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The Traveller Chronicle

A Magazine Devoted to Traveller In All Of Its Forms

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Table of Contents

A Long Way Home	3
The continuation of the serialized novel by Terrence McInnes	
Children of Earth Errata and Additions	27
List of known errata and some additions by Harold Hale	
Terran Information Network	29
All the news that's worth reporting by Harold Hale	
Psionic Time Travel	31
A rare psionic ability by Harold Hale	
Small Arms of the Terran Republic	33
Weapons of the Terran forces by Harold Hale	
Official Terran Republic Marine Sniper Rules	36
by Harold Hale	
Artifact	38
A Spinward Marches adventure by Clayton R. Bush	
Amber Zone: Sudrian Wevo	43
A Megatraveller era adventure by Glenn M. Goffin	
Out of This Universe	51
A Traveller variant by Clayton R. Bush	
An Offer You Can't Refuse...	53
Fiction by Mark Urbin	
Artwork	
Richard Biever	Cover
Kevin Montanaro	4, 7, 13, 24, 28, 37
Glenn M. Goffin	47, 48, 49

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The Editor Speaks...

Greetings, Salutations, and Welcome Back to the 12th issue of the Traveller Chronicle!

We've run most of Harold's Terran Republic information so this issue has a wider variety of articles. A major portion is taken up by the next several chapters of Terrence McInnes' serialized novel. We hope you like it; I know I did!

As always, we are in need of submissions, both general art pieces and new articles. If you have anything to send us, please do so! Thanks!

That's all for now folks...

From those of us Behind the Claw,

Kevin Knight

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Content: Sword of the Knight is interested in articles, adventures, artwork, or fiction from any era of the Traveller universe as published by Game Designers' Workshop. However, any rules related information should use the New Era rules system.

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A Long Way Home

by Terrence McInnes

Chapter 3

Firefight

Pvt. Harley "Tiny" Trask had dropped just before Gunny Rodriguez and was on the ground when the Gunny hit dirt. This was Trask's first combat drop and since was assigned as guard and runner to the platoon XO, he had wanted to land as close to Gunny as possible. He noticed from the position of Gunny's locator beacon on his helmet display that Gunny was coming down about a kilometer west of his position. Everyone else had been scattered to hell and gone. He headed toward Gunny on the double.

Trask made fast progress, his battle dress' power enhancement circuits let him leap over the stone fences that separated the local farm fields, and the local version of trees were spaced at wide, random intervals, except for a treeline ahead.

He heard Gunny on the platoon push and replied:

"Blackjack Five this is Blackjack Five One, I'm one klick east of you and closing. ETA less than two, over."

Nothing came back. And the star showing Gunny's locator beacon position had stopped moving. Trask got scared. Gunny should have answered. He bit down twice to shift to the command group and tried again, this time using Gunny's personal call sign rather than his unit ID.

"Red Dog from Tiny. Say your status, over." Nothing. Trask started running hard.

"Willy from Tiny, come in!" Still nothing. The LT was out of range.

"Tiny this is Radar, go!"

Better than nothing. Benny "Radar" Burke was the LT's talker. Not much in a hand to hand dustup, but he was a whiz with comms sets. The gear he lugged could reach out and touch Kant in orbit. The old saying was true. The most dangerous Marine in any outfit was the one with the radio.

"Radar, Tiny. I'm almost onto Red Dog. Home on me and call in a dustoff."

"Tiny, Radar, copy. Be there in three, going to the ship push now. Back at you in one."

Tiny was getting close to the tree line and Red Dog's position. He froze as he saw motion. The wide spectrum image intensifier built into his suit visor overlaid four infrared images glowing from body warmth on the enhanced visual light scene.

Two figures stood over a third laying on its back. The supine figure's head glowed while its body heat barely flickered on Tiny's visor. That had to be Red Dog, only

battle dress chameleon circuits would mask and blend infrared emissions into the local background like that. The other two wore metal body armor and one held a long rifle with a bipod at the muzzle. Both were zip troops with off-world weapons. They also had nasty looking locally-made long knives, one of which was about to be plunged into Red Dog's throat.

A fourth infrared image was lying prone in the grass about ten meters to the left of Red Dog and his executioners. This figure suddenly leaped from the tall grass and fired some sort of bow weapon. The knife-wielding zip screamed as an arrow sliced through his neck. The scream ended in a blood-filled gurgle as the man dropped to the ground. His partner wheeled toward the Bowman and raised the long rifle. Tiny nearly sawed the local in half with a 10-round burst from his combat rifle before he could fire.

Tiny swung to his left and saw the fourth man, a boy really, standing stunned and open-mouthed. "Drop your weapon and put your hands up," Tiny roared. The boy dropped his bow, raised his hands, and dropped to his knees.

Tiny turned toward Red Dog and ran to help. He opened the shattered breast plate of Red Dog's battle dress, revealing a massive bubbling chest wound that was making sucking noises as Red Dog tried to breathe. Tiny pulled a pressure bandage from his medkit, ripped off the outer covering with his teeth, and pushed it down into the chest wound. Tiny pulled off a glove and checked for a pulse in Red Dog's neck. It was faint and fluttery. Red Dog was in severe shock.

"Tiny, Radar. I'm one away and the dustoff is inbound estimating your pos in about five or so."

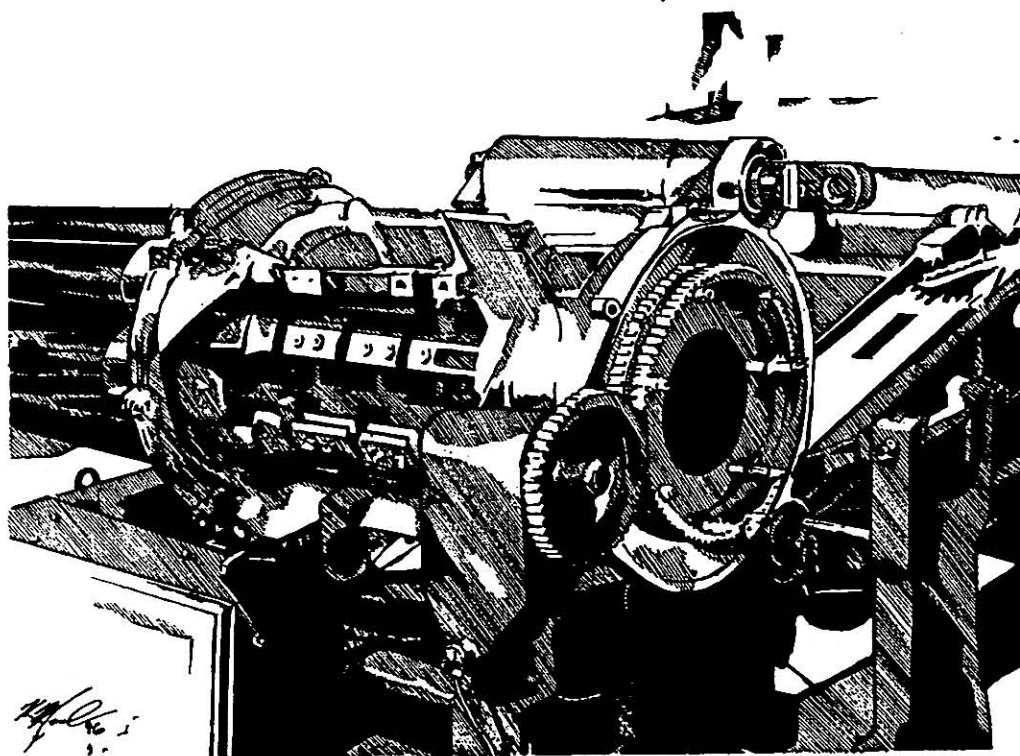
"Roger, Radar. Advise the dustoff that Red Dog is alive but barely. He has a massive chest wound to the lungs and major blood loss. His pulse is about 150, weak and thready. We also have a young zip here and I don't know what to do with him. He killed a local troop who was just about to finish off Red Dog. He may be a friendly but right now he's just scared."

Tiny turned and saw Radar loping through the pastures toward him, wearing a bulky backpack and his combat rifle over his battle dress.

"Tiny, Radar. The medics say do not, repeat, DO NOT administer the pull tab drugs. He's so shocky they could kill him. The lander has a portable automed on board, and we'll get him into that ay-sap. I also told them that we still have the greatest enthusiasm and confidence in this mission. They are coming buster."

"Blackjack Six Romeo from Arrow Zero Two, clear the LZ and pop a strobe. We're coming in."

Radar pulled an infrared strobe from his webbing, flipped the activation switch, and threw it into the clear area. A bright, pulsing light appeared on the Marines' WSV faceplate displays as the strobe lit up. The naked eye would only see it at five meters or less as a very dull red glow.



"Blackjack Six Romeo from Arrow Zero Two, I see a near infrared double pulse."

"Roger, that's us, the LZ is clear."

"Copy Blackjack, we'll be down in one."

Both men dragged Red Dog toward the nearest tree clump and Tiny went back and carried the quivering boy to cover. Presently, Arrow Zero Two announced itself with a roaring sound from the north. Nose jets flared, bringing the landing craft to a halt in mid-air, hovering on its contra-grav units.

"Radar, this is Hot Pants," the landing craft pilot announced. "Good to see you again baby, but I've got some bad news. Company's coming from the north. They may be zips but Sweetie Pie can't take too many crunch gun rounds. Get your butts aboard now! We're outa here in one or we're in trouble."

"Hot Pants, this is Tiny. Drop the ramp." The lander settled to the surface and a large hatch in its stern dropped to the ground forming a ramp.

"Come on kid, follow us or you're dead! Some of your emperor's buddies are coming. You're dog meat if you stay behind." Tiny yelled. Meanwhile, he and Radar pulled Red Dog out of his battle dress, picked up the wounded gunnery sergeant, and ran for the landing craft. The words sounded strange, with a difficult accent that was hard to follow; but it was close enough to the formal ancient language Great-Uncle

Nathan tried to teach him before he died, so Sean could grasp most of the meaning.

The boy shook himself, stood, and ran after the star men. As soon as he was aboard the strange metal craft he saw the large star man and the small, thin one strap the wounded man onto what appeared to be a board

with a metal and glass cover. They placed a mask over the wounded man's face, stuck some tubes into his arms, and closed the cover. Within seconds a pale blue fluid covered the man and filled the case. The large star man turned to the boy, shoved him roughly into a cushioned chair, and strapped him in tight. The two star men then strapped themselves into similar chairs while the smaller yelled, "Hot Pants! Go, go, go!"

"Who the hell is that?" yelled a woman from the front of the craft. She had long blonde hair falling beneath the back of her helmet, and looked not

much older than the boy. Only her tongue belied her age and experience.

"A new chum, Hot Pants. He saved Red Dog's life. I figure he deserves a break. He's dead if we leave him here."

"Tiny, your heart's bigger than your head. We'll waste reaction mass to get him to the ship only to have the skipper send him home in a cargo capsule!"

"Not if I can help it. I think you underestimate the skipper. Besides, we have room. Now lift this bucket!"

"OK, it's your call and your neck."

She turned back to the control panel, tapped some touch pads, and the landing craft lifted off the ground. She then touched a red pad, and an earsplitting roar filled the craft as a large invisible hand shoved the boy back into the seat. He tried to turn his head to see out of a nearby viewport, but the acceleration and his seat's head rest effectively pinned him in place for a number of seconds until the inertial compensators caught up with the sudden boost and his weight returned to normal.

"Don't try to turn your head again, you damned fool," Tiny yelled, "You'll break your neck. I don't want to bring an extra corpse back to the ship!"

After a couple of minutes Sean looked out of the nearby viewport. He could see farmland below in the

ringlight and the lights of homesteads in the distance. But they were rapidly becoming smaller. Suddenly, he realized he was climbing ABOVE them, seeing them through a flying wanderer or harpy's eyes. He must be above his world, rising every second. Soon the horizon became curved and the stars above became clearer and stopped flickering. The rings looked glorious. Looking around he noticed that the pretty blonde woman at the front of the craft was staring intently at some luminous windows on the panel in front of her and was urgently but calmly speaking to someone he could not see. The two star men appeared to be asleep. By leaning his head to the left, he could see past the woman's shoulder through the landing craft's transparent canopy. Much more of his shrinking world's horizon was visible, along with a silvery stick figure floating above it. The figure grew into a long silver rail with large boxes and other structures attached to it. Several other smaller craft hovered nearby. One looked like the landing craft in which he was riding. Others were smaller barrel-shaped craft with their pilots visible under clear canopies.

As Sean's landing craft moved closer to the larger rail-shaped ship, he noticed it was approaching one of the large boxes attached to the rail. Three large rings protruded from the box, and his landing craft headed toward the left-most. The craft slowed as it approached the ring, and with a couple of gentle bumps, settled in.

"OK people, we're home!"

"Thanks for the ride, Hot Pants," the large star man said.

"Hey kid, this way." The star man grabbed Sean by the shoulder and pushed him toward an open hatch on the right side of the ship's nose. A folding connecting tube lead into large, brightly lit room. The decks were made of gray steel and the bulkheads were painted a pale green. They were coated with a strange substance which yielded slightly to his finger when he touched it. Apart from a row of metal boxes along one of the bulkheads, there was no furniture. Several people wearing form-fitting black body suits waited while the star men exited the lander, then swarmed aboard.

The star man known as Tiny lead Sean through a narrow doorway, with Sean almost tripping as he stepped across the high hatchway sill. The two continued down a maze of corridors, up several ladders and through more corridors until they stopped in front of a door. Sean noticed the corridors were all pale green or blue, with only some additional colors on thin metal tubes running along the overhead to relieve the drabness. Tiny pushed one of several flat round objects on the bulkhead next to the door and waited. Sean yelped and jumped backward as the door slid open into a small metal room.

"It's OK. It's SUPPOSED to do that," Tiny said. "Ain't you every seen a door before?"

"N-n-not like this! Is it magic? The door d-d-d-d-disappeared!" Sean stuttered.

"Nah! It's electrical. I don't have time to explain, c'mon!" Tiny motioned Sean inside, then pressed another flat round object on the wall inside the room next to the door. The door came back and Sean nearly fell as the room lurched sideways. There was a humming sound and the room rocked gently for several seconds before jolting to a stop. The door opened into another corridor.

"Where did the door go?" Sean asked

"Never mind. This way," Tiny said as he grabbed Sean's upper arm. They rounded two turns and stopped before another door. Tiny pressed several small square objects on a what looked like a wall decoration. A section of the wall disappeared again, and an opening appeared leading into a small bare metal room.

"This is your new home 'till we figure out what to do with you. OK, I have to leave now and talk with some people about you. Someone will be by soon with some food. I'll be back as soon as I can."

With that, Tiny turned and headed out the door. It slid closed behind him. Sean saw the same kind of wall decoration near where the door opened as he had seen outside. He remembered that the starman pressed the small square objects within the decoration to get the door to open. He tried pressing a square object, gently at first, then harder. Nothing happened. He tried again pressing different objects, then several at the same time. Nothing happened. Soon, his fingers became sore and their tips bloody from trying. Finally, it hurt too much to try again. He sat down on the hard steel deck and wept. He was a prisoner.

Chapter 4

Fate

The dream came again.

Gunny Rodriguez was running along a low wall toward the Hasteaan God-Emperor's palace, leading 2nd Squad, Jump Detachment Lirgishkhunan, in the meteoric assault against the local Teddy. Resistance had been sporadic. The jump apparently had caught all the locals with their pants down. Suddenly, the zips woke up. ACR and VRF Gauss gun fire blazed down on the RC

Marines from the castle battlements. Fortunately, most of it went wide in the night-time darkness, while the Marines replied with plasma bazookas and RAM grenades. Rodriguez and his squad raced toward the nearest palace door. His bazooka gunner dropped, sighted, and fired, collapsing the door inward. At the same time, other teams were hitting other doors. Sharp sounds of firefights told of combat elsewhere in the palace.

"Red Dog, this is Drop Six, hold your position," ordered Captain Jeffries, the drop CO over the tacnet. "We've got the prisoners and the God-Emperor is dead."

"Roger Six, holding."

Jeffries called again a short time later.

"Red Dog from Drop Six. Sarge, report to my CP aysap."

Gunny rogered the order and loped over to the command group in a corner of the palace courtyard. He flipped a salute at the captain. "What's up skipper?"

Jeffries opened his visor and motioned Gunny to do the same so they could talk face to face. Gunny suddenly felt cold. " 'Fraid I have some bad news for you, sergeant. Johnnie bought it. Caught that first Gauss gun burst full in the chest."

"Can I see him, sir?"

"Yah, sure. He's over there," Jeffries answered, motioning toward an impromptu aid station. Jeffries touched Gunny's shoulder. "Let me know if there's anything I can do, OK?"

Gunny numbly walked over to where a team of corpsman were patching up several wounded Marines. A couple of still bodies lay nearby. The senior corpsman pointed at the first body and said, "I'm sorry Gunny."

Gunny looked at the torn battledress, slowly lifted off the helmet, and looked down upon the face of Lieutenant John Rodriguez, his only son. It's always the kids that buy it, he thought, it's always the kids.

The grief came again, then the blackness.

* * * * *

Sean McKinnie woke up on the hard steel deck, every bone in his body sore. The room lights brightened and the door opened. "Tiny" Trask came in. He looked different; smaller without his metal suit. He was clad in a skin tight garment that was colored green but covered with brown and black blotches and stripes. Over the garment he wore a harness that covered half his shoulders and chest, and a belt with pouches around his waist. An outstretched human figure embossed on a circle decorated the center of the harness. A single upside down black "V" appeared to be sewn onto each sleeve.

"Glad to see you're awake. Sorry to be gone so long. I had to go to the squad debrief.

"What's a squad? What's a debrief?" Sean had not the faintest idea what Trask was saying.

"I'll explain later," Trask said. "First, let's get you squared away in here. You don't have to sleep on the deck. And let's get you cleaned up. You smell like a ground hog. Look carefully at this."

Trask pressed a blue disk on one wall. A bunk folded out of the wall, made up with sheets and a blanket. "This is where you sleep, ground hog."

"What's a ground hog?" Sean asked.

"A small burrowing animal that's usually as dirty as you are now. Also, someone who never gets their feet out of the mud, just like you. I guess that's you name from now on."

Sean noticed another blue disk on the wall opposite the door. He pressed it, and a door slid open revealing a very small room with a strange looking chair. Next to the chair was a roll of paper on the wall. He sat on the chair, catching himself as he nearly fell in to its hollow center. A basin protruded from the wall to his left. Opposite the chair was a small booth with a metal tube protruding from the wall, and metal lever at about waist level. He fingered the paper, it was very thin and soft, and too flimsy to write upon; and it tore easily.

"What's this for?" he asked.

"To wipe yourself."

"You mean this is the outhouse? Where's the gompf stick? How can I clean myself without a gompf stick? And where's the honey bucket? Where do I empty the bucket?"

"Gaia, Ground Hog! You don't know anything, do you? You wipe yourself with the paper and put it in the toilet, that's the chair thingy. Then you press the silver lever on the wall and it all goes away."

Not having urinated in some hours, Sean let go into the toilet.

"Ok, press the lever."

He did, then yelped and jumped away from the seat as cold, swirling water carried the waste away.

"See? That's easy and clean. Now strip. Maybe the science officer may be interested in these clothes once they're clean."

Sean stripped off his leather and linen travelling garments and stood shivering. Tiny reached into the booth, pulled up the lever on the wall, and shoved Sean inside as water cascaded from the metal tube near the ceiling.

"That's soap," said Tiny, pointing to a bar of hard material on a small shelf in the booth. "Use it."

He then handed Sean a soft cloth rag and placed a large soft towel on a bar next to a basin protruding from the small room's wall. Clumsily, Sean took the soap bar that was becoming slippery and wet, and rubbed himself with it.

"Rub some on the rag, then wash yourself. We got to get you clean."

Presently, Sean caught on. The washing became pleasant and he felt much better and relaxed from the warmth.

"OK, enough." Trask flipped the lever down and handed him a towel. "Now dry."

Sean toweled himself dry and followed Trask into the main room.

"Press that," Trask said, pointing to a blue disk opposite the bed. A drawer popped out of the wall. Inside were clean, dark blue garments. Sean pulled one out, noticing that it would completely cover his body from neck to ankles. Trask pulled at a long seam running from neck to crotch, separating it with a ripping sound. "Put this on," he said. Sean tried but he needed help when he accidentally go both feet in one leg and nearly fell down. After some maneuvering, though,

he finally managed to get into the garment. Trask showed him how to press both sides of the seam together to seal the garment.

"Right. You're now housebroken and fit for modern human company. Hungry? I am. Let's get some chow."

Trask opened the stateroom door and guided Sean into the companionway. After a couple of turns, they approached a large room with a number of men and women, most dressed like Trask, seated at several round tables. All had plates in front of them piled high with steaming food, and mugs filled with drink. However, none of them were eating. They seemed to be waiting for something.

There were only two empty seats remaining. Trask took one and motioned Sean into another. Everyone turned toward a table in a corner of the room. An older man with tightly cropped gray hair and lines on his ebony face rose. He was dressed in the same uniform as Trask, but had three upside down "V"s with three inverted arcs below, all surrounding crossed broad-bladed swords sewn on his sleeves. Sean noticed the man was fairly short, about 1.7 meters, but broad through the torso. The older man raised his mug.

"To absent friends."

"To absent friends," everyone but Sean replied, bewildered by the ritual.

"We do that before every evening meal," Trask explained. "It honors our fallen comrades. If you ever get admitted to this club, you'll do it too. Now go ahead, eat." The meal appeared to be cooked meat of some sort he could not identify, some vegetables, many familiar, others strange; and to his surprise and delight, the beverage was wine, apparently from Cabernet Sauvignon, similar to the reds his father had grown on their ranch from old Earth-stock vines, but with an overtone he could not identify.

"This wine is very good," he told Trask. "Reminds me of the wine my father used to make."

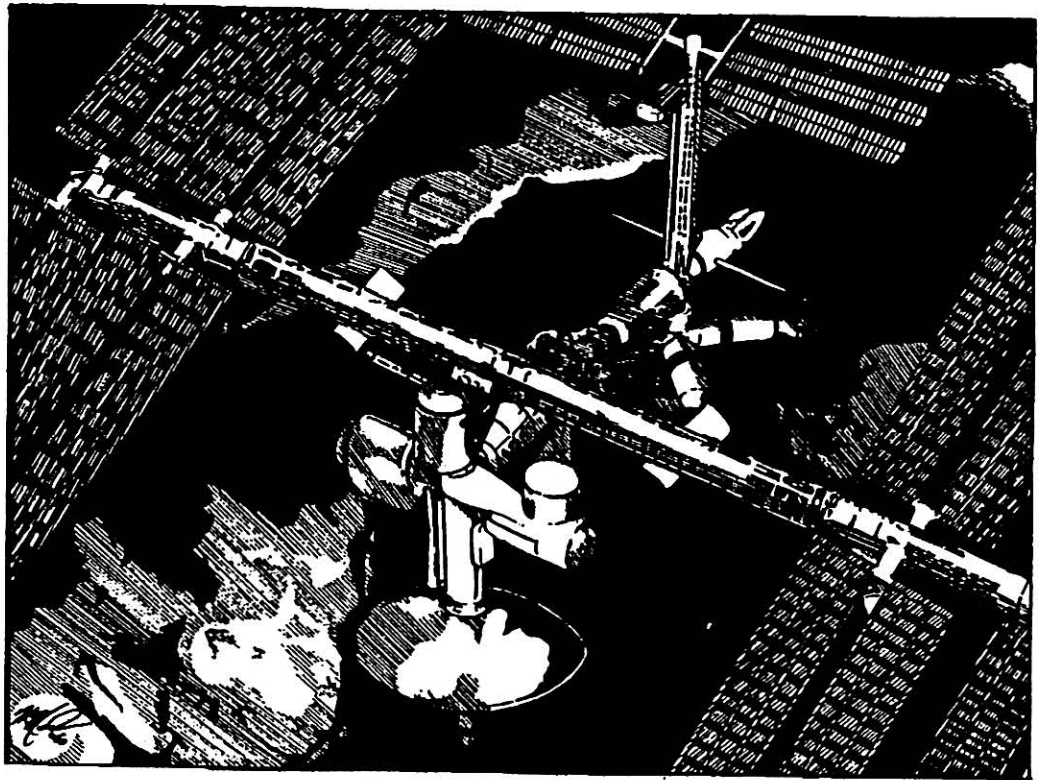
"It's just an ordinary red from Nike Nimbus," Trask replied. "You ought to try their varietals from the highland vineyards where the taint don't reach. They're really good.

"Our daily half liter of wine is one good thing about being a Marine. I heard it goes back thousands of years when the Corps' ancestors were stuck in the mud on ol' Terra; part of some sort of legion, they say. Give us our wine and an MRE and we'll fight anywhere. "

"Hey Tiny, ain't that the ground hog that saved Red Dog? Ain't you supposed to take him to see the captain?" the older dark-faced man interrupted.

"Yeah Top, but I had to get him cleaned up and in decent shape to talk with her first."

"Well, lay forward to the skipper's office. Her yeoman told me she wants to see your new chum as soon as he's civilized. He looks in good shape to me,



so hop it!"

"Aye, aye Top. Let's go kid. We need to find out what to do with you."

The two returned to the strange moving box in the wall. "What is this?" Sean asked.

"It's a travelator," Tiny explained. "It carries us backwards and forwards between parts of our ship. You see, the ship has a central spine that connects the head where the captain steers the ship, and the engines which drive the ship. In between, there are large boxes connected to the spine. These boxes are where we live, where cargo is carried, where fuel is stored for the engines, and where our small boats are attached. You can walk along inside a corridor in the spine, but it's much faster to use the travelator. Let's go." The two entered the travelator and in less than a minute were at the forward end of the ship. They stepped out of the travelator facing a short corridor leading to their right

with a doorway at the end. A Marine was standing at the end of the corridor next to a doorway. She waved Tiny and Sean through after closely examining Tiny's plastic ID badge.

Sean stepped forward through the doorway and stopped in his tracks. Directly ahead of him was a large clear plastic canopy through which he saw an immense field of stars. A huge glowing blue and white half globe filled the left third of the star field. He barely noticed the men and women seated around him at softly glowing work stations.

A short man wearing a slate blue body suit approached. "This way please, the captain is waiting," he said leading them to the side and then back toward the rear of the compartment. A second door slide open in the rear bulkhead leading into a warmly lighted office.

"Come," called a large, strongly built woman who was seated behind the only desk. She had close-cropped black hair and wore a slate blue body suit similar to the other crewmember. However, hers included four gold colored bars on each shoulder.

"Sit," she said.

Sean and Tiny sat in one of several chairs in front of the desk. Sean noticed a strange mushroom-shaped stool off to one side.

"I am Captain Alicia Blaine, also known as Hellfire. Welcome aboard Immanual Kant. I heard about you saving Sergeant Rodriguez. I'm not sure if that was brave, rash, or stupid. But you did save Red Dog, and I thank you for that."

Sean was too dumbfounded by all the miraculous sights to reply.

"Young man," the captain continued, "I don't know what to do with you. I can't send you back, Tiny says they will kill you. Therefore, I'm not going to drop you back home. However, you're useless on this ship as a crew member, although maybe you can help the cooks and sweep the decks.

"The good news is that there are people aboard who are interested in you since you come straight from a primitive society we have been wanting to establish relations with for some time. They will be talking with you from time to time, and may want to learn about your intelligence level, your education, and your experience living on Fisher's World. That's what your home world is named, by the way. Oh, and we will also want to give you a medical exam, to make sure you are free of diseases, that sort of thing.

"The bad news is that we can't keep you with us forever. There simply isn't enough room aboard this ship. Right now, we have you berthed in Sgt. Rodriguez's stateroom while he is in sickbay. He'll be there a long time from what the doctor says, so that'll work at least until we get home to Oriflamme and refit for another mission. But we can't have you running loose on this ship; you might accidentally get hurt or cause some damage or something. So except for meals

which you will take in the Marine mess and some of the physical and mental exams, you'll be confined to your cabin for this voyage. By the way, can you read?"

