TRAVELLER

Compendium 2

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Classic Traveller
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SPECIAL THANKS
To all the contributors to and readers of Signs & Portents and the Living Traveller Campaign.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second *Traveller Compendium*!

Inside you will find articles which have graced the pages of *Signs and Portents* over the last twelve months plus additional scenarios gathered from the *Mongoose Living Traveller* campaign.

The book begins with nine scenarios from both sources, a brief description of them can be found on the next page.

Following on from the scenarios are articles providing plenty of scenario hooks, ranging from a patron to a series of Non-Player Characters who can fit into almost any *Traveller* campaign.

The remainder of the book contains a real variety in the subject matter of the articles. From details on running a merchant ship to dealing with missing players, new equipment and finally a new career in the xenologist there should be something for everyone to enjoy.

ADVENTURES

This section includes adventures appearing in *Signs & Portents* between 2010–11 as well as adventures that were part of the *Traveller Living Campaign*. They are:

ANNIC NOVA

Originally appearing in *Signs & Portents 93* this adventure first appeared for *Classic Traveller* and has been updated so that it fits more smoothly into the current rules.

A myserious ship has attracted the atttention of the authorities and the Player Characters. What dangers await any who investigate this apparently abandoned alien vessel?

OTHERWORLD BLUES

Originally appearing in *Signs and Portents 91*.

The Player Characters are hired to playtest the latest in multiplayer gaming technology. Nothing could possibly go wrong, after all, it is just a game...

OLD ACQUAINTANCES

Originally appearing in *Signs and Portents 92*. A Sequel to Otherworld Blues.

The army on an advanced planet are looking to thoroughly test their latest training software. Guess who gets roped in to show what it can do?

THE THING IN THE PIT

Originally appeared in *Signs and Portents 89* this was inspired by the superb sci-fi television show Quatermass and the Pit.

While the guests of a low technology planet the Player Characters are asked for their help and experience when an advanced artefact is discovered buried beneath the earth. The problem is it appears to have been buried for longer than there has been any kind of civilisation on the planet...

DEATH STATION

First appearing in *Signs and Portents 87*, Death Station, like Annic Nova, is an updated conversion of a scenario for *Classic Traveller*.

Contact has been lost with an orbital research facility. the Player Characters are hired to try and find out what has gone wrong or if it is just a communications issue...

OF DICE SPICE AND DEWCLAWS

The first of the *Living Traveller* adventures included in this book.

An Aslan trading ship has lost an extremely valuable cargo of dust-spice. An assortment of passing travellers are their best hope of recovering the shipment before it becomes a clan-level embarrassment.

SPINWARD FENDER BENDER

The second of our *Living Traveller* Scenarios.

A group of travellers are escorting a valuable cargo from Mertactor (Spinward Marches 1537) to Collace (Spinward Marches 1237) when a dangerous collision between their starship and another threatens not just the cargo, but the lives of everyone on board.

A FESTIVE OCCASION

Another of our *Living Traveller* adventures.

A group of arriving passengers help foil a terrorist attack on a space station orbiting Mora (Spinward Marches 3124) and become involved in further drama among the Imperial nobility.

RESCUE ON RUIE

The fourth, and final, adventure from the Mongoose *Living Traveller* campaign. Rescue on Ruie was originally published for *Classic Traveller* in 1979 and has been expanded upon and updated here.

Sergei hault-Oberlindes, son of Baron Marc hault-Oberlindes of Feri (Spinward Marches 2005), trade magnate and owner of Oberlindes Lines, has been imprisoned by an anti-Imperial nation on Ruie (Spinward Marches 1809). Unable to make any progress through official channels, the Baron turns to unofficial means, and the characters are contracted to rescue Sergei.

ANNIC NOVA

BY MARC MILLER AND IAN STEAD

TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY ADVISORY REPORT 02–183–1105

Reports received from the Regina subsector in the Spinward Marches tell of an unidentified starship of markedly unorthodox design which has been making use of unauthorized transmission frequencies. Originally sighted in 1103, the ship immediately came to Imperial attention by standing off Heya (0802–B687745–5) and transmitting on a restricted military band. Interceptors scrambled immediately, but the ship jumped outsystem while the fighters were at extreme range.

Later reports have placed the ship at Kinorb (0602–A663659–8) where it stood off for nearly five weeks without any contact, then jumped. The lack of local bases or traffic made interception impossible.

Last known contact took place off Dentus (0601–C979500–A), where the local scout base immediately set five Type S scouts on contact duty. Although the unknown immediately jumped, some basic data was recovered from scanners. Reports of additional sightings should be forwarded to the local Travellers' Aid Society for central consolidation.

SCANNER DATA

Mass Displacement: 500 – 800 tons
Jump: at least 2
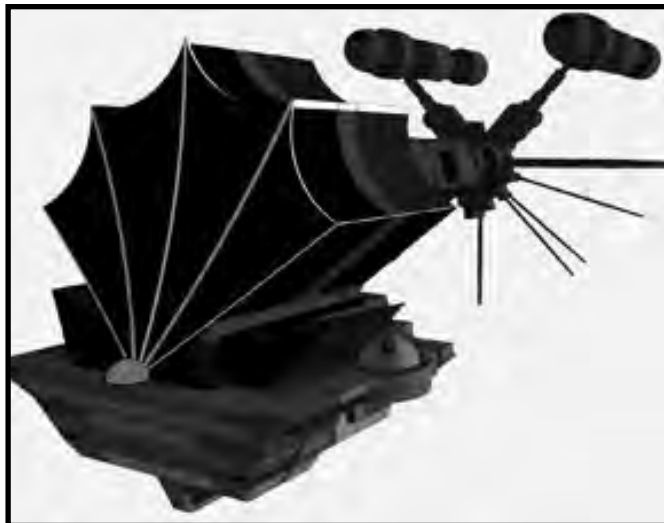Manoeuvre: 2G(?)
Armament: unknown

ABOARD THE STARSHIP

This derelict starship stands as an obvious object for investigation. Once it is boarded, checked out and fully understood, it promises to be a useful starship for nearly any type of adventurer. The ship appears to be in good condition, and can probably be made functional in a reasonably short period of time.

ENTRY POINTS

The computer supervised scan of the starship indicates several obvious (and not so obvious) entry points. After some deliberation, the group of adventurers may select one and enter the ship.

A. The keel-like structure projecting from the bottom of the ship is the furthest extension of the central communications and access shaft which connects the four lowermost decks. At its very lowest point, an operational iris valve is located; it opens to reveal a small interior chamber which is obviously an air lock. Safety interconnects prevent the inner iris valve from operating unless the outer valve is closed.

B. At the top centre front of the ship is a transparent astrogation dome with a bearing race along the front half of its circumference. Mounted on the race is an electro-mechanical sextant connected to the computer; whenever the ship's power is on, this sextant is in constant motion. Smashing this dome will allow access to the interior, to a vertical shaft leading down through the cargo deck (but not opening onto it) and to the quarters deck. The quarters deck will be rendered airless by this action.

C. At the very rear of the lower decks is an arched indentation with a single sliding panel. Forcing the panel open will allow access to the cargo bay, although decompressing it in the process.

D. The transparent observation dome at the extreme rear of the ship covers a cantilever platform holding four fixed chairs and a small control panel mounted on a vertical column. The dome is light-sensitive, and turns opaque when subjected to any strong light (such as a spotlight), slowly returning to transparency after the light is turned off. The dome may be broken or shattered, allowing entrance at the cost of decompressing the entire engineering deck.

E. Outboard on the port pod is a large access door. It appears to be operable, but will render the interior of the pod airless.
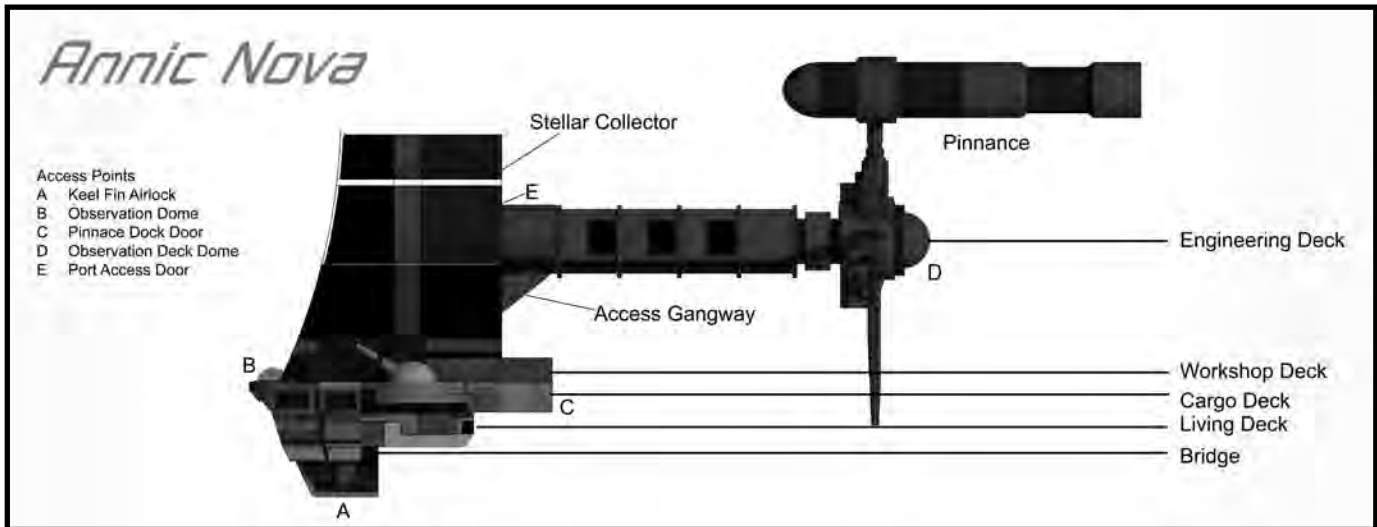
Simplistic solutions to the entry problem (such as cutting through the hull, or blasting the ship with laser fire) should be discouraged, either by the referee or through the ship's computer.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

As the starship is reconnoitred from afar, instruments indicate no transmissions from the ship. As the adventurers move closer, sensors will provide an image of the ship but it is showing no lights, with the exception of low level red showing through the forward lower bank of windows. There is no sign of life or activity.

Still closer, painted markings on the exterior of the starship become visible. A string of characters is placed on each of the pods to the rear, and on the top of the shaft leading aft to the hub. The characters are not anglic, being geometric in form, but an approximation of them would read (roughly) ANNIC NOVA. The port pod is marked ANNIC NOVA I, and the starboard pod is marked ANNIC NOVA V.

The markings are actually numerals, although this should not be apparent to the adventurers. The Numeral Chart shows the symbol painted on the ship (column 1), the actual numeral represented (column 2) and an approximation of a similar anglic letter (column 3). Note that in addition to a zero, there is a distinct symbol for the double zero. Any player who determines, in the course of play, that they are indeed numerals (including the double zero symbol), has demonstrated that he or she has a comprehension of the ship to at least a limited extent, and is allowed a DM of +1 thereafter when attempting to understand other aspects of the ship.

Symbol	Numeral	Anglic Approximation
□	0	0
I	1	I
∨	2	V
⌐	3	7
∧	4	A
⌐	5	J
⊔	6	U
L	7	L
Γ	8	F
⊏	9	C
⊓	00	N

INTERIOR FEATURES

The starship interior is initially dark, and intruders will be in vacc suits. The following information should be used by the referee as he or she administers the interior.

Power: The ship is at low power, sufficient only for standby lighting on the bridge, and for emergency operation of the iris valves within. All locations are at zero-G. The starship is dark and individuals will find their actions doubly clumsy from zero-G and from their encumbering vacc suits.

A prominent power-on switch is situated on the bridge; and another is on the cantilever platform at the rear which will turn power on (but cannot turn power off). Power-on puts all interior lights on and activates the grav plates.
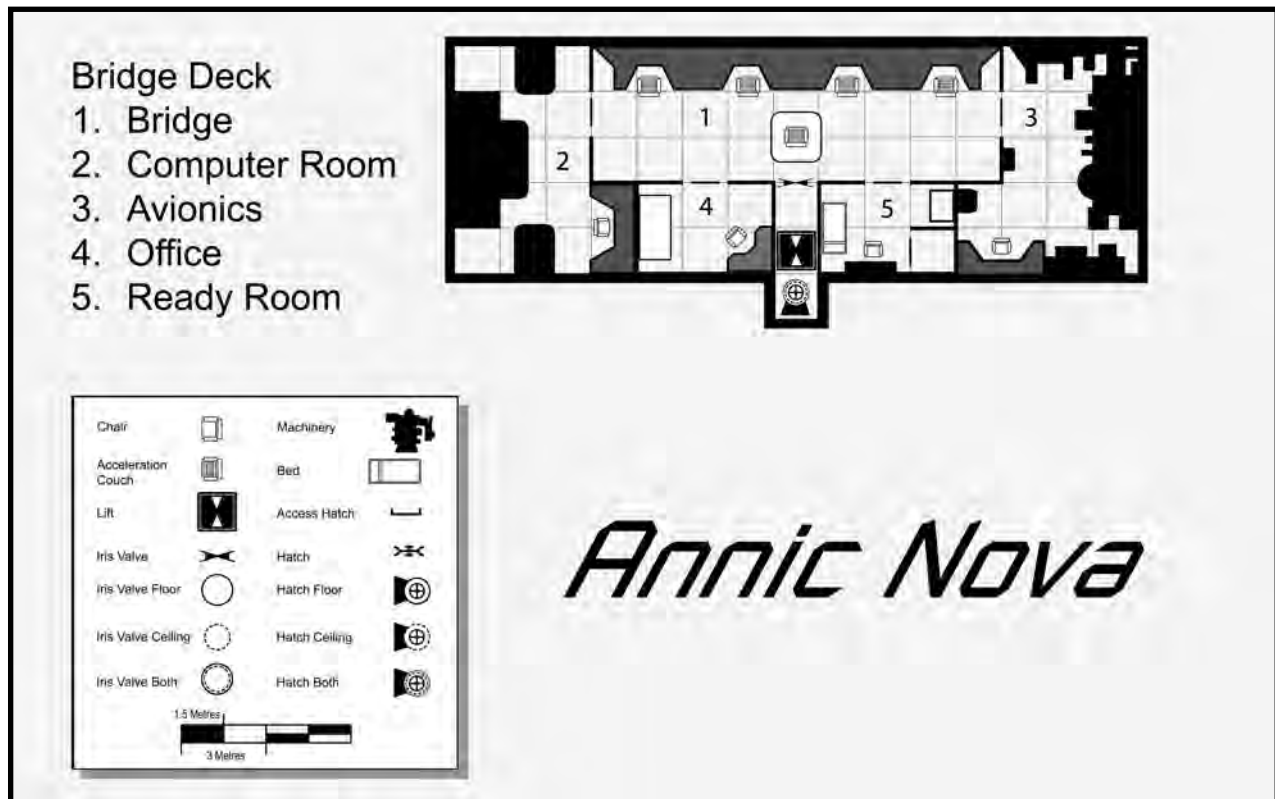
When the grav plates go on, any individual not specifically stating that he or she is standing with feet on the floor, or sitting in a chair, is subject to a fall. Each must make either a Dexterity + Vacc Suit or Athletics (coordination) or fall. If the fall occurs, the individual takes 2D damage.

Atmosphere: The interior of the ship is fully pressurized and an atmosphere tester will indicate breathable gases; there is no apparent (or real) danger of losing pressure. Fracture of domes, or other decompression activity will render a specific area in vacuum; its extent can be traced on the deckplans. Iris valves will automatically close to limit this effect whenever possible.

Vacc suit discipline should be broken as soon as possible, either by reassuring the adventurers that there appears to be no danger, or emphasizing the clumsiness of the vacc suits. Apply a DM –2 on weapon use by individuals without vacc suit skill, and reduce personal dexterity by –2. In addition, the ship is oriented to the small stature of the original crew, and passage through iris valves in vacc suit runs the danger of ripping the suit (throw 8+ Vacc Suit to avoid a tear).

Temperature: The interior temperature of the ship is about 25 degrees Centigrade.

Iris Valves: Automatic, airtight doorways are installed in bulkheads throughout the ship. These portals open and shut much like the shutter of a camera; they do not swing. Valves are difficult to force once fully closed (throw 10+ Strength + Athletics (strength) to force open a closed iris valve; DM –3 if in a vacc suit). Gunfire will simply lock a valve tighter. Valves are impossible to force shut if open. Any strong object (metal bar or rod) placed in the valve when open will prevent full closure, and allow a partially closed valve to be opened with ease. Iris valves are operated by pressing a stud on the wall near the valve. As long as the ship has any power (the power accumulators have not actually been disconnected at the source), iris valves will function automatically if pressure drops.

Hatches: Hinged solid airtight doors are mounted in some locations. These portals function manually.

Doors: Any doorway not a valve or hatch is a sliding door. These are not airtight (and easily visible as such), and open at the touch of a stud on the wall. If locked (all locks are controlled by the computer, even at low power), the door will not open unless broken down, shot open, or pried open with a crowbar (success will be automatic as the doors are not too substantial).

WITHIN THE STARSHIP

Diagrams 1 and 2 contain maps of the interior of the starship and all explanatory text is coded to these diagrams. The adventurers' seemingly purposeless search will gradually enhance their knowledge of the interior features of the ship and help in their growing understanding.

CENTRAL ACCESS SHAFT

Leading directly through the bottom four decks, this shaft has iris valves at each level. Running parallel is a lift which can carry up to three persons at once, operated by a simple control button set marked (in ship's numerals), I, V, 7 and A. At the rear of the shaft is a ladder which can be used in lieu of the lift.

The iris valves in the shaft maintain airtight integrity, so that loss of pressure on any deck will not be transmitted past any closed valve. Each level has one iris valve, facing forward, with the exception of level 7, which has three valves, facing forward, port and starboard.

BRIDGE DECK

Painted on the iris valve at this level is the figure I. The valve opens into a short corridor which further opens into room 1.

1. Bridge. The control room is a spacious area containing a long control panel against the forward wall under a row of windows. Five acceleration couches are centred in the area, two to each flank, and one, slightly raised, on the centreline of the ship, obviously for the pilot or captain.

The controls for the bridge are arranged in a reasonably straightforward manner, and readouts can be understood by any pilot or astrogator with intelligence of 8+ in a matter of hours, for those of lower intelligence this may take a few days, the power-on control is obvious to anyone. There is no evidence of manoeuvre controls or readouts at all; only a dual set of jump controls.

2. Computer Room. Nearly all of the available space in this room is taken up by computer equipment of large bulk, and requiring heavy cooling arrangements. A maintenance console for the computer is present in this room, but five other consoles similar in construction are installed on the bridge control panel.

3. Avionics Room. This room is filled with a wide variety of detection and communication instruments. Individuals with electronics 1 or better will recognise each of the following on a throw of 7+: long range detectors, long range communications equipment, short range scanners and deep radar.

4. Office. This room contains a desk, a computer terminal and several drawers of papers covered with indecipherable symbols.

5. Ready Room. This room contains a pair of bunks (clean and made-up) and simple toilet facilities.

QUARTERS DECK

Painted on the iris valve at this level is the figure V.

1. Bar/Lounge. This lounge is spacious and carpeted, and several comfortable chairs are scattered about around small tables. On the wall to starboard is a bar, while to port is a floor-to-ceiling visor screen. Each side wall has a hallway leading off laterally.

The bar is well stocked with liquors, most having indecipherable labels. A close check (taking perhaps 15 minutes) will reveal at least one bottle labelled in anglic and a date about 20 years ago. The quality of the liquors is excellent (by reputation to a connoisseur and by taste if tasted). If this deck has been rendered airless, all the bottles will be broken and the contents spilled and evaporated.

The visor screen responds to the controls (on-off) on the wall next to it, or will come on (with sound at full volume) if someone sits down in the lounge chair directly facing it. The program shown is indicated on the table below.

Close investigation of the visor will show a concealed set of controls (in a sliding panel on the wall), including a volume control, a channel dial marked *IV7AJU* and a speed control.

Programs

D6	Program
1	An animated film with a great deal of violence, but no apparent injuries.
2	An abstract colour projection with an accompanying soothing music soundtrack.
3	A head and shoulders view of a bald, eyebrowless, humanoid talking in an unknown language while graphic maps projected behind him constantly change.
4	An apparent travelogue showing a variety of animals in their natural habitats.
5	An animated lecture on the chemical elements, with accompanying text and voice-over.
6	Static.

Living Deck
1. Bar / Lounge
2. Stateroom A
3. Stateroom B
4. Stateroom C
5. Stateroom D
6. Stateroom E
7. Stateroom F
8. Stateroom G
9. Stateroom H
10. Maintenance Room
11. Common Room
12. Galley / Pantry
13. Ship's Locker
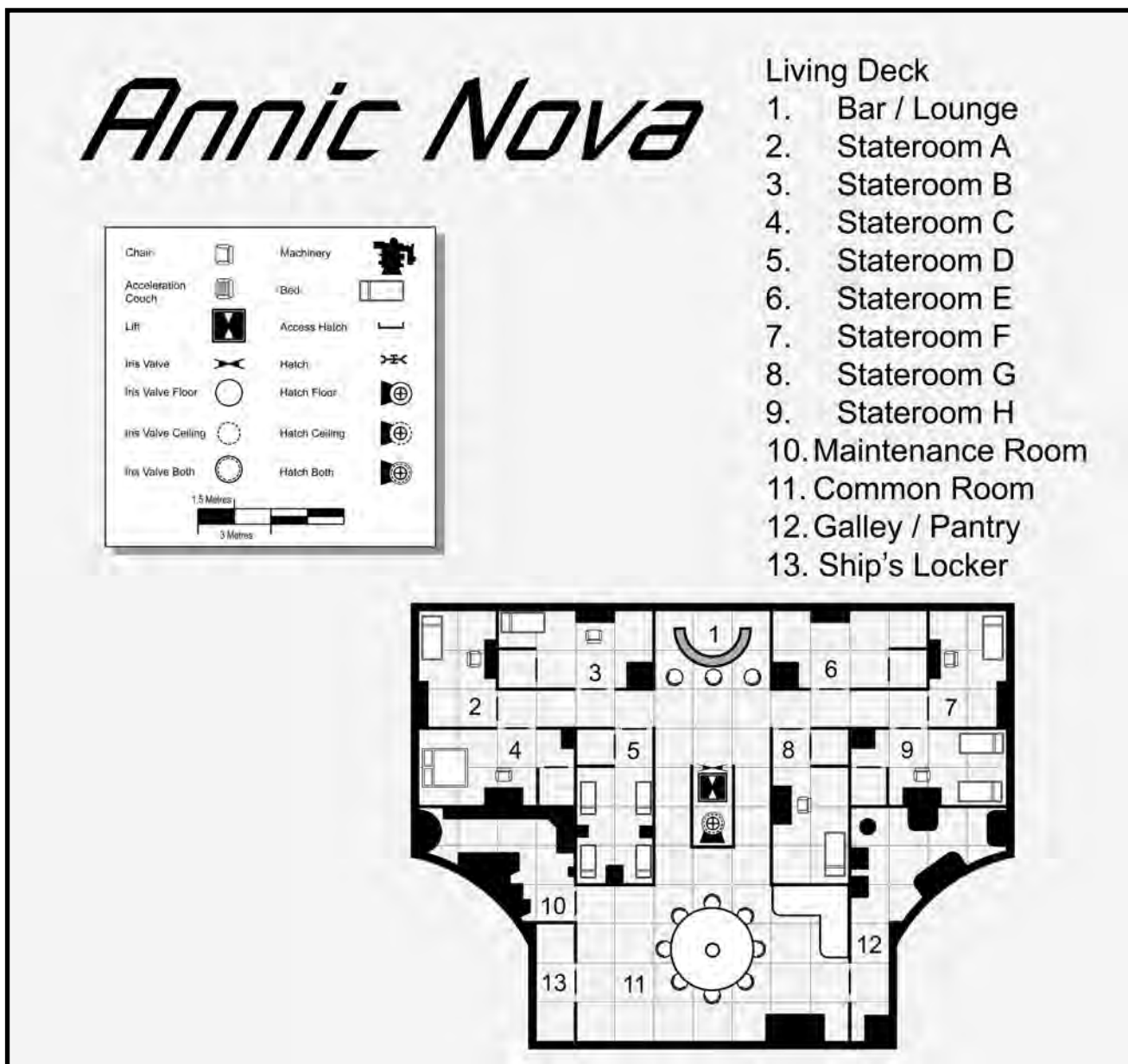
The channel control will select among the six channels indicated. The speed control will slow down or speed up the program being shown; if channel 6 (U) is slowed down, it becomes a children's illustrated dictionary. Studying channel U or channel J will teach the ship's language (studying 12 hours per day) on a throw of 14+, DM +1 per day spent, DM +1 if intelligence 11+.

2. Stateroom A. This small room is obviously sleeping quarters and contains a bunk, fold-out desk, several drawers, mirror and reclining chair. There is, however, no clothing and no sign of personal articles.

3. Stateroom B. This small room is similar to room 2 but has a lived-in look. In the top drawer is a box containing several rings mounted with gemstones (each with an apparent value of Cr. 500). Under the bunk's mattress is an envelope containing several bills (apparently money), marked J0, IN, and IN0, as well as various statements and phrases in the ship's language. A full length mirror is mounted on the wall. If power is on low level, it is indeed a mirror. If power is on full, the mirror is an operating colour retransmitter screen, which means that it acts like a mirror but presents an unreversed image. A person standing in front of it would see himself or herself as others do, rather than as a mirror image. Unless someone actually stands in front of the mirror and indicates he or she is checking it out, the effect it causes will be anyone in the room will have an undefined, uneasy feeling. The mechanism for the retransmitter is behind the screen, accessible if a concealed latch is located and tripped.

4. Stateroom C. This room is larger and contains a double bed rather than bunks. Personal effects for both male and female individuals are present in the drawers.

5. Stateroom D. In this room, the most obvious feature is the presence of the four small beds along the walls. Several small pieces of furniture are scattered about, and a lot of clothing is strewn in disorder. Aside from a few small toys, there is nothing of value here.

However, after all have left the lateral hallway, a small robot-like device (about 300mm high, cylindrical, and emitting small peeping noises while an electric blue spark wanders around its head/top) will emerge. It will orient on one person, and follow him/her around anywhere on this deck, the sparks getting more violent whenever it approaches closer than one metre. This device is a child's toy, easily broken by a kick or blow; it can be turned off by touching it with an ungloved hand, and will turn on again at the next touch.

6. Stateroom E. The interior of this room has been charred black, as if by flame (possibly by a plasma gun). Nothing remains of its original furnishings.

7. Stateroom F. This room is much like room 3 but the full length mirror is cracked. If the latch (concealed) is found, the area behind the mirror is found to be empty, the retransmitter having been removed. The area is now used for storage, and contains several cartons of books with garish covers. In addition, a map box with a chip installed for a specific world (Victoria, located in the Lanth Subsector of the Spinward Marches).

8. Stateroom G. This room is much like room 4 but contains two bunks rather than the double bed. Aside from ordinary articles of clothing, the only items of interest are an instant print camera, and a battery powered typewriter. Close examination of the typewriter reveals that it can be used as a remote (up to 500 km distant) terminal for the ship's computer.

9. Stateroom H. Taped to the door is a crayon drawing (as if by a child) of a coiled snake. When the door is forced, a terribly foul odour and considerable quantities of dust roil from the room. Inside are four dead bodies, three adults and one child, all exhibiting considerable corruption. In addition, dirty linen is piled in the corners of the rooms and the floor is filthy.

Breathing the unfiltered air of the room exposes an individual to an extreme chance of infection. The dust will slowly spread to the entire deck (within 10 minutes), after which anyone on the

deck is subject to a strong chance of infection. If an iris valve is opened to another level, that level becomes a possible source of contamination (with a low chance of infection).

10. Maintenance Area. Behind the cold box (it swivels out) on the port side is a maintenance area filled with life support systems, such as main temperature and air circulation ducts.

11. Common Area. This area is studded with tables and chairs, between kitchen facilities along the lateral walls. The tables and chairs are collapsible and the kitchen areas have sliding screens which can be used to conceal and protect them.

The floor of this area is uncarpeted and bears markings similar to that of a basketball court, obviously for some sort of game. This concept is furthered by the contents of one drawer in the kitchen area: several resilient balls and some handball gloves. A remote control switch in the drawer will turn off (and on) the grav plates in the galley/kitchen area.

12. Galley/Pantry. Behind the cold box on the starboard side is a pantry stocked with canned and preserved foods, including many delicacies. Much of the food is from commercial sources and can be identified as edible.

13. Ship's Locker. In here are stocks of everyday items, several small vacc suits meant for the original crew of the vessel (see area 6 of the Cargo deck for a more detailed description) and various small parts. There is a weapons' rack but any weapons stored here have been taken.

CARGO DECK
This deck has three iris valves in the central access shaft; they lead starboard, forward and port. Each is marked with a 7.

1. Observation Dome. This is a transparent astrogation dome with a bearing race along the front half of its circumference. Mounted on the race is an electro-mechanical sextant connected to the computer; whenever the ship's power is on, this sextant is in constant motion.

2. Observation Dome Access. An iris valve in the ceiling provides access to the observation dome.

3. Forward Cargo Area. A large chamber nearly 20 metres wide and 9 metres deep. Well lit, it is empty except for a few empty crates in one corner and a bale of vegetable leaves near the iris valve. Closer investigation will reveal this material is tobacco,

Cargo Deck
1. Observation Dome
2. Dome Access
3. Forward Cargo Bay
4. Corridor
5. Corridor
6. Aft Cargo Bay
7. Lower Gun Turret A
8. Gun Turret A
9. Lower Gun Turret B
10. Gun Turret B
11. Pinnace Access

Cargo Deck is 3.2 m high
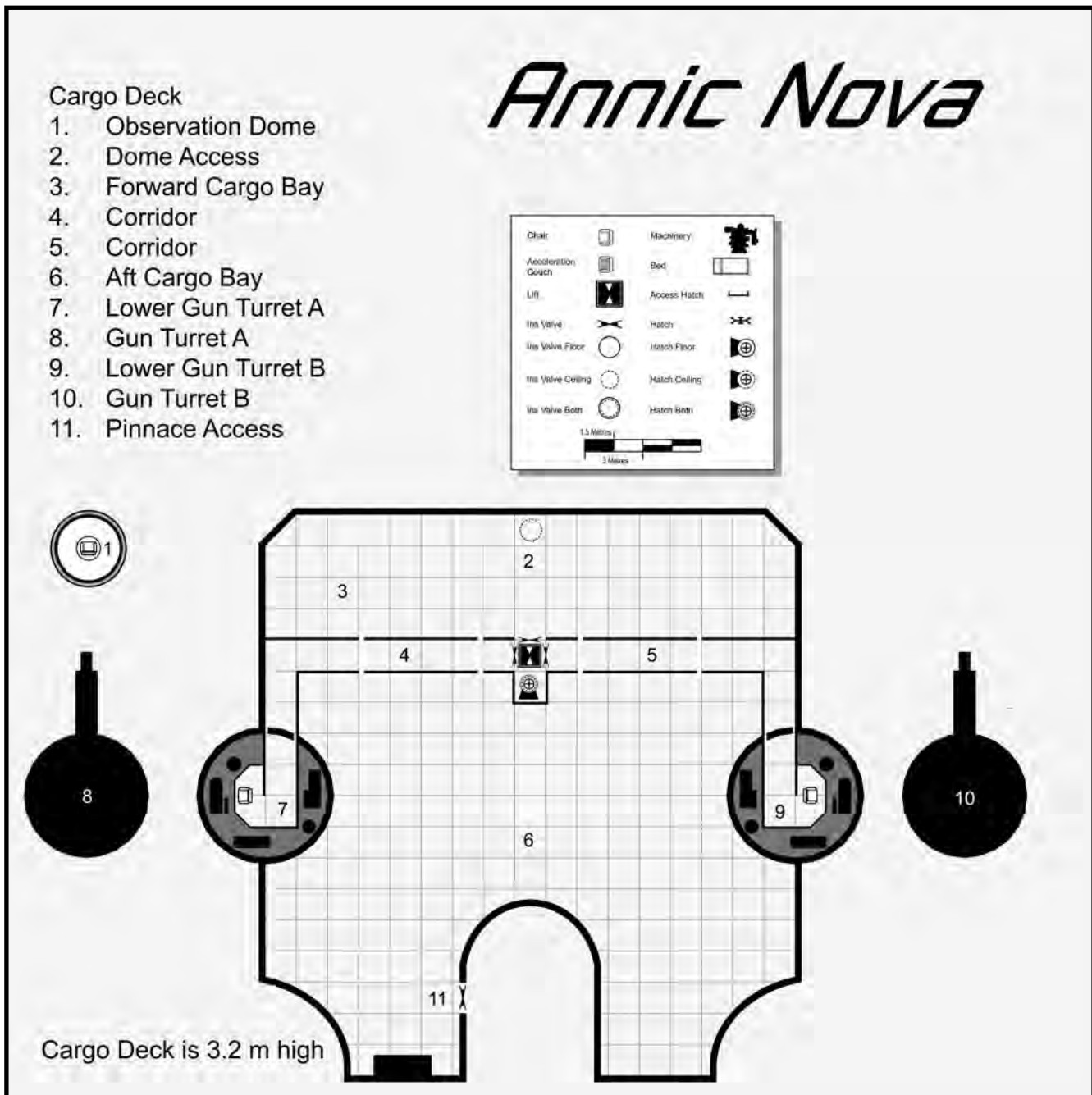
which is a rarity in this part of the Imperium. It will sell for Cr. 20,000 for the full 50 kg) if sold in the seedier parts of a starport town; it is also probably illegal on any world with a law level 8+.

4. Corridor. This passageway leads to port and makes a right angle bend aft, where it is then blocked by massive steel doors. Before the bend, large cargo doors open fore and aft into cargo areas; scratch and scuff marks indicate that cargo has been dragged across the corridor many times. A set of wall studs near these doors will open them; however, a red button is also present — it turns off (and on) the grav plates on this deck to allow easier handling of

cargo. The steels door at the end of the corridor is part of a cylinder set within a larger cylinder, It will not open without instructions from the main computer (a computer terminal is located on the wall next to each door). If some one attempts to force the door (or incorrect computer instructions are entered more than three times in a 10 minute period) and power is on, an outlet valve will open, bleeding the air from this deck within 30 seconds. In any case, the door is nearly 200 mm thick, and will require a long time to burn through (approximately 20,000 points of damage administered by an energy weapon, such as a laser, or by a cutting torch).

If the door is opened by computer instruction, the entire inner ring of the turret rotates to match a door opening with the doorway in the outer turret ring.

5. Corridor. This passageway leads to starboard and makes a right angle bend aft. It is treated in a manner similar to location 21.

6. Aft Cargo Bay. This area is an irregularly shaped cargo bay, marked by an arched protrusion in its centre and bulges in the lateral walls. The arched protrusion is fitted with a sturdy sliding door, which will not open if there is air pressure in the cargo bay (unless, of course, it is forced, or a pinnace is in position on the other side of the door). This siding door serves as a loading dock for pinnaces. There is a mechanism which will magnetically lock a pinnace in position against the doors.

Halfway back in the rear area, along the side walls, are sets of cabinets. The port cabinet has three vacc suits of unusual design. If they are tried on, they are found to be personalised and non-adjustable, with only a slight chance that they will fit the individual involved (throw 10+ for the suit to fit; DM +1 if the individual has a strength of 5 or less, because they are on the small side). The suits are unusual in that an oxygen regeneration system is built into the fabric, rather than being contained in a separate pack. If the suit does not fit, however, altering it will render it useless. Each suit may be assumed to have a value of about Cr. 40,000 to someone to whom it will fit.

7. Lower Gun Turret A. Beyond the steel doorway is a large crowded area filled with the mechanical and electronic apparatus which comprises the turret mechanism. A ladder leads upward into the ceiling.

8. Gun Turret A. At the top of the ladder leading from location 23, a small area contains a gunner's couch near a laser cannon tube. The couch is comfortable only for persons of small stature (assume a strength of 6 or less). The laser cannon is operated and fired from this position.

9. Lower Gun Turret B. This location is similar to location 23.

10. Gun Turret B. At the top of the ladder leading from location 24, a small area contains a gunners couch near a laser cannon tube. This area is similar to location 26, and should be administered like it.

11. Pinnace Access. An iris valve provides access to the pinnaces.
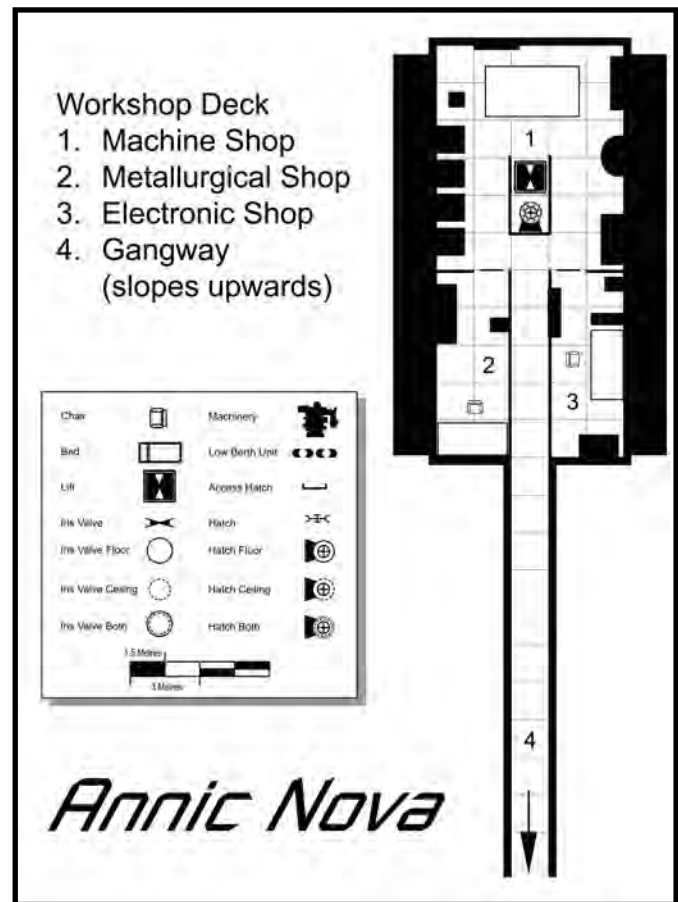
WORKSHOP DECK

The iris valve on this level is marked with the numeral A.

1. Machine Shop. This area is relatively small and filled to forward with machine tools, a workbench and cabinets filled with a great many spare parts in paper cartons. To the port and starboard are large (floor to ceiling) gratings with radiator flanges behind them.

2. Metallurgical Shop. This small room contains facilities for detained small scale metal work, from one gram to 10 kilograms and can be used to produce such diverse items as jewellery, gun parts and mechanical spares. Such a shop is quite usable by a person with Mechanic 2 or better.

3. Electronic Shop. This area is similar to location 2 but designed for electronics repairs. While this shop cannot create small electronics components, it does have a large supply of such parts, which can be identified through the shipboard computer. This shop is usable by a person with Engineer (electronics) 2 or better.

4. Gangway. Sloping at an angle upward, this corridor leads to the Engineering Deck.
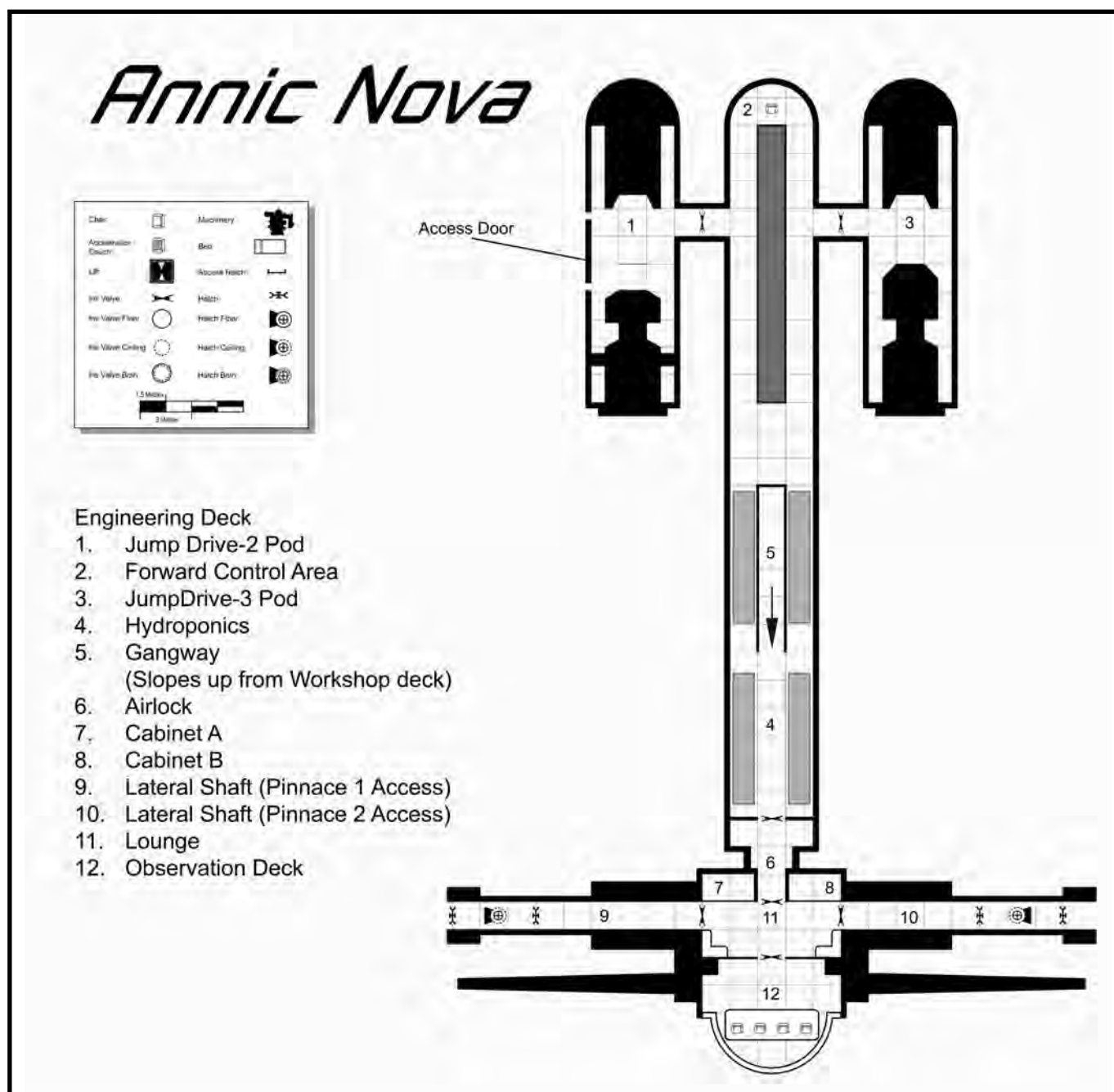
ENGINEERING DECK
This deck is accessed within the ship only through the gangway leading from the Workshops Deck.

1. **Jump–2 Pod.** This engineering area contains a jump drive mechanism for the ship and outwardly appears to be identical with the mechanism on the other side of the ship. An individual with Engineering (jump drive) 3 or better will see that this drive is capable of jump–2. There is an exit from the ship in this Jump Pod but no airlock. Opening this valve will cause the entire area to become airless.

2. **Forward Control Area.** A complete set of jump controls are installed at this point, including a computer terminal. If these controls are tampered with, the drive chargers will be set in operation. A humming will begin, and observers in the astrogation dome, the hydroponics area and in ships outside, will note that the canopy is unfolding. After an hour, the process will be completed, revealing a skeleton framework and a circular thin black radiation-absorbent film about 1 kilometre in diameter. Stopping the process is impossible without computer assistance, but the canopy will refold itself when the accumulators are recharged, a period of 1d6 weeks.

The twin corridors leading to the Forward Control Area are generally featureless, with single passageways leading port and starboard. The central area between the two corridors is a solid area containing a complex set of electronics parts and several solid silver buss bars. Engineer (electronics) 2 or better will deduce that this is the accumulator section of the starship power supply. When fully charged, there is a distinct odour of ozone in the air. Power cable connections (about 300 mm in diameter and insulated) rise from the accumulators and pass into the ceiling panels.

3. Jump–3 Pod. This area is similar to location 1 and can be treated in a similar manner. However, this equipment is capable of jump–3.

4. Hydroponics Area. This entire area is overgrown with plants. An iris valve is obvious aft but the two corridors leading forward are not, being concealed by the extensive growth. Overhead, the area is roofed by transparent sloping ceiling panels, and banks of lights. The vegetation is covered with thorns but is not especially dangerous unless a person were to actually fall into a group of plants, in which case about 1d6 hits would be inflicted.

5. Gangway. Provides access to the Workshop Deck.

6. Air Lock. The iris valve at the aft end of the hydroponics area opens into an air lock. The valve itself is in a nearly closed position but held open by a scratched and corroded metal rod wedged in place apparently by accident. Beyond the valve is a short corridor leading to another iris valve held open by a similar metal rod. Along the corridor, the attraction of the grav plates (assuming they are on) gradually diminishes from full (at the forward end) to zero (at the aft end).

7. Cabinet A. Concealed behind a bulkhead to port, accessible from location 11, is a cabinet, with a concealed switch behind the upholstery on the wall. The cabinet itself contains a transmitter/receiver, with audio, video, and telemetry capability.

8. Cabinet B. This cabinet is similar to location 7 but contains miniaturized communicators keyed to the equipment in location 7. These devices may be carried in world surface exploration and used to communicate with personnel aboard ship.

9. Lateral Shaft (Pinnace 1 Access). This corridor slants upward at an angle and ends in a hatch. Beyond the hatch is another, plus another hatch leading out of the tube. It is in zero-G.

10. Lateral Shaft (Pinnace 2 Access). This tube is similar to location 9.

11. Lounge. This area is finished with a fur-like carpeting on floor, ceiling and walls. Concealed panels in the forward bulkhead contain cabinets which are locations 7 and 8. This area is in zero-G.

12. Observation Deck. This area is covered by a transparent observation dome facing aft, and contains a cantilevered platform with four fixed chairs and a small control panel. It is finished in the same style as location 11 and is in zero-G.

THE PINNACES

The two trailing pods visible at the ends of the shafts connected to the hub on the Drive Deck appear to be manoeuvre drive pods from a distance but are actually 40 ton pinnaces. Normally transported in this position, they are detachable and may be used for errands or missions. These small craft are laid out in opposite handedness and will only attach on their proper shafts. Each is streamlined and has fuel skimmers (for refuelling at a gas giant), with provision for fuel transfer.

Each also has a cable connection which automatically mates with ship power connections when in docking position.

Pinnace 1

1. Cockpit. This area contains standard design controls usable by an individual with ship's boat skill. With seating for two, the port seat also has aiming and firing controls for the single pulse laser mounted on the small craft.

2. Airlock.

3. Cargo Bay. The port pinnace is a cargo craft and can carry bulk cargo totalling 12 tons. Collapsible seating can fill the area and carry up to 16 passengers instead. A large sliding cargo door is visible in the exterior bulkhead.

4. Fresher. This area contains toilet facilities and a shower.

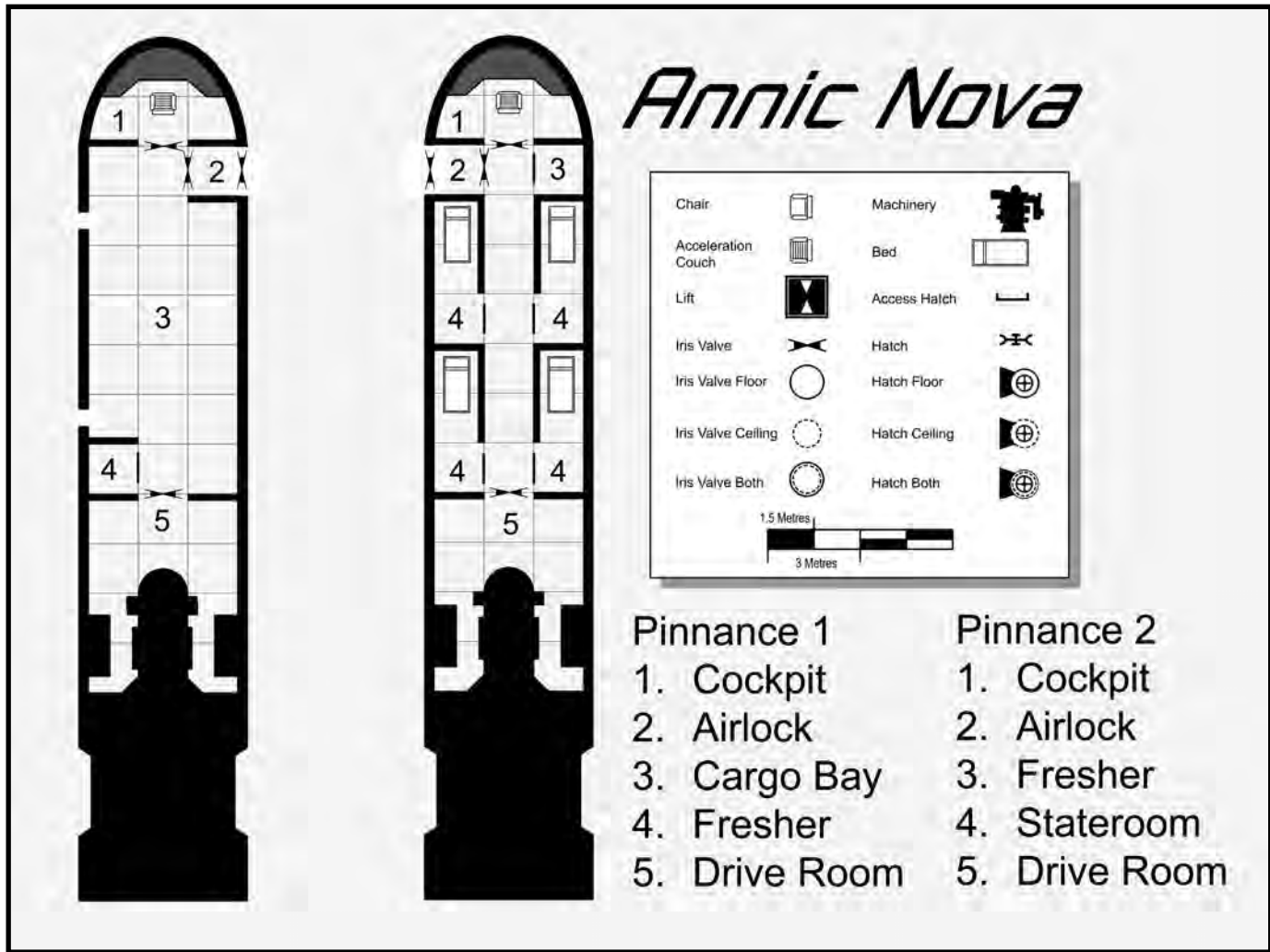**5. Drive Room.** The manoeuvre drives for this pinnace are contained in this area.

Pinnace 2
1. Cockpit. This area is similar to location 1 of Pinnace 1.

2. Airlock.

3. Bathroom. This area contains toilet facilities and a shower.

Pinnance 1
1. Cockpit
2. Airlock
3. Cargo Bay
4. Fresher
5. Drive Room

Pinnance 2
1. Cockpit
2. Airlock
3. Fresher
4. Stateroom
5. Drive Room

4. Staterooms. The starboard pinnace is a passenger vessel, with four half-sized staterooms complete with bunks and storage areas. This pinnace could carry up to five persons on relatively long (30 day) flights with only minimal discomfort. There is no provision for cargo, although conceivably about two tons could be crammed into the central aisle.

5. Drive Room. The manoeuvre drives for this pinnace are contained in this area.

Referee's Notes
The following should enhance the referee's understanding of the Annic Nova.

THE COMPUTER
Location 2 on the Bridge Deck contains the starship's central computer. Its programming language is unknown to the explorers, and the computer will not initially respond (assuming power is turned on). An individual with Computers 2 can install a standard programming language from another source in about a day. Someone with Computers 4 can instead decipher the computer's language, altering it to respond to normal procedures; throw 12+, DM +1 per level of Computers skill, once per week of trying. Once the computer is reprogrammed, it will be found to have the software list shown.

The computer is a non-standard device equivalent to a Model/3 but massing considerably more (in the range of 15 tons).

One feature of the computer is its graphics package, which can superimpose data on the forward window wall, making an immediate evaluation of a situation possible at a glance. For example, the computer can lay a three dimensional grid on the window wall, and then spotlight or code all objects present, showing their relation to the ship. It can then project and show trajectories or possible courses.

A functioning computer will respond to keyword input and reply with appropriate data. The Referee may wish to limit random

guessing at keywords by players, and may institute limits, or dispense clues. The following keywords are especially important.

Manoeuvre, Acceleration and Evasion

One or both of the pinnaces may be swivelled under computer control and thrust may be applied by their engines. Such manipulation will alter the orientation of the ship, allowing the guns to be brought to bear, or the observation deck pointed in a certain direction as desired. Instructions are simply keyed into the computer.

For travel to any great distance, a pinnace must be physically moved (using pilot or ship's boat skill) to the rear of the cargo bay (location 25) and magnetically moored. Computer instruction for long distance manoeuvre is then entered, and up to one-tenth G thrust applied. Each pinnace is capable of 10 minutes thrust for each ton of fuel burned.

Fuel, Refuel and Power

The canopy collects radiated stellar power and stores it in the accumulators on the drive deck. The only way to extend the canopy is with the controls on the drive deck or the control panel in the observation dome. It cannot be controlled from the bridge.

The accumulators can store enough energy to power each jump drive once, as well as maintain internal life support under normal conditions.

Duration of internal power: 60 days under ordinary load.

Required recharge time: One to six weeks (1d6), depending on the distance from, and spectral type of, the star serving as the radiation source.

Weapons: The two laser cannon turrets are fully operational.

THE DISEASE

The disease from location 15 is transmitted via an airborne virus with a long dormancy period. No symptoms will become apparent for at least one week.

At that point, each person who has been exposed must roll for infection on the disease table, once, at the highest possible level.

DM –1 for strength 10+.

DM –1 for any person with service in the scout service (for the scout service immunizations).

A doctor who has analysed the situation may prescribe strict rest and sleep; following this regimen allows a DM –4.

Low passage or drugs may slow the onset of the disease but there are no specific drugs or universal cures which will automatically counteract this disease.

Prevention: Anyone with a skill of at least Medic 3 or better will know from his training and experience that infection from this virus can probably be lessened greatly by strict rest and sleep. Following such a prescription would preclude any physical or mental effort, including any use of skills, or any work.

DISEASE TABLE

	Infection Chance		
Individual's Endurance	Low	Strong	Extreme
4 or less	8+	7+	2+
5 – 6	9+	8+	4+
7 – 8	10+	9+	6+
9 – 10	11+	10+	8+
11+	12+	11+	10+

If the number on the table is rolled or exceeded, the individual has contracted the disease. Immediately roll two dice and subtract the skill level of any attending medic (one medic may attend up to four persons). That number is the immediate damage inflicted. If it exceeds 8, roll again as before and inflict that number of hits. Continue until the result is less than 8.

THE SHIP

Free Trader (Non-Standard Classified Type NS18): Using an unorthodox 600 ton frame and hull, this artefact is allowed in Imperial commerce under the salvage laws provided the ship is registered with Imperial authorities (typical registration fee: Cr. 100,000). The ship has 8 staterooms (of non-standard sizes) for the crew (captain/ navigator, chief engineer, two ordinary engineers and medic), with provision for ordinary members (gunners, pinnace pilots, or passengers). There are no low berths. The ship has two jump-drives which operate independently (at Jump 2, and Jump 3, respectively) but may not sum their power.

There are no manoeuvre drives (the pinnaces act as tugs to a minor extent); there is no power plant. A stellar collector absorbs and collects energy for internal power and jump drives. Two single turrets each mount a single laser cannon. The computer is a non-standard model equivalent to a Model/3 but of considerable mass. The ship is not streamlined.

Two 40 ton pinnaces travel in trailing positions. Construction cost is impossible to calculate but current market value can be placed at approximately Cr. 200,000,000.

Annic Nova Type NS18 Non Standard Far Trader.

Annic Nova Type NS18 Non Standard			Tons	Price (MCr.)
Hull	600 Tons	Hull 12	—	43.2
		Structure 12	—	—
		Distributed	—	—
Armour	Crystaliron	8 Points	60	17.28
Jump Drive F		Jump 2	35	60
Jump Drive J		Jump 3	50	90
Manoeuvre Drive	None		—	—
Power Plant	Energy Accumulator	(60 Days Endurance)	47	120
	Stellar Collector		5	0.5
Bridge	Standard		20	3
Computer	Model /3	Rating 15	5	2
Electronics	Advanced	DM+1	3	2
Weapons	Hardpoint #1	Single Turret (Beam Laser x1)	1	1.2
	Hardpoint #2	Single Turret (Beam Laser x1)	1	1.2
Ammunition	None		—	—
Fuel	None		—	—
Cargo	160 Tons		155	—
8 Staterooms	Non Standard Size (6 Tons each)		48	4.8
Extras	Ship's Locker		—	—
	Pinnance	x2	80	40
	Docking Clamps	x2 (90 Ton Capacity and manoeuvre controls)	10	2
	Luxuries	(Includes Galley, Lounge)	33	3.3
	Machine Shop		15	4
	Metallurgical Shop		6	2
	Electronic Shop		6	2
	Hydroponics		20	2
Software	Manoeuvre/0	Rating 0	—	—
	Jump Control/3	Rating 15	—	—
	Library/0		—	—
Maintenance Cost (monthly)			—	0.0330
Life Support Cost (monthly)			—	0.0320
Total Tonnage & Cost			600	400.70

OTHERWORLD BLUES

BY JACOB D C ROSS

INTRODUCTION

The players are tasked with determining the cause of several glitches in the system of a new entertainment craze. Their adventure will take them to the terminator dividing the daylight of the real world and the night of cyberspace.

SETTING

This adventure can be set on virtually any developed world that has reached TL 12+. Worlds with a high degree of corporate presence and few restrictions on cybernetic implants work best. The corporation listed here, Spinward Marches Altered Reality Tritronics Coporation, or SMART-Co, can be replaced with any other corporation present in your own campaign.

SMART-Co

The Players find themselves in the lobby of SMART-Co's local headquarters. They have either answered a help add or been summoned by way of using a Contact or Ally to get this job. Their handler for this mission, Ms. Zteffani Gammaro, will meet them at the lobby and direct them to her office on the first floor. Perceptive characters will notice they are not being given the star treatment by their bosses. Read the following description aloud:

A tall, lithe and stunning woman with hair coloured in alternating strands of blonde and red wearing a flamboyant business suit approaches the group. When she reaches you she pauses very briefly before engaging each of you with a smile and a firm handshake.

'My name is Zteffani Gammaro, and I will be your handler,' the woman introduces herself, 'Gentlemen, time is passing. If you would please follow me to my office.'

Zteffani will explain that SMART-Co requires the players to discreetly investigate certain suspected malfunctions within their entertainment program OtherWorld. It seems players have been reporting memory gaps or lost time after playing OtherWorld. SMART-Co suspects a rogue player has been hacking the system for

some as yet undetermined reason. The players will be undercover as regular OtherWorld players. Zteffani informs the players that the job pays 500 credits and includes a free OtherWorld chip. The players will now have a chance to ask a few brief questions of Zteffani regarding their mission.

Zteffani knows a good deal of information, and will be helpful, up to a point. Zteffani will not reveal any trade secrets she is aware of. If she is asked, Zteffani will reveal the following information: the amnesia incidents have been ongoing for three weeks and SMART-Co has no leads as of yet, some of the amnesiacs have committed small crimes during the times when they claim to have no memory, the majority of cases have been reported following sessions in a nearby arcade called Neth's and SMART-Co has indeed sent an investigative team of their own but the team failed to find anything concrete. (In fact, the other team has turned up dead but Zteffani will not share that information with the players and will lie if asked directly. Characters who attempt to catch her in a lie via psionics will find that Ms. Gammaro is in fact a robot.)

After the discussion is concluded, the players are taken to a nearby room where they are to receive OtherWorld chips. The chips are direct neural implants and it takes 15 minutes of surgery to correctly implant the chip. The players will then awaken with no ill effects from the surgery and Zteffani will instruct the players on how to activate their chips.

As the players' game chips activate, the world gradually changes in front of them. First, a floating menu appears in each player's field of vision, approximately half a metre in front of their face. The menu resembles a 'character creation' display similar to those found in contemporary role-playing video games. Players may use this time to devise an appropriate avatar and choose a game theme. For simplicity's sake each player should choose the same theme in this adventure and for the rest of this scenario the OtherWorld objects and characters will be described in medieval terms, although referees are free to use whatever theme they desire. Zteffani instructs the group:

Zteffani Gammaro	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Perceived Age 23	7	11	10	11	9	8
Admin 1, Carouse 2, Computers 1, Diplomat 2, Gun combat (pistols) 1, Melee combat 1, Persuade 3, Steward 3. Pheromone Emitter						

'You will notice your character creation options in front of you. Advanced characters are allowed access to special abilities and powers, but for now the only thing that need concern yourselves with is choosing the look of your avatar. It would make things simpler for your investigation to simply start your characters off at a higher level, but we believe that the persons responsible for these malfunctions has sufficient resources to crack our central database and could easily discover doctored characters, thus blowing your cover.

'OtherWorld plays quite similarly to real life. You are given quests, which you may undertake on your own or in a group. Quests consist of real-world travel to predetermined locations and interaction with server-generated puzzles and Non Player Characters. Any other active player within 50 metres of your position will be alerted to your presence. This allows other players to join quests or to engage in mock player-versus-player combat.

'Speaking of combat, fights in OtherWorld go down in much the same manner as a regular brawl or gunfight. You will find that in such battles your opponents cannot knock you back or throw you, and you feel no particular fatigue. If your hit points are depleted, you will not be able to participate until you have at least five hit points again. Hit points are regenerated at a rate of one every five minutes and may also be recovered by the use of in-game items or abilities. Additionally, there are no psionic abilities in OtherWorld. Each character receives a number of hit points equal to ten plus their character level.

'Characters increase in level after obtaining a number of experience points equal to their next character level plus one, squared. You receive one experience point for every five points of damage done to OtherWorld Non-Player Characters and other players. At each level you will receive five enhancement points with which to improve your character, by purchasing powers and abilities or a greater number of hit points. I doubt that any of you will be playing long enough to advance very far in this game, so I believe that that is all, gentlemen.'

With a polite but dismissive nod, Zteffani gestures to the door. The players should now engage in their first OtherWorld quest. As a note to the Referee, experience is gained in OtherWorld only from actual damage delivered to an enemy. So if a powerful character delivers 42 damage to an Non-Player Character with total Strength, Dexterity and Endurance of 20, the player only scores 20 experience points. Also, characters will begin the game armed with a melee weapon appropriate to their setting that does 1D6 damage and a single point of armour. For this scenario weapons will be referred to as swords.

With a melodious chime like a swaying crystal chandelier, a human figure dressed as a medieval court jester materialises in front of you. Turning to face each player he begins, 'Welcome to the grandest quest of them all, novice warriors! For your first task, you'll all need to make your way to the village of Pinedale. It is but a short walk, but be careful that you do not let down your guard. Minions of the enemy may be afoot!'

Minions*	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Level
Weak Minion	6	6	6	4	1
Skills	Melee 1				
Medium Minion	8	7	6	4	2
Skills	Melee 2, Gun Combat 1				
Strong Minion	10	9	7	4	3
Skills	Melee 3, Gun Combat 2				

*These are the skeleton statistics for a variety of enemies to be used with any theme desired. Unless otherwise noted, damage done by OtherWorld Non-Player Characters is always 1D6+Level. Non-Player Characters appear wielding appropriate weapons. Damage done to Non-Player Characters is taken directly from Characteristics, as Non-Player Characters do not have a hit point total.

Armoured Figure	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Hit Points
Unknown Player	6	10	5	12	7	80
Skills and Items:	Athletics 2, Melee (blade) 3, Tactics (Virtual) 2, 4D6 Sword, Armor 7					

The Armoured Figure has also purchased an energy ray ability and can attack with it once every two minutes, doing 5D6 damage to hit points. He will not use this ability in the first encounter, as he can see the players' levels and hit point pools.

The jester vanishes in a spray of sparkling particles and the city environment instantly changes to into a medieval town. Buildings are all in the same place, but they are now outlined in a bright blue haze and seem to be made of cobblestone, rather than modern construction materials. Players and other real-world items are also outlined in blue. Non-Player Characters and computer-generated items are outlined in green. People not involved with the game still appear as themselves, which gives a jarring effect of ruining the illusion.

The quest takes the players half a kilometre to the west. Along the way they encounter first five Weak Minions, here seen as peasant brigands and then at the goal location run into two more Weak Minions and Medium Minion, here seen as a brigand leader. On average this will provide a total of 29 experience points; enough for three characters to level up. For this game players should probably just purchase more hit points, which are bought at a rate of one extra hit point for every enhancement point spent.

Following the fight at the end of the quest, the jester will reappear and give each of the characters who participated three experience points. At this point the players will receive an alert of a nearby human player. Seconds later, a hulking figure in ornate, spiky armour wielding a chain mace appears from the East. The figure is able to attack the characters before OtherWorld's customary player-versus-player request is given to the characters.

The battle is likely to go to against the players, due to the fact that the new player has a high pool of hit points and much stronger equipment. If the new player is reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, then he will shout loudly and in a deep baritone, 'Invisible retreat!' and disappear from the player's vision. Should the new player win, he will quickly head off to the West. The player will be heard to shout 'None shall vanquish Red Bone!' as he leaves. If any player decides to deactivate their OtherWorld chip, they will find themselves unable to do so until the new player is out of sight.

Noting the glitch in the game, the players would do well to record the time that the fight was initiated, and to message the incident to SMART-Co. The players will realize that Red Bone is somehow able to circumvent OtherWorld's rules and deduce that tracking him down will cause the investigation to progress. If Red Bone managed to escape while invisible, the players will not know the direction Red Bone ran. A quick reference to the local map network will reveal that a quarter kilometre to the West is Neth's Arcade, a popular spot for OtherWorld players to gather and play. If the players do not think to check the map network, then an 8+ Investigation Roll will put the players on the track of Red Bone.

PART TWO

Neth's Arcade is a short run from the players' current location. The players should make it there without incident. Once inside, read the following description aloud:

The arcade is obviously quite popular. Despite its massive space the place is filled with people of all ages, many of whom are waiting in long lines for brief turns at the latest holographic entertainments. Loud, obnoxious music blares and flashing lights serve to disorient you. As you push past the crowd you can see that a special area has been set aside with a large sign advertising it as the home of an exclusive OtherWorld quest area.

The players have not seen what Red Bone looks like in person, so in order to find him they will need to engage in another OtherWorld encounter. Entering the OtherWorld area costs 10 credits per hour. Inside the area is set up as a maze with configurable walls. Known to players as Neth's Dungeon, this area is popular and filled with many other players. The encounters within are at a higher level than the players' previous encounters, so they would be wise to ally themselves with more experienced OtherWorld players.

Asking any of the dozen OtherWorld players congregating at the entrance of the dungeon about Red Bone's location earns a cold shoulder. It seems that the other players are afraid of Red Bone, but one or two will silently nod, indicating that Red Bone is within the dungeon. As the players enter, read the following aloud:

Within this portion of the arcade the walls shift. You now see yourselves in a stone corridor, light with pale torchlight. Grey water drips from the mouldy ceiling. Ahead you can hear the bellowing of Red Bone taunting real and imaginary foes.

At this point the players will likely wish to take on Red Bone in the real world. It should be noted that they have no legal authority to detain a civilian but as he has shown evidence of hacking SMART-Co's system he will seem to be their man. Add to that the fact that the hacking incidents have caused potential harm to citizens and the players may have a good probable cause for a citizen's arrest, depending on the local law. The players may wish to have at least one member deactivate their OtherWorld chip in order to apprehend Red Bone while others keep him distracted in the game, or they may all gang up on him.

Any players who deactivate their OtherWorld chips on finally reaching Red Bone are in for a bit of a surprise. Red Bone is a 14-year-old boy. His Characteristics are the same as what are presented

for the Armoured Figure but his Social Standing is three. Arresting a dangerous adult hacker is one thing, beating up a child is another matter entirely. The players can attempt to restrain the boy, or succeed at a 6+ Persuade Roll to intimidate him into compliance. When the players succeed in restraining the boy, he will reveal his name as Thimmy Chavhose. He is a brat who speaks mostly in slang. A search of his person reveals a hand-held network device that has been allowing him to bypass OtherWorld rules. Read the following aloud:

'Come on, froods, don't take my pad! That was a prize for being the omega champ! Ultra-black secret but it's mine true and quad!'

A competent player asking the right questions will learn that a man claiming to be a SMART-Co employee gave him the device a few weeks ago. Thimmy will admit to a couple incidents of amnesia but has not connected incidents to the time he spends playing OtherWorld. At this point the players may contact Zteffani Gammaro with their findings. Zteffani will direct the players to return to SMART-Co headquarters. They may also wish to set out for SMART-Co without contacting Zteffani. If the players do not contact Zteffani, then they will have to avoid police patrols on their way back, due to Thimmy reporting the players to the arcade management. If the players contact Zteffani, she will anticipate this turn of events and SMART-Co will use their resources to divert the police away from the players.

PART THREE

If the players contacted Zteffani after taking Thimmy's pad, then on the way back to SMART-Co, the world will shift slightly. It takes a successful Investigate 10+ check to notice. After a minute of walking, each player will begin to see the other as a threat. The Referee can use a previously-encountered enemy Non-Player Character. He should describe it to the players by saying that the enemy appears near them, giving no indication that the players are seeing their companions as enemies. OtherWorld imagery will now no longer be outlined in blue or green; the players are locked into an OtherWorld illusion. They should realise this as soon as they finish the first round of combat, having hurt their companions.

It seems that the hacker responsible for the amnesia incidents has hacked into the players' OtherWorld chips. It will take a Difficult Computers Roll to deactivate the chips. If the players are carrying any EMP devices they may use them to deactivate the chips but this will damage any unshielded implants or equipment on the player's person. If the players have not deactivated their chips and continue to head back to SMART-Co, they will end up actually unwittingly walking away from the building, which will take another Investigate 10+ Check to notice. If the players do not notice this, then they will walk into another building and eventually end up on the roof before realising where they are. The safest option is to call Zteffani and request a pick-up service.

Once back at SMART-Co the game chips will deactivate, due to Zteffani alerting security to activate an override defence measure in the vicinity of SMART-Co's property. Zteffani will recognise the device that the players took from Thimmy Chavhose as a prototype she saw in the laboratory of a SMART-Co employee named Silas Ainley. Ainley's lab is located on the fifth floor of the building and he will be confirmed to be at work. As the players are still on the job, they should accompany Zteffani to Ainley's lab. If the players reach SMART-Co without contacting Zteffani and avoid police patrols then it is likely no one in the party will realise the danger posed by their OtherWorld chips.

