

# ***STAR TREK***<sup>TM</sup> **ADVENTURES**

## ***TUG OF WAR***

***BY AARON POLLYEA***

***A LIVING CAMPAIGN MISSION FOR 2371***

## INTRODUCTION

Tug of War is a mission for the *Star Trek Adventures* Living Campaign series. This mission is meant to be played by a Gamemaster (GM) and 3-6 Players and has been designed to be used by a starship and its crew in 2371.

To run this mission, the Gamemaster needs to be familiar with the mission itself and the *Star Trek Adventures* rules.

For this mission, you will need:

- At least two 20-sided dice (d20) per Player, and several 6-sided dice (d6) to serve as Challenge Dice
- A set of chips or tokens for Momentum
- A set of chips or tokens for Threat
- Characters and a starship. Pre-generated characters can be found at [www.modiphius.com/star-trek](http://www.modiphius.com/star-trek)

## SYNOPSIS

The Player vessel has been on an extended stellar and planetary survey mission on a remote part of the Shackleton Expanse near Sigma Librae and the Romulan Star Empire. An interesting planetary system has appeared on long range sensors, and on closer inspection it contains two Class-M planets that orbit each other and show signs of a sublight spacefaring civilization that has recently destroyed itself. After surveying the system, the Player vessel attempts to break orbit, but tractor beams from both worlds lock onto the ship. The sheer power of these beams begins crushing the ship's hull, nearly destroying the ship before the crew can reinforce the structural integrity field. The Romulan Star Empire lays close by, so a distress call to Starfleet Command is out of the question. It's up to the top minds of the crew to figure out a way to break the hold of these two planetary defense tractor beams and allow the heavily damaged starship to escape. Will the characters be able to save the ship and return to the Federation with the knowledge of two planets that once held intelligent life?

## BACKGROUND

The solar system surrounding the star HIP 73513 is the location of a very rare Trojan pair of Class-M planets that both developed their own native sentient life. The first species to develop was on the smaller of the Class-M planets, a humanoid species that had developed in the tidal areas of their oceans and sharing many traits with Terran canines. Calling themselves "Rl'lowo Shal", translated as 'Living on Walking Waters' developed an agricultural civilization even before the Vulcans had developed their first civilizations. Tribal city-states quickly developed and by approximately 180,000 BCE (Before Common Era), the beings of Rl'lowo (Walking Waters) had developed heavy industries and later orbital space flight. The other, larger world was named 'Five Turns' or more literally 'Everything' by its non-humanoid, radially symmetrical sentient species. The 'Us' didn't evolve flexible manipulative digits equivalent to human thumbs and fingers, thus they were never able to develop any technologies besides fire.

Scientists and astronomers on Rl'lowo had always been interested in their twin world and early on determined that 'Five Turns' had native life, and it drove development of a space program with a

focus on making the journey to Five Turns. When the Rl'lowo Shal first landed on Five Turns and made first contact with the Us, it was a turning point for both of their worlds. The Rl'lowo Shal felt the confirmation of not only life, but intelligent life on their neighboring world was a joyous experience. With the Rl'lowo Shal having nearly no sense of xenophobia, they attempted to embrace the Us as equals that only looked different and spoke a different language. The Us, on the other hand, were extremely varied in their appearances, with different color shades, shapes of their torsos and lengths of their six arms. They had developed an extreme form of tribalism, deep xenophobia, and cultural paranoia. They saw the Rl'lowo Shal as another invading tribe there to only destroy them, but they had the power of metal and technology.

The trusting Rl'lowo Shal began a program of 'uplifting' the Us by gifting their tribe's technology and helping them develop their civilization, but the paranoid and xenophobic Us tribes began to cull the tribes that were more accepting of the Rl'lowo, banding together against the Rl'lowo, gathering weapons and technology over nearly a century until the combined tribes of Us felt they were on an equal par as the 'invaders'. The first and final war between the two worlds devastated both planets, each being bombarded by asteroids and leading into dual mass extinction events and the total loss of both species. Remnants of the civilizations are still strewn across the inner system and evidence shows there were survivors of both species, but they quickly died of lack of oxygen on space stations, or the collapse of the ecosystem on the two worlds.

