

CIRQUA

TRAVELLER5™
21 CLASSIC-ERA ADVENTURES

TOURING THE MARCHES WITH A ONE-RING CIRCUS
A LOT LESS CLOWNING THAN EXPECTED!

By Gregory P. Lee
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*Songbird &
Her Warbirds*



*Barbarian
Princess*



*Fteirle Ihtei
Warrior Acrobat*

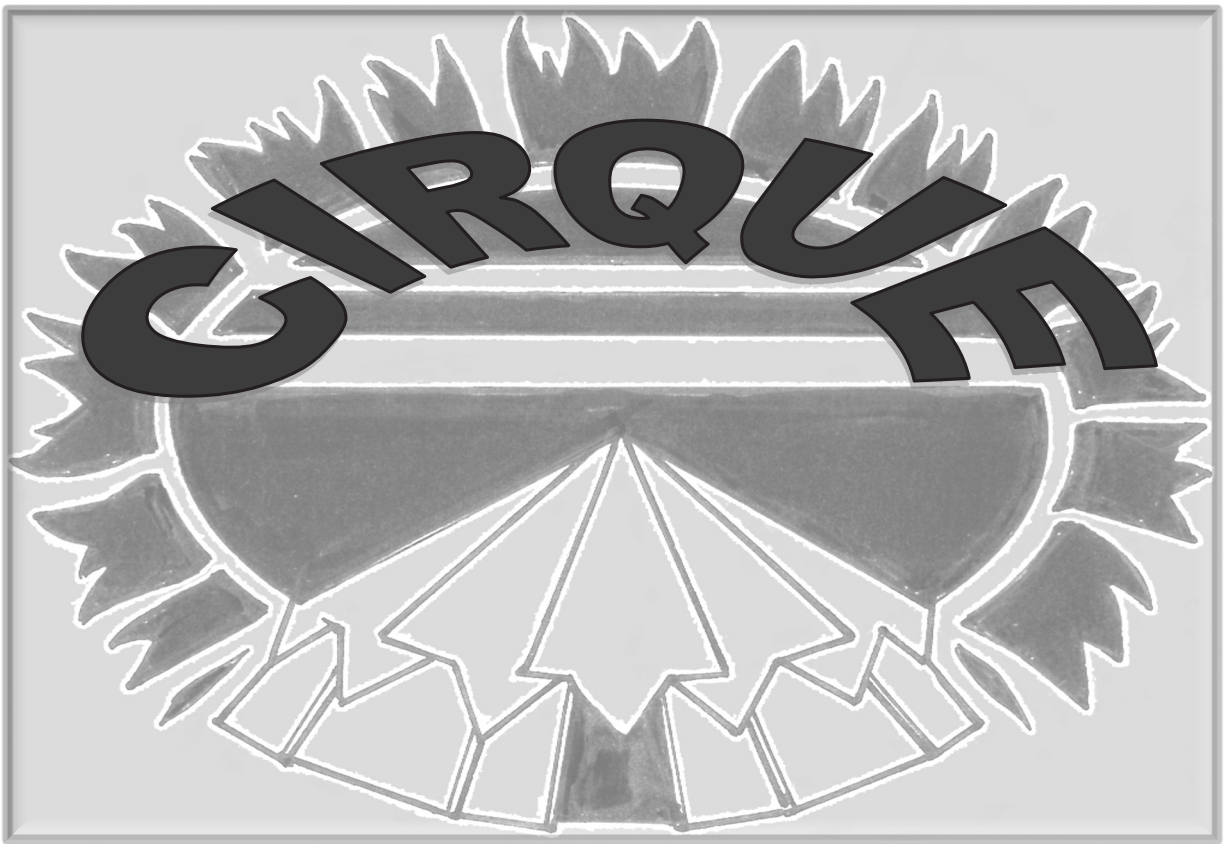


*Clowns, Jugglers
Drama and More!*



**Greylock
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Lines**

Illustrator
Tim Osborne
Ships
Rob Eaglestone
Casting
Craig A. Glesner



**For
Marc “Traveller” Miller’s
TRAVELLER5™**

**This Sourcebook and EPIC-Format Adventure
is based on the T5 Rules Set from
Far Future Enterprises**

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“I Got the Job”

I got the job!

I’m going across the sector to Regina, and I’m filming it all. This is going to get me known all the way to Capitol...maybe all the way to Old Sol herself.

I’m the Chief Documentary Producer and Travellers’ News Service stringer for this crazy idea that Sharurshid is backing. From what I hear, someone pushed my hiring. I know that the TNS wanted me elsewhere – some new police action near the Vargr Extents – but I guess they backed down. Maybe Sharurshid somehow got that blowhard old admiral, Lii – no, Lee, an old-fashioned Solomani spelling – to push someone around.

It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter how I got the job. I have the job. I admit, I’m not sure that I’m at all that interested in producing video after video of copyright-protection-creating documentaries of actual performances. There will be thousands of those. I think that will get pretty boring after a while, but I can leave most of that to robots and maybe an intern or two. No, on second thought, interns aren’t much use.

But that’s not the real point. The real point is that I’ll be going all the way from Rhylanor to Regina without getting shot at. I have the right to produce an independent documentary from my material, so there’ll be some extra money apart from salary. I’ll be on-hand for everything from the boring rehearsals to the snafus and bad days, and I’ll get to know some of the bigger artists in the Spinward Marches. Like that “Gilgamesh” actor, Trouth Mencken.

I’m glad I’m wearing my set up, because I was even allowed to record the contract talks on board *Cirque*. Andii herself gave me a tour.

[Cut Here. Skip Part of Personal Tour]

Capatin Houke walked me through to the auxiliaries they had converted. You know Andii from my prior documentary on the wounded vets of the Battle of Rhylanor. She lost her legs in using her tender’s jump drive against a much larger Zho vessel — made it a jump bomb. Cracked the Zho in two. Something about the exposure to jump space radiation has made it impossible for the docs to regenerate her legs, so she uses robotics sometimes. More often, she just wears grav kneecaps and zips around, but those aren’t much use when you’re under spin instead of artificial gravity.

[Cut here. Skip part of description of platoon lander.]

The big central area has been cleared out to be used for onboard rehearsals, extra space, and taping. I’ll be using that space to tape some of the other material they’ll be putting together, like a new version of that creaky old Geezer Thespian’s play about conquering death or whatever it was. “Gilgamesh Re-killed,” or some bad idea. There’s an old Earth-type rock band that will be putting on shows between the circus performances, and I’ll record a lot of their work for music videos. I can’t say I like the stuff, it’s much too loud and headbanging and all filled with drums and nasty amplified string instruments.

It’s quite a job, and my credits will be all over the place by the time I’m done. Frankly, this is better exposure than the war, because with any luck there won’t be any deaths. No deaths, that’s the way. Unless it’s that creepy old geezer Trouth.

[Cut here. Skip part of description of BT1.]

Whoever worked on this whole design had a fetish for flying saucers. But I suppose it fits, as the promotional material Andii gave me says that old, old circus performances happened in round arenas, under tents.

We also have a proper tent, based on very, very old sketches and writings from as far back as the 21st century in the old Solomani reckoning. Performances will happen in that tent when it can be set up, whether under real atmosphere in the big dome or any such thing. But there will be

a few worlds, even just a few places on those worlds, where it just be easier to keep the performances inside Big Top One.

Anyway, that was it. Andii and I shook on it and she had that quiet guy who hangs out with her, Bertii, send the contract over to my agent for a final review. My agent uses a legal AI, a good thing, since the contract is 500 pages long. I don’t know what is with that Bertii fellow, he looks like he could play a Zho if he was just the proper height. But he’s not.

Anyway, we shook hands and I went back out of *Cirque* through the forward cargo locks. Sharurshid has some influence. *Cirque* is docked right on the concourse segment of the Old Station. I went to the lock and down to the big observation café deck.

The Old Station doesn’t really take my breath away too often. I’ve seen a few stations by now, and the inside of a lot of other vessels. Go figure, spin a giant cartwheel and the people inside stick to the outside deck, same as they stick to a grav plate that costs more and eats power all the time. Terrace up a big curved tube, and you get a deep valley that lets you plant and grow and jump up and down and all that. No, there’s nothing all that special about Old Station’s concourse segment, until you look at all of the different spacers in the distance, and the offices and residences built up around the central cable and the other cables, and the cable cars running, and the louvers angling the sunlight from the reflectors outside. Once in a while, it catches your breath when you see it, the way it did the first time you stepped through an airlock. For me, this is one of those times. I looked right and left, and I saw all of those people walking around, and running, and talking, and trying get each other interested in all sorts of things...that’s the beauty of getting out of the old world.

And then I noticed, away on a corner near the corner edge of the café, a batch of Zhos. Real Zhos, acting like they had a right to be there. A couple of them even had the head wraps and straight-collar jackets. They also had official patches and ID packs right out to be seen, so they must’ve been diplomats. Frankly, I can’t see why a Zho would come to Rhylanor unless he was a diplomat, and maybe not even then. It was odd, as if they were actually watching who was going in and out of the lock behind me. As if they were interested in what was going on with *Cirque*. That was probably just foolishness on my part, thinking that. Not a lot of Zhos are likely to really enjoy the circus, I suspect.

But that’s okay, because not a lot of good citizens like Zhos. They don’t want to sit next to them at a show. While I was starting down the steps to the Concourse “ground level,” I saw a couple of women with something round and red in their hands. Fruits, I thought. I looked at my recordings afterward and cross-referenced, and discovered that the red fruits were just old-fashioned tomatoes, but they were a bit ripe. Well, a lot ripe. Rotten, really. Squishy, nasty, oozing.

Those women started tossing the tomatoes at the Zhos. I scrambled away, because I don’t really much want my video to be subpoenaed as evidence in a court, but I hear that station security ignored it at first, too. They didn’t come in until a computer alerted the station manager and got him dispatching Marines because the Zhos always were screaming for help. Didn’t want to use their mind-control techniques, I guess, there’s a new treaty, after all. I guess station security didn’t want to see the tomatoes being thrown, either, so it was up to the Marines to bail out the Zhos.

Bet the Marines weren’t all that happy to bail those Zhos out, either.

You know, I just noticed something in the video. Those women – there were three of them – had “Cirque des Sirkas” patches on their coveralls. I’d probably better delete that bit. I don’t want anyone charged with assaulting a diplomat. A damned Zho diplomat especially.

Setting the Stage

Introduction

This campaign is set entirely in the Spinward Marches, a vibrant frontier sector of the Imperium. The campaign assumes that the referee will have some familiarity with the Official Traveller Universe ("OTU") or will obtain it. While no one supplement or prior writing is essential, the referee would do well to obtain the Classic Traveller materials on CD-ROM from Far Future Enterprises.

The campaign begins near the end of 1110 at Rhyllanor, an important subsector capitol of the Marches. It proceeds to visit numerous worlds in the Marches, and ends at Regina, another subsector capitol that is growing more important to the Imperium. The players are expected to travel with the vessel *Cirque* as ship's crew, performers, or other support staff of *Cirque des Sirkas*, LLC.

Well-developed characters are important in this campaign. While it can be played as a simple set of "point-and-shoot" incidents, good characters drive good play. A number of prepared characters have been provided that can be adopted by the players or used by the referee for adoption by the players, or at least for the referee to understand. These characters have motives and histories that have the potential to lead to conflicts with each other as well as outside forces. This includes down-time during a jump, so the Referee should not necessarily speed through what could be a rich source of character interaction.

If players roll their own new characters, Imperial citizens — Entertainers and Fifth Frontier War military veterans — are highly desirable. The flexibility of the T5 character generation system permits characters to begin on one career track and move to another. It also permits the assumption that Entertainers were exposed to the Fifth Frontier War, whether as civilian militia at Rhyllanor's Old Station, reporters ("Authors") embedded with military units, or entertainers on traditional "morale boosting" tours.

The Classic Era: A Golden Age

The "Classic Era" of Traveller begins in 1105. Published Traveller adventures and materials set in that era recount the "canon" history of the Spinward Marches in some detail from that date. Official maps of the Spinward Marches, the Imperium and its neighbors can be downloaded from the Traveller Map online. The data there includes official basic planetary information effective as of 1105, most of which remains accurate in 1110.

The Fifth Frontier War

This campaign begins several years after the end of the Fifth Frontier War. However, tensions remain high. Veterans are still healing, and fleets remain on alert. The Zhodani, seen as the chief aggressors of the Outworld Coalition (the Zhodani Consulate, the Sword Worlds, and various Vargr polities) attacked the Marches without warning or provocation in 1107.

At the outset of the war, Imperial forces were deployed ineffectively. The Zhodani were able to push almost all of the way to Rhyllanor before Duke Norris of Regina (missing and thought to be ill, dead, or deposed) returned from a daring mission to retrieve a lost Imperial Warrant authorizing him to lead the Marches. On his return, he ousted Sector Admiral Frederick Santanochchev and took personal command of the Imperial forces.

***Cirque* is an old Terran (French) word for circle or circus, and implies something more than the lowest grade of itinerant performers. *Sirk* (proper plural, *sirka*, improperly pluralized in Anglic as *sirks* or *sirkas*) is a Vilani word meaning "star." Of interest, a close homophone is T'sirk, a Zhodani word meaning literally, "sand soaked with blood after a set duel," and carries a strong connotation condemning unnecessary bloodshed as insanity.**

Based on both Zhodani fleet movements and sources in Naval Intelligence, Norris deduced that the Zhodani goal was Rhyllanor, though not necessarily why that was their goal. Most strategists have concluded that the Zhodani were simply executing the divide-and-conquer plans of the Outworld Coalition (Zhodani, Vargr, and the Sword Worlds). Others look to Rhyllanor's high technology basis. A few overly imaginative military analysts have speculated that the Zhodani sought to use an Ancient complex on Rhyllanor, speculation that has been met with justified derision.

For Norris, it was enough that the Zhodani military desperately fought to get to Rhyllanor. Norris committed forces, ships and war materiel to the defense of Rhyllanor. He cut the Zhodani supply lines and retreat routes, already stretched across forty parsecs of Imperial space. His tactical sense deployed Imperial forces where they would be most useful.

Thanks to Norris's actions, not one Zhodani teleport-trooper or landing craft reached Rhyllanor's atmosphere, much less the surface. Ship-to-ship combat won the day, costing both fleets dearly many vessels and crews. The Zhodani were forced to flee. Their retreat was intercepted at Calit (Spinward Marches 1515) and their fleet sustained such devastating losses that the Consulate's government is believed to be undergoing significant "internal readjustment."

In the end, the Zhodani made no significant territorial gains despite their best military efforts. Zhodani allies fared no better.

The Sword World Confederation, a militaristic human polity, lost control of a number of worlds. As this campaign begins, the Imperium is building up a new "client-state," the Border Worlds, in part of the Sword Worlds. As one might expect, the remaining Sword Worlds are equally determined to regain their territory and are already regrouping as they plot to recover their territorial losses.

The various and changeable Vargr polities were also pushed back. The Vargr, intelligent beings created by the Ancients from Terran canine stock, are for the most part back behind their original lines.

The Aftermath of War

The Imperial Spinward Marches are slowly returning to normalcy. Some systems have been especially hard hit (including Rhyllanor, despite the Zhodani failure to land on the mainworld). Others were virtually untouched. Many, many combatants on both sides have been seriously injured. Despite modern medicine and biotechnology, some veterans have permanent injuries, both physical and psychological. Civilians have also been affected to one degree or another.

The Sword Worlds are already working to regain the territory lost during the war. However, they cannot currently do this by force. Instead,

their agents in the Imperium and the Border Worlds are committed to guerilla tactics bordering on terrorism. It is safe to say that Sword Worlds agents and local supporters may be found on any Imperial world within several parsecs of the pre-war border with the Imperium. Cirque des Sirkas plans to visit several of these worlds.

The Zhodani defeat resulted in the fall of the Consulate's militaristic governing coalition. The Consulate now faces internal struggles for control. Its various agents still in the Marches find themselves partially or entirely cut off from their leadership. Some agents will continue their information-gathering and their quiet support of underground Psionic Institutes. Others will flail about, taking action as they see fit. A few, loyal to the Consulate, will try to keep order in the "ranks." Thus, while Cirque des Sirkas will not visit any Zhodani world, some agents will be encountered.

Aliens and Uplifts in Traveller

The Traveller Canon includes numerous aliens (non-human sophonts such as the Aslan), prehistorically transplanted Terran humans (such as the Zhodani and Vilani, moved and then used by the Ancients hundreds of thousands of years ago) and "uplifts," sophonts created from non- or semi-sentient species (the Vargr, uplifted from Terran canine stock by the Ancients; Dolphins and Ursa, uplifted by the Solomani to aid the independent Terran push to the stars). Examples of all these species will be met along the way. All are detailed in various other Canon publications. In general, the referee should become most familiar with several.

Zhodani: Humanoid stock transplanted from Terra to Zdhant over 300,000 years ago. The Ancients, a little-understood high-tech society, used these humans in their works. The Ancients' War left the Zhodani and other humans scattered across space free to build their own societies. The Zhodani embrace psionic science and practice. Psionically trained individuals are highly prized, and can rise into the nobility. The Zhodani actively search out non-conformists in their midst and "treat" them to resolve their counter-productive issues. The Zhodani Consulate and the Imperium are hostile toward one another; five Frontier Wars have been fought in the Spinward Marches. The stereotypical Zhodani is almost two meters tall and slender, but many other norms can be found. The Zhodani are considered a "Major" race, and have been in space for thousands of years.

Vilani: Like the Zhodani, the Vilani are descended from humanoid stock transplanted from Terra over 300,000 years ago. These were taken to Vland, a world with a biological base which is not entirely supportive of human life. When the Vilani were abandoned at the end of the Ancients' ascendancy, they developed their own methods of preparing food from the local biological sources. As a result, Vilani food is considered exotic by most other races.

Solomani: Humans of more recent Terran stock. Many humans in the Spinward Marches (including the Sword Worlders) are of Solomani stock. However, this is more of an epithet than a compliment to some, as "Solomani" more accurately refers to a militant interstellar state and movement, originally from the Sol system, which espouses Terran superiority and control over humans throughout space. The Sol system itself is currently a member of the Third Imperium.

Sword Worlders: Humans of clearly Terran descent who will be encountered in the latter half of *Cirque's* travels. Sometimes derided as "Vikings," they are not considered an alien race, but are militant non-Imperial nationality in the Spinward Marches.

Aslan: Humanoid sophonts independently evolved on Ksuyu from pouncer/carnivore stock. The Terrans who originally encountered the Aslan saw a resemblance to Terran feline stock, but this is inaccurate; they are more similar to arboreal primates. They have a very structured sense of honor, and a rigid dichotomy between male and female roles. In essence, the males, who can be as tall as two (2) meters, explore and fight, and are given the public role of control over their clans and other subgroups. The smaller females tend toward administrative roles (males often cannot comprehend "money") and scientific roles. Aslan have an "internal clock" of about 36 hours, which may affect their function if they are forced to maintain 24-hour days for an extended period.

Vargr: Sophonts genetically engineered by the Ancients from Terran canine stock. Like other Terran transplants, they were abandoned as a result of the Ancients' War. They also eventually developed their own society and eventually came to space (and, coincidentally, within approximately the same general era as the Aslan and various Human subspecies). Vargr tend to shift-

"Timeline for the Fifth Frontier War" Reprinted from "The Spinward Marches Campaign."

186-1107	Zhodani battle fleets appear at Ruie (1809).
187-1107	Zhodani declaration of war delivered.
201-1107	Imperium begins evacuation of Regina (1910) in anticipation of Zhodani invasion.
204-1107	Imperium announces presumed state of war with Sword Worlds. Lanth (1719) under attack. Efate (1705) under Zhodani siege.
206-1107	Detached Imperial Scouts called up.
210-1107	Regina (1910) reports no invasion to date.
212-1107	Duke Norris of Regina reported ill or deposed.
214-1107	Heavy fighting takes place at Efate (1705) and Louzy (1604).
243-1107	Serious guerrilla attacks by Ine Givar at Equus (2417), Meleto (2827), and Bendor (2336).
035-1108	Yorbund (2303) taken by Vargr.
036-1108	Ruby (1005), Emerald (1006), and Lysen (1307) taken by Zhodani.
037-1108	Jewell (1106) and Kinorb (2202) continuing to resist.
097-1108	Zhodani raiding fleet strikes Inthe (2410); cripples massing Imperial fleet.
168-1108	Sword Worlds troops invade Saurus (1520).
229-1108	Zhodani fleet strikes Boughene (1904).
281-1108	Imperial fleet strike against Lysen (1307) unsuccessful.
302-1108	Imperial and Zhodani fleets clash at Tremous Dex (1311).
338-1108	Heya (2402) and Beck's World (2204) capitulate to Vargr invasion fleets.
362-1108	Mirriam (1315) occupied by Zhodani fleet. Calit (1515) under attack.
021-1109	Ghandi (1815) attacked by Zhodani fleet and forces including the Zhodani Consular Guard.
029-1109	Imperial operations to relieve Efate fail.
059-1109	Couriers from Jewell (1106) report the world continues to hold out.
083-1109	Imperial fleets retake Yorbund (2303). Operations continue against Heya (2402).
096-1109	Sword Worlds forces driven off Lanth (1719).
122-1109	Vargr battle fleet destroyed off Dentus (2201).
128-1109	Imperial forces raid Ninjar (0608).
132-1109	Admiral Santanocheev relieved and replaced by Norris, Duke of Regina.
147-1109	Imperial forces retake Calit (1515).
231-1109	Battle of Rhylanor (2716).
241-1109	Sword World forces expelled from Lanth subsector.
252-1109	Vargr forces surrender; negotiate separate peace.
348-1109	Zhodani fleet fleeing Battle of Rhylanor (2716) ambushed at Calit (1515) and severely mauled.
004-1110	Arden (1011) discards neutrality and allies with Imperium.
023-1110	Operations to relieve Jewell 1106) begin. Lysen (1307) retaken.
099-1110	Armistice declared effective 120-1110.

ing alliances; an individual's Charisma is a measure of his or her ability to gain followers. Vargr are seen as pirates, thieves and general pests by many Imperial humans.

Ursa: Sophonts genetically engineered by early Solomani from Terran "bear" stock. When this phase of Solomani arrogance came to an end, attempts were made to destroy the Ursa. Some Ursa escaped and ensured their racial survival. At least one small enclave is found in the Domain of Deneb. Ursa are rare in the Spinward Marches.

Dolphins: Sophonts genetically engineered by early Solomani from Terran "dolphin" stock. Dolphins are often found in the seas of habitable human worlds. Some have taken service in the Imperial military, and have specialized gear designed for them.

Useful Supplements and Material

The Traveller Map (www.travellermat.com) is Canon unless otherwise stated. The Referee can and should use this as a reference, and urge the players to do so. All basic world data found in this adventure starts with that version of The Spinward Marches map. However, some data has changed as a result of the war; those changes are discussed in text.

Rob Eaglestone's website The Sharakkannik Collection has useful tools based on the T5 rules, including an Animal Encounter Maker, Armor and Weapons Maker, a "Task Roller" which calculates combat rolls for multiple characters, a T5 Ship Maker, and examples of T5 ships "ported" from previous versions of Traveller. As publication closes, he is working on a program to assist in character generation (though Craig Glesner does a lovely and personalized job of that).

Other Internet sources should be used only with caution.

The Classic Traveller CD-ROM and other CD-ROMS can be purchased on CD-ROM through Far Future Enterprises (FFE). Basic information on CD-ROMs 0270, 0271, 0273 and 0274 are canon, though rules and statistics may require adaptation to T5. These materials include original issues of the Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society, later Challenge Magazine (collectively "JTAS" for convenience), which outline elements of Imperial society, Zhodani society, and most of the animals being carried aboard *Cirque*. Minor races such as the genetically engineered Dolphins are first described in early issues of JTAS.

Information about the Zhodani, the Sword Worlds, the Vargr, the Ancients, and other Classic Traveller sophonts can be found in various publications available through FFE. The Classic Traveller CD-ROM includes adventures and modules that provide expansive information about the sophonts and history of the Spinward Marches.

Donald McKinney's Mongoose Traveller *Alien Module 4: Zhodani* published by Mongoose Publications provides an excellent history of the Zhodani, and a better understanding of the Zhodani motivations leading to the Fifth Frontier War. It is not essential reading, but it provides perspective, and was particularly useful in drafting this sourcebook. However, player characters should not be given access to the historical information in that supplement, as few individuals know all of it. Zhodani characters in this sourcebook — and throughout the Consulate — are unaware of the full Zhodani history, much less stresses on the Consulate. Soldiers and spacers without a "need to know" were not made aware of background matters. Though stable and in many ways healthy, the Zhodani are at least as good at suppressing information as any other government structure, and often much better.

GURPS Traveller: Sword Worlds reasonably describes the history and views of the Sword Worlds prior to the "timeline split." *GURPS Traveller: Behind the Claw* has also been consulted, but given less weight. The kind permission of Steve Jackson Games and Loren Wiseman is appreciated. This promotes consistency between these two somewhat parallel Traveller universes. In case of any inconsistency or concern, the OTU as published and maintained by Marc W. Miller and Far Future Enterprises will be followed.

Zhodani and Sword Worlds characters should be generated using T5 rules. Skill selections and career paths may require some flexibility. Zhodani of sufficient psionic capability are trained from youth, and generally should be considered to have reached their maximum potentials by the end of their first adult term. The classification system used to identify personality types for Psionic Institute purposes is not generally useful for Zhodani psionics, as "adjustment counseling" is used freely in the Consulate. Most Zhodani can be considered disciplined and therefore "lawful"

users of their abilities; good and evil are relative.

Andii Houke

The central Imperial veteran is Andii Houke, who lost both of her legs below the knees. Houke, now on disability retirement, is determined to make her new dream a reality: she will bring live entertainment from Rhyllanor all the way to Regina. Her crew and some of the entertainers they transport will be veterans like herself.

Andii's goal is to meet and honor Duke Norris, and to help wounded and disabled Imperial veterans of the Fifth Frontier War recover and make new lives. Promotional material used to secure grants is reasonably accurate:

"Captain Andii" Houke is an aficionado of the arts, especially the oldest of performance arts. Having read widely on the old "circle" of performance and on itinerant performance arts like "vaudeville," Captain Andii has brought together the finest Terran-style acts and select local acts in a unique mix that is guaranteed to entertain both young and old. She also keeps an eye out for local talent that may be invited to join her troupe as they work toward their ultimate goal: playing before Duke Norris' Court on Holiday.

As noted above, Andii is a double-amputee. Why did I invent a reason to preclude simple regeneration or regrowth, given the technology levels and medical care available in Traveller?

It is convenient to provide game characters the opportunity for instant and miraculous healing. It is much harder to recognize that those who serve can never be completely healed. Andii is that reminder, both to the players as people, and the characters in this scenario. The vehicle of adventure here is a circus, but the adventures include the backdrop of war, the continuing intrigues, and the unresolved pressures faced by the Marches, the Zhodani Consulate, and others.

I've reached an age at which I won't shrug off the personal consequences of war, and I want at least one character to reflect that.

Andii should be retained as an NPC, as may Bertii and U'ailli. However, all characters are available to players in the referee's discretion.

Aramais P. Lee

Aramais P. Lee was originally created to add flavor to "Lee's Guide to Interstellar Adventure," an "adventure seed" booklet I wrote some thirty years ago. Neither the idea nor name were mine. They were handed to me by one of the editors with whom I was working.

Aramais provides strong opinions, information and hints about worlds, and even occasional disinformation. He's a leader and Fourth Frontier War hero in his own right, but also a finagler, a buttinsky, a brilliant self-promoter, and a loose cannon. He was not originally to play any role in this sourcebook. Crusty commentary about planets was to be the role of the Advance Sophonts. Aramais got my foot in the door to Marc Miller for this new Traveller, and that was all I thought he was needed for.

Marc Miller and Rob Eaglestone worked to convince me to refer to "Lee's Guide" in my preparations, and to build a connection between that and this adventure. Rob made a point of including Aramais's birth and retirement as Canon in a Mongoose publication on the Domain of Deneb. Eventually, I succumbed to logical necessity, or at least vanity, and began writing Aramais' "take" on systems on the tour.

This also started through my own grumbling about the number of "Ag" worlds in the Spinward Marches — I'd already used up the Farmer's Daughter hook. I had two or three such worlds in a row. Don McKinney pointed to the number of "tree" animals in the Marches, and a lumbering world took hold — but it was still a boring "Ag" world. Aramais' rant about boring lumberjacks got me in the right mindset to write the adventure. Aramais was thus "in," and the link to the old "Lee's Guide" firmed up. Every planet description now begins with his usually grumpy "take." Be warned that Aramais is not a 100% "reliable narrator."

Aramais's notes are generally dated after 1100 and before 1108. They are based primarily on his observations prior to the Fifth Frontier War. His information (where accurate at all) may well be dated.

With help from Craig A. Glesner, Aramais has been generated using the T5 system. Along the way, it was natural to give the old curmudgeon and teller of tall tales a direct connection to the Ringmaster Class of ships — they date back to the Fourth Frontier War. I also started won-

dering what happened to Aramais after 1105. Soon enough, I knew — his connections to Sharurshid were exploited in the Fifth Frontier War, when he returned to duty. Aramais was assigned by Santanocheev to help make sure that supplies, materiel, and troops were moved as they needed to be. Admiral Lee knew how to move things, sometimes secretly, sometimes using “commandeered ships” (impressed commercial vessels).

I also knew where this would take Lee in 1111. As Andii starts this tour, Lee is too involved in post-war dealings between Sharurshid and the nascent Border Worlds to sit back and give a lecture tour, fortunately, or he would be aboard *Cirque*. And he’s an arrogant kind of guy; he’d be trying to take over from Andii. We can’t have that. This does not preclude a “special guest star” appearance (“spoilers!”), but he should not be added as part of the regular cast, even as an NPC. *Cirque des Sirkas* is Andii’s dream, and her ship. Always play it that way.

Common Abbreviations and Terms

“The local Noble” is sometimes mentioned, with at most a suggestion of the noble’s rank. This is generally done to avoid interfering with efforts of other Traveller creators. Where a noble is named, he or she is often drawn from Canon sources. The referee may feel free to detail the noble or leave the noble no more than a title and gender. As always, the referee is free to alter the gender implied.

The referee is presumed to know T5 terms such as QREBS and the task system. Out of perversity, however, task levels are written out as full words. Other abbreviations include::

IISS: Imperial Interstellar Scout Service

IN: Imperial Navy

NPC: Non-Player Character

PC: Player Character

Huscarles: Personal military of an Imperial Noble, often also available to the Imperium.

Credits and Acknowledgments

Marc “Traveller” Miller created the system. He also provided invaluable advice on the Kickstarter and other phases. He helped me shape the plans for this supplement, encouraging me to produce something larger than I originally intended.

Rob Eaglestone encouraged me, and I suspect talked me up with Marc Miller. More importantly, he understood the new T5 ship building system. The ships in this supplement are his designs. The concept and design for *Cirque* herself was necessary to saying that this adventure could be done. It didn’t turn out exactly as originally envisioned, and indeed turned out much better.

Don McKinney has been vocal about Canon throughout this process. I learned early and often to ask, “Don, would this be inconsistent with Canon?” I have also used various of his references, including his continued work on the Second Survey data, his Spinward Marches Canon file, his Traveller Integrated Timeline, and as noted elsewhere, his Mongoose Traveller Alien Module 4: Zhodani. His advice on the choices of Canonical sources have been very informative and helpful. He has forced me to rewrite in places, and in one case, I have clearly labeled as “not necessarily the final or Canonical answer” (my speculations on how to prevent Life Insurance cloning from massively disrupting the Official Traveller Universe timeline). He has also repeatedly refused compensation for this role, something I will deal with at some point, in some way. You have been warned, Donald.

Tim Osborne is the sole illustrator of this supplement. He started in on the ship concepts, figuring things out from deck plans and descriptions, and going back and forth with me over design. His work and willingness to take my fidgeting got me started. He then auditioned for the job of drawing people, and clocked those out. He had a sense of what circus is and could be — the clown on a flying guggy is solely and completely his idea. He went on to insist that I not use tried-and-true sketches of classic traveler animals, coming up with new ones for the bestiary section. Two new animals, the duranthe and the fan lizard, are his creations, “statted out” more from his pictures than any original idea. Similarly, his art has added to the description of the vreeper.

Craig A. Glesner has created more characters for this supple-

ment than have I. He took ideas, some character sheets, my character descriptions and returned well-annotated characters that are consistent with T5. Many of the other characters in this supplement were created from simple requests, like “I need a bunch of gunners and pilots and such for *Cirque*.” He went from being a die-roller to a contributing author very quickly.

Bill Rutherford has become a fast-turnaround proofreader. His proofreading is excellent, and possibly even implemented by me. He has done more than critique my “legalistic over-use of quotation marks” and other typing and grammar issues; he’s pointed out ideas that fell flat and could be improved.

Lisa Evans also proofread and provided important suggestions as we came up to the end of the road. Her experience with role-playing and role-playing materials was a great boon. She also has no concern about bruising my ego, necessary in a proofreader. She also knows her medieval needlework and fabric history.

Roger Howe performed a final “blind read,” catching a few more typos and pointing out some things requiring fixing. No one else noticed that BT3 carries enough fuel for an extra Jump-1, for example.

Jim Kundert, Michael Morgan, David Smart, Andrea Vallance, the mysterious RH and others in the Traveller community have provided ideas from time to time, all of which have helped this come together. If your name isn’t there, it’s my tired mind, not an intentional slight.

Loren Wiseman and **Steve Jackson Games** have also been gracious, as has Mongoose Games and, of course, **Far Future Enterprises**.

Mario Butter provided the gift of bandwidth.

ProFantasy Software’s Campaign Cartographer with the *Cosmographer* Add-On made it possible for me, lacking a lick of artistic talent, to produce the deck plans, maps, and route diagrams found in these pages.

All of the **Kickstarter Backers** have made this financially possible, and become partners along the way. If you have somehow been missed in the Main Concourse list of stores, I sincerely apologize.

Fran V. Hutton Lee, my wife, jumped in and helped in both small and large ways. Backers’ names appear in connection with a Main Concourse store because she did the work. She’s also handled numerous other tasks. This book is here because she encourages my nerdish flights of fancy, and has even participated.

Helen Lee, my mother, gave me an appreciation of the circus.

Benjamin Pew and others play-tested some episodes.

Whole Tour Backers

Peter L.S. Trevor

Ernest Rowland

Mitch Hirz

Ian Jukes

Dave Finnamore

Dave Hunter

Constantin Terton

Peter Hadden

Carey James Beeston

Dean Heine

James Menotti

Steven LeMay

Jack Beckman

David Wendelken

Mario Butter

John Phalon

David Thorp

Matt Selter

Bruce Turner

Scott Erickson

Dennis Appell

Jim Moss

Bill Rutherford

Kevin C. Bell

William Self

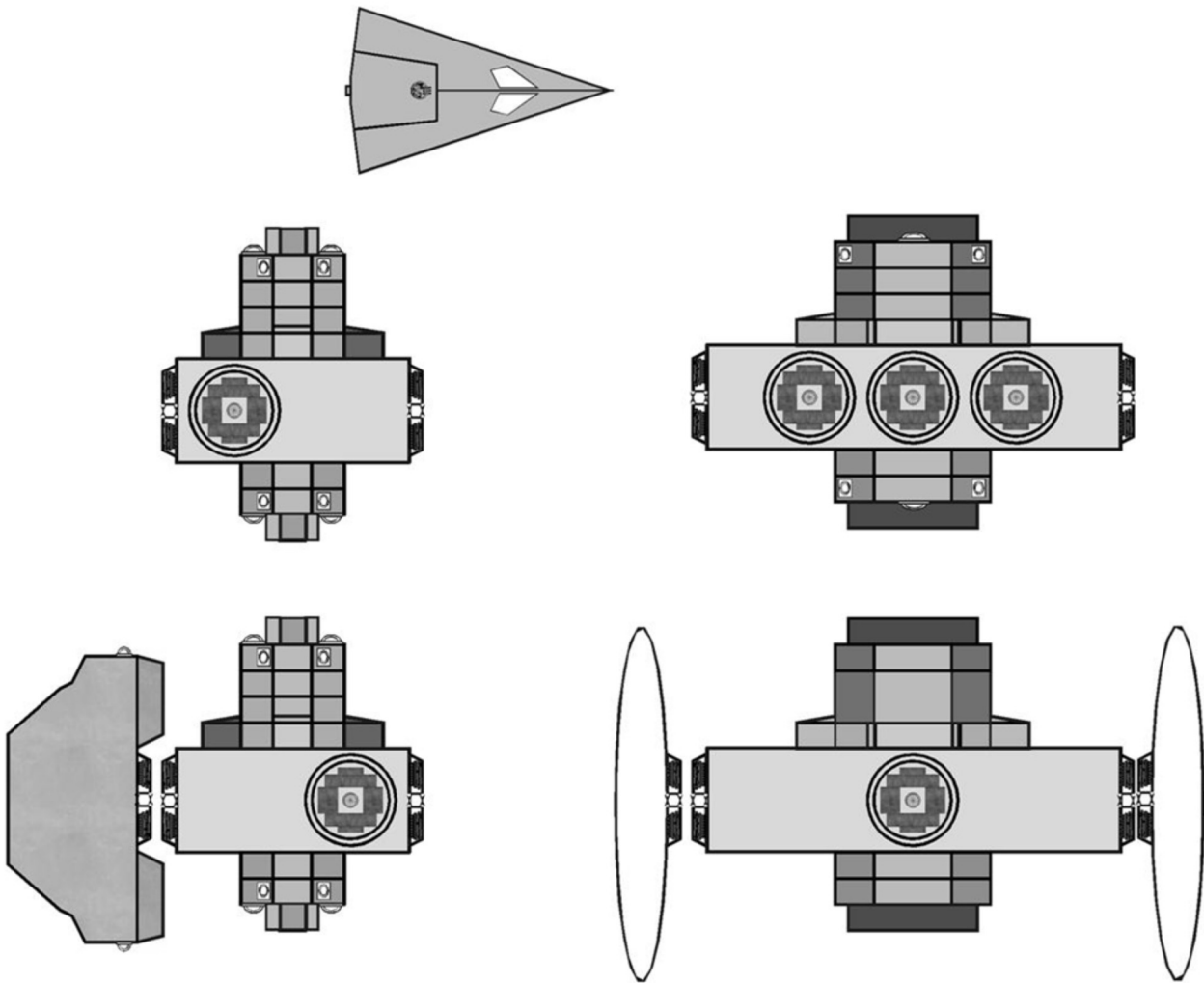
John Berry

Bill Cobb

Greg Matyola



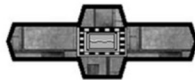
Cirque Deck Plans



***Cirque. Deck plans copyright (c) 2013
by Gregory P. Lee***

Cirque

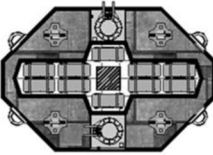
Forward Cargo Hull and Hatch.



Forward Hull

Ringmaster-class vessels are designed for one-ton cargo units, rather than the three-ton units common in commercial use. The hatch is designed for this maximum.

Foreward Cargo Deck (10 Tons) and Gunnery Hull, including Sensor Arrays, External Portions of Gunnery.

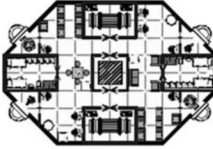


Deck 1

This deck also serves as a primary airlock and docking point for standard cargo locks. EVA can be conducted from this lock, as well as other locks.

In military and mercenary vessels, the cargo space is generally used for extended supplies (rations, ammunition, spare weapons, etc.).

Forward Gunnery Deck. Particle Gun Hardware, Gunner Barracks (8 Crew), Missile Storage, Sand-caster Storage.

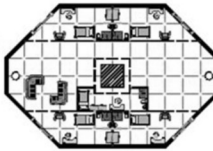


Deck 2

One of the four turrets is a firmpoint turret containing either the datacaster or commcaster emplacements.

Decommissioned Ringmasters are generally stripped of all weapons before being sold. Thus, Ringmasters in service may have different weapon combinations.

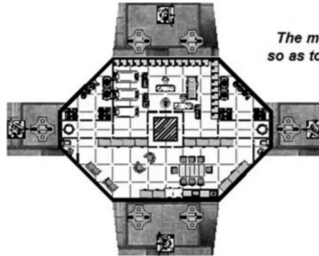
Officer Quarters (5) (can be converted to double occupancy), lounge, gym space. Note hazardous placement of central stateroom (access only through lift shaft).



Deck 3

Ringmaster officers' decks are uncommonly spacious. Some vessels may be refitted for bunk space up to the capacity of life support. In military use, officers from auxiliaries also use this deck.

Life Support, Medical Deck, Main Crew Lounge and Galley. Sensor Arrays on Hull.

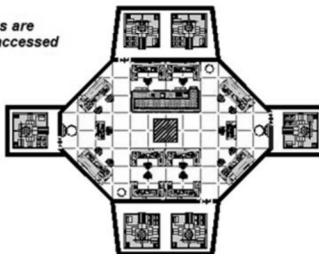


Deck 4

The medical facilities on a Ringmaster are spacious so as to afford medical care to a significant number of crew and combatants.

The entire crew of a Ringmaster and its auxiliaries generally have access to the crew lounge on this deck. This deck also serves for briefings and planning. Its facilities were state-of-the-art in the Fourth Frontier War era.

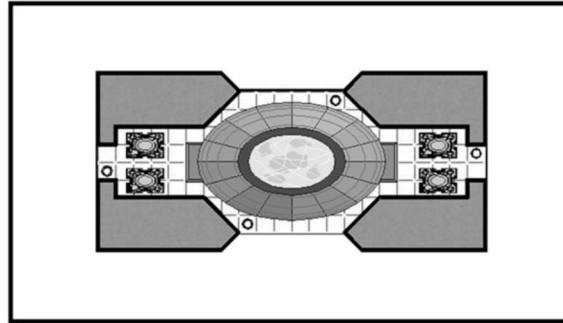
Bridge. Computers and main control consoles are contained in this deck. Primary electronics are accessed at the four cardinal compass points.



Deck 5

Cirque

Typical
Docking Cleat
Face-on view
and cross-section.
Locking mechanisms
retracted.

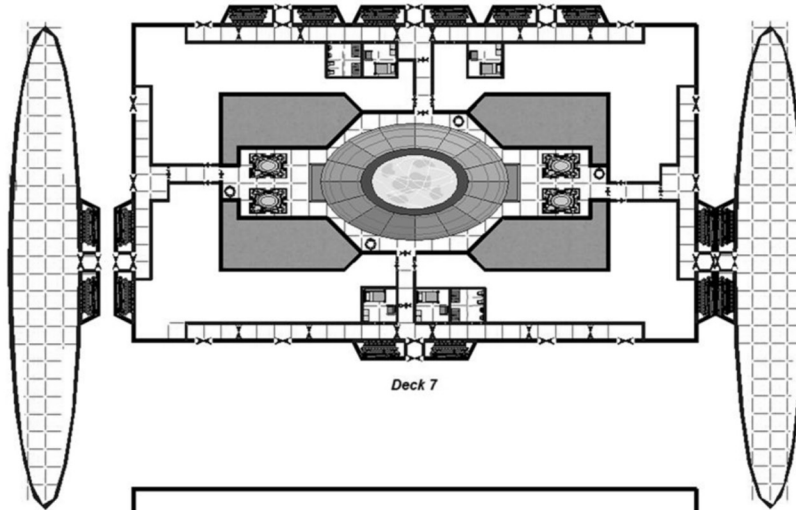


Upper engineering deck.
Note that, due to BACFUDS
height, this deck is more than
three (three) meters in height.

One significant design compromise
is the poor access to major engineering
structures. Any large parts must be
maneuvered down the "courtyard shafts"
to access points; hull plating must be removed
and later replaced.

Deck 6

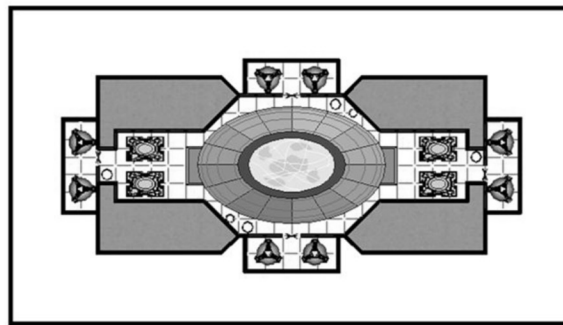
Docking Access Deck
Configured for two (2)
300-ton craft, one (1)
600-ton craft, and one
(1) 60-10 cargo module
(adds 56 tons of cargo
capacity).



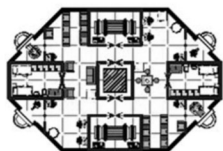
Deck height is standard
three-meter deck. Docking
cleats are centered at 1.5
meters.

Deck 7

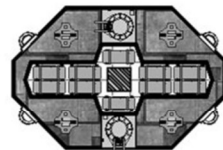
Lower Engineering Deck.
Deck is more than standard
three-meter height. Maneuver
drives are at this deck level.



Deck 8



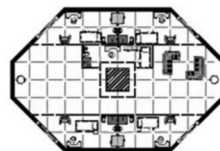
Deck 10



Deck 11

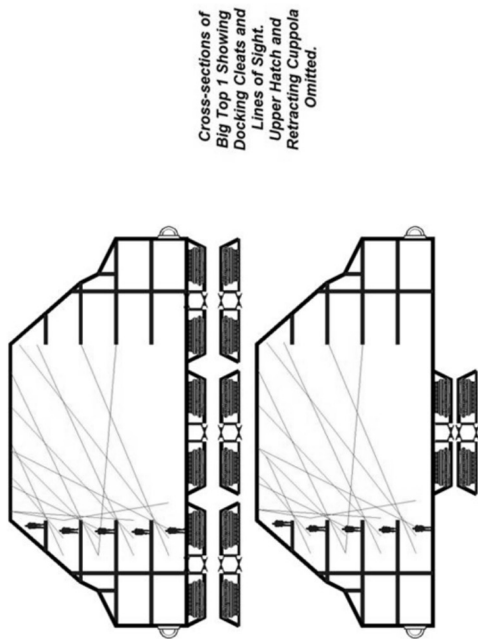


Aft Hull



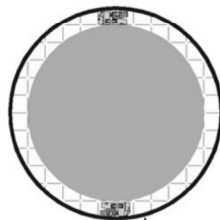
Deck 9

Lower quarters, gunnery and cargo decks.
These decks are very similar to
those on the forward structure.
In Cirque, the staterooms have been
converted to double-occupancy.



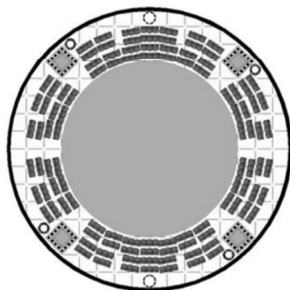
Cross-sections of Big Top 1 Showing Docking Cleats and Lines of Sight. Upper Hatch and Retracting Cuppola Omitted.

Not shown: catwalks and structures for lighting, video hoists for settings, and attachment of lines for aerialists



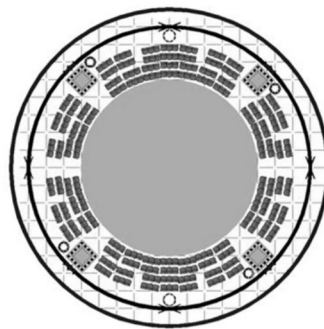
Deck 1

Hatch machinery to East and West. "Cuppola" made of material similar to the external tent can be raised. When lowered and folded, the cuppola takes about 1/2 of the upper deck.



Deck 2

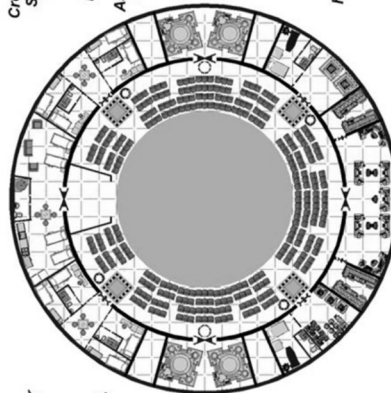
Audience space only.



Deck 3

Audience space only.

Bridge to south. Computer modules to either side. Sensors and electronics to southeast; Life Support to southwest. Small staterooms for Commander and First Officer as noted; First Officer usually gets SR beside waste reclamation system.

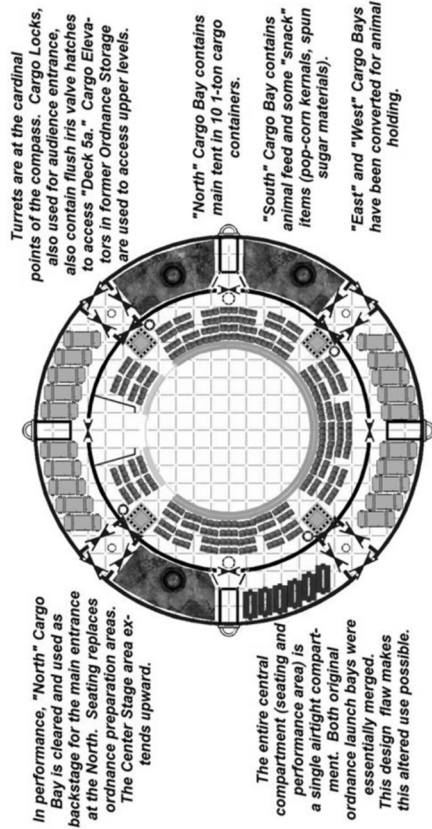


Deck 4

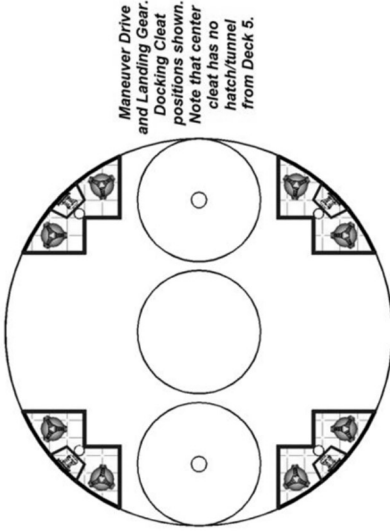
Crew Quarters, Barracks (8), 4 Small SRs with freshers (8), 4 niches (8). All beds are bunked. Animal care personnel and stage crew are assigned here. The Aslan Tumblers may choose to use this space as well.

Power plants are to the East and West points. Fuel tankage is to either side of the power plant compartments. All airtight hatches are locked during performances.

Big Top One



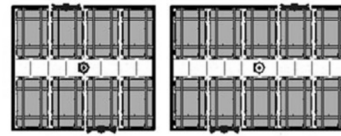
Deck 5



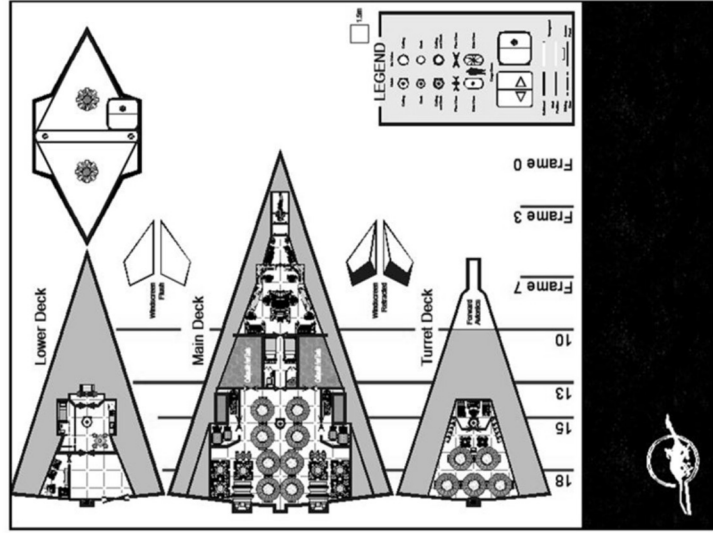
Deck 5a



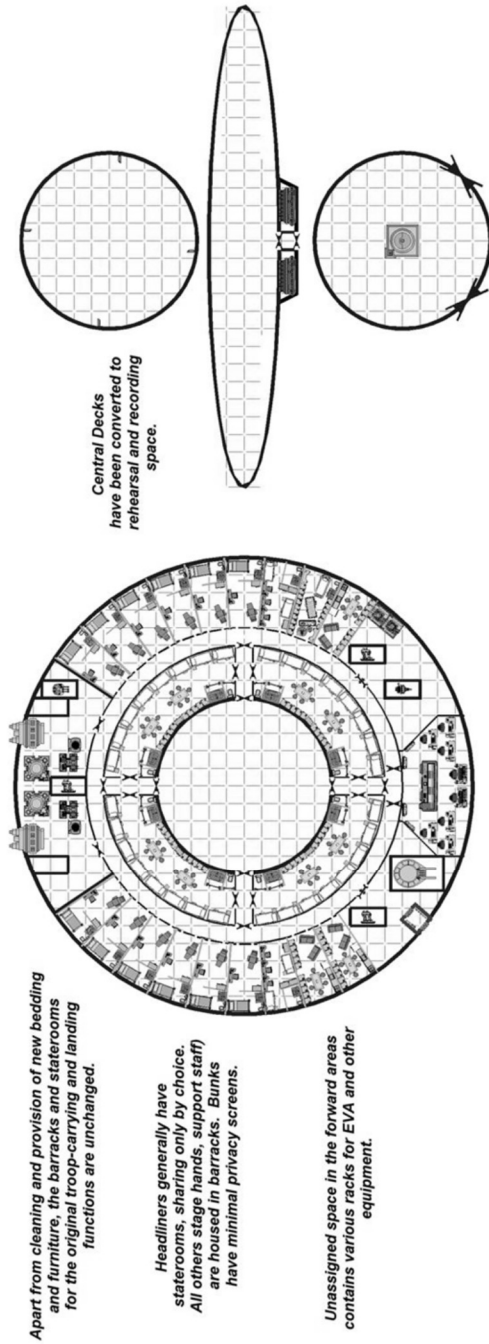
The cargo module totals 60 tons, with internal space for a total of 56 tons by volume. Most cargo modules have been retrofitted for standard commercial cargo containers (3 tons each).



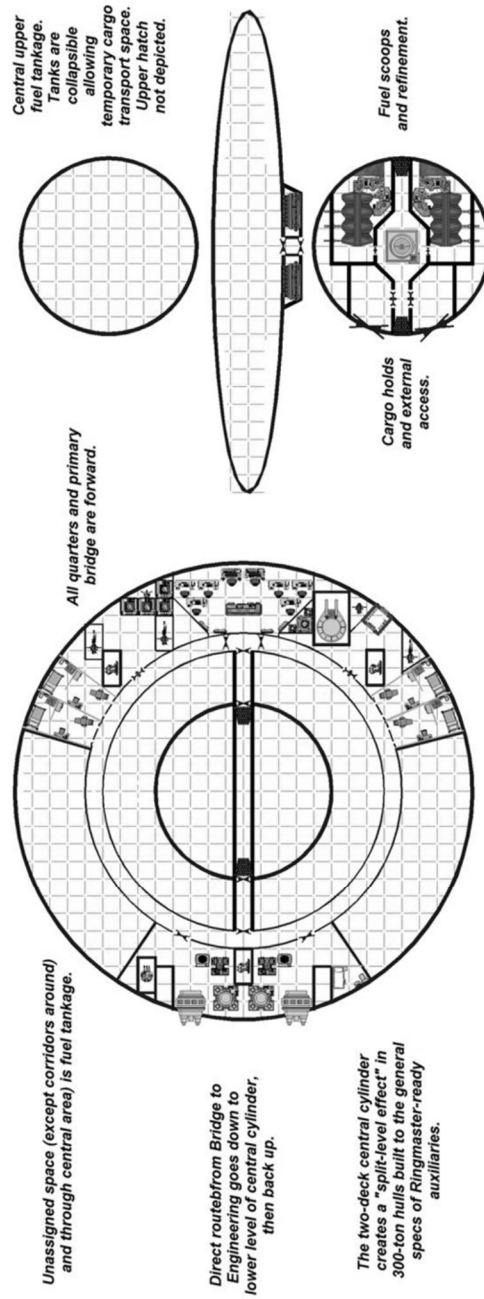
The cargo module consists of two decks. The external hull is streamlined. Cargo transfer generally occurs in orbit. Use of the standard docking cleat allows passage to the cargo module from the parent vessel during maneuver and jump.



Cargo Module and Jump-3 Scout



Big Top Two



Big Top Three

Program Notes: *Cirque*, Her Auxiliaries and Other Vessels

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

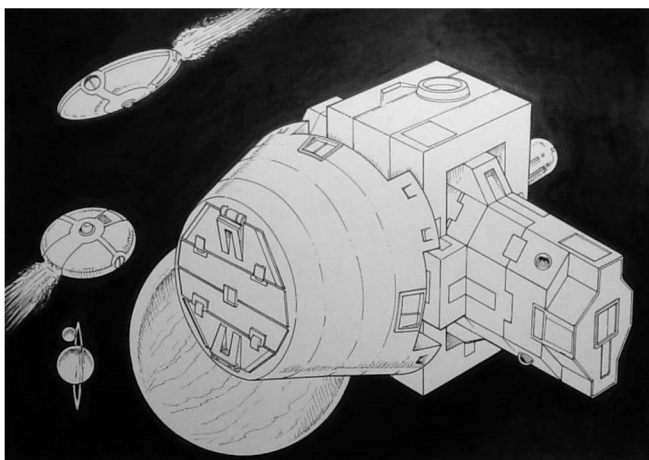
The Ringmaster class? Oh, how can I forget? I handled a few of them when they first undocked from the shipyard frames. A silly name, really. The original design contracts called for a big, circular docking ring, but that sort of thing would never have handled the stresses. Once a name gets attached, though — well, the Navy can be awfully stubborn about those things.

I assigned a few troublemakers to the Bacfuds quarters in my day. That was one of the small things that made those ships odd.

But they're good ships. Not a lot of thrust, but good. Some of the original hulls are still in service. And the blueprints are still in shipyard databanks all along the Marches. Some of the bigger mercenary outfits buy them. Wouldn't mind having one or two for Sharurshid — carry a lot of cargo and still whip any Vargr scum who come sniffin'.

You could have a lot of fun with a good crew, you know, crack pilots and engineers. Three landers and a fuel-sucker could run maneuver in tandem, push some real agility out of the jumpship while they were linked. You plow out of your jump, dodge around like crazy as you come in, launch the auxiliaries, cover and guide 'em downhill until you need to part ways. Everyone covers everyone else.

Different, of course, when the cleats are carrying frames of fighters.



You let the fighters loose to get where they have to get. They're pulling more Gs than you, so they're keeping the bad guys distracted — and you can pack some punches with the particle accelerator.

Bringing in a big ortillery can? One rack of fighters for defense, and the big fuel saucer. Put the can in polar orbit or an angle, and you can pound anything needed. Meanwhile, you've got extra boost to maneuver protectively and take on anything coming from above, below, either side. Your fighters are there, too, covering you. Meanwhile, the ortillery can drop rocks and boomers on just about anything below.

Sure, we've got a lot of better stuff at this point. The Ringmaster's just proved the concept all over again, showed that a versatile ship in the right place is better than the perfect design three parsecs away. That's why the really big merc units keep one or two Ringmasters and a whole batch of their auxiliaries around. Cost-effective versatility.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

Rob Eaglestone's ship specifications for all vessels follow the written descriptions. Deck Plans are provided for *Cirque* and her auxiliaries.

Welcome Home

The players' home for the run of the show is *Cirque* and her auxiliaries. Between planets, and sometimes on planets, they will have their bunks, bunkmates, and activities. It is not enough that the referee has plenty of characters with whom to work. The characters need their home base, with all its comforts and conflicts, from which they escape when they come to a planet and to which they can retreat when an adventure is over.

Though the total tonnage renders her an Adventure-Class Ship ("ACS"), *Cirque* and her auxiliaries are repurposed military vessels. *Cirque* herself is a small, multi-purpose "jump tender" of the Ringmaster Class originally put into service by the Imperial Navy before the Fourth Frontier War. Vessels of this class have since been used by the IISS (the Imperial Scouts) for survey and exploration, though they are now mostly supplanted by the purpose-designed Donosev-class scout. Adm. Aramais P. Lee (Ret.) has been connected to the class, both in his Naval career and post-Naval Scout contracting.

Vessels of this design are still constructed at some shipyards, though their role has evolved. They now tend to be private vessels, often used by large mercenary organizations. *Cirque* herself is about twenty years old.

The word which should best describe them is cramped. While a few of the main characters will have comparatively spacious staterooms (Andii, Bertii, Thespian, Juggler), many characters will find themselves lucky to have a privacy curtain on their bunks.

Many characters will find themselves with dual roles, as well; acrobats will also serve as gunners, engineers, and so on. The Stage Manager is likely a pilot. A seemingly soft actor may turn out to have been a hardened Marine.

The **Ringmaster Class's** principal features are a massive jump drive capable of Jump-3 when fully "loaded" (and Jump 6 when carrying no more than 60 additional Vtons), as well as a "docking cleat" grapple system which allows versatility in choosing auxiliaries. Its maneuver drive renders it capable of 1-G acceleration fully loaded, 2-G when "stripped."

The vessel has multi-purpose docking/cleats allowing riders with compatible cleats to link for acceleration and jump. The vessel totals 1140 tons, and thus has ten hardpoints and two (2) firmpoints. These are occupied by four three-ton barbettes, four triple laser turrets, two triple sandcasters, a half-ton turret equipped with datacaster, and a half-ton turret equipped with commcaster. The vessel is heavily equipped with commu-

Cirque

nications, sensors, and other electronic gear; it serves as an orbital command and coordination center during operations. Four separate surfaces on the "BACFUDS" ("Braced Adaptable Colloidal-Fuel / Docking Surface") section allow up to four riders to "dock and lock."

Most riders are three hundred tons, roughly saucer-shaped, partially streamlined, and carry a standardized weapon package. These riders are standard, and thus found throughout the Imperium, attached to many different jump carriers. The Ringmaster is the smallest carrier commonly used.

One of the most common rider configurations is a **Platoon Lander** capable of housing a full platoon of "drop" Marines, their heavy weapons, basic supplies, and their battle dress. Big Top 2 (BT2) is a Platoon Lander. A two-deck central space is devoted to exercise and activities, originally intended to allow the Marines to remain toned and prepared. A large central hatch on the dorsal hull also allows rapid access in combat operations. A single deck encircles this cylinder, making it a "split-level house." The Platoon Lander is streamlined and capable of 1-G maneuver. It is equipped with a particle-accelerator barrette, a triple laser turret, a triple sandcaster, and sensors. Its bridge is equipped with a Computer Model/3.

A second common configuration is the high-capacity **Fuel Shuttle**. This rider allows the main vessel to be refueled in only three trips to a gas giant or a planetary source of fuel. Its tanks are collapsible, allowing it to carry additional supplies and material when it is not hauling fuel. It is built on the same hull as the Platoon Lander, and can purify its entire fuel load in a few hours. These also incorporate a dedicated 11-ton cargo hold as well as the collapsible tanks. The Fuel Shuttle is streamlined and capable of 1-G maneuver. It is equipped with a particle-accelerator barrette, a triple laser turret, a triple sandcaster, turret and sensors. Its bridge is equipped with a Model/1 computer.

A third, more unusual rider is the **Ortillery Rider**. At 600 tons, the ortillery rider has a dual ortillery bay, two triple laser turrets, and two triple sandcasters. It has Maneuver-3 drives and a large capacity for ortillery and cargo. Its bridge is equipped with a Model/5 computer and extensive sensors in support of its primary goal: planetary bombardment.

Other configurations include supply craft, heavy equipment and vehicle landers, field hospitals, and surface command vessels. If a function can be fit into a standard configuration, examples have likely been placed into service.

The Ringmaster class's distinction among small jump tenders is the relative ease by which docking grapples can be moved. Up to three (3) circular grapples capable of holding up to three hundred tons each can be installed on a single docking surface. Thus, larger riders can also be carried, so long as the total tonnage carried is within the carrier's jump capacity. One example is the six-hundred ton Ortillery Rider, a large craft looking like an oversized "Apollo" or "Orion" capsule of old Earth. These craft are designed to carry and launch hundreds of missiles or deadfall ordnance from orbit or high altitude. To haul the Ortillery Rider, two or three docking grapples are moved into position and locked to the hull. Skilled workers can perform this task in a day at a properly equipped orbital station.

Cirque has been configured to haul an Ortillery Rider and two standard riders. Andii Houke has obtained an Ortillery Rider, a Platoon Rider and a Fuel Rider. Two of these auxiliaries have been significantly refitted. The Ortillery Rider's launchers were removed and the central bays reconfigured to accommodate a stage and audience seating. The Platoon Rider's central "gymnasium" has been equipped for rehearsals, audio/video recording, and a special stage for outside performances from the upper dome. The Fuel Rider has not been significantly altered.

Cirque herself has been overhauled, but not significantly altered. Even the particle-accelerator barbettes remain; though privately owned, the vessel is carried under "Naval Reserve" status, and thus is fully loaded with everything it might need.

On the forward-most hull of *Cirque*, the central supply hatch allows all cargo and essentials to be brought aboard. The external portions of the barbettes and turrets can be seen. Four flat sensor emitter/receptors serve for sensor and communications purposes, although the main equipment is several decks below.

Deck 1. The forward gunnery deck and the aft gunnery deck are virtually identical. Though all weapons can be operated from the bridge, individual weapons are generally removed from the "slave" circuit

and operated by an individual gunner for close combat. Spare sandcaster charges are stored wherever space can be made. The deck has barracks and common space for at least eight (8) gunners (more can be "hot-bunked" if needs dictate). The particle accelerators themselves are located at this level, providing both ease of maintenance.

Deck 2. Officer's Deck contains the main staterooms for the officers. It also has a small stateroom with an odd entry: it is accessed by walking through the elevator, which has a door on each side. Safety circuits are supposed to keep the door from being opened when the platform is on another deck. Malfunctions have been noted in some vessels.

The open space in the deck is furnished to taste or mission. Many examples of this class of vessel include exercise equipment, as the galley is below. Normally, one room is a lounge, and the other a small gymnasium.

Deck 3. Medical Deck contains a well-equipped medical ward, primary life support, and the main crew recreational space.

The medical ward is better equipped than the small sickbays installed on Platoon Riders, and so treats the occupants of all vessels. Though still small compared to facilities on a dedicated medical rider or a starship, the ward can handle trauma and illness within reason.

The main lounge contains food preparation and eating facilities, used in shifts. Crew can choose to eat in groups, or in anti-social clusters. The lounge area includes access to entertainment systems of various kinds, though the emphasis is of course on recorded stories and music. Educational sessions and briefings can be held in this area, though this can also be handled at crew stations and by use of hand-held computers and tablets.

Additional EM arrays are installed outside this deck, on the hull above and enclosing the primary circuits.

Deck 4. The Bridge and Electronics Deck contains the main computer as well as all command and control consoles. The deck is spacious. Apart from external dishes and other gear, all sensors, communications, stealth gear, and similar electronics are contained in the side sections.

At this level, the central lift is not enclosed save for the lift's cage. This provides quick and easy access to any bridge function. However, it is another triumph of incautious design; despite safety systems including sensors with "auto-stop" functions, loud buzzers and flashing lights, crew members passing underneath the lift when in operation have on occasion been trapped and injured.

Deck 5. The massive jump drive runs from Deck 5 through Deck 7, as do the power plants. Decks 5 and 7 are each 4.5 meters tall; deck 6 is a standard 3.0-meter deck. Fuel is contained in the BACFUDS structure surrounding the engineering structure. Access to the massive fuel tankage is available for inspection and repair purposes. Opening the access panels while the tanks are full is not recommended.

Deck 6. Due to the chill in the small single staterooms squeezed into the BACFUDS enclosure, personnel familiar with the Ringmasters have adapted the acronym into a cuss (e.g., "Oh, bacfuds," "You're a bacfud," etc.).

The BACFUDS docking level is shown configured for *Cirque*'s 600-ton rider and two standard 300-ton riders. The staterooms are designed to allow easy access to the engineering levels and the lower gunnery deck, as well as to use available volume. Unfortunately, despite insulation and extra electric heating coils, the rooms tend to be chilly at best when the tanks are full. As operational procedures favor being prepared for jump, the tanks are rarely empty except when the ship is actually in jump.

Most crews find ways to use the long corridors. With safeties disengaged, the especially large iris-valve airtight hatches are often left open to allow exercise, target shooting with low-powered lasers, and similar creative pastimes. Inspection access hatches into the fuel tanks themselves also allow for foolish games of hide-and-seek and other activities.

Gravitics can be shut down in the corridors on this deck to ease transition from one docked vessel to another.

Deck 7. The third engineering level is much like Deck 5, but also includes basic maneuver drives and necessary access.

Deck 8. Apart from the fact that access hatches are reversed (internal access from ceiling, external from floor), this deck is a duplicate of Deck 1.

Big Top One (BT1)

Big Top One ("BT1") is a converted artillery/missile platform. The main feature of the "baseline" vessel is its massive missile capacity in a small vessel. The vessel is built around two semicircular missile bays. The semi-circular hatches are forward and enclose both bays. The bays are partially open to one another in the center; the original bulkhead therein was non-structural and has been removed. This provides a central performance space fifteen meters in diameter and fifteen meters tall. This cylinder is circled by five decks which were previously additional ordinance storage and maintenance space. Columns support these decks; they now contain slightly angled seating. While a close look will show that the seating in the back has at best obstructed viewing angles, the entire performance area has been equipped with numerous cameras and other sensors which feed to the central computer. This builds a fully holographic image of the action. All audience members have "viewers" in the form of obviously dorky and hard-to-steal spectacles (these also contain tracking systems in case a spectator "accidentally" walks off with one). Thus, the "cheap seats" in the back are arguably better seats than the front rows.

All members of the audience can hear everything that goes on without additional aid, though the sound can also be transmitted to remote locations. In addition, the scents of the circus permeate the environment. This theater can seat 1224 people.

When opportunity allows the use of a separate performance area, additional spectators (an overflow audience) can be allowed into the vessel for a lower fee to experience the performances only via video. Alternative performances (e.g. plays, concerts) may also be scheduled.

The recording feeds are "closed circuit" and highly encrypted to prevent tapping of the feeds. The intellectual property rights of the Foundation, its sponsors, and its performers are guarded closely.

On other occasions, and between performances of the circus style shows, the theater can be used for plays, talent shows, musical performances, small sporting events and various other activities. If a performance is possible in the space, it can be put on in Big Top One.

A tent-like, extendable cupola has been installed at the forward end (the "upper" end in terms of gravitic orientation, and Deck 1 due to the top-down viewpoint). In appropriate atmospheric conditions (most of them), this is extended upward mechanically to provide an additional profile of a circus-like tent to viewers outside, and to those looking up from below.

Deck 5a. The lowest "decks" are two extension decks containing the maneuver drives and landing gear. These project slightly further than the 1.5 meters of the three circular docking cleats. In addition, the center docking cleat does not have a direct access hatch into the hull above, unlike most such docking cleats. This prevents direct access from another vessel to the missile bay in the original design and the performance area in the current refit.

Deck 5. The first full deck, Deck 5, contains the four large cargo airlocks and additional storage facilities. In the original missile/ordnance use, these airlocks and cargo space were used to load and store ordnance; they are now used for audience entry and other access. Additional supplies and consumables for extended periods are also stored here. Finally, the four defensive turrets are located at the four cardinal "compass points." It should be noted that access to each segment of the main drive machinery and the landing gear machinery is obtained via a recessed iris valve located in the center of each main lock. The iris valves are covered by a layer of hinged flooring flush with the remainder of the deck surface. This minimizes the risk of accidental falls into the machinery while loading and unloading cargo, whether it be ordnance or miniphants.

In the current configuration, two of the four cargo holds remain as they were, each capable of holding ten (10) containers three (3) meters long, one and one-half (1.5) meters wide and three (3) meters tall. The other two cargo areas have been converted to transport the various animals used in performances. Two (2) "animal tanks" allowing maintenance of unusual environments are installed, as are a number of smaller berths for small to midsized animals. One very large more-or-less open animal pen is maintained for large animals such as miniphants.

The animals are exercised daily in the center ring, regardless of whether in space or on a planet.

The four heavy ordnance lifts from the original design remain, but have been upgraded to bring guests and other necessities up and down. For safety reasons, each lift has an operator while performances are ongoing.

As noted, there is substantial seating.

The performance entrance is found at the "North" position. The cargo hold behind that entry is normally emptied of containers, which are moved outside during performances. The cargo area becomes the dressing and backstage area.

Some cargo containers include minimal "essential facilities" for guests. Other cargo containers include quantities of foodstuffs and materials, as well as substantial material to generate the all-important scent of popcorn (although actual popcorn is in limited supply, and the most costly item sold at performances). The majority of snacks and foodstuffs are purchased onworld, including local snacks to satisfy particular local preferences.

The four defensive turrets also ring the rim of this deck.

Deck 4. The next deck contains seating essentially mirroring the deck below; the center is open. The deck space above the "northern" entry area is used as a bandstand and additional performance or entrance space. The ship's power plants are located at the east and west points, with the fuel tanks to either side. The main control room is located at the south, with the computer systems in parallel consoles to either side. Note that while there are four separate computer consoles, these are linked to form a single unit; space requirements in the original configuration required as much. To the southwest, beside the computer the life-support is found. To the southeast essential electronics including the masking electronics are maintained. Beside each of those are found is found a stateroom generally occupied by the vessel commander and the onboard ordnance commander in the original configuration. In this configuration, these staterooms are available for any appropriate user; the command pilot is due less space than some of the star entertainers. It is likely that a larger bed will be placed in both to allow certain entertainers some additional space to reside with their spouses or significant others. Each stateroom has a private fresher.

At the north is found an eight-person barracks which originally housed ratings who handled ordnance in combat. In addition, several "crew niches" are also found there. In this configuration the double bunks (which afford some pertinent partitioned privacy) are primarily used to house performers and essential stagehands.

Deck 3. The next deck contains additional seats. The angled space at the outer edge of the deck has no functional use, and is sealed away from internal pressure.

Deck 2. Deck 2 mirrors Deck 3, but with no additional angled space.

Deck 1. The uppermost level contains the equipment for raising the tent-like cupola. It may also be used for surprise entries or gags (falling buckets of confetti, rubber chickens, items to be juggled being dropped, release of performing avians, etc.). The equipment for opening the main hatches for the two missile bays is also found at this level.

Big Top Two (BT2)

Big Top Two is a converted troop carrier based on a standardized three-hundred ton saucer/disc hull. She has a single primary deck, with a two-level central cylindrical deck.

The bridge is contained at the forward end, along with the main computer. Going clockwise around the rim are compartments for troop equipment, storage facilities for the particle accelerator, and the landing gear, as well as a personnel airlock. Similar storage facilities, landing gear, and the laser turret are found counterclockwise from the bridge.

Two common rooms with galley and recreation space are found further clockwise, followed by a junior officer cabin for up to three (3) people. To counterclockwise is found another common room, followed by the medical bay, followed by another junior officer room. In the original use, these were used either for Marine noncommissioned officers or junior vessel crew.

To both clockwise and counterclockwise are found single staterooms. The large number is used to guarantee privacy for crew, a Navy custom. Marine officers were also given private rooms. In the current configuration, these private cabins are reserved for the higher-level performers and managers.

Power plant, maneuver drives, and life support are found at the rear of the vessel, as is fuel.

To inboard, four (4) barracks with bunks for up to sixteen (16)

Cirque

troops each are found. The central two-deck structure is accessed from the corridors allowing access to each barracks unit.

The central area has several hatches in the upper hull allowing lift armor or lift vehicles to exit quickly and easily. The lower deck contains a central access hatch through the docking ring assembly.

In the current configuration, the central area is used as a rehearsal stage, gathering area, and recording stage. The primary documentarian has a daily schedule using that space to record various acts. One of the documentarian's primary projects is a full recording of the plays of Nish-gunashuu, the "Vilani Shakespeare."

Big Top Three (BT3)

Big Top Three is similar to BT2. However, most of the space allocated in BT2 to for crew and troops is devoted to BT3's fuel tanks. Central fuel tankage is collapsible, allowing further cargo space for shuttling cargo to the surface. The lower central deck is devoted primarily to fuel scoops and purification equipment. As has been noted elsewhere, the entire fuel requirements of a Ringmaster can be supplied by three (3) trips of the vessel to a hydrogen source.

The vessel also has substantial sensor capabilities, which allow it to avoid trouble, and to extend the sensor capabilities of the Ringmaster.

The Advance Sophonts' Scout-3

The Scout-3 on long-term loan to Advance Scout 1 is an integral part of Cirque des Sirkas. Though built on the same basic hull as a Type-S, it has reduced maneuver of 1G, enhanced jump of J-3, and no air/raft. This vessel compromise is used by the Scout Service for long-distance mapping and scouting in areas of low stellar density. However, it is even more cramped than a standard scout and thus is not often a desired mustering benefit.

The Scout 3 in use by Cirque des Sirkas is sometimes referred to as *Grendel's Mother*. Other Scout-3 vessels are occasionally encountered in the Spinward Marches and in space with a low density of stars. In the Marches, they are greatly outnumbered by the standard J2, 2G scout model.

The Vargr Corsair

Yaarrghu Pfaglum, a typical Vargr merchant/commerce raider, visits Old Station for the celebration of Holiday, 1111, and to check on the increasing fame and fortune of one of its own pups. Vargr corsairs may occasionally be met in the Spinward Marches. Armament varies; the details shown do not include turrets or weapons.

Yacht (Bakaal Sunflower Class)

Yachts may be encountered from time to time, especially in more civilized ports. Yachts may be used by the very rich, including Imperial Nobility. MegaCorporations also own yachts, using them to transport high-level employees from one world to the next, and to entertain important contacts. Armament varies; the details shown do not include turrets or weapons. The high (4G) maneuver rating is aimed at outrunning and outmaneuvering attackers.

