



FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Featured Article:

After-Action Report: TravellerCon/USA 2016

by Jeff Zeitlin

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.

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In A Store Near You: *Robert DeVoe.*

The Prep Room: *Timothy Collinson*

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From the Editor



This issue, I’m starting a new section, like I’ve wanted to do for some time. The *Freelance Traveller* Cookbook will be a place to share recipes that you’ve connected with Traveller in some way—read the Introduction on page 53 for the details. I hope this will become a regularly-submitted-for feature of the magazine.

Honestly, I’d like to see more—and longer—submissions all around. I see plenty of ideas tossed around on the forums and mailing lists; why not grab some and develop them? News stories can also provide ideas, as well. And if I have something to work with, I can (and will) help you improve your writing, if you need or want it. All you have to do is (1) write the article, and (2) send it in. ☼

Mongoose *Traveller* 2nd Ed. High Guard

reviewed by Megan Robertson

High Guard. Matthew Sprange.

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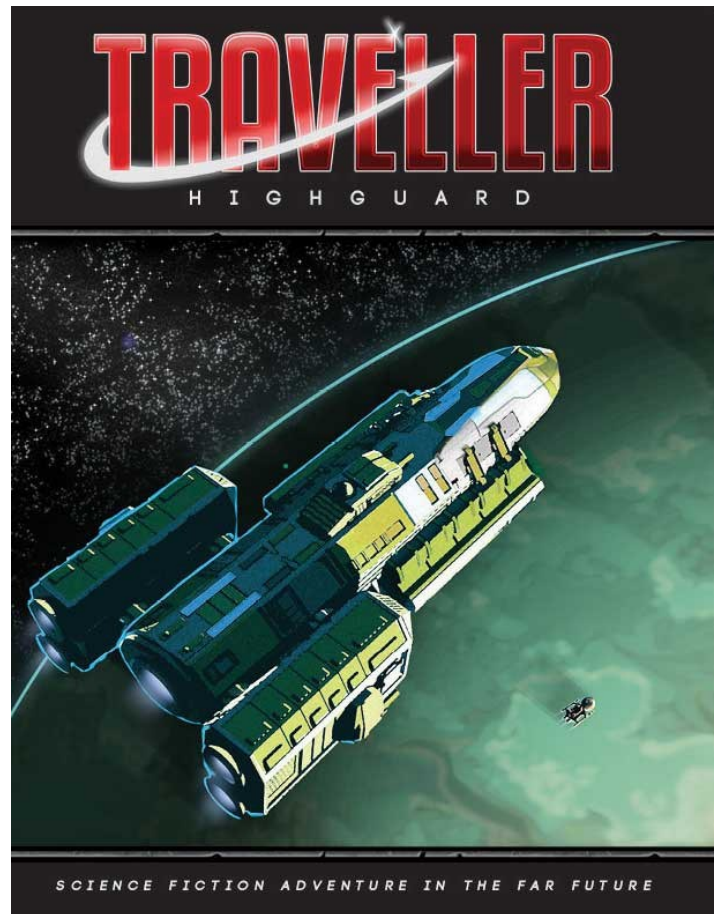
This review originally appeared on rpg-resource.org.uk in August 2016

What's *Traveller* without, well, some travelling... especially in space? *High Guard* is designed to provide a toolbox to empower every aspect of spacefaring in your game from designing and operating starships to using them in spectacular combat.

The Introduction begins by explaining where the name 'High Guard' comes from in the first place—it refers to a vessel standing overwatch in a position that is higher in a gravity well than other ships. That's a useful place to be, as if combat should take place when under the influence of a planet's gravity (or indeed that of any object in space) it's advantageous to be higher in it than your opponent. Harking back to the age of sail, one would speak of having the 'wind gauge' when in a position where the wind conferred an advantage—here it's the 'gravity gauge' instead, but a very similar concept.

Other topics explored in the Introduction cover terminology, the various types of space navies to be encountered—Imperial, subsector and planetary (assuming you are using the Third Imperium default setting)—and the concept of the Ship's Locker (standard equipment carried aboard all ships such as vacc suits and emergency equipment). It ends with a listing of different types of ship, including a useful size chart.

Chapter 1: Ship Design then gets down to detail of how the process of designing and building ships work. You can use existing designs 'as-is', modify them or come up with wholly-new ones... but you'll need to hire a naval architect to oversee the project. For those who want to have this level of control, there is a thirteen-step process to follow starting with creating the hull. It's a detailed process, one



that will keep you happily occupied for a while and, like many design processes in this game, can become an end in itself, an enjoyable pastime rather than the more utilitarian designing of a ship for your next game. As well as cost, you need to keep track of tonnage and power requirements.

Next is Chapter 2: Weapons and Screens. This goes into detail about the weapons and defensive systems that can be mounted on a spaceship. There's a huge range of weapons that can be employed, and this chapter concentrates on what you need to know to install them: cost, power requirements, hard-points to attach them and so on. Fighting with them comes later, never you fear! There's also a bit about defensive technology, mainly point-defence weapons and screens. Physical armour is covered in the construction chapter above.

Still looking at building ships, Chapter 3: Spacecraft Options gets quite interesting as it looks at how to customise your ship and presents a wide range of options from alternative drives and power systems to adding acceleration couches... and far more. Eve-

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rything is described in terms of cost, tonnage and power requirements, linking it all back to the original ship design process.

Next, Chapter 4: Primitive and Advanced Spacecraft looks at vessels which differ from the norm presented in the previous chapters. These range from custom-built ships utilising the latest concepts and technologies to ones built by less-advanced species who have at least begun to reach for the stars.

This is followed by Chapter 5: Space Stations, which looks in equal depth at space-based constructs designed for living in space rather than travelling through it. A similar thirteen-point checklist is provided for you to work through if you wish to design one from scratch, and there are also notes on some of the specialised space stations that are to be found out in the black.

We then take a look in Chapter 6: The Ship's Computer at the 'brain' of your space vessel in more detail. It's an interesting balance between modern advances in computing and the original *Traveller* concept of ship computers as being massive—a concept derived when real-world spaceship computers had about as much power as the average smartphone of today [*far less -ed.*] and computer facilities covered acres of land! There's information on the sort of programs you might need for your ship computer and how much they cost.

Next comes Chapter 7: High Technology which explores some exciting ideas about what happens beyond TL15 (the upper limit covered by the construction rules presented so far). Perhaps you'd prefer not to use a Jump drive at all... well, here are details of alternate drive systems such as hyperdrives, warp drives, space-folding drives and even time drives allowing temporal as well as spatial travel. There are equally exotic weapons and screens and other equipment to browse through as well. Here it's a matter of what the Referee is willing to let you have or, if you are the Referee, how you want your universe to look.

OK, now we know how to design a ship from the keel up (and how much it will cost) but what does it look like? Chapter 9: Creating Deck Plans... hey, hang on a minute! We've lost Chapter 8! Seriously, there isn't a Chapter 8 in this book. Fortunately this appears to be just about the only error I've found, and all the indexing and hyperlinks work, so it's no real biggie... So, this chapter looks at how to draw deckplans that reflect the ship you have just taken so much trouble to design accurately. It's all a matter of scale, and relating the known tonnage of different elements of your design to the whole. Some talent at technical drawing or a good drawing package might help here, though.

This is followed by Chapter 10: Fighters. Never mind these big ships, what about those swarms of single-seater ships you see swarming about in science-fiction movies? For a start, they are generally more fun in a space battle than capital ships from a player perspective. There are some design notes, although the main process introduced in Chapter 1 is sufficiently flexible to construct fighters as well as larger ships. There are also notes about how they are used in combat and even how they are recovered by their mother ship when the fight is done.

Next is the bit you've been waiting for—combat itself—in the shape of Chapter 11: Capital Ship Battles. Whilst it is possible to use the core combat system presented in the Core Rulebook—which does work for ship-to-ship battles as well as for when people brawl—it gets a bit cumbersome if you want to stage a mass battle of capital ships. So here is a vastly streamlined system based on, but separate from, the space combat rules detailed in the core rules. It takes a while to set up, but once that's done the actual battle proceeds at a suitably dramatic pace.

Finally, there is the *Jayne's Guide to Spacecraft of the Third Imperium* (presented by the Travellers' Aid Society, of course). This provides a whole host of ready-made ships (using the design process outlined in this book) complete with statistics, price, running

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costs, crew requirements, external illustrations and isomorphic floorplans—starting with a single-seater light fighter and working all the way up to battle-wagons like fleet carriers and dreadnoughts. There are a few interesting ones along the way—the Type S Scout and the Far Trader are still in there, which will be remembered by many *Traveller* players from

previous versions of this game, a laboratory ship built on a ring structure, and even the *Annic Nova*... an alien craft which formed the basis of a classic exploration adventure back in the days of the Little Black Books!

Overall, this contains pretty much all you need to know to get travelling... with an elegant design system that's infinitely scalable and flexible whatever sort of spaceship you need. 🌟

Doing It My Way

Secret Police Forces in *Traveller*

by Robert Weaver

This article is an edited (by the author) version of one that appeared on the author's blogspot in September 2016.

The KGB and FSB. The Gestapo. The SS. The Stasi. SMERSH (from the James Bond novels). S.H.I.E.L.D. (from the Marvel comics universe). U.N.C.L.E. (as in *The Man From...*). Torchwood (from the eponymous show, a *Doctor Who* spinoff). The Galactic Empire's Imperial Security Bureau. *Babylon 5*'s Nightwatch and Psi Corps. *Firefly*'s Blue Hands Men and Operatives. 1984's Thought Police.

What do all these groups have in common? They're Secret Police forces.

What are Secret Police?

The Columbia Encyclopedia defines secret police as a "Policing organization operating in secrecy for the political purposes of its government, often with terroristic procedures."

They exist to protect the security of the state from conspiracies or revolutions. They are distinct from conventional police in that they operate out of uniform, often with little or no government oversight. Secret Police forces (SP) often have power to act extra-legally, and authority to overrule conventional police. SP are a product of an authoritarian government's desire to exert control over the populace. They use coercion, threat, suspicion and force.

In some states the SP report only to the chief executive or someone near him. In these cases, the nor-

mal legislator or jurist may be unaware of their activities or even their existence. They're the ones who do the bidding of the Real Powers in Government, the scary dudes in dark outfits that show up late at night to arrest you. They're definitely Armed Groups*.

In the Official *Traveller* Universe, the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service moves into this territory in some of its activities. The Imperials see the Zhodani *Tavrchedl'* as secret police.

Harry Harrison's comic hero The Stainless Steel Rat encounters Secret Police in *The Stainless Steel Rat for President*. (A fun read, by the way). They are officially the Federal Health Alteration Committee (a joke on the CIA) and commonly called Ultimados. They are the president/dictator's personal hit squad. This is the worst element of SP forces, their capability to use deadly force against civilians. Acting 'above the law', they can assassinate enemies of the state with little fear of legal consequences.

Travellers often get involved in activities that may bring them to the attention of SP forces. Smuggling and other criminal acts get them pursued by conventional police as well, but it is the Travellers' being off-worlders that makes them interesting to the SP. They could be working for another government against the locals. Moving arms or other goods for dissidents challenges the Powers That Be. Crime encourages social breakdown and public disorder.

* See <http://ancientfarfuture.blogspot.com/2016/03/armed-groups-in-traveller.html>

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SPs may target Travellers for elimination, but the referee should give the players some chance to escape or fight back. No one will appreciate having their PC taken out by unseen and unsuspected shooters. Near misses or minor wounds can increase the dramatic tension, while still giving the players a chance. Instead of elimination, Travellers could be arrested and taken to secret facilities, from which they can then escape in heroic fashion.

If a PC fails a Streetwise-type throw for anything of questionable legality, the referee should make a secret throw for 6+. Success means that the SP have discovered the PC's inquiries or activities, and have them under surveillance.**

Secret police may not even be that secret. When the SP are above the law, there's no need to hide their activities. Publicity adds to the sense of fear they want to project. In authoritarian societies, the locals will be able to tell who's a SP agent, and avoid them when possible. Adventurers from off-world may have trouble picking them out.

To detect secret police presence in a social setting: 9+ on 2D6, DM +1 if EDU 10+, Streetwise, ½ Liaison, Law Level - 9 (min 0)

SP make the people reluctant to trust anyone. If the referee determines that a world has a significant SP presence, amend the reaction table as follows:

No results of 2 or 12 (nobody's going to be your friend, but nobody's going to get themselves arrested for street brawling). If throw is >7, DM -2. If throw is <7, DM +2 Reactions will tend towards neutral/unfriendly reactions. Why risk trouble by getting involved with strangers?

What Sorts of Governments Would Have Secret Police?

Any of them, but Secret Police are more common in governments that are remote from the governed.

** See <http://ancientfarfuture.blogspot.com/2014/04/what-gamers-need-to-know-about.html>

That includes Captive Governments, Dictatorships, and Oligarchies. Corporate governments may have them, as well as the often misunderstood Feudal Technocracy. If the Law Level is 8+, SP are almost a certainty. You might say that the Law Level scale is a measure of authoritarian tendency. Even democratic states can use Secret Police for their own defense, if the state feels threatened.

As the examples above show, the organization often has an impressive name, but this is not always the case. The White Witch of Narnia had a secret police headed by wolves, but not a scary name. The turn-creatures-into-stone thing was scary, though.

Kinds of Encounters with Secret Police:

The Random Encounter table has several entries for police or security forces, but these are the conventional forces. Referees, if you want to make your players nervous, casually mention that anybody on the list could be secret police in disguise. A patron could also be an SP agent, setting up the PCs for arrest or using them as catspaws against the 'enemies of the state'. Secret police in Imperial Russia would join rebellious groups and even conduct actions against government officials to expose the plotters.

In my TU, the TAS and the Wardens*** are *not* secret police. They make a point of announcing who they are; it's part of what makes them effective.

Stock NPCs

Secret Police Agent 878876

Streetwise-1, Pistol-1, Brawling-1

Badge, restraints, Mesh armor, pistol

Secret Police Leader 778986

Streetwise-2, Leader-1, Tactics-1, Pistol-1

Badge, Radio, restraints, Cloth armor, pistol

Secret Police Trooper 989776

Rifle-1, Pistol-1, Brawling-2

Badge, Cloth armor, Night Vision, Restraints, radio, Rile or Shotgun or Laser



*** See <http://ancientfarfuture.blogspot.com/2016/02/where-do-i-sign-up-becoming-warden-in.html>

Fugitive Nobility

By Robert Weaver

This adventure goes with the preceding article on Secret Police.

Required: a starship and vehicle.

Espionage experience* a plus.

The government of Mavramorn (Holtzmann's Corridor 0605, C-34374A-A, population 50 million) has been trending towards authoritarianism for some time now. A local noble, Tomas Childress, the Marquis of Harkan Ridge has been the most vocal opponent of this power shift. He's heard rumors that the new secret police force is planning to move against him. He sees this move as an attempt to silence him and threaten the still unorganized popular resistance. The Marquis has his agents contact the PCs, and bring them to his estate to meet with him. Once he assures himself that they are not working for the government, he asks the PCs to escort his wife and children to the starport and then to Stavanger. With his family safe, he will organize a loyal opposition to resist the encroachment on the traditional rights and freedoms of the people.

Referee's Information

The author's blog contains more information about the campaign area that this adventure was originally written to take place in. See <http://ancientfarfuture.blogspot.com/2015/04/planets-of-corridor-stavanger-and-its.html>. For the purposes of this adventure, the players need only know that Stavanger is J1 from Mavramorn.

The Mavramorni government has not instituted a general crackdown on dissent yet, but it is heading in that direction. But for the Marquis the situation is worse than he realizes. While the interview is still going on, estate security alerts the Marquis that some unmarked vehicles have entered the grounds. The newcomers are led by Senior Police Officer Tupolek (866A77, Age 42, Leader-1, Tactics-1, Pistol-1, Bribery-1) He claims to have government authority as Planetary Security Section Nine (PSS9) and that he has arrest warrants for the Marquis and his family. Tupolek is a bald little man dressed in gray, with a mirthless smile and a cold-fish personality.

* See <http://ancientfarfuture.blogspot.com/2015/02/casual-encounter-michael-westen.html>

The PCs meet the Marchioness and her three children. With little time, they must gather up the fugitives' belongings (the Marchioness will have way too much luggage – 1 displacement ton's worth) and get them to a vehicle. The PCs' first challenge is to get past PSS9 to escape. From there they have a journey of at least several hundred kilometers to the starport. Tupolek will notify the normal police forces to assist in capturing the PCs, and PSS9 will monitor the WorldComNet to pick up chatter about them.

The Marquis' Family

Marchioness Luisa Childress	67778D Age 38
Leader-1, Liaison-2	
Eldest Son Tomas IV	7979AC Age 22
Vehicle-1 Unarmed Cbt-1	
Daughter Leslie Childress	6668AC Age 18
Carousing-1	
Younger Son Benedict	56677C Age 14
Computer-1	

During the trip, the PCs will encounter two checkpoints (either vehicle or pedestrian) where normal police are checking IDs. To proceed they must either negotiate the checkpoint without discovery or get around it without creating suspicion of their actions. Police are equipped with vehicles, comms, Mesh armor and pistols. If the police should apprehend the fugitives and/or the PCs, PSS9 will arrive and take them away to a secret detention site. This site will be in a remote area, but will be lightly guarded. PSS9 is counting on secrecy to prevent breakout attempts.

If left alone for long, the daughter will use her personal comm unit to contact a friend. PSS9 have anticipated this and are scanning for her comm ID. She will divulge information about the group's plan or location.

Along the way the PCs may find allies. Workers in a factory, or at a bar or along the road may recognize the Marchioness and express their loyalty to the Marquis. They will offer any assistance they can give, as if the Marchioness got a modified reaction throw of 12.

Active Measures

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Once the group makes it to the starport, they will have to sneak the fugitives past another checkpoint to get them aboard. As they lift out, a PSS9

ship will lift and pursue them. It is a modified Type-A, with the jump drive removed, an improved M-drive and two triple turrets. It will pursue all the way to the jump limit. Once the PCs make the transition to jump-space, they're safe. 🌀

Raconteurs' Rest

After Action Report: TravellerCon/USA 2016

by Jeff Zeitlin

Dammit, what is it about this phone and Lancaster, PA? Sorry about no pics, again.

Day 1—Friday, 7 October

I got on the road earlier this year than last, pushing the power button on my Prius at just after 0900. After a quick McBreakfast and a fill of the Prius' gas tank, I jumped on to I-95 South, heading for the Cross Bronx Distressway (Expressway, for those of you unfamiliar with the term—some places might call this road a Freeway or a Motorway) and the George Washington Bridge. While on a slow spot on the Cross Bronx, I was putting along behind a minivan being used as an auto-parts truck; there were some place-and-press letters on the rear bumper whose *actual* meaning I had no clue for, but which any Traveller would have recognized—**F G M P ?**. I'd hate to think that he was suggesting that the truck was actually equipped with one...

Once across the George Washington Bridge, travel through New Jersey (I-80 to I-287 to I-78) was uneventful; I was able to run up to the speed limit and turn on the cruise control essentially the entire way. A quick stop at the Pennsylvania Welcome Center on I-78 after you cross the border was for emptying bladder, stretching legs, and grabbing something to drink. Then, back on I-78 to US-222 to US-30 to the T-Con site, arriving at 1330.

Shortly after I arrived, KF and MH (the rest of the con-com) did as well, and we went to set up the room. Our usual room was undergoing renovations (remember, there were some ... bobbles ... with the

hotel last year, and it was sold to new owners this spring, and they're putting time and money into it) so we ended up in a different room—larger, and much better lit (two whole walls were floor-to-ceiling windows).

1900 saw the official start of the first session of gaming, and I found myself playing a Marquis with Admin, Diplomat, and Persuade skill—and an INT of 3! Well, he didn't turn out to be totally useless, although the adventure might have suggested otherwise—the party were all cashiered from the Navy in one go, and more-or-less dumped as part of the discharge (other-than-honorable) package on a backwater world in a backwater subsector with nothing much to say in favor of it. The party's objective was to acquire a ship and attempt to make a go as free traders. We did find the ship that would work for us; financing it was ... interesting. We did get financing, but it required some creativity, and we necessarily developed a sideline in ... casual import/export.

Dinner was pizza, provided courtesy of the Con-Com, and eaten over the games. A good start to the con.

Day 2—Saturday, 8 October

I'm really not cut out for late nights; years of getting up at 0400 for work does a fairly solid job of realigning one's circadians. Nevertheless, I managed to drag myself out of bed at 0530-ish, breakfast at the restaurant's breakfast buffet (decent, but nothing to write home about), and at 0800, it was time for more *Traveller*. I could see (and hear) lots of fun going on around me, but DM was running his published For-even Sector adventure, and I was playing in that one. The party was "deniable assets" for Imperial

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Raconteurs' Rest

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Intelligence, and the mission was to find where a certain passenger of a certain ship was being held, and rescue said passenger, while preventing a cargo of missiles from being handed to a set of Bad Guys. Oh, and by the way, the missiles are being delivered on a Zho ship—more or less a *Marava* equivalent. And we don't know whether the Bad Guys that captured the ship are the same Bad Guys that are receiving the missiles. So, off we go, more or less winging it as we go, and somehow managing to grab some *hot* dice—my character was *way* overeducated (EDU 15!) and had Computer-2 on top of that, so essentially anything we wanted to do with a computer was at +5. Hastily conceived plans always managed to work out, and we actually managed to convince (with the help of some Hacks To End All Hacks—modded rolls of 14 and 16) the Zhodani crew—SORAG operatives—that we were also SORAG operatives, with the authority to supercede them. We made contact with the Missile Bad Guys, who turned out to be the Passenger Bad Guys as well, and managed to take them in long enough to “negotiate” getting the remaining prisoners out—including the passenger that the Imperium specifically wanted—and back to the passenger ship, which we took over revealing our connection to Imperial Intelligence—and destroying the missiles (and part of the Bad Guy asteroid base) on our way out. If you wanted to characterize this as a single task roll, collectively we rolled a natural 12 and had high positive DMs to boot.

One thing that I've noticed is that after a Really Good Adventure—one where everyone participated actively and had fun, regardless of the outcome—there's a fair amount of post-mortem discussion, which will range all over the map—not just retelling the good parts of the adventure, but more philosophical—*why* the adventure worked, what makes a good adventure in general, the role of the referee, and of the players, the characteristics of good refer-

ees, and good players, and so on. Because of the discussion, lunch turned out to be burning a few extra calories out of the layer of fat contributing to my 140-odd kilos (and if you've met me, you know that “odd” is appropriate. Oh, and for those of you who don't use rational measurement systems, that's about 300-odd pounds).

The afternoon session for me was the as-yet-unpublished sequel to DM's adventure from the morning session, and it was just as much fun for much the same reasons, even though it was quite different in character from its prequel. This time, though, we managed to have an event worthy of nomination for the PING! F*** It! Award—two or three consecutive blown rolls (including two crits) converted a near-certain full success at a three-part mission to a TPK that also converted two of the parts to failures. Even with the Peanuts-esque “AAUGHHH!”ing over the failure, a rollicking great time was had by all, and yes, more post-mortem discussion as above. I cut some of that short to go to dinner, and (sadly) the less said about it the better—and I choose to believe that they were understaffed for handling both the restaurant and the (*large*) wedding, even though the restaurant was nearly vacant.

After dinner, back downstairs for the evening session. For me, this was MW's “Mustering Out Blues”, which I recalled favorably from last year; see the November/December 2015 issue and just copy the description of the game and the discussion, even though this session's adventure had essentially nothing in common with last year's.

Day 3—Sunday, 9 October

The morning session was set to start a half-hour later than Saturday, but I was downstairs at the usual time. A few people were there, but far fewer than Saturday's session; not everyone would have Monday off (it's Columbus Day in the US, a minor Federal holiday—government offices are closed, but some schools are open, and most businesses treat it as Just Another Day. As a government employee, I have Columbus Day off), so getting home early Sunday—

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Raconteurs' Rest

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or late Saturday—was generally held to be a Good Idea. None of the games really appealed to me, so I spent some time just wandering around and looking at what was going on. One of the vendors was selling LED “nametag” badges, and was having trouble programming them, so I ended up spending a bit of time troubleshooting with him, and we concluded that that particular badge was bad—though none of them was entirely trouble-free for setup. Copious notes were taken and provided, and the vendor will be looking at various alternative suppliers, though it appears that they all end up coming from one or two Chinese factories.

By then, I'd shaken off the remnants of sleep (or so I thought), so, in spite of the SEH and the Ping! not having been awarded yet, I resolved to head out and try to beat most of the traffic that I figured I'd run into on “final approach” to New York. It didn't quite work out that way; about an hour out of Lancaster, I decided it would be prudent to pull into the parking lot of a Dunkin' Donuts and grab an hour nap. That put me on track for a 1700 arrival at home, which meant probably a bit of traffic at the George

Washington Bridge. And indeed, crossing the Bridge was slow, but not slow enough to delay me—especially as once across the Bridge, I had an alternate route to avoid the bottleneck caused by the accident on the Cross Bronx Expressway (which was the reason for the slow traffic on the Bridge). I ended up home just a few minutes after 1700—pretty good estimating for a GPS system that wasn't continuously updating for traffic conditions!

The Awards

I got the award info from KF and MH, with just summaries of the event. Next year, I'll try to stay for the awards and get the Whole Story.

