



FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Article

Slice of Life: The 30th Century Internet

by Mike Cross

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March 2013

A Note About Production

Freelance Traveller is prepared using Microsoft Office Publisher 2010 running on a Windows 7 Ultimate x64 system. The program is reasonably easy to use, and produces good results with moderate effort; it also supports advanced typographic features such as typographic quotes and apostrophes, small caps, ligatures, swashes, and stylistic alternatives (if the advanced features are implemented in the font). Generation of the PDF files is built in to this version of Microsoft Office; no additional products are needed.

The title and heading typeface is ZapfHumanist BT, a Bitstream adaptation of Hermann Zapf's digital redesign of his 'hot lead' typeface Optima, chosen as a 'tie-back' to the title typeface of the original edition of *Traveller*. The black-and-orange of the section headings is also a tie-back to *Traveller's* origins, though we felt that the 'correct' red was too dark. The heading sizes vary from 12 to 16 points. Body text is set in Palatino Linotype, also designed by Hermann Zapf, and is set at 11 points for most body text, giving approximately the same text spacing as Times New Roman at 12 point (which was the original *Freelance Traveller* body text), but a lighter 'color'. Palatino Linotype also 'balances' better as a body text typeface to Optima as a titling typeface.

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From the Editor



Thirty-five years. That's how long *Traveller* has been out in one form or another, and that is, therefore, how long there has been a *Traveller* community creating and sharing material to use with the game.

You can look at that collection of material and see a major part of the evolution of both science fiction/space opera and of role-playing games. You can see how both have gotten more sophisticated, more 'three-dimensional'. But you can also see that *Traveller* started out with a certain 'evolutionary advantage' over its contemporaries—most of the contemporaries were strictly 'hack-and-slash', with no real thought for the wider setting—the world existed primarily for the characters to go out, hunt down monsters, kill them, and steal their stuff. Your goal was to do it as much as possible, and get Experience that would allow you to Level Up, and become a tougher character.

Traveller was different—your character had (the skeleton of) a real history, and skills to match, and a world that was more than a backdrop for your characters. *Traveller* encouraged you to 'connect' with your character, and with your character's world. It wasn't about Getting Experience and Leveling Up, it was about Doing Things, and not all such Things were violence-oriented.

Traveller was also, in a sense, the English language of role-playing games—its community did not hesitate to adopt (and adapt) ideas from any and all sub-genres of science fiction, and make those ideas part of the game.

That's the kind of thing that makes a game special—the fact that everyone makes it their own, but with enough commonality for it to remain a shared experience. And I think it's because *Traveller* was special in that way that it's proven to have such staying power. So, let's go forward to the next thirty-five! ☼



Technical Manual 1: *Relieve-class* Escape Pod

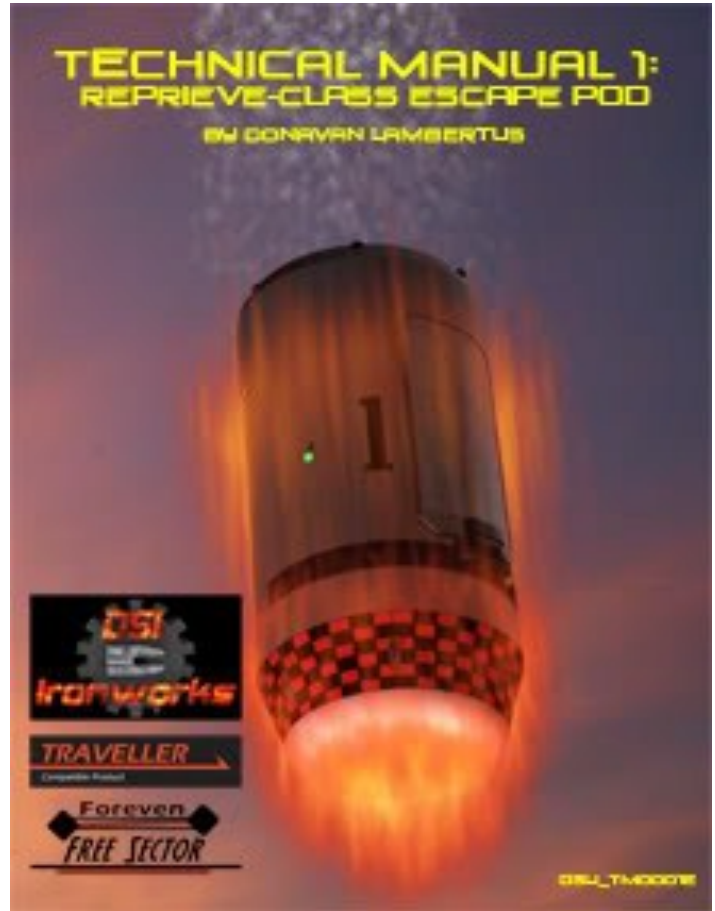
reviewed by Timothy Collinson

Technical Manual 1: Relieve-class Escape Pod. Donovan Lambertus
DSL Ironworks. <http://dsl-ironworks.blogspot.com>
22pp., softcover/PDF.
US\$5.00 PDF/US\$12 Softcover

Space travel is, of course, not without its dangers. *Traveller* has long provided for survival equipment from the humble rescue bubble, through the ordinary vacc suit, to fully fledged lifeboats. The *Relieve-class*, however, offers something more substantial than a bubble or a vacc suit which can keep a traveller alive for up to a week (longer with Fast drug) and even re-enter a planet's atmosphere. It's a quarter-ton pod shaped like a 2.75m tall upside down cola can and contains an acceleration couch along with the required fuel, systems and equipment. In minimum power mode battery life can be extended to 48 hours but in a stellar system, solar panels can extend this to two years.

This is the first in a proposed series from DSL Ironworks which is planning to examine a small craft such as this in some detail, the book also suggests it will be a companion to a forthcoming series of 'Captain's Manuals' which will detail specific classes of starships. If the quality here is anything to go by, then this reviewer for one is looking forward to both these series with some anticipation. The volume is branded as part of the 'Foreven Free Sector' line.

The 22 pages (plus a page of Open Game Licence and a page advert for the *Quick Decks 1: Starter Pack* from the same publisher) contain a well-produced and well thought out 'technical manual' describing the development history of the pod, a consideration of its utility compared to other rescue devices in various situations, the design and construction of the pod, and its operation and usage. Throughout the book are sidebars of fiction snippets giving testimonies of various characters who have had to use them.



You have to feel for the poor soul who, through use of Fast drug and the extended life support of a vacc suit once the pod life support gave out, managed a record 451 days in this claustrophobic space! These add great flavour to a book which could otherwise be rather dry. Two particularly useful pages detail the survival equipment the pod contains and some random malfunction and damage tables. Finally, there's a page of four adventure seeds – although it won't take an able Referee long to think of a multitude of others – and a 'Quick Reference Data Sheet' with all the vital statistics laid out clearly.

The artwork all through the book is glorious. Attractive colour renders from a cut away of the contents of a pod, to a rather forlorn looking traveller sitting on a recently used pod afloat in some deserted looking ocean. We can only hope help is on its way! The cover shows a terrific image of a pod undergoing atmospheric re-entry and judging from the sky in both pictures, is a depiction from just moments before the previously mentioned illustration.

(Continued from page 2)

The layout and proof-reading are of a high standard and with availability in print and PDF format (or both) it should suit the needs of just about any *Traveller* referee. The volume will be hugely use-

ful in such a wide variety of situations – from players kitting out a starship with some cool gear to Referees wanting plot hooks, atmosphere, or possibly even entire adventures. If you're travelling and have to abandon ship, you'll want a *Reprivee*-class pod; if you're Travelling, you'll want this book! 🌟

In A Store Near You

The Showroom

Kiracu TL11 Large Planetary Defence Missile Submarine

by Richard Perks

The *Kiracu* is the official planetary defense design from Enrii Maritime Industries LIC of Keplo/Core. The design has been licensed to Instellarms, who manufactures and sells the submarine through the rest of the Imperium.

The *Kiracu* is primarily a covert missile launching platform used to engage starships in orbit or within the atmosphere whilst remaining undetected. It is designed to survive initial orbital bombardment by remaining undetected and provides its owners with a retaliatory strike capability.

Its main armament is a single 100tn missile bay arranged as a vertical launch system supported by an extensive magazine. Missiles can be launched from 100m below the surface and guided to their targets using extensive passive sensor arrays. The use of passive sensors, EM masking and the cloaking effects of the water ensure that the submarine remains undetected between launches.

A limited self-defense armament is retained, including two remote beam laser turrets for close-in laser defense against torpedoes, a small anti-submarine missile system, and long range anti-aircraft missiles. These are primarily designed to protect the submarine against grav vehicles and small attack submarines engaged in anti-submarine work. The hull has been strengthened to increase the maximum dive depth to allow the submarine to flee attack submarines and orbital return fire.

Given the long duration of patrol cruises, each crew member is assigned a small stateroom, and sufficient fuel and supplies are carried for up to 90 days cruising.

Craft ID: *Kiracu* Planetary Defence Missile Submarine, TL11, MCr730.029
Hull: 900/2250, Disp=1000, Config=Submarine, Armor=67E, SurfUnload=12322tons, SurfLoad=12499tons, SubLoad(Max)=12699tons
Power: 3/6, Fusion=270Mw, Dur=90/270, Cons 0.135Kl/hr
Loco: 3/6, Std Anti-Grav Thrusters, Thrust=1698tn, SurfSpeed=104kph, SubSpeed=140kph, MaxAccel=20kph, MaxDecel=40kph, MaxDirChg=180deg, MaxDiveDepth=1005m
Commo: LaserComm×2(Plan), MaserComm×2(Plan), Radio×2(Plan), radio mast.
Sensors: AEMS×2(Reg), ActSonar(VDist), PEMS×2(Intst), PasSonar(Cont), NeutrinoSens(1GW), Densimeter(LoPen), EMSJam(Reg), EMMask, periscopes(night,attack), sensor mast. ActObjScan=Diff; ActObjPin=Diff; PasEngScan=Rout; PasEngPin=Form; PasObjScan=Form; PasObjPin=Imp
Off: 2×0.5MW B laser w/TL11 weap stabiliz, PD tgt, rem turr, 8cell subLaunch anti-sub miss in vert racks, Quad subLaunch hvy `LR SAM in vert racks, Starship 100tn MissBay F8.
Def: +5DM
Control: Comp Mod5Fib×2, Panel=DynLink×142, HUD×38, Env=BasicEnv, BasicLS, ExtLS, airlocks×3
Accomm: Crew=177 (Bridge=8, Deck=50, Sens=18, GunneryBLaser=2, AntiSubMissiles=1, SAM=1, StarshipMiss=2, Engineering=90, Stewards=4, Medic=1), Stateroom=Large×119, Small×58.
Other: Anti-Sub Missiles×8, Hvy SAM×4, Starship Missiles 1600 (16 Battery Rds/turret), Fuel (LH2)=291.6Kliters, ExtDur-Food&WaterSupp=31.77Kliters, Cargo=125Kl, Ballast(Pb)=22Kl, BallastTanks=2500Kl, 1250Klitter/hour BallastPumps(1250Kl/h×3), SpareCP=0.15, SpareMW=20.96, ObjSize=Avg, MLEv=None.
Weapons: B Laser 0.5MW, Range=Dist(2.5km), Pen=5/2, Damage=4, Sig=Hi, ROF=40. Anti-Sub Missiles, Speed=2880kph, Range=Regional(960km), Pen=32, Dam=16. Hvy SAM, Speed=880kph, Ceil=30,000m, Range=Reg(200km), Pen=26, Dam=32.



Tulagai Slandon and Gamma Banner

By Richard Morey

Tulagai Slandon is Chief of Operations on Lush, a SuSAG owned world. Like many of the SuSAG employees on Lush, Tulagai views his current assignment as punishment. In Tulagai's case, it is simply one more in a long string of such assignments since he inadvertently facilitated a corporate espionage attempt against SuSAG some fifteen years ago: Tulagai was trying to impress a certain young lady who it turns out, was working for a competitor. "One drunken night and it's all over," Tulagai complains to anyone who will listen. Still, calling in every marker he had accrued to that point, Tulagai managed to retain his job, finally ending up on Lush. His hope is to somehow make a difference here that will redeem him in Corporate's eyes. The two best prospects, from Tulagai's perspective, are to 'solve' either the renegade (disaffected indentured workers who have established independent enclaves in the wilds of Lush) problem or, eliminate the Little Men (an emerging sophont race native to Lush) before the IISS learns of their existence.

Though appearing smooth and cultured, Tulagai is amorally ruthless in pursuing what he views as being in the best interests of Tulagai. Player characters may encounter Tulagai if they visit Lush. He may employ them to help 'solve' one of his problems, in which case he will grant them freedom of travel (though not free of tracking) on Lush. Using outsiders also provides Tualgai and SuSAG with plausible deniability should anything go awry.