## SCENE 1: A ROUTINE SURVEY MISSION

When ready, start the mission by getting the commanding officer to read this log:

Captain's Log, Stardate 48581.4. We are in the HIP 73513 system after detecting a pair of Trojan Class-M planets. With the ship between both worlds at a gravitationally stable point, survey teams are deployed to both planets surfaces and shuttles are launched to investigate some orbital artifacts around each world, including debris near the Lagrange points of the worlds. What becomes clear is that both worlds have recently, in astronomical terms, suffered extreme asteroid bombardments and both are still in the midst of global impact winters and a mass extinction event. What will we find down there?

This is what Starfleet was made for.

The first scene of this mission should generally focus on being a routine survey mission to determine what happened to the civilizations on these worlds. Shipboard sensors aren't very helpful as the asteroid bombardment that occurred on both planets made large quantities of heavy metals, iridium, and osmium to coat the surface and blow as dust through the atmosphere. This is why away teams must do most of the planet-side information gathering. Clues and information can be given out based on what the characters are specifically doing and their specialties. Some examples are as follows:

### STAR SYSTEM RESEARCH

Characters wishing to do research on the system overall with a **Reason** or **Insight + Science Task** with a Difficulty of 1, with applicable focuses of Stellar Cartography or Astrophysics.

A successful Task notes that the likelihood of two planets being struck by extinction level impact events at the same time are literally astronomical. The heavy bombardment still has large amounts of heavy metal and iridium laced dust blowing through the atmosphere, helping make sensor readings from orbit difficult at best.

Using *Obtain Information* Momentum spends, the Player Characters may discover more of the information to hand:

- Due to the intersecting orbits, the dual worlds have been cleared of asteroids and other debris that would threaten them, making the event even more unlikely.

Characters wishing to do research on the surface of the planets are required to attempt an **Insight** or **Reason + Science Task** with a Difficulty of 1, with applicable focuses of Archeology or Anthropology.

A success shows the two worlds had two totally different sentient species inhabiting them. The smaller world clearly had a larger population as there are many more surviving structures in small groups similar to small cities.

Again, any *Obtain Information* Momentum spends could unearth more:

- The world with the larger population seems to have had technology much more widespread amongst their population, whereas the larger world had the same technology, but very centralized. The primary asteroid impact areas seem to be where the juncture of large

continental scale transportation lines would converge, suggesting a deliberate use of the asteroids as weapons of mass destruction.

- The more advanced race called themselves the Rl'lowo Shal and the less advanced race called themselves Us. It appears the Rl'lowo Shal shared technology with the Us and the Us seemingly used that technology to destroy both worlds.

Characters studying the life-forms and ecology of the planets attempt an **Insight** or **Reason + Science Task** with the Focuses of Biology, Ecology, or Climatology to get the following information:

Success reveals that both worlds' climate and biomes were seriously disrupted with multiple impacts of asteroids larger than the dinosaur killing asteroid that struck Earth 65 million years previously.

*Obtain Information* spends reveal:

- The ecological and climatological damage is so extreme that the surface is effectively sterilized on both worlds, and besides life in the ice-free portions of the oceans, there is little living and even that life could go extinct in thousands of more years.
- Some of the initial scans of what life remains on the two planets prove to be puzzling—it's possible one or more organisms from each planet share common biological traits, possibly even similar DNA markers. Securing additional samples and performing deeper scans would be recommended, if only there were time to do so.

Overall, characters on the surface will find extensive wreckage and badly weathered buildings and remains of two civilizations. Surprisingly some of the technology will still be functional in more isolated and weather proof areas due to solar power, radioisotope thermoelectric generators, and even advanced micro-fusion power systems on par with Federation technology of the 22nd century. There will be little information able to be retrieved by characters with computer information technology science specialties, but they could perhaps gain some of the same information normally provided to archeologist and anthropologist Focuses.