As the doors to Ainley's laboratory open, Zteffani will call for Ainley to submit to the players. Ainley is not without his tricks, however. Secret modifications to his portion of the building mean that whether or not SMART-Co raised an OtherWorld chip override field, Ainley can instantly activate the players' chips against their wishes. Additionally, four small turrets with the power of laser pistols will emerge from the rear wall facing the entrance to the lab. The turrets attack as if each had a Dexterity score of 10 and have Structure 8. Ainley himself is unarmed but can make use of neural implants to sabotage SMART-Co's headquarters computers. Ainley will not speak except to decry SMART-Co's corporate policies and the corruption that he perceives in the local government.

Silas Ainley	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 32	4	6	4	14	12	5
Computers 3, Engineer (electronics) 2, Physical sciences (electronics) 2*						

*Ainley is an Apocalyst hacker. Information on hackers can be found in the supplement *Agent*.

The turrets will open fire immediately. Ainley will attempt to charge past the players, altering his appearance to become invisible. This will not affect any player who has had their OtherWorld chip disabled permanently, as with an EMP device. Zteffani will also not be affected by Ainley's tricks, but will be busy firing on the turrets, due to her programming demanding that she first take action to protect SMART-Co employees. Should any character injure Ainley, even bare-handed, the programmer will fall to the floor, convulsing and foaming from the mouth. If Ainley is captured without being harmed, he will then activate a suicide pill hidden in a tooth.

After the turrets and Ainley are neutralised, Zteffani will thank the players and call for medical teams to tend to any of the players' wounds. Should any of them be seriously wounded, the scene should skip to SMART-Co's infirmary, if not, then the epilogue will take place in Zteffani's office.

EPILOGUE

Zteffani will thank the players for their service and as an incentive to keep their mouths shut about a SMART-Co employee being responsible for the amnesia incidents she will double their pay. The players will gain SMART-Co as a Patron and Zteffani as a Contact. Agents using the supplement *Agent* can make her an Informant using the Administrative Assistant statistics. As a service robot, however, Zteffani has no need for money and will thus offer her services free of charge but will only offer help against SMART-Co's competition.

Nothing will be known about Silas Ainley's motivations. A search of his apartment by SMART-Co security will turn up nothing linking him to any group.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES

BY JACOB D C ROSS

INTRODUCTION

'Old Acquaintances' is a scenario set in the Original Traveller Universe but usable in other settings. It is a sequel of sorts to the scenario 'OtherWorld Blues' published in *Signs & Portents 91*. If your play group has not participated in that scenario, it is highly recommended that you do so before playing 'Old Acquaintances.'

PROLOGUE

This scenario takes place approximately six months after the events of 'OtherWorld Blues.' By this time SMART-Co has managed to keep the story of their treacherous hacker, Silas Ainley, under wraps and have gone sector-wide with the OtherWorld game. OtherWorld is proving very popular, and various military organisations are interested in using its overlay technology with their soldiers as a new form of combat simulation system.

The players have been contacted by a version of the Zteffani Gammaro robot on another planet. Feel free to use whatever very metropolitan planet best suits your campaign. The only real requirement is that the planetary society be open to cybernetics. The scenario opens with the players in the lobby of the local SMART-Co headquarters, which is an exact replica of the headquarters from 'OtherWorld Blues.'

ACT ONE

Zteffani welcomes the players to SMART-Co. Although she is not the same individual robot who hired them in their previous adventure, the Zteffanis are continuously updated via X-boats and she is thus familiar with the players. Zteffani will escort the players to her office before filling them in on the nature of the job.

SMART-Co has been asked by the sector army to provide freelance participants in a field test of the OtherWorld chip's military application. The job pays 2,000 Credits apiece. If the players ask why the army does not simply run the test with its own soldiers playing both sides Zteffani will reply that those are the specifications provided by Major Tom Jameson, the project's military overseer. If the players ask why they specifically were chosen for this mission then Zteffani will reply that SMART-Co keeps dossiers of their freelancers and selects suitable candidates by analyzing these using a computer program.

As a side note, if the player group is composed of individuals with no military background, or for any other reason, the players may grow suspicious of why they were chosen or considered suitable for this job. Any hacker player may attempt to hack SMART-Co's databases after talking with Zteffani. All actions related to the hacking should have a minimum difficulty of 10, however, and the risk of getting caught is very real. If a player successfully hacks the servers, they will find they were intentionally selected for this job (rather than being selected via the normal SMART-Co protocols) but whoever selected them covered their tracks in a manner that is impossible to trace.

If the players ask Zteffani for more details about the nature of the mission, she cannot comment until the players make a signed commitment to the job. If the players do so she will then explain they are to report to SMART-Co headquarters early tomorrow morning. From there they will be taken to the local army base to have a meeting with Major Jameson before being outfitted with dummy weapons for a live demonstration in the city. The military has obtained the necessary legal permissions to have soldiers and 'rebels' run through the city on a mission to test how effective the OtherWorld battle chips are at providing the necessary information to pick terrorists out of a crowd. After this, Zteffani will dismiss the players and they are free to do as they like before turning in.

ACT TWO

The players are taken by flier to the local military base. They are led with little preamble or introductions to Major Jameson's office. Jameson is a severe man with a proud bearing and many battle scars on his face. It is obvious that he holds the players in little regard. Even mentioning past military service will not impress him. Nevertheless, he has approved of this exercise.

He will explain in a gruff voice that the players are to disperse in the local city in crowded areas in order to hide from the soldiers assigned to find them. They will be equipped with weapons that have been converted into dummies in a manner similar to laser tag. They will be facing superior numbers and so have no chance to win in a straight firefight but must rely on guile. In order to prevent the players from throwing the exercise in order to make SMART-Co's products seem effective, the army will triple their fee if they successfully "Kill" all the soldier participants. Jameson will take no questions and then order the players to the armoury.

Wait, what?!?!

You may be asking yourself why any military would allow open-field tests like this around innocent civilians. This is a fair question. The Referee can establish that the planet on which this adventure is set has been enduring multiple terrorist attacks. While most citizens still enjoy many freedoms, the government has sought to crack down on the terrorists and is taking more extreme measures. While the local citizens are not happy with the situation, they have yet to voice their complaints in any organised manner.

Of course the main villain, who is about to arrange for mayhem to occur, is more than capable of ensuring this field test appears to have all the necessary permissions and permits with (falsified) orders backing him up, even if this is something the government of the planet would never normally permit.

The armoury supervisor is Staff Sergeant Sharn Tollis. Tollis is a slightly-built man with a nervous disposition, which is quite unusual for an army man. Tollis does not make much eye contact with the players but quickly explains the use of their dummy weapons to the players before signing off on the guns and allowing the players to leave.

The players are then taken by flier to the heart of the nearest city's downtown district. The flier leaves and the players receive a start signal from Zteffani, indicating they are to disperse. From here on in they must remain vigilant.

ACT THREE
The player groups disperse through the city with a 30 minute head start. The players have been directed to seek highly-populated areas and two options will become immediately obvious to the players. First is a shopping district set up as an open 'craft market,' and the local waterfront is hosting a festival. Once the players decide which area to approach, they should set out, making certain to keep their dummy weapons concealed. Once the players are in place, they should have about five minutes to establish hiding spots.

As the soldiers make their way to the players' location, the players may throw Stealth or Tactics in order to set up an ambush. Regardless of how their rolls turn out, things are about to go pear-shaped. The Referee should read the italicised text aloud:

A squad of five soldiers makes their way through the crowd. One, a lance corporal taking point, seems to focus on a member of the group.

As you start to raise your weapon the corporal shouts 'Sir, they've all got guns!'

The other four soldiers raise their weapons as well. However, rather than aiming at any of you, the soldiers begin firing wildly into the crowd. Most of the civilians are sitting at tables and have dived for cover following the corporal's warning, but a few have been too slow and are visibly hit by live rounds! Something horrible is happening, and it will be up to you to prevent civilian casualties!

The soldiers are for some reason assaulting civilians. The players are likely to guess the reason why. The soldiers' OtherWorld chips have been sabotaged. It seems that the technology is easily manipulated and that is leading to catastrophe. Additionally, the soldiers were not issued dummy weapons, as the players had been led to believe. After the fighting they will have to work to uncover the saboteur. Now, however, there are innocents to protect.

The soldiers are represented by four Average Guards 1 from the *Traveller Core Rulebook, page 84* and one Average Guard 2. The players may try their dummy weapons to see if they, too are carrying live weapons. They are not, and firing from their positions will draw the soldier's fire to their position. Players may attempt to dodge from table to table, each of which will have been upturned to provide cover from bullets, or they may advance using a table as a shield. Stealthy characters can attempt to sneak up on the soldiers. Any characters who were able to sneak their

Ainley

So what is going on here? Silas Ainley, antagonist of 'OtherWorld Blues', has implemented a 'safety net' built into the OtherWorld chips. The chips are capable of connecting to the local OtherWorld network and streaming an individual's personality into the brain of any other person utilising an OtherWorld chip within the same planetary network. This is similar to the Personality Recording Chip found on page 70 of the supplement *Cybernetics*. Ainley has spent his time hopping from one body to another and is now inhabiting Major Jameson.

Ainley's motives are anarchistic in nature. He despises corporations and military structures and intends to sow chaos throughout the Third Imperium. He also desires revenge on the players who first disrupted his plans, as their actions could have killed the OtherWorld project.

Mechanically, Ainley's trick is represented by targeting any individual in visual range who has an OtherWorld chip, or uploading into the planetary OtherWorld server and targeting any random chip bearer. Ainley and the target each throw Intelligence and if Ainley succeeds then he has displaced the individual's mind and now controls the body. He has no automatic access to memories (although this is possible if he has had time to prepare a new host, as was the case with Jameson), and no access to Psionic powers possessed by the host. Psions add their Psi DM to their Intelligence Roll to resist Ainley. If he were to spend two or more years within a Psion, then he could conceivably learn psionic abilities but would require another two years of study before he could transfer those abilities to a new host body.

Additionally, Ainley need not target living creatures. Any computer or robot connected to an internet equivalent that is capable of running a Level Five Personality Program, as per the supplement *Robot,* is also a fair target for Ainley.

Scene Chewing Villain

Ainley not only wants to kill the players but wants them to die as ignobly as possible and to be aware of why they are dying. It is why he has ensured they are given the initial job and why he wants them alive before they are caught and brought before him.

He uses his technical ability to ensure he is the one who leads the initial investigation into the massacre. After all, unless he has control, he will not be able to gloat, will he? He is not overly concerned with dying or with failing, as he believes he will always have another opportunity…

personal weapons into the training mission will be able to attack the soldiers and attempt to subdue them. Various chairs and other objects will provide every character with club equivalents.

Besides assaulting the soldiers, who the players are likely to realise are acting innocently, hacker characters with appropriate wireless computer gear will be able to disrupt the soldiers' OtherWorld chips by rolling Computers against a Difficulty of 10.

Following the combat, news media and law enforcement will arrive. Likely, the players, the soldiers and several civilians will require medical attention. Any wounded will be quickly transported to local hospitals, although an army representative will arrive on the scene as well, demanding the soldiers be turned over to him immediately.

Any Player Characters who require hospitalisation will receive it, and the Referee should make certain to keep the group together during this time. After all is said and done, the players will be taken under heavy guard to the office of Major Jameson.

Jameson will be irate, ordering any of his aides from his office and blaming the players for the incident. Once the players decide to stand up for themselves, Jameson will smirk and play a video file of the shooting incident, shot from an angle in which it appears that

Silas Ainley	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 32	9	9	6	15	12	9
Computers 3, Engineer (electronics) 2, Gun Combat (pistols) 2, Physical sciences (electronics) 2						

the players provoked the soldiers into firing. If any player hacked into SMART-Co computers at any time during this scenario or they disabled the soldiers' OtherWorld chips by means of hacking then Jameson will throw down a file pad on his desk with evidence against the players and formally charge the players with whatever crimes fit the local law level.

At this point the players may decide to run, attack Jameson or plead their case. Pleading their case does no good, as Jameson is firm in his resolve. If the players run, Jameson will fire on them with his sidearm and the guards outside his office will accost them, and they will have the entire base against them. The players may try to silently subdue Jameson but Jameson will be able to alert the guards.

The major regards you all with a look of contempt. Finally, he speaks, 'There's nothing fun about being on the receiving end of payback, eh, scum?'

'Much as I'd like to see you squirm in court, having you go down for the attack on those civilians goes against my plans. I need the citizens of this world to rise against the oppressive military and if you end up taking the blame, then the people's outrage will be only directed towards SMART-Co. Sure, we need to see some of that, after all, they and you all, were responsible for my present condition, but just having you involved in the incident in the first place will put enough heat on SMART-Co to hamper their operations.'

'If you are still confused, I'll explain. You'll recall that you killed a SMART-Co employee named Silas Ainley. Well, Ainley was a lot smarter than anyone gave him credit for, and was able to integrate certain hidden features into OtherWorld chips, including a personality download. Well, enough of that, it is time that you were all killed in a botched escape attempt.'

With that Jameson/Ainley draws a pistol and trains it on the closest party member...

The players will have to fight Major Jameson/Ainley. Smart players will call for a medic if they harm him, in order to give a good appearance to others. No matter what the players' intentions are, they will be held liable for assaulting Jameson and the medics will discover he is in a fugue state, alive but completely unresponsive to all stimuli.

The players will be taken before the military police and asked to explain themselves. Any skilled hackers among the group may be able to offer evidence of Ainley's treachery, including the deliberate selection of the player group for the test mission. Additionally, this planet's Zteffani Gammaro will be able to corroborate their

story about Ainley. Of course, if the players were running any surreptitious recording devices during their encounter with Ainley, then the point of guilt will be moot.

EPILOGUE?

Following the players exonerating themselves, they will receive payment from the military and Zteffani will be authorised by SMART-Co to offer a sum of hush money in exchange for the players keeping their mouths shut about the rogue programmer on the loose. The players may deduce that Ainley is still floating about somewhere and very devious Referees may attempt to sow distrust among the group, hinting that any of the players may be hosting Ainley.

The purpose of these two scenarios is to provide Referees with a threatening, reusable villain. Every time Ainley is thwarted, he can simply regenerate into a new host body or computer. He can disappear from a campaign for months or years at a time before resurfacing to menace the players again. Possible uses for Ainley include inhabiting politicians, military personnel as above, Zteffani Gammaro or anyone else important to the players. As a final danger from this scenario, the players can get a true feeling for the scope of Ainley's power by having an orbiting navy ship begin firing on the players as they leave this planet. The ship will of course be under Ainley's control, and it will be up to the players to disable him via remote hacking, board the ship and hope for the best or simply escape for the time being.

The Thing in the Pit

By Alex Greene

INTRODUCTION

The characters confront an unthinkably ancient menace, and one character may be forced to choose between his life, and that of his shipmates and of an entire world.

SHALIMAR –
A WORLD IN THE BEYOND

The scenario takes place on Shalimar, a human world located in a remote sector called 'The Beyond':

Shalimar is a backwoods, with slow, simple electronic computers weighing tons and a primitive telephone network. The population rely upon broadcast television and radio for information.
The police are beginning to use handheld radio 'walkie-talkies,' superseding the archaic blue telephone boxes, which are still found on street corners.

The Shalimarans have built their own spaceport and are experimenting with rocketry. They allow outsiders to contact them, but they restrict high technology, accepting items of no more than TL 8. The high law level forbids all but police and the military from owning firearms.

The planet is on the cusp of achieving TL 8 thanks to a genius, Professor Bars Katzl of the Shalimar Aeronautics and Rocketry Association (SARA), whom the characters have befriended. Professor Katzl proposed 20 years ago that a network of orbiting satellites in synchronous orbit could provide an effective global communications network. For this insight, he was hailed as a visionary.

Not long afterwards, contact was made with starfarers. Professor Katzl was appointed the spokesman to lead all diplomatic contacts with offworlders. Professor Katzl has befriended the characters at the time of this scenario.

THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS
Guests of Professor Katzl

The characters are here to trade TL 8 electronics and to offer their ship's services in launching several Shalimaran communications satellites and a handful of unmanned probes to several of the system's worlds. Professor Katzl is in charge of this mission, and his government backs his plan with good, hard currency and a cargo hold full of lucrative goods for the characters as a reward for their generosity.

Business is routine: characters may indulge in trade with the locals as usual, with a +2 DM to all speculative trade transactions. Throughout this story they have no physical access to their vessel – it is being prepared for the satellite mission. The characters are temporarily marooned on Shalimar.

While they are here, they are interviewed for television by a pretty television news anchor, Lonia Vascu, who grills them on their offworld activities. What wonders have they seen? And what do they think of the Shalimarans?

The characters are staying at Professor Katzl's mansion outside the capital as his guests. Behind an unlocked door in, the characters discover his pride and joy: a prototech TL9 Model 2 ship's computer, connected to computers in academic faculties all over Shalimar through trunk landlines.

Called Away

One night, a telephone call interrupts a cordial dinner. Professor Katzl reveals he has been urgently summoned to the capital. As he speaks, a military helicopter lands on the lawn. The characters may request to board the helicopter, but two stern Shalimaran soldiers block them.

Shalimar   The Beyond Subsector   A   0105   B86764A-7   Ag Ni Ri

Professor Bars Katzl	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
Age 45	Scholar (scientist) 6 terms	5	7	7	D	D	9
Admin-0, Computers-2, Diplomat-0, Engineer (rocketry)-2, Engineer (electronics)-3, Science (physics)-2, Physics (electronics)-1							

The only thing the characters can do while they wait is watch the news. And there is plenty. Since the characters arrived, tensions have begun building up with sporadic rioting, domestic violence is rising and arrests for disorderly conduct, public drug taking and lewd behaviour are all showing a sudden, sharp increase.

Urgent Request

The telephone rings again. It is for the characters.

It is Professor Katzl on the line. 'Ah, there you are,' he says. 'I believe we are in further need of your services. You see, the construction workers on the Vexhill Line extension have dug up something, and I wonder if you have seen anything like it in your travels. I've sent transportation to bring you to the capital.'

The ground cars and escort vehicles arrive outside within minutes. The looks on the soldiers' faces hint that refusal to come with them is not an option.

Unearthed

The characters arrive at Vehill, just as a squad of bomb squad officers emerge from the entrance to an excavation wearing hazmat suits, gesturing all is clear. A television crew stands nearby, recording the extraordinary scene unfolding.

Professor Katzl emerges from the entrance following the bomb squad officers. Gently, he rebuffs a television reporter with 'Not now, Lonia. Save it for the press conference.' He looks irritated and also frightened.

'I'm so glad you're here,' he tells you. 'Come with me. This is extraordinary.' Behind the wire link fence cordon, the entrance to the underground construction site seems like a darkened maw.

He leads you through the dark tunnels to the site.

'Construction workers unearthed the object at dawn,' Professor Katzl says. 'They thought it was a bomb dating back to a civil war several decades ago, so they brought in the bomb squad. The problem is, we have no idea what it is, save to say that it's likely old. Very old.'

You reach the site of the dig. Hurricane lanterns and flashlights illuminate the darkness as soldiers struggle to hook up electric lights in the site to with power cables from a large generator you passed just outside.

A makeshift wooden platform rings the interior perimeter of the pit, which is about 30 metres across. In the centre of the chamber, half buried in the soft mud, a smooth, rounded conical shape juts out at a slight angle. The shape appears to be of some sort of dark metallic blue material. It is cold to the touch. Very, very cold.

The characters may run a series of tests on the object's surface, attempting to determine its material composition.
Education, Engineer or Physical Science (chemistry), 1 – 6 hours, Formidable (-6).

The Inexplicable Artefact

The object's shell defies analysis with the equipment available at TL 7. It resists diamond drills and oxyacetylene torches without so much as a scratch or a heat scar. The metal appears to be not only beyond Shalimar's Tech Level: it may be beyond *the characters'*. However, one simple test – striking it with a hammer – reveals a curious fact. The object is hollow.

At one point, an exhausted Professor Katzl gives up and heads back home to consult with fellow academics across Shalimar on what to do next. The characters are escorted from the site and an armed guard assigned to protect the dig. Another armed guard escorts the cavalcade back to the estate: a food riot is in progress. The characters smell the smoke from nearby fires and hear the angry screaming.

The characters get a good night's rest. It is their last one, for a while.

UNUSUAL EVENTS
Strange Forces Stir

The excavation proceeds over 3D6 days but progress is slow. Roll 3D6 each day, adding a cumulative +1 DM. Then roll the dice indicated to determine whether or not the incident happens with the characters as direct witnesses. Otherwise, it is reported on TV.

Referees wishing to add some spice for characters who wish for opportunities to engage in combat can give them the opportunity to confront rioters or cultists who may be attempting to storm the dig or suspect the characters of being involved in 'the conspiracy'.

Unusual Events

3D6	Events
3–6	Demonstration (roll 1D6 twice)
7–8	Riot (roll 2D6)
9–10	Hysteria (roll 2D6)
11–14	Vektism (roll 2D6)
15	Disappearance (roll 2D6)
16	Visions (roll 3D6)
17	Writing (roll 3D6)
18	Incident At The Dig

Demonstrations: A protest march takes place. 4+, it is in the capital. Second roll: 6, the march turns into a riot.

Riot: A riot takes place in one of the cities on Shalimar. 10+, the riot takes place in the capital, and the characters witness it first hand.

Hysteria: Scenes of mass hysteria and public mourning. A fair amount of public nudity and licentious behaviour as Vektists and ordinary people proclaim the end of the world. Roll 2d6 and add the DM. On 8+, the characters witness such hysteria for themselves.

Vektism: The characters see Vektists marching through the street chanting and burning incense, or catch a news report of a police raid breaking up a Vektist sect. On 10+, the characters witness a Vektist march.

Disappearance: People are disappearing inexplicably, suddenly. Often in mid-sentence. Sometimes they leave their clothes behind. On 6+, an accident happens – a motorist vanishes at the wheel, a doctor disappears in surgery. On 10+, the disappearance happens to a Non-Player Character the characters have had contact with – though not to Professor Katzl or to themselves.

Visions: The characters hear a first hand account of a vision of some sort of 'demonic entity' the witness encountered in a dream. On 11+, one of the characters has the vision.

Writing: People report strange writing appearing everywhere. On 11+, the characters witness the writing. They can take photographs of this strange, alien script. It is no hallucination. The ephemeral writing is *real*, though the substance vanishes before they can take a sample of it for analysis.

Incident at the Dig: The characters bear witness to an incident at the dig site involving the Artefact. Choose from the following but apply each incident only once.

- **Gatecrasher:** A young Shalimaran, dressed in a Vektist robe, sneaks into the dig site. She brandishes a leather book at the Artefact, chants at it and attempts to touch the side of the object before security forces take her away.

- **Fainting Spell:** Everyone in and around the dig site suddenly feels dizzy. Roll End 8+: a failing character loses consciousness for 10 – 60 minutes, and awakes with vivid dreams of strange, hopping demons with leathery wings in his head. This phenomenon will have extended for 2d6 x 100 metres around the site, even above ground.

- **Violence:** One of the researchers explodes with anger for no reason, and attacks the characters.

- **Insanity:** One of the researchers, a guard or a bystander goes insane and babbles about demons.

- **Hallucination:** The characters experience hallucinations of strange, small, hopping winged creatures out of the corner of their eye. This unnerves and distracts them, putting a DM of

–2 on all rolls based on Int or Edu for that day. They are not alone: other people they meet occasionally appear similarly distracted, sometimes inexplicably hostile to them.

- **Vanished:** Someone enters the site in a daze. She approaches the Artefact, touches it … and silently disappears in a swirling nimbus of blue light.

When the dig is complete, move on to the following scene.

A Shocking Conclusion

If the characters have not worked out by now that the Artefact is responsible for these phenomena, have Professor Katzl suggest it to them at the dig, or have the player of the smartest character roll Int 7+ to figure it out.

Professor Katzl points out that Shalimar possesses a nuclear capability in the hands of an increasingly apocalyptic, hysterical population. if the characters do nothing, this planet could go up in flames and take them with it!

An Aperture!

Someone shouts out. There is a huge bang and a yell. A worker has slipped on the near-frictionless shell and fallen, badly injuring himself. As he is stretchered away, someone notices that an aperture has opened, close to the ground. It was not there before.

Whatever is inside, it stinks like an open grave.

RESEARCH

The characters need to pursue research into the various phenomena plaguing Shalimar's population. Fortunately, they have an edge: Professor Katzl's prototype internet connection, linking Shalimar's university libraries together. *Education, 1 – 6 days, Routine (+2). Without Professor Katzl's computer, Difficult (–2).*

Vektism

Veltism is a belief on Shalimar in the existence of **Vekt**, a kind of Devil figure. Vektists believe that by indulging in sins, they can appease Vekt and thus protect the rest of the population from Vekt's wrath.

Belief in Vektism dates back, in fact, to the beginning of written Shalimaran history. Characters who read up on Vektism discover that it is, in fact, the planet's dominant religion – virtually every Shalimaran household has a small shrine to Vekt somewhere. Even

Professor Katzl, the great rationalist, is not immune from the fear of Vekt and proudly shows the characters his shrine if asked.

On an Exceptional Success, the characters learn that Veltism has always had its strongest presence in the capital. Historical research turns up a number of small shrines based in and around the district of Vexhill over the centuries.

Disappearances

Historical records reveal a curious fact. One night during the war, a large chunk of the population of Vexhill is said to have mysteriously disappeared overnight. Police and the military feared a bomb had destroyed the site, but when they arrived they saw abandoned houses and deserted streets. Hot food sat cooling on kitchen tables; televisions and old-style radios were on, unattended; beds lay unmade; even loose piles of clothing lay about here and there, as though people had divested themselves of their clothes and were running around naked somewhere.

By the time Vexhill was earmarked for the extension, 15 years later, the plans went unopposed because nobody had returned to the district to repopulate it. Nobody had wanted to.

Visions

Research reveals that visions of strange, demonic entities have been part of Shalimaran lore since the dawn of their recorded history, 15 000 years ago. People have experienced strange hallucinations of short, demonic creatures with leathery skin, bulbous heads, huge black almond eyes and leathery wings since at least then.

If the characters took photographs of the strange writings earlier, they realise this writing has appeared before, in some of the oldest documents the Shalimarans own. This is their earliest writing system and it resembles no written alphabet on record – not even in the characters' computerised ship's library.

Again, Vexhill comes up in research: more sightings of this strange writing and the demonic creatures have occurred in Vexhill than anywhere else. In fact, the name 'Vexhill' is itself a corruption of an even older name. *Vekt's Hill.*

Vexhill

At night, nobody comes to Vexhill. Not even vandals, morbid Vektists or animals. Characters may observe locals shuddering and blessing themselves as they pass by the dark, rotting terraced houses, their windows still mostly intact, rows of black squares staring at them like empty eyes.

ESCALATION

Public Disappearance
Plucky television news reporter Lonia Vascu has been following the characters for the duration of their visit. Her face has become a familiar one to the characters.

Tonight, she is presenting a live TV report from the dig, interviewing Professor Katzl and the characters.

'What do you think of these inexplicable events?' Lonia asks the characters, as they gather outside the site. This is an off the cuff comment, with the microphones and TV off.

With the discovery of the aperture, nobody is allowed in, except for Professor Katzl and his team who wanted to go inside the Artefact first. Non-essential personnel are not allowed in, and that includes the characters.

'I've been all around the world,' Lonia says. *'And I've never seen anything like this before. I was told by the government to try and keep people calm but basically if your ship was working I'd be out of here on the next flight.'*

At this point, the TV camera is switched back on and pointed at Lonia. The soundman tests the microphone for sound levels and Lonia is ready to begin.

As she launches into the latest live report, everybody suddenly hears a strange, rising whine coming from the site. It rises into a wailing screech, more animal than machine. All activities are at a –4 DM due to the distraction.

As the sound reaches a crescendo, Lonia suddenly clutches her stomach. She screams. Before a live TV audience, she vanishes in a nimbus of swirling blue light.

Global Panic
Word of the incident spreads everywhere there is a telephone connection. Some people had recorded the incident on their home video recorders and within hours panic flares up across the globe.

Back At The Dig
In the aftermath, everyone gets up. Almost everyone is now fleeing the site. Only Professor Katzl and the soundman remain. Professor Katzl looks distraught at losing Lonia. The soundman, however, looks puzzled.

If the characters do not ask, Professor Katzl listens to the playback and then plays it to the characters.

The tape did not pick up the rising scream that disabled everyone and preceded Lonia's disappearance. Other sounds were recorded but not that one.

The characters may now attempt two separate rolls, based on what skills they possess. The skills are: Life Science, with a speciality in Psionicology; and Engineer, with a speciality in Screens.

To determine the nature of that scream: *Intelligence, Life Science (psionicology), Difficult (–2).* To determine the cause of the disappearances: *Education, Engineer (screens), Difficult (–2).*

Referee: The reason why the scream was not picked up by the tape was that it was not a physical sound at all but rather a psionic projection similar to a telepathic *assault*. Those nearest the Artefact suffered the most; the characters will need to investigate this matter further. This means entering the Artefact.

A character who has had experience of operating nuclear dampers will recognise the blue flare as the burst of Cerenkov radiation produced by unstable nuclei when a nuclear damper beam is played across them. He may recall rumours nuclear dampers exist of a more advanced type, capable of disintegrating stable matter too; as well as rumours the Imperial Navy had a vessel with that capability at one time.

EXPLORING THE ARTEFACT
The ground has been dug around The Artefact, and the scaffolding now goes down a number of tiers. The Artefact is about 20 metres in diameter at the base; judging by the curvature of the surface, Professor Katzl theorises its shape is that of a flattened sphere with a parabolic curvature and a possible maximum diameter of around 100 metres.

The interior surface of the Artefact is almost as frictionless as the exterior. The characters are tethered together with ropes and gently lowered through the aperture.

The first chamber they enter is spherical, with another circular aperture at the far end. *Negotiating the Interior: Athletics, Dexterity, Difficult (–2).* Beyond that aperture lies a short cylindrical corridor leading downwards at an angle; the smell of rot comes from there. At the far end is a spherical chamber and, at its base, a four metre wide shaft.

This chamber and the shaft lie on the centre line of the Artefact. The shaft appears bottomless. However, the walls of the chamber at the top of this shaft bear writings similar to those found recently. Translating the writings so far proves impossible without a reference.

Descent

The shaft goes down several hundred metres. Characters discover more apertures leading from the central shaft. Each aperture leads to a short cylindrical corridor and to a spherical chamber. These chambers seem to be placed about the Artefact randomly, without rhyme or reason.

Sepulchre

Some of these chambers contain bones. Some look like human bones, others are smaller and more brittle, the hollow bones of an avian creature, and strange, almond-shaped skulls.

Base of The Shaft

At the foot of the shaft are more bones, and a solid floor. Part of the base of one of the lower chambers has been cut off, and there is solid rock underneath.

It looks as if, at some time, there had been more to the Artefact, but that somehow a huge spherical bite had been taken out of the base of it.

REVELATIONS AND A HARD CHOICE

If the players have not worked out yet what The Artefact is, have the smartest characters make an Education check on 8+. If they succeed, they realise what the Artefact is.

It is a ship. Specifically, an Ancient ship, and a big one.

The Ship Speaks

The characters have no time to react to their discovery before they find themselves elsewhere. They have been teleported into a featureless spherical chamber not reachable from the shaft. They are now all piled together at the bottom of this chamber.

This is the vessel's Bridge.

A light plays over the characters for a moment. Then a voice speaks to each of them in Anglic, saying the following words: *One must choose.*

The ship now gives them time to decide: but first, it explains what it wants, and why.

The Ship's Story

I travelled far with my cargo in the service of Yaskoydray. My cargo was precious – a colony of humans of the Yaskoydri and their caretakers. I was assigned to the Long Journey to the galactic core, when a mishap destroyed my drives. Helpless, I drifted here. I deployed my cargo onto the surface, before falling here. Over time, I sank into the mud, forgotten, in pain. I have waited for so long for salvation. Please. One of you must help me.

The players may deduce that the Shalimarans are, in fact, descendants of the original colony. Somehow, the ship managed to teleport surviving human stock onto the surface before it crashed and killed whoever remained on board. The ship has remained alive and in pain all this time. The strange sightings of Vekt over the generations were the computer's unconscious telepathic projections of the ship's Droyne crew, distorted and clouded by dementia, and the writings are Ancient script saying, basically, *Please help me to die.*

All this time the ship has sought to contact someone who can do that.

The Hard Choice

The self-destruct can only be activated from within the chamber. It can only be activated manually, and whoever remains to trigger the self-destruct must therefore die along with the ship.

The ship's computer presents this choice with profound apologies. To show good faith, it returns all the characters to the surface. Whoever makes the choice, all they have to do is touch the surface – it will read their intent and return them instantly to the chamber.

If the characters do not choose, Professor Katzl will. Lonia's death had robbed him of someone precious to him. With nothing left for him to do, all his challenges met and nobody to share his victories, he decides he can do this one last thing for his world.

Act of Compassion

Whoever makes the choice, the moment they touch the side of the ship, they vanish into the interior. A deep rumble warns everyone to get clear. They barely have time to evacuate when the ship, the dig site and an area 200 metres in diameter vanishes in a ball of blue light that rises, screaming, into the sky and then dissipates.

Silence falls on a stunned Shalimar. The fear is over. The rioting, the religious mania, fade as the ship's mental influence ceases to affect the Shalimarans.

AFTERMATH

The characters receive an award for their troubles. A rushed ceremony at the starport sees the survivors given the Shalimaran Medal of Honour. If Professor Katzl sacrificed himself, a shrine to his name is set up on the grounds of his home and the characters still get the medal, as well as promises they will want for nothing next time they visit.

With the ship ready to pick them up and go about its mission to lay those satellites, and its cargo hold full, the characters barely have time to say their goodbyes before heading off to their next adventure.

The Ancients

Referee: 300,000 years ago, the Ancients evolved from the aliens now known as Droyne. Possessing unimaginable technology, they uprooted entire species and genetically uplifted them for slave labour or, sometimes, amusement. One debate rages among academics that humans are among those species transplanted, which is why so many humans can be found across the Galaxy.

Among the marvels developed by the Ancients, it is rumoured, are sentient computers and weapons capable of disintegrating matter with a thought.

DEATH STATION

BY MARC W MILLER WITH FRANK CHADWICK AND JOHN HARSHMMAN

This adventure takes place in orbit above a backwater world of little importance to anyone. It should have a population numbering less than a 1000 and no formal government or law level. Local technology should be virtually all imported.

A PATRON!

The local agent for Lysani Laboratories, who lives in the mining camp and apparently gets along well with the company, has just walked into the mess hall and says he is looking for volunteers. Any takers?

The agent is concerned that he cannot get communication from the Lysani Labs ship in orbit; and he has an uneasy feeling something is wrong. He needs a group of workers to go up there and check out the station. He will provide an air/raft and vacc suits.

This may be just a routine communications breakdown. If that is the case, then he will pay Cr.1,500 per person, and they can get a good meal at the station (he gives them a voucher for this).

If there is more of a problem, he needs a complete report. He will pay for the report with a one off payment of Cr12,000 and a middle passage offworld for each of the group.

THE LABORATORY SHIP

Research is an unending pursuit within the Imperium. A constant effort to further understand the universe. produces more than understanding; it creates products, markets, jobs and profits. As a result, the research efforts of individuals and corporations are constantly moving forward. Given many continuing research projects, it is only natural that mobile research platforms be designed and made available at reasonable prices. The Calipso class laboratory ship is one example.

Using a 400-ton hull, the laboratory ship is a movable research and development station used for routine commercial experimentation. The ship has one 40-ton pinnace and two air/rafts. Cargo capacity is 19.7 tons. An additional 50 tons are available within the ship for use as lab space. The ship is unstreamlined.

The lab ship requires a crew of five: pilot, navigator, medic and two engineers. The pilot also operates the pinnace. Gunners may

be added to the crew if the Ship is armed and additional crew are carried to execute the research functions.

The lab ship is built as a ring structure which is rotated to provide centrifugal gravity simulation. Although the standard grav plates and inertial compensators are installed, they may be turned off and centrifugal force used instead in order to remove grav forces as a variable in experiments. Two drive pods are mounted on the rings and contain drives and the power plant; on the forward face of the pods are hardpoints for turret weaponry if called for.

Two air/rafts are carried in a compartment on the ring hull. They provide access to world surfaces, both for specimen gathering and routine errands. The 40-ton pinnace is carried at the end of a central spoke, making mating easy even if the ring is rotating.

Operations

Typically, a lab ship will be purchased (or chartered) and assigned to a specific system or world for a series of research projects. After jumping to the system, the ship takes up orbit and begins its regimen of experiments. Lab ships are capable of moving great

distances but they generally take up station and remain in one place for long periods of time. The air/rafts are used for routine transport while the pinnace is used for heavier work or missions requiring greater speed. The ship itself has minor thrusters positioned along the ring; they allow the ship to institute spin or to stop it as desired.

Refuelling

The lab ship is unstreamlined and cannot skim fuel itself, this task falls to the 40-ton pinnace. It is assigned the routine of skimming a gas giant and ferrying fuel to the lab ship. Where refined fuel is available at a distance from the station, the pinnace carries it to the ship's fuel tanks.

APPROACHING THE SHIP

When the lab ship is approached, the most striking feature observed is the rotation of the ring, The play of light and shadow constantly reveals new facets of the exterior hull. Not rotating, however, is the pinnace and its docking ring. The structure at the end of the single spoke is specifically mounted to counteract the rotation of the ship, making docking easier for less skillful pilots.

Entry Points

Four entry points to the ring are immediately obvious to observers. They are the two air/raft bays, the cargo access plate under the main lab and the docking ring for the research pinnace.

The air/raft bays normally contains an air/raft each. They are air locks and can be opened and entered using one of the ship's vehicles; the ship's air/rafts have remote triggers which will open the bay doors. A makeshift trigger can be constructed with Engineer (electronics) 9+, 1–6 hours.

The cargo access plate to the main lab is a heavy, fully secured sliding panel normally used to allow installation of research equipment. It is not normally opened, and requires the depressurization of the entire main lab. Unbolting the access plate requires at least two persons and several hours.

The docking ring can be entered by any six meter diameter vessel; entry to the spoke is then quite easy. If no six meter diameter vessel is available, then the manual hatch on the spoke can be opened and the ship entered with Engineer (electronics) 8+, 10–60 minutes

Simplistic solutions to the entry problem (such as cutting through the hull or blasting the ship with laser fire) should be discouraged as detrimental to the ship's interior.

INTERIOR DETAILS

The specific interior fittings for the ship are standard, and examples are shown on the symbols chart on the deck plans.

Interior Walls

Interior walls are partitions: non load-bearing panels firmly fixed in place. They are not pressure tight and cannot withstand a concerted assault.

Doing 20 points of damage on a wall with an energy weapon will burn a hole large enough for one person to pass through per turn; an explosion which produces 20 points of damage will produce the same effect. Weapons firing bullets are less efficient in doing this sort of damage; such a weapon must produce 200 points of damage before a person sized hole is produced.

Set in interior walls are sliding doors. Such doors save space over conventional swinging doors, and so are standard on most starships, They are not air tight, and serve merely as privacy screens. They may be broken through using weapons in the same manner as the interior walls.

Sliding doors are powered and open completely (assuming ship power is on) when a stud is pressed on the wall next to the door. Such doors may be locked (from the other side, from both sides or by the computer) and a red light shows on the stud panel to indicate this fact. When ship power is off, sliding doors will not operate automatically but they may be overridden manually with brute force (Strength 8+; a crow bar grants a +4 DM).

Bulkheads

The major structural components of a ship are the bulkheads and they represent the compartmentalisation of the ship for damage control and environment maintenance as well as the outer hull of the ship. Bulkheads are very difficult to destroy. A concerted effort with an energy weapon or explosive must produce 200 points of damage in order to create a hole large enough for a person to step through. Bullet firing weapons are ineffective against bulkheads.

All deck floors are assumed to be bulkheads.

Maintenance Hatches

At some points, small, unobtrusive maintenance hatches have been placed in bulkheads to allow repair or service personnel access to machinery or equipment. Maintenance hatches are not commonly used; that is to say, they stand closed and generally ignored nearly all of the time. Only rarely do crew and passengers even recognise their existence. Maintenance hatches are unpowered and they

lock with a common service key. On this ship, one key fits all maintenance hatches; there is a key stored in a compartment in the pilot's couch on the bridge and one hangs on the wall in each drive pod.

Lift Shaft

Elevators lifting personnel or goods between decks are called lift shafts. In the lab ship, this consists of a pressure tight lift car and a shaft extending along the spoke leading to the docking ring. Ordinary sliding doors close the shaft when a lift car is not present. The lift car itself is sealed with a sliding door which is pressure tight. Between decks, the lift shaft is sealed by pressure doors, maintaining integrity between the decks.

Iris Valves

Iris valves are pressure tight automatic portals set in bulkheads.

A valve functions much like the iris of a camera; many panels retract into the frame to leave an open passage or extend to block the portal with solid metal. Iris valves may be horizontal or vertical. The deck plan symbols chart shows the various combinations possible. Iris valves are operated by pressing a stud on the wall next to the valve. A valve may be locked from either side or by computer and a red light glows on the indicator panel to indicate this condition. Valves cannot be forced closed if already open.

Valves are very difficult to force open once fully closed. Players need Strength 9+ to force open a closed iris valve; –3 DM if the person is in vacc suit, +2 DM if ship power is off, –8 DM if locked. Gunfire and explosions will simply block the valve tighter. Iris valves close automatically when a pressure difference is sensed between the two sides of the bulkhead. They will not close fully until the valve is clear of any foreign objects (like legs, hands and so on).

Manual Hatches

Cheaper substitutes for iris valves are manual hatches. These are hinged pressure doors secured by a handwheel and extending bars. They are not automatic and have no interaction with the ship's computer (although there may be a sensor which tells the computer if the hatch is open or closed).

INTERIOR CONDITIONS

Normal conditions generally approximate those of a habitable world surface. Intruders will probably be in vacc suits initially. Once they have entered the interior, they should be encouraged to removed helmets and gloves at the very least.

Light

Many areas within the lab ship are fully and comfortably lit. The intensity of light can be varied by computer instructions or by simple wall switches. Some areas (such as the cargo hold or maintenance duct) may be poorly lit. Some areas may have no light and the fixtures may be smashed. Other areas (such as the bridge) may be lit with red light to preserve the night vision of personnel assigned there.

Each room description includes an indication of the lighting situation within.

Temperature

The interior of a normal ship is about 25 degrees C.

Plumbing

Each stateroom contains sanitary facilities for individuals.

Gravity

The lab ship has grav plates built into the flooring. These plates produce standard gravity within the interior. Acceleration compensators are also installed, to negate the effects of high acceleration and lateral G forces while manoeuvring. A ship's passengers would be unable to tell whether they were moving through space or grounded on a planet without looking out a viewscreen.

The grav plates can be turned off and interior gravity provided by centrifugal force if local gravity effects are to be eliminated as a variable for experiments.
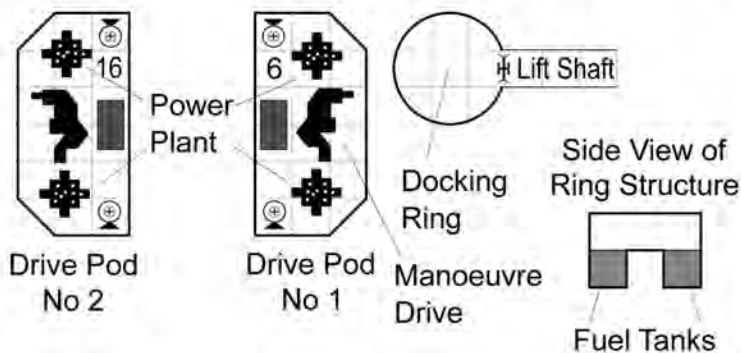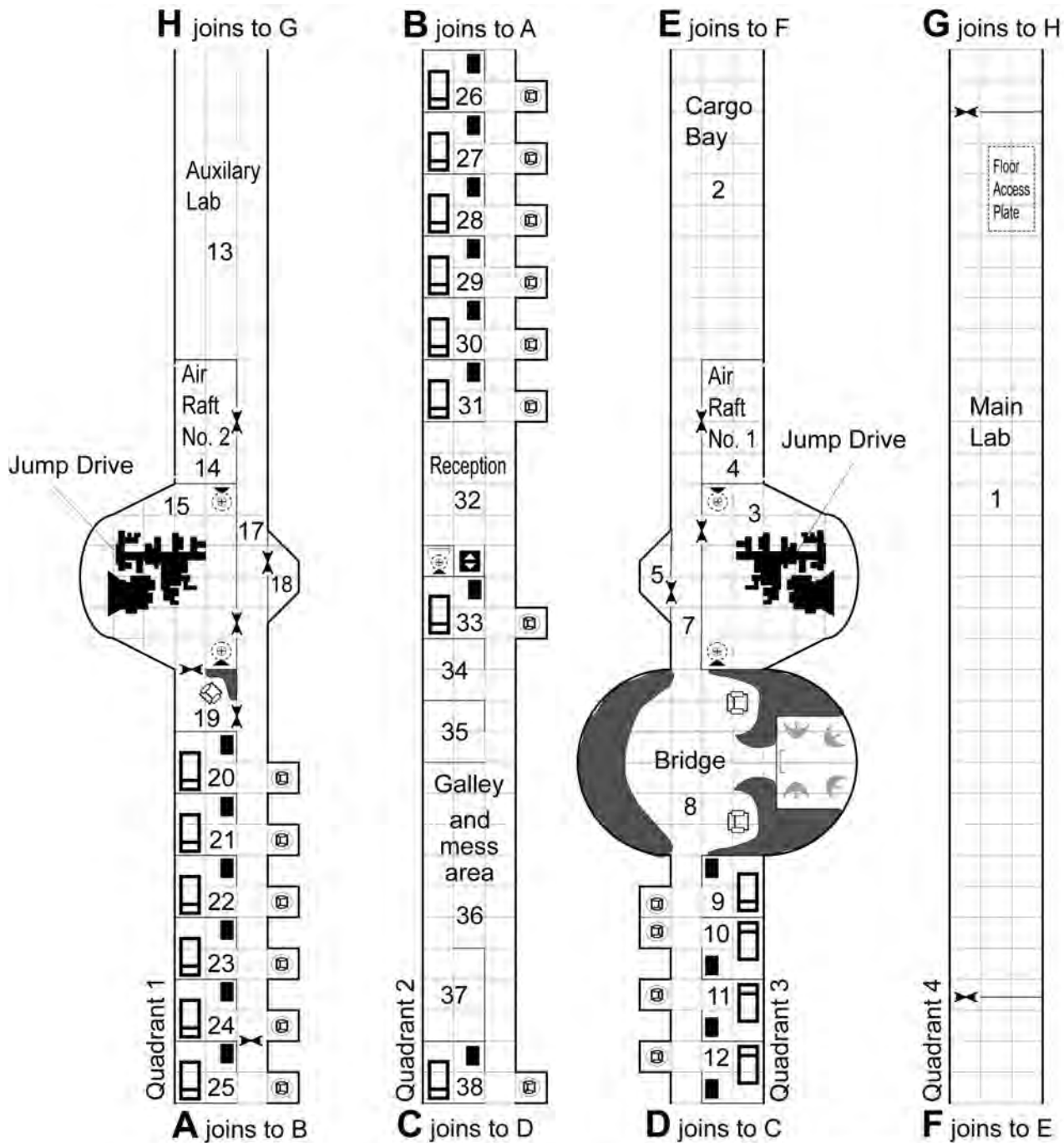
Power

Ship power is on, and all interior mechanisms are functioning. The ship is rotating but the grav plates are also on. Easily found light switches in each room allow areas to be illuminated.

A prominent power on switch on the bridge (another is located in each drive pod) controls all power to the ship. If the switch is turned off, all characters will perceive a slight lurch. Turning off power douses the lights and cuts the grav plates; loss of grav plates still leaves the centrifugal effects of the ship rotation, which places gravity at 0.5 G.

Atmosphere

The interior of the ship is fully pressurised, and an atmosphere tester will indicate breathable gases; there is no apparent (or real) danger of losing pressure at present. If pressure is lost in an area, tracing its effects on the deck plans will show which areas are in

H joins to G

Auxilary
Lab

13

Air
Raft
No. 2
14

Jump Drive

15

17

18

19

Quadrant 1

20

21

22

23

24

25

A joins to B

B joins to A

26

27

28

29

30

31

Reception

32

33

34

35

Galley
and
mess
area

36

Quadrant 2

37

38

C joins to D

E joins to F

Cargo
Bay

2

Air
Raft
No. 1
4

Jump Drive

3

5

7

Bridge

8

9

10

11

12

Quadrant 3

D joins to C

G joins to H

Floor
Access
Plate

Main
Lab

1

Quadrant 4

F joins to E

Drive Pod
No 2

16

Power
Plant

6

Drive Pod
No 1

Docking
Ring

Manoeuvre
Drive

Lift Shaft

Side View of
Ring Structure

Fuel Tanks

Chair	Machinery	
Bed	Low berth Unit	
Locker	Access Hatch	
Iris Valve	Hatch	
Iris Valve Floor	Hatch Floor	
Iris Valve Ceiling	Hatch Ceiling	
Iris Valve Both	Hatch Both	
Escape Pod	Sensors	
Solar Panel	Lift	

The Calipso-class laboratory ship is a variant of more common classes (see page 121 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*), though it shares much in common with them. Based upon a 400 ton hull, it has slightly less cargo space but can stay on station without resupply much longer and includes air/rafts, reducing reliance on the on-board pinnace.

Laboratory Ship (Calypso)			Hull	Price (MCr.)
Hull	400 toms	Hull 8	—	16
	—	Structure 8	—	—
Armour	None	—	—	—
Jump Drive	D	Jump 2	25	30
Manoeuvre Drive	B	Thrust 1	3	8
Power Plant	D	—	13	32
	Solar Panel	—	1.3	0.13
Bridge	—	—	20	2
Computer	Model 2	Rating 10	—	0.16
Electronics	Advanced	DM +1	3	2
Weapons	Hardpoint 1	Empty, fire control only	1	—
	Hardpoint 2	Empty, fire control only	1	—
Fuel	128 tons	One Jump-2, 26 weeks of operation	128	—
Cargo	19.7 tons	—	19.7	—
18 Staterooms	—	—	72	9
Extras	Fuel Processor	20 tons/day	1	0.05
	18 Escape Pods	—	9	2
	Laboratory	—	50	50
	Pinnace	(Fuel Skimmer) Docking Clamp	45	19.666
	Air/Raft	—	8	0.55
Software	Manoevre/0	—	—	—
	Jump Control/2	Rating 10	—	—
	Library	—	—	—
Maintenance Cost (monthly)	—	—	—	0.128517
Life Support Cost (monthly)	—	—	—	0.04
Total Tonnage & Cost	—	—	400	154.4004

danger. Iris valves automatically close to minimise the effects of depressurisation.

Vacc suit discipline should be broken as soon as possible. While the suits themselves provide the equivalent of cloth armor, helmets and gloves should be removed, or the characters will be affected by –3 penalties to Dex based rolls.

INTERIOR CONFIGURATION

The deck plans for the ship portray the interior of the laboratory ship. The ship is divided into four quadrants, numbered 1 to 4. The end of each quadrant is labeled with a letter and a notation of which quadrant end it joins to. It should also be noted each deck plan has an arrow which shows the direction of forward on the ship.

The curvature of the ring also affects line-of-sight within the ship. Along the length of the ring, two people of average height could see each other at eye level from 9 metres (6 squares). A standing person could see the deck at 11.2 metres (7.5 squares), and a person with his eyes at deck level could see the deck 13.5 metres (9 squares) away. Naturally, gunfire is affected in the same way.

THE DECK PLANS

Individual rooms are numbered within the deck plans; rooms are discussed in numerical order within sections devoted to the four quadrants.

QUADRANT FOUR

Quadrant four consists entirely of the main laboratory.

1. Main Laboratory

Almost all of the laboratory is in darkness. The end nearest the floor access plate is still lit by ceiling fixtures; the rest of the laboratory is dark and the lighting fixtures are smashed.

Much of the laboratory is outfitted with various chemical apparatus. Experimental tables line the walls, and form two rows down the center of the laboratory.

Two aisles lead down the length of the laboratory; occasional breaks in the tables allow shifting from each aisle to the other every 10 metres or so. Many of the tables are outfitted with various chemical apparatus. Some (about one table in ten) are knocked over or broken; the rest stand in various states of use or disuse. None of the laboratory equipment is currently operating and many examples are stained from lack of attention, or dirty from lack of cleaning.

THE COMPUTER

In approximately the centre of the laboratory, a small scientific computer (Ichiban Model/0.5) occupies part of one table; this is not the ship's computer but merely a scientist's research tool. Small flickering lights on its console indicate that it is operational. The screen is constantly flashing data and altering it.

This computer is processing elementary data about the lab's experiments. Each of five experiments (numbered randomly) is momentarily displayed and then is replaced by the next. Only by watching the screen flash through several times will an individual be able to note the exact data being shown.

Any individual with the Computer skill can stop the display and manipulate it; others will only cause the computer to turn off and lose the data.

The data includes code number, general title, location with in the ship and a list of raw results for each of five experiments: they are numbered 1067, 1077, 1079, 1101 and 1103.

THE LAIR

In a darkened far section of the laboratory (near F), several tables have been overturned to create a small den or lair. It is padded with bedding and trash and just outside the tables is a pile of garbage, including bones and excrement.

One table is completely overturned, and lies next to the wall, if it is moved, characters will discover a hole in the flooring leading to the fuel tankage below. The flooring and the tank have been cut with a laser or torch and a small hatch has been created leading into the tanks. The jagged edges are padded with wadded up bed clothing. The passage is dirty, and looks well used.

QUADRANT THREE

Quadrant three consists of a cargo bay, the hangar for air/raft number 1, drive pod number 1, the bridge, and several crew staterooms.

2. Cargo Bay

The area is dimly lit, but all lighting fixtures are intact; local wall switches can raise lighting levels. This 19.7 ton cargo storage area appears to be a standard chamber, with bare metal walls, and tie down fittings on the ceiling and floor. The wall between the cargo bay and the air/raft hangar is a large sliding door. This door allows trans-shipment of bulky cargo from the air/raft if required. Within the cargo bay are many large crates and storage containers. Some are empty and markings on them indicating scientific instruments were brought aboard in them. They are now being kept until needed.

One section of the cargo bay contains a large crate which is air tight, and appears to have been used for the transport of live animal specimens. Scattered behind the craft are the remnants of some small specimen cages. Close inspection will reveal some blood smeared on the walls and floor, but no sign of the animals themselves.

3. Drive Pod Number One Lower Level

This area is well lit, with no fixtures smashed. This lower level of the drive pod contains part of the ship's jump drive. It is accessed from the corridor and hatches lead up to the second level.

The walls of this chamber are plastered with posters and instructional aids pertaining to the jump drive. The various materials are put out by the drive manufacturers and were used in the education of apprentice engineers. Taped to the wall behind one of the posters is a maintenance hatch key, clearly labeled.

4. Air/Raft Number One

This area is dark and the lighting fixtures have been smashed. Firmly fastened into transport brackets in this area is a standard air/raft. A cargo door leads from this chamber to the adjacent cargo bay.

5. Hardpoint Number One
This area is dark and there are no lighting fixtures installed. This forward portion of the drive pod is intended to be fitted with a turret and weaponry. Once the hardpoint is armed, a gunner's couch and fire control equipment could direct defense of the ship. At present, the area is empty and there is nothing but some bare wiring.

6. Drive Pod Number One Upper Level
This drive pod level is well lit. The upper level of the drive pod extends inward toward the center of the ring. It contains the power plant and the maneuvre drive, This entire area is completely unused, although the power plant continues to function without supervision. A thin layer of dust covers all surfaces.

7. Corridor
The corridor is poorly lit; every second ceiling light is on. The remaining lights have been computer dimmed, but they may be turned on from a wall switch. This small narrow corridor leads past the drive pod from the cargo bay to the bridge.

8. Bridge
The bridge is well lit, with the exception of the end farthest away from the drive pod (toward room 9); there, the last three fixtures in the ceiling have been smashed. Two control couches are positioned in this large room: one is for the pilot and one is for the navigator. Surrounding the couches are the basic instruments for ship operation, and all appear to be in operating order. The forward edge of the bridge chamber is a large vision screen providing images of the ship's course and nearby bodies.

THE COMPUTER
On the wall near the drive pod is the ship's computer and a software library is kept in a cabinet near it.

The ship's computer has no information about the laboratory and its experiments. The computer's memory can be scanned (Computers 8+, 10–60 minutes), and the following information can be obtained.

- Regular, routine communicator transmissions of lab reports have been made daily to Lysani Laboratories, the registered chartering company for this ship. The transmissions, sent to the mining company on the world surface below for forwarding, are coded, but can be easily decoded by the computer.
- The same lab reports have been transmitted in batches of six to the mail reception point at the mining camp for posting by the mail boat when it calls. The reports are encrypted in a more complex code (although still readable through the computer) and addressed to the Butler Chemical Company.
- The visitor roster for the last four months lists several mercenary officers. This fact should serve as a hint that combat drugs are involved in the lab research.

9. Pilot's Stateroom
This room is well lit. This cabin is a standard stateroom used by the command pilot. Its position close to the bridge makes sure he or she is always available for duty. The single bunk's mattress has been thrown on the floor and the clothing and possessions in the room have been strewn about.

10. Navigator's Stateroom
This room is dark, but the fixtures are operational and will respond to the wall switch. This stateroom for the navigator is a standard crew cabin. The room's sliding door is locked. The interior is neat and undisturbed. There is nothing of any real interest inside.

11. Medic's Stateroom
This room is well lit. The interior is relatively neat but two bottles of whiskey have been smashed in the centre of the floor. Some blood is visible on close examination and a trail of blood leads out of the cabin into the corridor. There, the spatter disappears at the iris valve leading to quadrant two.

12. Engineer's Stateroom
The room is dark, and the ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The entire stateroom has been violently torn up, with the desk torn from the wall and the bunk smashed. The mattress is missing.

QUADRANT ONE
Quadrant one contains an auxiliary laboratory, the hangar for air/raft number 2, drive pod number 2 and several staff staterooms.

13. Auxiliary Laboratory
This area is dark and all ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The auxiliary laboratory is essentially identical in form and purpose to the main laboratory. The primary difference is that it is smaller.

The entire area is completely wrecked, and most of the equipment and apparatus has been destroyed by an explosion. The force of this explosion has shattered various pipes and conduits in the walls and has buckled the floor. Although pressurization has not been lost, the integrity of the hull may have been compromised, making this area in need of inspection and possible repair before the ship is used for any purpose.

At one end of the lab (near the air/raft hangar), a pile of wrecked lab tables and benches is stacked against the wall.

Close inspection of this area will indicate that a Small tunnel into the pile of wreckage, carefully concealed, leads to a lair or burrow within. If the pile is dismantled, an access hole, recently cut, leads below to the fuel tank.

As with the one in the main lab, the edges are padded with bed clothing.

14. Air/Raft Number Two
This area is dark and the lighting fixtures have been smashed. The air/raft itself is missing, showing the large retractable floor panels which allow entry by the air/raft. The room itself is clean and clear of any debris.

15. Drive Pod Number Two Lower Level
This area is dark, but lighting may be turned on with a wall switch, This lower level of the drive pod contains part of the ship's jump drive. It is accessed from the corridor, and hatches lead up to the second level.

16. Drive Pod Number Two Upper Level
This area is dark, and the lighting fixtures have been smashed. Stuffed in one corner of the chamber is a pile of cloth and mattresses. Scattered garbage, including bones and paper wrappings, litters the floor around the bedclothes.

17. Corridor
This corridor is dark and all of the ceiling light fixtures have been smashed. This narrow corridor leads through the drive pod from the auxiliary lab to the row of staff staterooms.

18. Hardpoint Number Two
This area is dark and there are no lighting fixtures installed. As with hardpoint number one, this area could hold a turret and weaponry. It does not and no weaponry has ever been installed. The area is empty.

19. Auxiliary Bridge
This room is well lit. This small room connects with iris valves to both the corridor and to the drive pod. It serves as a stand by or emergency bridge for the ship. Just as the bridge is adjacent to drive pod number one, this bridge is adjacent to drive pod number two. It is used to manage drive tests, and to replace the main bridge in the event of disaster. It holds complete operating controls and accesses the main computer through a local terminal.

20. Staff Stateroom
This stateroom is dark but the lights may be worked from the wall switch. The stateroom, normally used by one of the research staff, is empty. All of the cloth from within, including sheets, blankets, mattress and clothing, has been removed.

21. Staff Stateroom
This stateroom is dark, and the ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The room stinks; a dead crew member lies in the centre of the floor.

The body has been dead for several days and is the obvious source of the smell. One leg has been torn off the body and is missing. The stateroom is otherwise empty and all cloth within has been removed.

22. Staff Stateroom
This stateroom is dark, and the ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The stateroom is empty and all cloth within has been removed.

23. Staff Stateroom
This stateroom is well lit. The interior is normal and untouched. The bed is made, the drawers closed.

24. Staff Stateroom
This stateroom is dark and the ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The bunk is torn from the wall and materials have been piled in one corner into a barricade.

Behind the barricade is a hole cut in the floor leading to the fuel tank. The hole is concealed beneath a mattress and the edges of the hole have been padded with bedclothes.

25. Staff Stateroom
This stateroom is dark but the lights may be turned on by the wall switch. The interior of the room has been stripped of cloth, including the mattress and bedclothes.

QUADRANT TWO
Quadrant two contains staff staterooms, the reception foyer of the ship, and the galley and mess area. It also contains access to the spoke leading to the research pinnace.

26. Staff Stateroom
This room is dark but the wall switch works. Originally intended as a stateroom, this room has been converted to a scientific library.

Three microfiche readers are placed on stands near comfortable reading chairs.

One wall is covered with shelving containing the microfiche, typical titles are long and boringly scientific. Several boxes of cards are scattered on the floor.

This room should appear to be a potential source of information on the research which is going on in this ship. However, without additional help, all that can be learned is that the research is biochemical in nature.

If other information is found, and then this room is checked, it is possible that specific questions can be answered. Typically, Education 10+, 1–6 hours, is required for any real understanding of the information presented. Intelligence is not a basis for understanding the material, although it will help reduce the time needed to trace down an answer.

27. Staff Stateroom
This room is dark but the wall switch works. The stateroom is empty and looks as if it has never been occupied.

28. Staff Stateroom
This room is dark and the ceiling light fixtures have been smashed. The room has been stripped of all cloth, including the bedclothes and mattress. There are some indications of a heavy object being dragged from the room and some small blood smears on the wall near the door.

29. Staff Stateroom
This room is well lit. The room is undisturbed.

30. Staff Stateroom
This room is dimly lit; three of the four ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The fourth is flickering. The mattress from the bed and the sheets have been taken from this room. Lying on the floor in the room's centre is a long wooden pole. The instrument was used to smash light fixtures but has been abandoned for some reason.

The closet door for this stateroom is slightly ajar and disturbing it will cause it to swing open. As it does, the body of a dead crewmember will fall out, face up. The body is severely decomposed and an arm is missing. The smell now pervades the room.

31. Staff Stateroom
This room is dark and the ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. The room itself has been stripped of cloth and bedclothes. The center of the room is wet with a puddle of water about two centimetres deep. Checking the sink and shower will show that the faucets are turned on, but that they have been overridden by the central computer when the sink and shower basin overflowed.

32. Reception Area
This area is dark except for one light fixture near the lift shaft; the remaining fixtures have been smashed. This large foyer is the initial entry point for visitors arriving by pinnace. The reception area includes a large plaque on the wall, several comfortable lounge chairs and a communicator.

Adjacent to the lift shaft door is a maintenance hatch. It is well hidden by wall panels and will not be noticed unless a light (hand lantern or electric torch) is used.

The plaque on the wall indicates basic information about the ship, including its owner, Scientific Charters. The essential information is presented on the deck plans. Beneath the information is a small bulletin board. Individual letters have been attached to spell out Lysani Laboratories.

33. Staff Stateroom
This room is dark, but the light switch will turn on the lights. This room was unoccupied and there are no bedclothes or mattress inside. Several cartons are piled in the far corner.

The cartons are personal goods belonging to one of the staffers. They include books, clothes and various personal items such as a necklace of beads, a silver studded leather belt and a sprig of green leaf in a block of clear plastic.

34. Private Lounge
This room is dark but the light switch will work. This room contains a table and several comfortable chairs. One wall is a display board, with individual computer stations on the table surface. Another wall has shelving and several bound volumes of computer reports.

This is a meeting room for the scientific staff. The reports document the progress of the experiments mentioned in the Referee's notes. They detail where on the nearby planet the particular plant specimens have been gathered, and which specific types have proven useful. They also indicate the precise procedures used to process the plants. If Butler Chemical (see also item 8C, later) does not have the information, they could consider it valuable.

35. Private Dining Room
This room is well lit. A large table surrounded by chairs dominates the centre of the room. Place settings for a meal are on the table.

36. Galley and Mess Area

This area is dark; all but two lighting fixtures have been smashed. The center of the area is occupied by long tables and chairs. The place is obviously a dining room. The tables at one end (toward room 37) have been pushed aside, but no large barricades have been created.

37. Kitchen and Storage

This area is dark, and the lighting fixtures have been smashed. This room is a food preparation area; facilities are available for cooking both large and small meals. To the rear of the room is a large frozen food locker…

Inside, on hooks, hang 12 crew members, dead. Some have limbs missing; all seem to have been chewed on somewhat. The teeth marks look human.

38. Crew Stateroom

This room is dark, and the ceiling lighting fixtures have been smashed. A pile of mattresses and blankets occupies one corner of the room.

THE SPOKE

A single spoke extends from the ring to the center to provide docking for the research pinnace. Through the spoke are the lift shaft, a parallel ladder, and fuel conduits. At the top of the spoke is a docking ring.

Lift Shaft

The lift shaft car is well lit. It is operable and will travel from just below the docking ring to the reception room in just under 30 seconds.

Parallel Ladder

This shaft is dark, but wall switches work. The ladder is entered from the maintenance hatch, and extends from docking ring to reception room.

Docking Ring

The docking ring accepts any round cross-section (6 meter diameter) craft, and positions its exterior hatch adjacent to the ship's exterior hatch. Locking bolts hold the craft in position as the ship moves. Normally it holds the laboratory ship's research pinnace when it is not travelling elsewhere.

THE RESEARCH PINNACE

The 40-ton research pinnace is a small craft capable of scavenging fuel, acquiring specimens, and running errands to other parts of the system or to world surfaces. The craft has a crew of one and is capable of 5 G acceleration. It has a bridge with two control couches; the second control couch carries a gunner if the craft is armed. The cargo area carries nine tons of cargo and six passengers.

The pinnace is streamlined and has integral fuel scoops. Its fuel capacity of 12 tons is more than sufficient for long range ventures within any system. In addition, these tanks are used to ferry fuel to the lab ship.

THE FUEL TUNNELS

The fuel tankage for the ship is contained in two ring shaped tanks under the sub-flooring of the ship (the deck plan shows a cross-section of the ring and the two fuel tanks). Internal flow baffles automatically separate the tanks into leak-proof sections in the event of a puncture.

At present, only one section, under drive pod number one, is full. The other sections have been accessed from the ring by holes (at the main lab, location 1, the auxiliary lab, location 13 and the staff stateroom, location 24) cut through the sub-flooring. The small dark passage thus created allows quick travel from point to point within the ship.

The two fuel tunnels themselves run parallel to each other and join every 30 metres. Each independent section of fuel tanks joins to the next with flow baffles which are normally open, allowing easy movement from one section to the next. As a result, the tunnels form a simple but effective maze below.

This lab ship was engaged in psychochemical research, with a primary goal of achieving improved types of combat drugs. The activity is legitimate but has been shrouded in secrecy because of the potential for profit.

There are other reasons for secrecy as well. The three scientists engaged in the research have been using human subjects in order to more quickly perfect the drug formulations. The navigator has been copying the various reports and sending them to a rival chemical company in return for a pay off. In all, the entire project has been poorly managed.

THE BLOW UP

The navigator had received instructions from Butler Chemical to delay progress in the drug research, and stupidly decided that such a delay would best be handled by a simple explosion. He rigged a bomb in the auxiliary laboratory, set its timer, and than retired to his stateroom. There, he settled in to a bottle and got completely drunk. While he drank, the bomb went off. It was the night shift and the lab was unoccupied. Actual damage was rather low, but it disseminated samples of two of the combat drugs into the ventilation system. The two drugs have relatively innocuous effects alone, but together, they synergise.

That is to say, they interact with each other to achieve an effect far out of proportion to their normal ones. For 80% of humans, the result is death: the two drugs react together to form a poison which acts quickly and painlessly. Immediately, 16 of the 20 crew and staff were killed. The remaining four personnel were affected differently.

THE DRUG EFFECTS

The remaining four individuals on the lab ship were affected by the drugs, each in a different way. The exact effects of the drug differ according to body weight, metabolism and other factors; the general effect is to increase personal strength, dexterity and endurance, while leaving intelligence and education relatively unchanged. The effects take place almost immediately and last for an hour; thereafter, the individual is fatigued and ravenously hungry. The drug promotes flashbacks, however, resulting in recurring cycles of heightened strength.

These cycles occur about every twelve hours.

Two other effects are promoted by the drug combination. First, those affected have an aversion to light. Pupils are dilated, increasing night vision but making standard illumination levels painful to the subject. Second, individuals feel strong aggressive instincts while their civilized inhibitions are suppressed. They feel combative and are prone to attack sources of pain or irritation. This is the reason for the many smashed light fixtures. Although the individuals retain the ability to find and use light switches, the suppressed inhibitions lead instead to simple destruction.

Finally, the drunken navigator was subjected to a variation of the drug effects.

Because of the high level of alcohol in his bloodstream, the effects of the drugs were further twisted from normal. The alcohol speeded the effects of the drug combination, making him more greatly affected. Simultaneously, the drug effects increased his intelligence slightly while in the enhanced state, an effect not happening to the other survivors.

PINNACE: FUEL SKIMMER CLASS

This is a modified version of the standard pinnace. With an increased fuel capacity but reduced cargo and not as comfortable. Primarily used by ships lacking fuel scoops of their own to skim fuel, or those needing to stay where they are. While the fuel tanks are not large with the high acceleration of the pinnace trips to skim fuel can be done faster.

Pinnace (Fuel Skimmer)			Tons	Price (MCr.)
Hull	40 tons	Hull 1	—	1.4
	Streamlined	Structure 1	—	0.14
Armour	None	—	—	—
Manoevre Drive	sK	Thrust 5	5	11
Power Plant	sK	Rating 5	3.9	8
Bridge	Control Cabin for 1	—	3	0.2
Computer	Model 1	Rating 5	—	0.03
Electronics	Basic Civilian	DM –2	1	0.05
Weapons	None	—	—	—
Fuel	12 tons	12 weeks of operation	12	—
Cargo	6.1 tons	—	6.1	—
Extras	Cabin Space for 6	—	9	0.45
Software	Manoevre 0	—	—	—
	Library	—	—	—
Total Tonnage and Cost		—	40	19.143

THE EXPERIMENTAL DATA

The research computer in the main laboratory lists five experiments being conducted on the laboratory Ship. They are identified by the code numbers 1067, 1077, 1079, 1101 and 1103. Each experiment is listed below:

1067. Combat Drug

Location: Main lab.