"Yes ma'am," Sean replied, "I was on my way to the university when this all happened. I have been tutored since I was four years old."

"Ok, we'll send you some reading material. If you can read these OK, that will go a long way toward you understanding where we came from and why we are here.

"Meanwhile, I'll be meeting with my senior officers and advisors about you. We'll let you know what we decide as soon as we do that. Dismissed."

"Aye, aye Captain," Trask replied with a salute. He gathered up Sean by the arm and left the office.

"Hellfire" Blaine sighed and let herself go limp in her chair as the office door slid shut.

"All I need is another problem," she said to no one in particular. "They send me to bring back a TED's head and all I get is a scrawny farm kid. They'll laugh me out of the O-Club about this one."

She closed her eyes for a minute, then sat up. She reached for her desk communicator, punched a two digit number, and called out, "Woz, come in here please, I need some advice."

"Instantly, madam Captain," the communicator replied in a monotonal voice.

A minute later the office door slid open and Wozniak waddled in. The leathery creature looked like a giant six-legged starfish standing low on the deck, about 1.5 meters high. It was covered with pinkish pebbly skin. The creature walked on four of its six legs. Each of its legs ended in six symmetrically placed tentacles. However, the leg nearest the captain ended with six eyestalks placed evenly between the six tentacles. All six eyes looked at the captain from the upraised front leg as the four walking legs conveyed it to the low stool. Woz wore two items; the first a leather harness on its central body, the second a metal box suspended by a strap around the base of its front arm. After it settled on to the stool and made itself comfortable, Woz's rear arm reached over its body and its fingers began tapping keys on the metal box.

"How may I help you madam Captain?" a monotoned voice emanating from the metal box asked.

"Woz, you've heard of the Fisher's World boy we have aboard. I don't know what to do with him. We don't have room aboard for long, and he's totally ignorant of the stars, the RC, and everything else we stand for. "

"Aye madam. Perhaps the best thing we can do for him and us is drop him at Helios. Their technology is near enough to his own. He is young and should adapt to the allergens in the atmosphere there. And they certainly have enough room for newcomers. He should fit in well."

"That's a thought. I need to ponder this, and talk it over with some other people. Thanks for coming in."

"Yes madam," Woz replied, as it shuffled toward the door. "We'll talk more of this later. Good day."

"Good day, Woz."

Time to get back to real captain's work. Blaine rose from her desk and left her office. She walked into the canopied control area and took her station at the pilot's console as the Marine at the hatchway announced "Captain on the bridge!" Everyone stood, then resumed their seats as she settled into hers.

She turned to her executive officer, Cmdr. Lucias "Straight Wake" Brenner. "Set the maneuvering watch and prepare to get underway, Mr. Brenner."

"Aye, aye Captain."

Brenner touched a pad on his panel and throughout the ship his voice announced, "Now hear this. Now secure the orbital watch and set the maneuvering watch. Prepare to get underway. All stations report when ready."

Additional personnel reported to the bridge and filled empty control stations.

"Navigation, manned and ready."

"Sensors show no bogies on screen."

"Flight operations manned and ready, hanger bays secure."

"Engineering, manned and ready. Main HePlar thrusters on line and standing by."

"Weapons, manned and ready."

"All stations report manned and ready Captain."

"Very well Mr. Brenner, take us out of orbit. Make your course to the Corrig jump point."

"Aye, aye Captain."

"All hands, all passengers, standby for acceleration," Brenner's voice called from the ship's annunciators.

"Captain, plot to the jump point is locked in. Maneuver drive is firing in five... four... three... two... one... Ignition!"

Kant's personnel experienced a momentary surge of acceleration before the inertial compensators cut in. Kant was on her way home.

Chapter 5

Voyage

Sean tossed restlessly in his bunk. He tried to sleep but couldn't. His stateroom lights had been dimmed to a deep blue, and his stateroom door was locked. Even with the door unlocked, the only places he could reach outside the stateroom were the other staterooms, squad bays, and the mess deck and common area of the troop transport module. Locks that he could not begin to understand sealed him off from the ship's central spine and from the drop tubes and their adjacent assembly areas one deck below. His treatment by the Marines varied from curiosity to a stiff, cold, near-hostility. He tried to be friendly to everyone, yet the coldness from some persisted. He had seen Trask only at meal times. These were hurried occasions, where everyone was

tense and on edge; most were unwilling to speak to him, nobody had time for his questions.

Trask had tried to explain that they were about to jump, and the whole ship was always tense before then. When Sean had asked how high, Trask snorted, turned away, and walked off, leaving Sean alone in the stateroom, feeling like a stupid manure-footed plowboy.

Suddenly, the stateroom lights came on full bright, a pulsing tone sounded in the overhead speaker, and a loud voice commanded: "Jump stations, Jump station, all hands man your jump stations! All Marines and non-essential personnel lay to your bunks and strap in. Jump in 10 minutes. I say again, Jump in 10 minutes. All stations report when manned and ready."

Trask suddenly burst into the room. "OK kid, this is it," he said as he roughly shoved Sean down onto his bunk and strapped him in securely around his chest and hips. "Time to get out of this system and on to the next."

"What's going on here?" Sean asked angrily. "Why are you doing this?"

"We are about to jump," Tiny said, "That means we are entering another type of space, one that carries us between stars. Once we are in this jump space, everything will return to normal, and we will be safe from attacks of other ships. That's what we have all been worrying about up until now, by the way.

"But to get to jump space, we have to go over some pretty rough bumps. The first time is always scary. The lights'll dim, gravity may be cut off for several seconds, and other weird things can happen before the jump envelope is fully stable. You may feel a little sick and disoriented, too.

"Don't worry, though. This is normal, we all feel it, some of us a lot, some a little."

"What happens after that?" Sean asked.

"About a week from today, we'll pop back into normal space, but in a different star system. I don't know which one, though. Have to find out from one of the swabbies-- I mean Navy guys. I'll tell you when I find out. Anyway, we'll be six fewer light years from home.

"Gotta go now and get into my bunk. I'll check in with you when this over."

Sean lay back in the bunk and breathed deeply, trying to relax. The speaker sounded again.

"Jump Warning, Jump Warning! Jump in 5 minutes!" Nothing happened for what seemed a long time. Then the speaker came on again.

"Jump Warning, Jump Warning! This is your final jump warning! Jump in one minute!"

The lights dimmed, and the air circulation fans slowed and stopped. An eerie quiet enveloped Sean until the tones sounded from the speaker again.

.. one, two, three, four, five times... Then a single long tone that seemed to go on forever.

The long tone quit abruptly and the room lurched.

Sean felt as though he were floating, with only the straps holding him to the bunk. The bulkheads of the room seemed to be moving together, moving toward a central point in his vision. There was a second lurch and he suddenly felt all turned inside out and queasy, somehow tumbling without actually moving. Everything felt cold, terrifying and WRONG!

He snapped back down on to the bunk as gravity returned, the lights brightened, and the fans began circulating air again. He felt confused, barely able to remember his name, dizzy, and his stomach kept doing back flips.

A massive wave of nausea suddenly overcame him, and this morning's reprocessed soya fiber was ejected onto the adjacent bulkhead. Sean flopped back, weak and miserable, with vomit dribbling down his chin.

* * * * *

On the bridge, some people were just as disoriented. At the moment Sean felt turned inside out, the stars outside the canopy flashed out of existence in a bright burst of blue light. Blackness and an occasional blue flickering replaced the stars. Captain "Hellfire" Blaine was not feeling too peppy, either.

She was strapped down in her control chair, shaking her head, trying to clear the disorientation and the feelings of a bad hangover. Years of stellar jumps had conditioned her to the worst of jump shock, but the disorientation seemed to get worse as she got older. Her displays confirmed a good jump insertion with the navigational parameters for Corrig, six light years to rimward of Fisher's World, and six light years closer to Reformation Coalition space. Power output to the jump envelop was nominal, and the envelop was stable. They should arrive in the Corrig system in 150 hours, give or take 8 or 10.

"Mr. Brenner, secure from jump stations and set the jump space watch. By the way, good job on the jump plot. We should drop into normal space about 10 hours from Corrig's outer gas giant. We'll refuel in a day and be out of there."

"Thanks, Captain," Brenner replied. He touched a pad on his comm panel and throughout the ship he announced, "All hands secure from jump stations. Now set the jump space watch. The second section has the watch."

Several crew members got up from their stations and left the bridge. The level of tension among the remaining crew dropped quickly away.

* * * * *

The ship assumed its normal underway routine. Laser and missile turrets were secured, along with the central spinal weapon and the master fire control panels as external threats vanished for the next 170 odd hours. Crew members began standing one watch in three

instead of four hours on and four off. Maintenance work and cleaning began in earnest. Marines field-stripped and cleaned weapons, and along with maintenance technicians, performed minor repair work and upkeep on their battledress. Cooks had time to cook, the quality of meals improved greatly, and each Marine's wine ration was increased. Throughout the great ship people relaxed, thought of home, and began looking forward to various planet falls in the Coalition. They found time to be friendly and to talk with Sean. As the word spread that he had saved "Red Dog" Rodriguez' life Sean became the subject of handshakes and backslaps throughout Marine country.

Trask came to Sean's stateroom early in the second morning in jump space. By then, Sean had cleaned himself up and squared away his quarters.

"Hey Sean, I want you to meet somebody. Red Dog's finally come around and is asking for you."

Sean put on a clean jumpsuit and followed Tiny through the increasingly familiar maze of passageways and travelator rides. After stepping out of the travelator and walking down a passageway, Sean and Tiny found themselves in a white foyer facing a medical technician garbed in a white jump suit sitting behind a counter.

"Private Harley Trask and Sean McKinnie to see Gunnery Sergeant Rodriguez," Trask announced.

"OK, just a second," the tech replied. She turned to a workstation and tapped some characters on its keyboard, then waited for a few seconds until a window opened on the workstation's display.

"He's just out of regen stimulator treatment, and his biosigns show he's stable and awake right now. You can only see him for ten minutes. He's still really weak and he needs his rest."

"OK, that should be enough. We just want to say hello."

The tech punched a number into her communicator and announced the visitors. Presently, a second young woman in a white jumpsuit appeared. She was very pretty with deep blue eyes, a wide mouth with full lips, and long black hair drawn into a bun at the nape of her neck.

"I'm Alexandra Andropova, 'AA' to my friends. I'm Red Dog's nurse on this shift. Poor guy is a tough case. Although he is conscious, he has no feeling below his arms. A bullet fragment caused some spinal damage. He'll be needing spinal surgery after we get back to Oriflamme. We've replaced his blood and the regen stimulators are helping him rebuild lung tissue. We almost lost him a couple of times, but he should pull through. Whether he'll walk again is still a good question, though. Come with me."

The two followed AA around the counter and down a short corridor to a narrow room with glass walls on two sides.

"Here he is. Remember, no more than ten minutes. I'll leave you now."

AA smiled at Sean, turned, and left. Sean felt a hot

flush creep up his cheeks.

Rodriguez was lying on a high bunk with railings on the open side. Several wires and tubes were attached to his arms and body. The wires were connected to softly beeping electronic medical monitors, while the tubes supplied a number of fluids from plastic bags hanging overhead. A large white dressing covered Gunny's chest. A blanket concealed his body from the waist down.

Gunny's eyes turned toward them as the two entered the room. "Good to see you Tiny. Is this the youngster they told me about?"

"He sure is, Gunny. He dropped that zip with an arrow right through his neck just before your throat would've been slit."

"Come over here lad." Gunny motioned Sean toward his bedside. As Sean approached, Gunny weakly reached out a hand. Sean took it as Gunny thanked him.

"I owe you for my life, young man. Look's like you've given up everything to save an old grunt. Are they treating you OK? Do you know what they are going to do with you?"

"They're treating me fine, sir, except they keep me locked up, and Tiny is looking out for me. But I don't know what they are going to do with me," Sean replied.

"Well, I'll have a word with a few people as soon as I can and I'll see what I can find out.

"Tiny, don't keep the kid in hack. Just keep an eye on him He'll be OK in Marine country, I'll clear it with Top, and I'm sure Top's cleared it with the Skipper.

"By the way, kid, don't call me 'sir.' Gunny'll do just fine. I'm glad I'm around to meet you, and I'll see you again. Now get out of here. They say I need my sleep."

"I'm glad I could meet you too, Gunny. Rest well."

The two headed back toward Marine country. Trask didn't say much at first. As they approached their quarters, he turned to Sean with a serious look on his face and said, "You know Sean, Gunny really likes you. Letting you out of hack like that is his way of making you part of the platoon. He sounds gruff, and he'll be on your back if he thinks you're goofing off, but he's fair and he'll be straight with you. If I figure him right, he'll try to get you into the Marines."

* * * * *

Sean spent most of his days in his stateroom. After Trask showed him how to use the film reader, he began devouring the volumes of history and technology that had been delivered from the ship's library. Trask explained that the film books were designed to introduce people on primitive worlds to the history of humanity and how it spread among the stars. He read about Terra, the cradle of humanity and about how the Ancients took humans from Terra established other human civilizations among the stars. He learned about how one of these extra-Terran human civilizations established the Grand Empire of the Stars and that this

empire controlled the stars for some 2000 years before Terrans reached their own moon. He read the accounts of Terra's own expansion into space and how this young, vigorous civilization defeated the Grand Empire and later established the Second Imperium. He studied the history of the Three Imperiums and how they each rose, ruled the stars, and fell during the some 3700 years since a man named Neil Armstrong walked on Luna. After reading about all these grand accomplishments, he read of the revolts and civil wars that ripped the Last Imperium apart, and how technology turned against its masters and finished the destruction of civilization some 70 years ago. He was shocked to realize that the seemingly wild tales told by his Great-Uncle Nathan about how civilization collapsed on his own world were only too true, and he wept when he realized what civilization and technology had been lost.

He read how the Reformation Coalition was established, only three years before, to somehow preserve a small pocket of civilization and bring it back to the stars. On at least one world, Vezina, the Coalition forcibly removed a local technologically elevated dictator and began reintegrating the world into interstellar civilization. Reintegrating primitive worlds, establishing colonies on empty worlds, and recovering high technology artifacts and the knowledge to once again build higher technology is what the Coalition is all about, Sean learned. And the agency responsible for these missions is the Reformation Coalition Exploratory Service. The starship he was aboard is one of the newest interstellar vessels in the RCES fleet.

Trask explained later that Immanual Kant has a joint three-service crew. The Reformation Coalition Navy provides the navigators, engineers, gunners and others who actually work and fight the ship. "They are the people who wear slate blue," he said. "The RCES plan the and direct the missions, and do all the science and technology work, both in space and on the ground. They are the guys 'n gals in the black suits. The Marines do the dirty work, both covering the RCES's asses on the ground, and dropping from orbit to take out the Teddies and their troops." Trask told Sean there are actually two types of Marines aboard, the infantry who wear the woodland cammo, and Marine cavalry who drive and fight the ship's Pyrrhus support sleds. They wear the solid green body suits, Trask said, "Because they want us to know they don't muck around in a bunch of leaves."

As "Red Dog" Rodrigueez gradually recovered, Tiny and Sean would spend more time with him. On one of their first visits, Sean asked the Gunnery Sergeant about the Teddies and how they became that way.

"Teddies," Red Dog explained, are people who were able to grab on to a few pieces of high technology, mostly weapons, when everyone else around them lost theirs when civilization collapsed. Instead of using the

technology for the good of the people, the Teds used it to rule over them. Whenever the peasants even begin to think about revolting, out come the plasma guns. When you have several Teds on one planet, such as on your own Fisher's World, it gets worse. The world is fragmented among petty nation-states who are always fighting each other.

"What the RC tries to do, is to select the most well-liked and respected Ted on the planet, educate him about the Coalition, help his forces defeat the other Teds, and then set up a world-wide government and economy that will at first trade with Coalition worlds, then later join the RC. That's the way it's supposed to work. Sometimes it does."

"But the Emperor of Arcola was well liked," Sean exclaimed, "except for his taxes. Why did you attack him?"

"We weren't going after him," said Red Dog. "We wanted to take out his council and his military chiefs. Our intelligence said they were behind the upcoming invasion of Rivero. Eliminate them and we eliminate the invasion threat, and your emperor can lower taxes and be well-liked again. And, although we can't prove it now, there are signs that other off-worlders have been advising the emperor. Fisher's World is too close to home for the Coalition to allow Outsiders to take over the world and use it as a base. We'll be back, maybe not right away, but we'll be back."

The next day, Immanuel Kant dropped back into normal space. Sean was enjoying some tea in the Marine mess deck when Jump Stations sounded. He headed for his bunk and strapped in. Trask stuck his head to make sure Sean was all right, then headed for his own bunk. Once again after the warnings the long tone sounded followed by five short ones. The now familiar lurch and inside-out twisty feeling happened again, but not as strong as before. This time Sean kept down his breakfast, although he did feel dazed and disoriented for a number of minutes. Just as he was clearing the fog from his head when "Straight Wake" Brenner's voice came over the speakers announcing "Now hear this, now hear this. Set the maneuver watch. Now establish gas tight integrity Yankee throughout the ship. First section has the watch."

Kant had arrived in the Corrig system.

Chapter 6

Skirmish

The Corrig system's largest gas giant orbits about 10 AUs out from the close double star which forms the system's primary. The system's main planet orbits some 1.8 AUs from the hot, white F4V main star and its close dim class M9 red dwarf companion. Both planets are often used as wilderness refueling points by Reformation Coalition and other ships transiting to more desirable worlds to coreward or rimward. The

main planet was once a moderately populated backwater with 8 million people, a participatory democracy, a few nearly played-out lanthanum mines, and not much of an economy. Now it is a barren, unpopulated wasteland, valued only for its polar region's water ice, its star system's gas giants, and an occasional relic.

The Guild merchant cruiser Claymore's cutters were refueling their mother ship when Immanuel Kant stepped into normal space on a course toward the gas giant. Claymore had been in the system nearly a week, prepared to intercept any vessel heading coreward toward worlds where the Guild has an interest, or returning to rimward toward Coalition space. The converted Broadsword class mercenary cruiser was positioned to pick off a fat, slow free trader and strip it of its loot. She was also powerful enough to tangle with any but the newest Coalition warship. Claymore was armed with eight lasers, and her two cutters each had laser gunpack modules at their disposal. Most of her troop spaces had been ripped out and converted to cargo holds so she could fulfill the "merchant" portion of her designation. All in all though, she was considered by the Coalition to be nothing more than a glorified and very dangerous pirate. However, she was meeting more than her match today .

* * * *

"Hellfire" Blaine and her bridge crew were shaking off post-jump disorientation as Kant's sensors came back on line for normal space operations. As soon as his mental fog cleared, "Straight Wake" Brenner uncaged the ship's telescopes, focused them on three reference stars , and used them to both determine Kant's position in the Corrig system and align the ship's inertial navigation platform. Once that was done, the executive officer/astrogator located the system's large gas giant and compared its position with the astronomical data for the Corrig system that was stored in the ship's computer.

"Looks like we are about 9 million kilometers out from the gas giant, Captain, about 15 hours away. Recommend we begin decelerating in 12 and a half hours."

"Very well Mister Brenner. In the meantime, set the maneuver watch. We don't know who's around here."

"Aye aye, Captain." Brenner switched his headset mike to the ship's General Announcement System. "Now hear this, now hear this. Set the maneuver watch. Now establish gas tight integrity Yankee throughout the ship. First section has the watch."

Throughout the ship, the more experienced officers and petty officers manned their stations. All but the most critical gas tight hatchways were closed. The Weapons Officer and Senior Sensor Operator manned their consoles on the bridge. Master fire directors, turrets, and weapons consoles were manned

throughout the ship. Watch standers would be on duty for six hours rather than the usual four, and rotate watches every other watch with their colleagues, rather than stand one watch in three. By the time Kant began decelerating, her most senior and experienced personnel would be on duty again. Meanwhile, the giant ship drifted toward the gas giant, carried along by her 600,000 kilometers per hour residual velocity.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Henry "Big Eye" Barnes, the ship's senior sensor operator always manned the sensor console during jump insertion or breakout. He came on duty again just before the ship began decelerating 600,000 kilometers from the gas giant, and would be manning the sensor console during the entire approach and entry into orbit. Once every half hour, Captain Blaine would order Kant's engines cut and had the ship yaw 90 degrees to her flight path. That pointed the maximum area of the passive EMS array on the hull toward the gas giant and any unwelcome visitors lurking around the planet. One hour into the deceleration program, during the second sensor scan

emission near the large gas giant designated as Charlie One. Preliminary EMS indicates we have an emission source contact in near orbit. We are unable to classify the bogey yet. Could be a ship, but it could also be a natural hot spot on the planet."

"Captain aye. Stay on it, Big Eye. Straight Wake, sound General Quarters and have the fighter pilots stand to their craft. We might need them to do a little recon work. But don't launch yet, I don't want to send them off chasing a hot spot."

"Aye, aye Captain," Brenner replied as he yanked the general alarm handle and then announced battle stations to all hands over the GAS.

"Flight Officer, prepare the fighters for flight ops," he commanded.

Crew members throughout the ship began donning vac suits and sealing gas-tight hatches. The ship's meson gun, its eight lasers, and the missile barbettes in the missile module were manned and made ready. Damage control and medical parties assembled at critical locations throughout the ship. Kant's four

fighter pilots boarded their Wildbats and began powering up their systems and downloading astrogational data into their flight computers. Trask ran into Sean's stateroom and stuffed him into a lightweight vac suit before donning his battledress.

Meanwhile, Barnes kept making minor adjustments to the passive EMS, trying to tune in more tightly to the unresolved heat source at the gas giant. As the distance narrowed, Barnes could begin to see it moving across the face of the world, and then it suddenly disappeared.

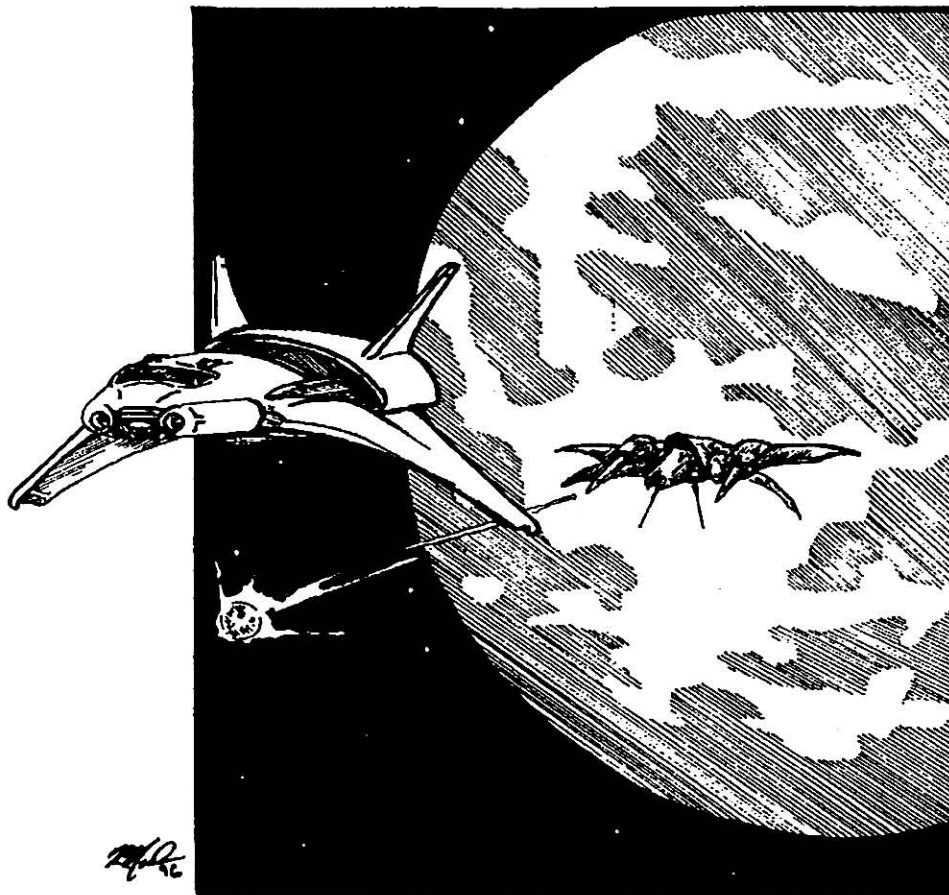
"Captain, Sensors. Contact Charlie One is possibly orbiting the gas giant. Contact was just lost as it went around the backside. If it's in orbit, I

estimate reacquisition in three zero minutes."

"Sensors, Captain. Are you sure its in orbit?"

"Affirmative Captain, I've check the planet's surface features, and this object is travelling much faster than the planet's rotation. It's in orbit and it's low."

"OK, Eyes. If it comes back into contact as predicted,



period, Kant's passive EMS detectors started lighting up with anomalous infra-red signatures in near orbit around the gas giant. Kant was now some 360,000 kilometers or one and a half hours away from orbit if they continued her deceleration program.

"Captain, Sensors. We have an unclassified infrared

we can be sure it's artificial and probably hostile. There ain't no friends out here."

"You got that right, boss."

Kant resumed her deceleration program. The minutes crawled as Kant's crew waited out the time until the next sensor sweep and the possible reappearance - the difference between a peaceful refueling and a challenged transit.

Barnes' console alarm suddenly squawked 32 minutes later and two fuzzy blobs showed up against the gas giant's half disk.

"Captain, Sensors. I now hold TWO contacts orbiting the gas giant. Designating new contact as Charlie Two. Range, 180,000 kilometers. Attempting to classify."

Barnes typed commands into his console requesting the ship's computer to scan its library of emissions profiles for a match with the infrared spectral lines now being picked up by Kant's EMS sensors. Some 20 seconds later, the message INSUFFICIENT DATA, UNABLE TO CLASSIFY flashed on his screen.

"Captain, Sensors. Unable to classify. Wait one."

Barnes was interrupted by another console alarm. The broad band spectrum display appeared normal, but when he ran the recording of the previous 30 seconds, he noticed several spikes in the UHF radio frequency band.

"Captain, Sensors, we have radio emissions from the contacts!"

"Roger, Sensors, redesignate contacts as Bravo One and Bravo Two. Start uploading data to the master fire control directors and to the tactical command display."

"Aye, aye. Uploading now." The contacts were reclassified as hostile, Bandits in RC parlance, and redesignated with the Bravo classification. Data flowed to the fire control computers which began working up possible firing solutions for the ship's weapons. However, HOLD FIRE, INSUFFICIENT TARGETING DATA messages kept coming up on all MFD and local turret displays. Meanwhile, a holographic image began building in the tactical display tank in front of the captain, the exec, and the weapons officer.

The gas giant seemingly floated in mid-air with two closely spaced fuzzy blobs moving across its surface. Glowing lines traced their predicted orbits and alphanumerics B-1 and B-2 hovered next to them.

The planet in the holodisplay slowly grew as the hours passed. Barnes kept up his tuning and classification attempts. The blobs went behind the planet again, and re-emerged on schedule every half hour. Natural radio interference broadcast by the gas giant itself began to show up in the background as Kant moved closer to the planet. A half hour later, with the range to the planet shortened to 60,000 kilometers, the targets suddenly firmed up.

"Captain, Sensors. Bandits positively identified as spacecraft. We are now getting both IR and EM emissions, typical power plant signatures. Attempting

to classify."

Barnes again queried the computer's database. This time with results. BRAVO ONE CLASSIFIED AS BROADSWORD CLASS MERCENARY CRUISER; BRAVO TWO CLASSIFIED AS MODULAR CUTTER flashed on Barnes' display. His blood turned cold. Nobody friendly for parsecs around owned a Mercenary Cruiser. The larger of the two bandits

suddenly split. Barnes queried the database once more. The computer display updated with a new listing: BRAVO THREE CLASSIFIED AS MODULAR CUTTER

There was absolutely no doubt now that Kant had a fight on her hands.

