



FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Double Feature:

After-Action Report: TravCon 16

by Timothy Collinson

Adventure of a Traveller Greenhorn

by Jane Polwin

Issue 075
May/June 2016

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



Twice a year, our featured article is an after-action report from a TravellerCon, and this issue, we even get a double feature! Both TravellerCons—the ones in the UK that Timothy Collinson brings us, and the ones in the eastern US that Your Humble Editor dons his reporter’s hat for—are All Traveller All The Time, but they’re not the *only* places for Traveller. Other cons may have some Traveller activity as well, such as PostApocalyptiCon in Tennessee, ConNooga (also in Tennessee), Mysticon, ... so if you’re at a con where there’s Traveller gaming, we’d love for you to write an after-action report about it. Other Traveller-related activities are worth writing

about, too—seen or done Traveller cosplay? Tell us about it, with pictures! Brought a first-timer along? Get him/her to write about it (like Jane Polwin, in this issue)! Introduced Traveller to «YourConHere»? Tell us how it went!

Other Traveller activity is worth reporting on, too—did your weekly Traveller campaign group have a particularly fun/interesting session? Write it up! Is the campaign itself a worthwhile story? Send it in, in installments, so we can run it as a serial! Writing software or building a CCG or other game with a Traveller theme? Tell us about it! It’s all good, and it adds to the evidence that the Traveller community is a vibrant and active one. Which is good. ☺

Supplement 14: Space Stations

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Supplement 14: *Space Stations*. Barnes Thomas.

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

96pp., PDF or Softcover

US\$24.99(s)/14.99(p)/UK£16.99(s)/10.41(p)

It's not hard to see where a space station fits into a *Traveller* campaign—at the very least, they can represent the orbital component of a starport, and starports are at the heart of travelling, second only to the starships they serve. But they can be more than just filling stations and minimalls along an interstellar highway—they can be destinations in and of themselves, with vibrant communities and attractions of their own. They can be one of several economic engines in a star system. They can be centers of research or learning or manufacture. The limits are, in reality, only your imagination.

This book allows you to start with that imagination, and flesh it out into something that “feels right” for your *Traveller* campaign. It starts with the rules for constructing a space station, outlining the various needs for the station, much like the rules for constructing starships. In fact, the two sequences are parallel, with the differences being called out (e.g., because a station doesn't move as much as a starship, the hull need not be as strong; stations don't need jump drives; stations often can be much larger than even the largest capital ships, etc.). There isn't the wide variety of hull configurations called out as in starship construction; instead, the important decision for a space station hull is whether it will be a spin-gravity structure or an artificial-gravity structure, with a spin-gravity structure being more limited as to configuration (but available at lower TLs).

It should be noted that this book does not discuss the differences—if any—between starports and space stations, and, unlike *Starports* (focussed on the Third Imperium setting), this supplement is strictly generic, not tied to any published setting.

After the basics have been determined in the first chapter, the station has to be equipped for its func-

TRAVELLER

Supplement 14: Space Stations

That's no moon...

tion, whether that function is to act as a filling station and minimall for starships passing through, to act as a refining platform for resource extraction in the inner or outer system, to defend the mainworld—or a critical outpost—against marauders from out-system, to probe the depth of space, or of one of the systems worlds, in pursuit of new knowledge, or whatever. The second chapter allows you to equip the station for any of these purposes, and generally offers multiple options for a given function, allowing customization of the station.

Now that you have your station, the next chapter talks about operating it—and attacking it; space stations are going to be relatively high-value targets in a star system. This section does touch on the differences between space stations and starports, but only to the extent that one must interpret some of the characteristics slightly differently. The emphasis in this chapter is on developing the overview of the operational characteristics, not on actually running the station from day to day.

(Continued on page 3)

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The next chapter widens the scope: instead of focussing on a single station, it discusses generating an overview of the set of space stations one might find in a system, at the equivalent of a UWP level—that is, the details of a station are not generated, just the basics of how many stations of a type are present, and what those types are. Although some of the discussion uses terminology that harkens back to the Third Imperium setting, there's no actual tie to that setting.

The next chapter returns to the single-station scope, but now focusses on the context—a space station doesn't exist in a vacuum (well, yes it does, but that's just a *physical* vacuum—I'm now talking about an economic/social vacuum for it to not exist in). More specifically, this focusses on building a space station and having it be a real place, with a need to bring in a profit, rather than merely being a flat for the player-characters to act in front of. It's pretty clear from this chapter that while there can be a primary reason for a station's existence, secondary purposes will be common, and such factors as crew skill and efficiency will play a part in defining the profitability of the station.

One important function that a space station can serve is as a shipyard. The next chapter discusses this, in terms of both constructing to contract and speculative construction. Constructing to contract is given as the more reliable way to realize income from constructing spacecraft and starships, but spec-

ulative construction is potentially more lucrative. On the other hand, it's coupled with higher risk; what do you do with the starship that you've constructed on spec but now can't find a buyer for? At least with contract construction, you've got a buyer lined up before the first structural member of the hull is set in place...

Putting it all together isn't always easy. The next chapter presents an example, in the Agave system. A history of the system is presented, including some NPC patron encounters and the adventures they can send the PCs on. Space stations of all types play roles in the adventures, and give the players a good look at what a space station is and does in an actual setting. The system setting is not tied to the Third Imperium setting, so can be used in pretty much any campaign.

Finally, comprising half the book, is a set of pre-generated space stations of various types, with stat sheets and at least partial deck plans for each. The plans are, unfortunately, in bitmap format, so while they can be enlarged to try to get a better look at detail, there are limits beyond which they'll simply become fuzzy. Fortunately, you can zoom in enough to identify components and staterooms - but not enough to make it worthwhile printing them out to use as miniatures maps.

Overall, the PDF is probably a better value than the print edition - but if you're not going to be doing space-station-centric adventures, there are certainly better things to spend your money on. ❄️

TravellerCON/USA 2016

TravellerCON/USA 2016 is planned for the weekend of October 7–9, at the Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center in Lancaster, PA (same place as last year). Registration is expected to open soon; the full weekend is \$30 for referees or participants (age 12+ only) and may be paid at the door; vendor registration is \$35 until July 1, \$60 after, and must be prepaid. There is a discounted room rate at the Resort; mention TravellerCON when making your reservation. Those who attended last year and were ... underwhelmed ... by the Resort should note that they are under new ownership and extensive renovations are under way. Come play with us! More information will be found as it becomes available at the Con website, <http://www.travellercon-usa.com/info/> ❄️

After-Action Report: TravCon 16

by Timothy Collinson

There was an increased air of anticipation for the UK's *Traveller* convention this year. TravCon16 was celebrating 20 year of British Isles *Traveller* Support. Across a couple of decades BITS have consistently run great conventions, published excellent support material and adventures, and connected up Travelers on this side of the Atlantic. In fact it's fair to say that I might well have never published anything, nor refereed an adventure, if it weren't for Andy Lilly's small but perfectly formed organization. So there was much to celebrate – or maybe answer for!

Well before the convention there were rumours of something special to celebrate and I was privileged to have a sneak preview. Oh the pain of not being able to shout about it! But I was also anticipating TravCon with a certain trepidation. My enthusiasm for *Traveller* and presumably for TravCon in the days after the event each year had apparently inspired a work colleague to sign up and attend. Now I'd be the first to guess that a cataloguer might be the ideal candidate to fit in with 35 or so geeky guys (and a couple of ladies) for a weekend of role play-



Keith, of Marquee Models, introduces my colleague J to Firefly as a prelude to her first TravCon

ing, but I had no idea if J (my colleague) really understood what she was letting herself in for. We spent a lunchbreak creating a character or two, had a look at the typical programme for the weekend, and even joined with a handful of others in a pub one evening to try the beginning of *The Traveller Adventure*, but it still seemed risky!

The third reason I was anticipating the convention was because, having promised myself I would take a break from any refereeing duties, a couple of weeks before I had finished putting together a special one-off preview edition of my *Traveller Bibliography*, now in its much expanded 3rd edition¹, so I had a little time on my hands. I also figured Andy would need help filling all 25 slots and I was beginning to wonder how *Ashfall II: Under the Dome* might



I anticipating another great TravCon!

play out. It's a sequel to *Ashfall* that I ran a couple of years back and that had gone well. But this was much more sandboxy and instead of a fairly linear set of events with the odd NPCs at the right moment, this was wide open with some 15 NPCs who could all be encountered at the same time! But it was already written and I just needed to reacquaint myself with the details and prepare some handouts.

A Page and Half of Notes

Having said that, I panicked at that point and worried that it might not fill four hours, so I sketched out a page and a half of notes and drew a map and a floor plan, just in case we needed to go

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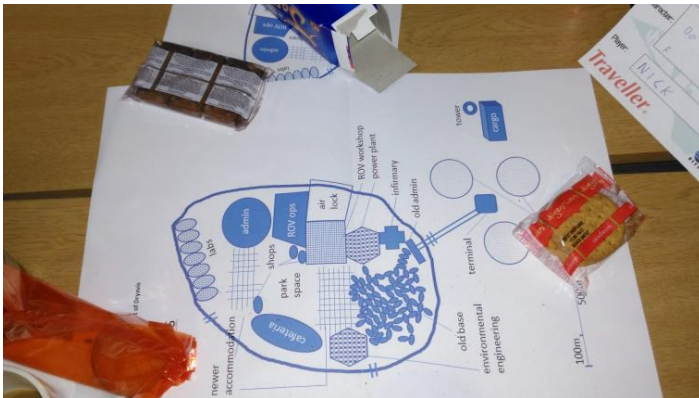
¹) 254 pages, 1588 entries, 10 eras, four indexes and full of lots of fun facts, such as BITS being in the top ten publishers for number of items published.

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 5)

Sunday session. I was suitably embarrassed and gratified at how fast the 7(!) slots for my game filled up. Someone timed it at 10 seconds, put that on Facebook and I was surprised to get home and find this was the one thing my daughter and wife had heard about – the power of social media! I was down for seven players rather than six because I'd made the (mistake?) of mentioning I had seven PCs and I think with one game not running or something, Andy was a bit short of places.

The hotel has had a change round and our usual third gaming room had been turned into an office – so we were banished to a 'converted' bedroom – the



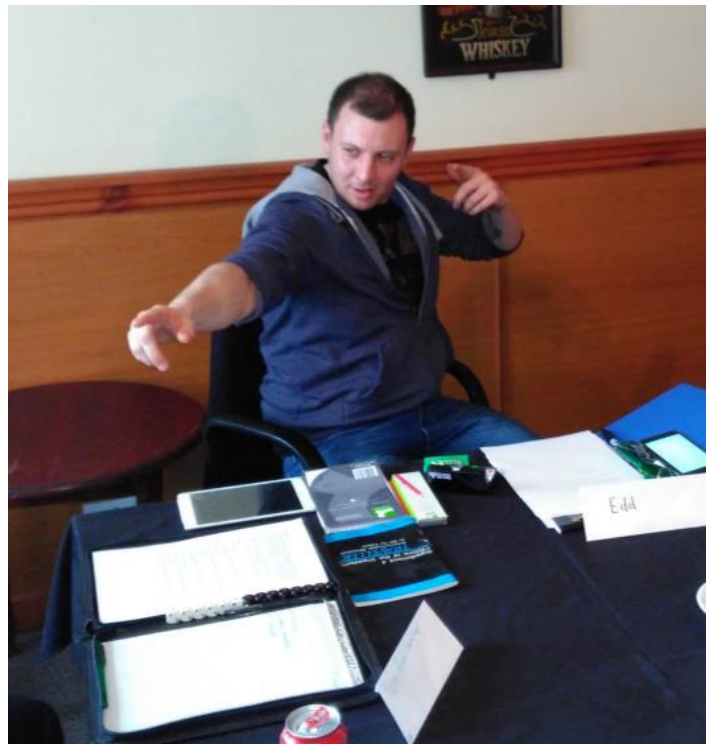
Snacks and a map of Dryavis in Ashfall II. There is no truth to the rumour bacteria were taking over the dome. It's just the old part of the base!

bedding had been jammed into the bathroom. But it made a suitably quiet room for us to revisit the Darrian scientists (and the NPC Special Arm agent now upgraded to a PC) and tackle the hellhole of Spume once again. Two years before I had rather thought that a bunch of academics in a non-combat adventure, with a 'reference list' as part of the handouts might be a rather specialised niche interest that appealed to me but perhaps not many other *Traveller* players. I'd been proved wrong then and I was proved wrong again. Not only with the alacrity with which people signed up, but with the perhaps over-the-top enthusiasm with which players threw themselves into the roles. It varied from the petty bickering of scholars vying for precedence and pre-eminence, through quiet and unassuming players switching into wonderfully appropriate language

such as "I want to run a comparative analysis of X and Y to produce Z data...", to a pair that were found in tea break huddled over an actual research paper they were outlining in some detail on a sheet of A4. I had a feeling that the plot I'd outlined in my notes was almost an irrelevance – though thankfully enough stayed on track to get to a conclusion. (The less said about S, who took the longest hot shower in the history of the Darrian Confederation and then disappeared with the local woman of ill-repute for several days, the better!) I needn't have worried, *Ashfall II* pretty much perfectly fit the four hours available on Friday and the five hours (but with a lunch break) on the Sunday.

Too Many Games! Too Little Time!

As usual there was the frustration of not being



Edd Quick running The Infected

able to play in the other games that were going on. K was running a game of *Firefly* for latecomers, but there were two other adventures happening as well: *Fixing X?* and *Wolves at the Door* were being run by Steve Quick and Dom Mooney respectively. The latter was one I'd managed to miss before which was doubly frustrating and the other involved J who, much to my relief reported that she had settled in

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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 6)

well and was thoroughly enjoying the convention so far. I believe she may be reporting on TravCon elsewhere in these pages [No such luck, though I'd have liked to have a first-timer's perspective –ed.]. As a last minute addition, Paul Barber also ran *It's a Big Planet* as Vic Berry's scrap team got together once more.

I was absolutely shattered by now so it was a tad irritating to find I was too excited to sleep immediately, so it barely seemed a moment before breakfast and the fun of the Saturday. Andy's wife Sarah had come up trumps once again with a third outing for the Chirper trash collectors of Persephone and in *A New Friend*, six of us – including Andy's daughter playing again after a year off for an archery competition last year – were once again chirping and falsettoing through a delightful adventure where our ignorance and stupidity managed to triumph. Rest assured I plague Andy and Sarah at any opportunity to collect these together and publish them. Elsewhere Ed Quick was running *The Infected* where the party was charged with collecting a dangerous fugitive from a low-tech world, Bob Parkins was running *Join the Colonials!* set in the 23rd century as the Terrans begin to expand into Vilani territory and are recruiting for an army to be sent to a swamp world, Paul Thornbury was running *Cold Store*, and Simon Bell – manfully struggling through a dreadful cold – was revisiting the excellent *Not Another Space Dogs!* which I've had the privilege of playing a couple of

times and can attest to its fun as some Vargr vie to become top dog.

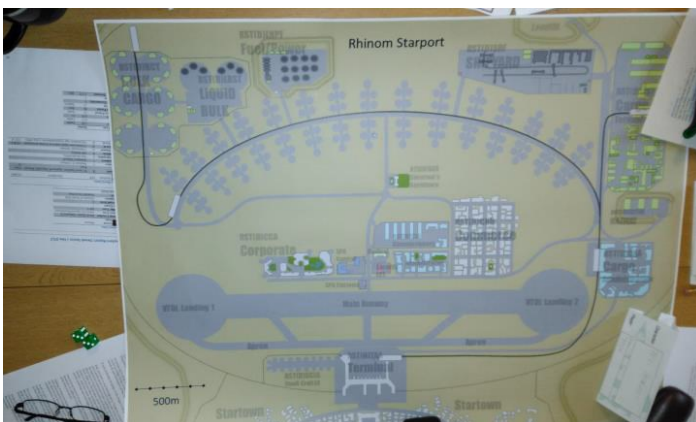


Bob Parkins invited players to Join the Colonials

The garage opposite the hotel has now permanently shut its doors, so no chance of a sandwich from there. But the ever dutiful Sarah made a run into Sawtry and came back laden with provisions to see us all through the afternoon. Not, to be honest, that there was much danger of starving with all the regular snacks – healthy and otherwise – that BITS provides for hungry gamers. And not to mention the traditionally excellent beer that D once again provided. Although not *Traveller* branded this year for which my attic and its growing collection of empty bottles is ever thankful.

Hybrid

After lunch I had an interesting experience having signed up for Dom Mooney's *Barbarians at the Gates*. This was set in the Interstellar Wars period which was unusual in itself, but was also using a hybrid of *Traveller* and the *Uncharted Worlds* rules which I'd never encountered before. I admit that I



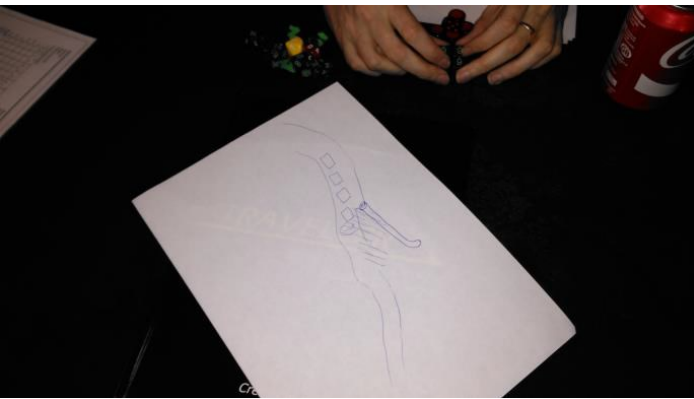
Stunning map of Rhinom Starport in *Cold Store* – auctioned off at the end. I regret not bidding.

Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 7)

started with some dubiousness as to the value of attempting (and largely failing) to learn a new rules set as well as deal with the adventure which was politically complicated, but Dom's excellent explanation and handling of both rules and plot put aside any doubts and I really understood the attraction when I encountered a facet of *Uncharted Worlds* that I'll write about elsewhere. As a mixed group of Terrans and Vilani we managed to avert the next interstellar war – or at least warn one side of a surprise attack brewing just over the border and Dom's wonderful colour poster sized maps of the Solomani Rim (A1 size if that helps visualize them) were a real treat to play on top of and really helped as an aid to following where we were and what we were doing and what our options were.

Elsewhere *The Show Must Go On* with Steve Quick again, *Thank You for Playing* with John Gent,



No one in *One of Professors is Missing!* would admit to just what this 'handout' was all about

One of our Professors is Missing! with Nick Walker (not related to the Darrian scientists of *Ashfall*) and *Dirty Work* with Neil McGurk were on offer. Troupes of entertainers, lotteries and luxury cruises, a lost expedition – as ever the variety, imagination and fun on offer meant four clones would have been more than welcome. I'm constantly impressed by the excellence of TravCon referees.

A Page and a Half of Notes!

At 5.30pm – in the middle of that last session – Andy had taken me aside. I'd (perhaps foolishly)

mentioned I'd scribbled some notes for a possible *Ashfall III* and now due to illness there was an empty slot at 7pm. How did I feel about running a game? *Gulp!* Well I admitted I didn't have much of an ending – but of course that wasn't an obstacle to someone with Andy's experience and he said something



There was hardly a time when *Chirpers* weren't taking out the trash in a wealthy mansion at some point in the convention

which triggered a connection with a bit I'd written which I thought might work. And after that I was out of excuses – save fear! So with a page and a half of notes and an hour and half of warning – but no actual prep time as I still had some of Dom's game to finish and supper to eat – I was signed up to run a third game. Now I know that many referees would eat that for breakfast, but remember that previously TravCons have seen me with 100 pages of notes for an adventure, handouts galore and a lot of thought and planning. It was encouraging to realize that all of that isn't always necessary. Though I'd be the first to admit that the task was made simpler by the fact that it was a continuation of a story in which I already had setting and characters in my head. More surprisingly to me, the adventure seemed to work quite well with some wonderfully humorous moments (such as a Respected Scholar abseiling head-first down a volcanic vent while his team leader filmed for the local social media outlet, some moving moments (the remains of a very old scout), and a hard-to-tell-if this-is-really-roleplaying moment as J, my work colleague who is a much put upon librarian in real life, was now playing the much put upon scholar technician of the group responding to this

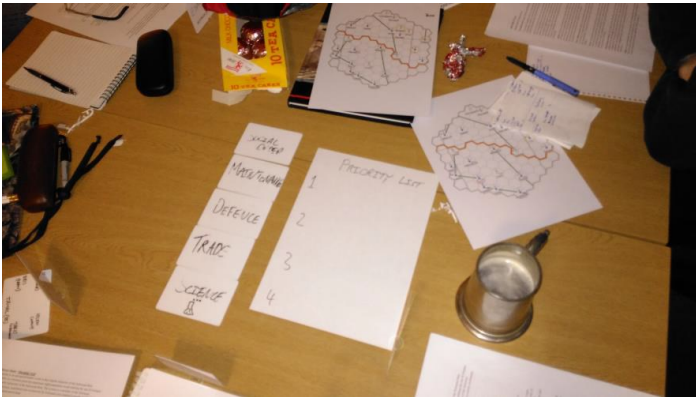
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Raconteurs' Rest

(Continued from page 8)

demand and that demand and viscerally channeling the “if someone doesn’t thank me soon, I’m going to take this spanner and...” vibe. She got into the spirit of the convention totally when at one point, irritated by the rather rambunctious noise of the Chirpers at the table behind, she invented a chirper-swat which several people wanted to try!

Of course refereeing meant I couldn’t play in Stephen J. Ellis’ *Mirabilis* which I’d been hoping to join. It was being promoted as the first ‘stat free’ game as a ruling council of a world in *Hard Times* needed to make some tough decisions. Judging from



The game that got away – I would love to have tried *Mirabilis* where even the props looked intriguing

the whiteboard after the fact, this is something I’d have really loved participating in. Elsewhere, the Chirper game was on the second of its three (!) outings – is that a record for TravCon? – Ed Quick was running *Noir* in which the PCs are hired to investigate a brutal killing of a young prostitute and the fifth game in the slot was *728-907* with Steve Thornton-Cook guiding the PCs to a study of gravitational anomalies.

Saturday is often known for its games in the bar after hours and F had bought a great selection as

OVERHEARD:

One less than intelligent chirper on finding a box of Cinnamon-Apple bars in the trash: What’s a cinnamon?

Second (somewhat out of character) chirper: Someone who does bad things. <beat while this gets processed>

Third chirper: So where does the apple fit in?

Second chirper: Well that’s where it all began...

<groans all round> <Referee sighs and tries to move on>

ever. Several of my friends have bought *Camel Up!* after I fell in love with that at a previous con. This time he had several but the one that grabbed us most was *Codenames*. Definitely a game I’d like to revisit but by that time we were all struggling with tiredness – and one player was still playing moves from the game half an hour previously which confused matters considerably!

Mothers’ Day Mayhem

Sunday had its usual more relaxed start, but just time for one more slightly longer adventure before the round up and departure. Unfortunately TravCon had conflicted with Mother’s Day this year² – Andy already works hard to keep it clear of the Six Nations rugby – and so the decision was made to have the awards and the auction just after lunch so that those who needed to could make a quick getaway but the games could continue afterwards. This had a couple of unforeseen repercussions. Firstly the awards ceremony revealed plot points that some players hadn’t quite arrived at by that point. Fortunately the players I was dealing with took in good spirit and refused to act on the knowledge. Secondly, there was much less drive to get games finished in good time so some were then waiting an hour or more for other games to finish and shared transport home etc. Hopefully with Mother’s Day being avoided as well as the rugby next year, that should solve that problem and we can return to a wrap up at the end. But the day is already booked for TravCon17!

To wrap this up, I ran *Ashfall II* for a second time – which was only a mite confusing having run the final part before this. I don’t think anyone played it backwards as they could have done which probably helped. I was very taken with just how differently a different set of players ran through a wide open sand box type adventure which included a random d66 table. This time, the settlement of Dryavis on

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² For US readers, we celebrate Mothers’ Day in March rather than May. This resulted in my mother receiving two cards in the years I lived in an international community as I’d usually forgotten by May that I’d already sent a card.

Raconteurs' Rest



*I find it difficult to write humour, but not to worry: the players can inject their own.
Ashfall II: Under the Dome being kept sane by C and L (centre) who really 'got' the Darrian scientist vibe*

(Continued from page 9)

Spume seemed like a real hotbed of paranoia and conspiracy theory which was fascinating. The players took a completely different approach as well which kept me engaged and motivated – although one five or six minute discussion by the academics sounded so much like a board meeting I might sit through at work that I actually zoned out at one point – mainly tiredness rather than disinterest – and I asked at the end of their pow-wow not for the minutes of the meeting, which I could tell would take hours, but just the action points.

