

Stellar Reaches

A Fanzine for Traveller T20 And Classic Traveller

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The Stellar Reaches fanzine's website can currently be found at <http://stellarreaches.nwgamers.org>. Please feel free to browse the site for more information, as well as back issues and other downloads as they become available.

The **BITS Task System**, although modified to include Traveller T20 difficulty classes, has been provided with permission by **British Isles Traveller Support (BITS)**. Its presence here does not constitute any challenge to the rights for this system, and we gratefully acknowledge Dominic Mooney and Andy Lilly for their generosity in allowing our use of this system to allow future adventures to be written in such a manner as to be more useful to all published Traveller rules sets.

For more information on BITS, check out their website at <http://www.bits.org.uk/>

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Calling All Adventurers



Intrigue, Espionage Opportunities, Corporate Trade Wars, Mysteries Abound, a Higher Calling and a Long Lost Treasure...They are ***not*** sure that you have what it takes.

Ready to prove them wrong?

Join the Adventure over on the **Citizens of the Imperium** Board! Look under:
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Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts:

I would like to start this issue off with an apology to the fans. It has been nine months since the Issue #7 of *Stellar Reaches* came out. In the intervening months, I had to focus on some personal matters in my life that pulled me away from the fanzine, and it unfortunately resulted in a rather long delay between the last issue and this one. Sorry about that, guys.

While all that was going on, the rest of the world moved forward. In early August, Mongoose Publishing announced to the world that Traveller would be joining the family of games released under the Open Gaming License (OGL). Indeed, before Issue #9 is released, we should see a new Traveller System Reference Document (SRD) that contains the rules that third-party publishers can use to publish Traveller products under the OGL. While this does not allow third-party publishers to use the Official Traveller Universe (OTU) in their products, it is still a great boon for the Traveller community. In the years going forward, we should see a great and diverse number of Traveller products that we can use to enhance our games, including all our favorite types of supplements. I'll even be getting into the game via my publication imprint, Samardan Press.

This issue is our largest yet, with over seventy pages of fantastic material for your Traveller game. Mark "Commander Drax" Bridgeman brings us our feature adventure, *The Irish Express*, which is the second part of his series *The Lorimar Slot*. Alvin Plummer brings us three more Empty Quarter adventures and a Campaign Seed, as well as the second installment of his Biography series. Jeff Hopper continues his fantastic Empty Quarter Echo travelogue series, while Joshua Bell, creator of the fantastic Traveller Map website (<http://www.travellermmap.com>), revisits the "Using Your Model 2 Bis" article series originally appearing in JTAS magazine. There's a lot of exciting content here, and I hope you guys enjoy reading it as much as I have when I first received these submissions.

We are fortunate to have three artists contributing to this issue as well. Andrew Boulton provides us a great cover for the fanzine, and you'll see some of Travis Leichsennring's fantastic art in these pages as well. In addition, I would like to welcome a new Traveller artist to the fanzine: Jimmy Lee Wilson.

Jimmy Lee Wilson is a 47 year old husband, father and grandfather. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky, and works in the Print Graphics Industry. He started playing Traveller in 1979 while serving in the Navy, and it's been his favorite RPG ever since! He enjoys the planning and illustration of each game as much as the actual game time!

We are most fortunate that Mongoose Publishing, who now has the rights to the OTU, has agreed to allow us to continue to support the Official Traveller Universe within the pages of this free fanzine. I, for one, am looking forward to seeing their version of Traveller, and am thankful that they've opened our favorite game to the Open Gaming License. It's going to be a great thing for our game.

As always, I want to say thank you to Marc Miller for giving us this great game in the first place, and for allowing the fans to help contribute to the universe created for Traveller over 30 years ago. I'd like also to thank all of the current Traveller license holders for keeping the game alive and vibrant with your product line: Avenger Enterprises, Quiklink, Steve Jackson Games, Spica Publishing, and any others that I may have forgotten. Keep up the great work, guys!

As always, my friends, I wish to thank you all for your continued support of the *Stellar Reaches* fanzine. Without your continued contributions, this fanzine simply couldn't exist, so once again I say "thank you, thank you, thank you" to each of the contributors for your efforts! With that in mind, it's time to stop reading this editorial letter and dive into the good stuff. There's a lot to enjoy with the latest issue, so let's dim the lights and get on with it!

Prepare To Jump,
Jason "Flynn" Kemp
Editor, *Stellar Reaches* fanzine

BITS Task System

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MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. Traveller T20 (T20) uses difficulty classes (DCs) to define target numbers for skill checks. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT and DCs for T20 as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (GT: critical) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Difficulty	T4.1 Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Difficulty	MT Difficulty	CT Target Modifier	T20 DC
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4	10
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2	15
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0	20
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2	25
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4	30
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6	35
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8	40

Ex. Maria Charles is forging a complex document, which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (GT: Forgery-16, T20: Forgery +18) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9, T20: 15).

CT: Task success is normally $2D + \text{Skill} \geq 8$. Maria requires $2D + \text{Forgery} \geq 12$ ($8 + 4$ for Staggering difficulty).

Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. $2D + 4 - 4 \geq 8$.

MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is $2D + \text{Skill} + (\text{Stat} / 5) \geq 15$. For Maria this is: $2D + 4 + 2 \geq 15$.

TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is $d20 \leq (\text{Skill} + \text{Stat}) \times \frac{1}{4}$. For Maria this is $d20 \leq 3$, i.e. $(9 + 4) / 4$ rounded down.

T4: Maria requires $4D \leq \text{INT} + \text{Forgery}$. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)

GT: Maria requires $3D \leq \text{Forgery} + \text{Target Modifier}$, i.e. $3D \leq 16 - 6$.

T20: Maria requires $d20 + 18 \geq 30$. (Note that the INT modifier is already factored into the skill check.)

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:

Difficult Recon (GT: Tracking), or

Difficult Hunting (T20: P/Hunting), or

Formidable Survival

+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.

+1 Difficulty if lost.

-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.

Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.

Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.

Failure: No tracks found.

Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas -1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.

Feature Adventure: The Irash Express

Part II of 'The Lorimar Slot' By Mark "Commander Drax" Bridgeman

Required Materials

Issue 2 Stellar Reaches - Empty Quarter Delta Quadrant Data.

Issue 4 Stellar Reaches - Hebrin Nights (Part I The Lorimar Slot)

The Story So Far...

The previous adventure will have seen characters employed by Davlan Polaris (of Polaris Lines) investigate the 'Magnum Opus' explosion at (Empty Quarter 1930) B550A88-9, easily the most populous world in the quadrant.

To Recap Polaris Lines is in legal "lock down" at present thanks to a MOJ investigation that may take upwards of 6 Imperial Months to complete. In the meantime Davlan Polaris, the sole survivor of the now infamous 'Polaris Massacre' is doing everything he can to maintain the company's established trade routes by hiring independents to provide regular service (once they've agreed to alter their ship's livery to match Polaris Colours). At present the outlook is bleak for Polaris Lines which has been linked to organ harvesting, slave trading and piracy by the MOJ. Davlan and his staff are insistent that the company is innocent of the charges brought against it by the Ministry of Justice. Whilst he is keen to be seen to cooperate with the Investigation he is openly convinced that the company is being 'framed' by an unknown party.

So far characters will have talked to the surviving crew of the Magnum Opus and established a link to the criminal underclass of Hebrin known as the Cybes, so called because their members like to augment themselves in any which way they can (although options are limited at Tech 9). These cybes had a tenuous connection to the Shadow Cartel via their egotistical leader 'Boss Julien' and his dealings with a port side 'business man' named Turishi. Whilst it is not proven, it is highly likely that the Shadow Cartel killed him after he choose to give in to 'pressure' administered by the PC's. This had the unfortunate effect of seeing the trail go cold, in addition to implicating the PC's in his death as Turishi's offices were under direct surveillance...

At this point the belligerents who destroyed the Magnum Opus remain unknown.

1st Plot Point - Fight or Flight!

If play continues directly from Hebrin Nights, the player's ship will be sitting comfortably some 200 Km away from Loren High-Port in a 'parking orbit', hence will not be immediately attainable, also the vessel will be continuously monitored by the orbital port authority. A colonial FHU Class SDB (see ship stats) has been given orders to keep

station with the vessel and destroy it, should anything suspicious be observed.

Players should also be aware that in such a populous system, traffic is rigorously controlled by the port authority, itself teaming with inspection barges, cutters, picket boats and local defence squadrons, not to mention the exceptionally large Imperial Naval presence in this system.

In the midst of this tension business should continue as normal with characters sourcing cargo and trying to recruit independent merchants to ply the space ways as Polaris employees, whilst quietly investigating the charges levelled at Polaris (as per their instructions). Should characters have left the Hebrin system or main world, then the following will happen as soon as they return and enter the port's extrajurisdiction zone.

Characters will remember Agent Rebba Harrison of the Imperial Ministry of Justice, a young, humourless woman, dedicated to her role as a professional MOJ investigator (full stats provided in Hebrin Nights – Stellar Reaches Issue 4). The adventure will begin with Rebba and two or three of her 'associates' apprehending the players as soon as they enter port jurisdiction. She will quietly ask them to join her for a 'quick chat'. Players may choose to cooperate or fight. If they cooperate they will be taken to an interrogation room within the port confines, they will be given comfortable seating, light refreshments and treated well. However should they decide that they want to fight, then Rebba and her colleagues will draw their weapons and order the players to stand down, before discharging their firearms if the request is not heeded. Whether the fight continues or not members of the Hebrin Imperial Marine Garrison stationed at the port will arrive within moments. They too will order the players to stand down from combat and surrender or face the consequences. Really stupid players who ignore this final warning should get exactly what they deserve (a new character sheet), no one tangles with the Imperial Marines and gets away with anything less than serious maiming. The Marines will be well equipped in their obligatory combat armor with top of the line gauss rifles to hand.

Surviving (or cooperative) members of the party will be taken to the interrogation room, at which point Rebba will show them a 2D image recording of them at Turishi's office (clearly taken from a secret or hidden camera position) several hours prior to his death. Rebba will very quietly and seriously ask the players, if they would like to 'confess to anything', clearly they have been implicated in his murder. Unfortunately the recording ends well before Turishi's killing with the time of death being estimated as some thirty-five minutes after the player characters had left his office. The recording will also have included voice feeds, hence Rebba will be aware of the 'pressure' brought to bear on Turishi by the player characters (if any). Her own investigation into the player's activities has been exceptionally thorough, she will summarise the situation as follows:

It is obvious that the player characters have been hired to conduct a secret investigation into the Magnum Opus Explosion. This investigation may interfere with an active Imperial Ministry of Justice investigation, the penalty for this alone is severe! The

recording also clearly reveals that the player characters have uncovered a link from the Cybes to the Shadow Cartel via Turishi as a middleman. Whilst there is no direct proof that the player characters actually killed Turishi, Rebba has enough evidence and thus suspicion to arrest the players and keep them locked up for as long as necessary. Rebba will offer the players a choice, namely tell her everything they know, in addition to giving exact details of their whereabouts prior to and leading up to Turishi's killing, or quite simply go to prison and be pumped full of 'tongue loosening drugs'. Rebba will add that the second option may well lead to a prosecution both by the MOJ and the Hebrin Constabulary for the many and numerous laws broken during their sojourn on this world. Unless the player characters have been saints and somehow survived their encounters without killing anyone, the list will involve, acts of violence, murder and procurement/use of illegal weaponry, all of which could easily lead to a 15 year sentence on an authoritarian world like Hebrin or a 50 year sentence in an Imperial prison facility. Needless to say, the characters ship will be impounded, searched and possibly sold to pay for their defence should the characters be unable to afford to be properly represented in a Hebrin/Imperial court.

Characters would be wise to consider the first option or at least hear Rebba out. Rebba explains that she has recently received some interesting intelligence from one of her field operatives working alongside the Imperial Navy aboard the Patrol Cruiser – INS 'Diamond Strike'. Apparently after two and a half years of being missing presumed dead, the Diamond Strike liberated some former passengers of the Polaris Type M Liner 'The Irash Express' when it's marine attachment stormed an underground bunker belonging to a suspected high level criminal named 'Shabasta Tuer' in the Camilla System (Empty Quarter 2528 D434342-7). Shabasta was suspected of bankrolling an anti-Imperial insurgency in the nearby Liamea System (Empty Quarter 2428 A3447BB-A) although Shabasta was captured when spectating an orgy of gladiatorial violence he denies all knowledge of his anti-Imperial activities and indeed genuinely seems to have suffered a mental breakdown, claiming that his life as it was these last few years seemed 'like a terrible dream'...

One of the liberated 'fighters', a human male named 'Geraint Trin' reported that he had been forced to work outside the ship in a vacc-suit to help with repairs when a micrometeoroid punctured a hull radiator. Geraint had been chosen by his captors because he'd previously worked as a zero-g-hull technician at the Elix-Beta orbital shipyard in the Sahale System (Empty Quarter – 2227 A335537-9). When outside repairing the radiator with the rest of the work crew he was able to see that the 'Express' was on course for a massive gas-giant surrounded by a very thin ring system, most notable however was that a storm was raging in one hemisphere of the giant, two huge cyclones seemed to be colliding in the upper atmosphere. The MOJ agent then began showing 'Geraint' recordings of gas-giants in the sector that were known to have ring systems and unique storm patterns. After studying several images, Geraint immediately identified the world in question as Rapadishu in the Mugama system. Further research confirmed the existence of the storm in question, it being fairly wildly known to the IISS who have been studying it since it first formed nearly 11 standard years ago. Other than that, information provided by Geraint is limited, as

captives were rarely allowed outside the ship and denied any knowledge of their exact locations. Since then Geraint has been in a low berth for an extended period of time, woken periodically to assist with further repairs before finally being sold into slavery in the Camilla system (Empty Quarter 2528 D434342-7)

Corroborating testimonies gathered from other liberated passengers seem to suggest the existence of a widespread, though hidden criminal underground that is, it would seem funding all manner of vice, corruption and anti-imperial 'resistance' cells on worlds that have been within the present Imperial borders for centuries. Player characters might suggest that the 'Shadow Cartel' is behind this, Rebba will quietly retort that this seems bigger than anything the Cartel has ever considered before, and that 'like parasites the Cartel needs the Imperium to survive'. This new organisation seems to be determined to undermine and weaken the empire at every turn. Most worryingly of all, intelligence reports suggest an active interest in a certain quasi-legal paramilitary group increasingly active coreward/trailing space such as nearby Gateway Domain, namely 'The Loyal Sector Guard'... Rebba and her colleagues have dubbed this new organisation 'The Keepers' (a contraction of 'The Keepers of secrets' as hardly anything is known about the organisation or its goals).

Rebba will ask the players to pool their resources and assist them in an MOJ investigation into 'something bigger than this Polaris mess', in order to do so they will have to maintain their ship's Polaris livery and continue reporting to Davlan through the X-boat network as agreed. They may continue their investigation for Polaris lines and even have support from the MOJ with the proviso that they report to her through secure and encrypted communications. These will be via a secret courier network and not through the X-boat network as used when sending reports to Davlan Polaris on Cooke (Empty Quarter 2030 A868837-9). Rebba will also insist that a special agent accompany them to ensure that they don't deviate from the job at hand [See Stats Section for Lydia Jenson]. Rebba will insist that they file a flight plan and follow the Polaris Trade Route from Hebrin (Empty Quarter 1930 B550A88-9) to Mugama (Empty Quarter 1728 AB-5) and make contact with a field agent there [See NPC Rami Gilixi]. This is off critical importance.

As you can appreciate players may not have much of a choice and may be wondering as to what is in it for them. Wiping their criminal record clean might be a suitable reward along with a reserve commission in the MOJ (equivalent to a reserve navy commission) and an annual stipend of Cr10,000 per year plus hazard pay when conducting work for 'The Ministry'. Should characters agree then legal agreements will have been ratified preventing the player characters from sharing any privileged information (outside of their mandate) or even profiting from it during or after the investigation (in effect a 'gag order'). Rebba will explain that once they've arrived at Mugama they are to assist the MOJ local intelligence contacts with their investigation into the 'Irash Express' and its unscheduled pass through the system. Most importantly they are to try and determine why it refuelled there, where it went to and why was it in the Mugama system, after all Mugama is a low value world of little consequence to just about anyone in the sector, despite the best efforts of it's current ruler Prince Luzardi to rectify this.

Rebba will give them a list of 'contacts' to pass information to on each of the worlds on the Hebrin-Mugama run (See Data File), reminding the group that this list is highly sensitive and should not fall into the wrong hands. Rebba will insist that the players speak with with designated MOJ contacts on each world in order to exchange information and file reports as each agent has been ordered to assist with the Polaris Investigation and

follow any leads that transpire. Rebba will give the player characters code words to use that will verify their identity and thus allow the local agent to swap data. Their First stop will be Iridia (1830 Empty Quarter -3) where they need to speak to a local by the name of Freya Hemstron, who will brief them from then on in.

2nd Plot Point - On The Main

Adventure Clue 1 - The Veritable Truth

(Location Iridia Empty Quarter 1830 – See Library Data)

Characters need to contact Freya Hemstron, their local MOJ contact whilst interacting with the locals at the landing field they should be led into the following:

The crew of the Polaris Owned 'Reliant' Class Fat Trader 'The Veritable Truth' received word of the company lock down when visiting Iridia (Empty Quarter 1830 -3) and true to the MOJ directive they set their ship down at the edge of the landing field before talking to the local port authority and any MOJ agents they could find. Initially they were interviewed by Freya Hemstron who forwarded a report to Rebba via courier to Hebrin. Since then they have been far from idle, whilst other crews would have been content to shut down their power plant and hang around for six months. The 'veritable' or 'Verity' as they call her, decided to turn their ship into an emergency response vehicle, distant settlements with poor communications are the norm on Iridia, meaning that for most people it can be days or even weeks before help arrives. Realising that they would be grounded for at least six months, they took their launch, visited every major settlement they could find and passed out a 300 km range radio to each one. They keep their launch permanently in orbit monitoring frequencies coming into range of each settlement every 8 hours, allowing the verity to respond immediately to any reported emergency. The crew also visit each settlement on a weekly basis to recharge batteries, tend to any sick with their high tech medicine and as a result have generated a considerable amount of good will, despite the fiercely independent though friendly nature of the populace. Whilst technically a breach of the MOJ lock down (no vessels to leave the port field), the local port authority (being just one man) is happy to let this slide in return for the help they are giving, also Freya being the ranking MOJ agent on Iridia approves of the arrangement, which from the crew's point of view prevents the ship's drives from locking up due to lack of use.

After two days of crew interviews and intelligence swapping a 100 ton scout/courier will descend on the field, the air lock will open and the pilot will calmly step out and make his way to the Port Authority building. He has news for Freya which she will share with the player characters. A week ago, just as the characters were leaving the Hebrin system a Type M subsidised Liner 'The Golden Eclipse' was hijacked by persons unknown and scuttled in the gas giant with all hands, passengers and cargo lost. Presumably this was a bizarre suicide attack. The vessel was owned by Majestic Lines and had recently taken over the former Polaris route to Irash from Hebrin (Empty Quarter 1930) to Drago's Belt (Empty Quarter 2032), passing through

Shuiku (Empty Quarter 2034) before terminating at Irash (Empty Quarter 2036) and reversing the route all of the way back to Hebrin.

Just as characters are preparing to leave and move on to the next destination, the Verity's launch will radio in and explain that it picked up very faint comm signals on the other side of the planet, someone should investigate!

Should the characters investigate or assist the Verity crew in doing so, the faint commo contact will guide them in to what is effectively a lake side crash site. A small 2 ton enclosed air/raft can be found strewn across the surrounding rocks and scrub land, its hull completely burnt out, several large craters in the region suggest missile fire, a few meters away a few human bones can be found next to a torn and battered coverall, just alongside the shores of the lake the remains of campfire and a battered fusion still can be discerned. The coverall will have a ship's patch bearing the name 'The Smoke & Mirrors'. EM direction finders will pin the comm signals down to an outcrop of rock. At the top of the outcrop a large and nasty looking, multi legged beast can be seen watching the group, before long others will join it. If players approach the creatures will spring away bounding into the wilderness, allowing the players to examine the outcrop. Wedged into a crevice, will be a small solar powered 300 km range hand commo stained with old dried out blood. It's set to burst a small automated distress message into the ether until the batteries are exhausted, before shutting down and allowing the solar cells to trickle charge the handset, ready to begin the cycle over and over again. It's seemingly pure luck that the Verity's launch just happened to be overflying the region when it was transmitting.

The Verity's crew will reveal that they 'know' this ship, and that for months, an old Type R Fat Trader 'The Smoke and Mirrors' has been shadowing them, following them from world to world picking up any spare freight that they couldn't handle and taking pains to establish connections with the same brokers and port side officials that Polaris tend to use. From the outset it's transponder codes and livery marked it as a 'Majestic Lines' vessel. Other Polaris crews they've met at various 'hub' worlds such as Hebrin have complained of also being shadowed by vessels belonging to Majestic Lines, nobody understood why Majestic would do such a thing as it's clearly unprofitable. Yet now with the company lock down in place, Majestic has all of its ships in a position where they can take over the Polaris Routes, its almost as if they knew there would be a lock down. Needless to say this has been a real boon to Majestic who previously have been struggling financially.

The Logs

Proper examination of the Logs will reveal a 2d visual recording of the pilot, making notes on the way down, he will identify

himself as Merchant 4th Officer Kalliam Nasire of the IMS 'Smoke and Mirrors' he will explain that his captain had crossed the line from being a legitimate merchantman to an unethical businessman. He will hurriedly explain (whilst concentrating on his instruments) that the crew of the 'Smoke and Mirrors' has been running low berth passengers in a specially adapted hull section for a few months. He will then look incredibly incensed when explaining that berths in that section have had a higher than acceptable failure rate resulting in the death of the occupant. Rather than disposing of the corpses properly, i.e. Informing the port authority at the next planetfall and removing the occupants for 'local disposal'. They have been hanging on to the bodies, leaving them in their berth, only dropping them off when docking at Loren Highport in the Hebrin system. The fact that proper protocol hasn't been followed is in itself bad enough, though what

tipped Kalliam over the edge is the suspicion that not all of the 'passengers' were dead when dropped off at Hebrin. He will claim to be witness to a conspiracy that involves not just the ship's captain but also the physician too, who he says was taking a more thorough than expected interest in the DNA of the lowberth passengers (although exactly what he means by that is unclear). He will confirm in the recording that the ship has been moving normal cargoes on the Hebrin-Mugama main, (following the route of the Polaris Cargo Mover 'The Veritable Truth'). When stopping over for a secret refuelling operation at Iridia he decided to check the hold, (part of his routine duties) knowing that an enclosed air/raft was aboard he waited for the ship to break atmosphere before powering up the air/raft, venting the trapped atmosphere of the hold to space (standard practice) before opening the hold doors (remotely) and launching to space. Unfortunately he wasn't prepared for happen next, an incoming message from the 'Smoke and Mirrors' (voice only) demanded his return and an explanation of what was going on. Kalliam told his captain in no uncertain terms exactly what he thought of him stating that he was on his way to the port authority to 'blow the whistle' on their organ harvesting operation. At that point the 'Smoke and Mirrors' deployed its launch, unlike lots of civilian subcraft carried aboard ship this one was armed. The launch didn't even pursue him, simply deploying its firing solution into the atmosphere ahead of the air/raft, forcing it down. after a rough crash landing a blood stained Kalliam can be seen leaving the raft, shortly afterwards the transmission ends in a blaze of static.

This is important information the 'Smoke and Mirrors' is a known Majestic ship, clearly a crewmember, or someone wearing a crewmembers coverall, has been shot from the sky and forced to crashland alongside the lake, the pilot presumably made it out of the wreckage before the vehicle exploded or was fired upon as a surface target. Clearly he made camp for an extended period of time before falling victim to the creatures that reside around the overhang. The big question to be answered is what was the 'Smoke and Mirrors' doing in this system and why did this particular person feel the need to run from and try to bring the air/raft down on the uninhabited side of this world. Should players attempt to recover the flight logs of the air/raft they will be able to do so, it's flight recorder having been built to withstand almost any eventuality.

Players should report this to both Davlan and forward their field reports onto Rebba Harrison at via their field contacts as soon as possible.

Adventure Clue 2 – The Moving Dark

(Location Miigaki 1730 See Library Data)

Miigaki, a cold hell hole of a world, with a stinking atmosphere, balkanised into numerous, unfriendly states is where the player characters will find their next contact, namely 'Balder Heyman'. Balder is based out of a small, hermetically sealed office at the Vimiri port annex, (to keep out the intense cold and the dire stench, he will complain). When spoken to he will happily confirm that the shadow cartel is involved in the whole Polaris mess, although he is formulating an idea that the Cartel are in some way victims, too. Being an information 'broker' he has contacts everywhere, whilst he can't name anyone specific (for fear of blowing their cover) he will reveal that the cartel

leadership has undergone a subtle change some ten years ago, being more manipulative and sneaky than they used to be. He will also explained that in previous times, the cartel had a code of honour that they lived and died by. This code has quietly been dropped as cartel operations now are now blatantly anti-establishment, this is in stark contrast to their historical style. He will explain that the cartel has spies and watchmen everywhere, one of which is on the move. He and his team are putting together an operation to break into their safe house, plant some discrete TL14 bugs which hopefully will be undetectable and get out. Of course he is short handed and could use some additional help.

If the players agree to assist he will pull up some schematics on a small holo-display of a run down looking tenement building in 'Adixur Prime' one of the Northern city states of Miigaki, the trip to Adixur Prime will involve crossing a territorial border either by surface travel such as the enclosed rail (tube) link or by 'hopping' their ship to a new dock at 'Priscilla downport' the local class D facility attached to Adixur prime by 'tube'. Laws are harsh in the militaristic state of Adixur so weaponry had best be discrete or not carried at all.

Once within the Adixur region Balder will make contact with one of his local agents named Wilhelm Strugger (see npc section) who is responsible for supplying the bugging equipment and provide the tools necessary to infiltrate the tenement building along with some small arms (in case things get nasty). Balder will explain that Strugger is a rock solid contact, an all round great guy with a fantastic sense of humour, with the added bonus that Strugger has been loyal and dependable for years. Characters meeting Strugger for the first time, will encounter a man who seems nervous, as he passes the handguns and munitions around, he will be uncharacteristically quiet (according to Balder) though when questioned will try hard to be jovial and ingratiate himself with the player characters. Perceptive characters may have reason to think that something is wrong.

Once characters have made it into the tenement building the player's will have to get passed a discrete security system which sweeps the entrance corridor to the tenement's top floor suite, consisting of a series of laser 'tripwires' (being quite high tech for this world), although with some aerosol this shouldn't present a problem for the player characters. Once players have picked the lock, they will gain entrance to a beautifully crafted luxury suite, at which point an exceptionally nervous Strugger will step back to the doorway just as the players come under attack by three hidden snipers, who will immediately kill the lights, plunging the suite into darkness, before opening fire on the player characters. The thugs have been lying in wait and are equipped with (light amplification goggles) as well as discrete small arms (with silencers) and blades (See NPC section). All hell should break loose, with players and opponents diving behind couches, over table tops whilst firing at each other in the low light (no penalty to the attackers). Combat should be short lived as even silenced guns are loud enough to cause alarm to the occupants of the several adjoining suites in the building. Within 20 minutes, local law enforcement will be on their way, having responded to an emergency call from one of the building's occupants.

At the end of the combat, Strugger will be found lying on the floor, haemorrhaging blood from his nose, despite not being injured he is clearly dying. If questioned, all he will say is that there is a darkness in his mind, that moves about and that 'it' made him do it, he will also volunteer that 'it' is going now, before asking Balder (if he's still alive) for forgiveness, prior to slipping into unconsciousness and slowly dying. No attempts to revive him will be successful.

This is incredibly important, player's should be in a rush to get out of the area prior to the arrival of the local police, though something very significant has just happened.

From here on in the referee can allow the characters to safely escape to their ship or stretch out the adventure with running gun battles and hot pursuit from the local (Adixur Prime police). Needless to say the bugs do not get planted and no new intelligence is gained from the Shadow Cartel, indeed there is some evidence to suggest that the supposed Cartel VIP never even existed, this false intelligence was most likely fed to Balder by the now deceased Strugger.

Adventure Clue 3 – Time in the Hole

Location Hemant 1729 (see library Data)

The Primus ship yard is enormous open frame structure hanging lazily in space above the dazzling blue/grey world that is Hemant. Whilst busy the yards are clearly not running at maximum capacity, with large, newly built bays being empty. Clearly there is much investment going on here as evidenced by the tell tale signatures of a profusion of pinnaces, cutters, fighters and shuttles flashing across their ship's sensor array, further study will reveal that they are manoeuvring about the station or entering and leaving the planet's atmosphere as they complete their space/airworthiness tests. The large bulk of a 3000 ton Tukera Lines freighter can be seen on scope, docked externally to the station's 'port section'. Once docked at the port annex, player's should get in touch with their contact on this world. Over the comm link Director Valstron Tay will be happy to see them and invite them down to his suite on the planet's surface, he will explain that the news he's got for them can't be transmitted electronically so they need to meet in person. Valstron will send a pinnacle for them and immediately asks them to sit tight at the port until 'his man' finds them.

'His man' is in fact a Vargr by the name of Gverrd Rheneg a talented if young pilot too full of his own ego for his own good, whilst this seems to be the norm with most Vargr, this trait is even more prevalent with Gverrd. On the way down he will find it hard to resist some impressive aerial acrobatics in the airframed pinnacle, bringing the pinnacle within meters of the craggy mountain peaks in a rather vulgar attempt to show off.

Once landed, the players will be led through an airtight dock into the mountain home of Director Valstron Tay. Valstron will meet them in a very plush lounge, a huge floor to ceiling window that stretches the width of the room, reveals the peaks of a magnificent craggy valley, grav vehicles and small craft can frequently be seen moving at enormous speeds across the landscape, accompanied by the occasional rumble of distant sonic booms. Valstron will enter the room and ask the group to take a seat in any of the available couches, whilst explaining that his home used to be a flight observation station, used in testing the latest atmospheric fighters back in the 960's. He was a young man at the time, working as junior manager, now he's risen in the corporate structure to become the head of ground side testing and a very valuable asset to the Imperial Navy and the MOJ.

Once everyone is seated and comfortable, some light refreshments will arrive, his staff will immediately leave the room, leaving him alone with the player characters, he

will explain that the room, is shielded and secure, characters might notice that they can no longer hear the myriad rumbles of sonic booms in the distance, the sound having been completely cut off. A thin meshed shutter will descend covering the exterior windows with the equivalent of a Faraday cage, keeping all electromagnetic signals out. The windows will immediately darken allowing the house lights to brighten.

'What I am about to tell you,' he will begin, 'is of the utmost secrecy, anyone repeating this information in a less than secure fashion may well forfeit their lives, hence the need for complete screening from all outside agencies.'

'Strange things are happening within Imperial Space, a few months ago, a 200 ton safari ship jumped out of the Mugama system, the ship's master a big game hunter, by the name of Jefferson Krell, is now residing safely in a psychiatric institute. We've had centuries to cure the myriad plagues of mental illnesses that have accompanied humanity since we've first evolved on old Terra, most healers and physicians will tell you that they can control and cure virtually everything physical and mental, yet they can't cure this man's deep seated problems.'

'He was apparently taking a party of rich, high paying passengers on a Mugaman Safari, in breach of the local laws, his ship apparently made landfall thousands of kilometres from any known settlement. Most Wildlife is protected on Mugama, but this didn't matter to Jefferson; instead of a photographic expedition he and his group took guns and began hunting game for real. Make no mistake the passengers knew what was going on, they paid extra for just such a privilege, it must have added a bit of excitement to the trip. You can imagine, a low tech world, not much in the way of sky watching sensors, large gaps in the net and a prohibition against harming the teeming wildlife or even carrying the type of weaponry they had stowed away in the ship's locker.'

His ship was on approach to the orbital yards, he was broadcasting all sorts of crazy stuff, babbling incoherently, shouting and ranting over the comm system, sometimes crying, but never making sense. We sent a cutter with a boarding party, he wouldn't let them aboard, in the end they had to blow through the hull, what they found inside was utter carnage. Every crew member, every passenger, every animal that had been captured had been killed in a gruesome and dreadful way, the extent of the violence was breathtaking. When the boarding party was homing in on the ship's bridge, Jefferson opened fire on them, ranting and screaming they overpowered him and brought his ship to one of our orbital facilities, he has since been interrogated by the finest minds on the station. None of them could make any sense of him, the guy was clearly deeply unhinged. So we did the only thing we could, we sent for a telepath.'

Valstron will pause then to allow the implications to sink in, as the room erupts into chaos with the player characters (possibly) and any accompanying NPC's expressing their horror that a man like him would even consider using a telepath, or have anything to do with the forbidden disciplines of psionics.

'That's right,' he will continue, once everyone has either calmed down or accepted the facts of the situation, 'Psionics exist and are routinely used on this base. How else do you think we keep out our competitor's spies! You might be surprised to discover that such usage is part of the terms and conditions of our contract with the Imperial Navy. It's useful for them and a benefit to us, a perfect business relationship, despite being illegal in the Imperium since the 800's. It's even more useful to the MOJ though. It took weeks of scanning, to get to the route of the trauma in that man's mind. One telepath even had to have therapy herself, some things are not meant to be seen.'

'Not one of them made it out, whilst hunting he apparently was witness to something highly grotesque, a secret ceremony in a large cave that apparently involved forcing groups of captured sophonts to fight to the death, some of these were off-worlders, a few, more local types. Secret fight clubs and gladiatorial contests have existed within human space as long as humans have been in space, what makes this one particularly interesting was the fact that they were overseen by two large and bulky looking Droyne and none other than Prince Luzardi, the ever popular dictator of Mugama. The droyne were probably soldiers, acting as his bodyguard. Apparently prince Luzardi was highly elated, in great spirits and thoroughly enjoying the spectacle, Intelligent beings and local carnivores were killing each other in front of him, his droyne friends and a number of spectators, some of which have been positively identified as members of his government, thanks to expert descriptions provided by the peeps. Whilst most watched the carnage unfold and enjoyed, one man clearly didn't like it at all, at least not at the start. One of the peeps uncovered a memory of a well dressed man chained to a wall, he was clearly distressed turning his head away from the proceedings before having it forced back by some of the other watchers. Later on, he was beaten and cowed into submission at which point the prince, stood in front of him. This unfortunate person then had a seizure.

'We're not sure what happened then, after all this information comes from a very sick mind, and took weeks of psionic interrogation to put it together into anything reasonably sensible, despite this we've put together a list of likely candidates. When you get to Mugama, find this man, we're reasonably sure that he was released unharmed at the end of the ceremony, although if this is not the case, bring him back, even if it's in a body bag if you have too.

We also know from recovered testimony that some of the combatants were crew members of the Irash Express. One psionic image recovered clearly confirms the details of the ship's patch sewn onto some coveralls. Following this incident, we think Jefferson's sanity cracked as his memories become fractured after this, also he became consumed with the need for cruel and relentless violence, though in fairness to him it seems that he tried to resist for the remainder of the trip, upon entry into jump space, he got tipped over the edge. I often think that this is the reason why one man scout ships usually have four cabins; human beings and jump space don't always mix that well, people need company and strong companions, just in case anything weird happens. But what do you do when the roughest, toughest and most dangerous man aboard loses his mind? You die it seems...

'When you get to Mugama, find this reluctant attendee, find out what happened to him and how it relates to this Polaris Stuff. I'll provide some artist impressions gleaned from Jefferson's mind. The MOJ desperately needs answers, so far we've got a formally respectable company in lock down thanks to strong evidence of slave trading, gladiatorial contests, piracy and organ harvesting. Meanwhile they're being shadowed by a company known to have been in financial difficulties, making decisions that were clearly unprofitable at the time that have now paid off in a big way with Polaris out of the way. When you compound this with the Hebrin gang culture of the cybes being in the employment of the Shadow Cartel, what remains is the pieces of a puzzle that do not fit any known

solution.' There seems to be an awful lot of violence going around in this, I just don't like it.

Conflict – The Floschi Extraction

Location Mugama (1728 See Library Data)

After a trouble free touchdown at Sulemanneran Extral downport a cursory custom's check and a disturbing 200 km long ride across a decaying bridge, player characters should arrive safely in the capitol city of Piloza, a wide, flat affair with a few high risen buildings in the city centre (the financial district), hotels are cheap and plentiful and sponsored by government grants now that the Prince has decreed that tourism is this planet's next best thing! The crowds are bustling, the streets busy and the technology low. What is noticable however is that the local law enforcers are equipped with high tech radio communicators strapped to their waists. Should characters visit the city centre they will also notice some newly installed video comm booths standing out in stark juxtaposition to the more simple buildings and walkways around them. This is a world in a state of change...

What is more disturbing however is that there is no sign of their MOJ contact (at least not yet), player characters might have been told that he is a belter, running a former scout surveyor, yet there was no sign of the vessel anywhere within the system. However in the absence of their contact they do have other things to do. One such thing is to use the identikit mock ups and ask around in order to follow up on the information given them by Valston Tay and determine the identity of the 'prisoner' in the cave.

Checking print newspapers and magazines might give them some clues, asking people might raise suspicions, it turns out that the person in question is none other than Rhadman Floschi (See NPC Section) a prominent member of the Conservationist Guild, who has been tipped to be it's leader when democratic proceedings on Mugama are restored. He has been very outspoken in his criticism of Prince Luzardi and his policies which he claims are in danger of permanently harming the planet's eco-system, especially with regards to overfishing in the Bahai Sea. However he has been less critical these last few months, leading some to think that he has been bribed, silenced or has sold out his beliefs in the pursuit of power, (these are possible rumours or complaints the player characters might encounter when asking around or investigating, also the identikit photofits are a close enough match to allow most people who are asked to say 'he looks like Rhadman Floschi', although some may be unsure).

