

Stellar Reaches

A Fair Use Fanzine for Traveller



A Samardan Press Publication

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Our website: www.stellarreaches.com

Credits:

Cover Art: *A quiet moment at a local hookah bar on Ababat, 993 Imperial. While the system doesn't have the technology to maintain robots, it can afford to contract that work out to Iper'mar professionals. In this way, the many out-of-system visitors can feel more at home.* The graphic is titled "Hookah Bar" © Jeremiah Humphries. Please visit his galleries at <http://j-humphries.deviantart.com/art/Hookah-Bar-278802072>, <http://jeremiahdraws.blogspot.ca/> and <http://jeremiah.portfoliobox.me/>

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For more information on BITS, check out their website at <http://www.bits.org.uk/>

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Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts:

In this issue of **Stellar Reaches**, we are mainly covering the varied personalities of the Empty Quarter. It's been a long time coming, with many delays: I hope that you will find them useful in your campaign! These broad ranges of characters have sharply-drawn personalities, which should be interesting for PCs to interact with. Most have an engaging history, which can be linked to the PCs history if they desire. Each has at least one implicit or explicit problem to solve: a few make suitable patrons for a full campaign. And finally, several have their own unique starships, for the PCs to fight, to fly, or to work with for research, trade, or war.

There is another useful backgrounder for the Empty Quarter, as well. The heart of this article is a set of four starmaps, displaying information on the breathability, technological level and habitability of the systems. (An additional map using Joshua Bell's "World Colors" setting is also provided.) A brief write-up of the better systems is given, should a PC or an adventure require a fairly earth-like world.

Finally, I grumble about the difficulty of conceptualizing a successful interstellar Islamic civilization in the last article. Hopefully, other budding world builders will be able to build on my problems, learning and applying the lessons of failure to make their own, more successful civilization. I grant that things would have been easier if I used a Malay or Turkish Islamic model, instead of sticking with the Arabs, but the sector is named "The Empty Quarter", not "Java" or "Star Steppes".

Ω

I was determined to focus on adventures and personalities for this year, but it's just plain easier for me to write up settings. So, expect yet another alternative universe for the summer. I should be able to push in some more personalities and adventures in these write ups, if only to try and stretch out the less used muscles of my imagination.

Reading ahead,
Alvin W. Plummer
Editor, **Stellar Reaches** fanzine

BITS Task System

From pg. 8, BITS Writers' Guidelines June 1999. Copyright ©1999, BITS. All Rights Reserved.

T20 Open Game Content from the article "Extending the Task Resolution System to T20" Copyright 2003, Jason Kemp.

MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. Traveller T20 (T20) uses difficulty classes (DCs) to define target numbers for skill checks. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT and DCs for T20 as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (GT: critical) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Difficulty	T4.1 Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Difficulty	MT Difficulty	CT Target Modifier	T20 DC
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4	10
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2	15
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0	20
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2	25
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4	30
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6	35
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8	40

Ex. Maria Charles is forging a complex document, which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (GT: Forgery-16, T20: Forgery +18) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9, T20: 15).

CT: Task success is normally $2D + Skill \geq 8$. Maria requires $2D + Forgery \geq 12$ ($8 + 4$ for Staggering difficulty). Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. $2D + 4 - 4 \geq 8$.

MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is $2D + Skill + (Stat / 5) \geq 15$. For Maria this is: $2D + 4 + 2 \geq 15$.

TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is $d20 \leq (Skill + Stat) \times \frac{1}{4}$. For Maria this is $d20 \leq 3$, i.e. $(9 + 4) / 4$ rounded down.

T4: Maria requires $4D \leq INT + Forgery$. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)

GT: Maria requires $3D \leq Forgery + Target Modifier$, i.e. $3D \leq 16 - 6$.

T20: Maria requires $d20 + 18 \geq 30$. (Note that the INT modifier is already factored into the skill check.)

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:

Difficult Recon (GT: Tracking), or

Difficult Hunting (T20: P/Hunting), or

Formidable Survival

+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.

+1 Difficulty if lost.

-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.

Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.

Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.

Failure: No tracks found.

Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas -1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.

Personality Profiles

By Alvin W. Plummer



One of many travellers, gazing to the far future. Gimushi, 993 Imperial.

The graphic is titled "A New Beginning" © shadothegombie. Please visit his gallery at <http://shadothegombie.deviantart.com/art/A-New-Beginning-361044149>

This is a collection of 'Classic Traveller' characters that have been patiently waiting to be put on virtual paper, some of them for a long, long time. This particular group of tailored to fit in the 993 Imperial Empty Quarter, but of course can be easily tweaked and snipped to fit into any given campaign. The characters are initially generated according to the [MegaTraveller Character Generator](#) (find it on the **Freelance Traveller** website), and then the skills are cut to fit my ideal of the character. A quick guide to Classic Traveller skills follows: 0: trained, 1: adequate, 2: skilled, 3: highly skilled, 4+: true mastery. I also use '-1', for theoretical exposure.

Captain Adarowee, Imperial Ministry of Justice

UPP 8958E9, age 34; pure Genoe¹ (Tlasov system)

Skills: Streetwise - 3, Instruction - 2, Admin - 2, Legal - 2, History - 2, Computer - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Prop Aircraft - 1, Helicopter - 1, Linguistics - 1, Liaison - 1, Mathematics - 1, Leadership - 1, Perception - 1, Persuasion - 1, Interrogation - 1, Laser Weapon - 0, Grav Vehicle - 0

¹ For more detail on the Geonee, please refer to [GURPS Traveller: Humaniti](#), and [Traveller's Digest](#), issue #11

Languages: Irkonee (*Native: the most widespread Genoee language*), Anglic (*Delphic dialect*)

Opening theme: "Untamed", Alexander Rocher, Anno 2070, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sg3nyHkt3tc>

Dress

Captain Adarowee is typically found in various types of MoJ uniforms; off-work, he dresses in the standard Genoee style, preferring thick padded clothing in purples and grey, complete with a large cap with tassels and boots with toes that curl up.



A wealthy world in the heart of the Imperium, one of the many ports of call for MoJ Captain Adarowee. Keum/Keum/Massilia, 988 Imperial. The graphic is titled "Dawn" © Robert Maschke.

Please visit his gallery at <http://airage.deviantart.com/art/Dawn-25881155>

"My Home is the Imperium"

Adarowee's family has a long involvement with the Imperial government, being vocal supporters of the Third Imperium since Emperor Zhakirov decisively broke from Solomani ideology and married a Vilani woman in 679 Imperial.² Other pro-Imperial Genoee tend to gravitate to the Armed Forces, especially the Imperial Army and Marines, but Adarowee's clan broke with tradition, focusing on the Imperial Civil Service, especially the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance.

Adarowee has always been willing to travel far and wide to support the Emperor's authority, working not only in his native Massilia sector, but in Fornast, Verge, Vland, even Core. Currently, he is located in Nulinad, sector capital of the Imperial Empty Quarter, but it's likely that he will relocate to Lazisar soon in pursuit of his duties.

² Family lore claims far older ties with the Imperium, chronicling forefathers who supported the Rule of Man government over a thousand years ago.

Psionics and War

Initially, Adarowee was sent to the Empty Quarter to assist the new Sector Duke Dethwabtakebwebwakawa to uncover and purge corruption from the ranks of the senior Imperial bureaucrats, especially favouritism to certain families, clans, and ethnicities. "Imperial Justice must be seen as unbiased, professional and even-handed to all, or we might as well dissolve the Imperium right now!" However, pressure from the Iridium Throne has turned a large portion of MoJ agents from their regular duties to a new slate of work, tied directly to the ongoing Solomani Rim War.

Captain Adarowee and his team was reasonably successful in disrupting criminal activity geared to discrediting the Bwap sector duke and instigating unrest across the Solomani-dominated Six Subsectors: but barely has one fire been put out, that he is now being redirected to supervise a handful of investigations tied to suppressing psionic activity. The various scandals involving psionics and high-level finance within the Empty Quarter has sparked Imperial displeasure powerful enough to distract Emperor Gavin from supervising the ongoing war, and Sector Duke Dethwabtakebwebwakawa wants the captain to insure that this kind of garbage does not happen again in his demesne. Imperial agents trained in the suppression of psionic individuals and organizations are en-route, and Captain Adarowee is to have a useful set of data, tools, and men available for their use as soon as they arrive.

Attitudes

Like most other Geonee, the Captain believes that he is one of the living descendants of the Ancients. This is sheer blasphemy in the eyes of many Vargr, but within the Imperial Empty Quarter, they can do little to shut him up. In the meantime, large segments of the Solomani population don't believe in the existence of the Ancients: they left no ruins in the sector, after all. However, many of them do support Captain Adarowee's view of women as the property of men. This cultural viewpoint has not hindered his climb up the ranks: the Imperium couldn't care less what you believe, so long as you obey the orders of your superiors (be they men or women, human or otherwise), and stay far from both the Solomani Party and anything psionic.

Starship

Captain Adarowee has to travel a lot on business, but the usual Jump4 Imperial couriers that take him where he wants to go have been substantially redirected to fill losses sustained in the Rim War fronts. The Commissioner of the Sector Ministry of Justice has heard Captain Adarowee's repeated request for a personal Jump4 courier, but for now the Captain has to make due with a Jump2 Suleiman Scout... "...but at least it's in good condition!"

Closing theme: "Night Watch", Jeehun Hwang, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr59t5yBTXU>

"Sector Duke" Aaron Collins

UPP 877ACB, age 42; Pure Solomani

Skills: Linguistics - 3, Liaison - 2, Computer - 2, Streetwise - 2, Leadership - 2, Legal - 2, Persuasion - 2, Instruction - 1, Research - 1, Theology - 1 (Abrahamic), Theology - 1 (Hindu), Psychology - 1, Handgun - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Admin - 1, Interrogation - 1, Disguise - 1, History - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Song - 0

Languages: Anglic (*Transform - the Empty Quarter dialect; Rim dialect (Collins' native tongue)*), Arabic (*Hebrin dialect*), Hindi (*Nulinad, Empty Quarter Trade dialects*)

Note: While Collins' social rank is B (Knight), Mr. Collins is not an actual Noble: however, his social pull and authority is equivalent to an Imperial Knight in pro-Solomani circles. He *does* have a Solomani Party rank of 5 (Leader)

Opening Theme: "The Best of Times", Kyle Gabler, World of Goo. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0tbDlsmx_c

Dress

Sandy brown hair, brown eyes, lightly tanned skin. A bit on the short side, dressed in the Arab or East Indian Gushgus style as the situation warrants. He carries a pistol, a fair bit of fake identification (professionally forged), and two false, deep-background identities (and two 'throw-away' identities as well.)

Youth

Collins was born on the very distant world of Agryx/Avua/Alpha Crucis (In 993: C1009B7-B). While young, he was one of the more idealistic members of the Solomani Youth cadre, believing that all the Men of Sol could use their separate strengths and weaknesses to build a glorious, multifaceted civilization that transcended the cookie-cutter, mono-everything ideals of the Vilani-corrupted Imperial civilization.

As a young Party man, Collins argued strongly for a less aggressive Solomanization policy within the Solomani Sphere: rather than take the wealth, lands, and lives of the nonhumans, they should be permitted to follow their own ways, so long as they don't challenge Solomani authority outside of their communities or in interstellar affairs. Rather than attack the minors (and possibly draw Imperial reprisals), the Race should focus on further development of the rimward frontiers. "Why waste time and lives fighting over the worn out lands of lesser races, when entire vistas of new stars and worlds await the vigour of the youngest of the Great Powers?"

Exile

But the majority of the Party councils disputed the very idea of nonhumans having rights to property, liberty, and their lives. Religious believers saw no reason to extend God-given rights to nonhumans: atheists saw the very notion of 'rights' to be just another temporary social construct, without any empirical basis. "Competition between species is real and verifiable: fairy-tales of some Sacred Law limiting competition are just the sentimental illusions of the weak and feeble-minded."

Collins refused to be discouraged, but the zeitgeist was against him, and he was eventually reassigned to the Empty Quarter, as far away from Terra as the Party could arrange. By this time, the Solomani Party was banned in Imperial Space, so Collins had to work incognito: but even without the ban, the Party had only a weak hold in the sector. Despite the widespread support for Racial Pride and Glory, few cared for the policies of the Party, while the majority of the Solomani population solidly supported the Emperor in war and politics.

The War

When war broke out in the Solomani Rim, the various party cells behind the Imperium were instructed to assist in the war effort. Most turned to terrorism and uprisings, but without widespread support by the Imperial Solomani population, these actions either fizzled out, or served as brief distractions and minor hindrances to the Imperial war effort. The most spectacular of these incidents became fuel for Imperial propaganda, serving as the justification for the imprisonment of billions of Party supporters, and sometimes the internment of entire Solomani populations on worlds where the Solomani were a minority.

In the immediate pre-war period, Collins made himself useful to the Solomani population, working tirelessly to promote Arab, East Indian, and American Indian unity against "the soul-crushing Bwap bureaucrats and the conniving Vilani corporate drones". He eventually built several Party cell networks along the Nulinad-Hebrin trade routes, avoiding violence while always looking for ways to embarrass Vilani and Bwap interests. No need to attack the Vargr: they are hated well enough in the Six Subsectors...

(He didn't directly attack Imperial power at the time, observing the dictum 'Communicate within the People's experiences.' The locals depended on the Imperial Navy for protection from Vargr thieves, and local Party policy would have to respect that. But now, with the Navy gone...)

Today

With the rise of a Bwap Sector Duke, Collins decided on a 'watch-and-wait' approach. Several local Nobles have sent feelers to him, asking for support, but Collins has refused to turn to violence. (Other Solomani cells, not so cautious, have been unveiled and destroyed by local Imperial security.) Instead, Collins is waiting for Duke Death to start treading on the toes of the small-scale starfarer classes, and more rigorously enforce Imperial laws and regulations. This will financially cripple the small lines and single ship owners, in both operations and financing: and when the pain is great enough, Collins plans to help lead the minor interstellar trader drive out the red-tape loving Bwap Sector Duke back to the swamplands he came from.

As of 001-993, Collins is the head of the largest intact Solomani Party network in the Empty Quarter. The last year was a pretty good year for Collin's network, with secret negotiations with Imperial representatives and the numerous racially conscious Noble families in the Quarter, with everyone agreeing "the amphibian has got to go!"

Most crucially, almost all of his networks' rank-and-file membership was released from assorted Imperial holding cells, exile sites and internment sites, thanks to a combination of their good behaviour, the lack of violence on his side, a sympathetic Arab & East Indian interstellar press, and the timely assistance of certain worthy friends of the Race, in public and in secret. Much of the leadership remains imprisoned, but new cell leaders can be trained up, and he himself and some of his most valuable aides remain free.

Finally, Collins' assistance in resolving a range of Arab/Hindu conflicts in Nulinad subsector, even on Nulinad herself, has led to a nice surge in favourable publicity. Contrasting his fruitful work with the 'rule-bound clumsiness of Duke Death', one pro-Arab network daringly referred to Collins as 'the true Sector Duke'. The resulting brouhaha led to subversion charges being laid on the Arab reporter and the firing of his supervisor, but the broad if disorganized hostility to the Sector Duke has found its champion – a position that Collins plans to exploit to the full.

[**Referee:** As a violence-shunning activist, it's easy to model Aaron Collins' operations on the book Rules for Radicals. Saul Alinsky had a similar loathing of violence, and a similar hostility to authority, if for very different reasons.]

Personality

Idealistic, engaging and quite personable. Always looking for a way to help his people, specializes in overcoming religious and ideological differences among the Muslims and Hindus, to unite them against the alien foe that threaten them all. Increasingly bitter when it comes to internal Party politics, and quite willing to ignore commands from the Centre when it suits him. He *loves* to bait the Vilani and Bwap, and has become quite adept in engineering social situations where their natural reactions make them look bad, but rarely turns to violence.

Rumours of the high-tech Ikonaz Vilani/Vargr pirate bands that are expected to terrorize the sector has him worried, but Muslim Brotherhood efforts to set up a defense network gladden his heart. (For some reason, Imperial Vilani and Bwap anti-pirate efforts never seem to interest Collins...) Still, local Party coffers just aren't enough to finance any reasonable anti-pirate effort, so instead propaganda is used to attack the lack of an effective Imperial response to alien aggression. "If the Emperor would put a man to work in the Quarter instead of a Newt, and turn Imperial forces from attacking Mother Earth to face the true enemy of all, then perhaps the Imperium would be worth supporting!"

Survival

Collins has good situational awareness, and is able to disappear before things get rough. Still, he wouldn't have evaded capture for so long without a good range of sympathisers in his ordinary stomping grounds, and a limited level of implicit support among the local Nobles. SolSec leadership in the sector dislike Collins' insubordination, and provide only sporadic support, just enough to avoid capture and keep him in circulation as a thorn in the Sector Duke's side. If Collins is killed, it is rather more likely that the bullet will be from SolSec than from Imperial agents: preferably at the height of his popularity, with the hit made to look like an Imperial job.

Closing theme: "Jelly", Kyle Gabler, World of Goo, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHA6G4v0E-Q>
(The windy desert visuals strike me as quite appropriate for the Empty Quarter, both in Arabia and in Traveller.)

Starship

Collins is not particularly attached to any starship, taking transport on whatever gets him to where he is going, while eluding Imperial Security.

Pirate King 'Koxinga'

UPP BAACC6, age 36; Mixed Vilani

Skills: Cudgel - 3, Computer - 2, Brawling - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Linguistics - 1, Streetwise - 1, Mechanical - 1, Electronics - 1, Pilot - 1, Energy Weapon - 1, Vacc Suit - 0, Rifleman - 0

Languages: NuLingo (native), Ovaghoun Vargr (*Ourmakten language*). No Anglic, Vilani, Hindi, Arabic...

Note: For purposes of Vargr interactions, Koxinga has a charisma level that varies between 10 and 14.

Opening theme: "Balsa Hashiru" (Balsa Runs), Kenji Kawai, Seirei no Moribito,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD8ICBPiLgQ>



Just one more rotten hulk in the Empty Quarter, which couldn't possibly be serving as a pirate base of some kind. Ankheal, Gimushi subsector, 992 Imperial. The graphic is titled "Stronghold" © Dmitry Dubinsky. Please visit his gallery at <http://elhor.cgsociety.org/gallery/904158/>

Dress

Koxinga is a powerfully built man, who dresses in an odd fashion, apparently chaotic and completely mismatched. Closer examination would show some very expensive, TL D-E fabrics, dancing holographic logos, and 'impossible' stitching. Currently, he has taken to wearing hats taken from his more (in)famous victims. In business meetings, he wears a high-tech 'face screener' (that also alters his voice), not to truly hide his identity which is well-known even with the camouflage, but as a nod to certain infamous human pirates of centuries past. (The effect is similar to wearing a tricorne pirate hat of today – in a culture that *loves* piracy and brigade, 'done the traditional way'.)

Koxinga carried a particular kind of cudgel/club, an Ikonaz human equivalent to the steel claws of a Vargr fighter. He's good at using it, too. Hidden on his person is a three-shot plasma pistol, no larger than his large palms.

Youth

Koxinga is very secretive of his youth, but someone knowledgeable of Tsahrroek subsector and/or the Rukadukaz Republic will be able to place him as an Ikonaz (from Ikon system) without much trouble. Attempting to document his past on Ikon leads to a dead end: this is rather unusual on Ikon, where the Vilani actually take record keeping seriously, unlike on most Vargr worlds. It is certainly that the complete destruction of Koxinga's electronic history, from birth records to internet chats, was done deliberately (and cost a very pretty penny, too!)

Unlike most humans from that very wealthy world, Koxinga is a member of the Impserver population, the descendant of Imperial slaves from various pirate and slavery raids. While slavery has been abolished for over 250 years on Ikon, they still hold a certain resentment of their old Vargr & Vilani masters, but this has diminished greatly over recent decades. The current focus of elite & middle-class contempt is the Irlitok Vargr, not the former Imperial slaves.

The Early Years

Going into the Vargr-dominated pirate trade early, Koxinga build up a strong reputation for daring and aggression 'for a human'. Thanks to a mixture of seized opportunity and skill, his crew was able to grab prizes that charisma-conscious Vargr passed over as beneath them, and consensus-driven Vilani were just too slow to grasp. By "making it big on the small hits", Koxinga was able to build up a nice seven-ship fleet, the Masuemna'on Alliance. More than just a pack of pirates, Koxinga organized a solid black-market network of dealers, financiers, fencers, and killers to haul in the profits.

The Shadow Cartel

Two years ago, he – as leader of the Masuemna'on Alliance – was invited to join the Shadow Cartel, and establish himself in Imperial space while the Navy was off in a distant war. The Shadow Cartel is broadly Imperial human, but they are strongly interested in building up Vargr membership as well, and are absolutely *fascinated* with Ikonaz technology and techniques. Koxinga cut a deal where – among other things – he gets to establish his own organizations on Pamushgar, while getting exclusive piracy rights to Kenrasda, Ankheal, Ardamashii, Dharmendra, and Askaath.

Pamushgar has a strong system navy, and the ruling Marquis is actively working against piracy in nearby systems. However, his starships are in the TL B-C range; while his pack is relocating, Koxinga intends to use his TL E pirates to teach the local starmercs and Colonial Navy types where the new no-go zones are. That way, local law enforcement officers gets to file reports showing solid metrics on how successful they are and get their promotions and bonuses, while Koxinga gets to conduct business without interference. "Just like back home in the Republic."

Pamushgar is a wealthy and powerful system (for the Imperial Empty Quarter), but it's a very Vilani culture, where even the criminals resist change – and the police prefer to deal with local, tradition-bound criminals rather than the Solomani rabble or the typically chaotic Vargr hounds. Koxinga has spent his entire life in a strongly Vilani culture, and plans to leverage his know-how to expand his territory 'the right way' on Pamushgar. His Ovaghoun lieutenants, strongly pro-Vilani to a Vargr, will be quite useful in building the needed links and reshaping the Pamushgar consensus to something more to Koxinga's liking.

Plans

If things go well, the next goal is to leverage his wealth and connections to organize a proper takeover of the Shadow Cartel, with himself and certain allies as the new Cartel Lords. If this can be done with leveraging the Imperial government as a tool against his enemies, all the better – *they* shed the blood, and *he* gets the return. It'll be a difficult undertaking, but Koxinga sees himself as more cunning than the typical Emptyhead, and he's confident that he can pull it off, if he doesn't rush things. "Take your time, and do it right the first time."

Unlike his namesake, Koxinga has better ships and higher technology than his current opponents: but one day, the Imperial Navy will return. It will certainly be his technological equal, and the *very* experienced naval captains will make mincemeat of his band if they ever get a lock on him. So like his distant namesake, Koxinga intends to make leadership and a superb understanding of the battlefield – criminal, political and economic, as well as astrographic – make the difference between an enriched retirement and an abrupt death.

