeer, cost 1d6x100 Credits in the Deneb sector, cost 1d6x500 Credits in the Spinward Marches or Corridor sectors, and cost 1d6x2500 Credits elsewhere.

Gameplay: *Survival Skills*. Jonkeereen have been specially geneered to survive well on all planets with atmospheres between 4 and 9, particularly hot worlds and worlds with 0 hydrographics. As a result, they do not need filter masks for tainted worlds, they need approximately 1/5th of the water of a normal human, they do not take damage from heat until it exceeds 70° (see *Traveller Core Rulebook* page 74), and any Survival skill checks that they make for hot or desert environments have a +4 bonus.

Planet of Origin

There are five systems within the Spinward Marches that include Jonkeereen in notable numbers, plus two scientific institutes (on Egypt/Glisten and Glisten/Glisten) that see a fair amount of Jonkeereen turnover. Though not included in this listing, there are several additional Jonkeereen planets that can be found in the Deneb sector.

Callia, E150852-6 (Glisten 0206). A rocky, desert planet. Jonkeereen represent about a quarter of the world's population, but remain almost invisible by dwelling deep in the planet's deserts. The mainline humans cluster around artesian wells managed and controlled by technicians. They're not fond of visitors, whether they be off-worlders or Jonkeereen; this suits the Jonkeereen just fine. *Background Skills*: Animals 0, Survival 0.

Egypt, BAC6567-7 (Glisten 0107). A lifeless planet with an insidious atmosphere. The planet's population is solely dependent upon its status as a research station and a colonization waypoint, all entirely owned and managed by the Imperial Ministry of Colonization. Various environmental domes contains the different environments that colonists might encounter. There are only a few hundred Jonkeereen on Egypt, and they are solely involved with scientific studies, mostly on the suitability of their species for various planets. Sometimes relations between scientists and Jonkeereen become a bit strained because of the Jonkereen's history with the Ministry. Most of these Jonkeereen originate on Melior, though a few are born on Egypt as well. *Background Skills*: Spaces Sciences 0. Any character born on Egypt may optionally decide to take a member of the Imperial Ministry of Colonization as a connection. Roll 1d6 to determine the sort: 1-3: Contact; 4-5: Rival; 6: Enemy.

Glisten, A000986-F (Glisten 0406). An asteroid society and a center of commerce and industry—not just the subsector, but for the entire Spinward Marches. It is also the home of GLIPS, the Glisten Institute of Planetological Studies, one of the largest universities in the sector. One of GLIPS' major fields of studies is geneering. As such, a few hundred Jonkeereen are em-

ployed here at all times for study by researchers and students alike. Most of the Jonkeereen originate on Callia or Melior—though the Imperial Ministry of Colonization is sometimes prickly about GLIPS "stealing its Melioran Jonkeereen." The situation on Glisten is a mirror to the Jonkereen research on Egypt; the relations between the students and the Jonkeereen are quite good, resulting in the Jonkeereen of Glisten being some of the least alienated in all of Charted Space. *Background Skills*: Computers 0, Life Sciences 0, Physical Sciences 0, Social Sciences 0, Space Sciences 0, Streetwise 0, Zero-G 0. Any character born on Glisten may optionally decide to take a member of GLIPS as a connection. Roll 1d6 to determine the type: 1: Ally; 2-5: Contact; 6: Rival.

Ianic, E360397-5 (Lunion 0304). A cold desert world with very little to recommend it. The Jonkeereen of the planet—about 30% of the total population—tend to be nomadic travellers of the deserts. These keeps them widely separated from the humans of Ianic, whose ranching of the lizard-like Slindi forms the economic foundation of the planet. Despite this general separation, there is no animosity between the two sorts of humans, unlike on some other planets. *Background Skills*: Carouse 0, Survival 0. Ianic's stable atmosphere and government make it a rich planet—but only for its human residents. If a character takes the Carouse 0 skill that comes with the Rich homeworld trait, the player should decide what caused his Jonkereen to become integrated with the humans of his home planet.

Melior, D140466-7 (Glisten 0106). An inhospitable desert planet with a thin and tainted atmosphere. It is controlled by the Imperial Ministry of Colonization, who use it for minor experiments and as a recruiting ground for the nearby research station on Egypt. About 50% of the population of the planet is Jonkeereen, a number carefully maintained by the Ministry for future needs. The Ministry keeps these Jonkeereen separate from other settlers on the planet to avoid conflicts between the populations. *Background Skills*: Animals 0, Survival 0.

