

# *Stellar Reaches*

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*A Fair Use Fanzine for Traveller*

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artur rosa

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*A Samardan Press Publication*

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### Credits:

Cover Art: A response to the work "The Three Masters of the Stars"<sup>1</sup>, this work of art on Ikon shows the refusal of the people of Ikon to see the Third Imperium as a legitimate successor to the first two Imperia. This graphic is titled "The Three of the Three Million islands" © Artur Rosa. See his work at

<http://arthurblue.deviantart.com/art/The-Three-of-the-Three-Million-islands-522153135>

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<sup>1</sup> See **Stellar Reaches** #25, page 37

## Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts:

First, let me apologize for the obvious: this issue came out really, *really* late! Other, higher-priority business managed to squeeze out most of my free time in 2015, destroying plans for a quarterly issue. Depending on available free time, **Stellar Reaches** could end up being an annual or even a biannual fanzine.

Fortunately, it takes less preparation to simply make a post on the **Stellar Reaches** website, [www.stellarreaches.com](http://www.stellarreaches.com). I often make posts there on a range of science fiction, Traveller and Empty Quarter-related subjects that could be of interest to the reader.

Ω

The personalities in this issue can be tagged as:

The Ducal Agent ● The Vilani Corporate Warrior-Prophet ● The Lucky Scout ● The Turncoat Agent ● A Soldier with a Starship (and his Vivacious Wife) ● The Moneyed Political Operative ● The Vilani Pervert ● A Clone Brother, Going His Own Way ● A Reformed Islamist ● The Silver-eyed Psionic Girl ● The Daring Doctor with an Idea ● A Man of an Anti-Vargr Order ● The Vargr Ambassador to the Court of Nulinad (and his current High-Maintenance Mate) ● An Old Soldier with a Mystery to Solve ● The Mountain Wolf ● An Imperial War Crime Investigator ● The Interstellar Investment Banker ● The Planetary Insurance Broker ● The Antiques Merchant ● The Hairless Vargr ● The Hun Who Would Be King

Ω

I had hoped to finally created more dedicated adventures, but alas! There simply is no time: even this issue has been abbreviated, cut shorter than I had planned. So, I hope that the range of personalities, histories, art, and background information will suggest the possible adventures I could not bring to life.

I find that in the famous initial line of Shakespeare's poem, "Had we but world enough, and time..." it is time, not the world, which is the limiting factor. I can dream up quite a decent variety of worlds, but I simply don't have the time to spell them all out on the page. And life being what it is, it will only get harder to find the time.

Fortunately, I am confident of the existence of a compassionate Creator, in eternity, and in the resurrection: so I can afford to put some things on the back burner, "to be further developed at a later date." Focusing on the majors – what Gary North would call our calling, "the work that would be most difficult to replace" – we do the most important work we are capable of completing, to the highest level of excellence we are capable of, with the tools we have, in the time we are given.

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.

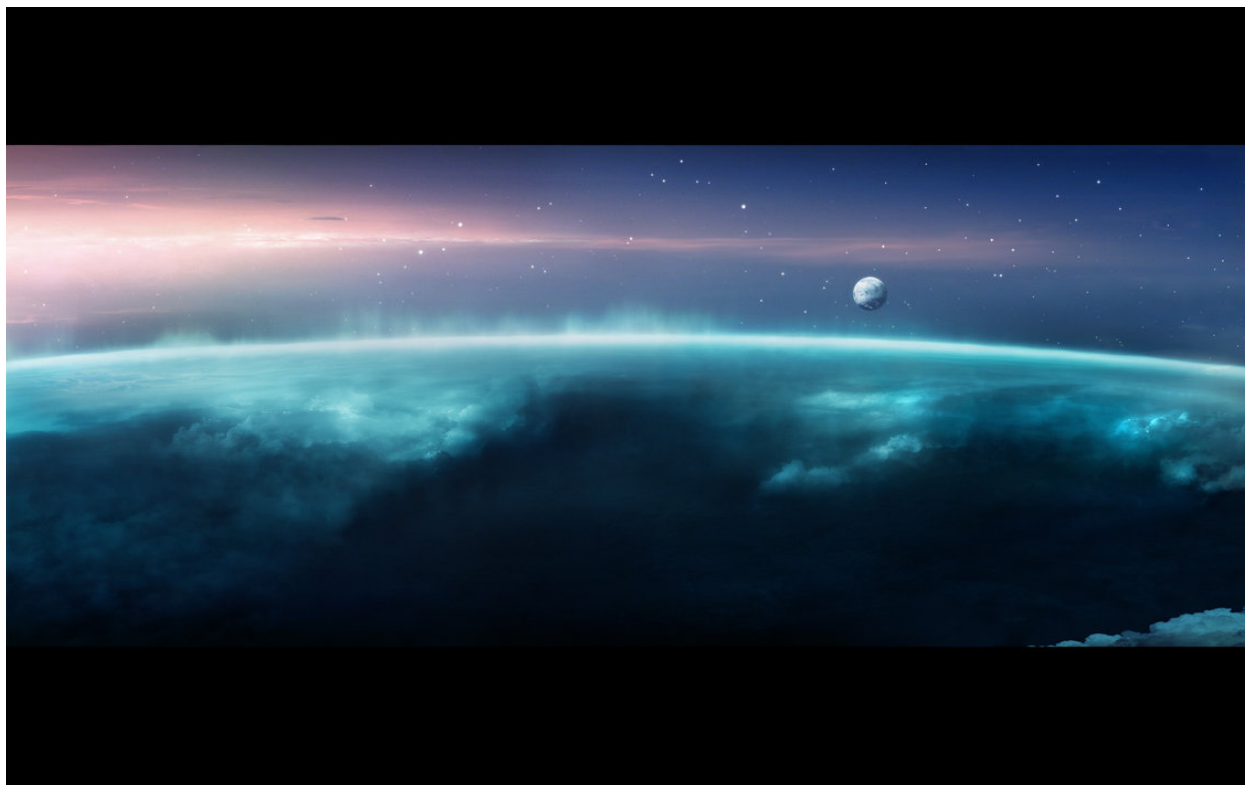
**Spectacular Failure:** They have become lost.

+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 V***



*The blessed heavens stretches out, as far as the eye can see...*

This graphic is titled "Auora x2" © Sami Mattila

See his work at <http://smattila.deviantart.com/art/Aurora-x2-64819986>

*What gives value to travel is fear.*

—Albert Camus

### ***Bannerman Shigerun Cusoriz, The Sector Duke's Man***

UPP 735A8A, Age 26, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Liaison - 3, Trader - 1, Grav Vehicle - 1, Linguistics - 1, History - 1, Ships Boat - 1, Handgun - 0, Vacc Suit - 0, Computer - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform, Native), Bwap

Tools & Aids: Bannerman Cusoriz is typically armed with a pistol, and wears a light bulletproof vest.

Visual: The standard Mixed Vilani physiology is present, with a mild East Asian cast on his features. Naturally, he wears Peo-e-a-a-athwako-ep Household Livery while on-duty; otherwise, he wears the Lazisari robes of his adopted culture. Following the fashion among younger noble servants in Nulinad Subsector, his left ear is pierced, and the single earring he wears bears the glyph of the house he serves. Almost always, the Bannerman can be

found with a smile and a silly joke or harmless prank at the ready: when he really is serious, it's time to get ready for Bad Things to Happen.<sup>2</sup>

Opening Theme: "Salamander Battle", Steve Jablonsky - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xZTEaiH6YY>

*You know, I am **done** talking to these people.*

*– Shigerun Cusoriz,*

*after the Imperial court case*

*Imperator vs. Riocijay Trading and Others was concluded.*

### **Trader, Spy, Witness**

As an Anglic/Bwap interpreter for Riocijay Trading, Cusoriz was involved in several trade delegations and negotiations throughout Nulinad and Gimushi subsectors. His bravery, interpersonal skills, and willingness to take on increasingly risky assignments increased his value to the firm.



***A commercial negotiation takes an unpleasant turn in Solaris' central business district, on the world of Gudina, 134-986 Imperial. This graphic is titled "Green Grass" © Joakim Olofsson***  
See his work at <http://joakimolofsson.deviantart.com/art/Green-Grass-357996178>

In 987 Imperial, he was contacted by an agent for the then-subsector Duke Dethwabtakewebwakawa (often shortened to Dethwab by friends) of Lentuli's powerful Peo-e-a-a-atwako-ep Crèche, with confidential company information occasionally dropped off in return for a financial consideration. The information proved useful in uncovering an illegal scheme in transporting radioactive waste to hidden refineries, converting the waste to nuclear warheads that Riocijay Trading could then charge top credit for, when selling them to the mutually hostile Imperial systems of the Empty Quarter.

<sup>2</sup> Even Happy smiley people have hidden sharp edges

<http://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2015/03/13/the-day-i-saw-miyamotos-darker-side.aspx>

and, to repeat the theme, behold the Happy Mask Salesman – [http://zeldawiki.org/Happy\\_Mask\\_Salesman](http://zeldawiki.org/Happy_Mask_Salesman)





BAZ012

***(Previous) A lonely home on an alien prairie. One of the very few human residences on the Bwap-dominant world of Tapawa, this place sports an excellent view of the Absab Expanses.***

**This graphic is titled "Habitation 2" © Ben Andrews**

**See his work at <http://ben-andrews.deviantart.com/art/habitation-2-352796220>**

Despite providing compelling testimony during the string of trials held at the Ducal Court of Gimushi on Lazisar<sup>3</sup>, justice was not served: too many planetary governments were implicated, and the Imperium did not want a wave of political disorder to destabilize the Six Subsectors when attention had to be focused on the coming war for the Solomani Sphere. A few low-level scapegoats were executed, but most – including the actual ringleaders – were only fined, forced from their positions of power, or given a mere slap on the wrist. Even Riocijay Trading was fined, rather than disbanded: Piel, the Duke of Gimushi, felt that trade was just too thin to break apart viable interstellar trading concerns, even for near-treasonous behaviour.



***The permanent population of Sakari has yet again reached the century mark.  
Will this beautiful but pitiless world now finally be tamed?***

**This graphic is titled "Ice Desert" © Justinas Vitkus**

**See his work at <http://justv23.deviantart.com/art/Ice-Dessert-413761708>**

### **Bannerman**

As various allies and servants of Duke Piel, backed by Imperial Ministry of Justice personnel, worked to clean out the corruption from Riocijay Trading, Cusoriz himself was quietly recruited by agents of the new Sector Duke. Cosoriz is a public (as opposed to covert) agent of the Duke, as a Bannerman<sup>4</sup>, and spent his first few years working

<sup>3</sup> The trial was not held at the sector capital on Nulinad, to avoid being caught up in the political maneuvering for the then-empty Sector Throne.

<sup>4</sup> In my writings for the 993 Imperium, a "Bannerman" is public representative of a ruling house, and a "Householder" is a family man-at-arms. Most Householder troops are hired and trained by the House itself: only a minority are actual real-deal Imperial soldiers, placed under the authority of the Noble – and with the privileges thereof (**GURPS Traveller: Nobles** refers to Imperial-recognized Noble troops as Huscarles: see esp. page 62 for more info.)



officially to promote trade and comity among Imperial systems, and unofficially to sniff out various attitudes and views regarding the Bwap Sector Duke – especially among the notoriously racist Solomani.<sup>5</sup>

As the Solomani Rim War started getting into high gear and the Empty Quarter Sector Fleet redeployed to the distant battlespace, Cosoriz was tasked as an official Ducal ombudsman, to better lower the tide of Solomani hostility to Bwap rule. With the destruction of the major organized Solomani Party networks by 992, his job is rather easier than it was even a few years ago. Still, there are always a few racially-motivated hotheads – some of whom have no connection with the Party per se, but still support basic Party principles – and it pays to be armed and situationally aware at all times.

Despite the generally pro-Imperial sentiment of the region, local Solomani support for the Sector Duke remains noticeably weak, while hostility remains firm, if more hidden and indirect than before. This worries Cosoriz, and he and a few other allies in the Sector Duke’s service are trying to figure out what to do about it.

Closing Theme: “Mind Game Part 1”, Steve Jablonsky - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scZ7UOE2q2g>



<sup>5</sup> Can't the Sector Duke hire public relation flacks? He can, and he does – but being a 'belt-and-suspenders' kind of Bwap, Dethwab also wants some on-the-ground feelers as well, who reports directly to trusted crèche members.

**(Previous) A Vilani holy man is a very different thing from a Solomani prophet or sage.  
For one thing, it's stability, not righteousness or immanence, that is his one and only focus...**

**This graphic is titled "Cybermage" © Rémi**

**See his work at <http://remton.deviantart.com/art/Cybermage-102430403>**

*Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.*

– Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad/Roughing It*

### **Ganidiirsi Aru**

#### **The Prophet as Warrior**

UPP 1869ED, Age 38, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Leadership - 5, Artisan (Cooking) - 2, Admin - 2, Computer - 2, Recruiting - 1, Lighter than Air Vehicle - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 1, Streetwise - 1, Farming - 1, Research - 1, Sociology (Vilani) - 1, Rifleman - 0, Dance - 0, Theology (Vilani Ritualism) - 0, History (First Imperium) - 0

Languages: Modern Vilani

Tools & Aids: Aru carries no arms, but does have a few notebooks/pencil sets and a small, well-thumbed Vilani text on rituals, meditations, and devotions. The book, called the Gish I, is very popular among the shugilii<sup>6</sup> caste: while *not* the Vilani equivalent of the Bible – the Vilani are People of the *Tradition*, not People of the *Book* – it is highly respected among those who Uphold the Tradition and Follow the Proper Rites.

In his religious/political travels in the Empty Quarter, his unarmed wife likush often assists Aru in his appearances. A strong, stout woman – unlike her physically weak husband – she typically carries a portable electric typewriter and a bulky videotape recorder, both at TL 7. (As well as a large carry-all bag.) The tape is a tamperproof videotape, of a type used for Vilani legal and religious recordings for millennia.

Visual: While just another Mixed Vilani in heritage, Aru closely adheres to traditional Vilani clothing and behaviour. While always very weak muscle-wise, Aru is rather dexterous and is (apparently) in reasonably good health: naturally, he prefers low-G environments, 'just like home'.

Opening Theme: "Somewhere in All This Green", William Ackerman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCKxKTCSD1g>

### **The Old Life**

Born on Theron/Gaakish/Antares – UPP A10087A-D in 993 Imperial – Aru joined the shugilii caste, and spent most of his career as a bureaucrat in Naasirka<sup>7</sup> on a respectable climb up the corporate ladder. He had reached the subsector managerial level when his assigned physician gave him the bad news: his circulatory system was quietly, painfully falling apart, and death was inevitable in four years.

That was two years ago. Speaking with his local clan & caste elders, they came to a consensus that Aru would best spend his remaining years in strengthening the Vilani cultures in the neighbouring Empty Quarter. They respected the deep devotion the Vilani of the Quarter had to the Tradition – even holding their technology down to the levels of the Ziru Sirka, for extra compliance! – but strongly felt that more could be done to insure the supremacy of

<sup>6</sup> The Shugilii Caste is that originally entrusted with the mystical preparation of Vilani food. At one time absolutely essential for human life on Vland, most Shugilii control over food has declined, with their role expanded to the protection of Tradition. See **GURPS Traveller: Interstellar Wars**, page 73, for a proper description of the classical Vilani caste system.

<sup>7</sup> "Naasirka originated with the shugilii. It floundered when it could not control food supplies on most worlds. Ultimately it became a broad-line organization emphasizing energy, transport, and luxury goods. Naasirka controlled the sectors of Gushemege, Dagudashaag, Illelsh, and Verge." – Vilani & Vargr, page 18.



Tradition, Consensus, and Prosperity. Especially in the face of all that inharmonious, dissenting Solomani noises about religion and race and tribe and freedom. That kind of talk was annoying at the best of times – and now, with the Imperium at war with the Solomani Confederation, there was simply no longer a place for such treasonous talk. Unity is the *only* way forward.



*Ipliisinke Tower is the oldest Ancestral Altar in Gaakish subsector, dedicated to the spirits of the First Imperium shadow-emperors. Aru holds his meditations and ritual offerings at Ipliisinke as the most treasured of his memories.*

This graphic is titled "First Snow" © Tobias Roetsch

See his work at <http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/First-Snow-64804385>

### **The New Life**

A talented leader and an adaptable, energetic organizer – despite his physical weakness and secretly encroaching death – Aru has worked 10-14 hours days for long stretches since arriving in the Six Subsectors, ignoring his inability to lift more than a single fat book. (Note: "Strength" is not the same as "Endurance".)

While bound and determined to strengthen the hand of the Vilani in the Empty Quarter, Aru is not as tightly tied to the needs of a centralized hierarchy as most local Vilani, nor does he shun innovation as vigorously – especially when it can assist the Vilani in their (currently non-kinetic, in-sector) cultural competition with the Solomani. Instead of a single centralized authority, Aru is propagating the need for the replication of Vilani culture everywhere: "Don't think of One Massive Tradition: think of many, many Vilani societies, each of them shaping the essence of the Tradition to fit in with the local situation."

This is cultural innovation: no different than heresy in the eyes of the hard-core Vilani Cultural Purists that dominate the Vilani of the Empty Quarter (The abomination that dominates Ushmigad excepted).<sup>8</sup> But when fighting a powerful enemy, you have to use whatever weapons you can get your hands on. And the Vilani have had to innovate at need before, even the shugilii, when they lost control of planetary food production. “The faster the Vilani worlds of the Quarter follow the example of Vland herself – who abandoned the TL 11 framework of the First Imperium many centuries ago – the better it will be for all those who seek union with the Consensus.”

*There never was a great love that was not followed by a great hatred.*  
– Irish Proverb

While Aru implores the local Vilani to face the pragmatic need to change in some ways to protect what is truly essential, he never patronizes them. Even his Vilani opponents will admit that Aru adores local Vilani culture, and wants nothing more than to see her triumph over all her foes. This is especially gratifying when you consider Aru’s Antarean origins (the denizens of Antares Sector have a long tradition of sneering at their impoverished, violent and poorly educated Imperial cousins in this sector.)

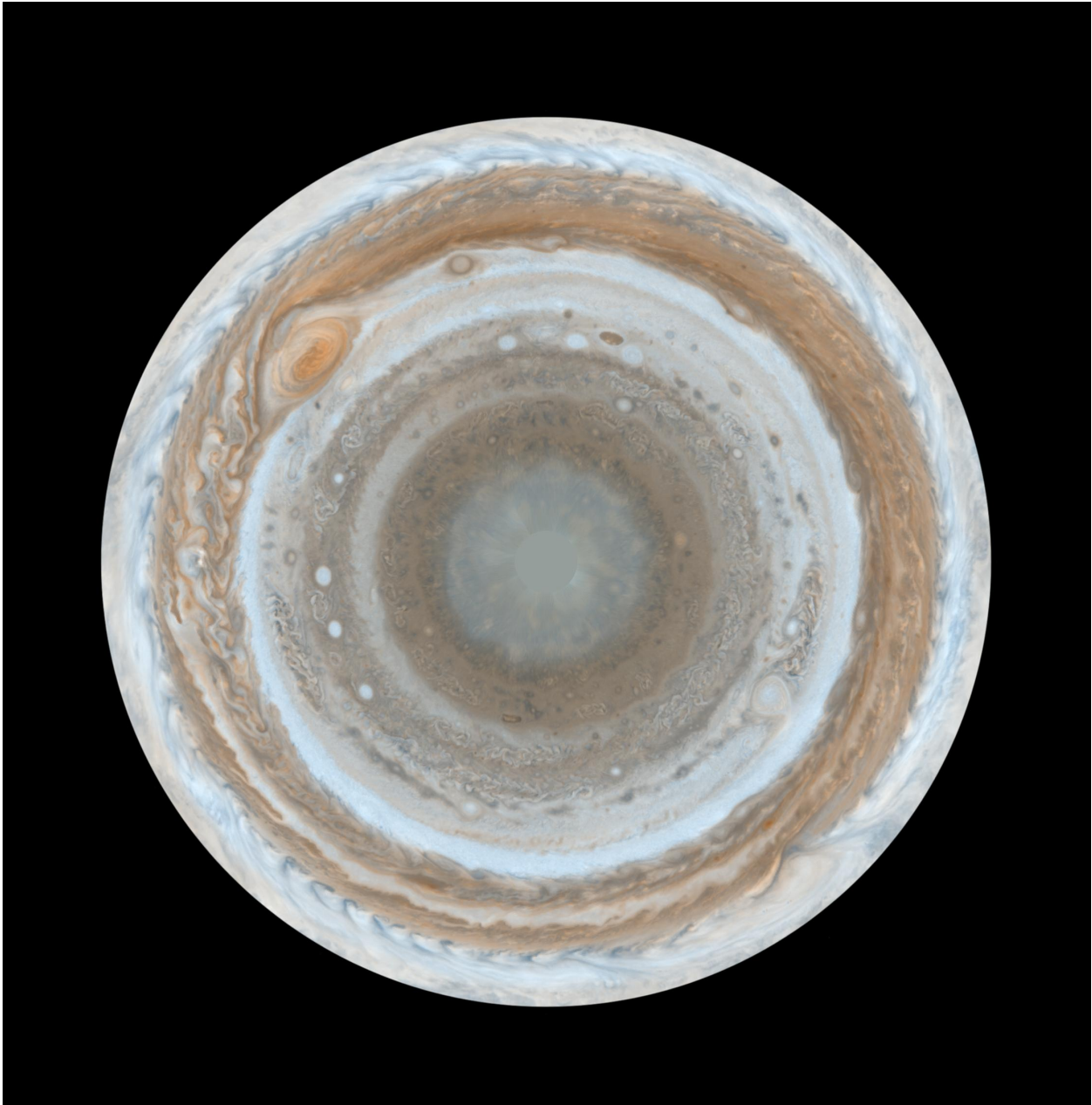


***Aru insists that his business journeys crisscrossing Gaakish subsector, visiting the varied worlds therein to build trust and forge deals, was the best preparation possible for spreading his message to the Vilani of the Imperial Empty Quarter. This graphic is titled “First Snow” © Tobias Roetsch  
See his work at <http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/First-Snow-64804385>***

On the other hand, Aru has nothing but utter contempt for Solomani cultures – especially their self-serving moralism – and openly proclaims his eagerness to see the Imperial Fleets take Terra, and laughs at the coming breaking of the Solomani: the day they are finally forced to Comply and Conform will be a joy to behold....

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<sup>8</sup> More details regarding the innovative (and thus, to Vilani eyes, profoundly disgusting) Ushmigad and the Ashi Gurlagili cult that dominate it can be found on **Stellar Reaches** #18 (page 16), #19 (page 39-40), #20 (page 9)



***The South Pole of Jupiter.*** Credit: NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute. The use of this imagery should not imply that NASA endorses this fanzine in any form or fashion. See the original graphic at: [http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/cassini/multimedia/pia07784.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/cassini/multimedia/pia07784.html)

Still, Aru is no racial supremacist, like Those People from Sol System. He's willing to reach out to all species – 'even those divisive Solomani' – who wish to unite under the peaceful, prosperous traditions of Vilani culture.