Tulagai Slandon: Human male, age 46, 778A98
7 terms Citizen/Corporate

Skills: Computers 3, Leader 2, Administration 2, Broker 2, Carouse 2, Advocate 1, Gambler 1, Drive 0, Diplomat 0, Communication 0.

Equipment: Expensive Clothing (Cloth armor 5), Personal Comm (TL 10), Access to SuSAG 'slush funds.'

Gamma Banner is a leggy beauty with short blond hair and a propensity for wearing even shorter skirts. She is Tualgai Slandon's current 'spouse,' having quickly determined that attaching herself to the local SuSAG Chief was the best gig she could arrange on Lush.

Gamma grew up in a rough part of town on her home world and quickly learned to trade on her looks, and to rely on the fact that most people would not see past those looks to notice her intelligence. The girl of a local crime lord, Gamma saw something she shouldn't have. While her patron was confident of Gamma's loyalty and discretion, his lieutenants didn't share that sentiment and Gamma realized that if she didn't disappear of her own volition, she'd disappear in a much more permanent fashion. Thus it is that Gamma accepted SuSAG's no questions asked offer for transport to Lush, where she quickly figured out the system and attached herself to Tulagai. Knowing that Tulagai is tiring of her, and recalling how easily she replaced her predecessor, Gamma is looking for her next patron, preferably with a ride off Lush.

Gamma's life thus far has taught her to trust no one but herself. Not surprisingly, Gamma's welfare is her only interest.

Gamma Banner: Human female, age 22, 979966. 1 term Citizen/ Worker

Skills: Trade (Escort) 1, Streetwise 1, Melee (Unarmed) 1, Drive 0, Mechanical 0, Engineering 0, Science 0.

Equipment: Collection of provocative clothing. 🌐

The Freelance Traveller Forums

Our connectivity issues appear to be mostly resolved; the main issue at this point is having the time to put everything together. We hope to have something set up for limited testing soon, and are seeking volunteers for testing and discussion of various features. Interested people should contact us at tech@freelancetraveller.com. We apologize for the continued delay in restoring this service.



One-Act Adventures: Vengeance by Proxy

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

One-Act Adventures: Vengeance by Proxy. Jason Kemp
Samardan Press. <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/samardanpress>.
16pp., softcover/PDF.
US\$3.99 PDF/US\$8.99 Softcover

On the Shelf

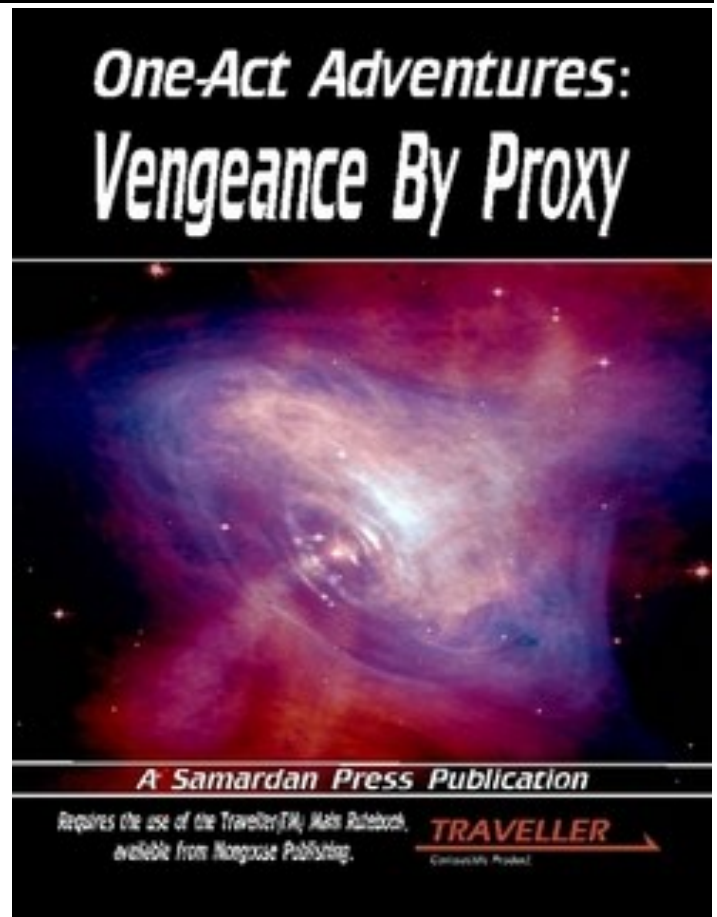
At only 16 pages, it's going to get lost if it's edge-on. In full-face view, it follows the basic structure of other *Traveller* third-party titles (and some setting-specific titles from Mongoose), with black segments with the title at the top, and publisher information and compatibility requirements and logos at the bottom, surrounding some artwork. For this number from Samardan Press, the artwork is a striking image of a whirlpool nebula. The print version of the cover seems to have less of the blue seen in the image accompanying this review, but is still quite striking.

On Inspection

The adventure of the title is presented on two-and-a-half pages, in the form of four scenes, presented in the order that they should be run. Each scene consists of a synopsis of the events that are expected to happen during the scene, plus some referee's notes about it. The scenes are set out in broad only; essentially specifying why the PCs are in the scene, and what the goals (for the scene) of the other party are—no specific method of achieving the goal is set out, nor are any specific events during the scene specified.

Immediately following the scenes is a page of character data, identifying the NPCs that the party will encounter. These are presented in the usual *Traveller* format, and include stats, skills, equipment, and a brief description.

The page-and-a-half of Library Data following the character data is very much tuned to Mr Kemp's Azri Drakara Sector setting, and contains mostly



background information entries. Some of these will be of interest to the PCs, but none of them provide information that has any immediate impact on the adventure.

A description of "Gee-Ball" follows, slightly more than a page. This description is more in-depth than the Library Data entry, because one scene could have the PCs involved in a game. The 'in-universe' rules are included, to give players and referees an image of what's happening during play, and a set of rules for 'gaming out' a match are provided to resolve the game that the PCs might get involved in.

Two pages of subsector data for Cepheus Subsector, on one world of which the adventure happens, are provided; this consists of a subsector map and a listing of the worlds in the format familiar to long-time *Traveller* players, dating back to the earliest days of Classic *Traveller*. Two pages of explanation of the codes in the UWP follows, mostly tables

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Critics' Corner

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that could have been taken from (or adapted from) the similar tables in the *Traveller* SRD.

The book closes with just over a page of the legalese required when one publishes material to which the OGL is applied.

The only artwork in the adventure is the cover; however, that should not be construed as a deficiency—while there is plenty of room for additional artwork (roughly two-and-a-half pages) due to the locations of page breaks, any additional illustrations would not necessarily have added anything to the adventure; at most, they might have provided imagery such as the appearance of the major NPCs, which in this reviewer's opinion can be just as easily—and just as profitably—left to the imaginations of the players.

Although written for the author's own unofficial setting, and for the current (Mongoose) edition of the *Traveller* rules, it is easily adaptable to any setting that carries the same trope elements as the Official *Traveller* Universe, and to any of the so-called 'Classic-compatible' rule sets (typically held to be Classic *Traveller*, *MegaTraveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller/T4*, and *Mongoose Traveller*).

Conclusion

For the referee who has trouble coming up with good playable scenarios, but can easily grab someone else's set-up and run with it, *Vengeance by Proxy* is a worthwhile short-but-expandable adventure to have. Mr Kemp has hit on a useful style of presentation, and has not over-specified the adventure, making it very nearly ideally flexible. A definite "buy" in PDF; the print edition is the purchaser's call. 🌟

In A Store Near You

Combat Exoskeleton III

designed by Ewan Quibell

CraftID: Combat Exoskeleton III, TL10, Cr 308,529
Hull: 1/1, Disp=0.185, Conf=CUSL, Armour=40E
Loaded=4.13108 tons, Unloaded=4.108286 tons
Power: 1/2, 2×FuelCell 0.09Mw (0.18Mw), Dur=15/45
Loco: 1/2, 2×Legs, P/W=43.57217, Road=87kph,
OffRoad=52.2kph
Comm: Radio=3×VDist (50km), Interface=Brain,
Power, Program
Sensors: ActEMS=Dist (5 km), PasEMS=VDist (50 km),
Passive Audio, Environmental, 2×Touch
Off: Hardpoints=1, Laser Designator
Weapon Stabilised=120 kph

	Ammo	Pen/Attn	Dmg	Max Range	Auto Tgts	Dngr Spc	Sig	ROF
9mm SMG-5	275	3/1	3	Long	3	0	M	600
9mm SMG-5	275	3/1	3	Long	3	0	M	600
LasRifle-9	-	9/2	3	Distant	-	-	M	40
LasRifle-9	-	9/2	3	Distant	-	-	M	40
Blade x2	-	3	2	Close	-	-	-	-

Def: +2, +8 under Robot control
Control: NHR Low Function 100 Robot Brain,
S/W=FwdObs-1, Recon-1, Head Up Display,
Enviro=BasicEnv, BasicLS,
Accom: Crew=1 (Operator), Seats=None x1
Other: 2×Light Robot Arm, Fuel=0.288kl,
Cargo=0.002634 kl, ObjSize=Small,
EmLevel=Faint
Comment: Cost in Quantity=Cr 246,824
Adds +10 to the Operator's STR
Can lift 1.787 under Robot control

This is Daud Enterprises' Combat Exoskeleton III (nicknamed "Battle Dress") presented to the Home County Military. The operator climbs into the exoskeleton with their arms in the robot arms and their legs in the robot legs. The contoured exoskeleton then encloses around them with the helmet providing a complete seal against the environment.

The upgraded Exoskeletons keeps the new integrated EMS arrays both active and passive increasing the staggering amount of tactical battlefield information presented to the operator via the integrated head up display. With increased road speed, although slower 52.2 kph over the battlefield, it is smaller, comes with increased protection to starship armour standards, and an endurance of 15 days. The arms enhance the strength of the operator considerably while the operator is in control, while the touch sensors on each arm ensure that the sensation of holding or lifting is passed through to the operator in order to allow use of normal weaponry, tools and equipment.

In A Store Near You

(Continued from page 6)

The exoskeleton is armed with a blade at the end of each arm for hand-to-hand combat, an SMG with 275 rounds of ammo in each arm, along with a Laser Rifle in each arm. The SMG is notionally a back-up weapon with an ammo counter shown on the HUD. Both weapons are gyro stabilised for firing while the operator is moving however this can sometimes put the operators arm in awkward positions so this function is automatically disengaged if it is likely to do so. The Laser Designator is to aid laser guided ordinance, and can be targeted from control via the robot brain.

The complex systems of the exoskeleton are controlled using a robot brain (Daud Enterprises' installed the NHR Low Function 100 Robot Brain) that is subordinate to the operator. The Brain is programmed with the abilities of a forward observer and recon scout allow tactical battlefield information to be relayed via one or two of the radios back to command, and between multiple exoskeletons, as well as presented to the operator as advice on the HUD. Using these skills artillery can be targeted on threats that the operator can designate by voice command alone. Tactical battlefield information from multiple exoskeletons can be combined between then or at command to allow for triangulations and audio fixes of unseen opposition such as snipers, and fire missions can be called in by command to

deal with these threats without the need for operator involvement. With the program interface it is possible for command to re-task the robot brain with a skill set of Forward Observer-2 or Recon-2 to be able to provide more detailed tactical battlefield information. In medical mode (see below) it has also been known to re-task the robot with Stealth-2 in order to help the casualty arrive at the medical centre without additional wounds.

In the event of injury or unconsciousness of the operator the Robot brain can take control of the exoskeleton and walk the operator back to the nearest medical assistance while reporting on the occupant's vital signs and still relay tactical battlefield information as necessary. In control of the exoskeleton the Robot is able to lift considerably more than the operator could; however as the needed positioning for this to be achieved put the operators arms and legs in highly uncomfortable if not painful positions this function is not used. The Robot brain is also able to predict and evade attacks on the exoskeleton far better than the operator; again in order to do this the Robot has to move the exoskeleton into positions that would be painful if not deadly for the operator so this function has been disabled.

Combat duration is exceptional at 15 days that is normally limited by the combat duration of the operator; however the need to refuel the unit causes the Home County Military to have to adapt combat tactics to take this into account. 🌀

Kurishdam

At Home, We Do It Like This

Slice of Life: The 30th Century Internet

by Mike Cross

In a future setting like *Twilight Sector*, mass communication and data storage are vitally important components of civilization. Want to be a back water planet? Don't have an internet or even just a sub-standard one and you'll get your wish.