Once they've ascertained Rhadman Floschi's identity the next step should be to find out where he lives or works and plan a way of extraditing him, as after all Valston's request was pretty clear, bringing him back alive is the preferred option. This man knows something of critical importance that might clear up some of the many mysteries surrounding this confusing investigation.

Floschi works in the Piloxi Head Quarters of the Conservationist Guild, which is located in the city's financial district, he has a villa style home in the hills overlooking the city affording him a fantastic view over the sprawling mess that is this world's capitol city. At all times he has a light though significant bodyguard of 4 to 5 personnel, either guarding his home or his offices. To make life a bit harder his VIP 'luxury staff car' is also very heavily armored (although not obviously so).

Players might consider bribing their way in (risky), bluffing their way in (also risky) or a good old fashioned kidnapping (very risky), the latter option should prove to be a very tough fight, that at the least should involve days of discreet surveillance prior to a fast storming of his offices or home. Wise players might consider

Floshi's home to be the 'softest' target when compared to the risk of storming his city centre offices, given that there are lots of law enforcement officers on the streets at present (indeed there has been since Prince Luzardi's ascendance to power) not to mention the increased military presence felt about the region since his 'coup'.

The exact details of the extraction are left to the referee, despite the player's best efforts Floshi's people will find a way of raising the alarm and summoning more help, either at his home of office building.

Psionic Characters who are in the group (if any) should begin to feel 'intimations of doom' on approach to Floshi or feelings of 'foreboding'. Indeed the presence of a psionic individual (even untrained) will alert Floshi to the fact that the group is coming within range of him, needless to say if this is the case then the element of surprise will be lost, the extraction should be made several levels tougher as a result of this. During the fight (at the height of the violence) a single psionic individual in the group will come under Telepathic Assault, if the assault is successful the characters will be rendered unconscious, should the unconscious character then fail a suitable saving roll (e.g a will roll in T20) that character will be inhabited by the same psionic parasite that currently inhabits the mind of Prince Luzardi and Rhadman Floshi. In any case when the actual combat begins, additional help will be summoned psionically by the joint entity that controls both Luzardi and Floshi.

If the players make it back to the starport they should be safe once they've convinced the local marine garrison that they are working on behalf of the MOJ. Needless to say the guard commander might be annoyed that his people were not briefed on the operation or even included in it (unless of course they were), although the player characters can claim a defence of plausible deniability. Sadly the characters will have to leave the starport at some time, alternatively the characters may have used their own ship or a subcraft as the vehicle of choice to perform the extraction, in which case they will be met by a Droyne Ship in orbit (summoned telepathically). The vessel will immediately open fire whilst simultaneous comm signals from the planets surface will 'demand the release' of Rhadman Floshi, one of which will come from none other than Prince Luzardi Himself, surrounded by his advisors all of which remain silent as Luzardi feasts on the violence and tension of the situation whilst promising the player characters 'severe consequences' for their actions.

The Droyne Ship will close on the player characters vessel and open fire relentlessly, (they don't care if they kill everyone aboard including Rhadman as afterall it's the same entity that inhabits the Luzardi, his advisors and the Droyne Leadership so the death of Rhadman is unimportant in the grand scheme of things, unless of course they can escape with him in which case information might be obtained).

At this point a second ship will join the fight, a Hilixi Class Scout Surveyor namely 'The Standing Invite', it's lightly armed though should serve as a distraction to the Droyne Vessel. The 'Invite' has been hiding in the Wakeman's Drift Belt for a number of weeks only leaving the belt on a low signature course after arrival from the players ship. The player's should receive a comm message from

Shikai Gia Hessi, the 'ship's master' he will advise the players to get to the jump point as quickly as possible and

set course for the Hemant System (Empty Quarters 1728 BA97312-B) and rendezvous at the orbital ship yard, with the additional request that their prisoner is 'knocked out prior to jump'. If players break of the engagement and make it to the jump point they should escape the system. If player's do not heed Shikai's advice then Floshi will go completely berserk at Jump transition and become exceptionally violent, possibly harming himself and others in the process. If he is unconscious then he will remain so until jump exit the following week (nothing will wake him). On precipitation out of Jump he will wake as if having had a refreshing sleep. After a few moments of cognition, his old personality will surface, the psionic presence has gone. He will complain that the last few months were like a dream and have scattered recollections of different events although nothing cohesive.

A few hours later a heavily damaged 'Invite' will emerge from Jump space, Shikai will contact the player's ship in addition to Valston Tay at the orbital yards. A meeting will be arranged and Floshi will be taken off their hands by an Imperial Marine Detachment. Valston will insist that the player characters hang around for a few weeks whilst Floshi undergoes psionic interrogation. In the meantime a Naval Courier will bring Rebba and her staff from Hebrin.(a single jump for a high performance vessel). Valstron will ensure that the player's costs are met if mortgage payments are due etc, when their ship is 'grounded'.

Resolution – The Keepers of Secrets

Location Hemant (1729 See Library Data)

The player group and significant NPC's (including Shikai and Rebba) will meet in Valstron's secure suite on the planet's surface approximately two weeks after the group's arrival. Rebba will bring the meeting to order and announce to the group that it is the findings of the Imperial Ministry of Justice that the Imperium is under attack...

She will explain that she has reviewed the reports compiled by Lydia Jenson regarding their encounters along the main, when cross referenced against the player characters own logs and other existing evidence as well as being compared with the 'incident' on Miigaki in which Balder Haymen's operation was betrayed, a clear pattern seems to be emerging from this madness. When correlated with the psionic staff aboard the station who have been 'interrogating' Floshi, it makes for a very disturbing analysis. Apparently the peeps have pieced together his dream like and half forgotten memories. Floshi was indeed a voice of genuine opposition to the newly formed government on Mugama, however several Imperial months after Prince Luzardi was sworn in as the planet's nominal ruler, Floshi was visited by some of Luzardi's men. They kidnapped him and took him to a remote cave on the other side of the world. It was at this point he was witness to the bizarre ceremony and scared out of his sanity by the intense violence, gladiatorial contests and killings. He was beaten and humiliated, though when he thought things couldn't get any worse and that his life was over, the Prince approached him, at this point his true life memories become confused.

At this point Shikai will speak and state that for years he's never really trusted the Droyne, everyone know's they are a psionic species, so clearly they are mixed up in this somehow. He will also express his dislike of psionic interrogation, stating that any sophont shouldn't have to worry about the quality of their thoughts (like he has had too these last few weeks) hanging around this place.

Rebba will silence the objection, and continue explaining that deep psionic probing of Floshi's mind has revealed the prior existence of a completely new species. The psionics personnel on

base think that the entity has withdrawn from Floshi's mind or was forced too when the player characters ship entered jump space. They have managed to piece together the following logical extrapolations.

This new species has a hive mentality, in this case a single consciousness is not necessarily confined to an individual body, so the awareness of these creatures can be considered to be a 'meta-consciousness'. It seems that its 'centre of awareness' can move from individual to individual, whilst it can seemingly expand and dominate any number of individuals, it would seem that this species needs at least one body to anchor itself in.

From the testimony gathered so far, it is understood or suspected that these creatures are seriously disturbed or even killed by a trip through jump space. It seems that Jefferson Krell was a latent psionic, who became partially infected by the psionic parasite centred on Prince Luzardi. Jefferson's mind was already in the process of breaking down when his ship entered jump space, this sent him into an insane state which resulted in his killing of everyone aboard. Violence is in this species nature, it seems that they draw energy from or thrive on the heightened levels of 'psychic' tension generated by most sentients in situations of extreme stress. It would seem that this energy is used to allow these parasites to expand their awareness enough to engulf a weakened or accepting mind within their close proximity.

Rebba will explain that they suspect these creatures to have entered Imperial space, a long time ago using slower than light transportation. Rebba is also of the opinion that a single entity could in the right circumstances control an entire world, either through directly absorbing the populace or by working it's influence into a position of power which it clearly has done with Prince Luzardi on Mugama.

Shikai will interject that he already suspected this, which is why he advised the player characters to ensure that Floshi was unconscious before entering jump space...

After a few moments of uncomfortable silence Rebba will ask Shikai why he felt the need to keep this to himself instead of warning the Imperium. Shikai will explain that didn't know how far their influence was reaching and has suspected their hand in the lock down of Polaris Lines. Also prior to these latest revelations, he understood that no one would believe him, after all he has been called many things in his time, ranging from 'lacking in sanity' to 'extremist' and 'conspiracy nut'. Shikai will then reveal that he has been discreetly scanning the 'Droyne Autonomous Zone' on Mugama more or less continually whilst working the Wakeman's Drift belt in the same System. He will proudly explain that he had left a modified prospectors sattellite in geo-stationary orbit above the 'Droyne Land Lease', giving it the signature of a peice of space debris. The results showed relatively high volumes of traffic travelling between Piloxi and the Droyne settlement, nearly all of which could be confirmed on the ground as government flights.

Shikai has developed the theory that the prince was invited to witness a Droyne casting ceremony after spending many months of negotiating the land lease and friendship agreements that would ultimately turn his world into a two nation state. Whilst casting ceremonies don't normally take place in the presence of non Droyne, Sikai suspects that the prince was deeply honoured to have been invited. Shikai suspects that the parasite invaded his mind at this 'casting ceremony', thereby ending the career and life

of what was once a deeply honourable man. Shikai will explain that his suspicions and conclusions have been included in all of his field reports for the last few years yet most officials (Rebba included) have ignored most information not directly related to Shikai's current investigation to be the mumblings of a crank...

Rebba will apologise for this severe lapse of judgement on her part and suggest a private meeting later on to discuss the issue further, before brushing the matter aside and continuing on in her usual formal style, stating that testimony obtained from the criminal 'Shabasta Tuer' is also congruent with the modus operandi of these parasites, although in Shabasta's case the psionic entity either withdrew from his mind or centred itself elsewhere at the moment of Shabasta's capture.

Rebba will continue by stating that it is impossible to know how far these creatures have penetrated into Imperial space, or how far reaching their influence is, she suspects that they have got into the inner circle of the Shadow Cartel, as this would explain it's change in operational doctrine. It was long since suspected that a new organisation had taken control of the Cartel or at the very least is working alongside it to fund criminal activites across the sector the proceeds of which are alledgedly being used to fund anti Imperial activities, nominally called 'The Keepers of Secrets' or 'Keepers' for short, so until more is known about these psionic entities they will be referred to as 'Keepers' as the coordinated actions of this new species seems to be the most likely cause of this additional activity. As the vast bulk of criminal incidents examined by the MOJ in this investigation have clearly been coordinated across multiple starsystems another interesting dimension has been added to the case. There is strong evidence to suggest that this species has a difficulty with jump space. In order to coordinate their activities across vast distances, there are a few possible conclusions. They either have a network of loyal (non inhabited sentients) acting as couriers for them, or they are psionically gifted enough to communicate with each other telepathically across parsecs of space. The only other and frankly more terrifying conclusion is that so far the MOJ has been investigating the activities of a single entity that has multiple vessels for its consciousness spread across a number of worlds in this quadrant or even the sector and beyond. Alternatively they might be accessing some hithertoo unknown faster than light communications technology, this the physicists agree is probably the most obscene suggestion of the day.

So far no one has any idea why such a species would take an interest in the Imperium, one thing that is increasingly obvious however is that Polaris Lines is innocent of the charges brought against them. Rebba will have the lock down lifted immediately. Fresh evidence generated by the Player Characters is enough to convince her that Majestic Lines is playing a bigger part in this than anything Polaris has done, so the focus of the Investigation will be Majestic Lines from this moment onwards. Just to be fair she will order that Majestic Lines be locked down with the same terms and conditions applied to them that were endured by Polaris Lines. With an immediate 'bounty' placed on 'The Smoke and Mirrors' which will be the focus of a very special investigation of its own. She is also considering the tenous links to the Shadow Cartel and how to investigate then, she strongly suspects that the cartel may have taken over by the keepers which would explain their changes in operational doctrine.

Epilogue – The Golden Eclipse

For now some questions remain unanswered, such as what was the Irash Express doing in the Mugama System, where did it go after leaving that system and where is the base of operations for suspected slave and organ trading in the quadrant, as presumably

polaris passengers are being transferred to other facilities elsewhere. Rebba will voice her suspicions that presumably Majestic/The Cartel are using captured Polaris vessels, to perform acts of piracy and aggression on other merchant shippers (although none of this is directly proven).

Other loose ends include being unsure of the exact identity of the operatives responsible for destroying the Magnum Opus, or the devastating attack on Cooke (Empty Quarter 2030 A868837-9) which effectively decapitated Polaris as an organisation. The only thing that spoils this picture is the news that a Majestic owned Type M subsidised Liner 'The Golden Eclipse' was hijacked by persons unknown and scuttled in the gas giant with all hands, passengers and cargo lost. The vessel had recently taken over the former Polaris route to Irash from Hebrin (Empty Quarter 1930) to Drago's Belt (Empty Quarter 2032), passing through Shuiku (Empty Quarter 2034) before terminating at Irash (Empty Quarter 2036) and

reversing the route all of the way back to Hebrin. This is yet another 'fact' that doesn't seem to make any sense at all in this case.

Rebba will advise the characters that she is travelling to Davlan's Estate on Cooke (Empty Quarter 2030 Cooke A868837 – 9) to give him the news that his company is (whilst not yet totally exonerated) now considered to be 'less guilty' by the MOJ and free to resume normal trading. Clearly the player characters should accompany her in order to get their remuneration. Once at Cooke (Empty Quarter 2030 A868837-9) she will have another job for them designed to tie up the ever increasing loose ends of this case.

If player characters haven't spotted it as of yet, perhaps an NPC can suggest to them (when they are next in jump) that Shikai didn't exactly answer the question regarding fore knowledge of the Keepers...

The answers to these questions and concerns can be found in the next installment of the Lorimar Slot.

Data Files

Adventure Locations

Hemant 1729 BA97312-B Lo Ni 414 Im M0 V* M6 V [M3 V M7 V] 16,332 km 1.25g

Hemant-Aeronautics are a major supplier of small craft, subcraft and non starships throughout the subsector, with 400 permanent residents made up of chief executives, board members and their families, other employees are drawn in from neighbouring worlds (with a great deal from Hebrin) in 6 monthly cyclic 'shifts' being in the main engineers, naval architects, zero-g-construction experts and support staff that oversee the largely automated design and build programs typical of the Hemant Yards. A small orbital port attached to the Primus Shipyard directs system traffic and handles most in system trade and transfer requests. The planet below is large, slightly chilly with extended polar ice caps that stretch all of the way down to the local tropics. Large shallow oceans (77% hydrosphere) teem with life, though all of it is imported from other worlds within the sector, the result of along abandoned terraforming attempt. The dense atmosphere is breathable though tainted by uncontrolled fungal spores that irritate the lungs in humans and related species such as the Vargr, hence filter masks are a must when venturing out. Where rain falls, it is usually highly acidic, with the result that plant life is almost non-existent where the ice gives way to rock. Indeed all of the planet's oxygen is produced by algae in this world's seas, being the only complete stage of the terraforming process so far. Some Executives and their staff do live in the elevated and craggy mountainous regions close to the equator where the taint is bearable and homes are hermetically sealed. Although most use of the atmosphere is simply for atmospheric testing of high performance pinnacles, ship's boats and launches or the occasional military design. The vast expanses of rocky wasteland are also considered ideal as bombing/testing ranges by many of the armed forces of nearby worlds, not to mention units of both the Imperial Army and Marine Forces, that can often be seen visiting this system for exercises and training.

Miigaki 1730 D479678-6 Ni 522 Im M5 V 0.5G

A world in Decline, this frozen ball of ice, is located in orbit 5 of its primary star, the M5V Shingi-431 (a rule of man designation) and home to 5 million inhabitants of various nation states. Whilst it is thought that the oceans were once wholly liquid, they are now covered with a thick crust of ice, that in places can be up to 12 km thick, heat generated by volcanism serves to keep the lower regions liquid. Primitive life, exists on Miigaki, the oxygen by-products of which escape to the surface in the form of superheated steam breaking through the crust in geyser form, only to fall to the ice as quick frozen snow. Whilst harsh this does serve to sustain breathable oxygen levels, albeit with a high sulphur taint that gives the entire planet a rotten stench. Filter masks are an essential fact of life when venturing outside on Miigaki, along with cold weather clothing. Most settlements are clustered around 'Fixtate' a small island that protrudes above the snows and ice of the northern 'ocean' and are built either in the bedrock or hewn into the frozen 'shallows'. Each city has its own port complete with hangers, maintenance sheds and machinery capable of heating the ice into unrefined fuel for visiting starships. Thus no central or ruling port authority exists, although most traffic stops at Kikkigga, the downport attached to the largest city of Vimiri, as this city represents the best market for off world goods. Agreements between the city states exist, though rivalries and tensions tend to spoil any good will generated, the main cause of conflict being access to the deep ocean vents, some governments want to tap them for power or mine them for minerals, others want to see them preserved as living examples of life tenaciously clinging on in a dead star system. Various climatic models and some fossil evidence suggests that the planet was very much warmer in the very distant past. Unemployment is high on Miigaki as traditionally this insular population has offered little in the way of trade to other worlds, most industry is service based in which individuals cater for the needs of their fellow citizens or work in the local bureaucracy. The bulk of transport is powered internal combustion engines that use hydrogen for fuel, large ice crawlers travel slowly between settlements whilst high speed transport is provided by ultra-secure enclosed rail links. Primitive fission reactors supply electrical energy to the city states whilst internal combustion engines fuelled by liquid hydrogen do the work of powering vehicles or smaller scale generators. Laws vary from place to place but are generally harsh, impinging heavily on personal freedoms (average law level 8).

Iridia 1830 E561443-3 Lo Ni 710 Im G9 V

Home to a small fiercely independent population of former political prisoners, recently granted independence by the Hebrin Government, the majority of which are spread out across this small though pleasant world, the bulk of which live on small homesteads or frontier territories in family groups or sustainable villages. Most off world traffic lands at the 'Drop Point' downport the traditional dumping ground for former prisoners. There is much angst and ill will between the modern day inhabitants of Iridia and Hebrin as the harsh treatment given to the original forced colonists still lives on in the form of local legends and handed down memories. In short the early colonists were dumped at the 'Drop Point' landing field with little more than the clothes on their back. The indigenous flora and fauna is compatible with Human/Vargr physiology, so crops can be grown and animals farmed for their meat. Most Iridian communities are introspective places where the pace of life is very slow and agrarian in nature. The low population combined with the vast amounts of wilderness and the harshness of frontier life have seen laws of hospitality evolve into rigid social codes, guaranteeing that all strangers will get a warm welcome all over this planet (providing they are not natives of Hebrin). Iridia remains lightly explored or only furtively scanned from orbit as venturing into the vast expanses of wilderness surrounding the settlements is not to be undertaken lightly. Living conditions are rough with sustainable technologies being around the tech level 3 mark. Most transport is provided by beasts of burden indigenous to this world, the main port is slightly more progressive with some imported higher tech items (a communications Tower with continental range radio) needed to maintain the class E classification. The imperial navy maintains a constant though light patrol in system as the local population do not have the necessary technologies to scan or inspect their own system, otherwise this world would be a haven to smugglers, pirates and career criminals from throughout the entire subsector. This world is a sad and interesting testimony to the former governments of Hebrin that decided to use this planet as a prison for dissidents and political opponents rather than easing the burdens of the vast amounts of population pressure back home by instigating a full scale colonisation programme. The 'official' reason behind this or so the Hebrin Authorities claim is that Iridia has limited amounts of surface water and is placed within a system that has no gas-giants, making a large population difficult to support, not to mention refuelling difficulties that such a large traffic volume would generate.

1728 Mugama E5537AB-5 921 G1V 8,221 km 0.22G 0.42 Atm

Most worlds are empty, most worlds are dead, those that aren't are most usually filled with badly altered or 'geneered' bio forms destined for life as mobile terraformers, not so with Mugama! Despite being a small, thin atmosphered low gravity world with no moon, it teems with indigenous life, much of which is avian in nature, wide winged flyers abound soaring high on the many 'thermals' of this dry and otherwise arid world. Whilst great 'Annurga' herds stalk the deserts or rich scrub lands of the vast continent of 'Landfall'.

Mugama's population of 90,000,000 live an urban or semi rural life in or around the three 'great' cities of Piloza, Necron & Billihiza that are built on the coast of Mugama's only ocean, 'The Bahai Sea'. An artificial island within this southern ocean is home to the 'Sulemanneran Extral' downport, this is connected to the mainland via a 200 km long rail bridge (this vast, wooden, steel and concrete structure desperately needs repairing). The isolation ensures that visitors don't get too close to the indigenous population, the bulk of which live in wide and sprawling single story buildings. Culturally the locals have absorbed elements of traditional Villani life despite having a mixed populous of Humans, Bwaps, Vargr and the occasional Sydite. There is even a Droyne colony near the equator (almost on the other side of the world from the capitol city of Piloza). The Droyne 'land lease' is considered to be sovereign territory of the Droyne and classified as a no go area for the other residents of this world. The Droyne live a pastoral life in the tradition of their people and keep themselves to themselves (this is seen to be a good thing by the mainstream population who distrust the reputed psionic abilities of the Droyne). Mugama's low gravity and thin atmosphere are greatly appreciated by the Droyne who reputedly maintain their own starport, although Droyne ships are a rarity in the Mugama system.

The current ruler is the ever popular Prince Luzardi a charismatic dictator that has recently swept to power after arranging the tumultuous overthrow of Mugama's former inept democratic government, forcing the president to step down after weeks of rioting and civil disorder in response to wide spread poverty seemingly caused by a lack of inward investment in Mugama, that saw some of the best local industries close down.

Whilst the prince is popular the laws he has enacted are somewhat extreme with curfews and set work times being the norm. The prince is keen to raise inward investment by encouraging sector wide corporations to visit the world and examine the vast tracts of unused or undeveloped land that take up most the world's habitable land mass. Prince Luzardi is very keen to try and tame his restless population by importing high tech relaxants and has promised access to a 'virtual' x-boat network extension that will allow the inhabitants to talk, visit and interact with each other without leaving their homes. His critics frequently say that such diversions will sap the will of the people to demonstrate against his political decisions whilst encouraging them not to venture out after curfew, indeed this may even explain the prince's eagerness to invest in such technologies.

Indigenous technology is most commonly encountered at TL5, some imported higher level tech exists such as the ultra fast trains (TL9) used to ferry people (permit required) between the three major cities of this small and otherwise strange world. Other rail links exist to carry bulk goods across the wide plains and desert regions of Mugama to secret government facilities or military bases/testing ranges in the dense scrub lands north of the Bahai sea. TAS has recently downgraded the travel status of this world from Amber to Green as Prince Luzardi's government now seems to be firmly entrenched in the Mugaman way of life.

There is a small though seizable community of professional hunters on Mugama some of which ferry the occasional tourists to the deserts for photographic 'kills' (as weaponry is tightly controlled on Mugama and most animal species are protected under law) whilst other members of the 'Eco-Guild' run boat or submersible trips into the shallow depths of the Bahai Sea. The Guild has evolved into a society of conservationists since hand guns and small arms were banned to all non military personnel and have started to raise complaints of excessive fishing in the Bahai region. Such a small sea with a limited and delicate eco-system will soon be threatened with collapse should overfishing continue or so they say... So far their complaints have been unheeded by the prince who does not wish to disturb the delicate 'status quo' of Mugaman life as the fishing industry employs a great deal of

people. It is hoped that when off world investment finally arrives in the form of heavy industry, traditional fishing can be phased out with the work being replaced by manufacturing jobs. The prince is radical in ideas and has promised to deliver an improvement in living standards with his ever popular slogan 'Tech 10 in Ten' referring to the number of Imperial Standard Years he has set himself to achieve this task...

System Overview

G1V	Yella	G1V
Orbit 2	Wakeman's Drift	X000000-0
Orbit 3	Mugama	AB-5 Im
Orbit 4	Belharashi Belt	X000000-0
Orbit 5	Pharzi	SGG 13 moons
Orbit 6	Freya orbit 16	X220000-0 Pix X100000-0

Supporting Cast: People of the Mugama Main.

Rhadman Floschi **A Mugaman Politician** - Member of the Conservationists guild Possessed by a keeper.

	(Professional 7 th Level)	Cr110,000	1 x Ice Crawler	
STR:13 +1	DEX:14 +2	CON:17 +3	INT:15 +2	AC:12 (unarmored)
EDU:13 +1	WIS:10 -0	CHR:13 +1	SOC:14	T-5 Age 38
SR	BAB+1	FORT+2	RFX+2	WILL+5
HP:35 LB:17	1 x Machete, 1 x Hunting Rifle, 1 x Gold Watch, 1 x VIP transport (armored car)			
Homeworld:	Mugama Empty Quarter 1728 E5537AB-5			
Feats:	Weapon Proficiency (Swordsman/Marksman)			Carousing
	Connections (Government/Conservationist Guild)			Armor Proficiency (Light)
	Professional (Speciality – Journalist)			Barter
	Natural Born Leader			
Skills:	P/Journalist-10	Survival-10	Gather information-6	Ride-4
	Innuendo-6	P/Admin-10	K/Law (Mugaman-5)	K/Interstellar Law-2
	Leader-4	Liason-4	Broker-4	

A tough outdoor type of a man, once a well respected journalist and wildlife reporter, now a prominent member of the conversationalist Guild on Mugama, an outspoken critic of the present government and leader Prince Luzardi. Sadly this has changed recently when he became a subsidiary host for the psionic entity that has invaded the mind of Prince Luzardi, he has since been less outspoken politically and is slowly changing the policies of the guild from one of opposition to compliance with the present governments position.

Physically he is tall, thick set and dark skinned, his once sharp mind is now a host to the creature that dominates not only Prince Luzardi but other members of the government and the Droyne encampment recently set up on the other side of the planet. He frequently takes himself off to a 'retreat' in the mountains, the reasons for which are unknown, he is accompanied at all times by a team of five or six bodyguards and a driver for his armored luxury transport.

Balder Hayman **Imperial Human Male Citizen (Information Broker – MOJ Operative)**

	(Rogue 6 th Level)	Cr130,000	1 x Ice Crawler	
STR:12 +1	DEX:9 -1	CON:13 +1	INT:14 +2	AC:9 (unarmored/Flak Jacket)
EDU:13 +1	WIS:10 -0	CHR:13 +1	SOC:15	T-3 Age 30
SR	BAB+4	FORT+2	RFX+5	WILL+2
HP:45 LB:13	1 x high passage, 1 x mid passage.		1 x Flak Jacket (AR 4)	
Homeworld	Miigaki (Empty Quarter 1730 D479678-6)			
Feats:	Armor Proficiency (Light/Medium)			Brawling
	Weapons Proficiency (Swordsman/Marksman)			Smuggling
	Connections (Naval Intelligence/Underworld)			
Skills:	T/Mechanical-4	T/Electronics-2	Bluff-6	Gather Information-9
				Listen-7

Balder Hayman is a native of Miigaki and knows this world as well anyone born here, which also it seems gives him the right to moan vigorously about everything he finds distasteful about Miigakian life, this includes, the climate, the state of the city streets, the present government and the tax system. He is 30 standard years old, has light brown hair and like most natives of Miigaki is very tall and slender, a side effect of growing up in 0.5G. Amongst his peers he is considered to be quite strong, though slightly clumsy. He has a pleasant demeanour despite his constant moaning. He works out several times a week to maintain his physique though will find it hard pressed to compete with a human being that has been raised in a 1G gravity well.

Hayman's official line of work is that of an information broker, buying and selling bits of technical data or industrial espionage, this makes him an ideal resource for the MOJ and naval Intelligence, due to his unparalleled access into the many criminal communities that make use of his services. These talents have served to make him exceptionally rich, living like a minor member of the Imperial Nobility. This means he can afford the best protection and the most loyal retainers. It is rumoured that he can make or break subsector corporations with the data that flows through his office. What's unusual about Hayman is that he manages to do all of this without computers, his office is stuffed full of low tech filing cabinets and secret compartments where the really sensitive stuff is hidden. Perversely this has served to make his operation more secure than others on nearby worlds, after all in order to steal data someone has to break into his office and actually take it, putting hackers out of the picture as his premises are always guarded by the best security his money can buy.

Balder also owns a luxury ice crawler although doesn't have the skill to operate it, he considers it a matter of prestige to have a driver do it for him.

Shikai Gia Hessi **An Imperial Human Male Citizen** **Belter 6th Level** **MOJ Special Investigator**
Cr120,000

(Belter level 6) Age 30 T=4 (starting age 14)

Str:10	+0	Dex:11	+0	Con: 10	+0	: 10	+0	AC 10/3 (unarmored/Vacc Suit)
Wis:12	+0	Cha: 10	+0	Edu: 10		Soc: 10		
Sta: 22, Lb:		SR	BAB+3	FORT+2		RFX+2	WILL+5	
1 x Snub Pistol,		1 x Shotgun,		1 x Laser Carbine				

Feats: Vessel (grav, ship's boat, starship), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, ship's weapons), Zero-G/Low-G Adaptation, Improved Zero-G adaptation, Brawling, Geological Survey, 3-D awareness

Equipment: Vacc Suit-12, Snub pistol or shotgun or carbine, tool kit

Skills:	Appraise +9	K/Mining +10	P/Prospecting +10
	T/Engineering +9	Demolitions +9	Gunnery +6
	K/Geology +5	Search +5	Pilot +4.

Like a lot of belters, Shikai is not especially strong or even quick, however he is diligent, methodical and keen to work with other belters, gaining access to the unofficial grapevine that permeates deeply entrenched belter societies. This is part of the reason why he choose not to enjoy the solitary life of an asteroid prospector, sinking his money instead into a reconditioned former scout surveyor ("The Standing Invite"). At 400 tons it bristles with second hand sensor technologies and makes an ideal prospecting ship. Unlike other independent belters he's in the fairly unusual position of having to pay a mortgage for the vessel, whilst this is expensive the 'invite' always pays its way making a worthwhile living for Shikai and his crew. Unknown to the larger community Shikai has been working for the MOJ as a field agent, following the rumour trail and reporting back to the regional office on Hebrin. This position is also very rewarding not least in terms of the additional income, but also because Shikai is a classic conspiracy nut... "When working alone in hard vacuum you get an awful lot of time to think," he will claim to anyone willing to listen, thus the recent upswing of commerce raiding and outright piracy in the region not to mention the formation of the Loyal Sector Guard in the Gateway region has disturbed him deeply, making him convinced that all of the coreward events of recent years are part of a larger conspiracy. "The classic 'cause a problem, solve a problem, get what you want move' often employed by dictatorial governments," or so he will claim. Hence he considers the 'misguided LSG' to be a part of the problem as he sees it. He is presently working on a 'black rock' site in the Mugama system, so called because the authorities on Mugama don't know anything about it, with his ship standing ready at Wakeman's drift, an ideal location in orbit 2 of "Yella" in which to observe ship movements around the rest of the system whilst being sufficiently close to the sun that their Em is naturally shielded, the sensor black holes provided by the belt are an added bonus.

Shikai is regularly in contact with the other MOJ operatives on the Hebrin – Mugama run via secret naval couriers so will be aware of their player character's identities, ship transponder and sensor profile, so will easily recognise their vessel on arrival in the Mugama system. At which point he will leave his position in the belt and head on a 'low energy course' to Mugama.

Lydia Jenson **A former Solomani Human Female Citizen (Sol Sec Monitor - MOJ Operative)**

(Professional-7th Level) Cr7,500 + Cr4,000 annual pension

STR:14	+2	DEX:7	-2	CON:8	-1	INT:18	+4	AC: 8/12 (unarmored/Flak Jacket)
EDU:14	+2	WIS:8	-1	CHR:9	-1	SOC:6		T-5 Age 38
SR		BAB+1		FORT+2		RFX+2	WILL+5	
HP:27	LB:8	1 x high passage,	1 x mid passage.			1 x Flak Jacket (AR 4)		

Feats: Armor Proficiency (Light/Vacc Suit) Professional Speciality T/Sensors
 Research
 Connections (MOJ) Interrogation

Appraise-4 Driving-4Gambling-8 Gather Info-8 K/Interstellar Law-6
 Leader-1 Liaison-5 Sense Motive-8 Survival-4 Swim-2
 T/Computer-10 T/Medical-6 T/Sensors-6 Trader-8 Bribery-5
 K/Psychology-4

This unassuming and small boned woman is a former Sol Sec monitor that after several years of travel and party service, crossed the imperial/Solomani border (effectively defecting to the Imperium, even though political relationships were somewhat better before the war), working her way through Diaspora Sector and finally into the Imperial core after crossing Massilia Sector in a variety of professional roles, assisting imperial companies or licensed investigators with their data gathering operations. Lydia was later recruited by the Imperial Ministry of Justice and has worked enthusiastically for them ever since, seeing herself as a champion of the weak and the oppressed. This strong sense of social justice, combined with her incredibly intelligent, lively and inquisitive mind coupled with a solid education to back it up makes Lydia unstoppable when on a case.

Like most freedom loving Solomani she has no qualms when it comes to bending the rules to get the job done. Thankfully her position in the MOJ effectively makes her immune to prosecution, unless of course she conducts some serious professional misdemeanour's. Being an amateur psychologist she loves to understand the workings of the mind, being brilliant at gathering information or subtle clues from body language or what is simply 'not said'. Her sharp intellect also draws her to games of chance (that she does very well at) in addition to making her a natural trader or market analyst. The recent hostilities between the Imperium and the Solomani have concerned her greatly, as she worries for her family and the few friends she left behind in the Rim. Her Solomani heritage has caused her a few prejudicial problems now that the war is in full swing although her origins are not immediately obvious to the mainstream population around her (as after all her humans look alike). Officially her present role is to assist the player characters and oversee their investigation, combining her skills with theirs, her true mission however is to compile secret reports regarding the PC's investigation and forward them to Rebba Harrison by secure courier, as the player characters have not yet earned Rebba's trust. Needless to say Lydia's background as a Sol Sec Monitor makes her ideal for this, so the players had better make sure their official reports don't omit anything, as the consequences could be severe. Lydia has become acutely aware that in an increasingly dangerous universe she has no weapon skills, this perceived lack of ability is really starting to irritate her making her desperate to learn.

Wilhelm Strugger A hired Hand with Balder Hayman A Mercenary 6th Level
 STR:12 +1 DEX:12 +1 CON:11 +0 INT:10 +0 AC: 8/12 (unarmored/Flak Jacket)
 EDU:10 +0 WIS:10 +1 CHR:10 +0 SOC:6 T-4 Age 34
 SR BAB+7+2 FORT+5 RFX+2 WILL+3
 HP:33 LB:11 1 x Flak Jacket (AR 4), 1 x Auto Pistol

Feats: Armor Proficiency (Light/Medium/Vacc Suit)
 Weapon Proficiency (marksman, Combat Rifleman, Defensive Roll)
 Evasion, Brawling, Alertness, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (auto-pistol), Weapon specialisation (auto-pistol)
 Vessel (wheeled)

Skills: 18 Bluff-2 Driving-2Intimidate-2 Leader-4 Move silently-4
 T/Commo-2 T/Computer-2

Wilhelm Strugger was a once loyal and likeable contact of Balder Hayman although not a native of Miigaki, at some point he was consumed by a psionic entity in order to infiltrate Balder's operation and interfere with his small scale though perceptive investigation of the Shadow Cartel.

Valstron Tay A Human Male Professional 9th Level T=5 Age 38 MOJ Intelligence Contact
Cr235,000

STR:12 +1 DEX:10 +1 CON:11 +0 INT:15 +2 AC: 11 (unarmored)
 EDU:14 +2 WIS:13 +1 CHR:14 +2 SOC:13 T-5 Age 38
 SR BAB+2 FORT+3 RFX+3 WILL+6
 HP:50 LB:11

Feats: Armor Proficiency (Light) Professional Speciality (P/Admin) Connections (MOJ/Imperial Navy)
 Credit Line Interrogation Vessel (Grav)
 Natural Born Leader

Skills: 81 Appraise-6 Gather Information-8 Leader-8 Recruiting-6
 P/Admin-11 T/Computer-8 T/Commo-6 T/Electronics-4

T/Mechanical-4
Sense Motive-3

T/Gravitics-2

T/Sensors-2

Liaison-10

A congenial man who first began working as a technician at the ground portion of the Hemant Yards many years ago, he has since worked his way up the corporate ladder and is now a Technical Director at the facility, overseeing the latest new designs and enhancements to existing technologies for both his company and the Imperium. A consequence of this is that he has evolved a very good working relationship with both the Imperial Navy (Intelligence Division) and the MOJ. Although not psionic himself he works in conjunction with an imperial sponsored psionics institute (a small one that does not accept members outside of their Imperial Mandate) based at the Hemant yards, an arrangement that suits everyone very well.