#### **Notes**

Wherever Aru speaks, he gains more and more respect among the Vilani of the sector. He is one of the very few who can bring the renegade Vilani of Ushmigad, the straight edge Vilani of Pamushgar, the Islamised Mixed Vilani of Lazisar, and the Vilani-Bwap co-dominion world of Gudina all to the same table... and actually come to a consensus.

As Aru's powerful words and forceful personality impacts the local Vilani, he is increasingly seen as not just a patriotic Vilani ("Sadly flawed by the spirit of Innovation and Change, but who is truly perfect?"), but as a Voice of the Tradition, a Vilani analogue to a Solomani saint or prophet.



Aru is unarmed, bears no weapons, has no great power or authority beyond his stirring words and visionary ideas, and has no bodyguards. But he is greatly honoured among the Vilani, and should he be assassinated by racially-, culturally-, or religiously-driven Solomani, there will be repercussions.

Count on it.



*Saishmi, 'The World of the Shattered Moon' is the setting for the 6,000-year old Vilani audio-visual epic, Imsukhingishua Gadaiidlunkhimgir. Despite both the world and the story being recognized as fictional from conception, uncounted Vilani explorers and mystics, enthralled by the story, still search for it...*

This graphic is titled "In The Shadow of the Broken Moon" © Justinas Vitkus

See his work at <http://justv23.deviantart.com/art/In-the-shadow-of-the-broken-moon-298536650>

#### Alternatives

*....consider that it is expedient for us,  
that one man should die for the people,  
and that the whole nation perish not.*

*– John 11:50*

The following is not necessary for the plot, but is worth considering, if the Referee likes his Hidden Hands and Far-sighted Plans.<sup>9</sup>

Let's say that there is a senior Vilani corporate bureaucrat in Naasirka, perhaps the Sector Director for Antares, who – being both an Imperial patriot and a Vilani cultural imperialist – would love to both enrich the Imperial Empty Quarter (Prosperity!) while extending and deepening Vilani dominance in a traditionally Solomani region (Consensus and Tradition!)

But to do this, he has to 1) prod the local Vilani systems to start climbing the technological development ladder, and 2) arrange for an unfortunate meeting between the more rebellious Solomani systems and, say, 50 or so multi-megaton missiles each, courtesy of the Imperial Navy. "Certainly not to harm the valuable ecosystems... just to trim the surplus population. And to remind the Solomani of their proper position in today's Imperium."

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<sup>9</sup> Hiver involvement optional.



**(Previous) *The South Pole of Mars. The Solomani Rim War will officially end in 1002 Imperial... but hardened & hidden Solomani 'resistance stashes' located here would insure that violent resistance would continue to plague Imperial Occupation Forces on the War World for decades to come.***

**This graphic is titled "The Southern Reaches" © Bill Dunford. See his work at [http://www.planetary.org/multimedia/space-images/mars/20130810\\_mars\\_polar\\_mex\\_jul13.html](http://www.planetary.org/multimedia/space-images/mars/20130810_mars_polar_mex_jul13.html)**

And what if he could accomplish both goals with one man – who truly knows how to prod his beloved Vilani brothers out of their rut, while also enraging the emotion-driven, short-sighted Solomani into an *eminently* predictable response?<sup>10</sup>

With the martyr of a beloved Vilani icon by Solomani hands, you can get a nice cycle of increasingly frenzied retaliation going on, which can be concluded rather decisively by the Imperial Antares Sector Fleet on the behalf of the ever-loyal Vilani.

I know how these Vilani, these parahuman cogs, think.

"Money buys the universities, buys the media, buys the politicians, buys the nobles. After all the loose ends have been tied up, we can finally turn to deal with the True Humans who have been a thorn in the side of the Machine for lo, these many, many years."

These foreigners, these outsiders... they have no idea how the Quarter works. Their Vilani money, their Corporate backing... it won't get them what they want here. Not even close.

(Crowds cheers)

Gadhadhar of Praveer, Solomani Party,  
still at large as of Holiday-993

Closing Theme: "Kuros Tale I - Her Rage", Gareth Coker - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzXNGRnOYP4>



***Some people think that being the first to discover panoramas like this is worth the high casualty rates of the Scout Service. Others think that the first group of people are utterly nuts. This graphic is titled "Titan's Panorama" © Justinas Vitkus. See his work at <http://justv23.deviantart.com/art/Titan-s-panorama-215110762>***

<sup>10</sup> Or maybe not. The local Solomani have seen this story before – see the Hebrin Rebellion, a century ago – and may avoid the road marked out for them. Moreover, the local Solomani have a long history of conflict with the Vilani, and may well sense a Vilani plot.



**Dr. Kenne Aalle-oup, IISS  
The Lucky Scout**

UPP 49A5C3, Age 34, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Chemistry - 2, Pilot - 2, Sub-Machinegun - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Computer - 1, Sociology - 1, Acting - 1, Theology - 1, Admin - 1, Liaison - 1, Disguise - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Turret Weapon - 1, Zero-G - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform, Native)

Tools & Aids: He prefers second-hand equipment, and rarely goes about armed – but he does keep his sub-machinegun in a clean and well-oiled condition, so when he’s armed, you know he means business.

Visual: Dr. Aalle-oup has a distracted air about him, and dresses in a shabby and very unkempt fashion: just by looking and listening to him, you’d think that he was a classic slum dweller, and certainly not a doctor, nor a Imperial Scout administrator. Even his uniform is as rumpled and stained as any field scout, despite being in Operations.

Opening Theme: “Typing Montage”, Cartel Burwell - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jL2pdC0-A\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jL2pdC0-A_w)



*Not all scouting is done from orbit or via air/raft. Above is a group of low-tech local explorers, searching for the remains of a long-lost high-tech IISS expedition on the world of Hemant, 975 Imperial. This graphic is titled “North Pass” © Max V. Nimos. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/north-pass/555422/>*

## Providence

Coming from a very unpleasant ghetto within the four billion-population supercity Goruhus on Ragklidkiks/Gaakish/Antares (in 993: B765ADD-B),<sup>11</sup> few would have picked the underfed waif to have even survived to his teens, nevermind gain a proper education and build a life for himself in Imperial service.

But a series of flukes and surprising coincidences opened a door to a boarding school, then a series of scholarships on His Majesty's dime (with university and grad school honours!), then pulling thru two terms of service in the Imperial Scouts. In a service infamous for its casualty levels, not only did Dr. Aalle-oup pull thru two classified special missions and a dangerous war mission as a Detached Scout (assisting in neutralizing a disloyal Solomani-dominant mercenary unit), but did so with flying colours.



*The Four Hands of Death, "Unkina Kalarkala." The Vilani adaptation of the infamous Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse – the heralds of European settlement in North America, according to current Plains Indian folklore within the Quarter<sup>12</sup> – the Four Hands are said to arrive at the starport a few months before a local war begins, 'to prepare the ground'. This graphic is titled "The Four Horsemen" © Ruben. See his work at <http://rubendevela.deviantart.com/art/The-Four-Horsemen-120223371>*

## Reassignment

Shifted in the Scouts Bureaucracy Operations office, rising quickly from Admin Trainee to Junior Administrator, Dr. Aalle-oup is in the process of being transferred from Antares to the Empty Quarter, along with about a thousand other Scouts from Antares (mainly fresh-faced recruits) to shore up the IISS bureaucracy there. While most of the transferred Scouts are being shipped via low-berth to save costs, Dr. Aalle-oup is provided with a dedicated scout/courier, the *Clerical Error*, to be used at his own discretion. He'll get to the Six Subsectors after the rest of the recruits, but he'll have access to a solid, jump-capable starship: not something to sneeze at, in a region of space with a distinct paucity of working starships.

(As the ship is tasked for Bureaucratic service, the *Clerical Error* isn't expected to go out of its way into danger. But sometimes, danger is coming whether you look for it or not. "It's the only ship in the subsector we can get our hands on right now, so it'll have to do...")

<sup>11</sup> Note that as of 1105, using [www.travellermap.com](http://www.travellermap.com), Ragklidkiks' UWP is E765988-5. Things will turn out badly for the world in the coming century...

<sup>12</sup> The European settlers did not have nuclear weapons on their arrival in the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD... but across 4000 years, various details are bound to get lost.

### **I've Just Thought of a Capital Idea...**

Dr. Aalle-oup was sent to the Empty Quarter not only because of his string of remarkable windfalls, and not only because of his low status (although both are factors). He is also a senior author of a paper that recommend a closer level of co-operation and integration between the Imperial Scouts and strongly pro-Imperial systems in the Six Subsectors, outlining mutually beneficial agreements between the Scouts and various public planetary intelligence-gathering organizations.

As a rule of thumb, the Imperium avoids such local entanglements, as it leaves the Imperium open to artful manipulation by local governments for their own political ends. However, with a lot of local Imperial assets stripped and sent to support the war effort, even dodgy and biased information is far better than simple blindness and ignorance.

While not a believer in God nor supernatural forces, Dr. Aelle-oup has always trusted in serendipity, that 'good things will be found, if you look for them'. So far, this attitude has borne fruit, even in very risky and difficult circumstances... but there comes a time when everything comes to an end.

Perhaps that time is now.

Closing Theme: "Trip to Arrakis", Toto - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yC0nwjth7o>



*The waterworld of Maarkhuda still has enough land for her 12 million inhabitants, well-fed by the world ocean. This graphic is titled "Blue City" © Joakim Olofsson  
See his work at <http://joakimolofsson.deviantart.com/art/Blue-City-357995532>*





**The Four Hands in detail: their appearance has remains consistent for the last two centuries, according to eyewitness reports across the Six Subsectors. Video footage does not exist – naturally, according to locals, “as they are spirits after all!” – and the names change according to the culture: Imperial soldiers have settled on the tags Biodeath, Chemdeath, Wardeath, and Puredeath when discussing a purported manifestation.**

**This graphic is titled “The Four Horsemen 02 color vrs” © Ruben. See his work at <http://rubendevela.deviantart.com/art/The-Four-Horsemen-02-color-vrs-181476776>**

*I get these occasional urges for stability in my life.  
– Sonny Crocket, Miami Vice (TV Show)*

### **Calic Mixali Omerwal Agent at a Crossroads**

UPP 9A8CE6, Age 39, Solomani

Skills: Combat Rifleman - 4, Heavy Weapon - 3, Handgun - 2, Admin - 2, Interview - 2, Streetwise - 2, Computer - 1, Stealth - 1, Prop Aircraft - 1, Linguistics - 1, Hovercraft - 1, Leadership - 1, Forensics - 1, Liaison - 1, Interrogation - 1, Legal - 1, Intrusion - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Polearm - 0

Languages: SingTongue (Native) Anglic (Transform)

SingTongue is a major language on Hattie/Madu/Fornast. (As of 993: C66467A-A.) Quite melodious, if difficult to master, SingTongue remains one of the sweeter languages of the Third Imperium: is often used for choral works in Fornast & Antares Sectors. Despite the planetary stereotype of Hattie’s inhabitants, Detective Omerwal has never been a singer, professional or amateur.

Tools & Aids: Besides his PDA – Personal Digital Assistant – and his service revolver, Detective Omerwal doesn’t carry much on his person.

Visual: With his Eastern European/Central Asian features, Detective Omerwal’s Arzula heritage (from the Lorean Hegemony) is easy to spot. What can’t be seen is that his parents had his genetics altered in vitro, making him pure Solomani.

Opening Theme: “Sunshine on My Shoulders”, John Denver - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diwuu\\_r6GJE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diwuu_r6GJE)

### **Dreams and Reality**

Raised in a politically active Solomani Party family on Hattie, Omerwal was often on the move as his parents moved around, to evade Imperial surveillance and restrictions. Membership within the Party was already quite illegal throughout the Imperium, but that didn’t stop his (racially mixed) parents agitating as often as they could – and often seeing the insides of a variety of cells and prisons.

Thanks to the assistance of certain pro-Solomani supporters, Omerwal was permitted to join the planetary military academy, graduating with honours. Unexpectedly, his infantry regiment was placed under Imperial authority, and was involved in a long counter-insurgency operation on Rishalii/Toza/Fornast (in 993 and 1005: C592AEE-C). Put on population protection duties, shielding loyal mixed-race and nonhuman sophonts from Party-affiliated attacks, pushing back both infantry and armour attacks, Omerwal found numerous instances to put his rifle and heavy weapons training to work. Eventually ambushed by warbots, Omerwal was badly wounded, and later discharged from the Hattie Expeditionary Force.

After seeing the gap between Solomani propaganda and reality in the field, Omerwal was too full of doubts to return home to his racially patriotic (and probably imprisoned) family, and instead pursued further service in the Imperial Ministry of Justice. Seeing how fluent the veteran was with Solomani ideology, his superiors tasked him with monitoring and investigating pro-Solomani groups... while keeping the man himself under surveillance, in case he ended up being a Party plant.

*The reputation of a thousand years may be determined by the conduct of one hour.*  
– Japanese proverb.

The suspicion of his superiors proved unjustified: Omerwal grew to both fully embrace his Solomani heritage, and to completely reject Party leadership for their arrogance and their recklessness “putting the entire Race in jeopardy to make some political point! Haven’t they learnt anything from the European Tragedy?!?”<sup>13</sup>



**An anti-Solomani Party Imperial investigation in a spectacular setting. On the tiny moon of Nuri-Delta-See, Nuri system, 985 Imperial. This graphic is titled “Tranquility” © Tobias Roetsch. See his work at <http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/Tranquility-201649284>**

### **And End to Old Labours**

Transferred to the Empty Quarter, Omerwal continued to push against local Party cells, with his good work earning him promotion to the Detective level. His last operation has just concluded, and surprisingly, there is no new anti-Party work available now for him. “The tide has peaked, and is now receding... finally!”

The real action now is in anti-piracy activity, against both the blood-thirsty Suedzuk Vargr of today, and the dreaded high-tech Ikonaz forces of tomorrow. But Omerwal is pushing 40, and his superiors doubt that he can make the transition to new dangers, new threats, and new ways of doing things. But a good desk job is his for the asking, or a transfer from his Imperial position to a plush planetary post: and Omerwal knows that he’s earned it.

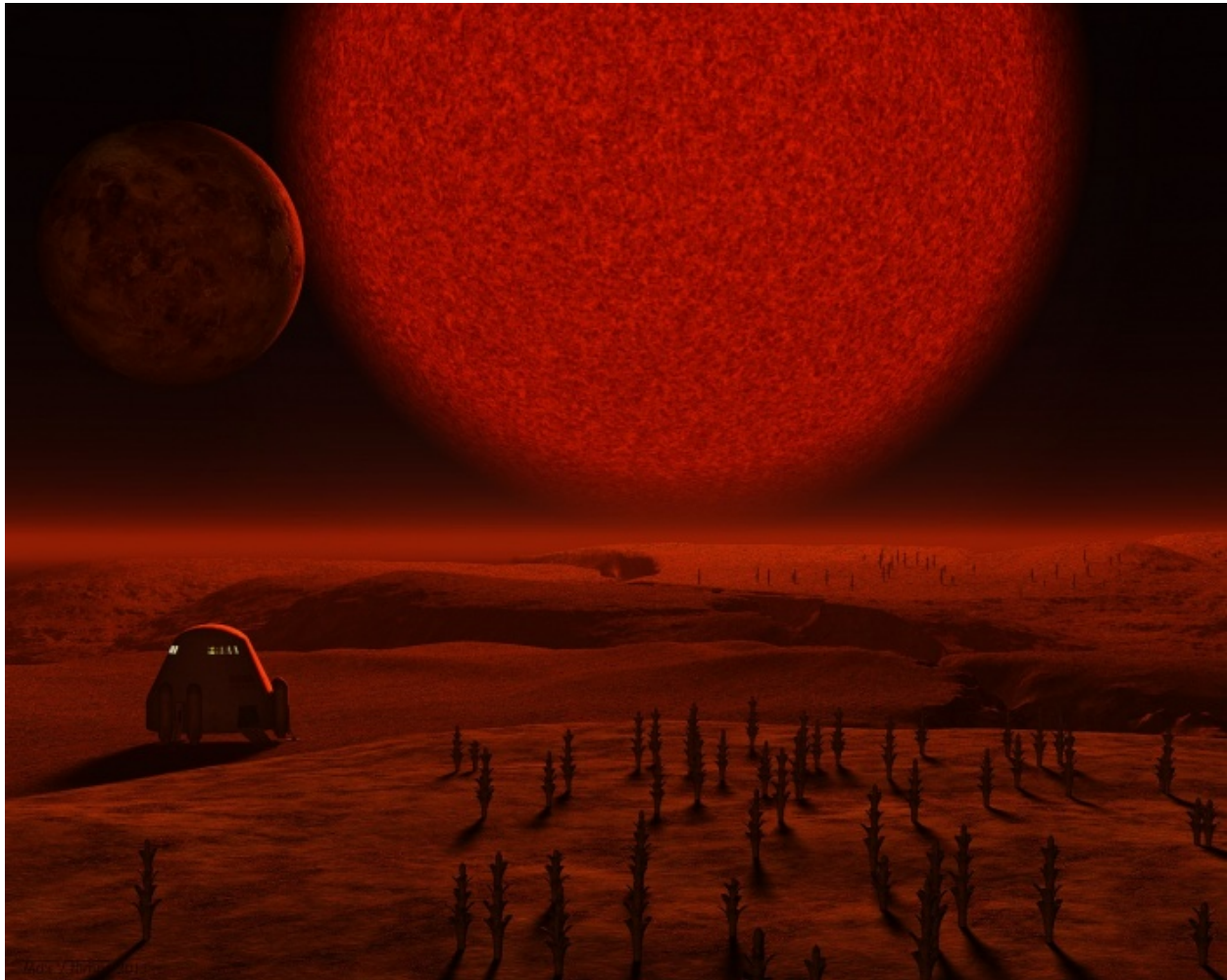
<sup>13</sup> The Solomani Party is *acutely* aware of the historical rise and decline of European Supremacy (from about A.D. 1500 to 2000), with that historical episode being as important to them as Greece and Rome is to Westerners today. Yes, the Party leaders swore up and down that they would not make the same mistakes; in the end, they went for a mix of old and new follies. “Right down to the fascism, the insane racial arrogance, and the faith in blood purity over reality. The *only* thing they did right was to leave the Jews alone, for once!”

But, while putting in time until retirement, he can use his vacation months giving a hand to decent people who need an experienced hand to solve their problems.

Or perhaps just forget the whole thing, and finally settle down.

Or do both: but it's hard to balance wife and kids on one hand, and doing interstellar police work on the other.

Closing Theme: "Pussy Willows, Cattails", Gordon Lightfoot - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWqK4ecpsn0>



*A snapshot of an Antares mineral survey of -158, almost a thousand years ago. No matter how many times a worthless world has been picked over – in this case, Olnoeltsoo of Khuvoeru system – there will always be another visitor eventually, hoping to find what the other two dozen expeditions missed.*

This graphic is titled "Under the Brown Dwarf" © Max V. Nimos. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/under-the-brown-dwarf/2254410/>





**(Previous) Irilitok Vargr non-jump capable scoutships, moving quickly to offer tribute to a warship of the temperamentally anti-Vargr Hegemony of Lorean. On the world of Kharo 993 Imperial.**

**This graphic is titled "To The Ship" © Neil Thatcher. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/to-the-ship/2428366/>**

*It's not that Kyrzee's a bad man...  
it's just that things tend to get out of hand, when he's around.  
– Anton Docform, 990 Imperial*

**Krzyśkiem Żądło  
Soldier with a Starship**

UPP C7BB63, Age 38, Solomani (Slavic)

Skills: Long Blade - 2, Combat Rifleman - 2, Brawling - 2, Intrusion - 2, Stealth - 2, Zero-G - 2, High-G - 1, Demolitions - 1, Recon - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Laser Weapons - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Linguistics - 0, SubMG - 0, Vacc Suit - 0, Liaison - 0, Admin - 0, Broker - 0, Handgun - 0, Heavy Weapons - 0, Recruiting - 0, Forward Observation - 0, Robot Ops - 0, Instruction - 0, Gambling - 0

Languages: Nowy język (Native), Anglic (Julian).



**One of several Cultic Flowers, here found on Zuerouk. These towering artefacts of the Unified Cultus of the Deified Man have been occasionally raised by Deifiers. Current Last Man theology claims that these are spiritually powerful works of art, whose beauty will draw the attention of the coming Last Man, and hasten His arrival. Local psions report difficulty using their mental powers near these Flowers, due to a psionic 'white noise' emanating from them. The most powerful of psions claim to detect an underlying rhythm behind the noise, with a meaning they can't quite grasp... This graphic is titled "The Artifacts" © Neil Thatcher. See his work at**

**<https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/the-artifact/2444074/>**



Nowy język (“New Tongue”) is one of the oldest far-future Polish/Anglic languages dominant on Tokitre, with numerous Vilani and Vargr loanwords. An outside researcher aware of the Polish background of the planet will be able to trace its roots back to Poland and the First American Republic with little difficulty.<sup>14</sup> The grammar is rather convoluted, with clear English and Vilani influence, but the Polish love of unusual consonants remains.

Julian Anglic is the trade & science language of Tokitre, occupying a similar position among Tokitreans that French used to enjoy in Europe, or that English currently enjoys in India: “A prestigious language, that can be used without favouring the native language of a particular nation or tribe – and so escape political implications.”<sup>15</sup>

**Tools & Aids:** A suspicious and hostile man, Mr. Żądło wears a light blade & bulletproof vest at all times, as well as a laser pistol. When meeting people he doesn’t know – especially Vargr – two fragmentary grenades, a HE grenade, and a proper assault rifle are borne as well.

**Visual:** Powerfully built and with an intimidating physical presence, matched with a sharp, aggressive mind, Captain Żądło is obviously not someone to take lightly. His light brown hair and light skin displays his Solomani Slavic heritage, in sharp contrast with most of Empty Quarter humaniti. He is typically dressed in the grey/black battle fatigues preferred by Tokitrean ship-boarding marines, with the government insignia replaced by the ship’s badge.

**Opening Theme:** “Manipulated Living”, Michael Andrews - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SScSzRngDr0>



<sup>14</sup> As of 993, the local inhabitants are unaware of their Polish heritage... but the signs are obvious enough, if you know what to look for. “[Tokitreans] see themselves as the children of the Melinsk people, a minority who immigrated from Korparov/Antares 2840 (as of 993: C8B0A77-A) over 800 years ago.” Korparov is a majority Russian-culture system, by the way... – **Stellar Reaches** #8, page 47.

<sup>15</sup> See **Stellar Reaches** #12, page 46, for more information on Tokitre.