* * * * *

Captain Oleg Garcia was bored. Claymore had been on patrol in this barren system for nearly a week with nothing to show for it except for a free trader caught napping while skimming fuel from the gas giant. All the trader had to show for his effort was some trade goods destined for a primitive world - mere low tech trinkets - and a rebellious crew of graybeards that he almost immediately spaced. He shouldn't be sitting around a gas giant, he should be trading and raiding to coreward. If things were this bad, he wondered, how could they possibly get worse?

He found out almost immediately when his reverie was ripped to shreds by the ship's general alarm. He raced from his office to the bridge where a passive EMS contact displayed in the holotank showed a target less than 480,000 kilometers out.

Garcia shoved his first officer aside and raged at the bridge crew in general.

"How in all the blue hells did something this large get so close without you idiots seeing it? Were you sons of bitches asleep? I'd space the lot of you if I didn't need your sorry asses!"

"Get your vac suits on and dump pressure. Break off fueling and get the laser modules installed in the cutters. Move!" They moved. They knew somebody would get spaced before Garcia vented his rage. None of them wanted to give him the tiniest reason to focus his attention on one unlucky soul.

Garcia steadied down and looked at the tank again. The sensor operator switched to active to get a more accurate reading on the incoming object. Active EMS returns showed that the target was large, nearly 3000 tons or more. It was on course for refueling and was decelerating. He wasn't quite sure what the incoming ship was. He had never seen anything this large before, and it was coming straight at him.

Around him, crew members were donning vac suits. Meanwhile, other crew disconnected Cutter #2's fueling hoses and her pilot moved her away from the mother ship. Outside the cutters, crew members frantically unclipped the cutters' fuel modules and

moved the laser modules from their storage bays. It would be some minutes before the lasers were attached.

* * * * *

Sean felt his vac suit stiffen as the air was slowly bled from Kant's spaces. His suit was plugged into the ship's life support system through an umbilical hose and a wall connection. He could switch to a one-hour emergency air bottle if the life support system supply was lost, enough time to get to another, hopefully undamaged, module with functioning life support. His suit's headset was connected by jack and cable into the ship's Internal Communications System. While helping him suit up, Trask warned Sean severely to not talk over the ICS unless there was an extreme emergency. "Just listen for orders like a good Marine," he said. Elsewhere in the ship crew members were strapped in at stations with vac suits sealed, with hoses plugged into their life support connections, and headsets plugged into the ICS. Even Aloycious, the ship's cat - also known as "Big Al," had jumped into his airtight life support box when general quarters sounded and was sealed in by a crew member. Big Al was not a pet. The black and white 10-kilogram tomcat was working crew, in charge of eradicating any vermin that might have smuggled themselves aboard through one of the small craft. Big Al had become friends with Sean. So that Sean would have something useful to do after his daily studies, the Chief of the Ship - the senior Navy petty officer aboard - gave Sean the job of feeding Big Al and cleaning his litter box. In return, Big Al often came around to Sean's stateroom to keep him company and occasionally deigned to jump into Sean's lap and let Sean scratch him behind his ears.

* * * * *

"Hellfire" Blaine had a problem. She had to keep decelerating her ship or Kant would merely swing past the gas giant in an altered orbit and head for the inner system. However, the HEPlARs announce her presence like a flare in the middle of a blackout. The HEPlARs would also degrade the sensors and consequently her ship's fire control. But then, Kant was the biggest ship on the block, so what the hell...

"Helm, Captain. Prepare to make our facing one eight zero degrees relative to flight path after weapons discharge. Engineering, prepare to continue the 2 G braking program" One more half hour of that would put Kant at almost zero velocity relative to the gas giant with just enough fuel left to nudge her into a parking orbit. She would be able to measure her fuel state by the teacup after that. But before she would light off the HEPlARs again she had a couple of surprises in store for the cruiser and her friends.

"Flight Officer, Captain. Launch all Wildbats,

dispersion pattern Delta." The fighters would undock from their module and then disperse in a pattern 90 degrees apart. They would then alter their flight paths so they would converge on the hostile ships. Because they could maintain their current velocity 30 percent longer than Kant before beginning deceleration, they would arrive first and have at least one good firing pass at the cruiser before the bigger ship would have a sure shot. Claymore would have five targets, not one. Of course, at least two of the fighters would have to deal with the armed cutters.

"Hellfire" called up surprise number two. She removed a bright red key from a vac suit sleeve pocket and inserted it into the Ship's Master Arming Lock in her console. She twisted it a half turn to the right from SAFE to ARMED.

"Weapons free," she announced to all weapons stations.

"Weaps, Captain," she called into the ICS, "Firm up the lock on Bravo One and slave it to the attitude thrusters. Standby to fire a full missile salvo and the meson gun on my command."

Attitude thrusters yawed Kant's bow on to the gas giant and Claymore. In the missile modules, gunners hurriedly ran through their pre-launch checklists and began the prelaunch auto sequence. Flight computers aboard the missiles woke up and downloaded targeting data from the master fire directors. Cyclotrons at the breech end of the massive spinal meson gun spun accelerating subatomic particles to relativistic velocities. When the command to fire was given, these particle streams would smash into each other and create meson particles. Magnetic rings formed their fields to confine the meson stream within the gun barrel and give the particles a further push toward light speed. These would stream down the gun's barrel at near light speed, and if they hit the target ship, pass through the target's hull to decay and explode within the hapless victim.

Missile and meson gun solution lights turned green on the master weapons panel in front of Lt. Cdr. Elizabeth "Hawkeye" Henley's acceleration couch. "Captain, Weaps, we have a firing solution on Bravo One."

"Very well. Shoot!"

Henley's forefinger stabbed down on the meson gun firing touch pad, then on Aux 1 and Aux 2, the firing touch pads reserved for the clip-on missile modules. The missile salvo indicators showed five birds were ready for launch in each module. All eight laser solution lights were also green but their turn would come later.

The firing of a meson gun is silent in a vacuum. Unless you watch for the power drop indications on the gun's display panel showing the surge of power discharged from the cyclotrons, you won't know it has happened. The meson stream is invisible as it sleets toward its target. The stream, travelling at near light

speed, would take ten seconds to travel to its target. If it hit, it would take an additional ten seconds for any damage to register on Kant's sensors.

A missile launch, on the other hand, is a lot more dramatic. As Hawkeye confirmed the launch with the cry "Missiles away!", the missiles rippled from the launch tubes in their barbettes; all ten of them streaming hot plasma and accelerating at maximum 4 G burn toward the gas giant and Claymore. They would be on top of Claymore within 30 minutes, and then the fun would really begin.

Meanwhile, "Hellfire" ordered the helm and Engineering to execute the attitude change and deceleration commands. Kant swung around to a stern-first attitude and highlighted her presence with a blazing plasma star as she continued slowing her approach to the gas giant.

* * * * *

Oleg Garcia watched with fascinated horror as Kant and her fighters closed in. Kant's image in his display suddenly flared in the near infrared, the telltale sign of a missile launch. Just as the infrared was reaching its peak in Claymore's sensors, an explosion jolted Garcia from his seat. He looked upward through the transparent dome above Claymore's bridge to see the debris of his number two laser turret go spinning off into space. There was nothing to do about it except to get out of here while the getting was good.

"Engineering, Bridge," he yelled into his helmet mike. "I want three Gees on the thrusters, now!" Using attitude jets, he yawed and rolled Claymore's spherical shape so that the ship's thrust axis coincided with his orbital path, then commanded the computer to execute a maximum burn to break orbit. He felt really lucky that whatever exploded aboard - a meson gun probably - hadn't wrecked his drives. However, concurrent hull damage would make it tough to repressurize the ship. Maybe he would be behind the planet relative to his foe, and the incoming missiles would lose lock in the world's magnetic fields. Maybe.

* * * * *

The worst part of a space battle is waiting for something to happen. Orbital mechanics and the time lags caused by the speed of light combine to make a battle a slow waltz of death. Aboard Kant, cyclotrons were recharging the meson gun; it would be a half hour before it would be ready to fire again. Missile gunners were wrestling reloads from the missile module cargo holds to the barbettes. Preflight testing, guidance software uploading, and loading the missiles into their launch tubes would consume nearly an hour. When the weapons systems would be next ready for combat, the lasers would join in, too. The laser's homopolar generators were soaking up power, getting ready to

release it in a single blast of coherent electromagnetic radiation. Gunners, engineers, Marines, bridge crew, Woz, Sean, and Big Al all waited. The big cat nibbled his kibble and dozed in his life support box. The humans and hiver aboard did not have that luxury. They waited in their vac suits, many itching in places they could not scratch, staring at workstation displays. Kant's bow was facing opposite her direction of flight, HEPlaRs firing at 2Gs, throwing a huge flare of plasma toward the ship's direction of flight, making a brightly lighted target for Claymore. The latter ship did not have the luxury of shooting at the tempting target. The merchant cruiser was blasting at 3 Gs with its jets pointed toward Kant. Only four of her remaining seven laser turrets were capable of bearing on Kant. However, with a spread of ten missiles approaching, all four were tasked with hitting as many of these threats as possible.

Claymore's two cutters were able to get their laser gun packs fitted and were maneuvering ahead of their mother ship, planning on using the gas giant's gravity well to slingshot them into a high speed orbit toward Kant's predicted position 30 minutes in the future. Kant's fighters were rapidly approaching Claymore, hoping to get off one laser blast each at the cruiser, then sling shooting around the gas giant to deal with the cutters.

At first, Claymore's gunners acquitted themselves quite well, given the small size of their targets. Each were able to lock their beam pointers on to a missile. They fired. Perhaps they were too nervous, or the beam pointers had not been properly calibrated, but only one missile blew up in a silent flash.

Kant's sensors went active to both burn through the increasing interference caused by the gas giant radio noise and her own HEPlaRs. They easily maintained their lock on the cruiser. The other nine missiles accepted their mother ship's course correction commands and targeting updates, and verified them with their own on-board sensors. In a matter of seconds, they were in their final orientation toward their target. Laser rods were deployed, and nuclear warheads detonated. The rods sent goutts of coherent x-rays toward Claymore in the milliseconds before they were consumed by nuclear fire.

Claymore was hit with the equivalent of 36 massive x-ray laser blasts. They vaporized a large cargo hatch and proceeded to detonate fuel tanks and destroy the ship's sensors, power plant, jump drive, and maneuver drive. Nearly one third of the ship was vaporized. What remained was a gutted hulk locked in a highly eccentric long period orbit around the gas giant. Eventually, repeated passes through the wispy upper atmosphere of the planet would slow the wreck sufficiently to pull it into a long, flaming arc toward the surface. Long before that though, Garcia's emergency life support oxygen would run out. He would have plenty of time to contemplate his sins and how many died by his hand

in the vacuum of space before he slowly choked to death.

Chapter 7

Honor

Claymore's cutters slowed as they headed out from the gas giant, then curved around the planet's bulk, picking up speed as they began to fall inward. Their crews had witnessed their mother ship's virtual destruction by Kant's missiles and knew they had only one choice: surrender or die.

Hideo Takamoto, Claymore's senior surviving officer, and pilot of Katana, his private name for Claymore Cutter #1, knew in his heart that surrendering to Star Vikings would mean a long, slow, painful death. Had not his captain said they would suffer the Death of the Red Eagle if they surrendered? Could they not anticipate the horizontal slash across the chest, and their hearts and lungs being pulled from their body? Besides, there was honor to consider. Takamoto could trace his ancestry for hundreds of generations back to Japan on Terra, and back to the Samurai warrior class. He lived by the code of Bushido, the code of the warrior. Surrender was unthinkable. Surrender would dishonor his family and ancestors, even though his family would never hear of how he died. But he would know; that's what mattered. There was only one choice: to die with honor.

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The Wildbat fighter is perhaps one of the ugliest spacecraft designs developed by all the human races. It is a strictly functional cylinder topped with a clear plastic canopy. The Wildbat has a bulbous rounded nose that houses the craft's 120 megajoule laser turret at one end, a 3-G HEPLaR maneuver drive at the other, and a fuel tank in between. It is not gracefully streamlined like the old Imperial Ramparts-class fighter, and it has no airfoils or stabilizers to help it maneuver in atmosphere. While its contragrav lifters enable it to land or give close support to friendlies on the ground, it does neither very well nor comfortably. Its main mission is to kill enemy spacecraft, or die trying.

The cockpit of a Wildbat fighter is not the most comfortable place to be under any circumstances. It is an even more uncomfortable place in combat. It's small, it's cramped, and there's no place to go in case of trouble. The cockpit is covered with a transparent bubble, which yields fine visibility, but is equally transparent to all types of radiation including visible light, xrays, gamma radiation, and the radiation trapped in planetary radiation belts. It does have an ejection seat to which is attached an atmospheric reentry kit, but that's only useful near a terrestrial type planet. At best,

around a gas giant, the ejection seat can put you into a more or less stable orbit. At worst, it can send you plunging into the giant's crushing atmosphere.

Lt. Kyle "Hot Shot" Hillman's Wildbat, known informally as "The Drunken Pig" because of its atmospheric flight characteristics, was in hot pursuit of the Guild cutters when the missiles detonated. He thanked all that was holy that his vac suit was sufficiently armored to stop stray xrays and gamma radiation from doing him any damage. However, the nuclear flash was not quite stopped by his auto-opaqueing face shield, and he had after-images burned into his eyeballs for several minutes. His dosimeter, though, indicated he had not absorbed any radiation beyond a safe level. Hillman was close enough to Claymore to confirm her damage through the PRIS binoculars that fit over his faceplate, and pass the word on to Kant.

"Big Bird, Big Bird, this is Hammer One. Confirm Bravo One is destroyed. The missile hits took out the aft third of her hull. She has no thrust and is drifting in orbit."

"Hammer One, Big Bird. Thanks for the confirmation. Continue pursuit of Bravos Two and Three."

"Roger, wilco, Big Bird. We have an intermittent passive lock and are closing."

The Wildbats were accelerating at 3Gs, while the cutters, burdened by their massive laser gunpacks could only accelerate at 1G. The fighters should catch up with the cutters before the latter had any chance to damage Kant. Theoretically, that is. In reality, things were not that easy.

Hot Shot bent to his sensor board. He noticed increasing waves of radio noise from the gas giant washing across his PEMS receiver display as the small craft flew close to the planet, blanking the two contacts he was trying to hold. He didn't want to go active and possibly give away his position unless he had no other choice. He did, however, have one more resource he had not yet used.

"Hammer Four, Hammer One," he called. "Deploy your PEMS and see if you can lock up those Bravo targets."

"Hammer One, Four. Deploying. Will advise."

Hammer Four was a specially modified Wildbat fighter. It was a two-seater with a sensor operator riding in tandem behind the pilot. In place of the usual laser in the nose turret, it carried a long range sensor suit including a 20-meter in diameter PEMS antenna that was starting to unfurl. As it deployed, the antenna made the fighter look like a stubby-handled umbrella with the fighter hull as the handle. However, it gave the Pathfinder a far more effective sensor capability than the rather puny sensors the fighters normally carried.

"All Hammers from Hammer Four. I have a lock! Datalinking the lock to Hammer flight...Now!"

The two bandits suddenly showed up clearly on The Drunken Pig's sensor display. Hot Shot slaved the laser to the datalink and set the master arming control to ON. The Drunken Pig's big nose doors opened and her laser mirror extended in front of the fighter, swiveling on its pitch and yaw axes until it locked on to the datalinked target coordinates.

Just then a warbling tone sounded in Hot Shot's headset. His EMS warning receiver was telling him that he was not the only one trying for a sensor lock.

* * * * *

Hideo Takamoto had a small nuisance to deal with before he could ride his beloved Katana to glory. Four small craft were closing in and they had to be dealt with. He called Cutter #2.

"Stilieto, Katana. Are you holding four contacts on bearings 175 to 185 relative, plus 010?"

"Negative Katana, we had them for a while but we just lost them in the radio noise," the second cutter replied.

"Understood, Stilieto. They're between us and the planet. That'll make it tough to get a passive lock with all that noise in the background. Let's go active."

Both cutters lit off their active sensors. Not only did the fighter pilots hear them in their warning receivers, they showed up like distant flashlights in a dark room on the fighters' sensor displays, making it easy for the Wildbats to hold their sensor locks without broadcasting their own positions.

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Hammer Four's PEMS locked on to Stilieto, the slightly nearer of the two. The other three fighters' lasers fired. One hit. That blast of photons lanced into Stilieto's maneuver drive causing it to overheat. The laser generated heat caused the plasma jet temperature to exceed the drive's specification and burn through the walls of the HEPlarR ignition chamber, causing a catastrophic failure. The maneuver drive exploded and died. Stilieto was no longer a factor.

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Takamoto was barely able to keep an active lock on the approaching fighters. The gas giant's natural radio noise kept fuzzing his display. However, he was able to get enough of a fix to hand off the lock to the ladar in the gun pack module, and the module gunners were able to draw a clean bead on The Drunken Pig. They fired.

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All Hotshot Hillman knew was that his fighters were chasing two cutters. Although he noticed that the

enemy craft were only accelerating at 1G, he didn't connect this clue with the possibility of the laser gun pack.

Therefore, since cutters were usually unarmed, he didn't implement his evasion software. He died blissfully ignorant of the gun pack when the lasers hit head on destroying his nose turret and then exploding his fuel.

For him, life ended in one sudden, vast blast of boiling, expanding hydrogen.

* * * * *

"Big Eye" Barnes picked up the small craft battle on his passive sensors.

"Captain, Sensors. Contact Bravo Two has sustained a major explosion and has ceased accelerating. Contact Foxtrot One has exploded. Those cutters are armed! Contact Bravo One is now behind the planet."

"Captain, aye." Another good man and a rare, skilled pilot lost to a filthy pirate, she thought. She'd have to write another letter to grieving parents. Meanwhile...

"Weaps, Captain. Target Contact Bravo One. The Wildbats look like they've bitten off more than they can chew."

"Weaps, aye. We'll nail Bravo One when it comes back around the sunward limb."

"Nail it good, Weaps. I don't want to have to deal with prisoners."

Time crawled past. Kant finished her deceleration program and entered orbit around the gas giant, her fuel tanks nearly spent. The gas giant rolled beneath her, a sulphur taint in the planet's lower atmosphere coloring the globe a lemon yellow. Katana suddenly reappeared over the planet's horizon, trailing but still accelerating toward Kant. Katana was in an elliptical orbit that would drop her below Kant, speed her past the RC vessel, then take her outward again. At least it would do that if the cutter was not accelerating. Meanwhile, the Wildbats were desperately trying to match orbit and line up for another shot at the Guild cutter. "Big Eye" Barnes had been tracking the vessel ever since it appeared over the horizon, passing on his readings to "Straight Wake" Brenner and the astrogation computer. Brenner projected the computer's course predictions into the holotank and didn't like what he saw.

"Captain, that sonavabitch is on a collision course with us. Estimate possible impact in 35 minutes!" Katana was trying to ram Kant.

Meanwhile, the three remaining Wildbats appeared over the horizon trailing Katana and entering Kant's field of fire. Hellfire immediately saw the danger and called out "Weapons Tight!" over the ICS. This command forbade any weapons installation in the ship from firing. Blaine enforced it by turning her key in the Ship's Master Arming Lock from ARMED to SAFE.

Radio contact between the fighters and their mother ship resumed. The Fighter Director passed on Captain Blaine's orders to the three remaining Wildbats.

"Hammer Flight, this is Big Bird. Break off pursuit of Bandit One. I say again, break off pursuit of Bandit One. Go high, planet relative, and clear the target picture."

The Wildbats obediently changed their orientation and used a HEPlAR burn to alter their course so they would pass Kant with the ship between the fighters and the gas giant. This would leave Kant a free field of fire.

"Weapons Free!," Blaine called out over the ICS as the fighters cleared away, and turned her key to ARMED, once again releasing all weapons for combat. Then she called up "Hawkeye" Henley.

"Weaps, Captain. Target Bravo One. Lasers."

"Captain, Weaps. Target Bravo One. Lasers aye. Target is locked and we have a firing solution."

"Shoot!"

Hawkeye's finger stabbed down on the Master Laser touch pad and six of Kant's eight lasers fired in battery. They lanced into Katana's gun pack, killed all four gunners, and wiped out the pack's MHD power generator. But Katana still came on.

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The blast that killed the gun pack threw Katana off course, but Takamoto used his attitude thrusters and his HEPlAR to wrestle the cutter back toward her collision with the big clipper. He was close enough now that EMS emissions from the clipper showed up as a hot dot on his passive EMS display in spite of radio noise from the gas giant and from jammers aboard the clipper. His active EMS was beginning to burn through the noise and jamming, and develop a port beam profile view of the big vessel, a long rail festooned with variously shaped modules. He would aim Katana at the rail, hoping the impact would break the clipper's spine in two. But first he would have to get past the lasers, which would surely fire again.

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Kant's EMS had a hard lock on the cutter, but the homopolar generators were still powering up the lasers and the missile reloads were not complete. Blaine ordered Kant swung around bow to the target. She would attempt a shot with the meson gun, but at such a short range and at such a small target, the chances of hitting were not good.

"Captain, Sensors. We now have a visual lock on the target," Barnes reported.

"Sensors, Captain. Give me a visual on my console." Blaine's multi-function display suddenly showed the star field picked up by the ship's telescope. She could see a bright white light moving across the star field. The range to target readout showed the cutter was

inside 10,000 kilometers and closing rapidly.

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Takamoto's flight engineer began to have grave doubts about what was happening. "Hideo, the lasers are destroyed. Shouldn't we turn away and head for Corrig? We have enough fuel to make it, and we could live off the emergency rations until another Guild patrol comes through."

Takamoto smiled. "Jahn, my friend. You just don't understand. I'm sorry."

He was still smiling when he drew a body pistol from his flight suit's thigh pocket and shot Jahn point blank in the forehead.

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The range readout on the visual display showed that the incoming target was inside 50 kilometers, seconds away from impact. The laser ready lights on Hawkeye Henley's panel finally flashed green.

"Captain, Weaps. Lasers ready and we have a firing solution."

"Shoot!"

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Takamoto could actually see Kant rapidly growing in his windscreen as his life ended in a blazing flash. Kant's lasers turned Katana into an expanding ball of hot gas and molten metal. Most of the metal would pass by and cool into pieces of orbiting slag. Some would not. Takamoto would have his honor.

* * * * *

Pvt. Harley "Tiny" Trask was standing watch as a member of the damage control team in the Marine's troop module when the metal impacted. It blew through the module's hull and through the bulkhead where Trask was standing. It cut him in half in a horizontal line above his waist before continuing through the rest of the module and then into the neighboring drop troop module where it destroyed six drop tubes and heavily damaged four more.

Sean, still strapped into his bunk, felt the impact. Then "Damage control and medical parties to the troop module," sounded in his headphones. Because the module had remained depressurized, he felt rather than heard the impact of running feet in the corridor outside his stateroom. Because of the pre-combat depressurization, no one was blown out into space through the suddenly open module hull, but the damage was horrific none-the-less. The impact had severed power lines cutting off artificial gravity. The two pieces of what remained of Trask slowly rotated above the deck, spewing gobs of scarlet that floated in

the air and splashed on the bulkheads. The only available light came from battery-driven emergency battle lanterns.

"AA" Andropova was a member of the Emergency Medical Response Team that arrived on scene. Trask was more than dead when she reached him, but she still had a job to do. Andropova and her colleagues collected the pieces of Trask and shoved them into a large plastic body bag. They would be frozen in the medical module's morgue and later delivered to his parents on Nike Nimbus. She also had to talk with Sean.

Chapter 8

Recovery

The great ship lay in orbit around Corrig's gas giant while repair crews rejoined severed control cables and fluid conduits in her spine, and patched the hulls of several damaged modules. Other repairs were made as well, to the minds and souls of the survivors.

Sean McKinnie felt lost in the stars, his best friend dead, his home light years away. He mourned for Tiny, missing the huge man's smile and rumbling laughter. Lieutenant ten Bosch tried to be friendly in a distant, officer-like way. "Red Dog" Rodriguez tried to break into Sean's desolation in his gruff-all Marine manner, but it was not the same as Tiny's friendship. Recovery came from an unexpected quarter.

Sean had little to do while repairs were underway; he didn't have useful skills and couldn't use a vacc suit. Mostly he mopped. One afternoon, while half heartedly trying to read one of the history books Rodriguez had given him, "AA" Andropova knocked on his door.

"Sean, got a minute?"

"Sure, come in." He hastily pulled up his coveralls and tried to straighten the covers on his bunk as AA entered his stateroom. "What can I do for you?"

"It's maybe what I can do for you. Maybe I can help you get past Tiny's death and get on with your life. You're among friends here, you know.

"Tiny wasn't the only person to care about you, Sean. Red Dog cares, you remind him of his son. He's dead, you know. The LT cares, you saved some of her people. And I care about you. You're cute and helpless, just like the strays I used to collect. I've always had this rescue complex, and you're my latest project. Here, take my hands," she said holding them out at arms' length.

Sean took AA's deceptively small, deceptively soft, but surprisingly strong hands in his. She pulled him closer and embraced him, then to his surprise, kissed him gently.

"Now you know how I feel," AA said. "I'll be back. Just remember, you're not alone."

Sean sat down. He felt warm and good. For the first

time in days he stopped feeling sorry for himself. Maybe life had something to offer after all.

That evening, after asking directions from several crew members, he found himself in the medical module. AA was off duty, so he didn't have to face that distraction. Gunny Rodriguez was just finishing dinner when Sean walked in. He knew the Sarge didn't believe in any formalities so he didn't waste time with any.

"Sarge, I don't belong anywhere. I want to belong somewhere, but I don't. I'm an outsider, a freak. I need to belong somewhere. I want to join the Marines."

Gunny nearly choked on his coffee. "Son, I know you'd be a good Marine with the training and time. But you don't have the basic knowledge you need. You don't know which end of the rifle the bullet comes out of, or how a vacc suit works, or... I just can't sign you up right now. You don't have the skills or knowledge." Sean's face drooped.

"Now don't get all unglued on me," Gunny said. "You are part of this platoon. You also have plenty of native smarts and you know primitive worlds and societies. Hmm, we already have plenty of regular jarheads, but the Pathfinders are always looking for special people, people who can slip into some TED's territory, scope out the lay of the land, maybe organize some resistance, and generally pave the way for the drop troops."

"Let me talk to the LT and see what she thinks about this idea. She know's your head's on straight, we just have to fill it with the right stuff, that's all.

"You saved my hide, kid, and you helped keep that mission from becoming a total disaster by uncovering the local ironheads or whatever they called themselves. You showed brains and guts, both commodities in short supply in this universe. Whatever happens from now on, you'll all ways be part of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, First Marine Brigade; always part of First of the First. And if anyone gives you lip about that, send 'em to me."

"Thanks, Sarge, I appreciate that. If they take me, what would happen?" Sean asked.

"Well, you'd come with us as far as Oriflamme, that's the Coalition's nearest main world to where we are now. It's about three jumps away from here. The Marines and the RC's Exploration Service would interview you there and make sure you have what it takes for recon work. Then they would probably fight over which service gets you. After that, you would go into training, first at the Marine boot camp on Nike Nimbus. They have special courses for recruits from primitive worlds there. Then if you survive bootcamp, you'll go to the RCES academy on Aubaine. Nike Nimbus and Aubaine are both worlds in the coalition, fairly nice ones at that, although boot camp in the Nimbus highlands is tough, the toughest training camp we have. Aubaine, by the way, is the capital of the Reformation Coalition.

"If I can get the LT and Captain Blaine to agree to

this, as soon as we get to Helios we might be able to dispatch a message to Oriflamme outlining this idea, if we find a ship that's jumping toward Oriflamme before us, that is. If we can get a dispatch to Oriflamme before we arrive, we should know if they buy the idea as soon as we enter the Oriflamme system." The Gunny gazed off into the distance for a couple of seconds thinking.

"Maybe," he said, "we can get Wozniak on our side with this."