Thugs on Miigakki

Use the Stats for the Bandits/Guerilla's as printed in the Traveller's Handbook Page 421

SHIPS OF THE MUGAMA MAIN

Droyne Vchtiltd Class Frigate

Spacecraft Type: Droyne Frigate

Tech Level:13

Size: Medium (400 Tons)

Streamlining: Fully Streamlined

Jump Range: 4 Parsecs

Acceleration: 4G

Fuel: 192 Tons Liquid Hydrogen

Duration: 4 Weeks

Crew: 12

Staterooms: 12

Small Cabins: none

Bunks: 0

Couches: 0

Emerg Low Berths: 2 (capacity 10)

Cargo Space: 25.3 Tons

Atmospheric Speeds:

Cruising = 900 Kph Top = 1200 kph

Other: Fuel Scoops and Refiner 192 tons in 6.72 Hrs

(Imperial Designation Type 4A Patrol Cruiser)

EP: 32 (3 excess)

Agility: 0 (+0 EP)

Initiative: +0 (+0 Agility)

AC: 10 (10 size +0 Agility)

Repulsors: None

Nuclear Dampers: None

Meson Screens: None

Black Globes: None

AR: 0

SI: 145

Main Computer: Model 3 Fib

Sensor Range: Medium Model 3

Comm Range: Medium Model 3

Cost: Mcr285.003 (Mcr228.002) in quantity

NOE = 275 Kph

Details:

Component	PWR	VOL	MCR	Notes
Hull Close Structure		+400	24.0	Hexagonal Shape Hull
Bridge		20	2.0	Holographic Linked Controls
Streamlining			2.0	Fully Streamlined
Computer	1.0	0.3	36	Fib 42/12
Avionics		1.2	(2.7)	Model 3
Sensors		0.9	(1.8)	Model 3
Comm.		0.6	(1.5)	Model 3
Acceleration	16.0	44.0	22.0	4G Thruster Array
Jump Drive	16.0	20.0	80.0	Jump x 4
Jump Fuel		160.0		1 x Jump = 4
Power Plant	+32	32.0	96.0	Fusion Power Plant
Fuel		32.0		4 Weeks Liquid Hydrogen
Armament		4.0	4.0	4 x triple turret
Beam Laser x 4	12.0		12.0	4 x USP=4
Hardpoints:4			0.4	
Staterooms 12		48.0	6.0	
Emerg Low Berths 4		4.0	0.200	Utility Usage
Fuel Scoops			0.400	Fuel Scoops
Refiner		5.0	0.030	Refines 192 tons in 6.72 Hrs
Cargo:		25.3		Disaster Relief Supplies, equipment etc.

Crew Requirements: 1 x Pilot, 1 x Astrogator 4 x Gunnery, 3, Medic-1

An elderly ship design as diverse as the many independent droyne worlds in existence, exceptionally well built, lightly armed, this vessel is designed to provide a naval presence in low threat environments, such as the well defended and protected shipping mains of the Third Imperium. This design is not a common sight in imperial space and is awe inspiring to look at, a hexagonal

saucer shaped main hull, that supports mainstream acceleration and jump not to mention 4 beam lasers. The downside of this design is that when faced with an real opposition it is a soft target, lacking in both armor and agility.

Hebrin Colonal FHU Class SDB

Class: Spacecraft Type: SDB	EP: 180
Tech Level:9	Agility: 6 (+60 EP)
Size: Large (1000 Tons)	Initiative: +6 (+6 Agility)
Streamlining: Fully Streamlined	AC: 15 (10 -1 size,+6 Agility)
Jump Range: None	Repulsors: None
Acceleration: 6G	Nuclear Dampers: None
Fuel: 170 Tons Liquid Hydrogen	Meson Screens: None
Duration: 4 Weeks	Black Globes: None
Crew: 24	AR: 0
Staterooms: 1	SI: 250
Small Cabins: 23	Main Computer: Model 3 Fib
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Medium Model 3
Couches: 0	Comm Range: Medium Model 3
Emerg Low Berths: 10 (capacity 40)	
Cargo Space: 137 Tons	Cost: Mcr1055.642 (Mcr844,513) in quantity
Atmospheric Speeds:	NOE = 275 Kph
Cruising = 900 Kph	Top = 1200 kph
Other: 1 x 40 Ton Hanger for Pinnacle. Fuel Scoops and Refiner 170 ton in 9.35 Hrs	

Crew Detail: Commander 1, Pilot 1, Engineer 13, Medical 1, Gunnery 2, Ships Troops 6 (Troops are cross trained to operate subcraft and any other mission critical equipment carried in the hold)

Details:

Component	PWR	VOL	MCR	Notes
Hull Close Structure		+1000	60.0	
Bridge		20	5.0	Computer Linked Controls
Streamlining			5.0	Fully Streamlined
Computer	1.0	0.3	36	Fib 42/12
Avionics		1.2	(2.7)	Model 3
Sensors		0.9	(1.8)	Model 3
Comm.		0.6	(1.5)	Model 3 Radio Only
Acceleration	60.0	170.0	85.0	6G Thruster Array
Power Plant	(+180)	270.0	810.0	Fusion Power Plant
Fuel		180.0		4 Weeks Liquid Hydrogen
Armament	60.0	100.0	35.0	PA Bay USP=6
Hardpoints:10			1.0	
Staterooms 1		4.0	0.500	Commander's Cabin/Office
Small Cabins 23		46.0	11.5	Crew Accommodation
Emerg Low Berths 10		10.0	1.0	Utility Usage
1 x Hanger		52.0	0.104	40 Tons Craft Capacity
Fuel Scoops			1.0	Fuel Scoops
Refiner		8.0	0.038	Refines 170 tons in 9.35 Hrs
Cargo:		137.0		Disaster Relief Supplies, equipment
etc.				

The Veritable Truth, Reliant Class 'Fat Trader'

Class: Starship	EP: 5
Tech level: 13	Agility: 0
Size: Medium 500 Tons	Initiative: 0
Streamlining: SL	AC: 10
Jump Range: 1 Parsec	Repulsors: none
Acceleration: 1G	Nuclear Dampers: None
Fuel: 55 Tons	Meson Screens: None
Duration: 4 Weeks	Black Globes: None
Crew: 8	AR: 0
Staterooms: 0	SI: 160
Small Cabins:8	Main Computer: Model 2
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range : Close Model 1

Couches: 2 Comm Range : Close Model 1
 Low Berths: 10
 Cargo Space: 343.3 Tons Cost: 120.864 (includes launch) 96.691 in quantity
 Atmospheric Speeds NOE = 275kph
 Cruise=900 kph Top = 1200 Kph
 Other: Internal Hanger for 20 Ton Launch (included in new purchase price)
 Fuel Refiner & Scoops Refines 55 Tons in 1 Hour 55 Minutes, 30 Seconds,

Reliant Class Fat Trader Stats

	Pwr	Vol	Mcr	Notes
Hull		500	30.0	Close Structured 10/5
Streamlining			2.5	Streamlined
Bridge		20	0.100	Dynamic Linked
Computer 2		0.2	5.8	Model 2
Avionics		0.8	(1.8)	Model 2
Sensors		0.3	(0.6)	Model 1
Comm		0.2	(0.5)	Model 1
Jump = 1	5.0	10.0	40.0	
Jump Fuel		50.0		1 x Jump =1
Acceleration 1G	5.0	10.0	15.0	
Power Plant	(+5)	5.0	15.0	TL 13 Fusion
Fuel		5.0		4 weeks liquid hydrogen
Fuel Scoops			0.500	
Purification Plant		5.0	0.030	refines 55 tons in 1 hr 55 min 30 sec
Hardpoints:1			0.100	
Small Cabins x 8		12.0	0.100	
Low Berths x 10		5.0	0.500	
1 x Hanger		26.0	0.052	
1 x Launch		(20)	11.282	
Cargo:		343.3	-----	A Staggeringly Large Hold

Crew Detail Pilot – 1 Astrogator - 1 Engineering – 1 Medic -1 Deck Hands 2 Subcraft Crew -2

The Veritable Truth (or 'Verity' as her crew call her) is an elderly example of a 'Reliant' class fat trader, though they are 'owned and operated' exclusively by Delgado they do occasionally 'de-fleet' some surplus units, that are no longer deemed to be as profitable as they used to be. When Delgado divested itself of 'The Veritable Truth' Polaris happily snapped her up. This design is interesting due to the fact that it was built from the keel up to be a cargo only transporter and thus suitable for service along the busy mains of the Imperium. It is well understood amongst shippers, that passenger carriage is often more troublesome than turning the space over to cargo (despite the increased profits!). In order to maximise this capacity, crew accommodation is cramped (small cabins) giving over as much of the vessel's interior space as possible to cargo (68%). A modest crew of 8 is all that is required to manage the ships operations, although in practice, this can be restricted to a single, pilot, astrogator and engineer (should the need arise). Cargo handling facilities are excellent, with a bewildering array of lifts, ramps and cranes built into the superstructure of the ship, making loading and unloading a joyful ease. It is recommended that 'Reliant' owners take on an additional two crew members to oversee the handling equipment (Provision has been made for this in the accommodation section).

Hebrin Colonial Defence Forces – FHU Class SDB

Class: Spacecraft Type: SDB	EP: 180
Tech Level:9	Agility: 6 (+60 EP)
Size: Large (1000 Tons)	Initiative: +6 (+6 Agility)
Streamlining: Fully Streamlined	AC: 15 (10 -1 size,+6 Agility)
Jump Range: None	Repulsors: None
Acceleration: 6G	Nuclear Dampers: None
Fuel: 170 Tons Liquid Hydrogen	Meson Screens: None
Duration: 4 Weeks	Black Globes: None
Crew: 24	AR: 0
Staterooms: 1	SI: 250
Small Cabins: 23	Main Computer: Model 3 Fib
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Medium Model 3
Couches: 0	Comm Range: Medium Model 3
Emerg Low Berths: 10 (capacity 40)	
Cargo Space: 137 Tons	Cost: Mcr1046.242 (Mcr836,993) in quantity
Atmospheric Speeds:	NOE = 275 Kph

Cruising = 900 Kph Top = 1200 kph
 Other: 1 x 40 Ton Hanger for Pinnacle. Fuel Scoops and Refiner 170 ton in 9.35 Hrs

Crew Detail: Commander 1, Pilot 1, Engineer 13, Medical 1, Gunnery 2, Ships Troops 6 (Troops are cross trained to operate subcraft and any other mission critical equipment carried in the hold)

Details:

Component	PWR	VOL	MCR	Notes
Hull Close Structure		+1000	60.0	
Bridge		20	0.1	Computer Linked Controls
Streamlining			5.0	Fully Streamlined
Computer	1.0	0.3	36	Fib 42/12
Avionics		1.2	(2.7)	Model 3
Sensors		0.9	(1.8)	Model 3
Comm.		0.6	(1.5)	Model 3 Radio Only
Acceleration	60.0	170.0	85.0	6G Thruster Array
Power Plant	(+180)	270.0	810.0	Fusion Power Plant
Fuel		180.0		4 Weeks Liquid Hydrogen
Armament	60.0	100.0	35.0	PA Bay USP=6
Hardpoints:10			1.0	
Staterooms 1		4.0	0.500	Commander's Cabin/Office
Small Cabins 23		46.0	11.5	Crew Accommodation
Emerg Low Berths 10		10.0	1.0	Utility Usage
1 x Hanger		52.0	0.104	40 Tons Craft Capacity
Fuel Scoops			1.0	Fuel Scoops
Refiner		8.0	0.038	Refines 170 tons in 9.35 Hrs
Cargo:		137.0		Disaster Relief Supplies, equipment
etc.				

The FHU, class is a highly regarded colonial design developed, manufactured and tested within the Hebrin System. Whilst many of these vessels see service in the armed forces of various worlds throughout the Empty Quarter Sector. A great many of them are retained by the Hebrin Colonial Defence force for use within their bustling and at times anarchic System. With traffic volumes as high as those found at Hebrin, pirates, smugglers, gun runners and other illegals often try to slip in to legitimate civilian traffic, hoping that the massive amounts of radio traffic, drive signatures and neutrino bursts will be enough to shield them from the attentions of an policing forces, until of course it's too late. This awesome design represents the pinnacle of Tech 9 engineering, a streamlined close structured hull, wrapped around an over large power plant, supporting a 100 ton particle accelerator bay more than adequately allows this design to fulfil it's mission criteria, namely piracy suppression, customs duties and harassment of invading forces. The FHU class distinguishes itself as a fine destroyer of lightly armored supply lines and auxiliaries, not to mention it's utility value, its copious (for a warship) hold, can contain a mixture of small arms, munitions, field equipment or disaster relief supplies as per the mission criteria. It's crew of 24 has been squashed into small cabins (with the exception of the commander who gets a standard stateroom) in order to maximise space within the hull. It's secondary equipment also consists of an internal hanger capable of holding a small craft up to 40 Tons in displacement, this most typically being vessels of the pinnacle classification. Whilst a good design, the FHU was never intended for front line battle duties, it's single armament and lack of hull armor makes it vulnerable, however it's speed and agility make up for it somewhat in addition to it's radiation hardened electronics suite. If used properly a, the FHU class is a very fine ship...

The Standing Invite (A modified Hilixi Class Scout Surveyor).

Class: Scout Surveyor (modified)	EP: 16 (1 Excess)
Tech Level:13	Agility: +0
Size: medium (400 Tons)	Initiative: +0
Streamlining: Fully Streamlined	AC: 10 (size Medium)
Jump Range: 2 x 3 Parsecs	Repulsors: None
Acceleration: 3G	Nuclear Dampers: None
Fuel: 256 Tons Liquid Hydrogen	Meson Screens: None
Duration: 4 Weeks	Black Globes: None
Crew: 8	AR: 0
Staterooms: 0	SI: 145
Small Cabins: 10	Main Computer: Model 3 std
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Medium Model 3
Couches: 0	Comm Range: Medium Model 3
Emerg Low Berths: 10 (capacity 40)	
Cargo Space: 19.8 Tons	Cost: Mcr (Mcr) in quantity
Atmospheric Speeds:	NOE = 275 Kph

Cruising = 900 Kph Top = 1200 kph
 Other: Fuel Scoops and Refiner 238 ton in 9.03 Hrs

Crew Detail: Pilot 1, Astrogator 1, Engineer 2, Medical 1, Gunnery 3, (gunners cross trained as sensor ops)

Details: TL13+

Component	PWR	VOL	MCR	Notes
Flatten Sphere		(+400)	32.0	Fully Streamlined
Bridge		20	2.0	Holographic Linked Controls
Computer	1.0	0.3	12.6	42/12
Avionics		0.4	(0.9)	Model 1
Sensors		0.9	(1.8)	Model 3
Comm.		0.6	(1.5)	Model 3
Acceleration	12.0	32.0	16.0	3G Thruster Array
Jump=3	12.0	16.0	64.0	3 Parsec Range.
Jump Fuel		240.0		1 x Jump 3
Power Plant	(+16)	16.0	48.0	Fusion Power Plant Agility 2
Fuel		16.0		4 weeks
Hardpoints:4			0.4	
Triple Turrets x 2		2.0	2.0	
Sandcasters x 6			1.5	USP=4 x 2
Battery Rnds: 10		3.0	0.024	60 cannisters
Double Turrets x 2		2.0	1.5	
Mining Laser x 4	2.0		2.0	USP=2 x 1
Small Cabins 10		20.0	2.5	Crew Accommodation
Emerg Low Berths 2		2.0	0.2	Utility Usage
Fuel Scoops			0.4	Fuel Scoops
Refiner		5.0	0.030	Refines 238 tons in 9.03 Hrs
Cargo:		19.8	(185.154)	

Powerful electronics suites ripped out and replaced with the minimum necessary to manage the jump drive and medium range sensor performance. Designed from the keel up to support 2 x 3 parsec jumps, vast amounts of space given over to fuel etc. Defensive Ament Only originally 4 triple sandcasters now reduced to 2, the remaining two turrets have been converted into 1 mining laser battery, at the expense of some of the ship's agility.



Adventure: Retirement

By Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Retirement is an adventure for 'general-purpose' travellers, working a missing-person case for a celebrity Noble patron. Starship ownership is immaterial. For reasonable PCs, the blood doesn't flow until the grand finale. This adventure uses the BITS Task System, with Classic Traveller rules. The PCs are assumed to be experienced, with a reputation for honourable conduct: formal policing authority and/or training is especially welcome. The ocean is an important environment: guidelines for modifying the climax for PCs without Swimming or Diving skills are provided. The 1983 Traveller supplement **The Undersea Environment** contain the default rules assumed in this adventure. The start date is 45-993 Imperial.

Disappearances

The PCs are taking a break on Nulinad (Nulinad/Empty Quarter A556894-A), a comfortable, gentle world and the traditional throneworld of the Imperial Empty Quarter. An upper-class friend of the lead PC alerts him to 'an interesting woman I'd like you to see.' Meeting at a very nice restaurant in the city of Quanust¹ - the Ambasciata² - the PCs greet their friend after checking their weapons at the door (Nobles and serving Imperial personnel excepted.) He mentions that his mystery guest 'will be a little late', so the group has some appetizers while celebrity-spotting. Most of the clientele are offworlders: mainly wealthy businessmen, with a few high-ranking noble servants and aging entertainment and artistic figures in the mix.

After five minutes of small talk, the mystery guest – a youthful, strikingly blonde³, if somewhat plain-faced woman – enters the Ambasciata and joins the PCs. It's been over 15 years since she was in the news, but for any Emptyhead over 25 years old, an Average Education test connects her face with an extremely famous graphic: a little blond-headed girl, guarded by a huge warrior, surrounded by smashed robots⁴. Yes, this is Dame Katerin Mushreuu, heiress to the Musheuu 'contragrav furniture' family fortune.

After flattering the PCs, Dame Katerin gets down to business: her dear friend, Captain Uika Okavango⁵ – the huge man in the iconic image – is missing. She has alerted the police, but they are of little help: they know that he has 'gone off into the blue' before, and see no reason why it's different this time. Captain Okavango once spoke highly of the PCs⁶: surely they could succeed where the local constabulary has failed...?

If the PCs agree, she provides a card to present to her lead lawyer, private banker, and personal representative on Nulinad: she herself must return to nearby Ushmigad (Nulinad/Empty Quarter A432753-E), but she'll be back within five or six weeks, and she expects the PCs to have proven their worth by then. As she exits, her handmaiden gives her a chocker: as she puts it on, the handmaiden opens a box, and ten butterflies emerge, surrounding the Dame. (This is the height of fashion at Core⁷: if a merchant-minded

character can get an exclusive distribution deal for the Empty Quarter, a fortune could be made⁸.)

The Dame's personal representative is Mr. Shao Baojian, Esquire, a native of nearby Ley Sector. He has no Net presence, or even a phone: the PCs must travel to his address in person to arrange an appointment with his 52-year old son, Mr. Shao Meng. After arriving at a local Tower of Power, the PCs must speak to the Younger Shao through a slot in the reinforced metal door ("No keypad, DNA or retina scanner? No secretary or servbot?"), and are not permitted to enter. Appointments are set a week in advance, but the PCs may convince the highly suspicious Younger Shao to arrange an appointment that evening (a Difficult Liaison task).

At precisely the appointed time (not before, not after), the Elder Shao opens the door and invites the PCs into his tiny, tidy office. Located in an extremely expensive part of Quanust, the Squire's minimalist office is blessed with an excellent view of the city at dusk. The observant PC notices that the office has no computers, phones, or electronic devices. The PCs may keep what devices they bring with them, but wireless datalinks are mysteriously cut while within the office. There are some notes, books and letters – all written in traditional Chinese.

The elegant gentleman insists on a quarter-hour of pleasant, civilized conversation over tea before getting to business: providing the PCs with a sliver of a holographic crystal. Once uploaded, it provides an excellent brief on Captain Okavango, and a summary of his business and personal contacts. It requires TL 12 computers to access: note that the top Nulinadian tech level is 10. During this meeting, a scrawny, agile, and extremely streetwise Chinese boy in nondescript clothing is admitted into the office, to provide a note or whisper some information to the Elder Shao. Careful questioning and observation reveals that this (apparently nameless) child works as the Elder Shao's messenger, observer, and contact with the less savoury aspects of the city.⁹

Profoundly stupid PCs may attempt to use violent force, for whatever reason. There are no weapons within the office, and the Shao's are unarmed. (Of course, this Tower of Power does have a suitable organic security detachment, and is under the protection of the Quanust City Security Agency.) The Shao family's chosen instruments of vengeance for any damage or harm inflicted is left as an exercise for the creative and subtle Referee.

In Search Of...

The data crystal, in addition to biographical information, has the following leads:

- Captain Okavango has a few thousand fans that idolize him. His fan club is eager to spread his praises, and won't tolerate criticism of their hero. Several fans have encyclopaedic knowledge about the Captain's personal history & various exploits – especially the legendary 'Robobattle incident' – but not much about Captain Okavango's

disappearance: even speculation that he disappeared is only on the more obscure discussion forums.

- Captain Okavango maintains his residence at Mars City: an exclusive retirement village for successful starship captains & travellers. This island cluster is about 50 kilometres' northeast of Quanust, a kilometre from the Imperial starport. Individual homes, built to TL 12, are set on their own personal islet. The Mars City Security Agency – the professional, privately-owned police department – may be persuaded to give limited assistance to the PCs: they cannot be bribed or pressured.

It is a Formidable Liaison or Legal task to persuade Mars Security to open a 'missing persons' case on the Captain. A Hopeless Liaison task is required to be allowed to 'support' the reluctant investigation of a Mars City officer of the law. (For both tasks, a PC Law enforcement officer gets a +1 DM, as does Knight gets a +1 DM: these dice modifiers are cumulative.)

Note that, while the PCs and ordinary citizens may carry weapons, Nulinadian law officers are specifically banned from doing so. Citizens are expected to defend law officers if those officers are threatened. A minority of Nulinadian men quietly spend their lives waiting for that one moment of time when they can legally blow away someone (preferably offworlders or nonhumans – ideally both) for threatening law enforcement.

- The executor of Okavango's estate in his absence is Gorancek Associates. It would be very difficult for the PCs to gain access to most of Captain Okavango's legal records, as they lack a lawful warrant. Some matters, however, are a matter of public record, and can be pieced together after some investigation (by the PCs', or via a hired service.) Uika Okavango has a clean criminal record (on this world); owns roughly 500,000 Cr in stocks, bonds, and world currencies; and shares in three Far Traders (estimated market value: 2 MCr.) The bulk of his worth, 17 MCr, is in the form of his paid-off home in Mars City. Most of his current income, 330,000 Cr/annum, is tied to licensing the use of his name and likeness to various entertainment venues, especially Virtual Reality arcades. The Captain has debts amounting to 2.25 MCr, mainly medical fees, legal fees, and various offworld fines & damages he is forced to pay (due to Imperial law, and treaties between Nulinad and other sovereign bodies (the Imperium, offworld governments, nobility, certain corporations, etc.))

- While Okavango's legal estate is handled by Gorancek Associates, his home is cared for by Tunceli and Ayisigi Deligöz, a hardworking, pious couple from the notable world of Dramm (0812 Spearhead/Ley A76AA76-E). Very commonsensical, they aren't interested in opening up the Captain's home to strangers.

However, if they can be persuaded that Dame Katerin backs the PCs in their investigation, they are happy to share what they know to the PCs. This is a Difficult Liaison task: if a PC is Sunni Muslim and/or of EuroTurkish heritage, the couple's reaction improves by +1; if both Sunni Muslim and EuroTurkish, the DM is +2. However, acclaiming to be a Sunni Muslim EuroTurk from Dramm gets a DM of -2 (due to suspicion of such an amazing coincidence) unless the PC can convincingly prove his identity to suspicious, clueful 'high-tech' minds: then the DM is +3. Upon a Spectacular Success, they even permit the PCs to search Captain Okavango's home

with light supervision¹⁰.

The PCs may also speak to other starfarers (an Average Liaison task): nearly all travellers who were in the Imperial Empty Quarter between 970 and 982 have heard something about Captain Okavango, and many crossed paths with him at one point or another. Success gives additional background information; rumours on enemies, rivalries and vendettas; a better understanding on just how the Captain thinks, and the usual round of Amazing Tales¹¹. Spectacular success provides rumours that Vargr pirates are offering a reward for the Captain's 'live delivery'. Note that Vargr travellers are generally hostile to the Captain – and to the Captain's friends – as Captain Okavango publicly insists that Vargr starfarers are all 'pirates on the side' (among other things.)

There are several routes for the PCs to get the tip they need:

- A careful review of Captain Okavango's expenses after his disappearance points to major withdrawals from credit & debit keys¹² on his person from his accounts to another account recently opened under the Vargr name of Stovguck¹³. These accounts were accessed from the seaside town of Ipodea, about 20 miles north of Mars City. These records are not accessible to the public: some 'social engineering' is called for.

- During the search of Captain Okavango's home, the PCs come across a list of saved files. These offline discs document an unpleasant exchange the Captain had with some Vargr, regarding unflattering remarks he made about their species, their preference for interstellar criminal activity, and their lack of emotional stability. A Difficult Computer (Early Stellar Tech) check reveals the location of the Vargr: Ipodea. Cracking Okavango's personal password for his desktop computer (TL 11, Average difficulty) provides additional information. To summarize: Okavango had a run-in with these Vargr in a public function: while no violence occurred, several harsh words were exchanged on both sides.

- While looking over Okavango's home (on site or via an online public satellite surveillance program, a la Goggle Earth¹⁴, but in real-time), the PCs notice that Okavango had a neat landing pad for a vehicle. This vehicle, a striking red air speeder is currently nowhere to be found: the caretakers only mention that the Captain liked to hop in and zoom off to who-knows-where. A Formidable Computer search reveals the location of the air speeder: on a docking pad in Ipodea.

All Roads Lead to Ipodea

Ipodea was founded as a Sylean enclave over 600 years ago, but the most of the 20,000 inhabitants today are Vargr Imperials, with some Vargr and human Julian Protectorate residents present as well. While local Vargr-human relations are peaceful, PCs who are Vargr have a social advantage in speaking to the locals (+1 DM to the reaction roll), while Solomani PCs are looked upon suspiciously (-1 DM.) The town's industry focuses on fishing and maintaining undersea infrastructures, both dominated by Vargr guilds.

Transportation is mainly by powerbike and ground car, with a few artigrav buses for regional transportation. Most own a light boat, jet-ski or a three- or four-Vargr submersible. The town itself is prosperous by planetary standards.

The trail runs cold here, unless the PCs can get some of the local underworld Vargr to talk. They are difficult to locate – several Difficult Streetwise checks must be made to find one. (Or just nab whoever tries to pick up the Captain's

beautiful red air speeder...) The working- and middle-class Vargr locals, aware of the low opinion most humans had of them, have gone out of their way to utterly crush criminal organizations in Ipodea. This has enhanced the standing of the Vargr locally, and brought a steady increase in the town's economic growth (and, non-coincidentally, strengthened the Charisma of the town leadership.)

The surviving members of the 'unofficial economy' hate this turn of events: they call the town leaders "man's best friend" and "human pets", seeing them as stooges for enforcing human laws on Vargr. However, most of the old guard are dead, imprisoned/enslaved, gone legit, gone away, or just too damaged (physically or mentally) to Fight the Power anymore. Only one of the old-school Vargr criminals – along with a few young followers – is willing to stand against the new way of things: but Fgaksivoet hasn't been seen since...

It is a Hopeless Streetwise task for a party with a human PC to get the willing support of an underground member of the local Vargr underworld. For a nonhuman party, it is an Impossible task; for a non-criminal all-Vargr party, it is a Staggering task; for a criminal all-Vargr non-Nulinadian party, the task is Formidable; for a criminal all-Vargr party, where the leader and most other PCs were raised on Nulinad, the task is merely Difficult.

The tiny Ipodea Security Agency can be persuaded to help the PCs on an Average Liaison check (+1 DM if the lead PC has a social level of A+, but no change for Vargr PCs). Of course, Ipodea Security carry no weapons – but they keep in touch with friends who do, and several of those friends discreetly follow outworlder PCs wherever they go (Average Streetwise to spot them.)

After they have contact with a member of the underworld, the PCs must persuade the hood to talk about Captain Okavango, the nice way (see task difficulties above) or the not so nice way (Average to Formidable Interrogation, depending on the rank of the criminal.) They may go the indirect route, by spying on Net activity or intercepting cell phone calls. Note that all information is in the Vargr tongue of Imperial Vuakedh¹⁵. (Local Vargr, including Ipodea Security, are fluent in this language. Vargr PCs raised in the Empty Quarter might know the tongue.) The conversation includes some or all of these points:

The Captain...

- ...is being held in an underground (undersea?) cavern
- ...has been killed, and his body fed to the fishes. Well, the local equivalent anyway.
- ...has escaped his captors, and is fleeing the world.
- ...has been drugged, and is to be shipped to 'interested parties' for a reward.
- ...has offworld friends who are coming to investigate!
- ...has offworld Noble friends who are coming to investigate!
- ...has offworld family who are coming to investigate!
- ...tipped off offworld reporters, who are coming to investigate!
- ...has angered the Imperial Ministry of Justice, who are looking for him!

Or possibly...

- ...offworld pirates are coming to 'pick up' the Captain.
- ...the payoff for the kidnapping is due at any moment.
- ...the payoff for delivering the Captain's severed head is due within a month.
- ...a power-struggle over who get what amount of payoff money is brewing.
- ...a power struggle over who gets the credit of capturing the Captain is brewing.
- ...a gang member has stolen some of the Captain's stuff, without 'sharing' with the others.

The Referee is free to add his own points, and decide for himself which ones are real, which ones are false, and which ones only tell half the truth. This adventure assumes that the Captain is being held in an undersea cavern for offworld pickup.

Davy Jones' Many Lockers... (Option A)

If the PCs don't have Swimming-1+ and Diving 0+ skills, they are forced to sit out the violent part of the adventure: there is simply no way the Vargr can take unseasoned "landlubbers and spacefaries" into a battle in the treacherous depths of the sea. If this is unacceptable, the Referee should still read this section, but modify it according to guidelines in "Option B".

The Ipodea Security officer chosen to lead the raid – Officer Granronrok, a high-Charisma Vargr – briefs the PCs and volunteer Vargr toughs on the raid. Some locals are familiar with the cave, and a basic diagram is handed out to all. The six criminals holding Captain Okavango criminals are amateurs, and aren't expected to have anything more than knives and small arms. The Security raiding party is expected to use fire discipline, and keep casualties to a minimum – on both sides. PC disagreement on this insures that they are left out of the fight. Using explosives is forbidden, except in extreme circumstances. Six subs shall be used for transportation: the posse will be dropped off about 100 meters from the cavern entrance.

The Vargr citizens grudgingly obey the officer's insistence on following the rules, with a bit of grumbling and good-natured teasing (in Imperial Vuakedh.) The PCs aren't allowed to join in. Everyone expects the offworlders to obey the Officer Granronrok without question: even a hint of a PC challenging the officer's authority spark harsh verbal responses from all. A PC might be allowed to improve the plan, if A) he doesn't challenge Officer Granronrok authority or competence and B) he has underwater warfare credentials.

Most of the local subs are built for use by three or four Vargr, and uses a combination of sonar signals and Webguns to catch the larger sealife. Ipodea Security has an unarmed submersible craft, suitable for use in undersea surveillance, with a capacity for six Vargr. Vargr are slightly smaller than humans, so men with a Strength of 7+ feel cramped in their subs. The Security sub and five civilian subs are used for the police raid.

Available occupancy is as follows: **5** crew [three fighters] {1 pilot} (1 free) for the Security sub; **4**[2]{1}(1), **4**[2]{1}(1), **3**[1]{1}(1), **3**[1]{1}(1), **3**[2]{1}(0) for the five civilian subs. The fighter seats are for the PCs, an Ipodea Security officer, and local deputised toughs (total number: 11.) The free seats are meant for the use of arrested criminals & Okavango. In case a large number of criminals or prisoners are found, a

large decompression chamber run by two Vargr techs has been submerged to a depth of 20 meters: it has space for 15 Vargr.

The undersea posse is armed, except for Officer Granronrok. If the PCs can arrange it, small torpedoes may be installed on the subs: none are available locally, and locals must be taught how to use them. The Security officer is present for three reasons: to provide legitimacy to the posse; make the formal arrest; and (unofficially) to 'keep things clean and legal' – the provincial government is clamping down on extralegal executions.

All Vargr are equipped with SCUBA equipment with artificial gills (unlimited air, 8 hours of light), a firearm (rifles & carbines), and a knife: some divers may also bring crossbows, pneumatic spearguns, and/or Webguns. Nobody uses radios: a set of hand, body, head, and (especially) tail signals are used for undersea communication instead. Human PCs are not able to learn to read this body language (called Kfyfgain) in less than two months, but they can be taught to read a few crucial signals quickly. Humans can never communicate using Kfyfgain, due to the lack of tails and muzzles. Humans are not able to use Vargr SCUBA gear, but they can purchase or rent gear for humans – at a substantial markup, naturally.

As the subs dive 50 meters and near the drop-off point, they dismount: six Vargr plus four PCs swim to the cavern. If they gain surprise (spotting the lookouts by visual or IR first), the PCs may dispose of the Vargr in a quiet manner: preferably by capture, but the Security officer may give permission for deadly force to be used, if no other reasonable alternative is available. If the lookout spots the subs first, he retreats to the base at top speed. (Unlike the posse, the lookout has an undersea jet pack, and moves at 20 meters per combat round).

Classic Trav Battle rules to remember (all from J. Andrew Keith's **The Undersea Environment**): Firearms are at DM -3 to hit (Staggering difficulty, using the BITS format), Melee weapons are at DM -1 (Formidable difficulty). Visual range in clear water is 75 meters: in this adventure's location, it's 60 meters. Radio's max range is 30 meters. Slow swimming is 5 meters per minute: fast swimming moves at 40 meters per minute plus 5 meters per level of Swimming skill. (Swimming at a speed of 20m+/minute is limited by the Endurance of the character: each point of Endurance grants one minute of such activity.) The lookout is armed with a knife and a pistol with five rounds. His goal is to run to the entrance of the undersea cavern and warn the others.

The cavern has been filled with an air bubble. The 'dry' floor of the cavern – an area about 10 x 10 meters – holds twelve Vargr criminals, Captain Okavango, and various heating, lighting, air-scrubbing, and power equipment. These Vargr are armed with knives, crossbows, and pistols. If warned, they don their SCUBA gear and fight the invaders, abandoning Okavango ("He isn't going anywhere".) If surprised, they panic: some fight, some hide behind equipment, and some just run in circles, screaming, shouting, and suffering a full-on Charismatic Collapse.

There is the distinct possibility that the lighting of the cave may be shot down, or disconnected from the portable power generator. If so, the cave immediately becomes pitch dark, unless alternate lighting is available (remember: all law-enforcement Vargr have lighting attached to their helmets.) The air bubble is not dependent on power, and won't flood. However, without power the air will turn bad within 10 minutes: carbon dioxide poisoning becomes a real threat.

For the sake of morale checks the Pack leader, Fgaksaivoet, is a Veteran, his underboss Dukemnuakaramuer a Regular, and all other criminals are Green. If Fgaksaivoet falls, all surrender. If Dukemnuakaramuer goes down, half the Vargr who see it flee or hide for a few rounds. If more than half the criminals die or become incapacitated, all surrender except the pack leader. It is possible that some terrified criminal may seize Captain Okavango as a hostage to negotiate his freedom: however, a Difficult Streetwise can convince him to let the hostage go, in return for a fair trial. (Formidable Streetwise if the Pack Leader seizes the Captain.) The difficulty is reduced one level if the Ipoda Security officer does the negotiating: Ipodea's a small town, and he's arrested everyone here previously on minor charges before. Referee roleplay note: bad history exists between Officer Granronrok and Fgaksaivoet.

On the PC side, Officer Granronrok has Elite morale¹⁶ but is unarmed. Of the other Vargr, the toughest, Thukfuavraistukr, has Regular morale, and the others are Green troops. If Officer Granronrok is grievously wounded or dies, all retreat, carrying his body. There are mandatory morale checks if 1) the Regular morale Vargr becomes a casualty 2) if more than half the Vargr are hit. Failure means that they retreat to their subs, and head back to the surface. They request a wet navy assault team: they find only a flooded, cleaned-out cave and a drowned Okavango.

In Nulinad's Thin atmosphere, the pressure underwater at 50 meters is 5.50 atmospheres. All must surface slowly, to avoid the bends. Assuming the raid is successful, the disarmed and handcuffed Vargr are stuck in the submerged decompression tank, while Okavango is transferred into a sub temporarily, until the Nulinad Aquaforce – the local wet navy – transfers him into a better facility. Captain Okavango and the PCs are mobbed by reporters for a news cycle or two.

Davy Jones' Many Lockers... (Option B)

There is a case to be made to simply punish the PCs for being unable to swim. That is the most realistic course: if it is chosen, then ~10 Vargr go down to rescue Captain Okavango: with a 33% fatality rate, around six to seven Vargr live to return, bearing Okavango alive (but forced into a decompression chamber for days) and several prisoners. Later, another dive is made to retrieve the dead – both heroes and villains, including Fgaksaivoet, "the last of the bad, bad dogs of yesteryear," as the humans would say.

If the Players pressure the Referee to alter this scenario, the grand finale can be relocated to an isolated island, instead of undersea. Boats may be used instead of submarines, and the lookout can man an air/raft, a speedboat, a water ski, or even an ultralight plane (the criminals have no luck in obtaining a grav belt). If the lookout is silenced before he can radio home, then the PCs and allies get surprise: otherwise, they have to make a hostile landing in the face of a rain of small-arms fire: no rocket launchers, grenades, or heavy metal is available to the criminals. The villains are based in a cave in the centre of the island: as Captain Okavango has greater freedom of action, it's possible that he can overpower the distracted guards and assist the PCs – he's been involved in a few prison breaks in his career.

