

The background is a dark space filled with numerous small blue stars. A prominent red nebula or comet tail is visible on the left side, extending towards the center. Several bright stars with lens flare effects are scattered across the scene.

STARSHIP TYCHE

"The Tunguskium Gambit"
Season 1

THE TUNGUSKIUM GAMBIT

Designed and Written by Berin Kinsman

Thanks to Leonard Balsera, Tim Dyke, Fred Hicks, Byron Kerr, Robin D. Laws, C.W. Marshall, Brad Murray, Steffan O'Sullivan, Mike Olsen, Amanda Valentine, and Clark Valentine for the foundational system designs that make this work possible.

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The Tunguskium Gambit

Episode 2

"Lying is not only saying what isn't true. It is also, in fact especially, saying more than is true and, in the case of the human heart, saying more than one feels. We all do it, every day, to make life simpler." - Albert Camus

Players and Crew Members

This episode assumes that you are using the Tyche and her crew, as provided in the *Starship Tyche RPG* core rulebook, but that's not required for play. You can use any ship or any player characters, substituting them for the named characters mentioned, inserting equivalent characters based on their high concept and other aspects. The gamemaster should further make any tweaks necessary to the story to make it fit with the troubles and other aspects of original characters created by your players so that this story becomes truly unique to your series.

Gamemasters and Continuity

This episode is the second episode in the *Starship Tyche* series. If you've played other published episodes, or created your own, that's okay. These episodes were written so that they can be played as stand-alone adventures and in any order. When played together there are some arcs and bits continuity that will be revealed, but that's more of a bonus. You won't be missing anything important if you're not playing that way. Read over the story synopsis, and make whatever adjustments you need to fit this adventure into your own series continuity.

Story Synopsis

The crew encounters a powerful alien ship whose master sets out to test them, but they may need to destroy the Tyche in order to protect the Coalition!

Act 1: First Contact

On the way from Gombe-IV (see Episode 1, "Be Not Afraid") and back into Coalition space, the computer detects unusual gravitational activity. This sounds an alert on the bridge science console. An Average (+1) result on an appropriate check will reveal that it is coming from approximately one light-day away. A Fair (+2) result will reveal that it is in fact moving on an intercept course with the Tyche. A Good (+3) result will reveal that there are a total of 4 objects, 3 much smaller spheres about the size of the Tyche preceding a vastly larger sphere the size of a small moon, 900 kilometers in diameter.

Pulling the object up on screen reveals the smaller objects to be glowing, multi-colored spherical probes. The larger object is a ship of unknown origin and design, gold in color and segmented with many plates and protrusions. None of the objects will respond to hails. An appropriate check with a Mediocre (+0) result will reveal that the probes are unmanned. It takes a Great (+4) check to determine that the larger vessel only contains one life form, partially because its propulsion system interferes with sensors, partially because finding the a single life sign in a ship that size is like detecting a needle in a haystack. A Good (+3) scan of the alien objects, cross-referenced with the ship's computer banks, will show that they bear hallmarks of Zookeeper technology found on various worlds by other Fleet expeditions.

The probes will move directly in front of the Tyche. The helm officer will need to make adjustments to prevent crashing into them. These are opposed rolls, with the gamemaster using the statistics for the probe provided at the end of this adventure. If the Tyche helm officer wins, they avoid the probes; if the gamemaster wins the Tyche crashes into one of the probe and takes damage based on the shifts between the rolls.

If attempts are made to turn or back up in order to get around the probes, they will move to block the Tyche. The larger ship can be seen on the view screen getting larger as it comes closer. When it gets close enough that it looks like the Tyche is in orbit around a planet, tractor beams will engage. This is an opposed roll, with the helm rolling against the gamemaster; the gamemaster gets a +7 to the roll. No damage is done to the Tyche, but any attempts to move the ship are opposed rolls against the +7 tractor beams.

