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THE GRAVITY STAR

BY PHILIP REED (RONIN ARTS)

The Gravity Star is a customized PL 7 escort designed to be used as a base of operations for a party of interstellar adventurers. This PDF details the starship, offers suggestions for getting your players onboard, and provides some suggestions for adventure once they're traveling the stars.

If you're in need of more starships, please consider Ronin Arts' *Future: Starships* line available at www.rpgnow.com. Each PDF in the series presents a starship, new rules, adventure hooks, and information specific to the ship design. You can also find starship information in RPGObject's October *Modern Dispatch* collection and their *Blood and Space* line.

THE GRAVITY STAR (PL 7) CUSTOMIZED ESCORT

This customized escort features the *Marauder*-class template (see box) and additional modifications (presented in game terms through quirks, see below).

Type: Ultralight

Subtype: Escort

Defense: 7

Flat-footed Defense: 5

Autopilot Defense: 5

Hardness: 40

Hit Dice: 23d20 (460 hp)

Initiative Modifier: +5

Pilot's Class Bonus: +3

Pilot's Dex Modifier: +2

Gunner's Attack Bonus: +2

Size: Colossal (-8 size)

Tactical Speed: 4,000 ft. (8 sq.)

Length: 180 feet

Weight: 900 tons

Targeting System Bonus: +5

Crew: 8 (trained +4)

Passenger Capacity: 24

Cargo Capacity: 30 tons

Grapple Modifier: +16

Base Purchase DC: 52

Restriction: Restricted (+2)

Attack: 2 fire-linked heavy neutron guns -3 ranged (15d8) and 2 fire-linked rail cannons -8 ranged (9d12) and CHE missile -8 ranged (6d12/19-20)

Attack of Opportunity: Point-defense system +3 ranged (1d12×10)

STANDARD PL 6 DESIGN SPECS:

Engines: Induction engine, thrusters

Armor: Neutronite

Defense Systems: Damage control system (1d10), magnetic field, point-defense system, particle field, radiation shielding, repair drones, sensor jammer

Sensors: Class V sensor array, improved targeting system

Communications: Drivesat comm. Array, mass transceiver.

Weapons: 2 fire-linked heavy neutron guns (range incr. 6,000 ft.), 2 fire-linked rail cannons (range incr. 3,000 ft.), 1 CHE missile launcher (8 missiles)

Grappling Systems: Grapplers

Quirks: Temperamental engine core, unexpected power fluctuations (see below).

STARSHIP QUIRKS

A fun concept used in several sci-fi movies and series is the starship quirk. The starship quirk is an unusual flaw or defect that plagues the ship and gives it personality and a unique identity. Starship quirks are never intentionally planned and are typically encountered on heavily modified, older generation ships.

The Gravity Star has the following quirks:

TEMPERAMENTAL ENGINE CORE

The Gravity Star's engines, having been cobbled together from stolen and cast-off military hardware, sometimes give out – especially when pushed to their operational limits. The problem is untraceable and permanent – the only way to repair the problem is to completely replace the engines with an off-the-shelf system.

Disadvantage: Once per turn, if the ship is moving at its maximum tactical speed, roll 1d20. If the result is equal to or less than the number of squares moved that round + the number of rounds the ship has maintained its maximum tactical speed, the engines fail and the ship is immobilized. Repairing the engines requires a DC 25 Repair check and takes 1d4+1 minutes. Reduce the Repair DC by 5 for each failed attempt at restarting the ship's engines.

Advantage: Increase the ship's tactical speed by 1,000 ft. (2 squares).

UNEXPECTED POWER FLUCTUATIONS

Plugging the upgraded sensor and defense systems into the *Gravity Star* was not a task performed in a dry dock or engineer's repair facility. Instead, the ship was upgraded a component at a time over the years, much of the work performed in questionable locales and without the proper tools. This, coupled with the lax maintenance schedule and a number of various owners' tendency to use the cheapest components

MARAUDER-CLASS TEMPLATE (PL 7)

The *Marauder*-class template can be applied to any PL 6 ultralight starship. The starship's design specs should be adjusted as follows.

Hit Dice: Increase by +3d20.

Engine Upgrade: Induction engine (tactical speed +1,000 ft.)

Armor Upgrade: Neutronite (hardness 40).

Defense System Upgrade: Repair Drones.

Sensor System Upgrade: Class V sensor array, improved targeting system.

Communications Upgrade: Drivesat comm. Array, mass transceiver.

available, has led the ship to develop unusual power problems.