Effects of standard combat drug as a control for other tests. This drug is used as a standard against which the other drugs will be judged.

1077. Improved Combat Drug A

Location: Auxiliary lab.

Effects of improved combat drug A on small animals: This drug appears to increase personal Strength and Endurance to 15 after ten minutes but at the cost of a reduction of Dexterity by – 5. There are no undesirable side effects other than a period of fatigue after 30 minutes.

1079. Improved Combat Drug B

Location: Auxiliary lab.

Effects of improved combat drug B on small animals: This drug appears to mimic combat drug but produces no effects on users when it wears off.

PINNACE
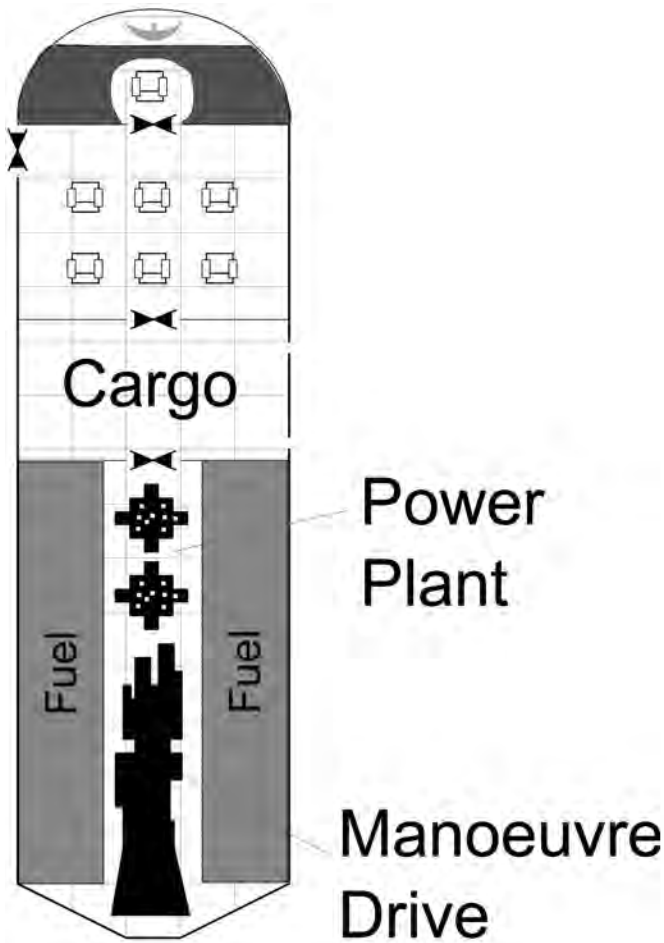
Chair		Machinery	
Bed		Low berth Unit	
Locker		Access Hatch	
Iris Valve		Hatch	
Iris Valve Floor		Hatch Floor	
Iris Valve Ceiling		Hatch Ceiling	
Iris Valve Both		Hatch Both	
Escape Pod		Sensors	

1101. Improved Combat Drug C
Location: Main lab.

Effects of improved combat drug C on small animals: This drug increases personal Strength and Dexterity by +5 for 30 minutes. There are no side effects.

1103. Improved Combat Drug D
Location: Main lab.

Effects of improved combat drug D on small animals: This drug has no observed effect, but 20% of animals used as subjects die after three days.

THE SURVIVING CREW

The four surviving crew members scattered to various parts of the ship. Their deranged mental states made survival uppermost in their minds, while hunger and fatigue led them to establish individual lairs. All the while, their intelligence was unimpaired, making them cunning and imaginative.

The surviving crew members are shown below. Each is shown with original characteristics, drug enhanced characteristics and fatigued characteristics. Also shown is the location of each crew member's lair. Crew members may be encountered in their lairs or elsewhere in the ship.

The flashbacks induced by the drug recur every twelve hours, and last for about one hour. After that period of enhanced characteristics, the individual becomes fatigued for perhaps six hours. Then a five hour period of normalcy returns, followed by another hour of enhanced characteristics.

CONFRONTATIONS
It is possible to trigger a flashback with a sudden confrontation. When any survivor is encountered, throw 9+ for an immediate trigger to enhanced characteristics. The enhanced, fatigued, normal cycle begins anew from this point.

45

Jan Vartha, Main Lab (1)

Jan Vartha	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
43	Scientist (6)	8	9	7	4	8	8
Enhanced characteristics		14	15	13	4	8	8
Fatigued		4	5	3	4	8	8
Computers 2, Survival 1, Engineer (Electronics) 1, Admin 1, Jack of all Trades 1							

Hollo Ezrahm, Auxilliary Lab (13)

Hollo Ezrahm	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
31	Scientist (3)	7	4	4	7	11	9
Enhanced characteristics		13	10	10	7	11	9
Fatigued		4	1	1	7	11	9
Astrogation 1, Computers 1, Mechanic 2, Physical Sciences (chemistry) 3							

Pent Stavro, Drives (16)

Pent Stavro	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
26	Engineer (2)	9	10	6	6	6	7
Enhanced characteristics		15	16	12	6	6	7
Fatigued		5	6	2	6	6	7
Engineer (power) 2							

Haris Slocombe, Cabin (24)

Haris Slocombe	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
33	Navigator (3)	7	7	9	5	6	8
Enhanced characteristics		16	16	16	7	6	8
Fatigued		3	3	4	7	6	8
Astrogation 2, Computers 2, Mechanic 2							

Laboratory Animal Escapees

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack
Intermittent	Plains Walker	4	7	4	1	8	12
Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Melee (claw) 1, Survival 1							
Teeth (1d6), Leathery hide (1). Number Encountered: 4d6							

Normally not dangerous these creatures are now capable of frightening ferocity in their attacks.

THE LABORATORY ANIMALS
The various animals being expertly tested upon in the labs were also affected by the release of the drugs into the ventilating system. Many (about 80%) were killed by the effects; their dead bodies were eaten over the next few days by the survivors.

Most of the remaining animals used their enhanced strength to escape from their cages and now roam free in the ship. Throw 9+ every 15 minutes for an encounter to occur. If it does, throw 4D for the number of animals encountered. If encountered in a lit area, they will flee; in the dark, they will attack on 7+. If they do not attack within two rounds, they will flee.

In reality, the animals are only a minor nuisance. But the possibility of encountering them in the fuel tunnels should be considered and used as a deterrent to the adventurers exploring below too easily.

THE UNDERSHIP MAZE
The fuel tunnels were created by the navigator. He realized that cutting through the sub-flooring to the fuel tankage below would create a maze of tunnels which would allow an alternate means of access to various parts of the ship. The tunnels come out at the main lab, the auxiliary lab, and the staff stateroom at 24. Almost immediately, the other survivors established barricades over the tunnel exits.

The purpose was not so much to conceal them as to control their access by others. Even while they slept, the survivors could lie above an exit with a mattress covering the hole, thus protecting themselves from that flank.

ENCOUNTERS
When the players enter the lab ship, one or more of the four surviving crew may be in the heightened strength phase of the drug induced cycle. Roll 10+ for each crew member to so determine. If in the heightened strength phase, the crew member will be wandering the ship in search of food, or engaged in eating a thawed limb of one of the dead crew near the meat locker. Those not in this phase of the cycle will be in their lairs.

When encountered by the players, surviving crew will display suspicion and guarded hostility due to the effects of the drug. While their intelligence remains unaffected by the drug (with the exception of the navigator) the mental effects of the drug have induced a psychotic paranoia, and their intelligence manifests itself more as animal cunning.

It is possible to talk to and reason with the surviving crew but they will be extremely sensitive to any implied or perceived threats. Light will irritate them, and a light shined in their eyes will automatically bring on the enhanced strength phase and cause an immediate attack, as will sighting any other surviving crew member ('the enemy').

All surviving crew members will claim to have subsisted solely off of captured lab animals and the galley food Stores, claiming that the others have been eating the dead crew (in fact, all four have). All will be hungry (and will respond positively to the offer of rations, if the players have brought any along) and will use this hunger as evidence of the fact that they have refrained from eating the dead crew.

All are convinced that they will be executed for cannibalism if it is found out, (in fact, no legal action would be contemplated given the circumstances but any attempt to convince them of this will be perceived as a trick to get them to confess). If a surviving crew member is discovered in the act of eating a dead crew member, the survivor will attempt to kill all of the players, thus preventing them from reporting his or her actions. The crew member will use all of his or her cleverness and knowledge of the ship to accomplish this.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE
The adventure may end in a variety of ways, usually by their own choice in leaving the ship.

- If the group clears the ship of the four surviving crew members (capturing them and restraining them), then the expedition is successful, and the agent will pay as promised.

- If the group clears the ship by killing some or all of the survivors (and capturing and restraining the rest), then the agent will express disappointment and waver a while, but will ultimately pay as planned.

- If the group leaves without dealing with all four survivors, then the agent will only partially pay the agreed amount and will not provide tickets off world.

OF DUST SPICE AND DEWCLAWS

BY ANDY LILLY

PREPARING FOR PLAY

As a minimum to run this adventure you need the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. It is strongly recommended that you read *Alien Module 1: Aslan* to fully understand the Aslan race. *The Spinward Marches* may be useful for background material regarding the area around Mora.

Throughout this adventure, text in *italics* provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on Non-Player Characters and creatures appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Refer to the Appendix for full information on Non-Player Characters and creatures.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The scenario begins with an Aslan trading ship having 'lost' an extremely valuable cargo of dust-spice. This is no accident – one of the competitive young males on the trader fooled a rival male into signing away the cargo to a transport company without the knowledge of the ship's senior crew. This was only intended to cause embarrassment but the situation quickly escalates beyond the instigator's expectations.

The shipment goes to a local company, randomly selected by the duplicitous male Aslan – clearly the recipients aren't expecting the dust-spice but the potential value of the spice leads them to accept the cargo. A disreputable member of the company immediately passes on the shipment to some friends of his... a local gang, who promptly spirit the spice away to their hideout.

The Player Characters are recruited in great haste by the astrogator of the Aslan ship. She discovered the loss of the cargo and is trying to recover it before the ship's captain realises what has happened, as the resulting dishonour would forever ruin all the ship's crew, in addition to the physically violent duels and retribution that could occur between certain of the crew...

LOCATION

The adventure takes place on Mora (A-A99AC7-F), a rich, strategically positioned trading gateway, the capital of Mora subsector in the Spinward Marches. The action is focused around Fenrock, one of the huge seabed arcologies located near the equator of this waterworld. A more detailed description of Mora follows.

MORA (A-99AC7-F)

Mora is known as the "Gateway to the Marches" as it sits at a critical pinch-point for the Jump routes through which most of the rimward half of the Spinward Marches is reached (from Deneb sector and the rest of the Imperium to Trailing). As a result, it became the seat of both the Duchy government and the Sector administration and accumulated a disproportionate amount of wealth and influence.

It is now more than a millennia since Ling Standard Products first established itself on Mora to exploit the rich natural resources of this water-dominated world. Over the centuries the population has swelled to over ten billion, mostly dwelling in hundreds of huge arcologies dotting the small areas of exposed land and sprawling across the seabed (primarily in the equatorial regions).

Physical Details

Mora is a large, molten-core world with a diameter of 15,567 km (9,673 miles) giving it a gravity of 1.19G. A day lasts 23 hours and 51 minutes and it takes 1,162 (local) days to circle its sun.

The dense oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere is tainted with industrial pollutants from its past but over the last hundred years this has been reduced to a minor irritant by various environmental 'clean up' measures. As a result, almost all inhabitants and most visitors suffer no ill effects, though those of a sensitive constitution may prefer to wear some form of filter mask when outside the sealed areas of the arcologies.

Around 92% of the planet is covered with water, with only one small continent (Batadis), a few large islands, a few archipelagos, and a smattering of lesser islands rising above the surface of the sea.

A relatively high axial tilt of 33 degrees combined with an orbital eccentricity of 0.02 means equatorial temperatures of up to 60°C in Summer but in the polar regions, ice sheets cover large areas of the sea with temperatures as low as -65°C in winter.

Social details

Mora's population of over ten billion mostly live in huge self-contained arcologies, about one-eleventh of which are built on dry land on to the continent of Batadis and the various islands, though most of the available arable land surface is dedicated to intensive agriculture. The remainder are spread across the sea floor,

mainly in the equatorial regions, and often have seabed farms around them. Arcologies may be home to tens or even hundreds of millions of inhabitants. Around 300 million people live in space habitats spread out across the star system.

The planetary government of Mora is split into three authorities – the Judiciary (an elite council known as 'The Eleven Brides'); the Executive (another elite council, of 33 women called 'The Caucus'); and the Legislative authority which is theoretically held by the Duchess of Mora in her capacity as Matriarch, but in practice exercised by a large bureaucracy appointed by her.

Over the last millennium, Mora has suffered various conflicts – mostly between the merchant lords who sought to control it for its strategic position and trade value. However, for the last 400 years the strong rule of a steady line of Matriarchs has provided a relatively stable and tranquil environment. The current Matriarch is Delphine Adorania Muudashir, 15th Duchess of Mora, who has reached the remarkable age of 125 years, has ruled Mora for more than 90 years, and is generally regarded warmly by Mora's population. As Mora also hosts the Imperial Sector Administration, the political and economic power-play of the whole of the Spinward Marches revolves around the Duchess' world.

Components of each of the military services provide law enforcement and first-response teams for the emergency services, with close day-to-day liaison with the judiciary run by The Eleven Brides. However, the Matriarch has overall control of the planet's military and can mobilise any and all of its units in a crisis situation. The world's laws are fairly strict and somewhat intrusive.

Mora's matriarchal bias extends across many of its government positions with males prevented (by law) from rising above specified levels of responsibility.

Starport

Mora Imperial Downport is located on an island in the Fakla River estuary, adjacent to the capital Wavecrest City on the east coast of Batadis. Two of the other arcologies have spaceports and most have some form of airborne access, being built in sufficiently shallow water for their uppermost levels to be above the surface of the sea. Given Mora's economic, astrographical and political importance, its downport is huge (140 square kilometres) and one of the busiest in the Marches. There is an equivalently large highport, handling bigger, unstreamlined starships as well as orbiting space habitats, space industry complexes and megacorporation docks.

Not only is the downport very large but in a fairly uncommon arrangement the associated startown is inside the extrality fence so the port's boundaries are swelled by residential areas, warehousing districts and an extensive diplomatic district housing hundreds of ambassadors and their staffs, as well as the ducal palace.

The various names applied in connection with the urban agglomeration at the Fakla River estuary are often confused and mixed up. 'Wavecrest City' is strictly speaking only the part that lies outside the extrality fence, but is often used to include the part inside. The part inside the fence is officially the Imperial Enclave but is often referred to indiscriminately as 'the startown' or 'the starport', since there is no real separation of the two.

Star System

The Mora system has mining operations and high-technology industrial research and manufacturing centres spread throughout its star system. Close in to the planet are four moons, the largest of which is a vast military complex which is home to the Imperial 73rd Fleet, the Duchy Fleet and the System Defence Force.

A Scout base and secondary naval base are located in the planetoid belt, the former being the IISS regional headquarters for the Spinward Marches. As a result, the system is full of every kind of vessel, from heavy battle squadrons to high-performance Scout Couriers.

KEY GAME POINTS

- It is assumed that the Player Characters have been on Mora for some days, have researched it before arriving, or have visited it in the past, such that any of the **world data** given in this section is readily available to them without the need to refer to a library data system.

- Mora's **atmospheric taint** only affects Player Characters with a weak constitution (Endurance of 5 or less). Enterprising local outfitters will try to sell tourists filter masks anyway. Characters with low Endurance may feel the need to wear some form of breathing filter (cheap nasal plugs are adequate) to remove the contaminants from past industrial excesses. Should they not do so, any period of exertion requires them to make an Endurance check (Easy, +4) to avoid a fit of breathlessness and coughing (determine the game effects as you feel appropriate, but this could be awkward in the middle of a chase or gunfight). This is not a problem inside the big arcologies, thanks to TL 15 filtering, even though the massive quantities of air within these mega-cities is drawn from the planet's atmosphere.

- Mora's **law level** requires all Player Characters to store personal firearms in secure facilities inside the extrality fence before

leaving the Imperial Enclave. The only weaponry allowed outside the extrality fence are: stunners; small blades (larger blades if of appropriate social status or career background); and clubs or similar.

- Mora's **law enforcement** is fairly strict and intrusive. The police (a part of the military on Mora) are armed, never hesitate to point their weapons at potential criminals and can call on military assault teams at very short notice. They expect all civilians to be obedient and produce identity documents whenever asked for. There is also a high degree of video surveillance around the arcologies. This does not mean that all enforcers are thugs – most of them are very approachable and helpful. However, they are capable and ready to deal with those who break the law.

FENROCK

Located 100 km almost due east of Wavecrest, Fenrock is a self-contained underwater city housing 33 million Moran citizens. The city is in relatively shallow water (generally less than 100 metres) and is on the main subsea highway system which carries ground vehicles and mass-transport anti-grav 'rail' systems between the major arcologies.

A few of the upper levels of the city rise above the surface of the sea, supporting a large airport capable of handling aircraft as well as the ubiquitous grav and helicopter traffic. The waterline also acts as a demarcation of class, with the more important and wealthy inhabitants living above sea level.

The city also extends down below the seabed, with large power plants at the lowest levels, subsea farming and processing around the edges and tens of levels of accommodation and services for its inhabitants.

Any given level within the city is generally about 8 metres in height, subdivided into circular or hexagonal spaces (termed 'sectors') of several hundred metres across, potentially able to seal themselves off with water- and air-tight doors should the need arise. Mora's tech level and wealth has allowed it to overcome any civilian's concerns regarding feeling enclosed: the quality and quantity of lighting and environmental control, combined with huge display panels all around these 'sectors' showing false 'windows' on to surface and subsea vistas, means it is pretty easy to forget that on the lowest levels you may be several hundred metres below the sea floor. Zen sector covers all the levels above and below the main transport hub (marked 'T' on the city map) and Yin sector the levels below the airport (marked "A"). These two sectors tend to

Primary Name: Dimoph
Type: F0 V

Orbital zones
Inner limit: 0.32
Life zone: 2.4 - 3.3
Snow line: 13
Outer limit: 64

List of Planets			
Orbit	Distance	Name	Type
0	0.96	Murugil	Terrestrial
1	1.35	Elicar	Terrestrial
2	1.74	Iyrne	Terrestrial
3	2.52	Mora	Terrestrial
4	4.08	Forigi	Terrestrial
5	7.20	The Guarek Belt	Planetoid belt
6	13.44	Gigig	Gas giant
7	25.92	Gogog	Gas giant
8	50.88	Erstine	Terrestrial

Mora is named after a harvest goddess of an old Sylean pantheon. The continent, Batadis, is named after her cornucopia-like Basket of Plenty, and other prominent geographical features on Mora are named after artefacts belonging to other gods. The sun is named after the Sun God and the other inner planets after other gods. The biggest planetoids in the belt are named for members of the Guarek, a race of small mischievous supernatural beings akin to the elves, trolls, and dwarves of Old Terra and the gishkan of Old Vland. The two gas giants are named for two of the giants who hold up the sky, and the major planetoids in Gigig's trojan points (Borranek (The Vanguards) and Surranek (The Rearguards)) are named after heroes listed in the Heavenly Muster chapter in an epic describing the Dawn War between the gods and the primal forces that opposed the creation of Sylea. Erstine, the tiny outermost planet, is named after a dog-like animal belonging to Forigi, the Goddess of the Hunt.

house most of the city's authorities, bureaucracy and associated services (such as the police).

Of course, on the highest levels, the dome structures are fully or semi transparent (with appropriate filtering for the sunlight) and provide views across the surrounding sea (particularly spectacular during the storms that are driven by Mora's dense, hot, equatorial atmospheric regions.

THE YAEUKHTAI ('OPEN PATH TO HEROISM')

The *Aokholkhtyeilik* (approximately meaning 'Balance of Trade') clan are a relatively small sub-clan of the *Wahtoi* clan, themselves vassals to the *Aroaye'i* clan. These huge clans own multiple worlds and are in constant competition to become, or retain, their position as one of the *Tlaukhu* ('The Twenty-Nine' highest-ranking Aslan clans).

The *Wahtoi* are renowned traders and explorers, with colonies and commerce establishments throughout the Trojan Reaches. The *Aokholkhtyeilik* are sufficiently important to own land on Dallia (1435/District 268/Spinward Marches) and their most senior females run *Aokholkhtyeilik'al'soistsea* (roughly "Balance of Trade across Frontiers"), a merchant company with a fleet of ten merchant ships, mostly *Aoa'iw* class Light Traders.

This adventure concerns the crew of one of these Light Traders, specifically the *Yaeukhtai* ('Open Path to Heroism' – hereafter just 'Open Path'), consisting of:

- Captain *Hwekaiheast* ('Hunter Of Meat') – hereafter 'Hunter'
- Astrogator *Ftoulreisktoal* ('Star Cloud Climber') – hereafter 'Star'
- Purser *Yorleikhoi* ('Seer Of The Evening') – hereafter 'Seer'
- Engineer *Ktaharastl* ('Cliff Edge Walker') – hereafter 'Edge'
- Spacehand *Troirlaukah* ('Power Of The Shaking Rock') – hereafter 'Rock'
- Gunner *Wiyl'steawtaul* ('Travels Quietly to Catch Prey') – hereafter 'Catch'
- Gunner *Wiyl'htarlhwoakh* ('Travels Far Across Wasteland') – hereafter 'Wasteland'

Hunter, Star, Seer and Edge have successfully crewed the *Open Path* for some years, working together for the benefit of their family. Wasteland and Catch are not *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan themselves but come from the *Ka'ahsu'ikhya'ui* ('Defenders against the Inner Void'), another vassal clan of the *Wahtoi*. A couple of years ago, Hunter's excellent ship tactics allowed the *Open Path* to not only evade, but then fire upon and disable a pirate ship run by outcast Aslan. These pirates had been preying upon *Ka'ahsu'ikhya'ui* ships

and in return for Hunter's brave action the *Ka'ahsu'ikhya'ui* clan nominated two of their young males to crew the *Open Path* for two years. Wasteland and Catch have been reasonably useful and cheap, but are coming to the end of their commitment and expect Hunter to free them to return to their own clan's service when the *Open Path* finally makes it back to Dallia.

A few months ago, just before the *Open Path* set off on its latest trading run into Lunion and Mora subsectors, there was an assassination attempt against *Troirloiykheyo* the first-born son of the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan leader *Aokholkhtyeilikko*. With no idea who was behind the attempt, the clan leader decided he must protect his precious male heirs while he and his brothers sought out and dealt with the assassins. He put his first-born *Troirloiykheyo* on one trader and his second-born son Rock on the *Open Path* and despatched both ships off on long trading trips. As both ships were captained by trusted cousins, *Aokholkhtyeilikko* felt confident his sons were in good hands.

Troirloiykheyo was an intelligent, fierce young chief, widely expected to bring honour to his clan and take over its leadership in the future. Rock was... not quite so bright and not quite so useful, but had to be protected as a matter of principal. *Aokholkhtyeilikko* entertained the vague hope that a few months on a merchant ship would expose his less promising son to the wonders of the stars and perhaps help him towards the role his mother had always wished for him as a clan duellist.

The *Open Path* crew had watched Rock grow up and knew that looking after him would be a full-time job. Indeed, Rock initially seemed to believe he was effectively being assigned as captain of the ship – Hunter quickly put him straight on the matter and Rock reluctantly settled down into a crew role, though he would still assume a leader-like air whenever Hunter was not in the vicinity.

Rock's arrogance did not enamour him to Wasteland and Catch; he would continually try to boss the other two young males around, despite having no real idea of shipboard operations. Over the coming months of trading through Lunion subsector and into Mora subsector, the crew learned to work *around* Rock, while trying to keep him sufficiently involved in day-to-day tasks that he did not have enough spare time to get himself into trouble. However, the animosity between Rock and Catch (in particular) had festered over this period, threatening time-after-time to erupt into vicious duels. Hunter did not feel it appropriate to constrain Rock's competitive nature (given his intended duellist career) but at the same time he respected the entreaties of his purser Seer that if Rock got injured by Wasteland, not only would it demoralise

the clan leader's son but it would also be disrespectful of the *Ka'ahsu'ikhya'ui* clan's contribution to the *Open Path* crew. As a result, Hunter has repeatedly had to step in to prevent open conflict between the young males.

Frustrated at the way Rock treated him and yet avoided having to answer his challenges, Catch finally decided on a more cunning method of discrediting the egotistical second-son...

GOOD FORTUNE
The *Open Path*'s trade route ran along the trade route from District 268 into Lunion subsector and then to trailing through Mora subsector, with the world of Mora as the turn-around point, working on the basis that as the trade hub of much of the Spinward Marches, Mora would be bound to have some of the most interesting and profitable opportunities for cargo to bring back to Dallia.

While visiting Carey (2726/Mora), the crew stumbled upon a fantastic opportunity. A raggedy Scout/Courier called the '*By Jupiter!*' was stuck at the starport with a major failure of its Jump Drive, requiring costly repairs. Given the minimal amount of trade through the port and their urgent need to get off world, the *By Jupiter's* captain was auctioning off his most valuable cargo – four small containers of genuine, high quality Romar dust-spice. (The means by which he had originally obtained the spice was one of the many reasons why the captain did not wish to stick around in this subsector any longer than he absolutely had to...)

The *Open Path* turned up at just the right time, with sufficient ready cash, to out-bid the locals for the shipment, such that the Aslan ended up with the dton of dust-spice at a massive discount.

On arrival at Mora, Seer intended to spend at least a week getting the best possible prices for the goods already in the *Open Path*'s hold, possibly including selling up to half of the dust-spice, while keeping the remainder to take back to their clan in Dallia. She would then invest in high tech electronics and other high-profit goods that were difficult to obtain in District 268, leaving a little space in the hold for trading lesser goods on the way back through Mora and Lunion subsectors.

As usual, Seer began brokering deals even before landing, though she knew she would get the best deals face-to-face as her sister Star was particularly adept at overcoming the instinctive fears and racial biases of many non-Aslan. Together, they made an excellent negotiating team.

A CUNNING PLAN

Catch had bided his time over the past weeks, gradually setting up Rock for a fall. He had made subtle suggestions to Rock that his father had given up on the idea of him becoming a duellist and he was destined to spend the rest of his life as a lowly deckhand; he even managed to plant the seed in Rock's mind that perhaps the assassination attempt had just been a ruse to get him away from the clan home so that his brother, the first-born, could develop relationships with certain young females in whom Rock had shown some interest. As a result, over the past weeks Rock had begun to demand more responsibilities and Hunter, hoping this was a genuine chance to educate his nephew, agreed.

On the third day in port, Catch found the opportunity to put his plan into action. He knew Seer and Star would be out most of the day brokering deals and Edge was off-ship handling the supply of some engine parts. Hunter typically spent most of the afternoon asleep after his main meal, so for a four hour period Catch, Wasteland and Rock were the only crew awake on the ship.

Catch ensured that on the first day on Mora he was allowed off-ship briefly, allowing him to use his computer and streetwise skills at a public computer terminal to send a fake shipping request to BlinkOfAnEye, a courier franchise operating across much of Mora (though selected at random by Catch from the public directory). He selected as the destination a company called Land Of Spices, which sounded to him sufficiently relevant that no one should question the shipping paperwork.

He arranged for BlinkOfAnEye to arrive at the *Open Path* about an hour into the captain's nap period, so only he, Wasteland and Rock were aboard and awake, to handle the courier. When the van turned up, Catch stroked Rock's ego a little and encouraged him to "play captain" and handle the courier. Just a single taunt about waking the captain "if he wasn't sure what he was doing" was quite sufficient to prompt Rock into action.

So far as the hulking Rock could tell the human courier had authentic paperwork indicating the dust-spice was to be taken off the *Open Path*; he reassured himself with the assumption that Seer and Star had made a worthwhile deal for the spice today and their customer had wanted to make the exchange promptly.

Rock puffed out his chest, assumed Hunter's manner for dealing with non-Aslan and even announced himself to the courier as the ship's captain (feeling in some way that while Hunter was asleep, logically Rock really was the effective captain). When the courier asked for payment for the shipping, Rock was still unsure but with a suitable flourish put his personal authorisation into the courier's handcomp.

The courier left with the spice, Rock awaited his superiors' return (eager to tell them how well he had handled the transaction) and Catch retired to his cabin, confident that through his deception Rock would be thoroughly humiliated.

Seer and Star returned to the ship two hours later, just prior to Hunter awakening from his afternoon nap. On hearing Rock's story, the two females immediately concluded that fraudsters had tricked Rock into releasing the dust-spice to them. Realising they had only a very short window in which to act before Hunter awoke, Seer persuaded all three young males of the wisdom of keeping their mouths shut, then she and Star brainstormed a plan.

A quick com call to the couriers indicated they were a legitimate company, had fully authorised paperwork for the shipment, all seemingly initiated from the *Open Path*, and had already made the delivery, so (basically) it was not their problem. A further call to the destination got no response but a quick computer search identified it as a seafood restaurant.

The two females needed to make a quick decision: Hunter could awake any minute, and would probably rip Rock's head off if he realised the dust-spice had been lost. It would be nonsensical to try entrust any form of investigation to the ship's young males, while involving Mora's legal authorities could require lengthy official entanglements which could not be concealed from Hunter. Seer decided she would stay at the ship with Rock and Catch and try to cover up the loss of the shipment for as long as possible while Star headed into the port to see if she could find 'local' investigators who could pursue the matter... the first suitable candidates she finds are the Player Characters.

1. FOR HONOUR

The Player Characters are recruited by the astrogator of the Aslan trader *Open Path* to recover a shipment of dust-spice that has mysteriously gone missing from the ship. Finding out what happened is problematic given the crew don't want the ship's captain to know the dust-spice has gone.

Damsel In Distress

It is assumed that the Player Characters are in a suitable location for hiring (such as the Travellers' Aide Society at Mora Downport) and are looking for work. If one of the Player Characters is an investigator, trader or similar, they are assumed to have already put up (or be about to put up) an advert for their services at this establishment.

The time is 4pm on a normal working day.

You are slightly startled to see an Aslan burst in through the door. A couple of traders nearby look very taken-aback but the Aslan, seeing their distress, does make a rushed placatory gesture indicating some form of apology.

She is clearly a female, lacking the thick mane of the males but otherwise still the height of a tall human and fairly well muscled. She wears a loose scarlet tunic and kilt, both embroidered with shimmering golden symbols, some of which look vaguely representative of star systems while others are probably Aslan calligraphy. A thick leather belt with golden metal bands at her waist carries pouches, a comm unit and tool pack as well as a small pistol holster [just a blade if outside the starport]. She looks around quickly then her piercing eyes settle on your group and she stalks over.

- If any of the Player Characters happen to have Aslan as a language skill then a Routine task roll will allow them to interpret the calligraphy on the female's tunic: part of it is a short poem which roughly translates as "This one uses the clouds as steps to reach her star"; the remainder indicates she is part of the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan and is an Astrogator from the starship "*Open Path to Heroism*".

If any of the Player Characters are female, the Aslan will address them in preference to the males:

"Are you of the skills necessary to undertake an urgent investigatory task?"

Whether or not the Player Characters actually have the necessary skills, they should be encouraged to at least get the Aslan to talk to them (otherwise this adventure ends here...).

The Aslan will draw the Player Characters into a quiet corner, showing some concern not to be overheard (more due to potential embarrassment regarding what she is about to reveal, than any real need for secrecy). In the following briefing, she will subconsciously direct more of her attention to the female Player Characters when discussing investigative or financial matters, while looking to the males when there is mention of more physical activities.

"I need your urgent help to resolve an extremely embarrassing situation. I am the astrogator of the honourable ship Open Path and humans call me Star. My ship has suffered the loss of an extremely valuable piece of cargo which may be due to fraud or theft – the exact conditions are not clear to me. This loss is not only financially painful but... also... dishonouring." She frowns deeply, her expression combining confusion, discomfort and perhaps anger.

"A local courier arrived at our ship just three hours ago with forms indicating he was to take away one displacement ton of valuable spice from our hold. I and the senior ship's officers were away from the ship, securing other deals. In our absence, a junior member of our crew – you may call him Rock – signed over the spice to the courier. I think he believed that as the forms were in order, perhaps our purser – you may call her Seer – had organised the courier." You notice her claws flicker out before she clenches her fists and clears her throat with a threatening growl, perhaps an instinctive reaction to her concern at the loss of the cargo.

"As soon as Seer and I returned to the Open Path and discovered this error, we contacted the courier – a human enterprise called Blink-of-an-Eye in your language. They appeared to have forms filled in by our purser Seer to transport this spice to a Land-of-Spice in Fenrock which we determined to be a restaurant serving local sea-derived foodstuffs. Unfortunately the Blink-of-an-Eye had already delivered the cargo nearly an hour before we contacted them and have all the proper forms signed... yet the restaurant owner whom we then called denied all knowledge of the shipment and said his business premise was closed until later this evening." She grimaces, showing a hint of sharp teeth.

"We called the port authorities but they say if the forms are valid and our own crew signed over the spice then this is not a crime but rather a legal dispute and will involve the Moran law system since our goods are now outside the extrality zone. Yet we called the Wavecrest law enforcement centre and they cannot see that a crime has been committed either because they say there is no proof since the courier has only acted on our apparent instruction." She shifts restlessly and waves one fully extended claw in the air as her voice rises in clear frustration: *"Both these great entities seem unwilling to do more than consider opening an investigation, if we fill in many forms and wait a great time and then I still have no belief they would find anything of use."* Her claw slices through the air in an angry gesture.

"Understand that we feel they show us great disrespect. To lose this cargo is great dishonour. It must be recovered, by whatever means is necessary and as quickly as possible. It is with this task in mind that I have sought out investigators such as yourselves..."

- Perceptive Player Characters will note that – unlike so many of her species – Star seems relatively comfortable dealing with non-Aslan; presumably she has a lot of experience with other races, which hopefully means she also has an even temper...

The Task At Hand

The Player Characters now have the opportunity to ask any questions (for your easy reference, a "Timeline" is presented below) and to negotiate their reward should they be successful:

- It is possible the Player Characters may suspect some form of trick, but a check of Diplomacy or some similar skill will determine that Star is very genuine.

- If the Player Characters ask whether any of the crew could be 'in' on the heist, Star will adamantly deny this (her initial view is that not even Catch would do something this dishonourable, but such questions *will* sow the first seeds of doubt in her mind).

Regarding rewards for the Player Characters:

- Star is pretty desperate. She will initially offer each of them Cr 100 of "expenses" up-front (this is as much cash as she has on-hand) and Cr 1,000 on successful return of the cargo. She hopes this will not take more than a day, so will offer a retainer of Cr 200 per person per day after the first.

- Successful negotiators (Player Characters who ask for more money *and* make some form of Leadership, Broker, Diplomacy or similar task roll (not just players who shout loudly)) will be able to get Star to double her offer – potentially Cr 2,100 each for just a day's work (if they are lucky). Because of her current stress levels she will respond more positively to requests from a female Player Character than from males.

If the Player Characters need any guidance, Star's expectations are that they should do the following:

1. Talk to Rock and Catch to get as much information as possible about the loss of the cargo. Star cannot afford to let the Player Characters near the *Open Path*, as this would make Hunter suspicious, so she sets a meeting point at a nearby bar she is familiar with: The Terminal Pheasant. She will meet the Player Characters there in 15 minutes (probably around 18:30 depending upon how long she took recruiting them). See Part 2: First Questions.

2. Talk face-to-face with the courier firm and preferably whichever courier actually dealt with their shipment, to confirm his story and find out to whom he delivered the cargo. (In her aggravated state, she will occasionally slip back into Aslan mode and use terms such as "if these people lie, you must Challenge them" – implying an Aslan honour challenge). See Part 3: The Courier.

3. If the courier really did leave the shipment at the Land-of-Spice restaurant, then the Player Characters will have to go there and find out who received the cargo and what then happened to it. See Part 4: Something Fishy.

Of course, the Player Characters may have alternative ideas, but they must end up at the restaurant to have any chance of tracking down the dust-spice. Sensible Player Characters will realise that the 'trail' may be 'growing cold' with every minute that they delay, so it is likely they may decide to split up and address the interrogation of the Aslan, the couriers and the restaurant simultaneously – to ensure none of the players are left out of the game, you may opt to allow them to suggest ideas to each other, even if their characters are not physically present.

Timeline
The Player Characters may wish to establish a detailed timeline as part of their investigation; for your purposes, the key events were as follows (items in parentheses are not known to the Player Characters at this point):

10:00	Seer and Star departed the *Open Path* to meet various brokers around the Downport.
(10:30	Catch wandered into the Downport to arrange the courier.)
11:00	Edge left the *Open Path* to visit two engineering firms in the Downport.
13:00	The remaining ship's crew finished lunch aboard the *Open Path* and Hunter settled down for a nap.
14:00	The BlinkOfAnEye courier turns up and Rock signs over the cargo.
14:20	The courier leaves the *Open Path* with the spice.
15:40	The courier arrives at the Land Of Spice restaurant and delivers the cargo (who receives it is not clear at this point).
16:20	Seer and Star return to the *Open Path* and learn of the loss.
16:25	Star contacts BlinkOfAnEye to ask where the spice is.
16:40	BlinkOfAnEye confirms the shipment was received at Land Of Spice.
(16:50	Edge returns to the *Open Path* but Seer decides it would be best not to tell her. She has already ordered Rock, Catch and Wasteland not to mention a word of this to Hunter or Edge.)
17:00	Star manages to contact the manager of Land Of Spice, who denies any knowledge of the shipment.
(17:20	Hunter awakes. He detects some nervousness among the crew but Seer reassures him there's nothing wrong.)
17:30	Star has quietly called both the port authorities and the Wavecrest police, neither of whom can help.
18:00	Having decided they cannot handle this themselves, Seer agrees Star should go recruit some private investigators.

2. FIRST QUESTIONS

The astrogator will expect the Player Characters to gather their initial information from those Aslan who interacted with the courier who took the spice shipment away from the *Open Path*. Getting information out of two aggravated male Aslan may be a little challenging...

While Star is fetching her two young male crewmates, the Player Characters have a few minutes to think, plan, decide what questions to ask and so on.

The Terminal Pheasant is easy to find and looks like a fairly reputable establishment with reasonable price drinks and simple bar snacks available. A circular bar in the centre has display screens hung above it, showing incoming and outgoing starships and the current prices and availability of various goods being traded in the Downport. The seating is arranged in discrete groupings, separated by low plastic walls with vine-like growths flowing over them.

The Player Characters can find a quiet table in a secluded corner where their discussion can be discrete (if they do not do so, Star will take them to such a table before she begins any discussion with them). They may have time to get drinks or snacks before the Aslan arrive:

This time three Aslan walk through the door, the leader being the female you know as Star. You felt she was well-built but towering over her are two much heavier, muscled males, the fluffed-out manes and just slightly bared teeth adding to their dramatic appearance. The first has shiny gold crescents secured into long braids of mane which hang over his shoulders almost like epaulettes. He wears a similar red and gold tunic and kilt to Star's but this is supplemented by a metal chest plate, its surface covered with intricate calligraphy. The second male has similar clothing but somewhat less impressive, using mostly silver rather than gold decoration.

Star looks quickly around, spots you and signals the two males to follow her over to you. Needless to say given their appearance, the eyes of quite a few of the clientele follow them as they swagger across the room.

- A Player Character with Aslan language skill can make a Routine task to interpret Rock's calligraphy: it roughly translates as "His roar is so powerful it makes the very rock shake beneath his enemies"; like Star he is from the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan and is an Envoy from the starship *Open Path*.

- A similar task for the second male shows him to be "One who moves quietly to catch his prey unawares", Gunner of the *Open Path* but, interestingly (to one who understands

Aslan clan loyalties) of the *Ka'ahsu'ikhya'ui* clan and "serving honourably with" the *Aokholkhtyeilik* (not a "vassal" in the normal sense).

Star will introduce her two companions:

"These are my two honourable crewmates who were defrauded of our cargo a few hours ago. The first, who dealt with the courier you may call Rock. The second, who was also on duty at the time and helped load the cargo may be called Catch. Please ask what you will but be factual and do not hypothesise blame or ignorance to the actions of either male... it would not be taken well." She quickly looks meaningfully at each of you.

Star hopes the Player Characters will understand that they should treat the two males with due respect but she is not currently in the mood to run through the niceties of Aslan interaction (as she might have done when first introducing an important business contact to one of her crew).

- If necessary, use the "Knowledge of the Aslan" principle to indicate to one or more of the Player Characters the potential physical hazards of insulting one of these two males. However, any Player Character stupid enough to face off with one of the males should end up with the male challenging him; in desperation, Star will prevent the duel by fabricating some excuse (in Aslan) that the Player Character, being an alien, is too far beneath the male's level to accept the challenge. The last thing she wants at this point is for the Player Characters to be distracted from the task at hand. However, you should keep note of any transgressions or insults by the Player Characters, because the Aslan **will** remember these.

It Must Be Someone Else's Fault

The two males are somewhat uncomfortable in this environment and somewhat snappy with anyone who asks them impertinent questions. Star translates where necessary to avoid confusion (mostly on Rock's behalf).

Given his lack of experience of dealing with non-Aslan (he has no Tolerance skill), Rock is particularly uncertain which of the Player Characters to talk to; he would expect investigative / administrative work such as this to be undertaken by females. Catch does understand some of the oddities of aliens and will try to assist Star in managing Rock's interactions with them – in fact he will be almost fawningly desperate to show how helpful he is being.

Rock can repeat the key points of the story as explained in "A Cunning Plan" earlier. Catch will try to leave Rock to do the

talking, acting innocent and playing down his part in the incident: all he did was notify the senior crew present – Rock – of the courier's arrival, then help load the spice into the courier's truck.

Catch will, where possible, slip in some careful flattery of Rock, effectively encouraging him to cast aspersions on the courier's integrity. Rock's simple pride means he is almost unable to accept he did anything wrong – so it must be someone else's fault. He may even suggest that Star or Seer must have made a mistake – of course Star will politely point out his error. When he mentions in an almost absent-minded way that perhaps Catch should have noticed there was something wrong with the courier, the second male will suddenly turn very defensive – there will be a noticeably tense air between the two for several seconds before Star cuts in and tries to placate them. Thereafter, Catch will end every sentence he says to Rock or Star with the term *fiya* ("I am your vassal") to highlight his lesser status (somewhat tongue-in-cheek).

During the conversation, Star will contribute the following:

- She can confirm – so far as they are aware – the original shipping request from the *Open Path* was fraudulent. Seer has had time to check their computer systems and she cannot find any record of that request originating from the ship or any of the hand computers and other equipment used aboard.

- However, Rock's authorisation of the shipment was genuine and he does not deny doing it. The couriers have his paw print, retina scan and the ship account number (because the courier required payment authorisation for the transport costs).

However, Star will also be noticeably wary about certain points:

- She will not confirm the exact type or value of the "spice" that was in the shipment and will butt in (carefully, so as not to offend) if either of the males start giving away too much detail. She fears the Player Characters may decide to take off with the spice themselves if they know just how valuable it is!

- If the Player Characters ask to talk to any other members of the *Open Path* crew, Star will at first say that only she is really skilled in dealing with non-Aslan so it is best if they communicate solely through her. She will provide a comm code by which they can contact her at any time of night or day.

- If really pressed she will refuse point-blank to allow the Player Characters near the ship, creating vague excuses that she does not want them associated with the ship for their own protection, or claiming the ship is currently being watched by the authorities.

Suspicious Player Characters might try:

- Following the Aslan – they will return to the ship and will not leave again until the Player Characters call them with some news.

- Spying on the ship – they will not see anything of interest except to confirm that: Star, Rock and Catch are all crew members; there are several other Aslan crew as well; the ship arrived in port a week ago just when Star said.

- Checking with the Port Authorities or local Law Enforcement – because the Player Characters have no legal jurisdiction on this world, neither group will confirm or deny whether any crew of the *Open Path* have contacted them regarding any form of lost cargo; they will be told to contact the ship's crew directly.

If the Player Characters waste too much time, Star will contact them by personal comm to chase them up for a progress report and, if necessary, spell out that with every minute they delay, the trail may be growing cold.

3. THE COURIER

The next logical step is to check out the courier company, but they seem to have genuine paperwork requesting the cargo transfer and one of the Aslan crew signed all the forms.

The central office for BlinkOfAnEye couriers is just outside the Downport. The staff are honest, if a little uninterested: as far as they are concerned, they did their job and they have the paperwork to prove it (and customers are *always* moaning about stuff going missing in order to fraudulently claim on the insurance).

The Player Characters will probably ask for the office manager; if not, once the desk clerk understands the nature of their enquiries, he will call out the duty manager Folim Jones:

The manager appears to be an average, down-to-earth guy wearing the standard dark green, one-piece jump suit typical of BlinkOfAnEye, with an animated eye on his front that blinks and then shoots off to one side. It repeats with annoying frequency – since it's out of his eyeline he doesn't seem to notice initially but then apologises, rubs a patch on the jump suit and the thingy stabilises. "What can I do for you folks?" he asks as genially as possible with a fixed customer-facing grin.

Folim will try to be helpful, as he is with all customers. The courier who actually delivered the shipment is currently out on his rounds but will be back in an hour or two "depending on the traffic". He has a personal comm on him, but Folim will refuse to allow him to be distracted from his job unless the Player Characters offer substantial financial compensation for the disruption this would cause to their delivery schedule.

Folim will be happy to provide all the electronic forms used in the transaction, which consist of:

- The original shipping request.

- The sign-off and payment authorisation by Rock.

- The sign-off of receipt of goods at the restaurant.

These forms clearly define the shipment as "four 0.25 dton standard cargo units, hermetically sealed, containing class I-a Romar dust-spice". The Player Characters may quickly realise the potential value of this cargo.

Checking the shipping request shows only the information on the form *could* have been created by any fraudster who knew the basic details of the *Open Path*. However, any Player Character looking over the electronic forms who makes a successful Admin, Broker or similar task will note that the 'user' transaction code (an identifier entered by the requester as their own 'reference' code) is in an unusual format.

- The 'user' transaction code is invalid, but uses a non-standard code format which a Merchant (or someone with a quick bit of computer searching) will identify as probably being unique to Aslan traders.

- If the Player Characters check with Star, she can confirm the code is Aslan and does include the *Open Path*'s valid ship identifier, though the rest of the code appears random to her. She will express concern that this may mean another Aslan ship is messing them about but will tell the Player Characters to ignore this for the moment as it will be easier for her to make enquiries about the two other Aslan ships she knows are in the port (this is a red herring, and Star will confirm at some later point that she does not think either ship is involved).

- For the Player Characters, this is a clue that someone on the ship was responsible for initiating the request (Catch has seen shipping paperwork enough times to know what to put in as a reference code on his fake shipping request; however, he did not properly consider just how unique the code format was to Aslan ships).

Checking the sign-off for the shipment leaving the *Open Path* shows nothing fraudulent. Rock signed the approval with his retina scan and paw print and even put in the ship's account number for the shipping fee.

- However, a Merchant or someone with Admin or Broker skill will notice the details on this form – part of it concerns customs taxes, which are usually handled by the couriers on behalf of their customers. This requires an accurate valuation of the shipment – shown as Cr 1,600,000. The observant Player Character will also notice that the sign-off that Rock put on the form was not *just* for the transport fees but *also* accepts payment of the customs fees – a whopping Cr 160,000 in this case. Seer has not yet realised this but will be even more distraught when she hears about it.

Working on the same principal, the recipient sign-off has a retina print and hand print for the person who signed for the shipment. The name on the form is Taliesan Frump.

- The Player Characters ought to ask whether the name matches the bio-ID provided (if they do not think of this, get anyone with Admin or Broker skill to roll a quick check to remember

this; alternatively, a Player Character could make a Difficult Intelligence roll to realise that Taliesan Frump is the name of a minor 3D movie star. (Garth Frix – the real culprit – had to think quickly when the spice turned up; he had to use his real retina and hand print, but at least tried to think up a false name on the spur of the moment.)

- If any doubt is raised over the recipient's identity, the couriers can easily check the name against the retina and hand prints. On doing so, Folim will look a bit confused and say he believes there might be an error in the database (which is very unusual) as the retina and hand prints match to someone called Garth Frix. Their computer access will only confirm the person's name and show an ID picture (yes, the courier should have checked this on the spot but they process so many transactions a day all they are interested in is getting *someone*'s signature on the form so they can get on to their next delivery). Their computers do NOT have access to Frix's personal details, address and so on.

The Player Characters will want to find out who Frix is, but this information is effectively protected by law and so only available through local law enforcement agencies, who will not release that to the Player Characters no matter what bluff they use.

The only way to track down who Frix is, and where he has taken the shipment, is to go visit the restaurant...

4. SOMETHING FISHY

Having traced the shipment to a restaurant in a nearby seabed city (100 kilometres from the starport), the Player Characters find the alleged recipients claim never to have seen the cargo, until someone mentions one of their staff has suddenly gone missing…

Talk To Me!
The Player Characters can phone the Land Of Spice restaurant, and (unlike the earlier Aslan calls) will now get an answer from one of the staff as it's late enough in the evening for the restaurant to have opened to customers.

However, it is a busy, noisy evening, the staff all have strong local accents, and are mostly interested in whether the Player Characters want to book a table, rather than wasting their time discussing some 'lost shipment of spice'.

- Diplomatic or persuasive Player Characters who specifically ask about Garth Frix will get an admission that Frix works there but the staff on the phone will not be sure if he is around and do not have time to go look for him.

- If the Player Characters use a clever ploy, for example saying Frix has won the lottery or similar, then the staff will be sufficiently motivated to go search for him, though they will return shortly and say he is not in the kitchen and has not phoned in sick.

- If the Player Characters ask for the restaurant manager (Jules Torpen – Star knows his name from having contacted him earlier), they will be told he is too busy to come to the phone (whatever the reason) but if they want to "pop in" to the restaurant he may be able to spare them some time.

Getting Around
The Player Characters will need to visit the restaurant in person to get any further information. This is fairly easy as Mora has an excellent public transport system. To get from Wavecrest to Fenrock (or vice-versa) the Player Characters may do one of the following:

- Ask Star to lend them the *Open Path*'s grav vehicle: she will refuse – not only is it too valuable to simply hand over to the Player Characters, she knows Hunter would get suspicious and it is a very conspicuous vehicle!

- Hire a small ground car: these cost as little as Cr 100 per day for a 6-person wheeled vehicle, including all applicable taxes, though the "named driver" must have the appropriate driving skill. Grav vehicles start at Cr 1,000 per day and will require a lot of paperwork because of their much greater value.

- Hire a taxi: a 6-person taxi will cost Cr 5, plus Cr 1 per km, so about Cr 100 to get to Fenrock.

- Take the train: fast monorail systems will provide transport to Fenrock's central terminal for Cr 10 per person. There are plenty of subsidiary railway systems and stations dotted throughout Fenrock, so getting around within the city is fairly easy, costing just Cr 1 per journey.

The transport link between Wavecrest and Fenrock is effectively a series of huge 'pipes' containing many subdivided tunnels for road and rail traffic with separate links for the emergency services.

Fenrock is described earlier. Emphasise the layered, sectored nature of the city but otherwise it is effectively like a multi-layered city above ground with two- or even three-storey buildings free-standing along a fairly normal network of streets. Stacking a few tens of layers like this gives the city the same overall population density as (for example) a city such as London or New York.

Spicy Stuff

The Land Of Spice is located in Spear sector level 7 (below sea level), about 250 metres from, and one level above, the Quandor docks (the D marked in the bottom left corner of the Fenrock map).

On their arrival, the Player Characters will find none of the staff can add much beyond what the Player Characters may already have obtained over the phone. However, a diplomatic approach will get them a few minutes with the manager Jules Torpen, provided the Player Characters take a table and order some food (the more they spend, the friendlier Torpen will be).

- Torpen will act confused, wondering why the Player Characters would be asking about Frix. He mentions some mad Aslan called him up earlier in the day accusing him of receiving some huge shipment of spice at the restaurant. "What the Plinus would I do with a displacement ton of spice?" he grumbles. "And I've never heard of this Frump bloke that the silly alien seemed to think worked here!"

- Assuming the Player Characters explain Frump may actually have been Frix, Torpen will change his tone. "I always knew he was a trouble maker", he says. With a little thought, Torpen admits that Frix could have been at the restaurant earlier in the day – it was his turn to get into the restaurant early in the afternoon, ready to receive the fresh afternoon catch from fishermen at Quandor docks. Certainly the fish were all stocked in the refrigerator units when the other staff turned up this evening, but Frix had gone by that time.

- Now that he knows Frix could be mixed up in this business, Torpen will declare that he's firing him, so any loss of spice is not the restaurant's responsibility.

- The Player Characters will no doubt want to know where they can find Frix. Torpen can tell them that he hangs around the Quandor docks with some 'friends' – he won't elaborate. If it will make the Player Characters go away, he will somewhat reluctantly tell them Frix's home address.

Torpen will expect the Player Characters to finish their meal and leave, without hassling the rest of his staff, but Player Characters may want to talk to the staff anyway (particularly if they didn't get far with Torpen).

Hanging around out the back where the staff take their breaks, or sitting down for a meal and then talking to the waiters/resses as they come by, with some suitable "financial encouragement" will gain the Player Characters some useful information:

- Frix only joined the restaurant a couple of months back..

- They think he might have been a member of a gang, certainly he seems to hang out with some unsavoury people around the Quandor docks.

- They think he might have "done time" recently.

- They can give his home address, though this may take some persuasion.

- He is a bit unreliable at turning up on time and doing what he is told.

- None of them would trust him with their wallet.

There is nothing more to be learned here – the Player Characters need to locate Frix, either at his home or down at Quandor docks.

A quick look around the docks will not locate Frix though the Player Characters may have the opportunity to encounter the smells of a lot of processed fish up-close-and-personal. See part 8 for a description of the dock area. This should encourage them to head for Frix's home but if they have not managed to learn where he lives, then allow them to encounter him near the docks (but not near the Sharks' hideout).

5. THE LONG HAND OF THE LAW

The Player Characters arrive at the house of their chief suspect only to find him overdosed on dust-spice… just in time for the cops to turn up. (Note: If the Player Characters have tracked down Frix in the docks, adjust this encounter accordingly but the result should be the same, with at least some of the Player Characters and Frix getting arrested.)

Dust-spice is, in theory, only a mild euphoric for humans. However, having retained a little of the spice for himself when he passed the rest over to his gangland friends, Frix decided he should try it out to see why it is so damnably expensive. Having no idea how much to consume or how to take it, he decided to try dissolving several spoonfuls in the low quality spirit "Headharmer" that makes his life worth living. The combined alcohol-dust-spice concoction has had quite an effect on Frix, sufficient to make him mix up some further glassfuls. By the point the Player Characters turn up, Frix believes he lives on a planet-sized water melon and everyone else is just one of the pips in the melon.

Having also decided that since he is a Shark he should now go swimming like a real shark within the water-melon "sea" of flesh,

Frix has stripped naked and is wandering about his apartment block trying to convince some 'pips' to come with him. A woman in a nearby apartment decided she did not want "to create a new melon" (the offer Frix made on her doorstep) and instead called the cops.

The Player Characters turn up just in time to find Frix leaving his apartment stark naked, claiming he is going to pop out to see the fishes for a while to find out if they are melon pips too. Assuming the Player Characters confront him, he is far too "gone" to give them any coherent answers, however he will then suffer a bout of sudden paranoia, at which point he will look thoughtful, say meaningfully "Ah, the sharks took it!" and make a run for it. The Player Characters should easily catch him again without significant injury!

At some point during or just after this escapade, the police turn up. As is natural for the military-oriented law enforcers on Mora, they have a lot of guns and point them very meaningfully at anyone whom they suspect of doing anything that could be considered illegal. At least some of the Player Characters should be sufficiently engaged with Frix that the police will arrest them too, assuming that Frix is either a maniac or crazy on drugs, and the Player Characters could be anything from helpful bystanders to his drugs suppliers. The key thing is that they want everyone down the local cop house to make their statements.

Any Player Characters who avoid being captured (for example, they watched Frix from a distance and did not get involved in confronting or chasing him) will see those who were arrested bundled into a wheeled APC with police markings and driven about half a kilometre into the Zen sector where the local police station is situated.

6. RED TAPE

Some or all of the Player Characters are in the clink having been caught in a possible drugs-bust. They will have to be at their most diplomatic if they want to regain their freedom and avoid involving the Aslan. Any Player Characters taken to the police station in Zen sector will be interrogated to determine their part in this evening's charade. The police will adjust their questioning according to how suspiciously the Player Characters acted and whether any of them denied arrest or lied about their identity.

At this point the police have no reason to link the Player Characters or Frix to the enquiries Star made earlier in the day regarding a "stolen" shipment of dust-spice. However, if anyone mentions their patron Aslan, the police will try to check their story. Assuming

Star is on the *Open Path*, she or Seer will intercept any such call (to avoid Hunter getting wise to the situation).

- If the Player Characters have broken the law, then the Aslan will only admit to having hired them to find some 'lost property' and will deny any authorization to commit crime, carry weapons or kidnap Frix (for example)! If the Player Characters have behaved properly, then Star will vouch for them and confirm their investigatory authority on behalf of her ship.

In their time in the cop shop, the Player Characters should be able to learn that:

- Frix is a nasty piece of lowland gang thug – a member of the Fen Sharks.

- He has only been out of prison (one year for beating up some people who did not pay protection) for a couple of months.

- For parole he had to demonstrate he was taking a decent paying job. Here the law says you cannot hold past convictions against someone, so he got the job at the restaurant without the owner knowing (initially) he was an ex-con.

Player Characters who have committed crimes, however minor, will – as offworlders – probably just be fined for their misbehaviour, anything from Cr 50 up to Cr 500. If someone somehow managed to seriously injure a police officer then they will only be released if Star comes down and personally signs them into her custody, on bail of Cr 5,000. Needless to say, that Player Character can consider any fee from the Aslan to have been waived. You should only confine a Player Character to jail if they have really screwed up, because the rest of the game should happen sufficiently quickly they will effectively take no further part in it.

- Player Characters who can mention the names of past contacts or patrons (for example from previous adventures) or who have a very high Social Standing, will get more positive and respectful treatment from the police.

If the police somehow learn that the Player Characters are looking for a missing shipment of dust-spice, they will confide in the Player Characters that this is expensive stuff and if it's in the hands of a local gang then it could be hazardous to find, so they should leave it to the cops to handle. Of course, this means Star sitting down with the cops and filling in a lot of paperwork, so she will be adamant that the Player Characters should keep looking.

In addition, the police will do a quick check on the "missing dust-spice" story and, though there is paperwork – from the couriers – showing a ton of dust-spice exported from the *Open Path* just a few hours earlier, they cannot trace the payment for it to the *Open Path*, and its delivery to the restaurant is very suspicious, so they will begin to wonder if it is really dust-spice that has gone missing, or perhaps this is a drug distribution deal with the Aslan acting as the "mules".

Whatever the manner in which the Player Characters leave the police station, a combination of factors (Frix's strange state, his own admission to having taken drugs (he is non-specific about which ones), the possible drug-running link noted above, and the (extremely likely) suspicions that any Player Character raises whenever they talk to an officer of the law) will lead to a couple of plain-clothes officers being assigned to tail them, "Just in case they lead us to something interesting."

Frix will not have said anything useful during this whole scene, but the Player Characters should conclude that the stuff is with his gang friends. After all, who else would he get to take a dton of dust-spice, given it was not at his house and the police may have been a bit insistent about asking them all where the stuff had got to… Time to find the Fen Sharks…

7. SWIMMING WITH THE SHARKS

Unfortunately, the dust-spice has ended up in the hands of the local criminal fraternity. Frix's Fen Shark friends hang around sub docking bay 42 in the Quandor docks, within one level and a few hundred metres of Frix's house:

It is easy to get directions to the Quandor docks, though once within the Quandor sector it is a somewhat confusing tangle of huge water-lock docks, repair yards, noisy processing plants, warehouses and a few very dodgy looking drinking establishments. The first thing that surprised you was that the huge doorways linking the docks with the rest surrounding sectors were closed – everywhere else these doors stay open except in times of emergency. Of course, once they opened the door to let you through, you were hit by a solid wave of fish-stink and weed-smell that explained why their neighbours preferred the docks to keep their doors sealed as much as possible.

Naturally, cities such as Fenrock are totally dependent on the bounty of the sea, deep fishing and seabed farming to support themselves, but up to now you had not been exposed to the "dirty" end of the business.

Asking around for the Sharks will mostly get blank stares from the dock workers, though the application of a bit of Streetwise will quickly get them directions to bay 42.

- If you need to push things along, have one of the Fen Sharks wander by with a very noticeable shark tattoo on his exposed muscled shoulder. If the Player Characters need any further clues, feel free to let them find a sign with "Sharks this way" and a big arrow pointing towards bay 42.

If the Player Characters are doing a bit too well at this point, then assume that one or more of the Sharks heard about Frix's capture by the police… they will have watched the station, seen the Player Characters released and wondered if they were perhaps a rival gang, out to find or steal the dust-spice. An attempt by some Sharks to beat up and interrogate the Player Characters in a back-alley can be used at this point to add some action and/or delay getting to the finale (if this is necessary).

If threatened by the Sharks now, or in part 8, the Player Characters *could* pretend to be dealers in the spice. No doubt the police covert surveillance will be gradually increasing now that the Player Characters are in the docks area and interacting with known gang members. The police might subsequently step in and encourage

the Player Characters to act as dealers, in order to speed up the location of the dust-spice and allow them to make a dramatic swoop and arrests.

- Though the planet's law level is 7, all the Sharks are muscled and/or know how to use knives, spearguns and other nasty marine-oriented weaponry. If the Player Characters out-fight the Sharks too easily in this part of the scenario then in part 8 a few of the gangsters should have access to real guns, just to make it a bit more challenging.

- It is unlikely the Player Characters can get hold of guns, though they may get clever and go buy some fish-hunting equipment themselves – anything from spearguns to one-shot explosive "sticks" (used for scaring away aquatic predators), electrified nets and so on can be obtained at shopping malls close to the docks.

If the Player Characters are not working with the police at this point, they *might* get the feeling they are being watched, though they will have to roll a good Streetwise or somesuch to spot an undercover cop. Even then they should be unable to determine whether he is a cop, or a Shark or another rival dock gang member.

8. FINDERS KEEPERS

The Player Characters have to decide what approach to take, legal or extra-legal, to resolve the matter and get the dust-spice back from the thugs because asking nicely is not going to work. It is time for the Player Characters to go to dock 42 and try to get the dust-spice back.

Simply watching the Sharks carefully will indicate a sudden preponderance of them around sub dock 42 – they are holding the dust-spice there while they try to decide whether to fence it themselves or find a proper "trader" to sell it to. Some of their group have suggested trying to sell it to one of the Aslan ships in port, because they know the Aslan *really* like dust-spice – this will lead into scenario 9.

The head of the sharks – Niko "the barb" Kinollo – is currently inside the dock, while a number of his heavies (adjust as appropriate to be a good match to the Player Characters) lounge around outside on the crane system that runs between the dock and the nearby repair yard.

The dock is basically an 8 metre long and 5 metre wide cylindrical water-lock, with large iris valves at either end (one opening out into the sea). There is a very rusty old mini-sub in there that the Sharks actually own and occasionally use to ship contraband between cities. The four crates of dust-spice are sitting idly by this old sub, awaiting Niko's decision on whether to sell them immediately or ship them out to somewhere safer.

The Player Characters have a number of options:

1. They can pretend to be spice dealers. The head of the sharks – Niko "the barb" Kinollo will see they are offworlders and assume therefore that they are not undercover cops, so will probably be fairly easily convinced that they can either buy his spice or sell him some more (depending upon the approach the Player Characters have used). He will proudly take the Player Characters into the dock, show them the number of heavies he has got, claim worldwide distribution capability and so on to impress them. He has a rough idea of how much money he can make from the dust-spice and if the Player Characters have any more to sell he is determined that he is going to get a cut of the action.

2. If they are acting as buyers, Niko will not show them where the spice is, but will meet them somewhere in the same dome, with plenty of his heavies around, and let them sample the spice. He does not know yet how to check its purity – his brightest thug is looking this up on the local equivalent to the internet so he can work out how to test it. The Player Characters will not have to work hard to look more knowledgeable than Niko! They could even bring along one or more of the Aslan as potential buyers. If so, then Star and Seer will turn up, with Rock and Catch left in their grav vehicle somewhere nearby (they just do not trust the two males to be left on the ship where they might give the game away to Hunter, if he has not already realised the dust-spice has gone). This is another way of triggering part 9 of this adventure.

3. The kick-down the door approach. The Player Characters basically turn up with improvised weaponry and try to sneak, or force, their way past the Shark guards to see if the dust-spice is in the sub bay.

4. The Player Characters involve the Aslan in approach 1, 2 or 3 above – see part 9 as well.

5. The Player Characters involve the police in approach 1 or 2 above (the police will not sanction kicking down the doors of the dock unless they have evidence the Sharks have stolen goods there.)

Whichever approach the Player Characters choose, modify the number and armament of the Sharks to make this a fun fight, without causing undue injury to any given Player Character. If the Player Characters out-fight them initially, more Sharks can be called out from the local bar and other nearby locations where they hang out, potentially with more significant weaponry to extend the fight as needed – see part 9.

9. Mad Cats

The young Aslan males involved in losing the dust-spice from their ship have decided to take matters into their own hands and deal with the dishonourable thieves who are holding it. However, their fiery tempers and lack of experience dealing with non-Aslan are guaranteed to lead them into trouble.

At some point Rock will get to hear about the Sharks, whether it is through him or Catch accidentally picking up the call when one of the Sharks tries to sell a ton of dust-spice to them, or the Player Characters giving them updates on their progress, or actively inviting Star as part of a 'deal' in scenario 8.

Whatever the reason, Rock and Catch turn up in Shark territory and at the worst possible time decide it is their honour to get back the dust-spice (Rock because he screwed up, Catch because all this has gone much further than he intended and he knows he needs to get the spice back so people stop looking for the culprit who is responsible the whole incident).

The Aslan will not necessarily attack the Sharks outright without warning the Player Characters or otherwise investigating the docks, but they will be somewhat ham-fisted and the situation Is guaranteed to result in Aslan issuing challenges, Sharks pulling weapons (being no respecters of "honour") and there being a fierce, whirling-claw battle probably pulling in the Sharks, the Player Characters (willingly or otherwise) and the police (having been warned by their surveillance team that something serious is going down at bay 42)!

This should be the exciting finale to the adventure (BUT leave time for part 10 too).

There is the danger that Niko and his guys will try to escape in the sub, perhaps managing to load one or more of the spice crates in a rush, or in a panic they might open the sub bay doors and flood the bay (the crates would get carried out into the sea but would sink to the sea floor quickly and could therefore be recovered).

Normally the inner and outer dock doors cannot be opened simultaneously. However, Niko's crew once over-rode the control system to allow them to get their sub out fast when the police came to call… this means that in theory they *could* mess up and lead to a mass flood of the sector, though this should be a threat rather than an actual event, as all concerned would probably drown.

The presence of heavily armed local police can be used to add excitement and to provide last-minute assistance to prevent any Player Character getting unnecessarily killed by a Shark. Any Player Character who is foolish enough to try attacking a police officer is likely to get themselves killed or at least arrested.

10. Casting Out

Hopefully the dust-spice has been recovered and the authorities placated. The Player Characters should have gained sufficient evidence to determine that one of the young Aslan males is behind this whole incident. The question is who is brave enough to challenge him with the facts?

When the fight is over, the Player Characters and the Aslan will have to come clean about the dust-spice, because otherwise the police are going to confiscate it as evidence against the Sharks. Star and Seer can provide sufficient evidence of their ownership to get the police to release the goods to them.

- Should any of the Player Characters decide that they would have preferred to keep some spice for themselves (given its great value) it is unlikely they will get away with this given the presence of the police at the conclusion of the adventure.

At this point there is still a potential "hole" in the story – who initiated this whole thing? The Player Characters may have picked up a few clues pointing to Catch – if they suggest him as the culprit, he will challenge whoever does so to a duel. The legality here is a bit of an issue, but it is practically impossible for the Player Characters to have obtained definitive proof, so they are effectively challenging his honour here. The other Aslan may be horrified, Star or Seer may intervene and be reluctant to dispute the challenge itself but will point out it does not have to be resolved by a fight – the Player Characters could then suggest suitable alternative methods of duelling that would satisfy everyone. If a Player Character accepts the challenge but then gets mauled by Catch, or they simply chicken out of the duel, Rock may step up to the challenge, substituting for the Player Character. This is most likely to occur if someone alleges that Catch's plan may have been to deliberately embarrass Rock (they may have worked out the animosity between them).

Whatever, hopefully the Player Characters or Rock win. Hunter may step in and give everyone a thick ear. He will not be happy, however things have turned out.

The end result is that Catch ought to be declared to have committed *Ya'uiya* – dishonour so great that the Aslan is stricken from the rolls of his clan and becomes Outcast… and potentially a life-long enemy of the Player Characters!

Consequences

The consequences of the adventure are dependent on if the characters recover the dust-spice, and how much trouble or turmoil the recovery causes.

If the characters recover the dust-spice but choose to steal it for themselves, they will gain Rivals in the form of Aslan Merchants and Mora Law Enforcement. The first makes it very difficult to sell or profit from the stolen dust-spice, and the second one results in the character being arrested and taken out of game (not the campaign) during any adventure when encountering Law Enforcement personnel and failing a Advocate + Social Standing check (Average, +0) and spending some time in lock-up, this could lead to further adventures for the Player Characters as they serve out any prison term (probably of several years' length, after all what they stole was worth a considerable amount, although if they willingly repay the Aslan they are likely to receive a shorter sentence).

If the characters recover the dust-spice and return it to the Aslan merchants, they receive two awards: "Honourable Reputation with Aslan", and "Favour of *Aokholkhtyeilik'al'soistsea*". The first award allows for a +1 DM on social interactions with Aslan groups in the campaign, and the second extends free travel (Middle Passage) on the clan's merchant fleet, to campaign adventures in the Lunion (K), Mora (L), District 268 (N), Glisten (O) and Trin's Veil (P) subsectors of the Marches. In addition, the Aslan will give each character Cr6,000 immediately, and all characters will also receive Star as a Contact.

If the characters prove Catch is guilty of the series of events, they will also gain Rock as a Contact and Catch as an Enemy. While Rock is not the greatest contact, he will remember they protected his honour. Catch, on the other hand, will NOT forget they proved his dishonour, and because he is forced to make his way in human society, may be in a position to make things difficult for the characters later.

APPENDIX 1: THE ASLAN

The Referee is advised to read *Alien Module 1: Aslan* for additional background. The following points can help in play.

Key Points When using Aslan

- Importance of **pride and honour**, which may lead to **challenges or duels**. There are points in the adventure where the text suggests that dealing with the Aslan in a disrespectful manner may lead to a challenge / duel. In order to avoid the characters spending all their time fighting the Aslan (who are, after all, their patrons!) the Referee should (if necessary) guide players by providing advice through volunteering information to a suitably 'knowledgeable' member of the party – see "Knowledge of the Aslan" below.

- Very strong **gender bias**, based more on perceived skill set than actual gender for non-Aslan.