*(Previous) Star Memory Temple, located on the crowded, low-tech world of Reskhuda. A major stronghold of the 'Priestly' school of the Bright Faith (See [Stellar Reaches #19, page 20-21](#)), current controversies centre on the acceptance of off-world Vargr into the local religious orders. The Hegemony of Lorean has indicated that it is prepared to accept any decision made, encouraging the pro-Vargr priests and monks. This graphic is titled "Temple" © Erik van Helvoirt. See his other work at <http://phade01.deviantart.com/>*

### **Early Career**

Pan Żądło spent over a decade with the Lomza Guardships, serving as a Marine in inspecting (or forcibly boarding, as the case may be) suspicious-looking starships. Rising to Force Commander, Pan Żądło was an excellent soldier and leader, but his increasingly abrasive personality left him vulnerable to the political manoeuvres of his enemies, who eventually forced him out of the service. The unexpected setback left Pan Żądło to wallow in depression and drink for a full year, until – repulsed by what he was becoming – his brothers intervened, and managed to drive some sense to him, spending the time to help Krzyśkiem Żądło get out of his rut.

Tokitre's governments can band together – there's only one flag for the world in **Stellar Reaches #23, page 79** – but as a rule they prefer to go their separate ways. Several of the world's nations, tied together by geography and history, pooled their money to build their own small fleet, the Lomza Guardships, to handle the protection of *their* chunk of the world. These vessels – mainly SDBs, with a few jump-capable patrol ships and small assault vessels – do their duty in protecting their turf from outsiders, but what happens if their sponsoring nations start fighting amongst themselves is an open question.



**An aging but still intimidating Ikonik freighter looms over her crew. This graphic is titled Spaceport 3”**  
© Max V. Nimos. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/spaceport-3/1650143/>

Starting anew, the man signed on as security for a stable subsector line, the Red Envelope Corporation. A few early incidents quickly had him reassigned from the passenger ships to the cargo vessels, where he did rather well (if still not making any friends among the Red Envelope crews). Things really started looking up when he left Red Envelope to join an adventuring band, where he met a former purser, Bogumiła, who was attracted to him despite (because?) of his personality. Eventually, his own thinking shifted: instead of hating the entire galaxy to a greater



or lesser level of intensity (excepting his family, who are worth tolerating), he instead hated the galaxy (excepting his family... and the purser).

*When you work for us, you must do exactly what you say you will do. In this business with me, if you say you will do a thing, you must do exactly that thing....*

*I don't pay for a service, I pay for a result.*

– Montoya, *Miami Vice* (Movie, 2006)



*Sometimes, even the charms of a paradise world like Irikrough isn't enough to bind a Traveller to a world.*

This graphic is titled "TropicAlien" © Neil Thatcher. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/tropicalien/2458461/>

### ***A New Ship, A New Captain***

Thanks to his involvement in what is known on Tokitre as “The *Vgrirkseisghudhas* Caper” (see Appendix), Żądło was able to purchase a 50% share in a Far Trader, the *Dorb-kiewiz* (“Money-maker” in an local Tokitrean liturgical language). Captain Żądło’s moods are quite mercurial, and tend to create dramatic episodes when he gets irritated. As an example, he is perfectly capable of making a huge scene if a passenger is served old nuts<sup>16</sup>; if shoved while in line, can rapidly escalate the issue into a ferocious fistfight (don’t let his small frame fool you: his fist can definitely pack a wallop); and routinely throws acidic comebacks to even innocuous greetings. His prickly character makes him difficult to work with, at best.

Even so: on the rough edges of the Empty Quarter, Captain Żądło’s personality flaws is a minor issue, compared to his military competence, disciplined work ethic, and reliability when it comes to meeting his commitments. His wife provides the financial competence to keep the ship bills paid and the technical competence to keep the ship humming, but he can definitely use more hands on deck.

Just try not to set him off, if your character decides to work with him.

Closing Theme: “Apocalypse”, Jesper Kyd - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVsJLPF5JaY>



***Trading involving travels across light years gets all the attention: but even today, adventurers must sometimes physically walk around and look for the goods. This graphic is titled “The Path” © Tobias Roetsch.***

See his work at <http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/The-Path-269979720>

<sup>16</sup> You can use [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/10/world/asia/korean-air-executive-resigns-post-after-halting-flight-over-snack-service.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/10/world/asia/korean-air-executive-resigns-post-after-halting-flight-over-snack-service.html?_r=0) as a model. Or even better, use Mrs. Cho Hyun-ah as a model for a certain kind of shipping executive: zealous to serve the passengers, but brutal to her employees. Not a wise model of leadership....



*Never go on trips with anyone you do not love.*  
– Ernest Hemmingway

**Bogumiła Żądło**  
**Living the Dream**

UPP 896AEC, Age 44, Solomani (Slavic)

Skills: Admin - 6, Liaison - 4, Carousing - 3, Medical - 2, Legal - 2, Leadership - 1, Ship Tactics - 1, Ships Boat - 1, Zero-G - 1, Broker - 1, Trader - 1, Engineering - 1, Commo - 1, Linguistics - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Streetwise - 0, Navigation - 0, Handgun - 0, Vacc Suit - 0, Gravitics - 0, Mechanical - 0

Languages: Nowy język (Native), Anglic (Julian). Knows about 200 words in Ikonaz Vilani.

Tools & Aids: As the Chief Purser of the *Dorb-kiewiz*, Pani Żądło still keeps a financial-oriented tablet on her person. She is usually unarmed.

Visual: A Plain Jane type, Pani Żądło would pass by without remark in many Solomani systems in the Imperium. But her fair skin and blonde hair attracts attention in the macho East Indian/Arabic cultures commonly found in the Empty Quarter. As a party girl, Pani Żądło enjoys the attention and loves to banter and flirt with interesting men, but the games stop when her husband – and his hair-trigger temper – shows up.

Opening Theme: “Visiting”, William Ackerman - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgBjd\\_9N8-Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgBjd_9N8-Q)



*Yes, even low-tech worlds, far from the trading routes, can sometimes find a way to get their hands on a starship.* This graphic is titled “The Icefox Mission” © Max V. Nimos. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/the-icefox-mission/1456402/>

Panna Wysocki – the future Pani Żądło – bounced between several Tokitrean shipping lines for years before getting roped into an adventuring group on a lark. “Everyone’s afraid of the wolf, but I want to punch one right in the snout!” Always attracted to bad boys, she fell for the dangerous Krzyśkiem Żądło, and eventually got her man. Soon afterwards, they were both involved with the *Vgrirrkseisghudhas* affair, managing to not only come out alive, but substantially wealthier. While both could have easily retired on Tokitre in great comfort, they decided to instead get their own ship, and make their own way among the stars.

Pani Żądło essentially runs the ship and manages the crew and passengers (if any), as her husband’s life experience is overwhelmingly oriented to (para)military operations. His narrow range of specialties is actually quite useful in the pirate-haunted Ssilnthis Gap: but just as you can conquer a kingdom on horseback but can’t rule on one, you can’t run a starship with only good marksmanship and demolition experience.

The woman also has to handle relations with the other shareholders of the ship: mainly prosperous upper middle-class/lower upper-class men on Tokitre - “doctors, lawyers, minor land magnates, wealthy venture capitalists, that sort of thing”, these part-owners always press their questions, complaints, and (unwanted) advice on her... and not on her easily annoyed, highly comfortable with violence husband. “Like it or not, dearie, they do own 50% of the ship, so you have to listen to them if you don’t want the ship tied up in court!”



***Even desperate pirates would hesitate before setting a base on Janardan Zeta (a.k.a. the fifth world of Janardan system)<sup>17</sup>. But if you want to stash something you want left alone, Janardan Zeta looks rather suitable... This graphic is titled “Athoras” © Sami Mattila.***

**See his work at <http://smattila.deviantart.com/art/Athoras-180944181>**

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<sup>17</sup> See MegaTraveller: Referee’s Manual page 25 for Imperial world naming conventions

The *Dorb-kiewiz* is a good ship, but as of 993 she is only 58% paid off, even with the massive down payment the couple made. Steady income is coming in, thanks mainly to Pani Żądło's ability to get her ship on the better 'preferred trader' and 'authorized merchant' lists. (Three cheers for Admin, Liaison, Carousing, and Legal skills!) However, this just keeps the bills paid and a half-decent rainy day fund around: more is needed, if she plans to actually live to see the ship paid off.

*According to experts, people caught up in disasters tend to fall into three categories. About 10% to 15% remain calm and act quickly and efficiently. Another 15% completely panic, crying and screaming and obstructing the evacuation. But the vast majority (70%) of people do very little. They are "stunned and confused," says British psychologist John Leach.*

– "How to get Out Alive", Amanda Ripley,

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1053663-1,00.html>

Państwo Żądłoyi ('Family Żądło' in Nowy język) is thinking of putting together a squad to check out some suspected Blood Vargr pirate sites, looking for stolen goods to liberate. It's more than likely that they are just running the risk of wasting weeks and months for the sake of turning over barren rocks, long-abandoned ports, and picked-over starship husks. And supposing they do find something – something that is sure to be guarded by hostiles?

Well, Bogumiła knew that she wasn't the type to die quietly of old age on her homeworld. She's taken some big gambles in love and life, which paid off more often than not: and she's getting ready to she up another go at pushing her dreams forward, reaching for the stars.

Closing theme: "Preparation for Battle", James Horner - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZLFmBp4XMc>



*Even in these troubled times, there are still hunters – human and otherwise – looking for a real challenge. This graphic is titled "Island" © Goran Delic.*

See his work at <http://delic.deviantart.com/art/Island-376326157>



*A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal,  
but even the compassion of the wicked is cruel.*

– Proverbs 12:10

**Accalu Lignedeshi**  
**Pharaoh's Promises**

UPP 4438CA, Age 35, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Persuasion - 2, Acting - 2, Broker - 2, Liaison - 1, Carousing - 1, Trader - 1, Linguistics - 1,  
Guard/Hunting Beast - 1, Admin - 1, Bribery - 1, Vacc Suit - 0, Handgun - 0, Theology (Hindu) - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform, Native), Indian English

Tools & Aids: In general, Lignedeshi dresses like a lower-caste native leader, despite his wealth. Like the rest of his populist friends, he has one of a set of off-world, TL 9 smartphones, linked together by certain microwave towers erected on the buildings of political allies.<sup>18</sup>



***This early Second Imperium portrait of the gas giant Bitririk (ببطريرك), in the Ebrahim (إبراهيم) system, is one of the most widely recognizable treasures of the Duke of Hebrin. The art student is invited this work, “Distant Worlds”, to similar works on Regina/Spinward Marches, that uses the gas giant Assiniboia as a focal point for the eye. This graphic is titled “Distant World” © Justinas Vitkus. See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Distant-world-245329341>***

<sup>18</sup> His aristocratic foes also maintain their own private, encrypted TL 9-A communication networks: everyone else can use the old landlines.



Visual: Of mixed Vilani & Arab parentage – specifically Assyrian<sup>19</sup> – Mr. Lignedeshi gloried in both branches of his heritage, and loves to tell the story on how he got his Assyrian name. He is armed with a politician’s smile; a strong, firm handshake; and the ability to sense what someone wants to hear and then tell them that in the warmest, most friendly way possible.

Opening Theme: “Every Ending Needs A Beginning”, Tilman Sillescu  
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-DDQpaPiYI>

### **Setup**

Mr. Lignedeshi hails from Arakaad/Nulinad, but currently lives on Akiar/Gimushi, a world currently under Direct Imperial Administration due to the extinction of the local ruling line – and the religious & political turmoil due to the current empty planetary throne.<sup>20</sup> The strife has naturally led to economic hardship, and some of the locals are willing to follow anyone with real help: even strangers from the stars.

Currently, Lignedeshi is working on the island of Basti, where he’s been building up a reputation as a Real Leader for about a decade. He worked from the bottom up, initially setting up charity kitchens, tent cities, and some makeshift hospitals (with more medical robots than flesh-and-blood medical personnel) for the poorer half of the island’s 500,000 sophonts.



***Ninety percent of the time, an abandoned building is just an empty, sad reminder of busted hopes and dead dreams. But ten percent of the time, you get to discover exactly what killed the dream... This graphic is titled “The Deserted Research Station” © Neil Thatcher. See his work at***

***<https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/the-deserted-research-station/2434779/>***

Local politics is not democratic, or even really that well organized: in general, the most powerful families just do what they want, working together in an informal manner, restricted by traditions, old family treaties, religious

<sup>19</sup> There is a rumour that – due to the linguistic similarities between Assyrian and Vilani – the Assyrians are actually a lost Vilani colony. How true this rumour is, is up to the Referee.

<sup>20</sup> See “Adventure: Seasons Change” in **Stellar Reaches** #5 for more background information.

considerations, and pragmatic power politics. Traditionally, they are led by the Imperial Noble for the world, but that throne is empty, and the current Imperial Viceroy has ignored the unimportant island of Basti.

It was in this framework that Ligatedshi found himself, when he started to dabble in local politics – heavily oriented on issues of caste, religion and ownership of the local fishing grounds – generally positioning himself as a Man of the People. His way with words and ability to stir crowds with speeches and promises of better days has brought him both populist friends and aristocratic foes: but Ligatedshi is careful which lines he can cross, and which lines to leave alone.

Ligatedshi insists that his ample amounts of money come from ‘off-world businesses and an old family inheritance; but regardless of the (undocumented) source, it isn’t possible to just buy yourself into power on an alien world. Even with the right relationships, you will always be a stranger: and who wants to follow a foreigner? Finally, Ligatedshi is not a Hindu believer, and the Hindu religion is *extremely* important on the world of Akiar.



*Another Cultic Flower, here found on Marrkhuda. Another... Shrine? Psionic focal point? Harbingers of the Apocalypse? ... is being raised up by the servants of the Last Man.*

**This graphic is titled “Origin Unknown Reloaded(for wblack)” © Neil Thatcher.**

See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/origin-unknown-reloaded-for-wblack-/2443532/>

But Ligatedshi and his local friends have not been idle. On an island where corruption reigns, Ligatedshi has organized unofficial People’s Courts, where the merits of a case is more important than the caste or family of the plaintiff or defendant. From just appealing to the poor, Ligatedshi’s allies have been courting the (small) middle class, broadening his support. And it is whispered that there is a split among the aristocracy, between those who are hostile to Ligatedshi and everything he stands for, and those who want to make use of him as an ally, to build their own power.

### ***Kickoff***

A new development has shifted the playing field on 001-993 (“Now” in most articles of **Stellar Reaches**, including this one). As part of the celebrations of the Imperial New Year, there are many morning petitioners who attend the local Hindu temples... but this time, Ligatedshi was among them, giving a major donation in gold to the largest temple on the island. And in the evening, he and the Pasupati aristocratic clan declared an alliance, to be sealed with marriage after Ligatedshi has completed the rituals that will mark him as a Hindu. After the marriage, a policy of Full Employment will be instituted by House Pasupati for all followers, new and old. “Work for All, Health for All, Life for All!”

*...Pharaoh was a better economist than any Keynesian today. He knew there would not be something for nothing by means of a state decree. The Israelites would be forced to work harder.*

*– Gary North, “Chapter 10: The Fetish of Full Employment”*

*Christian Economics in One Lesson*

<http://www.garynorth.com/public/13883.cfm>

The entire island is abuzz on what this means. Where is the money for all this going to come from, to guarantee employment for everyone? What will happen to the populists, Ligatedshi’s old allies, in the New Order? And surely the other aristocratic families are not going to just take this lying down. So far, their property and privileges has not been touched, but a new populist movement is going to change that in a hurry!

It is now sunset on Basti. The world of Akiar is poor, at TL 8 (1990s technology), but still able to build Generation III night vision goggles. The few who have them on the island can see blacked-out air/rafts and G-carriers landing on Pasupati property or in the Sharma District, where Ligatedshi has his strongest and most loyal power base, at a rate of one or two every hour. What this means can only be guessed at.

Closing Theme: “Industrial Landscapes”, Markus Schmidt - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChiVJRgMRHw>

*When bad men combine, the good must associate;  
else they will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.*

*– Edmund Burke*

***Rigedanmaakurla Ar Khishi  
Skilled, yet Self-Destructive***

UPP 4438CA, Age 40, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Sociology - 4, Vacc Suit - 3, Electronics - 2, Linguistics - 1, Astronomy - 1, Meteorology - 1, Energy Weapon - 1, Streetwise - 1, Zero-G - 1, Mechanical - 1, Gambling - 1, Long Blade - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Theology (Ashi Gurlagii) - 0

Languages: Vilani (Modern, Native), Vilani (Old High)



***Charted Space: Trillions of sophonts, on thousands of worlds... but still just a drop in the galaxy.***

***This graphic is titled “Dimensions” © Psyxis.***

See his work at <http://psyxis.deviantart.com/art/Dimensions-436897614>



Tools & Aids: Ar Khishi generally carries a beautiful, ornate shock rod (designed to inflict pain, not to stun or *immediately* kill), and a TL 13/14 datapad that is wirelessly networked on worlds & ships able to handle it. On certain days, he wears carefully-chosen fetishes, amulets & charms and celebrating long-dead Vilani gods and extinct heretical movements.

Visual: Ar Khishi's fashion sense shifts with his moods and the seasons of his last port of call. His favourite, though, is a well-tailored symmetrical Vilani dress, with elegant symbols and glyphs that declare his loyalty to Ashi Gurlagili.

Note: Ashi Gurlagili is essentially an anti-religion,<sup>21</sup> focused on celebrating Vilani perversions (that is, innovation, continual change, disunity, and disrespect for tradition)<sup>22</sup> as opposed to Solomani perversions, which focus on sexuality.

Opening Theme: "Go Your Own Way", Fleetwood Mac – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ul-cZyuYq4>

Born on Ushmigad – a world dominated by Vilani heretics – Ar Khishi gained the Vilani equivalent of a Ph.D. in sociology,<sup>23</sup> then got to work as a ship's electrician for a Vilani megacorp.<sup>24</sup> He became a reasonably skilled electrician, with a special emphasis on long-duration zero-G and EVA work, but his work skills and craftsmanship does not make up for his hostility to corporate culture, as is evident on his resume: from an Imperium-spanning megacorp to a sector-wide line, to a subsector transport agency, to a "fast-growing interface line" (really three starship crews, banding together to prop each other up and starve off bankruptcy), to a freelancer who is never taken on full-time... and is slowly running out of gigs.

If taken on by the PC – and don't forget, he only speaks Vilani – they will find a reliable worker, gifted when working in the void, and an overall asset to the team... when it comes to on-the-job results. Unfortunately, Ar Khishi simply *can't* leave well enough alone: he loves to use his people skills to create discord, disputes, and "the excitement that makes me feel alive!"<sup>25</sup> If the PCs can't find someone skilled enough to replace him – and there aren't *that* many experienced spacers in the Imperial Empty Quarter, especially with hands-on qualifications with TL 13/14 equipment – they'll have to somehow put up with him... and keep the Vilani members of the crew from killing him outright in some stunning episode of group violence, when he opens his mouth one too many times.

Closing Theme: "Little Lies", Fleetwood Mac - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5HkuhSEnPQ>

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<sup>21</sup> Apropos of nothing, I have always found "Post-Christian" to be an insipid evasion of our current atheistic materialistic intellectual class. What's wrong with coming clean, and saying that we revere the Democratic State, with the Voice of the People – as interpreted by court lawyers on and off the bench, of course – as the superior source of morality and justice, the true successor to the Christian God?

<sup>22</sup> Note that of the three elements of the Vilani Trinity – Consensus, Tradition, and Prosperity – Ashi Gurlagili only opposes *two* of them. Money, they like: but as they can't get the Imperial Government to fund their lifestyle via tax redistribution, supportive legislation and/or getting on the civil service payroll (all funded by taxpayers), they have had to launch innovative, profitable businesses instead. (Or go into bank robbery, in the style of Lenin the Thief & Murderer, founder of the Soviet Union). A minor theological revolution cemented the shift, after which they saw the free market as a fundamentally revolutionary, anti-traditional force... and therefore, A Good Thing.

<sup>23</sup> Surprised, I am not.

<sup>24</sup> Colour me impressed!

<sup>25</sup> The fact that Ar Khishi can't speak Anglic – or Hindi, or Arabic – has added a good two decades to his lifespan. Now, if he was living in a Vilani-dominated sector (instead of a Solomani one), I wouldn't give him two weeks.

*Free trade is not based on utility but on justice.*  
– Edmund Burke

***Irkheshii Ar Khishi***  
***Crossing Boundaries***

UPP 56499A, Age 40 (apparent/biological age 30), Mixed Vilani

Skills: Engineering - 3, Robot Ops - 2, Electronics - 2, Computer - 1, Linguistics - 1, Streetwise - 1, Small Blade - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Recruiting - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Sensor Ops - 1, Handgun - 0, Grav Vehicle - 0

Languages: Vilani (Modern, Native), Vilani (Old High)

Tools & Aids: First Mate Ar Khishi usually has a few styli, data sticks/dongles, and chipped cards on his person, so he can interact with the variety of computer systems on his ship. (A variety of security systems have been kluged together over the years.) He also has a handgun on his person at all times, in case of pirates and hijacking... and planetary customs agents who press too closely for a bribe. Unlike his clone-brother Rigidanmaakurla Ar Khishi (above), Irkheshii only keeps a few amulets and charms on his person.

Visual: Ar Khishi wears boring utilitarian navy-blue overalls, everywhere. When visiting his homeworld of Ushmigad, though, he will wear overalls in family/corporate colours, and special cultic clothing when visiting Ashi Gurlagili shrines and attending worship ceremonies.

Opening Theme: “The Siege of Madrigal”, Martin O'Donnell, Michael Salvatori

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHqvziH\\_bgg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHqvziH_bgg)



**(Previous) *The Staar Sinhassan* (स्टार सहिसन, “Star Throne”) on Nulinad. The site where the locally-beloved Emperor Angustus<sup>26</sup> first held court in 357 Imperial, Staar Sinhassan has fallen into neglect and disrepair. Still, the occasional pilgrim makes the journey to pay homage to his memory and to the Imperium that still stands.**

**This graphic is titled “Dimensions” © Psyxis.**

**See his work at <http://psyxis.deviantart.com/art/Dimensions-436897614>**

### **Origins**

Irkheshii & Rigidanmaakurla Ar Khishi are clone-brothers from the same world, but they have led very different lives which has brought them to very different places: even their biological age, intelligence and physical characteristics (strength, agility, etc.) have diverged from their old similarity.

While children, they didn’t know each other very well, being raised in different corporate-caste crèches (but yet, in the same artigrav flying city). But in their teens, they were brought together in various study and sports teams, where they (and other Ar Khishi clone-brothers) found that they bonded together quickly. Still, clones – like their natural equivalent, identical twins – eventually go their separate ways... but Irkheshii & Rigidanmaakurla still try to keep in touch, across the light- and the time-years. When they can, they get together once a year for a long chat and a lot of laughs.<sup>27</sup>



***A supplicant on Sandardin, on his way to present his petition to the local Baroness, 992 Imperial. By law and custom, all who approach the Baroness must cross the last three kilometers on foot, across the desert. This graphic is titled “Kingdom of the Desert” © Jan Vavrusa. See his work at***

***<http://janvavrusa.deviantart.com/art/Kingdom-of-the-desert-439739055>***

### **Navy**

While Rigidanmaakurla went on to higher education in sociology, Irkheshii went on a more technical route, doing well enough to gain advanced training from his corporate sponsor. But instead of going into service on various in-system bases, Irkheshii Ar Khishi was transferred to service in the Imperial Navy, as part of an ‘in kind’ payment for corporate taxes.