Information is power. On the internet, information takes the form of communications being

passed from one location to another, or data storage, both public and private. The information on the future net will allow for efficient communication and economic activity, increasing the quality of life and the productivity of all those with access to it.

The future internet might go by a multitude of names, like Net, Grid, Matrix, Network, Web, Pocket, Store, Comm, RAM, Crib, Rack, Post, Tulle, Reticule, Veil, Snood, Circuit, Mesh, Gin, Pattern, Weave, Dock, or Trivet. In some places it might even

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be named for a person or corporation who established it or as a tribute to a historical figure. Hence, it might be called the Peterson or the Seti-Tallos or a combination like the Seti-Tallos Grid.

'Places' mentioned above refers to star systems or any other spot in Einstein's three dimensional space/time that humans choose to inhabit, like Avalon Station or the Trinity Research Station in the Twilight Sector. This is important to note, because the future internet will of course be bound by the laws of physics. Those laws dictate that data is subject to the speed of light and light waves of one form or another will be the vehicle by which information is transmitted. That means that for every Astronomical Unit of distance between two internet access points there will be a share delay of just a hair over 8 minutes. But where real sharing delays come to bear are across interstellar distances.

What that boils down to is that each system will have its own internet.

In a setting like *Twilight Sector*, with interstellar communications like Grav Satellites, the internets of system A and system B will be able to share information. It will, of course, be subject to whatever delay there is in communications between the two systems. There could also be bandwidth problems. Updating the thousands of audios, videos, holograms and plain old data files from a thousand worlds would require a mammoth amount of broadcast capacity. Quantum computing has largely eliminated bandwidth problems in local nodes of the internet but broadcasting updates might create some bottlenecks based on the quality of Tachyon satellites and the frequency of communications.

Just as quantum computing solved the bandwidth problems of the original internet, it is hoped that Tachyon computing will link all nodes of the internet in something approaching real-time. That seems like a tall order. Physical matter can be transported across space faster than light can cover

the same distance via Tachyon space but even then the delay is considerable. Theoretical mathematicians believe it can be done, but as of 2991 there is still a lot of scientific ground to be covered before a more integrated galaxy-wide internet comes to pass.

Various star systems would become either the planned or *de facto* repositories of information and news about their surrounding systems or sectors. For example, Terra/Sol in the Twilight Sector might serve in this role. A planet, say in the Oster Republic, a completely separate stellar nation and almost on the other side of the Known Galaxy, would assume that if they had the latest updates available from Terra/Sol they would have the latest information on the Twilight Sector. However, that may or may not be the case.

Where things start to get really interesting is with systems that require the physical transport of internet updates, most likely because they aren't on the Grav Sat communications system. Interesting, in the sense that the information might not be as fresh or accurate as a group of adventurers might want. Also, the 'freshness' of data, or lack thereof, provides a multitude of adventure opportunities, like carrying updates to or from out-of-the-way systems, acquiring specific information from an out-of-the-way system at a patron's request, or taking advantage of the fact that a system has not been updated on a specific event.

Beyond the grand vision of an all-encompassing internet, across the Known Galaxy, whose nodes periodically communicate with each other, it is worth noting that internet nodes have developed what have come to be called cybercities. Technically, a cybercity is nothing more than a collection of information existing on a particular physical server. These clusters are often based on a particular genre of information. For example a cluster could be a place where you could go to learn about 25th century ethics. That's the boring answer.

The truth is far more interesting. The internet is alive with living entities, Artificial Intelligences,

(Continued from page 8)

Ghosts, and Dups who actually live in this digital environment, not to mention the multitude of biologicals who log in as Net Pilots. When digital life forms want to interact with the world occupied by meat sacks (biological entities) they must leave their digital world and occupy a physical interface like a robot or biocon. Conversely, meat sacks who want to interact with this digital world, must use digital interfaces (avatars) to enter the internet.

A cybercity populated by these digital entities is a far cry from a boring database on a server farm. Cybercities run by digital entities can take a bewildering number of forms. They are typically created to project a visual appearance to those entering them. Their appearance could be anything from a maze of ones and zeros, almost impossible for a biological entity to navigate no matter how good their avatar program is, to a replica of ancient Shanghai. In short, cybercities can take on almost any imaginable form and sometimes a multitude of forms all in the same city. From this maze of ones and zeros example, they can also be unwelcoming and even dangerous to biologicals.

Cybercities can be a bit like the "Old West", somewhat lawless and subject to the law of the jungle. The internet is one of the hardest places for law enforcement to impose their will. That's not to say the law doesn't exist there. There are digital entities that seek to regulate actions within these domains either because they are themselves law enforcement or they have a moral code that they live by. But, the danger of the internet in certain places shouldn't be ignored, especially for biologicals entering this alien world.

Besides its physical effect, the 30th century internet plays a central role in the psychology of humanity and for that matter, all sentients. The internet is the crucible in which much of human society is shaped. And, because of that, what most of humanity perceives as human culture does not exist without

the internet, at least as it would be recognizable to someone living in the 30th Century.

In the *Twilight Sector* setting on a maintech world, (which are TL12 at least and constitute a substantial majority of the planets in the setting), the average citizen's life revolves around the internet. It can be safely assumed that most people on a maintech world would have friends and coworkers that they've never met face to face.

A sentient on a maintech world would almost universally own some sort of computing device, either a wristwatch or credit card sized tool. The interface would probably be an interactive holographic display or be voice activated. Most devices would have very minimal storage capacity. There is simply no need for it. Storage capacity is something rented (or perhaps owned) on the internet.

The internet is where people go to watch their favorite entertainment programs. The internet is where they go to access address books. The internet is where people go to access business work space. The internet is where people go to access personal financial accounts. The internet is where people go to access information. The internet is where people go to meet other people. In short the internet is everything, *everything* associated with "modern" life.

An example of how the 30th century internet has become addicting to sentients is by allowing access to the entire world. By combining the internet with a Virtual Environment Overlay, more commonly known as VEO technology (see the previous 'Slice of life' article entitled 'Holographic and Immersive Technology' for a complete description), the internet can allow someone to be almost anywhere on a planet without ever leaving the comfort of their living room. Thus, the internet can allow someone in say Kansas City on Terra/Sol to visit the Paris Replica in New France. They can rent a robot or BioCon that actually is at the Paris Replica to move about the city and, via VEO technology and the rented doppelganger, interact with people and objects actually there, half a world away. They can visit the Louvre

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and touch, see, and hear the displays and people there. Even taste and smell can be replicated in an advanced system. Many sentients have described the experience as feeling more real than if they'd experienced it with their actual body. This technology has created a sort of technological teleportation.

Those are only some of the active ways the internet infiltrates everyday life. Because everyone uses it, the internet provides a captive audience. Marketers in capitalist societies barrage potential customers both online and off. Walking by a wall screen in the subway is likely to trigger a directed marketing pitch based on past internet usage. In totalitarian societies people are likely to get the latest propaganda based upon what past internet usage shows as interests. If space is an interest, then a piece on space will show the great socialist leap towards development of space for the good of the masses!

Speaking of masses, the sheer volume of information available on any particular node of the 30th century internet will make data searches next to impossible without a personal assistant, which would take the form of a personalized Agent program. The higher tech that the Agent is would be a reflection on the personal status, much like owning a luxury grav car. On the 30th century internet, finding the information isn't hard; in fact that's the problem: one is bound to find massive amounts of relevant data. Sorting through it all is what's hard, and so, specialized software is a necessity.

The internet has become so pervasive on maintech worlds that it has spawned individuals who are simply lost without it. These people have what society has termed tech addiction, immersion sickness, monkey hands or glowers, (pronounced Glow-ers), presumably because the person is always looking at the glow of a holo-display. The most common reference to these tech addicted people however is the slang term; Flatlander. Even those affected by the predilection recognize it. Most can't envision

themselves not having access to the internet and the thought of it invokes a phobia-like reaction.

Most who have spent the majority of their lives on maintech worlds can't understand why people would subject themselves to lives cut off from, or with limited access to, the internet. Things like living on a distant space habitat or being part of a starship crew would be unimaginable. T-Space travel can be difficult for these individuals. Cut off from internet access for a week or more at a time is very difficult for them. Cases of catatonia and mental instability have been reported.

The Flavor of the 30th Century Internet

(by Jim "Captain Jonah" King)

People are going to go to school with, work with and socialize with others that they have never and probably will never meet. When your "Net" provides every form of service and contact you could need, in the comfort of your own apartment or Dole cube, why leave?

Without even covering any form of sensory feedback, just 3D wall screens will allow you to visit anywhere on a hundred worlds. Working at the office, your desk or at home the "Net" connects you via Holo displays. It wraps you in the office area where you can see your coworkers at their desks around you or a school where the entire class can be seen sitting round the teacher or A.I. shell, thanks to Holo tech, but these people you're seeing are actually scattered all over the world.

Shopping would be for luxuries only, since your smart apartment makes sure that everything you need and run low of is replaced before you even notice.

This is the total tech immersion that an all encompassing "Net" brings.

This is where the tech withdrawal and isolation panic comes in.

All those people who have to meet strangers face to face, people who find themselves isolated and needing to do things for themselves, people who are

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cut off from the limitless resources of the “Net” and suddenly cannot find what they want. Those people often experience isolation panic.

In terms of the data on the “Net”, it comes from hundreds of worlds, trillions of people, millions of companies, tens of thousands of entertainment channels and programs. All of that data forms a vast lake and for a person trying to search it the effort becomes akin to emptying a swimming pool with a thimble. A.I.s and smart search programs reduce internet search results down to manageable numbers. With holographic data storage and quantum core processors you can literally get a million results on a search and the interpretive software will be making the search before you have finished typing.

Marketing companies who specialize in keywords and search routines now advise companies on how to get their web sites, adverts or documents to the top of those search lists.

Data archeologists and specialist archival experts are the hot careers and data editors who are employed to hunt down data relevant to a single person or company and edit it to be correct or less damaging. With a person’s entire life from birth to death and every meal in between online, a single foolish stunt as a child could make you unemployable as an adult; edit that away, and maybe that job could be found and you can get off the dole.

A marketing company or A.I. can access your biometric ID and find out your entire history, not just purchases but how you vote, the area you live, your meals, who your friends are and how they vote or eat or shop. With quantum processors all this data is a microsecond away. A search could find that once a week you eat lunch in the same restaurant at the same time. Checking the billing would show who else eats there at the same time on the same day and time, cross check who paid the bill. Then pulling up the job, school history, politics, etc., of your dining companion and by cross referencing your entire

network of friends can be identified. Further data mining can identify any shared hobbies or linked purchases, a pattern can be established and suddenly those personalized holo ads that you walk past are advertising something that not only you would like but something that your friends would be impressed by as well. All of this is done in the fraction of a second between the ad board sensor identifying you and the targeted holo array activating.

To be born to this, to live your entire life in this total data environment, is to have the difficulty of making decisions taken away from you. There’s no need to pick between items when a data mining program has already compared every single jacket you have ever worn and the marketing program has selected the idea choice for purchase, you just need to hit the select button. This is where the total dependency on the “Net” comes from.

This is why PCs are the oddballs, the loners, the weirdos—the ones who not only can exist away from this birth to death electronic cocoon but are willing to choose it.

How does this affect my game?

Well, one of the best answers for that question is that it’s an adventure hook! But even beyond that, it helps you understand the world that the PCs and NPCs live in. It helps define one of the most elusive creatures in your game, the well rounded NPC.

It also goes a long way to explain why PCs are unique; they can endure the absence of a constant connection with the rest of humanity. This makes them unusual and valuable commodities.

- A free trader might be engaged to transport updates and receive the same from an out of the way system.
- A group of adventurers might be employed to either confirm information on the latest update or perhaps to update certain information themselves.
- For campaigns that adventure in cyberspace they could have electronic avatars of themselves

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transported to a distant internet to retrieve some heavily guarded data.

- Travellers might be hired to check out why a data update ship is overdue.
- A client might have some time sensitive material that needs to be transported to an out of the way system. It might be legit information or maybe it's part of an elaborate scam.
- A glitch in the system has caused personal information on the players to be corrupted. A payment didn't go through, a permit application wasn't received or perhaps some embarrassing personal information was marked public instead of private.



Raconteurs' Rest

For Luck

by Andrea Vallance

188th of 2024 (014-93): The Battle of Rurur

I really didn't want to be here, but my parents had insisted. I looked down, my knives neatly arranged in order of size and function. I'd spent ten years in the *Iadtlu*¹, I knew a knife should be used. I was a 4th degree adept of *eenia*^g, a master with the *lysh*, more than competent with the *wubar*, *asint*, and *tiesamr*², as well as pretty damn handy with a gun. But here I was, one day past my *dorlia*³, looking at my knives and longing to be just about anywhere else. My parents had insisted I follow a proper career, not the 'fanciful' dreams I had. I'd spent the last four years at school taking electives designed for this. So here I was, ready to begin. The whole morning had been taken up with instruction in the safe handling, care, sharpening and storage of knives. I was just so bored. Now it was time to actually use a knife. The instructor was looking at me, her expression grim, arms folded in front of her. She spoke "Ariaryn, I get the impression you don't want to be a chef."