This year's awards almost seem like they were awarded more-or-less backward, but the nominations were made and voted on with these results.

The Starburst for Extreme Heroism went to DT, who used a cybernetic claw to break a cryotank and freeze the party like popsicles, thus preserving their lives.

BM earned the Ping! F*** It! when he went to kick in the corrupt governor's office door, missed on a natural 2, and broke his foot. He incapacitated the governor with a thrown knife, catching him in the knee. 🎯

Doing It My Way

Prison Inmate

by Michael Brown

“Sometimes travelers break the law.

Sometimes they get caught.”

—Prison Planet (1981), GDW

It's almost a given that PC adventurers eventually end up on the wrong side of the law. Many such groups evade capture; others don't. For the ones that don't, the subsequent prison sentence can provide fuel for an extended adventure, especially if the referee uses the aforementioned *Prison Planet*. But what if the referee doesn't own or use *Prison Planet*? What if (s)he wants the group to face the conse-

quences of their actions, but doesn't want to run an entire adventure to do so? What if the player wants to have a character with prison experience and background, but also doesn't want to run an entire adventure to get it?

There are few alternatives. In *Book 1: Characters and Combat*, the player has the option of choosing the “Other” career; it's implied that the player can then simply state that the adventurer was once in prison. A generous referee might simply give a player a few extra throws or assign skills based on a prior prison stint. However, more detail and effort might be needed to properly convey the unique experiences of being an ex-con. The following tables, for use dur-

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ing Book 1-style Classic *Traveller* generation or when NPC ex-cons are desired, are designed to do just that. The generation process may be specially imposed by the Referee as the result of any of:

- Being apprehended, convicted, and sentenced during an adventure. Thus, this generation process is the only one that begins after initial character generation.
- The player's desire to create an ex-con as a character. Thus, this table becomes the initial generation table, with the Career being ex-Prisoner
- A failed Survival throw. Obviously, the hero isn't dead, but begins a prison term after recovery from injury (possibly due to charges of negligence, or the result of a frame-up)
- A failed re-enlistment throw of a natural 2, indicating that the PC did something against the law or the code of military justice, resulting in court martial, incarceration, and subsequent discharge.
- A decoration roll failed by six or more (e.g., Decoration required a roll of 10+, and the player rolled 4 or less after DMs are applied), indicating that the PC did something against the law or the code of military justice, as above.

Sentencing usually follows a (sometimes lengthy) court trial, which is beyond the scope of this article. The referee need only decide what got the PC in trouble, and what his or her sentence would be. If in doubt (or for time's sake), throw 1D—this is the number of terms to which the hapless adventurer was sentenced. The generation process then follows the process from Book 1:

Enlistment	Auto
Survival	7+
DM +1 if	(Terms)
Position	12
DM +2 if	INT 9+
Promotion	11+
DM +1 if	STR 9+
Re-Enlist	See below

Position and Promotion: The PC's good behavior and willingness to abide by the rules (at least when the guards are watching) has been noted. (S)he is accordingly allowed more (relative) freedom, the food is marginally better, and (s)he enjoys minor day-to-day perks. Once Position has been achieved, the hero can throw for Promotion each subsequent term. Each level of Promotion moves the inmate a little more up the ladder of trust, with every three levels translating as a +1 DM when consulting the Skills table below. However, prison trust cuts both ways; every three levels of trust equals a -1 DM on Survival throws, as the other prisoners don't take too kindly to trustys (they might be snitches.) A maximum of six level of trusty are available.

Re-enlistment: Re-enlisting for another term in prison is automatic until the prescribed time runs out. However, if at any time a natural 12 is thrown, the PC has been granted parole and musters out immediately.

Aging occurs per Book 1.

Skills are acquired per Book 1, although there are no automatic skills; nor an extra skill throw upon the initial term of incarceration. Extra skill throws are granted upon attaining Position and Promotion:

	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education	Adv Education (EDU 8+)
1	+1 INT	Forgery	Gambling	Medical
2	+1 DEX	Streetwise	Bribery	Electronics
3	+1 STR	Brawling	Jack-O-T	Computer
4	+1 END	Brawling	Streetwise	Mechanical
5	-1 SOC	Streetwise	Liaison	Admin
6	+1 EDU	Blade Cbt	Carousing	Leader

Notes on Skills

Skills as per Book 1 except **Liaison** (*Book 5: High Guard*)

Blade Combat: This is with shiv (improvised knife) only; treat as Dagger. This version of the skill also covers making such a weapon: finding suitable materials, proper honing techniques, etc.

It may seem odd that a prisoner would pick up skills. Indeed, *Prison Planet* makes no mention of

Doing It My Way

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PCs gaining skills while serving their sentences (the adventure focuses more on interactions between PCs and NPCs and efforts to eventually escape.) Yet, skills such as Streetwise, Brawling, and Blade Combat are almost mandatory for sheer survival. Most of the others are picked up during day-to-day interactions between prisoners, or prisoners and guards. The Advanced Education skills are typically the

product of rehabilitation efforts such as correspondence courses and sponsored vocational education.

Mustering Out

Upon being released from prison, the former inmate is presented with a suit of clothes, the return of any valuables confiscated upon incarceration (throw 10+ for these items to have disappeared), and 2D×Cr150. Throw 9+ for the prison to instead simply give the former inmate a Low Passage ticket and directions to the nearest starport. 🌟

Active Measures

Search for the Stardrive

by Steve Hatherley

This adventure was obtained from the author's blog, with permission.

Player Information

Midway is a planet in the Sol Subsector of the Solomani Rim famed for its jungles, its archaeology and its deep sea mining installations. It is not the most exciting of planets for stranded adventurers, but occasionally interesting jobs are available...

Datafax on Midway Down Starport offers a range of services, including an advertising section. While browsing, the players find an advert requiring the services of a few 'good' men. The advert is conspicuously lacking in information.

The advert lists a number and through that they contact York Shushi, an ex-Scout. He is in hospital recovering from serious gunshot wounds. He wants the players to recover some electronics from Doctor James Henna of the University of Terra, a task he would perform if he wasn't crippled. He is prepared to pay Cr:20,000 apiece, to a total of Cr:100,000.

Referee Information

The electronics in question is a field actuator, an addition to the jump-drive. Marrn Uradure (Shushi's shipmate) built it out of spare parts after their ship had mis-jumped and spattered half the engines across the drive-room. Once installed it enabled their ship to jump while within the gravity

field of a planet or star—an act which normally guarantees a fatal mis-jump. Shushi will not reveal its true nature as he intends to sell it to the highest bidder.

When York and Uradure landed at Midway Down for maintenance, the field actuator was discovered and disconnected by one of the engineers. Being pro-Solomani, and having very strong sympathies with the Rule of Terra terrorists, he passed the actuator to Henna, who he knew as a Rule of Terra contact. It never occurred to him to keep the device.

Doctor James Henna is a member of the Department of Xeno-Archaeology in the University of Terra. He is thin and weak looking, but possess a sharp mind and a willingness to kill. He is known in the Department for his strong, pro-Solomani opinions, but nobody there suspects that he belongs to the fanatical Rule of Terra terrorist organisation.

Henna immediately realised the potential of the actuator—it would enable strike teams to jump straight into the low orbit of a planet, cause havoc, then jump straight out. The Imperium would never know what had hit it. Aware that the two scouts might be tracking him he prepared to leave for the Rule of Terra's base in the jungle.

Uradure had discovered the theft and had indeed started tracking Henna. He and Shushi caught up with the activist in Startown, but both were gunned down in an ambush. Uradure died while Shushi was badly wounded and left for dead.

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The players can contact the university to track Henna, but they believe him to be on site in the jungle—they can supply the location of the dig. His apartment is empty and his recorded message informs visitors that he is out of town for a few days. Both his office and apartment are devoid of clues.

The Department of Xeno-Archaeology keeps a dig at a Jala'lak temple in the jungles of Midway. A small group of portable habitats and a landing clearing for grav vehicles marks the site. It is currently occupied by a number of students and the small tribe of Jala'lak that live there. However, none of the students or staff have seen Henna for several days—they believe him to be back at the university.

The players will be denied access to Henna's cabin, but will find it easy to break into. Inside, they find a bed and washing facilities, his computer, and a few personal items. The adventurers will have to tap into his computer to find more. In a concealed file the group will discover the location of the base and an inventory of the resources (men and weapons) stored there. The base is in the jungle not too far away. Henna has wired a bomb beneath the computer which is set to go off if the security routines detect any intruders. The bomb will destroy the computer, likely kill the operator and alert the base.

The Rule of Terra's base is heavily camouflaged and set into the base of a cliff, at the entrance to some deep caves. Inside there are a number of military vehicles and a large cache of assorted weapons. Also, deep within the caverns are ten huge low berths—each containing twenty sleeping troops: Rule of Terra terrorists. Henna is at the base, as is the Actuator. It is currently being examined to see if it can be reproduced. If it can be, then it will be fitted into several Rule of Terra ships for testing.

Should the players return the actuator to Shushi he will pay them what he promised. Alternatively, should they discover its purpose, they may want to keep it for themselves. It will fit quite easily in their ship, should they have one, or they may wish to sell

it. A megacorporation might be prepared to pay several million for it, but will find it puzzling—it is the product of luck, genius, and conditions near impossible to reproduce.

Should the players contact the Imperial Marines about the Rule of Terra base, they will earn the Cr:10,000 reward, but that is all. All equipment will be confiscated and examined. The actuator will get swallowed up in Imperial bureaucracy and vanish forever.

Library Data

Rule of Terra: A violent pro-Solomani terrorist organization. More information can be found on the Traveller wiki (http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Rule_of_Terra).

Midway: Midway/Sol 0409 B699552 D. Midway has two continents, one polar and desolate, the other sparsely populated and covered largely with thick rainforests and jungles. The deserted eastern side of the continent holds several vast, mostly automated opencast mines.

There are very high quality radioactives to be found in the rock under the sea bed and a number of deep sea mining installations have been developed specifically.

The southwestern jungles support the Jala'lak .

Midway can be found on the Traveller Map (<https://travellermat.com/?x=16.021&y=-109&scale=64>).

University of Terra: One of the oldest universities in the Imperium, its base of operations is New York, Terra/Sol. It has a number of faculties on other worlds in the Sector.

Jala'lak: A race of primitive humanoids native to the jungles of Midway/Sol 0409. They are a peaceful, friendly people, and the object of both study and controversy. The jungle they live in harmony with is filled with temples to their various gods and the University of Terra maintains a base there.

The Jala'lak can also be found upon Gaea/Albadawi 0702 but for an inexplicable reason their temper is vastly different—much more savage, even cannibalistic. Clearly they are not native to Gaea, and consequently are the subject of much debate. ☸

Building an Adventure

by Jeff Zeitlin

The core of any role-playing game is the adventure. With *Traveller*, you can sit and generate characters and worlds and whatever all day, and at the end of it, you'll have... a pile of characters and worlds and whatever. Some people enjoy that, but... what's the point, if you don't play with the results? And if you do play with your pile of characters and worlds and whatever, what else are you doing but having adventures?

Adventures aren't just about rolling dice and seeing what happens, though. They have a structure, and that structure is a major part of what pulls together a whole bunch of interactions and die rolls into a coherent whole.

Types of Adventure

The phrase "type of adventure" can be used in different ways. It is used here to refer to the relative length and completeness of the developed material describing the adventure. Broadly speaking, under this definition, there are two types of adventure:

Long Form

The Long Form adventure supplies essentially everything the referee will need to run the adventure – patron(s), mission(s), inducements, assistance and opposition for the player-characters, encounters, and so on. The long form allows the referee to concentrate on running the adventure, rather than prepping for it or creating scenarios "on the fly". A Long Form adventure need not be complex, or even particularly long in terms of "word count" in the definition of the adventure; the classic *Traveller* introductory adventure "Exit Visa", intended to familiarize new players and referees with *Traveller's* task resolution mechanism, can be fully described in about a single page of text.

Short Form ("Seed")

The Short Form adventure, often called an Adventure Seed, generally provides little more than a starting scenario, leaving further development to the

referee and the party. In its classic form, it may additionally supply a small number (usually six, to be selected from using a 1D6 roll) of alternative one-line summaries of possible denouements. The Short Form adventure gives the referee the flexibility to fit the players' actions to the adventure without constraining them.

Components of the Adventure

The components of the adventure will be discussed here as though the intent is to put together a Long Form adventure. While not every adventure will have – or need – every component, understanding what the basic component are and how they fit into the adventure is essential to building it.

The Patron

The Patron is, in short, the source of the adventure. While the general usage makes the patron a person (within the meaning of person for the game setting), the broader conceptual definition here allows for non-person patrons – for example, finding an old diary with an entry about a hidden treasure places the diary in the role of patron.

The Mission

The Mission defines the overall goal of the adventure – what the patron (implicitly or explicitly) wants the party to do. It is up to the party to decide whether the inducements (see below) are sufficient to make executing the mission worthwhile.

The Inducement(s)

An inducement is a reason that the party chooses to take on the adventure presented by the patron. If there is no inducement, the party will choose not to undertake the adventure. Inducements may be internal to the adventure, or external to it; an internal inducement is one that is provided by the adventure itself; an external inducement is one that is generated by the players based on factors not directly connected with the adventure. Whether internal or external, inducements come in two types: The Push, and The Pull.

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The Push

The Push assumes that the characters are reluctant to undertake the adventure; it is in many senses a goad. The objective of the push is to cause the party to undertake the adventure to avoid some sort of negative consequence of not doing so.

The Pull

The Pull is an inducement that causes the characters to be in favor of undertaking the adventure; it represents a reward – often fiscal, but other forms are quite commonly encountered.

The Opposition

If there is nothing opposing the completion of the mission, there would be no reason for the patron not to undertake it himself. Opposition need not be intelligent or targeted at the mission; natural conditions can make for effective opposition, especially if the party is ill-equipped to deal with it.

The Puzzle

The puzzle is very much optional; it represents unanswered questions that make themselves evident either as part of the mission definition, or during execution. Puzzles can range from mere unanswered questions as to why the patron needs the mission accomplished – or why the opposition needs it to fail – to trying to learn what the nature of the Mysterious Object is. Solving the puzzle may become a “pull” on the characters for future adventures.

The Conclusion

The conclusion is mandatory; it represents the opportunity to play out the events that occur as and immediately after the mission is completed. Often, it provides “closure” for the whole adventure, but it is entirely possible that some aspects might be left “dangling” for use in future adventures – for example, the puzzle might not be solved, or the Big Bad of the opposition may escape, with vengeance on his

mind, or the conditions of the push or the pull may remain unfulfilled, leading to the characters actively seeking a continuation.

Structuring the Adventure for Play

Linear Progression

The linear progression is the form that most often appears when “dilettante” or “amateur” authors first turn their hand to writing adventures for role-playing games. As the name implies, the organization is linear, with the characters required to complete a set of tasks in sequence to achieve the goal of the adventure.

The advantage of the linear progression is that it’s a “natural” design, and easy to develop. Fiction (stories, novels, etc.) are linear, and the author of an adventure often has a story-like sequence in mind when developing the adventure, so the linear progression is a good fit. The adventure folio tends to read like a story as well.

The disadvantages of the linear progression can be summed up with one word: “railroad”. The essence of the word is its implication of being out of control of a situation, and carried along by events. This can work against both the characters and the referee:

If the adventure is not managed well – generally by a highly-skilled and experienced referee – the players will tend to feel that they are being “railroaded” – that is, they are merely being carried along by preplanned events, and have no real influence over the outcome.

On the other hand, if the players manage to take control, the referee may find that the adventure has gone in unanticipated directions, and may not have a way of getting it “back on track”, or may not have plans or materials to accommodate the new direction.

Cinematic Nugget Format

Digest Group Publications devised – or, at the very least, presented in an organized fashion – an alternative to the linear progression format for an adventure. The Cinematic Nugget Format laid out

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the adventure as a series of “scenarios”, each of which was divided into several “nuggets”. Each nugget was similar to a “short form” adventure (as described above), setting up a situation to be resolved by playing it through. Additionally, the scenario itself often had some additional background information. Not all the information accompanying a scenario or nugget would be for dissemination to the players or player-characters

Not all nuggets were essential to the ultimate resolution of the adventure as a whole, and those that were not could be skipped (not played out) if necessary. Certain nuggets, however, were “key nuggets”, and had to be played to move the adventure along. Key nuggets could rely on information gathered from previously-played key nuggets, or from non-key nuggets; they also tended to establish necessary (but not necessarily sufficient) conditions for playing the next key nugget.

While not actually required by the format, adventures in Cinematic Nugget Format often had a diagram showing the relationships between nuggets.

The major advantage to the Cinematic Nugget Format is its flexibility. Non-key nuggets may be played in any order, allowing the players to exercise some control over the course of the adventure, and with some additional planning on the part of the referee, multiple adventures in Cinematic Nugget Format can be interwoven, and possibly interwoven even with Linear Progression adventures, to provide a multi-threaded campaign.

The major disadvantage is potential complexity. While key nuggets are the only ones that must be played – and most likely in a specific order – relying on having some information from non-key nuggets requires the referee to track what information the characters have, and (if necessary) diverting them into the non-key nuggets to obtain needed information. This does not make any particular non-key

nugget into a key nugget; consider the situation where the key nugget involves opening a door, either with a physical key or a passcode: One non-key nugget may allow the characters to obtain the physical key, while a different one will give them the pass code. Neither is “key”, as either can be avoided by playing the other – but at least one of them must be played to provide the information needed for the key nugget.

EPIC format

The difference between the Cinematic Nugget Format and the EPIC format seems to be fundamentally one of nomenclature, rather than of organization. The EPIC format adds some minor refinements such as a consolidated list of characters (PC and NPC) for the entire adventure, requiring the schematic diagram of scene/plot key (nugget/key nugget) relationships, and adding a checklist for completed scenes and plot keys.

As with the Cinematic Nugget format, the flexibility of the EPIC format allows for moderate player control within the adventure, and also the possibility of interweaving multiple adventures.

Similarly, its major disadvantage lies in the potential complexity of the interaction among scenes and plot keys. This is slightly mitigated by the use of the checklist, an innovation that can be “back ported” to the Cinematic Nugget Format as well.

Other Uses for the Adventure

While the focus of this article has been creating an adventure for traditional “tabletop” or “pencil, paper, and dice” role-playing, a fully worked-out adventure has other uses as well.

Story

A fully-worked-out Long Form adventure can easily be viewed as an outline or summary of a story. By imagining how each scene or nugget might play out, writing it down, and repeatedly expanding on and refining your work, you can flesh out the summary into a full story. If your original adventure material is in the Cinematic Nugget Format or EPIC

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The Prep Room

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format, you also have the flexibility of rearranging the chapters of your story to best suit the need for dramatic tension.

“Interactive Fiction”

“Interactive Fiction” is the currently-used general term for the kind of game that used to be called “text adventures”; the most widely recognized examples are the classic “Adventure” (ADVENT) or “Colossal Cave”, and “Zork”. These games generally have the player issuing typed commands to a more-

or-less robotic “avatar”, which then reports the results, along with what the avatar sees, hears, and so on. Tools exist to make it easier to create such games, even if one isn’t a programmer, but the tools can’t write the actual adventure (sometimes called a story) for you – you need to do that yourself, and a Long Form adventure in Cinematic Nugget Format or EPIC format that needs only one active character is nearly ideal as a starting point. Each scene or nugget represents a “room” of the adventure, and you can more or less script the needed interactions within the room. ❄

Critics’ Corner

2300AD: French Arm Adventures

reviewed by “kafka”

2300AD: *French Arm Adventures*. Colin Dunn.

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

177pp., hardbound or PDF

\$23.99

It was with some trepidation that I approached this book, but, I am happy to say all the fears and real concerns that I had with *The Grendelssaga* disappeared. The quality of the printing was superb with excellently rendered illustrations and images and the text flowed effortlessly and showed a great deal of attention to detail with regard to the re-editing and revamping of the original GDW 2300 adventure modules of *Beanstalk*, *Kafer Dawn* and *Energy Curve*.

I have always had a particular sweet spot for 2300AD believing it to be more *Traveller* than what often passed as *Traveller* and that is because I started playing *Traveller* very early on circa 1982-1983 and one has to remember that was the era dominated by post-apocalyptic landscapes that Mad Max would introduce us to and very hard and gritty Science Fiction that the 1970s, *Outland*, was making commentary upon, and, of course, *Star Wars* (when there was only one). Furthermore, *Traveller* appealed to the Golden Age of Science Fiction, whereas, a generation that was growing up in Apollo’s shadow and



the astonishing discoveries of the *Voyager*, *Viking*, and *Venera* robotic probes knew that the universe was not a kind and forgiving place that resembled Southern California, but one filled with very alien landscapes and one where we would certainly need a spacesuit. And, it is exactly in that area that *Travel-*

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ler failed, and continues to fail to a certain degree; it lacked the grit and the dark realism from where it emerged. For many adventures in *Traveller* gloss over that alien worlds will create alien environments beyond the immediate culture shock – *Traveller* is about asking questions. Classic *Traveller* glossed over those questions, much as *Star Wars* glossed over the history of the Sandpeople by putting aliens in rubber suits. Ok, not, entirely true...but *Traveller* has always been more Space Opera than Hard SF. And, I have always favored Hard SF. So, these adventures, like many *Traveller* adventures, do pose a question in science, then proceed to use fiction to unravel it. As always, the bare minimum of the adventures will be covered, and most certainly there will be no spoilers.

Previous offerings from Mongoose took the skeleton, sometimes little more than the name of the adventure, as a springboard to greater role playing opportunities than what was in the original module, or simply Mongoosefied the old module. I am happy to report that the best of the original modules have been preserved for posterity but with new additions that make it possible to link these adventures to the larger canvas that is unfolding in the Mongoose 2300AD milieu. And, while many may moan about *Traveller* adventures not being fully cinematic, it is only a valid partial criticism, just as most people believe that Hard SF cannot be filmed – yet the canons of film are filled with quasi Hard SF films that need not be as riveting as Tarkovsky's *Solaris*. But therein lies the difficulty of these adventures; they require buy-in by the players for an older and slower version of play. Whereby, incremental changes will ripple and change the universe as a whole, but, players have to be cautioned that they are laying down structures. And, that is the most important thing about these adventures, they modify the milieu in a most logical and consistent way. So these adventures or some variation of these adventures are essential for players if they wish to play in the sand-

box which the milieu calls the French Arm (essentially, a hyperspace corridor of stars spanning out from Sol).

Now the synopses of the adventures:

Beanstalk

The beanstalk hung above the horizon of this stark, airless asteroid like a shining silver thread against the backdrop of the star-sprinkled blackness of space. As I watched, a cargo capsule (almost invisibly small at this distance) slipped from beneath the edge of the main station and began to crawl down the beanstalk in its long descent to Beta's surface. Eventually, like the beanstalk itself, the capsule disappeared against the bright haze of the planet's atmosphere.

The beauty of the view brought a gentle smile to my face. This, I reflected, is one of the bonuses of my job. I am a troubleshooter.

In 2181 a French exploratory squadron discovered a garden world in the Beta Canum Venaticorum system. Within about 25 years, three ESA nations (France, Britain, and Bavaria) had established colonies there. Over the next eight decades all three colonies cooperated in an attempt to adapt the planet to human uses. The Bavarians began extensive mining of their continent's mineral resources. The British created an extensive transportation network between the colonies. France built their colony a beanstalk.

Then came Earth's War of German Reunification. The colonies on Beta Canum began to experience rising tides of nationalism as they jockeyed for power by the judicious use of the world's resources.

But the most valued commodity on Beta Canum is the safe, regular access to orbit granted by the beanstalk. The French have found themselves holding the reins of power on Beta Canum. Tension continues to grow as they seek to consolidate their position and the British and Germans seek to undermine it.

The French control the beanstalk. But a Bavarian built it-and he thinks he's found a problem.

Opportunities are ripe for troubleshooters looking for work.

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"Beanstalk" deals with enigmatic aliens (in a very cursory way) and the power politics where national rivalries still drive adventure in the future. The credibility of this claim is premised upon the world undergoing a cataclysm this century which re-fortified the nation-state. What is important to take away is that the world of 2300AD, of national rivalries is not the end point, for as troubleshooters, players to a certain extent go beyond it. Furthermore, even as foundations and transnational corporations are rapidly becoming the megacorporations that ply the stars, not yet owning whole planets, but whose livelihoods depend upon said corporations.

Kaefer Dawn

Life for colonists on Aurore was difficult at best. Native plant and animal life was deadly to humans and soil had to be brought in by the ton to grow imported crops. Tidal bores were scoured by half-mile tall waves twice a day. Earthquakes and volcanic activity were constant hazards. Then, the Kaefer came...

The inhabitants of Aurore always took a special pride in their home—it was the most spectacularly beautiful and at the same time least hospitable of the garden planets in the French Arm. For years it was also the end of the line in a colonial arm that terminated at planetless Arcturus, a dull ruby in Aurore's night sky. The Kaefer were first encountered at Arcturus, and then their invasion fleet and invading armies struck Aurore. The battle was close, but the major population centers held out. Now, the remaining Kaefer need to be hunted down and rooted out.

"Kaefer Dawn" covers the campaign to mop up the Auroran 'hotback' from the viewpoint of several adventurers who come to join the fight against mankind's most bitter foe. Despite over a year of warfare, little is known of the Kaefer, and so "Kaefer Dawn" is a voyage of discovery as well. Are the Kaefer necessarily our implacable enemies, or can better understanding bring peace to both species?