Ar Khishi did well enough in his posts and duties, mainly as a drive hand for minor combatants. He did spend a full decade in the Frozen Watch for a major orbiting battle station in Lazisar system, though. After nineteen years of

<sup>26</sup> See **Stellar Reaches** #11, page 23-24, for more information on the Majestic Circuit of The Empty Quarter.

<sup>27</sup> They’re now too different – physically, and in their emotional/psychological ‘presence’ – to pull the usual identical-twin tricks on unsuspecting bystanders. “It’s not the years, it’s the mileage.”



service – ten of them frozen – the Imperium deemed his segment of corporate debt ‘paid in full’, and was given an ordinary (not dishonourable, honourable, or commendable) discharge.

### **Smuggler**

Taking up a tip from his clone-brother Rigidanmaakurla, Irksheshii signed up with the crew of the *Kushagiligen*, a beautiful TL E merchantman that works as a fast (for the sector...) jump3 freighter, with some smuggling on the side.

OK, make that a *lot* of smuggling on the side.<sup>28</sup>

The usual targets are the broadly xenophobic Solomani systems, but jobs that involve getting past the customs craft of Vilani systems are cheerfully taken on as well.<sup>29</sup> For most work, the usual grey market financiers are good enough to handle escrow and partial payment arrangements<sup>30</sup>: rarely does the master of the ship, Captain Shakukairu, have to get entangled with the really nasty boys for face-to-face negotiations.



***Older, TL 13 warships are a dime a dozen in most of the Imperium... but in the backward Empty Quarter, they are still able to make their power felt. This graphic is titled “Low Orbit 3” © Ken Lebras.***

See his work at <http://theuncannyken.deviantart.com/art/Low-Orbit-3-137208388>

After satisfying himself that Ar Khishi isn't an Imperial mole or double-agent,<sup>31</sup> Captain Shakukairu has been teaching him the basics of the high-level smuggler's trade. The ship and crew are solid and professional, but lack the imagination to lead the ship and sniff out the right openings. But in the captain's eyes, Ar Khishi has the

<sup>28</sup> Actually, it does so much smuggling, that the Imperium has placed the ship on the “Starships of Interest” list. Still, so long as no *Imperial* laws are broken...

<sup>29</sup> The Bwap don't do crime. “You can't sneak stuff in, if there is nobody interested in paying you at the receiving end.”

<sup>30</sup> The good captain doesn't have the connections to have actual banks handle the financial affairs... yet. For examples/inspiration on how the big boys move, see Wells Fargo & Wachovia <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-06-29/banks-financing-mexico-s-drug-cartels-admitted-in-wells-fargo-s-u-s-deal> or HSBC <https://www.accountancylive.com/hbscs-offshore-accounts-used-drug-dealers> for highly Travelleresque reads.

<sup>31</sup> True enough – at least, in my version of this story.

potential needed, the right mix of skills, initiative, instinct, observation, and the classic ‘sixth sense’ needed to avoid traps while exploiting opportunities.

“And remember: no matter what, *don’t touch psionics*. Too many people – Nobles and Commoners alike – get extralegal if they think you’re involved in that: and the profits are just far too small, compared to the risks. And when you factor in the likelihood that a crewman will fink on you, in return for a completely clean legal slate *and* ownership of the ship? *Forget about it!*”

### **Promotion**

Eventually, Captain Shakukairu will move on. It’s actually quite likely that he will live long enough to retire in extreme comfort, and properly turn over the captaincy to Ar Khishi. But even with a careful and highly experienced man like Shakukairu, there may be a deal gone bad, or an unexpected welcoming committee at a pick-up/drop-off point. Or perhaps a peeved-off Imperial Ministry of Justice bureaucrat finds that, while he can’t get the *Kushagiligen*,<sup>32</sup> he *can* get the Captain, who gets arrested at an Imperial starport.<sup>33</sup>

When Shakukairu moves on – temporary or permanently – Ar Khishi will get the (de-encryption) keys to the kingdom, either limited or unlimited. There will be a lot of interesting information, all carefully organized and indexed in the Vilani fashion for easy retrieval, and some surprises as well.



***When you set foot on a new world, you usually know something about the sophonts, the gravity, the seas... but the weather is usually left unspoken, as a special surprise to the visitor. This graphic is titled “Volcanic Moons”***  
© Justinas Vitkus. See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Distant-world-245329341>

Where the new Captain goes from here is up to him.

Closing Theme: “Marco Polo (Main Theme)”, Ennio Morricone - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssoQbusZ7os>

Ship: Kushagiligen  
Type: Merchantman  
Tech Level: 14

Class: Kushagiligen  
Architect: Alvin Plummer

<sup>32</sup> Captain Shakukairu has done business on behalf of Imperial interests before: but payment was not in credits, but in certain legal immunities and understandings.

<sup>33</sup> Actually, Shakukairu will probably get off – being careful, smart, experienced, connected, and more knowledgeable about Imperial shipping & cargo regulations than many young lawyers in the field. But it can still take months – even a year or two, if an angry High Noble is involved - before the case is finally dismissed. And while the Captain is working with his lawyers from a jail cell, somebody has to keep the ship running and the bills paid...

USP

M-4333581-230000-20002-0 MCr 387.528 400 Tons  
Bat Bear 1 2 1 Crew: 14  
Bat 1 2 1 TL: 14

Agility: 2  
Pulse Lasers  
Fuel: 144

EP: 20

Cargo: 63 Passengers: 2 Crew Sections: 1 of 14 Emergency Low: 6  
Craft: 2 x 0.5T Air/Rafts, 2 x 4T G-Carriers  
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification  
Backups: 1 x Model/3 Computer

Architects Fee: MCr 3.875 Cost in Quantity: MCr 310.022

Detailed Description

HULL

400 tons standard, 5,600 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration

CREW

Pilot, Navigator, 3 Engineers, Medic, 4 Gunners, 4 Flight Crew





**(Previous) Two Imperial Scouts stroll across the caverns of Vigil Beta, 988 Imperial. The region with breathable oxygen fluctuates on a yearly basis, depending on the respiration of the kilometer-scale lifeforms.**

**This graphic is titled "Orion Chasm" © Max V. Nimos.**

**See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/orion-chasm/1340752/>**

#### ENGINEERING

Jump-3, 3G Manoeuvre, Power plant-5, 20 EP, Agility 2

#### AVIONICS

Bridge, Model/8 Computer; 1 Model/3 Backup Computer

#### HARDPOINTS

4 Hardpoints

#### ARMAMENT

1x Single Missile Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-2),  
2x Single Pulse Laser Turrets organised into 2 Batteries (Factor-2)

#### DEFENCES

1 Single Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3),  
Armoured Hull (Factor-2)

#### CRAFT

2x 0.5-ton Air/Rafts, 2x 4-ton G-Carriers (Crew of 2 each)

#### FUEL

144 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance,  
plus 4 tons of additional fuel)  
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

#### MISCELLANEOUS

9 Staterooms, 6 Emergency Low Berths, 2 Middle Passengers, 63 Tons Cargo

#### USER DEFINED COMPONENTS

1 Stealth Treatment (0 ton, Crew 0, 0.400 Energy Point, Cost MCr 4)

#### COST

MCr 391.403 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 3.875),  
MCr 310.022 in Quantity

#### CONSTRUCTION TIME

82 Weeks Singly, 65 Weeks in Quantity

#### COMMENTS

This is the premiere smuggler's ship in the Six Subsectors of the Empty Quarter.<sup>34</sup> Of the 134 Imperial worlds of the sector, only Ushmigad and (with a lot of luck) Wesaswek have a real chance of catching it. Even the Imperial Navy – used to easily spotted, low-tech starships with zero stealth – has to actually work to spot her, when she's "on the job".

When not smuggling, the one-of-a-kind Kushagiligen works as a fast shipper, using her jump3/maneuver3 setup for good effect. Here, the money just isn't that good: she would be running at a loss without the smuggling work, instead of an ample profit.

A note on the "Stealth treatment", a catch-all term that refers to design and equipment decisions that lowers her visual, radar, and thermal profile. While aspects of the ship's stealth design are useful in space (decrease the chance to detect by one level), it is mainly tailored to foil/defy detection from worlds and ships of TL 11 and lower (decrease the chance to detect by two levels).

Because of her technological superiority over most local craft – and at least some chance to defeat a high-tech Ikonaz pirate – there has been more and more offers to hire the Kushagiligen as a warship, something she simply wasn't built for. Captain Shakukairu keeps on using his favourite word – no – in response, but the pile of money on the table keeps on growing and growing...

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<sup>34</sup> But definitely not the best in the entire sector – see Ikon, a high-tech world run by Vargr, for more top-tier smugglers than you can even imagine.



(Previous) *The sky breathes, and the moons dance*. The graphics are titled “Path in the Sky 1”, “Path in the Sky 2”, and “Path in the sky 3”, all © Justinas Vitkus. See his works at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Path-in-the-sky-1-444727923>, <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Path-in-the-sky-2-444729165>, and <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Path-in-the-sky-3-444729762>

*You be a person. I'll be a man.*

– *The Respected Izzat Savafi,*

from *Against the Imperial Core: A Memoir (985 Imperial)*

**Baron Izzat Savafi**

**Bee Farmer as Nationalist**

UPP 29C85C, Age 31, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Apiculture - 3, Gardening (Flowering pants) - 2, Biology - 1, Trader - 1, Admin - 1, Handgun - 1, Lighter than Air - 1, Dance - 1, Robot Ops - 1, Streetwise - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0

Languages: Hebrin Arabic



**One of the many well-armed denizens of the Empty Quarter. This graphic is titled “Soldad” © Shasrul Nizam Selamat. See his work at <http://syarul.deviantart.com/art/soldad-163010952>**

Tools & Aids: Usually, the Baron carries nothing but a well-thumbed copy of the Koran, a ceremonial pistol, and a light wooden rod of office.

Visual: Visually, Baron Izzat is rather short, with light blue skin, finely scaled, and an abnormally large, hairless head. He is rail-thin, with very little strength, but extremely tough and wiry – the man has *never* been sick, not



once. Genetically, Barron Izzat is a wild mix of humaniti, with prominent levels of Solomani, Vilani, Yilean, and Syndite DNA. Culturally, though, he's 100% Solomani Arab, and follows that set of cultural mores (and the Sunni Islamic religion) exclusively.

Opening Theme: "Ay Jan / Alap Robab / Srang Srang Srang (Afghanistan)", Anello Capuano & Bruno Assenmacher  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ypw-XCdZflg>

### ***Heritage***

Izzat is the son and heir of Raed Savafi, the greatest and final leader of the Hebrin Fedayeen, an anti-Vilani Hebrinite resistance group.<sup>35</sup> As part of the Pep Eti Round of negotiations that brought a substantial resolution to Arab grievances, Raed was 1) ennobled and granted a fief on Mugama<sup>36</sup> and 2) his family and men-at-arms (and their families) permanently exiled from Hebrin, with all the original fighters granted an Imperial-funded pension, a small homestead on Mugama, and a full TL 5 set of farming equipment, seed, and start-up funds, all under the authority of their new Imperial prince.



***On the desert world of Hebrin, water has long been the official currency of the planet. Which makes sewers water more carefully protected than it is on most worlds... This graphic is titled "Sewers" © Erik van Helvoirt. See his works at <http://phade01.deviantart.com/>***

<sup>35</sup> "Was the hostility based on *religious* reasons, or on *racial* reasons?"

"These are *Solomani* we are talking about, so why not both?"

"Whatever string of empty words get what you want done..."

<sup>36</sup> For more on Mugama, see **Stellar Reaches #8**, page 15







(Previous) *Baron Izzat's vast sunflower fields on Mugama, 993 Imperial. A sturdy plant, sunflowers can be found on most Solomani-settled worlds, even on the arid worlds of the Empty Quarter. This graphic is titled "Dusk" © John De Bord. See his work at <http://kkart.deviantart.com/art/Dusk-476900233>, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwL1V\\_1UyY8&list=UUwe5juOX0szSY-KDIVHGiqw&index=19](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwL1V_1UyY8&list=UUwe5juOX0szSY-KDIVHGiqw&index=19) and <http://www.jdebordphoto.com/>*

### ***The Sweet Taste of Growth***

While his father was a feared terrorist, legendary desert & urban guerrilla, and a passionate political leader, the son has turned his focus to business, religion, and interstellar politics. In the business world, he – with the assistance of various family friends and Muslim Brotherhood financiers – has built up his beekeeping business into a massive local concern, Blessed Honey Industries (BHI), with vast fields dedicated solely to the production of a truly vast array of monofloral and honeydew honeys: sunflower honey is in great demand on Shamokin/Ley right now, and a good trader could make a bundle if he gets past the pirate gauntlet...

The upper-class rage isn't only for honey, in an incredible array of flavours, scents, and colours. Assorted forms of beeswax is used for cosmetics for both humans and Vargr; the propolis ('bee glue') has numerous biomedical properties, with BHI a major supplier of this material to the Charity LIC sector-wide medical concern; and royal jelly is sold at an exorbitant cost to Imperial nobles and corporate executives across Lishun & Antares sectors.<sup>37</sup>



***Fusion-drive spaceships are a rarity even in the relatively primitive Empty Quarter: but the few who own them like to show off, with flashy stunts no M-drive ship can imitate. This graphic is titled "Sojourn" © Tobias Roetsch. See his works at <http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/Sojourn-336003575>***

<sup>37</sup> Most Imperial Nobles in the Empty Quarter can't actually afford to buy any of BHI's royal jelly. Nobles from Core Sector got *their* supply exclusively from Terra, but with the Current Unpleasantness cutting into their accustomed rations, they are reluctantly turning to alternative sources...



The Imperium deliberately focuses its attacks on the various Salafi-style terror cells (who want to break up the Imperium) while treating the Muslim Brotherhood with leniency because the Brotherhood does not want to destroy the Imperium... only to convert it, and alter some of the High Laws.

The key to building an empire that lasts centuries is in choosing your enemies wisely.<sup>38</sup>

Worst-case scenario? The Nobility must all convert to Islam, and publicly live as one. This is of limited importance to an aristocracy with a laser-focus on the money and the power: "Paris is well worth a quick conversion."

BHI is currently going through another massive growth surge, as two particular aspects of honey – it's a supercooled liquid that will never freeze solid, and it never spoils – makes it very attractive to certain Vilani ceremonies and rituals. All the available useful land on Mugama has already been bought up, so BHI is currently in intense negotiations with Sharurshid – a Vilani Megacorporation, specializing in the trade of luxury goods – to secure dedicated territory ("preferably between two million and five hundred thousand square kilometers") for the needed flowering plants, hives, and personnel.



*The Suhra' Aljusur (الجزر صحرَاء), "Desert of Bridges" is one of the more graceful landscapes of the bone-dry world of Hebrin. This graphic is titled "The Barrens" © Jan Vavrusa. See his works at <http://janvavrusa.deviantart.com/art/The-Barrens-357136077>*

<sup>38</sup> Those 40-year losers known as the Christian Right should consider the articles "Why Fight to Lose?" <http://www.garynorth.com/public/14667.cfm>, "Unprofitable Servants" <http://www.garynorth.com/public/14671.cfm>, "Life and Death and the Last Days, or Why Eschatology Matters" <http://americanvision.org/4566/life-and-death-and-the-last-days-or-why-eschatology-matters/> and "Evangelicals and education: Larceny, just not sodomy!" <http://americanvision.org/12829/evangelicals-and-education-larceny-just-not-sodomy/>. Until they repent, they're just another useful tool, nothing more.

### ***An Independent Man***

Despite his ties and responsibilities to the Imperium as a serving Noble, and his increasing links to interstellar trade, Baron Izzat is a strong proponent for an autonomous interstellar Arab Islamic Republic within the Imperium.<sup>39</sup> Reluctantly, he has turned away from any possibility of a revival of the Hebrin Caliphate: too many unbelieving Vilani (and various other immigrants) have been transplanted to the sands of Hebrin for the Caliphate to ever rise again.<sup>40</sup>

But while a true Caliphate is politically impossible for now, there is a possibility of a gathering of Arab Solomani worlds in Hebrin's neighbourhood to a less harsh version of Islamic rule, much closer to a model of visionary Arab-Islamic leadership of all humaniti, believer and unbeliever, Solomani and otherwise, human and non-human, all bound together by the words of the Prophet and the will of Allah. A perfectly rational attitude of course: "If one tool doesn't work, try another!"

Unlike the vision that drove his father, Baron Izzat focuses on non-violent means to bring his ideals to life, to damp down Infidel suspicion and hostility while building up his own people with wealth and wisdom. Part of this is demonstrating his loyalty to the Iridium Throne (regardless of the beliefs of the man sitting on it),<sup>41</sup> especially in relation to the current war against the Solomani Confederation. But another part is his increasingly outspoken voice in favour of *all* the cultures of the Six Subsectors, as opposed to the cosmopolitan, wealthy, egalitarian – and fundamentally secularist – dominant cultures of the Imperial Core.

His greatest dream? To have the Imperial Ban removed, and to return to Hebrin as a beloved son, welcomed by local Arabs and Vilani alike as their noble leader and guide.



***No Ancient weapons or relic have ever been found in the Empty Quarter. But a sliced moon in Tinghakh System suggests that an Ancient weapon may have been used in the sector...***

**This graphic is titled "Victim of Gravity" © Tobias Roetsch. See his works at**

**<http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/Victim-of-Gravity-91582546>**

<sup>39</sup> Yes, the Baron is looking at the League of Antares as a model of the hypothetical Arab Islamic Republic. No, he will never admit it: the nature of the Empty Quarter's rivalry with Antares includes the refusal to admit that the rivalry exists. In contrast, the Antareans when asked about their rival to trailing will either look at you in a puzzled manner, or burst out laughing...

<sup>40</sup> Not to mention the overwhelming hostility – OK, OK, elemental hate – the local Infidels feel at the very possibility of again being ground under the heel of the Righteous.

<sup>41</sup> Outside of his fief, the families and businesses tied to his House, and his various Imperial duties, Baron Izzat doesn't get involved in the actual governance of the world of Mugama, as he isn't the senior Noble of the world.

## **Interactions**

Most PCs will simply be another service provider for the Baron, mainly in keeping his estate well-equipped for honey production, keeping out raiders and thieves, and facilitating contact with other business partners. A chosen few – usually from families that were exiled with the Baron’s family decades ago – will actually be working for him in his various interesting side projects.

Closing Theme: "Taqsim Ud / Samaï Bayati (Egypt)", Anello Capuano & Bruno Assenmacher - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq3TrsuWVbM>

*Relax, Candace. It's simple math. Instead of cooking it at 350 degrees for one hour, we could cook it for five minutes at... (enters equation into calculator) 9000 degrees! What could go wrong?<sup>42</sup>*  
– Stacy, "Moon Farm", Phineas and Ferb

## **Gamaagin "Gam" Maarera The Girl with the Silver Eyes<sup>43</sup>**

UPP 175947, Age 9, Pure Vilani

Skills: Acting - 0, Computer - 0

Psi: Unknown strength; known abilities include Telekinesis, Telepathy

Languages: Modern Vilani

Opening Theme: "No Time for Caution", Hans Zimmer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5d0vBtwBK0>



***Ikakhs, one of the four mighty giants of Saezzok System. This graphic is titled "Cosmic Breath" © Psyxis.***  
See his work at <http://psyxis.deviantart.com/art/Cosmic-Breath-467344310>

<sup>42</sup> TVTropes helpfully adds: "The surface of the Sun is 9,940.73 degrees Fahrenheit, by the way."  
<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/OvenLogic>

<sup>43</sup> Actually, silver eyes are common enough among the Vilani: "Pure Vilani eyes range from grey to gold." (Vilani & Vargr, page 2). But I insist on my allusions!



Miss Maarera is a young girl of nine, who lives on the world of Gasadim, the smallest of the Pamushgar cluster of Vilani systems. Raised by a carefully controlled caste of loathed and isolated Vilani researchers and experimenters, she was exposed to a certain set of unusual chemicals, but otherwise seemed to be without abnormalities. However, from the age of four, she exhibited psionic powers at an unusual level of strength, primarily telekinesis and telepathy.

About six weeks ago, she felt in her dreams dangerous monsters that wished to harm her. The dreams grew in strength and intensity, until her lab father showed her a doll and carefully coached her into twisting their heads (...as opposed to crushing their necks...), and encouraged her to do the same in her dreams. When she next slept, the dreams were more terrifying than ever: but Gam remained calm, and carefully reached out with her mind and gave a firm *twist* on each monster's head, one by one. Near the end of the dream, she could feel the waves of fear from the last of the monsters... but by then, it was too late.

The nightmares finally stopped.

Four days ago, near the end of 992 Imperial, the Free Trader *Alligator Lizard* detected a group of silent vessels, orbiting one of minor planets of Gasadim system. Curious - but not being so foolhardy as to personally check out who crewed these ominously silent ships – they gave a head's up to the starport. Gasadim has no native spacefaring capability (besides rockets), but the Marquis of Pamushgar maintains a squadron of SDBs in the system (the regular Imperial Navy being absent at this time).

It is now 001-993. A lot of Imperial citizens are celebrating the Imperial New Year, but Gasadim Squadron is about to make contact with a Blood Vargr raiding pack. Battle stations will be called, and the warships will accelerate into a battle that will never happen.

When the star soldiers board the silent ships, and discover *why* there will never be a fight, a lot of questions will be raised. Imperial Ministry of Justice officers will be called in. Certain Gasadim bureaucrats will have to make irrevocable decisions. And the destiny of a certain silver-eyed girl will be decided.

Closing Theme: "Where We're Going", Hans Zimmer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHNllxzUv94>



(Previous) *Wealth can speak without making a sound.* This graphic is titled "Patrol" © Sebastian Wagner.  
See his works at <http://sebastianwagner.deviantart.com/art/Patrol-399440847>

*Fairy tales are more than true:  
not because they tell us that dragons exist,  
but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.*  
– Neil Gaiman

**Emet Isumetil Chea, M.D.**  
**Doing Well by Doing Good**

UPP B988F8, Age 42 (apparently 34), Mixed Vilani

Skills: Medical - 7, Persuasion - 4, Admin - 2, Genetics - 2, Computer - 2, Forensics - 1, Biology - 1, Liaison - 1, Biochemistry - 1, Interview - 1, Trader - 1, Small Blade - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Handgun - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform dialect)

Tools & Aids:

A datapad, an experimental TL 15 diagnostic scanner (for work)

An ordinary pistol, and a well-balanced fighting knife (because this is the Empty Quarter)

Visual: While there are hints of Vilani ancestry here and there, his features are predominantly Solomani (Arabic and Punjabi, precisely). He maintains a neat and tidy appearance at all times, and has a generally friendly and comfortable air about him. The doctor is good at positioning his massive bulk and powerful frame to project reassuring and protective vibes, leading to a fiercely loyal clientele – but in a different life, his raw mental and physical strength would have led to an excellent career as a Imperial Marine officer.

