

Frontier Explorer



Issue 10
Fall 2014

Shades of the Blade
No Passport for Giggles
Frontiers of Horror
In the Shadow of the Prodigal Sun
Bounty Hunters
How Many Ships are there?

It hasn't got a name



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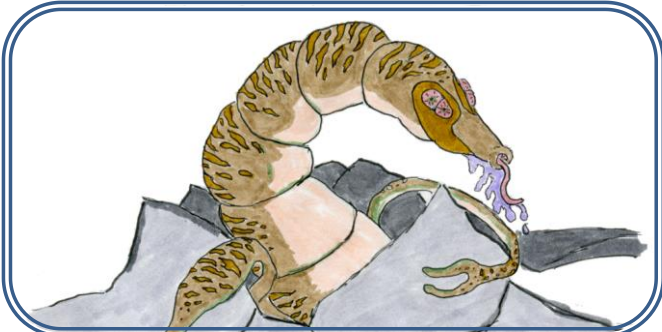
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FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome back explorers!

Welcome to issue 10. This issue brings a variety of horror related articles along with the usual fare of creatures, equipment, and starships. The issue starts off with a short story about Yazirian clan ghosts that was the inspiration for several of the articles in the issue.

As many of you may have already heard, there are several events that happened related to the Star Frontiers on-line community and the Frontier Explorer. Back in July as we were putting issue 9 together I was contacted by Bill Logan, the creator of our sister Star Frontiers fanzine, the [Star Frontiersman](#), contacted me to see if we would be interested in taking over management of that magazine as he no longer had the time to give it the attention it needed.

As a former author and editor of the Star Frontiersman, I was quite happy to take over management of the magazine. The past three months have been spent making that transition including building the new Star Frontiersman website, transferring the domain, and transferring the Star Frontiersman issue entries on DriveThruRPG. The transfer finished up in early October and we were able to release [issue 25](#). You can find the full details on the Star Frontiersman website as well as in the “A Changing Frontier” article at the end of issue 25.

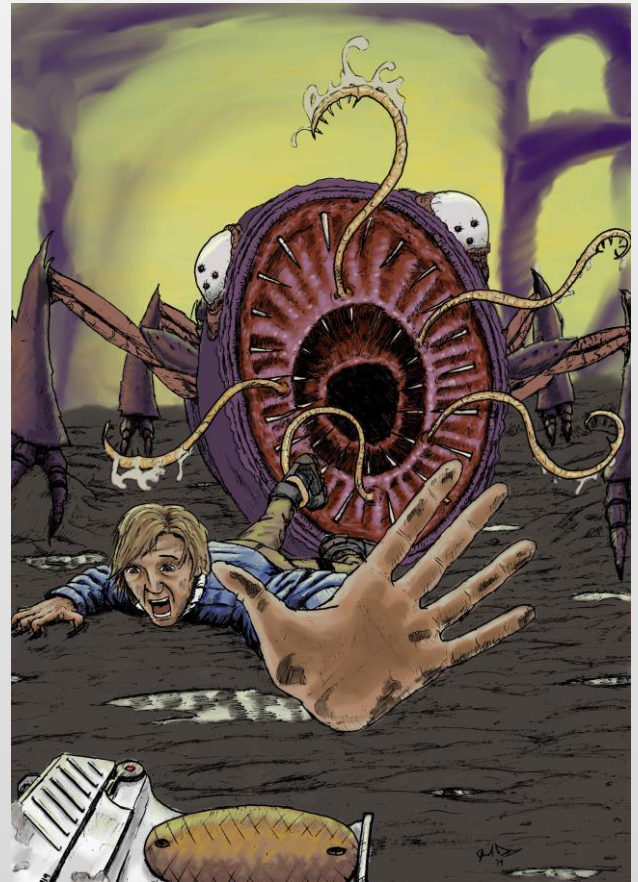
So going forward from here, the Frontier Explorer will be running and producing both magazines. The two magazines will be sharing the submission queue on the Frontier Explorer website and new submissions will be considered for either magazine. If you have a preference you can let us know in the submission comments. The Frontier Explorer will continue to be produced quarterly and will receive priority to make sure we have content each issue. The Star Frontiersman will be published as we have time and content to do so. If you want to see lots of issues, we need lots of submissions.

Related to the transfer of the Star Frontiersman, Bill also officially passed to me the reins of his Star Frontiers website, <http://starfrontiers.us>. I've been hosting that site for nearly 5 years already but now I'm officially the site admin and webmaster.

As with all changes, there are bound to be some bumps along the way. Bear with us as we work through them. If you are interested in helping out with either magazine or the websites, let us know at editors@frontierexplorer.org. And as always, keep exploring!

- Tom Stephens
Senior Editor

PRODUCTION CREDITS



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Editors: Tom Stephens, Tom Verreault, William Douglass, Eric Winsor

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Full Cover Quote: "It hasn't got a name. It's a new system. I wanted us all to discover it! No one's ever been down here before."

- Juno (*The Descent*)

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Fiction

SHADES OF THE BLADE

Daron Patton

Editor's Note: This story provided the inspiration of the adventure contained in this issue along with the article on running horror campaigns. It can be found in the internet archive at:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20020712204823/http://www.rpgarchive.com/index.php?advid=121&page=adv1>.

Koraffo stared at the Khad'dan buried deep in Ulkunk's amorphous corpse. He was the sole survivor now. Why hadn't he simply refused to follow the human female's orders? Why didn't matter anymore. The Hir-Kal would be coming for him next. Then it could rest again. The Yazirian sighed then dropped his blaster belt and blaster to the deck. Lasers would be no use against such a phantom. According to legend nothing was. The hissing song of his Khad'dan being swiftly drawn from its sheath echoed down the silent passageway. If an ancient evil wanted his life, it would have to pass through ancient steel to take it.

The morning rays of an unnamed star glinted off the ablative hull of the privateer, Prodigal Sun as she lifted slowly into the air. In less than a quarter hour, Sun had cleared the thin atmosphere of the likewise nameless planetoid the team had spent two days exploring. Within an hour, the ship was already building up velocity for the first void-hop back home.

In a second-hand acceleration couch, Koraffo absentmindedly fidgeted with his holster. His mouth cycled through tight-lipped, barely contained anger to purse-lipped contemplation, back to anger. Pop. Close. Pop. Close. Pop. "Will you cut that out," Marsha Teak said staring back at him from the pilot's seat. Her seething glare cut through any veneer of civility the two had managed to maintain to this point. "We are taking these artifacts back to base and that's that. No more discussion. You read me, 'Raff?'"

"Loud and clear," The Yazirian's lips curled back to show sharp canines and he flared his nostrils in open contempt of Teak's decision to continue on in what Koraffo felt was nothing less than tempting the gods. Ulkunk, the Dralasite astrogator/engineer/every other free position on the ship, burred for a moment. "Perhaps we should reconsider, Captain. After all, disturbing graves isn't standard even for Streel Corp."

Teak looked at her second-in-command, a nonplussed expression pasted on her face. She pulled her three-barred

rank insignia from her collar and held them out to the Dral. "Perhaps you should call, T'keec up here and make it a unanimous mutiny, Ulk."

The blob blustered at the accusation. "No one said anything about mutiny, Captain. I was simply pointing out--

"Listen, Gentle-beings. For better or worse, I am the skipper on this little bag of bolts and what I say goes. The Executive VP has a thing for collections and he wants anything unusual we run across. I'd rate those ancient Yazzie grave-sites back there as unusual, wouldn't you?"

"Well, yes, but--

"Like I just told our simian muscle-boy here, it's not open to discussion. Not another gods-damned word about it. From anyone!"

No one knows what happened to the crew of Prodigal Sun. When she was recovered, all four of the crew had been killed by various grizzly means. The human female captain had been strangled by some sort of strap. The Vrusk male archaeologist was dissected into component anatomical sections, joint by joint. Several deep stab wounds were found in the Dralasite neuter's cadaver.

Circumstantial evidence points to the crew's only Yazirian member, Koraffo except his remains massed less than four kilograms when recovered, though it all seems to be present based on proportional analysis. Piracy is one possible explanation, but why would pirates leave a perfectly functional ship floating derelict? Strangely the only thing missing from the ship's manifested cargo was a crate listed simply as artifacts. Perhaps no one will really ever know what happened aboard this ship.

The Hir-Kal (Clan Shadow) is a venerable legend among the Yazirians. Protectors of their masters' graves, these spiritual beings supposedly wreak vengeance on any foolish enough to disturb a Yazirian warrior's tomb. According to myth, the Hir-Kal are creatures of living darkness, taking their very substance from the absence of light. From gnawtoki cats to Yazirian nightbirds, they are said to be capable of changing form, passing through walls like a Khad'dan through water.

Accounts of Hir-Kal attack say that the only way to survive witnessing a Hir-Kal's fury is to not be the offending party. Other than simple innocence in the offending act, Yazirian folk history cites no known defenses against these shade creatures.

Campaign Background

IN SEARCH OF THE GORLIANS

Tom Verreault

Author's note: Special thanks should be given to Richard Rose (aka Shadowshack) and Robert Bowman who submitted the articles to [Star Frontiersman #8](#) with their personal solutions to the Gorlian question. Also special thanks is due to the members of the Star Frontiers community that participated in a very lively discussion on the forum thread at <http://www.starfrontiers.us/node/8309>: (in order of posting) Ascent, Iggy, Shadow Shack, Malcadon, rattraveller, Jaxon, Terl Obar, and Stormcrow.

Thirty years ago when I first opened the expanded game booklet to the Star Frontiers RPG rules I started reading through it from page 3. On page 4 there was an example of using the Personality ability score:

“Dreevale the Vrusk has just insulted a Gorlian thug by accidentally spilling a drink on him. The Gorlian is very mad. Dreevale decides to try talking his way out of the situation. ‘Oops, pardon me, my good fellow, how absolutely clumsy of me,’ the player says. ‘Here, let me buy you a drink and let’s forget about it.’ Dreevale’s Personality score is 40. The referee notes that the Gorlian is mad and wet and itching for a fight. He tells Dreevale to subtract 20 from his score. Dreevale rolls 91, which is greater than his modified score of 20. The Gorlian punches Dreevale.”

Since I was only on the second page of the rules I noted that there was something called a Gorlian in the setting and moved on as everything was new and I was trying to absorb the rules. In the effort to master the rules I guess I forgot about the Gorlians. Since ability checks are easy to perform once you’ve learned the rule I never had an occasion to turn back to page 4 of the rule book to consult the examples for performing ability checks. For me the Gorlians became a forgotten aspect of the Star Frontiers setting.

Fast forward to 2007 when I began to reconnect with the Star Frontiers game and reread the rules with fresh eyes. I already had a depth of familiarity with the rule set and suddenly the word Gorlian jumped off the page as my curiosity pondered, “Who are the Gorlians?” I fully recognize that we only have the “Gorlians” because the writer of the rules example pulled a name out of the air for his example, however, it still leaves us with an unanswered question. The Gorlians were simply one of those sandbox details that individual referees must find a solution for.

In 2008 the Star Frontiersman fanzine already had a fan submission for a player character race called the Gorlians. However in the same issue another submitter had made the Gorlians a Yazirian clan from the planet Hentz. I’ve like and used both ideas over the years but these are not the only solutions to who the Gorlians are.

A SAPIENT SPECIES

The Gorlians as a sapient species existing within the setting could be either a non-player character or a player character option. One would not even have to use the fan submission in Star Frontiersman #8 if you had an itch to create your own alien race.

One of the challenges to doing this is that some thought should be put into how they became a part of the setting. What is their history, where did they come from, what is their home planet like are all details that tend to be overlooked as was the case for the Gorlian race submission in Star Frontiersman #8. I like to have these details as a game referee though other referees might not care due to a more free-wheeling style of play. For me if a species exists in the setting then it should really exist in the setting with a home planet, home environment and so on. Now I realize this is not actually true for the core four PC species that are all described as travelling to the Frontier from elsewhere and this could be the story for the Gorlians as well but that detail should be decided upon before introducing them to the setting.

The biggest pro for introducing a new species to the setting is also the biggest con: you’ve introduced a new species to the setting. If you desire is a more “Star War creature cantina” style of setting then by all means you should introduce a new species. However, the Star Frontiers setting is focused on a narrow area of the galaxy that is not even big enough to be called 1% of the galaxy and yet there are a plethora of sapient species that have evolved in this narrow little area plus the immigrant species from the core four. It’s a bit illogical but this could be ignored as it really depends on the style of play a referee likes and that of his group.

A YAZIRIAN CLAN

The Gorlian thug, as presented in the rule example, is very much like the general presentation of yazirians in the Endless quest books and some of the modules. Making the Gorlian a yazirian clan noted for thuggish behavior is a rather simple and elegant solution. It gives you a ready

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to hand foil to challenge the player characters with when you need a “random encounter” and the players won’t think much of the encounter because thuggish behavior is expected from Gorlians.

The writer of the Yazirian Clans article in SFman #8 added in an element of anti-establishment to his Gorlians in that this clan feuds with the clan controlling the Family of One, which is a dominant power structure in yazirian society. The Gorlia clan from Hentz is a simple and creative solution that is easy to implement into a campaign. It’s not guaranteed that the Gorlians will be opposition to the player characters though they could be.

A CADRE OF THUGS

Cadres were introduced into the setting with Knight Hawks but were developed into greater depth in Zebulon’s Guide. They may or may not be a criminal organization. For example, the Brotherhood of Spacers is not a criminal cadre but the Silver Death Cult is.

Gorlians as a gang or cadre are ideal for driving action in a campaign. They will have an agenda that may pit them against the player characters. Being known as “thugs” means the referee can use them to violate the rules of polite society that another being would not be so quick to do. Since it’s a gang like affiliation they can be from any species and the referee is not limited to yazirians. If the player character’s group bests one group of Gorlian thugs they may develop a reputation with Gorlian thugs in general and any chance encounter with a Gorlian could mean trouble at any point in the future.

The benefits of using Gorlians as a cadre are that cadres already exist in the setting, a cadre can be a source of driving action, and it’s almost guaranteed that they will be opposition for the player characters.

AN ENGINEERED RACE

There are many examples of biological engineering of sapient species within the setting. The eorna purposely engineered no less than 3 primitive sapient species in less than 1000 years and accidentally created a fourth. Another example is the “sapes” from the Bugs in the System module which were engineered by Renouf Associates of Hakosoar and have seen limited testing at corporate owned facilities. Other corporate labs might have been trying to compete with Renouf Associates using lokkuku (Mission to Alcazzar) or wypong stock (native to Lossend) to create a large strong gorilla like menial laborer or potential cannon fodder soldier.

This would be a simplified version of the sapient species listed above with their point of origin being a corporate lab. The engineered species is also a popular theme in science fiction and could become a major campaign element for a referee. The gorlians proved tough to control and thus many have walked off the job and

become “thugs” living in the lowest echelons of society. Shades of the classic sci fi movie “Blade Runner” come to mind with an obvious plot hook being the hunting down of a Gorlian by the player characters. The Gorlians become a tough opponent for the player characters and the referee can play with value of life and genetic engineering issues in his campaign.



A WORD OF YAZIRIAN ORIGIN

It’s been suggested in the discussion boards that gorlian is derived from the Gruna Garu system which is actually spelled Gruna Goru in the astro catalog (list) in the Alpha Dawn book but is spelled Gruna Garu on the accompanying map as well as in the astro catalog and map from Zebulon’s Guide. This solution posits that Gorlian is derived from Goru and simply refers to something that originates in the Gruna Goru system like Gorlian beer, Gorlian entertainment or Gorlian thugs.

The planet Hargut in this system has a heavy population and resource based economy which we can presume to be mining. With large urban zones and a tough hard industry like mining being a major sector of the economy we can imagine that the thug culture from this system would be something that would become quite stereotypical in the Frontier at large possibly promoted through holo-vids. The downside is that these thugs are going to be largely limited to the Gruna Goru system and are not likely to drive action for the referee game unless it’s based on Hargut.