"Kaefer Dawn" gradually introduces the players to Kaefer over the course of four new separate adventures (all included in this booklet) which form a mini-campaign. From the time the players ground ship on Aurore as raw recruits to the time they participate in the final drive against the last major groupings of Kaefer in the hotback, they will gradually learn more and more about their violent but complex enemy.

So, as the brief synopsis shows, there is an element of scientific investigation that may lead to a greater understanding before the inevitable "nuke 'em from orbit" comment. So, while completely not a bug hunt (wiry readers may understand the ironic humour), it deals more with the question of a completely alien world whereby humans and "aliens" are both invaders. The ecology of Aurore is lovingly detailed. While not as alien and forbidden as some — there is enough on this moon of a superjovian to keep players entertained.

Energy Curve

The carefree activity around Beta Canum often belies the horrible reality of the Kaefer war in the bright visible stars overhead. Only the most experienced and fearless crews dare travel through that area of space, through the hotly contested systems of the border. Several centuries of human civilization can attest to the simple fact that a frontier is always a dangerous place to conduct business.

The LaFarge made its final call at a human port at Hochbaden over two years ago, heading into the middle of the Kaefer conflict on Trilon company business. When they did not return no one was too surprised. They'd probably fallen victim to the war and that was that.

But now a routine survey vessel has picked up survivors from the crew of the LaFarge and they tell an incredible story of treks across the ice fields of a glaciated world, stories of strange alien races on the verge of civilization. The crew of the LaFarge are coming back to human space after a multi-year odyssey on an uncharted world, a world where evolution of life has been perpetually bound to it and the ebbs and flows of an uncolonized world.

(Continued from page 18)

As the crew of the survey ship *LaFarge*, you live out the thrill of discovering a truly alien world. Survival will be difficult and will probably depend on the cooperation of a native alien race of beings. Can you communicate with them and can you live among them for what might be years before a human rescue? As one can read this is potentially one of the most exciting of all adventures dealing with First Contact. However, before one gets their *Star Trek* uniforms out, First Contact, just as it was for Europeans shipwrecked in different parts of the world becomes a process of cultural negotiation. "Easy enough" when both parties are human, but the wonderful world of *2300AD* and *Traveller* in general – they are not. Going in with human historical biases (especially, American history) will cause huge problems. Added to that there is a dynamic of national rivalries that was touched upon in "Beanstalk". Truly wonderful and beautiful aliens are described here.

And, thus we come to an end of *French Arm Adventures*... no, we have not: there is new equipment and new ships for players to take advantage of. The art of these pieces is something of what has become the Mongoose norm for equipment – for better or for worse. Which looks like panels being assembled together as opposed to blueprint drawings or the quasi-realism of the Keith brothers. Aesthetically, it does look awkward but it is in no way as bad as some other pieces of art that Mongoose has commissioned for *Traveller*... That said, it is bad compared to the other pieces of art in the book. For instance, you get high resolution pseudo-satellite images and excellent space fantasy NPCs. I know being an art director is thankless task and increasingly artists

have bills to pay with minimal or scant resources that can be devoted to art. However, art is what really creates that magnificent Sense of Wonder, for as I began this review by invoking the glorious images of the manned and unmanned space programs, as well as the gritty realism of 1970s Science Fiction films. RPGs are more than simply than a collection of tables and charts but a sweeping narrative and art plays a very important role in communicating that message. GDW understood that very well; Mongoose seems to be struggling while smaller and more agile companies are filling in that niche. Or perhaps it points to a deeper problem that the imagery of Hard SF has fallen by the wayside... On the other hand, there seems to be tens of artists on artistic/graphic design clearing houses, like DeviantArt or CGSociety desperately wishing to market their talents.

French Arm Adventures is an excellent complement to the best of the *2300AD* milieu, in which I think the best is yet to come. Mongoose is doing it right by updating the *Traveller* classics to a more posthuman and post-cyberpunk sensibility without getting too mired in the previous motif—recreating an "Age of Sail". *2300AD* is a large enough "universe" for many, if not all Hard SF stories to be told. Nor do Hard SF have to be equated with *2001: A Space Odyssey*. If Referees are stumped, I can wholeheartedly recommend *The Hard SF Renaissance* by David G. Hartwell (Editor), Kathryn Cramer (Editor), or, from the BBC, *Star Cops*, *The Outcasts*, or first couple of seasons of *Blake's 7*. Colin Dunn has a very useful suggested reading list in the main rule-book that undoubtedly needs to be updated. And the beauty of Hard SF, it is the world of tomorrow – mirroring the world of today. Thanks, Colin, for restoring my Sense of Wonder for *Traveller*. 🌟

A Problem Like Myra

by John Clifford

Part 3

On the bridge of the *Vakandi*, Captain Ornof silently cursed the seemingly endless paperwork as he sat in his command chair typing on a data pad. It reminded him of the old joke: No ship leaves port, until the paperwork equals the mass of the largest man aboard. Supposedly that joke was first told on Terra, before man had even gone to its own moon, much less had starships. Amazing how some things never change. As he waded through another mind numbing material usage report the bridge crew went about the job of running the ship. The scene around him was one of calm, orderly efficiency. Just the way he liked it. The ship was parked in a geosynchronous orbit, hanging over the starport on the planet below. Aside from the usual shipboard operations, the only thing going on of note was the shore party delivering the cargo of books. He had just received a report from Lieutenant Feldmann that they had reached their university destination. So at least that seemed to be going well. Of course he had one of the bridge ratings monitoring the convoy and the starport. Just in case.

Gerfreiter (Able Spacehand) Beurgsen was trying not to be bored. A portion of the ship's sensor array was tasked with watching Lieutenant Feldmann's convoy and the starport. The multi-spectrum scanners and sensors gave Beurgsen a detailed overhead view. But watching crates of books being unloaded or marines and spacers standing around doing nothing, was not exactly thrilling viewing. At least, not until the ship's boat started launching missiles and the marines and spacers at the port started shooting and running. "*Kapiten!*"

Ornof looked up at the rating. "On the main display, *gerfreiter*." The quick reply, "On the main display, aye, *Kapiten*," and more importantly, the quick response drew Ornof's view to the bridges main holographic display. The images painted a clear pic-

ture. The group of Sword Worlders at the port were under attack. The fire was coming from the south, outside the view on the display. "Expand the view to show the ships and docks to the south. Communications, raise *Kadet* Brun and sound battle stations." Just as the view expanded, a missile streaked from a warehouse to the starport and struck the ship's boat. There was a flare of light and the boat rocked from the force of the explosion. One of its landing legs must have collapsed as it appeared to settle at an angle. There was an answering flash from one of the marines. The plasma gunner returned fire at the enemy missile gunner. Judging by the resulting secondary explosions he scored a hit. The warehouse started to burn fiercely; unfortunately, so did the ship's boat.

To the sound of the battle station klaxon, the ship's crew readied for action. As the different departments reported ready, the ship's defensive screens and weapons came online. While on the planet below the unknown enemy was moving out from two of the buildings by the docks. They seemed to know what they were doing. They spread out quickly and advanced in small groups. Between brief rushes, they would throw themselves down and provide covering fire to those in motion. They were taking a steady stream of casualties from the defending Sword Worlders. But there were over a hundred attackers. Two small groups peeled off and headed for the two bridges. It seemed they didn't want anyone from the mainland interfering.

The communications officer called to the captain "Sir, I can't raise *Kadet* Brun. There's a strong jamming signal coming from the middle ship at the docks." Ornof snarled and barked out, "Guns, turn off that jamming!" A second later, "Missile away, *Kapiten!*" He grunted in acknowledgment and smiled grimly. His people were dying down there. But at the same time, the crew on the ship was responding beautifully. They were trying to anticipate his orders, and moving quickly. And the shore party appeared to be giving as good as it was getting. The

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enemy was leaving a trail of bodies as they advanced. But advance they did. The bulk of the enemy force had made it to a drainage ditch just outside the starport. The Sword Worlders had fallen back to the wreckage of the ship's boat and were firing from the meager cover it offered. There was a massive explosion as the missile fired from the *Vakandi* vaporizer half of the ship the enemy was using. Within seconds the communications officer turned to face the captain. "Sir, I have *Kadet* Brun. She's requesting a missile strike on her own position. What do I tell her?"

Ornolf didn't hesitate. He could see how close the attackers were. If they rushed his people, they would overrun them before his missiles could arrive to stop them. "Guns, launch her strike. Communications, tell her it's on the way. Then get Feldmann on the comm." He hit an intercom button on his chair as they acknowledged his orders "*Leutenant* Roth, get the rest of your marines and a medical team ready to head to the planet."

Down below at the starport, if anyone looked up they would have seen eight streaks of light coming from the sky. When they arrived, everyone noticed. Suddenly for those at the starport the entire world seemed to explode into a hell of fire and death. It seemed to last forever. But in truth it was only a matter of seconds. Then a brief silence, till the screaming started.

Myra sat up gingerly, as she did, dirt and bits of metal sloughed off her. "Ow. That was unpleasant." She grimaced with pain as she moved. Her arm had been broken earlier in the fight; A bullet had hit it at just the right angle. And even though it didn't penetrate her suit, the force of the blow had broken the

bone. Between that and the pounding in her head from the conclusive force of the missile impacts, she felt like passing out. So long as she kept moving slowly she should be ok. The beeping in her helmet wasn't helping any. That was probably the captain looking for a status update. She reached across to her wrist comm, pressed the acknowledge button. "Hold one, please." Then switched to the local channel "Alright, everyone, break's over. Can I get a roll call please?" She looked around as she spoke at the devastation around her. She could see two large craters from missile strikes on this side of the wrecked ship's boat. Bodies, both human and Vargr, littered the ground. Some were moving, most were not. The navy crew sounded off first, then the marines. Four of the spacers were wounded, but two of them were still mobile. Three were dead. The marines, with their heavier armor had done better. Only one dead and one incapacitated. There were at least twice that number of enemy dead and wounded in sight. "Can anyone see what the enemy is up to?" Sergeant Myerson replied "What's left of them are pulling back to the docks, ma'am." Myra grunted and replied "Thank you, Sergeant." Then in her most haughty sounding voice she declared, "I believe we should hold this position until relieved. Someone else can deal with the docks." A raged chorus of "Aye, ma'am" interspersed with laughs answered her. "In the meantime, does anyone have any pain killers?"

On the bridge of the ship, Captain Ornolf looked up at Arva with an amused grin. "Did I just get put on hold by a *kadet*, X.O.?" Arva replied with matching humor, "It would appear so, sir. On the plus side, we seem to have found out how she'll do in combat." Ornolf nodded his head. "I think she'll do, X.O., I think she'll do." 🌟

Concrete

By Michael Brown

A mercenary company defends crews repairing a dam from insurgents.

Mission Type: Security

Unit Size: Company

Setting: Any world with a breathable atmosphere, Hydrographics 3+, and Tech Level 5+.

Background

This world has been plagued by a rising insurgency against the planetary government for some time, sparked by protests that began as small, scattered affairs that quickly grew as the underlying problems remained unaddressed. The unrest has recently flared into open hostilities, marked by armed skirmishes between government troops and scattered ragtag rebel elements.

During the term of a previous (unpopular) leader, a hydroelectric dam was built as part of a project to modernize the power grid in an important but rural province; and incidentally, as a political boost. The dam's construction didn't save the leader from being overthrown several years later. Worse, it was subsequently found that, thanks to corruption and kickbacks, it was shoddily built with substandard materials. The few experts who've had an opportunity to examine the structure have found that it's close to giving way, flooding the valley and several towns beneath. Indeed, they marvel that it hasn't already done so.

After many contentious debates, the government has agreed to fund repairs to the dam. Crews have been hired, and materials gathered, but the area surrounding the site has become a hotbed of insurgent activity and a danger to repair crews. Government

troops are spread thin fighting rebels elsewhere and cannot be spared as guards.

Mission

The planetary government offers a company-sized unit Cr750,000 for a twelve-week, success-only Security contract to guard the dam repair crews and repel any rebel attacks. The mercenaries must supply their own weapons and equipment.

Referee's Information

The insurgents certainly notice all the new activity at the dam. Their activities for the first week consist of espionage, with the rebel commanders trying to uncover as much intel about the newcomers as possible. Success (on a throw of 9+) adds +1 to the commanders' Tactics skill. Each week thereafter, the referee should throw 8+ for the enemies to attack the dam with the aim of killing the construction crews and seizing it. However, if the throw comes up as a natural 12, an attack is just a feint to provide cover for a team to plant explosives and blow up the dam.

The insurgents pose little threat to the mercenaries in a stand-up fight, but they rarely resort to such tactics. They're mostly raw recruits with a sprinkling of veterans (planetary army defectors) serving as commanders. They typically attack in units the equivalent of Commando squads, but they will commit the numerical equivalent of a section if they have a critical objective. They rely heavily on guerilla fighting tactics and aren't above using hostages, making suicide attacks (typically with explosives), or committing atrocities. They're equipped to the planetary Tech Level minus 1, including surplus and captured heavy weapons and vehicles, but have many members adept at jury-rigging weapons or using pre-technological weapons. They have an average Morale rating of 8 (which includes a bonus for their general fanaticism) regardless of unit size. 🌀

#25: After Four Decades...

The Traveller Adventure at Last!

I've written in these pages before about my only refereeing experience being at TravCon. Just once a year that involves one-off adventures for a group of people that have come together for that specific game, may never meet again in that exact grouping, and all playing pre-generated characters they've been handed with a few short minutes to take in. (I've not yet had anyone refuse a character, although I have had two people swap when they felt they'd enjoy a neighbour's character more.)

I'm aware that's a very different kettle of fish to running an ongoing campaign with an ongoing group of people on a (semi)-regular basis. Knowing their preferences and styles; jointly agreeing to the kind of adventure that would be most enjoyable; tracking not just the progress through any plot that might exist but also the changes players might be making to the universe. Whether it's buying equipment, meeting people, or interacting with the plot – it all needs noting and possibly recalling at short notice. And not having a year to prepare a session!

At the same time I was hankering after being part of such a group, I've long fancied playing some of the classic *Traveller* adventures of yore. Having never been part of a gaming group, these have only ever been reading experiences for me. Nowhere near the same. Particularly, if you're just reading them as a potential player. I've found reading adventures very different with a little refereeing experience un-

der my belt – how would I run this scene, what would I do differently in that place, what information/characters do I feel is lacking and would need to create?

Of course, the stand-out possibility for a campaign is *The Traveller Adventure*. Yes, I know it has problems. I've heard complaints about railroading; I've heard complaints about unlikely events; I know some scenarios are better regarded than others. But surely nothing a competent referee couldn't overcome with an enthusiastic group of players? I've longed to play it.

So I got very excited when a referee I hugely admire talked, at TravCon 2015, of possibly running TTA at TravCon 2016 across three days and five sessions (even so, he said some things would get cut). So excited that I offered to sign up there and then – even at the expense of not having the fun of running anything or playing anything else.

Sadly that didn't come to pass, but muttering about my disappointment in the work staffroom afterwards and with a newly christened work colleague eager for more *Traveller* before next year, I was persuaded to offer it as an evening thing on the in-between months of our regular Library book group. Even more surprisingly three other work colleagues signed up, as did a lecturer I knew and also a TravCon regular. We had a group! We had a night! Now I just needed to work out all the problems I've mentioned and work out just how in space I was going to do it. ☼

In A Store Near You

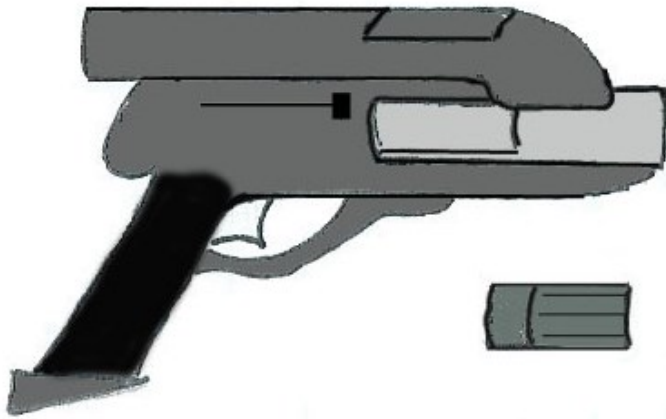
Net Guns For Mongoose *Traveller*

By Robert DeVoe (introduction by Jeff Zeitlin)

The desire to capture an attacking person or animal is understandable; sometimes killing the attacker is excessive, and allowing the attacker to come too close risks the defender's safety, or results in unnecessary or undesirable injury to either the attacker or

the defender. Though common, tranquilising gas, emitted by short-range grenades, may not be an option due to atmospheric conditions or risk to the user, or safe types or dosages of the tranquilising agent may not be known. Similar arguments against electrical stimulation of the target's nervous system ('tasers') can also be made. One common solution is the net gun. Two for *Traveller* are presented here.

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Komachi-11 net gun (Slug Thrower/pistol skill)

Produced by Perkin Industries

Used by animal control agencies, security forces, and bounty hunters. Provides safety for the user while minimizing chances of hand-to-hand combat.

The uniqueness of Komachi-11 is contained in the pre-loaded shell. The net is synthetic spider silk. (It is a Difficult Task using strength to break free of the net and takes a standard action) .The net is propelled using a standard nitrate charge funneled into six cylinders which contain guiding leads. The leads are aerodynamically designed to ensure the distribution of the net over a one meter area. This will effectively tangle one normal human sized creature.

Three seconds after the second stage launches the net, the active ingredients coating the net will activate making the net adhesive for 15 minutes. A contact muscle inhibitor (Endurance check at -4 DM neurotoxin that causes 2d6 temporary strength damage, wearing off after 15 minutes) is standard with all Perkin Industries net guns. The Komachi-11 is considered ineffective beyond Short range.

It should be noted any clothing will prevent the contact neurotoxin from being effective. However, security specialist have found most people don't wear gloves in casual environments.

The Komachi-11 holds two standard cartridges allowing it to be used in situations where more than one person needs to be restrained. Bar-fights can now be quickly ended. Should the owner wish to chamber one cartridge then the Komachi-11 can hold three rounds before needing to be reloaded. It is a standard action to reload.



Serengeti -7 net gun (slug thrower/shotgun skill)

Produced by Perkin Industries

Used by wildlife conservationists and zoologists to capture animals without subjecting their systems to stunning trauma. The patented two-stage cartridge gives the user greater range than a normal net gun and the fragmenting cone insures the even distribution of the capture net. As many of these professionals handle larger and more dangerous animals, the larger shell allows the synthetic spider silk net to encompass a two-meter diameter. (It is a Difficult Task using strength to break free of the net and takes a standard action). The composition and activation of the net in the Serengeti-7 matches that of the smaller cartridges of the Komachi-11. The Serengeti-7 uses a drum magazine containing 5 rounds, and its effectiveness is limited to Medium range. ☼

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Auto	Recoil	Mass	Magazine	Cost	Ammo
Komachi 11	10	Special	NA	No	0	1	2/3	100	100/each
Serengeti 7	10	special	NA	No	2	5	5	150	150/each

Weapon	Personal	Close	Short	Medium	Long	V long	Distant
Komachi 11	NA	+0	+0	Out of range	Out of range	Out of range	Out of range
Serengeti 7	NA	NA	-1	+0	Out of range	Out of range	Out of range

Gvoudzon

profiled by Ken Bearden

This profile was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 1999.

Gvoudzon has major roles in The Traveller Adventure, to which this article implicitly refers.

Corsairs.

The glamour, the prestige, appeals to Vargr mentality. Impulsive and easily directed by charismatic leaders, the Vargr psyche naturally gravitates towards these ultimate opportunists. Corsairs are admired by the Vargr public at large for their pursuit of unlimited booty and a stretch of the easy life.

These commerce raiders answer to no law but their own. Members of corsair bands go wherever they want, do whatever they wish. In the broken empires of the Vargr Extents, a few corsair organizations eclipse even the power of local rulers with entire kingdoms behind them.

It has been said that as long as there are individuals capable of attracting a handful of followers to mount raids, there will be Vargr corsairs.

The largest, most politically powerful corsair band operating in the Imperial fringe today is the bloodthirsty Kforuzeng organization, formed over 50 years ago through amalgamation of a number of smaller bands. They conducted large scale raids into Aramis subsector during the Fourth Frontier War.

The Kforuzeng now boasts a fleet of 35 starships, ranging from 100 to 1,000 displacement tons, able to field several thousand pirates and mercenaries.

One former member of this organization, **Gvoudzon**, has stumbled his way across the Imperial border, planet to planet, finally resting on the capital world of the Aramis subsector.

The Commonality of Kedzudh is a loose interstellar government in the Vargr Extents. As the Kforuzeng organization rose in power 61 years ago, several world governments united in an attempt to suppress the outbreak of piracy. One of the planets forming the Commonality is the world of Ksarueso. It is on this planet that Gvoudzon was born.

During Gvoudzon's childhood, Kforuzeng influence grew to cover several subsectors along the Imperial border. By the time Gvoudzon came of age, the corsair band spaced a fleet of two dozen small starships and operated as a short-term military force, hiring their services out to the highest bidder. When jobs were scarce, the Kforuzeng would raid unguarded worlds and shipping routes for loot.

Ksarueso was one of the worlds raided by the Kforuzeng, and on one of these raids, Gvoudzon was taken as a conscript.

Desperate at his enslavement at first, Gvoudzon eventually found that the life of a corsair agreed with him. Over the next twelve years, he rose steadily in position, attaining the powerful and well-respected rank of Force Leader.

About nine years ago, internal power struggles threatened to tear the Kforuzeng organization apart. The history of the Kforuzeng had always been bloody, but the band's newest leader directed its resources toward particularly gruesome operations. A minority faction of the Kforuzeng feared the band's actions would attract increased opposition from Kforuz enemies, heralding their demise.

Compromise was not reached. Rather than destroy the Kforuzeng from within, the minority faction broke off from the mother group, forming another corsair organization, the Aegzaeng.

Gvoudzon found himself member to this new Kforuz splinter group.

The Aegzaeng is weaker than the Kforuzeng, its fleet older and smaller, totaling ten ships in the 300 displacement ton range. The Aegzaeng is more equipped for ground operations rather than missions requiring space superiority.

Ties to the Kforuzeng have been maintained, though. Both bands weakened by the separation, the Kforuzeng and Aegzaeng have found it mutually profitable to perform operations in tandem. The two groups often combine efforts on joint missions.

The nature of interstellar communication—that the speed of communication is dependent on the

Up Close and Personal

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rate of transportation—poses a problem for any interstellar entity. Simple coordination of activity between the Kforuzeng and the Aegzaeng is a considerable obstacle.

The Vargr answer to this problem has become a major industry—and a career choice of many Vargr within the Extents. Emissaries are individual bargainers and arbitrators, employed by Vargr governments and other Vargr power structures, charged with the task of maintaining swift, coordinated interstellar communication. The fragmented nature of Vargr society, compounded by the interstellar communication issue, requires these intermediaries—problem solvers who assist in resolving disputes that inevitably arise between interstellar entities.

Just after the Aegzaeng split from the Kforuzeng, Gvoudzon was sent to Tsu Thoezhou (which, translated literally, means Honor Gate), the premier school for emissaries in the Vargr Extents. He became a member of the Zhosokh Urs (translated, means the well-respected ear), and, upon graduation, had his right ear clipped as is the tradition of this brotherhood of professional emissaries (thus, the name of the brotherhood).

Gvoudzon returned in 1099, six years ago, beginning a career as courier between the Aeqzaeng and the Kforuzeng.

In recent years, Kforuzeng has recovered from the damaging blow of the Aegzaeng separation. Gvoudzon has watched as his former corsair band rebuilt itself, growing in both size and power. In his position as emissary to the Kforuz, Gvoudzon has seen Kforuzeng expansion policies turn to bloody takeovers, and the bloodiest has been the most recent—the Kforuzeng absorption of the Uekuez.

From his position on the sidelines, Gvoudzon read the writing on the wall. Sooner or later (probably sooner), the Kforuzeng would make a move to re-absorb the Aegzaeng. When that happened, Gvoudzon did not want to be around.

Because of the power of the Kforuzeng in the Firgr subsector, Gvoudzon knew that, if he left the Aegzaeng, he would not be safe in Vargr space. So, when he did leave, just under a year ago, he drifted rimward, across the Imperial border, to the Aramis subsector...finally ending up on Aramis itself.

Points to Remember...

- Gvoudzon was a member of the Kforuzeng corsair band for twelve years—from the time he came of age to about age 30.

The Kforuzeng raided his homeworld in the Vargr Extents and shanghaied him—“recruiting” him into their ranks.

The life of a corsair agreed with him, and Gvoudzon excelled, achieving the respected Kforuz rank of Force Leader.

- Kforuzeng is the most powerful corsair band operating in this region of space. Kforuz operations span throughout the Firgr subsector and range into both the Commonality of Kedzudh and the Thoengling Empire.

Gvoudzon broke from the Kforuzeng almost a decade ago and helped to form the Kforuz splinter group, the Aegzaeng.

- Ksarueso is Gvoudzon’s homeworld. It is a member planet of the Commonality of Kedzudh—one of the small broken kingdoms in the Vargr Extents.

The Commonality is a “new” Vargr kingdom (they’re always changing), just over 50 standard years old, created when several worlds banded together to fend off the growing Kforuzeng threat. The Vargr state maintains close ties with one of the more powerful kingdoms in the Extents, the Thoengling Empire.