At this point, the gamemaster can cut away to a scene featuring a subplot based on a player character's trouble. This is left open for the gamemaster to develop, but is assumed to be happening in a location other than on the bridge. Once the ship is trapped and any subplot scene has been played out, this act come to an end.

Issues

- *Investigate the alien objects*
- *Avoid getting penned in*
- *Other subplot issues suggested by player character Trouble aspects.*

Zones and Aspects

- **The bridge of Starship Tyche:** *encountering the alien objects*
- **Character subplot location:** *subplot trouble aspect*

Stress and Consequences

At the end of this act players can clear all stress their characters may have taken. If any characters have taken mild consequences those can be cleared at well, provided the characters have had the opportunity to rest and receive necessary medical assistance.



Act 2: Encounter with Ayori

The probes retreat and go back inside the alien ship once the tractor beams are locked. Attempts to hail the alien vessel continue to go unanswered. What is known is that the ship is likely a Zookeeper vessel, and that the Tyche cannot move.

The sheer size of the alien ship makes it not unreasonable to assume it could be some sort of ark used by relatively benign Transplanters or Gatherers. It could be on its way to capture subjects to study or relocate to another world. There is also the possibility that the ship could be some sort of arena, meaning it could belong to the more malevolent Zookeepers known as the Harvesters. The players should be allowed to speculate and psych themselves out for a while, as the gamemaster only confirms that it is Zookeeper technology, and there is only one life form detected aboard.

The alien ship will scan the Tyche and access its computers, setting off the alert klaxon. Crew members who make a computer check with a Fair (+1) result can tell that it is looking at history files. Attempts to stop the invasion of the computer banks are a contest, requiring 3 successes over 5 turns. The gamemaster can use the statistics for the alien captain found at the end of the adventure. By the end of the 5th turn, the alien scan stops presumably because it has found what it was looking for.

The Tyche is then hailed by the alien ship. A hazy image of an infant appears on the screen, humanoid, with purplish skin and the crackle of electricity racing in streaks across its skin. In a booming, echoing voice the alien announces that he is Ayori, master of the Starship Zhavi. His mouth does not move, indicating that he is communicating telepathically. All of the characters hear the voice in their own native language. He declares that he has investigated the primitives aboard their feeble ship, and found

them to be disgusting, warlike animals. Because they are so inferior and savage, they will be given a period of time to make peace with whatever gods they worship, after which they will be destroyed.

To add to the suspense, if the gamemaster has access to a timer with an alarm it should be set for 10 minutes. The players have that much time to formulate a plan. The gamemaster should also remind the command crew – the captain, first officer, and chief engineer – of the Tunguskium Protocol they were briefed on, specifically for this sort of situation.

The next scene in any subplot can be inserted here, with player characters dealing with trouble aspects and personal issues.

As soon as Ayori issues the ultimatum and the countdown to destruction begins, this act is over.

Issues

- *Captured by an alien force*
- *Judged and found wanting and sentenced to destruction*
- *Other issues suggested by player character Trouble aspects.*

Zones and Aspects

- **The bridge of Starship Tyche:** *dealing with a crippled ship*
- **Character subplot location:** *subplot trouble aspect*

Stress and Consequences

At the end of this act players can clear all stress their characters may have taken. If any characters have taken mild consequences those can be cleared as well, provided the characters have had the opportunity to rest and receive necessary medical assistance.



Act 3: The Tunguskium Gambit

When Fleet officers achieve upper command rank, they are given self-destruct codes for their ship. For security reasons, this information is not contained in the computer data banks. Should a Fleet starship and its crew fall into enemy hands and therefore present a threat to the Coalition, or should an enemy of superior power present a clear and immediate danger to the Coalition, the Tunguskium Protocol should be initiated. This constitutes activating both the fore and aft Alcubierre drives out of sync, causing stored up energy to be released; the resultant explosion is certainly enough to destroy everything within a light day – the average solar system – and may in fact create a black hole. Miguel Alcubierre himself postulated this possibility when he first theorized the warp drive back in 1994. It's so terrifying a prospect that it's never been done, and never been tested.