Opening Theme: "World on Fire", Evan Call - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_t3ialzKW7A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_t3ialzKW7A)

By a combination of a mastery of the medical science, skillful opportunism, and some remarkable coincidences, Dr. Emet has become the wealthiest doctor on the sector capital of Nulinad, primarily tending to the needs of (human) executives, resident nobility, and visiting celebrities. Between his concierge medical care, his medical patents, and a chain of clinics that bear his name, Dr. Emet has gained extraordinary wealth.



*More busted dreams in the Empty Quarter – but perhaps, alien instead of human ones.*

This graphic is titled "Unknown Structures" © Neil Thatcher.

See his works at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/unknown-structures/2482902/>

But being a billionaire doctor with a perfect family, a chain of privately-owned islands and the ear of the great and the powerful just *isn't* enough: the man also wants an Imperial title: at the very least a knighthood, but preferably a barony, with a fief in Core Sector and a personal standard and Imperial security clearances and a small group of

men-at-arms and a voice at the Imperial Moot. But to get there, he needs to provide a service to the Imperium, something that will earn the respect of the Right Sort of People, and get him the discreet tap on the shoulder he longs for.

There is someone out there who can make his way to an Imperial Noble Patent *much* easier. Someone who has a powerful voice in the sector, who is revered by millions, and who has personally shaped the medical careers of the greatest physicians, surgeons, and medical researchers in the Imperial Empty Quarter.

But Dr. Emet still hesitates to make the call, and send out feelers to Baroness Yasmin of Charity system (and head of Charity LIC).<sup>44</sup> Her many, many fans praise her The Fatima, but Dr. Emet has heard certain tales from some of his most knowledgeable patients, and refers to her as The Tigress in private. He's absolutely confident that she has long had an eye on his practice and his wealth, and the thought of actually attracting her attention makes him shiver involuntarily.

Dr. Emet and a few friends have an idea.<sup>45</sup> Something that could make the impact he needs, and gain the gratitude of both the Bwap Sector Duke and the Emperor himself.<sup>46</sup> But there is a risk: by definition, he must surpass the achievements of the Baroness of Charity, and so risk her envy... and her exquisite wrath.

The good doctor has the intelligence and the strength of the ideal Imperial Marine officer. It will be interesting to see if he has the bravery, as well.

Closing Theme: "Rise of the ESPers", Evan Call - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2EGDGP8KgQ>



***Sangre is a barren, airless world... far too mundane for an organization as ambitious as the Order of One. Rumours continue to circulate, claiming that the Order is quietly relocating to a more hospitable dwelling place: and 'what the Hegemon doesn't know won't hurt him.'*** This graphic is titled "Settlers" © Sebastian Wagner. See his works at <http://sebastianwagner.deviantart.com/art/Settlers-402824140>

<sup>44</sup> See **Stellar Reaches** #20 page 8, and #5 page 32 for details on the fearsome Baroness.

<sup>45</sup> See <http://www.forbes.com/sites/matthewherper/2014/09/10/medicines-manhattan-project-can-the-worlds-richest-doctor-fix-health-care/> for what's on my mind.

<sup>46</sup> If you want a fief in Core Sector, you need more than the approval of your (non-Core) Sector Duke.



**Phocas Herenyov**  
**Watching, Waiting, Working**

UPP B78889, Age 34, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Trader - 3, Computer - 2, Brawling - 2, Streetwise - 2, Vacc Suit - 1, Rifleman - 1, Liaison - 1, Disguise - 1, Admin - 1, Broker - 1, Handgun - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0, Electronics - 0, Steward - 0

Languages: Arzula-A

Tools & Aids: A pistol and a trader's tablet are commonly on his person, as is a networked PDA/phone with various human languages built-in. A common Order religious charm – St. Cambria killing the Great Wolf – is around his neck, often rubbed just before battle or a rumble.

Visual: Like all public members of the Order of One, II Rank Officer Herenyov is dressed in TL D military grey-scale fatigues, or off-ship in TL D camouflage (but with only simple dial-a-cammo patterns – woodland, urban, desert, snow – to keep costs down.) Service dress is worn at home among the civilians, and the dress uniform is only worn at religious and the most formal occasions. All uniforms have black & red highlights, to a greater or lesser degree.

Opening Theme: "Potus 111", Brian Tyler - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lMqWVCA1Cg>

**On Duty**

II Rank Officer Herenyov was born on Sangre, the last refuge of the Order of One.<sup>47</sup> He received the typical martial and technical training of a young boy on the world, but his career took an interesting swerve when he was selected to help man the *Stella Mercator* – a Jump2 Far Trader – instead of an SDB or the planetary Fight/Work<sup>48</sup> companies he was expecting. It was not the life of war he was expecting, but the trader's life had its' own rewards – especially after he got his first big bonus for negotiating a major trans-shipping deal.

Due to their doctrinate hatred/fear of the Vargr, the crew of the *Stella Mercator* spent most of her time among the human systems in the rimward regions of the gap and dealing with the nearby Hegemonio systems – and never entered Rukadukaz Republic territory, regardless of the Republic's wealth and superior technology. There were a number of fights when encountering Republican crews, but the captain of the ship kept his men from getting more trouble than was necessary: the homeworld's population of 40,000 is simply too small to afford to lose skilled men to racial rumbles.

I don't *care* if managed to beat the dogs at their own game! They – and their ships – outnumber us dozens to one, and they have lots of backup they can call on if the gloves come off. At least you didn't trash them publically: if you did, it would be a matter of Charisma, and we'd have to hide back at the homeworld for months until it blew over, losing all sorts of trade credits in the meantime!  
– Captain Sumass Dikiye of the *Stellar Mercator* during a crew debrief, 140-986

Descended from the Yilean-backed Legion of Breskain, the focus of the Order is the complete extermination of all Vargr in the Empty Quarter, in the name of the Last Man, the coming genetically engineered messiah the Azula await. Exiled from its old home system of Pramas within the Hegemony of Lorean over thirty years ago, it has managed to adapt to and prosper in its new location, a small but secure high-tech manufacturing base within the Ssilnthi Gap. The most dangerous years – when the local Suedzuk Vargr bands vigorously attacked the young settlement – are now past... but the Order has yet to regain the political influence it once enjoyed.

<sup>47</sup> For more, see *Stellar Reaches* #13, pages 12, 25, 27.

<sup>48</sup> As the reader may guess, a Fight/Work company is a labour unit of about a hundred men that is cross-trained for ground military operations. Trained in minifacs and combat, they are 'general purpose' workforce that raise domed installations, run air/raft patrols, manage robot production units, and battle Vargr raiding groups on an as-needed basis. Originally organized on a fascistic, centralized basis, the Fight/Work companies are effectively independent business as of 993, with limited Technarch oversight so long as they keep their customer base happy – 'both the security services side, and the production & domestic services side.'



***Sangre. Not a pretty home, but for the Order of One it will do for now – especially as the million of near-orbit rocks helps discourage both casual visitors and Vargr raiders. This graphic is titled “In the Coldness of Space” © Sami Mattila. See his works at <http://smattila.deviantart.com/art/In-the-Coldness-of-Space-154601709>***

As Herenyov rose and matured as a trader, he rose in rank as well, becoming an officer in 984, and rising to Rank II just a few months ago. The ship has had two major trade missions within the Hegemony of Lorean, and has recently won a Hegemonio licence for a third mission. With the third mission, the goal is not only to make money, but to touch base with certain covert Order assets within the Hegemony, and attempt to quietly rebuilt contacts with sympathisers<sup>49</sup> within the Hegemony. While the Hegemony has no love for the Vargr, it is hostile to the Order of One, as they wish to kill obedient, tax-paying Irilitok Vargr that the Hegemon finds useful – and thus worth protecting – so Herenyov needs to be cautious in how he makes his contacts, especially on the high-law (and thus, high-surveillance) worlds.

### ***Off Duty***

Like most everyone on Sanger, Herenyov hates the Vargr: in his case, he loathes the Suedzuk more than the Ovaghoun. “At least the Old Imperial Vargr are housebroken by the Vilani, but the killers from the Vargr Enclaves are pure animal!”<sup>50</sup> Again like the majority of the Order of One, Herenyov worships the Last Man, insists on human supremacy in all things, and as a firm adherent of both mutually reinforcing beliefs leads the ships’ exaltation rituals as well as several study groups on the need for (and implications of) a genetic Superman both on and off the ship.

Herenyov maintains three mistresses on three different worlds: but this is against the policy of the Order, which claims the authority to regulate the sexual lives of its membership. If caught, he will have to drop the women, get cut down a rank, and suffer the punishment of the lash (and afterwards, spend the time and effort to secretly find new lovers), so he is careful in arranging his trysts.

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<sup>49</sup> The vast majority of humans within Hegemonio space loathe the Vargr: but few are willing to *personally* put up the blood and treasure to back an active policy of genocide. “We have enough problems keeping the local Vargr down: why go about looking for trouble?” This is further influenced by the current Hegemon’s policy of ‘Economy first, Military second.’

<sup>50</sup> Few anti-Vargr groups spend much energy on the ‘tamed’ Irilitok Vargr. Of course, they will wipe out the Irilitok Vargr as well if they get the chance, but they’re low-priority. This puts the Order of One at loggerheads with other human supremacist groups, who see the Irilitok Vargr as useful slave stock, and resent the Order’s damage of their property.



*In the Traveller Universe – like most classic science fiction – one of the core assumptions is that life is everywhere in the cosmos, no matter how marginal the environment. This graphic is titled “Under the Light of Sisters”*  
© Justinas Vitkus. See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Distant-world-245329341>

Finally, Herenyov simply enjoys travelling. The freedom of the stars, putting the Vargr in their place (while giving a hand-up to other humans), making lots of money, seeing his homeworld Sanger<sup>51</sup> prosper as a direct result of the technology and goods his ship brings in, the thrill of footloose adventures and meeting fresh challenges every day... all this brings a happiness in his life that simply can't be matched.

Closing Theme: “Ventura Highway”, America - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5J54RVZjYs>

*To a Mongol, horses represent not only wealth and status,  
They provide food and transportation.*

*To clearly see the Mongol's almost mythic relationship  
With the horse just watch a horse race  
The jockeys are children*

*The race course can be as long as 30 kilometers.  
Magic powers are attributed to the winning horse*

*And spectators scramble to touch it  
Hoping some will rub off.<sup>52</sup>*

*– from the song [MOS 6580](#), found on the Carbon Based Lifeforms album  
by Johannes Hedberg Segerstad*

*itself a quote from <http://on.aol.com/video/maintaining-the-eastern-steppes-ecosystem-in-mongolia-489142898>*

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<sup>51</sup> “One wonders why the Rukadukaz Republic hasn't stepped in to burn the planet down.”

“They probably did try – using Suedzuk raiders as cat's paws – but it didn't work, and the Republicans aren't willing to send in the big guns to do the job right. After all, the Hegemony might react in an unpredictable fashion... better to let sleeping men lie.”

<sup>52</sup> Replace “horses” with “starships”, and take another look at the verses with the mind's eye...





*Vargr media love to tell lurid, hyper-dramatic tales of distant stars, where valiant Vargr fight impossible wars against overwhelming odds. The enemies are always absurdly advanced, and the Vargr heroes never have much besides pluck, aggression, daring personalities, and fantastic levels of luck to pull them through. (Well, Grandfather – depicted as The Ultimate Vargr – sometimes makes an cameo appearance.)*

This graphic is titled "Praedestinatio" © Tobias Roetsch.

See his work at <http://taenaron.deviantart.com/art/Praedestinatio-101266250>

### ***Ksir Mrilalaegruant The Civilized Wolf***

UPP 9CA79D, Age 33, Mixed Vargr

Skills: Liaison - 3, Linguistics - 3, Infighting (Vramrekh) - 3, Survival - 2, Admin - 1, Hunting - 1, Interview - 1, Persuasion - 1, Grav Vehicle - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Song - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, History - 0, Computer - 0, Sub-Machinegun - 0, Equestrian - 0

Languages: Rrakfugk (Native), Anglic (Julian, Transform), Arzula-C

#### Notes:

Infighting (Vramrekh) is a Vargr martial art, geared to leveraging Vargr agility to defeat superior human strength. When used against other Vargr, reduce the value of the skill by 1. When used against humans, reduce the combat value of human strength (chance to hit, and damage inflicted) by the Vramrekh skill level.

Rrakfugk is a widespread Irilitok language within the Asimikigir Confederation, the most prestigious member-state of the Julian Protectorate.

Arzula-C is the most common civilian language within the Hegemony of Lorean's Arzul Sector<sup>53</sup> systems.

Tools & Aids: Ambassador Mrilalaegruant usually bears no tools, aids, or weapons: that's the job of his assistants, secretaries, and bodyguards.

<sup>53</sup> Note that the K'kree name, Ingukrax Sector, is used at <http://www.travellermap.com>



*To the Vargr, there can be nothing so satisfying, so beautiful, as a good hunting pack on the move.*

This graphic is titled "Formations" © Paul Gibson. See his work at

<https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/formations/1854618/> and [www.gibsoncreation.com](http://www.gibsoncreation.com)

Visual: The Vargr sure looks like a gentle, easygoing, eager-to-please Irilitok Vargr: complete with big eyes, short snout, upright posture, and even the warm voice and soft, glowing golden-retriever fur. His dress though – in the style of a senior Menderes Company executive – doesn't match the body. Last you heard, you don't get to the C-level suite of a megacorp by being a friendly, obedient, self-sacrificing team player...

Opening Theme: "MOS 6581"<sup>54</sup>, Carbon Based Lifeforms - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syyl1rKpodw>

### ***Ambassador to Vargr Hell***

Acting Resident Envoy Mrilalaequiant represents the interests of three separate parties – the Julian Protectorate, the Menderes Corporation, and House Menderes – within the Imperial Empty Quarter. His diplomatic position is relatively weak: not only because he's only the temporary ambassador until the permanent resident – a full Consul – arrives on Nulinad (expected in the first half of this year, 993 Imperial), but because none of his superiors are much interested in the Imperial Empty Quarter – political interest is low at the moment, corporate markets are weak, and the House has no dynastic interests here. Still, at least he outranks (in certain arenas) the humanist

<sup>54</sup> From the comments: "The MOS Technology 6581/8580 SID (Sound Interface Device) is the built-in Programmable Sound Generator chip of Commodore's CBM-II, Commodore 64, Commodore 128 and Commodore MAX Machine home computers. It was one of the first sound chips of its kind to be included in a home computer prior to the digital sound revolution. Together with the VIC-II graphics chip, the SID was instrumental in making the C64 the best-selling computer in history, and is partly credited for initiating the demoscene."



ambassador of the Hegemony of Lorean, Valdin Gonsarles<sup>55</sup> – a position Envoy Mrilalaegruant takes great joy exploiting every chance he gets.



***An acolyte of the Church of the Stellar Divinity, visiting a fallen temple complex/shrine of his religion. Stellar Divinity is one of the major religions of the Third Imperium, even extending to many systems to trailing of Imperial borders – but after a brief flowering, the Empty Quarter proved hostile soil to their beliefs.***<sup>56</sup>

This graphic is titled “Pilgrimage” © Don Malo.

See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/PILGRIMAGE-360203730> and <http://www.artofmalo.com/>

Unlike the naval background of Sector Consul Gonsarles, the Resident Envoy was raised on the boardrooms where political power and corporate wealth mix and clash and intermingle. The style he was weaned on wasn't the classic Vilani bureaucratic command-and-control style, or the Solomani-school 'government-business partnership' so beloved by fascists both hard and soft, but instead a continuous tug of war between innumerable human and Vargr personality cults, with dashing corporate tycoons waging media wars against their pirate opponents (and the occasional fire-breathing religio/ideological fanatic) and the mob being pulled this way and that by various demagogues and pundits. As this is the Protectorate we're talking about, most of the major political parties/corporate concerns/dynastic networks/pirate bands have both human and Vargr components, working together to a single goal.<sup>57,58</sup>

Compared to the joyful vigour, unpredictability, and a deep mutual understanding and trust within Amdukan Sector, The Empty Quarter is so *overflowing* with racial hostility and malice that it makes the Resident Envoy gag.<sup>59</sup> From being served raisin cakes by the Solomani locals<sup>60</sup> wherever he goes, to the coldness the Republican Ovaghoun Vargr (and their Vilani servants, obedient to Tradition and the Masters...) treat him due to his Irilitok heritage,<sup>61</sup> the place seems to grow in repulsiveness and ugliness every day. Nowadays, Mrilalaegruant spends his

<sup>55</sup> See *Stellar Reaches* #21, Page 46-49. Note that Sector Consul Gonsarles is quite willing and able to match the Acting Resident Envoy in word and deed... and that the Hegemony of Lorean is an Associated State of the Protectorate, and not a Member per se.

<sup>56</sup> See *Stellar Reaches* #11, page 15-16, and the *Gateway to Destiny* book for more information.

<sup>57</sup> The Rukadukaz Republic operates under a particular cultural hierarchy – Ovaghoun Vargr rule, Vilani humans are respected servants, aides and advisors, Irilitok Vargr serve both – that isn't the norm in the Protectorate. Most Julian's are Mixed Vilani or pro-human Irilitok Vargr who are quite willing to follow the human lead, and are treated as full equals.

<sup>58</sup> Most of The True Vargr Gods groups in the Republic accept Vilani members for the 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' drudgework, but none tolerate them for leadership positions. Conformist bureaucratic cultures are not famed for their blinding charisma...

<sup>59</sup> The Resident Envoy should be glad he wasn't here even two centuries ago, when things were definitely worse...

<sup>60</sup> As all the local Solomani – Arab, East Indians, and American Indians – knows, raisins are highly poisonous to Vargr, bringing about severe illness and even death. To the Solomani of course, this is merely 'collecting on old debts' inflicted by innumerable Vargr raids.

<sup>61</sup> Once again: every time the ruling Ovaghoun see the 'cute, harmless, and friendly' Irilitok, they see a human-wrought parody of themselves, an abomination that they *instinctively* wish to rip apart...



time in the Diplomatic Quarter of the Imperial Sector Capital City of Jajapur, Nulinad<sup>62</sup>, as much for the mental escape as for the intelligence.



*Wherever there's trouble in the Empty Quarter, you'll find low-profile types sending encrypted reports to mysterious associates. This graphic is titled "Station" © Don Malo.*

See his work at <http://donmalo.deviantart.com/art/STATION-436887947> and <http://www.artofmalo.com/>

As least he is quite safe in the Diplomatic Quarter: after all, there's no way any of the local xenophobes could get past all the high-tech security – seen and unseen – that keeps things locked down properly.

Closing Theme: "Imperfect Lock", Hans Zimmer - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8K6jjNmgn4>

*If you reject the food,  
ignore the customs,  
fear the religion  
and avoid the people,  
you might better stay at home.*

*– James Michener*

### ***Thurfenr Gersuag***

#### ***The Friendly Wolf***

UPP AB8BBD, Age 30, Irilitok Vargr

Skills: Carousing - 2, Streetwise - 2, Forgery - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Admin - 1, Disguise - 1, Liaison - 1, Scrounge - 1, Infighting - 1, Linguistics - 1, Bribery - 1, Jack-o-Trades - 1, Energy Weapon - 1, Computer - 0, Laser Weapon - 0

Languages: Rrakfugk (Native), Anglic (Julian, Transform),

Rrakfugk is a widespread Irilitok language within the Asimikigir Confederation, the most prestigious member-state of the Julian Protectorate.

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<sup>62</sup> For more on Jajapur, see **Stellar Reaches** #24, page 113-115

Tools & Aids: Thurfenr Gersuag usually has no tools or equipment on her person, save an energy weapon (a one-shot plasma stick/walking stick, a sign of her membership with the House Enutax/Great Pack Khadufgut (a Julian human/Vargr dual-dynasty) and a comlink to the local Julian diplomatic consulate.

Visual: While her current mate *looks like* “a gentle, easygoing, eager-to-please Irilitok Vargr”, Thurfenr Gersuag *actually is* one, from the big eyes/small snout cuteness (in human eyes), to the natural odour that attracts male Vargr like flies to honey, to her happy willingness to follow instructions regardless of the species giving the orders.

Addendum: As of 993, Thurfenr is never found apart from her current litter of two pups, Grailig and Rruts, young enough at seven T-years old. They are cute and friendly now, and – thanks to the human genetic re-engineering of the Irilitok race, long ago – will *stay* cute and friendly (if somewhat larger) for the rest of their lives.

Opening Theme: “Children [Dream Version]”, Robert Miles - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC5ca6Hsb2Q>



*The latest Cultic Flower, raised up two years ago, in 991 Imperial on Nisaga. This graphic is titled “Origin Unknown Reloaded (for wblack)” © Neil Thatcher. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/origin-unknown-reloaded-for-wblack-/2443532/>*

### ***The Hook-up***

Gersuag was always sought-after by various hound dogs, and she had difficulty balancing her gregarious social life with her duties as a low-level field agent for Great Pack Khadufgut. When a friend got the chance to meet with a successful Vargr in the employ of the Menderes Corporation, Gersuag managed to manipulate/social engineer her friend to give up the chance to meet Ambassador Ksir Mrilalaegruant – a chance that Gersuag promptly took for herself.<sup>63</sup>

At the end of the day, Gersuag was simply better at ‘the mating dance’ than her competitors, which is why she is the Ambassador’s consort... for now.

### ***Looking for Purgatory***

The Ambassador sees the sector with extreme distaste, but Gersuag is attempting to get him to “stop hiding in the capital, and so see something of the sector!” He remains resistant to her nagging, so his more daring mate is

<sup>63</sup> In such mating competitions, Ovaghoun Vargr females tend to follow the group consensus on which mate is suitable for which (something Vilani women would not find out of the ordinary), while Suedzuk Vargr go directly to the violent infighting stage.

looking for a small, reputable ship that is available for a charter, for herself and her pups to see something of the region.



***A child sees the beauty of a desert world, something that is missed by many weary Travellers.***

**This graphic is titled "Layers of Impossibility" © Arthur Rosa.**

**See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Layers-of-Impossibility-539920511>**

As she is unwilling to put her pups lives in real danger, she has *reluctantly* struck off most Solomani-dominant worlds: but this leaves several Vilani, Bwap, and 'other' systems that she can take a deep sniff at. She will also be taking along one to three Julian Protectorate bodyguards for her family's protection. One to three Protectorate cultural exchange & trade assistants and a minor media manager will also join the tour, to give a boost to the Julian name locally with cultural fairs, lectures, a tour of the local talk shows, and maybe some Protectorate movies and other recorded entertainment.

**Referee:** As long as she says off the Solomani systems, her tour is actually likely to be a minor success. PCs who charter their ship (and their services as crew) for Gersuag are generally in for a pleasant (and profitable!) adventure in this case. As for breaking the rule, and visiting most Solomani systems in the Six Subsectors... let's just say 'the hatred is real' and leave it at that.