Astrographically, the Commonality of Kedzudh lies between the Imperium and the Thoengling Empire in the Vargr Extents.

- The Thoengling Empire is one of the larger kingdoms in the Vargr Extents. It is more powerful and more stable than most of the Vargr states in this region of space, existing for over 300 years.

Up Close and Personal

(Continued from page 26)

The Marquis of Aramis has recently made trade agreements with the Emperor of the Thoengling Empire, and these trade agreements have led to the establishment of Vargr Trade Stations on several worlds in the Aramis subsector. These same trade agreements have blocked the Navy's effort to secure a price ceiling on lanthanum ore imported from the Extents

- Gvegh-Aekhu is the Vargr term for the cultural region in this area of space. Vargr in the Spinward Marches and the immediate coreward region of the Vargr Extents tend to be a mix of the Gvegh race and the Aekhu race.

The word "Gvegh" translates as "tawny" or "light-brown", and most Vargr of this racial breed tend to have coats colored that way. Aekhu translates as "black", and most racially Aekhu Vargr tend to have darker coats.

Most Vargr names for specific Vargr races refer to fur color.

Gvoudzon is a Gvegh Vargr. His hair is tawny, and his native language is Gvegh.

- Aegzaeng is the splinter group that Gvoudzon helped form eight years ago.

Gvoudzon acted as an emissary between the Aegzaeng and the Kforuzeng, and when he broke for Imperial territory late last year, he took with him a brooch used for clandestine communica-

tion between the two organizations—a brooch that may still contain a secreted message.

Gvoudzon believes that the Aegzaeng will soon be re-absorbed by the Kforuzeng.

- Daeus Jacks spent a large portion of his naval career engaging Vargr corsair bands, including both the Kforuzeng and the Aegzaeng.

Two years ago, in 1103, Daeus lead an Imperial naval task force, out of the base on Aramis, that routed out and engaged vessels from a major Kforuz base. This engagement took place outside the Imperial border. Several of the Vargr vessels were destroyed, resulting in a major blow to the Kforuzeng organization.

Daeus was given the medal for Meritorious Conduct Under Fire, making him one of the most decorated naval officers stationed on Aramis.

- Uekuez is the Vargr corsair band that was recently absorbed (last year) by the Kforuzeng.

Gvoudzon viewed the ruthless, bloody take over from his position as an Aegzaeng emissary to the Kforuzeng, and it was this encounter that spurred Gvoudzon to leave Aegzaeng service and travel rimward to the Imperium.

Because of discussions with Daeus, Gvoudzon has since realized that it was Jacks' damaging raid on the Kforuz base that prompted Kforuz leadership to take over the Uekuez. The Kforuzeng needed to replace the ships lost in the encounter with Jacks' task force, and the Uekuez had vessels for the taking. ❁

Critics' Corner

Grand Safari

reviewed by Megan Robertson

Grand Safari. John Watts.

Gypsy Knights Games <http://www.gypsyknightsgames.com>
153pp., PDF

US\$9.99/UK£7.75

This review originally appeared on rpg-resource.org.uk in July 2016

One of the delights of *Traveller* is exploring new parts of the universe... and here's a whole cam-

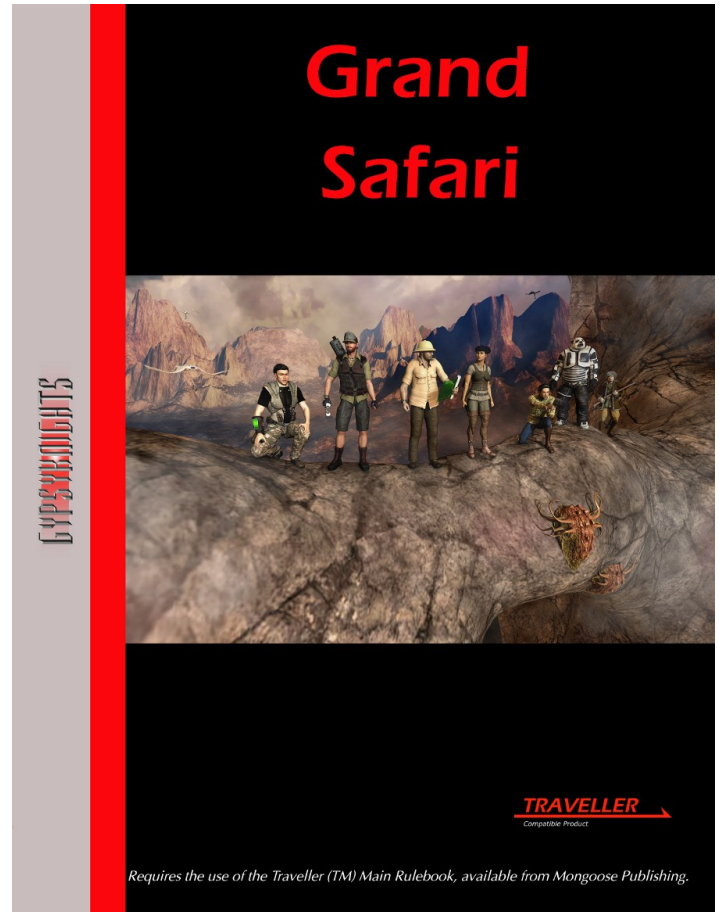
paign about doing just that. Set in the Gypsy Knights Games alternative *Traveller* universe, it puts the party as members of the Gentlemen's Club of Dashwood (an society you'll find in the book *21 More Organisations*) who have booked themselves onto a hunting safari into the unsettled Hannibal Subsector (Leonidas Sector) which is located to spinward of the Dade Subsector in the Clement Sector. You can read about the Dade Subsector in the work *Dade Colonies*, too. Nine pre-generated characters are

provided but you can use your own—provided they are 'posh' enough (assume SOC 8+) to join the Club or can wangle an invitation from a member to join the trip. There are also safari staff and ship's crew roles, but these are probably best filled by NPCs.

What we have here is a series of adventures which can be played in any order, linked by the theme of the Safari, which is a competition. Various activities accrue points, which accumulate towards a prize and enhance standing within the Club. The game begins at a Club meeting on Dashwood or at the first stop, a skills training day on Aisha, after which the party should be allowed to choose from a list of available safaris (adventures) which ones they want to do and in what order.

There's plenty of detail to help you run this campaign, from planetary data to the Clubhouse on Dashwood. The safari contest rules are introduced and then it's on to Aisha for Skills Day. Here, the party has the opportunity to demonstrate prowess at various activities: rifle marksmanship, archery, horseback riding, climbing, stealth, and making a shelter out of native materials. Points are awarded for all these activities—and characters who do well despite being unskilled in a given discipline may gain rank 0 in the appropriate skill. The party is then shown a list of six expeditions and can decide the order in which to visit them.

Each expedition is presented in detail. For each one, there is a defined objective and the party will have a certain amount of time and the appropriate equipment to undertake it. Interestingly, sometimes the task is being done for someone else—for example, in the Sea Hunt the Club has been contracted to capture certain fish for a research group. Some of the tasks involve killing, but there are enough places in which capturing or even making recordings of the target animals or plants will garner points so that those who are uncomfortable with the idea of hunting for sport will find plenty to do. Naturally, each location visited boasts more than the target creature and there are extensive random event charts and other encounters to further enliven affairs. Once the



six hunts have been undertaken, the party returns to Aisha, points are added up and prizes awarded.

Full details of all the systems in the Hannibal Subsector are provided, at least to the level that they are known to the Club. As far as is known, none of them have been settled yet... but there's sufficient detail in the system write-ups to allow for that if the party choose to do so in later adventures, or for you to write your own campaign around exploring and settling any one of them. Many do not even have names yet, just catalogue numbers, although some have acquired unofficial names bestowed by the Club during earlier safaris. The ship on which the safari will be undertaken is also presented, complete with deckplans and full details including those of a surface (wet) boat provided for ocean travel during the trip. Finally, there are a few ideas about other things that might be going on in the area...

This presents an exciting and original campaign framework, with loads of detail to support the adventures provided or indeed facilitate your own in a virtually unexplored subsector. 🌐

Props

by Timothy Collinson

Editor's note: Footnote in the original submitted article have been converted to end notes, and duplicate references eliminated.

Role-playing games are primarily imaginative. As they say about radio vs television, “the pictures are better in your head”. Computer games have yet to equal the high resolution, surround sound, smell-o-vision of what’s going in our creative minds. But physical accompaniments have often been present in RPGs – from dice to help arbitrate rules, through character sheets, pencil and erasers to act as aide memoires, to miniatures to help track combat movement. And who doesn’t love a good handout – whether it’s a lovingly crafted world map or a detailed deck plan?

However, there is also the possibility of going a step further and creating some form of prop to use within a game. Most often this will be an artefact from within the game world. They can be a great aid to visualizing what’s going on, they can be engaging objects in their own right, and they may even be a memento of the game afterwards. Oh, and they’re often great fun for the referee to make!

Asked to describe some of the props I’ve made for various adventures: what they were, why I made them and how I went about it, has given me some pause for thought about the whole enterprise. I actually hadn’t considered this as much of a feature of what I do – most usually at TravCon. I think for the most part I’ve done it because it’s fun and, if well done, can surprise and really involve players along with their characters. Sometimes it’s been because it seemed like a good idea at the time and at least once it was almost by accident.

The following takes a look at a few of my attempts – I don’t claim any expertise – in the hope that it might inspire other referees to give this a go if they’ve not considered it before. I’m not going to consider the usual paper handouts that most referees produce – whether it’s a gorgeous poster sized

starport plan as auctioned at TravCon16^a or the hastily scribbled layout of an Automated Packet Switched Low Berth Network recovery room in TravCon12^b. One thing I would say is that advice I’ve seen about props is along the lines of minimum effort for maximum effect. I’m definitely not one to advise on that as I sometimes suspect I go for maximum effort and minimum effect. r at the very least a major effort but that the players at least vaguely appreciate.

The Diary



At TravCon12 I ran my very first *Traveller* adventure. Then called ‘Portents and Signs’ it was eventually published as ‘Into the Unknown’ (Mongoose, 2015) so you can read the full text of the diary there. All ten thousand words. The Diary became a big feature of that game and had been in my mind from the earliest stages of sketch-

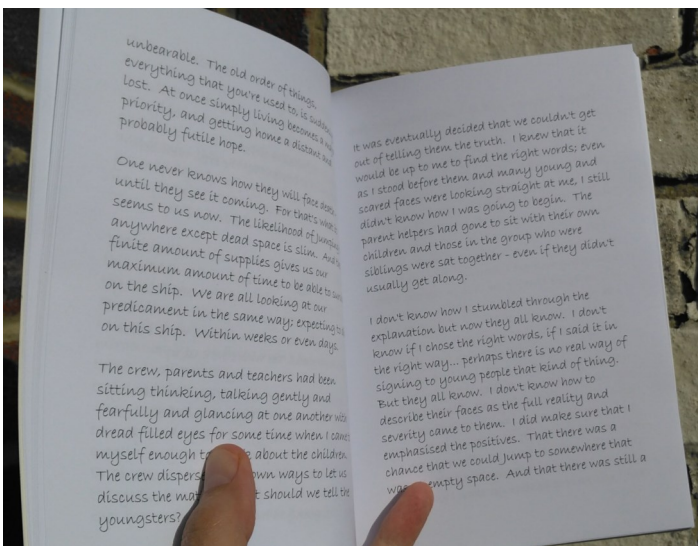
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ing out ideas – although my initial conception was nothing like as big as it became.

The idea was hardly original. Found diaries are a common staple of both fantasy and science fiction stories and I dare say role playing as well. Indeed, masters like Tolkien used the idea to good effect when the Fellowship arrive at Balin's tomb and find the record of what happened to the dwarves in Moria. Usually however, you just get extracts of diaries and I thought perhaps I could do a little more. However as I wrote in the convention write up^b, time became pressing towards the end and my then teenager daughter loved writing in notebooks and diaries so the obvious thought came to me to see if she was interested in an exercise. I gave her a page and a half of notes – essentially what you can see on pages 39-40 of 'Into the Unknown', a month to write at whatever length she liked, and a free hand on names. Just a few days before the convention she came to me with 10,000 words of *handwritten* notes. I was tempted just to reproduce them as they were but it wouldn't quite have worked so I had just one evening to type the whole lot out. Exhausting, but surprisingly moving as I read what Emma had written. What had I done to these poor people!? I really hadn't considered the human element.



In any case, with the text turned into a PDF with a tidy handwriting-style font, I took it to a local printshop and got three copies of the diary made up (one for the convention and the auctioned off adventure notes, one for myself and one for Emma). I carefully included some blank pages at the end as a real diary might have when cast aside. This detail was quite effective in giving a sense of a lost future.

I ran the game twice at the convention and twice elsewhere, and from the moment the diary was 'found' by the PCs it was never out of the players' hands. Indeed, the only complaint I've had about the adventure is that there wasn't enough time to read the whole diary. Some players were as moved as I was reading it. I can only thank my daughter.

And that's the one sadness of this prop. In the original adventure text, I carefully credited Emma and my colleague from work, Patrick Galway (<http://patrickgalway.weebly.com>), who produced the sign language artwork, but both credits went missing in the PDF publication. I immediately sent in the correction although it was never adopted in a revision and I sent it again before the print book came out. Sadly, it's still not there.

Were I to do one thing differently – aside from allowing more time for the typing – it might be to produce one copy for each of the players. Maybe not give them out until the end to maintain the fiction of the found object, but it would make a nice memento.

The Logbook

Just about qualifying as a physical prop was the Logbook of the *Spinward Charter*. This was inspired by my real world time as crew on a merchant ship. The logbook is immensely important and strictly kept by the officers. I was also aware that yacht masters keep similar records. And of course *Star Trek* has forever immortalized the Captain's Log. It didn't take a moment to find some examples of real life logbooks to see what kind of information they might include and then adapt such books for *Traveller* ship purposes. My suspicion is that a real log in the Third Imperium would have much more detail, but the

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result you can see in 'Into the Unknown' was sufficient to give the feeling of a found log. It had the added advantage that it could be given to a second player as the diary could only be in one pair of hands at a time and it also had the advantage of being much shorter so that the relevant back story could be summarized from it much more quickly. I left that to the players rather than giving them the backstory myself which definitely made it a better moment for the characters.

I immediately discarded the idea of producing a printed version as too 'samey', and with my newish iPad to hand could immediately see that the best way to introduce it was to simply have a PDF on screen, ready to go and hand the tablet over to the player whose PC had accessed the ship's computer.

Again, this seemed to work really well with the players. So much so that if I ever get around to running a more 'normal' merchant type game, I might encourage the players to have their PCs keep such a logbook for real.

For anyone who would like the simple outline for their own use, it's here:

Date
Dep/Arr/J
PP
M/Drive
J/Drive
Crew
Narrative

And an example of a filled in entry:

Date	998-048
Dep/Arr/J	Dep: Zavazadlo [Foreven 0101] 1800
PP	24 standard hours
M/Drive	6:45 standard hours
J/ Drive	N/A
Crew	Captain (Pilot): Stock Engerson, Navigator: Saim Hussein, Chief Engineer: Drem Marzon, Engineer: Olga Inson, Medic: Linn Sy, Steward: Ponase Marten
Narrative	Chartered by the Almarga Academy for Jump to Kushti, one parsec. Interesting charter with the Academy pupils all deaf and using sign language. Could be a quiet trip.

(Note that for entries after the first, the crew entry might well be 'ditto' unless something changes. The idea of the drive entries is to track the number

of hours they've been running – with obvious maintenance implications.)

Vargr Merd

After pretty much writing 'Into the Unknown' in a month, I was determined not to repeat the mistake and essentially spent the entire year writing 'The Second Scions' Society' for TravCon13^c. The banquet scene at the beginning was long in my mind and it seemed obvious that I could perhaps produce a menu as a handout. However, as the idea of Vargr Merd took shape in my mind (see "Vargr Merd on the Menu", p.54 in this issue), I increasingly thought it might be fun to actually serve it up. I had some white gloves that with some body language, speech patterns and a bottle of wine would turn me into a waiter. Why not also produce a chopping board with the final course on it? It was also nicely heralded by the player who bothered to read the French menu items and saw the humour but all thought that that was it; just a one line joke. When I actually produced the chopping board from a box to one side where I'd hidden it, their jaws dropped and I was amply repaid for the work. With suitable warnings to the one player with a nut allergy (best not touch it with a bargepole – but that could immediately be worked into his character), the others were willing to give it a go – despite what it looks like and is being 'sold' as – and along with the story telling really made that section of the adventure. Well worth doing. Photos, and more on the story telling, can be found in the write up referenced above.

The Beggar

Perhaps the biggest and most animated 'prop' I've included in a game was also in 'The Second Scions' Society'. The PCs – as very wealthy nobles – must traverse a rundown bit of starport and I thought it would be fun to have them encounter a beggar and test their generosity. The idea was that later in the game, if they encountered some low-lives or the downtrodden, they might receive some benefit from how generous they were or weren't. From

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there it was but a moment to wonder if I could somehow engineer such an encounter for real. Perhaps have each of the players walk down the corridor of the hotel on some pretext and encounter someone sitting in the corridor who would plead for a handout.

I came up with the excuse that I needed to know how long it would take them to traverse the distance at their normal walking speed with entourage of servants in tow and off each of them went one at a time. (This also had the excellent side effect of giving the other players a chance to prepare their after dinner story telling.) I still recall the player who stated he had a palanquin and bearers and moved out at the most sedately pace you could imagine in his imaginary box! Brilliant!

On the first occasion I ran the game I was able to find a fellow conventioner sitting out the gaming session as he desperately tried to finish writing an adventure he was going to run (and I thought I cut it fine sometimes!). He was willing to take a few minutes out to play the indigent and I gave him a quick briefing on his backstory, his lines and the need to note how much he was 'given' by the PC. On the second occasion I ran the adventure there was no one around, so I nipped out before the first player, did the begging and then briefed that player on being the beggar for the rest of the group. It worked well enough although I did deliberately choose a player I knew would be comfortable with the whole thing (with LARP experience).

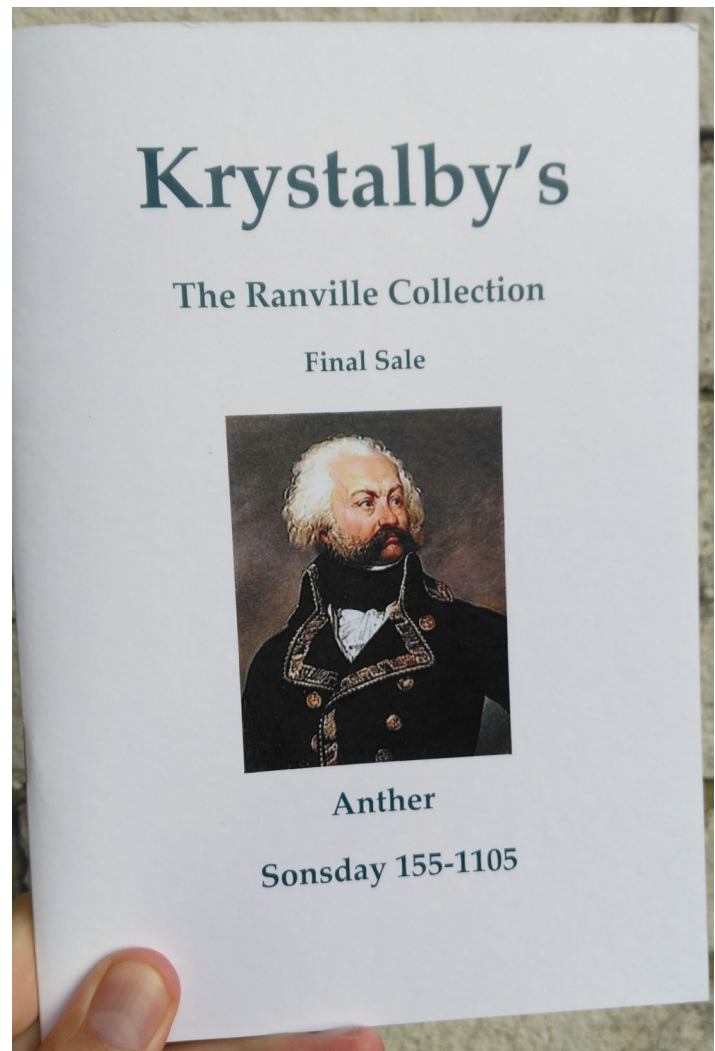
It's probably not strictly a 'prop' but it was a fun element even if the subsequent bit of plot about the generosity of the PCs and how karma might reward them wasn't something we got into due to lack of time.

The Auction Catalogue

Inspired by the success of the diary the previous year, I was thinking about whether I could do something similar for TravCon13. I already had any num-

ber of handouts for the adventure (some would say far too many) but this would be The Handout. Given that the Scions' adventure climaxes in an auction house where the noble PCs are bidding for at least one particularly rare item, it seemed obvious that it might be fun to actually produce an auction catalogue. I'd worked in a library where the art and design courses meant we actually kept such things, so I knew what they looked like and how glossy and attractive they could be.

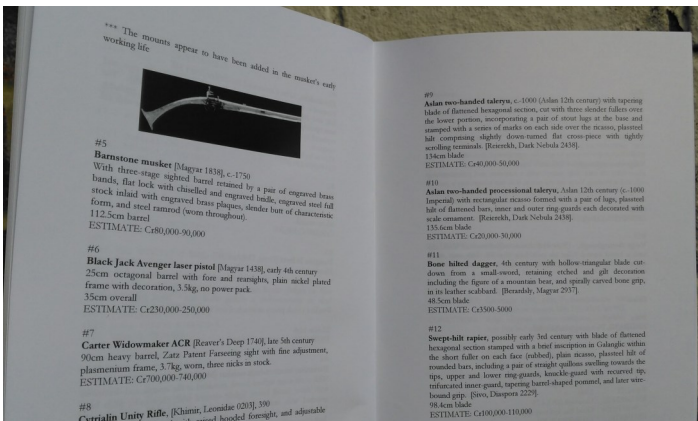
Fortunately I started this project early because it was surprisingly difficult to come up with 60 or 70 items with fairly detailed descriptions in keeping with the kind of object they were. In addition I wanted them to be firmly rooted in a history of the Third Imperium which is nowhere near detailed enough for this kind of work. (The auction was selling lots of an old explorer's lifetime collection of val-



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uables. The booklet also contains Sir Ranville's biography and a list, with maps, of every world he visited on his three expeditions to various parts of Known Space.) One or two such items weren't too hard, three or four were alright, but having to learn the styles of description and invent history/facts and so on for weapons, coins, clothes, jewels, manuscripts and so on was incredibly time consuming. On the other hand I did learn a lot – for example I'd not come across *netsuke* before. When, a year or so later, I went to a museum which contained tray upon tray of the things, I spent far longer looking at them than I would have done otherwise. I'd like to hope the whole adventure – with auction catalogue – will be published one day, but some sample entries are included in Appendix 1 to this article.



On this occasion a trip to the local print shop involved 14 copies (two games × 6 players, one for the (real!) auction and one for me). It cost about £20 which I did think twice about but when I considered the number of hours I'd put into creating the adventure itself, it hardly seemed worth balking at this extra cost.

Once again, the adventure would have run well enough without this prop, but the players enjoyed having them (although I did say that in game they'd quite probably be electronic) and 'shopping' before the auction. This had the unintended consequence of lengthening the auction scene as I had to run the bidding on the additional lots the PCs were interested in. I also invited anyone who didn't want to keep

a catalogue to leave it behind and I'd reuse it. Not a single one was left. However, this is probably my lowest effort/benefit ratio prop to date even though the finished item is perhaps one of the most desirable objects I've ever made. (Rereading this booklet some three years later I can't help but be amazed I produced it in the first place and find adventure ideas in nearly every entry.)

Postcards

'Ashfall' was an adventure I ran at TravCon14 and was the first where I deliberately took something I had not spent the vast quantity of time preparing that I had previously. It was also the first adventure I ran which I'd not written specifically for the convention. It was one I'd written for publication, hadn't by then seen the light of day, and I dug out because I was curious to see how it might play out. I was growing in confidence – perhaps not of my refereeing ability so much as the patience and forbearance of conventioners with a newbie.

I had enough time however to really explore the planet Spume in my mind and as I sat in the kitchen looking at our sand picture frame (sand in a liquid which forms attractive patterns when you invert it), I realized that it looked rather like a landscape. As our frame contained red and black sand it looked rather alien. Furthermore, we have a relatively bright yellow paint on our kitchen wall and when the frame was placed in front of it the whole effect was a sulphurous landscape that I could see was Spume. Using an early iPad to take pictures the resolution was poor enough to actually work in the pictures' favour of making the whole thing look like the poor visibility found in the ashfall.

I was then able to manipulate some of the pictures a tiny bit using the Brushes app – adding a plume here, or a tiny vehicle on the horizon there and even an entire volcano which I was pleased with. Back to the print shop who are now getting used to my yearly visits and along with the cards I'll mention next, these pictures were printed out like photographs or postcards to present to the players

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and add to the atmosphere (perhaps literally!) of the adventure. For the little time and effort they took, these were definitely worth doing and for a non-artist such as myself were very enjoyable to produce. They can clearly be seen on the table in figures 5 and 6 of the convention write up^d. They also reappeared to good effect when I ran 'Ashfall II: Under the Dome' and 'Ashfall III: Into the Crust' at TravCon16.

