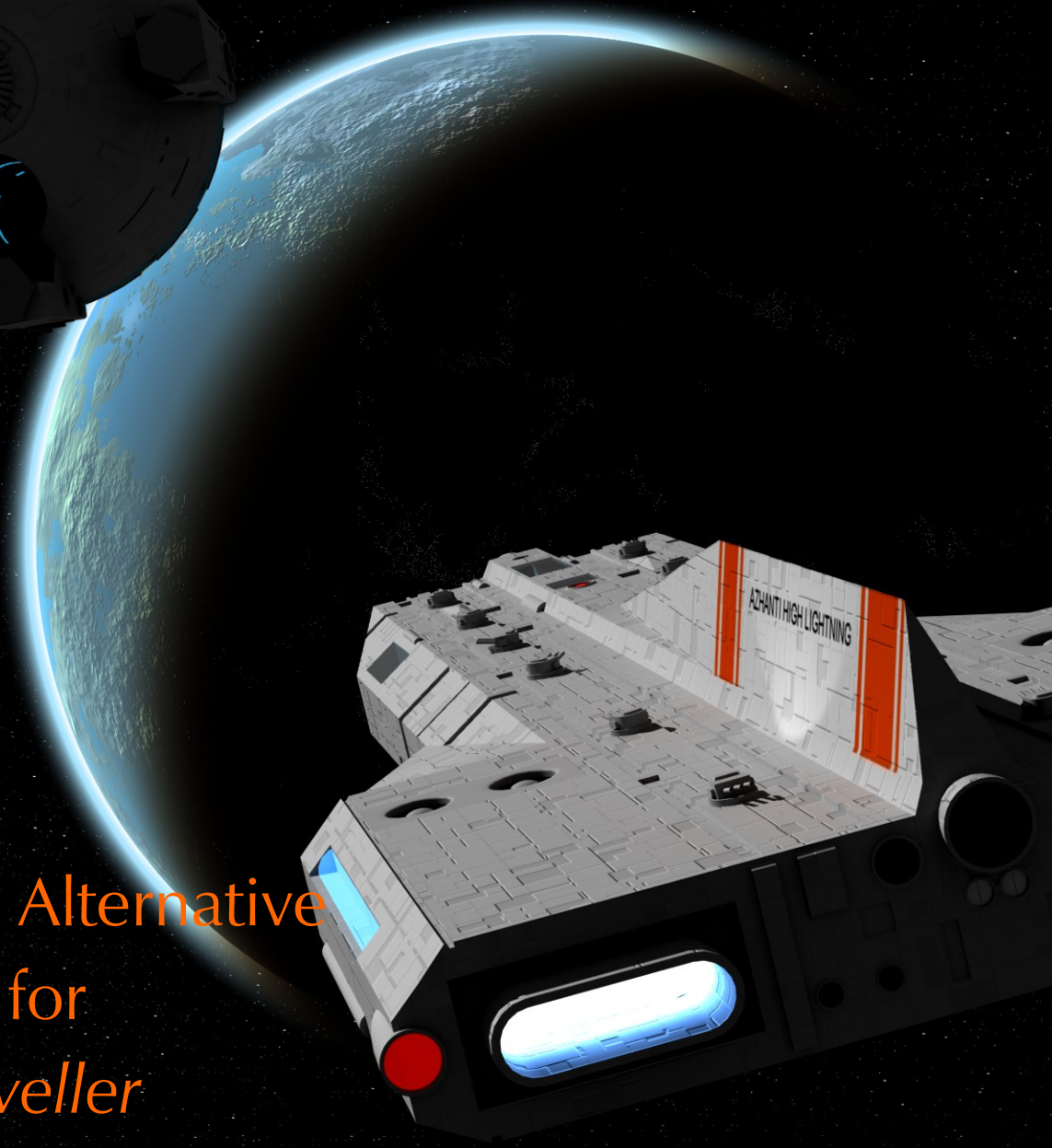
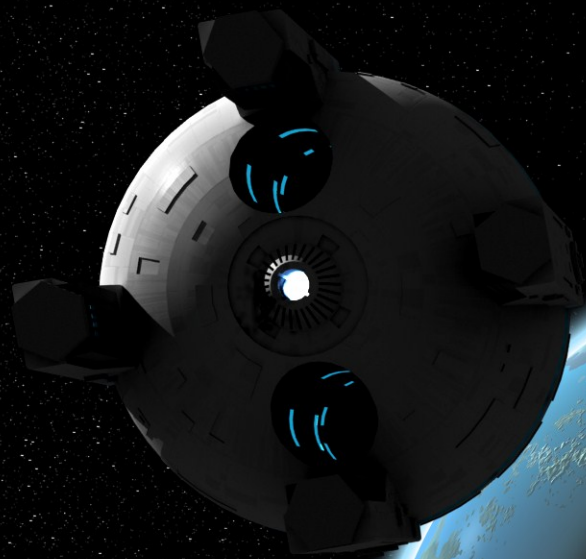




FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Article
Hostile Intent: Alternative
Combat Rules for
Mongoose Traveller

by Sam Lockwood

Issue 034
October 2012

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From the Editor



While the Editor was putting the finishing touches on this issue of *Freelance Traveller*, the computer on which the magazine is prepared played the 'incoming e-mail' sound. On inspecting the newly arrived mail, we found that it was a plea for ideas to 'energize the base'. The specific problem at issue is that there appears not to be—despite having all the 'right' ingredients, as expressed previously by the community—much interest in Terra/Sol Games' Kickstarter for *Six Guns: Lasers*. In his email, Mike Cross uses phrases like '...this thing is turning into a referendum on whether or not *Traveller* fans want us to keep producing products for the system...' and he indicates that he doesn't want to go in that direction.

We're relaying his plea to the entire community: Please, tell Mike and TSG what you want from them. How do you see TSG fitting into the publishing side of the *Traveller* community, and how can they catch and hold your interest, so that you'll buy their products? (And do the same for other publishers, too!)

We're also encouraging the community to participate in *Traveller*-related Kickstarts, and to buy products, from some of the lesser-known publishers, as well as the major ones—we've got a good list on the next-to-last page of every issue (page 38, this issue), and we'll add to that list as we learn about new publishers. All of them have appeared at least once in a 'Follow Your Favorites' e-mail from DTRPG, where the Editor has a single favorite selected: *Traveller*. As much as we appreciate the support we've received from the community over the twenty years or so that *Freelance Traveller* has existed, that support is secondary to supporting the commercial publishers. We're not urging blind support; quite the contrary: your money needs to be spent in ways that *you* feel will best serve your *Traveller* needs, and encourage the products that you want to see.

Finally... your money talks, and it does so loudly. But it's not the only voice that gets listened to. Write to the publishers, write reviews, and *tell them* what you want to see.



Compendium 2

reviewed by Timothy Collinson

Compendium 2. Various authors; Nick Robinson (ed.)
Mongoose Publishing. <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
176pp, hardbound
US\$39.99/UK£29.99

The author of this review contributed two pages to *Compendium 2* in the form of 'A Helping Hand' – four small adventure seeds to add momentary interest to any campaign.

Compendium 2 is, as you might guess from the title, a second *potpourri* of *Traveller* excellence, gathering articles from the Mongoose house magazine *Signs and Portents*, from issues 85 to 93 (the most recent issue at the time of writing) and also includes their 'Living *Traveller*' adventures. The Introduction claims to have articles from "the last 12 months" and the back cover claims to "collate all the most popular articles... over the past year", but in fact the volume doesn't contain anything from issues 82-84 which would complete the year from July 2010 to June 2011.¹ There are two items, 'Availability' (on modifying the availability of purchases depending on tech level) and 'Xenologist' (a new career with some new alien rules and alien pets) which came from older issues, nos. 80 and 79 respectively.

The first 123 pages are taken up with nine adventures: three updates of classic *Traveller* material, four from the Living *Traveller* campaign, and three that were original to *Signs and Portents*. If you make that ten, you're right, except that 'Rescue on Ruie' is both a classic and a Living *Traveller* adventure!

Long-time fans of *Traveller* will immediately recognize the classic adventures, 'Annic Nova' (the investigation of a mysterious starship) and 'Rescue on Ruie' (the rescue of a trade magnate's son) from the very first issue of *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*. Basically, these are as previously published, but updated to Mongoose rules and with new illustrations and deckplans. 'Annic Nova' has had the order of its text revised, and 'Rescue on Ruie' has been greatly expanded from the original Amber

TRAVELLER

Compendium 2

Zone. The other classic, 'Death Station', from *Double Adventure 3*, is pretty much exactly as found there.

The four Living *Traveller* adventures are a good variety; 'Rescue on Ruie' has been mentioned and includes Marc hault-Oberlindes as a patron who, if memory serves, is Marc Miller's alter ego. My personal favorite, because I had the privilege of actually playing it at TravCon11 in a game refereed by the author, is Andy Lilly's 'Of Dust Spice and Dew-claws', a great romp around Wavecrest city on Mora trying to help some Aslan retrieve an extremely valuable cargo of dust-spice. I enjoyed the feel this gave of actually visiting Mora and encountering Aslan. 'Spinward Fenderbender', by Steven Parker, involves a collision in space that leads to much derring-do. 'A Festive Occasion', by Hans Rancke-Madsen, is also set on Mora and involves nobility, Ine Givar plots, and exclusive functions in the ducal palace.

'Otherworld Blues' and 'Old Acquaintances' are two linked adventures by Jacob Ross concerning

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Critics' Corner

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new gaming technology and its application to military training. 'The Thing in the Pit' by Alex Greene is tale of horror inspired by the BBC TV show 'Quatermass and the Pit'.

The remaining fifty-odd pages collect some of the *Traveller* articles from *Signs and Portents* with the usual mixture of careers, patrons, assorted rules, and articles on gaming. Their utility will depend on the likes or needs of individual referees, but there's much of interest here, from Lindsay Jackson's excellent thoughts on what to do when players haven't turned up for a session to the xenologist career ("much more than a scientist—an adventurer, an explorer, a businessman"). 'Space Bazaar' offers six pages of items and weapons to spend money on; 'Parallel Dimensions' looks at the possibility of inter-dimensional travel; and 'Mass Battles' provides rules for large-scale conflicts between massive space fleets. 'A Helping Hand', 'Old Flames', 'A Friend in Need', and 'The Flying Money Pit' all offer patrons or small adventure ideas. 'Balancing the Books' looks (in detail) at ship finances and admits that such minutiae may not be to everyone's taste. 'A Gallery of Outsiders' provides five alien 'races' based on popular culture.

There are two 'reprints' of articles from *The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, both from issue no.16: 'SuSAG', by Loren Wiseman, and Jolly Blackburn's 'Give the Bank a Fighting Chance' (with a minor title change) are both pretty much identical to the original text but with paragraph break revisions. Interestingly, 'SuSAG' appeared in *Signs and Portents* branded as Corporation rather than *Traveller* which is appropriate as it details a megacorporation.

Physically, the book is an attractive hardcover in the plain black book style of Mongoose publications. Both compendiums uniquely have orange trim; neither has a strapline like the books and supplements. The three column layout of the original magazine articles has been revised here to two columns which

provides more space in the margins and a less crowded feel; this obviously means that the articles have been reformatted as well. In general, all the original artwork has moved across as well. The volume is also available as a PDF from DriveThruRPG.

Given that virtually all of this material is, or has been online for free at some point (the *Living Traveller* adventures appear to have now been removed), it's a good question as to how valuable this book is. If you collected the adventures when they were available, are happy to root through the back issues of *Signs and Portents*, and have access to the classic adventures, then there is no new material here at all. One particularly significant lack in a volume such as this, is an index which would help considerably with locating various bits and pieces. If, on the other hand, you want the classic adventures in Mongoose format, or want all this high quality material in one handy place, then *Compendium 2* is certainly worth investigating. Of course, the fact that it's available in printed form as well as electronic might sway those who particularly want a physical hardcopy. Even if the rule variations and short articles are not of particular interest, the price is worth it for just the adventures presented here.

It's a pity that the source periodical has gone on such an extended hiatus, but here's to the return of *Signs and Portents* in the near future and much high calibre *Traveller* material for a third compendium!

¹ A few articles from *Signs and Portents* don't make the selection: a 'Bestiary' (no.89) converting Springers and Kian to Mongoose animal format by Roger Moore; an article by William H. Keith, 'Destiny: Within the Two Thousand Worlds' (no.88, originally from JTAS, no.21), one page of observations by Debbie Fulton on women in role playing and female characters in *Traveller* (no.86), and 'Augments and Prosthetics', by Alan Oliver (no.82) which isn't connected with *Supplement 8: Cybernetics*. Also not included are the various 'Ships for Traveller' by either Andrew Welty or Ian Stead which for the most part went to *Supplement 10: Merchants and Cruisers* with some revisions, seven articles and adventures for the *Judge Dredd Traveller* line, and four pieces for *Cthonian Stars*. One item branded as *Traveller* but described as being aimed at "horror RPG referees" didn't make the cut either: 'Jagged Shards and Nightmares' (no.84). ☹



The Galactic Gourmet

by Michael Brown

Patron: Merchant

No. of Players: 2-6

Required Equipment: Starship

Required Skills: None

Players' Information: The party is approached by Andin Gustavus, a chef and restaurateur renowned throughout the subsector. He is planning a tour to scout out restaurant locations on other worlds and wants to hire the group's ship as transport, as well as employ them as aides and bodyguards. He will possibly have other work for them in the future if they do a good job. He offers to pay standard charter rates for the duration, plus Cr1500 per crew member per week that participates. Naturally, a few gourmet meals are also part of the deal.

Referee's Information: Select 6-8 worlds in the subsector with starport class A or B for Gustavus to visit. If there are fewer than that number of worlds in the subsector which meet that criteria, then select a few worlds in the immediately adjacent subsector (s) to round out the number. He will spend a week on each world, during which time the group will have varied duties depending on the circumstances he encounters. The referee is not limited to using only one or two of the following circumstances; one per week may be imposed to create a mini-campaign if need be.

1. A crowd of fans and well-wishers has gotten advance notice of Gustavus' arrival and mobs him almost as soon as he steps off the starship. The PCs will be hard-pressed to prevent harm to him as they try to get him to safety. Each character providing aid must throw their DEX or less on 2D or take 2 hits from being roughed up by the crowd. The referee should make the same throw for Gustavus. On any round in which fewer than half of the characters succeed, *and* Gustavus fails, Gustavus will take one hit. If Gustavus and half or more of the characters succeed, *or* if all characters escape damage

(regardless of whether Gustavus' throw succeeds), they succeed in getting a shaken Gustavus to safety.

2. One of Gustavus' rivals has allowed his animosity to overtake him and he has subsequently decided to dog the chef through the subsector attempting to undermine and discredit him. On any world the PCs and Gustavus visit, throw 2D for 7 exactly. If the throw is successful, the rival has spread rumors and lies about Gustavus and his methods that will set the press on the party and impose a -2 DM on any reactions to them. The rival himself will be present on a further throw of 2D for 12 exactly. If present, he will loudly and publicly confront Gustavus directly, ridiculing him and trying to turn his fans and potential business partners against him. He will quickly accept any challenge to compete through cooking.