Adjusting to Imperial Space

Koxinga will have some interesting work to do to properly adjust to a life of Imperial piracy. In Imperial Space, the Navy has an adversarial posture to pirates, and many officers and crewmen have a genuine hatred of them. This is quite different to how things are done in the Vargr-led (but Vilani-run) Rukadukaz Republic. Simply by virtue of being a man, Koxinga will be better treated than any Vargr; this is not the case in the Republic, where even respected Ikonaz humans are not *quite* as equal as Ikonaz Vargr.

In a patriarchal interstellar culture, his masculinity is also a social asset: while family is important among humans in the Republic, women are quite likely to be the centre of the family, and have a decisive say in many family matters. In the race-conscious Six Subsectors, there will be many attempts to place Koxinga's race, but not even the man himself knows all the varied peoples that make up his heritage – the 'Mixed Vilani' box is as good as any other.

Religious identification is also important in this part of Imperial Space, but Koxinga isn't much interested in such abstractions: but he does follow a few widespread Vilani and Vargr superstitions, from jump-dimming (the starship lights before a jump) to giving a hard whack on the door with his cudgel when he first enters his cabin (imitating the Ikonaz Vargr habit of giving a deep claw-mark when claiming a cabin for himself).

Koxinga can't speak either Vilani or Anglic: as his first base will be on the Vilani world of Pamushgar, he will have to somehow learn Modern Vilani while taking command of his criminal fief there. (He could just get by with a good translator, but that kind of dependence weakens his self-image). He'll also have to adjust to the relative poverty of the region, compared to the wealth of the Republic.

Closing theme: "Teidou no Balsa" (Balsa on her way of her destiny), Kenji Kawai, Seirei no Moribito,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=me0ADmtDLYg>

More on the original Koxinga:

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/NC16Ad03.html>

<http://www.atimes.com/china/DC14Ad01.html>

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FH28Ad03.html>

Starships

Six of the seven ships of the Masuemna'on Alliance are 400-ton Corsairs, upgraded to TL 14 specs. The seventh ship, the *Trunskar* (NuLingo, "Boss, Manager"), is a dedicated 1500-ton warship. It is built as much for light raiding of poorly defended worlds as it is for space warfare. As the *Trunskar* is not a true pirate vessel, light freighters like the 200-ton, Jump2 Jayhawk-class or Empress Marava-cass Far Traders are hired out to provide transport support: both for more raiding troops in, as well as more cargo capacity out.

All starships are designed using Andrew Vallance's **High Guard Shipyard**, version 2.0.0.011, using JTAS crewing determination.

USP

FR-A6266H2-800000-43500-0 MCr 1,434.528 1.5 Ktons
Bat Bear 321 Crew: 121
Bat 321 TL: 14

Cargo: 19 Passengers: 4 Crew Sections: 2 of 61 Fuel: 390 EP: 90 Agility: 2
Marines: 60

Craft: 8 x 6T G-Carriers, 1 x 20T Gig, 5 x 1T Air/Rafts
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 1 x Model/7fib Computer

Architects Fee: MCr 14.345 Cost in Quantity: MCr 1,147.622

HULL: 1,500 tons standard, 21,000 cubic meters,
Flattened Sphere Configuration

CREW:

12 Officers, 49 Ratings, 60 Marines
Command section: 7 officers and 4 ratings;
Engineering section: 1 officer and 4 ratings;
Gunnery section: 1 officer and 7 ratings;
Flight section: 1 officer and 32 ratings;
Service section: 1 officer and 2 ratings;
Medical Section: 1 officer;
Marines: 60

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 6G Maneuver, Power plant-6, 90 EP, Agility 2

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/8fib Computer, 1 Model/7fib Backup Computer

HARDPOINTS: 1 50-ton bay, 5 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT:

1x 50-ton Particle Accelerator Bay (Factor-5),
3x Triple Beam Laser Turrets organized into 3 Batteries (Factor-4),
2x Dual Plasma Gun Turrets organized into 2 Batteries (Factor-3)

DEFENCES: Armoured Hull (Factor-8)

CRAFT:

8x 6-ton G-Carriers (Crew of 2),
1x 20-ton Gig (Crew of 1),
5x 1-ton Air/Rafts (Crew of 2)

FUEL:

390 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS:

68 Staterooms, 2 High Passengers, 2 Middle Passengers, 19 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST:

MCr 1,448.873 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 14.345),
MCr 1,147.622 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 127 Weeks Singly, 102 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS: The Trunskar is designed to conduct a raid on a lightly defended target, preferably a city, town, or industrial installation; assist in the theft of all valuable articles and technology as it is stashed in the escorting cargo ships, and fly off into the sunset. The particle accelerator is designed for intimidation as much as for the quick destruction of defending SDBs; the Plasma Guns are for hammering dug-in defense installations.

The G-Carriers are mainly meant to quickly haul marines to the targeted sites, as well as transport the most valuable articles for their weight – usually data bases, but also art, geneered organisms, high-value hostages, and sometimes physical currency – back to the Trunskar herself for safekeeping. The light air/rafts are for scouting and basic fire support as the G-Carriers get the main work done; if pressed, they can double as an anti-aircraft platform, but they are meant to be used against ground forces.

The Trunskar is a member of the Loestra'og Va Aak-class of heavy raiders: several hulls are on a rush order by various Ikonic pirate groups, hoping to take advantage of Imperial weakness before the Solomani Rim War is concluded. Light raiders, in the 500 – 1000-ton displacement range, are starting to show up in Imperial space as well.

Madam Diega Decoder

UPP 8A55EA, age 28; Vilani

Skills: Carousing - 2, Dance - 2, Acting - 1, Psychology - 1, Medical - 1, Leadership - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Streetwise - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Handgun - 0

Languages: Modern Vilani (native)

Note: Despite her Anglic family name, Madam Decoder is of primary (but not pure) Vilani descent, and strongly identifies with Vilani culture.

Opening theme: “It’s Over”, Level 42, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RlwA7j- KU>

Dress

Madam Decoder dresses like the high-status Vilani she is; covered head to toe, except the face and her fingertips, in rich traditional fabrics. Over her shoulders is a kind of V-shaped shawl, edged with metallic Vilani inscriptions denoting her family lineage, caste and subcaste, and clan affiliations.

Youth

Born Diega Khaimga Andurdirsu Umnasgan in Biankili Asteroid, Eninshih system, the young girl was raised in a minor managerial family, a member of a respected clan of life support specialists. However, when she reached her majority, Diega’s community elders judged her to be better suited to entertainment duties. While Diega agreed with the basics of the decision – she naturally loves the attention of the crowd – she initially resented the downgrade in social status. Still, the elders know best, and soon she was one of the most beloved members of the 150,000-strong community of light manufacturers, miners & refiners, and hydroponic farms.

(Following) A pensive young Solomani, within one of the larger asteroids of Eninsish system, 993 Imperial. While there are tens of thousands of inhabited asteroids in Eninsish’s single broad asteroid belt, only four have been given the full-scale “Natural World” treatment, complete with flowing rivers, forests, and breezes. A fifth was under construction, but this was halted on the onset of the Solomani Rim War: that kind of skilled labour and heavy equipment is very useful for secret naval bases and reinforced system strongpoints. The graphic is titled “Eon” © Maurizio Manzieri. Please visit his gallery at <http://manzieri.cgsociety.org/gallery/>



In time, a wealthy Solomani Hindu from Nulinad, Kaartikeya Decoder, was touring the asteroid. While being entertained as a respected guest, he saw and desired the happy young Vilani woman. He bargained with the asteroid elders and her parents, eventually placing a substantial order as well as paying a large dowry in return for the woman's hand.³

Marriage

Initially, the marriage went well for the first few years, with the birth of a son and a daughter, but soon enough the husband began to wander, siring several children outside of the marriage. Diega grew to despise her husband: the fighting eventually led to beatings. Things grew to a head when Kaartikeya insisted that his children from other women should get shares in his estate, in *complete* violation of the marriage contract he pledged. Outraged by this contempt for herself, her children, and for the traditions he had betrayed, she promptly shot him dead.

The Indian-style license raj of Nulinad never budged when the Vilani woman was being abused, and they ignored her demands for a divorce when her husband was playing around, but they finally swung into action after her wealthy and connected East Indian husband was killed. However, the grindingly slow pace of appeals – snarled by the endless delays, procedural appeals, flawed testimonies, and spoiled evidence – gave time for several pro-Vilani advocate groups to rally to her defense. When what should have been a simple murder trial turned to an interstellar incident and an opportunity for the rather egalitarian Vilani to sneer at Solomani culture, right in the sector capital, during a major Imperial war against the Solomani Confederation.

Controversy

After Diega narrowly avoided an assassination attempt by the guards charged to protect her, Sector Duke Dethwabtakewebwakawa directly ordered the planetary government to release Diega and give her the title to her husbands' holdings. The Nulinad government did so – and also exiled her and her children out of the system within one week, while requiring that she sell all of her husband's property before she left, at firesale prices.

Despite the planetary government intentions, several minor Vilani corporations, positioning themselves as defender of Vilani culture, together bought her property at prices fairly close to the market rate... reaping a nice PR bonus among both the Vilani peoples and anti-Solomani Imperial patriots. A fair amount of Noble influence was used to prevent a cycle of Hindi/Vilani violence from playing itself out across the subsector: as it is, there were some nasty incidents over the main Nulinad starport before the local Naval squadron brought the hammer down.

Return

When Diega Decoder returned to her home asteroid, both her family and the asteroid elders publicly apologized for their failure to see the true plans of the honourless Solomani man, and their inability to shield her from Solomani brutality. While she was permitted to retake her old family name if she chose, she chose to retain her husband's name, as a way to secure her claim to his property, most of which has been sold.⁴

Her Mixed Vilani children, Bali (boy, 4) and Nidhi (girl, 3) are being raised in the Vilani way, to strictly conform to Vilani mores. Following Vilani cultural mores, they have no interest in racial purity, but have a deep interest in cultural conformity. Despite their Solomani names, it's likely that the children will grow to despise their father's culture – aided in part by the societal background of Imperial hostility to the Solomani enemy.

Now a living symbol of Vilani strength and nobility before Solomani sexism, bigotry, and ignorance, Madame Diega is training up to re-join her entertainment caste: but this time, she will perform for Vilani corporations, societies,

³ This is in contrast to modern Hindu practice of the parents of the girl *paying* a man to take her in his family. Ergo, the East Indian abortion and infanticide of little girls, etc. A good case can be made that women in Hindi cultures are in an even *worse* position than women in Arab cultures, both of which dominate much of the Empty Quarter. At least Islam bans abortions, and Mohammed really *did* raise women's positions from what it was before!

⁴ She also received a nice insurance settlement: no Vilani woman will marry without a solid policy on her husband's life, should he die in unforeseen circumstances.)

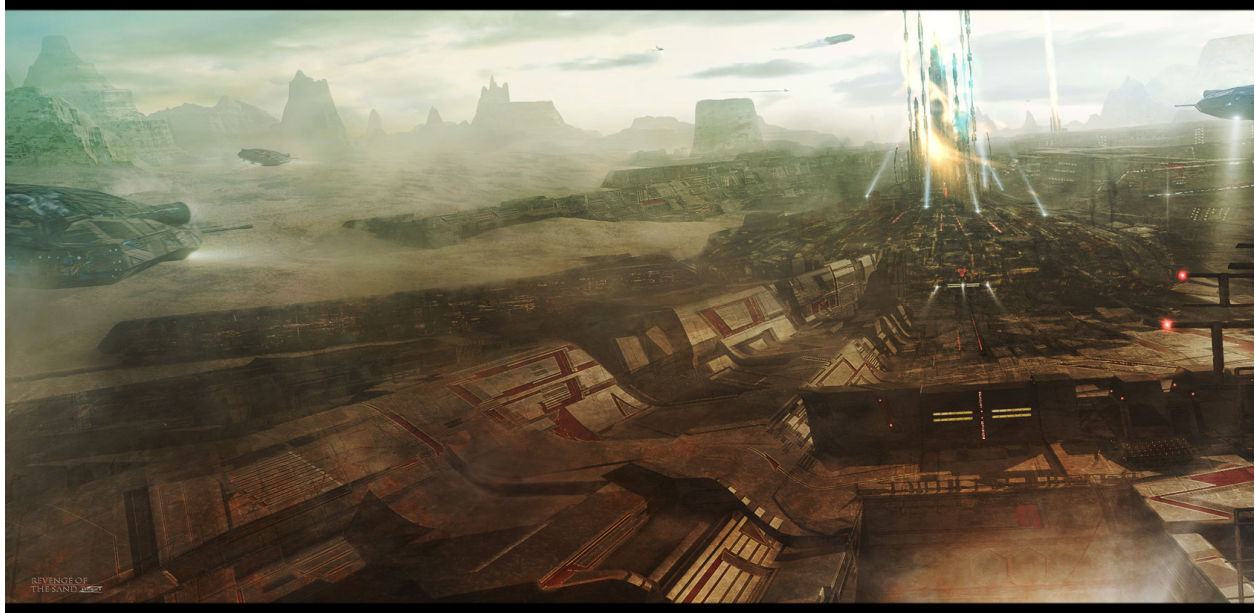
nobility, and cultural groups. Certain pro-Vilani groups have *very* big plans for her, using her to promote Vilani culture across the Six Subsectors while smearing the Solomani every chance they get.⁵

Starship

Madame Diega does not have access to a starship yet; but her handlers are definitely in the market for a reliable crew and starship for a long-term charter, preferably with a Vilani or a Vilani/Bwap crew. Solomani crews need not apply; Mixed Vilani crews will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Closing theme: “Call on Me”, Ulpio Minucci and Arlon Ober, Robotech

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZRQ7k3moL0>



Baronet Sir Jasser el Ghachem Imperial Starport, 993 Imperial. Named after an exceptionally famous explorer, trader, arms smuggler (during the War of Men in the 300s) and incorrigible raconteur, Hebrin’s primary starport is certainly the most famous one within the sector. But outside the sector, in the Imperium at large, Tokitre’s Imperial starport is better known as the launching point of desperate and risky ventures into the unknown.

The graphic is titled “Revenge of the Sand” © Sebastian Hue. Please visit his gallery at

<http://shue13.deviantart.com/art/Revenge-Of-The-Sand-274758096>

Baron Shafiq bin Mesut

UPP 47796C, age 31; Solomani

Psionic skills: Psi - 7, Clairvoyance - 1, Telepathy - 1, Telekinesis - 1,

Standard skills: Chemistry - 2, Astronomy - 2, Leadership - 2, Sophontology - 2, Brawling - 2, Recruiting - 1, Admin - 1, Legal (Imperial Law) - 1, Legal (Islamic Law) - 1, Tactics - 1, Linguistics - 1, Small Boat - 1, Hunting - 0, Rifleman - 0, Equestrian - 0, Wheeled Vehicle - 0

Languages: Arabic (*Modern, native*), Anglic (*Transform dialect*).

Opening Theme: “Desert Rose”, Sting, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3lWwBslWgq>

Dress

Like many nobles, the Baron dresses to clearly display his social status. On modern Hebrin, that’s a set of expensive

⁵ Madame Diega is young enough to possibly live to the Classic Traveller era, over a century away. It would be interesting to see what the results of her life would be at that time...

maroon breeches edged in black, an orange silk shirt with a bolo tie tipped with crystals, and a sash with colours and insignia that display his status as a Rank Baron of the Third Imperium. His hands bear transdermal implants that act as electronic keys to his registered stocks of water (water acts as currency on dry Hebrin). The Baron is normally unarmed.

Early Years

The youngest of the ruling families on Hebrin, the Mesut family used to rule the northern polar region of the world as their own nation. Now, post-Hebrin Rebellion, his family only has their traditional Imperial duties to focus on: administrating Imperial Law, and acting as ombudsmen between the Imperium and the local government.

Shafiq gained an extensive education in the Duchess Imani Science Academy on Hebrin: designed to support friendship and scholarship exchanges with the Hegemony of Lorean, he rubbed shoulders with ordinary Julian military officers, the cold Arzula from the Hegemony, and a surprisingly large number of Vargr scholars from both the Hegemony and the Rukadukaz Republic.

While he learned quite a lot, Shafiq never actually graduated despite the five years he spent studying there. He pleaded laziness and womanizing before his parents when he returned home without a degree, and he gave hints of drug use to his friends, but the real reason is far more disturbing: two of those years were spent receiving psionic training in a secret branch of The United Will (**Stellar Reaches #18**, page 67), abandoning his lightly held Islamic beliefs as part of his training.⁶ While apostasy is no longer punishable by death on Hebrin, he rarely speaks to anyone (and never to family) about his new beliefs, and only speaks to two other people about his psionic powers – the possession of which *is* punishable by execution. On the other hand, he feels quite bit superior to others, understanding that he has been given a glimpse into a reality few others will ever see. (Most put down his smug aura to his Noble social status.)

Career

Before being raised to the Barony, Shafiq spent his years in service to the subsector Duke, helping to resolve interstellar disputes as they arose. As he did well in his science classes, science-oriented cases were placed in the Duke's docket. He took the work seriously, gaining the knowledge (but not the actual degree) of an experienced astronomer and chemist (the chemistry was very useful in various gas giant mining disputes).

After several years of excellent service to both his father and to himself – where he surprised many by his quick, strong grasp of the required science – Duke Saqr recommended to Emperor Styryx that Shafiq be raised to a Rank Baron in 987. While Styryx approved of the recommendation, it was his son Gavin – unexpectedly raised to Emperor – who actually issued the enfeoffment in the 989 Holiday list.

Love

Soon after Shafiq was raised to Baron – to the public delight of his family, and the secret pleasure of the United Will cabal – he became the target of the affections of various women. One of them, Naima, managed to hold his attention long enough to become his second wife in 991. His first wife, Jaliyah, did not take this well at all, and both women demanded more and more gifts and rewards. Loving both women, and unwilling to anger their powerful families by divorcing either, Shafiq is increasingly driven to go to greater and greater lengths to fund his wives' ever-more expensive desires. And, given his expertise in interstellar law and the high degree of respect he has earned, there are a number of parties who are willing to help him ease his financial troubles... at a price.

Starship

Baron Shafiq time-shares a standard yacht with six other Rank Barons of limited means. As much of his work is space-related, he would love to own one that solely for his own use, instead of time-sharing one, buying a ticket on a freighter, or even lowering himself to use a tramp Free Trader.

Closing theme: "The Working Hour", Tears for Fears <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ja4qxibu7eio>

⁶ Blackmail? I didn't say anything about blackmail! Where did *that* come from?

Bassem Salah

UPP B4697A, age 26; Solomani Arab

Skills: Medic (First Aid) - 2, Laser Weapon - 1, Streetwise - 1, Biology - 1, Mechanical - 1, Zero-G - 1, Leadership - 1, Instruction - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Unarmed Combat - 0

Languages: Anglic (*Native: Transform*)

Opening Theme: "No Sacrifice, No Victory", Hans Zimmer, Transformers

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xrQ8wzGiQM>



The city of Ranaghat, seat of an Imperial Baron and home of several subsector offices and affiliates of the Imperial subsector government on Irash. In the foreground and mid-ground are several circular buildings, part of the sprawling Lady Biasdo Imperial Veterans Hospital. The graphic is titled "Canyon City 02" © whatzitoya.

Please visit his gallery at <http://whatzitoya.deviantart.com/art/Canyon-City-02-357785259>

Dress

As is typical for Orderlies in Imperial Veteran hospitals and hospices, Salah wears a standard uniform of white pants, a white shirt with an open collar, and a white smock. On his belt is a datapad and some medical sensors, as well as a panic button (four different buttons, for medical emergencies (human, Vargr, other) and for intruders). He has no weapons except for his fists.

From War to Peace

As a young boy, Salah immigrated with his family from Hebrin to Mordekai. The Muslim family never felt truly welcome on the Jewish world, and Salah was happy to leave Mordekai and join the Imperial Army when his draft number came up. He only served one term in the field, though, as a wound cut into his mobility (a.k.a. his Dexterity rating). Rather than leave the service, he was permitted to retrain as a medic, and worked as an orderly at the Lady Biasdo Imperial Veterans Hospital on Irash.

Lady Biasdo is a sprawling campus, tending to over 75,000 veterans of Imperial service with serious or chronic conditions. While some wards are equipped to the top Imperial tech level of 14, most of the medical care available is only at the top planetary level, TL 10. Orderly Salah is assigned to patients with psychological conditions, especially obsessive-compulsive disorders, who are resistant/immune to drugs & sedatives. Because of his strength, Salah often works to restrain patients, using crisis intervention techniques such as finger & muscle locks,

and had gained a 'sixth-sense' for when patients start to tense up or are getting close to violence. In better circumstances, Salah provides massages to ease muscle tension.

Orderly Salah is in training to gain a speciality in behaviour modification, so he can better help the patients. He is very knowledgeable in the differences between Solomani and Vilani forms of OCD, and is busy trying to get a grip on Vargr forms. (Bwap do not suffer from an OCD equivalent – it's a natural and healthy part of their personality.)

I know people...

Orderly Salah is primarily a contact for PCs, and can help link them up with patients who have important information. PCs that are in the service, but (for some reason) was not shipped with most of the other regiments and warships to the Old Expanses front, may be under his care. He had no great hostility to the Vilani or the non-humans, but is still suspicious of Jews, especially those from the world of Mordekai.

Starship

Not even in his dreams does Salah consider owning a starship. But, as a passenger, he just might spend the tens of thousands of credits he needs (and doesn't have) to visit Hebrin, and try to find his childhood haunts.

Closing theme: "Haunted Ocean 1", Max Richter, Waltz with Bashir

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYfjsZYa2-g>

Exalted Generalissimo and Master of the Stars Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish

UPP 899CBE, age 38; Ovaghoun Vargr

Skills: Navigation - 2, Sensor Ops - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Linguistics - 1, Research - 1, Grav Belt - 1, Recon - 1, Tactics - 1, Infighting - 1, Stealth - 1, Instruction - 1, Computer - 0, Energy Weapon - 0, Vacc Suit - 0

Language: Ikonaz Vilani (*Native: Vargr pronunciation*), Anglic (*Julian dialect*)

Opening theme: "Wolf Trial 1", Jeehun Hwang, MechWarrior 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNWK8qgfpYE>

Note: Despite the title, it's been a few years since Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish has commanded any military unit. "Generalissimo" is effectively a civilian title signifying his authority over a province the size of Belgium on Khastok (total population: 55), "Exalted" means that he is under a separate political hierarchy than the other Generalissimos, giving him greater latitude to simply ignore planetary laws and the constitution at will; and "Master of the Stars" is tied to his earlier career as a senior naval officer for one of Ikon's assorted fleets.