Disadvantage: At the beginning of each trip, and again at the beginning of each combat encounter, roll 1d20. On a roll of 8 or less the ship exhibits power failures for this trip (or combat, as appropriate) and all attack and defense rolls suffer a -1d4 penalty (roll the penalty once for each crew member – the power fluctuations are random across the ship). Additionally, a random communications or sensor system is inoperative for this trip (or combat). A successful DC 30 Repair check reduces this penalty to -1 for this trip (or combat). The Repair check must be made each time that the d20 roll indicates the ship is experiencing power fluctuations.

Additionally, doors on the ship are almost always stuck (90% chance) and require four rounds to open.

Benefit: Increase the ship's Initiative Modifier by +1 and the ship may have one more sensor, defense, or communications system than normally allowed.

STARSHIP KEY

1. Cockpit: Designed for three crewmembers – a pilot, communications officer, and navigator – the cockpit is quite large for a ship of this size. The navigation and communication stations include backup controls from which the ship may be piloted (-2 penalty to Pilot checks) in an emergency.

2. Crew Quarters: A downside to being on a ship this size of the *Gravity Star* is that, except for the pilot, this is the only place to sleep. Three triple bunks mean tight quarters and this means that everyone from the technician trainee to the communications officer have to live in the same area, a fact resented by almost everyone. Each crewmember that sleeps in this room has his own personal storage locker.

3. Bathroom: Fully equipped and very necessary.

4. Storage and Backup Systems: This area of the ship is the primary cargo hold and is filled with a variety of storage lockers. Additionally, a computer terminal in this section can be used to perform every task of running the ship – with the exception of piloting.

5. Airlock: This is the *Gravity Star's* entrance and airlock. The lockers contain a number of survival suits and other gear potentially necessary for adventuring.

6. Pilot's Quarters: When the *Gravity Star* was a military escort, this area was the pilot's personal quarters. Today it serves the same purpose though some owners of the ship have used it as guest accommodations or extra cargo space – all depending on the ship's function at the time (for a decade or so the ship was used as a private taxi between installations in the rim worlds). The room includes its own, private bathroom.

7. Ship's Library: The computer terminal in this area is stocked with data on every subject

STARSHIPS AND PURCHASE DCS

According to the rules as presented, starships are extremely expensive pieces of equipment. This is appropriate for many types of games but, when it comes to a space opera setting where several people own and operate starships, the printed purchase DCS are far too high.

To make starships more prolific in a campaign setting, especially one in which it's preferable for the player characters to own their own starships, reduce the printed purchase DCS of all non-military starships by 15. This change brings starship purchase DCS to a range closer to that of civilian land vehicles in a *Modern* campaign.

This is an optional rule and one that must be approved by the GM.

imaginable. Additionally, records of the ship's history, maintenance, schematics, and whatever information previous owners felt important have been added to the ship's library. This is an unusual feature on a ship of this size and was added shortly after the Gravity Star was decommissioned from military service. This area, like many others on the ship, is sometimes used as storage space in an emergency.

8. Airlock Controls: The computer system in this area, in addition to being connected to the ship's library, controls all three of the airlocks – the only ways in or out of the ship.

9. Airlock: This smaller airlock is identical to area 5, with the exception that the lockers in this area do not hold any survival suits.

10. Engineering: The ship's unusual engine design – built of scraps and stolen components – makes it extremely temperamental (see *Quirks*, above) and in constant need of repair. If possible, the current owners of the *Gravity Star* prefer to keep two engineers in this section during flights so that they are immediately available to attempt repairs if something goes wrong. The door that originally separated this area from the rest of the ship was removed to make it easier to get into the section during an emergency.

ACQUIRING STARSHIPS

In addition to the methods covered in the basic SRD – borrow, rent, steal – here are some ideas for getting your group of adventurers into a starship. After all, most sci-fi campaigns in which the player characters do not own a starship will prove difficult and frustrating – it's not a lot of fun to take a passenger ship and it's difficult to get involved in starship combat without owning your own starship.

INHERITING A STARSHIP

The simplest method for placing low-level PCs into a starship is to have one of the player characters inherit a ship. This can be handled by counting the starship in place of a feat, permanently spending 5 action points, or just giving one PC the starship. Any inherited starship should be partially damaged (the ship has 1d4+1x10 percent of its maximum hit points) and one PL lower than the campaign level. An inherited starship is very likely to have quirks (see above).

FINDING A STARSHIP

In some campaigns in which war plays a major role, finding a heavily damaged starship and repairing it to operational status is an excellent option. Allowing the PCs the opportunity to find – and rebuild – a starship

should be the focal point of an adventure and found starships should always be abandoned derelicts. A series of adventures can be designed around rebuilding the derelict starship as the player characters travel the galaxy in search of the proper parts. And new starship components can make an excellent payment for a group in the middle of retrofitting an older design (transport this load of illicit materials and we'll give you a new particle beam as payment for the job).