Nadrin, D120203-6 (Mora 0704). A small, inhospitable, and scantly populated world. There are less than 1000 persons on the planet, all of them Jonkeereen. This planet represents a long-term study by the Imperial Ministry of Colonization on Egypt into how well the Jonkeereen can withstand poor atmospheric conditions without outside assistance. The answer has thus far been: poorly. Though Jonkeereen have survived in the atmosphere without respirators or filters, they are confined to only the lowest altitudes of the planet and their longevity is still negatively impacted. It should be no surprise that the Jonkeereen of Nadrin are among some of the most alienated and conservative in the Marches. *Background Skills*: Animals 0. Any characters brought up on Nadrin suffer an additional -1 DM to all aging rolls, for a total of -3 DM for being a Jonkeereen on Nadrin. In addition to normal background skills, also take Survival 1.

Quopist, B150679-A (Lanth 0605). A warm planet with a thin atmosphere. The population is about 60% Jonkeereen. Though there is considerable conflict on the planet—which has led to an amber rating by the JTAS—it is not racial. Instead, groups of Jonkeereen and other humans are intermixed across the globe, gathering at natural oases, springs, and wells. These "water brotherhoods" often exert territorial control over immense groves of Spiny Trees, a cactus-like succulent that releases an important chemical catalyst called Valden into the sandy soil. Some of the fighting surrounds control of these groves, but other fighting is centered on more philosophical grounds, including a divide between two groups on the planet concerning resource consumption: one treats the Spiny Trees as a renewable resource while the other does not. *Background Skills*: Life Sciences 0, Survival 0.

Character Creation: *Homeworld*. Select a Homeworld for your Jonkeereen by rolling on the Jonkeereen Planet Table (p.25, following this article). Read the information on the world to get a basic feeling for your character's society and note if there are any special rules that apply to that world.

Character Creation: *Background Skills*. As usual, Jonkeereen gain a number of background skills equal to 3 + their Education DM. Each homeworld offers specific background skills that players may choose among. These are largely derived from the standard homeworld

background skills (*Traveller Core Rulebook*, page 6), but in a few case one or more background skills have been added due to the specific history of the planet.

Careers

Jonkeereen are full members of the Third Imperium, thus they have access to all of the careers available to the rest of humaniti. However, prejudice and natural affinity slightly modify some of them.

Army. Though army recruiting appreciates the sturdiness of Jonkeereen, general prejudice against the desert dwellers tends to keep them from advancing through the ranks. *Special Rules*: +1 DM to enlistment, -1 DM to advancement.

Drifter. By their core nature, Jonkeereen are loners and nomads, thus the drifter career is the one most frequently adopted by Jonkeereen who leave behind their home planets. *Special Rules*: +1 DM to survival. This also applies to the advanced barbarian, scavenger, and wanderer careers found in *Traveller Book 6: Scoundrel* (pages 20-31).

Marines, **Navy**. Prejudice against the Jonkeereen has generally kept them from being accepted into the more prestigious Imperial military careers. *Special Rules*: -1 DM to enlistment, -1 DM to advancement.

Scout. Unique among the major Imperial services, the Scouts actively recruit Jonkeereen, primarily for their ability to act as loners, far from the rest of humaniti. The scouts' incentives to Jonkeereen are usually reflected by improved mustering-out benefits. *Special Rules*: +1 DM to enlistment, + 1DM to the first Benefit roll.

Character Creation: *Special Career Rules*: Apply the above modifiers to enlistment, advancement, and survival rolls for the specified careers. Other careers have no modifiers for Jonkeereen.

Character Creation: *The Draft*: Though Jonkeereen can theoretically be drafted into any military service, the marines and navy never randomly select them. Use the Jonkeereen Draft Table on p.25.

Life Events

Though Jonkeereen are subject to the same mishaps and events as others during the course of their careers, their life events tend to be somewhat different, reflecting the different culture and psyche of the Jonkeereen.

Character Creation: *Life Events*. If you are told to roll on the Life Events table, you should use the chart on p.25, following this article, rather than the table on page 34 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Bibliography

The story of the Jonkeereen is relatively contained in *Traveller* literature.

"Contact: The Suerrat", *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* #26, Imperium Games, 1997. This short article provides some information on the minor human race that indirectly caused the creation of the Jonkeereen.

GURPS Traveller: Behind the Claw, Steve Jackson Games, 1998. This book is always useful for its short summaries describing every system in the Spinward Marches. It also contains information on Jonkeereen populations on various systems.

"Races of the Domain: Jonkeereen", *The Mega-Traveller Journal* #3, Digest Group Publications, 1992. This was the only in-depth look at the Jonkeereen to date, building on some short notes in *The Travellers' Digest* #19 (Digest Group Publications, 1990). This new article is heavily indebted to it.

The Regency Sourcebook: Keepers of the Flame, GDW, 1995. Though set in the New Era, this book was still quite valuable as it's the one that integrated Jonkeereen more broadly into the Spinward Marches and Deneb sectors. It also expanded upon the idea of Jonkeereen alienation.

The Spinward Marches, Mongoose Publishing, 2008. The first-cut reference for the 1105 state of the Official Traveller Universe.