In space, overall, the characters will be able to discover that the more advanced species had developed forms of space travel with fusion powered impulse drives like those used in the Federation, but no artificial gravity and no faster than light drive systems. Like those on the surface, the computers in the remaining derelict space craft and space stations are corrupted or contain little useable data if they are powered back on.

**GM advice:** *You should allow the Players to really role-play their characters in this scene, allowing them to feel out how they react to two species wiping themselves out in such a horrific and devastating manner. If they can piece together the fact that the Rl'lowo Shal interfered in the Us' society and 'uplifted' them, do they bring up the parallels with the importance of the Prime Directive? Give the impression that this is a short episode focused on roleplaying, but as the characters wrap up their mission and begin to leave, that's the beginning of scene 2, as ancient dead-man's switch weapons activate and attempt to hurl the Player vessel at the other's planet, putting everyone's lives in peril. The rest of the episode is sirens and alarms squealing as the characters attempt to keep the ship together without rousing the interest of the Romulans.*

Just as the ship is about to break orbit, read the following:

## SCENE 2: HAMMERFALL

As the Player vessel begins to break orbit two powerful tractor beams, one from each world, locks onto the starship and begins pushing it towards the other. The long dormant computers had woken up as their sensors detected its mass as a possible weapon against the other world. Without shields up, the Player vessel is struck as though it had slammed headfirst into a planet, the outer hull buckling, decompression alerts screaming across the ship, the warp core going offline, etc. It's up to the characters to stabilize the ship before it is crushed.

Treat this as a starship combat encounter, with the two tractor beams representing a Scale 3 starship with a basic crew (Attribute 8, Discipline 1), even though the two emitters are on either planet. Use the following weapon to represent the two beams crushing the ship.

- Repulsion beam (Energy, Range Long, 7 ▲, High Yield)

***GM Advice:** If the Players can come up with a great in-universe way of escaping the tractor beams, don't hold them back. Reward their creativity. The flight controller may attempt evasive maneuvers, in which case the planets' tractor beams need to succeed at a Difficulty 1 Task to lock back onto the Player vessel. The tractor beams from both planets will continue to deteriorate the ship's structural integrity field, causing damage to the ship itself, while the two beams attempt to push the ship to the opposing planet. Certain areas of the ship may breach and buckle, risking exposing decks to space, requiring crew to wear EVA suits and attempt Damage Control Tasks. These sections, and how much difficulty they will add to a Skill Task, is up to you depending on the skill set of the Players and how well they are doing.*

With any repair or damage control procedures attempted by the Player Characters, the Gamemaster is encouraged to increase the Difficulty as the artificial gravity on many decks begins to malfunction, fluctuating between zero gravity and Vulcan like 1.4G's. This could in fact be the cause of minor to serious injuries amongst the characters or the rest of the crew. The view of an unconscious crew member floating down a corridor before gravity flickers on and slams them against the floor, breaking bones, and then rebounding upwards as the gravity fades should make Players pause.

What is occurring in this scene, overall, is that extremely powerful tractor beams on both planets, designed by the Rl'lowo Shal to defend the two planets against possible asteroid impacts and then used as weapons of war, activated as soon as they detected the Player vessel moving out of orbit. They were not previously detected because of the problems with the sensors as previously stated and that they were not fully powered up yet, still cycling up their capacitors. As these tractor beams were initially designed to move large asteroids and either park them in orbit for mining purposes, or to toss them into the star, the strength of these beams is enough to overwhelm the structural integrity field and inertial dampers of Player vessel. Note the breaches to the different Player vessel's Systems and follow their repair attempts as per *Chapter 9: A Home in the Stars* in the core rulebook. In addition, describe the problem with the structural integrity below:

## STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

This is the most pressing issue facing the characters as the ship was slowly being crushed between the two tractor beams. The structural integrity field needs to be repaired and improved to shore up the duranium hull. Repairing the structural integrity field is an **Engineering Task** with a Difficulty of 3. Improving it can come from a few different methods. First, the characters may wish to boost the

power going through the structural integrity field system. This is feasible, but it will require taking main propulsion offline due to the need for a significant portion of the fusion power plants normally servicing the impulse drive. To do this requires a further **Engineering Task** with a Difficulty of 2, with a Focus in a Starship Structure related field. This is probably the first thing Players will do, but it will stop the ship from moving and will buy time to make further repairs or improvements.