"Wozniak? Who's he?" Sean asked.

"Woz is not a he, Woz is an it," Gunny replied. "He's our tech rep from the Hiver Federation."

"Whoa, you're going too fast, sarge. What's a tech rep? What's a Hiver?"

"Well, you know by now that there are thousands of inhabited worlds in Charted Space. But these worlds are not all inhabited by humans. Some are inhabited by races of other intelligent beings. Hivers are one of these races. They inhabit a confederation of stars fairly near Coalition space. The old Imperium had made contact with them and we had good relations and trade with them going back way before the Collapse. After humanity fell, the Hivers took an interest in the worlds now in Coalition space and began assisting us with their advanced technology.

"A tech rep is a Hiver assigned to a Coalition ship or base to help out with high tech matters and to act as a general adviser to the ship or base CO. Woz is our tech rep. You don't see him much, he-- or more accurately it-- generally hangs out around officers' country.

"If you saw Woz though, you'd never forget it."

"What does Woz look like, will I get to meet him?"

"Ever see a starfish? Maybe not, your world might not have them. Anyway, Woz is about a meter-and-a-half high and about two meters broad. Woz has six arms that end in tentacles. The tentacles on one of these arms end in eye stalks. This is what he sees with. He can hear you and understand you, but he can't talk directly to you. He uses a device called a voder to communicate. Basically, it gives Hivers an artificial voice.

"Yeah, maybe I can arrange a meeting with him before we get to Helios. I'll let you know."

"Sarge, what's going to happen to you?"

"Oh, they'll fix me up at Oriflamme Base and assign me to another mission, aboard Kant, I hope. I like working with Captain Blaine and her gang.

"By the way, AA tells me I'll be able to move about in another week. That means I'll get my quarters back and that they will move you into one of the squad bays. That also means I'll probably be mobile enough to call in some favors and put in a good word for you on Oriflamme.

"Meanwhile, we have to get you squared away with the skipper. Rumor has it that she wants to put you down on Helios, and I'll be damned if I'll let that

happen."

After talking for a few more minutes, Sean headed back to his borrowed stateroom a lot lighter of heart than an hour before. At least people cared.

* * * * *

Three days after the battle, repairs were complete. Repair crews put away their welding torches and Kant's fueler Skate topped off her tanks. Subordinate craft rejoined the clipper, and Captain Blaine ordered Kant to get underway toward the jump point. Hours later, she was safely in jump space enroute to L'steich, a system suited only for wilderness refueling some six light years closer to Coalition space.

When Kant stepped back into normal space a week later, the L'steich system was empty of starships, and the barren main world with its carbon dioxide atmosphere was on the far side of the system's K4V primary. Kant entered orbit around a small gas giant. Skate separated from the mother ship and repeatedly dipped into the planet's atmosphere, filling first the ship's fuel modules and then the fueler's tanks. Within 24 hours Skate was once again secured to the clipper's dorsal surface as the clipper's main fuel tank. Kant was outward bound again, this time toward Helios, a friendly world where her sailors, Marines, and assorted passengers could walk free again under blue skies. Meanwhile, a number of decisions had to be made, including what to do about Sean.

The morning after Kant entered jump space enroute to Helios, Captain Blaine convened a meeting with Bravo Company Commander Capt. Jake "Slugger" Janaczek, Lt. "Willy" ten Bosch, RCES mission chief and covert operations specialist Earl "Planetfall" Esterhasz, Woz, with Gunnery Sergeant "Red Dog" Rodriguez attending via the ship's commo system. The question on everyone's agenda was "What to do about the farm kid?"

"I have been covertly watching Sean McKinney ever since he came aboard," said the Hiver. "He comes from a very primitive culture. He is intelligent, but I do not think he can adapt to a modern society. All he has is the experience he has had with us. He does not know how to exist in a modern society. From what I have seen, I am convinced he belongs in a primitive culture."

"I take it that your recommendation remains that we leave him on Helios?"

"Yes Madame Captain. With his farming and ranching experience, he should integrate quite well in one of the ranch families on the Plateau. It would be for his own benefit."

Red Dog didn't think so and said as much from his sick bay bunk.

"Have you considered asking the kid what he wants to do? Passive observation ain't everything you know. You haven't even met him. He's been exposed to modern technology and society. He can read Galanglic,

and he has soaked up humanity's history like a sponge. He's excited and interested in the Confederation and what we're doing. Hell, Captain, he wants to join the Marines!"

"That just might prove he's slightly nuts," Slugger Janacek commented dryly. "But then, you gotta be nuts to join the Corps. Still, I don't think he is quite enough up to speed to handle an assault rifle, although as you know Sarge, he's damn good with a bow."

"True enough, Skipper. He'd need a lot of training before he was combat ready. And then, we'd have just another Jarhead. This kid's special. He's smart and he has insight into how a primitive society works. Most of all, he hates TEDs.

"By the way, Woz. Why didn't you meet with the boy as I suggested?"

The alien paused before tapping his voder keys.

"I did not want to contaminate my observations. As you know, the observer can affect the actions of the subject and thus contaminate the resulting data. I did not want that to happen."

"That's pretty lame," Red Dog snorted. "Sean McKinney is a human being, not a lab rat."

"Even so," the alien replied. "The principle is the same."

"Hey guys, if you don't want him, we'll take him. With some training, he'd be perfect for a Moonshadow team," said Planetfall Esterhasz. "They're not as deadly as a Pathfinder insert team, but they're slicker, more covert. We have a greater need for brains than you do, Slugger."

"Cut that out," said Hellfire Blaine. "Don't forget, I have the final word here. Any recommendation about Sean McKinney will come from me. I need input, though, not interservice name-calling."

"Sorry, Captain. We're desperately short of resources, and when we find good people we don't like to see them wasted as cannon fodder," replied Planetfall.

"We're short too, and our people are NOT cannon fodder," Slugger answered heatedly.

"ALL RIGHT!" Blaine stood, her face flushed. "THAT'S ENOUGH!"

"I've made my decision. First, Sean is not staying on Helios. That's an utter waste. Second, since he's already formed a strong bond with the Marines, I'm recommending him for Marine boot camp on Nike Nimbus. That will make him useful to the Corps and to RCES. Third, I'm recommending that Sid Papagopolis review his case while he is in training and interview him for possible assignment as an RCES contract scout with either a Pathfinder or Moonshadow team. That should keep everybody happy, even young McKinney, Right?"

The humans assembled in the wardroom nodded their assent. Red Dog grinned on the commo monitor. If Woz could have smiled, he would have.

The Hiver got exactly what he wanted.

Chapter 9

Helios

Captain "Hellfire" Blaine gave the last of her commands to send Immanuel Kant into a polar parking orbit around Helios. She secured the maneuvering watch, set the orbital watch, and then retired to her office off the bridge. She felt good about what she was going to do. She reached for her desk communicator and called her bridge messenger.

"Harris," she said to the Marine standing messenger watch. "Bring young McKinney up to my office aysap. And alone. I want to talk with him."

"Aye, aye Captain."

Blaine watched Helios roll by below the ship on her office's multi-function display while waiting for the boy. She knew that what she was about to do might violate the agreement she had reached with her senior officers about the farm boy's future, but she knew she would be doing the right thing.

Shortly her door chime rang. "Come," she called. The door slid open and Harris waved Sean into the office. He was awestruck by the view of a new world from the bridge, and shaking at the knees with the thought of being summoned by the all-powerful captain.

"Please sit down, young man. Relax, I won't bite."

Sean brushed a lock of hair out of his eyes and settled into the chair.

"As you saw from the bridge, we've arrived at another world. This one's named Helios. It's a friendly world and a member of the Coalition. In some ways it's much like your own. Helios is a farming world where most of the work is still done by hand.

"We've had a long talk about you. We've decided we can use you in service to the Coalition, if that's what you want.

"But I don't want to force this on you. I want this to be your choice. And that choice is either serving the Coalition or leaving us to settle on Helios. This would be a good world for you, with plenty of opportunity to build your own life." She paused. Sean sat in bewildered silence.

Finally he spoke up. "I don't know what to do. This ship is like my family. I don't think I want to leave."

"I know Sean. Many of us have become attached to you too. Some of us almost too attached. But we want to be fair to you and give you a chance for a normal life, one with the possibilities of a stable family and lifelong friends. Something permanent, not like bouncing from ship to ship, world to world, duty station to duty station with your life always on the line. Therefore, I'd like for you to at least take a look at Helios and make up your mind after you've had fair chance to see both possibilities.

"We'll be here for three days while we take shore leave, refuel, and replenish our supplies. Go on down and look around. I know Gunny Rodriguez wants to go

ashore, he's going stir crazy in the medical module. You can go dirtside together."

"Thank you Captain, that would be great. I'd love to see a new world."

"OK, that's it then. Report to boat lock Alpha at 1100 hours. Gunny and AA will be there to meet you. Dismissed."

Sean stood, stiffened to attention the way Tiny had tried to teach him, turned and strode through the door. He felt a curious mix of fear, pleasure, and anticipation. He'd be seeing a new world and he'd be seeing AA. But he was afraid of losing her and his family aboard Kant as well.

Hellfire Blaine punched a set of numbers into her communicator. "Red Dog? This is Hellfire. Your plan is a good one. Go with it."

* * * * *

Helios loomed beneath Immanuel Kant, while she swung around the tidally locked globe in polar orbit. Night brought Kant over a glaciated southern hemisphere. Day over blazing ochre deserts in the north. Only relatively near the shoreline of the planet's single continent, lying roughly 20 degrees north of the equator, would temperatures be sufficiently moderate and enough free water be available to support humans, their livestock, and crops.

Helios is a young world, with a relatively high carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere. Humans can breathe the atmosphere at sea level, but with some discomfort and difficulty. Some require supplemental oxygen. Only in the mountain ranges, upland valleys, and plateaus, where the atmosphere's carbon dioxide content dropped below the toxic level, could humans and their related animal life breathe freely.

Sean McKinney sat strapped in the passenger module of Kant's cutter as grapples released the small craft for the long fall to Helios' Best Chance starport. Gunny Rodriguez sat on one side and AA Andropova on his other. All three looked forward to a long walk under blue skies. Since they were dropping into friendly territory, with the only thing hot about the LZ being the temperature, no one wore the shipboard RC body suit and harness. Instead, the Gunny and Sean wore Marine undress khaki shirts with short sleeves and open collar over walking shorts and desert boots. AA wore a similar outfit, although here shirt was pale blue worn over Navy blue shorts. Gunny's uniform was adorned with chevrons, unit patches, combat ribbons, and the "Flaming Rock," a stylized flaming meteor that is the emblem of the drop trooper. AA's bore a caduceus medical symbol. Sean's was without insignia. All three had broad brimmed hats in hand to protect against Helios' sun during the long days of the world's perpetual summer. All three were unarmed, not anticipating any trouble on the friendly world. The other RC personnel in the liberty party were similarly

attired.

Gunny Rodriguez, still recovering from his wound, sat in a powered chair clamped to the deck between his two younger companions. Sounds from outside the hull built up from a sigh to a roar as the small craft entered Helios' atmosphere, slanting toward the single polar continent. Presently the cutter crossed over the coast and reached the plateau where the Best Chance starport and settlement lay. The starport came into view as the craft circled to bleed off velocity and then began making its final approach to Best Chance. Starport was perhaps too grand a term for the facility, consisting of a large open field with a few storage sheds and other buildings to one side. There is no fuel available at Best Chance. Nor did Helios' system include any gas giants. Any visiting craft had to refuel from Helios' ocean or icecap.

None-the-less, Sean could see nearly a dozen ships scattered about the field. Some were gaudily painted blunt arrowheads, others were rounder and drabber. Some were small craft, winged and otherwise. As they settled onto the turf, Sean could see large multi-colored tent-like pavilions set up beyond the wood-framed permanent buildings with crowds of people entering and leaving.

"You're in luck, Sean," Gunny said. "It's auction time. Normally there are only a few thousand people on the entire planet, and only a handful of farmers with their produce and livestock here to greet you. Now we have ships in port with cargoes and artifacts from outside the Coalition all up for sale to the highest bidder after the Coalition gets its pick of the best pre-Collapse technology. Best of all, the Hellions don't take a cut of the profits. They get rich peddling food, booze, and bunks to the crews, auctioneers, RC officials, and various parasites trying to make a credit."

Sean's ears popped as the cutter's crew equalized pressure with the outside and then opened the boat's access hatch. Space hands and Marines boiled out of the craft, eager for air that didn't come from a can and sunlight that didn't come from a tube. Sean's feet settled onto green spongy turf. Helios' sun glowed with an orange tint near the northern horizon. Blue mountains appeared jagged in the distance to the north, west, and east. A steady cool breeze blew from the south toward the northern hot pole. Sean smelled herbally musty odors, familiar yet strange, laced with the tang of hot metal from the cutter's cooling hull. All of his senses felt alive again.

"Well kid, this is your first new world. Quite a sensation, isn't it? I'll never forget my first planetfall when I stepped ashore at Nike Nimbus to check into the recruit depot. We're both lucky. They're both decent worlds. I'm glad we didn't land you on Baldur."

Gunny rolled across the turf toward the sheds, buildings, and pavilions to the north, with Sean and AA close behind. The other Kant crew members and Marines were well ahead of them.

Presently they were passing through the buildings at the edge of the port. Sean noticed they were not unlike the farm buildings and village stores back home, although the metal roofs and the extra-wide verandahs were unusual to him. The trio found themselves among a fair number of people. Many were dressed in ship-style coveralls, some in various patterns of mottled green and brown, still others in canvas pants and cotton shirts. A few Kant crew members and Marines had by then also mixed in with the crowd.

"You can tell the players by the clothes," Gunny commented.

"The coveralls are a dead giveaway to Free Traders and merchant crews. The cammies are worn by mercenaries just back from scavenging missions. The locals wear the homespun cotton shirts and canvas pants. You'll also see some finer dressed folks from the RC, but I expect they are busy at the auction right now."

"What's this auction you've been talking about?" Sean asked.

"Remember reading how the Coalition got started? A group of worlds coming together to help reestablish civilization among the stars? Well, we need the technology to do this, and the quickest way to get the technology is to go out and find relics of the fallen Imperium. Weapons and starships are the things we need the most, along with advanced power plants, computers, and agricultural systems. There aren't enough government people in the RC to do this on the scale we need, so we rely a lot on freelance prospectors who find relic technology and sell it to us.

Helios is just one of several Coalition worlds that hold auctions. But it is one of the first worlds prospectors run into returning from the direction of your world.

"First the RC government checks incoming cargoes for really dangerous stuff or weapons and other things the RC or one of its governments need, and buys those up. What's left goes on sale to the highest bidder, either private companies or government agencies.

"Merchants and RC government officials are over in those pavilions bidding on cargoes just brought in by prospectors. Want to see what's up for sale?"

"Sure, let's go!"

The three headed toward the nearest auction pavilion. It was a 50 by 25 meter open-sided tent holding seats, a stage, and equipment for auction piled or parked next to the stage. Sean recognized wooden and metal crates; he thought he recognized plastic crates, the remaining merchandise were merely strange shapes to him.

Six metal crates were up on the stage, one crate was



opened and tilted toward the audience. Sean could not make out the contents from where he was standing at the back of the audience.

A tall balding man stood behind a podium on the stage.

"Lot 78," he said. "Six cases of relic TL-15 recoil compensated fusion rifles, 72 of them in all. I will entertain bids for them by lot only. The minimum

opening bid is 3 million credits. These are high quality, ex-Imperial Marine weapons, recovered six weeks ago near the former Imperial Naval Base on Berkin in the Shenk subsector by Capt. Tadashi Garret and the crew of Highland Warrior. These have been inspected by Coalition Marine armorers and pronounced in excellent condition. I have the certificate of inspection on the podium.

"Because of the nature of these weapons, they are only open to bids from Coalition or planetary government agencies. What am I bid? Do I hear 3 million?"

"The Reformation Coalition Administrative Service bids 3 million," said a woman in a conservative khaki bush jacket and slacks.

"Three point five million," replied a burley man wearing a leather vest and pants, "three point five from the government of Oriflamme."

"Four," said the RCAS representative.

"Four-five," said the man from Oriflamme.

"Five."

"Six, let's get this over with," said the lady from RCAS.

"Seven."

There was a pause as the RCAS representative thought for a moment. "Eight."

The Oriflammer flushed and muttered to himself.

"Eight going once," said the auctioneer. "Eight going twice. Sir, do you wish to bid again?" The Oriflammer shook his head and sat down.

"Sold to the Reformation Coalition Administrative Service! For 8 million credits 72 mint condition Tech Level 15 fusion rifles," and bang went the gavel.

Gunny Rodriquez exhaled sharply. "Those will arm nearly a company of Marines. Maybe they will help us figure out how to make our own weapons better. I'm sure glad we got them, not the Flamers."

"What do you mean Flamers?" AA snapped back at the sarge. "Don't forget where I'm from. Next time you need a shot I'll be sure to use a dull needle!"

"Sorry AA, I just worry about some of your people on your home world."

"Well, when we get there in a week or so, let's all take liberty together. I'll introduce you to my family and maybe you can get a more positive view of Oriflamme. Let's get out of here. I don't want to spend my liberty under a tent."

The group went outside where they spotted a refreshment stand. "They make a good local beer, here," Gunny said. "Let's get some."

Soon they each had a foaming tankard of amber-colored beer, hand-made by a Helios farmer. The taste cause Sean to think about the last time he had a brew, back at the Inn of the Crescent Moons in Two Bridges, and reminded him that it really was a long way home.

Feeling the heat from the perpetual sunshine and from the crowds, they moved over to the shade of one of the low scrubby trees in the area. Sipping their

brews, they each began talking about their lives before coming aboard Immanuel Kant. AA talked about her early days on Oriflamme. Sean told them of life on Fisher's World. Gunny described his days in the Corps, first the Oriflammen Marines, then the RCMC. When Sean asked Gunny Rodriquez about where he was really from, Gunny was silent for a long time, and then said, "Right here. I was born on Helios and grew up on a ranch just northwest of here. When I was 16 standard years old, an Oriflammen Marine recruiting team came through here and I signed up. I was tired of plowing fields and cleaning stables, and wanted some adventure. I got that all right.

"My brother and his family are still here, running the family ranch. I'd like to go see him. AA, is there any chance of that?"

"I don't know Gunny. I'll have to call the ship and get some transportation. We can't just put you on horseback. I'll need to get a ship's boat or an air raft to haul us there. Let's go back to the cutter. Maybe I can use the communicator on board to raise the ship and get some help."

The trio went back to the cutter and had the flight engineer who was standing gangway watch radio Kant in orbit. Within an hour, another one of the clipper's boats landed alongside the cutter and took them aboard. Minutes later they were approaching Rancho Rodriquez.

The homestead lay in a high mountain valley near the base of the northern Rainshadow Range, the rugged mountain massif which separated the habitable portions of Helios from the polar desert. The valley was green and damp from recent rainfall, mostly rolling grassland punctuated by an occasional low tree. High cumulus clouds were piled up against the mountain tops shadowing the valley. Original Terran stock cattle and horses dotted the valley. A cluster of low buildings, built of native wood and rock, bordered a swiftly running stream flowing down the center of the valley. The details were different, but the overall picture reminded Sean very much of home.

The boat touched down near the buildings. A lone figure on horseback began riding toward the boat. As he approached, Sean could see he looked like an older version of Gunny Rodriquez.

"Hola Heladio, com'esta!" Gunny said in a language Sean couldn't understand.

"Estaban! Este Estaban!" the older figure said as he spurred his horse. He rode at a full gallop toward the boat. Pulling his horse to a halt at the last second and then leaping off, the older man grabbed Gunny in a fierce embrace.

"Esteban, what have they done to you?" the man said as he suddenly realized the extent of Gunny's wounds and that Gunny was confined to the chair.

"Luck of the Marines," Gunny replied. "Sometimes these things happen. Don't worry, I'll be OK. I should be on my feet again in a couple of weeks. The autodocs

and regen stimulators work very well these days, thank you.

"Here, let me introduce you to these people. This beautiful young lady is Alexandra Andropova, AA to her friends. She's my nurse. This young man is Master Sean McKinney, late of Fisher's World. He risked his neck to save my life." Sean found himself wrapped in a bear hug, then so did AA.

"Folks, this is my older brother Heladio Rodriquez, owner of Rancho Rodriquez, a couple of thousand hectares of the best cattle range on this side of the Coalition. While I've been out getting myself shot up, he's been getting rich selling beef to Oriflamme and Baldur."

"Welcome young friends," Heladio's voice boomed. "Mi casa esta su casa, my house is yours. You can come anytime and you can stay as long as you want. Come, let's go to the ranch house, this sun is warm today." The four rode and walked toward the house under the trees next to the stream. It was cool in the tree's shade, and the thick rock walls of the house kept the temperature pleasant inside the house. Heladio explained that although the ranch was now in direct sunlight, Helios' slight wobble moved the northern mountains' shadow so that it covered the house and his estate part of the time.

"Without the wobble and the direct sunlight part of the time, we'd freeze at this elevation," he said.

Small windows and hissing alcohol pressure lamps lit the interior. After his guests had a chance to wash up, Heladio suggested they adjourn to the front verandah. Beer was served, and they all relaxed.

"We're used to the ranch life," Heladio said. "It's in our blood. We've been on this world since before the Collapse, and before that, we were ranchers in a district of Terra called Argentina, a country with vast plains and high mountains, just like this. Estaban grew up on a horse until he got the crazy idea to go to the stars."

Heladio turned to Sean. "Young man, I hear you're from a world not unlike this."

"Yes sir," he answered. "I grew up on a ranch, although our equivalent of horses have eight legs and a beak. I'm from what Sarge.. Estaban that is, calls Fisher's World. On my world, everything is made or grown by hand, just about like here."

AA chimed in, "It's a lot different in other ways, though. Here it's peaceful, you don't have countries fighting each other or thugs waiting to bash your door in. Sean, you'd probably be dead right now if we hadn't pulled you out before the Emperor's goons grabbed you."

"That's right, AA. You all saved my life and gave me a whole new future. I'd like to go back home someday, though, and help straighten things out, to help make my world a better place."

"That could take a long time for an uncertain journey," Heladio said. "We could offer you something a lot more certain and secure right here. You saved my

brother. That makes you special, almost like one of the family. We'd like you to join us right here and stay with us at Rancho Rodriquez. You'd fit in perfectly with your ranching experience. With time you'll meet a nice young lady, buy some land, and settle down on a ranch of your own.

"What do you say? Are you interested?"

Sean's head spun at the sudden offer. Being safe again had a certain appeal. "I, I don't know. That's a great offer, but I need to think about it."

"Sure, I understand that. Why don't the three of you stay at the ranch tonight and let me know what you decide in the morning. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough."

The evening passed pleasantly enough. The brothers caught up on happenings in each others lives. Soon, dinner was served, authentic Terran beef roasted over an open fire. "That side of beef would fetch twenty five thousand credits on Baldur," Heladio noted. "This ranch makes good money."

The food and drink soon made Sean and his friends sleepy. They each adjourned to separate rooms in the sprawling ranch house and then to bed.

Sean slept for a number of hours but woke before the ranch started stirring. It was in the middle of what passed for night, locally. He drew back the blackout curtains and stared out his window. Though the sun had set behind the northern mountains and the ranch was again in shadow, it was still broad daylight with a sun-washed sky. Sean suddenly realized that if he stayed on Helios, he would never see the stars again. But was that such a great price for a peace and quiet such as he had never known before in his life? He sat for a while longer as the farm started to come awake around him, then his mind made up, he turned back to his room to wash away the remains of the night.

to be continued...

Children of Earth Errata and Additions

by Harold Hale

The following is a list of the known errata and some additions for the Children of Earth material appearing in Traveller Chronicle #10 and #11.

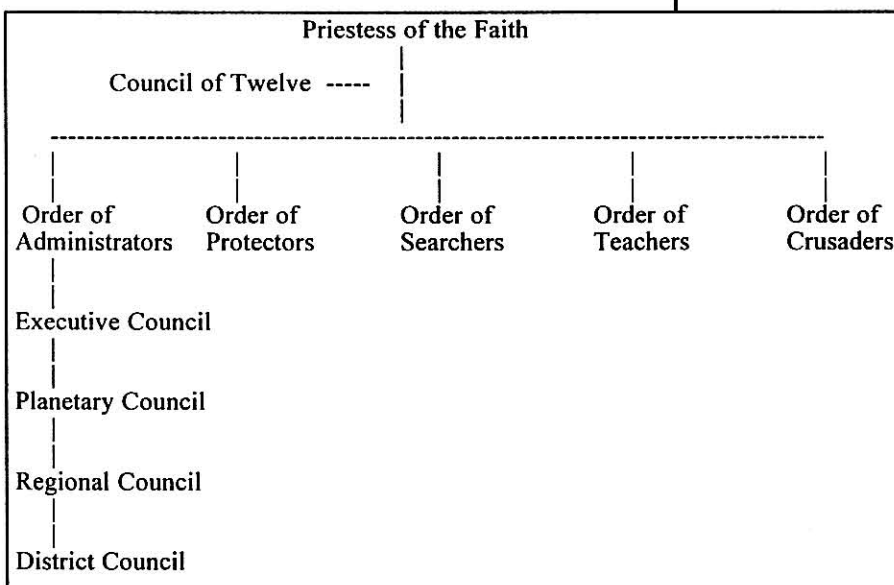
Traveller Chronicle #10

Page 39: Because of a problem with column width limitations, some of the names in the Associated Known Star System table were truncated. Here are the full names of those that were cut, with the hex location for purposes of reference:

- 0527 Basse Terre BD+45 4408 (Giclas 171-40) K6V M0V
- 0528 Kidashi BD+44 4548 (Giclas 171-39) M0V
- 1332 Mirabilis Omnicron 2 Eridani (DM-7 781) K1V M4V A4D
- 1622 Apishal BD+4 4048 (Giclas 22-22) M3V
- 1732 Ys BD+50 1725 (Giclas 196-9) K2V
- 2021 Ishimshulgi BD+45 2505 (Giclas 203-51) M3V M3V
- 2131 Inferno BD+44 2051 (Giclas 176-11) M2V
- 2720 Nyarlathotep BD+17 2611 (Giclas 63-18) K1V M1V

Traveller Chronicle #11

Page 4: The organizational chart for the Gabreelist Faith is missing from the Organization section. It should have appeared as follows:



Page 14: The table accompanying the Crisis of Faith section is jumbled. The corrected table is below:

Roll Change to Faith Level

- 1 - subtract 1D6+1
- 2 - subtract 2
- 3 - subtract 1
- 4 - subtract 1
- 5 - subtract 1
- 6 - add 1
- 7 - add 1
- 8 - add 1
- 9 - add 2
- 10 - add 1D6+1

Page 47: the Vegan Character Generation table is missing. Here's what you didn't get:

Creating Vegan Characters

Vegans may be generated using the character generation procedures presented in TNE with the following modifications:

Basic Attribute Rolls:

<u>Attribute</u>	<u>Roll</u>
STR	1D6+1
AGL	2D6+2
CON	1D6+1
INT	2D6-1
EDU	2D6-1
CHR	2D6-1
SOC	2D6-1

Homeworld Effects on Attributes:
Because of the Vegans lower gravity origins, the modifiers discussed in the Homeworld Effects on Attributes section (page 19 of the TNE Manual) do not apply. Vegan characters should use the following:

If Gravity 0.5G or less: no effect
If Gravity greater than 0.75G, but less than 0.9G: add 1 to Strength attribute and subtract 1 from Constitution

Vegans cannot survive without special life support equipment on worlds with Gravity 0.9G or greater. Vegans must chose one of the worlds mentioned in the Vegans section as their homeworld.

Psionics: Vegans always have a potential PSI rating of zero, though they are subject to psionic manipulation in a similar manner as humans.