Dress

This high-charisma Vargr prefers a very high-tech, and very loud, Vargr uniform with a dazzling array of badges, medals, insignia, and inscriptions. Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish always carries a simply massive plasma pistol, lovingly engraved in the Sylean Noble style.

Earlier

Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish (pronounced, 'of•house•foe•shh•trim•nur•gh•ish') has a very varied career within the Mgo Squadron, eventually rising to the equivalent of Admiral several times.⁷ As a military commander, Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish was at best average (he actually had a better grip on ground tactics than space tactics), but as a leader of the Ikonaz, Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish has charisma to burn, able to bring large numbers of independently-minded warship captains and the better corsairs together, and work as a team more often than not.

Now

Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish was eventually pushed into a situation where he could either punish a political foe, keep his position, and lose charisma; or let the foe win, lose his position, but keep or build up his charisma. Of'housfo'shtrimnurghish decided that sacred charisma was more important than easy-come, easy-go titles and

⁷ Vargr careers paths are rather turbulent, even among the Vilani-influenced, somewhat bureaucratic Ovaghoun.

ranks. After retirement, he managed to snag a single corsair in good shape and – relying more on propaganda, intimidation, reputation and inspiration than naked violence – leveraged the ship into a nice-sized private nation on Khastok and richly-paid “technological consultant” and “naval advisor” gigs.

Khastok is a world with little atmosphere, mainly inhabited by the Ikonaz, Vargr and Vilani alike. It was wealthier and more populated centuries before: you don’t need to look hard for abandoned bases, some of them still heated and filled with air, waiting for their long-gone owners to return. In Exalted Generalissimo Of’housfo’ shtrimnurghish’s ‘Theatre of Operations’ (what the locals call a state, province, or district of the planet), a few dozen of his friends and allies maintain three comfortable bases, each large enough to hold a hundred times their number. His wealthy, well-connected friends were able to convert the extra space into gardens, automated factories, secure fortresses, small starports, even domed hunting ranges.⁸

The citizens of the neighbouring world of Irikrough have some problems with off-world interests exploiting the local fauna for medical supplies. Recently, they have come to him waving lots of cash – and, better yet, even more honours, respect and prestige – asking for his support in hindering or stopping the trade. Of’housfo’s shtrimnurghish has decided to do his own research and visit Irikrough himself, to see if the citizens are speaking the truth, but also to see if the drugs being made for export are watered-down versions of ‘the good stuff’, only sold locally. If he feels that piracy is called for, he’ll have to plan out the political side of it, to keep the Star Legion from interfering with a little pirate-backed trade war on the pharmaceutical companies.

Starship

Of’housfo’s shtrimnurghish sold his starship to help finance the renovation of his private base on Khastok. He wouldn’t mind getting back into action again, but one thing has to be made clear: no matter who owns the starship, it’s *Of’housfo’s shtrimnurghish* who’s commanding it!

Closing theme: “The Final Decision We All Must Take”, Shiro Sagisu, Evangelion 2.0

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aXk8jB4ilc>

Junker Dominik Fenstermacher

UPP 494B8B, age 38; Pure Solomani

Skills: Rifleman - 4, Streetwise - 1, Brawling - 2, Vacc Suit - 2, Leadership - 1, Instruction - 1, Trader - 1, Recon - 1, Mortar - 1, Legal - 1, Forensics - 1, Admin - 1, Small Blade - 1, Interrogation - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Handgun - 0,

Language: Anglic (*Native: Terraform dialect*)

Opening theme: “Ode to a Dark Star”, David Lanz and Paul Speer, Bridge of Dreams

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsWbP3R_RZ8

Dress

Fenstermacher prefers a standard white shirt, black jacket, and black shoes, with a black tie. A small pin on his tie identifies him as a member of House Pruvia, a formerly Mixed Vilani family that altered their genes of their descendants to fit the pure Solomani genetic profile. The Junker is unarmed in civilian environments, but able to handle a rifle *very* well in the field.

Origins

A true bottle-born man – and so a member of the upper classes of Rommel, his homeworld – Fenstermacher initially chose a career in the military. He was a proficient soldier and a good if unremarkable sniper, but only rose to Oberleutnant (O2) before a nasty explosion nearly took his life on the poisonous atmosphere of his world: as it was, he was seriously crippled (ie: lost lots of Strength and Endurance, and some Dexterity), and was honourably

⁸ Sure, the bases are beautiful and impressive and very well defended: but there is no substitute for dozens of cubs running around nipping each other, and *that* the Ikonaz Vargr do not have. The phrase “whitewashed tombs” comes to mind...

dismissed. Still looking for a way to serve his people, Fenstermacher joined the police services, becoming a respected investigator (and gaining adoption into a local noble line as well, gaining the title of Junker). He remained an active leader in the planetary reserves.



Fusion-powered rockets soar past the cloud cover of Rommel. While the system is able to create reactionless engines, fusion-drive rockets provide far more cost-efficient results for the government.

The graphic is titled "From the Edge" © Gabriel Gajdoš. Please visit his gallery at <http://pipper-svk.deviantart.com/art/From-The-Edge-359631907>

Problems

Traditionally, the planetary navy is a caste apart, with members trained from childhood in Battle Schools and retained by the service for life. As part of the tribute paid to the Emperor to support the Solomani Rim War, an extensively trained crew was placed at the Emperor's disposal, and was given command of a single 3,000-ton, TL D second-line warship, the *Chorren*. But to the shock of Rommel, the latest IISS courier brought news that the *Chorren* was lost with all hands at her very first engagement in the Old Expanses.

As the world mourns, the planetary government has ordered Fenstermacher to join an investigative team, and determine just how such superbly-trained men, crewing an older but perfectly serviceable warship, was wiped out by a mediocre Confederation combatant. The Imperial Navy isn't interested in pursuing the matter: so far as the Admiralty is concerned, it was just another inexperienced, poorly-trained Colonial crew who fouled their lines up in their starting engagement and paid the price for it. The Rommelmens are 100% certain that this wasn't the case, and want to dig up the truth. The fact that the dead *Chorren* is currently in an active warzone doesn't dissuade them in the slightest.

Other members of his team include other investigators (military and police), genetic profilers to analyse the remains and determine if there are any flaws, and a priest to convert most of the remains of the dead into diamonds for their families to mount on their Walls of Honour.

Closing theme: "Departure", Michael Nyman, Gattaca <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca6NoSVhjZU>

Starship

No Rommelman starship is available, but Fenstermacher knows of a fast courier that would be very handy. Unfortunately, the *Bessel* has been sitting in a dock for the last 54 years as various legal entanglements and counter-claims slowly work their way through various Imperial and planetary court systems. But, if the ship was to *somehow* leave its berth in Unsharshe and arrive in Rommel's Imperial Starport seven parsecs away, Rommel's claim on the ship would be unchallengeable, and the investigators can finally begin their long journey to the Rim War battlefield to uncover the truth of the death of the *Chorren*.

Fenstermacher has no idea of the current status of the *Bessel*: as far as he knows, her airlock has been bolted shut for decades now. He does have the specs for the ship, certain useful passcodes and keys, and a set of ship papers which remain in hot dispute, but which – used carefully – *could* get the approval of a Colonial warship busy looking for pirates to hammer.

Ship: Pommern Class: Mercury
Type: Fast Courier Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13

USP

CF-2241541-030000-20000-0 MCr 165.350 200 Tons
Bat Bear 1 1 Crew: 5
Bat 1 1 TL: 13

Cargo: 10 Passengers: 4 Crew Sections: 1 of 5 Emergency Low: 3 Fuel: 90
EP: 10 Agility: 1
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops

Architects Fee: MCr 1.653 Cost in Quantity: MCr 132.280

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Cone Configuration

CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Medic, two Gunners

ENGINEERING: Jump-4, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-5, 10 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4 Computer

HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 1 Single Beam Laser Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-2)

DEFENCES: 1 Single Sandcaster Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-3)

CRAFT: None

FUEL:

90 Tons Fuel (4 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS:

9 Staterooms, 2 Low Berths, 3 Emergency Low Berths, 4 Middle Passengers,
10 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST:

MCr 167.003 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 1.653),
MCr 132.280 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Mercury class is an old Imperial Navy design, built to quickly ferry command officers and critical personnel across a sector or across the Imperium. As a later member of the class, three emergency low berths were added to this design, in addition to the standard two regular low berths. Even now, in the middle of a major war, cheap and plentiful Mercurys are doing much of the basic officer transport work in most of the Imperium, with more recent TL 14 designs being used closer in the battlefield itself and regions close to the fighting.



The Hiver Research Cruiser Uyaken visits the world of Ewa, the centre of technology within the Mische Conglomerate (Ewa/Osternann/Crucis Margin, hex 0702), for a complete overhaul, 989 Imperial. It's a long, long way to the Imperium... The graphic is titled "Colonized Moons" © Gabriel Gajdoš. Please visit his gallery at <http://pipper-svk.deviantart.com/art/Colonized-Moons-115900631>

Manipulator Harni Glozzom

UPP A8B879, age 38; Pure Minor Race Human (Referee designed race, homeworld in the Hive Federation. Broadly similar to the Solomani, with only minor differences)

Skills: Manipulation - 3, Hiver Sign Language - 2, Psychology (Hiver) - 2, Navigation - 2, Vacc Suit - 1, Electronics (Hiver) - 1, Small Blade - 1, Linguistics – 1, Computer (Hiver) - 1, Pilot - 1, Handgun - 0, Grav Vehicle (Hiver) - 0,

Languages: Trealop (*Native*), Anglic (*Rim dialect*).

Trealop is common language among Hiver humanity, including Glozzom's homeworld.

Currently, M. Glozzom is struggling to learn the Transform dialect: when she speaks Rim Anglic, she sounds like the Racist Enemy of the Imperium everyone recognises from the media. Nobody mistakes her as Solomani thanks to the visual differences her race has with the Men of Sol, but she still doesn't like to give bad impressions.

M. Glozzom has a beginner's grasp of Gurvin, the most common *spoken* language in the Hive Federation: treat it as Gurvin-0 for basic greetings and elementary requests, and Gurvin-(-2) for anything more complex.

Opening theme: "Abandon Opening Titles", Clint Mansell, Abandon

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTBY-e_Fmw

Notes:

- In Hiver society, her Curiosity level would be set at 12.
- Hiver humans have a very different technological aesthetic and presuppositions than Imperial, Vilani, or Solomani technology. For one thing, their technology does not originate *from* them, but is designed *for* them by the ever-parental, ever-caring, ever-controlling, ever-manipulative Hiver cabals who truly know what's best for them...

Dress

While within the Empty Quarter: a plain baggy white overall, under a black abayat and niqab.

Back home in the Hive Federation: a plain baggy white overall, under a shimmering TL 14 lightdress. Often, M. Glozzom will wear a brightly coloured headtie or headscarf – for cultural reasons, M. Glozzom believes in keeping her head covered outside of the family home. (And home is very, very far away, so...)⁹

At all times, M. Glozzom carries two slim blades: one, a very nice and well-balanced TL 10 steel weapon, is kept on her left forearm for easy access. A second one, a TL 15 boneblade, is usually an integral part of her right shin bone until needed. It is undetectable with anything less than TL 16/17 sensor equipment.

Field Research

M. Glozzom is one of the very few humans who earned a recognized Manipulator rating from the Manipulations Club of Guaran for her inspired work in reigning in and taming the irrational fanaticism of the Nap'!, smoothing their way to accepting gentle Hiver oversight of their mating rituals and cub-raising traditions. Almost immediately, she received several offers from numerous topical clubs, but the one that she tweaked her curiosity most was the Imperial Cultures Club of Glea. The kaleidoscope of human cultures, races, and patterns of thought within the Third Imperium fascinate the ever-curious Hivers, and – despite the expense and risks of travelling hundreds of parsecs – the competition to join an expedition into Human Space was intense.

On the starship *Uyaken*, M. Glozzom and her team crossed Leonidae, Crucis Margin, and Ley sectors over a three-year period, visiting several Hiver and Imperial client states on the way (and avoiding the K'kree clients). After arriving at Nulinad last year, she has spent her time absorbing the local culture like a sponge. M. Glozzom mastered Anglic on her journey to the Empty Quarter, and (while getting a grip on the Transform dialect) is looking for ways to hook up with the local intelligentsia. Local scholars are suspicious of her – especially with that "M" before her name¹⁰ – but in this case she is genuinely curious about everything and everyone in the region.

Club Leader

To review some official information: First, Hivers don't do hierarchies: instead, everyone is egalitarian (officially). Secondly, Hivers are not ruled by a state, but by nests and topical clubs. So officially, the starship *Ukayen* is not a nest, but a voluntary branch of the Imperial Cultures Club. There are no ranks, only sophonts who specialize in the

⁹ Note that Hiver policy is to keep those family ties weak (**Alien Module 7: Hivers**, page 44). M. Glozzom's culture did conform to policy, but certain Hiver schemes working at cross-purposes, and a certain series of unplanned-for ideological shifts among the pro-Hiver (and thus very manipulative) human leadership, has led to a resurgence of family feeling. Hiver policy is currently adjusting to the unexpected development, but – as the Hiver Manipulators in charge are *still* more interested in getting a handle on each other than getting the sheep back in their pens – the human culture is developing in some rather *disquieting* directions...

¹⁰ Yes, she does plan to make a good number of moves, but her game is back in the Federation, for greater stakes than anything the Empty Quarter has to offer. Manoeuvring sophisticated Hivers around like chess pieces is far more interesting – and far more challenging – than leveraging the local tools. And just how does she manipulate them? If you know Hiver psychology, M. Glozzom's fondness for pointy objects gives a hint to how she understands Hivers – but the obvious answer is misleading. Think tangentially and consider the indirect implications, and you can have a good start in understanding how she works.

(not applicable to Hiver craft: see Traveller: AM7 page 38)

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 99 Weeks Singly, 79 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Uayken is designed to be as close to the Hiver Research Cruiser as I can get it, as described on page 39, Traveller: Alien Module 7, Hivers. The major issues that remain are that the ship here has 18 tons of extra cargo room, and the price is 8 MCr cheaper. There is also the question of hull type, which is not clearly spelt out in the description.

“Using a 600-ton hull, the Hivers Research Cruiser is a survey vessel used for exploration and as the primary base of operations for covert operations teams by the development agency.” - Traveller: AM 7 Hivers, page 39.



Outside of the crew of the Uayken, perhaps seven of the c. 540 billion sophonts living in the Empty Quarter, 993 Imperial, has seen Blueshelly's home: Askanuftir. The most highly-populated asteroid in Askanuftir/Dao/Extolian, hex 1614, Askanuftir is an exotic high-tech wonderland, but few Imperials have even heard of it: the universe is just too big and complex for a system like Askanuftir to stand out.

The graphic is titled “Alexandra” © James Nelms. Please visit his gallery at

<http://jdnelms.cgsociety.org/gallery/>

“Blueshelly”

UPP 99CDF7, age 34; Hiver

Technical Skills: Note that Blueshelly is trained and works with Hiver equipment, TL 14. For all complex and difficult work, increase difficulty by one when using Imperial (and other non-Hiver) equipment; also increase difficulty according to how far below TL 14 the equipment in question is. Blueshelly's JoaT skill may be used to assist him when using non-Hiver equipment, at the Referee's discretion.

Computer - 2, Commo - 2, Robotics - 1, Engineering - 1, Sensor Ops - 1, Grav Belt - 1, Ships Boat - 1, Robot Ops - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0,

Non-technical Skills: these abilities are not tied to Hiver equipment and technical standards.

Research - 3, Genetics - 2, Linguistics - 1, Dance - 1, Broker - 1, Trader - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Streetwise - 1

Languages: Hiver Sign Language (Native), Anglic (Rim: hearing only)

Opening theme: "Helvetica Standard ~ Sono One", Nomi Yuuji, Nichijou
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIFKgfP7Gn0>

Dress

"Blueshelly" is the Anglic name Glozzom gave to this Hiver: even though Blueshelly's shell is naturally tan, 'he' allowed Glozzom to paint 'his' shell blue. (Each Hiver bears both sexual organs.) This marks Blueshelly as very strange: even though the shells of ancient Hivers ranged from pure white to pink to dark blue, the Hivers have established a series of 'embassies' to keep the race consistent and discourage gene pool isolation.¹¹ Still, odd thinking occurs among the Hivers, and as Glozzom participates in 'embassies' without any qualms, most Hivers write it off as an odd affectation, nothing more.

Blueshelly always wears a standard Hiver voder, to allow him to 'speak' by typing (manipulation of his hands).

A Curious Technician

Blueshelly was trained as a technician, and is has a broad knowledgeable in his field. Despite repeated attempts, he was never permitted to join the Federation Development Agency; so he joined various exploration and expedition clubs instead as technical support. Most of his excursions were no more than a year in length at a time, and never more than 20 parsecs from the Hive Federation border: this is the first time he has journeyed far from home. While his official tasks involve ship maintenance and services – especially communication – Blueshelly is quite curious to learn more about the design, technical standards, ergonomics, and rate/form of equipment failure for Imperial equipment.

Whenever possible, he tries to join Glozzom in her field research on Nulinad: while she focuses on the people and cultures, he continually tries to play and fiddle with the equipment. Whenever a actual technician or engineer is present, he can expect to be heavily interrogated by Blueshelly.

Only recently has Blueshelly discovered that the Imperium has a strong hatred of psionics. This strikes him as very strange: "Why hate something that doesn't exist?" Blueshelly has been speaking to Glozzom on the subject, and has been warned that the subject is quite taboo among Imperials: "Let me ask the questions, and I'll let you know what I find out". The Hiver has been gnawing on the problem in his head for quite a while, and is increasingly likely to try to use a bit of manipulation to further investigate the issue. The Referee shall decide just how much hot water Blueshelly gets into with his amateurish manipulative scheming.

One thing that is becoming more urgent: the *Uayken* is an unarmed vessel, and the Imperial Empty Quarter requires weapons on starships, to defend themselves from pirates. There are serious technical deficiencies with the local Imperial turrent weapons, but there are no Hiver-designed weapons available. Retrofitting Imperial weapons into a Hiver ship will be a challenge. Or, the *Uayken* could just arrange for an armed local to provide escort services. Know anyone cheap?

Aside

Blueshelly is quite intelligent and very well educated, but his curiosity is far stronger than his desire to manipulate others. He has a certain lack of social skills even among the Hiver, a lack that is far deeper when among all these alien humans. Traditionally, social manipulation is tied to intelligence, but that is not *strictly* true... something that his Team Leader Glozzom knows very well.

Closing theme: "Helvetica Standard ~ Sono Two", Nomi Yuuji, Nichijou
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDv8oZoo7-c>

¹¹ See page 8 of "Alien Module 7: Hivers" for more information.

Sir Andrew Sandia

UPP A67A57, age 38; Solomani (American Indian)

Skills: Vacc Suit - 4, Zero-G - 2, Energy Weapon -2, Mechanical - 1, Liaison - 1, Ship Tactics - 1, Long Blade - 1, Recruiting - 1, Gambling - 1, Streetwise - 1, Engineering - 0, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Turret Weapon - 0, History (American Indian) - 0

Language: Anglic (*Transform dialect*). He is studying the Old American English of the 24th century, treat as '-1'

Opening theme: "Dancing with the Lion", Andreas Vollenweider, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onp_uRi6FNE

Dress

Sir Andrew is typically found in formal business clothes, as he is usually meeting with other members of the Great and the Good. But at home and around his town, he prefers casual miner dress. He is usually unarmed at home, but carries an extendable, TL 8/9 long sword on more dangerous worlds.

Earning

Sandia started out in his uncle's two-ship interface line, Black Feather Exports, but washed out: Sandia just couldn't handle the dull routine, the harsh discipline, and the strict rules he faced. He fell in with a group of miners wandering around Hebrin subsector, and spent an exciting decade with them uncovering small-yield claims, fighting to keep them from other hungry miners. The find that changed his life 984 – the high-grade lanthanum find on the world of Salek, an outer system rockball in the Iridia system – took a good three years to finally cash in after defending it against all comers, in the courts, in the streets, and in the void. Now, seeing how bad things are – with the Imperial Navy gone, and the Shadow Cartel muscling in on everything they can – those tough days look like a gentle walk in the sunshine...

Spending

Sandia originally established himself in Hebrin, living very low-profile for a man worth three billion credits. But, with the boom finished and the lanthanum strip mines practically exhausted – leaving only Grand Canyon-scale scars on the airless world – Sandia finally took the advice of his family and relocated to Lakea. Encouraged by the local's kindness and welcoming attitude, he joined a local church and married a local girl. Sandia looked for ways to make his money do good, by building an informal association with other socially-minded magnates, charities, activists, and philanthropists to push back on the pirates. Unlike most other groups in the Empty Quarter, Sandia's Association of Hope (AoH) was not restricted by race or religion, or even Imperial nationality: "If you want to cross the stars without the fear of theft or murder, join us!"

The biggest public victory the AoH has won so far was the discovery of a prison camp on an isolated island on Rajan, that fed a sex slavery ring. The evacuation and release of the women there raised the profile of AoH, bringing in more donations and making more influential friends. It's now a full-time job, but Sandia is quickly bored by success, and is looking for someone to take AoH over and continue the struggle against the pirates and the Cartel, freeing the slaves and restoring stolen property to its rightful owners. Once this turnover is done, Sandia can completely switch his attention to a new project: upgrading and refreshing a group of three orbiting stations over Nulinad, used to house and treat sophonts suffering from mental illnesses and retardation.

For fun, he likes to teach his kids – adopted and natural – more about Old American history, especially on the Second American Republic. He has a smattering of knowledge on the first 'Washingtonian' Republic, but has a weak grasp on certain important points. "Was the Civil War fought in the 1880s, or the 1780s?" Sandia's understanding of 24th century Old American English is not *too* distant from that of the early 21st century: a time traveller from our world and time could do a lot worse than make Sandia his first contact in the Imperial Empty Quarter of 993 Imperial.

Starship

Sandia owns no starship: he long ago decided that travelling incognito was far safer than with a personal starship that practically shouted "The money man is here: come and get it!" However, he does have a few old starfaring friends he prefers to hitch a ride with. When he travels, he travels with an armoured, reflective spacesuit he had

especially built and an extendable long sword. The sword is not as tough as a standard long sword, and is not meant for dueling or use against properly armoured opponents. But, it cuts through flesh and light cloth armour just fine, and is a good deal more concealable than the typical long sword.

