# THE HAND OF ANTAR

## *A Scenario For STAR LEGION™: The Game of the Space Opera*

## *By Mark Bruno*

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**THE PREMISE:** Your characters are crew members aboard a merchant freighter transporting goods and passengers along the Balis sector's most infamous trade route – the Terman Corridor. After many years of working as independent contractors your crew is contacted by the notorious free merchant, Fen Riis. His job is simple – transport a few crates of android brain matrices to a drop-off point along the Corridor at the Terman Station spaceport. It pays 10,000 credits. In addition, Fen will supply the crew with a data file containing the navigational coordinates and docking clearance codes.

**THE SETUP:** Individual crewmembers should be trained in Piloting, Bargaining, General and Technical knowledge. Character types best suited for this scenario are soldiers, pilots, merchants, engineers, medical personnel, and possibly even criminal types (i.e. smugglers). Unbeknownst to the PCs (and consequently Fen Riis) the data file has been corrupted with a virus planted there by a pirate band calling themselves the Hand of Antar. The virus has been randomly inserted in the PCs ship's computer in an effort to disrupt Riis' shipping operations. The PCs just happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

**FIRST CONTACT:** The PCs should be given an opportunity to engage in some recreational activity at the start of the game. Perhaps they need a bit of down-time and excitement after a slew of boring trade runs transporting mundane goods like foodstuffs or clothing to backwater systems. While relaxing in a starport lounge or casino the PCs are approached by an employee of Riis inquiring about a term of employment. Try to get the players interested by stressing that business is slow (the money just isn't coming in quick enough) and that Mesto Respite, the crime lord responsible for loaning them the credits to purchase their freighter, is very displeased with his sparse returns. Coincidentally, those 10,000 credits will come in handy!

**THE MEETING:** When the PCs accept the job they are instructed to travel to Riis' homeworld – New Pale in the Grumman star system. Once there, Riis introduces himself and outlines the terms of the contract. He provides them with the data file and agrees to pay the PCs 1/4 of the credits up-front to cover initial operating costs. With a good Bargain skill roll, Riis might be persuaded to raise that amount to half. While playing Riis underscore a sense of flamboyance and presumptuousness. The free merchant is a corpulent, bloated individual with rolls and rolls of fat oozing off his large frame. He covers up his obesity with flowing, opulent robes and adorns his fat fingers with gem studded rings. Riis is a shrewd businessman without scruples, but he NEVER renegs on a business contract.

**DEPARTURE:** After meeting with Riis the PCs ship is loaded with the crates and they are sent on their way utilizing the data file as a guide. Emphasis the monotony of starship travel during the long journey, but occasionally have the ship experience minor system glitches along the way (this is a used freighter, after all). Things like shield power fluctuations, a blown power coupling or minor sublight drive malfunction can be used to keep the PCs on their toes without rousing suspicion. Once they are comfortable with being able to repair anything that comes their way hit them big time.

**HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM:** Suddenly, the freighter is dropped out of FTL speed into Realspace nearly colliding with a civilian pleasure cruiser. Then, without warning, the PCs' ship's computer takes control of the vessel, powers up the blaster cannons, and opens fire on the hapless cruiser! For a bit of added suspense, have the crew make numerous Pilot and Technical Knowledge skill rolls with a +1 or +2 modifier, initially, as they try to gain control of their vessel. The key here is to prevent the PCs from gaining control of their ship before it completely obliterates the cruiser.

**FROM BAD TO WORSE:** Just before the cruiser explodes its crew manages to broadcast a distress signal that is picked up by sector patrol. Two wings of Star Rangers are dispatched to investigate and (hopefully) arrest the alleged shipjackers. After a brief but harried dogfight, allow the PCs to escape so they can gather their bearings and proceed to investigate what happened. Don't worry, the Star Rangers won't give up the search for them just yet. Make the player's sweat it out a bit. The PCs' investigation should lead them to conclude that the ship's computer was beset by a virus inserted from an outside source, most likely from the data file.

**THE ACCUSED:** Most likely the PCs will place the blame upon Riis and would probably want to contact him as soon as possible. Make this a difficult thing to do. Riis is very influential on his homeworld and although he doesn't appear threatening, those who know him well know otherwise. Riis has many loyal employees who will stop at nothing to prevent the PCs from getting to the free merchant. Perhaps the only way to get to Riis would be to sneak into his company headquarters located in the commercial district of the planet's capital city. Regardless of how they accomplish this Riis is NOT the culprit, and while he does not suspect anyone in particular he does put them in contact with the computer specialist who programmed the datafile.

**PAPER TRAIL:** After numerous false leads and dead-ends the PCs finally track down the computer specialist, Jared Seele. During the meeting Seele is gunned down by a hidden assailant just as he tells the PCs they need to acquire a decryption code to get rid of the virus. Spotting the assassin as he makes his get away the PCs engage in a thrilling chase scene either on foot or grav-sleds. This is also a good time to have the Star Rangers enter the chase (the idea here is that they followed up on leads directing them to the PCs' destination). They key is for the players to evade capture by the Star Rangers while simultaneously chasing the assassin! If the assassin is captured (and possibly threatened within an inch of his life) he gives up the location of the Hand of Antar (his employer) claiming they are the ones responsible for the virus.

**AGAINST THE HAND:** Armed with the location of the pirate base, a remote outpost on the jungle world of Altair 7, the PCs' final objective is to infiltrate the base. Fighting pirates (STURDINESS 2/Shooting 1) along the way they must locate the decryption code needed to purge the virus, and in the process, defeat the pirate leader (Kengel Antar: STURDINESS 3/Shooting 3), thus disbanding the Hand of Antar forever, and clearing their names.