- **Better night vision, hearing and smell** than humans, giving them a +1 DM to any Recon or Survival checks that involve these senses.

Knowledge Of The Aslan

Aslan are not uncommon within the Spinward Marches and so any character who has travelled the stars, lived near a major starport, or who is reasonably well-educated concerning offworld matters, will know of them and have some idea of their society and behaviour. However, this view may also be somewhat stereotyped, in the same

way that many Imperials view all Vargr as untrustworthy pirates or Zhodani as mind-sucking baby-eaters.

Any character wishing to know details about the Aslan should either justify the reason they would know the information, or make an 8+ Education check for each piece of data, +1 if from a starfaring career, +2 if they were a scout.

APPENDIX 2: DUST-SPICE

Fteahrao (dust-spice) is a rare, euphoric spice used for seasoning food, especially fruit. Harvested from the bark of the geki – a desert scrub-plant originally found only on Romar (2140/ Glisten, Spinward Marches) – this seasoning is popular with humans as a mild recreational spice with effects slighter than, but similar to, alcohol.

The Aslan (as well as a few other non-human races such as the Vargr) find dust-spice a much more powerful euphoric, and since it was first imported into the Aslan Hierate (by *Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr* Tyeyo dust-spice Importers), it has been in constant demand by those higher ranking Aslan who could afford its very high price.

Quickly recognising its value, the Aslan and other races have sought to grow geki on other worlds, but with only limited success, and never to the same strength and exquisite flavour as the Romar variety. Clever chemists have since determined the key organic components of dust-spice and created synthetic equivalents but these are still regarded as inferior to spice from Romar. As a result, production and shipping of Romar dust-spice is carefully controlled, with a complex system of certification of purity and origin to ensure that this maintains its value in a market swamped by synthetic spice. The *Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr* is now just one of many dust-spice shippers and long ago changed its focus to other novel or valuable trade goods that can be traded between Mora (3124/ Mora, Spinward Marches) and the Aslan capital of Kuzu.

GRADING AND PRICE

Dust-spice is graded via laboratory measurement of several of its chemical components, effectively determining the strength of its intoxicating effects, its fragrance and taste (for cooking) and even its colour. These factors are affected by the origins of the spice (the environment in which the plants grew), the manner of collection (for example, the degree to which the stripped bark is contaminated with other parts of the plant during harvesting and subsequent preparation) and its processing (the control of temperature and humidity during drying, the grinding and filtering techniques used and so on).

Imperial Trade Standard 3632-101-B1 is dedicated solely to specifying the grading standards for dust-spice, defining four basic grades: IV (poorest), III, II, and I (finest quality). Officially, only Romar dust-spice can ever be rated grade I, and within this there are four sub-categories: I-d (poorest) through to I-a (finest). The precise grading is obtained by spectrophotometric analysis of a spice sample.

The basic grades very roughly correspond to Romar (I), geki plants transplanted off Romar (II), mixed synthetic and geki-derived (III) and pure synthetic (IV) though of course every trader of dust-spice has their own view of how precious their particular spice mix may be! Typical trading prices range from Cr 500 per kg for grade IV, up to Cr 11,000 per kg for grade I-a (though like fine wines, the price paid for the highest prices may reflect 'snobbery' value rather than the purest flavour).

KEY GAME POINTS

- **Dust-spice is well-known** across most of the Spinward Marches (and beyond), so all the characters will know the information given above unless they fail an Easy Education roll. The only exception to this is the detail of the grading and prices, which will only be known to Merchant Player Characters who succeed at a Broker task.

- **The dust-spice in this adventure** is graded I-a and is carried in four 0.25 dton containers. Each container's gross volume is a 1.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 m cube. Allowing for vacuum-safe walls, carrying handles, securing points, and internal packaging, each container holds about 2,500 litres of dust-spice, which weighs just over 36 kg (dust-spice has a relatively low density) and is worth about Cr 400,000. The total value of this shipment is therefore up to Cr 1,600,000.

Appendix 3: The Crew Of The Yaeukhtai

Hwekaiheast ("Hunter of Meat")

Ship's Captain/Pilot

Male Aslan Captain – Space Officer (Commander) 4

Abilities Str 13 (+2), Dex 6 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 5 (-1), Edu 5 (-1), Soc 8 (+0)

Languages Aslan

Skills Comms 1, Computer 1, Gun Combat (Rifle) 1, Gunnery (Turrets) 1, Leader 3, Melee (Dewclaw) 2, Pilot 2, Tactics (Naval) 1

Possessions Carbine *Uealikhe* (3d6), Hardened Dewclaw (2d6), Combat Flex *Su'koir'yerl* (5), Cr 1,000

Hunter is an impressive sight – towering over two metres tall, covered in shining, brightly coloured armour which barely contains his bulging muscles. His bushy mane surrounds a broad face with a seeming perpetual frown, his heavy brows shadowing piercing eyes that burn with fierce intensity.

He is famous within his family for resolving issues through simple intimidation, though when required to "show his claws" he is a genuinely good fighter. Though not the fastest or brightest of males, he does have an innate ability to foresee starship actions and has avoided pirates from rival clans several times through this keen insight, including one instance where the use of a gas giant for cover allowed him to counter-attack a pirate ship and take it out – this was considered a great blow for his family and the clan as a whole.

He has strong respect for his cousin who runs the *Aokholkhtyeilik* clan and is using the *Open Path* as a means of surveying various worlds to determine somewhere he might strike out and grab some land of his own in the near future. He is protective of his crew though somewhat perplexed at what to do with Rock as the young male does not seem to show much talent for anything useful.

Ftoulreisktoal ("Star Cloud Climber")

Ship's Astrogator

Female Aslan Astrogator – Space Officer (Astrogator) 4

Abilities Str 10 (+1), Dex 9 (+1), End 10 (+1), Int 9 (+1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Anglic, Aslan

Skills Astrogation 2, Computer 1, Engineer (Jump Drive) 1, Engineer (Power Plant) 1, Robotics 1, Tolerance 2, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Body Pistol *Khaihte* (3d6-3), Gold Flak Jacket (4), Cr 11,000

Star is an experienced astrogator and also helps Edge (see below) with ship maintenance. She is also unusually tolerant and understanding of other species, which means she often accompanies her sister Seer on her business about starports when cargo negotiations with non-Aslan are required. She understands the need to have Rock as part of the crew but finds him frustratingly "male".

Yorleikhoi ("Seer of the Evening")

Ship's Purser

Female Aslan Senior Lieutenant – Space Officer (Shipmaster) 4

Abilities Str 5 (-1), Dex 3 (-1), End 7 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Anglic, Aslan.

Skills Admin 2, Advocate 1, Broker 3, Computer 2, Deception 1, Diplomat 1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol) 2, Leadership 1, Persuade 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2

Possessions Long Pistol *Takhestah* (3d6-3), Cr 65,000

Seer is relatively short and thin and, with her thin mane is barely distinguishable from a human at a distance – totally unlike her sister Star. Her small stature tends to make her seem far less threatening, both to Aslan and to other species. However, her humble demeanour hides a sharp, business-oriented mind and she is a subtle but very persuasive negotiator who rarely fails to secure an advantageous deal for the ship.

She has many years' experience of dealing with non-Aslan and is confident of her capabilities in a business environment. However, she feels distinctly uncomfortable as soon as non-business matters arise, which is why she often asks her colleague Star to accompany her when meeting non-Aslan, particularly for the first time.

Ktaharastl ("Cliff Edge Walker")

Ship's Engineer

Female Aslan Intendant – Space Officer (Commander) 1, Space Hand (Engineer) 2

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 4 (-1), End 9 (+1), Int 6 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic, Aslan

Skills Computer 2, Engineer (Manoeuvre Drive) 1, Engineer (Power Plant) 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Mechanic 1, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Long Pistol *Takhestah* (3d6-3), Cr 31,000

Edge is an average size Aslan whose primary value is in her dedication and thoroughness. Outside of the engine room, she may appear dull and lumbering; thankfully once she is working on the innards of the power plant, her very methodical attitude seems to overcome her lack of manual dexterity and she always thoroughly studies the manual for anything she needs to use, rather than believing in the intuition many engineers seem to rely on.

Edge began her spacer career as a simple spacehand but after two terms of service she transferred to Hunter's ship; it was just a month later that her expert management of the ship's drives helped Hunter in his counter-attack on a feuding clan's pirate ship. He rewarded her dedication with a promotion to the officer path.

Troirlaukah ("Power of the Shaking Rock")

Annoying Family Second-born

Male Aslan – Envoy (Duellist) 1

Abilities Str 13 (+2), Dex 6 (+0), End 11 (+1), Int 3 (-1), Edu 5 (-1), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Aslan, Anglic (very limited)

Skills Melee (Dewclaw) 2

Possessions None

Rock believes he is the "god-king of the universe", the pride and joy of his parents. In fact he is the second-born son of his family and it is his older brother *Troirloiykheyo* who has been spoilt and wanted for nothing throughout his young life. However, some of this did 'rub off' on Rock and given his very simple mind and correspondingly very simple view on life, he effectively believes himself to be just as important as his brother.

He is still a little confused as to his role on Hunter's ship and originally believed himself to be the effective captain, given Hunter is merely his uncle and has the relatively unimportant task of running a starship. In Rock's eyes, if Hunter were important in the clan he would be a land-owner, not wasting his time here in space, albeit all the boring day-to-day running of the ship at first appeared to be handled by his subordinate females. Hunter

quickly demonstrated how 20 years of duelling experience could overcome a naive young male – no matter how strong – so Rock, somewhat humiliated, realised that he was not the boss and he would have to do as he was told... at least for the moment...

Wiyl'steawtaul ("Travels Quietly to Catch Prey")

Gunner

Male Aslan Spacehand – Spacer (Gunner) 2

Abilities Str 13 (+2), Dex 5 (-1), End 8 (+0), Int 10 (+1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)

Languages Aslan, Anglic

Skills Computer 1, Gunnery (Turret) 1, Sensors 1, Steward 1, Streetwise 1, Tolerance 1, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Cr 2,500

Catch is a third son who already had experience in space on his own clan's traders before being assigned to the *Open Path* as a token of his clan's appreciation for Hunter's anti-piracy success. Although as heftily built as Rock, Catch has not trained for fighting and is not truly sure whether he could take on the arrogant whipper-snapper nephew of the ship's captain who has been making Catch's life a misery for the past few months. Unfortunately Catch's cousin, Wasteland, is about as bright as Rock and so not very helpful.

Wiyl'htarlhwoakh ("Travels Far Across Wasteland")

Gunner

Male Aslan Spacehand – Spacer (Gunner) 2

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 6 (+0), End 10 (+1), Int 4 (-1), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)

Languages Aslan, Anglic (limited)

Skills Gunnery (Turret) 2, Vac Suit 1

Possessions Cr 1,500

Wasteland is a third son in much the same position as Catch though his smaller size means he is much more easily intimidated by Rock and so has learned to simply keep out of the way of the conceited young second-son. He sympathises with Catch's frustrations but does not see what either of them can do about it.

APPENDIX 4: OTHER CHARACTERS

When needed, Mora's Peace Enforcement teams are quick to respond. They will consist of four Peace Enforcer personnel, and one Peace Enforcer officer. They will separate all groups immediately, working first to stop all violence and only afterwards investigating a scene.

Mora Peace Enforcer Officer

Human Agent (Law) 3

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions stunner (2d6+3 stun), autopistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm.

MORA Peace Enforcer Personnel

Human Agent (Law) 2

Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions stunner (2d6+3 stun), autopistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm

If violence continues, additional teams will respond, replacing the cloth armour (5) with combat armour (12), and the stunner with assault rifles (3d6).

# APPENDIX 5: YAEUKHTAI "OPEN PATH" AOA'IW CLASS LIGHT TRADER

A popular design inside the Hierate, especially in the Trojan Reach, combining cargo space with a small number of passenger cabins. Nicknamed the pouncer, it has a dramatic, forward-sweeping wing design.

The hull of the *Yaeukhtai* is a deep red and heavily decorated with inscriptions and clan heraldry in gold and silver with sparkling spots imitating expensive jewels embedded within the hull.

- The key statistics for the ship are:

- 300 dton hull, streamlined with fuel scoops.

- Jump-2, 1G Manoeuvre, Power Plant-2

- Model 2 computer with basic civilian electronics.

- Three double turrets, mounting double-beam lasers in one, and missile / sandcaster combinations in the other two.

- Cargo capacity of 105 dtons.

- 20 dton Launch.

- Ship's Air/raft.

- Cost as new, MCr 92.

Deckplans for this ship can be found in *Alien Module 1: Aslan* but should not be needed for this scenario as none of the Aslan will let the Player Characters aboard the ship under any circumstances.

APPENDIX 6: MAPS OF FENROCK
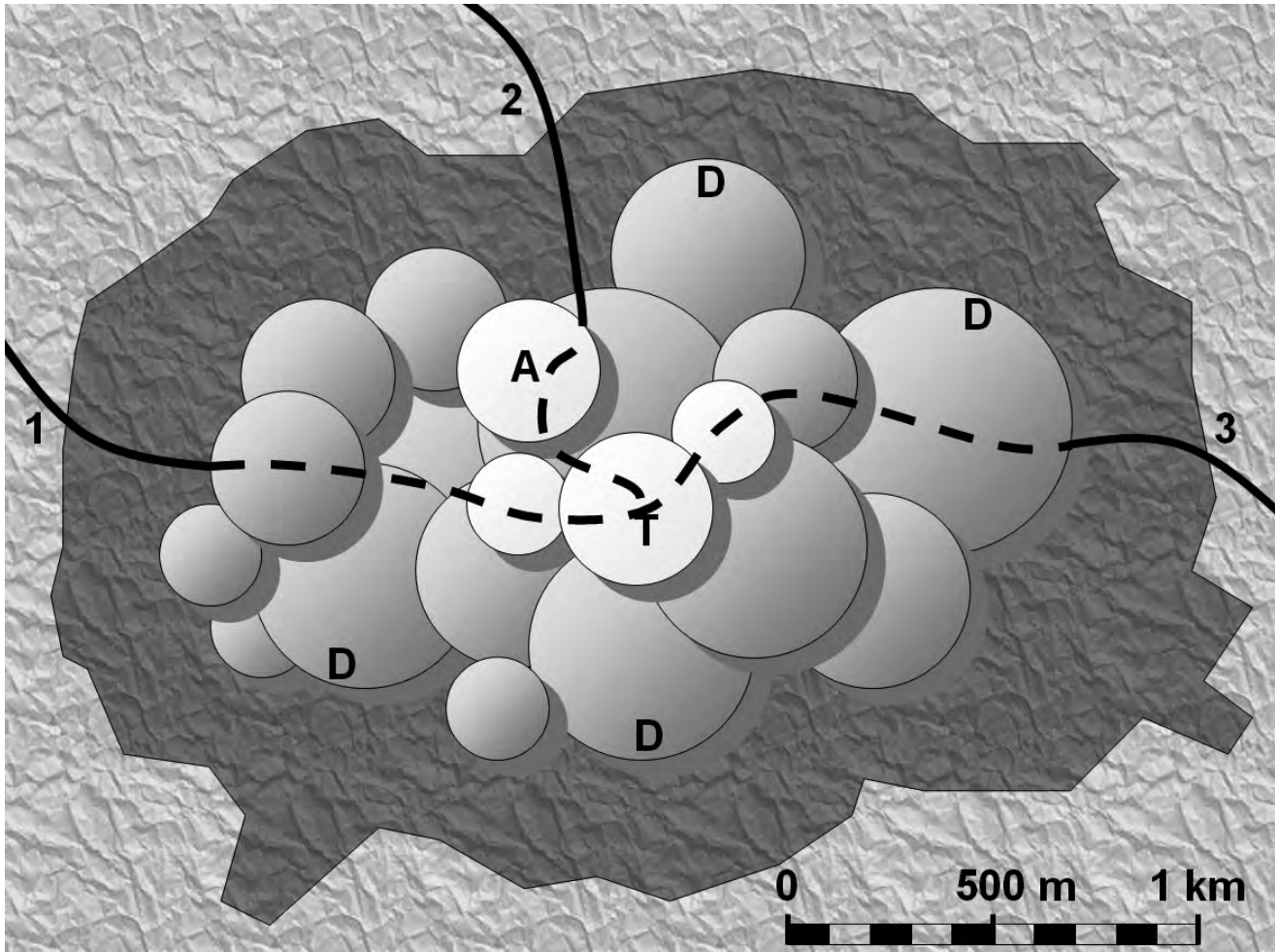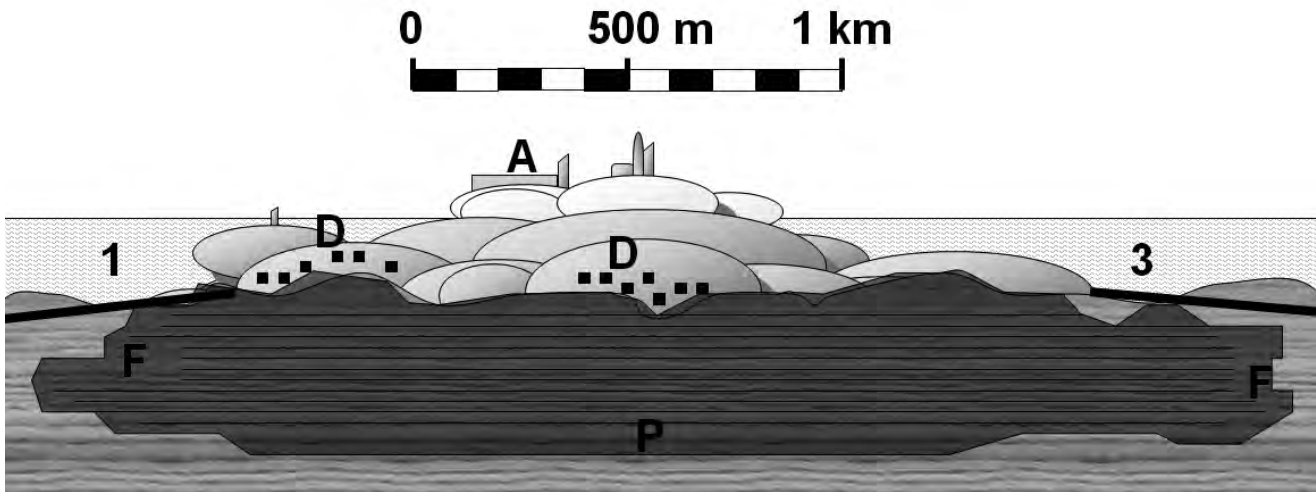

AERIAL VIEW OF FENROCK CITY, MORA

Key:

1: Subsea transport system to Wavecrest city (100 km west).

2: Subsea transport system to the Lancefer Arcology (200 km northwest).

3: Subsea transport systems to the Morilar Archipelago (1500 km northeast).

A: Airport (above sea surface).

D: Main subsea docking and warehousing sections.

T: Main transport hub.

Shaded area shows extent of the city under the seabed.

SIDE VIEW OF FENROCK CITY, MORA

Key:

1. Subsea transport system to Wavecrest city (100 km west).

3: Subsea transport systems to the Morilar Archipelago (1500 km northeast).

A: Airport (above sea surface).

D: Main subsea docking and warehousing sections.

F: Subsea farm processing.

P: Main power plant area.

Shaded area shows extent of the city under the seabed.

SPINWARD FENDERBENDER

BY STEVEN PARKER

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Location

This adventure takes place in the Spinward Marches, going from Mertactor (Spinward Marches 1537) on the very edge of the Imperium, to nearby Collace (Spinward Marches 1237) in District 268. The players are escorting a very valuable cargo to the non-Imperial world when there is a dangerous collision between two ships above the highport - one of which is the liner the players are on! As the accident unfolds, the players must help to save the other passengers, protect and take possession of their cargo and make it safely off the ship to deliver their goods.

Player Characters

This adventure is meant for a handful of spacer type characters, optimally of low or moderate social status. A party of Drifters, Merchants and Scouts should handle this quite well, though a Marine or Navy member in the party would definitely not hurt. The party will be expected to deal with a dangerous Zero-G situation, some combat and some bureaucratic red tape before the adventure is over.

Encounters

This adventure starts on Mertactor in District 268 on 083–1105. All of the action in Imperial space takes place in Mertactor's orbital starport. In broad strokes:

1. The Player Characters are offered a job escorting a valuable cargo for an eccentric Imperial industrialist. They are offered some cash up front and high passage to Collace. Upon delivery at Collace they will be paid the balance owed. 083–1105, departing 084–1105.

2. Once underway, the Player Characters are able to hobnob with the Captain and other luminaries, spending a relatively uneventful week in jump. 084–1105 through 091–1105.

3. Upon arrival at Collace, an errant 20-ton launch strikes the liner at high velocity, causing an urgent emergency situation. An unusually quick response by a Collace Search and Rescue cutter is revealed to actually be a gang of pirates infiltrating the liner in the confusion of the wreck. 091–1105; the crash occurs about 6 hours after exiting jump space.

4. The Player Characters will assume the gang is there to take their cargo and should clash with them immediately. It will become apparent however that the cargo is not actually the gang's target; the gang is making a kidnap attempt against a particular high passenger onboard. The Player Characters' actions should foil the gang's goals as well as contribute to legitimate rescue efforts. 091–1105; this action covers about 20 to 30 minutes of game time.

5. Collace Highport Authority will contain the accident and all persons, vehicles and debris involved will be sequestered in the highport brig or System Patrol shipyard until an investigation can be completed. This is about 10 hours after exiting jump, early on 092–1105.

6. About 18 hours after being detained, the Player Characters are released to discover they are immediately famous because of their involvement in the crash and their actions. They are hounded by paparazzi as they track down their personal belongings and their cargo and attempt to deliver it to their client's warehouse in the highport. This should wrap up on the evening of 093–1105 or early on 094–1105. They will be successful, be paid the balance due on their contract and have minor celebrity status on Collace for the next 3–8 days.

The Job Offer

The party is looking for work in the Mertactor Highport when they are contacted by a wealthy non-Noble industrialist. He is looking for a few hardy spacers to escort three 10-ton shipping containers from Mertactor to Collace. The patron, Jannar Djim will travel on a separate ship, his own yacht, to keep his competitors guessing as to what he may be up to. He assures the group it is not necessarily a dangerous job but it is important and his competitors have been known to play some very underhanded tricks on occasion. Assuming departure on 084–1105 and seven days in jump, Djim expects to see the players at Collace Highport on or very near to 091–1105.

The offer is Cr15,000 each, half up front, and high passage on the liner *Vindaar's Gambit*. The remainder of the fee will be paid upon delivery at Collace.

The Trip To Collace

The players load their cargo, board the liner and are treated to service traditional to high passage travellers - personal attention from the Steward, exotic toiletries, and so on. They get to meet the ship's Captain and are invited to join the nightly festivities in the ship's lounge.

Most of the trip will be spent in the ship's lounge interacting with the other passengers; they include two Imperials of near-Noble status: a corporate trader attempting to secure a lucrative government contract with Collace and a socialite finalising an arranged marriage into the family of a high-ranking Collacean government representative. These two have the highest SOC onboard the ship; the rest of the passengers are their staffs, as well as common citizens, all of whom are taking middle passage. The low berths are only about half full on this voyage.

The crew of *Vindaar's Gambit* keep mainly to themselves, but the players will get to know them a bit as well since their staterooms are adjoining the crew stateroom section and they probably have some things in common.

Arrival at Collace Highport

Precipitating from jump is uneventful, save for the socialite suffering from a bit of jump sickness. The liner makes a textbook approach to the highport and is given an orbital 'parking space' to unload passengers via its own launch since the highport can't currently support docking tube procedures for this vessel due to construction limitations. Cargo is to be handled by Collace Highport drones once the liner's main cargo bay is put into Zero-G, which a member of the ship's crew will do after inviting the Player Characters down to oversee the unloading of their containers.

A few minutes later a drone arrives and begins taking the first container when the ship's alarms go off and the Captain broadcasts an urgent 'Brace for impact!!' Ten seconds later the entire liner lurches dangerously and a sickening metallic tearing sound can be heard and a dreadful rumbling felt throughout the ship.

The Fenderbender

The liner's own launch has rammed the ship, destroying its M-Drive and tearing open the rear section of the main cargo bay. The power plant is offline, a few areas of the ship have lost atmosphere and escape pod access has been severely mangled. The Player Characters witness the death of the crewmember assigned to their cargo-handling and must secure the containers for their patron and of course figure out what happened and how to get safely off the ship.

In a surprisingly short amount of time, a group of humans in boarding vacc suits enter the cargo bay; the Player Characters may believe this is a hijacking but the boarders will attempt to convince them that they are a Collacean search and rescue team. This team will immediately attempt to get into the passenger areas of the liner but will conduct only minimal communication with the bridge. The Player Characters should realise this 'rescue team' is actually making a dangerous situation even more dangerous in their rush.

When the rescue team gains access to the passenger area, they will immediately begin searching for the corporate trader, escort him to an escape pod and eject him as soon as possible. They will help other passengers to maintain their ruse if need be but as soon as the trader is off the ship they will all attempt to escape as well.

Crash Aftermath

The impostor rescue cutter will pick up the fake rescue team and accelerate away from the area. The liner and the Player Characters are left on their own to save themselves until about 20 minutes after the crash when construction tugs begin appearing to help the drifting ship. About four hours after the crash, all possible vehicles, debris and persons involved in the assault on the *Vindaar's Gambit* will be in the custody of Collace Starport Authority, either in highport medical facilities or the highport brig.

The Glare of the Lights

Once the players are released, they will be told their personal belongings can be picked up in the starport warehousing district at Collace Downport but the duty officer has no idea where to find their cargo. They are taken in a police cutter to the downport. It is now 092–1105 and they have lost a day in their schedule, seemingly lost their cargo and they are... famous.

The moment the players exit the police cutter and step into Collace Downport, they are bombarded by yelling, flashing lights and buzzing drone cameras. Apparently the story of their exploits in 'The Wreck of *Vindaar's Gambit*' has preceded them and everyone wants to talk to the Imperials who fought off pirates and helped Collace S&R save 'innumerable lives!'

There is still a job to be finished, however. The Player Characters need to get back to the highport and navigate through a swarm of bureaucratic red tape to find their patron's property, make sure it gets delivered and hopefully get paid.

MERTACTOR (B–262732–B)

Mertactor is a world that lies at the bleeding edge of Imperial space, literally on the border of unincorporated District 268 at the termination of an Xboat route going trailing into Glisten subsector. A small planet in its star's habitable zone, Mertactor is approximately 3,200 kilometres in diameter with a surface gravity of 0.82 (Normal G). This seeming contradiction is due to the fact that Mertactor's planetary sphere is made up of abnormally high concentrations of metals and heavy elements, giving it a density rarely seen in Charted Space. About 70% of the planetary surface is considered the 'drisk,' desolate areas of rock, gravel and mineral deposits which inhibit plant growth and settlement expansion. The Mertactan day is 14 Standard hours in length.

The world's unusually robust gravitational force also helps it to hold a light Standard atmosphere which is breathable by Humans but volatile in another sense: 'drisk storms' are sudden, turbulent gales which kick up the rocks and pebbles of the drisk in high-speed funnels and twisters; near the outer edges of the storms it can literally be raining rocks while the storm centres are cauldrons of wind-blown destruction. Curiously, they are mostly confined to the drisk proper; the scant seas and coastal areas (about 20% of the planet's surface) as well as the surrounding light forests are generally safe from the worst aspects of them. Were it not for these extremely dangerous storms, Mertactor would enjoy vast wealth from its abundant metal and mineral resources.

The population of Mertactor is Human and numbers just under 11 million. A voluntary, self-perpetuating oligarchy known as the Mertactan Council handles the planet's interstellar affairs, while internal policies are mainly left to the population's intensely defined familial relationships and customs. The actual 'laws' of Mertactor are few but it is quite easy for offworlders to offend the locals by violating an obscure family rule that only Mertactans could be aware of. Mertactan natives are intensely supportive of one another, rely greatly on each other's word and honour and consider offworlders to be crass and somewhat underdeveloped socially; visitors are advised to behave in the most civilised and conservative manner possible.

There is an Imperial Scout base in the system, which operates several tenders and a large amount of Xboats; heavy exploratory vessels are also a common sight. Mertactor's lack of a gas giant means the port's refuelling operations are handled by atmosphere-capable tenders that process hydrogen from the planet's few seas, another unfortunate roadblock to the system's growth and the rare area of Mertactan life that is highly controlled and regulated by both orbital and planetary police forces. Regardless, passenger liners are frequent clients at Mertactor's highly efficient class B orbital station as, in addition to being a gateway into District 268, the system enjoys a highly renowned cuisine which brings in food connoisseurs from all over the region.

COLLACE (B–628943–D)

Collace is a planet in its star's habitable zone, approximately 10,000 kilometres in diameter with a surface gravity of 0.91 (Normal G). Its Very Thin and Tainted atmosphere requires a filtered respirator and the average temperature of –9° Celsius requires reliable cold weather gear when venturing outside of the 'Hab,' Collace's pressurised and acclimatised living structures. All of Collace's copious water is locked in ice except for a few lake bottoms and a summertime strip along the equator when glacial runoff creates a string of meandering rivers and small shallow seas. Collacean days are approximately 20 Standard hours in length.

There are about 1 billion inhabitants on Collace, nearly all Human, who live under a representative democracy with two fringe factions that hold views counter to the main government: that is, they do not see membership in the Imperium as good for the future of Collace. The majority of Collace - indeed, the main government - is strongly pursuing membership in the Imperium and is positioning Collace to be the subsector capital of District 268 since it the most advanced world in the subsector and one of the most populous. In fact the majority government of Collace (known simply as the People Of Collace, or POC) has applied for membership in the Imperium through Glisten; the application is still pending.

While POC sees the planet's high-tech industrial capacity as a strong incentive for Imperial membership and support, the minority fringe elements consider their planet's economic strength the very reason to avoid being consumed by what appears to them to be a voracious and uncaring interstellar entity. The POC (and most of the world's population) consider these fringe groups as nothing more than minor irritants; the Right Of Collace Coalition (RCC) has staged small demonstrations and pickets in the past but has become more militant of late. The smallest and least active of the groups, Collace Now, while a true anti-Imperial party, concern themselves mainly with domestic issues such as habitat regulation, waste management and atmosphere legislation.

The Law Level on Collace is relatively low, but due to the nature of the atmosphere and environment some tough regulations are in place: ships are restricted to the starport areas only and many of the more powerful weapon systems are capped or forbidden in port environs. Personal armours are unaffected but personal arms are

limited to melee weapons outside of the starport areas to minimise risk of damage to Collace's vast network of sealed habitats; within most port areas, pistols are allowed to be carried openly. Fighting of any sort in any pressurized area carries stiff penalties, generally 1–3 weeks incarceration, 1–3 months if firearms were involved. Although rated class B, the highport and downport are both undergoing expansion at this time due to the growing amount of trade and travel coming from trailing out of Glisten subsector; construction delays are frequent but not overly long.

There is a moderate Imperial Scout base in the system operating a few scout/couriers and other exploratory vessels but mainly assisting with growing the port's navigation and traffic control network. That base is the core of the political fringe groups' problems - they see it as the sole of the Imperial boot coming down on their necks. However, most people on Collace crave all things Imperial - news, celebrities, art, culture and especially commerce.

PLAN OF ADVERSARIES

Jannar Djim and his precious cargo are not the target of this adventure's adversaries; their target is Alamen Grisst, a very wealthy businessman on the liner that the players will have met over the course of the week in jump. Grisst is attempting to finalise a lucrative contract for his company with the main government of Collace, the POC.

Grisst is the target of a kidnapping attempt by the Right of Collace Coalition. The most volatile group of dissenters on the world, the Coalition is ready to take more definitive steps in their campaign to prevent Collace's 'swallowing' by the Imperium. They plan to take Grisst the moment he arrives in-system, hold him for two weeks until his company's intended negotiations collapse and then release him unharmed in Collace Highport.

The RCC have been working on this operation for quite some time, gathering information from their moles in the POC and spies in Imperial space. They have a mole on the *Gambit* as well, the ship's 2nd Steward, Otto Hureelee, who has been sending them passenger and cargo manifests for quite some time. They know Grisst will be on the *Gambit* and they know who he is. Their plan is as follows:

1. Using their contacts in the POC they will have access to a damaged rescue cutter, which is undergoing repairs to meet Collace regulations. There will be a kidnap team on the cutter ready to board the *Gambit*, disguised as Search and Rescue technicians.

2. A small second team will be at the highport docking tubes. Posing as offworld tourists confused by all the construction, this second team will commandeer the launch of the *Gambit* after her passengers have left and kill or incapacitate the pilot. One member of the team will then fly the launch back to the *Gambit*.

3. The launch will be put on a collision course and rammed into its own liner. The Coalition pilot will abandon the launch on its fatal vector and await the arrival of his companions in the cutter.

4. The rescue cutter will arrive and pick up the launch pilot (who will take over cutter flying duties and comms) while the entire rest of the team board the *Gambit*, find and capture Grisst and then eject him in a rescue bubble or escape pod and flee. All will rendezvous with the cutter, which will then leave the area and make for a hiding place on the planet's surface.

5. Two weeks later Grisst will be dropped drugged and unconscious in a highport fresher stall. He will not have been harmed and will have no idea who is responsible but his company's negotiations will have collapsed.

THE JOB OFFER

The Mertactor Highport is a very busy place, it being the end of an Xboat route which comes direct from famous Glisten itself. Xboats, Scout ships, liners, huge freighters... surrounded by a swirling cloud of launches, shuttles and boats. The Imperium should be proud of this place, bright and busy on the bleeding edge of the frontier where all the familiar comforts could be gone in an instant. The native Mertactans are certainly proud, almost to a fault. You have learned to be extra nice to people here; sometimes it seems like saying 'Good Morning' to the waitress means you just offended her father or maybe her father's father.

You are sitting in the Spinning Lady, a cheap but decent highport bar, trading stories and hoping a job will come along to get you all off this tin can when a loudly over-dressed man walks in. Obviously a Mertactan, he looks the place over and is about to leave when he notices your group. He hesitates a moment then strides purposefully across the bar to you.

This is Jannar Djim, a very eccentric Mertactan industrialist. His clothing is flashy by Mertactan standards, he carries a large personal comm from a couple tech levels ago and he obsessively runs his hands through his thinning gray hair to the point of distraction.

He will buy a round to open the conversation if need be, but only one drink for each character. He is looking for a group to accompany a valuable shipment of cargo to Collace, a few parsecs spinward of here, and make sure nothing happens to it - no theft, damage or contamination of any sort. He offers more money than the job should be worth, Cr15,000 to each of them and high passage on the liner which will haul the cargo. Half up front, half on delivery at Collace.

'Here's the thing,' Djim says, sipping with a look of mild distaste the best wine the bar-tender could offer. 'My competitors watch my every move. They know I have a shipment to Collace, they know I'm in this bar right now. They don't know what I have to sell, what ship it's going on, who the buyer is... they actually know nothing. But this is a big deal for me. It will lock up a cross-border trade agreement with an associate on Collace which could mean quite a bit of money for me and quite a bit of work for some hardy spacers such as yourselves. Dangerous is too strong a word for what I'm asking you to do. I'm looking for insurance and everyone knows cheap insurance never pays off.'

If pressed, Djim will tell the characters that he has three 10-ton cargo containers which hold a variety of drisk ores, rare and hard-to-mine heavy elements intended for high-tech industry, a perfect cargo for ice-bound Collace with its lack of natural mineral and metal resources. He will not elaborate on how he acquired the ores.

The characters will be expected to personally oversee the ship's crew as the containers are both loaded into the cargo bay and unloaded at Collace. Collace Highport is under expansion so construction there will mean a Zero-G situation to navigate as drones take each container out of the ship and lash them together for a tug to take to the highport. The Player Characters are to follow the tug to the warehousing area in the ship's launch and personally confirm their placement in Djim's facility.

Djim will be travelling separately in his own yacht in order to create a bit of confusion for his competitors and keep them guessing as to his true agenda. He will be arriving a half-day or so after the Player Characters and will contact them as soon as he is in-system.

Djim will have a hand-comp capable of thumb-printing a contract and will expect each Player Character to sign it and then give them copies if they desire. He will then give them his personal comm code and ask them to go to a small bank nearby where the credit chips for their advances will be waiting. The bank manager will also give them identity codes for the containers. From there the Player Characters will have the rest of the day to get their personal affairs in order and purchase any equipment they might deem necessary. They will be expected to report to the port's Cargo Handling Desk (CHD) first thing the next morning.

It is an easy thing for Djim to email thumbprint IDs of the characters to the bank manager; in fact, the bank manager will most likely know who the characters are before they and Djim leave the Spinning Lady. The characters can go as a group to the bank but Djim will feel more comfortable if they go separately over the course of the afternoon.

At CHD they will need to authorize the release of Djim's cargo to the Purser of *Vindaar's Gambit* with a standard thumbprint scan as Djim's acting agents. They will then be allowed access to the cargo inspection area and be shown the containers, at which point they will have an opportunity to check the ident codes supplied by the bank manager. While they are checking the codes, the 2nd steward of the *Gambit*, Otto Hureelee, will arrive and take the characters and their cargo to a nearby spacedock for loading into the main cargo bay of the *Gambit*.

THE TRIP TO COLLACE
Cargo Bay

The highport spacedocks are Zero-G climate-controlled areas that mate directly with most ships' main cargo hatches; *Vindaar's Gambit* is in just such a position as the Player Characters arrive so they are able to personally oversee Otto and the Mertactan stevedores as they load and secure their cargo. Perceptive Player Characters may notice with a successful Education check (Difficult, –2; optional DM +1 per 2 weeks that they have been on Mertactor) that Otto is not a Mertactan native and there is some tension between him and the stevedores. They will drop the cargo (where Otto tells them to) and take their grav forks and leave as soon as possible. If questioned, Otto will simply explain away the tension as a 'little labour dispute, nothing a couple credits won't take care of when we're back in a few weeks.'

From here on the Referee should review the deckplans in order to understand the references made in the text. Also, the Main Cargo Bay is in Zero-G; any characters not accustomed to such an environment may prefer to watch from the cargo inspection area rather than from inside the bay itself. They will however need to cross the Bay in order to enter the ship proper through the airlock on the starboard side of the Bay.

Detail-oriented characters in the Bay will notice the following with an Intelligence check (Routine, +2): the containers are held in place by magnetic buckles which are powered through conduits in the bay floor; also, there is a floor hatch far to aft behind their first container. Traditional tie-downs and straps are not used on the *Gambit* but there are six wooden crates on wood pallets in the forward section of the bay which are held in place by strands of superdense cabling. If questioned, Otto will explain the crates hold cloth sacks of Mertactan dry dyes which, being derived from the metal-heavy tissues of Mertactor's plant life, will react unappealingly with the base metals of standard shipping containers. Lastly, there is an airlock directly across from the main bay doors, which leads into the low berth area.

A Short Tour

Upon completion of their cargo tasks, the characters will be escorted through the bay to area 9 and introduced to the chief steward, Galeana Avalar. She will accompany the characters past the low berth section, taking them forward towards the small passenger lift where she will take their weapons for safekeeping in the ship's locker. Then she will lead the characters to their staterooms on the passenger deck, showing off the passenger lounge and common area (both labelled area 1) on the way; she will make sure they get settled in and have every little thing they need. She will then invite them to join the Captain and other passengers in the lounge for a farewell toast. After that, the ship will be underway.

These first sections are meant to move along rapidly; the real point is to familiarize the Player Characters with the layout of the liner and cargo bay. By now it is mid-afternoon on 084–1105.

Farewell And Jump

Most of the trip will be spent in the ship's lounge interacting with the other passengers; they include two Imperials of near-Noble status: a corporate trader attempting to secure a lucrative government contract with Collace and a socialite who is finalising an arranged marriage into the family of a high-ranking Collacean government representative. These two have the highest SOC onboard the ship; the rest of the passengers are their two attendants, as well as common citizens, all of whom are taking middle passage. The low berths are only about half full on this voyage.

The crew of *Vindaar's Gambit* keep mainly to themselves, but the players will get to know them a bit as well since their staterooms are adjoining the crew stateroom section and they probably have some things in common.

The characters will be in the stateroom section forward of the crew section (area 3) very close to the lounge area. This gives them a good opportunity to get to know the crew as well as the other passengers. They should feel some fish-out-of-water sensations here as they might not normally travel high passage; the personal attention, fine accents and extras in the staterooms and quick courteous responses from crew members (especially the Steward staff) should feel odd to the characters. Characters with Carouse or Steward skill may take to the attentions more naturally than those without; these characters can act as liaisons for the rest of the group in order not to offend other passengers or find themselves relegated to a lonely table in the corner of the lounge for the duration of the trip.

The first order of business after securing the final cargo is the ship's traditional Farewell Toast. Started 103 years ago by the first Captain of the *Gambit*, the ship has never left a port without assembling all its passengers in the lounge and having a small toast to the health of the ship and the joy of jumping to other stars. This is where the Player Characters will be introduced to Captain Alvernon Olicie as the stewards hand out drinks of the passengers' choice. Captain Olicie is an older gentleman of Mertactan birth, a few months away from retirement but still spry. The characters will not meet Grisst or Ongilii yet but they should notice them as Chief Steward Avalar is attending to them personally and Captain Olicie will join them and personally clink their glasses.

After the toast the ship will be given clearance to leave the spacedock and the liner will be underway. This is in the afternoon of 084–1105; *Vindaar's Gambit* will enter jump space about four hours from port departure, after which dinner will be served.

Meals may be taken in rooms or in the lounge. The circular lounge is often split in half by retractable partitions to allow more varied entertainment to occur simultaneously; at those times it is also generally closed off from the square common area just to aft.

Chief Steward Avalar's Daily Calendar of Events for the week in jump is as follows:

084–1105	Toast, Departure, Dinner, Holo-film	
085–1105	5 AM - 8 AM	Breakfast
thru	8:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Port Lounge: Gym/ Athletics
090–1105		Starboard Lounge: Spiritual Centre
	11 AM – 12 PM	Full Lounge: Bar and Library
	12 PM – 2 PM	Full Lounge: Lunch, Bar and Library
	2 PM – 3 PM	Lounge Closed
	3 PM – 5:30 PM	Port Lounge: Day Spa (light massage, facial, nails and so on) Starboard Lounge: Holo-vid
	6 PM – 9 PM	Full Lounge: Dinner
	9 PM - Midnight	Full Lounge: Bar and Games
091–1105	Breakfast as usual; Full Lounge as Bar and Library until arrival	

The characters may take advantage of all the events above if they wish; the daily activities are not well attended in general but the games in the evenings are quite popular.

The entire crew of the *Gambit* is Mertactan except for 2nd Steward Otto Hureelee. The crew is detailed in the Character Appendix but for now know that they are Mertactan through and through but the characters' status as high passengers will allow them to make the occasional unintended gaffe without consequence. They will interact mostly with the Steward staff (Galeana, Otto and 3rd Steward Neenah Tromt) and possibly with Captain Olicie in the evenings in the lounge.

The liner's 36 staterooms will be full on this voyage, with all 12 crew members enjoying their own staterooms and four more being taken up by the non-player characters and their assistants. The remaining staterooms will be filled by the characters and the balance by a mix of Imperial and Collacean citizens travelling middle passage; there are 13 passengers in low berths. This means there will be 20 middle passengers, less player party size, for probably 13 - 15 other passengers.

The Player Characters are the only high passengers aboard, except for one Alamen Grisst, a wealthy trader from Mille Falcs and one Mikeska Ongilii, a socialite from Egypt in Glisten subsector. They both have fairly high social status though they are not Noble; they both expect their business dealings on Collace to elevate them to the next level of social strata in the region.

Alamen Grisst is approachable but quick to be bored unless the conversation is of trading or economics or gambling. He is attempting to finalise a lucrative deal for his company with the POC on Collace, a subsidised route for his company's small fleet of merchant vessels. He is travelling with his secretary, a young woman named Ana Pyriem who keeps to herself but is always attentive to her boss. Grisst will scoff if Jannar Djim's name is mentioned:

'Jannar Djim?! Hah! That man's an imposter, a quack who thinks his will can outweigh the force of interstellar economics. He talks out of both sides of his mouth! He makes money, to be sure, but he's just lucky. Real business in this area needs government support which is why I'm doing what I'm doing.'

If questioned as to why he is taking the *Gambit* to Collace, rather than a company ship, Grisst will explain that the *Gambit* is a slice of history, a stalwart subsidised liner that has done more than her fair share to broaden the Imperium's influence in District 268. Seeing that his company expects their own ships to be as long-lived and profitable as the *Gambit* has been, he decided to take the trip on her to see if he could deduce some clues about the secret of her success.

Being from Mille Falcs, Grisst has little patience for the Mertactan crew's slightly superior attitude and tendency to take offense 'at the slightest remark!' It makes him irritable but he enjoys gambling in the evenings; should one or more of the characters become involved in a game with him, he will warm up to them considerably. The Referee may play out an evening of gaming with a simple 2D roll, one for Grisst and one for the player, DMs + Gambler or Deception (Int); highest roll wins money equal to the difference of the two rolls times Cr100. After a couple evenings of gaming, Grisst will tell the characters they could probably make
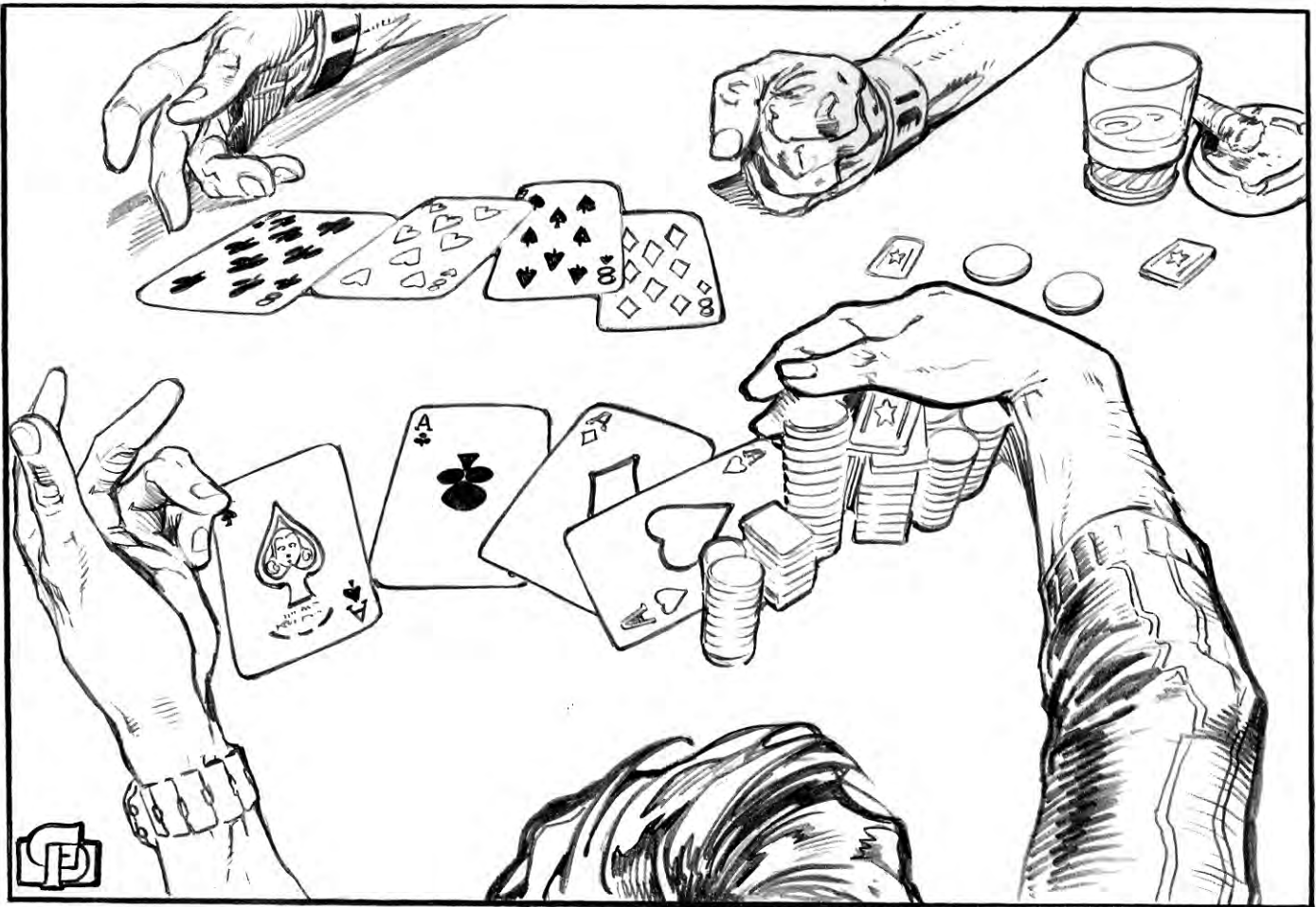
more and easier money working with him rather than Djim; interested characters can attempt to make a Contact of Grisst for the future.

Mikeska Ongilii will not join in the games, but will occasionally attempt to engage Grisst in conversation. He is not very interested in her but the savvy lady is always seeking new alliances and ways to improve her standing or her business portfolio. His connection to the POC is quite interesting to her but his innate coldness towards her makes it difficult for her to gain ground with him. Characters with Carouse skill may attempt to melt the ice between the two, which if successful will result in Ongilii letting the characters know (later, in private) that Grisst has an excellent reputation in the region and is expected by many to be Knighted by the Imperium shortly for his work in District 268.

At any rate, it seems Ongilii is attempting to finalise an arranged marriage for her unborn daughter with the unborn son of a high-level official in the POC government. She is several months pregnant, a fact which will slip out in late night lounge conversation with her nurse, Elleena Erior, after Ongilii has gone to bed.

The week in jump should flow quickly but not be rushed by the Referee; the characters should feel they know some of the crew as well as Alamen Grisst. Mikeska Ongilii is a bit of a red herring; her pregnancy should make her stick out in the characters minds when the collision occurs and cause them to think twice about their actions once the 'rescue team' boards the ship.

ARRIVAL AT COLLACE HIGHPORT

The *Gambit* exits jump space without issue; it will take a little over five hours for the ship to reach Collace highport. It is now 091–1105 at about 10AM local highport time. Most passengers will have lunch and gather their belongings then relax in the lounge until the ship reaches the port. Ongilii has a bout of jump sickness upon precipitation; she will remain in her stateroom while her nurse Elleena handles the business of getting ready to leave the ship.

The liner proceeds to Collace Highport without incident and is given coordinates for a station-keeping orbit near the facility. The 2nd Pilot of the *Gambit*, Evendas Arliin will begin readying the

ship's launch, the *Vinny*, for passenger transport to the highport proper. Meanwhile, 2nd Steward Hureelee will meet the Player Characters in the Lounge and escort them to the corridor of area 9 and into the main cargo bay where he will assist them in donning vacc-suits; the cargo bay will then be evacuated of atmosphere and placed in Zero-G in preparation for the arrival of the highport cargo drones. Through-out the trip from the lounge to the cargo bay, Hureelee will be making private comm calls; characters who can pass a Intelligence (Difficult, –2) check will realize he is not in communication with the bridge crew during half the comm calls. If questioned he will offer only a brusque 'Ship's business!' and talk to the characters as little as possible.

Characters who do not have Zero-G or Vacc-Suit skill may opt to be in the lounge with the Captain, Chief Steward Avalar and the other passengers: one viewport allows an unhindered look at the area below and directly in front of the main bay doors. Those who do suit up with Hureelee will be in the bay with him as he opens the main doors of the bay, revealing the small Collacean highport floating against the black in the middle distance, spindly fingers of unfinished superstructure growing from it on three sides.

Hureelee will then begin programming a hand-comp, interfacing it with Port Authority and receiving command codes for the cargo drones. They will be departing the highport area in a few minutes; in the meantime, Hureelee begins breaking loose the magnetic buckles on the containers, leaving one in place on each container until the drones arrive.

In the lounge, the Captain and Chief Steward will each personally say farewell to every passenger as they depart and are led to the launch boarding area (area 5) by 3rd Steward Neenah Tromt. The *Vinny* can handle six passengers per flight; the first flight will leave about the same time as the characters are suiting up. Grisst wants to have one last drink on the old *Gambit* before leaving so he and Ana Pyriem will be in the lounge and will leave on the final launch run. Ongilii has decided to wait longer for her jump sickness to subside before taking the launch so she is still in her stateroom; normally the ship's medic would be warming the low berths right now but he and the Captain have decided that attending to Mikeska Ongilii is a more prudent choice at this time since she is pregnant. Elleena Erior is in the lounge attempting to contact Ongilii's family on Collace; she hopes that they will be able to take the next launch flight. This leaves (14 - player party size) middle passengers in the lounge area waiting to depart when Otto opens the main bay doors, in addition to Grisst, Pyriem and Erior.

About 20 minutes later, the drones have not arrived. The characters may push Otto to apply pressure on the Port Authority and he will do so but he seems agitated; he is irritable and disrespectful to the (high passenger) Player Characters, utilizing some choice spacer expressions when querying Port Authority about the drones. (He is expecting something to happen with his Coalition friends but he does not know what the actual plan is.) Port Authority is apologetic and promises the drones will be underway shortly; the construction has everything bunged up.

At this point, the ship's launch should have returned but has not and the Captain and Chief Steward are both called away from the lounge to deal with an agitated Ongilii and a late launch. 3rd Steward Tromt will offer various refreshments to the increasingly impatient passengers, explaining that delays are normal when a highport is under construction.

A few minutes later both the highport drones and the *Vinny* are confirmed to be vectoring to the Gambit and should arrive in about two minutes.

THE FENDERBENDER
Cargo Bay

Otto Hureelee, under the watchful eyes of the Player Characters, will begin manipulating the first cargo drone into the Bay; as soon as the first container is up and underway the ship's warning system goes off and the Captain broadcasts an urgent ship-wide warning: 'Brace for impact!!'

Two combat rounds later the ship shudders violently and a sickening metallic tearing sound can be heard and felt throughout the *Gambit*. One combat round after that most areas of the ship will lose gravity and general lighting; the ship will revert to emergency power (red LED strip lighting and manual door and valve operation) and any areas that can maintain atmosphere will start to fill with a hazy gray smoke which seeps in through the ventilation system. Everyone on the ship may throw a Dexterity check (Difficult, –2) to properly brace themselves if they state that they are trying to do so; success means they may reduce any collision damage they suffer (see below) by 50%.

Characters in the cargo bay will be the first to see the effects of the accident in the red glow of the safety lighting: the aft wall of the bay will immediately buckle and the ceiling will be torn open, revealing the void outside. Some (1–3) of the 1-ton wooden containers in the forward area of the Bay will be knocked out of their moorings and begin drifting in freefall. Also, the character's own containers will be jarred into a slow freefall drift. Anyone in the main cargo bay will suffer 1–6 hits, DM –1 for every level of Zero-G skill, also reduced by 2 if they successfully braced for impact. Every three combat rounds there is a small chance (10+ on 2D) that a character will need to dodge a drifting container, which

may cause 1–3 hits and a loss of control if they fail the dodge. On a natural 12 they will not see the object coming but can be possibly be warned by someone else.

- Check to dodge a drifting container: Zero-G + Dexterity (Difficult, –2).

- Check to regain control if lost: Zero-G + Dexterity (Difficult, –2).

Being near the main doors, Otto Hureelee will be crushed by a wooden pallet and his vacc suit will rupture in several places. Despite their most heroic efforts the characters will not be able to save him from suffocation. His hand-comp will drift in the bay until a character thinks to try and grab it.

- Check to grab Otto's hand-comp: Zero-G + Dexterity (Difficult, –2).

The drone handling the cargo is pre-programmed to immediately exit any ship broadcasting emergency alarms so it will attempt to set down the cargo container it holds once it re-orients itself to the drift of the ship (three combat rounds to re-orient, two to set the container down). Players with their own hand computers (or Otto's) may attempt to override this programming but the character must make a check to be steady when attempting the override. It will take 1D6+3 combat rounds to override the drone programming but then the drone can be put to work gathering up the free-floating containers and the other characters can begin securing the containers to minimize damage. Both these actions, successful or not, require three combat rounds each.

- Check to secure a drifting container: Zero-G + Dexterity (Difficult, –2).

- Check to reprogram drone: Computer or Engineer (Electronics) + Education (Difficult, –2).

- Check to maintain control during drone reprogramming: Zero-G + Dexterity (Very Difficult, –4).

If the characters need 10 rounds or more to begin securing their (Djim's) containers, apply 1 hit of damage to any of them in freefall per minute, until they are secured (the Referee should track all damage suffered by Djim's containers). The metal containers will not breach or rupture but the wooden pallets might (5+ on 1D6, roll once every three combat rounds for each drifting pallet) and if they do, the fine-grained powders inside will burst forth and obscure vision (no warnings for drifting containers, a cumulative –1 DM per burst crate on all drone tasks).

If the characters fail twice to grab a container or pallet with the drone it will be bumped towards the bay doors and may drift into open space (DM –1 on the next handling task; failure means the container in question has drifted out of the bay). The bay doors cannot be closed due to a sheared power conduit in the torn ceiling of the hold.

The characters may feel the cargo is not worth securing at this point and may attempt to get out of the main cargo bay. The starboard airlock and the floor hatch to aft both show red access lights, indicating there is atmosphere on the other side. The only way out would be to spacewalk out of the main bay doors and try to enter the ship from another point - an extremely foolish idea at best. Anyone near the bay doors attempting to see what happened will be able to discern the smashed launch drifting away from the *Gambit*, trailing bits and pieces of machinery and hull plating; Collace Highport is still visible but is nearly upside down relative to the last view of it the characters had.

ONBOARD THE GAMBIT

Any characters in the lounge area will hear and feel the terrible crunching of the collision; all persons in this area will suffer 1D3 hits and be knocked into freefall. Reorienting requires a check (see below) and will take three minutes for everyone here to accomplish. The passengers in the lounge will then begin to panic and try to reach the lift to corridor 9 and the escape pods.

- Check to reorient after collision: Zero-G + Dexterity (Difficult, –2).

The lift is not operational under emergency power; any characters here may attempt to override the lift programming or bypass the emergency breaker in order to get the lift working (see check below). If the Player Characters do not succeed (they may try more than once, each attempt will take one minute) or are not here, assume the bridge will restore power to the lift six minutes after impact.

- Check to operate the lift locally: Computer, Engineer (Electronics) or Mechanic + Intelligence (Difficult, –2).

Characters if present may attempt to corral the passengers and create a more organised escape from the area (see check below) and this will allow six passengers per minute to be evacuated into corridor 9; otherwise only four passengers per minute will be able to leave the lounge once the lift is operational.

- Check to organise the escape: Leadership or Persuade + Intelligence (Difficult, –2).

Chief Steward Avalar and 3rd Steward Tromt are at the aft end of the starboard corridor leading to the boarding area (area 5) when the crash occurs, they will most likely be knocked unconscious during the crash.

The ship's crew will all be at duty stations when the *Vinny* hits, many in the Bridge section: Captain Olicie is there, and the Chief Pilot Gavlan Harlo who is trying desperately to get the M-Drive back on line (the 2nd Pilot, Evendas Arliin, was ostensibly flying the *Vinny* and is presumed dead). The Navigator and Purser are also there; the Navigator is trying to contact Engineering and get the power plant back online and the Purser communicating with Collace Highport and trying to get rescue teams on the way.

The ship's medic is in a starboard-side stateroom with Ongilii when the collision occurs. The Gunner was stationed in the ship's single turret; it was he who alerted the bridge about the odd vector the *Vinny* was using to approach. He will not notice the launch pilot abandon ship, nor a nearby vessel also vectoring towards the *Gambit*. After the collision, the Gunner will drop down to the bridge deck, arm himself from the ship's locker (gauss pistol (3d6) and two full clips, TL 8 flak jacket (6)) and then move into corridor 9 to begin evacuating passengers.

The crew stateroom area and passenger boarding area suffer extensive damage; engineering is effectively destroyed and both engineers along with it (the *Gambit* takes 1D6+3 hits, the first three disabling the M-Drive). The rear lifts between area 4 and 5 are useless, 60% of the port side escape pods are destroyed and the ship is venting a small amount of hydrogen into the void. Sections 4, 5 and 7 are ruptured and depressurized, and the main corridor traversing the ship (9) past the main cargo bay and low berths has a small leak aft near the lifts (13–18 minutes until the corridor is void of air).

People onboard the ship (outside of the cargo bay) when the collision happens will suffer damage starting at 5D6 in Engineering and reducing by 1D6 for every 10 metres they are forward of the engineering section; also reduce damage by one die for being on a different deck than the engineering room (The Chief and 3rd Stewards will both be taking 4D6 hits). Persons in vacc suits may reduce damage by half.

Communications are possible only through suit comms or personal comms; shipboard comm systems are shorting out and effectively useless. Any players running through the local comm bands will pick up communications that sound distinctly calm and goal-oriented, on a small frequency band rarely used in port areas. The calm communications are discussing a ruptured vessel, obviously the *Gambit*, and they seem to be trying to hail a particular individual who is not responding (the late Otto Hureelee).

THIS IS A RESCUE?
Cargo Bay

About six minutes after the collision, a group of humans in vacc suits begin entering the main cargo Bay through the rent in the ceiling. They number (player party size) +2 and are (secretly) armed with gauss pistols (3d6) and smoke grenades and several large satchels. The characters may at first think they are a Search and Rescue team but they will not communicate with them, instead heading directly for the manual hatch to aft which leads down to the crew stateroom area.

The Boarders will immediately try to cycle the floor hatch but will have to resort to a small shaped explosive charge to breach the valve. If the characters try to intervene they will authoritatively state 'Port Rescue Service! Stay back and await further instructions!' Once through the hatch they will apply a hull patch from the other side to stop atmosphere loss and foil pursuit. Scout, Navy, Marines or Merchant characters will realise this rescue team is actually making a dangerous situation even more dangerous in their rush.

The characters can use cargo containers and the cargo drone to fight the boarders, if things go that way. A successful cargo-handling

task as detailed above will strike one boarder for 1D6 hits and knock him out of control for four combat rounds; if the boarder had his gun drawn, it will float free and the Player Characters may attempt to grab it.

- Check to grab loose weapon: Zero-G + Dexterity (Very Difficult, –4).

Using cargo containers as free-floating projectiles may damage the characters' own containers, however; for each use of a container against the boarders, one of the character's containers will suffer 1 hit on 9+ on 2D. If the characters do fight, the boarders will stick to their plan and eight combat rounds after hostilities start they will have breached the floor valve. Four combat rounds later they will be through the breach and five combat rounds after that they will have applied the hull patch and effectively trapped the characters in the bay.

If no boarders were killed or knocked out (or the characters do not think to search them) the players may use the cargo drone to attempt to smash through the hull patch. They will gain DM+1 if they think to use a cargo container as a ram. Each attempt will require three combat rounds and every second attempt gains a cumulative DM+1.

- Check to use the cargo drone to smash through the hull patch: Computer, Engineer (Electronics) + Intelligence (Very Difficult, –4).

If the characters do search any incapacitated boarders, they will find one explosive charge, one hull patch, 10 metres of steel cable with magnetic grapples on each end, two smoke-signal grenades and a gauss pistol (3d6) with two clips of ammo on each one. Obviously, the Referee will need to track the boarders use of these items in the preceding combat but no boarder will use a shaped charge to fight the characters, so there should be one or two for the characters to find. Using the shaped charge to breach the hull patch takes three combat rounds. Failing the first attempt means that characters will automatically succeed on the second attempt or if they now try ramming the patch open.

- Check to use shaped charge to breach hull patch: Explosives + Intelligence (Average, +0).

If the characters offer to help the 'rescue team' they will be given two coils of magnetic safety cable and a smoke grenade and be told to exit the ship through the main bay doors, attach themselves securely to the hull and detonate the grenade to signal the rescue cutter waiting nearby. Characters who have served in the Scouts, Navy or Marines may make an Intelligence check (Average, +0) to realise that the orders go counter to all known orbital emergency procedures because at least one rescue tech would be accompanying them on the EVA and communicating with the cutter on their behalf.

If the characters do indeed foolishly lash themselves to the hull, they will be waiting for quite some time. The 'rescue cutter' certainly will not pick them up and they will helplessly watch escape pods pop out of the top of the stricken liner only to be left drifting as the cutter accelerates away from the scene. If any characters are left in the ship, the Referee should continue to play out the kidnap attempt but if not this portion of the adventure ends here with the successful kidnapping of Grisst. A few minutes after the impostors depart, highport tugs will arrive and begin gathering up escape pods and stabilising the *Gambit*; not long after that a police cutter will arrive and the characters will be taken into custody.

The characters should have figured out by now that these boarders are not in communication with the bridge and are acting on their own. If queried as to their behaviour, the boarders will indicate they are to rescue 'government liaisons and Collacean citizens first and foremost' and the characters will face 'severe legal consequences' if they do not do as ordered.

Characters who warn the bridge will be contradicted by the boarders, who will cite a meaningless and false 'Port Authority Regulation' number and continue on their way. Captain Olicie will be heard to comply with the boarders' requests; his only concern is getting all of his passengers off the liner safely.

Whether they fight or not, the characters' interaction with the boarders should delay the kidnap operation for several minutes before the boarders are able to move forward. The hatch should be blown three to four minutes after the boarders first appear, nine or ten minutes after the collision.

Lounge

When the rescue team gains access to the passenger area, they will immediately begin searching for the corporate trader, Alamen Grisst, escort him to an escape pod and eject him as soon as possible. They will help other passengers to maintain their ruse if need be but as soon as the trader is off the ship they will all attempt to escape as well.

At the eight minute mark, most of the passengers from the lounge area will have been evacuated into corridor 9, where they are all crowded, panicky and waiting desperately to get into escape pods. Strangely, the ship's gravity is functioning in this area. Grisst is

here now, stunned and woozy, as well as the ship's gunner and purser. The purser will take the lift back down to the stateroom areas to begin gathering rescue balls from the staterooms while the gunner will work his way through the crowd to the escape pod section. The medic, having sedated Ongilii in her room, will place her in a rescue bubble then take the lift to corridor 9 with several other rescue bubbles and attempt to calm the passengers and institute some sort of crowd control. The sound of the boarders' second explosive detonating (if it does) will make the passengers even more panicky.

• Check to calm passengers: Leadership or Persuade + Intelligence (Very Difficult, –4).

The delay in escape pod deployment is due to the fact that the rear lifts have been jammed up into the corridor leading to the pod airlocks. The portside pods are completely inaccessible; the gunner will try to clear debris to get to the starboard side locks but a large piece of deck plating is too big for him to move on his own. He requests help from the characters if any are here, from the ship's crew if they are not.

Moving the deck plate will require 32 Strength points to be applied at once; any characteristic DMs may be added to the total. Athletics or Mechanic skill may be added as well, to simulate the use of leverage. Once the 32 point minimum has been reached, the character in charge should roll a Strength check (Difficult, –2), with the effect of the roll indicating the time it takes to move the plating: Effect of –6 or less requires 3 minutes, 0 to –5 requires two minutes and +1 or greater requires only one minute. If no characters are in this area at this time, assume the plating will be moved in four minutes, about 12 minutes since the ordeal started.

Once the plate is moved, the gunner will begin evacuating passengers at the rate of two per pod, one pod every three combat rounds. This is roughly six people per minute so the liner should be free of passengers, except for Ongilii and Erior, in about three minutes, or 15 - 18 minutes after the initial crash.

Where Are The Boarders?

At the 10 minute mark, the boarders will blow the airlock into the passenger section (area 2) and sweep into the lounge area, finding it empty except for the Purser who is still gathering uninflated rescue bubbles. Realising the jig is up and Grisst is most likely gone already, the boarders will immediately head back down the corridor and apply a hull patch at the valve between the crew staterooms and the passenger area. Once that is completed they will blow the airlock to area 4 and escape the ship through the torn walls of the launch bay. Their cutter will arrive in eight combat rounds, pick them up and accelerate away from the area. This should be 12 - 14 minutes after the crash and assumes the characters were not able to prevent the Boarders from getting here in the first place.

The characters should be able to breach the hull patch in the cargo bay floor two to three combat rounds after the boarders have sealed off the passenger section; there may be another combat here but the boarders will attempt to minimise casualties and escape the ship.

CRASH AFTERMATH

The impostor rescue cutter will pick up the fake rescue team and accelerate away from the area. The liner and the characters are left on their own to save themselves until about 20 minutes after the crash when construction tugs begin appearing to help the drifting ship. About four hours after the crash, all possible vehicles, debris and persons involved in the assault on the Vindaar's Gambit will be in the custody of Collace Starport Authority, either in highport medical facilities or the highport brig.

Collace Starport Authority (SA) will respond by sending two construction tugs to the area, which will arrive about 17 minutes after the crash and will begin stabilising the liner and launch and gathering up any escape pods that may eject. A police cutter will arrive about 23 minutes after the crash to dispatch four Star
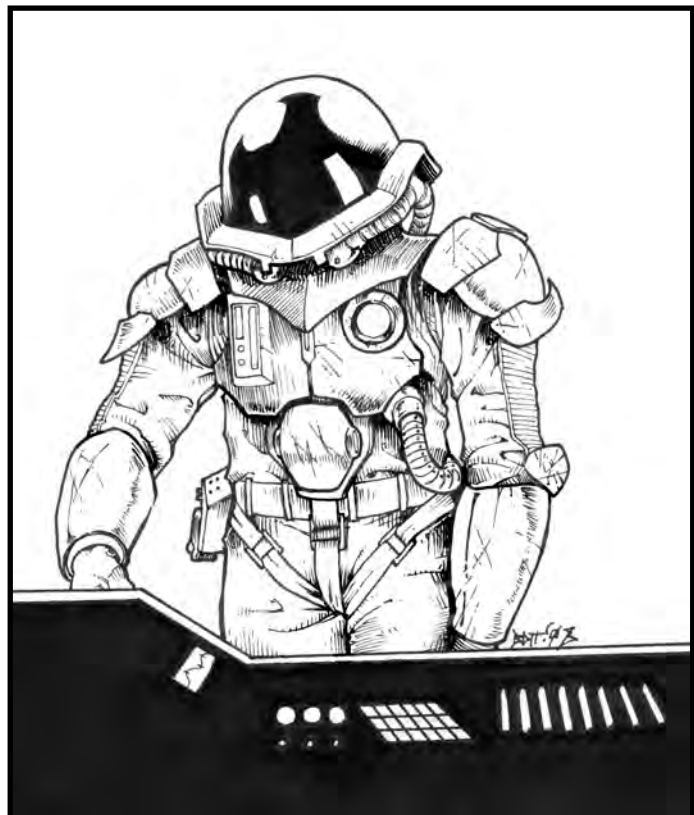
Marines in combat mode as well as six Star Marines in Search and Rescue (S&R) mode to finish evacuation of the liner.

The tugs will gather up any and all debris, vessels, escape pods and persons involved in the accident (excluding any of the criminals who may have escaped) and will place everyone in Starport Authority holding until an investigation can be completed.