3. An overeager fan of the great chef has, through trickery or plain good luck, managed to bypass all guards and reach her hero. While meaning no harm, her gushing praise and overly friendly manner may appear on the outside to be unbalanced, possibly even dangerous behavior. Unfortunately, the media is ever-present, and any harsh treatment of the woman by the PCs will be beamed around the planet in seconds, with appropriate social and legal results.

4. Gustavus is confronted by a group of people who believe that they each contracted food poisoning from one of his restaurants (referee's call as to whether or not the accusation is true) and blame him for it. They demand restitution. The offended group will number 1D times the number of PCs. They are not armed (that the adventurers know of), but they are angry, frustrated, and more than willing to escalate the situation. Of course, if any of Gustavus' establishments *is* responsible, he will want to investigate forthwith.

5. While hosting a cooking event, Gustavus commits some breach of local propriety, whether through his actions, his choice of foodstuffs, or even his choice of ingredients. The offense is considered

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serious enough on this planet that the situation may even progress to violence. The adventurers have the option of hustling the chef off-world as quickly as possible before the crowd gets hold of him, or dusting off their best diplomatic skills to head off any unpleasantness.

6. As 3, except that the fan is deranged and committed to harming Gustavus. The referee is encouraged to make this person as smart and dangerous as necessary to give the group a good runaround.

As always, the referee must determine the flow of subsequent events.

7. After an orderly appearance on a broadcast interview, some well-behaved fans appear at the studio exit to request that Gustavus autograph copies of his book. Gustavus would be happy to comply... except that he hasn't written a book, and will insist on staying on-world to investigate and find out who is actually responsible for the book. The referee has discretion to determine Gustavus' willingness to be associated with the book. ☼

Doing It My Way

Hostile Intent: Alternative Combat Rules for Mongoose Traveller

by Sam Lockwood

Introduction

In many ways, Mongoose improved on the Classic Traveller game engine's combat rules. In others, I feel they've added some unnecessary complexity.

In particular, the initiative/recoil/heft system is a bit fiddly. I also don't care for the way things can be "gamed" such as autofire or how a player chooses which characteristics get damaged after Endurance.

Overall, the object of these rules is to make combat play faster with less book-keeping. I've also tried to add some areas that actually *needed* some detail, such as vehicle maneuvering.

Initiative

The initiative roll is 1d6 instead of 2d6. Certain careers get a DM if the character completed a term successfully:

- +2 for Army (Cavalry or Infantry) or Marine (Ground Assault or Star Marine).
- +1 for Agent (Law Enforcement) or Rogue (Enforcer).

Leadership and tactics rolls use the 'aid another' DMs, which means that rolling poorly will result in

an initiative penalty. Surprised characters have their initiative roll halved.

Regardless of DMs, the maximum initiative possible is 12, and the minimum is 1.

The Combat Round

Characters act in order of their initiative numbers, highest to lowest. If multiple characters have the same initiative number, they take simultaneous actions. The method used to declare simultaneous actions is up to the referee.

A character can choose to delay their action until a lower number, and if the count drops to 1 the character starts the round delaying at 12. This may mean that in some cases a character who delays may end up acting twice in a given round. This is balanced by the lack of action in the previous round.

Defensive Actions

These rules replace the rules for reactions. A defensive action is a significant action, and there are two basic defenses:

Dodging: This is used to avoid ranged attacks. The character applies their Athletics (co-ordination) and Dexterity DM (if positive) as negative DMs to all ranged attacks made against them. The minimum Dodge DM is -1.

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Parrying: This is used to defend against melee attacks. The character applies the appropriate Melee specialty and positive Dexterity DM as negative DMs to melee attacks made against them, with a minimum of -1.

Aiming

Aiming has no effect on melee attacks, and a profound effect on ranged attacks. A ranged attack conducted without first taking an Aim action in the same round is called snap fire.

Melee Combat

All melee combat is at personal to close range. Most melee weapons can only strike within personal range, while reach weapons (the pike and halberd) may strike at close range with a -3 DM. Some large animals may have Reach weapons as natural weapons.

Relative stance applies a DM as follows:

Attacker	Defender	Attack DM
Standing	Crouching	+1
	Prone	+2
Crouching	Standing	-1
	Prone	-1
Prone	Standing	-2
	Crouching	-1

As in the core rules, the melee task uses the character's Strength DM and the appropriate Melee specialty.

Ranged Combat

Instead of a table, all ranged weapons have an effective range band that uses the weapon's base ranged attack DM. Each successive range band increases the difficulty as follows:

Range Band	Aimed	Snap
Base Range	0	-3
1 band beyond Base	-3	-6
2 bands beyond Base	-6	No

When converting weapons from the core rulebook, use the following guidelines:

- Thrown weapons and shotguns have base range Close (to 3m).
- Pistols have base range Short (to 12m)
- Assault Weapons have base range Medium (to 50m)
- Rifles and Rockets have base range Long (to 250m).

For example, an assault rifle converts to a base range of medium. The difficulty profile would be:

Range Band	Aimed	Snap
To Medium	0	-3
Long	-3	-6
Very Long	-6	No

Recoil and Heft

These numbers are largely ignored except:

Melee weapons with a negative heft apply that DM to their Parry DM if they're skilled. This means that the Cutlass and Rapier are superior parrying weapons.

Melee Weapons with a heft of two or more are generally 2-handed weapons, although you may have to make some judgement calls. Any reach weapon is usually 2-handed.

Ranged weapons are put into 3 categories, that effect their use in Zero G combat:

Recoilless: These weapons have no recoil rating (-) on the weapons tables. They can be used freely in zero G with no ill effects.

Normal Recoil: Recoil ratings are 1 or less. The character must make a Zero G task (average; Dex) when firing these weapons. The difficulty goes up to Difficult (-2) if the character isn't braced against a solid object.

High Recoil: Recoil rating of 2 or higher. As normal recoil but the difficulties are Difficult if braced or Formidable if not.

Disoriented characters can take no actions until they succeed at a Zero G task (average; Dex; minor action) to right themselves.

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Ammo and Rate of Fire

Most of the time, even trained soldiers will use the highest rate of fire possible when in combat. To reflect this, all weapons except autofire weapons have only one rate of fire. With weapons other than single-shot weapons, the magazine value is number of attacks instead of the individual number of bullets or charges.

Rapid Fire: Most non-autofire weapons with a magazine of 10 or more are rapid fire. Halve their magazine value, to reflect the faster rate of fire. Round fractions down. Rapid fire weapons get a +1 DM to attacks.

Autofire: Divide the magazine by the autofire number, rounding down. Autofire weapons can be used on one of two ways: They can fire at a single target, getting the autofire number as a positive DM to hit, *or* the character can fire at a number of targets equal to the autofire number, using up a “shot” for each target and suffering a -3 DM vs. all targets. Each target is a separate attack roll.

Shotguns: All shotguns have a +2 DM to hit since they fire a spray of pellets rather than a single projectile.

Armor and Weapon Effects

If you have the *Central Supply Catalog*, use the armor rules from there. If you have only the core rulebook and/or *Mercenary*:

- The gauss pistol, assault rifle, autorifle, rifle, and accelerator rifle negate 1 point of target armor.
- The ACR negates 3 points of armor.
- The Gauss rifle negates 4 points of armor.
- Shotguns are “soft target” weapons, which means that the target’s armor is doubled against shotgun damage.
- Stunners are “area effect” weapons, as are flamethrowers from the CSC. They ignore armor on open vehicles, or non-sealed suits of armor.

Only vacc suits, combat armor, and battledress offer protection against area effects.

If you have CSC, apply the armor rules as listed, except for melee weapons. Weapons listed as “Mace” should be Semi-AP weapons. “Armor reduced” weapons are Armor Piercing, and “Armor halved” weapons are Super-AP.

Explosives

The effects of explosives are streamlined. If you have the CSC, use the primary radius as the basis. An explosive has two possible areas of effect:

Blast: The attack does full damage to the target, and half damage to targets in the primary radius.

Frag: The attack does full damage to the target and to all targets in the primary radius, and half damage to targets out to twice the primary radius.

Armor-piercing effects are only applied to the primary target. Soft-target and area effects are applied to the primary target and targets in the blast/frag radius.

Only a single damage roll is made, as opposed to damage rolls for each target at differing distances. Placed charges add the Effect of the Explosives skill roll to damage.

Explosive Special Effects: The special effects for explosives from the Core Rulebook are as follows:

Explosive	Damage	Effects
Grenade, Frag	5d6	Frag 3m, Soft Target
Grenade, Stun	3d6	Area Effect, Frag 1.5m, Stun
Plastic Explosive	3d6	Frag 6m
Pocket Nuke	2d6×10	Frag 45m
Rocket, TL6	4d6	AP 8, Blast 3m
Rocket, TL7	4d6+3	AP 8, Blast 3m
Rocket, TL8	5d6	AP 10, Blast 3m
Rocket, TL9	5d6+5	AP 10, Blast 3m
TDX	4d6	Frag 12m

Damage and Injury

All attack rolls should have a timing die rolled with them like any other task roll. In this case, the

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timing determines hit location rather than how long the task takes. Hit location determines the order in which characteristics suffer damage, referred to here as wounds:

'Timing'	Location	Wounds
1,2	Arm/Leg	STR, END, DEX
3,4,5	Torso	END, STR, DEX
6	Head	DEX, END, STR

Damage from explosions and area-effect weapons (or falling) ignores the hit location rule, and should be applied as torso hits.

Roll damage as normal. A character with at least two characteristics above zero but less than full is considered injured.

Incapacitation: When two characteristics are reduced to zero, the character is incapacitated and knocked unconscious. When a character is first incapacitated, they must make a task roll for each characteristic at zero (using the DM for the characteristic's full normal value). If the roll fails, the characteristic is reduced by an amount equal to effect.

Incapacitated characters that regain consciousness can only take free actions. A conscious incapacitated character that suffers further damage doesn't need to make any more "saving throws" for characteristic loss, but will be knocked unconscious again.

Death: When all three characteristics are reduced to zero the character is mortally wounded but not necessarily dead. The character makes a "not quite dead" yet roll that's similar to the "saving throw" for incapacitation mentioned above. Apply any damage in excess of what reduced the 3rd characteristic to zero as a negative DM to this roll. If the character succeeds, they instead survive with 1 point on that last characteristic rather than being dead.

Stun Damage: Stun damage is rolled normally, and weapons that have split damages should use

the full stun damage value + $\frac{1}{2}$ the non-stun value. For example the shock baton in CSC does $2d6 + 1d6$ stun. This would convert to $2d6$ stun. Half-dice convert to a +3 to damage.

Compare stun damage to the character's Endurance. If the damage is equal to or greater than this, the character is knocked out for 1 minute. If the damage is twice Endurance, the character is knocked out for 10 minutes, and each extra multiple of Endurance adds another 10 minutes. First aid won't revive the character during this time.

Blunt conventional weapons can be used to deal stun damage, but have a -1 DM to hit and have their damage rolls halved when using them this way.

Healing and Medical Treatment

Injured characters heal $3 + \text{End DM}$ points per day they rest, and End DM points per day they remain active. Incapacitated characters heal End DM points per day only.

Healing is always applied in the order of Dex, Str, then End unless otherwise noted.

First Aid: First aid can be used to either heal injured characters, or revive an unconscious character. If used to heal, the patient heals effect points. First aid is a Medic (Edu) task with a time increment of 1 minute.

Surgery: Surgery can benefit patients if they are treated within 1 hour of incapacitation. Surgery can heal damage equal to the effect of the successful roll. This healing can be used to heal wounds, or can be traded on a 2:1 basis to remove permanent injury suffered to characteristics. However, failed surgery causes effect damage. Surgery is a Medic (Dex) task with a time increment of 10 minutes.

Medical Care: Long term medical care doesn't require a task roll (although timing should be rolled if it matters, with an increment of 1 hour). A character can heal a patient's injuries at a rate of $2 + \text{Medic skill}$, and these points can be distributed as desired. A doctor can perform this task several times a day as time allows.

Doing It My Way

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Self-Doctoring: A non-incapacitated character can self-medicate, but this becomes Difficult rather than Average. Regaining of characteristics is at half the rate for Medical Care.

Healing Limits: A character can only receive the benefits of medical care once per day, and only the first successful attempt is used.

Injury and Recovery Example

Brooke (UPP 596A87) takes a shotgun blast to the torso, suffering 14 points of damage. This reduces her End and Str to zero, and takes two points off her dex (070), and incapacitates her. She has to roll saves for her Str and End, and rolls 6 and 8 respectively. This drops her maximum Strength to 3.

Her brother Sam is a skilled surgeon (UPP 694878, Medic 2), and sets to work on her soon after the rest of the *Tranquility* crew finishes with the pirates. Sam does really well on his surgery roll, roll a total of 14 for an effect of 6. Sam decides to use 4 points to heal the 2 points of permanent Strength damage, and the other 2 points towards healing wounds. This brings Brooke's physical UPP to 090.

Sam continues to provide medical care, and adds 4 points to Brooke's natural healing of -3 per day. This means she gains 1 point of Strength and is no longer incapacitated. On day 2, her natural healing rate is now 1 point with rest, plus Sam's medical care of 4 points. This brings her Strength up to full and her End to 1.

Brooke decides she's been in bed long enough, and begins to do small things around the ship (much to her brother's consternation). She does consent to continued medical care, so she continues to heal slowly, gaining 2 points on the 3rd day, and 3 points to fully heal by the 4th day.

Vehicles: Maneuvering

One big hole in the *Traveller* rules has always been vehicle maneuvering. The core rulebook is no different. For this, apply the following simple rules.

Vehicles have an acceleration limit determined by their agility, based on the vehicle's top speed:

Agility	Divide Speed By
-1 or less	10
0, 1	5
2, 3	4
4 or more	3

A vehicle can't accelerate more than this value per round. Ground vehicles may decelerate twice acceleration. All vehicles have a "safe speed" equal to twice acceleration, allowing tighter maneuvering.

Turn: A vehicle can execute a 90 degree turn at or below safe speed, or a 45 degree turn above safe speed, without a skill roll. "Turn" is the total amount of direction change in a round, not an individual number of direction changes. A failed control roll of effect 2 or less simply means the turn isn't completed (or a 90 ends up being a 45 instead), while effect of 3 or more means that the vehicle has a skid, spin, or collides with a nearby object.

Tight Turn: A tight turn is 180 degrees at safe speed or 90 degrees above safe speed.

Climbing and Diving: Flyers can use their acceleration to gain altitude, gaining one meter per kph of acceleration. The aircraft can increase acceleration by losing altitude, but can't increase acceleration by more than double by diving. Fixed-wing vehicles with an agility less than 0 can't ever trade more than 50% of their acceleration for a climb, and can't gain more than 50% of their acceleration from diving.