An Adventure/Encounter Seed:

A Flatlander taking a trip on a Dreadnought on which the players are also travelling as either passengers or crew. The Flatlander comes down with a bad case of monkey hands and turns psychotic. He/She/It (this is a *Twilight Sector* game after all!) begins sabotaging ship systems. They are hiding in the guts of the ship in access tunnels and utility ducts. Maybe the Flatlander does something that harms the players in some way or endangers the whole ship and so the players for whatever reason need to find and stop them. To add a whole other level of excitement the Flatlander might become a homicidal maniac. To up the level of opposition make the Flatlander a robotic expert who has hijacked a number of the ship's maintenance bots. ☸

204th of 2024 (030-93):

Ecole des arts culinaires Daramm, Daramm

It was lunch, I was sitting with Sheska, she wanted to be here about as much as I did. I liked Sheska, I liked her rather a lot, actually. I'd been trying to work up the courage to ask her out. Two months older than me, long brown hair, a figure to die for. She was intimidating. "Cooking."

She looked at me "Cooking?"

"Yes, this afternoon, we move on to actually cooking something." Two weeks we'd been learning basic skills. Food safety, hygiene, first aid, nutrition. It was more boring than I could have imagined. I'd spent four years at school learning all this, my life had been pretty much planned for me. But here at the *Ecole*, they assumed you knew nothing.

She sighed "Yes I know."

"I learnt all this at school. My parents insisted."

She laughed "A proper trade? Something respectable that would serve you the rest of your life?"

I smiled "Yep, something like that."

"Mine, too. It was this or a choice between *kulfi*⁴ and archaeology at university" She was fiddling with her food.

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Kulfi, I couldn't think of much worse. "But archaeology?⁵ Get all the boys with that."

She laughed "Can you imagine me as an archaeologist? Posters of me in my scanties next to Liasha and Astronic⁶."

I gulped, I'd like a poster of her in her scanties. I took a breath, time to ask her. "So, Sheska, tonight, I was wondering..."

She looked at me, her smile, those lips, eyes tinkling "Yes?"

"Errr... would you... errr... if you're... errr..."

I froze, my mind suddenly blank. She was just staring at me. She sighed and glanced at her food, then looked up again "Look, dumbarse, are you going to ask me out or not? I've been dropping hints for two bloody days."

I turned bright red, I must have sounded like an idiot as I stammered "You er... want to um... go out? Somewhere er... If it's uhm... okay, if you don't mind, you know."

She shook her head and laughed "Why yes, what surprise, that would be lovely. Dumbarse, took you long enough."

I breathed again. "So where'd you like to go?" There was loud dramatic music from the viewscreen in the corner. It had been playing pop vids before. We both turned, the words 'FLASH, ALL CHANNELS!!!' were scrolling across the screen.

Sheska giggled, "Three exclamation marks and capitals. It must be important."

I sniggered "Yep, likely the Council has passed a new resolution on something, you know, *important*, like what shade of yellow to use on street signs."

A man appeared on the screen. Sheska chuckled, "Lord Protector McCloud himself, nope, not the shade, the actual colour probably."

I laughed, maybe a bit too hard, at her joke. McCloud spoke, he did look grave. "Peoples of the Protectorate. On 188th a large Imperial fleet entered our territory at Rurur and engaged our forces there

in an act of unprovoked aggression. We are at war. Our forces under Sherin *Adtmral* have successfully defeated this, initial, Imperial incursion, but a long struggle remains ahead of us."

I turned to Sheska, the Lord Protector was continuing. She was sounded as stunned as I felt "War, Ariaryn."

220th of 2924 (036-93):

Protector's Guards training camp, Verasaryn

We both signed up, Sheska and I. The day the war was announced, we'd gone straight to the recruiting office and signed up. We were on Verasaryn⁷, training. My family weren't wealthy, actually we were poor, six adults and sixteen children kind of ate into the funds. So I'd never been off world before, family holidays were maybe a week in the Lants⁸ if we were lucky. Not that I minded that, I liked camping in the Lants. Both of us had over six years in the *Iadtlu* and served in local defence, so we'd skipped basic training and gone straight to combat preparation. I thought ten years in the *Iadtlu* would have prepared me. I was wrong. We were laying in a foxhole, panting. The air was thick like soup. We were carrying a twenty five kilo pack and an R15⁹, wearing a heavy combat suit, all at one point three G, it wears you down. We'd been 'assaulting' a fixed position for hours and we were exhausted. So we lay there panting, helmets off. I turned to her "Bet you wished you'd picked archaeology now."

She grinned "What and let you have all the fun? You just want to see me in my scanties." I smiled, I had seen her in her scanties. Well sort of, her underwear at the medical review, but it wasn't quite the same. "You know, we should be moving."

"Yep, don't want to be seen loafing. Just one thing," She reached over and kissed me lightly on the forehead.

I turned red "What, what was that for?"

She laughed "Luck."

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I looked up and saw Vascaz *Serganet*. "A little nap perhaps?" Sheska grinned. "I am so glad you are enjoying it Eadaasa *Rekhot*, I'm sure the Imperial marines will appreciate it too, it'll give them more time to aim!"

We replaced our helmets, counted "*Ie, Cee, Val-an*¹⁰," stood, and charged up the hill screaming.

We were both lying on the ground again. I was winded. Even with the combat suits, the training bullets still hurt. But I suppose that was the point. I could see Vascaz *Serganet* walking slowly towards us. We were covered in mud and grime from head to foot; he looked like he was ready for parade. I wondered how he did it. "Well, you two idiots are now officially dead. Next time, you may want to consider the value of cover." He marked a sheet. "Now back to barracks." A wicked grin came over his face "Oh, and make sure you get all that dye out of your uniforms."

We stood there scrubbing; we'd been there for over half an hour. Not just Sheska and I; Barii, Sharik, Melissa, and Despi too. Only Renal and James were still out there. I felt a bit better that we weren't the only ones and we weren't the first. Barii sighed, "This stuff is never going to come out. How we supposed to get them clean without a machine?"

Melissa chuckled "I think that's the point."

"They *do* like making points, don't they?" My arms felt like lead.

Sheska held up her suit "Ta Da!"

"Show off."

She giggled "My family are *Mraiyyasin*¹¹, you know, back to basics types."

Despi looked at her "Okay smart-arse, how do you do it?"

Sheska pulled up a small wooden board with ridges. "It's called a scrubbing board, you rub the suit on it. It forces the soap through the cloth, much

easier than with a brush." She grinned and handed it to me "Now share the joy, guys."

234th of 2024 (060-93):

Protector's Guards training camp, Verasaryn

Half way through, we'd made it half way through training. And as a reward we had a twelve hour pass. Not a lot to do near the camp, just one place to go, really, Gami's bar. A Guards' bar, apparently, decorated with images of Guards old and new, a few ancient weapons, an old rifle from the First Protectorate in pride of place. I wasn't used to this. I'd had a little wine at table while I was a child of course, and even the occasional something stronger when I was older. But this stuff, I wasn't used to. A *Verasti Dtareen* drink called Lightning Ale. It smelt like paint stripper, and it tasted like I imagined paint stripper would taste. Melissa said it burnt at both ends. Well she was right about when it was going in, I was kind of dreading finding out what it did coming out. We were laughing and singing, drinking, reliving our 'adventures' of the last month, recounting our tails of the horrors and humiliations inflicted by the drill *serganets*. We were having fun. I could actually see said drill *serganets* sitting quietly, off in a corner, keeping an eye on us young *rekhots*, but they were leaving us alone. Letting us have our fun, I guess.

There was dancing of course, can't have fun without some dancing. I was sitting, smiling Melissa turned to me "You should ask Sheska to dance."

I wanted to, but, well, she was her and I was me "She's dancing with Barii and James before that."

"Because they asked her. You should ask her."

I remembered the stammering idiot I'd turned into when I asked her out, a date we'd never actually got round to having "Uhhmm... Er... I don't think she wants to. " There I was again, a stammering idiot.

Melissa rolled her eyes "Sometime you are just so thick, Ariaryn. Every time somebody asks her to dance, she looks at you. Ask her."

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She returned and sat. Melissa shoved me to my feet and mouthed 'ask her.' I walked over to her awkwardly. "Er... Sheska, would you, ummm. You know..."

She was sitting looking expectantly, Sharik rescued me "All the gods, you'll be there all night. Sheska, dance with the boy before he makes an even bigger arse of himself."

264th of 2024 (090-93):

Protector's Guards training camp, Verasaryn

We stood, our dress uniforms pressed and neat, silver for the Luriani, blue for the *Verasti Dtareen* and deep purple for the *Mmarislusant*. We'd done it, graduated. There was always a special guest to do the presentation. In our case it was Kirsov *Mrigadeer*, commander of the *Verasosal*¹². I stood at attention as the *Mrigadeer* stood before me, looking me up and down. He pinned the silver falling star to my Wolseley¹³ and saluted. I saluted back "Thank you, sir." I don't know why I said it, it just came out.

He chuckled, "So which is it, *Piaviadt*?"

"*Mrigadeer*?" I made sure I got it right this time.

"Generally speaking, when a Guard calls you 'sir' it either means they think you're being a pompous arse or they think you're a hero. So which is it?"

I could hear Sheska sniggering. I turned red. "Er umm, a hero? Sir."

We had a week's pass, time to see our families if we wanted. But first, we went to Gami's. We were drinking, laughing, dancing, telling how we were going to win the war. We'd promised we'd all meet back here, after, to drink to victory. Sheska came to me. "So what you going to do with your leave?"

"Shuttle to Daramm tomorrow, spend some time with my family. You?"

"Pretty much the same, shuttle tomorrow." She put a lot of emphasis on the tomorrow. She draped her arms around my shoulders. "But until then..."

She kissed me, passionately on the lips. I turned bright red again, she laughed, "I do so love the way you do that. But till tomorrow..." she kissed me again, grinned mischievously and put on a very sultry voice. "How about I go change into my scanties and we can pretend I'm an archaeologist." I'm not sure there is a name for the colour I turned.

269th of 2024 (095-93): Yarnar, Daramm¹⁴

I'd made a mistake, a big one. I'd mentioned to my *ami* that I had an *eeshren*¹⁵. That had been all they needed. Who was she, what was she like, what was her family like, when would they meet her, meet the family, it just went on and on. So it had been arranged, the two *tami* had met for dinner. It had been crowded, Sheska came from a big *ami* too. There was her five parents, five brothers and seven sisters. Then my six parents, eight brothers and seven sisters. Add in a few grandparents, spouses, *eeshren*, children plus a few favoured friends and you couldn't move for *Mmans* and *Eadaasas*. All yabbering away about how good a couple we made, that, according to several of my grandmothers Sheska had 'good hips' and would make lovely babies. Also apparently, according to a couple of Sheska's grandmothers, I was a handsome boy with strong arms, definitely a good sign. I'm pretty sure several of our mothers and fathers were already making wedding plans. Mind you, my brothers *Mraiko* and *Sekaa* were a bit annoyed at being turfed out of the bedroom. Both *tami* agreed we needed our privacy for the night.

We lay in bed together, holding one another. She felt warm against me. "You know we're going to have to do it all again, *Sheevia*?" Lover, she'd started calling me lover now. *Sheevia* in private, *eshal*¹⁶ in public.

"Eh? When?"

"Tomorrow, dumbarse, at the sending off party. If our *tami* can muster, what was it fifty seven, immediate family, imagine what eight can do, especial-

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ly when you add in extended family, close friends and not so close friends. Seems they're hiring the biggest hall in Antiavash."

I grinned, she was right, there would be a lot of people. "Why is it in Antiavash anyway? It's not exactly close to anywhere."

"It's where Melissa's from. Her father is butler for no less than Lady Councillor Manish and she's paying for it. Insisted apparently. So that's where it's going to be held. Guess the old lady doesn't like travelling."

I was puzzled for a moment "Melissa doesn't look *Mmarislusant*?"

She giggled "She's not full blood, her mother's *Verasti Dtareen*. But the name, Blandii, a bit of give-away, *sheevia*."

I chuckled a bit at that. "Yeah, guess it should've been." I kissed her lightly. "We should get some sleep, lover, another big day of having our lives planned for us tomorrow."

A mischievous grin came over her face "Yes, suppose we should. Or..." I smiled and kissed her.