Closing Theme: "Ride like the Wind", Christopher Cross - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur8ftRFb2Ac>





**If you want some nice deep holes drilled into a heavily armoured position in the Rukadukaz Republic, the Ghiinrangghong (Ikonaz Vargr<sup>64</sup>: Anglic "Scorpion") is what you're looking for. This graphic is titled "Scorpion Tank" © Erik van Helvoirt. See his gallery at <http://phade01.deviantart.com/>**

*I am the Lord, and there is none else.  
I form the light, and create darkness:  
I make peace, and create evil:  
I the Lord do all these things.  
— Isaiah 45:6a-7*

***Basil Tribulation  
Surprised by Survival***

UPP 742C88, Age 71, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Ships Boat - 2, Combat Rifleman - 2, Pilot - 1, Computer - 1, Mechanical - 1, Electronics - 1, Gravitics - 1, Sensor Ops - 1, Commo - 1, Navigation - 1, Handgun - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Early Firearms - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0  
Languages: Anglic (Transform)

Tools & Aids: A handgun and several electronic diagnostic tools, as well as various databases in his datapad.

Visual: Fairly ho-hum and nondescript for the Empty Quarter: weathered and heavily lined light brown skin, dark salt'n'pepper wavy hair, a long nose, brown eyes, and an angular face. Tribulation prefers to wear long-obsolete Imperial Army work overalls, cut in a style last seen during the reign of Margaret II.

Opening Theme: "The Logical Song", Roger Hodgson- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcX1qA1Etc8>

<sup>64</sup> Ikonaz Vilani is effectively the same as Ikonaz Vargr, but with the official pronunciation softened to make it easier on human throats. (Doing Things the Official Way is important to the Vilani.) But then again, it can be argued that Ikonaz Vargr is a variant of Vilani, heavily reworked for Vargr use...



***For soldiers within the Empty Quarter, it is either men or Vargr that are the enemy – but not always.***

**This graphic is titled “Life on Planet Rios” © Neil Thatcher. See his work at**

**<https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/life-on-planet-rios/2481346/>**

### ***Juvenilia***

Long ago and far away, Tribulation was conscripted into the Imperial Army, a transfer from his old low-tech world with its ‘black powder’ army. Like most low-tech transfers, he did well enough in mastering the new technology, and even after his discharge he never went back home, instead spending the decades as an army support technician with various mercenary outfits & planetary units, serving at one time or another on a third the systems of the Imperial Empty Quarter.

### ***Senilia***

The man raised six children, split between two women (his earlier wife divorced him): by this time, he should be retired with his wife in a small but neat home, with his sons sending enough money for him to get by. But that’s not how it worked out: after the Imperium stripped the Six Subsectors of most experienced military talent to strengthen Imperial forces in the Solomani Rim War, Tribulation found himself called up again by his old employer, waving much-needed credits before his nose. He was supposed to be just a trainer, getting young kids up to speed<sup>65</sup>: but the way things are going, he’s going to be at the front lines, soon enough.

### ***Mystery***

Tribulation has a puzzle he wants to solve before death, drawing closer even now, finally catches up to him: not so much ‘why is there evil’ or ‘why I, alone of my old battle-brothers, am still alive’ as much as ‘why is evil diminishing, at least in this neck of the woods’. In the old days, the humans slaughtered each other by the millions over race & religion live on Tri-V, led by the greatest men in the sector: now, pirates secretly rob and kill tens of thousands in the shadows, lead by criminals who shun the limelight... in human space, at least.<sup>66</sup>

Tribulation is thankful to God & Emperor for the progress he has seen in his long years, but he still wants to know *why* things are different now. Nobody has given him a satisfactory explanation: the character of men simply hasn’t changed that much since his youth; silly claims that ‘religion makes one violent, but atheism makes us peaceful’ are demonstrably false; and the sector is about as impoverished as it was seven decades ago, so superior financial self-interest doesn’t ring true.

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<sup>65</sup> This simply wouldn’t be possible in 2016: the rate of technological change is just too fast. But the speed of tech advances is a good deal slower in the Third Imperium, and indeed, in all of Charted Space history. (Excepting the Darrians for a few centuries, and to a lesser extent the Terrans of the AD 1700s-2300s.)

<sup>66</sup> In the Rukadukaz Republic, pirates are Charisma-fuelled media heroes, publicly beloved, and hog the limelight... while the complaints of the impoverished and backward residents of the Six Subsectors are ignored at best, laughed at at worst.

The old support tech is pretty sharp and observant, even in his old age: but he knows that he's missing the key piece of the puzzle. He doesn't have much time to find it, but he'll do his level best to get the answers he needs.

Closing Theme: "Unspoken", Elizabeth Naccarato - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtpaNpWkok4>



*The last Imperial Scout survey of Mentinnium, in 935 Imperial. "A complete waste of time, but orders are orders." This graphic is titled "Retro Titan" © Justinas Vitkus  
See his work at <http://justv23.deviantart.com/art/Retro-Titan-371606844>*

*To see what's in front of your nose is a constant struggle.  
– George Orwell*

### ***Aangoimnig***

#### ***Death on a Mountain***

UPP 9DAB54, Age 30, Suedzuk Vargr

Skills: Rifleman - 2, Grav Belt - 2, Hunting (Traps) - 2, Infighting - 1, Stealth - 1, Scrounge - 1, Recon - 1, Survival - 1, Electronics - 1, History - 1, Mechanical - 1, Computer - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Swimming - 0

Languages: Khethuksdzengts (Native: a Suedzuk pack language, with only 50,000 speakers in existence.)

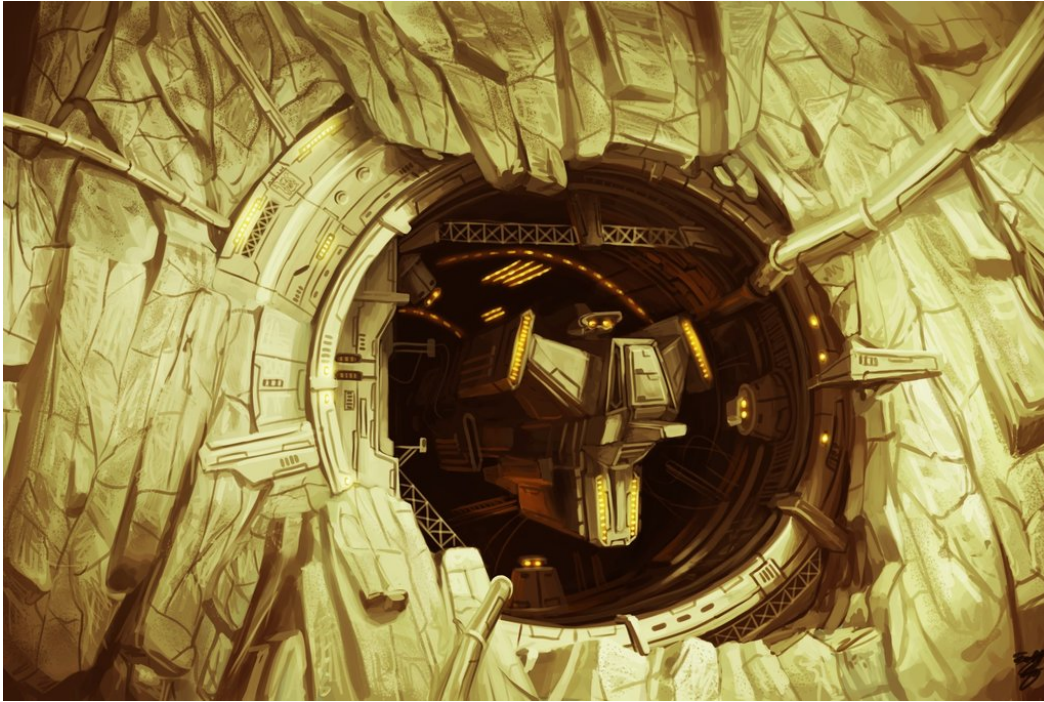
Tools & Aids: Mountain climbing equipment, air recycling/filtering equipment (depending on the environment), a way to haul supplies and equipment across mountainous terrain (depending on the Referee: from a pack animal to an anti-grav platform to a robot).

Also carried, two high-powered rifles: one an unpowered slug rifle w/scope (and non-reflecting glass), and another a self-aiming rifle with both regular and course-correcting bullets.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBC8IFWC1P0> - "The Gun That Aims Itself" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjro8um8-YE> - DARPA Homing bullets



Both Aangoimig's claws and teeth have been reinforced with non-metallic ceramics, for more traditional kills. His superior endurance and strength are a matter of conditioning and exercise, than biotech or chemical assistance. His all-natural agility is above average for the Vargr, boosted only by experience.



*Khethuksfel Pack repurposes another hijacked Hegemony freighter, to bring more of her kin to a new lair.*

This graphic is titled "Enustah Refueling Dock" © UNGDI-SEA

See his work at <http://ungdi-sea.deviantart.com/art/Enustah-Refueling-Dock-265417750>

Visual: In the field, TL 12 chameleon camouflage is preferred, so you won't be seeing him on the job. (Note: Aangoimig does not like battle armour, and uses only the cammo cloth.) If working in an airless environment, his suit is geared for endurance, multiple redundancy and ease of repair, not resistance to bullets or lasers.

Back in the base, Aangoimig is a strong and tall grey/black Vargr, with the tell-tale red highlights that prove Suedzuk heritage. His Charisma level is four: 'a commoner worth his salt' in Imperial terms, but nothing extraordinary or commanding.

Opening Theme: "The Power of One", Michael Richard Plowman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AanqikyqG4>

### **Secret Exodus**

One of the more paranoid packs of a very paranoid race, the Khethuksfel Pack has managed to survive in intensely hostile Hegemonic space by being very choosy about their victims, when and how they strike, and highly disciplined clean-up. With the Hegemony being somewhat less vigilant when it comes to native pirates (due to an overall decline in pirate attacks), the Pack has decided to take the moment as a golden opportunity to exit the Hegemony of Lorean, and relocate into better (or at least less unforgiving and lethal) hunting ranges in Imperial Space.

Already, 2/3rds of the 50,000-strong pack has silently pulled out of the old hidden base in the Oort clouds of Tindhakh system – careful not to leave a whisper, a stray radio signal, or an unshielded jumpspace flash for the

forces of the Hegemon to pick up and home on to – and are settling deep into their new home, deep in the heart of Mentinnium<sup>68</sup>, an unremarkable moon of one of Muna’s gas giants. Over the next ten years, the rest of the pack should trickle in: once empty, the old abandoned lair will be covertly sold to the highest Vargr bidder.

As for Muna, the guiding principle will be ‘don’t foul your own nest’. The Khethuksfel Pack knows well the power of statistical analysis, and have no intention to do their actual killing anywhere *near* their hidden new home. Quiet negotiations are being made with the Shadow Cartel and the less anti-Suedzuk pirate corporations of Ikon to arrange for corsair production, equipment, shell corporations, and technical training. If all goes well, the home base will be accessed by visiting packmates (bringing in new equipment, supplies, and technical advances) perhaps once a generation (40 T-years).



***Tindhakh’s gas giant Ringirth is an old friend of the Khethuksfel Pack – but too heavily guarded by Hegemony stations and sensors to be visited nowadays. This graphic is titled “Nocturnal Deam” © Gabriel Gajdos***  
See his work at <http://pipper-svk.deviantart.com/art/Nocturnal-Dream-135552715>

### **Secret Guards**

There is no reason for any ship to visit Mentinnium: numerous prospectors and research missions over the centuries have found nothing worth exploiting here, no hint of hidden treasure. After the settlement is complete and properly hidden away, new investigators are better left alone, to return home with nothing in their hands, than be ‘disappeared’ and possibly raise unhealthy suspicions in the wrong quarters.

Still... the resettlement isn’t complete yet, and despite every precaution, something might get out. To the Pack, it’s important that any stranger who discovers what’s going on doesn’t live to tell the tale.

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<sup>68</sup> This is the Imperial name: the new settlers have rechristened the moon ‘Vrgeghzaelarai’ in their own language.



***Unlike most Vargr, Khethuksfel Pack ships avoid the ‘finned shark’ look in their starships: the Hegemony has taught them expensive lessons on the importance of discretion, lessons they have not forgotten. This graphic is titled “Scout” © Sami Mattila. See his works at <http://smattila.deviantart.com/art/Scout-201494615>***

Angoimnig intends to help the Pack out in a variety of ways. For example, the entrance to the new base is set within an intimidating set of mountain ranges: explorers will have to climb several near-sheer ledges and detect and follow certain pathways to reach the really critical hidden access points.<sup>69</sup> Fortunately, those paths are tailored for Agility-12+ Vargr, not Agility-6 humans: most human teams will turn back after a sufficient number have slipped and hurdled to their deaths.

Angoimnig – who currently sleeps on climbing bivvys, dangling over the mountain valleys<sup>70</sup> like a newborn cub on his mother’s back– also doesn’t mind using his high level of agility in combination with a zero-emission sniping rifle, ‘for those more stubborn scouts.’ But whenever possible, indirect means are preferred: deadfall traps, artificial radio-blackouts, hacking air/rafts while they’re in-flight, even old-school misdirection could be a useful stratagem in the toolkit.

The Blood Vargr lacks the grenade launchers, combat armour, and handheld anti-air/space rocket launchers more heavily equipped guards bear. Grav belts are expensive, so are supplied only when mission-critical. But Angoimnig doesn’t mind hunting light, feeling that his wits, foresight, speed, and knowledge of the terrain provide all the armour he needs.

Closing Theme: “The Wolf and the Moon”, BrunuhVille - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wj9jkVQS-No>

<sup>69</sup> The Khethuksfel have never heard of Afghanistan: but if they were told, they’d see the Afghans as natural kinsmen. The Swiss, on the other hand, would be far too corporate and tame for their tastes – only their large militia and home-based weapons would seem familiar.

<sup>70</sup> I have not specified if this moon has an atmosphere, or what kind of atmosphere it is, but gravity is assumed to be around that of Earth.



The Khethuksfel Pack's military operates at around TL 12-13 right now. Their training doesn't follow the mass army format of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but instead is more closer to the special forces format of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where small Vargr groups – never larger than company size, and often a mere 6-Vargr fire team – create an inordinate amount of damage. Individual Charisma is important, but so is the tight-knit pack unity and hierarchy, so there is a tension between impressing your peers, and not letting them down by failing to show up when they need you due to the temptation of showboating.

A typical Khethuksfel combat unit is cross-trained, so 50% casualties can be sustained before combat effectiveness declines drastically. Agility, speed and creative tactics are at a premium: the natural Suedzuk bloodlust is strongly restrained by the paranoia regarding enemy intentions. (Many Blood Vargr packs were destroyed by letting their aggressive emotions drown their tactical instincts, a cultural flaw the Khethuksfel is aware of and trains against.) Traps and distance strikes, from IEDs to sniping to laser blinding to communication hacking/disruption, is strongly preferred, both to preserve limited forces and as a way to leverage technology as a force multiplier.

At their best, the members of a Khethuksfel combat unit are close-knit enough to work as a single unit. They have not only practiced fighting together for years<sup>71</sup>, but are also taught to adapt to meet the unexpected, from wounded/dead team members to attacks from unexpected groups, including Imperials and K'kree forces. On the other hand, it's hard for these groups to integrate and trust reinforcements: because of the difficulty, most combat units never bring in new blood, and die out when the last member – a lone wolf independent operative<sup>72</sup> – finally falls.

A half-dozen of the pack are trained telepaths/empaths, and are able to generate a limited 'group battlemind' in the field. Sometimes they are used as a uncrackable communication net, but they are more commonly used as a high-level military unit, able to not only co-operate even more closely than the typical tightly-knit unit, but are better able to read enemy intentions and plans.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Sir Akio I Gironi***

#### ***Let Justice be Done, Though the Heavens Fall***

UPP 23587B, Age 200 (104), Mixed Vilani

Skills: Legal - 4, Admin - 2, History - 2, Linguistics - 1, Carousing - 1, Research - 1, Streetwise - 1, Handgun - 1, Interview - 1, Hovercraft - 0, Jack-o-Trades - 0, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform), Modern Vilani

Tools & Aids: An old man now, Sir Akio rarely uses any tools besides an old TL 8 laptop and a fountain pen, and would have difficulty learning something new. Fortunately, he is wealthy enough to 1) have many backup laptops of the same make and operating system, and 2) have these laptops wirelessly networked to the TL 12 servers that actually houses the data he needs.

Visual: Quite healthy for his apparently 104 years, Sir Akio is thin, short, lean, and surprisingly wiry and tough. He prefers to walk with a cane, and – in addition to his anagathics habit – also likes to smoke his pipe. Usually, it's high-quality tobacco, but in the Imperium there is a range of interesting substances – some spicy and tasty, some mind-altering, some with odd colours, airborne patterns and behaviour – that he likes to sample every so often.

Opening Theme: "The Sky", Mannheim Steamroller <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocXRRmapgrE>

<sup>71</sup> One of the problems of 'keeping a low profile' in the Hegemony of Lorean is that real-life combat experience against humans is not widespread. Sure, the pack loves battle, but it's more important to stay below the radar.

<sup>72</sup> Yes, the very last unit survivor may have many, many ghosts accompanying him.

<sup>73</sup> A few of these Vargr can read minds that think in the Azulan language, common in the Hegemony, but (as of 993) none can read minds that think in Anglic or Vilani. Empaths can still feel emotions, morale & confidence levels, and stress, however.



*The closing battle of the Final Jizani War. As is so often the case, vast numbers of lives were burned away, to merely delay the inevitable for a few more weeks, maybe another month...*

This graphic is titled "Their Finest Hour" © UNGDI-SEA

See his work at <http://ungdi-sea.deviantart.com/art/Their-Finest-Hour-288137111>

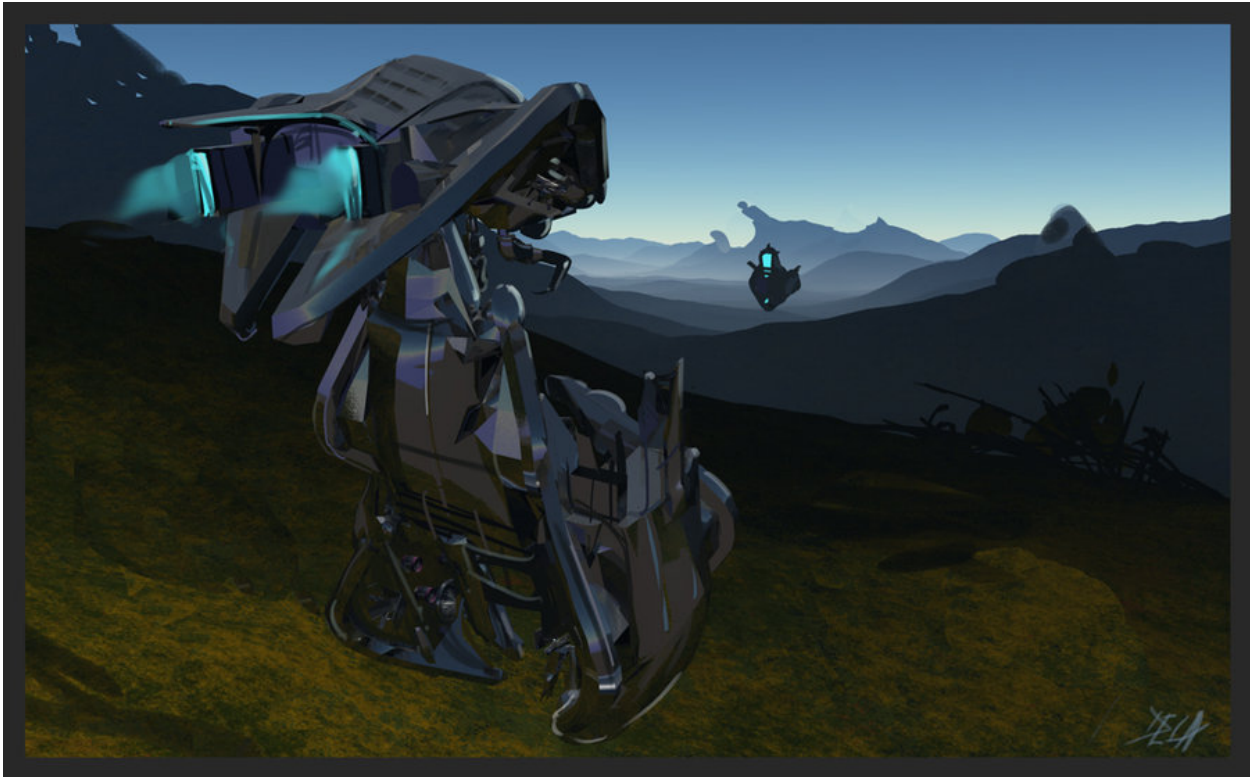
### ***The Last of the Investigators***

Sir Akio has spent the last 67 years of his life investigating the origins of the Final Jizani War. In a nutshell, an EMP detonation stuck the Sultanate of Jizan, destroying most electrical equipment, the financial & information networks, and most agricultural and sanitation equipment. The possession and use of nuclear weapons is aggressively banned by the Imperium, but the hostile neighbours of the former Sultanate insist that they had nothing to do with it: instead, they produced data that suggested that the Sultanate failed to pay Danegeld to the Kzokhfuell, a feared pirate group from the Vagr/Vilani world of Ikon, and so was punished for it.

With the sector in an uproar over the perceived failure of the Imperial Navy to protect her charges, and relations with the Julian Protectorate in rough waters – only exacerbated by loud denials that any such Ikonaz pirate bands even existed – only a few investigators were tasked to actually verify the documents. The analysis came back positive, which gave the Imperium a chance to rhetorically unite the sector against the high-tech barbarian outsiders (instead of setting off another round of tribal reprisals), and build up sufficient regional Naval strength and authority to drive out the Kzokhfuell from Imperial Space.<sup>74</sup>

Over the decades, Sir Akio has continued to pursue leads that suggest that the Kzokhfuell was encouraged to pressure the Sultanate of Jizan by Jizan's enemies: but definite proof has eluded him, even after the Kzokhfuell disintegrated and the possible actors of the drama aged and died. With the exile of the Jizani people and the Sultanate herself dead for 87 years, Sir Akio is the only Imperial Ministry of Justice Investigator working on the case: after he dies, it will cease to be a criminal matter, and instead just an issue for historians to debate.

<sup>74</sup> Yes, this dealt with the symptom, and not the cause: a high-tech/high-pop world that is friendly with pirates. However, the Imperium find it cheaper to manage Vagr piracy and incursions than attempt to burn it out, root-and-branch, in what would rapidly become a ferocious interstellar race war: and in any case, it's far easier to deal with the somewhat predictable Ovaghoun than other Vagr cultures.



*Drones still looking for evidence, on a Imperial war crime decades old... This graphic is titled "Incoming"*

© Goran Delic. See his work at <http://delic.deviantart.com/art/Incoming-194843910>

### ***A Golden Lead***

As part of current operations against pirates – the Shadow Cartel, in this case – a derelict pirate base was uncovered in <system name>. The Colonial Naval forces couldn't spend the time to properly scout the entire base, but were able to determine that it was abandoned in haste at least 70 years ago. Sir Akio financed an expedition to the site in 991, two years ago: it was definitely a Kzokhuell command centre, but all the major equipment – including the mainframes and databanks – were yanked out.