Climbing and diving rules also apply to Submersibles, substituting depth for altitude.

Vehicle Damage

Vehicle damage is greatly simplified, and uses the hit location system developed for characters.

The first step is to divide any damage done to the vehicle by 3, rounding down, to determine the number of "hits." As with character damage, apply the timing rule using a modified version of the vehicle damage table (see next page).

Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 9)

Timing Die	Vehicle External	Vehicle Internal	Drone/Robot
1	Hull	Structure	Hull
2	Hull	Structure	Hull
3	Hull	Passengers	Hull
4	Weapon	Cargo	Weapon/Limb
5	Drive	Power Plant	Drive
6	Sensors	Computer/Cockpit	Sensors/Computer

Calculate the full hits value vs. the given location. On a vehicle, use the listed external system first. If the hull is depleted go to the same row on internal hits.

If the vehicle is without a weapon, drive, or sensors, treat as a hull hit.

If a given location use two systems, apply hits to the first, then the second, then to hull or structure as appropriate.

Hits to cargo transfer to the cargo (sub-vehicles or items). Passenger or crew hits convert to 1 die per hit, divided evenly as possible in full dice among the various crew, and treated as area effect damage.

Vehicle Damage Example

The PCs are traveling in an ATV in rugged terrain, and are ambushed by bandits who start the festivities by firing the two TL 8 rocket launchers they have at the ATV.

The first attack roll is an 8, and the AP value of 10 for the rocket launcher negates all but two points of the ATV's armor. This leaves 2 points to resist the damage roll 15, for 13 damage. This translates to 4 hits, and the timing roll of 3 is a hull hit, dropping the ATV's hull to 1 point.

The second rocket attack is a 10, which adds two to the damage roll of 15, which is a net 15 with the armor. Timing this time is 6, for 5 hits of damage. The first two take out the vehicle's comms and sensors, and the 3rd hit reduces the hull to zero. The remaining damage goes to the internal column. As the ATV has no on-board computer, the remaining 2 hits are applied to the cockpit. As there is only one crew person, the character driving, that person suffers 2d6 damage.

Sample Weapon Data

The table at the bottom of the page shows the altered combat statistics for selected weapons from the *Core Rulebook*.

Weapon	Range	Damage	Magazine	Notes
Autopistol	Short	3d6-3	7	Rapid Fire
Club	Melee	1d6		Blunt
Dagger	Melee/Close	1d6+2		
Gauss Rifle	Long	4d6	20	Autofire 2
Laser Carbine	Medium	4d6	25	No Recoil; Rapid Fire
Rapier	Melee	1d6+4		Parry 2
Rifle	Long	3d6		Armor Piercing 1
Rocket Launcher (TL6)	Long	4d6	1	Armor Piercing 8; Blast 3m
Shotgun	Short	4d6		High Recoil; Shotgun; Soft Targets
Staff	Melee	2d6		Blunt; Reach
Stunner	Short*	2d6	50	Area Effect; No Recoil; Rapid Fire; Stun
Stunstick	Melee	1d6		Stun

* The maximum range for a stunner is also Short.



General Purpose Hoverjeep

designed by Timothy Collinson

Vehicle	TL	Skill	Agility	Speed	Range	Crew/Psgrs	Cargo	Open?	Hull	Stru	Cost (Lv.)	Ship'g Size
General Purpose Hoverjeep (Lt Hover, 5 sp)	8	Drive (hover)	+1	200	500	1/3	1	Y	1	2	75,000	2.5

Armor	Other Equipment
All Facings (Left, Right, Front, Back, Top, Bottom)	Basic Controls.

The General Purpose Hoverjeep is an old design that has served well on many frontier worlds. It wins no awards in the looks department but is just about the simplest utility hover vehicle on the market. It's considerably cheaper than the Bridgeport-Swift Songbird¹ and is much lighter. It is, however, not quite as fast and doesn't have the same range. Mass produced as cheaply as possible, it may have no bells and whistles but is robust, mechanically sound, and simple to operate and maintain. One driver and one passenger can sit in some limited comfort – these aren't built with luxury in mind – with a small amount of cargo space behind. Two more passengers can just squeeze in behind but at the expense of nearly all the cargo space. Very limited amounts of equipment can be attached to the sides, rear and engine cover. The windshield can be rotated forwards to lie flat on the engine cover if required.

Popular amongst the homesteading community as an all-purpose vehicle that suits the rough terrain many have to work on and around, the hoverjeep has also been used in a wide variety of roles from small survey teams to mail delivery, from search

and rescue to light ambulance duties. In less civilized areas, weapons can be mounted – typically on a central pintle between driver and front seat passenger and operated from the rear seat. Of course, its ability to cross open stretches of water make it even more useful in a variety of environments and some worlds see them in use as river or canal taxis.

The open nature of the hoverjeep means that it can only generally be used on worlds with breathable atmospheres and relatively hospitable weather, although an additional purchase can include a frame and soft cover to enclose the vehicle from the windshield backwards. Many models also include a small winch either mounted at the front of the engine housing or the rear.

Some worlds have 'stretch' versions of the vehicle used in applications such as urban public transport.

1 Although the 2300AD volume (p.175) gives the price of the Songbird as Lv26,500, this seems to be impossible under the design rules. (A light hovercraft is 20,000 per space, so 120,000 for the six spaces. Less 25% for having an open passenger and an open cargo area = 90,000. Plus TL8 Commo at 2,000 and Basic Navigation at 2,000. Total: 94,000.)





Earth Alliance Salvage Shuttle

by Richard Page

Earth Alliance Light Shuttle (Salvage Shuttle Variant)			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	90T Distributed	Hull 1 Structure 1	90	1.71
Armour	None		0	0
Manoeuvre Drive	sP Reaction Drive	Thrust 4	3.5	7
Power Plant	sG Fusion Plant	2	3	6
Cockpit	4 Crew		6	0.4
Computer	Model 2	Rating 10	0	0.16
Electronics	Basic Civilian	-1 DM	1	0.05
Weapons	None		0	0
Fuel	19.25T + 0.75T (Fusion Plant – 7 days endurance)		20	0
Software	Manoeuvre/0, Library/0, Intellect/1, Intel. Interf./1, Expert/1, Remote Ops		0	0.0031
Extras	Airlock, 4 Firmpoints, All-Terrain Landing System, Salvage Module		18	5.3
Cargo	38.5T		38.5	0
Total Tonnage and Cost			90	20.6231

The Earth Alliance Salvage Shuttle is a purpose-built standard light shuttle that has been optimised for the salvage of debris and destroyed spacecraft. The shuttle is a short-ranged vehicle, designed to operate from Space Stations and specialist Salvage ships, recovering salvaged items that otherwise might be a hazard to navigation. Originally built before the Dilgar War, demand for them increased as Earth Alliance began using them to recover Dilgar and League technologies from combat areas. They were also used in the aftermath of the Battle of the Line, to recover damaged spacecraft, fighters and their crews.

Features

Firmpoints: Each shuttle is equipped with two pairs of firmpoints (0.5T, 0.2 MCr per pair) which can be used to attach different types of modules to the shuttle. Each pair of firmpoints are on either side of the shuttle and must use the same type of attached module (for example, you could attach two fuel modules to the front pair and two cargo modules to the rear pair). If you have any modules attached to a shuttle, the hull counts as being distributed rather than standard. The two most common modules used are 5T cargo and fuel modules (not interchangeable – you can't use the cargo ones for

fuel and vice-versa), which cost 0.01 MCr empty, have negligible mass and hold either 5T of cargo or fuel respectively. On the Salvage Shuttle, the rear pair are permanently used to hold the Salvage Module and are unavailable for any other module.

Salvage Module: The Salvage Module is a permanent fixture on the rear firmpoints of a Salvage Shuttle. It consists of a large drone retrieval gantry which also supports two grappling arms and two pods – each holding a standard probe drone and four 1T salvage drones (repair drones optimised for salvage recovery). The module takes up 15T of space and costs 4.5 MCr.

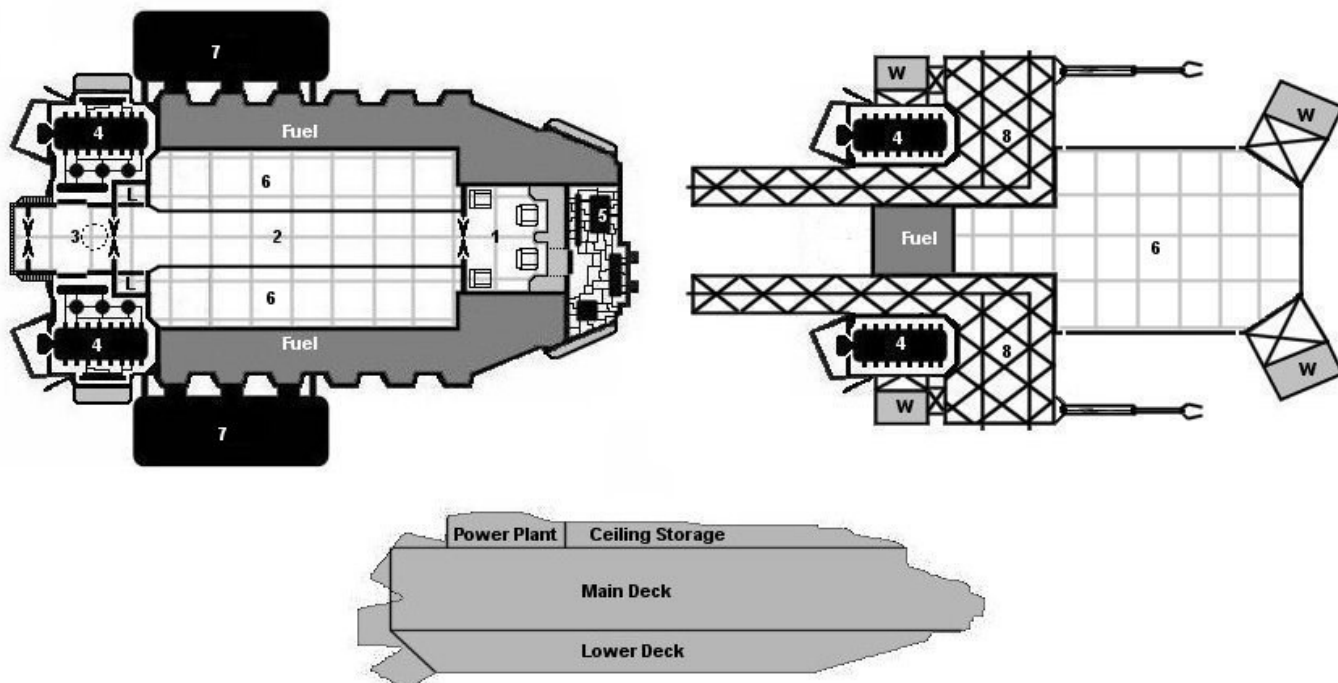
Landing Struts: The STG-19 Shuttles are designed to operate from ships, stations and prepared landing areas. Because of this, the landing struts are unsuitable for landing on unprepared or uneven ground. An 'All-Terrain' extendable landing pad system is available – it takes up 1T of cargo space and costs 0.2 MCr. This is fitted as standard on a Salvage Shuttle due to the extensive salvage module.

Other Features: Each salvage shuttle is usually equipped with two or more lockers for EVA suits (located near the airlock) for two of the crew to perform EVA manoeuvres, as well as many small storage compartments located in the overhead area.

(Continued on page 13)

The Shipyard

(Continued from page 12)



Deck plan key.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Cockpit/Control Cabin. 2 Main cargo or transport cabin. 3 Airlock with fold-down powered ramp and ceiling access to Power Plant. 4 Engines (access panels located in airlock area). 5 Sensors and Computer/Electronics (access panel located in crawl-space under co-pilot control console). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Main cargo area (open through main and lower deck, with sliding doors for external access on each side of lower deck). 7 Drone Storage Pod (each with 1 Probe and 4 Salvage Drones). 8 Drone retrieval gantry and Grapple Arms. L Lockers. W Landing strut well. |
|--|--|

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller News and Findings

September 2012

- **Terra/Sol Games** has released *Techbook: Chrome* and initiated a Kickstarter project for *Six Guns: Lasers*
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Subsector Sourcebook 4: Sequoyah* and *Cascadia Adventures 2: The Lost Girl*
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book IIO: Lurking Shadow*, *Starships Book III: Orbital Shuttle*, and *Starships Book IOOO: Stellar Shuttle*
- **Expeditious Retreat Press** has released *Awmrie - Lyart Subsector*, *Deave - Lyart Subsector*, *Gryce - Lyart Subsector*, *Worlds Apart Suppliers*, and *Worlds Apart*
- **Gorgon Press** has released *Kalashain* and *Ship Book: Garuda-class MSV*



Drop Out

by Ken Murphy

Part 19

The Showroom was a gigantic building almost the size of the largest sports arenas. Behind it sat the many-blocks-long technological sprawl of hundreds of different buildings of all shapes and sizes that made up the majority of Heimdall's Computer and Robotics Research and Manufacturing facilities on-planet.

Inside, the walls were decorated with stylized pipes, cables, gears, clocks, pistons, machinery, rivets and what appeared to be robots embedded within the bas-relief.

The first several floors were devoted to the hundreds of different models of computers; from general-purpose personal models, to special-purpose models designed for everything from vehicles to starship, to ultra-specialized and esoteric one-offs.

The next few floors were for the mind-numbing tens of thousands of different programs, each one available in multiple sizes and configuration, and covering things as mundane as a home management program to the very latest in Naval Simulations & Combat Theory.

The top several floors were devoted to thousands of different robots; from the dumbest Cleanbot or Servebot to valets, back loaders or Refuse Collection bots, to security and defense bots, to massive construction robots 20m high or more, to robots expert in one or more fields. Whether tool, servant, guard, companion, mentor, or even lover, it could all be found inside the walls of The Showroom.

In fact, while some humans were to be found helping customers, the majority of the team that escorted customers through the massive maze and explained what was what were actually robots; the humans being called in when the finer points of commerce were to be discussed.

"This is all very nice, Barrabas." Captain Fyyg told their robot-controlled sled as they passed

through a small forest of a hundred or so different models of robot children; all stock still. "But, as I said earlier, what we want is a robotic surgeon."

Sometimes a robot's decision tree had some odd branches.

"Robotic Surgeon!" Barrabas repeated. "Why didn't you say so?" he cheerfully asked as a quick right nailed one of the robot kids with the rear left bumper.

Eventually Barrabas pulled over at what appeared to be the right area, and, after the group exited the vehicle, it left them to find and transport another group made up of tourists, shoppers, or both.

The group from the *Waffles* stood looking at several different medical robots. Not counting several variations of each, the first type looked like a centipede or snake that coiled down from a fixture in the ceiling above the operating table; the eight limbs below its head equipped with various surgeon's tools.