The crew has a precious few minutes to decide whether this constitutes that sort of situation. The alien has scanned and theoretically absorbed the entirety of the ship's computer banks, including all sorts of strategic information about Fleet capabilities and Coalition defenses. If this Ayori really is a Zookeeper, he might seek to capture and enslave entire worlds, starting with nearby mining colonies.

They have the option to use the weapon, to bluff, or to find some other solution.

At the end of the allotted time period, the image of the infant-like Ayori will appear on the view screen. He advises that their deaths will be quick and painless, and that they should not be afraid. He is showing mercy to both them and the rest of the universe by preventing them from spreading their violence and hatred beyond their small collection of worlds. The crew members will have the opportunity to interact with him, and try to talk him out of destroying them.

If the players make suitably impressive arguments about missions of peace, overcoming their warlike nature, the hypocrisy of destroying them as destroyers, or even threaten to use or actually implement the Tunguskium Protocol, Ayori will laugh and release the ship. If the Protocol was underway, it will suddenly shut down and stabilize.

Issues

- *Review all of the options, including the Tunguskium Protocol*
- *Create a plan to deal with Ayori*
- *Other issues suggested by player character Trouble aspects.*

Zones and Aspects

- **The bridge of Starship Tyche:** *making tough decisions*
- **Character subplot location:** *subplot trouble aspect*

Stress and Consequences

At the end of this act players can clear all stress their characters may have taken. If any characters have taken mild consequences those can be cleared as well, provided the characters have had the opportunity to rest and receive necessary medical assistance.

Act 4: Welcome to the Zhavi

Ayori announces that he has only been testing the crew members, and he has found them... *interesting*. He apologizes for his extreme measures, but in his experience you cannot be too careful. Many of the species who take to the stars still carry primitive and warlike traits with them. He finds it admirable that the peoples of the Coalition wish to rise above their baser natures. Even if they were willing to destroy themselves to stop him, he finds it noble and encouraging that they would sacrifice themselves in order to save others of their kind.

He announces that he will open a docking bay on his ship, and that the Tyche may send a shuttle over to visit with him. Ayori laughs and suggests that they should bring an appetite and be prepared to stay for dinner. His shields and the nature of the technology that moves a ship of that size interfere with the Fold, so they should not attempt to use it. It is up to the crew to determine who will go over on the away team.

Once aboard the Zhavi, they will be greeted by a tall man with purplish skin, wearing a purple-gray robe. This is the real Ayori. He apologizes again for the deception, but he has found that a telepathic infant is far more intimidating than a mere man. His race is near the end of their days, and he is near the end of his. He has been a Transplanter, collecting species from dying or endangered worlds and moving them to safety on other viable worlds. His



mission has been to preserve life. He presents them with a vegetarian banquet, telling them that these are his favorite foods in all the galaxy, and hopes that they enjoy them as much as he does.

After the banquet, he informs the crew that they must go, and he must also. The directives of his people prevent interference. As they have spread into space and claimed this sector now, he must take his lonely mission elsewhere and leave stewardship of this portion of space to the Coalition and its fleet.

Issues

- *Meet the real Ayori*
- *Other issues suggested by player character Trouble aspects.*

Zones and Aspects

- **The deck of the Zhavi:** *meet the real Ayori*
- **The banquet hall of the Zhavi:** *I hope you relish the food as much as I*
- **Character subplot location:** *subplot trouble aspect*

Epilogue

If you're using this adventure in conjunction with the Starship Tyche Season 1 series/campaign, the ship will receive a distress signal from the direction of those nearby mining colonies mentioned earlier. A merchant ship is being attacked by pirates, and in need of rescue! This is the teaser for the next episode, "A Joy Forever."

If you're not using the Season 1 campaign, the ship can head off toward whatever adventure you have planned next with no real loose ends. Ayori is available to return as a supporting character in future stories, but bear in mind that he and his ship are incredibly powerful and can easily throw your game off course.