A WORD OF HUMAN ORIGIN

It’s also been suggested in the discussion boards that Gorlian could be a corruption of the human word gorilla. In this scenario it had become popular to describe someone that was big, hulking, ill-tempered and possibly hairy as a gorilla or gorillian. Yazirians are taller than humans, hairy, with stereotypical grumpy dispositions and

most importantly have a superficial resemblance to a monkey. Thus it's not a stretch to think that the word gorilla or gorillian came to be used as slang. When the Pan Gal trade language was developed the word became corrupted to gorlian when it was brought into Pan Gal as a loan word from humanity's native tongue. The linguists that worked on the lexicon was sensitive to the use of racial epithets and sanitized the definition to mean big, hulking or ill-tempered and dropped references to yazirians and monkeys altogether. This definition has stuck and Frontier wide the word Gorlian is used as a general adjective.

THE BLENDED SOLUTION

In the real world a word like gorilla has 3 different meanings; a powerfully built ape, a powerfully built aggressive looking man, and a dominant contender within a particular sphere of operation; so why can't Gorlian also have multiple meanings in the Pan Gal trade language?

It is possible for Gorlian to coincidentally be both a human and yazirian loan word to Pan Gal representing two different meanings for this word. In fact the human word may have reinforced the stereotype of a Gorlian thug from Hargut. A corporate lab may experimented with an engineered species and officially labelled it Specimen XL35987 but a slang working name for it was Gorlian which was impart derived from the Pan Gal word borrowed from humanity. At the same time there still could be a clan of yazirians from Hentz called the Gorlia clan which would not be unusual since Gor would be a root word in the yazirian language.

To date we have 6 suggested solutions for who or what the Gorlians are and I, personally, like all of them to one extant or another. It would be easy enough to use up to 4 of the solutions simultaneously. Ultimately it's up to each referee to choose the solution that fits his game and campaign the best. For myself I'll be using all of the word origin solutions and the yazirian clan solution automatically and reserving the race and cadre solutions as potential campaign elements to be implemented at need. The sapient race solution would work well with an exploration style campaign, the cadre solution would work well in a pulp adventure style campaign, and the engineered species would work well in a corporate intrigue style of campaign. Thus the final choice on those three options would depend on the campaign I was planning to run.

THE POPULARITY POLL

A poll was run at <http://www.starfrontiers.us/> to determine the most popular solution within the Star Frontiers community. The results were as follows:

- **16.6%** - A Yazirian clan
- **16.6%** - A playable race
- **16.6%** - A cadre of thugs
- **50%** - A mistranslation of Garu (Guna Garu) resulting in a cultural stereotype referring to things from Guna Garu

The voting was somewhat sparse but the most popular interpretation was the mistranslation.

FE



NO PASSPORT FOR GIGGLES

Eric Winsor

Tik pressed me into writing this issue's column to document a dangerous creature of the frontier that caused us quite a bit of sorrow recently. Dwain and I got invited to be guests on the pilot of a holo-vid show that some colleagues of ours are pitching to StarPlay. The premise of the show is mysteries of the Frontier revealed. Since the founding of Terledrom there have been stories of unsuspecting vrusk and dralasites being eaten by a horrific beast that lurks in the dark tunnels of the ancient volcanic caverns of Terledrom's northern hemisphere. These caverns are cold, wet, and remote. Hence most vrusk and dralasites avoid them. However those adventurous few seem to pop up every few years to go explore the caverns. Then someone gets eaten and a lone survivor returns to renew the tales of horror.

Dwain and I made the trip to Terledrom along with a sape new to our foundation to put a human and yazirian perspective to these tales. This little adventure cost us dearly and I feel duty bound to follow Tik's advice and report the events that transpired.

A LITTLE HISTORY

First I should give our readers a little history about the Ravenous Cave Creatures of Terledrom as the locals call them. The first tale we could find in our research is of a vrusk prospector who went north in the early days of the colonization of Terledrom.

T-Fzz K'st and his partner Deu Ma were early Terledrom prospectors that combed the planetary survey data logs for mineral claims to sell to the then up and coming mining corporations. Satellite scans and aerial surveys had provided clues of a rich deposit of radioactives. The prospector took an aircar to the safe landing location closest to the deposit and hiked in to do detailed scans for his claim. Two days later he radioed to his partner a coded message that he had found a rich deposit of fuel grade plutonium. He logged the location in his geoscanner and set off on the hike back to his aircar. A storm arose on the second day of the hike back to the aircar and T-Fzz took shelter in some volcanic caves for warmth and to stay dry. He radioed Deu Ma and told him he expected to be holed up for a few days.

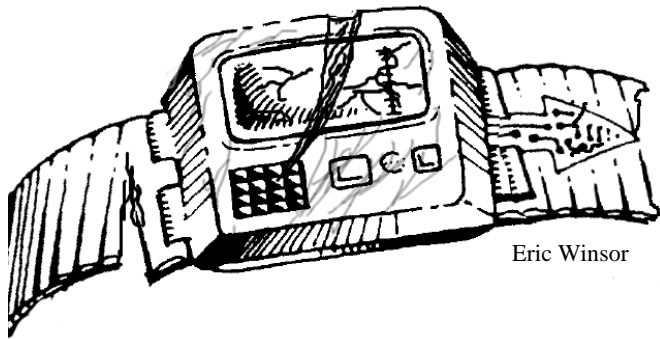
Three days went by and the storm cleared, but there was no contact from T-Fzz. Deu Ma waited two more days for a message or T-Fzz to arrive, then he located T-Fzz's aircar in a satellite image. The vehicle was still in the

same location it had been the previous time the satellite had orbited over the site the day before the storm. Deu Ma contacted the colonial rangers and flew out to the site with a vrusk ranger named Z-St V'th. They found the aircar still sealed and set off into the wilderness to the radio location coordinates from T-Fzz's last message. The two searched many volcanic caves and lava tubes for three days. They found T-Fzz's rucksack torn open and the contents scattered in one lava tube on the second day but no other signs. Additional rangers and search personnel were called in and they eventually found shattered exoskeleton pieces in an excrement pile deep in a volcanic cave 2 km east of the radio signal location. DNA testing and forensics revealed the exoskeleton pieces to be from the head and abdomen of T-Fzz. Testing of the excrement could not reveal any known Terledrom creature.

Deu Ma spent the remainder of his life searching for the missing geoscanner in hopes of finding the plutonium claim and clues of T-Fzz's demise. Several years after the loss of T-Fzz, Deu Ma wandered out of the northern wild into a ranger station with the battered chronocom of T-Fzz. He had slaved its memory to another chronocom and retrieved a last frantic distress call from T-Fzz that had never been able to send before the chronocom was damaged and the power cut to the system circuits.

T-Fzz had taken shelter in a volcanic cave which prevented his chronocom from connecting to the planetary net. At 0317 on the second day of the storm T-Fzz activated his chronocom for a distress message. The chronocom recorded seven minutes of the ordeal that was the end of T-Fzz's life. The recording begins with T-Fzz screaming, "Help! Help! Something grabbed me by the leg while I was sleeping!" There are sounds of gun fire from T-Fzz's side arm, then a shriek of agony from T-Fzz. Moments later T-Fzz stops shrieking and the sound of labored running can be heard from T-Fzz and a low growling sound.

T-Fzz then is heard chattering wildly that, "it ate my legs, it ate my legs," interspersed with cries and shrieks. There is the sound of rummaging from T-Fzz tearing through his rucksack. His medical scanner can be heard activating and instructing him to use chitin seal on the open wounds of his legs and warning him of the danger of bleeding out. Then there is a continuous sound of gun fire as T-Fzz fires and reloads several times. When the gun fire ceases, T-



Eric Winsor

Fzz is heard saying “No, No, No” over and over again as his exoskeleton is heard snapping and crunching in some unknown beast’s mouth. There is one final gurgling sound from T-Fzz and the remaining time of the recording is of the beast crunching away at T-Fzz’s body with a final metallic sound of what must have been the chronocom being eaten. The chronocom has a deep tooth mark which likely came from that moment that severed the device’s power.

Deu Ma entered the data in the ranger database as evidence of a dangerous Terledrom creature and vowed to discover and kill the beast. Over the next several years many northern settlement records show Deu Ma purchasing supplies, weapons, and ammunition in his hunt for the Ravenous Cave Creature as Deu Ma called it. Then Deu Ma stops showing up. It is presumed that Deu Ma found the ravenous cave creature and lost his life too. However some say that Deu Ma found T-Fzz’s geoscanner and sold the claim to Terledrom Mining Northern Territory and retired a wealthy dral.

Terledrom Mining Northern Territory did set up a rich plutonium mine shortly after Deu Ma disappeared. They enforce a strict company policy of no personnel outside of the mine perimeter. Over the years many miners have claimed to see a large ravenous beast with a maw full of teeth surrounded by tendrils. There have been several disappearances of miners outside the perimeter with no evidence. The miners blame the ravenous cave creatures.

HUNTING MYTHS

We meet up with the holoivid crew at our hotel in Sengsen. They introduced us to a young vrusk corporate accountant who had until recently been an avid member of the Vrusk Cave Exploration Society of Terledrom. He had decided with two friends to explore the volcanic caves of the north and find out if the ravenous cave creatures were real. We cannot release the name of this young vrusk as he is under investigation about the disappearance of his two friends. His company has put him on suspension and he is barred from travel off world and has a tracer implant. He wanted to go back and find the beast to exonerate himself. The producers felt this plot twist to myth exposé would make the pilot episode sell well to StarPlay. They may sell their holoivid series

but the cost has been dear and the JHF is saddened to have been involved.

We flew north the following morning with a camera woman, a director, the vrusk guide, his lawyer, and a police detective. Dwain and I brought Guph, a sape that we brought on with the Foundation to work with animals when robots are not appropriate. I am a fan of sapes as replacements to robot servants which can be treated as equals. They are simple minded but have the capacity for love and devotion that robots do not.

The expedition started with a day-long hike into a volcanic cavern retracing the route the young vrusk had taken with his companions. That night we camped in the cave with a sensor net activated to warn us of any perimeter breaches. The next day we reached the location of the attack and stopped to make a proper examination of the crime scene. The detective, Dwain, and I conducted a thorough examination of the scene and easily determined that there had been a conflict. There was dried vrusk blood and fluids, and the gear of the two missing vrusk cavers. Nothing conclusively implicated an animal or creature to the incident. Nor did anything exonerate the young vrusk. What was distinctly lacking were bodies or any remains beyond the dried blood. The detective started thinking of the case as a potential homicide and not just missing persons. The lawyer began hampering the communication of our young vrusk guide by making him speak only through him.

That afternoon Guph wandered off into the darkness while we were cleaning up from documenting the scene of the attack. Dwain was the first to notice that he was gone. We hurriedly stowed our gear and elected to break into two search pairs with Dwain pressing back along the path we had taken and I going forward. The holoivid director went with me and the camerawoman went with Dwain. The young vrusk, the detective, and the lawyer stayed at the attack site and set up the sensor net. We remained in direct link via chronocom as far as the signals would allow, in the confines of the cave environment. The attack site party set their chronocoms to relay our signals which effectively doubled our limited range.

The way forward was impaired by a few sections of bouldering to get over rocks that had fallen from the volcanic ceiling. The rocks were sharp and hard to climb over while protecting our hands, knees, and elbows. After an hour we began to suspect that Guph would not have bothered with traveling this way and suspected that he had gone back. Our chronocom communication was getting marginal so I halted our explorations as Dwain and I discussed turning back to search for Guph. The detective joined the discussion in support of turning back with the evidence in hand. At that point the lawyer joined in and vigorously argued that the expedition must press forward for the sake of his client. An argument ensued between the two and the director and camerawoman started

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pressing Dwain and I to return as quickly as possible to the attack site so that they could cover the argument. I was forced to whistle into the chronocom very loudly to regain control of the communication channel. That whistle was answered by a growl from ahead of us in the darkness. I stopped all communication by announcing that something was growling and had started toward us in the dark. The director started retreating back down the passage. I held my ground and readied to set my flash light to full luminance at the last moment in hopes of blinding the creature.

Suddenly the growling stopped. I dropped to a crouch. The director was now far down the passage making his way back to the attack site. I unclipped the latch on my side arm's holster. I could hear something crawling forward and sniffing as it went. The creature stopped moving behind the boulder I was crouched behind and waited. Then there was a barely perceptible sape growl. I spoke softly, "Guph?" and switched on my light to low beam. Guph stood up slowly from behind the rock with a distinct look of worry and fear on his face. I calmed him and encouraged him to approach me. He reached out to me and presented me the severed hand of a vrusk.

I called back to the team that I had found Guph. I explained that Guph had been growling at us. I explained that he had found vrusk remains and was very frightened by something. We agreed to return to the attack site and regroup. The director called that he could see the light of the attack site lanterns and was almost there. Dwain and the camerawoman called that they were turning back as well. We all relaxed a bit until fifteen minutes later when Dwain called in a very cautious voice.

"Jurak! There is something following us and it is very big. We are picking up the pace to get to you as quickly as possible but it is matching our movement."

I called back that we understood the message and instructed the attack site team to open my bag and retrieve the tangler grenades I had stowed in the bottom pouch. I instructed them to snare the creature following Dwain and to use as many as they liked.

Dwain and the camerawoman were nearly running as they reached a boulder they had to climb over. Dwain helped the camerawoman climb over first and then scrambled over the top. When he got to the other side he found the camerawoman setup with her camera ready to record. Dwain could smell a putrid reek close behind him and jumped down from the boulder just as a slimy tendrill whipped across his leg and adhered to his boot. He started to run but the tendrill tripped him to the ground. The camerawoman turned on her flood light and started recording. Dwain rolled onto his back and pulled out his pistol, firing one shot at the beast as it clambered over the boulder. The bullet stuck and the beast jerked, flipping Dwain forward and landing him hard on his back. His

gun dropped from his hand. Dwain grabbed his chronocom and yelled, "Jurak! Help!"

Dwain's cry for help startled the camerawoman and she dropped her camera to the ground and began firing her blaster wildly. She called on her chronocom, "It's big! Come help fast! It's gonna eat Dwain!"

The detective called back, "I'm on my way!" grabbed my pack of tanglers and bolted up the passage. I ran into the director in the dark, grabbed him by the arm and ran him forward as I called, "I'm coming Dwain! Fight like mad!" The sape followed my lead and bolted ahead of us.

Dwain crawled frantically on the ground trying to reach his pistol as the camerawoman fired everywhere. The creature kept advancing, pulling Dwain closer as he gained ground centimeter by centimeter towards his pistol. Then the creature stopped moving forward and began pulling Dwain into its gaping maw. Dwain pulled his knife, rolled to a sitting position and began slashing at the tendrill attached to his boot while he dodged the other tendrills. The tendrill was sticky yet slippery to his blade the few times it made contact. He quickly came to the conclusion that he was not going to be able to cut his way



Dwain Ensnared – from My Day with Giggles the Destroyer by [Jason A. Davis](#)

free and likely to lose his blade by getting it stuck to the tendril. He turned the blade up and cut the laces of his boot and jerked his foot free.

Dwain scrambled forward snatching up his pistol as he got to his feet. He got back to the camerawoman and began firing at the beast as he pulled the camerawoman backward in a fighting retreat. The beast continued advancing towards them blocking the entire tunnel forcing them to continue their retreat. Several minutes later Dwain and the camerawoman had exhausted their ammunition and were continuing their retreat, throwing rocks, when the detective reached them. The detective stopped shocked by the scene. His mandibles chattered as he composed himself. Then he pulled the pin on the tangler grenade in his hand and chucked it into the gaping maw. The casing erupted releasing its gooey threads all over the beast's successive rings of teeth in a violent burst. The beast reeled back and coughed. The tangler threads began to harden, constricting the movement of the massive maw. Then the beast spat and the threads began to quickly dissolve.