Nulinadian Farewell

If the PCs fail to find Okavango within five weeks, then they are quietly taken of the case by Squire Shao Baojian, with only a small honorarium for their time. If Okavango is discovered dead, or is killed in action, the PCs are given a reasonable rate for their time, nothing more. If they rescue Captain Okavango successfully, they are paid the going rate for 'armed investigators', with a tidy bonus thrown in as well. They (and possibly Officer Granronrok, if his actions warrant it) are also invited to a celebration at the home of Captain Okavango, which Dame Katerin (and a small selection of 'the great and the good' of Nulinad's elite society) attends. A particularly extraordinary and heroic rescue is rewarded as above, except the entire Ipodean raiding party is invited as well. The PCs earn Dame Katerin's genuine friendship, and an invitation to drop by her fantastic estate on Ushmigad¹⁷. Such a rescue also earns the respect of Captain Okavango, who is willing to use his numerous connections and friendships on behalf of the PCs (even the Vargr PCs!); if the PCs have a difficult but doable request, now's a good time to speak up.

Personalities

These characters have been hand-built with Classic rules in mind. Some MegaTraveller and homebrew skills have been used. Vargr **Charisma** is used per the extensive rules found in Traveller Alien Module 3: Vargr. **Infighting** skill replaces Brawling for Vargr, and relates to their teeth (at close range) & claws (at short range). To summarise from the Alien Module: 1) Infighting gives +2 DM to hit 2) an additional +1 if the Vargr's charisma is higher than his opponents (all Vargr gave higher Charisma than all humans in this kind of fight) 3) If both Vargr have the skill, it permits the loser to surrender in a fashion that is automatically accepted by the winner (by going limp). "If the winner is of lower charisma than the loser, the two exchange charisma values (but a rise of charisma may not exceed three points)."

Dame Katerin Mushreuu, Imperial Knight & Corporate Scion: 5747BA, Age 22, Grav vehicle-1, Admin-1. Usually unarmed.

Squire Shao Baojian, Noble representative: 132B89, Age 87, Liaison-4, Admin-3, Legal-2, Streetwise-2, Vacc Suit-1, Sword-1. Usually unarmed.

Mister Shao Meng, Assistant/Apprentice: 537667, Age 57, Steward-2, Bribery-2, Streetwise-1, Interview-1, Liaison-1. Usually unarmed.

Tunceli Deligöz, Housekeeper/ Butler/ Gardener/ Handyman: 439A74, Age 59, Steward-2, Streetwise-1, Interview-1. Usually unarmed.

Ayisigi Deligöz, Housekeeper/Cook: 297684, Age 55, Steward-2, Streetwise-2, Child Care-2, Admin-1, Legal-0. Usually unarmed.

Fgaksaivoet, a.k.a. "Stovguek", the Pack Leader: 678649 (Charisma=A) Age 48, Streetwise-3, Infighting-2, Pistol-1, Knife-1, Recruiting-1, Swimming-1, Diving-1, Submarine-1, Automatic Rifle-0, Small Water Craft (submersible)-0. Has a Pistol (one 15-round magazine), and two knives.

Dukemnuakaramuer, the Underboss: 693474 (Charisma=5), age 22, Swimming-1, Diving-1, Knife-1, Bribery-0, Computer-0, Pistol-0. Has two knives, and a Pistol (one 15-round magazine)

Granronrok, Ipodea Security Officer: 465B27 (Charisma=C), Age 37, Pistol-2, Streetwise-2, Diving-2,

Swimming-1, Knife-1, Infighting-1, Webgun-1, Computer-1, Legal-1. Unarmed.

Thukfuavraistukr, Ipodea Tough: 68B474 (Charisma=8), Age 24, Swimming-2, Diving-2, Knife-1, Crossbow-1, Infighting-1, Webgun-1. Has two knives, a crossbow (with ten bolts), and one webgun with two canisters.

Captain Uika Okavango, Traveller Celebrity: 657878, Age 64, Carousing-3, Brawling-2, Plasma Rifle-2, Pistol-2, Bribery-2, Trader-2, Streetwise-1, Pilot-1, Engineering-1, Broker-1, Jack of all Trades-1, Battle Dress-0, Computers-0, Demolitions-0, Cutlass-0, Equestrian-0, Electronics-0, Leader-0, Gambling-0, Cutlass-0, Aircraft (Jet)-0. Okavango has removed his cybernetic enhancements, and his old-school "power arm" has been replaced by a much weaker (but locally legal) 'naturalistic' right arm. Usually carries a pistol and cutlass, but is currently unarmed.

Equipment

Most of specialized equipment discussed above is detailed in **The Undersea Environment**. For some unexplained reason, not every Traveller home has a copy of this 1983 supplement handy, so a selection of useful items is included below. These are summaries: exact quotes are in "quotes". Prices quoted are for full purchase: rentals are possible for the thrifty traveller. A premium deposit may be charged if the supplier thinks that he might not get his equipment back (i.e. he finds out that the PCs are going into a law enforcement or military operation.)

The suit and face masks are designed for Vargr usage: finding human-use equipment takes longer and costs more. Vargr and human hands are similar in design and function, so human PCs have no problem handling Vargr knives, etc.

Wet Suit: The waters off Ipodea are warm, around 20°C, so only a regular wet suit is needed for insulation. Local wetsuits are made at TL 10 quality. Vargr wetsuits are locally available at 20Cr, human wetsuits are difficult to find, starting at 50Cr. Without a wet suit, characters lose 1 point of Endurance per hour (this loss is at a far higher rate in colder waters.) Weight is 1 kg (ignored when worn.)

Face Masks: Vargr face masks are available for 30 Cr. Vargr face masks weigh 0.4 kg (due to the muzzle), human masks weigh 0.25 kg.

Air Tanks: Tanks locally available are for 2 hours (2 kg, 300 CR) and 4 hours (2.5 kg, 400 Cr.)

Artificial Gill: The locally available gill includes a tank of charged nitrogen, which extracts oxygen from the water. Carbon dioxide is disposed of via bubbles (which can give your position away!) There are various possible dangers, which are ignored for simplicity – and this gill is built to TL 10 specs, not at TL 8 (when it's first available). Weight is 4 kg, cost is 4,000 Cr.

Vacc Suits may be used: problems with electricity and buoyancy are left for the Referee to adjudicate. The sound of Vargr laughing like jackals *may* be sufficient to warn off PCs...

Minisubs: There are three types of minisubs included in this adventure: three-Vargr and four-Vargr civilian models and the five-Vargr Security force model. The sub pilot needs Small Water Craft (submersible). Maximum pressure for these subs is 10 atmospheres. These subs include sonar, hydrophones, and undersea communications (limited to 1 km radius). There are no airlocks: the cabin gradually floods when the crew wishes to leave for undersea work (taking 3 minutes to do so.) All subs have 150 kg cargo capacity. Displacement weight does not count ballast.

Three-Vargr minisub: Length 10 m, height (draft) 2 m, width (beam) 1 m. Weight 4125 kg. Cost 55000 Cr.

Four-Vargr minisub: Length 14 m, height 2 m, width 1 m. Weight 5500 kg. Cost 80000 Cr.

Five-Vargr minisub: Length 16 m, height 2 m, width 1 m. Weight 6875 kg. Cost 100,000 Cr.

For all minisubs: full speed is 9 kph, endurance is 2 hours. Cruise speed is 4 kph, endurance 4 hours. Slow speed is 2 kph, Endurance is 10 hours.

A direct quote from **The Undersea Environment**:

“Powered Tow Sled: A self-propelled, torpedo-shaped, one-diver propulsion device. The diver grips twin handles (which house propeller during plane, and rudder controls), and is pulled along by the torpedo.

At Tech Level 6, when these devices are first introduced, the limited battery power available holds performance to a maximum [sic] speed of 15 meters per combat round, with a total operating time of one hour between rechargings. Weight is 10 kg, price is CR 150.

At Tech Level 9, introduction of practical fuel cells reduces the weight of the propulsion system while increasing performance and endurance. Speed is increased to 25 meters per combat round, and endurance to 5 hours between recharges. A cargo capacity inside the torpedo of 5 kg is provided. Total weight is 10 kg, price is CR 250.”

The following is a direct quote from **The Undersea Environment**. Note that the default ‘Classic Traveller’ weapon statistics assume use out of the water, and must be modified for use underwater.

“Gas Spear Gun: An undersea weapon using compressed air or CO₂ gas to fire a spear, the gas spear gun is available at TL 6.”

Base weight: 1000 gm, Length overall: 500mm, Base price CR 125, TL 6, Reload weight 250 gm, Reload Price CR 20.

Weapons Table: No required strength, advantage strength or weakened blow level or Die Modifier Required dexterity 7 (-2 DM if below this), Advantaged dexterity 9 (+1 DM if dexterity is at this level or above).

Armor: +1 vs. nothing, +1 vs. Jack, -1 vs. Mesh, -2 vs. Cloth, +1 vs. Reflect, -1 vs. Ablat, -5 vs. Battle.

Range: Close +1, Short +2, Medium -4, Long no, Very Long no. Wounds inflicted 3D.

The following is not from **The Undersea Environment** but is the author’s creation:

TL 12 Webgun: This gas-powered device looks a bit like a sawed-off shotgun, but with only one large barrel, and only one round. Firing the weapon ejects a highly sophisticated canister: when its sonar triggers, the canister explodes into a dense mass of webs, immobilising any large animal. The webgun resists cutting, and naturally dissolves in water in six hours. It takes two rounds (12 seconds) to reload a webgun.

Base weight: 600 gm, Length overall: 200mm, Base price CR 200, TL 12, Reload weight 400 gm, Reload Price CR 20.

Weapons table: Required Strength 7, DM -3; Advantageous Strength 10, DM +1; Required Dexterity 7, DM -2, Advantageous Dexterity 9, DM +1.

Armor gives no bonuses against webguns.

Range: Close 0, Short +2, Medium -6, Long no, Very Long no, Wounds Inflicted 0 HD.

Footnotes

¹The author’s mental image of Quanut’s skyline and architecture is taken from SquarePixel’s “City in the Chasm”: <http://squarepixel.cgsociety.org/gallery/306776/>

²Like the Romans, the Italians are long gone – but their food has stood the test of time. The restaurant owner maintains her own set of farms to raise meat and produce. These off-world sealed environments replicate mid-19th century Italian farms in every particular, including gravity and atmospheric composition. The meal and wine prices reflect this attention to detail: fortunately, the Dame is happy to pick up the entire tab.

³The author’s image of the adult Dame is from “The Rider” by Krista Leemhuis, as seen here: <http://digitalart.org/artwork.php?ID=44917>. Most human Emptyheads are of East Indian, Arab, or Amerind descent: female, fair-skinned blondes are revered as exotic beauty goddesses, as is typical of non-white Solomani regions ‘from time immemorial’ (i.e. before spaceflight.) The Vilani, noting their strong contrast to the majority Solomani form (brown skin, black hair, brown eyes, flat noses, etc.), generally mistake them for some obscure minor race. Several white communities have taken the idea to heart, claiming to be “non-Solomani colonists, abandoned on ancient Terra” and distancing themselves from the Solomani supremacist movement.

⁴The iconic image is “The Princess and Her Bodyguard”, by **Zubuyer Kaolin (overcontrast)** (<http://features.cgsociety.org/challenge/masterandservant/entry.php?challenger=6235>). IN this story, the graphic is based on the famous rescue of Miss (later, Dame) Katerin from warbots by the cybernetically-enhanced Captain Okavango in 971. The original now hangs in The Citadel Requiem, the seat of Count Cicero of Gobi’s government. Copies and parodies of this grossly overexposed image can be found throughout the sector, excluding Vargr worlds & societies. The largest version is 0.4 km x 0.1 km, carved via high explosives and shipborne weaponry into the polar icecap of Praveer/Gimushi by the famous Fornast artist Sir Francisco Mena-Ayllón in 986-988. It is incomplete: the warships needed to complete the work of are needed elsewhere at the moment.

⁵Captain⁵ is just a courtesy title: Okavango left the captaincy of his ship, *The Lady of the Moon*, over ten years ago to retire on Nulinad. Older travellers may have personal memories of Captain Okavango; if they meet the location and timeperiod limits (his career spans the Imperial Empty Quarter, from the late 940s to his retirement in 982.) The Referee may let them make an Intelligence roll, to simulate a memory recall. The more detailed the memory, the higher the difficulty. Hi-tech drugs may be used to assist recall: the Referee should determine the availability, cost, danger, and effects of these drugs.

⁶Of course, the author is assuming that the PCs have done something fearless, praiseworthy and well-known to the local interstellar traveller community. Captain Okavango also respects anyone who ‘sticks it to those yapping dogs’: i.e. publicly defeats or humiliates the Vargr.

⁷“The height of fashion” as of about three months ago – a time lag which is actually pretty good, compared to some back of beyond sector like the Spinward Marches. The author’s ‘quick and dirty’ estimate of the distance between

Capital/Core/Core and Nulinad/Nulinad/Empty Quarter is 45 pc.

⁸Others, especially the Sharurshid megacorporation, know this as well. However, much of their shipping has been redirected from the luxury trade to transporting necessities: a LOT of heavy interstellar shipping has been commandeered by the Imperium to support troop transport and resupply for the Solomani Rim War. (The impact of this high-intensity war is inescapable: ripples are being felt across all of Charted Space.) Due to the lack of large transports, there may be great profit for Okavango who has the 'first-mover' opportunity.

⁹This child is a pure red herring – at least, for this adventure. Some referees may wish to expand on this character: my favourite template is the character Kim, from Rudyard Kipling's book *Kim*. The title character, a white boy abandoned to live as a poor native in British India, fell into a series of adventures which eventually led to his induction into the Imperial secret service. Due to the low law level of Nulinad, it is perfectly reasonable for a local child to live without family, identification, education, or even a name without drawing the attention of the lordly, India-style "License Raj" that governs the world.

¹⁰The Referee is encouraged to 'plan out' the interior of the Captain's residence. Creativity is recommended when describing curios from distant worlds, the sophisticated 'household AI', etc. One of the ideals implicit in this adventure is pushing the players to set goals for their character, by showing what a really successful free trader can achieve.

¹¹A representative sample: One time, while on the move with a low-tech insurgent army, his caravan was bombed by the local government. He was the only one not on foot (actually, on a riding lizard), and, while his lizard was unharmed, then-Drivehand Okavango's intestines was spilling out of his belly. So, Okavango simply stuffed his guts back in, and drove his lizard 20 km to the insurgent base. The TL 5/6 surgeons there patched him back up well enough.

¹²Nulinad is a bit backward in some respects, as they use hardware-based, pluggable 'keys' as bank ID, instead of retina, DNA or biomorph scanners. Local financial security professionals swear by them, however: the highly sophisticated criminal ecology developed to foil RDB identifiers is inefficient at handling hardware keys, and the keys can be developed to more precise specifications than the ever-changing organic body allows.

¹³The author is using Leroy Guatney's TRWORDS program – along with the DOSBox emulator – to generate Vargr names.

¹⁴A live-update version of Google Earth—available on most worlds of TL 9+, Pop 8+, Law B or less — is a very useful item in the travellers tool chest.

¹⁵For more information on Vuakedh, please see the article "Vuakedh: an Alternate Vargr Language" by Mike Metlay, Seth Blumberg, and Joe Heck. It can be found here: <http://www.ssgfx.com/traveller/language/vuakedh.htm>

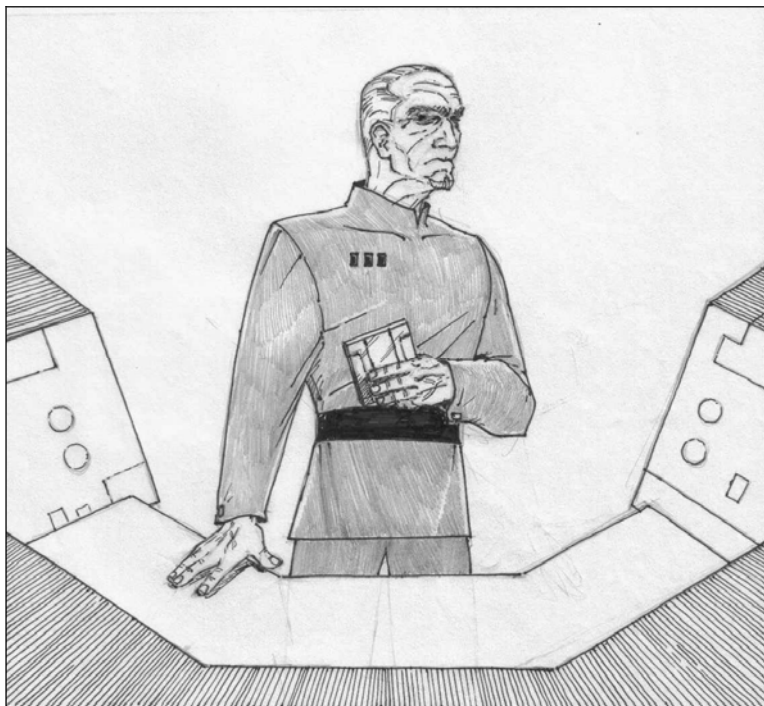
¹⁶Actually, Elite+, as (for the purposed of this adventure) he flees only when the last of his Vargr has left - and perhaps, not even then. Officer Granronrok is unarmed – not even a Webgun! - but if the situation degenerates into a 'last stand', he takes a weapon and put it to excellent use to protect his people. Should he survive, he will immediately resign his commission in disgrace after surfacing: his Charisma falls to zero as he is exiled permanently from his home town.

¹⁷The author's mental image of the high-tech home of this butterfly-loving knight, Dame Katerin Mushreuu, is from Avi's "The Shuttle Operators" at <http://www.psionic.digitalart.org/artwork.php?ID=29571>

For Further Reading

Look up the following website for a good layman discussion of the effects and details of firing underwater firearms:

<http://www.straightdope.com/mailbag/mgununderwater.htm>



Adventure: *Until Sheep May Safely Graze*

by Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Until Sheep May Safely Graze is an adventure for travellers with a taste for smuggling information, handling unexpected violence, thinking on your feet, and the propagation of the Christian faith (at least when the pay's good.). Starship ownership is recommended, but workarounds are possible for creative individuals. This adventure uses the BITS Task System, with Classic Traveller rules. The Referee may read up on the basics of Islamic society if he chooses, for added verisimilitude. The start date is 338-993 Imperial.

Religious advisory: the PCs, the Players, and the Referee are assumed to be pro- or neutral to Christianity; anti-Christian individuals won't enjoy the adventure, and thus shouldn't play it. Alternately, a different religion may be used: I've always wanted to see a massive, State-backed Imperial Cult as an Alternative Traveller experiment, but I'm too lazy to build one properly.

"It's just a milk run."

The players can theoretically start out anywhere in Charted Space, but if the Players aren't interested in Homeric-style epic odysseys, any world on the edge of the Lazisar Gap – the void surrounding Lazisar (Gimushi/Empty Quarter 1233, B5509D-B) - will do as the start point. Judging by the system names, the selection includes many Bwap-dominated systems (Ka-aswa, Kawatas, Kewepab, Fathwaas); the Vargr world of Agnakhong; several important (Pamushgar, Gimushi) and not-so-important (Mihirkiran, Gasadim, Nakhukir) Vilani systems; a few East Indian worlds (Dharmendra, Akiar, Nazirah) and several systems I can't even make a guess at right now (Arakaad, Sandardin, Kenrasda, Dyani). The Gobi and Charity systems are also in the neighbourhood, as is the possibly Jewish world of Mordekai.

Wherever they start, someone who owes the PCs a favour hooks them up with a promising little run. The destructive chaos that is the Solomani Rim War has disrupted all sorts of Imperial/Solomani trade and communication links – including the circulation of church letters, legal rulings from theocratic cultures, information on new scientific and cultural developments, historical & scholastic research, and recent commendations and anathemas. The Empty Quarter's distant and small Christian community has always lagged behind their more influential and powerful cousins closer to Terra (i.e. practically all other believers in Imperial Space).

However, a package of several dozen Terrabytes of news & information has just arrived from the old Solomani Sphere, dated A.D. 5504 (986 Imperial). The couriers are willing to pay top credit for immediate delivery to Lazisar. They themselves must press on trailing to Star's End (via Ley and Gateway), finally touching base with congregations in Gh!hken sector (bordering the Two Thousand Worlds) before doubling back to their

Motherhouse of their order, not far from the front lines of the Rim War¹.

If the PCs are interested, their contact can arrange a meeting with Brother Grigori, Master of the 200-ton starship *Byzantium*. He and his five crewmen are at a local Chapterhouse of their Order, and are personally off-line. However, contacting the Chapterhouse itself and explaining the situation leads to a callback by Brother Grigori. It is unexpectedly difficult to understand him: Brother Grigori is from Daibei, and speaks Deephum – a subtype of Rim Anglic very different from the Transform dialect that is dominant in the Imperial Empty Quarter. Fortunately, his written Anglic is clear and legible³. As a polymath, Brother Grigori also speaks Modern Vilani, Old High Vilani, Swahili, Stellar Malay, and Medieval Latin (His Classical Latin isn't so hot... and don't ask about his Old American English!)

The Brother is happy to meet with the PCs at a place of their choosing, or at a secure virtual site if they wish. They can go to the Chapterhouse⁴ themselves if they insist, but the Order bans human females from entering the premises, and nonhumans may enter neither the Chapel nor the Prayer Hall. Special robes are provided for visitors to wear within the Chapterhouse, and - if a vow of silence is in effect - a simple yellow notepad and two sharpened pencils are also provided for communication.

What does the mission entail? Just deliver the data to the Solariopolis, the largest Naval Base within the Imperial Empty Quarter, and the foci of Imperial military power within the sector. Once cleared by Imperial security, hand-deliver the data to Mistress Habiba Lamaya'al Farqi. Insure that this handover is holographically recorded and notarized by a registered Imperial notary. Send the necessary documents proving this to the Chapterhouse Brother Grigori is currently at. After receipt, the 90% of payment owed will be deposited into the bank account of the PCs choosing. "You'll be taking a perfectly innocuous and harmless package into the heart of Imperial Power in the sector! What could possibly go wrong?"

Available data on the local Net highlights Mistress Farqi as a trader of some note, and head of a fairly prosperous, 200-sophont trading company with branches on three worlds, domiciled at Solariopolis. Sampling the data on the holocrystals merely verifies what Brother Grigori is saying: there's way too much data for a byte-by-byte analysis with the resources the PCs have. An astute PC may do a search for tensions between local Christians and Kikhushegi⁵, the dominant sect on Lazisar and indeed, a plurality of the Imperial Empty Quarter. While there is the usual set of loudmouth hotheads, the last violent incident was over a decade ago, and tensions are low right now.

Brother Grigori's negotiating skills are merely passable: a PC who can sense his urgency should be able to negotiate quite the profit. However, only 10% is paid upfront: the rest is held in escrow by a long-established Bwap regional bank, Woe-sab Attethbaabka-dat Taa sa-wa-wete-tabfab, until delivery is verified by several third-party sources, including the recipient and an Imperial notary.

The actual data itself is simply several shipping containers of holographic storage crystals. Additional containers with

assorted technical equipment are also provided, allowing the data to be read in all the major formats of Charted Space (including 72 of the formats currently found in the Vargr Extents). A practiced eye can detect the high quality of the equipment and data protection used (a Difficult Electronics task).

“The Heart of the Fleet”

PCs who have never served with the Imperial Forces in the Empty Quarter have likely never seen Solariopolis⁶, although they may have heard of it occasionally in the news. Serving or former Imperial military (including Scout and Civil Service) personnel are likely to have some familiarity with Solariopolis: they should be informed of the basic information below.

Solariopolis is built with a central cylinderal axis (housing the Imperial Naval Base) and a single torus encircling the axis (where most civilians live). Rotating to maintain a 1G environment, the torus is connected to the zero-G axis⁷ by six struts and inhabited by contractors, Imperial service personnel, and their families. The scale is simply breathtaking: Solariopolis is the largest artificial object in the Empty Quarter, with a torus dozens of kilometres in circumference, and about 42 million sophonts live within her graceful walls. She is also the most heavily-defended point in the Empty Quarter: Solariopolis boasts several dedicated SDB fleets, thousands of fighters, and multiple meson cannons housed in crystaliron spheres along her lengthy spine⁸

Solariopolis was originally built in the aftermath of the Julian War, as a tangible symbol of the Imperium's commitment to hold onto their portion of the Empty Quarter. Finally commissioned in 238 - after grossly overrunning both cost and time estimates - the base was designated an Imperial Depot, capable of handling dozens of squadrons of front-line warships and troop transports. The centuries-long peace since then has led to the downgrading of the status of Solariopolis, from Imperial Depot to a Major Naval Base, freeing up resources for other conflicts. As a substitute and an attempt to promote interstellar commerce within the Imperial Quarter, Solariopolis was reoriented as a centre for trade and finance with the Imperial Government. All the major suppliers & contractors for the Imperial military forces have extensive offices in Solariopolis: a majority have corporate labs and classified skunkwork sites sited here, as well as the usual light and heavy manufacturing plants. The primary Naval construction yards for the sector are also located here.¹⁰

The Regular Imperial Navy detachment has been called to duty hundreds of parsecs, leaving only the large Gimushi Colonial Fleet (dominated by Lazisari personnel and warships) to keep her company. Docking procedures are crisp, professional, and tightly supervised. Security has been tightened due to the war, but it's mainly just bureaucracy: military-civilian relations are very good.

Clearance to dock at a civilian gate is fairly easy, once Imperial Customs and Naval Security is satisfied. The architecture within the huge ring is built to resemble the TL 8-10 low-rises on Lazisar. The interior environment is kept hot and dry – much to the discomfort of the resident Bwaps. An artificial river, called the Nil by locals, runs along the centre of the inhabited torus, dividing the urban area in two halves: large cargo ships ply the waters, carrying low-priority cargo. The forest of low-rises taper

off as they near the outer Skywall, giving way to ‘natural’ scrub and bushland: various small animals make their home here. Composed largely of glass and immense piping, the Skywall handles the air, water, heating, lighting, and power needs of civilian Solariopolis. The huge, shuttered windows handle the day/night cycle for the space city.

Solariopolis is rather more cosmopolitan than Lazisar itself: around 30% of the civilians are foreign to the Empty Quarter (Mainly of Ley and Antares origin), and another 30% are from elsewhere in the Imperial Empty Quarter. The largest community of Coremen (residents of Core Sector) within the Quarter resides here, numbering 50,000: their influence far outweighs their numbers. About 40% of the locals are citizens of Lazisar, and ¼ of these are true Solariopoli: folks whose families have always lived here. Roughly 15% of the entire population are nonhuman. The majority are Bwap, who reside in humid warrens underneath the Nil, exiting by subway to interact with the human population.

The lifestyle here is similar to Lazisar's: strongly Arabic-flavoured, with men wearing bright robes and women subdued in dress and behaviour. Their noticeable religious and national pride is woven into daily habits and language. Like on Lazisar, the law level is 13: no weapons are permitted to commoners. Nobles can carry bladed or melee weapons only, unless they are Dukes or greater. Serving Imperial personnel are ordered to deposit their weapons in the armory: weaponry for local security personnel is restricted - except for the rarely-seen S.W.A.T. and Special Circumstances teams. The search for hidden weapons is through (due to the military base and sensitive corporate installations): it's a Formidable Streetwise task to smuggle small firearms and explosives into the station, assuming an hour for preparation.

“En Garde!”

So, where's Mistress Habiba Lamaya'al Farqi? Any half-decent Net search or common directory (an Easy Computer task) flags her residence: Suite 76, Kenitra Building, Sa'ad Zaghlul Ward, North Bank. (Unknown to the PCs, someone has set up a software watchdog to look precisely for such a search...) Attempts to contact her directly receive a recorded message, pointing them to contact her home. Her household servants advise the PCs to come.

There are no planes within the interior of Solariopolis, and air/rafts are all reserved for police or military use. The Kenitora building is 3D6 km away on foot, but the local bus or subway network can cut the time in transit. Electric taxis and minitaxis are eager to take the PCs anywhere. Due to tight supervision – every taxi is tracked and wired (sight & sound) by the Taxi Guild - both their driving safety and rates are reasonable. If the PCs want to deliver their cargo, they need to rent a truck and a driver. The best way to do this is grab one idling near a civilian gateway, and negotiate the terms on the spot. (This is an Average Streetwise or Trader task.)

While on their way, the PCs are waylaid by a two ground vehicles, trapping them in one of the narrow alleys of Solariopolis. A crowd forms around them as an agent provocateur loudly claims that the PCs want to spread vile propaganda, attacking the Great Prophets and Traditions of Kikhushegi. As the growing crowd begins to murmur, the PCs can try to defend themselves by argument and rhetoric, or challenge the accuser to a duel of honour. Verbal defence is a Difficult task of Intelligence: Streetwise of 2+ gives a +1 modifier. Increase the task difficulty one level (to Formidable) for nonhumans, except for human-shaped beings like the Vargr, Bwaps and Aslans: the cosmopolitan locals are less xenophobic than other Emptyheads, and are far more willing to give such aliens a fair shake.

If there is a duel, then the PCs need to choose their best swordsman to match the troublemaker. If the PC champion doesn't have a sword or knife, a regular short sword will be given to him. The rules of the duel are explained: all fighting is done within a 10-foot circle, and fought to first blood. Maiming and killing break the code, and are criminal offences. Cheating (poison blades, outside help, dust cast to the eyes, etc) results in fines or criminal charges, and the offender automatically loses. The troublemaker is good with a blade, but not a true duel artist. If the troublemaker wins, the PCs must apologise for offending the Great Prophets and the Tradition, and leave Solariopolis without making the delivery. If the PCs win, the agent provocateur retreats to lick his wounds. If the PCs do something really stupid, the crowd riots, and the PCs are seized and charged by Solariopolis legal forces: their delivery is in limbo while they fight the charges, and may well 'disappear' as the PCs are stuck in jail.

"The Badlands"

The PCs reach Mrs. Farqui's residence without further incident. Her suite – really, a three-floor condo – is in a swanky part of town. As is common locally, her residence doubles as her business office; traders, foreigners, and friends are constantly streaming in and out of her home, speaking to her servants and managers. Right now, the Mistress of the House is absent, doing charity work in Zeuxis Ward. The PCs are shown traditional Lazisari hospitality, and are encouraged to rest and wait until she returns in three weeks or so.

If they wish to go to her location immediately, they may, but are warned that they are heading to a bad part of town. They are advised not to handover the data in the Badlands, but wait for her return. If they insist, then they must find and hire an Imperial Notary to document the handover – not an easy task, and if they can find someone who's willing, it will cost them a pretty penny. They must also find willing transport for their cargo of data crystals.

If the PCs have no strong soldier-type among them, they are advised to hire some security. They are usually tough and disciplined men, unarmed except for his (licensed) baton. Because of the intense heat and dryness of the Badlands, Bwap PCs must make special preparations for the journey or risk death by dehydration. Renting a Bwap-tailored environmental suit is quite wise, but the rent & deposit are on the high side due to the possibility of violence.

To get to Zeuxis Ward, the PCs need to first take a lengthy subway journey: then head out from the river to the edge of the urban area, when the buildings end and the dry scrub begins. By the time they reach here, artificial night has fallen: but the nearby windows face away from the sun, and are left open for the starlight to shine. Packs of small predators roam this territory at night, but they are easily scared off.

More dangerous are the thieving ruffians and brigands of the area. Some work alone, holding up the foolish single traveller: most work in small gangs. They generally don't kidnap or kill, preferring to just take whatever they can steal. They are usually armed with knives, lead pipes, and chains. Few have swords or axes: a very few have homemade and unreliable guns. Gangs are all-male, and generally monocultural/monoracial (all-Solomani, all-

Vargr, etc.) Of course, there are no Bwap gangs, being the law-abiding and desert-fearing types they are.

Per half-hour in the Badlands, outside of a settlement, roll 2D6. Add +3 if the PCs are carrying cargo, +2 if the party numbers two or less, -2 if displaying rifles, -3 if the party numbers 15 or more. Modifiers accumulate. Results: **4 or less:** no attack. **5-6:** an attack by 1D6+3 bandits occurs. **7-10:** an attack by 1D6 bandits occurs. **11-13:** an attack by 2D6 bandits occurs. **14 or above:** an attack by 2D6+1 bandits occurs, plus one Bandit Leader.

Roll 2D6 for the nature of the attack (same DMs as above). **2 or less:** 1/3 of the force strikes, and retreats to where the 2/3 hidden bandits waits in ambush. **3-5:** (only if large valuables or containers are spotted) strike and scatter the party, grab the containers, and retreat. **3-10:** head-on attack by a single force. **11-14:** at a signal, attack the front and back of the party simultaneously. **15 or above:** parley with the party, attempt to befriend them, and then attack.

Once at Zeuxis Ward, the PCs need to locate Mistress Farqi. There are no available directory kiosk, and no peaceful locals to ask. However, any PDA or computer can tie into the wireless net, and give a civilian map download of the area, highlighting several villages and shantytowns in the Ward. A stranger entering one is rather unwelcome, but violence is unlikely unless they look like a mark (flaunting wealth, weakness and ignorance) or causing problems. Good trading and bargaining skills can be used to improve the reception (Hint: liquor and mind-altering substances are appreciated, the stronger the better.)

Even after successful bargaining, additional sweet-talking is needed to get the locals to open up. This takes an hour. Roll Average Liaison or Streetwise until one of the following results occur:

- Four Successful results: give the PCs the last known location of the Mistress. This location is 2D6 + 4 km of the PCs current location. There is a 25% probability that she is still there.
- Four Failure results: give them nothing useful. Move on to the next shantytown.
- A Spectacular Success: the locals can find out the location of the Mistress in real time (via cell phone, etc.) The PCs may speak to her, and determine the fastest route to her location.
- A Spectacular Failure: the locals get real nasty, real quick. If they see that they can rob and kill the PCs, they do so. If they are too intimidated to do this, the locals shout abuse, and harass or shun the PCs until the PCs leave.

If the PCs arrives to the Mistress' location during 'daytime', they discover a group of three tents, surrounded by ~30 sickly or wounded individuals, pregnant female sophonts, and small, ill younglings¹². There often are a few knots of people chatting, and an itinerant merchant or two loudly hawking their wares. The largest tent is a field clinic, manned by two physicians, three nurses, an orderly, and four security men (one is a local hire). The two smaller tents house the Mistress' office and a supply depot, respectively. Both tents are guarded by a local hire, and

there will be several individuals in line to speak to the Mistress, monopolising all of her time. In the middle of the camp are two large magnetic-field trucks, guarded by two men (one a local hire.) Local guards are armed with a stout stick and a sword or axe. The outsider guards wear simple helmets and very light torso armor, and carry stun batons, knives, and swords.

If contact is made at ‘night’, the patients are absent; the site is dark, silent and still. Approaching the tents at night is ill-advised: there are motion-detecting sensors planted around the camp which wake the guards if something trips them. The guards assume the PCs are bandits unless the PCs can persuade them otherwise. ‘Dawn’ is busy: the Mistress’ camp moves from place to place, and the camp is either packing up for an hour-long trek, or is being unpacked for the day’s work. ‘Dusk’ is the most peaceful time in the camp: everyone is cleaning up, eating, or preparing to sleep. If the PCs can arrange it, dusk is the best time to contact Mistress Farqi. She is willing to sign for the goods, but requests that the PCs bring the data back to her residence, as it’s much safer there than in the camp. If the PCs bargain, she promises them fair-market payment for their services. She won’t provide transportation or guards to help: they are needed in camp.

“Payment in Kind”

The PCs now have to prove that they successfully delivered the data to the Woe-sab Attethbaabka-dat Taa sa-wa-wete-tabfab, the Bwap bank which is holding their payment in escrow. The bank wants the proper documents (the Imperial Notary video & shipping papers), and three third-party signed confirmations that the delivery was successful. This being a Bwap bank, ALL papers must be in PERFECT order before they release the funds. The PCs may need to head back to the badlands *again*, if they didn’t get everything right the first time!

Referee advisory: read the following text carefully, and consider if your Players can tolerate this kind of ‘surprise’. If you think that they would hate it, DON’T ROLEPLAY IT. It isn’t worth breaking up your group or losing friends for. It is merely included for realism, nothing more.

Soon after the funds have been transferred into the PC accounts, they receive an anonymous email. It seems that someone is impressed with their work: would you like to meet with then at a certain restaurant late this evening?

The PCs may decline: in which case the adventure ends.

The PCs may accept. If they do, they can find the restaurant after some effort. There are only a few tables and an old man, who shuffles off to bed soon after the PCs arrive. He is replaced by a young waiter, eager to please. He takes the PCs order and retires to the kitchen.

Within an appropriate amount of time, he returned, pushing a trolley of food and covered dishes, and parks it next to the PCs table, placing the covered dishes on the PCs table. One of those dishes is a bomb: when the PCs open the dish, the bomb explodes, causing 4D6 damage to all the PCs and the waiter. If the PCs survive the initial two minutes after the explosion, the Solariopolis Emergency Response Team arrives and packs off the PCs to the nearest hospital. As non-Lazisari visitors, they must pay for their

own medical care, or face legal sanctions. Local hospital care is quite good.

The PCs are debriefed by both Imperial naval investigators and Solariopolis police before being let go. Local law enforcement strongly discourages any PC vigilantism and/or private investigations. If the PCs are caught breaking any of the numerous laws surrounding privacy, weapons or violence, they can expect fines, jail time, or expulsion¹³. Unlawful killing or excessive violence is punished by personality wipes & reconstruction.

The result of the government’s investigation is left for the Referee to determine¹⁴.

Personalities

Brother Grigori, Courier: 426CB8, Age 26 years; Pilot-2, Liaison-1, Medical-0, Vacc Suit-0, Pistol-0; Languages: Modern Vilani-1, Old High Vilani-1, Swahili-1, Stellar Malay-1, and Medieval Latin-1, Classical Latin-0, Old American English-(-1). Usually unarmed.

The Troublemaker, Duellist: CC77A5, Age 22 years; Streetwise-1, Sword-1, Brawling-1. For this encounter, he is armed with a sword.