270th of 2024 (096-93):

Antiavash arcology, Daramm

There must have been at least thousand people here. All just to see eight Guards off to war, I could see why the government restricted the actual departure to parents, spouses and children. You get a couple of thousand troops going off and you'd end up with half of Daramm at the naval base. The eight of us were very popular, you'd think we'd already won the war single handed. I had so many offers to dance, I was pretty much exhausted. So I was hiding out on a balcony. I was staring out over the sea a kilometre below us "News says we're winning, probably won't be any fighting left by the time we get there."

I turned, it was Barii. "Oh, I expect we'll see our share of action."

Barii was excited, his father had been a Guard, two brothers already in the line and a sister in the navy "I hope so, news says the Impies are collapsing, so it'll probably be over soon."

"Yeah we've got them beat, we'll be half way across the sector by the time we get there."

Barii snorted "Hell the rate we're advancing, we'll be clear to Sylea by the time they get round to surrendering."

I smiled and put on my best Lord Protector McCloud voice "Remember we don't seek conquest, we are defending our homes."

He laughed "Yeah, wouldn't want all those Impies in our Protectorate anyhow, I spent a year there as a kid. My father was assigned to an embassy. None of them know how to behave." He took a gulp of his drink "You seen how many girls want to dance? Never had so many offers. Reckon it's the uniform, they all love the uniform." He was beaming with pride "Hey, I'm going back inside. You coming?"

"Nah, getting some air, I'll be in soon."

He turned and went back inside; I turned back to the sea. Always makes you think, the sea; there was a pod of *sesherin* out near the shore. I heard another voice. "Always relaxing, the sea, don't you think, *piaviadt*?"

I turned, it was her. I snapped to attention and stammered, "M... M... M..."

She smiled kindly. "It's all right, *piaviadt*, I'm just a politician, not an officer."

I recovered my composure. "I'm sorry, Lady Councillor."

She smiled "I'm sorry, also, *piaviadt*, but it is a very pleasant night, don't you think?"

"Yes, my lady, very." Here I was, chatting with Lady Councillor Manish about the weather. I wasn't sure what to say.

She looked out over the still water. "I'm afraid I believe you and your friend may be wrong."

I was puzzled "My lady?"

Raconteurs' Rest

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"About the war; I fear it will not be over soon, or be without a heavy toll."

"But my lady, we're thrashing them, they've got no fight in them."

She sighed "For now, yes, they have underestimated us. But the Imperium is no pocket empire with a handful of worlds. They will not give up easily."

"Nor will we my lady, not while there are still Guards standing, we'll never give in." I was convinced, we'd hold them back.

She sounded sad. "Yes, I'm sure you are correct." She sighed again. "*Piaviadt*, you should not be out here. There's a party on and I'm sure there are many young ladies who will be seeking your company, something about the uniform I believe." There was an odd twinkle in her eyes.

"Errr... I'm errr... have somebody." I blushed.

She grinned. "Then, *piaviadt*, you should go and spend some time with her. It may prove precious."

I'd got some time with Sheska. She was as popular as the rest of us, but we were sitting this one out. We were actually thinning out now. Bari, Depsi, Renal, and Melissa had all gone off with somebody for the night. I grinned at her. "Never had so many offers."

She sniggered. "Me either. You know, you could have your pick of company tonight."

"Nah, I'm with you, *kucuin*¹⁷."

She grinned at me "I wouldn't mind, you know, if you wanted."

I was a little surprised "No, I'd much rather spend the night with you."

A mischievous grin spread over her face. "Well, we could..." She lent over and whispered something in my ear. "You know, if you'd like."

I was stunned now, I didn't quite know what to say. "I didn't know you were into that!"

She giggled, "Oh I'm not, I mean I never have, but I've always been curious, you know."

I still didn't quite know how to take it "Errr... I'm... I've never considered."

She took my hands "*Eshal*, we're going off to war. Who knows what could happen? Let's live a little, please."

I looked at her, she seemed almost to be pleading. "Well, if you want, I'm sure we could try it. You know, maybe just this once."

272nd of 2024 (098-93):

Protectorate Naval base, Daramm

It was time to leave, we were going off to war. Not just us, there must have been at least three hundred boarding *Caroline*, a troop transport bound for the front. We were going to Alsuy, an Imperial world, to replace combat losses. That frightened me, combat losses, some of us could die out there. My family had come to see me off, the government had provided transport for them since they couldn't afford it themselves. Mother Ora was in tears, so was father Orlanedt. Father Despi had given me a medallion. It was lucky apparently, some relation from the First Protectorate had worn it and it had saved her life. I could see a big dent in it; a bullet had made it, according to the story. Everyone was fussing, I could see Sheska talking with Sharik, the two of them looking conspiratorial. Bari positively glowing with pride and looking very happy. Despi with his family, one of his mothers loading him up with home cooked goodies. Melissa and her father, he looked stuffy and fierce, I noticed the ribbons on his chest though, twenty eight years long service with the Guards. James' family all seemed to be trying to hug him at once and Renal's were all in tears. By the time we finally boarded the shuttles there wasn't a dry eye anywhere. But we were off, we were finally going to war.

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286th of 2024 (112-93):

Troop transport *Caroline*, en-route to the front

Well if this was war, it wasn't so bad. We'd all spent a day or two recounting our adventures after the party. Seems Sheska and I weren't the only people who'd been a little adventurous. And we were busy, the Guards don't let you sit around getting bored. There was training of course, a rifle range and computerised combat simulations. But there were a lot of other things to do, a couple of games of *Mmi-alaryn*¹⁸ running, *keedit*¹⁹ a point. Dances most nights and various short courses you could do; Guards are supposed to have a well-rounded character. People were pairing up too. Despi and Sharik spent a lot of time together, seems they'd been quietly an item since training. Renal and James, too, they'd spent a few nights together, think they'd be a couple soon.

Sheska and I were at breakfast, she was just playing with her food. "You okay, *kucuin*?"

"I'm bored, *eshal*."

"How can you be bored? Dances most night, games, training, plenty of stuff to do."

"After a couple of weeks, that gets boring. How about we enroll in some of those courses? We're supposed to, you know. I looked at the list the other day, some interesting things we could do, together."

She'd stressed 'together'. "Have anything in mind?"

"Well..." I got the idea she might be wanting something. "Sharik has talked Despi into *kamminlu*²⁰ and we could do that."

I choked on my eggs "Kamminlu! Are you serious?"

She chuckled "Well it's an option, maybe studying it would make it more fun."

"I am not spending hours learning how to thrash around like a demented lunatic! What about creative writing? I've always wanted to write."

Sheska hummed and looked at her food. "Maybe, a bit pedestrian though, what about *kulfi*? I did some at school and it's relaxing."

"Kulfi, that's almost as bad as *kamminlu*!"

She looked up and gave me that look, the one that says *you're going to lose this argument*. "Well, we can pick more than one. Tell you what, I'll do writing if you do *kulfi*."

I wasn't convinced "Can you see me spending hours learning how to set flowers?"

She took my hands "Please, *eshal*, I don't want to do it alone."

I sighed, things we do for love. "Okay, for you, suppose I can look like a dork."

319th of 2024 (145-93): Battle of Alsuy

We'd been assigned to our unit, all of us. *Beta Sekton, Patoon lan, Kumpanee B, Ceeala Batalian, Daramm Fusileer Regaament*²¹. We were under the watchful eye of Osidt *serganet* for now, but eventually one of us would take command. The 2DFR was ready in battle at Alsuy. We'd only had ten days before we were in combat. In most place, the Imperial resistance to our advance had collapsed quickly, but not on Alsuy. Here, the Imperial garrison had been made of sterner stuff; they were still grimly holding on, and now an Imperial squadron with two troop transports had arrived in-system. The garrison had launched an attack to clear a landing zone and we'd been thrown into combat early. In training you spend a lot of time in muddy holes in the ground; I was starting to see the point. Sheska and I were in a rain filled shell crater covered in mud. Barii and Melissa were in another about twenty metres off to our right.

We were panting, waiting, turns out war isn't fun, after all. I turned to her. "I'm scared"

She smiled "I'm bloody terrified, I nearly peed myself when the first shells started landing."

I laughed. "Good to know. Shall we do it again, yes?"

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 18)

"Guess so, yes." We counted, turned, and stood. I could see figures moving about a hundred metres in front of us. I fired off four bursts, she fired five. We ducked down again.

We lifted our visors and took a drink. She turned to me "Think you hit anything, *sheevai*, yes?"

"No, you?"

"Nope." She leant over and kissed me.

"What was that for?"

She giggled "Luck. Again, now?"

We counted and stood. There was a soldier there, not ten metres away. She was young like us, pretty, dark hair, blue eyes, a slight attractive figure and a rifle in her hands. I didn't think, I didn't aim, I didn't squeeze, I panicked and just jerked the trigger repeatedly. I knew people died in war, I was ready for that. I wasn't ready for how they died. My second burst hit her in the face. I fell to my knees, lifted my visor and emptied my stomach.

Sheska knelt beside me and stroked my back "It's okay lover, it's okay."

"I killed her, I killed her."

"Yes, and she would have killed you if you hadn't. It's okay, but you need to get back, there are more coming."

I couldn't face it all I could see was her and the bullets... "I can't, I killed her."

She took my hands "Ariaryn, please, I need you." I took a breath, stood, turned and fired again.

It was getting towards dark, we'd had to fall back. Melissa and Barii had joined us. Thing about muddy holes in the ground is they're all pretty much the same, only difference with this one is it was bigger. We were running low on ammunition and Melissa had gone to get more. Barii carefully peered over the rim of the crater "I think they're pulling back." There was a flash and he was gone. One moment he was there, the next not. More flashes, noise, light, dirt and shrapnel everywhere. An-

other flash and Sheska fell. I didn't know you could feel so much fear. I cowered, huddled in a ball and cried. I'm not proud, but there was so much noise and light.

I don't know how long it lasted, it seemed like forever but they tell me it was only minutes. It stopped as suddenly as it started. Everything hurt, my arms, legs, and back stung like crazy. I looked up, I saw shapes in the sky, falling, rockets firing, drogue parachutes, meteoric assault. They'd be down in seconds. I looked at Sheska, she lay there still. There was blood, so much blood. I didn't know if she was alive or dead but I threw her over my shoulders and started running. The drop capsules were landing everywhere. I saw figures emerging, like some insect from a cocoon, encased in stiff plastic and steel combat armour. They were struggling to stand, some pointed weapons at me, some even fired, I kept running. I saw three capsules land and split open in front of me. The first was on their feet, I could see the gauss rifle²² swinging towards me. I let Sheska fall from my shoulders and ran full at them. I knocked them to the ground and fell on top. I didn't think, just reached down and drew my combat knife. I remembered the training, the weak spot at the neck. With both hands I drove the knife up beneath his armour. I grabbed his gauss rifle and rolled. The other two were turning to face me. I yelped with pain as the skin between my fingers ripped when I jammed my hand into the awkward trigger guard. I fired, switching between the two. They fell and lay motionless. I lay panting, I grabbed the dead Imperial's water flask and took a deep drink. I dragged myself to my feet, recovered Sheska and started to move again.

Close now, I could see our position maybe two hundred and fifty metres off. I saw something on the ground. Melissa, she'd been caught in the bombardment. I stared at her mangled body, she must be dead, I was sure. I wanted to so much to be sure of

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 19)

it, I was so tired. But I couldn't leave her. I let Sheska slip from my shoulders, grabbed both their belts and began to drag. There was fire and bullets everywhere. I kept as low as I could, getting closer. I could see flashes and hear the firing. I heard somebody shout "By the gods, give them covering fire!"

I saw the firebase open up and figures scramble out. They reached me, I wanted to hold on to Sheska, but I couldn't any more. I felt hands grabbing me, dragging me to safety. I lay on the ground exhausted, somebody lifted my helmet off. I saw a medic bending over Melissa, somebody by Sheska. I pleaded, "Please, save her."

Notes

1. The *Iadtlu* are a traditional militia in Luriani society. They serve as a reserve of trained personnel allowing the expansion of the military in times of emergency. In addition, it also acts as a civil defence force and a youth training corps, encouraging good citizenship and moral values. Children may join at age 8, though they may not transfer to regular service until 18 (though they may volunteer for service in a local defence unit at 12).

2. Respectively, a traditional form of unarmed combat, a 45cm short sword, a 2.5 metre spear, sling, and a large bladed double handed pole arm. All taught in the *Iadtlu*.

3. Short form of *dorcenviajkulia*, Luriani coming of age ceremony. Occurs at eighteen.

4. A form of artistic flower arranging.

5. Archaeology was held in curiously high regard in the Protectorate. It was said to be the only place archaeologists had to hide from autograph hunters.

6. Two popular culture icons of the time. Liasha Oſtee, a well known holoivid star, and Astronic, a successful *Verasti Dtareen* musical group.