The knowledge that there is at least one Transplanter out there, even if he has moved on to other regions of space away from the Coalition and presumably out of the reach of the Fleet, can have many ramifications. Some might seek to find him, or bring him back, in order to ask him questions. Certain factions will want his advanced technology, to be used for their own gain. If signs of other Transplanter activity are found in the future, it might be a nice callback to find evidence that Ayori was the one responsible for saving a race at some time in the distance past.

Stress and Consequences

At the end of this act players can clear all stress their characters may have taken. If any characters have taken mild consequences those can be cleared as well, provided the characters have had the opportunity to rest and receive necessary medical assistance.

Because this episode was designed to be played out in a single game session, moderate consequences can be cleared. Unless the gamemaster has other plans, it is assumed that the characters will have the opportunity to rest and receive necessary medical assistance prior to the start of the next episode.

If a character has a severe consequence, the player can choose to resolve it using the end-of-scenario milestone (see below).

Milestones

The end of the scenario represents a significant milestone. In addition to the benefit of a minor milestone, player characters also gain both of the following rewards. If a character has a severe consequence that's been around for at least two sessions, it can be cleared now. The player can also raise the bonus of one of the character's approaches by one.

Supporting Characters

There is one main supporting character in this adventure, Ayori the Transplanter. Other characters may be added by the gamemaster as needed to play out any subplots based on character troubles.

Ayori the Transplanter

Ayori is a member of the Zookeeper faction known as Transplanters. Aside from his purple skin he appears to be human. To frighten new races that he encounters he projects a recorded image of an infant, to exaggerate the level of his psionic abilities. He is in truth a gentle man, dedicated to preserving life and saving plants, animals, and sentient beings not technologically advanced to save themselves from extinctions.

Aspects

High Concept: *Captain of the Starship Zhavi (Zookeeper: Transplanter)*

Trouble: *fearful of violent and hateful aliens*

Other Aspects: *keeper of secrets, master of technology, witness to history*

Approaches

Careful: Fair (+2)

Clever: Good (+3)

Flashy: Average (+1)

Forceful: Average (+1)

Quick: Mediocre (+0)

Sneaky: Fair (+2)

Stunts

Telepathic: Because I am telepathic, I gain a +2 when I carefully probe and read minds.

Computer controller: Because I am a computer controller, I gain a +2 when I sneakily enter and take control of computer systems.

Evolutionary biologist: Because I am an evolutionary biologist, I gain a +2 when I cleverly create environments for diverse life forms.

Stress

○○○

Refresh: 3

Consequences:

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

Starships

There are two new ships introduced in this episode, the Probes and the Starship Zhavi.

Probes

The probes are unmanned drones roughly the size of the Tyche. They are perfect spheres, and the sensors that cover their skin cause them to glow in a pulsating array of rainbow colors. Their purpose is to scan and collect information on life forms that the encounter, and transmit that information back to the Zhavi for analysis. Probes have no weapons, not even tractor beams.

Because they are fully automated and have no crew, follow the rules for extras. If a roll is needed for a probe to do something and it seems related to its function, allow a +2 bonus. If it is unrelated to its function, allow no bonus or add a -2 penalty to the roll.

CR: 2

Function: *automated data collectors*

Aspects

Advanced Sensor Package: Because the ship has advanced sensors, it gains a +2 on Overcome rolls to learn basic information about life forms.

Maneuverable: Because the ship is maneuverable, the probe gains a +2 on Defend dice rolls for evasive maneuvers.

Stress



Refresh: 3

Consequences

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

Starship Zhavi

The Zhavi is a sphere 900 kilometers in diameter. Its source of propulsion is unknown, but it is capable of warp speeds and has demonstrated that it is more maneuverable than any starship known to the Fleet. It has no weapons other than the tractor beams. It is designed to be operated by one person, and the majority of its functions are automated.

The ratings listed below seem to contradict the numbers provided in the adventure. The explanation is that the increased numbers reflect Ayori's advanced knowledge of the ship, having operated her centuries or even millennia.