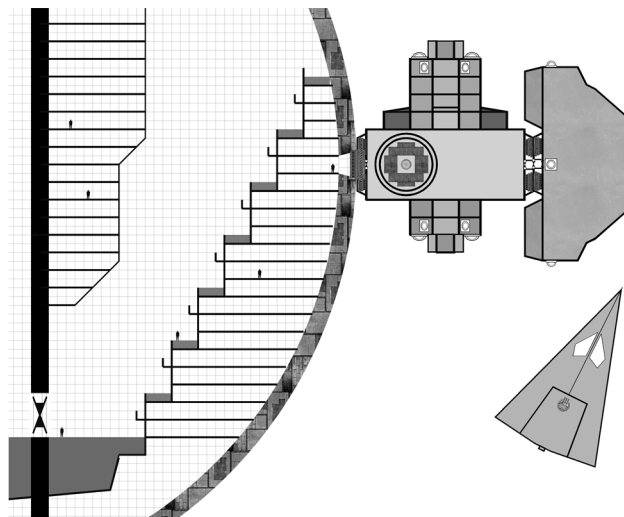
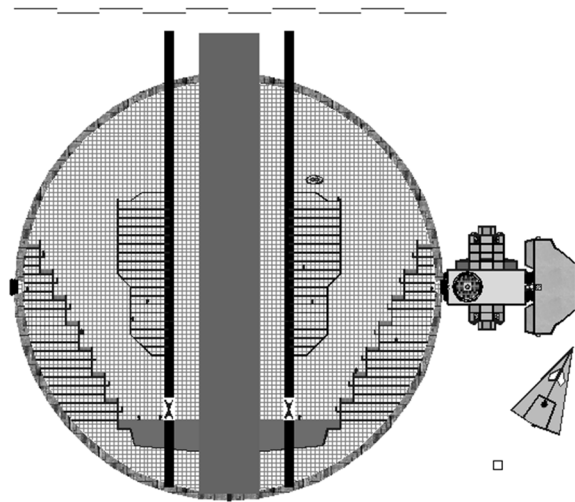
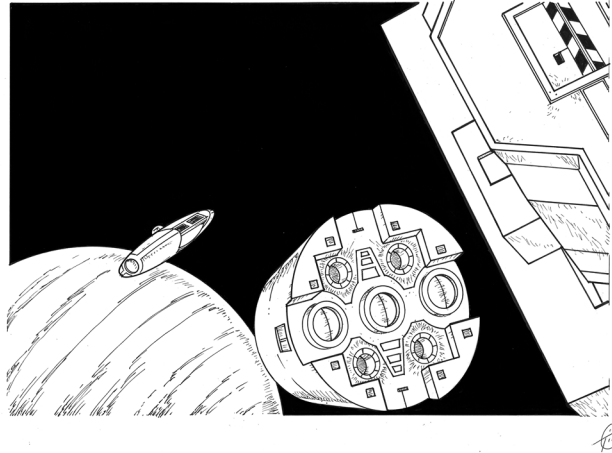
Tulgan Patrol Cruiser

The Sword Worlds employ various vessels. Their designs are often more utilitarian than Imperial designs. They tend to be crowded. The emerging Border Worlds retain a few of the vessels. Others remain in the control of the remaining Sword Worlds.

Laknir-Class Laboratory Ship

The Laknir-class laboratory ship is a standard and regularly encountered vessel. Weapons and laboratory equipment vary significantly.

Cirque's Planned Itinerary	06 2624 Mercury	14 1320 Saurus
01 2716 Rhyllanor	07 2324 Capon	15 1119 Vilis
02 2414 Tureded	08 2124 Lunion	16 1217 Arkadia
03 2417 Equus	09 2024 Derchon	17 1315 Miriam
04 2519 Pannet	10 1822 Rabwhar	18 1515 Calit
05 2621 Fosey	11 1825 Zaibon	19 1413 Denotam
	12 1524 Hofud	20 1611 Phlume
	13 1522 Dyrwyn	21 1910 Regina



Cirque

Transport T-MC26 Ringmaster0214 MCr475.4 [Bilstein Yards]

Original Hull Name: Avinashini
 Current Name: *Cirque*
 Disposition: Cirque des Sirkas, LIC, with Reserve Obligations

Actual volume: 1140 tons
 Crew comfort: -2
 Passenger demand: -5

Tons	Component	MCr	Notes
1200	Cluster Hull	24	C
-6	No Landers	0	
0	AV=28. 1 Kinetic Charged	0	
648	Jump Fuel (6 parsecs)	0	6 parsec jump, at 108t per parsec
48	Plant Fuel (3 weeks)	0	0.75 months
1	Fuel Transfer Pumps	1	
109	Imp PowerPlant-6 (T2)	109	P 6
185	Jump Drive-6 (J5 actual)	185	J 6
23	Maneuver Drive-2 (M)	46	2 G
1	AR Ant Communicator	1.5	
1	AR Ant Jammer	1.5	
1	AR Ant Scope	1.5	
1	AR Ant Neutrino Detector	1.5	
1	AR Ant EMS	1.5	
1	AR Ant Stealth Mask	1.5	
2	2x Vd T3 Sandcaster	2.2	#2
4	4x Vd T3 Beam Laser	6	#4
0.5	D T4 DataCaster	1.7	
0.5	SR T4 CommCaster	5.7	
12	4x AR B1 Particle Accelerator	22	#4
4	Computer Model/4 std	18	
2	Life Support Long Term	2	40 person-months
8	2x Gunners' Barracks	0.4	#2 (5) R1 R1 R2 R2 R3
9	Medical Ward	4	
4	Spacious Bridge	0.4	2cc 0op 0ws
1	Crew Common Fresher	1	10 crew
5	5x Spacer Niche	0.5	#5 1 crew
12	4x Crew Stateroom	0.4	#4 1 crew
8	2x Crew Lounge	0	#2
17	Cargo Hold Basic	0	
0.5	Air Lock	0.1	
37	37x Grapples	37	#37 up to 35t

A-FU30 Bigtop One MCr154.5 [Clan Severn]

Original Hull Number: Ortilery SM C443
 Designation: Big Top 1
 Disposition: Cirque des Sirkas, LIC, with Reserve Obligations

Crew comfort: -2
 Passenger demand: -5

[code]

Tons	Component	MCr	Notes
600	Unstreamlined Hull	20	U
0	AV=28. 1 Kinetic Charged	0	
0	Jump Fuel (0 parsec)	0	0 parsec jump, at 0t per parsec
9	Plant Fuel (0.5 months)	0	0.5 months
17	Maneuver Drive-3 (J)	34	3 G
28	PowerPlant-3 (J)	28	P 3
0	AR Surf Communicator	1.5	

Cirque

0	AR Surf Jammer	1.5	
0	AR Surf Neutrino Detector	1.5	
0	AR Surf Visor	1.5	
0	AR Surf Stealth Mask	1.5	
0	AR Surf EMS	1.5	
0	Vd Surf Proximeter	0.6	
1	2x D T3 Beam Laser	2	#2
1	2x D T3 Sandcaster	1.2	#2
5	Computer Model/5 std	27	
5	Squad Barracks	0.4	(5) R1 R1 R2 R2 R3
6	3x Life Support Long Term	6	#3 40 person-months
3	Cramped Bridge	0.7	1cc 5op 0ws
6	2x Officer Stateroom, fresher	1.2	#2 1 crew
3.2	4x Spacer Niche (bunkable)	0.4	#4 1 crew
7.2	4x Small SR, fresher (bunkable)	2.4	#4 1 crew
6	2x Crew Lounge	0	#2
20	2x Cargo Hold Basic	0	#2
7	Large Animal Berth	1	5 tons of animals
14	2x Capture Tank	1.4	#2 atmospheric controlled
8	4x Cargo Lock	0	#4
3	6x Animal Low Berth	1.2	#6 750 Kg of animals
433	Center Stage	0	
18	18x Grapple	18	#18 up to 35t

Transport T-CL10 Big Top Two MCr165 [Bilstein Yards]

Original Hull Number: Platoon SM B918

Disposition: Cirque des Sirkas, LIC, with Reserve Obligations

Originally designed as a troop carrier, this ship sports barracks for a platoon of marines with equipment (battledress and support weapons) and multipurpose living space. Even with all of the open space, the ship feels too small.

Crew comfort: +0

Passenger demand: -5

Tons	Component	TN	MCr	Notes

300	Lift body Hull, lifters	12	43	L, lifters
3	Landing legs with pads	14	3	
3	Flotation hull	14	3	
0	AV=28. 1 Kinetic Charged	14	0	
0	Jump Fuel (0 parsec)	12	0	J0, 0t/pc
1.5	Plant Fuel (0.5 months)	12	0	0.5 months
3	Maneuver Drive-1 (B)	14	6	1 G
7	PowerPlant-1 (B)	14	7	P 1
0	AR Surf Communicator	14	1.5	
0	AR Surf Jammer	14	1.5	
0	AR Surf Neutrino Detector	14	1.5	
1	AR Ant EMS	15	1.5	
0	AR Surf Stealth Mask	14	1.5	
0	AR Surf Visor	14	1.5	
3	AR B1 Particle Accelerator	16	5.5	
1	Vd T3 Beam Laser	14	1.5	
1	Vd T3 Sandcaster	14	1.1	
3	Computer Model/3 std	17	10.5	
4	Medical Bay	14	3	
40	Troop Barracks (16 each) (4)	14	0.8	#4 (5) R1 R1 R2 R2 R3
4	Life Support Long Term (2)	14	4	#2 40 person-months
12	Spacious Controls	16	0	
48	Officer Stateroom (12)	14	1.2	#12 1 crew
12	Crew Stateroom (6)	14	0.6	#6 1 crew
2	Crew Common Fresher (2)	14	2	#2 10 crew
12	Galley/Lounge (3)	14	0	#3

Cirque

0.5 Air Lock	14	0.1	
100 Center Stage	14	0	
10 Cargo Hold Basic	14	0	
4 Cargo Lock (2)	14	0	#2
16 Vehicle Lock (4)	14	0	#4
9 Grapples (9)	14	63	#9 up to 35t

Transport T-CL10 Big Top Three MCr158.7 [Bilstein Yards]

Original Hull Number: Fuel SM A274

Designation: Big Top 3

Disposition: Cirque des Sirkas, LIC, with Reserve Obligation

Actual volume: 298.5 tons

Crew comfort: -3

Passenger demand: -5

Tons	Component	MCr	Notes
300	Lift body Hull, lifters	43	L, lifters
3	Landing legs with pads	3	
3	Flotation hull	3	
0	AV=28. 1 Kinetic Charged	0	
0	Jump Fuel (0 parsec)	0	0 parsec jump, at 0t per parsec
216	Plant Fuel (72 months)	0	72 months
3	Maneuver Drive-1 (B)	6	1 G
1	Fuel Transfer Pumps	1	
2	Fuel Intakes 80t/hr	0.2	80t/hr
7	PowerPlant-1 (B)	7	P 1
5	5x Fuel Purifiers	0.5	#5
1	Fuel Scoops	0.1	
4	4x Fuel Bins	0.4	#4
0	LR Surf Communicator	2.5	
0	LR Surf Jammer	2.5	
0	LR Surf Scope	2.5	
0	LR Surf Neutrino Detector	2.5	
0	LR Surf EMS	2.5	
2	LR Ant EMS	2.5	
0	LR Surf Stealth Mask	2.5	
3	AR B1 Particle Accelerator	5.5	
1	Vd T3 Beam Laser	1.5	
1	Vd T3 Sandcaster	1.1	
1	Computer Model/1 std	1.5	
2	Life Support Long Term	2	40 person-months
12	Spacious Bridge	0.8	2cc 4op 0ws
8	4x Crew Stateroom	0.4	#4 1 crew
1	Crew Common Fresher	1	10 crew
1	Spacer Niche	0.1	1 crew
0.5	Air Lock	0.1	
12	Cargo Hold Basic	0	
9	9x Grapples	63	#9 up to 35t

Enhanced Scout/Courier S2-AL23 Grendel's Mother MCr80.9 [Bilstein Yards]

Owner: IISS

Disposition: Detached Duty

Though built on the same basic hull as a Type-S, the Extended Scout has enhanced jump of J-3, and no air/raft. This vessel compromise is used by the Scout Service for long-distance mapping and scouting in areas of low stellar density. However, it is even more cramped than a standard scout and thus is not always a desired "mustering benefit."

Crew comfort: -1

Passenger demand: -5

Cirque

Tons	Component	TN	MCr	Notes

100	Lift body Hull, lifters	12	17	L, lifters
1	Landing legs with pads	11	1	
2	Submergence hull	11	4	
0.5	Fins	11	0.2	
0	AV=11. 1 Blast Plate	11	0	
33	Jump Fuel (3 parsecs)	12	0	J3, 11t/pc
3.3	Plant Fuel (one month)	12	0	one month
15	Ear Jump Drive-3 (B)	9	30	J 3
7	Ear PowerPlant-3 (B)	9	14	P 3
2	Maneuver Drive-2 (A)	11	4	2 G
1	Fuel Scoops 100t/hr	8	0.1	100t/hr
1	Fuel Intakes 40t/hr	8	0.1	40t/hr
1	Fuel Bins 20t/hr	8	0.1	20t/hr
1	Fuel Purifiers 4t/hr	8	1	4t/hr
1	Vd T3 Hybrid L-S-M	11	2	
1	Computer Model/1bis std	13	3	
1	Life Support Adaptable	11	1	10 sophonts
2	Life Support Long Term	11	2	40 person-months
10	Spacious Controls	13	0	
2	Crew Stateroom	11	0.1	1 crew
0.5	Crew Shared Fresher	11	0.5	4 crew
3	Spacer Niche (3)	11	0.3	#3 1 crew
8	Crew Lounge (2)	11	0	#2
4	Cargo Hold Basic	12	0	

Raider P-DA42 Rrazaghz Corsair MCr167.1

Built on a 400-ton TL-12 winged airframe, the corsair is a pirate ship, ranging the star lanes in search of vulnerable freighters and their cargoes. Its drives support jump-2 and 4-G with fuel tankage for one jump and four months of operations. Ungainly in an atmosphere, this particular ship has a 60 ton cargo bay, and a 60 ton hangar -- both are perfectly suitable for storing captured goods and stolen small craft, respectively.

The keys to the corsair are its firepower and its sensor suite (which varies widely between ships). It has four hardpoints, usually allocated to several bay weapons and powerful sensors.

[T5,p.359]

Overtonnage: 23 tons

Crew comfort: -1

Tons	TN	Component	MCr	Notes

400	12	Airframe Hull, lifters	34	A, lifters
4	12	Landing legs with pads	4	
8	12	Submergence hull	16	
16	12	AV=24. 2 Kinetic Plate	0	
80	12	Jump Fuel (2 parsecs)	0	J2, 40t/pc
64	12	Plant Fuel (4 months)	0	4 months
25	12	PowerPlant-4 (H)	25	P 4
25	12	Jump Drive-2 (D)	25	J 2
15	12	Maneuver Drive-4 (H)	30	4 G
1	8	Fuel Scoops 100t/hr	0.1	100t/hr
1	8	Fuel Intakes 40t/hr	0.1	40t/hr
1	8	Fuel Bins 20t/hr	0.1	20t/hr
1	8	Fuel Purifiers 4t/hr	1	4t/hr
0	12	LR Surf Jammer	2.5	
0	12	AR Surf EMS	1.5	
0	12	LR Surf Scope	2.5	
0	12	AR Surf Stealth Mask	1.5	
0	12	Vd Surf Field Sensor	0.6	
6	14	AR B1 Missile (2)	6.4	#2

Cirque

6	14	Vd B1 Beam Laser (2)	7	#2
2	14	Computer Model/2 std	5	
2	12	Life Support Long Term	2	40 person-months
8	12	Standard Controls	0	
1	12	Crew Shared Fresher (2)	1	#2 4 crew
16	12	Crew Stateroom (8)	0.8	#8 1 crew
8	12	Crew Lounge (2)	0	#2
2	12	Cargo Lock	0	
1	12	Air Lock (2)	0.2	#2
60	12	Cargo Hold Basic	0	
10	12	Large Vehicle Lock	0	
60	12	Hangar	0	

Yacht Y-EU42 Bakaal Sunflower MCr179.5 [Tukera]

Builder: Tukera

Built on a 500-ton TL14 unstreamlined hull, the yacht is a noble's plaything for entertaining friends and undertaking political or commercial missions. It mounts drives giving it jump-2 and 4-G. Fuel tankage supports five months of power plant operations and allows two successive jump-2; it incorporates fuel intakes for refueling from a water source. Adjacent to the bridge is a Model/3 computer. Added to a basic sensor suite is a neutrino detector, stealth mask, and a standard proximeter.

The yacht is built around its luxurious staterooms, including one double stateroom suite for the owner. There are five hardpoints, but no weaponry is installed. There are three ship's vehicles: an air/raft, a 30-ton ship's boat, and an ATV. The ship's boat is fitted to ferry the ATV from orbit to surface and back. Cargo capacity is 20 tons. The yacht is unstreamlined, and is capable of tarmac and water landings only. The yacht requires a minimum crew of four: pilot/astrogator, three engineers, and a steward/medic. In practice, it carries several more stewards.

Actual volume: 497 tons

Crew comfort: -1

Passenger demand: +5

[code]	Tons	Component	MCr	Notes
500		Unstreamlined Hull	17	U
5		Flotation hull	5	
0		AV=7. 1 Kinetic Organic	0	
180		Jump Fuel (4 parsecs)	0	4 parsec jump, at 45t per parsec
36		Plant Fuel (2 months)	0	2 months
1		Fuel Intakes 40t/hr	0.1	40t/hr
1		Fuel Purifiers 4t/hr	1	4t/hr
19		Maneuver Drive-4 (K)	38	4 G
30		Imp Jump Drive-2 (E)	30	J 2
31		Imp PowerPlant-4 (K)	31	P 4
0		LR Surf Neutrino Detector	2.5	
0		LR Surf Stealth Mask	2.5	
0		G Surf Proximeter	4.1	
0		LR Surf EMS	2.5	
0		LR Surf Communicator	2.5	
0		LR Surf Scope	2.5	
5		5x AR T1 Empty	1	#5
3		Computer Model/3 std	10.5	
1		Life Support Luxury	1	10 high passengers
2		Life Support Long Term	2	40 person-months
16		Spacious Bridge	0.8	2cc 3op 3ws
16		8x Crew Single Stateroom	0.8	#8 1 crew
2		4x Crew Shared Fresher	2	#4 4 crew
8		2x Crew Lounge	0	#2
20		Cargo Hold Basic	0	
12		Owner's Suite	0.8	1 passenger + fresher

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42	7x Luxury Suite	2.8	#7 1 passenger + fresher
28	7x Passenger Lounge	0	#7
4	Air/Raft Enclosed	0.1	
30	Fast Boat	14	
1	ATV	1	
4	Vehicle Brackets	4	

Cruiser C-FS22 Tulgan Patrol Cruiser MCr172.4 [undefined]

Owner: Sword Worlds

Heavily armored and with cramped crew conditions, this ship is aimed at taking on Imperial ships, and therefore is designed with survivability in mind.

Actual volume: 454 tons

Crew comfort: -3

Passenger demand: -5

Tons	Component	MCr	Notes
600	Streamlined Hull	38	S
96	AV=55. 5 Kinetic Plate	0	
120	Jump Fuel (2 parsecs)	0	J2, 60t/pc
6	Plant Fuel (0.5 months)	0	0.5 months
1	Fuel Scoops	0.1	
1	Fuel Intakes	0.1	
1	Fuel Bins	0.1	
3	Fuel Purifiers (3)	0.3	#3
19	PowerPlant-2 (F)	19	P 2
35	Jump Drive-2 (F)	35	J 2
11	Maneuver Drive-2 (F)	22	2 G
0	AR Surf Communicator	1.5	
0	AR Surf Jammer	1.5	
0	AR Surf Radar	1.5	
0	AR Surf Scope	1.5	
0	AR Surf Neutrino Detector	1.5	
0	SR Surf Stealth Mask	1.2	
50	AR Bay Particle Accelerator	7.5	
50	AR Bay Salvo Rack	15	
3	AR B1 CommCaster	8	
1	Vd T3 DataCaster	2	
1	Vd T3 Beam Laser	1.5	
1	Vd T3 Sandcaster	1.1	
18	Platoon Barracks	1	(22) 4 sq + R4 01/02
2	Life Support Long Term	2	40 person-months
4	Frozen Watch (2)	2	#2 10 individuals
2	Computer Model/2 std	5	
2	Counsellor	0.2	
2	Clinic	1	
4.5	Cramped Controls	0	
4	Crew Lounge	0	
1	Crew Common Fresher	1	10 crew
2	Spacer Niche (2)	0.2	#2 1 crew
1.5	Spacer Bunks (3)	0.3	#3 1 crew
4	Crew Stateroom (2)	0.2	#2 1 crew
8	Cargo Hold Basic	0	

Lab Ship L-DC12 Laknir MCr138.4 [Bilstein Yards]

Disposition: In Service

Using a 400-ton TL15 Cluster hull, the laboratory ship is a mobile base for scientific analysis and investigation. It mounts drives for performance of jump-2 and 1-G acceleration. Fuel tankage supports a single jump-2 and five months of operations. Installed on the bridge is a model/2 computer,

Cirque

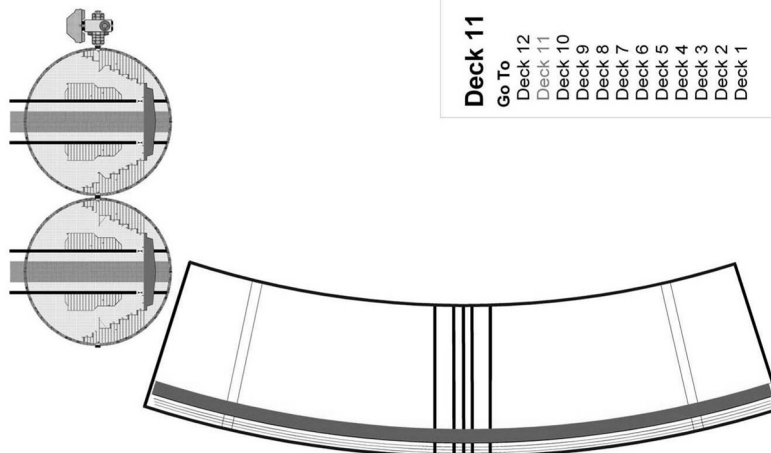
and a powerful sensor suite. The unusual hull of the lab ship allows spin-generated centrifugal gravity: to avoid the interference that gravitics might produce on some sensitive experiments. About half the ship is allocated to laboratory space and sample storage. The ship has four hard-points, but no weapons are installed. There is one 40-ton pinnacle in a vehicle bracket, and two air/rafts stored adjacent to cargo. The ship is an overtonnage design. The laboratory ship requires a crew of five: pilot, astrologator, two engineers, and medic, although most are typically mission-oriented researchers as well. Gunners and scientific research personnel may be added. There are twenty staterooms and no low berths. The pilot operates the pinnacle; the engineers operate the air/rafts. The ship can carry 20 passengers (35 if double occupancy) on a non-commercial basis.

Overtonnage: 25 tons

Crew comfort: 2

Passenger demand: -5

Tons	TN	Component	MCr	Notes
400	12	Cluster Hull	8	C
-2	15	No Landers	0	
0	15	AV=30. 1 Rad Charged	0	
66	12	Jump Fuel (2 parsecs)	0	J2, 33t/pc
32	12	Plant Fuel (5 months)	0	5 months
1	8	Fuel Purifiers 4t/hr	1	4t/hr
3	15	Maneuver Drive-1 (B)	6	1 G
4.29	15	Adv PowerPlant-2 (D)	13	P 2
10	15	Adv Jump Drive-2 (D)	30	J 2
0	15	DS Surf Communicator	3.5	
3	16	DS Ant Neutrino Detector	3.5	
3	16	DS Ant EMS	3.5	
0	15	DS Surf Grav Sensor	3.5	
0	16	DS Surf Visor	3.5	
0	15	G Surf Mass Sensor	4.1	
0	15	G Surf Deep Radar	4.1	
0	15	G Surf Densitometer	4.1	
0	15	G Surf Proximeter	4.1	
2	17	Computer Model/2 std	5	
4	15	Infirmary	2	treats minor trauma
3	15	Life support (120 people/month)	3	120 people/month
7	15	Standard Controls	0	
50	15	Crew Single Stateroom (25)	2.5	#25 1 crew
5	15	Crew Shared Fresher (10)	5	#10 4 crew
4	15	Crew Common Fresher (4)	4	#4 10 crew
120	15	Lab/Conference/Work area	0	
50	12	Cargo Hold Basic	0	
8	15	Vehicle Lock (2)	2	#2
40	14	Slow Pinnacle	18	
4	15	Small Craft External Bracket	4	
8	9	Air/Raft Enclosed (2)	0.2	#2



Program Notes: “Dramatis Personae” (Characters)

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

I’ve met a lot of people, especially in the last few years. “Materiel and Transportation Command” is a desk job with a moving desk. It’s about shaking hands, wheedling, begging, buying, ordering, yelling, bribing, threatening — you put down a word for a way to get what the men and women needed to kick Zho butt, I used it. Because it had to be done.

A lot of fine people served in the last war. Maybe even some of the Zho were fine people, believing in their cause. Whatever it was. I can never seem to understand the Zho. The Vikings I get — they’re all about “We’re the best, and leave us to our oddball little corner of planets, plus yours.” The Vargr I even get, you just have to think about the worst kind of migratory human thieves you’ve ever met.

The humans, though, and maybe the Aslan who joined in — most of them rose to the occasion, or beyond. I’m just a beat-up, nasty old man with a bad temper, don’t quote me on that, mind you. But the folks who fought out there, even most of the Zho on the line — those are the folks worth putting into a colony ship to a virgin system. They’re the ones we want carrying on the species.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, 188-1110.

Character Nicknames

Most of the regular characters are refereed to by nicknames, rather than given names. Thus, the actor Trouth Menckens, venerated for his years on Rhylanor’s stage, is referred to as “the Distinguished Geezer Thespian” (or “Geezer Thespian” for short). Faolchugh, the runaway Vargr bitten by the acting bug, is referred to as the Vargr Ringmaster.

This is to ease the referee’s job, just as it eased the author’s job. The commander, Andii Houke, her spouse, Bertii Jones, the Second Officer/Purser/Wily Lawyer U’aili, the Cold Case Detective Javert, and memorable VIPs such as Duke Norris are generally referred to by name.



The Distinguished
Geezer Thespian



The Vargr
Ringmaster

Referee

Only the referee should have access to this section as a whole. Players assuming specific characters may be given copies of their characters’ summaries *only*. Generally speaking, PCs do not have access to the statistics, skills, or histories of their fellow characters except to the extent revealed.

All of the pre-generated characters aboard *Cirque* can be assumed by players, providing that the players are willing to accept central personality points and life histories (that is, to actually play the role). Indeed, the players may even choose to have several characters available, choosing the “best fit” for certain adventures. Some adventures, for example, may best be handled by ship’s security.

Three are best left to the referee: Andii, Bertii, and U’aili. All three are filled with background information, and can serve to help the players out at times. In addition, they have driving goals which may differ from those of the PCs. In a sense, these three may be considered patrons.

Andii is essential to ship’s operations and will likely avoid clearly illegal activities wherever possible. When she violates the law out of necessity, she will take care to do minimum harm.

If any of the three (Andii, Bertii or U’aili) is assumed by a player, she or he *will* have access to the personnel records of characters, including their (admitted) skills.

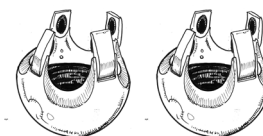
Any human character may be assigned gender based on the player’s preferences. In some cases, the characters are in relationships; the players and referees must work out gender changes to their comfort. Only a few characters must be specifically male or female, usually based on species (e.g. U’aili and the Aslan Tumblers, for example, are gender-specific).

Integrating Pre-Existing or Newly Generated Characters

Existing T5 characters (or characters converted to T5) may be integrated with this campaign. In general, these will be characters who have been in a campaign beginning sometime in the Golden Age (1105 thorough about 1115). Many will have been run through the referee’s version of the Fifth Frontier War. Any prior career can be useful to *Cirque des Sirkas*. Because security is a concern, military careers are useful. Because the vessel needs crew, space-trained characters are useful. Characters may have or discover a talent useful on-stage. Those capable of lifting heavy objects or counting cash receipts may be useful in “behind-the-scenes” functions. In all of these cases, the characters find themselves at Rhylanor late in 1110. Andii is still hiring, especially crew and backstage personnel. The existing characters may find themselves sitting on a bench beside the Cold Case Police Officer, an animal handler prospect, or assorted others.

Similarly, players may choose to roll their own entertainers, either replacing or supplementing other characters.

This is not generally a campaign for characters with their own ships.



Characters Aboard *Cirque* — Primary Crew

Cirque's Captain

IN Lt. Commander (Ret.) Andii Houke
 CEO, *Cirque des Sirkas*, LIC
 Commander, *Cirque*
 Final UPP: 9(9)CC67 (Dex 6 without prosthetics or grav units). Age: 42 years. Fame: 19 (Subsector, Subsector = Rhylanor). Sanity: 8.
 Final Honors: Lieutenant Commander, 7th Rhylanor Battle Group, Imperial Navy, [CR-5, WB-1, MCFU-4, *SEH*-1].
 Final Skills: Admin-2, Animals-0 (Riding-1), Art: Acting-1, Astrogator-1, Bureaucrat-2, Comms-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Engineer-0 (Jump Drives-1, Maneuver Drives-2), Fighter-0 (Beams-1, Unarmed-1), Gunner-2 (Screens-1, Turrets-1), Heavy Weapons-0 (WMD-2), Hostile Environment-1, Language: Zdetl-2, Liaison-1, Pilot-2 (Spacecraft ACS-1, Spacecraft BCS-1), Sensors-2, Stealth-1, Science: History of Travelling Entertainment-2, Zero G-0.
 Terms (6): 6 Spacer (Imperial Navy).
 Muster Out (12) (x2 Muster Out due to DD): TAS Life Membership, TAS Fellowship, C3 +1 (End B), 4 Ship Shares, Life Insurance, Wafer Jack, 2 SECRETS, Knighthood, C2 +1 (Dex 9/6), C3 +1 (End C).
 Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Pension: KCr 30/year.
 Homeworld: Spin 2303 Yorbund C7C6503-9 FI Ni.

Andii Houke is the commander of *Cirque*, and the Chief Executive Officer of *Cirque des Sirkas* Foundation, LIC. However, she depends heavily on Bertii and U'aii for the business and administrative duties associated with the operation. She takes a far more hands-on approach to her command, which she understands well as a Veteran of the Imperial Navy. Andii inspects all operations at least once weekly, and also randomly spot-checks. However, she is not a foolish martinet.

Andii served with distinction in the Imperial Navy, culminating in a significant role during the Battle of Rhylanor during the Fifth Frontier War.

Her first term involved some rather ugly combat, including the threatened use of WMDs, in piracy suppression. The second term was also eventful, but Andii developed an interest in theater during the less combative periods. In the third term, Andii became a landing-craft commander on a newer spine, but flying trusted designs such as the 300-ton saucers first designed for use with the Ringmaster class of vessels. During her fourth term, Andii received training in Zhodani language as a communications monitor she was denied promotion due to questioning the wisdom of maintaining a "cold war" mentality over the Zhodani Consulate.

In her sixth term, the war broke out. As part of the Corridor Fleet, Andii served in the Battle of Rhylanor. Communications skill and Zhodani language abilities served Andii well; she intercepted communications which allowed a daring defense against a much larger vessel.

In this defense, Andii was commanding a battle tender. She got most of her crew off before turning the tender into a "jump bomb" against the Zhodani vessel, which was approaching Rhylanor. Andii escaped, but her legs were crushed by failing structural members. Regeneration has failed due to multiple medical factors (the medics speculate that exposure to jump space is a factor), and thus Andii's legs remain amputated just above the knees.

Bertii became Andii's informal counselor during Andii's convalescence. They developed a deep bond. Andii is aware of Bertii's origin and real identity. In this case, love has conquered years of prejudice and training. She does not, however, trust the Zhodani as a whole (nor does Bertii).

Following her disability discharge, Andii has focused her energy on the performing arts. She has collected numerous materials and memorabilia on travelling shows in many cultures, including specifically the old Solomani shows such as vaudeville and the "travelling circus." This interest gave her a will to live after the severe injuries sustained in the Battle of Rhylanor.

Cirque's First Officer

Merchant First Officer Bertii Jones
 Final UPP: 685A98. Record and Apparent Age: 36. Actual Age: 42 years. Fame: 0 (none). Sanity: 12.
 Terms (6): 1 Education, 2 Agent, 3 Merchant.
 Final Honors: Directorship, *Cirque*.
 Final Skills: Admin-4, Art: Actor-1; Author-2, Astrogator-1, Broker-1, Counsellor-1, Bureaucrat-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Engineer-0 (Life Support-1, Maneuver Drives-1), Fighter-0 (Unarmed-1), Forensics-1, Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Language: Anglic-9; Oynprith-8, Liaison-1, Medic-2, Pilot-0 (Spacecraft ACS-1), Sciences: Biology-1; Sociology (Imperial)-5, Stealth-1, Streetwise-1, Steward-2, Survey-1, Teacher-1, Trade: Programmer-2, Trader-2, Vacc Suit-1.
 Psionics: Ψ = 12 [5th Stage Psionic]
 1st Stage: Basics; Direct-12, Remote-12, Self-12.
 2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-0, Psi-Hearing-0, Psi-Touch-0, Psi-Smell-0, Psi-Awareness-18, Psi-Perception-18.
 3rd Stage: ECM; Move-6, Teleport-0, EShift-0, The Touch-6, OOB-0, Mentation-24.
 4th Stage: No Psionic Institute affiliation.
 5th Stage: Intuitions; Insight-0, Curiosity-24, Luck-0.
 Muster Out (5): Life Insurance, Secrets x2, Directorship of *Cirque*.
 Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Medical Texts, First Aid Kit, Information regarding Zhodani activities.
 Actual BW: Ziafiplians 2934 Zhdoiesh A200 632-D Na Ni Va Cp.
 Actual HW Skills: Admin-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Survey-1, Vacc Suit-1.
 Purported BW: Spin 1515 Calit C434867-7
 Purported HW Skills: None.

Bertii is the fourth (and therefore already anomalous) child of a Zhodani Noble family. He is also quite short by Zhodani standards. Bertii nearly failed in his first and last years due to an insistence on taking views of Imperial literature contrary to accepted teaching and Zhodani viewpoints. Intercession by a parent and government service resolved the second set of issues. Ironically, after the intercession Bertii was allowed to pass with Honors. He was then recruited into the Consulate Tozjabr (Zhodani Intelligence Service).

Bertii entered the Imperium through Calit in 1090. His mission was to obtain information relating to the planned goals of the Fifth Frontier War through apparent scholarly pursuits and some computer hacking. During his time at the University of Rhylanor, Bertii became an informal counselor to many undergrads. He also immersed himself in Imperial literature. He was not pulled out after two (2) years (as is customary in the Agent career) due to the significant nature of the mission and long-term Zhodani goals — goals he knew nothing about.

Bertii followed new leads. Much of this required learning Oynprith. However, most of what he learned about the Ancients involved myths about the Ancients' final war. About mid-way through this term, Bertii was put on "Sleeper" status as the cover was considered successful despite Bertii's lack of success. This was a relief; Bertii was concluding that the Zhodani government had the wrong view of and approach to Imperial society. During this remainder of the term Bertii spent substantial time creating new personas and identities. Having become comfortable in and enamored of Imperial culture, he built an "escape hatch" persona. At the end of the term Bertii took the escape hatch and signed on to a merchant ship, reducing her/his age by eight years, showing trade school information from Rhylanor. The original Agent persona was reportedly killed in an Ine Givar terrorist explosion. Small quantities of Bertii's DNA were recovered.

Bertii became a Merchant under the new identity. He subtracted eight (8) years from his actual age, and maintained health and good looks using the psionic power of The Touch. Bertii found work with a small company servicing contracts for Sharurshid, a shipping company known for its interests in high-end luxury items.

Bertii found continue success. However, near the close of this term (1106), Bertii learned of activations of sleeper agents. Bertii hesitated at first to do anything. After a second round of activations came to his attention, Bertii sent anonymous data packets to the Imperial Navy intelligence services. The data were given some credence at lower levels, as it tended

Cirque

to support other reliable intelligence. Nonetheless, Admiral Santanochcheev's command structure disregarded this and other warnings that war was on the horizon.

After the Fifth Frontier War erupted, Adm. Aramais P. Lee's commission was restored. He was assigned to manage supply lines and used his knowledge of Sharurshid and other merchant lines to organize and enforce use of private vessels. Bertii was hired by Sharurshid and assigned to a liner converted to a hospital transport. He obtained additional training as a medic. Bertii anonymously identified Zhodani agents on several worlds along the route, and also hid a cache of data. Bertii showed particular skill in helping with symptoms of PTSD.

His vessel helped in search and rescue in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Rhyllanor, where he met Andii. As a result of the war Bertii became convinced that something he had done in his time on Rhyllanor was important, but could not be sure what. In addition, he realized that other information collected and cached would be of value to the Imperium in efforts to clear up the messes left behind.

Bertii holds a deep remorse regarding the carnage caused by the Fifth Frontier War.

Bertii is now Andii's spouse. When people note that something's a little different about Bertii, his stock response is, "I'm from Calit. I lost my whole family in the Tsuduryev Melt-Down." The delivery usually is sufficient to keep people from deeper inquiry. The Tsuduryev Melt-Down is discussed in the material on Calit.

Bertii is in some ways the true force behind Cirque des Sirkas. A former agent of the Zhodani Consulate, he is not a normal, "sane" Zhodani. He has abandoned and left his homeworld. He does not return there to have his psyche telepathically "repaired." He prefers the more open and free culture of the Spinward Marches.

Bertii was raised in an unusual Zhodani family which secretly valued independence and the right to be at least "quirky." He studied Imperial language and culture. Bertii's studies were almost interrupted for "readjustment" due to disagreements with the prescribed ("sane") views of Imperial civilization and literature.

Despite an independent streak, Bertii desired to serve the Consulate. In addition, his skills and ability to think independently were valued by the intelligence community. Thus, he was inducted as an agent and sent to Rhyllanor to obtain information important to Zhodani objectives, and in particular data regarding the Ancients' activity and myths. Bertii was also involved in placing other agents and building backgrounds, becoming versatile in the hacking necessary to create personas and covers. Bertii is in a position to read the thoughts of any character who is not shielded. Bertii will take action to help a player character adjust severe issues, but never in the high-handed (in his opinion) way of the Zhodani culture. For example, to help Andii heal emotionally, Bertii helped pull together the consortium which became the Cirque des Sirkas Foundation, LIC. This also helps Bertii; it gives him the ability to travel through the Marches, gathering additional information to ultimately provide to Norris.

Bertii has great influence with and loyalty to Andii. So long as a PC's goals are not directly counter to Andii's best interests, Bertii is a potent ally. No one who harms Andii is safe from enforced re-adjustment, at best.

Bertii feels deep personal guilt over the Fifth Frontier War. Seeking to make personal amends, Bertii is using each stop along *Cirque's* route to surreptitiously look for information on Zhodani agents. He knows what to look for to discover drop spots, Zhodani-influenced Psionic Institutes, and secretive presence of agents on social networks and other communications systems. Bertii hopes to provide his findings directly to Duke Norris when they finally meet in just about a year. In addition, Bertii is collecting any available additional information on the Zhodani war goals. He knows that his people wanted control of an Ancient installation on Rhyllanor, but is not certain what the installation was to do.

Apart from that, Bertii is relatively sane, very private Zhodani on the run.

Cirque's Second Officer and Lawyer

Merchant Second Officer U'ailli ("U'ailli")

(Aslan Female)

Ship's Lawyer and Purser

Final UPP: B88AA9. Age: 32 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family)

Final Honors: Third Officer, Sharurshid.

Final Skills: Admin-4, Advocate-3, Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Astrogation-1, Broker-6, Comms-1, Counsellor-2, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Diplomat-1 Engineer-0 (Power Systems-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), JOT-1, Language (Vilani-9), Language (Anglic-9), Medic-1, Steward-2, Trader-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Terms: 2 Education, 3 Merchant

Muster Out (3): KCr 25, KCr 25, C3 +1 (Sta 8).

Homeworld: Belizo (SM 3015) Ag Ni.

Note that U'ailli's career generation commenced earlier than a human's would have. Aslan commence adulthood at younger ages.

Her clan (Hk'ua) resides on Belizo, within the Spinward Marches. Her clan is loyal to the Imperium, having been granted lands and privileges. Her clan also has ties to Sharurshid, the human shipping megacorporation helping fund Cirque. More detail is found in the discussion of the Aslan Tumblers.

As a conservative female, she has taken an administrative role. Her clan has interests in common with Sharurshid.

The Fifth Frontier War broke out early in U'ailli's third term. She was aboard a Sharurshid vessel when hostilities erupted. The vessel was trapped as the Zhodani Fleet jumped into the Efate system. The captain was prepared to surrender. Adm. Aramais P. Lee (Ret.), a passenger on the ship, took command on his (mostly honorary) authority as Senior Captain. When the human gunnery chief questioned orders to prepare for combat, Lee asked U'ailli whether she had the dewclaws to take over.

She did. Though outgunned, the vessel disabled several Zhodani auxiliaries on its run out to safe jump-distance. U'ailli's aggressive fire direction was central to the effort, second only to Adm. Lee's reckless helm orders. His commendation brought her to the attention of Sharurshid officials. She was made an officer, and then promoted during the war, which she spent on vessels moving essential supplies and equipment under hazardous circumstances.

When the war drew to a close, she was at Rhyllanor. Her vessel (a liner temporarily impressed as a medical transport) assisted in search and rescue operations; Bertii was also on the same vessel. When Andii and Bertii later approached Sharurshid to sponsor Cirque des Sirkas, the corporate board agreed, providing that certain Sharurshid employees be placed in key positions. One such position was the Second Officer (M3). Recalling U'ailli, Bertii arranged to have her take the Second Officer/Ship's Lawyer position.

U'ailli serves as intercessor and adviser on what the PCs can get away with at various times. This is not a standard adventuring group, out to make itself fame, fortune, and a body count. U'ailli can fix a problem. She will also handle bail and other legalities surrounding "standard" misbehavior such as bar-fights.

U'ailli was brought on by Sharurshid to protect its investments and contributions. She came highly recommended by Sharurshid. She will, very pragmatically, advise the termination of a PC's contract as need be. She will not lightly participate in any strictly illegal activity, though she might bend a rule under honorable circumstances.

U'ailli is quite capable of defending herself at need, despite the traditional role of females in her species. While the males of the Aslan species are better known for the warrior propensities, a dewclaw on an Aslan is not lightly ignored.

U'ailli has also taken on the management and shaping of the Aslan Tumblers' act. She discovered the Marines, as noted in the notes on their service and discharge, and is directly responsible for recruiting them into Cirque's travelling entourage. She takes a strong interest in them, as they are of the same clan.

The Ship's Doctor

Lt. Commander Sir Leo Shannon, MD

Final UPP: 676AA8. Age: 38 years. Fame: 8 (Regional).

Final Honors: Doctor Sir Leo Shannon, KC, INR (LCMR), (CMO) *Maelstrom Solace* (TR-2342) [WB-1 XS-2, MCFU-1], {Doctor of Medicine, Bachelor of Science}.

Final Skills: Animals (Trainer)-2, Arts (Actor)-2, Astrogation-1, Athlete-1, Comms-1, Engineer-1 (Life Support)-2, (Power Plants)-2, Gambler-2, Gunner-1 (Turrets)-1, (Screens)-1, Liaison-2, Medic-7, Pilot-1, Trades

Cirque

(Biologics)-2, (Electronics)-1, (Mechanic)-1, Trader-1, Seafarer-1, Sensors-1, Sophontology-2, Strategy-2.

Muster Out (4): KCr 25, Knighthood, and member of: *The Beneficent Order of Caduceus and Cannon* (an order open only to doctors in the armed forces who have seen combat and been knighted at the Imperial level; though this is in essence a fraternal organization rather than a form of Imperial-level Knighthood, membership allows one to add the letters KC (Knight), KHC (Knight Hospitaller) or KGC (Knight Commander) depending on their rank in the Order)), KCr 30, Life Insurance.

BW: Alell (SM 1706) Ph, Pa, Ri.

HW: Alell (SM 1706) Ph, Pa, Ri.

HW Skills: Trader-1, Arts (Actor)-1.

Shannon is known best for his gruff bedside manner. He is not at all uncaring. To the contrary, he uses the gruffness to his advantage to hide the caring, and/or to motivate patients to pull themselves together. Shannon's experience with training animals is also useful when he is not busy with patients. Shannon's work is with smaller animals. He is particularly good with tree rats, whose mischievous games of "steal and hide" amuse him (so long as he is not the target). "When marines are cooped up too long, they need something to get the energy directed away from punching each other's lights out. A rat-hunt's just the thing, some days."

Pilot, Big Top 1

Apamasha Kiimuu

Final UPP: 97889A. Age: 30 years. Fame: 1 (Parent).

Final Honors: Sublieutenant, 3rd Escort Squadron, Imperial Navy, [CR x3, MCUF-1].

Final Skills: Astrogator-2, Computer-2, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-0 (Blades-1, Beams-1), Fleet Tactics-2, Gambler-1, Gunner-2 (Turrets-1, Screens-1), Pilot-0 (Small Craft-1), Sensors-1, Trade (Polymers-1).

Muster Out (3): KCr 25, C2 +1 (Dex 8), Life Insurance.

BW: Ara Pacis (DB 0419) Ni.

HW Skills: Driver-0 (Wheeled-1).

Kiimuu is chief pilot of Big Top 1 due to her multiple skills, rather than any particular skill. During run-up to jump, when the auxiliaries are fully secured, her position shifts to the main bridge as gunnery coordinator. She also runs training and exercises for the entire gunnery crew during jumps, helping to focus the eclectic crew on teamwork.

Planetside, Kiimuu's duties often include running errands, escorting performers, and finding time to explore and recommend local establishments. When performers are busy, she is less so.

Cirque's Chief Engineer

Commander Noam Ishbar

Final UPP: CA8AAB. Age: 38 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family).

Final Honors: Commander, (Sir/Dame), Yorbund Cruiser Squadron, Imperial Navy, [CR x2, XS x2].

Final Skills: Admin-1, Astrogator-1, Computer-1, Driver-0 (Tracked-1), Engineer-1 (Jump Drives-2, Maneuver Drives-1), Fleet Tactics-1, Gambler-1, Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Hostile Environment-1, Language (Zdetl-1), Leader-1, Naval Architect-4, Navy-1, Pilot (Small Craft-1), Trade (Craftsman-3) (Programmer-1), Sensors-1, Strategy-1.

Muster Out (4): KCr 25, KCr 30, Knighthood (KE), Life Insurance.

BW: Yorbund (SM 2303) FI Ni.

HW Skills: Hostile Environment-1, Driver-0 (Tracked-1).

During years in the Imperial Navy, Ishbar became known as a minor miracle worker, combining his education in Naval Architecture with practical skills in engineering. He was initially hired to manage the refit of *Cirque* and Big Top 1 based on extensive training as a ship's architect. Though not fully trained in all elements of engineering (he is not expressly trained in power plant maintenance), he knows how to get things done.

Cirque's Primary Helm Officer / Pilot, Big Top 2

Siduge Geshruk

Final UPP: 7A69A4. Age: 30 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Honors: Bachelor of Philosophy.

Final Skills: Comms-1, Computer-2, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Hostile Environment-1, Linguistics-2, Astrogation-1, Philosophy-5, Pilot-0 (Spacecraft ACS-1), Seafarer-0 (Sub-1), Survey-1, Survival-1, Trade (Biologics-1), Trader-2.

Muster Out (2): KCr 25, C5 +1 (Edu A).

BW: Traltha (SM 2834) De He Ni An.

HW Skills: Survival-1, Hostile Environment-1, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1).

Cirque's Primary Helm Officer leaves Andii and Bertii free to handle other ship-related details during the trips to and from jump. In combat, Geshruk is a "utility player," able to take a gun station or to coordinate computer resources. Geshruk's linguistic and philosophy education are often useful planetside as local dialects and attitudes can cause communication difficulties.

Headliners' Steward

Gukarri Laamaka

Final UPP: 779CA8. Age: 26 years. Fame: 5 (Town).

Final Honors: Assistant Professor of History.

Final Skills: Bureaucrat-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Flyer-0 (Winged-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), History-4, Hostile Environment-3, Sensors-1, Stealth-1, Steward-1, Survival-1, Trade (Mechanical-1).

Muster Out (2): StarPass*, C1 +1 (Str 7). (* The StarPass is mostly in the pocket to purchase some genuine circus stuff for the next publication and a future attempt at tenure, will not use or sell without grave need.)

BW: Dorannia (SM 0530) He Ni Po.

HW Skills: Hostile Environment-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Steward-1.

Laamaka is researching travelling entertainment as a scholar. Ship-board skills acquired in prior service as a lowly assistant to a travelling researcher (Steward and Gunner) prompted Andii to hire the mostly self-taught scholar. Laamaka's primary duty is to keep the headliners happy and out of U'aii's hair.

Pilot, Bigtop 3, and "Ship's Understudy"

Kiimen Khum

Final UPP: 9C8B76. Age: 30 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Honors: Petty Officer First, Yori Cruiser Squadron, Imperial Navy, [MCUF x3].

Final Skills: Athlete-2, Bureaucrat-1, Computer-1, Fighter-0 (BattleDress-2, Blades-1), Engineer-0 (Jump Drives-2), Fleet Tactics-1, Gambler-1, Gunner-4 (Bays-2, Screens-1, Turrets-1), Pilot-0 (Small Craft-1), Streetwise-1.

Muster Out (3): KCr 25, Wafer Jack, C3 +1 (End 8).

BW: Vland (VD 1717) Hi Cs.

HW Skills: Streetwise-1, Bureaucrat-1.

Khum is not a performer, despite the "Understudy" designation. Instead, Khum is useful in multiple crew functions. When not scooping fuel in BT3, Khum can be found where the action is, whether it's tuning a cranky jump drive or assisting the security chief by pulling a musician out of yet another bar fight.

Forward Gunnery Chief

The Vargr Ringmaster (*See Performers*).

Aft Gunnery Chief

Raararki Pernari

Final UPP: 5B9879. Age: 30 years. Fame: 1 (Parent).

Final Honors: Petty Officer First, 4533rd Orillery Squadron, Imperial Navy, [CR x2, XS x1].

Final Skills: Astrogator-1, Computer-2, Driver-0 (Track-1), Engineer-0

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(Power Systems-2), Fighter-0 (Beams-1), Fleet Tactics-1, Gunner-0 (Turrets-4), Gambler-1, Hostile Environment-1, Medic-1, Sensors-2, Trade (Electronics-3)
Muster Out (3): KCr 20, Wafer Jack, KCr 20.
BW: Boughene (SM 1904) FI Ni.
HW Skills: Driver-0 (Track-1), Hostile Environment-1.

The Aft Gunnery Chief is, as suggested, in charge of the gun crew in the aft gunnery deck. When *Cirque* is truly secure in orbit, Pemari likes to take on ground-based duties. This does not happen often enough for Pemari's tastes.

The Musical Cargo Master

Iidir Minrinik
Final UPP: 994547. Age: 30 years. Fame: 1 (Parent)
Final Honors: Sharurshid Steward Apprentice (R1) [3 Ship Shares invested with Andii in *Cirque*].
Final Skills: Admin-1, Advocate-1, Art (Musician)-1, Broker-1, Comms-2, Computer-1, Diplomat-1, Driver (Grav)-1, Gunner (Turrets)-1, JOT-1, Pilot-1, Sensors-1, Steward-1, Trader-2, Vacc Suit-1.
Muster Out (3): KCr 25, Wafer Jack, KCr 25.
BW: Regina (SM 1910) Ph Pa Ri Cp.
HW Skills: Trader-1, Art (Musician)-1, Admin-1.

The Cargo Master also plays guitar, often substituting with either the Cirque des Sirkas live "orchestra" or the Solomani Ancient Rock Tribute Show.

Characters Aboard *Cirque* — Performers and Other Circus Personnel (Performers and Circus Personnel Often Also Fill Crew Roles as Needed)

Cirque des Sirkas' Vargr Ringmaster (Headliner)

Faolchugh (Vargr Male)
Final UPP: 789CA5. Age: 30 years. Fame: 16 (Outer System).
Final Honors: Able Spacer, Rhylanor Home Guard; Member, Rhylanor Live Actor's Guild.
Final Skills: Art: Actor-3; Artist-0 (Videography-1); Author-1, Athlete-1, Comms-1, Fighter-0 (Unarmed-2), Gunner-3 (Turrets-2), Language: Anglic-11, Medic-1, Sensors-1, Trade: Tailor-2, Vacc Suit-2, Zero G-1.
Terms (N): 1 Education, 3 Entertainer.
Muster Out (N): StarPass, KCr 10, KCr 30.
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Specialized Vargr Weapons.
BW: Deep Space (*Yaarghu Pjaglum*). Na Va.
HW Skills: Vacc Suit-1, Zero G-1.

Cirque des Sirkas' Ringmaster is Faolchugh the Vargr. Faolchugh was born and raised on board a Vargr trade/raiding vessel. As a result, Faolchugh became a talented ship's gunner in a four-year apprenticeship. However, Faolchugh has a low charisma statistic, leaving him/her at the rear of the pack. With a great desire to somehow be the center of attention, Faolchugh jumped ship when a patrol vessel docked for boarding. Although no evidence of piracy was found, the Imperial patrol vessel saw no reason to refuse a Vargr a ride. Faolchugh did not, however, betray the pack.

To make money, Faolchugh found work on the Rhylanor stage. The dearth of Vargr actors gave Faolchugh an unusual chance to succeed. Faolchugh became something of an orator and presenter despite a growly tone, as well as playing many small roles. On a regular basis, however, Faolchugh found himself defending against ridiculous physical attacks. Thus, he became more skilled at personal combat.

In his second term Faolchugh also picked up the trade of clothing fabrication out of the need to modify human costumes to fit, or make appropriate costumes for specific roles.

In Faolchugh's third term, he continued acting, getting into fights with ignorant humans, and learned more about combat. Faolchugh also voluntarily served on a merchant vessel volunteering in the "Home

Guard" during the battle of Rhylanor. Faolchugh was never inducted into the Imperial armed forces, but became reasonably skilled during the two years of volunteer service.

Faolchugh has come to Capt. Andii's attention both through the Thespian and through Faolchugh's role in the battle of Rhylanor. Placing a Vargr into the center ring in the formalized red tuxedo and black top hat of old Solomani tradition is a unique reward for Faolchugh's service. It also provides an interesting picture, somehow akin to ancient cartoonish art from Terra herself.

In space operations, the Vargr Ringmaster serves as a gunner, usually commanding the forward gunnery deck.

The Distinguished Geezer Thespian (Headliner and Investor)

Trouth Menckens ("Gilgamesh") (Human)
Entertainer (Headliner), Investor
Final UPP: 7878A2. San: 4. Age: 70 years. Fame: 23 (Many Domains).
Final Honors: 2 Ship Shares invested with Cirque des Sirkas LIC.
Final Skills: Admin-1, Advocate-2, Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Arts: Actor-5; Artist-0 (Videography-1); Author-2; Dancer-3; Musician-0 (Keyboards-1, Voice-1), Athlete-2, Bureaucrat-1, Comms-2, Computer-2, Diplomat-1, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Flyer-0 (Rotor-1), Gambler-2, High G-1, Hostile Environment-3, Languages: Vilani-10; Sagamaal -9, Liaison-1, Navigation-1, Sciences: Psychology-6; Neuropsychology-3, Streetwise-6, Trades: Electronics-1; Mechanical-1; Programmer-4, Trader-4, Vacc Suit-1, Zero G-2.
Terms (13): 1 Education, 12 Career.
Muster Out (12): TAS Fellowship, 2 Ship Shares, Wafer Jacks, Royalties: KCr 630/year (special exception based on fame).
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Stage Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Secret Wafer Library, Personal Weapons, Scripts, Anagathics.
BW: Spin 1910 Regina A 778 899-C Ri Pa Ph An Cp (Amindii)2.
HW Skills: Admin-1, Art: Dancer-1, Trader-1.

Trouth Menckens is a distinguished actor whose work is well recognized. The stage name is taken from his enduring role as "Gilgamesh," the warrior king who defies death for as long as he can. The role is one developed by Gilgamesh over the years.

The character began life in the lowest of social echelons on Regina, but with a high intelligence and great promise. As a result, he was granted a special scholarship to a major university to study psychology. At the same time, a condition was set: he had to have an experimental version of a wafer reader implanted. This design was not fully successful.

During University, Thespian was bitten by the acting bug.

If warned of danger in advance, Thespian is capable of selecting a suitable personality from his many wafers. Each wafer can trigger the necessary disassociation to make the Thespian into the right kind of hero or persona for the moment, as well as conveying the necessary skills in the emergency. Thespian has been known to become locked into personalities for days or weeks, for better or for worse (though the reason has never been disclosed, as Wafer use is contrary to Rhylanor's acting traditions).

Thespian's major roles include most of the classical Shakespearean leads, Vilani cognates of the former, Gilgamesh, at least one mass-murdering megalomaniac from human history or fiction, Khamuddum Menurgare ("Great Uncle Thief," a Vilani version of Robin Hood), Loki the Doombringer, Olaf the Glorious, and so on. All of the personas are recorded on wafers.

The Makeup Artist

Aamrika Pinek
Spouse of Geezer Thespian
Final UPP: 6BB677. Age: 58 years. Fame: 0 (none).
Final Honors: n/a.
Final Skills: Admin-4, Advocate-2, Art: Artist-4 (Makeup-6, Video-1), Athlete-1, Broker-1, Comms-2, Computer-2, Designer-3, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Flyer-1 (Flapper-2), Forensics-2, Gambler-2, Navigation-1, Science: Chemistry-2, Streetwise-2, Survival-1, Teacher-2, Trades: Fluidics-1; Polymers-5; Trade: Programmer-1, Vacc Suit-1.
Terms (10): 10 Citizen.

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Muster Out (10): TAS Fellowship, Life Insurance x2, Secret (see comments), KCr 300.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Extensive Makeup Kit, Polymer Kit.

Homeworld: Spin 2716 Rhyllanor A 434 934-F NS Hi In Cp.

Pinek was an attractive young lady who sought the “bright lights” of Rhyllanor’s live theater. Her acting talents were not exceptional, and her education basic, so she found work in the background and gravitated toward makeup. She met and began working with Trouth Menckens, discovering his dark secret: his use of Wafer recordings to assist in learning lines and holding “character.” As this violates strict rules in Rhyllanor’s live theater, she used the knowledge to her advantage. She used this as the “stick” of her carrot-and-stick approach toward getting the rising actor to marry her.

Another makeup professional later learned that Menckens was utilizing Wafers. No reputable producer on Rhyllanor will knowingly employ such an actor, because the local actor’s union rules would require a show-closing strike. The second makeup artist was threatening to go public, blackmailing both Pinek and Menckens. The other makeup artist’s motives also included designs on Menckens’ affections given his potential as a gravy train.

The second makeup artist was about to go to certain news outlets. This would have ended Menckens’ stage career on Rhyllanor. Pinek would also likely have been banned for using her skill to conceal the wafer socket (conveniently located on the lower left neck).

In the final high-volume argument, Pinek pushed the victim in a moment of rage. The victim stumbled toward the stairs, then down. The neck snapped. Menckens came on-scene moments later.

Menckens by then loved Pinek enough to help her cover the crime and evidence. Both Thespian and Makeup Artist are guilty in covering up their involvement, and Pinek could easily be convicted of manslaughter if not murder. If a proper charge was filed, both could be extradited back to Rhyllanor under Imperial law.

Each character has put information regarding the other’s involvement in certain safe deposit boxes or other locations, with directions that these locations be opened upon the unexpected death or unexpected disappearance of the other. Pinek has also diverted funds from the royalties from the Gilgamesh miniseries to purchase not one but two Life Insurance policies. The Thespian has not done so; Thespian has some awareness of his dissociative disorder, and has decided that it would be better not to come back with it at all.

The characters are often heard arguing, but are also habitually defensive and protective of each other. The relationship is by no means pure avarice or pure self-protection, as one might assume in a simplistic world. There is also genuine affection and genuine connection. Their longstanding relationship could be classified as “Two who must argue to the death.”

Pinek has equipment and materials to provide excellent makeup at need.

The Cold Case Undercover Detective

Eugene Javert

Stage Hand and Prop Craftsman

Final UPP: 79A985. Age: 38 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Honors: Detective-Sergeant, Cold Case Squad, Rhyllanor Police Service, [Commendation-5].

Final Skills: Admin-2, Advocate-3, Comms-2, Craftsman-3, Designer-2, Fighter-0 (Slug Thrower-1), Forensics-8, Liaison-1, Science: Chemistry-1, Stealth-1, Streetwise-6, Tactics-1, Teacher-1, Trade: Electronics-1; Mechanical-1; Programmer-1.

Homeworld: Spin 2716 Rhyllanor A 434 934-F NS Hi In Cp.

Terms (4): 1 Education, 3 Citizen (Police), 1 Agent (Undercover Police).

Muster Out (4): KCr 50, Wafer Jack, KCr 50, StarPass.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Civilian Clothes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Metal Working Equipment.

Javert, an undercover police officer now on Rhyllanor’s “cold case squad,” is obsessed with the perpetrators of a killing (which may not even

be “manslaughter,” though the cover-up is itself a crime). He is an undercover police officer, and may have to commit some crimes while investigating crimes. He may also become obsessed with the number of little illegalities that go on outside his jurisdiction, and “widen” the investigation. On the other hand, Javert may develop a taste for skirting the law in small ways as do many police officers. Javert will nonetheless seek “main justice,” the arrest and prosecution of two serious criminals. He will keep notes on illegal activities for an eventual report to the authorities with jurisdiction. In the end, Javert’s goal is to get one pair of perpetrators convicted.

Unlike his namesake from Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, however, Javert is capable of evolving to a degree. Javert may well come to like some of the people he sees as criminals, may even see their contributions to society as important. The conflict will torture Javert throughout his existence, though it should not be overplayed. Unlike the character in *Les Misérables*, Javert is unlikely to commit bodily suicide over dereliction of duty.

When he has the chance, Javert will look for ways to investigate. He may also become oddly protective of Menckens and Pinek — Pinek, because he fails to see her guilt, and Menckens because the actor is “his collar.”

Javert’s prior undercover work involved his hobby of replicating antique firearms. He is a skilled gunsmith, and capable of repairing firearms. He has reasonable knowledge and crafting ability in mimicking antique weapons. He also makes and repairs many of the props used in performances. His metal-working skills make him a potential shipboard acquaintance of the Viking Barbarian Knife Thrower.

The Viking Barbarian Knife Thrower (Headliner)

Meenah Hutchins

Final UPP: 6C99A9. Age: 34 years. Fame: 15 (Greater System).

Final Honors: Bachelor’s Degree in Anthropology.

Final Skills: Art: Actor-2; Dance-1 (Choreographer-1), Athletics-2, Craftsman-2, Fighter-4 (Blades-2), Science: Anthropology-5, Streetwise-1, Trader-1, Sagamaal-0.

Terms (4): 2 Education, 2 Entertainer.

Muster Out (3): StarPass, KCr 50.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Archaic Costumes, Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Vast Collection of Archaic Weapons, Portable Forge Equipment.

Meenah Hutchins, who goes under the stage name of Meenah the Barbarian, is a human aged 34. Like most of Cirque’s performers, she has just received her “big break” through Capt. Andii.

Meenah is the scion of a wealthy but non-noble family from Porozlo in the Spinward Marches. She was sent to an exclusive liberal-arts college in order to prepare her for secondary education in business administration. Meenah’s destiny, in the family tradition, was to inherit the business and run it.

Her college advisors encouraged Meenah to pursue her own interests. She majored in and received her Bachelors’ Degree in Archaic Human Civilization and Anthropologic Studies. She minored in Physical Education. As a result, Meenah knows a great deal about pre-industrial cultures and is a fitness freak.

Upon graduation, Meenah rebelled and refused to go to business school. Rather, using a trust endowed upon her by an indulgent aunt, Meenah chose instead to spend two years in a trade school. There, she learned the essentials of metalsmithing, with a particular concentration on making archaic blade weapons. Meenah also learned leather working, because “a good sword deserves a great scabbard.” Her life pursuit includes crafting the perfect blade, and she owns a small (and quite expensive) cold-fusion powered forging set-up which she takes out at each stop along the way.

As a result of a chance transaction with a noble commissioning a good blade, Meenah was hired to work on a family reserve, a job which included a “side” relationship with the already married noble. Meenah learned specifics of armed combat using archaic weapons, and became exceptionally good at throwing knives. She also began to develop the persona of Meenah the Barbarian. This led to occasional appearances at various medieval-style fairs and events. As her noble “friend” showed

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signs of putting Meenah aside, Meenah developed the act and character further as a means of self-support

In Meenah's third term, she was given a job on the staff of a year-around "Living Museum of Pre-Industrial Life" sponsored by the local nobility. Her fighting and acting skills were improved, and Meenah also became a dancer and choreographer. Meenah developed the act further over her fourth term. She also practiced metal work, and developed sufficient experience with riding and caring for klan. During this time, to the great embarrassment of Meenah's parents, Meenah became fairly well-known in the role.

Meenah now lives the role. She is rarely seen in anything but primitive clothes, including leathers. She also finds modern clothing uncomfortable and constricting, and pretends an ignorance of high technology for effect. Her chosen "look" of an old-Earth Viking (and peppering her "patter" with words from the Sword Worlds' Sagamaal language) is often seen by Sword Worlders as an insult.

The Comic Juggler (Headliner and Investor)

Guillaume Labarenu

Entertainer (Headliner)

Final UPP: 7ABAA9. Age: 34 years. Fame: 23 (Many Domains).

Terms (5): 1 Education, 4 Entertainer.

Muster Out (4): Ship Share x1, KCr 60, KCr 50, <Royalties = KCr 25/year>.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Collection of Juggled Objects.

Final Honors: n/a.

Final Skills: Advocate-1, Art: Actor-1; Author-1; Dancer-2 (Juggling-3), Athlete-1, Diplomat-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Fighter-0 (Blades-1), Hostile Environment-2, JOT-2, Liaison-1, Science: Physics-1, Streetwise-1, Trader-2, Vacc Suit-1.

Homeworld: Spin 2519 Pannet E9C5677-9 FI Ni.

Guillaume Labarenu was born and raised on Pannet, a backwater of sorts. He loathed the idea of becoming a "slime miner" like his parents. At 14, he apprenticed himself to a juggler and began learning his unique "dance" form.

At 18, he began entertaining in bars and clubs. He was quickly discovered by media, and his act became a staple on talk and commentary entertainment. Like many "lasting" successes amongst jugglers and trick-artists (e.g., Will Rodgers, W.C. Fields), he found it necessary to add humorous commentary and patter. He eventually took this into political directions.

He also discovered women. He married two of them before he was 21. However, despite the rather strict legalities enforced on Pannet, he did not bother to divorce the first before marrying the second. He simply paid financial support outside the legal system. He also left the second wife at the end of this term, again failing to seek any legalization of status.

Neither marriage produced children.

During his second term, Labarenu honed his act still more, and had a regular 15-minute slot. He spent several hours a day checking the Travellers' News Service and other feeds to add a "cosmopolitan" air to his comedy. This also resulted in recordings of his acts becoming popular on other worlds, including Rhyllanor, especially among disaffected youth. His barbs were often aimed at the Imperial government and Nobility. He also developed a small stream of royalties from his recordings.

Despite this, he showed his patriotism during the war years, touring units and bases, including some "forward" positions. This allowed him to relocate to Rhyllanor as well. His recorded commentaries spread quickly through the sector, and then the whole domain, as people devoured news of the war. Some of his more scathing material was aimed at Sector Admiral Santanochiev; he sometimes juggled wearing an admiral's uniform covered with fake medals and awards, billing himself as "Admiral Married the Big Cheese." The depiction led to Labarenu being refused permission to entertain on Imperial Navy vessels and bases. However, the caricature was popular in other quarters; Duke Norris himself was rumored to have called Labarenu a "comic genius" in one private discussion, even though he had not spared Norris. Norris' absence during early events of the Fifth Frontier War did not go unnoticed, given Regina's proximity

to the border. Labarenu's juggling patter often included the question "Where's Norris?" when major events occurred. Slides or videos flashed on screen to his side tended to show Norris in exotic locales drinking fruity drinks from straws. Norris has not publicly commented on those routines, which have long since made their way to Regina via video. Later routines, on the other hand, depicted Norris far more positively; "Where's Norris?" was often followed by slides and short CGI videos with Norris involved in slapstick fights with hordes of Zhodani, Vargr and Sword Worlders. As Norris' tactics won the war, the videos became more and more respectful.

During this time, despite his increasing income, he stopped contributing to either spouse.

As the war drew to a close and rebuilding began, Labarenu returned to Rhyllanor. There, he aimed his barbs squarely at Duke Stephen, who he accused of giving too little attention to pre-war preparations and post-war rebuilding.

The Contortionist (Headliner)

Antonia Malak ("Gigiin")

Final UPP: 8CC666. Age: 26 years. Fame: 10 (World).

Terms (3): 1 Education, 2 Entertainer.

Final Honors: n/a.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Art: Dancer-5 (Choreography-1), Athlete-2, Bu-reaucrat-1, Craftsman-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Liaison-1, Seafarer-0 (Ship-1), Sensors-1, Survival-1, Zero G-1.

Muster Out (2): Wafer Jack, KCr 40.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.

BW: Spin 3010 L'oeil d'Dieu B98A510-B N Ni Wa Pr.

Born and raised on a water world with a higher-than-average gravity, Antonia Malak was drawn to both arts and athletics. She lived with her parents on an arcology, and also has some experience with uplifted Dolphins. She was also unusually slender and flexible. She found her forte in gracefully demonstrating feats of strength and flexibility, highly prized as a dance form on that world. Her parents apprenticed her via a specialized program. She has learned both classical dance forms and Gigiin-Gigish ("The Dance of the Flexible").

She began performing at 18. She obtained a wafer implant young, primarily for personal entertainment. She has also used it to study the choreography of various dance forms. She was sheltered from the war, and is somewhat naïve.

Desiring to see more of the universe, she sent audition recordings to several dance troupes on Rhyllanor. One manager forwarded it to Cirque des Sirkas on a whim. Andii and others saw the resemblance of Gigiin-Gigish to "mere" contortionist exhibitions, and sent for her.

Gigiin practices her art in various ways. On board *Cirque*, she can be found squirming her way through tight spots, exercising under higher gravity, and other tasks.

The Diva Avian Trainer (Headliner)

Delores Damgar ("Zoe Bandini")

Entertainer, Animal Trainer, Practical Veterinarian

Final UPP: 947BD7. Age: 42 years. Fame: 19 (Lunion Subsector).

Diva Talent: 12, Vocal Talent: 9, Chef Talent: 10.

Terms (6): 1 Education, 5 Entertainer.

Final Honors: Bachelor of the Art (Music/History), Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (based on certification testing).

Final Skills: Admin-2, Animals-1 (Trainer-2), Art: Actor-1; Musician-5 (Voice-2); Chef-1, Diplomat-1, High G-1, Hostile Environment-2, JOT-1, Language: Vilani-12, Leader-1, Science: History-1 (Music-1); Veterinary Medicine-5, Streetwise-2, Trade: Biologics-1, Vacc Suit-2.

Muster Out (5): Life Insurance, StarPass, KCr 30, StarPass, KCr 40, C1 +1 (Str 9).

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Various Avians for Act.

Birthworld: Spin 2124 Lunion A995984-D NS Hi In Cp.

Born to middle-class civil servants on Lunion, Delores aspired to be

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far more than a data-pusher in the local government. She used her college education to train her voice and become a musician, and then started performing in various classical forms. Though her vocal talent (9) was not sufficient to make her a true "breakout" performer, she worked in "regional" opera and musical theater, gaining a level of fame in that area. She was working steadily, but not reaching the highest peaks in that area.

During her second term, she parlayed her limited fame into a spot in an extended "reality cooking competition." Though she was not the final winner of that competition, she became known as "The Opera Chef," often breaking out into arias as she proved her mastery of soufflés. This led to a series of the same name. As "The Opera Chef," she mixed cooking, music, and celebrity interviews into a mélange which intrigued the public of Lunion.

As she continued the show into her early thirties, Dolores also found an interest in animals, particularly flyers. This was useful, as bird-training was surging as a fad on Lunion. Her fame spread, and she became well-known in the system. She continued to perform, and to become an advocate for various bird-based skills and sports.

In her fourth active term, with her own show "put on hiatus," Dolores parlayed her diva-dom into acting. She was cast in an Epic Holovision Miniseries Event, "Taming the Vilani," as a Solomani explorer making first contact with the Ziru Sirkas. The part was extensively rewritten for her, and included the use of hunting avians into her character's story arc. This resulted in confusion, to say the least, as she used avians of non-Terran origin. The miniseries is not considered historically accurate, but it resulted in an increase in her visibility. It also led to a series of "public service" presentations as the Fifth Frontier War broke out.

After the war, she was engaged to star in a melodramatic and rather laughable series based on the local resistance forces fighting the Zhodani on Lysen (Spinward Marches 1307). Her character again used hunting avians; again, the avians were exotic to the locale. The series did not last long, and she was soon reduced to making personal appearances.

Throughout her life, she studied veterinary medicine and volunteered.

Like a true diva, she seized on a new possibility when she heard about Cirque des Sirkas. She agreed to bring her abilities to a live act, understanding that she would be required to include music, avians, and a sense of humor to a fifteen-minute live show twice daily. Dolores took this as a challenge, and created an act well suited to the travelling milieu.

She has also brought her serious abilities to Cirque. Dolores has significant veterinary skills. Though her "doctorate" is honorary, she has spent many of her less busy years studying veterinary science. She is one of the "go-to" sophonts on board for animal issues, especially with so many different animals on board.

The Quixitlatl Mind Reader (Headliner)

Maxidotl the Great

Real Name: Maxwell Parmenter

Final UPP: 776A97. Age: 47 years. Fame: 15 (Greater System).

Final Honors: Bachelor of Science, Scheme Account(s): MCr 2.25 (lost based on events at end of fourth Rogue Term), Ship Shares x2 (1 lost based on events at end of fourth Rogue Term).

Final Skills: Admin-1, Advocate-1, Arts: Actor-4; Dance-1 (Prestidigitation-1), Astrogator-2, Broker-2, Comms-1, Computer-1, Counsellor-1, Driver-0 (Automotive-1), Fighter-0 (Beams-1, Unarmed-1), Flyer-0 (Grav-1), Hostile Environment-2, JOT-1, Language: Zdetl-8, Liaison-1, Medic-1, Pilot-0 (Spacecraft ACS-1), Science: Psychology-5, Streetwise-1, Survival-2, Trader-1, Trade: Programmer-1, Vacc Suit-2.

Terms (6): 2 Education, 4 Rogue, 2 Entertainer.

Muster Out (6, 4 Rogue, 2 Entertainer): TAS Fellowship (lost based on events at end of fourth Rogue Term), Life Insurance (lost based on events at end of fourth Rogue Term), KCr 110 (lost based on events at end of fourth Rogue Term), StarPass (lost based on events at end of fourth Rogue Term), 1 Middle Passage, Wafer Socket.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Zhodani Noble Clothes (with typical stage magician touches: wire guides, lots of hidden pockets, etc.), The Obligatory Trick Cards and Accouterments worthy of a Proper (Stage) Magician, Assortment of "Psionic" Greeblies, a "grey" set of data-mining software (used to mine public data to simulate "Amazing Psionic Abilities of the Zhodani Mind Readers").

BW: Jenghe (SM 1810) Ni.

HW Skills: Driver-0 (Automotive-1).

During college, the Mind Reader developed his studies and learned the arts of interviewing and reading "tells" (tell-tale movements tending to suggest unconscious or hidden responses to statements and acts). He also discovered that he often won in games of chance involving bluffing; he could control his "tells" better than most of his school-mates. After college, he spent some time learning programming for practical purposes.

By age 23, the Mind Reader had become a rogue, with plans to obtain funds from others regardless of his entitlement to them. He initially went Coreward through Corridor to Vland Sector. There, he played off a purported "Marine" identity in a scam involving the buying and selling of military equipment. He made a small profit, but got shot at more than he would like as his persona went into a small combat situation.

Next, he took on the identity of a rogue IN officer and learned Zdetl. The Mind Reader went to Dagudaashad Sector, where he brokered a purported sale of Imperial technology to Zho agents (who were, fortunately, Proles, rather than Intendants or other psionically-trained individuals). The final product delivered was crates full of Imperial technology – hammers, screwdrivers, nuts, bolts, and other low-tech but essential Imperial technology. He then moved several subsectors to avoid trouble, but kept the Zhodani experience in mind for the future.

Still in Dagudaashad Sector, the Mind Reader was able to obtain the use of a Scout located in that sector. The Mind reader got lucky, though, and found papers to a disused but functional Scout forgotten in the far-away Regina system, left in an outer-system parking orbit. He moved on to the Core sector.

In his following term, the Mind Reader technically but barely succeeded, having bitten off more than he could chew. He took the role of a Zhodani Noble in the Core Sector (but never on Capitol) to obtain funds, working only against Imperial humans. Unfortunately, he drew the attention of a Zhodani agent. Disgusted at wealth-oriented Imperial dishonesty, the Zhodani agent did a quick and dirty "correction" of the Mind Reader's antisocial personality. The agent carefully and thoroughly interrogated the Mind Reader via telepathy. All of his ill-gotten booty was listed out very carefully. Then Mind Reader was then brought to a cheap hotel and drugged with a long-lasting sleeping agent known to cause intense and often unpleasant dreams. When the Mind Reader finally became conscious, he discovered that all of his accounts were emptied, his misplaced Scout mysteriously returned to a base, and all valuable memberships and tickets cancelled. No amount of work would recreate these possessions, and the Mind Reader correctly understood that no police force would be willing to help. In addition, he has the clear impression from the mind-to-mind contact that the Zhodani would be happy to turn him over as a Zhodani spy.

Given all of that, the Mind Reader had no choice but to start again, though with less significant dishonesty involved. He undertook a simple role at this point: he created an act and took it on the road. He was far enough away from the Spinward Marches that he was not affected by the Fifth Frontier War. He has always made his act light and a bit comic, suggesting that the Zho are really nothing to fear, perhaps even a bit silly. He has retained vague hopes of getting to Regina and claiming the other Scout.

During the next term, he truly began again. Despite being afraid of upsetting unknown Zho agents who might have a long memory, he began a career on the stage as a magician and mind-reader. He developed the "Zhodani Quixitlatl Mind Reader" act as a way to make money and start back toward the Spinward Marches. By "pretending" to be a Zho, he is using the classic "hide in plain sight" maneuver. Over the term, he discovered that he rather liked the role, and the reduced pressure of working on stage, despite barely making ends meet.