Paul Thornbury was running one of his amazing miniatures games, *The Akabar Express*, with a herd of K'kree racing across the plains to catch a speeding train. I was told the value of the miniatures on the table at one point. It would have kept me in Cherry Coke for a few years! Vic Berry's Scrapyard was having another scenario run by Paul Barker, Dom Mooney was running folk through a game of *Power Projection* and Andy Lilly was bravely running *A New Friend* for a third time. Given the mayhem that ensues in the chirper games, I was surprised he didn't win the Starburst for Extreme Heroism for that alone.

Speaking of awards, I was a tad embarrassed to win the Ping, F*** It! award for the third year running. This time it was for simply falling off my chair when trying to pick up a book from the floor. I didn't think it particularly amusing but apparently others saw the funny side of the chair still being

attached to me in a horizontal position. Next year I really am happy for someone else to take a turn with the PFI! On the other hand, I had nothing to do with the SEH for a change – although T kindly nominated me for running a game at such short notice – and the Starburst went to M. For once there was a formal write up of the citation:

"A small agricultural colony has been attacked by Vargr raiders intent on stealing their valuable crop of anagathics. The colonists have been rounded up by heavily-armed Vargr wearing full battledress – only one family has managed to slip away before the net closed. They return to the mothballed colony ship, a repurposed former combat dropship languishing in an abandoned barn. As they make a fast, aggressive pass over the invading Vargr and their new captives, the only crew member on board able to speak Vargr is the colony's 15-year-old teenage prom queen. Charged with extracting a peaceful sur-



Andy presents the SEH to M – digitally removed on the left

Raconteurs' Rest

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render from the Vargr raiders with no harm to the captured colonists, she flips on the microphone and, in a stern, authoritative voice, says in her best Vargr: "SIT!"

Well done to M (who has been expunged from the photo for security reasons). The auction is almost the final formal event of every TravCon – I was very pleased with the generous amounts bid for both my adventure (part II) and the one-off preview edition of the bibliography. For once I managed to bid on something and brought home the lovely maps that D had produced of the Solomani Rim. Not that I have wall-space for such monsters. The actual final formal moment is our regular thank you to Andy and his family for their work and stress and patience in putting on such a great convention. It's a hard standard to maintain I'm sure, but here's to another twenty years of BITS and please, everyone, encourage them that it needn't be another decade until the second part of *In Search of Angels* sees light of day. 🌟



The convention organizer manages to have some fun!

Doing It My Way

Hazard: Tsunami!

by Michael Brown

Zhasmiin ignored the glittering beach a quarter-kilometer away and 30 meters down and kept her eyes glued to the horizon; she didn't want to miss a thing. Dr. Terin, for his part, kept his eyes glued to his portable workstation console, occasionally reaching to adjust sensor controls without looking; almost unconsciously.

"Soon," he announced, in acknowledgement of her palpable excitement. Years of formulation and testing of his seismic quake and tsunami prediction algorithm were about to bear fruit. The seaquake had already occurred, and matched exactly the location, time, and magnitude Terin predicted. They had now come to a cliff above the point at which he had predicted the worst tsunami would occur. This final prediction, if accurate, would allow Imperial scientists to begin predicting the worst seismic

shocks and resulting deluges in advance, saving many lives. Zhasmiin, his most trusted assistant, had accompanied him on every trip to observe his theories in the field.

As Zhasmiin watched through the binoculars, the sea rapidly receded from the beach as though a giant drain had been opened somewhere. The sea floor lay bare as scores of unlucky fish flopped impotently on the newly expanded shoreline.

A sudden motion out of the left corner of the viewfinder caught her attention. A group of children ran out onto the beach, seeking out interesting, previously-hidden objects. They laughed and called to one another merrily as they took youthful advantage of the unexpected event.

Zhasmiin stared in shock. Terin must have happened to look up at that critical moment. She heard his voice, strained with horror. "Gods of Sharru! Those kids..."

The drawback meant the tsunami was due within minutes. Indeed, the far horizon darkened and swelled and

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a dull, faraway roar began. Terin had predicted it would be up to ten meters tall. Few structures could withstand such a wall of water; let alone fragile children.

Terin frantically tried to get the oblivious kids' attention, shouting and waving his arms to no avail. Zhasmiin shook off her astonishment and sprinted for the air/raft. As she leaped into the pilot's seat and thumbed the machine to life, she mentally calculated how long she had to reach the children, load them aboard, and gain enough altitude to top the wave. A glance at the sea told her the answer: not long, if she made it at all. She arrowed the air/raft forward, praying that she would.

Any world blessed with liquid water might have much of it collected into bodies of substantial size. Along with the abundance of water comes an abundance of dangers; usually indirect, such as cyclonic storms and marine wildlife. However, some dangers present a direct threat to land-based life; tsunamis are one such peril. They are among the most unassuming of natural disasters, many times speeding across the ocean completely unnoticed before delivering their deadly blow upon the land. This article provides background material, scientific explanation, and a game mechanic for use by the Classic Traveller referee in creating these events.

Disclaimer: while based on real-world science, the concepts herein are part of a game. Nothing presented here is intended to be used in real-life situations. Tsunamis are dangerous phenomena that cause a great deal of destruction, injuries, and deaths, and are best avoided. In the aftermath of severe marine disturbances, always observe authorities' warnings and instructions regarding the potential for tsunamis and the areas where they are likely to strike.

Defining a Tsunami

A tsunami (from an ancient Terran Japanese word meaning "harbor wave") is a series of giant waves originating from an event that causes a sudden large-scale displacement of water, usually seis-

mic activity. Also commonly called "tidal waves" (a misnomer, since they have nothing to do with tides), tsunamis can occur in any substantial body of water, including inland seas, large lakes, bays, sounds, and harbors. They differ from normal wind-generated waves in their genesis and structure.

A common (but inaccurate) image of a tsunami is of a gigantic wave cresting above the tallest buildings. Tsunamis don't crest—they more typically resemble a quickly-rising tide or surge, or a huge wall of water—and while they can become quite large, most are nowhere near the skyscraper-dwarfing monsters popularized in fiction. There have been exceptions, of course (see below). Tsunamis also typically form and strike in multiples. The initial wave that hits may not even be the most powerful.

The Making of a Tsunami

Tsunamis are created by abrupt, large-scale disruptions in the ocean. Large landslides, volcanic action, and even asteroid impacts are sometimes responsible, but the vast majority of tsunamis begin with underwater seismic activity. Strong seaquakes (7.0+ on the Richter scale) that cause the seabed along fault lines to move vertically up or down displace massive amounts of water, which in turn creates waves that ripple out in all directions at speeds of 500-1000 kph. Tsunamis are rarely single events, but a series of waves called a wave train. While moving across the ocean, tsunamis have a long interval, or period, between waves which may be measured in the hundreds of kilometers. Because their energy is distributed vertically all through the column of displaced water at maritime depths, at sea they're generally less than a meter high. Indeed, travelers in watercraft may not even notice them.

Once near land, tsunamis display a totally different character. As the water gets shallower, the waves' speed slows and the energy that was distributed into the depths now has nowhere to go but up. Additionally, the water behind the wave backs up. The result is a sharp buildup in the waves' size and power. By the time they hit the shoreline they've be-

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Doing It My Way

come a deadly wall of water thousands of times more powerful than a normal wave, hitting with incredible force and flooding a large area. Unfortunately for the stricken areas, the destruction doesn't end there. The powerful outflow as the wave recedes sweeps victims and debris into open water.

Each tsunami is a unique creation, so there is no "average" size and scope. They depend on where it originated, how powerful the trigger was, and the topography of the areas they hit. Some hit the coast as no more than a rushing tide a few meters high. Others are monsters tens of meters tall that scour the landscape. One of the worst tsunamis in Terran history struck Indonesia and countries on the Indian Ocean in -2512 (2004 CE). Created by a magnitude 9.0 quake, the resulting tsunamis averaged 15 meters in height, affected more than ten countries, and killed nearly 250,000 people. Another, classified as a megatsunami, struck Terra's Lituya Bay, in the northwestern North American continent, in -2558 (1958 CE). Caused by a massive seismically-induced landslide, it had an initial wave height of over 500 meters and a secondary wave height (which traveled the length of the bay) of up to 30 meters. Likewise, the flooding can be extensive, and depends on the size of the tsunami and the topography. A tsunami that struck Terra's Japan in -2505 (2011 CE) inundated about 561 square kilometers over a plain.

Tsunamis are measured according to a scale. One of the first was the Sieberg-Ambraseys tsunami intensity scale, which debuted in -2554 (1962 CE). This scale divided tsunami intensities and their effects into six categories ranging from Very Light to Disastrous. Other scales replaced it in subsequent years, but the Sieberg-Ambraseys lends itself to simplicity and the use of a six-sided die:

1. **Very light.** Wave so weak as to be perceptible only on tide-gauge records.
2. **Light.** Wave noticed by those living along the shore and familiar with the sea. On very flat shores generally noticed.
3. **Rather strong.** Generally noticed. Flooding of gently sloping coasts. Light sailing vessels or

small boats carried away on shore. Slight damage to light structures situated near the coast. In estuaries reversal of the river flow some distance upstream.

4. **Strong.** Flooding of the shore to some depth. Light scouring on man-made ground. Embankments and dikes damaged. Light structures near the coasts damaged. Solid structures on the coast injured. Big sailing vessels and small ships carried inland or out to sea. Coasts littered with floating debris.
5. **Very strong.** General flooding of the shore to some depth. Breakwater walls and solid structures near the sea damaged. Light structures destroyed. Severe scouring of cultivated land and littering of the coast with floating items and sea animals. With the exception of big ships all other type of vessels carried inland or out to sea. Big bores in estuary rivers. Harbour works damaged. People drowned. Wave accompanied by strong roar.
6. **Disastrous.** Partial or complete destruction of man-made structures for some distance from the shore. Flooding of coasts to great depths. Big ships severely damaged. Trees uprooted or broken. Many casualties.

Unfortunately, since tsunamis occur in series, the danger may last for hours as one wave after another arrives. Each time, the sea retreats from the shoreline, serving as a warning that another wave is imminent. The interval between waves can be as little as 10 minutes or more than an hour. Worse, the energy of one wave can "bounce" off a landmass and add to the next wave, making it larger and deadlier.

Worlds with Hydrographics A (water worlds) aren't spared the wrath of tsunamis. Although there are fewer landmasses for them to affect, underwater topography can still vary enough to allow them to build energy and create a recognizable wave. Also, since tsunamis retain their energy even across thousands of miles of ocean, a large enough quake could conceivably create a tsunami that would last, perhaps even for years or be more or less permanent.

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Even structures such as habitats and other installations on the seafloor aren't immune. Recall that a tsunami's energy is distributed throughout a vertical area of water, from the surface to the bottom. This energy is often more than enough to erode the seafloor, stir up silt and debris, and destabilize structures.

Detecting a Tsunami

Tsunami detection can be implemented on many worlds, with only the tech level dictating the degree of sophistication and accuracy. Primitive societies develop warnings based upon instinct and observation of local wildlife behavior. Worlds with advanced technology develop electronic methods of detecting tsunamis and can issue warnings immediately. Warnings can go out by voice (radio broadcast, runners and criers, etc.) or by simpler means such as sirens, whistles, or other agreed-upon sounds.

Surviving a Tsunami

The best way to survive a tsunami is preparation. This can mean simply being aware. Adventurers traveling near coastlines on geologically-active worlds should stay alert to the possibility of tsunamis and note their height above sea level, the distance to the nearest high ground, and potential escape routes. Acknowledgement of local history and natives' skills are also invaluable preparation tools.

In coastal areas, the first sign that a tsunami is due is a strong seismic event. Adventurers should first protect themselves from the quake using standard survival techniques. Immediately upon the quake's passing, travelers should head for high ground or take to the skies; a tsunami might be only minutes away. A sudden or unusual retreat of the water from the shoreline or other lowering of the water level means one is about to happen. Heroes that cannot escape to high ground or fly out of harm's way should get into a sturdy building on the

highest floor or (only as a last resort) climb the nearest, sturdiest tree they can find.

"Riding out" a tsunami is dangerous and foolish. The impact of a typical tsunami wave can flatten all but the sturdiest structures, and toss vehicles and other heavy objects like toys. Even though they slow down near the coast, they still travel far faster than heroes can run—if they're still on the shoreline when they sight the tsunami, it's already too late. Creatures caught in the wave are subject to being drowned, injured by floating debris, slammed against structures, and dragged out to sea.

Experienced sailors and coastal dwellers, however, with enough advance warning of a tsunami have been known to get as far out to sea in a watercraft as possible, where the tsunami's energy is still at pelagic depths and any effect is not more than a gentle swell, as mentioned above.

After the Tsunami

In the aftermath, the shoreline and flood zone will be covered with debris, including watercraft thrown inland and the remains of buildings and infrastructure. Such debris carries the potential for secondary injury. More destruction can occur due to building collapse as tsunamis can erode structural foundations. Victims still ashore will need help, but the widespread destruction may stretch rescue services thin. While communications may still be possible after the disaster, chaos and confusion may well rule the day. Local authorities might also co-opt communications to coordinate relief efforts.

Responses to the disaster naturally include rescuing victims, getting them out of the danger zone (in case there are more waves forthcoming) and treating their injuries. Accounting must also be made of the missing, who may have been buried by debris or swept out to sea. The response to the disaster scales with its severity; a large or deadly enough tsunami may provoke aid responses from the entire world. Such was the case in the tsunami on Terra in -2512; a worldwide response was mobilized to help the affected countries and rebuild. While it's rare that an Imperial response to a tsunami would be re-

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quired, the empire might send aid if Imperial installations were widely affected, or upon request of a noble overseeing the world.

Socioeconomic Impact of a Tsunami

Tsunamis impact not only life and property, but a region's economy, environment—even culture. A large tsunami can completely obliterate an area; such areas often must be rebuilt, fortified, and even resettled, at great cost. Replacing infrastructure and critical installations can take years, during which other areas must pick up the slack, putting a strain on their infrastructure as well. If the stricken area was considered a global economic engine, its sudden offlining and decline might have worldwide ramifications.

Along with economic decline, the impact of victims suddenly forced from their homes prompts homelessness and migrations. The destruction of businesses, financial institutions, and other economic engines means damage to the area economy. This is complicated by displaced multitudes seeking jobs and other forms of financial stability either where there is none, or in areas already straining under the weight of refugees. People already living there might welcome the migrants with open arms—or allow resentment to build. Either way, there is increased social tension. Worse yet is the possibility that disease and starvation runs rampant because of floodwater contamination.

Tsunamis can also cause great environmental disruption by scouring a landscape and rendering devoid of life. Food sources and habitation can be destroyed or swept away, forcing wildlife to establish new territories elsewhere, supplanting the previous animals. On Industrial worlds, the problem can be made worse by pollution as the tsunami damages or destroys industries and sanitation systems. The tsunami that hit Terra's Japan in -2505 damaged a nuclear power plant, introducing to the Terrans the grim concept of radioactive contamina-

tion of the adjoining sea and water sources. Environmental damage may be years in the recovery, if ever.

Refereeing the Tsunami

The basic ingredients of a tsunami are simple: a causative event and liquid water (or other fluid) gathered into a sufficiently large body. We'll skip the causative event since our focus is the tsunami itself. Remember that regardless of the cause the basic tsunami mechanism is the same: a sudden, massive displacement of water. In the case of a seismic disturbance, only those measuring 7.0 or greater on the Richter scale create tsunamis.

To determine the tsunami's characteristics, first determine its Initial Power: throw 1D and apply the result (T_p) to the following calculations:

- **Distance to Inception Point** (quake epicenter, asteroid impact zone, etc.) in km: Optional. $(6 \times \text{the planet's UPP Size digit}) \times 2D(25)$. Adjust as necessary for the size of the body of water in question.
- **Speed**: $100(T_p + 4)$ gives a base speed in kph; the referee may adjust this as desired. Dividing the total distance by the speed in kph gives a time until the attack (arrival of the first wave.) Note that for nearby inception events, this may be on the order of mere minutes.
- **Wave Train** (number of waves): $2(T_p)$.
- **Period** (time between waves): $1D \times 10$ minutes. Alternately, $4D/(\text{wave train})$, in hours (round up.)
- **Wave Height**: $T_p((\text{wave train})/2) + (6 - \text{period}/10)$, in meters. The referee can rule that this is an average height, or the height of the largest wave in the train. It doesn't have to be the initial wave.
- **Attack**: $((\text{Wave Height}) + (\text{Speed})/100)$, expressed as dice of damage. Each wave may do the same amount of damage, also at the referee's discretion.
- **Flood Zone**: $((\text{Wave Height}) \times (\text{Speed})) \times 100$, in square meters. Divide by 1,000,000 to get the area in square kilometers. The referee should adjust for the local topography; flatter areas of course allow more flooding.

Doing It My Way

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Creatures surviving the attack are swept up in powerful floodwaters. Throw the following:

- 2D for injuries sustained by flotsam and drowning.
- STR or less (DM: -Attack/10) or be dragged out to sea by the runoff.

Unconscious adventurers take an additional 1D drowning damage per combat round until rescue or death.

Reinforced structures and armored vehicles protect their occupants equal to $(12 \times \text{Tech Level of manufacture})$. For example, an AFV (TL 6, from Book 3) offers 72 points of protection vs. the tsunami as long as it stays “buttoned up.” However, the force of the wave may move the vehicle uncontrollably; the total damage of the Attack / the object’s weight in tons = number of meters the object is moved. Triple this value for watercraft caught in the wave.

Example: the referee wants to complicate the PCs’ mission while they’re on Mercury (2624 Spinward Marches, (B658663-8) with a tsunami, presumably created by a strong seaquake. She begins by throwing 1D for T_p , getting a 4. Deciding to determine an inception point randomly, she throws 8 on 2D and uses the formula $2D \times 25(6 \times \text{the planet’s UPP Size digit}) = 8 \times 25(6 \times 8) = 9,600$; the quake’s epicenter is 9,600 km away. The tsunami’s speed is $100(T_p + 4) = 100(4+4) = 800$ kph. Dividing the total distance by this figure gives an ETA of 12 hours. When the time arrives, she determines the number of waves in the wave train = $2(T_p) = 2(4) = 8$. Opting for simplicity, she throws a 1D for 2 ($\times 10$), getting a period of 20 minutes; a wave will strike every 20 minutes until all 8 waves have hit. The wave height is $T_p(\text{wave train}/2) + (6 - \text{period}/10) = 4(4) + (6-2) = 20$ meters; she rules that this will be the largest wave in the train, with the others somewhat smaller. The attack would do $(\text{Wave Height} + \text{Speed}/100) = (20 + 800/100) = (20+8) = 28$ dice of damage to anything in the area. Finally, she determines the area covered by the sub-

sequent flooding: $(\text{Wave Height} \times \text{Speed}) \times 100$, or $(20 \times 800) \times 100 = 1.6$ million square meters, or 1.6 square kilometers. Luckily, the PCs heeded the warnings and watch the devastation from the safety of their air/raft.

“I happen to know something about tsunamis...”

Since tsunamis are uniquely marine phenomena, only denizens of worlds with substantial hydrographics collected into large bodies of water will have even passing knowledge of them. Prior *Traveler* careers most suited as background for heroes with knowledge of tsunamis are Sailor, Scientists, and Barbarians (*Supplement 4: Citizens of the Imperium*). Sailors have especially useful knowledge not only of watercraft and nautical navigation, but marine phenomena such as tsunamis. Scientists who specialize in oceanography or water planets are able to impart knowledge behind their formation and mechanics. Coastal Barbarians often keep histories (oral or written) of prior tsunamis and the damage they do. They are also much attuned to even subtle changes in the sea and can tell when something is amiss long before the obvious warning signs.

Skills useful in dealing with tsunamis include Combat Engineering (for constructing protective structures such as seawalls); Electronics (for monitoring and maintaining tsunami detection equipment); and Survival (useful in post-tsunami recovery efforts). Water Craft gives knowledge of handling such vessels in rough seas and underwater topography conducive to creating the largest tsunamis.

The Tsunami’s Impact on the Game

Tsunamis are a game changer, for heroes and opponents. They also have widespread consequences beyond the initial impact. While they can be used as background (occurring before the PCs arrive or “off-stage” during the adventure); directly as a man-vs.-nature scenario; or even as a *deus ex machina*; the referee should give some thought as to the long-term effects of introducing such a widespread calamity. 🌊

2300AD: Atlas of the French Arm

reviewed by Megan Robertson

2300AD: Atlas of the French Arm. Colin Dunn.

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

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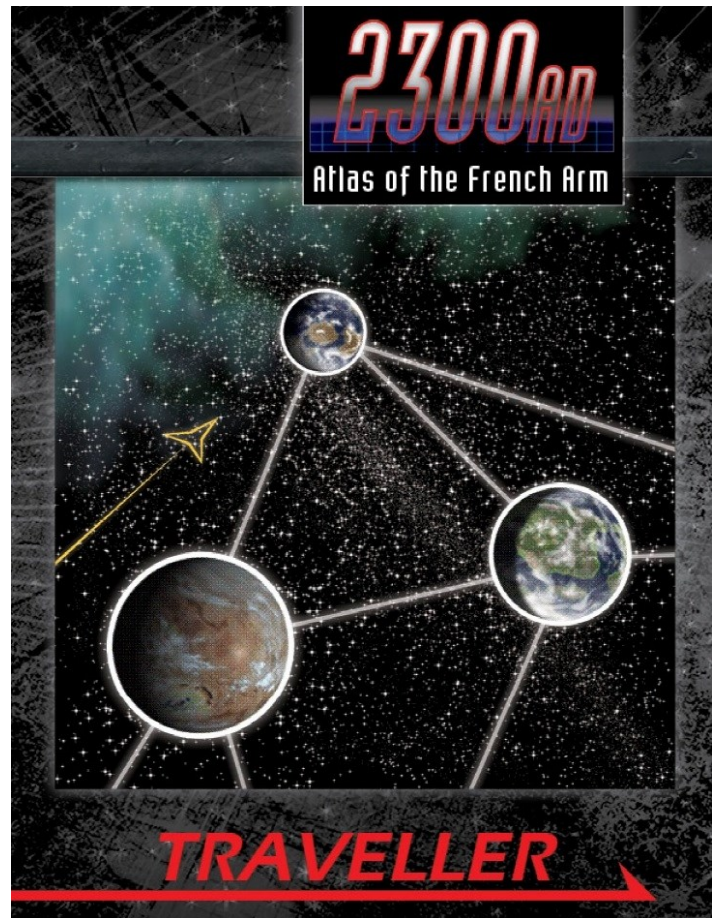
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In the French Arm, you'll find the oldest, richest colonies, many of big enough and strong enough to survive as nations in their own right. Here is a mammoth work, atlas and gazetteer and source of many an adventure idea, to fuel your party's explorations and adventures here.

Exploring the French Arm, the first chapter, gives an overview of the history and current state of affairs. It paints a picture of a living dynamic area, with various tensions and problems arising, being resolved or then fading away again, layering to create the present-day situation. It also shows how the use of languages has followed, with both French and English being useful for the would-be spacefarer.

This follows on naturally into the next section, Conflict on the French Arm. To start with, things were peaceful with exploration rather than conflict occupying people's minds, but of late things have become more contentious. Many conflicts have their origin in squabbles back on Earth that have spilled over to space, with colonies perpetuating the differences begun on Earth and indeed sometimes acting as their proxies. There have also been minor skirmishes as different factions and groups have butted heads. Most recently, however, the source of conflict has come to the Arm with the ever-mounting threat posed by the Kaefers.

Next is a chapter on Organisations, those extra-governmental entities that have a profound effect along the French Arm, influencing policies and decision making across over a dozen systems and countless worlds. Many are commercial in nature, massive corporations that rival governments in scope and influence. Some are 'private security compa-



nies'—mercenaries for hire, in other words. There are also those organisations lumped together under the term 'foundations' being any non-governmental, non-commercial group. Several dedicate themselves to 'pure science' or so the PR goes, although they're not backwards in monetising their discoveries. And of course there are terrorists, outlaws and organised crime, pushing their 'cause' or merely lining their own pockets at everyone else's expense. In some way, most of these will impact on anyone visiting the French Arm—suppliers, employers, enemies or allies... or just names in a news bulletin.

Then comes a chapter entitled Libertines. These are the folk who occupy a niche on the spacelanes equivalent to where Romany or Gypsies or Travellers fit in on Earth. It's a fascinating web of relationships and concepts, wrapped up and living in space, roving the French Arm although they are actually more prevalent in the Chinese Arm. Families are at the core of their culture, with ships crewed and run by extended families, some of whom we meet here. In similar vein the next chapter deals with the Belt-

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ers, those fiercely independent souls who mine asteroid belts for whatever valuable materials they can find.