The second was a booth externally similar to a cryoberth, but packed with a dozen or so manipulators that were equipped to perform surgical tasks.

"That's the man, Officer!" Ilsa laughed as she pointed at the third type. If it weren't for the fact that Ilsa knew the surgeon that had fixed her damaged arm was still on Nordic Prime, she'd swear he was standing right in front of her.

"So this is the unit we want for the *Waffles* then, Ilsa?" the Captain asked, looking somewhat skeptically at the strange looking, multi-armed robot with the big block head and three legs.

"Definitely," the Second Officer answered.

As they chatted, a robot stepped from out of the bas-relief of the wall and introduced itself as Larry.

Larry gave them all the technical specifications of the robot and answered any and all questions. And butting heads with a guy like Fyyg, there were a lot of questions.

Once Captain Fyyg told Larry they'd take the surgeon, it thanked them and used its comm to contact a human sales associate before returning to the wall, saying someone would be with them shortly.

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 14)

When the sandy-haired human arrived, he was wearing a blue and white name badge with 'Kevin' written on it sloppily in pen. Nordel was all ready to buy the thing when he was told there just weren't any more in stock. The company had recently filled a contract for this unit with the Imperial Navy, and there just weren't any more to be had until the company did its next production run. Which was longer than the crew from the *Waffles* would probably like to stick around.

"So you are telling me that this one in front of me is the last one, then?"

"In a manner of speaking, sir." the scrawny kid answered, both answering and not at the same time.

"Ah, but there is one and I want to buy it!"

"No sir, that robot is out of stock."

"But I am looking at it right in front of me, lad!" The Captain tried reasoning.

"This one here," Kevin said, rapping it on the side of its big, boxy head, "is our display model, sir. We are not permitted to sell our display models. I'm sorry, sir, but that's just company policy..."

Fyyg patted the flak on the shoulder, "It's okay, pup..." he said, smiling a warm, understanding smile. Nice and smooth the Captain asked, "Son, could I please speak to the Manager?"

With the swagger knocked out of him, the young salesman deflated and backed off a ways before contacting his superior on the comm.

Once Captain Fyyg explained the situation with the robot to the Manager, face to face, things happened mighty fast. The Manager promised the Captain that the salesman was at fault, not knowing the merchandise or store policy, and before you knew it, the *Waffles* gang discovered that Heimdall did in fact sell their floor models. At half.

Once outside, they discussed what to do. The robot had been activated only part way, its lower

functions providing the motive power to control it and move it along. It stood there, serene, waiting.

Brodie moved his large hand in front of the robot's face, getting no response.

"Look! Nobody's home!" he laughed.

Everyone was laughing, with Fyyg telling Brodie "...and they gave it to us for only eighty thousand! Half the normal price, if you can believe it!"

"Really?" Brodie asked, interested suddenly in the robot. Checking the gaskets at neck and trunk with a multitool, Brodie suddenly grinned.

"Hmmm. Looks good, Captain. The primary seals still appear to be in tact."

Taking Fyyg's cigarette case from inside the Captain's jacket, Brodie took out one of the Captain's smokes and lit it. Taking a couple of puffs he grinned again. "See, sometimes these floor models are cobbled together out of several different wrecks—whose seals have been compromised by trauma or reassembly—to serve as a representation of what the thing should look like. but is not necessarily a good, working model. Ya follow me, right?"

"Yes, Mr. Le Boucherre..." the Captain said, not sounding all that sure himself, with eighty grand suddenly on the line.

"I don't know how long this thing has been out of its box, but aside from a few scratches and a dent or two, I'd say its in perfect shape!"

"I hope its got a better personality than Doc Billings," Tam said, "That old pervert was always trying to grope my butt!"

Kevin stepped out of the cyclopean Showroom and descended the stair two at a time, angry that he'd been fired minutes before for purportedly arguing with a customer.

"That asshole and that fucking robot!" he started, mumbling to himself. "If I ran into that guy I'd like to..."

Too busy grousing to pay any real attention to the world around him, Kevin suddenly bumped into Brodie, who was innocently standing there

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 15)

among robot and shipmates, enjoying a well-earned smoke. Both tumbled down several stair together, tangled, end-over-end, cursing and wrestling.

As they came to a halt, the kid had Brodie pinned, face down in a Half Nelson; Kevin yelling "What do you think you're doing, you beat up old Monkey?"

Folded oddly and uncomfortably over two large steps, Brodie yelled back, "Kid, why're you hurtin' me?"

"If I let you go, you're gonna leave me alone, right?" Kevin asked.

"Sure sure!" Brodie grunted as the blond kid let go and stepped back.

Springing up, Brodie smoothed some of his hair here and there. Retrieving his checkered, pork pie hat, he turned to the kid and told him "Okay junior, you got me. But I ain't no freakin' Monkey, see?" as he adjusted his coat. "Monkeys are about the size of a baby and have tails. I am not the size of a baby, nor do I have a tail! Got it?"

"Sorry Mister..." Kevin said, hesitantly putting his hand out to Brodie.

"Le Boucherre." Brodie said, taking the offered hand. "Brodie Le Boucherre. Pleased to meetcha."

"Kevin Garafalo" the scarecrow replied.

The other four approached, glad handing around and exchanging names.

Captain Fyyg was all smiles as he talked to the painfully-thin youth "That was something to see, lad! Besting one of the toughest fellows I've known. Amazing. Simply amazing..."

"Nothing really." Kevin answered. "Took seven years of Jeet Kwan Do when I was younger."

"So what brings you outside your store to wrestle with my robotics expert, Kevin? Surely this can't be considered a break."

Kevin stammered slightly, "No sir, Captain Fyyg. The Manager fired me right after you left—

said I was arguing with the customers, and I didn't know how to do my job."

"Really?" asked the Captain. "You obviously knew how to do your job. You followed your orders when I wanted to buy a robot that was unavailable to me. When a problem you could not handle arose, you contacted a superior, as a sensible sort would do. Followed procedure from beginning to end..."

"Yeah?" Kevin said, smiling at the Captain's interpretation of the events.

"I would chalk working for that unpleasant fellow back there up to politics in the workplace and let it go at that." Fyyg said, smiling and clapping a hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Kevin, let me asks you a few questions, yes?" Fyyg imposed.

"Go ahead," the kid replied.

"Are you familiar with moving cargo?"

"Yessir."

"Can you operate a Pallet Master?"

"Yessir."

Ilsa leaned close to the Captain, saying quietly, "Captain. I know we aren't looking for any crew for a few days yet, but I believe Mr. Garafalo would be an ideal fit for Mr. Moore's old position."

Moore was one of the roustabouts, or Roosters that'd handled cargo on the *Waffles* before being killed in the recent pirate attack.

"By Jove, Number Two, that is an excellent idea!" replied Captain Fyyg.

Captain Fyyg, Tam, Dave and Brodie went on with the robot as Ilsa stayed behind to give Garafalo the particulars of service aboard the *Chicken and Waffles*, as well as how to find the ship.

As Kevin got into his old sled and started driving toward home, Ilsa yelled after him, "And remember, your personal gear has an allowance of one cubic meter, maximum!"

Later that evening, Brodie was in the Med Bay with an audience gathered around to watch as the new Autodoc was activated fully. Maintenance pan-

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 16)

el seal now broken, Brodie went through the arcana of powering the robot's higher functions.

A few minutes later, the green metallic robot came to life; weaving its multiple sets of arms in an intricate pattern one might see at an art show or interpretive dance. The whole thing reminded Tam of a Thai dance troupe.

When it was done, the device seemed to kick into full awareness of its surroundings, as its boxy head with its multiple visual sensors scanned the audience.

Some of the audience applauded. There were even a few yells and whistles.

The robot raised one of its medium work arms; long, delicate index finger extended to elicit a response of silence.

Once the silence had gone on for several seconds, it introduced itself.

"Hello Shipmates," the robot said. "My name is Doctor Wang."

Later that evening a quartet of visitors showed at the airlock. One of the men was Kevin Garafalo. He had two other men and a woman in tow. None of them had more than a backpack and a small box or two—nowhere near the cubic meter maximum Ilsa had warned about.

"My roommates," Kevin explained over the com. "Quit work on the docks at Heimdall when I told them about my day, and they're hoping to be hired on."

At the airlock, Number Two nodded for the lock to be opened, and at the flick of a switch the inner door rose; pulling some of the heavy, stale, grease-smoke tinged air of the Highport into the *Waffles*.

Gladhanding was again the rule of the day as the newcomers met some of the crew.

One of the men, Euripides Johansen, was tall, old and balding, but with long hair and a long grey beard that went down to his belly, and made Tam

think of Lu-hsing, the Chinese God of Salaries. He looked to Ilsa as if he'd have a hard time with a desktide wastebasket, but both he and Kevin insisted he was up to the work.

The other man, Hagar Ermette, was a short, wide, bowlegged fellow with an enormous head, close-shaven, that seemed to grow, neckless, straight from the top of his muscular torso. His arms and hands were huge.

The single woman, Kelowna Brewster, was tiny and pale, with black hair. Tatoos could be seen running from her jawline down her neck. Her rolled-up sleeves showed that the tatoos went at least down each arm to the wrist. She had also worked at Heimdall with Garafalo, but in the computer and software departments. Hopefully, Ilsa thought on meeting her, the girl might make a good Computer Tech.

Watching the security feed on a monitor in his cabin, Captain Fyyg's interest was piqued, and he decided to come down from his cabin to meet the prospective crew.

Arriving in his plush bathrobe and crush cap; his posture and bearing in the long robe giving him an almost regal air, Nordel shook hands with each prospect; telling each, "Welcome aboard."

Seeing Kevin again, the Captain clapped him on the shoulder, saying, "And Mister Garafalo! Welcome aboard!" Then turning, he went back to his cabin; giving Number Two the thumbs up sign on the way.

As the Captain passed, she saluted, then turning to Kevin and his friends, said "I'm Second Officer Ilsa Freilander. Come with me and I'll explain your duties and show you around the ship. We'll be sure to take care of your paperwork and get you right with the Merchant Spacers' Guild tomorrow morning." ❁



Markwies-class Luriani Raider

designed by Andrew Vallance

USP
 DR-4636861-040000-30003-0 MCr486.682 400Tons
 Bat Bear 1 1 1 Crew: 12
 Bat 1 1 1 TL: 12

Cargo: 7 Crew Sect: 1 of 12 Fuel: 152 EP: 32 Agl: 6
Fuel Treatment: Scoops, On-Board Fuel Purification

Architects Fee: MCr4.867 Cost in Quantity: MCr389.346

Detailed Specifications

(High Guard Design)

Hull

400.000 tons standard, 5,600.000 cubic meters,
Flattened Sphere Configuration

Crew

Pilot, Navigator, 6 Engineers, Medic, 3 Gunners

Engineering

Jump-3, 6G Manoeuvre, Power plant-8, 32.000 EP,
Agility 6

Avionics

Bridge, Model/6 Computer

Hardpoints

4 Hardpoints

Armament

2 Triple Missile Turrets organised into 1 Battery
(Factor-3), 1 Triple Beam Laser Turret organised into
1 Battery (Factor-3)

Defenses

1 Triple Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery
(Factor-4)

Subordinate Craft

None

Fuel

152 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump + 28 days endurance);
On-Board Fuel Scoops and Fuel Purification Plant

Miscellaneous

6 Staterooms, 7 Tons Cargo

User-defined Components

None

Cost

MCr 491.549 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr
4.867), MCr 389.346 in Quantity

Construction Time

82 Weeks Singly, 65 Weeks in Quantity

Description

The standard Protectorate light raiding vessel, the *Markwies* class was intended to be rapidly produced in bulk. Its design reflects the normal Luriani preference for high-G manoeuvrable craft relying on speed and agility. In the hands of a skilled pilot, these ships could outmanoeuvre most opponents. The *Markwies* were never intended to stand in battle, rather they were meant to perform hit and run attacks, disrupting commerce and communications in an enemy's rear areas.

During the Luriani War the Protectorate built and deployed hundreds of these craft. Operating in groups of five, they ranged deep into Imperial territory, destroying communications and trade, as well as encouraging and supporting anti-Imperial sentiment on many worlds.

While unable to pose a serious threat to a defended system, they proved to be a constant nuisance, tying down large numbers of Imperial ships. Able to out run most standard Imperial escorts, the Imperium was forced to deploy cruiser class vessels to neutralise the threat.

Their standard tactics were to jump in system, conduct high speed dash raids at targets of opportunity and withdraw before defending forces could mobilise or intercept.

The deep penetration of Imperial territory achieved by these vessels presented a significant challenge to Imperial prestige and was a major factor in spreading unrest throughout the Fornast and Antares sectors.

However, these deep raids relied heavily on pre-positioned supply caches. Ultimately the Imperium responded to these raiders by attempting to destroy these supply dumps. However this required a significant investment of Intelligence resources to locate them. ☼



NHR 6000 Ship Repair Robot

by Ewan Quibell

```

Robot ID: NHR 6000 Ship Repair, TL10, Cr779,720
URP=YFx06x, STR=541, DEX=15, INT=0, EDU=6
Hull: 1/1, Size=6.75 kl, Config=0USL, Armor=40E,
Unloaded=8.8822 tons, Loaded=9.6058 tons
Power: 1/2, Fusion=4 Mw, Duration=25/75
Loco: 1/2, StdGravThr=10 tons, MxAcc=1.04G, Agl=1
Commo: Radio=Contx3 (5000 km), I/F=Brain, Program
Sensors: ActEMS=VDist (50 km), PasEMS=VDist (50 km),
Magnetic=VDist (50 km), Headltx4, Touchx8*
Off: Hardpoints=1
Def: DefDM=+3

```

	Ammo	Pen/ Attn	Dmg	Max Range	Auto Tgts	Dngr Spc	Sig	RoF
Laser Welder-9	-	9/2	3	Short (5)	1	-	M	40

```

Brain: NHR Low Function 240x3**
CPU=Linear x11, Storage=Standard x60,
FundLogic=LowData, FundCmd=LimitedBasic,
Software=Shp's Bt-1, Elec-1, Mech-1,
Engrg-1, Gravs-1, NavArch-1
Control: Panel=CompLinkx1, SlaveLinkx1
Append: HvyArmx4, VLtArmx4
Other: Cargo=0.4716 kl, Fuel=3.6 kl,
Elec Tool Kit, Mech Tool Kit,
Metalwork Tool Kit,
ObjSize=Small, EMLevel=Faint
Comment: Cost in Quantity=Cr 623,776

```

The NHR 6000 Ship Repair Robot is New Home Robotics' response to the lack of skilled starship workers at the Ogen shipyards of New Home, where there are currently a number on trial. While relatively expensive, they are able to work 24 hours a day for 24 days at a time, offsetting the need for multiple shift workers and their additional expenses of weekend and holiday working.