I hope you enjoyed this final Fifth Imperium article, and that it can prove useful in your own campaign. With it, I'm bringing this column's two-year run to an end. I do plan to offer one addenda sometime in the future, to summarize my review of Traveller fiction when I'm done, but that'll just be a one-time thing. Until then, may your own Imperiums (or Twilight Sectors or other *Traveller* universes) prosper!

Fifth Imperium

Jonkeereen Homeworld Table	
Roll 2d6	**Jonkeereen Homeworld**
2	Egypt
3	Nadrin
4	Melior
5-8	Callia
9-10	Quopist
11	Ianic
12	Glisten

Jonkeereen Draft Table	
Roll 1d6	**Service**
1	Army (Infantry)
2	Army (Infantry)
3	Army (Any)
4	Merchants (Merchant Marine)
5	Scouts (Any)
6	Agent (Law Enforcement)

Jonkeereen Life Events	
Roll 2d6	**Life Event**
2	**Premature Aging.** The Jonkeereen suffers premature (or additional) aging. Roll 2d6 on the Aging Table (Traveller Core Rulebook, p36), with a negative DM equal to the number of terms the character has served including the current one. A 1+ still results in the reduction of one physical characteristic.
3	**Death.** Someone close to the Jonkeereen that still lives on their home planet dies, probably due to the harsh conditions of the world.
4	**Alienation.** An event further convinces the Jonkeereen that Imperial society conspires against him, causing him to withdraw even more than the norm.
5	**Friendship.** The Jonkeereen makes a real connection with someone outside his race.
6	**Scientific Inquiry.** Either the Imperial Ministry of Colonization or SuSAG subjects the Jonkeereen to scientific study. Choose which you prefer, and gain a Conact, Rival, or Enemy from that organization.
7	**New Contact.** A real connection that the Jonkeereen has made with someone outside his race blossoms. Gain a new Contact. Since Jonkeereen tend to have very few non-Jonkeereen friends, you should try and convert someone the character already knows to become this Contact.
8	**Friendship Betrayed.** A non-Jonkeereen friend betrays the Jonkeereen—which just reinforces his core beliefs about the universe. Convert a Contact or Ally, if you have one, to a Rival. Otherwise, gain a Rival
9	**Wanderlust.** The Jonkeereen feels the urge to move on. At the end of the term, you must muster out of your current career.
10	**Patron.** The Jonkeereen gains a non-Jonkeereen Ally who feels some close connection to him and will actively work for his interests in the future. The Jonkeereen may or may not believe the goodness of his intentions, as you prefer.
11	**Deportation.** The Jonkeereen is temporarily deported back to his home planet. You lose out on chances for advancement this term, and probably grow more alienated due to the unfair (but expected) treatment.
12	**Revolt!** The Jonkeereen becomes caught up in a planned revolt against the Imperium—either the events of 1083 or 1101 if they fit with the character's chronology, or a more minor, local event. If the Jonkeereen sides with the Imperium, he gains an Imperial Ally and a DM +1 to one Benefit roll for the current career; however, he becomes an outcast to most Jonkeereen. If the Jonkeereen sides with the other Jonkeereen, he must immediately muster out of any Imperial career (Army, Marines, Navy, Scouts), losing any chances for advancement that year, and he gains an Imperial Enemy.

Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 10

The following morning, 0430 Local Ship Time found Captain Fyyg on the bridge in the Big Chair. In front of him, and to the right sat Tam Murmisagli at the Sensor board. First Officer Milo Hertzog sat to the left at the Nav station, trying to give Tam a step-by-step on maneuvering the *Waffles* across the 60,000,000 km of mostly barren space approaching the Oort Cloud.

Fourteen hours into the 30 hour approach, and Hertzog was still butting heads with Tam over the finer points of starship piloting.

"Milo. Please, hon'. Quit trying to tell me how to do my job, would you? I've been piloting one of these things since I was ten years old. And living on one well before that. What in hell were you doing at ten, I'd like to know."

"At ten I was still on my grandparents farm on Mica." Milo replied.

"Hmmm," Tam mused. "Cattle or sheep?"

"Sheep." Milo clarified.

"Sheep." Tam repeated, giving Herzog a sideways look.

"Is it true….?" she began, only to be cut off.

"When it comes time to castrate the flock," Milo started, "the knife is just not fast enough. And the robots they sell for the job are just so much dodgy trash. The quickest way when you've got a large flock is biting them off."

"So it is true!" Tam laughed. Hertzog grinned, adding, "Of course, there's more than a single shepherd with the flock at such a time."

"One would hope so, anyways." The young woman said.

Suddenly, from the Big Chair the Captain yawned, then cursing, went into his usual diatribe "By Hades, but this chair is entirely too comfortable for a working man to sit in!" And yawning again and stretching, continued "It does it to me every time!"