The detective cursed and began throwing grenades repeatedly all over the beast. Dwain and the camerawoman joined in until they had emptied my pack. The beast was thoroughly entangled but kept spitting. All the threads around its mouth dissolved away. Its legs were held fast to the cavern floor and the advance of the beast was checked. The camerawoman resumed active recording of the creature. Dwain called back that he was safe for the moment but that he didn't think tanglers would hold this beast long. The detective kept his side arm trained on the beast.

We hurried back to the attack site and found the young vrusk and his lawyer. They would not come with me until I mentioned that there was no proof that there was only one ravenous cave beast and another might come along while we were gone. I impressed upon them it was better to stay together and finish this business as quickly as possible. They followed us very reluctantly.

We rushed up the tunnels to Dwain and found the three nervously awaiting the creature's inevitable escape from the dwindling tangler threads. Dwain and I quickly began debating how to restrain this beast for transport. Dwain quickly informed me that the beast's saliva seemed to dissolve tangler threads rather efficiently and that he felt it was only a matter of time before it discovered that it could spit on the tangler threads holding its feet and free itself. We resolved to try to put it to sleep with doze darts. I readied my needler rifle and fired two darts into its mouth as Dwain began scanning with a medical scanner to try and determine if the doze was having any effect.

Several minutes went by and Dwain could find no signs that the doze was having any effect. The beast kept pulling at its entangled feet breaking more and more

threads. Time was running out. Dwain barked, "Give giggles there more." And I pumped five more rounds into the beast. Three more than I would normally do with an unknown creature this size, but we were all pretty tense. The darts struck various locations along the creature's flank. I was hoping to find more susceptible tissue for the drug to enter the creature's system. One dart struck close under the leg and as the creature struggled, it closed its leg down upon the dart forcing it deeper into its flesh. The beast jerked and growled, ripping its leg free.

Time was up. The beast was jerking and fighting wildly. The natural instincts of fight or flight were kicking in. This appeared to be the first time any attack had seriously inflicted pain on the creature, despite the many bullet wounds to its mouth. I looked to Dwain and he shook his head, the doze was not working fast enough. I rummaged through my pack and pulled out a doze grenade. We did not have good ventilation and the grenade would likely catch us to. I hesitated. The lawyer saw me hesitating and urged me to throw it. I countered that I didn't think it would be safe. He shot back that there was no time and snatched the grenade from hand, pulled the pin and threw it. All I could think to do was yell, "RUN!"

We all ran, but the poor dral lawyer was not fast enough. The expanding cloud of doze overtook him and he collapsed into unconsciousness. Unfortunately one doze grenade was not enough to stay the beast, it slowed its motions for a minute then renewed its struggle and pulled its other fore leg free allowing it to turn about and inspect its bonds. It began spitting on its legs. The tangler



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threads began dissolving.

The beast began pulling free and Guph recognized the peril the unconscious dral was in. Guph rushed into the doze cloud and began pushing the lawyer toward us. One tendril reached out and caught Guph around the neck. Guph struggled forward pushing the dral. Then another grabbed him around the leg and Guph went down. Guph was pulled into the beast's mouth and the chewing began. That's when I saw Dwain rush forward with a grenade in his hand. "Goodbye Giggles!" he shouted as he threw it into the creature's mouth. Then there was a blinding flash of light and fire. The incendiary grenade ignited the ravenous cave creature as well as Guph and it spat Guph out in response. Dwain followed the first grenade with another then he jumped on top of Guph and held him down. There was a deafening bang and the fragmentation grenade ripped mouth parts from the creature and splattered them all over the cave. Dwain began frantically patting and smothering Guph's burning fur. Behind him the ravenous cave creature withered about in pain as it began to bleed out. The detective and director rushed in to pull the lawyer to safety as the young vrusk and I carried Guph and Dwain away. It took an hour for the beast to die.

GOODBYE GUPH

We treated Guph's wounds as the ravenous cave creature died. His left arm was eaten away and his back and left side were deeply lacerated. The burns from the incendiary grenade had burned away much of his fur and caused 3rd degree burns over much of his body. We bandaged Guph as best we could and shot him full of Staydose. We carried him out of the caves on a make-shift stretcher while the young vrusk and the detective ran ahead to retrieve the aircar to evac Guph. Guph survived the incident but not the flight back to a hospital. Dwain and I regretted not having Tik along as we usually do.

I asked Dwain how he happened to have a fragmentation grenade and incendiary grenade with him. Dwain responded that Tik had made him promise to take them as a precaution if they would not take him along. Tik, we are sorry we did not take you along and we will never leave you home again.

-Jurak

P.S. We forgive you for shipping us storage class to Osaka.

Readers wishing Jurak Hangna to investigate a creature of the Frontier need only submit a picture and any details of the creature via FrontierExplorer.org. Submitters must have rights and permission to submit all artwork.

Ravenous Cave Creature of Terledrom (Giggles the Destroyer)	
TYPE:	Carnivore
SIZE:	Large : 20cm
NUMBER:	1 to 5
MOVE:	Fast : 80 m/t for 3 combat rounds then medium (55 m/t) after that
IM/RS:	+5/50
STAMINA:	125-150
ATTACK:	65
DAMAGE:	2d10
SPECIAL ATTACK:	Tendrils Grab (with half strength tangler fluid)
SPECIAL DEFENSE:	Spits half strength solvaway which it can use against commercial tangler threads. Buries itself in mud and brush and becomes immune to IR detection as well as counts as camouflaged.
NATIVE WORLD:	Terledrom

GM NOTES

Fact: The saliva on the creature's tendrils is a mucus that helps in grabbing its victims. Vrusk scientist studying this creature developed the tangler grenade from this very compound. The creature's existence has been kept as a Terledrom government secret since the colonization of Terledrom to protect the formulas for tangler and solvaway. The Myth exposure holoivid series never launches as the Terledrom government confiscated all recording data from the expedition.

The creature also has a gland that secretes a solution that lets it dissolve its natural tangler mucus and tangler threads. PCs can harvest this provided they have a specimen container to keep it fresh. This will act as 1/2 strength solvaway.

The creature has no nerves inside its mouth so it will not react to wounds inflicted inside its mouth. Damage rolls to the mouth are normal.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Jurak Hangna article titled, "Gorilian Carnivorous Wom" in Frontier Explorer issue 3 mistakenly used the spelling gorilian throughout the article. The proper spelling is gorlian. Jurak, Dwain, and Tik wish to apologize to any gorlian's out there who may have taken offence. The error was purely accidental and not intentional.

FE

THE FRONTIERS OF HORROR

Tom Verreault

RUNNING A HORROR SCIENCE FICTION RPG ADVENTURE

With classic movies like *Alien* and *Predator*, horror has been a cornerstone of science fiction. The nature of role playing games skews the majority of adventures toward action adventures yet a horror themed adventure could be a nice change of pace. The question is how to run one?

ELEMENTS OF HORROR

A referee must understand and employ the elements of horror to run a horror adventure. In the following sections, these elements are reviewed and practical suggestions are made for including them in a game session.

FEAR, SURPRISE AND SUSPENSE

Fear and horror go hand in hand. Audiences and readers of horror stories experience fear because they can identify with the characters in the story or with the fears experienced by those characters. However, the player

characters only have emotion if the role-player portrays it. If the player begins to understand that there is real jeopardy for his character and that bad things can and will happen that he may not be able to do anything about the player may begin to experience and play that fear.

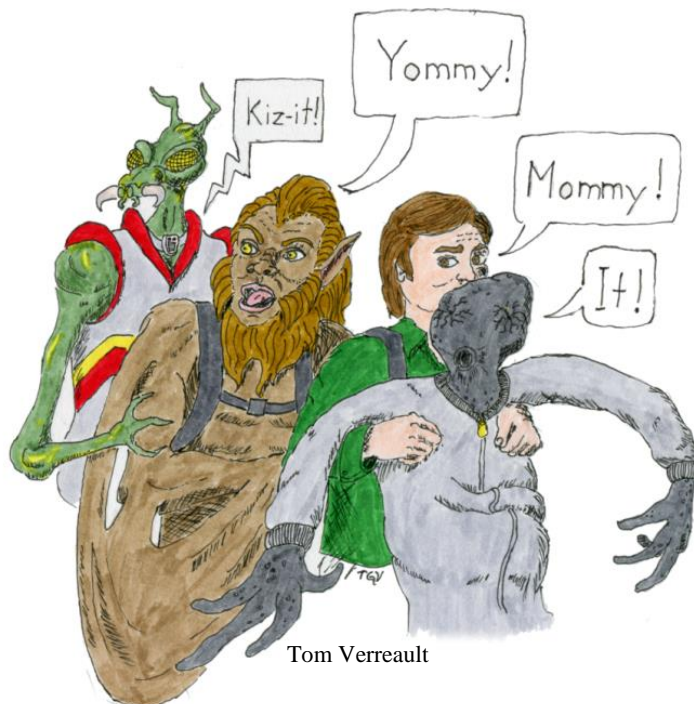
Surprise is about turning the expected on its head. Many horror stories save the monster as part of the surprise and there isn't a big reveal of the monster till the end. In order to simulate this in an RPG, the referee needs to not reveal hard details of the monster's game stats to the players until the end. He can describe the monster but not actually name it.

Suspense is simply waiting for something to happen. Suspense develops as characters wait for something to happen.

Pop-out surprises – something jumping out at the characters in a horror drama can shock and surprise. Not all pop outs need to be harmful. An early series of pop-outs can be relatively harmless to prepare the characters for a harmful pop out to be unexpectedly harmful. A referee should guard against over use as that leads to desensitization.

In most role playing games players debate moves and decide on a course of action. There is a convention of giving everyone a say and group brainstorming. To a certain degree there is unlimited time to do this. However, characters in a horror story rarely have that much time to deal with the source of their fears, they are often reacting not initiating action.

The conventions of a role playing game should be adapted to force the players to react and potentially experience fear, surprise, and suspense in the game. The referee can artificially deprive the players of their luxury of "unlimited planning" by having a timeline of events with bad things keyed to times and places in the adventure. In addition he should keep a timer (kitchen timer or smart phone) that dings every 10, 15, or 20 minutes and when this happens game time advances one ten minute turn. In this way the players are forced to make a quick decisions and go with it and not try to work out the most optimal plan. This technique was used in the *Space Hulk* board game to ratchet up tension for the space marine player leaving him



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only 3 minutes to make all his moves while the tyrannid player had all the time he wanted. It's also employed in theater; simply placing a clock on stage creates tension in the audience. What the players will quickly realize is that time is running out and they don't know if something bad is about to happen according to the referee's timeline. While it might not actually induce true fear it will create tension and possibly dread of the timer.

MYSTERY

Mysteries are an expected part of horror and support suspense and surprise. In the movie Sixth Sense, the mystery revealed at the end was shocking in its revelation. Including a mystery to be solved can give direction to the adventure for the players and enhance the surprise and suspense factors of the adventure. Having a goal like solving a mystery gives structure and direction preventing the adventure from languishing.

GORE

The visual nature of movies has brought about a change in the expectations of horror fans. A survey of undergraduates by a professor showed that they expected some gore in a good horror story. The good news here is that RPGs lend themselves to this since one major component of RPG rules is combat and by extension killing things.

Tastes may vary but less is probably more when it comes to gore. A referee should focus on having more descriptive narrative that paints the visual picture in the imaginations of his players. The gore in Alien is surprisingly limited to one scene, the chest burster. It's shocking despite being foreshadowed and it's rather tame compared to latter slasher films but it is one of the most horrific moments of the movie.

ARCHETYPE CHARACTERS IN HORROR

Horror movies have become somewhat formulaic in that there are now recognized archetypes for the protagonist: the jock, the cheerleader, the nerd/stoner, the minority, the nice guy, and the last girl. Each serves a role in the story with some of them being the person that the audience is actually rooting for the monster to kill. Most often it's the jock or the cheerleader because they have picked on the nerd/stoner or simply been arrogant or slutty.

RPG's are about the players who supply their own characters and the players will clearly be rooting for their character to survive which actually casts them in the role of nice guy, nerd, or last girl. RPGs are replete with non-player characters who are sometimes throw away characters you expect to die. In Aliens the one character we really loved seeing get it was the corporate exec because he was such a jerk and tried to kill characters we really cared about. Many sci-fi settings embrace the idea of a powerful mega corporation as a force of greed and sometimes evil. Science fiction horror should embrace the archetype of the corporate exec; they guy everyone at the table is rooting for the monster to kill.

THE SPOILER

Another modern development in horror story telling is the spoiler. At some point in the beginning of the story the audience learns something about a character's fears which plays into the story latter. We like knowing secrets and this convention has become part of the genre.

One way to do this in a game session is to use the vignette from D&D 4th edition. At the start of the adventure the referee gives the players each a NPC with goals and agenda and sets the scene. The players adopt that NPC as a character for a 15 minute scene and attempt to obtain their goal. This is less about stats and game mechanics and more about the drama between the characters. A scene very much like the one from Aliens works for this: some of the crew are potentially infected with an alien agent and they are not being let onto the ship, these crew want back on the ship badly, the captain is adamant that they cannot be let on and the android doctor has a secret directive to preserve samples of alien life even at the expense of the human crew so he wants to let them on. The scene would play out and the monster ends up killing all of them. The actual game begins when the PCs begin investigating the derelict ship. The players know something about what happened but the mystery of the monster is still intact.

The vignette could alternately be a scene from a corporate meeting with the corporate executive mentioned in archetypes. Nobody is going to die in this vignette but a decision will be made by the participants that will affect

the coming adventure. Include enough parties with varied agendas and let the players role-play the scene. The decision reached becomes the corporate policy governing its reaction to what is about to happen in the adventure.

PACING AND MULTIPLE GAME SESSIONS

A horror story that can be played out in one game session is going to be fairly simple. One that takes multiple sessions will suffer from breaks in the tension that spoils the hard work of the referee creating tension in his players. Breaks in the game are going to happen. A referee can look for a natural moment of tension release to end a session like comic relief. Inevitably there are moments in any RPG session when funny things are said or happen, much like those moments of comic relief in a movie. Watch for these and use them. Alternately, the referee can end the session on a cliff hanger, leaving the tension high till the next session. What is important here is to leave the anxiety level high so that the players are worrying and thinking about what will happen to their character till the next session.

MONSTER ARCHETYPES

The **Remorseless Killer** is your Frankenstein monster, a malignant demon, or mindless killer. Sometimes serial killers fit this archetype.

The **Predatory Killer** is your vampire, hunter, parasite, possessing demon, or body snatcher. His goal is to prey on his victims.

The **Changeling** or **Shape-shifting Killer** is your werewolf, Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde, and some serial killers. What is important is to portray a radical change between the two personas. Commonly this is done by giving the good/social personal a very mild manner than making the killer persona extremely monstrous for a stark contrast.

The **Unkillable Killer** is your ghost, avenging spirit, and unstoppable force. It desires vengeance or redemption but it is implacable in the pursuit of its goals.

WHO DIES AND THE TAKE BACK

In horror stories the protagonists die and yet killing off PCs in a RPG session puts players out of the game. The question is how to run a game where killing and death are prevalent and yet not spoil the fun for the players.



Scott Mulder
SRM 2014

In movie making they have a convention called the take back where it looks to the audience that someone has died but somehow they survive. It's used to heighten the impact of the next death. Audiences instinctively know that once one character they care about has been taken back from the brink of death the next time is for real. Role playing games incorporate plenty of mechanisms for take backs: in fantasy games it is healing spells and potions, but in sci-fi it is technology based. These methods can be used to do take backs in game but at some point someone is going to die otherwise there is no real jeopardy.

Since most players don't care if a NPC gets killed, a referee can change this by letting the players create an NPC. Someone that is connected to the player's PC in some way; friend or family. Part of the PC's mission might involve ensuring that this NPC survives with success meaning a bonus in game money or experience points.

LAST THOUGHTS

Ultimately a decision will need to be made over the focus of the game. What is more important: horror or adventure? If the answer is horror then dead PCs should be expected and perhaps even a total party kill. If the focus is adventure then the referee will need to walk a fine line to avoid too many PC deaths in a story genre that is supposed to kill protagonists. However, players that do foolish things, like going alone into "the creepy basement," should suffer consequences.