Skills: All Vegans undergo the Irrishtyoshun for their first term. To simulate the skills gained during the Irrishtyoshun, Vegans characters receive an additional eight levels of skill (but no more than two in any one skill) from the Background Skills List. Skills not on this list can also be chosen, with the referee's approval. Note that Vegans on Fallen Worlds may or may not undergo the Irrishtyoshun, in which case they are generated normally.

Aging: Vegans age at a rate much slower than humans (approximately half as fast). Therefore, use the Vegan Consolidated Effects of Age table below in place of the one presented on p. 32 of the TNE manual:



Term	Start Age	End Age	STD/SD	STR	Losses		
					AGL	CON	INT
1	17	21	*	---	---	---	---
2	21	25	4	---	---	---	---
3	25	29	4	---	---	---	---
4	29	33	3	---	---	---	---
5	33	37	2	---	---	---	---
6	37	41	1	---	---	---	---
7	41	45	1	---	---	---	---
8	45	49	1	---	Y	---	---
9	49	53	1	---	Y	---	---
10	53	57	1	---	Y	---	---
11	57	61	1	---	Y	---	---
12	61	65	1	Y	Y	---	---
13	65	69	1	Y	Y	---	---
14	69	73	1	Y	Y	---	---
15	73	77	1	Y	Y	---	---
16	77	81	1	Y	Y	Y	---
17	81	85	1	Y	Y	Y	---
18	85	89	1	Y	Y	Y	---
19	89	93	1	Y	Y	Y	---
20	93	97	1	Y	Y	Y	---
21	97	101	1	Y	Y	Y	---

22	101	105	1	Y	Y	Y	---
23	105	109	1	Y	Y	Y	---
24+	109	113	1	Y	Y	Y	Y

* - Special: Irrishtyoshun term

Terran Information Network

by Harold Hale

Ys/Gemini (1732 C84786A-8)

Date: 036-70

New Covington Starport/New Covington District

¶ A naval courier, the Pegasus, which had been presumed destroyed in a misjump while on route from Agidda to Terra reappeared here yesterday after a nearly three month odyssey in the Near Bootes cluster.

¶ The Pegasus is a 400-ton J-6 Hermes-class courier which had been discovered adrift in the Loki system in 185-69 and salvaged by the Terran Republic Navy. Serving once again as a courier, the starship had an excellent maintenance record and was being used for priority military communications between Lagash and Terra.

¶ Tasked with carrying medical samples back to Terra for analysis and a small number of passengers, the departure of the Pegasus from Lagash on 122-70 had been uneventful, as was its arrival in the Agidda system one week later. Upon jumping out of the Agidda system, however, the crew knew within hours that a serious misjump was taking place.

¶ Instead of emerging from jump space in the Terra system, the ship instead came out in deep space, approximately midway between the Sirius and Fenris systems. To make matters worse, the crew of the vessel soon became disabled with a mysterious illness and there were no qualified individuals on board who knew how to properly operate the controls.

¶ Fortunately, two of the passengers, Lieutenant Winston Clark, a Navy officer assigned to 2nd Fleet, and 1st Lieutenant Terrence Von Bricker, a Marine with the 4th Corps, had some piloting experience, and with the assistance of one of the crew (who lapsed in an out of a coma), managed to plot a course for a jump into the ship's navigational computer. While their effort ultimately led to yet another misjump, it did put the Pegasus within close proximity to another star system, the Vantage system.

¶ While at Vantage, the flight crew of the courier gradually recovered. Clark, temporarily in command of the vessel, took a party to the surface of Vantage to explore one of the many ruins, a contragrav levitated city that had crashed into one of the world's oceans and sat partially submerged. While there, his expedition discovered a small tribe of primitive, genetically

engineered humans which had taken up residence on the fallen city. The "Vantageans" were apparently adapted to the crushing atmospheric pressure which makes the air on Vantage unbreathable at sea level for humans.

¶ With the crew recovered, the Pegasus began its voyage home, first stopping in the Saxe system before arriving back in Republic space at Sarpedon. Saxe was found to have fallen onto barbarism, though Clark did manage to make contact with the inhabitants and left them a copy of the Book of the Faith.

¶ "Throughout this ordeal, I kept believing that the Divine Being would help us get home," said Clark at a press conference held by shortly after the arrival of the Pegasus yesterday at the New Covington Downport. "I'd like to be a part of an expedition that returns to the Near Bootes Cluster one day so that we further explore the region and help its inhabitants in its recovery."

¶ A spokesperson for Outpost Beowulf had no comment on Clark's remarks, but it is widely believed that a major expedition is being planned to take place within the next year.

Prometheus/Sol (2027 A785965-B)

Date: 044-70

New Osaka/Nippon District

¶ Protests occurred here for the sixth straight day outside the gates of the new Enrona Naval Yard Downport over rumors that StellarTech, a Terran defense contractor, was using autonomous robots in the construction of facilities.

¶ "Aside from the absolute sacrilege involved, those things are taking jobs from our people," said a spokesperson for the protesters. Thus far the protesters, who number in the hundreds, have been orderly and local authorities have not acted to disperse them.

¶ Governor Vaidyana could not be reached for comment on the situation, though a spokesperson for his office indicated that the Governor was "satisfied with StellarTech's explanation of the situation."

¶ For their part, StellarTech has denied that any construction robots were being used that were not under the direct control of a human operator. Their most recent press release reads in part, "we at

StellarTech abide by the laws governing the use of robotic equipment, and are sympathetic to the sensibilities of the Promethean people with regard to the use of automation."

Arrukir/Vega (2420 C59A7A9-8)

Date: 050-70

Outpost Odysseus

¶ Local authorities were surprised yesterday by the arrival of the Von Helsing Squadron in the system.

¶ The 100 ship special task force normally limits its patrols to within Terran Republic borders. The commander of the Von Helsing Squadron, Admiral Lars Rasmussen, held a press conference today at the Outpost Odysseus downport to explain the squadron's presence.

¶ "We have come here to the Arrukir system as a show of goodwill and solidarity with the people of this world, and to extend to them our promise that we will defend them against the Vampire ship threat just as we defend the people of Terra."

¶ The arrival of the Von Helsing Squadron comes on the heels of reports concerning the redeployment of elements of the Third Fleet, normally stationed at Arrukir, to Ganesh (2518 D766969-8). Authorities at Outpost Odysseus only recently confirmed that such a redeployment was taking place, and termed the move, "a normal realigning of naval forces in the region."

Terra/Sol (1827 A867AA9-C)

Date: 054-70

Dayton/Ohio Region/North American District

¶ Archaeologists working near the Huber Archology have uncovered the remains of what they believe to be a virtually intact middle class dwelling dating from the late 20th century.

¶ Measuring some 400 square meters, and constructed primarily of wood and brick, a single family would have called the building home. It is known that large numbers of these buildings, all in similar style and construction, were grouped together in what were called housing plats. Typically families would use ground cars to go from the housing plats to work, occasionally stopping on the way home to visit entertainment, retail, or other commercial outlets.

¶ "It was all terribly inefficient in terms of land usage," said Dr. Maxwell Scarre, lead Archaeologist at the site as he explained it to visiting reporters. "In fact if we dotted the landscape with enough of these things

to house everyone today, there wouldn't be room to grow food, let alone preserve the wilderness areas of Terra. Still, Terra was a much less densely populated world back then. From their perspective, our archologies and planned cities would seem very over crowded."

¶ The find has delighted experts in the field of Ancient North American Studies, who hope that the site will reveal more about the habits and daily life of the people of that era. Of the two dozen such dwellings known to still be in existence, most are in private collections, two are located at the Getty Museum of American Antiquities in Los Angeles, while three more are currently on display at the Smithsonian Institute.

¶ "We are hopeful that we will find other structures of this type buried nearby," said Dr. Scarre. "I've done some research in conjunction with my associate Dr. Elizabeth Warren, and we believe this area is a particularly rich one archeologically speaking. As proof, we began excavation work only a month ago and turned up this site. We are all very excited about the prospects of what we will find next."

Psionic Time Travel

by Harold Hale

A Note for Referees

Only three individuals out of the 50+ billion inhabitants of the Terran Republic are known to have the ability to psionically time travel, and they are all related. This should give you some indication as to just how uncommon Psionic Time Travel ability is. However, it is conceivable that another person outside the Dahnara-Avila family could also this skill. Thus a description of Psionic Time Travel and how it is used in Traveller is included as part of Children of Earth.

As with all psionic skills, referees should use care in allowing a player character to have this ability, least it give the PCs to have an unfair advantage. Remember, Traveller was never intended to be Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (AD&D) with gauss rifles and laser guns.

Introduction

Similar to Prescience and Teleperception, Psionic Time Travel is in fact an Arcana psionic ability. Characters with this ability don't actually physically travel through time, but are receiving impressions of events that have occurred in the past, or will occur in the future. At times these impressions can be so clear that the psion feels as though they are actually experiencing the event as it takes place, while at others, only vague emotions and images can be felt.

It is not known when the first instance of Psionic Time Travel took place. It is likely that an individual prior to the Imperial Era experienced it, but did not know what was happening to them. Some scholars have suggested that so-called "past life regression", popular in certain regions on 20th century Terra, may have been a primitive form of Psionic Time Travel. While an interesting possibility, it is more likely that previous psionic time travelers may have mistaken what they were experiencing for another psionic talent, probably Prescience or Teleperception, or even insanity (not all worlds in the Imperium and Solomani Confederation had a full understanding of psionics).

The first recorded use of time travel ability was by Gabrielle (later Gabree-el) Dahnara, who having just completed psionic training, experienced a time travel of over 3500 years to the era of the Great Southern California Earthquakes of 2072 AD. Gabrielle continued to practice this new found psionic skill in secret, and was later able to use it in her classification and authentication of ancient Terran artifacts during her tenure as a professor in Damascus. It was a Psionic Time Travel into the future that revealed the coming of the Collapse on Earth. Unfortunately, her warnings

about what was to come went unheeded. This was due in part because she chose not to reveal that her predictions were based on psionic visions (prejudice against psionics was very strong on Terra during this era). After the Collapse, she continued to use her talent to help the war effort of the Eastern Coalition, giving them vital intelligence on everything from future troop movements to post-battle analysis.

Since then, both Gabree-el's granddaughter Shoshanna Dahnara-Avila (the current Priestess of the Faith) and great-granddaughter Ellora Avila have tested as having time travel ability, and both practice its use. While neither Shoshanna's nor Ellora's psionic visions of the past or future have been as dramatic as the vision of the Collapse experienced by Gabree-el, it is known that Shoshanna routinely reports any significant visions she has to the Executive Council of the Terran Republic.

Usage and Restrictions

In order to successfully psionically time travel, the gifted individual must be in a Relaxed Environment as described in the TNE Manual. The base difficulty of Psionic Time Travel is Difficult, though this difficulty can be reduced to Average if the psion undergoes a meditative trance, either through use of psionics or special training. The base difficulty can also be increased, at the discretion of the referee, if the psion wishes to travel an era in the distant future or the distant past, (say several hundred years or more).

The emotional state of the psion is extremely important. Witnessing events while psionically time traveling that evoke strong emotion of any kind (joy, sorrow, anger, etc.) in the psion will immediately cause them to come back to their own time and place and lose all memory of the event that caused it. This is particularly true if a loved one is involved in the event (which was why Gabree-el was able to foresee the Virus attack on Earth, but not the death of her husband when his Virus infected grav bus crashed to the ground). Those schooled in mental disciplines designed to suppress emotion can attempt a saving throw (Formidable, Willpower) to retain at least some memory of what occurred. The referee is the ultimate judge in determining what, if anything, evokes a strong emotional response in a character, and what memories (if any) are retained.

Psionic Time Travel also requires a psionic focus. This focus can be an object, a place, a person or animal, even a photograph or a recording. The only stipulation is that the focus must be present at the time the event the psion wants to observe in the past or future. A

forgery of a historical object, for example, will not evoke any impressions of the historical era it supposedly came from, but it will evoke impressions of how the forgery was made. Copies of photographs made from an original will give impressions of the people who have possessed the copy, and how it was made, but not anything of the original scene-this is also true of copies of sound recording and other such matter like holodisks or photo CDs.

While Psionic Time Travel to another place in the exact same time frame is not possible, the talent can still be used as a substitute for Teleperception if the psion is in communication (by radio, camera, etc.) with the place to be observed. This is because the psion is receiving images and sounds from the near past due to the delay that naturally occurs from the time a picture or sound is recorded by a recording device to the time the image or sound is transmitted to the psion. If successful, the psion will receive impressions of images and/or sounds from the scene that are not available through the limits imposed by standard communications devices.

Levels of Success

Below is a suggested Psionic Time Travel Success Chart. Referees should feel free to modify it as they see fit, or even discard it in favor of their own.

Basic Success - a single still image

Stage Two - 1D6+1 still images

Stage Three - 5 seconds of moving images (no sound)

Stage Four - one minute of moving images plus sound

Stage Five - five minutes of virtual reality images plus sound

Stage Six - fifteen minutes as above plus all other senses

Stage Seven - unlimited*

* - every thirty minutes, character must pass a Difficult Willpower check to continue.

Note that a character need not spend the entire time listed for a particular stage of success in Psionic Time Travel. The period given is the maximum that can be spent psionically time traveling for that attempt. If additional time is desired, another attempt must be made.

Additional Considerations

While a character psionically time traveling experiences the events they are witnessing, they can not interact with the individuals present, even if the individuals also are psionic, or even if they also have Psionic Time Travel talent.

In addition to seeing, hearing, and smelling, if a psionically time traveling character achieves exceptional success, they can also feel and touch objects as well. They cannot manipulate them, however, either physically or through use of psionics. Characters that try to physically move things anyway will find that their body passes through the object, in

much the same way a ghost passes through walls (those attempting psionic manipulation will be automatically unsuccessful). The first time during a Psionic Time Travel episode that a character experiences this effect, a Difficult Willpower check must be made to keep from losing concentration.

The Bill and Ted Rule: The very nature of Psionic Time Travel should make creating paradoxes in time impossible. This mere statement, however, will not stop players from trying. Fortunately for the referee, the Divine Being hates a paradox. Should a player figure out some way to put himself or herself into a position where Psionic Time Travel creates a paradox, the attempt automatically fails, and the character gains no information from the attempt.

Regardless of success level, Psionic Time Travel into the future is an uncertain (small 'u') task. This is because the future, unlike the past is not fixed in time (as the old saying goes "what has happened, has happened, and nothing can change that now"). What the psion sees when he or she travels into the future is what will happen if none of the significant variables that caused the particular event to occur are changed. Identify and change one or more of the significant variables, and the event might not take place at all, or will happen differently.

Psionic Time Travel into the past can also involve a degree of uncertainty. Unless the psion has a knowledge of History, he or she may be unaware of the significance of the event he or she is witnessing, or may interpret an event incorrectly. This is particularly true if the psion was taught a biased view of the subject. Referees should determine just how much (or how little) a particular individual player character knows about an event he or she is witnessing and adjust the description of the event accordingly.

Conclusion

Gabree-el often described Psionic Time Travel as being similar to standing on the edge of a fog bank. To her, the past seemed crystal clear, while the future appeared to consist of images that faded away rapidly in the mist the further away they were. Still, she became convinced through her experiences that there was no such thing as Fate. The future could be changed, given enough time and control over the variables that cause an event to occur (we see evidence of this belief in the Book of the Faith and in her later writings).

Player characters should be reminded of this when they psionically time travel, or whenever the future looks troubled or bleak ahead. Others have probably experienced what they are going through, and there are lessons that can be learned and applied from that experience. In that respect, the ability to psionically time travel can be a useful tool for a group of player characters.

Small Arms of the Terran Republic, Part 1

by Harold Hale

Introduction

In addition to the many copies made (and some surviving originals) of Imperial and Solomani weapons that are available to individuals in the Terran Republic, there are a number of new designs that have been created for use by the military that have found their way into the civilian, paramilitary, and black markets. The designs selected below reflect the Defense Ministry's philosophy of procuring small arms that are higher in caliber and have greater lethality. Typical is the 5.3 mm series of gauss weapons. While heavier than corresponding 4 mm Imperial designs, they also have lower recoils and thus give a soldier an increased probability of hitting at high rates of fire.

P-35 "Cobra" 5.5mm Gauss Pistol

The P-35 was originally designed to be carried by Terran Republic Marines as a back up to their primary firearm in combat. A rather bulky pistol, the P-35 nevertheless proved so popular that it soon became the standard sidearm of all Marine personnel. It fires the same kind of gauss dart ammunition used by the G-2A2 gauss battle rifle, but cannot use the same clips. Thousands of these weapons have found their way into the civilian market as military surplus.

TL: 12

Manufacturer: Steyr-Koch

Ammo: 5.3 x 26.5mm

Muzzle Energy: 1,423 joules

Weapon Length: 33.3cm

Weapon Weight: 1.76 kg loaded, 1.74 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine)

Weapon Price: Cr 644.08 (includes cost of empty box magazine)

Magazine Weight: 0.38 kg loaded, 0.36 kg empty

Magazine Price: Cr 1.18 (loaded), Cr 0.72 (empty)

Ammunition Weight: 1.17 g per round

Ammunition Price: Cr 0.02 (Dart)

Features: Gyroscopic compensator

G-1A2 Battle Rifle

The G-1A2 is the standard gauss rifle of the Terran Republic Marines and Army. The original G-1 was first carried by Eastern Coalition forces during the Terran Civil War. The current version was adopted just before the Lagash Campaign. Because of the need to streamline logistical support, only one kind of ammunition is procured by the military for the G-1A2, that being the 5.3 x 26.5mm gauss dart type. More exotic rounds (HE, HEAP, etc.) have been manufactured by commercial vendors for previous versions of the weapon, but they only yielded slight increases in performance, sold poorly, and were eventually dropped from production. Throughout its service, the G-1 has proven to be a reliable and effective weapon. A civilian version of the G-1A2, known as the "Model 11A2" is also available. The Model 11A2 is virtually identical to its military cousin externally, though it lacks grenade adapter and bayonet lug, and fires in semi-automatic mode only.

TL: 12

Manufacturer: Steyr-Koch

Ammo: 5.3 x 26.5mm

Muzzle Energy: 4,583 joules

Weapon Length: 71.2cm

Weapon Weight: 4.99 kg loaded, 4.95 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine)

Weapon Price: Cr 1,250.86 (includes cost of empty box magazine)

Magazine Weight: 2.05 kg loaded, 2.01 kg empty

Magazine Price: Cr 4.86 (loaded), Cr 4.02 (empty)

Ammunition Weight: 1.17 g per round

Ammunition Price: Cr 0.02 (Dart)

Features: Bullpup stock, shock absorbing stock, optic sight, bayonet lug, grenade adapter, gyroscopic compensator

* Short range without optical sight

G-8A2 Gauss Carbine

The G-8A2 is essentially a stripped down version of

Round	ROF	Dam Val	Pen Rtg	Bulk	-Recoil-		Burst	Short Range
					Mag	SS		
P-35 5.3x26.5mm Dart	5	3	1-Nil	2	20	1	3	19
G-1A2 5.3x26.5mm Dart	5/10	5	1-2-Nil	4	36	1	2/4	112 (97)*

the G-2A2, and uses the same ammunition. It is issued to vehicle crews in both the Marines and Army, and has been adopted by Naval Security forces as their standard gauss rifle.

TL: 12
 Manufacturer: Steyr-Koch
 Ammo: 5.3 x 26.5mm
 Muzzle Energy: 2,766 joules
 Weapon Length: 51.42cm
 Weapon Weight: 3.53 kg loaded, 3.49 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine)
 Weapon Price: Cr 1,026.96
 Magazine Weight: 1.26 kg loaded, 1.22 kg empty
 Magazine Price: Cr 3.29 (loaded), Cr 2.45 (empty)
 Ammunition Weight: 1.17 g per round
 Ammunition Price: Cr 0.02 (Dart)
 Features: Bullpup stock, shock absorbing stock, optic sight, gyroscopic compensator

* Short range without optical sight

LMG-45B1 "Saw" Gauss Squad Assault Weapon

The LMG-45 (known then as the LMG-45A1 Light Gauss Support Weapon) was introduced into Marine service just prior to the Lagash campaign, and was intended to be mounted on the LAUV-3s assigned to each light infantry platoon. Battle experience on Lagash proved that the LMG-45 was better placed on the ground within the organization of individual squads. The B1 version, which entered into production just after the war, adds a provision for a detachable bipod (Marines on Lagash frequently improvised such devices), but is otherwise identical to the previous version. Ammunition from this weapon can be used in the G-2A2 gauss rifle and the other members of the 5.3mm gauss weapon family. Both versions can be found in Marine, Army, Naval Security, and mercenary units throughout the Republic.

TL: 12
 Manufacturer: Steyr-Koch
 Ammo: 5.3 x 26.5mm
 Muzzle Energy: 6,858 joules
 Weapon Length: 99.82cm
 Weapon Weight: 14.26 kg loaded, 14.14 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine)
 Weapon Price: Cr 1,478.25 (includes cost of empty box magazine)
 Magazine Weight: 8.42 kg loaded, 8.30 kg empty
 Magazine Price: Cr 18.94 (loaded), Cr 16.61 (empty)

Ammunition Weight: 1.17 g per round
 Ammunition Price: Cr 0.02 (Dart)
 Features: Bullpup stock, shock absorbing stock, optic sight, gyroscopic compensator, detachable bipod

* Recoil is reduced by one if used with bipod
 ** Short range with bipod

AS-2B1 "Warhammer" Assault Shotgun

The AS-2 Warhammer is used by Terran Republic Marine infantry and Naval Security personnel during boarding actions and other close quarter combat situations. Developed during the Terran Civil War as a stop gap close support weapon for Eastern Coalition forces, it is still sometimes referred to as "The Poor Man's Plasma Gun". Because of its weight, it is usually carried with a shoulder strap, though it has a surprisingly low recoil for such a power weapon. The AS-2 is generally expensive, difficult to obtain outside of military service (usually for triple the price listed below), though a civilian version, known as the Aurora Model 201, is available to the general public for significantly less (depending on law level restrictions). The Model 201 lacks the laser sight and fires in semi-auto mode only, but is otherwise identical to the AS-2 except as noted below. A variety of rounds have been developed for the AS-2, including pellet, tranq pellet, slug, HEAP slug, flechette, and HEAP flechette (which contains eight high explosive armor piercing darts each). Slug, pellet, and flechette rounds are widely available on the civilian market, while HEAP slug and tranq pellet are rather more difficult to obtain. HEAP flechette rounds, because of their damage potential, are banned on most worlds in the Republic, and are usually only available at ten times the listed price from the Black Market.

TL: 12
 Manufacturer: Aurora Enterprises
 Ammo: 18x90mm (8 projectiles per shell)
 Muzzle Energy: 4,878 joules (total)
 Weapon Length: 91.24cm
 Weapon Weight: 7.75 kg loaded, 7.36 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine); Model 201 - 7.25 kg loaded, 6.86 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine)
 Weapon Price: Cr 1,830.97; Model 201 - Cr 1,530.97
 Magazine Weight: 1.38 kg loaded, 0.99 kg empty
 Magazine Price: Slug/pellet - Cr 27.49; Tranq Pellet - Cr 41.23; HEAP slug - Cr 54.97; Flechette - Cr 82.46; HEAP Flechette - Cr 123.68 (all loaded). Cr 13.75 (empty)

Round	ROF	Dam Val	Pen Rtg	Bulk	-Recoil-		Burst	Short Range
					Mag	SS		
G-8A2 5.3x26.5mm Dart	10	4	1-2-Nil	3	36	1	5	87 (76)*
LMG-45B1 5.3x26.5mm Dart	5/10	6	1-2-Nil	6	100	1*	2*/3*	152/198**

Ammunition Weight: 68.7 g per round
 Ammunition Price: Slug/pellet - Cr 0.69; Tranq Pellet - Cr 1.37; HEAP slug - Cr 2.06; Flechette - Cr 3.44; HEAP Flechette - Cr 5.50
 Features: Bullpup stock, optic sight, laser sight, gyroscopic compensator, muzzle break

Note: Maximum range with laser sight is 240 meters

* Each shot is rolled as a 5 round burst
 ** A hit indicates that 6 (in the case of all pellet type rounds) or 8 (in the case of all flechette type) projectiles from the round have hit the target, each with the specified amount of damage (pellet/flechette: 2D6, HEAP flechette: 3D6, Tranq pellet: 1D6) and the listed penetration rating.
 *** 1D6 points of damage plus tranq effect on TNE, page 350.

GS-7 Gauss Sniper Rifle

The GS-7 was developed in response to a Marine and Army request for a quality, high caliber dedicated sniper rifle with extremely low recoil. A small quantity of these weapons were eventually purchased and sent to troops on Lagash for battlefield testing. They proved so effective, the Terran Republic Defense Ministry recently ordered a large quantity of GS-7s for distribution to sniper teams throughout the armed forces. A unique feature of this weapon is the special discarding sabot ammunition developed for it. DS rounds are generally not produced for gauss weapons because they are rather difficult to manufacture. The GS-7 is not currently available on the civilian market, though it has been reported that several them were recently sold at Barnard on the Black Market.

TL: 12
 Manufacturer: Tarantino Limited
 Ammo: 13.5 x 67.5mm
 Muzzle Energy: 46,762 joules
 Weapon Length: 148.43cm
 Weapon Weight: 23.02 kg loaded, 22.73 kg empty (includes weight of empty box magazine)

Weapon Price: Cr 4,439.29 (includes cost of empty box magazine)

Magazine Weight: 8.93 kg loaded, 8.64 kg empty
 Magazine Price: Cr 23.07 (Dart loaded), Cr 28.88 (DS loaded); Cr 17.27 (empty)

Ammunition Weight: 19.32 g per round
 Ammunition Price: Cr 0.39 (Dart), Cr 0.77 (DS)
 Features: Shock absorbing stock, electronic sight, gyroscopic compensator, laser sight

* Recoil is reduced by one if used with bipod
 ** Short range without electronic sight

Note: Maximum range with laser sight is 240 meters

Round	ROF	Dam Val	Pen Rtg	-Recoil-			Burst	Short Range
				Bulk	Mag	SS		
AS-2B1 18x90mm Slug	5	5	3-4-Nil	6	20	2	3	36
AS-2B1 HEAP slug	5	9	2-2-2					27
AS-2B1 Pellet (short)	5	2x6	1					24
(medium)	5x5*	2	Nil					
AS-2B1 Flechette (short)	5	2x8	1					24
(medium)	5x5*	2	Nil					
AS-2B1 HEAP Flech (short)	5	3x8	2-2-2					18
(medium)	5	3	2-2-2					
AS-2B1 Tranq Pell (short)	5	1x6**	Nil					14
(medium)	5x5*	1***	Nil					
GS-7 13.5x67.5mm Dart	5	14	2-2-3	9	15	1*	2*	320 (300)**
GS-7 13.5x67.5mm DS	5	14	1-1-2			1*	2*	320 (300)**

The Official Terran Republic Marine Sniper Rules

by Harold Hale

Introduction

This is a rules variant intended for Traveller: The New Era. You can chose to incorporate it into your Traveller campaign to add a degree of realism to your combat.

Sniper Shots

Sniper shots are an additional type of direct fire shot (see page 274 of the TNE manual), similar to an aimed shot, in that it allows you to specify a particular hit location to aim for (head, gun arm, etc.). This location, for our purposes is known as the Target Area. An individual biped target may have up to 7 Target Areas.

To take a sniper shot, a character must spend two actions aiming the weapon. In addition, sniper shots are conducted at the same difficulty level as quick shots (this because it is harder to hit a particular body part than just aiming center mass of the target).

Only one sniper shot can be made per combat turn. Any additional shots are quick shots, and are resolved normally. Opportunity sniper fire is **not** allowed.

Sniper shots can not be taken against a target that is evading. Also note any target movement difficulty modifiers, which also apply.

Sniper shots cannot be taken against a concealed target area, unless the shooter can observe at least a portion of the person or thing to be hit. Note that the targeted location may be under some form of cover--remember to check penetration of any such obstructions before declaring a hit.