CR: 3

Function: *space arc*

Aspects

Advanced Tractor Beams: Because the ship has advanced tractor beams, the character at the helm console gains a +2 on Attack rolls to hold an object in place.

Maneuverable: Because the ship is maneuverable, the character at the helm console gains a +2 on Defend dice rolls for evasive maneuvers.

Reinforced Hull: Because the ship has a reinforced hull, it gets an extra Stress circle.

Stress

○○○○○ **Refresh:** 1

Consequences

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

Starship Tyche Adventures

The Starship Tyche television series ran for six seasons and produced a total of 79 episodes. Now you can play out those adventures for the Starship Tyche roleplaying game!

Available from DriveThruRPG!

Be Not Afraid

When the Starship Tyche encounters a strange energy field that causes a crewman to suddenly develop psionic powers, the crew must find a way to escape, or else the ship will be destroyed!

The Tunguskium Gambit

The crew encounters a powerful alien ship whose master sets out to test them, but they may need to destroy the Tyche to protect the Coalition!

A Joy Forever

The Tyche rescues a ship full of beautiful women betrothed to inhabitants of a mining colony, but they harbor a dark secret!

Naked Villainy

A mishap with the fold pulls in crew members from an alternate dimension, and the evil doubles may destroy the Tyche!

The Rule of Extinction

The crew of the Tyche must find a way to stop a shapeshifting alien vampire before it kills again.

Invisible Spirit

The Tyche's crew becomes infected with an alien substance that destroys inhibitions and causes them to act out their greatest dreams and fears.

As Morning Shows the Day

The Tyche rescues a young man who has been stranded alone on an uninhabited planet, but is he really what he seems?

The Schemer Falls

The Tyche and a mysterious T'Leng ship play a game of cat-and-mouse along the No Man's Land between the Coalition and the Empire.

Taste of Death

A scientist doing research into artificial intelligence on an isolated planet has his own plans for the Starship Tyche and her crew.

The Tameless of a Wolf

The Tyche performs a routine stop at a Coalition penal colony, and discovers the governor has implemented some drastic policy changes.

Let Virtue Be As Wax

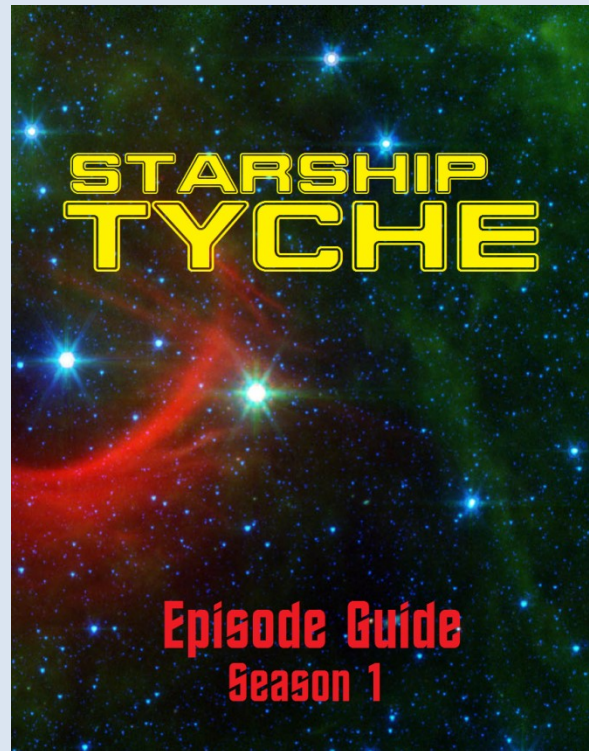
While investigating a seemingly dead planet, members of the Tyche's crew become infected with a disease that causes rapid aging.

The Serpent's Egg

A member of the Tyche's crew believes the head of a traveling theater company to be a fugitive wanted for mass murder.

The Starless Midnight

Members of the Tyche's crew are marooned on a planet with hostile natives, but the bigger threat may be one of their own.



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