Licensed security guard (typical): A98654, Age 22 years; Baton-1, Brawling-0. If the PCs want to hire better-trained security, they must find them, and determine their skills: this is an Average Interview task. Armed only with a standard baton.

Mistress Farqi’s professional guards (typical): B86765, Age 30 years; Tonfa-1 (doubles as Baton-1), Brawling-1, Sword-1, Streetwise-1, Rifle-1, Pistol-0, Tactics-0. Wears a helmet w/radio comms (5 km) and light armor (treat as jack armor.) Armed with a proper tonfa (baton w/side handle) & short sword.

Bandits, Local guards: 688721, Age 22 years; [weapon]-1. Roll 1D6 for the weapon chosen:

1: Stones; teeth & claws if Vargr, fists if human. **2-3:** Knives. **4:** Stout lead pipes. **5:** Knives and lead pipes. **6:** Knives and heavy steel chains.

Bandit Leader: 88951, Age 26 years; Knife-2, Streetwise-1, Leader-1, Black powder pistol-0, Tactics-0. Armed with two knives and two black powder pistols (one shot each.)

Mistress Habiba Lamaya’al Farqi: 445878, Age 27 years; Trader-2, Broker-2, Liaison-1, Theology (Christian)-1, Theology (Kikhushegi)-0, Medical (First Aid)-0, Pistol-0, Ancient Hymns-0. Armed with one small ‘Lady’s Pistol’ (treat as body pistol) with four shots. She is licensed for conceal carry on Solariopolis.

Footnotes

¹The Brothers of St. Darrell of the Reavers have their Motherhouse located at Petra/Daibei 2533. Daibei Sector is not currently a theatre in the Solomani Rim War, but the Sector Navy is geared up and aggressively patrolling the Imperium’s Spinward flank in case of Solomani incursion. Petra herself is owned by Wordspread Inc.², and run as a communications, datamining & analysis node. Petra’s UWP when the *Byzantium* last saw her (at 988 Imperial) was B798566-D. A view of her starport can be seen, framed on a bulkhead: the view is similar to ‘Space port’ by czarnyrobort, located at

http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=197522. The *Byzantium* is not described in this adventure: the Referee may base her design on the ships depicted here.

²Wordspread was founded in -517 within the Old Earth Union, and can legitimately use the term “Incorporated” instead of “Licensed Imperial Company” (LIC).

³A certain resemblance between Imperial Anglic and traditional Chinese isn't coincidental: both are massive Imperial tongues, whose written form is fairly standardized, but whose pronunciation varies widely. Pronunciation across Imperial space is more intelligible than you'd expect, due to: 1) the Imperial version of Received Pronunciation (a.k.a. "The Emperor's Anglic") common among the Nobility, the Officer Corps of the Imperial Armed Services, and senior corporate executives, 2) audiovisual materials (without radio, British and American English would have become separate languages in the 20th century), 3) the alphabetical nature of the language provides better pronunciation clues than Chinese pictograms.

⁴The visual of the Chapterhouse of my mind's eye is based on "Monastero Di San Cremona - Revision 1" by Fabio Comin - <http://fcomin.cgsociety.org/gallery/411548/>

⁵Kikhushegi is the indigenous religion of Lazisar, founded in -1173, and dominant on Lazisar since -804. Derived from Islam, the strong influence of Vilani tradition and philosophy on Kikhushegi leads many Muslims to treat it as heretical. However, the vigorous support of the Kikhushegi religion by both the people and the government of Lazisar has entrenched it as the leading human religion in Gimushi subsector, and quite influential through much of the Imperial Empty Quarter.

⁶I'm basing Solariopolis closely on a specific visual, "The Return to Abalakin Part I" by Alexander Preuss <http://vampeta.cgsociety.org/gallery/378795/> Note that I'm ignoring another graphic on the same idea, the Grand Space Opera Winning Graphic by the same artist <http://vampeta.cgsociety.org/gallery/211306/>. The first graphic's an interior shot, which is far smaller than the world-girding torus shown in the Space Opera graphic. And anyways, the Imperium doesn't have the technology needed to support the activity shown in the Space Opera shot. (They can barely build a proper Death Star!)

⁷Largely zero-G: artigrav flooring maintains a 1G environment in selected regions.

⁸Yes, I'm avoiding giving exact numbers on Solariopolis. I don't have the math to translate the visual from "The Return to Abalakin" to numbers, except in a general sense. That challenge, I leave to the hardcore FF&S⁹gearheads among us.

⁹Traveller Lore: 'FF&S' refers to *Fire, Fusion and Steel: Technical Architecture*, a highly math-oriented Traveller: The New Era supplement. Some of us (cough, cough) spent entirely too much time detailing out starships to the last kilogram, watt, and meter with that book. Note that the book was printed in January 1994, without the expected electronic spreadsheet.

¹⁰The Empty Quarter is far from the well-travelled mains of the Imperium, and distant from most neighbours, making it a nice place for quiet, long-term military research. Moreover, the local Imperial worlds are strongly loyalist¹¹ while their poor tech levels leave them ignorant of the implications of certain technologies and experiments. This serves the larger contractors just fine.

The Imperial yards are not available for civilian construction, and don't affect the "B" starport rating of Lazisar. Standard Imperial policy until the Solomani Rim War was for Imperial warships construction to be built only in dedicated Naval ship yards, for security and quality control reasons. During the War, the Solomani made the destruction of the Naval yards a top priority, crippling the

Imperial war effort. In 994, Admiralty policy shifted to warship construction in civilian yards, with only experimental craft, testbeds, and classified projects reserved for dedicated naval yards. This policy remained in effect up to the Rebellion period.

As an Imperially-funded attempt to spark civilian trade and local wealth creation, Solariopolis is a failure. However, it does have a secure place in the Imperial military-industrial complex, and runs a small but consistent profit for the Baronial family that administers it on behalf of the Imperium.

¹¹The Imperial Emptyheads initially remained loyal to Emperor Lucan during the Rebellion era. In 112-1118, there was a massive battle over Nulinad, where the Antarian 104th Reserve Fleet and squadrons of the 226th fleet challenged Emperor Lucan's forces. "This major clash has for the first time pitted massed enemy ships against the proud fleets of Antares, testing the League's commitment to Independence." (*Survival Margin*, page 15.) The Imperial Empty Quarter – especially 'Bwap space' – was then dominated by the League of Antares unto the assassination of Regent Brzk in 271-1129, after which the League disintegrated. Even at the League's largest extent in ~1123, over a third of the Imperial worlds (and half the population) never was part the League. They remained loyal to Lucan, declared independence, or went Wild.

¹²The image in my mind is from "Thriving Outskirts (colony urchins)" by Jamie Jones (Cicinimo) <http://forums.cgsociety.org/showthread.php?f=147&t=183803&highlight=Thriving+Outskirts> Informal policy among subsector Christian charities is to treat Christian humans first, then non-Christian humans, and finally nonhumans if supplies permit. Mistress Farqi has a looser policy, using standard medical triage rules regardless of species (with a bias towards the young.) Most local church leaders disapprove, but no one interferes: it's her time & money, after all, and the community is wealthy enough to 'let the gleanings go.' The Lazisar System Directorate disapproves of private charity & medical care, but the Mistress has enough pull to get an exception, so long as her good works stay in the Badlands.

¹³Note that the Lazisar System Directorate is a 'patriotic surveillance society', as is fairly common among the Solomani. Not everything is watched, but quite a lot is monitored, especially in the city proper. There are few paid informers, but many patriotic citizens are eager to report the suspicious activity of foreigners.

¹⁴Some PCs are certain to defy the authorities and the author of this adventure, and insist on personally investigating the matter. The Lazisari city government opposes any PC investigation or research into the matter. On the other hand, some Imperial support might be gained, if the PCs are 1) Imperial Knights or higher 2) honourably served in the Imperial Navy and 3) has a friendly contact within the Imperial Administration of Solariopolis. A good political schemer can use the divided nature of the government to his advantage, even without being a noble.

Using streetwise skills for underworld support is more difficult than usual, but quite possible: money always helps. Note that the local criminals and local law enforcement have certain 'unspoken agreements' in place, giving criminal minds some margin for smooth operations, so long as the general public is undisturbed and the authorities shown proper respect. There are very few criminals that care to break the agreement, and become the target of a full-on manhunt by both the authorities and other criminals, interested in the reward money.

If the Referee allows the PCs to pursue a private investigation, there are some basic questions he must have answers for:

➤ Was the waiter innocent? Did he even survive the

explosion?

- Who sent the email? Sending an anonymous email is supposedly impossible on Solariopolis, where all electronic contacts are tagged and linked to personal ID. Can it be traced?
- The government sent men to debrief the PCs, but there was no press. Why is mainstream press

coverage being suppressed? How about the alternate press?

- How did the sophont who sent the email learn about the PCs?
- How did he get the explosives? Security is pretty tight in Solariopolis. (Referee hint: a commercial kitchen uses all sorts of interesting materials to make their meals...)



Adventure: Frozen Fire

By Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Frozen Fire is an adventure for military specialists in a Cold War/Small War situation. PCs can carry any man-portable weaponry, gadget, and armor, up to Battle Dress and Fusion rifles (no portable nukes – sorry.) All PCs must be trained in Grav belt operations: the higher the skill, the better. NBC munitions are interdicted by the Imperial military. Demolition skill is useful. The Laws of War are in effect – to a certain extent. PCs are expected to have experience in cold weather survival.

Since the PCs are expected to have all sorts of excellent gear on their person, it is most likely that they are serving members of the Imperial Army or Marines. Noble Household troopers, elite mercenary units and corporate assault troops are also suitable. Payers who read this adventure before playing it out should be reprimanded, and crucial details changed to keep the players on their toes. The PCs should carefully determine the PCs Dexterity with their armor and load. Classical Traveller rules & the BITS task system are utilized.

This adventure is heavily abstracted. Many military players prefer maps and layouts, so they can figure out precisely what their tactical situation is. No maps are provided: the Referee may use the suggested visuals to imagineer his maps. Weapon & armor statistics are not included.

“...where it is always winter, and never Christmas.”

Pugaash/Nulinad 0337 is not a happy world. Over the last two hundred years, the world has gone thru six worldwide wars (two of them involving a limited nuclear exchange), over 20 regional wars (regional: of a sub-continental scale or larger), and innumerable local wars, skirmishes, raids, and border incidents. Oftentimes, the violence spills over into the neighbouring system of Nulinad, the Sector Capital of the Empty Quarter. The Imperium has tried various means to contain the violence, from Red Zoning, to full-on Imperial Army occupations, to relocating the smaller, more vicious nations to systems at least 20 parsecs from Pugaash.

The essential problem involves the entanglements of conflicting land claims, prideful and powerful nobles, the relentless shrinkage of arable land, a fixation on avenging past wrongs, and corporate intrigues to gain effective monopolies in controlling both 1) food imports and 2) the high-tech military infrastructure – something the locals can't do, being at TL 6.¹ The struggle between the three largest theocratic powers for world domination simply adds another overlay of hostilities to the world's many troubles.² Fortunately, the Solomani Rim War gave the Subsector Duke the right to draft the most aggressive and violent men – roughly two million soldiers – to wage war on behalf of the Imperium hundreds of parsecs away.³

This act has done several good things for Pugaash: the sharp decrease of militancy has permitted a (rather rushed)

rezoning to yellow, then green, permitting the Imperial garrison to be redeployed. The local governments no longer feel honour-bound to react to every slight and perceived insult. Moreover, the now-feminine led local noble houses are enjoying renewed planetary trade & (relative) prosperity, and there's an informal consensus among the major powers to make the peace permanent. This wave of pacifism is strongly encouraged by the Imperium, both directly and indirectly.

“Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to Uudikun.”

There's always someone who doesn't get the word.

The Unified State of Uudikun – pure Vilani (like the rest of the world), population 20 million, law level F – was successfully annexing a displeasing neighbour (displeasing because they existed) when the Imperial proconsul requested they hand over the bulk of their army to the Imperium. Because of their strongly pro-Imperial ideology (which gave them the political leeway to crush their neighbours in the first place), the Unified State felt obliged to comply. They STILL tried to hold on to what they have, but the would-be victim – the Sarrkhuguush Baronical Townships – drove them back to the original borders.⁴

While much of the Imperial presence is gutted, local intelligence assets – both personnel and equipment – have been kept in place. When Imperial observers spot a possible Law of War violation, local governments generally make a sincere effort to resolve the issue, and if necessary bring offending soldiers to justice. Careful backchecking of previous records, however, has uncovered a systemic series of questionable incidents involving Uudikuni forces, incidents that were never conclusively resolved.

Normally, this matter would be left for the Diplomatic and Legal Corps to deal with. But in this case, there is disturbing evidence of recent provocative acts against another neighbouring state, The Traditional Order of Kuusegkigikar. Abductions, poisoned & infected livestock, and sabotaged power & telephone lines are destroying the Order from within.

“Bring it on!”

The PCs Commanding Officer/Patron notifies them that they have been chosen for an insertion/extraction operation. They are to be transported close to Kinade Aamzarkhin, one of the mountains of Uudikun's rugged Liani mountain chain. A command post of the Uudikuni military is located here. Efforts are made to suppress anti-air fire, but a rapid decent via Grav belt to the small ship landing platform is recommended.

The secondary peak – where the landing platform is located – is connected to the main mountain via tunnel: the PCs are expected to blast their way thru all opposition, and use the tunnel to enter the main facility. If the tunnel is destroyed or inaccessible, the PCs are in trouble, but there is a chance to salvage the situation, if – and it's a big if – they can breach the reinforced armor shielding of the main facility via a direct outside assault.

Once inside the main base, the PCs must head to the Base Commander's office. The PCs get a schematic of the base downloaded into their Battle Dress: the information is felt to be accurate, but can't be depended on 100%. There is a direct route highlighted, which is sure to be a death trap. There are also two indirect routes, which have dangers of their own. An important 'known unknown' is just how many reinforcements can be expected for each route, and how well prepared are they for the PCs. By this time, the enemy is unlikely to attack the PCs using handheld weaponry, but Block Gates, Insta-barriers, sonic Shriekers, Sticky Seas and old-fashioned Deadfalls are to be expected to be used against the armored PCs. Excepting the Sticky Sea, no barrier should be more than a nuisance: the probable location of the Sticky Sea is flagged.

After arrival at the Base Commander's office, any and all data storage devices must be seized. This is the core of the mission, and must be done as quickly and completely as possible. Some data storage may be disguised: if in doubt, stuff it in one of the expandi-packs. The PCs must use their discretion, and can't carry everything due to bulkiness: but powered armor helps a lot with weight-bearing. Once everything has been secured, the PCs must do a quick evacuation. The PCs Commander/Patron has good reason to believe that the CO has a prebuilt evacuation route from his office: the PCs must locate this exit, and use it to swiftly leave the base.

If their intelligence is correct, the exit chute leads to an underground monorail. The monorail car should be long gone, but the monorail itself can be used by the PCs for transportation. The monorail runs for 30 kilometres: some sort of ambush is a certainty, so the PCs should keep their eyes peeled. At the end of the monorail should be a gate into a wooded area: this is also a good site for an ambush.

Afterwards, the PCs must transmit a specific code from their radio, at a specific frequency. They must wait between three to five minutes for a reply.

- If they receive Reply One, go to Clearing #1 for pickup.
- If Reply Two, go to Clearing #2 for pickup.
- If they get Reply Three, then they must use their Grav belts, and burn as long and as hard as they can in a North-Northwest direction, towards the Traditional Order of Kuusegkigikar. They might be able to cross into Order airspace successfully, where you are homefree.
- If Reply Four, they should forget the Grav belts: use a stealth/survivalist approach to cross enemy lands on foot, until they are within 100 meters of the border. At that point, depress the IFF button so the Order Defenders can recognise them and not shoot, and run with everything they've got. (On a really good day, the Order Defenders may give them covering fire.)
- If Reply Five is given, the PCs must remain where they are for pickup, and remain alert: the enemy is sure to try to reach them before their own people do, and things can get quite dicey.

If captured, the PCs are to give name, rank, and serial number. By now, the PCs have memorized their rights as a Prisoner of War. All prisoners can be expected to be aggressively interrogated. If the PCs are Imperial Military, they should stress this fact. PC officers may point out the possible consequences for this act of open rebellion, but don't expect any great results from doing so. Imperial Military prisoners can expect to be released after a few months: they are not abused (though they may be mildly roughed up), and may be given small privileges for good behaviour - smoking rights, freedom to worship in a non-Vilani fashion, etc.

If the PCs are mercenaries, they should lie and claim that they are Imperial Troops, to the best of their ability. (The smarter PCs may go to the lengths of faking Imperial ID, uniforms, etc.) Note that if the Uudikuni military discovers the deception, the PCs are treated as spies: their captors follow the "Black and Decker" School of Interrogation before the PCs are finally shot. On the other hand, the Unified State of Uudikun does not consider mercenaries to be lawful combatants: such men are unlikely to be ever seen alive again, once captured.

For Noble Household troops, treatment varies wildly: depending on the relationship of their lord with the nobles of Uudikun, they could be brutally imprisoned for decades, released after a few years of fairly decent treatment, or freed immediately - with apologies. Corporate troops generally receive some form of mutilation and tattooing (loping off thumbs and kneecapping are popular, as they cripple fighting ability), and then sold back to their corporate sponsor. Some corporations won't spare the cash to purchase/ransom captured men back: these abandoned men are eventually killed.

A few words before heading out...

Environmental advisory: Pugaash's atmosphere is tainted with hallucinogenic micro-organisms. While the mote-sized, plankton-like organisms don't exist in mountainous regions - where the air is too thin for breathing, regardless - they are pervasive over most of Pugaash's land masses (a similar micro-organism circulates over the planet's oceans, but is 'harmless' compared to it's land-based cousin.)

After exposure for several hours (add the Strength and Endurance of the character, then divide by five, to determine the number of hours), the subject begins to imagine threats that aren't there, and grows increasingly more paranoid, even of trusted friends. Exposure over a longer time period causes permanent brain damage, up to death. Referee: subtract 1 point of Intelligence for every 'cycle' the PC is exposed to the atmosphere. (Cycles differ between characters: a cycle length, in days, equals the sum of Strength + Endurance.) A character needs to be out of the atmosphere for 2+ days before the micro-organisms in his body die out, and the mental damage ceases. Recovery procedures: one point of Intelligence for every (20 - (Strength + Endurance: minimum three)) days in a TL A+ hospital or treatment centre.

Of course, the PCs Battle Dress is sealed and pressurized, and has build-in air filtration. All Pugaashi homes (isolated and hivehomes) have airlocks and sealed windows, and both civilians and military forces wear TL 5-6 airfilters.

Communication advisory: All Uudikun (and everyone else on the planet) speaks Modern Vilani. In the Unified State of Uudikun, only officers and communication specialists are permitted to learn any additional languages. However, about

5% of the Uudikun population has studied Old High Vilani secretly, and can speak it at a skill level of zero.

Wear and tear: The Referee needs to consider how much wear and tear Battle Dress can take from 'low grade' attacks. The PCs could go thru lots of small arms fire; concussion damage; heavy impact by boulders; attempts to pry open their suits via crowbars; their visors could be slimed and blinded; and go thru lots and lots of grenade impacts – fragmentary, high-explosive, and perhaps white phosphorus. The PCs may also be exposed to roaring sheets of flames and napalm. Killing cold temperatures are not out of the question. How many rocket grenades can Battle Dress take before it starts to crack? How close does a World War II-type bomb impact needs to be before it turns the occupant into so much red paste? How much heat can Battle Dress handle before the PC starts to boil alive – or until onboard sensors fry? How much concussion damage can be sustained before on-board electronics start to fail?

Depending on his rule set, how 'realistic' his science-fiction is, and his own idea on what Battle Dress can handle, the Referee should have at least some idea on how to answer these questions.

"Make your move."

Kinade Aamzarkhin airborne encounter: As the PCs exit the military transport, the area around them is alive with small arms fire and anti-air flak. However, thanks to jamming and electronic countermeasures, the AA is woefully inaccurate: the PCs may be spooked by it, but not harmed. Of greater import is when the firing stops (always an ominous development), and five to twenty men rise to greet them in the air. These Veteran-level fighting men are wearing ballistic cloth armor under their grey greatcoats, and carry automatic rifles (20 shots each), four Sticky grenades, two knives, and a crowbar each. They shoot at the PCs when they are within 100 meters, and switch to crowbars and knives in close combat, attempting to smash the visors of the PCs (blinding them), toss a Sticky grenade in their face (blinding them: Sticky grenades have no explosive charges, but hinder movement and sight), jam the sharpened crowbar into a weak point of their armor (crippling the PC), or disable/pry off the PC's Grav belts (letting the Terran-like gravity do what comes naturally.) A successful crowbar smash or gunshot on a PC's hand won't damage it (Battle Dress is that good), but the hand is stunned and unusable for a few moments (number of six-second rounds the hand is useless is (1D6+3) – Strength), temporarily crippling the PC.

These Air Infantry are natural grapplers, and good at close-up combat: getting within arms-length of them is a risky proposition, indeed. Their greatest weak point is their cheap and shoddy Grav belts (Uudikun can't afford much high-tech, and doesn't ask too much about why certain products are on sale at low, low prices.) Trained PCs can out-manoeuvre, out-turn, and out-dodge them – but the Referee must balance the PCs greater flexibility with their greater weight. (The PCs Dexiterity penalty for heavy armor – of crucial importance in this encounter – must be determined by the Referee.) The main issue is accurate fire while flying thru the air at high velocity: Grav belt skill comes into play here, as well as weapon skill. The enemy Air Infantry has an easier job: "just get close enough so you can reach out and touch someone."

Air Infantry: UPP 895654; cloth armor, automatic rifle (20 rounds), cheap Grav belt (1 hour, low manoeuvrability),

crowbar. Brawling-3, Cudgel-2, Knife-1, Automatic Rifle-1, Grav belt-1.

Kinade Aamzarkhin landing pad encounter: With about five minutes to go till touchdown, the AA flak suddenly gets a good deal more accurate. (The Uudikuni finally dumped the delusional radar guidance, and start using the Mark I eyeballs for targeting.) While the chance of actually getting hit is still low – (avoiding flak: an Easy Grav belt task), it is no longer zero, and being hit by an AA shell or fragments is pretty hard on your health, even with good Battle Dress. Wise PCs accelerate to the landing pad, trusting in their Grav belt skill for a light landing. While approaching the landing pad at a high rate of speed, the PCs spot twenty men wearing grey winter uniforms and goggles, shooting at them with automatic rifles. The PCs should enjoy scattering this ineffective resistance: "Local yokels discover walking, flying tanks" is a good summary of this incident. Using demolition charges is just plain overkill at this point. There is a small (50-ton) spacecraft docked on the pad: it is unmanned and unimportant now, but could come in useful later...⁵

Standard USU Soldier: UPP 667545; no armor, automatic rifle (20 rounds), two fragmentary grenades, knife. Automatic Rifle-1, Knife-0.

Variant: Grenadier (One-shot TL 6 Grenade Launcher (high-explosive warhead): four throwing grenades (two fragmentary, one high-explosive, one smoke). Grenader Launcher-1, Throwing-1.

Variant: Serjeant: Social +1; Automatic Rifle-2, Ground Tactics-1, Leader-0. (Serjeants and other NCOs have higher status in Uudikun than in Solomani Anglo-influences cultures.)

Variant: Officer (One automatic pistol, 12 rounds): Social +2, Admin-1, Leader-1, Automatic Pistol-0, Automatic Rifle-0.

Base Commander: as Officer, but with Admin-2, Computer (TL C)-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Anglic-0.

Note: only the fragmentary grenades take the traditional "pineapple" design. All other grenades are built "potato masher" style: the explosive is on the end of a wooden stick.

Approaching and crossing the tunnel: The fight to the tunnel mainly involves enemy troops attacking the PCs; receiving military discipline; then running away as quickly as they can (or - more likely - lying really, really still.) However, the tunnel is a harder nut to crack. The fifteen Uudikuni soldiers there are widely dispersed, under good cover, and armed with one-shot grenade launchers. As soon as the PCs step in, the power is cut, anti-IR smoke fills the room, and a solid steel block behind them slams down (any PC directly under the gate dies, but his Battle Dress jams the gate open.) After firing their grenades, the Uudikuni men beat a hasty retreat: as soon as they leave (or die trying), the exit to the main base is closed off by a similar solid block of steel.

This is a good time for the PCs to start getting antsy. They may choose to retreat back to the landing pad: a 'sufficient amount of explosives' can get them out, and if laid competently, the PCs won't kill themselves in the process. Fusion rifle bolts work too, but they are more inefficient, and ammo is limited: shots fired now can't be fired later. If they act quickly, the PCs won't find anyone waiting for them when they exit. If getting out longer takes more than 30 minutes, then there are two TL 6 airborne fighters with Gatling guns and simple rockets, ready and eager to say 'Hello!' Even in this situation, PCs armed with fusion rifles may be able to fight their way out, but the odds are getting ugly, especially with further reinforcements sure to arrive shortly.

Going forward is an interesting exercise in high-energy kinetic physics. The steel block going forward is in a tricky position: the demolition guy has to figure out how to break it open without collapsing the tunnel ceiling, and without shattering the tunnel floor. (Demolitons-2 skill comes in handy just about now.) It is possible to bust open the gate with Fusion fire: but this takes time, and certainly warns Our Friends on the other side of the gate. Breaking open the forward gate without Regrettable Side Effects is a Formidable test of Demolition Skill. On failure, roll d6: on 1-4, the tunnel lining collapses, inflicting 6D6 on all players (Battle Dress helps with this blunt damage, but probably not enough to save the mission). On a 5-6, the floor collapses: the PCs are sent screaming into the chasm below. PCs whose mind don't freeze in a panic have a chance of lighting up their Grav belts, and saving their lives: but they must also deal with the large collections of boulders lazily tumbling with, below, and especially ABOVE them. Regrettably, Wile E. Coyote flashbacks provide no useful strategy to deal with this predicament.

Regarding PC who survives this fall: the Referee is reminded that it's winter in the mountains, food is scarce, and the Uudikuni military are combing the area. Safety is over 30 kilometres to the north – if things work out really well. The best bet is the Grav belt, IF is still operational. If the batteries were not damaged, the PCs may be able to walk to safety, using the automated walking function of their suits and some basic discretion and stealth procedures.

Exiting the tunnel: If the PCs successfully breach the steel gate explosively, they surprise a group of guards in the middle of a meal. Most of the guards are shredded in the force of the explosion and the flying shards of steel: the remainder are screaming blindly, wonder around blinking in a state of shock, or just sit their gazing at their detached arm as they swiftly bleed to death.

If the PCs did things the slow way, breaching the gate with fusion fire... well, the first one to step out loses his leg (and probably his life) to a remotely-detonated anti-tank mine. The second PC, if he is wise, uses a mirror on a stick to spot the tripod plasma gun aimed right at the opening. If he is unwise, he steps forward, and dies unpleasantly. The PCs have ten minutes to come up with a plan before the Uudikuni soldiers get their brains in gear, and start tossing all sorts of fire into the breach (lead, grenades, flamethrowers, plasma...). The area around the tunnel exit is quite greased up, and has various explosive mines emplaced around it. Some of the mines are 'harmless': fragmentary or White Phosphorous. The thing to watch out for is the anti-tank mines: there are four of them, one of which is set right below the breach (for the first PC to step out.) Fortunately, a reasonably observant & experienced PC can spot those mines quickly, and give them the respect they deserve. On the other hand, they are the (only) mines that are remotely detonated: merely getting too close causes trouble, unless the PCs destroy the three minicams in the room.

Past the gates: Once the PCs get past the gate, the enemy retreat, and the PCs can start making up for lost time. The PCs probably start ignoring small-arms fire at this point, while keeping an eye out for mines and heavy weapons. While only the anti-tank mines and plasma guns are able to do a one-shot one-kill on the PCs, the constant Grenade impacts are capable of degrading Battle Dress at the joints, reducing mobility.

As the author lacks the time and the software to prepare detailed maps, an abstract method is used to determine violent incidents on the way to the Commander's office. If the PCs

choose to use an indirect route, the Referee should roll to see what modifier he should use. Roll a dice: on a roll of 1-3, no modifier is used for the table below. On a roll of 4-6, use DM +2. If the PCs choose the direct route, the Referee uses a DM of +5.

On an indirect route, the PCs should roll ten times on the table below. On the direct route, the PCs should roll five times.

Roll 2D6 on the table below, with the appropriate modifier.

- 2-3: The Uudikuni quickly drop their weapons and kneel with their hands in the air.
- 4-5: A few wild shots are taken at the PCs. No harm is done.
- 6: A Uudikuni pops his head over or around a wall, spots the PCs, and pop his head right back in before it is blown off. He's gone like a jackrabbit way before the PCs can hope to catch him.
- 7: A knot of Uudikuni – between four and ten soldiers - actually makes a stand against the PCs. As they only have small arms, things don't go well for them.
- 8: The PCs must climb the stairs, or go up an elevator shaft. Roll 2D6+ the lead PCs Ground Tactics skill. DM -2 if the PCs are climbing the stairs.
 - 2-: the PCs are caught in a free-fire zone, and are attacked from two directions by 20 Uudikuni soldiers with grenades, flamethrowers and a plasma gun.
 - 3-4: The PCs are hit by a Flash grenade. Note that PCs in Battle Dress are NOT blinded (their visors instantly darken, preserving their sight) as Uudikuni troops fire grenades (fragmentary, high-explosive and incendiary) for six rounds.
 - 5-6: the PCs are ambushed by men with two rocket grenades.
 - 7-8: the PCs are ambushed by high-explosive grenades hidden in the debris.
 - 9+: no unpleasantness: but it takes a few minutes to shove all that heavy stuff aside (if on the stairs) or shrug off the impact of tossed junk (if going up an elevator shaft.)
- 9: Roll 1D6 + lead PC Ground Tactics skill. If the roll is 3+, there is no result: otherwise, the PC with the lowest Dexterity falls into a 10-meter deep pit trap with electric spikes. Battle Dress is insulated against electricity, and the falling velocity of a 10-meter drop is insufficient for steel spikes to pierce Battle Dress. If a PC Grav belt is still operational, the response to this setback is obvious.
- 10: Roll 1D6 + lead PC Ground Tactics skill. If the score is 1-2, there is an unexpected hit (via explosives on the OTHER side of the wall), and a wall collapses onto the PCs. Roll 1D6 again, per PC. On a result of one, the PC takes 1D2 points of damage: otherwise the PC takes 2D6 of damage

(concussion and blunt impact)

- 11: Roll 1D6 + lead PC Ground Tactics skill. If the score is 1-2, the PCs find themselves in a sudden close quarters battle with Uudikuni troopers bearing flamethrowers.⁶ The PCs themselves are not harmed, but their equipment takes a beating. Roll 1D6 for the trooper with the lowest Strength + Dexterity score: if he rolls a one, his Fusion Rifle overheats. As the PC is an experienced soldier, he is permitted a Difficult task of Intelligence, to recognise the weapon is overheated and toss it before it explodes, vaporising his arms and torso. PCs within 2 meters of the exploded Fusion Rifle takes 1D6 points of damage: PCs within 5 meters take no damage, but their shiny new Battle Dress ain't shiny no more.
 - There is a distinct possibility that, with all these pyromaniacs running around, a serious fire could kick in. Man-high flames don't merely turn Battle Dress into a cool charcoal colour: it also ruins the chameleon function. But the real danger is asphyxiation via smoke inhalation & Carbon Monoxide poisoning – for both PCs and the Uudikuni.
- 12: The PC with the highest Recon + Intrusion skill suddenly senses that things are “Quiet. Too quiet.” If he can convince the other PCs to let him, he goes scouting the local area. An Average Recon roll determines that the Uudikuni are hedging them into a trap, with mines, two light machine guns, three plasma guns, and carefully hidden explosives are being laid out. A Difficult Recon roll is needed to find a way for the PCs to escape the trap without alerting the Uudikuni that they were foiled (and granting them a second chance to wipe out the PCs.) If the Recon roll fails, the PCs are pushed into the trap. It is unlikely that the PCs survive, but it is possible: a Formidable Ground Tactics roll gives the team them a fighting chance, but only a chance. (Surprises like Amazing Grav Belt Stunts, Ultra-Smooth bluffs, unexpected ways to (Ab)use Fusion Rifle cartridges, or rigging up Battle Dress as a passable mannequin are some of the ideals the PCs should be playing with.) Executing the plan successfully would gain the respect of well-seasoned Imperial Marines. (Of course, it is quite likely that the PCs ARE well-seasoned Imperial Marines!) If the Ground Tactics roll fails, then the PCs are walking dead men: they should be encouraged to die with their boots on, and teach the Uudikuni to twitch spastically every time they spot a certain uniform.
- 13: Reroll this number, unless the PCs have experienced numbers 9-12 at least four times. (For example, if the PC have rolled 9,11,10,9 - and survived these incidents - then they don't have to reroll number 13.) If the PCs have passed these earlier incidents successfully, and then roll 13, then please refer to footnote 7.⁷

At the Referee's discretion, additional incidents can be planned involving flaws in the base layout schema the PCs are working from, and how to cross the (1D6+2) floors to the

Base Commander's office. Stairs are available, but are sure to be trapped or heavily guarded. The elevator shafts are a better bet, especially with Grav belts and the ability to just tear a hole in the elevator's roof and flooring.

Additional hindrances:

Block Gates: these corridor gates have massive, steel-sheathed stone barriers, hidden in the roof and droppable at a push of a button. They provide very poor protection against a single Fusion bolt, and shatter at the second shot. The more clever and gutsy Uudikuni might hide themselves, to hit the switch so the Block falls exactly when a PC is under the Block. This has a small chance of breaking the PCs neck. It's an Average Ground Task for a PC to spot a hidden Block Gate.

Insta-barriers: These are gates of solid steel rods, which slide out of a recess. They are meant to provide instant cover for local troops. Gaps between the rods exist for the Uudikuni to shoot from. PCs in Battle Dress need only give a good kick or two to dispose of the barrier and continue on their way.

Sonic Shriekers: these are TL A sonic attack weapons, designed to overwhelm the PCs with severe pain, nausea, and agony, likely breaking the eardrums as well. Battle Dress is insulated against Sonic attacks. Locally available Sonic Shriekers are not powerful enough to be treated as a physical attack, on the scale of the concussion wave of a high explosive.

Sticky Seas: there is only one TL C Sticky Sea trap in the base. However, it is expensive and has not been maintained, and the PCs encountering the trap merely fall into a one meter deep sea of harmless dry white dust. If it was active, the Sticky Sea would swiftly gum up the joints of Battle Dress, reducing mobility severely.

Deadfalls: these are hidden four-meter drops, found only on the initial level of the main base – higher levels (including the Base Commander's level) have no deadfall traps. PCs that fall into a Deadfall are unharmed, and need only climb or use their Grav belt to float out.

The Office: Assuming the PCs 1) don't get to see what's being Door #13 and 2) are still free and operational after the required five or ten rolls, then the PCs finally arrive at the Base Commander's office. As soon as they open the steel door, the anti-tank mine laid at the door is detonated, and the three soldiers in the room fire their grenade launchers, then one opens up heavy machine-gun while the other two fire their automatic rifles. After the enemy has been killed, the PCs can search the room, and grab anything that looks like data storage. There are two TL B desktop computers in the room, and a hand-held TL C computer in a wall safe hidden behind a framed motivational banner – “Power to the Union!” - written in Vilani. Portable TL B data storage is in a locked desk drawer.

The Elevator Shaft: There is a hidden hatch in the roof of the office. After finding it (via IR or other Battle Dress sensors), the PCs need to open it – the hatch is sealed, it's too high to punch or kick in, and a Fusion Bolt is overkill. After it's opened, the PCs can enter via Grav belt (There is also a coiled-up & hidden rope ladder, but the concept of a Battle Dressed PC using it is laughable. The furniture is too weak to bear the load of Battle Dress, as well.) The hatch leads to a small, one-man elevator shaft, dropping down hundreds of meters thru solid rock. The elevator itself is unavailable. The shaft looks too small for Battle Dress: the PCs may have to dump their very expensive armor to go down the elevator shaft, via climbing or Grav belts. (Note for Imperial servicemen: Imperial policy is to destroy any abandoned

Battle Dress.) A Difficult Intelligence roll (Engineering gives bonuses) allows the PC to spot the shaft wall depressions (mainly for wiring) that gives them the room they need to wear Battle Dress on their way down – “but it’ll be a tight squeeze!”

After the initial few meters, the shaft opens up a bit, allowing the PCs to fly down using Grav belts, instead of crawl down. Near the end of the shaft, things get tight again, slowing things to a crawl.

“Into the Woods.”

The Subway: At the bottom of the elevator shaft is a small subway (not monorail) station. The single subway car is long gone, but the rail remains, and stretches out for 30 kilometres. The PCs can walk it (the suits may provide automated walking) or fly it via Grav belt. It is possible that they may even have equipment to ride the rail in person (Referee’s discretion.) This is the quietest part of the adventure: there is no ambush here.

Subway exit: There is a single, two-man, egg-shaped electric car sitting at the end of the rail. It is not booby-trapped. There are steps leading up from the small subway station, to an unlit room. At the four-meter high roof of the room is a closed steel hatch, with a coiled-up rope-ladder. The hatch opens up into a quiet, cold wood. About fifty meters away, there are three large TL 6 anti-air vehicles with AA guns pointed at the exit and twenty TL 6 Uudikuni soldiers.