With the Fifth Frontier War over, he ultimately made it back to the Spinward Marches and Rhyllanor. Auditions for Cirque opened at the end of his tour, and he found a new job. Even better, it is going toward Regina. He still has occasional dreams of retrieving the second Scout, if it is still in orbit.

An affable, clever fellow who can read a "tell" a mile away, the Mind Reader is a scared-straight con-artist who once had enough money to live easily for the rest of his life. He is aware that he may have pushed too far when impersonating a Zhodani Noble. He has lived much more

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hand-to-mouth over the past eight years, but there was a war on. As a character, he may stay “scared straight,” or he may revert to his old ways. His past has been well concealed to almost everyone but of course Bertii. Note that Bertii understands the value of having a fake Zhodani prominently in the cast; it diverts attention from the *actual* Zhodani aboard *Cirque*.

The Clown (Headliner)

Werner Gaargikhin

Final UPP: 6A9887. Age: 30 years. Fame: 13 (Inner System).

Final Honors: "The Fighting Mime of Rhylanor".

Final Skills: Admin-1, Advocate-2, Art: Actor-2; Dancer-2 (Choreography-1, Mime-4), Astrogator-1, Athlete-1, Engineer-0 (Maneuver Drive-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Medic-1, Sensors-1, Streetwise-1, Survival-1, Trade: Gravitics-1, Zero G-2.

Terms (3): 3 Entertainer.

Muster Out (3): StarPass, KCr 10, High Passage.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Makeup Kit, Clown Props, Civilian Awards, Rules & Bylaws of the Rhylanor Associated Performance Guilds.

BW: Spin 2716 Rhylanor A434934-F NS Hi In Cp.

HW Skills: Admin-1, Streetwise-1, Trade: Gravitics-1.

The mime attended the Olaf I High School for the Performing Arts. He was successful in learning silent performance with heavy makeup (“Mime”). In his first term, he became a union representative, and is vitriolic anti-Wafer in all acting professions. He performed both on the surface and Old Station. He eventually began to reside full-time on Old Station, performing for tips at the Main Concourse.

During his second term, he continued to perform on the Old Station. He also began learning maneuver drive operations in his spare time. He made money as engineer and entertainer on in-system cruise liners as well. The outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War put the Clown into the civilian defense forces of Rhylanor. He primarily handled gunnery at Old Station and on defense boats. In the process, he became known as “The Fighting Mime.”

In order to work with *Cirque des Sirkas*, the Clown has studied the old Solomani customs. He is now adept at water tricks and various other skills useful for clowns. Though he has no animal handling skills, he works with the Tree Rats in a Watch Stealing routine.

The Documentarian

Harry Faust

Chief Documentarian

Final UPP: 777B88. Age: 28 years. Fame: 12 (World System). Sanity: 9.

Final Honors: 1st Lieutenant, 324th Public Affairs Company, Imperial Army, [WB-1]. XS.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Art: Author-5; Artist-0 (Videography-2), Athlete-1, Computer-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Fighter-0 (Battle Dress-1, Slug Thrower-1), Language (Zdetl-1), Leader-1, Medic-1, Streetwise-1, Trade: skill-1, Zero G-1.

Terms (3): 1 Education, 1 Army, 1 Entertainer.

Muster Out (3): Wafer Jack, KCr 30, ReconDress-D (By special arrangement with Travellers News Service). Treat as Light Combat Dress-13 with multiple sensor systems and recording gear).

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Machine Pistol, Video Editing and Storage Equipment.

Birthworld: Spin 2124 Lunion A995984-D NS Hi In Cp.

Faust was raised on Lunion. His family had insufficient funds to send him to school. He accepted a scholarship for officer training at an Imperial Army-affiliated program, majoring in journalism. His specialty in authorship was the one-man documentary: using high-tech systems, he could direct and film at the same time. He also developed solid research skills, and a solid ability to edit using pre-packaged software.

His mandatory service started in 1103, well before the Fifth Frontier

war. He documented several police actions in which the Army was utilized, and was eventually stationed at Efate. He was there when pre-war guerilla activity began, and when the Zhodani invaded. He was seriously injured during the siege, and was eventually evacuated. His wounds were serious enough to require a six-month recovery and a disability discharge. Despite the general call-up of forces, he was refused re-enlistment due to PTSD and his overall health.

The Travellers News Service hired him, however, and embedded him with Imperial forces in various ground offensives. He was provided with Battle Dress specially fitted for his needs. As a result, he witnessed combat in several campaigns, and learned some Zdetl. As the Zhodani pushed toward Rhylanor, he was brought to that region. Like many, he found himself at Old Station, where he documented the civilian defenders loading archaic missile launchers, repairing century-old laser turrets, and preparing to repel any boarders with personal weapons of all descriptions.

With the battle being engaged primarily in space, Faust was unable to participate in direct documentation. Instead, his subjects became the survivors — Zhodani, Vargr, and Imperial — of the many vessels damaged and destroyed. Old Station became both an emergency medical center and a morgue for casualties on its trajectory. The most serious were often shipped elsewhere after stabilization, but some were cared for in makeshift wards throughout the old wheel. The resulting documentary, “Old Station’s Finest Hour,” has won numerous awards, and is rumored to have brought tears to Duke Stephen’s eyes.

With hostilities put aside, Harry was assigned to other stories in the subsector. When he heard of the *Cirque des Sirkas* project, he applied, but expected little due to his reputation as a war correspondent. He was pleasantly surprised to be called back for a final interview, and then hired. Although he now works for *Cirque des Sirkas*, he has arrangements with the Travellers News Service to provide dispatches and recordings related to any important events along the way. As a special benefit, he has been “loaned” his news-collecting battle dress.

Pounce (Headliners)

Pounce, a troupe of Aslan tumblers and swordplay entertainers are five “Imperialized” Aslan males from the Hk’ua clan of Belizo (Spinward Marches 3015). The clan had left Aslan space seeking new lands about one hundred fifty standard years ago. Belizo’s Baroness granted the Clan a preserve. Knowing something of Aslan honor, the Baroness sought and



accepted service in return. The Clan agreed, and gave its fealty. Part of that fealty has included providing service. Most are part of the Barony’s Aslan Huscarls. Some join Imperial forces.

At the behest of their Aslan Clan, these five joined the Imperial Marines on 281-1102. Because the Aslan deem their young “mature” at 14, the Imperial military services do the same.

The Marines insist on traditional training, including edged weapons such as the traditional cutlass. These five are thus adept, despite traditional Aslan choices of non-edged weapons. They are also adept with more traditional Aslan weapons. In deference to both common sense and the requests of their Lord, the five were trained together as Commandos and kept together throughout their service.

Cirque

The five have always been particularly good at coordinating action together. During their “off” hours, they devoted extensive time to additional martial arts training in various traditions. They became expert in unusual leaps, jumps, flips, and other operations – in essence, they became something akin to the fabled “ninja” of Terran origin. These skills are represented by a combination of athletics and dance.

All were non-commissioned; the highest rank achieved was achieved by Staff Sergeant Hkei’kht. All served in the Fifth Frontier War, and were part of the forces dropped on Tureded against the Zhodani occupation. They spent several months on the planet, gaining contacts and trust.

As the end of their third term approached, the five were debating whether to remain with the Marines, return home, or follow some new path. They had become disenchanted with Imperial and Zhodani warfare. The Aslan sense of honor was deeply disturbed by some of the acts they were required to commit, despite the necessities of war. Following their withdrawal from Tureded, they were housed in temporary Marine Quarters on Rhyllanor’s Old Station as the Marines sought to pressure the five to continue to a third term.

U’aili, Cirque des Sirkas’ primary attorney, first spotted the five quite by accident when they were visiting Main Concourse during off-time. Out of Marine uniforms, and wearing clothing more appropriate to humans, they were accosted by a group of eight traditional Aslan warriors from the Aslan Hierate. The five took insult from several comments regarding their masculinity. A challenge issued. The ensuing combat was quick and ended decisively in favor of the Aslan Marines.

Heavily armed station security arrived shortly thereafter and arrested the five marines. The Hierate Aslan were discovered to have diplomatic passports, and thus left free. Although the eight “traditional” Aslan warriors declined to press charges – doing so would only put their loss and dishonor in the public eye – neither the station authorities nor the Imperial Marines could be so lenient.

U’aili, herself from Belizo’s Hk’ua clan, was impressed with the former marines. In their quick moves and coordination, she saw several opportunities all at once. She found it easy to resolve the issues with the station authorities; the five were let go with a warning against brawling. She found it less easy to intervene with the Imperial Marines, especially as a civilian. A marine, even out of uniform, commits a serious infraction when he or she brawls in civilian territory. Despite affidavits from the eight more traditional Aslan attesting to the reasonableness and honor of the five, a Court Martial was to be convened, and dishonorable discharges virtually assured.

With Holiday 1111 and Cirque des Sirkas’ opening coming, U’aili convinced Andii of the opportunity presented. Together, they roughed out the outlines of the act. They went first to the Imperial Marine authorities, then to the five young Aslan. An agreement was made: the five were honorably discharged, granted their full benefits, and granted their reserve status – on the proviso that they sign a one-year exclusive contract with Cirque des Sirkas. U’aili is their manager as well as the Aslan female handling the administrative tasks of their lives.

The outline for their act begins with their using traditional Marine cutlasses and similar bladed weapons. They show their prowess and accuracy, slicing melons in half as they leap and spin. As the act moves on, however, they each begin to change weapons, exchanging cutlasses for traditional Aslan weapons. With help from the sidelines, they also manage to shed human-like coveralls to reveal traditional Aslan garb. Running, jumping, heaving one another, sparring with traditional Aslan weapons, and otherwise impressing the crowd with their abilities, they end the routine as proud Aslan warriors.

Pounce returns at the end of the Equestrian Act. The kian and the single duranthe first perform riderless. The Aslan then mount bareback, leaping from animal to animal and performing other tricks.

The five Aslan are not limited to performance roles. Although not formally part of Cirque’s security team, the Aslan are a formidable force. They retain their smaller personal weapons. Unfortunately, so far as they know, the Imperial Marines have expressly retained their Aslan combat armor and heavier weapons for use by future Aslan commandoes. In fact, Andii has these units in her secure cargo space, available at need.

The Aslan tumblers are on a voyage of rediscovery: eight years of close contact with humans has had an effect on their already diluted Aslan culture. They provide an excellent vehicle for characters wishing to ease

into the full taste of the Aslan culture. They reside together in a group of semi-private cabins on Deck 4 of BT1, but are not unwilling to associate with humans.

Note that for purposes of generating these characters, Major, Minor and Gambler under garrison skills were considered to be Athletics, consistent with Aslan male views on honor and education. The Leader also assists the Diva Avian Trainer in her act. The four others are familiar with riding kian from their youth, and thus perform on the kian for part of the equestrian act.

Pounce’s Leader

Ex-Marine Staff Sergeant Kaduva

Final UPP: A8G674. Age: 26 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Honors: Staff Sergeant, 62nd Special Forces (Belizo), Imperial Marines, [CR-2, WB-1, MCG -1, SEH-1].

Final Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-4 (Aslan Weapons-1 Blades-3, Dew Claw-1, Exotics-1, Battle Dress-1, Unarmed-1), Athletics-2, Heavy Weapons-0 (Launcher-1), Hostile Environment-1, Language (Battle-6), Leader-2, Stealth-1, Tactics-1, Trade (Electronics-1, Explosives-1).

Muster Out (3): Life Insurance, Low Passage, KCr 20.

BW: Belizo (SM 3015) Ag Ni.

HW Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-0 (Aslan Weapons-1, Dew Claw-1).

Kaduva’s animal training skill represents particular experience with afeahyalhtow.

Pounce’s Second Tumbler

Sergeant Bāgha (3 Terms)

Final UPP: 7A6757. Age: 26 years. Fame: 1 (Parent).

Final Honors: Sergeant, 62nd Special Forces (Belizo), Imperial Marines, [CR-2, WB-1, XS-1].

Final Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1), Athlete-2, Career (Marines-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-4 (Aslan Weapons-1, Beams-1, Blades-3, Dew Claw-1, Battle Dress -, Exotics-1), Heavy Weapons-0 (Launcher-1), Leader-3, Tactics-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Muster Out (3): Life Insurance, Star Pass, High Passage.

BW: Belizo (SM 3015) Ag Ni.

HW Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-0 (Aslan Weapons-1, Dew Claw-1).

Pounce’s Third Tumbler

Corporal Vāgha (3 Terms)

Final UPP: A9A748. Age: 26 years. Fame: 7 (Large City).

Final Honors: Corporal, 62nd Special Forces (Belizo), Imperial Marines, [CR-2, WB-1, MCG-2].

Final Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1), Athlete-3, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-3 (Aslan Weapons-1, Blades-3, Dew Claw-1, Battle Dress-1 Beams-1), Hostile Environment-1, Language (Battle-6), Leader-2, Survival-1, Tactics -1.

Muster Out (3): C2 +1 (Dex 9) Middle Passage, High Passage.

BW: Belizo (SM 3015) Ag Ni.

HW Skills: Animals-0 (Ride-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-0 (Aslan Weapons-1, Dew Claw-1).

Pounce’s Fourth Tumbler

Marine Private Puli (3 Terms)

Final UPP: 969455. Age: 26 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family).

Final Honors: Private, 62nd Special Forces (Belizo), Imperial Marines, [CR-1 WB-2].

Final Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-1 (Aslan Weapons-1, Blades-3, Dew Claw-1, Battledress-1, Exotics-1, Unarmed-1), Leader-1, Medic-1, Survival-1, Tactics-4, Vacc Suit-2.

Muster Out (3): Wafer Jack, High Passage, KCr 25.

BW: Belizo (SM 3015) Ag Ni.

HW Skills: Animals-0 (Ride-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-0 (Aslan Weapons-1, Dew Claw-1).

Pounce's Fifth Tumbler

Private Huli (3 Terms)
 Final UPP: C87769. Age: 26 years. Fame: 3 (Extended Family).
 Final Honors: Private, 62nd Special Forces (Belizo), Imperial Marines, [CR-2, MCFU-2, WB-1].
 Final Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-5 (Aslan Weapons-1, Beams-1, Blades-2, Dew Claw-1, Exotics-2, Slug Thrower-1), Leader-2, Medic-1, Stealth-1, Vacc Suit-1.
 Muster Out (3): C2 +1 (Dex 9), Low Passage, Star Pass.
 BW: Belizo (SM 3015) Ag Ni.
 HW Skills: Animals-0 (Ride-1), Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-0 (Aslan Weapons-1, Dew Claw-1).

The Two Ursa

The Ursa are husband and wife, from an enclave of Ursa which found its way to the Domain of Deneb while fleeing the atrocities of their original Solomani Rule of Man genetic designers. The genocidal attempt at destroying the uplifted species was not entirely successful. Most Ursa are concentrated in the Ley Sector of the Imperium; small enclaves found their way to Corridor.

The female Ursa (the Scholarly Bear) is a scholar whose work has focused on "uplifting," often highlighting the long-term negative results on species which are effectively "enslaved by chains or gratitude." Her scholarship brought the mates to the Spinward Marches in 1106; she was attempting to correlate the long-term effects of the "uplift" process on several species, including Dolphins and Vargr (uplifted by the Ancients, rather than the Solomani humans).

Her current thesis is that "uplifting" has negative results on all sophont species, regardless of the "uplifting" species' skill or "venerability." In short, it does not matter whether the uplift was performed by ham-fisted Solomani during the Rule of Man, or by some mystical and unknowable "Ancients" of great prehistory; uplifting creates a mentality of enslavement. The Uplifters are, of course, the enslavers, while the Uplifted must through multiple generations deal with the truth that they were created to be disposable machines. She has never attempted to apply this to branches of humanity who may have been affected by the Ancients, however (e.g., Vilani and Zhodani).

The male Ursa (the Crafty Bear), on the other hand, brought his skills and work with him. During this period, he has been designing and fabricating unique works, some merely decorative, some merely functional, some both.

The Fifth Frontier War broke out while the Scholarly Bear was teaching on Regina. They were evacuated in the early panic (Regina was thought by much of the IN under Santanochiev to be a certain Zhodani target). More fortunate than most refugees, they made their way to Rhyllanor. Rhyllanor was believed to be safe, too far away to face significant direct attack.

With the war calling many humans away from their scholarly pursuits, the Scholarly Bear was able to obtain teaching work at Rhyllanor Institute of Technology. The Crafty Bear worked in maintenance, ship repair, and other functions. The Crafty Bear gained contacts on Old Station. Like the Vargr Ringmaster, both Ursa volunteered for the Civilian Defense Force; the Scholarly Bear took gunnery positions, while the Crafty Bear refurbished and maintained old equipment.

With the war over, the Ursa want to return to their homeworld, but they have insufficient funds. Andii offered them working passage as ship's crew. The Vargr Ringmaster, noticing an old picture in one of Andii's texts on the Terran circus tradition, spoke privately (and carefully) to the Scholarly Bear, an avowed cyclist. Fortunately, she was far more amused than offended (though her mate initially took a swipe at the Vargr Ringmaster). She quickly mastered the unicycle, arranged an act in which she pretends to be nothing more than a non-sophont Terran bear riding various UPVs ("Ursa-Powered Vehicles"), and auditioned. Her mate plays the comic foil, purportedly unable to master any significant tasks. At the end of the act, they finally speak. Roland: "It takes so little to amuse these people, doesn't it?" Gabrielle: "Now dear, they're only human." Roland: "Say goodnight, Gabby." Gabrielle: "Goodnight, Gabby!"

Andii could hardly refuse. The Ursa now have a one-year contract. Though the destination is farther from their home than they are now, they

will have cash and credentials at the end. In addition, one of Andii's long-term goals is to take the circus Coreward after Regina; the Ursa certainly would go part of the way with *Cirque* if that came to fruition.

The Crafty Bear is a sculptor working primarily in metals and polymers. He designs and builds sculptures based on discarded and outmoded vehicles and vessels. His skill has already benefitted *Cirque*; he has been involved in the design and outfitting of Big Top 1's performance space, as well as the refurbishing of other old equipment on *Cirque* and her auxiliaries. He assists in set maintenance in addition to his performing duties.

The Scholarly Cycling Ursa (Headliner as "Gabrielle the Bear")

Gabrielle Trumpet (Ursa)

Final UPP: HACCB7. Age: 34 years. Scholar Fame: 25 (Beyond Empire) (Works critical of the Solomani history of uplifting have been received badly in many Solomani communities, even resulting in death threats. In Vargr territory, the works have raised a few hackles, but most Vargr who know of the Ancients' manipulation of genes consider the Ursa to be crypuppies. Several Zhodani sophontologists have offered to provide adjustment assistance to the Scholarly Bear so that she can get over her apparent anger over the long past.)

Final Honors: Renowned Non-Traditional Scholar of Uplifted Sophonts with Award Winning Publications.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Animals-0 (Rider-1, Trainer-2), Art: Author-1, Astrogator-1, Athlete-1, Bureaucrat-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Fighter-0 (Unnamed-1), Flyer-1 (Grav-2), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Language: Vilani-11 Navigation-1, Sciences: Archeology-2; History-6; Psychohistory-1; Sophontology-2; Theology-2, Seafarer-0 (Boats-1), Stealth-1, Survey-1, Survival-1, Trade: Gravitics-1, Trader-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Terms (6): 6 Scholar.

Muster Out (7): Life Insurance, C5 +1 (Tra B), Wafer Jack, Ship Share x1, Low Passage, KCr 25, Middle Passage.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Historical Media Collection, Sophont Studies Library, Archeology Tools, several Sophont-Powered Vehicles (2 unicycles, road bike, off-road bike, "tadpole" (3-wheeled) cargo hauler with two seats, trailer rated at 200 kg).

BW: Corr 1607 Shishkala B 686 654-B Ag Ni Ga Ri.

HW Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Art: Author-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Trader-1.



The Crafty Set-Building Bear

Roland Trumpet (Ursa)

Final UPP: 76B685. Age: 39 years. Fame: 0 (Unknown).

Final Honors: n/a.

Final Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Art: Chef-2, Athlete-2, Broker-1, Computer-1, Craftsman-4, Design-9, Driver-0 (Grav-1, Wheeled-1), JOT-2, Liaison-1, Medic-2, Naval Architect-1, Science: Physics-2, Trades: Electronics-6; Mechanics-3; Polymers-1; Programmer-6, Trader-1.

Terms (N): 3 Education, 3 Citizen, 3 Craftsman.

Muster Out (N): (3 Cit, 3 Cra) Int +1 (Int 7), Soc +1 (Soc 6), KCr 30,

Cirque

Wafer Jack, C1 +1 (Str 8), High Passage.
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Electronics and Mechanics Tools, Design and Programmer Suite.
BW: Corr 1607 Shishkala B 686 654-B Ag Ni Ga Ri.
HW Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Art: Chef-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Trader-1.

Miniphant Handler

Dashsha Riira
Final UPP: 869995. Age: 30 years. Fame: 4 (Neighborhood).
Final Honors: Discoverer of the Riira Lode on Wypoc, a valuable source of radioactives.
Final Skills: Animals (Teamster)-1, Art (Author)-1, Athlete-1, Computer-2, Driver: Tracked-1, Fighting (Slug Throwers)-1, (Unarmed)-1, Flyer-1 (Aeronautics)-1, (Rotor)-1, Gunner (Bays)-1, (Turrets)-1, Hostile Environment-2, Medic-1, Sensors-1, Survival-3, Trade (Programmer)-1, Vacc Suit-1, Xenology-1.
Muster Out (3): KCr 40, StarPass, Life Ins
BW: Traitha (SM 2834) De, He, Ni, An.
HW: Traitha (SM 2834) De, He, Ni, An.
HW Skills: Survival-1, Hostile Environment-1, Driver: Tracked-1, Xenology-1

The Elephant Handler handled a survey on the dangerous world of Wypoc (SM 2011). She located a valuable source of radioactives. She also learned how to handle herself in hostile environments. Elsewhere, she had some experience with miniphants, and so was hired to go to the nascent Border Worlds and purchase two for Cirque des Sirkas. On the long trip back, Riira began training them. Riira manages the miniphants and puts them through their routines. Riira also serves as a gunner of BT1.

Staff Sergeant Roustabout

Hank Martin
Final UPP: A9DA57. Age: 30 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family).
Final Honors: Staff Sergeant, 23rd Lift Regiment, Imperial Army, [CR x3, MCF x2].
Final Skills: Animals-0 (Riding-0, Referee Fiat), Army-2, Athlete-1, Driver-0 (Legged-2, Tracked-2), Fighter-0 (Exotics-2, Unarmed-1), Flyer-0 (Winged-2), Gambler-1, Heavy Weapons-0 (Artillery-1), Leader-1, Liaison-3, Navigation-1, Science (Physics-1), Streetwise-1, Tactics-1, Trade (Mechanical-1), Trader-1.
Muster Out (3): High Passage, KCr 25, Wafer Jack.
BW: Earth (SO 1827) Ga Hi.
HW Skills: Trader-1, Streetwise-1.

Hank Martin is a rarity in this part of space: a true Terran human. Born in Texas, Martin espouses discipline, self-reliance, self-defense, and loud commands. Hank is one of the few people on *Cirque* who has ever attended a true Terran “revival circus and rodeo,” and likes to compare that experience with the production being put on by Cirque.

Strong, bright, and agile, Hank practices a style of rope-tricks known as “cowboy” or “lasso.” Hank has also memorized Comic Juggler’s basic routines and keeps abreast of the news. Hank has a library of pithy sayings by an ancient “cowboy comic” of the Terran pre-space period, Will Rogers. In a pinch, Hank can go on in Comic Juggler’s place, performing rope tricks in place of juggling while discussing the latest local and Imperial events. Note that “Hank” can be a shortened “Henrietta” as well as “Henry.”

The Army of Rock and Sol Tribute Band (Headliners as a Separate Performance)

The Army of Rock and Sol Tribute Band plays and sings music from the “Rock” and “Soul” eras, historically date under the old calendar between 1950 and 2050. This is an exceptionally eclectic and wide range, but the time scale has caused fine distinctions in style to become blurry. All of the musicians were members of the Imperial Army; all began playing relatively traditional Solomani folk instruments like the electric guitar,

the electric bass, and the electric piano at some point during their lives. They found themselves together on a transport to Rhyllanor and began “jamming” in the old style. This experiment led to the further study of prehistoric Solomani Rock and Roll, Soul, and similar styles. While they are not yet terribly proficient, they are available, inexpensive, and fill the tent with youthful rebellious teens needing during off-hours when the more stylized and sedate Cirque des Sirkas is not performing.

With help from Makeup Artist and costumers, the group can play in several different units. Their repertoire is expansive, with the help of wafer jacks. Almost any song or rhythm structure ever employed is available to the group. As they are not members of Rhyllanor’s various live performance guilds, they have no concerns regarding the use of high-tech “sheet music.”

The band cycles through a number of performance groups and style during their weeks. When possible, they hold large outdoor concerts set up on a raised platform extending up through BT 2’s large circular “upper troop egress. Thus, though they are an “added attraction” for Cirque des Sirkas, they are in many ways a cost-effective added attraction.

As musicians, the group tends to spend more time in places they should avoid, like seedy bars where fights are likely.

Lt. Winds

Lt. Sadug Ubala
Wind Instruments
Final UPP: B56597. Age: 26 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family).
Final Honors: 1st Lieutenant (O2), 6th Artillery Regiment (Boughene’s Bombers) [Reinforced], (CO) Battery E, Imperial Army (Reserves) [XS-1, Wound Badge-1].
Final Skills: Admin-1, Driver (Grav)-1, Fighter 0 (BattleDress-1) (Beams-1), Hostile Environment-1, Leader-1, Soldier (Heavy Weapons)-1, Stealth-2, Vacc Suit-2, Zero G-1, Musician (Winds-1, Vocal-0).
Muster Out (2): KCr 25, Wafer Jack.
BW: Macene (SM 2612) As Ni.
HW Skills: Zero G-1, Driver (Grav)-1.

Lt. Bass

Lt. Nuu Lagi
Final UPP: 58C6A7. Age: 22 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family).
Final Honors: 2nd Lieutenant (O1), 6th Artillery Regiment (Boughene’s Bombers) [Reinforced], (CO) Battery F, Imperial Army (Reserves) [MCF-1].
Final Skills: Musician-0 (Electric Bass 1), Driver (Grav)-1, Gunner (Bays)-1, (Turrets)-2, Hostile Environment-1, Liaison-1, Seafarer-1.
Muster Out (1): Wafer Jack.
BW: Ruie (SM 1809) Hi, In.
HW: Boughene (SM 1904) Fi, Ni.
HW Skills: Driver (Grav)-1, Hostile Environment-1.

Staff Sergeant Ivories

Adluth Muura
Final UPP: 997699. Age: 30 years. Fame: 0 (none).
Final Honors: Staff Sergeant, Special Rifle Battalion, Imperial Army, [WB x3].
Final Skills: Admin-2, Musician (Keyboard-1, Vocal-0), Fighter-3 (Blades-1, Unarmed-1), Gunner-0 (Screens-2, Turrets-2), Heavy Weapons-0 (Ordnance-1, WMD-1), Leader-1, Liaison-2, Sensors-1, Stealth-1, Vacc Suit-2.
Muster Out (3): Middle Passage x2, C5 +1 (Edu 9).
BW: Magash (DB 0316) Va Hi Na In Cp.
HW Skills: Musician-0 (Keyboard-1, Vocal-0), Admin-1.

Corporal Drums

Ugi Basi
Final UPP: 7B4576. Age: 22 years. Fame: 1 (Parent).
Final Honors: Corporal, Efate PKF, Imperial Army, [MCF-1].
Final Skills: Science (Chemistry-1), Navigation-1, Fighter-0 (Slug Thrower-1), Liaison-1, Trader-1, Musician-0 (Drummer-1, Vocalist-0).

Cirque

Muster Out (1): Wafer Jack
BW: Alell (SM 1706) Ph Pa Ri.
HW Skills: Trader-1, Musician-0 (Drummer-1, Vocalist-0).

Security Chief, Cirque des Sirkas And Animal Handler

Master Sergeant Murgirla Jones
Final UPP: A88766. Age: 34 years. Military Fame: 14 (System).
Final Honors: Master Sergeant, 7323rd Armored Infantry Regiment, Imperial Marines, [CR-4, MCFU-2, MCG-1, SEH-1].
Final Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Art: Musician (Voice-2), Comms-1, Fighter-3 (Battle Dress-1, Beams-1, Unarmed-2), Gambler-1, Forward Observer-1, Heavy Weapons-2 (Launcher-2, Ordnance-2), High G-1, Leader-1, Pilot-0 (Small Craft-2), Recon-1, Sensors-1, Stealth-1, Survival-1, Tactics-1, Trade: Explosives-1, Zero G-2.
Terms (4): 4 Marine.
Muster Out (4): Wafer Jack, SECRET (A Battle Language dictionary), StarPass, Battle Dress-D (by special arrangement).
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Weapon.
BW: Spin 1807 Knorbes E 888 787-2 Ag Ri An Re
HW Skills: Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Art: Musician (Voice-1).

The Aerialist

Giigiizen Filjigdivilli
Final UPP: A9B854. Age: 30 years. Fame: Fame 14 (System).
Final Skills: Art: Dance-6, Athlete-5, Broker-1, Bureaucrat-1, Craftsman-1, Hostile Environment-1, Medic-2, Streetwise-1, Trade: Programmer-1, Trader-1, Zero G-1.
Muster Out (3): Wafer Jack, StarPass, KCr 10.
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Specialized Gear for Act.
BW: Spin 2620 Natoko C8879AB-9 Hi Ga An Pr
HW Skills: Streetwise-1, Trader-1, Craftsman-1.

As with many performers, the Aerialist started young, apprenticing at 14. The Aerialist performs feats of strength and coordination on a rope that swings, circles, raises, and lowers during the performance. The Aerialist is quite skilled at climbing and moving on ropes and other equipment. The development of programming skill is recent, and may suggest a dishonest path into cat burglary.

This is a solo act as written. If the referee prefers a trapeze-style act, this character can be the team's core.

The Noble Fan-Lizard Tamer

Baron Asushuun Medukiide
Final UPP: AAA8BC. Age: 42 years. Fame: 18 (Many Systems).
Final Skills: Advocate-2, Animals-6 (Trainer-2), Bureaucrat-2, Counsellor-2, Diplomat-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), High G-3, Language: Anglic-10, Leader-2, Liaison-1, Seafarer-0 (Boat-1), Science: Veterinary Medicine-3, Strategy-1, Streetwise-1, Tactics-1, Zero G-1.
Terms (6): 1 Education, 5 Noble.
Muster Out (5): 2 StarPass (High), KCr 200, Proxy (2D), Three Fan Lizards and transport containers (replaces Wafer Jack).
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.
BW: Vland (VL 1717) Hi Cs.
HW Skills: Streetwise-1, Bureaucrat-1.

Raised on Vland, the Noble Fan-Lizard Tamer has always been obsessive about the beauty and danger of the Fan Lizard. The Baron's skills with animals have been attuned to training and handling dangerous wild animals.

Although initially successful in the intrigues of the Moot, the Tamer became incautious eight years ago, and offended a large number of nobles

in the subsector, leading all the way up to the Duke. Two attempts to reverse the resulting exile have failed. After the second failure, the Tamer gave up and began travelling toward the Spinward Marches, fan lizards in tow. After a fan lizard attacked and savaged an elderly passenger on the liner coming into Rhyllanor, the Tamer was blacklisted on all major passenger lines. Most smaller traders have also heard of the incident, and refuse to take the Tamer on board.

Andii has taken the Tamer on with an act developed, but under strict conditions regarding the housing of the Fan Lizards. The Tamer has agreed, though with some unspoken reservations – as both a noble and an expert on fan lizards, the Tamer considers others unable to pass informed judgment on the situation. Thus, while agreeing to the terms, the Tamer may become slipshod and a discipline issue during the trip.

The Small Animal Trainer (Performer)

Shugaap Shugap
Final UPP: 785887. Age: 38 years. Fame: 17 (System).
Final Skills: Admin-2, Advocate-1, Animals-3 (Trainer-4), Art: Actor-2, Astrogator-2, Broker-1, Bureaucrat-1, Computer-1, Diplomat-1, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Flyer-0 (Grav-1, Rotor-1), Hostile Environment-3, JOT-1, Language: Vilani-7, Navigation-2, Pilot-0 (Small Craft-1, Spacecraft ACS-1), Survival-1, Teacher-1, Vacc Suit-1.
Terms (5): 2 Citizen, 3 Entertainer.
Muster Out (5) (2 Citizen, 3 Entertainer): KCr 30, Wafer Jack, High Passage, KCr 40, Int +1.
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.
BW: Aramis (SM 3110) He Ni Cp.
HW Skills: Hostile Environment-1, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Admin-1.
Shugap and the small animals perform in Shugap's own act. The animals also interact with the Clown and the Comic Juggler. The Juggler works with seedspitters, while the Clown is harassed by thieving tree rats in one bridge segment.

The Bloodvark Trainer

Edwina Dystrom
Final UPP: 958B69. Age: 34 years. Fame: 17 (System).
Final Skills: Animals-2 (Trainer-4), Art: Actor-1, Broker-1, Bureaucrat-3, Computer-1, Counsellor-1, Driver-0 (Automotive-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Hostile Environment-1, Liaison-1, Pilot-0 (Spacecraft ACS-1), Sensors-3, Survey-2, Vacc Suit-1, Zero G-1.
Terms (4): 1 Citizen, 3 Entertainer.
Muster Out (4) (1 Citizen, 3 Entertainer): KCr 20, KCr 30, Ship Share x1, C2 +1 (Dex 5).
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.
BW: Ara Pacis (DB 0419) Ni.
HW Skills: Driver-0 (Automotive-1).

The Kian/Duranthe Trainer

Wayne Johnson
Final UPP: 9B7987. Age: 38 years. Fame: 20 (Sector).
Final Skills: Animals-2 (Rider-2, Trainer-5), Art: Actor-1, Broker-1, Bureaucrat-2, Flyer-0 (Winged-1), Hostile Environment-1, JOT-1, Medic-2, Pilot-1 (Small Craft-2), Streetwise-1, Trade: Biologics-1, Trader-2, Vacc Suit-1, Zero G-1.
Terms (5): 3 Citizen, 2 Entertainer.
Muster Out (5) (3 Citizen, 2 Entertainer): KCr 50, StarPass, TAS Fellowship, High Passage, Secret: A book banned by the Imperial Bureaucracy.
Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Costumes, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.
BW: Ruie (SM 1809) Hi In.
HW Skills: Streetwise-1, Trade: Biologics-1.

Johnson displays the "equine" animals first in a riderless display, then allows the Aslan to show their riding skills on the animals.

Characters Not On Board *Cirque*

Some NPCs specific to certain worlds have been generated in advance for the Referee. Time, space, and other limitations prevent generating every NPC the referee will require. The Referee must prepare some characters, but can use discretion and creativity to bring out essential characteristics. This is unavoidable in an extended campaign resource.

No attempt has been made to generate T5 data for significant Canon Nobility, such as Dukes Norris, Luis and Stephen, or Admiral Frederic Santanocheev. Defining their exact skill set is unnecessary in this material, and it is certainly undesirable to wind up in potential conflict with later Canon materials.

The Self-Promoting Admiral

Adm. Aramais P. Lee, IN (Ret.)

Final UPP: 57CA9c. **Age:** 66. **Military Fame:** 22 (Domains).

Final Honors: Admiral, 33rd Fleet, Imperial Navy, [CR-6, XS-1, MCG-2, MCG-1, *SEH*-1], Knight of the Domain of Deneb, Baronet of Charted Asteroid N-609342, Regina (Volume = 0.5 Kiloliters).

Final Skills: Admin-4, Advocate-4, Art. Author-3, Astrogator-3, Athlete-1, Broker-3, Comms-1, Computer-2, Diplomat-4, Engineer-3 (Jump Drives-1, Life Support-1), Fighter-0 (Beams-1; Unarmed-1), Fleet Tactics-3, Flyer-0 (Grav-1, Rotor-1), Gunner-1 (Ortillery-2, Screens-1, Turrets-1), Languages: Gvegh-9; Sagamaal-7; Zdetl-8, Leader-2, Liaison-2, Medic-1, Pilot-1 (Small Craft-1, Spacecraft ACS-1), Sensors-5, Strategy-1, Streetwise-6, Survey-2, Trader-5, Vacc Suit-1.

BW: Dene 1926 Amshal B687365-9 N Lo Ga O: 1925 Deneb.

HW Skills: Flyer-0 (Rotor-1), Trader-1.

Terms (13): 1 Education, 6 Navy, 2 Scout, 4 Merchant.

Muster Out (12) (6N, 2S, 4R): Wafer Jack, Life Insurance x 2, Knighthood, Social + 1 (Baronet), Retirement x2 (KCr 42/year), Ship Share x 4 (Traded for full ownership of Scout 3), TAS Membership.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library. NO PROXIES OR OTHER NOBLE BENEFITS, AS HIS SOCIAL STATUS IS NOT OBTAINED THROUGH THE NOBLE PROFESSION.

Aramais mis-spent his youth and spent quite a bit of time causing trouble and in juvenile detention. He was finally offered deal by a judge: join the Navy or go into adult prison. He took the Navy.

Though enlisted, he was brevetted to Ensign when half of the crew was struck down by disease during a vital mission. He was promoted to Sublieutenant for further action.

Aramais then found himself assigned to piracy patrol and a special mission. He disliked Vargr by the time he was done.

Lee was then sent to Corridor where he successfully dealt with more Vargr issues. His Knighthood (awarded in Mustering) was awarded as a result of his actions against a significant pirate incursion. However, he was "selected" to work with the Scouts on a mission in the Spinward Marches (exiled away from Corridor Fleet after cussing out an Admiral) as Naval Liaison to a Scout task force dealing with something or other.

He was then trained in ortillery in preparation for assignment to the new *Ringmaster* class and tested several of the new auxiliaries. Thereafter, he was assigned to command of the Marigold, a *Ringmaster*-class vessel. The task force in which he was assigned handled several battles and then a siege in a series of flare-ups near the Sword Worlds.

The outbreak of the Fourth Frontier War found Lee commanding a small task force of Ringmasters carrying fighter strike forces, Aramais was involved in significant combat. The events mentioned in his Episode 21 note occurred when his commanding vessel misjumped.

Lee was finally promoted to Admiral. He commanded the Fleet in his last two years. During that time, he took part of the 23rd Fleet on an unauthorized (and successful) mission to retrieve an IN vessel accused of spying in Sword World territory. Upon his return, he was very clearly ordered to stay put and stay on patrol. He was in conflict with the Sector Admiral throughout the remainder of the term. Disciplined for expressing negative opinions of the Sector Admiral in logs, he retired under pressure. Based on his service and knowledge of the class, he negotiated an arrangement to work with Scouts towards adaptation of *Ringmaster* class to ex-

ploration purposes.

While working on board the first Scout use of the *Ringmaster* class (as a predecessor to the *Donosev*), Aramais developed typical survey skills. His basic writing also improved as his log style was made "open to opine."

In a second term with the IISS, Aramais was focused more on contact and diplomacy. By the end of the Term he had made contacts with Sharurshid and enemies within the Scout Service. Sometimes his diplomacy was less than diplomatic, as when a Darrian diplomat annoyed him and hinted that the Star Trigger made the Darrian Confederation impervious. Aramais untruthfully advised the Darrian that a coordinated nuclear ortillery strike plan had been drawn up "and ships are always moving" to counter the threat. "Our intelligence is that twenty radioactive ciders are just as uninhabitable as twenty planets with their stars blown up. So tell me, are you a betting man?" While the bluff re-energized stalled negotiations, the Scouts and Imperial diplomats thought his interruption inappropriate. They suggested he retire. As this threat cleared the way for certain Sharurshid plans to go forward, Sharurshid offered a "Golden Lifeboat." Aramais accepted.

Lee was made a Senior Captain in Sharurshid by contract. However, his role was not in direct command, but rather in negotiating long term contracts and strategy. Despite this he sometimes annoyed the real captains of the various larger vessels on which he traveled by conducting surprise inspections, taking watches, and otherwise being arrogant and bossy. Lee started on anagathic treatments, as part of his overall compensation package. He was also regularly recorded for Life Insurance.

Lee was on a vessel leaving Efate when the Zhodani surprise attack began. He took over command of the Sharurshid vessel on which he was travelling and fought through to Jump range, then left Efate. He volunteered to reactivate his commission, hoping to command in battle. He was accepted, and ordered to "take charge of the Merchant Marine and other quasi-military resources, get us shipping lines." Though his commission was active, his work remained in the merchants. Numerous communiques to Santanocheev changed nothing. When Norris resurfaced with his Warrant, Lee tried a less angry approach. Norris sent a terse response: "Continue to successfully muster civilian assets. Your assignment will not change. In the future, communicate only through the chain of command." Norris may be the only superior who obtained absolute cooperation from Lee.

With the war over, Lee has returned to his role for Sharurshid. He is working on contacts in the Border Worlds, and is expected to also further Imperial interests as a result.

Admiral Lee's career path says much about him. He is a self-promoter, talker, carouser, and loose missile rack in an ordnance bay, likely to result in unexpected explosions. This has resulted in his being at least temporarily useful to several organizations, and sometimes in a fair amount of trouble. At the same time, he is practical, and has made things happen on a number of occasions.

Zhodani Agents

The Fifth Frontier War was long planned by the Zhodani. The Consulate sent a number of agents to prepare the way. Cells obtained intelligence, recruited sympathizers, and subverted Imperial law. Working through numerous covers and assumed personalities, the agents were placed to assist the ultimate push, from establishing beachheads at Efate to reaching the ultimate goal – Rhyllanor. Other agents worked behind the scenes to make the Vargr politics and the Sword Worlds ready to join a fight for goals not known to them.

Agents remain in the Imperial Spinward Marches. A very few have adopted the freedom of the Imperial lifestyle. The majority are agents that were not retrieved and removed during the war, for whatever reason. Some were sleeper agents never activated. Others never arrived at the right place and time to leave with retreating fleets. Some simply continue to subvert the Imperium – supporting or operating Psionic Institutes that use Zhodani methodologies. Psionically trained individuals from those Institutes generally become sympathetic to the benefits of the Zhodani way of life. It is ironic that these specific agents, taught to lie and hide, teach the benefits of a Psionics-based society's openness, honesty, and mental health benefits.

Cirque

Nemesis

Zephraim Guertin (Real Name Unknown)

Final UPP: 8BCBAA. Age: 38 years.

Final Skills: Admin-2, Advocate-1, Arts: Actor-2; Chef-1, Astrogator-1, Pilot-1, Athlete-3, Bureaucrat-2, Comms-1, Computer-1, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Fighter-1 (Exotics-1, Unarmed-1), Flyer-0 (LTA-1), Forensics-2, Hostile Environment-3, Language: Tezapot-1, Medic-2, Naval Architect-1, Seafarer-0 (Ship-1), Stealth-2, Streetwise-1, Steward-1, Survival-1, Zero G-2

Final Honors: Defender of 1000 (A5), Counter Intelligence, Consulate Tozjabr (Zhodani Intelligence Service), [Craftsman Commendation-3, Entertainer Commendation-4, Functionary Commendation-2, Merchant Commendation-4, Scout Commendation-2].

Terms (5): 5 Agent.

Muster Out (5): KCr 45, Ship Share, KCr 30, KCr 30, C4 +1 (Int 12), Life Insurance.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Cover Identity Documents, Cover Identity Tools.

Psionics: Ψ = 12 [3rd Stage Psionic]

1st Stage: Basics; Direct-12, Remote-24, Self-0.

2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-0, Psi-Hearing-0, Psi-Touch-0, Psi-Smell-0, Psi-Awareness-12, Psi-Perception-24.

3rd Stage: ECM; Move-12, Teleport-12, EShift-0, The Touch-0, OOB-0, Mentation-12.

4th Stage:

5th Stage: Intuitions; Insight-0, Curiosity-0, Luck-0.

HW: Ziafrilians 3138 Iadriefria C 542 420-6 Ni Po.

HW Skills: Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Steward-1.

Purported HW: Calit

Nemesis, an Intendant of long standing, is unable to accept the Zodani Consulate's loss in the Fifth Frontier War. He does not believe that the Consulate's leadership is likely to change following the failure of the military strategy. Having spent long years dealing with the chaos and ugliness of Imperial politics, he cannot forget that the Consulate remains threatened by them. He (or she) is seeking to pull together agents remaining in the Imperial Spinward Marches to rebuild the intelligence and espionage networks. Some Zhodani will follow Nemesis. Most will reject his efforts as insanity.

In addition, Nemesis knows that some agents have defected. Having discovered one – a relatively unimportant agent going by the ridiculous name of Bertii – Nemesis has concluded that justice must be done. Without minimizing the information to be obtained by Bertii (assuming success), it is only part of the larger puzzle behind relations with the Consulate and the Consulate's actions in the Spinward Marches. Thus, Nemesis' obsession is not entirely merited.

Nemesis will exit a situation before death if at all possible until the events of Episode 20. At that point, he will go for broke.

Nemesis has possession of a Jump-3 scout, which he uses to get ahead of *Cirque* on a number of occasions. He may also pick up other agents along the way.

Agent 4

Daylin Prendigast

Final UPP: 99888C. Age: 34 years.

Final Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1, Trainer-1), Athlete-1, Bureaucrat-1, Comms-1, Driver-0 (Automotive-1), Engineer-0 (Jump Drives-1, Life Support-1), Fighter-0 (Slug Thrower-1), Fleet Tactics-1, Forensics-2, Gunner-1 (Screens-1, Turrets-1), Hostile Environment-2, JOT-1, Language: Gvegh-7, Medic-1, Science: Chemistry-1, Seafarer-0 (Boats-1), Sensors-1, Streetwise-1, Survey-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Final Honors: Defender of 500 (A4), Counter Intelligence, Consulate Tozjabr, [Navy Commendation-7, Scholar Commendation-1, Scout Commendation-6].

Terms (4): 4 Agent.

Muster Out (4): KCr 40, KCr 15, Ship Share x1, StarPass.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library,

Professional Library, Cover Identity Documents, Cover Identity Tools.

Psionics: Ψ = 10 [3rd Stage Psionic]

1st Stage: Basics; Direct-10, Remote-10, Self-10.

2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-10, Psi-Hearing-0, Psi-Touch-10, Psi-Smell-10, Psi-Awareness-0, Psi-Perception-0.

3rd Stage: ECM; Move-10, Teleport-0, EShift-0, The Touch-0, OOB-0, Mentation-20.

4th Stage:

5th Stage: Intuitions; Insight-0, Curiosity-0, Luck-0.

BW: Ziafrilians 2537 Zhdietsvre D 9B4 620-9 FI Ni.

HW Skills: Driver-0 (Automotive-1), Hostile Environment-1.

Agent 3

Flood Hoffman

Final UPP: 996ABC. Age: 30 years.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Gunner-0 (Turrets-1), Hostile Environment-1, Languages: Anglic-9; Sagamaal-8, Survey-3, Survival-1, Trades: Electronics-1, Programmer-1, Vacc Suit-2, Zero G-1.

Final Honors: Defender of 100 (A3), Counter Intelligence, Consulate Tozjabr, [Navy Commendation-1, Army Commendation-4].

Terms (3): 3 Agent.

Muster Out (3): High Passage, KCr 35, C2 +1 (Dex 9).

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Cover Identity Documents, Cover Identity Tools.

Psionics: Ψ = 9 [3rd Stage Psionic]

1st Stage: Basics; Direct-0, Remote-18, Self-9.

2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-9, Psi-Hearing-9, Psi-Touch-0, Psi-Smell-0, Psi-Awareness-0, Psi-Perception-0.

3rd Stage: ECM; Move-0, Teleport-0, EShift-0, The Touch-9, OOB-0, Mentation-18.

4th Stage:

5th Stage: Intuitions; Insight-0, Curiosity-0, Luck-0.

BW: Ziafrilians 2934 Zhdoiesh A 200 632-D Na Ni Va Cp.

HW Skills: Admin-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Survey-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Agent 2

Diamond Wayne

Final UPP: B9988B. Age: 30 years.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Animals-0 (Rider-1), Bureaucrat-1, Diplomat-1, Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Flyer-0 (Rotor-1), Forensics-1, Gambler-1, JOT-1, Navigation-1, Pilot-0 (Small Craft-1, Spacecraft ACS-1), Sapper-1, Sensors-1, Stealth-1, Vacc Suit-1, Zero G-1.

Final Honors: Defender of 50 (A2), Counter Intelligence, Consulate Tozjabr, [Citizen Commendation-0, Scout Commendation-9].

Terms (3): 3 Agent.

Muster Out (3): KCr 35, KCr 35, C3 +1 (End 9).

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Cover Identity Documents, Cover Identity Tools.

Psionics: Ψ = 8 [3rd Stage Psionic]

1st Stage: Basics; Direct-8, Remote-8, Self-8.

2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-16, Psi-Hearing-8, Psi-Touch-0, Psi-Smell-0, Psi-Awareness-0, Psi-Perception-0.

3rd Stage: ECM; Move-0, Teleport-12, EShift-0, The Touch-0, OOB-0, Mentation-12.

4th Stage:

5th Stage: Intuitions; Insight-0, Curiosity-0, Luck-0.

GUPP: 5612x6.

BUPP: B9778B.

BW: Ziafrilians 3237 Yiranz E 300 578-8 Ni Va.

HW Skills: Driver-0 (Wheeled-1), Vacc Suit-1.\

Agent 1

Sky Oltsch

Final UPP: 87658C. Age: 30 years.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Animals-0 (Teamster-1), Athlete-1, Broker-1, Comms-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Fighter-0 (Beams-1, Unarmed-1), Flyer-0

Cirque

(Winged-1), Gunner-0 (Screens-1), Navigation-1, Pilot-0 (Spacecraft ACS-1), Sensors-1, Streetwise-1, Survival-1, Trader-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Final Honors: Analyst (A0), Counter Intelligence, Consulate Tozjabr, [Merchant Commendation-3].

Terms (3): 3 Agent.

Muster Out (3): StarPass, KCr 30, Forbidden (Streetwise-1).

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Cover Identity Documents, Cover Identity Tools.

Psionics: $\Psi = 13$ [3rd Stage Psionic]

1st Stage: Basics; Direct-13, Remote-13, Self-13.

2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-0, Psi-Hearing-13, Psi-Touch-0, Psi-Smell-0, Psi-Awareness-13, Psi-Perception-13.

3rd Stage: ECM; Move-0, Teleport-0, EShift-13, The Touch-13, OOB-13, Mentation-0.

4th Stage:

5th Stage: Intuitions; Insight-0, Curiosity-0, Luck-0.

BW: Ziafriplians 2740 Lanse Sho' B A7A 435-B Z Ag Ga Ni.

HW Skills: Animals-0 (Teamster-1), Driver-0 (Grav-1), Trader-1.

Vargr Merchant Raiders

Note: Vargr "Merchants" are sometimes pirates, and thus receive Fighting-0 (Hand-to-Hand-1)

Vargr Merchant Raider 01

Final UPP: 97A68A. Age: 30 years. Fame: 3 (Extended Family).

Final Honors: Apprentice Steward (R1) [2 Ship Shares = 50 tons].

Final Skills: Admin-1, Astrogation-1, Broker-1, Computer-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Language (Zdetl-7), Medic-1, Merchant-1, Pilot-0 (Spacecraft ACS-1), Sensors-1, Steward-2, Trader-2, Trade (Programmer-1).

Muster Out (3): High Passage, C2 +1 (Dex 8), KCr 20. Ship Shares: 1.

BW: "Capitol" (XX 0000) Hi Cx.

HW Skills: Streetwise-1, Language (Zdetl-7).

Vargr Merchant Raider 2

Final UPP: 788B73. Age: 22 years. Fame: 1.

Final Honors: Spacehand (R0), [1 Ship Shares = 25 tons].

Final Skills: Astrogation-1, Broker-1, Trader-1, Merchant-1, Science (Chemistry-1).

Muster Out (1): KCr 20.

BW: Pax Rulin (Trojan Reaches 2204) (A402231-E) Ic Va Lo Cp.

HW Skills: Vacc Suit-2, Flyer-0 (Grav-1), Admin-1.

Vargr Merchant Raider 3

Final UPP: 876646. Age: 26 years. Fame: 3 (Extended Family).

Final Honors: Sergeant, 3rd Support Battalion, Marines, [CR-1, XS-1, WB-1].

Final Skills: Advocate-1, Driver-1 (Grav-2), Fighter-0 (Blades-1, Unarmed-1), Heavy Weapons-0 (Ordinance-1), Hostile Environment-2, Language (Vilani-5), Leader-1, Medic-1, Sapper-1, Stealth-1, Tactics-1, Teacher-1, Vacc Suit-2, Zero G-1.

Muster Out (2): Low Passage, Secret (The location of First Empire Senior Dreadnought).

BW: Zaibon (SW 1825) (B000544-B) As Ni Va.

HW Skills: Zero G-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1).



Character Story Arcs

Story arcs are stated or implied in some of the character descriptions. These have not been fully fleshed out. The referee may consider adding elements to character interplay, giving them reasons to continue with Cirque des Sirkas other than mere pay.

Bertii and others may look for evidence of Zhodani activity at every stop. They may not always be successful. Sometimes, it is not there to be found.

The **Vargr Ringmaster's** old shipmates will likely turn up again in the latter half of the tour. An inconclusive encounter can occur prior to the events of Episode 20. The Ringmaster himself seeks to better himself in the human Imperium.

Javert is pursuing **Geezer Thespian** and **Makeup Artist**. He may search cabins, conduct sly interviews, or even simply pretend to be their friend. Any of the three characters may try to involve PCs on one side or the other. A possible ally for Javert is the **Clown**, who will disdain Geezer Thespian's use of wafers to augment his live acting; Clown is heavily involved in the politics of the Rhyllanor Associated Performance Guilds.

The **Diva Avian Trainer** is always considering a new wrinkle on her primary goal in life, which is to be famous for something. She can be trusted to reinvent herself through any endeavor.

The **Comic Juggler** is seeking to avoid deep personal entanglements with children, animals, and women in the future. Unfortunately, he may be destined to fail. The Vargr Crested Tracker/Retriever (billed as Loki the Crested Jabberwock) will regularly display his affection. Others on *Cirque* may also find Juggler desirable in spite of common sense. The most fun (and dangerous) of these would be the **Viking Barbarian Knife Thrower**.

The **Contortionist** and the **Aerialist** are both students of specialized forms of dance. They will become interested in reviving other ancient forms of entertainment, potentially becoming the core of future acts. They may also discover that they can get into places that others cannot, for either good or ill.

Pounce, the Aslan tumblers, are confronted with the effect of being "Imperialized." They seek to become more and more traditional. With **U'aiili**, they may also look for new lands, as the lands allotted to their Clan on their homeworld are becoming crowded.

The **Urša** are seeking to return to their homeworld, Shishkala (Corr 1607). They have been away from their own kind, and their families, for longer than they expected. As they travel, they will seek to convince Andii to take *Cirque* Coreward for the second tour. In addition, the **Scholarly Cycling Urša** will have a chance to observe several uplifted species, notably the **Vargr Ringmaster**, and may come to reassess some of her theories. The **Crafty Set-Building Bear** is quietly working on his own Masterpiece, a model of Cirque des Sirkas' one-ring tent with laser-carved polymer figurines of each member of the cast and crew, as well as important NPCs to be met along the way.

The **Noble Fan-Lizard Tamer** has spent eight years in exile. Though there have been rewards, he is in the end hopeful of returning to importance. He resents finding himself stuck in the Marches among the Anglic-speaking types, away from his native Vland. He takes solace in working with Vland's dangerous animals, but is also seeking some advantage or information that will give him a way back to his homeworld — or, better yet, the Imperial Court.

The **Quixitadl Mind Reader** is doomed to be mistaken for an actual Zhodani from time to time; he is simply too good as a con-artist and tell-reader. He thus is constantly watched (and Bertii sometimes plants rumors to misdirect attention toward the somewhat reformed confidence man).

Almost any **Player Character** is likely to be looking for someone lost to them during the war. Comrades, spouses, children, and others have been displaced over time. Clues may be found along the way, and the refugee camps of Vilis will certainly interest such characters.

Though **Nemesis** becomes obsessed with **Bertii**, he has other goals which keep him from merely shadowing *Cirque*. Nemesis' route bypasses Lunion because the Consulate's new order has already sent representatives that far. Agents who may remain loyal to the Consulate's prior regime may be found on other worlds close to *Cirque's* route. Some may even join him, or serve as contacts. After leaving Zaibon, Nemesis will be building the small coalition of ships which join in the attack on *Cirque*. A referee may chose to run this as a parallel adventure for a single player or small group.

Program Notes: Animals of Cirque des Sirkas

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Slopping the hogs, milking the cows, mucking out the stalls. It's the same all over. It doesn't much matter whether the cow's a groat, or the horse is a kian. It's hard, smelly work. I never much liked it. Ran like hell away and never went back. I didn't want to spend my life watching a kian from behind, if you get my drift. Like I said, it doesn't matter what your local draft animal is — I don't suppose a Terran horse is any better.

Have you ever seen a proper horse here in Spinward? Not unless your socket's plugged in to the entertainment nets. Or maybe the power outlet, but that's a different concept. Lot of animals you haven't seen, probably, and a lot more you don't want to see. Animals are mostly for the planet-bound, not ships. Ever see a live-animal hold? Sure, the recyclers process their stuff, too — one full shovel at a time. It's not like scooping out that litter box you keep for the ship's tree rats, you know.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1102.

Animal Handlers and Trainers

In the oldest tradition of travelling entertainment, many of Cirque's acts involve animals. All are treated and trained well. All have a place in performance. Some may become useful in the course of various adventures. Most of the animals reside in the space allotted for them in BT1's various animal decks, though some of the more tame creatures stay with their handlers. A few, notably the Diva's avians, are housed in their performer/handler's cabins. These performers tend to have cabins on BT1.

Animal handlers are not necessarily the performers in the ring, though as a general rule they are involved. In a small circus, many of the performers assist with the animals, participate in the animal acts, or include animals in their acts. At least one of each type of animal participates in the opening procession, with various performers riding or leading.

Later, the Aslan Tumblers join in "equestrian" tricks on galloping Kian. Seedspitters perform tricks with the Comic Juggler before he begins his topical monologue. The clowns deal again with seedspitters, as well as "thieving" tree rats. The Diva performs her arias with garhawks and afeahyalhtows ("batstings") swooping and barrel-rolling in an aerial dance.

The clowns perform a traditional piece with various animals running, jumping, escaping, and generally making fools of them. Later, the "Terran brown bears" (actually fully intelligent Ursines) dance and entertain by riding old-fashioned bicycles and rolling on balls, showing their almost-human gestures as they growl and moan for approval before one gives the punch-line ("How easily humans are amused, Dear!").

Eventually, miniphants perform traditional tricks. The Vilani Feathered Fan Lizards are brought out in cages. Screeching and roaring, the Fan Lizards face their noble master, jumping through various hoops and performing other tricks. Finally, after arguing with the Noble (who has already worked with the dangerous and intractable Fan Lizards) the Vargr Ringmaster rolls out a covered cage holding the most fearsome beast known in Solomoni space, the Crested Jabberwock, known for its implacable, untrainable ferocity. It escapes, rears back to pounce — and

turns out to be nothing more than an oversized puppy, a sloppy-drool-friendly look-alike from a world deep in Vargr space. It performs tricks between moments of affection for the Vargr Ringmaster, the Noble, and all of the performers during curtain calls.

Descriptions of each animal are taken either from the T5 Bestiary (p. 588) or from the original text found in the Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society magazine, with permission of FFE. Some editing of the JTAS articles has occurred. T5 statistics and information on trainability are included at the end of each description. Trainability is based on the wild animal, not the domesticated breed. In most cases, domesticated examples of these animals will be at least one level less difficult to train. Thus, for example, all training of a Terran dog born and matured in the company of humans becomes an average task for the breed as a whole.

Animal Speed is expressed as "SpeedC" (the standard energy-conserving movement), "SpeedAF" (speed when attacking or fleeing), and "SpeedB" (the highest speed an animal can achieve in short bursts). SpeedC is also expressed as Speed2 in generating animal encounters. The number in parentheses following the beast name is the number of such animals found on board *Cirque*. The various performing animals' given names are found under the name of the original creator.

Value	SpeedC	kph	SpeedAF	kph	SpeedB	kph
1	Walk	5	Run	10	Sprint	20
2	Run	10	Sprint	20	Charge	30
3	Sprint	20	Charge	30	Fast	50
4	Charge	30	Fast	50	Vfast	100
5	Fast	50	Vfast	100	Xfast	300
6	Vfast	100	Xfast	300		

Afeahyalhtow (2)

(Aculeoptere venatod)

Original Writer: John Marshall

Perfect and Jamussen

Trainer and Handler: Diva Avian Trainer

A life-form native to Kusyu, homeworld of the Aslan, the afeahyalhtow (known to humans as the batsting, winger, or falconbat) was domesticated by Aslan hunters long before the race first achieved star flight. They are popular as pets, and are found almost anywhere Aslan are found. Afeahyalhtow are roughly as common in Aslan space as dogs, cats, and other pets are in the Imperium, and regarded by the Aslan in much the same way.

The afeahyalhtow is a carnivore/killer, distantly related to the Aslan in evolutionary terms (the relationship is roughly equivalent to that between humans and bats on earth). Like the Terrestrial bat or the Macropan screamer-in-the-darkness, the creature is a flyer, massing roughly 1 kg, and

with a wingspan of about 0.75 meters. The lower limbs have evolved as grasping claws to carry prey or perch on tree limbs or high rocks.

Afeahyalhtow have sharp eyesight, with cat-like eyes that can adjust to a wide range of lighting conditions. Their common practice is to soar at high altitudes, then swoop down on prey. The creatures' grasping claws include one sharp, specialized claw which can inject a paralyzing poison which does 10 points of damage within a few minutes of injection. The poison's effects wear off after about an hour (whereupon the damage is recovered). The venom is not usually harmful to any creature much larger than five kgs, but can be deadly to humans who develop an allergic reaction to it. The primary purpose of the poison is to slow the prey or render it unconscious, so the afeahyalhtow can feed (it prefers live meat). Teeth and claws only do two points of damage per round, but this is sufficient to allow the afeahyalhtow to make an excellent meal, feeding for 2D + 6 rounds before departing.

Domesticated afeahyalhtow are raised and trained much as falcons and garhaws in human space. Properly trained, they can be used to track and hunt prey; such trained hunters will administer poison to the prey, but will feed only when permitted to do so by their owner. They are easily cared for, eating almost any variety of small animals or, if necessary, raw meat of almost any sort.

Training an afeahyalhtow requires Animals:Trainer skill and six to twelve months before the animal will respond to simple commands (usually various whistle and tongue-clicking signals). A character who has any hunting skill at all and who has worked with afeahyalhtow (Aslan characters with hunting skill have this experience on a 6+, humans on 12+) will gain an extra level of hunting skill while using the animals on the hunt.

Despite their feeding habits, which most humans find distasteful, afeahyalhtow are relatively gentle, companionable pets. They are frequently likened to cats in their behavior — independent, somewhat aloof, but capable of a strong affection and attachment to individuals who understand their ways.

Afeahyalhtow do not respond well to being caged; most grow listless and lose any hunting spirit if confined for more than a few days (roll 10+ once per week to avoid such an outcome) and will eventually die in close confinement. Most owners let them fly free, first attaching small straps around their feet to prevent the stinger claw from functioning. On a



starship, they usually require an hour or two per day of flying time in the ship's cargo compartment or some other open space.

Afeahyalhtow can fly on any world with standard or dense atmospheres and in any thin atmosphere where the world size is 4 four or less.

Because of their size and build, they cannot be provided with any sort of protective gear which will allow them to fly, and so are rarely encountered on worlds with tainted or otherwise unbreathable atmospheres, except indoors, in conditioned quarters.

Other than on worlds heavily settled by Aslan colonists, Afeahyalhtow are not common in human space though some humans do keep them as pets. They command high prices commercially.

Niche:	C Carnivore	Subniche:	5 Pouncer
Quantity:	1 Sole	Size:	4 75 cm (wingspan)
Volume:	1 litre	Mass:	1 kg
Loco:	Flyer (Wings)	Strength:	Strong Size*4D
SpeedC:	Sprint	Speed AF:	Fast
SpeedB:	VFast (Diving)	Endur:	4 hours
Weapon:	Claws, Sting	A/F:	S/S+
Defer:	Formidable	Obey:	Formidable
LST:	Formidable	Edible:	Y (Unusual)

Garhawk (2)

(Stellafalconiformis u/ularis)

Original Writer: J. Andrew Keith

Fluffy the Bog Troll and Chookeyham

Trainer and Handler: Diva Avian Trainer

Also known as the Skyhuntress, or Kahkahyeek from its hunting call, the garhawk has become popular in some circles of Imperial nobility for hunting. Properly trained garhaws, with their keen eyesight and superb hunting instincts, can spot and kill prey over remarkably long distances.

Garhaws are large (over one meter wingspan) flying carnivores, originally from Nagaschk, a planet to spinward of the Imperial core. Natives of the world, a TL3 race, delighted in hunting; their use of garhaws in their sport sparked interest among human visitors. Once the trick of raising and training these vicious aveforms was mastered, a small but lucrative trade in garhaws gradually opened, introducing them through much of the Imperium, the Solomani Sphere, and even within the Zhodani Consulate. Humans, at least those enjoying the hunt, have found the sport of hunting with garhaws a fascinating renaissance of falconry and hawk-ing.

The Stellafalconiformes are prime examples of convergent evolution. Externally, they are quite similar to the Exoaccipitiformes of Kalga, the Falconiformes of Terra, and countless other aveform families throughout known space, where natural selection has acted to mold highly efficient flying hunters. Garhaws are not true birds; they bear live young in nest-litters of two or three. The young are fed meat in the nest by the two parents for three months. After their first flight, the young will remain in the nest for from six to nine months. Garhaws form mate-pairs which last for life; they are often sold in pairs, for this increases the lifespan (and the value) of the animal, but they rarely breed in captivity, and those that do produce inferior hunters. Their average lifespan is ten years, although one specimen lived for nineteen years after it was taken.

Garhaws should always be approached cautiously. Sudden noises or movements, unfamiliar voices or odors, brightly colored or shiny objects or articles of clothing have been known to provoke sudden and unrelenting attacks. Trained garhaws are used to hunt a wide variety of small animals, usually not exceeding half the garhawk's weight. However, they have been known to ferociously attack creatures far larger than themselves in defense of their young, or on command from an experienced handler.

Garhawk falconry is not a sport for the poor (which also explains its popularity in certain circles). Garhaws are expensive to buy — a trained one demands a price of close to Cr5,000 — and expensive to maintain. A full-grown garhawk, weighing as much as 6 kilos, needs 500 grams of fresh meat per day. A temperamental creature, a garhawk can be particularly vicious when it is not properly fed and cared for. Other expenses include heavy gloves, pads, and training paraphernalia for the handler, and hoods and collars for the garhawk. A full-time handler is required to feed and care for the creatures, and to constantly sharpen their training. Garhawk falconry remains a sport of the very rich.

Adventurers may encounter garhaws in a variety of circumstances. For example, a wealthy patron or enemy may keep them for sport. An encounter might find a nobleman unleashing his garhawk against unwanted intruders to his estate.

Skyhuntresses are occasionally found aboard ships as cargo, especially if the destination is a world where hunting is popular, or where there are many landed estates. Adventurers owning a starship may be hired to deliver a mated pair of garhaws to a noble, and woe betide them if the feeding instructions for their charges are not carried out precisely.

Garhaws inhabit such remote and hard-to-get-to places that in the wild they are rarely encountered by adventurers. If a party is actively searching for garhaws, roll 12 exactly each week spent searching the proper locations (generally high, not readily accessible mountaintops, cliff faces, and so on) for them to successfully locate a nest.

Characters with noble or hunter backgrounds are the only characters likely to have had past experience training garhaws. On a roll of 6 on one die, a hunter or noble will be familiar enough with these creatures to attempt to handle them. They may be able to turn a garhawk's attack on a roll of 7+ (The referee may wish to designate DMs for various skills which may be applicable.)

Training a garhawk requires much time, patience, and blood. One

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raised in captivity usually lacks the spirit of its wild cousins. A garhawk must be captured while still flightless in the nest in order for optimum training. Those captured too soon will not survive, and those captured too late will

be too hard to control although even the best trained of garhawks are difficult to control completely.

Training takes six to eight months, with a training session every day. On each encounter, roll 10+ to avoid attack; past experience gives a DM+3. Dexterity, strength, intelligence, and the Animals: Trainer] and JoT skills can all be used as DMs at the referee's discretion.

Niche:	C Carnivore	Subniche:	5 Pouncer
Quantity:	1 Sole	Size:	4 l m (wings)
Vol:	1 l	Mass:	1 kg
Loco:	Flyer (Wings)	Strength:	Strong Size*4D
SpeedC:	Charge	SpeedAF:	Fast
SpeedB:	VFast (swoop)	Endur:	3 hours
Weapon:	Claws	A/F:	S/S+
Defer:	Staggering Obey:	Staggering	
LST:	Staggering Edible:	Y (Slightly Off)	

Bloodvark (5)

(Megalorhinos osmichnilatis claudii)

Original Writer: William H. Keith, Jr.

Traak, Phileas, Eschnitt, Artemis, and Aiderbai

Trainer and Handler: Edwina Dystrom

Bloodvarks — also called walking noses and hoovers (the latter for reasons unknown) — are four-limbed mammal-like creatures native to Lentoli. They have been introduced as trade items to worlds throughout the Imperium; they are often purchased by the law enforcement agencies of planets of tech level 5 through 9.

These strong, hairy animals mass between 50 and 70 kg when full grown, stand .8 meter high at the shoulder and average 2.3 meters long, including the bushy tail. They are omnivores, preferring small, burrowing animals or hive insects, which they dig up with their fore claws, but can subsist on berries and sweet grasses. This adaptability has let them adjust to and thrive on a number of planets and a variety of climates.

Bloodvarks are best known for their uncanny sense of smell. Once put on the trail of a fugitive or animal prey (by letting them smell an article of clothing or recently-handled item, for instance), they will follow it relentlessly and without stopping for days at a time. They can follow trails a

week old in good weather, though they will lose a trail after about 4 hours of steady hard rain or snow. They have been known to follow fresh trails — less than 6 hours old — across streams or along the ground UNDER the branches used by an escaping prisoner, probably picking up traces of scent still hanging in the air. They do not tire easily; they are worked on leashes day and night by handlers working in relays. The animals used by local police



forces are trained for their tasks, usually by the agency which raises them, a process which takes 3 months.

Bloodvarks have extremely poor eyesight, and only fair hearing. Normally gentle, they attack if wounded, cornered or provoked, with powerful swipes of their long claws.

Their usefulness as trackers makes them valuable trade items. Trained bloodvarks can fetch as much as Cr800 on the world where they

are purchased; untrained animals bring about Cr100 each. Their size and single-mindedness makes them unattractive as pets, but because of their intelligence and fierce loyalty, human handlers frequently become quite attached to their charges.

Bloodvarks are oviparous and have two genders. The female digs a den in soft earth under a fallen tree or a large boulder, buries two or three 15 cm eggs under loosely packed soil, and lays over them until they hatch. The young dig themselves out and cling to the mother's abdominal hair, where they hang and nurse for about 5 months.

Niche:	O Omnivore	Subniche:	HG Hybrid
Quantity:	2 Pair	Size:	5 2.3m
Volume:	70 liters	Mass:	70 kg
Loco:	Walk (Legs)	Strength:	Strong Size*4D
SpeedC:	Walk	SpeedAF:	Sprint
SpeedB:	Charge	Endur:	6 hours
Weapon:	Peds (Clawed)	A/F:	9/6
Defer:	Difficult	Obey:	Difficult
LST:	Difficult	Edible:	Y (Tasty)

Miniphants (2)

(Microelphas var.)

Original Writer: Roger Moore

Rumpole and Casey

Trainer and Handler: Dashsha Riira

During the earliest days of expansion into space from Terra, a number of worlds were settled whose terrains challenged the best overland transportation systems. Dense jungle growth and swamplands foiled road building, and local vegetation sometimes proved nearly unkillable. Since the colonies had (initially at least) very low technologies, one solution to the problem was to use specially bred beasts of burden. These animals could be sent to the colonies in embryonic form, and soon became the low tech alternative to the truck and ATV on many worlds.

One of the animals developed for this program was geneered from the Terran Indian Elephant (*Elphas indicus*). These beasts were ideal for overland travel in forests and lesser swamps. Later colonies carried the animals to other colonies, and over the years, numerous varieties were developed. The most popular of these are several species collectively referred to as miniphants, so-called because of their smaller size and mass. Miniphants were bred for tractability and high intelligence. They stand an average of 2.05 meters at the shoulder; males weigh 1800 kgs, females weigh 1600 kgs. No tusks are present, but miniphants compensate for this lack when lifting loads by having more powerful trunks. Miniphants have an extremely good sense of smell by nature, but are possessed of superb hearing, giving them a DM +2 against being surprised. The visual sense is not exceptional, and geneering was only partially successful in eliminating a tendency towards near-sightedness. The grey hide of a miniphant is as tough as cloth armor but is very sensitive to touch. The trunk is even more sensitive and susceptible to injury, but makes a fairly effective manipulative limb.

There is a fair chance of running across miniphants on worlds with tech levels between 0 and 3, and they can be found on some higher tech level worlds in remote and backward regions, employed as cargo handlers, pack and hauling beasts, and mounts. In addition, many worlds keep them in zoological collections, where they are popular exhibits. The cost of upkeep is about Cr150 per day, including 50 kg of hay and vegetable supplements and 50 liters of water.

Miniphants, like many other elephant species, have some powerful abilities to aid their survival. Though they cannot tolerate cold weather, miniphants adapt well to higher temperatures to the limit of human tolerance. All swim exceptionally well. Their feet are padded in such a way as to permit them to move quite silently (DM +1 to surprise). Because of their foot structure, it is difficult for them to get stuck in the mud; the foot expands when it strikes the ground, and reduces its diameter when lifted.

Miniphants will rarely attack unless wounded or provoked. The usual tactics involve charging the victim and delivering a butt with the head, trampling with the feet, or seizing a tree branch or similar object in its trunk and flailing away. A blow from an elephant-wielded cudgel, which is larger than a human could use, will do substantial damage.

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Miniphants can be considered to have an intelligence range of 2-4. While they cannot speak, they can understand spoken commands readily, even when given in whispers. A large number of commands may be learned and will be retained for a long period of time, though few tasks of exceptional complexity will be known. Miniphants make slow

but patient learners. They have emotions as humans do, play games and practical jokes, and are amiable.

If used as a pack animal or mount, miniphants can carry up to 350 kgs comfortably or can pull up to 2000 kgs in a wagon or cart.

Niche:	H Herbivore	Subniche:	Grazer
Quantity:	2D Some	Size:	5 2.5m
Vol:	2000 l	Mass:	2000 kg
Loco:	Walk (Legs)	Strength:	VStrong Size*5D
SpeedC:	Walk	SpeedAF:	Sprent
SpeedB:	Charge	Endur:	4
Weapon:	Peds, Trunk	A/F:	8/8
Defer:	Difficult	Obey:	Difficult
LST:	Difficult	Edible:	Y (Tasty)

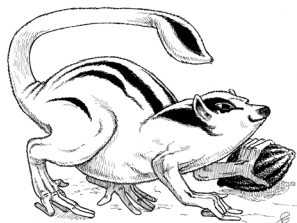
Seedspitter (3)

(Pseudotupaia gigans)

Original Writers: L. Crede Lombard
and Jerry Stoddard

Chromamoth, Blinky and Fuzzybutt
Trainers and Handlers: Shugaap Shugap,
Comic Juggler, Clown

The seedspitter is a small, moderately intelligent animal native to the forests and uplands of certain worlds throughout the Imperium. Externally, the seedspitter resembles the Terran shrew, but is larger, massing about three kgs (about the size of a small domestic cat). It has reddish-grey to reddish-brown fur, a domed head and an elongated nose.



At one time the seedspitter secreted an irritant poison similar to a bee's venom into a chamber located behind its upper lip. It would fill this chamber with venom, constrict it rapidly, and squirt the irritant out through an opening in its upper lip with sufficient force to propel it one or

two meters. The irritant could paralyze the small animals which were a part of the seedspitter's diet.

As time passed, the animal learned to pick up fruit seeds or small stones with its tongue, insert them into its poison cavity, and propel them at predators. In time, the seedspitter developed this skill to the point where it only secreted enough poison to lightly coat the seed and lubricate its passage out of the chamber.

Because of its affectionate nature and its appealing appearance, (the upturned corners of the mouth give the appearance of a perpetual smirk), the seedspitter is a common pet on starships, where it helps in pest control. Seedspitters are easily trained to do tricks such as hitting a target, or "juggling" seeds by repeatedly spitting them into the air, catching them, and spitting them again. Well-trained animals can keep four or five seeds in the air at once.

Niche:	O Omnivore	Subniche:	HG Hybrid
Quantity:	2D Some	Size:	3 20cm
Vol:	3 liters	Mass:	3 kg
Loco:	Walk (Legs)	Strength:	Weak Size*1D
SpeedC:	Walk	SpeedAF:	Run

SpeedB:	Sprint	End:	
Weapon:	Peds, Poison	A/F:	9/8
Defer:	Difficult	Obey:	Difficult
LST:	Difficult	Edible:	Y (Bad)

Crested Jabberwock (0)

(Jabberwockiscristatus saevitia)

Original Writer: John Marshal

Loki

Trainers and Handlers: Beast Tamer
and Assistant

Cirque des Sirkas bills itself as having "the galaxy's most ferocious land-based killer, the Crested Jabberwock, tamed and taught to perform for your amusement!"

Sometimes called the nightclaw, the fanged death, or simply jabberwock, the *genuine* Crested Jabberwock is a medium-sized carnivore native to Kasaan (Vega 0101 A-785757-E) in the Solomani Rim. Only a few members of the species have been transported off-world.

Fully grown jabberwocks mass about 400 Kgs. They are bilaterally symmetrical, homoeothermic quadrupeds, standing about 1.2 meters tall at the shoulder and measuring some 2.6 meters in length. Their anatomy is unusual in that the animal has four two-chambered hearts.