Adventure

IN THE SHADOW OF THE PRODIGAL SUN

Tom Verreault

Overdue for years and presumed lost with all hands, the Prodigal Sun has been sighted drifting in the outer reaches of a star system. A team is being dropped off to recover and salvage her. What mysteries does she hold and will they survive the experience or will the Prodigal Sun take them down to Perdition?

RULE SYSTEM AND SETTING

The Star Frontiers rules and setting are the default for this adventure but it should prove easily adaptable to other rule systems and settings. The Alpha Dawn and the Knight Hawks rules are required for this adventure but it is intended to play out as an Alpha Dawn adventure with no actual ship to ship combat.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Prodigal Sun is an armed privateer commissioned by the Streel Corporation toward the end of the corporate war on Laco. However, it never participated in that conflict and was repurposed from an armed troop carrier to a heavy exploration scout. Responsible for discovery of the New Streel system, the crew scouted new resources for Streel Corporation for eight years before going missing in the vicinity of Zebulon and Scree Fron.

SETTING UP THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure is designed to be a horror adventure but could be played out as an action adventure typical of most other Star Frontiers modules. If the referee is going to emphasize the horror themes of the module he should be familiar with the previous article, "The Frontiers of Horror," which gives advice on running a horror adventure in a science fiction setting. The adventure will work well enough in either genre.

The premise is simple, a drifting hulk is to be recovered or salvaged. The player characters are to be the team doing this. They can be in the employ of Streel Corp, a rival mega corporation, Space Fleet, a militia, or even private operators - whatever works for the referee's own campaign. Streel Corporation would dearly love to find out what happened to their ship and recover a significant asset, but other corporations would love a chance at finding out what Streel might have discovered with this

ship. A Space Fleet or militia team will be just following orders and a private team would be just looking for the salvage.

The ship will be discovered drifting in the outer reaches of an isolated system. The actual system is not that important and a referee has flexibility in which one. What is important is that the PCs are isolated and outside help is difficult or impossible to obtain. A system like Prenglar which is the hub of the Frontier Sector with major space stations and a large Space Fleet presence would be unsuitable for this purpose. Systems like Dixon's Star, Zebulon, Belnafaer, or even Starmist (after its discovery) would work well. Scree Fron might be a possibility as long as there are no ships in system that can be radioed for help. In fact, if this system is used, the referee might want to have the local star in an unusual phase of solar and ion storms interfering with radio communication.

The Prodigal Sun was spotted by chance by the astrogator of a ship "hot footing" through a system and a query of the hulk's IFF transponder got a low power return. Hot footing is when a ship has no intention of decelerating to and rendezvousing with a planet or station in the system but rather decelerates for half the time it will take to compute its next void jump. The ship then accelerates for the other half of that time interval and makes the jump spending the least amount of time in system. Thus the ship is not going to be available to stop and investigate.

This would normally mean that a salvage ship will have to be dispatched later and hope they could relocate the Prodigal. Fortunately (or unfortunately) a company executive is on board and he's ordered the PC's to attempt to salvage the ship using a shuttle.

When the ship performs turn over to begin accelerating on its outbound trajectory the shuttle will detach with a team and rendezvous with the Prodigal Sun to establish the salvage claim. The ship dropping them off will dispatch another ship to assist them when it reaches the next star system. They can expect this ship in 1-2 weeks at the least but everyone knows it could take longer so the shuttle is being outfitted with provisions for a month. The shuttle has an atomic drive so it will have more than enough fuel to reach the hulk.

Finally, the corporate executive, Lazarus Burk, is coming along to supervise. It's clear he views this as a chance to advance his career.

PLAYER'S BRIEFING

Lazarus Burk, the company exec, stood at the head of the conference room and addressed the team, "The ship's astrogator discovered a drifting hulk while confirming our position after jumping into this system. The captain queried its IFF transponder and the low power response was that of the SCS Prodigal Sun. The Prodigal Sun is a Streel corporation exploration ship that disappeared 12 years ago exploring in the vicinity of the Lesser Morass nebula. There are potential secrets on that boat and we're going to go find out what they are. The Captain cannot stop and must make his schedule so we'll be taking the ship's shuttle and a salvage ship will be dispatched once this ship reaches its destination. It could take two weeks for the salvage ship to get here but we will bring a month worth of supplies."

Players will have their personal equipment and a month worth of water and food loaded onto the atomic powered shuttle. Other appropriate supplies can be requisitioned from the ship as the referee approves.

NOTE: This is the point where the obligatory warning is given to warn players intending to play the adventure that they should stop reading.

NEW SUB SKILLS

For this adventure there are new sub skills that a medic can perform with the aid of his medical scanner.

PRELIMINARY AUTOPSY

Use of this sub-skill will give a cause of death but not a wealth of details. It only takes a few minutes of time with the scanner. Chance of success is automatic.

FULL AUTOPSY

Successful use of this skill will generate details but takes 2-5 hours (1d4+1). A failed skill check only means that one or more details were missed depending on the percentage of failure. For a really bad roll simply tell the player the autopsy is taking longer than expected and require another 2-5 hours and a second skill check with a +20 modifier for the accumulated time.

THE SHIP

The Prodigal Sun is a Red Thunder class privateer (see the [deck plans and write-up in issue 9](#)). The lander module is present and the ship appears intact. The ship is air tight and life support has been dialed down to minimal levels such that the temperature is just a few degrees below zero and the air is very stale. One engine has completely expended its fuel and the other has almost done so as well. Emergency lighting is sporadic and almost nothing has power to operate.

All security doors still have emergency power and their locks will need to be defeated by a technician or the door



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broken into (100+d100 structural points). None of the internal gun mounts have weapons as the gun mounts are a design legacy left over from Laco's War.

The obvious ways to enter the Prodigal Sun would be through the main hatch (deck 3), the probe door hatch (deck 7), a work pod hatch (deck 9), one of the landing module vehicle hatches (landing module deck 2) or the bottom hatch to the landing module (LM deck 2).

DECK 1 SKY BRIDGE

There is nothing of interest here.

DECK 2 BRIDGE

The subspace radio is missing both the tuning buffer and the tachyon alignment module. They have not been destroyed but simply removed. The tuning buffer holds coordinates for the last sub space call and could be a clue to where the ship was when it made that call. The radio could be used without this part but each sub space call will need to be realigned by the astrogator even if calling to the same star system. The tachyon alignment module is crucial for operating the radio and it cannot be aligned without it. Neither part can be manufactured on ship but they can be replaced at port.

There is the body of a human female strapped into the pilot's seat. Her ship suit proclaims her to be Captian Marsha Teak. A preliminary autopsy will show she died of manual strangulation (see crew roster for more details of her death).

The bridge weapons locker is empty.

The astrogation station cannot reveal where the ship has been. The data has been lost...or erased.

DECK 3 MAIN HATCH

There is the body of a human male not in a space suit with his foot caught in the outer airlock door. His ship suit proclaims him to be Drewel Patton. A preliminary autopsy shows he died by asphyxiation (see crew roster for more details of his death).

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The airlock is unpowered and frozen in place. It will require manual strength to open or warming up key areas to unfreeze it.

The main weapons locker has had an explosion inside that somehow did not puncture the outer skin of the ship. All the weapons that are here were damaged and are unusable. The destroyed weapons present do not seem to be enough for the kind and size of privateer that this ship is. It's not initially noticeable but the floor plates are damaged opening this deck to the sub deck crawl space below.

Note that the hole to the sub deck is covered in wreckage and will not be found without a determined search.

All escape pods are present save one.

DECK 4 COMPUTER DECK

There are two security robots in the robotic recharge terminals. They have been receiving a trickle charge from the emergency power feed and their parabatteries are fully charged. Their mission is to protect the Prodigal Sun against intruders with intruders defined as anyone not on the crew roster. Their programming authorized them to use deadly force with intruders that do not surrender. Their programming further instructs them to detain intruders in Streeel corporate uniforms and confirm via chronocom with the ship's Captain or officer of the watch that they are permitted aboard. The robots will not use deadly force if an intruder is wearing a Streeel uniform unless the intruder damages them in anyway.

Security Robots: Level 3 robot, STA 100, IM +6, Move 90/turn, Ranged 60%, Melee 60%, Installed equipment: type 1 parabattery (500 SEU), flashlight, polyvox, chronocom; Carried Equipment: Electro-stunner with 2 clips, 2 tangler grenades, 2 dose grenades, albedo screen (operates off the parabattery) and mag shoes; Installed programs: Attack/Defense.

DECK 5 CREW QUARTERS

The double occupancy rooms were not in use and



therefore are empty. The captain's quarters belonged to Marsha Teak and the other four crew members had the single occupancy rooms. The body of Ulkunk the dralasite astrogator/engineer is just outside the door to his room (3rd one from the captain's). A preliminary autopsy will reveal exfluidation or severe fluid loss from several deep stab wounds.

The crew all had personal effects of which there will be little interest for the PCs. Hidden in Koraffalo's room is a kha'dan sword with dralasite fluids on it.

DECK 6 GALLEY & REC DECK

On the food prep table in the kitchen, the vrusk archaeologist T'Keec, has been dissected into anatomical components, joint by joint and arranged on the table as a gruesome biological display. An initial autopsy will show that T'Keec was alive for most of the dissection. (See crew roster for more details of his death).

In dry food storage is extensive supplies that look a bit old but could be serviceable if the PCs food doesn't last. The floor is littered with some of the packaging that has been ripped open and the food consumed. Cold food storage and the freezer has food remaining in it but it is dried out and freezer burned and nothing looks edible anymore.

When normal power is restored to the ship the holo projector will begin playing a looped recording from the team's last landing showing the discovery of yazirian graves and the debate to loot them for artifacts. The content is mainly the heated exchange between Marsha Teak and Koraffalo over looting the yazirian graves they discovered and Koraffalo storming off into the bush after losing the fight.

DECK 7 MED-LAB

Koraffalo the yazirian is in a state of stasis (freeze field) in surgical room #2. It's uncertain how he would have ended up like that. There appears to be nothing wrong with him medically and he can be revived by a medic (treat the presence of the med-lab as a hospital for skill check purposes). See the crew roster for details on playing Koraffalo as an NPC.

The lab terminals for both bio and physical specimen investigation have been smashed and destroyed. There will be no accessing the main computer through these terminals till they are repaired at port.

There are only 2 probes left in the probe bay and one of the probe doors is open to space. A careful examination of the outside of the ship will reveal direct access to the ship can be made through one of the probe launch doors. Opening the probe bay hatch will depressurize the deck unless the probe launch door is sealed. The security door beyond the pressure hatch in the probe bay has emergency power and will present a problem requiring defeat of its lock to access the deck.

The probe system computer is a stand-alone computer that links to the main computer. It has records of all the probe launches and will show details of multiple probe launches in what appear to be two different star systems. The first appears to not have had an inhabitable planet. The second had an inhabitable planet and evidence from the probe scans showed what looked like a reflection from the surface that the computer classifies as a “starship’s hull”.

DECK 8 ENGINEERING

Main life support is off-line. It appears a power surge might have knocked it out. Backup life support is still working at minimal levels but the internal temperature of the ship is just above freezing. It should have been able to operate at a higher level but for some reason its set to minimal requirements. There is no way to tell if was intentional or accidental.

The port engine always ran a little hot and it is completely out of fuel. The Starboard engine’s fuel will be exhausted in as little as a day or could trickle out minimal power for a few weeks more.

DECK 9 CARGO HOLD

One work pod is missing.

There are 2d10 cargo containers in the hold. Roll for the number of containers and roll on the table for their contents (items marked with an * can only be found once, reroll if they appear again). If the random contents “Archaeological Artifacts” and “Biological Specimens” are not discovered before the last two containers are opened they will be at that time.

LANDING MODULE DECK 1

All of the computers on this deck have been wiped clean of any memory.

LANDING MODULE DECK 2

The hatch seals to the explorer bay failed and this bay is exposed to space though the hatch remains closed. This means that the explorer strapped to the deck here has experienced extreme cold and all rubber and vinyl parts have degraded to uselessness. It is inoperable and requires major repairs at a full service facility.

The reactor still has fuel and has maintained power on the lander all this time but the life support here has expended all of its consumables and will no longer scrub oxygen from the atmosphere though it maintains the proper temperature. There are no power links between the module and the ship thus the reactor cannot provide power for the ship proper.

The reactor has been running a long time and some of its containment program files are corrupted. There is a chance it could go into overload (same as a ship self-destructing its atomic drives). The chance is 10% each

Roll 2d10	Description
2	Biological Samples* – Samples from the various planets visited.
3	Power Packs* – 1d10 power belt packs fully charged
4	Freeze Fields – 2 fully functional freeze fields.
5	Spare Robot Parts – parts and components for repairing the on-board robots.
6	Geologic Samples – Each time this is rolled it should be from a different planet or moon.
7	Camping Supplies – Tents, sleeping bags, ropes, etc.
8	Food – Extra food supplies for the life support system. These are as expired as the ones in the main system.
9	Spare Computer Parts – Various computer components for repairing the on-board computers
10	Survival Rations – d100 days of camping rations
11	Water Packs – d100 liters of water in one liter packs
12	Lab Supplies – Various supplies for the different labs on-board. Each time it is rolled it should be for a different type lab.
13	Envirosuits – Fully enclosed suits for exploring toxic environments, 2 for each of the original crew
14	Spare Space Suits* – Backup spacesuits for each member of the crew.
15	Mechanical Parts – Random parts for repairing ship systems.
16	Random Personal Gear* – extra personal gear and clothing of the crew’s that is not in their cabins
17	Rocket Packs* - One for each of the crew members, for EVAs as needed plus two spare refuel charges for each pack.
18	Parabatteries – 1d10 Type I parabatteries
19	Spare Fuel Pellets* – Sealed and shielded, this crate contains two Atomic Fuel pellets that can be used to refuel the ship’s engines.
20	Archaeological Artifacts* – These are the Yazirian grave artifacts that were collected on the last planet visited.

Items marked with an * can only be found once.

hour the PCs remain on the ship. If the PCs should, according to the referee’s opinion, “fiddle” with the reactor in any way the chance becomes 20%. The reactor may be shut down by a star ship engineer for a skill check but a critical failure will result in a runaway overload requiring the module to be jettisoned. The Prodigal Sun

will then have to ride out the self-destruction of the lander module in close proximity and this could damage the ship further.

GETTING THE PRODIGAL SUN UNDERWAY

There are numerous things wrong with the ship that the PCs will want to address:

Life Support at minimal levels. Main life support is off-line but can be reset in 10 minutes. Several test and diagnostics should be run to confirm its working properly. Failure to test the system should result in a problem in 1d5 hours like rising CO₂ content in the atmosphere, plumbing backing up and flooding areas of the ship, dehumidification filters out of alignment and humidity continuing to rise on the ship with droplets of water condensing on walls and cool fixtures, or other things the referee imagines.

The backup life support has been running at minimal levels for years and is just about exhausted. It should be taken off-line until it can be recharged and serviced. Players have the option of attempting to play around with this system but their go to source of life support should be the main system.

Not only are the atomic engines out of or almost out of fuel but they sorely need an overhaul. If the PCs refuel the engines the ship will only be able to get enough thrust for 0.6 G of simulated gravity. This speed will cause them to spend a day reversing their drift and another 4-5 days heading toward some point in the system. Both engines will need an overhaul for balanced thrust. See Knight Hawks for details of how long an overhaul takes.

THE MYSTERY ON THE PRODIGAL

The last planet the Prodigal Sun set down on had a sathar listening post. The sathar manning this post was an upper caste sathar who had received the sathar equivalent of “banishment to Siberia”. (Upper caste sathar were discussed in the [Sathar Summit II article](#) in Frontier Explorer #6). After Koraffalo lost the argument to not loot the yazirian graves, he stormed off into the bush for a period of time where he encountered this sathar. Once the upper caste sathar hypnotized him, the sathar decided to abandon his post and seek to better his position by infiltrating the Frontier onboard the Prodigal Sun.