The PCs are good if they simply vape the hatch, blast straight up into the sky like a bat out of hell, and start putting the hurt on the troops below. The Big Guns are built to deliver anti-air fire, but the TL 6 turrets can’t quickly track the PCs. The Uudikuni soldiers contain a two-man mortar team, two two-man heavy weapon teams (heavy machineguns), and 16 riflemen, each with an automatic rifle, a one-shot grenade launcher, and two high explosive grenades.

Phone Home: The PCs must now send a specific radio signal: if they have no radio or send the incorrect signal, they’re on their own. After 1D6+2 minutes, a reply comes. Which reply is received is decided by the Referee, in any way he chooses (including whim, or flipping coins.)

- The PCs receive Reply One. They must go to a specific clearing in the woods, 2 km away, for pickup by an Imperial Army air/raft. The rest of the mission is uneventful: the Unified State of Uudikun has decided to let the PCs leave unmolested.
- The PCs receive Reply Two. They must go to a specific, cleared hilltop, five km away for pickup by an armed ship’s boat. Roll 1D6 + the lead PC ‘evasion’ skill (evasion = (Ground Tactics + Intrusion or Recon) / 2.) On a roll of three or less, there are four anti-air vehicles, one TL 6 light tank, and 40 Uudikuni soldiers on hand for the farewell party.
- The PCs receive Reply Three. The PCs must *move*, using their Grav belts, to the North-Northwest where the Traditional Order of Kuusegkigikar. If the PCs dawdle for three or more minutes, seven men with TL E combat armor, gauss rifles, and grenades began hunting the PCs down. An additional soldier begins to snipe from a good, difficult-to-spot position in the trees. These men don’t have Grav belts: however, two squadrons of TL6 fighters appear in the air. They strafe the PCs, and pursue them if they take flight. An additional four squadrons are prepped

to attack the PCs all the way to Kuusegkigikar: two of these squadrons are bombers (with HE, fragmentary, and napalm bombs,) and two are fighters. Of the two fighter squadrons, one have kamikaze pilots, who are quite interested to discover what happens when Battle Dress meets a 4000 RPM propeller blade 100 meters in the air....

- The PCs receive Reply Four. The situation is worse than above: the entire platoon of high-tech soldiers available to Uudikun is in the area, with Grav belts, high-tech anti-air rockets, and Fusion rifles. The PCs must avoid the air, as they can be quickly spotted and brought down like a rock. Instead, they must do a major stealth run to the border, evading discovery. Even contact with regular TL 6 troops must be avoided, as a single radio signal can call up the high-tech soldiers in less than five minutes. When the PCs are within 100 meters of the border, they must put the pedal to the medal, killing anything that tries to stop them, while hitting the IFF button so that the Order Defenders know that they are friendlies. The Uudikun guards may be ready for the PCs: this depends on the military fieldcraft and stealth of the PCs.
- If Reply Five is given, the PCs must remain where they are for pickup. If the PCs take cover while waiting for pickup, roll 1D6, adding the lead PCs Recon or Intrusion skill. On a roll of 5+, an armed ship’s boat picks up the PCs without incident. On a roll of 2-4, an artillery & mortar bombardment strikes the PCs as the ship’s boat arrives: whenever the ship’s boat tries to land under fire, or the PCs fly up to the ship’s boat, is to be determined at the time. On a roll of 1, the bombardment includes fighters dropping bombs on the PCs position for 2D6 minutes before the ship’s boat arrives. When the boat arrives, the fighters try to bring it down: if it attempts to land, shells may impact the boat, damaging or destroying it.

Footnotes

¹The question arises: if the natives are so poor, how can they afford such advanced weaponry? The response is: they can’t – but their offworld brothers (especially on Nuilnad) & involved noble houses can.

²See the listing ‘Pugaash’ in the Related Library Data of **Stellar Reaches #1**, “Special Delivery to Gudina”, by Jason “Flynn” Kemp

³“Two million soldiers? Transported from across the Imperium?” Yes: if you don’t want to do a sterilization campaign to retake those high-pop Solomani (and risk civil war in the Imperium itself, due to Imperial Solomani reaction) you’re going to need a lot of men. If the usual ratio of defence hold – “five attackers are needed to defeat one defender” – about five sector’s worth of men are needed to take the Solomani Rim (ignoring the Old Expanses, Diaspora, Magyar, and Alpha Crucis for the moment.) Assuming similar tech levels, two million soldiers are perhaps enough to take a world of about hundred million sophonts. It isn’t enough to hold that world.

⁴The Sarrkhuguush Baronical Townships were overjoyed when the Imperium undercut the “Emperor’s pet enforcer.” Numerous songs, stories and dances were inspired by the turnaround: performing any of them within the borders of the USU is sufficient reason for summary execution.

⁵A creative Referee can have a lot of fun with this landing pad, or just leave it empty if he wants to run the adventure straight. Note that the Unified State of Uudikun does not have TL 5/6 helicopters, and there's no way TL 6 aircraft can land on this lilypad. On the other hand, Uudikun does have a precious handful – less than ten, say - of air/rafts and ship's boat that are maintained in functioning order. More importantly, various off-world cutters and air/rafts have used this landing pad far from prying eyes, for whatever reasons.

⁶See the article “Weapons Locker: Flame-Throwers for Classic Traveller” by Omer “Employee #2-4601” Golan in **Stellar Reaches** #7 for more information

⁷The PCs receive a Very Special radio signal. If the PC chooses to acknowledge the signal, then a single Uudikuni soldier walks up to them with a white flag. The Imperial government does not require unconditional surrenders⁸, but it does require *substantial* ones, with the senior enemy officers turning themselves in to a recognized Imperial representative and a ceasing of armed resistance to Imperial authority. In this case, the PCs ARE the Emperor's Representative, so in due course the Base Commander steps in, and personally leads the PCs to his office, where the PCs seize all the data storage devices they can spot. They have no orders to arrest the Base

Commander, but may do so for Resisting Imperial Authority. The PCs then have to radio home for instructions on how to handle this unexpected turn of events. The PCs are put on hold for quite a while: then, they are told to release the Base Commander (if arrested), and bring the data to the landing pad. Within two hours, a simple 2-ton civilian Air/Raft with Imperial markings arrives, picks up the PCs and their goodies, and goes home. Mission accomplished: end of story.

⁸If the PCs inquire just how many Uudikuni surrendered to them in the base, some research should reveal a number equal to 1D6 x 100 men. For a TL C+ force attacking a TL 6 fortification, this sounds a bit on the low side to most tactical thinkers in Chartered Space: those Uudikuni really are tough hombres.

Images

“Jettroopers” by Stuart Jennet (StuJ):

<http://stuj.cgsociety.org/gallery/270341/>

“Shock Troops” by Miko Kinnunen (Mikkok):

<http://mikkok.cgsociety.org/gallery/403173/>

“Speed Paint – SciFi Character” – by Mathias Verhasselt (mv)

<http://mv.cgsociety.org/gallery/385276/>



Campaign Seed: Sacred Mission

By Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Sacred Mission grew out of a Biography listing that wouldn't stay within its bounds. The nature of the adventure provides the possibility to focus on a Naval, Ground, Political, or Cultural campaign, depending on the desire of the Referee (and the Players, if the Referee is wise.) Classic Traveller rules are assumed. Starships are designed with the Classic Traveller format, using High Guard Shipyard v1.13 written by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance.

PC design

The players may bring over their characters 'as is', but creating new characters for the campaign is recommended. The 'Instruction' skill is especially valuable in this campaign. Whatever their focus, they should be experienced and skilled in their field, with a good reputation among Imperial leadership, no unfortunate incidents on Tokitre (Tokitre/Empty Quarter: B550A77-B) and at least one (preferably two) skills at the 2-3 level. Characters should either be native Śląskie or Imperial, rather than Protectorate citizens. Note that the Aristocracy of Śląskie, a leading nation on Tokitre, is strongly influenced by the idea of an alternate Catholic Poland, of wealth and vast desert dunes¹: PCs born on this world should roleplay with that in mind.

Starship design

The Noble Jumpship *Borm* is a new-built ship, commissioned in 987 as the Aristocracy of Śląskie's contribution to the Tokitre Rapid Response Group. Starship design revolves around a large particle accelerator spinal mount, supported by numerous Plasma Gun bays. A secondary design factor is transporting & equipping a 200-man Expeditionary company: a fair number of fighting and support craft provides additional support in the field. Assuming a consumption rate of 1-ton per day per groundpounder, there is sufficient stores (using the Cargo space) to maintain the force for a bit over four days.

The observant Naval Architect will see that the crew is NOT under double occupancy. The additional crew space is assumed to be used for sick bays, training rooms, common rooms, and shrines. This 'wasted space' was originally meant as a subtle way of intimidating lesser governments with the wealth and power of the Aristocracy: currently, the lack of crowding means one less thing to stress the crew, and provides a larger margin for error (at a cost of crew redundancy when people start to die under fire.)

Ship: NJ Borm
Type: Battle Cruiser
Tech Level: 11

Class: Błyskawica
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

BC-N123643-590004-65K04-0 MCr 41,461.788 40 Ktons
Bat Bear 3 3 4H1 1 Crew: 624
Bat 4 3 5L1 1 TL: 11

Cargo: 882 Fuel: 10,400 EP: 2,400 Agility: 3

Security Detail: 40 Troops: 200 Pulse Lasers

Craft: Thirty-two vehicles, landers & transports: 5 x 20T Assault Lander, 2 x 50T Assault Transport, 6 x 4T Ground Support Air/Raft, 4 x 4T Utility Grav Vehicle, 8 x 2T Scout Grav Vehicles, 3 x 4T Engineering Grav Vehicles, 2 x 5T Grav Recovery Vehicle, 2 x 5T Grav Resupply Vehicles.

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Backups: 2 x Model/4 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 414.618 Cost in Quantity: MCr 33,169.430

HULL: 40,000 tons standard, 560,000 cubic meters, Needle/Wedge Configuration

CREW: 39 Officers, 385 Ratings, 200 Soldiers

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 3G Maneuver, Power plant-6, 2,400 EP, Agility 3

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4 Computer, 2 Model/4 Backup Computers
 HARDPOINTS: Spinal Mount, 3 100-ton bays, 20 50-ton bays, 94 Hardpoints
 ARMAMENT: Particle Accelerator Spinal Mount (Factor-K),
 20 50-ton Plasma Gun Bays (Factor-5),
 4 Triple Missile Turrets organized into 1 Battery (Factor-4),
 50 Triple Pulse Laser Turrets organized into 5 Batteries (Factor-6)
 DEFENCES: 3 100-ton Repulsor Bays (Factor-4),
 40 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organized into 4 Batteries (Factor-9), Armoured Hull (Factor-5)
 CRAFT: 5 20-ton Assault Landers (Crew of 2: transports 20 Troops),
 2 50-ton Assault Transports (Crew of 3: transports 30 tons of vehicles, or 60 Troops,
 or some combination thereof),
 6 4-ton Ground Support Air/Rafts (Crew of 2), 4 4-ton Utility Grav Vehicles (Crew of 1),
 8 2-ton Scout Grav Vehicles (Crew of 1), 3 4-ton Engineering Grav Vehicles (Crew of 1),
 2 5-ton Grav Recovery Vehicles (Crew of 2), 2 5-ton Grav Resupply Vehicles (Crew of 1)
 FUEL: 10,400 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
 On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
 MISCELLANEOUS: 625 Staterooms, 882 Tons Cargo
 USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
 COST: MCr 41,876.406 singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 414.618)
 MCr 33,169.430 in quantity
 CONSTRUCTION TIME: 184 Weeks Singly, 147 Weeks in Quantity

Feudal Obligations

As part of their clan's feudal obligations to the Imperium, the Aristocracy of Śląskie has provided a 40,000-displacement ton warship, the Noble Jumpship *Borm*, to the Sector Duke of the Empty Quarter. This fulfills clan feudal obligations to "support the Imperial Nobility in times of insurrection and major invasion", which is understood to include the Solomani Secessionists. Representatives of the Duke are attempting to persuade the Borkowski's to permit the use of the NJ *Borm* for anti-pirate and convoy duties within the Imperial Empty Quarter. If this fails, then the neo-feudal treaty stipulations must be followed: NJ *Borm* is sent to support the Empty Quarter Fleet in the Old Expanses, after first journeying to Capital to formally present the ship & crew to the Emperor, touch base with the Imperial branch of House Borkowski, and provide certain data and material to the Tokitre Embassy on Capital².

The Borkowski Sisters

Dame Jadwiga & Dame Kazimiera Borkowski are members of the ruling Borkowski clan of Śląskie, one of the major nations of Tokitre (Tokitre/Empty Quarter: B550A77-B), the most important Imperial Client State within the Empty Quarter. In addition to membership in a powerful family, both are also members of the Most Serene Order of the Queen of Heaven. Jadwiga is a one of the Blessed Guides (an order of lay preachers), while Kazimiera is a Shining Sword (armed defenders of sacred sites, and bodyguards for the local clergy.)

Dame Jadwiga Borkowski is the Naval Commander of the NJ *Borm*. She is an intensely religious, "Throne and Altar" Imperial Catholic, who emphatically believes that she is destined to join a mighty host to fight an apocalyptic war to regain Holy Terra for the Imperium. While only a tiny minority of Imperial Commanders *openly* agree that the conquest of Terra has eschatological significance³, a rather larger number – perhaps as many as 10% - of the rank and file Imperial Solomani concur with the core belief: Terra is Holy, and *MUST* be regained and held by God's Friend, the Emperor⁴.

Dame Kazimiera Borkowski, Ground Commander of the ship, is driven by rather different goals. While paying public respect to the beliefs of her sister and her order, Kazimiera's real drive is the sheer joy, the utter purity of Immediate, Intense, Violent action on the battlefield. She never feels more alive than in battle. A true adrenaline junkie, Kazimiera is extremely eager to take on the Infidel Traitors on their own turf. In the meantime, she aggressively trains, and leads her troops into action whenever called for (and sometimes when it isn't), 'singing as they slay'.

Dame Jadwiga herself is Green as a ship commander, but very good as a leader and an inspirational role model: her name is already circulating as a candidate for sainthood. Dame Kazimiera, on the other hand, has real talent as a ground commander (treat as a Veteran), and is also quite inspirational on the battlefield – but exactly *what* is inspiring her remains a troubling question.

The Sector Duke does not have the authority to knight or ennoble anyone, but the Imperial Ministry of State can grant ‘courtesy titles’, and has chosen to do so for the Borkowski sisters, for as long as they remain in Imperial service. Legally, they operate as “colonial & allied forces under the command of the Empty Quarter Sector Fleet”.

Attire: Dame Jadwiga wears pseudo-Medieval soldier’s clothing, with an ultralight chain mesh shirt. Overall grey/black/silver hues, with cape and white neck frill. Dame Kazimiera wears a black bodystocking with blue/grey rank and department piping. Note that all Aristocracy officers design and wear their own unique, personalized uniforms, within the Service Color Palette: only the rank and file wear dusty blue/grey (if Space) or black/dark green (if Ground) functional uniforms and dungarees.

Dame Jadwiga Borkowski, Naval Commander of the NJ Borm: 24558A, Age 26, Leader-2, Theology (Imperial Catholic)-1, Liaison-1, Vargr (Referee-chosen language)-0, Foil-0, Communications-0, Ship’s Tactics-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Computer-0. Her native language Anglic, and she is always armed with a foil. Her ornamental ultralight ‘chain shirt’ may be of some worth in a pure melee fight, but worthless vs. modern weaponry.

Dame Kazimiera Borkowski, Naval Commander of the NJ Borm: 5B668A, Age 26, Ground Tactics-2, Leader-1, Sword-1, Fusion Pistol-1, Grenade-0, Vargr (Referee-chosen language)-0, First Aid-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Computer-0. Her native language Anglic; she is always armed with a semi-transparent katana.

In the field, Dame Kazimiera also wears a high-tech flak jacket with grenade pouches. She is routinely seen with a set of TL F “data integration” goggles of Julian Protectorate origin, which double as infrared/nightvision/think-zoom goggles. (Extensive training is required for effective use.) Finally, she routinely carries a TL E fusion pistol for extra punch in tight situations.

Holy Warriors

When word of the Solomani Rim War reached the Imperial Client States on Tokitre/Empty Quarter⁵, feudal obligations to the Iridium Throne led to the re-assignment of the *NJ Borm* for Imperial military purposes. Strong Śląskie sentiment – as well as the force of tradition and religion – made replacing the Military crew with a Religious crew a political necessity. The ships’ essentially Green officers & crew is under an intensive training schedule, and frantically trying to get up to par: it is quite possible that (ex or serving) Navy/Marine/Army PCs are acting as cadre, working to whip things into shape before Bad Things start to happen....

All officers and about 20% of the crew are long-standing members of the Order of the Queen of Heaven, and have Regular morale. The rest of the crew are either eager new Sisters of the Order, or devout lay Imperial Catholics who wish to lend a hand: both groups have Green morale. Mass and other sacraments are to be provided by any Imperial Catholic churches or monasteries the ship happens to come across.

Due to the cultural/religious aura surrounding the Mission, the *NJ Borm* is manned solely by women: they are held to be of greater religious purity than men, and less likely to be distracted from their Sacred Mission by banishments of power, wealth or sex. All members of the crew have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the Mission, on pain of dismemberment or death. They hold other Imperial Catholics on the Emperor’s Service to the same standards as they maintain: failure to Uphold Standards creates great contempt, and likely execution if the crew can build a ‘good-enough’ justification that will stand the scrutiny of an Imperial court⁶.

The Good Fight

There are several ways to utilize this ship in a campaign focusing on the *NJ Borm*. In the ‘Pirate Patrol’ campaign, the *NJ Borm* is used at her maximum effectiveness, hunting down pirates and smashing pirate bases in the Empty Quarter. This campaign poses limited risk to the ship’s Green crew: the Navy personnel would focus on tracking the pirates, until rewarded with the catch. Ground personnel would be in a more risky position, doing ship boarding actions they haven’t trained or equipped for. To get to Nulinad to present themselves to the Sector Duke, the *IJ Borm* must cross the Lesser Rift, either spinward (via the Rukadukaz Republic), and thru Antares; or trailing, thru the Hegemony of Lorean, and thru the Deep Space Stations of the Saeghvung-Turley-Exile Run⁷, and cross Imperial Space to Nulinad. Both the poor human-dominated Hegemony and the wealthy Vargr-dominated Republic are members of the Julian Protectorate. Which route to take depends as much on politics and local stability as on distance and available starports⁸. Getting a Tokitre warship, acting under Imperial authority, permission to fight pirates within Protectorate space would present an interesting diplomatic challenge....

The ‘Odyssey of the *Borm*’ campaign focuses on the long Jump2 journey of the ship to Capital: meeting the Emperor & the Tokitre Diplomatic Council⁹ there, then moving on to the Empty Quarter to fight the Solomani. The journey from Nulinad/Empty Quarter to Capital/Core is ~50 parsecs: the journey from Capital/Core to the battlegrounds of the Old Expanses is ~100 parsecs. The Jump2 *NJ Borm* can make the journey in ~155 weeks, assuming the standard “1 week J-space, 1 week N-space” cycle, four weeks on Capital, and an extra week on Nulinad. The survival of the *Borm* in Rim War space depends on hiding a lot, and her usefulness is restricted to raiding behind enemy lines, or whacking small Solomani outposts. Actual ship-to-ship battles against other low-TL warships are possible, as both the Solomani and the Imperium have tossed in a few third-rate ships like the *Borm* in

the mix, to attack shipping and other soft targets while better ships are tasked with more crucial missions. Attacking high-tech targets - TL D+ starships and defense installations – is a death sentence for the NJ *Borm*. The Referee should provide a major reward to the PCs if the ship actually survives six years of war in the most high-intensity conflict in the history of Charted Space, pre-Rebellion¹⁰.

The 'Rejection' campaign is grounded in an interesting truth: the fact that the Emperor isn't even a Catholic does not trouble the crew in the least. The Iridium Throne itself is held to be sacred, and the Office of Emperor must be revered, regardless of the man wearing the Imperial Robes. On the other hand, Dame Jadwiga knows well the verse: "It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for a throne is established in righteousness." (Proverbs 16:12) She will never raise her hand against the Emperor, but she can lawfully turn away from his service, if she judges him unworthy. What would cause such a rejection, and the consequences of it on Tokitre (and possibly even among Imperial Catholics) would make good social roleplay.

The 'Visionary' campaign relies on an old chestnut: the Machiavellian 'Armed Prophet' who changes history. This is good if you want World-Historical (actually, Sector-Historical) consequences to stem from the actions of your players. Expect to properly trash the Official Traveller Timeline in this campaign, and reset the Solomani Rim's borders while you're at it. The least disruptive consequence would be a minor rebellion, as Imperial and/or Solomani starship and fleet commanders flock to the banner of the charismatic Borkowski sisters, ("Now trained by Vargr professionals!"), causing all sorts of chaos on the front for a while. A 'favourable pro-Imperial' outcome is the Borkowski sisters inspiring Imperial devotion so strongly that it becomes politically expedient to elevate one to Ducal status over a subsector. The Epic-minded Referee can get more grandiose from here: just remember that massive changes create massive resistance.

Footnotes

¹The Śląskie are unaware of the overwhelming influence of a 2000-year dead nation on their culture. They see themselves as the children of the Melinsk people, a minority who immigrated from Korparov/Antares 2840 (as of 993: C8B0A77-A) over 800 years ago. Enlightening them on Russian/Polish history would have interesting consequences. Proving their Polish decent is fairly easy, but collecting and organizing the scattered evidence is the work of a lifetime.

²Most Imperial Client States keep their embassy on the nearest Sector Capital: but the Aristocracy of Śląskie's political importance and family connections allows them the prestige of having an Embassy on Capital, while 'just' keeping a major consulate on Nulinad/Empty Quarter.

³The religious significance of Terra is more openly proclaimed by Solomani military commanders – whenever they themselves are devout, lukewarm, or unbelieving. Unlike the wildly polytheistic Imperials, the Solomani remained focused on the Abrahamic religions. This mutual universe of meaning is used by the Solomani Party to increase determination, inspire acts of self-sacrifice for a few, stifle dissent among the populace, and tie the major Solomani religions to the Solomani Party & the Solomani Cause. "What's not to like?"

⁴Something to get in the mood:

"We are Jade Falcon, great among the Clans.
We are Warriors who fight with the strength of the falcon's claws,
and ascent to the heavens on the wings of the same.
We remember with clarity of falcon sight the Words of Kerensky,
Through the smoke of time he speaks to us, his chosen,
and urges us onward with the promise of Eden.
We will take what is ours by right,
That shining jewel Terra.
Not the vastness of space,
Nor the Wolf's obstinate howl will stay us from our [righteous] goal.
We are Crusaders, and will trample all who stand in our way."

Or, if you want a different flavor:

"We are Clan Wolf; Children of Kerensky.
We carry the honor of his name on our shoulders as our fathers did before.
The Remembrance speaks to us of the evil in Man's will,
of the reasons for Exodus, and the rights of the traveler.
Arcadia is our destiny and our right.
Enlightenment is our gift.
By the bloodnames of the Founders we must return.
Return and protect that which is unique amongst the stars;
Terra awaits us, as it was written.
We are the last of the Wardens, the sole hope for the Earth."

<http://ppc.warhawkenterprises.com/theclans/cjf.html>; all quotes are from the MechWarrior 2 game.

Of course, what you really need is to obtain the MechWarrior 2 original soundtrack.

More Traveller poetry wouldn't be such a bad thing, either, if it's worth reading.

⁵The world of Tokitre is a balkanized world: while most of the nations of the mainworld have no ties with the Imperium, the four dominant nations – and the two independent polities elsewhere in the Tokitre system – all have client relationships with the Imperium. A major proxy war (the Sathin Conflict, 987-992) has broken an alliance of pro-Julian nations, forcing them to break ties with the Protectorate to regain their independence. As of 993, the Protectorate has failed to re-establish any public presence in-system.

⁶Depending on the Referee, the local branch of the Order may not be concerned with the legal niceties of Imperial Law, especially if they view such laws as illegitimate. Such contempt for Imperial authority is asking for punishment by the Imperial Catholic hierarchy, though – and the Sisters would know this.

⁷For more information on the Saeghvung-Turley-Exile Run, see the article “Deep Space Stations” by Jason “Flynn” Kemp, in Issue 2 of **Stellar Reaches**.

⁸The Aristocracy of Ślaşkie is a human exclusivist polity, but not human supremacist: other Vargr nations and visitors are treated with respect, but no Vargr (or other non-human) may settle within the borders of the Aristocracy. Even so, the Aristocracy is strongly influenced by the powerful and successful Rukadukaz Republic to spinward (although the Ślaşkie would stoutly deny this.) Charisma, flair, and passion are important in politics, and the military is more personality-focused than you'd expect: losing and gaining rank is both easier and strongly tied to the opinion of the led than to the desires of the superiors or government officials.

⁹The Imperium maintains formal Client relations with six Tokitre nations. The Tokitre Diplomatic Council on Capital is composed of ambassadors from all six nations: a Senior Ambassador is chosen every two years from among them, to be the ‘Face of Tokitre’ before the Emperor. The Senior Ambassador can do little on his own authority: the Council must ratify any major decision he makes.

¹⁰If the Referee wants the PCs and crew to have a front-line rôle, he may decide that the Imperium has a surplus of warships, but a deficit of trained crews. In this case, the Tokitre crew spends a year being retrained on High Stellar equipment on Capital, and then provided with a suitable TL E or F starship to fight with.

Images

The Borkowski sisters come from a pair of images: “Star Crusade Part 1” and “Star Crusade Part 2” by Omen2501:

<http://www.deviantart.com/deviation/49887844/?qo=1&q=by%3Aomen2501&qh=sort%3Atime+-in%3Aascraps>

<http://www.deviantart.com/deviation/50264984/?q=by%3Aomen2501&qh=sort%3Atime+-in%3Aascraps>

..and for extra hyper-religious fun in a modern/sci-fi setting, see his “Mal’ak Adonai”:

<http://www.deviantart.com/deviation/35052477/?qo=10&q=by%3Aomen2501&qh=sort%3Atime+-in%3Aascraps>

The image above would make a great mural over the NJ *Brom*’s Captain’s Table.

The IJ *Borm* is envisioned as resembling the ship depicted in “Landing Marker”, again by Omen251

<http://www.deviantart.com/deviation/24455909/?qo=19&q=by%3Aomen2501&qh=sort%3Atime+-in%3Aascraps>

(The actual ship as designed is a good deal smaller than the ship shown – TL B limitations are in lay here.)

Empty Quarter Echo: Wesaswek

By Jeff M. Hopper

If you are reading this, then you should send me some money.

Why? Because I am about to tell you how to keep yourself from getting beaten up like I have when you visit Wesaswek.

I am back onboard ship at the moment, nursing a black eye and what I hope isn't a broken nose. All of this is because I approached a woman wearing the wrong color veil.

Normally, I wouldn't bother with leaving the starport on Wesaswek. It's a Bwap settled world, colonized during the First Imperium with the help of the vilani in exchange for allowing a human enclave to be placed there. This means that it is a bureaucratic nightmare to deal with, I swear that if there is a Hell then it is staffed with Bwap bureaucrats and their endless forms. What is worse is the tendency for Bwaps to think that their annoyingly ordered bureaucracy has religious significance. If you do not like the paperwork you have to sign, do not crumple and throw away any of the forms - that would not only be seen as criminal behavior but also as a sin, both of which result in fines for the criminal behavior and tithes for the forgiveness of the sinful behavior. I planned to stay at the human enclave as much as possible.

So why would I go wandering around here? Because I have a weakness for heavy metal music and two of my favorite bands were giving a concert. Near-C Rocks was going to play a three-hour show and the opening band was Mandlebrot Set. This was all part of some cultural exchange program initiated by the Bwaps, who I really didn't think knew who they had invited especially with Near-C Rocks's habit of shooting their stage with orbital artillery after each show so they wouldn't have to do encores. For a lineup like that, I'd even be willing to suffer through refereeing a rugby game between some Ithklur and Imperial Marines in order to see it.

Well, the concert itself was great. Mandlebrot Set played a lot from their latest release mixed in with some classics while Near-C Rocks played all their greatest hits. Then both bands came out and played a classical solomani song for the finale, I think it was a political statement that they ended the show with "I Want To Rock N' Roll All Night and Party Every Day" but I didn't really care. There were plenty of humans there and not a few of them were female wearing their traditional veils over their faces. Veils or not, it didn't stop the women from throwing underwear at the stage. There was even a mosh pit over in a corner, but it was a good one because people got picked up if they were

knocked down. The pyrotechnics of the ortillery strike was beautiful, awed the entire crowd and ended the heavy metal concert perfectly.

I think the Bwaps were appropriately horrified by the entire show. Score one for mutual understanding.

With the show over and everyone leaving what was left of the concert arena, I wandered with the crowd to see if it would lead me to a good bar where I could come down from the high of a live show before heading back to the starport and getting some sleep.

The bars are all in the basements of buildings here, once you enter one you see that there is no actual bar where you can get drinks. There are numerous low tables with cushions for sitting on the floor. Servers pushing carts loaded down with the liquors and mixers bring around the drinks. If one of the servers does not have what you are looking for then that one yells out to the rest the order and the one who has it on their pushcart brings it by. I found out later that each pushcart was individually owned and that the bar was actually a public community center. Depending on what time it was during the day or night, you could find pushcarts selling liquor or food or even renting out games to each table. All of the women who were servers wore light blue veils that should have been a clue for me but wasn't.

I ordered a beer and sat down at a somewhat empty table, immediately several others sat down next to me. Nobody seemed to care whether or not a person was looking for company or wanted to drink alone, if you were here then you were soon included in the conversation of whoever decided to sit at the table. I didn't mind this, because more women than men sat down at my table. I turned to the woman on my right who was wearing a light brown veil and began talking to her. She looked back at me with astonishment.

Then someone punched me in the face.

I don't remember much of the fight, but I remember getting pummeled pretty well and being called an "offworlder" like it was an insult more than a few times. I woke up outside of the bar, in the street, face down in the gravel.

A shadow hovered over me and I turned to look up at it, expecting another punch but looking anyways. Instead I was looking at a red veil with a pair of green eyes floating over it. A wet washcloth was held out to me.

This was how I met Fatima Himiko. She was wearing a red veil that night which allowed her to approach whomever she liked, as long as it was for economic purposes. Himiko helped pick me up and we

went to my ship and she helped me clean myself up. During the trip, she explained that the veils signified

the woman's purpose for being out and who she was and what she was open to while in the public part of the human vilani enclave. My mistake in the bar was that I didn't know that the woman I was talking to was underage and looking for romance from another juvenile since she was wearing a light brown veil - by talking to her, I had accidentally labeled myself to be a pedophile to everyone who witnessed it. Each color of veil and pattern on it signified something. This is what

the humans living in their enclave on Wesaswek have adopted from the Bwaps.

I have to thank Fatima Himiko for this insight, and the help back to the starport, and guiding me to my ship. I also should thank her for only charging me a hundred credits for the help, although I like to think that she gave me a price break because she thought I was cute. Although from looking at my nose, she may have just done the price break because she felt sorry for me. Damn, I hope this thing isn't broken.



Biography: Selected Ship Masters and Vessels of the Empty Quarter, Part 2

by Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Biography is a series of small biographies of various personalities within the Empty Quarter. For Referees, this is a selection of useful NPCs and starships. My focus is on the Imperial Empty Quarter, especially Gamma Quadrant. Starships are designed with the Classic Traveller format, using High Guard Shipyard v1.13 written by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance.

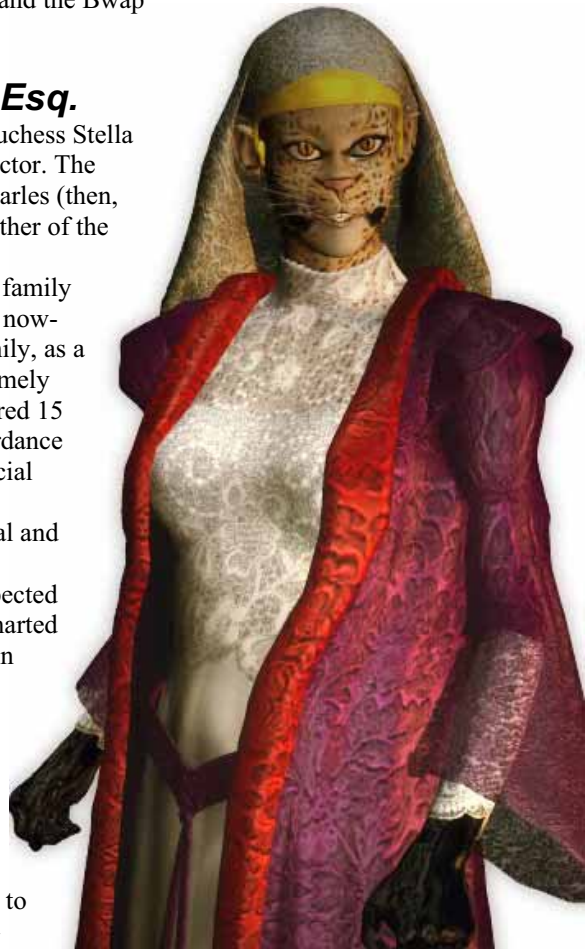
For this particular instalment, we have eight personalities and their ships. There is some important astrographic/cultural information regarding the Rukadukaz Republic, the Ikon system, and the Julian Protectorate lost in the footnotes - footnote 5, to be exact. Various highly Vilanized aliens and interesting Nobles are profiled. There is also a basic schedule for a jump2/3 route from Imperial Nulinad to Republican Ikon – while remaining within the Quarter. Psions and ex-psions are also part of the mix - and the Bwap homeworld gets a Bwap name!

Nagma Ilaammangarkhi Gaararaamash, Esq.

Squire Nagma is a female Aslan lawyer, and a representative of Duchess Stella Hsiao, the ruling noble of Arnakhish subsector in Dagudashaag Sector. The Squire's father, Endro Tahoih, was a trooper in the Duchess' Huscarles (then, the Duke's Huscarles) who died heroically in 960 defending the father of the current Duchess. As a gesture of thanks, Household Guardian Sir Haararaamash - one of the Duke's more powerful servants, whose family emigrated from the Julian Protectorate a century ago - adopted the now-orphaned 2-year old daughter of Sergeant Tahoih into his own family, as a prospective member of the noble servant Vilani caste. While extremely uncommon, there is undeniable proof that such an event has occurred 15 times in the over 9,000 years of Vilani interstellar history, in accordance with proper Vilani tradition and forms. Forced into a corner, a special dispensation was conditionally secured by senior Vilani shugilii authorities on Vland – with a host of additional regulatory, personal and ceremonial restrictions, to discourage others from following Sir Haararaamash's example. (A final resolution to this issue isn't expected for the next two centuries, as shugilii organizations from across Charted Space hash out the legal, traditional, and ceremonial implications in innumerable committees.)

After being rechristened with a proper Vilani name, the Aslan cub had Vilani culture and mores 'ground into her at the DNA level' (as a friend would put it). Nagma, ever fearful of being rejected and losing her position in the family, struggled fiercely to conform at whatever the psychic cost to herself. Even after pleasing her adopted father by excelling in Vilani Law and joining the Household Caste, Nagma is still consumed by the need to out-Vilani the Vilani. While she hasn't altered herself physically – such behavior would be extremely un-Vilani - she has and adopted Vilani norms to the core of her being. Imperial Aslan feel rather uncomfortable in her presence, while Heirate' Clans innately despise her – but Vilani hold her in greater regard than they do other Aslan, and it is *their* opinion that she respects.

Pending the retirement of her long-lived father, Squire Nagma – along with other up-and-coming Squires - has been given the opportunity to prove herself worthy to take his place as Guardian for the Hsiao Noble Household. Granted use of a starship and certain extraordinary powers over family resources and personnel, Squire Nagma has been authorized to catalogue the possessions of the Household in Antares, the Empty Quarter, Fornast, and Ley Sectors; and to resolve any disputes over possession according to Imperial and Vilani Law, preferably to the



Household's favour. She has spent the last ten years doing so, operating in the more important sectors first. With the heavy lifting completed, Squire Nagma is now ready to enter the Imperial Empty Quarter, to catalogue, rectify and clarify any legal disputes regarding Hsaio property.

The urbane Squire Nagma is comfortable with high-powered legal practice, and she will find working in Bwap space very satisfying, due to their ordered and lawful nature. Operating outside of Bwap space will be a different kettle of fish, especially in those regions more accustomed to using violence rather than the courts to resolve disputes. Still, Squire Nagma is an Imperial lawyer: she has seen (and instigated) her share of violent incidents, and is hardly a naïf when it comes to bloodletting to resolve property & legal disputes. However, she may be surprised at just how *personal* Emphyheads are with their violence, however – rarely is it 'just business' with the Indian, Arab, and Amerind cultures that dominate the sector.²

The Household servants who man Squire Nagma's yacht, the *Shii Miigdinka*, are highly professional and knowledgeable – if more than a little haughty. Four of the five are ethnic Chinese/Vilani in origin, with long family histories of service. The exception, a Luriani hired to replace the dead steward³, is having some difficulty tolerating the Chinese/Vilani culture that dominates the ship. His response to the Aslans' utter abandonment of her racial heritage for a Vilani life, coupled with her cool impersonal legal professionalism, occasionally interferes with his duties. All except the Squire wear Household livery (dress and undress), mainly of Vilani design with Chinese accents. The Squire, as a senior Household officer, dresses in a more subtle fashion that shows her allegiance 'to those who have eyes to see.'