Shotguns: unless firing slug rounds, shotguns by their very nature cannot be used for sniper shots, unless the shooter is within close range of the target. Good luck.

The following devices act as a positive modifier to the asset of the shooter for a sniper shot:

- Optical Sight +1
- Telescopic Sight +2
- Laser Sight +3
- Electronic Sight +3

Assessing Hits and Misses

Regardless of sight modifiers, a natural roll of 17 - 20 is always a **total** miss, resulting in a miss of the target area and any potential adjacent targets.

In case of a hit, the target area (head, chest, etc.) takes damage according to normal TNE rules. As always, blunt trauma damage, exceptional success and other relevant rules apply.

In case of a regular miss (a roll less than 17 that does not result in a hit), the shot instead hits a location in close proximity other than what was intended. This may be another part of the body, or even another person. Roll a D10 and consult the table below:

10	1,2	3
9	target area	4
8	6,7	5

This is the direction the round will "drift" in relation to the target area.

Note: This table can also be found on the TNE Referee's Screen, and is labeled "Scattered Diagram".

Example: Assuming a front/rear shot against a solitary target (i.e. an individual alone on a stage), if the head were targeted, the chest would be hit on a 6 or 7, the relevant arm (depending on target facing) would be hit on a 5 or 8 and all other results would miss. If the chest were the target, the head would be hit on a 1 or 2, the relevant arm would be hit on a 4 or 9, the abdomen would be hit on a 6 or 7, and any

other result is a miss.

Rounds that don't hit some other part of the body may hit an adjacent target. If another target (i.e. a person) is within 1 meter of the target area, their hit locations are added to the above chart.

Example: An assassin attempts to kill the Prime Minister. The assassin is using a gauss rifle with an electronic site. Firing from long range, it is a

In Case You Want to Recreate Those Famous Western North America 2D Film Moments

To take a sniper shot with a pistol, a character only needs to spend one action aiming the weapon. This allows high initiative characters to aim and shoot a man in the head in the same combat turn. All other rules above apply.



Formidable task, with a +3 allowed to the combat rifle asset of the assassin because of the electronic sight. The target is facing directly away from the shooter, and is standing still. Recoil is not a factor with the weapon. The assassin's combat rifle asset is 11, plus 3 for the sight modification equals 14, which means that the assassin must roll that number or less to hit the target location, which turns out to be the head of the Prime Minister. A 15 is rolled, which means the assassin missed the target area, but was in close proximity. Rolling a D10 to determine where the shot hit, we come up with a 9. The referee then determines if there was a target within the adjacent area, which there was--the chest of one of the Prime Minister's body guards (oops, well that's why he gets paid the big bucks). The body guard was wearing body armor, however, so perhaps he'll survive.

Note that the assassin could have elected before the start of the turn to take 4 additional quick shots after his attempted sniper shot on the Prime Minister. These would have been resolved normally (Formidable task, no positive modifier for the electronic site), and any additional recoil would have to be accounted for.

Artifact

by Clayton R. Bush

SYNOPSIS

The player group is hired as intermediaries to purchase a rumored Ancient artifact. They travel to Thanber, an unaligned world between four interstellar states, and search for it on the black market.

The antagonist is a Droyne sport who uses the Droyne powers of invisibility and forgetfulness in an attempt to secretly thwart sale of the artifact. None of the characters has psionic training, and psionic shield helmets are not available initially. It is up to the characters to figure out who is causing trouble.

The specter of a teleporting psionist can be presented as a red herring.

ANTAGONIST

The artifact was used in the clan's casting ritual. Without it, lack of belief could cause participants not to caste, and that would doom the clan. Thus, the Sport's motivation equates to national survival. The Sport has not resorted to murder, but could if tricks fail.

Invisibility: A telepathic power thought to be unique to Droyne and Chirpers.

Invisibility allows the character to cloud the minds of every living thing within 400 meters of the individual so that they do not NOTICE the Droyne. This power is voluntary; it can be turned on and off at will. It is not selective, however. If in use, no one sees the Droyne; if not, everyone sees it.

All Droyne, even those without psionic training, can use Invisibility. Using it requires no psionic strength points. Use can last as long as a Droyne wishes, though it cannot be maintained during sleep or unconsciousness.

The power will not work against anyone with a natural or artificial psionic shield, or against robots. It also cannot work against television cameras (including electronic image intensifiers and infra-red scopes) and the like so a remote operator (outside 400m of the Droyne) would notice the Droyne.

Forgetfulness (Telepathy): A telepathic power thought to be unique to Droyne psionists.

Using this ability causes a target character to suffer partial amnesia. The memory loss is only partial, and covers a period of time in hours prior to the "attack" equal to the power level attained by the "attacking" character in the task attempt. The duration of the amnesia is likewise equal to the power level.

Forgetfulness cannot be used against characters with a psionic shield of any kind. The amnesiac character

is allowed a Difficult test against the Intelligence attribute only, and with success, the character is uneasy or disturbed enough to seek professional help. A Formidable: Psychology or Difficult: Telepathy (Probe) task will unlock the lost memories.

Forgetfulness is a level 8 ability, requiring 6 psionic strength points plus applicable range points. This activity requires 240 seconds.

START

Entrope (Spinward Marches

0720 E336AAA-C Hi 110 Da G6V M1D)

At Entrope Starport, the players have just finished participating in a sting on a Mr. Krito, a local crime boss. Now they need transport off world. (Referees may fit this in a campaign after other activities requiring a quick departure.)

A tall, well-tailored man approaches the players. "I'll keep this brief. First, here's a Cr2,500 advance. Now you work for me. Second, if anyone asks, tell them I tried to hire you as bodyguards and that you refused. Third, the real job is offworld. That concludes the Cr2,500. Shall I continue with an offer?"

The players should encourage him to continue. If not, spill a drink on them.

"Fourth, several Vargr from Foreven with an object that I want are at Thanber. Transport has been arranged at the dock, and I'll call ahead to have the steward 'clear' whatever you wave at him as if it were a mid-passage ticket.

"Fifth, find a freebooter called Prince John. Don't write it down: the name is Prince John.

"Sixth, when you have possession, you contact an ID on the Thanber station communications network. That party will arrange pickup and pay you for your efforts.

Why them?: "Using a variety of middlemen makes it harder to trace ownership. Besides, prices can rise if the seller know who the buyer is."

What are they picking up?: "Certain items--antiquities--greatly interest scholars. Remember the stir about the Sky Raiders in Far Frontiers sector? The University of Regina gained a lot of prestige from getting that collection into their museum.

"My backer doesn't want to be beaten out again. So we are acting on some skimpy information.

Equipment: "On the ship is a briefcase. It contains all you need to know."

DEPARTING ENTROPE

To end the above, a character receives a beep on his communicator. It detected a reference to the characters while monitoring a bug previously planted on Mr. Krito during the sting. According to a monitored conversation, Krito has a report the characters are leaving the planet and has sent goons to the Starport. The player can predict that they should arrive in 30 minutes.

BRIEFCASE

A contract is in the briefcase. By accepting the offworld transportation and the briefcase, the party is considered to have accepted the contract. Anyone wanting out should email Cr8,000 to JOHANN.FAUST on arrival at Thanber station to get out of the contract. Participants will receive a high passage ticket and Cr10,000 upon completion of the contract.

The briefcase contains a chemical dating kit, a laser dating device, and a disk with operating instruction for their use. Exceptional success examining the laser dater will reveal a memory module which records results, which is not covered in the instructions.

There is a note: "The local contact's ID on the Thanber Internet is JOHANN.FAUST. Check the station network. Call the ID after acquiring the artifact.

"The dater estimates age from chemical composition and light frequencies reflected. It has a reliable range of one-quarter meter, and can give a reliable age estimate up to 1,000,000 years.

"Your contact must approve any price you negotiate, based on tests on the item. Contact him when you are ready, not before. He will accept delivery of the artifacts and the laser dater, and provide you with the rest of your payment."

PASSAGE

The starship can hire one PC for working passage, as steward. The captain will only refund Cr5,000, since the ship is already in space. Players with paid passages who take working passage should suffer.

1. One female passenger, Uta Dressig, has been to Thanber many times. Dressig works for the Pan-Galactic Friends of Life, and is on her way to continue investigating reports of native life below Thanber's surface.

From Hrunting in the Sword Worlds, she comes across as obsessive and insulting. She will try to convince the captain to donate her passage fee to the PGFL, but treating the crew rudely frustrates this campaign. When rebuffed, she treats everyone as weaklings beneath her interest.

Dressig has other interests besides the PGFL, and will sell any information dropped about the players' mission. (Lesser beings deserve whatever happens to them; she can use the money.)

Uta Dressig will insist on a ferry ticket before she

leaves the starship. Travel contracts are either orbit-to-orbit or ground-to-ground, and she was transported to the starship from the ground. If anyone brought cargo to sell, they may accompany her to the ferry station. Otherwise, after selling any information she picked up, she disappears from the adventure.

2. An Aslan family travelling to Thanber are citizens of the Darrian Confederation seeking markets for agro-products. If the PCs interact with them, the Aslan can be used as references on Thanber.

Clan: Yewahkas

Noble male: Arliee (bored)

Other male: Yearlstea (examines weapons)

Chief female: Stuarstehe (listens)

Other females: Asa, Esftou (discusses trade)

THANBER OVERVIEW

Thanber (Spinward Marches

0717 B243753-D 210 Cs M9V M1D)

Many merchant ships are docked at an orbital complex, the center of inter-system trade. The player's ship will leave them there.

Many small communities (under 10,000) dot the planets' surface, but there are no cities. The downport is among a cluster of communities and connected to the network of mag-lev rail lines. The lack of a surface Star City will be obvious to characters accustomed to sleazy dives and bars.

Study of displays shows that travel to the planet's surface is via a separate slow boat service that operates from the other side of the station. The players would have to travel through residential or manufacturing sections to reach the ferry. Customs will be stricter there, and officials will ask which community has invited them down. Players will not be stopped here, but will progress slowly. The down port is a working port and services resemble an all-night truck stop. On the surface rail net, finally, communities will refuse admittance without an invitation.

THANBER ORBITAL STARPORT

The orbital station consists of two dozen modules. The docking modules connect to one module with customs, hospital, police, and storage. There is one exit into the next station module, but there the interconnections increase.

Customs: Customs is loose about weapons and equipment, but will hold anything that could threaten the integrity of the station. Local currency converts at 80% of Regency credits.

Network: A kiosk sells access to the station communication net. It is a bulletin board/telephone system. The question, "And what name do you want as your address?" should lead to some inter-player discussion. There is a 50% chance a good name has already been taken.

There is no Prince John in the directory.

JOHANN.FAUST says to contact after they have acquired the artifacts.

Encounter: Two men nearby the player group argue in Zhodani. The older one points at the group as they argue. Finally, he walks over to an armed member of the group and asks, "How much to buy a pistol?" His son, Shdiv, is going into Regency space, and will need protection from all the thieves there.

Mr. Aentazh will haggle--with that player only!--over the price or what he gets for it. ("For ____, he should get more than one clip. He's a lousy shot!" "Where's the cleaning kit? What, you want more for it? Like you had some other use for it?")

Mr. Aentazh can be used as a local contact. He is a temporary resident with a valid license, but he knows nothing about how a black market works. He doesn't understand quiet illegality. His search methods will seem foolishly naive. ("Attention! Anyone here know a Prince John?")

LODGING

Shops carry a wide variety of Regency, Darrian, and Zhodani goods with equal diversity in quality. There is a TAS hotel, several good quality independent hotels, and a progression downward.

Cheap and comfortable leads to the Thanber Zloril. At the Zloril, after bringing their bags into the players' room(s), Johnny Futernik will offer his unofficial services with the line, "What do you need?" He looks like an average kid, which he exploits to the hilt as a veteran negotiator. He is connected to the station network, and can get most anything.

If the players show him illegal equipment, a tip to outbound Customs gets him a small finders fee under the table. Serious trouble he will take to the police. If it's just between offworlders, though, who cares?

SEARCHING

Note that this is a good place for players to find interesting rumors, information sources, and so on.

None of the hotels have a Prince anything registered.

Prince Electronics is a dead end, but it has a great sale on regional radios (50% off regular price).

Asking on the street gets the initial response, "What is it worth to you?" The streets have many rough types: mercenaries, exiles, pirates, and free traders. Besides all the usual businesses, prominent local merchants include fences, junk dealers, and auctioneers.

The docks have a LOT of ships coming and going. There are several sealed ships whose crews are on shore leave.

The Regency embassy has no information. However, if the subject comes up, they "remind" the characters that Ancient artifacts in Regency space are supposed to be registered with the Ancients Foundation, a Scout Service affiliate.

CONTACT

Eventually, the PCs get a message to meet Prince John at the Garseka during the "night" downcycle. Johnny will want a payoff. The electronic message comes from "Garkhek," which has no listed address; there will be no response to a RSVP.

A directory search shows Garseka is a small eatery located in a station residential district. The PCs make several turns off the main corridor to find it in a colorful, low-rent section. The Garseka is a small eatery with a dozen booths, a Vargr chef, and (5 out of 8) Vargr customers. The waitress and three customers are human.

Where did the Vargr come from? "A Vargr faction colonized Rushu (Spinward Marches 0215). Like always, some Vargr splintered off. There's 'bout a hundred on the station. You gonna order or what?"

After a few minutes, three Vargr come in the door. The leader is dressed in what seems to be a Regency naval uniform--unless you notice the insignia is a helmeted Vargr. The other two have long black capes. Both wear a device over their eyes; on a routine roll ex-military personnel recognize it as a computer-enhanced infrared viewer. (If the devices recorded, users could play back and see how "unnoticed" Droyne walked past them...)

The leader is called Prince John. He does not know what the players want, but having someone come to him will help his perceived charisma. His interest during this meeting is to make a good impression on the onlookers. His companions seem very nervous about something.

Prince John is back from some free trading in Foreven sector, and he is disposing of various acquisitions for cash. Auctions tend to bring the best prices. Still, what are they interested in? When artifacts are mentioned, his companions tense. Prince John, however, will state that he will part for them for the right price. It would save him the standard 5% fee of auction proceeds.

Prince John will agree to send some samples to the characters' lodging for testing and authentication. The auctioneer wasn't interested in some of the pieces, but please keep damage down.

Characters wearing psionic shield helmets would see a figure follow Prince John to the meeting, and afterwards follow the players back to their lodgings. They could recognize it as a Droyne sport. The sport carries a shotgun microphone and other gear.

NEGOTIATIONS

The following guidelines govern the negotiations. Players may attempt to buy the items at the first meeting, or otherwise step outside the expected flow.

Prince John will let the players make the first offer. He will ask for one million credits, but will accept as little as Cr200,000. Whatever they offer him will "convince" him to sell it without waiting for an auction (after some haggling). Any acceptable offer will get

him agree to part with the artifact the following day, since the players "seem to be in a hurry."

Players might backtrack, and make inquiries about three Vargr rather than "Prince John."

Prince John arrived three weeks ago. Most of his crew left him on arrival, several with casts or on crutches. He is a local boy made good, and the station's Vargr admire his success in getting his own ship. His ship was damaged while in dock, and is no longer jump capable. (It is registered to Garkhek, his legal name.)

Prince John is down to his last Cr100,000. He needs to sell something to pay for repairs, and he wants to get rid of this artifact. It's brought him a string of bad luck. All but three of his crew have left his troubled ship because of accidents.

SAMPLES

Two characters returning from breakfast will hear a blow and sound of body hitting the floor. Vargr hands and a briefcase fall into the corridor where the characters can see them. Next, the Droyne sport will drag the Vargr back out of sight, and then go for the briefcase. If the players rush, the Droyne will leave and they will see no one except the Vargr. If they don't rush, the Droyne will pull the briefcase back out of sight (staying low), and they will not see the hand pulling the briefcase across the floor.

If the players concentrate only on the downed Vargr, the Droyne will grab the briefcase when they aren't looking. Once he is carrying it, they will not "notice" it and it has disappeared. The Droyne is prepared to retreat, however, and try again later. If the briefcase is opened, showing that the artifact is not inside, he will definitely lose interest in the briefcase.

The briefcase contains three plastic and four metal objects, all of them cracked, crushed, or twisted. Chemical tests of dirt and object surfaces will indicate an age over 50,000 years. The laser dater reads out 60,000-90,000 years for different pieces. Based on that information, then JOHANN.FAUST will approve payment up to Cr5,000,000.

EXCHANGE

At mid-morning, two PCs (only!) are to come to a department store on the upper level of an old recreation module. (Prince John wants one companion to provide covering fire; the restriction is a face-saving excuse for only having one person with him.)

The store opens at 11:00. The Vargr will go in first, and the characters are to follow five minutes later and meet them inside. (This should prevent setting up an ambush.) There is almost no business or traffic at this time.

Preliminaries: If PCs go early to scope the site, they find the "upstairs" entrance to the department store, assorted shops, and a small park on the mezzanine level of the module.

Most morning traffic is at a small cafe. The

characters do not blend in well with the other clientele who wear different store uniforms and seem to know each other. Everyone else leaves the cafe at 9:30, well before the stores open. The cafe has no other business than any PCs until about 10:50.

The Droyne sport will recognize any characters seen at the Garseka or during the attempted delivery of samples. It will attempt to plant a tracer on a randomly chosen, recognized character.

If Uta Dressig passed on information: Several urchins approach the PCs about 10:45 and compete to sell flowers and offering service as guides. Suddenly a hand goes up in the back of the group, and points a camera at the PCs. The urchins then scatter in all directions.

One urchin attempted to plant a tracer on a randomly chosen character.

The Zhodani are always interested in things Droyne. A group of Sword Worlders on Thanber acquires Droyne artifacts for trade to the Zhodani; they favor snatch-and-grab raids. (In this case, having a video image doesn't hurt either.)

Exchange: Entering the department store on a lower level, before opening, Prince John wears his replica of a Regency Army captain's uniform, except for the insignia. Prince John has a autopistol and cutlass. Kughikfoe has an SMG, small shotgun, pistol, and blade. Both Vargr wear cloth armor.

Argharr is providing overwatch from a grating above one of the shops. It is a Difficult task to spot him using Recon or Tactics. He has a hunting rifle and a shotgun, and has clear view of the upper level entrance to the department store, an escalator, and an elevator.

At 11:02 Kughikfoe will walk outside on the upper level, look around to see the characters, then walk back inside.

Prince John will quickly conclude the deal. He has the artifact in a blue suitcase, which he will hand over when funds are electronically transferred to his account. The players may look in the open suitcase, and use the laser dater to verify its age. (A customer wanders into the section, sees the weapons, and slowly backs out.) He gives the PCs the account, verifies receipt, gives them the suitcase, and leaves.

Argharr is outside the range of Droyne's telepathic invisibility. Anyone at the cafe is not.

After Prince John steps outside, Argharr starts shooting at the Droyne sport behind him. They freeze in mid-action while looking around. While running to the escalator, the Droyne fires an SMG burst at Prince John and wounds him. Kughikfoe drags Prince John into the elevator, and the Vargr leave the scene.

All PCs will probably hurriedly leave the scene. Use the following to resolve less likely possibilities.

If the PCs go outside, they will find blood trails to the escalator and to the elevator. Going down the escalator will bring a burst of fire from an unseen foe.

Once the Droyne binds the wound, the trail ends and the characters will see nothing to follow.

The police will question anyone found at the scene. The police assume a trade went bad, and that the PCs were in combat with the Vargr.

One testimony will clear any PC involved. All the police will volunteer is that a witness saw someone shoot Prince John, and it wasn't the PC. (One witness tells the police she saw a creature follow the Vargr out of the store and shoot at him. She thinks it fired only after it was hit itself, however. She saw it twist and half fall before pulling out its weapon.)

PAYMENT

JOHANN.FAUST will refuse to approve paying the PCs until another dating test produces the same results as the first test. (The laser dater has a secret memory module, which is not covered in the instructions given to the players.) He would offer to meet in their lodgings if given the chance. However, he will agree to meet the PCs in a meeting room in the customs module, on the station side of the customs checkpoint.

If Uta Dressig passed on information: Four Sword Worlders will break in wherever their tracer is to grab the artifact. During the confusion, the Droyne arrives and grabs the blue suitcase; it becomes "unnoticed."

Otherwise: If the meeting is at the groups' lodgings, substitute Johnny for the customs official in the following.

The Droyne enters the conference room with JOHANN.FAUST. An emergency beacon activates in the room, drawing police. A quick search finds the drugged body of a customs official in an adjoining room; the official's fingerprint is on the beacon's activation button. (The Droyne used a pointed object to push the button without disturbing the fingerprint placed by unconscious finger.) Again, the Droyne will grab the blue suitcase.

PIECES COME TOGETHER

Time is lost being questioned at the security office. Several facts come to light.

1) Johnny, or the customs official, does not recall anything from the half-hour before he was found. He has no idea who needled him from behind. Further, no permanent harm was done and no charges are being filed.

2) The beacon has a label from the Reaver, which is registered to Garkhek (Prince John). Garkhek denies any knowledge of its use.

3) Of the nine passes from the Reaver, three have not left the station and six have. Five left over ten days ago, but one passed customs just this morning--after the fracas.

4) Garkhek/Prince John has posted a classified ad saying: "Dear unseen friends: I no longer have it. You

know who does."

If called, Prince John refuses to meet with the PCs personally. He will assert that he and his crew only numbered eight, and that the other five left much earlier.

Access to station records shows that the ninth Reaver pass was used to reboard the Reaver.

Check on "Droyne" shows that one Droyne was renting a room at a dive until this morning, but has now checked out. Homeworld is given as Steward/Foreven. Also, a Droyne mercenary cruiser is in-system from Steward and will dock in five hours.

FINALE

JOHANN.FAUST will offer Cr100,000 to recover the artifact.

Prince John will grant use of access codes to get the Droyne out of his ship. However, they will have to pay for any property damage.

Station authorities insist that no trouble spill over onto the dock, but shipboard troubles are outside their claimed jurisdiction. (If a customs official was drugged, they will clear characters quickly.)

The Regency embassy representative reminds the characters that Ancient artifacts in Regency space are supposed to be registered with the Ancients Foundation, a Scout Service affiliate.

Only two psionic shield helmets are available.

Attempts to buy more psionic shield helmets from individuals reveals that a betting pool has sprung up. Odds are 30:70 on the Droyne thwarting the characters. Participants feel it would be unfair to further handicap the Droyne.

The Reaver is a standard Far Trader. The empty blue suitcase is inside the ship's airlock door.

The Droyne is on the bridge when the players board. It will attempt to retreat to the ship's boat and transfer to the Droyne mercenary cruiser. If the characters block him, he will attempt to return to the bridge and manually lock itself in. While waiting for the Droyne reinforcements, it will spend the time trying to activate the anti-hijack system without danger to itself. This is an Impossible: Computer task which it may roll every half-hour.

The bridge door can absorb 1,000 damage points.

The Droyne is carrying the artifact in a backpack. It is armed with an SMG.

If the players do not get into the bridge and out in time, the Droyne mercenary cruiser will transfer ten Droyne warriors with combat armor and gauss rifles to the Reaver.

Amber Zone: Sudrian Wevo

Glenn M. Goffin

1. "Put the bullet here"

"Then I offered my pistol to the man from the mining company," old Chief Prathtin's granddaughter translated as he told the story in their native language, punctuating it with gestures, "pushed aside my armor, and I said, 'put the bullet here, in my heart, then do the same to my wife and children, and great grandchildren, and the other clan elders and their families, and all the other Wevons, and take your machines and dig a big hole and put all of us and all of our possessions and all of our animals in the bottom of it and fill it in and then do whatever you want with the land. You'll do that anyway. Don't you have the guts to do it straight?'"

The PCs are a group of (four to twelve) mercenaries with covert operations experience meeting with a prospective client and other interested parties at Oegfurrenz & Stithers, a mid-sized law firm. Present are Chief Prathtin and his granddaughter Chakrampom, two other members of the Chief's family, attorney Sir Ve Oegfurrenz (counsel to Chief Prathtin), Madeline Nebed of Hortalez & Cie., and the PCs. Chakrampom will outline the assignment; if the PCs want the job, they will have to make a sales presentation showing that they have the skills and experience to accomplish the assignment -- definitely on time, and preferably under budget as well.

2. Ticket to Sudrian Wevo Island

After her grandfather's introduction, Chakrampom presents the following information:

Sudrian Wevo is a very large, swampy, jungle-covered equatorial island located in a major archipelago on a backwater but hospitable planet called Pledzoon.

Pledzoon is inhabited primarily (99%) by a minor human race, the Sudgatar, placed there by the Ancients about 300,000 years ago. The remainder of the population consists of off-worlders, mostly humans. Physically, the Sudgatar tend to range from 150-180 cm and 70-90 kg, with mottled brown skin, straight hair often containing different colors from blond to dark brown on the same head, and brown eyes, but there is of course considerable variation outside these parameters.

Sudrian Wevo is almost entirely undeveloped, and most Wevons led nearly a stone-age existence until about seventy years ago, when the large mainland country of Banjisar began trading with them and exploring. The Wevons maintain about a TL 3 agricultural society, with some imported items of higher tech levels. Banjisar is the nearest large nation of the balkanized world, and the site of the world's best starport (Class D). The military seized power in Banjisar some fifteen years ago, and rigidly controls most aspects of Banjisari life (law level 9).

About ten years ago, Banjisari prospectors discovered significant deposits of gold and copper in Sudrian Wevo. At about the same time, Banjisar declared Sudrian Wevo a protectorate; last year, it annexed Sudrian Wevo as its newest province, after a referendum characterized by fraud and intimidation of the Wevon electorate.

Banjisar has granted the gold and copper concessions to Firstciv/Amoglam Mining, LIC, a large raw-materials development corporation active in the sector. This is a sweetheart deal for both Banjisar's ruling junta and Firstciv -- Firstciv paid some Cr5 million (believed to have gone almost entirely into the junta's pockets), in exchange for a complete tax holiday for ten years and massive governmental support in developing infrastructure on Sudrian Wevo to facilitate ore extraction.

The Wevons, however, were never party to the deal and have gotten the short end of the stick. Open-pit mining operations over the last three years have led to cyanide and copper poisoning of Sudrian Wevo's rivers and lakes, destroying both the fish and edible plants that together form the bulk of the Wevons' subsistence. The result has been wide-spread starvation among the Wevons.

The first mines -- over one kilometer across -- were dug by hand by Wevons at gun point, but once pollution from the mining operations destroyed the Wevons' agriculture, guns were exchanged for a wage just sufficient to buy Banjisari grain from the Firstciv general store. More than ten thousand Wevons are now thus employed as mining laborers, along with some Banjisari in overseer positions.

Every one of the two hundred-odd miners killed in mining accidents since the mines opened has been Wevon. Some Wevons work for even lower wages in

the relatively safer service sector, making beds, waiting tables, and engaging in prostitution in the excellent hotels and restaurants of Donbran, the town built by Banjisar on Sudrian Wevo for Firstciv's off-world employees.

Banjisar prohibits travel by Wevons to Banjisar (or anywhere else). The Banjisari military, aided directly by Firstciv security forces, has put down all attempts by Wevons to seek relief -- including demonstrations, labor organizing, press conferences, and letter-writing campaigns -- with extreme violence and reprisals that have left thousands of Wevons dead and tens of thousands homeless. These are in addition to the tens of thousands made homeless or killed by the destruction of their main food sources. The total Wevon population does not exceed 200,000. Wevons in desperation have also resorted to terrorism and sabotage, but have been ineffective in driving Firstciv off, let alone ending Banjisar's occupation of Sudrian Wevo.

The Banjisari military conducts random spot-checks of villages suspected of harboring rebels or other opponents of Banjisari rule. These suspicions are always confirmed, and several villagers are killed and their homes destroyed in reprisal. Firstciv often provides air transport and cover with a gcarrier. Many Wevons, generally those educated offworld and in leadership positions, have also disappeared since the Banjisari took over.

