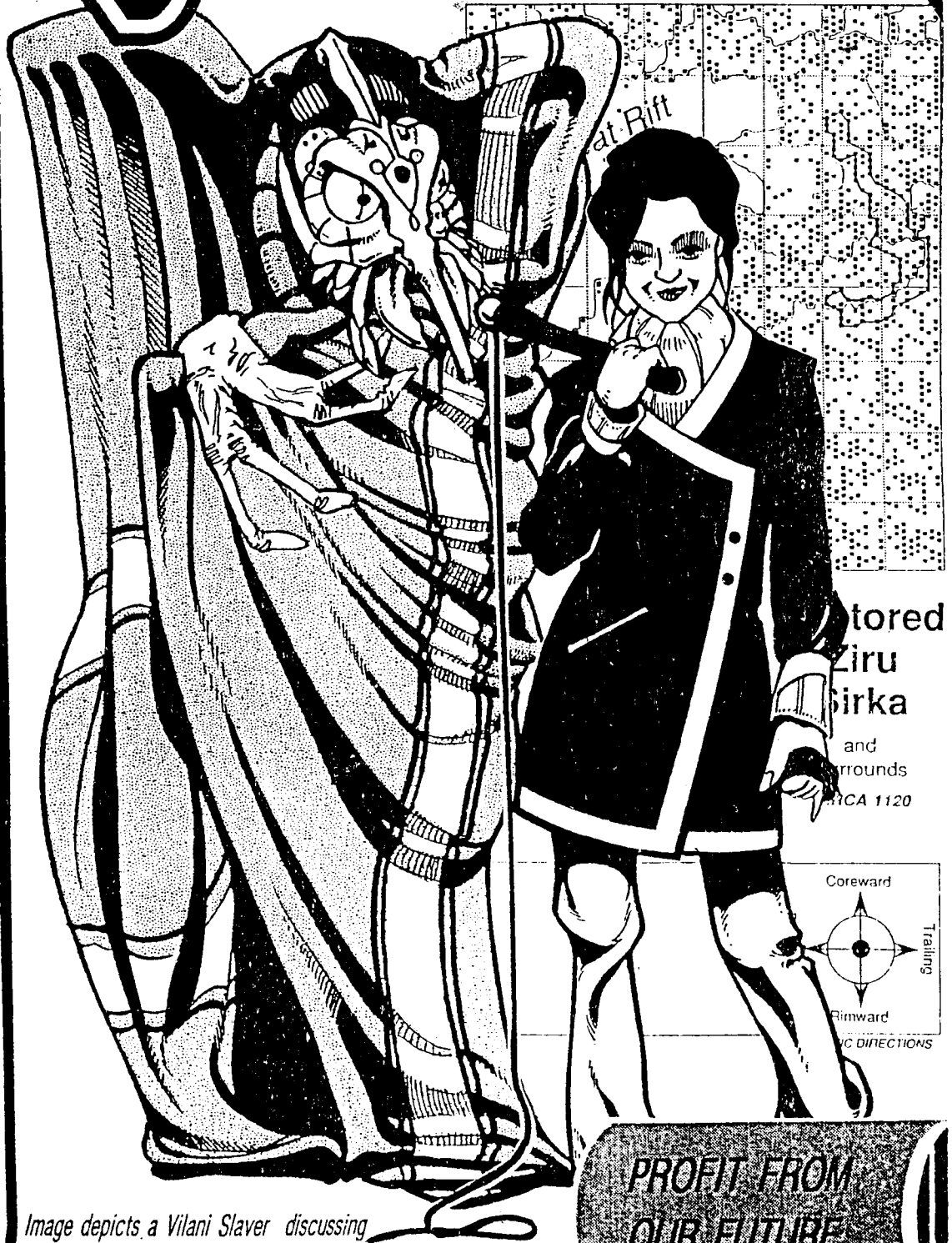
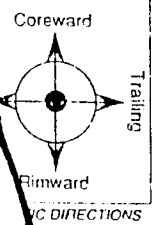


Pathrrumbarba



Store
Ziru
Birka
and
grounds
CA 1120



10

Image depicts a Vilani Slaver discussing trade routes from Rabir to Vland with an Ashdak Meshukiiba of the Pathrrumbarba commune

PROFIT FROM
OUR FUTURE
SHAERUSHID

SIGNAL GK

Acknowledgements

The name *Signal-GK* is not intended to infringe upon the earlier GDW adventure of the same name. For review purposes, please refer to it as either '*GK*', '*S-GK*' or '*Signal-GK the fanzine*'...

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Editorial

Welcome to Issue 10! First off all apologies for all of you who have been waiting for this issue. The Christmas period and bouts of 'flu have ensured that this edition was behind schedule. In addition disks of contributions were lost in the post. Hope it was worth the wait.

At the time of writing, this issue might appear slightly thinner than usual but hopefully what it might lack in quantity in more than makes up in quality. I know that many are not keen on filling out the Feedback sheets that we send out but Jae and I urge you to do so. It is only through this that we have an accurate idea whether or not we are doing a good job. The assumption is that we are doing ok as no-one has told us otherwise. Also we would encourage you all to contribute to 'Signal-GK', even if it is only a small piece, such as a review of a new product or a piece of library data. Fresh contributors and fresh ideas will keep the mag from going stale. So please put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and show us what you think.

Tim Osbourne is asking anyone out there who has an interest in developing Dag' in the New Era to come forward. He is looking for people with an idea to bring up the sector to the new rules background, stats, history, development of emerging space-faring worlds and states, etc. Those interested can contact me (address below) and I will pass on your offers of help, whatever they may be. Jae has touted the possibility of a different ending to the Rebellion and has taken over the thought of developing an alternate history of Dagudashaag/ Third Imperium, one that doesn't have the Virus. Again pass on any thoughts to me and I'll see that it gets into the right hands.

All the best

Leighton.

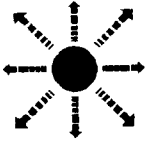
I can be contacted at:

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PR1 5UP.

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STARPORT FREEFAX

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- Society of the Rose Invisible can help, call 99871-88188 for date of the next lecture.
- Calls are charged at .25 per minute cheap rate and .55 business rate - Call timed to last no longer than 3 minutes.
- Sir Marcus Crowe, Author of the famous 'Crowe's Encyclopaedia Xenologica' will be giving a lecture on 'Sentient Species in Dagudashaag' at Lecture Hall B27-a all this week. Tickets cost Cr.25 which includes a Cr.50 discount off the cost of the latest edition of his work. Tickets may be booked from the Traveller's Mission.
- Traveller's Mission - Located on Deck 7. Down on your luck? Cheap beds, access to Free Medi-Diagnostic and JobNet, cheap food. Free Surgery every Threeday. Church services, including free food concentrates, every Midday and 15pm. NO Alcoholic Drinks or Drugs allowed on the premises.



PORT of CALL

NUKAUSH

NUKAUSH 1906 B684400-9 N Ni 923 Im M2 V

PRIMARY: Aeic, Spectral Class M2 V, Mass 0.4258, Luminosity 0.376

Nukaush: Mean Orbital radius 0.20 AU. Period 46.38 Std Days. Diameter 9627 km; Mass 1.3 terra. Heavy Core, Density 1.3. Mean Surface Gravity 0.975g. Rotation Period 36h 03m 21.3s. Axial Inclination 22° 9'. Energy Absorption 0.820.

Surface Atmospheric Pressure 1.6. Composition oxygen-nitrogen mix. Hydrographic Percentage 36% in four oceans and 9 seas mostly located around the polar regions. Mean Surface Temperature 31.43°C. Native Life Present - classified non-intelligent. Total System Population 25,900⁽¹⁾.

Primary Cities: Misha - 9,000, Starport B; Inferno - 12,500, Starport C (Restricted); Teäl - major Hamaran settlement, population unknown, Spaceport F; Rural settlements - 4,400.

Satellites: Seven including rings (see system chart for details).

World Government is non-existent, local decision-making is organised along patriarchal and guild lines. Most settlements are primarily extended families.

Law Enforcement is restricted to the local communities which varies according to location. Limited agreement relating to certain civil and criminal laws has been agreed between the majority of the settlements.

Population Breakdown: (1) Only Humans dwelling within the settlements are recorded on the planetary census - 78% Humaniti, Vilani and 12% Humaniti, Mixed. No record is taken of the Hamaran colonists or of those dwelling in the wilderness regions.

Social Outlook: Progressive, indifferent, competitive, neutral, harmonious, Xenophilic.

Technology Profile: 99-8999A-9999-89-A

HISTORY

The history of Nukaush is as splintered as it is diverse. The system was first surveyed in -8,120 by mining scouts from the Naasirka Corporation. The crew must have thought they'd found the mother load, as the ship's sensors showed massive mineral and petroleum deposits extremely close to the surface. The claim was immediately registered and a small exploratory mining platform was planted on the surface to protect Naasirka's investment. The rig was stationed in the Lixlondu Desert over what should have been a 300,000 million tonne petroleum field but found nothing but dust. Several attempts at other 'high-yield' locations also proved unfruitful. The sensor readings had lied. A second survey discovered that the planet had a fluctuating and erratic magnetic field which when 'echoed' by a carpet of crystalline particles (Daemonite) that covered certain regions of the planet, disrupted and confused sensors. At the time a note was made in the ship's log of unidentified lines of infrared radiation spreading out from a crater near the South Pole. Everyone assumed that this was just another sensor malfunction. The colony was abandoned after only two years, leaving the mining platform behind.

Over the next two thousand years several small, independent communities were set up. Most failed. The Pirate base at Inferno was the only one to apparently survive the Long Night. Records from the ruins on the Southern coast show that the settlement was raided frequently, over a period of approximately two hundred years, by the infamous Gograhah Reivers.

These records contain one of the few known descriptions of the Reivers to survive to modern day. Apparently composed of a multitude of races, including, if the settlements records are to be believed, giant bald Hamaran ('..as tall as men') and several races totally unknown today.

All were completely hairless and, it is now generally accepted, used stolen or abandoned Vilani ships. The Reivers were apparently technological barbarians who spoke a common tongue (which none of the pirates apparently recognised) and refused to recruit from among their victims - spies were instantly recognised and brutally disposed off.

Given the frequency of their attacks, scientists have come to the conclusion that the Reivers must have had a settlement on the planet. They have further hypothesised, working from previous data on the Reivers, that this settlement would have been near a large body of water somewhere in the planet's temperate zone. The Jhester Seas fit the requirements perfectly but all excavations to-date have failed to find anything more than hundreds of Reiver stone carvings (of various races and mythological creatures) etched into the cliff-faces. The last known Reiver attacks took place about -1,200.

In - 455 Nukaush was revisited by Vilani Traders. Apparently they too must have been fooled by their sensor readings into believing Nukaush was rich in minerals. In -450 a 1,000 Vilani colonists, from a mining guild, arrived (including, unbeknown to anyone, 200 Dhuna Worshipers) and set up several settlements. The main camp, named Misha, was built on the old, abandoned drilling platform. Other, smaller settlements spread out over the planet. Some of the colonists, on discovering that Nukaush was not the bonanza they had originally hoped, left for pastures new. Most, enamoured with the natural, rugged beauty of the planet, decided to stay and create a new life for themselves. Several other waves of colonists followed, most fleeing the stringent regime of Vilani space. One of the groups successfully transplanted Millennium Trees from Ranthar. During this period the Dhuna's kept to themselves, building their temple and oracle. Once the temple was complete and a new generation of

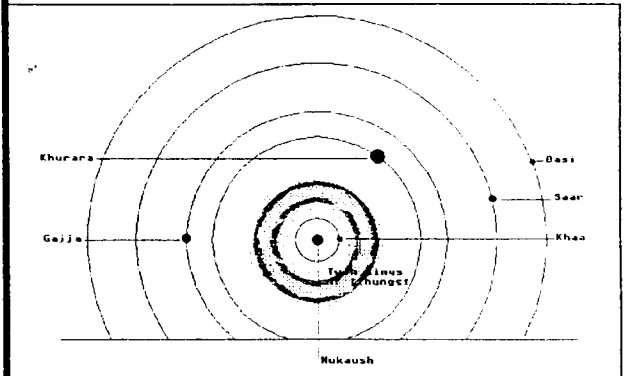
priestesses were installed to oversee the bloody rituals, Dhuna assassins began to terrorise the planet. One of the first colonies to be driven off-planet was the horticulturalists that had planted the Millennium Trees. For over one hundred and fifty years the Dhuna terrorised the planet, killing, then vanishing into the hills like ghosts. The planet's magnetic field prevented the colonists tracking down the Dhuna settlement by sensor. Local legend claims that in -9 a Solomani smuggler and rooner ^(a) named Tarliesin Euphrates tracked a Dhuna Assassin for almost a thousand kilometres through the Wyld and single-handedly assaulted the Temple, killing the High Priestess. Tarliesin was allowed to walk free, unarmed and without food and water. The Dhuna probably thought the Wyld would finish him off. It is now believed that the surviving Dhuna saw the assassination as a bad omen and fled the planet. Almost two years later Tarliesin walked, malnourished and covered in festering wounds, into Inferno through Snake Pass.

In 65 a colony of Hamaran arrived and colonised the Millennium Trees. They were the last major influx and their technical skills were greatly welcomed by the inhabitants of Inferno. Most of the cities inhabitants had turned away from outright piracy and had established the Cauldron region as a Smugglers paradise. The locals had become experts in modifying ships. A thriving blackmarket existed and best of all, few off-worlders knew the place even existed.

It took until 450 before the Imperium became aware that Nukaush was the 'throne world' of the Thief-Kings. The planet was literally flooded with Imperial troops, and a permanent Navy base was built at Port Misha. Despite that, it was still a full thirty years before Inferno itself was found. The base was attacked but, protected by the thick overhang of the Southern cliffs, most of the inhabitants survived. Land attacks completely failed. There was even talk of evacuating the planet and using planetbusters as a final solution. Eventually a compromise was agreed. The base would be left alone but, all shipping in and out would be monitored and a Naval Blockade maintained. This has remained in force even up to the modern day. The Imperium has tried to infiltrate the region but has found it very costly in terms of lost lives. Today the Cauldron has its own spaceport and several TOT'L ^(b) shipyards built in the middle of the crater sea. The old city is now mostly flooded and in ruins. Rumour claims that Inferno still houses the last of the Sector's Thief-Kings and is still the smuggler capital of Dagudashaag where anything can be bought or sold for the right price. What is known for certain is that Inferno is an extremely dangerous place and travellers are warned to stay away. Inferno is certainly a 'wretched hive of villainy and violence' and TAS has taken the extraordinary step of classifying the city region as a Red Zone despite the fact that the planet as a whole enjoys Green Zone status.

(a) **Rooner** - a specialised smuggler/thief. A rooner deals in ancient and valuable artifacts 'recovered' primarily from extinct civilizations.

(b) **TOT'L** - Slang meaning Top Of The Line.



STARPORT PROCEDURE

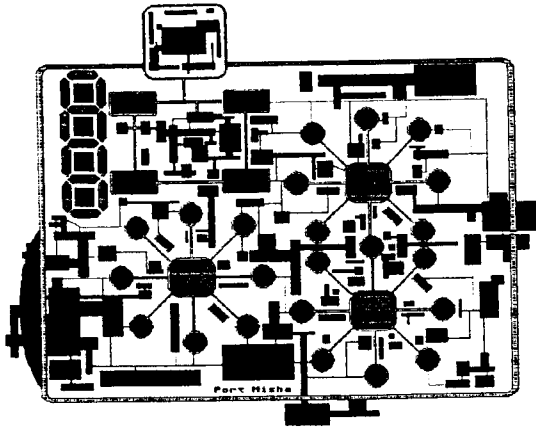
Landing Pattern

Ships are generally contacted by the Imperial Navy within an hour of entering the system. Due to the complexity of Nukaush's orbital space, as well as the Naval blockade of Cauldron, all traffic within the system is confined to rigidly defined transit lanes. It is extremely dangerous to deviate from the assigned approach path especially since Naval vessels are under strict instructions to prevent unauthorised access to the planet at all costs.

Inter-system traffic control is handled by Naval staff and civilian shipping may find their landing slots 'bumped' in favour of military or corporate shipping. All out of system shipping must first land at Port Misha for customs inspection. The Clearance Party generally consists of a Naval Officer representing the Port Warden's Office, an engineer, Health Officer and a Scanner team. Given Inferno's reputation as a smuggler's paradise, all ship's have to go through a thorough inspection before they can receive clearance to transfer to anywhere else on the planet. Once clearance has been given, ship's must file a flight plan which must be strictly adhered to. Unfortunately for the Navy it is almost impossible to track anything on the planet once it is out of line of sight. Communications are also affected by the planet's magnetic field so shielded fibre-optic cables are used to link the settlements together. If a ship is reported as failing to turn up at its specified destination by a set time then Navy fighters are sent out with orders to shoot down the offender.

Starport Facilities

Port Misha has an extrality zone of twenty kilometres. The Port has 31 park bays built on the old mining platform 100 metres above the desert floor. Four are specifically for Naval fighters and another four for Naval and Corporate shipping. All civilian ships must first land at one of three landing fields until inspected. They are then transferred to one of the field's surrounding eight park bays.



Most free traders opt to land at fields one or two and ask to use Alpha-Echo park bay. This is because it connects the two fields together and is the only park bay that can use either landing field for take-off. Owners may opt to save themselves berthing charges by parking on the desert floor though, given the frequency of sandstorms in the region and the amount of damage the small daemonite particles in the sand can cause, few seriously consider this a cheap option.

Given the difficulties of landing on Nukaush, it is surprising that the traffic through the port runs at 75% of capacity throughout the year. Starship construction and repairs at Misha are extremely limited though Port Inferno has a reputation for technical excellence. The Navy maintain limited Search and Rescue facilities but are extremely slow to respond to civilian requests for assistance. INDISS has rated Misha at 1.5.

Inferno is classified as an C-Class starport with four landing strips radiating out from a central point. There are twenty four park bays, each fitted with shielding so that ships can take-off directly without having to be transported to the field. The region is covered in a thick mist of water vapour and black smoke from the regions active volcanoes. The volcanoes regularly expel magma which heats the crater lake and melts the ice surrounding the region. From above, the region is completely hidden beneath the swirling black fog. Most newcomers to Inferno elect to land on auto-pilot despite the risks of sensor malfunction though most natives take great pride in their own ability. Beneath the seething fog the crater is bathed constantly in red light from the volcanoes and the temperature of the inner sea is a incessant 45°C. Port Inferno, and the surrounding underground town of Port Inferno, has a wide range of ship repair and maintenance facilities and is considered by many the 'true' capital of Nukaush.

Port Costs

Port Misha - Refined Fuel Cr. 35 per kilolitre, Unrefined Fuel Cr. 10 per kilolitre, Berthing Costs Cr. 100 for the first six days, Cr. 100 per additional day, Desert Berthing is free. Warehouse Costs Cr. 10 per tonne per std. week. Security Cr. 150 per week.

Port Inferno - Refined Fuel Cr. 25 per kilolitre, Unrefined Fuel Cr. 3 per kilolitre, Berthing Costs Cr. 200 per first three days, additional days by negotiation. Warehouse Costs Cr. 50 per tonne per std. week. Security Cr. 250 per week. Transport between settlements is by charter only.

Regulations

Imperial regulations apply at the Starport. Beyond, laws are subject to local interpretation.

Currency

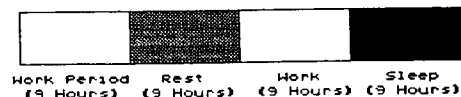
Visitors are allowed to transport any amount of Imperial Credits for personal use. In addition, Inferno has a Currency Exchange Facility which actively welcomes the entire spectrum of local planetary currencies. Rumour has it that the bank is also involved in money laundering for several crime syndicates in Dagudashaag but this has never been proved.

Languages

The primary language is Vilani, though Galanglic is the chosen tech-speak of both Port Misha and Inferno. In addition Kiriani is widely spoken both in Inferno and the Hamaran colonies. Sfuizia, NeoTrokh and Kehuu are also frequently heard in the warrens of Port Inferno.

Local Time

Given the length of the Nukaush day (36h 03m 21.3), and the origins of the majority of the population, its hardly surprising that the locals use a variation on the Vilani day. The Nuk's have adapted the Vilani circadian rhythm to fit a thirty-six hour day. The day is divided into four nine hour periods; work, rest, work and sleep.



Portside Facilities

Port Misha has only one hotel, The Theduat which rates 2 star comfort as well as a single traveller's mission near Field One. There are no TAS facilities on the planet despite its Starport classification. Several bars have sprung up which generally cater for either Naval Personnel (most popular is The Alibi) or Merchants (The Bar that Jack Built or One Eye's in particular) but never both. Inferno has a MacKhan's and the Buccaneer Hotel (which is part owned by Makhiir-Hilton) though both have seen better days. Many independent traders prefer to stay at one of the many bordello's or live on their ships. Given Inferno's lack of port-side security many feel this is preferable to having their ship hijacked. Alcohol is extremely cheap - local beers cost Cr.1 per glass, wine from Cr.3 a bottle. Food, due to contamination from the wyld, is either extremely expensive or requires intense preparation by a local Shugilii.

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO NUKAUSH ECOLOGY

Nukaush is a planet of many contrasts, from the vast deserts to the impenetrable jungles that form the Wyld. Most of the water is landlocked in the temperate and polar regions surrounded by high mountains and inaccessible wilderness. At the equatorial region lies a vast desert that encircles the entire planet. Yet even here oasis of fragile life exists both above and below the surface.