"Welcome back, Sir." said Number One. "We're riding the System Plane, traveling at a constant 2Gs acceleration, and just…"

Tam looked up from the Sensor board and answered "43 minutes on my mark…Mark!"

"43 minutes from Midpoint, Captain." Milo finished.

Stretching as he stood, the Captain said "Good. Good…", then, informing the bridge crew of his intentions, "I have a pile of paperwork needs attention in my office. Anyone needs me, that is where I shall be." he left the bridge, hands thrust into pants pockets.

Once at midpoint, Tam used attitude thrusters to rotate the *Waffles* one hundred and eighty degrees along the ship's long axis so its tail was facing forward. A controlled burn followed for the computer-recommended duration to produce enough thrust to slow the Waffles to the point where its acceleration would have ceased very near the sixty million kilometer mark fifteen hours from now.

An hour or so after Midpoint, Second Shift came to relieve Milo and Tam. Kalifra, who was taking Milo's place, was a tall woman, with knee-length blond hair, who hailed from Aretius, and had learned the basics of ship combat in the Imperial Navy.

"The Professor" who'd be taking Tam's place, was in turn, no Professor, but he did know his rocks, and was a fair planetologist. He had learned to pilot a ship mining the asteroid fields.

Several minutes of small talk ensued with the shift change, then, grabbing an orange, Tam began peeling it as she moved off the bridge, her magnetic boots, built into a pair of salmon colored greaves from an old set of combat armor, clicking as she walked.

Several steps behind her, Milo watched the little brunette's hips slowly glide from side to side, hypnotic-like, as she moved. It almost seemed to Milo as if the clicking were calling his name; click click click click--- mi lo mi lo mi lo...

Hertzog had read about the sirens' call in an old Earth legend, where sailors put candle wax in their ears to resist it. But looking at Tam seemed a different thing all together

Feeling as if he were going to jump out of his skin if he didn't do something, Hertzog increased his pace and tapped her on the shoulder. "Ya, what is it Milo?" she asked, chewing a pair of orange segments.

"What've you got planned now, Tam?" he asked.

"Gonna throw some darts, have a beer or two in the Crew Lounge. Try and unwind a little."

"You?" she asked.

Instead of saying what he was going to do—paint miniatures and listen to a little Mozart, he told her "Same, I guess; throw some darts, have a beer."

"Are you challenging me to a game of darts, little man?" she chuckled.

As the First Officer nodded, the woman linked her arm with his.

"C'mon then hon', Miss Murmisagli's gonna school you." and they headed for the Crew Lounge

Down in the cargo bay, Thom was giving the once over to the vacc suits in storage; repairing or installing a radio where needed, double-reinforcing any patches that looked questionable, filling tanks and checking tank adaptors for a tight seal.

On the far side of the bay, Brodie and a couple of the Roosters manhandled the trio of *Waffles'* Mosquito rigs from their corner storage. Had the grav powered palletmaster not been destroyed during the pirate's attack, maneuvering these three monsters into place near the cargo doors would have been simplicity itself.

Each of the tall, ground-car-sized devices was essentially a none-too-bright, insect-like robot with multiple grasping legs, that once in space, flitted from one icy-body to another in the vicinity; and used its deadly-looking proboscis to drain away a slurry of raw asteroid ice to carry back to the fuel purification equipment. aboard *Waffles* for later refining. Ordinarily they worked in large swarms, rather than the *Waffles'* trio.

Brodie saw that one of the Mosquitos was one of the older Mk 11s, whose clog-prone filters requires an almost endless routine of pulling, cleaning and repairing. Brodie had acquired his expertise working with the Mosquito rig in a Ducal work-camp on Magnus, one of thirteen small moons orbiting the massive gas giant Makkitosimew. He had told Fyyg they needed another of the newer Mk 12s, so they could draw fuel without all the time wasting babying the older bug required.

Obviously the Captain hadn't gotten around to it yet, and in all likelihood probably wouldn't any time soon. Brodie decided the old bug would likely be causing headaches-a-plenty before the mission was over.

Stepping into the Lounge, Tam went straight for the dartboard that'd been hung between the bulletin board and the trio of refrigerators. The girl grabbed the handful of darts and yanked them free of the board with a single motion; the old, holed picture of the Captain that'd been held there dropping to the deck.

Meanwhile Hertzog reached into the Beer Locker (the first of the three fridges), coming out with a foursome of large brown beer bottles chosen at random; a pair of Hephaestus Dark, a Donald's Pale Ale, and a single Olde Republic Stout.

Given her choice, Tam took the Olde Republic; opening the bottle on the table edge and taking several long pulls of it before setting it down on a scarred table. Using the table edge method himself, Milo opened the pale , and took a long sip before setting the bottle down.

Tam divided the darts and handed Hertzog half, telling him "And remember, doll, no using any of your implants." as she motioned toward his head with the feathered ends of her darts.