Things didn’t work out exactly as he planned and he was forced to cocoon himself and hibernate until such time as the ship might be found. He is the one that killed the rest of the crew when they discovered him or simply resisted his attempt to hypnotize them. He also shut down the main life support and reset the backup to minimal levels

as well as removing parts from the subspace radio. He also acquired weapons from the ship’s locker and then destroyed the rest.



With him are several satharin slugs. These are the slugs that the sathar use as cybo slugs but they have not been implanted with their cybernetic flame throwers. This means they retain their ability to “spin” self-hardening resin that can immobilize a person in seconds. They used this ability to spin cocoons for themselves and the sathar and will chew their way out once vibrations by the PCs disturb them or the heat begins rising. The cocoons can be found in the sub decks (the space beneath some of the decks). There are 2 cocoons on sub deck 2, 3 on sub deck 3, and one plus an oversized one on sub deck 4. The space in the sub decks shows extensive resin webs being spun to cover the deck and machinery. It takes ten minutes with a laser scalpel to cut a 10 cm area of resin webbing.

Koraffalo has no conscious memory of the sathar and believes that a Hir-Kal or clan spirit from the disturbed yazirian graves killed the crew. He can interact with the sathar that hypnotized him and not realize it’s a sathar believing it to be the Hir-kal. He may even seek to prevent the PCs from harming the sathar.

The sathar will seek to sabotage the ship and impede the progress of the PCs until he can take control of the situation. This means he will attempt to remain hidden and play on their fears of what might be aboard. He may also seek to take the PCs’ shuttle and fly away with it but that would be a last resort as he desires to “turn” several of the PCs and start his own spy network in the UPF.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Keep track of time passing as you allow the PCs to move throughout the ship and perform actions on ten minute turns. A PC should be able to use an elevator to move elsewhere in the ship and perform an action or two, within reason, inside of a 10 minute turn. If combat breaks out then the action shifts to regular combat rounds and the full combat is played out and then things shift back to the 10 minute turns.

The sathar and his slugs will be using air vents to move around the ship and yet remain unseen, at least initially. The sathar is aware of things like the potential for the lander module’s reactor to overload since he corrupted the files himself. He could send a slug to chew into a control run for the reactor triggering an overload. This would be done if he needed a distraction and he could isolate and neutralize a NPC or PC elsewhere in the ship.

Deactivated robots left unattended could be reactivated or given a minor repair and reactivated. There is a shadow programing that causes the robots to treat the sathar and his slugs as crew of the highest authority. These would unexpectedly try to detain the PCs again as per their programing.

If the PCs have not released Koraffalo from the autodoc’s freeze field then an apparent “random” power fault will. This should happen fairly early on.

There are significant power shorts and any given deck can be forced to have the lights go out. This would be used attack a lone PC or NPC.

The resin web ability of the slugs could be employed to create obstacles in areas. Key parts to operate important equipment might go missing.

Eventually, the sathar will try to incapacitate a PC with a stun weapon and have them encased in resin webs. The PC will wake up in the dark and restrained. It will be pitch black and he will hear the voice of the sathar attempting to hypnotize him and convince him that there is a Hir-Kal and the artifacts must be brought back to their clan in yazirian space.

SATHAR SLUGS (PRE CYBER IMPLANTS)

The sathar only use the largest for cybernetic implantation but the slug actually ranges in size from tiny to large.

They can extrude a self-hardening resin webbing which can even be used as a cocoon to hibernate in.

The sathar slug is native to the same ecosystem as the sathar. They can climb walls and ceilings. Its body is covered with a reflective slime which reduces damage from laser and flame attacks. Slugs of small to large size can extrude a resin web that hardens in seconds. The attack has effects similar to a tangler grenade except the resin hardens and is relatively permanent. The victim of this attack will be immobilized unless he makes a STR check to break free. Even if a victim breaks free the slug’s special attack it will continue to extrude resin and automatically hits on the next turn until it is dead or the victim is incapacitated. The resin web can be cut with a laser scalpel.

PRODIGAL SUN CREW ROSTER

CAPTAIN MARSHA TEAK

(human female)

Marsha was a driven company woman looking to advance within the company. Her career had entailed numerous scouting expeditions with the scouting of New Pale being an important feather in her cap. She’s wearing her ship suit, a belt with an empty holster, and her chronocom. In her pockets are her ID card, a holo photo of her and a then low level company executive wearing parkas at a ski chalet (presumably taken on Pale), and a baton key that will not unlock anything on the ship.

Preliminary Autopsy: Cause of death was most likely manual strangulation possibly with a strap.

Full Autopsy: Cause of death was manual strangulation but the attacker stood behind her command chair. There are a series of “nicks” on her ear in a strange circular

Type	Tiny Ominvore	Small Ominvore	Medium Omnivore	Large Omnivore
Number	1 to 10	1 to 5	1 to 5	1 to 5
Move	Medium	Slow	Very Slow	Very Slow
Special Move	Can cling to walls and ceilings			
IM/RS	6/50	5/45	4/40	4 35
Stamina	10	20	40	80
Attack	50	45	40	40
Range	N/A	1m PB	3m PB	5m PB
Damage	1d10	1d10	2d10	2d10
Special Attack	N/A	Resin Web	Resin Web	Resin Web
Special Defense	1/2 damage lasers + flame			
Native Ecology	Native sathar creature			

Frontier Explorer

pattern. The “strap mark” of the preliminary autopsy was in fact the tentacle of a sathar and the nicks on the ear is a bite mark from the sathar. He was not trying to kill her but rather hypnotizer her. Since she was successful in resisting the hypnotism, the struggle became violent and he bit her ear in an effort to keep whispering into it.

PURSER DREWEL PATTON

(human male)

Author's Note: Drewel Patton is homage to the author, Daren Patton, who wrote the short fiction that inspired this adventure. Because he was the source of the inspiration for this adventure I felt Daron should be named in the adventure in some way. I changed the name a little since this crewman is found dead and that should not be construed as a slight on Daron in anyway.

Little is known of Drewel Patton other than his planet of origin is Clarion in the White Light system.

Preliminary Autopsy: Cause of death asphyxiation by vacuum.

Full Autopsy: He did indeed die by exposure to vacuum. There are also unseen bruises circling his wrist. The bruises happened too close to the time of death to show to the naked eye. Their cause is indeterminate.

T'KEEC

(vrusk male)

T'Keec was a noted archaeologist and scientist. He has published numerous articles in scientific journals. He is somewhat famous for a tome published in academic circles, “The Sociological Implications of Wypong Funeral Practices as Evidenced in the Archaeological Record.” He keeps holo projection pictures of artifacts he’s personally recovered at archaeological digs. The holo pics change to another artifact every 5 minutes.

Preliminary Autopsy: Disarticulation (he has been dismembered into component parts of his external shell.

Full Autopsy: Peri-mortem drugging with a paralytic compound and dismemberment of the body while still alive. Death eventually resulted from blood and fluid loss but only after all the arms and legs have been dismembered and the killer had begun working on the abdomen.

ULKUNK

(dralasite neuter)

Ulkunk was noted as a nervous techie his whole life. It seemed he was often caught between the aggressiveness of his captain and security officer and was noted in T'Keec's personal log as an ineffectual peace maker. The ship's medical records show that he had developed a

nervous habit of rubbing his eye spots causing them to become inflamed.

Preliminary Autopsy: Exfluidation. (Severe fluid loss leading to death).

Full Autopsy: Deep stab wounds leading to traumatic fluid loss. Eye spots are enflamed.

KORAFFALO “RAFF”

(yazirian male)

Raff is from Athor. He has full citizenship rights on Yast having completed his civil service requirement but has not been home in 30 years. His record lists his clan affiliation as “clanless.”

Preliminary Diagnosis: Severe dehydration presenting as fever, sunken eye orbs, confusion, and delirium. Treatment should be sedation and IV fluids but he may not be communicative for 1-5 hours.

Once Koraffalo is able to talk he claims that the crew disturbed yazirian warrior graves on an unexplored planet somewhere within a nebula. He further claims that a Hir-Kal or clan shadow came on board with the archaeological artifacts and began killing the crew. He survived by jury rigging the autodoc to put him into a coma. He cannot tell you where this planet is and will be surprised to learn the artifacts are missing.

The truth about Koraffalo is that he encountered a sathar on the planet and was hypnotized. He killed the captain and Ulkunk and continues to be in the sway of this sathar which is now on board.

THE WORM IN THE WORKS

The upper caste sathar hiding on the Prodigal Sun

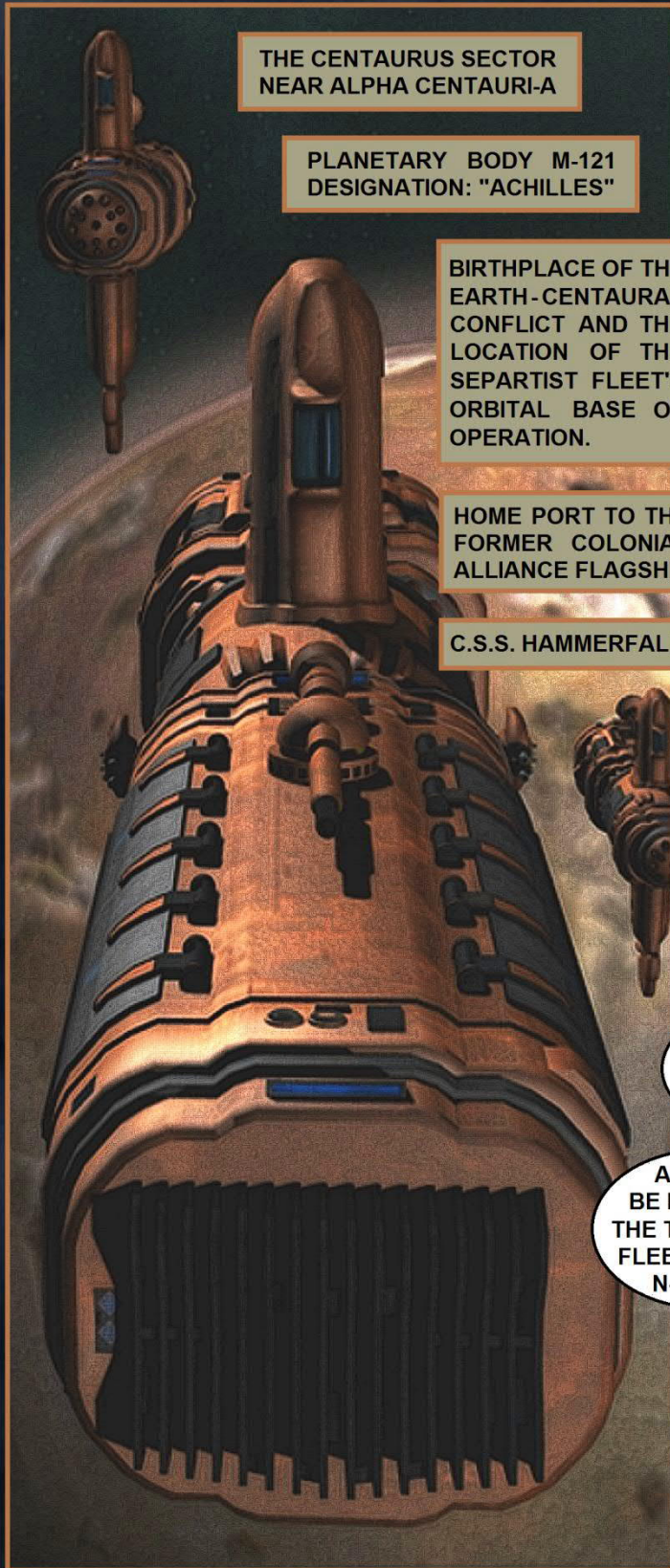
(RW: 65, M: 55, PS 2, IM 6, RS: 60, STA: 60) Skein Suit, laser pistol, sonic stunner, stun stick, 2 tangler grenade, 2 dose grenades, 1 smoke grenade, albedo screen, holo screen (programmed to present a ghostly yazirian) power belt, gas mask, and a chronocom tied into the ships com system allowing the sathar to listen in as if at a master display board (it's difficult to detect this, -20 to skill check).

Stockpiled equipment: 2 replacement power belts, 1 case of grenades (various types), case of power clips, 5kg TD-19, and 5 variable timers. Stockpiled equipment as well as the pieces removed from the subspace radio are hidden on the various sub decks. Players may find some of these items with a concerted search of the sub decks.

His goals are to isolate and subdue the player characters then hypnotize them. His ultimate plan is to create a spy network in the Frontier and return to sathar space with leverage to regain his old position.

TITAN RISING: 2299

EPISODE #3.0: "INFLUENCE"



THE CENTAURUS SECTOR
NEAR ALPHA CENTAURI-A

PLANETARY BODY M-121
DESIGNATION: "ACHILLES"

BIRTHPLACE OF THE
EARTH-CENTAURAN
CONFLICT AND THE
LOCATION OF THE
SEPARTIST FLEET'S
ORBITAL BASE OF
OPERATION.

HOME PORT TO THE
FORMER COLONIAL
ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP

C.S.S. HAMMERFALL.

DENTAK?...
ARE YOU THERE
OLD FRIEND?

UNDER THE
COMMAND OF...

I AM HERE
WITH YOU.

CAPTAIN RACHEL FLYNN

WE ARE
RUNNING OUT
OF TIME

THE
ALLIANCE
FLEET WILL
BE HERE
SOON.

EVERYTHING
IS PROCEEDING
ACCORDING TO
OUR PLAN...

ALL WILL
BE READY BY
THE TIME THEIR
FLEET ENTERS
N-SPACE.*

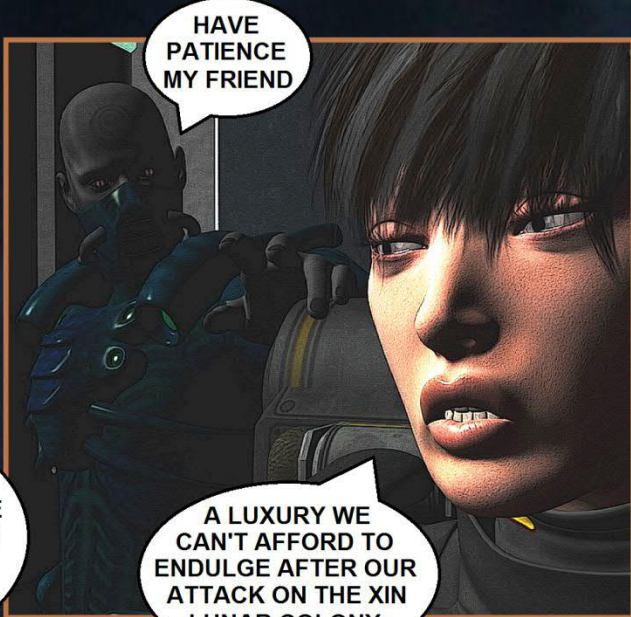
*NORMAL SPACE





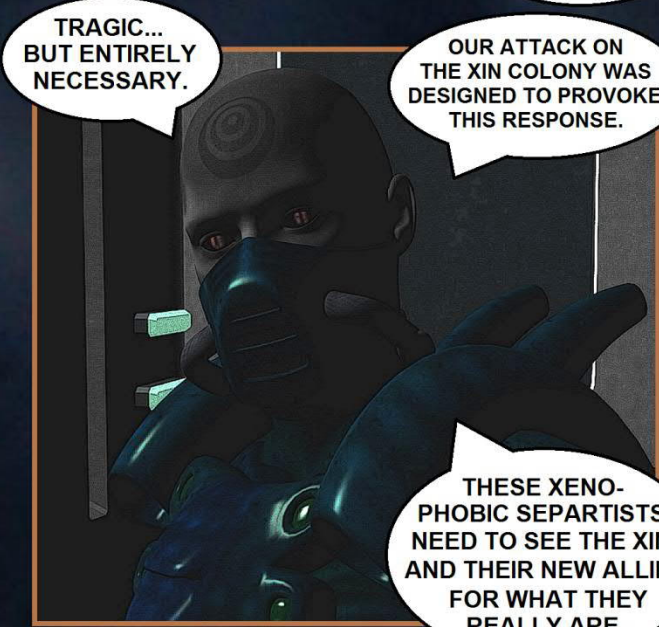
NO MORE DELAYS!