Closing theme: “Cuore Sacro”, Andrea Guerra, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWN9fNfXh_U

Dame Sofia Pachflame, Ph.D

UPP 6688DB, age 50; Mixed Vilani

Skills: JumpSpace Physics - 3, Physics - 2, Astronomy - 2, Mathematics - 2, Navigation - 1, Robot Ops - 1, Gravitics - 1, Computer - 1, Admin - 1, Engineering - 0, Grav Vehicle - 0, Handgun - 0

Research: breakthroughx5, majorx8, minorx4. Major grantsx5

Language: Anglic (*Transform dialect*)

Opening theme: “Yum Bap”, Se-Heyon Im, Jewel of the Palace <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVI8umNCHvk>

Dame Sofia is a JumpSpace researcher of the University of Sylea, and one of few sophonts whose every act is tracked by the Imperium. This is to be expected, as what’s in her head – the theoretical keys to Jump6 technology – is an extremely high-level State Secret in 993 Imperial. She tends to roll her eyes at the endless surveillance, the plainclothes bodyguards, and the psionic shield helmet she must wear 24/7 (it’s been literally bolted down into her skull), but she has accepted it as one of the prices to be paid for her work, which she wouldn’t give up for anything.

(Referee: just before the helmet loses its charge, small explosive charges in the helmet will detonate, killing her instantly. Dame Sofia is aware of this, and would rather wear the helmet than be cooped up a second more in the high-security section of the University of Sylea, back on Capital. She also keeps a lot of backup batteries around, on her person and in her cabin, and even has a small solar panel integrated in the helmet should all else fail.)

Dress

Dame Sofia can be found in a pair of ship overalls, with utility belt, magnetic boots, and a sealable hood in case of hull breach with 20 minutes of pressurized air and limited heat. She *always* wears a psionic shield helmet.

Origins

Dame Sofia was born Sofia Hakimi on Gimushi, of a Mixed Vilani family following the Kikhushegi religion. Her amazing intelligence and retention abilities, coupled with some very lucky breaks, were seen for what they were by her father, who managed to get the attention of the very best professors on the world. Miraculously for a TL 7 world, they got in touch with the exactly the right noble at exactly the right time, who opened the right doors for Miss Hakimi to study Jumpspace physics in Antares sector. Her chain of discoveries and her intuitive grasp of what you can and cannot do in Jumpspace just kept on opening doors – and gaining some very powerful backers in the process – which quickly let to her transfer to Closed Group #19 in the University of Sylea, on Capital herself.

(Both her doctorate and her knighthood were more of a ‘natural side effect’ of her work than the actual focus of study: her day job is just too important to too many powerful people to permit any diversion into mere ‘research for the sake of research’ or the diversions of social climbing on an interstellar scale.)

After getting over their surprise of seeing anyone of her intellectual calibre come from the ever-backward Empty Quarter, Dame Sofia was brought up to speed very quickly, and spent the next two decades pounding the theory into useful technology (while getting her thick Transform Anglic accent under control). As of 993, the technology is less than a decade from primetime production for the Imperial Navy who is pounding the door to get at it, occasionally literally.



*Auroras dance on the top of the gas giant Tyon; Tyon is just one of the five large gas giants in Oloe system.
The graphic is titled "Aurora II" © Gabriel Gajdoš. Please visit his gallery at
<http://pipper-svk.deviantart.com/art/Aurora-II-349340396>*

Putting the Pedal to the Metal

Dame Sofia is travelling with the Imperial Scout *Unaccountable Effect*, as the Test Evaluator of the experimental Jump6 engine. Princess Elizabeth, the elder sister of Emperor Gavin and the effective head of the Imperial secret services, knows for a fact that Capital system has far too many Solomani Security agents nosing around to safely test anything of such importance¹². Therefore, one of the literally priceless engines will be field tested for small-ship void operations in the backward and incurious Empty Quarter, where SolSec resources are thin on the ground (and have only the most tenuous communications to SolSec headquarters on distant Terra), the population broadly supports the Imperium, and the only interstellar neighbours are the relatively friendly Julian Protectorate.

Both five-parsec and six-parsec runs will be tested, using the Imperial Naval Base over Lazisar as the base of operations (Lazisar is already quite familiar with Imperial and corporate skunkworks done far from prying eyes.) Both ends of every jump are carefully plotted, and protected by a few Lazisari military craft.

Off-duty

Dame Sofia enjoys games of Go and Saba-a (short for Saba-a-wabwabwa, a difficult form of Bwap chess) with other researchers. These games tend to be quite long, and are broken up into segments for the sake of work. Her fellow researchers have introduced her to the ancient Korean epic *Dae Jang Geun*: the main character, a woman doctor in pre-spaceflight Terra working in a highly patriarchal culture, sometimes has an unexpected resonance with her own life.

A separate issue regards family. Dame Sofia has abandoned the religion of her forefathers and much of the culture as well, but still feels a little ambivalent when her co-workers make fun of her backward home sector. Her father is dead, but her mother and the rest of the family is extremely proud of her, but is unaware of her abandonment of the Kikhushegi religion, a subject she is not eager to bring up. Kikhushegi does not teach followers to kill apostates, but her family is sure to make their anger and shame felt nevertheless.

Her work is currently top secret, and she has no plans to visit Gimushi during her present stay in the sector, but her work cannot be hidden forever. Someday, her team's work will be made public, and her aging mother and family elders will rightfully insist on seeing her to hug her and praise her and ask lots and lots of questions. And even if she lies to them initially, they'll soon pick up on the truth, one way or another.

Closing theme: "Da Som", Se-Heyon Im, Jewel of the Palace <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWrDQrxnBh4>

Starship

The *Unaccountable Effect* is a unique 600-ton testbed, used to test the experimental jump engine. The cost of the ship is arbitrarily quadrupled from its original cost of 513.630 MCr, to model the cost of the jump drive, jump grid, and both the electronics and the programs needed to manage both. Production time is also quadrupled from the original 99 weeks. The ship is named after a song by the same name, by Liz Story – no YouTube, unfortunately.

Ship: Unaccountable Effect	Class: None: unique
Type: Testbed	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 15	

USP

EX-6261661-000000-00000-0	MCr 2054.52	600 Tons
Bat Bear	Crew: 13	
Bat	TL: 15	

Cargo: 9 Passengers: 1 Crew Sections: 1 of 13 Fuel: 396 EP: 36 Agility: 1
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 1 x Model/6 Computer 1 x Bridge

¹² The Referee is directed to Soviet rings in Washington D.C. during the 1940s and 50s as a useful model of the situation. Yes, it's *that* ugly.

Architects Fee: MCr 5.136 Cost in Quantity: Non-applicable

HULL: 600 tons standard, 8,400 cubic meters, Cone Configuration

CREW:

Pilot, Navigator, 3 Engineers, Steward, Medic,
6 Additional Crew (Lab and research personnel)

ENGINEERING: Jump-6, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-6, 36 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS:

Bridge, Model/6 Computer
1 Backup Bridge, 1 Model/6 Backup Computer

HARDPOINTS: None

ARMAMENT: None

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: None

FUEL:

396 Tons Fuel (6 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 8 Staterooms, 1 High Passenger, 9 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:

2x Jumpspace Labs (4 tons, Crew 1, 0.2 Energy Point, Cost MCr 10),
1x Engine Monitor Station (4 tons, Crew 2, 0.1 Energy Point, Cost MCr 3),
1x Jumpgrid Monitor Station (4 tons, Crew 2, 0.1 Energy Point, Cost MCr 10)

COST:

MCr 2054.52: soaring fees for everything. Forget about production in quality.

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 400 weeks.

COMMENTS:

This is the smallest viable testbed for the Jump6 engine yet created: smaller testbeds have a habit of simply exploding in the middle of the initial jump. Instead of trying to further push the size boundary, current goals are to determine the material and programming margins for successful regular operation, as a preamble for mass production for the Imperial Navy. A stable, repeatable jump bubble with rock-solid jumpgrid projection synchronization and field strength are the very heart of current experimentation. Assuming good results, the experimental production of very fast couriers for the Imperial Navy can be rushed at a far smaller cost in time and money.

Plans for small-batch production of larger jump6 warships are already being finalized, with larger, more stable and reliable jump6 engines, able to incorporate more failsafes and redundancy. The very high prices - in terms of money and time - are expected to be greatly reduced as regular production swings into place.



The not exactly glorious Mugama Imperial Starport: The Imperial Starport Authority has refused to name the port after any notable knight or noble, for its own inscrutable reasons. Perhaps because it's overshadowed by the far larger oceanic port...

The graphic is titled "Harbor" © Jeremiah Humphries. Please visit his galleries at <http://i-humphries.deviantart.com/art/Harbor-297198552>, <http://jeremiahdraws.blogspot.ca/> and <http://jeremiah.portfoliobox.me/>

Arvyuptros

UPP A61635, age 28; Beta Male Droyne Sport

Psionic skills: Prediction - 1, Invisibility - 0;

Standard skills: Jack-o-Trades - 2, Appeal - 2, Interrogation - 2, Zero-G - 2, Black Skill - 2 (used for Unarmed Combat - 2), Liaison - 1, Instruction - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Flying - 1, Ships Boat - 1, Linguistics - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Handgun - 0, Home - 0,

Language: Oynprith (*native*), Anglic (*Transform dialect*)

Opening theme: "Ready for Battle", Michael McCann, X-com: Enemy Unknown

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeQEr7m8wGA>

Note: Arvyuptros has a set of mechanical wings and a simple ordinary handgun (never used in anger). He also has a very special handgun, described below.

Adventurer

Arvyuptros is a Sport for the Broprayts Oytrip on Mugama. For a long time, he travelled across the Six Subsectors with his kroyloss (team), looking for ways to build up the Oytrip by their own credits, time, and efforts. They had several adventures, but their most dangerous (and final) adventure started when their exhausted Free Trader, the *Thaistwesdo*¹³, misjumped into a void hex. Normally, that would be the end of the story. But this time, the ship landed practically on top of a small yet hospitable space station in hex 1428/Empty Quarter. (Later, Arvyuptros would investigate the matter, and find no record of any space station or caravansary in that hex.) After refuelling –

¹³ As of 993, not a single Droyne oytrip in the Empty Quarter can afford a dedicated Droyne scout: Arvyuptros' kroyloss was only able to get their Free Trader by means of the better grey markets, with a lot of work to get the papers completely clean and the ship into a non-death trap condition.

the station gave a discount! – the station manager handed out a bit of gossip, claiming that a few Ancient artefacts were to be had cheap in an obscure little shop on Ersiirkuu, an unremarkable city on the crowded and polluted world of Kenrasda.

On the world, the Droyne managed to find the shop without getting lynched by the xenophobic locals. Selective use of invisibility and a bit of night-gliding helped: actual Droyne flight was not possible, even with mechanical wings. After buying the goods from the quaking shop owner, the Droyne were well on their way off-world when an accident claimed one of their member, killing him instantly. The police got involved, and claims of psionic use soon circulated. As the case involved off-worlders, the Imperial Baron got involved and started pressing for the Ancient artefacts to be handed over to him, in return for his assistance in getting to their starship. The kroyloss decided against it, and decided to get into the starport before the locals could arrest them. Arvyuptros was the only one to make it, stowing away on a Fat Trader with his precious cargo: the rest of the kroyloss were captured.

(Referee: this can be modified to Arvyuptros stowing away on a PC vessel, adding to the background to the PCs.)

Problem-solving

Now safe on Mugama with his Oytrip, Arvyuptros has determined that one of the ‘non-operational Ancient souvenirs’ is actually an exceedingly powerful handheld weapon. It needs about 20,000 MW to power it up properly, the kind of power that a 20,000-dton or so civilian starship can provide. Powered up, it can fire up to five shots, each shot powerful enough to destroy a major warship. The weapon is keyed so that only a Droyne can fire it: trying to reverse engineer it or modify it will cause it to disintegrate into simple atoms with a burst of radiation powerful enough to kill everything in a 20 km radius.

The Broprayts Oytrip wants this weapon powered up, and then entrusted to the Oytrip leadership, without the Imperium knowing a single thing about it. For one thing, it would be entirely too useful in the current Rim War, and the Oytrip will never get it back after the war is over. For another, the Imperium might, just *might*, be able to reverse-engineer and replicate it. This would be Bad.

Also, two years after escaping Kenrasda, Arvyuptros still doesn’t know what happened to his captured kroyloss. He wants to find out if they are dead or alive, and bring them back home. More importantly for the Oytrip, the *Thaistwesdo* is still locked down at the starport: the Imperial Baron needs to be persuaded to release the ship into the hands of the Broprayts Oytrip. Starships are just too rare, and just too valuable, to be simply abandoned on some crowded low-tech wasteland.

Closing theme: “Vigilo Confido”, Michael McCann, X-Com: Enemy Unknown
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb4NPmZ_zmg

Starship

The *Thaistwesdo* is just another Empress Marava Far Trader, nothing special. Except for all the Droyne-scale interior design, instrumentation, and amenities.

Sam Taylor

UPP BBB9B, age 30; Pure Solomani (American Indian)

Skills: Leadership - 2, Brawling - 2, Submachine gun - 2, Interview - 1, Sensor Ops - 1, Ship Tactics - 1, Navigation - 1, Survival - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Electronics - 0, Swimming - 0, Vacc Suit – 0

Language: Anglic (*Transform dialect*)

Opening theme: “Fire Dance”, Peter Buffet, Lost Frontier <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lb0MmhAq2A>

Dress: Usually, Taylor wears casual EQ American Indian business dress: a jacket with turtleneck sweater, and spacer pants with metal boots. He is unarmed, but keeps a submachine gun and a heavy bulletproof vest in his cabin in case of boarders. Taylor shuns the utility belts worn by most spacemen in the Quarter.



While Sam Taylor maintains several tiny apartments across the Six Subsectors, the place he calls home is on the airless world of Dyani. The flag of the Empty Quarter branch of the Solomani Party may be seen hanging from the roof, as well as Taylor's favourite light submachine gun on the table.

The graphic is titled "Moon Pad" © Jeremiah Humphries. Please visit his galleries at <http://j-humphries.deviantart.com/art/Moon-Pad-340093650>, <http://jeremiahdraws.blogspot.ca/> and <http://jeremiah.portfoliobox.me/>

Free Enterprise

Like many of the older generation of Gushgusi American Indians – before large numbers started working in the imperial military and civil services, or branching out into interstellar finance – Taylor's family had to struggle for a living in a region dominated by more powerful tribes – Arabs, Hindi, Vilani, and Bwap – who naturally put their own people first, forcing American Indians to the bottom of the totem pole. Being a member of one of the poorer American Indian tribes, Taylor's house¹⁴ was long involved in grey- and black-market activities, specializing in forcing out the Vargr from assorted criminal niches, and taking it for themselves. Over time, his people got the attention of a covert Solomani Party man, who out of sympathy, an entrepreneurial spirit, and racial pride provided for a little training here, a few extra contacts there, and a small start-up fund for low-profile, high-profit ventures legal and otherwise.

In this case, the nameless Party man's seed money brought fruit, and Taylor's band began to prosper. But as the saying goes, "more money, more problems". Several families of the band, going the legitimate route, eventually learned to shun the more lawless branches of the family. The "Legits" are more closely allied with the Imperial government, are strongly hostile to pirates, and are growing adept in the political games needed to manipulate Imperial nobles to stomp on your opponents and/or get on the various political gravy trains. The "Crims" have built up their links with the Solomani Party, are strongly hostile to *Vargr* pirates, and are now powerful enough, organized enough, and violent enough to drive out some Hindi and Arab gangs from their own turf.¹⁵ (Vilani gangs are a very different kettle of fish,¹⁶ and the Bwap don't do crime.)

¹⁴ In some Imperial cultures, *everyone* refers to his clan or family as a 'House', imitating the far-above-your-head Imperial Noble types. Whether this imitation is aspirational or sarcastic depends on the family...

¹⁵ Let's point out what did *not* happen: the construction of some vast Imperial bureaucracy to 'protect the culture of the weaker races' and keep them in dependency, a la <https://mises.org/daily/6416/Native-American-Reservations-Socialist-Archipelago>. For one thing, American Indians are *Solomani*, and so are not weak from the perspective of the Iridium Throne...

¹⁶ From a sociological perspective, it's actually more accurate to see Vilani criminal networks as well-organized subsections of the major Vilani bureaux than truly 'outside of the law'. In the majority of Vilani cultures, they have actual branch offices that operate publicly and legally, complete with proper caste dress and rights and responsibilities to the ruling nobles...

The Fence

Despite the family fissures, blood is still blood: you never know when you will need friends on the other side of the law, and in the end it's still the Tribe against the Galaxy. One of the contact points between the two wings of the Taylors is Sam. While never going pirate himself, he has had profitable dealings with them: for example, in the old days he always insisted that his ship had clean papers, but maintenance and parts are often obtained via shady venues. Pushing more into smuggling¹⁷ or black-market activities than the violent side of the underground, Sam has never drawn a weapon against Imperial forces, but he has no problems pressing the law as far as it can go, or just ignoring it if he feels that he can't be caught. Despite his habitual avoidance of violence – fewer blood enemies, smaller costs, higher profit – there have been irregular business disagreements that have ended unpleasantly: Sam Taylor has made certain that *he's* the one who lives to see another day.

Right now, things are getting more interesting than usual. The Legits have several interstellar concerns that need more protection as the Imperial Navy has gone absent, and naturally the Bwap & Vilani forces tend to their own first. There are a lot of American Indian mercenary groups who are willing to give discounts to kinsmen, so the wealthier businessmen are fairly secure. But the poorer American Indian businessmen can't afford the starmercs (if they can find one that isn't fully booked). They still need protection: and Sam has been hooking them up with rough types who can provide it, at the right price.

Your land and home and pleasant wife must be left behind.

Horace

Starships

Sam Taylor has ship shares in quite a number of ships, but avoids conducting business on any ship he owns: "Never soil your own nest!" His unofficial Party connections help in crossing the stars at a sharp discount or for free, and he is generally able to obtain a ship for his sole use when circumstances demand it. One of his favourite tactics is to hitch a ride on a Bwap or Vargr-owned starship: it's a great way to throw off prying Imperial investigators, he's careful to have all his papers in order for the Bwap (forged or not), and he's perfectly willing to discreetly conduct business with Vargr scroungers and less savoury characters, if the price is right.

Closing theme: "Never Cry Wolf", Mark Isham, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTN0ulkJEKw>

Baron Itelit bin Nassar, Sector Admiral of the Empty Quarter Colonial Fleet

UPP 662CFC, age 50; Solomani

Skills: Ship Tactics - 4, Pilot - 4, Admin - 3, Liaison - 2, Ships Boat - 2, Fleet Tactics - 2, Computer - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Navigation - 1, Engineering - 1, Energy Weapon - 1, Electronics - 1, Robot Ops - 1, Tactics - 1, Commo - 1, Persuasion - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0

Language: Arabic (*Native: Hebrin dialect*), Anglic (*Transform dialect*)

Opening theme: "Macross National Anthem", Yoko Kanno, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ee55r9G48Oc>

Dress

Admiral Nasser typically wears Imperial Navy undress uniforms. The Sector Admiral is rarely armed.

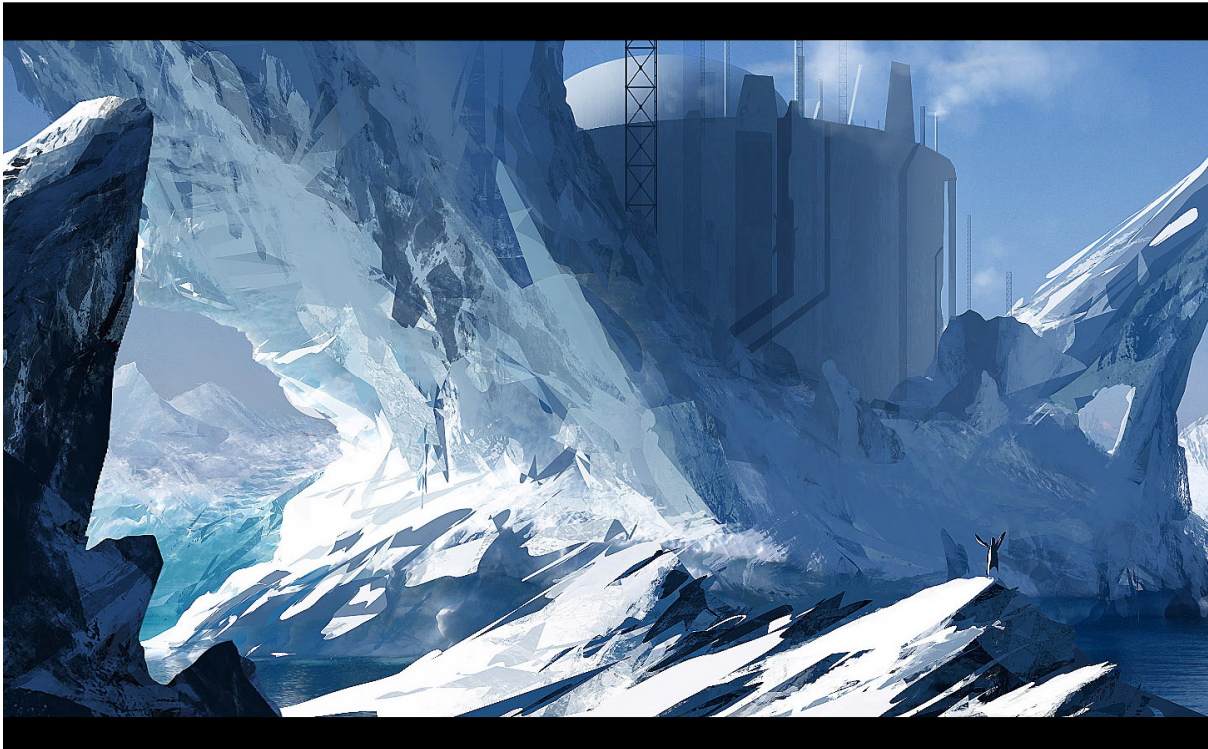
Operations

With the majority of the Regular Sector Fleet en route to the Old Expanses, Admiral Nasser has been working primarily as a co-ordinator of the varied local navies, flotillas, allied starmercs, and corporate-, culturally- or racially-tied naval forces within local Imperial Space. The spinward regions of the Six Subsectors are broadly under control, and the recent smashing of entrenched pirate networks in Hebrin has started to turn the tide in Hebrin

¹⁷ Smuggling: from the dawn of history - <http://www.freemansperspective.com/forbidden-history-smuggling/> - to the 56rd century!

subsector. Still, the power of the Shadow Cartel expands; the fight for peace in the Quarter hasn't been won yet, not by a long shot.

The growing rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as a naval presence is somewhat disturbing. Admiral Nasser is a Sunni Moslem himself, but he is also a strong secularist, and dislikes the religious goals of the Brotherhood. However, they have a solid following among believers – especially outside of Hebrin subsector – and he can't afford to turn down their offers for help. Their ability to draw in high-tech patrol ships from other sectors could be a world-saver when – not if – the high-tech Ikonaz Vargr of Ikon start to move in earnest. How he is going to fit them in with the Lazisar Directorate Navy, the Tap-a-wewaka-atapas, the other colonial powers, various small baronial warships, and the starmercs is going to be a problem. The Admiral can only hope that the Brotherhood will take care not to antagonize the infidel population of the Six Subsectors, or things are sure to get out of hand.