Next we hear of Mysteries of the French Arm. The tall tales you hear in spacer bars. Strange ruins predating exploration. Unidentified alien objects, some being actual artefacts, others glimpses in the distance... and this leads neatly in to a chapter on Intelligent Life, there being at least three known non-human intelligent races to be found in the French Arm—the Pentapods, the Kaefers and the Arbors.

Scene now set, we move on to the Atlas proper. In the fairly large volume of space there are but twelve inhabited colony worlds, with many systems lacking really habitable worlds although many sport outposts. There's a quite lengthy discourse on 'planetology', the science of describing star systems, showing what the various descriptors applied in the Atlas to follow mean. First up, however, are the Outposts—small settlements that are not fully-fledged colonies in their own right but which serve as way-stations on the route to someplace else or which have other purposes.

The listing of outposts is followed by a chapter on Colonies, which introduces the twelve colony worlds. They then get a chapter apiece, with all the

information you need to understand what they'd be like to visit in the course of your adventures. For each, there is system data, notes on each planet and the settlements upon them, then the history, native wildlife and more about the mainworld that is the colony itself. Maps, weather charts, a wealth of detail to enable your party to visit or even settle there.

This raises the question: is this a book for all players or the referee alone? The answer is, probably a bit of both. Most of the information here could be researched by an interested character, some at least will be covered in a normal education or is the sort of thing you pick up if you pay attention to documentaries and travel shows. It's possibly best to restrict access a bit, but when direct enquiries are made be open about the information that answers that enquiry... but no more. Make players work for the information, but provide it when they do.

Finally there is a chapter called Exploratory Worlds. This provides details of just a few of the worlds that have been charted but barely visited yet—ideal for a game in which exploration of new worlds is to be a feature. There's enough here to get you started and plenty of scope to develop them however you wish.

In short, this is a massive and excellent resource for anyone planning games set in the French Arm. It makes you want to take ship and visit forthwith...🌌

Kurishdam

Jump Destination: Korvo, Virtchok System, Dole Moving Group

by Ken Pick

The Dole Moving Group (DMG) is a remnant of a star cluster, a set of stars with a common origin, age, and Galactic orbit. At an age of just over 2 Gyr, these stars are Type F through M main-sequence stars whose smaller members have not yet stabilized completely; many of its orange and red dwarf members (late K through M) are flare stars or BY Draconis-type variables with massive irregular sunspots.

Lecture Hall and Library

Due to the group's young/intermediate age, many of the worlds are life-bearing, but usually nothing more complex than single-celled organisms—prokaryotic bacteria, single-celled plankton, and colony organisms such as algae mats (Life Scale 3bis, maximum). Though limited to such primitive organisms, evolution has progressed far enough so those single-celled organisms are aerobic, "pre-Terraforming" the more earthlike worlds with not only an oxidizing but oxygenated atmosphere.

Because of this, many of the DMG worlds have been T-formed and settled.

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Virtchok System (DMG 7)

Only Jump-1 distant from Paryan System (Telerine), Korvo is a medium-population, medium-tech world currently ruled from Telerine as a colony.

The system consists of Virtchok, a G8V main-sequence sun (“orange-yellow dwarf”), seven planets, and two asteroid belts.

Planet I, **Yagan** (X300000-0, Orbit 1) is a small, cratered rockball, a twin of Mercury baking in close orbit. From Korvo, it appears in the sky as a bright morning/evening star, easily lost in the sun’s glare.

Planet II, **Korvo** (B544764-7, Orbit 2) is the system’s main world, a Telerine colony with a native human population of 20 million. Trade class is Ag, with an Eaglestone Trade Index of 2. Its two moons, Huk (BS00569-9) and Iskay (XS00266-9), house various highport, industrial, and defense installations.

Planet III, **Asilra** (XAAA000-0, Orbit 3) is a large waterworld with a thick exotic atmosphere of methane/CO₂/nitrogen; the heavy greenhouse effect keeps the oceans liquid.

Virtchok **Inner Belt** (D000565-9, Orbit 4) is a thin belt of primarily-metallic asteroids with a permanent population of some 700,000 Belters.

Planet IV, **Melrissa** (LGG, 100 T-mass, Orbit 5) is a Saturn-sized gas giant with ten regular moons plus dozens of irregular captured-asteroid moons. Because of its size and relatively-calm atmosphere, Melrissa is the fuel-skim site of the system. Melrissa’s cloud bands are swirls of Jupiter-like pastels, with few storm spots.

Virtchok **Outer Belt** (D000465-9, Orbit 6) is another thin belt of asteroids, primarily mixed stone-and-ice “centaurs” worked by around 4000 Belters.

Planet V, **Yantor** (LGG, 400 T-mass, Orbit 7) is the system’s dominant gas giant, with ten regular moons plus dozens of captured asteroids. A third again the mass of Jupiter, Yantor has too high a surface gravity and too strong a magnetosphere to be suitable for fuel-skimming. Yantor’s cloud bands are

yellow-white with numerous storm spots, shading into blue-green on its polar regions and night side.

Yantor Trojan Cluster (D000463-9, Orbit 7) is a thick cluster of mostly-ice asteroids occupying Yantor’s leading Trojan point worked by about 2000 Belters.

Planet *Vbis*, **Hahral** (DCA6366-9, Orbit 7), a “Trojan Planet”, is Virtchok’s unique system feature, a large “Super-Titan” with thick hazy methane/nitrogen atmosphere, continents of ice, and oceans of hydrocarbons occupying Yantor’s trailing Trojan point. It is believed to be a capture. It is the site of a Telerine hydrocarbon-mining operation with around 3000 population.

Planet VI, **Tanithra** (SGG, 40 T-mass, Orbit 9) is a Neptune-blue small gas giant with six icy moons, alone on the outskirts of the system.

Outside of Tanithra is a thin Kuiper Belt of dwarf iceballs and comets.

Korvo (Virtchok II)

Korvo (Virtchok II) B544764-7

Agricultural; Eaglestone Trade Index 2

A small, arid, mountainous world with landlocked oceans, Korvo is barely large enough to hold a breathable atmosphere and under a heavy UV flux from its sun despite Virtchok’s G8v spectral class.

Planetary Geography

From afar, Korvo appears as a slightly-larger and much more rugged Mars with a thicker atmosphere and some hydrosphere other than icecaps. It is a small, arid, world of brine seas and rugged mountains, flanked by two small moons.

Only 30% of the surface is human-habitable; 40% are the brine oceans and their surrounding alkali salt deserts, and 30% are highlands and mountains, high enough the atmosphere becomes too thin for even Korvans to breathe (Very Thin).

The terrain is rugged, dominated by curving mountain chains, the remains of overlapping impact crater walls; as a young system, Virtchok’s Heavy Bombardment Period is not that far in the past. The oceans and salt flats/dry lakes have definite “flooded

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overlapping craters” shorelines and the lowlands around them show all the signs of impact basins.

Most of the population is in the lowlands, along river valleys and floodplains well away from the oceans and salt deserts. In its “natural” state, these would be grasslands and light forests along the rivers and watercourses flowing from the highlands to the oceans. In its settled state, this area is full of cultivated agricultural land, irrigated by rivers and canals and terracing up the foothills.

The highlands are more arid, dusted with exceptionally hardy Terraforming vegetation and Very Thin atmosphere on the edge of breathability. And cold, well below freezing at night; foodstuffs set out at night will naturally freeze-dry over the course of a couple nights into *charkri* (rhymes with “jerky”). Some thin forests and scrub grow at this level, just enough to support the mountain tribes that inhabit the area. And behind the highlands, barren mountains, their peaks extending beyond the breathable atmosphere.

Nobody lives near the oceans; the rivers cut through salt-flat deserts before emptying into the heavy brine, and the exotic salts are alkaline and irritating. (Think the Salton Sea, except with natural pollutants.) The only settlements in this area are along the rivers near the edge, making their living through salt collection and chemical extraction.

Surface Conditions/Sky Picture

The day is 28 hours long, with a year of 226 local days (.62 T-year). Climate is constant year-round, with temperate days and cold nights throughout the year, getting colder with altitude.

Only half of Korvo’s land area (30% of total) is habitable (Thin atmosphere); the other half (30%) are rugged highlands, with Very Thin atmosphere. New arrivals from thick-atmosphered Telerine will always contract altitude sickness; one in four of these will be unable to adapt to the Korvan atmosphere, and must return to Telerine or die.

The first difference a visitor will notice is the gravity—only 2/3 of a gee. Then (if not previously acclimatized on the journey) the Thin atmosphere; the popping of the ears, followed by the shortness of breath and constant sinus headache of altitude sickness. After that, the UV sunburn by the end of the day followed by an icy night; the thin atmosphere does not hold heat well.

The low gravity causes less pressure drop from altitude; however, “sea level” (lowland) pressure is just over half standard, so the limit of breathability is only around 2 to 3 km altitude, the transition between Thin and Very Thin atmosphere. Korvan mountain tribesmen can breathe up to just over 4 km altitude; above that, there are no settlements and even Korvans require compressor/oxygen masks.

Even in the lowlands, water boils at only 80°C; 70°C at the limit of breathability in the highlands.

The daytime sky is deep blue, almost blue-black at the zenith; the sun has a distinct yellowish tint, and appears about 20% larger than “normal”. Both moons are tiny, barely large enough to show a disc to the naked eye, and hurtle through the sky like those of fabled Barsoom; Huk has a month of just over two local days, Iskay four. Yagan periodically appears as the Morning/Evening Star, and Melrissa and Yantor shine bright yellow in the night sky, along with the two first-magnitude stars of Paryan (Telerine) and Hamilton’s Star (Geolan/Wasphome). These are also visible during the day, where the sky goes indigo at the zenith.

Tall mountains have a peculiar “layered” appearance, with the tree line near the bottom, ring snowcaps and glaciers at the “middle” elevations, and little-eroded barren grey peaks at the top, too high for clouds to form or snow to fall.

Native Life

Like other surface-habitable worlds in the Dole Moving Group, Korvo never got beyond single-celled prokaryotes (Life Score 3—phytoplankton and bacteria), enough to oxygenate the atmosphere but not much else.

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Most native biomass is in the alkaline brine of Korvo's small landlocked oceans—extremophiles living under conditions where nothing else could live. Each ocean and salt lake has a different biota due to different salinity and alkalinity.

Except for windblown bacterial colonies in the uninhabitable highlands and deserts, the entire land ecosystem was imported during Terraforming. Terraforming concentrated on the most habitable areas—along river valleys and watercourses, from the lower of the mountains through lowland plains, where the atmosphere was thick enough to breathe but not tainted by alkali blowsalt from the oceans and surrounding salt flats.

Vegetation is similar to the Andes Mountains of Earth, with domestic crops of maize, potatoes, quinoa, and hardwoods along the rivers from the highlands to the salt flats and seas. Three transplanted animals are important enough to mention:

Korvan Puma (*Puma concolor korvanus*): Large (25-50kg) carnivore/pouncer, descendant of the Terran Cougar adapted to the thin atmosphere. Apex predator of the forests and crags, not aggressive towards humans (which suggests they are descended from the Argentine Puma, the least aggressive subspecies). Important in Korvan lore and folk beliefs and associated with royalty ("Puma" is Korvan for "Powerful One"). During the Long Night, Korvans selectively bred a domesticated form, the "Korvo Cat" (*Puma concolor domesticus*) as a Royal pet; after the end of the monarchy, the Korvo Cat became popular as an exotic pet.

Quii is a generic word for three types of herbivore/grazers of varying size which serve as Korvo's main meat animals. All are kind of dopey-looking:

Cavy (Guinea Pig, *Cavia korvanus*): Small (half-kilo), fast-breeding rodents with the IQ of the potatoes they are shaped like; they fill the ecological and agricultural niche of rabbits in most colony worlds.

Coypu (Nutria, *Myocastor coypus korvanus*): Large (5-10kg) semi-aquatic rodent found along the

rivers and marshes, fills the ecological niche of the beaver or muskrat. Major agricultural pest due to its diet of water plants and crops; domesticable, but never successfully ranched; free-range in wetlands and culled for meat as needed in communal hunts.

Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris korvanus*): Largest rodents in existence (25-50kg), land-bound version of the coypu. Herd grazers of the forests, hunted and culled the same way as coypu for meat, hide, and a fat-derived grease with pharmaceutical uses. Can also be domesticated.

Camelids (*Lama korvanus*): Large (100-200kg) primarily-domestic herbivore/grazers of the genus *Lama*, genetically-engineered hybrids of the llama (*Lama glama*), vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*), and alpaca (*Vicugna pacos*), source of the fine wool that is one of Korvo's major exports. Raised more for wool and as (light) pack animals than for meat. Very sure-footed; wild/feral herds roam the fringes of the mountains.

Cautions and Hazards

The main hazards all have to do with the thin atmosphere.

Even in the lowlands around the seas, Korvo's atmosphere is Thin; altitude sickness is common among visitors. The highlands are worse; only native Highland tribesmen can breathe and work normally in the mountains; all others (even lowland Korvans) need supplemental oxygen or compressor masks to breathe. This is worse for visitors from thick-atmosphered worlds like Telerine, who will always develop altitude sickness on Korvo.

Despite Virtchok's spectral class, the thin atmosphere also lets a lot of solar UV to the surface; sunburn is an additional hazard for light-skinned visitors over the entire world, and for medium-skinned people in the highlands. Korvans say they can smell Telerines and offworlders a kilometer away because they reek of sunscreen.

Cataracts are a universal problem with age; local legend is that a Highland tribesman is not made a clan elder until he has gone blind from cataracts.

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The thin atmosphere does not retain heat; coupled with the somewhat long day/night cycle, temperatures approach freezing during lowland nights and do get below freezing in the highlands.

Allergies and bio-toxicity are often a problem on life-bearing colony worlds, and Korvo is no exception. The salt in the brine seas is strongly alkaline, both irritating and toxic; high winds scouring the surrounding salt flats can taint the atmosphere for hundreds of kilometers downwind, burning the eyes and lungs with moderate-to-fatal results.

Though easy to produce (all you need is fermentation tanks and a still), the use of alcohol as the main liquid fuel presents its own hazards. Alcohol burns very clean, emitting almost entirely infrared; an alcohol flame is visible only in low-light conditions as a faint blue flame edged with yellow. In strong light (daylight or strong artificial light), human eyes literally cannot see an alcohol fire. This increases the chance of burn accidents, as a character might not realize a fire was starting until he/she actually put a hand into the flames.

Population

Korvo began as a small low-tech backwater colony, barely established when the Long Night began. During the Long Night, the stranded colonists adapted to local planetary conditions, drifting into a uniquely-Korvan ethnic type and language.

Currently, Korvo has three main ethnic types. All are genetically near-pure or pure Solomani, but with different details:

The basic Korvans are a medium-skinned people with coppery complexions and distinct ethnic characteristics, adapted for the thin atmosphere and UV similar to natives of the Altiplano—slim from the low gravity, with deep barrel chests and ethnic characteristics of South American/Andean natives.

The second are the Highland tribesmen—“Extreme Korvans” with darker skin, super-adapted to thin-atmosphere conditions but otherwise con-



Peruvian politician/activist Hilaria Supa shows classic Andean ethnic characteristics; her appearance and clothing would not be out-of-place for a prosperous Korvan city woman, including her jobona jacket and montera hat. (photo derived from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quechua_people#/media/File:Hilaria_Supa_Huamán.jpg; CC-BY-2.0 Wikipedia user Athenchen)

forming to Korvan ethnicity. These highland tribes include:

- The **Shiar**, who have a cultural taboo against bathing and a genetic quirk where one birth in a thousand is pale-skinned and blond(e), showing no Korvan ethnic characteristics. (The taboo on bathing is probably a result of the extreme cold in the highlands, where stripping down to bathe or getting wet is inviting hypothermia.)
- The **Chachapoya**, a loose federation of fiercely-independent mountain tribes who have never bowed to the lowlanders, let alone Pumayaqta.

The third are transplanted Telerines of the colonial administration, with light-to-medium olive skin, a generally “Mediterranean” appearance, and huskier higher-gee builds; usually short of breath, dry-

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skinned, and either sunburned or sunscreensed. There is no way to mistake a Telerine for a Korvan.

For purposes of character generation, Korvans are human with the following characteristics:

- Korvans are naturally adapted to Thin atmosphere, and may have problems with Dense atmosphere; rural Korvans will probably have a bonus skill of Survival(Mountains)-1. Prior Service type will have a bias towards Barbarian (or, surprisingly, Belter).
- Mountain tribesmen are even more Thin-atmosphere adapted, may have problems with Standard atmosphere and will have problems with Dense. They will always have the Survival(Mountains) bonus skill and will most likely have a Prior Service type of Barbarian.

Character names should be taken from Andean Quechua; typical names can be found at <http://www.babynamespedia.com/search/m/quechua;> (male) and <http://www.behindthename.com/submit/names/gender/feminine/usage/quechua> (female).

Korvan men wear a traditionally-patterned wool poncho; the higher the status and wealth, the finer the wool and the more elaborate and intricate the woven pattern. Men's headgear is the *chullu*, an ear-flapped knit hat. The patterns on ponchos and *chullukuna* are traditional and vary by region; locals or "old Korvo hands" can tell the origin and social status of a Korvan from the pattern on his poncho and style of his *chullu*, sometimes down to the specific *ayllu* and village of origin.

In rural areas, most all Korvan men carry a machete, an all-purpose chopping blade intermediate between a Blade and Cutlass with elements of both. Treat as Blade or Cutlass depending on size. (And a Blade(Machete) or Cutlass(Machete) skill level of 0.)

Korvan women wear a large embroidered skirt called a *poyera* and a half-shawl, half-poncho shoulder cloth called a *yikiya*, patterned similar to a man's poncho. Rural women also wear a carry-cloth or *qipina* over the shoulder for carrying things.



This woman is wearing a yikiya of a typical color and pattern; she carries a young child in a qipina slung underneath the yikiya for sun protection.
(photo derived from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quechua_Woman.jpg; CC-BY-2.0 Wikipedia user palindrome6996)

Women's headgear varies from region to region; some regions' women wear the *montera*, a wide-brimmed hat shaped like a giant lens; others modified versions of offworld hats; still others feminine versions of the *chullu*.

In rural areas, both men's pants and women's skirts are about knee-length to mid-calf, more practical for work in the fields and terraces. Below this, woolen stockings are normally worn—again, in bright colors and patterns if the wearer is well-off. Rural Korvans usually wear knee-length pants/skirts and sandals-over-stockings, city-dwellers longer pants/skirts and actual shoes.

For an overview of these articles of clothing (illustrated by their ancestral forms), see <http://hubpages.com/education/traditional-andean-clothes>.

The staple foods of Korvo are potatoes and beans, with some quinoa in the highland mountains

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and some maize in the lowlands near the seas; Telerines refer to Korvans as “Potato-Eaters”. (These days, maize is grown more for alcohol—both fuel and drink—than for foodstuffs.) The main meat is *quii* (cavy), with cameloid and game meats as more expensive alternatives.

One custom for festivals is the *pachamanqa*, a mixture of marinated meats, potatoes, beans, peppers, and anything handy slow-cooked in an earth oven similar to a Hawaiian *luau* or Maori *kumara*.

The main alcoholic drink (and drink of preference in rural areas) is *chicha*, a maize beer of around 3% alcohol. While bottled *chicha* from city breweries is OK, you don’t want to know how they make the homebrew sold by street vendors from big earthenware crocks. (Clue: “salivary fermentation”.)

Hard liquor is represented by *qanya*, a truly awful local moonshine served at important events—like negotiations with offworld free traders, which are often initiated with a *qanya* drinking bout, matching glass-for-glass. Offworlders unfortunate enough to experience *qanya* liken the taste to foul petrochemicals.

Mix *chicha* and *qanya* with the machetes every Korvan man seems to carry in rural areas and you have the custom of “Friday Night Machete Fights”. Casualties from these slash-em-ups are few and far between; despite the wild swinging of sharp objects, it’s hard to hit anything with that much *chicha* dissolved in your belly.

Non-alcoholic drinks include unfermented “blue *chicha*” in the country, sweetgrass-flavored soft drinks in the cities, and *coca* tea everywhere.

Coca tea is a bittersweet tea brewed from *coca* leaves; the trace amounts of cocaine give the brew a kick like strong coffee. *Coca* infusions of similar strength are used to fortify the soft drinks up to double-espresso/energy drink levels.

Despite being an exporter of various types of coffee, Korvans usually don’t drink it themselves; coffee is a city thing.

Language

The Korvan language is represented by Quechua, complete with no fewer than fourteen regional dialects, some of which vary enough to be separate languages. With the advent of mass media, regional dialects are fading as the Pumayaqta dialect becomes the planetary standard.

Korvan is written using the standard Galanglic alphabet, with some unique spelling conventions (such as “Q” for “K” or hard “C” and “S” for “Z”). This orthography is not strictly followed in this article, as the actual Korvan spellings would not be easily understandable by English/Galanglic speakers.

Telerine colonists have their own unrelated language and alphabet, represented by Greek.

History

Korvo was settled just before the Long Night as a deliberately low-tech colony by Solomani humans of largely Andean ethnicity. Like most main worlds in the DMG, the planet was already partially “pre-Terraformed” by its native life, with not only an oxidizing but oxygenated atmosphere.

The remaining Terraforming was also low-tech, using geneered soil fungi and plants to prepare the world for its new biosphere of Terran flora and fauna, based on that of the Andes mountains and the West Coast of South America. Unlike Telerine with its islands and archipelagoes, Korvo was mostly dry land (some very dry), and the T-forming biota and followup biosphere spread naturally over the habitable areas.

Then came the crash and the Long Night. Korvo weathered it pretty well, as the colony was low-tech to start with, and the people regressed to the traditional society of their distant ancestors, loose federations of *ayllukuna* (lineages, tribes, and clans) which gelled into proto-national groupings determined by geography and region. Some of which were very well organized and run.

Ten generations ago, Korvo was a balkanized collection of Tech Level 3 isolated tribal states, petty

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monarchies clustered around lakefronts and rivers. Then an *Inka* (king) named Pachucuti (“World-shaker”) of one of the larger kingdoms “rooned” some pre-Long Night technology and knowledge from the ruins of an old starport near his city of Pumayaqta (“City of the Great Cat” or “City of Power”).

Inka Pachucuti’s son *Inka* Tupaq carried on his father’s goals, bootstrapping his kingdom through an Industrial Revolution to TL4 (early/limited Industrial)—enough to begin to overwhelm the neighboring kingdoms and start expanding with equal amounts of diplomacy, force, and political skill. Petty kingdom after petty kingdom fell to the *Inka* of Pumayaqta, their capitals turned into provincial capitals connected by new Royal Roads, their Royal *Ayllukuna* either disbanded or intermarried into those of Pumayaqta, their taxes going to enrich Pumayaqta. Only the Chachapoya, a loose federation of various mountain tribes, was never assimilated—mostly because their highland homes were so harsh and the atmosphere at that altitude (right on the edge of breathability) gave even other Korvans serious altitude sickness.

Two generations ago, Korvo was a single mostly-unified kingdom, ruled by the *Sapa Inka* (“Only King”) from the world capital of Pumayaqta, stable at Tech Level 4bis (late Victorian). While formally classified as Gov A (charismatic dictator in the person of the King), the Korvan monarchy at this time also incorporated elements of Gov 3 (oligarchy) and 9 (impersonal bureaucracy).

The Long Night was ending for Korvo and the DMG systems; the neighboring system of Telerine (then Tech 9bis) had made contact and was expanding into the outer system using locally-hired Korvan labor when the Korvan monarchy blew up in a succession crisis; *Sapa Inka* Yupanqui (“The Accountant”) had left no single heir but four, each from a different branch of the Royal *Ayllu* having roughly-

equal claims to the throne. Civil war between the four Royal heirs seemed imminent.

The Overgovernors of the Four Quadrants had become a Regency Council tasked with selecting the next King from among the heirs; whichever one they chose, the other three would plunge their world into civil war.

The Four Governors avoided this by (after a long dance of secret negotiations) awarding the succession to Telerine’s dominant nation the Helleanean Republic, inviting the offworlders to annex the system under terms of the negotiated agreement—a contract between the Korvan and Telerine governments, backed by the Overgovernors’ forces. Since Telerines were outsiders not of any Korvan *ayllu*, none would be offended (at least in theory—two of the four Royal heirs backed the Regency Council’s decision, but the other two didn’t).

Styling themselves *Sapa Inka* Pachucuti VI and *Sapa Inka* Atahualpa II, the two dissenting princes both tried to seize the Puma Throne for themselves (and from each other). Both the Overgovernors’ and Telerine forces (including Laconian mercenaries and Special Forces rushed to the system) saw some action until the matter settled down.