Equatorial Desert of Lixlondu

The planet's desert is not a dead region, though most visitors rarely see the variety of life that exists here. There are a wide variety of water-bearing vegetation though much of the plant lies deep underground with only a few thick skinned leaves on the surface. Wild life, mostly reptile or mammal are rarely seen except at dusk and dawn. The only exception to that is the Desert Trapworm. Trapworms belong to the leech family and live deep below the surface. They use a natural secretion to bind the sand above their entrances into a thin crust. They then wait. A single trapworm may have as many as two hundred holes within a 50m radius of their lair. When something steps on a crust it cracks open releasing a pungent odour which signals the trapworm as to which trap has been invaded. Trapworms are believed to be capable of travelling at speeds of up to 63 kmph through prepared tunnels and can travel at speeds of 20kmph through soft sand. Beneath each trapdoor is a pit, usually 2m deep into which the creature's limb falls. The trapworm quickly rushes to the base of the pit and using strong body muscles springs up and engulfs the limb. All the victim feels is a warm sensation as the worm, using its three rows of sharp teeth bites the limb off. The victim is generally unaware that they have been decapitated until they pull the remains of the limb free from the trap. The trapworm will absorb all body fluids from its prize before excreting the desiccated remains out in a single amber pellet. This pellet is composed of silicone, daemonte and the creature's own secretions and within ten minutes becomes extremely hard. This substance, known locally as Ambersand, is highly prized for decoration. Given the dangers involved in locating a trapworm's lair and excretion chamber, ambersand is still extremely rare.

Wyld

The wyld is the name given to the wilderness regions surrounding the equatorial desert of Lixlondu. It is hemmed on one side by desert and on the other by vast mountain ranges which the icy Polar winds cannot penetrate. Fertile valleys lie on the slopes which have been tamed by man and extensively cultivated. The rain-laden monsoons are contained within the Polar regions by the vast size of the ranges forcing them to drop their moisture onto snow-laden plains causing much of the wyld's moisture to be

restricted to the millions of underground rivers which feed into the seas and oceans. This region teems with life, over 750 species of mammal, 2,100 species of birds and in excess of 50,000 species of insect. The most remarkable aspect of the wyld is however, its plant life. Many of the species are trappers, killing animal life and then dissolving the carcass within its stalk for nourishment, others actively seek out heat traces and strangle. At least three species have a limited form of mobility and can up root and chase after their prey, stunning it by releasing pods filled with an anaesthetic. Most Nuk's actively avoid travelling through the wyld and in recent years there has been a great deal of land clearance to make way for crops.

Fire Blossom - Cactus-like plants, typically about 40 cm tall with one or two bronze-coloured flowers and long, highly mobile tendrils. They produce an intense chemical heat within the stem that makes the tendrils and stem so hot that any combustible material that comes in contact with it is liable to start to smoulder and burn. Fire Blossoms attack by winding their tendrils round an unsuspecting creature and dragging it back towards the plant whereupon it begins to kill it by intense heat.

LeechRoot - LeechRoot grows in the more temperate parts of the Wyld. It may reach up to 1.5m in height with a long, flexible stem and branches covered in hooked leaves ending in small poison barbs. The plant's blossom is about the size of a man's head and is composed of twelve grey, fleshy petals drawn tightly together. LeechRoot is sensitive to body heat and attacks initially by clinging to its victim with its leaves which inject a mildly poisonous anaesthetic. The creature will fall unconscious and be stalked by the LeechRoot which will open its blossom to reveal hundreds of fine 'filaments' which it inserts into the prey's veins in order to drain off its blood.

The Cauldron Region

The Cauldron was initially formed millennia ago, when a giant meteor passing through the system destroyed the twin moons of Ithungsi and caused a fragment of one of the moons to crash into Nukaush. Today the Cauldron is protected on three sides by high cliffs with massive waterfalls plunging over the sides to the crater floor three kilometres below. The Western edge of the crater is lower but is dominated by three active volcanoes that continually spew out black sulphuric smoke into the atmosphere. During the Rule of Man a settlement was built on the Southern coast of the lake by the crews of smugglers and pirates who used the planet as an illegal 'pitstop'. The colony survived the Long Night and was preyed upon by Reivers who apparently established a settlement of their own in the Northern territories.

The Cauldron Sea is fed by melting rivers of snow caused by the mini-greenhouse effect of the valley. Heat is trapped beneath a canopy of sulphuric smoke and water vapour. Above the valley is a vast plain of snow all year round. The magma also heats the water up making the region almost unbearably hot with extreme humidity. The Cauldron has no native life of its own, though numerous species has been transplanted. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the Region are the Lucifer Lines; seven lines radiating out for several kilometres from the cauldron which only show up as infrared. No-one knows what causes them. Sensor malfunction is not possible as the region is completely bare of daemonite particles and the fluctuating Polar field could not create this time of sustained effect. Perhaps the most surprising thing is that the thick covering of snow on the surface is totally unaffected by the lines, though the snow and ice should be melted by the excessive heat apparently given out by whatever fashioned them.

Rather Millennium Trees

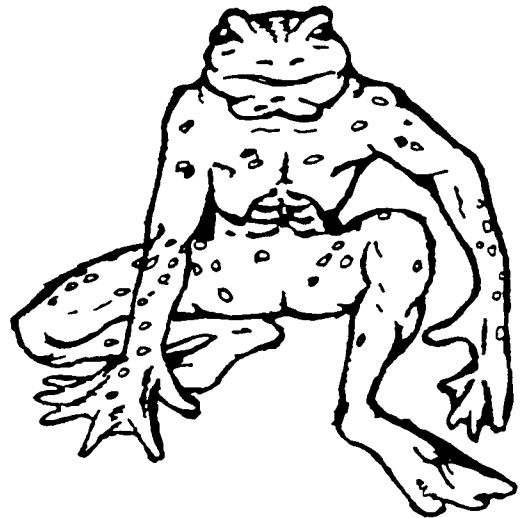
Planted in -320, there are twenty one Millennium Trees on the planet, eight of which are over 200 metres high. The leaves, which can grow up to 0.75m long, are translucent and breaks up the natural sunshine causing the entire region to be bathed in a rainbow of light. Millennium Trees appear to be immune to seasonal changes though not to native organisms. A small larvae, native to Nukaush, causes the bark around the base of the tree's limbs to swell and distort causing the bark to split. Like most trees, it is only the outer few layers of wood that is still alive. A native fungi has adapted so that its spores enter the tree through the split bark and begin to eat away at the dead wood inside. This has several beneficial effects for the tree; Millennium Trees, primarily due to their immense size, are extremely unstable in storms. The fungi eventually eats out the centre of the tree which gives it greater resilience to climatic conditions. The fungi also makes it possible for animals (and Hamaran) to colonise inside the tree so that their faeces, which falls into the roots inside the base of the tree, gives additional fertiliser directly to the plant. The fungi also creates giant plates of organic matter within the tree which act as living platforms. Only within Teäl has the fungi actually eaten away completely the centre of the tree so that it is thoroughly hollow.

Sinkholes

Another mystery of the planet are the sinkholes. Every year as many as ten circular holes, often a hundred metres in diameter, open up around the globe. All are perfectly circular and drop for a depth of up to 200 metres. These sinkholes occur without warning and have taken out buildings, fields, people and livestock. Rumour has it that they are the castholes of gigantic trapworms but whatever is causing this phenomenon, it is totally unpredictable.

Jhester Seas

Only in the regions around the Jhester seas are found native polymorphic lifeforms. Fauna, in all other regions, follow standard evolutionary patterns. In this region, however, the native lifeforms are both amphibious and shapechanging. Creatures from this region all have the following characteristics; All lack fur, instead they have a thick layer of epidermis which they can alter to be thinner or thicker as required. 'Bones' consist of flexible hollow tubes made up of a flexible cartilage which can be reshaped and then filled with a super-dense 'blood'-like fluid to give the creature skeletal strength.



The Jhesters are perhaps the best known example of shapechanger. Its natural form is of a 1.3 m high frog-like creature, yet it is capable of mimicking most racial forms through mentally controlling the alteration of its bone and outer skin. Jhesters are not intelligent though scientists have not yet been able to figure out the mechanism which controls the metamorphosis. Jhesters can only imitate images that they see and then only on the surface. It can create ridges of 'armour', grow new limbs (though these generally lack strength or dexterity and are more for decoration than function) or 'false sensory organs, or even swell their size to half again its original bulk through creating pockets of methane deep within the layers of epidermis. Most other polymorphic creatures lack the Jhesters ability to imitate a wide variety of creatures and generally develop a defensive and attack forms, often in imitation of their most feared predator. Jhesters have been classed as non-intelligent though the Brethren Uplift Institute have stated that it is their belief that Jhesters could develop intelligence eventually. This theory is hotly contended by most scientists who believe that Jhesters are an evolutionary dead-end. Jhesters have become a popular pet both in and around Inferno and throughout Dagudashaag, Vland and Gushemege Sectors.

CULTURE

The Dhuna

The Dhuna originated on Gursa. The cult was originally part of the Khuraashii faith which permeates Vilani space to this day. In -5,879, two years after the death of the prophet, confusion over the proper successor led to the religions separation into two distinct factions; one believed that the leadership or Khimaan should fall to a qualified leader elected by the faithful. The other sect believed that succession should fall to a member of the prophet's family (specifically Shannash Dhuna who was the prophet's son-in-law). This matter became the cause of great contention and, in -5,877 Shannash was assassinated without leaving an heir. This led the majority of the faithful to agree to follow an elected Khimaan. However later that year a priest wandered out of the desert of Gursa claiming to have been possessed by the spirit of Shannash Dhuna. This priest (known today only as Sharik Dhuna) formed a well organised underground to strike at the 'pagan followers' of the Khimaan. Having no organised army and no great wealth, Dhuna used other means. Assassination has a long history in Vilani society and Dhuna had no shortage of fanatics willing to die for his cause. Dhuna established a caste of secret killers who were trained in the methods of assassination, disguise and languages. These devotees were brainwashed into total obedience and believed that ordinary religious beliefs were for the masses. Dhuna is also believed to have started the search for young females with high psionic potential to form the core of his caste of priestesses; each was blinded 'so they might see' and were only allowed to breed with males who were either of his warrior caste or were of high psionic potential. In -5, 708 Dhuna died and his spirit chose its 'new' host . Very little is known about the Dhuna for the next two hundred years though their assassinations continued unabated. Near the end of this time several changes began to be recognised; The caste were no longer focusing their 'attentions' on just followers of the Khimaan but were attacking in what appeared to be a random manner. Secondly, more and more of the Dhuna were failing to be caught. Historians now believe that the Dhuna had began its worship of Guurakhira, she who thirsted after blood. The leadership had also changed. Now the spirit of Dhuna apparently resided within the high priestess. Legends claim that Sharik had been inspired to begin his Priestess breeding programme in order to create the perfect 'host'. Despite the number of ritual murders performed each year, the Dhuna would have probably remained nothing more than a legend if the Dhuna hadn't spread out into space. The High Priestess 'fragmented' the spirit of Dhuna and endowed it onto two hundred priestesses who would each establish a temple sacred to the pacification of Guurakhira and continue the breeding programme using new stock.

One such 'seed' arrived on Nukaush with the Mining Guild. They built their temple deep within the Wyld, in the foothills of Bhuraani. Tradition had it that their victims were chosen at random, the sign of Dhuna upon their foreheads. It was this apparent random selection of victims that proved to be their undoing. Followers of the Khimaan had accepted f̄atalistically, the assassinations but others did not and set out to unmask the murderers. On Nukaush, the Dhuna eventually fled, leaving behind an undamaged temple (one of only two in the Sector) though legends continue to persist right up to the present day that a caste of Dhuna still exists amidst the population secretly carrying out their 'religious' duties.

Vilani Families

Most settlements (*or Gankhesii*) on Nukaush consist of extended Vilani families. When the caste system broke down on the planet, the Vilani colonists reverted back to more ancient links. Most settlements are organised along patriarchal lines and have a strong sense of community. Port Misha and Inferno are the exception. Port Misha, while controlled by Vilani Nuk's, is a neutral ground overseen by the Navy and local guilds. Like most Vilani, the majority of Nuk's will allow their own personal desires be subdued by the needs of the group. This has led to the universal concept of hospitality whereby strangers are looked after as distant members of the family while within the settlement yet instantly revert to the status of a 'rabid beast' once they have left. Few travel, except to Port Misha. The chaos of the Wyld terrifies them, as does space.

Most of the families have taken over specific tasks - some harvest the Shu algae which can be converted into 'Anti-Alc', an alcohol suppressant widely used throughout the Sector (Note: Anti-Alc is administered by patch and, within 15 seconds, radically alters the chemical composition of alcohol in the blood into a harmless stimulant, though it momentarily leaves the user disoriented. Taking alcohol within ten minutes of administration will result in violent and uncontrolled vomiting). Other families mine the Daemonite particles in the desert. Daemonite are crystalline fragments which absorb and then re-echo the planet's magnetic radiation. The carpet of Daemonite was primarily responsible for the 'false' sensor readings that fooled the mining guilds and today are widely used in sensor decoys. Yet other families man the giant wind turbines that power the Gankhesii or have formed partnerships, like the Family Kadli has with SURD and Makhidkarun, to oversee the creation of Androids or run the Half-Life farms.

Work always comes first to the Vilani families. Keep in mind that there is little social entertaining in the pure sense. Its society is inflexibly hierarchical. Any blurring of the line of authority will lead to confusion and resentment sooner or later.

One's position is determined primarily by race and position though age and (to a lesser extent) gender come into consideration. Dagudashaag Vilani have a clear sense of what tasks are more menial than others and therefore beneath their dignified station in the hierarchy. You must be careful and respect their status. You do not ask a junior member to give a message to a family head, especially if it could be interpreted as an order. All tasks are carried out by specific people and asking a Vilani to carry out a task that is 'below' them can result in a great deal of discontentment. Whatever you do, do not carry out a task that should be done by someone in your employ unless you wish them to think you are about to dismiss them. Most Vilani around Port Misha are getting used to the antics of young Interstellar's trying to do everything themselves so they are no longer so easily upset by a single annoying act. When in doubt, use your common sense, and pass all orders down through qualified family linkers. They know what to do to preserve everyone's dignity and your composure. Most Nuk's know their place, and, while hard working and eager to please, they will generally be reluctant to venture beyond their specified responsibilities.

Due to the poor quality of on-planet education available to the families, most have not been trained to make decisions or to use their own judgement. Some of them may be extremely proficient at using technology yet cannot read a manual nor are they generally willing to learn anything new by themselves.

It will probably help non-Vilani if they have their names rendered into high Vilani. Avoid computer programs and companies which transliterate names for a fee. They have no sense of humour and little literary background. It helps obviously if your name can be translated into the name of a major family or hero from Vilani history.

ANDROIDS - THE REALITY & THE MYTH

By Roger E. Moore, c. 1082 - University of Ushra

'It is the character that makes the man, not the clay which is its abode'

John Carter, Barsoom.

An android was a technologically produced man-like creature, made of organic material, which was capable of rational human thought, feelings and behaviour to a reasonable degree. They were however incapable of reproducing - this restriction is imposed by Imperial law, not by the limitations of technology. Android populations were primarily the creation of humans who required their service in occupations involving physical labour, repetitive tasks and generally considerable hazard. Thus they were often seen as expendable and given little control over their fates.

Though commercial varieties differed considerably on the surface, virtually all had certain physiological and psychological characteristics in common. Androids were generally produced in basically human form, though there were produced in various sizes with varying skills, characteristics, colorations etc. Most were stronger than the average human (muscle tissue is relatively easy to construct) but with slightly poorer physical co-ordination and almost always below-average intellects (nervous and cerebral tissue is much harder to create and maintain). A high tolerance to pain and physical damage with a conversely lowered level of self-preservation was also present. Respiratory and digestive systems were generally analogous to a humans, and they could survive on the same sorts of food as ourselves, though androids required more protein supplements and generally ate more vegetable matter than meat. Initially, following decanting, androids were extremely passive and required considerable instruction and care. Most were given sufficient training to be able to follow human behavioral and thought norms but little formal education except what was required to carry out their allotted tasks. Android thought processes tended to be literal and unimaginative though there were cases of Androids, nearing the end of their life-span, adopting more independent and creative personalities. Studies of such Androids showed that most were employed in military and commercial-merchant organisations which required considerable independent thought and action. Androids frequently had distinguishing physical characteristics to ensure easy recognition. None had navels, sexual organs and many had no body hair. Sense of touch, smell and taste were generally less discriminative than humans though most had good sight and hearing. Most bore discretely located company trademarks or identification numbers on their bodies and a few brands were given skin tones that were divergent from human norms such as a purple or orange tint.

Ancient fears of androids killing their human masters and rebelling in general (known as the Frankenstein Complex) have proved to be completely mythical, though there appear to be a couple of cases where individual androids have proved themselves capable of anti-social activities in the defence of a particular master or even to prolong their own self-preservation but never to the extent where they would breach the Asimov Inhibition and kill or seriously injure a sentient creature other than another android.

(Abridged from an article found in **White Dwarf 30 - April 1982**. I have unfortunately been unable to track down the author, **Roger E. Moore** who holds the copyright on the complete article and character generation system so have had to restrict myself to abridging his extremely comprehensive concepts and ideas.)

ANDROIDS IN THE IMPERIUM

In 17, Emperor Cleon Zhunastu single-handedly destroyed the entire Android trade when he declared that *"Any sentient lifeform, within the Imperial borders, regardless of its origin, is a protected being, and thus a citizen of the Third Imperium."* An android is classed as a "synthetic man, created from biological materials." Prior to this time, certain planets that had reached TL 14, had begun to flood the 'servant' market with synthetic humans. They had many obvious advantages over robots, both from the producers and the consumers point of view; they were more versatile, intelligent, fairly high dexterity, extremely strong, cheaper to create and with a built-in consumer lifespan of only 15 years (after all you can't have a new servo-motor fitted if your Android loses her arm now can you?). Androids, under Imperial Law, were now automatically classed as Imperial citizens (**Android Freedoms Act, 22**).

At the same time, Cleon gave the robotic industry, who were obviously in direct competition with Android manufacturers, a much needed boost by explicitly stating that robots were not affected when he further stated that *"One may argue that that an intelligent robot might be sentient, but it is definitely not a lifeform."* **Imperial Archives XVII-AAB230 (b)**.

While Android production continued on some worlds (a fundamental concept of the Imperium is that it rules between worlds, not the worlds itself), it was now illegal to transport them off-world. In the 1090's Imperial Geneering lost their Imperial charter and had their assets impounded when it was discovered that the company was trading in Androids.

Problems also arose because of the android's similarity to humans; some saw them as slaves in need of liberation, others as a threat to the survival of man. The latter reflected ancient fears some humans had towards androids.

In 1098, SURD hit upon an idea for circumventing the law. If they could breed non-sentient androids, the law no longer applied. These could be programmed through the use of a cybernetic interface. The Android would still maintain all the advantages of the genetic servant while actually be capable of being programmed with whatever personality the owner wished. However, until the idea could be properly marketed it was necessary to place the breeding facility on a world where the production of Android 'slaves' would not be illegal - Nukaush was chosen as the test site.



Field Worker 205

Androids (Artificial Persons - APe's)

AP's are biological robots; with a genetic rather than mechanical structure. Solomani have been creating artificial races for centuries but the AP's are a variation, in that this is an attempt to create a servant race without independent thought. SURD has used the unique gene structure of the Jhesters and created a hybrid DNA that has resulted in the synthesis of a man-like creature with shared racial talents. These AP's are generally grey/green in colour and, while they are man-like in shape, they have been designed to be sufficiently different to prevent their eventual owners from 'humanising' them. Most Grey's stand about 1.5 metres high, have elongated muscular arms and legs and a ape-like head. The face is deliberately designed to be unattractive to humans; broad nose, thick, bulbous lips and eyes that are large and completely covered by a black membrane. All are born neutered. Grey's are extremely dextrous and strong (e.g. can lift and carry as much as three humans) despite their apparently fragile appearance. Grey's are supposedly born without intelligence and at age three (biologically) they undergo an operation whereby their brains are linked to a computer interface which allows their owner to programme in tasks and personality to suit their individual taste. The League for the Abolition of Robotic Slavery (LARS), are currently in court trying to prove that in fact Grey's are born with intelligence and actually go through a lobotomy at the time the interface is fitted to make them the 'perfect' servants. Makhidkarun has dismissed this claim and stated that they hope to start marketing the Grey's within two years.

Half-Lifers

Another experiment based on Nukaush is the use of S'mrii Ss'mitkr (ROM Constructs) for humans. Experimental interfaces are being used to allow humans to record their personality onto ROM which theoretically could then be transferred, using experimental mind transfer units, to the organic brain of a human clone or android. This could effectively allow the user to 'live forever'. There is a great deal of public distaste about the concept, primarily, it is claimed, amongst those who cannot afford the privilege. Given the current Imperial ruling, Makhidkarun thought it wise to set up its first station on a backwater planet.