But the Imperial Knight has a hunch that something valuable was left behind. Certainly there were enough abandoned datalinks, smartphones, laptops, and even pseudopaper documents scattered about here and there. Even the routers and network nodes may still hold data, after all these decades. A properly financed group of investigators, techno-archaeologists, and software forensic analysts should be able to piece together the story – either onsite, or at an Imperial sector or subsector capital – and finally let Sir Akio point the finger at the culprit before the Sector Court, with evidence that is 'beyond a reasonable doubt'.

The Referee can set up the political repercussions as he pleases, from the quiet arrest of a few aging politicians and naval officers, to a huge religion-fuelled controversy, once again providing an opportunity to reopen old wounds and restart old wars – the 'fall of the heavens' backed with nuclear fire. Or maybe the victims and the victors will actually come to a reconciliation: the Jizani won't be coming back, but expressions of genuine regret and repentance would go far.

Opening Theme: "Fresh Aire", Mannheim Steamroller <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI3dX-xeDLE>





*Money never sleeps in the Nulinad markets – but blood is far thicker than water in this sector, so the aspiring dealmaker can't just trust in the numbers like back in the Imperial Core. The personal angle has to be respected as well, to get anything done. This graphic is titled "Rail Jet, view 2 " © Max V. Nimos. See his work at <https://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/rail-jet-view-2/1686703/>*

### **Squire Alroy Ó Foghlú Causing Trouble**

UPP 9A68EB, Age 30, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Admin - 3, Economics - 2, Legal - 2, Research - 2, Mathematics - 1, Acting - 1, Psychology - 1, Persuasion - 1, Liaison - 1, Computer - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Handgun - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform)

Tools & Aids: A wealthy and fully-vested investment banker, Squire Alroy has access to all the high-tech technical toys he needs to pursue his career – and to maintain a suitably superior level of status above the locals. Most of his work tools are tied to highly specialized algorithms, for trading, value determination, risk management, etc.

Visual: Squire Alroy has the same serious, disciplined, intelligent, buttoned-down look all the other investment bankers have, right across Imperial Space. The only distinctive feature here is his shock of red hair – a gift from his Solomani ancestors.

Opening Theme: "Mere Image", Mannheim Steamroller <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpaKLbb1Kaw>

Squire Alroy is from Antares Sector, which is automatically a strike against him in the comparatively poor Empty Quarter. He's also an outsider, a suit, with no ties to the various clan, racial & religious networks that shape the culture of the Imperium's Six Subsectors – no obligations, but also no protection, or any 'early warning network' in case of trouble. The Squire has supreme faith in the numbers and the algorithms – a faith that in other men was brutally torn apart, in the personality-driven Empty Quarter.

Now I don't actually know any commercial bankers, but a commercial banker was reputed to be just an ordinary American businessman with ordinary American ambitions. He lent a few hundred million dollars each day to South American countries. But really, he meant no harm. He was only doing what he was told to do by someone higher up in an endless chain of command.... He had a wife, a station wagon, 2.2 children, and a dog that brought him his slippers when he returned home at six...

An investment banker was a breed apart, a member of a master race of deal makers. He possessed vast, almost unimaginable, talent and ambition. If he had a dog it snarled. He had two little red sports cars yet wanted four. To get them, he was, for a man in a suit, surprisingly willing to cause trouble.

— From *Liar's Poker*, Michael Lewis

Yet, unlike so many other outsiders who thought 'to beat the ignorant locals', the Squire has not only survived, but has prospered. For many planetary potentates, corporate boards, and Imperial households, he is a reliable and profitable advisor-for-hire, able to cut through the blather to get directly at the kernel of opportunity – and a distinctive willingness to bend rules and engage in some very sophisticated financial legerdemain to squeeze out that extra 3% in profit... at a cost to be paid for by someone else.



*Once his blockbuster interstellar M&A deal gets the approval of three separate Imperial Ministry of Commerce offices – in Antares, the Empty Quarter, and Ley – Squire Alroy intends to enjoy a quick, well-deserved vacation hand gliding around one of the famed Shimmering Vortexes of Ishmaga/Antares. But his own jump3 yacht won't get there and back fast enough: surely there is a reliable jump5 courier available for charter somewhere...? This graphic is titled "Cryzlis" © Sami Mattila. See his work at <http://smattila.deviantart.com/art/Cryzlis-32932644>*



Right now, the wave of piracy across the Six Subsectors means opportunity for discreet money-laundering for certain clients, additional government bonds to finance military expenditures, corporate pull-backs to avoid loss (and so new niches for daring entrepreneurs, willing to grab what the major have abandoned), and disrupted capital and trade markets – with excellent market-timing opportunities, for those in the know. The Squire plans to exploit each of these revenue-building openings to the maximum extent possible, and exit at or near the peak – just before everything goes to pot.

Now it is not good for the Christian's health to hustle the Aryan brown,  
For the Christian riles, and the Aryan smiles and he weareth the Christian down;  
And the end of the fight is a tombstone white with the name of the late deceased,  
And the epitaph drear: "A Fool lies here who tried to hustle the East."  
— From *The Naulahka*, Rudyard Kipling

Closing Theme: “Amber”, Mannheim Steamroller <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRXeJ0uU9TE>



*Europa, currently held by the Solomani Confederation. Current Naval insists that least one of the four gas giants of Sol System must be secured before moving directly against Terra – and preferably all four, to deny reinforcements from outside the system. Jupiter is the preferred target, as it's closest to both Mars and Terra: but there's precious little information on Solomani garrison forces. For example, if there are mobile PA or Meson guns emplaced on Europa (under the ice of her global sea), a major Imperial Marine deployment will be necessary to dig them out and spike the guns. This graphic is titled “Europa” © Justinas Vitkus. See his work at <http://justv23.deviantart.com/art/Europa-411355638>*

**Sir Dalpati Khugaragakan-MacKenzie**  
**A Helping Hand, in Times of Trouble**

UPP 53ABAB, Age 42, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Persuasion - 2, Liaison - 2, Leadership - 2, Interview - 2, Linguistics - 2, Grav Vehicle - 1, Streetwise - 1, Bribery - 1, Hovercraft - 1, Lighter than Air - 1, Legal - 1, Biology - 1, Admin - 1, Instruction - 1, Geology - 1, Meteorology - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0, Brawling - 0, Handgun - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform), Bwap, Hindi Empty Quarter Trade Language

Tools & Aids: The Imperial Knight doesn't carry many tools on his person, just a general-purpose datalink and a hum TL 9 laptop. As a rule, the Knight is unarmed unless he is forewarned that he is entering dangerous waters.

Visual: Sir Dalpati is a rather swarthy, short and squat man, graced with a cheerful face and an easy smile. Richly dressed, he walks with a regal air that suits a Duke more than a Knight, but naturally draws close to people regardless of their station in life, instead of separating himself from the commoners.





***For-profit hydroponic installations can be quite profitable, if you keep an eye on the bottom line. But expect problems if a) the local population has problems buying food at the cost + profit margin you need to keep things running and b) they decide that it's time to simply take what you spent quite a lot of sweat and money setting up. Pump up the hostility if it's one of the more wealthy & connected populations (Vilani, Bwap, Iper'mar) running the moon farms, and the less wealthy & favoured ethnic groups (Solomani Arab & East Indian) who need to fill hungry bellies... This graphic is titled "Moon Hydroponics" © Eric van Helvoirt.***

See his work at <http://justv23.deviantart.com/art/Europa-411355638>

### ***Building a Reputation***

Raised in a human enclave on Datawo, a Bwap world, young Khugaragakan-MacKenzie was fortunate to gain a Ducal scholarship to the University of Nulinad. While he did well enough in his studies – gaining a foundation in biology, meteorology and geology – he eventually found the scientific life more tedious than he had hoped, instead turning to life as a journalist (much to the disgust of his family).

After being a dispatch journalist for years – writing brief, to the point stories about the major events of a world, meant for the consumption of fee-paying subscribers (usually financial analysts and interstellar traders & corporate concerns) – he graduated into getting his own syndicated column, writing in-depth about a particular facet of a world... light on human interest, heavy on the pros and cons on how to profit from a particular business opportunity.<sup>75</sup>

Khugaragakan-MacKenzie's reputation was made with his Imersee articles, where he detailed how Imersee LIC was profiting from gathering toxic waste from the major inhabited worlds, to merely dump them elsewhere on the same world (instead of depositing them on a local airless moon, as per contract). The scandal rocked the sector, the resulting lawsuits destroyed Imersee, and the Imperium granted Khugaragakan-MacKenzie a Knighthood for

<sup>75</sup> Most Emptyheads are deeply incurious about their neighbours... except in regard on ways to profit from them, or how these outsiders might be a threat to their own people, religion, liberty, or wealth.

bravely revealing corporate corruption and (far more important) violation of interstellar contracts, despite the danger – and so find something for the whole sector to hate together, instead of their usual intermural feuding.<sup>76</sup>



*There are very few examples of East Asian architecture within the Empty Quarter: this example is set on the Ong Vong Estate on Nulinad, owned by House Teoh of Anging/Sotri/Lishun and run as an exclusive tea plantation/meditation retreat/exile site for troublesome relatives. Anging is ~55 parsecs from Nulinad: that's five month's journey, assuming a fleet-footed jump5 ship and the usual week-in-jumpspace, week-in-port cycle. The distances involved make any contact with the main branch of the family a major event. This graphic is titled "Morning Tea" © Jan Vavrusa. See his work at <http://janvavrusa.deviantart.com/art/Morning-Tea-442749224>*

### **Protect LIC**

Afterwards, the newly minted Sir Dalpati was tapped to lead Protect LIC, an interstellar insurance agency that provides planetary-scale protection for major natural disasters such as asteroid impacts, supervolcano eruptions, solar flares, hyperquakes, continent-scale flooding, ecosystem rot, etc. Originally founded during the 800s when infidel worlds could be certain to never get a finger of Imperial help by the then-dominant local Arab nobility, the Stellar Sheiks<sup>77</sup>, Protect LIC allowed the local unbelievers to assist each other in the face of disasters – at least, disasters that were not inflicted by the Arab-controlled Imperial Navy Sector Fleet of the era.

Sir Dalpati is now attempting to branch out to include the Arab Muslim systems – against much of his own membership, and facing a cool reception from the Arabs. While working on lowering that set of walls, a whole new set of divisions is growing: the Vilani (and the Bwap), growing more interested in building their own insurance agency. Doing so will allow Vilani and Bwap money to protect Vilani and Bwap worlds – and cut off the less ~~wealthy~~ worthy worlds. Without the financial backing of the Vilani and Bwap systems, Protect LIC will collapse.

To prevent this, the Knight is gambling on the influence of the Lazisari, from a powerful Mixed Vilani world of Lazisar. Following Kikhushégi – a syncretic religion, combining Sunni Islam and Vilani Traditions – Lazisar could be the linchpin to not only hold Protect LIC together, but even expand it. Sir Dalpati is also trying to sway the Imperial

<sup>76</sup> Things are pretty bad, when the Imperium would rather throw a *corporation* under the bus instead of letting the locals crack each other's heads open, as is their wont.

<sup>77</sup> *Stellar Reaches* #12, page 9. Or, just visit Egypt, and observe the treatment Christians receive in Muslim Brotherhood hospitals.



Dukes to provide additional funding and support for Protect LIC – something that’s rather difficult, at a time when every spare credit is being earmarked for either the Imperial War effort, or local defense against the pirates.

Closing Theme: “If I Could”, Pat Metheny Group <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xUBvCWJxBY>



**One of many military-run research stations, found across Charted Space. This graphic is titled “Air Force Base” © Gary Jamroz-Palma. See his work at [www.artofgary.com](http://www.artofgary.com)**

Your airliner has been forced down in the burning hot desert. Your best plan is to:

- Remain in the shade, moving as little as possible.
- Take off all the clothing you can and breath thorough your mouth.
- Stay active so perspiration will cool you.

From “Would You Survive?”

<http://staff.esuhdsd.org/danielle/english%20department%20village/lordoftheflies/Would%20You%20Survive.pdf>

**Dr. Sarek Vorian**  
**All Alone, In The Dark**

UPP A589F9, Age 42, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Admin - 3, Geology - 3, Liaison - 2, Jack-o-Trades - 2, Archaeology - 1, Robotics - 1, Handgun - 1, Commo - 1, Computer - 1, Vacc Suit - 1, Linguistics - 1, Leadership - 1, Legal - 1, Ship Tactics - 1, Mechanical - 1, Engineering - 1, Electronics - 1, Writing - 1, Grav Vehicle - 0,

Languages: Anglic (Transform), Modern Vilani

Tools & Aids: A pistol, and a datapad (with extra memory crystals)

Visual: This Vilani/East Indian archaeologist/trader generally wears dingy-brown ho-hum worker’s overalls (with reinforced knees and elbow pads) in most situations, complete with a belt with light mechanical & electronic tools, and a holster for his handgun. His rarely-seen formal wear is quite splendid, a finely tailored suit that communicates both his membership with the Archaeological Research Institute of Ganpati and as a member of House Tapti (seventeenth in line to the Baronial Throne).

Opening Theme: “Acroyali”, Yanni - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou5iQVjXfnQ>





*The rains do come... but sometimes, they come too late. The Quarter isn't the best place for happy endings.*

This graphic is titled "Waiting for Rain" © Goran Delic.

See his work at <http://delic.deviantart.com/art/waiting-for-rain-184576544>

While Sarak greatly enjoyed his privileged youth – capped by academic success, earning his doctorate in Surveying and Geodesy – his later life hasn't been so rewarding. He worked for 16 years for the family firms: first in the construction firm, and later in the four-starship subsector line, only earning a little success in the latter (with his share bonuses, he earns a decent yearly dividend). Weary of the tedium, Sarek decided to strike out on his own, setting up a small business – Vorian Antiques – to *legally* dig up and sell First & Second Imperium artefacts from the long-settled worlds of Nulinad subsector.

*"Boss ran away on a trip. The Workers don't get paid. All on sale now,"*  
*"Expropriation. Difficult business. Suicide after sale."*  
*"Mad prices. Crazy prices. Reduction and reduction again"*  
– Chinese sale signs, Yangjiang Group exhibit  
from [Yangjiang Group & Zhang Huan](#)

After his first significant find, things went well for a while: but with the rise of numerous illegal competitors, Sarak's business has begun to shrink. He is contractually obligated by his creditors to meet a certain level of cash flow quarterly, a goal that he is in danger of failing. Fortunately, he has gathered quite a number of promising dig sites, thanks to his academic and merchant contacts. Unfortunately, he has only a limited amount of time to get the goods: so limited, that he might have to cut a few corners himself to stay afloat long enough to stabilize income, and get back to the straight and narrow. Time to cash in on some favours...

Closing Theme: "Don't Blow It", Cliff Martinez - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBHfXWX5lsw>



*A starship crew takes a break, gazing at the crumbling ruins of an early Third Imperium city on Hebrin before moving on. This graphic is titled "Hidden Fears" © Gary Jamroz-Palma. See his work at [www.artofgary.com](http://www.artofgary.com)*

### ***Ungi Laragii*** ***Paying Prices***

UPP CC789A, Age 30, Mixed Vilani

Skills: Streetwise - 3, Axe - 2, Liaison - 2, Steward - 2, Brawling - 2, Laser Weapon - 0, Vacc Suit - 0, Grav Vehicle - 0, Computer - 0

Languages: Evrgoer (The most common Suedzuk tongue in the Empty Quarter)

Tools & Aids: Bears a two-handed axe, all of the time. Often wears knuckle dusters and a set of steel claws, scaled to fit the human (as opposed to Vargr) hand.

Visual: Laragii wears a set of bright red pants decorated with the images of several fighting animals, and a broad belt highlighted with a mix of Vilani and Vargr boasts and fighting slogans. While heavy steel-toed boots are worn, no shirt is, permitting Laragii to display his numerous fighting scars (and so earn Charisma, in the eyes of the Blood Vargr he usually works with).

Note: Laragii is illiterate.

Laragii is a member of the “Fegawzi”, the Evrgoer term for humans under Suedzuk rule that are not *supposed* to be killed for eating, ritual, or pleasure. Ever since the teachings of Ongour’k Gatzua<sup>78</sup>, *some* Suedzuk within the Empty Quarter has seen the value of putting human life to work for the Vargr. As a rule of thumb, these are the Blood Vargr that were able to adopt successfully to the era of regional human dominance.

Opening Theme: “See What I’ve Become”, Zach Hemsey - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWDYAJ2-Y1E>



***“Man against Nature” is far better than “Man against Man” (Or “Man against Vargr”). For one thing, Nature plays by fixed rules: they may be merciless, but they are also rock solid. Sophonts, on the other hand, aren’t nearly as predictable! This graphic is titled “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” © Jan Vavrusa.***

**See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/The-Secret-Life-of-Walter-Mitty-453695841>**

Born on Ssilnthi, Laragii was born and raised as part of a half-feral urban human tribe, on the outskirts of a Blood Vargr city. Even as an eight-year-old, Laragii was involved in the simply constant fighting with the Vargr packs (and the occasional group of human interlopers), initially as a spotter and a runner, eventually rising to a brawler and axman.

Things changed when there was a series of large explosions in the city, followed by a wave of diseases. The majority of the human tribe survived the plagues: but most of their numerous local Vargr enemies didn’t. The source of the plagues was the Gvarghoneer Pack, one of the three Blood Vargr superpowers of the world: they moved to occupy the ruined city and tear apart the Vargr survivors... but ignored the humans who didn’t get in their way.

Afterwards, the human tribes were told to send their leaders to meet with the new Vargr governor, who simply told them to submit and obey the new government or die. Laragii’s tribe chose to submit: half the menfolk between the ages of 15 and 40 were promptly conscripted to serve as cannon fodder for the superpower (including Ungi Laragii himself), and the rest of the humans put to work in low-charisma jobs that the Vargr loathed.

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<sup>78</sup> See *Stellar Reaches* #13, page 8; #19, page 10; #21, page 67





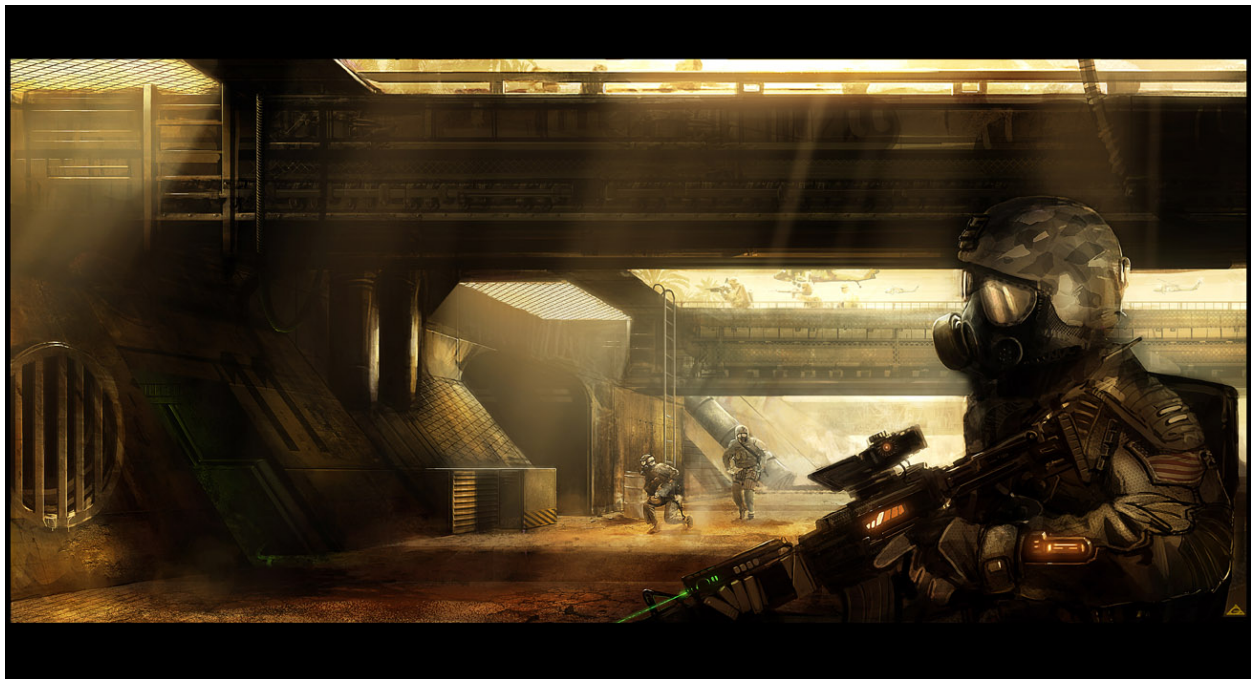
**(Previous) Barbarians look upon civilization, and see wealth & weakness. The truth of the matter is... complicated. This graphic is titled "Beyond Bifrost" © Gary Jamroz-Palma. See his work at [www.artofgary.com](http://www.artofgary.com)**

Laragii had never seen an organized, disciplined, professional army before. As he adapted to the new situation (and avoided getting killed in the field), he grew into a good squad leader, of reliable loyalty: able to not only obey orders, but to disobey them in the right way at the right time in order to gain the objective. Such behaviour gained him respect and charisma, and he was eventually picked out of the battle lines to serve his Vargr masters in a different way.

Various elements of the Gvarghoneer Pack is interested in building up relations with their fellow Blood Vargr that role Flange. Flange's situation is curious: a Suedzuk Vargr (another name for the Blood Vargr) minority ruling class, who are seen as the legitimate planetary rulers by the majority human population, even as the system is a (relatively gently treated) member of the highly anti-Vargr<sup>79</sup> Hegemony of Lorean. The Suedzuk of Ssilnthi still greatly outnumber the humans: but the Suedzuk of Flange are only about 10% of the population, but – after a period of second-class status – once again clawed their way to the top of the political food chain. How they managed to do so, and how they managed to get the humans to tolerate (at times, even support!) their rule, is a question that the masters of Ssilnthi are eager to have answered.

And Laragii's coming journey to Flange is expected to be a key – perhaps the key – to these questions. Sure, his Gvarghoneer Pack companions and supervisors will do the fun stuff: interviewing the local alpha males and business tycoons, drinking Terran blood<sup>80</sup> with local military commanders and heroes,

Closing Theme: "Scorponok", Steve Jablonsky - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDFns0LA700>



<sup>79</sup> "Highly anti-Vargr", yes. But, as the Arzula humans that dominate the government of the Hegemony are fascists – a brand of socialism – they are bad at producing wealth. In contrast, many of the Vargr (definitely the pro-social Julian (Irilitok) Vargr, but even some of the more clued-in Blood (Suedzuk) Vargr) are good at generating wealth... and even the most hostile and cruel of the humans know that tax-farming (or enslaving) the Vargr is more profitable than exterminating them. The men of Damlaer who dominate the economy of the Hegemony are not nearly as instinctively anti-Vargr as the Arzula... but many keep a hostile mask on in public, to curry favour from the Arzula rulers.

<sup>80</sup> The blood of rabbits and chickens is consumed widely in Suedzuk Space: "Nothing is tastier!"