Eight months ago, student protests at the one modern school for Wevons (built by Firstciv led to destruction of the school by the Banjisari military, and the deaths of several students and faculty. It was at a meeting to attempt reconciliation after this event that Chief Prathtin offered his pistol to Bernend Weebleden, Firstciv's general manager in charge of operations in Sudrian Wevo.

Banjisar and Firstciv control the media, prevent any use of it by the Wevons, and forbid independent reporters from visiting Sudrian Wevo.

Before the annexation by Banjisar last year, some Wevons (like Chakrompom) obtained excellent educations elsewhere on Pledzoon and off-world. They have been pleading the Wevons' cause around the subsector. They have recently found help in the form of a significant sum of money. Nebed at this point interrupts to explain that her client, who will be financing the operation, wishes to remain undisclosed. The client has instructed her to convey its interest in the free self-determination of all peoples, and will cover, through the good offices of Hortalez et Cie., all financial aspects of the operation.

The Wevons want to hire the PCs to make the mining operations so unprofitable and otherwise unattractive that Firstciv will abandon its facilities. They have wide latitude in achieving this result, and significant loss of Banjisari and Firstciv life and property are accepted.

The PCs will have access to an ECM-equipped

pinnacle that can be used for supply and resupply from space.

Political and propaganda initiatives, as well as psychological operations, are being pursued separately. While the PCs may be called upon to assist in them, they should not undertake any such initiatives without consulting Chakrompon, who will act as their handler and contact.

The timetable for completion is no later than eighteen months from now. The Wevons offer a flat fee of Cr250,000 per member of the team, a success bonus of MCr5 to be placed in escrow by Hortalez, MCr0.5 for expenses, and repatriation bonds.

3. Intelligence briefing

If the PCs and the Wevons come to an agreement, Chakrampong will provide the following additional intelligence:

3.a. Other forces

About 100 Banjisari conscripts armed at TL6 to 7 guard the mining facilities. They have eight to twelve light wheeled vehicles, several rubber "zodiac" type rafts, three large shallow-draft motorboats (each capable of carrying 20-30 troops) and a light helicopter (armed with auto grenade launcher), but no armored vehicles. Leadership rotates about every season among several of the best Banjisari captains and majors.

Firstciv security numbers between ten and fifteen persons armed at TL 12 standards. They have at least two plasma guns, a gcarrier, and a wheeled armored vehicle with auto grenade launcher and high pressure water nozzle that has been used to break up many disturbances. The head of Firstciv security is Odetto Jonnsonn, a former lieutenant in the subsector duke's army intelligence branch. (Any veterans of that army among the PCs will know of him as a psychopath cashiered from the service for torturing prisoners.)

Other equipment at Firstciv includes two large equipment-moving helicopters of Pledzoon manufacture, four air/rafts, and a fleet of ground vehicles and earth moving machines.

Operating in the countryside are a band of Wevon guerrillas, estimated at about 500 soldiers. They have not carried out any significant operation in several months. The tech level of their equipment is not known, although it is assumed to be a hodge-podge of stolen Banjisari weapons and items smuggled in from Pledzoon or from offworld. They have pack animals (similar to small elephants), but it is believed that they have no vehicles. The official representatives of the Wevon people, Chief Prathtin and his entourage, are not in contact with this force, and do not know its intentions or capabilities. The mercenaries have discretion to contact or ignore it, as they see fit.

3.b. The Wevons

The mining areas are on the western side of the island, not far from the most densely populated regions. In the central part of the island is a low mountain range, and beyond that is untracked and poorly mapped swampy jungle. It is not unexplored, however -- the Wevons have lived on the island for countless generations, and have explored the island extensively. For several years, Wevons have been secretly relocating into this uninhabited portion. Those who have moved have been officially recorded as dead. Ultimately, the entire population intends to move east and hide in the uninhabited portion, living off the unpolluted land there. The mercenaries will thus have no local sources of supply, and will have to make their own arrangements for resupply, including probably caches and certainly use of the pinnacle. The mercenaries will not be responsible for defense of the Wevon population at large; this is being arranged in another manner.

3.c. The City of Donbran

Not far from the mining areas is Donbran, a city of approximately 5,000 persons, all of whom are directly or indirectly employed by Firstciv. The bulk of the population is mining staff, such as technical specialists, engineers, and administrators. Virtually all of these are offworlders.

In addition, a large service sector providing construction, maintenance, transportation, sanitation, and the like is composed primarily of Banjisari, with some Wevons. Near Donbran is a class E starport and a one-strip airport; only Firstciv-related traffic is permitted. This tiny city boasts a huge four-star Tesharkan Grand Hotel, where middle and senior managers assigned to Sudrian Wevo, as well as various VIPs, stay.

Donbran relies for its water supply entirely on a reservoir of the Iuwunchu River, upstream from the mines and some 20 km from the city. Firstciv dammed the Iuwunchu about five years ago, when the city was built. The water travels via covered aqueduct, and is purified at the water company's plant at the city's edge. Power for Donbran and all Firstciv facilities comes from a TL 12 fusion plant that runs on water from the same source. Otherwise, Donbran operates at about TL 7.

It is rumored that Weebleden, the Firstciv general manager, keeps a 20-ton launch in the top floor of the corporate headquarters building in Donbran, in case he needs to escape.

3.d. Anthropology, geography, biology, meteorology of Sudrian Wevo

Chakrompong will also provide the following

geographical, biological, and meteorological information, which is also available from public sources.

3.d.1. The Seasons

Sudrian Wevo is a large subtropical island, characterized by steep mountain ranges and swampy lowlands. The region has four seasons, called in Wevon Kalithtep (the heavy rains); Borotep (the sunny season); Palathtep (the light rains); and Borintep (the other sunny season). During Kalithtep, steady hard rain swells the rivers to 2-3m above their level in the other seasons. Thekthemis tubers, a wild growing staple of the Wevon diet, are gathered then.

Borotep is the planting season, characterized by extreme heat (40C) and virtually cloudless skies, broken by afternoon thunderstorms. In Palathtep, fog, moderate rain, and cooler temperatures (25-30C) predominate; this is the season for fishing and hunting. Borintep is much cooler (20C), with generally sunny warm days and cool nights. The Wevons continue hunting and fishing and do most of their weaving and other preparations for Kalithtep in this season. During Kalithtep, the rivers swell and overflow, and the Wevons brave the dangers of the rivers to gather thekthemis tubers (see 3.d.2., below).

3.d.2. Terrain, Flora, and Fauna

Sudrian Wevo's mountains rise to peaks of 3000m. They are covered overall with dense rain forest, except for the steepest walls and peaks. The rain forest consists of tall (30-100m) tree-like and fern-like photosynthesizing plants, with associated parasitic organisms resembling large (3m) mushrooms. In many areas, the leaves form an unbroken canopy, shielding the forest floor from both sunlight and rain.

Mountain and rain forest fauna include several large and dangerous omnivore-gatherers, an enormous variety of fliers, and many small, poisonous invertebrates. A leech-like parasite, ranging from 2cm to 1m in length, is an especial danger in the higher rainforests.

Descending from the mountains, the rain forest gives way in the valleys to overgrown jungles, which in turn become vast swamps near the rivers. The jungles are characterized by dense, low growth and some taller plants related to the rain forest tree forms. Sudrian Wevo's major rivers are often 3 to 5km wide in the valleys, and up to 500m deep, with mats of plant material floating in the middle. An enormous variety of animal life, both air-breathing and gilled, inhabits the rivers.

The jungles are home to various reptilian species, as well as relatives of the mountain omnivores. Smaller leeches are found in the jungle, as are fliers and various invertebrates.

The swamps are water-logged year-round, but during Kalithtep are completely underwater. At this time, the bladders of a plant called in Wevon the thekthemí fill with gas and float to the surface. The thekthemí's tuberous roots are then in their edible phase, and are gathered by the Wevons. The elliptical bladders may exceed 10m in length; the tubers average 2-3kg.

Borotep dries out the lowlands somewhat, allowing agriculture on land flooded and fed by rich silt from upstream during Kalithtep. This is the gavazoo eel's mating and spawning season, and it is most dangerous time to approach because its electrical charge is the most potent.

Tall, thick grass lands are found in the relatively drier northern side of the island. The grasses exceed 3m in height. They are inhabited by large herbivores and the predator-chasers that feed on them, as well as by fliers unique to these areas. The Wevons harvest some grass for weaving baskets, furniture, roofs, and raingear.

4. Referee's notes

This information should not be presented to the PCs. They will learn some of it in the course of the adventure.

The Wevons' benefactor will not be revealed at the meeting. It is SuSAG, LIC, the giant Imperial pharmaceutical concern. Off-world and Wevon scientists have pursued the folklore of the long-lived Gavazoo eel, which lives in the rivers, lakes, and marshes of western Sudrian Wevo. The Gavazoo was said to have a lifespan of three hundred years; studies have proven this folktale to be true. With the help of SuSAG, the Wevons have isolated a powerful anagathic in certain glands of the Gavazoo. Destruction of the Gavazoo's habitat by the strip mining operations will be irreversible in two standard years. In exchange for an exclusive right to controlled harvesting of the Gavazoo eel, SuSAG has agreed to underwrite the overthrow of Firstciv. (SuSAG has also agreed to accept independent environmental audits of the eel harvest by independent scientists. How this works out could be the subject of further adventures.) SuSAG intends neither to support nor oppose liberation of Sudrian Wevo from Banjisar. SuSAG does not want its involvement known, and will officially distance itself from the operation. SuSAG intends to step in and purchase Donbran and other Firstciv facilities at distress prices when Firstciv is exhausted.

The Wevons have about 20% negotiating room on total compensation, but are already offering rates well above market.

If the PCs seek poisons, for example poison gas or toxins for the water supply, they will be able to obtain them at good prices, in large quantities, and of high quality -- SuSAG will be supplying them from its own production, through a third party.

Unbeknownst to the PCs and SuSAG, the Wevons

intend to assassinate Firstciv's directors and senior officers at the board of directors' meeting. This will take place in about 60 days, on the world where Oegfurrenz & Stithers is located. The board meeting will be preceded by a stockholders' meeting. The effectiveness of this action, and its effect on security at Donbran and the mines, is left to the referee.

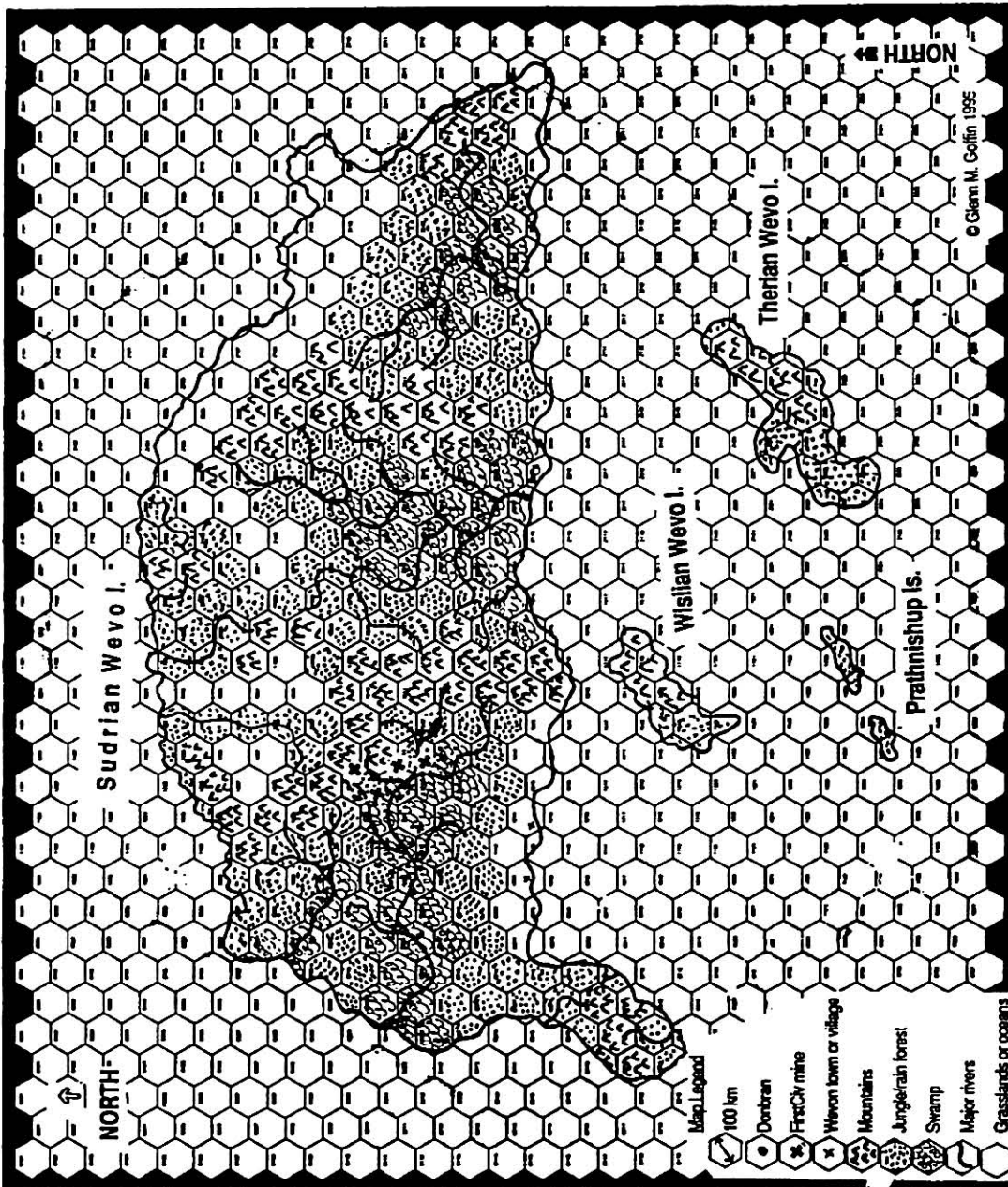
The information about the guerrillas is true. The guerrillas are mostly young men and women striving to get the Banjisar and Firstciv out of Sudrian Wevo, and to return independence to their country. Their primary leaders are Brethtin Merwonin, who received his Ph.D. in political science from one of the most prestigious universities in the subsector, and Geshakong Helwain, who left Sudrian Wevo to join the Imperial Marines, specifically to learn skills to use in liberating Sudrian Wevo from Banjisar. She retired as a Force Commander in the Commandoes.

Chief Prathtin has repeatedly refused to meet or communicate with the guerrillas, believing that guerrillas could never effectively solve the Wevons' problems and that association with them would undermine his credibility with such offworlders as might offer assistance. This has naturally frustrated Merwonin, Helwain, and the guerrillas. How the guerrillas and the PCs interact is left to the referee. The guerrillas should probably mount a hit-and-run raid on Donbran and/or Firstciv's operations during the course of the adventure.

Defense of the Wevon population, beyond simply hiding in difficult terrain, will largely be a matter of electronic countermeasures and booby-trapping to delay ground forces. In addition, the mountains contain several large cave complexes that whose existence is not generally known outside Sudrian Wevo. The Wevons believe that they can evade Banjisar and Firstciv detection for at least one year. The Wevons have secretly been moving for several months. To avoid suspicion, they have been forging their death certificates, which has resulted in a grossly inflated death rate. There are probably as many empty but marked Wevon graves as there are full but hidden graves.

The rumor about the Weebleden's escape launch is false. He does have a grav speeder on the roof of the building containing his office, which he uses for business purposes. It would certainly serve him should the need to escape arise.

Chakrampong will also be mounting psychological operations against Firstciv and Banjisar. These will include publication and mass distribution in Banjisar of "The Sudrian Book of Witchcraft," which will describe horrible (and entirely false) practices of the Wevons against enemies. Elements of these practices will begin to appear in Donbran within six months of the meeting. The PCs may be called upon to assist in transporting copies of the book to contacts in Donbran. In addition, senior Firstciv managers will receive



reminders of the extreme heat and humidity, poisonous animals crawling into the PCs' boots (or sleeping bags) during the night, mysterious fungal infections covering their bodies (or the insides of their armor), fevers, strange noises (and strange silences), etc. The Wevons, of course, know how to deal with most of these problems in low-tech ways that will seem quite strange to the PCs, but might be just as effective (or ineffective) as all the pesticides and antibiotics that the PCs are carrying. (E.g., burning herbs to keep away insectoids and kill fungi.) A good counterpoint to the paranoid jungle adventure aspects would be an occasional inkling of the impersonal, otherworldly beauty of the island.

falsified messages detailing various disasters happening to offworld family members, such as incurable diseases, disfiguring accidents, marital problems, etc.

Chief Prathtin and the other members of his family (except Chakrompong) will return to Sudrian Wevo, where they will remain in the western region as leaders of the community until the bulk of the Wevons have relocated, when they will fake an assassination implicating Firstciv, and disappear.

Development of personal animosities and friendships among the PCs and individual Wevons, Banjisari, and Firstciv staff, is left to the referee's discretion, as are maps and treatment of prisoners. Banjisari, Firstciv, or both, may not honor repatriation bonds.

The referee is encouraged to develop a "jungle" atmosphere in this adventure, including constant

5. NPC sketches (statistics per Megatraveller)

Chief Prathtin (and many other names and honorifics)

Leader of the Wevon people

558AAC (age 85, many terms, tribal leader)

Porang-3 (see below), Handgun-2, Brawling-4, Leader-6, Recruiting-3, Recon-1, Streetwise-2, Instruction-3, Linguistics-3 (fluent Wevon, some Banji, a little Galanglic), Agriculture-2, Wheeled vehicle-1, Hunting-2, Animal riding-2

Hereditary leader of the Wevon people, Prathtin is the twenty-third in his line. He is unusually sharp in

his mental faculties, and is in excellent physical condition for his age (although his multicolored hair is mostly white by now). He is a very tough and direct old man, not afraid of anything, and he detests Firstciv's manager, Webleden, whom he sees as spineless. His first priority is the protection of his immediate family, then the safety of the Wevon people, but he is willing and expecting to die in driving out Firstciv and Banjisar. He can be expected to provoke the Firstciv and Banjisari authorities, who will avoid arresting him out of fear of the uncontrolled political instability that would result.

The porang is an unusually curved blade weapon utilized by the Wevons for thousands of years. For game purposes, it is treated exactly as blade, except that, because it is of unusual design, a character unskilled in porang is treated as having (-1) to blade skill. Any Wevon NPC will have sufficient familiarity with the porang to avoid the negative DM.

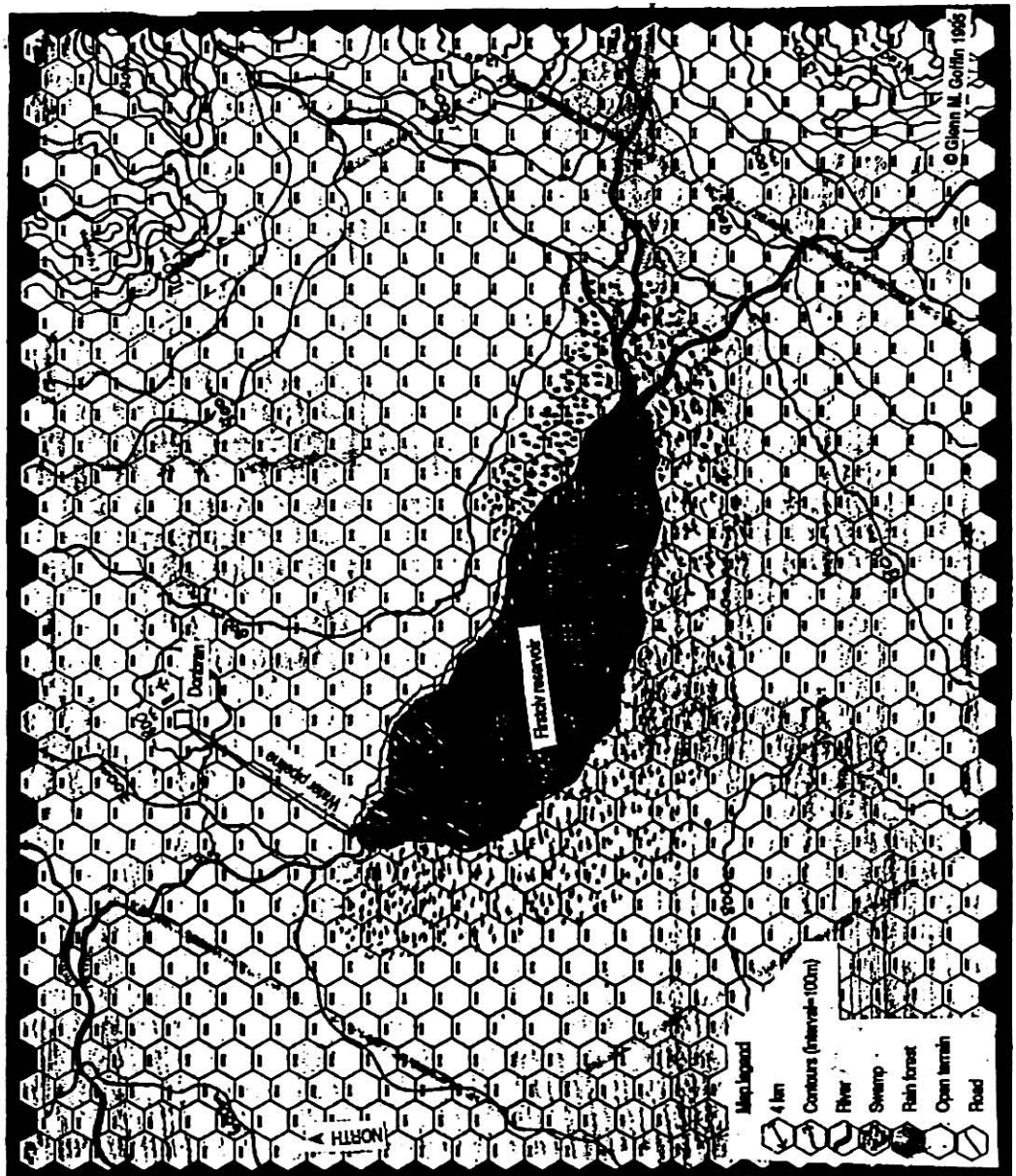
Chakrampom Porathir (and many other honorifics and names)

Granddaughter of Chief Prathtin

9BABDB (age 31, 3 terms, academic)

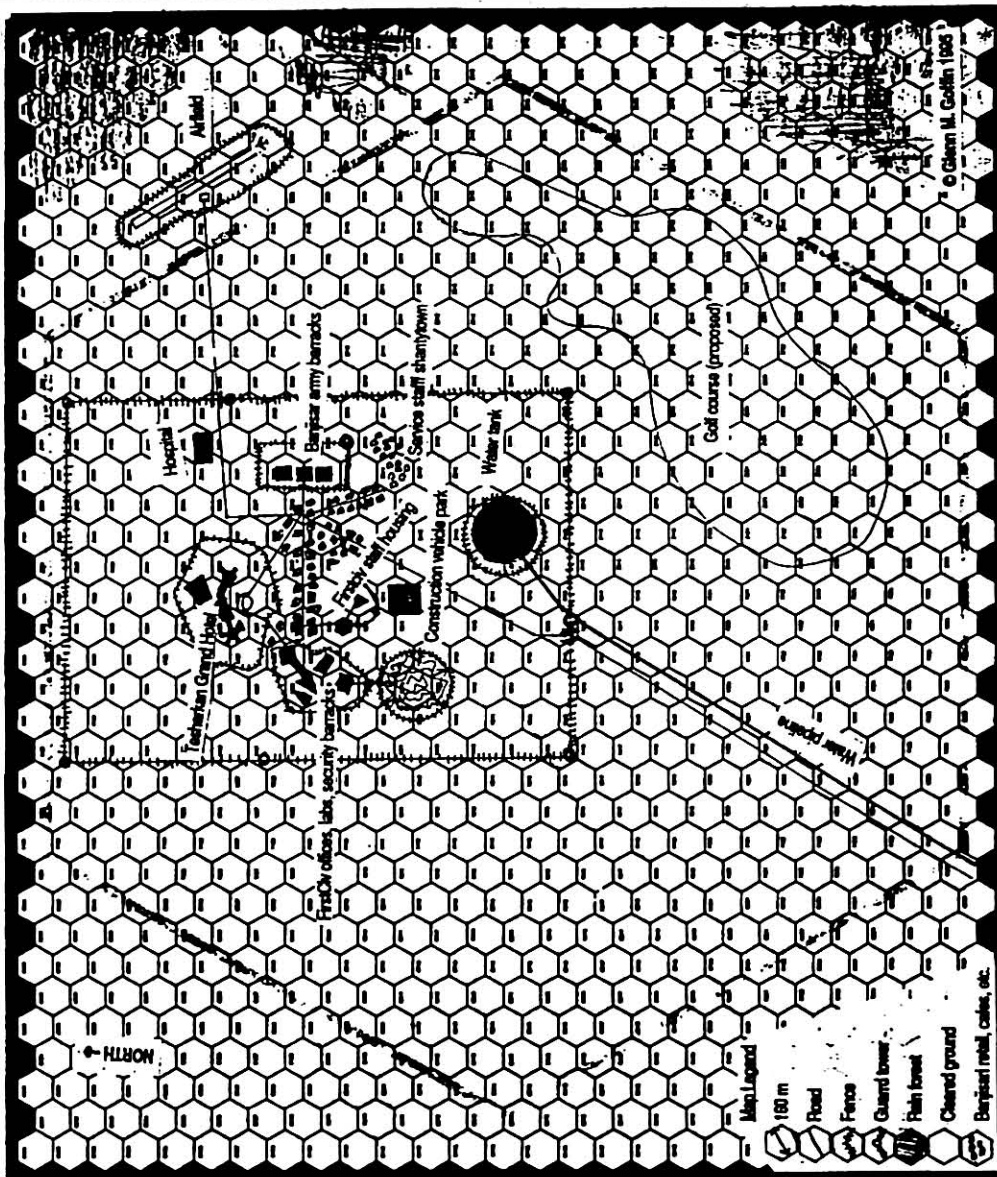
Linguistics-6 (fluent in Wevon, Banji, Galanglic; a little Gvegh), Ship's boat-2, Handgun-2, Melee combat-2, Porang-2, Interrogation-1, Admin-1, Liaison-1, Leader-1, Computer-1

Chakrampom is a professor of Wevon folklore and anthropology as well as the Wevons' foremost freedom fighter. She has been on sabbatical for the last year and a half; during that time, she has been training extensively with one of the subsector's better mercenary units. She is now prepared to do her part to



lead her people out of slavery. A cold, dedicated, warrior, Chakrompong encourages her reason to dominate the rest of her personality. She will not hesitate to do whatever she finds necessary for the mission to succeed. Chakrampom will insist on results, will castigate perceived cowardice, and will be very sparing with her praise -- she is, after all, her grandfather's granddaughter. Chakrampom is an attractive, tall, strong woman, with very short straight hair of at least six different colors. She will not receive any flirtation from the PCs in a positive way.

The PCs will see a lot of Chakrampom, and her character should be fully developed. Chakrampom is not in the line of succession to Chief; rather, Prathtin's eldest daughter, Bothchom, is the heir apparent. Bothchom is presently "studying offworld" at a well-protected SuSAG facility. Bothchom is the only overt link between the Wevons and SuSAG, and her studies there are entirely focussed on hygiene and disease prevention, not anagathics.



matters, and will probably be hassled by the security forces. The lawyers are citizens of their own world, and must accordingly go through customs at Banjisar Wevo. They are unlikely to interact much with the PCs, but any of Sir Ve's lawyer's going to Sudrian Wevo will have been briefed on the PCs' mission on a need-to-know basis.