The players who do not need serious medical attention will be detained for 12 hours, plus an additional 2D6 hours. They will be given light medical treatment and a meal and questioned for several hours about their actions on the *Gambit* (the Referee need not role-play the interrogation sessions; suffice to say the characters are exhausted by the hours-long ordeal). Any attempts by the players to inquire about their personal belongings or Djim's cargo will fall on deaf ears. Asking about the safety of the other passengers on the *Gambit* will reduce their brig time by 1D3 hours. Anyone who was seriously injured will need to remain in the highport hospital until they can leave under their own power or be taken into the care of a licensed medic or doctor (Medic–2 or better).

Once they are released, the characters are told their personal belongings and credit chips can be picked up at Collace Downport. They will have to find their cargo from there; the Duty Sergeant does not know where S&R placed the wreck of the *Gambit* or her contents. Any pleas to be released into the highport will be ignored and they will be taken in a police shuttle to the surface and released into Collace Downport.

THE GLARE OF THE LIGHTS

Once in the Collace Downport police facility, the players will notice they are being treated with a lot of courtesy by the officers processing their personal (non-weapon) belongings. They will be offered coffee, shown holograms of the transit system and so forth. No one can tell them the whereabouts of their cargo but they can direct them to Cargo Handling and verify that any personal weapons they had on the *Gambit* can be picked up at the Port Authority Security Desk, not far from this facility. The *Gambit* herself, and her launch *Vinny*, are both in orbit at the shipyard, undergoing repair evaluation. It should now be the afternoon of 092–1105 which makes the characters about a day late on completing their contract with Jannar Djim.

If any characters think to contact Djim while in police custody, they will be allowed to do so and will easily get in touch with him. Djim arrived in system several hours after the crash and was contacted by the purser of the *Gambit*, who explained the situation to him. His cargo containers are being held for several days until Port investigations are completed.

Djim will be very impressed with the characters, congratulating them for their heroism and courage. He will offer to meet them at the Highport the following morning to finalise their arrangement but will ask them to inspect the containers for damage and come with a report on the status of the cargo.

The officer who escorts the characters to the facility's public area will pat one of them on the back and say 'Good work!' before showing them to the entrance of the Downport.

The Downport is part of a large network of sealed habitats that stretch across the surface of Collace like the root system of a great tree. The port area is one of the oldest and most developed sections of 'the Hab,' some areas dating back hundreds of years. The Collace habs make extensive use of drones and robots for transport, cleaning and maintenance work. Grav tech is ubiquitous but the atmosphere of the planet means tunnels are used to connect many areas, with large airlocked bays for large vehicles and long overland journeys.

When the characters walk into the port's main terminal, they will find themselves surrounded by blinding photo strobes, buzzing drone cameras and a push of humanity thrusting microphones and tri-dee equipment in their faces. They have become minor celebrities over their time in the brig as the story of their exploits has spread like wildfire throughout the Collace habitats. Everyone wants to talk to the Imperials who fought off the 'murderous pirates during The Wreck of the *Vindaar's Gambit*' and also saved 'innumerable' lives.

The crowd of reporters will follow the characters everywhere they go for the next several hours, creating a nuisance for the various offices they have to visit and making any task checks during this time more difficult; for the next two hours they will suffer a DM of –3, then a DM of –2 for the hour after that and finally a DM of –1 during the fourth hour after release.

The Referee should emphasize the annoying and insistent nature of the reporters and make any simple thing the characters try to do be the subject of a whole new round questions and photographing.

If the characters decide to stop and do an impromptu press conference, it will take an hour and then most of the paparazzi will leave; they will then suffer only a DM of –1 for the following hour. If on the other hand any characters get violent with the paparazzi, even more strobes will go off and in a few minutes local police will arrive. The police will review some of the copious paparazzi video footage and then regretfully arrest the offending characters and they will be placed in jail for 1–6 days, a rather light sentence based on their heroic actions on the Gambit. They will then be

hounded for another four hours from the time of the arrest.

If the players have not tried yet, they will find it easy to contact Jannar Djim but he will not speak with the characters until the paparazzi is gone and they can be assured of privacy. In the meantime they should go to the Cargo Handling Desk.

Cargo Handling Desk
At CHD, the characters will need to find someone who can tell them where their containers are. This check takes half an hour, and is modified by the presence of annoying paparazzi. If they fail they will be able to try again in an hour.

- Check to find someone who can locate the containers: Admin + Intelligence (Average, +0).

Success means they will be verified as legitimate acting agents on behalf of the cargo's owner and will have verified the cargo ID codes. They will then be given a data chip and sent to the Requisitions Office to find out where their cargo actually is.

It will take about 20 minutes to get to the Requisitions Office via grav-tube. A successful check takes an hour (again modified by the presence of paparazzi), after which their data chip will be updated, verifying them as the cargo's agents and told that their containers are in Quadrant Four of Collace Highport.

- Check at Requisitions Office: Admin + Intelligence (Average, +0).

The characters, knowing they must go back to the Highport, will want to collect their weapons from the Security Desk. There is no task roll involved in this but it will take half an hour to complete. From Security they can catch a shuttle to the Highport (Cr200 each) which will depart in about 45 minutes.

Back To The Highport
If the characters have moved fast enough to still have reporters following them, they will be able to lose them in the hustle and bustle of the highport terminal if they so desire. No paparazzi will be waiting for them here at the highport but they will see themselves occasionally on vid-screens and holo-displays, footage from when they were first released a few hours ago.

People will recognize them; mostly shop owners, dockworkers, port personnel and the like. They will smile and wave, occasionally clap or pump their fists, but otherwise leave the characters be. It is obvious their efforts are appreciated by the crews here, people that spend most of their lives one thin metal wall away from the void.

Finding their containers will be a simple task (no roll) taking only a couple of hours. Proper inspection of the containers is an Intelligence check (Routine, +2) which takes about half an hour. The players can contact Djim now if they wish, or wait until the morning. Regardless, they can arrange transport of the containers to Djim's warehouse for Cr500 each, which Djim will reimburse them for.

If any characters were injured badly enough to be put in hospital, they can be visited now. It is the late evening of 092–1105; the Player Characters will need to eat and find lodging for the evening, which to their surprise will be offered to them for free at whichever establishments they visit. They are heroes, after all!

The next morning they will be able to meet with Djim at his warehouse and provide the Starport Authority report on the damage the containers may have suffered. Although proud of the party for their actions, Djim will tell them he can only pay them a portion of the agreed-upon amount (subtract Cr1,000 for each

hit the containers suffered in crash and divide the result between all the Player Characters) and can only pay once the containers are released. The Player Characters will balk of course, but Djim will be firm - undamaged delivery was a principle tenet of the contract. If any containers were lost during the assault (floated outside the cargo bay), Djim will deduct 20% per lost container (in light of the fact that they will have been recovered by the Starport Authority).

Smart Player Characters will remember they were escorting heavy elements and ores and ask how much damage can such materials actually suffer. Djim will smile at this point and pull out a small plastic disk, the Imperial sunburst and place it on his lapel. He will tap it and it will begin changing colours, play the Emperor's March, show a small holographic Scout ship and so forth. It is utterly tacky and yet somehow fascinating.

'There's no ore in those containers, my friends. I'm sorry to have misled you and my ancestors will hound me forever over that. But I couldn't risk the truth coming out. These little sunbursts will sell here for a credit each and you brought three million of them here! They are part of publicity drive by the People Of Collace to show local support for their application of membership to the Imperium. And after what you did, I think I'm going to need three million more!'

The characters will most likely really balk now that they know the truth - what's a few damaged trinkets among millions? But he stands firm on his reduced payment. He does however tell the characters that he has discovered that any boarder killed or captured on the *Gambit* have since been identified as terrorist operatives of the Right of Collace Coalition and the characters may claim a bounty of Cr2,000 for each one they overcame in the assault. He will assist them over the next few days by providing any legal aid they need to claim the bounties and make sure that they have decent lodging while waiting here at the highport.

CONCLUSION

The characters will enjoy the gratitude of the Collacean citizens while they wait for Djim's containers to be released and their bounties to be paid. They will not have to pay for food and many drinks will be poured for free. Any equipment they own that may have been damaged will be repaired for only the price of parts. Many people will clap their backs and want to hear their stories and they will be asked to interview for the infotainment channels. Alamen Grisst (if he was not taken) will contact them and offer to pay for their rooms at a luxury highport hotel. And lastly they will be invited by the crew of *Vindaar's Gambit* to attend a memorial dinner for the ones who did not survive the collision. The next morning (096–1105) Djim's containers are released, he will pay

them the (adjusted) balance of their contract and he will tell them they can report to the Highport Security Desk to claim their bounties. The characters are now free to leave Collace or stay on and enjoy another few days of celebrity status while looking for their next adventure.

The characters may have gained 'Contact – Merchant Alamen Grisst', although he may be a bit aloof since he will soon discover (if he does not know already) that they were working for one of his rivals, Djim. However, Grisst could still be important as he rises in noble status. His negotiations will go well, and Collace will have another subsidised route connecting into the Imperium.

If any characters were arrested for striking a reporter or a drone camera, they will have to pay Cr2,000 in fines and damages for each reporter or camera hit.

If any characters were put in hospital, Collace Starport Authority will cover their medical expenses as reward for their efforts in helping to save the passengers of *Vindaar's Gambit*.

If any of the boarders escaped capture, the characters gain 'Enemy – Right of Collace Coalition'. It will take several months for them to become active again.

Investigations will reveal that the Right of Collace Coalition was behind this debacle. Their political charter will be revoked and within six months the party will cease to exist. Their membership will drift mostly into the POC but some will remain anti-Imperial and join Collace Now. Any boarders who were taken into custody will be in jail for a very, very long time.

APPENDIX 1:
PASSENGERS ON THE GAMBIT
Jannar Djim
Merchant (Broker) 3
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 6 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 10 (+1), Soc 8 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Broker 3, Admin 2, Advocate 1, Persuade 1, Soc Sci (Psychology) 1, Diplomat 1, Carouse 1
Possessions Comm, TL 13 hand computer

Jannar Djim is a wealthy trader from Mertactor. He is the last surviving member of his family, having never married or had children, so his strict Mertactan upbringing has been softening over the last few years. He favours loud clothing, old technology (he is nostalgic about it) and fine wines. He built himself up

from modest beginnings and has very little patience for those who complain about things as if they have no influence on their own lives.

He will not buy or lease trading ships himself, though that would probably be a good move for him; he prefers to hire existing vessels for his dealings, believing there are plenty of struggling ships out there who do not need competition from him. It is his combination of high-finance acumen and salt-of-the-earth humanity that make him both a valuable friend and an exasperating partner.

Alamen Grisst
Merchant (Broker) 5
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 9 (+1), Soc 10 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Broker 3, Advocate 2, Persuade 1, Soc Sci (Economics) 1, Diplomat 1, Carouse 1, Gambler 1
Possessions TL 13 hand computer

Alamen Grisst is a wealthy corporate businessman from Mille Falcs. His work for his small trading company, Grisst Enterprises, has done much over the years to solidify trading across the border into District 268. He is a frequent visitor to Glisten and moves in high social circles throughout the region.

Grisst is doing everything he can to ingratiate himself with any Imperial nobility possible. He never married, thinking he might find a young Noble heiress to woo; he has never captained his own ships (he currently runs three free traders and some small craft) as he sees that as a commoner's approach to living. His work seems to be paying off: not long ago noble friends on Glisten succeeded in having him named to the honours list, and hinted that he would soon be elevated to knighthood.

Grisst fancies himself a romantic and dashing figure; he loves to gamble though he is not especially good at it and he often drinks a bit too much when he is winning.

Ana Pyriem
Citizen (Corporate) 2
Abilities Str 5 (−1), Dex 7 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 10 (+1), Soc 8 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 2, Advocate 1, Computers 1, Diplomat 1
Possessions Comm, TL 11 hand computer

Ana is a pretty, well-dressed executive assistant of the highest calibre. She expects to become an integral part of Grisst Enterprises,

perhaps even running the company, when Grisst accepts his Knighthood and most likely moves to Glisten to join the nobility there. She is from Mille Falcs and says she has no time for personal attachments but she does seem a bit lonely on occasion.

Mikeska Ongilii
Citizen (Corporate) 4
Abilities Str 5 (−1), Dex 6 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 10 (+1), Soc 9 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Advocate 2, Diplomat 2, Carouse 1, Persuade 1, Broker 1, Leadership 1
Possessions Comm, TL 9 hand computer

Mikeska Ongilii is a socialite from Egypt in Glisten subsector, a successful attorney who was able to marry into a rich expatriate family from Collace and thus retire from the working life. While her husband attempts to make inroads at Glisten, she is taking advantage of his long Collacean heritage by marrying her daughter into the family of a high-ranking representative of the People Of Collace with whom her husband had many dealings in the past.

Ongilii is somewhat severe, but approachable and a bit of a gossip. She will believe the assault on *Vindaar's Gambit* was an attempt to kill or kidnap her in order to prevent the marriage she is still negotiating.

Elleena Erior
Scholar (Physician) 1
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 8 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Medic 1, Admin 1, Computers 1, Diplomat 1, Phys Sci (Biology) 0
Possessions Comm, TL 9 hand computer

Elleena is a young Egyptian who was working her way through medical school when she met Mikeska Ongilii at a fundraiser. Being sympathetic to the young lady's struggle, Ongilii offered to hire her as a personal nurse during her pregnancy and for a short time after, in order for young Erior to save money to complete her education. Erior accepted and is quite happy with the arrangement; in fact she is wondering how she might stay on with Ongilii after her child is born.

APPENDIX 2: CREW OF THE GAMBIT

Captain Alvernon Olicie

Merchant (Free Trader) 5
Abilities Str 4 (–1), Dex 6 (+0), End 5 (–1), Int 8 (+0), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 8 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Comms 2, Pilot (spaceships) 1, Sensors 1, Steward 1 Computers 1, Admin 1, Astrogation 1
Possessions Comm

Alvernon Olicie is of Mertactan descent, of a respected and long-lived family of merchants and traders. He is the third member of his family to serve on the *Vindaar's Gambit* and is only a few months from retirement. He has been quite happy making the Collace run for all these years and is proud of his service and his record as a ship's captain. He has two children, both of whom are serving in the Imperial Navy. His wife died several years ago and when he retires he plans on building a cabin in the hilly forests outside of Mertactor's capitol and planting the flower garden she always wanted.

Chief Steward Galeana Avalar

Merchant (Free Trader) 3
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Steward 2, Computers 1, Admin 1, Pilot (small craft) 1, Persuade 1, Gambler 1
Possessions Comm

Pretty, thoughtful and proud, Galeana Avalar is a near-perfect Steward. While demanding of her staff and fellow crew, her drive is based on a real desire to see her ship's passengers have the most enjoyable voyage possible. Her entire family lives and works on Mertactor proper; she leaves many duties to her 2nd Steward when the *Gambit* calls at its home port so she can visit with them for as long as possible before her next journey. She is engaged to a chef on Mertactor, who provides her with excellent victuals for the high passengers on *Vindaar's Gambit*.

2nd Steward Otto Hureelee

Merchant (Free Trader) 2
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Steward 1, Computers 1, Vacc Suit 1, Mechanic 1, Zero-G 1, Streetwise 1
Possessions Comm, TL 12 vacc suit, blade

The only crewmember on *Vindaar's Gambit* who is not Mertactan, Otto is a native of Collace from a family of low-income maintenance workers. His time spent working with overbearing high passengers and with his proud and seemingly superior crewmates has pushed him to the edge and he joined the RCC as a way of getting past his disillusionment about the people and planets around his homeworld.

3rd Steward Neenah Tromt

Merchant (Free Trader) 2
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Steward 1, Computers 1, Persuade 1, Melee (Blade) 1, Comms 1
Possessions Comm, blade

Being the only daughter in a family with three boys, Neenah pushes herself extra hard in order to be 'taken seriously' by men; she still carries a bit of a chip on her shoulder from all the teasing her brothers gave her growing up. She is developing a bit of a crush on Otto although she knows romances among ship crews rarely work out well.

Chief Pilot Gavlan Harlo

Merchant (Free Trader) 4
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 10 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Sensors 1, Computers 1, Pilot (small craft) 1, Persuade 1, Zero-G 1
Possessions Comm

Imagining himself an adventurous hotshot, Gavlan Harlo exhibits the worst behaviour of both arrogant starship pilots and Mertactan pride. No one on the ship can really stand him but he has the Captain's ear so he is tolerated.

2nd Pilot Evendas Arliin

Merchant (Free Trader) 2
Abilities Str 9 (+1), Dex 9 (+1), End 8 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 5 (–1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Pilot (small craft) 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1, Sensors 1, Streetwise 1
Possessions Comm, TL 12 vacc suit

Light-hearted and easy-going with a self-deprecating sense of humour, Evendas is loved by all; his personality is very un-

Mertactan and yet his native brethren would walk through fire for him - except perhaps his immediate boss, Gavlan Harlo, who often gives Evendas ridiculous chores such as polishing the pilot's control couch or oiling the manual controls of the *Vinny*.

Navigator Trevor Dantine
Merchant (Free Trader) 3
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 8 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Astrogation 2, Sensors 1, Computers 1, Persuade 1 Mechanic 1, Admin 1, Art (Instrument) 1
Possessions Comm

A decent enough individual, Trevor is a musician of some small renown on Mertactor; when off-duty he will keep mainly to his stateroom practising his electric flute; if asked, he can talk for several hours about the musical history of Mertactor and his family without once allowing the listener to speak.

Purser Helmut Geldaun
Merchant (Free Trader) 3
Abilities Str 5 (–1), Dex 6 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 6 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Broker 2, Steward 1, Persuade 1, Comms 1, Admin 1, Advocate 1, Soc Sci (Economics) 0
Possessions Comm

Purser Geldaun is the perfect stereotype: nebbish, penny-pinching bean counter. Captain Olicie hand-picked this man to keep the books on the *Gambit* because he knew this person would never be influenced by anything as base as greed; Helmut lives for the purity of mathematics and a holo-vid in the evening.

Medic Agar Starrett
Scholar (Physician) 2, Merchant (Free Trader) 1
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Medic 2, Computers 1, Persuade 1, Investigate 1, Diplomat 1, Phys Sci (Biology) 1, Steward 1
Possessions Comm

After several years of service in the medical facility of Mertactor Highport, Agar decided to finally strike out into the void and see some other worlds. He is the newest crewmember of the *Gambit* and is still feeling his way around shipboard life.

Engineer Jonno Giles
Merchant (Free Trader) 4
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 5 (–1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Engineer (Jump Drive) 2, Mechanic 2, Engineer (Electronics) 1, Vacc Suit 1
Possessions Comm, TL 12 vacc suit

Jonno Giles comes from a long line of Mertactan starship engineers and takes his job very seriously, almost to a fault. A somewhat sombre man, he finds solace in long games of holo-chess.

Drive Hand Clariss Vigna
Merchant (Free Trader) 2
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 9 (+1), Int 7 (+0), Edu 5 (–1), Soc 4 (–1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Engineer (M-Drive) 1, Mechanic 1, Engineer (Life Support) 1, Vacc Suit 1, Gambler 0
Possessions Comm, TL: 12 vacc Suit

Clariss is a cute, greasy-faced drive monkey and a good foil to her boss, Engineer Giles. She likes to get some gambling going in the evenings in the crew lounge despite the fact she loses more than she wins.

Gunner Tivas Lingula
Navy (Gunnery) 1, Merchant (Free Trader) 1
Abilities Str 9 (+1) Dex 9 (+1) End 8 Int 7 Edu 7 Soc 5 (–1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Gunnery (Turrets) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Zero-G 1, Vacc Suit 1, Mechanic 1, Melee (Unarmed) 0
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), flak jacket (6)

After a short stint in the Imperial Navy, Tivas left the rigid military life for the steady, easy-going pace of the *Gambit*. His traditional Mertactan family is not pleased with his choice.

APPENDIX 3: BOARDERS
Boarder Pilot
Rogue (Pirate) 2
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 5 (–1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Pilot (small craft) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Zero-G 1, Vacc Suit 1, Streetwise 1, Deception 1
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), TL 12 vacc suit with magnetic grapples and thruster pack (6)

Boarder Leader
Rogue (Pirate) 3
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 8 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 4 (−1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Zero-G 1, Vacc Suit 1, Streetwise 1, Deception 1, Stealth 1, Pilot (small craft) 1
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), TL 12 vacc suit with magnetic grapples and thruster pack (6), smoke grenades (2), magnetic safety cable, hull patch, light shaped explosive charge

Boarder Team Leader 1
Marine (Star Marine) 1, Rogue (Pirate) 1
Abilities Str 9 (+1), Dex 8 (+0), End 8 (+0), Int 6 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 5 (−1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Zero-G 1, Vacc Suit 1, Slug Rifle 1, Explosives 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), TL 12 vacc suit with magnetic grapples and thruster pack (6), smoke grenades (2), magnetic safety cable, hull patch, light shaped explosive charge

Boarder Team Leader 2
Marine (Star Marine) 1, Rogue (Pirate) 1
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 8 (+0), Int 7 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 4 (−1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Zero-G 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Vacc Suit 1, Streetwise 1, Explosives 1, Stealth 1, Deception 1
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), TL 12 vacc suit with magnetic grapples and thruster pack (6), smoke grenades (2), magnetic safety cable, hull patch, light shaped explosive charge

Boarder Team 1 (2–4 individuals)
Rogue (Pirate) 2
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 6 (+0), Edu 5 (−1), Soc 4 (−1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Zero-G 1, Streetwise 1, Deception 1, Vacc Suit 0
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), TL 12 vacc suit with magnetic grapples and thruster pack (6), smoke grenades (2), magnetic safety cable, hull patch, light shaped explosive charge

Boarder Team 2 (2–4 individuals)
Rogue (Pirate) 2
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 8 (+0), Int 5 (−1), Edu 5 (−1), Soc 4 (−1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Zero-G 1, Streetwise 1, Deception 1, Vacc Suit 0, Gun Combat 0
Possessions Comm, gauss pistol (3d6), TL 12 vacc suit with magnetic grapples and thruster pack (6), smoke grenades (2), magnetic safety cable, hull patch, light shaped explosive charge

APPENDIX 4: VINDAAR'S GAMBIT

Vindaar's Gambit was laid down at Glisten in 999 on behalf of Mertactan trading company Vindaar Shipping and Travel, LIC and was completed on 017–1002. Her maiden voyage was a jump to Egypt, followed by two jump–1's to Mille Falcs and then to Mertactor. The vessel's registration was updated to reflect Mertactor as her home port and the liner began servicing an emerging cross-border route that included trips rimward to Trexalon and coreward up the main as far as Forine. She has been a lucky ship in this undeveloped and occasionally rough region, having had relatively few scrapes with pirates and the like. She is a favourite of the Mertactan highport, a symbol of the steadfastness and strength of Mertactor and her people.

Deckplans and ship stats of the Standard Type M Subsidised Liner from *Traders & Gunboats* should be used for the *Gambit*.

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A Festive Occasion

By Hans Rancke-Madsen

Adventure Summary

Dates

All dates correspond to the standard Imperial calendar. The start date of this adventure is Forday 005-1105 (the 5th day of the 1105th year since the founding of the Third Imperium). Time will flow normally once the adventure begins. If a different date is required, for example to fit the adventure into an existing campaign, then the start date can be altered with little or no disruption to the adventure.

Location

The adventure takes place on Mora (AA99AC7-F), a rich, strategically positioned trading gateway, the capital of Mora subsector in the Spinward Marches. The action takes place partly in a small orbital space station and partly in the startown associated with the Imperial downport.

Encounters

The Referee should review the material in Arrival before running Disembarkation or To Warn a Duke.

Disembarkation – The characters arrive on *Diamond*, an auxiliary space station normally reserved for private yachts and luxury liners, but were re-routed due to traffic issues in-system. Unknown to everyone, the Ine Givar have just seized control of the station.

To Warn A Duke – The characters having dealt with their watchers, moves to warn/assist the Duke of Regina, whose ship is about to dock at *Diamond*. The Ine Givar try to prevent this.

Vacation (*optional*) – As a reward for their assistance, Baron Hasse hosts the characters in his suite, allowing them to enjoy and appreciate Mora's luxury side.

Our Host is Missing – Baron Hasse is missing, and the only person who knows anything is his "loyal" retainer, Gerasim Zeif.

To Rescue the Baron – Baron Hasse must be rescued from the thugs who are holding him.

A Most Enjoyable Day – The baron repays the characters by letting them enjoy a dinner in the gardens of the ducal palace on Mora.

A Narrow Window of Opportunity – The characters uncover a plot by the Ine Givar to humble the nobility of the Marches and must stop it, by storming the embassy of a member of the Imperium!

These are sequential, but Vacation is easily skipped, as it involves basically a week of the characters enjoying themselves. The others should all run in sequence, but the Referee should not run them as if they were one right after another – the Referee will need to be familiar with the details and pace them accordingly.

Chronology

Forday	005-1105	Player Characters arrive on Mora
Fiday	006-1105	Senate opening
Forday	012-1105	Baron Hasse is kidnapped
Fiday	013-1105	Baron Hasse's appointment
Senday	015-1105	Palace Gardens Picnic
Fiday	020-1105	Senate closing
		Sir Abel is kidnapped.
Sixday	021-1105	Afternoon: Marriage
		Evening: Grand Gala Ball

Introduction

This adventure concerns a group of characters, all recently finished with their previous careers, travelling to Mora on the same passenger liner to see what opportunities there may be found on the sector capital. As it happens, this trip takes place on the eve of the 74th Assembly of the Senate of the Spinward Marches, with lots of extra visitors coming to Mora.

The player characters are all passengers on the same liner arriving in the Mora system on Forday 005-1105. They may know each other beforehand or they may have met on the ship. Holiday, the Imperial New Year, occurred while they were in jump and the shipboard party that was held on that occasion has broken down most reserve and if they were not acquainted before the trip began, they certainly will be by now.

The Referee should begin by handing out Player Handout 1 and allowing the players to present their characters to each other.

Once the introductions are over, the captain announces that due to extra high volumes of arriving traffic, the liner has been diverted to a small auxiliary station. There will be a delay of about half an hour before docking, since the station is undermanned and a luxury liner from Rhylanor is being processed at the moment.

Key Game Points

• The Spinward Marches' Senate is an advisory body comprised of all Imperial peers associated with the Marches. It can be summoned at will by the Emperor to advise him on matters of local importance. In addition, once a decade it assembles on Mora, the sector capital, to discuss matters of mutual interest and to compose a formal document known as the State of the Marches Report for the Emperor. Considerable politicking and many hours of committee meetings and plenary sessions during the daytime goes into deciding just what that report does and does not say. In the evenings, Mora's High Society takes the opportunity to hold a succession of glittering parties and balls, and the commoners simultaneously hold a magnificent festival of their own. The opening ceremony will be held on Fiday 006-1105 and senate activities are scheduled to spread over fourteen days, culminating in a closing ceremony on Fiday 020 followed by a Grand Gala Ball on Sixday 021.

• During this period security arrangements are stepped up. This year there have been rumours that the Ine Givar, the most powerful terrorist organization to plague the Marches in living memory, are planning some spectacular atrocity during the festival. Consequently security has been tightened an extra notch.

• It is assumed that the Player Characters have become well acquainted during the trip. The adventure is supposed to accommodate almost any combination of characters (although they do have to be able to put up a good fight); hence the rather vague hints about what motives they have for travelling to Mora on the ship in question. They also have to be at sufficiently loose ends to accept an invitation to stay with a fellow passenger. If desired, the Referee can encourage players to figure out prior friendships and specific motives, but there can be no urgent purposes that would preclude spending a couple of idle weeks at a luxury hotel with someone else picking up the tab.
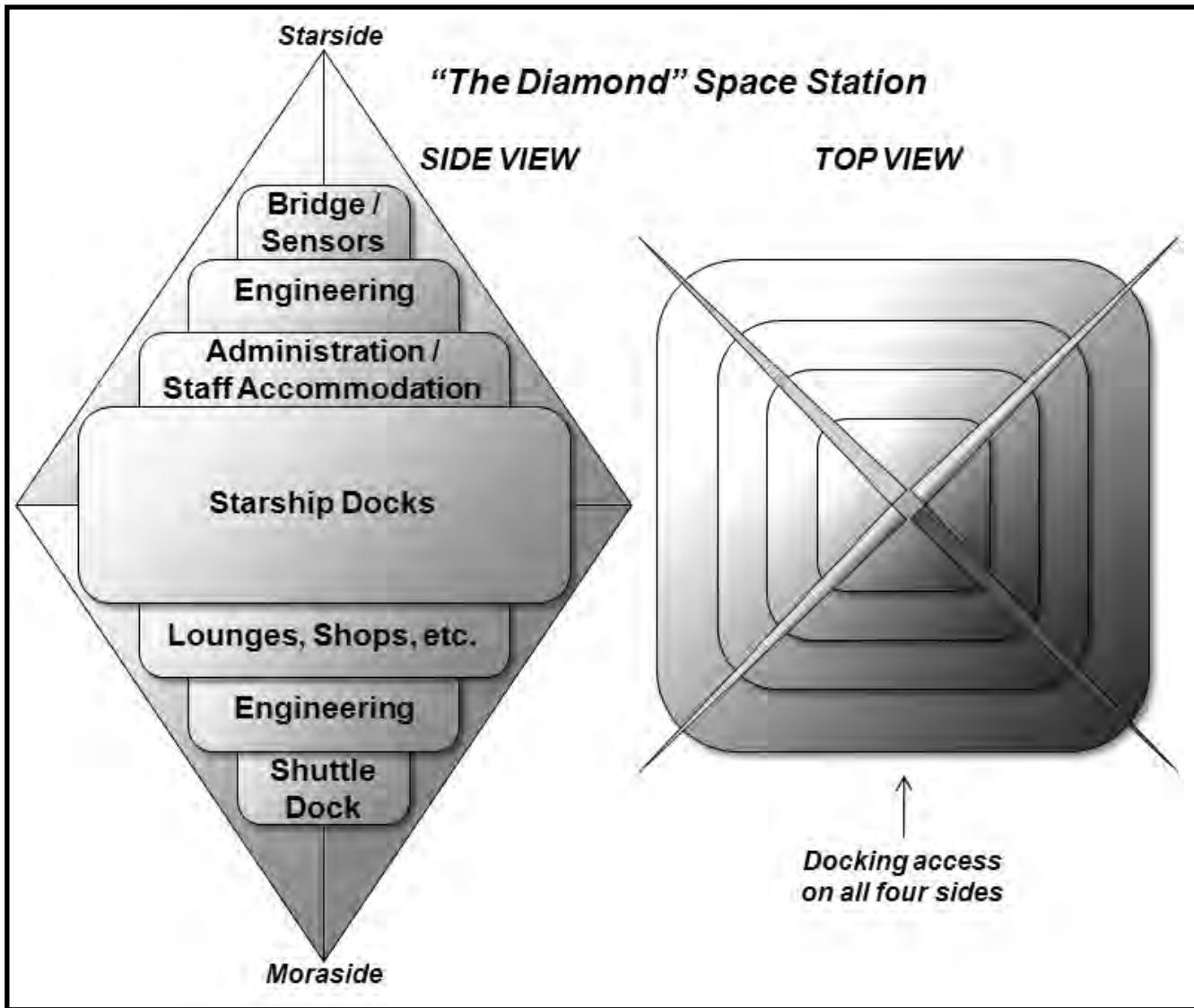
ARRIVAL
The Space Station

The *Diamond* is a small auxiliary space station in orbit around Mora. It is mainly used for private yachts and luxury liners, but is occasionally used to accept overflow from the main station at peak hours. With nobles coming in from all over the Marches and tourists pouring in to participate in the associated festivities (directly or vicariously on 3V screens), such a peak has just occurred and the ship the Player Characters are on has been diverted to the station.

What they do not know is that the Ine Givar has just taken over control of the station and is waiting for a yacht belonging to Duke Norris of Regina, one of the six most important nobles in the sector, to dock. The yacht arrived at the jump limit several hours ago and will be here in 3½ hours. The terrorists are keeping up appearances, but are not allowing any communications from the station. They have taken over the control room and communications array, of course.

"The Diamond" Space Station

SIDE VIEW — TOP VIEW

Starside

Bridge / Sensors

Engineering

Administration / Staff Accommodation

Starship Docks

Lounges, Shops, etc.

Engineering

Shuttle Dock

Moraside

Docking access on all four sides

Station Layout

The Diamond is shaped rather like a diamond, with a tall deck for docking ships in the middle and successively smaller decks in both directions. The side facing away from Mora is mostly administrative and the side facing Mora is mostly passenger service.

Key Game Points

• The terrorists infiltrated the Diamond by impersonating a relief shift of 12 guards. To avoid arousing suspicions, they were forced to leave behind their normal weaponry and make do with the shotguns, snub pistols and other equipment local station security guards usually carry.

• One third of the real guards left peacefully as they were relieved. The rest were surprised, some of them killed, the rest locked up in a back room; not in the brig, which only has two cells, and not in low berths, because there are only two low berths on the station, in the sickbay. These were used for the station commander and the security chief.

• Key civilian personnel were locked up in another room and some of the Ine Givar took over their roles. Just the really indispensable ones. The team did not have enough men to secure the entire station, nor to guard all the passengers and personnel, so they put the least dangerous people in a big arrival lounge on Moraside and blocked access from there to the docks.

The Opposition

At the moment, the 12 terrorists are distributed as follows: The leader and one more are on the station bridge. Two are in the security office, keeping a desultory eye on the monitors. Two are in the communications office, and the last six are waiting in an empty starship dock for Norris' yacht to arrive.

Ine Givar team leader: human rogue (enforcer) 2, rogue (thief) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5), suicide pill.

3 Ine Givar team members: human rogue (enforcer) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5).

If the Player Characters manage to deal with any of the terrorists without the alarm being raised, the rest will remain at those locations. If the alarm is raised, a deadly game of hide and seek will ensue.

The Security Office

The office has a bank of monitors, desks, weapons locker and a brig with two cells (empty). Two terrorists are sitting at a desk in the centre of the room and arguing politics, occasionally casting an idle glance at the banks of monitors mounted on the walls. If surprised, they can be defeated before giving the alarm. The two cells are empty. The weapon cabinet has racks for snub pistols and shotguns to equip 36 guards; while some of the snub pistols are carried by the guards, the characters will find plenty of weapons on hand here.

2 Ine Givar team members: human rogue (enforcer) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), shotgun (4d6), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5).
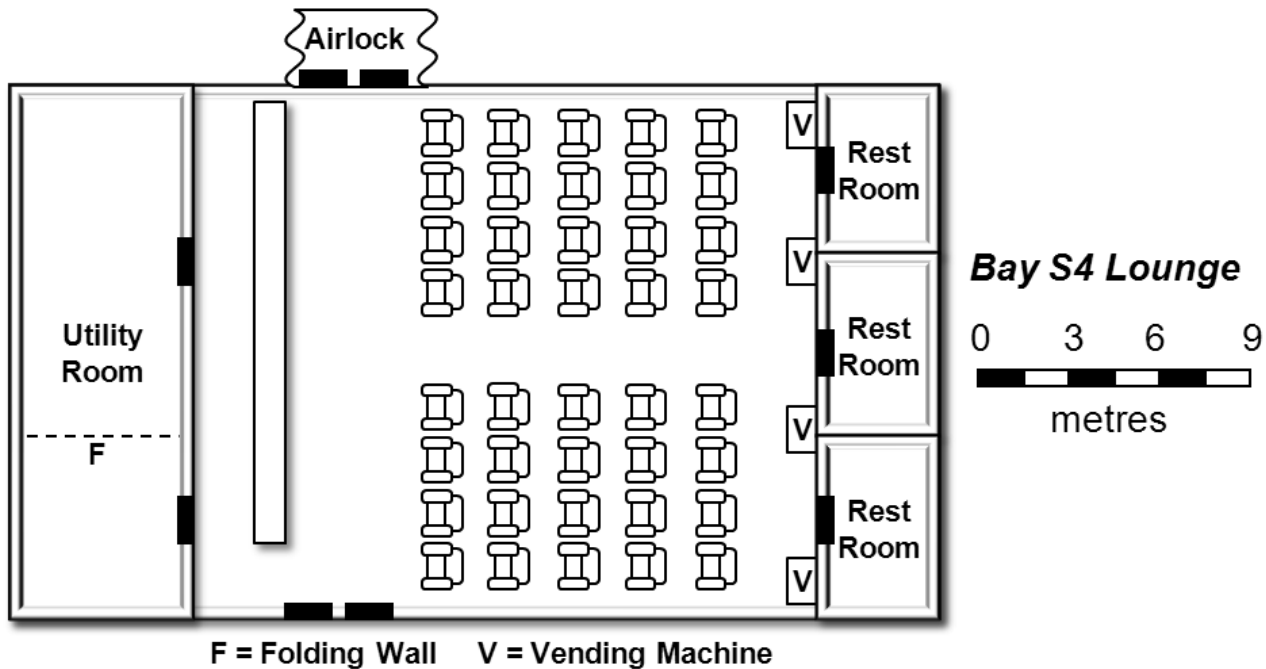
KEY GAME POINTS

- There is no reason the terrorists have not used the cells to hold half a dozen prisoners. It just turned out to be easier to bundle everybody in together elsewhere.

DISEMBARKATION

The passengers file out of the liner and into a small arrival lounge. Six security guards inspect the luggage and confiscate any guns they may find, after which both passengers and crew are guided to the main lounge.

Bay S4 Lounge

Bay S4 Lounge

0   3   6   9

metres
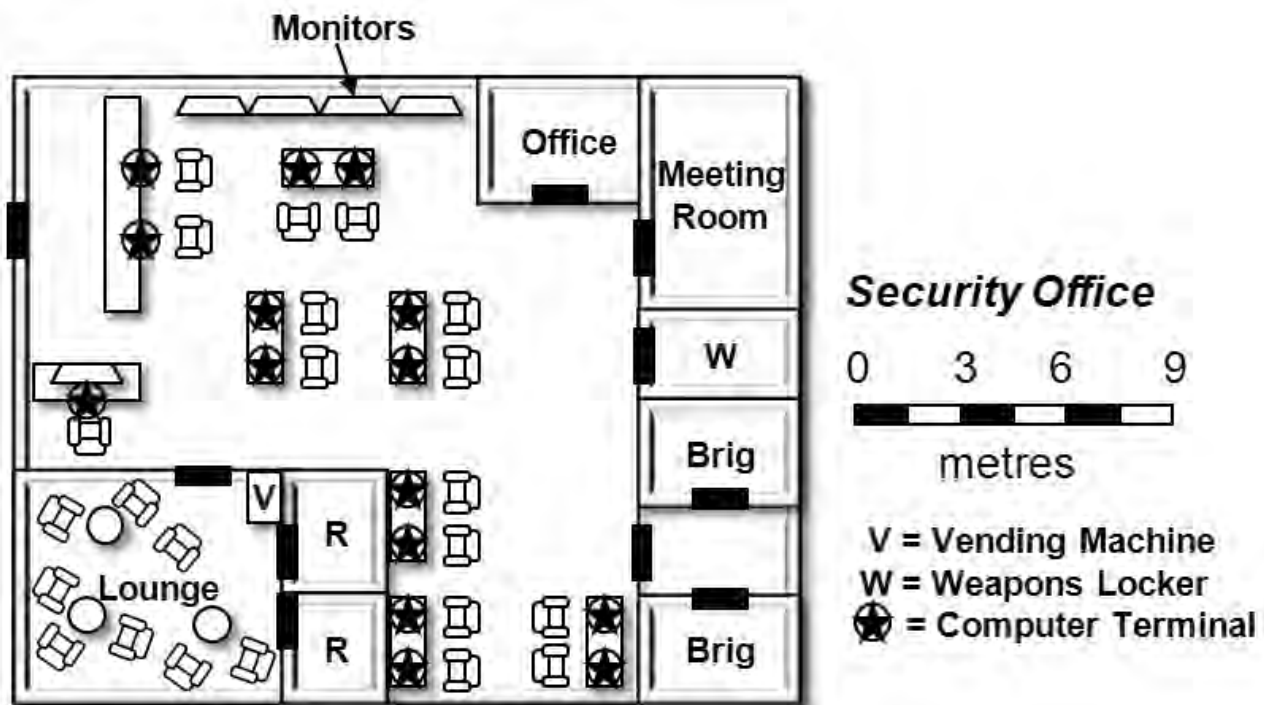
F = Folding Wall   V = Vending Machine

Key Game Points

- In an effort to deal pre-emptively with those most likely to make trouble, uniformed military officers are deftly separated from the rest and herded into another room. The player characters may not even notice that this has happened.

- **Check:** Carouse + Intelligence, Difficult (-2).

- If anyone asks for their weapons, they are told that they will be forwarded to the downport and they will get them back there.

- If asked about any irregularities, the guards will explain that increased security measures in connection with the upcoming Senate Assembly have increased workloads and caused personnel to be diverted to other tasks. The station is therefore severely undermanned.

The Main Arrival Lounge

The lounge is a large area with room for about 200 passengers to sit and wait in comfort, with all the facilities one might expect -- bar, restaurant, gift shop, comm screens, rest rooms and so on.

The lounge is already occupied by the passengers and crew of the *Trimkhana Brilliance*, a fancy jump-6 liner that just arrived from Rhylanor (2716) via Heroni (2521) and docked a little while ago. The roughly 80 passengers and 20 crew are already somewhat upset about the situation; the doors leading to the shuttle dock are closed, communication with Mora has been temporarily interrupted, the

crew was herded in here instead of into the crew lounge on starside, and no one is answering their questions. A dozen harassed starport service personnel man the bar, the restaurant, and the shop and know no more than the passengers about what is going on.

Interaction is aided by social barriers breaking down as the frustration the passengers feel over being kept in the lounge with no communication and no information mounts. One of the passengers on the *Trimkhana Brilliance* was a lesser Imperial noble, **Baron Hasse von Harkhoost**, an honour baron from Rhylanor. Baron Hasse should introduce himself as soon as any of the Player Characters make a remark that he might overhear and feel like commenting on. He is bored and worried and could respond to a question about Imperial nobles or the Senate, or to remarks about how something appears to be amiss.

Somebody Has To Do Something

After a bit of social interaction the Player Characters and the baron are drawn aside by **Captain Lyn Ilkanii**, Imperial Navy, an Imperial Navy Intelligence (INI) agent in mufti who has been sent to meet Duke Norris of Regina, whose yacht arrived at the jump limit some hours ago and is heading for the *Diamond*. She will concur with any suspicions the Player Characters have expressed (or present her own suspicions if the players are still oblivious) and prompt them into trying to regain control of the station.

Both the doors they came through and the door leading to the shuttle dock are locked. They will also be in full view of surveillance

cameras. However, there are various service entrances that can lead into the back corridors. Any reasonable plan should work.

Captain Ilkanii can give a rough description of the station layout. Places she thinks might be of interest are the security office, the communications room and the station bridge. Other places are the starship docks holding the two starships and the sickbay.

Whatever plan the Player Characters come up with, the captain will say her first duty is to warn Duke Norris; to this end she will try to make her way to the physical communications array and try to get a message out without alerting any terrorists or would-be kidnappers who may have taken over any part of the station. Baron Hasse will elect to go with the Player Characters.

Surveillance cameras are sparsely mounted in the parts of the station not open to passengers and can be circumvented with a little care.

Along the way the Player Characters will find several dead bodies clad in the uniforms of security guards. They have been knifed, mostly in the back, and casually tucked away in corners. Their weapons are missing.

Key Game Points

- The Player Characters were selected by the captain as the likeliest bunch of people around. If the question is raised, she will note that the passengers from the two ships ought to have included a sprinkling of serving Imperial officers and men, but there are none to be seen in the lounge. If no one noticed it at the time the baron will now recall he saw several uniformed fellow passengers being guided elsewhere.

- Acquiring weapons is probably uppermost in the minds of the players. The restaurant kitchen is mostly for preparing pre-packaged meals but there are enough kitchen knives to equip everyone. Other improvised weapons may be found here and there. Fire extinguishers are mounted at regular intervals. The likeliest place to obtain weapons is the station's security office.

- Baron Hasse has to stay with the Player Characters to develop a rapport born of shared danger, in order to set up later developments (He will invite the Player Characters to stay in the suite he has booked at a hotel in the startown; see below). The baron is accompanied by a single family retainer, an older man named Gerasim Zeif, who is not suited for strenuous let alone dangerous activities. He will stay behind in the lounge.

TO WARN A DUKE
Bay S1 Lounge
The layout of Bay S1's arrival lounge is the same as that of Bay S4. Use the same deckplan.

The Player Characters and Baron Hasse should arrive outside the lounge, armed and ready for action, just as Norris' yacht is about to dock. Captain Ilkanii has failed to get her warning out and the Duke is about to fall into the hands of the terrorists. Although accompanied by a couple of excellent bodyguards, they are likely to prove ineffective due to the element of surprise. The Player Characters have to act, and luckily they have the element of surprise now.

Ine Givar team leader: human rogue (enforcer) 2, rogue (thief) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5), suicide pill.

5 Ine Givar team members: human rogue (enforcer) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5).

NOTE: there are only 11 Ine Givar members and 1 leader on the station, so numbers may need to be adjusted for this encounter to account for previous player character actions.

If all goes well, the Ine Givar are defeated just before the Ducal party enters the lounge. If things go badly, the noise of the fight is sufficient to alert Norris and his people, and the Referee can let his bodyguards intervene. Norris himself will be right behind them (much to their resigned dismay). All three are armed with automatic pistols.

When the dust settles, there os a brief encounter with Norris, who thanks all of his rescuers, after which he allows Captain Ilkanii to guide him and his entourage to the shuttle dock.

As the Duke moves away, Baron Hasse asks if the Player Characters have anywhere to stay on Mora, and when told they have not, expresses concern that it may be difficult to obtain decent rooms in a city currently bursting with tourists. He offers to put them up in the suite he has reserved for himself in a hotel in the Twins Arcology; he had planned to bring his wife and daughter, but when the daughter became ill, they decided to stay behind; and without them and their maids there is plenty of room for everyone.

The customs area is manned by a single, very busy, customs officer and everybody gets waved through without so much as a cursory examination.

Downside in the South Landing Field Terminal the Player Characters are told that they must rent a storage locker to keep their guns in until they can get a license to carry them (see above), but are warned that even with a license the weapons may be carried only inside the Imperial portion of Wavecrest City.

The story of the kidnap attempt is all over the news services the next day, but the names of the Player Characters are kept out of it. Apparently the attempt was foiled by Imperial undercover agents whose identities must be kept secret to protect their effectiveness.

Key Game Points
* Mora's **law level** requires all Player Characters to leave behind personal firearms if they leave the extrality area. Inside, personal firearms may be carried, provided a license has been acquired but no assault weapons, submachine guns or heavier weapons. Acquiring a license upon arrival on Mora requires a skill check:

* **Check:** Admin + Social Standing, Routine (+2); if the character was a member of the Imperial Army, Marines, Navy or Scouts, the check becomes Easy (+4).

A check takes 1D6 working days (Wonday, Tuday, Triday, Forday and Fiday are working days, Sixday and Senday are not), half that (rounded up) for former members of the Imperial Army, Marines, Navy or Scouts.

The only weaponry allowed outside the extrality fence (regardless of licenses) are: stunners, small blades (larger blades if of appropriate social status or career background), and clubs or similar.

Referee's Information: The Real Plot
While the Ine Givar would love it if their plan to kidnap Duke Norris succeeded, they do not really expect it to work. The entire operation is a blind to allow a fairly well-known Ine Givar operative to slip past security and enter Mora. Although he no longer looks like he used to, the risk of being spotted under ordinary circumstances was deemed far too high.

Agent Leopard is a highly skilled Ine Givar operative, well-known to the Imperial security forces, who has been surgically altered to look just like **Colonel Sir Abel Spendabel**, the man in charge of security for a wedding involving a lot of important nobles. He travelled to Mora aboard the same ship as the Player Characters. While aboard, he did not dare wear any makeup, as the risk of getting spotted when spending over a week at close shipboard quarters was considered too great. Upon arrival, he slipped away from the rest of the passengers and crew and joined his fellow Ine Givar members for just long enough to disguise himself. He

then slipped past the customs barrier and lurked in an unused janitorial closet until the situation was resolved and then calmly walked aboard a shuttle and flew down. Here he used a fake ID to exit the starport.

(Note that a traffic controller on the main station had been bribed to direct the ship to dock at the *Diamond*. He was killed as soon as he came home after his shift. This may be mentioned on the news.)

Key Game Points
* Although everybody assumes the terrorist takeover of the *Diamond* was triggered by the arrival of Norris' yacht, it was actually the arrival of the ship that Agent Leopard was on that did it. It was pure luck that such a juicy target as Norris was on his way at the time, though there would have been something else they could have done instead of going for him, such as holding a ship full of highborn passengers hostage or even destroying the station and everyone on it.

VACATION
This portion of the adventure should be compressed or omitted if pressed for time. It is intended to develop the relationship between Baron Hasse and the player characters, and introduce Mora to the characters.

The Hotel Suite
The suite has a lounge in the middle, a master bedroom to one side, and four smaller rooms to the other side. The baron will take the master bedroom, Gerasim Zeif, his personal attendant, will take one of the small bedrooms, and the Player Characters may distribute themselves as they want.
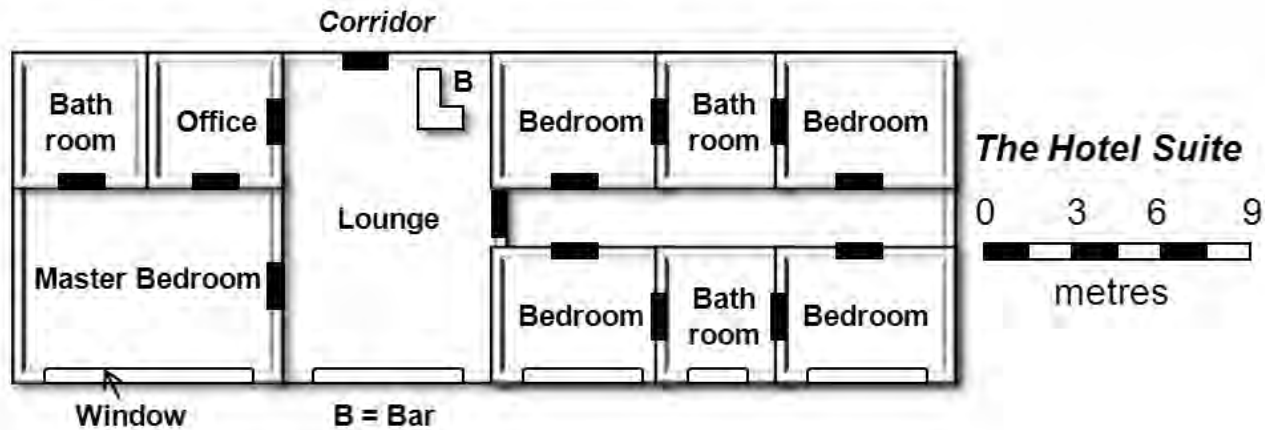
Baron Hasse leaves the Player Characters to their own devices during the first week or so, attending senate sessions in the day and touching bases with the Player Characters in the evenings, where it rapidly becomes an established routine that they all meet for dinner followed by some kind of show. The baron proves a thoughtful and convivial host and they should soon become firm friends. During the day the Player Characters can do touristy stuff.

Tourist Activities

These are potential timewasters. As long as all players are content to spend time on them, the Referee should allow them to. As soon as even one player expresses a desire to get on with the adventure, the Referee should encourage the rest to wrap it up. The Referee should feel free to think up other tourist attractions.

- **The Oldest Building on Mora**. A modest eight-story permacrete building of utilitarian design originally erected by Ling Standard Products (LSP) in 60 to be the administrative centre of the outpost (At the time it was referred to as 'The Tallest Building on Mora'). Today it houses a museum dedicated to the period from the initial Scout survey in 53 to the admittance of Mora into the Imperium as a full member in 116. Located in Porsiar, a fashionable district in Wavecrest City named after Port Ziar, the original startown.

- **The *Kig'reel!* Gardens.** A recreational park constructed by the K'kree and donated to the people of Mora. Located on the edge of Wavecrest City.

- **The Vargr Quarter.** A rough and ready neighbourhood inhabited primarily by Vargr. It is a favourite party spot for tourists who like the thrill of danger to spice up their partying. Although things do on occasion get out of hand, the danger is more imagined than real.

- **The Keksihedin:** One of the Seven Wonders of Mora, the Keksihedin is a region of the sea far to the north where a range of active underwater volcanoes cause the sea to bubble and roil spectacularly and a huge plume of clouds to ascend from the surface of the sea. It is named for the cauldron used by the storm goddess Elicar to brew weather. Day trips in comfortable grav busses are conducted by several tourist agencies.

- **The Mountain Retreat of Lark Kenaashiim:** Another of Mora's wonders, a fabulously luxurious secret underground complex built in the 5th Century by one of the richest of the Merchant Lords to serve as a secure place to relax and filled with his extensive collection of art collected from worlds from many parsecs around. It was hidden deep in the Brindigor Mountains and every effort made to keep its location secret. When Kenaashiim and a number of close family members and trusted retainers were killed by a bomb, the location was lost and the retreat remained undiscovered for several centuries. When it was discovered in 811, the complex was turned into a museum. Day trips are available.

- **Undersea cities:** Many tourists are fascinated by the underwater arcologies dotting Mora's seabeds. Excursions to a number of them are available. Or visitors can just buy tickets on one of the regular flights. The closest is Fenrock, only 100 km east of Wavecrest City.

Our Host Is Missing

On the evening of Forday 012-1105, the Player Characters find that the baron has not returned to keep their dinner appointment. Nor has he sent any messages about being delayed.

What really happened: Baron Hasse has been spending his afternoons talking to a lawyer about a legal case involving an

inheritance lawsuit. The other party (a half cousin) stand to lose a fortune if the baron shows up at court with various legal documents in his possession. The cousin had managed to bribe Gerasim Zeif, the not-quite-faithful-enough family retainer. The baron returned early that day and went directly up to the suite, where Gerasim gave him a message that lured him to an empty apartment where he was grabbed and tied up. The baron is now being held prisoner by a couple of rent-a-thugs.

Gerasim Zeif is a non-combatant, and will neither engage in combat nor defend himself. He will attempt to run if there is any violence.

Investigation
* Gerasim says that he has not heard a word from the baron all day.

* Any comm message to the baron will be fielded by a secretarial expert program. The baron is not accepting messages at the moment.

* If the master bedroom is searched, it will be discovered that the towels in the bathroom are damp. The baron took a quick shower before heading out again. The suit he wore this morning is also to be found in the laundry hamper.

- **Check:** Investigate + Intelligence, Routine (+2).

* If confronted by evidence he has lied, Gerasim can give the address he lured the baron to. This will require a successful skill check.

- **Check:** Persuade + Intelligence, Average (+0).

* The man who bribed Gerasim was masked, but he can provide sex (male), height and build.

* If contacted, Captain Ilkanii can trace the baron's personal comm unit to the same address Gerasim knows. It has been left behind there by the thugs.

* The office is a multi-purpose room that can be configured for a number of purposes. Apart from a standard work desk, there is also an internal security system console where a visiting nobleman can install his own guards if he is sufficiently paranoid. Baron Hasse did not bother, but Zeif snuck into the office and turned on the monitors; the one in the baron's room allowed Zeif to learn the combination to the wall safe. Zeif tried to erase the surveillance files afterwards, but a person skilled with Computers could bring them up again.

- **Check:** Computers + Intelligence, Difficult (-2).

* Gerasim has a rendezvous with the culprit later that night. He is supposed to bring a folder full of legal documents that the baron keeps in the wall safe and exchange it for a Cr50,000 bearer debit card (An anonymous way to transfer credits in a society where the bank notes are equipped with RFID chips). If the Player Characters leave him alone in the suite he will take the folder and leave. However, he will forget his comm unit can be traced.
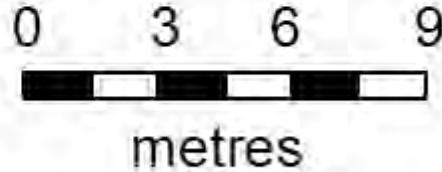
T*O* R*ESCUE* T*HE* B*ARON*
The Captor's Apartment
The two thugs watching the baron keep him in the bedroom for the most part. They really are just waiting on a call from the cousin, and certain have no reason to expect any interruption or attack.
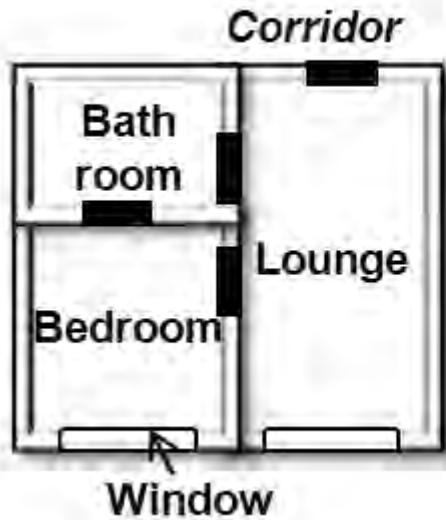
The Captor's Apartment

2 local thugs: human rogue (enforcer) 2; autopistol (3d6-3), flak jacket (4).

The rescue concludes with the Baron thanking them for their timely assistance and rewarding them by inviting them to come with him to a highly prestigious picnic lunch in the Palace Gardens. He has six tickets; for himself, his wife, his daughter, and for three personal attendants, but since his wife and daughter are not here and his attendant just betrayed him, there are enough to go round. The baron will deal with his cousin personally later.

A MOST ENJOYABLE DAY

The Baron and his party have thoroughly enjoyed the picnic lunch and are now strolling through the ducal grounds. In one fairly secluded corner of the gardens, they come across a (relatively) small chapel surrounded by idyllic trees. Here they meet Captain Ilkanii again and fall into conversation with her. First she apologises for the news stories depriving them of the credit they deserved. It was not her doing. People higher up the chain of command felt that it would inspire greater confidence among the public if they thought the Imperium had not been caught completely off guard. After that, the conversation becomes general. The Player Characters learn a wedding will take place here in a couple of days, on the early afternoon of Sixday 021; Admiral Lord Frederick Santanocheev, the son of a powerful Imperial count, is marrying Lady Indu, the daughter of Sector Admiral Marquis Ottmar Manolis. A whole slew of important nobles, including Duchess Delphine of Mora and Duke Norris of Regina, are going to be there.

What's HE doing here?!?

Suddenly, one of the Player Characters recognises someone from the ship they came in on. At the time he was a commercial traveller; now he is decked out in the uniform of a colonel of Imperial Marines and dictating notes to an aide. Ilkanii can tell the Player Character he must be mistaken. That is Colonel Sir Abel Spendabel, the man in charge of security for the wedding (because of the naval nature of the weddings and because the palace guards have their hands full with all the guests staying at the palace, the Marines rather than the Palace Guard will be handling security). Sir Abel has been very much in evidence for months; the captain has seen him on numerous occasions (their duties overlap a lot) and he definitely has not been on any ship lately.

At this point the Ine Givar has not yet performed the substitution.

The captain is willing to investigate if the Player Character insists, but the evidence is inconclusive. The Ine Givar deleted all the security footage and none of the other Player Characters have the same vivid recollection of the commercial traveller (He sat opposite the Player Character during meals (where it would have been suspicious behaviour to stay away) but otherwise spent his time mostly in his cabin). The ship has long since departed and will not be back for another week, and the other passengers are scattered across Mora.

Captain Ilkanii is willing to listen, but is unable to help directly. She is the younger daughter of an Imperial baron on Regina, so even though she tries to avoid politics, she is regarded by the clique

scheduled to provide security for the wedding. They are currently quartered in a base located several hours flight from Wavecrest City. A fake Sir Abel could simply rescind their orders and allow the terrorists to take their place.

However, this means most of the terrorists will leave the embassy the next morning (along with Agent Leopard), leaving behind only a few guards (and taking the autorifles and ACRs with them). At that point the Player Characters could move in and free the real Sir Abel. Once free, he will be all the proof needed to have the terrorists dealt with before any of the wedding guests begin to show up around noon.

The assault on the embassy should be the climax of the adventure. The embassy staff are locked up in the basement with Sir Abel and will be suitably grateful.

Embassy Grounds

The chameleon surfacing of the three metre tall wall surrounding the embassy grounds has been set to look like it is made of a kind of blue-veined marble (used extensively in classical Morovici architecture) giving it the incongruous appearance of being made of ripe cheese. The wall is very smooth and requires adhesive gloves and kneepads or something similar to climb.

All the trees, bushes, flowers, and even the grass, in the garden are species native to Morovic, no stranger than vegetation seen on most other worlds, but unfamiliar to the Player Characters. The garden has a neglected look. Topiary bushes of strange animals have been allowed to grow shaggy, the grass is a bit long, dead branches and flowers have been left in place, secluded nooks and crannies have grown just a bit too secluded.

The embassy building has been set to look like it was built of the same blue-veined marble. There is a front entrance, a side door leading to the kitchen, stairs down to another side door leading into the cellar, and at the back a set of French doors leading from a ballroom out onto a big patio. If none of the Player Characters have lock picking skills, the private agent will come with them as far as the embassy and open the door of their choice, but will not enter the building.

The ground floor houses offices, kitchen, dining room, ballrooms, smoking rooms, a library and a few completely empty rooms.

The upper floors contain accommodation. The master suite and a dozen other bedrooms are occupied, another dozen are furnished but not in use, and the rest are empty. If the master suite is searched thoroughly, a drop shaft is found in a closet. This is an escape route for the ambassador leading to the secure communications room in the cellar, something that can be guessed with an Intelligence check.

- **Check:** Intelligence, Easy (+4).

The cellar is where the action is. In addition to various storage rooms, the embassy's secure communications room is located there. In the room the terrorists are watching news channels and setting up a camera. If the Player Characters sneak up and listen to the discussion, they seem to be preparing to record the execution of Sir Abel and arguing about what to do with the ambassador and her staff. Execute them too or let them live? At the moment they are awaiting developments at the wedding, which will be televised.

Sir Abel and the embassy staff are locked up in several rooms deeper inside the cellar. Trying to open the doors without making any noise risks having the terrorists block the way out.

Setting Up the Action
There are at least three ways to handle the situation: A direct assault on the terrorists, who have not bothered to close the armoured door to the communications room; setting up an ambush outside the door to the room and causing the terrorists to investigate; and somehow scaring the terrorists into sealing themselves inside the room.

All six terrorists spend most of their time in the secure communications room, though some of them will leave from time to time for short rambles through the mansion (going to the kitchen for snacks, or the bedrooms to steal any small valuable they can find, or to use a restroom). Waiting for just the right moment to strike could improve the odds for success, but the clock is ticking and the time when the first guests will show up at the chapel approaches.

The assault is risky, but (if successful) gives the best results. Sir Abel can communicate directly from the embassy and give the alarm. The ambush is likely to result in some dead terrorists and the rest holed up inside the room. The third option leaves all the terrorists alive and holed up. In both the second and the third case they can and will warn Agent Leopard and his men, allowing them to escape, at least for the moment (hotly pursued by most of the security personnel in Wavecrest City). Coordinating a second attack through the drop tube from the master suite with either the assault or the ambush should (hopefully) result in the defeat of all the terrorists.

Ine Givar team leader: human rogue (enforcer) 2, rogue (thief) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), shotgun (4d6), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5), suicide pill.

5 Ine Givar team members: human rogue (enforcer) 2; snub pistol (3d6-3), shotgun (4d6), dagger (1d6+2), cloth armour (5).

Any terrorists forced or tricked into sealing themselves up in the communications room will be difficult to winkle out but that would be somebody else's problem, as both the Ambassador and Sir Abel will have been rescued at that point.

CONCLUSION
Unfortunately, Sir Abel is a scene-stealing, credit-grabbing glory hound, so as the Referee, you need to explain the player characters that they will not receive full credit for their exploits, but Captain Ilkanii knows the truth and will do what she can. She will privately inform her superiors, suggesting these people can be trusted in future situations. She will also let the Player Characters know that while most of the fake marines were killed or captured, the fake Sir Abel managed to escape somehow or other.

Sir Abel, on the other hand, will largely forget the role the characters played, although if the embassy rescue is mentioned, he will remember to get their names wrong. Badly.

The Morovici Ambassador, on the other hand, will consider the player characters to have saved her life, and the lives of her staff. The characters will be regarded as true heroes, in the nation of Morovic on the world of Porozlo. The rest of the Marches are not even sure where that is.

Rewards
1. The Ine Givar were defeated before Duke Norris' arrival, or were defeated with the assistance of the Duke's security team. This awards "Favour of Duke Norris of Regina", and Cr 4,000 for each character.

2. Any characters who successfully rescue Baron Hasse from his captors will gain him as a Contact. In addition, the Baron will give the characters Cr 3,000 each.

3. If the characters successfully rescue Sir Abel Spendabel from the Morovic embassy they will gain a Contact in Imperial Naval Intelligence (Captain Ilkanii), plus Cr 5,000 apiece. In addition, each character involved in the rescue gains the option of purchasing ONE TL 15 or under item costing Cr 12,000 or less, if they wish to spend the money at the end of the adventure.

4. If the characters successfully rescue the Morovici Ambassador they are awarded a Planetary Knighthood – the Morovici Order of the Golden Bell, although only recognised in the nation of Morovic on the world of Porozlo in Rhylanor subsector, plus Cr 1,000 each.

Cellar level

KEY:
Door
Window
Stairs (up)
Stairs (down)
B Bedroom
R Rest-/Bathroom

0   3   6   9
metres

Ground floor

Master /
Guest floor

Office /
Staff floor
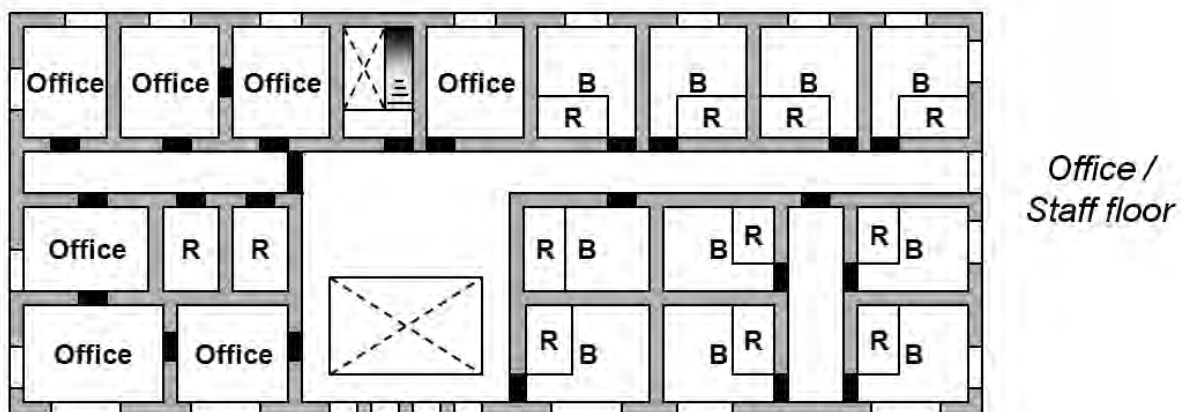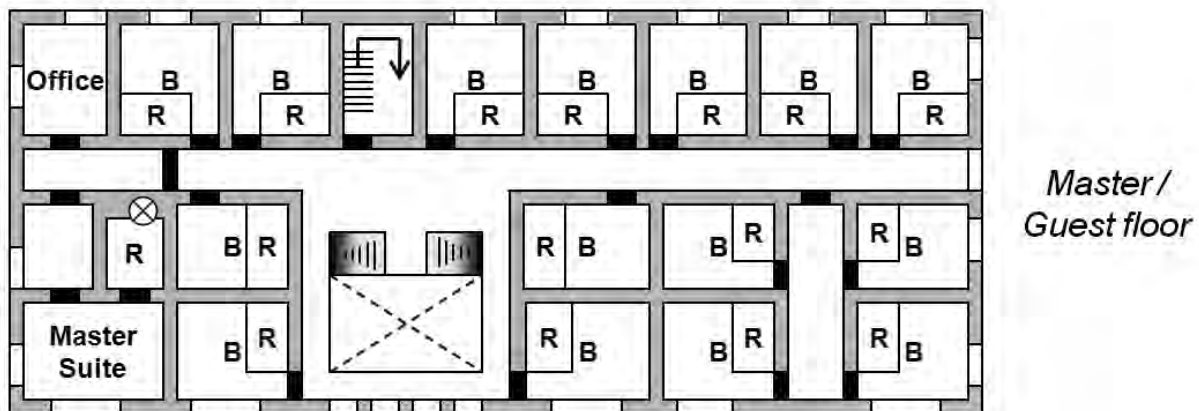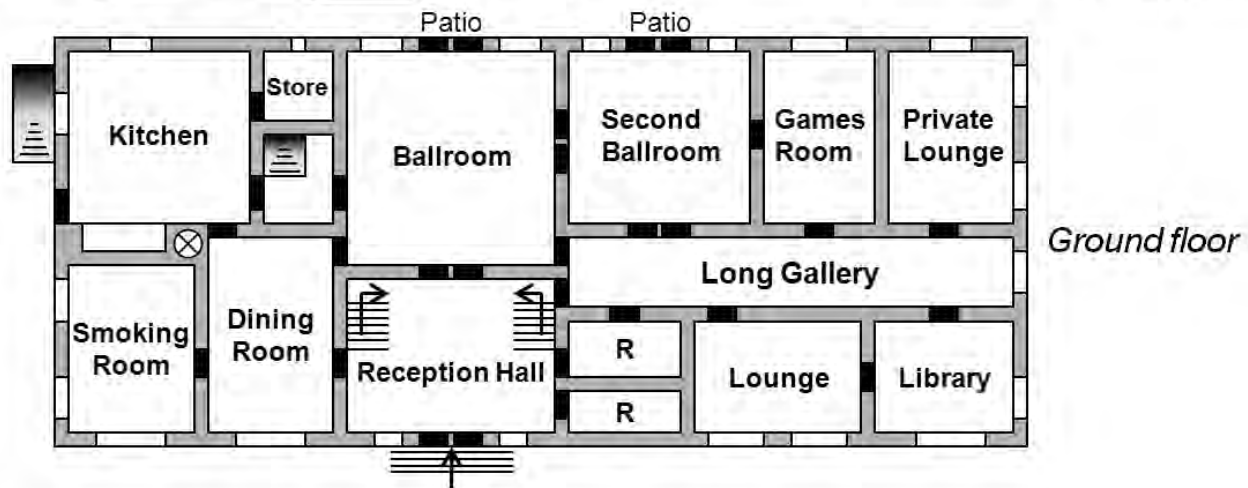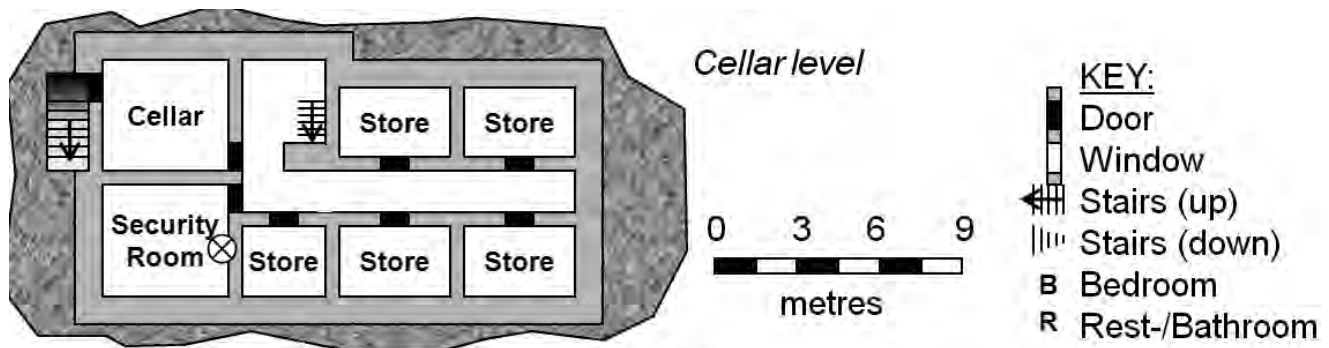
APPENDIX 1: CHARACTERS
1. Aboard The Diamond.
BARON HASSE VON HARKHOOST
Noble (Administrator) 3
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 6 (0), End 12 (+2), Int 9 (+1), Edu 6 (+0), Soc 12 (+2)
Languages Anglic, Zhodani
Skills Admin 1, Advocate 2, Carouse 1, Comms 0, Computers 0, Diplomat 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 0, Gun Combat (shotgun) 0, Investigate 0, Persuade 1, Streetwise 0
Possessions Comm, rapier (1d6+4), cloth armour (5)

Baron Hasse is a tall, well-built man in his early thirties with the sleek, well-groomed aspect of a man who routinely works out with a personal trainer. His clothes are subtly understated, but tailored from expensive materials. He is an honour baron from Rhylanor.