7. The second habitable planet in the Daramm system. It is larger than Daramm, with significantly higher gravity and a far denser atmosphere. Most

Luriani find its atmosphere oppressive at sea level and its population is heavily skewed towards *Verasti Dtareen* and *Mmarislusant*. It was also the site of the Protector's Guards headquarters and main training facilities.

8. A large natural preserve on Daramm noted for its rugged beauty. A frequent wilderness and camping holiday destination for natives.

9. Standard issue Protectorate combat rifle. Normally fires 7mm discarding sabot ammunition with a 4.5mm armour piercing penetrator. In training it uses dye filled frangible bullets.

10. Literally, 'One, Two, Smallest Four.' Guards tradition is not to use *Okha* (three) while in combat. Many theories exist as to the origin of this odd tradition, none of which make much sense.

11. The 'children of Mrai.' A small sub-culture on Daramm noted for their preference for avoiding labour saving devices.

12. Elite Protectorate special forces, drawn from all branches of Protectorate services.

13. Cloth covered full dress helmet worn by the Protector's Guards.

14. Yarnar is a large group of islands near the northern pole of Daramm. Home to nearly two billion people, most of whom live in large arcologies anchored in the shallow seas surrounding the islands. The region is noted for its conservative culture.

15. Short form of *eeshiaewalistren*, romantic female friend. Can also mean *eeshiaelullistren*, romantic male friend.

16. Both *eshal* and *sheevai* are usually translated as 'lover', along with several other words such as *nuntarri*, *sheepai*, *sheenai* and *sheelai*. However, only the word *eshal* would be heard in public. *Nuntarri* was at this time obsolete and the others were strictly for use in private situations.

17. Roughly translated, 'darling'.

18. A Luriani card game, frequently involving gambling.

Raconteurs' Rest

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19. Basic currency unit of the Protectorate, equal to 1/10th of an Imperial Credit.

20. Not a native art form, *Kamminlu* originated on ancient Vland. It has since been lost by the Vilani and only survives in Luriani society. Most people regard *kamminlu* as exceedingly tedious and an ordeal to watch. Those who show any real liking are considered a little 'odd.' Despite this perception, the Protectorate takes great pains to preserve the form and attendance at recitals is close to an obligation in upper class Protectorate society.

21. Beta Section, Platoon four, Company B, Second Battalion, Daramm Fusilier Regiment

(abbreviated as b4B 2DFR). A standard Protectorate rifle company at this time consisted of four rifle platoons, a support platoon and a command element. Each platoon was divided into four sections each of eight and a twelve strong command and support section. Protectorate policy at this stage was to encourage *esprit de corps* by keeping personnel recruited and trained together in the same unit whenever possible. Due to the Guards tradition there is never a platoon three or third battalion.

22. An advanced combat rifle using an electromagnetic accelerator to fire tungsten-steel darts at hypervelocities giving great penetration and extreme wounding effects. ☼

Critics' Corner

Orbital

reviewed by "kafka"

Orbital. Paul Elliott.

Zozer Games. <http://zozer.weebly.com>.

223pp., softcover/PDF.

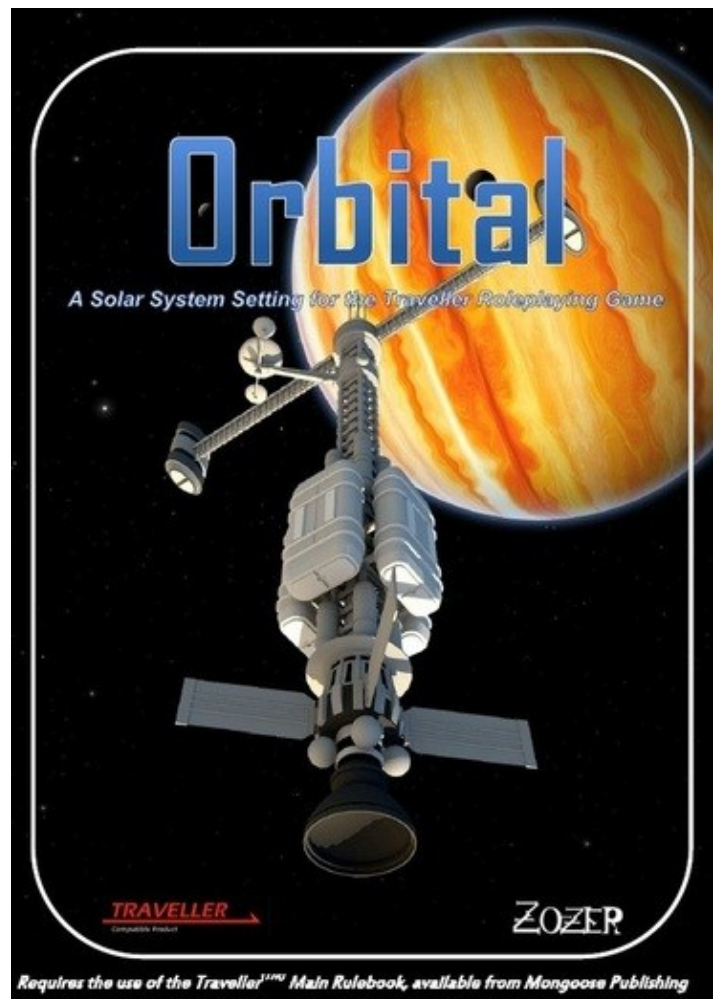
US\$15.99 PDF/US\$22.29 Softcover

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared on RPG.Net in December 2012, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

First and foremost, allow me to thank Paul Elliott of Zozer Games for gifting me a copy of this PDF for the purposes of this review.

This is the game that Hard SF players of *Traveller* have been waiting for (at least, until my *Traveller Now* appears...). It takes the time scale back to a simpler time, set in the immediate afterglow of US President Bush's Space Exploration Initiative (SEI) – in which, this Alternate *Traveller* Universe (ATU) postulates gets passed and expanded upon. Although this is an ATU, it can be played with any form of *Traveller* with sufficient modification by simply messing about with the timey-wimey stuff and reversing the polarity of the neutron flow (ok, wrong universe but right idea...)

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This is a labour of love and a hallmark in gaming, for all too often, Hard SF RPGs make compromises that cause them to veer toward a softer side. Not so here; this is diamond-hard SF which might cause some people to feel squeamish that lasers are used for cutting asteroids to find ore samples, not handheld toys that go: "chtow, chtow...". That said, Zozer Games has created a universe rife and pregnant with conflict under the rubric of a Cold War existing between a somewhat unified Earth government and the extra-planetary colonies (which have managed to wrest significant independence from this ball of dirt). Nor is the game ultimately simulationist; it encourages a wide variety of role playing characters that encourages the imagination just to think of the world, as it could be had we put our resources in space exploration rather than the myriad of conflicts on Earth. That said, it is not a happy utopian vision, but one forged from grit and struggle of new frontiers being thrust open guided by technological ingenuity and human creativity where many of the troubles and ills have come with us – just as they have in the past. Notwithstanding, there is a great deal of hope contained within, as new communities spring up, trying new ways of doing things and ultimately transforming the human condition. Thus, avoiding the darkness of cyberpunk or dissolving of the human into the machine-human nexus of transhumanism. This is a game for people who believe it is the human destiny to live, work, and procreate "out there" – and it is the outward urge that will take us there.

The rules are simple enough, as they borrow heavily the Mongoose *Traveller* rulebook but tweaking those ideas to better suits a lower Technological Level (TL). It does so, without sacrificing any simplicity that Mongoose (and to a lesser extent Classic *Traveller*) had achieved, mainly by subtracting the unnecessary bits. So, it makes the game more rules-light and rules-fast without sacrificing any of the

chrome and intrinsic sense of wonder that is the hallmark of good SF writing.

Extensive background is provided in setting up the background or the canvas of the Alternative *Traveller* Universe by outlining the setup of the universe of two neighboring powers – Earth and Luna, challenging each other for supremacy for the resources of the Solar System. Sandwiched in between are organizations which then create the basis for employment in this conflict-ridden Solar System. Players accustomed to hit the jump button and move to the next adventure (a.k.a. *Star Trek* mode of play) will certainly find this setting slower and less dramatic, but it is very *Traveller* and the pushing back of *Traveller* to its roots of a small ship universe and to the glory days of the Space Age might seem alien to younger players but it is increasingly supported by a vast literature of Hard SF – the secret is weaving together the party to think in these terms. Thus, it is hoped that a player's handbook of sorts or more purple prose will go into future supplements directed toward players living the frontier and banishing the idea of speed and concentrate on the sense of wonder.

Next up, we have the modifications to the standard Mongoose character generation sequence. Many things can be directly ported over from the main rulebook (thus, it is necessary to own one copy of those rules) albeit with the suggested modifications to better suit the back story of *Orbital*. Furthermore, there is nice little table which converts standard Hard SF careers into their *Traveller* equivalent thus reducing enormous amounts of redundancy while still preserving the hard edge. Similarly, new careers are established that better mesh with the milieu. What I found was lacking is the comprehensive way of knitting the party together for the background. In standard *Traveller*, retirement from one of the main branches of the military or paramilitary or deciding to strike it and go alone from a larger corporate entity provides the glue for binding the party together where individuals of the same persuasion through

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circumstance find themselves in a common lot. It is not clear, how *Orbital's* background is conducive to this form of play. Rather, one is left with the impression that players are trouble-shooters or still employed by their parent organizations – both completely valid options in standard *Traveller*, but in *Orbital*, it would seem that one is defaulted into choosing these options in the chargen. Perhaps, because the literal playing space is smaller – options are hence smaller.

Spacecraft design comes up next. Now, there is a whole subset of *Traveller* players affectionately known as gearheads who like nothing more than using spreadsheets and design stuff. And, this chapter is for them. For me, it merely has to make sense that the players have it or have a predefined equipment locker is more important than building stuff. That said, this chapter is excellently written and make construction a snap. Related is the next chapter on actually operating a spacecraft. Standard *Traveller* makes running a starship as easy as running a small boat; however, in a Hard SF milieu; things are more a little more complex. Again this chapter is very well written to give the sense of the dangers and encounters that a solitary crew will face in the real world. Again, it tacks on preferences and options to the standard *Traveller* paradigm tweaking it to fit the campaign model in minimalist but exceedingly useful way.

Hardware builds upon Zozer Game's earlier supplement on the Vacc Suit and provides an extensive equipment list. Thus, we get rovers, computers, orbital vehicles, launch vehicles, deep space vehicles and orbital facilities. Where this area is somewhat poor is the everyday things but again one can refer to standard *Traveller* for that – a rope is a rope and a 4m pole is a 4m pole; it does not matter what Technological Level these basics are found in – just the materials change. Also, the ubiquity of computing is covered through the use of comms – kudos to Zozer

for spelling out things like today's smart phone are comms – why bother trying to predict the future – just let the technology follow itself and focus upon technology as a tool. Something, standard *Traveller* has somewhat lost its way through numerous "catalogues" of stuff for the picking. So, taking down a few gradients in the technological curve really reinforces what is needed, as opposed to what is wanted. And, given that space on spacecraft is limited – one can only carry the bare necessities.

Next up is a fascinating and enthralling depiction of life in the high frontier. Replete with maps and wonderful descriptions that bring the out what could be considered bland back into an area of excitement. The author in the introduction cites *Outland* (film with Sean Connery) as a major source of inspiration – clearly this stimulation and inspiration has rubbed off and created a superb description which nicely dovetails into the rules mechanic entitled "Working in Space". For these two chapters are about creating the right ambiance for *Orbital* – standard *Traveller* can easily borrow these rules and call them as their own. Frequently, the spectacular masks over the speculative of actual life in *Traveller*, and once again, I am impressed by the detail and yet ease. The next chapter, entitled "Worlds", outlines the planets and worldlets of the Solar System of *Orbital*. This, together with the history outlined in the first two chapters completes the tapestry with the longitudinal thread for the milieu completing the vertical thread – thus combining the temporal dimension with the actual spatial aspects. If there is one criticism, it is the density of said information; more effort could be made in spreading some of the information in preceding chapters. I also liked how the earlier supplement of *Outpost Mars* is faultlessly integrated the chapter on Mars, which does pay homage to LGM but in a purely scientific way, which ties in nicely to the success of SETI in finding something out there... I guess, that, there needed to be some discussion of aliens but I still do feel uncomfortable with it. However, it is written in such a

Critics' Corner

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way that it would make Carl Sagan or Arthur C. Clarke proud. We are treated to aliens as the ultimate enigma, as neither they (well, if I would reveal more, I would have to kill you) nor us in our Solar System have a way of reaching each other... So much as I found the inclusion of these to pander to a softer audience, it is important to have enigmas – and if aliens have to be one of them – so be it. For me, the Solar System is rife with enough mystery there is no need to add aliens to the equation... humans are quite capable of doing things awry that they do not need McGuffins like aliens to mix up the pot.