The jabberwock is noted for its magnificent, multi-colored crest, which is used in displays of territorial aggression and courtship. This gorgeous crest is highly prized by hunters and trophy collectors throughout the Solomani Rim, who have made the animal a highly prized and much-sought-after target. As the jabberwock is one of the most aggressive carnivores known in modern exobiology (they have been known to attack prey five times their size), the challenge of jabberwock hunting has long been considered the ultimate proof of courage and skill in some circles.

The creature unfortunately has not proved a match for the inevitable march of civilization. Over the centuries, the inhabitants of Kasaan have sought to extend the world's agricultural production into new areas; they have ruthlessly sought to eliminate the carnivore to protect fields and livestock. This, even more than the depredations of trophy hunters, has caused a massive decline in the numbers of jabberwocks in the wild. The species was recently placed upon the endangered species list maintained by the Pan-Galactic Friends of Life (FoL), which organization has set out to protect them from further decline. The FoL's efforts have been quite successful to date, with the establishment of wilderness preserves on Kasaan and the passage of strict laws against jabberwock hunting being among the most important triumphs achieved.

A solitary hunter, the jabberwock stakes out a territorial claim over an area several kilometers square, and tolerates others of its kind within that area only during a relatively brief rutting season each year. They are ferocious and kill their prey by using both their long slashing claws and sharp fangs. A jabberwock is rarely satisfied; even when freshly fed, they take great delight in stalking and killing prey.

Cirque des Sirkas does *not*, in fact, have any such animal in its bestiary. The insurance alone would bankrupt the tour.



Niche:	C Carnivore	Subniche:	Killer
Quantity:	1 Sole	Size:	5 Large 2.6 m, 400 kg
Vol:	400 liters	Mass:	400 kg
Loco:	Walk (Legs)	Strength:	Formidable Size x 6D
SpeedC:	Run	SpeedAF:	Sprint
SpeedB:	Charge	End:	8
Weapon:	Claws, Teeth	A/F:	12/12
Defer:	No	Obey:	No
LST:	No	Edible:	Y (Disg)

Vargr Crested Tracker/Retriever (1)

Vargr Name: Dzoeghuerrgh (No Latin Genus Name)

Original Artist: Tim Osborne

Original Writer: Gregory P. Lee
Loki

Trainers and Handlers: Vargr Ringmaster
and Clown

The dzoeghuerrgh, or Vargr crested retriever is originally from Soun (1005 Tuglikki). It is best known to the Vargr of that sector, and is rarely seen in Imperial space. Only a few have found their way there, primarily with Vargr merchants. The animal has long been domesticated and used in hunting, tracking, and for simple companion-ship.

Though not originally from Terra, the dzoeghuerrgh seems to thrive on companionship with mammals of Terran biological extraction, most especially humans and Vargr. Vargr scientists who have studied the animal have concluded that pheromones produced by Terran mammals have a mood-altering effect on the dzoeghuerrgh. In response, it has an almost sycophantic need to please intelligent mammals of Terran DNA-origin. The dzoeghuerrgh is highly affectionate and submissive, seeing itself as a lap-dog despite its size. It handles separation from its primary badly, yowling and crying if left in a cage or behind a locked door. Fortunately, the dzoeghuerrgh is easily house-trained.

The dzoeghuerrgh has highly developed olfactory and visual senses. It is generally useful in tracking, flushing, and retrieving game. It views this as wonderful play, at least so long as it is properly fed.

The dzoeghuerrgh is intelligent and can be trained with relative ease. It can perform reasonably complex tricks, and seems to derive pleasure from doing so, especially if its master is pleased.

In short, the dzoeghuerrgh is a perfect pet for a Vargr. Even the least charismatic Vargr who has a dzoeghuerrgh has a loyal follower.

As an interesting sidelight, the dzoeghuerrgh is similar in shape, color and proportion to the deadly Crested Jabberwock of the planet Kassar in the Solomoni Rim. Though its head is far less frightening, and it is about twenty-five percent smaller, many sophonts viewing photos or videos of the crested retriever identify it as the more deadly Crested Jabberwock. Others have been known to run in terror as a dzoeghuerrgh bounded toward them to bestow an affectionate greeting. Indeed, at least one charlatan has attempted to foist a dzoeghuerrgh off on the Duke of Lunion Subsector as a "tame" Crested Jabberwock.

Several dzoeghuerrgh pups were recovered from wreckage during the Fifth Frontier War. A breeding program has been commenced on Rhyalanor's Old Station. Both Andii and the Vargr Ringmaster saw the potential for using this animal in performances. It is brought on at the end of the Fan Lizard performance, as the Clown attempts to convince the Vargr Ringmaster that he, too, can tame a frightening beast.



Niche:	C Carnivore	Subniche:	Pouncer
Quantity:	1 Sole	Size:	5 Large 1.5 m
Vol:	300 liters	Mass:	300 kg
Loco:	Walk (Legs)	Strength:	Typical Size x 3D
SpeedC:	Walk	SpeedAF:	Run
SpeedB:	Sprint	End:	6
Weapon:	Claws, Teeth	A/F:	6/4
Defer:	No	Obeys:	No
LST:	No	Edible:	Y (Unusual)

Beaked Monkey (4)

(Psittarhynchus fructophagii)

Original Writer: Loren Wiseman

Tyche, Pella, Fruzzel and Snowball

Trainers and Handlers: Shugaap Shugap,
Bertii (Snowball)

Beakers, as Beaked Monkeys are sometimes called, are common on many worlds, both in the wild and in captivity. In addition, they are found on many starships as pets. Their planet of origin is not known, but the animals can be documented as far back as far as 300 years pre-Imperial, with a range almost as widespread as at the present.

Beakers typically weigh from 2 to 3 kilograms, and measure 60 to 75 cm in length, half of which is generally taken up by the tail. Tails are sometimes bobbed on animals kept aboard spacecraft. Beakers are covered by a short fur, most commonly brown or gray. Black is rare, and white extremely so (roll 2D for 2-7 = brown, 8-10 = grey, 11 = black and 12 = white).

The skeleton and musculature follow typical Terran vertebrate norms. Respiration is accomplished by the usual paired lung arrangement, the circulatory system is closed and the heart four-chambered, making the animal very similar to certain small Terran mammals such as the squirrel monkey.

The beaker's most notable feature, the beak, is formed of two bony projections from the palate and mandible, covered by a horny substance resembling keratin. The lower third of the esophagus is extremely heavily muscled and lined with a number of tooth-like grinding structures, which break swallowed food into fragments small enough to be digested readily. In the wild, the beaker is arboreal and is thought to have originally subsisted on a diet of hard-shelled nuts and seeds, although specimens have been observed eating insects and other small animals. In captivity, beakers thrive on almost any available type of human food.

The animals are quite popular as pets on starships because of their gregarious affection to almost all humans, their intelligence and their scrupulous cleanliness. Some individuals are rumored to act as a booster for certain psionic activities, but this last ability has not been proven to the satisfaction of most authorities.

Referee's Information: Certain animals act as boosters for psionic talents under restricted conditions. First and foremost, The animal must have the potential. Roll 2D for 10+ to determine if a particular beaker has psionic booster potential, DMs +1 if black, +2 if white.

A player possessing psionic ability at any level greater than 0 may be able to detect a beaker with psionic enhancement potential (DIF (3D) < (Psi + Mentation). No player can determine the amount a particular beaker will be able to boost psi potential in advance.

Finally, for the boost to be possible and be used successfully:

- The beaker must have lived in close proximity with the human desiring the boost for at least three months.
- The beaker and the human must be within one meter of each other during the time the boost is taking place. If this distance is exceeded, The beaker must save against its endurance to avoid death for each combat round the separation continues: AVG (2D) < (End).
- The human desiring the boost must have a natural, unenhanced psi rating of 5 or higher.

If all of these conditions are met, the beaker will raise the human's psi rating temporarily by from one to six points (roll one die). Each time the player's psi strength is boosted, the beaker must roll to save against dying from the effort (AVG (2D) < (End). If a beaker dies during psi booster contact with a human, that human permanently loses 2 from his psionic strength rating.



Cirque

Niche:	O	Subniche:	Hunter/Gatherer Hybrid
Quantity:	Triple	Size:	4 75cm
Volume:	3.5 litre	Mass:	4 kg
Loco:	Legs	Strength:	Typical Size*2D
SpeedC:	Walk	Speed AF:	Run
SpeedB:	Sprint	Endur:	3 hours
Weapon:	Teeth, Tail	A/F:	
Defer:	Difficult	Obey:	Difficult
LST:	Difficult	Edible:	Y (Exquisite)

Kians (4)

(Pseudostruthio gigas)

Original Writers: Liz Danforth and
Loren K. Wiseman

Carnivog, Bernhardt's Rhino, Cecelia and Rema
Handler: Wayne Johnson

Kians are herbivore grazers of large size, originating on Prilissa in the Trin's Veil subsector. Due to their hardy nature, they were exported to a number of worlds as beasts of burden and are a common sight in the coreward reaches both in the wild and in captivity. They are plains dwellers, travelling in herds of 10 to 60 individuals, feeding upon grasses, leaves, or similar plant matter.



Externally, the kian is a large bipedal creature with a long neck, short tail, and no other limbs (the remains of an atrophied pair of fore-limbs can be found in some breeds). Kians are thickly furred, their coats showing distinctive color patterns of brown, gold, lemon yellow, and black. A kian's legs are powerfully muscled for fast movement over long distances. The sturdiness of their overall frames has made them a frequent choice for use as mounts and pack animals on the planets where they occur. Klan's hearing and

eyesight are extremely good, reflecting their predator-laden environment of origin.

Internally, the kian is unremarkable. It has a closed circulatory system and an overall high metabolism which requires that it be fed 30 to 50 kilograms of vegetable matter daily. Its digestive system consists of two stomachs, which allows the animal to break down the toughest plant matter into digestible form. The kian has a thick layer of fat which insulates in cooler climates and provides a degree of protection from the venomous bites or stings of some small animals. The skeleton is strong and heavy, and is structurally not unlike that of the moa and other prehistoric terrestrial flightless birds.

When attacked or frightened, kians will usually flee, but if cornered are capable of delivering deadly kicks with either of their hoofed feet. The large claws projecting from the backs of the feet are only present in the male, and seem to be used solely for ritual combat between males prior to mating.

Kians can carry up to 250 kilograms comfortably, and will refuse to move if overloaded. Kians cannot tolerate thin atmospheres and require a special filter/ muzzle (Cr50) for tainted atmospheres.

Niche:	H Herbivore	Subniche:	Grazer
Quantity:	2D Some	Size:	4m
Vol.	800	Mass:	790 kg
Loco:	Walk (Legs)	Strength:	VStrong Size*5D
SpeedC:	Sprint	SpeedAF:	Charge
SpeedB:	Fast	Endur:	5
Weapon:	Peds	A/F:	9/4
Defer:	Difficult	Obey:	Difficult
LST:	Difficult	Edible:	Y (Tasty)

Kagerushum (Fan Lizard) (3)

(No Latin Genus Name)

Original Artist: Tim Osborne

Writer: Gregory P. Lee

Millicent, Zoxy, Grok'thar Dorounaunt

Trainer and Handler: Baron Asushum Medukaide

The Vilani kagerushum is a small but decorative creature which is found in the more tropical regions of Vland. They are more intelligent than Terran animals of similar niches (e.g., the flamingo), but less easily tamed. They are deemed ornamental but not necessarily companionable. The kagerushum are a flocking species but are far cleaner and easier to keep as indoor pets than Terran birds. Keeping one as a pet is a mark of arrogance in some eyes. The animal is difficult to fully tame, and in that way is similar to the big cats of Terra.

The "fans" are bone covered with a thin skin with complex and consciously altered biochemical color-production qualities. They serve to communicate moods and other messages to both other kagerushum and potential threats and predators. When an individual is safe and pleased, the fans are soothing blues and greens, and vibrate so as to make pleasant sounds. When the kagerushum is mating, it uses yellow and green symbols. When threatened, the fans become very animated and seem to "strobe" through various patterns and color combinations, amounting to a final warning and threat by the kagerushum. If the animal attacks, its flock will follow, and the target of the attack will be in significant danger of being eaten. Several Vilani nobles of note have committed "suicide by kagerushum" when greatly shamed by misdeeds, pushing themselves into enclosures with hungry, threatening flocks.



The social and flocking nature of the kagerushum makes it an interesting animal to train. When a leader is trained and willing to comply, its followers will copy its actions and colorings. Some patient trainers have been able to teach animals to mirror words and patterns in the coloring; if a leader learns the pattern, its followers will copy from the leader.

Niche:	C Carnivore	Subniche:	Chasers/Sirens
Quantity:	Several	Size:	5 135cm
Volume:	80 litre	Mass:	70 kg
Loco:	Legs	Strength:	Strong Size*3D
SpeedC:	Sprint	Speed AF:	Charge
SpeedB:	Fast	Endur:	2 hours
Weapon:	Teeth	A/F:	S/S+
Defer:	Staggering Obey:	Formidable	
LST:	Formidable	Edible:	Y (Unusual)

Duranthe (1)

(No Latin Genus Name)

Original Artist: Tim Osborne

Writer: Gregory P. Lee

James

Trainer and Handler: Wayne Oater

A beast of burden native to Lagaashin (Core 2407), the duranthe is a valuable animal. It is four-legged, has a wide back, and a somewhat tall neck suited for grazing from trees as well as the ground. Like most of the warm-blooded creatures from that world, the duranthe is self-inseminating. However, it maintains a veritable "recombination laboratory" in a special organ. This, in essence, provides the same "re-scramble and experiment with mixtures" that is provided by more common systems of reproduction. A duranthe will commence a gestation of approximately

thirteen standard months when conditions are right (sufficient food and water must be available, as well as certain biochemical signals).

Duranthes are long-lived and are apparently able to recycle and refurbish their own telomeres several times. Some duranthes have had documented lifespans exceeding 150 standard years. As mounts, they are sometimes passed from parent to child.

The beasts are compatible with humans as a whole. However, they can evidence clear preferences, and will not let some humans approach. In those cases, they have been known to bite, snort, spit, and even rear up and attack, all without apparent provocation. They are at the least querulous and unpleasant to those humans they dislike.

Despite their unusual reproduction, they are not at all solitary creatures, preferring to herd with other duranthes or other creatures. They are surprisingly social with both Terran horses and kians when mixed, so long as they are exposed to the species while fairly young.

Duranthe communicate in what is sometimes described as a mixture of nasal and raspy tones, but which have a musicality nonetheless. Their four eyes provide substantial peripheral vision; their ears are very sensitive. Their trunk-like dual nasal manipulators are used in eating, sensing by smell, communication with other duranthes, and simple grasping. Many humans find contact with these tentacle-like structures unusually distasteful; scientists suspect that this is in part a pheromone-mediated reaction.



Nicheche: H Herbivore	Subniche: Grazer
Quantity: 2D Some	Size: 2 m
Vol: 750	Mass: 770 kg
Loco: Walk (Legs)	Strength: VStrong Size*5D
SpeedC: Sprint	SpeedAF: Charge
SpeedB: Fast	Endur: 5
Weapon: Peds	A/F: 9/5
Defer: Difficult	Obey: Difficult
LST: Difficult	Edible: Y (Tasty)

Tree Rat (9) (Abdor var)

Original Writer: Roger Moore

Sleepy, Dopey, Grumpy, Sneezey, Doc, Happy, Bashful, Snow White, Rose Red

Trainer and Handler: Shugaap Shugap

The Focaline tree rat is a small rodent-like creature native to Focaline (in the Aramis subsector). It weighs 3-4 kilograms, and measures 70-80 cm in length. Two thirds of its length is tail. Tree rats have a red-brown fur covering the entire body except for the soles of their paws. Some specimens are shaded more to a deep chocolate brown or maroon. Tree rats seem able to adapt very quickly to temperature changes, and exposure to cold weather for more than a week results in their growing a thicker and rougher coat. Though they physically resemble terrestrial rodent types, tree rats have longer legs, feet adapted to grasping, and a prehensile tail that all help them in their arboreal habitats. This tail allows tree rats to easily pick up small objects and hang from tree limbs using their tail alone (most tree rats sleep in this fashion). In the wild, tree rats use their tails to carry food to treetop nests, to retrieve food dropped into areas that cannot otherwise be reached with paws, and in combat, either to free their other limbs for the fight or to grab a small opponent and dislodge it from its perch on a limb. They are omnivores, and have very sharp teeth that they use to pierce thick fruit skins (or unwary fingers!) They are quite intelligent

(about the same level as most small Terran monkeys) and have an elaborate social structure in natural environments.

Tree rats are looked upon with a mixture of dislike and appreciation. They are prone to raiding fruit-bearing plants (their chief food) and are thus not popular with orchard owners and other growers, but they also feed upon and control local pests (such as the ubiquitous Norway rat) that destroy or spoil other more financially important crops on the planet. Tree rats have proven quite popular pets in many places (especially in places where small animals present a pest problem), as well as on starships as mascots or personal pets. This practice has led to the spread of tree rats throughout most of the spinward reaches of the Imperium.

Tree rats have an extremely well developed olfactory system, and much of their intra-species communication is based on the detection of emotional states through different smells. When exposed to human company for longer than a year, tree rats can learn to distinguish emotions such as fear or anger in humans by smell. They can easily be trained for certain tasks, such as sniffing out small component micro-fires or bearing burn-outs. Some planetary police forces have trained tree rats to track creatures or persons over limited areas, and sniff out hidden illegal cargoes. This is not a simple undertaking, however, as such training takes a year or more, and requires constant reinforcement.

As pets, tree rats are quite successful. Their mammalian physiology allows them to eat most of the foods that humans do. They shed little, except when getting rid of a cold weather coat, and are naturally clean animals, easily housebroken.

Tree rats have an average lifespan of fifteen years, mate for life, and bear young once a year after age three, in litters of about four "ratlings". Their major drawback as pets is their insatiable curiosity, which has led to their accidentally being locked in airlocks or food bins. They also like to collect bits of shiny or brightly colored material (like coins, keys, and credit cards), depositing them in a nest in their owner's cabin, a trait which has earned them the nickname "cinnamon thief". This can develop into a game the tree rat initiates by picking up a valuable item in its tail and then racing around the ship, with the item's owners in hot pursuit.



Niche: O	Subniche: Hunter/Gatherer Hybrid
Quantity: Triple	Size: 4 75cm
Volume: 3.5 litre	Mass: 4 kg
Loco: Legs	Strength: Typical Size*2D
SpeedC: Walk	Speed AF: Run
SpeedB: Sprint	Endur: 3 hours
Weapon: Teeth, Tail	A/F: Formidable
Defer: Staggering Obey:	Edible: Y (Tasty)
LST: Formidable	

Vreepers (0)

(No Latin Genus Name)

Original Artist: Tim Osborne

Original Writer: Gregory P. Lee

Named for the sound they make when warning or attacking, Vreepers are about the size of the Norway rat, and fill the same ecological niches and functions. Like the rat, they migrated on ships, and thus are well represented in the Spinward Marches. However, they lack the cute and cuddly nature of their Terran counterparts — which is to say, they are truly repugnant.

Vreepers are six-legged, exothermic (warm-blooded), and furred. Their legs end in clawed four-digit manipulators, each of which can be used as either a foot or a hand. Their mouths are hinged to open wide, then clamp down and grip. Though omnivorous, they are capable hunters and defenders.

Cirque

The vreepers' original world circled a small star with a companion star in the next orbit. While its environment was generally reasonably wet, severe drought struck at varying intervals as the companion star drew close. Thus, when water is lacking, vreepers hibernate, slowing down all bodily functions and excretions. A vreeper can survive up to four weeks in this state.

Vreepers are mammalian, with two genders. Females give birth to broods of six to eight offspring, with a gestational period of about 33 standard days. A pregnant vreeper may hibernate in dry spells; the unborn broodlings within her suspend their development until both food and water become available.

Vreepers form nests of 4D individuals. Beyond this number, population pressure causes individuals leave and form new nests. Interrelated nests form colonies. Where food is plentiful, colonies have been known to include up to 50D6 nests (200D6 individuals) within a half-kilometer radius. With sufficient food and water supplies, vreepers can live even more densely.

Fast and clever, vreepers have been known to get into cargo containers despite reasonable efforts at pest control. Food-containing cargo carriers are a primary mode of vreeper migration from world to world. Technological means are not always succeeded in locating hibernating vreepers in containers. Common shipboard animals such as tree rats consider the torpid vreeper a treat, but do not always locate them. The somewhat rare Terran cat has been less successful in rooting out the pests; although they can locate and kill torpid vreepers readily enough, they find the taste of the flesh unpleasant.

Vreepers which become free in ships (e.g., from improperly sealed cargo containers or low-technology containers constructed of edible natural fibers) will nest and begin breeding. Already-pregnant females may give birth even before the vessel reaches its destination. Vessels which take insufficient precautions have become mobile breeding grounds. Any vessel believed to be infested is subject to orbital quarantine. All cargo is off-loaded to a sealed bay in the up-port's cargo dock, unpackaged, inspected and sifted to eliminate the vreeper nests before it is re-packaged and re-sealed.

The infested ship itself is often fully decompressed and left without air for a week. All supplies are discarded into space, usually on a terminal orbit. The resulting brief show of streaks in the night sky is sometimes called a "vreeping meteor shower" by space-aware groundlings. Such quarantine procedures are more a commercially disruptive inconvenience than an expense.

Non-hibernating vreepers are highly territorial and will display threatening behavior to scare off any perceived competitors, including humans. Where the threat is ineffective, and fewer than five vreepers are nearby, they may attack or flee. However, when more than five are within a few meters, they become aggressive, and are much more likely to attack.

Attacking vreepers emit both the verbal signal and a strong pheromone signal that attracts other vreepers up to two range bands away. These new vreepers join in emitting the pheromone as they swarm. This can cascade, significantly extending the range of the "call to arms." Wounded vreepers release a similar but more potent pheromone, raising the "threat level" and inciting surviving vreepers to a higher level. This second pheromone may even attract vreepers from nearby related colonies.

In either case, healthy vreepers from the same multi-generation colony swarm toward the fray. Hundreds or even thousands of vreepers may attack an individual or group, biting and sometimes clawing. The attack ends only if the vreepers are satisfied that their territory is secured by the apparent death of the enemy, or the vreepers are dispersed.

Vreepers can be dispersed using stench projectors. They are also susceptible to tear gas and other gases which incapacitate humans, but they release the more potent pheromone in response. The pheromone is

lighter and travels farther than the tear gas. Hogajue's Patented Vreeper Grenades, a recent entry into the field of vreeper-control products, combines a tranquilizing gas with an artificial vreeper "food-here" pheromone signal in a colorless, odorless gas. The product is effective on about seventy-five percent of vreeper nests, with an effective radius of 1.5 meters in an open space.

Gunfire and other wounding attacks tend only to exacerbate the situation, as injured vreepers release the second pheromone. As more vreepers swarm, escape can become difficult even for those in battle dress.

A single vreeper bite causes only 0.1 points of damage. It is possible to survive a swarming attack, although the sheer number of wounds generally leave the victim weakened, miserable and at risk of infection. The referee may choose to give vreepers amalgamated attacks in groups of ten or more when swarming, easing calculations and giving the full effect of a coordinated attack. In large enough numbers, vreepers may cause gruesome injuries, including amputation and mutilation.

Niche:	Omnivore	Subniche:	Hunter-Gatherer
Quantity:	1 Sole Seen	Size:	3 10 - 20 cm
Volume:	0.5 liter	Mass:	0.5 kg
Loco:	Walk	Strength:	0 Weak
SpeedC:	2	Speed AF:	3
SpeedB:	4	Endur:	1 hour
Weapon:	Teeth, Claws	A/F:	8/8
Defer:	No	Obey:	No
LST:	No	Edible:	N (Offensive)



Vreepers—Single Nest and Colony

In general, only one vreeper is noted at first; the others are within alert range.

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV
4	S	4D	Om-Hun	3	0.2	Wlk	2	0	1	Teeth	A8	F8	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	1	1
4	S	200D	Om-Hun	3	0.2	Wlk	2	0	1	Teeth	A8	F8	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	1	1

Program Notes: The Tent and Other Cargo

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

I love poking through cargo containers. They're filled with all sorts of interesting stuff. Amazing what gets put in those crates. Apart from vreepers, I always want to take a sample of what I find. It's not always mine, and sometimes it's not even legal.

Legal's over-rated.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

Cargo Pod

A cargo pod has been specially built to make use of 60 tons of jump and maneuver capacity not otherwise used in *Cirque's* configuration. Though rated at 1200 tons, *Cirque* is actually only 1140 tons.

The cargo pod has two decks and uses a standard docking cleat designed to mate with the docking cleats on *Cirque*. The internal cargo capacity is 54 tons. The hatches and fittings are designed to accommodate standard three-ton pods. This is a difference from the cargo spaces in *Cirque* and her auxiliaries, which are designed around smaller one-ton containers of the sort sometimes used by the military. One-ton containers may be substituted in the cargo pod, but not all freight space will be accessible from the corridor during flight. As most standard cargo is carried sealed, this should not present a significant problem.

The tent and primary circus equipment is carried in Big Top 1's cargo space. Other equipment is carried within *Cirque's* original forward and aft cargo bays. The external cargo pod is reserved as much as possible for Sharurshid cargo.

The Circus Tent

When the planetary environment permits, *Cirque des Sirkas* performs in a one-ring tent familiar to schoolchildren of many societies thanks to old videos and archival images. However, TL 15 materials are far superior to the romantic but vulnerable canvas used in ancient times.

The tent uses technology based on inflatable survival domes first developed as easily constructed and stored pressurized shelters for scouts and colonists. For all their convenience and light construction, however, these facilities are designed to provide adequate shelter in most atmospheres once they are fully erected and pressurized. The materials are not, however, proof against corrosive or insidious atmospheres. In that sense, the tent is really nothing more than an oddly-shaped pressure dome capable of functioning in various atmospheres and environments.

In addition, nano-fiber and nano-facturing technologies render the fabric more compact, more versatile, and far stronger than any low-tech canvas or plastic. The tent cannot be easily ripped or damaged, and is completely fireproof. It is also layered with reflec and other TL-15 materials to reduce threats from outside attack. Andii has no desire to have his/her guests become terrorist targets.

The tent fabric also has built-in mnemonic and display functions thanks to nanotechnology, allowing previews of future shows, interviews

with the headliners to be displayed directly on the tent during the run-up to the performance, and even advertisements for local products. In essence, the entire tent — interior and exterior — is a marquee.

The internal fittings include light, collapsible seating and risers for spectators. With the seating fully assembled, 1700 guests can attend a single performance. Heating and cooling systems are included and can be attached and operated as necessary. There is also an entry area that includes basic space for refreshments stands and a ticket booth.

The performance area is a circle 15 meters in diameter. Gravitic generators under the stage allow variance for performances, usually to provide the performers with the gravity to which they are most accustomed. Thus, aerialists (trapeze artists and similar performers) need not re-tune their reflexes for every planet's gravity. They may also work without a net, as automatic sensors alter the gravitic field to catch a falling performer. If Dolphins join the tour, they will perform a graceful, weightless ballet in their specialized skin-wetting suits. The gravitics may also be used for dramatic entrances and exits, and to play tricks on clowns, jugglers, and others for comedic effect.

Poles, props, food service stations, set-pieces and portable rest rooms are also carried in cargo. These portable rest rooms are by no means sufficient for a full audience, but provide basic facilities. Spare food and care material for the various animals are also carried in this cargo space. All told, *Cirque* devotes six pods (18 tons) to essential performance equipment and material in standard cargo carriers.

The tent is semi-robotic. Erecting the tent requires the supervision and efforts of several people and several robots, but its own robotic brain coordinates the process. The robots are fairly common models used in construction and are programmed to unload the tent, set up the main telescoping poles, and handle the wrapping of the tent fabric. This all works fine unless there is a malfunction, at which point erecting the tent becomes a job for all hands.

The tent's dimensions when erected are:

- Height: 15 meters on the inside to the cupola, 21 meters to the top of the tent.
- Diameter: 45 meters.
- Sidewall: made of 12 sections, totaling 141.4 meters in circumference and measuring 6 meters high
- Cupola frame: 15 meters across.
- Masts: 15 meters tall.
- Side poles: 98 side poles measuring 5 meters high support the periphery of the tent.
- Stakes: Masts and tent are tied to a total of 194 stakes.

True aficionados of old Solomani circuses will note that these measurements approximate a relatively standard "one-ring circus," which generally had a 50-foot (old English measuring system) ring.

The entry area is a separate appendage, as is the entry/exit staging, but they are also capable of being pressurized and sealed for certain conditions. Sanitary facilities are located outside the tent, but in an enclosed

Cirque

area, for the convenience of patrons.

Sharurshid's Cargo

Approximately 26 tons of cargo volume is allocated to Sharurshid cargo. As a major sponsor of the tour, Sharurshid is taking advantage of available cargo space to move its most valuable shipments. Few other merchant vessels carry the substantial firepower of *Cirque* and her auxiliaries, much less trained war veterans in command and major crew roles, which gives Sharurshid's shipments an extra layer of security and protection.

Sharurshid's cargo consignment varies from system to system, but includes rare food and drink, various antiques, and similar valuables. The containers are all securely locked; only Sharurshid personnel and *Cirque*'s senior crew can access these containers for anything other than inspection purposes. The manifest is available, but not all items are clearly identified. Various pods are set for drop-off at various stops along the way. These will be returned with some cargo removed and replaced, or entirely replaced.

A three-ton module is listed as "private shipping," and set to go to Regina "unless otherwise requisitioned by appropriate Sharurshid authorities." Its contents are known only to Andii, Bertii, and U'ailie. This module contains six coded pods for "life insurance" clones. The individuals' identities are coded. Heavily encrypted wafer collections are also locked into the half-ton cases — the memory and personalities to be loaded into the clones.

If the players successfully hack into Sharurshid databases at various ports [Formidable, (4D) < (Programming + Edu, 8 hours); failure carries risk of being traced, spectacular failure carries automatic discovery and tracing of the logical and physical location of the console or computer from which the hack was attempted, with immediate silent dispatch of police and private security to that location], one clone will ultimately be determined to be that of Adm. Aramais P. Lee (Ret.), who again works for Sharurshid as a trade representative. Lee is understood to be alive at this time and working with the new Border Worlds Confederation to establish client-state trade ties. According to the data, Sharurshid is merely positioning the clone to be near their trade representative. Other clones are of high-ranking Sharurshid officers who have recently moved to Regina.

The clones may all be targets of clone-napping. Any of the clones, properly restored to function, might be used in attempts at fraud. The clones would believe themselves the revived original personalities, and with an additional layer of instructions beneficial to the clone-nappers, could be used in attempts to access Sharurshid funds, databases, warehouses, and other material, or as fronts in committing fraud or pulling off confidence games. Clone-napping fraud is high-risk, but also high-profit. Indeed, that is why Life Insurance policies almost always call for force-growing the relict only *after* the death of the insuree. Imperial law likely prohibits pre-growing replacement clones absent advance waivers. This writer's speculations are presented in *Episode 15: Clonenapped*, but not as Canon.

Pirates and starport-based criminals would be interested in obtaining any portion of Sharurshid's cargo. The Terran and other exotic wines are high-value cargo, easily sold on the black and grey markets.

Andii's Personal Cargo

Ten one-volume-ton cargo carriers are found in *Cirque*'s bow cargo bay. Only Andii, Bertii, U'ailie, and the Security Chief have the codes needed to access them. One container is filled with Andii's personal trade goods for speculation. Six containers are available for small lots (one cubic meter or less) of personal goods of any crew member or performer for transport or speculation — a perk Andii considers important.

One container carries "Obstinate," a Battle of Rhylanor memorial sculpture destined for Duke

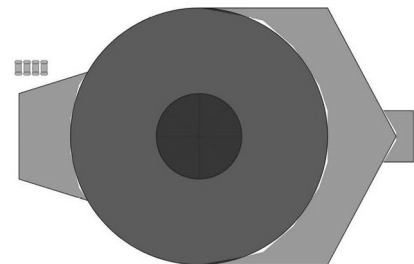
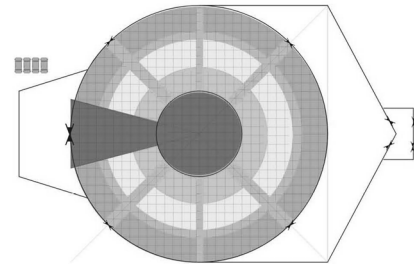
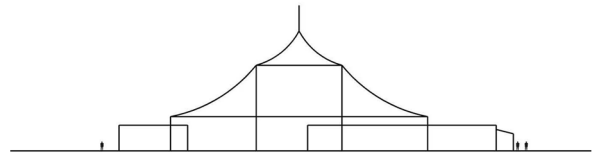
Norris' court. The master sculptor who created the piece has indicated that the name is intentionally obscure and open to individual interpretation. The referee may choose to have the players converse briefly with the exceptionally tall sculptor as the container is loaded under her careful supervision. Most people viewing the sculpture sense that the artist is contrasting the bravery of the Marches' (and especially Rhylanor's) defense with a vague sense of misguided desperation.

Two more containers are sealed, with no information available to anyone but Andii and Bertii. Nothing whatsoever is stored on *Cirque*'s computers concerning their content. The referee should note that the standard for Life Insurance Clones is to force-grow them after a confirmed death.

One of those two remaining standard containers is a "Ship's Locker Treasure Trove." Sharurshid gave Andii an off-the-books budget with which to purchase weapons, armor, survival equipment, and other items that might be useful in an emergency. The arsenal includes examples of many types of arcane weapons, as well as standard Imperial issue weapons. The Aslan Tumblers' command armor and heavier weapons are also contained in this cargo, though Andii does not advise the Tumblers of this until and unless they are needed.

In an emergency, Andii will supply players with appropriate equipment from the trove. The referee should in essence consider this a "magic box" to provide useful (but not scenario-changing) equipment.

The last container's contents are far more somber: crematory urns. These hold various unidentified remains of military and civilians who perished in the Battle of Rhylanor. Andii has insisted on inclusiveness, regardless of the loyalties or side taken in the late war; they are all victims of what Andii now sees as a senseless conflict. All of the three human variant races (Solomani, Vilani, and Zhodani) are represented, as are other races including both Aslan and Vargr. All are to be interred with honor in a vault already under construction on Regina; the vault will become the base for Obstinate.



The Tent. Upper: Front-to-rear cross-section. Middle: seating zones and performance area. Peripheral seating is bleacher-style; mid-range seats are tight; and ringside are more spacious. Light grey areas are primary aisles. Dark grey is performance and entry space, including the staging and scaffolding for musicians. The front entry (right) includes concessions and milling-about space. The backstage (left) allows entrances to be smooth and coordinated. The two iris-valve entries from the tent directly outside are used only in emergencies; they are watched for urchins trying to let friends enter for free.

Program Notes: Schedule and Routine Operations

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Running a ship sounds easy. Sure, I'm going to go be a Free Trader. I'm going to get me a Scout. Oh, sure, I'm going to be a great astrogorator and get fed bon-bons in bed just for making sure the passengers get to where they want to get. Because I'm a *Math-ee-matty*-call Genius.

Right.

First of all, most of you aren't. Mathematical geniuses, I mean. Most of you can't count to twenty without your shoes off. So forget that cushy job. Second, it's not cushy — a good astrogorator worries every minute about getting that ship properly into jump, and coming out where the ship belongs. Want to see a set of chewed-to-bleeding fingernails? Look up your astrogorator on the last day of jump.

And the jumping isn't even the *hard* part about running a ship. It's the organizing. Get your ship loaded up. Get it unloaded. Get food, get water, get all sorts of things you need. Get your bills paid so the Port Administrator can't chain you to the up-port with legal paper.

And then, if you're route involves more than just hauling cargo — oh, geeze. Run a mercenary cruiser, that's easy. Did you remember to buy ammo? What, you bought the wrong caliber bullets? Not enough armor? What, you forgot the tear gas? *How* could you forget the tear gas?

A luxury liner. Some kid refuses to do his business in the toilet, and you didn't bring the chlorine for the pool. Not to mention sterilizing all the galleys, staterooms, freshers and your own fingertips because someone brought an old-fashioned norovirus on board. Vreeper in the flour bins. And not enough parsley to garnish the plates, a *real* disaster.

A safari ship...oh, something that easy, and you can forget what, the piles and piles of data storage for the cameras, the steaks, the K'kree repellent. That K'kree repellent might just keep you alive if you're anywhere near the Two Thousand Worlds.

The messes you can get into running a starfaring *anything*...

Forget it. Stay on the rock you were birthed at. Go work as an accountant. Chances are you'll eat better. Or at least every day.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1103.

General Data (Players)

Operating an interstellar travelling show of any kind would be logistically formidable in a cluster of systems, or even within a single subsector. Operating the same show under Captain Andii's grand vision of crossing a sector, stopping to perform at twenty systems, and arriving at the last stop within a year requires attention to routine.

In theory, Andii can assume that *Cirque* has 18.25 days total for each "leg" (jump-in to jump-out) of the tour. However, her goal is to be on Regina by 001-1112. Thus, each leg is planned to run a 16-day maximum. Seven days are allocated to jump, and nine in-system. This results in a tour of 320 days, leaving a 45-day margin for problems and delays.

Cirque des Sirkas needs as many of the 16 days as possible on the ground. There are no passengers to regale during the jumps. Thus, with

two of the nine days allocated to maneuvering, landing, set-up and take-down, Cirque des Sirkas plans to perform for no more than seven full days.

The overall routine of *Cirque* and her auxiliaries is set to maximize efficiency and allow large blocks of stage time. The secondary object is to make BT1 accessible to the public as needed. While the tent will be erected when atmosphere and other conditions permit, secondary performances can and do occur in BT1's cylindrical center stage. In addition, the smaller stage facility at the center of BT2 are used for rehearsal, recording, live transmissions, transport, eating, sleeping, and any other function to which it need be put.

Adventures happen between and around performances. At times, they may interfere with performances, or delay leaving a system. Andii will count every lost minute, and do everything possible to clear matters up within the time allotted.

Factors of Sharurshid and Advance Sophonts

Advanced notice of Cirque de Sirka Foundation, LIC's planned route and function has preceded the voyage by X-Boat and other mail services. Local agents and factors of Sharurshid, LIC, a major sponsor, have been notified to provide assistance in advance and as requested. They are responsible for advance ticket sales, though the tickets are not dated. Rather, tickets are sold for "Day x of 5, Show 1 of 2." If the sales justify adding days, the run can be extended by no more than two days without permission of the Advance Sophonts. They are also to obtain lists of potential contractors and applicants who will provide local support. The local factors lack authority to make final arrangements because *Cirque's* itinerary is expected to be fluid.

Note that some of the factors will take their job seriously, perhaps as a welcome diversion. Others put the memos into the "permanently to do but un-done" email file. On these worlds, the Advance Sophonts will work harder. If a player party is operating as the Advance Sophonts, the exasperation of dealing with such near-catastrophes can be an adventure in itself.

Advance Sophonts

IISS Scout3-0156 (named "*Grendel's Mother*" by its assigned retired scout) is crewed by its team of Advance Sophonts. These four go ahead on the assigned route, despite the cramped space and misfit nature of the crew. Their job is to get in-system, find out what has already been done for Cirque by Sharurshid's various factors and representatives, and then do the rest. They also put out publicity and the most accurate possible date for *Cirque's* arrival.

The Advance Sophonts keep about one week ahead of *Cirque* herself. Their duty is to quickly finalize arrangements for landing sites, landing permits, performance sites, food handling licenses and vendors, releases, advertising, press releases, additional ticket sales and estimated dates, advance reduced-rate ticket sales for active service members and

veterans, local transportation, local employees for the ticket booths and services, contractors to provide refreshments and refreshment stands, portajohns and other waste management systems, and similar details.

The Advanced Sophonts have appropriate survey information and a plan of action for each new system (in case, as noted above, the local factor has shirked his or her responsibilities), as well as the ID codes of the local factor. Thus, they are able to begin transmitting as soon as they exit jump. They already have possible landing sites chosen. They review information provided and seek out large fields, plains, and other locations large enough for BT1 and BT2, close enough to major transportation lines and facilities, and reasonable in terms of other likely planetary government concerns.

The starport itself presents some opportunities, and in some systems will provide the only reasonable location. However, in the majority of systems, the preference is to be off-port. Off-port facilities provide easier access for local inhabitants and add an informality not found in the starport proper. In addition, starport officials are not interested in the extra security and risk of confusion inherent in the daily crush of audiences. Cirque des Sirkas would quite literally be unable to function without these arrangements being made prior to and in place before *Cirque's* arrival.

Finally, the Advance Sophonts return to space at about the time *Cirque* is supposed to arrive. They wait at a pre-arranged jump point for *Cirque* to exit jump space. If time permits, *Cirque* and *Grendel's Mother* may match orbit and dock for a meeting. More often than not, *Grendel's Mother* merely spits the data out in a concentrated data burst and gets on its way with an exchange of pleasantries.

During their time in-system, the Advance Sophonts have opportunities for suitable adventures (or, more often, misadventures) in the course of their daily grind. Indeed, the adventures set out in this book can be assigned to a suitable group of Advance Sophonts if the referee prefers running a smaller campaign to a larger campaign. More than four player characters will have to either double bunk or operate using a larger vessel with a Jump-3 minimum (e.g., a Type-T Patrol Cruiser).

Cirque: In-System

Cirque follows its own routine.

On system entry, she begins broadcasting to announce the arrival of the tour. Clips, reviews and other information from prior systems are transmitted, both to the departing Advance Sophonts and the destination world. At the same time, Andii, Bertii and Wily review the Advance Sophonts' information and contracts. If necessary, cargo is shifted to the fuel shuttle's cargo space (including cargo space made available by collapsible fuel tanks). Performers are prepared and briefed on local laws and situations that must be considered.

As noted, most performance stops total 16 days. The first two and last two days are occupied with landing, set-up, and take-down of the tent and equipment. Performers are brought to the surface in BT1 and BT2 in advance to allow them time for public relations appearances, a formal (but usually short and stylized) circus parade, liberty and to get the first hint of the adventure to come. The following seven days are packed with performances, with each act providing at least two scheduled performances on six of the seven days (the day off is, when possible, for rest and of course adventuring time). The Cirque des Sirkas show itself runs two performances every standard day. Musicians and the acting troupes perform between circus shows, or (when possible) at nearby alternate stages.

Geezer Thespian performs at least once daily on the same six days in an independent one-man show. He alternates at least two different one-man acts. One is his famous "Gilgamesh." Another consists of great monologues and soliloquies from various sources throughout human space. Thespian also usually joins other performers in a modernized version of "Duke Vaalearn" (a Vilani-language version of Shakespeare's "King Lear") at least once per planet, playing the title role.

Although he performs in the circus, Comic Juggler also performs a separate thirty-minute show of commentary interspersed with juggling and other tricks, video-recorded every other day before a live audience. The audience pays a separate admission, and the video is transmitted after a delay of several hours. His work is topical and aimed at skewering the pompous and powerful, sometimes at personal risk.

The Zhodani Quixitlatl Mind Reader and magician performs several two-hour sets during the down-time, greatly expanding his act. None of

his tricks use advanced technology (a magician who uses gravitics to float a sawed-in-half android is cheating, not using misdirection).

The Solomani Tribute Band (playing primitive "rock" and similar music from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries of old Earth) performs a two-hour set once daily at ear-splitting volumes.

Juggler and Thespian are each major draws, with no seat selling for less than Cr 200. The Solomani Tribute Band tends to draw younger people paying at least Cr 100 per seat. The Great Maxidotl draws Cr 50 per seat.

On the full-cast "rest day," the stages are not left dark and empty. Local groups are invited to perform for audiences to fill the gaps. These performances are recorded auditions, in essence. "Amateur Day on Andii's Stages" carries a lower admission cost for the audience (Cr 25), but also costs far less to produce. On very rare occasions, an act may be good enough to be offered a spot with the tour; this can be used to introduce a new player character. Amateur Day is further detailed in Episode 19: Counting Coup.

After a rest day, the routine is resumed for three more days. On the last day, there is no rest; it is taken up with preparing to leave. The performers are given their last liberty but also advised of their strict boarding times. Each performer is implanted with a locating transceiver above and beyond his, her or its standard communications devices.

Andii will take reasonable steps to retrieve a late performer, but will also on occasion make harsh decisions for those with repeated problems returning. Her rule is "three strikes", but exceptions can be made for either big draws or special circumstances.

The planet-side routine obviously provides some constraints for adventuring. The adventures are worked around performance times, and will generally occur in geographically close proximity to the performances. However, even with two performances per day, unexpected situations will unfold. The middle day with its amateur performances provides time for the entertainer player characters to experience a piece of the growing adventure. In addition, non-entertainer player characters can generally be given greater leeway. This is especially true of *Cirque's* space crew, the documentary crew, and the security details (indeed, the security details exist to minimize hassles for the entertainers, and thus will find themselves in tight spots).

Cirque: Space Routine

The routine in space and during jump is more relaxed. Each act rehearses and works on new variations, usually daily. The documentary crew also spends time recording interviews. Animals are exercised in BT1's ring. Various on-ship interactions and adventures play out. Javert will continue to prowl around for evidence on Thespian and Makeup Artist, as well as his perhaps expanding list of suspects. Bertii will do whatever it is he does in his cabin, as well as handle ship's business. Andii goes through the ship and checks on all of the details for the next stop, as well as crew efficiency. Trysts and arguments will break out. Other issues may be revealed. Competition for "better billing" may include petty sabotage and slights. Andii may even find herself conducting a Captain's Mast to discipline performers, and remind those without a military background that Andii is the Absolute Monarch of *Cirque*.

Used to military conduct and efficiency, Andii will discover that her hands are full, given this cast and crew of artistic types. However, she may also discover the unusual resilience of the artistic soul. People used to highly emotional competitions and the constant threat of rejection bounce back after most rejections.

Other vessels will be encountered inbound and outbound. Adventures may occur from those encounters. Andii is alert for piracy attempts, given Vargr activity and, later on the tour, the political changes in the Sword Worlds. Andii and others may encounter old acquaintances along the way as well. Ships may issue distress calls after they are attacked or vital systems fail. In short, although *Cirque* carries clowns, it is by no means due a careless ride.

The great number of animals on board become a particular concern of all of the crew. The animals are part of Cirque des Sirkas' attraction. They must be fed and cared for despite the close environment. The various foodstuffs, from nuts and berries to bales of hay-like plants must all be inspected for troublesome vermin before being left out for food; much of it cannot simply be exposed to vacuum as a precaution. Animal handlers

Cirque

and roustabouts sift through every pitchfork– or shovel-full of hay and grain to locate unusual insects, slugs, and larger animals such as rats and vreepers. The various animals also take part in this process; tree rats and bloodvarks, for example, will be allowed to go over a bail of hay before it goes to the miniphants.

Advance Sophonts' Checklist

- ☐ Begin transmitting upon arrival.
- ☐ Locate and contact Sharurshid factors.
- ☐ Determine what has been prepared; remedy failures.
- ☐ Off-port landing permits as necessary.
- ☐ Local food preparers.
- ☐ Local ticket takers.
- ☐ Local sanitation necessities.
- ☐ Audience transportation arrangements.
- ☐ Cirque des Sirkas transportation arrangements.
- ☐ Food replenishment for *Cirque* and auxiliaries.
- ☐ Special animal needs replenishment.
- ☐ Contact news and interview outlets.
- ☐ Arrange paid advertising.
- ☐ Arrange word-of-mouth campaigns including social media.
- ☐ Contact representatives of system nobles as courtesy.
- ☐ Contact representatives of local government as courtesy.
- ☐ Determine show scheduling to coordinate local day with “standard days” observed by *Cirque*.
- ☐ Announce Amateur Day on Andii's Stage and the rules.
- ☐ Run computer checks on local taboo topics.
- ☐ Obtain local news for Comic Juggler's routine and commentary.
- ☐ Arrange charity tickets for veterans and orphans.
- ☐ Execute essential contracts.
- ☐ Lift to orbit.
- ☐ Await *Cirque*'s jump into system.
- ☐ Transmit data packet and comments.
- ☐ Jump to next destination.

Cirque's Arrival and Landing Checklist

- ☐ Locate and contact Advance Sophonts; download data.
- ☐ Remedy any failings of Advance Sophonts.
- ☐ Check for major taboos and arrange acts accordingly.
- ☐ Take orbit or dock with up-port.
- ☐ Courtesy calls to nobles.
- ☐ Arrange gas giant fueling using BT3 whenever possible.
- ☐ Arrange cargo changes (Sharurshid cargo on board).
- ☐ Dispose of any potentially contaminated animal feed before docking. Re-inspect for vermin.
- ☐ Provide specific warnings to performers and crew about conduct.
- ☐ Provide specific lists of off-limits areas.
- ☐ Provide information on sleeping arrangements if off-ship.
- ☐ Obtain final landing coordinates and position.
- ☐ Land BT1 and BT2.
- ☐ Unload cargo pods (tent, food stalls, ticket stalls, etc.). Have pods trucked to tent site if not nearby.
- ☐ Begin erecting tent (semi-robotic).
- ☐ Transport animals and performers to location of circus parade.
- ☐ Hold circus parade.
- ☐ Provide interviews for local news organizations.

- ☐ Make visits to local hospitals for children and veterans.
- ☐ Give personnel a few hours off.

Performance Checklist

- ☐ Open the tent.
- ☐ Check audiences for security (subtle).
- ☐ Seat the audiences.
- ☐ If nobles and bigwigs are present ask if they have a sense of humor for the clowns.
- ☐ Get acts and performers to their entrances as needed. No, really, *now*. And give me that blasted bottle!
- ☐ Introduce Cirque des Sirkas, greet nobles and local bigwigs in audience.
- ☐ Big opening.
- ☐ Run the acts.
- ☐ Avoid mishaps.
- ☐ Prepare for closing and curtain calls. No, really, *now*. And give me that blasted bottle!
- ☐ Close the show.
- ☐ Clean up and set up for next show and audience.

Take-Down Checklist

- ☐ Return animals to BT1.
- ☐ Store props.
- ☐ Take down tent.
- ☐ Discover climax of adventure happening just at the wrong time.
- ☐ Check all cargo containers for youngsters running away to the circus and other vermin, especially animal feed containers.
- ☐ Round up performers who have discovered yet another interesting establishment. No, really, *now*. And give me those three blasted bottles!
- ☐ Launch and go.

Transit Checklist

- ☐ Mend costumes and props.
- ☐ Fine-tune acts and rehearse.
- ☐ Learn new performance skills, even if not a performer.
- ☐ Record final versions of acts and other material in BT1 or BT2.
- ☐ Review briefings regarding next stop.
- ☐ Deal with personnel issues.
- ☐ Handle ship maintenance issues.
- ☐ Run drills and scenarios for emergencies, including combat, hijacking, and boarding.
- ☐ Jam with the musicians.
- ☐ Feed animals.
- ☐ Tend to any potential veterinary issues.
- ☐ Yell at the noisy people in the next barracks for not shutting up at night.
- ☐ Play games in the BACFUDS once the tanks are empty.
- ☐ Follow interesting threads in character arcs. Why is Geezer Thespian insisting he's King Richard today? What was Bertii doing in the BACFUDS tanks last night? What exactly is that stuff the stagehands are cooking in the barracks? What's that copper tubing for? What are the Crafty Bear and the Barbarian Knife Thrower making in that forge? Why is Javert such a creepy snoop?
- ☐ Explore *Cirque's* nooks and crannies.
- ☐ Engage in personal vices.

Program Notes: Entertainers in an Ongoing Campaign

Cirque des Sirkas: Travelling Entertainers

Cirque des Sirkas is a fish-out-of-water story. Ideally, it takes the players out of their usual roles and comfort zones and places them into new kinds of characters and adventures.

The same is of course true of the characters they play. An Aslan Imperial Marine concerned with honor becomes a tumbler concerned with amusing humans; a decorated war veteran must make sure the show always gets to its next stop. At the same time, an aging, famous actor may have to find the skills to enter a firefight.

T5 assumes that entertainers will possess or gain some traditionally useful game skills and knowledges. It also assumes that military personnel and merchants have hobbies and interests even before play begins. Entertainment skills can be useful in campaigns, as discussed further below.

Whether the referee and players use pre-generated characters or create their own, Cirque encourages well-rounded characters. Cirque des Sirkas is not simply a vast cover for some scheme or another. It is a working entertainment vessel. The referee should use it and run the adventures as such. All entertainers are rolled as characters through one generation table or another. While any character may become a performer of sorts (e.g., the Aslan Tumblers), most are created as Entertainers.

All of the Entertainers created for Cirque were created using the Entertainer categories. Many physical types of performance are treated as specialized Knowledges under the general Skill of Dancer. Because these are specializations, a character may have no more than six levels.

Comic Juggler's Skill is Dancer (Juggler-6). He can learn other knowledges under the Dancer Skill, such as Choreographer or Jazz Dancer. He can also add Athlete skill to a performance, perhaps under the specialized knowledge of Unicycle Riding. Finally, because he is a comedian, his act includes commentary and asides for the audience. He thus has both Actor and Author skills.

What use is he in a scenario? He can distract a crowd, pick pockets, accurately throw bottles at the heads of opponents, accurately toss guns to other characters who have been disarmed, catch-and-return a lobbed grenade in the nick of time, grumble that he didn't sign up for this, and make it all look *easy*. The application of the skill depends on the creativity of the player and fair rulings by the referee. Entertainers aren't simply gunslingers with odd backgrounds. Their backgrounds and skills provide a way for *role-playing*.

Fame

Any entertainer's fame is relevant to any adventure. A well-known entertainer can easily infiltrate at any level simply by playing on his or her celebrity. A celebrity can obtain entry into the homes of the rich and powerful, or the poor and meek. Other PCs can enter along with them as managers, drivers, bodyguards, makeup artists, bubblegum pre-chewers, and in any other roles necessary to an interstellar celebrity's retinue.

This form of infiltration will only work once or twice per planet, however. At some point, people will start believing the supermarket tabloids (or their high-tech equivalent, social media) after seeing enough headlines saying, "Tri-Vid Star Fronting for Jewel Thieves and Kidnap-

pers." With speed-of-jump and distance limiting data transfer, however, such a ploy may occasionally be of use. If over-used, the referee can call the players out, and have it fail because the nemesis of the moment has advance word of the infiltration technique.

Celebrities from the entertainment world (especially actors, musicians, and sports stars, but almost never writers) can also be used as distractions and decoys. Their adoring fans (and their despising detractors) will form mobs to bask in (or destroy) their celebrity. A mob is a wonderful distraction, as anyone knows.

Another obvious adventure hook for is the stalker. A character pursued by obsessed fans must find ways to defend him or herself. The character can find this daunting, as can the adventuring group. Dealing with a stalker can enliven any adventure, or be an adventure in and of itself. After all, how many regulars in a drama series are taken hostage by an obsessed red shirt (usually played by a formerly significant thespian in need of a few spare bucks) in the course of a five-season run? Trick question! *All of them*.

Actors

A less well-known thespian is a far better character to play than a sector-wide star. These characters can be played as agents in deception. Indeed, the crossover between the prior career of actor and that of agent is one worth noting for character generation. A well trained actor, especially one from the live stage, can convincingly take on a character's mannerisms and basic persona for extended periods. They know how to "hold their role." They have training in small things which can enhance or distract the person seeing the role, and avoid sending "tells" that reveal them as actors.

Traveller geezers will recall the "Paris" character of the 1960's "Mission Impossible" series as a good example. An even better example is found in the Heinlein novel *Double Star*: There, the actor replaces an important politician for a brief but important "run of the show." This hides the politician's kidnapping and prevents an interspecies war. In T5, an actor or actress who looks like a VIP can, with proper support and back-up such as persons capable of forgery, take over that person's role in distant places – whether for good or bad (it's *not* good to be Dulinor's stand-in circa 1116).

Dancers and Athletes

Dancer may be considered a catch-all for any entertainer whose skills are primarily based in physical action and coordination. Thus, with some care, a character rolled as a Dancer may be just that — or may be a gymnast (including trapeze and other aerialists), a clown, a mime, a contortionist, most kinds of sports entertainers (when combined with the athlete knowledge base), stunt actors, and so on. The essential elements in each of these endeavors are the ability to move properly and to choreograph one's movements. Coordination with other members of a team is a form of "on the spot choreography."

All of these character types may take on roles and adventure using their particular skills and strengths. Certainly, a large "linebacker" (a bur-

ley Solomani engaged in a pointless and long-forgotten team sport involving primitive battle dress and obloid projectiles bounced against opposing team players) can become an intimidating bodyguard for an important personage despite the most gentle of personalities. Gentle giant or not, the bodyguard will certainly have less and less fun as the VIP being guarded is attacked. Other athletes may find other occupations; the mountaineering expert of today is the cat-burglar of tomorrow.

A circus contortionist is invariably slender and unusually limber. If narrow vents with twists and turns must be crawled, the contortionist can crawl them. Contortionists can also be shipped in properly equipped crates, hide beside corpses in coffins, and undertake similar nasty tasks. Well trained ballet dancers have similar qualities; they can also move quickly and hold uncomfortable positions for extended times (e.g., River Tam of *Firefly* and *Serenity*).

Most dancers are in good physical shape and are likely to be found striking, if not attractive, in many cultures. Thus, whether ethereal or tawdry, dancers may be used as distractions.

Musicians

The musician as a character should never be considered dull. Each often has a second life, as musicians (apart from those in the active military) are notoriously undisciplined and poorly paid unless they are truly famous (when they become notoriously undisciplined and vastly *overpaid*). This truth should not be seen as relating only to rock stars and divas. Mozart's unbalanced brilliance led him to excesses and a pauper's grave.

Such characters obtain many contacts and learn how to obtain *more* contacts. These contacts can usually procure almost anything desired, licit, illicit, or in violation of the local laws of man and physics. The best of musicians may begin their careers in crowded, seedy venues, and thus can obtain underworld contacts. If a musician has played a city before, especially in the lower levels, he/she or his/her retinue can obtain work, illicit substances, illicit weapons, information, secondary contacts of other types, and (of course) quality musical instrument repairs. A down-on-his-luck rock star can be an asset (if kept reasonably sober).

The rare disciplined musician's sideline can and should be something useful, like electronics, computer-related skills gained in composition and performance, counterfeiting or the sort of home chemistry which leads to explosions.

Food/Odor Creators

A very successful army cook may become a chef and become known to the upper classes, and thus work for a better clientele. Those contacts are somewhat limited. However, private chefs in fancy restaurants (like many other entertainers) are sought out by important and powerful people. These people want to meet the person feeding them, if only to make sure that the food isn't poisoned. Thus, chefs are useful as contacts on any planet where they have either run a kitchen or have references.

A chef with a reputation planning on spending a few weeks or days on a planet need simply "hang out a shingle" to obtain the notice of local nobles, celebrities and other gourmets. This puts them into contact with powerful and rich people, who may have jobs to give adventuring groups. Chefs can also be very useful as agents in this regard, because a chef may be brought into the place in which a target resides or a goal is kept. Whenever a chef is a PC, the adventure ultimately goes outside the kitchen.

That said, hot grease makes a handy weapon in hand-to-hand combat. A proper stainless-steel ladle substitutes nicely for a vorpal cudgel. Chefs have a natural environment, and can use their combat skills in that natural environment.

Authors

Authors, especially journalists and reporters, have regular contacts with many people at all levels of society. An investigative reporter knows how to dig into information and how to bribe other people into doing so. Natural curiosity is likely to get their noses put into other peoples' business. Other people are likely to respond by punching the journalist in the nose; this causes development of fighting and medical skills. An investiga-

tive journalist needs only one thing to get him or her into hot water: an editor with a tip or story idea. Note that the terms author and journalist can and should be interpreted widely in this context. Photographers, videographers, and wired-to-the-hilt-with-sound-video-and-computer-clothes blogging documentarians are all authors. They tell stories through multimedia. They are also likely to cause angst among the subjects of the stories.

More sedate authors, like other celebrities, may often find themselves brought into a home or otherwise into unusual venues. Such authors will also find themselves thronged by wannabes who wish them to read or review their work, especially at science fiction conventions. All of these may result in work and adventure opportunities.

Authorship will also provide an extra source of income. The adventurer who can turn his or her life into someone else's reading/entertainment material may know from whence the next meal is coming. The average adventurer may beg on the street in the lean times, or worse yet hire on to a tramp freighter with a clanky jump drive. An author can turn that trip into his or her next royalty-generator.

Animal Trainers and Handlers

Technology can do most of what animals can do — but animals can often do it better, and with more interesting results. Animal trainers and handlers generally come equipped with small but useful assistants. With reasonable rapport and advance coaching, a performing animal can be used to assist in what it does naturally — steal things, embarrass clowns, fly in intricate patterns, and so on. At higher tech levels, they can be equipped with small cams, recording devices, sensors, tracking chips, transceivers (e.g., apparent earrings) and other devices. Properly prepared, an animal handler can be a substantial asset.

Some agents, indeed, make use of animals in their work. A beaker may react to (or work with) a powerful psionic. A tree rat can be a great aid in obtaining keys, jewelry, and other small items. Bloodvarks are trackers. A few examples are built in to scenarios; resourceful PCs should create others.

Unprepared, animals can still be useful. Cuddly animals are distractions. Hunting animals such as garhawks can be sent on the offensive. Kian can be ridden, of course, but their massive haunches also provide striking power; their mouths are used in defense as well. A kian accustomed to a trick-rider's acrobatics may assist the trick-rider in a daring or necessary leap.

The Circus Milieu and Cirque Des Sirkas

Travelling shows are found in many cultures and on many planets. Any planet which has had a pre-technological period and a substantial population will develop its share of itinerant storytellers and actors — bards, gypsies, druids, poets, scholars and shaman all were in show-business. The heroes sung about by the bards are themselves in many ways entertainers. They practice for battles and earn their keeps by performing "feats" and wrestling with the locals. Soothsayers entertain with their nascent psionic abilities (or more often use their abilities of observation to read a crowd or a person's "tells").

Eventually, the best of performers needs either a new act or a new audience, and moves on to another group. This may happen voluntarily, or because one too many soothsayers has turned out to be annoying to someone with weapons. This begets the profession of the wandering entertainer, and then the troupe of wandering entertainers. As entertainments became more complex, venues became more complex. In larger communities, stages and arenas were created. In others, any sand-pit or natural amphitheater was used.

The somewhat stylized form of entertainment modeled by Cirque des Sirkas derived the central ring on Terra in the 1800's (Solomani reckoning). Terran circus entrepreneur Philip Astley determined that the best diameter for the main ring was thirteen meters because this allowed an acrobatic Terran horseback performer to maintain balance on the cantering animal. It made equestrian feats possible. Cirque's ring is slightly larger, but follows the same principal.

Examples of many entertainers will be found in Cirque des Sirkas, along with large egos and a penchant for finding trouble.

Program Notes: The Standard Stanford Torus

The Standardized Stanford Torus

The Standardized Stanford Torus used in many Imperial systems is constructed using TL 10+ materials and techniques. It has a 2100-meter diameter (about one mile in the old “English” system). Many are constructed using carbon and silicate fibers nano-factured in space. Nanobots weave and spin the fibers and tubes; humans and robots assemble the final product. A TL11+ torus is as much “grown” as it is manufactured.

Each full torus has a designated “north” and “south” from the hub. “East” and “west” are determined traditionally, as if one was standing on the “North Pole” and facing any portion of the hub. West is to the left, and east is to the right.

The primary torus or “spinning wheel” at the rim is 150 meters in diameter. Most segments of the ten contain a standardized “glacial valley” arrangement, with terraces rising steeply to either side. The segments are 660 meters long at the rim (440 deck squares). Some stations have secondary tori closer to the center, providing lower “gravity” for residents or for other purposes.

Each torus is divided into ten standard segments, made from and including three main supporting cable assemblies and the enclosed living/environmental space. Most, though not all, maintain environmental seals between each segment. This provides both a lifeboat in case of significant malfunction, and the ability to have significantly different environments in each segment. Thus, for example, Rhylanor’s Old Station Main Concourse maintains a comfortable spring-like condition year-around. Its adjoining segment in the secondary “agro” torus is a humid environment producing grains in a watery “rice paddy” environment.

Like Old Station, standard tori are often produced as twins, sometimes triplets, and occasionally even higher numbers of conjoined tori. Such tori are connected side-by-side, and may employ counter-spin (connecting only at the hub) or synchronous spin (all tori linked and spinning at the same rate, in the same direction). This maximizes the use of sunlight from lighting mirrors and simplifies choices of orbit. However, at sizes much larger than five, other rotating forms (e.g., hollowed-out asteroids) become more useful and less expensive to build and maintain.

As noted, each segment is independently constructed, providing environmental compartmentalization. This is sufficient to prevent explosive decompression of an entire torus. It is not, however, sufficient to prevent all mixing of incompatible environments. Thus, for example, if pollen from Planet A is destructive of flora from Planet B, Planet A’s environment would generally be in one station, Planet B’s in an entirely separate torus.

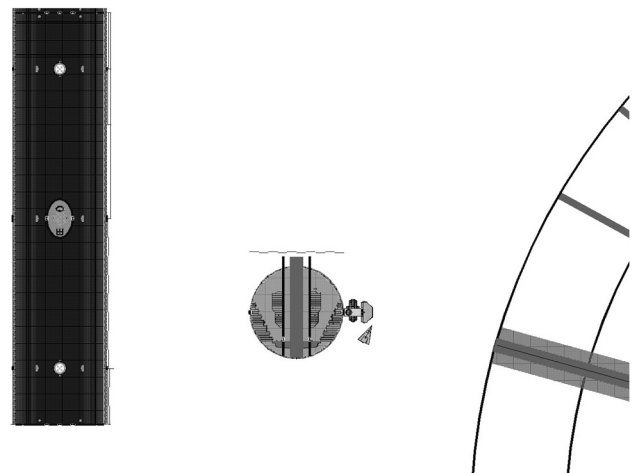
Each segment is supported by a central cable from the hub, with two smaller cables to either side, and two additional small cables at each

connection point. Each of the major support cables is enclosed by airtight bulkheads, reducing the risk of blowout due to catastrophic failure. In addition, these airtight columns allow passage up and down to the hub. The largest, central cable has turbo-car elevators as well as other means of access up and down. Each cable has two personnel lifts which crawl up the cables in long spirals. This allows for inspection and access for deployment of repair nanobots. The columns each have deck levels above the “ground level” entrances allowing space for storage, residences for the elite, access to hanging circles of shops and restaurants, offices, and anything else the referee might imagine. In many tori, “skyscrapers” are constructed around the three cables, but beginning a few deck levels up so as to conserve “valley floor” space.

Four thinner cables provide the final structural tightening at either end of the segment. These are also enclosed, but without more than a narrow crawl space. There are no elevators. As these are considered high security areas, entry to the crawl space requires either an electronic access code or a special physical key.

Each torus segment has three airtight docking ports spaced along the north and south rims (at the horizontal diameter of the segment). Each such port is located across from one of the three main supporting cables. These ports can be used as simple airlocks, or for small craft or starship docking. In the case of paired or multiple wheels these locks provide the location for direct access to the adjoining segment. Access to the tube platform level is the obtained by gangways and elevators inside the structure supporting the terraces, as well as steep exterior stairs.

Access to terrace levels is obtained through valley floor entrances, and (depending on specific design needs,) similar entries spaced along the various terrace levels. External stairs or lifts may also be provided. The multi-deck spaces built into each of the terrace structures are similarly accessed using internal stairways. Again, depending upon the exact needs and desires of each segmented section, as well as for aesthetic purposes, external stairways may also be constructed. In short, the utilitarian basic



1/ Deck plans of the segments are depicted flat, assuming that all of the levels are in fact 440 deck squares “long”, and thus are not perfectly realistic depictions of curved decks. This defect in design has been clearly pointed out. Any harm to the referee resulting from player outrage is really just too bad, and will not lead to liability against the writer, publisher, Far Future Enterprises, or Heartland Publishing.

Cirque

architecture of each segment can be altered to fit the particular needs and desires of the occupants or backers of the particular ring segment. In Rhylanor's Old Station Main Concourse, for example, almost 500 business establishments have "terrace frontage" at four of the available levels. Greenspace terraces contain private homes for vendors and others, as well as rental properties and boarding facilities for mid-term residents (e.g., spacers awaiting their ships, military personnel on leave, and transient maintenance workers).

Additional transportation within tori, and particularly from torus to torus, includes simple walking, SPV's (sophont-powered vehicles such as bicycles, tricycles, rickshaws, and other muscle-powered conveyances) electric vehicles powered by fuel cells or high-capacity batteries, and low-speed trams or monorails. The entire length of the walk from start to return is about 6.6 km. Paved ways are found at the rim, on upper terraces, and sometimes suspended above the dirt-levels minimize waste of acreage in the actively farmed segments. Cables may also support cars near the clear upper portions of segments. These cars are various sizes, have independent drive motors (or are SPVs), and carry from two to twenty passengers at a time.

The tori are almost invariably oriented edge-on to the local primary star in order to limit exposure to radiation, especially when in solar orbit. The shielding afforded by the meters-thick rim prevents significant harm. Giant disk-shaped mirrors orbit nearby, directing sunlight into the thick but clear "window" portions of the inner torus's skin. Complicated louvers reflect sunlight to where it needs to go, but also close to allow for a standard day/night cycle. Supplemental power is often produced by plants in the hub, or in other portions of the station, though solar accumulators are used to limit expense.

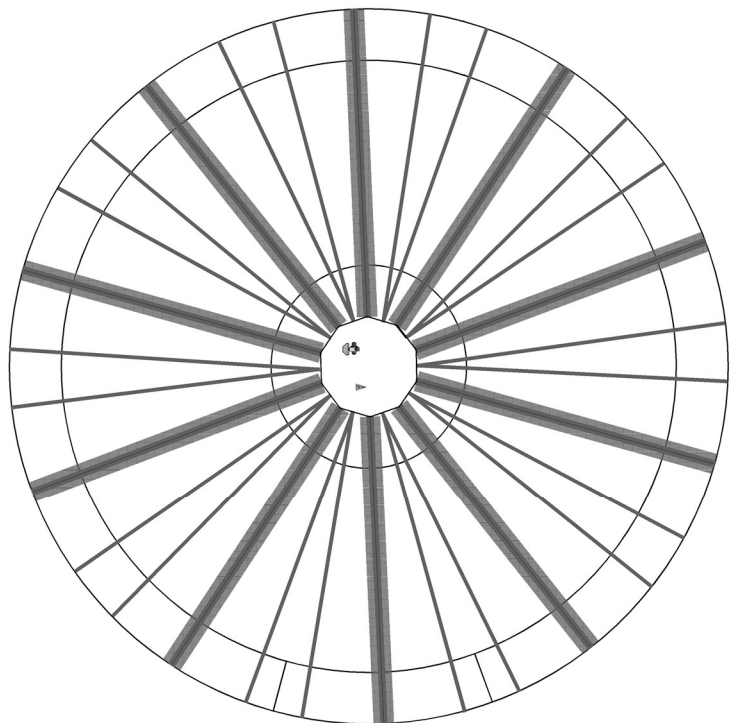
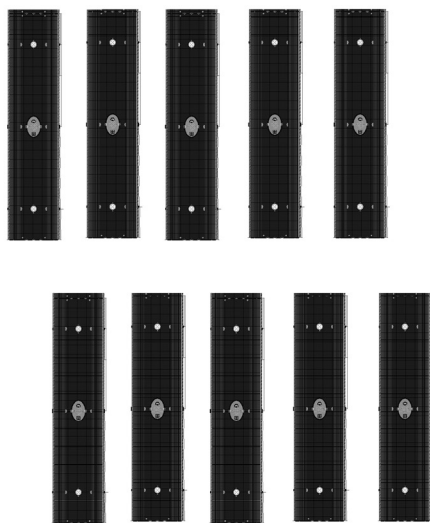
Standard calculations suggest that a standard torus can support and house up to thirty thousand human-sized sophonts at the high end. If a densely populated torus cannot produce enough of its own agricultural products for food, a second nearby (or linked) torus may be used as a farming substation. Such tori often have far fewer than 10,000 residents, obtaining labor from a well automated food production system and possibly even from the primary torus. However, when food leaves one wheel to go to another, essential biomass is lost and must be replaced. There will thus be (to put it most politely) garbage scows or pipes going between the two wheels. "Septic tanker pilot" is an unenviable position sometimes taken by down-on-their-luck space-trained pilots.

Many discussions of rotating stations suggest that docking ports will be in the hub to minimize the difficulty of docking. This is true in the Standard Torus; vessels can dock and be tied down in near-weightless conditions. This is often useful for maintenance, especially of designs not built with landing gear. However, Traveller assumes a high level of computer assistance. Thus, there is no reason that a vessel cannot match its vector to dock with ports on the rim. However, reaction mass or gravitic thrust is used in order to match speed and, when necessary, to prevent station wobble or rotational slowing.

While gravitics make the spinning wheel unnecessary, economy, construction experience and tradition have kept the proven design in use, just as the Type S scout is found throughout the Imperium and beyond. Tori consume less power than many alternative habitat technologies and thus can often rely on solar accumulators to supply their power needs. They tend to be easy to repair and maintain. Many tori remain in use for centuries. Built in 606, Rhylanor's Old Station is considered only middle-aged after a mere five centuries of use. Tori still in use after more than a millennium 1000 years can be found in the more central areas of the Imperium.

Rhylanor's Old Station is a double-torus constructed in 606, one ring serving primarily as a farming community to support the other. The connected main torus serves as a commercial up-port, and thus sees a number of sophonts moving through each day. The Main Concourse is found in Segment 1 and is a major attraction for visitors from throughout space. Other segments include landing bays, repair and construction bays, and other facilities for ships massing less than 400 volume tons. The Imperial Marines maintain a base and training facility in Segment 10. More detail on the Old Concourse is found in Episode 1. The Zaiwon belt, a dying mining community, is replete with spinning wheels.

Most spinning wheels have crews tasked with maintenance, spin control (from a physics perspective, rather than a political one) and of course environmental engineering. Older spacers often take such positions to begin a comfortable retirement. Work includes everything from polishing micrometeor strikes out of the windows (where automated systems cannot) to maintaining the solar mirrors.



Episode 1: The Usual Suspects

Rhylanor • Spinward Marches 2716

A434934-F • A • Hi In Cp • 810 • Im • M2 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Rhylanor.

A subsector capitol is always a nice place to visit. And Rhylanor's an important one — high technology, a history of great admirals who rose to the occasion — a great place. A place where any admiral on merest whim can become Emperor.

I suppose that's a good thing, right? Good way to get a whole class of ships named after you, not to mention cheap rent on a palace on Capitol. Sure.

I like the old up-port better, though. Old Station, a spinning wheel. I always go in through Old Station, not the modern up-port proper. For one thing, Sharurshid keeps its Rhylanor offices there. Convenient

But it's more than that. Old Station is solid, old-fashioned. Gravity supplied courtesy of Newtonian physics. You don't drift into the sky if power fails. Dual tori over two kilometers across, enough open space to keep you sane, air supplied by old-fashioned agriculture, fruit trees, lovely terraces, fountains carved out of marble and granite, a statue of old Olav the Arrogant, the Admiral who promoted himself to Emperor. It's got families who've been there for generations...a lot of old Solomani names, too, all over the shops. Sure, the Vilani are there, too, but I've heard Duke

Leonard complain that it's a Solomani ghetto.

You can bicycle the circumference at Ground or High Terrace level, or down at the rim, or you can be lazy and take the sliders all around. Heck, you can *walk*. You just can't beat a station that's been rotating for hundreds of years, especially when it still smells new. They take care of her, keep her clean. But she has "old world charm" to beat anything on Capitol.

Rhylanor's also got something of an arts scene, or it thinks it has, anyway. Last time I was there, though — well, there was some blasted Vargr playing Hamlet, or maybe it was Ophelia, on the vid feeds. "To growl, or not to growl..."

Maybe if he'd been playing it as an Aslan, it wouldn't be so annoying. Blasted Vargr. And a mime kept stalking me every time I passed

through the Old Station Concourse to get to Miller's Old Scout. Annoying blasted white-faced beggar, copying the moves and putting the hand out for money. Too bad I couldn't find an unsupervised airlock nearby. That one was a waste of good air.

No one on a spinning wheel likes wasted air.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, early 1107.

General Data (Players)

The subsector capital, Xboat link, and site of two major bases, Rhylanor is a high-population, high-technology Imperial world located in the Rhylanor Subsector of the Spinward Marches. Its orbital shipyards produce both capital ships and smaller vessels for deployment throughout the sector.

Rhylanor is a small planet with a very thin oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere and a reasonably temperate climate. Its location in a cluster just off the Spinward Main provides a useful short cut for high-jump vessels and Xboats but renders the system itself inaccessible to Jump-1 ships. The majority of traffic into Rhylanor comes via the Celepina-Jae Tellona link or from Fulacin to Porozlo. This also has some benefit in system defense.

Rhylanor is also known as the birthplace of Olav hault-Plankwell. As Grand Admiral of the Marches, Olav led the March Fleet in a successful campaign against the Outworld Coalition in the First Frontier War. He followed up this success by leading his fleet to Capitol to become the first Emperor of the Flag. This noble tradition was subsequently emulated by other admirals.

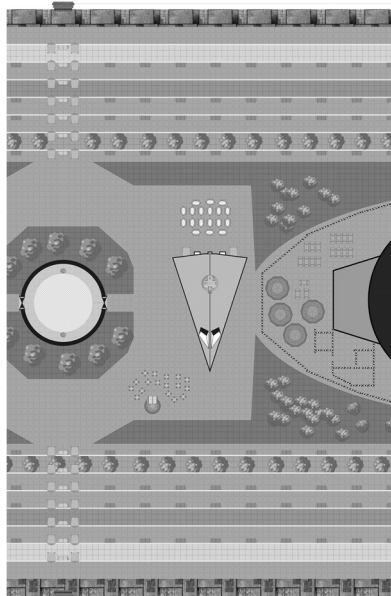
The subsector fleet has its headquarters at Rhylanor, with a system defense squadron being rebuilt and reinforced. The planet also boasts a large naval academy where young officers-to-be undergo their education and training. A large Scout base acts as a communications depot for the Xboat routes as well as a regional planning and command center. The facility is quite extensive and contains training facilities for some of the more specialized Scout roles.

In addition to Rhylanor Startown, other major settlements on Rhylanor include Leba, Liduka, Hegra, Panish, and Kikhimaa City.