The ship repair 'bot has touch sensors on each of its arms* in order to allow fine control of whatever equipment it is working on, and the initial single NHR 240 brain had to be replaced with three** working in unison voting on the correct decisions after a single-brained 'bot mis-ordered its instructions and started to dismantle a launch.

The NHR 6000 has proved to be a highly versatile piece of equipment. The Slave-linked controls allow remote human expert technicians to manually enhance the work of the robot to allow for unexpected complications encountered during a program

of work, allowing the work to be quickly completed without halting the whole repair to wait for the expert to suit up and make their way to the yard.

The robot operators, using the program interface and one of the radios, have been able reprogram the bots while on the job to make them specialists in one area of repair work. So far they have found that increasing one of the technical skills to 3 and raising Naval Architecture to 2 (i.e. a 6000's skills may be Ship's Boat-1, Electrical-3, and Naval Architecture-2) have proven the most useful combinations.

An unexpected consequence of the excellent sensors installed and an emergent behaviour of the 6000's programming was that they cleaned up after themselves. Space debris caused in ship repair was effectively hunted down by the 'bots and stored in their small cargo compartment until this became full, after which the bots inquired of their operators where the rubbish was to be deposited. As a consequence of this, there have been disposal areas set up in each of the yards where the bots work to keep them on the repair work and not to get distracted by a full load of rubbish. In addition, space debris has effectively been eliminated in the Ogen shipyards and work related accidents due to space debris have been all but eliminated. NHR specialists are currently studying this emergent behaviour to see if it's possible to deploy the 'bots in an orbit-cleaning role by increasing their ship's boat skill, and adding navigation to work out space debris orbits and approach vectors. So far, the skill package of Ship's Boat-2, Electronic-1, Mechanical-1, Gravatics-1, and Navigation-1 seems to be showing the most promise in this area.



About The Burrowwolf

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

Alien Module 3: Darrians

reviewed by "kafka"

Alien Module 3: Darrians. Pete Nash

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

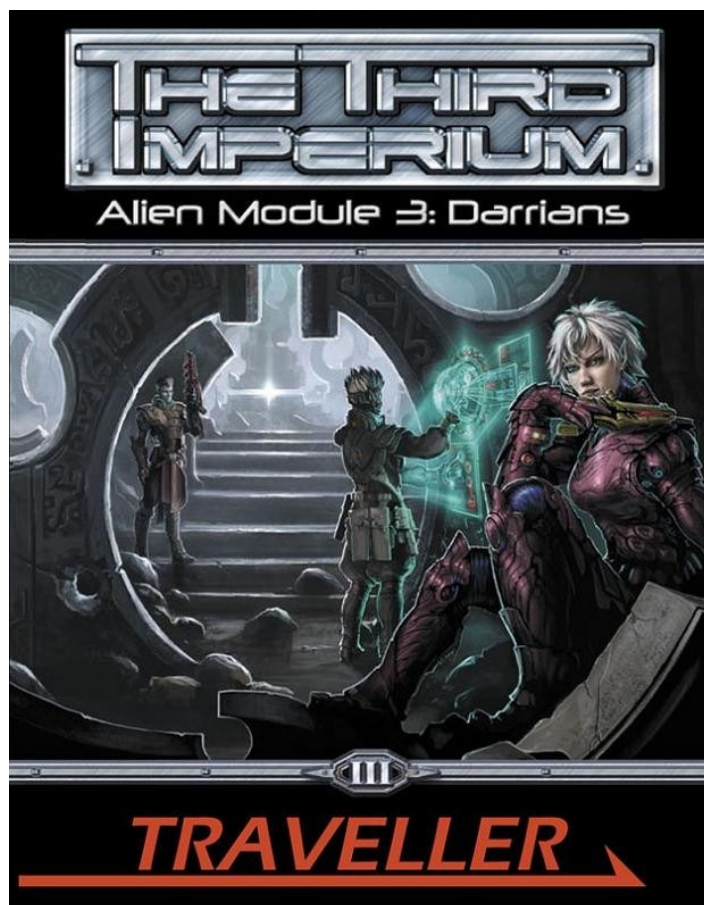
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This review originally appeared on rpg.net in January 2011 and in issue 14 of Freelance Traveller, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

I must admit, I felt great trepidation when I saw this product announced, for the Darrians had unfairly gained the reputation of being Space Elves and I feared that I might see yet another Dragonstar or D&D-in-Space rendition. As much as I loved Mongoose's race books for D&D, they had no place in my *Traveller* Universe. However, I knew much of fandom clamored for Space Elves. My own view of the Darrians was that they were a minor human race to be found in the Spinward Marches that managed to struggle against all odds to become one of the dominant minor players in the Marches – that is, they were the Israelis of Charted Space – whether they had pointed ears or not was irrelevant. Not that one takes exception to looking at pictures of Darrian/Elven babes/beaus. Thankfully, I was rewarded with an excellent product.

Like the other race books that Mongoose has produced, it follows a similar pattern. New careers for aliens, a smattering of history, some starships and other toys, the worlds of the Darrian Confederation, possible patrons and encounters, and a section on how to play them. The careers section is well fleshed out and contained excellent descriptions of how and what makes the Darrians different from the Imperial norm. Here, the right balance between skill acquisition and time spent in a career was struck. The author clearly had GDW's original alien module as a guide, but his own text make the descriptions more congruent with the text. Emphasizing, for instance, Social Standing to be equated with knowledge acquisition was an absolutely brilliant



move in the Darrian sphere. There are deck plans but there are also illustrations of the starships; sadly, the pictures of the starships are sensor profile and in no way resemble the phenomenal starship art of the main rulebook. While on the topic of art, the art in this book is truly some of the best *Traveller* art that I have seen in a very long time. Yes, the Darrians are portrayed as Elf-ish but I was so impressed that I would routinely ignore the hypertrophic ears for the quality of the art contained within. Gone are the cartoonish and silly art that marked much of Mongoose's line up to now. Hopefully, it marks a new era where gritty realism and photo-like illustrations come to the fore for at least their *Traveller* line. Especially commendable was their illustrations of the different character careers. True, there weren't any Darrian babes/beaus but I understand that their agreement with Marc prevents that.

Pete Nash did a great job reconstructing Darrian history, eliminating many of the grey areas that marked the original Alien Module and updating it

Critics' Corner

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to more current understandings of science. For example, the super flares that were so much a paranormal fear in the 1970s get a realistic re-examination that is less paranormal although traces could still be found there – this is sad. I realize that Pete Nash would have had the limitations of the original module to contend with but there was no consultation with some of the old *Traveller* grognards who could have at least vetted the manuscript and perhaps incorporated some of the work that SJGames has done on the Darrians. Some of the tech, such as the Meson egg cooker, is quite fun but really is not *Traveller*. But other innovations like Pandora's Box were excellent and well thought through.

If there is one thing lacking which was present in previous Mongoose Alien Module products, it is a series of tropes or caricatures outlining how to actually play the Darrians from popular (Science) Fiction films/books. So, I was still left wondering, "Are

these Space Elves or not...?" I also would have liked to see more on the Sword Worlds – Darrians conflict played out. For I could not help but get the sense that the Darrians were akin to the Nordic countries who were facing off against a rising Germany rather than Israelis. *Traveller* claims that it does not ground itself in real world politics but, as many know, the war gaming roots of *Traveller* often show up, with simulacra of "the real world".

All-in-all this is an outstanding product. I look forward to future offerings and hope that Mongoose can keep the excellent cadre of writers that are now emerging on staff. For it is starting to look more and more like the Imperium that I know and love...their first independent campaign, *Tripwire*, left a bitter taste in my mouth. Even though, I am a big fan of the game system...they have to respect the history of *Traveller* as well as build the future. Even despite its high price, I feel this product was worth every penny spent upon it. Keep up the excellent work, Mongoose! 🌟



Other Roads

Wounded Colossus

by Bill Cameron

This article originally appeared on the Freelance Traveller website in 2002.

The author writes, in part...

...At the time, I was the GM for a group of players who were slowly drifting away from the game. Real Life had a lot to do with this, but a marked distaste for the course of events in the OTU figured into it also. I tried to come up with an alternate timeline to keep things together, but Real Life won out in the end.

In this timeline, Strephon does not flee to Usdiki after he receives the news of the murders in the Throne Room, Dulinor's rebellion, and Lucan's ascension. Instead, he slowly works his way back to the Capital, proving his bona fides and rallying support among the nobility and Navy. He returns to the Throne, but not before Lucan's horrific fleet orders have gone out and the Imperium is under assault from within and without.

I called this alternate timeline "The Wounded Colossus".

Editor's Note: In comparisons between events of the official *Traveller* timeline and those of the "Wounded Colossus" timeline, ATL refers to

the "Wounded Colossus" alternate timeline; OTL refers to the official *Traveller* timeline.

The Setting - An Introduction

In this alternate timeline, Strephon moves to oust Lucan and regain the Iridium Throne after receiving news of the Assassination. While there is some military action in his campaign to return to the Throne, Strephon would rely more on political and propaganda efforts. Eventually, he convinces enough people that he is the real Emperor, Lucan is arrested, and Strephon returns to the Capital.

Strephon's problems are only beginning. He is faced with a Domain-sized rebellion, another Domain cut off from the Imperial Core and under assault, a war with the Solomani, sector-sized invasions by the Vargr and the forceful incursions of the Alsan *ihatei*. His Imperium has lost entire Domains and more than three sectors to these combined forces.

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He is also unsure as to whether the Imperium can rally and win through its current problems. Even before these events, Strephon was concerned that the Imperium was no longer a cohesive whole, that the commons and nobility cared more for local matters than the Imperium as a whole. The Ilelish Rebellion is proof that his fears were correct for at least one Imperial Domain. Will they prove correct for the rest?

So, Strephon is faced with immediate dilemmas: the Rebellion, the Second Solomani Rim War, and the Alien Incursions. But there are also several long standing, systemic problems with the Imperium too. He will need to address those problems as well as fighting his several wars.

The Emperor will be forced to walk a very fine line indeed. He will be prosecuting wars on several fronts while making the reforms necessary to heal and strengthen the Imperium. He must be careful that neither of these two great tasks adversely affects the other.

The Return to the Iridium Throne

Strephon hears of the assassinations and his supposed death at Depot/Lishun on 181-1116. Further couriers bring news of Dulinor's rebellion and Lucan's assumption of the Imperial mantle. It seems every courier that arrives brings more bad news. The Imperium is disintegrating before Strephon's eyes. He and his entourage begin to travel back towards Capital, but have no real plans. Factions arise among his advisors, some wish him to flee to a place of safety, still others feel he should return to the Capital as quickly as possible, and others yet want him to await more news before making any decisions. Shocked and grief stricken, Strephon cannot decide and provides no direction.

Then, Lt. Windhook arrives.

Windhook's story of Lucan's brutal murder of Varian is confirmed by the psionics on Strephon's staff. This simple piece of information causes a trans-

formation in the Emperor. Orders are given, plans drawn up, and the return to the Iridium Throne is underway.

Strephon announces his existence at Depot/Corridor on 204-1116. Windhook's story is part of the Emperor's speech. While at the Depot, Strephon proves his bona fides to the IN commanders and local nobility. This should be a relatively easy task given the trappings of office he would have carried with him, even during a secret trip to Longbow. Couriers are dispatched throughout the region carrying the news of Strephon's existence and Windhook's testimony.

It is also at Depot/Corridor that Strephon learns of Lucan's first disastrous fleet redeployment orders. While he could countermand those orders with the command codes and ciphers he traveled with, he realizes that such an action would cause even more confusion. Confusion that would only benefit Dulinor. Besides, Lucan's directives are already far ahead of any counter commands Strephon could dispatch. The Emperor grimly accepts he cannot undo this latest piece of Lucan's folly and instead adds another series of charges to the indictment against his nephew.

After a month, Strephon departs the Depot to rally the rest of the sector to him. What follows is a cat and mouse game between him and an increasingly desperate Lucan. Everywhere Strephon goes, Lucan's agents and minions try to intercept him. Everywhere Strephon goes, another world, another fleet, another group of nobles is informed of the Emperor's existence and Lucan's true nature.

At first, Strephon must move stealthily among the systems. Lucan has been informed of his presence and has denounced him as an imposter. Agents and squadrons are scouring the sector for Strephon on Lucan's orders. Strephon and his entourage know that capture means death. More than once, Strephon and his group barely escape capture, and more than once, Strephon convinces those pursuing him to switch their allegiance.

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There are armed clashes between Strephon's supporters and Lucan's people. The Emperor tries to keep them to a minimum, citing the need for those resources to fight Dulinor. That policy increase Strephon's support even further.

Delegations from surrounding sectors begin to enter Core looking for Strephon and requesting audiences. The nobles scattered when Lucan dissolved the Moot flock to him. Then, the very forces Lucan has dispatched to hunt down the "Imposter" begin to defect to Strephon.

When all these converts ask how they can help his cause, Strephon tells his questioners to fight for the Imperium. Whether that means they should fight Dulinor or Lucan is left up to the listener. Strephon merely calls upon them to do their duty.

Finally, in the first half of 1117, a fast courier arrives in the system where Strephon is currently based. Aboard it is a video from the Capital. There has been a coup and Lucan has been arrested. The coup's leaders respectfully request that Strephon return to the Capital and resume the Throne. Strephon and his horde of supporters travel to Sylea aboard a nearby naval squadron.

By mid-1117, Strephon is back on the Iridium Throne, Lucan has been defenestrated from the Moot Spire, and the Third Imperium is in for an era of very interesting times.

Strephon's Wars

Strephon the Kinless is back on his throne and his Imperium is in disarray. An entire Domain is in rebellion against him and another has been cut off from the Imperial core. Three sectors are in the hands of alien invaders. The Solomani have taken another sector and are hammering on two more.

What is to be done? The answer is summed up in one word: Fight.

As sorely pressed and set-upon as the Imperium is, it is still a polity of awesome power and capabili-

ties. Things may look bleak to the casual observer, but the latent strength of the Imperium can prevail—if someone can rouse that strength.

This is Strephon's major task: rally the nobility and commons to the Imperium's defense. Take immediate action to show that all is not lost. If Strephon can stop the Imperium from descending into despair, then it will win through.

Strephon should take immediate steps to reverse or modify Lucan's panicky fleet redeployment orders. Corridor and Lishun are already lost to the Vargr and the Solomani have taken the Old Expanses, but the portions of the fleets removed from those regions can be returned home. They will be a welcome addition to the defenders of the Imperium's new borders and a glad sight for those worlds who saw them leave.

The victories of the Vargr and Solomani in the ATL will not be as great as in the OTL. The territories they have wrested from the Imperium will be less than those in the OTL. The Imperium will have forces at hand for raiding and local counter offensives. The Vargr and Solomani will be forced to fight harder for the territories they wish to win. Any delay will be a victory for Strephon the Kinless.

The war presenting the most immediate danger to the Imperium is the one launched by Dulinor. It is occurring at the empire's heart, just a few tens of parsecs from the Capital itself. Yet, this war may prove the easiest to handle.