Squire Nagma is a member of the Travellers' Aid Society, and is well connected with TAS leadership in Ley Sector. She hasn't seen her homeworld of Likhukam⁴ (Dagudashaag 2204: Arnakhish subsector capital, in over a decade. While eager to see her Vilani family again, Squire Nagma has requested permission to make a brief visit to the Rukadukaz Republic.⁵

Attire: Long Vilani robes, as suits her caste and high position. In private and among close friends, the Squire prefers to wear a simple two-layered blouse and comfortable breeches with ornate brown leather slippers and gloves, while listening to the latest "Change is Evil!" rant/chant⁹ from her favorite Vilani orators and philosophers – both living and (very, very) long dead.

Squire Nagma Ilaammangarkhi Gaararaamsh, nominee-Guardian of House Hsaio: A64A9A, Age 36, Legal-3, Admin-2, Interrogation-2, Liaison-1, Ship's Boat-0, Bribery-0, Pistol-0, Old High Vilani-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Computer-0, Modern Mandarin Chinese-(-1). Native language: Modern Vilani. No Dewclaw skill, no Anglic.

Ship: Shii Miigdinka	Class: Esulali Pumuiiki
Type: Yacht	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 12	100 tons, Book 2 ruleset
USP	
Y-1521221-000000-00002-0	MCr 71.940
Bat Bear 1	Crew: 5
Bat 1	TL: 12
Cargo: 2.5 tons	Passengers: 1
Emer. Low: 1	Fuel: 22
EP: 2	Agility: 1
Craft: 1 x 20T Ship's Boat	Backups: 2 x Model/2 Computers
Architects Fee: MCr 0.719	Cost in Quantity: MCr 57.552
HULL: 100 tons standard, 1,400 cubic meters, Sphere Configuration	
CREW: Pilot, Steward, Medic, Gunner, 1 Flight Crew (Ship's Boat)	
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-2, 2 EP, Agility 1	
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/2 Computer; 2 Model/2 Backup Computers	
HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint	
ARMAMENT: 1 Triple Missile Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-2)	
DEFENCES: None	
CRAFT: 1x 20 ton Ship's Boat (Crew of 1, Cost not included)	
FUEL: 22 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)	
No Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant	
MISCELLANEOUS:	
4 Staterooms, 1 Low Berth, 1 Emergency Low Berth, 1 High Passenger, 2.5 Tons Cargo	
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None	
COST: MCr 72.659 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.719),	
MCr 57.552 in Quantity	

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Esulali Pumuiiki-class starship is a yacht design, licensed for the exclusive use of the Hsiao noble family of Arnakhish subsector, Dagudashaag. Spherical and efficient (if a bit austere), it is a testimony to the First Imperium noble craft it is modeled after, and is decorated with the traditional repetitive patterns of that era. It is designed for “simple yet graceful travel” in peaceful space: the addition of the missile turret proved to be a necessity while in Ley sector, something the Squire still resents.

The ship itself is kept in tip-top shape, and is designed with multiple redundancy and ease of repair in mind. The Squire and the Pilot have their own staterooms, with the Pilot giving up his for respected guests.



Baron Harpreet Singh

Baron Harpreet Singh is a fighter, and a born survivor. A native of Zukhisa, Singh started off life as a criminal enforcer for local ethnic Indian syndicates. Easily captured after a bungled hijacking¹⁰, Harpreet Singh was imprisoned in the then-notorious Kranouvo Imperial Penitentiary (over and above the objections of his legal counsel.) Kranouvo – an oddly-shaped bit of rock two km long, in an eccentric orbit around Lazisars’ secondary G8 V star – has been a disgraceful hellhole for over five decades when Singh arrived. The environment has crushed many men before, and Singh was no exception. Unlike others, though, he managed to recover and adapt to the environment, eventually building a prison gang around himself. For most this would be accomplishment enough, but Prisoner Singh was not satisfied: by using prisonhouse diplomacy, seizing control of the various illicit trading networks, and orchestrating truly nasty acts of violence against his enemies, Prisoner Singh took informal (but very real) control of the prison.

The Warden eventually chose to work with Prisoner Singh, to “make a model prison” for the pleasure of Warden’s superiors (and ensure the promotion of the Warden): in return, Prisoner Singh was to be given a strong recommendation for early parole. The prison was successfully reformed, but after his promotion the Warden forgot all about Prisoner Singh.

Prisoner Singh finally got his break when he got wind of a series of a major anti-Bwap terror campaign being planned out and financed by an alliance of Solomani criminal gangs and pro-Solomani interests. From his prison cell, Prisoner Singh used his outside contacts and influence

to trace out the connections and the money flows, leading him to both a plot to kill the newly enthroned Bwap Sector Duke and to certain treasonous interests who stood to gain from the Duke demise. He played his hand with great adroitness and political élan, gaining not only a full pardon in 990, but a rank noble title as well in return for “crucial information and assistance in delicate Matters of State”.

Currently, Baron Singh is the Prison Bailiff¹¹ of Duke Dethwabtakwebwakawas’ household, and is in charge of Imperial Prisons within the sector administration. He works under the supervision of the High Bailiff of the Empty Quarter, who is in charge of Imperial law enforcement within the sector, especially the Ministry of Justice. He operates within an unseen cage¹² that channels his activities (legal and not) in ways beneficial to the Imperium and to the Ducal Household. Within these restrictions, he plays a useful and respected role in running & reforming the local Imperial prison system.

Baron Singh subconsciously knows that he is not free, but he enjoys his work and the rewards too much to bother complaining about the unseen hands and invisible restraints. Moreover, he is a patriotic Imperial in his own estimate, and he has materially improved the conditions of Imperial prisons within the sector, while reducing the recidivism rate sharply. Nagging questions regarding his methods have been muted in the applause for his results.

Attire: Baron Singh wears official Household Court Dress when appearing before the Duke, and at formal Imperial functions. Otherwise, he prefers blood-red garb, metallic boots, and spikes shoulder guards. He is often seen with a pair of well-trained Zhaks, a breed of small and unpleasant hunting carnivores raised on Zukhisa. His chosen weapon is a stout piece of lead piping, which has killed more men than most would care to imagine.

A particularly cracked Referee is invited to obtain a copy of the Japanese anime Paranoia Agent, and pay special attention to L'il Slugger for additional inspiration.¹³

Baron Harpreet Singh, Prison Bailiff of the Empty Quarter: AB8B5C, Age 34, Streetwise-4, Cudgel-3, Leader-3, Brawling-2, Bribery-1, Knife-1, Hunting-0, Legal-0, Animal Handling-0. Speaks both A'ger'arg (a Zukhisa tongue) and Anglic fluently.

Ship: IY Puny Huu-man
Type: Armoured Yacht
Tech Level: 14

Class: Patrician
Architect: Alvin Plummer
400 Tons, Book 2 ruleset

USP

YA-4224522-440000-30003-0

MCr 388.6678

Bat Bear

1 1 1

Crew: 15

Bat

1 1 1

TL: 14

Cargo: None Passengers: 5 Emerg. Low: 4 Fuel: 100 EP: 20 Agility: 4

Marines: 4 Pulse Lasers

Craft: 1 x 20T Ship's Boat, 2 x 2T Air/Raft

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Backups: 2 x Factor 2 Power Plants; 2 x Model/2 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 3.887 Cost in Quantity: MCr 310.942

HULL: 400 tons standard, 5,600 cubic meters, Cone Configuration

CREW: Pilot, Navigator, 3 Engineers, Steward, Medic, 3 Gunners, 1 Flight Crew, 4 Marines

ENGINEERING: J2, 4G, Power plant-5, 20 EP, Agility 4, 2 Power plant-2 Backups

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/2 Computer; 2 Model/2 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 4 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 1 Triple Missile Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-3),

1 Triple Pulse Laser Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-3), 1 Triple Empty Turret

DEFENCES: 1 Triple Sandcaster Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-4),

Armoured Hull (Factor-4)

CRAFT: 1 20-ton Ship's Boat (Crew of 1), 2 2-ton Air/Rafts

FUEL: 100 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 20 Staterooms, 4 Low Berths, 4 Emergency Low Berths,

1 High Passenger, 4 Middle Passengers

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 1 Gym (4 tons, Crew 0, 0.050 Energy Point, MCr 0.1)

1 Bwap Pool (4 tons, Crew 0, 0.050 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.010)

COST: MCr 392.565 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 3.887), MCr 310.942 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 82 Weeks Singly, 65 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Imperial Yacht *Puny Huu-man* is used in somewhat dangerous regions of space like the 990s Imperial Empty Quarter. It is fairly well armoured and armed, with a good agility rating as well. Utilizing the empty turret risks lowering Agility to 3.

Baron Singh had the traditional study reconfigured into a gym so he can keep in shape and train with his lead pipe. A small kennel for his two pets is also located here.

The IY *Puny Huu-man* is owned and manned by the Duke. "Passenger country" has its environmental settings set for human comfort, but "Crew country" is set for Bwap comfort. The Bwap pool is located in crew country, naturally. The name of the ship stems from a humorous but typically brutal incident in Baron Singh's earlier career¹⁴.

Captain Oussayn “Steady Hands” Elalamy

Captain Elalamy is currently (993 Imperial) the best starship pilot among the full-time free traders in Nulinad subsector, thanks not only to his performance in last years’ Erro Run (winning the Lord Hassan Cup for the second year in a row), but his stellar performance in the NHD Events¹⁵ held that same year. While the 10,000 Cr prize money is appreciated, a full-time career as a professional racing/manoeuvring starship sports pilot just isn’t possible within the Imperial Empty Quarter: not enough sponsors, not enough training facilities, not enough paying viewers, and working starship pilots just don’t have enough flying time to sharpen the competitive edge they need to really play in the big leagues.¹⁶ Most crucially, real starship sporting pilots need multiple, cutting-edge starships, top-notch maintenance crews, and a dedicated starport: even Emptyhead Nobility can’t afford to spend this kind of money on entertainment! (“Now, if you were talking about the cesspool of the Quarter – the Oloe system¹⁷ - then maybe...”)

As the fame of his piloting has grown – especially when he won the Hassan Cup the second time – Captain Elalamy has been receiving various recruitment offers. The legit offers require that he leave the Quarter for a sector with a stronger fan base, usually in the Imperial Core. The not-so-legit offers stress the money he will receive, and are really, really vague on exactly what he will be flying, where he will be going, or what the ship will be doing once she arrives. (Starships are always feminine to the Captain.) Captain Elalamy has no intention to leave the Quarter he calls home, and – thanks to a clientele that now asks for his ship by name – the Captain can finally afford to keep plenty of space between him and jobs that don’t smell right.

Unfortunately, a starship can’t live solely off the hands of a hotshot pilot: she needs a good crew as well. Even though the Captain isn’t for sale, other free traders have picked off his old crew one by one, with fat bonuses that Captain Elalamy wasn’t prepared to match (his additional revenue is going into an account to purchase a spanking new starship, not to salaries or penthouses.) He has some temps onboard, but the Captain is still in the market for a new crew: if the PCs are interested in a new start with a rising star, working with Captain Elalamy isn’t a bad place to start.

Captain Elalamy has a major social secret: at the age of six, he was found to have a psionic talent, and was lobotomized using the low-tech ‘ice pick’ method – a method that can be handled with 1950s (TL 6) technology, taking only a few minutes in the doctor’s office, and VERY common among the low-tech worlds of the Third Imperium.¹⁸ Fortunately, he was only slightly damaged: as a ‘high-functioning’ lobotomized man, the Captain can think well on his feet, and interact comfortably with society – the fact that he never gets excited about anything is written off as a personality quirk, or even as a sign of strength of character: “You can rest easy with Steady Hands on the bridge!” If his secret was revealed, there would be no legal repercussions: not a trace of psionic ability remains after the lobotomy. But competitors, enemies and rumour-mongers would use his history against him: he could even be run out of the subsector.

Since his fame has lead to increased business at good rates, Captain Elalamy now plans to take regular holidays at a little-known vacation spot for travellers: Khinumi V, a gas giant in the Khinumi system. A small colony, Sunset Aura, is maintained within the gas giant’s breathable atmosphere¹⁹ – officially under the flag of the Baron of Khinumi, but really run as a joint venture of the megacorporations Makhidkarun and Tukera Lines. As the Great Tour liners aren’t visiting Khinumi (being requisitioned by the Imperium for military logistics), the colony has deeply discounted their fares and prices. Even the wonderful “Cloud Sails” race only requires a partly-refundable fee of a mere 1000 Credits!

Attire: Captain Elalamy wears a cheap Nulinad business suit off the ship: onboard, he prefers clean but well-worn brown overalls with large utility pockets and magnetic boots (gravity on his ship is flakey). In his spare time, he can be found playing “2000 A.D. – Historical Roleplaying in the Deep, Deep Past.”

Captain Oussayn “Steady Hands” Elalamy, Captain of the Tylerman: UPP:463CC8, Age 38: Pilot-4, JoaT-3, Medical-1, Steward-1, Streetwise-1, Vacc Suit-1, Laser Pistol-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Computer-0, History (20th Century Terra)-0

Ship: Tylerman
Type: Free Trader
Tech Level: 9

Class: Type A
Architect: Andrew Moffatt-Vallance
200 Tons, Book 2 ruleset

USP

AA-26111111-000000-00000-0

MCr 67.200

Bat Bear

Crew: 3

Bat

TL: 9

Cargo: 91 tons

Passengers: 7 Low: 20

Fuel: 22

EP: 2 Agility: 1

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops

Architects Fee: MCr 0.672 Cost in Quantity: MCr 53.760

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800.000 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Medic
ENGINEERING: Jump-1, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-1, 2.000 EP, Agility 1
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1 Computer
HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT: 2 Empty Turrets
DEFENCES: None
CRAFT: None
FUEL: 22 Tons Fuel (1 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 10 Staterooms, 20 Low Berths, 7 Middle Passengers,
20 Low Passengers, 91 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
COST: MCr 67.872 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.672), MCr 53.760 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

This ship is a fair bit younger than most Free Traders: only 28 years old. The Tylerman has had only two owners since she made her first jump, and both treated her very well, so she handles like a ship half her age. The only serious flaw is internal gravity, that insists on giving out during the stress of landing in a gravity well. Captain Elalamy has spoken to five different ship engineers, received five different recommendations, and nothing has worked – so far.

Herald Zha Bingwen

Zha Bingwen is an imposing, well-built soldier of the Kingdom of Xarga, (Strashna/Lishun 1932. UWP in 993: C400AAB-D), a loyal planetary government within the Third Imperium. He has spent most of his life in the service of the Royal Xarga Army as a scholar-soldier. He is a minor member of House Zha, a famously violent and passionate military family with a long record of service to the Alkhalikoi dynasty, and savagery to enemies of House Zha. Zha Bingwen's family membership, political reliability and academic credentials have opened doors for him, eventually leading to his induction into direct Household service as a Herald. His first extra-planetary mission has led him to the Empty Quarter, to retrieve a wayward Member of the Blood, Zha Wenzhong, back into the bosom of the family - where he should be.

Zha Wenzhong is a quiet, gentle, rather intellectual man, of the same age as Zha Bingwen. As his personality and gentle defiance grated on his elders, they sent him off as a “remittance man”, and told to return when he has grown up and ready to take on his responsibilities. After ten years of wandering the Imperial starlanes, Zha found himself in the Empty Quarter. He joined the small Chinese community on Nulinad, married a local doctor, and sired a son. Having a child brought focus to his life, driving him to finally complete his mechanical engineering studies and get a real job with Atepabwasketh Ebpakas,²⁰ a Bwap manufacturing company affiliated with the Nassirka megacorporation.

Four years of bliss finally came to an end when, out of the blue, the yellow and red clad Herald of House Zha of Lishun arrived at his doorstep. The Herald proclaimed that the House is pleased that he has finally grown up, and that his presence is required at the family stronghold at once. Wenzhong Zha thanked him, sent him on his way, and ignored the summons.

Naturally, things did not stop there. The Zha Herald has returned numerous times, sometimes with threats, and sometimes with promises. Zha Wenzhong has patiently turned him away each and every time. Finally, the Herald arrived, handed Zha an electronic pass-card, a private banking card, and a stuffed envelope, and then departed without a word.

Looking thru the documents and the cards, it became obvious that he has been given sufficient funds to charter a starship to transport himself and his family to the heart of House Zha power, at Xagra. He had already decided to dispose of the papers and plastic when his wife pleaded with him to reconsider the opportunity he was throwing away. Her tenacity in defending her sons' future finally wore away Wenzhongs' idealism, and he decided to take up his family's offer and come back home. All he needs now is to charter a willing ship for the ~50 parsec journey.

Of course, the watchful Herald plans to escort him every step of the way.

Attire: On duty, The Herald of House Zha wears his formal, high-tech shimmering robes - in the bright yellow and red colours of the house, with light cloth armor underneath the clothing. Zha Bingwen also keeps a sharp set of 'ever-pressed' Xarga Army uniforms onboard, for relaxing.

Amusements: While knowledgeable and quite well-read, the Herald educates himself as a duty, not for the joy of learning. For pleasure, Zha Bingwen loves to exercise and train with his weapons. He also enjoys watching war movies of all eras, recount tales of clan glory, and singing marching cadences.

Zha Bingwen, Zha Herald, Royal Xarga Army Major: UPP 8666F6, Age 30: Pilot-1, Admin-1, Legal-1, Recon-1, Vacc Suit-1, Automatic Rifle-1, Submachinegun-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Plasma Rifle-0, Computer-0, History (Xarga, Clan Zha)-0, Liaison-0, Anglic-0. Native Language: Chinese. Usually carries a pistol and a rod of office. On his starship, he also has a set of TL-D Combat Armour and a submachinegun.

Zha Wenzhong, Product Engineer: 29CBA8, Age 30: Mechanical-2, Electronics-1, Language (Bwap)-1, Visual Arts-0, Poetry-0, Computer-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0. Native Languages: Anglic, Chinese. Unarmed.

Zha Nuying, wife of Wenzhong, Doctor: 234AB8, Age 30: Medical-2, Research-0, Computer-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0. Native Language: Anglic, Chinese. Unarmed.

Zha Fang, Child: 111426, Age 4: No skills. Native language: limited Anglic, less Chinese.

Ship: Xing Gang San Shi Er
Type: Armoured Courier
Tech Level: 13

Class: Pao Bu Zhe
Architect: Alvin Plummer
100 Tons, Book 2 ruleset

USP

SS-1232331-300000-00000-0 MCr 111.691

Bat Bear Crew: 1

Bat TL: 13

Cargo: 2.000 Fuel: 33.000 EP: 3.000 Agility: 2

Craft: 1 x 4T Air/Raft

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Backups: 2 x Model/3 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 1.117 Cost in Quantity: MCr 89.353

HULL: 100 tons, 1,400 cubic meters, Cone Configuration

CREW: Pilot

ENGINEERING: Jump-3, 2G Manuever, Power plant-3, 3 EP, Agility 2

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/3 Computer, 2 Model/3 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: None

ARMAMENT: None

DEFENCES: Armoured Hull (Factor-3)

CRAFT: 1 4-ton Air/Raft

FUEL: 33 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 1 Stateroom, 2 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST: MCr 112.808 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 1.117), MCr 89.353 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Pao Bu Zhe ("Runner") class of couriers is a unique class of ships commissioned for the joint use of the Xarga SpaceForce and House Zha. "Xing Gang San Shi Er" means "Star Ship Thirty-Two" in Mandarin.

Like all *Pao Bu Zhe*-class starships, the *Xing Gang San Shi Er* is built for one courier or Household Herald. In this case, the ship has several hull livery & patterns, depending on the mission: Xarga Household yellow/black highlights, Xarga Naval red/yellow highlights, Imperial Navy white/red striping & insignia, and tactical flat black.

Note that the original price is MCr 109.522 for a single ship (architect fee of 1.084), MCr 86.750 in quantity. The price provided above is increased by 3% to include stealthing (radar and heat).²¹

The ship itself is plan and undecorated, except for a single small image of General Zha Yu holding up the head and spinal cord of his archenemy, Marquis Ramin of Xarga, in 508 Imperial. All onboard labeling is in Chinese script: controls are NOT holographic: no Anglic script is available.

Sheikh Abdul-Alim bin Taysir bin Ratib

Sheikh Abdul-Alim bin Taysir bin Ratib is a citizen of Marhaban/Mirmida/Lishun (in 993: E31089B-C.) A recognized (if unexceptional) Islamic scholar, he is touring the Imperial Empty Quarter to investigate the state of the

Islamic Ummah there. His primary interest is in rumours of extensive corruption in the local Imperial courts, regarding the lone (usually Arabic Muslim) merchantmen vis-à-vis corporate and local megacorporate interests (usually Indian Hindus²².) He's especially interested in the 'general tone' of Islamic/Hindu and Islamic/Vilani relations: are they peaceful, or hostile? Are his religious brothers on the offensive, holding their own, or on the defensive? He is also mildly curious in regard of the Bwaps, and would like to visit their homeworld of Marhaban. (Yes, there are two Marhaban's²³ within the Imperium, but the Bwap homeworld is by far the more famous.)

Abdul-Alim has always had a vigorous and aggressive personality: by the age of 14, "I have had my man and killed my man": early even by the standards of Marhaban/Mirmida. At 18, Abdul-Alim joined the Imperial Marines, serving on patrol and escort duty on Ship's Troops, Customs Duty, and the Frozen Watch. He was transferred to his planetary military, to serve as a military advisor/trainer until he left the service in 984.

He enrolled into a planetary madrasah, and was granted a religious exception from the Imperial draft when the Rim War broke out. He continued on his studies of Shari'a until his widely-traveled Uncle Daniyal, the 'black sheep' of the family, related tales of how mistreated he was within the Empty Quarter. The Sheikh arranged to join his wandering uncle to see and judge for himself how things are in the Quarter. Within a few months of the ~45-parsec journey, Uncle Daniyal was killed while negotiating a business transaction with the wrong crowd. After avenging his uncle and fleeing the world, Sheikh Abdul-Alim continued on his journey to the Empty Quarter, and is expected to arrive at Marhaban within the month.

Sheikh Abdul-Alim is the kind of man who will die defending you if you're a friend, and kill you without a second thought if you challenge his honour.²⁴ His piety is real enough, but when it comes to women he suffers from the wandering eye, even now. The Sheikh loathes 'Vargr dogs', views Newts with tolerant amusement (so long as they eventually shut up), and sees psionics as a profoundly twisted manifestation of Shaitan's power. (Calling someone a psion is a death-insult back home.) While he gets along well enough with most infidel humans, individuals from TL D+ systems are seen with a certain amount of suspicion.²⁵ He is not such a good bargainer or shiphandler, and would like to have an experienced crew and trader/broker for his ship as he continues his journey – as Muslim as possible, if you please. Note that the Sheikh is an expert smuggler: Abdul-Alim's experience with the Marines has given him a fine education in smuggling techniques and customs search methods and equipment.

Attire: Sheikh Abdul-Alim wears the black robes, white undergarment, and circular white cap of Islamic scholars back on Marhaban. His hair is dyed henna red, to underscore his youth and virility. He often has a set of e-books in a pouch looped through his belt (including a copy of the Koran, and some works by the ancient Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes in Europe.)

Amusements: Besides arguing about politics, religion, and aliens, the Sheikh loves to play a variant of the *hapax legomenon* game: looking for Arabic words mentioned only once in the Koran. Besides acting as a memory aid, *hapax legomenon* also serves to teach people about rare Arabic words. Despite having no talent, the Sheikh also feels himself to be a budding poet and singer.

Sheikh Abdul-Alim bin Taysir bin Ratib, 3CB787, Starship Captain/Islamic Scholar (ex-Marine): UPP: 3CB787, Apparent Age 36 (Actual Age 44 - counting Frozen Watches): Cutlass-2, Theology (Islamic)-1, Legal (Islamic)-1, Electronics-1, Leader-1, Battle Dress-1, Zero-G-1, Anglic-1, Classical Arabic-0, Fusion Rifle-0, Gauss Rifle-0, Knife-0, Ship Gunnery-0. Native Language: Marhaban Arabic. He usually carries his worn Marine cutlass on his belt, and two daggers: one within an ornate scabbard on his belt, and a hidden dagger within the folds of his robes.²⁶

(Linguistic note: the Muslims if the Empty Quarter can't comprehend Marhaban Arabic, but all Muslim scholars – and many laymen - understand Classical Arabic, the language of the Koran.)

Ship: Addiriyah
Type: Far Trader
Tech Level: 12

Class: Star Dhow Type III
Architect: Alvin Plummer
300 Tons, Book 2 ruleset

USP

MA-3321221-030000-10000-0	MCr 163.713
Bat Bear 1 2	Crew: 7
Bat 1 2	TL: 12

Cargo: 74 tons Emerg. Low: 2 Fuel: 66 EP: 6 Agility: 1
Craft: 1 x 50T Modular Cutter, 2 x 4T G-Carrier
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/2 Computers
Architects Fee: MCr 1.637 Cost in Quantity: MCr 130.970

HULL: 300 tons, 4,200 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Navigator, Engineer, Medic, 3 Gunners
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-2, 6 EP, Agility 1
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/2 Computer, 2 Model/2 Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: 3 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT: 2 Single Beam Laser Turrets organized into 2 Batteries (Factor-1)
DEFENCES: 1 Single Sandcaster Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-3)
CRAFT: 1 50-ton Modular Cutter, 2 4-ton G-Carriers
FUEL: 66 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 7 Staterooms, 2 Emergency Low Berths, 74 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 1 Library (4 tons, Crew 0, Cost MCr 0.015)
COST: MCr 165.350 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 1.637), MCr 130.970 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 71 Weeks Singly, 57 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The *Star Dhow* class of Far Trader starships are commonly found in the coreward Imperium, from Lishun to the Empty Quarter. As a class, they operate as an important link between the major systems and well-populated, but low-tech and somewhat isolated worlds.

The *Addiriyah* herself has been modified somewhat, with a small scholar's library, equipped with books, scrolls, and curios as well as the usual dedicated databanks. The Sheikh has taken a stateroom for himself, forcing one of the gunners to double-bunk. The crew area itself is richly decorated with Arab, Islamic, and Marhaban/Mirmida motifs (carpeting, inlaid mosaics, etc.) Ship policy is to orient itself to face Mecca (on Terra/Solomani Rim) five times a day for prayers, to demonstrate the devoutness of the crew. This need not change the ship's course.

Note that human PC crewmembers – especially Solomani - will be strongly encouraged to convert to Islam. Conversion brings acceptance among the crew: but apostasy from Islam is harshly punished. Shari'a (and traditional Arab hospitality) operates onboard: conflicting Imperial regulations are casually ignored.

Baron David Dacko

Baron David Dacko is a visiting noble from Kaggushus, one of the most important, cultured, and historically significant worlds of the Imperium.²⁷ Resident in the Empty Quarter since 977, the Baron has annoyed numerous personages and organizations with his vocal opinions regarding the various failings, corruption and incompetence he has encountered. His satiric works "Empty Hopes," "Emptyhead – And Proud Of It!" and "Running on Empty" has taught Core opinion to view the cultures of the Imperial Empty Quarter with contempt. His loathing of the local noble establishment is vigorously reciprocated: two recent surveys (one among nobles, the other among the general population) both list his name as "the noble most likely to suffer a hunting accident." This hasn't stopped him in pursuing his hunting, touring, carousing, or writing activities: he already has an advance payment for his next planned work, "Empty Words, Hollow Promises."

As an individual, the Baron is always elegantly dressed and well-mannered, with an aura of casual superiority that he wears as a birthright. When he wants to, he can really turn on the charm – but he prefers to use his acidic wit to cut people down to size. He has fought in various duels, with his skill in marksmanship and swordsmanship permitting him to kill better (and, admittedly, worse) men than himself. Numerous nobles have accused him of being a mere layabout: accusations that he deems unworthy of response. He enjoys keeping a band of followers and hangers-on with him, and Baron David is an expert in playing clique-based social gaming – especially name-dropping. Despite his plump monthly stipend (from his small and extremely high-rent fief in the heart of the Kaggushusi city of Kishu Durdadsha), he rarely actually pays for anything: his mere patronage should be sufficient payment in his opinion, and there are numerous ingrates who are all too eager to pick up the tab.

For his new work, the Baron wants to travel with ordinary free traders as a 'working passenger' for a few months. He will present a charming face to the PCs he interacts with, and – instead of paying cash – he promises to use his influence and name to 'smooth things over' for the PCs regular activities, be it trading, smuggling, or as the 'public face' of a military party. You can be sure, however, that the PCs are to be properly skewered after he leaves their ship – but the PCs only discover this after about a year has passed, long enough for the damage to their reputation to be set in stone among the social elite and the literati. Getting back at the Baron is difficult...

...especially if he leaves the sector after his current bit of 'literary research'. The Imperial Ministry of Information has requested the Baron's services as a propagandist in support of the Rim War. The money is good, but it's the possibility of rubbing shoulders with real Movers and Shakers that has the Baron chomping at the bit. Baron David is aware that a fast Imperial Navy courier is due to arrive in Nulinad to pick him up, but he has about two

months – perhaps three – before he must take his leave of the sector. Even a fast Jump5 ship takes eleven weeks to cross the 51 parsecs for the direct Capital/Nulinad route, even if it is refueled ASAP and jumps without wasting a minute.

Attire: Baron David is clothed in a tasteful blend of Vilani and Old Terran fashions. Once a distinctively Kaggushusi custom, this mix of Solomani practicality and Vilani asymmetrical style serves as the recognizable ‘official dress’ of the Third Imperium, instantly recognizable across Charted Space – much as the “Top hat & Tails” signify the Victorian era, “T-shirt and Jeans” marks off the American age, or the carefully hung togas of Roman citizens proclaimed their time of glory.

Amusements: While the Baron occasionally does the wine, women and song bit, he gets his greatest enjoyment in dominating High Society wherever he goes. On the occasions he finds the social whirl exhausting, he likes to indulge in some big-game hunting. Baron David takes a series of discreet precautions, to limit any unexpected surprises his guests may have planned.

Baron David is a member of the Traveller’s Aid Society, and sporadically contributes planetary & situational reports, humorous articles, and sage (if cutting) advice for Imperial travelers within the Quarter. He is a fan of the “elegant simplicity of the printed word,” and distains audiographic ‘distractions’ – excluding the well-aimed, perfectly-drawn caricature.

Baron David Dacko, Satiric Writer: 5B4CAC, Age 42: Journalism/Writing-4, Long Blade-4, Pistol-3, Streetwise-3, Liaison-3, Bribery-2, History (Empty Quarter)-2, Sociology (Empty Quarter)-2, Perform/Act-2, Broker-1, Admin-1, Legal-1, Drawing-1, Vacc Suit-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Computer-0, Sophontology-0, Hunting-0. Native Language: Anglic. Always carries a pistol and a sword openly: in dangerous situations, he also has a hidden on his person a dagger, a hold-out pistol and undercover ballistic armour. A sword-cane is kept for special occasions.

Ship: Phoney Jump
Type: K
Tech Level: 11

Class: Animal
Architect: Andrew Moffatt-Vallance
200 Tons, Book 2 ruleset

USP

AK-26212R1-000000-00000-0 MCr 92.740 200 Tons
Bat Bear Crew: 5
Bat TL: 11

Cargo: 24 tons Pass: 6 Fuel: 44 EP: 4 Agility: 1
Craft: 1 x 20T Ships Boat, 1 x 3T Air/Raft
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops
Architects Fee: MCr 0.927 Cost in Quantity: MCr 74.192

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Steward, Medic, 1 Other Crew
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-2, 4 EP, Agility 1
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1bis Computer
HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint
ARMAMENT: 1 None Empty Turret
DEFENCES: None
CRAFT: 1 20 ton Ships Boat, 1 3 ton Air/Raft
FUEL: 44 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 11 Staterooms, 6 High Passengers, 24 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 2 Capture Tanks (7 tons, Crew 0, Cost MCr 0.000), 1 Trophy Room (7 tons, Crew 0, Cost MCr 0.000)
COST: MCr 93.667 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.927), MCr 74.192 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

Baron David originally arrived in the Empty Quarter in a TL-F Safari Ship, a wondrous starship named *NightPanther*. However, the *NightPanther* was attacked and taken by pirates in 979, and the Baron himself held to ransom. The Imperium was able to track him down and retrieve him, but his original starship was never recovered. His current vessel is a loaner from the Sharurshid megacorporation.²⁸

The *Phoney Jump* is a luxurious vessel that holds space for six high passengers, but only one stateroom is now available. The other staterooms are occupied by the Baron, his personal valet, his secretary (who handles appointments and organizes his personal life), his legal counsel (who also manages his financial matters), and a bodyguard/ship security specialist.

In contrast to the passengers, the crew are all Sharurshid employees. While they respect the Baron's authority, their first loyalty is to Sharurshid – and the starship remains Sharurshid property. The crew is of elite quality, and comfortable in both serving nobles and repelling boarders.

This ship is unarmed. A Starmerc or Imperial Naval vessel is usually provided if the local threat profile warrants it.

Eozoanga'o A'oukhokseiroeloenk

Eozoanga'o A'oukhokseiroeloenk is a Vargr entrepreneur, a Protectorate immigrant, and prominent citizen of Dharmendra. He was born and raised on Ikon/Tsahrroek/Empty Quarter, the most prominent world of the Rukadkaz Republic – itself a member state of the Julian Protectorate. Eozoanga'o's family have generally been lower-class/working class Vargr, struggling to get by on a wealthy world and getting into more fights than they can handle. Eozoanga'o decided that he wanted something better for himself. Most of the good employment opportunities on Ikon are dominated by Vilani and highly Vilanized Vargr, but Eozoanga'o managed to grab a position for himself as a deckhand on the Vargr trader *Oekthodzokhungvokh*. Unlike most Vargr traders (who dip into piracy, smuggling, or world-raiding activities when the opportunity presents itself), the *Oekthodzokhungvokh* stayed on the straight and narrow, focusing on making her ports on time and regular cost-cutting. This meant that the ship had to pay regular 'taxes' to the underworld to insure that they 'weren't noticed' by the more powerful pirate bands. (The ship could handle the lone wolves herself, thank you very much.) However, her customers, pleased by her reliability, soon became valuable repeat customers. This, coupled with word-of-mouth, insured that the *Oekthodzokhungvokh* crew always got paid in full, every time. This stability is somewhat uncommon among the Vilani-influenced Ikonaz Vargr, and simply unheard of elsewhere in the Vargr Extents.

In 985, the intensely Vilanized Inllegh caught the Eozoanga'o's eye. He desired to lay with her, but Inllegh, in extremely un-Vargr fashion, insisted on a Vilani-style nonrevocable monogamous marriage. Despite his anger at her refusal, Eozoanga'o was mad with desire for this high-status Vargr female who spoke in flawless Vilani. After losing a lot of Charisma contests, he finally agreed to her insistence on a formal Vilani-style marriage contract in 987.

In 988 Imperial, the Imperial Courts authorized *Oekthodzokhungvokh* crew to seize seventy hectares of land for non-payments of debts. The seizure wasn't contested, and Eozoanga'o – now the Master of the ship - planned to sell the land off to the highest bidder. However, the Baron of Dharmendra (Gimushi/Empty Quarter 1236 C84A210-5) persuaded Eozoanga'o to keep the land, and develop it into a profitable business. As the Vilani Baron offered incentive after incentive to stay, Eozoanga'o grew more interested, but still worried about being alone in hostile space: the human & Bwap-dominated, xenophobic, low-tech Empty Quarter is a huge shift from the high-tech, civilized realm of the Rukadkaz Republic.

After his return to his home port of Ikon, his wife was overjoyed to hear the offer – “What favour from the ancestors! To be ruled by a genuine Vilani Noble, in the true successor-state of the Ziru Sirka! Finally – endless stability is within our grasp!” It took two years to make the financial arrangements, while still working the trading routes. But in 991, the A'oukhokseiroeloenk family took their last journey on the *Oekthodzokhungvokh*. At a sorrowful parting, they said goodbye forever to their old friends & crewmates, and set up shop on Dharmendra. Earlier market research concluded that the most profitable livestock to farm was dogs (dogs as “*Canis lupus familiaris*”, not as “Vargr” (derogatory) or “guard animal/pet”) – dog-meat is in high demand in Lishun and Antares sectors, especially by Asian nobility, squires, and social wannabe's. Eozoanga'o had no ethical issues with this: after all, neither dogs nor humans were blessed by the touch of the Ancients. Vargr are.

As of 993, Puddle Farms is the largest existing dog-breeding and processing facility trailing of Antares. While there are still teething problems, the debt load has stabilized and losses have shrunk considerably. Cash flow is on a solid upswing: the agribusiness is expected to turn a profit within three to five years, thanks in no small part to the assistance of the planetary Baron. The farm has grown enormously, from seventy hectares to five square kilometres over four islands (the planet has only specks of land dotting the World-Ocean – christened “Bathtub Ocean” by typically mischievous Scouts in the early Third Imperium, in contrast to the rather sombre names preferred by Second Imperium bureaucrats.²⁹) When an annual profit is finally shown, the A'oukhokseiroeloenk's plan to take a month-long holiday on nearby Agnakhong/Gimushi – the only Vargr-dominated world in the Imperial Empty Quarter. There are Vargr cities (and lots and lots of Vargr slums) within the Imperial Quarter with **more** Vargr than Agnakhong: but on Agnakhong, the Vargr are truly **free** of local human domination - while still under the sway of the Imperium.

There are some further goals after profitability. First, the reintroduction of dogs as pets: a hard sell in most of Chartered Space, as they interact very poorly to interstellar life. (For example, dogs don't exist in the Spinward Marches.) Moreover, dog-eaters, dog-owners are associated with Solomani supremacists in the public mind. The

pious Muslim and Christian communities', influenced by their religious texts, disdain dogs. And finally, some Imperial Vargr dislike the symbolism of humans owning dogs (Vargr from the Extents could hardly care less.)