Madeline Nebed

Hortalez & Cie
 representative
 988899 age 28
 (accountant, 2 terms)
 Accounting-2, Legal-1,
 Grav vehicle-2, Melee
 combat-1, Computer-2

The characters will probably not see much of Nebed, except when they collect their fees at the end of the mission. This is unfortunate, for Nebed knows all the details of the story. She is completely discreet, however, and will not be drawn into conversation. Whenever the PCs see her, she is dressed in the best junior

Sir Ve Oegfurrenz (counsel to Chief Prathtin)

6A89AB age 50 (lawyer, 8 terms)
 Legal-5, Admin-2, Interrogation-3, Recruiting-1,
 Leader-1, Infighting-1, Handgun-1, Bribery-1,
 Carousing-2, Fly fishing-2

Sir Ve is a big rainmaker at his firm, but does not do much legal work, leaving that to junior lawyers. Large for a Vargr, with a gray muzzle and white tufts above his eyes, Sir Ve looks very distinguished (as he is, having published several articles on obscure matters of interstellar tax and business law, and counting nobles and megacorporations among his clients). He is both a garrolous talker and an excellent listener, a combination that helps him draw others out and learn a great deal, while making them feel comfortable. He will likely interrupt the proceedings at his offices occasionally with a well-timed remark that will be either funny or will help focus the discussion -- or both. Sir Ve and/or one of his associates will probably visit Chief Prathtin from time to time to consult about legal

executive fashion.

Bernend Weebleden

Firstciv general manager, Sudrian Wevo operations
 668B98 (age 35, 4 terms, corporation)
 Admin-4, Recruiting-2, Accounting-2, Grav vehicle-
 2, Wheeled vehicle-1, Shotgun-1, Hunting-1

Chief Prathtin's characterization of Weebleden as spineless is perhaps a little too harsh. A competent and ambitious manager, Weebleden finds that his decision-making abilities are constrained by Firstciv regulations and the need to justify his actions to his superiors. Sudrian Wevo is an important, if unpleasant, post for Weebleden, because anyone wanting to become a senior executive at Firstciv must spend several successful years running one of Firstciv's development projects. Weebleden, like most Firstciv staff at Sudrian Wevo, has left his family behind on their homeworld. Weebleden is a medium sized man with a medium

complexion and wavy medium-length brown hair.

Chjegodar Heztiz

Banjisari Major commanding forces in Sudrian Wevo

999967 (age 38, 5 terms, Army)

MCUFx3, DSO

Leader-3, Recruiting-1, Recon-2, Tactics-4, Combat Rifle-4, Melee combat-2, Blade-2, Wheeled vehicle-2, Heavy weapons-1, Autoweapons-1

Heztiz may be taken as a model for the various Banjisari officers taking tours at Sudrian Wevo. The Army of Banjisari sees overseas duty as essential to advancement, and its best officers vie for the posting. The solution of rotating the officers has had negative impacts on troop morale, as each one seeks to put his or her imprint on the force there.

Odetto Jonnsonn

Head of Firstciv security

A78989 (age 40, 5 terms, Army)

Brawling-2, Interrogation-3, Tactics-2, Recon-1, Combat Rifle-2, Vacc Suit-2, Grav vehicles-1, Wheeled vehicles-1

Jonnsonn is a former lieutenant in the subsector duke's army intelligence branch. Any veterans of that army among the PCs will know of him as a psychopath cashiered from the service for torturing prisoners. A tall, strong man with deathly white skin and prematurely white hair, Jonnsonn is immediately recognizable among the Banjisari and Wevons. He is a paranoid megalomaniac who delights in cruelties simple and complex. Only his concern for his personal safety exceeds his attention to the security of the Firstciv compound. He will usually be on good terms with the Banjisari officers, who are unlikely to be shocked by anything he does, but he does not like Webleden (who dislikes and fears Jonnsonn).

Brethtin Merwonin

9789D8 (age 30, 3 terms, academic)

Linguistics-3 (Wevon, Banji, Galanglic), Tactics-1, Leader-3, Recruiting-4, Wheeled vehicle-1, Hunting-1, Porang-1, Recon-1, SMG-1

Merwonin received his Ph.D. in political science from one of the most prestigious universities in the subsector. Instead of selling out his wild-eyed radicalism and joining the academic establishment, however, he returned secretly to Sudrian Wevo and began organizing a rebel army. That was two years ago. During that time, he and Helwoin have turned a gang of misfits, thieves, and drug addicts into a decent fighting force. They have done so by getting rid of the thieves and drug addicts and recruiting more wild-eyed radicals. Although Helwoin is the brains of the

operation, Merwonin has the charisma and the dogma to keep the troops motivated.

Merwonin is tall and was overweight as a student. He wears his hair short, in the jungle fashion. He has a bombastic, domineering style in conversation -- basically, he won't stop talking until everyone agrees to do it his way.

Geshakong Helwoin

897DA5 (age 40, 5 terms, Imp Mar Force Cmdr)

Leader-1, Ship's Boat-1, Recon-1, Tactics-4, Interrogation-1, Battle dress-1, Combat Rifle-2, Handgun-1, Medical-1, Linguistics-4 (fluent in Wevon, Banji, Galanglic), Instruction-4, Porang-1, Cutlass-1

A hopeless romantic, Helwoin ran away from home to join the Imperial Marines when she was sixteen, filled with a fire to learn the skills that she would need to help throw off the yoke of Banjisari hegemony. She retired as a Force Commander in the Commandoes, having served throughout the sector. She finished her service as a commando school instructor. Two years ago, she returned to Sudrian Wevo, where she was promptly recruited by Merwonin. Although Helwoin is officially recorded as having died of pneumonia soon after her return, Firstciv and Banjisari believe that she is part of the rebel force, and still quietly keep a price on her head.

Shorter and darker than Merwonin, Helwoin has kept her Marine haircut -- and cutlass. She says little, even when teaching, but when she does speak, the other rebels listen.

Out of This Universe: Traveller Variant

by Clayton R. Bush

INTRODUCTION

Your players have just rolled a catastrophic misjump. They know you won't kill everyone and end the campaign. In this case, you do want to keep on gaming, but you don't want to get them off a hook they chose. What to do?

Well, they just left Imperial space. Literally. They're in a different universe. The worlds have been settled by victims of previous catastrophic misjumps. If your players can repair their ship enough to jump between systems, they can find representatives of all the starfaring races on different worlds.

All of the following assume that you can't go home again. At least, not exactly home.

LOCAL EMPIRE

The Local Empire is a good set up to start such a setting. The "Local Empire" government was set up by beings from Imperial space, so the forms follow old Imperial forms. The government is organized in "circles", and new arrivals only deal with the outermost "circle." The innermost circle, should they ever reach it, consists of Droyne who dominate all else because they've maintained tech level 30.

This static society impounds all new arrivals, because their influence would only create problems. The arrival of another misjumped ship evokes the response, "Dammit, we've got to get a working system of immigration control somehow! I suppose you want us to fix your ship?"

Some locals will finance repairing the jump drive, because they want to hire the ship. They will not reveal how to leave this universe until they have recompense for repairing the jump drive. (This also gives the referee time to decide how the players can leave and how they can find out what that method is.)

RESIDENTS: The new universe being smaller than the Imperial universe, all major races (Aslan, Vargr, etc.) are present. Forcibly settled on separate worlds, they form their own "circles".

NATIVE LIFE FORMS: Species "native" to the alternate space are also segregated from everything that came from "outside." Native sophonts may have developed jump drive, or may have just gotten it from previous arrivals: the players won't be told.

LOCAL FTL TRAVEL: One way to prove this is not the same universe is that jump drives work

differently here. Jumps that would fail catastrophically simply don't work: A ship remain where it was when the misjump started. (This makes it hard for PCs to simply leave!)

You can twiddle with other aspects of jump: even numbers only, but up to 10; yes/no on jump-0; and so on.

VARIANT TECHNOLOGY: Characters may not believe they are in another setting. Widespread use of technology unknown to their civilization can be one proof.

The Local Empire allows widespread cybernetics with humans dehumanized; such subjects are more easily controlled. Higher-tech circles use advanced biological sciences or seemingly-magical nannites.

PLANNED MISJUMP

Players may decide the simplest way to leave this universe is to just make another misjump. The players can't get back to their original universe that way, because there is no discussion of leaving this universe under "Misjump, Recovery" in their original starship manual. A misjump does not lead from this universe back to their original one.

A catastrophic failure (that does not kill them) does push them into another universe. If the GM and players are ready to get back to the planned campaign, it is an Imperial universe. Proceed to the closing section, "RETURN HOME." Otherwise, it is neither Imperial space or the space they just left. (The PCs are not off the hook yet.)

If they continue to misjump in this fashion, the new space is smaller than the former space. The field of play contracts with each misjump. Some levels are relatively uninhabited; others people stopped at and filled out (First Imperium universes! Aslan universes! and so on.) The ultimate goal of this progression would be a level with just one world/system.

Players may choose to stop at any level. That's what the ancestors of the level's inhabitants did.

STAYING?

The players may decide they want to stay in this universe. The referee is free to create reasons to leave, not previously revealed to the characters, that the locals have been holding back.

RECRUITERS: A world's minority ruling class

looks at the new arrivals as an increment of strength in suppressing the lower class of native races. Criminals know the characters have a ship but no friends to protect them. Intelligence agencies know the ship is not registered to any government and no family will complain if it fails to arrive after a contract mission.

YOUNG EMPIRES: A coalition of native races on the periphery want to conquer the static Imperial-space-derived government they players know. An underground sympathetic to the natives contacts the characters about running routes on the periphery and meeting enemy alien ships.

SECRET RULERS: The oldest residents are Droyne who live in numerous separate city states of one million Droyne each. Initially, they do not reveal their presence to the characters; they're tired of being asked about the Ancients civilization. All a normal Droyne wants is to be left alone anyway.

Once the group decides to stay, a sport contacts them about carrying cargo between Droyne settlements. The Droyne leaders care nothing about customs duties, quarantine rules, and laws about safe transport of hazardous materials. (And its not a Droyne ship or crew anyway.)

Once the players start carrying Droyne cargos, the oyntrip leaders will simply not understand any desire to stop servicing the Droyne trade. Or that all goods in the hold on arrival are not for the oyntrip.

DEPARTURE PLANNING

If the ship can misjump back to an Imperial space, there will be a record of people returning that would have worked its way back to this space through later misjumps. In other words, if a reliable departure method exists that comes back here, there will be a record.

So, smart characters will seek records from other arrivals of ships arriving in their universes from this one. The authorities or a corporation will reveal a recorded procedure for jumping to another universe for benefits rendered.

If there is no recorded way to jump here from another universe, the characters can still look up a mad scientist..., a physicist or jump researcher with a theory.

RETURN HOME

The players may find a way to get back home. Continuing problem: there is no record of anyone returning from a "misjump universe" to the official universe. Finding such a reference points out the likeliest possibility: this is a very similar parallel universe.

Because misjumping to parallel universes can distort your outlined campaign timeline, I recommend that changes from the original universe be personal penalties against the PCs. (Changes to outside entities such as governments, corporations can change your

timeline.) (Changes should be penalties because catastrophic misjumps are supposed to be bad for characters.)

Roll 1d6, and determine affected PC(s) randomly. If characters are repeating this catastrophic misjump adventure, roll 4, 9, 16, or more times.

1. One PC has a spouse. Roll 1D6-3 for number of children, then roll 1D6.

1.1 Spouse is loving, but poor.

1.2 Spouse is trying to reform character by auditing bar bills, etc., and expects to see receipts for all expenses.

1.3 Spouse is rich, and spouse's parents have title to players' ship.

1.4 The spouse acts loving, but is planning the PC's death. His/her lover is an accomplice.

1.5 Spouse is very religious, and tithes from PC's income.

1.6 PC is now descended from a communal marriage. The numerous in-laws are always dropping by with suggestions and can't-lose deals.

2. One PC now has a criminal record. There is a 50% chance he is a fugitive.

3. One PC did not exist in this universe. He/she has no family, friends, or valid ID.

4. The PCs did not exist in this universe. Authorities will be interested in how the characters gained control of the ship and what happened to the recorded crew. (Or the ship never existed.)

5. Starship ownership changes hands, either within the group, to the group from outside, or out from within the group.

6. The ship had been impressed into military service. The authorities assume it still has the instructions and equipment given to its parallel ship before the parallel ship misjumped. They provide mission orders which they expect the PCs to carry out.

Feel free to add or impose other results. And then your campaign can return to the direction it was heading before the detour. And players will not want to find out what a catastrophic misjump will do to them in this universe.

An Offer You Can't Refuse...

by Mark Urbin

From the Personal Log of Trader Garek Sung, Purser of the March Hare:

"Ah...", a smile comes to my lips as I breath in once more. Deeply through the nose. Yup, I recognize that smell. The sweet scent of opportunity. Regina Downport is ripe with it. The end of the War has presented a wide range of possible profit for a clever trader. It could be the mild buzz I picked up from the wine I nursed while listening to incoming troops unwinding for the last four hours is helping with my mode. Lot's of news abuzz. Besides the standard postwar rebuilding, a lot of SubSector and planetary governments are talking about beefing up their defenses. Several sources have talked about Imperial backed loans and grants for just such tasks. A clever mel, such as myself, could turn a handsome profit by obtaining the proper material and getting out to the borders. The materials isn't a problem. That fellow I spotted several sifters of Heyan Glow Brandy rattled off several downsizing Merc units. Then there is the usual Imperial military surplus sell off.

Perhaps I could call in some of my Naval contacts for an inside track on the auctions...No, perhaps it would be best not to call those in. I've finally got that woman out of my life. It would be best to avoid the risk of attracting her attention. I decided after sweating out too many Zho checkpoints that I am not really spy material. The worst part was keeping the unprintable sweating inside my skin. Had to keep that calm, cool, and collected look on the outside. It's one thing to do it over an honest biz deal. It's a different story when there's a half dozen Vargr Marines would just love to sweat anything and everything out of you at the twitch of their officer's tail.

Oh well, that's all thankfully behind me now. I'm free once more to just be an honest merchant in search of an honest profit. Now that I have some angles lined up, next item on the agenda is finding a ship to space out on. Pity old Captain Morn turned the ship over to that idiot son of his. Romy Morn wouldn't know a good deal if it came up and bit him on the ass. At least I had the satisfaction of turning in my resignation to his father before the twit and his fart sniffing toady could fire me. Little shit still pissed over his old man promoting me to First Officer over him. Just because I was the reason the ship turned a profit at each stop.

Oh well, not profit in worrying over him. He'll disappear in a mis-jump inside two years. He's too cheap for proper maintenance and only a fair ship's engineer. Couple that with his butt-kiss navigator, and they'll be space junk soon enough.

My semi-random stroll through the Downport has ended up in a retail center. No rush. I can take the time to admire the goods. Let's see...what Traders are currently docked and who could profit from my services. I've got a few KiloCredits tucked away. I might be able to buy into a Trader Captain down on his luck and pull him out of the hole. It's a risk, but the profits would be worth it.

"Hello Garek. Fancy meeting you here."

That voice! It belongs to HER! I freeze on the inside as my blood temperature drops a few degrees. Outside I don't twitch or bat an eyelash. I turn slowly. I wonder just what in the Nine Hells she'll look like this time.

She's a meter and half away. Tall, lean and wrapped in a Imperial Naval Officers Uniform. A quick glance shows that she's a Commander, in the Intelligence branch, and has an impressive set of fruit salad. The face is similar to other faces she has worn in the past. This one is free of scars and boasts a healthy tan. Burnished bronze comes to mind. The lips are currently set in a wry smile. They are at that nice halfway point between thin and full. The nose is a trifle large, but not wide. It shows no sign of having been broken (I saw that fight. She won, but her nose was broken for sure). The eyes are gunmetal gray and focused on me. Her hair is several shades darker than her tan and pulled back in a braid.

"Hello Kat." I keep my reply even, and my smile matches hers. I know this is her. The heartless bitch who recruited me and was my cold blooded contact during the war.

She smiles a bit more, "Call me Commander Thorn please. Kat's retired from the field. I just spotted an old friend and wanted to chat. Can I buy you a drink?"

I smile a bit more also. She's up to something. Has to be. "Sure, lead the way." What the Hell. She nearly got me killed a couple of dozen times. That's worth a few drinks. I quickly sort through the most expensive vintages currently available on Regina as she leads me toward a small bar.

My uneasiness grows as I notice that this place is well equipped with sound dampers and white noise

generators. I've conducted biz in places like this before. Bug Stompers at each table, robo-severs, dim lights. This is a place for conducting Biz, not for having a friendly drink. She quickly guides me to a corner booth and doesn't even blink a fornicating eyelash when I key in my order. She keys in something I know isn't on the menu. For what a case of that stuff fetches in this corner of the Imperium, I could buy a top of the line air-speeder. She bloody wells knows it and what's even worse she knows I know it.

Then it hits me, like a combat boot in the stomach. No, she can't be one of those Thorns. A family with that much money and clout doesn't send it's kids behind enemy lines.

"It's fortunate that I ran into you, Garek. I've got a favor to ask you." Oh no...here it comes, the pitch. Well I was stupid enough to buy into it before. Gods and the Imperium and all that Stronium plated crap. The war is over and I'm not buying that set of goods again.

The waitron arrives and saves me for a moment. When it floats away, she continues. "My big brother has bought himself a new toy. He figures to cash in on potential postwar profits, so he picked up a Far Trader. Personally I think he's bored, but I would hate to see him throw good money after bad. I would you like you to keep an eye on him. Help him with the Biz."

Biz? Profits? Ship? I mentally give my head a shake. Careful there. This just another pitch. "So you want me to make sure he can make his payments?"

Damn to the Seventh Level! She nearly laughed over that.

"Payments? You still have that sense of humor Garek. Markarious bought the ship out right. I told you there was profit involved. I wouldn't try to steer and old friend like you down an occupied warren."

I feel the gears in the back of your head kick in. Markarious'...'Thorn'...Think Man! You know that name. Outside I smile innocently and sip my drink (which would cost a dock worker three weeks pay). Inside, my heart drops down to pay my stomach a visit. Count Markarious Thorn of 'The Thorns'. Word in the Guild was he had spent the last four years touring the Marches and spending a lot of the family money. If he was her big brother...Money, when you gather enough of it, tends to attract more money. The Thorn fortune had hit critical mass several centuries ago.

"Really, do tell me more." The smile creeps a bit further up my face. His money, my talents, the possibilities...Inside ten years I would have enough Cred to set myself up with a small fleet of traders.

"His ship is the 'March Hare'. It's currently docked here at Downport. I've already spoken to him and his personal secretary. He'll be pleased to have you sign on." She actually winked at me. "I spoke of you in the most glowing terms."

"He's more of an executive than a trader, but at least he's bright enough to recognize that fact. Which is how I wiggled you into this job. Too bad about old Captain

Morn."

I wonder just what I did wrong in a previous life. That comment about Morn means she didn't run into me by accident and this isn't just Biz. She's still your never to be sufficiently damned Field Controller. She's being nice about it and she knows that I know that she doesn't have to be. Oh well, if I'm going to be forced back into Imperial servitude, I might as well make a profit over it.

"I'll look the situation over. If there is promise for profit, I'll keep an eye on him." She replies with that damn smile again. "Don't worry. Turning profit is one of the family commandments."

"And the others?"

The smile disappears as her eyes grow hard, "Patriotism and duty." The eyes lighten a bit as she slides a data crystal your way. "Here is the location of the March Hare's dock and the comm number for Sidney. He's the Count's personal Secretary." The damn smile returns, "You'll like Sidney."

She sets down her empty glass. "Thanks Garek. I'll stop by the ship before you space out."

Then she was gone. Just like before. She didn't really sneak out. She just distracted you and then walked away. Oh well, profit is profit. I'll give this Sidney a call, but first I'll call up the current peerage listing and do some studying.

Later that night, I finally admitted that even a bottle of wine that good wasn't going to provide any insight on just what that past life incident was. I set down the empty glass before I filled it again. I left the terminal screen on to provide enough light for me to stagger to bed. I didn't like what I had found. A bit of digging through the Imperial Peerage listings showed that I have been talking to Baroness Kyna Adelaide Thorn, sixth child of the Current Duke of Ebonrose. The Duke doesn't have a territory to rule over like most Dukes. He's just rich, powerful, and close the to Imperial family. As was his father, and his father, and still more fathers going way back.

Baroness Kyna really is a Commander in the Imperial Navy. I got the idea early on that nosing any deeper into her service record would be a bad idea.

Her big brother is Count Thorn XXIV, the Duke's third son. A retired Imperial Naval Commander with a brief, but distinguished career. He also had a short, yet successful career as a member of the Imperial Diplomatic Corps. His posting was to the Darrian Confederation. He is currently tending to family interests scattered across the Spinward Marches.

"Sidney" is a Bwap. I didn't even have to buy a Downport employee a drink for that. Overheard two of them talking about him before I made it back to my rented quarters. "Every 't' crossed, every 'i' dotted." He apparently fits the old saying, "swims through red tape like a Bwap" perfectly.

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<u>Title</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Cond</u>	<u>Stock No.</u>	<u>System</u>
101 Vehicles	8.00	DGP	5	871	Traveller - Mega
Adjutant #01	5.00	Adjutant	5	ADJ9001	Traveller - Classic
Adjutant #10	5.00	Adjutant	5	ADJ9010	Traveller - Classic
Adventure 04: Leviathan	7.00	GDW	5	316	Traveller - Classic
Adventure 10: Safari Ship	8.00	GDW	n	GDW338	Traveller - Classic
Adventure 11: Murder on Ac	8.00	GDW	n	GDW339	Traveller - Classic
Alien Module 1: Aslan	15.00	GDW	5	GDW254	Traveller - Classic
Aliens Archive	17.25	Imp Games	n	IPG1300S	Traveller - T4
Aliens of the Rim Vol 1	14.00	GDW	n	GDW0318	Traveller - TNE
Amycus Probe	8.00	Judges Guild	5	710	Traveller - Classic
Arrival Vengeance	8.00	GDW	n	GDW0225	Traveller - Mega
Assignment: Vigilante	4.00	GDW	5	GDW0223	Traveller - Mega
Astrogator's Guide to Diaspo	6.00	GDW	n	GDW0224	Traveller - Mega
Battle Rider	30.00	GDW	5	GDW0308	Traveller - TNE
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Best of the Journal TAS #3	6.00	GDW	5	GDW335	Traveller - Classic
Best of the Journal TAS #4	6.00	GDW	5	GDW342	Traveller - Classic
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Book 2: Starships	4.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Book 3: Worlds and Advent	4.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Book 4: Mercenary	3.00	GDW	5	GDW304	Traveller - Classic
Book 5: High Guard	5.00	GDW	5	GDW308	Traveller - Classic
Brilliant Lances	30.00	GDW	n	GDW0303	Traveller - TNE
Central Supply Catalog	15.00	Imp Games	n	IG1200	Traveller - T4
Corsairs of the Turku Waste	8.00	Judges Guild	5	JG880	Traveller - Classic
Crucis Margin	8.00	Judges Guild	5	JG590	Traveller - Classic
Disappearance on Aramat	15.00	Grenadier	4	704	Traveller - Classic
Doom of the Singing Star	15.00	Judges Guild	5	500	Traveller - Classic
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Double Adventure 2: Across	7.00	GDW	5	GDW313	Traveller - Classic
Double Adventure 3: Argon	6.00	GDW	5	GDW321	Traveller - Classic
Double Adventure 4: Maroo	6.00	GDW	5	GDW323	Traveller - Classic
Double Adventure 6: Divine	8.00	GDW	n	GDW331	Traveller - Classic
Drak'ne Station	4.00	Judges Guild	5	105	Traveller - Classic
Fighting Ships of the Shattere	10.00	GDW	n	GDW0218	Traveller - Mega
Fire, Fusion, & Steel	25.00	GDW	5	GDW0304	Traveller - TNE
Glimmerdrift Reaches	6.00	Judges Guild	5	490	Traveller - Classic
Imperial Encyclopedia	8.00	GDW	5	GDW213	Traveller - Mega
Imperium	16.80	GDW	n	GDW0205	Traveller - Boardgame
Imperium - First Printing	30.00	GDW	n		Traveller - Boardgame
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Journal of the TAS #11	8.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Journal of the TAS #13	5.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Journal of the TAS #15	7.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Journal of the TAS #16	5.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Journal of the TAS #17	5.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Journal of the TAS #18	7.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Known Space Map	10.00	GDW	5		Traveller - Classic
Maranatha-Alkahest Sector	8.00	Judges Guild	5	JG760	Traveller - Classic
MegaTraveller Boxed Set	15.00	GDW	5	GDW210	Traveller - Mega
Navigator's Starcharts	6.00	Judges Guild	5	520	Traveller - Classic
Ordeal by Eshaar	10.00	FASA	4		Traveller - Classic

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Players' Manual	5.00	GDW	5	GDW0211	Traveller - Mega
Rebellion Sourcebook	10.00	GDW	4	GDW0214	Traveller - Mega
Referee's Companion	10.00	GDW	n	GDW0215	Traveller - Mega
Referee's Manual	10.00	GDW	4	212	Traveller - Mega
Reformation Coalition Equip	20.00	GDW	5	GDW0310	Traveller - TNE
Salvage Mission	5.00	Marischal Adv	5		Traveller - Classic
Smash & Grab	14.00	GDW	n	GDW0305	Traveller - TNE
Snapshot	12.00	GDW	5	GDW0602	Traveller - Classic
Snapshot Rules Booklet	6.00	GDW	4		Traveller - Classic
Star Vikings	13.00	GDW	n	GDW0315	Traveller - TNE
Starships	12.00	Imp Games	n	IG1100S	Traveller - T4
Supplement 01: 1001 Charact	6.00	GDW	5	GDW303	Traveller - Classic
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Traveller 4th Ed Hard Signed	40.00	Imp Games	n		Traveller - T4
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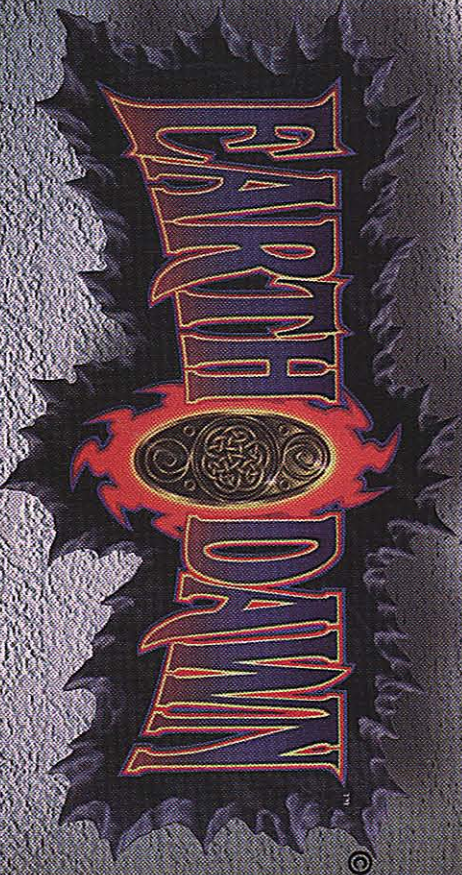
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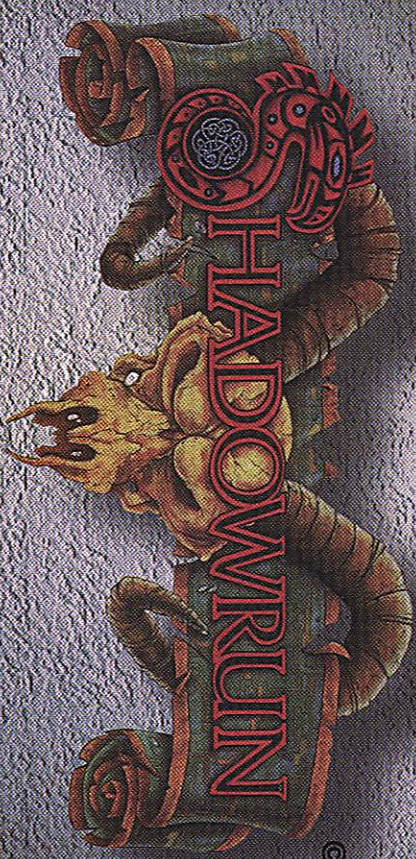
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