Equipment cards

I suppose these could be considered as 50 very small, business card sized 'handouts' but I'm going to include them as a prop because they were a bit more physical and they had an in-game purpose. The Darrian scientists of 'Ashfall' would be able to select what equipment they wanted to take with them on their expedition but also at one stage in the adventure have to make very quick, snap judgments on what to grab in the event of a landslide destroying their base. I'd written into the characters varying degrees of tidiness and personal organization – perhaps inspired by my visits to academic offices at a university which could on occasion be astonishing piles of paperwork, books, journals and other paraphernalia. The aim was to get the players thinking about their gear, to represent each piece with a separate card, and then for them to have to grab a card or three in a very limited time frame. If they'd kept them tidy it would be easy to grab what they wanted, if they had left them scattered over the table as gamers are wont to do with handouts, it would be harder. Their characters would then be surviving with whatever had been grabbed. Including the fur-lined handcuffs that a previous expedition had left in the kitbag for some unknown reason. (I did have an NPC to hand to grab the one bit of kit they really needed!) Again, the cards can just about be seen, stacked up and ready to hand out in figures 5 & 6 of the convention write up^d.

This was probably an idea that worked better in theory than practice but only because I gave the players so many other things to think about. It's probably just as easy to role play this kind of thing without anything physical as long as the players aren't ones to abuse the freedom. Perhaps this was a sign of my inexperience. Had I focussed more on this, it would probably have worked as intended. As it was, the cards were no trouble to produce, cost very little to print and can easily be used in other *Traveller* games where similar equipment might be used. So I'd probably try this again if circumstances warranted.

The Starport Plan

This was a handout for 'Three Blind Mice' – a second game I ran at TravCon14 – rather than a prop but I'm going to include here as a point on logistics. I wrote in the After Action Report about winning the PFI award for the moment I handed out the referee version of the map. It can be seen in the free to download adventure^e. As you can see the map clearly marks the 'INI agent hideout' – which the PCs are supposed to be locating so they can rescue the kidnapped orphan. That was unintended and I should have had a version without that note on the key. Although the players were very gentle with me, and in fact we probably didn't have time to play out the search and the rescue in the convention slot so it was a good job we moved on, the incident has seared itself into my memory as to the importance of keeping my different notes, handouts, props etc clearly labelled or stored for prompt access. In the stress of a game, there's never enough time to double check everything so it's worth doing such checks well before sitting down at the table.

A Verbal 'Prop'

Again, not perhaps strictly a prop, unless you take the loosest sense of a 'support'. This was the language I introduced to the 'Generation X' adventure at TravCon15. I'd just read the marvellous *Dark Eden* by Chris Beckett and was very taken with his

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use of language. It occurred to me that the way the Edenites doubled words for emphasis, e.g. something might be “cold cold” rather than just “cold”) would be perfect for the regressed technology stage of the adventure with a bunch of essentially barbarians running around on their generation ship. I didn’t instruct the players to use such language, but whenever I was in character as an NPC – or perhaps just as referee as well – I would introduce such usage. The players weren’t slow to pick up on the language such that their PCs began to use it and some of the words I’d thrown in (such as ‘wombtime’ for 9 months instead of a ‘year’) whenever appropriate and it really gave an alien flavour to their society when the ‘Rendezvous with Karma’ Imperial players finally got into the ship^f. You could actually see the cogs in the Imperials’ minds ticking over as they tried to work out what was really being said.

The Speakstick

Also during the ‘Generation X’ game, the PCs were at one point tribal leaders who met together to discuss, plan, argue and so on. These meetings, which for reasons described in the usual After Action Report^f were held standing up, could become a tad rambunctious. To keep things in order the players decided they needed a ‘speakstick’. No one could talk except the person holding the stick. No more shouting at the same time so no one can be heard. It had never occurred to me to provide any such thing. But we were in the games room of the convention hotel and a snooker cue was at hand. This then became the symbol of who held the floor and cut down on the shouting over each other. It worked very well but I can hardly claim it as something I did any work on, or even thought of at all. However, it does show how props need not be time consuming, cost anything or even be solely the domain of the referee. It also perhaps shows just how useful something physical can be in what, after all, is primarily a game of the imagination.

Props may not be everyone’s cup of tea. You may not have time for them, you may be on a budget that can’t afford such things, or you may not feel you have the ideas for them (or at least how they can be practically realized – wouldn’t we all love a real ‘handcomp’ – oh, wait a minute, that’s happened in my lifetime – from *Star Trek* fantasy to tablet reality!). But props can be a terrific way of getting players into character, be a great means of developing an atmosphere or even as mentioned earlier simply be a souvenir to take home. I don’t always use them – I’m currently running *The Traveller Adventure* with work colleagues as well as an ‘off the cuff’ game at lunchtimes occasionally and we’ve not had one yet, but there have been plenty of handouts and Google Keep images and documents to refer them to. (It would have been fun to have made up a howood brooch from something!) When the moment comes, I’m sure we’ll include something. I doubt I’ve made my last one and would encourage others, if perhaps you’ve shied away from them in the past, to have a go too.

Appendix 1: Excerpt from Krystalby’s Auction Catalogue, 155-1105

#7

Carter Widowmaker ACR [Reaver’s Deep 1740], late 5th century

90cm heavy barrel, Zatz Patent Farseeing sight with fine adjustment, plasmenium frame, 3.7kg, worn, three nicks in stock.

ESTIMATE: Cr700,000-740,000

#10

Aslan two-handed processional taleryu, Aslan 12th century (c.-1000 Imperial) with rectangular ricasso formed with a pair of lugs, plassteel hilt of flattened bars, inner and outer ring-guards each decorated with scale ornament. Reierekh (Dark Nebula 2438).

135.6cm blade

ESTIMATE: Cr20,000-30,000

#20

Wine-coloured silk chiffon Karnesti evening

gown worn by Dame Julli Morston-Bayward when accompanied by Duke Eli Marruthers Pilkington Basinth at the Emperor’s Ball in 763. Jacinta Karnesti is said to have instructed her design house to destroy the pattern after seeing the incomparable grace with which Dame Julli wore it.

ESTIMATE: Cr530,000-610,000



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#22

Ivory netsuke of a shishi

Kyoto, Terra, -2600s (early 19th century Terran)

Sitting upright in a guardian position and looking forwards, tail trailing to the left. Eyes are inlaid opals. Ivory worn, but in good condition, unsigned.

4.1cm

ESTIMATE: Cr1,100,000

References: Hindwoodson, J. (1003). Netsuke. Capital: University of Sylea.

#59

Leeatah'ostyohwi'taihtari Atlaiyea'ear Aftairl tluakh ktoleir ihatei oukha htioeiosowao ihaikhao [Chronicles of a Mercenary Ihatei Spinward of Aftair Sector], Manuscript 'tala' or scroll of epic poetry, illustrations, maps, original silk sheath, 8m x 0.4m, -654.

ESTIMATE: Cr800,000-Cr900,000



Notes

- a) TravCon16: *Freelance Traveller*, May/June 2016, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon16.html>
- b) TravCon12: *Freelance Traveller*, May/June 2012, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon12.html>
- c) TravCon13: *Freelance Traveller*, June 2013, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon13.html>
- d) TravCon14: *Freelance Traveller*, Sept 2014, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon14.html>
- e) Three Blind Mice can be downloaded from <http://www.13mann.com/index.php/en/download/category/52-traveller-adventures>
- f) TravCon15: *Freelance Traveller*, Aug 2015 <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon15.html>. This writeup includes a description of the 'double game' linking 'Rendezvous with Karma' and 'Generation X'.
- g) *shishi*: Japanese stone lion



Kurishdam

The Club Room

Sintoshareeta

by Michael Brown

This article was originally posted to the pre-magazine Freelance Traveller website in 2006.

The Sintoshareeta are a minor Human race adapted for an arboreal existence by the inscrutable Ancients. After an initial period where they feared and distrusted the other denizens of the universe, the Sintoshareeta have woven themselves into the rich fabric of Imperial society.

The Terrans who first encountered them made reference in their reports of the Dryads, woodland beings from Greek mythology; the nickname stuck, although the Sintoshareeta disdain the comparison.

Origin and History

About 300,000 years ago, Ancient starships arrived in the Sintoshee system with a living cargo of primitive Terran Humans. The Human transplants were subjected to biological manipulation designed to adapt them to an arboreal environment and released into discrete areas of the planet. Sintoshee was a world filled with predators of every sort, but constant monitoring by the Ancient patrons kept the proto-Sintoshareeta relatively safe.

When the Ancients destroyed themselves in their Final War, the Sintoshareeta found themselves alone in a world bent on eating them. Despite taking horrific casualties, they eventually learned to survive and flourish, even turning the tables on a few hostile species and domesticating others.

By the time the Vilani contacted the Sintoshareeta in -5988, the natives had achieved tech level 2, with expertise in arboriculture. Unfortunately, initial relations with the Vilani did not go well. Social mis-cues caused relations to sour very quickly, and sporadic hostilities broke out. The later Vilani Consolidation Wars only made matters worse; in response, the Sintoshareeta took part in wides and open revolt.

Following the fall of the Ziru Sirka, the Terrans generally treated the Sintoshareeta in a more even-handed manner, although they relegated the natives to second-class status. When the Rule of Man collapsed, the Terrans simply abandoned their charges. Sintoshareeta fortunes actually improved during the subsequent Long Night due to their agrarian skills; they weathered the Long Night in good order and had even made some technological progress by the time the Third Imperium contacted them in 18. By then, Sintoshee had reached TL5.

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Initial contact with the Third Imperium went almost as badly as contact with the Ziru Sirka had centuries before. Sintoshareeta memories of dealings with extrastellar inhabitants were long, and these new arrivals were, fairly or not, lumped into the same category as their predecessors. Intensive interaction with the Scout Service, along with the Sector Duke's personal assurances of fair treatment, has allowed the Sintoshareeta to shed some of their intercultural baggage and embrace Imperial society.

Unfortunately, all is not well within Sintoshareeta society; a radical faction opposed to contact with outsiders has recently arisen and undertaken terrorist activities against offworlders. Imperial authorities are working closely with the Sintoshareeta to stop the increasingly violent attacks.

Homeworld

Sintoshee (2640 Corridor)

System Data: primary: G0V; no belts, 3 gas giants

Starport: Class I

Diameter: 6,420 miles; Atmosphere: thin oxygen-nitrogen; Hydrographics: 66%; Population: 79 million Sintoshareeta; Government: Multiple; Control Rating: 6; Tech Level: 5; Climate: Warm; Gravity: 0.63g; WTN: 3

Sintoshee is a geologically stable world with heavily arboreal terrain. Products from the planet's jungles form the backbone of the economy, and lucrative exploitation contracts have been awarded to those companies willing to follow Sintoshareeta environmental dictates. The most important exports are foodstuffs and wood products.

Sintoshee boasts an astonishing variety of flora and fauna, much of which remains a danger. Predation was a major problem until the Sintoshareeta achieved technology. They have been kept in check through various environmental programs.

The Imperial-built downport is artificially kept at Class I to avoid environmental damage. A Class III orbital port has been built by a conglomeration of

private interests and is better able to handle Sintoshee's flourishing import/export trade.

Physiology and Appearance

Sintoshareeta are undeniably Human, though differing from the Human norm. They average only 60 inches (152.4 cm) tall. They are very slender and lithe, averaging 90 lbs. (40.9 kg) under standard gravity. There are two sexes, with average sexual dimorphism. They sport lush, wavy hair on their heads, but little elsewhere on their bodies. Their facial features have often been described as "elfin."

It is there that the resemblance ends. The most noticeable feature is the Sintoshareeta tail, which averages almost a yard in length. A vestigial remnant in other Humans, the non-prehensile tail aids balance while traversing narrow areas and jumping. Sintoshareeta skilled in hand to hand combat can use their tails to confuse opponents and deliver surprise blows. Their skin tones run the spectrum from light to dark, but all have a pronounced greenish cast. Even their hair is green; drunk spacers have circulated the wild story that the hair is actually moss. The skin is typically blotched or freckled; the amount individually varies. The feet are longer and more flexible than those of Imperial Humans and the toes have an extra joint, giving the feet a better grip, though they cannot be used as true manipulators. The arms are longer in proportion to the body than Imperial Humans. Because of these adaptations to their arboreal existence, Imperial Humans generally find Sintoshareeta unattractive.

Sintoshareeta typically avoid loose-fitting clothing, jewelry, and other adornments that can catch on foliage. When decorative items are worn, they tend to be close-fitting or applied with temporary adhesives. Sintoshareeta do not wear shoes, protecting the soles of their feet with sandal-like affairs that leave the toes completely free, and only willingly wear footwear as part of an overall ensemble (a vacc suit, for example.)

Sintoshareeta hearing is very keen, and they consider hearing their primary sense. An advanta-

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geous arrangement of the structures of the inner ear grants them superior hearing and balance. Such keen hearing is essential in a predator-filled environment; adversaries will often be heard before they are seen. The ears can also better pick up sounds in Sintoshee's thin atmosphere.

The respiratory system includes a smaller extra pair of lungs. These act as oxygen sponges, absorbing and binding ambient oxygen molecules directly into the pulmonary tissues. Such a respiratory arrangement avoids the "barrel-chested" look seen in inhabitants of worlds with similar atmospheres and has the overall effect of allowing the Sintoshareeta to operate normally in thin atmospheres. The circulatory system is a typical closed type, except that Sintoshareeta blood is configured to bind more oxygen. The nervous, endocrine and immune systems are all typically Human.

The digestive system is frailer than that of Imperial Humans, and cannot digest animal protein at all. It is not known if the Ancients engineered this condition or it developed in response to Sintoshee's then-alien environment. A result is that Sintoshareeta become violently ill if they try to eat meat. Sintoshareeta traveling offworld are thus scrupulous about what they eat. Drugs intended for Human use have unpredictable effects on Sintoshareeta; medics must consult medical databases or confer with Sintoshareeta physicians before administering drugs.

The reproductive system is typically Human, except that the gestation period is slightly shorter. Sintoshareeta have shorter lifespans, but mature faster. They are considered mature by 13. The onset of aging begins by 30, and aging rolls increase thereafter. The shorter lifespan can be attributed to a slightly higher metabolic rate, which also makes it difficult for Sintoshareeta to get fat.

Sintoshareeta are best known for their chameleonoid camouflage ability, a certain result of Ancient bioengineering. They are able to consciously control

the degree and distribution of their skin pigmentation to better hide among foliage and thus escape predators. This ability is useless in urban areas or within flora of a color other than green. They cannot become truly invisible, rumor and Imperial adventure fiction notwithstanding. A Sintoshareeta in the jungle is still a fearsome opponent, able to blend into the background until choosing to strike.

Sintoshareeta presumably have the same capacity for psionics as many other Human races, although culturally they share Imperial society's distaste for such abilities.

Psychology and Philosophy

The dual dangers of falling to their deaths or becoming another creature's meal while maintaining a precarious existence in the treetops instilled a strong sense of caution in the Sintoshareeta. They are constantly scanning their surroundings for possible danger and sticking to people, places and situations they know and have come to trust. When threatened, Sintoshareeta attempt to escape by climbing, if possible, or by putting obstacles between themselves and the aggressor. Some Sintoshareeta take this wariness almost to the point of paranoia. In modern society, this attitude most often takes the form of a strong conservative streak, colored by a steadfast refusal to accept new ideas.

One of the Sintoshareetas' earliest defenses against predation was by forming tight cooperative bonds. Sintoshareeta are generally uncomfortable working alone. Conversely, they keep a careful watch on their companions' backs, and are quick to come to their aid. While part of a group, however, Sintoshareeta tend to remain in the background, shunning the limelight. This may be due to ancient psychological imperatives that led Sintoshareeta to keep quiet and unnoticeable to avoid being caught and eaten.

The twin drives of caution and cooperation cause Sintoshareeta to choose their friends with great care. New acquaintances are viewed warily until their motives are clear. Once they accept some-

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one as a friend, however, a Sintoshareeta will not abandon them under any circumstances, short of physical violence. Considering the care given to the selection of their associates, however, such things rarely occur.

Most of the thousands of belief systems on Sintoshee incorporate holdover elements of ancient totemic or animistic worship. Contact with offworlders has introduced many other belief systems, religions, and philosophies, many of which have been adopted into Sintoshareeta culture.

Society and Culture

Although Sintoshareeta society is organized along clan/tribal lines, what prevents the Scout Service from simply classifying Sintoshee's governmental structure as that is the degree of cooperation shown between the tribes. Although each tribe maintains a distinctive cultural and familial identity, the Sintoshareeta cooperative drive causes extreme blending and overlap with other tribes, blurring societal indicators the Scouts typically look for. The current governmental classification of Multiple/Balkanized is a compromise. The thousands of Sintoshareeta tribes are called Societies. It is joked among Scouts that the social survey teams went insane trying to catalog all of the Sintoshareeta Societies after contact.

Each Society is composed of a variable number of families. The largest Societies boast hundreds of families while a few families are Societies unto themselves. The cooperative bonds that link the families within the Society are adaptable to a larger scale; thus ensuring that interaction with other Societies takes place smoothly. Family elders handle interfamily disputes, with small councils of such elders called up on an *ad hoc* basis. Conflict between Societies, and therefore such councils, is rare. Functions within each Society are handled by families best able to do so, from educating children to dealing with Imperial authorities.

The Scouts have noted consistent and relatively uniform laws across the planet, to regulate movement and provide authorities with means to locate those in danger. The assigned CR of 6 reflects this. The consistency of these laws is another indicator of the former homogeneity of Sintoshareeta society. Natives and visitors alike are required to register with Society authorities and natives must escort visitors at all times. Deliberate flouting of laws can bring severe penalties if the actions endanger others.

Sintoshee's tech level is 5, with strengths in arborculture and ecology. Some Imperial ultra tech has been imported, but most Sintoshareeta seem content to get by as they have for millennia. Because of the emphasis on low-tech tools, craftsmanship of such items is typically of very high quality.

Language and Naming

The bewildering array of societies on Sintoshee has given rise to an equally bewildering array of spoken languages. Fortunately for visitors, many Sintoshareeta have learned to speak Galanglic. Many Sintoshareeta merchants also use a trade pidgin (learned as a M/E skill) for use in communicating with extraplanetary customers. Most Sintoshareeta languages are M/A skills to learn.

Imperial linguistic experts have found common roots in many of Sintoshee's languages, leading them to speculate that at some point the Sintoshareeta all had a common language. Investigation into this intriguing possibility is continuing.

The exact structure of Sintoshareeta names depends on the particular society in which the individual was raised, but most involve a tribal name, a given name, and a descriptive appellation, in that order. Thus, Salee Kyrris Taloon is Kyrris of the Salee tribe, called Taloon, for a hardy flowering plant known for its beauty and tenacity. Common male names include Aurrin, Coris, Javoon, Davin, Koror, Rilin, Sinorshee, and Taror. Female names include Auli, Deereeda, Fuli, Geli, Kyrris, Nerali, Ronnis, Sireeta, Talis, and Vellin. Common Tribal

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names include Salee, Karnoon, Bintornis, Tarrin, Mellin, Orsorhee, and Sheehee.

Government and Politics

There is, of course, no centralized government on Sintoshee. Each Society handles its own administrative affairs. Of course, some Societies are larger and more prosperous than others, and tend to take the lead in dealing with large, complex issues such as dealings with offworlders.

Attitudes towards offworlders run the gamut from enthusiastic xenophilia down to hostile segregation. The resident terrorist faction, the Sinsheehee ("fruit of an evil vine") is the worst example of the latter. They are violently xenophobic, and attack Imperial visitors of any race at every opportunity.

Sintoshareeta in the Campaign

Despite some of the wild rumors concerning their natural appearance and abilities, Sintoshareeta have become part of the rich tapestry of Imperial society. They are often hired as consultants to environmental and farming projects on other worlds. Many migrate to garden worlds, especially those with major forestation.

As part of an ongoing *GURPS Traveller* campaign, Sintoshareeta are suited to fill almost any niche. Although their racial skills and abilities are nearly useless when away from a natural environment, they are as intelligent and capable as any other branch of Humaniti, and can quickly adapt to changing conditions. As part of an adventuring group, their knowledge of the outdoors comes in handy when the team is in wilderness areas.

Players wishing to play Sintoshareeta should keep a few basic particulars in mind:

- Never abandon your friends; back them up at all times.
- Never work alone if you can help it.
- Don't seek the limelight; it only invites unwanted attention.

- The universe can be dangerous; stay alert.
- Stick with tried and true methods, innovation only leads to ruin.

Sintoshareeta Racial Template

	3rd Edition	4th Edition
Total Template Cost	-21 points	12 points
Attribute Modifiers		
ST-2	-15	-20
DX+2	20	40
Advantages		
Acute Hearing +2	4	4
Chameleon (2 levels, only in foliage, -20%)	11	8
Perfect Balance	15	15
Striker (Tail; 4e -2 to hit -20%, Weak -50%)	5	2
Disadvantages		
Chummy	-5	-5
Delicate Metabolism (3e only)	-20	
Restricted Diet (4e only, Very Common, Substitution -50%)		-20
Short Lifespan (1 level)	-10	-10
Unattractive	-5	-4
Primitive (TL5) (3e only)	-25	
Racial Quirks		
Careful	-1	-1
Dull	-1	-1
Racial Skills		
+2 to Acrobatics	4	2
Climbing at DX (3e only)	2	
+2 to Climbing (4e only)		2

GURPS Traveller Template Suitability

Sintoshareeta are best suited for careers as Farmers (p. GT92) and Hunter/Guides (p. GT93). Sintoshareeta that emigrate can and do take up other careers, including serving in the Imperial military, although they avoid careers that emphasize working alone or in groups so small as to make them uncomfortable, such as Belter (p. GT88), Bounty Hunter (p. GT89) and Undercover Agent (p. GT99). Sinsheehee are often Martial Artists (p. GT95) of some skill. 🌟

System Generation/Adaptation from ACCRETE

by Ken Pick

Introduction

At age 20, I first hooked up with organized SF litfandom at my first SF convention (NASFiC 1975, Los Angeles), and met Wayne Shaw (then 19 years old; later to develop the Shavian Empire campaign^a), who would be my primary FRP GM for the next few years. (NASFiC was his first, too; he was introduced to D&D and the world would never be the same.)

During his high school years, Wayne was working on a space-opera universe to write in, and had defined over 20 alien races from parahuman to AWAP (as weird as possible). I was interested in figuring out the races' homeworlds and systems, and the current issue of Scientific American (September 1975, theme "The Solar System") included two pages of diagrams of hypothetical planetary systems, selected for maximum variety from runs of a computer simulation called ACCRETE.

ACCRETE

ACCRETE was apparently developed around 1969 by Stephen H Dole of RAND corporation to study solar system formation, concentrating on forming solar systems similar to our own. The Sci-Am article diagrams appear to be from a subsequent experiment by Richard Isaacman and Carl Sagan (yes, *that* Carl Sagan) at Cornell University, tweaking the various constants used in Dole's original ACCRETE to see what would happen.

According to Dole's original 1969 paper, ACCRETE works by simulating a protoplanetary disk of gas and dust particles in orbit around a gravity well (protostar) and injecting random "seeds" into that orbiting disk on random orbits. These "seeds" grow by sweeping in the smaller particles of the disk. These growing planets will coalesce if their orbits cross or they come too close to one another

(gravity wells overlap); growth stops when a planet has cleared its orbital region.

When a growing planet becomes massive enough (Dole sets this at 3.5 Earth masses, the point of helium capture), the "seed" begins to gather in gas as well as dust. Seeds are injected until most all the dust has been swept up.

Varying the parameters of the simulation – disk mass, density gradient, density distribution over distance, orbital eccentricity of the particles and seeds, etc – varies the architecture of the resulting system. Dole's original paper (and most of the ACCRETE apps online) had its parameters set for maximum chance of generating a solar system similar to Sol's. Isaacman & Sagan's paper changes these parameters and observes the results on the systems.

Classic ACCRETE output its systems as a table of planetary masses (Earth = 1) and orbital distances (in AU) and a diagram of planets (represented as disks of varying size) distributed over a logarithmic scale of orbital distances from 0.1 to 100 AU; planet sizes in the diagram were proportional to the cube root of the mass, which was written next to the planet's disc. Some also had orbital eccentricity ranges for each planet.

Conversion of ACCRETE-generated systems to (primarily Classic) *Traveller*

To "*Travellerize*" an ACCRETE-generated system (or a RL system), you need only the masses and orbital distance (semi-major axis) of the planets in the system. The latter can be in a table of distances or "eyeballed" from the logarithmic scale of published ACCRETE run diagrams.

All planetary masses in ACCRETE are expressed in T-masses. RL extrasolar planets are expressed in either T- or J-masses.

- A T-mass (Terrestrial mass) is the mass of Earth.
- One J-mass (Jupiter mass) = 318 T-mass.
- One S-mass (Solar mass) = 1037 J-mass = 330,000 T-mass.^b

All distances are expressed in Astronomical Units (AUs) = Earth-Sun distance.

^b—Note that one J-mass is within three percent of .001 S-mass. This permits easy comparison of Super-Jupiter or Brown Dwarf masses (measured in J-masses) to their parent sun (measured in S-masses).