Secondly, the vast Bathtub Ocean is teeming with life – most of which is rather poisonous to humans and Vargr. But, some Vargr from Nulinad are very experienced with aquaculture, and are trying to get Eozoanga'o to set up a small-scale fish-farming project. ("Fish" in Emptyhead Anglic means "anything that lives in a liquid environment.") Eozoanga'o is reluctant to start such a venture until the dog-farming business is on a solid footing.

Third, the Baron of Dharmendra is hinting that shares of the planet itself may be made available, permitting Eozoanga'o to buy himself a seat on the Governing Council, and perhaps putting his family on the road to Noble status in a few generations. Eozoanga'o isn't into politics - but his wife Inlegh loves the idea....

Attire: While Eozoanga'o is much more comfortable in his flashy spacer's overalls he wears when handling the livestock, his wife insists that he wears proper Vilani-styled garments off of the kennels and the running fields. Whenever he can, Eozoanga'o wears a mechanic's utility belt with his beloved TL E tools hooked on – he feels naked without it.

Amusements: Eozoanga'o genuinely enjoys trying to out-argue, out-smart, and out-charisma his wife, and relishes his victories. Despite the competitive nature of their relationship, he remains genuinely fond of her. Other amusements are observing the antics of the dogs, and watching good Vargr sitcoms, police dramas and sports. He also chats with his (largely Vargr and Vilani) employees: now numbering 77, they actually make up the majority of the planet's population of ~100 sophonts.

Eozoanga'o A'oukhokseiroeloenk, Part-Owner of Puddle Farm, ex-Merchant Captain: UPP 566879 (Charisma B), Age 30: Jack-of-all-Trades-3, Mechanical-2, Broker-1, Biology-1, Tracked Vehicle-1, Handgun-1, Sensor Ops-1, Vacc Suit-1, Anglic-1, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Ikonaz Vilani-0 (as Modern Vilani-(-1)). Native Language: Ourmakten (an Ikonaz Vargr language common on Ikon.) Usually unarmed.

Inlegh A'oukhokseiroeloenk, Part-Owner of Puddle Farm: UPP: 595BA8 (Charisma F), age 26: Ourmakten-2, Liaison-1, Recruiting-1, Leadership-1, Computer-0, Grav Vehicle-0, Bribery-0. Native Language: Ikonaz Vilani (as Modern Vilani-(-1)). Usually unarmed.

Ship: Oekthodzokhungvokh			Class: Khugh (customized)		
Type: Armed Liner			Architect: Alvin Plummer		
Tech Level: 14			300 tons, Book 2 ruleset		
USP					
AL-3132532-230000-40000-0			MCr 259.418		
Bat Bear	1	2	Crew: 11		
Bat	1	2	TL: 14		
Cargo: 2 tons Passengers: 8 Low: 8 Emergency Low: 7 Fuel: 105 EP: 15 Agility: 2					
Craft: 1 x 10T Ship's Boat, 5 x 2T Lifeboat, 1 x 1T Air/Raft, 1 x 2T Armoured Ground Car					
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification					
Backups: 2 x Model/3 Computers					
Architects Fee: MCr 2.594 Cost in Quantity: MCr 207.534					
HULL: 300 tons standard, 4,200 cubic meters, Needle/Wedge Configuration					
CREW: Pilot, Navigator, 2 Engineers, Steward, Medic, 3 Gunners, 2 Other Crew (Security Officer, Data Analyst)					
ENGINEERING: Jump-3, 2G Maneuver, Power plant-5, 15 EP, Agility 2					
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/3 Computer, 2 Model/3 Backup Computers					
HARDPOINTS: 3 Hardpoints					
ARMAMENT: 2 Triple Beam Laser Turrets organized into 2 Batteries (Factor-4)					
DEFENCES: 1 Single Sandcaster Turret organized into 1 Battery (Factor-3), Armoured Hull (Factor-2)					
CRAFT: 1 10-ton Ship's Boat, 5 2-ton Lifeboats, 1 1-ton Air/Raft, 1 2-ton Armoured Ground Car					
FUEL: 105 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)					
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant					
MISCELLANEOUS: 14 Staterooms, 8 Low Berths, 7 Emergency Low Berths, 4 High Passengers, 4 Middle Passengers, 8 Low Passengers, 2 Tons Cargo					
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 1 Secure Communication Suite (1 ton, Crew 0,					

0.100 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100)

COST: MCr 262.012 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 2.594), MCr 207.534 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 71 Weeks Singly, 57 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The stock Jump2, Maneouver-2 *Khugh*-class merchantman is a fairly common sight within the wealthy Rukadkaz Republic. Able to deal with pirates and built in the dockyards of Guezdhe /Kakhasaek - famous for their reliability of their ships - the *Khugh*-class starships are highly sought after by the more successful captains.

The *Oekthodzokhungvokh* has been modified extensively: with the addition of lifeboats, a secure communication suite for passengers, a new Jump3 engine, and additional armour, she now works as a secure liner for high-priority passengers traveling across the Empty Quarter (along with their low-berthed aides).

SCHEDULE:

The scheduled route for the *Oekthodzokhungvokh* is:

Homeport: Ikon/Tsahrroek, hex 0208	C253AC7-E Hi
(3 parsecs) - Aeghzivik/Tsahrroek 0510	A858873-9
(3 parsecs) - Khastok/Kakhasaek 0811	A515485-A Ic Lo Ni
(3 parsecs) - Unaeng/Tokitre 1013	D664437-4 Lo Ni
(3 parsecs) - Uku/Tokitre 1211	B21238A-7 Ic Lo Ni
(2 parsecs) - Tokitre/Tokitre 1411	B550A77-B De Hi Po Naval
(2 parsecs) - Libertad/Tokitre 1611	D340566-9 De Ni Po Scout
(3 parsecs) - Salir/Cotan 1911	B221263-8 Lo Ni Po
(2 parsecs) - Flange/Flange 2009	B654AA9-A Hi
(1 parsec) - Ghothu/Flange 2109	C868576-6 Ag Ni
(3 parsecs) - Naerrsuel/Flange 2410	C41359A-B Ic Ni
(3 parsecs) - Irkong/Cotan 2413	C302335-8 Ic Lo Ni Va
(3 parsecs) - Dharo/Nisaga 2516	C655896-6
(3 parsecs) - Saeghvung/Nisaga 2618	D668724-6 Ag
(2 parsecs) - Deep Space Station ³⁰ 2720/Nisaga	
(2 parsecs) - Deep Space Station 2621/Turley	
(2 parsecs) - Turley/Turley 2523	A549554-E Ni
(2 parsecs) - Deep Space Station 2324/Hebrin	
(2 parsecs) - Deep Space Station 2225/Hebrin	
(2 parsecs) - Sahale/Hebrin 2227	A335537-9 Ni
(3 parsecs) - Hebrin/Hebrin 1930	B550A88-9 De Hi Po Naval
(3 parsecs) - Anata/Gimushi 1631	B202625-B Ic Na Ni Va
(3 parsecs) - Gimushi/Gimushi 1431	EA86A86-7 Hi
(2 parsecs) - Lazisar/Gimushi 1233	B55099D-B De Hi Po Naval
(3 parsecs) - Fatuas/Gimushi 1035	A6667AB-B Ag
(3 parsecs) - Indara/Nulinad 0837	A675745-9 Ag
(2 parsecs) - Ushmigad/Nulinad 0638	A432753-E Na Po
(3 parsecs) - Nulinad/Nulinad 0338	A556894-A

This 27-jump, 68-parsec-long route takes 54 weeks to complete, assuming the standard one week Jumpspace/one week Normalspace routine is kept. Naturally, another 54 weeks are needed to return to Ikon.

Note that there is a much shorter Jump3 route from Ikon to Nulinad, taking only ~45 parsecs if you go thru Antares.

HISTORY:

The experienced Imperial merchant may well ask “Why go into all this expense to reconfigure the *Oaktho... Onektha...*, that *Vargr* ship, when she was earning so much money previously?” “Why blow millions of credits on a massive and very expensive refit?”

The answer lies in *Vargr* psychology. As the reliable starship gained a reputation for reliability, she also gained charisma. Naturally, this means that any pirate that could delay or harm her would reduce the *Oekthodzokhungvokh*’s charisma, while gaining charisma himself. The increasingly hostile environment for the *Oekthodzokhungvokh* in Tsahrroek subsector lead the current captain to the wisdom to taking long journeys out of the area.

The current clientele of the *Oekthodzokhungvokh* are Rukadkaz planetary and subsector-scale government & corporate officers, who appreciate the security, the reconfigurable communications suite, and the near-certainty that they will get to where they are going, discreetly, on time, and without incident. Large sums of money are paid upon successful completion of these lengthy & risky journeys.

Kukura Donald Khalumarash

Kukura Khalumarash appears as the typically grumpy, ornery, and antisocial asteroid prospector, just like thousands of others that can be found across the sector. He works for ‘GoldRush! Prospecting’, a mid-sized mining corporation. Goldrush! has fifteen corporate mining starships and two independent contractors (including Mr. Khalumarash) who own their own starships. Currently, GoldRush! is working the innermost belt of the Ababat/Lentuli system. After the ore sample (usually iron or nickel/iron) is cut out of the rock, it is picked up by a shuttle, and transported to an spaceborne refinery in orbit around Ababat proper (B7577BA-9) for testing. If the ore body is large enough, a full mining team will be sent to set up a long-term mining operation, complete with miner’s barracks and shafts drilled into the asteroid. Other possibilities include shattering it using explosives (up to nukes, under tight Imperial supervision), shaving the asteroid or just towing the whole thing to the refinery, if it is small enough.

Mr. Khalumarash has a secret: he has psionically talent, and was trained by a Psionic Institute, formally located in Julian space. The current Emperor has an intense hatred of psionics, an attitude that has filtered down to minor nobility and the Imperial services. This fear and loathing has held firm even with the Solomani Rim War raging (the Solomani share a similar contempt of psions.) Even ‘legitimate’ use of psionics – in support of Imperial military operations in the Old Expanses, say – is stifled, undercut, inhibited, watered-down, or flat-out forbidden by Imperial nobility, officers, and bureaucrats. Psions in Imperial service are strictly instructed to Let No One Know, with the single exception of their handler: not their family, not their church, not their noble liege, and not their commanding officer. Far too many have been forcibly lobotomized or immediately killed to risk even a rumour of psionic ability.

Living in this ferociously anti-psionic culture, Mr. Khalumarash has chosen a profession that minimises contact with other sophonts. His two purely mental talents – awareness & clairvoyance – don’t impact the minds of others: this allows him to carefully use these powers when completely alone. (He has trained to use his powers without any foci, which would be a massive giveaway, and easily seen by any hidden security camera.) However, his manipulatory abilities - teleportation and telekinesis ability can be seen and heard by others, and even be recorded electronically – something that could easily happen, and quickly lead to his violent death. These psionic powers are never used, except in life-or-death situations: if he does use them, he quickly kills all witnesses and destroy any recordings as well: if this proves impossible, he must immediately flee under a new identity, at least to a neighbouring subsector - and so eluding the local Imperial Ministry of Justice law officers.

Mr. Khalumarash has a set of goals. First, he wants to reconnect with a Psionic Institute. The one he attended was violently smashed with many casualties: while the attackers were only vaguely identified as ‘pirate raiders’, Khalumarash strongly suspects a covert Imperial operation. Secondly, he wants to obtain asylum in the distant Zhodani Consulate. While psions are ruthlessly hunted down within the Imperium, psionic talent in the Consulate leads to power, respect, and high praise from the authorities. Khalumarash sees the Consulate as the only true utopia in Charted Space, but is careful to hide his Zhodani sympathies and studies from all. In 993, approaching a Zhodani diplomatic mission for any reason outside of Imperial business is difficult even for a Noble, and is simply impossible for a commoner while within the Imperial borders. Another dream Khalumarash has is to pay off his ship: he’s halfway there, but that’s not good enough. So the lonely “Black Sky Digging”³¹ continues...

Attire: Mr. Khalumarash wears standard spacer overalls and workboots wherever he goes. Onboard his ship, he always wears his vacc suit while in N-space (except in the sonic shower): he reverts back to overalls while his ship, the *Salaggar*, is in J-space. Always carried an automatic pistol, a knife, a large patch of HullSeal, a small bag holding networking tools and handheld sensors, and the usual handcomp connected with the central ship computer.

Amusements: Mr. Khalumarash loves collecting and organizing things. This year, his focus is on small pieces of Bwap art, created to remind the possessor of the importance of Proper Order. Most (nonVilani) humans find this art mind-numbingly boring, but Khalumarash rather enjoys it.

Kukura Donald Khalumarash, Master of the *Salaggar*: UPP 7FB986 (Ps 12), Age 34: Mechanical-3, Pilot-2, Vacc Suit-2, Jack-of-all-Trades-1, Navigation-1, Handgun-1, Zero-G-1, Streetwise-1, Computer-1, Grav Vehicle-0, Ship Tactics-0, Anglic(-1), Awareness (Psi)-1, Teleportation (Psi)-1, Telekinesis (Psi)-1, Clairvyance (Pis)-1. Native language: Modern Vilani. Armed with an automatic pistol and a knife.

Ship: Salaggar
Type: Seeker
Tech Level: 11

Class: Type J
Architect: Andrew Moffatt-Vallance)
100 Tons, Book 2 ruleset

USP

SJ-11222R1-000000-10000-0 MCr 52.134

Bat Bear 1 Crew: 4

Bat 1 TL: 11

Cargo: 23 Fuel: 22 EP: 2 Agility: 1 Pulse Lasers

Craft: 1 x 4T Miners Buggy

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Architects Fee: MCr 0.521 Cost in Quantity: MCr 41.707

HULL: 100 tons standard, 1,400 cubic meters,

Needle/Wedge Configuration

CREW: Pilot, Gunner, 2 Other Crew

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 2G Maneuver, Power plant-2, 2 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/Ibis Computer

HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint

ARMAMENT: 1 Dual Mixed Turret with: 1 Pulse Laser (Factor-1).

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: 1 4-ton Miners Buggy

FUEL: 22 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 2 Staterooms, 23 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST: MCr 52.655 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.521),

MCr 41.707 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The *Salaggar* is a standard Seeker, straight from stock. This particular ship is very young for the Imperial Empty Quarter – only eleven years old. “It almost has that new-ship smell!” Besides wear and tear, there is nothing remarkable about this ship, no individual touches or improvements. There IS a handheld datacomp full of extremely illegal information on psionics, but it is kept in a place impossible to access without telekinesis and teleporting abilities – or, barring that, good hull-slicing equipment. The datacomp set to autowipe and physically combust without precise handling (Awareness and telekinesis skill is needed to avoid autowipe & meltdown.)

Footnotes

¹What *IS* the correct spelling – Hierate or Heirate? I have always preferred Hierate, but web sources differ. At least they are pronounced the same!

²Both Arab and Indian traders and merchants are famous for their excellent business and bargaining sense – but their trading culture is very personal, compared with Euro-American impersonal corporate culture (or even compared with the guanxi-networked, family-based business culture of the Chinese.) As Kipling said,

Now it is not good

For the Christian’s health

To hustle the Aryan brown

For the Christian riles

And the Aryan smiles

And he wearth the Christian down

And the end of the fight

Is tombstone white

With the name of the late deceased,

And the epitaph drear,

“A fool lies here

Who tried to hustle the East.”

³The dead man, Anua Ling, has been ceremonially mummified & dehydrated in hard vacuum and interned in a coffin built to his religion’s specifications. After the *Shii Miigdinka* returns to her home port, the coffin will be turned over to his family for proper entombment.

⁴Likhukam: located at Dagudashaag 2204, the system is Arnakhish's subsector capital. UWP in 993 Imperial: B200952-E. Its' wealth makes it one of the major trading nexuses of the sector – and, by implication, all of Chartered Space. Judging by eye, Likhukam/Dagudashaag is a bit over 80 parsecs spinward from Nulinad/Empty Quarter.

⁵The Rukadukaz Republic is a major member-state of the Julian Protectorate. Within the Empty Quarter, the Republic dominates Alpha Quadrant, including Tsahrroek, Kourae, Kakhasaek, and Tokitre subsectors. Earlier, this area of space was part of both the Ziru Sirka and the Rule of Man, but the Ikonaz Vargr conquered this former Imperial region, and now politically and demographically dominate the Republic. However, they follow much of the mores and traditions of the 'conquered Vilani' (who, incidentally, dominate the Republic's economy.) Relations between the local Vilani and Vargr are peaceful and mutually profitable.

The capital world of the Republic, the heart of the Ikonaz Vargr, and one of the most powerful worlds within the Protectorate (and debatably, in all of the Vargr Extents) is Ikon/Tsahrroek (C253AC7-E). Here, the triumph of Vilani/Vargr cultural syncretism is complete: the Vilani even prefer Vargr shugilii for an ever-expanding list of ceremonies and rituals: while, on the other side of the fence, more and more wealthy Ikonaz Vargr are making the pilgrimage to Vland, "The Transcendent Land of the Timecalmed Mind."

Squire Nagma is interested in extrapolating cultural lessons, which could be used to spread Vilani culture into the Aslan Hierate.⁶ She expects to spend one to two years traveling to, in, and leaving the Republic, and documenting her travels for sale to a Vilani audience. Learning of her plans, recruiters of the Great Imperium Party⁷ has approached Squire Nagma, but she has not committed herself until her Vilani clan heads have made their views known.

⁶In the opinion of several far-sighted Vilani cultural leaders, the sure success of the ongoing Rim War will lead to the permanent ascendancy of Vilani culture over all other human cultures. Naturally, it follows that True Culture must break out of the borders of the 11,000 stars, and – over the next few centuries – must reshape all other sentient cultures into a Vilani image.

⁷The Great Imperial Party is related to the One Imperium Movement and the Full Imperium Party. The One Imperium Movement wants to incorporate the Solomani and Julian Protectorates into the Third Imperium. The Full Imperium Party wants to bring all humaniti - especially the Zhodani – into the Imperial fold. (The Zhodani would be forced to abandon psionics.) The Great Imperial Party is substantially smaller than either of their brothers: its goal is to bring all sentient creatures under Imperial rule. According to the Party's visionary founder, the Marquis Messantinkia⁸, the absorption of all of Chartered Space would be 'a good start' and a Imperial Galaxy 'a significant milestone in our Imperial Destiny.'

Because of the scale of the goal, the Grand Imperial Party is resigned to working on timescales of centuries and millennia. It is extremely elitist, and prefers to work in an indirect manner. Most of their current assets are being used to strengthen general support for the current Solomani Rim War (referred to as a "the long-delayed Solomani Pacification Campaign" in internal literature.)

⁸Whenever the Founder is alive, long dead or 'otherwise'; his origins & homeworld; and his influence within with Imperial Nobility is left for the Referee to decide. Note that, unlike the pan-humaniti Full Imperium and One Imperium groups, the Marquis is focused on pan-sophont concerns and unity.

⁹Squire Nagma would pay good money for "recent" (post 990 Imperial) sound files from her favourite Vilani pundits from Dagudashaag.

¹⁰He and some fellow neophyte criminals hijacked a starship, but the pilot easily deceived them when 'plotting jump co-ordinates' (while actually sending out a distress signal.) The hijackers suspected foul play when the 'misjump' occurred, but the crew managed to sweet-talk them into allowing a 'harmless repair shuttle' to dock and fix the jump drive: the would-be pirates only needed to hold the bridge, while the 'frightened crew' – supervised by a 'dangerous armed hijacker' - provided the friendly face for the repair techs to work with.

As soon as his electronic profile was made, the supervising pirate was quietly garrotted while a virtual version was planted in the surveillance software. The TL-5/6 ignoramuses – including Harpreet Singh – were left 'in control' on the bridge until they heard a familiar voice giving the all clear. The minicams' (photoshopped) video was as expected, but they refused to open the door until they heard their buddy's (synthesised) voice at the other side. So they opened the iris door, and had an unexpected meeting with a team of armored and rather displeased Imperial Marines.

Ooops.

Fortunately for them, the hijackers were too surprised to resist as they were swiftly bashed/stunned, thrown down, disarmed, and shackled. ("All done in less than eight seconds flat – a new record!")

¹¹The internal titles, ranks, organization, and responsibilities of civilian Imperial governments are not standardized, and are left at the discretion of the ruling noble. How the noble handles his duties is his business, so long as he fulfills his obligations to the Emperor. This level of discretion leads to widely varying Ducal governments: massive bureaucracies, aristocratic networks, scientific technarchs, pure noble dictatorships,

Imperial/corporate partnerships, family fiefdoms, religious clergy, and friendship cliques have all dominated Ducal governments at one time or another.

The Imperial Empty Quarter's internal organization is actually rather mainstream. The sector government is superficially based on European feudalism, but substantially shaped by Arabic, Indian, and Bwap forms of government. Bureaucracy is quite important within the sector government, but family connections count for more. The main variation from the Imperial mainstream is the lack of megacorporate influence: as there is little of value within the Quarter, the Imperial megacorporations keep only a few token lobbyists circulating within the Noble Courts. (The Menderes Corporation – the dominant megacorporation within the Julian Protectorate – has spotted the lack of interest in the region, and is considering a bit of expansion into Imperial turf...)

¹²The nature of this cage – systemic/bureaucratic, subconscious conditioning, personality tweaking, an old-school chip in the head, nightly memory editing, or even psionic mind control – is left for the Referee to decide. *Matrix* flashbacks are optional.

¹³A copy of the outrageous opening sequence of the show *Paranoid Agent* can be found in a YouTube sequence of anime openings, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPZUtn0Fs-U>. *Paranoid Agent* is the 3rd shown here.

¹⁴Traditionally, Imperial Dukes are expected to avoid controversial names for their starships. (Lesser nobles have much greater leeway, while the Imperial Navy has very specific regulations on starship nomenclature.) While the *IY Puny Huu-man* is at the complete disposal of Baron Singh, it is still formally owned by the Sector Duke. Speculation on why the Duke has chosen to ignore tradition in this matter is a favourite pastime of his Court.

¹⁵The Erro Run is a race from Nulinad to Zukhisa, a two-parsec journey. Competitors are limited to Jump-1, Manoeuvre-1 engines: ship size no more than 200 displacement tons, tech level no more than TL 11. Moreover, the competitors must be career merchants, and the ships involved must be actual, working Free Traders: no 'purpose-built ship' allowed. The NHD Events involve a range of navigational and N-space piloting challenges: competition is in a range of classes, from non-jump capable ship's boats, to Free and Far Trades, fighters, up to 500-ton liners and 'funny ships' using Solar Sails, Ion drives, and even chemical and nuclear rockets. (The nuclear rocket class, always very controversial, is currently suspended until the end of the Rim War.)

There is a distinctively competitive spirit between the organizers and fans of the Erro Run and the Kalin-Vaento Classic, described in **Stellar Reaches #1**, "Special Delivery to Gudina" by Jason "Flynn" Kemp. The Classic, first run in 671, is a respected sporting event, backed by the major yards of Nulinad subsector, with professional pilots brought in from Antares, Core, and occasionally Ley and Fornast sectors: even Vargr pilots from the Protectorate have been known to participate. The Error Run is far more of a shoestring affair, less than thirty years old and rather more informal when it comes to rules and behaviour in the field.

¹⁶Counterintuitive, but true. Remember: most civilian starship pilots are paid for safety and reliability, not to push the performance envelope of their craft, and not to take unnecessary risks. In the Empty Quarter, if something breaks, it can take a long, long time before it gets fixed: and experienced pilots avoid putting stress on patch jobs (which are never as stable as the original equipment.) Moreover, Emptyhead pilots multitask out of necessity, i.e. learning how to handle weapons, or pull Engineering duty, or bone up on Liaison tasks. This increases the survivability of both pilot and ship, but weakens pure piloting skills. The one time when a pilot must regularly push the margins of his craft involves pirating (both as predator and as prey), and smuggling operations. Both groups tend to shy away from the public eye, for all sorts of reasons.

¹⁷See the listing for Oloe, in the article "Alpha Quadrant of the Empty Quarter Sector" by Jason "Flynn" Kemp, in **Stellar Reaches** Issue #4

¹⁸Other, more civilized Imperial regions have developed the science of lobotomies to a very high level. Most lobotomized individuals can leave normal, regular lives, with only a certain lack of emotion hinting at a psionic past. However, the stigma of being lobotomized is still very high, and accidents do happen, even at TL E surgery theatres. Lobotomizing drugs (TL 9+) are actually more dangerous than TL 6 surgery, are in common use by law enforcement throughout the Empty Quarter (being cheaper than a visit to the doctor's office.)

¹⁹Once upon a time, the gas giant was famous for its breathable layer of atmosphere: even Emperor Anguistus (reigned 326-365) publicly declared that colonizing such worlds would be the future of the Imperium, and the Ministry of Colonization has an entire department to handle gas giant terraforming & colonization. But in the end, the costs rose to astronomical heights while unexpected difficulties just kept on building on top of each other, with the entire project forgotten by the early 400s Imperial.

²⁰Atepbawasketh Ebpakas is a Bwap manufacturing company, closely affiliated with the Nassirka megacorporation. It is the market leader for the Bwap domestic appliance market, especially for humidifiers, baths & pools, misters, and purifiers. Products with the Atepbawasketh Ebpakas trademark can be found in Bwap communities throughout the Imperium and the Julian Protectorate, and sold thru a Nassirka distributor whenever possible. Atepbawasketh Ebpakas was also dominant in the 'Bwap flooded living space' and biobalance maintenance business, but market share here is rapidly being lost to a bevy of aggressive competitors. Actual manufacturing plants are found only in the Bwap-dominated Lentuli Cluster.

²¹Note: starships cannot be truly hidden in outer space (excluding black globes). Onboard heat MUST be dissipated somehow, and the best option – disposing all heat in a direction away from the target – is useless if there is 360° surveillance of local space. Fortunately, it costs money to set up such a network of eyes, which is only doable in system defense, or as a cloud of scouts escorting a fleet.

²²The Referee who wants to harass his PCs in a new way can get them caught up in an “Islamic Courts vs. Imperial Courts” conflict for influence and respect. Can the Imperial Courts drive out corporate corruption from their ranks? Can the Islamic Courts gain the respect of the infidel free traders, and rebuild local trading laws on the basis of the Shari’a? And what happens to the PCs, caught in the crossfire between their fellow traders and the Imperial Government?

Of course, the Referee may instead decide that the Imperial Courts are Bwap-run (and the Bwap are, according to Traveller canon, corruption-free), or that the Sheikh is really agitating for an Islamic Empty Quarter. (Actually, what he really wants is an Islamic Imperium, but that’s just a dream right now, and not the focus of his actions – defending the Ummah (a.k.a. “the local Muslim community”) is the point. But this can change, if the Referee so desires.)

If the Referee wants corrupt courts (and thus justify the grievances of the Sheikh), then resolving these differences can take a campaign in itself – trading, military, or diplomatic/political, as the Referee and his Players desire. Expect lots of interaction – and perhaps hard feelings, even violent action – between the players and other Muslim traders.

²³Marhaban is the Classical Arabic word for “Hello”. Interestingly, they have completely accepted the Solomani term for their world when speaking to humans, just as they accepted the old Vilani name - Lentuli - in the days of the Ziru Sirka. The actual Bwap name for their homeworld – Taswabwapeaspa – is only used among themselves, due to its’ semi-sacred status. Comparing the two Marhaban’s is rather entertaining: the nearly airless, highly passionate, deeply religious, highly Solomani world of Marhaban/Mirmida (run by an Impersonal Bureaucracy) makes quite a contrast with the very humid, highly bureaucratic, deeply religious, highly Bwap world of Marhaban/Lentuli (led by a Charismatic Dictator).

²⁴The Referee is referred to a brief passage in “When Islam Breaks Down” by Theodore Dalrymple:

“Afghanistan was different, quite clearly a pre-modern society. The vast, barren landscapes in the crystalline air were impossibly romantic, and the people (that is to say the men, for women were not much in evidence) had a wild dignity and nobility. Their mien was aristocratic. Even their hospitality was fierce. They carried more weapons in daily life than the average British commando in wartime. You knew that they would defend you to the death, if necessary—or cut your throat like a chicken’s, if necessary. Honour among them was all.

On the whole I was favourably impressed. I thought that they were freer than we. I thought nothing of such matters as the clash of civilizations, and experienced no desire, and felt no duty, to redeem them from their way of life in the name of any of my own civilization’s ideals. Impressed by the aesthetics of Afghanistan and unaware of any fundamental opposition or tension between the modern and the pre-modern, I saw no reason why the West and Afghanistan should not rub along pretty well together, each in its own little world, provided only that each respected the other.”

This passage is a fairly good model of Imperial attitudes in the 990s – except when it comes to secessionism (Solomani or otherwise), and Psionics.

²⁵His own homeworld, while both the wealthiest and most populous world in the subsector, is rapidly being overtaken by Garmagan/Mirmida (in 993: A463887-E) – a nearby system which is benefiting spectacularly by massive Imperial orders for warships, support craft, and light, high-tech weapons. (It was only reclassified as a TL 14 last year!) However, the bureaucratic, comfortable, and insular leadership has failed to grab onto those lucrative Imperial contracts, and by Strephon’s time Garmagan – then a TL F world - would be the clear cultural leader within Mirmida subsector. Resentment against Garmagans has morphed into resentment against all high-stellar cultures.

²⁶The TL D ‘cloth dagger’ is undetectable using TL B- equipment, but could still be found with a careful, low-tech hand search by someone who knows precisely what he’s looking for. Once gripped, the dagger instantly solidifies and hardens for twenty minutes before returning to its cloth-like state. This particular blade is poorly balanced when used, but has a razor-sharp edge. (Whenever this Stellar-tech assassin’s weapon is able to pierce Combat Armor is left for the Referee to decide. Note that the believed ability of the blade can differ from actual performance.)

The openly worn dagger is a family heirloom and a traditional symbol of manhood. If you ignore the blade replacements, the new handles, and the various modifications, jewelry, gold, and mottos added on and pried off, it’s PERCISELY the same blade that his great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather used during the Imperial Civil War, around 350 years ago.

²⁷Kaggushus (Kerr/Massilia: in 993 Imperial, A442AA7-F) is one of the most crucial worlds in Imperial society. Located close to the geographic centre of the Ziru Sirka, it was given the additional Terran name of Hub, and served as the capital of the Second Imperium. Today, it’s located four parsecs from the “Imperial Scout

homeworld” of Reference/Core (where the ongoing Second Survey is organized and directed), and 33 parsecs from Capital herself. Kaggushus is two parsecs from Massilia’s Depot, which is quite busy thanks to the ongoing Solomani Rim War. In the Official Timeline, Kaggushus will become the centre of the post-Virus Hubworlds as well, near the edge of the Black Sphere. (“Ships can go in, but they can’t get out!”)

²⁸Sharurshid holds a major position in the luxury trade of Kaggushus, in both the domestic & offworld markets: they have good reasons to cultivate and befriend the influential Baron.

²⁹See Jeff M. Hooper’s “Empty Quarter Echo” of Issue #5, **Stellar Reaches** Issue #5 for a contrasting example.

³⁰For more info on the Deep Space Stations, please see Jason “Flynn” Kemp’s article “Deep Space Stations” in **Stellar Reaches** #2.

³¹“Black Sky Digging” is a centuries-old mining song, originating from Daibei around the fifth Imperial century.

Images

“Baron Harpreet Singh” comes from an imaginative interpretation of a word by Kirsu Salonen (kison), called “Good Intentions”: <http://kison.cgsociety.org/gallery/408403/>

The Sunset Aura colony is based on this image “Sunrise Docking at Helios Station” by Fabio Comin (FComin): <http://fcomin.cgsociety.org/gallery/389805/>

The Cloud Sails racing event is inspired by “Explorers” by krpolak: http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1229448&member

The Grand Tour liner concept is inspired by “Crusing” by Terreinconnue http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=823257



Using Your Model 2 Bis, Revisited

By Joshua Bell

“Traveller has always been an easy game to mate to a computer.”

So begins Marc W. Miller’s first entry in a short-lived column in *The Journal of the Travellers’ Aid Society* and *Challenge* magazines, issues 24, 25 and 26.

A Bit of History

Traveller emerged on the scene in 1977 at the same time as the personal computer, and this revolutionary new tool was instrumental in the creation of the *Traveller* universe. Software was used to generate the sector data for *Atlas of the Imperium* and other supplements such as *1001 Characters* and *Veterans*. GDW even dabbled in selling play aids such as *Beastuary* and *WordGen*. As noted on the last page of *Book 7*: “As the Merchant Prince trade system was created and tested, extensive use of a computer simulation helped the designer analyze and understand various aspects of the system” and this simulation was released in an interactive form as *Trader*. It is clear that without personal computers, the evolution of *Traveller* would have been quite different.

Typical of the personal computers at the time was the Apple II, and this was the platform used by Miller. While primitive by today’s standards, the Apple II was programmable out-of-the box in a straightforward way using a built-in programming language known as Applesoft BASIC. This meant that programs could be listed in magazines and typed in by hobbyists, who could learn as they typed and tinker with the results. In contrast, software development today often involves a whole series of complex and often expensive tools. Asking “how do I get started in programming?” often leads to questions such as “what language – C++ or Java?” or “what platform – Windows or Macintosh?”

Is there a simpler way that hearkens back to the “good old days?”

A Different Approach

Every contemporary personal computer system comes with a Web browser, which provides a nearly uniform environment for content that adheres to certain Internet standards, such as HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Writing programs which run within a Web browser is nearly as simple and straightforward as in the days of the Apple II, and in many ways far more convenient.

- Start a simple text editor
 - Windows: Start > All Programs > Accessories > Notepad
 - Macintosh: Applications > TextEdit, then select Format > Make Plain Text
- Type in the code from Listing 1
- Save the file as “roll.html”
- Double-click the file to open it in your default Web browser

NOTE: On Windows with Internet Explorer, you may see an alert that the page has been blocked from running scripts. This is an extra degree of safety designed to prevent random pages you save from the Internet from being run as full applications from your hard drive and doing bad things. Since you know you created the page, you can select Allow Blocked Content to continue.

Listing 1:

```
<html>
  <head>
    <title>Roll 1D</title>
    <script type="text/javascript">
function myprogram()
{
    var output = document.getElementById("output_element");

    var result = Math.floor( Math.random() * 6 ) + 1;
```

```

        output.innerHTML += "Die Roll: " + result;
    }
window.onload = myprogram;
</script>
</head>
<body>
    <div id="output_element">
    </div>
</body>
</html>

```

This is an empty HTML document that provides a blank slate for the script to write upon. The script itself can be broken down into two pieces – a *function*, which is a set of instructions, and some *glue* which says “when the browser is done loading the page, run my function.” This function, called “myprogram”, also has two parts. The first finds the blank slate, and the second adds something to it. This program provides a very basic *Traveller* utility – every time you load the page, it will compute a new 1D roll result.

This simple example has captured many of the aspects that made writing programs for the Apple II so easy: it uses the tools already found on your computer to create and run the program; the program listing is easily readable and modifiable; the program is easily saved and can be re-used again and again. A big advantage of computers today is that the program (in the form of an HTML file) can be easily shared; by publishing the file to the Web, anyone can access it at any time, and the program can run on any computer with a Web browser.

Traveller Utility – Temperature Calculation Revisited

To really kick off this series, let’s revisit the very first example by Marc W. Miller from *JTAS* #24 – a utility to compute the average local temperature of a world. Unlike the previous example, this one requires input from the user:

Listing 2:

```

<html>
  <head>
    <title>Computing Local Temperature for Traveller Worlds</title>
    <script type="text/javascript">
function compute()
{
    var k = 374.025;

    var distance      = parseFloat( document.getElementById( "distance"
).value, 10 );
    var albedo        = parseFloat( document.getElementById( "albedo"
).value, 10 );
    var luminosity    = parseFloat( document.getElementById(
"luminosity"        ).value, 10 );
    var greenhouseEffect = parseFloat( document.getElementById(
"greenhouseEffect" ).value, 10 );

    var g = greenhouseEffect + 1;
    var t = k * ( 1 - albedo ) * ( Math.sqrt( Math.sqrt( luminosity ) ) /
Math.sqrt( distance ) );

    var output = document.getElementById( "output" );
    output.innerHTML = "";
    output.innerHTML += "Local Temperature = " + t          + " K" +
"<br/>";
    output.innerHTML += "Local Temperature = " + (t-273)    + " C" +
"<br/>";

```

```

        output.innerHTML += "Local Temperature = " + (t*g)          + " K with
greenhouse effect" + "<br/>";
        output.innerHTML += "Local Temperature = " + ((t*g)-273) + " C with
greenhouse effect" + "<br/>";
    }

    </script>
</head>
<body>
    <form action="" onsubmit="compute(); return false;">
        <div>Distance (in AU) <input id="distance" /></div>
        <div>Albedo (Earth=0.3) <input id="albedo" /></div>
        <div>Luminosity (Sol=1) <input id="luminosity" /></div>
        <div>Greenhouse Effect (Earth=0.1) <input
id="greenhouseEffect" /></div>
        <div><input type="submit" value="Compute"></div>
    </form>
    <div id="output">
    </div>
</body>
</html>

```

The next article in this series will revisit the basic *Traveller Sector Generator* from **Challenge #25**.

- Joshua Bell got started programming on his school's Apple II back in 1981, and he remembers hours spent dutifully typing in program listings magazines. After receiving a degree in Computer Science, he spent nearly a decade as a software developer and manager at Microsoft Corporation. He is currently working at Linden Lab helping to create the online virtual world called Second Life. In his spare time, he created and maintains TravellerMap.com, an online resource for exploring the Traveller universe.

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