The sector courts have currently ruled that, hypothetically, recipricants of such a personality transfer should not be in line to inherit their 'own' estate, except in cases where the 'original' donor is now deceased has left no living kin. They have further ruled that should Mind-Transfer Cloning (MTC) be de-regulated, the clone recipricant must be unenhanced and that the ROM personality must only be transferred into the undeveloped mind of the 'original's' own clone which must then be tattooed to legally identify it as such. While Makhidkarun are not completely happy with the rulings, they have accepted that the court's viewpoint has allowed a possible legal opening in the current interpretation which could result in the process being accepted as a legitimate practice. At the moment Makhidkarun are processing minds onto ROM - a task that can take up to a month while the depositor lies in deep coma - and are contesting the current legal ruling through the Imperial Courts in the hope of having mind transfers totally deregulated. They are also processing clones and putting them into cold storage in preparation for such an event. Rumours are currently circulating that someone has already successfully transferred a personality into a clone though this is rigorously denied by Makhidkarun officials.

The Hamaran

The majority of Hamaran live in close knit communities established within the hollowed out centres of the larger Millennium Trees. Each community is dedicated to ensuring the health and continued growth of their home-tree and do all possible to protect and preserve the living wood and branches from danger. The actual settlements are located deep within the trunk in natural pockets eaten out by the fungus. These 'caverns' are immense and the hamaran have taken to cultivating the platform fungus as natural floors on which entire families live. These have been extensively carved and are connected together by skywalks and lifts. With the notable exception of Teäl, all the settlements are utterly enclosed except for the 'split bark' entrances. To this end, most are connected to nearby wind generators which also power the Hamaran prayer wheels. Most Hamaran generators are 3 kilometre high towers into the top of which water droplets are sprayed. As the water falls it cools creating air currents which power the generator sails at the base. On the way down the wind also powers artificial voice boxes which are computer programmed to speak the ten million names of God. Legend has it that once all the names are spoken aloud, the galaxy will come to an end.

For further details on the Hamaran species see
Signal-GK issue 4

or the upcoming Crowe's 'Encyclopaedia
Xenologica' due out in 1996

Half-Lifers

The cloning of sentient lifeforms becomes possible at TL 10 as does growth quickening techniques, however it requires TL 16 to create clones complete with basic memory patterns of the 'parent'. Memory transfers are still extremely experimental and largely untried even at this level of development, though there has been a great deal of enthusiasm for the work of Doctors Riket and Zinan. Under the ruling of Emperor Paulo III in 1070, 'memory clones' would be classed as illegal since it would be seen as 'tampering with the mind of a sentient lifeform, similar in concept to psionics'. The facility on Nukaush was built (a) because local laws did not prohibit the facilities creation and use and (b) because the companies had already made a large investment on the planet in the form of its android breeding facility. Much of this facility was also necessary for the production of 'memory clones'. To date, SURD has challenged the interpretation of the Imperial Decree in the local Sector Courts and has been given a reasonably favourable interpretation though as yet they have not dared to directly challenge the law by physically creating a clone with the memory of its 'parent'. The facility is currently producing memory pattern clones and placing them in low berths, while at the same time, recording memory and personalities for several rich clients in preparation for a possible deregulation of the Law, hopefully in 1120.

(See Traveller's Digest 12 & Signal G-K 9
for further details)



Hamaran Trader on a Crav-sled

ENTERTAINMENT

PLACES TO VISIT

Nukaush is not known as a tourist destination. Local families, while upholding the laws of hospitality will not go out of their way to make a visitor feel welcome. Outside of Port Misha and Inferno there are no entertainment centres and little for the tourist.

The Dhuna Temple of the Martyr

The temple is one of only two to survive intact. The temple lies deep within the wyld and is not often visited. The building has been cast from local stone and is sculpted inside and out with images of Guurakhira in her many forms. The building is set low to the ground and consists of eight open court yards set round a circular, domed building. This is the entrance to the caverns where the priestesses lived and where the hearts of sacrifices were offered up to appease Guurakhira. The oracle consists of a giant crystal set in a platinum frame. Legend claims that the crystal was used to allow the High Priestess to 'see' the next chosen victim. Next to the oracle is a deep pit into which the remains of victims were cast. The floor of the pit was apparently filled with Trapworms which mummified the remains. Few will willingly risk the trip to the temple and it is currently in a bad state of decay. What is unexplained is the fact that even today, live Trapworms exist at the bottom of the pit and this has helped fuel local fears that there are still Dhuna cultists on the planet.

The Reiver Carvings

The carvings, which vary in quality from outstanding to extremely crude, cover an area of cliffs three kilometres long. These overlook the Jhester Seas and have apparently been carved by hand millennia ago. Of the Reiver settlement there is no sign and most scientists now believe that they must have lived onboard their ships rather than creating a settlement. Some locals have begun to make smaller casts of the carvings which they sell off-world.

Jhester Seas

The Jhester Seas swarm with a wide variety of polymorphic life. Most come to watch the Jhesters building their nests amidst the rocky shore or to see creatures such as the harmless lakho alter its shape from fish into a Jhester spawn. On the Southern shore of Lake asier, locals have trained a tribe of Jhesters to imitate visitors in return for tipbits.

The Hidden land of the Cauldron

The Cauldron region is extremely dangerous and tourists are well advised to stay away. There are no laws in force regarding the preservation of life and each year in excess of 750 people die through acts of violence. There is little here to attract the casual visitor. The ruins on the Southern Coast of the crater was destroyed centuries before when the crater wall that overhung the city was partially destroyed by bombardment.

This resulted in the city being flooded from above though many still live in the drier parts of the old town. On the surface of the Crater lake lies the actual Starport, startown and several of the richer estates. Local rumour has it that at least some of these are the estates of the three surviving Thief-Kings. Most of the city is actually underneath the lake. The true city of Port Inferno was built within ancient magma holes that honeycomb the region. Down here life is cheap and anything can be bought for the right price.

Inferno is a dirty and uncivilised port city where almost anything goes. Since all transport has to come through Port Misha there are no customs inspections though each ship must file a list of incoming freight on which the City Elders charge a 3% duty. The system is totally corrupt, and Port Administration deliberately kept understaffed. Shipping leaving the Port is supposed to travel first to Misha and then into orbit though most ignore this rule.

Most of the inhabitants of Inferno live underground though there are several vents and some of the larger buildings have entrances on the surface of the islands. Surface buildings are built with domed roofs to help protect against volcanic eruption. There are no laws on urban planning and houses co-exist next to factories or directly beneath the starport. This is further confused by the fact that none of the 'streets' have names. Directions are generally given by local businesses which makes it hard for first-time visitors to find their destination. There are many more magma shafts than are currently used by the local inhabitants and rumour has it that some of the unused shafts are being used to store contraband goods. Whether or not this is true, most make it a point to deliberately avoid unoccupied shafts.

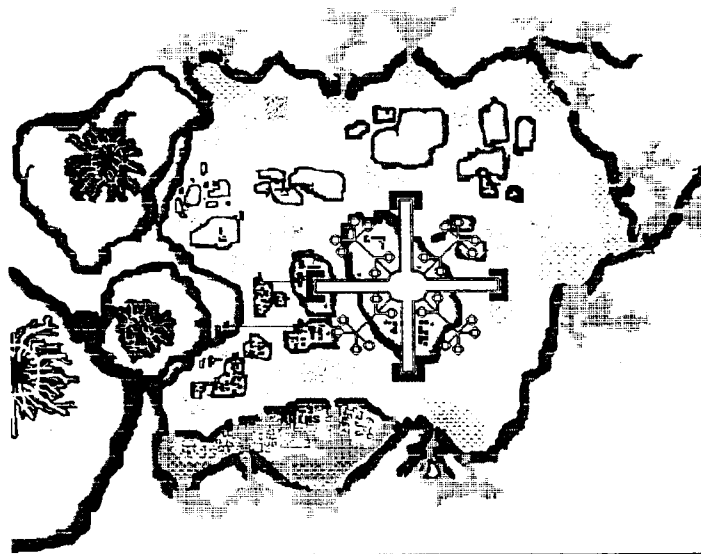
This area is supposed to be under the protection of the Five Star Triad though many independent fixers also reside here, paying protection money to the right people. The markets often seem filled with junk yet the same person who is trying to sell you a worn-out translator can obtain virtually anything you could think of, for the right price.

Perhaps the most popular bordello in Port Inferno is The Mirror; the bar and 'entertainment' area is fitted with moving holographic mirrors and projections from other parts of the bar. For this reason each table has been fitted with its own autobar facility and patrons use guide sticks to find the rest rooms and exits. Officially these projections are supposed to be random though certain patrons claim that if you pay for it the projections can give you total anonymity by cloaking your location or, in cases of emergency, shield you by projecting your image to another part of the bar.

Duelling is not only legal but classed locally as prime entertainment. Given the problems with communication, there are no Tri-vee facilities on the planet. Instead all entertainment is by shielded chip which must be duplicated for dispersal. Most don't bother and settle instead for the real thing. Fights can start for almost no reason and there is no law within Port Inferno to punish a murderer.

Psychopaths and professional gunslingers however don't last long here.

What Port Inferno lacks in entertainment and sightseeing, it makes up for with business opportunities though it is not for the weak-hearted. Many of the best pilots in the Quadrant either come from the Cauldron or else regularly visit. Street festivals can occur at any time, the booze is cheap and law enforcement almost non-existent.



Traveller's Mission



"Take thy Brethren into thy house & feed him"

Legend engraved above the entrance

Traveller's Missions can be found on most high population planets throughout Core and Dagudashaag sectors. The first such missions were initially constructed for proselyting purposes by the Brethren faith which were just beginning to spread out from Dipa in the Pact subsector. It was Abbot Saul Benedict who, in 98, first saw the need for the Church to construct buildings specifically to feed and house the physical (rather than the spiritual) man. He based his concept on an ancient Terran institution, the Seaman's Missions. Abbot Benedict built the first pre-fabricated missions and sited them in the startown's of neighbouring systems. So great was the demand for these 'temporal' shelters that Abbot Benedict made it his life work to fundraise for the construction of mission buildings on all Class A & B planets in the Sector as well as on high population worlds. When he died in 197 he had managed to build in excess of one thousand hostels throughout the sector.

The Hostels

All buildings follow a similar floorplan; Primarily a single floor building with storeroom upstairs and a high ceiling sleeping chamber to enable them to pack as many people in as possible.

Entrance - The front entrance is deliberately kept narrow to force people to go through the doorway one at a time. This was designed in to control access in case of attack or riot.

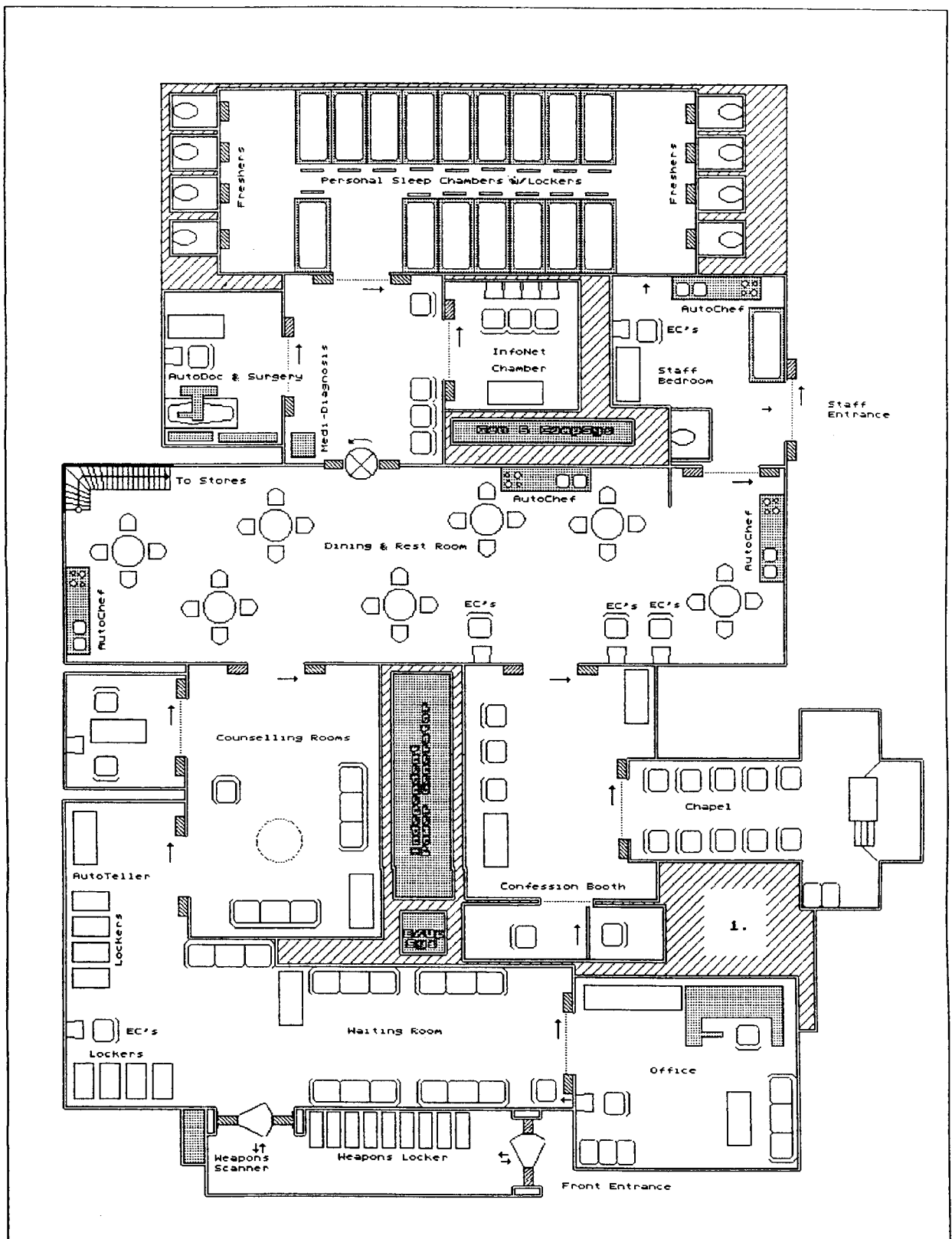
Weapons Lockers - Palm-seal lockers to store client's weapons and drugs safely without allowing them within the blast-shielded interior of the building.

Weapons scanner - A TL 15 design weapons and chemical scanner linked to a **Gen5 Computer** which controls access to the inner chamber. The Brethren policy is that no weapons or drugs are allowed within a hostel. Attempting to go through can result in a lock out or in being captured by the interior tangles which are located throughout the waiting area.

Waiting Room - Where clients wait until their request for a sleep chamber ('coffin') is cleared. Given that most hostels are over-subscribed, these seats often act as beds for the poorer clients. this chamber also houses large lockers for the storage of luggage and paks as well as an Autoteller to allow clients to change their money to and from local currency without having to pay an excessive fee for the privilege.

Office - While each hostel is technically fully automated, all have a staff of nephilyte Brethren Priests to interact with the clients. A fitted 'Coffin' costs Cr.10 per night and food from the AutoChef costs between Cr.2 and Cr.20 per meal. 'Coffins' at the top of the stack are generally stripped of all amenities and may be given out by staff for a fee varying between totally free and Cr.5 according to what the client can afford. In addition to the AutoChef's, most Hostels also operate a free soup kitchen supplying free food every night at Midnight.

Note: Most weapons scanners can actually 'read' how much money (both in credit and in local hard currency) the client is carrying on their person when they first enter. Credits can be read magnetically while the majority of local currency use different alloys in their local currency which, when analysed, can reveal the type, value and amount of currency present. This fact is not well known or widely documented.



Counselling Rooms - Consist of a small consulting room and a larger group room with a **holo-pit**. Here clients can receive counselling on debt, addiction and the local law. When not in use for a session, the larger room doubles as a rest area with the **Holo-pit** tuned into the local Tri-vee stations.

Independent Power Generator - All missions have their own power supply which leeches from the local power system when available but can carry on without interruption if the external power is cut off.

Dining Area & Rest Room - has three AutoChef's supplying a wide variety of highly nutritious meals throughout the day as well as several individual Entertainment Consoles (EC's or Easy's) which can tune in (but not interface) with all approved channels and InfoNets including FreeFax and JobNet. The hostel's **Gen5** automatically tunes out all pornographic and excessively violent programmes. Privacy Zones can be activated around each of the tables and Easy's.

Staircase - This is retina-sealed and leads to the large storeroom area above the main building.

This holds a year's supply of food as well as a stockpile of emergency supplies in case of a disaster.

Staff Bedroom - A separate chamber with security lock to give staff privacy. The room includes three Sleep Chambers, a Fresher, Easy and AutoChef (which surprisingly carries exactly the same range of food as the clients) and a private entrance in and out.

Chapel - Just off the Dining Area is the Hostel's religious centre. While the **Chapel** itself is primarily for Brethren rituals the **antechamber** is used by all denominations. The area also includes a **Confession Booth** where Brethren followers can confess their sins and receive absolution from a Brethren Priest. The entire region is flooded in ultra-sonic subliminals to ensure everyone feels a sense of peace and tranquility in these rooms.

Corridor to Dormitory - This is sealed and has a secondary chemical sensor. Inside is an adapted autoDoc which can give diagnosis (and amount remaining on medical insurance) but will not treat anything except minor wounds.

AutoDoc & Surgery - sealed behind a blast door is the mission's medical facility which is manned twice daily by volunteer medics; often trauma team staff and starship doctors on shore leave. The Mission finances free medical treatments every three days but will provide medical attention (at cost) throughout the year. The **AutoDoc** facilities are ex-military sold as a job lot and as such are capable of quite radical surgery with minimum medical supplies.

InfoNet Chamber - Allows access (under supervision) to the planetary Commnet. This facility is supplied (at cost) by INDISS.

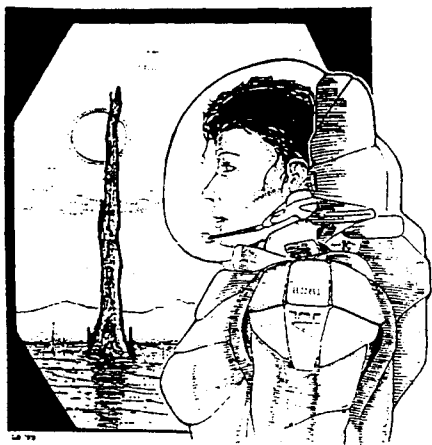
Gen5 CompSys - The entire facility is ran by a pseudo-intelligent computer system. These were originally starship systems which has been reprogrammed to deal with the needs of the clients. The mission also has an emergency Back-Up System (B/Up Sys) which switches in if anyone disrupts the primary computer functions. Both systems have been fitted with an extensive series of Asimov Inhibitions to prevent harm either through action or inaction to sentients. The **Gen5** can be accessed throughout the premises by voice and has a pseudo-personality (the B/Up Sys does not) which varies from Hostel to hostel depending on who originally programmed the core.

Dormitory - This area is two stories high, stacked with personal sleep chambers ('coffins') right to the roof. A standard hostel can sleep 128 people in individual chambers. Each chamber has a small entrance to crawl in, a small locker and inside most have a bed roll, light, music unit, pay-as-you-use commlink and small snack bar and non-alcoholic drink cabinet. each also has a hidden medi-sensor built into the chamber in order to notify the **Gen5**

should one of the clients take ill during the night. There are also Fresher cabinets with Dri-wash plumbing facilities. This room has deliberate low lighting and is also flooded with ultra-sonic subliminals to ensure that all the clients want to do in here is sleep.

Refefee's Note: Brethren priests make wide use of post-hypnotic and subliminal suggestion both to 'program' the clients of the Mission's against violence (though not directly against self-defence), to help calm them down and stop depression and to ensure that they are susceptible to the message of the Church. This is deliberately designed not to over-ride the client's own religious belief but to make them more tolerant of other sentients. The programming for the whole hostel is controlled by a special hidden chamber at (1) which is accessible only from the storeroom upstairs.