Other ways to improve the SI and suggested challenges for accomplishing the task could be:

- Modulating the power output to the Structural Integrity Field to cancel out the graviton waveforms produced by the incoming tractor beams. This would be a **Science** or **Engineering Task** with specializations helping from Sensor Operations, High Energy Physics, or Subspace Dynamics. This would also allow the starship to continue to have propulsion via its impulse drive at a reduced rate.
- Using the deflector dish to 'transmit' a standing wave in subspace to dampen the tractor beams strength enough that the ship continues to be held in place, but it is no longer being crushed. This would be a **Science** or **Engineering Task** with a Difficulty of 2, with specializations helping from Sensor Operations, High Energy Physics, or Subspace Dynamics.

As always, allow Players to come up with solutions that may work in your opinion after reading this episode.

Once the structural integrity field is working and the Player vessel is out of danger from being crushed, damage across the ship can begin to be repaired, at least the basics like gravity, life-support, hull breaches, etc. The ship is still being held in place as the tractor beams struggle against each other and the starship will shake and buck now and then as it gets shifted in space, like bad turbulence in an aircraft. This makes fine repairs like the warp drive and warp core systems nearly impossible. Any briefings the characters may have will be done by emergency lighting, breathing air that is thin, cold, and dry, and fearing the next shudder through the ship may blow out the transparent aluminum window nearby. It's time to really get to work.

## SCENE 3: RIDING THE BRONCO

The ship is still in one piece, but what working sensors there are tell the characters that more power systems are warming up on each planet as they both struggle to gain dominance. The characters must decide on how to break free now, or how they'll say goodbye to their families. In Starfleet, you never give up and fight till the end, so the characters come to a daring plan to get out alive and in one piece.

***GM advice:** The theme of this scene should be tension. Will the characters be able to get out of this with the ship intact and their lives? The GM should attempt to convey the oncoming danger as the characters (and Players) debate, remind them that the ship still bucks and shakes every couple minutes and the groaning of the ships structural members continues even if they improved the structural integrity field.*

There are a couple ways the characters can get the ship free. If the characters did anything in the previous act that dealt with frequencies or harmonics (i.e. modulating the power output to cancel out the graviton waveforms of the tractor beams, etc.) then this is a fantastic opportunity to let the Players

know that the changes in harmonics that they made to the power systems / structural integrity field affected both tractor beams, which means they both operate at the same frequencies. In fact, if they use ships sensors to confirm this, they can tell they are exactly the same frequency as they were built by the same technology, factory lines, etc. They will also recall their Academy teaching about constructive and destructive interference. The basic concept of this is that two waveforms (sound waves, waves on the water, light, etc.) can add or subtract their energy from each other, with effects ranging from increasing the strength of the wave to be as strong as both of them put together or by totally negating each waveform if they have the same amplitude and frequency.

The conclusion to all of this is that if the characters can get the Player vessel to a point in space where the two tractor beams would destructively interfere, then it is possible that the beams would be disrupted long enough that the Player vessel could escape the targeting lock. How exactly the ship gets to that point is very dependent on what the characters have done previously. For example, if they've rerouted impulse power to shore up the structural integrity field, then the characters won't be able to move the ship and they are going to have to think outside the box and attempt some system changes/repairs that have been mentioned previously. In any case, as always, if they can come up with an intelligent and great in-universe way of moving the ship, give them a Challenge related to the method they wish to use.