Annexation did improve the lot of those Korvans being exploited as grunt labor insystem—upon annexation Korvans became *Metikoi* (resident non-citizens), with some rights and protections under Telerine law. The Republic’s Department of Metik Affairs had to do more than a few investigations and prosecutions before conditions improved.

Ever since, Korvo has been a Telerine colony ruled under the terms of the agreement by appointed Governors-General and a civil service bureaucracy in the manner of the British *Raj*. The Telerines inherited the old Royal bureaucracy, which kept on with business as usual; little has changed except for a Telerine colonial presence on-world and where the taxes go.

The Republic’s political tradition is that of a parliamentary democracy with extensive social-benefit programs, and they extend that tradition to a limited

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extent with their Korvan subjects. While the Telerines are definitely in charge of the government and all offworld affairs, on-world their hand is light. The Korvans are mostly self-governing in their traditional manner, with the Telerines overriding the councils of *ayllukuna* only when Telerine interests are threatened. Telerine is interested primarily in the rest of the system's resources, and lets Korvo handle its domestic affairs as long as it doesn't jeopardize the arrangement.

In addition, the Telerines provide offworld employment for Korvan employees in their outer-system mining, Belting, and industrial installations.

The main exceptions are the Chachapoya mountain tribes, who continue the same arrangement with the Telerines that they had with the *Sapa Inka*: "You leave us alone and we'll leave you alone."

In the process, Korvo's Tech Level has risen to TL7 (mid-Cold War), still below their Telerine overlords' TL11 (mid-to-late 21st Century).

With the difference in Tech Level and culture, Telerines consider Korvans to be primitives, though legally *Metikoi*. This attitude is more pronounced among new arrivals; Telerines who have been on Korvo for generations and "gone partially native" have much less of an attitude, and will often "set straight" the worst of the new arrivals. Still, all it takes is one pig-headed Governor-General or newly-appointed senior bureaucrat to mess things up.

Economy and Trade

Since Telerine annexation, Korvo is in the odd position of a separate economy from the remainder of Virtchok System. (Odd for a system main world.) Accordingly, the main world classifications differ from the rest of the system.

Korvo proper:

Trade Class: Agricultural.

Exports: Textiles, Coffee (or equivalent), Pharmaceuticals (Cocaine), Hardwoods.

Imports: Medium-tech manufactured goods.

Remainder of Virtchok System:

Trade Class: Industrial.

Exports: Alloys, Chemicals.

Imports: Supplies for all the offworld industrial outposts.

Both Combined:

Eaglestone Trade Index: 2 (over 1500 passengers and 6000 dtons freight/week; 70-80% of that with Telerine)

Services: Refined fuel, Starship maintenance/repair, resupply

While ruling with an easy hand over Korvo itself, Telerine interests are exploiting the remainder of the system using Korvan labor, draining the off-Korvo economy for Telerine's benefit. Korvo itself remains pretty much untouched, a backwater agricultural world.

Korvan agriculture has traditionally been by *ayllu* in farming villages; however export cash crops are changing this into a plantation system, with scale-efficiency coffee and *coca* plantations. Control is passing out of the hands of rural chieftains and villages into factory farming run by offworlders or city *ayllukanu*, and the strain is starting to show.

Offworld is a whole different matter, with Belters mining the two asteroid belts, chemical lighters mining the gas giants Melrissa and Yantor, and exotic chemical and methane fuel extraction on Hahral. When it comes to high-tech, non-Ag interstellar trade, the Telerines get the better end of the deal.

This causes some friction between Telerines and Korvans, but so far nothing beyond serious grumbling about their Colonial overlords. Major exceptions are mountain tribes who want to be left alone and don't like outsiders, period, and one or two minor terrorist organizations with delusions of grandeur. (Or organized crime with a veneer of Free Korvo terrorist agendas.)

Speaking of organized crime, here's some details regarding the export entry of Pharmaceuticals (Cocaine):

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Coca—the botanical source of cocaine—is an integral part of Korvan culture; *coca* tea and *coca*-fortified soft drinks are drunk in the more “civilized” areas, while backwater rural Korvans chew the raw leaf. In both these forms, the cocaine is present only in trace amounts, with a maximum effect like an energy drink or strong coffee.

Cocaine proper is extracted and refined from the *coca* leaf into a concentrated form which even at high Tech Levels is still in demand for medical uses, the lowest-tech of local anesthetics. And Korvo is the major source of “Korvan Marching Powder” for half the subsector.

Coca is grown on *coca* plantations (owned by local governments or *ayllukuna*) as a cash crop for both uses.

And then there’s the reason most neighboring systems search every ship coming from Virtchok System—the other cocaine trade. “The Korvan Connection” began when Telerine annexed Korvo; diehard anti-Telerine factions associated with the two Rebel Princes started “The Korvan Connection” to get back at the Telerines by getting as many of them as possible addicted to Korvan Marching Powder, made from diverted (and dangerous) *coca* paste/refinery tailings. A generation later, the money became too good and political/terrorist organizations mutated into organized-crime *ayllukuna*, their original purpose all but forgotten. Basically, they are now crime families who mouth a Free Korvo agenda for justification and provide a constant headache for law enforcement, both traditional and Telerine.

Cities and Starports

Korvo’s Highport is located on Huk, the innermost moon. A natural space station in the shape of a potato, the tiny moon’s surface gravity of less than 0.05 gee permits micro-gee docking of unstreamlined ships of most any size.

Hukport is a TL9bis Class B Highport, with all the amenities and services except for starship con-

struction. The port is divided into three sections of almost equal size:

- The starport proper, handling outsystem traffic.
- A spaceport handling insystem traffic from the Telerine industrial outposts in the asteroid belts, including fuel and chemical lighters and intermodal transfer to the starport proper.
- A Telerine naval base housing the Republic’s insystem naval presence and Planetary Defense Command.

Except for the surface docks, the port itself is dug into the moon, supporting a permanent population of some 40,000 in a cramped warren of tunnels. Internal atmosphere is at Standard—not too thick for Korvans, not too thin for Telerines, and breathable for Chitin A “Wasps” (from Hamilton’s Star). This atmosphere is characteristic of all insystem outposts. Internal gravity can vary from Korvan standard (60% gee) to natural (not much above microgravity); inducing gravity over the sprawl of the entire settled area would be too expensive.

Hukport has a heavy Telerine presence, with more Telerines than Korvans and a smaller “Wasptown”. All three rub shoulders in the maze of Highport tunnels. You are much more likely to encounter Telerine foods than Korvan, and all signs in three languages using two alphabets (Pumayaqta-dialect Korvan/Quechua, Telerine/Greek, and Galanglic/Interstellar lingua franca).

Located where two medium-size rivers come together, Pumayaqta (“City of the Cat” or “City of Power”) is the planetary capital, the largest city at two million, and the site of the Class B downport.

The downport sits atop a high mesa between two rivers emerging from the foothills overlooking the city, extending down the sides of the mesa on terraces. This is the heart of Telerine presence on Korvo, with a Telerine Colonial Army HQ and Governor-General’s residence/offices in a repurposed Summer Palace with a view of the city below. The downport hotels include special hyperbaric wings pressurized to Standard or slightly denser, for Chitin A “Wasps” and those Telerines who cannot adapt to Korvo’s

thin atmosphere. (Including the third Governor-General, whose altitude sickness was so severe he spent his entire time on-world in the hyperbaric wing of the main hotel, conducting all business through airlocks and telepresence.)

Under the old monarchy, Pumayaqta was the only legal downport on-world, with the Royal *Ayllu* taking a cut of everything that came to Korvo through it. Since annexation, the Telerines have been putting additional D-class secondary downports in the provincial capitals and 27 other cities of over 100,000 to reduce the need for long-distance shipping to Pumayaqta on Korvo's *Inka Nan* ("royal road") highway network.

The repurposed palace used by the Governor-General sits on the edge of the mesa overlooking Pumayaqta itself. The view is impressive; funicular/incline connections extend down the side of the mesa to the head of Pumarqurqo ("Cat's Spine"), the main boulevard running the length of the Old City. From the mesa, you can look down the entire length of the street, from the medium-rise commercial downtown nearest the port to the Great Plaza surrounded by the "Golden Gardens" of old palaces/Royal *Ayllu* Compounds to where Pumaqurqo ends at the "Cat's Tail", where the two rivers come together. The rivers flow through the city in stonework channels, a wonder of low-tech engineering. Secondary boulevards crisscross the Old City, extending over the river channels on stone bridges into the lowrise suburbs of the New City on the opposite banks, where they continue as *Inka Nankuna* ("royal roads") into the countryside.

Close-up and away from the boulevards, the "Golden Garden" of the Old City is a maze of centuries-old streets flanked by stone buildings. Most of the architecture is of stone and fairly low; three to five stories around the Pumaqurqo and Great Plaza; even the recent construction of the downport commercial center is rarely over ten stories.

The Old City was said to be laid out in the shape of a great cat; the Great Plaza and surrounding Roy-

al Compounds forming its heart, Pumaqurqo its spine, the confluence of the two rivers its tail, and the Downport mesa its head.

Stretching hundreds of meters across the heart of the Old City, the Great Plaza is the main governmental/ceremonial center, a combined *huaca*, park, and gathering place. The Royal Palaces/*Ayllu* Compounds around it house government offices (now used by the colonial government as well as residences for the remaining Korvan princes and their extended families/*ayllukuna*).

The two large suburbs of the New City are of later construction, sprawling away from the riverbanks in arrays of open gardens and one- to two-story buildings—mostly traditional adobe with tile or thatch roofs; some plazas break the sea of roofs where former farming villages were overrun by urban sprawl.

Pumayaqta is the only fully-electrified city on Korvo, juicing off fusion plants in the downport itself. Other cities (even provincial capitals) are only partially-electrified with small alcohol-burning powerplants (upgrading to fusion as part of Downport installation), and the real Outback doesn't even have those.

Korvo has few cities; only 28 of them (mostly pre-unification capitals) are over 100,000 in size, and only Pumayaqta is over 1 million. Most of the arable land is scattered along the river channels with small villages and some towns along the Royal Roads. This world is fiercely rural.

Tech Level Notes

The highest Tech Level is at Pumayaqta itself, where a lot of imported TL10 (mid-21st Century) Telerine technology and equipment mix with Korvan TL7 (Mid Cold War). The farther you get from the cities, the lower the Tech Level, down to TL1 or 2 mountain tribesmen.

Even in the low-tech areas, there are some exceptions due to imported Telerine technology. Most communications are TL9-10, with global satellite

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cellphone coverage and GPS/map boxes accurate to within a couple meters.

Outside of Pumayaqta and some of the provincial capitals which have offworld fusion powerplants, the main liquid fuel is alcohol, distilled from the maize crop (with some diversion for *qanya*).

Because of its rugged terrain, Korvo never did develop railroads (which are limited to the shallowest of grades). Instead, alcohol-fueled trucks and jitneys carry freight and passengers over the network of Royal Roads, with all the side effects that entails.

Most of those trucks carry agricultural products; Korvo is proudly agricultural, from coffee and *coca* plantations to village plots, many of them terraced up the frequent slopes and hills, irrigated by canals from reservoirs behind earth-fill dams. What manufacturing exists on-world is small-scale, concentrated in the major cities and owned/worked on an *ayllu* basis. Most manufactured goods must be imported.

Korvan architecture and civil engineering is surprisingly advanced—good stonework, canals, bridges, earth-fill or masonry dams. Stonemasons form their own specialized *ayllukuna* and are greatly respected. Buildings tend to be low, rarely over three to five stories in the cities or one in the countryside, with a lot of stone construction in cities and adobe in the country.

Society

In many ways there are two Korvos, with traditional rural Korvan culture being the norm.

The basic unit of Korvan society is the *ayllu* (plural *ayllukuna*), a network of related families tracing lineage back to a single ancestor/founder, holding land in common and generally self-sufficient. Similar to a Bryant's World "Clave" or a Vargr extended pack (but generally more stable than the latter), these extended clans are generally self-sufficient, held together by networks of owed favors under their *mallku* (chieftain and elders). Within an *ayllu*, the economy runs on bartering and exchanges

of labor and favors and debts; money is used outside the *ayllu*, not inside.

Traditionally, an *ayllu* lives together in a "lineage compound" in the manner of a Vargr pack house. (In many ways, Korvans and Vargr understand each others' traditions.) In cities, a lineage compound is normally a group of buildings—houses and communal structures—covering a full city block, sometimes grouped around a single *ayllu*-owned company or industry. In rural areas, a lineage compound can be a small-to-medium sized rural village. Or half of one—a rural village normally has two *ayllukuna*, marrying into each other to prevent inbreeding. A woman is "married into" her husband's *ayllu* and "married for" her father's; her children are "born to" their father's *ayllu* and "born for" their mother's. Outsiders can also join an *ayllu* by assuming the responsibilities of belonging: *Minqa* (communal work for the *ayllu* as a whole), *Ayni* (reciprocal trade in individual labor), and *Mita* (paying taxes levied on the *ayllu*).

Honored dead (elders and ancestors) are normally buried within the lineage compound, sometimes even under the floors of their kin's residences to form a *huaca*, hallowing the place with their presence. Weddings are normally grouped together into a multiple/mass wedding followed by a joint *pachamanqa* feast.

The *ayllu* kinship/lineage system is strongest in the rural areas where it originated, but is starting to fragment in the cities—with the Telerine occupation, imported tech, and offworld jobs, the system is starting to show cracks, partially patched by the formation of *ad-hoc ayllukuna* from those separated from their rural home *ayllukuna*. Even so, cities are full of unattached urban Korvans without local *ayllu* affiliation, preferring their new Telerine-made smartphone screens to *minqa*, *ayni*, and *mita*. And with planet-wide cellphone coverage and satellite broadband, it's spreading into the countryside.

Philosophy and Religion

Korvo's most widespread religion is monotheistic, a relative of Telerine's main religion (though Telerines are loath to admit it) but overlaid and syncreted with a lot of animistic ancestor veneration and folk religion which accreted around it.

This folk religion is shamanistic. In rural areas shamans are traditionally male and function as "traditional healers". In cities it is the opposite; shamans tend to be female and function as "the local Witch", casting love philters and other behavior-modifying castings. Both also fill the role of "Wise Man/Wise Woman" as alternate authority figures to *ayllu* chieftains. Many shamans (both rural and urban) have psionic talents. Shamanism provides a traditional milieu for psionic "magic", both benevolent and destructive.

One characteristic of Korvan shamanism is that natural forces and spirits are considered evil—destructive enemies, neutral at best. Only the spirits of your ancestors can be counted on to be favorably disposed. This is probably due to the harshness of nature on Korvo, but comes as a shock to high-tech offworlders predisposed to romanticize "primitives" as spiritually-superior Noble Savages.

Many shamans (and their followers) are also active churchgoers, hedging their bets. The Church provides a respite from hostile nature, but Korvans are survivors and keep one foot in each. And Korvan shamanism is abstractly monotheistic...

The word *huaca* is usually translated "shrine" or "temple", but can refer to any "sacred place". *Huacuna* can be places of worship, shrines, graves or memorials of great men, or even prominent mountains which "anchor the world to the sky". One uniquely Korvan ritual is "pattern walking" of laid-out labyrinths or mountain ridge trails from *huaca* to *huaca* at the upper end of breathability.

Government

The present government is a planet-wide Telerine colonial administration (Gov 6) in the manner of the British *Raj* over TL4 India. The Governor-

General resides in the old Royal capital of Puma-yaqta, overseeing the old Royal bureaucracy plus an influx of Telerine Colonial Ministry administrators.

Provincial capitals are similar, except with fewer Telerines; as a rule-of-thumb, the farther from Puma-yaqta the fewer and farther between the Telerines. The local *ayllukuna* administer their native provinces as they did under the *Sapa Inka*, collecting taxes for the capital and getting public works projects in return. (Depending on region, these taxes can be paid in the traditional prestige products of the area—precious metals or fine textiles—as well as money.)

Outside the cities, the local *ayllukuna* and lineages work the land and run their own local affairs as they have always done.

Armed Forces

Korvo's armed forces (under Telerine command) can field 10 TL7 divisions (20 brigades or 40 regiments) at full mobilization.

These are Telerine Colonial forces; each *taxias* (regiment-sized "brigade") consists of one Telerine Colonial battalion (TL10, all Telerine, using grav vehicles instead of hovers) and three battalions of Korvan light infantry (TL7, Telerine officers, Korvan *Metikoi* enlisted men and non-coms, with heavy support weapons carried on "technicals"—light all-terrain trucks).

In addition, there is a TL10 Telerine garrison of a single *taxias* composed of Republic regulars, with additional Laconian mercenaries filling it out to an understrength division. This *taxias* is Protected Forces, available for offworld deployment. This is intended as a "fire brigade" in the event of rebellion, but mostly stays on-base with elements deployed on Security tickets throughout the system. A second *taxias* of Korvan Colonial troops is also Protected Forces trained and available for offworld deployment.

Colonial forces use standard Telerine ranks and rank badges; the main difference is that Colonial officer badges use a puma's mask instead of the Re-

public's phoenix and Korvan enlisted men wear *Metik* insignia, not Citizen.

Not counting visiting Telerine naval ships, system defenses total 2000 tons, divided among three SDBs and four squadrons of fighters as well as surface- and moon-based missile batteries. All are TL10-11 and under Telerine command.

The Moons

Korvo has two small moons, Huk-Rikin-Killa ("First Moon" BS00569-9) and Iskay-Rikin-Killa ("Second Moon" XS00266-9), commonly referred to as "Huk" and "Iskay". Both resemble roughly dug-up potatoes, orbiting in tidal lock with long axes aligned with their primary. Highport facilities (including a Telerine naval station) are located on Huk, system defense bases and remote missile sites on Iskay.

Hukport and its support installations are described under "Cities and Starports".

Asilra (Virtchok III)

Asilra (Virtchok III) XAAA000-0

Waterworld, Uninhabited

From orbit, Asilra looks like a blue-white marble; blue at the poles, white at the equator, and generally hazy. A large waterworld with a thick inert atmosphere of nitrogen/methane/CO₂, Asilra would have been a super-Venus if it were closer to Virtchok; as it is, not only does the heavy greenhouse effect of the methane and CO₂ keeps the oceans liquid and carbonated, the surface atmosphere/density of five times Standard keeps the oceans liquid at a surface temperature of well above Standard or Korvan atmo boiling point.

Asilra's world ocean has no solid bottom; like a gas giant's atmosphere, it "bottoms out" in a layer of hot pressure-frozen Ice VII, tens of kilometers down.

Asilra has a 15-hour day, no permanent moons, the magnetic field and Van Allen belts of a small gas giant, a Life Score of 3 (anaerobic extremophile plankton only), and *no* settlements or outposts. Not even "Wasps" could tolerate those temperatures and pressures, never mind the total lack of oxygen.

The Asteroids

Virtchok System is heavy with asteroids—two moderately-thin belts flanking the orbit of Melrissa plus a thick cluster at Yantor's leading Trojan point. Telerines say that Virtchok got all the asteroids for both suns.

All are being exploited by Telerine interests using mostly-Korvan labor, with a side effect of a large number of experienced Korvan Belters.

Outer-system installations are similar to those on Huk, but with fewer Telerines and more Korvans—dug-ins and domes with atmosphere kept to Standard as a compromise between thin-atmosphere Korvans and dense-atmosphere Telerines.

Virtchok Inner Belt

Virtchok Inner Belt D000665-A

Asteroid Belt/Secondary Colony, Non-Ag

With a permanent population of 700,000, the Inner Belt is the center for Belter activity in system. Inner Belt asteroids are primarily metallic—prime real estate for a spacefaring civilization like Telerine.

Belter activity here is on a full industrial scale, with Telerine corporations running the show from the largest settlement—a dwarf planet in the belt. Mining and smelting of metals from iron to iridium is the order of the day, with a labor force of half Korvans and half "Wasps" in separate installations—the pseudo-insectoids take "spam in a can" crowding much better than humans.

The heavy Telerine presence raises the Inner Belt to Tech Level 10, highest in the system. One of the side effects is a large number of experienced Korvan Belters familiar with zero-gee/vacuum operations and higher-tech.

Korvan characters generated from this background default their Prior Service type to Belter.

Virtchok Outer Belt

Virtchok Outer Belt D000465-9

Asteroid Belt, Non-Ind, Non-Ag, Poor

(Continued on page 32)

The Outer Belt is not as heavily mined; its asteroids are mixed stone-and-ice “centaurs”, less valuable than the Inner Belt’s metal ores. Still, there is enough Belter activity to support a population of some 4000 in both mining and chemical extraction. Basically a much smaller and sparser version of the Inner Belt.

Yantor Trojan Cluster

Yantor Trojan Cluster D000465-9
Asteroid Cluster, Non-Ind, Non-Ag, Poor

Farthest out of the system’s asteroids, this is a cluster of mostly-ice asteroids at Yantor’s leading Trojan point with just enough value to support cryo-extraction industries for a population of some 2000 Belters. Smallest and poorest of the outer system settlements, the Trojan Cluster places a distant second to the facilities on Hahral.

The Moons of Melrissa (Virtchok IV)

A Saturn-sized gas giant, Melrissa is the fuel-skim site of the system. There is some Telerine activity—Belter spillover—among its ten regular moons and dozens of irregular moons.

Hahral (Virtchok Vbis)

Hahral (Virtchok Vbis) DCA6366-9
Super-Titan, Non-Ag, Poor

A “Trojan Planet”, Hahral is Virtchok System’s unique system feature. A large “Super-Titan” in Yantor’s trailing Trojan Point, Hahral is larger than even Asilra, a failed gas giant core with a thick hazy methane/nitrogen atmosphere, continents of ice, and shallow hydrocarbon oceans over 60% of its surface.

Hahral is huge for an iceball—Size 12, right on the cusp of helium capture with a surface gravity of 1.5 gees and a “sea level” atmospheric pressure like Asilra or Wasphome. Its magnetosphere and eight-hour day would do justice to a small gas giant. Despite the heavy greenhouse effect from the methane in the atmosphere, the surface temperature varies between dry ice and liquid nitrogen. Here it rains methane and rivers flow with liquid natural gas.

There are a couple settlements with a total population around 3000, exploiting the rugged cryoworld for hydrocarbons and petrochemicals. Due to the crowding in the domes and dug-ins and the local atmospheric pressure, most of the labor force are Chitin A “Wasps”, with Emissaries as go-betweens to the Telerine owners and corpos.

Designer’s Notes

Like most systems in the Dole Moving Group, Virtchok System is based on an ACCRETE run from 40-year-old planetary-formation simulations by an R.L.Dole published in *Scientific American* in the 1960s and referenced in Carl Sagan’s *The Cosmic Connection*. ACCRETE gave only planetary orbital distances and masses; the orbits were translated into *Traveller* notation and the planets detailed according to both *Traveller* world generation rolls and known planetology.

System nomenclature was taken from a para-Andean pantheon in Wayne Shaw’s “Mageworld” D&D campaign of the late Nineties. Since the nomenclature was pseudo-Inca, Korvans were based on Quechua-speaking Andean peoples, among thin atmosphere and rugged terrain resembling the Andes and Altiplano.

Referees are encouraged to use Peruvian/Andean Indian names and customs and local color. Their Telerine overlords have the trappings of Greeks.

The history of the Korvan monarchy deliberately parallels the rise of the Inca Empire; the annexation by Telerine is based on a Sikh account of how the British got the Punjab. The custom of “born for” and “born to” is actually North American (Navajo), but sounded like it would fit in the *ayllu* system.

Continuing the Andean theme, the city layout of Pumayaqta is based on that of Cuzco, Peru (Quechua spelling *Qosqo*), with the downport mesa in the place of Saksaywaman.

Asilra is based on one of the pre-Mariner probe theories about Venus—the Carbonated Ocean World.



Less Dangerous Game

Korvan Puma and Korvo Cat

by Ken Pick

Korvan Puma	Rough, Broken, Mountain, or Forest Terrain			
Qty	Mass	Hits	Armor	Wounds/Weapons
1	Carnivor/Pouncer	50kg	4D/2D	None 2D Teeth, 2D Claws

Korvo (Virtchok System/DMG7) is a low-gee, thin-atmosphere world in the Dole Moving Group whose only native life are aerobic microbes. A land biosphere was imported during terraforming and settlement, using flora and fauna from the Andes Mountains of Earth, including the apex land predator of that ecosystem, the puma (*Puma concolor*).

Korvan Puma (*Puma concolor korvanus*)

The Korvan puma is a subspecies of the Terran cat adapted to Korvo's lower gravity and thin atmosphere. The differences are subtle, primarily slimmer legs and a wider barrel chest to accommodate the larger lungs. Fur color varies from tawny to grey, depending on environment; grey fur is more common in rocky mountain habitats.