CAPTAIN LYN ILKANII, IMPERIAL NAVY
Navy (Line) 5
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 5 (-1), Int 12 (+2), Edu 14 (+2), Soc 12 (+2)
Languages Anglic, Sagamaal (Sword Worlder), Trokh (Aslan), Zhodani
Skills Admin 1, Animals 0, Carouse 0, Comms 0, Computers 1, Leadership 2, Medic 0, Melee (blade) 1, Remote Ops 1, Sensors 1, Tactics (naval) 1, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 0
Possessions Hand computer, comm, snub pistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5)

Captain Ilkanii appears to be a bookish woman in her late thirties. She's a younger child of an honour baron on Regina. As many other sprigs of the Imperial nobility, she chose to pursue a career in the Imperial Navy, and is currently assigned to Naval Intelligence's Mora Office. Although she tries to avoid politics, she is regarded by the clique surrounding Sector Admiral Manolis as an adherent of Norris, which is why she gets assigned to meet Norris' yacht and why any accusation against a member of the clique that she endorses will be suspect. She becomes the Player Characters' conduit into the Intelligence community, giving them whatever unofficial help she can get away with.

INE GIVAR TEAM LEADER
Rogue (enforcer) 2, Rogue (thief) 2
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 10 (+1), Int 8 (+0), Edu 10 (+1), Soc 6 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Deception 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Leadership 1, Melee (unarmed) 2, Persuade 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2
Possessions Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Shotgun (4d6), Dagger (1d6+2), Cloth Armour (5), suicide pill

While the team leader does know about Agent Leopard, the suicide pill will prevent these details from being revealed. Death is a necessary sacrifice.

INE GIVAR FIGHTER
Rogue (enforcer) 2
Abilities Str 9 (+1), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 6 (+0), Edu 9 (+1), Soc 5 (-1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Athletics (coordination) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Stealth 1
Possessions Snub Pistol (3d6-3), Shotgun (4d6), Dagger (1d6+2), Cloth Armour (5)

While they have been trained and led by their team leader for some time, they know no other details about Ine Givar operations. Their capture will serve no purpose.

3. The Wedding

COLONEL SIR ABEL SPENDABLE
Marines (Ground Assault) 5
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 10 (+1), Int 9 (+1), Edu 9 (+1), Soc 11 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 1, Athletics (Endurance) 1, Battle Dress 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1, Leadership 1, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (unarmed 1), Tactics (military) 1
Possessions Comm, slug pistol (3d6-3), cutlass (2d6+4), cloth armour (5)

Colonel Sir Abel is a fairly competent officer, but it is his unctuous personality and skill at 'office politics' that has brought him to his present rank. He hitched his wagon to Sector Admiral Manolis' star six years ago and has now become one of the Admiral's most

trusted men. Currently employed as the Admiral's security aide, he has been tasked with handling the security arrangements in connection with the marriage of the Admiral's daughter Indu to Admiral Lord Frederick Santanocheev. Sir Abel allows no opportunity to shine in the eyes of his patron to escape him.

CAPTAIN DOMINIQUE DURAND
Marines (Support) 3
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 9 (+1), Int 12 (+2), Edu 10 (+1), Soc 9 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 1, Advocate 1, Comms 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Leadership 1
Possessions Snub pistol (3d6-3), comm, cloth armour (5)

Captain Durand, whose real name is Dominique Edongenuce, is the son of a woman from a backwater world in Deneb sector who was abandoned by her Imperial Army husband when his tour of duty was over, leaving her in difficult circumstances. He grew up hating his father and the Imperium in general. Recruited by the Ine Givar at the age of 16, he was given a false identity and told to enlist in the Marines and become a mole when he turned 18. He has never lost his hate or his dedication to the Cause.

AGENT LEOPARD
Agent Leopard is one of the Ine Givar's best known leaders, although his true name and origins has never been revealed. He is a skilled and dedicated terrorist, both cunning and versatile. He has been behind some of the Ine Givar's most successful actions, which has brought him to the attention of the Imperium and, despite routine precautions, have left the authorities in possession of various biometrics readings that might make it possible to identify him. No matter the circumstances, Agent Leopard will not be among the captured or dead, and those terrorists who are captured will not be able to identify him at the end of this adventure. He will return…

Appendix 2:
Background Characters

The characters below are not likely to become directly involved with the scenario, but at the same time Referees may find it useful to have additional details on them.

Duchess Delphine Adorania Muudashir of Mora
Citizen (Corporate) 4, Noble (Diplomat) 23
Abilities Str 4 (-1), Dex 5 (-1), End 4 (-1), Int 10 (+1), Edu 13 (+2), Soc 15 (+3)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 4, Advocate 2, Broker 1, Carouse 1, Comms 1, Deception 1, Diplomat 3, Leadership 1

Delphine is the 15th Duchess of Mora of the second creation, her ancestress having replaced the previous family in the aftermath of the Civil War. In addition to being duchess of the Duchy of Mora, Delphine is also the ruler of the Mora system with the title Matriarch of Mora. In theory the Imperium's nobles constitute a layer of government separate from that of the member worlds, but in practice quite a few hereditary planetary leaders have acquired Imperial authority too.

Delphine was born in 979 and became Duchess and Matriarch of Mora when her mother abdicated in her favour on her 35th birthday. Although she does not take anagathics (or so she claims), she has lived a very long life and show little sign of slowing down. She celebrated her 125th birthday and the 90th anniversary of her rule last year.

Duke Norris Aella Aledon of Regina
Navy (Line) 4, Noble (Administrator) 2
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 6 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 10 (+1), Edu 12 (+2), Soc 15 (+3)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 1, Advocate 1, Astrogation 1, Comms 0, Computers 1, Diplomat 1, Flyer (grav) 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 0, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2, Leadership 2, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Persuade 1, Sensors 0, Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 0

Norris, the 14th Duke of Regina, was the second child of Willem Caranda Aledon, the 13th Duke. Expecting his older brother William to inherit, Norris originally made his career in the Imperial Navy. Unlike many of his peers in the service, he did not play the patronage game (except, arguably, when he had himself assigned to a post on the other side of the Imperium, allowing him to visit Capital on his way there) and advanced in rank at the normal rate for an officer of his abilities. His career was cut short when William died in an accident in 1097. At the time Norris had just been promoted to commander. He took leave of absence and went home to help his father; when Duke Willem died of natural causes a year later, Norris resigned his commission and took up his new duties running the Duchy of Regina. Norris was and remains unmarried, but to safeguard the succession, he was persuaded to have a clone of himself, which he insisted be female, created in 1097. The clone was named Seldrian and named his heir.

As a high duke, Norris ranks *ex officio* as a Fleet Admiral. Strangely, or perhaps not so strangely, career admirals who accept the authority of dukes who have had no formal navy experience whatsoever without a murmur resent taking orders from "a jumped-up commander".

Sector Admiral Marquis Ottmar Manolis, IN
Navy (Line) 9
Abilities Str 5 (-1), Dex 6 (+0), End 5 (-1), Int 9 (+1), Edu 12 (+2), Soc 13 (+2)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 2, Astrogation 2, Comms 1, Computers 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Leadership 2, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (capital ships) 2, Sensors 1, Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 2, Zero-G 1

The Manolis family is one of the Imperium's so-called service families, families who provide personnel to the Imperial Army, Marines, Navy, Scouts and other Imperial organisations generation after generation, accumulating minor noble titles along the way and often reaching high rank. The Manolises live mainly on Capital and other worlds in the Duchy of Core and mostly go into the Navy and the Marines. After a career spent in Core and Vland sectors, he was appointed to the post of Deputy Sector Admiral of the Spinward Marches six years ago and succeeded to the post of Sector Admiral when his predecessor retired two years ago. Marquis Ottmar is an honour baron associated with the Core sector and is thus not a member of the Spinward Marches Senate.

The Admiral is married with five children. The fourth child, his daughter Indu, is engaged to be married to Admiral Lord Frederick Santanocheev.

ADMIRAL LORD FREDERIC MUUDASHIR SANTANOCHEEV, IN

Navy (Line) 4
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 6 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 12 (+2), Soc 14 (+2)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 3, Astrogation 1, Computers 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Leadership 1, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (small craft) 1, Tactics (naval) 1, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Lord Frederick is the second child of Count Sebastian Santanocheev of Fornice (3025) and Aliisha Muudashir, a niece of Duchess Delphine of Mora, and currently serves as the Imperial Navy's attaché to the Spinward Marches senate. At 34 he is quite young for his rank; as the son of Duchess Delphine's staunchest supporter, his career has been fast-tracked with lots of cushy assignments and frequent promotions. Lord Frederick, however, believes it is all due to his own merits as a superior tactician and strategist.

As second in line for his father's county, he holds the courtesy title 'Baron of Solstice' but does not use a baronial prefix with his name.

APPENDIX 2: OTHER CHARACTERS

When needed, Mora's Peace Enforcement teams are quick to respond. They will consist of four Peace Enforcer personnel, and one Peace Enforcer officer. They will separate all groups immediately, working first to stop all violence, and only afterwards investigating a scene.

MORA PEACE ENFORCER OFFICER

Human Agent (Law) 3
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0
Possessions Stunner (2d6+3 stun), autopistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm.

MORA PEACE ENFORCER PERSONNEL

Human Agent (Law) 2
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0
Possessions Stunner (2d6+3 stun), autopistol (3d6-3), cloth armour (5), comm.

Note that if violence continues, additional teams will respond, replacing the cloth armour (5) with combat armour (12), and the stunner with assault rifles (3d6).

PLAYER HANDOUT 1
A FESTIVE OCCASION

Having just closed a chapter in your life by leaving your previous line of work, you found yourself at loose ends. For whatever reasons you decided to take passage to the neighbouring world of Mora, sector capital of the entire Spinward Marches and reputed place of great opportunities.

Aboard the ship you met and became friendly with four other passengers. Shipboard acquaintances ripen quickly and the big party held five days ago to celebrate Holiday Eve (the Imperium's New Year's Eve) also helped shake you together, so by the end of the trip the five of you were pretty tight.

Mora

Mora, known as the Gateway to the Marches, is the seat of both the duchy government and the sector administration. It is one of the richest worlds for many parsecs and exerts a great deal of influence on sector and even domain politics.

It is a large world with a dense, tainted atmosphere. More than nine tenths of the surface is covered with water, with only one small continent, a few large islands, a few archipelagos, and a smattering of lesser islands breaking the surface of the sea. The gravity is a bit higher than standard, but not so much that it's going to bother you unless you go hiking. The day is only a few minutes shorter than the standard 24 hour day, but the year is 1155 days long (1162 local days). The dense atmosphere is tainted by industrial by-products, but that won't be a problem as long as you stay in the big arcologies.

The population is well over ten billion, mostly living in great arcologies that dot the continent of Batadis and the seabed girdling the equator. Another 300 million people live in space habitats spread out across the system.

Wavecrest City

The capital of Mora is located next to the Imperial downport. In fact, a major portion of Wavecrest City is the downport. Unlike on most other worlds, the startown is inside the extrality fence, and so are a number of other buildings usually located outside it. A great portion of the town is devoted to a diplomatic district and to the ducal palace. Ambassadors from all the major races and most of the Domain of Deneb can be found here, as can several small arcologies catering to Imperial citizens. The extrality fence encloses an area of almost 140 square kilometres.

Festival Time

Apparently there is a big festival coming up, with lots of spectacular events. Of course there is no chance of attending any of the really fancy parties, but the ordinary festivities are reputed to be quite spectacular too.

Final Approach

It is noon on Forday 005-1105. Seven hours ago your ship broke out of jump and began moving towards Mora. Now it has almost reached Marchkeep Station, the huge space station that serves as highport for most of the traffic that come to Mora. You are assembled in the main lounge with your luggage packed and ready to go. Only your guns are still held by the ship's purser. They will be forwarded to the downport terminal where you can get them once you shuttle down.

RESCUE ON RUIE

BY ROBERT EAGLESTONE

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Dates

All dates correspond to the standard Imperial calendar. The start date of this adventure is Senday 183-1105 (the 183rd day of the 1105th year since the founding of the Third Imperium). Time will flow normally once the adventure begins. If a different date is required, for example to fit the adventure into an existing campaign, then the start date can be altered with little or no disruption to the adventure.

Location

This Mongoose *Traveller* adventure starts on Regina (Spinward Marches 1910), but quickly moves to Ruie (Spinward Marches 1809). The characters must get into the prison where Sergei hault-Oberlindes is being held, free him, escape pursuit and rendezvous with the starship.

Player Characters

This adventure is meant for characters capable of handling themselves in combat. Characters not capable of using weapons or without related physical skills will find this adventure difficult. Characters should also have some measure of subtlety to their skill sets; Survival and Recon will be helpful.

ENCOUNTERS

The characters are contacted by a factor of Oberlindes Lines to rescue Sergei hault-Oberlindes from a prison on Ruie. They will enter the prison as inmates; once they contact Sergei, then they will also be contacted by a security officer of the prison who is allegedly a Jingarlu agent. She aids their escape by giving them the outbound supply truck and creating a diversion by which they may simply drive out the front entry. From there they drive to a pre-designated pickup zone, where a speeder descends and takes them up to a waiting Oberlindes trader, which jumps back to Regina and Oberlindes headquarters for a debriefing. There they will find out that Jingarlu officials on a goodwill visit to the prison were

slaughtered about the same time the player characters were making their escape, and Nebelthorn blames them as Imperial agents of the crime against all of Ruie. After some initial questioning, hault-Oberlindes believes the player characters, and rewards them accordingly, but of course there may be other agencies which are not so easily convinced…

Mr. Sirkiin. The players are briefed on the situation.

The Capture. The players are dropped off in Nebelthorn and proceed to be captured.

Finding Sergei. Sergei meets the new inmates.

Inside Help. An agent contacts them.

The Escape. A supply truck is scheduled to leave at an opportune time.

The Pickup. The rescuers are recovered.

Ruie (C-776977-7)

Ruie (Spinward Marches 1809) is a balkanized, industrialised, autonomous world, situated in the rimward-spinward corner of the Regina subsector in the Spinward Marches sector. Ruie is a medium-sized world, with a diameter of 11,000 km and a circumference of 34,000 km. It has a standard atmosphere, tainted by airborne biological contaminants, with a pressure of 0.90 atm, and a surface gravity of 1G. It has seas of water covering 60% of its surface. Its average temperature is 28°C, with a temperature change of -3°C per 1000 m elevation. A filter mask is required on the surface.

Ruie is in orbit 3 around a G5 V primary. It has a 25 hour day and is 150 million kilometres from its central star. The local year is 360 standard days. There is one small moon orbiting at a distance of 35,000 kilometres.
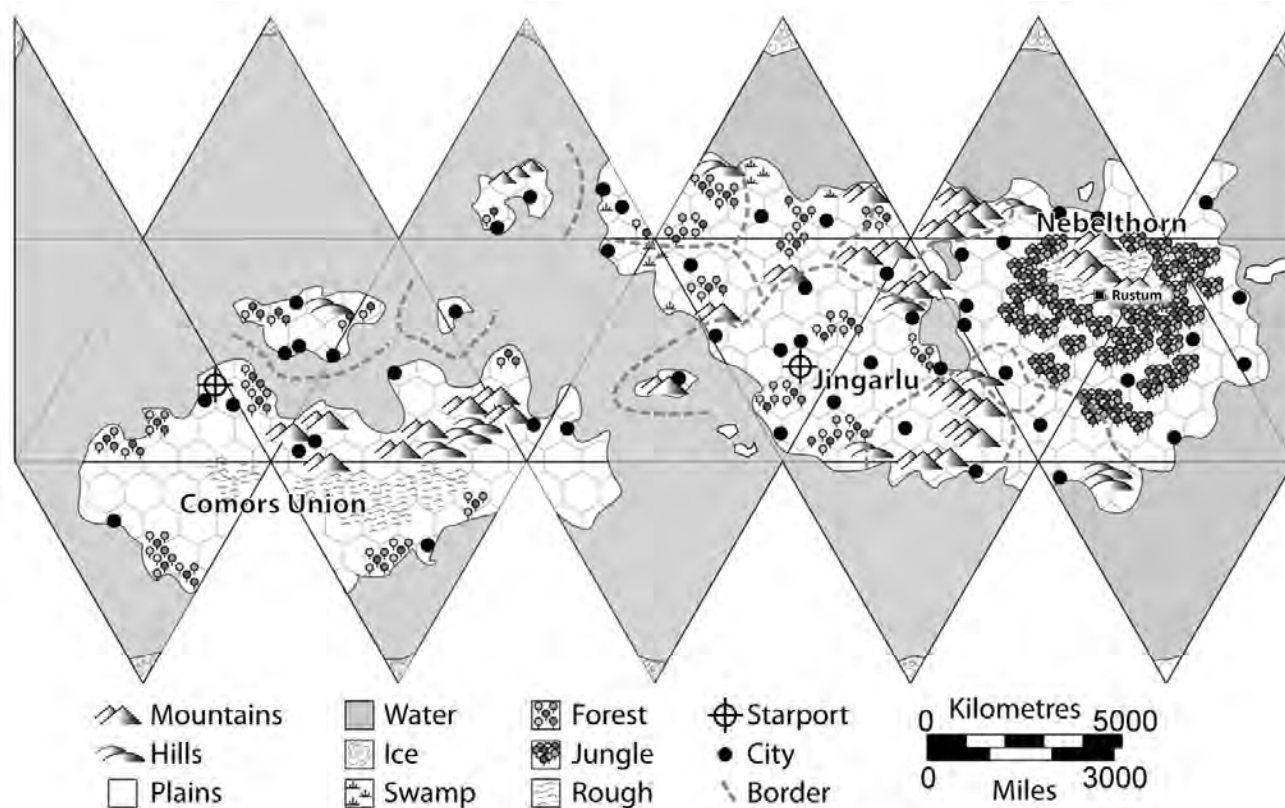
The planet has a population of 7 billion. It has four major states, and many smaller states; the most liberal countries are at best mixed regimes, and the possession of most firearms - including shotguns - is usually forbidden. Ruie's most advanced countries have technology equivalent to that of the semiconductor age.

Physical Description

Ruie's main landmasses consist of a single ocean with two continents and three major islands (of at least 1 hex in size). There are numerous small islands. The equator passes through two of the three largest land masses – a continent and the largest island. Both poles have small, fragile icecaps.

The current planetary configuration began forming 250 million years ago, with the separation of two plates which now form the Comors Union and the so-called "Western Plate", which is roughly equivalent to the western half of the main continent. The Union plate was forced west and south, while the Western Plate was forced east, colliding with a third "Eastern Plate" to form the current main continent, creating the high barrier Dekalu mountains in the north and south, and landlocked seas in the centre.

The largest continent (called Garan in Jingarlu, Tharon in Kanyarli and Chora in Nebelthorn), is divided into three regions by a largely north-south running mountain range. The Western region consists of tall, old-growth forest and wide savannas. The north-western region consists of forest, meadow, and marshland (although the latter has mostly been drained and converted to agriculture). The Eastern region is mainly jungle, with a continental-centre highland forest quickly giving way to lowland jungle, marching almost to the littoral zone of the eastern shores. The Eastern region's centre also has the Rustum mesa complex, the remains of an archaic highland, marked by hundreds of square kilometres of dramatic plateaux interspersed with overgrown badlands.

The Comors continent is divided into broad, wooded coastal regions, a rugged northern coastal badlands, and a central desert. To the east and west, the desert transitions into semi-arid plains until meeting a coastal region.

Navigable rivers include the Terssis River in Jingarlu, the Alanessi in Nebelthorn, and the Kamaris in West Comors.

Weather

Garan is primarily tropical. Its mountain ranges serve as a brake to moisture, but their central location in fact changes little about the weather. The northernmost latitudes are mild but humid, while the centre and southern portions are hot to say the least. At the equator the temperature can reach 50oC, while remaining uncomfortably

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humid. Temperatures in the mountain ranges are cooler, and the land tends to be less humid just over the Nebelthorn side. Hurricanes seasonally buffet the southern, eastern, and western coastline of Garan.

Comors has some tropical regions, especially along the equatorial coastline to the north, but tends to be dry in the interior; air currents will bring moisture eastward from the Western shore, which usually spends itself out before reaching the centre of the continent. The eastern coastline tends to have milder storms than the western; combined with a temperate climate, it enjoys some status as a vacation or retirement destination.

Northern and southern islands tend to have temperate climates, while equatorial islands tend to be warm. All have seasonally severe weather, except for those off the east coast of Comors.

Heat prostration is a danger in tropical parts of Ruie. Savannahs tend to be windy and warm, and occasionally experience dry periods. When dry, plant life in the savannah dies back, and the land is susceptible to blistering dust storms. Like the desert regions, heat prostration is the main danger to travellers.

Flora and Fauna

The predominant pattern: Larger life forms tend to exhibit radial symmetry, with little or no distinction between legs and manipulators. As in any environment, each life form has adapted to its niche in the local ecology, and each varies according to its nature and habitat.

The Sagley. These large carnivores support their 5,000 kg body with eight strong legs. Their brains are buried safely in their torso, which itself is covered with a tough, leathery skin. Four arms end in knobby, blunt, hornlike claws, which deal painful bludgeoning damage, while their feeding maws are ringed with sharp bone plates for cutting meat. They hunt in twos, subduing their prey by clubbing them unconscious and then unceremoniously eating them.

The Ersulan. These powerful flying scavengers mass 25 kilograms, and though they prefer to find their supper already dead, they are not above attacking smaller animals. They can be found singly and in small groups. Their bodies are covered in light, hairy feathers in all colours, and can actually be beautiful to look at. Some people of means have held these beasts in captivity – but it is more common to hunt them.

The "Scuttlers." These are fast, 8-legged jungle insectoids. Massing up to 5 kilograms, these creatures are hunted singly by Ersulan, but often travel in packs of 50 or more (2D6 x 10). If need be, they rely on overwhelming numbers to take down animals for food. Their normal speed is about that of a running human.

Countries with a population of at least 100 million.

Nation	Port	Pop	Government	LL	TL	Location
Staralka	X	1200	Republic	5	5	south Garan
Kayarlu	C	950	Monarchy	8	6	northwest Garan
Nebelthorn	C	900	Oligarchy	7	6	east Garan
Comors Union	C	650	Confederation	7	7	Comors
Jingarlu	C	350	Republic	7	7	west Garan
Chanoss	G	350	Bureaucracy	6	6	southwest Garan
Swemet	X	250	Dictatorship	8	5	Comors north island
Liruga	H	250	Charismatic Leader	5	5	north-central Garan
Showaj	X	200	Democracy	4	6	northwest Garan
Rukajan	X	150	Bureaucracy	8	5	northwest Garan
Orissali	G	120	Oligarchy	7	6	Cammet Island
Saeton	X	100	Theocracy	9	5	south-central Garan

Port: Starport or Spaceport quality.
Pop: Population, in millions of people.
LL: Law level.
TL: Technological level.

Ruakan Asthma. Ruie's atmosphere has been classified as tainted due to airborne spores, found in tropical regions of the planet, which can lodge in human lungs. Called Ruakan Asthma (or, more colloquially, Ruie Redspot), this malady manifests itself in offworlders (the locals are mostly immune) after failing a Strength check (Average, +0), and lasts for 2D days after leaving the world. The symptoms are a frequent, distracting dry cough; the sufferer takes a DM-1 penalty on all tasks. Without medical care, some Redspot infections will kill the host, leading through a grisly set of secondary complications ending in an explosion of new spores from the victim's chest cavity. An immunization regimen administered by the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service is available, although it requires 5 to 10 months of treatments and therefore is not used for short-term visits. Filter masks are 100% effective against contracting the malady, and wearing a mask after contracting Ruakan Asthma can hasten recovery; symptoms clear up 2D days after beginning to wear a filter mask.

Wearing a filter mask (or conversely, displaying symptoms of Ruakan Asthma) will generally mark characters as offworlders.

Social Description

Ruie is divided into about 150 separate nations. It currently has four major states: Jingarlu, the Comors Union, Nebelthorn and Kayarlu.

Jingarlu: Jingarlu lies on the western side of the continent of Garan. The nation is an authoritarian, unitary republic, with government lawmakers elected to office by representatives ("Caretakers") of the population. With Imperial ties, its economic future looks bright. Jingarlu has a tech level of 7.

Comors Union: The Comors Union is a TL7 group of states on the Comors continent united under one federal government, composed of a moot of elders from each state. Each subordinate state maintains its own government structure, but submits to the will of the federal government. They had originally united for common defence and global economic bargaining power. Recently, several states' economic instability and mounting debt has strained the union's ability to govern itself effectively; since member states are still sovereign, central controls are weak and old nationalisms are rearing their heads. Riots are common among the more troubled states, and markets are uncertain about the Union's future.

Nebelthorn: Most nations on Ruie are not interested in interstellar society. Some are openly hostile to the Imperium. One of these is Nebelthorn, a nation ruled by the same family for over 120 years (since before Imperial year 985). The rulers, the Family Eldenn, keep tight control over all offworld (and most international) contact, using various methods (nearly all distasteful) to discourage it. Nebelthorn's only notable resource is petrochemicals and the country prospered selling oil and related products to other industrial customers.

Following Imperial recontact, however, offworld merchants began selling fusion power systems and vehicles to Jingarlu and the Union, Nebelthorn's largest customers. This led to a sudden dearth of both customers and income, plunging Nebelthorn's economy into a depression which has continued for the last 12 years without signs of improvement. The Eldenns have blamed their plight on the Imperium, and their country has been posted as an Amber travel zone.

Kayarlu: Kayarlu, located in northwest Garan, lies within one of the oldest settled areas of Ruie. Its people tend to have insular attitudes about other nations, considering their culture to be superior in every respect. They encourage their tourism industry, thinking of it as a kind of therapy for outsiders, and tolerate foreigners with good-natured condescension. It is therefore not highly interested in affairs outside its borders, much less from other worlds.

Starports

Ruie supports four class C starports, in each of the four major nations. A few other nations have spaceports – essentially launch pads for putting up satellites. Each port is owned and operated by its own nation. There are no Imperium-owned starports or spaceports.

The largest nations have budgeted space programs, but until recently have only sent up communications satellites to Ruie orbit, and short-term survey satellites to the planets in their own system. The recent sale of small fusion-plus units and gravitics modules to certain governments proves likely to significantly change the nature of Ruie's various space programs.

History

The Daccam Ruins, located in Nebelthorn, are the site of an extinct alien culture which lived on Ruie over 100,000 years ago. 'Daccam' is the name of the early archaeologist-geologist to identify the ruins (and also to lose his life in the process; see the Sagley entry in the bestiary); hence many geological or ancient archaeological terms use a form of the word Daccam; for example, the Dekalu Mountain Ranges in central Garan and Cammet Island west of Garan.

The world was surveyed and settled at about the same time as Regina (accounts vary). The original colony, located in the northwestern part of Garan, was named Ruakh; hence many colonial indigenous terms use a form of the word Ruakh, such as

Ruga, or Ruakan (and perhaps even the name Garan). Its culture was structured as isolationist; presented with the opportunity to join the Imperium in 235, it declined and has remained an independent world since. All official contacts with the Imperium were dropped and in fact Ruie was later placed under interdiction by the Imperium, receiving regular visits to the system by Imperial naval vessels when interstellar tensions run high. Ruie had worked itself up to tech level 5 by the time it was recontacted by the IISS 31 years ago, in 1074.

INTRODUCTION

Ruie is a balkanized industrial world just 1 parsec from Regina (Spinward Marches 1910). A pre-interstellar mix of hostiles and friendlies, each nation is independent and protective. With a few exceptions, most governments have strict controls on their citizens.

About a year ago, Sergei hault-Oberlindes, Marc's 20-year-old son, landed on Ruie as part of a Grand Tour of the Marches, part learning the business and part pleasure. After several days in Jingarlu he heard of the Daccam Ruins, located in Nebelthorn. The Ruins are the site of an extinct alien culture of considerable interest to sophontologists.

Though warned of the Amber Zone travel classification, Sergei insisted on visiting them, and (through some devious means) obtained a visa. When he failed to return, the crew of his ship (employed by

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Primary Name: Ohrreit
Type: G5 V

List of Planets			
Orbit	Distance	Name	UWP
0	0.1 AU	(empty orbit)	
1	0.3 AU	Sustro	X300000-0
2	0.7 AU	Qorgon	X111000-0
3	1.0 AU	Ruie	C776977-7
4	1.6 AU	Peori	X505000-0
5	2.4 AU	Orissa	X310000-0
6	5 AU	Nustir	X705000-0
7	10 AU	Renli	LGG
8	19 AU	Mennet	X201000-0

The system consists of a G5 V central star and a total of 8 planets, one of which is a gas giant. There is no asteroid belt. Only orbit number 3 is in the system's life zone; the other planets have no signs of life. A few nations have conducted system surveys.

Oberlindes Lines) attempted to find out what happened, only to run into a blank wall of hostility and indifference from the Nebelthorn authorities. Requests for entry visas were denied.

Despite every effort by Marc Hault-Oberlindes, nothing more was heard for three months. At that time, Nebelthorn's ambassador to Jingarlu delivered an official communiqué to the Imperial consul in Jingarlu, informing him that Sergei hault-Oberlindes, an Imperial citizen, had been convicted of assaulting a member of the National Police and had been sentenced to 30 years hard labour. No further word was sent, letters to Sergei were returned, and all appeals and bribes refused.

By spending a considerable amount, Marc hault-Oberlindes did learn the following:

1. Sergei did, by Nebelthorn standards, receive a fair and legal trial for a genuine offense (he assaulted a cop). He signed a confession and pled guilty.

2. He is held in Rustum Prison, a maximum security institution. Marc hault-Oberlindes has obtained a map of the region around the prison, which sits atop a plateau deliberately kept clear of vegetation. He also obtained a map and recent photographs of the prison with various areas labelled.

Plan Of Adversaries

The Nebelthorn Bureau of State Security (BOSS) seeks to discredit the Imperium in the eyes of the governments of Ruie; in particular, they would like to put tension into the relationship between the Imperium and Jingarlu. Their plan is to put the characters into an escapable situation – helped by one of their agents – and to make sure the escape is not only successful but also messy. Needless to say, organising the inspection of the prison by Jingarlu representatives is a major part of their plan.

THE PROPOSAL

The players are contacted by a Mr. Adaamu Sirkiin, a senior aide of Baron Marc hault-Oberlindes of Feri, and the owner of Oberlindes Lines.

Mr. Sirkiin's office is on the 40th floor of a modern 100-floor building in downtown Credo (on Regina) with the words *Oberlindes Lines* emblazoned across its top. When he does business in person, it is from this room, behind a massive wood-and-leather desk. At other times, he may simply convey a holocube of his mission parameters to his workers. The cube has an embedded, specialised computer which not only projects an image of him giving his message, but also has just enough programming to be

able to respond intelligently to a very narrow scope of clarifying questions the players may ask. The Referee may use whichever method works best.

Mr. Sirkiin will deliver the details from the Introduction to the players, and record and transmit their agreement to Oberlindes headquarters. Once this is done, the characters will be given an Oberlindes family pass code, which will allow Sergei to verify they are indeed from his father.

Nebelthorn, while refusing a diplomatic solution, would love nothing better than to find out about Imperial citizens trespassing in their country. Mr. Sirkiin stresses the need for the characters to keep a low profile.

The elder hault-Oberlindes wants his son freed, regardless of the consequences. To assist on this, Mr Sirkiin has a surplus free trader (type A) fuelled and ready for the players to use. This ship cannot be traced back to *Oberlindes Lines* and is being provided as it offers a further layer of deniability.

At some point, the players may realize hault-Oberlindes certainly could probably have hired a small, specialised mercenary group to rescue his son, or (more likely) some of Oberlindes' own "special

services" men. The only reason to use the Player Characters is for deniability. This might make the players wonder if they are also expendable.

In line with deniability, the players will not be given anything that could trace them back to Oberlindes Lines, especially any weapons or armour. Mr. Sirkiin will arrange for an offworld kit to be cached a few hours' travel from the prison, including an orbital communications unit to allow the characters to notify the *Toronto Blizzard* they are ready for pickup.

THE GULAG

The Nebelthorn Rustum Prison is a gulag resting at the top of a plateau, rising above the lowland jungle, in central Nebelthorn. Its location is marked on the Ruie world map.

The two outer fences are approximately 15 meters apart.

A.   Administration building, single story
B.   Troop barracks, single story, for approximately 50 guards
C.   Cellblock C (500 prisoners), two stories
D.   Cellblock D (500 prisoners), two stories
E.   Cellblock E, single story, for females
G.   Guard towers

Not shown: There may be *inner* security fences. An access road, leading through front gates, opens through the fences north of the A and B buildings. The solitary confinement quarters are in a smallish basement bunker (essentially a dungeon) with poor light and poorer air circulation.

Unknown to the characters and not revealed in the information from Oberlindes are the details about the fences: All fences around the prison are electrified; the outer to 11,000 volts (enough to inflict 16d6 hits on an uninsulated person), and the inner fence charged only enough to incapacitate (2d6 hits per round per touch). The 15-metre strip between them is heavily mined (treat as fixed frag grenades from the *Traveller Core Rulebook*).

GETTING IN

The players will be delivered to (and from) Ruie by the *Toronto Blizzard*, a surplus Type A free trader – altogether ordinary except that its supplied crew are all skilled veterans of the Imperial military, loyal to hault-Oberlindes, and are capable of working well under stressful situations.

The characters, with possible help from Mr. Sirkiin or the *Toronto Blizzard*'s crew, need to decide how to get into the prison complex while in transit to Ruie. Creativity is encouraged. Some possibilities:

- Get "caught", on purpose. By far the easiest way to get imprisoned.

- Infiltrate, perhaps by stowing away aboard a supply truck, or hijack one. By far the easiest way to get killed.

THE CAPTURE

It is very easy to get captured. In fact, anyone captured near the prison will be confined there while their cases are handled.

The characters may be assigned the same or separate cells, and each is given a serial number and bright orange "inmate" clothing. They will be questioned, with the interrogator asking their names, where they came from, why they are here and so on. Cooperativeness will be noted on their records; as will belligerent talk, threats or suspicious answers. Especially unruly characters may be beaten up by other inmates (bribed by guards).

Ruakan Asthma. Inmates are not allowed filter masks, so it is possible that the player characters will start to come down with Ruakan Asthma. This could be used to help inject a sense of urgency to executing the escape plan.

Finding Sergei. Once inside, the players should have little trouble locating Sergei. An Oberlindes family pass-code can be used to verify the players' integrity. When questioning Sergei, the players will learn that he was imprisoned for striking a National
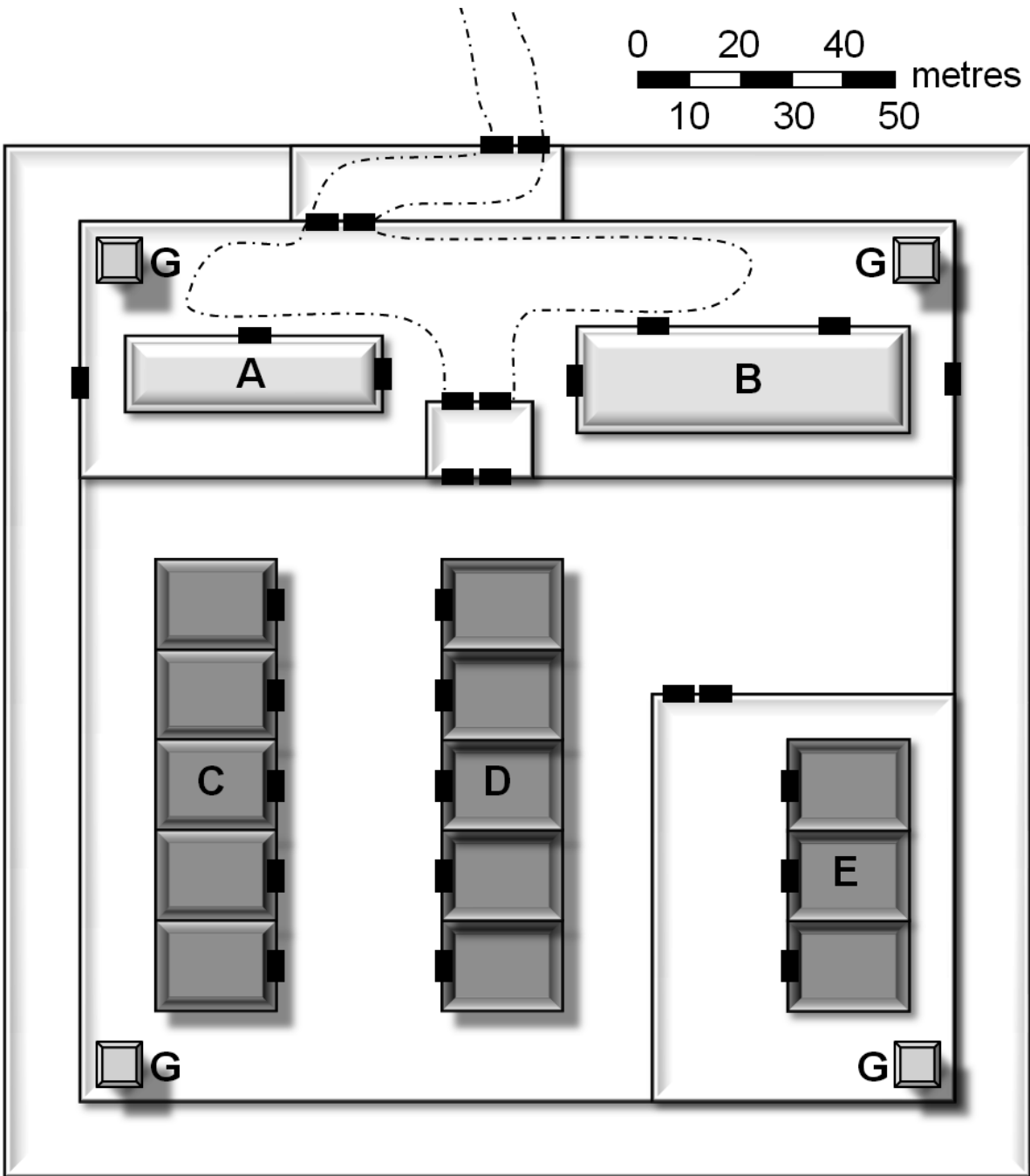
Policeman who had manhandled a girl (named Zinovia) Sergei met. She is also in prison, in the woman's cellblock in one corner of the compound.

Sergei can shoot and once an escape plan is decided upon and begun, he will demand a weapon. He will attempt to free Zinovia (he knows where she is) regardless of the odds.

The Routine. The prison routine is pretty simple. Prisoners are woken at 6 AM, fed a morning meal and then half are exercised around the fence, and then returned to the cafeteria for re-education time, and lunch. In the afternoon the half that are not exercising and re-educating are working on various prison projects, ostensibly to pay for their re-education and rehabilitation. In reality, the projects are generally whatever will make the prison warden more money.

Re-education in Rustum Prison takes on two forms. The first form is labour, where the inmate is making gravel by breaking large rocks into smaller rocks with a sledgehammer. The second form is propaganda and coercive persuasion, for the purpose of disrupting the prisoners' ability to organise.

Living conditions in the prison are harsh and frequently degrading. The prison is crowded, the food quality is low, and medical care is poor.

Mata Hari

The only non-suicidal way out comes via unexpected help: an attractive guard, named Marion Hannegan, knows how the prison works and what can best be exploited. The players can connect with her by trying to bribe a guard, but even if they do not think of this, everyone will know where they are from, and she will find them.

She will offer to help the players carry out their escape plan. If the players decide to bribe a guard, she will arrange it so that she is the one they contact. Otherwise she will pose as an agent from Jingarlu. She will offer help, including getting them access to a way out: the supply truck.

The supply truck arrives late every sixday afternoon and leaves several hours later, after dark. Marion knows these details, can arrange access to the truck, and might even provide them with a primitive communicator that can just reach orbital distance.

Just Walk Out. Alternately, it is possible that the players will think of using fake uniforms and a fake release order to escape. Oberlindes operatives can supply the materials and the procedure just might appear to work…

THE ESCAPE

Marion Hannegan will order the characters' "departure" so that it coincides with a visit by some low-ranking Jingarlu dignitaries, who are working a non-aggression accord with Nebelthorn, and as a show of good faith were permitted to inspect the prison to see how efficient and humane it is.

In reality, Hannegan is a loyalist agent, instructed by BOSS to insure that the escape is messy – even if she has to mess it up herself. A particular item on her list is to make sure the Jingarlu officials are killed and the Imperials are blamed.

Once the escape is underway, the prison is bound to be alerted, in which case the getaway will be dicey. She will offer to intercede in a manner similar to the following:

Marion: "They have us pinned down. I will go out there and take care of this."
Characters: "No, we can stop them ourselves." (If they are feeling heroic…)
Marion: "Stop worrying; I can talk to them."
Characters: "Okay, but be careful."
MH steps out, calls for the shooters to halt, goes over to them, and then mows them down with her SMG.
Marion: "There are more guards coming. You have to go, now!"
Characters: "Ok…"

Much later, the players can wonder if she had set up the whole situation. If Sergei insists on getting Zinovia (and he will if not unconscious or dead), Marion can assist in getting to her easily, as she will have arranged for her to be "waiting" for a special interview with the Jingarlu officials. Ms. Hannegan knows she and Sergei were arrested together and the circumstances of the arrest.

Assuming the players get behind the wheel of the canvas-backed supply truck, they will be discovered at the checkpoint just beyond the prison, and they will have a night chase shoot-out, pursued by a general-purpose light military vehicle down the plateau to the jungle floor. A number of TL 7 light SMGs* (2d6-2) stored in the truck will give them equal footing against their pursuers, and once dispatched they can proceed on foot to the designated pick-up point.

Alternately, if the players have procured fake uniforms and a fake release order (perhaps from Oberlindes), the BOSS agents will see through the attempt plainly, but will let the 'escape' happen, then chase after them once they have left, proceeding with the "gun them down" plan.

If Zinovia is given a firearm, she will shoot and kill Marion Hannegan as everyone leaves on the supply truck. She has figured out her BOSS connection, as she ordered her confinement to the interview room where the characters and Sergei would meet up with her. That gunfire, and the prison guard knowing that the escapees are killers (there IS a dead BOSS agent, after all), will mandate an all-out search for the characters, despite the darkness.

On The Outside

Once outside, they are on their own, and in fact the arranged rendezvous location with the *Toronto Blizzard* is not too distant from the prison. The few hours spent on foot (or in the supply truck) across rough jungle terrain in darkness provides an opportunity for some encounters. Please refer to the Flora and Fauna section for descriptions of the animals.

For convention events, some or all of these encounters may be eliminated for time needs.

Encounter 1: Sagley on the hunt.

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack
Sagley							
Hunter (omnivore)	Jungle Walker	24	3	21	0	8	6

Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Melee (horns/teeth) 1, Recon 1, Survival 2

Horns and Teeth (3d6), tough hide (2), number encountered: 2

Encounter 2: Ersulan feeding on a fresh kill.

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack
Ersulan							
Scavenger (carrion-eaters)	Jungle Walker	8	9	6	0	8	6

Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Recon 2, Survival 1, Melee (claws) 1

Claws (1d6), number encountered: 4

Encounter 3: Scuttlers on the run.

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack
Scuttler							
Scavenger (hijacker)	Jungle Walker	5	6	3	0	6	8

Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Recon 1, Survival 1, Melee (teeth) 1

Teeth (1d6), number encountered: 16

ENCOUNTER 4: RUINS UNDER A HILL.

The Doorway. You are standing in front of a low hill, overgrown with trees and underbrush, with regular protruding stones covered with lichens, ferns and fungus. A mudslide has partially uncovered a dark doorway leading into the hill; a carved glyph on a lintel is visible in muted blues and reds. Either Sergei or Zinovia will realise this must be the site of an undiscovered Daccamite ruin. In the distance, you hear your pursuers closing. The doorway cannot be cleared and opened before they arrive.

Back to Civilization. The pick-up point is a small clearing just east of the Rustum mesa complex, amidst the forest cover. An orbital communicator is in the cache hidden in a pre-arranged manner here, although Marion Hannegan will have provided a primitive one. They can make a call to the orbiting *Toronto Blizzard*, which will send down a speeder to pick them up and take them back to Regina.

CONCLUSION

Shortly after arriving at Regina, the players are brought into the Oberlindes administrative building, to deliver their report in person to Marc hault-Oberlindes. What they do not know is that Nebelthorn has been busy in the last week, and has used Marion Hannegan's report and actions to spin their own story. The discussion will probably go something like this:

Characters: "Well, Mr. Oberlindes, we rescued your son, and even his girlfriend, and made it out, no casualties."
Marc: "But the Nebelthorn press claims there were 42 gruesome deaths, including the commandant of the prison, AND a visiting diplomatic delegation from an Imperial-allied nation."
Players: "What?!?"

Of course, if Zinovia gunned Marion Hannegan down during the escape, (or she died in some other fashion), the only casualties will be those caused by the characters. Marc knows that the players were set up as pawns in a diplomatic game, and knows from Sergei what their conduct was like.

Marc hault-Oberlindes actually will apologize to the characters for the reward he can give them, but under the current diplomatic circumstances, as an Imperial noble he is limited; but his gratitude is enormous and he promises to assist them as best he can in the future.

Rewards are based on the following events throughout the adventure.

1) If Sergei and Zinovia are both rescued successfully (and Marion Hannegan is killed), the characters each gain two Contacts within Oberlindes Lines and six high passages (only good on Oberlindes Lines or allied carriers, which means Spinward Marches or Gvurrdon sectors, and they cannot be cashed in). In addition, Marc hault-Oberlindes gives each character Cr20,000, and the characters may buy one item of up to TL 12 worth up to Cr20,000 at Regina.

2) If Marion Hannegan lived, the characters are grilled by Imperial officials and bureaucrats; and do not gain the ability to buy an item of up to Cr20,000 at Regina (they still get the credits). In addition, all characters a Rival in the Imperial Secret Service, who will be ordered to keep an eye on them. Marc hault-Oberlindes will do a lot to take the pressure off the characters, so no other penalties are involved.

3) If Sergei was rescued, but Zinovia was left behind or died during the rescue, Sergei never forgives them for her death (or execution). Reduce the awards to only one Contact within *Oberlindes Lines* and only two high passages (as limited above). The rest of the awards (credits, buying one item and so on) are as above.

4) Regardless of the other conditions, all characters are convicted of murder and other crimes by Nebelthorn, and sentenced to death. If they return to Ruie, they will be watched by all nations, but if captured by Nebelthorn, they will be executed as off-world spies.

Appendix 1: Characters

Sergei hault-Oberlindes
Merchants 1
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 9 (+1), Soc 9 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Athletics (endurance) 1, Carouse 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2
Possessions None

Sergei hault-Oberlindes, the 20-year-old son of Baron Marc hault-Oberlindes of Feri, is currently held in a gulag in the nation of Nebelthorn on Ruie, serving a 30 year sentence for striking a member of the National Police. He is aware that his father will send assistance to get him released, but they must have the family pass code or he will have nothing to do with his rescuers. Even if they have the passcode he will not leave the gulag without Zinovia. He previously served in the Imperial infantry for 4 terms, then retired as a Captain to begin touring the Marches to learn the business.

Zinovia Camet
Citizen (worker) 1
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 10 (+1), End 6 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 10 (+1), Soc 8 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Advocate 1, Drive 0, Melee (unarmed) 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1
Possessions None

Zinovia is a -year-old Nebelthorn native who comes from a chain of islands off the coast of Jingarlu. Her family migrated to the continent to find work, and she studied law at a local university.

Marion Hannegan
Agent (intelligence) 5
Abilities Str 6 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 8 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 7 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Animals 0, Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Comms 1, Computers 0, Deception 2, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug carbine 2), Investigate 2, Medic 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Trade 0
Possessions Comm, TL 8 boarding SMG (3d6-1)*, TL 8 flak jacket (6)

Marion is a 38-year-old Special Agent working for the Nebelthorn Bureau of State Security (BOSS). She is as attractive as she is dangerous.

Adaamu Sirkiin
Army (infantry) 3/Cadre (field exercise leader) 2/Noble (diplomat) 4
Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 8 (+0), Int 12 (+2), Edu 11 (+1), Soc 10 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Admin 2, Advocate 2, Carouse 2, Comms 0, Deception 1, Diplomat 1, Explosives 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Instruction 1, Jack of All Trades 1, Leadership 2, Melee (blade) 1, Recon 1, Tactics (military) 1, Vacc Suit 0
Possessions TL 12 radio transceiver, TL 12 gauss rifle (4d6), TL 12 combat armour (14)

9-term Counsellor Nobleman to hault-Oberlindes, assigned to the players to assist them with mission details and planning. In his *official* capacity, he is in charge of a refitted Gazelle squadron purchased by Oberlindes Lines for route security. This character allows the Referee to guide the players as necessary, and to streamline their efforts towards getting jailed while also staying alive.

Jorac Talay
Navy (flight) 4, Sublieutenant
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 11 (+1), Edu 11 (+1), Soc 9 (+1)
Languages Anglic
Skills Astrogation 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Mechanic 0, Melee (blade) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Pilot (small craft) 2, Vacc Suit 0, Zero-G 1
Possessions TL 12 radio transceiver, TL 8 body pistol (3d6-3), TL 12 combat armour (14)

Pilot and CO of the *Toronto Blizzard*.

Khaalo (Chloe) Hariisi
Navy (engineering/gunnery) 3, Sublieutenant
Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 7 (+0), End 11 (+1), Int 9 (+1), Edu 11 (+1), Soc 8 (+0)
Languages Anglic
Skills Engineer (j-drive) 2, Engineer (m-drive) 1, Engineer (power) 1, Gunner 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Mechanic 0, Pilot 0, Vacc Suit 0, Zero G 1
Possessions TL 12 radio transceiver, TL 8 body pistol (3d6-3), TL 12 combat armour (14)

Engineer of the *Toronto Blizzard*. She is working for Oberlindes to repay an undisclosed debt.

JAMES WAH

Marines (star marines) 3, Captain

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 11 (+1), Edu 11 (+1), Soc 9 (+1)

Languages Anglic

Skills Athletics 0, Battle Dress 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Heavy Weapons 0, Melee (blade) 1, Stealth 1, Tactics 0

Possessions TL 12 radio transceiver, TL 8 body pistol (3d6-3), TL 12 combat armour (14)

Gunner and Security for the *Toronto Blizzard*.

RE-EDUCATION ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

Human Agent (Law) 3

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions autopistol (3d6-3), jack armour (1), TL 6 comm, TL 3 binoculars, truck (use ground car stats)

RE-EDUCATION ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Human Agent (Law) 2

Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 6 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 7 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions rifle (3d6), jack armour (1), TL 6 comm

Search teams from Nebelthorn's Rustum Prison will have one officer, and from one to seven other personnel per squad. When the prison is alerted to an escape attempt, three such squads will be sent out searching for prisoners, executing a standard search pattern. Only one such squad will have a vehicle; the others will be on foot.BOSS Re-education Officer

BOSS RE-EDUCATION OFFICER

Human Agent (Law) 3

Abilities Str 8 (+0), Dex 9 (+1), End 8 (+0), Int 9 (+1), Edu 9 (+1), Soc 8 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions body pistol (3d6-3), TL 7 cloth armour (3), TL 6 comm, TL 3 binoculars, jeep (use ground car stats)

BOSS RE-EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Human Agent (Law) 2

Abilities Str 7 (+0), Dex 8 (+0), End 7 (+0), Int 8 (+0), Edu 8 (+0), Soc 8 (+0)

Languages Anglic

Skills Comms 1, Computer 0, Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Streetwise 0

Possessions autorifle (3d6), TL 7 cloth armour (3), TL 6 comm

Better trained and better equipped, a single BOSS team will be sent after the players if Marion Hannegan is killed. Their instructions (not from the prison) are to leave no survivors.

A Helping Hand

By Timothy Collinson

A series of hooks which can have a group of Player Characters become involved with local communities. Although these are all non-profit making enterprises players should realise they do have the potential for improving relations with local communities, having friends is always a good idea for those who often live on the edges of society.

Mountain of Meaning

Not far from the starport is an unprepossessing mountain. It is barely a mountain and certainly not the highest in the vicinity, however, it is special to the locals who for centuries have been inspired by it to write poetry. Its natural surroundings, beautiful vistas and varied fauna all contribute to a place that is full of meaning for many who live nearby. Even those who might not write a word will be familiar with poems the mountain has inspired. Many take time to visit and pen their own verse and some even spend several months living on the lower slopes in basic accommodation – natural and locally sourced to capture the atmosphere of the place – in an effort to prompt the muses to strike.

The Player Characters are approached by a group, the Mount Ogotoy Protection Society, who are trying to clear up an unsightly dump of rubbish that has accumulated in one of the out of the way corners that is rather inaccessible by road. If they could just use their cargo hold to shift a couple of loads from the mountain to a proper waste disposal facility it would help enormously. The group will provide the labour of actually shifting the stuff (at both ends of the trip) although the players are welcome to help or supervise as they see fit. If pressed the Society have collected some donation money that would cover the minimal fuel costs but they wouldd rather use the money to post signage and run an awareness campaign to stop such dumping happening in the future.

If the Referee wishes to reward such a simple act of altruism, then one of the Society happens to be a wealthy businessman volunteering *his* time – it is tax deductible naturally – and is able to put the characters in touch with a trade deal or a contact of his. He fancies himself as something of a poet and the players will find it hard to escape his desire to recite his latest creation. However, his recommendations to his connections might be all the more positive if he feels particularly warmly disposed to the players! Alternatively, the ship's engineer spots a piece of what is thought to be a junk bit of refrigeration unit, which turns out to be a valuable jump drive component that could be sold quite easily for a healthy sum. What it is doing in the dump is anyone's guess. Whether the Player Characters decide to give the profit to the MOPS, share it, or take it for themselves is left to the players!

Doctor! Doctor!

Far from the main trade routes the news that one of the Player Characters is a trained (and skilled) doctor gets about. Ideally the doctor should have Medic-3 or more but it could be that the locals have completely over-estimated the Player Character's talents. Local TL is limited and medical facilities in the vicinity are basic to say the least. The landing site where the ship is berthed is hardly secure and the vessel is soon besieged by those for whom any kind of treatment would be a boon. How much the doctor can treat with the limited facilities at his or her disposal may become an issue involving much anguish. Triage – sorting those who can be reasonably helped from those who may be suffering more but who cannot be helped without more extensive facilities – may be an opportunity for the rest of the crew to help out if they are not engaged in trade or whatever mission has brought them to this backwater. Of course, it could be that their trade opportunities increase dramatically if they are seen to be doing their best to help. There may be no money to be had from some of those who are sick but it is heartbreaking to see what some of them offer in order to get help. It is left to the Referee and the ongoing needs of the campaign as to whether, say, one of those needing help could be saved from dying by making the trip to the ship's next destination. Or perhaps it is a child who is sick and an anguished parent pleading for help.

Players of a certain mindset might even plan ahead for this and equip a sickbay as a small surgery, carry extra supplies of medicines and even train in basic dentistry or eye surgery to maximise how much they can help in truly underdeveloped locales. See the *Traveller Core*

Rulebook pages 92-94 and *Supplement 4: Central Supply Catalogue* pages 166–169 for medicines and medical equipment.

A GRAND DAY OUT

Often it is the least well off and low prestige parts of a city that adjoin a starport. At one such location, a couple of teachers approach the players. They have planned a class outing to take a group of children on a day trip to orbit, giving them the opportunity to see what a real starship is like, experience zero-g and so on. They have been let down at the last moment by the company that usually arranges the trip and have tried a number of vessels in port to see if they could help but without success. The Player Characters' ship appears to be their last hope. The fact that one of the teachers is extremely attractive may or may not influence any of the characters. It is left entirely to the Referee as to whether the teachers are male/female, minor human race or alien.

This does not have to affect their ongoing efforts to find cargoes for their next destination or even their planned departure date as the school trip is so imminent – and the children have been looking forward to it for so long. It would be a pity to let them down at this late stage. One of the children's parents happens to work for the Starport Authority and, if the Referee allows, can get the port fees for the vessel's stay waived or significantly reduced.

If the Player Characters agree to help out, the teachers will make all the arrangements and even get loans of sufficient rescue balls for every child to meet with safety regulations. They will already have flight plans logged and approved and will pass to the players the planned itinerary. How much of this the Player Characters want to honour is up to them – although the teachers will hope for all of it – but might include a flyby of an orbital structure, a tour of the ship, a visit to the bridge, a sit in the captain's chair for each child and so on. How old the pupils are will have a significant effect on what events unfold and any roleplaying involved. The trip might be a complete milk run or something much more exciting could happen – perhaps another vessel in orbit has some problem and sends out a Signal GK message. Whatever transpires, the kids will be excitable and something of a handful even with their teachers on hand but they will have the trip of their lives. A little after these events mail will catch up with the Player Characters containing video essays inspired by the trip and profuse thank you notes.

A LICK OF PAINT

On a backwater world that sees very little traffic, the players and their vessel are surrounded not just by the local kids when they are not in their madrassars but sizeable numbers of adults as well. The players have been giving short tours of the ship to anyone who is interested. Many are – and they are enthusiastic as well. Of course, the fact that it does no harm to potential trading relations for the Player Characters is neither here nor there.

One of the locals, Suze Gibbeth, approaches the players with an offer. She has noticed the poor decor of their well worn ship and is willing to give the interiors a makeover – new carpets and a paint job. If the Player Characters' vessel is a large one, this might be limited to lounge areas and staterooms. Gibbeth is willing to do this for no cost because she wants to give her apprentices experience that will stand them in good stead for selling such services to future visitors. If the players look into it, they will find that she has a good reputation for her work amongst the locals. If the referee wants to add to the role-playing Gibbeth might suggest the carpeting 'at cost' – but with local exchange rates and prices this would be ridiculously cheap for the players.

If the players accept her offer a team of 20 or so young locals will descend on their vessel. All the necessary gear is piled up outside or, if the weather is inclement and the Player Characters willing, in a cargo hold. A certain amount of chaos will ensue for several days while staterooms are emptied – probably in rotation, any necessary preparation is done, paint is applied, carpets laid and so on.

They will do a good job, although there is plenty of opportunity for the Player Characters to be paranoid about that not being the case or losing cargo, ship equipment or personal possessions to theft or damage. Gibbeth will ask to take pictures of the completed work and also hope for testimonials from the characters. One surprise will be a mural painted in the crew lounge area that is a really fabulous piece of art and becomes a talking point for visitors for months afterwards. Gibbeth and team also present a beautifully woven rug to the adventurers on departure as a 'thank you' for the opportunity they have been given.

Old Flames

By Alex Greene

Romance is a part of almost everybody's life. Some people starve for the want of it. Others find the opposite problem: a wish for solitude and personal space.

The following Non-Player Characters became romantically entangled with a character. In some cases, these Non-Player Characters managed somehow to move on with their lives: in other cases, they still carry a torch for the character with whom they were involved. That torch can easily be a raging obsession, placing the character's (and the Non-Player Character's) life in danger.

Referee Note: Gender and Age

The Non-Player Characters presented here are a mix of genders. That is not to say you cannot mix and match the Non-Player Characters presented. The Jilted Lover below can as easily be a man ditched at the altar by a female (or, indeed, male) character. The names can be swapped around, so Shiimi Kushaami can be the name you give to the Childhood Sweetheart or the Lonely Heart.

Finally, each Non-Player Character can be different to each member of the crew: a Patron to one, a Rival to another … even a new romance to a third crewmate.

The Non-Player Characters' ages range from between 3 – 5 terms; this presumes the characters muster out at between 3 and 6 terms. If the characters are older, adjust the Non-Player Characters' ages and skills accordingly. Do not bother with their aging rolls until after play begins.

Alternatively, these Non-Player Characters could be younger people whom the characters met later in their careers, so leave them unmodified. Do not be afraid of the age gap. It is a potential source of friction: and for a Referee, friction generates adventures.

Format

Each Non-Player Character has the following format.

Title: A short summary of the Non-Player Character, along with the Non-Player Character's name, and any nicknames or pet names the Non-Player Character was known by.

Description: The Non-Player Character's appearance, history and possible secrets for Referees only.

Involvement: This section details how the Non-Player Character can become significant in the character's life again as an Ally, Contact, Rival, Enemy or Patron.

Left In The Lurch: Shiimi Kushaami, The Jilted Lover

Description: Already a physically imposing woman when she was involved with the character, Shiimi is now positively Amazonian, with ripped musculature and a severe blonde crew cut. There is a steely gaze in her grey eyes that was never there before. Imagine Brigitte Nielsen in Imperial Marine fatigues, and you get the picture.

This is the old flame whom the character dumped one night, after a romance that had been the talk of the community. She and the character had been all set for marriage; had even set the date. Nobody expected the character to leave her waiting.

It is up to the player how the character came to abandon Shiimi. Perhaps he got cold feet. Or a Rival told the Draft Board where the character would be, or slipped Fast Drug into the character's drink before locking him into a cold berth on a long Jump out system. Perhaps he got an offer he simply could not refuse, if only he would leave immediately.

Involvement: Not long after being left in the lurch, Shiimi joined the Marine Corps "to forget." There, she discovered her true love: her unit and the Corps. Shiimi's career in the Corps has been exemplary. She specialises in Commando and Striker actions, receiving two Purple Hearts and an MCUF to date.

As an Ally: An exemplary Marine, she wants the character to know there are no hard feelings – the severance proved to be the best thing for her. In any fight, she has his back.

As a Contact: Shiimi can never forgive the character, and will not speak to him directly – but she can understand what drove him away. She has come to understand that part of the fault was, indeed, hers. She had been too clingy. Life in the Marines had cured her of that weakness.

Shiimi will not help directly but she will pass on information useful to him, perhaps in a manner intended to induce guilt pangs in the character.

As a Rival: It was Shiimi who had arranged to recruit the character into the Draft, or had arranged for his involuntary voyage in a cold berth. The cold feet were hers. A career in the Marines was imminent and there seemed no way to let the character down, hence the charade.

As an Enemy: Shiimi wants the character to feel alone and deserted, as she once had been. And then she wants the character to know nothing but pain.

As a Patron: Shiimi approaches the character while she is on leave. She explains her sister has been kidnapped and is being held to ransom. She wants to tag along in any rescue attempt, and she knows the character will help because her sister is still a good friend of the character (an Ally). All debts are cleared anyway but if the character accepts he gains Shiimi as a very capable Ally.

Blast from the Past: Timothy Trohe, The Ex-Boyfriend

Description: He has put on a little extra weight since the relationship but his tousled sandy hair, the wicked gleam in his eyes and his million-credit smile – they have not changed.

Neither the character nor Timothy know how the relationship ended. But both agree on *when*. Rhylanor Highport, six months ago. You got on one ship. Timothy got on another. Neither of you looked back. Neither of you needed to: the romance had been good for both parties, but it had run its course and both knew it.

Involvement: This is a chance encounter. Or is it? The character could be in the middle of an adventure, at a tense moment, when Timothy appears seemingly out of nowhere. Or a comms call arrives unexpectedly from Timothy in a quiet moment.

If the character was an Agent or a Rogue, the character may even bump into Timothy in a police station, languishing in a holding cell.

As an Ally: Timothy became involved with a band of Drifters, roaming through space. They are his family and a good friend of his is a good friend of theirs.

As a Contact: Timothy always was an expert social networker, and he always has useful, or at least entertaining, information for the character.

As a Rival: He was never satisfied with the ending of the relationship and now Timothy wants to show the character he still has what it

takes to be a good partner. He will not take no for an answer. It may require stronger measures to shake him.

As an Enemy: The break-up had not been good. Timothy has never come to terms with the split and now seeks closure through violence.

As a Patron: Time has not been good on Timothy. All the old mannerisms the character once thought endearing now seem crude; almost childish. However, he has an interesting lead on an old medical ship that crashed two parsecs from here, and he is looking for people to join him on a little expedition he has been hired to undertake, under the impression that it may have been carrying a cargo of expensive anagathics. Along the way, he may even attempt to rekindle the romance. If he is rebuffed, he may decide to strand the character and any associates.

Puppy Love: Farah Culver, The Childhood Sweetheart

Description: She was the first one. The character's first ever romance. The character still remembers her auburn ringlets, and the dimples in her cheeks when she smiled; fondly recalls sharing Chroma sodas, going to see movies and kisses stolen on long, romantic walks under the moons. But then high school drew to a close, and Farah and the character sadly parted company to go to different colleges.

And now she is here, staring at the character. She is the one wearing the badge; the character is the one in cuffs.

Involvement: Farah can turn up any time the character falls afoul of the Law. The character's past misdeeds have somehow caught up with him, and it is Farah who has the pleasure of apprehending and charging the character. Personally.

As an Ally: Farah remembers the character fondly. If the character has not left a trail of bodies behind him, she will pull strings to get the character let off. Once. And that is all she can do. If the character *has* carved a long, unsanctioned swathe of broken corpses behind, there is little she can do except to arrange for a more comfortable prison cell and, perhaps, a few privileges.

As a Contact: Farah arrested the character on a trumped-up charge. She needed the character taken out early, because her agency is planning on raiding the establishment where the character was due to meet their Patron that night. After the raid, she will let the character go without charge.

As a Rival: Farah is working a sideline moonlighting for her agency's opposition, and has discovered the characters are after the same thing she is. Her Patron has ordered the character's death; she convinced her employer incarceration is a far more satisfying means to get the character out of the way. If the employer tries to go behind Farah's back, she will change her tack and spring the character from prison, rather than let him get murdered. She at least owes him this.

As an Enemy: Farah cannot believe how far the character has fallen. Sickened by his depravity, she will walk away and only reappear once again in the character's life – as a witness at his sentencing.

As a Patron: Farah has the character over a barrel. She will let him go free, if he can provide her with information vital to her enquiries. That means undercover work infiltrating a dangerous criminal or terrorist group. From now on, the character will be on a very short leash.

Admired From Afar: Doran Marshak, The Unrequited Love

Description: This is the weedy little boy who sent anonymous Lover's Day cards to the character in school but whom the character never even knew was there. Then everybody grew up. The character became a Traveller; the nerd became a billionaire and secured Naval and Scout contracts to supply their vessels' computers with the latest software.

He is now losing his hair, and he has gained some weight; but he never forgot the character, nor what the character meant to him.

Involvement: Doran had a stammer in school; it plagued him constantly. Since he grew up, he learned to overcome his deficiencies and became an urbane and sophisticated public speaker; except when the character appears. Then the old stammer resurfaces once again.

As an Ally: Doran will help get the character a cut price deal on computer software. He can even arrange for a copy of some Intrusion software to fall into their possession, from the days of his wild youth in the Rhylanor Irregulars, a group of hackers and chaoticians.

As a Contact: Doran owes the character one, for that one time the character helped him out in school. All the character did was take the blame on Doran's behalf for hacking into the school computer and altering some grades; but Doran feels that this is a debt that he can never fully repay.

As a Rival: The character has made good use of his own Computer skill, and Doran would like to learn the secrets of coding the character never revealed.

As an Enemy: Doran actually stole most of the character's secrets one drunken night. The character must expose Doran as the copyright thief he is or Doran will make billions more and the character will languish in ignominy for the rest of his life.

As a Patron: Doran is aware of a bug in the software of an experimental stealth Naval ship currently on her shakedown cruise somewhere in the subsector. He needs the characters to locate this ship, board her and supply its commanding officer with the patch before it Misjumps, or before the flaw triggers a lethal radiation surge from the power plant that will fry the crew.

Casual Encounter: Viriada, The One Night Stand

Description: It was the wings. The character could never get past his (her?) wings, their downy, feathery, fractal texture and iridescent sheen. They were functional, too, in a dense atmosphere or under low gravity. Hairless, with translucent bluish skin and golden eyes, Viriada's odd appearance and supernatural poise exuded a strange, compelling allure the character found irresistible. It was a brief encounter, and Viriada had literally flown the coop by morning. But it had been unforgettable.

Involvement: Viriada is an unknown. Is she a genuine alien, or a far-flung member of an uplifted offshoot human species whose homeworld is, so far, undiscovered? Viriada will say nothing of his or her past, race or homeworld. Viriada is a mystery, and her motive for involving the characters again should be just arcane as she is.

As an Ally: The alien race of whom Viriada is a member has been discovered. Viriada offers to act as a guide to the natives in the characters' First Contact efforts.

As a Contact: Viriada can contact the character for any reason: to provide useful information, or to give a warning – or simply to offer a cryptic, seemingly meaningless piece of advice that turns out to be essential to cracking a puzzle the character was working on. Viriada never explains her motives. Ever.

As a Rival: The characters are on a job to track down an alien temple. The complication arises when it transpires the temple is sacred to Viriada's species, and it is taboo for outsiders even to set

foot on the planet on which it is based. Viriada will do anything possible to stop the characters, even calling upon strange and arcane alien Psionic abilities not listed in the *Traveller* core book, such as pheromones that alter behaviour or telepathic memory erasure, or even some exotic power such as time travel.

As an Enemy: Viriada's species has declared her an outcast. The act of mating outside of one's species is taboo and distasteful. Viriada blames the character for his indiscretion in boasting about his assignation with Viriada within earshot of another member of his species.

As a Patron: Viriada's reappearance surprises the character. Viriada asks the character if he can undertake a simple task, which at first blush seems incomprehensible; perhaps to retrieve an item which is locked in a sealed underground vault, or to arrange for the placement of seven large menhirs in a certain configuration in the local municipal park overnight.

Viriada's request has a purpose: perhaps her species is claustrophobic and the item is sacred to her people, or the park menhirs will open a portal to his homeworld in another dimension, allowing Viriada to go home at last – or to launch an invasion of his kind.

Looking for Love: Martha Goodge, The Lonely Heart

Description: Martha runs a small tailoring business in a respectable part of town not frequented by Travellers. She is visiting Startown looking for a brief liaison with one of these "dangerous" Traveller types she has heard so much about.