When the ship is ready to move towards the interference point, please read the following aloud:

*An Engineering Task with a Difficulty of 3 will be required to ensure the fusion reactors in the impulse drive don't overload and that the thrust vectoring is correct for what they are trying to do. Characters on the bridge and not specifically at an engineering station shouldn't be able to assist in this check, though other characters either in main engineering or unassigned to a current duty station will be able to assist.*

If the Players fail the Gamemaster may use Threat to cause injury to a character failing the skill check as plasma conduits explode around them before they are able to correct the misalignment or the overload. Continue reading...

*Another Engineering Task, with a Difficulty of 2 is now required to fix the hull breeches before they begin to spread and expose larger sections of the starship to space, possibly killing more crew. Focuses in either Damage Control or Structural Integrity Fields are applicable here. Any remaining characters not already helping with holding together the impulse drive may assist in this Task.*

If the Players fail, the Gamemaster may once again use a Threat to cause injury to Players from bulkheads ripping away and explosive decompression that harms them before emergency forcefields flicker to life. The GM may also use Threat to cause the bulkhead that tore away to impact another area of the ship, such as the impulse drive or the engineering section, requiring a Task to repair it by the person maintaining watch on the impulse drive, or anyone else available. Continue reading...

*Each character is now required to attempted a **Security Task** with a Difficulty of 2, as you are thrown from your feet against bulkheads, consoles, and equipment striking you as it is thrown around, as the ship violently shakes.*

Any character who fails the Task suffers 1 ▲ damage that can be increased by the GM's use of Threat. Continue reading...



If you wish, the crew can begin repairs on ships systems, ideally bringing the warp core back online and realigning the warp coils in the nacelles. Repairing the warp core and matter/antimatter containment conduits is an **Engineering Task** with a Difficulty of 2, and re-aligning the warp coils is an **Engineering Task** with a Difficulty of 1.

## THE CONTINUING VOYAGES

This adventure provides some fodder for future adventures, even beyond the scope of the Living Campaign, should the gamemaster desire to move in a different direction. This material could also be folded into a future adventure as information the Player characters pick up through newscasts or briefings.

In the months to come, Starfleet will deploy multiple ships to the HIP 73513 system. The findings by the Player vessel were significant in that both worlds are on the cusp of having all their life-forms go extinct and become lifeless rocks. *U.S.S. St. Joseph* (a Danube-class runabout) will be first on scene to slip in and disable the planetary defense weapons now that Starfleet knows they exist and where they are on each of the planet's surfaces. Teams from the United Federation Biological Preservation Society will be on site to catalog and preserve as much of the unique genome and life-forms as possible from both worlds. What will follow will be a large contingent of Starfleet Corps of Engineers to build orbiting mirrors and atmospheric processors to attempt to warm the worlds before the oceans freeze over entirely, and if this can't be prevented, terraform the worlds for eventual reintroduction of life and colonization.

Characters could also find out the full story (if they hadn't pieced it together themselves already) of these worlds as described in the background. The system's unhappy history won't finish there: native life does go extinct within five years of the Player vessel's visit, the xenophobia and misplaced altruism of its two sentient life forms finally coming to its conclusion.

If any of the Player characters found hints that there might be a deeper connection between the lifeforms of the two planets, the continuing research on the planets will be able to gather some more information, though the scientists are able to, at best, provide theories largely unable to be proven due to the lack of sufficient research material. The idea that two separate cultures managed to destroy each other but were somehow biologically linked is a tantalizing one that will tease scientists for some time to come.

The HIP 73513 system can be used as a forward base for the Starfleet Corps of Engineers and even as a layover for starships moving through the Sigma Librae sector (coreward of the Romulan Empire in the Beta Quadrant). A small planet side starbase will be constructed early on to help house and protect archeologists exploring the planet, and an orbit dock will follow soon after. This can also be the center of a new round of espionage between the Federation and the Romulans as the Empire attempts to learn of the ancient weapons used by the natives of HIP 73513.