"Certainly, certainly." Hertzog replied. "Besides, my targeting system", he tapped his left eye, "really only works with ship's weapons. You'll be happy to know I still throw like a girl."

She took another sip of the Olde Republic, "I guess that means we're evenly matched then, hon'." Another sip of the stout and she urged Milo on. "501, First Officer. Go."

The pair each took turns throwing, with neither the clear leader until finally, with both well past zero, Tam hit the double ring under the 18 and ended the game.

Halfway through a second game the Hephaestus' were opened. One of the gunners, Thom's brother Dave, entered on his lunch break, grabbing an acidic Eryth Cola from the fridge, and pulling a mysteriously-wrapped Everfresh Sandwich from a cargo pocket, he sat down and watched the game progress.

"'Cha playin'?" he asked.

"501" they replied, almost in unison.

"Hmmmm. S'winnin'?" Dave asked as he pulled

off the plain white wrapper that always made the purchase of an Everfresh such a mystery. He was pleased to find that this time it was his favorite, Philly Cheese Steak ; microfilaments in the wrapper heating the thing through while he attempted to open it.

"The First Officer here has only eighteen, while I'm down to two hundred forty one." Tam replied, slightly perturbed.

Milo won smartly in just two more throws.

"Throw like a girl, my ass!" Tam said, draining the last of her Hephaestus.

Hertzog smiled, face reddening.

Murmisagli dug around in the Beer Locker for some time, eventually coming out with a pair of large green bottles of Robot Steam, with the image of a big, rusty cog on the label.

"No more Olde Republic, but I think you oughtta like the Robot here….Smooth and strong, like a horse—or a robot, I guess." she grinned, deftly popping the cap from both bottles on the table edge before passing one over to Milo.

She turned to Dave, who'd already eaten half his sandwich.

"Dave, honey, J'like a beer while I'm up?" she asked.

"Nah'tanks." the older Vasqes brother said, "Don't drink."

The pair sat down at one of the battered tables. Dave, sitting at a table near the door, finished his sandwich then had a couple of smokes, since, as a holdover from Pre-Atomic times, you couldn't smoke in a weapon turret. Once finished, he got up and left; leaving Tam and Milo alone.

Hertzog took a sip of the Robot Steam, surprised by its alcohol content; higher even than the Olde Republic he'd passed up earlier. Rocking the folding chair back on two legs, Milo pushed his crush cap back, and, scratching the side of his aquiline nose, asked "So just how does a ten year old girl come to pilot a Starship?"

In the cargo bay, with all of the work of moving and performing routine maintenance on the trio of Mosquito Rigs finally completed, Brodie, Thom, and the other roustabouts decided to forego going all the way back to the Crew Lounge for their breaks, and instead dug a roundball from one of the lockers for a pick-up game of basketball; a half court, four on four game loaded with more than its share of personal fouls dealt-out, for the most part, by hard charging Thom Vasquez to the point where it seemed as if he were channeling the spirits of Atomic Era basketball greats, Elvin Hayes and Bill Laimbeer simultaneously.

Tam took a chug from the wide mouthed Robot bottle.

"My father—our father," she corrected, "worked for the Packet Service. Not one of those that're run by some Megacorporation, like Local Bubble, or Inter System, but the actual Imperial Packet Service. Twenty years and Daddy retired with a fairly generous pension, as I understand. I was pretty young at the time—five or six—so some of details are pretty sketchy now."

"At some point we'd moved off Holt and onto some old junker *Auspicious Venture*-class merchanteer—just like the *Waffles*, here." She rapped on their table with her knuckles. "Or almost, anyway."

"We were all there of course: Mother, Daddy, my Uncle Tiger, me, my sister Sarah, and my little brother Henry—what an absolute nut!" she laughed.

"A merchant family! So you're a Gypsy then?" Milo asked before taking another drink of the Robot Steam.

Tam grew stern and pulled away, "No Milo, a 'Merchant Family'. 'Gypsies' are what they call us when they're reporting on something they don't agree with, or wanna sensationalize…." Tam accidentally hit her bottle and it crashed to the deck, exploding..

"Oh fuck!" Tam fumed at her clumsiness as she watched the cleanbot efficiently wrangle the mess.

In the next few minutes the pair was busy interrupting one another as each tried to apologize to the other, until they both started laughing at the ridiculousness of it.

"Anyway, " Tam continued, "by eight I was doing little chores around the *Black Betty*. By ten I'd started piloting her. Dad had originally wanted Sarah to pilot; she being so graceful and all with her ballet, but sis had

Raconteurs' Rest

a bad case of the yips when it came to operating machinery. She did become a fair hand with the palletmaster, though."

"Hmmm," Hertzog sounded before finishing the last of his bottle. Slightly drunk and bright red, Milo smiled at the woman.

Smaller, and thus more drunk, Tam stood, smiling and rocking slightly.

"Well, enough about me." she said, "I've got to get going…Guess I'll see you around the campus!" she laughed.