True, Dulinor and his cabal of traitors have planned their actions for years, but they didn't quite plan on fighting a prolonged civil war, especially a war against a man who was supposed to be dead before it all started.

They had planned on a *coup de main*, Dulinor murdering the Imperial family and then mounting the Throne to stay. The Ilelish traitors had been caught as much off guard by Dulinor's craven flight back to Dlan as the Imperium had been by the Assassination itself. The fleets and armies of Ilelish had been prepared to support an Emperor already sitting

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on the Iridium Throne and not to fight their way back into the Core Sector to place him there.

From a planning standpoint, Dulinor and his cabal are just as unready for this war as Strephon is. Barring major multiple disasters, the Imperium should be able to thwart Dulinor's drive on the Capital. Once the strategic initiative passes to the Imperium, the failure of Dulinor's drive on Sylea would signal this, time will work for the Imperium and against the rebels.

While Strephon will take forceful military actions against Ilelish, once again his primary weapon will be propaganda. The rallying cry of "Do the Imperium no further harm", used so successfully against Lucan, will work equally well against Dulinor. The defections from Ilelish should begin almost immediately after news of Strephon's survival arrives.

The *Rebellion Sourcebook* talks about the people of the Imperium forced to make choices, which faction to follow, which story to believe. None of the choices presented them are clear. In the ATL, the choice is clear. The Emperor is still on the Throne. Others have brought wrack and ruin to the Imperium. Do no more harm and help him save the Imperium.

The commons of Ilelish and the majority of the nobility there did not choose rebellion. They were not asked or polled by Dulinor and his cabal about their opinions. Rebellion was chosen for them and they can choose not to rebel. Strephon is in a near unassailable position to support that choice. He sits on the Throne, legal Emperor of the Imperium. He can release recordings of Dulinor murdering four sophonts in cold blood. He can richly reward those in Ilelish who spurn Dulinor and the traitors.

One of Strephon's first acts upon resuming the Throne would be to strip all known rebel nobles of their fiefs. The resulting bonanza of fiefs, patents, lands, sinecures, and the like will provide Strephon with a vast number of ways to reward his support-

ers. Nobles unable to decide whether to support Dulinor or Strephon could be swayed in this manner. Even nobles who waffle in their support for Dulinor help Strephon's cause.

Strephon will also have a number of Ilelish nobility at the Capital. There would have been those sitting in the Moot, unaware and uninformed as to Dulinor's plans. Unless they immediately fled back to Ilelish with Dulinor, they are now fief-less. Every one of them is a potential weapon in Strephon's hands. He can promise them the fiefs of the traitors in return for their knowledge of and contacts in the rebellious Domain.

There will be nobles within Ilelish unaware of Dulinor's choice for them until news of the Assassination arrives. If they swing their support to Strephon on news of his survival, the Imperium will have a ready-made fifth column in rebel territory.

Dulinor's domain is not a monolith. He will not be able to prevent news of Strephon's survival from reaching the commons and nobility. Besides, Strephon will make disseminating that news a top priority. In the OTL, Dulinor faced rebellion and defection among his fleets and systems. In the ATL, those events will occur more rapidly and extensively. In the OTL, Dulinor's opponent was a deranged princeling who had murdered his own brother. Dulinor was a better choice than Lucan. In the ATL, Dulinor faces the real Emperor, a man whose family Dulinor has murdered. Dulinor will find it impossible to hold his domain together.

As the forces of the Imperium patiently work their way towards Dlan, more and more systems and nobles will defect from Dulinor's cause or escape his grasp. There will be a feedback effect in all of this, each defection causing more defections, every system and noble racing the others, trying to work out the best deal for their readmission to the Imperium. The systemic reforms Strephon will be making across the Imperium will also help this process. Dulinor's domain, aside from the few true believers, will melt away under his feet.

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Sometime within four years of the Assassination, Dulinor will die by his own hand. His forces will have been slowly squeezed into a tight pocket, perhaps centered on Dlan, perhaps not. His cause will be universally discredited, his vision for the Imperium lost. Only those who know they would not get anything from the Imperium other than the rope will have remained with him. The Ilelish Rebellion will have collapsed, the majority of the people of Ilelish having chosen not to support it.

While the war against Dulinor took primacy in the Imperium's eyes, the wars against the other three foes still sputtered on. Dealing with the Vargr and Aslan will require an effort lasting generations, but now that Dulinor has been dealt with, the Solomani take center stage.

For the last four years, the Imperium has been on the strategic defensive along the Solomani front. Daibei and Sol have defended themselves as best they could, some Imperial resources have been sent their way. The Domain of Gateway, acting as a strategic reserve for both the Ilelish and Solomani fronts, has conducted limited offensives in the Old Expanses. This has forestalled any further major gains by the Solomani.

Defense against the Solomani has been aided by the fact that most worlds in the Rim remember Solomani rule. There may be billions of people eagerly awaiting the return of the Confederation, but there are many times more equally dreading it. Resistance along the front and in systems already taken by the Confederation will be fierce. The Imperium will support that resistance as much as possible. In the OTL, the Solomani bogged down in these captured territories, which led to political strife within the Confederation. In the ATL, the Solomani will bog down, too, and perhaps with fewer gains than they acquired in the OTL. This too will lead to political strife and factionalism within the Confederation.

Then the collapse in Ilelish frees up a huge amount of Imperial power and the hammer swings towards the Rim. While conquering and garrisoning the entire Confederation is impossible; the front should be pushed many more parsecs rimward of Terra.

Strephon and the Imperium should hammer the Confederation until the Solomani sue for peace. This time there should be no cease fire leading to a de facto border. There should be a treaty, outlining the obligations of both sides. The government and peoples of the Confederation should know they lost, and lost badly, to the Imperium. This is not to say that a 57th century treaty of Versailles should be crafted, but that the Confederation should be forced to sue for peace, to acknowledge their defeat.

The Imperium should also take advantage of the fractious nature of the Confederation. Every effort should be made to encourage the surrender of planetary and multi-system forces apart from those of the Confederation as a whole. Ideally, the Imperium should set up a multi-parsec thick buffer region between the two states filled with small polities. This type of buffer region works along the borders in the Dark Nebula and Foreven Sectors and should be applied along the Rim.

Good fences make good neighbors.

The war against the Solomani should be over within 3 to 4 years of the Ilelish rebellion's collapse. The First Solomani Rim War saw the Imperium starting much further inside its own territory and taking Terra within three years. The Second Solomani Rim War should not last much longer, especially with Imperial starting positions in Daibei, Sol, and the Vegan Autonomous Region so much closer to the border.

With the new Imperial border 10 to 15 parsecs rimward of Sol, and an equally wide buffer region of client states beyond that, both sides will be able to divert their energies to more important tasks instead of constantly sniping at each other. The Imperium can slowly absorb and de-radicalize the Solomani

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worlds and movements within it and the Confederation can turn its energies towards exploring and settling the Rim.

Eight years after his return to the Throne, Strephon has put down the Ilelish Rebellion and laid the foundations for a lasting peace with the Solomani Confederation. He still must deal with the Alien Incursions (actually he's been dealing with them in the same time frame), institute reforms to strengthen the Imperium and, hopefully, prevent any recurrence of the factors leading up to all this.

Fighting these two wars, especially the Second Rim War, will require the nobles and commons to be rallied to the Imperial cause. Strephon and his advisors will need to keep a close eye on the mood of the high population worlds and nobility during all this time. War weariness, especially away from the fronts where the danger isn't immediately present, will set in. Every effort must be made to present these wars as part and parcel of restoring and rebuilding the Imperium.

The idea of renewing the Imperium, refashioning it, rebuilding it, must be kept in the forefront of the commons' and nobles' minds.

The Alien Incursions

Strephon has returned to the Throne and is prosecuting wars against the Imperium's human enemies. The campaign against human opponents, the Ilelish rebels, will be relatively easily. The campaign against the other, the Solomani Confederation, will be a drawn out affair. But, we must not forget, the Usurper left Strephon two additional wars as reminders of his time on the Throne. How will the Imperium deal with the incursions by these two interlopers, the Vargr and Aslan? Both species present very different and long term problems for the Imperium. While military operations should and would begin against them immediately, the Imperium will need to employ other methods also.

The Vargr pose the most immediate threat of the two interlopers, thanks to their presence across a greater front and their occupation of more territory than the Aslan. The Vargr are pressing on the coreward borders of four sectors; the Spinward Marches, Deneb, Vland, and Antares, and have occupied two more; Lishun and Corridor. The occupation of that last sector has actually cut off the Domain of Deneb from the Imperium as a whole. It is evident that dealing with the Vargr requires a greater urgency than dealing with the Aslan.

Lucan's fleet transfer orders were the proximate cause for the fall of Corridor and Lishun. After Strephon's return to the Iridium Throne, he and IN command will attempt to reverse the worst excesses of those orders. While some of the IN assets arriving from Corridor and Lishun will be retained for use against the Ilelish rebels, a good portion will be directed back "home" to begin the campaign against the Vargr.

Additional orders will go out to the sectors still resisting the Vargr assault directing them to assist in clearing the occupied sectors. The assistance each sector will be able to provide will depend heavily upon its current situation. Antares, hardly touched by the current troubles, will do most of the work clearing Lishun. The Spinward Marches however, pressed coreward and rimward by Vargr and Aslan, and with the Zhodani watching, will do well enough simply to stay afloat at first. Deneb and Vland, assisted by portions of the Corridor sector fleet, will do most of the work clearing Corridor. Deneb will also have to send forces into the Trojan Reach to deal with the Aslan, but that will be detailed in the proper section.

Operations against the Vargr will be difficult. The Corridor Pacification campaign in the early days of the Imperium took 138 years, but those campaigns may have included the eviction of entire populations of planet-bound Vargr. In only a few years of occupation, the Vargr have not had enough time to move masses of settlers into their new territories.

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For a variety of reasons, the Vargr forces in the occupied territories will be formidable, but fragile. It is obvious that no clutch of corsairs undertook the major Vargr assaults and subsequent occupations. Corsairs may have led the way, but major naval assets were needed to beat down the Imperium's colonial forces in the now occupied regions. Either naval formations from the bordering Vargr polities were dispatched or the same forces mutinied and arrived on their own. However they arrived, their lines of supply for the specialized items every warships needs will be tenuous and thus open to Imperial raiding. The Vargr occupiers will be able to extort or confiscate simple supplies, food and the like, but the spare parts, repairs, and other specialty items their warships require are only available in the Extents. The Imperium will have a field day disrupting Vargr supply lines and smashing Vargr merchant convoys.

The Imperium will also enjoy an immediate technological and an eventual numerical advantage over the Vargr occupation forces. Ship for ship, the Imperium will be better than the Vargr opposing them. Once Imperial war production ramps up, the Imperium will also outnumber the Vargr.

Another factor to remember is that in this campaign the roles have been reversed. The Vargr will be forced to either defend their conquests or retreat from them, both of these decisions means victory for the Imperium. Rather than the Imperium trying to chase down will-o'-the-wisp Vargr corsairs skulking in backwater systems, the Vargr will be found trying to defend the systems they've occupied. This means the Imperial hammer will have something to hit, a rarity when dealing with the Vargr.

This period when the Imperium muscles the Vargr out of their occupied territories will be a very dangerous one for the local human populations. They will be little more than hostages for a species that has no compunctions regarding mass murder, as the Sack of Gashikan showed. Despite all of the Im-

perium's efforts, there will be scattered incidents of genocide committed by both sides. Some worlds may end up looking like they did at the end of the Official Timeline's Viral Era.

While evicting the Vargr occupation forces will prove to be relatively easy, cleaning up the sectors after the main Vargr forces have been removed will be very hard. Once the border is re-established and the major Vargr assets either destroyed or chased back across, the old roles reassert themselves, with the Vargr as raiders and the Imperium as chasers. This is where the Imperium's long term Vargr strategy must be overhauled.

When dealing with Vargr corsairs there is no central territory to take the fight to. Sure, fleets and squadrons belonging to the Vargr polities can be identified and those polities dealt with, but, given the nature of Vargr society, the polities that dispatched those forces into the Imperium will no longer be in power when the reckoning comes due. Imperial forces will once again find themselves chasing the same chimeras they did in the pre-war era.

One solution that is sure to be tried in the establishment of a DMZ of sorts. The Imperium simply would not tolerate any starport in any system within a certain number of parsecs of its official border. There may be Imperial controlled starports in this zone, but any facility that may conceivably aid or abet corsairs would be either destroyed or occupied.

This option will entail a great amount of spending and an even greater number of forces. The Imperial presence will even further exacerbate Vargr public opinion across the Extents. Might there be another way to go about it? It seems there may be one after all; look at the Julian Protectorate.

That interstellar state has managed to live with the Vargr both within and without for millennia. While the Imperium spends trillions on fleets and fences, the Julians somehow do without either. How does the Protectorate do it? Unfortunately, I have no idea.

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Despite being only one of two states to have fought the Imperium to a standstill, the other being the Zhodani Conuslate, and being the largest “Vargr” power in known space, the Julian Protectorate is the least detailed major power in the OTU. We know how it came into being and we know how it kept itself out of the Imperium, but we have only the slightest of clues as to how it is actually run or of its internal policies.

It would do the Imperium no end of good to study the Protectorate and identify just how it deals with the Vargr. The Imperium has just the sophont to head such a project, the Archduke Brzk. While Imperial forces clear Corridor and Lishun and hunt down the swarm of corsairs left behind, the Archduke of Antares can begin this extremely long term project.

Whatever the results and findings of the Archduke’s efforts, it is clear that the benefits won’t be felt immediately. This project is a gift Strephon will be giving to his heirs and the future subjects of the Imperium, but he’d be wise to start on it now.

The Aslan incursions present the Imperium with an entirely different set of problems. Fortunately, they also can be handled in several different ways.

The *ihatei* are simply migrating. Rather than occupying systems as a gaggle of pirates like the Vargr, the Aslan want to actually settle there. They bring along both noncombatants and nonmilitary equipment. The presence of both of these makes the *ihatei* fleets much easier to deal with when compared to the Vargr.

The Imperium’s first order of business should be the reassertion of the pre-war border. IN elements operating in the Trojan Reaches should occupy the border region as soon as practical. Any *ihatei* migratory fleets should be contacted upon crossing that border. Please note, I did not say engaged or turned back, the forces the Imperium has in the region may not be enough to do either of those things at first.

Instead, the *ihatei* should be contacted and warned that they are violating Imperial space and will be subject to attack at any moment as they move deeper into Imperial territory.

The Aslan are big on formalities, providing them with a warning will be seen by them as both natural and correct on the Imperium’s part. Then, when their military vessels are destroyed and their non-combatants escorted back into Aslan space, there will be fewer hard feelings and fewer reasons to try and “correct” any dishonorable Imperial behavior.