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Once a small group of interstellar heroes have access to their own starship, a variety of adventure possibilities open up. Below are just a few adventure ideas.

THE LOST IDOL

The party hears rumors of a long-dead alien civilization and manage to acquire the coordinates of the planet on which the civilization is rumored to have existed. They journey to this location where they discover the ruins of an ancient city. A rival group is there and the two forces suddenly become involved in a race to locate and recover an ancient alien artifacts of immense value to collectors.

MEDICINE DELIVERY

An outbreak of a rare and dangerous disease on a distant asteroid colony can only be halted by a special medicine from the core worlds. The group is hired to deliver the medicine to the colony – or they are doing it for personal reasons – when they encounter a band of pirates that is charging a toll to those wishing to land on the colony. The pirates, if the GM is feeling particularly nasty, are responsible for the sickness and are using it to steal money and supplies from the colonists.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip Reed has been working professionally in the roleplaying game industry since 1995. In that time he has worked for such companies as Atlas Games, Paradigm Concepts, Steve Jackson Games, and Dork Storm Press. Today Philip spends his days at home running Ronin Arts, writing and designing new games, and trying to force himself to take a break so that his wrist will heal. To learn more about Philip Reed – and Ronin Arts – please visit www.roninarts.com.

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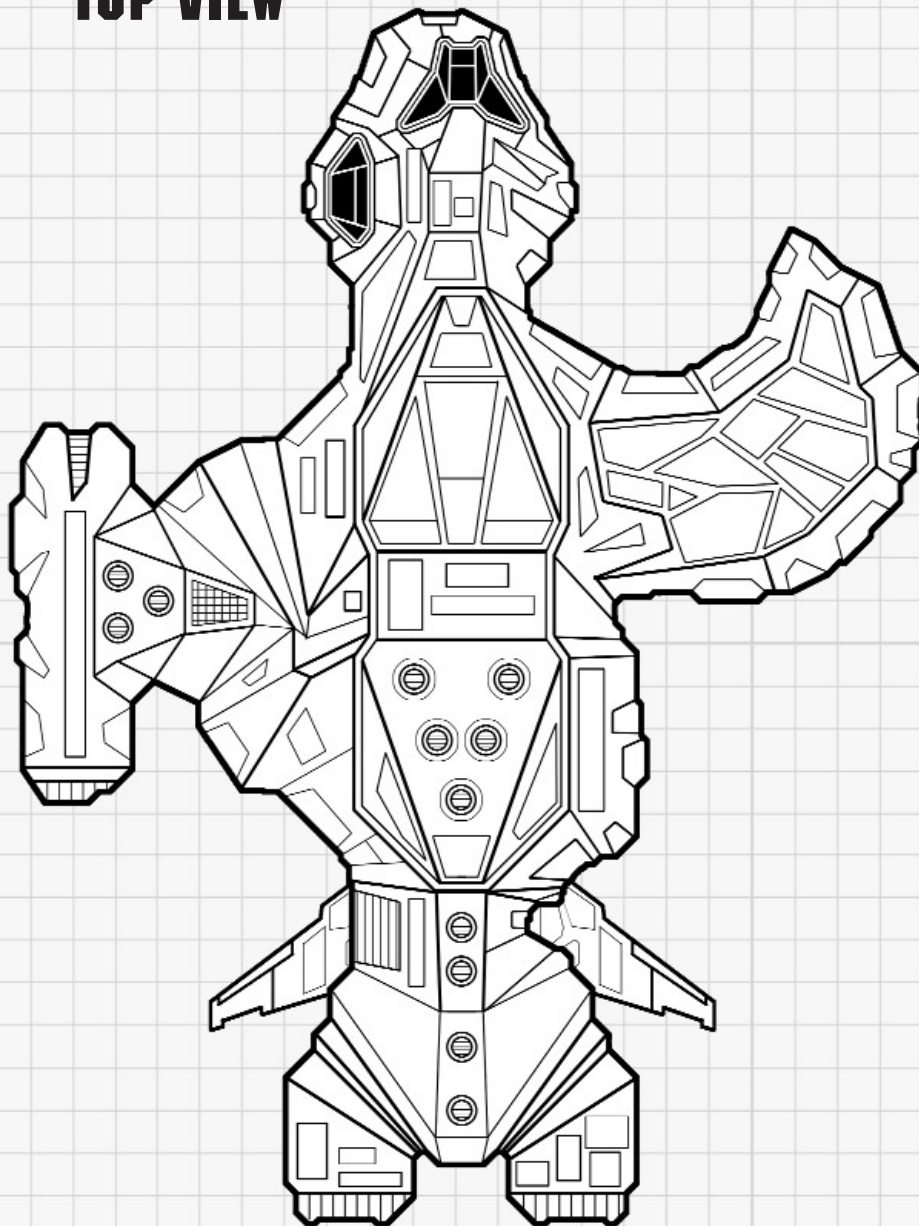
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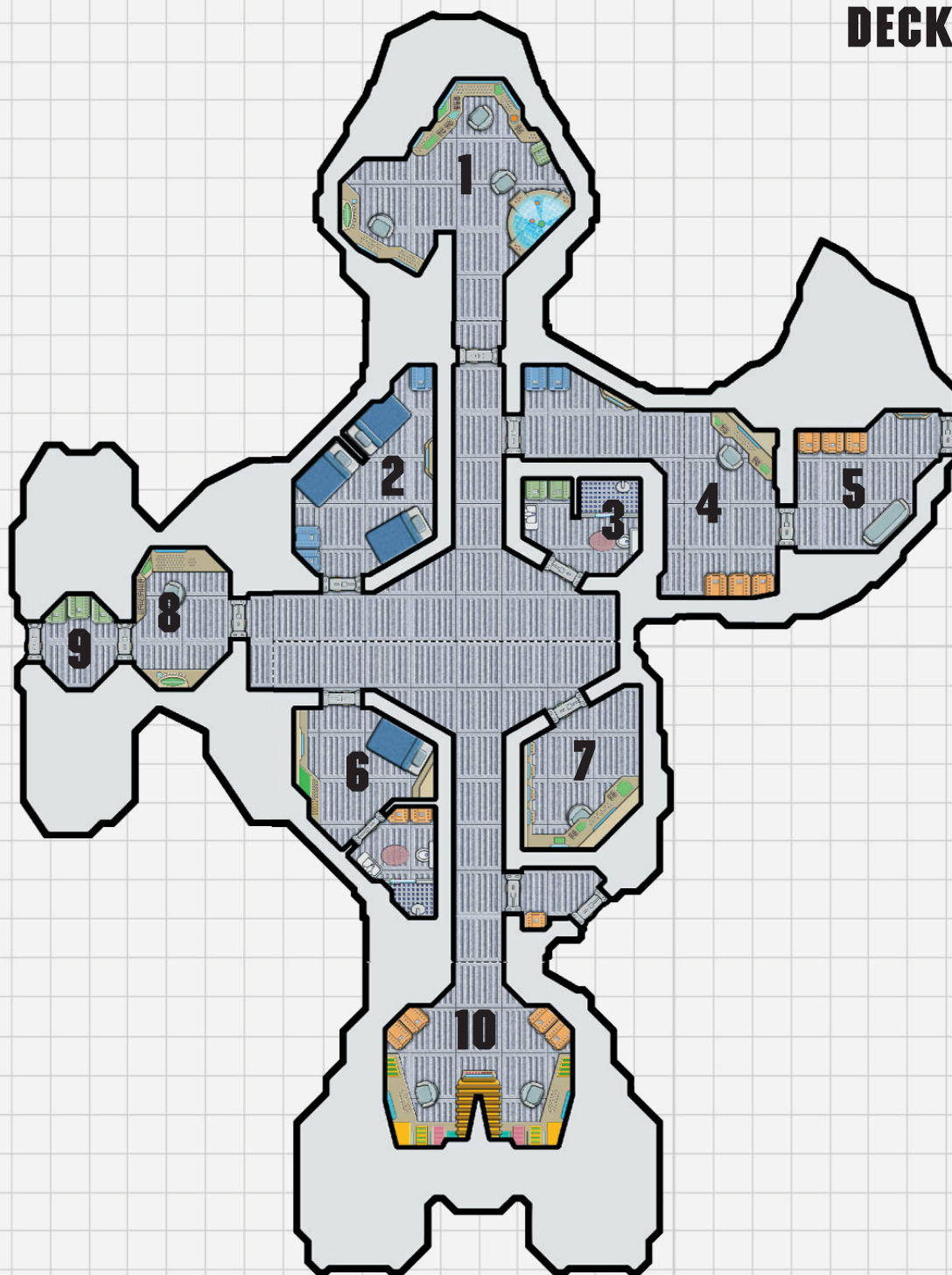


SILHOUETTE VIEW – FRONT



THE GRAVITY STAR
MODIFIED ESCORT

DECK PLAN



- 1. Cockpit
- 2. Crew Quarters
- 3. Bathroom
- 4. Storage and Backup Systems
- 5. Airlock

- 6. Pilot's Quarters
- 7. Ship's Library
- 8. Airlock Controls
- 9. Airlock
- 10. Engineering

THE GRAVITY STAR

MODIFIED ESCORT