CROWE'S Encyclopaedia Xenologica



Published by Makia-Selwyn-Tobermory, 1114
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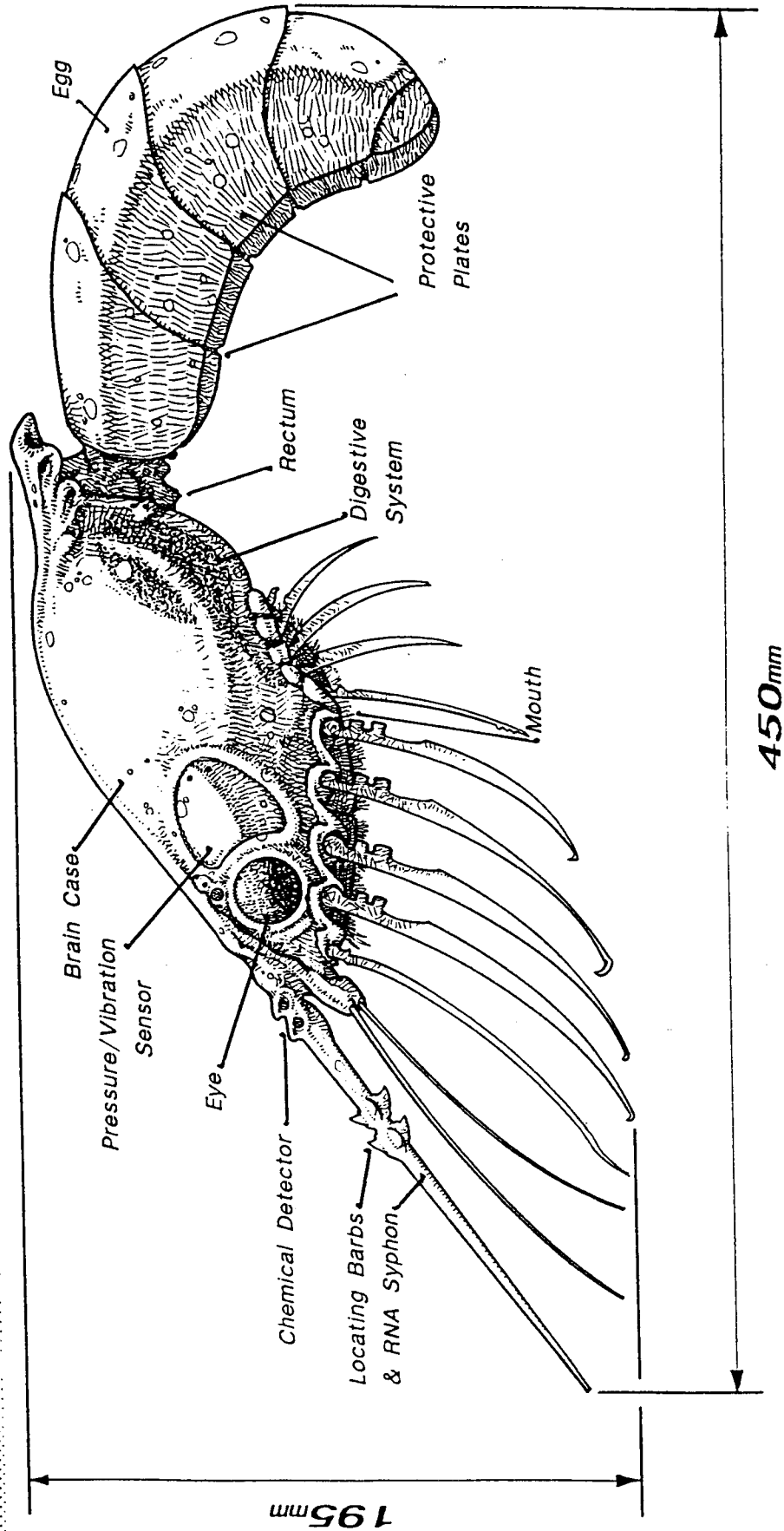
A GUIDE TO THE DRACAENA MARGINATA SHRIMP AND RELATED LIFE FORMS.

Spence's Dracaena Marginata Shrimp; first discovered in -2,199 by Doctor Ou-alla Spence basking in the submerged roots of the Dragon Tree in the mangrove swamps of Rabir, a planet just rimward of the present Vilani border (2405 Arnakhish/ Dagudashaag B9864459 Non Ind 402 Im K3 VI). By this time it is believed that Rabir had been settled by Vilani farmers and miners for some six thousand six hundred years. The original Naarsirka settlers, paying very little attention to the planets non-profitable resources, ignored much of the fauna of Rabir.

LOCATION - Spence's shrimps are aquatic, they are generally found in strongly lit areas of broken shade, in the interface between fresh and salted waters such as mangroves. They can be found in any depth of water, but prefer still water with silted beds. Rabir, their homeworld has a vague resemblance to Earth; in size, rotation, gravity and natural satellites. Rabir, however has elevated levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, giving acidic precipitation. Both plants and animals native to this planet are accustomed to the high carbonic acid levels in the rain, but long term visitors should take precautions). Rabir, like Earth has large bodies of water, but its close orbit prevents ice-caps forming, and with elevated ozone in the atmosphere weather world wide, is always found to be clement. Very few species of fauna exist (5% of Terra), and very many species of flora (twice as many as Terra). All major land masses between hex 4 north and hex 4 south are covered by rainforest to the sea shore. The atmosphere is humid and hazy, and the whole surface of the planet is subject to great fogs and mists, on a scale rarely seen in human space. Ecologists speculate that the planet is in a minor green house effect, apparently recovering from a major ecosystem overload which occurred circa -300,000 Imperial. Rabir has a 28 hour day and a 154 day yearly rotation, with no axial tilt at all.

The far northern and southern latitudes have long since been colonised by Vilani farmers and miners. An average population of 40,000 vilani live here. They're self sufficient at TL 9, trading in spice, staples, rice, 'indentured servants' and ores, off world through their two B class starports. The vilani society is both welcoming and gregarious to travellers. Do not leave without sampling the fine ales and spiced sea food dishes of the northern climes.

PHYSIOLOGY- The shrimp is a bilateral symmetrical, semi-warm blooded, arthropodic filter. The shrimp is supported and protected by a translucent chitinous plated exoskeleton. The mature shrimp can grow up to 650mm in length and 200mm in width, and up to 4 kg in weight. Even at these vast sizes the shrimp remains translucent to light. Anatomists suggest that this translucent nature is so that the shrimps can absorb warmth from light directly into it's internal organs, and pockets of air within its shell which are used to generate heat by way of a limited green house effect, whilst basking for short periods of time in the early morning sun. The shrimps pneumatic systems are all open ended, allowing the creature always to maintain its internal pressure in balance with that of it's environment. This gives it an ability to exist in virtually any depth of water without adverse effects. This remarkable crustacean also maintains a small liver which allows it to maintain the correct temperature for both its' brain and its' egg sack. However the balance of pressure with it's surroundings does have significant draw backs for the dragon tree shrimp as a filter form. For instance, it has evolved a costly, complex chambered peristaltic digestive system (a pressure diffusion or forced osmosis system are not efficient in balanced pressure systems). To make the digestive system more efficient several of the shrimps legs have atrophied into manipulators to waft and wave larger clouds of aphids (their main source of



SPENCES' DRACAENA MARGINATA SHRIMP
(DRAGON TREE SHRIMP) DANGER PARASITIC LIFE FORM

nutrient) into the ducted mandible hairs where they are ingested. Similarly the filter mouth-parts have evolved from simple catchment hairs in ducted tubular hairy jaws, capable of ingesting larger prey.

The shrimps forward section houses all manipulators and limbs (which are not jointed), all sense organs, the whole digestive system, gills, major organs, and a very (150g) oversized brain. The rear section is solely an egg sack. Joining the two halves of the body is a soft fleshy segment containing the lower bowel, rectum, ovaries, atrophied male sex organs, major taxotic supply arteries to the sack and muscle ligature for support of the egg sack while out of the water. The fleshy joint is generally regarded as part of the forward husk as it is not lost when the shrimp drops its egg sack. One of the most bizarre aspects of the shrimp is its' RNA siphon, the purpose of which completely alluded scientists for decades see "Life Cycle and Mating" until Saloika Bremiur discovered its true purpose in 1102 Imp'.

The egg sack is annexed to the main body of the crustacean, it usually contains close to a 100,000 immature eggs each attached to the main taxotic artery, which runs from the parents main body cavity where it is attached to the liver by a type of placenta. In the early morning and prior to mating, by product gasses are pumped into this sack directly from a small pump attached to the gill. This pump has the effect of causing the egg sack to act as a buoy floating the shrimp to the surface of the water to absorb warmth, breed or spawn. In the early morning this buoyancy effect means that you can literally watch a lake turn from muddy brown or crystal blue to pale pink in a matter of moments, as the sun rises.

SENSES - The *Dracaena Marginata* Shrimp being a water borne animal has a slightly different set of senses to ourselves and most other intelligent animals in the empire. It has a simple segmented eye similar to a *Drosophila*'s, but with a blind spot directly forward and a viewing arch of only 270 degrees, the animal is extremely short-sighted. Directly behind the eye is a half moon shaped pressure and vibration centre which acts as a long range sensor similar to sonar. The high frequency sound being omitted in this case from between the protective case of the egg sack the membrane also gives a depth gauge and a point of reference for determining balance. Forward of the eye are chemical detectors which are triggered by a limited series of chemicals in the water, mainly ammonia based chemicals and chemicals with similar properties. The manipulator/feelers under the main husk are sensitive to pressure and, therefore, quite adept at collecting small pieces of digestible material (1 to 12mm in size). Its most bizarre sensor is housed just inside the tip of the forward RNA siphon. This is used to sample the DNA of other life forms to determine if their metabolisms are compatible. Finally, located below the RNA siphon are 2 pairs of feelers. These are used to gauge the depth and viscosity of the water bed ahead of them.

THE BRAIN - The brain of a fully developed Spence's shrimp can weigh up to 250 grams. This size of brain is clearly not required for a life form of this type, which shows no indication of even rudimentary intelligence. Hence we must assume that it fulfils another function, other than higher reasoning. When we study the animals reproductive cycle it becomes clear exactly what this enormous brain is for. Prior to Bremiurs' study several bizarre explanations were offered; A specially bred delicacy (presumably for the Ancients palate), A genetic throw back to an earlier species, Beliwiff the Ziadd biologist suggested that the organ may not be a brain at all, but instead a type of gill or water filter. Clearly none of these explanations were plausible.

MATING AND THE REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE

- Saloika Bremiur in 1102 Imp' discovered the true nature of the dragon tree shrimp and astounded the scientific community of Xeno-biologists by discovering this to be the first unique reproductive cycle found in over 2 centuries. The discovery came from a simple but long term study of the habits of the 2 major life forms on this planet, those being the shrimp, and what appears to be a distant relative, the **Ashdak meshukiiba** or *cow-ant*, a large, intelligent, though not sentient, insect standing at 2.2 metres. Time and observation has shown us that the scenario goes a little bit like this; the shrimp grows to its full size, in the water with a full egg sack. It involuntarily produces excess gases which accumulate in its egg sack, the added buoyancy floats it to the surface in a similar manner to the early morning basking. However, once on the surface they find themselves unable to dissipate their gasses and are stranded on the surface. At this point one of two things generally happens, either the shrimp dies, and sinks to the sea bed, its egg sack tares releasing its eggs which incidentally are the aphids, mentioned earlier, and contribute 60% of the shrimps staple foods. The dead shrimps remains decompose naturally, and become part of the food chain. Alternatively whilst stranded on the surface the bobbing action and colour contrast with the surface attracts the attention of the scavenging cow-ant which wades into the water to try and capture the immobilised shrimp. Naturally, the cow-ant knowing its prey approaches the shrimp via its blind spot, directly forward. If the cow-ant is hungry it will devour the shrimp dropping the egg sack into the water (this evidently is not to its taste) in this instance the egg sack sinks and the aphids are freed into the food chain. If, however, the cow-ant intends to take the shrimp back to its social group it invariably carries it high on its shoulders just behind the back of its head secured in place by its upper pincers, this appears to be an instinctive carrying stance, the upper pincers have evolved perfectly for this use. Out of the water the shrimps RNA siphon becomes supple, the shrimp slips the siphon under the uppermost plate at the base of the cow-ants chitinous skull and through its orbital joint until it contacts the

grey matter of the cow-ants brain. This action evidently gives the cow-ant great pleasure, and studies have shown that the first areas accessed by the siphon are the pleasure stimulation centres of the brain, the cow-ant releases its' grip. The relaxation of grip allows the shrimp to hook the barbs of its' legs onto the cow-ants armour plate. once fully secure the shrimp inserts its two sets of feelers in between the cow-ants armour plates securing a good supply of oxygenated blood. Within an hour of being rescued from its watery grave the shrimp is fully symbiotic with the cow-ants metabolism, the shrimps armour has oxidised, hardening and becoming blackened, and it has started to siphon small amounts of its hosts RNA. These RNA strings are introduced to its own brain and examined. If the strands are useful they are reproduced in the shrimps hind brain, and passed on through the taxotic artery to almost every egg. Almost 10,000,000 eggs are housed in the sack, the ones which receive RNA become aphids. The others, only about 1000 eggs, will mature into shrimps when an amino acid trigger is introduced to them, toward the end of the "mating" process. In an egg sack which receives cow-ant generated RNA, the RNA seems to be distributed randomly amongst the eggs. The reasons for this random distribution are unknown, it was suggested to be an adaptation to preserve the balance of genetic variation. However as the actual genetic variation of the shrimps and cow-ants seems to be well under 0.025% from individual to individual with an overall racial variance of about 0.05%, this would seem to be a redundant theory. Breimur hypothesised that the aphids as a whole are a sort of "library", containing all the relevant experiences of every cow-ant that ever lived, and mated, these experiences are imprinted on the RNA strands shared amongst the pre-aphid eggs during mating. This may be the basis for the next research project, planned for 1130. After the shrimp and cow-ant have been joined together for a period of about 1500 hours, the 1000 eggs mature into hatchling shrimps. The egg sack is dropped, usually in a body of water, and the newly "triggered" shrimps quickly find their way to the bed of the water mass where they feed on their aphid cousins and other organic matter. Meanwhile the hardened husk of the shrimp, still attached to the cow-ant, may remain in place, functioning for up to two years, after this period it drops away from the cow-ants body, lying dormant for a further 1500 hours, during this time the shrimps husk forms into a chrysalis inside of which a baby cow-ant forms. Both the baby cow-ant and the young shrimps mature, the cycle starts again. There are no recorded cases of sexual reproduction amongst the native fauna of Rabir, only asexual reproduction.

INCENTIVES IN THE BREEDING PROCESS -

Apart from the pleasure felt by the cow-ant during insertion and removal of the shrimps various appendages, and besides the intrinsic pleasure gained

by the cow-ant from returning with food to its community, the cow-ant actually achieves sentience whilst the shrimp is attached, even after mating. This period of enlightenment is referred to by sentient cow-ant scholars as "the time of felt memories". This is due to the fact that the shrimp brain turns itself over to storing and encoding the cow-ant hosts transient and static memories into RNA sequences. In doing this process the cow-ant relives former glories and experiences, but with the additional brain capacity (its' brain is effectively doubled in size. The whole of the cow-ants brain is turned over to higher processes whilst the shrimps brain is used as memory. Both brains act together in unison.) to make self judgements and appraisals of their own selves. Also during this period cow-ants are put to work in an organisational manner. Whereas, before mating, a cow-ant of a high culture may have been a gatherer of food, during mating the cow-ant will be elevated to a position of authority. Basic cow-ants remember their times of mating with no awareness but a longing to be "clever" again. As sentience will occur probably just once in a lifetime, in natural & ideal conditions (sometimes more, or sometimes less often according to social structure, location of community, etc.), enlightenment, when it occurs naturally, is interspersed by long years of simple toil.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE COW-ANT -

The term cow-ant is derived from the Vilani words **Ashdak Meshukiiba** or *bovine arthropod*, poorly translated this became cow ant or cow-ant in galanglic. The ashdak meshukiiba is a large; bilaterally symmetrical; warm blooded; quasi-bipedal omnivorous Arthropod. The cow-ant's body is segmented into five main sections, the head; thorax; shoulder; hip; and abdomen. It has the distinction of being one of the few 'aliens' discovered with 20 jointed appendages, 18 of which are used for manipulation or locomotion, none are used for reproduction. It has an opaque, dark vari-coloured chitinous exoskeleton, with some supporting endoskeletal structures of little consequence. the gait of the cow-ant varies greatly. The animal will assume a quadropedal stance when it wishes to trot at a faster pace (30 KM/HR), or whilst burdened. More regularly it will be found in a bipedal stance. When in its bipedal stance the cow-ant stands some 2.2 meters tall. The adult cow-ant weighs in the region of 80KG, with 30% of its body mass dedicated to lung tissue. The lung is housed to the rear of the abdomen, in a trilaterally symmetrical, flexible, protective carapace, which may open or close: exposing the lungs surface to the air; and manipulating the lung in a similar manner as the rib cage of common vertebrates. The cow-ant's alimentary canal begins in the centre of its chest, with large grinding mandibles forming the outer shell of the thoracic cavity. The mouth is fed by an arrangement of pincers locators and grapples on the upper thorax and the under side of the head. Directly behind the mouth lies a sphincter opening onto the stomach, followed by the digestive system which is

very similar to any other large omnivore. The rectum is situated in the base of the thorax and ejects waste in the form of a slurry, from a small blow hole in the anterior/ventral cleft of the thorax, only when the cow-ant is in a quadruped stance (in this stance the blow hole faces down & away). The average cow-ant will live to 50 standard years of age.

SENSES - The cow-ant has independent monotone eyes. They can work simultaneously and are motion activated triangulating, and so are able to zoom in, focus, and independently judge distance. The cow-ant hears in the same range as humans, the ears are situated rear of each eye. It samples odours with the carapace surrounding the lung. The cow-ant has a poor sense of smell, barely reaching human standards. Cow-ants have no sense of taste. The cow-ants tactile senses are confined to the fleshy parts of its body; hands, feet and under the chin. Cow-ants have a great sense of balance and no fear of heights. Cow-ants communicate using the beaters behind the legs, which drum very quickly on the lung casing, making a low vibrating hum. Variations in the pitch, frequency and volume of the hum are used to convey meaningful communication. Any universal translator can cope with the language (there is only one language used amongst the cow-ants, with no dialects or variations of any kind.) a suitable alternative to the UT is the combination of a hair comb and tissue, assuming you already understand the basics of the cow-ant language.

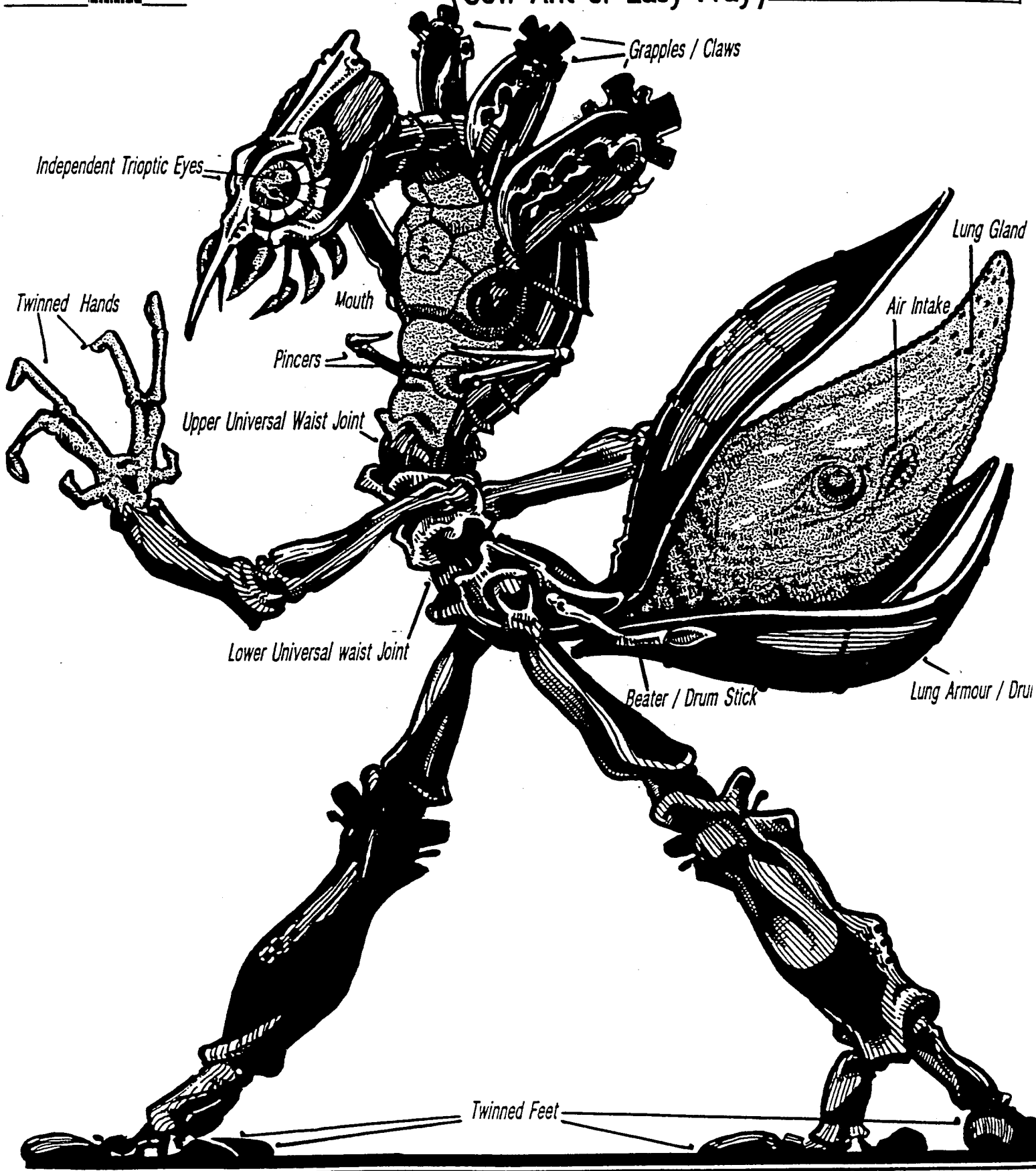
SOCIETY - Cow-ant societies may form where ever a cow-ant finds sentiency. They may be as small as 10 members with only 1 sentient, or as large as 2,000,000 with 40% sentiency. Societies vary this widely with a number of contributing factors, in areas where water is limited a cow-ant may never achieve sentiency, or the shrimps may grow to only 30 centimetres, thus reducing the brain capacity of the enlightened cow-ant during mating. Hence highest cow-ant cultures are found in interface areas between large bodies of water/mangrove and dry land. But all cultures have a love of water sports and attach cultural significance to large bodies of water. Most settled towns invariably have a central community pool for socialising. Some cultures have achieved tech level 5. To achieve this level a special class of both cow-ants and shrimps are grown and mated. These classes are known collectively as 'The Offices'. Each Office is trained to a specific purpose with maximum sized shrimps bred in optimum conditions, with selected aphid food bases. The adult cow-ants are continually mated to achieve a constant level of intelligence for use in occupations such as engineer, doctor, architect, researchers in different fields. One such Officer is the intermediary who is trained selectively for the offices which he will mediate between. 'The Offices' seem to be the mainstay of all higher cultures, filling the technical, administrative, managerial, and practical niches which become more pronounced in advanced

cultures. Most Offices and social groups as a whole do not interact with one another, except through the Intermediary Offices. This puts an awful lot of power at the feet of these individuals. Generally the Office of Intermediaries forms the core of rudimentary governments which start to appear around Tech level 3 onwards. Culturally there are no constraints on the type of governments which spring up in cow-ant social groups. And there are a diverse variety springing up and dying down all the time. However only once has a truly consistent society occurred; the TL5 communist tribe; 'Pathrrrumbarba, it is also the only stable cow-ant government, the only group to achieve and maintain such a high TL, and the only stationary social group to have a history of more than 2000 years (actually it has existed in its present form, for a little more than 6,500 years). Many other socialist and feudal societies are close to 2000 years old. Socially cow-ants vary a lot from time to time and place to place. It should be remembered that unmated cow-ants are actually non sentient, and are therefore quite open to exploitation by elevated cow-ants. The only constant in the cow-ants psyche seems to be an acceptance of their situation, and a sort of lust for 'the time of felt memories', and the elevated thought patterns that accompany it. Elevated cow-ants are subject to as much variation as any other sentient life form. Generally they are gregarious with other sentients, on the other hand their tendency is to look upon standard cow-ants as nothing more than tools. They have no compassion for them, maintain no 'family ties' with them and give no second thought to the fact that when they lose their own sentiency, they too will be equally mistreated. Compassion for less fortunates is a bewildering and alien concept to elevated cow-ants. If it is explained to them they clearly understand the idea but, somehow they never make any actual use of it. Finally, it may be interesting to note that cow-ants are the only intelligent species ever found, which does not have a collective name for itself such as humanity, etc. Even individuals do not have intrinsic names but are named for their social group, then their office or job, then their rank, so a not uncommon name might translate to Pathrrrumbarba - Smith - Elder (Pathrrrumbarba has no translation in galanglic it is thought that it was elected as a name for the tribe on a whim). Cow-ants tend to take on galanglic or vilani names as a matter of courtesy when in human contact.