The campaign against the Aslan will take three forms. There will be *ihatei* that are destroyed, there will be *ihatei* that are co-opted, and there will be *ihatei* that are accepted. Striking a balance between these three options will be the Imperium’s hardest task.

The majority of *ihatei* settlements will be evicted, especially those in strategic systems. Their military forces will be engaged and destroyed, then the Aslan that surrendered and all noncombatants will be escorted out of the Imperium. As with the Vargr, the Imperium will enjoy an immediate technological edge in this fighting and an eventual numerical edge when war production ramps up. The Imperium will also be able to use the fractured nature of Aslan society, Imperial forces will be able to concentrate on each “pocket” of *ihatei* separately without much fear of other *ihatei* joining the fight.

Some *ihatei* will be co-opted. Particularly tough fleets or those with long-standing feuds against other *ihatei* will be suborned, but the overall number handled this way will be few. The Imperium would be foolish not to exploit the factions and fissures in Aslan society. “Hiring” one *ihatei* fleet to destroy another in return for land could be a common tactic. The “hired” *ihatei* could merely take over the other faction’s settlement. This tactic has the bonus of setting a precedent among the “hired” *ihatei*, they have now worked for the Imperium. Having taken Strephon’s shilling, they’ll be more likely to do so in the future.

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A few *ihatei* fleets may be simply accepted. Small groups of *ihatei* squatting in backwater systems will be good candidates for this. Small *ihatei* fleets intercepted deep in Imperial territory before they can settle somewhere will be good too.

These *ihatei* may acquiesce to Imperial overlordship and swear fealty to Strephon in return for their land, as many Aslan in the Imperium already do.

Or they may desire to do the Imperium a service and earn their land, such as fighting the Vargr and settling along the Imperium's rimward borders. *Ihatei* that may balk at fighting other Aslan would willingly take on the Vargr. A series of Imperial-supported *ihatei* settlements along the border with the Extents would make setting and patrolling the proposed DMZ much easier.

Finally, *ihatei* remaining in the Imperium will be subject to the same cosmopolitan social forces that the previously settled Imperial and Darrian Aslan are. Unlike the Vargr, Aslan behavior is cultural, not genetic. Canon has many references to how differently Darrian and Imperial Aslan behave, compared to their brothers in the Hierate. It will take generations, but the Aslan will be eventually absorbed.

A final Imperial strategy may be to search out the Aslan fleet dispatcher and challenge him to battle. The fleet dispatcher has been what passes for a co-ordinator of the *ihatei* incursion and is thus the most "senior" Aslan in the region. Dealing with him successfully may bring most of the incursions to a halt. The Imperium did this once before in the Dark Nebula sector. They fought a "duel" war against the most powerful Aslan in the area, won that war, and have enjoyed a stable border region ever since. Winning a similar duel against the Trojan Reach fleet dispatcher would bring about a similar result.

In clearing the Trojan Reach of *ihatei*, the Imperium will enjoy one luxury that they don't when dealing with the Vargr: As long as the Imperium takes care not target or harm *ihatei* noncombatants, Impe-

rial civilians will be safe. The *ihatei* will not slag the worlds they are forced from or kill civilians out of hand the way the Vargr will. Such behavior is beneath them.

Both the campaign against the Vargr and the one against the Aslan will take time. The Vargr will be evicted relatively quickly from the regions they occupy, but cleaning up the mess left behind will take decades. The Aslan will have to be pried out of every system they're found squatting in. However, once beaten, each *ihatei* faction will "honor" their defeat and cause the Imperium no further trouble.

Strephon, using the natural strengths of the Third Imperium and not falling into despair and panicking as Lucan did, should be able to see most of the Imperium's wars settled within a decade.

The Ilelish Rebellion, although presenting the most immediate danger, will come to an end first. The weight of the Imperium, the failings of Dulinor's leadership and that of his faction, and the promise of amnesty and reform will cause the Rebellion to collapse both within and without.

The Second Solomani Rim War will grind on for most of this period; the stated goal of the Imperium, forcing the Solomani to sue for peace, will ensure this. Eventually, the Imperium's superior technology and superior numbers will begin to tell on the Confederation. The Confederation, a prison house of nations much like the pre-WW1 Austro-Hungarian Empire, will fracture into its separate components. Regimes and regions closer to the pre-war Imperial border will break away and sign their own peace accords with the Imperium. The hard-line racist rump of this fascist Confederation, the part that never was part of the Third Imperium, will be forced to give up the fight. The Imperium and Confederation will now be separated by several parsecs of neutral and client states. A better border should lead to a better peace.

The Vargr will be driven from the sectors they occupy. Like the barbarians of old, they are merely a thin crust of military forces lording it over the mass

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of society. Although the occupations forces will be beaten easily, Vargr rading will be a large problem fro some time to come. However, if there is to be a lasting peace along the rimward border, the Third Imperium will need to examine relations with the Vargr very carefully and try to apply some of the lessons it may learn from the Julian Protectorate.

The Aslan may prove the least trouble of all. Some *ihatei* will be destroyed and forced out of Imperial space. Others may be turned into Imperial lackeys or subjects. If approached and handled correctly, the Aslan fleet dispatcher himself may prove to be the Imperium's best friend along the Trojan Reach border.

Fighting all these wars will require the nobles and commons to be first rallied, then held, to the cause. Strephon and his advisors will need to keep an eye on the mood within the Imperium, especially on the high population worlds where most Imperial subjects live. War-weariness will set in, even away from the fighting fronts. Every effort must be made to be seen as restoring and rebuilding the Imperium. Those tasks and those goals must be kept in the forefront of the nobles' and commons' minds.

Strephon must place these wars in a larger context, one in which the Imperium becomes a better place for all its inhabitants, "the broad, sunlit, uplands" of Churchill's prose. There must an ultimate goal held before nobility and commons alike, one that they are all striving towards. That goal should be the reform of the Imperial system as a whole. If the Imperium is worth fighting for, its worth fixing, too.

The Imperium, which was revealed to have major systemic problems by the Assassination, requires reform. Strephon's reintroduction of the Domains was an attempt at reform; Dulinor's rebellion was another, albeit disastrous. Before the murders in the Throne Room, Strephon was restrained by societal inertia, custom, and a host of other factors. His re-

creation of the Domains illustrates that fact. Now, during this decade long time of crisis, those strictures have been loosened. Strephon will be able to make changes that seemed inconceivable only a few years before.

The Strephonic Reforms

Prior to the Assassination and subsequent Rebellion and Invasions, Strephon was a reformer. He expressed concern about the rise of discontent within the Imperium and the malaise that seemed to have sapped its strength. He chairs a conference of psychohistorians, held in secret, to address the problems he sees within his realm. Against the advice of the Moot, he reestablishes the Domains and recreates the Archdukes as a pathway for reform.

Whether his efforts would have ever prevailed over the entrenched interests, societal inertia, and restraints of custom cannot be known. Dulinor has killed more than just Strephon's family, he has also killed Strephon's first, small attempts at reform.

But, the Assassination, Rebellion, and Invasions will also provide Strephon with an incredible opportunity for sweeping changes in the fabric of the Imperium. The Imperium is in flux, the constraints that hobbled Strephon's earlier reforms are now either removed or changed. The Emperor will grasp this chance readily. If he can succeed and make the fundamental changes to strengthen the Imperium, then all the lives lost to war, rapine, and rebellion may not have been for naught.

His gift to the millions of dead, his way of honoring their sacrifices, will be the reform and re-founding of the Imperium.

Reforms in communications

One of Strephon's immediate reforms must be of the Imperium's communication net. That net, primarily comprised of jump-4 X-boats, is technologically backward and operates over irrational, suboptimal routes. Reform will have to deal with both of these problems.

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The jump-4 technology used by the X-boat system made sense at the time of that system's creation in 624, nearly five centuries ago. As technology improved and higher jump numbers could be achieved, upgrading the network was always put off. There were good reasons for this; the cost would be great, only a few worlds could produce the necessary components, Imperial technological inertia, and so on. However, the real reason behind the decision not to upgrade the system lay in the use to which the system had evolved. The X-boat system was no longer used for communication. Instead it was now used for control.

Those in power, whether in government or business, had access to a jump-6 system of couriers. They received and sent information among themselves at a far greater speed than that available to the common herd. They used this ability to help them control and rule the Imperium.

This dirty little secret was obvious to anyone who bothered to think about it. The Assassination and subsequent events simply brought it to more people's attention. That in itself will be a cause of discontent among Imperial subjects.

Also, the fact that the Imperium uses two "nervous systems"; one fast and secret, one slow and public, means that the Imperium is less nimble or agile than any of its opponents, be they foreign or domestic. News of an opponent's actions may reach the nobility via jump-6 couriers with public notification arriving much later at jump-4, as did news of Dulinor's murders in the Throne Room. The news received may require immediate attention, but those in power must ensure their actions do not reveal the existence of the secret jump-6 system. That alone limits the options available to them.

Not just the equipment used by the X-boat system requires upgrade, the routes flown must be upgraded too. Look at the X-boat route between Mora and Regina, for example; why should it swing

through the Lanth subsector at all? The secret jump-6 couriers do not travel by that route, so why should the public X-boats?

The idea that the X-boat system follows major trade routes has been shown false. Discounting random generation of these routes, the X-boat routes must have been set up along lines of patronage. Worlds and nobles with enough "pull" influenced the flight paths. This must be corrected. Adding a few weeks communication time between important worlds just because the Marquis want an X-boat link in his current mistress' home system cannot be tolerated anymore.

So, by way of reform, Strephon must direct the eventual upgrade of the X-boat system to a jump-6 capability and rationalize the routes flown by the system. The equipment upgrades will require decades, especially with the demands placed on the Imperium's industrial base by the several ongoing wars.

The rationalization of routes can happen much faster and will pay immediate dividends. At a minimum, every sector and subsector capital, every high population world, every naval depot, and every strategic system would be linked together by the existing jump-4 equipment along a short a route as possible. Weeks could be shaved off the Mora-Regina route alone. All the weeks saved along the new, rational routes would add up, so that the further you are from Capital, the more time you save.

As the jump-6 equipment comes on line, the surplus jump-4 boats can be used elsewhere. The new X-boat network will resemble the US air traffic system in some ways. There will be "hubs" linked by fast jump-6 craft, jump-4 vessels radiating out from these along "spokes", and jump-2 *Suleimans* filling in the gaps.

One final improvement in communication specifically deals with the Domain of Deneb. The incursion of the Vargr into Corridor cut an entire Domain off from the Imperium. If the Zhodani had decided to strike, the Domain could have no longer been Im-

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perial territory. Other communication routes across the Rift must be arranged and regularized.

This could involve large numbers of deep space fuel depots (TNE's "calibration points") or the annexation of the Islands Cluster. Being a noted Islands crank, I'll only discuss that option.

Speculations as to why the Islands are not already part of the Imperium are rife. While the real reason lies in the fact that we're dealing with a game and not reality, you can make some near-plausible arguments for the Islands continued independence up to the Rebellion era. Those arguments don't amount to much after that however.

Whatever the Imperium's reason for leaving the Islands alone, it didn't hold water for the Regency. That polity easily annexes and garrisons the Islands across a multi-parsec gap. Strephon's Imperium can undoubtedly do the same.

Two deep space refueling depots give the Imperium a route between the Core and Deneb that is beyond the reach of the Vargr, although the Aslan could prove troublesome on the Denebian end of the route. The annexation, or conquest, or other approach to the Islands will have to wait until Dulinor has been dealt with. While Norris could begin operations along the Islands route from his "side" of the Rift, the link up with the Imperial Core will have to wait until Ilelish is returned to the Imperial fold.

Strephon's reform of the Imperial communication systems will allow information to flow more rapidly and be shared more equably. The Third Imperium simply cannot afford to have communication between its components parts artificially slowed. This new speed and equability of communications should help the far-flung portions of the Imperium feel a new closeness with one another, besides allowing Imperial governance to react more quickly to any events.

Reforms in political structures

Strephon has an entire Domain, Ilelish, in rebellion. Another, Sol, is under attack and partially occupied, and an entire sector, the Old Expanses, cravenly surrendered to the enemy. In addition, if you choose to believe it, the Vargr have overrun two sectors and the Aslan yet another.

The Emperor is asking the Imperial people to enter into a very long, very hard struggle to reverse this list of calamities. The Imperial will be at war internally and along its borders for decades at the very least. So, how will Strephon rally the people, a people he has feared were becoming discontented and apathetic, to this sustained effort? Part of the answer can be found where most of the Imperium lives.

High population worlds are the living heart of the Imperium. A tiny portion of Imperial worlds happen to hold the majority of Imperial subjects.

Any attempts to rally, restructure, and reform the Imperium must take these worlds in account. What would these worlds want from Strephon? What levers will he be able to use on them? An answer to that question may lie in how well those worlds have been treated by the Imperium. More specifically, how have those worlds been treated by the emblems of the Imperium those worlds deal with everyday, the Imperial nobility who live there.

If the dukes, counts, marquis, and barons, holding fiefs on a world have done their job correctly, then the world would have no discontent with the Imperium. Because there is discontent, those nobles must have drifted away from the goal of *noblesse oblige*, "nobility obliges", to a more selfish one. Strephon can remedy that little problem quickly.

Towards the end of Europe's Middle Ages, kings found themselves in a struggle for power with their own nobles. One way these kings created and improved on their power base was to grant charters to towns and cities freeing them from any claims the nobility may have on them. Strephon can imitate this practice.

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In return for swearing fealty directly to him, Strephon can free worlds from their Imperial nobility. Doing so will be awkward and the Emperor will have to walk a very fine line indeed. Freeing too many worlds will anger the remaining nobility and granting too few charters will keep many disgruntled high population worlds aloof.

Many of the worlds freed from fiefs in this manner may in be regions “abandoned” by the Imperial nobility. Ilelish, whose rebellious nobles no longer owe fealty to Strephon, and the Old Expanses, whose nobility surrendered to the Solomani, would be places to start this practice. Although those regions are currently held by opponents to the Imperium, Strephon could let it be known that certain worlds would be reincorporated into the Imperium without being part of any noble’s fief. This news alone should instigate a few counter-rebellions in the rebel held territories.

Another option Strephon can explore is giving high population worlds a greater role in the Imperium at large. As it currently stands, the only role a world has in the Imperium is the role that the Imperial nobility living there happens to have. This could be easily changed.

Strephon need only create subsector- and sector-wide Moots. The New Moots (or Senates, or Assemblies, or Things, etc.) would give worlds a route of Imperial representation outside of that of the nobility. They would provide both the worlds and the Imperium with many benefits.

The worlds would now be able to access or petition the Imperium power structure directly, rather than relying on the ability or political savvy of their nobles. The worlds would now have a feeling of involvement within the Imperial system outside the system of the nobility. Committees within the New Moots could oversee, but not direct, the Imperial bureaucracy in their area. Policy suggestions could also be made and forwarded by these New Moots in

much the same way they are made by the Imperial Moot at Capital.