EACH AND EVERY MOMENT THAT WE STAY HERE ORBITING ACHILLES PLACES THIS SHIP AND OUR PLAN IN JEOPARDY!



HAVE PATIENCE MY FRIEND

A LUXURY WE CAN'T AFFORD TO ENDULGE AFTER OUR ATTACK ON THE XIN LUNAR COLONY.



TRAGIC... BUT ENTIRELY NECESSARY.

OUR ATTACK ON THE XIN COLONY WAS DESIGNED TO PROVOKE THIS RESPONSE.

THESE XENO-PHOBIC SEPARTISTS NEED TO SEE THE XIN AND THEIR NEW ALLIES FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE.



IN TIME IT WILL ALL BE CLEAR.

TIME...

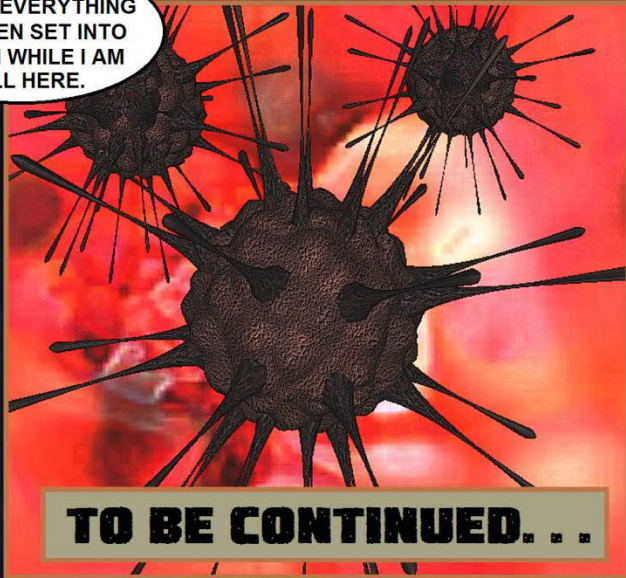
SOMETHING I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF...



IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED YET...

MY AFFLICTION IS EMERGING MUCH FASTER THAN YOU ANTICIPATED.

WE MUST ENSURE EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SET INTO MOTION WHILE I AM STILL HERE.



TO BE CONTINUED...

NEW CADRE: HAG

Thomas Verreault

HOLO ACTOR’S GUILD

The Holo Actor’s Guild is a Frontier-wide labor union numbering over 1 million beings. Its mission statement is to negotiate and enforce collective bargaining agreements that establish equitable levels of compensation, benefits, and working conditions for its performers, collect compensation for exploitation of recorded performances by its members, provide protection against unauthorized use of those performances, and preserve and expand work opportunities for its members.

Any world with a population status above the level of outpost has a guild chapter. The headquarters is naturally located at the City of Maze on Minotaur due to the proximity of Star Play, Inc. and the epicenter of the holovision recording industry.

HAG members visiting a planet can check in with the local chapter and attempt to get a role for extra money during a planetary layover. If offered the role as an extra they just show for the day and get paid but other roles require an audition. An audition is simply a PER check with modifiers; add the modifiers to the PER check to see if the actor passes the audition. Once the audition is passed, randomly determine the time commitment and if the player character cannot commit to that length of time then he or she must turn the role down.

In the Acting Role table the word level refers to skill level in a performing skill. This presupposes a skill system using such skills like those in Zebulon’s Guide or one of the fan created systems like SF 2000 or “A Skilled Frontier”

[<http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product/104997/Star-Frontiersman-9>]. If the Alpha Dawn rule system is being

used either the Psych-social skill can be used or divide the character’s PER by 10 and treat that as the skill level for the character.

After a character performs in a holo role they make a Performance Check and consult the Career Impact table to determine the impact on their career. This is a PER ability check (for Alpha Dawn rules) or a standard skill check in an alternative skill system. There is no Performance Check for the role as extra.

Career Impact Table	
Performance Check	Career Impact
Critical Failure	40% audition penalty for 2-10 years
Failure by more than 20	20% audition penalty for 1-5 years
Failure	10% Audition Penalty for 1-5 months
Success	N/A
Success by more than 20	Paid at level +1 on next job if within 1 year
Critical Success	Paid (level +1)X 2 on next job if within 1 year

Note the above rules are intended for an adventuring PC that happens to have HAG membership because of his background or in game character development. They should only be used to simulate attempts at making money between adventures or on extended starship layovers.

Acting Role Table				
Acting Role	Chance of availability	Audition Modifier	Time Commitment	Pay
Extra	40% + 10%/level	NA	1 day or 1-5days	25Cr/day
Local broadcast Commercial or Guest Appearance	20% + 10%/level	15%	2-5 days	At Level
Low Budget Independent Film	10% + 5%/level	10%	1-3 months	Half level
Low Budget Studio Film	20% +10%/level	0%	1-3 months	Level
Moderate Budget Studio Film	10% + 5%/level	15%	3-6 months	Level
Big Budget Studio Film	1% + 5%/level	30%	3-6 months	Level



[Recall](#) by [sab-m](#) on Deviant Art

HAG membership could be used in game for an NPC contact. If the PC has worked with a performance success on the planet in question then they can attempt to use a contact they made while acting. Details of this use are up to the referee and should be role played. Possibilities are a stunt man who happens to be a crack pilot and could fly the PCs somewhere for a parabattery recharge and a few drinks or an independent film maker that wants to do a documentary about the type of subject that is the PC's next mission and will help fund the expedition. Referees and players should be creative with this.

HAG MEMBERS BY PSA

ALPHA DAWN RULES

MILITARY PSA

HAG members with this PSA very likely fill the ranks of stunt beings but they could also be consultants who advised on a project. They also might have been cast in a minor role and discovered they liked acting or some other aspect of the industry (writing or directing).

TECHNICIAN PSA

Under the Alpha Dawn rules driving is a subskill of Tech skill, thus a technician could easily be a stunt being.

However, tech skill would also apply to dealing with all the electronic equipment being used as well.

BIO-SOCIAL PSA

Characters with Psyche-social skill may have studied this skill to understand the behavior of sapient beings in their drive to be an actor. A character with environmental skill may be a consultant or technician or even an animal handler.

ZEBULON'S GUIDE

Most of the above applies to the Enforcer, Techex, and Sci-spec professions. However, the Explorer profession is tailor made for an animal handler/trainer working in the holo vid industry.

Note: SF 2000 is an even more diversified version of the Zebulon's Guide skills rules and the above will apply to it as well.

"A SKILLED FRONTIER" STAR FRONTIERSMAN #9

The Artist PSA is perfect for actors and potentially writers but the Scholar PSA could also apply to writers.

The Scout PSA will provide the ranks of both animal trainers and stunt beings.

The Military and Pilot PSAs would be good foundations for stunt beings.

The Agent PSA could be a foundation for acting.

Note: I've mentioned writers and directors in a discussion of the Frontier's version of SAG, the Screen Actor's Guild, and writers and directors are not strictly members of the guild. HAG serves as a bit of setting fluff and a spring board for discussing possibilities for player character backgrounds being in the holo vid industry. Past employment by the Star Play megacorp is almost a certainty. There are numerous possibilities for PC backgrounds with everything from out of work stunt being to star-liner dinner cruise performer. A PC with a background in the industry could be fun, interesting and something different to spice up a game.

FE

Tom Dolan, author of the [Wishful Gaming blog](#), has started a small web-zine of his own, the Zine-o-Morph. The plan is for each issue to have a theme and they will cover topics ranging all across the gaming spectrum from fantasy, to sci-fi, to espionage, to military, to anything else he can think of. You can check out the [first issue of Zine-o-Morph on RPGNow](#) today.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

Jason Combs

BOUNTY HUNTERS

Kzar'me-taa and Zango are two seasoned bounty hunters. They prefer to use non-lethal force to apprehend their fugitives although they can use deadly force if needed. They have been bounty hunters for years and friends even longer. After acquiring much wealth, as business was good, they commissioned the "Seeker" to be built to meet their needs.

These two are well known. They try to remain within the law to apprehend their targets but, at times they have to go into...as Zango calls it – a "grey area". They always get their mark.

THE SEEKER

The Seeker is an advanced and unique spaceship. There are not a lot of comforts aboard ship but, it was built with utility in mind. It has several weapons and defenses packed into its hull with room for two staterooms for the crew, two cells for prisoners and two escape pods.

The computer is also unique. It links the propulsion, navigation, defense, communication, security and robot programs together. The computer is able to be programmed with automatic responses and able to defend itself; ex: if a

pirate ship fires on the Seeker, it is able to raise the deflector screen, maneuver the ship to flee the pirate ship, send an alert to the crew and activate the robots to prepare to repel boarders.

The Seeker also contains a hidden automatic rifle that drops down for the tail section over the ramp. It can fire 10 bursts before the Maintenance Robot needs to reload it. The Pod Laser and Forward Firing Rockets face forward and are used for attack. Facing rearward is an Ion Cannon that will immobilize any pursuers.

The ship supports two cells. The first cell is a small two meter by two meter room. It contains two racks and two outlets. This is for storage of prisoners who have been placed in freeze fields. The second cell is twice as large and contains a bed as well as a sink and toilet (both which fold into the wall).

The crew monitors Star Law transmissions for leads and tips on fugitives that they are searching for. Logs are kept of the fugitives caught, bounties received etc. One Life Support system was kept self-contained and separate from the main computer. Kzar'me-taa felt that if for some reason the computer was infiltrated, it could not turn off all the life support and kill the crew in its sleep.

Finally, all doors require a fingerprint and voice recognition. The cells also require a password to open.

KZAR'ME-TAA

Vrusk male (ambidextrous, comprehension 35%)

STR/STA 40/50, DEX/RS 45/55
INT/LOG 60/50, PER/LDR 45/50

IM 6

PSA: Technical

Skills: Computer 3, Technician 3, Robotics 4, Projectile 3(53%), Martial arts 1 (30%), Environmental 1, Psychosocial 1, Pilot 3, Astrogration 3, Engineer 3

Equipment: Security Skeinsuit (-25 pts, vs Ballistic/Melee), NL4 Netgun (DAM: *, RNG: -/14/24/34/40, ROF: 1/2 MAG: 1), 3 Mag-Net* (-25 STR to resist), 3 Tase-Net* (3D10 elec. DAM & STA check or stunned 2d5 rds), Albedo screen, Explorer Helmet(chronocom, compass, polyvox, sungoggles, toxy-rad gauge), Power Beltpack(50seu), Tactical vest, Bounty Shackles, Utility gauntlet(zipline, tag tracer, techkit).

ZANGO

Dralasite neutral(elasticity, lie detection 25%)

STR/STA 55/55, DEX/RS 50/50
INT/LOG 60/50, PER/LDR 45/50

IM 5

PSA: Military

Skills: Projectile 3(55%), Beam 2(45%), Thrown 1(38%), Gyrojet 1(38%), Martial arts 1 (35%), Environmental 1, Psychosocial 1, Rocket Weapons 3, Energy Weapons 2

Equipment: Security Skeinsuit (-25 pts, vs Ballistic/Melee), Blaster Pistol (DAM: 4D10, RNG: 5/15, 2 SEU per shot), Electrostunner, 4 Stun Grenades, Power Beltpack(50seu), Tactical vest, Bounty Shackles, Albedo screen, Infrared goggles with visocom, 8 power clips.

"Seeker" Class Bounty Hunter vessel	
Hull Size	2
Hull Points	10
ADF/MR	4 / 4
DCR	26
Engines	1 Atomic "A"
Fuel	3 pellets
Life Support (Back Up)	2 beings
Astrogation	Starship
Communication	Videocom, Subspace Radio, Intercom
Detection	Radar, Energy Sensor
Weapons	Pod Laser <Forward> (DAM1D10; 50,000 km) Ion Cannon <Rear> (DAM***; 60,000 km) FFR <Forward>(DAM2D10; 30,000 km)
Defenses	Reflective Hull Deflector Screen (6 hits) Skin Sensors
Computer (Level 4 FP173, linked programs*)	Drive (4), Life Support (1), Life Support (1), Alarm (1), Computer Lockout (4), Damage Control (1), Astrogation (4), Deflector Screen (2), Pod Laser (1), Ion Cannon (1), FFR (1), Skin Sensors (1), Analysis (3), Bureaucracy* (4), Commerce (1), Communication (1), Computer Security (4), Information Storage (1), Installation Security (3), Language (1), Law Enforce. (3), Maintenance (1), Robot Management (3)
Cost	958,800 credits

ROBOTS

1 Mark I Hullbot, 1 Type 1 Maintenance Robot

SELF-DEFENSE MECHANISM

Concealed automatic rifle (DAM: 5D10, RNG: 10/40/100/150/300, Ammo: 100 rds, RW: 50%, part of the Installation Security program)

ROBOT SPECIFICATIONS

MARK I HULLBOT

The Mk I Hullbot has audio & video receptors located behind plexiglass atop its body (50 sp), gas jets work like

conventional EVA units allowing acceleration & deceleration of up to 20m/turn each turn in zero gravity.

Level and Type: Level 3

Body & Hit Points: Standard – 100

Parabattery: Type I

Attack %/IM/RS: 60/6/60

Mod of Movement: Gas Jets

Normal/Max Speed (m/turn): 10m/120m

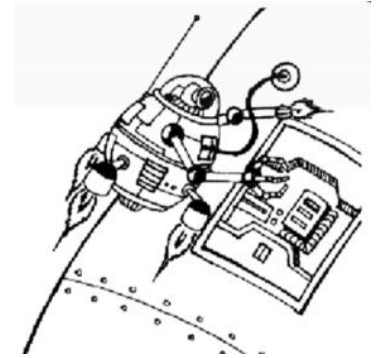
Limbs: 2 Mechanical arms (one has a welder)

Weapons & Defenses: None

Special Attacks: None

Mission Programs: Machine: Operator-2, Machine: Repair-3, Computers: Access & Operate-1, Power Read-Auto, Engineering (Spacer Skill)-3

Equipment: Anchor & cable (100m), magnetic grapple, chronocom (linked to ship's maintenance computer), laser power torch (left arm), dual- c.a.s. (electrical & mechanical), toxy-rad gauge, solar optics, power light



TYPE I MAINTENANCE ROBOT

The Type I Maintenance robot comes directly from the Star Frontiers game module SFAD5 – Bugs in the System

Level and Type: Level 3

Body & Hit Points: Standard – 100

Parabattery: Type I

Attack %/IM/RS: 50/5/50

Mode of Movement: 3 mechanical legs

Normal/Max Speed (m/turn): 10m/60m

Limbs: 3 mechanical arms

Weapons & Defenses: Albedo coating on limbs (2d10ea)

Special Attacks: None

Mission Programs: Machine: Operator-1, Machine: Repair-3, Computers: Access & Operate-1, Power Read-Auto, Security Lock-1, Self-Defense-1, Vehicles: Repair-1, Computers: Repair Mainframe-1

Equipment: Chronocom (linked to supervising computer, robot brain or supervising personnel), laser power torch (left arm), dual-c.a.s. (electrical & mechanical), toxy-rad gauge, power read gauge, power light



SHIP MAP KEY

1-BRIDGE

All functions can be controlled from here.

2-CREW QUARTERS

Each room has a small bed (with storage underneath), toilet and sink (both fold into the wall), a shower stall and a vidscreen.

3-ESCAPE PODS AND FRESHER

Two escape pods are in this area. There is also a small fresher for the crew.