Involvement: Martha's interest in the character is casual. She has fantasies about being swept off her feet by a pirate captain or adventurer. However, in the morning, she always returns to her one true love – her tailoring business.

With the advent of high tech desktop tailoring, virtually anybody can turn out clothing for themselves. What makes a really good dress or suit stand out is the tailor's eye for style, not the equipment. Fashion has returned to the individual and mass-produced designer labels have gone the way of phlogiston chemistry and phrenology. Martha's eye for good material and the aesthetics of clothing design have taken her far, and made her a lot of useful Contacts.

Nonetheless, Martha is fascinated by the Traveller way of life and secretly longs to join them. If she did not have the responsibilities of a house, a seven year old son and a business with three subordinates, she probably would.

As an Ally: Martha can pull some strings to kit out the characters with good quality ship's jumpsuits or specialised outfits at bargain prices. She can get them flak jackets, or sew concealed pockets into their garb, and she can get it for them wholesale.

As a Contact: Martha can be pumped for essential information concerning her associates. All the character has to do is just go out on one little date with her. What could possibly go wrong?

As a Rival: Martha hears that the characters are protecting the interests of a Patron who is her competitor. She will attempt to inveigle her way into the character's good graces in order to sabotage the character's efforts to complete her contract with the Patron.

As an Enemy: Martha is secretly working for a faction which the character seriously inconvenienced in the past. Once Martha gets close enough to the character for intimacy, she intends to kill the character and plant evidence framing an innocent whom the character's associates consider a friend. Her real traits are:-

As a Patron: Martha is not that interested in the character beyond casual intimacy, nor in the Travelling life per se. However, she has a younger sister Aloicia (Citizen, 30) who makes no secret of wanting to join a crew and taking to the stars. If the character takes Aloicia on and teaches her some of his skills, she becomes a valued member of the crew and Martha can supply the characters as for Martha as Ally. This is all about responsibility for those who depend on the character and as Referee you should only offer this option to a player you know will enjoy the challenge.

SHIIMI KUSHAAMI, THE JILTED LOVER

Shiimi Kushaami	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
35	Marine (4)	8	8	9	8	8	7
Athletics (endurance) 1, Battle Dress 1, Explosives 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2, Mechanic 0, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (unarmed) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Zero-G 2, Vacc 1							

TIMOTHY TROHE, THE EX-BOYFRIEND

Timothy Trohe	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
41	Drifter (5)	6	7	6	7	8	6
Admin 1, Carouse 2, Deception 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Melee (blade) 2							

FARAH CULVER, THE CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART

Farah Culver	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
35	Agent (4)	8	8	9	7	9	9
Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computers 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Interrogation (doubletalk) 1, Investigate 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2							

DORAN MARSHAK, THE UNREQUITED LOVE

Doran Marshak	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
40	Scholar (5)	6	9	6	13	14	6
Admin 1, Art (holography) 1, Broker 1, Comms 1, Computers 4, Remote Operations 1, Science (electronics) 1, Science(computers) 3, Sensors 1							

CASUAL ENCOUNTER: VIRIADA, THE ONE NIGHT STAND

Viriada	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
39	Mystery (5)	10	14	12	15	13	5
Athletics (co-ordination) 3, Athletics(flight) 3, Art (dance) 2, Carouse 1, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 1							

LOOKING FOR LOVE: MARTHA GOODGE, THE LONELY HEART

Martha Goodge	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
34	Citizen (4)	5	7	7	8	8	8
Admin 1, Advocate 1, Broker 2, Carouse 1, Drive (wheeled) 1, Persuade 2, Trade (tailoring) 3							

Martha Goodge	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing
34	Agent (4)	8	8	9	10	11	9
Deception 3, Melee (knife) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 2, Trade (tailoring) 2 (the tailoring business is a cover, and she really is good at it)							

A Friend in Need

By August Hahn

Patrons for Traveller

The galaxy is really big. There are hundreds upon thousands of known worlds, many of them explored to some degree or other. From balls of rock to gas giants, corporate colonies to toxic jungle worlds, they all have one thing in common. No matter where people go they always have needs. Some are small and easily handled. For the bigger tasks a helping hand is sometimes required. Need and conflict are the driving forces behind adventure. Conflict creates itself once players get involved.

Need is what patrons are for. A patron is anyone or anything with a direct need and the means to both communicate that desire to others and a way to reward them for the task's completion. This can be as simple as a gourmand ordering a meal and paying for it or as complex as a distraught noble hiring freelance operatives to infiltrate a war zone and rescue his captured son from an enemy stronghold. Patrons provide both the source of an adventure and the benefit for undertaking it.

This article series will more patrons in future issues, providing all the background needed to incorporate them into an existing campaign and the details required to use them in several different ways. Patrons may not always be forthright or even honest in their dealings with players but in every case they serve to get the ball rolling on a great adventure!

Ashton Ramsey, Human Scientist/Researcher

Requires: Life Sciences (any), Space Sciences (xenology), Sensors, Personal ship

Rewards: Cr. 10,000 + 1,000 per new life form catalogued and accepted. This is the limit of Ashton's grant. He is useless at bargaining so his initial offer is also his highest and final offer.

Player's Information: When the players meet Ashton they are not likely to be terribly impressed. His clothes, while decent, look lived in and hard worn. His pleasant face is haggard from intensity and lack of sleep. He is down to his last few personal credits and desperate enough to seek help from just about anyone – even the players themselves.

His first mission for the players is fairly straightforward. He seeks passage to a mostly uncharted system and physical support while he catalogues the life present on that system's seven worlds. He has been here before and had his funding cut, forcing his withdrawal. He has managed to convince his superiors to pay for a new expedition. All he needs is a crew willing to take him to the New Eden system and provide back up if any of the indigenous species prove dangerous.

His sales pitch may be less than enthralling but his money is good and his backers are beyond reproach. He works for one of the most advanced and influential scientific centres in the known galaxy (the specific organisation, be it a university, agency or corporation, is entirely up to the Referee). Their reputation is golden and if they agree to pay, that is a promise that can literally be taken to the bank. The job may be rough but there is guaranteed reward in exchange for their hard work and success.

Referee's Information: Ashton Ramsey is a xenologist with a mission. One might go so far as to call it an obsession. His backers pulled support for his last trip into space after his ship's command staff, what was left of them, expressed reservations over the escalating slaughter of the crew by Ashton's ever-more 'aggressive' discoveries. Forced to abandon his field work early, Doctor Ramsey has been consumed by the need to go back to New Eden and finish what he started.

On the surface, Ashton Ramsey seems like a driven but very competent scientist and his mission has clear terms and set rewards. Of course, what would life be without some complications?

d6 Result	Complication
1	In this case, life would be simple, professional and profitable. There are no hidden directive and no private agenda. The players may spend the entire time wondering what the catch is but in this case, the catch is that suspicion and panic might be the most dangerous elements of the entire mission. Making one's patron nervous is one thing. Making him nervous while he is working out how to contain a dozen ravenous blood-lizards for transport is quite another..
2	Ashton Ramsey may be honest and forthcoming but his backers are not. While they do have a reputation for honesty and integrity, that public image is one they have bought with years of black operations, wet work and the best image firms credits can buy. During this mission, they do not have a hidden agenda but their liaison, Ramsey's assistant Marya, is a covert agent with orders to judge the players for future 'possibilities'.
3	On Ashton's first trip to New Eden, the most dangerous life form he discovered was a reptilian killing machine, called a Riptalon by the mission's survivors. While he considers the discovery files closed on Riptalons, his backers and their military contacts feel otherwise. After reaching New Eden, the nominal leader of the players is approached via private communication with an offer. Bring back a breeding pair of Riptalons and earn 10,000 additional credits. The only condition is that Doctor Ramsey cannot know anything of this side operation.
4	Ashton's an honest man but the players are not the first group he has approached with this offer. The last crew, dishonest and mercenary to the core, has been watching the good Doctor since they turned him down. They do not want anything to do with his pointless mission but they *do* want his extremely expensive scientific equipment. When he goes to transport it onto the players' ship, they will be there, weapons in hand.
5	Doctor Ramsey is just a little more unstable than anyone suspected. Once the players arrive in New Eden, he will begin his work as normal. Hyper-sensitive to any sign that the players might be considering abandoning the mission, he is not above taking a more direct hand in ensuring that their ship does not leave the system. Just how 'direct' is entirely based on how the players have behaved and how they have treated him up until his little psychotic break.
6	Unbeknownst to anyone, even the scientists of Doctor Ramsey's home organization, one of the worlds of New Eden is inhabited by a sentient species. That race managed to remain hidden during his first visit but his presence was extremely distressing to them. Mistaking his scientific investigation as scouting for an alien hostile force, they have spent the entire time since he left preparing for a possible invasion. This should make for a rude surprise when the players arrive…

THE RIPTALON
(as excepted from Traveller: Animal Encounters)

Behaviour and Diet	Preferred Habitat	Movement Mode(s)	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack
Intimidator, Carnivore	Forest, Jungle	Walker	18	15	14	2	12	3
Skills:	Persuade 0, Deception 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Athletics (endurance) 1, Recon 2, Melee (claw) 2							
Attacks:	Teeth and Claws (2d6)	Armour: Scales and Hide (3)	Number Encountered: 1d6					

As brilliant as they are deadly, Riptalons are a fully reptilian, larger analogue of the velociraptor. As far as behaviour is concerned, their intelligence makes them hard to classify. They are technically intimidators only because it is their preferred method of 'hunting' to let others do the hard work of downing prey and then driving them away from their meals. This is only a generalization, however. They are fiercely intelligent, have been known to kill for pleasure and enjoy chasing prey before a kill.

BALANCING THE BOOKS

BY ALEX GREENE

KEEPING YOUR SHIP'S FINANCES STRAIGHT

Introduction

One of the more intriguing aspects of *Traveller* is the section on speculative trade. Through trading, a Traveller can venture his way to prosperity, or just as easily become desperate for cold, hard credits in a big way, with the wrong cargo sitting, unsold and unsellable, in his ship's cargo hold. But what about the art of keeping that ship financially afloat?

This article takes a look at the finances keeping ships flying. It looks at the role of the Purser, examines ways crews can create a group identity in financial terms, describes the three master budgets comprising the "books" at the heart of finances, and considers how players and Referees can work to keep the ship's records consistent throughout the campaign.

AUTOMATED ACCOUNTING

Players may want to consider using a spreadsheet program to keep track of their characters' finances on computer. A number of useful financial templates exist, available online for free.

> **Apology:** This article, while by no means an exhaustive look at finances, does dabble in the "off switch" words of commerce and finance that cause most people's eyes to glaze over.
>
> Referees and players who are more of an adventurous bent, who want their games to be full of exciting combat and conflict, may look away now. This article is for those players who love the *Traveller* trade rules and who may want to keep track of the ship's money from adventure to adventure, even to the point of maintaining the accounts during downtime.
>
> Of course, players who are already experienced in handling finances may consider this article somewhat simplistic. This is not for you anyway. It is for new players inexperienced at book keeping and running finances.

The Purser: Keeper Of The Purse Strings

The Purser's job might not seem glamorous compared with the roles of Pilot or Gunner, but in the long term, a Purser's role is vital for the ship.

Traditionally, the character with the highest Admin or Steward skills takes on the role – on larger ships the Purser is the senior Steward and is responsible not only for the Stewards under his care, but also for the payrolls of every member of the crew and the ship's books.

On board a free trader, the role may be entirely unofficial, and falls to the character with the highest Admin and Steward skills. Remember player character crews whose ships take on passengers, and who have not allocated space for luxuries, need Steward skill to keep them entertained – see Steward skill, *Traveller Core Rulebook*, page 58). The Purser gains the keys to the Ship's Locker and is thus in charge of the disbursement of equipment to crew and passengers alike, whether they are weapons or luxuries.

DEN MOTHER

The life of a free trader is centred around its common areas – the crew mess and the passenger common area. Here, crew and passengers mingle and bond together. Stewards have the responsibility for preparing the most frequent shared activities – meals.

The ability to cook is welcomed on a ship in Jump, where boredom can be rife. The ability to cook well, to provide an entertaining experience for crews and passengers, is cherished. The Purser is in charge of many budgets, including the purchase and storage of the raw consumables comprising the ship's meals. A Purser who cares for his ship may well seek out the local markets during planet fall, looking for foodstuffs – fresh vegetables and fruits in particular – with a long shelf life.

The Purser's main work during flight is to keep everyone entertained, which could involve a wide variety of activities, including:

- Games of Chance: Depending on the size of the ship, anything from running poker sessions in the passengers' mess to betting pools, right up to running a dedicated casino with a string of croupiers, security staff and others.
- Contests: These could range from backgammon or chess tournaments, shuffleboard or quoits, talent contests, cosy Murder Mystery games and holographic gladiatorial combat games through to an actual on board boxing match with a dedicated ring, publicity ("The Mauling In The Marches") and, of course, a running book and a heavy purse for the winner.
- Concerts: Performing artists travelling with the ship could be persuaded to give a performance for the passengers and crew in lieu of actually paying the ship any money for passage. A lot of unsigned bands sign up for such working passage; a canny Purser can usually arrange for a manager, talent scout or publicist to fly with the ship at the same time as part of the arrangement.
  The ship gets entertained in flight, the Stewards do not have to work so hard and the band gets a captive audience to make its pitch to sign for a label. Some unsigned bands come with their own fans, booking flights just to be near their favourite acts. This means security, drafting in Stewards as roadies, arranging supplies of drugs, green candies and so on.
- Fashion: The ship becomes a catwalk for the latest fashions.
- Exhibits: If a ship's Master is known to own a rare and valuable piece of art, sometimes a passenger will book a flight just so they can see that artwork, whether it is a Dali painting all the way from Earth, the last manuscript of the famed alien author and playwright Alechrin or a genuine Szabo living tattoo writhing across the Captain's back.
- High Profile Passengers: Sometimes, the rarity is another passenger; a comedy legend, a famous after-dinner raconteur, the author of a notorious kiss-and-tell autobiography full of scandal or similar. As with the performing bands above, these passengers could pay their High Passage cost in total simply by turning up and saying a few words. Other passengers can pay a high price on board ship for the privilege of sitting at the Captain's table alongside such famous guests.
- Sublegal Entertainments: Large and small passenger vessels alike operate in Jump. While illegal drugs, psionics, pleasure robots and certain adult trades might be frowned upon planetside, in Jump space, a region far outside the jurisdiction of governments, such illegal commodities and activities cannot be prosecuted.

Pursers may find themselves running a number of illegal onboard rackets, sometimes quite openly, because if the passengers must indulge, for the safety of the ship it makes sense to arrange for a controlled environment for such activities, to ensure passengers do not end up overdosing or endangering the ship or the other passengers.

This may include running a line of "companions" or "comfort staff," living and robotic, whose trades (like the trades practised by Larry Niven's Halrloprillalar and Firefly's Inara Serra) use skills not listed on the *Traveller* character sheet.

FINANCIAL AND OTHER BURDENS

Planetside, in addition to taking care of replenishment of food and luxury supplies, the Purser has two further duties. First, he is in charge of the basic administration of the ship's finances, such as paying the berthing and warehousing fees and taking the monthly mortgage payments to the bank and submitting annual returns to the authorities, detailing the ship's financial situation over the previous year.

And second, the Purser is the public relations face of the ship, interacting with the outside world, acting as the ship's diplomatic representative, passage booking office and arbiter on which cargoes, and passengers, to allow onto the ship.

Lastly, the Purser is in charge of the most important crew duty of all – the crew payroll. Monthly, the Purser is in charge of each crewman's wages; at the end of the financial year, the Purser works out how much each shareholder in the ship receives in dividends and bonuses.

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

On board a free trader, there might only be one crewman with Steward skill to entertain the passengers and hold the keys to the Ship's Locker, while the ship's Master runs the books. Larger ships, ranging from the 800-ton subsidised liners to the colossal 20,000 ton and 50,000 ton superliners and 100,000 ton ultraliners, have more passengers, which necessitates a department of dedicated, qualified Stewards with the Purser designated as the head of that department, answerable directly to the ship's Master.

The Stewards' department is subdivided into a number of smaller sections:

- Administration, which runs the accounts and holds the purse strings;
- Auxiliary Vessels, the Stewards who travel with the ship's boats;
- Cargo, the teamsters, handlers and stevedores who haul the cargo;
- Catering, those in charge of food and beverage preparation;
- Entertainments, the Stewards whose job it is to keep everyone occupied;
- Sales and Bookings, which arranges passenger bookings and advertising;
- Ship's Locker, the staff which maintains the ship's personal equipment stores;
- Staff, the officers serving as the Purser's personal staff.

Each of these sections has a section chief serving in the Staff section, answerable to the Purser.

Crew As Financial Entity

A ship's crew is more than just a group of individuals working on the same ship, brought together by happy accident. They are a single financial entity, which stands or falls depending on how they perform during the year.

Crews can form two kinds of financial entity: a limited company (the business is a separate entity from the individuals of the crew) and a partnership. Both kinds of financial entity provide benefits and drawbacks.

LIMITED COMPANY

The crew forms a limited company, which is considered a separate financial entity from the individuals of the crew. This requires registration of the company with the proper authorities, specifically the Companies Register of the homeworld under whose flag the ship is registered. This document is called the Article of Incorporation.

Registration of an Article of Incorporation costs a nominal one-

off sum of Cr. 200 for a free trader (of any type) and Cr. 100 for any type of subsidised liner. Registration of the ship as a business protects the individuals because it limits the liability of the crew to the unpaid amount on the shares that they own, should the ship cease to be financially liable.

If the ship fails to remain financially viable, the entity's existence as a limited company protects the crew further: by separating the crew's individual personal effects and property from company property, at least if they have to forfeit the ship they can still walk away with the clothes on their backs. And non-shareholders, while they may lose their jobs, at least do not face the prospect of owing creditors money down the line.

PARTNERSHIP

This is the more familiar crew set up – the crew pool their ship shares (in the form of share certificates, which the Purser keeps) and either receive a monthly dividend proportionate to the percentage of ship shares held, or (for non-shareholders) a flat rate monthly payment depending on their position within the ship (Pilot, Navigator, Engineer and so on).

Partnerships do not require registration with a Companies Register, and if they do not have a registered homeworld (flying under a flag of convenience) they probably will not need to pay

taxes, although such stateless vessels are less likely to attract legitimate cargoes and passengers.

The main drawback of partnerships is that in addition to ship shares, each partner has to sink much of their personal money into the ship partnership. If the ship goes under financially, the crewmen stand to lose the lot.

Crews can mitigate this risk by forming a limited partnership – crewmen can either be general partners (hold ship shares) or limited partners (do not hold ship shares). If the ship goes down, general partners take the brunt of the financial failure, sparing limited partners that particular pain.

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

For a ship run as a limited company, the crew must sign up to a limited company contract agreement included in the Article of Incorporation. If they possess ship shares they are considered directors in the company, with the amount of their shares counting as a percentage stake in the company – 15% ship shares means a 15% stake in the firm, for instance.

The majority shareholder is the owner – he may or may not be the Captain in title – but owning shares entitles every shareholder to contribute input on how the ship is to be run, what markets to pursue and so on. The directors are collectively known as the Board, with the Owner taking the role of Chairman.

Non-shareholders, crewmen with no ship shares, are ordinary crew. They are treated as employees of the company, sign an employment contract with the ship / company, and receive a standard salary (which can either be taken from the list in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, or drawn from the formula listed below.

Directors may draw the same level of salary for doing their assigned jobs, and they also receive a dividend which is potentially substantially higher than the standard salaries of ordinary crewmembers. This dividend may be paid annually or quarterly, and the amount paid depends on how many ship shares the director owns.

A ship run as a partnership runs along similar lines. Partners who have ship shares to contribute are considered general partners (like a law firm) and partners without ship shares are considered limited partners, with limited management rights but with equal unlimited liability in the event of the business' failure.

Crewmen who contribute ship shares have a higher stake in the business than those without ship shares – but the partnership allows all active members at least one vote, regardless of whether they have ship shares or not, plus one vote for each percent ship share they may hold.

A limited partnership allows non-shareholders limited liability in the event of financial failure, in exchange for their forfeiting all management rights; shareholders still face unlimited liability, unless they have formed a limited liability partnership designed to protect all partners, general and limited alike.

Creating a partnership requires little more than a document drawn up detailing the form of the partnership and signed by all present crewmembers.

A crew trading as a limited company may well include clauses allowing Player Characters share purchasing rights, should their individual adventures earn them enough to be able to purchase ship shares, as well as the right to hold onto any cash they independently earn through adventuring. A partnership agreement may include a clause requiring crewmembers sink a percentage of any cash they earn through adventuring towards the common partnership fund, as well as the option to buy ship shares if they have contributed enough cash to buy into the inner circle of general partners.

All contracts and agreements, whether Articles of Incorporation or partnership agreements, contain clauses designed to protect the business entity and individuals in the event of crew changes, the death or retirement of the majority shareholders, the event of the business going under and so on.

Drafting such an agreement requires Admin and/or Advocate skill to verify the document's legal standing:-
Draft Article of Incorporation: Admin or Advocate, Int, 1-6 hours, Average(+0)
Draft Partnership Agreement: Admin or Advocate, Int, 1-6 hours, Average(+0)

Copies of these documents, along with ship share certificates, are placed in the hands of the Purser, who will keep them along with the usual ship registration documentation for presentation to Customs officials.

Dividends and Salaries

Crews need to get something back from their company or partnership, and that remuneration comes in the form of dividends and salaries. Dividends are paid semi-regularly, typically on an annual or quarterly basis, and salaries are paid out monthly.

SALARIES

The salary table on page 137 of *Traveller Core Rulebook* lists salaries as follows:

Position	Salary
Pilot	6,000
Navigator	5,000
Engineer	4,000
Steward	2,000
Medic	4,000
Gunner	2,000
Marine	2,000

These defaults are useful as a "default" salary guide, but some ships might have a different salary weighting, depending on such variables as the crewmembers' skills (determined by the prestige of flight certificates, medical licenses, certificates of schools completed, engineering qualifications or similar measures of excellence).

Position	Salary
Pilot	3,000 x Pilot skill rating (Pilot-0 counts as Pilot-1)
Navigator	2,500 x Astrogation skill rating (Astrogation-0 counts as Astrogation-1)
Engineer	2,000 x Engineer skill rating (Engineer-0 counts as Engineer-1)
Steward	1,000 x Steward skill rating (Steward-0 counts as Steward-1)
Medic	2,000 x Medic skill rating (Medic-0 counts as Medic-1)
Gunner	1,000 x Gunnery skill rating (Gunnery-0 counts as Gunnery-1)
Marine	1,000 x highest Combat skill rating

The above scheme assumes the crewmen filling these posts have attained level-2 in their required skill. Level-1 skill would qualify the character as a junior crewman, and draw a lesser salary; highly skilled senior or veteran crewmen with relevant skills rated 3 or higher, are in correspondingly higher demand and can draw higher salaries accordingly.

Stateroom running costs are charged to the ship as part of its fixed costs (see below) – they are not charged to individual crewmembers, so Marines and Gunners do not end up perpetually penniless just because their staterooms cost exactly the same amount to run as they draw per month.

DIVIDENDS

Paid out either annually or, more often, quarterly, dividends are the financial reward for having shares in the ship. If the ship does well financially, the crew get paid according to how much of a stake they have in the ship – in other words, their percentage of ship shares.

Each percentage ship share entitles the bearer to that much of the profit allocated for dividend payments. The Captain might make 100% of the profits payable as dividends, but a prudent Captain may choose to allocate a smaller proportion to dividend payouts, keeping the bulk of profits to plough back into the running of the ship – its reserves.

For example, the ship might run to a Cr. 250,000 profit in the quarter – the Captain might plough Cr. 200,000 of that into the reserves, leaving Cr. 50,000 for dividend payouts. Each percentage ship share earns its bearer Cr. 500; the bearer of a 15% share would earn Cr. 7,500 that quarter.

Running The Books

The following is only a sketchy introduction to the basics of accounting. Accounting in real life is such a vast topic that this article can only provide the roughest introductory outline to players and Referees. Many resources exist online for people who wish to keep track of real world money and balance their books, and it is recommended players and Referees go and look for these tools and resources.

The two things you need to know about keeping a business afloat are:- firstly, where the money comes from; and secondly, where it goes.

Money coming in, whether from speculative trading, freight or passenger shipping or adventuring, is called income: if it is paid to a person, it is called earnings or salary. Cash offered in fixed amounts by governments to subsidised traders in exchange for them operating along fixed routes, hauling mail and so on is called a subsidy.

Money going out is called costs, and include items such as fuel, stateroom maintenance and life support, mortgage and maintenance payments, berthing and warehousing costs, salaries, dividends and other costs.

ABSTRACTING THE ACCOUNTS

Referees and players might not want to keep track of the running costs and incomes, and simply abstract the process to a simple Admin skill check.

A positive Effect means that the ship continues flying – a high Effect (3+) means the crew might get a bonus (the dividend is doubled for that quarter, or they get an extra Cr. 1,000 in their wage slips that month).

A negative Effect means that the ship goes into negative cashflow – the crew may have to take a cut in salary, dividends may not be paid at the end of the quarter. A -6 Effect on the check means the ship's finances have gone into meltdown, and they will have to take on a risky adventuring job or go under.
Balance the Books, Admin, Int, 1-6 days, Average(+0)

DOWN TO THE LAST CREDIT

Players and Referees who wish to keep track of all the ship's accounts, down to keeping track of the cost of each round fired or each protein pack consumed in the galley, may wish to run a more detailed book.

Bluebooking, the art of maintaining detailed records of downtime activities in the gap between games, is one method that players can find useful. Invented by Aaron Allston, bluebooking allows players to do things like monitor ship's expenses, take stock of the speculative cargoes in the cargo hold and other similar activities.

Real, working accounting software also exists, and players can easily find and make use of such software, or simply run the books on a spreadsheet.

BOOKKEEPING

The player must keep track of all financial transactions: every purchase, from fuel and ammunition right down to bathroom tissues; and every credit coming in from passenger bookings and speculative trade.

These sales and purchases are kept in various books in chronological order: day books (sales daybooks record all sales, purchase daybooks record all purchases and so on), ledgers, cash books and the financial journal.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STREAMS

The ship's books are used to keep track of how much cash has come in and from where, how much is currently tied up in stock, what the ship owes in debts and how much cash has actually been spent and to whom.

Income Streams

These are the ways money comes in, and they include:

- The characters' own: Characters' ship shares, money they sink into the ship from mustering out, cash they invest into the ship from adventuring. Called "equity," "share capital" and "investments."
- Other people's money: Investments and purchase of ship shares by outsiders such as a government (subsidised merchant), money stumped up by the bank to whom the characters owe the mortgage payments. Also known as the ship's debt or the bank's loan capital.
- Profits: Money from a previous period that the crew plough back into the business – also called retained earnings or reserves.

Expenditure Streams

Here are the ways money is spent. They include:

- Mortgage Payments: The cash paid to the bank monthly
- Maintenance: The monthly life support cost of the staterooms and cold berths
- Berthing and Warehousing Costs: The cost of keeping the ship planetside, and for temporary housing of surplus speculative cargo.
- Fuel: The cost of fuel for the ship's systems.
- Salaries and Dividends: Crew wages and other remunerations
- Other costs: Variable costs such as replacement uniforms, spare parts, renewal of luxuries and consumables,
- Fixed assets: The ship and the equipment aboard it, right down to the ship's weapons in the Ship's Locker, the ammunition for those weapons, the repair and maintenance kits for those weapons and so on.
- Working capital: The speculative and other cargoes in the hold; raw materials, work in progress and finished goods waiting to be sold.

BREAK-EVEN ANALYSIS

Break-even analysis measures the point at which the income from cargo handling and passenger carrying is equal to all costs incurred, both fixed and variable, up to that point. Break even analysis is essential to a free trader, because it is the point at which the ship ceases to be in debt and starts to make a profit.

Here are the most relevant items to consider when making a break even analysis.

Fixed Costs

These costs remain constant, month to month. The primary fixed costs are the regular monthly mortgage payment, monthly salaries, the monthly life support costs for all staterooms and the monthly maintenance.

Variable Costs

These are recurring costs which you absorb with every unit sold – the highest variable cost being fuel, although other costs such as renewable luxuries, food and medical supplies, spare parts, replacement and spare crew uniforms, ammunition for weapons and replacement and spare weapons also come under this category.

Decisions, Decisions

Break even analysis enables a Purser to determine the number of High Passages and Middle Passages to accept each flight, whether it is more economically viable to haul freight (guaranteed revenue, but nothing to write home about) or to allocate the cargo space to speculative cargo, and whether or not to go and find a paying Patron and do a job (that the Patron will pay for) instead.

This can be abstracted with the following task check:
Break even analysis, Admin, Int, 10-60 minutes, Average(+0)

Success (positive Effect) allows the Referee to inform the Purser of the well-being of the ship, and whether or not to go for the easy road of freight and passengers, or to risk speculative cargo or go on a Patron-initiated adventure instead.

Master Budgets

When filing an annual return, the three documents accountants look for are the profit and loss account, the balance sheet and the cashflow analysis.

Profit and Loss Account

A look at the historical performance of the ship to date, this is the document used as the basis for working out how much to pay the ship share – bearing crew in dividends and how much to put back into the ship.

Balance Sheet

This is a snapshot of the current financial state of the ship – how much it has (its assets), and how much it owes (its liabilities).

Cashflow Analysis

Vital for working out future budgets, cashflow analysis is like a financial weather forecast: it can tell the Purser when things are going to get problematical for the ship, requiring the crew to take on a Patron job to make up for cash shortfalls (negative cashflow, which bites into the reserves).

The process of creating these three documents can be abstracted:-
Create master budgets, Admin, Int, 1-6 hours, Average(+0)

Conclusion

The financial aspects of *Traveller* may fascinate or repel players and Referees. You either love it or hate it. I only hope that this basic outline has whetted appetites and intrigued players enough to want to try running their ships as little businesses, with records as detailed as they want them to be, and see how far they can go.

THE FLYING MONEY PIT

BY ALEX GREENE

Premise:

The characters begin play looking for a ship or for transport off world. Somehow, they stumble into ownership of an old free trader with a reputation – it is a money pit.

Introduction

The characters begin the scenario in a public park, feeding pigeons and flagpies with the last of their food. They have literally only the clothes on their backs and their personal comms. If they have assets such as Travellers' Aid Society membership and combat implants, the characters retain them.

One of them has an Ally who owes one of the characters and who will stump up Cr. 50,000 on a one-time basis only, and that is it.

Referee, let them start thinking up ideas to try and raise funds to get off world, before reading this aloud.

In the midst of your brainstorming, [name a character]'s comm chimes. It is one of [character]'s Contacts. She has some information of use to you.

First Act – A Good Word

The characters meet with a Patron at the Rancid Spectrum bar, as directed by the Contacts. The Patron needs an in to a gambling den and one of the characters can vouch for the Patron.

The character must also join the game, which requires a stake of Cr. 10,000 for each player who comes in. The Patron puts up her own cash, and promises to split a portion of any winnings she makes, if she wins.

Second Act – The Gambling Den

The character can persuade the bouncer to let the Patron and other characters through:
Vouch for characters and Patron, Persuade, Soc, 10-60 seconds, Difficult(-2)

The characters, once in, cash in their Cr. 10,000 stake to purchase their way into the various games of chance. Have each character make two Gambler skill checks, and work out how much they win or lose:-
Games of Chance, Gambler, Int, 10-60 seconds

The difficulty determines the odds faced:

Easy(+4) – evens. Winner receives his stake back plus 100% of his stake.
Average(+0) – 6/4 on. Winner receives his stake back plus 150% of stake.
Very Difficult(-4) – Long Shot. Winner receives his stake back plus 500% of stake.

The last skill check has a twist. Playing against an inebriated man, the player is encouraged to go all-in: all his cash, against a keycard, the opponent's last asset. The game goes in the player's favour; the character is now in possession of one battered Fast Trader, in addition to whatever else he won.

Third Act – Berthed

The ship, the *Jarvis*, is currently in Berth 39 at the Starport. The keycard contains the documentation authorising its bearer, the player character, as the Master and new owner of the ship.

When they get to the berth, they will discover the following problems. First, they ship is not spaceworthy. Close, but she needs a full two years' worth of maintenance to get her up and running.

Second, they are now responsible for berthing costs. Berth 39 has been occupied for 18 months, at a cost of Cr. 750 per month.

Third, the *Jarvis* was a disaster as a business. Apart from the physical costs of repairs, she begins with a deficit of Cr. 300,000 on her books from the start.

Third, the ship has the following features due to her age (30 years old; see page 136, *Traveller Core Rulebook*):- Blacklisted, increase all maintenance costs 100%.

Fourth, the Air/Raft is in perfect working order.

Other than the fact that they have 100% ownership and no mortgage, though, they are good to go.

Fourth Act – Patron

To pay for the ship, in order just to get her airborne, the characters will have to go back to the wealthy Patron whom they helped the previous night. She is amenable to help the characters but she will need persuasion (a Difficult Persuade check) to fund their repair efforts.

Repairs will take one month. The *Jarvis* is a standard Type A2 Far Trader (page 118, *Traveller Core Rulebook*). Assuming the Patron can be persuaded, the characters will effectively be forced to perform three dangerous missions for her during this month, to work off their debt to her. The Referee can work out what those missions will be.

The Patron will not pay off the financial deficit. That is the characters' job.

Fifth Act – Forgotten Asset

While looking through the books, the Purser discovers an old receipt for a warehouse on the planet they are berthed on. The account at the warehouse is still active, and may still contain a cargo that can solve their financial crises at a stroke.

The cargo is (roll 1d6):-
1   Luxury goods worth Cr. 100,000.
2   Spare parts for a Type A2 far trader – cutting costs to get the *Jarvis* spaceworthy and airborne to 25% at a stroke.

3   Illegal contraband pharmaceuticals with a street value of Cr, 200,000.
4   Gone; someone had accidentally exposed it to the elements and native bacteria have turned it into a pulpy mess.
5   A consignment of 25 lonely, pre-owned human-looking lifelike pleasure bots, ten female, ten male, five androgynous, each unit worth Cr. 40,000.
6   A previous owner's seventy kidnap victims, all alive, all held in cold storage, each one worth a ransom of Cr. 150,000, or a reward of Cr. 15,000 apiece if they are reunited with their families.

Sixth Act - Complications

The characters will have to pay the warehouse owner's fee, which currently stands at Cr. 120,000. They can either add this to the bills they will have to pay before they can touch sky, or go and visit the Patron again.

Either way, the warehouse owner will want his cash. Up front. Now.

Any illegal cargoes, of course, will necessitate the characters attempting to smuggle the contraband past Customs, an adventure in itself.

Seventh Act – Resolution

Assuming everything goes smoothly for the characters, they should have themselves a working far trader, a cargo hold full of goods, and a huge collection of debts on their heads. Getting rid of those debts ... that is another adventure.

MASS BATTLES

BY JACOB D C ROSS

While *Traveller* is not always associated with large-scale battles between massive space fleets or incredible tech-equipped armies, the *Traveller* setting does present many engines of war that sometimes beg to be let loose upon hordes of the enemy. However, as *Traveller* is a role-playing game, players and referees may not desire to spend hours upon hours rolling for every single missile, defensive screen, beam weapon, or sand canister fired in a 300-ship engagement. To that end, this article presents a streamlined set of rules for conducting massive battles that will not take an entire weekend, or even an evening, to finish.

Referees can use the rules in this article for battles in which the Player Characters participate, or to simulate large battles taking place outside of the characters' location but which will affect the campaign or the characters in some manner. Referees are free to use any, all, or none of the optional rules presented after the main rules in the section below.

THE BATTLE SETUP
Step One
When determining the course of an epic battle, the first thing to do is to total up the Force Strengths of each side. The first step in this process is to find the total Structure strength of all ships on each side in a space battle or to find the total number of soldiers on each side of a planetary battle. In a planetary battle where combat vehicles are present or when one or more sides uses fortifications, every five Structure points of vehicles and fortifications count as a single man for the purposes of this step. Next, compare the totals and divide them both by factors of ten, rounding up, until the number of the smallest force is either in double digits or is a single digit of five or greater.

For example, in an epic battle where one side has 990 Structure points and the other has 670, the total of each would be divided by 100, leaving one side with ten and the other with seven. This is done to determine the "hit points" of the different sides, so it is desirable to divide down to manageable numbers. The above example could divide the forces only by ten, in which case one side would have 99 and the other 67, if the Referee and players wanted a much longer battle.

The young Sword World officer Ulrich von Hoppner has decided to prove himself to his superiors by assaulting a minor Darrian space laboratory. His fleet of fighters and a warship has a Structure point

total of 1,000 and the brash commander feels confident in victory. The Sword World fleet approaches the laboratory to find it defended by a single warship with a Structure point total of 500. For this battle the Sword World fleet has a total of "hit points" equal to 10 while the Darrians only have a total of five. Things are looking dire for the Darrian laboratory.

Step Two
In this step, various factors are considered to determine the Force Effectiveness of each side in battle. The Force Effectiveness is used to show how well each side can actually fight in the battle.

First, determine the advantage of superior numbers. This is done by calculating the ratio by which the larger force outnumbers the smaller force, using the Force Strength rating. The ratio is added to the Force Effectiveness of the larger force.

Ulrich smirks as he realizes that his fleet outnumbers the Darrian warship. His Force Strength of 10 is twice as high as that of the Darrians, so he adds two to his Force Effectiveness, bringing it to two. The Darrians add nothing to their Force Effectiveness.

The second consideration is the Tech Level of each side in the conflict. If both sides are using equipment or ships of the same Tech Level, then nothing is added to the Force Effectiveness, but if one side has the advantage over the other, then the difference between Tech Levels is added to the Force Effectiveness of the technologically-superior side.

Ulrich's fleet is not even close to state-of-the art, with each ship in his task force having TL 11 technology. The Darrian warship is incredibly advanced, using TL 16 technology. The difference between the TLs is five, so the Sword Worlders currently have a Force Effectiveness of two, while the Darrians have a Force Effectiveness of five.

Next, determine the training and condition of the soldiers on each side. This rating is assigned a number, as shown in the table below.

Training and Conditioning

Number	Force Training and Condition
-3	Sickly or completely untrained warriors. Pacifists forced to fight.
-2	Peasant rabble. Untrained and nearly useless in combat.
-1	Rookie soldiers or soldiers in training.
0	Regular, disciplined soldiers. The average for most battles.
1	Veteran soldiers or new soldiers with advanced or academy educations.
2	Special forces. Very effective.
3	The best of the best. Composed exclusively of battle-hardened veterans and extremely competent officers.

It turns out that Ulrich is an academy student, about to graduate at the top of his class. He wants to really impress the brass, so he has convinced members of his class to join him in an unsanctioned mission. Ulrich's fleet has a training and conditioning rating of one, giving their force a current Force Effectiveness of three. The Darrian laboratory has just received a top-secret priority assignment, and is thus being guarded by a ship filled with the best crewmen in the Darrian navy. The Darrians thus have a training and condition rating of three, giving them a current Force Effectiveness of eight.

At this stage, each of the force commanders may make a Leadership throw in order to inspire their men. Note that in the case of an ambush, only the ambushers may make this throw, as the element of surprise keeps the other side from immediately marshalling forces. The Effect of this throw is added to the Force Effectiveness. In the case of a failed roll, the commander has botched his speech and actually demoralized his troops; the Effect is thus subtracted from the Force Effectiveness.

Ulrich has the drop on the Darrians, and as an officer-in-training he has been taught to be an effective leader. Ulrich throws Leadership, rolling a nine, thus succeeding by one. The Sword Worlders now have a Force Effectiveness of four. The Darrians can make no Leadership throw, and thus remain at Force Effectiveness eight.

Step Three

With both Force Strength and Force Effectiveness calculated, it is time for the confrontation to unfold. The force commanders each throw appropriate Tactics and adding the total of the Tactics throw to their side's Force Effectiveness. The Effect of each roll, before adding it to Force Effectiveness, will then subtracted from the Force Strength of the opposing side at the end of Step Three. If any commander fails their Tactics throw, then the negative Effect of their throw is taken from their own Force Strength, as they have made a serious blunder in leading their men and potentially causing a disaster.

Additionally, if the new total of Force Effectiveness for one commander is higher than the new total Force Effectiveness of the other commander, then the difference in their totals is subtracted from the total by which they must reduce their Force Strength at the end of Step Three. Remember to factor in such conditions as weather and low-light for the tactics roll. Following the resolution of Step Three, another Battle Turn begins.

Ulrich is competent in battle, with Tactics (naval) 1 and an Int DM of +1. He throws an 8, for an Effect of two. The Darrian force will have to subtract two from their Force Strength at the end of Step Three, reducing them to only three! However, the Darrian commander is a brilliant strategist, with Tactics (naval) 3 and an Int DM of +2 and throws an 9, for an Effect of six for a total of 22 when added to his Force Effectiveness of eight. The Darrian commander's roll was eight higher than Ulrich's, meaning he commanded his men so well and utilized greater technology and training that his warship received virtually no damage. Ulrich will have to subtract six, due to the Effect of the Darrian commander's Tactics Throw, from his Force Strength, leaving him at only forty percent strength and with a lower Force Strength than the Darrians!

It seems that in this case discretion is the better part of valor. Ulrich will have to order a full retreat or face destruction. It looks like Ulrich will no longer be looking forward to being class valedictorian, if he is not immediately arrested and court-martialed!

Step Four

If the battle is not conclusively decided, then repeat Step Three until the fighting ceases. If the damage done to the sides of the battle changes the ratio of Force Strength, then the numbers advantage of the Force Effectiveness must be recalculated as in Step Two. As appropriate to the game session, each turn of battle can last for 1D6x10 minutes or 1D6 hours. Referees are encouraged to give rousing and exciting narration after each Battle Turn, bringing the battle to life.

BATTLE OPTIONS

While the above rules can be used to hasten large-scale epic battles, it can be quite dry and does not involve the players directly in the action, unless a player character is the force commander. To flesh out the battle, additional options are presented below.

Unit Types

Referees who want a force's composition of units to affect its performance may use this rule. While any fleet or army may be considered to have men filling each of these roles, in order to utilise these special units a force must have an "elite" unit, such as a crack scout team or medical staff with the highest training and best technology available. Any roll the unit is instructed to make is with a DM of zero. Referees should determine whether or not each force has any of the following special units:

Boarding Team: The unit may deploy to board an enemy ship or large vehicle. To determine whether the boarding craft reaches its target, roll against a difficulty of 9. Resolve the boarding using the simplified boarding attack rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. If successful in capturing the ship then the ship is removed from the Force Strength of the opposing fleet.

Engineers/Medics: Each Battle Turn the unit may make a roll against a difficulty of 10. If successful then their force may increase its Force Strength by one, although this may never increase a Force Strength above its starting value, nor may it ever restore more than half of the damage done to a force.

Heavy Artillery/Ortillery: Each battle turn the unit may make a roll against a difficulty of 8. If successful then add the Effect of the roll to the damage done to the opposing force. This damage is separate from the final Tactics roll made by commanders.

Scouts/Saboteurs: Each Battle Turn the unit may make a roll against a difficulty of 10. If successful then they may grant a +1 DM bonus to their commander's Tactics roll or impose a -1 DM penalty on the opposing commander's Tactics roll.

Traps

In the cases where traps could be utilised on the field of battle, this rule can be implemented. The person responsible for setting the trap throws a Difficult (-2) Trade (traps) or Mechanic (traps). The Effect of this roll is then added as a negative DM to the task of finding or avoiding the traps in battle. In space the traps are detected by a Sensors throw while on the ground Sensors or Recon may be used. Any character who spends a Battle Turn searching for traps may not participate in a battle encounter.

If a trap is discovered, then it can be avoided, although the Referee may rule in certain circumstances that this will be impossible. If a trap is not discovered, then it may be deployed. A deployed trap goes off in the same phase that the commanders make Tactics rolls. The trap makes its own roll, adding the skill of the trap setter as a positive DM, or subtracting three in the case of an Unskilled Roll. The roll has an Average Difficulty and the Effect of the roll is added to the Force Effectiveness of the side for which the trap was utilised for that Battle Turn only.

Tech Levels

The rules above present a general use for TLs in combat. However, if Referees desire deeper mechanics, then they can use this option. Referees may determine that a difference in TLs between the opposing sides grants a defensive bonus. In that case, the difference between the TLs is subtracted from the amount of damage dealt to the high TL force in the Step Three of a Battle Turn.

Battle Encounters

One way to engage the players in a large-scale epic battle while still streamlining the process is to incorporate the Battle Encounters Table. Each player may roll 1D6 on the Battle Encounters Table once per Battle Turn in order to participate in the battle, as well as to possibly have change the outcome. Players roll on this table after Force Effectiveness has been determined, but before commanders make their Tactics roll. If a result describes a situation that does not apply to the current battle, such as referring to an allied ship in need of assistance when the players have only one ship in a battle, then the Referee may describe the action differently but can use the mechanical result of the roll.

If using the *Traveller* supplements *Mercenary* or *High Guard*, then the Referee may allow players to qualify for medals or citations if they make sufficiently high rolls from the Task Rolls on the Battle

Encounters Tables, just as if they were generating a character. Depending on the odds facing the players, the Referee may choose to increase or decrease the difficulty of the Task Rolls on the tables. Many results will give a bonus to further Task Rolls later in the battle. This is to show the effects that come with success in battle.

Engineers/Medics

Rather than roll on a specific Encounter Table, characters in this category may act as the Engineering/Medic special unit above. However, when making their roll for the turn, the characters may use their Engineer or Medic Skills and the difficulty is 10. PCs use their own DM for the roll, rather than the DM of zero for non player character Engineer/Medic units. Every turn they must roll 2D6 and on a 2 or 3 they are injured.

Gunnery/Artillery Battle Encounters Table

D6	Result
1	Heavy Fire! The enemy is firing on your position and your only option is to return fire. You must throw Gunner or Heavy Weapons 10+ or be injured or your ship is hit. If successful then you may add half the Effect to your next Task Roll this battle.
2	Pinned Comrade! Enemy fire has trapped a comrade. If you can roll Gunner or Heavy Weapons 10+ then your return fire has eased pressure on your comrade. Gain a Contact.
3	Furious Volley! An enemy fire unit concentrates full power on your location. You must roll Gunner or Heavy Weapons against an enemy gunner who will have the same DM as you. If you fail you are injured or your ship is hit. If you succeed with an Effect of less than 3 the enemy will vow to get you next time. Gain a Rival. Success with an Effect of 3 or more will earn you accolades from your superiors.
4	Missiles Inbound! Enemy missiles are approaching. You must throw Gunner or Heavy Weapons 10+ or you are injured or your ship is hit. Half the Effect of your roll, if positive, is added to your next Task Roll in this battle.
5	Suppressive Fire! You target a strategic enemy unit. If you can throw Gunner or Heavy Weapons 9+ then the enemy force may not benefit from a special unit of your choice during this battle turn.
6	Weak Point! You direct your fire to the enemy force's weakest point. If you can throw Gunner or Heavy Weapons 10+ then you may add the Effect to your force's Force Effectiveness this turn and half the Effect to your next Task Roll this battle.

Infantry Battle Encounters Table

D6	Result
1	Flanked! An enemy light assault unit has the jump on you. Unless you can throw Gun Combat or Melee Combat 10+ you are injured. If you succeed then you add half your Effect to your next Task Roll in this battle.
2	Wounded Comrade! Your comrade has been hit. If you can throw Medic 9+ then you stabilise them and gain a Contact if they survive the battle.
3	Intense Opponent! An enemy soldier is gunning only for you. You must throw either Gun Combat or Melee Combat against the enemy, who will have the same DM as you. If you fail you are injured. If you succeed with an Effect less than 3 then the enemy escapes but remembers your face. Gain a Rival. Success with an Effect of 3 or more will earn you accolades from your superiors. And a dead opponent.
4	Enemy Charge! The opposing force is making a wild charge. You must throw Gun Combat or Melee Combat 10+ or be injured. Half the Effect of your roll, if positive, is added to your next Task Roll in this battle.
5	Downed Enemy! An enemy vehicle or soldier is disabled on the field near you. If you can throw Athletics 9+ followed by Gun Combat or Melee Combat 10+, then you have successfully reached and protected the enemy. At the end of the battle you will have a prisoner or may release them to gain a Contact.
6	Forward! Your unit must charge the enemy's weak point. You must throw Gun Combat or Melee Combat 10+ or be injured. If you succeed you may add the Effect of your roll to your army's Force Effectiveness this turn and half the Effect to your next Task Roll this battle.

Marines

Marines aboard ships can resolve the success of their boarding attacks or their efforts to repel boarders using the simplified boarding attack rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. The Referee may decide whether a marine detachment is boarding or repelling. While engaged in combat the marines can use the Infantry Battle Encounters Table.

Saboteurs/Scouts

Rather than rolling on a specific Encounter Table, characters in this category may act as the Saboteurs/Scouts special unit above. However, when making their roll for the turn they instead roll either Pilot or Stealth 10+ and then either Sensors or Recon 10+. Player Characters use their own DM for the roll, rather than the DM of zero for NPC Saboteur/Scout units. Additionally, Saboteurs/Scouts may search for traps every Battle Turn. Every Battle Turn they must roll 2D6 and on a 2-4 they are injured.

Pilots/Drivers Battle Encounters Table

D6	Result
1	Outmanoeuvred! An enemy pilot has gained an advantageous position. If you can throw Pilot 10+ then you successfully evade the pilot. If successful you may add half the Effect to your next Task Roll in this battle. If you fail then the negative Effect is added to the enemy's Force Effectiveness this turn if you are in a warship, or if you are in a fighter your ship is hit by enemy fire.
2	Imperilled Comrade! An allied ship is in danger. If you can throw Pilot 9+ then you can position your ship to protect them. If you fail then roll 1D6 and on a 1-2 the negative Effect of your failed roll is added to the enemy's Force Effectiveness this turn.
3	Dogged Enemy! An opposing pilot has his heart set on you. You must throw Pilot against the opposing pilot, who will have the same DM as you. If you fail your ship is hit, and if you succeed with an Effect of less than 3 the enemy pilot escapes but holds a grudge after his vessel is shot down. Gain a Rival. Success with an Effect of 3 or more will earn you accolades from your superiors.
4	Incoming Fire! Enemy fire is endangering your vessel. You must throw Pilot 10+ or your ship is hit. Half the Effect of your roll, if positive, is added to your next Task Roll in this battle.
5	Disabled Enemy! An enemy vessel, or an enemy in a vacc suit, is drifting in space. If you can throw Pilot 9+ twice, then you have successfully reached the enemy and manoeuvred them away from the fight. After battle you will have a prisoner or you may choose to release them and gain a Contact.
6	Prime Opening! You have a chance to place your ship in position to damage the enemy. If you can throw Pilot 10+ then you succeed and may add the Effect to your force's Force Effectiveness this turn and half the Effect to your next Task Roll this battle.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

BY LINDSAY JACKSON

Excuses, excuses, why a *Traveller* character has gone missing.

The synthetic mind glows in its wall setting before squawking 'I have the coordinates that your astrogator needs, where all the secrets of the Ancients will be revealed and you will become like demigods'.

The pilot is pushed to the fore by the rest of the crew. He shuffles forwards uneasily with his hands thrust into the pockets of his spacer's coveralls. Looking down at his magnetic boots he mumbles 'He's not here tonight, he's got to revise for his end-of-term exams'.

A common problem for *Traveller* Referees (and Games Masters throughout the multiverse) is what to do when one (or more) of your players fails to show up for a gaming session. Here are a set of in-character excuses, grouped by setting. Readers will notice some of these have serious consequences for the remaining players, but those challenges can make play more interesting and form the start of a new mini-scenario.

A number of these excuses will work for more than one player being absent at a time. Obviously some characters are occasionally indispensible and there will still be times when the referee just has to postpone a session.

Any Environment

The character is taken ill. This could be as simple as a bad case of "Betelgeuse belly" requiring only a few days' bed rest and easy access to sanitary facilities. Let us hope this occurs on a world sufficiently advanced to maintain cleaning droids!

For a really unreliable player an illness could take the form of a dangerous recurrence of Rigellian encephalitis. That could require the remaining characters to seek urgent treatment for their sick comrade or risk serious long-term damage to the afflicted character.

A character's religious or philosophical affiliation requires them to avoid any form of work for a certain period, spending the time in prayer and/or meditation.

A noble character (social standing 11+) is asked to mediate in an otherwise minor dispute, having to spend time away from the group while he deals with the situation.

In Space

The character is ill, possibly a mild case of jump sickness induced by some malfunction. This will often affect several people at once and will typically indicate a misjump is in progress. Players should be alarmed by this, particularly if essential spaceship crew have been affected.

The absent character is forced to complete some tedious and lengthy paperwork in order to retain an important qualification. For example a starship engineer may have an annual re-test via the ship's computer. A less technical role (such as steward) could get involved in stocktaking for an audit or annual accounts.

The Player Character is unable to return to their normal station due to exposure to radiation (from either a stellar flare outside the ship or an abnormal power plant fluctuation). They are unharmed but cannot risk further exposure for a while or risk radiation sickness.

In an Urban Area
(Even in Orbit, Such as on a Starport)

The missing character is detained by local security personnel for some minor (or not so minor) infringement ('But officer, how was I to know that plant I trod on was sentient?'). The remaining players might be asked to help clear their colleague's name by searching for witnesses, providing missing documentation or finding someone local who can attest to the good character of their associate. Of course, if their incarcerated colleague has behaved badly then character witnesses may not be forthcoming.

For a suitable character, their membership of their former branch of the Imperial armed forces is forcibly reactivated (in effect they are temporarily recalled back into service). This could take some time and can be handled as a separate solo mini-adventure for the relevant player when the referee can arrange it.

On a high law level world, a character is stopped by inspectors who demand them to demonstrate they have the right qualification for something they have done recently, for example driving a grav vehicle or performing electronic repairs. Travel to a local test centre and back could take days (depending upon local technology levels, planetary size and geography and so on).

On a low law-level world, the character is the victim of theft of a valuable item or a drunken assault. They must resolve the matter through the justice system or by other informal means (if they think they are tough enough). Either way it will take time.

On a low law-level world, a specific character with gambling skills is challenged to a high stakes game of chance. The opportunity seems too good to ignore. He gets to practice his skills and has to take time away from the rest of the group.

A character bumps into an old carousing buddy and goes off for an extended reunion in the nearest bar. After taking time off to recover, they may recall picking up some useful nugget of information (a rumour from a reliable source) for the benefit of the entire group.

The missing character is recruited into a political or other campaigning movement. His zeal is such that he is busy with this activity for several days or even weeks, before returning to the group. It is up to the referee and player whether their new political attitudes persist.

A nonhuman character meets a member of their own species and takes time off to catch up with news.

In a Wilderness

Unfortunately, the absent player's character is attacked by a disabling alien parasite, requiring temporary rest and possibly isolation while they recover. The rest of the group will need to support and protect the affected character until they can get rest and medical attention. Of course alien parasites may have side effects, as Flight Officer Ripley found out the hard way.

The miscreant is abducted by xenophobic tribesmen to take part in a ritual. They will not surrender him until a date that is favoured by their gods.

A Hostile Environment

The character is temporarily disabled by a leak in their protective equipment. They may need to be rescued and patched up by a medic. The suit or vehicle will also require some minor repairs by

GIVE THE BANK A FIGHTING CHANCE

BY JOLLY R BLACKBURN

Sergeant Cutter and his band have just arrived at Regina. After their latest venture, they have enough money pooled together to make the down payment on that ship they' have been dreaming of.

The bank is contacted and the construction begins. Months later an excited crew boards its new home and shuttles out of orbit. They spend several months trading along the established routes, making sure the payments are promptly made each month. Then, when Cutter is certain the bank's suspicions are allayed, he gives the order to skip. The plan is to leave Regina subsector far behind, along with the bank and its cumbersome payments.

The Bank of Regina gets burned again, or does it? Obviously, a bank which finances the construction of ships costing into the billions of credits has methods of preventing (or at least discouraging) such acts and of bringing the perpetrators to justice. Banks finance ships knowing the risks involved and they do everything possible to push the odds over into their favor. The following is a method of dealing with Travellers skipping, as well as a possible new source of income and adventure for players.

THE BANK

Whether your campaign has an independent bank on each world, a sub-sector or sector wide organization with branch banks on each world, or a master bank with a central headquarters and numerous branches, it is not illogical to assume banks will cooperate to reduce losses. This will most likely take the form of an information sharing network among all banks in a given empire or at least within a sector. Banks would need information on a client's credit rating to efficiently screen bad risks.

Such a system can be assumed to be in effect within the Imperium, and within the other interstellar empires of the *Traveller* universe. There is also a very good possibility information is shared between empires, under normal conditions.

Given this system, characters who make a bad name for themselves in one region will find their reputation following them throughout their travels. The ways of getting around this (forged ID documents, shell companies, assumed names and so on) are all imperfect and involve some degree of risk. Buying a ship and getting around the system can be a major challenge to a group of adventurers, and can provide months of adventure.

Preventative Measures

Banks take very direct steps to prevent clients from skipping out before their loan is repaid. The simplest way, and in the long run, the cheapest, is to screen out unfavorable clients beforehand.

Before the loan is finalised, a credit check and background review will be conducted. If these reveal no problems, and the client shows an ability to repay, the loan it will be approved. These checks will vary from exhaustive research on new clients to rather token searches for well-established customers or large property owners with deep roots in the region concerned.

Credit: Banks will know of bad credit characters have established with other banks, unless such information could not reasonably have reached the bank when they check or the players have taken measures (such as false names, bribes and so on) to prevent it. In general, banks send out information on skippers or delinquent payments as soon as such status is in effect.

Background Review: Banks will study the client's travelling and business habits. Specifically, they will look for criminal records, a tendency to fail in business ventures, and any involvement with organizations which the bank considers questionable. If there is any doubt about the character's background, it is very likely the loan will be denied.

Intended use: Banks place a great deal of weight on the use to which the ship will be put. Possible use of a ship in a risky venture will be cause for the bank to deny the loan, but stable ventures with low profit margins will not look very promising either.

Most banks are reluctant to completely trust some clients with the several million credits involved in purchasing a ship, even though no flaws in the client's background might be discovered. In cases like these, some banks have been known to take additional measures to secure the bank's investment. A timer may be built into a ship's computer so the computer will cease functioning if it is not reset by a bank official each month after the payment is tendered. The timer, of course, is removed when the payments are completed. Most banks, however, find it simpler to deny the loan application in the first place.

Repos

Despite all the measures banks take to deter skipping, a clever group will occasionally slip past the safeguards or a previously honest group will succumb to temptation. This is where the repos come in. Repos are people who pursue and retrieve ships and crews who have skipped. The term is descended from the word 'repossession.' Occasionally, a repo will be hired to retrieve other stolen property.

There are basically two types of repos, those who work for a bank or other financial institution and the independents (who work for themselves).

Company repos receive a salary (generally Cr.50,000 per year) plus a bonus of 2% of the value of the recovered ship. Their employer pays their expenses. They have access to their firm's information network, and can usually count on the cooperation of local financial institutions and police.

Independents have no financial backing, and generally charge expenses plus 2-5% of the value of the recovered vessel. If some or all of the crew are wanted for other crimes, the repo can collect all of any reward for their apprehension.

THE REPOS' TRADE

An individual wishing to become a repo usually starts by consulting the current Shipping Registry in any large library at A and B starports. The delinquent section lists all ships in the subsector posted delinquent by a financial institution, their last known location, the ship's description and transponder codes, the names of the crew, the value of the vessel and the institution seeking repossession.

Most of these ships are probably being sought by company employees, but there is always a chance an independent can beat them to it. An individual with connections (Admin 2+ or a relevant Contact or Ally) can have access to the 'scorched list'. This is a list of vessels whose crews have killed one or more repos and these ships often have recovery fees of up to 10% of the ship's value. These vessels are also being sought by law enforcement authorities, who have a low opinion of repos in general and independents in particular. Seeking vessels on the scorched list often involves considerable risk.

LEGAL ASPECTS

Legally, company repos are employees of the financial institution holding title to a skipped vessel and are allowed to take direct possession. Independents are (from a legal standpoint) ordinary citizens reclaiming another's stolen property and must immediately turn the ship over to the local authorities. Repos are allowed to use reasonable force to take possession of a skipped vessel, and may defend themselves if attacked but they are all subject to the murder statutes (even in the case of ships from the scorched list, although judges are often lenient in such cases).

If a ship's cargo belongs to the crew of the skipped vessel, it becomes the property of the financial institution holding the note on the ship. If it belongs to a party unconnected with the skipped vessel (if it has been stolen or is a contracted cargo), it remains their property.

Repos are not law enforcement officers, and cannot call for assistance from law enforcement agencies above the level normally given to civilians. They have no rights over and above ordinary citizens, except for the few they gain if they are employed by the company holding the note on the vessel. They are subject to criminal prosecution for any laws they break in pursuit of a skipped vessel.

TRACKING SKIPS

Tracking is not following physical tracks through space, but the skillful use of available information combined with intuition. An experienced repo will look at the background review conducted by the bank (available automatically if a company rep, otherwise roll Admin 8+) to see if there are any specific regions the crew frequents, any preferred business ventures, travel patterns and so on.

Because of the large number of variables, it is impossible to give specific rules for tracking a stolen ship in the space available, so individual referees will have to determine the results according to the situation.

CONCLUSION

Banks and other financial institutions are not suckers. Player Characters who skip out on their payments should spend the rest of their career looking over their shoulders (after all, nobody said a life of crime was going to be easy). Repos should add flavor to any campaign, whether as a new way of making money or as another thing for your players to worry about as they travel the universe.

PARALLEL DIMENSIONS

BY JACOB D C ROSS

The concept of alternate planes of reality or parallel dimensions that exist as distorted reflections of the existence that we know is a staple of science fiction, but is not frequently mentioned in *Traveller*. This article will present various possibilities for introducing dimensional travel to your Traveller campaign.

DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL - WHY?

The first question that may come to mind in traveling to a parallel dimension is why would anyone want to do so in the first place? Of what benefit is it for characters to visit alternate universes or for Referees to introduce them to a campaign?

Characters may desire to travel to alternate dimensions to escape justice while not having to live the life of a fugitive, to find an alternate version of a dead loved one or out of plain curiosity. Organisations such as corporations or governments may be seeking rare or valuable resources on less-habited or unprotected versions of enemy worlds, to conscript soldiers or slave labor from easy targets or to find new worlds to colonise when they have run out of viable worlds in their own dimension. Referees may find their current setting is not turning out how they originally planned, they may wish to cross or may be working with a player who wishes to change their character slightly and thus replace their current character with one from another dimension.

DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL - HOW?

If a group is planning on visiting alternate realities, then naturally they must figure out how to accomplish the journey. The *Traveller* supplement *Psion* features two ways to do so (via psionic powers or the "D Drive") but Referees may wish to introduce their own method, such as a random portal opening in space and drawing in a starship.

Random portals work well for Referees who want to strictly control the flow of events from one universe to another. Psionic powers are ideal for games set in societies with a low TL and D Drives or other technology work well in settings lacking sufficient psionic powers or set in eras with a sufficiently-high TL.

Referees may choose the manner in which the travel unfolds. Is it instantaneous? Does the travel take time? If so, are there objects, places, people or hazards in the space between the dimensions?

DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL QUIRKS

It is quite likely individual referees may have their own idea of dimensional travel. Perhaps each jump to another dimension causes characters to switch places with their alternate selves, meaning that while they are exploring an individual with their appearance is running wild in their home universe. Perhaps dimensional travel is temporary, with characters automatically sent home after a set or random interval of time in another universe.

Technology or psionics may be advanced enough so characters can choose to visit the same universes at will, or the destination may be random each time. There may be an infinite number of dimensions to visit, or perhaps there is only one, a twisted "Mirror Universe" that may find itself at odds with the players' home universe.

The Dimensional Difference Scale Table

For games where the Referee does not have a specific plan for each universe visited, the following table may be used.

THE DIMENSIONAL DIFFERENCE SCALE TABLE

Roll 2d6	Result	Mirror Character Modifier
2	Vastly different. There are few or no native life forms in this dimension.	-2
3-5	Somewhat different. History divergent for several centuries. Balance of power shifted in favour of governments who are considered minor powers in the characters' home dimension.	-1
6-8	Very similar. History divergent only for a few generations.	0
9-11	Somewhat different. History divergent for several centuries. Balance of power shifted in favour of governments who are already considered major powers in the characters' home dimension.	+1
12	Vastly different. Overcrowding on all habitable worlds.	+2

The Mirror Character Table

For games where the Referee does not have a definite plan for each "mirror version" of the characters, the following table may be used. If visiting a dimension where you rolled on the Dimensional Difference Scale Table, add the Mirror Character Modifier..

Sample Alternate Universe ("Dimension 434.679")

"Dimension 434.679" is a hypothetical dimension for players to visit. It will highlight the dangers facing characters in an alien dimension, the precautions they might take and the possible rewards of travel. It is assumed that characters visiting are in an Imperium world within the Spinward Marches.

"Dimension 434.679" will likely seem to newly-arrived Travellers to be quite similar to their home dimension, however first impressions are deceiving. Characters will soon note the lack of Vargr in the area. If they do see any Vargr, they will be emaciated and sickly, and any Vargr Player Characters will be treated with suspicion and given a wide berth. Worlds noted for high Aslan populations will notably lack their presence as well. The final glaring differences will be the lack of available meat in restaurants and frequent overhead flying vehicles, patrolling menacingly.

Players in search of information will have to phrase their questions carefully, to avoid being exposed as outsiders. Successful players will eventually find the reason for these strange changes, however. Beginning in the year 916 the K'Kree began a violent crusade against the Imperium, Vargr and Aslan. The Aslan and Vargr were nearly wiped out to a man, while omnivorous humans were allowed to live in peace if they swore loyalty to the steppelords and forsook the eating of meat. The K'Kree established settlements in the open plains of the conquered Imperium worlds, well away from the stinking humans, and patrol to insure the humans do not slaughter living beings for food.

This will present a bleak picture to any meat-eating being, but there are several possible benefits of exploring this universe. Firstly, the K'Kree have left the Aslan and Vargr worlds alone,

declaring that 500 years must pass for the worlds' ecologies to heal before they are settled by the K'Kree. This means that there are hundreds of uninhabited planets scorched by weapons fire with useful minerals exposed and ripe for the taking. Idealistic characters may desire to forment a rebellion, restoring the Imperium or ruling their own dynasty. K'Kree characters may desire to stay and join this utopian society.

ALTERNATE DIMENSION ADVENTURES

Presented here are a variety of adventure styles that can be introduced to a campaign. Referees should feel free to modify them in any way that they see fit for their play group.

The Devourer

Something or someone, a new type of trans-dimensional black hole, an enormous space entity, a mad scientist or a cult devoted to nothingness and destruction is working to bring each dimension to its end. Perhaps it destroys the characters' home and they are the sole survivors seeking to rescue the rest of existence from the same fate or they are attempting to stop the devouring force before it reaches home.

MIRROR CHARACTER TABLE

Roll 2d6	Result
2	Disturbingly, it seems that you were never born, or have already died, in this universe.
3-5	Your mirror is of a lower social station in this reality. They followed an appropriately different career, such as Drifter.
6-8	Your mirror is similar with the only difference being cosmetic, such as having a goatee.
9-11	Your mirror is of a high station. Their Soc is +2 and they may follow a different career, such as military options or Noble
12	Your mirror is a benevolent ruler, a ruthless warlord, a notorious criminal or any other option that means you are always recognised and confused with your mirror.

Motley Crew

The entire play group is composed of characters from different dimensions. As none hail from the same reality the potential for player conflict is high. Choices will have to be made as to the agendas and safety of the various dimensions and players may find their characters in a moral dilemma.

Official Business

As employees of a government agency, military or private corporation, the characters explore alternate dimensions in search of profit or conquest. Their assignment may be to eliminate a specific civilisation in another universe, thus "cleansing" it, or locating an unguarded source of valuable minerals.

Over There

The players stumble upon a method of travel to a specific universe, starting a time of covert hostilities between the two dimensions. This particular style of adventure lends itself very well to subterfuge. A Referee may secretly inform a player his character has been replaced with a "double" who is working against the rest of the player group in secret.

The Mysterious Stranger

In each universe the players visit, they run into a mirror of the same individual in various locations and occupations. After visiting several dimensions they discover this individual is not mirrored in every dimension, but the same individual following the characters and they have an agenda for the players.

Sliding

The players are forced into an alternate dimension, trying to find their way home from random portals. This situation may be due to the erratic nature of their means of dimensional travel, or it may be due to interference from outside influences, forcing the characters to do their bidding in order to return home.

NEW EQUIPMENT
Dimensional Probe (TL 12, 14)

The dimensional probe is a spherical drone commonly sent through open portals to check conditions on the other side before living beings cross through. The probe reports on atmospheric conditions, radiation levels, hazards and life forms present. The probes take video and audio recordings to be analysed by travellers, and the probes can catalog individual dimensions, storing their vital information in a database of known dimensions. At TL 12 the probe must return to its home dimension for its data to be analysed, while the TL 14 version can transmit data through portals in real-time. The probe has a weight of 5 kg and costs Cr. 200,000 at TL 12 and Cr. 350,000 at TL 14.

Trans-Dimensional Life-form Analyzer (TDLA) (TL 13, 15)

A hand-held scanning device for identifying beings from different dimensions. The TDLA is often used to root out spies from alternate universes. When a being is identified as trans-dimensional the scanner's display flashes a visible aura around the being and identifies the being's home dimension, if that dimension has been cataloged in a database. The TDLA weighs 0.5 kg and costs Cr. 50,000. At TL 15 it is available as an ocular implant and costs Cr. 200,000.

Infiltrator's Band (TL 13, 15)

The infiltrator's band is a counter-measure to the TDLA, effectively shielding a trans-dimensional being from being exposed. The band is most frequently disguised as a bracelet or other jewelry. Its weight is negligible and it has a cost of Cr. 100,000. At TL 15 the band is available as an implant and costs Cr. 400,000.
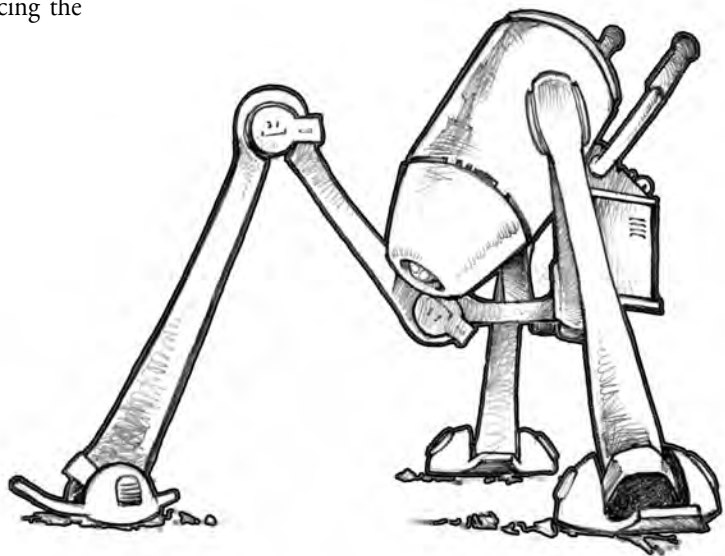
AVAILABILITY

BY MATT SPRANGE

A Traveller can reasonably expect most high-population technological worlds to have most reasonable weapons, armour and equipment for sale upon a visit. However, that does not mean players should have free and easy access to every piece of equipment in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, the *Central Supply Catalogue* or other supplements.