The Imperium would gain the benefit of having another path for reporting local conditions. During the long planning stage of their plot, Dulinor and his conspirators were able to either suborn or fool an entire Domain of Imperial nobility. With several subsector- and sector-sized New Moots in operation, keeping such a plot quiet and hidden would have been much more difficult.

While the work done by these New Moots would be similar across the Imperium, the structure of each, the name of each, and the method for selection of their members would depend heavily on local mores, customs, and sensibilities. A New Moot could consist of one or several houses; meet, deliberate, and vote in different ways; whatever seems right to the inhabitants of that region. The process by which New Moot members are selected would vary from world to world, region to region. Many members of the New Moots may be the Imperial nobles from that region. After all, they’ve got the necessary experience.

Representation within these New Moots would most certainly be proportional. In that way, high population worlds will not dominate the New Moots as easily as they might.

Strephon will not be instituting these reforms because he’s some crypto-democrat masquerading as the Emperor of 11,000 Worlds. The Emperor is a consummate pragmatist, however, just like his ancestor Arbellastra. In an attempt to shake the Imperium out of its malaise, he reestablished the Domains in the teeth of noble opposition. He can and will do the same with the “New Moots” program.

Sharing out a little bit of his power in return for restoring and strengthening the Imperium will not seem costly to him. Strephon has an abiding faith in the people; read his writings in *Survival Margin*. While his trust in the nobility may be shaken, he should have few qualms about engaging the general populace in the business of the Imperium.

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Also, these reforms may not be mandated Imperium-wide at first. Obviously, those areas in rebellion or occupied will not receive them. There may be subsectors who do not wish to participate in the program for various reasons. But a network of lesser Moots, all engaged in oversight of the Imperial bureaucracy and local nobility will become part of the fabric of the Imperium. Hopefully, the New Moots will provide the Imperium with a set of checks and balances on the activities on the nobility.

Strephon's reforms to the Imperium's political institutions should help draw the mass of the Imperial population closer to the Throne. Freeing some worlds from their Imperial fiefs will allow them to interact with the Imperium directly and not through a layer of potentially self-serving aristocrats. Giving both the high population worlds and other systems a greater say in local affairs via the New Moots should engender a "stakeholder" feeling among the commons. Furthermore, the political reforms will give the Imperium an additional route of reporting, monitoring, and oversight. This series of new institutions will provide additional checks and balances within the Imperium's interstellar feudal system.

Reform of the Imperial nobility

By any measure, a good portion of the nobility has failed the Imperium completely. The nobility of an entire Domain is in rebellion. The nobility of an entire sector has surrendered to the Solomani. The mass of nobility comprising the Imperial Moot meekly knuckled under to Lucan and ushered him onto the Throne.

However, other portions of the nobility have served the Imperium admirably. Nobles are leading the fight against the Imperium's enemies on many fronts. Others helped Strephon regain the Throne. An Imperial nobility is an obvious idea, a polity the size of the Third Imperium could not be governed without them.

There needs to be some sort of a fix, though. How can the Imperium hold the nobility to their tasks? How can the selfish, the rank incompetents, the wastrels be weeded out? The short answer is that, barring some major change in human psyches and behavior, none of that can be done perfectly.

Strephon can, however, raise the bar a bit.

One way would be to make the inheritance of noble titles less automatic. Another would be to make stripping titles from nobles easier. This would require information and reports regarding the abilities and personalities of the nobility in question to reach the Emperor's attention. That job would be perfect for the New Moots.

As an alternate reporting structure, the New Moots could provide the Imperium with fitness reports regarding the local nobility. Nobles newly elevated to their positions could be more carefully scrutinized during their first few years on the job. Nobles about whom the New Moots have received complaints could be investigated too. In this way, the New Moots would hopefully act as tribunes for the Imperium as a whole.

The New Moots would give the Emperor, or dukes, or Archdukes another viewpoint to consider when confirming inherited titles or granting new ones.

The "old boys' network" of local nobility would have to work much harder to cover up the deficiencies of a new heir with the New Moots watching. The major peccadilloes of that baron just tapped for advancement would be much harder to conceal. Unfit candidates, self-serving hacks, the occasional monster, and incompetents could still get through the process, but no where near as often as they have in the past.

The handling of proxy votes in the Imperial Moot would be another area for reform. As it stands now, many nobles sitting in the Moot have been there for years, if not generations. The deals that granted them the proxies they hold were arranged equally far in the past. Because of their long term

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stays at the Moot, these nobles are completely insulated from the very regions they purport to represent. No amount of tri-dee reports, agent summaries, and cyber memorandum can substitute for actual, on the spot visits.

This distance and insulation proved near fatal for the Imperium. There were nobles from the Domain of Ilelish sitting in the Moot who were as surprised by Dulinor's treason as anyone else. Not having been back to their fiefs in years and relying on bogus reports sent by traitorous underlings, these nobles suddenly found themselves in the dark. Everything they thought they knew about their fiefs was now a lie. Any noble who questioned the wisdom of visiting one's fiefs on a regular basis only needed to look at the fief-less nobles of Ilelish.

Procedures regarding proxies in the Moot should be changed. Whether Strephon can order these changes or merely suggest them is unknown. Lucan did disband that body for one year, so Emperors have some control over the Moot. Another way Strephon could initiate his reforms to the proxy system would be to make them part of every new nobles' oath of fealty.

As for the reforms themselves, multi-year sittings and generation-long proxies are right out. The nobles forming the Moot, theoretically all those in the Imperium, must make regular visits back to their fiefs. One way to encourage this would be to limit the amount of time proxies are good for and to forbid proxies being granted outside of the grantee's fief. For a count to receive a baron's proxy, the count must be his county. Yes, there will be ways to get around this, no system is human proof, but it should force the nobles rooted at the Imperial Moot to actually visit their fiefs once in a while.

All these reforms will create ire among many portions of the nobility. They will take umbrage at any questions regarding their fealty or work ethic. The nobles who complain the most about these re-

forms will be the ones who are most affected by them, i.e. the stiff necks, the wastrels, the selfish, and the incompetents. The nobles who actually perform their jobs, who believe that "nobility obliges", will take the reforms in stride. They have nothing to fear from increased scrutiny from their peers or the New Moots because they are already doing their jobs to the best of their ability.

The Imperial nobility will still wield great power in the future, but they will also be more scrutinized. While this scrutiny might fail or be subverted in some way, it can only help the Imperium as a whole.

The Pace of Reform

How quickly will the Strephonic Reforms take root within the Imperium, and how extensive will they be? The short answer remains, as always, "it depends!".

You would have noticed that I divided the reforms into three major blocs, even though some of the details of each reform may have belonged to another. One example would be the New Moots' oversight of the nobility; it is mentioned in under the reforms to the nobility and not with the political reforms.

My dividing the reforms into these rough blocs did follow a method of sorts. The reforms are discussed in order of their acceptance; the reforms in communications will be easier than the political reforms, which will be easier in turn than the reforms to the nobility.

The extensiveness of each bloc of reforms would follow this same hierarchy. Jump-6 communications would be seen Imperium-wide relatively quickly, followed by the set-up of the New Moots. Some areas may choose not to take part in the New Moots program, but would still be tied into the jump-6 x-boat net. Finally, the reforms to the nobility would lag behind the other two, largely depending on how the local nobility views the Emperor's policies. There could be areas in which the nobility fight or delay any reform to their powers as well as others that quickly accept Strephon's policies.

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One good rule of thumb would be to both accelerate the pace of the reforms and increase the area of their acceptance wherever the Imperium has had to recover its territory. With the damage done to the institutions there, Strephon would have a free hand to appoint new, and more tractable, officials.

Ironically enough, Ilelish, whose treason started this all, would be reformed more rapidly and more extensively than any other region of the Imperium. Another area that would see great changes would be the Old Expanses. Most of the Imperial nobility there surrendered to the Solomani and would have been purged, thus giving Strephon a clean slate on which to work.

Just as the Imperium is not a seamless monolith, the Strephonic Reforms will not applied as such. There will be areas that, for reasons of politics or for cultural reasons, do not wish to participate.

The Imperial Heir

Strephon is nearly 70 years old when he returns to the Throne. He will have many immediate problems, but the one closest to him is also one of the most pressing. He needs an Heir, a designated successor, and he needs one quickly.

Strephon's father, Paulo III, lived into his nineties, so the Emperor may have another two decades on the Throne. The pressures of ruling the post-Assassination Imperium may shorten that however. The line of succession to the Throne needs to be cleared up soon.

There are several ways Strephon can go about finding an heir. He could marry again and produce the Heir, he could simply designate one of his living relatives as the Heir, he could adopt a likely prospect as the Heir, or he could create the Heir by other means. After looking at these options, I believe he has only one real choice, creating an Heir by other means.

An Imperial marriage would kick off a round of infighting among the major families of the realm

that neither Strephon nor the Imperium can afford. Each group would want the next Empress and next Heir to come from their bloodline. The machinations, backbiting, and palace intrigues that an Imperial bridal hunt would engender could do nothing but harm to the Imperium at this stage. A new Empress is not the answer.

Adopting an Heir or designating a living relative as one would be equally risky. Both would mean bringing an adult into the most private councils of the Imperium. Whether Strephon and the Heir wished it or not, factions would develop overnight between those who believed themselves to be following one or the other. Once again, the Imperial leadership would be seen as a bunch of squabbling ninnies, too busy fighting over their own perks and perceived slights to be bothered with saving the Imperium.

While creating an Heir, via in vitro fertilization and whatever surrogates, human or mechanical, are available in the 57th century has its own problems, they are least put off until the Heir comes of age. We know that the necessary materials are at hand for such a project. Indeed, the materials may be available in many parts of the Imperium. Strephon was able to fashion Avery at Usdiki naming the late Iolanthe as his mother. What's more, Margeret was able to bear twins in her faction capital and announce that Strephon was the father.

The announcement of the birth of the Heir, perhaps a year after Strephon's return to the Throne, will be a cause for great rejoicing among the Imperial people. The news that Strephon and the late Iolanthe again have a child will be seen fitting. The people will know that, like them, the Emperor also has a hostage to the future.

Whether the Wounded Colossus Heir will be male or female, enhanced, as Avery was, or not, is entirely up to you. In my notes long ago, I settled the problem of the Heir easily enough, but left the details deliberately murky.

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Two problems left for the future of the Wounded Colossus timeline will be the relationship between Strephon and the Heir and the possibility of a regent if Strephon dies early. Both could work against Strephon's legacy. An embittered Heir may come to see Strephon's work as wrong and work to undo it even before taking the Throne. A regent, holding the Throne for an infant Heir, could easily succumb to the lure of power.

Where Were You, Strephon?

Sooner or later, most likely even before regaining the Throne, Strephon will need to explain why he wasn't in the Throne Room on the day of the Assassination. This "explanation" will be tricky at best.

Strephon and his advisors are most definitely not going to reveal the existence of Longbow and the visions/signals received there. They're asking the people of the Imperium to enter upon a decades long struggle; revealing that the apocalypse is due around 1200 won't help matters. So, the explanation cannot even hint at Longbow.

Yet, the reason Strephon was away must seem weighty enough. Simply announcing that the Emperor had slipped off to bowl a few frames won't cut it. The Emperor must be seen to be on the job at all times.

I tentatively penciled in the Cymbeline chips as Strephon's excuse for his absence. That was well before TNE used that same lifeform to destroy *Traveler* as we knew it, however. I thought the "discovery" of a sentient artificial lifeform would be "weighty" enough to pass as a reasonable excuse. Strephon would let it be known that he had been attending a conference regarding the sentience of the Cymbeline chips and leave it at that.

Whether you use the Cymbeline excuse or not is up to you. I'm sure any plausible story will fit into the setting; a secret weapons demonstration, sitting in judgement on a high peer, taking an emergency petition on a critical subject, a meeting insisted upon

by an alien ambassador from one of the other Major Races, etc. The plausible explanations easily made.

Strephon the Man

After posting the first part of the this flight of fancy, I was stunned to find that people were interested in Strephon as a person, particularly in his personality.

The Strephon the public sees, and to the Emperor, everyone is the public, may not be the actual Strephon. The post-Assassination Strephon has become the Imperium's Marble Man. He is the living embodiment of duty and honor. He never shows any strong emotions, he never laughs, never smiles, never cries. His always unfailingly polite, perfectly correct in behavior and actions.

His eyes are his best weapons. When someone complains about the burden they are asked to carry or the size of the problem they must tackle or the impossibility of the task they have been given, Strephon merely looks at them with a stare that seems to bare their souls. The pain, grief, and determination they show can overwhelm even those who work with him daily. He doesn't need to stare at anyone very often.

The Imperial family's quarters in the Palace were destroyed along with the Ileish Guard. Lucan began a restoration during his brief Usurpation, but Strephon has not bothered to complete it. The other parts of the Palace damaged in the fighting have been long repaired and the Palace is still used for every purpose but one, Strephon no longer lives there. He has taken over part of the IN command center below the Palace as his quarters. There, in a suite of a few small rooms, the Emperor leads a very monastic personal life.

What does the Emperor do when he's alone? Only his valet knows, and it's not talking.

Of course, all of this could simply be the "spin" put out by the Emperor's PR men. He could actually be slowly sliding down a path of madness, driven by his grief and anger. After all, Strephon was Lucan's uncle...



Feedback

Please tell us ...

- what you think of both magazine and website
 - what you think of the articles we publish
 - how we can make our magazine better
 - how we can make our website better
 - what kind of articles you do or don't want to see
 - what you think of our look
 - how we can make it better
- Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:
- e-mail: feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

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

Traveller on the Internet

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

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

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

Information Center: Request for Information

Here is a list of all of those publishers that we are aware of that are currently putting out material for Traveller (any version) or Traveller-compatible material not specifically for Traveller (this list is based on products that the editor owns, and notifications from "follow your favorites" from DriveThruRPG). If you know of others, or if any of those on this list are not in fact currently operating/publishing, please write and let us know. We'd also appreciate either lists or pointers to lists of all of the Traveller and Traveller-compatible material put out by any of these companies, or any companies that we may have omitted from the list. If you have contact information, we'd appreciate that as well.

List of Traveller/compatible Publishers

Avalon Game Company
Avenger Enterprises
Christian Hollnbuchner
D.B. Design Bureau
DSL Ironworks
Expeditious Retreat Press
FarFuture Enterprises

Forever People
Game Designers' Workshop(!)
Gorgon Press
Gypsy Knights Games
Jon Brazer Enterprises
K-Studio
Loren Wiseman Enterprises
Mongoose Publishing
Postmortem Studios
QuikLink Interactive
Samardan Press
Sceaptune Games
Screaming Eye Games
Spica Publishing
Steve Jackson Games
Terra/Sol Games
Toxic Bag Productions
Zoser Games

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 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, Avenger Enterprises' *Far Avalon*, and the forthcoming *Traveller Prime Directive*, and any others we may have forgotten.

...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 Sceptune 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 on what you're submitting. Generally:

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”.