Besides its military role, Rhylanor enjoys a reputation as a center for industry, commerce, and education. The Rhylanor Institute of Technology is one of the most prominent hard-science and technological research institutions in the entire Imperium, and is almost certainly the foremost such facility this side of Corridor Sector.

Several megacorporations have their regional headquarters or major installations on Rhylanor. These include the majority of Rhylanor's extensive shipyards. A handful of such facilities are still privately owned, but they are in the minority.

If this were not enough, Rhylanor also has a thriving art community. Live theater and non-digitized performances have been particularly emphasized since the 1050's. The various unions and guilds of actors, techs, and support staff are powerful enough to guarantee that theatrical and creative professionals are paid, but in turn the creative personnel are



Miller's Old Scout Brew Pub, on the West End of the Main Concourse. A scout hull converted into an eating facility, Miller's has tables inside and outside. Note the rear of Cirque des Sirkas' tent in this view.

expected to toe the line and not stir up trouble for the guilds that ensure their livelihood.

As one might expect in light of the above, the wafer socket and its ability to produce repeated, perfect performances is unpopular among the majority of performers, which has led to its use being banned by the guilds. Artistically, it tends to produce a lack of variation; variation is idealized by the live performer and many audiences. In addition, it tends to reduce turnover in parts, thus reducing the number of jobs available for up-and-coming thespians. “On Rhylanor, live means really *alive*,” the slogan goes, and this unpredictability is highly prized both by the performers and their audiences.

During the Fifth Frontier War Rhylanor was a primary target of the Zhodani forces. Indeed, post-war analysis suggests that the Zhodani fomented the last war with the sole intent of capturing Rhylanor, though the reason is unclear, as Rhylanor is far enough from Zhodani space that it was a difficult location to reach. Supply lines and open routes for necessary reinforcements could not be assured. Analysts now question why the Zhodani stirred up the Vargr and Sword Worlders and started this war. No sense can be made out of it.

Nonetheless, the entire Outworld Coalition was indeed roused. The Vargr attacked across the Coreward borders. The Sword Worlders occupied Imperial forces to Spinward. Zhodani fleets pushed across the Marches, capturing numerous systems and eventually crossing into Rhylanor’s outer system. They were only stopped because Duke Norris of Regina (previously derided by the Comic Juggler with the question, “Where’s Norris?”) had finally wrested control of the armed forces from Admiral Santanocheev. The Imperial Navy fought hard and suffered significant losses of ships and personnel.

Despite the significant forces they deployed against Rhylanor, no Zhodani ever put “boots on the ground.” They either died in space or fled, some to die in other systems, others captured during the attempted retreats.

Local volunteers also took an active role in defense of the system. Even residents of the Old Station trained and prepared, refurbishing and manning archaic turrets on the dual-wheel station before enemy forces began pouring in through several jump points. Old Station acquitted itself well; its “militia” forces destroyed one Vargr privateer and repelled another that managed to bypass the Imperial blockade.

The Rhylanor system contains relics of the climactic battle: the portion of space known as the Warships’ Graveyard. There the shattered hulks of disabled vessels are being gathered together by tugs to prevent their being a hazard to navigation. The whole area is classified as a no-travel zone, and patrolled to prevent any but military vessels and a few licensed salvage operatives from entering. The area is designated as a war grave by Duke Leonard Stephanos of Rhylanor, who is petitioning the Moot to give this designation Imperial imprimatur.

Summary and Referee’s Information

The episode commences in the last two weeks of 1110. Holiday is approaching, and with it Cirque des Sirkas’ opening show.

Andii, Bertii, Geezer Thespian, Comic Juggler, and U’aali are shareholders, as is anyone who contributes a ship share. Unless the player characters take available roles as original shareholders of Cirque des Sirkas Foundation, LIC, the characters meet with Andii, Bertii, and Wily Aslan to be signed on as ship’s crew, security, entertainers, animal handlers, or even mere stagehands. This is a one-year contract, or for the run of the tour, whichever ends first. It obligates the players to stay with Cirque des Sirkas from Rhylanor to Regina, and through the Holiday (New Year) 1112 celebrations honoring Duke Norris.

All contracts give each character a role as crew of *Cirque* (the vessel herself), regardless of training. Every job needs doing, even if it is swabbing decks. This subjects them to Andii’s full authority, and also gives Andii the moral (if not always the legal) right to intervene on behalf of any member of her crew who runs into trouble. This authority will not be used lightly, however. Andii does not yet believe that “All publicity is good publicity.”

Andii also underlines and emphasizes to new hires the fact that *Cirque* has reserve status papers as well, rendering the vessel subject to military recall. Characters seeking “spacer” skills will be allowed to apprentice in gunnery and other roles, spending part of the time in jump learning and participating in drills.

In addition to the usual clauses common to employment and performance paperwork, all contracts include an intellectual property clause. This allows entertainers to own the rights to their individual acts, including routines developed during the tour within their own specialties. However, material developed jointly with other performers, including the “envelope” material (segues from one act to the next) is owned by the Cirque des Sirkas Foundation, LIC. The Foundation has the sole right to record particular performances for retransmission or other for-profit motives. It also has the right to any intellectual property developed or discovered during and through the period of employment. The individuals retain the right, however, to own their own personal memoirs (including those written, recorded, or stored direct to wafer) for the purposes of profit.

This provision is not actually all that onerous. Any writer or performer knows that the producers — the money behind the show — own the script and other property developed. This is part of how Cirque des Sirkas will pay for itself; it is, in part, a “reality tri-dee” which will be recorded throughout. This clause, however, may come into play in interesting ways during the adventure, as unusual intellectual property is located or created.

All of the above should be presented to the players, preferably during their final hiring interview.

As the campaign gets under way, the tent has already been erected on Old Station’s Main Concourse. Rehearsals are taking place, primarily in Big Top One, but also within the tent. Cirque des Sirkas will open its first show on Holiday, 1111. The show will run for seven standard days before the tent is packed and *Cirque*’s main power plants heated up. These performances will include visits from various notables: VIPs of Sharurshid (a major corporate sponsor), the Travellers’ News Service (the Documentarian is, among other roles, a “stringer” for this news agency), high-ranking officers of the Imperial Navy, Zhodani diplomats, lesser Imperial nobility, and of course Duke Leonard Stephanos Kirgashii of Rhylanor.

The final preparations for the show and the voyage take place primarily in *Cirque*, docked directly to the Main Concourse, and in the Main Concourse itself. Characters will have the opportunity to explore the various business establishments, look for desired or essential equipment, run errands for the ship, and poke around the oddball establishments for information and items of interest. They will also be free to seek entertainment and purchase items for their own use. Main Concourse has hundreds of establishments in which spacers and other travelers can enjoy themselves.

Excitement is building. Holiday, the Imperium’s “New Year’s Day” is at hand. Celebrated in many different ways throughout the Imperium (some Admirals fire off spinal-mount particle accelerators to create upper-atmosphere displays), Holiday Eve is not sedate or dull on the Old Concourse; it is New Year’s, Christmas, Festivus, Mardi Gras, and Carnival combined, with a smattering of Vilani and non-human celebrations thrown in for good measure. While crews will be on alert throughout the system — no one has forgotten the Zhodani surprise attack of 1107 — many in the Imperial services will be on liberty. Some civilians, including youths, will also plan to be in “Rhylanor’s biggest mall,” while merchants from large freighters and small free traders will mingle with the crowds.

In anticipation of this, Andii has hired independent security personnel to watch over the tent and performance venue, leaving her own security personnel ready to assist any members of the troupe who get in trouble. Andii is a realist above all, and she does not trust that Holiday Eve will be quiet.

After the events of Holiday Eve (there *will* be events), Cirque des Sirkas will open its run. The opening show is planned to commence at 17:00 Imperial Standard Time, with a gala reception to follow.

Andii will set the pattern in the first show by introducing the circus herself. In the future, she will introduce the circus or have another veteran do so. When she does the introduction herself, Andii often wears a kilted variant of her dress uniform to display her robotic legs and remind the audience that part of the Foundation’s goal is to aid the many veterans of the Fifth Frontier War. All veterans present are asked to stand and be honored, after which Andii turns the proceedings over to the Ringmaster. On Old Station, this works the audience into a standing ovation each and every time. Andii then goes backstage and gets back to the work of planning and managing.

In gravity fields generated by mass or grav technology, Andii ma-

neuers on her “grav caps,” small gravitic generators appended to her remaining lower limbs. Note that gravitic devices are essentially ineffective on Old Station since spin, not mass, provides the “gravity”.

The Vargr Ringmaster is himself considered a veteran due to service with Rhylanor’s ad-hoc defense forces, and sometimes carries the opening duties for Andii. More often than not, however, another veteran is tapped.

If the players are performers, they of course will go through their acts. They will also have opportunities to meet other performers, the various VIPs, and potential contacts. If they need particular items before they leave (weapons, data, and so on) they have a little more time to obtain them.

Before leaving, the players must become familiar with their new vessel and their routine for the next year. They are now part of a multifaceted, upscale circus run by a military ringmaster, “Captain Andii.” Though not unreasonable, Andii will take no guff, and runs a tight ship.

There will be encounters on station. A few Zhodani can be seen, and they seem unduly interested in *Cirque*. There will also be chances to brawl in bars and deal with the repercussions. Animals must be handled and prepared for the first flight.

Finally, after all the preparations and encounters, *Cirque* will be almost ready to leave from Rhylanor up-port. Everyone, especially Captain Andii, will be busy with final details for the trip. All of these details are potential subjects for interactions: finalizing the anticipated itinerary with the Advance Sophonts (a week behind schedule, and just a week before scheduled departure); loading sufficient raw life support for several months in space; obtaining permits for necessary ordnance; finalizing contracts with the last acts (especially if player characters are taking the roles of entertainers); and even arranging fuel transfer.

As much of the above as possible should be role-played. The overall scene is barely-controlled havoc. Small disasters abound: during refueling a minor collision loosens hull plating; the Comic Juggler disappears for a last bender and must be tracked down by security; the animal acts have a breakout or two; the Chief Engineer becomes obsessive about locating a spare compression field generator for a slightly subpar power plant.

Amidst all of this, The Cold-Case Detective Javert is asking questions about Thespian and Makeup Artist. Javert has concluded that his or her long cold-case investigation is focused on one or both of the two. Javert will be looking for the final evidence, but has been refused an indictment and warrant. His superiors believe that Javert is correct, and will permit him to join the Circus as a stagehand in an undercover role. Javert will thus be coming aboard. He will naturally be in contact with the players, seeking to “get to know” everyone coming aboard.

Leaving Rhylanor’s orbit, Andii plots a course through or near the restricted portion of the system (the “graveyard” of many ships and combatants). This will generate an abrupt encounter with at least one naval patrol. The naval patrol will be both officious and threatening, and will insist on questioning anything the officer of the deck has to say. Andii will be called to the bridge to account.

Once the naval patrol is convinced that it is in fact dealing with one of the mid-level heroes of the Imperium (Andii assisted in repelling Zhodani attack), the commander will insist that Andii match trajectories. Andii sees an opportunity, and insists on bringing the patrol’s crew aboard Big Top 1 for an intimate show. The referee can use this to highlight non-player characters, and to also put player-character entertainers through their paces. This is a chance for the group immediately understand that this is not a standard “let’s go pick a fight” campaign.

Finally, the Circus reaches its jump point, sets the power plant to “overclock,” and exits. The circus train has left the station.

Old Station on Holiday Eve Scale: Standard Deck Squares (1.5 meters)

A deck plan of the Main Concourse is included. Establishments discussed are not expressly placed by number, but are on the levels indicated.

The Main Concourse is one of ten Old Station segments. All segments are operated under regulations of the Rhylanor Starport Authority. As such, it is not subject to planetary law. The Starport Authority regulates weapon possession and use within the Concourse, as the area is pop-

ular with tourists from Rhylanor and other worlds. Main Concourse is viewed by Rhylanor’s youth as the “ultimate mall” for a hanging out. At least a hundred youths manage to visit on any given day. It is also a dating spot for adults, and a liberty facility for military, scout, and merchant personnel.

Station Security has the right to take custody of any weapon from any person at any time. Failure to surrender a weapon on demand may result in detention. Carrying high-powered weapons is discouraged. Newly purchased firearms, explosives, lasers and similar ranged weapons must be delivered to an on-station hotel or to a properly registered ship for storage in an appropriate locker. Purchasers of edged weapons are encouraged to do the same. Only sophonts carrying proof of legal majority may purchase weapons on station.

Use of weapons of any kind on the concourse subjects the user to detention, questioning, and possible Imperial charges. Station Security is allowed wide discretion to choose “rough justice” over bringing formal charges, and security personnel have the authority to order miscreants off the station.

There are a few well-known businesses and features in the central portion of the Concourse. From west to east, they are:

1. *Rowland’s Hanger*. The Hanger is a somewhat rough restaurant and bar catering to serious travellers, not for light-hearted tourists.
2. *Secondary cable housing*. Branch offices for various megacorporations rent space in buildings hanging from the cable. The lowest building deck is at least nine meters above the glacial valley level.
3. *Stairs, escalators and elevators* go up the terraced levels to either side of the cable. The elevators and escalators are inside the terraces; stairs are external.
4. *Vilani Dessert Dome*. Features light, sweet foods based on Vilani recipes.
5. *Miller’s Old Scout Brew Pub*. The structure is a salvaged Scout/Courier hull with fittings, drives, controls, furniture, and internal partitions removed. Internally, the pub has open floor plan with tables and kitchen facilities. Brewing and distilling equipment has been built into the fuel tankage areas. Outside seating is also available.
6. *Cirque des Sirkas*. The tent is up, animal pens prepared and occupied. The caterers are working on meal prep, and appropriate security is already in place. From west to east there is a dressing dome and animal housing domes (converted survival domes). There are also one-ton cargo carriers; large animal pens; the Tent; porta-pries in rows to either side of the Tent; and a front reception area for the opening performance. The reception preparation is shown as of twenty-four hours before the opening show.
7. *Central cable housing*. This housing provides an airtight housing all the way to the hub for the segment’s main cable. Cargo and passenger elevators run inside the housing; the cargo elevator runs on a track up the cable. Smaller passenger platforms also follow the cable upward. Large hatches allow movement of cargo in and out of the enclosure. The elevator shafts allow the elevators and platforms to go down to the lowest rim area. *The Imperial Manor Hotel* hangs on the housing, providing exhilarating views to all of its guests.
8. *Four sets of stairs, escalators, and elevators* allow access to the terraces on either side. These are the same in constriction as those previously described.
9. *Stairs to the “subway.”* The subway goes around the rim, allowing faster transit for those in a real rush.
10. *“The Chessboards.”* The park contains two oversized chessboards on slightly raised platforms to provide for life sized games, performance space, soap-box space for orators, and other public uses. Benches provide seating. Two conceptualized sculptures of starships are not art, but have become excellent climbing spaces for children and childish adults. A large, unassigned space hosts various gatherings and functions. Construction is being undertaken to repair damage caused by a training accident during the war. In addition, two dome-kiosks are currently unoccupied.
11. *Interstellar Food Court*. Dome-shaped food kiosks provide a wide variety of food types. These provide “fast food,” rather than high cuisine.
12. *Statue of Olav hault-Plankwell (Olav I, first of the Emperors of the*

Flag, born on Rhyllanor).

13. *The Broadside.* The nautical-themed restaurant and pub is frequented by tourists hoping to see real spacer captains. The menus explain that the staff dress in quaint, historically inaccurate costumes intended to evoke British Imperialism (whatever that was).
14. *Secondary Cable.* Same as first secondary cable. The Travellers' News Service maintains its Rhyllanor offices in the building hanging from the cable.
15. *Trevor's.* Eating and drinking establishment favored by army and marine veterans. The entirely "outside" tables are fixed firmly in place to minimize their misuse during disagreements. The chairs are light plastic, reducing breakage of chairs and bodies during such arguments.

In addition there are many other facilities:

Storefronts. One-quarter of the approximately 500 stores and entertainment establishments have entries on this level. With additional available "depth," these tend to be larger venues. Storefronts, restaurants, bars and theaters with only terrace access (the second and higher levels) tend to be viewed as less desirable establishments, though there are bright spots.

Carts and Kiosks. Small mobile carts and kiosks can be found throughout out the concourse, selling everything from Vilani Shish Kabob to cheap souvenirs.

Green-space is found throughout the concourse. Several of the terrace levels are green-space for recreation and more traditional functions such as photosynthesis.

First-Level Storefront Establishments Of Note

1. *Traveller's Aide Society Subsector Offices.*
2. *Imperial Military Recruiting Station.* All formal branches of the Imperial military maintain a recruiting office within this storefront. Blatant attempts are made to appeal to youths in particular.
3. *Concourse Emergency Center.* The Emergency Center, which occupies several storefronts, can handle up to fifteen patients at a time, including trauma victims. Once patients are stabilized, they are transferred to the main hospital in another torus segment.
4. *Donald's Doodads and Data from All Over.* Rocks, toys, antique-looking thingummies, baubles and kitschy souvenirs from all over the sector. None of these items seem to be are worth very much, no matter what the price tag may say. The data compendiums are far more valuable; the proprietor actively buys and sells information from any source. If Donald tells you something is so, believe him; no matter the source, his information is all based on impeccable research. Among the proprietor's prized possessions is a sheet of what appears to be paper, with a simple but vaguely familiar symbol drawn on it. Occasionally, when he's feeling like talking, he takes the sheet of paper from its triple-locked safe, explains that it came to him from an estate sale, and then rips it up. It immediately re-assembles. Most spacers assume it's just a cheap parlor trick in a cheap shop, and all refuse to pay him the Cr 100,000.00 asking price. He would sell it for a tenth of that if someone could explain to him what it really is.
5. *Eaglestone Excursions.* Independent charter tour operator, specializing in adventure touring for the adventurist needing a break. The company owns a number of in-system craft and books charters and services for the wealthy.
6. *Trebor Interstellar Designs.* Ship's architect office specializing in ships of 2400 tons or fewer.
7. *Glesner Personnel Matching.* Headhunting offices specializing in personnel management. Glesner is the sole contractor handling personnel for Sharurshid's Rhyllanor Office, Cirque des Sirkas, LIC, and other spacefaring operations. Glesner also holds contracts with numerous guilds and unions. Starship operators throughout the subsector rely upon Glesner's to vet personnel. Fee only if successful.
8. *Osborne Galleries.* Art gallery selling genuine and expensive works of art, including "folk art" from various societies and species throughout the Domain of Deneb, as well as more affordable author-

ized reproductions. Osborne is currently showing the sculptor's concept model for "Obstinate," a Masterpiece commissioned by various private citizens of Rhyllanor. The final work is being shipped to Norris to be installed by Holiday Eve, 1111 (a year hence).

9. *Smart's Tailor Shop.* Smart's experienced tailors and seamstresses can let out your old dress uniform, or make you a new facsimile that will fool Sector Admiral (Ret.) Santanochiev. Rumors that Smart runs a sweatshop are exaggerated, at least slightly. Smart can also pad a suit to hide most small weapons with ease.
10. *Kundert's Shipboard Pets.* A wide variety of beakers, tree rats, seedspitters, and other small animals commonly found on vessels in the Spinward Marches. The owner also claims to know where one can by a "breeding pair" of "genuine Terran barn-cats from the woods of deepest, darkest Maine." A black beaker in the beaker cage stares at any character with a known (to the referee, at least) high psionic potential.
11. *Vallance Gems and Settings.* Well-secured and alarmed establishment which sells genuine and valuable gems.
12. *Evans' Textile Creations.* Evans sells hand-made textile creations, from fine clothing to quilts. Some of her work includes valuable antiques, including a quilt once owned by the Aledon family. It has been fully authenticated, having been among documented gifts to a loyal retainer. The squares include bits fabric said to date from before the Aledon family came to the Spinward Marches.
13. *Hunter's Cyberware Emporium.* Hunter's offers a range of cyberware upgrades including implants and prostheses. Products include both wired and wireless neural computer interfaces, data cores, hearing augmentation, optical sensor implants in any wavelength, prosthetic hand, arm and leg upgrades in a wide variety of configurations, weapon implants, skeletal reinforcing, and Subcutaneous armor. Hunter's expert technicians and surgeons offer a 24-hour turnaround once payment is confirmed. Disclaimer: 1. It is the responsibility of the customer to abide by any and all laws pertaining to implants and concealed weaponry. 2. Hunter's accepts no responsibility in the event of disfigurement, impairment, disability or death. 3. Strictly no refunds.
14. *Rutherford's Editing and Writing Services.* Rutherford provides expert assistance in all written communications, reviving an art that's lost when one relies on computer programs. The proprietor can locate natives of most human and non-human languages spoken within the Domain of Deneb to assist in translation and proofing of texts.
15. *Worj's Physical Books.* Offering and selling the best in both reprints and genuinely old books produced on physical media.
16. *Olav I Museum.* A museum devoted to the life of Olav hault-Plankwell, as well as the history of other "Emperors of the Flag." A number of authentic artifacts associated with Olav are kept in the museum, under high security.
17. *Hirz's Mind and Body Gym.* A standard gymnasium with exercise equipment, payable on a daily rate. Referee: this gymnasium is operated by a Psionic Institute. Evaluations and training are handled in a back room.
18. *Dr. Menotti, Exoveterinarian.* Menotti has facilities to handle many types of biology. Bring him a beaker, your family bloodvark, or your favorite geneered atmoslug to cure what ails. No species too exotic.
19. *Calthron and Calthron Investigations.* Neither the size nor location of the office (behind one of the support cables) reflects the real abilities of the company. Note that this is a "Fat Cat" crossover.
20. *Duke Self's Solomani Curios and Bistro: Featuring oddities and fine foods showcasing the diverse cultures and history of Solomani peoples.* Enjoy Ukrainian Borscht, Chinese Spring Rolls, American Pancakes with real Maple syrup, and even Peruvian Roasted Scorpions with Ghost Peppers. All of these delicacies are offered alongside a staggering display of Solomani cultural novelties that you can take with you for a modest price. Drink, dine, and revel in the glory of the many and varied Solomani cultures. Leave content and a little wiser concerning your friends to Rimward (and your wallet lighter; the real maple syrup costs CR 2,000 for two pancakes' worth).
21. *Beckman Power.* Beckman sells batteries, power cells, and other devices to power almost any piece of equipment, modern or archaic.

22. *Butter's Awards.* If you need a plaque, scroll, engraved power screwdriver, or almost anything else as an award, Butter will prepare it for you within an hour of having the object. He knows where to buy most items, and has discounts arranged with the majority of the merchants on the Concourse.
23. *Phalon Candies.* Phalon sells a wide variety of sweets for every taste.
24. *Thorp's Cleanerbots.* Thorp sells everything from small sweepers to heavy-duty janitorial systems, for the busy housewife or the busy ship's steward.
25. *Selter's Communications.* Selter sells various phones and other communications devices — some so small and discrete that possession without proper authorization is a felony on worlds valuing personal freedom.
26. *Turner Data Retrieval.* If you accidentally erased your holiday pictures, or you want to scare up the data off a methodically erased data storage unit, Turner will do the work for you. Like any good business person, Turner charges extra for certification that his own computers are wiped clean of the data after it is retrieved.
27. *Erickson's Keys and Locksmith.* Mechanical or electronic, Erickson can copy a key or install a better one.
28. *Appell's Walking Sticks and Staffs.* Under a sign depicting Odin, the Grey Pilgrim of Sword Worlds lore, Appell will sell you any supporting rod you may need or desire, using fine woods from throughout the Domain of Deneb. His best staffs are made of Capon's century wood.
29. *Jukes' Survival Suits.* When you've forgotten your emergency air supply, Jukes can take care of you. Jukes went from comfortable to wealthy during the Fifth Frontier War, and for good reason — his survival gear is the best.
30. *Finnamore Party Supplies.* Every day's a party when you're alive, and Finnamore wants you to supply your days well. Proof of age required for most purchases.
31. *Bell's Supermarket.* Everyone must eat, and a fair number of people reside on Old Station year-around. Bell gets the freshest vegetables, meats, and other foodstuffs available, because the company controls most of the adjoining agro-torus.
32. *Hutton Starship Provisions.* Across the Main Concourse from Bell's, Hutton handles more basic provisions, like protein dispenser refills and liquid purification recharge packets. They maintain a large catalogue of items for every sophont's taste.
33. *Terton Algae.* Terton specializes in pond-scum, doesn't deny it, and doesn't dodge the issue, because your starship air recycling uses pond-scum to keep you *alive*. When you want the best pond-scum, and you don't mean a lawyer, you go to Terton Algae.
34. *Hadden Musical Instruments.* A starship crew needs to nurture its collective soul in the deep and dark of jump, and what better way to pass the time than with good music? Hadden sells everything from reproduction bagpipes (guaranteed to get you unceremoniously decompressed) to the finest stringed instruments, even a massive Grand Piano if you can find space in your lounge for it. The only things Hadden doesn't sell are pre-programmed "instruments" that require no training or talent.
35. *Berry for Zero-G.* If you need powered, counter-spin-stabilized wrenches, screwdrivers, and other tools to make your zero-g repairs, come to Berry.
36. *Carey Planetary Emblems.* There's a fortune in putting your planet's flag or other emblem on hats, shirts, vacc-suit covers, and other clothing — and Carey is making it, one overpriced hat at a time.
37. *Matyola's Firearms.* No traveller should be without a means of self-defense. All identification is carefully checked, and station policy is followed in all cases. So you, kid, yes, *you* — don't try to buy even a BB gun from Matyola. Spacers, though, are welcome and given individual attention.
38. *Cobb's Pharmacy.* Cobbs fills your prescriptions for fungicides, antibiotics, painkillers, and other medications and materials to help you through your latest misadventure.
39. *Heine's Edges.* Heine sells a wide variety of edged weapons, from flint souvenirs to monofilament blades.
40. *Loren the Laser King.* This small store sells only laser weapons, but

they all work and they all work well. The owner occasionally spouts off claims that an alternate universe exists in which the Emperor isn't a few years from assassination. His friends and colleagues think him odd, not certifiable — everyone loves Strephon, after all, and Loren is just eccentric.

41. *ReID.* An electronics shop exclusively for ReID brand goods ... personal communicators, portable computers, A/V players, personal music players, etc. ("ReID" is the local retail brand name for Naasirka's consumer electronics range.) ReID can be pronounced as "Re-ID" or "Reed".
42. *Gelinas Duffles.* Spacers' duffles are as individual as they are. Don't go from one ship to another without the best duffle you can buy.
43. *Rowland Bank.*
44. *LeMay Weapon Repair.*
45. *Wendelken Florist.*
46. *Moss Barber Shop.*

Second-Level Establishments of Note

1. *Terhune Formal Wear.* The store caters to humans, with only a small selection of items suitable for non-humans.
2. *Dillon's Buffet Eatery.* With a variety of food types, Dillon's offers somewhat higher quality and comfort than the food provided by the domes and kiosks. It also has Second-Terrace charm overlooking the treetops.
3. *Raymond's Vilani Cuisine.* Vilani food for the pickiest eater of somewhat incompatible life forms. No one knows why someone with a Solomani name is selling Vilani food, but it's as good as anything Grandmother Malikaanasi ever fermented for you.
4. *Net Effect.* A youth-orientated A/V media shop. Well stocked with the latest music tiles. Net Effect defines itself as a cool alternative to House of Coal's overt trendy-ism.
5. *Joyner's Ship Carpentry.* Joyner's builds special furniture for special ships. If you need an Owner-Aboard suite crafted from Capon's exotic hardwoods (or, for that matter, Mercury's cheap pine), Joyner will fit you out right. Joyner particularly likes 100-year wood from the forests of Capon (Spinward Marches 2324), and will talk your ears off about how the migratory lumberjacks do their best to keep the forests producing. You can pretend interest; *Cirque* plans to stop there.
6. *Reich Electronics.* Reich's specializes in the highest quality local technology in consumer electronics. All items offered for sale are known to incorporate materials from Pannet's nasty mines and collection points.
7. *Engstrom Glassware.* Engstrom sells the kind of solid, heavy glassware that survives heavy maneuvering or a solid crack against a marine's skull. Engstrom has a line of hand-blown glassware from Arkadia's finest craftsmen.
8. *Merx Musculature.* A standard gymnasium with exercise equipment, payable on a daily rate.
9. *Bulldog Court Private Investigations.* The proprietor's got a gun and a grav cycle, and somehow there's always a dame mixed up in his life and assignments. Private investigation undertaken, wrongs righted, justice done and seen to be done. Bulldog can also help with speeding tickets.
10. *Morgan's Formal Wear Rentals.* If you don't want to own the latest in formal wear, but have a reception to go to on Holiday, this is the place to rent what you need. Morgan maintains a large stock of formal wear for males and females of various shapes, sizes, and species. A large, well-catalogued warehouse in another torus segment holds over ten thousand items ("If it's not in style today, wait a decade"), and can pull out appropriate clothing within a half-hour to forty-five minutes.
11. *Smith's Low-Tech Weapons.* Specializes in blades, mechanical projectiles (e.g., bow weapons) and other weapons which can be used at many law levels and in most technology settings. "The other gal's just as dead with an arrow through her eye as a bullet."
12. *Myer's Wormhole Donuts.* Shop specializing in baked and fried circular cakes and hot drinks including caffeine and other stimulants.
13. *House Of Coal.* A trendy youth-oriented A/V media shop. Well

Cirque

- stocked with the latest music on all media forms. Also has exclusive local distribution rights to several major offworld video titles (including "Pirates of the Blood Asteroids").
14. *Rhylanor Home Defense Forces Main Offices*. From 1107 through 1109, the offices were filled with volunteers planning the last-ditch battle against invading forces. Now the office is mostly deserted, with only two paid staffers and a handful of aging Fourth Frontier War veterans telling fibs about how they served under Aramais P. Lee the time his ship misjumped into deep space and lived to tell about it.
 15. *Hoxter's Hats*. Hoxter's sells all sorts of headgear for all sorts of weather. Proud supplier of Cirque des Sirkas' distinctive "baseball-style" crew caps with logo.
 16. *Sonderman's Toys*. Toys of all designs, from all over the galaxy. Some sophont toys have small parts that may endanger young children. But, then again, taking a small child on your next trip may endanger them more.
 17. *Rondot's Ship Customization*. Rondot takes fairly standard ship designs and customizes them to the client's specifications. She knows and studies the plans, and knows that personalization can make a Free Trader into a palace.
 18. *Frasier Therapy*. If you've had a bad year and need someone to listen, Frasier is there for you.
 19. *"Flame" Ashby's Fire Prevention Systems*. Donnie "Flame" Ashby knows how fires start, how to prevent them, and how to stop them without venting all of your atmosphere into space. Upgrade your ship's fire prevention systems before you try to breath smoke.
 20. *Davies' Delightful Donuts*.
 21. *Curtin's Curtains*.
 22. *Gemstones by van den Heever*.
 23. *Boyer's Beyond Bedding Boutique from The Beyond*.
 24. *Rathbone's Comics and Graphic Novels*.
 25. *Poles Traditional Vilani Craft Brews*.
 26. *Thrien's Very Odd Lots*: You need it, we might have it. We have it, you might need it.
 27. *Wilson's Medical Supplies*.
 28. *Addley's Armory*.
 29. *Rogers' Communicators*.
 30. *Hammond's Genotyping*.
 31. *Dangerous Jay's Terran Tabasco Specialties*.
 32. *Barnett Pet Supply*.
 33. *Law's Gag Gifts*: When you don't know what to give, give a good laugh. Sit your favorite Vargr on a whoopee cushion!
 34. *Fennell Spice Merchants*.
 35. *Penrod's Pest Control*.
 36. *The O'Neill's Leadership and Management Training School*.
 37. *Smith Ironware*.
 38. *Steele Rails Model Train Emporium*.
 39. *Shafer's Securities and Investments*.
 40. *Reger's Seed Supply*: Heirloom seeds, hybrids, and exotics.
 41. *Mitford's Pancake House*: Classic Aslan pancakes served 24/7.
 42. *Van Wie's Perfumery*. Specializes in Saurus-created scents.
 43. *Carpenter's Woodworks*.
 44. *Davis' Vehicle Rental*: Bikes, strollers, & personal electric transport devices.
 45. *Dufresnes' Collectable Action Figures and Miniatures*.
 46. *Borghi's Breads and Pastas*.
 47. *Seitz's Ice Cream*: Home of Seitz's original 777 flavors.
 48. *Hillers' Suds Palace*.
 49. *Henderson's Haven Casino*.
 50. *Umphress' Uniforms*.
 51. *Lyttle's Titles*: Title services for all space vessels.
 52. *Reimers-Rawcliffe Life Insurance Agency*.
 53. *Heng's Teamwear*: Team shirts, caps and other gear printed or embroidered while you wait.
 54. *Sarkes Salvage*.
 55. *Fleming's Homeopathic Pharmacopia*.
 56. *Young's Game Emporium*.
 57. *Watt's Lamps and Lighting*.
 58. *Wesson's Costumes and Masques*.
 59. *Brooks Biospheres*.

60. *Vernon Game Hall*.
61. *Pearly White's Orthodontia Galactica*.
62. *Seeley's Seasonal Shop*: Gifts and decorations for holidays throughout the sector.
63. *Schuerholz Chocolatiers*.

Third-Level Establishments of Note

1. *Raz's Pasta Bowl*. Tucked away on the Third Level, the Pasta Bowl is found by the curious following the smells of exotic Terran spices like garlic and oregano. Just a window, usually with a line, they only serve two items: large garlic-bread bowls filled with pasta and meat sauce, and liters of thin beer in even thinner plastic cups. The prices are low, the pasta is hot, and no one ever leaves hungry. Spacers down to their last credit but respectful are fed and sent to Glesner's for urgent help.
2. *Fifty Million Names*. Shop specializing in religious documents and iconography from multiple cultures and species.
3. *Frannilii's Cartography*. Despite its location in a dingier section of the third level, Frannilii's provides the most accurate cartography (planetary and stellar) available in the subsector. Frannilii works with Donald to obtain all possible data. She does not discount legend and folklore solely because it appears to be apocryphal, preferring to correlate every scrap of information she can access to locate any place of interest. Frannilii maintains several safes full of valuable maps and atlases. Among her projects: she has been commissioned by Aramais P. Lee to determine approximate locations of rogue planets and other extra-solar objects in the Regina Subsector, while another project has her correlating legends of odd appearances and disappearance on and near Regina.
4. *Hemidian Books*. A book store (both printed flimsy and media tile formats) focusing on non-fiction such as textbooks, technical manuals, science journals, and popular science magazines. Mostly new, some second-hand.
5. *Coinich Financial Advisors, LIC*. "Don't leave your financial future to inferior software or A.I.s. Only a sophont, with years of experience, can provide the intuition needed to provide you with a secure retirement. Whether a permanent station resident, on a regular route, or just passing through... we can help. Come in and speak with Aengus MacLaren, or any of our licensed advisers at all hours of station day or night. Member: Rhylanor Stock Exchange (RSE), and Imperial Financial Advisors Association (IFAA)."
6. *Pravda News Service*. The subsector "tabloid" competitor of Traveller News service. Video displays on the walls show lurid stories of various events, stories of questionable accuracy, and tout coverage of the "seriously underplayed threat of Zho sleeper cells ready to rise up and use Ancient installations to enslave us all."
7. *Dale Dips and Condiments from 5,000 Worlds*.
8. *Millard Portable Language Translators*.
9. *Bergstedt's Crom-Burgers*: Berg sells the best crom-burgers in the sector. Forget that Gatliifi fellow on Regina.
10. *Lai's Day Spa and Health Retreat*.
11. *Molesworth's Leather Goods*.
12. *Warnes' Portrait Studio*.
13. *Johnson Gym*.
14. *Collinson's Cheese Cupboard*.
15. *Bell's Silversmith*.
16. *Webber's Baby World*.
17. *Vallat's Fine Wines*.
18. *Draper's Dry Cleaners*.
19. *Sherlock Investigations*.
20. *Lymbery Luxury Confections*.
21. *Crucifix Fine Luggage*.
22. *Wootton's Boots*.
23. *Harris' Electronic Charging Station*.
24. *Rathbone's Rugs and Carpets*.
25. *Kehnen Krispy Kones*.
26. *Orr's Locks*.
27. *Bishop's Bridal Shop and Wedding Boutique*.
28. *Akkerman Martial Arts*.
29. *Marjola's Magic Shop*.

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30. Gibbins' Porch and Patio Furniture.
31. Yamaguchi's Dance Studio.
32. Brodie's Belts and Bags.
33. Paul's Paint and Paper.
34. Karlsson Physical Therapy.
35. Fields Fireworks.
36. Bradshaw's Personalized Stuffed Animals.
37. Rosynek's Vilani Viands.
38. Boase Private Security.
39. Slocum's Hardware.
40. Adams Office Supplies.
41. Danielson's Oxygen Supply.
42. Urbin's Acupuncture.
43. Vargas Precision Timepieces.
44. Bryan's Breads and Buns.
45. Howlett's Vargr Karaoke Bar.
46. Patterson Personnel.
47. Stanton's Hydroponic Greenhouse Supplies.
48. Stafford Private Nursing.
49. Shayne Event Staffing.
50. Petro Rock Climbing Gear.
51. Grimmund's Maze of Mirrors.
52. Blood's Pudding Bar.
53. Hammond Footwear.
54. Mitchell's Mini-Golf and Arcade.
55. Gorski Tile and Flooring.
56. Lockett's Safe Storage.
57. Garnett's Celebrity Memorabilia.
58. Schmiedekamp's Soups, Salads, Sandwiches and Sake.
59. Saul's Sundries.
60. Eveland's Arboretum.
61. Hansen's Hats.
62. Shocklee's Trapper Supplies.
63. Joly's Lunion Jellybeans.
64. Thede's Robotic Steeds and Equestrian Shop.
65. Heck's Cafeteria.
66. Kuzma's Kites.
67. Currie's Imaging and Remote Sensing Supplies.
68. Reiss's Stringed Instruments.
69. Soholt's Salad Bar.
70. Fegette's 3-D Printing. Specializing in Reproduction of Difficult-to-Locate Parts.
71. Eckman's Seafood.
72. Engebos' Exotic Fruits.
73. Buck's Billiards.
74. Reynolds Sportsmania.
75. Byers' Best Cookies.
76. Roth's Jewellery & Timepiece Repair.
77. Metzger's Munitions.
78. Karamales Seafood Shop.
79. Kolb's Safes and Lockboxes.
80. Johnson's Coin and Credit Exchange.
81. Hidalgo Buckles & Belts.
82. Davis' Coffee Bar.
83. Hand's Therapeutic Massage.
84. Shaw's Sleepwear.
85. Romero's Gelato.
86. Richards' Medical Supply.
87. Young's Aslan Cuisine.
88. Salisbury's Steak and Eggs.
89. Romanowski's Rags: Second-hand clothing at third-hand prices.
90. Crocker's Pottery.
91. Galliard's Specialty Ammunition.
92. Bossi's Bubble Machines.
93. Leen's Reader's World.
94. Campbell's Plaids & Pipes.
95. Rief's Scuba Shop.
96. Majer's Minor Electronic Repairs.
97. Covert's Cantina.
98. Stanton's Tea Time.
99. Schultz' Swimwear.

100. Brodie's Noodles.
101. Campbell's Classic Cupcakes.
102. Narucki's Lizard World.
103. Reynolds' Camping Equipment.
104. MacGregor's Hovercycles.
105. Hay's House of Herbs.
106. Adler's Anonymous: Everything you need for not being noticed, including three bushes.
107. Boisvert Archery Supplies.
108. Wong's Farm Gear.
109. Greimann's Snowshoes and Skis.
110. Stehling's Shaving Supply.
111. Slaughter's Salon: Good looks to die for (but please don't).
112. Duke's Vilani Apparel.
113. Hain's Helmets and Goggles.
114. Pritchett's Denim Den.
115. Scoggins' Puzzles and Brain Teasers.
116. McCulloch' Custom Embroidery.
117. Sackett's Station Skateboards.
118. Trias' Tavern.
119. Blanco's Beerfest.
120. Walz' Cutz.

Fourth-Level Establishments of Note

1. *Kabala Life Coaching.* The shop provides instructional materials and books on numerous ancient religions and magical systems. Some speculate that it is a front for a Zhodani-supported Psionic Institute. Referee: in actuality, this is a front for a *fake* Psionic Institute, one which takes money to teach nothing more than measured breathing.
2. *Lee's SPV (Sophont-Powered Vehicle) Sales, Service and Rentals.* The store sells and rents bicycles and tricycles for station use. It is at this level to be convenient to those "riding the upper rim," the track encircling the station on the next terrace above. Operated by a former lawyer claiming to be a distant relative of Aramais P. Lee.
3. *Rhylanor Live Player's Guild (Old Station Office).* Small office maintained for the registration of live performers of all type, and for enforcement of Guild Rules regarding abuse of technological assistance.
4. *Bob's Token Locker.* A competitor of Donald's Doodads and Data from All Over, Bob's sells "trinkets and knickknacks from all over." Seen by many as a simple pawn shop, Bob's is a fair establishment, giving "thirty-day redeemable loans" for items. If the loans are not repaid with one percent interest, the item becomes Bob's for sale. However, Bob's prices are reasonable, given that most spacers in trouble will take less; Bob's loans are generally about 80% of his fair estimate of value. Spacers usually leave without redeeming, so he makes his money. Bob's current prize item is a jeweled ear-stud made from a small Star Sapphire from Derchon (Spinward Marches 2024, which is on *Cirque's* planned route). He will sell it to a PC for a mere Cr 6,500 "because I like your face."
5. *Plankwell's.* A small, seedy bar run by a direct descendant of the long-dead Emperor's second cousin twice removed. Plankwell is rumored to keep his prices low by running a still in the back. However, no one has gone blind yet from a bender at Plankwell's.
6. *Hogajue's Vermin Control.* Hogajue is the being to go to when you have a vermin outbreak in your station warehouse, your hold, or your Main Concourse eatery. Hogajue has a real appetite for vermin control. Using both simplistic chemical poisons and more exotic methods such as DNA-tailored predators, Hogajue is the four-eyed thing that keeps the station clean. Don't forget to buy an eight-pack of Hogajue's Patented Vreeper Grenades while you're there.
7. *Forester' Aslan Bonsai.*
8. *Mehrholz' Mania Tavern.*
9. *Horrell's Sensor Repairs.*
10. *Levy Optical Specialties.*
11. *Wood's Watering Hole.*
12. *Payne Podiatry.*
13. *Schleusener's Smoked Sausages.*
14. *Rubin's Artist Supply Shop.*

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15. *Baxter Beauty Supply.*
16. *Clinite's Specialized Landing Craft Sales Financing Office.*
17. *Foster's Fabrics.*
18. *Rice's Juice Bar.*
19. *Bell's House of Pewter.*
20. *Weiskircher's Wine Emporium.*
21. *Ryng's Compact Starship Gym Equipment.*
22. *Lockhart Crossbows.*
23. *Kowalczewski's Haberdashery.*
24. *Darios' Doubleshots Bar and Grill.*
25. *Connelly's Silicon Grill.*
26. *Miller's Market Research Center.*
27. *Darios' Specialty Gift Wrapping.*
28. *Page's Paper Supply.*
29. *Piper's Plumbing.*
30. *McLearen's Specialty Micro-Satellites.*
31. *Humphreys Drones.*
32. *Linnemann's Ointments and Unguents.*
33. *Holmes' Arbitration Service.*
34. *O'Flannagain's Fish and Chips.*
35. *White's Wombat Watering Hole.*
36. *Clark's Creamery.*
37. *Chunie's Lunar Specialties.*
38. *Jones' Junior Gymnasium.*
39. *Osswald Otherworld Outfitters.*
40. *Leymaster Gravitic Repairs.*
41. *Corrin's Cutlery.*
42. *Fuente's Olde-Fashioned Solomani Soda Shoppe.*
43. *Rouse's Finned and Feathered Foods.*
44. *Lauer's Gift Baskets.*
45. *Ueber Candles.*
46. *Lewis' While-You-Wait Specialty Tailoring.*
47. *Simon's Hot Pretzels.*
48. *Ota's Yogurts.*
49. *Weissler Waxworks.*
50. *Headley's Aquariums.*
51. *Maroney's Safe-Storage.*
52. *Townend's Rhylanor Eel Specialties*
53. *Bigland Station Rental Office.*
54. *Anderson's Plush Stuffed Toys.*
55. *Duyker's Very Fine Pies.*
56. *Saint John's Stained Glass Specialties.*
57. *Whalley's Wheel Covers.*
58. *Sacco's Satchels.*

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I — Two Weeks Before Holiday (351-1110)

- ☐ The PCs seek employment through Glesner Personnel on Old Station. Glesner green-lights the PCs for interviews and, if entertainers, auditions. Except for Geezer Thespian and Comic Juggler, entertainers taken from the pre-rolled group face final auditions.
- ☐ Both the Ringmaster and the Geezer Thespian are generally present with Andii at entertainer interviews and auditions, as is Bertii. All other characters are first interviewed by Bertii and U'aili, with others as appropriate (e.g., cage cleaners will also meet with the Chief Trainer; stage hands will meet with the Chief Roustabout). All PCs meeting with Bertii will feel that Bertii is silently but thoroughly sizing them up. Fortunately, the players will all be basically qualified, no matter how they might feel about the war in general or "Zho and other Outworld Types" in particular.
- ☐ Signing actual employment contracts will take place on board *Cirque* with Andii herself while the ship is docked at the Old Station Concourse torus segment.
- ☐ When the players leave through the lock after signing their contracts, they notice a small group of Zhodani diplomats seated at a nearby café table. . The diplomats seem to be watching the entry to the lock. A crowd is also gathering and begins to jeer the Zhodani. Station security initially takes no notice, indeed pointedly looks away. Escalation is up to the referee and the players. Any crowd violence will be in the form of rotten food thrown at the diplomats and similar relatively minor actions; station security will reluctantly break the crowd up eventually.

- ☐ Final meeting with Advance Sophonts, if players involved in management.
- ☐ Tent erection. Robots perform well for the most part, but some glitches occur. Players find themselves climbing poles, tugging ropes, and otherwise attempting to fix the mistakes made by the "self-erecting tent" and auxiliary robots.
- ☐ Players encounter all major NPCs.
- ☐ First chance to "meet and greet" one another. Players get to decide what they will tell of themselves, and where. The encounter can happen anywhere on the Main Concourse, including of course in a proper bar.
- ☐ Every adventure should include a bar fight. Some of the musicians find a seedy karaoke bar built under a terrace during the weekly contest. One of the musicians engages in a "karaoke hustle" (feigning inability to sing in order to raise the bets) and then demonstrates real abilities. A fight naturally erupts. The players get pulled into the fight.
- ☐ Exploring the Main Concourse. The PCs should be encouraged to explore, especially within the Main Concourse. Doing so can take several days, depending on the PCs' and Referee's interests.
- ☐ If the PCs go to any of the following, they are likely to encounter Aramais P. Lee (but only once, unless Aramais suggests a drink and a meal after a discussion at one of the storefronts): Miller's Old Scout Brew Pub, Donald's Doodads and Data from All Over, or Frannilii's Cartography. At the latter two locations, Aramais is in quiet conversations with the proprietors, and will stop talking, hide all papers, darken reader screens, and so on as the PCs approach. At the former, he may agree to join the PCs in a drink, so long as they are buying (even if he seemed to have invited them to join him). Aramais will say nothing of his plans, except that "Sharurshid always has some place for me to go, and they want me there yesterday." Though he has been touted as a host of the Opening Gala for the circus, he will say without conviction, "Oh, that, a shame, but it looks like I'll have to miss it. Blast all." He will, however, express interest in the vessel *Cirque*, and make sure that the PCs know he had a part in "proving the design." He would rather talk about old battles and "striking Viking women" than his current role in events. Several hours after he excuses himself, he will have departed the station in a Sharurshid-registered Jump-3 Scout with no stated destination. If the encounter is later discussed with Andii, she will not be unhappy at all that he is skipping the festivities. "A lot of us owe him our lives, but he's still an insufferable braggart."
- ☐ Encounter: The PCs encounter a group of underaged teens, egging each other into some form of foolishness (e.g., buying drinks at a bar, baiting uniformed Imperial military, trying to purchase a firearm with pooled funds, picking pockets). Whatever the foolishness, the PCs become involved and have to assist the teens to avoid beatings, arrest by station security, etc. One has a wealthy or noble parent or relative who may be helpful in the future.
- ☐ Encounter: A one-legged beggar in a corner sends a skinny young boy over for alms. Ignoring the boy gets a scowl; kicking the boy gets an irate crowd after the PCs. Giving the boy a credit or two obtains the PCs a favor to be redeemed later: the beggar will turn up with an artificial leg, a handgun and very precise aim when the PCs are in trouble deeper than they can handle.
- ☐ Event: Station security announces a "Zho terrorism drill." Everyone is asked to stay where they are unless ordered otherwise. The PCs are contacted by Andii and advised that it is a standard drill. They are to quite literally put on their "*Cirque*" crew hats and stay put unless told otherwise by station security. The drill ends about twenty minutes later without incident.
- ☐ Encounter: Vargr ruffians from the *Yaarghu Pfaglum* ("Vicious Circle") (the Vargr Ringmaster's natal ship) spoiling for a fight.

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- Encounter: Maintenance team looking for an air leak.
- Encounter: The PCs see a vreeper scuttling toward a plywood-covered storefront on an upper level (see Animals section). The vreeper sees them and displays threatening behavior. Killing it causes it to emit its pheromones, and over 200 vreepers come scrambling out of a hole in the storefront's plywood.
- Encounter: Sharurshid merchant officers in company uniforms. If they learn that the PCs have joined Cirque des Sirkas, they will warn about U'aii. "She gets her papers signed in blood, she does." It is unclear whether this is a respectful comment, and the character will just say, "Be careful."
- Encounter: Combat veterans (army or marines) looking for some "Zho or Viking or even Vargr to give a lickin'." One laughs about "finding that dog in the red tails and funny hat."
- Encounter: Lt. Commander Svilli Jakarti, IN (Ret.). He will react favorably to learning that the PCs have met and will "serve with" Andii. "More guts than most of the admirals."
- Encounter: Private investigator pretending to be a circus fan. He seems interested in the names and planets of origin of headliners in Cirque des Sirkas.
- Encounter: A mime comes up to the PCs and performs all of the standard routines while blocking their way. A coin gets the mime out of their way.

Act II — Holiday Eve (364-1110)

- Holiday Eve.
- Bright and early, Holiday Eve morning, all performers, hands, and non-essential crew members are at the tent, 00:01 Imperial Standard Time. Everyone is present for the "final dress rehearsal" in the tent. The tent fabric is tuned to muffle sound emissions to the outside but to show pre-recorded snippets of performances on its sidewalls (see Tent description for details).
- *Cirque's* Chief of Security supervises both her forces and the additional forces from the contractor. Rowdy revelers are already beginning to gather on the Main Concourse.
- Unless they have other jobs, the PCs are to assist the Animal Handlers and Roustabouts in getting the animals to their shelters. The animals are berthed there at night, as Andii wants them secure for the Holiday Eve festivities. After that, the livestock will be free for the excitement. All personnel except for the Animal Handlers are expected back on board *Cirque* by 01:00 Holiday morning, to rest up for the opening show and reception.
- Animals protest this treatment, whether large or small, and interact with the PCs and each other. Play for fun, but also to introduce some of the animals (notably a) the "faux Jabberwock," a cuddly "dog's dog" from Vargr space with the slobberingly friendly playfulness and coordination of a drunken St. Bernard, and b) the durahnthe, a large four-legged mount).
- A tree rat gets free and runs into the crowd, creating havoc and endangering the animal (the referee may choose any other animal, but a mischievous, thieving tree rat is harder to catch and causes more trouble). The PCs are sent to protect and retrieve it. The task is complicated because no tranquilizer darts safe for tree rats are available, and tasers and other devices meant for humans are unsafe. This animal is a valuable part of the Clown's act and needs to be captured alive and well.
- The animal finds numerous ways to evade capture, despite being chipped with a small transmitting unit. The chip is not functioning well; its signal comes and goes, annoying the players. This should be played into an all-day event. The events and encounters listed below should be woven into the search and disrupt it. Raising the interruption just as a character is situated to grab the animal is perfect. The items stolen by the tree rat will eventually be dropped in favor of new items, usually when and where a new item is stolen.
- Some idiot in the crowd eventually tries to grab the tree rat. The referee may allow the PCs to stop this with appropriate force, or the tree rat bites and runs. Regardless, the tree rat steals the grabber's expensive sunglasses.
- Event: A group of youths toss many strings of fireworks into the air, causing sounds very much like gunfire. The crowd panics. Station Security yells to "stop them" as some break toward the PCs. This causes the tree rat to bolt, but not before it steals a shiny lighter from one of the kids.
- Encounter: A shady-looking person wearing a trench coat approaches the characters. He or she opens the coat to display hundreds of bits of jewelry hanging from lanyards sewn in the coat. The players are offered impossibly good deals on genuine platinum-and-diamond jewelry from Zaibon's luxury mines that "fell off the trike." Referee: The Zaibon belt (Spinward Marches 1825, a planned stop for *Cirque*) is not known for its precious metals or gems, and indeed is almost played out. The con artist becomes verbally and physically abusive if shooed away. The tree rat intervenes and steals some trinket from the con artist.
- Encounter: Several disgruntled Aslan from the Aslan Hierate (far from here, not of U'aii's Clan) push through the mob, scowling mightily. They determine that the owners of a thieving tree rat have intentionally dishonored them (most likely another Aslan, if part of the PC party) and offer a challenge. The object of the theft will later be found to be a bit of jewelry.
- Encounter: Duke Stephen's security forces come through with Duke Stephen. Someone will note the *Cirque* and Cirque des Sirkas insignias on the PCs' clothes and make a point of Noblesse Oblige. The tree rat zips in and steals Duke Stephen's shiny (and valuable) antique pocket watch. At that moment, a young woman appears, raises a cream pie, and shouts, "The Zho sent you dessert!" The pie strikes the Duke square in the face. The duke's chief bodyguard orders the PCs to catch her. If they pursue, they will eventually find her. Sobbing, she will explain that her fiancé died in a terrorist attack on-station, blamed on the Zhodani Ine Givar organization. She blames Duke Leonard Stephenos for relaxed security, as he is the titular head of the Imperial bureaucracy in the subsector. The PCs may decide whether to bring her back to face Imperial charges of Assaulting a High Noble, a felony even when the weapon was a cream pie, or let her go and give the Duke's security forces an appropriate story about her getting away.
- Event: A high-tech "flash mob" converges around the Broadside and begins singing ancient Terran sea shanties about drunken sailors, yo-ho-ho bottles of rum, and a "three-hour tour, a three hour tour." Other patrons get surly and start threatening the singers. The tree rat steals a flask from one of the singers, and the weather starts getting rough. Once again, a fight ensues. Station security personnel begin to question whether the PCs are actually instigators.
- Encounter: Several Uplifted Dolphins in wheeled travel tanks move through the crowd, grumbling in their translators at the lack of artificial gravity. The emblems on the tanks indicate that they are veterans of the Fifth Frontier War. The tree rat cackles and chirrups at them from below, apparently angry that it has nothing to steal this time.
- Encounter: An inter-service fracas breaks out at a bar. The tree rat leads the players into the middle of the brawl, stealing a medal from a torn uniform. This causes the PCs to become a focal point for at least one group of participants.
- Encounter: Very inebriated men riding very small tricycles weave through the crowd wearing odd little hats and throwing candy. The tree rat starts riding the shoulders of the inebriated men, hopping from shoulder to shoulder. It eventually steals a charm from a funny hat and runs off.
- Event: Station security announces a "Zho terrorism drill." Everyone is asked to stay where they are unless ordered otherwise. The PCs are contacted by Andii and advised that this time it's not a drill, but a real threat. One or more Ine Givar snipers are somewhere in the PCs' vicinity. Andii has been asked to have her people quite literally put their "*Cirque*" crew hats on and begin looking. The snipers are

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likely near the PCs' position in some closed storefront or other cranny (e.g., by trees on the "tree" terrace level, at a higher terrace level, or in one of the "secure" accesses of the narrow end-cables). As the PCs look around for a gun, the tree rat's chip "pings" their comms, drawing their attention to the rat's location beside the shiny business end of a laser or gauss weapon. Several other snipers are nearby as well. The PCs (and the referee) must decide how to best end the threat. The referee is free to decide how many "terrorists" they are and how real the threat is (e.g., they may have inadequate weapons, or high-powered weapons with laser designators), but one thing will be clear upon capturing or killing them: they are all "radicalized" local youths. If followed up at all, it will become clear that they claim that a) the Zhodani way of life is better, b) the Zho should have been allowed to capture Rhylanor, and c) they have been duped by someone. And, of course, the tree rat again escapes.

- Event: After the snipers are captured, Duke Stephen thanks the crowd for their patience and cooperation and tells them to "keep enjoying themselves." The Comic Juggler is live-cast on every local newsfeed and loudspeaker; he does a five-minute riff on the idea that "Finally, the Zho are really trying to join the party." Frivolity resumes. The tree rat appears and steals an old-fashioned chess piece from a nearby game table. A grumpy old man gets up and stalks away, shouting back over his shoulder at a companion: "Oh, come on, last time it was a beaker stealing my queen. At least be original."
- Event: The station finally enters the night-time period on the 24-hour clock. The louvers on the outside of the clear portion of the station skin close, and dim streetlights take over. The PCs are near Miller's Old Scout Brew Pub; the tree rat is "hiding" near the forward landing gear. About two hundred youths wearing caps labeled "R.I.T." (Rhylanor Institute of Technology) suddenly appear with yellow safety tape and six heavy-duty fuel-cell-powered lift vehicles marked as shipyard equipment. After clearing the crowd, they efficiently shut down and disconnect the water, sewage, and power fittings. The lifts are positioned (two at the front landing gear, four each at the main gear), the hull lifted, and the hull gently swiveled to

point north. Additional fittings are produced to reconnect power, water and sewage, the lift vehicles are driven away, and the caps disappear as the students fade back into the crowd. The tree rat has gotten away again, this time stealing a "high honors" fraternity pledge pin.

- Encounter: The PCs find themselves caught between growling Vargr and Imperial Army soldiers. A fight erupts; station security has trouble getting through the sudden mob encircling the combatants (and the PCs). The tree rat steals a station security badge.
- Event: As the clock counts down to midnight, Old Station passes into Rhylanor's shadow. The louvers open. Just before midnight, a Sound and Light Spectacular begins with loud booms, music, generated smoke, and laser lights. At precisely midnight the show reaches its climax. Self-oxygenated, multi-color fireworks and flares erupt from the trailing surfaces of the cables between the hub and the clear upper skin. These are visible through the open louvers and trace a "slow pinwheel" due to the station's rotation. While the PCs are transfixed, the small animal they have been pursuing comes up to them, jumps into welcoming arms, and makes happy-to-be-home sounds.
- The PCs are free to return to *Cirque* and get some rest.

Act III (001-1111)

- Holiday has "dawned" and with it the beginning of performance week.
- Last-minute preparations abound. The PCs are put in charge of getting the animals ready for the first formal "Circus Parade," scheduled for 11:00. The parade passes around the central cable, making noise and showing the animals. The tree-rat's cage has been triple-locked.
- During the parade, the duranthe reacts to some small pest scurrying across the deck. The PCs, nearby, have to calm it.
- Several apparent Sword Worlders point at the miniphants; the Barbarian Princess is walking beside them in Viking-inspired garb. In accented Anglic, they start yelling that Cirque des Sirkas is full of thieves and posers. They approach the parade; the PCs are in the right place to politely intercept.
- The show opens, as described in text.
- Performers perform. Most acts go off well, but the Comic Juggler apparently offends Duke Stephen, going very close to the edge (suggesting that he been studying Zdhettl and doing quite well before the IN won and pushed the forces out). The Zhodani delegation which is present shows its only amusement at that stab.
- Performers seek audience approval (applause) (AVE 2D, Primary Skill + Controlling Characteristic + Flux).
- After first performance, Andii has a reception to meet and greet VIPs. These include several ranking members of a Zhodani trade mission. No one notices any telepathic probing, but Bertii is not present.
- Vargr crash the party, looking for their "old shipmate" (the Vargr Ringmaster) who has done well among humans. Security sends them away, but not without a fight. The players likely become involved.
- Protesters of the Zhodani presence at the reception seek to overwhelm the northern security perimeter, or to drop in from above, to disrupt the event. The PCs are nearby, and must respond to protect members of Cirque des Sirkas and other (non-Zho) guests.
- The Zho, on the other hand, seem to be interested in the performing beakers.
- Late that evening, the formalities end, and everyone gets some well-deserved rest.
- Performances go on for the week. Characters get familiar with their bunks and bunkmates. Encounters on station occur at the referee's discretion.
- Late in the week, Andii is trying to arrange for the delivery of a final

Cirque

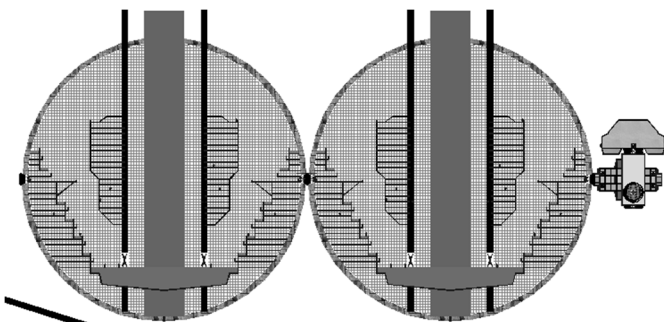
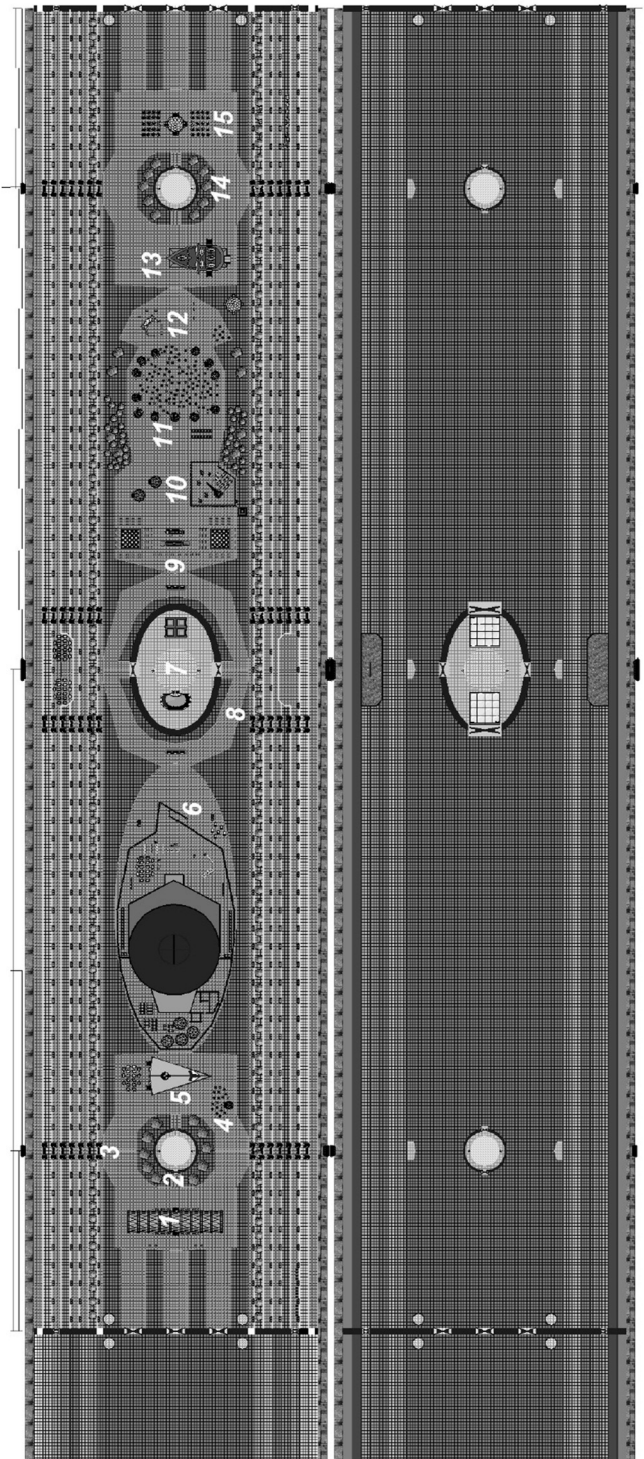
a cargo carrier containing a sculpture destined for Regina. Eventually she assigns the PCs to go to the surface and pick it up. They should have fun with flying and fun with functionaries as they arrange to close on the station, “park” near *Cirque*, and move the carrier into *Cirque*’s detachable cargo module. The PCs are given this task whether they are “mere” performers who need to have a pilot assigned to fly the cargo carrier, or actual spacers with appropriate skills and experience, as *Cirque* is short-handed loading other necessities.

Act IV

- ☐ The week ends, with great success. Robots and roustabouts begin taking down the tent and domes.
- ☐ The Vargr pirates return and waylay their “old pal.” The Ringmaster is kidnapped. Players must pursue and try to retrieve him. This can be a short combat or a more drawn-out rescue. Note that Station Security will help if needed; Ringmaster is a civilian hero of the Battle of Rhyllanor. The Ringmaster is found drugged, tied, and in a large crate being loaded onto a three-wheeled electric cart.
- ☐ An NPC performer (preferably the Comic Juggler,) disappears more quietly. The NPC must be found and persuaded to return to *Cirque*. Juggler’s trail is reconstructed from bar to bar; he has hours of head-start and never stays more than twenty minutes at any establishment. He is finally found in a dingy bar next to Lee’s SPVs, grumbling incoherently into a drink that jump space bothers him. When the PCs take him by the scruff of the neck, he proves that too much alcohol is a bad thing by vomiting all over the bar, the PCs, and disinterested bystanders.
- ☐ Geezer Thespian, of course, makes a grand and elegant entrance on board, and immediately questions why he does not have two state-rooms assigned (“Sleep with my wife? Are you joking, my good madam? She *snores*.”) The referee may decide how this is played out.
- ☐ As noted in text, *Cirque* goes outbound.
- ☐ Players get to fiddle with BT1 and the rest of the ship as needed.
- ☐ Encounter with Naval vessel patrol/honor guard near the Battle Vessel Graveyard.
- ☐ *Cirque* delays jump to hold performance in BT1. Audience: fewer than 100 ratings and officers of an Imperial Navy vessel patrolling the “Graveyard.” At the close, the applause is as heartfelt and loud as a hundred can make it. The PCs should note that the most stoic and “hardest” of the human characters present are flushed and in tears at the audience’s response. This is the “out-of-town tryout” that counts.

☐ Tag

- ☐ *Cirque* moves out toward jump range. Sensors note a Vargr vessel at extreme range. The vessel does not attack, but *does* pointedly “ping” and paint *Cirque* with active EMS sensors.
- ☐ *Cirque* jumps.



Episode 2: The Farmer's Daughter

2414 Tureded

Spinward Marches 2414 C565540-9 Ag Ni 614 Im M3 V

Excerpt: *Diary and Dialogues*

You can't swing a tree-rat in the Marches without finding another bucolic nightmare. Usually, though, they're trying to keep the spacers and such away. They think we're all out to despoil their youth.

Well, most of us probably are, as I think about it, but that's not the point. The point is, you can't stop the young from wanting a little of the excitement of strange places to rub off on them in a real personal way. If you get my drift. "Kiss a deraabelar and your dreams will come true." Sure. But the deraabelar might get a behind full of buckshot. Might even deserve it.

Tureded is one of the odd worlds I can think of where they *encourage* a little hanky-panky. From married folk, more the odd. The human gene pool there got a little shallow a few hundred years ago, for one reason or another. They've been playing catch-up, I guess. Six hundred thousand fair-skinned, red-haired kissin' cousins needed to stop kissing each other so much. They know that, so they encourage getting that genetic diversity more diverse. Great for the men — if your gene scan comes up pretty clean, at least. There's fun there for the women, too. They'll happily ask you to hang around for a year or three, or at least sell some spare eggs from your personal hatchery.

It's weird, though, to be in a place where a husband might shoot at you if you *don't* respect him enough to cuckold him. But don't plan to hang around unless you're planning to hang around. The parents — they interview prospects. With bamboo shoots under the fingernails to help get at the truth.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1104

General Data (Players)

An agricultural, non-industrial world, Tureded has a normal climate and a standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. The planet is a breadbasket world, supplying foodstuffs across the region, while the port is a reasonably busy trade hub where goods of all types change hands. Its approximately 600,000 inhabitants have plenty of room to spread out. Much of the local farming is accomplished with the aid of computer-guided machinery (essentially low-level robots). The local technology level, as always, reflects what can be manufactured easily on-world; however, the favorable balance of trade allows importation of more advanced products.

"Urban" clusters of course exist, in particular within a few hundred kilometers radius of the starport. Most of the population is well separated by kilometers and long work-days, however, as one might expect on an agricultural world. Thus, even with high-tech communication, regular communal activities are planned for most weekends. No town or village lacks for a Sixday dance, book group, card game, and other meetings. Most local religious activities occur on midweek evenings or Sevenday mornings. The people are an earthy, practical, strong society.

The local representative democracy is designed to prevent non-essential government intrusion into personal matters. The weight of custom, however, controls certain aspects of life, particularly in regard to

family relationships and reproduction. Infant mortality is higher than Imperial averages here due to a combination of solar activity, native viral factors, and a small, non-diverse gene-pool. As a result, marriage and mating customs are rigidly enforced by social pressure despite the low law level.

Marriage is a contract entered into after both careful genetic consideration and multi-level family negotiations. The attraction between two young people is considered a foolish basis for an essential contract. Eligible young bachelors and bachelorettes with a "stake" or expecting to inherit family land must consider potential spouses carefully, and only marry with the unanimous assent of all generations above them. Blushing brides tend to be at least half a decade younger than bridegrooms, but well educated and firm in their desire (and ability) to produce stalwart offspring. Bridegrooms are expected to be providers for wives and children.

No person under the age of twenty-five (25) standard years may marry without family permission. This local custom is of course enforced anywhere off-port. No one will solemnize or record a marriage unless at least one of each party's parents (or a guardian) is a witness. Imperial authorities defer to the pressure on-port where at least one of the parties is a young citizen of Tureded. This respect limits the number of angry mobs of relatives attempting to prevent an on-port elopement by infatuated youngsters trying to circumvent the system.

All adults of good genetic stock are expected to pass on their genes through their marriages. Monogamy is strongly favored as a genetic and financial matter. The only exception is for the introduction of "outside" genes, obtained from off-world, to increase genetic diversity. Children born of such outsiders are supposed to be a subject of male pride, rather than a reminder of cuckolding. These are children who are born into stable marriages with the intention of improving the local breed. Raising one is a privilege.

Even in this regard, however, willing parents are expected to choose wisely. Both spouses generally are involved in the decision. At the same time, no offworlder may leave the port without providing a genetic sample for analysis and posting on the planetary data system to facilitate this process for prospective parents.

Contacts with off-worlders are monitored quite simply; willing women and their husbands scan the postings for favorable mixes, check IDs and insist on medical documentation. Similarly, off-world women are paid to provide viable unfertilized ova or other undifferentiated tissue from which ova or sperm can be generated.

The effort given to expanding the gene pool is not the only effort made to ensure that families are strong and secure. Extended families live close by their kin and take care of each other. The elderly and infirm are rarely cared for outside the home. Overly extended suffering of old age is generally considered unnecessary and even offensive. "He (she) wouldn't put down his (her) own mother if she were half-rotted by cancer" is, perhaps, the ultimate attack on an adult's lack of character.

Despite its farm-belt tendencies, Tureded was viewed as having increasing importance as a trade and shipping center because of its location at a junction for Jump-1 travel from rimward to the Regina, Jewell, and Rhyllanor subsectors. Prior to the Fifth Frontier War Tureded was widely expected to be upgraded to a class B Starport. The Scout Service was

considering the establishment of a Scout Base, with the apparent intention of an X-Boat link from Rhyllanor (Spinward Marches 2716) to Dinomn (Spinward Marches 1912) and Regina (Spinward Marches 1705). However, the independent nature of the locals delayed expansion of the starport and hampered negotiations over the base. When the Fifth Frontier War broke out negotiations were forgotten due to the necessities of war.

On 251-1107 Turededian authorities announced the discovery and arrest of a number of “sleeper” agents in their planetary government. Some of these were first- and second-generation agents who had spent years or decades working their way unobtrusively into families, and then into the highest councils of the planetary government. As war approached, the agents were to break the vital Jump-1 route to Regina and the war zone by turning Turedad against the Imperium and destroying or impounding supply vessels on their way to the front.

Between 180-1109 and 200-1109, the Zhodani 40th Fleet captured Tureded. On 200-1109 the 40th Fleet was forced to halt an important offensive push after discovering that a “secret” base at Fulacin (Spinward Marches 2613) had been compromised. Faced with a choice between retaking a destroyed base and establishing a new one, the 40th Fleet retreated back to Tureded and established their base there. From the Tureded base, the 40th Fleet jumped off to attack and invade both Porozlo (Spinward Marches 2715) and Rhyllanor. The 40th Fleet abandoned the Tureded base following to collapse of the campaign.

As is true in any war, a few enemy combatants discovered a preference for the world they invaded. Such non-noble, non-psionic Zhodani deserted and stayed behind. Some married into local families; those families are viewed with suspicion. However, there are also a few parents proudly raising very tall children.

The inhabitants of Tureded believe in self-determination, self-defense, and personal armament. During the Fifth Frontier War, the locals mounted an intensive guerrilla campaign combined with sabotage in the starport facilities. This effectively denied the port to the Zhodani. Both men and women joined in the various guerilla activities.

Children over fourteen rarely leave the home without some armament, especially after the Zhodani occupation. Adults are always armed. Shotguns are popular, as are various rifles. Handguns are also usually available. These are also useful against local predators.

Summary and Referee's Information

On arrival in-system, Andii receives a following recorded message from the Advance Sophonts.

“We’re jumping out right away. The contracts and regulations are all attached. You have permission to bring BT1 down, off port, at four different sites. The biggest population cluster is near the starport, of course, and that’s where the government is.

“You have to keep BT1 and BT2 together, though, within a kilometer of each other. The locals don’t want you wandering too far. You can relocate twice to get to another population cluster. Most of these farmers will travel a few hundred kilometers at most. I have all of the grav buses around chartered to help get the audience from the farms to you. Some of them are pretty remote.

“We have the initial publicity out, as planned. It’s sort of computerized word-of-mouth here. Lots of social networking. This is a big deal for some of these remote settlements

“Watch out for those farmer’s kids. Don’t pay too close attention to anything that old idiot Aramais said. The kids may be hot-to-trot, but their parents keep an eye on them. Don’t want grandkids before the youngsters are properly married. The adults are always carrying. Most of the kids, too. Advance Sophont 2 took a load of birdshot in the right buttocks when... never mind. Serves him right.

“Oh, one small thing. Anyone human needs to let one of the local docs take a few samples. Nothing too intrusive. Just some blood and undifferentiated tissue – the usual silly stuff these backwaters come up with.”

As noted in the description, this world carries two distinctions: it is a fairly sparsely populated agricultural society; and its people are among the unsung heroes of the Fifth Frontier War. Thus, although the likelihood of profit is somewhat diminished, Andii insists on this as the first stop. It is the first real “out of-town tryout” for all of the entertainers and systems involved. The world is hospitable enough to allow performances in the

tent or in BT1 with its upper hatches open and cupola erected. The stop will also test the “self-erecting tent,” with its robotic central brain and numerous sub-robots.

Some of the action will come out of the simple irritations of unmet expectations. A tent may fail to be properly erected by the “roustabots” and their human supervisors. A loophole or mistake in the Advance Sophonts’ work on the contracts causes difficulties in landing as a system defense boat closes on BT1. Local media interviews are haphazard, as the dispersed and independent nature of the populace has created an information sharing system resembling a “wiki” rather than traditional, centrally organized news services. The Advance Sophonts have not exploited this to its fullest extent; a small introductory performance will become necessary for a group of potential “blogger” critics flown in on BT3 to drum up publicity.

Shotgun-wielding fathers and mothers will conclude that the acrobats are sniffing around their sons and daughters to corrupt them (and this may be true). The traditional backwater suspicions of gypsies and theater folk are in full play. At the same time, officials will be insisting on genetic samples from all humans on board in order to increase local gene pool diversity.

None of the locals are bothered by the apparent contradiction. Providing such samples is part of the deal made by the Advance Sophonts – but some characters may (with good cause or not) refuse to submit to the desired epithelial (inner cheek) and bone-marrow samples. It will be emphasized, however: no non-local may be off-port without submitting to the genotyping, nor may males consort with local women on-port without submitting. Andii will thus make sure that the marrow is indeed sampled; local techniques are fortunately reasonably good.

Suspicious will be raised about the Ringmaster, as the Vargr are well known as pirates. Javert will be observing Thespian and Makeup Artist for signs that they intend to disappear into the outback to assert their rights against extradition, and will follow them wherever they go.

The PCs will also be approached by a young individual with decidedly a Zhodani “air” about him or her. They are asked to deliver a media card to Bertii. As the scenes make clear, nothing conclusive whatsoever comes from this contact; its entire purpose is to alert the PCs to Bertii and make them watchful.

If the PCs side-track into a more thorough investigation of this individual, they will get nothing but blank stares, disbelief, and run-around; the individual’s claims to have been born and raised on Tureded are true. Records will show that one of his or her parents, now deceased, was born and raised on Calit (Spinward Marches 1515), and came to Tureded in 1091. The other is a local. Neither Bertii nor the referee should make anything of this fact (its significance may be noted much later in the campaign; the now-deceased parent was a sleeper agent, came through Calit, and like Bertii claimed to have had all records lost in the Tsuduryva Meltdown).

The apparent culmination, however, arises when a pair of legal-aged but unmarried youths approach a player character for help in escaping Tureded when *Cirque* heads to her next destination. The youths are both very unhappy that their respective families have refused to agree to their marriage plans. They are considered too closely related, not due to explicit relationship (e.g. by being third cousins), but through genetic testing.

This population does not unreasonably permit recombination of deleterious alleles. The adults also apply experience to look for long-term compatibility. The older and wiser members of the lovebirds’ families know each other well and understand that these two youths are likely to be temperamentally unsuited for a solid, long-surviving marriage. Therefore, each has been presented with a series of more appropriate suitors to interview and court. They are expected to give up their youthful passion for one another and look for a future spouse from these lists of prospective mates. The marriage tradition on this world places high emphasis on family involvement in the choice of spouse; this is perhaps the sole strongly-enforced “law” on this world.