Whenever a Referee deems a piece of equipment may not be present or easily found the player should roll for the item's Availability.

Roll 2D. On 8+, the player has successfully found the item he has been looking for and may purchase it.

MODIFIERS

There are a number of modifiers which should be applied to this roll.

REFEREE'S FIAT

In addition, a Referee may apply his own modifier from –3 to +3 to reflect equipment that is easy or hard to find, rare or common on the present world, or features technology that the Referee just plain is or isn't keen to see proliferate in his campaign!

TECH LEVEL AND LAW LEVEL

Under normal purchasing conditions, items that are unlikely to be found on a world due to the Tech Level being too low or Law Level being too high should not be made available to players. There may be exceptions where a Referee can create a mini-scenario in order to locate such items if he sees fit.

Circumstance	Modifier
Item is considered to be highly specialised	–1
Item is typically reserved for military use	–2
Item's TL is 3–4 steps away from World's TL	–1
Item's TL is 5 or more steps away from World's TL	–2
Purchaser willing to pay double listed cost	+1
Purchaser willing to pay triple listed cost	+2
Starport Class A or B	+1
Starport Class X	–2
World has Hi, Ht, In and/or Ri Trade Codes	+1
World has Lt, Na, NI, and/or Po Trade Codes	–1
World Population 0	–3
World Population 1–2	–2
World Population 12+	+2
World Population 3–5	–1
World Population 9–11	+1

SuSAG

BY LOREN K WISEMAN

Although no two megacorporations are exactly alike, there are enough similarities between them to allow a study of one to serve as a study of all.

The following general survey of the history, organisation and activities of SuSAG will serve to illustrate how megacorporations operate and delineate their powers and limitations.

HISTORY

Schunamann und Sohn, AG, LIC was founded in 252 by Gustav Schunamann, a professor of biochemical engineering and his son Reinhardt, a doctor of medicine.

A few years earlier, the elder Schunamann had resigned his position at the Imperial University to pursue private research. The result of this research was the discovery of a radically new technique for the isolation of various forms of the psionic drug, psioniline.

Schunamann patented the process and licensed it to several manufacturing concerns. By 252, using the royalties which had accumulated, the Schunamanns purchased a near bankrupt pharmaceuticals company which carried an old Sylean charter (and was thus entitled to a limited Imperial charter automatically) and renamed it Schunamann und Sohn AG, LIC (retaining the archaic AG).

Shortly afterward, Schunamann announced a new, more efficient process (which he had evidently discovered years before) and the new company, (commonly known as SuSAG) rapidly drove almost all competing drugs off the market.

The company's early years were stormy ones. The Imperial University brought suit against SuSAG, charging that Schunamann had developed his processes while at the university, and thus they belonged to the government. Other firms brought numerous other lawsuits.

SuSAG defended itself successfully from all these attacks, but they instilled in SuSAG and the Schunamann family a corporate paranoia which was to heavily colour the firm's actions for the first two centuries of its existence. This paranoia, although it has lessened over the centuries, can still be detected in some of SuSAG's actions to this day.

Perhaps because he was a researcher at heart, Gustav established a policy of devoting large sums to exploratory research, and SuSAG's well-equipped laboratories rapidly attracted some of the best minds in the Imperium, another characteristic of SuSAG which persists to this day. Gustav's heavy emphasis on research created numerous new products and manufacturing processes for the company, which laid a strong foundation for the SuSAG's future growth. The discoveries were not always in the field of pharmaceuticals, however, and the company began to diversify into medical products in general, and later into related areas such as chemistry and genetic engineering. The deep-set paranoia of the early years prevented SuSAG from selling or licensing any of its discoveries to other companies. Many good ideas languished in the company files for years, because SuSAG did not have the resources to develop them but did not want any other company to benefit from them.

SuSAG's dominance of the psi drug market caused it to be hardest hit by the Psionics Suppressions of 800 to 826. The manufacture and sale of all psionic drugs was declared illegal, all manufacturing plants within the Imperium closed down and all stockpiles confiscated. Although SuSAG had considerably diversified its activities by this time, the suppressions nearly destroyed the company.

The massive loss of revenue forced a number of emergency measures on the company, including sizable loans from other megacorporations. As part of the arrangements, large blocks of SuSAG stock were transferred to the other firms. Up until that time, the Schunamann family had retained over 75% of SuSAG stock, and the forced transfer caused considerable loss of revenue to the family. Eventually, some of this stock was reclaimed but significant amounts are still retained by others, most notably Hortalez et Cie (9%), GSbAG (5%), and Sternmetal Horizons LIC (3%). The resulting change in the composition of the board of directors was ultimately beneficial for SuSAG, since it diluted the paranoid tendencies of the Schunamann family, which had dominated the board up to that time.

Although it took decades to recover from the damage done by the loss of the Psionic Suppressions, SuSAG resumed a slow, steady growth, gradually expanding into new markets, such as synthetics, industrial chemicals and (most controversially) chemical and biological warfare agents for the Imperial military.

SuSAG is responsible for a number of major advances in anagathic research and is one of the largest suppliers of anagathic drugs in the Imperium. In addition, through a number of factories located outside the Imperium (owned by a chain of subsidiary companies), SuSAG has continued the manufacture of psionic drugs, some of which illicitly find their way back into the Imperium, where they bring premium prices because of their quality and purity.

SuSAG does not engage in smuggling of these drugs into the Imperium. Throughout its development, SuSAG made it a policy to purchase control of numerous subsidiary companies. Often it was cheaper for SuSAG to acquire an existing company in order to move operations into a new region of space or to move into a new field. SuSAG would buy a company to engage in operations to which SuSAG did not wish to have its name associated. The firms outside the Imperium which manufacture psionic drugs are owned through a long and complex chain of holding companies, dummy corporations and interlocking directorates.

To catalogue the activities of SuSAG and all its subsidiary companies would take more space than is available here. Basically, it can be said that for any business activity SuSAG owns at least one company that does it. Major subsidiary companies are under the control of the board of directors; lesser companies are under the control of the divisional vice-presidents or the regional general managers.

Organisation

SuSAG is organised in a similar fashion to most other limited Imperial corporations, there is a board of directors, a president, and numerous vice- presidents. Seven vice-presidents are responsible for the control of each of the seven divisions of the company: the pharmaceuticals division, the medical and surgical products division, the industrial chemicals division, the gendering division, the CBW (chemical and bacteriological warfare) division, the research division and the extra-imperial division.

Each divisional vice-president has a number of executive assistants who are not directly in the chain of command. These assist in the administration and operation of the division, but do not set policy. Under the divisional vice-presidents are the division's numerous regional general managers. The most important operating officers of SuSAG, these RGMs and their assistants control the operations of a SuSAG division inside a particular region of space. A region may range in size from a few systems in the heavily populated regions of the Imperium around Core sector, to several subsectors in more sparsely populated regions.

Note that the boundaries of a region belonging to one division often do not completely coincide with those of another.

In frontier regions, one person may occupy the position of RGM for several divisions. In more densely populated areas, there are several RGMs, who may consult with one another but only have authority over their own division's activities. This system could lead to inter-divisional rivalry but seldom does, since each SuSAG division rarely competes directly with another. Many times, however, subsidiary companies will be working at cross-purposes, sometimes actually engaging in trade wars with other SuSAG subsidiaries. Naturally, these are ended as soon as they are discovered, but with an entity as large as SuSAG, it is difficult to keep track of who is and who is not on your side.

Advertising
An overall advertising policy is set by the board of directors. Individual divisions each have an advertising executive, responsible for overseeing the advertising for that division. Subsidiary companies co-ordinate their advertising efforts with those of SuSAG.

Security
Many megacorporations contract out all but the most important security measures to independent security companies. SuSAG maintains an unusually large and well-equipped corporate security force which handles all aspects of their security requirements.

There are many reasons behind this.

Many of SuSAG's products are compact, extremely valuable and easily resold on the black market. Because of the value of their manufacturing processes, SuSAG manufacturing plants and research installations are often the target of industrial espionage by rival firms. SuSAG's CBW installations are often the subject of raids by terrorists seeking to steal CBW weaponry or sabotage by anti-CBW activists. The company's unreservedly poor reputation for safety, particularly in its CBW plants, causes a great deal of vandalism at all SUSAG installations.

These factors, combined with the company's extreme distrust of any outside agency, explain SuSAG's extensive security establishment.

Most security forces are under the direct control of the various RGMs and operate only in the region to which they are assigned. The board of directors, however, maintains several units of wide-ranging troubleshooters who are assigned to particular sensitive areas of very important installations.

Mercenaries

In spite of its desire to keep everything in house, SuSAG often hires mercenary units for actions with which it does not wish its name (or that of a subsidiary) associated. By company policy, mercenaries can only be hired on the authority of the RGM, but this is usually done through several intermediaries (usually SUSAG security personnel).

THE DIVISIONS

The operations of SuSAG's various divisions are outlined below.

PHARMACEUTICALS DIVISION

This division manufactures and markets medical drugs for treatment and prevention of various pathological conditions, therapeutic drugs such as anagathics, veterinary and horticultural drugs, and surgical drugs such as anaesthetics and muscle-relaxants.

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL PRODUCTS DIVISION

This division manufactures and markets non-pharmaceutical medical and surgical products such as diagnostic equipment, surgical instruments and supplies, and prosthetic devices such as replacement limbs.

INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS DIVISION

This division manufactures chemicals used by other companies in manufacturing processes. Several subsidiary companies provide chemicals of extreme purity for scientific applications.

GENEERING DIVISION

This division manufactures genetically engineered organisms for specific industrial and agricultural applications.

CBW DIVISION

This division manufactures chemical and bacteriological weapons and defenses exclusively for the Imperial military and its allies. Despite the fact all such plants are located on isolated, uninhabitable worlds, this division has a very poor reputation for safety.

RESEARCH DIVISION

This division is not engaged in manufacturing, but conducts a constant search for new products and new ways of manufacturing old products.

EXTRA-IMPERIAL DIVISION

This division is in charge of all SuSAG activities outside the Imperium, which includes those of all SuSAG subsidiary companies. Many of these activities would be illegal if carried out inside the Imperium, such as the manufacture of psionic drugs.

Because of the lack of reliable protection for its installations and products, SuSAG security teams assigned to extra-Imperial duties are as heavily equipped as most planetary military forces. They are often assigned company starships for the protection of extremely valuable facilities (such as the psi drug factories.)

POLICIES AND GOALS

SuSAG's main goals are to make money, retain its position of power relative to other megacorporations, retain its control of its current markets, develop new markets for old products, and develop and market new products.

SuSAG has a great desire to improve its poor public image, and spends billions of credits annually on advertising with this in mind.

SuSAG facilities engaged in the manufacture of extremely valuable or dangerous products (such as its pharmaceutical, psi and CBW plants) are located in remote and sparsely populated areas whenever possible. This was done to minimize potential deaths in the case of an accident, and to facilitate protection of the plants and their products. Psi drug plants are especially vulnerable because of the high value of their product on the black market and receive especially high levels of protection by corporate security. CBW plants are usually assigned units of the Imperial military for protection, but company security at these plants is also heavy.

Corporate/Government Relations

The Imperium has the power to tax megacorporations and regulate certain of their actions. SuSAG's power, in certain areas, is probably equal to the Imperium. Active hostilities, however, would be bad for business.

SuSAG maintains that a stable interstellar government is good for business, and keeping the Imperium in power is in their own best interests.

For this reason, SuSAG never actively opposes the Imperium, or works for its downfall. This does not mean that no SuSAG division ever violates the law, merely that they keep violations to a minimum and try not to get caught.

Outside the Imperium, SuSAG still exercises restraint in opposing Imperial interests.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

By Imperial law, SuSAG is required to comply with whatever local laws are in effect. As a general rule, SuSAG prefers not to overtly

oppose a legitimate planetary government. Usually, the firm has sufficient covert influence to persuade a government to exempt it from most restrictions.

Unlike most other megacorporations, few worlds are under SuSAG's direct control. This is due to a company policy, promulgated to help SuSAG's public image. Corporate control of a world is usually resented by the populace, and in SuSAG's case this could lead to outright rebellion. However, SuSAG retains covert political and economic control of a number of worlds throughout the Imperium and beyond, through its subsidiaries.

SuSAG In The Spinward Marches

SuSAG's presence in the Spinward Marches sector dates from the acquisition of a chemical facility on Mora in 427. Expansion proceeded rapidly, and all divisions were active in the Marches by 600. Massive stockpiles of CBW Weaponry and Countermeasures were sold to the Imperium at the start of the Third Frontier War (none were used), and at the war's end a CBW plant was established on Shirene (Lunion 0505).

SuSAG has other major facilities in the Rhylanor (Rhylanor 0306), Fornice (Morn 0605), and Trin (Trin's Veil 0805) systems. SuSAG subsidiaries have facilities at most non-Zhodani systems.

Each SuSAG division maintains offices at A and B starports in the Marches.

SuSAG maintains no offices and owns no subsidiaries in territories under Zhodani control, but some trade was done before the recent war.

The extra-imperial division maintains a large psi drug manufacturing facility at Tarsus (District 268 0308), as well as other (non-psi drug) facilities in the Zamine (Darrian 0401), and Collace (District 268 0407) systems.

District 268 is considered an important enough region to rate an RGM all its own.

SuSAG In The Solomani Rim

SuSAG has an extensive presence in the Rim, dating from the acquisition of Inidu (Concord 0806) from its original owners in 425, just before the admission of the Easter Concord into the Imperium.

All divisions of SuSAG are active in the Rim, and its offices can be found at all A and B starports in Imperial space.

Inidu is owned by SuSAG's R&D division and the populace is employed by SuSAG.

The Extra-Imperial division, through subsidiary companies, has installations on dozens of worlds within the Solomani Confederation. SuSAG's affiliation with these companies is kept hidden from the public at large, because of the bad feeling that would be generated by an ImperiaI firm controlling Solomani companies.

Manufacture of psi drugs is illegal in the Solomani Confederation, and SUSAG runs no psi drug plants there (although, as with the Imperium, smuggled SuSAG psi drugs are sold on the black market).

A GALLERY OF OUTSIDERS

BY BRYAN STEELE

The *Traveller* universe is immense and contains a huge variety of different beings that occupy a vast collection of worlds and galaxies. In the *Traveller Core Rulebook* several of these alien species are revealed to readers but in such a vast universe there are many more. Science fiction and horror stories, comics and movies have included countless beings who have grabbed our attention in one way or another. Those creatures have sparked new and interesting alien races. Perhaps these alien creatures may appear on some world within your version of *Traveller*?

This article gives descriptions and rules for five alien races based around popular movies and stories. It also details how *Traveller* Referees and players can choose to make use of them in their own gaming sessions – as Player Characters or new opponents.

Artificial Soldier

Designed by scientists looking to create the perfect disposable warrior who could be dropped into a battlefield to do whatever it takes to fulfil the mission, the artificial soldier program forgot to omit one very important factor – self-preservation. These silica-based humanoid life forms are everything the scientists planned them to be, except they were supposed to just 'die out' after their mission was over. They did not. Their genetically fabricated bodies were so tuned to survival in battle that their basic 'do anything to live on' programming carried over after their missions ended. In effect, they refused to simply fade away after their intended use was up.

Artificial soldiers cannot breed but they have learned how to recreate the processes allowing their 'birth' from artificial wombs and their fast-tracked behavioural and learning processes. They managed to find a way to effectively reproduce asexually, turning a few dozen battle-hardened veterans into a fully capable, albeit militaristic, society.

Other than the tattooed barcode numbers on the necks of the first 72, all artificial soldiers are more-or-less identical. They are physically fit, bald, eerily smooth-skinned and exactly 1.95 metres tall. They are strong, fast and preternaturally good at learning, all at the cost of natural healing capabilities and a social awkwardness bordering on sociopathic.

Artificial Soldiers in *Traveller*

Artificial Soldiers have Notable Strength, Dexterity and Education (+2), Weak Social Standing (–4) and cannot manifest Psionic powers. Additionally, Artificial Soldiers do not naturally heal. They 'seal wounds' using the Medic skill; gaining lost Characteristic points equal to the Effect of the roll (once per day).

Example Artificial Soldier Characters

The following are several ready-made Artificial Soldiers for use in a *Traveller* game.

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
1st Generation Infantry	Army (Infantry) 3	12	10	8	7	10	4	—
Drive (wheeled) 1, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 2, Leadership 1, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 2, Recon 1, Survival 2, Tactics 1; Artificial Soldier Traits								
Blade (2d6), Laser pistol (3d6+3), Combat Armour (14)								

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Laboratory Breeder	Army (Infantry) 2, Scholar (scientist) 1	11	10	8	9	12	5	—
Computers 2, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 2, Life Science (cybernetics) 2, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Survival 1; Artificial Soldier Traits								
Blade (2d6), Laser pistol (3d6+3), Combat Armour (14), Medikit, Multi-spectrum Medical Scanner								

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
5th Generation Spacer	Army (Infantry) 1, Drifter (Wanderer) 2	10	10	10	7	9	3	—
Athletics (coordination)1, Comms 1, Gun Combat (energy pistols) 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2, Investigate 1, Jack of All Trades 1, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Recon 1, Streetwise 1, Tactics 1; Artificial Soldier Traits								
Comms, ACR w/ 2 magazines (3d6), Combat Armour (12), Medikit, Survival Kit								

The Carnaxians

Native to an industrialised planet on the rim of a high-radiation system, the Carnaxians were once common omnivorous humanoids living on a lush planet with adequate agriculture. After 20 generations of pollution and over-industrialisation, the planet's flora became scarce and weak. After the vegetation all but vanished, chemical proteins and vitamin supplements became thin and eventually nonexistent. The Carnaxians turned to base carnivorous behaviour at first, eventually succumbing to cannibalism.

Fifty more generations and several evolutions later, the Carnaxians have become the personification of predatory instinct and insatiable hunger. They began to hunt each other like tribes of savages. The hunt became half the fun; the devouring of one's enemies the greater half, of course. Reaching out into the stars, the Carnaxians found new prey – and new tastes to fill their maws.

Carnaxians are short and squat humanoids, roughly 1.5 metres tall on average. They are covered in thick and leathery skin the colour of soured milk, making great contrast to their deep blue, pupil-less eyes. Their long-fingered hands and long-toed feet end in sharp claws good for grasping prey and their wide, froglike mouths are filled with serrated teeth similar to a shark's. There is little more frightening than a Carnaxian hunting party looming over you as you come to...their stunners ensuring you are *live* prey when they begin to eat you.

Carnaxians in *Traveller*

Carnaxians are Armoured (1), have Notable Dexterity (+2), Natural Weapons (claws and bite) and Feral. Carnaxians suffer a –2 to all skill checks if they have not eaten fresh meat that day. The damage of a Carnaxian's bite attack is 2d6; their claws inflict 1d6+1. When a Carnaxian shows Psionic potential, they add +1 to their Psi Characteristic.

Example Carnaxian Characters

The following are several ready-made Carnaxians for use in a *Traveller* game.

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Carnaxian Pack Leader	Scout (Exploration) 2, Rogue (Enforcer) 2	9	11	10	7	4	7	—
Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigation 1, Leadership 1, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Zero-G 1; Carnaxian Traits								
Body Pistol w/ 2 magazines (3d6-3), Flak Jacket+Natural (7), Stunner (2d6+3)								

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Carnaxian Meatmonger	Scout (Exploration) 2, Rogue (Enforcer) 1	10	10	9	6	3	6	—
Athletics (Endurance) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Investigation 2, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (natural weapons) 3, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2; Carnaxian Traits								
Blade (2d6), Body Pistol w/ 2 magazines (3d6-3), Flak Jacket+Natural (7), Hunting Survival Kit, Stunner (2d6+3)								

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Carnaxian Instinctual Predator	Rogue (Enforcer) 1, Psion (Psi-Warrior) 3	9	11	10	7	5	8	9
Athletics (Endurance) 1, Awareness 2, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Investigation 1, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Telekinesis 1; Carnaxian Traits								
Blade (2d6), Body Pistol w/ 2 magazines (3d6-3), Flak Jacket+Natural (7), Hunting Survival Kit, Stunner (2d6+3)								

The Gorrilans

An offshoot from the uplifted apes originating from Earth aeons ago, the Gorrilans are hulking reminders that having a high technology level does not always mean having a higher sense of civilisation. Dedicating their lives to brutal close combat tactics and constant warfare between Gorrilan clans, each member of the species is hard as nails and never afraid of engaging an enemy. As long as they can get in close and get their armoured mitts on their foes, a Gorrilan is happy.

Gorrilans thrive on combat and constantly test their mettle against what they hope to be greater opponents. They adorn themselves with trophies; kill markings and reminders of their glory. To some these markings look cluttered and ugly hanging from the aliens' fur or armour but to a Gorrilan it speaks volumes of their battle prowess, ability and worth to the rest of Gorrilan society.

Gorrilans are 2.5 metre-tall gorilla-based humanoids who tend to rest forward on their knuckles, walking on their elongated arms like their terran counterparts. Their fur is dark brown, black or even a silvery grey, with near-black skin tones showing on their hands, feet and faces. They are extremely strong but tend to move somewhat awkwardly as a result of it.

The Gorrilans in _Traveller_

Gorrilans have Notable Strength (+2), Large size and Weak Education (–2). Gorrilans suffer a –2 to all ranged combat rolls and are incapable of refusing a challenge to any test of physical prowess (within reason).

Example Gorrilan Characters

The following are several ready-made Gorrilans for use in a _Traveller_ game.

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Gorrilan Clan WarApe	Marines (Ground Assualt) 3	13	6	9	7	6	7	—
Athletics (strength) 3, Carouse 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Heavy Weapons (man portable artillery) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 2, Melee (unarmed) 2, Recon 2, Survival 2, Tactics 1, Vacc Suit 1; Gorrilan Traits									
Baton (2d6), Comms, LMG (4d6), Gauss Pistol w/ 2 magazines (3d6), Powered Gauntlets (2d6+4), Combat Armour (14), 1d6-3 Combat Implants, 1d6-2 War Trophies									

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Gorrilan SiegeApe	Marines (Star Marines) 3	14 (18)	8 (6)	11	7	7	8	—
Athletics (strength) 3, Battle Dress 2, Carouse 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Heavy Weapons (man portable artillery) 2, Melee (bludgeon) 2, Melee (unarmed) 3, Recon 1, Survival 1, Tactics 2, Gorrilan Traits									
Battle Dress (16), Rotary Machine Gun (5d6), Gauss Pistol w/ 2 magazines (3d6), Rending Fists (4d6+6), 1d6 Combat Implants, 1d6+2 War Trophies									

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Gorrilan Silverback Officer	Marines (Star Marines) 2, Nobility (Administatr) 2	14 (18)	10 (8)	12	9	10	9	—
Athletics (strength) 2, Battle Dress 3, Carouse 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Heavy Weapons (man portable artillery) 2, Investigate 2, Leadership 2, Melee (bludgeon) 3, Melee (unarmed) 3, Recon 1, Survival 2, Tactics 3, Gorrilan Traits									
Battle Dress (16), PGMP-12 (10d6), Gauss Pistol w/ 2 magazines (3d6), Rending Fists (4d6+6), 1d6+2 Combat Implants, 1d6x5 War Trophies									

The Vampyr

Dozens of terran myths and legends surround the idea of an undead creature living off the blood and energies of the living – the vampire. As all myths have some root in fact, so too does the legend of the vampire. Long ago, when Earth was in its darkest of ages, a race of predatory aliens came to the planet in search of resources. One of these was a renewable source of their primary food item; colloidal iron. This race, the Vampyr, needed trace amounts of iron in their diets to survive but had weak digestive systems that could only tolerate liquids and soft pastes. The answer was iron-rich human blood.

The Vampyr came to the planet and many others like it to hunt and feed upon the blood-bearing creatures occupying it. Unlike the stories about them, Vampyr (both single and plural in reference) are very much alive. They simply have a very cool body temperature, a circulatory system that is based on osmosis rather than a pumping heart and a severe physiological reaction to direct ultraviolet light. Their fabled strength, speed and amazing charisma hailed from their innate psionic abilities, which are formidable. So long as they keep the iron content in their body high, they are amazingly adaptive creatures through the power of their mind.

Like their descriptions in the stories, the Vampyr have extremely pale flesh and red eyes like those of an albino. Their strange metabolism and internal organelle structure makes their skin clammy and their wounds do not bleed so much as *weep*. Other than their sharp fangs (which include all of their teeth, not just the pronounced canines) they are similar to terran humans in size and form but many have longer or pointed ears and more almond-shaped eyes. They can pass as humans with makeup or in very low light but with their mental skills they rarely need to.

Vampyr in *Traveller*

Vampyr are Psionic, have Notable Psi (+1), Natural Weapon (bite) and a Fast Metabolism. Vampyr have Weak Endurance (–2). The damage of a Vampyr's bite attack is 1d6. Additionally, any part of a Vampyr caught in direct ultraviolet light (yes, open space counts) unshielded suffers 1d6 points of damage each round. They also suffer an additional 1d6 of damage from any weapon with 'laser' in its name.

Example Vampyr Characters

The following are several ready-made Vampyr for use in a *Traveller* game.

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Vampyr Socialite	Nobility (Dilettante) 3, Psion (Adept) 1	7	9	6	9	9	10	10
Athletics (Coordination) 1, Awareness 2, Carouse 2, Computers 1, Deception 3, Gambler 1, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Stealth 2, Telepathy 2; Vampyr Traits								
Blade (2d6), Executive Protec Suit (4), 1d6-4 vials of blood, 2d6 x 1,000 Credits								

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Vampyr Bloodhunter	Rogue (line/crew) 2, Psion (Psi-Warrior) 2	9	9	8	8	7	8	11
Athletics (Coordination) 2, Awareness 3, Clairvoyance 2, Computers 1, Deception 3, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Stealth 3, Telekinesis 2; Vampyr Traits								
Blade (2d6), Silenced Body Pistol (3d6-3), Mesh Armour (6), 1d6-2 vials of blood								

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Vampyr Warlord	Nobility (Administrator) 2, Psion (Psi-Warrior) 3	10	9	8	8	7	9	12
Athletics (Coordination) 1, Awareness 2, Clairvoyance 1, Comms 1, Computers 1, Deception 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2, Leadership 2, Melee (large blade) 3, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Stealth 1, Tactics 2, Telekinesis 2, Telepathy 2; Vampyr Traits								
Broadsword (3d6), Gauss Rifle (4d6), Combat Armour (12), 1d6 vials of blood								

The Zom-B Infected

The zomroniasis complex B, or Zom-B for short, was a powerful bio-weapon used on rogue human colonists during the much hated and tragic Colony Wars of Sigma-7. Designed originally to be a low-orbit weapon that would deaden and desiccate flesh when spread into the atmosphere, complex B was unfortunately never tested in a high-radiation environment – a worldwide travesty in the making. When the Corporation deployed Zom-B onto Sigma-7, the radiation layer in the upper stratosphere mutated the bacteria and turned it into a powerful flesh contagion turning men into pain-deadened monsters.

Contagious beyond just the first exposure, the infected of the Zom-B bio-weapon can also pass their powerful disease to anyone they bite (or somehow spread their saliva to). In a matter of hours the bacteria turn the human into a grey-green leathery beast with black nails, teeth and eyes. They are undeniably tough and can withstand most injuries, healing through the devouring of what was lost – flesh.

Those infected with the Zom-B weapon are not truly dead or rotting, they simply look as if they should be. They are horrible to look upon, smell terrible and have a constant shuffle to their step due to the deadening in their nerve endings; a blessing and a curse. While they might not be able to feel the world perfectly, they also never feel the pain of the wounds that are killing them...when the people of the galaxy see them as the monsters they were made to be.

The Zom-B Infected in *Traveller*

Zom-B Infected have Notable Strength (+1) and Endurance (+4), Natural Weapon (bite) and a Slow Metabolism. They also have Very Weak Dexterity and Social Standing (–4). The Infected cannot heal normally, only healing damage they have suffered equal to the damage caused from their bite attacks. The damage of a Zom-B Infected's bite attack is 1d6+3.

Additionally, any human (or near-human species) bitten by a Zom-B Infected must pass an Athletics (Endurance) skill check or contract the disease; becoming one of the Zom-B Infected in 2d6+4 hours.

Example Zom-B Infected Characters

The following are several ready-made Zom-B Infected for use in a *Traveller* game.

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Sigma-7 Colonist	Citizen (Colonist) 3	8	6	12	7	6	4	—

Athletics (Strength) 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Survival 1; Zom-B Infected Traits

Body-Pistol w/ 1 magazine (3d6-3), Cloth Armour (4)

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Sigma-7 Soldier	Army (Infantry) 2, Citizen (Worker) 2	10	6	12	6	7	5	—

Athletics (Strength) 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 1, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Survival 1, Tactics 1; Zom-B Infected Traits

Blade (2d6), Assault Rifle w/ 1 magazine (3d6), Mesh Armour (6)

Character	Career Path	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Education	Social Standing	Psionic Strength
Romero Crops	Army (Infantry) 1, Rogue (Enforcer) 3	11	6	13	8	8	5	—

Athletics (Strength) 1, Computers 1, Gun Combat (energy pistol) 2, Melee (blade) 0, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Survival 2; Zom-B Infected Traits

Blade (2d6), Stunner (2d6+3), Flak Armour (8)

Space Bazaar

By Carl Walmsley

At the waypoints and space ports of the Third Millenium – just as in the towns and cities of old Earth – there are gathering places where merchants, hawkers and peddlers sell their wares. Oddities from far off worlds, prototype weapons and armour and curious plants and animals are all available for the right price.

The properties of some such items are accurately described and explained in a manual. More often, however, the old adage 'buyer beware' is all too appropriate. Now and then, a find of exceptional worth may even be acquired from a merchant who has no idea what he has stumbled upon.

Whether it is a 'star boot sale' or a grand auction, there are all sorts of bargains to be had by characters with sharp eyes, who know how to strike a deal.

Random Value

For some of the items presented below, tables are included to randomly determine their true worth. The Referee is, of course, free to pick from or alter these tables as he sees fit in order to suit his own purposes.

It is also hard to put a fixed price on some of the unusual, even unique, items Player Characters might try to purchase in a space bizarre. The prices listed should be taken as the minimum each item is likely to be available for.

Alien Organisms

Many bazaars and markets specialise in the acquisition and sale of alien life forms. They may be collected as pets or guardians, used for biological research or for a host of other reasons.

Creature	Cost
Curas Worm	2,500 Cr.
Daskaryn Egg	500 Cr.
Oracle Plant	400 Cr.

Curas Worm

Curas Worms are symbiotic organisms that live inside the digestive tracts of other animals. In exchange for the food they siphon off from their hosts, they provide greatly increased regenerative capabilities.

So long as a curas worm is well fed – this requires the host organism to double its usual consumption of food and water – it produces regenerative chemicals and enzymes which are distributed throughout the host's system.

As a result of this process, an injured host recovers from wounds more quickly. A host maintaining an active lifestyle recovers from injuries as though he has taken a full day of rest after one hour's rest. A host taking a full day of rest recovers 2d6 + Endurance DM worth of characteristic points.

Daskaryn Egg

Ferociously protective of creatures that they perceive as part of their pack, Daskaryn are in some ways the perfect guard-beasts.

Once hatched from an egg, Daskaryn use an acute sense of smell to assimilate information about their brood-siblings. Any creature that nestles up to a hatchling within the first 2d6 hours of its life becomes part of its pack. From this point onward, the Daskaryn will do all that it can to protect its kin – even laying down its own life if required.

Many free traders take a daskaryn on board as a ship's pet and 'guard dog'. They can be 'ship-trained', though do tend to get restless on longer voyages.

A daskaryn that has already hatched is of little value as it will no longer bond with new creatures.

Daskaryn

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack
Daskaryn							
Intimidator	Woods	9	11	9	1	7	10
Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Recon 1, Melee (teeth) 2, Persuade 1, Survival 2							
Teeth (2d6), Hide (2). Number Encountered : 3d6							

Daskaryn resemble feathered, slightly reptilian wolverines. They have warbling voices that can produce bird-like tweets and whistles when they wish to show they are happy, and deeper growling sounds to indicate they are angry or feel threatened.

Oracle Plant

Oracle plants contain hallucinogenic chemicals, which certain cultures believe facilitate visions – both of other places and of the future. In fact, the consumption of oracle plant stems stimulates the parts of the brain controlling psionic abilities.

A character with no psionic talent (Psionic Strength 0) who consumes the stems of an oracle plant experiences vivid and debilitating hallucinations for 10d6 minutes. It will only be by pure co-incidence that some of the events glimpsed in his visions might turn out to be relevant to the future, his mind will simply be extrapolating likely outcomes or musing on recent events.

A character with a Psionic strength of 1 or higher (but who has never received training) may possibly experience a genuine vision. To determine whether or not this occurs, the character should test to see whether he acquires Clairvoyance – and only Clairvoyance – as if he had just received psionic training (*Traveller Core Rulebook*, page 152). If successful, the character permanently acquires Clairvoyance and experiences his first use of the talent during the vision. If unsuccessful, the character becomes locked inside a nightmare hallucination for 10d6 minutes, during which time he is rendered comatose. At the end of the nightmare, the character permanently reduces his Psionic Strength by 1.

A character with a Psionic Strength of 1 or higher who has already received training may consume oracle plant stems to temporarily boost his abilities. The character feels light-headed for 1D6 minutes (-1 DM on all skill checks) after first eating the stems, but once this passes he benefits from a +2 DM on his next psionic skill check, so long as the check is made within 24 hours of consuming the stems.

ALIEN ARTEFACTS

Many of the so-called alien artefacts picked up at stalls and markets are nothing more than flotsam and jetsam from ancient civilisations. Some however – such as those presented here – are genuine treasures, the like of which Player Characters dream of finding.

No prices are listed for these items – the sky really is the limit. However, if their function has remained a mystery to the person selling them, they will typically be available for 2d6 x 100 Credits.

Purification Globe

This 30cm silver sphere is able to create a safe zone where most organic life is able to survive.

Once activated, the sphere neutralizes all toxins, bacteria and viruses which would be harmful to the creature holding the sphere. It also screens out harmful radiation and is able to modify the temperature – up or down – by as much as 200 degrees kelvin, in order to best suit the needs of its owner.

The range of these purification effects may extend as much as 3 metres in all directions from the globe.

The globe cannot produce gas – it may only filter an existing atmosphere of harmful microbes and such like – so it can not protect a character from a vacuum or in an atmosphere which is itself unable to sustain the wielder.

Activation of the globe requires it to be held and the wielder to concentrate on starting it up. This takes a single round. Thanks to an internal energy source, it can run indefinitely.

Holographic map

Stored inside an innocuous looking item such as a disk, crystal or ornament is a three-dimensional map of an uncharted region of space.

The holographic projector which reveals the map will remain dormant until a specific condition is met. Typical examples include:

- Being held by a member of a certain race
- Being held by someone with a Psionic Strength of 1 or higher
- Being exposed to radiation from a certain type of star
- Being exposed to a certain pressure
- Hearing a command phrase spoken aloud

Once the trigger condition is met, a fully interactive, holographic star map is projected into the air. There is no way to be certain of the map's accuracy, but it may well reveal undiscovered stars, worlds, asteroid belts and so forth. To the right people, such information could be very valuable.

Interpreter

This tiny gelatinous ganglion works by attaching itself to a creature's vocal chords and extending tiny filaments up into its brain. It then greatly enhances both the creature's ability to learn and understand new languages and to generate the necessary sounds to speak such languages.

Typically, the interpreter remains dormant until it is swallowed. From there, it makes its own way to the vocal chords and implements whatever neural connections are required to function properly.

After only 4d6 hours of exposure to a new language, a character with an Interpreter will acquire this language at a skill level of 0. If the character continues his exposure to this language, his skill

level will continue to increase by 1 every 1d3 days, to a maximum skill level of 2.

Psi-Mask

This potent artefact was devised by a race with no psionic abilities of its own, but feared those of its enemies. It is half black, half crimson with narrow slits for the eyes and mouth. A tiny gravitic device allows it to float in place without the need of a cord.

A creature trying to use a psionic ability directly against someone wearing a Psi-Mask suffers a –2 DM.

Anyone – including the wearer of a psi-mask – who tries to use a psionic ability within 10 metres of such an artefact suffers a –1 DM.

Exo-bionic Glove

Resembling an insectoid claw made from green and silver metal, this gauntlet was most likely designed as both a weapon and a badge of office.

Situated just behind the knuckle joints of the index and middle fingers, and built into the workings of the glove, are a retractable blade and a venom-projector.

The knuckle blade may be extended or retracted with the use of a minor action.

The venom projector may only be fired at Personal, Close or Short range. The venom used in this weapon is both toxic and corrosive.

In addition to providing the use of these weapons, the glove enhances the wearer's grip and physical strength. Any tasks making use of the augmented hand (which includes melee attacks) benefit from this. The wearer's Strength is considered to be 3 higher than normal.

Gene-splicer

This machine is a collection of odd glass tubes, wires, pumps, circuits and needles. It is just small enough to be held by a single

Exo-bionic Glove

Weapon	Range	Damage	Heft	Mass
Knuckle blade	Melee (small blade)	2d6	—	—

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Auto	Recoil	Mass	Mag	Cost	Ammo Cost
Venom Projector	—	Special	3d6	No	—	4	50	—	—

adult male. The splicer works by taking a genetic sample from two separate creatures and synthesizing a formula that will transform the physical form of one subject to match the other.

The splicer is only able to create a formula from two genetically similar creatures – usually members of the same gender and species.

The effects of the metamorphosis are permanent, though a counteragent may be formulated from the original subjects' DNA which reverses the process.

A creature undergoing a gene-splicing transformation enters a sort of cocoon, formed from a resin secreted through the skin. 1d6 hours later, it emerges in its new form.

A newly created 'twin' has an appearance identical to the original at the time the genetic sample was taken. Its voice sounds very similar, though detailed vocal scans will detect slight differences.

In game terms, the transformed creature acquires the Strength, Dexterity and Endurance of the duplicated creature – along with any natural weapons, armour or movement types. However, it maintains its own Intelligence, Education and Social Standing – along with its memories and skills.

Each day a creature spends in its new form increases the likelihood of genetic decay. When the transformation first occurs, the Referee should secretly roll a d6. After this number of days has elapsed, the creature begins to lose 1 point of either Strength, Dexterity or Endurance per day until he resumes his original form. Determine this loss at random. If these reductions ever reduce a Characteristic to 0, the creature dies.

In addition, if this genetic decay ever reduces one of the creature's characteristics below its starting score (i.e. before the transformation), this damage becomes permanent and will not be recovered even if the creature is later returned to its original form.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

As scouts and merchants explore the far-flung reaches of space, and even recently colonised worlds, the remnants of ancient civilizations are often discovered. These items may be little more than curios or truly significant cultural finds.

Cultural Trinkets

Those seeking to uncover the history of ancient cultures greatly value the discovery of buried artefacts. These can take a variety of forms, and be worth anywhere from a few credits to tens of thousands.

You will need to roll twice on the table below in order to establish the type of item for sale and its asking price. It is important that a note is made of the asking price, as it will figure into its later value.

Each time that the character tries to sell on a cultural trinket in a new location the Referee should roll the appropriate dice indicated by the Value Modifier to find out how much the character will receive from the sale of the item. Of course, the character is not compelled to sell an item if he does not wish to.

d6	Item	Price (Cr.)	Value Modifier
1	Pottery	2d6 x 10	1d3
2	Carvings	2d6 x 10	1d6
3	Jewellery	3d6 x 10	1d6+1
4	Ancient weapon	4d6 x 10	1d6
5	Funereal artefacts	5d6 x 10	2d6
6	Religious artefacts	2d6 x 50	2d6

For example: *Jentar Hex, a merchant explorer, has paid 80 Cr for an ancient urn (pottery) which he now tries to sell on. The referee rolls 1D3 (the Value Modifier for pottery), resulting in a 1. Jentar is offered only 80 credits for the item so he elects to hold on to it. On the next planet he visits, he is offered 240 credits (a result of 3 on the Value Modifier) and he is happy to sell.*

For each of the above items a character purchases, there is a small chance that it represents a truly significant find. Roll 2D6 for each item that is acquired: on a result of a double 6, the item's value in increased by a factor of ten. Of course, the character will not know this until he comes to sell it on.

Armour

Armour Type	Protection	Required Skill	Cost (Cr.)	Mass (kg)
Chrysalis Armour	6	None	7,000	1
Rhino V Assault Shield	10	Battle Dress 1	2,000	12

ARMOUR

Although the widespread availability of armour allows for characters to be shielded against harmful environments and weapons, there are certain locations and situations which are so unusual as to require spesialized forms of protection.

Chrysalis Armour

By employing a lightweight frame of supports woven into the fabric of an apparently everyday garment, Chrysalis Armour is able to fold out and retract in much the same way as an insect's wing. Once unfolded, it covers vulnerable body parts with a translucent plastic film that is both extremely durable and supple.

Favoured by those who do not wish to openly don armour, Chrysalis suits can move between their retracted and unfolded state in a single combat round. Switching between states requires a Minor Action from the wearer.

Corona-shield Hostile Environment Vacc Suit (C-HEV)

Designed to be worn by engineers and explorers whose work takes them dangerously close to stars, the C-HEV provides twice as much protection against heat and radiation based damage as would a standard HEV of the same Tech Level.

A C-HEV costs 50% more than an HEV of the same Tech level. The Mass of the suit is increased by 10%.

Rhino V Assault Shield

Fashioned from an exceptionally tough alloy, the Rhino V is a personal shield that can deflect fire from all but the most powerful of weapons. It is designed to be carried ahead of a character who is advancing upon an enemy position.

The Rhino V provides protection against all attacks from the front (or from any other single 90% arc towards which the shield positioned). This is in addition to any Protection offered by any armour a character may be wearing.

It is possible to shoot 'around' a Rhino V, but the character holding the shield is considered to have ¾ Cover (-2 DM) against all attacks from the arc against which it is positioned.

Due to the bulky nature of a Rhino V, a character holding one may not Dodge.

WEAPONS

Whether it is under or over the counter, there will always be a lively trade in weaponry. For Player Characters looking to gain an edge over their enemies, purchasing a uniquely modified weapon, or one recovered from an alien world, may be just what is needed.

Modified Weapons

A few tweaks, or even a major redesign, can greatly increase the effectiveness of a weapon. Though such changes usually invalidate the manufacturer's warranty, they can make a weapon rather appealing to a Player Character.

'Woodpecker' Autopistol

Disregarding all the usual protocols for balancing and maintaining a weapon, the firing rate of this autopistol has been significantly increased. As a result, it can deliver far more firepower than most weapons its size, but has a severe recoil that only the strongest individuals can hope to cope with.

Mercurial Staff

Utilizing a blend of super-light plastic polymers, and fashioned around a hollow, liquid metal-filled core, this weapon is able to deliver an extremely hefty blow. As it is swung – at great speed due to its lightness – the mercury-like substance rushes towards the end, increasing the force of the impact.

The metal used in the construction of these weapons is approximately five times heavier than mercury and has a correspondingly greater 'hit'.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Heft	Mass	Cost (Cr.)
Mercurial Staff	9	Melee (bludgeon)	2d6+3	1	2	500
Vibro-Sabre	10	Melee (large blade)	2d6+3	1	1	2,000

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Auto	Recoil	Mass	Mag	Cost	Ammo Cost
Double Tap Snub Pistol	9	Pistol	4d6	No	2	0.5	6	500	10
TCM 4 'Mule'	9	Shotgun	4d6+special	No	2	5	8	800	80
Bio-Gloop Gun	12	Pistol	5d6	No	—	3	15	1,000	50
Nova Gun	13	Rifle	4d6+6	No	—	7	100	10,000	2,000

PROTOTYPES

There are plenty of small-scale arms manufacturers looking to expand and mix it up with the all-powerful mega-corporations. One way for them to make a name for themselves is to develop prototype weapons with unusual abilities. Sometimes these are given to military units or high profile individuals for field-testing. All to often, however, they end up being sold on the black market.

Starknight Industries 'Double Tap' Snub Pistol

Though not a sophisticated proposition, the Double Tap's twin barrel design allows a character with sufficient strength to handle to recoil to deliver a truly deadly attack.

The weapon is equipped with two settings, allowing the weapon to fire either one or both of its barrels. If only one barrel is fired, the weapon is identical to a standard TL8 snub pistol. If both barrels are discharged, use the statistics below.

TCM4 'Mule' Electro-shotgun

Employing traditional buckshot ammunition, the Mule's innovative feature is to electrify the pellets in order to shock and stun targets.

A character struck by a blast from an electro-shotgun must make an Endurance check with a negative DM equal to half the damage taken (after armour is subtracted). If the Endurance check is failed, the character is immobilised by convulsive seizures for 1d3 rounds. If the Endurance check is successful, the character ignores the effects of the shock.

Vibro-Sabre

There are many civilisations still making use of melee weapons, either for ceremonial or cultural purposes or because they are 'safe' to use on board a space ship.

A vibro-sabre employs a curved metallic or plastic composite blade that vibrates at hypersonic speeds. This enables the constantly shifting edge to slice through even the toughest armour.

A vibro-sabre halves the Protection offered by Armour.

ALIEN WEAPONS

One of the most tantalising aspects of finding an alien weapon can be an uncertainty regarding its capabilities. Taking a merchant's word for it is never a good idea, and some sort of demonstration is highly recommended.

Though notoriously difficult to maintain and repair, many adventurer-types regard an alien sidearm or blade as a badge of honour – and will pay top-credit to own one.

Bio-Gloop Gun

This organic-tech carbine, into which the wielder slots his forearm, fires blobs of acidic blue gunk. Though the range of these projections is limited, they have the capacity to rapidly digest organic matter. However, Bio-gloop has only a limited effect against non-organic materials. Amongst other things, this makes it safe for use aboard space ships.

The Protection afforded by Armour that is non-organic in origin (in most instances, everything except leather) is tripled when calculating its resistance to Bio-gloop.

Nova Gun

Wherever this weapon first originated, its angular design speaks of a culture prizing elegant simplicity. Containing a power cell which must be allowed to charge for 1 round before each shot is fired, it is a weapon unsuited to frantic firefights but has found use as a sniper rifle.

A shot from a nova gun creates a bright rainbow-hued beam of light.

A Nova Gun includes an x-ray laser sight as standard.
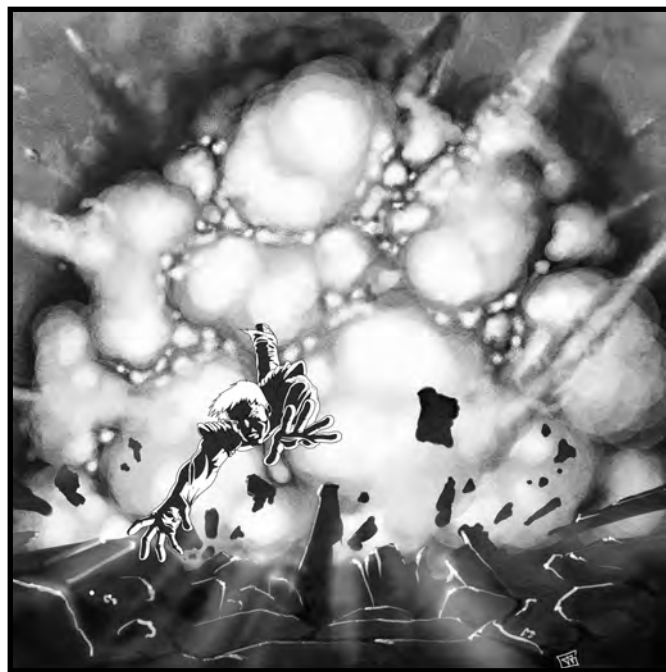
XENOLOGIST

BY URI KURLIANCHIK

'God loves aliens, otherwise he wouldn't have made them so darn expensive!'

— Captain Hordan Arber

The xenologist is not a scientist, though many xenologists would like to think of themselves as such. He is much more - an adventurer, an explorer and a businessman; a supplier of exotic alien pets or a Doctor Dolittle in outer space.

Xenologists are people who dedicate their lives to various non-sentient alien life-forms. Some become interstellar pet merchants; others work as freelance veterinarians who can deal with the most bizarre anatomies, while still others choose to risk life and limb trying to tame the untameable.

While there is much demand for the xenologist's skills and wares, he is often viewed with suspicion as the true power and sentience of an alien creature is rarely known in advance; what appears to be a cute and harmless pet might very well end up devouring an entire family when the stars are right. Because of this constant risk, xenologists rarely set up permanent 'pet shops' but travel from planet-to-planet, trying to sell their services or latest catch. This sometimes brings them at odds with the law because their businesses often include smuggling, poaching and violations of animal rights laws (where such exist).

Nevertheless, many wealthy and powerful merchants and aristocrats are willing to pay small fortunes to possess unique and impressive pets, ignoring both the danger and the illegality of the issue. This makes the risks taken by the xenologist more than worthwhile... should he survive to retire.

This article discusses the xenologist career, the unique challenges he has to face and the skills and items that help him overcome them. For Referees, two example alien pets and a patron for xenologist adventures are presented for immediate use in any *Traveller* campaign.

Qualification: Edu 6+
–1 DM for every previous career

Assignments: Choose one of the following:
- **Trader:** You made your living from capturing, transporting and selling exotic alien creatures to anyone who could afford them.
- **Tamer:** You broke and trained wild aliens to serve as mounts, guards, pets or beasts of burden for their owners.
- **Caretaker:** You were a doctor of non-sentient aliens, capable of taking on completely unknown physiques.

CAREER PROGRESS

	Survival	Advancement
Trader	Dex 6+	Int 6+
Tamer	Int 5+	Soc 7+
Caretaker	Edu 5+	Edu 7+

MUSTERING-OUT BENEFITS

Roll	Cash	Other Benefits
1	1,000	+1 Str
2	5,000	Weapon
3	10,000	+1 Edu
4	20,000	Ship Share
5	20,000	Armour
6	40,000	Two Ship Shares
7	60,000	Safari Ship*

* The Animal class safari ship from *Traders and Gunboats*.

RANKS AND BENEFITS

Rank	Trader Skill or Benefit	Tamer Skill or Benefit	Caretaker Skill or Benefit
1			
2	Survival 1	Animals (training) 1	Animals (veterinary) 1
3			
4	Gun-Combat (non-lethal) 1	Science (xenology) 1	Medic 1
5			
6	Trade 1	Persuade 1	Science (xenology) 1

SKILLS AND TRAINING

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 8)
1	+1 Int	Gun-Combat (non-lethal)	Advocate
2	+1 Edu	Comms	Astrogation
3	+1 Soc	Broker	Engineer
4	+1 Dex	Trade	Computers
5	Athletics (any)	Zero-G	Pilot (any)
6	Melee (any)	Vacc Suit	Heavy Weapons (non-lethal)

Roll	Specialist: Trader	Specialist: Tamer	Specialist: Caretaker
1	Survival	Persuade	Science (xenology)
2	Stealth	Animals (training)	Medic
3	Sensor	Investigate	Animals (veterinary)
4	Animals (Riding)	Science (xenology)	Investigate
5	Recon	Survival	Survival
6	Streetwise	Diplomat	Admin

MISHAPS

1d6	Mishap
1	Injured. Roll on the Injury table.
2	An animal you imported goes on a bloody rampage. Reduce your Social Standing by 2 and gain an Enemy. No one wants to continue doing business with you and you are forced to quit.
3	You are bitten by an alien that causes you to mutate. Roll on the Injury table and reduce your Social Standing by 1 due to your mutation. This Mishap does not cause you to leave this career.
4	You accidentally sell a sentient alien as a pet. Gain an Enemy. Roll Advocate 8+, if you succeed gain Advocate 1 and keep your job, if you fail you are disgraced, imprisoned for 1d3 years and banned from practicing xenology.
5	You were captured by wild aliens. Roll Persuade 8+ if you succeed you are free to go, otherwise spend your next term as a Barbarian.
6	Your spaceship crashes on a savage alien world and years pass until you are rescued. Gain Survival 1.

EVENTS

2d6	Event
2	Disaster! Roll on the Mishap table but you are not ejected from this career.
3	An aristocrat asks you to smuggle illegal aliens to his planet. If you accept, roll Deception 8+ or Persuade 8+ to gain Streetwise 1 and an extra Benefit roll. If you fail the roll you are caught and must pay a heavy fine, lose your Benefit roll for this term. If you refuse, you gain an Enemy in the political sphere.
4	You spend months at a time living and hunting among the friendly natives of some primitive planet. Gain one of the following skills; Melee (any) 1, Survival 1, Animals (farming) 1 or Stealth 1.
5	You become a popular expert on alien pets; your business thrives and you are a common guest on talk shows. Increase your Social Standing by 2 and gain +1 to your next benefit roll. However, animal rights groups target you as their Enemy.
6	You spend a while living among the friendly natives of a relatively civilised planet. Gain a Contact.
7	Life Event. Roll on the Life Events table (*Traveller Core Rulebook* page 34).
8	You develop a very close connection with an alien you recently acquired or trained. Gain an Ally.
9	A sentient alien desires you to bring it a human as a pet. If you agree, roll Persuade 8+ or Melee (any) 8+ if you succeed you get an extra benefit roll and a Contact. If you fail you lose one benefit roll, gain an Enemy and are thrown out of this career, you must take the Draft for your next term.
10	You are praised by animal rights groups everywhere for your humane treatment of animals and careful choice of clients. Gain a Contact in the political sphere.
11	You come across a powerful alien who treats you as a favoured pet and becomes your Ally. Either gain one level of Science (xenology) or +4 DM to your next advancement roll.
12	You discover a new creature which proves to be an extremely sought after commodity (as food, medicine, beast of burden and so forth). You get +3 DM to a Benefit roll from this career and also you gain Trade 1 or Broker 1.

New Equipment

In the xenology business it is essential to be able to capture the target without harming it. Whilst on earth this can easily be done by using stunners and standard sedatives, xenologists are often forced to deal with creatures whose anatomy is so alien that earthly sedatives and stunners have no effect on them and other means of detention are required, such as extraterrestrial poisons, nets, force fields and even stranger methods.

To achieve this aim, xenologists have developed an entire arsenal of non-lethal weapons. Since most xenologists are rivals and loathe sharing their professional secrets, these weapons vary widely. Presented here are the most common of these tools;

Dart Gun: The dart gun is the most primitive and least effective weapon in the xenologist's arsenal. Basically a specialised shotgun, this hefty weapon shoots a small syringe filled with a sedative that will hopefully temporarily incapacitate the target. This has two major drawbacks; the first is the physical damage done by the high-speed projectile, which can severely injure or even kill smaller aliens.

The second problem is the difficulty to acquire reliable sedatives – many good xenlogists lost their lives after shooting a small dart into the backside of a 50-ton monstrosity only to discover the sedative is not quite as effective as the alien merchant assured them it would be. For more information on sedatives and the methods of acquiring them, see the sidebar 'Finding the Right Sedative'.

Net: this grenade explodes into a cluster of miniature semi-intelligent missiles linking a durable metal net that envelopes and captures the target/s. Because of their heft, net grenades are usually shot from grenade launchers rather than thrown. Only creatures with Str 9+ can throw net grenades and only with –2 DM.

Trapped creatures are completely immobilised and automatically fail any roll requiring movement or reaction. The only kind of action they can attempt is to try damaging the net, which usually has protection 3 and can sustain up to 30 points of damage before breaking. Due to the net's tightness, only personal-range attacks can be used.

Cryogenic: Possibly the most sought after weapon in the xenology business, this futuristic grenade cryogenically freezes an area and all inside it, enabling the xenologist to quickly transport the victim to a cryoberth and from there to his ship. Its greatest disadvantage is the inherent danger of cryogenic freezing (see *Traveller Core Rulebook* for more details).

Any creature *fully* within the grenade's area of effect must make an Endurance check with a negative DM equal to 3d6. If this check fails, the creature is frozen and will die in 2d6 minutes unless moved to a cryoberth. If the Endurance check is successful, the creature is slowed down for the same duration – all its Characteristics are halved and it cannot take significant actions.

Creatures partially within the area of effect perform the same roll, only in case of failure they are slowed down instead of being frozen. Success means they suffer no ill-effects at all.

Force Field: The force field grenade is an extremely sophisticated weapon that creates a large, almost impenetrable semi-sphere around the grenade's location. A force field lasts for 30 minutes and weights about 150 kilograms. It does not stop laser rays and can be penetrated by an energy attack that deals 50 or more points of damage in one strike.

The difficulty to escape the force field is a function of how precisely the grenade was thrown.

Distance from target	DM to dodge
0–2	–2
3–5	0
6	+2

Slug Throwers

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Auto	Recoil	Mass (kg)	Magazine	Cost (Cr.)	Ammo Cost (Cr.)
Dart Gun	6	Ranged (shotgun)	2d6 + Special	No	1	4	5	250	30 + sedative

Grenades

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Mass (kg)	Blast Radius	Cost (Cr.)
Net	10	Ranged (thrown)	1d3	2	6	500
Cryogenic	11	Ranged (thrown)	Special	0.5	6	5,000
Force Field	13	Ranged (thrown)	None	0.5	6	2,500

New Rules
Training aliens

The skill used to train animals, be they earthly or extraterrestrial, is Animals (training). Despite that, without the Science (xenology) skill, training an alien is a Formidable Task (–6 DM) and the best a trainer could hope for is to teach the creature in question not to attack humans.

An experienced xenologist trainer, however, can do much more – he can teach an alien to perform various useful duties, rear it to be a friendly and playful pet and, on rare occasions, even install in it a rudimentary understanding of human society.

Rolling a natural 2 means the tamer made some horrible mistake and was savaged by the animal (if applicable). How much damage the animal caused to the hapless trainer and what was its subsequent fate is left up to the Referee's discretion.

Animals with Instinct 3 or less cannot be taught any commands, as they are too dim to communicate with.

Rear/ Break

Rearing is the act of raising a wild animal, born in captivity or captured in infancy, to be domesticated, while breaking is the act of domesticating an adult wild animal. An animal that was not reared/ broken cannot be taught any commands and is much more difficult to handle or pacify. Breaking an animal takes 1–6 weeks, while rearing takes whatever period it takes for the animal in question to reach maturity. Both checks are Intelligence-based.

Condition	DM
Animal needs to be broken*	–4
Animal was injured/ traumatised by a member of the xenologist's species	–2
Animal is herbivore	+2
Animal is omnivore/ other	None
Animal is carnivore	–2
Animal is small	+2
Animal is human-sized	None
Animal is large	–2
Animal is huge	–4
Animal is colossal	–6
Group Animal	Apply animal's Pack DM to Animals (training) roll

* As long as the animal is not broken it is hostile and does anything in its power to escape or harm the trainer, depending on its disposition.

Finding the right sedative

Despite the advances brought about by the stellar age, sedatives are still the cheapest and most widespread means of capturing exotic animals. However, as demand rises for stranger and stranger creatures, so finding the right sedative becomes a greater and deadlier challenge, sometimes even harder than finding the alien itself.

If the creature is known to science, the xenologist can attempt to acquire the sedative on a nearby planet. This requires a Streetwise 8+ roll and usually costs between 100–5,000 credits per dose, depending on how difficult it is to come by. If the creature is unknown, the xenologist can attempt to deduce the proper sedative based on past experience and scientific knowledge with a Science (xenology) 12+ roll with a DM equal to the xenologist's terms served.

The right sedative operates like tranq gas (see *Traveller Core Rulebook* for more details). The wrong sedative will usually have no effect at all or cause one of the following:

Roll	Effect
1	Same effect as arsenic on earth creatures.
2	The target becomes extremely sexually aroused with the first creature it sees.
3	The target increases all its physical characteristics by 1d6 for 2d6 minutes.
4	The target permanently gains a random planetary quirk (see page 69 in *Traveller Core Rulebook* for more details). The process takes 2d6 minutes during which the target is paralysed with searing pain.
5	The target becomes severely depressed and apathetic, neglecting any kind of self-defence for 1d6 hours.
6	Same effect as neurotoxin on earth creatures.

Teach

A domesticated animal is not dangerous but nor can it serve its owner in any useful way. For this reason many owners choose to spend a few extra thousand credits for the xenologist to teach the animal to perform some basic commands. The amount of commands an animal can learn equals to its Instinct DM (minimum 1) plus the following modifiers;

Condition	Commands
Animal lives in groups of 6 or more in nature	+1
Animal lives in hierarchal groups in nature	+1
Animal is has the Intermittent behaviour	+1

Presented here are some of the more popular commands taught to animals, followed by their Difficulty and a brief description. In any case, apply the animal's Instinct DM to the Animals (training) roll to teach that particular command. Teaching a command usually takes 1–6 weeks and each subsequent failure imposes a cumulative –2 DM on the next roll.

Attack (Varies) – This command tells the animal to attack a specific creature within sight. Note that most animals lack the intelligence required to recognise machines or even creatures vastly different from themselves as living beings and so may fail to identify them as potential targets. The Difficulty of teaching this command varies, depending on the ferocity of the animal in question but usually ranges between Very Difficult (for peaceful herbivores) to Routine (for pouncing, chasing and killing carnivores).

Defend (Varies) – This command tells the animal to follow you or any other creature you indicate and attack whoever attacks or threatens them. Along with Attack, this is one of the most popular commands in certain social circles, where having a squad of towering monstrosities accompanying you everywhere is more than a safety measure – it is a fashion statement. The Difficulty to teach this command is the same as the Attack command.

Patrol (Varies) – This command tells the animal to patrol a designated area and to attack anyone who enters it unaccompanied by the animal's master. The Difficulty to teach this command is the same as the Attack command.

Seek (Difficult) – This command tells the animal to try to find a certain quarry. Because most animals lack the intelligence needed to use a verbal description, this command is usually given in conjunction with showing a picture of the quarry, letting the animal sniff or taste something that belonged to the quarry or anything else that might help the animal locate the quarry using one of its senses.

Ride (Average) – This command teaches the animal to serve as a mount, which includes understanding which direction and at what speed that person wants the animal to go. No matter how cooperative the animal is, however, riding still requires an Animals (riding) roll. Pouncers are notoriously difficult to train and ride. Training a pouncer to be a mount is a Very Difficult task and all Animals (riding) rolls are made with –2 DM.

Work (Routine) – Work is not a single command but rather a certain mind frame conveyed to the animal. Work-trained animals are meeker and more dependent; they pull, push, lift and otherwise move various objects for their owners and usually work into exhaustion without any coercion being required. This command is almost never taught in TL 4+ societies as machines have replaced ordinary beasts of burden by this stage.

Come (Easy) – This command tells the animal to stop whatever it is its doing and return to its owner. Although it is one of the simplest commands to teach, ensuring the animal actually carries it out, especially when engaged in some pleasurable or exciting activity, might require an additional Animal (training) roll. See Handle/ Pacify for more details.

Fetch (Routine) – This command tells the animal to bring you, unharmed, an object or creature within sight.

Tricks (Routine) – This command includes a large group of actions such as: sit, stay, play dead, give paw (or any other equivalent appendage) and lie down. It is not as practical as the previous commands and is used mostly for leisure and entertainment. Ordinarily these commands are automatically carried out by the animal. However, just like with the Come command, distracting the animal from some pleasurable or thrilling activity might require an Animal (training) roll.

Handle/Pacify

Sometimes a tamer can find himself face-to-face with a powerful, unrestrained animal that can tear him to ribbons in seconds if he makes the wrong move. Sometimes an ordinarily well-behaved animal gets a sniff of some delicious morsel and cannot resist going after the treat. These are the cases when the handle/ pacify option is used.

Pacifying a wild animal is ordinarily a Very Difficult task, while handling a disobedient trained animal is Routine to Average, depending on how strong is the temptation the animal faces. All the DMs applied to Rear/Break rolls are also applied to Handle/ Pacify rolls.

DEALING WITH ALIEN XENOLOGISTS

An interesting twist for a xenology campaign could be an encounter with alien xenologists who consider the players to be non-sentient creatures to be used as pets, beasts of burden or display animals. How will the players cope with hunters equipped by the most sophisticated non-lethal weaponry in the universe? If captured, will the players try to prove their intelligence to their alien captors or will they try to escape their captivity using guile and ferocity born out of desperation? If both fail, how will the players interact with the other aliens they are kept in bondage with? After their escape, will the players' experiences cause them to reconsider the morality of their trade?

Physical violence can help but is risky; a character in a position to bully the animal must make 8+ Persuade roll. Success enables the character to add the check's Effect to his Animals (training) roll, while failure causes the Effect to be applied as a negative DM to the roll.

Handle and pacify take 1–6 minutes and each subsequent attempt is done with –2 DM.

ALIEN PETS:

Described here are two 'pets' that demonstrate both the allure and danger of the xenologist profession.

Saq'se'qan

The saq'se'qan is an extremely intelligent alien parasite that feeds on the mental waves generated by ill will and aggression. While unable to verbally communicate with members of other species, it has significant psionic powers that enable it to manipulate its victims into hatred and strife. Nothing brings the saq'se'qan more joy and substance than a domestic murder-suicide.

An adult saq'se'qan resembles a fat and grumpy purple hyrax whose mood swings tend to be more comical than intimidating. This amusing appearance combined with the creature's high intelligence, apparent fondness of children and longevity can lead the uninformed buyer to consider it the perfect pet – a mistake that will cost him at the very least his marital happiness and possibly his and his entire family's lives.

A healthy saq'se'qan can fetch a price of up to 2,000 credits from a client who is unaware of the creature's sinister nature and up to 10,000 credits from a client who is aware of it and intends to use it for unwholesome purposes.
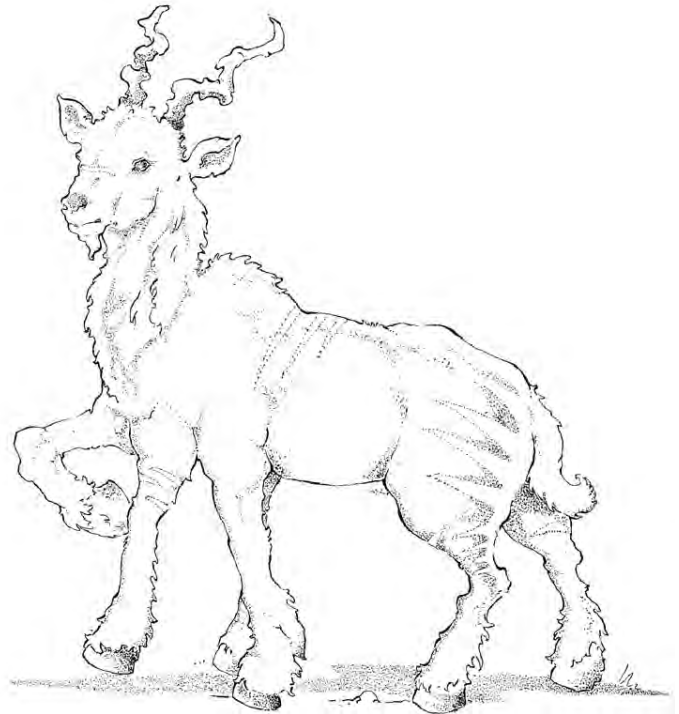
Khal'oman

The khal'oman is a bizarre creature that can cause dreams to manifest by gently touching a sleeping creature. In the wild, khal'omans prey on the dreams they summon, which makes them popular pets for people who suffer from night terrors and insomnia.

The latest rage, however, is to immobilise khal'omans in such a way that will enable them to create dreams but not to devour them. The results are phantasmagorical parties where dreams and reality intermingle to create an experience survivors will never forget. These parties are not only illegal due to their frequent fatalities and mental traumas but are also a common target for animal rights groups' raids because of the stress and pain it inflicts on the captured khal'oman. This has led most governments to ban khal'oman import for non-medical purposes.

An adult khal'oman looks like a melon-sized jumble of colourful and luminescent strings that pulsate with ever-changing ghostly lights. Some strings hang loosely from the creature's body, their touch will end dreams but is quite harmless to real creatures.

It is unknown where or how these creatures multiply and all attempts to cause them to reproduce outside their native planet have failed.

A healthy khal'oman can fetch a price of up to 10,000 credits.

SAQ'SE'QAN

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack	Psionic Strength
Siren (Other)	Desert Walker	4	6	7	11	12	3	7
Deception 2, Survival 2, Persuade 3								
Claws and Teeth (1d3), Furry Hide (1). Number encountered: 1								
Psionic talents: Telepathy, Telekinesis								

KHAL'OMAN

Type	Habitat	Strength	Dexterity	Endurance	Intelligence	Instinct	Pack	Psionic Strength
Trapper (Other)	Rainforest Flyer	1	7	4	4	5	8	2
Recon 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1								
No attacks, no armor. Number encountered: 1d6+1								
Psionic Talents: none.								

SAMPLE PATRON:

Below is a sample patron for xenologist adventures, a demented Noah-figure bent on collecting a sample of every species in the universe.

However, to acquire aliens from the farthest and wildest regions of space, Tvan employs xenologists who explore new planets for him, returning with truly unimaginable beings... or not at all.

Baron Tvan Khamefeth
Required: Survival, Science (Xenology), Sensor
Reward: Cr. 20,000 per capture

Referee's Information
Tvan is in fact quite mad, the role of a deranged street preacher fitting him far better than being a member of the highest echelon of society.

Players' Information
Tvan is a slightly unhinged baron who is investing unimaginable sums of money in creating the largest travelling zoo in the universe. For this purpose, he has constructed a huge ship and travelled the galaxy's safer zones for decades, collecting animals and making sure he has the minimum amount required for each animal type to multiply.

Sadly, he is also immensely charismatic and phenomenally wealthy, which has enabled him to attract a cult-like following of radical animal rights activists, religious nuts, deviants and self-proclaimed scientists who operate his travelling zoo and tend to his every whim.

d6	Complication
1	Tvan wants to open the most extensive zoo in the universe but radical animal rights activists infiltrate into his ship and release all the animals. With alien madness reigning in the corridors, the Player Characters must make their way to the control room before the ship crashes into some world, bringing about a catastrophe of planetary proportions.
2	The next stage of Tvan's plan is to begin kidnapping sophonts, possibly even some of his xenologists. By creating a self-contained universe that includes all life-forms, Tvan hopes to become a God.
3	As for previous, only owning a small universe is not enough – you have to get rid of the competition, which Tvan hopes to achieve through his extensive secret collection of nuclear bombs.
4	Tvan wants to discover the most powerful creature in the universe and so once his collection is complete he will begin pitting the aliens against each other until only one remains. His hired xenologists are, of course, 'invited.'
5	As for previous, only instead of pitting the aliens against each other Tvan plans to secretly release them on inhabited worlds and watch the slaughter from the safety of his orbiting ship.
6	Once his collection is complete, Tvan plans to acquire a vast number of Khal'omans and use them to literarily unleash an army of nightmares on the universe.

Compendium 2

This second volume of the Traveller Compendiums collates all the most popular articles that have appeared in Signs & Portents over the past year, and presents them for the tabletop! Inside you will find new careers, new ships, adventures, patrons, advice on running games, new equipment, and much more!

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