LOOSE ENDS - There are many loose ends and mysteries to the fauna of this planet; Further studies have revealed that all animal life here is arranged in this peculiar asexual triple cousin manner (e.g. aphid, shrimp, and cow-ant). There are no females at all in any species on this planet. How can life evolve in this manner? And why do all the species on this planet sport sets of vestigial male sex organs if they have no female counterparts? Evidently females did exist once on this planet, fossilised evidence proves

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(Cow Ant or Easy Pray)



Independent Trioptic Eyes

Grapples / Claws

Lung Gland

Twinned Hands

Mouth

Air Intake

Pincers

Upper Universal Waist Joint

Lower Universal waist Joint

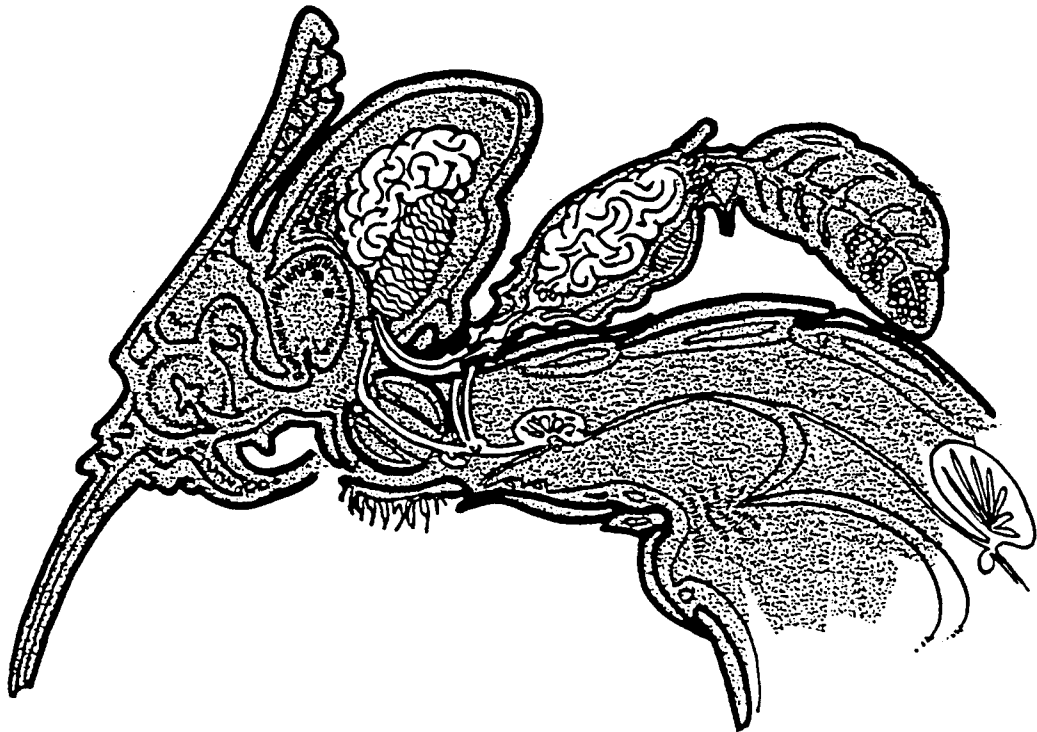
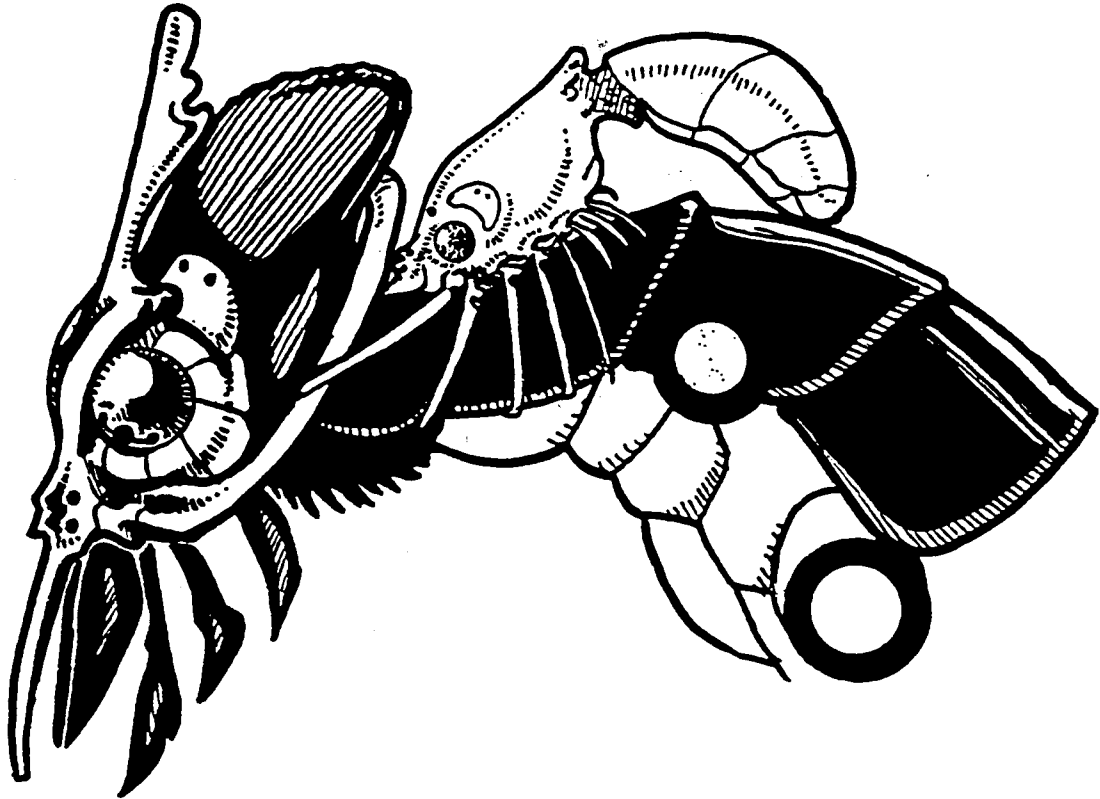
Beater / Drum Stick

Lung Armour / Dru

Twinned Feet

Cow Ant with a Spences' Shrimp Saddled Rear of Skull.

(At this point the shrimp has inserted its' DNA syphon, integrated with the cow ants metabolism, via its' 'feelers', and secured itself to the cowants plated armour with its' hooked legs. Hardening of the shrimps chitinous exoskeleton will soon take place.



Here we see exposed the DNA syphon of the shrimp as it cleaves between the cow ant skull and orbital joint, and inserts itself into the lower part of the cow ants brain. Also note the two lower feelers in contact with the cow ants main artery to the brain, through these 'feelers' the shrimp becomes fully part of the cow ants metabolism, one Syphons oxygenated blood from the cow ant to the shrimp the other returns the spent blood to the cow ants veins.

the point, however none of these fossils have ever shown any physiological forms similar to the arthropodic life forms that inhabit the planet today. In fact fossil evidence shows that all life was replaced by this arthropodic form during the major environmental changes which took place 300,000 years ago more research must be done on this point. Perhaps during the next expedition which is planned for 1130 imp' to study the cow-ant and the aphid/library theory in more depth.

USES IN A STORY LINE

Think of all the fun your characters can have swimming in the mangroves at dawn, think of the possibilities of a human with boundless knowledge in a specific field.

- **Whilst on shore leave one of the PCs accidentally gets a Shrimp attached to the base of his neck,** watch with glee as his ship mates panic and try an extremely dangerous operation without proper medical knowledge. Guffaw as they bungle the op' and leave their ship mate crippled for life, and wander at the new vistas to which the players mind might have soared, if only they had of left him alone.

- **Become a slaver, selling willing slaves on at a vast profit.** And try to avoid the authorities at the same time. Although the cow-ants are not classed as a sentient race, and under Imperial law may be transported as livestock you must have your documents in order. A livestock licence in this area for an 80Kg animal will cost cr. 2,000. Fines for illegal shipping may exceed cr. 10,000,000, so stop and think before you trade livestock.

Since Rabir was settled by the first empire, the colonists have stayed well away from cow-ant territories. Stories of cow-ants are lost in the local populaces history, 99% of the population now view the cow-ants as nothing more than a myth. Cow-ant territories are rarely explored due to their swampish or humid natures, humans find the mangroves and rain forests uncomfortable and of little economic interest. For several years the Pathrrrumbarba colony has been in secret contact with a handful of people from the northern human colonies, and have been selling information about weather patterns, crops, tidal influences and locations of ore loads to the northern settlers. Recently Pathrrrumbarba has started to export small trinkets and earthenware produced by cow-ant craftsmen, for sale offworld. Along with these goods a steady stream of cow-ant 'servants' have been sold on to vilani planets (markets for anything) to date perhaps 1600 cow-ants have found their way onto the vilani market at a price of cr200,000 each.

- **The Brethren Uplift Institute** has heard and reported the tales of Rabir traders selling indentured servants in the Vilani sector. The MOJ, have authorised the BUI to conduct a full investigation on their behalf. Upon further enquiries the BUI has

discovered that the slaves are not human, but are the Ashdak Meshukiiba or cow-ants. The PCs may be hired to investigate the source of these slaves, and in the process, may discover that a few humans in the northern colony are in actual fact only the agents of the sentient cow-ants, who are themselves selling on their own kind for profit, and technology. The BUI has been aware of the cow-ant population of Rabir for several decades during which time it has helped many cow-ant communities to set up their own uplift offices. However this seemingly easy task has always met failure, now with the advent of slaving, in the northern communes the BUI intends to send a research team to investigate why these kind and gregarious sophonts can so completely lack any compassion for their less fortunate brethren. The PCs may be hired to institute the forced uplift of the whole cow-ant population, or maybe just to investigate the sociological reasons which are forcing the cow-ants to act in this manner. They may also be hired on as part of a blockade, to prevent any more slaves being extracted. Whilst in orbit around the planet players lose radio communication with the dirtside research party. They try to locate them with NAS sensors but can find no brain patterns at all on the planet surface. Within a short while radio communications are re-established and the incident is forgotten. The accident with the radio shows us that the world has a psionic shield either natural or sophont-made. Many previous visitors to this planet have noticed this fact but somehow it has never been pointed out to the authorities. If the PCs try to report it, the authorities will accept the PCs statements as fact but somehow still never find it within themselves to do any thing about it.

- **While with the Pathrrrumbarba the PCs are approached by a member of the Exploration Office who has a yen to visit other planets on a voyage of discovery.** If the characters agree he will turn up at their pick up site with a small portable lake, displacing three tons, and especially constructed for his journey. It contains an enclosed ecosystem with trained shrimps for him to maintain his sentience. On leaving the planet the PCs NAS sensor suite will immediately pick up strong activity (equal to that of a telepath) emanating from the cow-ant. If the characters ship is boarded by the blockade or customs; gradually over a period of months the self contained ecosystem will die despite the PCs attempts at preventing it. This is due to the very balanced nature of the ecosystem, the designers didn't expect the tank to be inspected by rigorous investigators. The PCs must find an alternative source of nutrition for the cow-ant. Without access to a source of shrimps the cow-ant will eventually become nothing more than an intelligent animal. If the PC's suggest returning to its' home planet, the cow-ant will become angry and stubborn, not appreciating its dilemma, only knowing that it has a quest of discovery to fulfil. If the PCs have the heart to

refuse the animal its request, it will sneak off ship at the next starport, in an attempt to find its own way to its destiny. The PCs' may cross its path in later years, meeting it in a sleazy bar in the very same starport, where it sits staring into a bowl of blue scout brew, with pink melon balls floating in it. If the PCs do go along with the flight of fantasy they will eventually find themselves at Undim/Ushra where the cow-ant will insist upon landing to look at the surface, when told that he cannot land in an asteroid belt he will become confused, threatening and violent. Though tall, swift and fearsome looking, the cow-ant is incapable of doing any real harm to the PC's or their ship. The cow-ant will soon fall into a deep depression, it's normally waxy smooth shell becoming flaky and patchy until after several days without food he will cease to function. If the PCs return the cow-ants' body to the cow-ant homeworld, they will be thanked and paid for their trouble (in rare earths). The cow-ants will question the PCs' as to their final destination. When the PCs describe to them the system of Undim, a sadness will sweep across the community. Some hours later the PCs may be contacted by yet another cow-ant, this time from the Office of Histories who would also like to hire the PCs for a similar journey. If the PCs agree all will go well this time, its ecosystem will flourish, and the cow-ant gradually proves to be a good friend to the PCs'. Again the PCs will notice the strong NAS readings within their own ship while the cow-ant is wearing a shrimp, another interesting development is the fact that the cow-ants vestigial sex organs become active over a period of weeks as they near their eventual destination, the planet Nox. On Nox the cow-ant will make directly for a particular magnetic anomaly, an enormous solid mound, where he will find a large group of arthropods of a more complex, but not dissimilar structure, to the cow-ants. After long nervous moments a single arthropod steps from the crowd, and delicately touches the cow-ants face. A series of probes and examinations ensue conducted by the curious Noxian spider. Within some 40 seconds of this interrogation three spiders stride forward from the crowd. As he turns his attention to the PCs' and starts to say " I think I am going to be happy here:-", the three Noxians jump upon him and ruthlessly rip him apart. The spiders leave his corpse behind them and return to their mound, leaving the PCs' dumb founded.

If you don't like the idea of the cow-ants/shrimp being altered Malaach males, that's O.K. ignore this whole section.

350,000-300,000 years ago a Malaach deep space base, in stasis, collided with this world after sustaining battle damage. Stranded here the Malaach engaged on a four point plan of survival; Firstly they designed and built a psionic shield that cloaked the world against Grandpas' probing mind. This shield appears to be naturally occurring, even under close

scrutiny. Second, they Bio-engineered a whole new food chain which was virtually self contained and consisted the Triple cousin life cycle. In this system the Malaachs' vast brain was further disguised against discovery by splitting it in two (a drastic step some sophonts might say), one half containing an ever growing file of memories, encoded in RNA ,the other, virtually untapped, only ever fully accessed when the two parts of the brain are mated. The Malaach chose to invest all of their great knowledge and abilities in this great organic data bank. In this way the might of the Malaach could live on indefinitely, awaiting the day when the opportunity would arise for this organic memory to once again rejoin the Malaach tribes (well it was a long shot but they were desperate Grandpa had sewn up the rest of space tight as a S'mrri's you know what, all they could do was try to out live the old beggar in some way.). Third they killed all animal life on the planet to prevent their delicate plans being dashed by an evolving life form. This had a catastrophic effect on the plant life of the planet. Fourth they instituted a re-growth plan for foliage. With nothing to feed on it the forests of the planet spread like wild fire to their present state of world domination. When humans appeared on the scene some 300,000 years later the cow-ants assessed our use as a tool for re-unification of their parent race. What the stranded Malaach did not allow for was the change that may have occurred in the female side of its' species. When the envoy journeyed to Nox with the unsuspecting Humans, the changed Noxians found him to be nothing more than a curiously attractive threat to their existence. Other Malaach sites may house more understanding females only the future may tell.

Generating a Cow-ant.

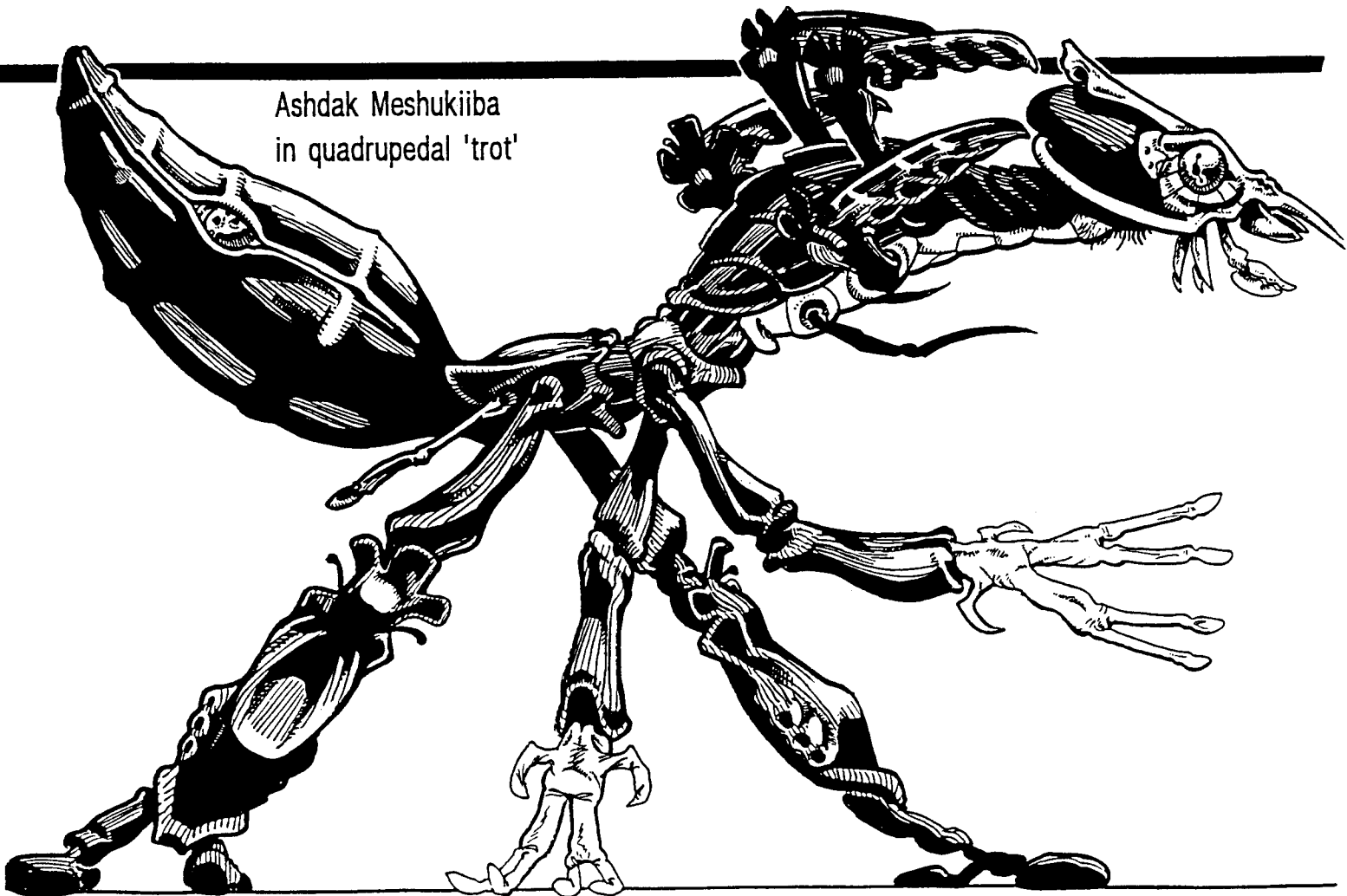
- STRENGTH; 2D6-3
- DEXTERITY; 2D6+2
- ENDURANCE; 2D6+1
- INTELLIGENCE; 3D6 / 2D6-4 (MIN 2)
- EDUCATION; 2D6 / 1D6-1 (CRAFTSMEN)
- SOCIAL STANDING; NIL

For edu & int two possibilities are listed - the first is for the sentient cow-ant.