One of several covert Colonial Navy reserve installations, now activated as the regular Sector Fleet is absent. Pugaash, 993 Imperial. The graphic is titled "Snow Tower" © Igor Vitkovskiy.

Please visit his galleries, <http://m3-f.deviantart.com/art/Snow-Tower-204623801> & <http://artistmef.co/>

Patron

The Sector Admiral has to keep a handle on all the diverse efforts to push back the pirates, and try to systemize them into some sort of somewhat organized plan, if only to avoid duplication of effort, the more massive blunders in the field, and ugly friendly-fire incidents. Also, sharing communication among the disparate forces involved is quite important, but not as easy as it should be. True, the pirates find it difficult to attack high-tech patrol ships, so the Vayu-class ships are getting occasional courier duties, but it's the small IISS Scouts that carry most of the burden – and they can definitely be taken down.

This man is likely to be a major patron of the PCs. He can provide legitimacy and authority, and a regular stream of income, but above personal-scale expenses things get difficult. Right now, the PCs can't get top-of-the-line battle armour from him, only TL 12 or less: high-tech military, communication, and surveillance equipment is as rare as hen's teeth right now. (And a fair amount of what's available has been retrofitted and repurposed by the few TL 14 Ikonaz pirates & criminal packs the Imperium has managed to locate and defeat. Some of that weaponry, meant for Ikonaz Vilani use, can be put to work relatively quickly; others, meant for Vargr hands, eyes, and ears, take a good deal longer to rework to a usable form.)

There has been some major victories over internal corruption, but the pirates can still offer selected individuals bribes far above any naval pay packet: integrity and personal honour are absolutely indispensable if they are to be fought back into the void they came from. Sector Admiral Nassar is very serious when it comes to loyalty: his hands in the field must be *reliable*, especially as the tools available – from fleets to information – are so difficult to find, and so difficult to replace...

Starship

Sector Admiral Nassar has a lot of bureaucratic, political, and organizational problems to get a handle on, and he will often hitch a ride on whatever Colonial Navy starship is going his way. The environment in some subsectors is too dangerous for a yacht, and the limited amount of resources available means that he simply can't afford to have a Navy escort at his beck and call: such a ship is desperately needed elsewhere.

Usually, he can do everything he needs to do from the sector capital at Nulinad. If he needs to relocate to Lazisar to directly supervise the largest group of military vessels in his command, he'll request the Lazisar System Directorate to send a destroyer or escort to ferry him over.

Closing theme: "Nebraska", Peter Buffet, Lost Frontier <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2RiZbK0Efg> [In-Universe] I still insist that this is the "sombre anthem" of the Third Imperium spoken of in the MegaTraveller supplement Arrival Vengeance, despite the lack of any evidence whatsoever.

Darliene Oras

UPP 9C9BB9, age 30 (apparent age 29); Solomani

Skills: Psychology - 2, Computer - 2, Song - 2, Mechanical - 2, Electronics - 1, Cryonics - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Disguise - 1, Robot Ops - 1, Linguistics - 1, Carousing - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Handgun - 0

Language: Anglic (Native: *Transform dialect*), Vilani (*Modern*). Can *sing* in Old High Vilani, but can neither read nor speak it with any comprehension.

Opening theme: "Space Station No. 9", Capsule, NEXUS-2060 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSARXH-mxLc>

Dress

Oras tends to dress very flamboyantly, as suits her position as a Gruan-o artist. Flash and femininity are the watchwords.

Youth

While now residing on Irash, her homeworld is Cooke, a good six parsecs away. Her parents disapproved of both her love of music and of mechanics, but she persevered, eventually earning a technical degree in robotics. A pretty good singer and programmer, she managed to get her machines to sing and move in an entertaining and cute manner, earning her a quick flash of fame. Normally, this would be the end of it, but Oras has the ability to repeat and build on her performances, eventually breaking out of her quirk niche and into a broader audience.

Her hit performances began to bring in more money, but it was when she started to weave in a mystical Vilani and Hindi subtext in her music/robotics that she really gained sector-wide fame. The religious imagery in her performance gained the disapproval of her community, and helped to push her to Irash.

(This theme of 'Persecuted and martyred for her music!' has only built up her fame and reputation among Hindu Gushgusi; but in truth it never got past disapproval and some public mockery.¹⁸ On the other hand, the pull of big money on Irash – with its strong Vilani/Hindi synergetic culture – doesn't get into the narratives on Oras' life.)

¹⁸ Examples of *real* persecution – as opposed to mere unpopularity, exclusion from the in-crowd, naysaying from the elites, or negative media blather – can be found here: <http://www.persecution.com/>

Maturity

As a programmer-technician-celebrity, living with 14/6 media contracts, she is very protective of her private time when she can act like a grown woman with worries and hopes and sorrows, instead of the 'manic pixie dream girl' rut her public image has chained her to. She used to mix more often with the public in disguise, but is nowadays a bit of a recluse, and is now more likely to disappear into her private low berth for months at a time.

As of early 993 Imperial, Oras is hard at work with her technicians, programmers, and robotics to expand her artistic skills. She really wants to imitate the legendary early Imperial artist "Miki Happy" (actual name never discovered – depicted here <http://www.epilogue.net/cgi/database/art/list.pl?gallery=526>) and make something that will be remember centuries from now, but it's very difficult to find a good mentor in the backwater that is the Imperial Empty Quarter. She is considering a journey to Core sector to find someone who can guide her to the next level of her art.

Starship

Darliene Oras' yacht, the *Space Capsule*, has recently returned from a lengthy journey carrying valuable ancient engineering artefacts from the pre-Rule of Man era.¹⁹ It was then sent to Hadiya system for a full refit, but it was hijacked by pirates, and is now lost. Oras is planning a trip to Hadiya herself to commission a new jump4 yacht, and is in the market to charter a ship and crew to bring her there - a crew with proven anti-pirate credentials.

Closing theme: "World Fabrication", Capsule, NEXUS-2060 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPsv6okaDE>

Scout Ogkr'rorgh

UPP AB5B86, age 22; Ovaghoun Vargr

Skills: Mechanical - 3, Handgun - 2, Electronics - 1, Pilot-1, Laser Weapon - 1, Stealth - 1, Early Firearms - 1, Bow - 1, Hunting - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Vacc Suit - 0, Navigation – 0

Language: Ikonaz Vilani (*Native: Vargr pronunciation*). She uses an electronic translator to speak Transform Anglic to the denizens of the Six Subsectors of the Imperial Empty Quarter.

Opening theme: "Their Daily Lives", Kenji Kawai, Patlabor XVIII <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxCwLAnPoro>

Dress

Ogky'rorgh dresses in a rather subdued style, with brown- and grey-toned work overalls, spacer's boots, and a set of high-tech gizmos. She is always armed with a handgun.

Youth

A powerfully-built Vargr, Ogkr'rorgh has been teased about her appearance since she was a pup, typically compared to the massively-built, coldly brutal, kill-the-weak Urzaeng Vargr to coreward. As a reaction, Ogkr'rorgh takes special care to behave in a civilized Ovaghoun manner at all times without exception, and is highly protective of weaker Vargr. There are quite a number of 'runts of the litter' who owe a big favour, a new career, their freedom, sometimes their very lives, to a certain wandering scout.

¹⁹ Which can be seen here: http://www.flickr.com/groups/1063697@N21/pool/with/5790519146/#photo_5790519146



The city of Uurdoer'k, on Byegh Arngz. The Ikonaz who dominate the Republic have wisely ruled this Irilitok Vargr world with a very light hand, but still refuse to grant home rule – which could force greater Irilitok representation in the highest levels of the interstellar democracy. 993 Imperial.

The graphic is titled "Lost City" © Chris Stoelting. Please visit his gallery at <http://digital-import.deviantart.com/>

She was born and raised in a naturalist Vargr colony on Thaeallikh, where the Old Ways of the Hunt are followed. She will be quick to point out that she never chased down and killed prey with just her claws and teeth; instead, “like all the other sophont races in their youth”, her pack used a variety of team-based hunting tactics, using spears, bows & arrows, and sometimes black powder firearms to bring down their prey.

Being a very curious and clever Vargr, she organized a profitable venture, guiding off-world Vargr in hunts, and insuring that they did it right: “No grenades, by the Ancients!” Eventually, an off-world Vargr scout offered a place in her team, an opportunity Ogkr’rorgh did not let slip by. A huge variety of adventures followed over the next five years, as Ogkr’rorgh visited many worlds across the Rukadukaz Republic, and even ventured into the Ukhanzi Coordinate (also a Julian Protectorate State) to spinward.

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.
Marcel Proust

Today

A wealthy Ovaghoun patron offered her a golden opportunity: she would have command of a two-Vargr starship, and a very nice payoff, if she would scout for the Masuemna’on Alliance, which plans to expand into the Imperial Empty Quarter. Ogkr’rorgh disliked the proposal, pointing out the barbaric, intensely anti-Vargr attitudes of the Emptyheads. She would *much* prefer to remain in the Julian Protectorate!

After more negotiations, it was understood that Ogkr’rorgh would not have to land on many Imperial worlds, or interact with the locals: Shadow Cartel hideouts will be available for her use. All she will have to do is deploy a range of monitoring satellites and transfer their data to certain locations at certain times. If she could manage to get firsthand information on various worlds, she will be compensated, but this isn’t strictly necessary.

Starship

The ship she would captain, the Egdogvaa, would be a small high-tech vessel, built in the famous Guezdhe Shipyards. With the Imperial Navy gone, nothing in the Six Subsectors can hope match her. As of 001-993, Ogkr’rorgh is preparing for the journey. There are some starship robots that will help crew the ship, providing engineering and medical skills she lacks, but it’s still a lonely task. Like most Vargr, she dislikes doing maintenance duties for robots: she’s hoping to hire a polite Ikonaz Vilani servant, experienced in robot maintenance and ship support operations.

Closing theme: “Reclamation”, Austin Wintroy, Journey <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYobjMiF0Ik>

Ship: Egdogvaa	Class: Okhoa
Type: Scout	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 14	

USP	S-1641541-000000-00000-0 MCr 92.128 100 Tons
Bat Bear	Crew: 1
Bat	TL: 14

Cargo: 5 Crew Sections: 1 of 1 Fuel: 45 EP: 5 Agility: 1
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Architects Fee: MCr 0.921 Cost in Quantity: MCr 73.702

HULL: 100 tons standard, 1,400 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration

CREW: Pilot

ENGINEERING: Jump-4, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-5, 5 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4 Computer

HARDPOINTS: None

ARMAMENT: 1 None Empty Turret

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: None

FUEL:

45 Tons Fuel (4 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 1 Stateroom, 5 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST:

MCr 93.049 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.921),
MCr 73.702 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS: This is a very solid and simple TL14 Ikonaz scout. The Okhoa class is designed for two. The Egdogvaa, has had about 5 MCr in additional spending applied, for on-board robots and interfaces to make it easy for a single scout to run the ship for years. An empty turret is standard for the class: this may be replaced with a small air/raft dock.



The Egdogvaa, nosing about in the Rukadukaz Republic. Kaekhaenae, 991 Imperial.
The graphic is titled "Engin Volant" © Geoffroy Thoorens. Please visit his gallery at
<http://djahal.cgsociety.org/gallery/>

Krutock

UPP 571AA4, Irilitok Vargr

Skills: Gravitics - 3, Mechanical - 2, Vacc Suit - 2, Boomerang - 1, Electronics - 1, Linguistics - 1, Physics - 1, Carousing - 1, Biology - 1, Computer - 1, Persuasion - 1, Sensor Ops - 1, Tactics - 1, Instruction - 1, Commo - 1, Equestrian - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Rifleman - 0

Languages: Ikonaz Vilani (*Vargr pronunciation*), Anglic (*Julian dialect*)

Opening theme: “Welcome to Lunar Industries”, Clint Mansell, Moon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtCpttsZiys>

Dress

Krutock almost always wears his Hidden Knowledge academic robes; it’s a lot classier than the rather plain clothes he can afford to buy, and it’s pretty good at hiding his two light mechanical arms (Strength 4), but not the hands.

Krutock also wears a strong, TL 14 visor to support his weak eyes. The Vargr is normally unarmed.

What he is

Before he lost both arms, Krutock was a rather successful field scientist for Menderes Corporation, the megacorporation that dominates the Julian Protectorate. Krutock mainly worked in gravitics, tuning heavy equipment to work in difficult environments and bringing in good money – for an Irilitok. But a gravitational accident three years ago brought the good times to an end. Not only did he lose his arms: he was found at fault for the accident, leading to his rapid dismissal from Menderes and the end of medical treatment as well. His partner soon abandoned him, taking the cubs, the house, and the money with her.

Left to beg in Ikon’s underwater cities, he was a sickly destitute with a poor likelihood of surviving the year when a missionary from the School of Hidden Knowledge befriended him as a likely prospect. After learning of his scientific background, the missionary offered to bring him to one of their colleges: the School is always interested in bringing in bright new minds. The promises did not match the reality, but the new reality is far better than the old one: in return for teaching acolytes in the science of gravitics, food, clothing, and shelter was once again his. More importantly, the School helped restore part of his eyesight, and provided light mechanical arms as well: nothing fancy, but again far better than what he had before, which was nothing. Finally, a certain level of respect was again his: Krutock was among the lowest on the academic totem pole, and was still somewhat ignored or treated lightly by society at large, but he had a bit of money and dignity now, and a servant/nurse to help him in his daily chores.

Where he is going

The Director of the local branch of the School recently spoke to Krutock in private. There was an opening for specialists in high-tech gravitics on Gengath, both as teachers and as team leaders. Gengath is unable to locally build or maintain anything gravitic, but the terraforming project to distribute ice from the dead icy moonlets orbiting Gengath to the mainworld herself required imported gravitic platforms from Ikon. All the know-how needed to run things smoothly has to be imported, and the School of Hidden Knowledge has the brains available to reputable buyers – at a reasonable price.

Krutock is an Ikonaz society, so an Irilitok Vargr still isn’t going to fit in well – but a survival wage on TL E Ikon is a king’s ransom on TL 8 Gengath. You can’t buy charisma, but that kind of money – and the services, servants, and friends it *can* buy – will certainly help gaining and keeping public respect easier. And public respect & deference, charisma, fame... those are the things that are at the very centre of life for the Vargr, even for a feeble, crippled old dog like Krutock.

Starship

Krutock has been on a few starships in his time, even worked as an engineer once or twice, but he isn’t particularly interested in obtaining one, even if it was possible for some near-miraculous reason or other. The millions that a starship is worth can catch his eye, though...

Closing theme: “The Door is Open”, Øystein Sevåg, Link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCNdqGuxy6Y>

Valdin Gonsarles, Sector Consul for the Hegemony of Lorean

UPP 99A758, age 34; Arzula

Skills: Pilot - 3, Bribery - 3, Ships Boat - 3, Ship Tactics - 2, Vacc Suit - 2, Navigation - 2, Persuasion - 2, Engineering - 1, Naval Architect - 1, Electronics - 1, Grav Vehicle - 1, Computer - 1, SubMachinegun - 1, Admin - 1, Fleet Tactics - 1, Linguistics - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Paint/Sculpture - 0, Mechanical - 0, Prop Aircraft - 0, History - 0, Rifleman - 0

Language: Arzula-A (*native*), Anglic (*Julian & Transform dialects*)

Opening theme: "EXEC_COSMOFIPS/.", KOKIA, Ar tonelio III <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeSUaKHRz44>

[In-universe] *The* premier example of an Azula war hymn, this is the oldest known human song in the Empty Quarter. The earliest known versions date back to the Vagr Pillaging of three thousand years ago; modern variations can be found on every human world and military organization of the Hegemony.²⁰

[Out-universe] The story and peoples of Ar tonelico are about as diametrically opposite of the Hegemony as is possible: only the passion, drive, and determination of these two cultures are similar.

Note: at the highest diplomatic levels, the Julian Protectorate High Ambassador to the Iridium Throne on Capital represents the Hegemony of Lorean; this individual is always a senior member of the ruling Menderes family.²¹ However, the Hegemony is permitted to maintain her own diplomatic Consuls in Antares and Empty Quarter sectors. The Hegemony also maintains a diplomatic network with the other Protectorate states, various minor powers near her borders, and various worlds.

Dress

At work, Sector Consul prefers to wear austere grey and/or black jackets, pants, and capes, with a 'baseball cap' bearing his diplomatic rank. On occasion, he may wear the uniform of an Arzula Navy Reserve Commodore. The Sector Consul has taken to trying out rich, East Indian-influenced Nulinadan robes and vestments when off-duty, to try and 'disappear into the crowd.' [Referee: this is a lot less effective than he thinks.]

In the Fleet

Referred to as 'Captain Wildchild' in his naval days, Sector Consul Gonsarles spent most of his career as a naval officer of the Arzula Fleet, a single-environment organization dedicated to naval warfare vis-à-vis the Blood Vagr – the first and still the greatest enemy of the Arzula race – in Arzul sector. In his time with small ships – patrol, escorts, and destroyers – Gonsarles saw a *lot* of action, as he was often sent into harm's way. But his time with the big ships – cruisers, battleships, dreadnoughts and baseships – was more peaceful: these vessels are heavily tied to defending the major worlds and trade bottlenecks, and there were only sporadic light & medium raiding to defend against. Whenever possible, the Vagr would avoid engagement against the heavy crystaliron directly.

In Imperial Space

This lack of business gave Commodore Gonsarles time to sharpen up the political game. While he couldn't the plum prizes for retirement, he did snag a satisfactory consolidation prize: Senior Council for the Empty Quarter. The Hegemony is broadly based on merit, race, and the Last Man materialistic religion more than on family lineage, but successful fathers remain a good indicator of successful sons even in the Hegemony. After transfer to the Imperial Sector Capital on Nulinad, Valdin Gonsarles has made a point of exposing his children – especially his promising first-born son, Semyon – to Imperial culture, teaching them to see everything and everyone through the prism of Hegemonio interest, Hegemonio policy, and Hegemonio goals.

²⁰ Once more with feeling: the Arzula have been at war with the Blood Vagr for *A Very Long Time*. The current era is one of the most *peaceful* eras vis-à-vis the Suedzuk in recorded Arzula history. "No slaughter-minded Blood Vagr incursions in over 30 years? *Heaven!*"

²¹ There is also the High Ambassador to the Two Thousand Worlds, but this is a far less prestigious assignment: no member of the Menderes family has chosen to take this position.

Stuffing their Mouths with Gold²²

Right now, the main lessons involve the careful use of money and face time to creatively secure Hegemonio policy goals. Local enemies of the Hegemony tend to be rooted in the Islamic religion (and occasionally the Hindi religion); few human Imperials in the sector care about what happens to the Vargr within Hegemonio space. Earlier Sector Consuls were able to go over their heads, and link up directly with the few Imperial megacorporations in the sector to build the Deep Space chain across the Lesser Rift. But now the time has arrived to deal with the threat directly, especially with the distasteful rise of religious feeling within the Six Subsectors.

The foundations of current strategy have been laid, with successful Imperial tours of the (genuinely) religiously free worlds of Kharo, Pramas and Flange – Tsose always seems to drop off the itinerary for some unforeseen reason or other. Now, the Sector Consul works with various civilized individuals and groups who are working behind the scenes to mute and enervate the influence of Islam in the sector.

Thanks to his son Seymon, a new strategy is being carefully tested: providing funding to a few of the more militaristic Islamic groups, but leading them on a path that brings them to attack the Near Infidel (the Imperial government, unobservant Muslims, the Kikhushegi, the Hindus, the Vilani, and the godless Bwap) rather than the Far Infidel (the Last Man-worshipping Hegemony of Lorean). The Salafis will be encouraged to do what comes naturally: build a limitless supply of enemies, which will tie them down in a war against all in the Six Subsectors.²³

Blood for the violence of Arzul; gold for the wealth of Damlaer.
Power United, as it was meant to be.
 an old Hegemonic adage
 tied to the symbol of the Bloody Coin

The Bloody Coin

There are an endless number of pro-Hegemony secret societies within the government, which tend to fight each other (in a restrained fashion) when they are not attacking anti-Hegemonio subversives (with wild abandon, cold efficiency, or unleashed ferocity, depending on the nature of the group).

Sector Consul Gonsarles is a leader within the Bloody Coin, a secret society named after an old and respected symbol of the power of the Hegemon. With the assistance of a few daring priests and missionaries of the United Cultus of the Deified Man, the Sector Consul – in his capacities of a private Hegemonio citizen²⁴ – plans to establish the first Temple of the Deified Man in the Imperium, on world of Nulinad, within the Ducal capital city of Jajapur.

The Imperial Vargr are sure to howl when they hear of it, but they are not much liked within the Six Subsectors, and with some care – the Imperium *does* want to protect their reputation for respect for the concerns of nonhumans, and they *are* fighting a war against Solomani racial supremacists to rimward – the certain but disorganized opposition of the Vargr can be drowned out or undercut by the more important forces of money, political interest, and a strong desire for peaceful relations on the coreward Imperial border.

The Sector Consul is eagerly anticipating certain ceremonies during the Temple dedication.

Starships

The Sector Consul maintains a jump4 yacht at the Nulinad Imperial Starport. As the sovereign property of the Hegemon of Lorean, it is under diplomatic seal: Imperial officers may not enter without invitation.

²² The inspiration for this section comes from “Sugar Daddies and Flunkies: a Symbiotic Relationship” <https://www.garynorth.com/members/login.cfm?hpage=10976.cfm> A fine read for all Imperial Nobles...

²³ **Referee:** this plan will fail. The jihadi already shot their bolt in the Hebrin Rebellion – leading directly to the death of billions of believers. A religion or ideology without defenders is dead, and jihadi dreamers are *despised* on Hebrin. The Muslim Brotherhood, based on Ababat are a better bet – see “A Haji for the Fallen”, **Stellar Reaches #20** – but most of their limited (para)military force is tied down fighting the local pirate menace. Moreover, the very success of the Brotherhood has built up too many ties to the Imperial power structure: they are unable to wander far from Imperial policy. What the Consul’s plan *can* do is get the Hegemony in hot water with the Imperium...

²⁴ Let’s all say it together: “The Hegemony of Lorean is *not* a Deified Man theocracy!”

The yacht is comfortably appointed, with about 15 MCr of equipment, artwork, etc. not reflected in the price. Lorean's Light is meant to impress visitors and guests with the power and vision of the Hegemon (and, more subtly, the Unified Cultus of the Deified Man), and can double as a secure place for confidential meetings, but it is not meant to be a covert operations or communications platform.