Size ranges from 60-90cm at the shoulder, 150-250cm nose-to-tail, and 30-100kg weight, with males being larger; the 50kg weight in the stats is an average. A good climber of both trees and rocks, they can leap 6m vertically and 12m horizontally under one gee. 8m/16m under Korvan gravity, 4m/8m under Telerine). In an attack charge, they can run 60-80kph for up to half a minute.

Classic solitary ambush predators, they will prey on anything they can catch, preferring medium-sized prey—on Korvo, larger *quii* (coypu and capybara) and camelids. The normal attack profile is a charge-and-leap from cover onto the back of the prey, normally from behind.

Vocalizations include a rumbling purr, a loud deep meow ("Rrow..."), and a bloodcurdling scream like that of a woman being murdered.

They are most likely to be encountered around dawn and dusk in Rough, Broken, Mountain, or Forest terrain, i.e., where there's prey and cover for

stalking. They will not be found in harsh Desert (like the salt flats around Korvo's remaining seas or extreme Outback).

Though wild, they are not very aggressive towards humans, and will tend to flee if encountered. This argues for the original ancestor being the less-aggressive Argentine subspecies (*Puma concolor cabreræ*).

The Korvan Puma is very skittish around any sort of canid (including Vargr), and will withdraw or flee if confronted by a dog half their size.



The Korvan Puma (*Puma concolor korvanus*) strongly resembles its Terran ancestor (pictured here) in appearance and behavior. (photo derived from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cougar_sitting.jpg; CC-BY-SA-2.0 Facebook user AskJoanne)

Korvo Cat (*Puma concolor domesticus*)

Korvan name: *Inka Puma* ("Royal Powerful One")

Telerine name: *Ailuros Korvanos* ("Korvo Cat")

As apex predator of the mountains, the puma is venerated in Korvan folk religion and associated with royalty. The word "*puma*" itself is Korvan for "Powerful One", and Korvan kings and chieftains would hold court with one or more next to their throne. In such a situation, it was important that the Royal Animal not maul its Royal master.

During the Long Night, Korvans selectively bred a domesticated version of the Korvan Puma for this purpose, breeding for less aggression and more social behavior, especially towards humans. The original wild cat species was known for a wide range of personality, so the potential for a mellower, more social breed was already there.

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Less Dangerous Game

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Over several generations, this “low-tech genetic engineering” resulted in the present domesticated Korvo Cat, companion of kings.

Domestication usually has the side effect of neoteny (retaining juvenile features into adulthood) and the Korvo Cat is no exception, retaining more kittenish facial proportions and faint spotted fur. Though only slightly-smaller than its wild ancestor, the Korvo Cat looks like an adolescent puma kitten. And has the personality and attitude of a housecat—a 30 to 50-kilo housecat.

They also have twice the lifespan of their wild ancestors; 10-20 standard years instead of 5-10.

With the end of the Korvan monarchy and annexation into Telerine’s pocket empire some two generations ago, the Korvo Cat became an expensive exotic pet in general; the first few Telerine Governors-General adopted some of the trappings of the old kings, including having a domesticated big cat/ Powerful One at their side; both kittens and breeding stock were imported to Telerine, and those lines that best adapted to Telerine’s heavier gravity and atmosphere became the *Ailuros Korvanos*.

A Korvo Cat is expensive to keep—two-to-four kilos of vitamin-and-calcium-enriched, moderately-fatty chunk meat per day. (Hope you have a big budget for cat food...) ☼

Critics’ Corner

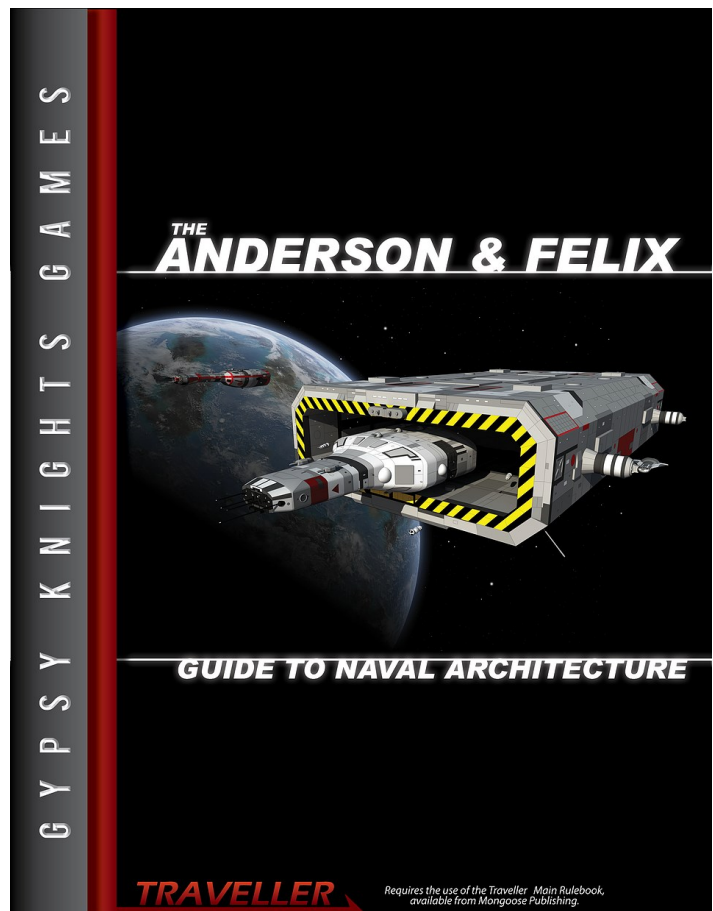
The Anderson & Felix Guide to Naval Architecture

reviewed by “kafka”

The Anderson & Felix Guide to Naval Architecture. Michael Johnson. Gypsy Knights Games. <http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com> 114pp., PDF, Softcover, or both Bundled US\$19.99(S,B)9.99(P)/UK£13.88(S,B)6.94(P)

This review originally appeared on *rpg.net* in October 2015

There are a subset of *Traveller* players (in *Traveller’s* case, they are known as gearheads), and possibly all of RPG players that pride themselves, in building things. Whether it is building scale model dungeons in their basements or building starships from Lego™ to hang in their hobby rooms or designing unique minis and getting printed via 3D printers. I am not one of those players. I am a Gamemaster and a player who favours free-flowing narrative, who wishes that dice rolls could be called as part the overall dialogue rather doing a shout out. So, when I get something like this item, it is very hard to review objectively, as it is a manual on how to build starships in the Clement Sector ATU. Like (or, more accurately, complementing), Mongoose’s *Book 2: High Guard*, there is essentially a



number of components that have to be fitted from different charts to build a starship.

The rules and construction techniques are very solidly grounded in years of *Traveller* construction

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techniques that date from the 1970s. And therein lies my problem; these rules do not expand the imagination. When I was young, I could be intrigued by Black Globes or Particle Accelerators or Fusion Guns (Black Globes or similar Force Shields do not appear in this volume as they are too high tech), but at the same time, I do not want completely fantastical weapons. So this book does its job; it is a workshop for building starships, not the imagination. So, there is little for people who are narrativists, aside from the occasional piece of purple prose and fantastic illustrations.

Overall, I cannot think how this work can really be improved, except to break the limitations of what the ATU has established as the overall tech level. There is a precedent in *Traveller* for doing this—TNE's *Fire, Fusion & Steel*—which once again harvested the imagination of different SF tropes and... yes...it was incredibly buggy and the sums did not add up. But, folks, we are talking about building Starships here; there has to be an element of the imagination inserted in. And, beyond simple engineering, there has to build in a sense of wonder. Perhaps it is the drawback of all SFRPGs that when players want to add-on chrome fittings, one needs a Sourcebook like this one, otherwise they end up with Vagon Constructor ships. And, abstractly, if one takes

a look at *Traveller*, much of the art (with some notable exceptions) has been about creating Vagon ships. It is an irony, as the conceptual art that is going into the SF genre, whether on the big screen or the small, is radically improving thanks to CGI, that this has not translated into some sort of shift in the art of starships. One must remember Steve Jobs' quip about Bill Gates; he could forgive for all he stole from Apple, save one:

"...Why did he have to make it so ugly looking..."

That is how I feel about this product. There is much potential residing within these pages, and for the gearhead audience I am sure it is a godsend. I am thus reluctant to give this a bad rating, because it is a fine product in its own right, but at the same time it is not what I have come to expect from GKG. GKG has been steadily advancing away from the Tables and Charts model of early *Traveller* toward more of a narrativist freeform model using charts to *illustrate* the story rather than *be* the story. This product represents a side step away from that. Fantastic art, even if it is poser art (CGI), makes this a stunning product to leaf through. However, at the end of all these Tables and Charts, one does wish that *Traveller* could come up with a basic sketch program that would translate what are essentially spreadsheet statistics into something beautiful once again. 🌀

Raconteurs' Rest

Bad Things Happen

by Andrea Vallance

Part 2

30th of 2025 (221-93): Antiavash Central Hospital

I watched as the rolling waves passed beneath the speeder. I could see the Antiavash arcology, its elegant spires reaching three kilometres into the sky. It was only a short distance to Nashu's home, a

small town called Askisfant on one of Daramm's many islands. It had only taken me three days to recover, but they'd kept me in for seven, for observation. I don't think they were really worried about my physical health. Nashu had come to see me most days, she brought me fruit and flowers, told me I needed to eat, rebuild my strength. She was probably right; I must have lost at least twenty kilos, but you had to be careful with food. I saw the shore draw near, farm land stretching beyond. The horrors I'd seen jarred against the quiet rural landscape.

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Slower now, the land slipped passed, fields and orchards, people working, farm machinery. I noticed the surprising lack of automation; I wondered at that, but said nothing. We touched down outside a large stately home. It looked old, very old, built of brick, three stories, polished crystal glass. I saw a wood a little way off, a stream and a small lake. An ideal rural estate. Well at least it was a pretty prison.

73th of 2025 (264-93): The Manish Estates, Askisfant

I sat at breakfast with them. This was a new thing, but I seemed safe. I remembered the first morning. Kamsi had found me curled up in a tight ball of sheets under the bed. I'd checked the room carefully but that seemed the safest place. I usually slept in the bed now, but still, sometimes, when the nightmares were really bad, I'd escape to my cave; I felt safe there. She'd brought me some of her clothes to wear, they were huge on me. I had my own now, Kamsi had taken me shopping. Well, eventually; I couldn't face the crowds the first time, or the second. But it was okay now; I was pretty sure it was safe here, so I joined them for breakfast, most days; I was even starting to put some weight back on. Blindii entered and whispered something to Nashu. She looked surprised. "Siishubuu?" The door opened and a man entered. He was in his thirties, tall and handsome. But that's not what I saw. I'd been wrong, it *wasn't* safe here. All just a scheme to get my trust. I panicked and ran. Ran back to my cave; I knew it was pointless, they'd just drag me out, but, hell, I felt safe there.

Siish sat stunned. The woman had just sprinted out the moment she saw him. "Who, what was that?"

His mother sighed deeply, "That, Siishubuu, was Isabella; she's our parolee."

"Why did she bolt like that? I'm not *that* scary."

She sighed again, "No, but your uniform is. And she was making such progress."

Siish was confused. "My uniform?" He thought for a moment. "Combat fatigue?" He'd seen it of course, but this seemed rather extreme.

"Something like that, Siishubuu."

"Shouldn't she be repatriated, on compassionate grounds? Or at least in counselling?"

His mother focused on the table. "Unfortunately, circumstances prevent repatriation. But she *is* in counselling; your brother is, after all, an excellent *Shugilii*⁸ and *dokhtor*. But anyway, Siishubuu, why are you here?"

"Martinez is in for refit, after *Giasaaruu*. I'm leaving again tomorrow." They were assigned to supporting the raiders now, hazardous duty. "I just wanted to see the family."

His mother was touched; she was aware of the risks he faced. "Thank you, Siishubuu, it is good to see you as well. However, you will need to get out of that uniform, and then you can help us coax Isabella out again."

Siish was changing when his brother came to him. He was carrying a plate of pancakes covered in syrup. "I thought you didn't approve of those, Eneri, but thank you, I'm starving."

Eneri chuckled, "I don't, and they're not for you, little brother; they're for Isabella, she loves them."

Siish looked longingly at the pancakes. "I love them, too."

Eneri grinned, "Well, go get Isabella and then we can eat."

"Where is she?"

"In her room, second floor, blue guest room. She'll be under the bed, most likely."

Siish was puzzled. "Under the bed? What's she doing there?"

"Hiding."

I was in my cave, curled up tight, waiting. I heard the door open; someone came in. I saw the man's face appear. He'd changed out of uniform; I

wasn't fooled. "Eneri made you some pancakes." He put a plate on the floor where I could see.

I looked. I was hungry, but I'd learnt not to trust food too much. Vomiting and diarrhoea are not fun. "You eat one." He hesitated, then picked a pancake. "Not that one." I picked another. "That one." He moved to take it; I changed my mind, "no, that one." He hesitated again. "Eat it."

He took it and ate; I waited. He looked at me, and asked, "Well, are you going to eat the rest?"

"No, in a while. Who are you?"

He continued to look at me. "Siishubuu, Siish."

"Why are you here?"

He smiled, "I'm on leave, come to see my family before," another hesitation, "I leave again tomorrow." It sounded plausible, but then again, it would. I watched him carefully. "Well, are you coming out to eat these?"

I kept watching. "No, not yet; push them under here." He pushed the plate under; I kept looking. Nothing.

"Well?" Still nothing; I took a small careful bite. They were Eneri's; another bite, they seemed okay; I started to eat. "Look, can you come out? I'm starving and watching you eat is only making things worse."

"No."

He waited as I ate. "Look, you're a grown woman; you're being silly."

"No; you'll have to drag me out." He reached under and grabbed my arm. I bit him, hard. He yelped as I tasted blood. He stood and left holding his hand. I finished my pancakes.

Siish came out clutching his hand. "She bit me!"

Eneri chortled, "What did you do, little brother?"

"She drew blood, look!" He thrust his hand out.

Eneri looked. "Ick, nasty, that'll need sealing."

"What the hell is wrong with her?"

Eneri sighed, "I don't know; she's not ready to say."

"She was terrified of me, totally feral, but terrified. That look in her eyes, like some wounded wild animal. What happened to her?"

Eneri shrugged, "I'm not sure." He cast his eyes to the floor, "I'm not sure; Mother is very evasive, but I think..." He paused. "I think we, the Protectorate, did this to her." They stood in silence awhile. "Come on, little brother. We'll have to leave her awhile. Kamsi'll be home soon. She seems to be able to get through to her. I've got some suture spray in my bag. Let's get that cleaned up and I'll make a you a few, and I mean *a few*, pancakes."

Kamsi came in a few hours later. Her head appeared at the bedside. "They tell me you've been maiming my brother-in-law."

"He tried to pull me out."

She chuckled, "So you bit him?"

I grinned, "Yes."

"Eneri had to seal the wound, Isabella. Siish can be a bit of a prat sometimes, but he's not that bad, really." She put her hand under the bed. "Look if you want to bite somebody, bite me." I hesitated, then took her hand. She smiled "Much better. Now, come on out; you need to meet Siish properly." I hesitated still; I was safe here. "Honey, if something bad was going to happen, don't you think it would have happened by now?" I pulled myself out from under and she hugged me. "It's okay, Isabella, it's okay, you're safe here. Now come outside, I've got a present for you."

A bike, a grav-bike. Kamsi let me ride hers sometimes; she knew I liked them. But this one was mine of my very own. "Why don't you take it for a spin?" I got on, it felt good. I pushed it off and circled the house a couple of times. I wanted to give it a proper run, but well, I couldn't.

I set down next to her "Thank you, it's wonderful."

"Why don't you take it for a real spin?"

"Two kilometres, remember?"

(Continued from page 37)

She had hers there, too. "I know; Mother is working on that, but these things take time." I didn't say anything "However, there are ways and means, Isabella." Her face was covered by a wicked grin. My shoulders and arms twitched as I felt three jolts in my spine. *Tingle*, they'd said; tingle my arse. Her grin widened as she waved the mobile unit. "Now you've got five hundred metres from me. So... race you to the beach!"

Nashu Manish *tsked* as she saw the pair race off into the distance. Kamsikinash came from an excellent family, was a diligent daughter-in-law, a devoted mother, and Eneri loved her. But her fascination with grav-bikes, so... undignified. Siish stood beside her watching. "How'd she get her out?"

"Well, not by trying to drag her, Siishubuu; rather foolish."

"Oddly enough, Mother, I did not consider the possibility that a grown woman would sink her teeth into me."

His mother surveyed him rather condescendingly. "Perhaps you should have. However, Kamsikinash is a wonderful mother, and Isabella has much in common with a hurt child."

"Where are the twins, anyway? I was hoping to see Munush and Enli before I left."

"The Ashunmanii's⁹ have taken your niece and nephew on a camping expedition in the Lants. Their grandfather is hunting for the *Roryniar*¹⁰, again." Nashu was reasonably certain where Kamsikinash had got her 'wild' streak from.

Siish looked at Isabella and Kamsi as they passed from sight. "What happened to her, Mother?"

She considered. "Isabella? Bad things happen in war, Siishubuu."

Siish thought for a moment. "Eneri said... He thought... that *we* might have done this to her?"

His mother thought, but Lady Councillor Manish answered, "As I said, Siishubuu, bad things happen in war."

Siish looked at his mother. "Can you fix it, what was done to her?"

His mother stared at the window; she sounded very distant. "Fix, Siishubuu? Probably not, but, hopefully, we can help her learn to live with it." Nashu Manish changed the subject. "So, Siishubuu, you'll be leaving tomorrow; where are you off to?"

Siish hummed non-committally, "Back to *Martinez*, Mother."

She turned to him. "Siishubuu, your concern for secrecy is most commendable, but I *am* head of the Security Committee of the Lord Protector's Council. If I were an Imperial spy, the Protectorate would have far greater concerns than your next assignment."

He felt a little ashamed. "*Martinez* has been assigned to support the raiding groups. The Imperium has changed tactics; the losses are mounting."

His mother knew this; they were mounting alarmingly. "I know, my dear. You will take care, please." She embraced her son; she wanted to hold him as long as she could.

93rd of 2025 (284-93): The University of Antiavash Museum

Lady Councillor Manish was waiting for her daughter-in-law to finish arranging the display, her latest exhibition of artefacts from her dig in the Lants. Madam Manish considered; she had never been one of those who subscribed to any of the various *Roryniar* theories, but some of her daughter-in-law's latest items did appear intriguing. Her daughter-in-law finished supervising the positioning of a small statue of an odd creature and approached, wiping her hands as she went. "Mother, come to see the opening?"

"I would not miss it; but no, this is regarding another matter." Nashu studied the stone creature "Is that one of your *Roryniar*?"

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Kamsi turned to the statue. "Sadly, probably not; far too recent, it dates from slightly before *Edtyassos*, not sure what it is yet. But the other matter?"

"May we speak somewhere privately?"

"Of course, Mother; my office." They adjourned to a rather plain and cluttered university office. "So, Mother, what's this about?"

"Isabella. The two of you appear to have become extremely close."

"Yes; I like her, a lot." She smiled. "She's a lot like me, I think."

"Indeed, she is. She seems to have picked up your fascination with the *Roryniar*, at least. She has been on at me about coming to your opening for days." As well as sharing her passion for fast grav-bikes.

"I hope you can see your way to allowing her, please, Mother."

Madam Manish smiled slightly, "Yes, she will be attending. It will do her good to get out. However, that is not what I wished to discuss with you." She took a sharp breath; this was not going to go well. "There are some things about Isabella of which you are not aware. Doubtless you have noticed her... frequent distress."

"You mean that she's been hurt by something? Exceedingly badly hurt?"

"Yes." Madam Manish had noticed a slight change in her daughter-in-law's tone. "I suspect she will shortly be seeking to talk with somebody about what caused her pain. And I suspect that person will be you."

The change in tone was very definite now. "Yes, Mother."

Lady Councillor Manish decided to simply come out with it. "As you know, Isabella was captured at Rurur and six months later came to us." Her daughter said nothing. "In the intervening period she was interrogated." Lady Councillor Manish noticed her daughter-in-law's eyes narrow, though she re-

mained silent. The Lady Councillor decided there was no real point in trying to subtle or euphemistic "Her 'pain' was caused by what occurred in those six months."

"Go on, Mother."

"Isabella was tortured and," she hesitated, "humiliated in ways I can't describe, stripped of every shred of human dignity and came close to losing her mind."

"And, Mother?"

"The cause has been dealt with, very firmly dealt with," she stressed the words *very firmly*, "but it will do no good for anyone if this were to become... public. There is a war on and in the absence of concrete proof, most people would simply refuse to believe it. However, the Security Committee would have no choice but to see Isabella as a threat and act accordingly."

"And presumably, you're telling me this so that I will remain silent." Nashu could hear the contempt in her voice.

She ignored it. "Yes, it will do Isabella no good to spend the remainder of the war locked in a small cell. I imagine it would complete the job begun then."

Kamsikinash sat there fuming; she looked at Lady Councillor Manish, her eyes searching for some understanding. Finally she spoke. "Mother, I will keep Isabella's confidences. For *her* sake."

Lady Councillor Manish was relieved. "Thank you."

"One question, Mother."

"Yes?"

"Your sleep, is it restful?"

Nashu answered, "Less than I would wish."

104th of 2025 (295-93): Hall of Memories, Waicir

Fleet Admiral Iigkikadii felt very odd being here; there was a war on and he was standing in the enemy capital. But bravery was bravery and deserved recognition regardless of whom made the recommendation. He reviewed the file, they'd had

(Continued from page 39)

to hit her over the head to stop her dragging more wounded into the boat, definitely deserving a MCUF¹¹. Franklin *Vebee Adtmral* saluted him. "Well, Lieutenant Sanchez y Montoya is here; shall we begin?"

114th of 2025 (305-93): A beach near the Manish Estates

I sat watching Munash and Enli play; I loved watching their innocent games in the water. People here loved water. "I envy you, Kamsi."

"Envy, honey?"

"The children, I wish..."

"Hey, you're what, twenty seven? Plenty of time. Mind you," she smiled, she had something to share, "you'll be a *iikimurshi*¹² soon enough."

It took a moment for me to realise what she was saying. "You don't mean...?"

Her smile broadened, "Yes, I'm pregnant again!"

I hugged her, "That's wonderful, Kamsi!"

"Eneri and I haven't told Mother yet, so don't let on."

I sighed, "I think you're wrong."

"Wrong, honey?"

"About me and children. I don't think I will." I could barely take care of myself and the thought of being with somebody... "I mean, who knows when I'll be going home and anyway..." The memories of *that place* came back.

She noticed my distress and put her arms around me. "The war can't go on forever."

I gave a sad laugh. "I've read the children's history books, thirty five years¹³. You people seem to have a habit of not giving up."

"Honey, it won't go that far. Any anyway, plenty of good men here."

I snuggled into her embrace. "I don't know, just, you know...."

Kamsi considered her conversation with Lady Councillor Manish. "There's something else, isn't

there?" I nodded. "You know, Isabella, I'm here to listen, whenever you're ready to talk."

130th of 2025 (321-93): Planning a party at the Manish Estates

Gam and Mazun were visiting. They lived on Verasaryn, running the Khaadii clan's shipping empire. They usually only visited once a month or so, but Kamsi had announced her pregnancy last week and there was a party planned. *I'll say one thing for the Protectorate, they know how to throw a party.* Gam was very much a younger version of her mother, so stiff and proper. She'd spent over an hour informing me of all the duties of an *iikimushi*, a very serious role according to her. I'd eventually managed to escape and found Kamsi sitting quietly in the garden. "What are you doing here? I thought you'd be with Nashu and Gamaagin, organising."

She grinned, "I was, but the two of them seemed to have things well in hand, so I... escaped."

I giggled, "They *are* good at 'organizing', aren't they?"

"Yep."

"Gam didn't seem too keen on me as *iikimushi*," I said, "...because I'm an Imperial?"

She gave a small laugh. "No, honey, it's because you're unmatched. Traditionally, an *iikimurshi* is supposed to be matched, preferably with children of her own."

I was disappointed. "Well, if you'd prefer somebody else..."

"Don't be silly, Isabella, this is my baby, my choice. Eneri is happy with you as *iikimushi*, so end of story." She hugged me. "I know it's hard, fitting in." I just nodded. "How about, tonight, you take your purse off your lap¹⁴? I know Imperials can dance; I've seen them."

I looked down. "I'm... I just never learnt." I was lying, of course, and she knew it. But I remembered the last time I danced.

"You know, Eneri was more than a little offended when you turned down his offer to teach you."

"I know, and I am very sorry for that. It's just..." My voice trailed off. She said nothing, just held me again.