Education may only be applied to three skills if the cow-ant is a member of the intermediary office. Otherwise it is applied to only one skill and becomes the upper limit for that skill



Ashdak Meshukiiba
in quadrupedal 'trot'



Through a Glass Darkly

Gateway Part II

Preface

This follow-on adventure to 'Gateway' is structured differently, i.e. the absence of a consistent nugget structure as in the first part. This is due to three factors:

1) The more open nature of this adventure forced me slightly to avoid the more rigid nugget structure to allow for the many approaches the players can possibly take. In particular the ending is open. I know this may appear as a bit of a cop-out but in my experience players will bail out at almost any point in any adventure no matter how rigid and bearing this in mind I don't think this is a bad thing. This does not mean that all eventualities have been covered but hopefully the information has been presented that will allow the referee to extrapolate to cover these possibilities.

2) Although open adventures can be written in the nugget style it often takes longer and therefore to make sure it appeared in this issue complete I felt it would be easier and quicker for me to present the adventure as I have below.

3) As some may be using 'New Era' rules and some may even be using 'Classic' rules system I have tried to leave the task resolutions open to allow the adventure to be played with any rules.

The ultimate goal of this adventure is to put Iimaan de Fot behind bars. The further the players are prepared to go in the adventure and collecting as much incriminating evidence as possible the more likely this end will be realised. All this means is that the referee will have to do more work, particularly in the disclosure (or non-disclosure) of certain information. The referee is encouraged to thoroughly read through the adventure a couple of times before embarking. Good luck and all the best!

Thanks must go to Liz Hodgson, Tony Banks, Robert Bates, Christopher Bates, Whitford Bates and Nick Dodds for playtesting the original adventure. I inadvertently omitted them from their due credit in the last issue. Sorry!

Introduction

This adventure is a follow-on to 'Gateway' presented in issue 9. It concerns itself with the investigation into the drug smuggling operation uncovered on Kimarla. The scenario can also stand on its own as an independent adventure. If the scenario is to be used as a separate adventure see the 'A Job To Finish' scenario.

Referees' Background

Following the misjump into the Gishi system and subsequent passage to Kimarla through a matter 'transportal', the PCs found themselves running from the aggressive, regressed inhabitants of the cave system into an abandoned trader. Investigation of the ship, its crews' logs and contents showed that the occupants had been involved with an illegal anagathic smuggling racket. The anagathic is processed from the bodies of rodent-like creatures (Kimlat) native to Kimarla. The crew of the ship were killed while on a rodent hunting trip.

The PCs will have a responsibility to try to complete their original mission, and brief details are included to achieve that end. The primary thrust of this scenario however, is the investigation into the agency or agencies behind the drug smuggling ring. That a smuggling ring is indeed in operation should become

more obvious once the players delve into the role of the 'Company' mentioned in the Captain's log.

Also, a connection linking the 'Company' to the smugglers can be made through tracing the makers of some of the pharmaceutical equipment in the makeshift laboratory aboard the abandoned vessel.

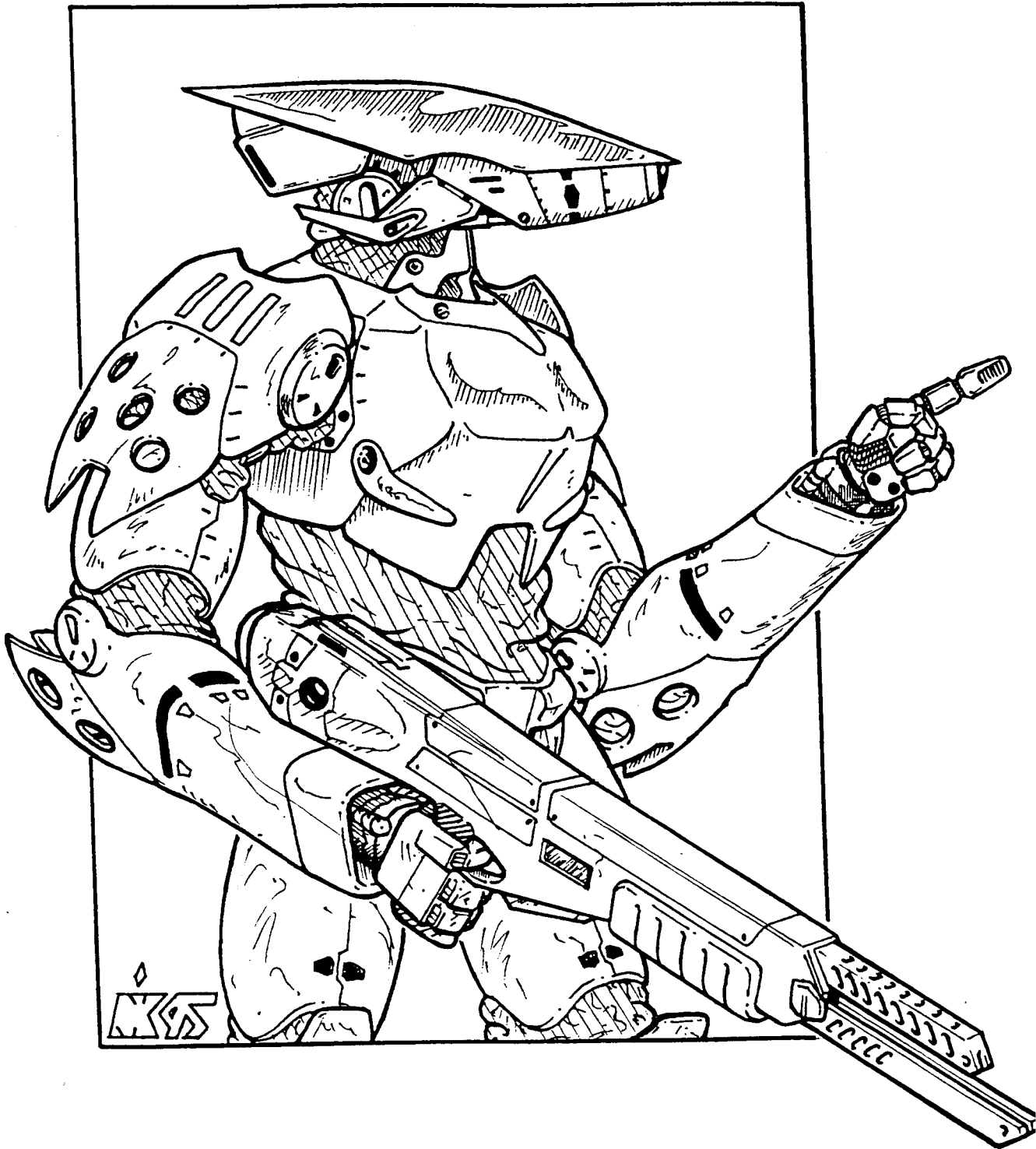
The rodent bodies were to be transported to Rusadaa where the anagathic-rich poison glands of the Kimlat are to be extracted and the raw anagathic pre-cursor is purified into the active 'street product'. The whole project is financed and supported by a nefarious criminal organisation known as the 'Company'. The Company not only purify the anagathic but control its distribution in the Vland-Dagudashaag border regions. Although the drug production centre is on Rusadaa, the actual centre for the Company is to be found on Shakuur where direct evidence linking the Company with its illegal activities can be found. Thus the PCs investigative efforts should be directed towards the discovery of the processing centre and then the financial heart of the ring.

There will be many obstacles to the PCs progress, not least the members of the criminal organisation themselves as well as other parties who may offer passive as well as active resistance. Many do not want to get involved with such a potentially dangerous foe. The Company has friends in high places; in business, in politics and law enforcement. There could also be 'interference' from agencies trying to halt the activities of the 'Company': honest cops, business rivals and other criminal groups.

The 'Company'

This business empire goes under a number of names, many of them legitimate, but the term the 'Company' is that used by its own members. It is a euphemism for all the activities under the control of its head *Imaan de Fot* (pronounced 'Foe'). De Fot is the man with the brains. The man with the muscle. The man with the power. The man who has almost everything.

And this earns respect. He controls virtually all aspects of the Company - he trusts very few although all his business and holdings are legally in the names of others who answer to him directly. The only business directly under the control of de Fot is **New Vista Holdings**. NVH owns small percentages and controlling shares in a wide range of other companies through a network of real and dummy businesses. De Fot spends most of his time on *Anshir* (2408) but



pays regular visits to *Shakuur* (2010), *Ninlakim* (2208) and *Likhukam* (2204) on business.

The Company is involved in a multitude of illegal businesses with drug smuggling and production a major source of funds. The acquisition of MediPharm in 1108 gave the Company a knowledge and technical base to expand its production and supply operations, as well as another lucrative legitimate source of funds. With the purchase of MediPharm came a licence to produce and sell anagathic, but limited by rigid quotas and high taxation has prevented the Company from realising even greater profits. The discovery of anagathic on Kimarla has handed the Company an opportunity to fulfil MediPharm's financial promise. As the raw material was from an unregulated source obtained at a bargain basement cost, huge profits could be made providing the supply to the eager market could be conducted without attracting attention. MediPharm provides an ideal cover as the processed anagathic is distributed as stock 'dietary vitamin supplement', a product that doesn't arouse much interest. Once anagathic is transported by way of MediPharm to local distribution centres (usually firms with a sound legitimate front), small teams actively embark on its sale to the next level of street pushers and dealers, especially at starports. Through the demand and the control of street prices of anagathic (the loss in profits from the extra layer of middlemen is more than made up by the low production costs and absence of taxation). Virtually all MediPharm employees are unaware of the true nature of the 'dietary vitamin supplement'. For the most part the regional law enforcement units at street level are unaware of an increase in the level of the drug. There are exceptions which will be explained later.

Through various means de Fot has managed to stay one step ahead of the law, avoiding prison numerous times through a variety of tricks. He is currently under investigation for a number of suspected tax evasion ploys and racketeering.

A Job To Finish

Original Contract: Once the players have extracted themselves from the Kimarla system they may well seek to fulfil original mission and return to Gishi and then to Hourara. They will probably not have the tools to repair the 'Venture' but should easily be able to transfer the frozen plant embryos aboard their new ship. The research team on Hourara will be relieved to see them and will be somewhat puzzled by the appearance of the PCs in a new ship. This will not concern them too much as they will be more worried about the cargo. It is up to the players to decide whether they tell the research team the whole story. If they do they will be encouraged to tell the authorities if they haven't already done so (the University will be interested in sending a research team to Kimarla to study the Kimarlans - the PCs could well be invited to lead them). The PCs will be rewarded in accordance with the original contact.

There is also a complication in the story if the players elect to reveal the discovery of the matter transportal which could lead to an invasion of Kimarla by Imperial Research teams that will possibly end in the interdiction of the world.

Registering the Ship: In their travels to Shallows or on the trail of the smugglers the PCs may run foul of Starport Authorities, the IISS and probably the local naval forces over the registration of their new vessel. The PCs will have three main options:

- 1) They can be honest and register the vessel as their own - they will need to give a full account as to how they acquired it. There will checks on their story and their background, and a large registration fee to pay.
- 2) They can pretend to be the original owners and bluff their way through any checks. This would require some good forging of personal and ship documentation, which should be difficult to achieve.
- 3) Make up an alternative story on their acquisition, i.e. salvage just bought, papers being updated, in transit, etc. Good acting/ bluffing performances and maybe a bribe or two may just do the trick.

Ultimately the players will need to make a full, legal registration application if they wish to avoid trouble in the future. This may alter the approaches taken above.

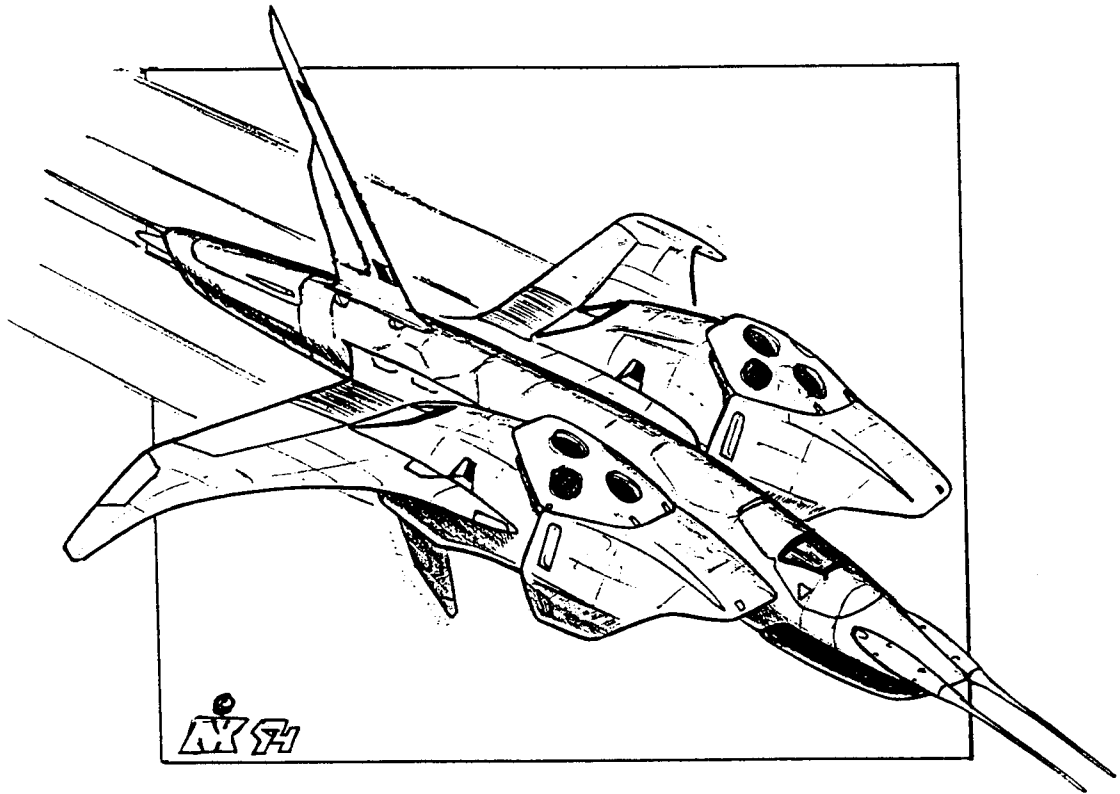
Gathering the Evidence

The First Step: The first phase of the investigation into the smugglers will require the PCs locating the processing centre (on Rusadaa). A thorough examination of the ship will probably be in order.

A check on the ships travel-navigation log will indicate an apparent random series of destinations local to the Kimarla region (this trip is put down to a random fuel skimming stop while travelling along the Rusadaa Trace) although the log records the system to be Sadiikashe. The cargo manifest log will show an number of apparently unrelated cargo items, the latest of which corresponds to small containers of low-quality farm machinery in the hold. The manifest would seem to indicate that the ship is nothing more than an independent tree trader which hasn't been carrying enough cargo to cover its running costs (the listed cargo is in the hold and legitimate). Obviously the captain and crew must have been making money by other means to survive, as the PCs should quickly realise.

The ship itself is recorded as being registered at Likhukam. Tracing the ships registration will be simple enough. A registration enquiry at any class C starport (or better) will show that the ship was bought locally and the mortgage of the ships is held by GilGamaag Finances (partially owned by NVH). GilGamaag Finances are based on Rusadaa.

An examination of the small lab in the hold shows that it 'folds' away into a space created by a modification of the fuel tank. Even a close look once the bench space, etc., has been folded back into the



wall will reveal nothing out of the ordinary - to the observer what was the lab appears to be just another section of full tank. This is meant to reinforce the appearance that the vessel is nothing more than a normal trader. A clue to the site of processing centre can be found in the presence of the original packaging for a portable biochemical analyser and biochemical reagents from a company, ChemiTek (a subsidiary of MediPharm) based on Rusadaa. There is even an invoice in one of the boxes. There is also a Menchuuk-Sim portable computer (serial no. 344-8989B) with a standard pharmacology text book on disk inserted into the disk slot - there is no other information within the machine. Underneath the bench can be found a dark grey metallic canister (containing traces of anagathic).

Searching the staterooms will reveal one other clue: in the room belonging to the crew-member known as Scarlen, there is an air-raft landing permit for a district of the capital city of Rusadaa on the table.

The clincher comes with the navigation log and the cargo manifest - the log being more important. As standard on all commercial vessels the navigation log and certain transponder elements are linked to the flight recorder or 'Black Box', which keeps track of a vessels flight path/ plan and crucial engineering and computer parameters. It is supposed to be tamper proof, taking time stamps from the ship's transponder, and system beacon data the transponder and nav logs receive. Information can be added to the log but it will not overwrite the core data or allow any deletion of the information This particular nav log has in one sense been altered.

It is not the core data that has been changed but the data the observer sees. A highly sophisticated and complex overlay program has been added to the system that can put a false layer of data over the core. Without the correct passcodes, all data requests are intercepted and false information fed to the inquirer. This leads to a slight time lag that will pass almost unnoticed except by the experienced and acute observer.

The cargo manifest computer has a hidden file that records the real activities, not in plain galanglic but through semi-transparent euphemisms. The Kimlat are described as rare edible delicacies. Numbers are given (some 600 so far). This file is solely for the purpose of the 'Company' who want to keep track of their goods.

Where on Rusadaa!: Through one means or another the players should arrive on Rusadaa, at the principal downport of the capital Hiluus. When they arrive it will be commented upon by a starport worker that 'you are back again. Hey, where's the normal crew?'. Any questioning of the worker or others will only tell the PCs that the ship has been a semi-regular caller as of late. The PCs once through the routine of clearing, landing and customs, etc. at the starport will probably want to start their investigations in earnest. Obvious targets for information will be ChemiTek and following-up on the location of Scarlen's air-raft permit.

Casual or formal enquiries into the background of ChemiTek will draw a blank except for the fact that a business search (at the local library) will show the majority shareholder of the company is MediPharm.

The location of MediPharm can be found easily from the same source material.

Investigations into the parking permit location will direct the PCs to the home of Scarlen's family in the adjacent block of apartments. The apartments and the general area are well-to-do, housing the upper-middle class of the capital. Scarlen's wife, Heynna, will be polite but somewhat reserved if the PCs attempt to meet and talk with her. She will be anxious about the whereabouts of her husband. Although he is often away for several weeks at a time, he is a couple of weeks overdue from the latest date she expected him back. If the players relate the news of his apparent death, she will go into a state of shock, asking the PCs to leave. Once over the initial shock she will begin to make enquiries of her own which will attract unwelcomed attention for the group. Even without the bad news dropped on her, Heynna Scarlen will start enquiries about her husband, with same result as above.

Trying to pump much information from ChemiTek (or indeed MediPharm - see later) employees will also attract that same unwanted attention. Even if the PCs avoid to antagonise ChemiTek, MediPharm or do not visit Scarlen's wife, the PCs will receive visitors from three different 'agencies'. The ship has been noticed back in port; 1) Agencies in the employ of the 'Company' - local corrupt police and hired thugs. 2) Business rivals who do not like the way the 'Company' (and especially de Fot) has been moving in on their operations. 3) Special Agent Homer Aymes of the IISS Intelligence Service who heads a small cross-organisational team investigating the activities of Imaan de Fot.

MediPharm: Having established another link in the chain, MediPharm, the investigation can begin to really 'hot up'. Again a business registration search will show that MediPharm is wholly owned by NVH. Alternatively the PCs can make an appointment with MediPharm's PR office for the next day (providing that come up with a good story). There is a 50% chance however that word will have reached certain senior executives about the PCs investigation, and when they then arrive for their meeting they will find that it has been cancelled. There will be little or no explanation. If this is the case and this prompts the PCs to break-in to MediPharm's production facility go to the section 'Intrusion'.

If the PCs are able to make the meeting before MediPharm get wind of their enquiries, they will be given a brief talk and holo-slide show presentation about the business before going on a guided tour of the research facility and the production site, which is some twenty kilometres away. The research facility is the interesting site and the area the PCs should concentrate their search (the production site is an ultra-modern, a wonder of all the latest in chemical engineering but for most relatively uninteresting). Evading the supervising official and employees to get to sensitive areas will be extremely difficult

(tasks should be set at the Formidable level). Successful observation tasks (at Routine/Difficult) while touring the site will reduce task levels and time spent searching the facility if the characters elect to break-in at a later date. Although MediPharm will not be expecting trouble, the site will be operating as a normal working day with a full complement of staff; this includes security guards and sophisticated alarms (inside and out).