Closing theme: "EXEC_ViiBaCi_MjiiRa/.", Haruka Shimotsuki, , Ar tonelio III
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwi529twCpY>

[In-Universe] One of the most famous hymns of the Deified Man, the song describes the birth of the New Age as the Last Man tears open the throat of the Inhumane with his bare hands as prophecy foretells, leaving only a truly Humane universe for all mankind to use as they please.²⁵

Seer Carl Bioyino

UPP 8777BA, age 32; Mixed Vilani

Psionic skills: Psi - 5, Telepathy - 1, Clairvoyance - 1, Awareness - 1

Standard skills: Acting - 4, Theology - 2, Astronomy - 2, Streetwise - 2, Research - 1, Psychology - 1, Persuasion - 1, Computer - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Laser Weapon (Pistol) - 0

Language: Anglic (*Transform*)

Opening theme: "Road to Hanna", Shadowfax, Too Far to Whisper
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8v5BBzaLcY>

Note:

- Seer Bioyino is a full member of the Imperial Astrologers Guild (Antares District), and is in training as an Acolyte of the Stellar Divinity religion. These beliefs are not mutually exclusive.
- Despite his acting skill, Seer Bioyino is a *sincere* believer in both the power of the stars to govern sophont lives, and that sophonts sufficiently devoted to the StarGods can become one after death. His 'Acting' skill is better seen as a tool he uses to help strengthen the faith of weaker believers.
- Seer Bioyino has psionic powers, but he was *not* taught to see them as psionic, but instead as the gift of the gods. In Antares sector, a large portion of the population – including Imperial Nobles and the military – follows Stellar Divinity, and are reluctant to accuse a Seer of psionic use, especially when they are believe that the stars are alive, and bless devout Seers and priests. Things are different in the Empty Quarter...

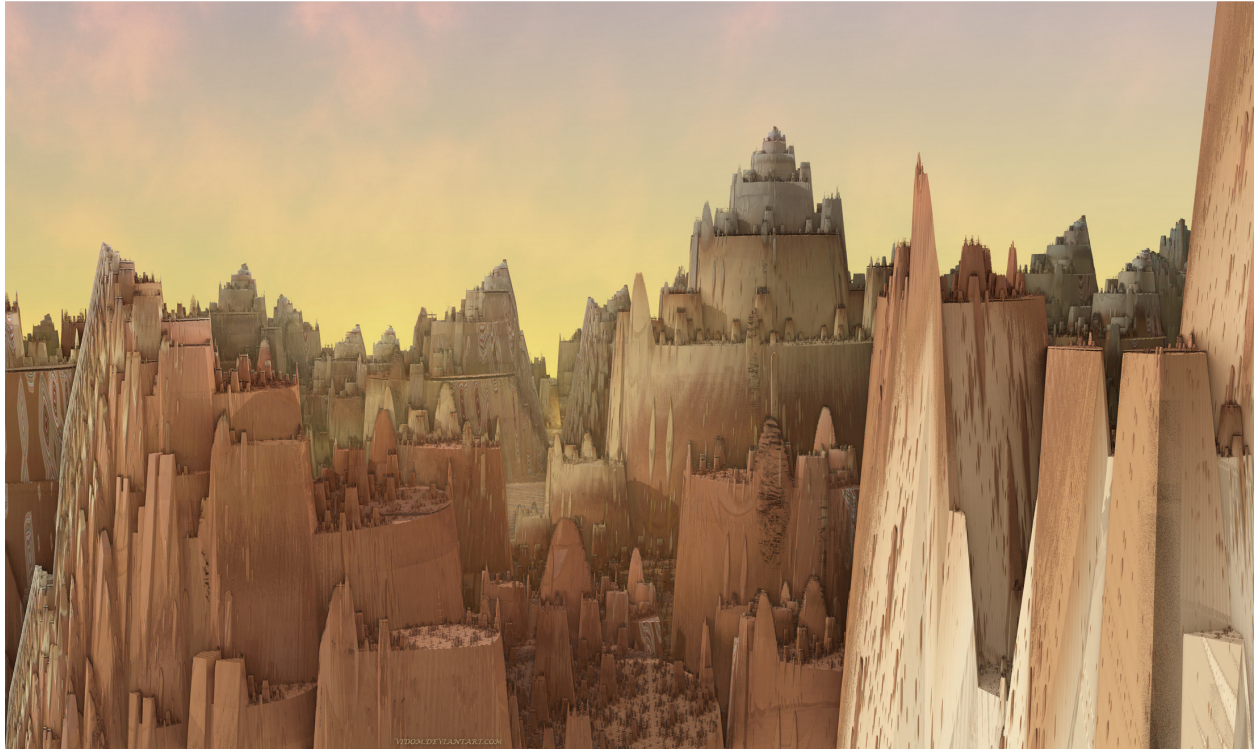
Dress

Seer Bioyino wears rich yellow and red robes, signifying his membership in the Guild of Imperial Astrologers (Antares Branch). Wary of Imperial assassins, he also wears body armour capable of sustaining two points of damage, and always bears a TL 13 laser pistol.

Fame

Carl Bioyino was born in Antares sector; while his father paid only casual respect to mystical forces, his mother and two elder sisters were serious followers of Imperial Astrology. Carl followed in their footsteps, and – encouraged by his mother – applied for formal training in the nearest college of astrologers. In the college, Carl Bioyino was rigorously trained in the major schools of Imperial astrology. Unknown to himself, he also received psionic training: the actual power of psionics was attributed to the powers of the stars and the secret knowledge provided by the college, strengthening his faith in astrology.

²⁵ The suspicious Imperial Scout might want to research the similarities between Last Man beliefs and the more violent theologies of the Suedzuk Vargr. He would be well advised to publish his findings within *Imperial* space, though, to avoid joining the ever-lengthening list of Scout casualties in the field...



Upper Daneik, a city on Pramas, is the home of Seer Bioyino's church. The Psionic Centre the Seer is associated with can be seen prominently in the background. A kind of 'cut-rate' Psionic Institute, this Psionic Centre is affiliated with the Unified Cultus of the Deified Man, but – due to the official Hegemonic support of religious liberty on Pramas – is willing to assist all sophonts of any belief (or none). There is a full, secret Psionic Institute within the Hegemony; but it is located in Arzul Sector. It is run solely for and by the Deifiers, on behalf of their religion and the Hegemonic government. The graphic is titled "Not far from Tatooine" © Vidom.

Please visit his gallery at <http://vidom.deviantart.com/art/Not-far-from-Tatooine-356358911>

Flight

Seer Bioyino had a successful career in Antares, gaining quite a lot of renown, respect, and wealth in the highest Noble and Corporate circles. His fall came when he decided to branch out from the True Constellations school he followed in Antares into Jyotisha astrology, the Terra-centred school favoured by local Hindus. Relocating to Nulinad to receive his training, his psionic powers were detected by Imperial agents, who moved to arrest him.

Fearing chemical lobotomy would strip him of his special connection to the stars, and believing that the local courts – where he had no friends in high places – would certainly convict him, Seer Bioyino fled. Despite a manhunt, Seer Bioyino was able to escape into the Hegemony of Lorean, with the help of Suedzuk Vargr pirates who felt his special powers would be useful to their pack. In his second year of (fairly comfortable) service with the pack, the pirate base where he dwelled was detected and neutralized by the Hegemony. Seer Bioyino was able to plea for asylum, placing himself and his powers at the service of the Hegemon.

New Masters in New Lands

Seer Bioyino now resides on Pramas, a world filled with an innumerable number of religions, cults, sects, and would-be prophets. Despite his inability to speak in any language but his native Anglic, Seer Bioyino has managed to build up a personal following of about 800 sophonts, mainly Imperial expatriates, pilgrims, exiles, and traders. He retains a discreet connection with a Psionic Centre on the world, and works as an occasional agent of the Hegemony: in return, he gets discreet, effective protection from Imperial assassins and the occasional tidy financial reward for unusually useful information.

While remaining an astrologer, Seer Bioyino has increasingly friendly relations with the Church of the Stellar Divinity's hierarchy on Pramas. He is interested in formally converting to that religion: his handlers from the

Hegemonic government will permit it without punishment, but still find his choice rather silly: “Why worship an unthinking ball of hydrogen? Why fear orbiting chunks of rock? With intelligence and science and discipline, we shall create a true god worthy of worship, the Last Man!”

Starship

Seer Bioyino often made use of starships to better refine his astrological predictions, but his work on Pramas has tied him down for years. He has no vessel to his name now, and if millions of Imperial Credits Julian Stars dropped into his lap, he would use it to expand his church and recruit more followers, not buy a starship.

Closing theme: “Move the Clouds”, Shadowfax <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijGRkGEPL9o>



Temple Neresenj, the third-largest Kikhushegi temple on Udisis, and home to Priestess Heriman’s religious superiors. 993 Imperial. The graphic is titled “Cliff’s Monastery Final” © Kaus Pillon.

Please visit his gallery at <http://klauspillon.deviantart.com/art/Cliff-s-Monastery-Final-315077085>

Narti Heriman, Kikhushegi Priestess

UPP 7694AA, age 30; Vilani

Skills: Admin - 3, Linguistics - 2, Perception - 1, Interrogation - 1, Small Blade - 1, Legal - 1, Computer - 1, Physics - 1, Acting - 1, Theology (Kikhushegi) - 0, Wheeled Vehicle (motorbikes, scooters) - 0, Rifleman - 0

Language: Anglic (*Native: Transform dialect*), Modern Vilani, Classical Arabic

Notes:

- Priestess Heriman has two children, Eran (boy, 14) and Seress (girl, 10)
- Nari Heriman does have psionic potential, but has never developed it. She would be horrified and angered at any suggestion that she should do so, but naturally shys away from any lobotomy to destroy it permanently.

Opening theme: “The White Spirit”, Uman, Purple Passage <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnv5DcOm9ml>

Dress

The Priestess wears TL 8 white robes hemmed in bronze thread, and bears dyed white hair in imitation of the White Lady.

Mistress

Priestess Heriman is a community leader of a Kikhushegi congregation in the tough, depressed city of Banitag, on the world of Uduisi. Uduisi is a rather conservative world, composed of numerous human and Vargr populations that have managed to organize a fairly broad and durable peace amongst themselves, but don't care much for outsiders. The priestess is a typical Uduisi: solid and sensible when dealing with her own people and the neighbours, but sceptical and suspicious when contacting visitors from outside her district, never mind strangers from the stars...

Mystery

...but her stolid, deep-rooted opinions are starting to shift, sometimes unpredictably. Despite her title, the priestess was never very religious: in her community, it more accurate to see her title as a political tag with vestigial religious duties than as an actual Kikhushegi Priestess devoted to her God. However, with the death of her husband and her mother in a single year (her husband in a criminal firefight where he was just an unfortunate bystander; her mother after a long illness), Priestess Heriman started to be plagued with powerful, sometimes terrifying dreams and visions. Things started to get *really* bad after her sister suffered a stillbirth...

After consulting with other Priestesses, the group consensus was that Priestess Heriman should leave the world, and go on a quest to uncover the source of these spiritual maladies. The priestess was secretly ashamed at her poor grasp of spiritual and theological matters compared with her sisters with stronger Solomani ties.²⁶ As it was, she was glad to do something that might resolve the issue, and ease the stress on her mind.

As she hurriedly prepares to leave the system and save her mind, her character has already visibly changed in the eyes of her followers. Before this year, she routinely advised her followers to avoid resisting robbers, as 'your money is worth your life'; now, she encourages them to be armed, and now leads a posse at night upon occasion, becoming a fairly proficient knife fighter and a budding interrogator in the process. By and large, the local criminal gangs have decided to stay out of the neighbourhood of 'the Crazy Priestess': harsh conflicts with Sunni Moslems have taught the Kikhushegi the value of Vilani military traditions, and any actual *harm* visited on a priestess is going to get a lot of locals very angry, very quickly.

Before her children, she was typically stern, watchful, and a strong disciplinarian; now, she seems to 'space out' more often at her good times. (At her bad times... well, at least the priestess has enough self-control to shield her children from some *really* scary aspects of her shifting personality. This is not true with the criminals she catches in the field.) Increasingly, the priestess spends less time at home, charging Eran with the protection of his little sister while she goes out with her posse on patrol, white robes and all. At the moment, Eran is being taught to handle the family finances, and has been hurriedly apprenticed to a congregant so he can earn bread for himself and his sister when Priestess Heriman leaves her world.

Starship

Priestess Heriman is in need of a starship, and is willing to work as a crewwoman on the ship as a translator and a liaison between Vilani, Lazisari, and Arabic cultures. (She has a bit of experience with the Vargr, as well, but can't speak the language.) If possible, she would prefer to join a ship crewed by fellow Kikhushegi believers. She will not mention her expertise with violence, and will avoid dangerous situations: not because she is fearful of the criminals, but because she is fearful of discovering just how far she is willing to go.

Closing theme: "Visions", James Newton Howard, Unbreakable <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsSDFwKh2h0>

²⁶ Vilani spirituality focuses on right behaviour, right ritual, and right action, not on contact with the numinous.

Tation Vero

UPP 89889C, age 44; Arzula

Skills: Grav Vehicle - 4, Bribery - 2, Carousing - 2, Ship Tactics - 2, Streetwise - 2, Jet Aircraft - 1, Engineering - 1, Medical - 1, Demolitions - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Computer - 0, Handgun - 0, Vacc Suit - 0

Language: Arzula-K (*Native*)

Dress

Typically, Vero wears warm, earth-toned suits and robes, mixing Arzul and Nisagan influences. There is always a small lapel pin, indicating his brief service as an officer of the Nisagan Aerospace Force. When preparing for a dangerous situation, a handgun worn in a shoulder holster is used.

Hymavathi Vero (née Iyer)

UPP 99A758, age 44; East Indian Solomani

Skills: Liaison - 3, Admin - 2, Bribery - 1, Grav Vehicle - 1, Computer - 1, Electronics - 1, Stealth - 1, Herding - 1, Linguistics - 1, Early Firearms - 0, Swimming - 0, Vacc Suit - 0,

Languages: Anglic (*Native: Transform dialect*), Arzula-K

Dress

Hymavathi dresses in a light, feminine style, with pastel colours and flowing fabrics in the traditional East Indian fashions. Upon occasion, high-tech jewellery may be worn. Hymavathi bears no weaponry.

Opening theme: "Night Crossing", John Doan, Departures <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FzqY1-StSw>
[Because I couldn't find Carol Nethen's work "A View from the Bridge" on YouTube. You can sample and buy it here, though: <http://www.last.fm/music/Carol+Nethen>]

Officially

An attractive couple, well-preserved despite their age and (mixed) Solomani heritage, the Veros are respected celebrities among the masters of Nisaga. Tation's willingness to marry an East Indian woman is rather uncommon; the fact that she is actually immigrated from the Imperium, and converted to the worship of the Last Man, made the couple *sensational*. A representative from the Apex itself was sent to congratulate the couple's union.

(Following) The Hegemony has long had a taste for monumental warships, designed as much as an expression of devotion to the Last Man and an example of Human Glory, as for actual military operations. The Draco Rutilus, at over three million tons the largest warship within the Julian Protectorate, will not be armed and operational for another century: her massive weaponry load-out is still being designed, including a phenomenally powerful (and phenomenally expensive)²⁷ meson spinal gun. However, the starship hull and controls have been installed, and her jump4 and manoeuvre drives are doing well in field tests.²⁸ Pictured refuelling in the Desecit gas giant, Abuish system, before jumping into the Sandworlds, 993 Imperial.

The graphic is titled "Draco Rutilus" © Tibor Bedats. Please visit his gallery at <http://rawwad.cgsociety.org/gallery/346611/> & <http://rawwad.blogspot.sk/>

²⁷ When will the Hegemony finally become the comfortable economic powerhouse their (Damlearite) leadership dreams of? Freeing most of the Irilitok Vargr, while necessary, isn't sufficient: they need to stop wasting trillions of credits on unproductive military symbolism as well. Ditching the national socialist economy would be a great move, too... but it's going to be easier said than done. Old habits exist for a reason, and the Blood Vargr are still out there, even if they are more quiet nowadays.

²⁸ The Referee may amuse himself in guessing the reactions of the Hegemony's neighbours when they first discovered the mere *existence* of this warship, even in her unarmed state. Realistically, though, the *Draco Rutilus* is far too valuable to use for anything except protection of the core Hegemonic worlds. Not a true hangar queen, but in the ballpark. Naval architects will have to use either TNE's *Fire, Fusion, and Steel* or Third Edition *GURPS Starships* or *GURPS Vehicles* – coupled with *GURPS Traveller: Starships* – to properly design the main armaments of this behemoth.



Tation was a powerful man even before his marriage: after spending a term serving in the Nisaga Aerospace Force (where he suffered wounds after being shot down by Suedzuk Vargr raiders), he made a name for himself as head of Tation Industries, a supplier of TL 8-A equipment for the local military establishment. A strong patriot, he insured that his workers provided only the best base construction material at the best prices for the nation – and he was rewarded with a continual stream of contracts from both the planetary and (interstellar) provincial government.²⁹

He met the beautiful Hymavathi when she was only a low-ranking purser for Adele Cargo, a minor Imperial interface line following the Deep Space Stations link between the Third Imperium and the Hegemony of Lorean. They met and fell in love, but their courtship was not consummated until Hymavathi was willing to set aside her family's religion and join the Deified Man instead.

The gossip rags continue to speculate when their first child will be conceived, but the business press is focusing on the dramatic attempt of Tation Industries to buy out the Resi Conglomerate. If successful, Tation will take on a great deal of debt, but get access to important technologies and key contracts with some of the leading military forces of the Hegemony.

Secretly

After a tough struggle, Hymavathi Iyer finally hooked up with Adele Cargo in 991, getting her chance to go to Nisaga in search of her son, Kallol. Kallol went missing years ago, and Hymavathi has committed her life to finding him – divorcing her unsupportive husband in the process. She has managed to uncover his links to patriotic Hindi paramilitary groups, and traced his journey to Nisaga, to support the underground Hindu believers on this Last Man-dominated world.

While searching for any news, she made contact with Tation. He came from an Arzula family that chafed under the grinding conformity and endless militarism of the Home Systems, eventually choosing to relocate to Nisaga and start a new life without the social controls, harsh punishment for trivial infractions, or the dehumanizing, brutalist, emotionless culture.

Together, they searched for her son, growing fonder of each other as they did so. They were unable to find him, but they decided to continue Kallol's work together, if in a more indirect manner. Tation managed to persuade a few followers of the old religion to work for him in return for less non-work related oversight, fewer and milder punishments for cultural/religious infractions, and less or no discrimination tied to their beliefs. Violent rebels and loud agitators were shunned, but quiet nonconformists who could deliver were welcomed.

Despite her public conversion to the Last Man, Hymavathi continues to revere the Hindu goddess Shiva in the privacy of her home, with her husband's blessing and the support of her discreetly Hindu household staff. She also continues on her slow yet patient search for her son.

Starship

Until 991, Tation always kept a yacht at hand, but he sold it that year, using the funds to 'pursue personal interests in art and scientific research'. Hymavathi disapproved of the sale, and she is slowly turning Tation to looking at things from her point of view. This year (993 Imperial), Tation may be in the market for a yacht again, and will be looking for an Imperial crew for his ship, rather than a Hegemonio crew. The PCs will discover for themselves his reasons...

Closing theme: "EXEC_FLIP_FUSIONSPHERE/.", Haruka Shimotsuki,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0wlsqGXus0>

²⁹ Not mentioned: the intensive lobbying for those lucrative military contracts, the national socialist subsidies and set-asides, the quid pro quo arrangements, and the alliance with 'security-minded conservatives', 'humanist revolutionaries', and 'theocratic messianic' political groups, as they all keep up Hegemonio support for a powerful military.

Emil N'din, former Duke-Consort

UPP 99A758, age 34; Mixed Vilani

Skills: Liaison - 3, Admin - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Computer - 1, Electronics - 1, Stealth - 1, Herding - 1, Leadership - 1, Bribery - 1, Early Firearms - 0, Energy Weapon - 0, Vacc Suit - 0

Language: Nasiyor (*native; planetary language*), Anglic (*Rim dialect*). Elementary Hindi (Nulinad), treat as “-1”

Opening theme: “Season 3 trailer”, The Track Team, Avatar: The Last Airbender

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrSntiZNWjM>

Note: N'din has two daughters, Nolin (age 7) and Ekitcle (age 2).

Dress

Once upon a time, Emil wore the rich robes and costly synthetic cloths of a high-ranking Imperial Core Noble. Those days are gone forever, but the cotton clothing and leather jackets he currently wears have their own charm.

A Useful Alliance

Emil N'din was a youngest of three children in a notable data-trading family in Daibei sector, specializing in timely information transfer and rapid data manipulation for a range of major concerns. A handsome and well-spoken gentleman, he had already risen to a major subsector manager and highly respected technologist-pundit when a plainly dressed, rather dumpy-looking woman struck up a conversation with him. He rather enjoyed the chat, but though nothing more of it for the rest of the evening... until his friends informed him that he had just spoken to the Duchess of Shadigi!

Emil talked it over with his family, and his Archon and uncle, Sir Gensou, encouraged him to pursue Duchess Aulia's affections. Meetings were engineered, and the Duchess welcomed the courtship... if in a rather lukewarm manner. His family and his business operations were thoroughly vetted, and after proposing four separate times the Duchess finally accepted him as her husband and consort. Eventually, Emil and the Duchess agreed to a discreetly open marriage where she was to be given two children, an heir and a spare: she herself could take on any private paramour she desired, but preferred her work and intelligent conversation with friends to flings with strangers.

Despite the lack of fidelity and unity, the marriage remained superficially pleasant and even affectionate at times. As the Duchess had no real interest in children – marriage and family were just a matter of duty to her – her daughter Nolin was primarily raised by the nannies. Emil was eager to get his hands on the Duchess' property and powers, but everything was tied up legally in her name, and upon her death to her daughter, skipping him entirely. Besides nagging Aulia for more access to her wealth, Emil spent his time running building up the family's business in Shadigi subsector and chasing the female co-workers.

Fear

The Duchess often disappeared in the course of her duties, but she was at the family estate when news of the start of the Solomani Rim War arrived. Initially, she seemed nonchalant; the war was a long-planned Imperial offensive, and she was finally able to share a few unclassified tidbits and hints about it. She seemed... playful.

Then the bad news began to come in, first as just a few unpleasant incidents, but quickly turning into a flood. Duchess Aulia soon became inaccessible to her husband, wrapped up in a continuous train of meetings. All news of his family in Daibei ceased; later, Emil learned that almost his entire family was wiped out, with Solomani Security conducting a flawless takeover of the family business there. In Shadigi subsector herself, Emil lost control of the business, with it first being seized by Imperial agents, then torn to shreds by murderous SolSec operatives.