4-ENGINE

The small “engine room” allows one to overhaul the engine and refuel it.

5-CELL

This room is used to hold up to two prisoners in freeze fields.

6-CELL

This is small, one being room cell. It includes a toilet and sink (both fold into the wall) and a fresher.

7-AIRLOCK

This room allows one being (two in cramped conditions) to enter and remove their spacesuits.

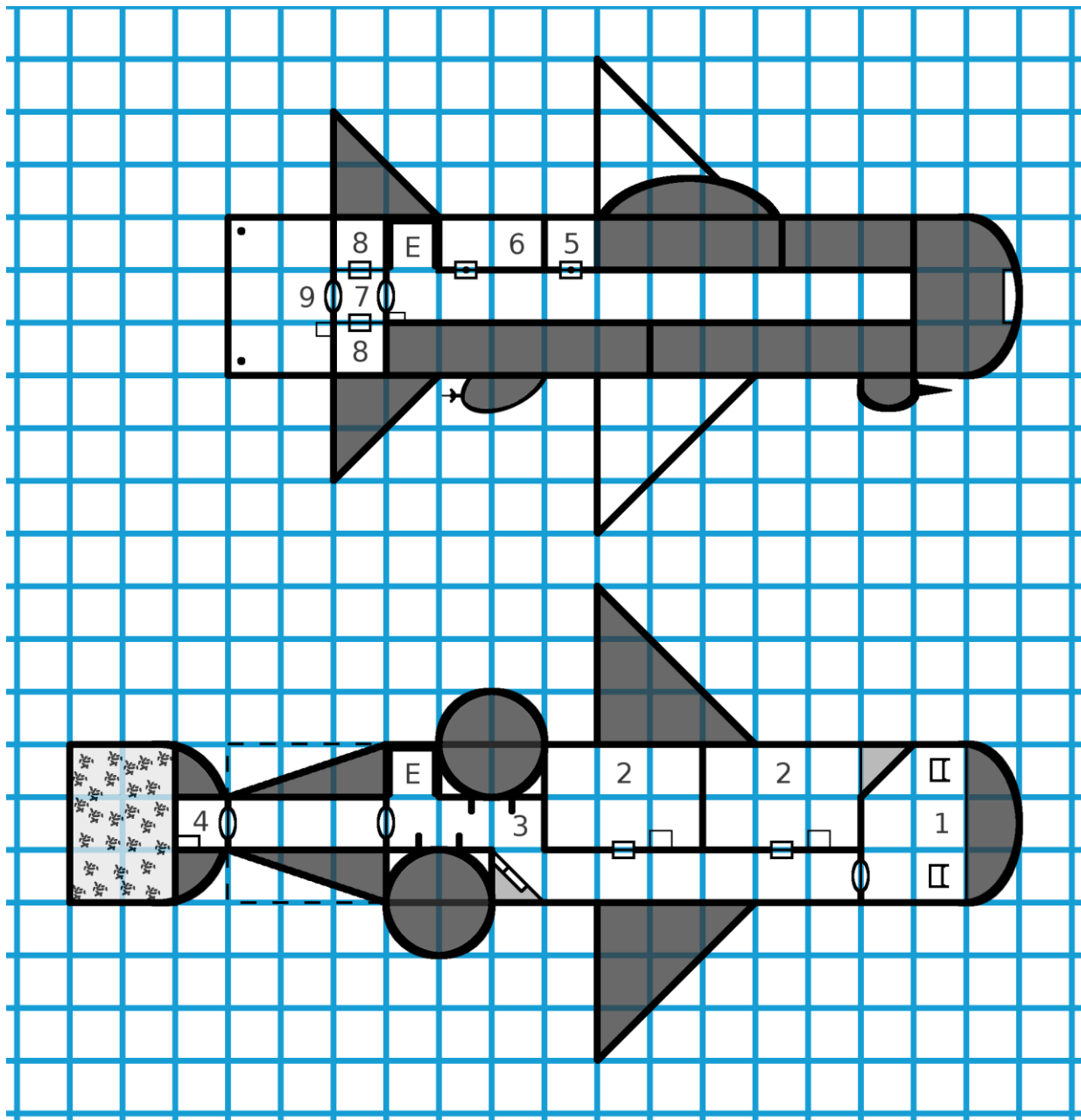
8-STORAGE

This is a storage room for spacesuits. Each room can hold two.

9-RAMP

This ramp lowers and allows access to the airlock.

FE



HOW MANY SHIPS ARE THERE?

Tom Stephens

A couple of years ago, Jeff Rients, in his game blog, appropriately entitled [Jeff's Gameblog](#), posted an article with the title of [Star Frontiers and Space Elitism](#) where he talked about how the rules of the Star Frontiers Knight Hawks game, which make it really hard for characters to gain spaceship skills, set the tone that only the best of the best are going to be sitting behind the controls of a starship. He compares it the early days of the American space program, and that if your character got to the point to learn those skills they were “officially As Cool As An Astronaut”.

Unlike most players I know, I didn't have a problem with this difficulty in acquiring spaceship skills. I guess I bought into the idea that space travel was rare and difficult. As a kid in the 80's it was in real life so why not? I've always played the game such that spacecraft are expensive and uncommon, so why shouldn't the skills be hard to get as well?

At the end of his piece he has a quote: “Starting PCs dream of joining the elite, those who are trusted to operate the *small* fleet of starships operated by the United Planetary Federation Spacefleet, the richest planetary governments, and the handful of interstellar corporations.” (emphasis mine). That line got me thinking. I like the number of ships to be small, but how small is the number of ships in reality? Do the rules justify only having a small number of spacecraft, or do they imply large numbers flying around? Just how many ships are plying the spacelanes of the Frontier? I decided to find out.

THE RULES

Almost everything thing we need to solve this question can be found in the first ten pages of the Knight Hawks Campaign book, most of it on pages 9 and 10. Here's a quick summary of the relevant rules, quoted directly from the book.

CONSTRUCTION TIMES

The time needed to actually build a spaceship equals the hull size of the ship x 30 days. For example, an assault scout (hull size 3) can be built in 90 days.

STARSHIP CONSTRUCTION CENTER CAPACITY

- Class I Centers can construct any type of military or civilian ship. Up to 140 hull points of ships can be

under construction at any one time.

- Class II Centers can house any civilian ship of 14 hull points or less, and military vessels of 6 hull points or less. Up to 50 hull points of ships can be under construction at one time.
- Class III Centers are used only for the construction of system ships, since installing and adjusting atomic engines requires equipment that is not available at these smaller centers. Any size civilian system ship can be built at a Class III center, but these centers will never be used for construction of military vessels. Up to 20 hull points of ships may be under construction at one time.

It should be noted that in the above descriptions, that these rules only make sense if you assume that “hull points” means points of hull size, i.e. an assault scout, HS 3, has 3 hull points for construction purposes. If not, then there isn't a military ship that could be built at a Class II center as even a fighter has 8 hull points.

AVAILABLE STARSHIP CONSTRUCTION CENTERS

System (Planet)	Center Class
Araks (Hentz)	II
Cassidine (Rupert's Hole)	III
Cassidine (Triad)	I
Dramune (Outer Reach)	III
Fromeltar (Terledrom)	II
Prenklar (Gran Quivera)	I
Theseus (Minotaur)	II
Truane's Star (Pale)	III
White Light (Clarion)	III

Note that the table in the rules also lists the “Number of Hulls”. This is just the number of size 6 stations hulls that are strung together to make the SCC. The higher class centers have more station hulls to provide their larger capacities. I've left off that statistic as it isn't relevant to the investigation.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE

All spaceships, whether starships, system ships, or shuttles, should undergo routine maintenance once every year. Any spaceship construction center can perform

routine maintenance on any ship, even if the ship could not have been built at that center.

These routine checks, replacements and tune ups take a number of days equal to 1d10 plus the hull size of the ship. The cost is assessed to the ship owner at a rate of 1,000 Cr per day of work. When the ship is operating under a company charter, the company and the owner split the cost in half.

If the ship has gone more than a year without maintenance, add another d10 to the number of days needed to complete the work. If two years have passed 2d10 should be added, and so on. In other words, for each year that the ship is not maintained, another 1 to 10 days of work are required when it finally does get into the shop.



SIMULATING SHIP CONSTRUCTION

Given the rules above we can create a simulation of the flow of ships through all the starship construction centers in the Frontier.

While the rules give instructions for determining the backlog at a given SSC at a random point in time and how long it will take for there to be room for the PC's ship to go in for maintenance or construction, that wasn't necessary for the simulation (and is somewhat unrealistic to boot) since in the simulation, we know exactly how many ships are being worked on and when they will finish.

SIMULATION ASSUMPTIONS

When running the simulation I made a couple of slight modifications to the above rules and some assumptions.

MODIFICATIONS

1. I removed the size restriction on the Class II construction centers allowing them to build or service ships of any size.
2. I removed the restriction on Class III centers limiting them only to system ships.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. A shared queue across all SCCs in the Frontier – I just maintained one master list of ships to be built and

- ships went into whichever SCC had room for them.
2. When there was space available in a SCC, the simulation would go down through the queue of waiting ships to find one that would fit, skipping over larger ships. However, if a ship was skipped over it is noted and once a ship has been passed over a number of times equal to its hull size, it cannot be skipped and the SSC's are allowed to drain until it can be fit in.
3. Ships waiting for annual maintenance always take precedence over new ships in line to be built.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ASSUMPTIONS

The above modifications and assumptions have a few implications. First, let's talk about the two modifications that I make to the rules for what ships can be built and serviced where. In the long term, these really have little to no effect on the final number of ships that can exist as eventually there will be a distribution of ships of various sizes and all of them will be in for maintenance, not new ships being built. The only real effect it has is to allow for the simulation to reach a steady state a little bit faster.

The assumption of a shared queue basically has the same effect if it has any effect at all. It was made mainly for simplicity in programming the simulation.

The skipping of larger ships a few times had a couple of effects on the simulation that I was able to check by turning this feature on and off. First, it slightly lowered the average hull size of ships in the Frontier. This is understandable as it slightly gives preference to smaller

Frontier Explorer

ships. The other effect was to make the processing of ships through the SCCs more efficient by having less space in the SCCs sitting unused waiting for more space to free up to get the larger ships in. This resulted in the total number of ships that the SCCs could support begin slightly higher.

The final assumption that maintenance takes precedence over new construction allowed simulations to reach a steady state where no new ships were being built and all of the SCC capacity was being taken up with maintenance. Eventually this steady state is what would be reached if all ships in the Frontier were getting their annual maintenance. This steady state represents the maximum number of ships that the SCCs can support.

ENOUGH ALREADY! WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

Would you accept 42? Probably not. Be patient and we'll get there in a minute. There is one more bit of information we need to know in order to determine the maximum number of ships and that is the distribution of hull sizes. Are there equal numbers of all hull sizes, more little ships than large ones, or clusters around different hull sizes?

Without detailing every ship in the Frontier there is really no way to know. I tried several different distributions from purely random, to basing on the hull size distributions from pages 5-7 at the beginning of the Campaign book, to heavily weighting toward smaller ships. In the end it I settled on simulating three distributions: purely random with equal probability of all hull sizes, a distribution based on the known ships in Starfleet, the militias, and the ship sizes from the Campaign book with a reasonable assumption of the relative number of the different types of ships, and finally a distribution that had equal probability up to hull size 10

and then falling off toward hull size 20, giving more smaller ships than larger ones.

THE NUMBERS OF SHIPS

Okay, finally! With all that background it's time to get to the final numbers. Drum roll please. Based on all of the known information, the Starship Construction Centers of the Frontier can support between 1,200 and 1,700 ships. Total. The exact number depends on the model of hull size distributions with the flat distribution (average hull size 9.8) supporting 1200 ships and the flat then falling distribution (average hull size 7.8) supporting 1700 ships. The other model (probably the most realistic) gave 1400 ships.

So I was right! Based on the rules as given in the game, the number of ships in the Frontier really is quite small. Spaceflight doesn't happen a lot and you really do need to be the best of the best to have a chance at getting behind the controls of a starship. Let's see what this means for life in the Frontier. And then let's look at ways to increase the number of ships flying around.

IMPLICATIONS

The small number of ships has several implications for life in the space lanes of the Frontier.

NUMBER OF SHIPS IN EACH SYSTEM

Let's work with 1500 ships, it's a nice round number in the middle of the range and close to the value given by the most realistic model. Now of those 1500 ships, 60 belong to Spacefleet and 37 belong to the militias, which leaves us just 1400 ships for all the mega-corps, freight companies, private yachts, shuttles, and system ships. That's not very many. There are 16 star systems and 22 planets in the Frontier (according to the AD rules that KH was supposed to supplement). That means, given 1400 ships we have an average of 64 ships per planet. That's not really a whole lot considering about half of those may just be small shuttles to get people and goods to and from the planetary surface.

And even if you only divide by the number of systems, that still only 87-88 ships per system. Most likely they are distributed based on the population of the planet but even so, that still probably gives you no more than a couple hundred ships at the high population worlds.

SIZE OF SPACEFLEET

Between Spacefleet and the militias, we have a hundred ships or one military vessel for every 14 civilian vessels. And if a large number of those civilian ships are shuttles and system ships, the number of Void capable ships is even smaller and the ratio is better. Given these number of ships, this isn't an unreasonable size for Spacefleet and the planetary militias. They are still probably stretched a



little thin but barring a major outbreak of trouble, the listed ships can keep a handle on the space traffic.

Of course, if you want to have more ships in your campaign, you'll probably want to boost Spacefleet's numbers as well.

TRAVEL

Interstellar travel, and even interplanetary travel (in systems with more than one habitable planet), is going to be fairly uncommon. Unless you have really small populations, even on the Heavy population worlds, most people will have never been off planet into orbit, let alone gone to another planet or star system. There just isn't the capacity to move large numbers of people around the Frontier.

Even assuming that half of the available ships (which is probably a very high overestimate) were passenger liners and each one could carry 500 beings (again, probably a high overestimate), that's a total capacity of 350,000 beings. If an average jump takes a week (10 days in the Frontier) that's 350,000 beings a week that can be mobile about the entire Frontier. Compare that to the US airline industry that moves a little less than 15,000,000 people a week. It's not a lot. It's much more comparable to the cruise line industry which has about 390,000 passengers a week. This probably also means that prices are fairly high (higher than those given in the rules).

INTERSTELLAR TRADE

With this small starship capacity, the amount of interstellar trade that is possible is also very limited. Most planets will have to be self-sufficient. There simply isn't the cargo capacity to move large quantities of goods between worlds. If a planet isn't capable of being self-sufficient in the necessities, it will not last long as a developing world and will at best ever have a very small population.

The lack of capacity means that getting space on a ship will be expensive. Trade will be limited to the transport of high value items: expensive luxury items, rare foods and minerals, and critical supplies for medicine and infrastructure that can't be obtained or manufactured locally. The most likely model for the megacorps isn't to manufacture an item on one world and ship it throughout the Frontier. Rather they will have an R&D and prototyping department at their corporate headquarters and when they want to open a market on a new world will build a manufacturing plant on that world and ship their designs to be manufactured locally.

OLD SHIPS

The small number of ships and limited capacity for manufacture and repair means that ships will be old. In the simulations, the number of ships reached a steady state after only a couple of decades. Thus the Frontier has been



at maximum capacity for some time and the SCCs are at full capacity just keeping the ships in existence running.

It takes 150 days to build a new HS 5 ship. That same size ship takes only 10-11 days on average for its yearly maintenance. Thus during the time it takes to build the ship, some 13-15 ships are waiting on their yearly maintenance. Trying to squeeze in the construction of a new ship will take some work and will displace a large number of ships that could be in being serviced. This means that ship owners will typically try to squeeze as many years of service out of a ship as possible to avoid having to deal with the cost of construction.