Lastly, are the resources which are fictional and factual inspirations for the milieu. I would have liked more novels and I was surprised by the non-inclusion of *Star*Cops* or *Outcasts* (albeit the latter would require some reworking to account for the fact that only Earth has a breathable atmosphere). Nicely included is an Appendix which has all the acronyms used in the book and a wonderfully comprehensive and detailed index. As this PDF is a prelude to a printed book, smart bookmarks or indexing is not done which is fine but just annoying for this review that has had to spend many hours toggling between screens to write this review. However, it makes me eager for the hard copy even more when it does arrive. Zozer games has done a wonderful

job in building a believable and wonderfully described *Traveller* universe amply illustrated with art that sets the right mood for a Hard SF game. Hoping that the print edition can retain the colour prints, as they really give a sense of a time gone by, when space was an exciting place whether it was last moonwalk or flyby of Voyager to the Outer Planets not merely the routine of different experiments on the International Space Station which seem to dominate the headlines today. More art is always appreciated by this author but considering the strength of the writing, it is ample.

Certainly, anyone wanting to inject more realism into their *Traveller* game would be wise to pick this volume up. And, those like me, who dream of the stars not as just destination points but fully realized places replete with cultures and different ways of doing things yet grounded in the sensibilities that these new worlds will carry the problems of the old into them, will certainly welcome the addition of this book into their *Traveller* collection. Those wanting to dream about the easy life in the Stars should go back to playing *Star Wars/Star Trek* versions of *Traveller*. I hope Zozer Games will return to this milieu, and create more supplements and adventures for it – and thus hopefully inspire the Grand Old Game itself (especially in its Mongoose 2300AD incarnation). For my appetite is whetted and I am wanting more. Keep up the excellent work! 🌀

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller News and Findings

February 2013

- **Rainer Games** has released *The Horns of Plover*, *Chentrikry Sector Map*, *10-dton GravTank Recon*, and *Donatella Light Escort*.
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Adventure 3: Trillion Credit Squadron* and *Special Supplement 3: Vehicle Upgrade Manual*.
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book 1000I: Drone Gunship*, *Starships Book 10010: Heavy Fighter Starfish*, *Light Walker: Gazelle*, and *Police Cruiser: Drifter*
- **DSL Ironworks** has released *Planet Reference Cards 1: Halverdi Cluster*.
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Dade Colonies*.
- **Scrying Eye Games** has released *Type Y Royalty Class Yacht Spirit of the Empire* 🌀



New Bermuda

by J.E. Geoffrey

The characters are approached by local officials of Badrun (C877744-6), a backwater with only a few ten million inhabitants, no great resources to speak of, and only some small industry. The word 'backwater' was made for this world. It has a few small cities all over the world and one large centre close to the starport.

Not much happens on this world besides people moving in and people moving away to get rich somewhere else. Baran Doherty is a local politician, and he came up with a wonderful new idea: Let's attract some tourism! Why not pretend to have something mysterious on the world so more people will come to the planet and bring money in while trying to investigate something completely fictitious. What real harm can it do, after all? Think Bermuda Triangle or Nessi on good old Earth. Think of the money it might bring in!

The locale of choice is on one of the smaller, barely explored continents, a hellishly boring place covered by swamp and jungle. Why not pretend to

have something interesting there for a change? Nobody ever found anything of worth there anyway, and nobody will mind a few offworlders hunting spectres there.

The characters are hired to do something with this idea, and by 'do something' they mean make some nice mysterious things happen.

Possible directions to take this seed:

1. Everything is as presented. The idea and efforts are greeted with near-universal enthusiasm.
2. As 1., but the characters run into troubles with local authorities who don't like the idea.
3. As 2., but the locals say that people who go into the swamps don't come back. Could the planet already have its "New Bermuda"?
4. As 2. or 3., but someone decides to make a documentary of the whole project for local TV.
5. As 4., and the party finds some sort of mechanism in the swamps. It seems to be working...
6. As 5., but instead of a mechanism, the characters find an inhabited village in the swamps. They're not human, though, and they're low enough on the tech scale that it's almost certain that they're natives.



In A Store Near You

The Showroom

Muller-class Passenger Hovercraft

designed by Ewan Quibell

CraftID: Muller-class Passenger Hovercraft, TL7, Cr1,964,922

Hull: 1/3, Displacement=15, Conf=4USL, Armour=4C, Loaded=42.6078 tons, Unloaded=34.2506 tons

Power: 1/2, Gas Turbine=6.066 Mw, Duration=20 hours

Loco: 1/2, AirCushion=60 tons, Max Accel=1.4286 G, Cruise=90 kph, Top=120 kph,

Comm: Radio=Regionalx2 (500 km)

Sensors: Headlightsx6, Radar=Distant (5km)

Off: Hardpoints=1

Def: DefDM=+2

Control: Computer=0, Panel=Electronicx54,

Accom: Crew=1 (Driver), Seats=Crampedx80, Adequatex2, Env=basic env

Other: Fuel=8.088 klitres, Cargo=0.3322 klitres, ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint

The Muller-class passenger hovercraft is a standard passenger transport vehicle intended for short

crossings over water, marshy or slightly uneven ground however it has the ability to operate in a variety of places. The Muller is built by Hess Motors of Udesh although similar specification vehicles can be found across the old Empire.

The minimal cargo capacity is overhead space for passenger carry-on luggage as the Muller is not designed to move cargo. The driver's compartment at the front of the vehicle is distinct from the passenger compartment at the rear and has quite comfortable seats for the crew. The two radios, one in the driver's compartment and one in the passenger's, can be used both for two way communications as well as to listen to broadcast news and entertainment.





The Third Imperium: Sector Fleet

reviewed by "kafka"

The Third Imperium: Sector Fleet. Martin J. Dougherty.
Mongoose Publishing. <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>.
136pp., softcover.
US\$24.99/UK£16.99

Editor's Note: This review originally appeared at RPG.Net in January 2011, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Once again, I am going to be reviewing one of the latest offerings from Mongoose Publishing for their *Traveller* line. *Sector Fleet* is written by the talented and quite prolific Martin J. Dougherty (hereafter shortened to MJD) and sadly will mark his swan song or (one hopes) his temporary departure from writing for the Official/Original *Traveller* Universe. As one can tell, I am quite a fanboy of MJD style and writings. For he is reminiscent slightly of the old Keith brothers save without the endless tables that went along with their writing. Adventures, like his writing style, are clear and precise without the extra verbosity and deliver many punches with slamming accuracy.

Sector Fleet is essentially a guide to everything one ever wanted to know about the Imperial Navy and some of its rivals. It goes through meticulous detail describing the different types of ships and removes some of confusion regarding terminology that was inherited from *Traveller's* earliest days (such as ambiguous and seemingly archaic term – Colonial Fleet).

It also seeks to clarify the lines of command by delineating where Nobles' interests lie and which interests the Admiralty is sworn to uphold. Shades of the Fifth Frontier War echo eerily throughout reading these passages. So, if your campaign, as one of mine has revolved around Norris' capture of Imperial Stationary—then this would provide the correct amount of gloss to understand the metagame. Having said that—is *Sector Fleet* a metagame product? Not really. At least not in the sense of *Trillion Credit Squadrons/Imperial Squadrons* or the wargames



that GDW produced. Happily, it shies away from the wargaming roots of *Traveller* and returns it back to where it belongs—the realm of role-playing. However, the transition is not smooth and unless one has appreciation for all the different types of ships and ranks that command them—it could quickly descend into a quasi-wargame. With this objective in mind, there is a listing of all the fleets of the Imperium—an exercise that certainly filled pages but did not really add value to the average roleplayer. As a Referee, better would have been a suggested structure with a few examples and the player is unlikely to gain

Littered throughout are quirks tying *Traveller* back to the Age of Sail such as the reintroduction of a Rum Cupboard given an appropriately modern sounding title. I would have liked some further discussion on tactics. For me, it is perennial question, how to fashion space battles – is it akin to an aircraft carrier battle group, a submarine wolf pack or

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Critics' Corner

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squadron of aircraft. At the end of the supplement, I still had the answer that I had at the beginning—all three. Which hardly is satisfactory...? Also, there was no discussion how the technology such as Black Globes or Meson Guns could be used to modify tactics. Similarly, there was very little on the role of the Navy during Planetary Assault missions. Is this a terrible thing? No, it is merely a drawback. These issues will hopefully be dealt with a future supplement dealing with Fifth Frontier War/Rebellion that has been hinted at by Mongoose.

So, what is bad about this product? Very little, but its biggest fault that might not be worth the price for something that is that it is by-and-large a reprint of *Grand Fleet*—a QLI PDF product produced both for CT & T20 which may or may not be Imperial Navy commissioned for GT. So, if you do own *Grand Fleet* which has been pulled from QLI shelves then you will feel slighted unless, you are like me, detesting reading information from a screen and like the feel of a book. So this is my fourth time buying this product and wished there could be some extra value added between the editions.

What also is bad the artwork seems a tad recycled from the ComStar/Avenger line. And, furthermore, sadly this book suffers from very little art. For art in RPGs should not be neglected in game books. Art can be used to tell part of the story as well as prove a resting point by providing a break from excessive text. And, indeed, this is where this book has severe drawbacks and shows its lineage as being a PDF prior to being a deadtree book. Artwork in a PDF can be viewed as a waste of valuable and expensive ink but in a book, it should be something that adds value to the book. Therefore, the poverty of art does not detract from the quality of information presented but does have a tendency to overwhelm the reader with all the factual information leading the reader tired at the end of it.

I conclude with wishing deeply that MJD would write more for the OTU. For both the *Reft Sector* and the compilation of adventures entitled *Crowded Hours* truly show an innovative and fun way of reinvigorating the Grand Ole Dame that is *Traveller*.

For lack of art and the lack of crunchy bits like no info on Planetary Assault or future tactics. Substance drops down to 4 which could have otherwise been a solid five. 🌟



Less Dangerous Game

Spindizzy

by Scott Diamond

Wet Lowlands terrain

Gehenna

Qty	Animal	Mass (kg)	Hits	Armor	Wounds and Weapons	
10+3D6	Spindizzy (Carnivore Flyer)	1	2/1 (explosion if flame or heat present)	None	2D6 stinger*	A0 F7 S3

* +1 per Spindizzy feeding per round. Also injects venom causing 1/4 damage to be permanent to one characteristic

Gehenna has a biosystem unique to known space in that all of the life forms living there are venomous to some degree or another. Some manufacture their own venom and use it offensively, others use it passively or actively as a defense, and others do not use it as either a defensive or offensive weapon but it is merely a byproduct of another use.

An example of this is the fascinating, if somewhat repellent and fearsome Spindizzy (*terribilis ratis*, or “the terrible floater”).

Spindizzys live in the marshy wetlands and swamps of the lowlands. They live in swarms of up to 30 individuals and while not cooperative, they do sometimes rely on their numbers to find and subdue

Less Dangerous Game

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prey when their usual food suppliers, the Heffalump and Madcow, are not around. The Spindizzy survives as do a remarkably wide and thriving population of similar organisms found all across the stars, by feeding on the blood or similar tissues of hosts, but not as full-time parasites. Instead, they feed once and then leave the host to continue about their business until hungry again. Because the Spindizzy cannot eat a large amount of food lest it be weighted down and unable to fly it will try to stay with the host for a protracted period to take several feedings if possible, then float off. It is particularly adapted for this, as we shall see here.

The Spindizzy is a gasbag floater with the head and articulated body hanging head-down from the gasbag. The gasbag, which also contains the gas creating organs, air siphon for propulsion, and a large vane on top, is approximately 1-1.5 meters in diameter. The body containing the expandable lateral stomach sacs, legs, head, and other organs is about 8cm long and 4cm in diameter. The animal has four, long, articulated legs with numerous spurs along them, and terminate in razor sharp hooks. The head hangs from the body in the center of the legs and is a sphere with the mouth on the lowermost side. The Spindizzy has four large compound eyes spaced horizontally and equidistant around the center axis of the head. The mouth consists of a muscular extensible tube surrounding a 3cm long bony proboscis ending in a sharp tip. The needle-like proboscis is hollow and has several small holes along the sides near the first 50mm of the tip. Two large, curved chelicerae on either side of the mouth complete the feeding end of the animal. The color of the Spindizzy ranges from various shades of pale yellowish gray to some banding and patterns of red on the legs and body. The vane on the top of the gasbag makes the Spindizzy spin as it descends, slowing the animal enough to make a more or less controlled descent, in

the same manner a monocopter seed, such as those of Terra's maples, does.