(Following) The Imperial Sunburst, for reals. This is the Type G star Capital orbits, which is on innumerable flags, shields, memorabilia, warships, weapons, and documents. I can't seem to find her name in canon materials, though... anyone? The graphic is titled "Luminosity" © Gabriel Gajdoš. Please visit his gallery at

<http://pipper-svk.deviantart.com/art/Luminosity-153836595>



LUMINOSITY
by pipper-svk

Rendered powerless by the loss of his business, his fears, desires and plans were ignored with contempt by the Duchesses' blood relatives, who rapidly moved in to run Duchess Aulia's household, 'ignoring the boy-toy'. He desperately tried to get in contact with his wife, but was completely stonewalled by everyone he met. All he could do was turn to his daughter Nolin, who looked at him as a stranger: her nannies were far more familiar to her.

When reports came of a building Solomani offensive against the world he lived on, the subsector capital Ferry, Emil turned to drink and strange women for comfort. Ignoring the Duchess' blood relatives – who quickly scooped up Nolin and scooted to the ultradeep bomb shelters – Emil stood alone at the top of the tallest tower of the abandoned family compound, to watch the light show as the Imperial and Solomani fleets ferociously clashed in orbit. Finally, *finally*, the Imperium eked out a victory, with no small thanks to the hurriedly reinforced planetary defense network.

[**Referee:** Ferry, subsector capital of Shadigi, was a crucial win for the Imperium. Being the most rimward of a local quartet of the subsector capitals of Ferry, Narquel, Messier, and the sector capital of Libert (Liberty at the time of the Rim War), a solid victory here gave the Imperium breathing space, and persuaded the Confederation to press the advantage in the Old Expanses instead of Diaspora. The failure to hold these four systems would cripple the Imperial war effort and likely lead directly to Imperial capitulation, leaving the Solomani Confederation an immensely powerful (and soon to be *exclusively* Solomani) polity, and the Imperium with a shattered Imperial Navy, a zero-morale set of intelligence services suffering from widespread subversion and corruption, and a discredited Emperor on the Iridium Throne. With a second coup very likely in the face of such a punishing defeat, a period of ferocious political turbulence – and possible collapse – would be the most likely Imperial future.]

Less than four weeks after the Battle of Ferry, Emil was arrested by Imperial troops, "to be brought before the Emperor for questioning." Hustled to a ship's boat, on his way to a comfortable cabin/cell on an Imperial warship for the three-month journey to Capital, he spotted his daughter, and then his *visibly pregnant* wife. He hadn't seen Aulia for over a year! He struggled to get free of the guards and get his hands around her throat, but the guards simply jammed a taser in his side.³⁰

Isolated in his cell, Emil simply drank and drugged away the weeks until his arrival at Capital. A few days before exiting jump in Capital system, the drugs and the alcohol was taken away, and a medic supervised his painful withdrawal. In a holding room before boarding the Navy shuttle to Cleon, capital city of the Imperium, Emil finally met his wife, his daughter, and a small infant in his wife's arms. Duchess Aulia had aged very rapidly and very badly since the start of the Solomani Rim War, and Emil quickly recognized the scar marks around her throat, from the time she tried to hang herself in her cabin.

Emil swore and cursed Aulia vigorously; when he stopped, she told him (her very voice had changed! – raspy, hoarse, hardened) that the child was from his stored sperm, as she simply *had* to have a second child for her family, and to keep little Nolin company. (Nolin, who was all of five, was at the moment staring up at her parents, hanging onto every word, watching their faces keenly.) The Duchess didn't expect to survive the meeting with Emperor Gavin: as head of Imperial Security, Solomani Operations, she had failed too completely to deserve anything but death. But Emil *had* to survive, and *had* to protect their daughters. "When I am killed, do not say a word against it. Just *kneel*, and *LIVE!*"

Death

The very next day, the Duchess and her family were called before the Iridium Throne. The Duchess was permitted to dress herself in her regal robes of office, and the rest of her family followed her example.

Had anyone entered the Octagon³¹ – the throne room of the Grand Palace, a sphere one kilometer in diameter over the city of Cleon – would know that something harsh was going to happen. On the Dais, Emperor Gavin's face was set in a hard mask, Empress Chunlai to his right had a sad, sympathetic expression, and Princess Elizabeth to his left had an unreadable expression, with the edge of her lips slightly tightened.

³⁰ No, I didn't forget that this was officially an open marriage for *both* parties. Duke-Consort Emil certainly did, though...

³¹ See "The Imperial Palace", *Traveller's Digest* #9

Upon seeing the Duchess, the Emperor expressed his roaring anger and limitless contempt with great passion, demanding exactly what was she doing when Solomani Security was taking over the entire intelligence community in her demesne, and just how many millions of his people were dying each and every day for her incompetence. When she said nothing, the Emperor stood up, took his sword – ordering the Imperial Executioner and the Emperor’s Champion to remain in their places – and strode directly to her. He then ordered Duchess Aulia to stand, and drove his sword, the Emperor’s Fury, into her heart, killing her.

Emil had never loved Aulia, at least not deeply, but he cared enough to wince and turn away. When he again straightened up, he saw Princess Elizabeth not five feet away, directly looking at him. Despite the lack of emotion on her face, he immediately sensed that the Princess was going to decide right there and then if what remained of his family should be killed or not. He knelt quickly, holding little Ekitcle with one hand and pulling Nolin (who was in a state of shock) down on the ground with him with the other. A moment... two... and the Princess turned, and walked away.

The Duchess’ body was covered, placed on a stretcher, and taken away. Robots mopped up her lifeblood even as Imperial business continued. Eventually, somehow, Emil was out of the Octagon and in his cell, weeping with both of his daughters and holding them tightly. The next day, an Imperial servant arrived to discuss the disposal the future of his family. It was a brief discussion, with stark choices. Caring nothing for wealth and power anymore, Emil formerly renounced, for himself and for his daughters, any claim to Imperial titles and privileges, and all his wealth – excepting 500 credits – was turned over to the Emperor as a token of compensation for the abject failure of his wife.

In the name of his daughters, he begged for them to be allowed to say good-bye to their mother one last time. The request was granted, and the family watch as their mother was wrapped for mummification and placed in a stone sarcophagus, which was itself placed in a shipping container, to be returned to her ancestral lands after the war was over. His little family watch the ceremony alone: Emil never asked if there were any survivors from either his or his wife’s house, and he was never informed of any.

Hope

As part of the conditions for his release, Emil and his daughters were sent to the Empty Quarter, a sector too poor to matter much in Imperial life. On the chartered liner, he focused on helping the badly traumatized Nolin. Nolin was far closer to the nannies than to the mother she almost never saw, but the destructive power of what happened was very difficult to deal with. There was no religious consolation, as Emil never saw the need for such things; no mourning songs, no prayers, no talk of heaven or hell, destiny or the home of the ancestors. Nolin only had pictures and recordings of her mother now, recordings that she played repeatedly and which she guarded fiercely.

And Nolin had dreams, bad dreams. Over the next two years, they faded as well, but the electronic images she had helped to keep the memory of her mother and her past life alive.

The homemaker has the ultimate career.

All other careers exist for one purpose only - and that is to support the ultimate career.

C.S. Lewis

On Nulinad, Emil had no money and two kids to care for. On a planet with no welfare state and no tradition of charity for strangers, Emil had to hustle to keep his kids fed and clothed. Fortunately, he still had his skills as an interstellar businessman, and managed to find work in the import-export business. He was being paid at only half the rate he should be, but never mind: there’s a roof over the head, food on the table, and hope for the future.

His little Ekitcle, a charming two-year-old toddler unscarred by the past, is Emil’s source of joy in life. Nolin, now seven, has turned into an exceedingly serious, self-sufficient and quiet little girl. Her skill in using electronic equipment to see her mother has grown into a strong ability to work with all sorts of electronic and mechanical tools and devices. Most importantly, she had made a few friends – the ungirly girls who don’t fit in with the usual groups, and so have bonded together for companionship. Nolin is particularly close to one 10-year old girl by the

name of Keemaya, who has chosen to take Nolin under her wing, teaching her the Hindi language, how to prepare Hindi dishes, and how to follow the Hindi religion (with the occasional support of Keemaya's mother).

The future is unknown, but the N'din family is at rest... for now.

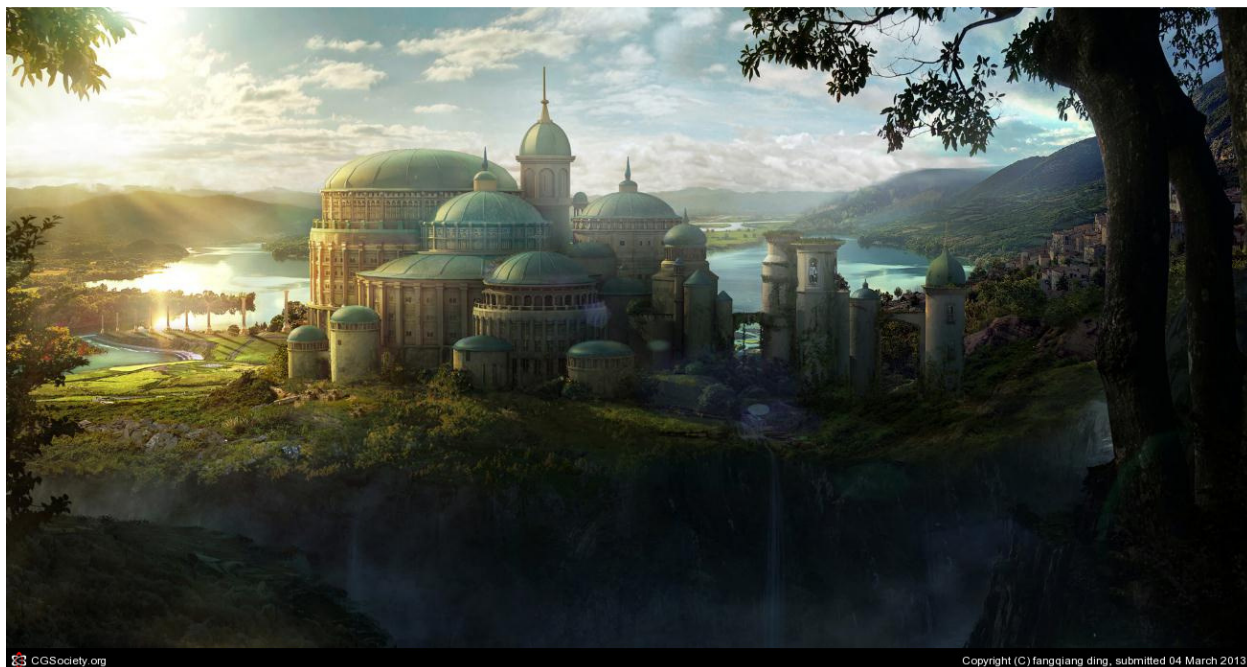
Starships

There was a time when Emil had billions of credits of starships at his beck and call, including three yachts – one for play, one for business, and an un-restored, non-functional 2000-year old yacht from the Rule of Man era just to impress visitors. All dust in the wind now. On the other hand, he had held on to something more valuable than any starship.

It's a fair trade, in his eyes. No complaints.

Closing theme: "Barcarolle", Kawai Eri, Aria <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvCJNpwxY3c>

And, from the universe next door...



Cathedral of the Star Maker, Nulinad, AD 2962 (Alternate Universe). Built on the site of the very first Imperial Catholic church in the Empty Quarter, it is the destination of several sector-wide pilgrimages.

The graphic is titled "Heart of the Holy Land" © beaverman. Please visit his gallery at

<http://beaverman.cgsociety.org/gallery/1096609/>

Mod-man Chershoee☒

UPP A784CA, age 39 (biological age 30); Terran

Skills: Handgun - 2, Ship Tactics - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Computer - 1, Swimming - 1, Engineering - 1, Naval Architect - 1, Pilot - 1, Linguistics - 1, Electronics - 1, Leadership - 1, Admin - 1, Vacc Suit - 0

Languages: Onana (*Terran*), Basic (*Imperial*)

Opening Theme: Destiny, Sato Nakoi, X TV <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHNPSEmPXxQ>

Dress

Chershoee☒ wears the simple, functional work overalls of a Church militant naval rating.

In the Service

Chershoe was born and raised in a clap-trap semi-legal trading station, just one of many in the inner system of Unlakhar (3040 Saregon/Sylea) far away from his current home in Hebrin. His family was at turns neglectful and abusive, and the young boy got out as quickly as he could, first by hitching rides as a shiphand paying his way with labour, then as a cheap and disposable freelance shuttle pilot on Ziraa (0303 Kirkankhim/Delphi C5559EJ-6). At the age of 18, he heard that one of the Church militant units were hiring, and he was inducted as a Tactician Third Grade, despite his absolute lack of knowledge of the art.

The New Sword of the Star Maker treated him better than at any other time in his life, but it was very difficult training all the same. Very little religious training was offered, despite all the Imperial Catholic jargon, paraphernalia, and symbolism on the base: everything was focused on the starship design, starship abilities, and starship tactics. At 20, he finally graduated from the base, and was soon sent to the Terran Rim in support of the large religious armies occupying the heretical systems.

At War

Third Grade Chershoe served his flotilla and his ship well. His ship, the *Blunt Instrument*, helped to destroy and deter numerous smugglers from the Terran Confederation trying to skirt Imperial and Church patrols, slipping money, supplies, and arms to the innumerable insurgents within the Imperial Occupation Zone. While Chershoe was a good spacer, the real reason why he loved the fight was the strong bonds of camaraderie he shared with the rest of the crew.

The end came suddenly, when a Church Review Board investigated an incident months before, where the *Blunt Instrument* launched a brief orbital bombardment in support of retreating Church units. Orbital strikes are very tightly restricted by the Imperial Laws of War, with official Church policy to prefer the loss of the men, even the loss of the world, to authorizing strikes.

Despite the strong ban, brief bombardments were still done on the sly – but whenever it was discovered, the Imperial Church lost a bit of her reputation and standing as a beacon of justice. A powerful church killing poorly-armed locals from on high brings scorn upon herself: but starmen crossing the void to give their lives on alien soils for the sake of the salvation of strangers is respected as a noble sacrifice, with their blood purifying the world on which it was shed.

Warfare is not about winning: it is about worship. And we may not worship as we please, but instead we must worship the right way, in a manner pleasing to the Imperial Trinity of the Star Maker, the Queen of Heaven, and the Universal Saviour.

- War Deacon Sragall, AD 3024

Outcast

With the Church court ruling against her, the name of the *Blunt Instrument* was stripped from the hull and the caps of the crew, replaced with *Hull 03957-A-Q0*. *Hull 03957-A-Q0* was removed from the field, and reassigned to Hebrin; her crew was placed in low berth, with the ship brought to her new port by civilians. After arriving at St. David's Abbey at AD 3323, the First Mark of Disgrace was tattooed on the top of their right hands and appended to their legal names.

Second Grade Chershoe has grown restless. Even as his ship and his mates are increasingly ostracized, they have grown more defiant and resentful under the condemning gaze of both the local Church militant establishment and Imperial Navy officers. Some of his fellows are considering the idea of heading out to friendlier stars, taking their ship with them. Others are interested in deserting the ship and joining one of the local religions that are hostile to the Imperial Church, or going out-and-out pirate. The Captain is still in control, but the faint scent of mutiny is in the air....

Closing Theme: "Ironclad", Clint Mansell, Sahara <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGoXmor8Peg>

The Preferred Worlds of the Empty Quarter, 993 Imperial

I decided to take a few printouts of the 993 Empty Quarter, using Joshua Bell's wonderful sector map generator, available here: <http://www.travellermap.com/post.htm>. Choosing the World Colours selection, I started looking for astrographical patterns, clusters of living worlds, etc. Watching the colours and comparing them with the UWP, though, there was a dawning realization that what was thought to be a great world by the map didn't meet my standards. For example, a rich and agricultural world would have a tainted atmosphere. (The full legend is at <http://travellermap.blogspot.ca/2011/11/beta-appearance-options.html>) That might be a rich world for farmers who are comfortable with tainted or poisonous air – so long as the plants are healthy – but I need the clean stuff!

So, I made my own map. Actually, two of them: one for the environment, and one for technology, using the same spreadsheet that can be found on the **Stellar Reaches** website, issue 19.

Atmospheric

First, atmospheres. I grouped them in these categories, depending on their atmospheric ratings:

- Very thin (3) - sky blue,
- Thin (5) - blue,
- Standard (6) - green,
- Dense (8) - orange, and
- Unusual (D,E,F) - red.

Worlds outside of these ranges are ignored.

Technology

The second map is on technology. Here are the categories I used for them

- TL 0 – 3: black, "Pre-Industrial"
- TL 4 – 5: grey, "Industrial"
- TL 6 – 8: brown, "Pre-Stellar"
- TL 9 – A: red, "Early Stellar"
- TL B – C: blue, "Average Stellar"
- TL D+: yellow, "High Stellar"

Note: In Traveller, "Average Stellar" includes TL D. This is reclassified here, due to the lower overall tech level of the Empty Quarter.

Preferred

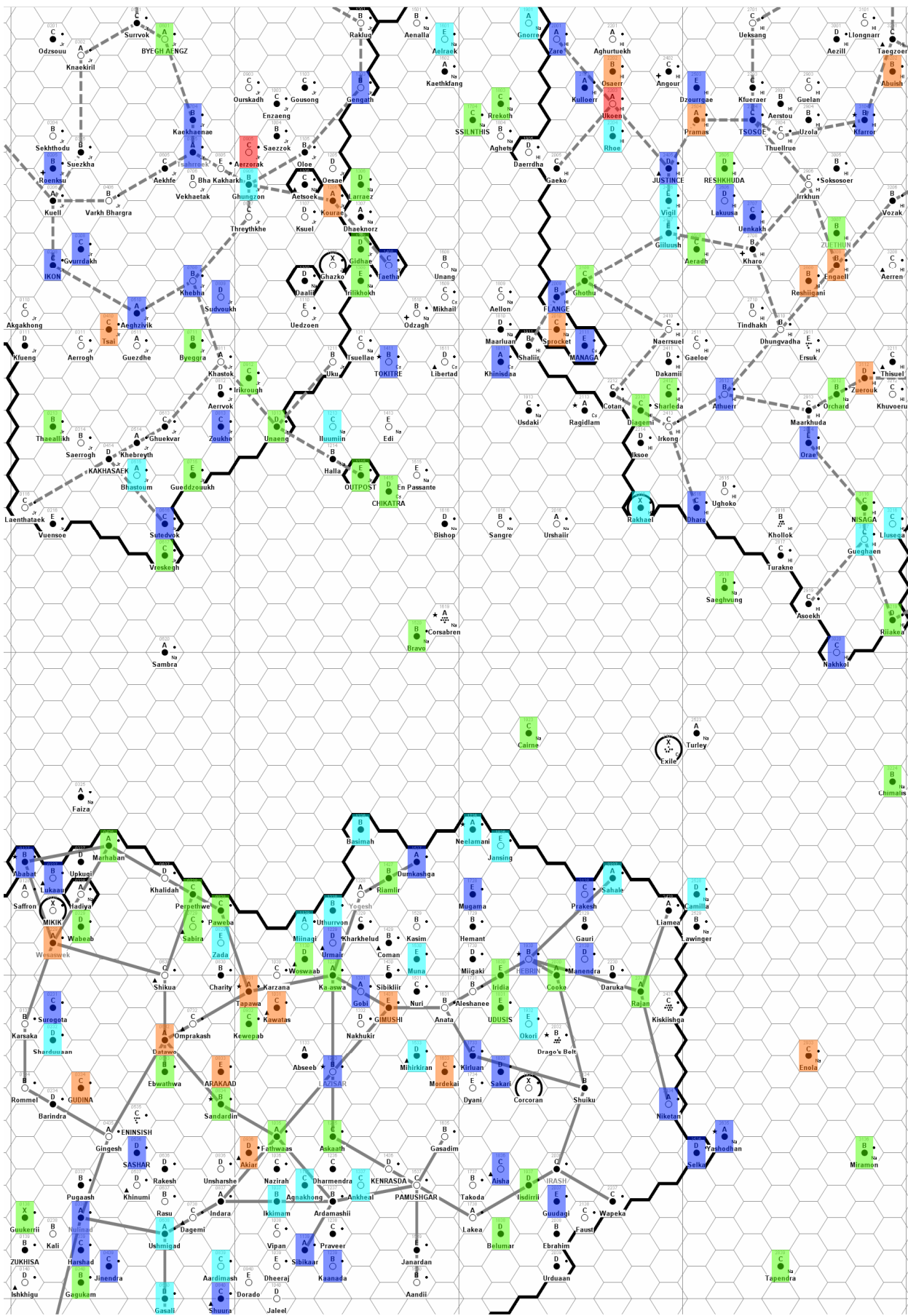
These systems have

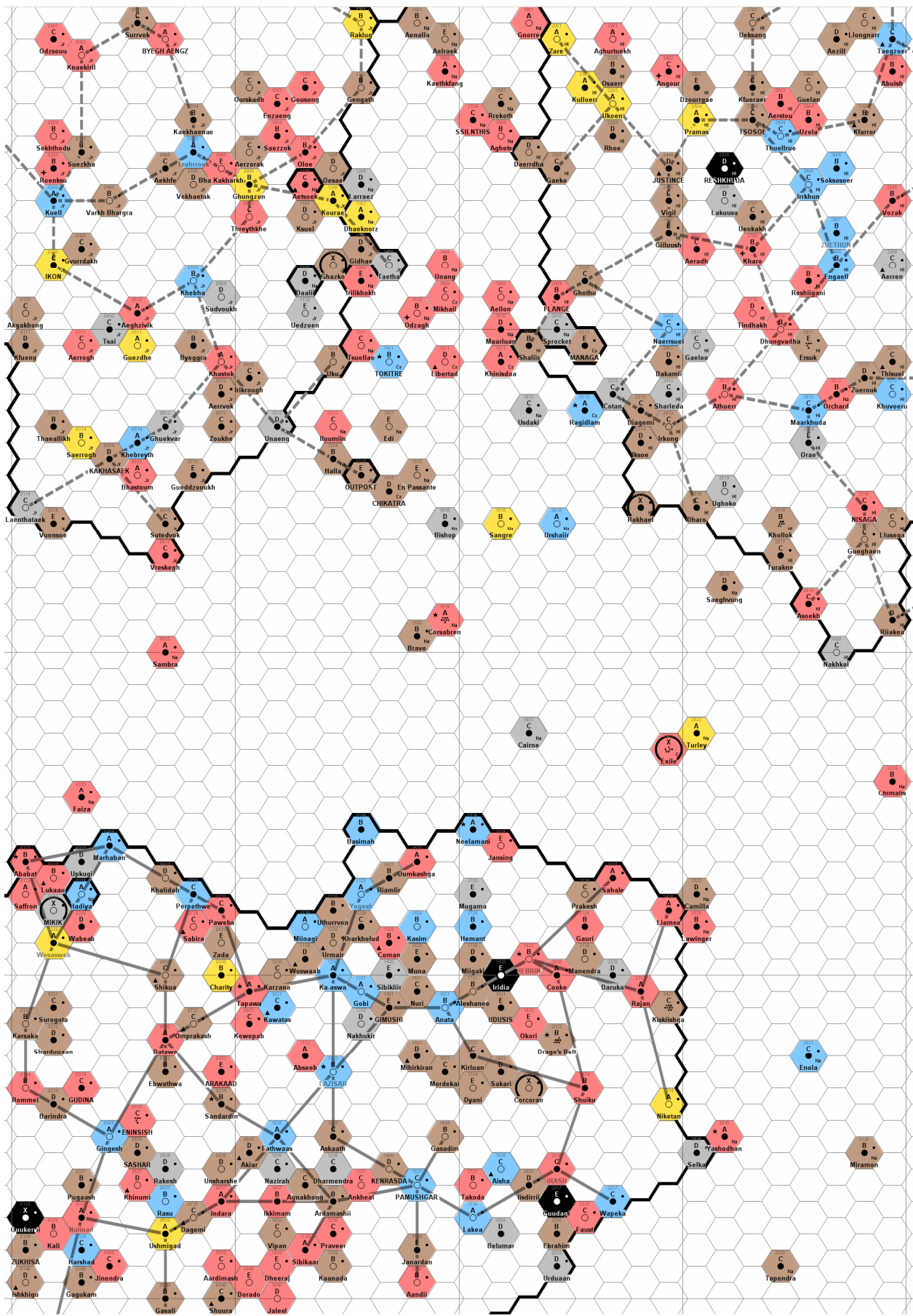
- an atmosphere that is breathable without assistance – 5,6,8,D,E,or F
- a world size of 7 or 8, to provide a suitable gravitational field (and avoid long-term bone deterioration)

Worlds with a technology level of 9+ (capable of building jump engines, and at least transitioning to artigrav technology) are highlighted with a light green circle; worlds of TL 8 or less are highlighted with a dark green circle.