"Oh?" the First Officer mouthed, surprised; unsure of just what to do now that the object of his desire seemed about to slip away.

"I'm heading home myself." Milo suddenly said, "Would you like some company?"

Standing there thinking for a moment, Tam decided and said "C'mon darlin', lets go!", holding out an arm to him.

Linked arm-in-arm, the pair left the Crew Lounge. Taking a few turns down various corridors, they arrived at the Quarters Deck.

Hertzog's cabin was the first door on the right, but he passed it up, walking Tam down to her cabin at the end of the hall, to the last door on the left, right next to the fire extinguisher.

There was a pause, then they bumbled all over each other as each tried telling the other what a wonderful time had been had, until they both laughed again.

News About Traveller

Recent *Traveller* News and Findings

October, 2011

- **Mongoose** has released *Compendium 2* for *Traveller*.
- **Samardan Press** has released *Flynn's Guide to Azri Drakara: Rodan Subsector* for *Traveller*.
- We missed an announcement in September from **Gypsy Knight Games**. They released *Subsector Sourcebook 1: Cascadia* for *Traveller*. During October they also released *Quick Worlds 13: Chennai*, *Quick Worlds 14: Hiallt* and *Quick Worlds 15: Vasynov*.

- **Spica Publishing** has released *Outer Veil* as a new setting for Mongoose *Traveller*.

(We actually didn't go to press until the first weekend in November, so we can include some very-early-November news as well...)

- **Spica Publishing** has released the *Outer Veil Sector Map* as a supplement to their Outer Veil setting for *Traveller*.

Feedback

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

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:
- e-mail: *feedback@freelancetraveller.com*.

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

Conurbation Commuter Bus (TL8)

By Timothy Collinson

Cities all across the Imperium often need to move thousands of commuters each day. One solution pre-grav technology is the omnibus. This example can carry up to 39 seated passengers with another 20 standing. There is usually a very limited space for luggage. Higher law level worlds may mandate seatbelts and/or disallow standing passengers; surveillance cameras may also be fitted. Alternative configurations can remove seats to allow space for wheelchairs, pushchairs or further standing passengers with luggage (for example on an airport or starport connection service). Some models may have a second set of doors part-way down the bus to allow speedier egress on busy routes although this is at the expense of seats. Seating is not overly comfortable although some buses, particularly on longer routes, may have higher backed coach style seats. The driver issues, or checks tickets as well as operating the vehicle and has a small two-way radio to keep in touch with controllers. At this tech level swipe ticketing from a machine beside the driver, or several devices throughout the bus, is also possible, in which case, rear doors can allow ingress as well as egress. It is rear engined such that the rear few seats are on a slightly higher level. Primitive climate control (heated or chilled air) is blown through the bus although often this is notably ineffective (or indeed broken so that it fails in weather where it is needed, or is 'full on' in weather where the op-posite is needed.) Some models have a hydraulic system that allows the bus to lower itself at a stop for easier disabled access, some have a flipout ramp in the floor that can assist with this instead or in addition.

Depending on tradition or local law levels, the bus may simply pick up or set down passengers at any point on its route, or bus stops may be utilized. These might be anything from a post at the side of the road, painted markings on the road, or a full shelter perhaps with timetables and advertising. Bus stops may be 'request' stops where the bus only stops if a passenger signals (either waiting – most often by extending an arm – or onboard by use of a signal, perhaps a bell). Some stops may be wait points should the bus get ahead of its schedule.

Routing information and a route identifier number are usually displayed at the front of the bus, some models can display this information at the rear as well – particularly useful in densely crowded conurbations where there maybe some chance of catching a missed bus on foot if it happens to be stuck in traffic. At TL8 this routing information may be electronic, or older style 'rolls' of destinations may still be used which the driver has to wind to the correct position before beginning the route. It's not unknown for an incorrect route number or a 'not in service' indication to be shown, confusing waiting travellers sufficiently that they allow the bus to pass with the driver blithely unaware the bus is empty due to this lack of attention. Typical dimensions: 10.4m × 2.5m × 3m (overall).