177th of 2025 (003-94): Askisfant school

I went to school now, with the children. Learning to speak Luriani and Old High Vilani, learning how to fit in. The children liked me; I was exotic, spoke funny and came to school on my grav-bike. Well, it was only four kilometres away and I had five now. Some of the parents weren't so keen on me, though; guess that's what you get when you're the 'enemy'. Still, *Dtinal Verasrasti*¹⁵ called in a couple of times a week, just to put their minds at rest. Another benefit, I had a new friend, Ora Cajklus, the *yasvati*, the teacher. Kamsi had picked me up with the twins today, a bit odd. "So what's up, Kamsi?"

"Well, we wanted to let you know, before you got home. Siish, Siishubuu is here, on leave for a week. Just wanted to let you know."

I remembered my meeting with Siishubuu. I'd bit him. Then, at dinner, he went to stroke my cheek, I'd screamed and run out again. Not a successful first impression, probably. "It's okay Kamsi, I'll cope." Nothing bad had happened after his last visit, so I figured it was probably okay. But I was still nervous. He was waiting when we got home. Sitting outside in civvies. I smiled, he looked as nervous as I felt. He stood as we got out of the air/raft. "Hello." He extended his hand. I looked at it and pulled back, just a fraction. I don't think anyone saw. This was stupid; he was just a man. I took his hand and shook it.

184th of 2025 (010-94): The Manish Estates, Askisfant

Siish stood on the terrace and looked out over the garden and out to the wood where he'd played as a child. He remembered swimming in the lake, and all the times he'd fallen from his favourite tree. He didn't hear his mother come up behind him. "Still quite beautiful."

He turned, a little startled. "Mother?"

"The estate, still quite beautiful, isn't it, Siishubuu?"

"Yes." The tranquillity jarred with the horrors he'd left and had to return to. "The perfect place to spend a childhood, Mother."

His mother could see how far away he was; she understood. "Remember Siishubuu, this is why we are fighting."

"I know Mother, just..." He recalled friends he'd lost. "...we've lost so many already."

His mother took his hand. "I seem to recall mentioning to you that bad things happen in war, Siishubuu; it is best not to dwell on them too long."

He sighed, she was right. "On that, Mother, Isabella appears to be improving. At least she no longer flinches every time she sees me." He had seen her fear on the first few days of his leave. She appeared to be slowly mastering it, though.

"Time has many healing properties, Siishubuu."

"She spent some time talking with me yesterday. She even smiled at me. I think I like her, Mother." His mother considered for just a moment; her son's match was long overdue. Then she firmly put such thoughts from her mind. There were far, far too many complications to consider that possibility. "Odd that she doesn't dance though; I find it very hard to believe that she doesn't know how."

His mother simply replied. "She still has a long way to go, Siishubuu." She looked at her son. "So, Siishubuu, a *Kommadtur* now and command of a division; your father would be proud."

Siish took a deep breath. "Perhaps, but I'd still prefer to be a *Kaptan* with fewer dead friends."

188th of 2025 (014-94): The garden, Manish Estates

It was dark, I was laying on the lawn looking at the sky. A year, this time last year. I tried to make out the star that was Rurur and the star that was home. I wondered what became of the other thirteen survivors. I knew there had to be a lot of other prisoners here. I had met a few, but not many. I heard

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someone approaching; it was Kamsi. "Aryn¹⁶ will be rising soon."

"I know, but I thought I'd look at the stars in the meantime."

"Have you found it?"

"It?"

She lay on the grass beside me. "Home, Isabella, I assume that's what you're looking for."

"Not yet; I'm still not used to these constellations."

"Something eternal about the stars, isn't there?"

We lay there looking awhile. I thought of the last year. "They raped me, Kamsi, tortured me and raped me." I don't know why I said it, it just came out. There was no anger, no pain. It was just a statement of fact.

I felt her hand take mine. "I know; Mother told me some of it, but I'd figured out the rest myself anyway."

We lay there waiting for Aryn to rise.

Notes

Notes 1-6 appeared with Part 1.

- Both sides during the war released a few prisoners on such grounds. These cases usually involved severe mental or physical trauma.
- Part of the *Shugilii's* role was to give 'spiritual' guidance and comfort. Most were familiar with the role of therapist.
- Ganidiirsi and Enidi Ashunmanii, parents of Eneri's spouse Kamsikinash
- The *Roryniar* are a supposed sophont race that inhabited the Daramm system before the Ancients seeded the Luriani there. Their existence remains unproven and they are a highly controversial subject in Luriani academic circles.
- Meritorious Conduct Under Fire (MCUF) the third rank Imperial gallantry award. Above it were the Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry (MCG) and Starburt for Extreme Heroism (SEH).
- Literally supporting mother, *Mmarislusant* equivalent of a female godparent.
- She is referring to the Luriani Consolidation War. The Vilani's campaign to conquer the Luriani. One of the bloodiest and most brutal of the Consolidation Wars, it took the Vilani 35 years to finally overwhelm the Luriani in a campaign that verged on extermination.
- It is considered extremely rude to refuse an offer to dance in Luriani culture. However, a person my place an item on their lap, indicating they do not wish to dance, thereby avoiding giving offence.
- Roughly translated, constable, a law enforcement officer.
- Daramm's larger outer moon. Its disk covers about 0.35 degrees of Daramm's night sky. Mrai the smaller inner moon covers 0.41 degrees. The combination makes Daramm's night sky quite bright when both are above the horizon. 🌕

Critics' Corner

Behind the Claw Podcasts

reviewed by Timothy Collinson

Felbrigg Napoleon Herriot. <http://behindtheclaw.blogspot.co.uk/>

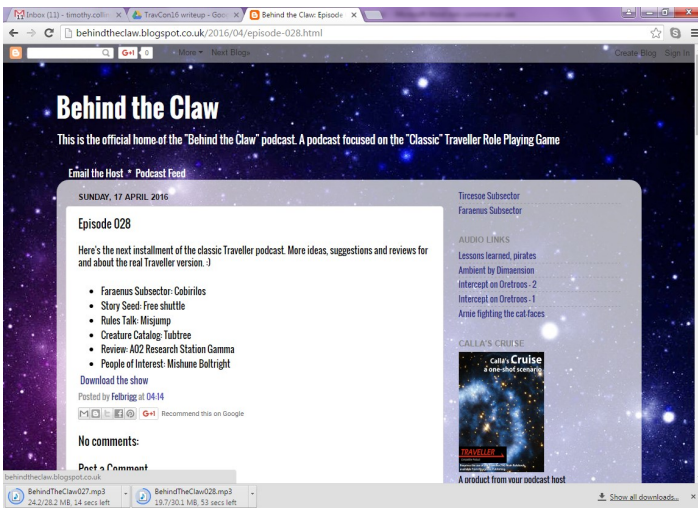
28 half hour episodes (at time of writing);

MP3 format (~30-40MB per episode)

Free downloads, CC-BY-NC-ND.

I can't say the podcast format is my cup of tea in general. I'm a bibliophile, perhaps a bibliomaniac. I love the tactile feel of books and the way they often

smell. I'm used to the way you can read them straight through or keep your finger in a page while you refer to something else in the same volume. I've made them my life and my profession. So I find podcasts something of a struggle. Slow to listen to in comparison to reading the same amount of text, difficult to 'access' when looking up information, and often—it seems to me in many I've stumbled across—simply a forum for chatty sophomores giggling their way through an overlong broadcast of



very little content. Nor can you easily speed them up at simple (or dull) sections or slow them down when the material takes more thought. And that's before my complaint that they don't stop when you fall asleep like a book or a PDF does. Although I suppose I should be grateful that nor do they fall on your nose like a book or a tablet if reading in bed!

So the Behind the Claw podcasts I discovered a little while back had everything against them in terms of drawing me back to listen to them every fortnight or so. And yet they do. These small, perfectly formed gems of *Traveller* goodness are available free from <http://behindtheclaw.blogspot.co.uk/>, where the podcaster also links to his *Decopedia* booklets for sale on DriveThruRPG which compile some of the podcast material as well as, more recently, his small, inexpensive adventures designed as one-offs.

Now in their third 'season' (each of ten episodes), each thirty minute episode follows a similar format with material divided loosely into two categories: 'in game' content and *Traveller* discussions. The first of these is focussed on Felbrigg's own *Traveller* setting but which is generic and easily adapted to other *Traveller* games. Game content might include the My Galaxy segment where Felbrigg describes one of the worlds in his Tirceso subsector (with map and UPPs available on the website), Story Seed which gives a short scenario idea, Creature Catalog (an animal that might be found in and around the Imperium), and People of Interest (no prizes for guessing it's a character description). If

you do want to look things up later, the website also lists the contents of each episode—a great boon.

The *Traveller* discussion segments might look into the email vault (for example, episode 26 looks at where a newbie might begin with *Traveller*), Rules Talk (taking a look at the detail of various *Traveller* rules, from nobility to comms delays and learning skills to reputation), possibly a review, which in #26, for example, is a guest reviewer ("DM Mike") looking at Marc Miller's *Agent of the Imperium*.

The various segments are presented in magazine format with introductory sound effects or recorded conversation snippets which give atmosphere and introduce each section. Mostly, it's Felbrigg presenting, but occasionally there's a guest, as mentioned. Segments generally last three to five minutes, although this can vary. The professionalism of the production and the gentle voice of Felbrigg—who I wasn't surprised to learn also narrates audiobooks—make these a delight to listen to. He's clearly thought carefully about the format and selected the content to provide variety and interest, drawing on his refereeing experience to offer material that is immediately usable. It should be noted that the podcasts concentrate on classic *Traveller* although they are generic enough to be of wider use. Better yet, the podcaster offers them on an "attribution, non-commercial, no derivatives licence" (CC-BY-NC-ND) so it would be both easy and legal to use appropriate segments as a briefing for players during a game, say, and allow the referee's voice a rest.

I may not have been totally converted to the podcast format, but I'm certainly addicted to these particular contributions to the genre and love winding down at the end of the day with the dulcet tones of Felbrigg chatting about a shared interest and a shared universe of adventure. The intimate style gives the impression he's in the room with you. Given the bias I confessed to at the start of this review, it says something about the quality of Behind the Claw that I'm so taken with these under-recognized aural experiences. I'd warmly recommend them. Every *Traveller* should have them on their playlist.



Animal Encounters in CT

by Robert Weaver

What could be more fun for your players than to be in a wilderness situation and to be confronted by a giant mutant insect?

How Dangerous Is That Bug, Anyway?

The animal encounter tables give two numbers expressed in xD for the animal's fighting ability. The first is hits to unconsciousness, the second is [additional] hits to kill.

I have consulted the <http://anydice.com> site for averages on die rolls.

- An Autopistol does 3D-3 (average 8), and is best at Short range or less.
- A Rifle does 3D (average 10) and is good out to Long range.
- A Shotgun does 4D (average 14) and is best at Medium range or less.
- A Laser Rifle does 5D (average 18) and is good at all but Close range.

A 50 kg animal (such as an aardvark or wolf) has hits of 4D/2D. On average that makes for 14 hits (to unconsciousness) plus 7 additional hits (to death), for 21 total – this is equal to the 777 stats of an average human PC. So, that's pretty reasonable. Creatures this size may have tough (jack equivalent) hides but don't have the mass to support significant armoring.

At 100 kg, the next step up, (such as a St Bernard dog) hits go to 5D/2D or 18 plus 7, or 25. For a doubling of mass, that's not a big step up in toughness. A 100 kg critter could still be taken down with two rifle shots or one laser bolt. At this size it's time for creatures to start sporting tougher hides (mesh equivalent or better)

At 800 kg (such as the largest bears) the average hits are 7D/3D, or 24 plus 10 for 34. By this point, the critter can take a laser rifle bolt and keep walking. Possibly two, but probably not three. With bullet fire, it could probably take three before falling, maybe four.

The animal size column of the creation tables keeps going up, and so does the Hits column. Rhino- or elephant-sized animals and larger are possible, and correspondingly tougher. After 400 kg, the animals have damage bonuses. Extra-large animals have damage multipliers to reflect greater attack power. That 800 kg ursinoid? Its claws can do 4D+3 damage, average 17. Yeah, that'll be the end of your PC in one go if it gets close enough.

Once a critter is down, of course, the PCs are likely to make sure it stays down by shooting it again. So the hits to death part isn't really useful information. The *coup de grace* rule in the combat section makes that second number irrelevant.

Does the Animal Creation System Need A Change?

I suggest we change things to where the first number represents the bulk of the creature's health, the point at which its desire to attack will be overcome by self-preservation and the creature flees. Even a carnivore on the hunt isn't likely to commit suicide by continuing to attack a foe that's demonstrated an ability to hurt it. If the PCs keep shooting at it until the second number is exhausted, then the beast dies.

As an alternative for hunters, the first number is the point at which the creature can't recover on its own. It will continue to lose strength, like 1 point per 30 seconds until the second number is exhausted and the creature dies. An animal hunted for food might flee after being wounded, necessitating a chase.

Another possibility is to assign maximum wound points to a critter based on its size, rather than leaving it to random die rolls. As each 1D adds on average 3 points to the critter's total, bigger things are not that much tougher. If a critter battle is going to be an adventure climax, giving the thing Battledress-tough hide can make it a big challenge.

Thoughts on running an encounter

(Continued on page 45)

Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 44)

The 'Attack if' and 'Flee if' numbers provided by the animal encounter tables are used only at the start of the encounter. The numbers in the table are the target for a 2D roll. Roll for Attack and Flee in the order presented. If the first target is not met, then roll the second. If neither target is met, the creature remains in place, either hidden or in sight of the PCs. It might move around (stalking) but takes no

decisive action until the PCs do. Once the PCs act, then the referee should roll for Attack or Flee again.

Once a creature has been wounded, it will respond with whichever action is listed first on the table—herbivores will flee, while the other types will attack. If the referee decides that the creature can tell which character attacked it, the creature will attack that character. Otherwise, the creature will likely attack the nearest character to it. ☘

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Adventure of a Traveller Greenhorn

by Jane Polwin

Two librarians, an institutional repository and a bibliography over lunch. No, not the start of a bad joke, but my introduction to the *Traveller* Universe.

Timothy needed his fabulous bibliography of the *Traveller* publications entered into the University of Portsmouth's Institutional Repository, a place to collect and distribute the University staff's research, and being a nosy parker I asked to read it and also had to look at some of the publications whose details are so carefully recorded.

Timothy has always been a *Traveller* enthusiast and encouraging his work colleagues to engage with the fun and frolics to be had with a couple of dice and good imagination. He drew me into a world of character creation and the adventures that can be had over lunchtime and beyond. Several characters creations later, Fred Squeaker being the most successful and likeable character I created. I wanted to play an adventure.

Other colleagues, De. Da. E. became interested and an evening in the pub was set up with Timothy in charge. Two other folk from outside the Library also joined in, C., one of our lecturers and Te., a friend of Timothy's and moral support. The adventure chosen was *Aramis: the Traveller Adventure*. Characters were given out and absorbed and the adventure began. Timothy's acting of a Bwap had

us all in stitches, flapping hands and lispng speech, worthy of a BAFTA. Four hours later and a good time was had by all, so good in fact a second evening was arranged to continue the adventure.

I took the plunge and signed up to go to TRAVCON16, much to my husband's amusement.

The day arrived and I set off with a little trepidation to spend a weekend with a group of strangers. I needn't have worried, I was welcomed with an opening game of *Firefly* to say hello and some mild mickey taking that I worked with T.

After a very pleasant Indian meal at the next door restaurant, TRAVCON settled down to the first scrum of the weekend to sign up for the adventures on offer. Timothy's *Ashfall 2* was filled in under thirty seconds (he was very surprised and highly delighted). It was all done in the best possible haste. I signed up to *Fix(ing) X*. A distress call from a red



Jane and Lindsay, Fixing X

zone, a moral dilemma (do we go with the rulebook or obey the instinct to offer help), rival researchers

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(Continued from page 45)

and indigenous creatures, all ending with us being declared heroes.

A good night's sleep and breakfast saw everyone ready for round two. Again the signup sheets were eagerly awaited and the dash ensued. This morning's adventure was *Cold Store* and saw me as



Tony, Jeff, and Jane playing in Cold Store.

a twenty six year old clerk/bar dancer getting involved with gangsters, dodgy cargo, a mystery illness, the death of a friend and suspect heritage along with my family. I ended up facing the bad guy dressed in a towel with a pistol hidden only I knew where.

Lunch was capably sourced by S. after the usual place had closed down. And the afternoon's adventures were waiting to be signed up for.

This time all the fun of a variety show was on offer in *The Show Must Go On*. A world whose paper-



Clockwise from lower left: Steve, Edd, Jane, Bob, Lindsay, and Andy playing The Show Must Go On

work had been lost wanting to host a magnificent show from off world. Throw in suspected sabotage of the new transport system and mining industry, a missing brother, and of course two stars wanting

top billing, fun was had by all. To top it the highlight of the show was a chimpanzee called Jimmy, dressed as the Duke of the world, throwing knives at Henri ('Enry to everyone else but himself) on a spinning wheel. We brought the House down.

Dinner was a fantastic Chinese takeaway, again ably sourced by volunteers on the food run. The now familiar sprint to the signup sheets, and *Ashfall 3* was mine. This adventure was out of the norm for



The tabletop for Ashfall 3

Timothy to be running as he only volunteered it as a substitute and it was still being developed to its full potential. One and a half pages of notes for guidance instead of the one hundred plus he normally has. However undeterred we took on Spume, decided magma worms taste like liquorice cuttings, found a spaceship docked to a large complex, took over the local social media channels with an amazing upside down abseiling academic (thank you D. the image still makes me laugh) and started terraforming Spume. The magma worms' days are numbered but liquorice cuttings just taste so good. Spume had some new neighbours move in on the table next door, Chirpers in the adventure *A New Friend*. One of the technicians from *Ashfall 3* came up with a Chirper Swatter as they were on the nice but screechy side.

Another good night's sleep and another decision to be reached as the pen marks the signup sheets. This time Vic Berry's *Scrapyard* and the chance to salvage an abandoned mining operation. Rats chewing body armour, genetically mutated big green men and to bomb or not to bomb dilemmas abound on the way to making a profit. We did not bomb the

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(Continued from page 46)

green men and discovered that the planet genetically alters off world visitors to suit itself. So we rescued the green men got treated for the mutations and profit was made. Off to the next contract.

Overall I had a fantastic weekend with a group of fantastic people. D. and P. in particular went out of their way to welcome me, particularly with very good real ale. With Andy and his family organising such a great weekend, I have already signed up for next year and am encouraging other colleagues to come along.

Back in the real world and on to planetary creation, started great but had to slow down as real life has got in the way.

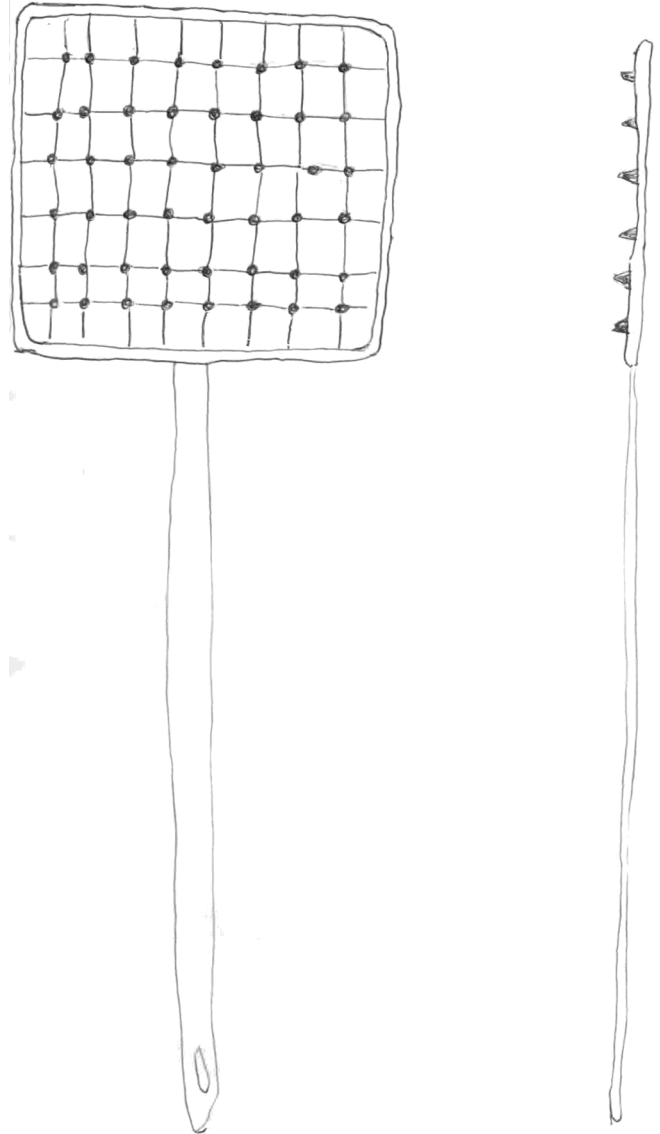
Encouraged by my enthusiasm Timothy agreed to run an improvised game over a lunchtime using characters that are already up and running. Game one started with me and D. playing Fred Squeaker, an infantry man, and Gvoudzon, a Vargr who got left behind teaming up and becoming bodyguards for a business woman. After successfully looking tough and being paid double what was agreed, Fred's CO has requested that he travel to collect a case from the army base across the country. Gvoudzon agrees to come along for his usual fee and expenses and the second adventure starts there.

Buying *Traveller* publications, from most versions of the game, is becoming a habit after reading all the reviews and of course Timothy's recommendations and introduction to websites where they are sold. Luckily most are available as pdfs or space would soon become an issue.

Where to go from here?

- Keep playing
- Get those planets created, mapped and populated
- Create my own adventure (space station and fiery tentacle monster)

- Persuade my colleagues to play said adventure
- If all goes well may be offer to referee a game at TRAVCON????



P.S. Chirper swats, based on the lightweight flyswatter, are available to order. The Chirper version adds small but sharp points to emphasize the swat to the victim. Available in a wide range of colors Points come in three sizes. Cr2 each. No responsibility will be taken if use of the swatters contravenes any local/national sophont welfare laws. ☸

#22: Welcome to Traveller!

by Timothy Collinson

It's fair to say that I enthuse about *Traveller* an awful lot. To family, to friends, to colleagues at work. Perhaps I tell them about a new book that's caught my imagination, a convention I've returned from, or a piece of writing I'm working on, or maybe even my excitement over something being published. I hope it's not to the point of utter boredom.

Some of those I know have even tried out an adventure or two just to see what the fuss is about, but one colleague at the university library I work in has gone a step further and signed up for TravCon in March. I think it was a staff room mention of the miniatures side of things that caught this particular cataloguer's interest. Or maybe it was having to catalogue and classify the Mongoose *Core Rulebook* and the adventure *Into the Unknown* that our Creative and Cultural Industries librarian bought for the game design students. (As an aside, it's weird seeing these two items nestled on the shelves between *Dungeons and Dragons* rulebooks and Sean Patrick Fannon's interesting, if somewhat dated nowadays, *The Fantasy Roleplaying Gamer's Bible*).

Fortunately, there was still a place at TravCon and now, with just a few weeks to go, reality is hitting that a complete newbie to the game is going to be thrown in at the deep end. I'm confident that those attending will be just as warm-hearted and welcoming as they were to me eight years ago, but I

also recall the whole experience being relatively daunting the first year when everything and everyone was unknown.

As an introduction for J, she thought she'd try her hand at generating a character. Armed with the core rules, a print out of the checklist (page 5), and some newly bought dice, we took over the staff room table one lunchtime and set about creating "Fred".

Her first roll, for Strength, was of course a 2. But undaunted we debated the merits of rolling three sets of characteristics and choosing one which seemed a little more playable. Eventually we had someone who was not very bright, for whom education seemed to have been almost non-existent, but who was a bit of a bruiser (Strength now 11). The army seemed like just the ticket. Soon it was onto Fred's first survival roll. A complete failure of course! Welcome to *Traveller*. At least under Mongoose rules rather than classic rules that was a mishap rather than death but on the day my FFE t-shirt "I died in character generation" turned up in the post, it seemed entirely appropriate.

I think J is getting the hang of it – some of her rationales for particular events or rolls were wonderful – although we've yet not moved on to tasks or combat. At least a pre-generated character sheet at the convention won't be quite so mysterious. As for me, I rather enjoyed seeing the whole process through a newbie's eyes. I should do it more often. 🌟

Doing It My Way

Starships for Sale

by Mark S. McCabe

Zoe: "You paid money for this, sir? On purpose?"

Mal: "What? Come on, seriously, Zoe. Whaddya think?"

Zoe: "Honestly, sir? I think you got robbed."

Mal: "Robbed? What? No. What do you mean?"