The couple will of course offer cash to the player character or characters to persuade them to smuggle the lovers on board *Cirque* before she leaves. If the player character or characters are not tempted, some non-player character will give in and smuggle them onboard. Alternatively, the youths may simply seek assistance in disappearing together for a tryst which will cause impregnation, forcing the parents on both sides to accept

the match. They have carefully timed the tryst to focus on the young woman's fertile cycle.

As foolish as either plan is for these youngsters, it is even more foolish to assist them. Whoever assists them will face weapons-toting parents, grandparents, siblings and cousins. The "neutral" rights of Capt. Andii and others on board the auxiliaries will not be respected; the auxiliaries are not parked on the starport. The system defense units will target any vessel which attempts to lift with the couple on board.

The couple itself will threaten to "Romeo and Juliet themselves" while on board. They are armed and willing to use their weapons. As anti-hijack programs and systems have been shut down by computer issues, these conflicting sets of demands will have to be negotiated and resolved. Security may suggest a "SWAT team" approach, while others will suggest talking the children down. Bertii will not intervene psionically, having been swayed by their desire to be together. He is, of course himself a nonconformist refugee from the ultimate button-down society.

Whatever resolution is reached will have consequences for the tour. Andii is well aware that she must respect local customs and law in order to maintain the reputation of *Cirque*. Andii will do everything within his or her power to force the return of the youths.

If, through some referee luck or choice, the youths have in fact reached orbit on board the vessel, the vessel will be subject to attack and possible boarding. Andii will be faced with a choice: beat the odds, or be a good business person.

For convenience, the three young locals are referred to as "Romeo, Juliet, and Tybalt." Other names can be used. A referee familiar with Shakespeare's play may feel free to embellish the events, characters and scenes as appropriate, without concern about literary theft. After all, Shakespeare himself stole it from an earlier poem — and his copyrights are long elapsed.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Entry into system.
- ☐ Message from the Advance Sophonts.
- ☐ Players obtain basic information.
- ☐ Plan landings.
- ☐ Someone didn't get the memo: SDB guides/forces BT1 and BT2 to land on starport.
- ☐ All human characters must provide genetic samples. Resolve any conflicts. To perform off-port, characters must provide genetic material.
- ☐ Bertii finds a way to avoid gene-typing (e.g., the Old Zhodani Mind Trick causing the typing technician to think Bertii has already been sampled, or on another person to provide the sample in Bertii's stead).
- ☐ First landing off-port, in a lovely field.
- ☐ The robotic self-erecting tent glitches out. The players and the rest of the crew must work to get the tent up and running. This takes several long hours.
- ☐ To diagnose and reprogram tent systems: Difficult (3D) < (In + Programmer) (Uncertain) (If the task succeeds, the systems function correctly THIS time, but will fail again the next time the tent is unpacked).
- ☐ A very tall young man, observing the difficulties, offers to help. He points out that the machine language is similar to certain farm machines imported from Rhyllanor, and that "all of that company's code needs debugging." The young person speaks with a definite accent. If suspicions are noted, the locals will laugh. "Well, of course Tybalt's a danged Zho," will be the response. "He's a prole-type, young, far away from home, an' we treated him nice. Takin' the kid in saved us a killin', not that we'd have let that bother us much. A nice family wants him to marry their daughter. Not like them Capulets."

Act II

- ☐ First encounter with Romeo and Juliet between performances. Romeo is 20 standard years, and Juliet has just turned 18. They are working as local help (e.g., ticket takers, food sellers). They are decent, hard-working, and helpful. Though they have few practical skills, they are quick to understand the system and helpful in supervising the local youths who are taking tickets and ushering. Every now and again they get caught holding hands and looking soulfully into each other's eyes.
- ☐ The Vargr Ringmaster takes a quick walk. Encounters anti-Vargr sentiment (armed). Players must rescue. If discussed at all, the local response will be simple: "They're pirates and vermin, and turnin' them's no good."
- ☐ A local husband or wife approaches a PC. Explains that he/she has reviewed the genetic profiles, and is interested in the character's profile. He or she would be honored to raise a child or clone. This seems rational, in light of the local mores. However, this is a deranged person (Sanity = 2) who will drug and kidnap the PC and bring him/her back to a decrepit backwoods shed. A rescue must be mounted.
- ☐ Juliet's father approaches one of the PCs and asks that they watch over all of the kids carefully. "Sometimes they get foolish ideas in their heads, especially with the wrong class of folk." Juliet's father says no more, and he leaves.
- ☐ Romeo and Juliet become the all-around good local help. They are both good with animals, and help with even some of the dirty jobs. They seem willing to take on anything they are asked, so long as they can work together or in the same area.
- ☐ As the first several days ends and plans are made to move to a separate location on Tureded, Romeo and Juliet ask to be kept on. U'aiili sees no reason not to; they are of age. She agrees.
- ☐ Just to distract the PCs another series of encounters from locals seeking out good genetic matches occurs with various offers and suggestions. The specifics should be handled in good taste, considering the ages and maturity of the players. In at least one case, a Turededian spouse is properly upset about a proposed tryst and attacks the PC involved. The PC's lesson is simple: "No good deed goes unpunished."
- ☐ As the tent is packed away, Tybalt — the tall former prole — can be seen staring darkly at Juliet as she laughs at a joke by Romeo.
- ☐ Juliet sends an e-mail advising that her father has ordered her to stay home, and she will not be coming along to the next stop. Romeo, however, is packed and ready to go; his parents have ordered that he "get some fresh air and sense."

Act III

- ☐ The tent is relocated. The problems erecting it recur. The same attempts are made to resolve the programming. While the tent finally erects, discussions are had about sending for Tybalt to really go through the system.
- ☐ Events may and should be interspersed. They are grouped for convenience.
- ☐ During performances, other decidedly tall men and women with grave faces are noted in the audience. One approaches a PC and asks that a sealed message be brought to Bertii. If the PC refuses, he or she has a strong but inexplicable feeling that the PC is right to follow such instincts. If the PC agrees, the individual simply hands over a small media card, leaves, and gets lost in the crowd.
- ☐ If the PCs snoop, they may attempt to open the card. Inserting the media card into an appropriate device shows it to be utterly blank. To analyze the card further: Difficult (3D) < (In + Computer) (Uncertain). Regardless of success, the PC will conclude that this is unused, fresh-out-of-the-package media which has not even been formatted.
- ☐ If the PCs investigate further, they may locate the person who pro-

Cirque

vided the card. He or she claims to have been raised on Tureded (records located will confirm this), and to know nothing about Bertii, the media card, or anything else they ask. They are sent away at gunpoint by other members of the family.

- Investigation into the media-bearing character will demonstrate that one parent came from Calit and the other was a local. The parent from Calit is deceased due to cancer, according to both records and anyone asked. “He was from some place that went bad.”
- After the last performance of the night, Tybalt shows up. He again works on the Tent programming. When done, he looks around for Romeo. Romeo is outside, a few hundred meters from the set-up, enjoying a mild night. Angry voices are heard, and fighting. If the PCs intervene, they will get there just before guns are used, but both young men will be the worse for the punching and kicking and biting. They each threaten to kill the other.
- Andii hears about the events. She orders that both be terminated from future employment.
- A day or so later, Cirque des Sirkas moves to its final site. This time, the Tent works perfectly.

Act IV

- The tent erects itself perfectly at the next location, requiring minimal human intervention.
- News comes through the nets: a young immigrant with a good future (Tybalt) has been found shot to death in the woods near the first performance location. No additional information is provided.
- The performances go on as planned.
- In a minor change to the Shakespearean plot, Romeo and Juliet arrive, disheveled and hand-in-hand. They ask to be taken on tour through the Marches with Cirque des Sirkas.
- They both deny having had anything to do with Tybalt’s death. Instead, they say, he committed suicide.
- The suicide can be confirmed, either by properly schmoozing with local authorities, or via deeper digging in the local computer networks. A police report, not intended for publication, will indicate that Tybalt was taken in by Juliet’s family, and her parents were in favor of a marriage on genetic grounds. Tybalt left the home with his gun when she absolutely refused to marry him. Romeo’s whereabouts at the time of death “were fully accounted for.”
- U’aili will note that, by Imperial law, both of the youths are old enough to decide to go to space, and to marry under Imperial law. Thus, it is up to Andii.
- If Andii is an NPC (or a PC played by someone with sense) she will refuse the two. She doesn’t need to be a nursemaid to children as well as actors, after all.
- Romeo and Juliet hide aboard BT1 in an animal berth. The vessel heads out.
- Local defense vessels pursue. At least one warning shot is made across the bow. Resolve space actions. Andii will be reluctant to use devastating fire on local defense vessels. She will, however, order reasonable defensive fire and actions.
- Notified of the “children” on board without proper Imperial Identification, a

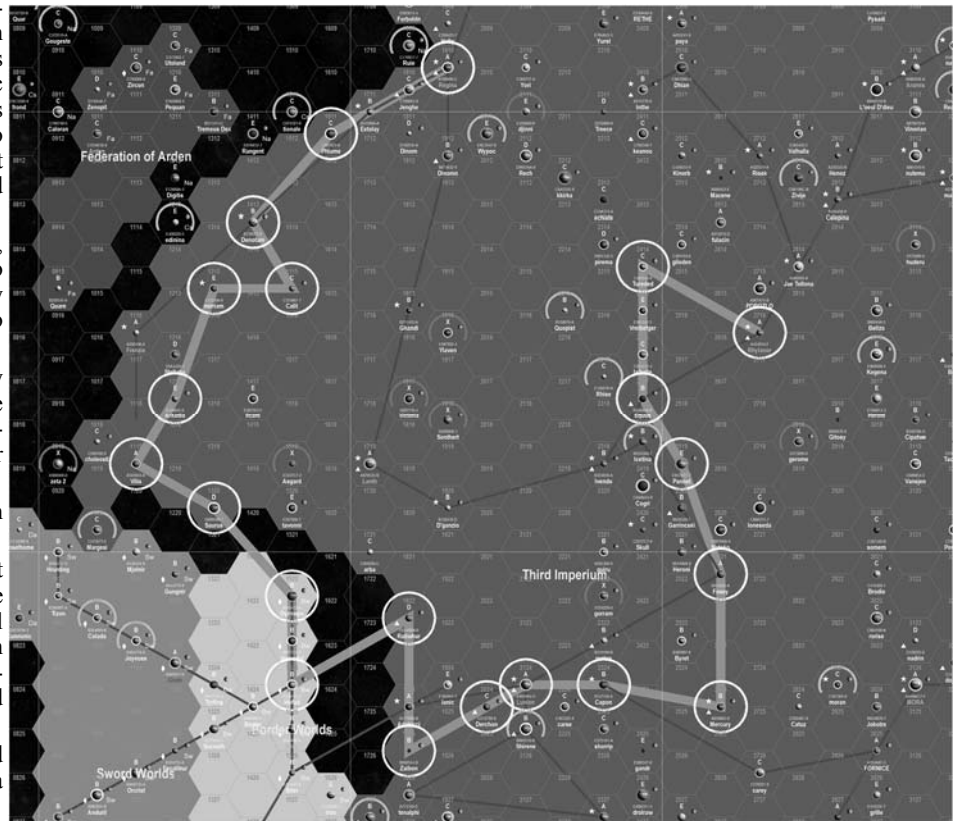
nook-and-cranny by nook-and-cranny search will be conducted until Romeo and Juliet are found. Recording systems seem to have gone down for several hours, however.

- Task: Diagnose and repair the ship’s internal security (3 hours). Difficult (3D) < (Edu + Sensors or programming). On success, the character discovers that the system has been set to shut itself down after every jump, but to show readouts indicating that it is functioning.
- The youths have guns, and threaten to kill themselves if they are not brought along. The PCs will have to calm matters down, in whatever manner they prefer, short of killing the children. Note that tranquilizers are available in ship’s stores, including on BT1 herself.
- The youths pose a dilemma. U’aili will again point out that they are of legal age to emigrate, from the Imperial standpoint. Proper identification can be arranged. Andii is concerned that this sets a bad precedent for *Cirque*, and may cause difficulties for Sharurshid. This gives the PCs a chance to argue a bit. Ultimately, Andii is Captain and CEO, and will tell the PCs to find a way to get the kids off *Cirque* without disrupting their rights as Imperial subjects to leave their homeworld, and without unduly delaying *Cirque*’s departure.
- If the players do not come up with a solution, a passing Free Trader may serve as Deus ex Machina Spacelines.

Tag

- So long as the two youths are removed from *Cirque*, all will go well with Tureded’s authorities (who may well grudgingly admit that the youths are lawfully able to go elsewhere and wed).
- If the PCs bring the “media card” incident to Bertii’s attention, Bertii will shrug it off. “Locals can be odd, especially after hard times.”
- One point of this series of events and interaction is simply to plant the question in the PCs’ minds: who is Bertii? What is his real agenda and role?
- *Cirque* jumps safely to the next system.

Cirque’s Planned Route



Episode 3: The Tempest

Equus • Spinward Marches 2417

B555A858-B • S • Wa Ph • 202 • Im • F6 V M1 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Not that many starships are big enough to waste volume on a swimming pool, so a lot of spacers get out of practice. When they get to a place like Equus, it's — well, scary. Equus is the wrong name, I suppose — planet's named after some kind of four-legged kian, but not any land to speak of. If you want to ride a mammal, you'd best get friendly with some of the local dolphins.

Some dolphins, now, some dolphins are good people. I've had a few navigators and pilots in those funny suits that keep their skin wet. Space suits for the air. But they can comp a course, and they get you home. Good marines, too, when they join.

They're a little slow on the idea of property rights, though. Not out of meanness or anything, they just don't get it. Living in pods of maybe twenty — thirty is a big city — and even moving back and forth between pods makes them pretty cooperative. Part of living in the ocean, I guess. "We all work together, and we're all reasonable, and if I need that tool or like that pretty doodad, of course it's ok to borrow it." Most of them have to be taught about human concepts so that they can avoid arguing. I gather that they can comply, and make it a silly game, but they think we're full of ... something ... the way we fence everything off. True communal attitude, that's what they have.

Why did the early Solomani haul so many of their beasts along with them all the way to Spinward? And why change them more than they had to? Were they really looking for help, the way they said? Or were they more interested in proving they could be minor gods, and make intelligence in our own image? They failed at that, if that was the real goal. Never once met a geneered Dolphin who was interested in a proper game of cards with an ante on the table, or buying and selling real estate, or even looking at pictures of pretty girl dolphins..

I don't think it's the god-thing, though, not for the most part. I think it's simpler: the old Solomani were terrified, that's all. Terrified of going out *alone*, without familiar things. Dolphins for the seas and the water worlds. Miniphants to haul wood in the jungle — I hear that there are even a few herds of those in the Sword Worlds. Horses, that's what they called those kian-like beasts. Cats and dogs — they were afraid they wouldn't meet anything like the old house pets. Brought them with us.

Guess they were surprised when they bumped into the first Vargr. Found out someone was playing god before they were. That's never fun, I guess.

You know, the Dolphins don't worship us any more than the Vargr worship the Ancients. They don't take every word we say, every little silly thing we do as guidance from on blasted high. They'll turn on us when they have to, when they think they need to. We made them a bit too much in our own image.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

General Data (Players)

Equus is located on a major trade route to the Rhylanor Subsector. Equus also contains an Imperial Scout Base. The world's population is about 200,000,000 sophonts, primarily human though there is a significant population (approximately 20,000,000) of uplifted Dolphins (Tursiops Galactus). A very small sub-population of humans employs mechanical or medical means to more completely reside in the warm waters.

Equus' limited land mass is almost all swamp or steep mountains rising straight from the oceans. The vast majority of the human population lives in cities in the shallows (both on pylons and undersea), and free-floating arcologies both on and under the surface of deeper waters. Both can be reached by vessels from the downport. Gravitic vehicles also serve to move people and cargo to the arcologies.

In addition to Equus Startown, other major fixed seabed settlements on Equus include Lungfish, Ulir City, Kerouac, and Kagasisli. These settlements combine high-strength pressure structures with gravitic and other technologies to allow traditional seabed colonization. The populations of these cities engage in mining and some forms of farming and sea-herding.

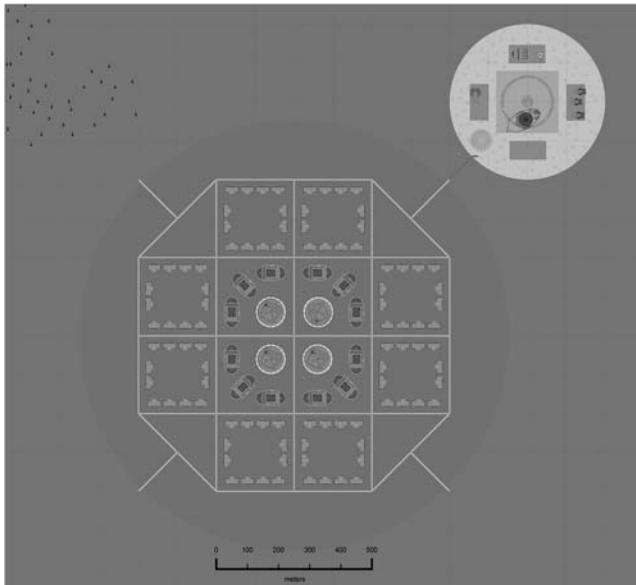
Anistown and Cote D'Azure are two major deepwater surface arcologies built on multiple floating "buckyhems" ranging in size from a few hundred meters in diameter to over a kilometer in diameter. The buckyhems are platforms constructed of advanced materials and supported by multiple floating hemispheres underneath. The "deck" shape can be almost any regular shape, but local custom seems to dictate large circular platforms supported by 100-meter-diameter hemispheres. Stable and heavy enough to support platforms and internal belowdecks works, the buckyhem floats also provide below-surface space for living, agriculture using techniques similar to those in starships, and even landing platforms for commercial starships equipped with gravitic lifters. Anistown is the larger of the two major floating arcologies, its many buckyhems floating near one another in a rough circle with a diameter of over twenty kilometers.

From above, a single buckyhem looks like a circle. From below, multiple flotation hemispheres protrude downward below the water. A large buckyhem such as The Spires can support tall buildings. Support personnel (servants and other staff) and many systems are contained underneath, in the flotation hemispheres. Parkland is found between the buildings.

Other buckyhems, such as Underhill, are more sustainable. Built-up hills contain underground dwellings with some windows, light-shafts, and access points. Almost all surface area is used for farming, grazing animals, and recreational space.

Cousteau, Ballard, Piccard, Cameron, Beebe, Nemo, Nelson and Zissou are clusters of various-sized floating undersea habitats (bubble-clusters). The various structures maintain a fairly constant depth of between ten and fifty meters. Approximately one-seventh can be found at the surface level recharging batteries and performing essential maintenance on any given day. Larger structures may be linked by airtight tubes, allowing easy movement among them. Smaller structures rely on small submersibles or simple skin-diving for passage from one to another.

Cirque



The Spires Buckyhem, and adjoining private starport, with the tent ready for performance. The four large central spires are each fifteen stories, containing spacious luxury units for the most powerful and rich Councilors. Each of the three smaller buildings in the central quadrants are six stories. The eight squares on the perimeter contain large single-family dwellings, as well as a few public buildings. All essential services (e.g., grocery repositories, stores, quarters for support staff, power plants, and other systems are maintained below decks in the flotation hemisphere.

Structures include buckyspheres with ballasted lower hemispheres and various other shapes.

More traditional submersible shapes are also used. Families often dwell in submarine designs that would be recognized by historians of old Earth's twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Only the power sources and life support systems have been modernized to use hydroxyl fuel cells or fusion. These habitats move with the slow annual currents, conducting sustainable gleaning and hunting of natural resources. They also conduct ongoing surveys of the ocean floors, looking for potential mineral sites and other resources.

Equus' inhabitants make their living by seabed mining, fish-farming, and aqua-plant harvesting. Local policies are based firmly in

sustainability. Every new seabed mine is carefully reviewed before the first deep-sea tunneling equipment is allowed to submerge into place. Fishing limits are carefully enforced. Seaweed and plankton growth and health is carefully monitored for any significant imbalance. Both human and dolphin population growth is limited and planned.

Summary and Referee's Information

Andii is eager to bring the show here. Equus is responsible for substantial exports of medicines and useful minerals, as well as highly regarded aquatic delicacies. In addition, Andii has occasionally served with dolphin advisors and pilots. There is even hope of finding a way to add a dolphin act to the travelling shows, though this will require much thought and some adaptations.

The Advance Sophonts have arranged for landing rights at the Aniston Arcology, on the main starport buckyhem. This allows sufficient space for air/rafts and other gravitic vehicles, as well as sea-level docking facilities for water-based transport. Aniston's large population and wealth will thus be served, as well as people from more distant locales. Tee-suited (grav-lifted water suited) Dolphins will also be able to come to the shows; they can float above seats using the gravitic generators. The shows promise to be interesting.

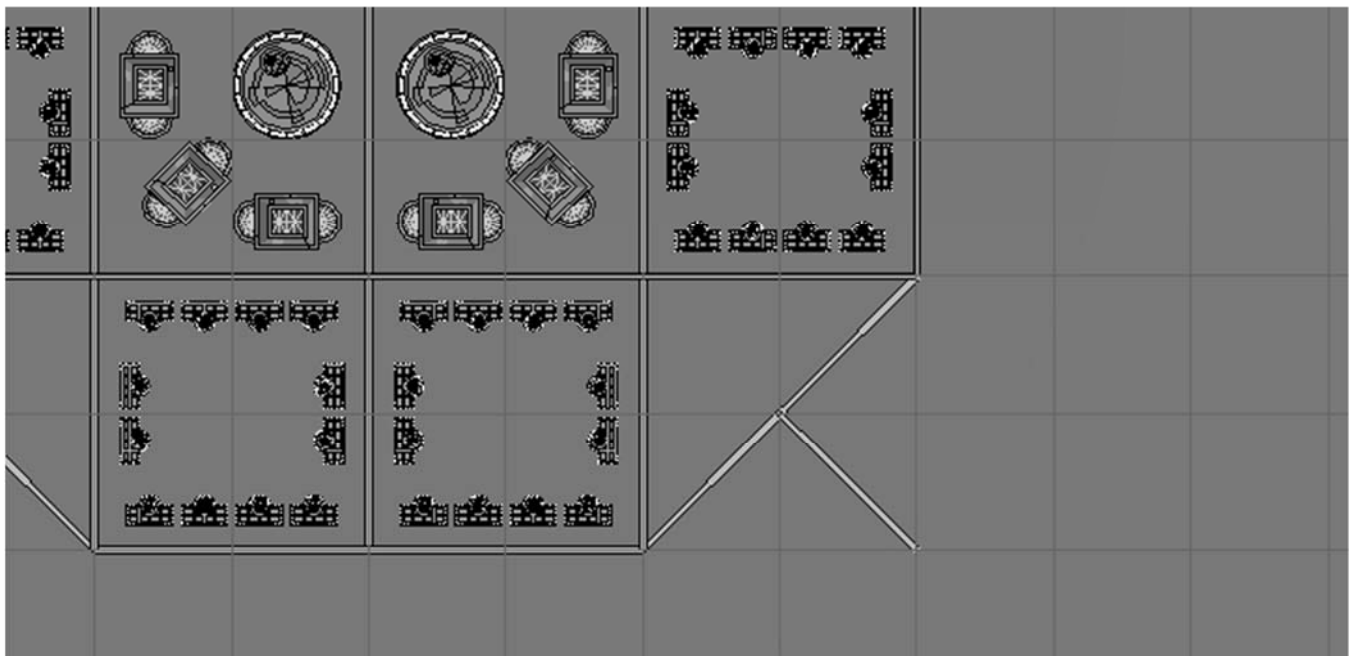
The historical data in the General Data Section will be proven outdated, as the players will discover over time.

The Advance Sophonts' information will be concise. "Land her carefully, Andii. You're going to The Spires, where the rich folk live. They have their own little port, floating out there, and plenty of parks. If you miss your pad, you'd better be able to swim. Oh, and be careful. Dolphin bites can be nasty."

BT1 and BT2 will have space on the port. The tent will be set up on the large central landing pad (easily large enough for the largest of ACS-class vessels). There will be various encounters during the set-up of the tent and contact with locals during performances in which concerns and tensions should be noted.

As noted, Equus contains a population of geneered dolphins who join with the human inhabitants in various agricultural and other pursuits. They are the first line in monitoring the ocean surface areas; most dolphins cheerfully carry small sensors and datacams. They also check buckyhems for leaks and other signs of wear. Dolphins can often be seen aboard the arcology in tanks or Tee-suits. They serve in advisory councils setting goals and limits, and forming policies regarding various resource uses, but have little power in the upper councils. There are too few dolphins on Equus to enforce their own views of community and community property.

As a feudal technocracy, the world's government is run by governing councils selected from among the most knowledgeable members of



society. The lower councils send representatives to the over-arching World Council, a group of thirty humans with one dolphin advisor. As with many human societies, this has concentrated power and wealth. Individual councilors seek to perpetuate their influence by training their proposed successors within their own families. Such successors are generally confirmed within the councils as “one hand washes the other.”

In the past, the primary goal of the various councils has been to maintain sustainable use of resources. Exports have always come close to balancing with imports. Export and import quotas are set annually and computers keep track of most shipping. Though “off-book” exports and imports have occurred throughout the world’s human/dolphin history, those were minor in scale before the war.

Accelerated mining and sea-farming during the Fifth Frontier War pushed beyond the conventionally understood limits of sustainable uses. Some unpatriotic liberals would suggest that it even moved into the realm of war profiteering, due to Rhylanor’s proximity and because the larger arcologies and seabed settlements were well situated to exploit military and civilian manufacturing demands. While this was understood as necessary to the effort to turn back Zhodani incursions, conservationists always understood that the balance would be addressed after the war. To date, the balance has not been restored, with exports far outstripping imports.

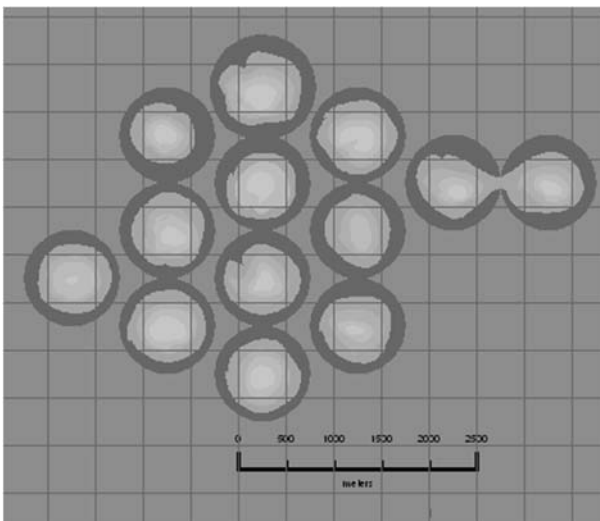
The smaller habitats are calling on the World Council to scale back all mining, farming, fishing, and similar activities. The conservationists seek to have exports return to below pre-war levels. They believe that they must “give the sea a rest.” These calls have been disregarded, sometimes with unkind suggestions regarding the intelligence of the “Azure Councils” (organized and militant conservationist groups).

Since 1105, and especially during the war, the bubble-clusters have spawned humans desiring to be “closer to the ocean.” They have brought in high-tech modification labs and personnel. Numerous younger humans have accepted biological modifications providing them with more efficient oxygenation. Their bodies are also better insulated by fats; some have their feet significantly altered into fins. These “gillpeople” are thus able to stay in the water and underwater for extended periods. Many can stay underwater for up to fifteen minutes before breathing.

The gillpeople are developing rituals and practices including a “swim-about” for individuals newly altered. These swim-abouts generally involve interactions with geneered dolphins and native sea creatures. Gillpeople are almost invariably pro-conservation.

Most of the smaller arcologies have become more militant in the last several years. They are demanding that resources be better managed, with little exportation. The dolphins and gillpeople are at the forefront of the growing eco-militancy which has come to be called “the Azure Party.” The most militant branch of the party is the “Azure Path.”

Anistown’s Underhill Buckyhem is becoming a center of the Azure Path. This section was already notable for its Azure viewpoint, with virtually all the surface farmed or open space, and residents all living below the exposed surface.



The Underhill Buckyhems.

Dolphins (Tursiops Galactus)

Like the Ursa, Dolphins were raised to sentience by the Solomani corporation GenAssist during the Rule of Man.

Dolphins are a Minor Race whose Home World is Terra/SOL-III. They are found on many water worlds, especially those with a Solomani influence. They are classified as Aquatic/Swimmer, Hunter/Carnivore, Air Breathers. They have no legs or arms, and instead fins and flippers. They must use technology for manipulation and for operation outside a water environment. Dolphin characters are assumed to begin generation at the Young Adult Life Stage with a default knowledge of Waldo Ops -1. For purposes of this sourcebook, they may pursue military and other training, using human tables. Merchants are rare, but not entirely unheard of, due to their lack of understanding of human property concepts. A small minority perceive trading as a “game” and thus do quite well.

Each Dolphin may muster out with an individually fitted Tee Suit, including waldoes and gravitic lifters, as well as weapons. A Dolphin trained for Battle Dress (Battle Dress-1 or higher) may trade the two highest benefit rolls for Dolphin Battle Dress.

Dolphin Basic Stats by Michael J. Morgan

Str 3d6	Life Stage
Gra 2d6	Infancy 2 Year (1/2 term)
Sta 2d6	Childhood 2 Years
Int 2d6	Adolescence 2 Years
Tra 2d6	Young Adult 4 years (1 Term)
Cha 2d6	Adult 8 Years (2 Terms)
	Peak 8 Years
	Mid-Life 8 Years
	Senior 8
	Elder 8
	Retire 8
	60+ years life

Anistown’s Spires Buckyhem, on the other hand, is occupied primarily by the most affluent humans on-world. Constructed within the last twenty years, its orderly and groomed surface level boasts high-rise luxury residential towers and other structures. Its opulence is virtually unprecedented among the floating arcologies.

Anistown has its own small starport buckyhem. Nominally under the control of the Starport Authority, this landing site is in fact controlled from The Spires by the local ruling council. It has become a route for “expedited export” (smuggling) of resources, including refined metals, raw seaweed and processed products useful in offworld medical manufacturing, exotic seafood, and so on.

Multiple factions of the Azure Party exist. Many are moderate and reasonable. Almost fifty percent of Azure Party members, however, have concluded that direct action is necessary. The Azure Path has been preparing to take such action. Its worldwide membership includes as many as 500,000 Dolphins and 1,000 gillpeople. Cells throughout the arcologies and undersea colonies have been arming. Their forces are swelling as former military personnel return home.

Some overt attacks have already been attempted, prompting increased armament on commercially-operated ships in the region. The attacks having failed to significantly alter the unbalanced trade, the Path has decided to strike at The Spires themselves, and the auxiliary starport buckyhem floating beside it. Most of the illicit shipments go through that starport and line the pockets of those residing in The Spires. The smaller traders handling the shipments use that port to avoid proper customs procedures.

Meeting in secret, the Path members have planned to cause mass confusion with a general strike, capture the highest-placed profiteers they can, and “try” them in a popular court, using the moment to take control away from the current hierarchy. They have been quietly attaching numerous demolition packs to the floatation/underdeck hemispheres of both

Cirque

platforms. They do not intend to sink either. Instead, the emergency is to provide a distraction for the strike.

Cirque de Sirkas will perform against this backdrop. For the most part, shows will go as planned, and the days will run smoothly. The houses are packed, and the coffers full. However, the dangerous undercurrents reveal themselves over the week of performances. All of this builds until the final performance of the final day.

The dolphins who have contacted the PCs are part of a more moderate Azure effort. They seek to have the appropriate authorities alerted to the ongoing war profiteering. They believe that *Cirque's* crew can be trusted due to Andii's reputation and the connection with Sharurshid. Sharurshid has not been involved in the illegal shipping, and so (per the moderate logic) will be interested in closing down competition.

Spire One, Fifteenth Floor

The uppermost (15th) floor of each of the four spires provides the most opulent apartments, each with eight "pie-slices" providing private but sunny units. Glass domes allow light into the units, as do windowed walls. A wide perimeter walkway over the fourteenth floor gives a "penthouse feel" for each of the apartments. Inside, three large bedrooms provide privacy for any occupants, but most space is open, giving the units a "loft" feel. Each Councilor has equipped his or her space appropriately.

The First Councilor, Arlin Deveraux, lives alone in the large suite, except when her children visit. A divorcee, Deveraux spends much of her time expanding Equus' economic reach. She sees nothing wrong with living well herself as a result. She collects various small antiques, keeping them in museum-quality cases throughout her unit.

Her former husband and their two teen-aged children reside in Underhill. The former husband is the managing farmer for one of the numerous buckyhemms making up that cluster. He and the children reside in a typical Underhill residence, consisting of a soil-covered dome entrance and two lower residence levels.

Several Azure Path cells have taken root in Underhill. They generally use typical residences, sometimes adding hidden rooms in soil behind the lowest levels of the unit.

The final day dawns bright and breezy. It is a perfect warm, sub-tropical day on the drifting buckyhem. Cirque des Sirkas gets its animals ready, its acrobats limbered up, and the comedy ready. Despite the local tensions and petty arguments, it has been a beautiful week on the planetary ocean.

A muted shudder runs through the buckyhem as the first crowd is taking its seats for the final day's last shows, scheduled for local noon. Sirens blare. Every hemisphere supporting The Spires upper surface has been explosively breached at dozens of locations and there are too many breaches to repair. The damage is extensive enough that compartmentalization has been compromised in some locations, with some segments taking on water faster than others, and several on the edge threatening to float away altogether. There is no real threat that The Spires will sink, but this is not immediately clear.

The starport, however, is in dire shape. Every one of its hemispheres has been ruptured and compartmentalization is failing. It will sink to several meters below the surface within eight hours. By good planning, few breaches threaten to release polluting petrochemicals and other hazardous substances. All gangways and tubes connecting the adjacent port are immediately explosively detached to keep The Spires from being dragged down as well (this is a standard precaution, but could have been delayed by up to three hours).

Thousands of workers must be evacuated from the starport buckyhem. The players may take a hand in this. The landers are well suited to shuttling people off of the buckyhem.

The players may become involved in the desperate search-and-rescue of a group of children (orphans, if necessary, to pull at callous PC heartstrings) lost somewhere below-decks. These children are from other arcologies, and so are of no interest to residents of The Spires.

In the mass confusion, surface vessels and submersibles docked at the various sea-level jetties collide. Rescue and assistance may become necessary there as well.

The cast and crew of *Cirque* receive news that The First Councilor is being held by battle-dressed Azure Path fighters — both humans and dolphins. Her two children were visiting for several days, and are believed

Gillpeople Modifications

"Gillpeople" is a misnomer. Gillpeople are modified to make their lungs and body systems more like those of dolphins and other sea-going mammals. As a result, they can breathe far more efficiently, exchanging up to 85% of their lung volume in a single breath. In addition, their lungs have a more efficient exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. A gillperson can hold his or her breath for up to fifteen minutes and maintain vigorous activity. A thickening of body fat layers insulates against cooler waters. Digestive modifications allow the eating of raw foods with reduced health risks.

These modifications produce an overall increase in endurance of up to 5, rolling good flux.

Some gillpeople opt to have their feet altered into flippers for efficient swimming; most use old-fashioned wearable flippers. Altered feet reduce dexterity on land by up to 5, rolling bad flux.

to be with her. The Path threatens to kill all three if their demands are not met, including the immediate embargo of all exports and the release of records showing that war profiteering took place. Local police and first responders are too busy with the starport evacuation to provide more than a token show of force, and request assistance.

The militants announce via all news sources that The Spires buckyhem has been rigged with additional explosives, both internally and externally. They threaten to sink the buckyhem if their timetables are not met for release of war profiteering data. This is a partial bluff. Charges have been mounted, but are insufficient to sink the city. The largest of the charges have been externally mounted, and must be removed or disarmed by characters with appropriate environmental and munitions skills.

Assuming that the PCs participate in a plan to free the First Councilor, they will discover that only the children are being held in the unit. The First Councilor was smuggled out in the early confusion and taken by submersible to Underhill. She is being held in a small room.

Kidnapp victims may seek to fight their way out of attempted kidnappings near various characters. The characters may be faced with a choice of assisting or not.

Andii is a reserve officer of the IISS and will consider it a duty to render any aid possible. She will give orders and suggestions consistent with this duty. However, she and the players will also obtain information regarding the profiteering. Andii is duty-bound to consider this as well.

Despite the desire to maintain a schedule, *Cirque* will not break orbit until matters are at least stabilized. Fortunately, the local Scout base will take a hand in this, and in calling for INS and other relief units. Depending on referee and player interest, this could keep the players on-world for at least a week.

Dwellings Typical Underhill Dwelling

Note that the upper dome is at ground level. The other levels are below ground.

1. Entry door in upper dome.
2. Air conditioning and circulation.
3. Master bedroom, first level.
4. Secondary bedroom.
5. Kitchen.
6. Dining Area.
7. Holographic entertainment center.
8. Closet.
9. General Room (storage, hobby room, etc.)
10. Secondary bedroom.

Azure Path Dwelling In Underhill

1. Entry door.
2. Air conditioning.
3. Heavy gun emplacement/sentry post.

Cirque

TYPICAL UNDERHILL FAMILY DWELLING



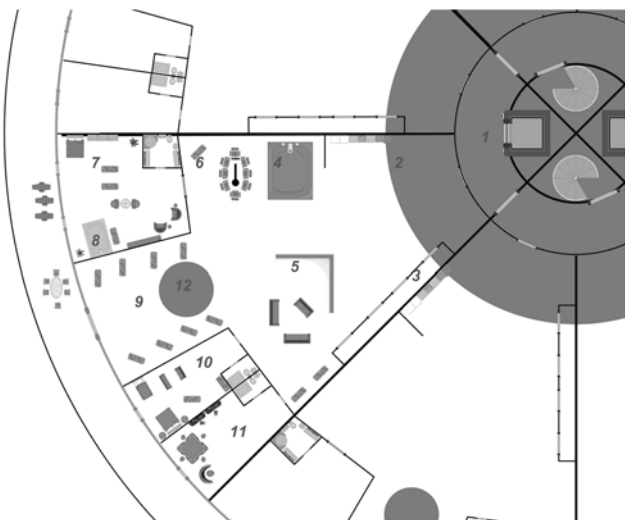
AZURE PATH DWELLING IN UNDERHILL



4. Bunkroom. Sleeps 4 militants.
5. Bunkroom. Sleeps 4 militants.
6. Kitchen. Largely used to heat prepared rations of various types.
7. Holographic entertainment center. Note that many propaganda videos and other militant materials are found here.
8. Conference and work table. Propaganda and planning materials are spread here.
9. Dolphin tank.
10. Closet converted to weapons locker. Multiple long arms, ammunition boxes, bomb-making materials, and communicators are found here. The dwelling is well prepared for a violent stand-off.
11. Holographic screen for training.
12. An amateurish wall-sized canvas-frame painting of dolphins frolicking in pure azure water leans on this wall. To one side, a desk has been placed in front of the painting. A wall panel has been cut out to allow a crawlway access into the cell behind.
13. Cell for one captive.
14. Undersea survival suit.

Devereaux's Penthouse

1. Elevator lobby. The entry to each unit locks and has security monitors and features. Grey shading indicates transparent ceiling (skylight) under large central dome.
2. Entry area of apartment. Grey shading indicates transparent ceiling



(skylight) under large central dome.

3. Large storage closet.
4. Dolphin tank for visiting dolphins.
5. Holographic entertainment center. Note that a large number of kid-based materials can be accessed, although the age-appropriateness may be questionable to either side (i.e., non-custodial parent slightly clueless about kids' current interests and levels).
6. Typical museum-quality display case, of which many are scattered through the apartment. Each case is locked; the glass is thick, shatter-resistant, and alarmed. Each case contains two items; each item is reasonably valued at CR 5,000.00 or more.
7. Master bedroom. Note extravagant size; most spacers would expect this to be a bunkroom.
8. Councilor's personal hot tub.
9. Entertainment area; large number of display cases.
10. Teens' bedroom. Teens are of same gender. Gender is a matter of referee preference.
11. First Councilor's working office. Note numerous computer connections and consoles. Data in these units is heavily encrypted.
12. Domed skylight from rooftop.

Scene and Task Checklist

Act I

- ☐ BT1 lands at The Spires starport and the tent is erected on the parkland.
- ☐ Local help (ticket takers, porta-john delivery experts, etc.) discuss local matters among themselves. The PCs will overhear and perhaps be drawn into discussions about the war economy still being in place.
- ☐ The "Circus Parade" event takes place on the greenspace near the bridge to the port. It is notable for the audience. Few non-residents of the Spires seem to be lining the walkways or coming into the park. When a group of Underhill residents come into the park from a below-decks entrance, they and their parents are snubbed.
- ☐ After the first performance, the PCs are entertained by First Councilor Devereaux of the wealthiest planetary council members in a fifteenth-story luxury apartments in the Spires. The apartment boasts a valuable collection of antiques, many from offworld (artwork, quality china, an ancient and fragile wooden "shoe-shine kit" with a metal footstand purporting to come from pre-spaceflight Earth, and even several archaic weapons). Devereaux drinks a bit too much and jokes about "wanting to get a swimmer into a net." When asked what she means, the conversation is diverted. Later on, she offers to show the PCs her "self-defense guns." At this point her older child throws a fit and demands to know what's so wrong with Swimmers.
- ☐ To research local slang for "swimmer": Average (2D), < (Int + Computer or Streetwise). On success, the PC learns that "swimmer" is slang for a human who has been enhanced for long-term survival in and under the water, such as by the addition of gills, increased ability to survive while holding one's breath and other water-based enhancements, whether technological or geneered.

Act II

- ☐ During a performance, a fight breaks out in the audience between a group of Underhill residents and one from the Spires.
- ☐ Between performances, a dolphin in its environmental suit asks that PCs carry an encrypted wafer either to Rhylanor or Duke Norris at Regina. If consulted, Andii will agree to the latter, but refuses to turn back to Rhylanor. The dolphin will explain and reveal nothing. To break the encryption on the wafer (6 hours): Staggering (5D) < (Edu + Programming). After three failed attempts, the media erases itself completely. If the encryption is broken, the wafer will prove to contain shipping schedules and other documentation demonstrating war profiteering by the World Council. It will also contain projections showing that Equus will begin to suffer significant resource depletion within five decades unless pre-war levels are resumed.

Dolphins

Army Master Sergeant Uplifted Dolphin

Final UPP: F78878. Age: 26 years. Military Fame: 5 (Town).
Final Honors: Master Sergeant, 343rd Infantry Regiment, Imperial Army, [CR-2, MCG-1, WB-2].

Final Skills: Admin-2, Driver-0 (Legged-2), Fighter-4 (Battle Dress-2, Beams-1, Exotics-1), Heavy Weapons-0 (Launcher-1), Hostile Environment-2, Leader-1, Liaison-2, Navigation-2, Recon-1, Sapper-1, Seafarer-0 (Aquanautics-1), Tactics-1, Waldo Ops-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Army Master Sergeant Uplifted Dolphin.

Terms (4): 4 Soldier.

Muster Out (4): ("Tee Suit" Cost: 2 best benefits), Retire x2 (KCr 16/year), StarPass, Knighthood, C5 +1 (Tra 8). Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: "Tee Suit" (with Waldoes, Lifters, Computer/Comm), Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Wafer Jack, Personal Weapons.

BW: Spin 2417 Equus B 55A 858 Wa Ph.

HW Skills: Seafarer-0 (Aquanautics-1), Waldo Ops-1.

Army Corporal Uplifted Dolphin

Final UPP: C98877. Age: 22 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Honors: Corporal, 78th Protected Forces, Imperial Army, [CR-2, MCG-1, WB-1].

Final Skills: Admin-1, Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Driver-0 (Grav-1, Legged-2), Fighter-0 (Battle Dress-2, Beams-1, Exotics-1), Heavy Weapons-0 (Launcher-1), Languages: Sagamaal-6, Vilani-7, Navigation-1, Seafarer-0 (Aquanautics-1), Sapper-1, Sensors-1, Tactics-1, Waldo Ops-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Terms (3): 3 Soldier.

Muster Out (3): ("Tee Suit" Cost: 2 best benefits), StarPass, StarPass, C4 +1 (Int 9). Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: "Tee Suit" (with Waldoes, Lifters, Computer/Comm), Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Wafer Jack, Personal Weapons, Retirement (KCr 6/year).

BW: Spin 2417 Equus B 55A 858 Wa Ph.

HW Skills: Seafarer-0 (Aquanautics-1), Waldo Ops-1

Sergeant

Final UPP: 7769A9. Age: 30 years. Fame: 2 (Close Family).

Final Honors: Sergeant, 78th Protected Forces, Imperial Army, [CR-4, XS-1, MCG-1, WB-1].

Final Skills: Admin-1, Animals-0 (Trainer-1), Driver-0 (Grav-2), Fighter-4 (Battle Dress-2, Beams-1, Exotics-1), Heavy Weapons-1 (Ordnance-1, WMD-1), Language: Sagamaal-9, Liaison-4, Medic-1, Navigation-1, Recon-1, Seafarer-0 (Aquanautics-1), Tactics-1, Waldo Ops-1.

Terms (5): 5 Soldier.

Muster Out (5): ("Tee Suit" Cost: 2 best benefits), StarPass, Retire x2 (KCr 20/year), Retire x2 (KCr 30/year), Knighthood, Life Insurance. Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: "Tee Suit" (with Waldoes, Lifters, Computer/Comm), Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Wafer Jack, Personal Weapons.

BW: Spin 2417 Equus B 55A 858 Wa Ph.

HW Skills: Seafarer-0 (Aquanautics-1), Waldo Ops-1.

- ☐ A small craft from Underhill sends an automated distress signal. Though it is within a hundred kilometers of the Spires, the response is indifferent. Either as volunteers or dispatched by Andii, the characters go to help. They find a sinking wooden houseboat in poor repair. The boat has taken on quite a bit of water and is about to go under. As the PCs approach, they see three gillpeople on board, throwing waterproof cases overboard. The cases sink quickly. They seem surprised at the rescue attempt, and suggest that they thought the comm was completely broken. If any cases are retrieved (unlikely, as they are weighted), they will prove to contain sophisticated explosives and sonar sensors.
- ☐ A pair of different dolphins will approach Andii through the PCs to take passage to Regina. They have the necessary special tank already. They will not discuss their reason. Andii may decide that she needs a dolphin act, at the referee's discretion (i.e., if the referee wants to administer dolphins). Otherwise, she will decline.

Act III

- ☐ Local police forces are encountered roughing up several young gillpeople and a dolphin companion. If accosted by PCs, they will tell PCs to "swim out." Assisting the gillpeople will lead either to arrest or (if the PCs successfully disengage and get away) further discussions with the gillpeople. They will discuss generalities about the current abuse of resources, and how it must stop. Out of gratitude, one will warn characters to "keep your life vests handy."
- ☐ One of the characters is romantically pursued by an Underhill resident. The character is likely shown his or her pursuer's apartment under the upper surface (known derisively to Spire residents as an Underhill Penthouse). The local is seeking to determine whether the PC can be convinced to help those planning an uprising. The apartment will have a number of waterproof cases stacked in one corner, identical to those seen on the sinking boat in Act II.
- ☐ The characters' sleep will be interrupted one night by the unscheduled, unannounced landing and loading of an Empress Marava class Far-Trader with its markings obscured. Her transponder claims her to be a trader Andii and others likely know (or can determine) to have been destroyed in the cross-fire of the Battle of Rhylanor. The trader unloads, reloads, and lifts within hours. If characters investigate by computer, they will locate data stating that no ship ever landed and no cargos were exchanged. By the time they physically enter the trans-shipping warehouses under the port surface, the warehouses will be empty, beyond one or two shipping labels identifying cargos of endangered crustacean bottom-feeders (outbound) and advanced undersea mining equipment (inbound).
- ☐ Unusual numbers of gillmen and dolphins are sighted near Anis-town. Some workers in the warehouses and shops contained in the hemispheres supporting the starport claim to have heard clicks and thumps through the outer shell.
- ☐ A tour of a kelp-gathering vessel reveals that the vessel is unusually well armed against attack.

Act IV

- ☐ The final performance is interrupted by muffled shockwaves passing through the floor. The attack has begun.
- ☐ A group of orphans is trapped below-decks, either on The Spires or the starport.
- ☐ The PCs assist in evacuating other personnel from the starport buckyhem. This occurs against the backdrop of panic, and with militant Path members attempting to take hostage officials and others who they believe to be war profiteers.
- ☐ Surface vessels collide and the PCs must assist the sinking vessels.
- ☐ Docking pylons are swamped as people seek any escape from the sinking buckyhem.
- ☐ The question of more bombs being planted explosions is raised. PCs familiar with submersibles and possessing other Hostile Environ-

Cirque

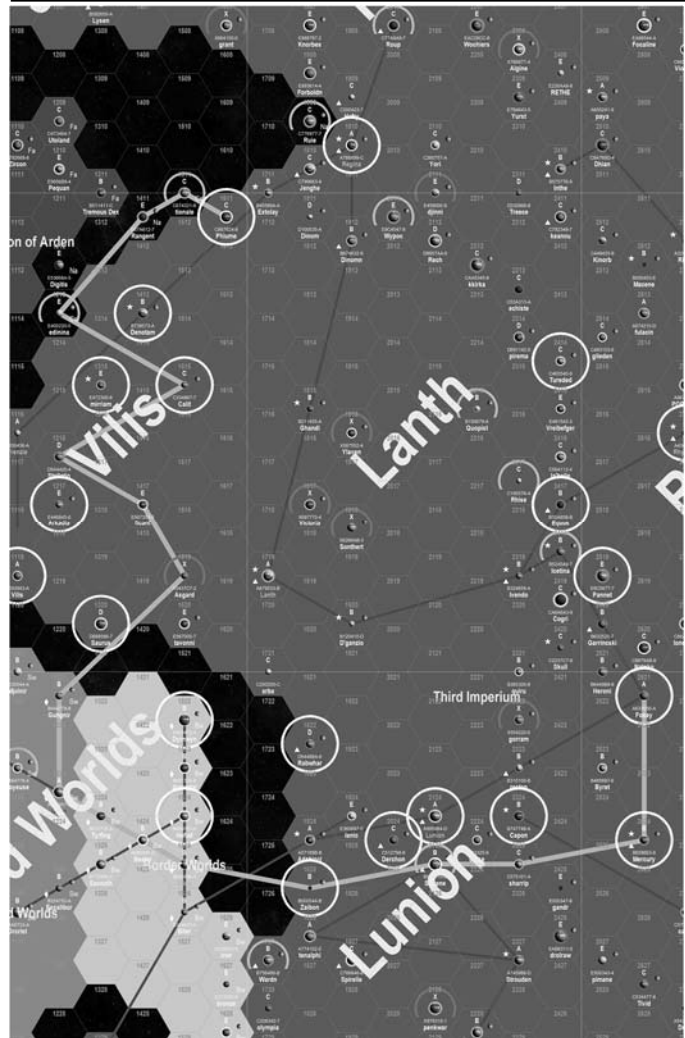
ment skills will be asked to help look for and disarm or remove the explosives. In the process, they discover that The Spires is not at significant additional risk.

- The First Councilor Deveraux is taken prisoner in her own apartment. Both human and Dolphin intruders are present, as are her children. As noted, local forces are overwhelmed and request Andii's help. As also noted in the narrative, the First Councilor is moved early.
- When the PCs successfully break the siege, they must determine the location to which the Councilor has been taken. Interrogation of the captured Path militants and the older child (an Azure Sympathizer, but not yet a member) will develop clues.
- The Path transmits its demands in a time-delayed video. It threatens to kill the First Minister within twelve hours if their demand for the resignation of all members of the World Council is not met. Deveraux is shown to be alive, bruised but not seriously injured, sitting on the circular steps of an Underhill dwelling unit.
- In the end, Deveraux's older child provides the essential clue to the whereabouts of the First Councilor. The teen recognizes a wall-sized amateurish painting of dolphins frolicking leaning against the wall behind Deveraux. The teen had been in that unit a year ago, when Deveraux's ex-husband had briefly dated the woman residing there. Computer checking will suggest that the woman is vocally pro-Azure Party.
- Matters are still confused and the local authorities still preoccupied. Andii will be asked by the local Knight (an ineffective type who has not been terribly interested in local events prior to day) to effect a rescue.
- The rescue attempt will require some planning. The Underhill dwelling has been fortified. Armed guards are on watch in the entry dome. Each level below has a number of effective troops available. Finally, the Path militants will make clear that they will kill the First Minister at the first sign of armed attack.
- PCs should be encouraged to consider all of their assets, from trained animals to trained Aslan acrobats, in rescuing the First Minister. However, Andii also makes clear that she does not want the First Minister set free; she is to be turned over to the Scouts, if rescued, to have them hold her as part of a potential investigation of war profiteering.

Tag

- This is not a full rebellion; it is more like a well-planned riot followed by two separate hostage situations. The immediate emergencies are ended and order is restored.
- All involved characters will be asked by both the Scouts and the local to record depositions and testimony. The recordings will be duplicated for distribution along the XBoat routes.
- The most serious war profiteers will be deposed. Acting on advice of the Scouts, the local Baron will order an embargo on all use of auxiliary starports while smuggling and other charges are investigated.
- *Cirque* has another planet to visit. Sobered, and licking any wounds, she and her crew head out for a jump point.

Nemesis' likely route. Note that a number of stops are Amber Zone worlds, most particularly in the latter portion of the voyage. These worlds are likely points of contact with elements of the vessels assembled for the events at Phlume.



Episode 4: Man on the Flying Trapeze

Pannet • Spinward Marches 2519

E9C5677-9 • F1 Ni • 224 • Im • K5 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Pannet. Let's see — a giant volcanic swimming pool filled with heated acid and two million crazy people who slather protective goo over all their heavy-duty suits to go out and gather stuff for other worlds to incorporate into consumer electronics. Blowing your nose without using hand sanitizer gets you a CR 200 fine on the first offense. The starport — a pretentious E-class port, no up-port, no fuel, no mechanics but those you've brought yourself, real live humans loading the ships, and only one watering hole. Oh, it wants to be a "D-class" port, pretends it should because it has some hanger domes...but those are just so freighters will land there at all. The atmosphere can eat through a hull in a week or three. They think it's special that they have a subway tunnel between there and the dome cities a few kilometers off.

Sure, I've been there. Sharurshid ships good wine to the wealthy types, and sometimes the Navy needs stuff they sell before it gets into me-Pods and game consoles. Can't keep the Zhodani honest with just music and video games, we need solid electronics in our *ships*. But I'm always glad to get away from that rotten-egg smell that seeps past all the seals, not to mention all the schoolmarms with their rules.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1105.

General Data (Players)

A non-industrial Imperial world located in the Rhylander Subsector of the Spinward Marches, Pannet is home to some 2,000,000 sophonts, mostly humans. Its atmosphere is fluid and exotically, insidiously corrosive. The world has a very hot core, and is subject to volcanism. As such, Pannet is a net exporter of various metals and minerals to less richly endowed planets.

Citizens of Pannet are hard workers, for the most part. Each learns young the basics of maintaining the heavy-duty protective suits and vehicles which allow sophonts to function in such a hostile environment, both through regular maintenance and by the careful use of ablative gels and coatings that guard against the worst effects of the toxic atmosphere.

As burdensome as this may seem to outsiders, the locals merely shrug. They are used to their world. Harvesting its mineral wealth requires careful self-protection and attention to the various types of equipment used.

Pannet's people are clustered in several mid-sized domed cities and other sealed environments. Apart from the all-permeating hint of sulfur in the air, the cities could be anywhere in the Imperium.

Pannet's laws are intrusive and rigid, given the regimentation needed to keep the dangerous environment outside where it belongs. For example, Pannet seems to have relatively standard marriage laws. An individual may be legally married to one spouse at a time. Marriages can be terminated by divorce. However, this requires a longer and more intrusive process than on more liberal worlds. In fact, Pannet criminalizes most marital misconduct. Moreover, such criminal laws are enforced, rather than quietly ignored. Any nonsupport of a spouse and/or children is a

felony, as is leaving Pannet to evade a support order. Similar laws accompany other seemingly "civil" activity, from making business contracts to properly disposing of refuse.

The starport has been at work constructing a two-story circular building since 1105 as part of its ongoing campaign to become a "D" port. The first story contains space for four entertainment establishments, only one of which has been occupied so far. There are also vending machines in a food court. The Port Administrator occupies an efficiency apartment next to the starport office. An enclosed walkway provides access from the subway tunnels.

The second story, intended to be a luxury hotel, is currently a large, bare space.

Summary and Referee's Information

The Comic Juggler was born and raised on Pannet. His career began here. He made his name initially as a local commentator, often skewering politicians and even the local Knight. His disaffection for the Knight has been well documented, and fully reciprocated.

When Juggler left Pannet, some balls were dropped, if one will excuse the pun: Juggler left at least two spouses behind. Both marriages were short and unsuccessful, entered into before Juggler was 21. Both followed the proper ceremonies to be legally binding, and both were properly registered. However, the first was not ended with a proper legal dissolution before the second was contracted; the two just separated. It was simpler to pretend neither had ever happened.

Polygamy is illegal on Pannet. Bigamy (having two spouses) is a serious crime.

Juggler simply shrugged off and ignored those rules and niceties as a mere technicality, and devoted little thought to the matter. Complicating the situation (and keeping Juggler from coming to the notice of the authorities), Juggler's second marriage took place under Juggler's stage name rather than his birth name, so no intrusive computer algorithm noticed the bigamy.

Neither of the spouses paid much attention while Juggler was still at home; Juggler was reasonably generous with his earnings. However, Juggler stopped bothering to assist either spouse when good fortune swept him away into the interstellar spotlight. Both of the abandoned and aggrieved spouses have become bitter that they have been left behind, financially and otherwise.

Hearing of Juggler's imminent arrival on *Cirque*, both spouses have obtained the services of skilled, aggressive family law attorneys. The second spouse's attorney is the more aggressive of the two, as the second spouse's marriage is currently of doubtful validity. However, the lawyer also knows that the second marriage will become valid the moment that the first marriage is dissolved. Both are claiming the benefit of being the "real" spouse, including fifty percent of Juggler's property and royalties.

Juggler is an investor (albeit holding only one ship share) in *Cirque*. Both former spouses seek one-half of that ship share.

Both skilled and well-connected attorneys will pounce on the situation as soon as BT1 and BT2 have landed. Attachments (liens approved by a local court) will be asserted, and the starport manager has been bribed

well to honor them. Local system defense units will match orbit to assert the attachment on *Cirque* herself.

Local police have apparently legal warrants for Juggler's arrest based on charges of felonious bigamy and felonious non-support. Both sets of charges are legally sealed and not available in any media or reports. As is typical, charges have been filed on behalf of both spouses, as the prosecutor is cautious. In addition, Comic Juggler has been charged with bigamy. The police intend to arrest Comic Juggler as soon as they can.

They will prefer to arrest him while he is off-port, promoting the circus. The ideal "scene" is to have the arrest occur during a live promotional event, such as the formal circus parade under the main city's dome, or while Comic Juggler is giving a live interview in a broadcasting studio. Sufficient force will be present to effect the arrest. Andii will not buck a properly served warrant by illegal combat, nor permit others to do so.

As the landers must land on port (what little there is) on this world, the extrality provisions of Imperial law would seem to protect Juggler somewhat. However, even if Juggler asserts his/her right against arrest while on-port, the starport manager will hastily convene an extradition hearing and turn Juggler over to local law enforcement based on the apparently lawful charges, and have Juggler taken to a holding facility off-port.

Needless to say, this situation threatens the ongoing tour. The on-world lawyers know this, and are using it as leverage against Andii and the other investors. The legal settlement being demanded is more than Juggler can afford, and would dig deep into the tour's cash reserves. Andii does not approve of using cash reserves to give in to blackmail. For that matter, she reacts poorly to blackmail regardless of whose money is at risk.

Sharurshid has only one weak and spineless factor on-world, who has no significant connections or pull and is of no use whatsoever. However, the factor will certainly be happy to show the players the local attorney listings, should they request them.

The ship's attorney, U'aiil, will quickly analyze the case. She has correctly concluded that the attachment on the ship has not been validly obtained or asserted, because the ship and its auxiliaries are commissioned reserve units of the Imperial Navy. The simple filing of a certificate to this effect will force both the local authorities and the starport manager to release all claims. The Knight, silently complicit in this action, will likely be embarrassed by such legal clumsiness. However U'aiil has advised Andii to wait until the end of the week's performances to file the certificate.

In the meantime, at U'aiil's suggestion, Andii will engage a local attorney to fight the remaining maneuvers in the local court. This local attorney – one of the best on Pannet – advises that the charges will ultimately be defeated, and Juggler released. Local counsel is optimistic that Juggler will be free within a mere 300 standard days.

Juggler's nightly act (safely juggling handguns, sharp objects and other objects while delivering cutting, topical commentary) is a mainstay of the tour. Andii cannot afford to leave him/her behind, even if personal loyalty would permit such craven and disloyal behavior. Despising both jilted spouses as mercenary opportunists (to say nothing of their attorneys), Andii will consider all other options that avoid deadly violence on-port.

Non-deadly violence off-port, however, will be condoned or even encouraged.

Information obtained through bribery and computer skills will reveal that Juggler is being held in the local minimum security jail. Although the guard contingent has been beefed up and ID procedures reviewed, the facility has several vulnerabilities. It is a building near the outer edge of a domed crater, and can be reached both from inside and outside the safety of the dome. A jailbreak is possible, and Andii will allow the attempt so long as only non-deadly force is used. The security stock of stunning weapons (gas grenades, tasers, etc.) can be requisitioned.

Most of the jail's inmates assist in the waste reclamation work of the dome. They are not in chain gangs, but have locator transmitters on locked ankle bracelets. Inmates are assigned to various nasty tasks, including rake-and-shovel work on and around a large pile of dried human waste; pole-and-squeegee work to remove oversized objects from the reclamation tanks; lifting and sorting scrap metal; and handling other work that is simple, exhausting and distasteful. As a general rule, the inmates are rotated from one job to another.

A rescue attempt from inside the dome requires the players to return to port through public corridors and tunnels. They can reasonably

expect resistance from local law enforcement. They may also discover unexpected allies in the form of Juggler's longstanding local fans. In addition, there are service tunnels for easy access to conduits for power, air, clean water, and other essential environmental services which can be used in the hope of eluding pursuit. Note that weapons fire within these service tunnels is likely to damage conduits for "other essential environmental services" with extremely unpleasant results.

An attack from outside must include plans to prevent the native atmosphere from entering the dome. Causing such a potentially deadly breach is a capital offense carrying the weight of an attempted murder charge. If this is attempted nonetheless, the assault from outside will require installing an emergency airlock and boring through (it happens, of course, that several such emergency airlocks can be located on port).

The nearest access using this means is above the jail facility; climbing down and back up will be essential. Such an attack has the benefit of avoiding a public battle, and also of giving the acrobats something to do apart from performing and whatever it is they do on their days off. Unfortunately, local law enforcement has dealt with several jailbreaks using this method. Getting in through the roof will not be easy.

Getting in via trickery and stealth is likely to make more sense. A combination of bribery and computer hacking can allow entry through the tunnels and/or via vehicles driven in through the access tunnel.

Battle dress will be viewed suspiciously in any subterfuge. Unless the monitoring systems can be interfered with, a rescue party's presence will be noticed in surveillance video if entry is attempted through the tunnels.

Getting out the same way will be impossible as well-armed reinforcements gather, forcing the rescue party to leave through the access tunnels. They will, of course, be pursued.

The referee should not make success too easy to achieve, nor too hard. This is a lighter adventure, and the perfect occasion for the various player-character entertainers to take a part in a "caper."

The moment that Juggler and the rest of the characters are back on-port, U'aiil will file the papers forcing the release of the liens. She will also serve papers filing suit against the starport manager for the unlawful nature of any extradition proceedings. At the same time, local counsel, coordinating his/her efforts with U'aiil, will file a series of local civil law suits for illegal detention of spacecraft crew, abuse of civil and criminal process, kidnapping, attempted theft by coercion (to wit, blackmail), and any other claim of unlawful skullduggery he or she and a bevy of energetic law students can use to kill trees and waste paper (already scarce on this world).

This, along with complaints for issuance of criminal complaints against the local police and prosecutors for taking bribes, kidnapping, and other criminal conduct, promise to lead to a favorable settlement in the months to come. All participants in the escape will eventually be notified that they are cleared without need for any of the players to return to Pannet. The escape attempt itself will provide publicity for the tour, favorable and "otherwise," but no publicity is ever really *bad* publicity.

Note that, if Javert is a non-player character he will prefer to not participate in the rescue, which is "volunteers only." If a player character, Javert will likely participate reluctantly. Javert will, however, accept a directive from Andii or any PC "superior" because Javert is concerned about "blowing cover" and being left off the ship. As Andii will be in favor of the raid, Javert will thus participate regardless of his personal feelings.

Finally, there is a certainty: no matter what they plan or intend, the PCs will be driven by the Fates and Furies to escape the dome through the pumping tunnels. That is, alas, inevitable, because (frankly) this is all the end-product of marital litigation — it really stinks. Once again, the referee must note: weapons fire within these service tunnels is likely to damage conduits for "other essential environmental services" with extremely unpleasant results. The players *will* be fired upon by guards foolish enough to employ deadly force. The PCs *will* experience extremely unpleasant results.

Waste Reprocessing Dome Details

The illustration of Waste Dome Three does not include the external walls. This is a shallow dome (not a full hemisphere) built into a depression almost exactly a kilometer in diameter. The dome ceiling extends

Standard Issue "Beat" Police and Prison Guards

987777 Fighting-3, Cudgel (Baton)-1, Second Appropriate Weapon-1

Code	Name	AV and Protection	Mass	KCr
StLtPoA-9	Standard Light Police Armor-9	18 [0,12,0,0,1,8,3]	12	37

Weapons Available to Guards: Police Baton, Stench Projectors, Flash Projectors, Shock Projectors. Guards in direct contact often have only baton. Police and guards on alert after an escape alarm has been raised may carry firearms and other deadly force.

Weapons Available to Police: Police Baton, Stench Projectors, Flash Projectors, Shock Projectors, Pistol-sized Slug Throwers. Tactical Assault Teams (if invoked) have heavier firearms.

above building height. No building is taller than four stories. The dome is about three meters above building height at the edges and arcs only slightly, reaching no more than double that height in the center.

The gray background indicates native, untreated, unfertilized soil. The darker portions of gray are elevated by approximately 1.5 – 2.0 meters per level of darkening.

All roads shown are inexpensive gravel tracks. Most of the vehicles used are wheeled trucks and construction equipment powered by fuel cell and/or cold fusion technology. They thus do not emit poisonous gases into the dome atmosphere.

The center top edge of the diagram is closest to the starport. As will be seen, this places the jail at the opposite end of the dome. Sewage reaches the dome through large pipes in service tunnels running from the spaceport and startown; reprocessed water leaves through other pipes in the same tunnels. Most of these service tunnels approach to the left of the center-point, running directly under the main control/office facility.

Any building shown in brown is directly connected with the processing of human sewage from the starport and other domes. Buildings shown in gray are not directly associated with that, but process other forms of waste.

Areas of interest are clearly marked on the map and described in the following paragraphs. Specific items of note may use specific grid references as well.

1. "Scrap Storage" is an area used primarily to store scrap metal and plastics in open-air heaps, awaiting further reprocessing. Backlogs have developed, however, and another waste processing dome is scheduled to be on-line within six months to handle the overflow.

2. The "Garage" is a dome containing repair and maintenance facilities for working vehicles. That dome is connected directly to the office/control complex by a sealed walkway. This promotes the comfort of those working in the office, allowing them to smell less of the acrid scent permeating the rest of the dome.

3. "Shops" consists of three long, narrow structures containing facilities and equipment for miscellaneous fabrication and tool-work.

4. "Access" is built into a tall contour and is the sole physical roadway into and out of the dome. The paved roadway goes down a ramp and to a tunnel; both are monitored to prevent the inmates from breaking out of the jail.

5. "Waste Management" consists of a series of two-story office buildings related to the waste processing functions of the dome. All systems are monitored in large control areas. It should be noted that a large, iris-valved entry to the maintenance tunnels is located at 6Q.

6. "Additional Waste Processing" contains additional waste reclamation facilities.

7. Excavation is under way for a new building. This may provide temporary cover.

8. "Methane Storage" consists of five large storage tanks used to store methane derived from the processing of human waste.

9. Located at 7O is an excavation of one of the underground service tunnels through which power, liquids, and other services are routed. Location 8O contains one of many pillboxes with an entrance directly into the maintenance tunnels. PCs must note that all pillboxes are electron-

ically locked and require proper identification for entry. However, a mere ID card is enough; biometric locking is not employed.

10. "Waste Processing Equipment" is a building complex containing processing equipment for various kinds of waste. However, this set of buildings is not for reclamation of sewage. Rather, these buildings handle metals, plastics, paper, and similar recyclables. A large cylindrical tank at the back of each building is used to store any toxic liquids involved in the particular process.

11. "Biohazard Storage" consists of a rather haphazard set of large sheds erected for biohazard storage. The building at K8 contains older laboratory testing facilities for quality control purposes.

12. "Methane Production" consists of three structures also involved in the processing of waste and production of methane. "Processing Plant" contains the main separation, precipitation and sterilization plant, also involved in the processing of water.

13. Example of a pillbox. Pillbox entries to the waste tunnels (massive manhole covers on rails) are scattered throughout the dome.

14. Initial waste entry and filtration tanks.

15. Old management buildings, now converted to labs.

16. The various vehicles are of course constantly operating inside the dome.

17. Far side of the human waste filtration equipment.

18. Solid waste grinders.

19. Fertile area caused by solid waste leaching.

20. "Jail" contains the prison facility and its surrounding security perimeter. As will be noted, the main entry proceeds through a security building at E15, below the inner surface of the primary dome. The clear materials used for this dome (and for other windows, as indicated on the map) are sufficient to hold pressure in case of a breach of the primary dome, and thus cannot be broken by simply tapping them with a hammer. However, the dome is vulnerable to properly set explosives, if such a method is considered.

The prison building is four stories tall. Both fences are wired to be electrified. However, they are not always powered up. Security cameras exist, but are monitored by computer. The system as a whole has a very low QREBS value.

21. The sole ground level entrance and exit to the jail for all so-phons, including guards, employees, and inmates, is found here. The entrance is reasonably well secured, and there are additional security stations enclosed in this facility as well.

22. After separation and sterilization, solid waste is stored next to the jail facility, at "Solid Waste". Here, too, accumulations are expected, as expectations have been exceeded. The resulting fertilizer has been piled and kept in reserve for new agriculture domes or orbital stations. As may be noted by the players and referee, this pile comes within meters of the double security perimeter of the jail building itself. Distaste regarding the material may cause laxness of any guard posted outside. Monitoring may also be lax, as no one has ever tried to break out (or in) on that side of the facility.

23. Jail exercise yard.

24. A large but broken-down multi-purpose tractor sits untended on the sloping pile of dried waste. There is, however, a dome located on

Cirque

the building's roof at E14. This is no more than three meters.

25. "Waste Processing" contains of skimmers, precipitators and separators which process human waste. The circular tanks are open to the dome's atmosphere and serve as the primary source of the dome's distinctive odor, as noted elsewhere.

26. Pillboxes allowing entry to the service tunnels are located in various places in the vicinity of the human waste processing systems. These are not guarded, and not readily visible from the work areas or jail.

As will be noted, there are several potential means for unlawful entry including cutting through the dome above the jail itself. In addition, the exposed tunnel structure is vulnerable to demolition techniques. Individual pillboxes are vulnerable to demolition or electronic lock-picking/password breaking of sufficient sophistication for entry into the dome (including mere theft of a technician's ID card). However, security codes may be re-set once the main control center is notified of unlawful activity.

In addition, as piping must run through the various parts of the sewage treatment plant, access and egress may be possible through smaller manholes and gaps within the sewage treatment plant. While these are secured, they are not necessarily as well fortified as the pillboxes themselves.

Worker identification cards cannot easily be forged, as this dome and others like it are correctly deemed to be essential life-support structures. To work, all local identification must be found within the planetary computer networks. The players will find it difficult at best to bribe anyone employed at the plant. Workers in the environmental systems of this and other colonies are well aware that their lives depend on the systems working correctly.

The most the players should be able to obtain by bribing such a worker is a helpful supply of dried, processed sterilized human waste for use in his or her personal garden. Thus, although security has become somewhat lax in the tunnels and elsewhere, the identification necessary to enter through the sole proper route is virtually impossible to falsify on short notice.

Regardless, there are always disgruntled and underpaid humans around who would like nothing better than to get revenge on their superiors. There are also Comic Juggler's fans. With enough searching, IDs may come through. Vehicles may be obtained, with some effort on the parts of the players.

Prisoners are employed in the facility in various roles as discussed above. Thus, there is a possibility that Juggler will be on a work shift when a rescue attempt is made. All prisoners are garbed in fluorescent lime green coveralls to identify them should they actually seek to leave without permission.

No visits are allowed with the exception of legal counsel admitted to practice before the local or Imperial courts. Although such meetings are not monitored, the prisoners are not allowed to keep any written materials, nor to give out any written materials except what they may write down in the meeting itself. Legal counsel is allowed to have only one pad of old-fashioned paper and an old-fashioned pen with which to take private notes.

Note that it will be easier to enter through a pillbox before a security alert begins than to exit by a pillbox after such an alert is sounded.

The service tunnels are wide enough for small recreational-sized ATVs or gravitic vehicles. A larger "standard" ship's ATV or air/raft, however, cannot maneuver in the tunnels.

Regardless of what method of ingress is employed, all roads of egress lead not to Rome, but to the service tunnels, and will require creativity and effort to be successfully navigated. Fortunately, the armed manpower in the dome is sufficiently limited to allow the rescue party to reach the exposed tunnel. They will also be able to reach the pillboxes, eventually.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Communication with Advance Sophonts regarding arrangements. Advance Sophonts leave.
- ☐ Chatting with Juggler about his "home" provides only scowls and growls. "Not a damn thing to see off-port."
- ☐ Landing at downport. BT1 and BT2 are both moved into domes on

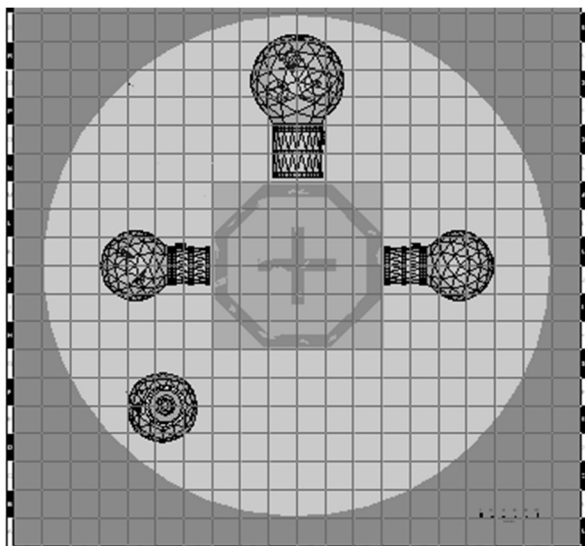
lifters.

- ☐ Performers sent out to handle publicity. They will provide interviews and have a formal "parade" in the "city center" park.
- ☐ Alternatively, folks go out to on-port bar, grill, pawnshop, and all-night candy store. Juggler refuses to go off-port simply to drink, ponies up tab for more expensive drinks. "There isn't a better bar on Pannet, which is really depressing," as Juggler points out.
- ☐ The Juggler is arrested by overwhelming number of well-armed local police, escorted by the starport manager. The warrant is in order, and the waiver of extrajurisdiction (if necessary) is endorsed by starport manager. The rest of the characters are left alone.
- ☐ Meetings with the starport manager may be attempted. These make no difference. In fact, Andii is served with liens attaching Juggler's share of *Cirque*. Several SDBs take position on *Cirque*, still in orbit.
- ☐ Attempts to contact the local Knight are fruitless. The Knight is unavailable, having unexpectedly departed for an inspection of his holdings in the outer system.

Act II

- ☐ Blustering divorce lawyers notify U'aili of the cost of Juggler's freedom: Cr 2,000,000 *per spouse*, in cash, negotiable securities, or properly appraised valuables. This is well beyond what Andii can or will pay.
- ☐ Any research shows fast notice of the arrest on the news-nets.
- ☐ The Show Must Go On. All performers are told to take their marks on schedule, each and every day. Player performers are encouraged to do schtick in Juggler's commentary spot. Schtick which highlights the Comic Juggler's plight meets with evenly distributed cheering and booing.
- ☐ Andii approves of planning discussions. Andii must approve all plans. Andii promises a bonus for retrieval of Juggler.
- ☐ U'aili reports on efforts to gain court release: No good. Hires local lawyer.
- ☐ Only U'aili may visit Juggler in jail. However, a tour of facility can be arranged.
- ☐ The PCs will want a look at the lay of the land. U'aili meets separately with Juggler (attorney-client privilege applies). She can bring back video. Video shows her entire trip in by hydrogen-cell powered groundcar. An item of great interest: prisoners in jump suits work with digging tools at the large pile of drying excrement. This is a daily occurrence. Comic Juggler can be seen there, scowling and doing the least work possible. Many guards are around, but they are not armored or heavily armed.
- ☐ Players may also tour as "VIPs." Note that suspicions will be raised if they tour ONLY the waste disposal dome. They may have to go to other sites to allay suspicions.
- ☐ To get general computer data on dump dome (basic layout, functions, access routes): Average (2D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 30 minutes. This provides the player with a map and discussion of building functions.
- ☐ Andii discourages breaching the dome. That is a serious safety risk to all inside, and very clearly a death-penalty felony because death, serious injury, or serious property loss could result.
- ☐ To get specific data on dump dome (personnel schedules, vehicle schedules): Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 120 minutes, can be repeated; on fourth or catastrophic failure, police track access attempt and arrive with arrest warrant). Success provides everything, including access to personnel system. Surprise the players: "Do you want to input a new employee profile, Ms. Habersham?"
- ☐ To get security codes for service tunnel access: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 240 minutes; on fourth or catastrophic failure, police track access attempt and arrive with arrest warrant). Success provides master codes to enter the tunnel system.

Cirque



Starport. Each dome has access to both subways to city and essential access to local waste systems in order to drain and service vessel needs. The separate dome houses the main starport offices and the single “watering hole.” Tunnels underneath the domes allow access from one to the next, and also to the starport office building.