Conurbation Commuter Bus (TL8)		Disp (m^3)	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)
Hull	78m3 (base 65m3) Box configuration, Light Alloys	-	5200.0	16,250
	Hull: 16 Structure: 17	-	-	-
Drive system	Ground Wheels	6.50	650.0	6500
Power Plant	Internal Combustion-8	8.00	560.0	12,000
	Power output: 144			
	Fuel Consumption: 16/hour			
Fuel	160 litres (10 hours operation)	0.16	160.0	-
Armour	Light Alloys 2	-	-	-
Sensors	Minimal (0.25, 0 DM)	0.25	0.5	100
Comm	Radio-20 (range 20km)	0.10	1.0	500
Crew	1 (1 driver)	-	-	-
Operating stations	1	1.25	125.0	-
Passengers	39	39.00	3900.0	-
Cargo	1.68 dTons	22.74	2274.0	-
Agility	0	-	-	-
Speed	Cruise: 84 kph Top: 112 kph	-	-	-
TOTAL		**78.00**	**12,871.0**	**35,350**
Ground Pressure	1.98			
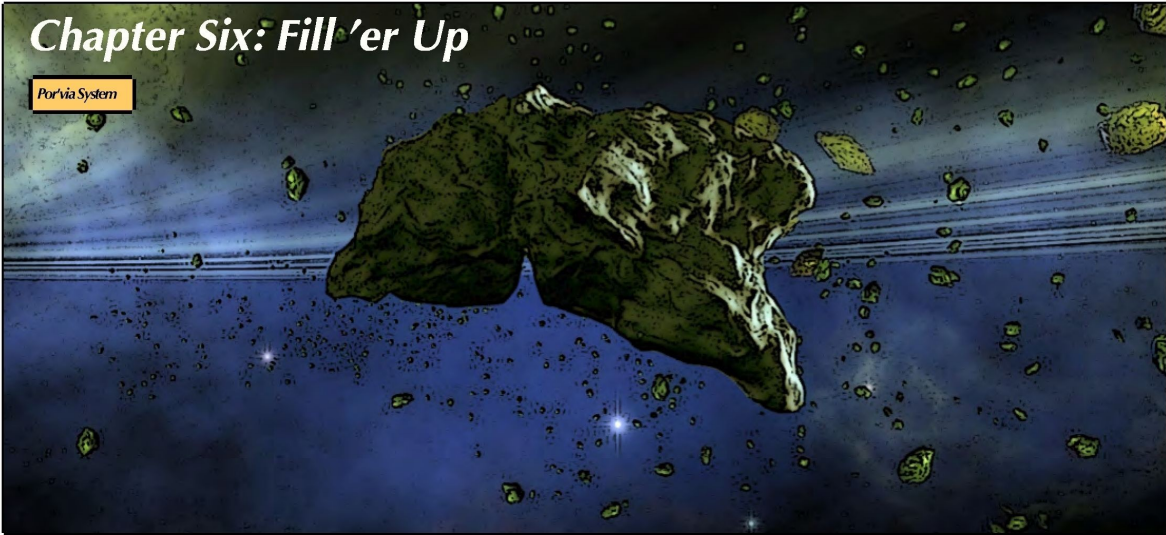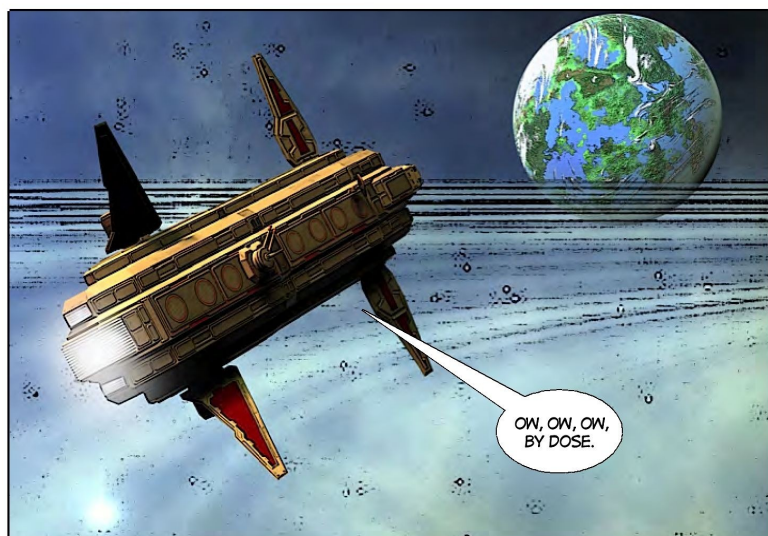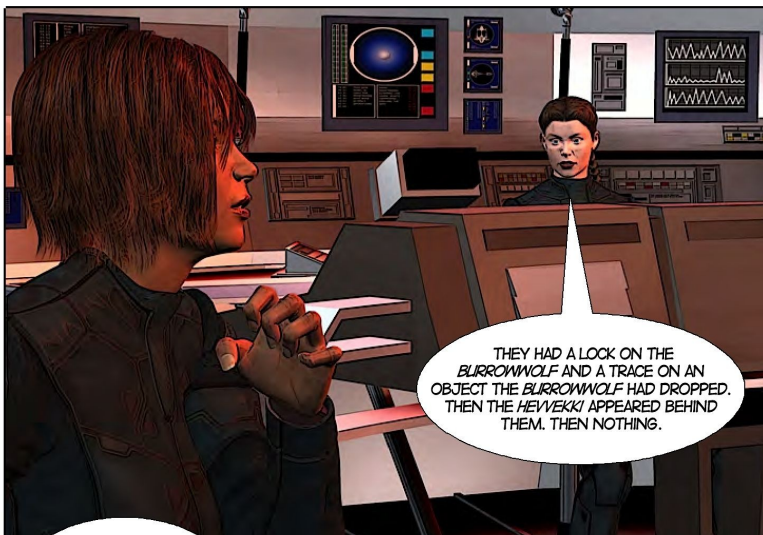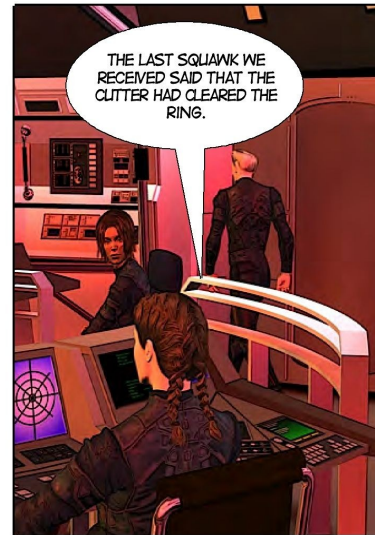
... to be continued...