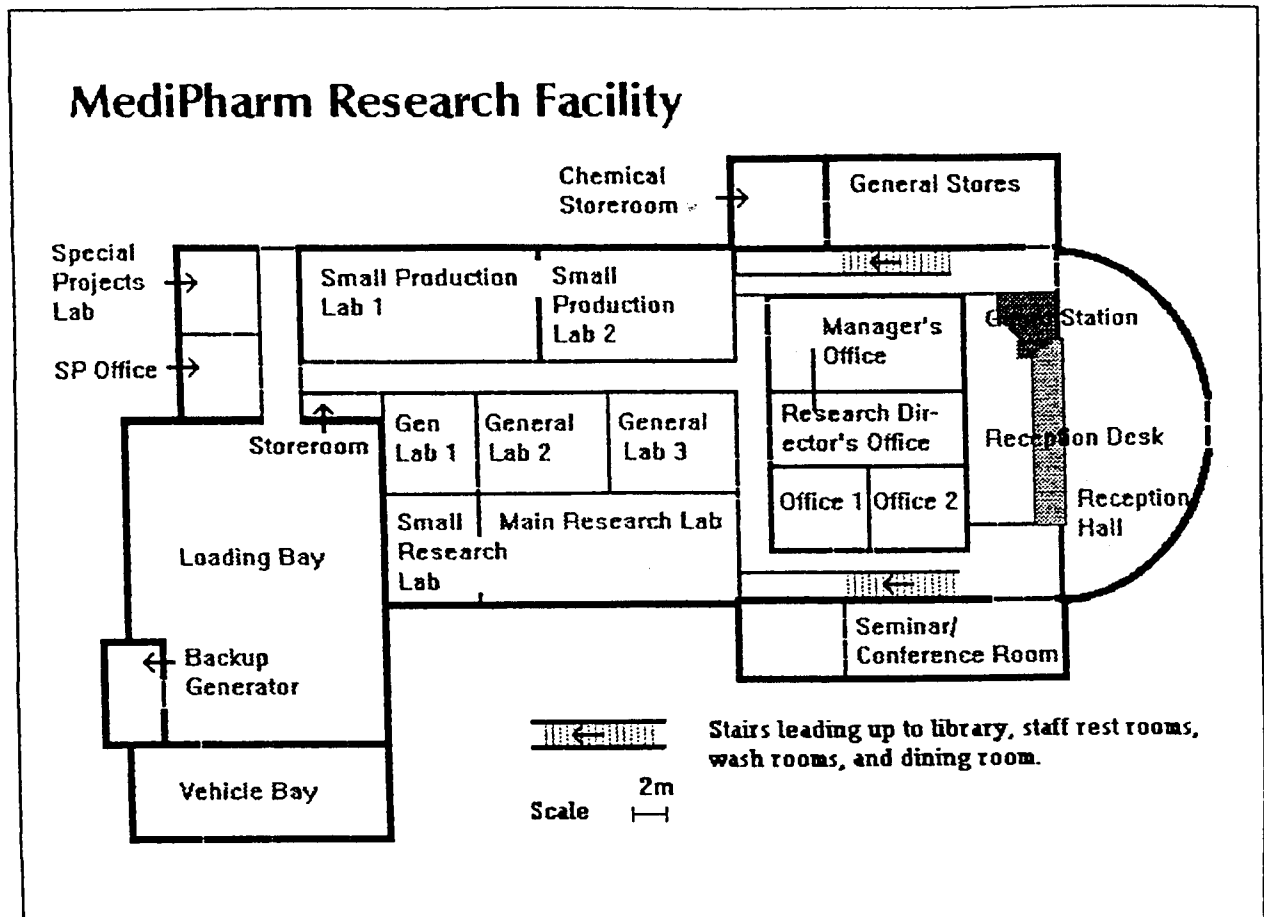
Apart from the location of guard stations, alarm sub-systems and general layout of the place, casual observation during the tour will reveal little in the way of clear clues. During the tour the PCs will be politely refused entry to one laboratory (marked 'Strictly No Access - Authorised Personnel Only'), to which they will be told that there is delicate research in progress. Entry requires elaborate and rigorous bioscan and decontamination procedures. While at the loading and delivery bay a crate marked Multi-Vit - bound for Ninlakim [2208] - will fall from a grav loader, split on impact to reveal small grey, cylindrical, unmarked canisters. The PCs will be quickly ushered away, somewhat forcefully, as a number of workers clear up.

If one or more of the group does manage to slip the tour guide or they break into the place at a later date or time, information and clues can be found at a number of locations.

1) A portable computer in the lab next to the one mentioned above will be an exact replica of the machine found aboard the ship. It will have a serial number consecutive to the one on the ship. There will be no useful information on it.

2) If the PCs break into the secure lab they can discover: a) A number of Kimlat 'poison' glands in an upright freezer. b) Various chemical containers and flasks, etc. in which are anagathic compounds at different stages of purification. The characters will not know the nature of the contents until they can run the material through a biochemical analyser (i.e. like the one aboard the ship). c) Another portable computer with data on the purification process of the Kimlat derived anagathic. The data is encrypted in a hidden file.

3) If the PCs break into the Research Directors office and access the computer terminal, they will find under 'Miscellaneous Accounts' section, a spreadsheet file that logs all the 'sales' of Multi-Vit. The sales are fictitious to a certain extent. The destinations of the goods is accurate but the consignments hide the shipments of anagathic. The shipments themselves are extremely large, a check on the destination markets will lead to the conclusion that more Multi-Vit is being shipped than could ever hope to be sold. The sales have been accredited to a local account having come from a numbered account **AR6-3916081B** and back out again to account **AR7-4200106B**. The first account belongs to Shakuur Health Services (a bogus company 'run' by Imaan de Fot's brother-in-law, based on Shakuur).



The second account belongs to NVH. Both are located at the Shakuur branch of The Credit Bank of Dagudashaag. There are 12 shipments listed: Rusadaa, Nukaush, Guru, Khalan, Umnudar, Likhukam, Ninlakim, Anshir, Eshsii, Larmige (2709 Iiradu), Lashgaiika (2512 Kuriishe) and Cimmeria (1511 Ushra).

Further examination will reveal a number of expense accounts accredited to a dozen people (again held in the Shakuur branch of CBD). None of these people appear on employee lists for MediPharm.

Intrusion: The greatest chance of success if the PCs choose to break into MediPharm will be if they try outside of working hours. They will still need, however, to overcome alarms, security video cameras and armed guards. There are four doors into the premises and numerous windows. The doors are the main entrance, the large loading bay doors and two side emergency exits. All doors and windows will be locked and alarmed outside of normal working hours. The security guards will have keys to all the doors, as will the Site Manager, and unknown to everyone the Research Director. The main entrance and the loading bay doors are covered by security cameras, the former is also watched over by the guard at the security station at the end of the entrance lobby. The rear loading doors are reinforced steel shutters. All windows are triple-glazed and constructed of toughened glass and plastics. There are security cameras throughout the facility. Once inside the PCs will have to make a blind Routine/ Average Evasion

task to avoid being spotted by the guard at the security station. The chance of detection drops one level if the PCs are aware of the cameras and take reasonable precautions. The guard at the security station will be keeping an eye not only on the monitors but the front door and his pocket TV. A distraction at the front entrance would be a good way to enter the building at some other point with a reduced chance of being noticed.

There will be two additional guards on duty patrolling the corridors of the site, moving in roughly circular paths in opposite directions. They meet up every ten minutes, in the loading bay area and then at the security station to check in. To avoid the patrolling security men use the task outline in the paragraph above. Reduce the task level if they are expecting guards and are taking precautions and increase the level if they do anything that could attract attention to themselves.

The guards will be in a dark grey uniform with cap. Each will have a 9mm autopistol, a night stick, a portable radio, a torch and a bunch of keys to virtually all the doors inside the building (except the Research Directors office and the secure lab).

Although not specifically covered the side doors and the windows are covered by wide-angle cameras that look out over the facility's surrounding grounds. If the PCs are using cover to approach the building then to avoid detection is a simple/ easy task. The alarm system is housed internally and it is a formidable task to disable.

Electronic tool kits and hand computers can reduce the level by one for each if used.

The electrical supply to the building is through the local power grid. In the event of mains power failure a backup generator (mainly to keep sensitive lab equipment and alarm systems ticking over) will kick in after about 15 seconds. The PCs may try to cut the power to the site to affect entry but they will have only 15 seconds to do so. The guard at the security station will telephone the local power company to check on the problem. If the PCs have sabotaged the power supply then the guards will be on alert and will call the Site Manager for guidance. He then will call the police. As certain members of the police force are in the pay of the Research Director they will be alerted to the possibilities of industrial espionage and have been instructed to shoot first and ask questions later. If the PCs knock out the phone lines as well then one of the guards will leave the building and head for a public phone. Their radios are only short range. The backup generator is sited in a locked room just off the loading bay.

The computers in the building are protected by simple password systems, a Routine/Average task against Computer skill. Again a hand computer used to assist in the task will reduce the level by one.

The Next Step

Once the PCs have gathered evidence through MediPharm they will need to move on to cement the link between MediPharm and the smuggling operation, then find the controlling influence. The next port of call could be one of a number of destinations, depending whether the PCs follow the routes of the Multi-Vit cargoes, track down the unlisted employees or look into the bank accounts.

The Multi-Vit Destinations and the Unlisted Employees: The number of destinations is equal to the number of unlisted employees for a good reason. Each of the unlisted are the target for the anagathic through a legitimate small pharmacy chain (a subsidiary of MediPharm) on each of the destination worlds. The pharmacies distribute the 'Multi-Vit' to small local bogus companies. The unlisted employees head these small firms and distribute the anagathic from there. Each act independently of the others and are unaware of the existence of the others.

The pharmacies are innocent of any crimes although one or two workers suspect that something 'dodgy' is going on:

- a) They never see anyone at the delivery point except for one or two people - the companies do not seem to have many employees.
- b) They never receive payment for the goods - there is an arrangement to pay directly to MediPharm.

Each pharmacy and its workers are unaware of similar operations going on other worlds (although it is possible that a worker may have come across the practice while visiting another world and may thus provide some additional conformatory information).

To track down the unlisted employees or the company each operates will require some hard graft and research. All the characters can be found on business lists at any class A or B starport (where local business information for the subsector is collected). Each heads a small company with varying titles and descriptions of their primary areas of business. Further information can be obtained on similar local lists on the worlds on which the companies are based.

- Each company is just a 'dead letter office' - a postal address. - There are no listed employees except for the owner. - Eight of the companies have NVH as listed creditors. - All companies bank with The First Credit Bank of Dagudashaag.

Gaining access to local police or subsector law enforcement agency files will reveal that most have criminal convictions and two were convicted of fraud while working for Iimaan de Fot.

The Bank Account: The bank account listed in the Research Directors Miscellaneous expenses file belongs to NVH. Gaining access to the account is nearly impossible whatever approach is taken. Access can be by breaking into the bank to access the bank's systems directly, or remotely by hacking into the computer system from the outside. The bank is physically protected by tough walls, sophisticated alarms, cameras, motion detectors, pressure sensors and armed patrol men in parts. The computer has an advanced series of system entry and file passcodes, activity monitoring alarm programs and sophisticated encryption procedures of sensitive financial data. Each has to be bypassed to get access to the appropriate files. Bypassing each measure should be a formidable task at least and assumes the necessary tools are available and the tasks are performed under ideal conditions (free from disturbance, etc.). Increase levels if these minimum's are not met. Reduce levels if appropriate enabling tasks are made (these should be of a similar level of difficulty).

AR7-4200104B and AR6-3916081B: The AR7-4200104B account has some very interesting and incriminating evidence within. It shows all the credits and debits for the past five years. There is some Cr.4,000,000 in the account. There are entries that correspond to the amounts generated from the Multi-Vit sales in the MediPharm computer. The AR6-3916081B account shows numerous over-the-counter cash additions which have been paid in the account on the last day of every other month. Each account has only a single source for outgoing funds. Money from AR7-4200104B heads toward the AR7-4400207P account. Money from AR6-3916081B moves towards the MediPharm Miscellaneous account held on Rusadaa . These figures match in total the amounts listed for the Multi-Vit sales. The AR7-4400207P account is the personal account of Deanne de Fot, the wife of Iimaan. The account holds more than Cr.6,000,000. Details of transactions in this account show that the

money has been used to buy property, various stocks and shares amounting to nearly Cr.50,000,000. Sales from the anagathic are collected and brought by courier to Shakuur then deposited in the Shakuur Health Services account AR6-3916081B of CBD on the last day of every other month. The money is transferred to 'pay' for the Multi-Vit supplies. The money is then transferred from the local Rusadaa account back to the AR7-4200104B NVH business account on Shakuur. The money is then transferred to Deanne de Fot's personal account. The money is used as collateral against loans taken out with the bank for the purchase of the property etc.

Complications

Homer Aymes - During the investigations on Rusadaa or Shakuur, the group will be contacted by Homer Aymes. This will be after they have attracted the attention of Company operatives. Aymes will be curious about the PCs relationship with de Fot.

If they choose to co-operate with Aymes he can supply them with some useful information - Aymes can be used by the referee to 'fill in the blanks' when and if the PCs get stuck. He will also be a good sounding board for planned courses of action. A successful conclusion to the whole proceedings may land the PCs a reward through Homer Aymes, and he will become a very useful contact for the future.

If they choose to ignore his advances or appear less than whole-hearted about co-operation he will leave them a box number through which they can contact him should they change their mind. Aymes will have them followed.

Glenn Bennings - Bennings is the head of an organisation, although much smaller, is in direct competition with de Fot. His organisation runs its own rackets, and he is incensed at de Fot moving in on 'his turf'. At an appropriate point the PCs will get an unscheduled visit by Bennings and a half a dozen of his thug sidekicks. They will organise the 'meeting' in a place that will make the PCs nervous about any attempt at forcing their way out of the situation i.e. at a bar under his patronage, run by one of Bennings' cronies. Force will be met with a hail of gunfire. Ideally he will corner only part of the group, when they have split to do research for instance.

Binnings' attitude is: 'if you are not with me you are against me'. Anything other than an unequivocal notice of co-operation will bring threats of gruesome violence. Sweeteners to persuade the PCs to co-operate will include direct cash payments and the chance to take one or two lucrative cargoes. He wants much the same information as Aymes, but he will use it to achieve different ends. Like Aymes he will keep the group shadowed - he doesn't trust anyone. Unfortunately for Bennings the people he uses are generally not too smart and can be easily shaken off.

The Company's Attitude - De Fot will send 'representatives' at the first moment the Company becomes aware of the ship in the starport without the normal crew and the PCs snooping. The PCs will be told in no uncertain terms to drop their investigation. In addition the representatives will demand the prompt return of all Company property, including the ship and its contents and any information they have gathered up to that point. If the PCs comply and hand over all the goods and information the Company will try to eliminate them.

Failure to agree the above will bring a steady stream of harassment from the police in the pay of de Fot. This will include being stopped and searched on some minor pretext, indiscriminate detention on petty charges (some fabricated) keeping an obvious eye on them, and even a little 'roughing up'. Not all cops will act in this manner - indeed the PCs may get some protection from an honest officer or two who take exception to the open abuse of their colleagues' police powers.

In addition to the police the PCs can expect a visit or two from thugs down some dark alleyway or dingy, seedy bar who will attempt to give the PCs a sound beating. They will be taunted, and told to keep their nose out of business that doesn't concern them. The PCs were pointed out to the thugs by a Company rep who gave them a few credits each to cause trouble. They know nothing of de Fot except by reputation.

The attitude of the Company will change if the PCs get through the above challenges. Realising that the group are not easily intimidated, de Fot will order a change of tactics. He will authorise the reps to allow the PCs to keep the 'Heyan Rose', and offer them a chance to work for him in the same role as the ship's original crew. De Fot will not trust them to keep silent and will arrange their elimination when they cease to be of immediate use to him.

Once again, the Company will change tack if the group spurns this advance. They will resort to an immediate campaign designed to remove all traces of the PCs and any evidence they have, including the ship. They will be very violent if necessary.

If de Fot suspects that the PCs are working for Aymes or Bennings, the latter course of action will be taken irrespective of their responses.

Corrupt Police and Other Officials - Wherever the Company are they have influence. Mostly it is through fear but often through corrupt means. Therefore whenever the PCs are delving into Company-related business they will almost certainly attract some official notice. As mentioned in the section above this could be from bent cops but equally other officials could make this uncomfortable for the PCs. A judge or magistrate giving the PCs a custodial sentence for some minor legal infringement when a fine is the norm; or a local city, municipal or council official authorises the PCs place of residence be turned upside down or sealed up while a Health

and Safety team investigates a report about a bad smell / wiring defects / pest infestation / electrical problems / water problems. The excuses are endless.

Defining the End

In the perfect universe where the Forces of Evil are vanquished by the Forces of Law, Order and Justice getting the information to legal authorities would be good enough to see de Fot rotting away in a gaol somewhere for the rest of his life. But this isn't a perfect universe. Not by a long chalk. It is not only a question of the amount and quality of the information the PCs accumulate but also in whom they place their trust and hand the evidence to.

The best chance of success is through Homer Aymes. Local law officials can not be trusted a hundred percent. Some are in the pay of de Fot and his

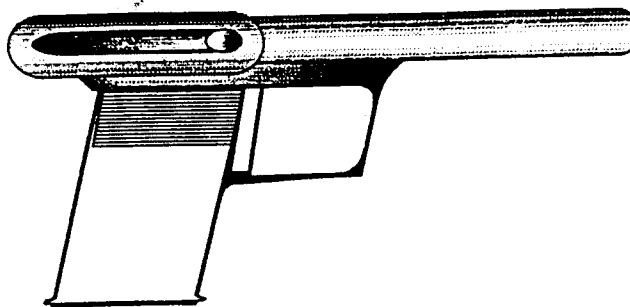
supporters and some will easily be twisted to their view through threats or the promise of financial gain. Even local judges are not beyond intimidation or corruption. Aymes will take the case through the Imperial Ministry of Justice which will give it the best chance of succeeding, if only because 'getting' to officials will be more difficult for de Fot. De Fot will be brought to trial and convicted, if only on a minor charge. The PCs will be required to give evidence.

It will be ultimately up to the referee to decide de Fot's fate; but he or she must bear in mind that a resourceful and powerful figure such as de Fot may be able to strike at the PCs from even the most secure prison. Who knows? De Fot, if he escapes or is released at a later date may harbour thoughts of revenge.



Holdout Weapons for Traveller

There are some people around the Third Imperium who aren't ex-Marines with a liking for heavy weapons (well there are rumours of their existence) and even the most socially challenged can find themselves in situations where they can't carry a FGMP-15. Most weapons detailed for Traveller, however are only useful for a battlefield. For those Hi-Tech Travellers who are fed up with trying to use a Body Pistol in actual combat or trying to conceal a gauss pistol on their person, here are a few more advanced weapons (all available at TL 13 - 16) that don't need gravitic compensation or blast shields.



Miniature Gauss Pistol

Weapon Mass: 0.1 kg (unloaded) Clip Mass: 0.01 kg Weapon Cost: Cr. 2,000

Clip Cost: (AP) Cr.20 (Tranq) Cr.40 Length: 11cm Rounds per Clip: 15

MegaTraveller Statistics

Description	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/Atten.	Dmg.	Max. Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Mini Gauss Pistol (TL14)	AP	15	1/-	1	Med.	3	Low	Med.
	Tranq	15	0/-	0	Short	3	Low	Med.

Description

One of the smallest gauss weapons ever produced, this gun fires 0.5g, 20mm long steel fletchettes of 2mm calibre at velocities just above 300 ms⁻¹ and effectively silent in operation. While the energy of the rounds is low, their sharpness enables them to penetrate clothing and light armour and enter a significant distance into the body, with enough momentum to start tumbling and fragmenting at closer ranges. The weapon can be set for semi-automatic fire, 3 or 4 round bursts and fully automatic fire (make sure you have a good grip before attempting the latter).

It is extremely concealable but has the disadvantage that the electromagnetic barrel and metal rounds can show up even on primitive security detectors. The pistol does break down into several pieces, small enough to be easily hidden inside other items of equipment. It is even possible for the barrel, receiver and clip to be disguised as a (working) pen-torch by the addition of a small attachment (the remaining folding plastic handle and trigger unit is practically impossible to detect if hidden). The weapons battery is used to power the torch attachment.

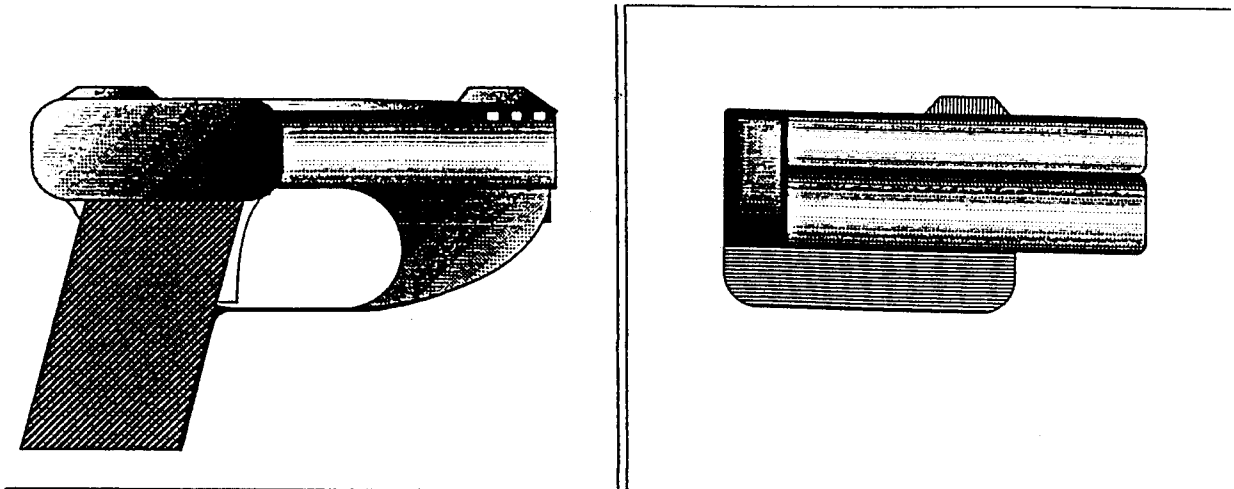
The extremely advanced passive metabolic detectors of TL 13+ can even recognise the separate items as components of a weapon but time limitations often make it impossible to scan everything entering a ship in the detail required to detect parts that small, allowing them to be concealed inside luggage or cargo reasonably successfully. Then again, some crewmembers know of the weapon and make a habit of taking apart any pen they see in the possession of a passenger.