**(Previous) If you go looking for surprises, be prepared to find them.**

This graphic is titled "Assault" © Gary Jamroz-Palma. See his work at [www.artofgary.com](http://www.artofgary.com)

*From one thing, know ten thousand.*

– Miyamoto Musashi

### **Pirzada Lalli**

#### **An Eye for the Main Chance**

UPP A8BCB7, Age 28, Solomani East Indian

Skills: Combat Rifleman - 4, Recon - 2, Computer - 1, Brawling - 1, History - 1, Leadership - 1, Heavy Weapons - 1, Forward Observer - 1, Survival - 1, Instruction - 1, Tactics - 1, SubMG - 1, Streetwise - 1, Wheeled Vehicle - 0

Languages: Anglic (Transform)

Tools & Aids: Usually, just a pistol and a light bulletproof vest.

Visual: A tall and strongly built East Indian man of military bearing, Lalli definitely has the pure Solomani looks one expects of a certain kind of Noble... but the effect is marred by the occasional spasm of pain that crosses his face. He is dressed in the kind of upper-class garb that inspires respect in local East Indian cultures.

Able to trace his Noble descent to the White Huns and to the Khattar (a Jat tribe, and a British India 'martial race'), Mr. Lalli has always sought to be an Islamic scholar-warrior, in the style of Sultan Mohammed Bello of ancient Sokoto. However, the more blue-blooded members of his family were reluctant to give him anything more than a decent education and 10,000 credits in start-up money. Fortunately, he was able to trade on his name (and his good athletic & educational grades), and finagle entry into the Imperial Military Academy, Nulinad Campus, graduating with honours.

Joining a Commando unit, Lalli worked in suppressing various religious groups, both Islamic and Hindu, where were being funded and groomed by the Solomani Party for anti-Imperial operations. They were successfully eliminated, but the current pirate plague proved more punishing. While leading a raid against an Ikonaz Vargr safeport, Major Lalli's was lured into a killing zone. While his troop did manage to survive by their skill and their valour, hastily-strung monofilament wire reaped unexpected casualties, including the Major himself.



*"If I had worlds enough, and time..."* This graphic is titled "Alien Titan" © Justinas Vitkus.

See his work at <http://www.deviantart.com/art/Alien-Titan-462675422>



After his severe wounds were attended to, the Major was honourably dismissed from Imperial service: but the man still wants to gain the kind of power and authority he feels is his birthright. There are still some chronic organ pains that flair up, but Lali has fully recovered his strength. He plans to get his piece of the Imperial pie the way his ancestors did – by direct conquest – and is working hard on his poor homeworld of Gasali to gather men and material for an expedition against the Emperor's enemies. The hard part is securing funding by interested parties: he can easily find enough men to fill the ranks, and still has enough connections with the ex-Imperial military community to get his hands on some officer and NCO talent, if the price is right.

In 993, it is the pirates of the sector who are causing the most trouble: and you can't cause trouble without a plump bank account. Lalli intends to get that money for himself, while killing the enemies of the Imperium, and receive a barony as a personal reward for solid, loyal service to the Iridium Throne. After the hard work has been done, he can indulge himself by amassing fine books and ancient relics, the knowledge of a hundred worlds and beautiful maps of every important world in Charted Space. The most holy of Muslim saints will live in his fief, madrassas will fill the land, and all will follow the words of the Prophet – just as it should be.

*His* shining court will be graced by the wisdom of the best scholars and artists in a dozen parsecs, surrounded by charming and well-bred women from the best families, disusing business with the shrewdest traders, and a stopping point for all the most interesting Travellers in the subsector – Travellers he will carefully question, and learn much from.

### **Appendix** **The Vgrirkseisghudhas Caper**

In 989, the adventurers came upon bits of information that, when pieced together, showed that the *Vgrirkseisghudhas*, a 4000-ton Ovaghoun Vargr Corsair, was repairing damage sustained during a major smash & grab in the Hegemony of Lorean.<sup>81</sup> Taking some pretty big risks, the team made some new hires: a mix of human ex-marines, Vargr pirates without a pack or a ship, and a robot operator with his cheap-but-useful set of battlebots armed with lasers and limpet explosives, able to quickly scuttle across the outside of a ship's hull, and make a surprise appearance at the windows of the bridge.

Security was quite tight around the *Vgrirkseisghudhas*, in her repair hangar over the Rukadukaz Republican world of Guezdhe: but most of the protection was tailored against other competing Vargr packs. The possibility of a direct boarding attempt by humans striking from the blue to steal a Vargr ship (and neutralize the hanger's control tower in the process) simply didn't occur to the ship's officers. The initial seizure of the ship went like clockwork, but the tower assault team took too many losses in securing the objective, and could only hold the tower for an hour before being overrun by port security.

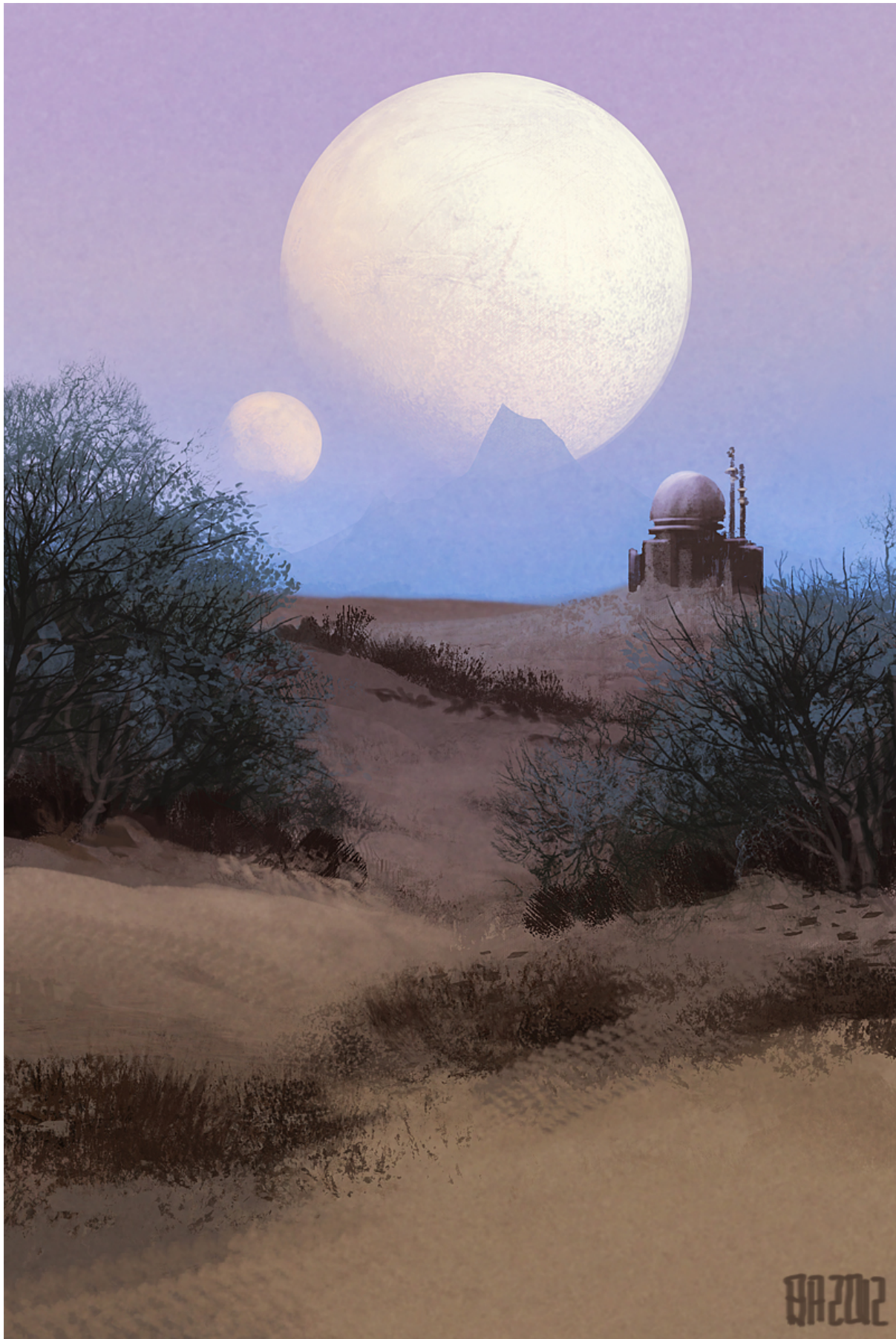
The boarding crew itself was still able to fuel up, fending off most of the quickly-organized re-boarding attempts before making the jump. The time in jumpspace was spent in ferocious search-and-destroy sweeps against the two Ikonaz (Ovaghoun Vargr and allied Vilani) boarding parties that managed to board the ship before jump. There were still a few hostiles alive and armed when the ship exited jump, but they were driven/lured to non-essential areas of the ship and locked down without power, air, or water. Only after they were weakened and near death where the Ikonaz given the chance to surrender during the six-week journey to Tokitre.<sup>82</sup>

Most of the Republicans – Vilani and Vargr alike – were raised on stories that emphasise Solomani hatred, venom, and cruelty for those not of the Race, and so died fighting, complete with explosive booby-traps for those poking at their bodies. But those few who did surrender – all Vilani – were treated surprisingly well by their old Tokitrean enemies. When the *Vgrirkseisghudhas* finally arrived over Tokitre, the prisoners were transferred to humane detention centres, with representatives of the human raiders carefully working within the Republican rules and customs of piracy to secure their prize and an end to any vendettas.

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<sup>81</sup> The proud, human-ruling Ikonaz Vargr and the emphatically anti-Vargr Hegemonio humans don't like each other very much.

<sup>82</sup> Three jumps = three weeks, plus three weeks in-system travel time, refuelling at unconventional locations.



BAZ012

(Previous) *A quiet home on Hebrin, among the desert sands*. This graphic is titled “Habitation 1” © Ben Andrews.  
See his work at <http://ben-andrews.deviantart.com/art/habitation-1-352795627>

After a year-long negotiation with the Republican Guilds of Emissaries<sup>83</sup>, the ship and surviving Ikonaz borders were taken back to Guezdhe, with the raiders rewarded with a large ransom. Within the Republic, the adventuring band was called the Oadzkuzkighoezoung (“Dangerous-yet-honourable human ship thieves” in Ukazk, a Ovaghoun Vargr tongue): the humans took on the name for themselves, but after shifting the pronunciation to Oadzyktórkegoedząuzień – something the denziens of Tokitre find much easier to pronounce!

### **Appendix: The Final Jizani War, and the Aftermath**

Over 150 years ago – ‘when the universe was young, and the Faithful still dominated the infidels’ – there were six major powers on the world of Indara, in Nulinad subsector. The smallest of them was the Sultanate of Jizan, of only three million people – but, being of the right race and religion, had access to enough money, technology, and Imperial military support to subjugate the other human nations. (The small Vargr and Bwap nations that survived the Long Night were wiped out in the early decades of the Third Imperium, on this Solomani-dominant – now Solomani-exclusive – world.)

When I am weaker than you, I ask you for freedom because that is according to your principles;  
when I am stronger than you, I take away your freedom because that is according to my principles.  
— Frank Herbert, *Children of Dune*

Then came the Hebrin Rebellion 871-872, the crushing Imperial response, and the fall of Arab supremacy in the Six Subsectors. The Sultanate found itself cut off from its support network, and surrounded by enemies with vengeance on their minds. Still, in a desperate war (The Three-Front War, 875-878), the Sultanate managed to starve off destruction long enough to compel a suspicious and hostile Imperium to broker a peace and insure its survival... for a while.

The end came unexpectedly. In 906, a major EMP detonation occurred over the Sultanate of Jizan, shorting most electronics - including the financial & infrastructure networks. The stores soon ran out of supplies, and the strictly digital economic system fell apart. Mass starvation began a week after the strike: but refugees trying to flee to neighbouring lands were killed.

Two weeks after the detonation, hostile neighbours were invading the Sultanate, starting the brief Final Jizani War. The initial justification was ‘to restore order’ but when this claim became ridiculous on its face,<sup>84</sup> the actual goals of justice (re: vengeance), irredentism, pure territorial conquest<sup>85</sup>, and ethnic cleansing were declared. It was extremely difficult for residents of the dying Sultanate to get word out, but with the help of sympathetic Islamic interstellar traders and those low-profile Muslim Imperial agents that survived the purges<sup>86</sup>, enough evidence was finally rounded up to force an Imperial Intervention: not to save the Sultanate, but to put an end to the slaughter of the Muslims.

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<sup>83</sup> See *Stellar Reaches* #25, page 162

<sup>84</sup> “I don’t see anyone ‘restoring order’. All I see are foreign soldiers killing ‘enemy combatants’ – civilian and military, old and young, armed and unarmed – while smashing everything in its path, going completely out of its way to destroy any remaining intact infrastructure, and seizing remaining food, water, and medical supplies for itself.” – ex-Imperial Army star trader, 906 Imperial

<sup>85</sup> Note that the Imperium does recognize Right of Conquest and local small-I Imperialism as perfectly legitimate war justifications: the Imperial Laws of War are meant to restrict the conduct of a war, not the justifications.

<sup>86</sup> Anti-terrorist purges? Anti-secessionist? Anti-Islamic? Different people have different viewpoints...



“You haven’t seen real malice until you’ve been to the Empty Quarter.”

“Ah yes, the most passionately devout sector in the Imperium.”

“Precisely.”

“Standard atheist blather. Calm, rationalist cultures are far more effective at systematic genocide than any number of howling, disorganized, factional religious fanatics.”

“True enough Menek – but I’m talking about malice, not body-counts.”

“Which would you prefer as an enemy? A fanatic who hates you and yours to a murderous extent, or some clean-fingernail drone who would liquidate your family simply to meet quota requirements?”

— Captain Magné & First Mate Lennek, of the Far Trader *Cheap and Cheerful*  
and Captain Edwardson of the Far Trader *Hinterland Trader*

While it was interstellar traders with cell phone cameras who prodded a reluctant Imperium into action, it was the Bwap noble leadership’s<sup>87</sup> insistence on proper procedure, exhaustively obeyed, that organized the Imperium’s forces into an effective force to protect the population – despite the reluctance of its then majority-Hindu rank-and-file soldiery, forced to shield the hated enemy from its ‘proper’ comeuppance.

“You and your crèche put in a lot of time and effort, to save a population that at best sees you as an innately inferior species, ‘sent by Allah to gather water for the Faithful’. Perhaps you expect them to return the favour someday?”

“We work to uphold all of the commands of the Emperor and his government, as careful attention to all the rules and regulations is what protects both the Imperial Citizen and Imperial Society. My crèche are certainly not so delusional as to believe that the local Solomani will ever change, regardless of what we do: but then again, we aren’t doing this for them. Greater issues are at stake here.”

— Baron Webtasa-sasa Pawesa,  
during an interview with the Imperial Action data network, 113-907 Imperial

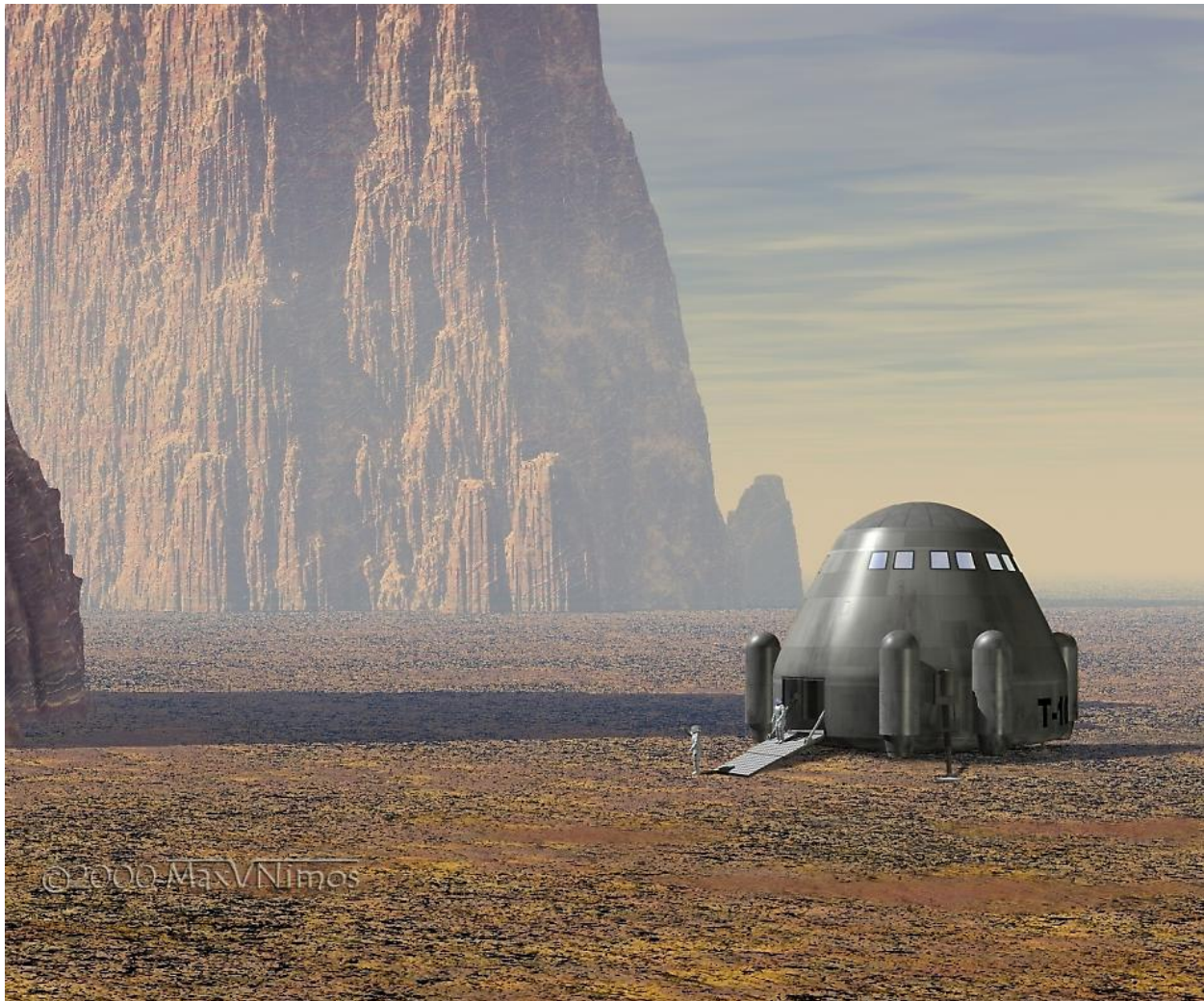
While the Imperial Expeditionary Force was able to meet its core objectives, keeping it in the field was a heavy drain on the purses of both the Sector Duke and the involved Bwap Noble Houses Crèches, so a call was issued for any party willing to transport the two million ex-Jizani survivors to another world. Several attempts to relocate the population to another system within the Six Subsectors failed. Fellow Islamic governments of the sector, vocal in their support in better times, pointedly refused to offer a square inch of land or a single credit to the refugees. Individual believers and charity groups were more generous, especially the Muslim Brotherhood: but they focused on humanitarian aid to their brothers<sup>88</sup>, and gave no support for resettlement. “Medicine yes; food yes; even arms, if you are willing to fight; but the rest is up to you.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The Sector Duke was not quite so foolish as to select Hindu or Vilani nobles to lead a mission to protect Muslims, so soon after the end of the Arab Domination: too much potential for ‘unfortunate oversights’ and ‘mistakes’ and ‘communication failures’.

<sup>88</sup> ...and *only* to their brothers. Infidels considering treated in an Egyptian Brotherhood hospital, say, should seriously reconsider. And if unbelieving humans are treated with such contempt, the treatment of aliens (or future gene-modified humanity...) is something left to a more pitiless writer than I.

<sup>89</sup> The offer of arms was declined: accepting it would negate Imperial protection, and the surviving Muslims would be left to a bitter fate at the hands of their enemies.



***An Antares Lander, on Knaekiril, Tsaхроок subsector, 992 Imperial. Of course, most Antares Landers like the Spice Garden above, are recreations of the original famed explorers/traders. This graphic is titled “Lander3” © Max V Nimos. See his work at <https://www.rendosity.com/mod/gallery/lander3/23687/>***

After a decade of negotiations,<sup>90</sup> a high-tech/high-pop, peaceful and prosperous Solomani system in Daibei Sector – eager to both prove its loyalty to the Emperor, and demonstrate its compassion to the galaxy (and especially to her distastefully religious neighbours) – declared its willingness to transport the refugees to a new home on her world. “Sure, these refugees are innately hostile to everything we are and everything we stand for: but surely with our generous welfare systems they’ll break in time, demonstrating the superiority of our culture and our winsome way of life!”

Several fleets of 10,000-ton low-berth transports arrived over Indara in the 921-924 period. The refugees left in the face of widespread jeering by the victors, but the heavy presence of Imperial military forces kept the expressions of hatred to the non-physical level. On 312-924, the last of the Jizani entered the last of the transports, to a far more comfortable life as high-tech welfare recipients<sup>91</sup>... but also to never be seen within the Empty Quarter again, with their land divided up amongst their conquerors.

<sup>90</sup> The Imperium is huge: it takes at least a year for communications from one end of the Third Imperium to reach the other end.

<sup>91</sup> The plan of their new atheistic hosts was to train their children to reject the beliefs of their parents, and become hard-working members of their new homeworld “a colourful addition to our people, with unusual foods and genes, but the same fundamental outlook on life.” Just how successful the plan was is beyond the scope of this article.







**(Previous) A woman rebels against the rebellious anti-Vilani Vilani of Ushmigad. Escape is unlikely, but possible: but what about survival? This graphic is titled "Unwanted Guests" © Eyal Lavon. See his work at <http://whipit101.cgsociety.org/art/sci-fi-desert-space-ship-bike-women-unwanted-guests-2d-926861>**

Consider: Let's say an Angel of Light, calling itself Gabriel, offered a Sunni Arab the opportunity to press a button and have every Shiite fall over dead. Would they even let the angel finish the sentence?

(And if you replaced 'Shiite' with 'Jew'...)

And these are humans, dealing with humans. Can you even imagine the savagery humans would exhibit, dealing with competing nonhumans?

This writer does not believe that there are any aliens in space: certainly, the evidence stands against *any* technologically capable species arising in the supposed billions of years of the past. But he also considers it likely that we will make our own, man-made sophont aliens over the next century, certainly so in the next thousand years.

And yes, he is confident that Our Greatest Minds are idiotic enough to create a real-deal Master Race, or – even better – a perfect Servant Race, as a precursor to the extinction of (old) humanity. At least Master Races can be reliably depended on to confuse their desire for godhood with reality, and so destroy themselves in a spectacular fashion: but nothing is going to stop a really well-engineered Servant Race. They would barely have to do anything but give us what we have always wanted, over and over again: this alone will send baseline humanity into an insipid dependence, delusion, and an early grave, with the Servants inheriting the world, the cosmos, and the favour of God.

"The meek shall inherit the earth", indeed.



**For all Travellers – regardless of tech level – the road goes ever on... This graphic is titled "Journey" © Syarul Nizam Selamat. See his work at <http://syarul.deviantart.com/art/Journey-37038436>**

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