Submission Guidelines

What is *Freelance Traveller* looking for?

We're looking for anything and everything to do with *Traveller* – reviews of products, house rules, alternate settings, NPC profiles, world write-ups, adventures, equipment, starships, fiction, "color" articles… If you see it in *Freelance Traveller*, or on our website, we're interested in it. Even if you don't see it in the magazine or on the website, we might be interested; write to *editor@freelancetraveller.com* and ask.

Some things that we want that you might not think of as "*Traveller*" would include reviews of non-*Traveller* products that easily lend themselves to being 'mined' for ideas for use in *Traveller*, or reviews of fiction (in any medium) that "feels" like *Traveller* in some way. In these cases, your article should focus on the *Traveller*-esque aspects of the item. There may be other things, as well; if you're not sure, write to *editor@freelancetraveller.com* and ask.

What about …

The rule of thumb is "If it's a *Traveller* ruleset, or a setting that has been published for use with a *Traveller* ruleset, go for it!". That includes the non-Official *Traveller* Universe settings that have been published for use with any version of the *Traveller* ruleset, including (but not limited to) *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Babylon 5*, *Reign of Diaspora*, *Twilight Sector*, the two *GURPS* variants on the Official *Traveller* Universe, and the forthcoming *Traveller Prime Directive*.

…Hyperlite?

We've made the decision to support *Hyperlite* as though it were an alternate *Traveller* setting, much like *Twilight Sector* or *Reign of Diaspora*. The changes that Sceaptune Games has made to *Traveller* to get *Hyperlite* aren't really much more than the differences between Classic *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller*, and Mongoose *Traveller*, and converting between any of those systems and *Hyperlite*, in either direction, should be 'trivial'.

… Diaspora, or Starblazer Adventures?

If your article is about "crossing over" between these products and any of the "standard" or supported *Traveller* rulesets or settings, by all means, submit it! If it's support for those systems beyond *Traveller*, we'll accept and hold the submission, but will not print it unless/until we've had a reasonable level of expression of interest in such support from our readers.

How should I submit my article?

What needs to be in the submission?

At the very minimum, we need the submission itself, your name (for credit), and a valid email address to contact you at if we need to.

What format should I submit it in?

That depends, in part, on what you're submitting. In general:

Text should be submitted in Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word 2003 (DOC) or 2007/2010 (DOCX), OpenOffice Writer (ODT), or plain text (TXT). Most word processors will support one of those; if yours seems not to, please write to us for assistance. Avoid PDF if at all possible; it is difficult to reformat PDFs for our magazine or website.

Graphics should be submitted in the format that's best for the type of graphic. Most of the time, that will be GIF, PNG, or JPG/JPEG. Submitting in higher resolutions is better; we have tools to resample a picture to make it smaller if we need to – but it's not possible to make a picture larger without it becoming pixellated.

If you're submitting a graphic that you'd like to see us use for a cover of an issue, please make sure that it will fit nicely on both US Letter and ISO A4 pages—we'll crop the picture to fit, to avoid distorting shapes, so please leave reasonable "margins"; don't run "critical" imagery right to the edge where it will look bad if we crop it. A good resolution is 100 dpi or more.

Plans (deck plans, building plans, maps, etc.) may be better submitted in a vector-based format such as CorelDRAW! format (CDR) or any format that can be imported into CorelDRAW! X4. Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG), Windows Metafile (WMF), Enhanced Metafile (EMF), Encapsulated PostScript (EPS), or Microsoft Visio (VSD) are some common vector formats that can be imported.

How do I get it to you?

Email it to us at our submissions address, *submissions@freelancetraveller.com*. Your subject line should specify the type of article that it is, and what section you think it should be put in, e.g., "Combat Rules for Doing It My Way".