- ☐ To get security codes for service tunnel security feeds: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 240 minutes; on fourth or catastrophic failure, police track access attempt and arrive with arrest warrant). Success provides master codes to enter the tunnel system.
- ☐ Consider obtaining documents of waste/sewer system workers. Breach planetary ID database and issue/create false IDs: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 240 minutes; on fourth or catastrophic failure, police track access attempt and arrive with arrest warrant).
- ☐ If Juggler is a PC, U’aili converses PRIVATELY with Juggler. She will visit to advise him of plans. Juggler may interact with other prisoners to plan distraction or confusion. The referee should conduct these discussions separately from the other players for realism, if possible.
- ☐ Players may consider contacting Juggler’s fans. If the players do not think of this, Referee can be kind and have fans approach Andii or players. Nice is not mandatory.
- ☐ Players may consider means of entering dump dome (access tunnels, get hydrogen-powered dump truck from starport and enter using fraudulent security card, use prison food service delivery, etc.).
- ☐ Plan distractions and research anything essential.
- ☐ Once plans are made, seek Andii’s approval. She will approve of anything designed to minimize violence and avoid killing. Any distraction which may injure or kill will be carefully considered. Example: using charges to cause a shift in the excrement pile will be accepted if and only if the players agree to rescue anyone buried by accident. Players proposing this should be reasonably sure that they can successfully plant the explosives.
- ☐ Attempts may be made to take full control of the service tunnel access systems in advance: Beyond Impossible (8D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if Wafer Socket), 240 minutes. On failure message arrives, “Initiating system intruder discovery and seeking physical location through IP logs”). A new task, to get out of hacked system without being back-tracked, and obscuring all location information: Difficult (3D) < (Int + Programming), 10 minutes.
- ☐ U’aili briefs the PCs on allowed weapons and tactics. Andii and

Security provide each player with stunning weapons and tranquilizing weapons. Several other weapons are available for return of deadly fire in self-defense only.

- ☐ Smoke-bombs and anti-laser aerosols are available.
- ☐ The Security Chief and Documentarian have Battle Dress available. Andii will want both along. They will however be difficult to conceal, and will raise suspicion if seen.
- ☐ Requisition or obtain other weapons and equipment.
- ☐ Overall success MAY be increased by having a player character stay on ship and use computers to control and coordinate throughout the scenario. A periodic roll to evade discovery of the hacking may be implemented, and is discussed below.

Act III

- ☐ The circus performs the closing show. Stage crew begins to pack up and prepare to leave as if all is well.
- ☐ U’aili obtains sealed court orders requiring that the liens on *Cirque* and auxiliaries are released. BT1 and BT2 are at launch readiness.
- ☐ If the PCs attempt to leave the port with obvious excessive arms or explosives, they are stopped by Bertii who gently persuades them to put their heavy weaponry away. To resist Bertii’s persuasion: Staggering (5D) < (Int) or Psionic Combat Task; on success only, the character knows that a mind-touch has been attempted, and can resist the influence. The Barbarian Knife Thrower will be influenced only against using any blade to kill (and encouraged to aim so as to frighten opponents). If a PC successfully resists influence, Bertii will alert Andii.
- ☐ If a PC wishes to monitor from BT1 or BT2, entry into the system: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 60 minutes, DM -2 for each prior successful hack into systems. Thereafter, the character must roll to avoid detection and lock-out in the referee’s reasonable discretion (e.g., every ten “rounds” of play).
- ☐ The PCs begin their caper.
- ☐ The PCs must locate Juggler during the raid (likely has a rake and is working at dried excrement pile, or a squeegee with a long handle at the edge of an aeration tank).
- ☐ Rescue Juggler. Combat is likely.
- ☐ Make sure that setbacks force a running tour of the dump before escape is managed through the service tunnels.
- ☐ The referee must assure that road is blocked (police), and vehicles locked down.
- ☐ Police and guards will swarm and sirens will blow.
- ☐ This act is largely a combat free-for-all. The referee should prepare combat rolls or use a spreadsheet to calculate rolls to hit, etc.
- ☐ No matter how this plan plays out, the only available exits lead into the service tunnels.

Act IV

- ☐ Enter the service tunnels.
- ☐ Smart players will disable the controls with weapons (combat roll).
- ☐ Really smart players will try to over-ride the entire control system against all over-rides. See Act II tasks; unless the initial roll has succeeded, this is a Hasty Beyond Impossible task.
- ☐ Navigate through the service tunnels. At each branch, choose correctly: Average (2D) < (Int), 30 seconds, DM+5 if argument.
- ☐ The referee should place five (5) pillbox entries between the players and the characters. Local police will attempt to enter from each. Ideally, the first time will be a warning. By the fifth attempt, the police have had time to regroup, guess what is going on, and have a force of at least ten uniformed officers ready to go, with deadly force.
- ☐ The players may emerge from the sewers before reaching port. If the emergence is in the city, crowds of Juggler’s fans will be availa-

Cirque

ble to “run interference” with police.

- Fend off attacks from police or guards entering the tunnels. Attacks may come from behind or ahead. Attackers from behind will be running or driving small vehicles to catch up. Attacks from ahead will be announced by gunfire. Battle Dress will be met with heavier fire, but not plasma or fusion weapons.
- At some point, no matter how careful the players try to be, a rusty sewer pipe will be breached by wayward bullets. Nasty semi-liquid goo under pressure will spray the players. However, it will also cause a massive distraction for the attackers as well. To avoid being disabled by retching (DIF < Int +End; can be treated medically).
- Andii may then arrive like the cavalry, choosing to join the battle herself, as she will be chafing against the advice that she not be involved in apparent lawbreaking. Fortunately, this portion of the access tunnel is below the starport, and under the port’s control and legal authority. Thus, it is technically Imperial territory, and technically outside the local law enforcement’s jurisdiction. Any attack or arrest attempt may be lawfully resisted with non-deadly force.
- Emerge from the sewers.
- If the emergence is in the hanger dome, the police may arrive in force if the referee so desires. However, U’aili and Andii will have their papers ready, and the confrontation will be mainly verbal (though the nearest turrets of BT1 and BT2 will be tracking).

Tag

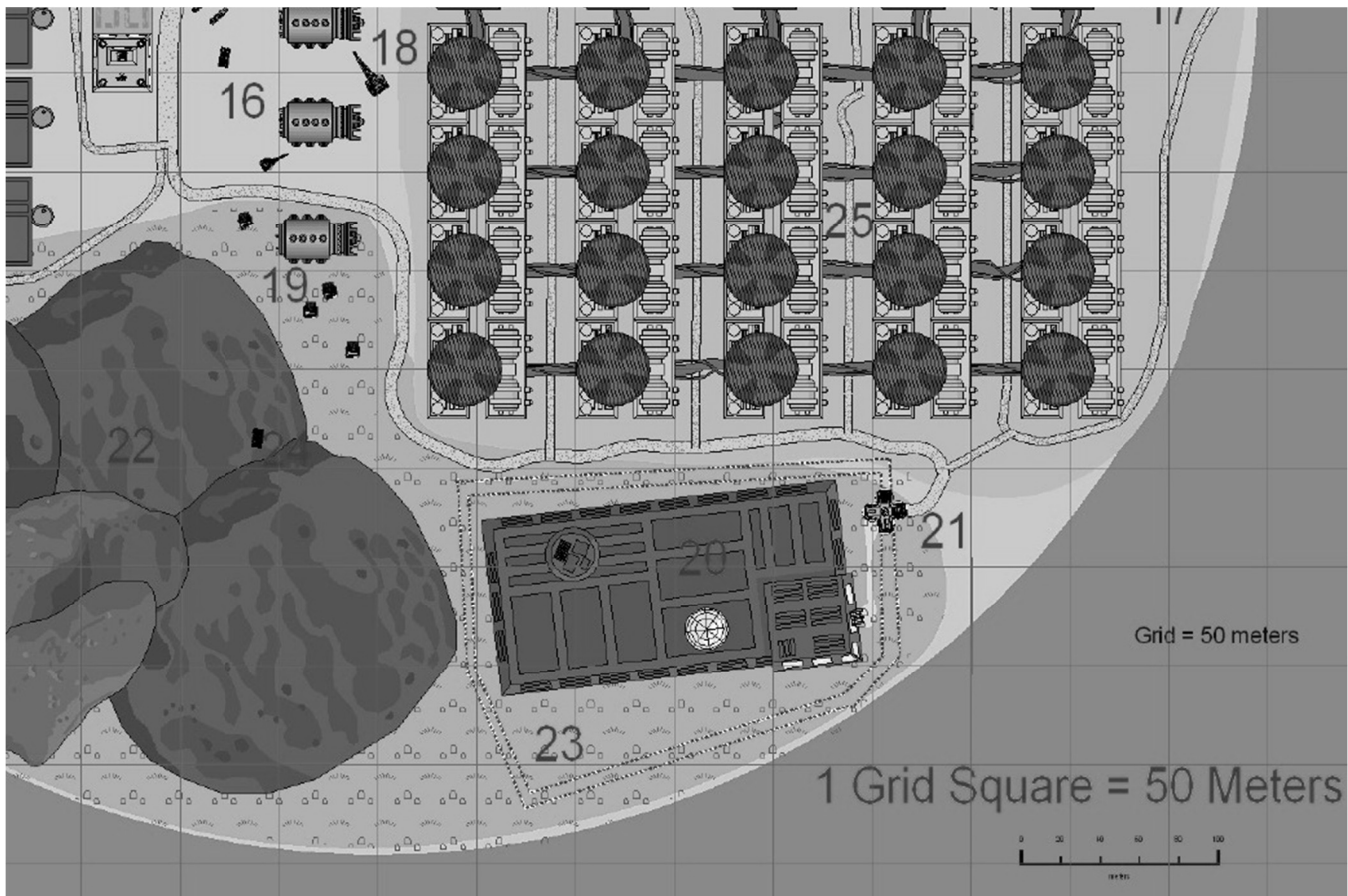
- Andii orders all players to board BT1 before takeoff. Showers are available in the miniphant pen, and nowhere else. All armor and clothing affected is to be exposed to vacuum long enough to kill harmful bacteria before being sent to the ship’s laundry.
- If everything goes really badly, and players somehow are captured and arrested, change the ending: U’aili gets local admission to practice “pro hac vice,” shows the sharpness of her legal acumen not to

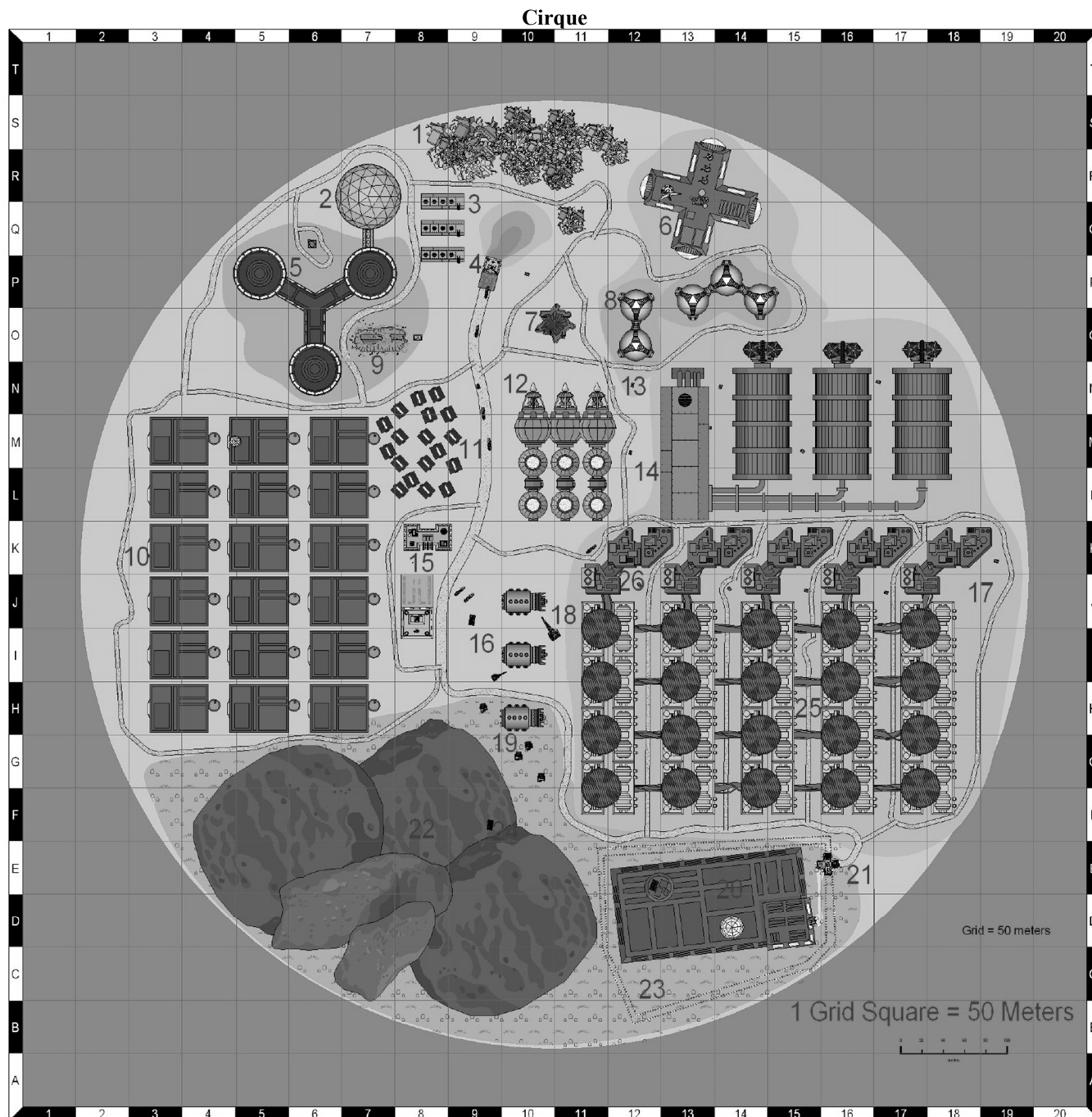
mention dewclaws, and wins in court after several days. *Cirque* leaves with all aboard. (“Welcome to Deus ex Machina Spaceways. Please fasten your seatbelts for launch. Please note that giant space pigeons do not provide environment suits; bring your own.”)



Tangler Rounds

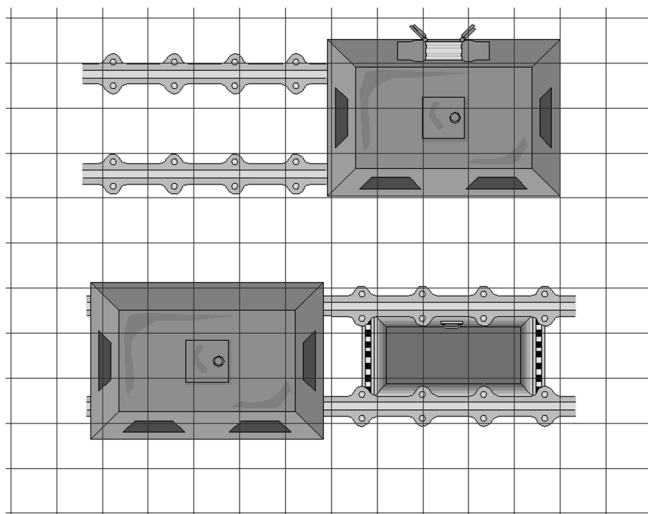
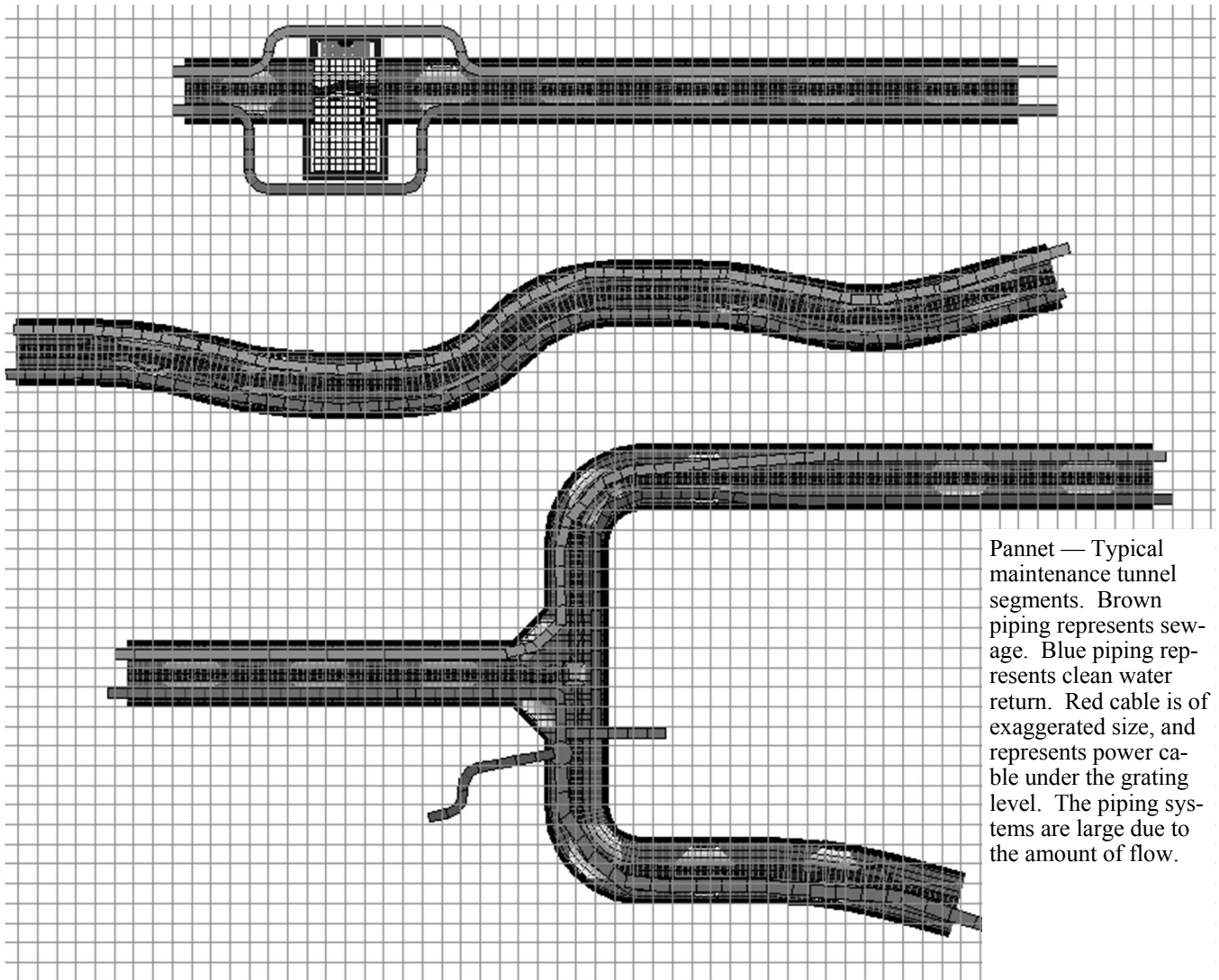
Advanced materials technology can provide new versions of old weapons. Bolas were traditionally thrown weapons designed to capture animals by wrapping around the legs. Fired from a rocket piston (next page), the tangler round is similar, but uses high-tech cords made with nano-fiber technology. Thus, they can wrap around torsos or legs, then tighten. The nano-fibers making up the cord also have a self-adhesive quality. Finally, the round itself may have a low-power laser sensor (a beefed up “pointer”) controlling the deployment of the two bola-ends as the round approaches the target. Though a short-range weapon, it is also effective when lethal effects are not desired.



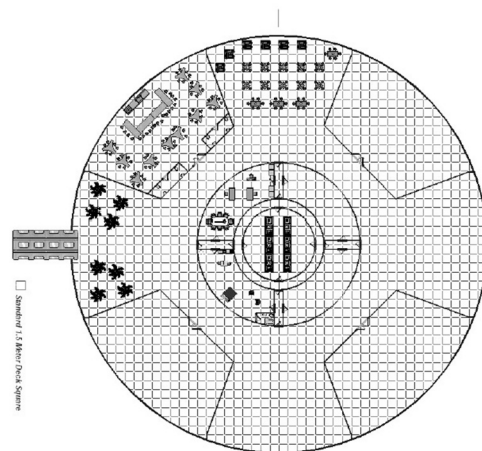


Cirque des Sirkas' security team has a number of weapons used to stun, tranquilize or temporarily disable disruptive sophonts. Andii prefers to use such weapons in this situation. As noted, however, she will also make heavier weapons available to defend against deadly force. Personal blades and trained animals may also be carried by appropriate characters.

Code	Name	Damage and Hits	Mass	R	Bu	Cost
ALtRP-7	Adv Lt Rocket Pistol-7 Tangier Round	(2) Frag-1 Pen-1	1.84	1	-3	330
ALtSPj-15	Adv Lt Stench Projector-15	(5) Stench-5	0.22	1	-3	790
ALtFPj-11	Adv Lt Flash Projector-11	(5) Flash-5	0.27	1	-3	990
ALtShPj-12	Adv Lt Shock Projector-12	(8) Elec-5 Pain-3	0.27	1	-3	1,300
ALtSPj-15	Adv Lt Sonic Projector-15	(8) Sound-5 Bang-3	0.33	1	-3	720
ALtDP-9	Adv Lt Dart Pistol-9	(5) Bullet-2 Tranq-3	0.36	1	-3	290
ALtDR-9	Adv Lt Dart Rifle-9	(6) Bullet-3 Tranq-3	1.34	4	-3	990
ALtRP-7	Adv Lt Rocket Pistol-7	(6) Bullet-2 Frag-2 Pen-2	1.84	1	-3	330
ALtLP-13	Adv Lt Laser Pistol-13	(6) Burn-4 Pen-2	0.73	3	-3	660
ALtEmpD-11	Adv Lt EMP Designator-11	(5) EMP-5	5.6	4	-4	1,700



Pannet — Typical “Pillbox” entry to maintenance tunnels. The unit has a door for easy access by individuals. The pillbox can be rolled away on rails for access by larger equipment, to lower pipe sections, and so on.



Pannet — Starport Offices and Establishments

Episode 05: Popcorn and Crackerjack

Fosey • Spinward Marches 2621

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Some worlds are just lucky to be useful at all. Being in the right place is most of what they have to offer. The smart ones, now, they make the best they can out of little bits of luck like that.

That's Fosey for sure. Not a bad size, but chilly, not really enough atmosphere or water. The warm beaches at the equator get a balmy minus ten degrees on a sweltering summer day. And dry, very dry. Other spots are chillier, of course, but closer to the "water" — good old ice. Not so cold that the dry spots are the best place to live, like other places I can think of. Piping water from a polar ice cap can be a real drag. Great way to get frostbite.

Anyway, what do you do with a place like this?

Avoid it if you can. It's easier to manage in pure vacuum—no "air" to tease you at all. No ice to tempt you to gather instead of bringing your own.

Oh, wait — that barely-an-atmosphere is in a great location. Some nice flat places. Thin air, so it's easy to land and take, off, but an oversized oxygen percentage. You can't breathe it, but there's lots more to compress and borrow.

Oh, sure, that makes this a great place. A truly great place, if you like cold, thin atmospheres. Like no one really likes.

So what you do is, you build warehouses, and more warehouses, and pretty soon, you start collecting all of the lost freight in the Marches, and then the whole domain, maybe the galaxy. All of it. Your left-handed three-eyed binoculars, your right-handed foot-warmers, all those odd socks you were sure got eaten in the ship's laundry, all there. Sword World breakfast cereals and dried prunes. Two hundred credit hammers that didn't make fleet standards, and had to be dumped in favor of five-credit hammers from the local bargain store. Medical supplies, like slightly radioactive tracers that killed patients with anaphylactic shock — but those are fine for low-tech populations that breed like vreepers. Crates and crates of stuff.

Best flea markets in the Marches.

But then there are the vreepers, the real ones. Not native, those nasty little things, not any more than the Norway Rat. Imagine, we have Terran vermin in the Marches, but no one thought to bring a few breeding pairs of barncats. You'd need a blasted big cat to handle a vreeper, anyway. You're better off with a flame-thrower. Some of those warehouses are full of the little nasties. Chew your leg off and give you a dirty look because you're not juicy enough. If you find yourself in one of those places the vreepers have decided they own, you'd better have your full complement of gas grenades, sonics, and so on, because that cat will run. I met a cat once, they're much more sensible than people.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

General Data (Players)

Located in the Mora Subsector of the Spinward Marches, Fosey has a cold climate and a very thin oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. Summer

temperatures in the equatorial zone reach a balmy minus 8° C, considered undesirable by more devoted sunbathers. It is much like the original Mars of old Sol system, though with far more surface "water" (largely glacial ice formed over millennia). The population is clustered around the rim of the main inland icepack in a series of small cities, while the large deserts are barely explored. Though it closely orbits its primary, it was settled as the most attractive and "hospitable" world in the system.

Because it has so little to offer, Fosey has spent the last several hundred years selling its location in a cluster of other worlds. Like a Terran 20th-Century small town at the intersection of major highways, Fosey's government began chanting the mantra "location, location, location." Thus, many, many Imperial credits were spent to attract Oberlindes and its shipyard.

Fosey's yards specialize in importing designs and necessary components for tried-and-true designs up to TL-13, notwithstanding the lower prevailing planetary technology level. In addition, major warehousing and transshipment facilities have been built and maintained. The resulting A Starport has become a major commercial interchange for the cluster.

In addition to the shipyards, the port also has a deserved reputation for accepting long-term storage of various commodities and cargos. This results in auctions, redemption sales, and other ways for warehouse owners to dispose of damaged, unwanted, and forgotten cargoes in an efficient and profitable manner. The starport boasts several "flea-market" spaces where unclaimed and often substandard (low-QREBS) products are sold at bargain prices. While every large starport has such warehouses and businesses, Fosey has made more than a cottage business out of the practice. "If you can't buy it at Fosey, it's not for sale anywhere."

The landlocked glaciers provide water for thousands of square kilometers of greenhouse farming. These units tend to be tightly clustered, even sharing common walls between typical peaked roofs. Advanced cultivation techniques much like those used in orbital habitats allow three-season farming (one season fallow). Fosey is thus reasonably self-sufficient in feeding itself despite its environment. Inevitable gas escape may have slightly increased oxygen percentages in the atmosphere over the last several hundred years, but no significant climate change has been noted.

The vast majority of Fosey's inhabitants are the stalwart warehousemen, salvage specialists, and indoor farmers of the Imperium. They are not explorers or adventurers. Most know of the "wilds" and their great expanses of "perma-moss" only from satellite photos and other remote sensors. They rarely bother looking at these, and the few who do will find surprisingly little data on the flora and fauna of the "outback." Inhabitants of Fosey are unusually content to live their lives in the quiet, settled ways, and rarely go far from the places of their birth. The legendary explorer Bennet Lai da Santos, born on Fosey in 1036, is considered by most locals to be nothing more than a bothersome anomaly, not a role model; he was "more than a little oxygen-deprived," many have said. Outworlders and others interested in the larger world are sometimes teased or insulted as "inSanto's."

This attitude is the backbone of complacency (or contentment) which has kept physical exploration of the outlying deserts to a minimum. Offworlders are often surprised at the difficulty in locating local guides for

adventuresome excursions to the mountains, or to search for local variations of the “perma-moss” of potential value.

The population shows only slow growth. People do not generally seek to acquire more wealth than they can possibly use for themselves, and most locals live out their lives within a few kilometers of where they were born. At best, they talk about the purported occasional sightings of figures moving through the outback. Claims have been made on occasion that a Yeti-like creature with massive lungs and long, nasty fangs somehow survives on the perma-moss in the Outback, though it purportedly has a taste for human flesh as well.

Referee's Summary

BT1 lands on-port, near enough to the perimeter to allow easy access to the most densely populated areas. Tickets have been sold, and the show must be made ready. The tent is pulled out and brought into the nearest “large” facility, a deep-dug city under a dome. It is successfully erected with only minor assistance.

BT2 begins its landing to shuttle down the bulk of the performers and stage crew. It is still night near the starport; the local day is a little under twenty standard hours. As the hemisphere is heading into winter, the local daylight time is under nine hours.

An imminent power failure forces the pilot to bring BT2 down well short of the starport. The pilot locates a smooth, wide spot in the Dusty Hills and sets down just before the plant goes completely dead. The landing is soft, but BT2 is in a narrow valley. The emergency beacons begin to signal, but cannot achieve line-of-sight with the port. The pilot cannot raise communications satellites or *Cirque* herself, all of which are in standard equatorial orbits.

Reasonable line-of-sight to satellites can be achieved only through one small gap in the mountains, and only for a few seconds at a time. It is theoretically possible for the players to be able to send and receive very short bursts to active satellites or even *Cirque* if they take the time to observe and calculate. However, this may require time and patience beyond that available to the players.

The engineer cannot restore power without parts available only from *Cirque* or the starport. Without the main power plant on-line, life support (including heat) will fail in under two days. Given the dearth of local search-and-rescue teams, the relatively low technology level, and the grimness of the overall situation, an active attempt to signal for help is essential.

The emergency locker includes a portable comm unit of sufficient range to reach the starport if line-of-sight can be obtained. The locker also is stocked with several barebones vacuum suits that will allow a small party to climb to a higher point to try to set up the comm unit. A few light pistols and similar weapons may also be located to protect against any larger animals, plus other equipment if the PCs maintain quarters on BT2.

The trek up the ridge can be managed in a few hours, provided there are no mishaps or difficulties. Regardless of training or skills, the players find themselves volunteering (or volunteered) for the four-hour trek. They have at most nine hours of light in the short day. The landscape is forbidding, with fine sand alternating with large patches of perma-moss. Rocks and stones litter the landscape.

Though long, the hike up the hills is not terribly strenuous. There is no significant rock climbing or similar high-detail exertion unless the referee wishes to insert such details. Instead, the climb revolves around the simpler details of avoiding assisted suicide by planet. Players should be faced with loose sands alternating with slippery perma-moss, all causing various slips, falls and longer tumbles. A longer tumble is likely to puncture a vacuum suit and require field repair.

Oxygen levels must be monitored. The tanks are good for no more than eight hours at this level of exertion. Internal nutrition supplies (tasty protein goo-tubes) are more than sufficient to satisfy the players' caloric needs, however.

After an hour and a tumble or two, the party will find the desiccated remains of a vacc-suited woman. She has clearly been dead for years. Sand has drifted partially over the corpse, and perma-moss has covered part of the sand.

A close examination of the pressure suit will reveal that it was punctured in a fall, probably against a nearby sharp rock. The suit's electronics are inactive; all batteries are long since drained. However, a close

look through the faceplate will show that the individual was equipped with a wafer jack. If the adventurers are unafraid to crack the mummy's suit and examine the remains more closely, they will discover that a wafer was in place at the time of the death.

Examination of the wafer itself will demonstrate that it was unlocked for recording (it has a little plastic tab, not unlike those found on archaic TL-8 SD cards). This may suggest, with some prodding if need be, that the decedent had been recording data into the wafer as she explored, possibly including information that might provide clues to her origins or identity. It may also give clues to nearby shelter. The wafer can be locked by moving the little tab to protect data already recorded. No personality data is recorded on the wafer.

For a player character to use the wafer, the character must open his or her own vacuum suit, as these barebones survival suits do not have a port. Needless to say, the time needed to insert the wafer using clumsy gloves (or ungloved hands that quickly go numb in the low temperatures) will take more time than desired. The chosen wafer-equipped member of the party will likely suffer from hypoxia for a short period after the helmet is removed. If the helmet stays off too long, serious brain injury is possible. This process should be played for maximum effect.

When the wafer is ultimately in place and accessed, diary entries and other available data indicate that the dead woman was an independent off-world biologist researching the perma-moss. She maintained a pressure igloo about a kilometer away, at about the same level on the ridge. The pressure igloo was not in line-of-sight with the spaceport or main city, but had a relay to a transceiver on the ridge-line. Going to this igloo will take only a relatively short time compared to completing the climb. She died here about ten years ago. Apparently, no one noticed that she was missing, or at least knew where to look for her.

If the players do not sample the wafer, but continue upward, after about ten minutes they will be in a position to see the ridge-line transmitter antenna. They will also see a second dish pointed down the slope, toward the igloo. It apparently is working; an encrypted carrier signal is transmitted every five minutes, though on a very tight beam. The PCs will be unable to link into the mountain-top transceiver from their suit radios because it rejects their passwords and refuses even a “Signal GK” override.

The igloo is visible and no more than a kilometer away from this position. It is half-buried by drifting sand and encroaching perma-moss, but is still structurally intact and has not lost pressure. The players can enter through the manual hatch.

Inside, they will see the biologist's simple living quarters and a hydroxy fuel cell for power, covered in frost. Once the ice crystals are wiped away, the hydrogen tanks' labels state that they are rated for one hundred standard years, and thus should still have hydrogen inside. Although the players will have to tinker with the brittle hoses and jammed valves, they can within bring power back online in the igloo within a reasonable period of time. The relay tower is still active and receiving transmissions from the starport. The players can begin sending their distress call from this location.

If they open their helmets and sniff, they will recognize the vague scent of decay. Looking around even in helmets will result in them locating what is left of a small brood of long-dead vreepers, their bodies huddled together for warmth and comfort. The single nest seems to have broken out of several cages labelled for experimental animals. The cages contained oxygen-producing systems apparently based on perma-moss, which is now long desiccated.

The bodies of the animals are fully intact, but emaciated. All of the food containers, human and animal feed, have been chewed and clawed open, with no trace of anything edible remaining in the supplies. The PCs are free to conclude that vreepers apparently observe one limit in their omnivorous habits: they are not cannibals.

The remainder of the information in the igloo should be of interest to botanists. If the players think to salvage the data and frozen samples, they will fall heir to a treasure trove of useful data on the particular strain of perma-moss discovered by the long-dead independent researcher.

It produces exceptionally high quantities of oxygen. It can be applied both in terraforming and in starship life-support systems. While research remains to be completed so that applications can be derived, the players have a commodity which can be sold for not less than Cr 100,000.00.

Cirque

Of course, if the players skip the attempt to find the igloo, they will simply complete the trek to a high point on the ridge. They will have been efficient and single-minded for the betterment of their fellows on board. In addition, the remaining seven hours of daylight are about enough to go to the ridgeline and back.

Regardless of how the rescue call is sent, their messages will allow a rescue flight to locate BT2. Andii either recall the fuel shuttle, which can carry parts from the starport, to rescue BT2, or send out an ATV from the port carrying the necessary spare parts. The performers will be brought to the port in time to start their first show, delayed by only one day.

Once the PCs and other performers have reached the port, the show must of course go on. However, during their off-time, characters will have a chance to explore the starport and surrounding startown. They will discover the local “flea markets” of abandoned property being sold at low process, or being auctioned. They should be given opportunities to rifle through bins and poke around pallets in search of the grain to be found in the chaff. Indeed the referee may choose to provide a vender selling “genuine Terran puffed rice, the weirdest you’ll ever see.” Examination of the product by anyone with knowledge or appropriate skill will reveal the food to be popcorn. However, there is no evidence that the kernels came from anywhere outside the Spinward Marches.

Shortly into the run of the show, having had an opportunity, the PCs will learn of an interesting cargo. If they have taken the initiative to look into records (and what player character can refuse a bargain on a brand new weapon?) they will discover a reference to “popcorn and crack-erjack.” Otherwise, they will be advised by the Musical Cargo Master that he has been researching information on available cargoes, as he does it every port. Numerous cargoes have been apparently abandoned as a result of the Fifth Frontier War. Most of them have little real value.

Two, however, intrigue him: a large quantity of genuine Terran hard-kernel American corn (“popcorn,”) and a storage unit containing unspecified Solomani entertainment data. He has already attempted to make a purchase, and been unable to make inroads with officious and stubborn local officials. The officials have incorrectly interpreted regulations setting the length of time before a shipment can be legally declared “abandoned” and subject to auction. In any event, the shipping line (not Sharurshid) apparently still pays the annual bill via an automated and apparently forgotten accounting algorithm. Audits have not yet discovered the slight stream of payments.

No one in the warehousing company is going to help anyone get into the warehouse, and not simply out of stubbornness. Several months ago, a minor vreeper infestation in their facility became major vreeper infestation. A nest of Zhodani watcher vreepers interbred with a particularly aggressive nest of new arrivals from Rhyllanor’s Old Station. The mix proved genetically explosive, especially as the offspring have been disproportionately male. Nests throughout the warehouse have been taken over by the new hybrids. Over 20,000 vreepers now reside in the warehouse. The company has hidden this fact out of concern that it will be shut down and much of the facility’s contents destroyed.

Worse, Sharurshid’s local agents are curiously weak and mealy-mouthed, and will make no effort at all to assist. The chief factor will threaten to report as a potential cargo hijacker anyone who seeks to push the issue. U’aili has been consulted, but has put the matter aside, knowing that Andii would not approve of outright theft even if an Aslan could conceive of such a dishonorable act. Bertii has been more tempted, knowing that the popcorn alone would be an asset to Cirque des Sirkas.

The popcorn shipment contains forty-eight tons of genuine Terran popcorn kernels, vacuum dried and sealed. It almost certainly remains

usable and ready to form crisp white balls of salty air. While American corn has been brought to many worlds and geneered for local conditions, genuine Terran popcorn is a rare commodity that is every bit as prized as a proper Terran Bordeaux.

The storage unit, one of a number of quarter-ton secure data-storage units, is also from Terra. The memory units are described as containing recordings of ancient Terran entertainment from the earliest days of film technology through the mid-21st century. The media on which the data is stored is not in and of itself particularly valuable. The value is in the recordings, which are digitized in an older format and not generally available in the Imperium. Much of the material has been considered lost and forgotten since the Rule of Man, at least this far away from Sol.

The recordings include everything from old recordings of various nighttime entertainment shows (including topical humor about political events which may well escape listeners), copies of old silent and early movies, copies of various adventure films, old vaudeville acts captured on film in one way or another, musical performances (both sound-only and sound-and-audio), recorded sports, and old recorded newscasts. Apart from the value as intellectual property, much of the information would be of great interest to various performers on the vessel. There may even be a trove of old horror, science fiction and giant monster films which the referee may detail at his or her own discretion. These may be used at later times to provide a certain amount of local color or amusement.

U’aili is intrigued, of course. Republishing these recordings with “envelope” material will allow a new copyright to be asserted, providing Cirque des Sirkas with a valuable source of additional income. Again, however, she cannot contemplate obtaining the material in any illegal manner.

Bertii, again, is willing to exercise dominion and control over the data, if it can be obtained in a way likely to avoid serious criminal consequences. Honest purchase is preferred, but the misconstruction of the salvage law provides an opportunity for alternate ways to acquire the material. Bertii will officially disapprove, at least in any and all statements he makes. However, he will secretly approve and supply some support, if for no other reason than his desire to please Andii.

If the PCs are not willing to act on their own, some NPC will come forward to propose a “grey area” solution. The Comic Juggler and the Aged Thespian, for example, are both shareholders, and both are already known to have grey-area ethics. Both know circus history, and know that Andii would take immense pleasure in presenting genuine Terran popcorn to Norris. Both also know the potential value of old entertainment materials, which could help defray costs. Either thus is willing to take some risks, and to seek cooperation of the players.

Getting access to the cargo will require surreptitious activity.

Understanding the importance of maintaining legal appearances, at least, any ranking NPC involved will suggest preparation of the necessary cash payments to compensate for the loss of six tons of popcorn kernels to vermin. They are aware that the cash can be made available. The trick, of course, is in preparing faked cargo containers with evidence of the vermin-eaten dried grain and getting them into the warehouse. Other plans can be set at the PCs’ initiative.

The memory unit cannot so easily be faked; it will have to be tapped, drained of all its data, erased to avoid having competing material available, and returned to settings as if it was never accessed. This process will require computer hacking skills and not fewer than three hours in the warehouse.

Retrieving the popcorn and data recordings will require hacking into the security systems (computer skills), hiring transport, breaking into

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	D*D	Interm	4	0.75	Wlk	3	44	1	Spike	F5	A9	A	HS-TB-LN-LL-N	2.7	9		Unu
2	O	2	Gather	T	2mm	Wlk	1	1	5	Peds	A8	F9	T	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	0	6	Y	Disg
3	C	1	Siren	3	0.2	Wlk	6	30	5	Claws	AS	F6	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	0.1	5		Ofns
4	S	2D	Hijack	4	0.75	Amf	3	64	4	Antlr	A11	F8	B	HS-TB-LF-LN-M	3.5	10	M	Unu
5	P	3	Collect	4	0.75	Fly	7	72	4	Quill	No	No	T	HS-TB-LN-LM-N	2.5	8		Ord
6	E	-----	Event	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Animal Encounters

the warehouse itself and evading discovery. It is of course no major problem for the PCs to break into a dusty, neglected warehouse, hang around unnoticed for several hours, and escape with numerous cargo containers. Certainly, this operation will go easily, and without a hitch, the PCs will determine.

The referee knows better. Eventually, so will the players.

While the data download is proceeding, the players have an opportunity to look around at crates for other cargo of value, much of which is already legally abandoned and paid off. Though the goods in the warehouse are subject to being auctioned, the insurance company has apparently forgotten the warehouse. The seals of many cargo containers have already been broken. As noted on the diagrams, employees had at some point created a "living room" for themselves at which they enjoy some of the abandoned luxury items. Doors can be opened and contents explored. It will be clear from dust, refuse and obvious vreeper tracks that the living room has been long abandoned.

The unclaimed freight nearby includes other exotic foodstuffs, various artifacts from more primitive cultures (e.g. kitschy velvet paintings of oddly misshapen Vargr playing cards), cheaply made kitchenware, poorly-made furniture, rugs, snow shovels, badly made clothing, senseless lawn decorations, office supplies, ridiculous toys, and anything else ever sold at a "salvage" store or extended flea-market. The referee should of course tailor some material to the interests and twisted predilections of the players.

The players may consider being patient and attending auctions, thus buying their booty (or similar material) legally, or they may simply employ a five-finger discount. If the players take anything above and beyond that which has been tacitly authorized by Bertii, he will not protect them from the authorities or Andii. Bertie is quite capable of disavowing their actions after first reconstructing their memories to forget their initial goal.

As with all "simple plans," there are hitches that render the option anything but simple.

The PCs will encounter the vreepers in large numbers. These vermin are omnivorous and unafraid of humans. Filling the same ecological niche as the Norway rat, they forage and hunt both singly and in groups. When threatened, they attack in singles, units, and swarms.

The most significant hitch in the plan, however, is that a residual Zhodani espionage cell is involved. This cell had originally been established to sow confusion should forces from the Imperial Naval Base on Mercury "move up" to establish a base closer to the Abyss and Rhyllanor. Those contingency plans were abandoned, however. In the chaos following the failure to take Rhyllanor and the resulting destabilization of the Zhodani government, and the covert operatives were left in place without further orders.

The cell itself consists of no more than two psionically trained Intendants, with the remainder of its personnel being of the Prole class. They have been using the seemingly forgotten warehouse to store some of

their illicit equipment. The illicit equipment includes weapons, battle dress, explosives and other materiel useful for sowing discord and supporting an invasion.

Worst of all, the Zhodani operatives have introduced specially bred vreepers into the warehouse among the local populations, resulting for at least some of the infestation. The cell seeded the vermin into the facility as watchers to alert them of any trespass near their own cache. This allows the agents sufficient time to decide whether to defend or escape should the cache be discovered by officials.

The cache is fairly well camouflaged: it is in one of the same three-ton cargo carriers as the Terran popcorn. The Zho are the actual parties paying the warehousing costs for the precious grain, meaning that the popcorn is much, much better guarded than the players would expect.

Adding to this is the recent arrival of Bertii's Nemesis, a powerful and high-ranking Zhodani agent who has stayed in the Marches despite the loss of the war. As noted in the character description, Nemesis is aware of Bertii's defection, and is committed to bringing Bertii and others to corrective justice. Nemesis also seeks to rebuild the Zhodani espionage infrastructure in the Spinward Marches and is unwilling to believe that the prior Consular regime is losing power. Without understanding why Rhyllanor was so important to the Consulate, Nemesis expects further military or other attempts at domination to be undertaken. Nemesis seeks to unify the remaining agents into an effective force for future invasions.

Nemesis is already on the road to insanity.

When the sleeper cell is alerted via its telepathic switches, it will begin to make preparations to defend itself. One telepathic, teleporting combat-trained agent will conduct a secret foray into the warehouse. After observing and reading surface thoughts, the teleporter will relay information back to the cell commander, who will also report to Nemesis. The decision will be made to "watch and wait," but in force. A sufficient number of combat-trained cell members will enter the warehouse, armed and ready to fight. A firefight should ensue about when the characters are close to discovering the weapons cache.

No matter how badly the Zho fare in the firefight, Nemesis will escape alive, having learned through surface thoughts that Bertii, the former Zhodani agent, is on *Cirque*. This begins Nemesis' attempts to pull together the post-war vestiges of the Zhodani espionage services and seek Bertii's capture.

The players are likely to leave without the popcorn and videos. On return to BT1, Andii will have been alerted to the firefight. She will be unhappy at the PCs' actions and dock them a week's pay (no good deed goes unpunished).

Prior to the end of the run of the show on this world, Andii will get a surprise communication from the warehouse managers. About half of the cargo of Terran popcorn is indeed available for sale at salvage prices due to an "accident" in the warehouse (an accidental firefight); the other ten tons were destroyed. A few of the cargo containers are singed, but the

Zhodani Watchers

Watchers are genetically engineered animals or plants used by the Zhodani in place of electronic or other technological surveillance systems. They are invariably species with some telepathic ability or "aura." The species is manipulated so that its intrinsic telepathic capacity is focused to a particular "frequency." A properly trained operative can attune to that "frequency." If a watcher detects conditions of concern (certain chemical traces, sounds, or even simple intruders), it instinctively sends a telepathic alert.

The benefit of using such species are obvious. They require no special psionic circuits. They reproduce themselves, reducing the normal expectation that devices will burn out, wear out, or exhaust batteries. They are rarely "out of place;" the watcher species chosen for an environment is one likely to be found in such an environment, and so are not as easily noted. In some cases, with higher-level brains, the watcher can be goaded into simple actions.

Beakers are sometimes used by Zhodani as natural "watchers." The connection between the two provides feedback for conditions noted by the beaker, from intrusion to odors. Their relative intelligence makes them useful. However, Zhodani are also wary of identification within the Imperium. Rumors regarding psionic interactions with beakers are a significant concern.

Watcher slugs are just that — slugs with a unique ganglion architec-

ture that makes them good telepathic transmitters. These slugs are used in wet places, and are generally useful at detecting chemical traces and vibrations that do not belong. These are typically deployed near water and agricultural facilities which must be protected. Other designs are used to sample air quality within starship environmental plants; these alert when the percentages of carbon dioxide, oxygen, and other chemicals are not at proper and safe levels.

Various other animals, and even some plants, can be engineered for specific or general watcher functions. In general, the requirements are that the watcher have some natural territorial bound, and that the watcher have ganglions or full brains which can be used to transmit simple warnings to the attuned psionic partner.

The ubiquitous vreeper has recently been added by the Zhodani as a simple alarm system. The theory is that a population controlled by proper food source limitation is a perfect living alarm system. Vreepers are well-known in the Marches. Their response to threats can be goaded: a trained telepath can initiate the fear and wounding responses, thus triggering the animal to exude swarming pheromones. The entire nest is alerted and goes on the hunt. A large enough swarm can occupy or take down the intruder or intruders.

Simply stated, the Zhodani did not consider what might happen if their special breed mated and mixed with naturally aggressive, fast-breeding, survival-fit vreepers.

Cirque

contents are intact. All releases from the owners have been obtained (these of course may be genuine, or they may be forgeries created by the survivors of the sleeper cell). The popcorn will be available for immediate purchase at a bargain price.

In addition, the quarter ton memory unit is also available, intact. For a small price, all will be delivered, giving the Cirque des Sirkas, LIC unassailable ownership of the rights to repackage and redistribute the old entertainment.

If the PCs do not understand, Bertii will: this is cause for concern. He will direct that the PCs carefully inspect all of the crates before they are loaded. They will find no direct threat in the crates. They will, however, note Zhodani letters written on one of the internal containers of popcorn. They are the Zhodani espionage service's initials "We see you now and know who you are."

The sole point of providing the popcorn is to warn Bertii that he has been located. He can expect his movements to be observed, and future attempts at his retrieval may be made by Zhodani agents.

Any efforts to trace Nemesis will be useless. The agent has already left Fosey.

The Warehouse

Warehouse 19 is one of twenty-two such warehouses in a cluster off-port. Like most such warehouses, it is pressurized for the sake of its workers and cargos. The warehouse is approximately a half-kilometer long and a quarter-kilometer wide. Its roof height allows stacking of cargo containers to three layers, but it is under-utilized. All vehicles inside the warehouse are powered by hydroxyl fuel cells to limit exhaust.

Green cargo containers hold foodstuffs. Red containers hold biologically dangerous materials. Containers marked with the "nuclear" trefoil hold materials with low-level radiation, often medical supplies.

1. Main airlocks. The main airlocks are large enough for trucks and large grav-vehicles to enter.
2. A fleet of massive grav-lift vehicles serves to move cargo containers and set them on flatbeds. They are used to tow the containers on gravitic pallets, also found here.
3. Warehouse office and break room. Two smaller personnel airlocks are to the side. The main air compressors for the warehouse are lined up on a wall beside the office.
4. Miscellaneous military vehicles, including military construction vehicles.
5. One-ton cargo containers labelled as military equipment. These contain weapons, armor, rations and various other items of use on a battlefield. Several have been opened and emptied, including one labelled "portable fusion weapons."
6. Biological canisters. These are labelled as medical biologicals, primarily immunizations, destined for military recruiting stations throughout the sector. They were mislabeled and delivered here. Most are still viable for use.
7. One-ton cargo containers labelled as designer clothing from a major pre-war designer. Research will show that these were manufactured in sweatshops, but mis-shipped. The designer went bankrupt.
8. Damaged, lost and unclaimed luggage from a cruise liner quickly converted to a transport in the Fifth Frontier War. The line has kept the luggage, but it was removed from cargo carriers and rummaged through by Warehouse 19 employees. If the PCs waste time going through it, they will find clothes and many other small items, such as computer media and small items. Valuable items such as jewelry and working computers have been taken. Food packages (boxes carried as gifts, etc.) have been ripped open by varmints and emptied.
9. Miscellaneous junk left over from raided cargo containers.
10. Vreepers have established a colony in these foodstuff cargo containers.
11. Medical-use radioactives. Most canisters show that they are long past their active date, but a few have labels showing that those are still effective. A label-maker is found on one canister, with a label hanging out. The label shows a new active date, suggesting that someone was planning on selling these as effective medical-use radioactives. There is no danger of radiation poisoning unless the

seals are broken and the contents mishandled.

12. Various gourmet foodstuffs in smaller containers, including barrels of good wine, cheeses, crackers, and so on. Vreepers have been through many of them.
13. "Living Room." It appears that someone once set up an area for relaxation, including a holographic entertainment system, food preparation, and couches. The couches and floor are speckled with vreeper leavings. None of the container labels are less than six months old.
14. Shipment of pest-control poisons. One three-ton container here is packed full of such poisons, including "vreeper grenades." The aerosol "grenades" can be set out or deployed using included non-military launchers. Close study of the container will show that the materials are over two years past their "best used by" dates, and were rejected by Hogajue's Vermin Control of Main Concourse, Old Station, Rhylanor when delivered about a year ago. The poisons are only partially effective.
15. Various grains in containers. Vreepers have established a full-fledged colony here. The colony is expanding toward the popcorn shipment. Note that these vreepers include Zhodani watchers.
16. Popcorn shipment. The Zhodani cell's weapons and equipment are also stored here.
17. Quarter-ton data units, stacked in two levels. Most contain recent entertainment data and other stored information. One is discussed in more depth.
18. Biologicals intended for use in terraforming.
19. Two forty-ton pinnaces. The vessels appear to be essentially new.

Scene and Task Checklist

Act I

- ☐ Arrival in-system. The usual information comes from the Advance sophants. *Cirque* will have a location in the main city in a pressurized dome.
- ☐ If the PCs normally stay aboard BT1, they are for some legitimate reason held back. They join the crew and residents of BT2 for the trip away from orbit.
- ☐ Power failure alerts sound. All attempts to restore full power fail. The pilot makes an emergency descent, and lands softly (in the nick of time) at the bottom of a valley.
- ☐ Attempts to raise *Cirque* or the starport fail.
- ☐ The PCs are selected to take a walk to the top of the ridge closer to the starport, in the hope of making contact.
- ☐ The PCs begin the climb. They encounter shifting sands and permamoss.
- ☐ The PCs come across the researcher's body. Checking the body reveals an old wafer.
- ☐ If the PCs access the wafer, they immediately know where the "igloo" shelter will be.
- ☐ To locate the igloo by searching the area without using the wafer: Average (2d) < (Int + Survey or Sensor Ops) (one hour). Each character has an independent roll.
- ☐ Entering and searching the igloo should be administered liberally.
- ☐ To restore power to the igloo: Average (2d) < (Dexterity + Engineering) (twenty minutes).
- ☐ To instantly determine the value of the data stored in the wafer and other computer systems of the igloo: Formidable (4d) < (Edu + either Biology or Medical) (Uncertain).
- ☐ To determine the value of the data stored in the wafer and other computer systems of the igloo: Difficult (3d) < (Edu + either Biology or Medical) (Uncertain) (eight hours).
- ☐ The PCs can contact the port from the igloo and warm up if successful in starting power.
- ☐ If the PCs never enter to igloo or fail to start it, they can contact the port from the top of the ridge. Help arrives within two (2) hours after

Cirque

contact.

Act II

- ☐ Further evaluation of the moss discovery. Note that this is technically property of Cirque des Sirkas, LIC under the intellectual property terms of the PCs' contract.
- ☐ Settle in at the starport or startown hotel.
- ☐ PCs should be attracted to auctions and flea markets, both on- and off-port. The referee should note particular player likes in providing inexpensive items, but QREBS values (quality) may be low. Items may be of outdated design, poor-quality materials and manufacture, etc.
- ☐ Encounter: near a refuse can, the PCs encounter a vreeper. The animal menaces by rearing up and snarling in a variation of the typical "vreeper" noise.
- ☐ PCs chat up people, and learn that unclaimed freight warehouse inventories can be researched with a little skullduggery. To locate and enter a database: Difficult (3D) < (Edu + Computer) (15 minutes). Once the poorly-hidden "back door" is located, many cargos are revealed.
- ☐ PCs or NPCs discover the cache of Terran popcom in an off-port but nearby warehouse owned by Undelivered, LIC.
- ☐ Attempts to purchase the corn legally from Undelivered, LIC result in a "no sale" deal. As the warehouse fees are being paid, speaking with higher-ups will do no good. They have no incentive to either jog the memory of the shipping company (which currently has no factors on-port), or to help in violation of freight-claim laws.

Act III

- ☐ Discussions with various NPCs, as necessary, over value of real, Terran popcom.
- ☐ Hatch plot.
- ☐ Perform necessary reconnaissance and computer research into Undelivered, LIC's warehouse.
- ☐ Obtain transportation locally. Several pressurized lorries will be available.
- ☐ The warehouse is primarily guarded and secured by computers and robots. Easily-bribed humans are not to be found.
- ☐ Obtain replacement crates and evidence of vermin infestation (i.e., "leavings"). Plenty of "leavings" will be found in BT1's animal pens. After the last adventure, this may cause some grumblings, but it is what it is.
- ☐ To bypass alarms and surveillance systems: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming), DM -1 if wafer socket, 120 minutes; on fourth or catastrophic failure, police track access attempt and arrive with arrest warrant). Success provides master codes to bypass security feeds to the alarm company.

Act IV

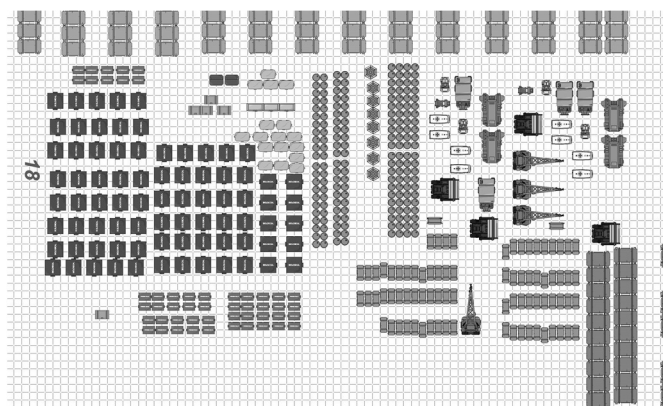
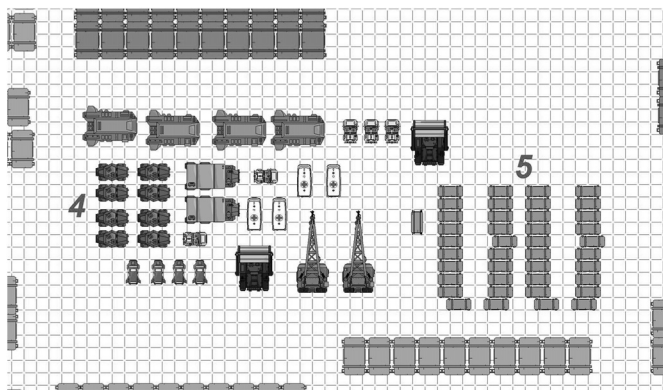
- ☐ Enter the warehouse.
- ☐ Cargos are stacked high (one- and three-ton cargo containers up to two high, smaller crates to similar heights).
- ☐ Begin looking for the corn. Optional: it will not be where it is supposed to be (the Zhodani have moved it).
- ☐ Encounters: vreepers. The PCs periodically hear scuttling sounds as 1 to 3 vreepers are startled and run. If the PCs get too close to a vreeper or vreeper nest, they will be threatened.
- ☐ Once the crates are found, PCs must operate forklifts to take the crates out and move "dummies" into their place.
- ☐ The Zhodani watchers are triggered. The Zho check out the Warehouse Noting that the feed has been diverted, the most proficient teleporter teleports in (onto the top of a stack of crates) and performs

a reconnaissance. For players to notice sounds made by the Zho teleporter: Formidable (4D) (Constant + Benchmark + 2 if "on watch," -2 if operating forklift).

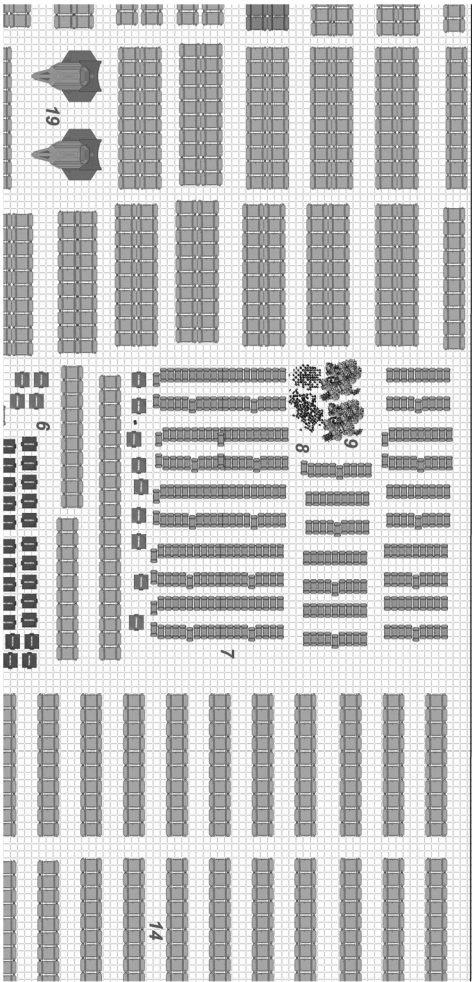
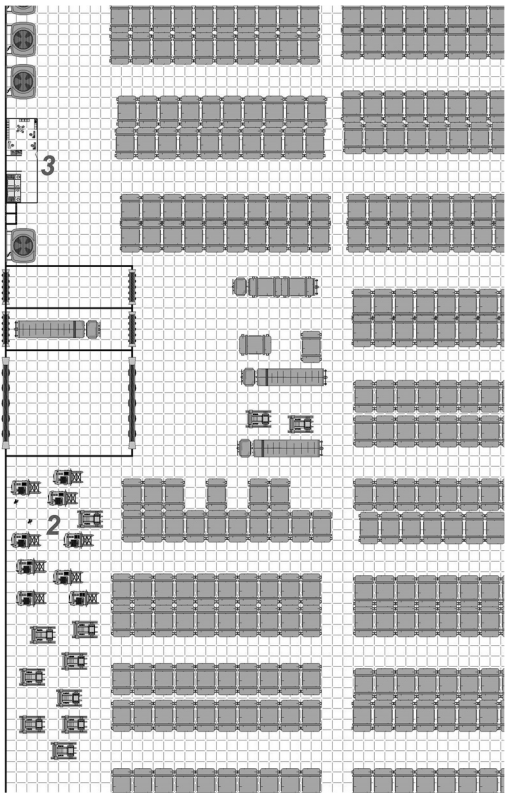
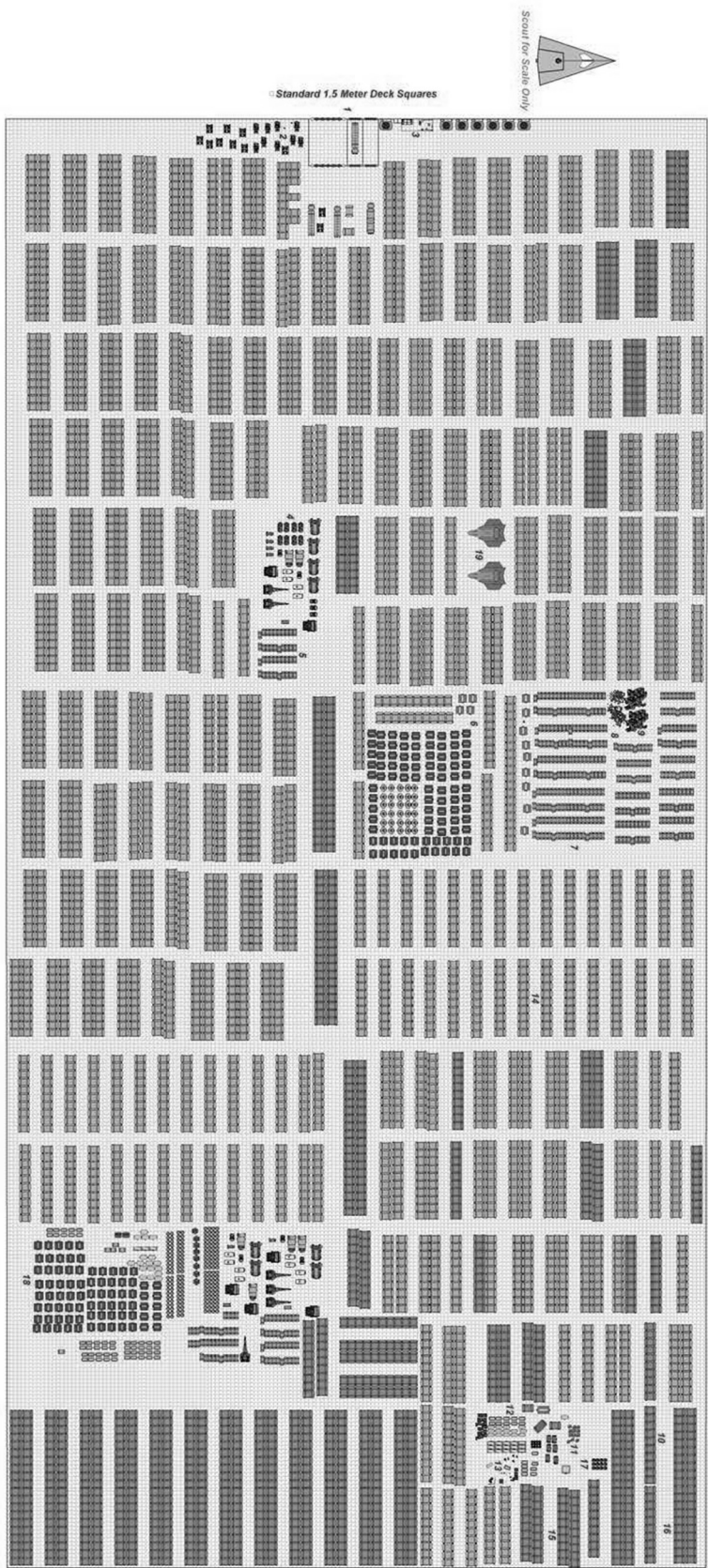
- ☐ The Zhodani cell is gathered.
- ☐ Firefight. The Zho ultimately retreat. Any Zho taken captive manages to bite down on a suicide tooth or its reasonable equivalent. The Nemesis escapes by teleporting out.
- ☐ If the PCs are somehow overwhelmed, they are mind-scanned by the head of the cell. Their memories of the firefight are buried or wiped, and they are released with memories of the scam having worked. The Zhodani cache is removed.
- ☐ Regardless of how the PCs return triumphant, they face Andii's ire. They are docked a week's pay. They are not fired only because Bertii and other shareholders were involved. However, it is made clear to all and sundry: all activity of this type is to be cleared through Andii.

Tag

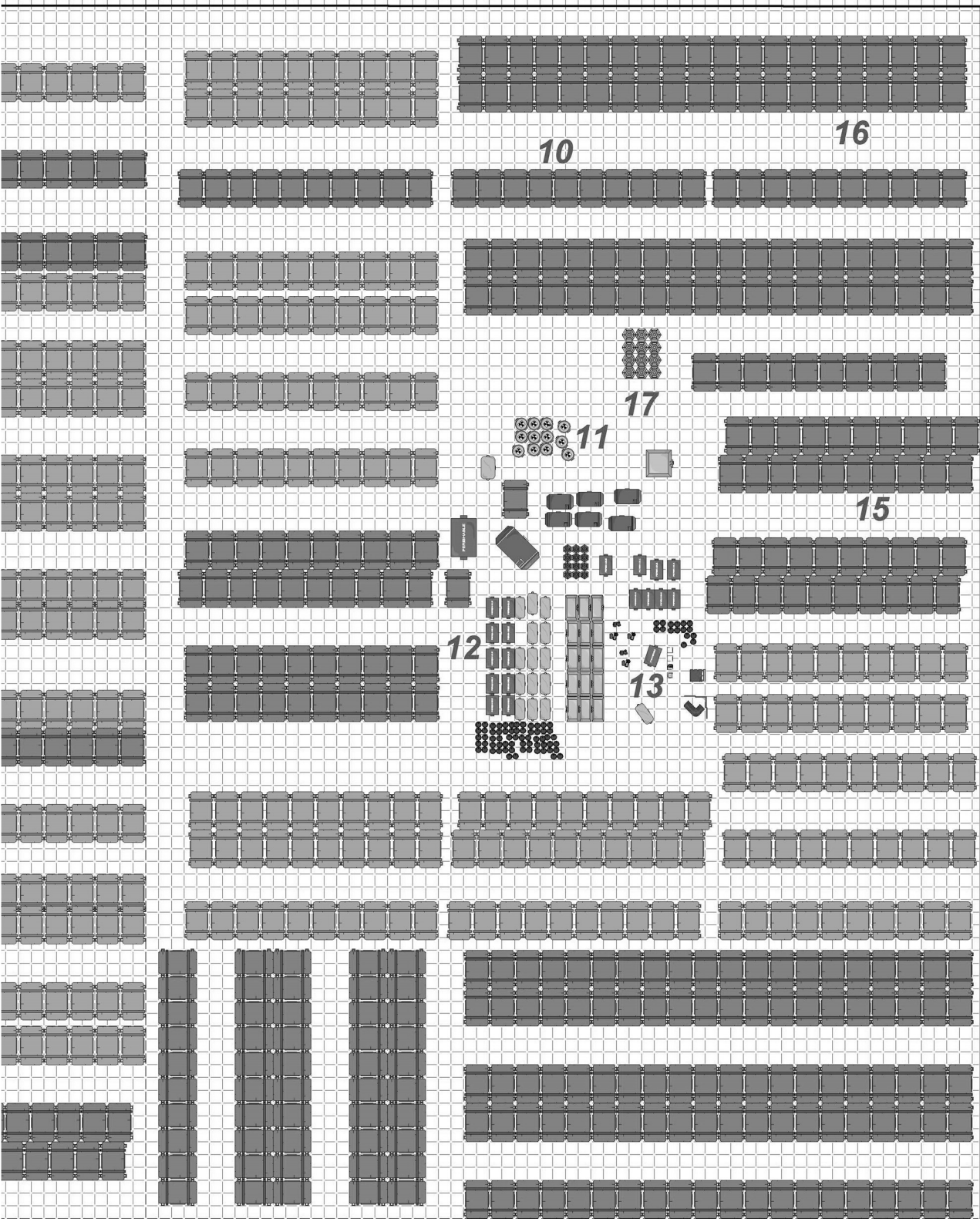
- ☐ The remainder of the popcom is delivered, along with the original quarter-ton memory unit containing the entertainment material.
- ☐ Andii, Bertii, and anyone familiar with Zhodani script will note that the following has been inscribed in Zhodani: "Hello." No exploration of this will provide additional information.
- ☐ Follow-up investigation of the Zhodani cell (if any) will provide little information. If their false identities are pierced, any and all survivors of the firefight will be discovered to have left. Their dwellings are empty.
- ☐ Andii will advise and permit an anonymous report to authorities. However, even in her ire, she will not allow members of her crew to turn themselves in for a relatively minor crime.
- ☐ Final performances. The ship is closed up, and the next jump taken.



Cirque



Cirque



Episode 6: Upon the Whale's White Hump

Mercury • Spinward Marches 2624

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Mercury is named after one of the old Solomani gods. The fast one, I guess. Also a planet from Sol, which was hot and close to the sun. Sometimes people hold onto stuff that's eons old just to be perverse.

This Mercury seems like a nice place to visit, but don't bother if the Imperial authorities are upset with you. They keep an eye on who goes in and out of the port, and they can be petty about stuff like hijacking and espionage. Makes sense, I suppose, considering that the off-port's not much more than a bunch of farms supporting a bunch of training bases. Nothing else there to see – raw recruits and officers on refresher all look the same. Spit, polish, lots of running around and screaming "Ma'am yes ma'am!" and "Sir no Sir!" and "Yes Sergeant, I am a Dim Red Dwarf!"

The big city, Ishmael — oh, what a wonderful place to not visit. A lot of nothing much to see there. It's mainly a bedroom community for the brass and the wealthier farming managers.

Nothing to see anywhere outside Ishmael unless you're a big fan of prison and forced marches. Refuel and head out.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1108.

General Data (Players)

As suggested by Admiral Lee, Mercury is an agricultural world. It is located in the Mora Subsector of the Spinward Marches, and contains both a naval and a scout base. The bases specialize in training exercises for the Imperial Navy, Marines, and for the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. As a result, the world is governed directly by the Imperium. The Navy takes the primary role in this, as its training facilities are extensive and pervasive. The planet serves as a ground base for maneuvers, combat games and training, and as a base for fleet exercises.

The IISS uses the planet and the system to train its personnel in survey and similar functions; as a result, Mercury and the other worlds in the system are among the best mapped in the Spinward Marches. It can truthfully be said that every meter of the surface has been imaged many times. The Scouts maintain a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Database on the world categorizing every building, every bit of infrastructure, and every large crater made during ordnance training.

However, due to the nature of military organizations, most of this information is classified. The extensive images and maps cannot be easily obtained; they are in heavily firewalled systems. This is to avoid cheating scandals in the military, among both active military personnel both in their service and the Navy/Marine training cadres, as well as limiting external espionage. Available information is essentially rationed. This forces trainees to obtain information the way they would in real-world situations: via real-time sensor and imaging scans, as well as direct observation on the ground.

To minimize contamination of the trainees, most vessels are required to stay at the up-port, in geosynchronous orbit above the main city, Ishmael. Only official Navy transports and vessels with special clearance are allowed to go to the down-port. Vessels which approach too closely,

or outside of prescribed vectors and trajectories, are challenged and subject to boarding. Vessels are also subject to intrusive scanning of their computer logs via mandated up-link to up-port Naval systems. Imagery and sensor data regarding the surface is deleted, and virus-like software injected to minimize and erase further scanning of the surface.

The planet has a thin but breathable atmosphere and a somewhat cool climate. Appropriate crops are grown in its more temperate zones. However, with a low local technology level as well, this world is not in the business of mass-producing its food for export. Farming systems are imported at Navy expense. Though farmers own their own land, Navy officials specify what crops and livestock are needed and how it is to be grown. That said, the life of a local farmer is reasonably lucrative; crop failure losses are borne by the Navy, rather than the landowner. With machines and robots to help, the economic model is as kind to the individual farmer as is possible.

Many other civilians provide support for the various bases and populations of military who are stationed here from time to time. In essence, Mercury is a planet in direct service to the military.

Rehabilitation facilities were also erected out of modular materials during the Fifth Frontier War to serve military casualties. Injured combatants needing up to a month of convalescence and therapy were brought to these facilities. They were often put to work in training roles during and after their treatments; many were integrated into the new units as they formed.

Summary and Referee's Information

Advance Sophont 1's voice is more gravelly than usual when *Cirque* enters the system. "Oh, by all the gods of the Marches, these guys drink too much down there. Entirely too much. There's nothing to do on that base but work and drink. These guys need a show, Andii. You have to give them a show."

"Most of the planet is restricted, except for the farmlands, of course. We've arranged for you to set up the tent on the outskirts of Ishmael. Most of the population is within a 1000-kilometer radius, anyway. Just be careful to follow flight paths. There's a lot of restricted area. And keep the mind-reading act under covers – they're more than a little paranoid about the Zhodani down there."

The stated reasons for the intrusive sensor blackout are, for the most part, true and accurate. A primary reason for the regulations is to prevent trainees and recruits from using data which would not be available to them while on maneuvers and other training missions. This is especially valuable for survey scouts and ground troops, who are often lacking in clear data as they undertake their missions. The level of data available from thousands of Scout trainee surveys and military training sorties would render the world unsuitable if it were not carefully limited.

A second, less openly stated reason for the tight controls serves to protect the trainees themselves. While no two training missions runs exactly the same way, patterns can be detected. Such information could be used by enemies to wipe out battalions in training. Known for their dishonesty, trickery, and psychological warfare techniques, no one would put past the Zhodani an attack on green recruits to demoralize Imperial civilians and members of the military.

Cirque

Finally, as any player character will suspect, the military does not wish to have all its secrets “out there” to be seen. Mercury serves to test area for new equipment, tactics and strategies in real-time. The military mind justifiably seeks to hide both the testing operations and the results. Patterns of destruction to a mountain, for example, could reveal an advancement of meson cannon technology to an applied physicist.

Bertii is familiar with Mercury. His wartime role in mercantile vessels converted to hospital transports brought him here on occasion. He is more familiar with the geography than most, as a result, though that says little. He was unable to see the world as a whole, but set foot on the surface several times. He knows a specific planetary region.

The last time he visited, concerned that he was close to capture by Zhodani agents, Bertii brought a personal lockbox containing several wafer-sized media units. While on surface, he was able to hike a few kilometers into the hills, looking for a good place to hide the box. He is sure that he was not followed by anyone.

During his hike, Bertii stumbled across a glacially-deposited “balance rock” in the woods. Through the trees, almost exactly fifty meters south of the balance rock, he found a cracked, half-buried glacial boulder. Moss, rotting leaves and evergreen needles, and other natural forces had deposited soil into the crack. Several saplings had taken root. Bertii carefully excavated, buried the lockbox among the roots, and then returned the soil. He did his best to memorize all features he could, and then went back to the prefabricated hospital.

Though he was ultimately able to evade capture by his own people, Bertii has not returned to Mercury since that short expedition.

He is now very concerned with retrieving the lockbox. The media it contains includes coded documents he intercepted, as well as the fruits of his own work on Rhyllanor. Taken together, these materials provide an important “pointer” to the Zhodani goal on Rhyllanor, though this remains deeply encrypted. Bertii does not know what the precise objective was, apart from the importance of Rhyllanor.

Information on the identities of long-term, deep-cover Zhodani

operatives is also found in the hidden materials. Bertii can identify at least five such operatives per subsector at this time. The information is dated, but many of these are likely to remain in the Marches, and loyal to the Consulate.

This is one of Bertii’s mustering-out secrets. He has gathered important intelligence of future interest into a single small container.

He wishes to hand this over to Duke Norris. He believes that Norris has intelligence assets who will be able to analyze and better understand the data as a whole. Bertii wishes to protect his adopted home from his own people, the Zhodani.

Unfortunately, security was tight, especially in wartime. The shuttles in which Bertii rode always landed at night, making it difficult for passengers to glimpse landmarks. Though he took his hike in the daytime, he was not able to orient himself to latitude and longitude with any certainty and thus does not know the precise location of the data cache.

However, at the top of a rise, and through a parting in the trees, he saw a distant mountain resembling a saddleback, or perhaps an angry hump-backed whale rising above the oceans of cloud-bank. Knowing that this formation is within 5000 kilometers of Ishmael and down-port, Bertii believes that he can locate the site again.

Bertii and anyone assisting him will face a number of hurdles. The first is that Bertii must diligently conceal any hint that he was ever a Zhodani agent from almost anybody and everybody around him. The second is that there are two local Zhodani agents (one a civilian, the other in the military) who, like Nemesis, still believe in the Consulate’s militaristic agenda against the Imperium. The third is the secrecy surrounding the surface and the resultant very limited information available to the *Cirque*’s company. The fourth is the concern that the mountain range has changed; the range as a whole has been targeted by artillery and meson weapons more than once. The fifth is getting to the area, finding the hidden lockbox, and returning without being accused of any form of espionage. The sixth is the “message” Bertii received on leaving Fosey; he is concerned that Nemesis has preceded *Cirque* here.



Cirque

Bertii will not reveal himself as a former Zhodani agent, nor will Andii allow that information to be revealed to the players. They will also not lie. If possible, they will simply suggest that the matter is a “geocaching” expedition, nothing more. If pressed, they will suggest that Bertii is an agent for the Imperium (true at this time), had obtained Zhodani information, and could not put it in the proper authorities’ hands. The information remains valuable but Andii cannot trust the local authorities, not even IN or IISS officials.