Accessories

Laser Light - 0.05kg/Cr.150 A tiny TL 14 model that clips under the barrel and can be seen up to 50m away (but only 5m in direct sunlight).

Tranq. Rounds - Light, metal-coated plastic rounds containing dose-controlled tranquillisers. The lighter rounds have greatly reduced range and penetration so are unlikely to cause serious injury but are still silent and useful for situations where casualties need to be avoided. Follow the MT rules for Tranq. Rounds (note that an Exceptional Success on the To-Hit task is needed for the rounds to do any damage but, if the target is unarmoured, any success will result in injection of tranquilliser).

Extended Magazines - A larger magazine is available with 150 rounds at ten times the cost and weight. This results in a slightly larger handle which (along with the increased weight) increases its controllability. The weapon is still easily concealable and has a staggering rate of fire.



Laser Holdout Pistol

Weapon Mass: 0.2 kg (unloaded) Clip Mass: 0.05 kg Weapon Cost: Cr.2,000
Clip Cost: Cr.50 Length: 7cm Shots per Clip: 10

MegaTraveller Statistics

Description	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/Atten.	Dmg.	Max. Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Mini Laser Pistol (TL16)	-	10	2/-	2	Med.	-	Med.	Low

Description

TL 16 equipment may not be as rare in the Imperium as the number of actual planets would suggest, since TL 16 planets are likely to be heavily populated and industrialised. Items such as this may not fit every Traveller game, but it is rather difficult to believe that all those Tech Level advances couldn't produce a decent small laser - it may even appear at earlier Tech Levels.

The weapon fires in the visual range, with the variable-frequency abilities found on larger lasers at TL 9-12 in order to reduce atmospheric interference. The weapon is not silent, but the noise is similar in volume to a conventional silenced firearm and the beam is not very noticeable except in smoke or mist. The power clips are recharged in the same manner as regular laser powerpacks. The weapon can function as its own laser sight (with negligible power consumption) or as a torch (power consumption in this mode is ten minutes equals one shot, the beam is 1m wide at 10m and provides reasonable illumination up to 50m). The penetration and damage ratings can actually be varied independently between 0, 1 and 2 representing the selection of specific frequencies and power (no extra shots are gained, however) with 9 settings stored in memory for fast access (others require several minutes work and the manual).

One option the referee may allow is the setting of the weapon to only be effective on particular colours or skin-tones (a la the 'racist' gun seen on 'Star Cops').

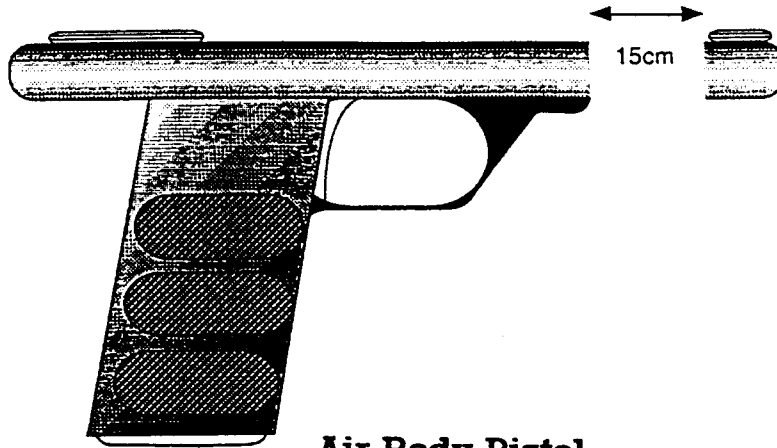
The weapon exists in at least two designs - one similar in style to a conventional semi-automatic pistol and one in a rectangular shape with an activation button. The latter design does not suffer in accuracy as might be expected, since the recoilless operation allows aimed fire without a strong grip, but does require practice to get used to.

Optional Rule

Stun Settings - It may be possible to use the laser beam to direct an electrical charge to the target, producing a similar effect to a 'Taser'. The following rules are completely untested, so - as always - make up your own if you prefer (or if you personally know how it feels to be hit with the TL 7 version..).

If allowed, this setting uses two charges from the clip with each shot, the first being used to power a normal laser burst (the Damage Value could be set to 0 but would still do damage on an Exceptional Success) and

the second used to produce an electrical pulse milliseconds later which rides the ionised air in the path of the laser beam - literally the path of least resistance - to the target doing 2d3 points of 'stun' damage (treat as normal damage but the maximum effect is 10 minutes of unconsciousness and the damage wears off when you wake up, or at the end of the round if unconsciousness is not caused). If the penetration of the initial laser pulse is less than the armour of the target AND the pulse did no damage then the electrical charge will be harmlessly dissipated without effect on the target.



Air Body Pistol

Weapon Mass: 0.15 kg (unloaded) Clip Mass: 0.05 kg Weapon Cost: Cr.1,000
Clip Cost: (AP) Cr.10 (tranq) Cr. 30 Length: 31cm Rounds per Clip: 10

MegaTraveller Statistics

Description	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/Atten.	Dmg.	Max. Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Air Body Pistol (TL13)	AP	10	1/2	3	Long	-	Low	Med.
	Tranq	10	1/2	1	Long	-	Low.	Med.

Description

The development of extra-sensitive chemical sensor systems and densitometers makes it difficult for any conventional weapon to escape detection (even a TL 8 Body Pistol will probably appear on densitometer scans and, once fired, the propellant residues on the weapon will trigger any chemical detectors within several metres until the whole weapon is cleaned in an organic solvent).

One solution to this is to make a weapon that uses none of the materials that normally show up on sensors. The Air Body Pistol fires 3.5g. 8mm calibre bullets of dense plastic at velocities around 300 ms⁻¹, again making it effectively silent. The weapon fires as a semi-automatic and the rounds are propelled by a high-pressure air reservoir inside the clip (clips may be refilled by the TL 13+ air compressors used in spacecraft).

The pistol and clip are constructed of advanced polymers chosen so that the weapon has a density as close to that of the human body as possible; it will therefore pass through almost all detectors safely. Laser or other electronic sights would remove this advantage and are seldom fitted. Tranq rounds are available and have a leak-proof outer coating to avoid detection on the drug by chemical sensors.

The weapon has outstanding range and penetration for a weapon powered just by air, partly the result of the long (20cm) barrel for maximum propellant efficiency and partly the result of advanced round design (the statistics would be similar to a normal body pistol if lower-tech ammunition were used). The long barrel is a handicap in concealability, but is required to produce a weapon that has reasonable combat ability and is acceptable for this reason.

Short-Barrel Air Weapons

A large variety of these weapons have been constructed, some disguised as other items, with similar capabilities to the Air Body Pistol but with less power (nevertheless they can still cause fatal wounds). The minimum mass for the weapon is 0.1 kg, length 10cm. Clip size can be increased or decreased easily. Any weapon of this type has Penetration = 0, Damage = 2, Max Range = Medium.

Light ETC Pistol

Weapon Mass: 0.3 kg (unloaded) Clip Mass: 0.1 kg Weapon Cost: Cr.2,000
Clip Cost: Cr.20 Length: 9cm Rounds per Clip: 10

MegaTraveller Statistics

Description	Ammo Notes	Rds	Pen/Atten.	Dmg.	Max. Range	Autofire Targets	Signature	Recoil
Light ETC Pistol (TL13)	-	10	3/-	3	Med.	-	Med.	Med.

Description

This pistol fires 6g tungsten bullets of 10mm calibre at velocities around 490 ms⁻¹ using liquid binary propellant. A clip of 10 rounds is inserted into the handle and the weapon fires as a semi-automatic. By itself this is about equal to a 20th century holdout weapon firing .357 magnum rounds - it's possible but painful to fire. The weapon is impossible to silence and indeed has a very impressive muzzle flash and report caused by the short barrel.

And that's before the **Electro-Thermal Enhancement** gets to work....

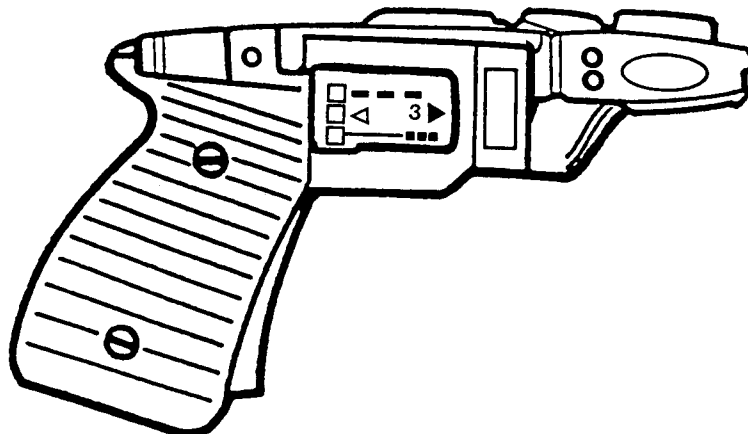
The weapon clip includes batteries (similar to those used in gauss weapons) that heat up the propellant gases as the bullet travels down the barrel. This keeps the pressure in the barrel higher than in a 'normal' weapon, which increases the total force applied to the bullet. The net result is that the round leaves the barrel at 700 ms⁻¹ with the energy of the most powerful TL 6 handguns and little increase in the recoil felt by the user. The propellant gases are still intensely hot when they leave the tiny (5cm) barrel and the muzzle flash is very impressive indeed - the weapon is sometimes jokingly referred to as a 'plasma pistol' (an accurate description of the gases). A possible option is to allow the addition of +1 to penetration and damage if within 30cm of the target.

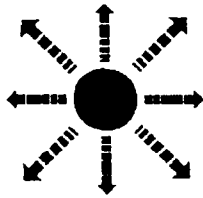
There is no way to hide this weapon from sensors but it is small enough to cover with one hand, has the stopping power of weapons ten times its size and a very impressive shock effect. Just the sort of back-up weapon to save your life. the propellant and rounds can be replaced (and the batteries recharged) at TL 8+, or even as low as TL 5 with a bit of effort in finding the right engineers/scientists.

The weapons above were derived from weapons designed using the most excellent 3G³ (Guns, Guns, Guns). Thanks Mr. Porter - I'd take a bullet for you, sir.

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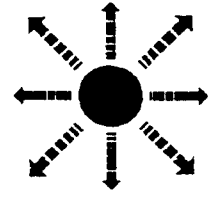
P.S. In addition to 3G³, Mr. Porter has also released a 3G³ supplement 'More Guns' which contains a wide variety of 'fun' weaponry to adapt. Please note we are always looking for traveller equipment (designed under either MT or TNE rules) to publish in S-GK. Every person published will get a free issue so get writing.





INDISS

Information DISsemination Services LIC



Cr. 3

SECTOR-WIDE NEWS

Head of Naasirka (Dagudashaag) Assassination: New Evidence Uncovered - Kilasir



Arapirlu Urkenim - Acting CEO

At a press conference held earlier today, Arapirlu Urkenim - acting CEO for Naasirka (Dagudashaag), stated that the assassination of the late CEO Nikhasha Amashdag last week, was not caused by his bodyguard, Khemgik. This is despite the fact that, during a bomb scare, hundreds saw her draw her weapon and shoot him several times through the head.

Urkenim went on to say that extensive investigation has revealed that in fact it was an unknown assailant using Khemgik's smart gun that had actually assassinated the CEO, not her. Smart Guns are modified versions of normal fire-arms, linked to an internal microcomputer, which in turn is jacked to the operator's neural pathways. Smart guns use a sonic or laser scope to lock onto the selected target. As the gun passes over the target it picks up the mental command to fire from the operator and triggers the gun. In Khemgik's case, the gun had been reprogrammed by an outside source to target Amashdag and go into autofire mode. It had always been thought impossible for an outsider to bypass the operator and access the gun's internal micro-processor. MNS officers believe that a Lancian or Medurman DataRunner, using some sort of proximity terminal or relay, must have reprogrammed the gun's standby mode with the CEO's heat trace pattern and then arranged for a bomb scare so that all his bodyguards would draw their weapons. It was only a matter of time before Khemgik's gun locked on to the CEO, causing it to target in and fire automatically. As a result of this investigation, Naasirka would no longer be using smart guns in any of its operations. In addition, and Naasirka has ordered all Lancian and Medurman on planet at the time of the assassination, pulled in for questioning.

Port Misha Endangered - Nukaush

Reports have just reached us that the platform city of Port Misha is under serious threat of collapse when a sinkhole opened up under one of the support pillars earlier today.

The pit, one of two that appeared overnight in the region, is reported to be over 80 metres wide. While the exact depth of the chasm is still not known, it is apparently in excess of 120 metres. The pit opened up without any warning at 26.20 last night and the ensuing tremour caused at least thirty-six people to plunge to their deaths. At the moment the city has stabilised, though starships have been refused permission to leave in case their take-off could disturb the delicate equilibrium. Plans are under way to arrange for the platform to be fully evacuated over the next three days. The port has appealed to the IISS for help to move the platform to a more secure site 1 km away. Such a repositioning would require the equivalent gravitic power of a grav-city to achieve and there is no way the local people could afford the costs alone. To date the IISS has refused to comment though they are apparently considering the request. Should Misha have to be abandoned, the Subsector Government would have no choice but to recognise Port Inferno as the planet's official starport.

No-one knows what causes sinkholes to appear on Nukaush, though up to ten may appear around the planet each year. Despite extensive densometer scans and constant seismographic analysis of the surrounding area, the appearance of the pit caught everyone unawares. An IISS Sensor Officer said 'The first we knew of the pit was when the platform began to suffer tremors. All our scans up to that point showed solid foundations beneath us. We don't even know where all the sand and rock has vanished to. It's a complete mystery'.

Report continues.

Ninlakim Prime named Subsector City of Culture - Ninlakim

Despite numerous protests from other worlds, Prime was officially named 'City of Culture' today in an elaborate ceremony presided over by Cllr. Jhadid representing the Ducal Office. The ceremony was marred however by violent scuffles from a large crowd of protesters, mostly off-worlders.

Cont. Page 2

Over three hundred arrests were made though the ceremony continued under military protection without further disruption. Afterwards many of the off-worlders voiced their protest over the decision, stating that the 'culture' personified by this world is both crude and vulgar and does not reflect the sophistication or depth of Arnakhish.

This depth of feeling may be magnified by the fact that Prime is currently hosting the controversial Montre Hall 'Comedy festival'. After the ceremony, Cllr. Jhadid agreed to attend a performance. While many of the acts could be classed as dubious, the shock act had to be a Vilani duo. They managed, during their forty minute set, to offend every major and quite a few minor races. Afterwards Cllr. Jhadid refused to comment on the show though he did state that he would be reporting back to the Committee of Culture & Arts regarding his experiences.

Update

It has just been confirmed that the most talked about sculpture showing at the newly opened Ninlakim Art Gallery was created by an unregistered psionic using telekenesis. The show opened four days ago amid a storm of critical approval for the work of the unnamed artist. At first it was assumed the artist's identity was being hidden as a publicity ploy by the sponsors of the show; UlsNel PLC. Rumours had already begun to circulate that the artist and the shows sponsors were under subsector investigation. The truth was finally revealed earlier today at a press conference called by Jars Ulsön, who publically admitted that he had agreed to front the exhibition for an illegal psionic. He stated that, while he would not identify the artist, that he was not a Zhodani spy as certain of the press were undoubtedly speculating, but a native of Ninlakim. Government officials have stated that the show will close immediately until the matter is fully investigated.

Virus attack on MNS Confirmed - Diu

McKellar-Naasirka Security finally admitted earlier today, after several months of rumours, that their security systems had indeed been infiltrated by a computer virus. The virus apparently encrypted captured gigabytes of data, which it refused to unveil until the operator answered a series of questions. If the operator gave a single wrong answer out of a quiz of over five hundred the data was interwoven with slanderous propaganda and fed out of the station as official data updates. While most questions were of a personal nature, the virus was made harder by the fact that certain answers given earlier in the interrogation completely altered the required answers of later questions. MNS have stated that the virus has now been decoded and removed from the system. The origins of the virus are still unknown, though, given the nature of the scandalous updates and the tone of the questions it was definitely not Vilani in origin.



Are Androids Intelligent? - Amnesty Interstellar

At a press conference held on Guru, Amnesty Interstellar admitted working with League for the Abolition of Robotic Slavery (LARS) to 'liberate' an experimental Android (Grey Series) from the Kadii station on Nukaush.

SURD immediately filed charges of burglary against the organisation and face counter-charges of kidnapping and slavery. The Grey series of Androids are classed as non-sentient and are fitted with a computer interface at three years old to allow them to follow commands. Amnesty claim that in fact Grey's are born sentient and are lobotomised when the interface is fitted. Under Android Freedoms Act of 22, sentient androids are imperial citizens and can not be sold without their consent. The purpose of the raid was to obtain a two year-old Grey who could testify in court. Unfortunately the android in question died last month. Amnesty claims this was the result of an assassin while SURD claim the creature was mentally incapable of looking after itself and probably died through neglect. The case is due to go to court next week and SURD hope that they will be successful in obtained extradition rights on the corpse.



Personal Servant 103

Prize Competition

Win a Cruise of a Lifetime with MMSL Passenger Service

MMSL are offering a Year's free travel across Dagudashaag (including cruise time on their new luxury liners, the Prince Lucan and the Prince Varian) to twenty lucky INDISS readers. The prize consists of ten High Passages and ten Middle passages. See page 10 for more details.

A.K.A. Joat Githerin

Real Name: Robert April

8 - A - 6 - A - 8 - 5 Age 38 Rogue (5 Terms)

Starport B, Medium Size, Dense Atmosphere, Wet World, Hi Pop, Mod Law, Avg Stellar.

Skills:

Brawling - 2, Disguise - 2, Streetwise - 2, J-o-T - 2, Intrusion - 1, Carousing - 1, Interview - 1, Electronics - 1, Hand Gun - 1, Grav Vehicle - 1.

Possessions:

Body Pistol, 5 Clips Tranq. Ammo, Cr. 300,000, IISS Survival Pack

Joat is what most Stella's (1) would describe as a 'rogue'. By his own definition, he is a survivor. He has, on numerous occasions, broken the law, but only when he deemed it absolutely necessary. He doesn't commit crimes for the sake of it, but simply to get by. He never steals more than his immediate needs, never steals from an 'innocent' (though his personal definition of innocence is unique) and rarely hits the same target twice. He is almost, but not quite, the modern Robin Hood in that he steals from the rich but generally keeps the majority of the loot for himself. He will never let someone starve, however.

He is a shrewd judge of character and considers himself an expert at body language; both survival traits from his homeworld (which he will not reveal nor allow himself to be questioned about - he will either lie outright or totally avoid the subject). He is an expert and practiced liar who is capable of beating most stress-related lie detectors. His sub-conscious reliance on his ability to read body language means that he is uncomfortable in the presence of non-humans - primarily because he can't 'interpret' the readings he perceives and so finds it difficult to trust them.

Joat's main disadvantage is his agoraphobia, fear of open spaces, which he didn't even know he suffered from until he left his homeworld. His birth place was a high population, industry based planet with the vast majority of the population (the Underclass) squeezed into a relatively small area. Joat was 7 before he even saw the naked sky. To stand at street level and look up was to look at a maze of walkways that strung between the massive skyscrapers towering above him. He is currently trying to conquer his fear (though he has an innate fear of hypnosis) and given time, will seek professional counselling to achieve this aim. Currently he is incapable of leaving a space craft in a vacc-suit or of trekking across a wide open prairie though he does not completely freeze up if confronted by those situations.

Although he is quite capable with a pistol, he will only use one as a last resort. He much prefers to settle combat hand-to-hand (but given a choice he'd rather avoid combat all together. He's no coward, he just favours brain over brawn any day).



Although he is used to being in a crowd, he values his privacy highly, and his personal space even more so. He unable to sleep unless he leaves his room light on all night - a throwback to a long stretch in prison). While appearing friendly, he rarely trusts people and has only offered his friendship to a select few over the years. He doesn't make friends easily (or try to) but once he does, they can rely on him entirely (and he will expect the same in return).

Currently travelling under some hastily produced false identification papers - as a Trader-Chaplin for the Church of Christ the Merchant. He is already finding the disguise hard to maintain and is on the look out for a permanent new identity to adopt.

Joat made his way to Dagudashaag whilst dodging call up papers for the Fifth Frontier War and considers himself safe for now (Church members are all registered pasifists, hence his current choice of identity). His last scam netted him Cr.300,000 and that, combined with winning one of the MMSL Prize tickets, has helped him to decide to go straight (of course old habits die hard). He is currently about to join the MMSL Prince Lucan for its maiden voyage.

One particular vanity is his use of the name 'Joat' in several of his previous identities; it stands for Jack-of-all-Trades, what he considers his most valuable talent.

(1) **Stella** - Slang term for a citizen of the Imperium. Used to describe a member of the interstellar community rather than a particular planet, race or sect.

For the Referee's Eyes Only

Unknown even to himself, Joat has a high psionic potential (7) although he has never been tested or even guessed that he might be psionic. Like most citizens, Joat has an irrational fear of psionics and would find it difficult to adjust to the fact that he is psionic. His abilities primarily lie in the field of telepathy though he has always assumed that his flashes of 'talent' were due to hunches and his ability to read 'body language' (he is actually quite poor at observing body posture and has only a limited ability in that direction - treat as Body Language 0).



Coming Soon ...

Wanderlust (w'nderl'üst, vah'nderloost) *n.*
eager desire or fondness for wandering or
travel. [C] from: wand, v. & lust, *n.*



NULISUD

OLD SUNS

IRADU

KHANDI