^a—<http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/othroads/shavfoib/genesis.html>

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“Travellerizing” a system from these parameters does not require high-precision calculations. I use my father’s slide rule to do the squares and cube roots needed for these calculations. Two or three significant digits is accurate enough for these purposes, and it’s traditional—slide rules *were* used for starship navigation calculations in pre-1960s SF.

Procedure

1. The orbital distance of the innermost “gas planet” determines the “frost line”, the point where it is cold enough for volatiles to condense and form gas giants. The exceptions are when the innermost world (less than half an AU) is a “Hot Jupiter” or otherwise gas planet or where there are no gas planets; in such cases, arbitrarily pick a distance for Step 2 depending on the actual planetary arrangement.
2. Divide this distance from (1) by 4.85 (approximate as 5). This distance is where the solar flux/illumination is the same as Earth.
3. Multiply the value from (2) by .9 or .95 to get the inner edge of the Habitable Zone (HZ).^c
4. Multiply the value from (2) by 1.5 to get the outer edge of the HZ.^d
5. Square the value from (2) to get the luminosity of the sun.
6. Stellar mass as a function of luminosity is best looked up on a table such as Table 11 in *Habitable Planets for Man*, “Characteristics of Main-Sequence Stars.” Taking the cube root of the luminosity is an approximation (10-15% low).^e

c—When Dole wrote *Habitable Planets for Man*, Earth was believed to orbit in or near the middle of Sol’s habitable zone. Later information showed Earth is actually close to the inner edge of the HZ.

d—A world with a Dense atmosphere can orbit slightly-outside of this outer edge; the increased greenhouse effect of Dense atmo and/or Hydro 9-A has the effect of stretching the outer edge. This works both ways; such a world near the inner edge would likely become Venus-like from runaway greenhouse effect.

e—Actual proportions of main-sequence stars are 73% M-class red dwarves, 15% K-class orange dwarves, 7% G-class yellow dwarves (like Sol), 3% F-class yellow-whites, and 2% larger. Of these, Ks and Gs are considered the most likely to host habitable planets. For Traveller purposes, my rule-of-thumb is two or three Ks for every G, two Gs for every F, and Ms as “targets of opportunity”.

7. The maximum size of the system – the distance where solar gravity is normally enough to accrete planets – is given by multiplying the cube root of the luminosity by 40. Outside of this limit, there will normally be only dwarf planets and the ice asteroids of a Kuyper Belt.
8. Translate planetary masses into *Traveller* Size.
 - Solid planets (less than mass 3.5 to 4.0): Size = $8 \times$ cube root of the mass.
 - ◇ Size 1 planets (mass .002 or less) are dwarf planets, and will share their orbit with smaller (Size 0) asteroids.
 - ◇ Asteroids (mass .001 or less) will form an asteroid belt.
 - Gas planets (over mass 3.5 to 4.0) do not use normal *Traveller* Size nomenclature but are sized directly by mass:^f
 - ◇ Mass 4-10: Gas Dwarf^g
 - ◇ Mass 10-60: Small Gas Giant (SGG)^h
 - ◇ Mass 60-600: Large Gas Giant (LGG)ⁱ
 - ◇ Mass 600-4000: Very Large Gas Giant (VLGG)^j
 - ◇ Mass 4000+ = Brown Dwarf, the transition between giant planet and red dwarf star.

f—Dole selected 3.5 T-mass as the upper limit of a potentially-habitable planet; 3.5 T-mass has a surface gravity of 1.5G, the threshold to capture helium, and helium capture would increase mass to the point of hydrogen capture and gas gianthood. This was his dividing line between solid and gas planets, but a smooth transition from a solid planet with very dense atmo and a gas planet with a solid core is more likely. Gas Dwarves are not considered suitable for fuel-skimming as their atmospheres are heavily contaminated with other gases than hydrogen and helium – treat as “Contaminated” fuel, one step below “Unrefined”.

g—In the Inner Zone, a Gas Dwarf-mass world is much more likely to be a Super-Venus.

h—These are now called “Ice Giants”, as they have more solid or liquid than gas in their material than a true gas giant. “Small Gas Giant” was the terminology in use during the time of *Classic Traveller*.

i—60 T-masses was chosen as the dividing line between SGG & LGG from the graph on p.34 of *Habitable Planets for Man* (Figure 11, “Mass-density relationship of the solar system planets”). According to this graph, 50-60 T-mass is the point of minimum density/surface gravity (less than 1G). In an SGG, adding more mass decreases the density; in an LGG, adding mass increases the density. Because of this, 50-60 T-masses is considered the optimum size for fuel-skimming; even 1G ships will have no problem.

j—A VLGG will not be much larger in diameter than Jupiter; the high-end of them may even be smaller. At this size, any added mass is just crushed into greater and greater density by the planet’s greater gravity. Because of this near-constant diameter, surface gravity on a gas giant above 150 T-mass will be .8G for every 100 T-mass, making VLGGs too large for fuel-skimming.

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9. Translate orbital distances into Traveller orbit zones, using the following table:^k

Table of Orbit Zones				
Orbit	Distance (AU)	Range (AU)	Stellar Class	Luminosity ^l
Close	<0.1	<0.1	-	
0 (Vulcan) ^m	0.2	0.1 to 0.25	M1v or M2v	0.04
0bis	0.3	0.25 to 0.35	K8v	0.09
1 (Mercury)	0.4	0.35 to 0.47	K4v	0.16
1bis	0.55	0.48 to 0.67	G9v or K0v	0.3
2 (Venus)	0.7	0.68 to 0.77	G6v	0.49
2bis	0.85	0.78 to 0.9	G3v	0.72
3 (Earth)	1.0	0.9 to 1.15	G0v or G1v	1.0
3bis	1.3	1.15 to 1.45	F6	1.7
4 (Mars)	1.6	1.45 to 2.0	F3v or F4v	2.6
4bis	2.2	2.0 to 2.5	A8v	4.8
5 (Ceres)	2.8	2.5 to 3.4		
5bis	4.0	3.4 to 4.6		
6 (Jupiter)	5.2	4.6 to 6.5		
6bis	7.6	6.5 to 9.0		
7 (Saturn)	10.0	9.0 to 11.9		
7bis	13.8	11.9 to 16.7		
8 (Uranus)	19.6	16.7 to 24.4		
8bis	29.2	24.4 to 34.0		
9 (Neptune)	38.8	34.0 to 48.4		
9bis	58.0	48.4 to 67.6		
10	77.2	67.6 to 116		

10. Tweak these results as needed to prevent absurdities or add variety.

- If two solid planets share a single orbital zone, consider merging them into a double planet.
- LGGs and VLGGs tend to clear adjacent orbital zones.

^k—Whole-number orbital distances are directly from *Classic Traveller*, Book 6: *Scouts*, with the addition of intermediate “bis” orbits. The original table in *Scouts* was taken directly from orbital distances of Sol System extended by the Bode-Titius Rule, and ACCRETE (and RL) orbits do not break down so cleanly. ^l—For Earth-equivalent solar flux at the nominal orbit distance (center of the orbit zone range).

^m—The hypothetical planet inward of Mercury, not the one from *Star Trek*.

- ◇ A LGG might clear the zone inward of its orbit, preventing accretion beyond asteroids. This results in an asteroid belt in the orbit inward of the LGG.
- ◇ A VLGG might clear multiple orbital zones depending on its size. If it clears two zones inward, the closest zone to the VLGG should be empty and the farther asteroids. Clear one zone outward for every two or three inward. ACCRETEd planets in this zone either go away or become moons of the VLGG.

11. ACCRETE-based systems could be combined with other systems as far binaries, giving “two systems in one”. The following special considerations apply:

- According to *Classic Traveller Book 6: Scouts*, “Orbits closer to the primary than the companion’s orbit must be numbered no more than half the companion’s orbit number (round fractions down); orbits farther away than the companion must be numbered at least two greater than the companion’s orbit number.” i.e. a companion star completely clears a “forbidden zone” of half its orbit number to two orbit numbers higher. No planets or asteroids can exist in this zone.
- ACCRETE-based systems normally extend out to Orbit Zones 7 to 9 which would set a minimum companion orbit at Orbit 14 to 16 (i.e. Far Orbit). Two alternatives:
 - ◇ Place the companion (and its system) in Far Orbit. Though gravitationally bound to each other (and therefore a binary), these are effectively two separate systems “Jump-0” apart in the same hex, effectively doubling the system.
 - ◇ If the companion’s orbit puts some outer planets of the ACCRETE system into the forbidden zone, these planets either go away or are recast as planets of the companion star (giving the companion a head start on its own system).

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- ◇ Remember that companion stars are likely to have more eccentric orbits than planets; check the forbidden zone inward from the orbit at periastron (point of closest approach) and outward from aphelion (maximum orbit distance).
- Brown Dwarf companions would be intermediate between a VLGG and an actual companion star.
 - ◇ Just as a guess, the forbidden zone would probably be from $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of its orbit number to 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ orbits higher. Brown Dwarf orbits may or may not be eccentric.
 - ◇ Judging from real-world red dwarf systems, chances are most of its planets/moons would be in Close orbit (like Example 8 below). Again, ACCRETEd planets in its forbidden zone become planets/moons of the Brown Dwarf.

Example 1: Isaacman-Sagan Fig.6b

Planet	ACCRETE		Traveller	
	Distance (AU)	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
I	.45 AU	0.42	1	6
II	0.8	0.25	2bis	5
III	1.5	20.6	4	SGG(20)
IV	3.2	18.1	5	SGG(20)
V	7	14.7	6bis	SGG(15)
VI	12	500	7bis	LGG(500)
VII	20	0.09	8	3
VIII	30	0.3	8bis	5
IX	43	0.56	9	7

A typical ACCRETE system.

- The innermost gas giant (the SGG at 1.5 AU) defines the frost line.
- Divide by 4.85 to get the Earth-equivalent solar flux distance: 0.31 AU.
- Square this for the solar luminosity = 0.1 Sol = K7v orange dwarf.

- Habitable Zone extends from 0.28 to 0.47 AU, putting Planet I on the outer edge.
- Maximum orbit distance for a K7v sun = 19 AU (Orbit 8). Planet VI (the LGG) becomes the outermost planet; Planets VII-IX either go away or become moons of Planet VI.
- Any binary companion could be no closer than Orbit 15 (2100 AU).

Result: We have a typical *Traveller* system, an orange dwarf sun with six planets. Planet I is the main world, small and cold, day lengthened by sun-tide drag, barely surface-habitable. The SGGs are ideal for fuel-skimming.

Example 2: Isaacman-Sagan Fig.10d

Planet	ACCRETE		Traveller	
	Distance (AU)	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
I	0.3	0.14	0bis	4
II	0.55	0.94	1bis	8
III	0.8	0.79	2	7
IV	1.1	0.34	3	6
V	3	6.6	5	GasDwarf(7)
VI	5	22	6	SGG(20)
VII	9	449	7	LGG(450)
VIII	27	2.7	8bis	11
IX	40	0.07	9	3

Another typical ACCRETE system. This one was the first diagram in the SciAm article.

- The gas dwarf at 3 AU defines the frost line.
- Divide by 4.85 to get the Earth-equivalent solar flux distance: 0.62 AU
- Square this for the solar luminosity = 0.39 Sol = G8v yellow dwarf
- Habitable Zone extends from 0.56 to 0.95 AU; Planet II is right on the inner edge; Planet III near the outer. This system could have two surface-habitable main worlds, one hot, one cold.
 - ◇ Dropping the sun by one sub-class to a G9v would change the luminosity to 0.32, the frost line to 2.7 AU, the solar flux distance to 0.56 AU, and the HZ to 0.50 to 0.85 AU, a more comfortable fit for Planets II and III.

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- Maximum orbit distance for a G8v sun = 29 AU (Orbit 8bis). Planet IX goes away.
 - ◊ Maximum orbit distance for a G9v = 27 AU; Planet VII is right on the borderline, and may or may not go away/become a moon of Planet VII.

Result: Another typical *Traveller* system (a yellow dwarf with eight planets), except with *two* main worlds in the HZ. (Two for the price of one!) The inner main world will be hot and dry, probably habitable only at the poles; the outer is best cold and wet. Planet VI (the SGG) is a natural fuel-skim site.

Example 3: Mystery System

Planet	ACCRETED		Traveller	
	Distance (AU)	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
I	0.21	0.05	0	3
II	0.37	3.6	1	12
III	0.85	0.62	2bis	7
IV	1.49	0.7	4	7
V	10.4	1570	7	VLGG(1600)
VI	19.2	0.24	8	5
VII	34.8	0.11	9	4

This one was listed in my 1975 notes (including exact orbital distances) but I cannot find it anywhere in either Dole's or Isaacman & Sagan's papers. I can only conclude it was on the missing p.32 of the Scientific American article that kicked off this whole schmeer some forty years ago.

I assume this was one of Isaacman & Sagan's runs when investigating the effect of changing the disk density profile, with more mass distributed farther out.

- Note the only gas giant insystem is way far out; we cannot judge the frost line. Instead, we size the sun to put Planet II (which in my 1975 notes was a double planet) in the Habitable Zone. Placing Planet II around the middle of the HZ gives us an Earth-equivalent solar flux distance of 0.3 AU.

- Square this for the solar luminosity = 0.09 Sol = K8v orange dwarf.
- HZ extends from 0.27 to 0.45 AU.
- Maximum orbit distance for a K8v sun = 18 AU. Planets VI & VII are recast as moons of the VLGG.
- Now for the tweak: let's make Planet V an eccentric super-Jupiter, swinging in to Orbit 6 and out to Orbit 7bis or 8. Five Jupiter masses at Orbit 6 would also clear out Orbit 4; Planet IV is recast as the largest moon of the VLGG.
- Remember, a VLGG is about the same diameter as an LGG, but its gravity well will extend over twice as far. Its Roche limit (the minimum orbit of any moon and maximum span of any rings) will be over twice that of Jupiter or four times that of Saturn. Now imagine a ring system filling that Roche Limit, spanning four times that of Saturn from a planet roughly the same diameter....

Result: A dim orange dwarf with four planets; three in a compact inner system and the fourth an eccentric Super-Jupiter with an incredible ring system sweeping in and out of the outer system. Despite having a gas giant, there can be *no* fuel-skim site insystem; the gas giant is a deathtrap, with a surface gravity of 12G.

Alternative 3-A:

Let us keep the eccentric orbit for the VLGG and size the frost line from its periastron of Orbit 6 = about 5 AU.

- This is within a few percent of Sol's frost line; accordingly, the sun would have a luminosity of about 1 Sol = G0v or G1v yellow dwarf, HZ extending from 0.9 to 1.5 AU, and maximum orbit distance of 40 AU.
- Note that all the inner planets are in the Inner Zone: a Mercury, a Super-Venus, and a Venus. *No* habitables.

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Alternative 3-B:

Same as Alternative 3-A except make the VLGG's orbit nearly circular, with a frost line around 9 AU.

- Earth-equivalent solar flux distance becomes 1.85 AU.
- Solar luminosity becomes 3.5 Sol = F1v star.
- Habitable Zone extends from 1.65 to 2.8 AU.
- Maximum orbit distance becomes 60 AU.
- Planet IV comes back, but becomes an additional Venus. Planets VI and VII also return. Planet I's bright face is probably red-hot.

Example 4: Dole Fig.17, Isaacman-Sagan Fig.5c

Planet	ACCRETE		Traveller	
	Distance (AU)	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
I	0.45	1.13	1	8
II	0.8	2.33	2	11
III	1	32.8	3	SGG(30)
IV	3	5150	5	Brown Dwarf(5200)
V	9	37700	7	Red Dwarf Star
VI	20	3770	8	Brown Dwarf(3800)
VII	43	59.5	9	SGG(60)

This one appears in both Dole's and Isaacman's/Sagan's papers, increasing the central density/mass of the protoplanetary disk to about four times the value of "standard" ACCRETE, pushing the program to its limits. The result was fewer but much more massive "planets", to the point of Brown Dwarves and binary systems.

Because this is a binary system, the orbit restrictions from Classic Traveller Book 6: Scouts come into play; with the companion star at Orbit 7, everything else above Orbit 3 goes away. Let us go over the system one star at a time:

Component A (main sun):

- The SGG at 1.0 AU defines the frost line.
- Dividing by 4.85 gives Earth-equivalent solar flux distance of 0.21 AU (Orbit 0).

- Square this for solar luminosity = 0.042 Sol = M1v red dwarf.
- Habitable Zone extends from 0.12 to 0.31 AU; all planets are in the Outer Zone.
- Maximum orbit would be ~6.5 AU, but with a binary companion that doesn't matter.

Component B (companion):

- The two Brown Dwarves are added to the red dwarf, for a total mass of 46700 = 0.14 S-mass. According to the table in Wikipedia, this would be an M5v red dwarf with a luminosity of 0.002 Sol.
- Working backwards from this luminosity, we get a solar flux distance of 0.045 AU (Close), a frost line of 0.22 AU (Orbit 0), and a HZ of 0.04 to 0.065 AU (Close).
- As this is slightly smaller than Component A, B would probably have maximum planetary orbit of 2bis. The SGG from Orbit 9 becomes a planet of B; other planets can be rolled up under *Scouts* as long as they are smaller than the above SGG.
- Since binary stars tend to have eccentric orbits, add some eccentricity to Component B's orbit; maybe swinging in to Orbit 6 and out to Orbit 7bis. Any more eccentric an orbit and Planet III goes away.

Result: a dim M1/M5 red dwarf binary with two SGGs but no potentially-habitable worlds; all planets are in their respective stars' Outer Zones.

Example 5; Isaacman-Sagan Fig.13b

Planet	ACCRETE		Traveller	
	Distance (AU)	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
I	0.45	989	1	VLGG(1000)
II	0.9	1.04	3	8
III	1.6	0.69	4	7
IV	3.2	0.015	5	2
V	5	0.001	6	1 (Dwarf Planet)
VI	7	0.001	6bis	1 (Dwarf Planet)
Farther out	several <.001	10+?	0 (Asteroids)	

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Also from the 1975 SciAm article, this is a “hot Jupiter” system, caused by different radial-density distributions than standard ACCRETE. Though the most-easily-detected of extrasolar systems, hot Jupiters were unknown at the time of the article, and seemed absurd – how could a gas giant form so close to a sun?

Later research theorized that planets tended to migrate towards the sun during formation, in a game of gravitic pinball. (Jupiter and Saturn formed a stable resonance when still beyond the frost line and prevented each other from migrating further in.) Planet I would probably have formed at the frost line and migrated inward, wreaking havoc on any planetary bodies in its path. Planets II-VI probably accreted from the planetisimals it left in its wake. Given that...

- Let us assume Planet III (the Size 7 in Orbit 4) is in the Habitable Zone. From there...
- Planet II would be a Super-Venus.
- The solar flux distance is estimated at 1.5 AU. From this, the frost line would be around 7 AU, the HZ between 1.3 and 2.2 AU, and the luminosity around 2.3 Sols = an F4v star, whitish with a sunlight heavy in UV.
- Maximum orbital distance would be around 53 AU, though there doesn't seem to be any actual planets outside of 3 AU.
- The VLGG originally formed around 7-8 AU out (just outside dwarf Planet VI). Everything inward of this will be occasional rockballs formed in the wake; even dwarf Planets V and VI don't have many asteroids in their zones.
- Outside where the VLGG formed is another thing entirely; starting a zone or two beyond the frost line (Orbit 8+) is a dense Kuyper Belt of ice asteroids extending to the limits of the system (53 AU/Orbit 9bis).
- At .45 AU (Orbit 1), the VLGG is in a wider orbit than a typical hot Jupiter; feel free to move it inward. This will affect its appearance:

- At Orbit 1, the planet would be solid blue, too hot for clouds to form.
- At Orbit 0, there's a good chance it would be charcoal grey from carbon monoxide and light-absorbing alkali metal-vapor “clouds”, maybe with a visible glow from the hot spot directly underneath the sun.

Result: An F-class sun with four planets: a hot Jupiter, a Super-Venus, a possible habitable (with two spectacular morning/evening stars), a small rockball (too small to be a Mars), and a very sparse asteroid belt with dwarf planets separated by a gap from a thick Kuyper belt. Though spectacular, the only gas giant insystem is *not* skimmable (too large and too hot).

Alternative 5-A, “The Twins”:

In 1975, systems like Example 5 were considered absurdities – hot Jupiters were unknown at the time, though IRL they are very common. My surviving notes show I swapped out the hot Jupiter for a binary companion around .2 AU (Orbit 0) and sized it so Planet I (the Size 8 in Orbit 3) was the main world (with a “Tatooine” double sun).

- At an orbital distance of .9 AU, the maximum luminosity of the suns could be no more than .8 Sol for a solar flux similar to Earth. This puts the Habitable Zone between 0.8 and 1.35 AU.
- Any combination of two stars could work, as long as their combined luminosity was around 0.8 – A pair of G7s or G8s, a G7v and a G8v, a G6v and a G9v, a G3v and a K7v.
- Since there was no gas giant throwing frost-line ice asteroids around, Planets I and II (the rockballs in Orbits 3 and 4) probably didn't accrete much water; roll 1D – 7 + size for Hydro instead of 2D.
- Planet III (Orbit 5) shepherds the inner edge of a thick series of asteroid belts with dwarf planets extending to the system's outer limit (around 50 AU; two stars will be more massive than a single star of the same total luminosity). The innermost

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of these belts will be metallic (nickel-iron), shading into “centaurs” (mixed rock & ice) and finally ice.

Result: A belter’s dream system, handicapped by not having a gas giant for fuel-skimming.

The following examples are RL extrasolar systems, which do not break cleanly into *Traveller*-style systemsⁿ. Reality has a way of throwing curveballs at any neat plans, and evidence is that a “normal” solar system such as Sol’s or the default ACCRETE isn’t all that common.

With actual stars, the spectral class and luminosity will be known and calculations will go from there. Spectral class, mass, and luminosity can vary from the tables, which represent the average class/mass/luminosity relationship.

These systems probably have additional planets to the ones given. The larger the planet and the closer the orbit, the more likely it is to be detected.

Example 6: Durre Menthor (Tau Ceti)

Traveller				
Planet	Distance (AU)	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
b	0.105	2	Close	10
c	0.195	3.1	0	11
d	0.374	3.6	1	12
e	0.552	4.3	1bis	13 or Gas Dwarf(4)
f	1.35	6.6	3bis	Gas Dwarf(7)

3.7 parsecs from Earth, Durre is a G9v yellow dwarf with a luminosity of 0.52 Sols (unusually bright for a G9). Using the luminosity as a base:

- Taking the square root of the luminosity gives us an Earth-equivalent solar flux distance of .72 AU, with a frost line of 3.8 AU and a Habitable Zone of .65 to 1.4 AU. Only the outermost Gas

Dwarf is in the HZ; the other four are in the Inner Zone, probably Super-Venuses.

- Durre’s mass is .78 Sol, well within the range for a G9v; multiplying this by 40 gives a maximum system size of 31 AU (Orbit 8bis). Outside of this, Durre is known to have an extremely-dense Kuyper Belt. No planets have been detected between Durre f and its Kuyper Belt, but only LGGs and up would be detectable in this range.

Result: No habitables (like most RL systems).

Outer system (if any) unknown; this might be a “compact system” with all the planets close-in. Which brings us to...

Alternative 6-A:

Another RL system – Ran (Epsilon Eridani, a much younger K2v orange dwarf) has an outer system detected but no known inner planets (though there is definitely room for some):

Traveller				
Planet	Distance	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
-	3	Asteroids	5	0
b	3.44	492	5bis	LGG(500)
-	20	Asteroids	8	0
c	40?	32	9	SGG(30)

Tacking this outer system onto Durre’s inner system gives us a full *Traveller*-esque system. Still no habitables, but two gas giants and asteroid belts. The outermost SGG could be moved inwards to the maximum system size of Orbit 8bis and the outer asteroid belt to Orbit 7 or 7bis.

Example 7: Gliese 676A

Traveller				
Planet	Distance	Mass	Orbit Zone	Size
d	0.04	4.4	Close	13
e	0.19	11.5	0	Gas Dwarf(10)
b	1.8	2130	4	VLGG(2100)
c	5.2	2160	6	VLGG(2200)

16.5 parsecs from Earth, Gliese 676 is a red dwarf binary – M0v/M3v, separation 800 AU (Far). The larger component has a massive planetary sys-

ⁿ—For further *Traveller* adaptations of actual systems, a list of known planetary systems is available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_multiplanetary_systems. Some of these are linked to pages detailing the actual systems and planets.

The Prep Room

tem reminiscent of the original ACCRETE runs for Example 5.

- Gliese 676A (the M0v) has a mass = .71 Sol and luminosity = .08 Sol, unusually large and bright for a red dwarf, more like a K8v orange dwarf.
- Taking the square root of the luminosity gives us an Earth-equivalent solar flux distance of .28 AU, with a frost line of 1.3 AU and a Habitable Zone of .25 to .41 AU. None of the planets are in the HZ.
- Multiplying the mass by 40 gives us a maximum system size of 28 AU.

Result: Another uninhabitable system. The innermost world is probably a lava world tidally locked in a torch orbit with an atmosphere of rock and metal vapor and a molten bright face. The gas dwarf is also in the Inner Zone and with all that atmo to hold the heat will resemble a Super-Venus with a very small solid core. Then those two VLGG deathtraps in the outer system – probably both resembling “Jupiters with smallpox” from internal heat. Any Traveller action insystem will probably be on their outer moons.