The motion of the Spindizzy is what gives it the name. Like most gasbag floaters, the animal generates a lighter than air gas inside its gas sac, in this case hydrogen, by means of electrolysis. A special organ concentrates salts and metals to act in combination with water the animal drinks to separate the oxygen from hydrogen. The electricity to power the reaction comes from banks of electrically charged organs similar to what it used by animals that stun their prey electrically. Terra's electric eel is an example. It takes about an hour for a Spindizzy to inflate its gasbag enough to achieve neutral buoyancy, and another hour to achieve flight. During flight, the animal uses a siphon nozzle near the base of the sac to puff air in various directions for steering, or to help it climb. The Spindizzy then slowly descends after the short climb, with the vane standing straight above the gasbag causing the animal to spin as it descends, with its legs splayed out horizontally. A Spindizzy in flight will be seen to bob up a short distance, and then descend with the spinning motion, repeating this motion as it floats across the sky looking for prey or hosts.

If a host or prey is found the swarm will rapidly descend, spinning down very rapidly as they vent gas from their sacs, to land on the animal they have spotted. The Spindizzys do not deflate the sac completely—they just vent enough gas to descend, then clamp onto the prey with their spiny legs to hold themselves there... otherwise they might drift off again. While feeding they generate more gas so once they let go of the prey they just lift away. They have to do this, too, because while they are feeding they take on weight and it has to be compensated for or the Spindizzy won't be able to take off. Otherwise, they are vulnerable to flying predators who swoop down to pick them off a Heffalump's back.

The Spindizzy's legs latch tightly into the hide of the animal with the hooks and spurs providing secure purchase while it punches the needle-like pro-

Less Dangerous Game

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boscis deep into the hide of the host, simultaneously injecting an anti-coagulant and enzymes that both protects the Spindizzy from any defensive venom in the flesh of the prey and numbing the area. This venom also has the property of necrotizing the flesh, thus liquefying it quickly (beginning almost immediately and with excruciating and highly destructive results in humans) so the Spindizzy can quickly begin to suck it up through the proboscis. The main prey of the Spindizzy, the Heffalump, has a 2cm thick hide so the aggressive action of the enzymes helps drill down deeply enough for the Spindizzy to feed on the underlying blubber and blood vessels. The other main prey item, the Madcow, has thick, bristly fur that is almost like dull quills. The numerous spurs and hooks on the Spindizzy's legs allow it to get a firm grip and force its way into the fur to the surface of the skin without being dislodged by the plunging and rearing a Madcow under Spindizzy assault will perform.

The numbing effect of the venom usually means the Spindizzy feeding will be a minor nuisance to the animal provided the prey is large, and the number of Spindizzys is small. If a human were to come under attack by a swarm that dropped out of the sky and began clamping on and feeding the results would be painful, and if not rapidly fatal, will result in destruction of muscles and bone as the necrotic effect turned them to liquid. This isn't because the venom the Spindizzy uses is for incapacitating prey, it is merely to aid in feeding by numbing and liquefying the tissues—the severe reaction in humans is due to the scale of the effect that evolved for use on multi-ton animals and a pain reaction to the rapid destruction of nerve and structural tissue.

In game terms, this means Spindizzy bites cause 2D6 in the first round, and 1-point loss for each additional round a Spindizzy is attached and feeding. If the character attacked survives ¼ of the total damage done to characteristics is permanently removed from one random

characteristic to reflect the liquefied tissues that are permanently lost either up the proboscis of the Spindizzy or that sloughed off.

Spindizzys are voracious feeders and will not hesitate to drop rapidly onto any prey large enough to support even one of the swarm. For purposes of evasion or defense, the descent rate is equivalent to Speed 3 but the Spindizzy flight is largely dependent on the wind speed and direction, though the animal using the puffing siphon gains some lateral control. Primarily the swarm bobs about looking for prey and descends on the whatever it sees moving that is large enough to feed off of and isn't so low to the ground that the Spindizzys have no way to rapidly ascend if danger threatens. Not many animals prey on Spindizzys. However, there are some large web-spinning trapper/arthropods and gasbag-slashing predatory flyers that do make a meal out of Spindizzys when they can. The greatest threats to Spindizzys are storms, with their high winds and lightning strikes. The first will scatter the swarm, smashing them into trees and cliff sides, and the latter can them to explode, sometimes causing spectacular chain-detonations across a swarm as their hydrogen-filled gasbags burn in bright flashes.

Gehenna has two short, but extremely violent storm seasons, one in spring and the Fall, when the monsoon storms come racing down the equatorial ridgeline into the lowlands and jungles. The electrical storms are spectacular and tourists come from all over to see them. When the Spindizzys sense the approaching storms they enter into a period of frantic egg-laying activity and burrow into their cliffside nesting holes if they can get to them. Often the egg laying exhausts them and they merely vent their gas sacs and seek cover in the trees. In their nesting holes, the animals deflate their gas sacs and back into the hole to protect themselves from predators that dig them out by presenting their proboscis and fangs at the entrance. Those sheltering in the trees almost entirely die from the high winds battering them to the ground and shredding their gas sacs.

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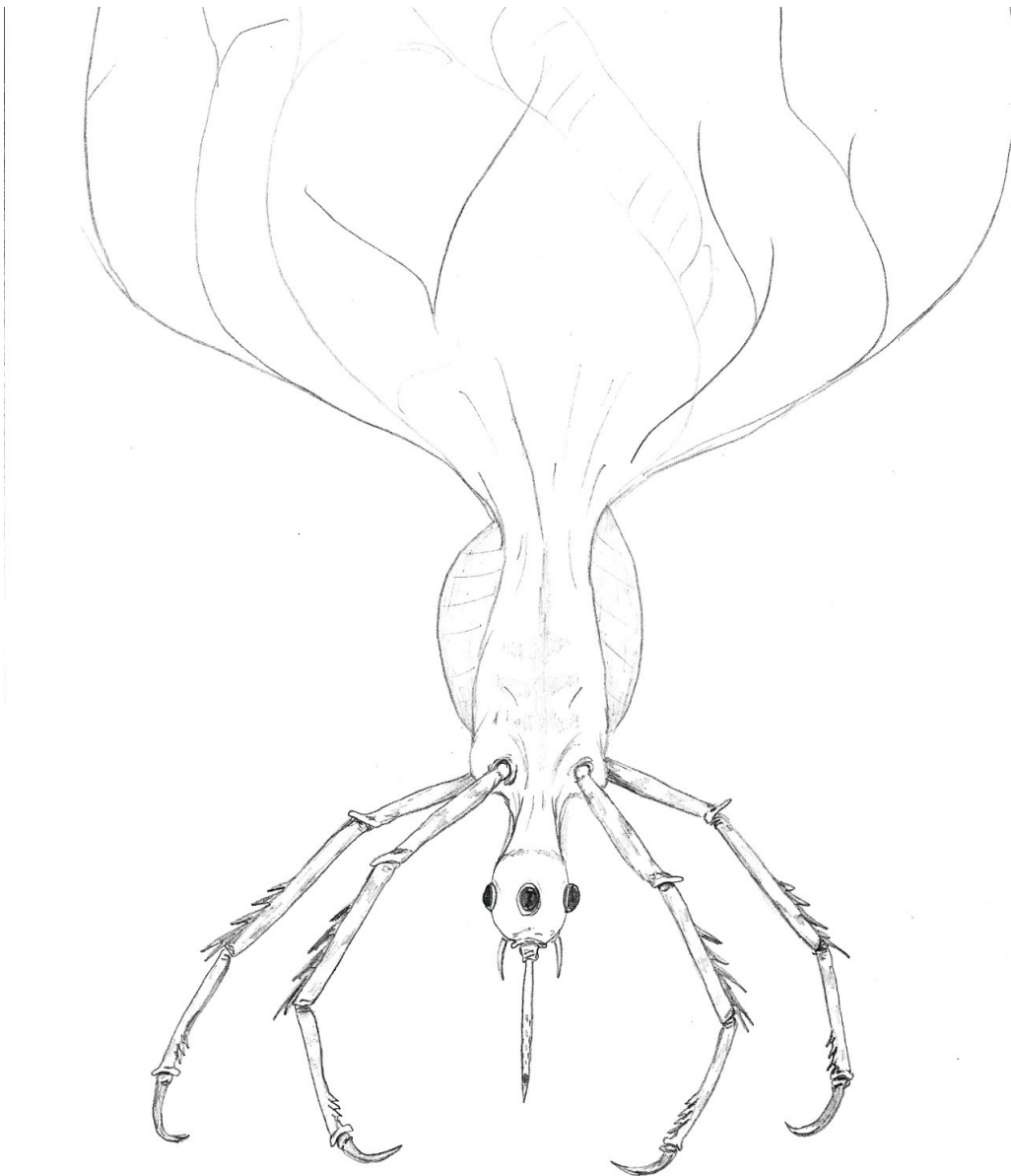
Less Dangerous Game

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Spindizzys are a hermaphroditic R-strategy animal that lay their eggs on the thick algae mats floating on the pools of the swamps and marshes they live in. One group will lay the eggs by floating across the mats and dropping the eggs as they pass. The eggs are sprayed by the non-egg laying Spindizzys with sperm-laden milt that has a hardening agent to trigger the eggs into encysting to protect the embryonic Spindizzy for the 40-day duration of the storm season. The Spindizzys that lay eggs will be exhausted after laying 200-300 eggs and be too weak

to do more than shelter in the trees or drift to the ground. They will die during the storms. The others will act as fertilizers and make it to the nesting holes. These animals will survive to become the following year's egg layers.

The young hatch 4-5 days after the end of the storm season and feed on the small arthropods and fish that eat the algae mats. The thick mats will protect them from predators. Once they begin to float after two weeks the young become prey to any number of animals living in the marshes and swamps, and of the 200-300 eggs laid by an adult, approx. 20-30 young will reach maturity within 1 month.



Corp World

by Joel Callahan

This article was originally posted to Freelance Traveller's website in 2007, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

The PCs are having a night out and they notice that bars, restaurants, nightclubs, and so on, are all more crowded than usual. After asking around (discreetly), it seems a MegaCorp has recently 'let go' a lot of employees. *Thousands* of them.

A week or two later, the players are having another night out, in a different city, perhaps on a different world. They see that most of the 'spots' are crowded for a week night, and everyone seems to know each other.

Seems most of these people just got laid off by a MegaCorp and dumped on this planet to seek work elsewhere. The same MegaCorp.

If the players make inquiries, they will learn that everyone worked at the same place—a Corporate-owned world a J2 from here. Things were humming along when in the middle of the night, they were roused from their beds and in the middle of their work shifts and told to leave. Now. Take only what you can carry, but go to the transport dock. The players hear almost everyone complaining about leaving money and possessions behind. Considering the MegaCorp paid the employees in cash, there's a good chance the purser's safe is still there and intact. There must be a fortune left on that world.

One fellow claims to have been on the last boat off that rock and the pilots were mumbling something about a virus or biological weapon that 'got loose'. But rumours are numerous in situations such as this. That fellow also claims that there are only a handful of people left on-world—some scientists and some Top-Level Executives.

GM Info

The MegaCorp was doing illegal, unlicensed research in the field of Biological Weapons, in the hopes of securing a lucrative government contract and then opening a new BioWeapons division.

The bug got out of the containment lab and infected a number of personnel.

So far, the bug only infects Humans, but it's possible it can mutate and jump species. Players playing non-Human races may be immune to it. *May*.

Adventure Hooks

1. The players might consider the possibility of landing on the planet (with suitable protection) and pillaging the hell out of it.
2. The players are approached by a member of said MegaCorp, and are offered a large sum of money if they land and destroy key installations. Retrieving some important technical data on the research would earn them a bonus. Unfortunately, the only people with the computer access codes are 'no longer with the company', so the PCs will need a proficient computer hacker.
3. A rival MegaCorp offers a large sum of money if the players land and retrieve research data. They'll need a computer hacker on the crew.
4. An Agent (claiming to be) representing the Sub-Sector government approaches the PCs and offers a large reward for gathering evidence against the MegaCorp. The research data would be nice 'evidence' as well.
5. An Agent representing 'Concerned Citizens of the Imperium' (i.e. organized crime) approach the players. The Agent offers a reward *and* that 'the Concerned Citizens would be indebted to you'. A favour owed by them could be interesting! If the players refuse, photographs of an unknown man holding a box with an oversized timing device on it is produced. The man has been photographed standing in their ship's Bridge, Crew Lounge, and Engineering. "While there are no such devices on your ship at present, you can see we can easily change that."
6. There is no plague or virus. The MegaCorp wanted to cut overhead expenses by firing the staff and replacing them with robots. They 'leaked' the virus scare to cover themselves. 🌐

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

3Hombres Games
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
Screying Eye Games
Spellbook Software and Games
Spica Publishing
Steve Jackson Games
Terra/Sol Games
Toxic Bag Productions
Zozar 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”.