World Colours

Finally, this map is created with Bell's website, and is available here for your convenience.





Preferred Systems: Details

A little extra information, for the more earthlike worlds.

Early Stellar (and better) technology systems

Aeghzivik/Tsahrroek 0510, A858873-9, K2 V

Aeghzivik is a nice world with a pleasant orange sun, but it's also a world dominated by the Church of the Chosen Ones, a young and vigorous Vargr religion that teaches Vargr supremacy. Humans on this world hold second-class citizenship, and human visitors are well advised to have a high-charisma Vargr escort. Vargr PCs, on the other hand, can get quite comfortable on this world: the religious connections that Aeghzivik enjoys brings in occasional visitors from across the Vargr Extents, making the local culture more keyed to typical Vargr norms, and not as tied to the Vilani. Moreover, tensions between the Irilitok and Ovaghoun are reduced on this world, as the Church prefers to unite all Vargr under the banner of the Ancients.

Irilikhokh/Kourae 1309, E86A625-A, F5 V

Irilikhokh is located within the Ssilnthis Zone, and is populated by Suedzuk Vargr. Blood Vargr like the location, the decent technology, the stock of aquatic megafauna to hunt, and the hundred of kilometers between the island-bound Suedzuk settlements – it helps to avoid aggressive reactions from your unfriendly neighbours. Non-Blood Vargr visitors to this system should be very cautious to avoid lethal paranoid reactions from the locals. Human visitors to the system are simply nuts.

*"But the world isn't Red Zoned!"
"You will discover the worth of TAS Zoning within the Quarter, soon enough. For now, just stay in the ship and keep your shotgun close."*

Josh and Obadiah Blackdust,
of the starship *Crispy Credits*
En route to Zuethun, 993 Imperial

Ssilnthis/Flange 1704, C767A77-A, K7 V, F3 IV

Most of the residents reside undersea like on Ikon, but over 20% of the population – or six billion sophonts, mostly Blood Vargr – reside on the planetary land mass. If the locals tolerate your presence, the human districts of the planetary cities can be very pleasant. Only remember that the human minority have been strongly influenced

by Blood Vargr mores, and may cut and wound you for what may seem to be trivial or nonexistent reasons.

Ukoen/Flange 2203, A8D4416-E, M2 III

Most of the Irilitok inhabitants of this world reside on a single advanced settlement, hugging a deep ledge on a huge mountain high above the planetary surface. These Vargr are quite friendly to visitors, and are always ready to trade. Their relationship to the humanist Hegemony is rather complicated, but rewarding enough (to the right people) for the local Hegemonio masters to permit the Ukoenz Irilitok to build their wealth in peace. For most Travellers, this is one of the better places to reside.

Aeradh/Tsoso 2508, C76A401-A, G2 V

Another Irilitok settlement, Aeradh is closely tied to the Star Legion base – and Julian Protectorate bureaucracies – on nearby Kharo. Kharo is classified as a 'rich' world in Traveller terminology, and it does have a larger population. But the world has a weak gravitational field and a tainted atmosphere as well, so it is not as healthy for humans to reside on long-term. The Vargr colonists of Aeradh try to deal with the Julian government whenever possible, rather than with the Hegemony directly. But sometimes, they have no choice but to face the Cold Ones all by themselves...

Zuethun/Tsoso 3007 B76297B-B, M3 V, M5 V

The unofficial capital of the quadrant, the human population now owns most of the choice land sounding the small seas and lakes of the world, and receives the majority of the available rainfall. The remaining land is under control of the Suedzuk Vargr: it largely consists of vast deserts and harsh badlands. Heavy Hegemonic funding continues to power further development of the human nations of Zuethun. If you ignore the underlining tension and focus on the government subsidies, intensive technological development and the fine Mediterranean climate, it's a great place to live!

Abuish/Tsoso 3202 B88A775-A, K7 V M9 V

While Orchard was meant to be the premiere Arzula settlement world in Beta Quadrant, in reality, Abuish is the place to be for the settlers with the best political connections. Ironically, the reason for it is linked to the local's willingness to use the rules and power of the fascist interstellar

state for their own advantage: “Somebody’s gotta profit from all those government contracts, government regulations, and government supervision. Why not us?” While the scofflaw attitudes of the Irlitok Vargr made them rich, they are careful to insure that powerful humans in powerful places benefit from their wealth as well, which is where the citizens of Abuish come in. While the Vargr occasionally are permitted to visit as guests, they are not permitted to stay: but Beta humaniti (non-Arzula, non-Damlaerite humans native to the Quarter) never step foot on Abuish. Only whistleblowers are held in greater contempt; and in this idyllic waterworld, they tend to die during police questioning at an alarming rate.

Ababat/Lentuli 0127 B7577BA-9, K0 V

Muslim Arab worlds in the Empty Quarter have a reputation for violent parochial ignorance, a reputation that is justly earned upon occasion. But not on Ababat: a Muslim world next to the heart of Bwap space, with a large Vargr minority, the Ababatans simply don’t meet the profile of the typical Emptyhead. By focusing on trade rather than war, they have managed to build up their world to an impressive level, even becoming the home of an Imperial Naval base, and hosting a good number of Naval veteran settlers. As they develop, they have not lost touch with their religion, welcoming the Muslim Brotherhood as much as the Imperial Navy – so long as the credits flow. Finally, education is more highly respected here than elsewhere, with a fair amount of physicians, technicians and engineers graduating from the local colleges and universities: some of whom are good enough to catch the eye of visiting Tech Tyrants.

Wesaswek/Lentuli 0229 A8868DB-D, F5 V

While Marhaban is the heart and soul of Bwap civilization, Wesaswek is the financial and political nexus. The environment is tuned to the 98%-100% humidity the Bwap need to live without special clothing or equipment, but that same comfort level for the Bwap makes the world a miserable place to be for humans and Vargr. Still, if you can stand the bureaucracy, the regimentation, and the endless instance on the Proper Way of Doing Things, the high tech level does have its rewards.

Ka-aswa/Yogesh 1230 A8698A7-B, K1 V

Ka-aswa, like Wesaswek, is a world inhabited by the Bwaps, for the sake of the Bwaps, most definitely including the high humidity. But while

Wesaswek is about money and power (as the Bwap understand it), Ka-aswa is more focused on sharing with others the Right Way of Doing Things. Several major schools, not least the Administrative Academy of Ka-aswa, has made the world the centre of education for the Six Subsectors, and guarantees a steady inflow of Imperial students, Bwap and otherwise. Moreover, while Wesaswek is located in the heart of Bwap Space, Ka-aswa is on the edge of it, nearby not only the notable Bwap worlds of Tapawa and Abseeb, but also within three parsecs of important human systems like the subsector capitals of Yogesh and Lazisar, and historically important systems like Gimushi, Gobi, and above all Sibikliir.

All of this makes Ka-aswa more familiar to human visitors than Wesaswek, despite the poorer levels of wealth and technology (which, incidentally, is still far above most of the Quarter). The few humans that wish to permanently reside here manage to do so without too much trouble; not only are the inhabitants less controlling than in Wesaswek, but the world is not as completely terraformed for high humidity: there are several minor island chains where the humidity falls below 70%. Virtually uninhabited by Bwap, they are often the place to live for humans, Vargr, and other species uncomfortable with near-saturation humidity,

Dumkashga/Yogesh 1527 A75779B-A, K7 V

This world is a well-kept secret for the Vilani. Quiet, out of the way, highly traditional and stable, it is close to a pastoral Vilani paradise, with the skies lit not by the distant primary, but by a ringed protostar. The system bears the honour of one of the Glorious Twelve, the systems that stood against the Vargr Pillaging of centuries ago. The inhabitants still dislike the Vargr somewhat, excepting the Ovaghoun Vargr (who are respected for following Vilani culture). Despite the agricultural bent of the planet, the world is fully capable of building her own starships without outside assistance, and it is quite possible to live very well here at TL A – so long as you conform to the culture.

Cooke/Hebrin 2030 A868837-9, F5 V

Cooke is something of an anomaly in the Empty Quarter. First, the population is fairly closely divided between Bwap, Vargr, and human populations, but the relationships among them are fairly amicable. Second, the humans are not

Muslim Arab or Hindi East Indians, but Atheistic Europeans who can trace their descent from Australia. The unique demographic and cultural makeup is very much off the beaten path for the Empty Quarter, and there is a fairly steady stream of visitors, especially from nearby Hebrin. Immigration is tightly controlled though, to preserve the local cultures and demographic balance, so the lineup to relocate to this comfortable and peaceful world is long, and the restrictions difficult to surmount.

Gudina/Nulinad 0334 C786967-9, G6 V M4 V

Gudina is most well known as an Imperial Repository, where vast amounts of documents and materials have been archived since the First Imperium. While a broadly Vilani-culture world, there is a substantial Bwap minority as well: many of these crèches are culturally influential in the planetary government – it is one of the few worlds ruled directly by an Imperial Viscount, instead of a separate and independent local government – and in the interstellar Bwap culture, to the extent that Gudina is sometimes treated as an honorary Bwap world. Due to its unusually close links to the Iridium Throne, the planetary culture is rather closer to the “clan & corporate” Imperial mainstream than to the “race & faith” matrix common in the Imperial Empty Quarter.

Below Early Stellar technology

Rrekoth/Flange 1803 C86A765-6, G8 V

This is a rich waterworld with a large but relatively low-tech Suedzuk population. Aqua farming is very popular, as is some drug manufacturing and mining, but unlike Ssilnthis and Ikon systems, the entire population lives on the islands, not underneath the waves. The Suedzuk who live here are not as violent as most of the Blood Vargr, if still not as self-controlled as the Vargr back on Ssilnthis motherworld., A careful human who knows his way around these not-so-insanely-paranoid Suedzuk Vargr can survive for a long time among them: the current record is a remarkable *eight years!*

The current target of growing hatred are not human interlopers, but the Gvarghoner Pack, a Ssilnthis superpower that owns the world. The Gvarghoner are supposed to give the world independence after 300 years, but are considering altering the agreement to add another century. You can already hear the low growling as the news spreads across Rrekoth...

Ghothu/Flange 2109 C868576-6, M7 V

A rather isolated world, Ghothu’s original population was wiped out – both human and Suedzuk Vargr – in a worldwide thermonuclear/bioplague war. Recently, it has been repopulated by both the human and Suedzuk Vargr population of Flange, as a reward to the kinda-loyal Flange population by the Hegemony of Lorean (which rarely allows most Suedzuk to even leave their homeworlds, never mind settle new worlds). The new settlers are busy working to plant towns, piece together the tragic story of the dead cultures, and neutralize what remains of the plagues and the radioactivity. The new starport was an occasion for celebration, returning the world to the interstellar community, but the more difficult task of healing the wounded ecosystems still remains.

Uenkakh/Tsoso 2707 C85A843-8, F6 V

While this is a Vargr world dominated by the Irilitok, the Suedzuk maintain a substantial presence here. A stable democracy including both groups was long thought to be impossible: only as the planetary government nears its fourth decade of existence are outside observers willing to shift ‘impossible’ to ‘exceeding difficult’. The core agreement that keeps both groups together is “Irilitok money adding to Suedzuk weaponry; Suedzuk protection of Irilitok wealth.” The weak point here is, of course, the possibility of the Suedzuk using their weapons to take Irilitok wealth... but so far, that simply has not happened. *Why* that hasn’t happened (yet) is a deep mystery: the most widespread current hypothesis is that the Suedzuk are using the Irilitok as a political shield against Hegemonio hatred and extermination.

Careful observers note that there is a current of cultural influence, going both ways: the local Irilitok are noticeably more violent and aggressive than most Irilitok, and the Suedzuk are definitely more co-operative and patient than the typical Blood Vargr. There are even those that claim a new subset of Irilitok, the Hegemonic Vargr; this would be to replace the old “Hegemonic Vargr” race, which are indistinguishable from Irilitok Vargr (as both altered by men to be a pro-human slave race, they share the same DNA modifications and racial traits).

Byeggra/Kakhasaek 0711 B76859C-7, G3 V

This planet is populated by distinct Solomani and Vilani: the two cultures have not merged into one,

as is common within the Third Imperium. The government is pro-Vilani, and racially pure Vilani dominate the ruling bureaucracies. There is a trace Vargr population on the world, a few hundred descendants of two Suedzuk Vargr packs who were marooned here when their pirate base and corsairs were destroyed in a major Star Legion strike two centuries ago. Very few humans venture to the tropical continent where the Vargr lurk...³²

Excluding the melodramatically-named Continent of Blood, Byegggra is a very pleasant world, almost all of which is uninhabited. Humaniti has restricted itself to Limarshuggi, a large tropical island where most of the 600,000 inhabitants reside. Life is very comfortable on Limarshuggi, and there is still lots of space on the island for more families: no one is interested in establishing new settlements on virgin soil. The stability-oriented Vilani government likes to spread tales of ghouls and goblins Suedzuk packs roaming the wilderness, to discourage Solomani expeditions.

Diagemi/Cotan 2313 C766636-8,

K6 V M1 V M5 II

Diagemi is one of the most cheerful worlds of the Hegemony – not that it takes a lot of cheer to surpass most Hegemonio systems. An agricultural paradise, the population was only lightly singed by the numerous wars that charred local space: even the Era of Horrors saw only a few mass graves and some terror raids, instead of cratered cities or razed continents. An originally Vilani system, Arab, East Indian, and later Arzula and even a few Damlaerite settlers have peaceably merged into more-or-less one ethnos, with the local religions having strong roots in the Bright Age. As they grew in wealth, a fair number of Irilitok settlers have also made their mark, but – unusually for them – they have kept their distance from the human settlements, instead purchasing the ‘western’ region of a continent (in a temperate clime) as their own autonomous province under the local Vilani/Arabic monarchy.

In addition to a bounty of fruits, vegetables, meats, and spices streaming from the world to the tables of many nearby worlds, Diagemi is a centre of tourism, with an abundance of native wildlife

³² Odd: nobody ever considers that the paranoid Suedzuk may be just as terrified of the humans, as the humans are of the Suedzuk Vargr. And consider: this is a *continent* that is dreaded because of a few *hundred* Suedzuk. Bad reputations spread *fast*...

and Earth-like conditions. It is a favourite for both humans and Vargr across Beta Quadrant.

Riiakea/Nisaga 3219 D864651-7 M0 V M3 V

Before the Era of Horror, Riiakea was the heart of the Gangas interstellar government, and one of the major centres of resistance to Hegemonic rule. However, the Hegemony was able to defeat her military defenses: but the population was prepared, and retreated to extensive underground networks. To destroy these networks, the Hegemonio set off the Exotorik megavolcano: the planetary plant cover was also burnt off.

After the Horror was over, the Hegemony spent great sums to rebuild the biosphere. The world is a neighbour of Star’s End sector: and – instead of the Arzula – Vilani Hegemonio from Star’s End took charge of the rebirth of the world. Even though the lifeforms now more closely resemble that of an idealized Vland than the original fauna and flora, the world is again breathing and alive. The Vilani that now inhabit the world are culturally distinct from the Arzula and the Damlaerite cultures that shape most of Hegemonio life: less fun-loving than the Damlaerites, less cold and cruel than the Arzula, and more stability and consensus-oriented than either. Moreover, the Vilani inhabitants do not subscribe to the United Cultus of the Deified Man, instead retaining their Vilani ritual traditions.

Riamlir/Yogesh 1427 B7678CF-6, K3 V M3 V

A very comfortable and prosperous world in the early Imperium, Riamlir was chosen to be the centre of the ancient Church of the Stellar Divinity for the Empty Quarter. However, after an early flourishing, Star Worship withered under sustained Hindu and Islamic hostility: with the last major population centre of Star Worship in the sector collapsing on Riamlir in 804.

While relics of Stellar Divinity can still be easily found if you know where to look, the planet’s population now broadly follows Vilani Ritualism, with Islamic, Hindi, and American Indian Animist minorities. The world remains a comfortable place to live physically and environmentally, but the high law level makes it impossible to live freely here. A shame.

Cairne/Hebrin 1923 C865431-4, G4 V

Cairne can arguably be called an unsettled world, if you ignore the tiny population of 60,000 huddled around the starport. The low-tech system is part of

the high-tech jump5 Cairne-Corsabren Run across the Lesser Rift, but few visitors care much about the world itself: in the minds of most, it's just a forgettable stepping stone to something greater. But if a visitor decides to make a home here, the locals can't stop you: they don't even have a steamship or a bi-plane to their name!

Guukerrii/Nulinad 0138 X763000-0, F1 V

This living, comfortable world is currently uninhabited, unclaimed, and unzoned. It's also two parsecs from the Imperial sector capital of Nulinad. Guukerrii is a mystery crying out for development and resolution.

Udusis/Udusis 1831 E768996-8, K8 V M1 III

This is a world with beautiful bones, populated by people with pinched hearts. There is more going for the world than the locals can see: a rich biosphere, and a stable, resilient peace between

the humans and the Vargr. But if all you see are missed glories and lost hopes... if a world only pines for what it does not have, while envying the more successful cultures... well, you won't get anywhere fast.

lisdirrii/Udusis 1937 D8668D9-7, G9 V M5 V

lisdirrii *feels* wealthier than Udusis, even though empirically it isn't. It has a smaller population, less technology, a theocratic government and an elevated law level, so the typical Traveller will prefer to give it a pass. But what the numbers don't relate is the close sense of community on lisdirrii. It has been said, "Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear," and lisdirrii once again proves the old adage correct. Of course, if the PC is a four-armed Syndite, the large Syndic community on lisdirrii will happily help in settling you down on this humble but comfortable world.



A pleasant farmer's field on Cooke. The graphic is titled "Last Cut" © Chipp Walters. Please visit his gallery at http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1498664

The Future Awaits

The Arab Spring has unleashed the Arab Collapse. Everybody still standing in the region is picking the flesh of the helpless. The Islamist cancer proved more virulent than Arabs themselves expected, while dying regimes behave with unrestrained ruthlessness.

And our diplomats *still* think everyone can be cajoled into harmony.

We're witnessing a titanic event, the crack-up of a long-tottering civilization. Arab societies grew so corrupt and stagnant that violent upheaval became inevitable. That's what we're seeing in Syria and Iraq — two names, one struggle — and will find elsewhere tomorrow.

We can't stop it, we can't fix it, and we don't understand it. But we *can* stay out of it.

Ralph Peters, "The Arab collapse: Middle East a vulture's feast",
http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/the_arab_collapse_tfjo7W92EreoUHdxdQq1DN

This is great advice for the here and now, but I'm expected to write up a sci-fi future for Islamic civilization. This is not a particularly easy task.

There is the Turkish secularist solution — repress both Islam and Christianity — but that is slowly disintegrating as we speak: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/islamic-rewrite-of-gallipoli-legend-20130424-2if2m.html>. Not all Moslems want Shari'a, or believe in the execution of apostates — see the recent Pew survey — but it is often desired <http://www.pewforum.org/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-beliefs-about-sharia.aspx>. The Brotherhood Egypt, the Ayatollah's Iran, and Salafi Arabia of today are not particularly inspirational models: Egypt's failure to become an industrial power is particularly damaging to any Islamic future.³³ In my write-up for the Empty Quarter, the Kikhushegi — a form of Vilani Islam — is doing well, but they have very little time for Mohammed, the Quran, or Shari'a.

It is fair to argue that the Ottoman Empire was the peak of Islamic development: but the rot settled in that empire long before its death in World War I. Malaysia and Indonesia have some claim on a peaceful Islamic future, but both nations depend on an unbelieving Chinese minority to keep the economy humming. There are the Central Asian nations, who strongly resist radical Islam: but they remain bastions of repression as well. The future no more lives there than it lives in Arabia or Egypt.³⁴

In the end, I assume that Islam still exists in the far future, but the future has passed them by. Backwater, fossilized cultures can last a long time if left undisturbed: and the Imperium is *huge*, with all sorts of nooks and crannies where a weak culture can hide. But this is a work of fiction: in real life, no culture is safe from the future, not in North Korea, or the Amazon rainforest, or the Sahara.

As Mencken wrote: "I believe that it is better to tell the truth than a lie. I believe it is better to be free than to be a slave. And I believe it is better to know than to be ignorant."³⁵ If you want to shape the future — instead of fleeing from it — you need to take this to heart.

Of course, it helps if you have a reason to prefer truths to lies, freedom to slavery, and knowledge to ignorance. Without such a reason, then it's just a fashionable choice, and fashions change... while the hunger for power and pleasure never goes away, clothed in whatever ideology you choose.

³³ Moslems of course will insist that the great Arabian oil deposits were a blessing from God. I choose to shudder, and pray to always avoid God's ferocious wrath, no matter what shape it chooses to manifest itself...

³⁴ One of many examples: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22543252>

³⁵ <http://www.lewrockwell.com/blog/lewrw/archives/137786.html>

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