Example 8: Kepler-42

Planet	Distance	Mass	Traveller	
			Orbit Zone	Size
c	0.006	2.1	Close	10 (Super-Venus)
b	0.012	2.7	Close	11 (Super-Venus)
d	0.015	0.9	Close	8 (Super-Venus)

About 40 parsecs from Earth, Kepler-42 is a solitary M5v red dwarf with a luminosity of .002 Sol, very dim for its spectral class. It is one of the most “compact systems” known, more like something you’d expect to find around a Brown Dwarf or VLGG.

- Taking the square root of the luminosity gives us an Earth-equivalent solar flux distance of .03 AU, with a frost line of .15 AU and a Habitable Zone of .027 to .045 AU. Despite this, ALL of its known planets are in the Inner Zone, tidally-locked Super-Venuses.

- Multiplying the cube root of the luminosity by 40 gives us a maximum system size of 5 AU.

Result: Here we see where reality conflicts with any possible system generation rules. I’d recommend using this system for a Brown Dwarf companion.

Bibliography

“Formation of Planetary Systems by Aggregation: a Computer Simulation” by Stephen H Dole; RAND Corporation, October 1969; Icarus, November 1970.

Pages 28-35 are ACCRETE diagrams of the systems generated in Dole’s “Set 4” runs. These runs were to find conditions and constants which generated systems similar to our own.

Free PDF download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P4226.html>

Habitable Planets for Man by Stephen H Dole, 1964.

The first detailed scientific study on the probability and description of a human-habitable and/or life-bearing planetology. A second edition abridged and appended to by Isaac Asimov was later published under the title Planets for Man. (Use the original version with Stephen H Dole as sole author, *not* the mass-market edition “by Stephen H Dole and Isaac Asimov”; the latter omits much of the detailed technical information and all of the tables and graphs.)

Free PDF download at http://www.rand.org/pubs/commercial_books/CB179-1.html

“Computer Simulations of Planetary Accretion Dynamics: Sensitivity to Initial Conditions” by Richard Isaacman and Carl Sagan, Cornell University Center for Radiophysics and Space Research, Icarus, August 1977.

Using Dole’s ACCRETE paper as a basis, Isaacman & Sagan experimented with changing the assumptions, conditions, and constants in ACCRETE to see how the resulting systems varied. Figures 1 – 13 at the end of the paper contain many variant ACCRETE systems.

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Free PDF download at <https://ntrs.nasa.gov/archive/nasa/casi.ntrs.nasa.gov/19770006045.pdf> "The Solar System" by Carl Sagan; introduction to the September 1975 issue of Scientific American, pp 22-32.

Pages 31-32 are diagrams of ACCRETE runs from Isaacman & Sagan's paper. (Page 32 was missing from the microfilm archives at Cal State Fullerton library and may contain more systems and actual mass/distance tables, as my 1975-vintage handwritten notes had detailed mass & orbital distance information not on the Page 31 diagrams, as well as two systems which did not appear on Page 31.)

ACCRETE on the Web

Dole first created and ran ACCRETE at early Tech Level 7, written in longhand on coding forms and transcribed by keypunch onto FORTRAN card decks.

At TL9, ACCRETE is available as a download or Web page app. Unfortunately, all the ACCRETE apps on the Web seem to be adjusted to Dole's original parameters, optimized for solar systems similar to Sol's. However, some of downloads claim to include source code, which leaves open the possibility of reverse-engineering a version with the control parameters exposed for Isaacman-Sagan-style tweaking. (Into the "fun" systems.)

<http://www.znark.com/create/accrete.html>

This page contains several ZIPped download links, including a Java applet with source code.

http://www.projectrho.com/public_html/starmaps/software.php


This appears to be a clearinghouse page for several worldbuilding apps. ACCRETE apps are under the headings "StarGen" and "Accrete". One ZIPped download claims to be to a C-language version of the original ACCRETE source code.

<http://www.eldacur.com/%7Ebrons/NerdCorner/StarGen/StarGen.html>

A description of StarGen, one of the more elaborate ACCRETE apps. StarGen is more elaborate than the original ACCRETE, generating random star types and a lot of planetary details; all you need for this article's form of Travellerization is the planetary mass and orbital distance.

<http://fast-times.eldacur.com/StarGen/RunStarGen.html>

Online runnable StarGen interface. I prefer the "SVG Graphic File Output" option, which outputs in a classic ACCRETE diagram format, but the graphic does not seem to match the tables of mass and orbital distance below. You can eyeball orbits from the diagram (close enough for Travellerization) or from the table.

These sites appear to be clean, but I cannot vouch for the downloads. Use full virus protection just in case. 

Critics' Corner

The Course of Empire

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

The Course of Empire. Eric Flint and K.D.Wentworth

Original Publication: 2003 (Baen Books)

Current Availability: E-book (Baen Books free library)

Previously, most books reviewed in this section of Critics' Corner have had a close connection with

Off the Table

Traveller, or could be seen as stories and settings for a *Traveller*-compatible (though definitely not 'Third-Imperium-compatible') universe. That is largely my intent for the section. However, I occasionally break with that goal when a book offers material that would be of interest to *Traveller* players or referees, even if not of immediate and direct use. This book (and its sequels) let the *Traveller* worldbuilder see what a well-designed alien culture looks like.

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Much of what I say about the reasons to read this book apply equally to the sequels, *The Crucible of Empire* (Baen, 2010) by the same authors, and *The Span of Empire* (Baen, 2016), by Eric Flint and David Carrico (with some of the background work written by K.D.Wentworth before her untimely death). These books, at the time of this writing priced at \$6.99 and \$9.99 respectively in ebook format, continue the story arc begun in this book, and equally deserve a place in your recreational reading library.

Story

Twenty years ago, Earth was on the losing end of a war of conquest by the Jao. The rule of the Jao governor has been anything but benevolent, and resistance to the Jao continues. But there are also some Jao who think that the harsh rule imposed is the wrong answer, and have set up a situation where it might be possible to change. Aille *krinnu ava* Pluthrak, without knowing any of this, may be the agent of that change. From an assignment to commanding ground troops, he turns his hand to learning about the humans he commands, and ultimately comes to realize that there is a way to bring them into what the Jao call “association”—a concept much deeper, in some ways, than the common human understanding of the word implies. By taking on some humans as personal staff, and treating them with respect, in both the Jao and human senses of the word, and by listening to their advice, even when he cannot or ultimately chooses not to follow that advice, he brings Jao rule—now seen even by many Jao to be misrule—to a crisis situation, and it is one of his human advisors that, because of her intimate knowledge of Jao thinking and body language, proposes what is accepted as the solution to the crisis—and makes humans into partners, albeit junior partners, to the Jao.

Style

Eric Flint says that his type of story is the story of ordinary people in extraordinary situations. I dis-

agree; he writes stories where the *seemingly* ordinary person is placed into an extraordinary situation, and rises to the occasion, proving that they are *not* an ordinary person. That they continue to think of themselves as ordinary more-or-less emphasizes to the reader that they are *not* so ordinary.

K.D.Wentworth, sadly deceased since she and Mr Flint wrote the first sequel to this book, has, in some fan forums, been called one of the best writers of aliens ever to see print. In this series, she worked out the defining characteristics of the Jao and at least two other races that appear and play important roles, and (in my opinion) has given them the seeming of an existence independent of the stories in this series—they are not merely devices for moving the story forward; they are shown to have their own attitudes, their own ethics, their own strengths and weaknesses...they are *people*, not cardboard cut-outs, and the worldbuilder could do far worse than to look at them as examples to be studied before setting one's own hand to creating aliens.

Together, they have produced stories as well-written and gripping as any by any of the “Golden Age” greats, without being imitative of those greats, in style or in story. The tapestry of science fiction has evolved in several different directions since that “Golden Age”, and has become richer and more nuanced in detail, and this work is clearly a product of that evolution, without succumbing to the memes of ‘message fiction’, or insisting on fitting a story to a character concept rather than letting the character, the setting, and the story develop “organically” together.

Why is it *Traveller*?

It's not, plain and simple. It's a great read, in my opinion, but there's just no way to fit the Jao or the Ekhat or any part of the story line into a *Traveller* universe, especially not with humans not being the dominant culture. But besides being a great read, it's worth reading because of the way that Ms Wentworth developed the Jao as a species and culture—they are clearly *not* just ‘humans in rubber suits’,

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though in Orson Scott Card's *Hierarchy of Foreignness*, they are clearly *ramen* (or, if you prefer, they are an excellent answer to John Campbell's demand for an alien "that thinks *as well as* a man, or *better than* a man, but not *like* a man"). The reader who seeks to build cultures for his *Traveller* games will see a culture that stands on its own, and is not mere-

ly a foil for human heroes—and, in addition to having enjoyed a good story, will hopefully come away from this one (and its two sequels) with a sense of what a well-developed culture will "feel" like.

A solid "Download this!" recommendation, and an equally solid "Buy!" recommendation for the sequels, which also have good stories and well-developed alien cultures. 🌐

Kurishdam

At Home, We Do It Like This

Vargr Merd

by Timothy Collinson

"Kurorrrraghz voekh ez udheg"
—Vargr Proverb*

The bulk of the Vargr diet is made up of fresh, raw meat, as is well known, along with their proclivity for fruit. Less well known however in the Imperium is a feature of a Vargr meal that has taken on almost ritualistic connotations. In the same manner that a cheese course might bring to an end a meal in human space, with its formal 'rules' of what is served and how it is dished up, Vargr may well finish a more resplendent banquet with a merd board – a selection of delicacies served up on a rough wooden platter shared between all guests at the table. 'Merd', it should be noted, is an Imperial catch-all term for the many words used in the Extents: *kerrgh*, *knouth*, *rruedh* or *rorrrraghz* (paw food), to mention just a few.

Traditionally, merd is eaten with paws – either picking up a suitably sized piece, or – if much finer in nature – a dipped paw which has been licked will do the trick. Vargr who have had some exposure to Imperials may use cutlery either out of desire to emulate their 'culture' or so as not to offend the sensibilities of any Imperials they may be eating with. This is rare, however.

These delicacies vary enormously from place to place in the Extents and no one item could be considered standard. Finely sliced exotic meats are common – sometimes almost rotting is considered a particular delight – but spiced fruits or nuts stuffed in peppers or soaked in alcohol may be served as well. The emphasis is not on quantity but on strange and interesting or unusual tastes and textures. The charisma of a host can even be affected, positively or negatively, depending not only the quality and the variety of what is served, but also the uniqueness or novelty value.

As is often the way with Vargr, fads come and go, flavours and styles fall in and out of fashion, and rarely will two merd boards look the same. Trends will change, but some merd – or the region of the Extents that produces it – will gain a reputation as being particularly fine or desirable and can command higher prices. Connoisseurs may claim to be able to identify a particular world or even region of a world that certain delicacies come from.

Most important is the ritual that goes with such a course. The Vargr who takes the first taste, the way an item is cut or pulled apart, the subtlety with which two items might be combined – all these are vital parts of the tradition of Vargr merd that can trap the unwary. The biggest difficulty is that practices vary nearly as much as the items served and Travellers are advised to take local advice or risk not so much giving offence as being seen as uncouth. Of course, the reverse can be true as well, and a non-

* "The rorrrraghz of the pack marks (or "tattoos") the pack." Often used in the sense that a pack can be identified by its choices. (Sometimes translated into Galanglic as "the merd makes the mob".)

(Continued from page 52)

Vargr visitor to the Extents who doesn't put a foot – or a finger – wrong on such an occasion, can expect to gain charisma. The sub-species of Vargr often have their own traditions and even if they include the course, it may be very different again in its content and presentation.

Merd in the Imperium

It is possible to find merd in some parts of the coreward sectors, from the Spinward Marches to Lishun, or even beyond on occasions. However, it tends to be rare and very expensive. Generally, it doesn't travel well and there's not a huge demand. If it is available, it will tend to be less exotic varieties

from Provence or Windhorn. Some varieties are actually inedible to humans and not to be recommended. Gastronomes however may have certain stuffs shipped in at great expense as something of a novelty, and nobles may serve it to guests as a mark of their wealth. Indeed, there's been a recent fashion amongst certain nobles of Core to include it as an end course in exquisite banquets. For those on a restricted budget it is possible to create something of the style of Vargr merd using Imperial ingredients, but for those in the know these are never convincing. Merd may be encountered as a menu item, as a luxury good to be shipped, or as a delicacy to be sought out for some wealthy patron. ☪

The Freelance Traveller Cookbook

Introduction to the *Freelance Traveller* Cookbook

by Jeff Zeitlin

The *Freelance Traveller* Cookbook is something of an experiment, which has its roots in some of the discussions of culture-building that Your Humble Editor has had in various *Traveller* forums, and in many years of participation in the Society for Creative Anachronism, and in Timothy Collinson's article in this issue (p.52) on Vargr merd, and in the section of his article on props that briefly discusses merd as a prop for a game at TravellerCon/UK (p.31, article starts on p.29).

The editor envisions this as a place to share *Traveller*-connected recipes, and perhaps some of their back-stories. If you've used food as a prop, like Mr Collinson did, share the recipe here, along with some back-story about how using it as a prop, and why you decided to do what you did, came to pass. If you host a gaming session, and rather than just putting out a few bags of sweet and/or crunchy snacks and bottled beverages, you make something quick, easy, and different-and-interesting, tell us

about it here, and include the recipe. If you've been putting together a culture for a *Traveller* game, and thought about the food they eat, and experimented to approximate what it would taste like to them, and liked the results, tell us about it, and give us the complete recipe—both in the “native” form (cured *shalap* with roasted *argu*), and redacted into 21st-century reproducible form (ham with roasted potatoes and walnuts)—along with the relevant cultural information. Pictures of how the “prop” food or the culture-building meal came out, along with comments on the process you used to arrive at the idea, are welcome as part of the article.

How well this works depends on you. This is yet another way to exercise your creativity, one that can be used entirely outside the *Traveller* community.

The first recipe to be shared here (starting on the next page) is, in fact, Mr Collinson's prop, Vargr merd. You'll get to see the recipe as he shared it with us, along with a reproduction, more or less, of the menu it appeared on, and some pictures of the end product. The quite extensive cultural information provided appears as a separate article on p.52 of this issue. We hope you enjoy that article, and this one. ☪

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Vargr Merd on the Menu

There's been some interest expressed in the menu I used in the "Second Scions' Society" game at TravCon13 so for those who'd like to attempt to recreate something similar here are some background notes.

The adventure itself began with some high level noble dilettantes – second sons or daughters of Counts/Countesses – having a banquet together. The idea in game terms was to allow them to introduce themselves, settle into their roles and tell a short anecdote of some sort. As I wrote the section of Referee's notes some months before, I thought it might be fun to actually produce a menu for the banquet, but I resisted the temptation thinking it wasn't directly needed and I had several other things which were much more vital (from learning to run a combat session to designing a starship and so on). However, as I slowly ticked off all the more important jobs, the idea of a menu had stayed swilling around in the back of my mind. Initially, I'd thought it would be a massively complex thing with a large number of choices and huge numbers of invented foodstuffs. Then sanity set in and I realized it would be much more straightforward to have a set menu but go for something along the lines of the French meals I've encountered with multiple courses. This led to the thought of producing the menu in French as a way of making it seem much posher for my nobles. Which then led to the thought of – rather than inventing a lot of supposedly *Traveller* foodstuffs such as roast Kian – simply making the items on the menu very ordinary foods. Anything but posh, but described in a 'high' style.

However, I still wanted to have something of a science-fiction feel about it, and at some point in the middle of one sleepless night, I had the thought that it would be quite fun to actually serve something up during the game to the players. Obviously it would have to be 'simple' and for some reason grated ha-

zelnuts (it was around Christmas time) soaked in rum came to mind. It was then that I thought: instead of having a cheese board, why not have several things and posit some extremely exotic and rare (in Core Sector) Vargr foodstuffs served up after the other courses? In keeping with the French theme it could be something along the lines of renowned 'Vargr merd' (knocking an 'e' off to keep it decent!) that dilettante nobles pay a huge sum of money for. Of course I had to think of at least a couple of other things to go on the board as well. Eventually I settled on grating some chili chocolate and grating some salt liquorice. Grating it all to make it look a bit different; the chili and the salt to give it something of an 'alien' (and particularly Vargr) feel even if the basic food item could be identified.

My in-game rationalisation was that the Vargr finish up their meals with a selection of delicacies that in the Vargr extents would be as common as cheese and have as many, if not more, varieties. In that usual chaotic way, the varieties would say much about the part of the Extents the particular stuff came from, different groups would have a taste for different types, and even the charisma of the host could be affected by the kind or the quality or the variety of merd that is served up. Vargr of course would simply lick a paw and dip it in rather than bother with such niceties as cutlery. Presumably Vargr merd might become known in the Imperium, become a luxury import, and Core dilettantes have a fad of paying huge sums to ship the stuff across the sectors. This neatly explained the very small quantities.)

A work colleague who is something of a gastronome agreed to help as my French is not up to much and we were now into the week before TravCon. She had soon produced the delight that is shown below. As she has a role-playing son she was also very patient and understanding about the whole project! (Thank you Lynn.)

I didn't think that the items, once grated/chopped/soaked/etc. would last very well, so having saved some hazelnuts from Christmas and having

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had Lynn source some chocolate and liquorice of the right kind, I packed it all up for TravCon along with a bottle of rum, a cheese grater and a plain wooden chopping board.

In an interval between games I raced up to my room and started grating. One lesson I learned is that it takes a lot longer than I had imagined – especially with soft liquorice which might have been better chopped with a sharp knife. However, it wasn't long before I had a small chopping board with three heaps of very odd looking food on it. Smuggling that down to the gaming room, hiding it in a large box, and nabbing spoons from the hotel, I was ready to go. If somewhat nervous.

As the PCs sat down to the banquet, I handed out a menu to each player and let them make of it what they would. Some (perhaps overwhelmed by the amount of hand-outs they'd already had to plough through) gave it short shrift, some took a look but couldn't get past the French, and some looked it at quickly, then looked again, and then started looking in detail. As titters began to erupt the others paid more attention and finally the game was up. One player – well done Tom – got to the end and said “so we finish up with dog \$#!+”. Yes, that's about the size of it.

We got on with the scene – the chef recommending certain dishes and offering something illegal on the side. With my best waiter manners (and some white gloves) I served up a bottle of white wine just to help things along, but when we arrived at the last course, I reached into the box behind me and pulled out the chopping board. All the hassle was (just about) worth it to watch the players faces as they realized that it wasn't merely a joke on the menu, they really had some Vargr merd being served up to them. (See the third photo in the After Action Report at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/stories/aar-travcon13.html> or *Freelance Traveller*, no.42, June 2013).

After some initial wariness (and a warning for anyone who suffered from nut allergies!), they gave it a go and had some fun identifying exactly what it was. It seemed to be a success and it certainly made the banquet a very memorable scene even before the story telling which was a highlight.

Menu

Amuse bouches

Crostini avec les haricots blancs aux tomates

Kors d'œuvres

Œufs à l'Indienne

Potage

Consomme de volaille

Poissons

Doigts des poisson sur la lit de riz

Entrée

Saucisson et pommes de terre écrémées

Sorbet

Pamplemousse rouge

Dessert

Tarte à la mélasse avec crème Anglaise

Savoureux

Vargr merd

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And for those whose restaurant French needs a modicum of help, the other posh nosh the nobility were eating at their banquet: beans on toast, curried eggs, chicken soup, fish fingers on a bed of rice (the author's only culinary capability), sausage and mash, pink grapefruit and treacle tart. For those who don't know the culture, these are all – with the exception of the fish fingers on rice which was my own personal in joke – very common-or-garden, working class dare I say, dishes here in the UK. No wonder the Swiss call us Brits *kulinarischer tiefflieger*. (Literally: culinary lowflyers, perhaps 'Culinary Philistines' would be a fair translation.)

Recipe: Vargr Merd

Ingredients

- half a dozen hazelnuts
- 2 or 3 'sticks' of salt liquorice
- ¼ bar of chili chocolate
- 3 serving spoons of rum (or a half filled egg cup)

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The Star of People's Justice

by Dave Nelson

This adventure was originally posted to the website in 1999

Summary

Players are hired as marshals by a dome manager on planet Halfway. They will be called on to help put down a riot, then to patrol the land and mining camps outside the dome, and finally, when an official from a mining company is abducted they must:

1. question the assistant director
2. search mining camps for members of a criminal organization
3. raid a coffee house run by revolutionaries
4. raid a terrorist camp
5. rescue the official and prevent a terrorist bombing.

Method

Crack open the hazelnuts and soak the nuts overnight in the rum; grate or finely chop. Alternatively – if time or rum is in short supply – grate the hazelnuts and drizzle the rum over them. The broken shells can be retained as a serving decoration if desired.

Grate the chili chocolate – different effects can be produced with the different sides of a multi-function grater.

Grate the liquorice, or, if too soft, very finely chop.

Arrange the nuts, chocolate and liquorice in attractive piles on a wooden chopping board. Add other brown or black finely chopped foodstuffs of exotic taste as desired.

Serve in the centre of the table with teaspoons for Imperial delicacy or licked fingers for the true Vargr experience. ☼

Background

Location: This adventure is set on the planet Halfway (B533699-B) in the Massilia Sector in about the 50th year of the Third Imperium.

The adventure can be easily placed in any era of the Third Imperium on a world that meets these criteria:

- Atmosphere: 2,3 or 4 (any that require a filter mask/respirator for humans to live outside).
- Hydrographics: minimum 2, maximum 6.
- Population: minimum 10⁴, maximum 10⁶.
- Government: type 6, 8 or 9
- Law Level: 7+
- Tech Level: 7+

Description: Halfway is a planet administered by the Imperial Ministry of Colonization and cur-

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rently being settled as an industrial pro-Imperial enclave on the frontier. The official colonization efforts are focused on setting up a series of domed cities each of which has a stated purpose under the master colonization plan. Dome 1, for example, is the Starport; Dome 2 is the administration center, and Dome 3 is a tool-making industrial dome. Dome 23, where the action takes place, is the major source of refined hydrogen on planet, taking in water from the adjacent sea and passing it through a large refining plant to be piped to the Starport and major fusion reactors on planet. The dome structures are reasonably sturdy but the danger that a breach might cause is significant; as a result, all projectile weapons are banned from all the cities. Even police units are restricted to bludgeons and “thud” guns.

While the majority of the colonists live in the cities, a fraction live outside in various mining camps. There is a good supply of minerals to be mined on planet, but since the atmosphere is inhospitable, it requires sealed buildings with built-in respirator support to live in the “territories”. Each dome city is required to keep its assigned territory (the area for about 300 km in every direction) under control.

Organizations of Note

- **Galactic People’s Party:** anti-Imperial, anti-nobility, anti-corporation agitators.
- **Star of People’s Justice:** terrorist group
- **The Grey Shadow:** organized crime syndicate
- **Hortalez Mining Group:** subsidiary of megacorp, runs a mining operation in District 23.

Encounters

Patron: Dome Manager Hurro Dumblar

To Find Encounter: Average Task of Admin, or Computer

Necessary Skills: Weapon Skills, Ground Craft, Interrogation

Necessary Equipment: None

Scene: The Empire Club, Dome 1.

Near the main Starport Terminal in Dome 1 is the Empire Club, which is a private restaurant and meeting place for ex-Imperial soldiers, sailors, marines, scouts and their guests. It is decorated like a Sylean noble’s hunting lodge, with wooden paneling and hunting accoutrements on the walls. Each booth is equipped with a computer display. The players will see an advertisement play across the screen—an Imperial starburst, followed by the seal of the Ministry of Colonization, and the following notice—

Trusted people needed for security work, contact Hurro Dumblar—Manager Dome 23.

When the players decide to inquire, they need only ask the computer system to contact Mr. Dumblar or the Dome 23 main office and an appointment will be arranged within 2-3 hours, in Dome 23. The players will have to take a tube-train ride from Dome 1 to Dome 23. The tube train is modern and ultra-fast. During the trip they will pass through Domes 14 and 19, just outside of which they will notice some burn marks on the inside of the tube. If anyone is questioned about the burns, they will refer the PCs to the conductor who will say the burns came from a terrorist bomb, set by the Star of People’s Justice.

Once they arrive in Dome 23, the security guard at the station will lead them to the manager’s office. Just outside the station they will notice a group of scruffy people dressed in old green work coveralls, milling about across the square. The manager’s office is at the apex of the dome in a grav-supported cubicle, conspicuous for its position and ostentatious use of contragrav support in an otherwise still-in-progress Dome city. Inside the office, the PCs will be ushered into a meeting room. Several minutes later Hurro Dumblar will enter greet everyone with an all-business faked sincerity. He is a short man with thinning hair and thin mustache, he is wearing an outrageous silver jumpsuit, the kind of thing that was worn in Sylean adventure holovids of 20 or 30 years ago, but never by real people. Dumblar will take out a hand comm and begin an appalling 20-

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minute holo-slide show about the duties of a territorial marshal and the principal opposition to the government.