Zoe: "It's a piece of *feiwù*." [*feiwù* = junk, garbage]

Mal: "*Fèiwù?* Okay, she won't be winning any beauty contests anytime soon. But she's solid. Ship like this, be with ya 'til the day you die."

Zoe: "Cause it's a deathtrap."

Firefly, S1E8 "Out of Gas"

When I first started playing RPG's, the group I was with had an interesting twist during character generation. We had what we called a "Boogey Table" where we would randomly determine a unique

Doing It My Way

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characteristic to our characters. This could range from something positive like a special ability to a negative aspect such as “Battle Bladder.” As my RPG experience continued we extended this concept to other aspects of our sessions to include unique Horse personalities to expanded and detailed NPC behaviors. We did this to enhance our gaming experience as much as prevent drifting into generic gameplay.

In my gameplay, I extend this concept to the starships the players use. Unless they are extraordinarily lucky, most beginning *Traveller* characters are not exactly rolling in the credits after they muster out of their careers during character generation. So to help the players out, I allow them to cash in their ship shares, maybe trade in some gear and allow them just enough for the 20% down payment to a used surplus starship. Also, the monthly payments (1/240th the cost of the ship) will be more palatable to the characters as they keep an eye on their profit margin. These used surplus starships do present an opportunity for the referee to spice things up to prevent boring generic-style gameplay. So where do these starships come from?

Surplus military equipment is made available in some form or fashion to the general public or to other government agencies at the state and local level even today. Some of these starships may have had battle damage, may have been outclassed by new hardware and/or software, or may have just labeled as too expensive to maintain. Since these ships have been placed in mothballs, you can fairly well guarantee their scheduled maintenance cycle has not been maintained. So if the players are visiting a Scout base, there is a possibility there would be some surplus Scout ships available for purchase. If they are located in a Class “A” or “B” starport, a wider variety of merchant ships ranging from repossessed traders to abandoned cargo haulers will be available for purchase. Type J Seekers are likely to be found near developed systems with asteroid min-

ing. As for Naval vessels, I generally do not make them available to the players unless they have a buyer that is of exceptionally high social standing.

As always, this is a system I use. I recommend the referee tailor the results to something fairly easy to understand. Add or take away any undesired result, after all the idea is to have fun. I am sure many of you out there can come up with some excellent creative hurdles to place in the way of the PC’s.

So what would be the particular quirks to these ships? I use the formulas below:

Base Cost: (2D6 × 5%) +10% off the “book” cost. (example: I roll a “3” and a “4” which yields $7 \times 5 = 35 + 10 = 45\%$. The Type “S” which lists for MCr 30.0 is for sale at this place for MCr 16.5. The players need to come up with a down payment of MCr 3.3 for this ship, and monthly payments will be KCr 65.)

Number of Problems With the Ship: One problem for each 10% reduction in price, rounding down (i.e., a 45% discount yields four problems; a 50% discount yields five). For each problem, roll D66 against the following tables or similar ones of your own devising to identify the system affected. Then, roll 2D6-2 (reroll results of 0) to determine the severity of the issue (1—least severe, a minor annoyance or cosmetic only; 10—most severe, system damaged/destroyed, replacement required). If the ship is originally a Navy ship, DM -2 for severity; Scout ships DM -1.

D66 Rolls 1-1 to 1-6: Control Systems	
1-1	Helm Issues
1-2	Ship’s Computer Issues
1-3	Ship’s Sensors Issues
1-4	Targeting Issues <i>or</i> Faulty Transponder
1-5	Ship’s Communications Issues
1-6	Bridge Control Issues (Other Than Helm)

1-1 Helm Issues

This result will throw some difficulty in the handling of the ship. A minor glitch may be a loose connection in the helm’s controls, to a near-complete failure of being able to steer the ship through this control station.

Doing It My Way

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1-2 Ship's Computer Issues.

The ship's computer may simply have a few glitches in some of the software programs up to cracked and loose hardware components.

1-3 Ship's Sensor Issues.

The ship's "eyes" are either seeing false images or are not detecting real images they should be tracking.

1-4 Targeting Issues or Faulty Transponder.

Targeting issues will simply cause a DM -1 to DM -3 to hit for the gunner.

Transponder issues will likely bring on all kinds of unwanted attention by military and planetary defenses. Transponders are supposed to be tamperproof so serious scrutiny will be given to the ship's crew for possibly violating this law.

1-5 Ship's Communication Issues.

Communications systems, either internal or ship-to-ship, have problems with routine functions such as transmitting, receiving, or recording messages. These could range from frequency or volume maladjustment to intermittent failures to transmit, receive, or record, to complete failure in one or more of those functions.

1-6 Bridge Control issues (non-helm).

Other than the helm, another of the bridge's command or operating consoles is malfunctioning. It can range from a blown indicator light on a warning panel to a short in the keyboard-like interface.

Detecting These Issues

To detect a Control Systems Issue:

ROUTINE, INT, Electronics, or
AVERAGE, EDU, field-related skill

Field-related skills refer to skills related to the function of the specific subsystem, e.g., Pilot for the helm subsystem, Commo for the communications or transponder subsystems, Gunnery for the targeting subsystem, et cetera.

D66 Rolls 2-1 to 2-6: Engineering Systems

2-1	Interstellar Drive
2-2	Sublight Drive
2-3	Power Plant Issues
2-4	Life Support Issues
2-5	Power Transfer Issues
2-6	Battery Issues

2-1 Interstellar Drive.

Something in the interstellar drive system is amiss. It can range from a faulty field grid, a software problem, a drive motivator switch (just ask the *Millennium Falcon*) or an improper fuel flow valve in the drive engine itself.

2-2 Sublight Drive.

A wide array of problems here can include engines cutting out, engines overheating, engines misaligned, engines sputtering causing half-acceleration and unpredictable vectoring possibly resulting in a loss of forward direction, resulting in a spin.

2-3 Power Plant.

Another wide array of issues can range from intermittent loss of power, a radiation leak, a problem with the fuel intakes resulting in using much more fuel than normal, or the engines will overheat causing a cascade of issues in the engine room with other systems.

2-4 Life Support.

This refers to the ship's main life support. This does not cover the components in each compartment which provide limited emergency backup. The difference between this entry and the collection of entries in 4-1 to 4-6: Life Support/Environmental is that this entry represents general shipwide issues in all of the subsystems, whereas the entries in 4-1 to 4-6 affect specific subsystems, perhaps only in specific areas of the ship.

All ships in space must maintain a steady flow of oxygen and heat. Also, there must be a way to circulate the air to scrub the air of carbon dioxide coming off the crew's breathing.

Doing It My Way

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2-5 Power Transfer Issues

Power must go from the power plant to the other systems of the ship. This can range from the ship's weapons, to the ship's engines, to the ship's life support, to the low berth's support systems and to the ship's computer.

2-6 Battery Issues.

All ships have some type of batteries. They provide power to the ship during its startup sequence or they can provide power when the power plant is not working.

The ship's batteries are dedicated to emergency systems. This would include medical systems, low berths, life support and emergency lighting (red lights). A loose connection could result in a short in these systems and a complete loss of that system.

Detecting These Issues

To detect an Engineering Systems Issue:

ROUTINE, INT, Engineering, or AVERAGE, EDU, Electronics or Mechanical

D66 Rolls 3-1 to 3-6: Structural Systems

3-1	Air lock Issues
3-2	Ship's Stabilizer Issues
3-3	Ship's Thruster Issues
3-4	Interior door Issues
3-5	Ship's Fuel Issues
3-6	Ship's Weapon Issues

3-1 Airlock Issues

One of the ship's airlocks or hatches has an issue with sealing properly, or, the atmospheric controls that flood or evacuate the airlock is not working. A character with mechanical skill will be useful in repairs.

3-2 Ship's Stabilizer Issues. (VTOL Capable ships only. Reroll if non-applicable)

All VTOL ships (or ship's fitted with lifters) have an internal gyroscope that helps regulate thrust when taking off or landing on a planet.

(Most pilots will detect issues with this on an easy skill roll). A character with mechanical skill will be useful in repairs.

3-3 Ship's Thruster issues.

In space, ships need to have the ability to pitch and rotate to match another ship's vector in order to properly dock.

If a ship's thruster fails to fire when necessary or if it fires off when not wanted, this can result in a collision when docking or it can alter slightly the pitch and/or roll of the vessel. A character with mechanical skill will be useful in repairs.

3-4 Interior door issues.

Bulkheads sometimes put pressure on a non-hatch doorway, causing it to not fully open, not close or open. This is not an easy fix. A character with mechanical skill will be useful in repairs.

3-5 Ship's Fuel issues.

Problems in this category can range from a leaky pipe, valve or tank to a stuck valve to a fuel purification issue. A character with engineering skill will be useful in repairs.

3-6 Ship's Weapon issues (if the ship is unarmed, ignore and reroll)

The ship's weapon can jam, the turret can be stuck, the powered weapon can lose power or the weapon can be out of calibration. A character with that specific weapon skill will be useful in repairs.

Detecting These Issues

To detect a Structural Issue:

ROUTINE, INT, Directly-related skill, or AVERAGE, EDU, Electronics or Mechanical or Indirectly-related skill

Directly-related skills are those skills that directly involve the use of the system, e.g., Pilot for Stabilizer or Thruster issues. Indirectly-related skills are those skills that have general theory or techniques that are potentially applicable to the subsystem, e.g., Engineering for most subsystems.

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D66 Rolls 4-1 to 4-6: Life-Support and Environmental Systems	
4-1	Ship's Water Recycling
4-2	Ship's Air Recycling
4-3	Ship's Waste Processing
4-4	Ship's Food Processing/Galley
4-5	Ship's Gravity Systems
4-6	Ship's Temperature Controls

4-1 Ship's Water Recycling.

All water on a ship is kept in a liquid state by the ship's life support and is reused continuously by running waste water through bio filters. While on a planet with any degree of moisture, the ship's water condensers will also create air from the moisture in the atmosphere.

Also, if the ship takes on board any water for its fuel, then it can use some of that liquid to fill up the ship's potable water tanks.

If there are issues with this system, it can range from the ship's condensers/reclamation system (the ability to "make" water), to a rupture in the ship's potable water reservoir.

4-2 Ship's Air Recycling.

All ships with a closed environment have air recycling to remove carbon dioxide and/or other toxic gases that would tend to build up. Also, these system "scrub" any atmospheric taints and some are capable of eliminating biohazards and microorganisms in the ship's air.

The problems here can range from clogged air filtration systems to a complete shutdown of the ship's biofilters.

4-3 Ship's Waste Processing.

The system that processes solid and liquid waste fails and is likely oozing out somewhere on the ship. What a mess.

4-4 Ship's Food Processing/Galley

The system that prepares and stores food is not working properly. This gets repaired or the crew and passengers are eating MRE's.

4-5 Ship's Gravity Systems

The artificial gravity is either in flux (where it ranges from 0.5G to 2.0G) or is completely out, leaving the crew and passengers in a zero-G state.

4-6 Ship's Temperature Controls. These refer to the secondary/emergency life support indigenous to each of the ship's compartments.

Independent of the ship's main life support, each stateroom has a control panel that can alter the conditions of the room. If it is a passenger's stateroom they will want to move or get a partial refund. If it a crew member, that person will not get a full night's sleep in that space until it is repaired.

Detecting These Issues

To detect a Life-Support/Environmental Issue:

ROUTINE, INT, Mechanical or Engineering, or AVERAGE, EDU, Electronics

D66 Rolls 5-1 to 5-6: Mechanical Systems	
5-1	Airlocks (Cargo or Personnel) are faulty
5-2	Hatch(es) Issues (Cargo or Personnel)
5-3	Deck plate damage (too heavy a load)
5-4	Fire Suppression Issues
5-5	Landing Leg Issues
5-6	Running Lights Issues

5-1 Airlocks are faulty.

There is either a problem with the ship's seal around the airlock or there are leaks, perhaps from pinholes, perhaps from faulty seams between plates. This can also cover such issues as indicators failing to properly show the airlock status, even if the lock is properly sealed. Applies to both cargo and personnel airlocks.

5-2 Hatch(es) Issues.

One or more hatches has a problem opening or closing fully. As with airlocks, this can also cover such issues as indicators failing to properly show the status of the hatch.

5-3 Deck plate damage.

Because the ship has handled cargo improperly

Doing It My Way

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stowed or in excess of its capacity rating, deck plates are damaged (cracked, broken, etc.).

5-4 Fire Suppression issues.

Most of the compartments on space-going craft have independent fire suppression equipment. This system is a combination of atmosphere evacuation and sealing off the affected area. When a fire is detected, a loud klaxon sound will sound off and the ship's lights will rapidly strobe on and off. Within ten seconds, if the fire suppression override button is not struck, the compartment will be sealed off and the air will be evacuated.

Issues will include either a failure of the system to detect and handle an alarm, or false activation, causing a potentially dangerous situation.

5-5 Landing Leg issues. (If the ship does not have landing legs, ignore this result and reroll).

The ship's landing legs will either stick open, not deploy or will collapse under the weight of the ship.

5-6 Running lights issues.

All ships and vehicles have running lights. Unless this ship is a military-owned craft on a mission, it is required that a ship have red blinking lights on the port side and green running lights on the starboard side. It is well known that most ships on attack runs (such as corsairs) have found a way to switch these lights off. Running light malfunctions usually result in greater scrutiny by patrol and customs vessels. The ship's lights are stuck on or stuck off. This needs to be repaired unless the crew wants to attract a lot of unwanted attention. This is an easy skill roll to spot for any crewmember.

Detecting These Issues

To detect a Mechanical Systems Issue:

ROUTINE, INT, Mechanical or Engineering, or AVERAGE, EDU, Electronics or Steward

D66 Rolls 6-1 to 6-6: Irritants

6-1	Ship has unpleasant biological odor
6-2	Ship has small insects/rodents infesting it
6-3	Ship has obvious corrosion problems
6-4	Ship has old scorch marks from previous battles
6-5	Ship's windows are damaged
6-6	Ship's interior lighting is dim and blinks

6-1 Ship has unpleasant biological odor.

Easily detected. May be characterized as rotting crops, sewage, or "something died".

6-2 Ship has small insects/rodents infesting it.

Ranging from the smallest pests (flea-sized) to rodents the size of Terran beavers, the crew needs to clean up the ship in a major way. Also easily detectable; may not be easy to correct if the vermin have gotten into such concealed and enclosed spaces as between-decks conduits.

6-3 The ship has obvious corrosion problems.

Easy to spot, this ship will need to be scrubbed and possibly will need to have some sections of wall or bulkhead replaced. Easy to spot as well.

6-4 The ship has external damage from previous encounters with hostile armed ships.

Also easy to spot, may range from scorch marks that merely need new paint to partly-melted or nearly-holed plates that requiring replacement.

6-5 The ship's windows are damaged.

A cracked or pitted window or porthole in space is an accident (blowout) waiting to happen. Large windows (such as a bridge window) are easy to spot. Smaller portholes will have their issues detected on a routine skill check.

6-6 The ship's interior lighting is faulty.

Another easily detected issue. Ranges from the equivalent of fluorescent tubes that persistently flicker to emergency lighting being randomly triggered to complete failure of lighting systems in some areas of the ship.

Detecting These Issues

To detect an Irritant:

EASY, INT, Mechanical or Engineering, or ROUTINE, EDU, Electronics or Steward

Doing It My Way

Example

In our example the Type “S” scout we want to buy (lists for MCr 30, discounted 45% to MCr 16.5) has four issues. We roll and achieve the following results:

1 and 4, Faulty Transponder. Severity: 5. The ship’s transponder cuts out half of the time. This will need to be replaced. (New part, Cr 15,000)

3 and 2, Ship’s Stabilizer Issues. Severity: 7. The ship will pitch and buck when landing and taking off. This will also need to be replaced. (New parts, Cr 35,000)

4 and 5, Ship’s Gravity Systems. Severity: 2. The ship’s gravity tends to unexpectedly increase and decrease by a factor of 0.2G, causing the crew to get disoriented while in space. (New parts, Cr 25,000)

6 and 3, Corrosion problems. Severity: 3. There is rust on the landing legs and along the belly of the ship. This will take some minor supplies (Cr 100, not including paint) and about three full man-days of work to remove these spots.

So the PC’s inspect this ship with a mechanic and they easily find the corrosion problems right away. During the hours-long inspection they discover the problems with the transponder and the stabilizers. A week later, they have made the necessary repairs (Cr 50,100 in parts, not including labor if

hired) and take off. While in space, they encounter the issues with the gravity plates while preparing for hyperspace, panicking the crew and causing a -1 to skill rolls for crew dizziness until it is fixed.

By the time the characters fix this undiscovered problem, they are now at least another Cr 25,000 lighter in the pocket and now they should be desperate for work.

Summary

So how can a buyer help themselves out during the point of sale? As shown I would carry along a ship’s engineer/mechanic and conduct a thorough inspection of the ship in question. Often, these maladies will be uncovered with a simple walk-through of the ship. Many of the surplus sales will be considered as an “As-Is” transaction.

Another way for these places to sell off their surplus ships would be through an auction. Again, the surplus ship will available to be examined ahead of time, usually hours before the auction is set to begin. As you would expect, all sales are final.

I hope those GM’s out there find this chart useful. Just in the making of this list I can foresee all kinds of interesting plot twists to ensure no campaign becomes stale. Again, this list is not all inclusive and by all means feel free to alter it to your tastes. Enjoy! ☼

Up Close and Personal

Aghregh

profiled by Joseph Rocchi

This article originally appeared on the pre-magazine Freelance Traveler website in October 2007

Aghregh is a bounty hunter operating in the Marches. His sense of humor is best described as quirky—those who associate with him over time can never quite figure out if he’s totally serious, or just “yanking their chains”. Peaceforcing is not truly a high-profile job among Vargr—but being a lone operative tracking down fugitives has a higher cachet. Aghregh is assisted by three gene-enhanced (non-

sapient) Terran-stock canines, which he has equipped with collars with audio and video pickups, and speakers. Using commdots and HUD, Aghregh can “see what they see, hear what they hear” and give them instructions remotely. This often means that his targets will find their means of escape blocked by the dogs, or that the dogs have been ‘herding’ them towards Aghregh. The dogs also can serve as less-conspicuous surveillance on worlds where Aghregh himself would stand out, tracking by both scent and video direction. Aghregh calls them his “Great Equalizer” in dealing with humans—after all, Terran-descended humans find

Up Close and Personal

Vargr easy to read, as they're used to reading the body language of Terran canines from millennia of co-existence. Vargr don't have the same experience with humans, but Terran canines *do*, and Aghregh reads *their* body language and vocalizations easily.

This is all well and good, and were that the end of it, Aghregh's casual associates would have no problem. But Aghregh tends to 'push it', joking with them, especially if they're human. In a bar after completing a mission, he'll order four beers—and put three on the floor. He loves Hawaiian shirts, calling them “perhaps the only proof the Solomani are right in saying that they have a superior culture”. Aghregh has been known to walk up to a ship to book passage wearing such a shirt—and his three dogs trot along behind in matching shirts. His dogs are intelligent enough to understand moderately complex instructions in both Galanglic and Gvegh, so he'll often have one deliver a message for him in a mouth-carried pouch (he can give it commands on directions, etc., through their commlink collars).

Aghregh has also been known to buttonhole traveling Solomani party functionaries about “renewing his party membership”—insisting that his ancestors came from Terra just as the Sollies did should his target try to tell him that a Vargr among the party is impossible.

Character Profile [GURPS]

Aghregh [100 points]

ST:	10/9 [10]	IQ:	13 [30]	Speed:	6.00
DX:	13 [20]	HT:	11/10 [10]	Move:	6
Dodge:	6	Parry:	8		
Movement:	Enhanced Move 12				

Advantages [44]

Vargr Racial Package (Total Cost 0)
Racial ST -1 [-10];
Racial DX +1 [10];
Enhanced Move 2 (=D72) [7]
(Speed (running): 12; (Running Fatigue after 5 sec): -30%);
Claws [15] (Damage: cr 1d);
Sharp Teeth [5] (Cutting damage; see p. B140);
Fur [4];
Temperature Tolerance 1 [0] (ZoneCtr: 63; Min:29; Max: 95);
Acute Taste and Smell +3 [6] (Taste and Smell: 17);

Acute Vision +1 [2] (Vision: 15);
Reduced Hit Points -1 [-5];
Chummy [-5];
Curious [-5] (Roll: IQ);
Easy to Read [-10];
Proud [-1];
Reduced Fatigue -1 [-3];
Reputation -2 (Flaky and Easily Swayed) [-10] (React: -2);
Alertness +1 [5];
Legal Enforcement Powers (BH License) [5];
Charisma +2 [10] (React: +2);
Wealth (Comfortable) [10] (Starting Wealth: \$30,000);
Animal Empathy [5] (React: +2/+4);
Contacts: Police (Skill 15, 9 or less, Usually Reliable) [4];
Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages [-40]

Honesty [-10];
Intolerance: Crooks [-5];
Enemy: Rival Bounty Hunter [-5];
Overconfidence [-10];
Odious Pers. Habit “Twisting Humans’ Tails” [-5] (React: -1);
Stubbornness [-5].

Quirks [-4]

Wears Hawaiian shirts off duty [-1];
Practical Joker [-1];
Speaks loudly when excited [1];
Showoff. [-1]

Skills [30]

Area Knowledges: Spin. Mar.-13 [1]; Gvoerdounn Sect.-13 [1];
Research-13 [2];
Streetwise-13 [2];
Guns (Pistol)/TL12-15 [1];
Blackjack-13 [1];
Judo-12 [2] (Parry: 8);
Stealth-12 [1];
Detect Lies-12 [2];
Shadowing-13 [2];
Criminology/TL12-13 [2];
Holdout-12 [1];
Tonfa-12 [2] (Parry: 6);
Piloting (Contragravity)/TL12-12 [1];
Law-11 [1];
Law Enforcement-12 [1];
Languages (MA): Galanglic-11 [=BD]; Gvegh (native)-13 [0];
Interrogation-12 [1];
Intimidation-13 [2];
Fast-Talk-13 [2];
Veterinary/TL12-14 [=BD];
Animal Handling-15 [1];
Body Language-13 [1].



Four Cons

by Bill Cameron

Editors Note: This was originally posted to the Traveller Mailing List, and reposted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in October 2007. This reprinting has been lightly edited.

Introduction

Con games and scams have been around as long as humans have been around. You can rest assured that once Og finally polished off a mammoth, Ug immediately tried to trick him out of a steak or two. Literature, mythology, and folk tales the world over abound with stories about tricksters. Homer's *Iliad* reaches its climax when the Greeks, after ten years of battle, finally trick the Trojans, take the city, and win the war.

Scams and cons make for great RPG scenarios too, if the referee and PCs can pull it off. Accordingly, I've typed up this little primer on four basic cons or scams. I'll lay out how each works in general terms and how each can be tweaked or customized. Most cons have been around for centuries, if not millennia. The specific details of a scam may change, but the underlying mechanism remains the same.

Cons and scams work thanks to human emotions. In a purely rational society, cons and scams would not work. While cons and scams do rest on the emotions you'd first think of, greed or fear, they also take advantage of other feelings, like charity or benevolence.

A brief note on terminology: The 'mark' is the person, or persons, being targeted by the confidence tricksters. 'Short' cons are named such because they either involve small amounts of money or take a short period of time. 'Long' cons are for large sums or take longer periods. If money is taken from a mark in several payments over a period of time, the con artists are said to 'grind' the money out.

The Badger Game

This scam depends on the mark's desire to avoid either arrest or a ruined reputation. In the classic Badger Game, the mark is caught by the con artists

in flagrante delicto with a woman other than his wife. Naturally, the mark's bed partner is one of the con artists! Once in a compromising situation, the second con artist, posing as a husband, boy friend, cop, priest, etc., bursts in and 'discovers' the couple. The mark is encouraged by the con artists to pay money in order to 'hush up' the affair.

A 'short' con, the Badger Game depends on the mark being eager to hush things up. Contact with the mark only lasts a few minutes or hours, long enough for a 'deal' to be made and money to be handed over. Please note, the Badger Game is not exactly blackmail. The con artists do not intend to 'grind' the mark, as he will not be approached for additional payments in the future. Indeed, the con artists do not want to 'grind' any future payments out of the mark because that will negate the 'deal' the mark thought he had made! The con artists don't want the mark to realize that he has been taken. Contacting the mark for further payments would run the risk of tipping the mark off, or 'smartening up a chump'.

The Badger Game can be easily tweaked and customized. The con need not involve extramarital sex or even illegal acts. All that the mark needs to be 'caught' doing is something he would rather not have bruited about. Any social *faux pas* that the mark feels strongly enough about will do. A Moslem found drinking alcohol, or a Mormon found drinking coffee, may want it to be kept quiet.