Given the breakdown rules (1%+1% per five years of age), ships can be pretty old before you start to see regular occurrences of breakdowns. A ship 25 years old only has a 6% chance of breakdown on any give trip. Since a ship typically takes only 20 or less trips a year, at that age you might have one breakdown a year if you're unlucky. And a ship has to be 45 years old to have a 1 in 10 chance of a breakdown. Given the high cost of ships and difficulty of building a new one, that's something owners would probably be willing to work with and budget for. So it wouldn't be surprising to see ships that are up to 50, 75, or even 100 years old still flying around.

PIRACY

Since ships are rare, if pirates do manage to capture a ship, it is very unlikely that they are going to leave it drifting. They will do everything in their power to capture the ship intact to be used later. Very rarely will the cargo be worth more than the ship itself.

On the other hand, the limited number of ships in the Frontier means that every single one is known. Once captured by pirates, it could never be taken into port without being recognized.

JUMP TUGS

While this isn't an effect of the low number of ships, it is a direct result of the fact that there isn't a SCC in every system. This means that either systems without at least a Type III SCC don't have any system ships or, more likely, there exists some sort of transport ship to get the system ships from the SCCs to the systems that they will operate in. I detailed exactly this type of ship, the Jump Tug, for exactly this reason in [issue 9 of the Star Frontiersman](#).

PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE?

So 1500 ships isn't a whole lot, and most people probably want more ships to be flying around than that. There are several ways, still keeping with the basic rules, to increase the ship capacity.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE

One way to allow more ships is to play with how often ships come in for annual maintenance. This could be done by modifying how often it occurs and where it occurs.

FREQUENCY

If everyone only brought their ships in every other year, the Frontier's existing SCCs could support an additional 600 ships, about a 40% increase in number. If ships only came in every third year you'd add another 300 ships in capacity.

That assumes of course that the maintenance rules don't change and each year skipped adds 1d10 days of work to be performed. If you make the amount of work required less, you increase the number of ships that can get in for maintenance each year and thus increase the total capacity. For example if the work required was 1d10+HS days after two years instead of one, you would double the number of ships that could be supported instead of only getting a 40% increase.



Of course, with the standard rules, skipping an annual maintenance is a fairly significant risk. Each maintenance skipped adds 5% to the breakdown chance, the equivalent of having a ship 25 years older than it really is. If, however, you reduced the additional breakdown chance from 5% a year to only 1%, you'd have a lot more owners only bringing their ships in every 3 or 4 years, thus increasing the number of ships that the SCCs could support.

LOCATION

As written the rules seem to require that the maintenance work on the ships occur in the SCCs. If, however, you allow this maintenance to occur elsewhere, say a ground based stations for shuttles, on board carriers for fighters, at regular stations for other ships, or specialized Starship Repairs Centers (SRCs), you can greatly increase the capacity of ships supported by the Frontier's SCCs. Adding additional maintenance facilities equal in capacity to the SCCs immediately doubles the number of ships that can supported. And that can be achieved simply by every planet having the capacity to do maintenance on 25 hull points of ships.

STARSHIP CONSTRUCTION CAPACITY

Another way to have more ships is to simply increase the construction capacity of the existing SCCs or add more of them. If you simply decide that the capacity is double what is listed, you double the number of ships that the Frontier can support. If you say it's ten times as much, you get ten times as many ships. Or if you only want smaller bumps, consider adding small SCCs in some of the systems that don't already have them.

A great example of adding in more capacity by way of a small SCC is Boneyard Station, a custom used starship center designed by Richard Rose (a.k.a. Shadow Shack) as part of his campaign setting. This station was highlighted in the [Boneyard Station article](#) in issue 8 of the Frontier Explorer. It is a Type III SCC specializing in ship customization and construction of ships from used hulls and new and used parts. Full technical detail of the station and its capabilities can be found in the Boneyard Station article on page 56 of issue 15 of the [Star Frontiersman](#) which describes the station and its services.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Of course, you can just ignore all this and not worry about it. However, understanding the dynamics of how ships are built and maintained, the impact that has on the number of ships flying around, and the repercussions that has on things like travel and trade help improve the verisimilitude of your campaign.

Optional Rules

EDGES AND FLAWS FOR STARSHIPS

Thomas Verreault

The following was adapted from David Eckelberry and Andy Collin's article, "Starships Perks & Flaws" in Dragon #255 which was written for the Star Drive game system. The durability points of the Star Drive system don't translate well to Star Frontiers but many of the ideas in the article are adaptable and I developed a few edges and flaws specifically for Star Frontiers. A ship shouldn't have more than one or two edges or flaws.

EDGES

ADVANCED INTELLIGENCE

The vessel has an advanced AI, a level 6 robotic brain from the Alpha Dawn rules. This AI can assist the characters with skill checks (+10 to +20 at referee's discretion) or execute orders like firing weapons, overloading the engines or plotting a course.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

Possibly developed in a secret corporate lab or looted from an ancient alien cache, this starship contains advanced technology. One system aboard the vessel operates on an order of magnitude greater than normal for that system. Engines would be at +1 ADF. A weapon system could have greater range, increased damage (+1d10), or a better Damage Table Modifier than normal (-10 to existing DTM). Defensive systems like ICMs would double its effects on weapons like torpedoes and rockets.

This perk can be a flaw if the ship's uniqueness becomes common knowledge or if the advance tech is a weapon system that expends ammunition; making replacements difficult to obtain.

BEAUTIFUL

The vessel's configuration, whether intentional or not, is such that its color, shape, lines, and detailing causes the vessel to be perceived as a work of art. The vessel will forever be praised and admired.

EFFICIENT COMMAND DECK

On the ship's command deck the consoles, interfaces, and system stations function together in a synergy that enhances the teamwork of the command crew. During a combat turn the ship's captain may make a LDR check

and if successful he gives another crew member a +10 bonus to a skill check.

EFFICIENT ENGINE DESIGN

The atomic drive of this vessel is so well designed that it may make one more Void jump than normal before requiring an overhaul.

FAMOUS

In the Frontier, the ship has become famous. Whether as a veteran of a corporate war, the discoverer of rich new planets, or as an accomplished and profitable freighter, her crew gains a +5 or +10 bonus to NPC reactions or PER checks where appropriate.

HARDENED VESSEL

The ship has reinforced hull plating and gains +1 HP per hull size.

HIDDEN COMPARTMENT

Hidden compartments are difficult to discover during a physical search. Scanning for them can be done with hand held scanners but if the compartments are empty they are not likely to show up as anything on the scan. A demolitions tool kit scanner will reveal the presence of explosives (if hidden in the compartment) or an environmentalist's scanner will reveal the presence of biological organisms and so on.



LUCKY

Fortune has been kind to this ship. Once per game session the crew can change a failed die roll involving the ship or one of its systems by adding (or subtracting) 20% to the result

MILITARY SHORTFALL

This star ship was designed to military specs and yet has found its way into civilian hands. Weapon systems with controlled or restricted munitions still remain difficult to obtain but otherwise the vessel is a military vessel.

OFF BORE FF WEAPONS

One of the vessel's weapons with the designation of Forward Fire can actually shoot off bore. This means that instead of using the narrow & restricted FF firing arc this weapon has a 60° firing arc.

POPULAR MODEL

Because this model of ship is so popular and the ship is everywhere it's almost invisible; no one notices it. Parts are easier to come by, 50% greater chance of the parts being available for repairs. In addition repair techs are very familiar with the class of ship and repair times are cut by 25%.

TOUGH BULKHEADS

Reinforced bulkheads and bracing help this ship resist damage. All rolls on the Advanced Damage Table are modified by +10 and damage applied to hull points is reduced by 1 point per dice of damage.

FLAWS

AGED HULL

Any time the hull is repaired there is a 25% chance that it cannot be fully repaired. If this happens the new maximum amount of hull points is permanently reduced by 1 point.

ERRATIC INTELLIGENCE

The good news is the ship comes with a robotic brain to assist the crew but the bad news is that it's unreliable or downright insane. There is a 1 in 5 chance that it will refuse to carry out an order but it will not expose the hull to damage in so doing. The source of the AI's madness can be flawed programming, alien influence, or simply the loneliness of interstellar travel has driven it over the edge. Expression of the AI's madness is left up to the referee but the full spectrum of mental illness in humanity can be used to develop this.

INFAMOUS

The name of this vessel is a vile epithet across the Frontier. Everywhere the vessel travels it is recognized

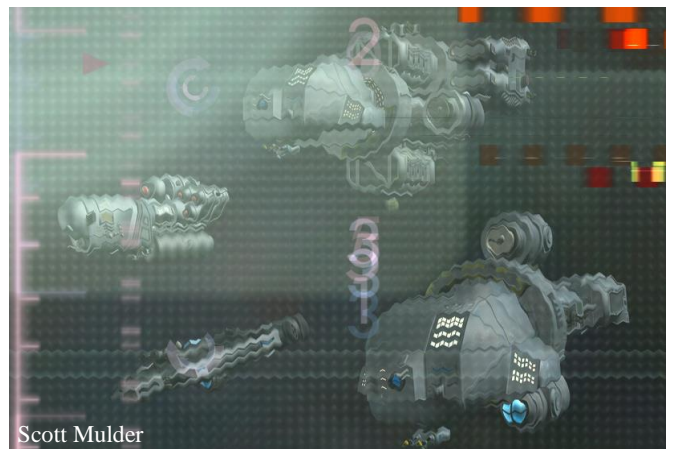
and disparaged. The crew suffers a -10% penalty to initial NPC reactions and PER checks.

POORLY TUNED ENGINES

This ship's atomic drive is poorly tuned and requires an overhaul one void jump sooner than normal.

PRIMITIVE SYSTEMS

At least two of the vessel's systems are outdated. ADF or MR would be reduced by 1 point. A weapons system would be larger and more massive to the point of reducing the overall number of weapons the vessel could carry by one. A defensive system like the MS or ICMs would have the amount of assets cut in half. A beam weapon might also have its range reduced by 1 hex.



TEMPERAMENTAL

The vessel may occasionally suffer a system's failure without ever suffering damage. This can happen once per game session.

UGLY

Though appearance has no effect on the performance of a vessel, this star ship causes reactions of contempt and disgust by anyone familiar with the standards of ship construction. The ship's appearance is likely to cause consistent comment by NPCs.

UNLUCKY

Some say the ship is cursed. Cursed or not, it seems that the vessel and her crew consistently suffer ill luck. Once per game session the game master may modify a successful die roll involving the ship by 20 points in an unfavorable direction.

VULNERABLE

The design of the ships bulkheads fails to protect one of the ship's systems in combat. A hit to ADF or MR takes out two points instead of one, a DCR hit would take out 3/4s of the DCR instead of half, a weapon hit will take out two weapons or a defensive system hit will take out an additional defense, etc.

Vessels of the Frontier

THE DUBLINER FAMILY

Tom Verreault

Zeek Dublin was a spacer on Minotaur Merchant Marine vessels and served in both Common Musters. Despite his ship being destroyed in the Battle of Morgaine's World he survived the battle and mustered out after the war.

The disposition of the prizes captured by the First Common Muster were tangled up in courts as there was no interstellar body to adjudicate the case and it did not get settled till after the First Sathar War. There were, by that time, fewer survivors of the 1st Common Muster to divide the prize money amongst. Zeek used his share as well as service pay and took advantage of special rate loans for combat veterans and bought a Pacific class (Gullwind class) merchant vessel after the war naming it the Gypsy Wind.

He became the patriarch of a clan of spacers marrying Cherry Rodrick. Theirs was a May/November romance with her being half his age. Zeek has passed on but Cherry "Ma" Dublin runs the family business. The Gypsy Wind holds the note on two other vessels crewed by family members; the Gygsy Trader captained by Zeek's nephew, and the Gypsy's Luck captained by Cherry's eldest son. She's been grooming her youngest child to captain of the Gypsy Wind while she steps back and attends to business.

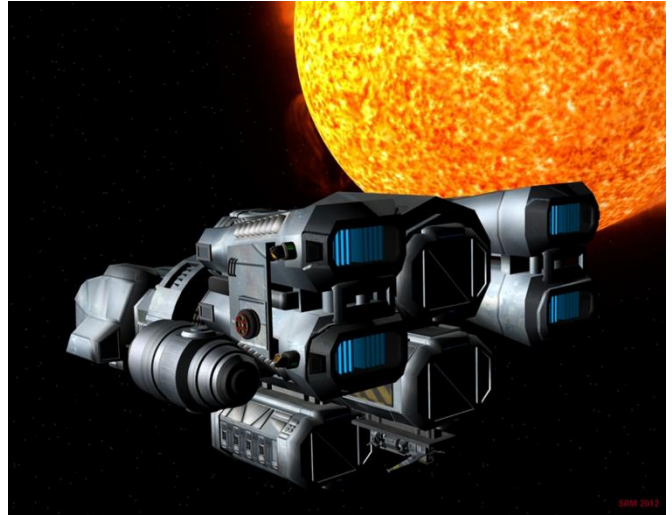
Crew is almost exclusively family on Gypsy clan ships though personal friends of the captain of a vessel can find a berth. Advancement within a ship's crew is glacially slow but adding a new vessel to the "fleet" creates opportunities that are highly sought after.

Note the Gypsy Wind is nearly identical to the Gullwind from the Dramune Run module (SFKH1) and those deck plans can be used for this ship. Gypsy Trader is a large freighter and conforms to the deck plans for the large freighter in the Warriors of White Light module (SFKH0) which came bundled with the Knight Hawks box set. Finally the Gypsy's Luck is a Rim Song Class yacht from "Yachts and Privateers Return" by Douglas Niles in Dragon #88.

Gypsy Wind: HS 6, HP 24, ADF 4, MR3, DCR 38; Weapons LB; Defenses RH, life boat.

Gypsy Trader: HS 10, HP 50, ADF 1, MR1, DCR 50; Weapons LB; Defenses RH, MSx2

Gypsy's Luck: HS 3, HP 15, ADF 4, MR3, DCR 29; Weapons LB; Defenses RH, no life boat.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Our next issue will be out in January and we're going for a Yazirian theme this time around. If you have any material, whether it be stories, rules, art, adventures, or anything else related to yazirians, we'd love to have you submit them through the Frontier Explorer website (<http://frontierexplorer.org>) for inclusion in the Winter 2015 issue. Just hit the big, gold "Submit New Content" button to send it in.

And if you have material that you'd like to submit that doesn't relate to that themes specifically, that's okay too, you don't have to wait. Submit them now and they may still end up in the next issue or the one after that. We prioritize all user submissions over anything we create so we can get your material published as soon as possible.

And don't worry if you don't think it is good enough yet. We'll work with you to get it ready if you want. And if you need an idea to help get your creative juices flowing, we're considering doing a Yazirian themed issue. So think up anything related to Yazirian creatures, clans, equipment, attitudes, etc and send it in. We can't wait to see what you come up with.

Submissions for the next issue need to be in by December 1st at the absolute latest so we have time to review, edit, and work with you to prepare the articles for publication. Early submission is even better as that gives us more time to prepare. So don't be shy, send in your articles and share your work with the community. And remember submissions doesn't have to be for Star Frontiers. Any sci-fi topic is fair game.



GRYMZ

GUIDE TO INTERGALACTIC CONQUEST



LESSON #10: "BLAME"

SO.....

BLEEP!



HE'S GOT A VALID POINT THERE.

YOU ARE CERTAIN THAT GRYMZ IS NOT THE CAPTAIN OF THE TANHAUSER?

ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN.



'NOT EVEN A MEMBER OF SPACE FLEET.

HEY!



I FOUND YOUR JUNKY OLD SHIP ADrift IN OPEN SPACE...

...WASN'T FOR ME YOU'D STILL BE POPSICLES IN CRYO STASIS.



HE DUMPED THE CREW INTO SPACE!!!

UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT.



EH, HEM... LESSON NUMBER TEN: BLAME IS NEVER BENEFICIAL TO ONE'S INTERGALACTIC CONQUEST.

IS HE USING THAT PHRASE CORRECTLY?



BY THE WAY... WHO ARE YOU AND WHY WERE YOU ON OUR SHIP?

HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW ANYMORE.