In sum, Mr. Dumblar requires the services of up to 8 characters to act as District 23 Territorial Marshals. The job pays Cr2000 per month per character and requires patrolling the district around Dome City 23 for bandits, saboteurs and rebels. Each character roll Social Status plus 1d6, +1 per term in agent, scout, army or marine career, +1 per point of Law or Forensics skill. Highest roll will be hired as Marshal, with command of the unit and Cr500 extra per month, others will be deputy marshals. Territorial marshals are responsible for law enforcement outside the dome, but are officially part of the Dome Security Force and can be used within the dome as well. Dumblar will brief the players on "organizations of note" and dome weapon laws. (See Background and Organizations of Note, above).
Riot at the Train Depot

Soon after hiring, the team will be ordered to help dome security put down a riot, led by the Galactic People's Party, at the transit depot, protesting the failure of new food synthesis units to appear. The rioters are led by the same green-clad ruffians the PCs spotted when they arrived. The team will be issued Thud Guns, Clubs, Helmets and Flex Armor-11 and will each have to clear away 1-4 (1d6-2, at least 1 per PC) club-armed rioters. Each character may make an average task roll vs. Recon or Perception to spot a ringleader, then roll a Difficult roll vs. Tactics to get a chance to approach/attack, capture one. Successful capture gains a commendation and Cr500 bounty. The purpose of this encounter is to introduce the players to the GPP and to serve as an introduction/refresher to the combat and task system in a non-lethal setting.

Rioter/GPP member: UPP 877664, Brawling-1

Weapons: Club Damage 2. Thud Gun Damage 1, range Vshort, 10 shots.

Flex Armor-11 Armor rating 5f on torso. Helmet armor 6r on head

Patrol

The principal duty of the marshals is to patrol the 300km radius around the dome in a fully-equipped ATV. They are expected to help miners in distress, apprehend law-breakers, claim-jumpers and other bandits, and keep the outside installations of the dome secure from terrorists. They will operate out of a garage in the dome and are expected to use the ATV. There are also 2 air/rafts available for supplementary use, but the manager's permission must be gained before taking one out (Avg Admin task).

1-2 days later, characters must begin first patrol, Patrol route is up to the Marshal but must include all the Enclaves, the Refinery, the Pipeline, the Transit Route and the Dome.

Players will be equipped as follows:

Tracked ATV equipped with Machine-gun in turret and radio link to satellite sensors. The vehicle has an armor rating of 5, making it proof against most rifle and pistol fire.

Locker includes: Bullpup Rifle×6 (mag×30), Shotgun×1 (mag×8), Laser Rifle×1, Pistol 003 ×4 (mag×12), Pistol, Staplegun×4 (mag×16), Laser Pistol×1, Compressor Masks×16, 300km range communicators×8, Forensics scanner×1, Geology Scanner×1, Paramedic Kit×2, (each Medical Drug×10, Medical Slow Drug×10), Radiation Detector×2, Biosniffer×2, Radiation suits×8, General Purpose Hand Computer×1. Handcuffs×20, Cable×200 meters, Grav belt×1, and any blade weapons requested. Axe, Electronics tool kit, Mechanical tool kit, Survival kits×4, 56 man/days of food and water.

WEAPON STATS					
Weapon	Dmg	Range	Shots	Mode	Mass
Medium MG	5	Medium	200	Autofire	14kg
Rifle, bullpup	4	Short	50	Semi-auto	3.5kg
Shotgun	2 (spec)	V. Short	6	Semi-auto	3.8kg
Pistol Pc003	5	V. Short	10	Semi-auto	0.6kg
Pistol, Staple Gun	2	V. Short	25	Semi/burst/auto	0.9kg
Laser pistol	5	Short	30	Semi-auto	2.9kg
Laser rifle	7	Long	50	Semi-auto	15.6kg

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Back-up: can be summoned in an emergency, consisting of a GCarrier with a squad of 12 Army Troops, however, it will take 20-70 minutes to arrive and this will cost the Dome Manager money from his budget and he doesn't like it.

ATV Travel Rates: 2 hexes per hour in the clear, 1 hex per hour in the hills.

The Mining Enclaves

There are a number of small mining camps or enclaves scattered around the district. Each enclave serves as a meeting place and resupply point for prospectors. Each enclave typically consists of 2-3 prefab buildings: a cantina serving food and drink, a general store and mine office which purchases ore, and a vehicle garage/repair shed. The miners usually wear a dull colored set of coveralls, a compressor mask, and a large overcoat. The rougher crowd like to wear the skins of native cave lizards hanging from the shoulders of their coats, and most miners wear a broad-brimmed hat when outside.

Encounter Table: (7+ on 2d6 once per 6 hours)

2-3	Distress Call from random Enclave; must travel there immediately to deal with it.
4-6	Bushwhackers (2d6) armed with guns and vehicle
7	Hidden Crater or Sand Pit (roll Difficult/Ground Craft to avoid throwing a tread)
8-9	Distress call from disabled vehicle 1-6 hexes away
10-11	Miners in ATV
12	Hidden rock seriously fouls transmission of ATV (Staggering task Mech 1/hour)

Bushwhackers: most encounters will be with Bandits, members of the Grey Shadow Criminal Organization, or claim jumpers, who will generally retreat if not met with immediate overwhelming success.

Typical Claim Jumper/Bandit Group: 2d6 men with following stats:

Bushwhacker: UPP: 888775 Mining-1, Brawling-1, Rifle-2, Ground Vehicle-1

Each will have a backpack with various bits of survival gear. Most will be carrying a Rifle-Bullpup-9 (Damage 4, Range Short, 50 shots, semi-auto). But 1-2 in each group will have a hunting Laser Rifle-12 (Damage 6, Range: Long, 5 shots). The Bushwhackers will have a Tracked ATV 1-2 km away.

Rebels: the third encounter with bushwhackers will be with a Rebel group, the Star of People's Justice with 12 men, well equipped who are intent on destroying any marshal patrol they encounter.

Rebel: UPP 888663 Rifle-2, Recon-1, Demo-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Ground Vehicle-1.

Each will be wearing Cloth Armor-4 (armor 1f). Each will carry a Light ACR-9 (Damage 4, range: Medium, 60 shots: single/auto/burst). Two of the men will instead have a Laser Rifle-12 (Damage-7, range: long, 50 shots +2 to aimed fire). The team will have 4 hand grenades total (damage 8 frag.).

Distress Calls: Some sample calls include:

Filter breakdown: a mining enclave has had one of its building air compressor/filters go bad. They need a repair, either by skilled PCs (difficult Mechanic) or by getting a replacement from the dome.

"Bart's drunk, again": A miner has gone on a bender and is busting up an enclave watering hole. PCs must arrest him.

Bandit Raid: A group of 12 claim jumpers (see Bushwhackers above) are attempting to storm a mining enclave, which now contains 8 people holding the cantina.

Medical Emergency: 8-10 people at an enclave have gotten serious food poisoning from eating Cave Lizard Chile (a local "delicacy"). PCs must rescue, an Average Medical task will stabilize the situation, but if it fails the victims must be transported to the dome. There are 3 ATVs at the enclave, but PCs must drive them to transport the people.

The general patrol should last until the players start to get bored or the first payday, then move on to one of the next pre-planned encounters. If there is a time constraint for the game, keep the number of encounters down to only one or two, or this section can be skipped entirely.

Disappearance

Manager Dumblar will radio, saying that an official from Hortalez Mining Group has disappeared in the Mountains near their Mining station. He suspects that it must be a ransom kidnapping by the Grey Shadow, or a terrorist action by Galactic People's Party (Star of People's Justice Division), but it must be cleared up quickly, Hortalez has claimed that they have had no ransom demands, but the SPJ has never harassed the Hortalez facility before.

Encounters

Just the Facts, Ma'am.

Location: Hortalez Mining Group District 23 Prospecting Facility

Chance of Encounter: automatic when entering HMG facility.

The Hortalez Mining Group facility is like a large mining enclave. There is a large bunkhouse, an administration building, two large vehicle garages, an ore-cracking station and a fusion power station.

Ms Ruthel Broadwic, assistant director of the facility, will gladly cooperate with any investigation; she is a tired-looking woman of about 50 years and wears a neat company coverall set. She will explain that the director, Mr. Tudball was on an inspection tour south of the center when radio contact was lost, his ATV was discovered, apparently opened by the use of laser fire. The location of the disappearance will then be shown to the players. If questioned she will vehemently deny any contact or trouble with the SPJ or the GPP (it is the truth). She does volunteer the fact that the Grey Shadow criminal organization has harassed some workers and stolen some ore shipments in the last six months. There has been no proof, but Mr. Tudball confided to her that a shady operative had asked him for protection money to make the trouble stop.

We didn't do it, see?

Location: any Enclave

Chance of encounter: Difficult Streetwise. May check each enclave until successful.

Once encounter occurs, characters will meet will Purgo Logrod, who claims to be a legitimate miner and trader in salvage and abandoned property. He will resist any questioning, but if isolated from his 5 friends (treat he and his 5 friends as Bushwhackers detailed in encounter 3), he will provide the following information after a Difficult check of Bribery, Intimidation or Interrogation is made:

He is a claim-jumper, and member of the Grey Shadow crime syndicate.

The Grey Shadow in this area have never moved against Hortalez or any other big corporate unit. In fact they are generally focused on mid-level theft and extortion.

No off-world specialists have come through in several months.

This stunt seems to be something Star of People's Justice might do; he can lead help you find their lair, for the right price. (i.e., if he is let off the hook for obvious weapons violations, or a bribe of at least Cr250 is offered, he will tell the marshals that Sally Mufu, a coffeeshop owner in Dome City 23, is liaison between Galactic People's Party and the Star; she could reveal location of the Headquarters of the Star of People's Justice).

Power to The People, Man!

Location: Dome City, People's Coffee House

Chance of Encounter: automatic.

If players radio in suspicions, Dome Security will issue a warrant and suggest that the marshals come back to the dome to raid the coffee house. In the coffee house there will be 3 innocent customers, 4 members of GPP and Mufu and her two-man staff. If raided, the 7 GPP members will fight back using clubs, 2 body pistols, 2 Blur canisters.

The People's Coffee Shop is in the workers district of Dome 23. As per Ministry of Colonization practice, the building itself is the packing crate of a large earthmoving machine. It still says "Mark II Earth-Mover: Zhunastu Industries" on the side. The "Zhunastu" has been struck through with a line of spray paint, and two doors cut through the side

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panels. The title "People's Coffee Shop" is painted, badly, over one doorway. Both doorways are simply holes covered by curtains.

Remember, in the Dome itself the players must surrender their weapons in exchange for Thud Guns, Blades, Clubs, and/or Blur, at their choice. Once captured, the GPPs will be really annoying. They will curse at the players and begin by calling them "Impy Pigs" and "Cleon's boot-boys"; eventually one will say "You Impies are gonna burn", to which another will mutter "yeah, oh the humaniti". It will require Difficult Interrogation or Staggering Intimidation rolls to get the location of the base, no further elaboration of the dropped comments will be possible.

RAID!

Location: Star of People's Justice Headquarters, 3 hexes NW of E2.

Chance of Encounter: automatic if location given, Staggering Recon task if passing through.

If no one escapes the GPP raid, then the players should have surprise; if not, the Star will be in ambush nearby. The site cannot be located by overhead survey satellites, due to a combination of bribery and computer hacking. There are 5 small bunk sheds and a long vehicle shed which is currently empty.

The headquarters will normally be defended by 12 Rebel Riflemen, stats and equipment as follows:

Rebel: UPP 888663 Rifle-2, Recon-1, Demo-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Ground Vehicle-1.

Each will be wearing Cloth Armor-4 (armor 1f). Each will carry a Light ACR-9 (Damage 4, range: Medium, 60 shots: single/auto/burst).

There will also be a support team of 3 men armed as follows:

Rebel: UPP 888663 Pistol-2, Recon-1, Heavy Weapons-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Ground Vehicle-1.

Each will be wearing Cloth Armor-4 (armor 1f). Each carries a Heavy Pistol-7 (Damage 3, range Vshort, 10 shots, semi-auto). They will attempt to

reach a gun pit in the camp which is equipped with a heavy machinegun-8, (damage 8, range Long, shots 100).

If the rebels are caught by surprise, there will be 2 riflemen patrolling the perimeter. Otherwise, there will be 2 support gunners in the gun pit and 6 riflemen dug in around the perimeter. The remaining men in either case will be in the bunk sheds.

Players may, if they think to ask, get the use of 1-2 air/rafts to supplement or replace their ATV. The raid will not turn up a captured official, and if questioned, prisoners will reveal that they kidnapped the mining official at the request of their mysterious cell leader "Retzer". If the camp is closely searched a large number of empty explosives boxes will be discovered. It will also be discovered that there is support equipment for two air/rafts which are not in evidence. A difficult interrogation task or a staggering intimidation task will get one of the prisoners to reveal that the captive Tudball was taken north several hours ago and Retzer headed south in the direction of the dome. Note: Retzer's course will only be revealed if specifically interrogated for. If the players only ask about Tudball, that's all they'll find out.

Mayday! Mayday!

Some time after the raid on the camp, a broadcast S.O.S. from Mr Tudball will be received by the players. He claims to have escaped from an air/raft that was transporting him to a secret base. His current location is almost 400 km north of the dome, and he sounds desperate. If Tudball is rescued within 5 hours, he will be fine. Each hour past 5 roll 2d6, on 11+ Tudball will meet with a deadly accident in the wilds. It will take 4 hours to reach him by air/raft, it will take 15 hours to reach him by ATV. His distress is real, but his plight is a diversion. The goal is to lure the marshals as far away from the pipeline as possible. If the players head north they should rescue Tudball, but the pipeline will be blown up by the terrorists. If the players head toward the dome or pipeline they will discover the location of Retzer's

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air/raft rather easily (Average Sensor task using satellite sensors). You might want to have the ATV throw a track to heighten tension, but the PCs should arrive in time to catch Retzer and 3 terrorists in process of setting a large series of charges on the hydrogen pipeline. During any fire fight, a critical failure using HE or HEAP ammunition will set off the charges or rupture the pipeline.

Terrorist: UPP 888663 Rifle-2, Recon-1, Demo-1, Grav Vehicle-1,

Cloth armor-4 (1f armor)). Each will carry a Light ACR-9 (Damage 4, range: Medium, 60 shots: single/auto/burst).

Retzer: UPP 8A7975: Tactics-1, Recon-1, Demo-2, Pistol-3, Grav-Vehicle-2, Leader-2

Wears Flex-11 (5f armor), carries Laser Pistol (damage 5, range Short, 30 shots, semi-auto).

Closure

Complete Failure: If the pipeline is blown up and Tudball dies, players are fired. 0 experience points.

Partial Success: If the pipeline is blown up but Tudball is rescued, players are fired as marshals, but are given Cr1000 each by Hortalez, and possibly offered security work by the company. 1 experience point.

Partial Success: If pipeline is saved but Tudball dies, players can keep marshal job, are given a Cr1000 bonus and 1 experience point.

Complete Success: If pipeline saved and Tudball rescued, players can keep job or take a security job with Hortalez, are awarded Cr2000 in rewards and bonuses and 2 experience points. 🌟

Up Close and Personal

Zachary Higgins-David

profiled for T20 by Clay Bush

Zachary Higgins-David, Lvl 4 academic; Age 22; 180 cm; 56 kg.

Abilities: STR-15; DEX-14; CON-13; INT-12; WIS-7; CHA-8; EDU-18; SOC-6

Skills: Decipher script-6; Drive-4; Entertain-2; Gather info-4; K/Antares-2; K/Imp. history-3; Liaison-7; Move silently-3; Navigation-5; Pilot/grav-0; P/Prospecting-0; Read/write langs-6; Sense motive-2; Speak langs-4; Spot-0; T/Computer-6; T/Commo-6; T/Sensors-4; Use alien device-4

Feats: Connections/Underworld, Endurance, Hacker; Mental discipline; Research, Skill Focus(K/Imp. history); Vessel/grav; Langs: Galangic, Hiver

Stamina: 13; **Experience:** 8,000

Homeworld: Antares/Antares; **Cash:** Cr21,000

Zachary was raised in an orphanage in a run-down district (Eastwood) beside a sprawling industrial complex (Shurinkin Valley). He grew up destitute and depending on wits and luck. He has no

known family, which doesn't matter as he is no longer on Antares.

Growing up, Zachary remembers two boons. One New Year's he received a donated computer with a flexible AI already installed. Everyone else got a blank one, suitable only for schoolwork. Zachary named it 'Hal'. It has been his constant companion since then, with Hal collating information Zachary collects for it.

The teachers thought he was obsessing with the computer. The following year Zachary received a guitar. He tried to play it, but one day it mysteriously disappeared. No one would tell Z who took the guitar; this incident reinforced his distrust of his orphanage companions. Instead, he spent his time off-grounds around gangs, and in malls and coffee bars.

He began his lifelong research into conspiracies. He spent his middle school years scouring the areas outside Shurinkin Valley, looking for evidence of fossil or earlier settlement. Sometimes he fantasized about traveling offworld to prospect.

Entry into College could have been a turning point. His academic learning was offset by his pov-

Up Close and Personal

(Continued from page 62)

erty, low social status, and strange social contacts. Zachary could not get a recommendation from anyone who knew him.

Zachary got a minor job where he proved talented but unenthusiastic. One of his classmates, recalling Zachary's prospecting, involved Zachary in quality control at a site where the organized crime syndicate sorted 'misdirected' raw materials. Zachary's ability to decipher foreign scripts proved key to the operation. Zachary continued to make friends with people from different backgrounds, asking about their groups' histories, stories, and so on.

Mr. Goshi, a local crime boss, recognized his ability to work with others. Zachary was 'invited' to help with a project involving employees of a subsector trading company and workers at the spaceport maintenance section.

The break was slow in coming. Mr. Goshi sponsored Zachary into the local Church of Absolute Dignity. With its requirement of ancestor worship, the orphan Zachary was a hard sale, and never fully accepted. His marriage offer to a member girl was flatly refused (producing heirs is a requirement for ancestor worship). The project was under police investigation, the church had turned against Zachary, and Mr. Goshi cut his losses in a sad farewell. Since he liked Zachary, Mr. Goshi had him placed in low berth and shipped him and Hal 15 jumps away from Antares, using Zach's Cr30,000 share of the project.

A curious Hiver, 'Anton', had Zachary unfrozen. Anton thinks he made a wonderful choice by befriending Zachary afterward. Zachary likes meeting people; he can't help explaining how he thinks the universe really works; and the Hivers get to observe the customers' amazed reactions. The whole Hiver colony now uses Zachary as their go-between with transients needing computer or other work.

Zachary did have some mental damage from the unauthorized low berthing. He has less control over his action (reduced WIS) and acts more impulsively than before.

Appearance: Zachary is recognizable by the photo-optic shades implanted over his eyes (to counter Antares' brightness). He dresses neatly, in white with black trim, but always firmly lower class. He is perversely proud of the status that helped get him shipped off Antares.

Talk: In negotiation, he is humble about his talents, and sells what the Hivers can do instead. Zachary is obsequious to anyone in authority. Once work is in process, he relaxes and chats with the customers. The Hivers take as long as it takes to run out of interesting reactions from their customers.

Hal: Once Zachary starts explaining his theories, Hal will 'speak up' in a firm, friendly voice. Hal will, throughout Zachary's exposition, assist with video and map holo displays.

Zachary's Favorite Topics:

To Nobles: A Vilani faction used the Terrans to overthrow the established regime of the Ziru Sirka. Hal has an assortment of charts and graphs of relative industrial capability and charts mapping the movements of various 'key' individuals designated by Hal as go-betweens.

To military characters: A Terran faction called the Illuminati runs the Imperium through the Archdukes. That is why the Archdukes stayed out of the Imperial Civil War. The 'real' nobility considers the Navy and Army to be expendable toys. Hal displays the relevant sections of library data about the Imperial Civil War, which records Admirals claiming the throne but makes no mention of the Archdukes.

To others: Antares/Antares must have been created by the Ancients. There are rumors of underground tunnels disappearing miles under the surface. Hal displays orbital charts and maps of how a hollow world could work. And so on.

Developments: When he was shipped off world, his DNA and ID were processed. He has received a one-way message from his natural parent(s) asking for a meeting. It included contact information, but he is no longer on Antares to use it. He is looking for someone going to Antares, who he will ask to relay a message to the contact address. 🌟

Feedback

Please tell us ...

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

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

- e-mail: feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

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

Traveller on the Internet

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

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

You can also run "play-by-IRC" game sessions in either channel; please stop in and ask 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

September/October 2016

- **Gypsy Knights Games** has released (in 2nd Edition/OGL Edition) *21 Plots*, *21 Plots Too*, *21 Plots III*, *21 Plots Go Forth*, *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* (all in print), *Ships of Clement Sector 13-15: Escort and Support* (print and PDF), *Clement Sector: The Rules* (print and PDF), and *Wendy's Guide to the Fleets of Hub Subsector*
- **Mongoose Publishing** has released *Referee's Briefing 3: Going Portside*, *High Guard Deployment Shuttle*, *Referee's Briefing 4: Mercenary Forces*, and *Pirates of Drinax: Theev*
- **Stellagama Publishing** has released *Near Space*
- **Universe of Action, LLC** has released *Emerson Class Starship Deck Plans (Squares = 1.5 Meters)*
- **Gareth Lazelle** has released (under the TAS imprint) *MgT Traveller Map of the Spinward Marches Sector*, *MgT Traveller Space Combat Chart*
- **Zozer Games** has released *Camp Cretaceous*
- **Moon Toad Publishing** has released *RAX Type Protected Merchant*
- **Gregg Wilson** has released (under the TAS imprint) *Jump Station Echo*
- **Alex Greene** has released (under the TAS imprint) *Castrobancla*, *The City of Aliens*
- **Christian Nienhaus** has released (under the TAS imprint) *Universal Planetary Profile Sheet for Traveller*
- **Out of MY Mind Games** has released *Ships of Gold: Commercial Starships*
- **DSL Ironworks** has released *Quick Decks: TL9 Yacht*
- **Ideagonk** has released *Derelect Generator*
- **Michael Brown** has released *Girkekaashur*



Submission Guidelines

Content

Freelance Traveller supports *Traveller* in all of its incarnations, rulesets and settings, both. However, there are some limitations on the combination of ruleset and setting that we will enforce:

We refer to the rules defined in *Classic Traveller*, *Mega-Traveller*, *Marc Miller's Traveller* (T4), *Traveller*⁵, and both editions of *Mongoose Traveller* as “Classic Compatible” or “2D6”. This includes *Sceptune Games' Hyperlite*, and *Sarmardan Press' Cepheus Engine*. For these rulesets, any setting, whether official, commercially-published-but-unofficial, or house setting, will be supported. A partial list of published settings supported under 2D6 *Traveller* includes the Third Imperium setting (including polities other than the Third Imperium proper), *Reign of Diaspora*, *Clement Sector*, *Hyperlite*, *Twilight Sector*, *Orbital*, *2300AD*, *Foreven Sector*, and I'm sure I've missed others.

Other rulesets, such as *GURPS Traveller*, *Traveller*²⁰/*SF20*, *FATE*, and so on are different enough from 2D6 *Traveller* to make conversion more difficult, and will only be supported for the Third Imperium setting (including polities other than the Third Imperium proper)—we feel that combining these rulesets with a non-Third Imperium setting makes the game something other than *Traveller*. The Third Imperium setting includes *all* eras and polities of the Third Imperium, however, so mixing (for example) the “Milieu Zero” Third Imperium with *FATE* rules would be fair game, as would be playing out some of the *Zhodani* core expeditions using *SF20*.

Send us any type of article—house rules and rulemixes; animals you've created for encounters; adventures (both long form and short); after-action writeups of conventions or your gaming night; equipment; vehicles; starships; other consumer goods; character profiles (NPC or PC); reviews of *Traveller* products, of products for other games that you feel can be “mined” for use in *Traveller*, of fiction (or non-game non-fiction) that “feels” like *Traveller*, or presents ideas that would be of interest to *Traveller* players or referees; new races or organizations or societies; artwork; or pretty much anything else you can think of. Articles on real-world science are of interest, when accompanied by rules for applying that science to *Traveller*. Tools and techniques you use for preparing for a session or a game are also welcome.

Published *Traveller* has generally been kept to a rating approximating the MPAA “PG-13” rating, or the ESRB “T” rating, and *Freelance Traveller* respects that, but does not draw a hard line. Mature themes may be addressed, but explicit or excessively violent/bloody material will not be accepted for publication.

Where To Send It, and What To Send

Except in very rare cases, all submissions must be through email, sent to either editor@freelancetraveller.com or submissions@freelancetraveller.com. All submissions should include the submission itself and a full name and valid contact information for the submitter. If you wish the material published under a “handle”, please give the preferred handle and explain why publication under your real name is not acceptable—we prefer to publish under the real name, but realize that this can be a problem in some cases.

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Formats

Text material can be submitted in any common textual or word-processing format, but we prefer (in no particular order) Microsoft Office, Open Office or one of its forks (we currently use Libre Office), RTF, minimally-formatted HTML, or plain text, all with full Unicode support. Our readership is principally English-speaking, however, so foreign languages and scripts should be used sparingly, and if not intended as purely decorative, an English transcription of pronunciation (and possibly a definition in English as well) should be included.

Graphics should be submitted in an appropriate format for the subject matter—in most cases, that will be GIF, JPEG, or PNG at 100dpi or higher. If it's principally line-drawing material, it may be more appropriate to submit it in a vector format; most common vector formats can be imported by our tool of choice, CorelDRAW! X4 or X6. Please try to leave some space around the edges for cropping, especially for covers. We publish in PDF in US Letter and ISO A4 sizes, and columns in the magazine are roughly 3.5 inches (actually a little more) wide.

Avoid submitting in XPS or PDF format; these are generally seen as “output-only” formats, and trying to extract material in usable form from these formats is problematical.