Because the Badger Game depends on the mores and laws of a particular society, this con may not be easily worked on certain worlds. A very conservative society with a high law level would afford con artists with many activities to bait their traps with. Conversely, an anarchic society on a free wheeling world may not afford any opportunities at all. The activities an individual from one of those worlds might find embarrassing may not be worth paying to hush up; the mark may decide to remove all of the witnesses instead!

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The Pigeon Drop

An ancient scam, this con depends on the ability of the con artists to misdirect the mark's attention either with bluster or sleight of hand. At some point during the scam, the packet or bundle containing the mark's money must be switched with a 'gaffe' packet or bundle which contains nothing. US list members may remember a version of the Pigeon Drop from the opening scene of *The Sting*.

In the classic Pigeon Drop, the mark is approached by one of the con artists. The con man has found some money. Sometimes, the mark is allowed to 'find' the money and the first con man immediately approaches him. The con man begins to propose that he and the mark find the money's rightful owner when the second con man, the 'singer', comes up. The con men will pretend to be strangers, just as the mark is strangers with them.

The second con man identifies the money as something that will not be claimed; i.e., it is from illegal or immoral activities. He suggests that the windfall is to be split between the three men and the first con artist agrees.

For various reasons, the split cannot be done right away and each of the three will need to put up 'good faith' or '*bona fide*' money in order to share in the windfall. Naturally, this is where the mark's money is whisked away and he is left quite literally 'holding the bag'!

Like the Badger Game, the Pigeon Drop is a short con. Contact between the con artists and their mark will last only minutes, maybe a few hours if the mark needs to withdraw funds to provide his 'good faith' share. The Pigeon Drop depends on a mark's greed or a desire to help, whereas the Badger Game depends on embarrassment or fear.

Over the centuries, the Pigeon Drop has been tweaked and customized nearly out of all recognition. One version has an illegal immigrant with a winning lottery ticket. Others involve 'lost' valuable items that need to be sold before the sale proceeds are shared; still others 'dropped' payroll checks.

One popular version has the first con artist attempting to sell a valuable item because they need immediate cash to handle some emergency. In this version, the 'singer' volunteers to purchase the item because he knows where he can resell it. However, the 'singer' doesn't have the full purchase price on hand. The mark and 'singer' together purchase the item for resale, giving the first con artist the immediate money he 'needs'. After further shenanigans, the mark is left with a worthless item and an empty bank account.

While both are 'short' cons, the Badger Game and Pigeon Drop do vary in certain aspects. After running the Badger Game, the con artists can still stick around. Their mark may not even know he has been scammed, all he knows is that he has successfully arranged for something to be hushed up. Unlike the mark in the Badger Game, the mark in the Pigeon Drop knows he has been swindled. The con artists involved in that scam need to either move on or at the least change their appearance.

Next, I'll discuss two 'long' cons; the Spanish Prisoner and the Pyramid Scheme, lay out their operating details, and describe a few versions of each. Both of these scams are 'long' in nature. The con artists are in contact with the mark(s) for long periods of time, days or weeks, and are attempting to come away with large amounts of money. 'Short' cons, like those described earlier in this article, depend on fleeting contact with the mark and usually involve smaller amounts of money.

The Spanish Prisoner

An ancient con game, the Spanish Prisoner presents the mark with a person who must be ransomed or item that must be purchased. After the person or item is retrieved, there will be a large payoff for those involved in the ransom or purchase. The 'Nigerian Bank Scam' (which no longer involves only Nigerian banks; 'inheritances' or 'unclaimed funds' from other countries are not rare) or '4-1-9' is nothing but the latest permutation of the venerable Spanish Prisoner scam.

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The Spanish Prisoner con works on many emotional levels. The Badger Game relies on fear or embarrassment as the Pigeon Drop does on greed or helpfulness. The Spanish Prisoner will play to a certain level of greed in the mark, but well-run cons of this nature always look for a 'good' or 'noble' emotional hook too. By way of example, the Nigerian Bank Scam often targets religious organizations and pitches the need for co-religionists to assist each other in times of trouble.

The actual term for the con, the Spanish Prisoner, harks back to a noble hook or pitch used in the scam during early 1900s America. This con was run successfully throughout the African-American community of that era. In the scam, a 'Creole-looking' individual, who was actually a Spanish nobleman, was supposedly in jail on trumped up 'Jim Crow'-type charges. If he is bailed out, he could contact his embassy, clear his name, and richly reward the people who freed him. As you can see, this con played its marks on many emotional levels; greed for 'justly' earned riches, 'group' solidarity, getting one over on the 'establishment', and many others. When tweaking or customizing the Spanish Prisoner for your campaigns and adventures it is important to remember that the 'prisoner' need not be a person, it can just as easily be an object or information. A map, a logbook, a database, an answer, all can hold the promise of riches in a con artist's plan.

The scam may even take on a life of its own. A story concocted by a rogue as part of a con job could gain wide currency. Others, completely unaware of the origins of a particular story, may truly believe that a certain special data disc holds the key to a fortune, even though a con artist for some long ago scam invented both the disc and the fortune. As a 'long' con, the Spanish Prisoner requires the con artists to stay in contact with their marks for lengthy periods of time. While the chance of being found out is greater, that danger is somewhat offset by the bigger 'score' this style of con can provide. Like the Badger Game, if the play in the Spanish Prisoner is

handled properly the mark won't even know he's been swindled. US List members may remember the elaborate con job played on Robert Shaw at the end of *The Sting*. That con game, which involved paying for inside information regarding the outcome of horse races, used a variant of the Spanish Prisoner.

Pyramid Scheme

You may be familiar with this con game under another name, the Ponzi Scheme. Strictly speaking, this old con game uses the money received from later marks to pay off earlier marks. Paying off on promises made to the early mark acts as a kind of advertising to draw in later marks. By bragging about the money they've received, these early marks are actually helping the con artist scam his later marks!

The con artist could be selling phony stocks, trading certificates, investment plans, whatever items or services he promises will provide the marks a 'great' return on their 'investment'. The con artist sets up a payment 'pyramid' in which a portion of the moneys received from later marks is given to early marks. Because the growth of the payment 'pyramid' is not constrained in any manner; i.e., everyone wants in on a 'good' thing, the scam will eventually collapse when enough new marks cannot be roped in to pay off the older marks.

During this 'long' con, the scam artist will be in close contact with many, many marks. After all, the more marks he can rope in, the longer the scheme can operate and the bigger score he can carry away. The amount of contact and the length of time makes this type of con is very dangerous. The Pyramid or Ponzi Scheme can also be carefully crafted to skirt the boundaries of what is legal or illegal. The longer the con artist can operate in that gray area, the longer he has to make money. On some worlds and in some cultures, Pyramid or Ponzi Schemes may not (yet) be illegal and the results of those schemes could be far out of proportion to the wishes of the original scammers. During the early 1990's, a series of Pyramid Schemes run in Albania destroyed that

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nation's economy and helped lead to the later problems in Kosovo.

Legal Pyramid and Ponzi Schemes include lotteries and social security programs. In lotteries, a portion of the money received from lottery players (marks) is paid out to winners while the lottery operator pockets the rest. By limiting the number of winners to a small portion of the players, the payment 'pyramid' remains stable. In (US) social security programs, money is taxed from current workers and paid to current retirees. Because of death rates, the workers will outnumber retirees and again the payment 'pyramid' (supposedly) remains stable.

Pyramid or Ponzi Schemes sometimes develop spontaneously. The Dutch Tulip craze, the South Seas investment bubble, and the more recent Dot-Bomb bust are all examples of this. Sharp operators

who recognize these 'natural' pyramid schemes early can ride the resulting bubble for great profit. Including a con or scam in a campaign or adventure doesn't mean that the PCs must be either marks or con artists. There are plenty of ways in which the PCs can be involved in a con or scam without risking their morals or money.

The PCs could become involved along the many edges of a con. They could find themselves investigating what may be a pyramid scheme. They may be hired as 'frighteners' in a Badger Game or tricked into 'holding the bag' in a Pigeon Drop. They could be hired to pick and deliver the worthless 'mcguffin' in the Spanish Prisoner con. Whatever scams you use in your sessions and however your PCs are involved, I hope this little primer proves to be of some help. 🎲

Doing It My Way

TNS Quick and Easy

by Michael Hughes

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in June 2002. It has been lightly edited, with some new material added by the Editor

Good old Traveller News Service. The first thing any true *Traveller* player reads when they cracked open the journal all those years ago. Just one to two lines that could lead to adventure, glory or incarceration in a deep, dark hole.

Want to 'hide' a nugget of adventure information in a TNS report? Need to create stories as camouflage for a story seed? Well, simply let the dice fall where they may then fill in the blanks. Below is a system used to create stories for a subsector, but is easily applicable for smaller or larger areas.

This list is of course no means a comprehensive one but hopefully you might find it of use.

Step 1: Number of Stories

Number of stories for a particular day for that Subsector: Roll 1D6 ÷ 2, round fractions down. This will give you 0-3 stories. Note if the Travellers are

on the world where a story occurred, then it will be on that date. If 1 to 3 parsecs from that world, subtract a week (as it took a week to get there). And so forth for more distant systems.

Step 2: Where Did the Story Take Place

Determine where the story takes place. For me, I load the Pop code for each world in a Subsector into an Excel spreadsheet, total it up and use a Random Function to determine where the news item takes place.

For those who are not blessed with Excel, if there are less than 36 inhabited systems a good model might be using the *Traveller* D66 system, ie 11 to 16, 21 to 26, 31 to 36 etc, re-rolling a blank result. Because stories with larger populations are more likely to have news to report, consider rolling 2D6-2 when you have nominated a system, if the result is higher than the Pop code then re-determine where the story took place.

Other ways of determining the system are possible, but in any case, you should probably bias your method in favor of worlds that would be "more important" in the milieu.

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Step 3: Story Type and Topic

Simply roll D66 and consult the table below.

D66 Roll		Story Type/Topic
1	1	Civil War or Inter-state War begins, ends, escalates, peace talks commence, etc.
1	2	Imperial Navy deployed in increased patrols, interdicts a planet, battles with pirates/enemy vessels, etc.
1	3	Imperial Marines or Army deployed in police action, counter insurgency or raid
1	4	Government Changes: Revolution by people or coup by military occurs, overthrowing current administration. Consider change in Govt Code. OR Democratic process has seen a change of government (applicable for Govt Codes 4, 7, A, B)
1	5	Change within Government: Government remains the same but a major figure within it has left due to scandal, age, family reasons, health, growing senility etc, or has died in office
1	6	Change within Government: A new figure has emerged as the effective ruler of government and is ushered in into office in an elaborate ceremony, e.g., coronation if a noble (Govts 3, 5, A & B), or swearing in if a representative (Govts 4, 7-9). Could also a member of the supreme judiciary body.
2	1	Change in Laws: New laws have been introduced or rescinded, that impinge greatly on personal freedoms, for example the right to search a residence without a warrant, the right for governments to monitor bank accounts etc.
2	2	Civil unrest has broken out on world over some particular issue such as harsh new laws being introduced, the government being caught in immoral activity, ethnic or minority persecution, immigration issues etc, or a crime wave occurs.
2	3	Major Crime Bust or Legal Event occurs: A criminal organization has been broken open due to diligent law enforcement work and/or information provided by an informant. Or a legal case of great significance has begun, is in process, or has concluded.
2	4	A major contract has been signed between a system and a company to produce a particular product: e.g., small arms, starships, computers, nylon stockings, etc. Or a company has announced a new product, e.g., Vanilla Coke, the latest Android House Servant, a really big gun, etc.
2	5	A major company has merged with another or been acquired by a larger company. Concerns about reduced competition or the loss of a national asset might surface.
2	6	Big Business: A major company has announced massive losses, restructuring required or even has gone bankrupt, which will greatly impact on that particular system (for example they could have been the major employer on that world).
3	1	Natural Disaster: Earthquake, Fire, Storms, Flood, Drought, Space Debris, Plague, Pestilence, Famine, Mass Extinction, etc.
3	2	
3	3	
3	4	
3	5	
3	6	
4	1	Accident: Explosion, major transport accident (e.g., rail derailment or aircraft crash), bio-weapon loosed, habitat or life support compromised, etc.
4	2	
4	3	
4	4	
4	5	Amber zone applied or lifted on planet; Red zone downgraded to Amber or Amber increased to Red. Determine cause for the new rating. If being applied as opposed to taken off anything that threatens the well being of others makes a good example: natural disaster from disasters or conflict from political are good reasons.
4	6	

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D66 Roll	Story Type/Topic
<i>Entries 5-1 through 5-6 are for celebrities. If stuck for a celebrity type roll D6:</i>	
1-2	<i>Noble/Politician (Duke, Count etc.)</i>
3	<i>Business Mogul (very rich non noble)</i>
4	<i>Performer or Artist (Singer, Actor, Sculptor etc)</i>
5	<i>Scholar or Religious Figure (Academic, head of faith or for that region)</i>
6	<i>Military figure or Hero (head of planetary military, imperial naval, marine or armed forces figure, medal clad military hero)</i>
5 1	Celebrity (or partner) has given birth, had a true clone made, etc.
5 2	Celebrity has died of natural causes, tragic or bizarre accident, assassinated, is gravely ill, diagnosed with a rare disease, etc.
5 3	Celebrities relationship status has changed: Got married, divorced, split up, hooked up with someone (preferably famous in their own right with a similar sounding name) etc.
5 4	Celebrity caught in a Scandal: Bribery, Drugs, Disgusting Fetish for culturally obscene act, Sex, fraud, criminal, revealed as a covert Psi, etc.
5 5	May go to trial and be covered extensively by tabloid press (with the broadsheets also giving less coverage but largely commentating on the immoral actions of the tabloid press, while still giving enough details to satisfy their high brow clients).
5 6	Celebrity is touring the region: fact finding, performing, attending awards ceremony, visiting with sick children for charity etc.
6 1	Competition or Sport: Major sporting event concludes (trophy/award handed out) or starts. Or winners of prestigious awards are announced, e.g., actor's guild awards, TAS reporter of the year, the Imperial Academy of Sciences etc. For lower population planets the competition or sport is probably weird (hence it appearing as a 'quirky' news item: for example nude ice hockey, dwarf tossing, Vargr shaving or the like)
6 2	Festival commences/concludes: A major festival or celebration starts or concludes, and probably has some wacky elements or customs. For example: on Roup (Regina) or Florida (Terra/United States) the law level is reduced several places for a week to allow people to let off steam; The festival of the dead commences which has the living honoring dead relatives by dancing in the street wearing masks made up to look like them; etc. The lower the population the more unusual or outré the festivals
6 3	Weird Customs: An unusual custom, calling for conduct far outside the social norms for where the story is appearing, is revealed for that planet (the World Builders Guide by Digest Group Publications had some great examples). For example: Judges must wash the feet of a leper to prove their worth to judge others; social standing is indicated by hair color; law enforcers must sing the recently arrested their rights; everyone sits down at the same time for a meal. Go nuts.
6 4	Mystery solved or Discovery: A ship which disappeared many years ago has re-appeared, the owners of ancient ruins identified, technological breakthrough has occurred in a particular field of sophont endeavor, a missing celebrity turns up, etc.
6 5	Mystery occurs: Ship disappears, ruins belonging to an unknown race discovered, entire city goes psychotic for exactly 10.1 minutes, etc.
6 6	CHOOSE

Step 4: Write the Story

While a story in a regular daily or weekly newspaper (or equivalent) is generally several paragraphs long, TNS articles in *Traveller* publications have typically been one-to-three short paragraphs, like the “lead” (now commonly written “lede”) of a more extensive story.

When writing your story (or its lede), you should insure that you answer the “five ‘W’s and the ‘H’” — Who the story is about, What happened, Where it happened, When it happened, Why it happened, and How it happened. Since the lede is generally intended to be the first paragraph of a longer story, you only need to include the bare bones.

Examples

Rolled a 5-2 for Celebrity Death. Stuck for a celebrity type, I roll a 3 for Business Mogul.

Radan Colth, owner of Robo-Technics, the largest supplier of Technical droids in the subsector, was killed in a tragic accident at his most recently built Robotic plant, when a droid went haywire at a ceremony to officially open the facility. The robot, a servant model hired from a catering company, was reported to have attempted to serve Radan Colth by inserting a magnum of champagne down his throat, which ruptured internal organs, leaving Colth beyond the help of advanced medical science. The servo droid was not of Robo-Technics manufacture.

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Rolled a 2-5 for Company Buy-out or merger

Fenris Arms, a local company specialising in the manufacture of infantry support weapons, has been bought by Madagascar Incorporated, a wholly owned subsidiary of Interstellar Arms. Company spokesperson, Lou Franburg, said that Madagascar had long sought Fenris Arms, a company with an excellent reputation for producing a high quality product, and its growing market share amongst mercenary companies that hire out from the world.

'The Fenris VRF has the highest ammunition to kill ratio of any VRF unit on the market today. If the Imperial Marines were armed with these babies during the siege of Banu-Phal, there would have been a lot less Vargr limping back over the frontier with their tails between their legs,' he said.

Rolled a 4-3 for Accident

A shuttle crash at Moughas down has killed over one hundred people and caused nearly MCr2,000 damage to the facility. The shuttle apparently lost control on landing and impacted into a fuel refining facility. The resulting explosion levelled that section of the complex, and caused wide spread damage to other areas of the port, and injuring 450 personnel in addition to those killed. SPA Chief Administrator Pablo Bescaro has been stood down un-

til an inquiry into the accident has been completed. Rumours of cost cutting to Starship Approach control systems have abounded at Moughas down for years. Last year two shuttles were forced to abort landings after control systems inexplicably went down at the last second.

Rolled a 61 for Competition

The Rogue Roosters have won Tansum's Grav Ball league, with a stunning 45 to 8 win over favourites Carson City. Commentators have said that the fact that Carson Cities entire forward section coming down sick was almost certainly the deciding factor to a Rooster win. The Roosters are owned by Davwa Smcan, a former player who made a fortune as a Belter after leaving professional sports, and who was horribly disfigured in a decompression accident last year, shortly after purchasing the team.

Rolled a 3-3 for Natural Disaster

An earthquake initially estimated to have a magnitude of at least 7.9 has shaken the northern third of the minicontinent of Shiikelanaa. The epicenter of the quake has not yet been determined, but is believed to be within 100 kilometers of the city of Denikar. Damage is reported to be extensive, and casualties high. Relief efforts from southern Shiikelanaa and western Eshiki are under way. ☸

Up Close and Personal

Kylor Dukagen

profiled by Walter G. Smith

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in April of 2002.

Kylor Dukagen 458CE9 Age 50 Cr150000

6 terms Scientist

Human Male, homeworld Regina

Admin-2, Computer-2, Grav-1, Vacc Suit-1

Imperial Science Union Member, Pocket Computer

From the TAS News Service, Rhylanor, 011-1105

Doctor Kylor Dukagen of the Rhylanor Institute of Socio-History has announced a leave of absence from the Institute in the wake of his ground-breaking, popular release of Unicorn Rising: A Frontier Comes of Age in the Second Millenium. This scholarly work has made Dr Dukagen well-known in intellectual circles throughout the Domain of Deneb, but this new popular release, edited and annotated with the general public in mind, has made his name familiar from Corridor to the Zhodani border.

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Up Close and Personal

According to a spokesperson of the Institute, Dr Dukagen will be using his leave of absence to undertake a lecture tour of all the subsector capitols and other selected worlds within the Spinward Marches. The doctor hopes, sources said, to take advantage of these personal appearances to "further develop his work against the broad mosaic of cultures and peoples that make up our domain of the Imperium".

Rumor has it that the Sector Duke at Regina was particularly taken by the ideas presented in the work, and intends to invite Dr Dukagen to stay at length at the sector capitol, perhaps with an offer of an advisory position. The book's signature phrase of unity, "all of us together behind the claw", has already been heard in communiqués and government addresses on both Rhyllanor and Regina.

Dr Dukagen's exact itinerary has not been made public at this time.

Dr Kylor Dukagen is a tall, dark-haired man, his hair slowly turning salt and pepper with advancing age. He is usually more adept with computer records and libraries than he is with people, but is slowly growing into his newfound popularity. He is currently travelling between major worlds of the Spinward Marches on a combination lecture tour and sociological research trip.

Dr Dukagen has never been in a life-or-death situation. While not especially cowardly, his first response to such a situation would almost certainly be either flight or freezing with panic. His approach to any non-violent conflict situation is to talk things out in a reasonable fashion, based on his world-view that people can always find common ground.

The good doctor is an avid collector of space exploration memorabilia, and loves to spend time on starliners buying drinks for talkative members and ex-members of the IISS. Note that he is smart enough to recognize most tall tales when he hears them, but may continue buying drinks if the teller is entertaining enough.

Plot Hooks

1. Dr Kylor Dukagen is a cousin of noted journalist Enli Iddukagan (see *Journal of the Traveller's Aid*

Society #22). This somewhat questionable reporter may try to attach himself to his cousin's group, so as to try and gain advantage of Dr Dukagen's newfound fame. Enli will attempt to gain access to information and areas not open to the public, with the players (and the Doctor) caught in the middle.

2. Dr Dukagen is carrying with him a piece from his space exploration memorabilia collection, an old scout's logbook. He intends to present it to a correspondent of his, a curator of a museum along his route. Unknown to Dr Dukagen, the logbook contains jump coordinates for a derelict starship of unusual design. An assistant of the curator has determined the information exists from a scanned copy of the log, but needs the original...and wants to get it before the curator gets it into the well-secured museum.
3. As #2, but the information leads to a series of Imperial deep-space refuelling sites—the exposure of which would prove damaging to the Imperium, both diplomatically and militarily. The assistant curator is a spy for a foreign power.
4. Dr. Dukagen's message of unity has been irritating to a radical group on a planet along his route. A small group of dissidents will attempt to harass him upon his arrival, and will look for ways to delay, embarrass, and even blackmail him to interfere with his personal appearances.
5. As #4, but the dissidents will attempt to kidnap him, offering his safe return in exchange for his reading a prepared statement to the media—which he will refuse to do. It will not even occur to him to later recant the statement, or that people will ignore it as being given under duress.
6. As #5, but the dissidents will attempt to publicly assassinate Dr Dukagen for anti-imperial purposes.

In all cases, the players could be friends, traveling companions or simply people he bought drinks for in a starport or shipboard tavern. ☼

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- how we can make our magazine better
- how we can make our website better
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- what you think of our look
- how we can make it better

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

- e-mail: feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

- feedback form at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html>.
- Forums:
Traveller Fanzine section of SFRPG: <http://www.sfrpg-discussion.net/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36>
Lone Star at Citizens of the Imperium: <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13>

Note: you must be registered with the forums to be able to use this method.

Traveller on the Internet

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

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

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

News About Traveller

Recent Traveller News and Findings

March/April/May 2016

- **Felbrigg Herriot** has released *The Motherlode: A One-Shot Scenario*, and *Calla's Cruise: A One-Shot Scenario*
- **Christian Hollnbuchner** has released *Starships Book I00III0: QRF70 Typhoon*, *Starships Book I0I0000: Javelin Class Torpedo Boat*, *Starships Book I0I000I: Spark Class Scout*, *Space Stations XXIIIX: Cylinder Habitat*, *Space Stations XXIX: The Wheel*, *Thunderclap*, and *Bubble Car*
- **Jon Brazer Enterprises** has released *Foreven Worlds: Alespron Subsector*, *Foreven Worlds: Fessor Subsector*, *Foreven Worlds: Massina Subsector*, and *Foreven Worlds: Tsokabar Subsector*, under the TAS Community Content program
- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released *Ships of Clement Sector 12: Broken Hill Class Prospector*, and 2nd Editions or OGL Editions of *Clement Sector Core Setting Book*, *Subsector Sourcebook 2: Franklin*, *21 Plots*, *21 Plots Too*, *21 Plots III*, *21 Plots Planetside*, *Introduction to Clement Sector*, *Ships of Clement Sector 1-3: Hub Federation Warships*, *Ships of Clement Sector 4-6: Traders, Scouts and Small Craft*, *Ships of Clement Sector 7-9: Defense Boats and Light Warships*, *Ships of Clement Sector 10-12: Workhorses*, and *Ships of Clement Sector 13: Strikemaster Class Brig* (new)
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Reach Adventure 2: Theories of Everything*, TAS Community Content *TAS 2D Deck Plan Templates*, and *TAS InDesign Templates*
- **Gamer Printshop** has released *Corsair Star Ship Deck Plans*, *Crusader Class Close Escort Starship Deck Plans*, and *Peregrine Class 1200 ton Fast Diplomatic Sloop Deck Plans*
- **Far Future Enterprises** has released *The Science Fiction in Traveller* (eBook), *Fate of the Kinunir* (eBook), *Shadow of the Storm* (eBook)
- **Antherwyck House Games** has released *Planetary Display*



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”.