Strictly speaking, all of these statements are true. Bertii’s self-appointed status as a burgeoning double-agent was simply not known by intelligence sources. He had previously hidden his trail well.

The adventure will proceed in substantial part from player decisions. First and foremost, the general locale of the hidden lockbox must be determined. This will require questioning locals and (likely) obtaining access to IISS computers. Once this is done, some may simply suggest that they just sneak in, find the lockbox, and sneak out, or they may take part in the “hide and seek” exercise briefly described below. The referee should mold this scenario to the personality of his or her campaign. The essential element is Act IV; Bertii’s secret will clearly be important and Bertii will likely reveal himself to the PCs as a powerful psionic.

The trek to the caching point will be interrupted by animal encounters and weather events. In addition, the PCs will be followed by at least two parties: Zhodani agents, including Nemesis, and Navy security forces. Once the player group reaches the site of the cache, they can expect opposition in multiple forms. A multi-party firefight with *somebody* is a virtual certainty.

Map

The important planetary area is shown in the attached map. The map is based on a standard 100 Kilometer Terrain Hex (red), with ten-kilometer sub-hexes (grey). Thus, the scale should be self-evident.

The largest city, Ishmael, is several hundred kilometers inland. It is approximately 500 meters above sea level. Northwest of the starport and naval base, Ishmael borders on the more wild lands used for military training.

The area around Ishmael is reminiscent of dense northern pine forests, and has a similar overall climate. Relatively recent glaciation has left an abundance of large rocks and boulders at the surface level, including a relatively dense field in the hills to Ishmael’s northwest.

Lighter shading indicates a higher land contour. Each gradation in shade depicts a total rise of approximately 500 meters. Thus, Saddleback’s highest point is approximately two kilometers above the general plain, and 2.5 kilometers above sea level.

The remains of the wartime rehabilitation center are also found to the northwest. Only slabs are found at the site, as well as a landing field. These are somewhat visible on the map but heavy trees and undergrowth make these scars less visible to simple imaging. More advanced orbital imaging methods available may reveal these surfaces to a character experienced in interpreting such imaging, including those trained as forward observers or sensor operators.

The balance rock is found almost equidistant between the highest rises of the ridge between Ishmael and Saddleback. The cache rock Bertii used is in a straight line back between the Balance Rock and Ishmael’s Peak, the highest point of Saddleback. Individual boulders appear on the map, but individual trees and other growth do not.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Arrival in-system. *Cirque* is guided along tightly-controlled trajectory toward the up-port.
- ☐ Permissions and limitations are explained.
- ☐ *Cirque*’s computer is locked into the IISS network.
- ☐ Active-duty naval personnel are assigned to pilot BT1, BT2, and BT3. The regular pilots and navigators are, in essence, given the week off. The naval personnel are young and impressionable.
- ☐ The tent is set up near Ishmael, near the down-port.

- ☐ Performances begin, as expected.
- ☐ Bertii and Andii approach the players with a request to help locate the lockbox.
- ☐ If there are no better ideas (or to make it simple) Andii advises that she has been asked by an old friend, Commodore Kirgushid Latimer, to take part in a “hide and seek” exercise. Andii and her crew will be the quarry. In truth, Andii has suggested this to Admiral Latimer (if Andii is an NPC), and has bet with him that she and her people can evade capture for at least three days. To sweeten the bet, she has even added performers to the list of her people who will participate (she may not note that some of her “performers” are Marine-trained Aslan commandos). She asks only one thing: the right to choose her terrain and time. Both parties must travel on foot; Latimer will not allow vehicles into the area. Even Andii’s “grav knees” are disallowed; she uses her artificial legs, providing her with no greater strength than a normal person. Highly competitive, Latimer cannot resist such a bet.
- ☐ Arrangements are made for *Cirque des Sirkas* to function without any PCs taken from the cast for the necessary three days.

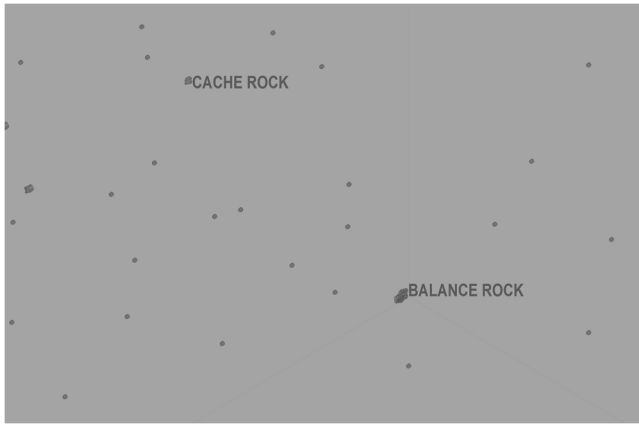
Act II

- ☐ If the “hide and seek” scenario is used, the players are given very general maps with some contour information. These are no more detailed than a Terran mid-1970’s geodetic survey map, giving only a general idea of contours and positions of major terrain features.
- ☐ To get more detail, the PCs must illicitly access a base computer shared by the INS and the IISS using a physical network connection. Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket, 240 minutes. On the fourth or a catastrophic failure, military police track the access attempt and arrive with guns drawn). Success provides a download of the IISS’s complete geographic information database including ortho-rectified images from which contour shape files can be created using proper geographic information software. These images include imagery obtained from both passive and active sensors. However, the actual shape file structure is not included in the download.
- ☐ Produce a shape file globe for analysis and study: Average (2D) < (IN + Sensors, DM -1 if Scout background, 4 hours work plus 24 hours compiling time). The result is a fully realized computer-based map which will allow study of the world in multiple views and at multiple elevations and perspectives.
- ☐ Use map to locate the balance rock and saddleback mountains: Average (2D) < (Int + Sensors, DM -1 if Scout background, 3 hours). This can be made more difficult at the referee’s discretion by stipulating that one of the peaks has been severely altered by artillery target-practice since Bertii was there. The imagery accessed is recent, and thus shows the cratered version of the mountain.
- ☐ Note that additional data will include the abandoned foundation slabs used for the temporary rehabilitation center during the war. The buildings themselves have been removed and put back into storage.
- ☐ Alternate means for locating the formation might include asking around. Adventurous local youths sometimes hike the area despite military proscriptions. They will refer to the mountain with various nicknames (e.g. Saddleback, Greyhair, and Ishmael’s Whale), and have informally named the glacial balance rock “Balance Rock.”
- ☐ As a result of their work and inquiries, the players will come to the

Rhylanor

This sourcebook deliberately leaves vague the nature of the Zhodani interest in Rhylanor. For the purposes of this scenario, it is enough to say that the information may be of use to intelligence analysts possessing other information, from which a larger understanding of the Zhodani may eventually be generated.

Cirque



The Balance Rock and Cache Rock, separated by about 50 meters.

attention of the small Zhodani “remnant” cell, and a local counter-intelligence training cadre. These observers complicate the simple task of finding a geocache.

- ☐ Inquire regarding security measures in place without provoking suspicion: Average (2D) < (Int + Sensors, DM -1 if Scout background, 3 hours). On success or failure, the payer or players learn that most of the military land constitutes a no-fly zone and is well patrolled. People and animals on foot, or on small personal ATVs, are not likely to be seen using the available surveillance systems.

Act III

- ☐ Travel from Ishmael to Balance Rock. This is a short trek on foot, no more than a few days.
- ☐ The player group may begin its trek by simply sneaking through a convenient hole in the fence. They may have a guide or a shadow in the form of teenagers wondering why grown folk are interested in their recreational camp. This gives the players an additional duty to protect the youth.
- ☐ Other interested groups (Zhodani cell, counterintelligence) will follow from various distances.
- ☐ The players see some signs of the shadowing and may take action as they desire. However, the small Zhodani force (two, but heavily armed) should manage to evade capture. The exact means of detection (psionics, sensors, good hearing) are left to the referee to be based on the character abilities, animals brought along, etc.
- ☐ If possible, there should be at least one cloaked discussion around the campfire.
- ☐ The players will also encounter wild animals along the way. An encounter table is provided. The referee may choose to generate alternate encounter tables for the purpose, or use a standard encounter table.
- ☐ The players will at some point find themselves under mistaken bombardment. Explosions will occur within a kilometer of their position, and as close as the referee chooses dares. This is not an intentional attack but is simply the result of a training sergeant making a targeting mistake with a trainee artillery crew.

Act IV

- ☐ After tracing their way, the players see the twin humps of the twin “saddleback” mountains. They approach and begin using their maps to locate the balance

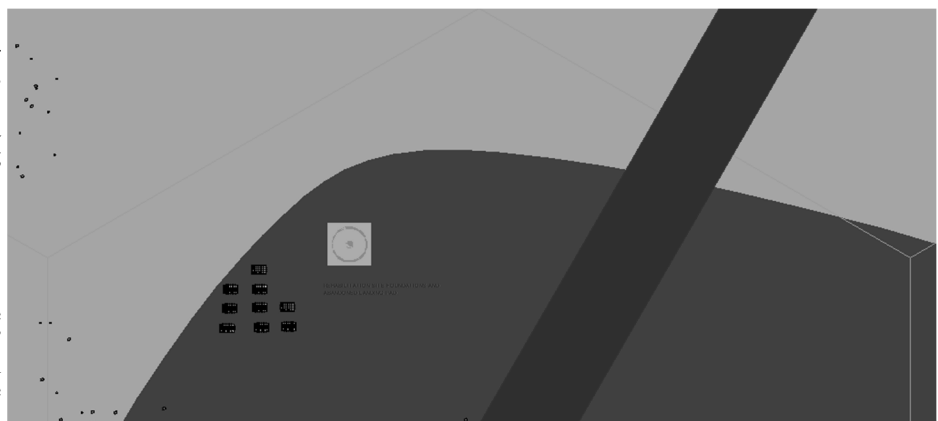
rock.

- ☐ Once they find the balance rock, Bertii will trace a line to the cracked rock. He will then dig the lockbox out.
- ☐ The referee must play the response to the questions which will likely be raised by the players upon this discovery, unless Bertii is a player character.
- ☐ At this point the Zhodani party will attack the PCs, coming out with weapons firing and psionic capabilities in overt use, specifically attacking Bertii. They are after the cached data. Nemesis is one of the two.
- ☐ Latimer’s team will also arrive, close behind. They may engage in the firefight as well, or may stand off and watch.
- ☐ To further mix matters up, the counter-intelligence training cadre may show up. They will also attempt to capture Bertii, as well as the other players.
- ☐ In the confusion of battle, Bertii will find himself facing Nemesis, the more powerful of the two Zhodani. While the combat may not be visible to the others, the two will be locked in psionic combat, their attention focused on one another. Bertii will win, just barely, and Nemesis will teleport away.

Tag

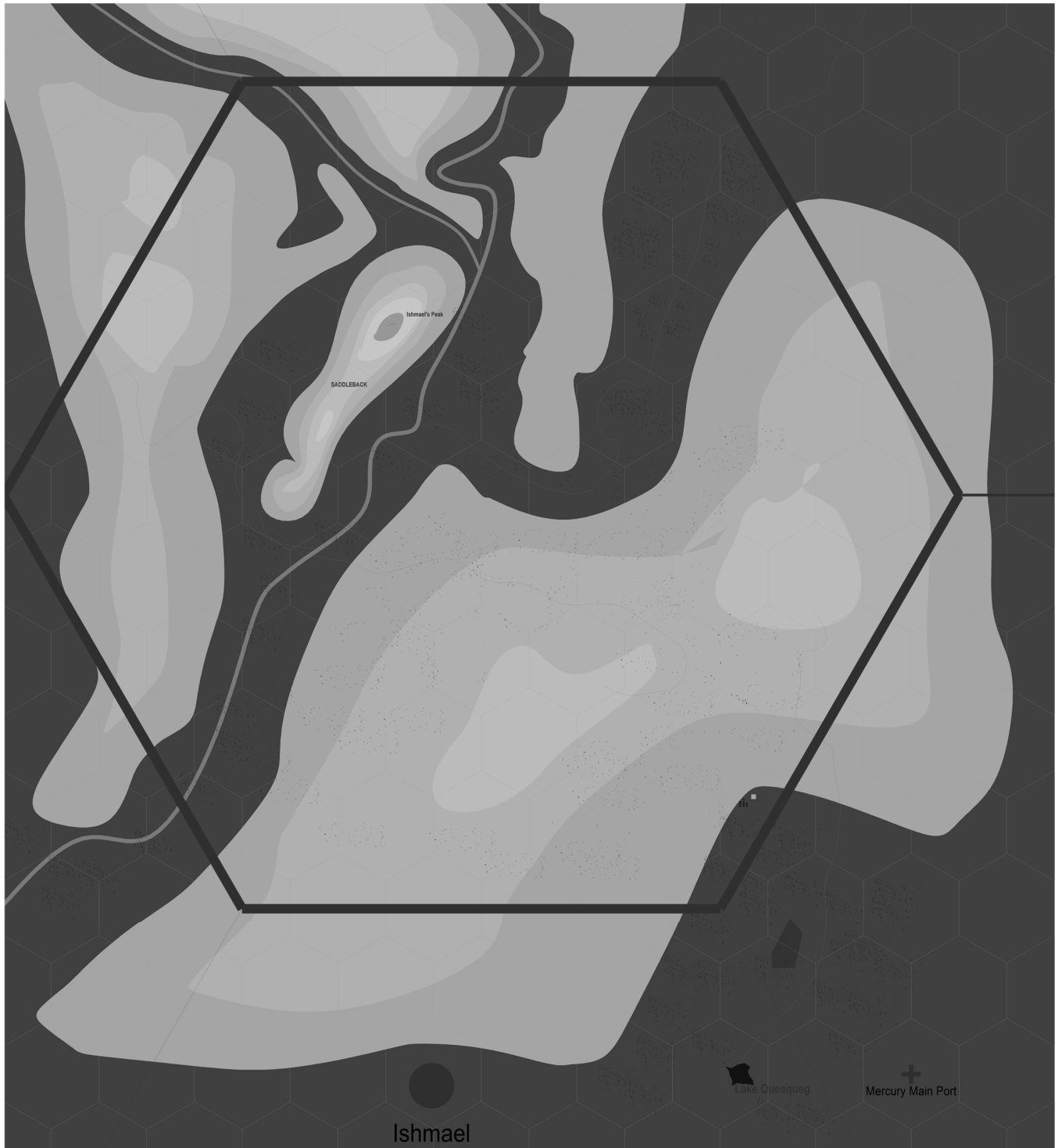
- ☐ Commodore Latimer will have questions for all involved, and will try to determine why there was a firefight. He will want to know what was retrieved. Andii and Bertii will meet with him privately.
- ☐ When they exit the admiral’s office, he will simply end the matter and send *Cirque* on its way. If either Andii or Bertii is a player character, the scene should be played out. Bertii, if an NPC, will use his telepathic abilities to influence Latimer. If a PC, Bertii may or may not do so at the player’s discretion.
- ☐ When the PCs return to *Cirque* (or sooner) they will likely have questions. This may be a defining moment for the players in their choice of loyalties. If need be, and if an NPC, Bertii may use his telepathic skills to demonstrate his deep internal viewpoint. He will describe to the players, or implant directly into their minds, the meaning of the Zhodani word “T’Sirk:” “The blood staining the sand after a [foolish] set duel.” Without revealing all of the details, Bertii and Andii will do everything possible to convince the players of the importance of the information reaching Norris himself. At the same time, neither will entrust it to any other courier. That alone could result in Bertii’s arrest.
- ☐ As those discussions play out, *Cirque* heads for its next destination.

Site of the Rehabilitation Facility During the War Only Foundations and Shuttle Pad Remain



Cirque

**The large hex is a 100 km planetary hex. Small hexes are 10 km wide.
Darker layers are lower in altitude.**



Cirque

Encounter Tables. Apart from their human pursuers, the player characters will deal with local predators. The tables below reflect a number of potential encounters to be found in the general area of the party's trek. Creatures smaller than 1 cm (10 mm) are insects. Tables generated using resource at <http://eaglestone.pocketempires.com/>.

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	2D	Interm	2	75mm	Wlk	4	14	1	Horns	F10	A10	T	HBS-T-LL-LL-N	0	8		Dlic
2	O	D*D	Hunter	5	1.5	Wlk	3	65	2	Horns	A12	F9	A	HBS-T-LN-LN-N	70.1	5		Exq
3	C	2D	Pouncer	2	75mm	Wlk	6	50	6	Sting	AS	AS+	B	HBS-T-LL-LM-N	0	6	M	Off
4	S	1	Hijack	R	1mm	Wlk	3	1	2	Sting	A11	F9	R	HBS-T-LL-LL-N	0	8	Y	Disg
5	P	1	Basker	4	0.75	Wlk	5	92	4	Antlr	No	No	T	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	15	5		Unu
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1D+2	Interm	2	75mm	Fly	7	26	6	Peds	F5	A8	B	HBS-T-WL-WW-N	0	2	M	Dlic
2	O	D*D	Hunter	4	0.75	Fly	5	96	2	Thag	A11	F6	T	HBS-T-WL-LN-N	19.6	6		Disg
3	C	D*D	Pouncer	3	0.2	Wlk	4	24	5	Claws	AS	AS+	B	HBS-T-LN-LM-T	0.6	3	M	Off
4	S	D*D	Carrion	4	0.75	Amf	5	56	1	Peds	A10	F11	B	HBS-T-LF-WL-N	21.3	9		Ofns
5	P	D*D	Collect	1	7mm	Fly	5	13	5	Sting	No	No	B	N-TBS-WN-WN-N	0	11		Unu
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	D*D	Interm	4	0.75	Wlk	2	56	3	Spike	F7	A6	B	HBS-T-LN-MM-N	12.5	10		Unu
2	O	1D+2	Gather	R	1mm	Wlk	1	1	4	Sting	A6	F8	A	N-TBS-LL-LN-N	0	8		Ord
3	C	3	Pouncer	3	0.2	Fly	4	27	2	Claws	AS	AS+	B	HBS-T-WL-WL-N	0.3	8		Bad
4	S	2	Reducer	5	1.5	Wlk	6	30	3	Spike	A11	F6	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	89.5	7	Y	Unu
5	P	2	Basker	7	75	Wlk	3	21	6	Peds	No	No	T	HBS-T-LL-LM-N	7m	11	M	Off
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1D+2	Filter	3	0.2	Wlk	1	78	4	Peds	F8	AP	B	HBS-T-LL-MM-N	0.4	7		Ofns
2	O	2D	H-G	7	75	Amf	3	21	2	Horns	A8	F7	A	HBS-T-LF-FN-N	7m	8		Off
3	C	1	Pouncer	7	75	Fly	5	161	5	Claws	AS	AS+	B	HS-TB-WL-LN-P	5m	12		Bad
4	S	3	Intimid	T	2mm	Fly	6	1	3	Sting	A11	F7	B	HBS-T-LF-FN-N	0	10	M	Disg
5	P	2D	Basker	7	75	Wlk	5	7	2	Peds	No	No	B	N-TBS-LL-LN-T	6m	7		Ord
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1D+2	Filter	2	75mm	Amf	1	16	3	Thag	F9	AP	B	HBS-T-LF-LN-A	0	9		Ofns
2	O	3	H-G	T	2mm	Wlk	3	1	1	Sting	A10	F10	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-T	0	10		Ord
3	C	1D+2	Pouncer	4	0.75	Wlk	5	64	2	Teeth	AS	AS+	T	HBS-T-LL-LN-T	13.9	12	M	Unu
4	S	2	Carrion	2	75mm	Wlk	1	2	2	Quill	A9	F7	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-A	0	6		Dlic
5	P	3	Collect	2	75mm	Wlk	3	12	5	Horns	No	No	T	HBS-T-LN-LN-T	0	9	Y	Ofns
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1	Filter	3	0.2	Fly	7	39	4	Peds	F6	AP	B	HBS-T-LL-WM-N	0.4	9		Good
2	O	3	Gather	3	0.2	Wlk	5	36	6	Body	A9	F9	R	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	0.8	8		Ord
3	C	1D+2	Chaser	5	1.5	Wlk	5	100	5	Sting	A8	F4	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	78.1	7	M	Bad
4	S	D*D	Carrion	4	0.75	Wlk	5	40	4	Thag	A9	F9	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-A	20.1	7	Y	Off
5	P	3	Collect	4	0.75	Wlk	4	28	3	Antlr	No	No	B	HBS-T-LN-LL-M	19.9	6		Exq
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1D+2	Grazer	5	1.5	Wlk	2	85	6	Peds	F4	A5	A	N-TBS-LL-LN-N	127.5	9		Off
2	O	2	H-G	4	0.75	Wlk	4	48	1	Peds	A11	F7	A	HBS-T-LN-LN-N	19.5	10		Unu
3	C	3	Killer	3	0.2	Wlk	3	18	4	Sting	A11	F4	B	HS-TB-LN-LN-T	0.4	7		Off
4	S	D*D	Reducer	1	7mm	Fly	3	17	5	Quill	A11	F8	T	HBS-T-WL-WN-A	0	9		Ord
5	P	3	Basker	4	0.75	Wlk	3	20	6	Peds	No	No	B	HBS-T-LN-LN-A	14	7		Ord
6	E	----- Event -----																

Episode 7: Peter and the Wolf

Capon • Spinward Marches 2324

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Another farming paradise. A world of 60,000,000 dullard lumberjacks and shepherds who I would happily hand over to the Zhodani, except that they're too well adjusted for the Thought Police to torture. Trees and more trees, and then some meadows. How can you be adjusted with that sort of lifestyle?

I should be fair – there's no place in the Marches where I'd rather spend Holiday watching concrete harden. Except on Capon it's probably illegal to take a whole day off of work, even for Holiday. And certainly socially unacceptable.

And where there aren't trees, there are geneered sheep. Yes, sheep. There's altogether too much boiled mutton. Bring your dental floss, it's stringy. The beer's pretty good, but they'll never drink more than one a night. Even women with ugly husbands stay sober on Sixday night.

How do you get drunk if you won't drink? *Lumberjacks* who don't drink. I'd rather drink with a buzz-saw than a lumberjack from Capon.

Capon is as close to the Coldest Pit of Tartaros as I've ever been.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1107.

General Data (Players)

Despite its thin, tainted oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere Capon is a lushly forested world. The canopy is thick and rich with secondary life of all types, though adapted. The taint is caused by a higher level of carbon dioxide and various tree pollens that can cause serious delusions, hallucinations, and other mental illness. Humans born on Capon are somewhat less susceptible to such problems due to multiple medical interventions, including locally developed pharmaceuticals. Humans, Vargr and Ursa nonetheless tend to wear filter masks when outdoors. The hallucinations affect Aslan less.

The plant life on Capon is adapted to the thin atmosphere. Oxygen tends to be released below the canopy, increasing the percentage of breathable air. The canopy also tends to trap carbon dioxide produced by animate life and decomposition. A healthy canopy is thus of the essence to the ecosystem. All oxidation occurs more efficiently below the canopy than above.

Capon's main exports are luxury hardwoods and luxury wools. Its farms and orchards provide self-sufficiency. Capon is a major trade-route link and naval base, and is widely reported and advertised to be a pleasant stopover due to the friendly and hard-working local population. Off-worlders are in fact treated courteously, though not effusively. Meals are hot and on-time, and the showers are warm enough to prevent shivering for as long as three minutes; Capon's Tourism Board boasts that "no one has ever been scalded in a hotel shower." There are few civil disturbances or fatal accidents, even in the lumbering industry. People rarely fail to get a good night's sleep, and Imperial taxes are always paid on time.

While Admiral Lee's views are harsh and possibly exaggerated (the Admiral's memoirs are noted for hyperbole, not to mention a few outright lies), the grain of truth at the center is that Capon is a society of puritan

mores. Indeed, the mores are unusually homogenous in a population of this size. Though the citizens may disagree on small matters, they work together smoothly and single-mindedly.

Through careful husbandry, Capon harvests hardwood "century trees" (trees of at least a local century's growth) every year. "Half-century hardwood" is taken from a few forests of faster-growing tree species, but these are less sought after. Capon's lumberjacks do not clear-cut and insist on replacing every "century" tree. They cut selectively. They also insist on ton-for-ton importation of properly sterilized raw fertilizers and soil to account for the biomass which leaves as hardwood.

In short, this is a statistically improbable amalgamation of conservative, stoic, hard-working, single-minded, puritanical eco-minded farmers. Though some of the populace is settled in communities near the starport, farming communities, and various manufacturing centers, millions of people are migratory.

Most of the migratory workers reside in portable housing. Some can move under their own power (the gravitic version of RVs), but most are loaded onto vast gravitic barges for the move from one location to the next. Many communities stay together. Children are educated both within the community, and using links to other teachers in other locations. The society is designed around the mobility necessary to be responsible stewards of the environment.

It should be understood that when Capon was first settled, traditional clear-cutting ruled the day. This helped produce arable land farming and shepherding. However, it also produced ecological damage. As the population grew, the leaders eventually realized that humans would destroy the environment by over-logging. Their ability to reason toward the future seems to have been enhanced by the medications taken to limit the consciousness-altering effects of the atmosphere. Thus, they developed the system currently in effect, becoming careful farmers who minimized the loss of revenue through good management practices.

The Century Harvests are carefully planned, and executed using very clean technologies. Each tree to be harvested is approached by a grav-based mill, snared from above, and tied off using natural but thick hemp-based ropes. The "groundjacks" are the foresters who handle the cutting. Trees do not topple; they are floated through the sky to massive gravitic barges on which they are cut into their component branches and trunks. These are collected and brought to the mills, most of which are near the starport.

The groundjacks are followed by the "planters." Prior to human intervention on Capon, vast swaths of forests were periodically destroyed and renewed by forest fires. The seed pods of the century hardwoods all require heat to germinate. Entirely eco-conscious regarding different local species, the planters gather seed-pods found on the forest floor and start their growth. Because heat is required to trigger growth, small fires are built and tended carefully to avoid major conflagrations that could cause significant damage to the forests. Any saplings found that have already sprouted on their own are transplanted as well. Nets may be draped from the surrounding trees to limit the remaining canopy from growing into the hole which allows the new growth will have enough light as it matures. Otherwise, nature is allowed to take its course; another century tree will soon sprout to replace what has been taken

Forests also have “tenders.” The tenders are also sometimes known as “tinders,” the Anglic pun not being lost upon this otherwise serious world. As trees are the most valuable planetary export, even natural destruction followed by a century of regrowth is unacceptable. The tenders are charged with removing the worst of the combustible remains of fallen leaves, trees, branches, and other dead foliage from the forest floor. While some fires are inevitable (lightning strikes, for example, do happen), the object is to minimize destruction of the crop. Tenders generally enter the forest through the various holes in the canopy caused by selective harvesting. With some robotic aid, they tend the grounds and haul potential fuel to the access points for removal. However, this is possibly counter-productive, as it reduces the tinder for an ecologically desirable fire.

In terms of their emotional uniformity, the human population is (as Adm. Lee once observed) the “next best thing to the Zhodani.” Though they lack the psionic techniques available in the Consulate, they have a well-developed pharmacological industry based on local plant life, and the will to use it. Starting at age five, each child’s brain structure is scanned using the best available technology. Various direct and indirect tests of brain chemistry are also performed. Each child is then put on a personally optimized mood stabilizer regimen comprised of drugs extracted from the local flora and custom-designed to promote industriousness and reduce distractibility. The high law level thus reflects more than whether the average adventurer is allowed to casually carry weapons. It also reflects the overall governmental intrusion into personal rights.

“People have a right to be stupid and crazy, so long as they don’t expect a free living and don’t screw up the rest of society,” Adm. Lee is reputed to have said. “And I trust them better when I can see a wee bit of infectious crazy oozing out of the corners of their eyes. I know who I’m really dealing with from the color of the ooze.” Capon is decidedly not a world to the taste of anyone who likes his or her companions to be a little bit random. Most of the rigidly-controlled populace interfaces poorly with “randoms” who seek adventure in the forests.

It is likely that Adm. Lee never spent time with tenders during his three or four days on Capon. Tenders are known for their wild side, which includes sometimes refusing to take their medications for days at a time, quaffing down two beers at a sitting, and spinning wild stories of forest-dwelling witches, warlocks, yetis, bigfoots, ten-armed monsters and other menaces. A well-known aphorism on Capon is, “Tenders tell tales.” While no necromancers or unduly hairy wild men have ever been brought back for examination, the forest is without doubt full of both interesting and deadly local fauna.

Dangerous native animals include various pouncers and other carnivores, as well as the occasional crazed antlered herbivores. The deep forest also provides a good environment for insects, warm-blooded flyers, cold-blooded reptilians and carrion-feeders. Groundjacks, planters and tenders are defended by hunters who are allowed to fire only on actual threats. Taking the carcass for any reason is illegal.

Summary and Referee’s Information

The Advance Sophonts’ data-dump awaits *Cirque*’s drop out of jump, along with the usual message. “Your schedule’s all set up, as usual. Leave the tents upstairs, you’ll be bouncing a day at a time in Big Top One. Not a lot of enthusiasm down there, Andii. ‘Frivolous entertain-



ments’ is something we heard a lot. I don’t trust a lot of the yarns old Aramais spun, but he was sure right about *these* folks.

“Oh, and you’ll be landing in pastures. Make sure you don’t vent plasma into any sheep. You’ll have too much boiled mutton as it is.”

The schedule is, as predicted, a day at a time in various locations near settlements. Because venues are far apart, the tent is erected only near larger settlements. There will accordingly be several days spent near current lumbering camps.

BT1 and BT2 come to one of their lumber-camp shows. This camp is in a forest clear-cut and replanted ninety-eight local years ago. The cutting has only recently been commenced. The camp itself is located in one of the large clearings maintained in the ancient forest. Some of the cleared space is devoted to minor farming, not the least of which includes shepherding. The residential structures are all quite comfortable and readily moved from one camp to the next.

As gravitic vehicles stream in from other nearby (within 500 kilometers) camps, two crises are brewing. At the same time, a group of tenders who are quite properly taking their medications have concluded that the forest will be ecologically healthier if its natural cycle of forest fires resumes. Thus, this group has taken a lax view in its own area, and has not cleared all dangerous tinder from the forest floor. Indeed, they have been preparing to set a fire, moving some “cleared” tinder to other nearby locations. With the off-worlders and their cameras present, they rush their plans to set a major fire. They leave in the pre-dawn hours to start the fire,

Cirque

Encounter Tables. The player characters will deal with local predators. The tables below reflect a number of potential encounters to be found in the general area of the party's trek. Creatures smaller than 1 cm (10 mm) are insects. Tables generated using resource at <http://eaglestone.pocketempires.com/>.

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	D*D	Grazer	6	7.5	Wlk	4	24	1	Thag	F7	A9	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	8k	5		Off
2	S	2D	Intimid	5	1.5	Amf	1	30	4	Antlr	A6	F9	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	102.7	8		Dlic
3	C	2D	Killer	4	0.75	Wlk	2	60	3	Sting	A8	F6	B	HBS-T-LL-LM-V	15.4	5		Ofns
4	S	1D+2	Carrion	5	1.5	Fly	6	20	4	Peds	A7	F6	B	HBS-T-WL-LN-N	93.8	2		Good
5	H	3	Interm	6	7.5	Wlk	1	54	4	Peds	F6	A8	A	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	9k	7	M	Good
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	3	Grazer	5	1.5	Wlk	4	15	6	Peds	F6	A6	B	N-TBS-LN-LN-N	93.3	7	M	Disg
2	C	2D	Killer	4	0.75	Wlk	2	60	3	Claws	A8	F6	B	HBS-T-LL-LM-V	15.4	5		Ofns
3	O	1D+2	Eater	4	0.75	Wlk	4	60	5	Thag	A12	F7	T	N-TBS-LL-LN-V	13.6	9	Y	Ofns
4	S	2	Intimid	4	0.75	Wlk	4	24	4	Thag	A10	F10	B	HBS-T-FF-FN-N	24.2	6		Dlic
5	C	1D+2	Pouncer	5	1.5	Amf	3	60	5	Claws	AS	AS+	B	HS-TB-LN-WF-N	113.2	8		Ord
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1D+2	Grazer	2	75mm	Wlk	1	14	1	Peds	F7	A8	B	N-TBS-LL-LN-N	0	8		Unu
2	O	3	Hunter	5	1.5	Amf	1	40	4	Peds	A11	F6	A	HS-TB-LL-FN-V	88.3	8	Y	Unu
3	C	1	Siren	5	1.5	Amf	5	80	2	Claws	AS	F10	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	100.1	7		Off
4	S	2	Carrion	1	7mm	Amf	2	16	2	Sting	A10	F9	B	HBS-T-FF-LN-N	0	8		Unu
5	S	D*D	Carrion	4	0.75	Wlk	5	84	4	Sting	A10	F7	B	N-TBS-LL-LN-T	17.2	10	Y	Ofns
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	D*D	Grazer	4	0.75	Wlk	5	112	2	Spike	F8	A6	B	HBS-T-LL-MM-N	20.2	7		Bad
2	O	D*D	Hunter	T	2mm	Fly	4	1	5	Horns	A10	F5	A	N-TBS-WN-LN-N	0	8		Ord
3	C	1D+2	Pouncer	1	7mm	Wlk	6	9	4	Claws	AS	AS+	B	HBS-T-LN-LM-N	0	10		Tast
4	S	2	Reducer	3	0.2	Fly	5	48	1	Peds	A9	F8	B	HBS-T-WL-WN-N	0.5	5		Disg
5	P	3	Basker	4	0.75	Wlk	1	32	2	Peds	No	No	B	N-TBS-LL-LN-N	21.7	4		Good
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1	Interm	5	1.5	Amf	5	45	5	Peds	F8	A7	B	HBS-T-LF-LN-N	94	2	M	Tast
2	O	1	Eater	5	1.5	Wlk	3	85	5	Thag	A8	F5	T	HBS-T-LL-LL-A	74.3	8		Tast
3	C	D*D	Pouncer	4	0.75	Wlk	1	28	1	Claws	AS	AS+	T	HS-TB-LL-LM-T	11.8	7		Off
4	S	2	Carrion	1	7mm	Wlk	4	7	2	Thag	A10	F10	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-T	0	5	Y	Disg
5	P	D*D	Basker	3	0.2	Amf	6	18	2	Thag	No	No	B	HBS-T-LF-FF-N	0.4	3	M	Exq
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	2	Interm	3	0.2	Wlk	5	15	1	Spike	F6	A7	A	HS-TB-LL-LL-T	0.3	3	Y	Good
2	O	1	Gather	3	0.2	Wlk	1	30	5	Antlr	A7	F11	T	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	0.4	9		Tast
3	C	1	Chaser	4	0.75	Wlk	1	44	4	Sting	A8	F6	B	N-TBS-LL-LN-T	20.5	10	M	Unu
4	S	1	Hijack	4	0.75	Wlk	1	88	2	Peds	A8	F9	B	N-TBS-LL-NN-T	25.1	11		Disg
5	P	2	Collect	4	0.75	Wlk	5	84	1	Spike	No	No	T	HBS-T-LL-MM-T	12.7	7		Off
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	D*D	Grazer	5	1.5	Wlk	6	120	5	Spike	F4	A9	A	HBS-T-LN-LN-V	89.7	8	M	Unu
2	O	1D+2	Gather	3	0.2	Wlk	3	15	1	Peds	A9	F7	T	N-TBS-LL-LN-N	0.4	8		Tast
3	C	2D	Siren	2	75mm	Fly	8	2	4	Tusks	AS	F9	B	HBS-T-WW-WN-N	0	6		Ofns
4	S	1D+2	Carrion	7	75	Wlk	2	126	6	Peds	A11	F8	B	HBS-T-LL-LL-N	5m	2		Good
5	P	1	Collect	4	0.75	Fly	5	24	3	Peds	No	No	B	HBS-T-WW-LN-N	24.5	5		Ord
6	E	----- Event -----																

and are currently out of contact. Horrified or not, anyone local knowing of the plot is keeping his or her mouth shut.

At the same time, a group of foolish adolescents is missing. It is learned that they took a dare to go into the woods in search of a version of the legend of the referee's choice (e.g., an evil witch, a group of "wild humans" who take no medications and yet survive, the latest Bigfoot, or some other rumor). These teens, both male and female, are inadequately equipped and trained for an extended stay in the woods. They were dropped off via grav vehicle through a "century tree" hole in the canopy. The youths were to be picked up the following morning by their friends at a different hole in the canopy.

Their friends attempted the pick-up, but the group was not awaiting them. After several hours of yelling ineffectively, they finally returned and reported what they did.

Shortly after it becomes known that the teens are missing, the first smoke will be noted. Even if the guilty tenders learn of the missing children, it is too late to put out the fire.

Everyone present will be called on to join the search, or to assist in emergency tree-clearing in hopes of building a firebreak. Andii will offer the assistance of anyone under her command as well as BT1 and BT2. Their military-class sensors will be a boon if they are focused in the right area.

The local IN commander will be unable or unwilling to mobilize forces to assist. Capon's available units were vastly reduced in the war; some are still attached to garrisons nearer the Zhodani border. Piracy has been troublesome of late. The local commander has most units patrolling the jump points, too far away to be of immediate assistance, and too thinly stretched to create more gaps in the system's defenses.

The teens' goal was to walk through the forest within 48 hours from one hole in the canopy to another, while investigating the myths. Because conventional GPS systems are ineffective under the canopy, the teens had several inertial trackers to maintain their route. Relying upon failure-proof technology, none of the teens thought to carry an old-fashioned magnetic compass.

Unfortunately, there is a "joker in the deck." The teen responsible for drop-off and pickup (a very bright youngster who skips taking his/her medications) intentionally reprogrammed the inertial trackers' internal maps to send the teens in the wrong direction, and to avoid taking them to any hole in the canopy. His or her rationale was likely one of any number of silly teen reasons: revenge for past slights, a juvenile sense of humor, a romantic rivalry, or true malevolence (a serial killer in the making). The perpetrator is lapsing into a deeply hallucinogenic state due to his/her lack of proper medication.

To make matters worse, the miscreant had already thoroughly wiped all records of the reprogramming to hide his/her efforts. The programming will be virtually impossible to correct in the time available. The referee should make the task of successfully reproducing the program suitably difficult, beyond the ability of any technicians present. No psionic effort to reach the teens will produce anything useful.

In the meantime, the lost kids will have realized that their equipment is faulty. They have realized that they must find a clearing, but (as noted above) are in a section of forest which has few holes in the canopy. They are casting about for clearings and attempting to avoid walking in circles.

Thus, they are at a minimum 20 kilometers away from any place they could be easily found. They must be found by searchers either from the air or on foot. They are also in an area which has not been as well policed as it should have been. The undergrowth is thick, and the flammable tinder plentiful.

The high quality sensors available to Andii and the PCs will be of some assistance. However, the woods are full of large animals that generate heat signatures little if any different from those of your average-sized teen. Indeed, at least one of the myths is true: there are several species of two-footed, human-sized warm-blooded animals in the forest (the local equivalents of bears or ape-like creatures). Further, it is difficult or impossible to get through the canopy from above except through one of the holes provided by the removal of a century tree. The landers' weapons will be of no help, as lasers, missiles and even particle accelerator bursts will generate heat and start new forest fires. Any cluster of heat signatures which might represent the teens (or a separate subgroup thereof) will have to be tracked from the nearest opening in the canopy.

In addition, the hallucinogenic effects of the atmosphere must be considered. Most PCs will function well so long as they take their medications. A few, however, will not respond sufficiently to the medications. While the initial dose will have blocked most of the atmospheric effects, the build-up of the psychoactive substances in characters' systems will loosen their grips on reality. One or more will begin to go on a "bad trip," suffering paranoia, delusions, misperception of reality (for example, a predator attacking one of the teens, for example, may appear as a larger, more monstrous beast) and outright hallucinations.

If the topic of battle dress comes up, Andii has sets available in her stores, and at least two characters also have battle dress available. Andii will put most if not all battle dress into use fighting the forest fire. Any battle dress used in the search will be parceled out among several groups, no more than one suit per search group.

The players should be required to track at least one "false positive" before they find the youngsters. During both attempts, they will face constant attacks from various dwellers in the forest. Though many are small, they are also dangerous. In addition, as noted, energy weapons are discouraged, as are flame throwers, incendiaries, and almost anything that goes "boom." The PCs are forced to defend against big game with small arms.

The forest fire makes the time spent on the hunt all the more critical. The fire is moving on prevailing winds toward the lost teens. It drives ahead all manner of panicked and dangerous local animals. Just as the teens are found and the PCs can double back, the first signs of stampede show. Before long, it will be full-blown. While all of these panicked animals are more likely to flee, some have become especially irrational. Any-



one on foot is subject to attack and trampling.

Success is achieved by both finding the youngsters and getting them back to the nearest hole in the canopy, all without failing to properly react to a threat. Following this success, Andii may be asked to assist in locating the tenders who have gone off-mission and bringing them to justice. Javert may be of more assistance in this than would be expected of a stagehand, as may others. Andii will not delay leaving more than a day or two, however. The show, after all, must go on.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ While still in jump, briefing on medications necessary to combat hallucinogenic effects of the atmosphere. Filter masks and medication are both required.
- ☐ Determine Sanity of significant characters if not previously determined.
- ☐ Characters are given medications to build up tolerance before arriving at Capon. To avoid significant side-effects of nausea and headache: Average (2D) < (End). On failure, the character has 1–6 days of unpleasant side effects (e.g., nausea, joint pain and stiffness, and fever). In addition, the success of the medication will vary. The

Cirque

referee may impose a reduction to characters skill or other rolls without telling the players, may roll secretly, or may allow them to roll without telling them why they are rolling. To obtain full immunity from the hallucinogenic effect of Capon's atmosphere: Formidable (4D) < ((Int + San)/2) . On failure, the character's mind exaggerates whatever is seen. On Spectacular Failure, the player openly hallucinates.

- ☐ Arrival in-system.
- ☐ Every meal includes some form of sheep meat.
- ☐ First performances. BT1 and BT2 move to of the first logging camp at which a performance will be held. Shows are played in BT1.
- ☐ The characters have a chance to see the high-technology "RV"-style vehicles, and to get to know people.
- ☐ Run several encounters with stolid lumberjack types. These show that Aramais was not exaggerating. They are all stolid.
- ☐ The best material fails to get the same responses on this world as other worlds. The people are more serious than normally encountered.
- ☐ Characters actively role-playing performances may seek to create additional material.

Act II

- ☐ Move to next logging community.
- ☐ The PCs encounter several tenders who have just come in from the wilds. These tenders are less dull than most of the people the PCs have met so far. The encounter should be made interesting. However, though Tenders are the "colorful" people on a dull world, they are still difficult to fathom. The Tenders will advocate having two beers, and possibly dancing in public.
- ☐ PCs are invited to go along on the next day's tender work as an opportunity to see the woods and the environment first-hand.
- ☐ The PCs should notice that not all wood seems to be going to the clearings. If they question the tenders, they will be told that some of it is being stockpiled. This true; it is being stockpiled to produce a fire.
- ☐ The PCs have an encounter with a massive pouncer. After they shoot it full of holes, they realize that it seemed much larger when pouncing.
- ☐ A second encounter occurs. The PCs again see the animal differently during the encounter than after it is slain.
- ☐ Eventually, the PCs may note that the tenders are amused by the "newbie nerves."
- ☐ To realize that the local atmosphere's hallucinogenic effect is altering their perception: Difficult (3D) < (Int + San). On failure, the individual utterly denies any altered perception.
- ☐ Once a PC is aware and accepts that his or her perception has been altered, the player rolls to correctly interpret each new encounter or situation: Difficult ((Int+San)/2). On success, the PC correctly understands the situation, no matter what he or sees, believes he sees, and/or hears. On failure, the PC believes the altered perception is real.
- ☐ The day is cut short when the PCs become a danger to themselves and others, but not before.
- ☐ Return to BT1 and the drudgery of performance.

Act III

- ☐ At dawn, a reddish glow can be seen on the horizon and the PCs can smell smoke.
- ☐ The adolescents are noted missing.
- ☐ Incorrect information suggests that they went east. Searches start in that direction.

- ☐ Tenders are sent west to arrest the fire before it destroys a lucrative stand of trees.
- ☐ As both emergencies become evident, Andii puts BT1, BT2, and the PCs into the loop.
- ☐ Questions are asked. Players can ask the questions on the excuse that all of the able lumberjacks are heading out to search.
- ☐ The PCs are questioning kids.
- ☐ The foolish adolescent is pointed out, or noticed.
- ☐ On questioning, the boy or girl tries to play cat-and-mouse with his/her questioners. Finally, he or she admits to the prank s/he played on the others. However, the boy or girl is not very lucid, having not taken his or her antipsychotic medications in days. No real detail beyond his or her guilt in reprogramming the inertial guidance systems to send the missing kids in the wrong direction (i.e. east, not west) can be obtained.
- ☐ The search parties are searching in the wrong place; the players must go west.
- ☐ Attempts to reproduce the intentionally faulty programming are unsuccessful.

Act IV

- ☐ The PCs go west with BT2.
- ☐ Several sensor readings that might be people will delay and/or distract BT2. Searching beneath the canopy on foot reveals various human-sized animals, many of which are frightened. The creatures are fleeing from the fire, panicked and unpredictable.
- ☐ As the fire draws nearer, trees are toppling and flames are jumping and creeping along the canopy.
- ☐ The smoke and heat is causing the hallucinogenic substances to more efficiently enter the PCs' bodies. As a result, the delusions and hallucinations may increase in severity. The referee should exaggerate each animal encounter, descriptions of the fire, and so on.
- ☐ Medical stores have no readily available antidote for the hallucinogenic effects; they must wear off over time.
- ☐ After several attempts, the group of teens is found. They are being menaced by a massive, fearsome monster ... or, perhaps, are just stuck in the same mess with a frightened, smaller creature. PC reactions should be based on what they see.
- ☐ The PCs, with their charges, must escape the fire and get back to a hole in the canopy to be lifted out.
- ☐ All characters should have their share of minor burns, cuts, scrapes, and so on. The more dramatic of these can be played out as minor encounters, e.g. "A massive tree falls; roll to avoid becoming squished".
- ☐ Once the PCs return the kids safely to base, Andii and company may put two and two together. They may not. The tenders understand that the ecology is being altered by husbandry. They have become convinced that a more natural course is best, and have secretly attempted to provide for this.
- ☐ The tenders responsible for the fire are in hiding. At the referee's option, Andii can have the PCs pursue them. The general consensus of the Caponites is that regardless of whether their ecological sense is correct, the danger the arsonists have caused to all requires a reckoning.

Tag

- ☐ The players are thanked by the parents of the rescued teens with small but valuable wooden curios such as carvings of monsters, backscratchers, small jewelry boxes, desktop name triangles ... and mutton. Lots of mutton.
- ☐ *Cirque* leaves for the next system.

Episode 8: Hidden Camera

Lunion • Spinward Marches 2124

A995984-D • A • Hi In Cp • 810 • Im • G5 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Lunion? “Present your identity documentation. Type in your proper legal name to confirm. Stop typing in your name. Provide retinal scan and fingerprints prior to DNA registration. Spit here for DNA Registration. DNA registration failed, start over. You have retried too many times, please exit the line. Please do not drop your phone while doing so.”

That’s Lunion. You need an advanced degree in data entry just to order a plate of Vilani Ragout. And don’t order the Sword Worlds Steak and Fungus — the robowait automatically pings your ID to a special watch-list. And don’t speed, or violate pinged traffic lanes when you take your air-raft out for a spin with the top down. The bots and scanners and transponder queries keep a tight rein on everything. They know who you are, most likely. And if they don’t, your picture winds up on the news — ‘Do you know this speeding maniac? Help us issue a fine.’ That’s one way to keep the local skyway patrol funded.

And shoplifting — no point. Your bank gets charged if you leave with something anyway. Better to put your thumb to the scan, as if it matters.

Not that they do much with the data. The local laws are reasonably relaxed for a place with so many bureaucrats. So long as you comm in your Form A23TT when you buy a new undershirt, and pay your fines for failing to merge with excessive caution, no one cares what you do. Lots of forms, low expectations.

OK, I’m exaggerating. It’s not really all that bad — for all of the paper shuffle, they have pretty reasonable laws. If you kill someone, there’s a fair amount of paperwork to complete, so they say, but your fine will be under CR 100,000 so long as your grammar is good and you fill in all the fields before you hit “submit.”

Don’t ever get anyone powerful mad at you when you visit Lunion. The bureaucrats are always happy to do a favor for a higher-up. It’s the nature of the beast all over, just more so. The computers can be used to expedite a permit, or to send it right into a black hole.

It’s one of those places where you find a little bit of everyone and everything. It’s on the Spinward Main, not far from those crazed Viking-types in the Sword Worlds. Sophonts of every size, shape, and eyeball count. Shipyards, stations, warehouses — stuff people want, not the unsellable crap that gets shipped to Fosey — all of that sort of thing. You can meet them all there, so they say, and buy what they’re selling.

I always feel like I’m being watched when I move through. And I don’t mean the local bureaucrats tracking my shoe size. Sure, they do that, but a world like Lunion has more than its share of nosy types.

Spies, not just Imperial ones. They keep an eye on the big spines and little cruisers alike moving through. You can bet that the blasted Vikings and the Zho have people on the ground, maybe watchers in the deep dark, keeping a pile of passive sensors tuned tight to see jumps in and out. I wish I were just paranoid, but I’m not. Some of these dummies even think a cranky retired admiral knows more than he does. I do — but it’s about money these days. I’ve never been on the favorites list. Had to beg Santanoccheev to give me a job in the last war. It’s funny when they make small talk about how they haven’t seen this battle-rider or that dreadnought.

Lunion is a good place to pass through with your mouth shut, your billfold out, and your eyes open.

Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1105.

General Data (Players)

Some things have not changed in the far future. “Location, location, location,” is as important in 1111 Imperial as it was on Earth of the 20th Century (Old Reckoning). Lunion’s position on the Jump-1 Spinward Main renders it an essential commercial crossroads. It creates opportunities to rub elbows with members of most sophont species and subspecies. Without doubt, Lunion’s position also makes it a hotbed of politics in the Marches.

This is not to say that decisions are made at Lunion. Lunion’s nobility holds sway over neither Duke Norris of Regina nor Duchess Delphine of Mora. The former has become important because he is willing to act decisively; the latter remains important because Mora was once seen as the unofficial Sector Seat. Both overshadow Lunion, whether Duke Luis of Lunion accepts that fact or not.

The Fifth Frontier War has altered the Marches’ political balance. Duke Luis and others are engaged in the essential machinations of building and rebuilding political connections. This is a current and defining characteristic of dealings on Lunion.

Lunion has a second defining characteristic: its bureaucracy is pervasive. Its high technology level provides sophisticated surveillance. Computer-based systems recognize most faces, and easily can (and do) track individuals’ movements. This competes with the inevitable sophont desire for privacy.

Many crowded, high-technology societies keep regular surveillance in place, both by the government and private individuals. Given its location and the resulting political and social pressures, the local government takes such monitoring to extremes. Interlinked cameras stream data to central computers, maintaining temporary video records (about three years’ worth) of most public places. Private security systems are required to upload their data into the same systems and then erase it.

Personal recognition programs combined with government-issued phones keep reasonably close track of individuals as they move in public. Every child is issued a phone keyed to his/her genetic profile at birth, with upgrades and replacements as necessary. This assists in some private matters; there is little successful shoplifting from brick-and-mortar stores, and missing children are located quickly and easily. With a combination of ubiquitous security and links to the private banking system, the cost of a purchase is automatically deducted from available credits when the individual leaves such a store. Most local residents are thus “absent-mindedly honest.”

Any offworlder leaving the starport is issued a visa/identification phone programmed with the individual’s identity and locally available banking data. A genetic profile is locked in as well. This data is taken from the papers and identifications presented by the individual upon arrival, as well as a cheek-swab. Such identifications are carefully scrutinized

and cross-checked against available Imperial databases. Only the best forgeries get through, so criminals fleeing Imperial charges are better off staying on-port rather than attempting to mingle with the local population.

Once a local phone is issued, its essential programming can be altered or falsified only with great effort and skill. It is easier to obtain another sophont's phone and use it, though this requires fooling the phone's biometric security system (e.g., by spraying matching synthetic skin on a hand). It is also possible to obtain certain modified phones which legally identify the individual by an alias. These are used by most nobles and officials when they desire anonymity in public. They may be issued for other reasons, such as providing a measure of privacy for confidants, friends, and lovers of the rich and powerful who are to be kept out of the public spotlight. These are also issued to other celebrities on reasonable request, including travelling performers. Anyone whose Fame exceeds 7 is a potential candidate for a lawful alias.

Black-market phones are also available. These are generally phones of people who have died or gone "off the grid," and can be used until the death or disappearance of the proper owner is noted. It is usually easier to obtain the genetic samples needed to fool the phone in these cases. Incautious spacers and tourists are favorite targets of such black marketeers. A small but significant number of offworlders disappear every year.

In addition, bureaucrats periodically go rogue and provide illicit phones for personal profit or other motives. Despite the best efforts, such scandals surface on average once every Imperial year.

Diplomats of non-Imperial governments are exempt from carrying phones issued by the Lunion government, but such diplomatic immunity does not preclude surveillance and identification. To the contrary, known non-Imperial officials' movements are closely observed. Powerful algorithms parse the data, establish patterns and look for deviations from those established patterns. Neither Zhodani nor Sword Worlds pass documents or utilize public "drop points" to transfer data developed by spying.

With all of this stated, the local government maintains a relatively low level of interference with personal choice, even having unusually open laws about carrying weapons. Given the population level and government type, laws and attitudes allowing most firearms to be carried are something of an anomaly. Lunion is a cosmopolitan, accepting, socially liberal society in spite of its regulations.

The local government tends to require a great deal of paperwork in order to pursue one's personal dreams. Admiral Lee's comments exaggerate this in one direction, but are relatively accurate regarding the handling of matters such as traffic infractions. Serious violent crimes and property crimes are certainly not treated lightly, but the judicial system relies heavily on computerized tracking and prosecution.

As any crime-show based on Lunion makes clear, this tracking renders the rumpled detective character almost superfluous when dealing with serious crime. The tracking data may be accessed by police, though only with judicial approval. Such judicial approval is provided by robotic magistrates linked into the stream of data. Thus, an officer seeking to obtain data to identify a suspect or issue a traffic ticket must access the system and request the warrant, uplinking his or her "local" video stream and personal "testimony," transmitted on the spot. The magistrate quickly evaluates the data on the system, determines if a crime or serious infraction is being or has been committed, and determines what movement information will be provided. This generally results in a list of suspects within moments (and often only one named individual).



This efficiency does not trickle down to seedy private investigators or suspicious spouses. The most strictly applied legal right on Lunion is the right to personal privacy. So long as an individual is not violating a penal law and pays his or her debts, all movement information is personal and private. Retailers may not share purchase information with anyone, including advertising and statistical agencies, without the purchaser's very clearly and lawfully obtained consent for each purchase.

In any event, hard, cold, anonymous cash is an entirely legal way to make one's purchases.

The right to privacy is jealously protected by Lunion's Ministry of Movement. This extensive agency maintains the massive datafiles and assures that tracking information is routinely destroyed after an appropriate period of time. It mandates privacy for all tracking and identification. Violations of the right to privacy are reported first to the Ministry. Investigations begin here, and are referred to the police. Internal investigations and police investigations also look for black marketeers supplying illicit phones.

Summary and Referee's Information

The Advance Sophont's initial message is succinct. "Someone on Lunion must hate clowns and big blue tents, because this place is a nightmare. Things here are all screwed up. We have lots of tickets sold, but problems all around. You may need to send out refunds. Nothing more to say unless we meet deck to deck. No channel is secure enough."

A brief meeting reveals that the entire process of obtaining permits, venues, and support has been stymied. The Advance Sophonts have been frozen out. They must start for their next destination. Andii will have to find a way to cut through the red tape, or simply move on.

Success in this adventure is defined simply: "The show must go on." Despite all the roadblocks set into place, the players succeed by getting the show on the road without violence.

The adventure is also about the undertones of politics in the Imperial feudal system. Merit is not the only basis of advancement. Personal insults hurled in back rooms are not the way nobles snub each other. Despite Imperial politics, the "Crossroads of the Spinward Marches" should be cosmopolitan, liberal, and easy to deal with. It is not. Lunion is a confirmed "Red Tape Zone."

This stop is defined in terms of streams of events, rather than strict "acts." The referee should arrange the streams into acts of his or her own choosing. The streams are arranged in likely sequences of events. This allows the referee to mix and match events, keeping the players off guard and requiring them to deal with the fast pace of a busy, nosy, high-technology world.

The streams are named. *Venue* deals with unusual red tape in securing the right to land off-port, or even to obtain a performance location. *Fleet Performance* deals with unusual red tape in scheduling a special performance for the 43rd Fleet, stationed at Lunion, and highlights the presence of Admiral Santanocheev at Lunion. *Animal Quarantine* deals with claims that the animals of Cirque des Sirkas may carry dangerous diseases, and thus require up-port quarantine rather than being kept in *Cirque's* usual facilities (which are safe enough for most purposes). Though brief, *Sharushid Factor* deals with the local factor, who deserts Cirque des Sirkas and heads for the hills as political manipulation mounts. *Phoneleggers* depicts an attempt on the players' lives by a fortunately amateur batch of kidnappers. *Zhodani* and *Sword Worlds* illustrate aspects of the "Crossroads of the Imperium" to the scenario. *Lupins* seems independent of the political flow, but highlights the ways that bureaucracy and surveillance software can be improperly used — and, in the end, provides the PCs with an opening to cut through the red tape.

Finally, *Duke Luis* brings out the key to the red tape: Luis himself. The Duke is not directly behind the red tape, but his supporters (and particularly his young, inexperienced Seneschal) are. Reaching Duke Luis should not be easy. Once he is reached, however, he can cut through the red tape.

Despite phoneleggers and a stalker with exceptional information access, this adventure is more about interpersonal skills than combat. The players will be required to handle a number of situations over several days to obtain all of the permits needed to open Cirque des Sirkas. Regardless of their actual positions with the operation, they will be put onto these jobs

Cirque

due to their previous creativity in problem-solving. The Diva Avian Trainer will be of some importance, given her connection to Lunion.

Cirque des Sirkas' trip is destined to honor Regina's Duke Norris as the man who saved the Marches from the last Zhodani incursions. While Duke Luis will acknowledge this, and affirm his respect for Norris as the Marches' military leader under an Imperial Warrant, he retains his own political ambitions. Rumors have spread that the Iridium Throne will finally name a Sector Duke for the Spinward Marches. Duke Luis would accept the role, of course, as a compromise over two headstrong and stubborn candidates, Duke Norris of Regina and the Duchess of Mora. If his bid fails, Luis would prefer the Duchess of Mora to take the role. Mora has traditionally been seen as the central authority in the Marches, and the Imperial Navy's Admiralty has traditionally been anchored there. Luis prefers the status quo over centering the sector's politics so close to the Zhodani.

The Admiralty affects Lunion in another very direct way. Duke Luis has a sister, and his sister has a husband: Sector Admiral (Ret.) Santanocheev. Santanocheev and his wife feel humiliated by Norris' summary dismissal of the admiral and his close advisors. Neither is willing to acknowledge Santanocheev's failure to consider "flaky" intelligence suggesting that the Zhodani's primary objective in the Fifth Frontier War was to take control of Rhyllanor could possibly have been a factor in his fall from grace. Despite its high technology level, Rhyllanor is small and out-of-the-way ("Location, location, location"), which was why Santanocheev and his commanders reasoned that any intelligence suggesting otherwise was cleverly planted disinformation. "The Zho want a buffer," Santanocheev said more than once, even as tactical evidence suggested a different conclusion.

Santanocheev's niece has been newly elevated to the position of Duke Luis' Seneschal. She is eager to please, loves her uncle and enjoys political games. In her youthful inexperience, however, she fails to realize that some games are counterproductive in the long term.

Santanocheev's niece also has distant connections to the Duchess of Mora. She believes that any honoring of Norris should also include Mora, and has noted that Cirque des Sirkas did not visit Mora itself. She is unaware that early communications were sent to Mora offering to include that world on the itinerary; the Duchess herself requested that Mora be skipped, but sent a representative to the opening performance at Rhyllanor's Old Station.

Other officials can be played in each department, using only a series of names and titles. In each case, the bureaucrat is simply obstructive, and must be convinced, bribed, or blackmailed into handing out necessary permits. The sequences can be played out one problem at a time, or in a complete and head-spinning confusion of events.

Under no circumstances should Duke Luis intervene early in the scenario as this would virtually guarantee capitulation of the intertwined bureaucrats.

Scenes from the *Lupins* thread should be interspersed with other problems. Once again, an entertainer's past gives rise to adventure. The Diva Avian trainer is stalked by an obsessed classmate to whom she paid no attention to in her early years. She ignored him throughout her re-inventions of herself over the years. Her return galvanizes her admirer, who works for the Ministry of Movement. The stalker is not high and noticeable official, but he wields great power: he can track people through both their phones and facial recognition.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

The Set-Up

- ☐ *Cirque* arrives in-system.
- ☐ Contact with Advance Sophonts.
- ☐ Andii will be firm on maintaining a schedule of performances. She gives the crew 48 standard hours to unsnag the worst of the messes.

Venue

- ☐ Many issues have arisen with permitting. No major venue has agreed to host the performances. The Advance Sophonts are having difficulty obtaining permits for off-port landings, which would allow

the events to occur in BT1.

- ☐ *Cirque* is permitted only to dock with the up-port as of entry. Landing will be by port-supplied shuttle only. No off-port landings are permitted, nor are *Cirque*'s auxiliaries permitted to land.
- ☐ Getting off-port visas for the performers and crew requires extra paperwork, questioning and stamping. The few exceptions are those crew members who are Lunion natives, including the Diva.
- ☐ The Zhodani Trade Mission offers a permit to land at its diplomatic compound. If the offer is accepted (unlikely as that may be), the entire cast and crew will be detained for interrogation as potential Zhodani sympathizers.
- ☐ If the Zhodani offer is under consideration for more than a few moments, word will leak to the news media. Threats of properly placed news stories ("Only Vile Zho willing to house circus aiming for Regina and Norris!") will likely resolve this issue.
- ☐ The Sword Worlds Embassy threatens to shoot down vessels associated with Cirque des Sirkas if flying within ten kilometers of the Embassy. This causes a diplomatic flap; the Sword Worlds Embassy should not have the capability to make good on such a threat. Reasonable inquiry (or good sense) will see this as a display of Sword Worlds bravado.
- ☐ Attempts to negotiate with any bureaucracy on Lunion (Parks and Recreation Department, Ministry of Tourism, etc.) will result in clear refusals to issue permits. All inquiries will result in a suggestion that the Department of Extraordinary Land Use is the only department which can issue a permit.
- ☐ A college friend of Luis' Seneschal is the Acting Chair of the Board of Extraordinary Land Use, which oversees the Department of Extraordinary Land Use.

Fleet Performance

- ☐ Imperial Navy commanders refuse to commit any resources for a performance, or to schedule a special performance. No explanations are given apart from "Your papers are not in order."
- ☐ Information gathering (computers, questioning at port) reveals that Sector Admiral (Ret.) Santanocheev's personal ship is in port.
- ☐ Further nosing around reveals that Santanocheev's authorized biographer has recently registered at a second-class hotel near port. Contacted, the biographer refuses to discuss matters apart from, "Santanocheev hates Norris and anyone who likes him."
- ☐ Direct contact with the Chief Morale Officer for the fleet results in a furtive meeting for a discussion at a Startown establishment. The Morale Officer essentially shrugs. "I approved all of the papers. It got killed somewhere above me."
- ☐ Research will show that the Admiral currently commanding the 43rd was Santanocheev's adjutant approximately ten years ago. This admiral has credited Santanocheev with his rise through the ranks and credits his command skill to Santanocheev's mentoring. Santanocheev and the former adjutant had a private dinner together two days before Cirque des Sirkas arrived in-system.
- ☐ Attempts to meet with Santanocheev will result in a brief meeting with his wife's social secretary. The social secretary will note that the Admiral and his wife are too busy to meet with clowns and other vagrants. The social secretary unsuccessfully tutored the Seneschal in Algebra II during the Seneschal's last year in secondary school; when the Seneschal needed to retake the test, the social secretary allowed her own memory imprint to be temporarily overlain in the Seneschal's mind (clear and flagrant cheating).
- ☐ Someone aboard *Cirque* likely has contacts within the lower command echelons of the 43rd. A word-of-mouth campaign spread through the lower ranks ("We're being refused a free show because Santanocheev is angry at Norris for being right?") has a possibility of creating a policy reversal.

Animal Quarantine

- All performing animals are ordered quarantined for thirty days. They may not be used in performances, nor taken out of quarantine to leave the system. They are taken off *Cirque* at gunpoint and brought to a special holding facility in the up-port.
- Demonstration of the fact that Cirque des Sirkas' performing animals are kept carefully separate from any local livestock and are carefully vaccinated against most transmittable diseases, is almost enough to convince the bureaucrat to allow the animals off the port. However, it is not quite enough.
- The last bit of convincing can be obtained by bribery, including possibly cash, free passes to the circus, and other valuables, providing that the bribed individuals are not offended. To avoid offending the individuals to be bribed: Formidable (4D) < (Soc + Fame).
- Discussions with the Livestock Safety Bureau reveal that its head is married to an individual who once was engaged to marry Duke Luis' Seneschal's cousin (who everyone knew was not good enough for the spouse of the head of the Livestock Safety Bureau).

Sharurshid Factor

- The Factor is no help with any problem. After one discussion, she closes the office and takes all of the employees on a "team-building retreat." She then leaves and refuses to accept any calls.
- Research on the Factor shows her to be a third cousin of Duke Luis' Seneschal. The retreat is being held at an estate controlled by the Seneschal's spouse.

Phoneleggers

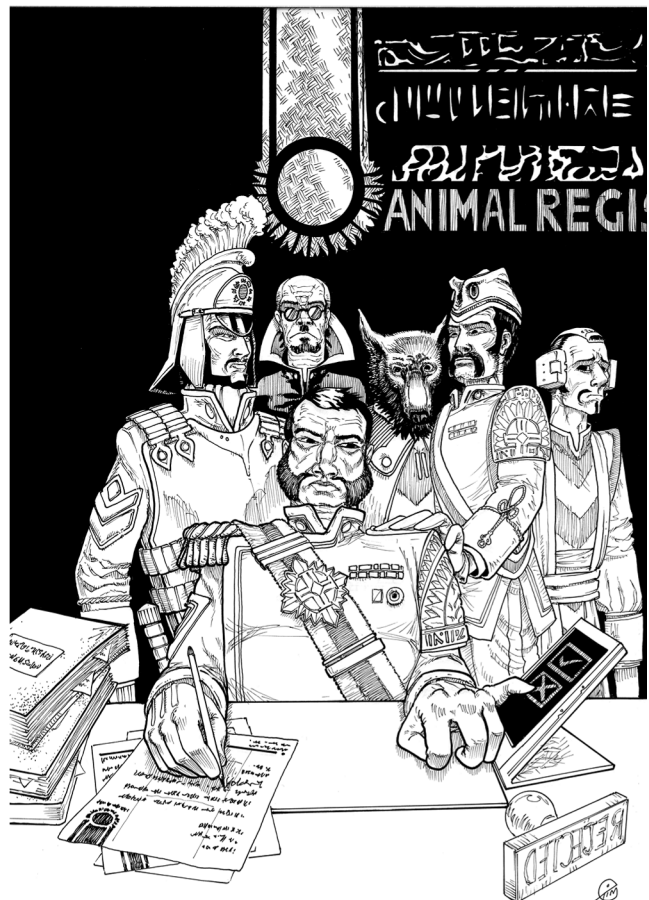
- The PCs are approached by a group of prom-dressed young people in a large grav limousine. The young people claim that they are on a scavenger hunt for the best prom dates, and want the PCs to come along. The young people are all attractive, of course, and are decoys.
- When the PCs approach, several large men grab them and attempt to force them aboard the limousine. They show weapons in order to intimidate the PCs.
- If the kidnappers are successful, the limo pulls into the sky. The PCs are shackled and disarmed, if possible. Their phones are also taken.
- Fortunately, a local police officer noticed the event from a distance. The police officer applied for and obtained a warrant. Before this group of phoneleggers (who apparently are unaware of the need to bribe Ministry of Movement officials in the phonelegging business) can harm the PCs, the limousine is surrounded by police vehicles and forced to land. The PCs are released, give their statements, and allowed to return to their business.

Lupins

- Twelve dozen Lunion Red Lupins (the Lunion equivalent of red roses) arrive wherever the Diva Avian Trainer is being housed. The card says, "Your Greatest Admirer. You are blessed by the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space."
- PCs investigating the Lupins will trace them back to the flower shop which filled the order. The order came from a public computer and was paid for by cash fed into the slot, so it is not traceable.
- While the Diva Avian Trainer is having a coffee-like brew at an off-port café, a florist truck pulls up. More red lupins are brought out. The note reads "A Holy Marriage of the Heavens has been arranged by 'the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space. Please wear that white dress you wore yesterday. P.S. You should know that coffee-like drinks stain your teeth.'" Questioning of the florist driver indicates that the shop was told to have the lupins ready, and paid in advance, but got the email and the text of the note only ten minutes before the delivery. If the PCs do not realize that this indicates real-time surveillance, similar scenes should be played through until they

get the hint.

- Review of religious research databases and documents fails to locate a religion worshipping an angel or deity named Turdemond.
- Asked, Diva Avian Trainer thinks she recalls something about "the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space," but cannot remember what or, more important, when.
- Research and questioning regarding surveillance indicates that Lunion's cities have pervasive commercial and governmental surveillance and tracking systems. Cameras watch, and communicator locations (i.e. the ubiquitous government-issued phones) are tracked. However, individual use of such systems for the purpose of stalking is illegal. Reasonably powerful security prevents most illegal access.
- To hack into a surveillance system: Staggering (5D) < (Edu + Programming) (three hours) (failure results in the hackers being shunted into recordings of purely public webcams as a distraction, and a visit from humorless police officers before the three hours is over).
- More unexpected lupins arrive. Once again the note indicates close surveillance: "We will die together, and the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space will twine the threads of our soul together."
- The Diva Avian Trainer thinks she remembers that the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space was in a book she read once, perhaps for a talk show segment.
- Review of the Imperial copyright and literature databases provide no title or authors of books dealing with the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space.
- More unexpected lupins arrive. "Turdemond is always near." A nearby structure (building, furniture, etc.) is struck by a bullet. The crack of the gun is heard a split-second later. As the parties look frantically around, a person speeds away into the sky and gets lost in the stream of air rafts and other gravitic cars and trucks.
- No matter how rapidly attempted, no record of the shooter's flight can be located in the traffic control systems.



Cirque

- ☐ The Diva Avian Trainer's memory is finally triggered, whether by psionic assistance, drug assistance, or by stopping by the secondary school she once attended. A strange classmate of hers once fancied himself a writer. He was once laughed out of the room while reading a short story of his own featuring the Great Angel Turdemond of Time and Space. Inevitably, the classmate was given the unfortunate monicker. Turdemond once asked her to a dance; she laughed at him and walked away. The Diva cannot remember his actual name.
- ☐ Despite its limited literary value, the short story was printed in the secondary school literary magazine. The magazine was printed on paper. No electronic record of it can be found.
- ☐ The PCs may consider various ways to determine the identity of the stalker: high-tech yearbooks, school records, and similar records should be fruitful. Non-physical records have been erased by the stalker.
- ☐ Diva has lost touch with most of her childhood friends. Tracking one or two down may produce interesting interactions and opinions of Diva. One will turn out to have a physical print of the short story: "Trials of Turdemond." The author's name is included on the print: Gerard Lapin.
- ☐ Running down information related to the name of the author will finally bear fruit. The author is a functionary in the Ministry of Movement. He has gone on vacation, however, and cannot be located despite all efforts to do so. If it is not clear to the PCs yet, the helpful functionary will realize that Lapin has used his knowledge of the interlocked surveillance systems and their privacy settings to entirely obscure his own location and activities. It may take weeks to break through the security Lapin has set. His home address can be obtained, however.
- ☐ Going to Lapin's home will reveal Lapin's obsession with Diva. The walls are plastered with sketches and prints of photos. Electronic displays run various pictures and videos. A holographic display in the center of the cluttered living room shows a simulated embrace between Lapin and Diva, apparently created by Lapin.
- ☐ One way to catch Lapin is to set a trap and lie in wait. The PCs will likely suggest other interesting methods. If the PCs don't catch him, Lapin may eventually manage to kill Diva.
- ☐ The easy denouement is a firefight with Lapin. Less obvious is the capture of Lapin so that he may be locked away. The details depend on the PCs and the referee.
- ☐ If the PCs capture Lapin, they will discover that he has a wafer jack. The wafer contains three items: an electronic map of the city based on the locations of surveillance systems; a command sequence allowing any person to take control of the surveillance systems; and a copy of the turgid "Trials of Turdemond." The command sequence includes commands to overwrite video of designated individuals as they occur, essentially making those individuals invisible. This is the method used to ensure the privacy of celebrities, VIPs, and persons closely associated with VIPs.
- ☐ To decipher the capabilities of the command sequences: Difficult (3D) < (Int + Computer; requires wafer jack) (2 hours). On success, the PC is able to explore and toggle numerous potential commands, including commands used to over-ride surveillance units and to erase movement records. The PCs will also find commands that allow the user to break into personal data, and to identify individuals by facial recognition without warrants.
- ☐ If the PCs do not locate the wafer jack or the police get it before they can take full control the Ministry of Movement will nonetheless determine that the PCs are owed a favor, and will help them track down the mysterious 21-year-old (see *Duke Luis*).

Sword Worlds

- ☐ A TNS story is sent to Documentarian as a heads-up: "Sword Worlds Consul decries depictions of Sword Worlds in Imperial Entertainment." The accompanying video is a bootleg video of the

The Seneschal

Final UPP: BC96Bc. Age: 28 years.

Final Honors: Baronetess.

Final Skills: Admin-1, Advocate-3, Bureaucrat-4, Counsellor-2, Diplomat-2, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Language: Vilani-8, Leader-1, Science: Linguistics-3, Tactics-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Terms (4): 3 Education, 1 Noble.

Muster Out (1): StarPass. Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Noble Regalia, Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.

BW: Lunion (SM 2124) Hi In Cp.

HW Skills: Admin-1, Streetwise-1, Trade: Programmer-1.

The Stalker (Gerard Lapin)

Final UPP: 985A97. Age: 42 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Honors: Senior Supervisor, Systems Infrastructure Maintenance Department, Lunion Ministry of Movement.

Final Skills: Admin-5, Advocate-2, Animals-0 (Rider-1), Art: Author-1, Bureaucrat-2, Comms-1, Counsellor-1, Fighter-0 (Slug Thrower-2), Flyer-1 (Grav-2), Forensics-1, High G-1, Liaison-1, Navigation-1, Science: Philosophy-1, Streetwise-1, Teacher-1, Trader-1, Trades: Electronics-3; Programmer-10, Vacc Suit-2. Terms (7): 3 Citizen, 4 Functionary.

Muster Out (7) (3 Cit, 4 Fun): Wafer Jack, KCr 15, KCr 30, Pension x2, Cr 20, Str +1, Int +1. Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.

BW: Lunion (SM 2124) Hi In Cp.

HW Skills: Admin-1, Streetwise-1, Trade: Electronics-1.

Barbarian Princess' act, and Cirque des Sirkas is mentioned by name. TNS is running it because it is a slow news day, and because it allows TNS to show some pulchritudinous video on the news hour.

- ☐ Sword Worlders from a trade vessel will see the Barbarian Princess and harass her. This could end in violence.
- ☐ If there is violence, there will be fines to pay, especially if it takes place off-port.

Zhodani

- ☐ The "Zhodani Mind Reader" is arrested by local police on suspicion of being a Zhodani spy.
- ☐ Players must provide accurate information to local police to demonstrate that he is, in fact, just a con man.
- ☐ Bertii knows that there was a Zho-front Psionic Institute here prior to the War. He believes it is still there.
- ☐ Search for real Psionic Institutes to locate any false fronts. An unknown PC (or NPC) seeking training may be used in this effort as a "bloodhound."
- ☐ Between three and five active institutes can be located. Bertii finds no clear evidence of current Zhodani involvement.
- ☐ The search for Zho-front Psionic Institute turns up obvious identity changes. The former cell has been filled with Dumb Psionic Wan-

Cirque

nabees. The real cell is nowhere to be found. Identities known to Bertii have been “killed off” or simply disappeared during the war.

- The Zhodani, on the other hand, are observing Bertii and others. A Zhodani should be noted every hour or two. The Zhodani take no action, however.
- Any attempt to capture or contact a Zhodani observer should result in the Zhodani getting away if at all possible. If a Zhodani is captured, he or she will resist all interrogation memories, erasing his or her own memory with “The Touch” if necessary.

Duke Luis

- Duke Luis is unavailable for the planned show in his honor. Most other subsector nobles in the general area are also declining invitations. “Even if you ever manage to cut through the red tape.” Analysis of names shows clearly that those most loyal to Duke Luis are avoiding the show. Others are blowing with the wind.
- All attempts to contact Duke Luis go through his Seneschal. The Seneschal refuses to put anyone through to Luis, regardless of stature.
- Duke Luis’ personal, private communicator code can be obtained from several sources. If obtained, it can be used once to try to obtain his cooperation and convince him of the foolishness of the de facto embargo on clowns and acrobats. Questions, answers, and news reports eventually suggest people who have unusually free contact with Luis. These are his hairdresser, his personal Clone Insurance Physician, who weekly provides memory recordings; and an attractive young woman of about twenty-one whose weekly visits are erased from almost all public records.
- Rumors abound that Duke Luis has an attractive young mistress who has been seen entering Luis’ residence — yet is never recorded by surveillance.
- Rumors abound that Duke Luis has an attractive young illegitimate daughter who has been seen entering Luis’ residence — yet is never recorded by surveillance. Eyewitnesses suggest that she certainly

resembles Luis to an extent.

- Rumors abound that Duke Luis is employing an attractive young private detective who has been seen entering Luis’ residence — yet is never recorded by surveillance.
- Contacting the hairdresser results in a visit from the police. The PCs are warned that they will be watched.
- Contacting the supposed mistress after finding out who she is (e.g., through the denouement of *Lupins*) will result in her explaining that she is Duke Luis’ Aunt Joan, who was in line for the Duchy before Luis’ predecessor. She refused the position, preferring to lead a life as an actress. Her death was feigned, and she started a career at Capitol. She has since undergone memory transfer to at least one fresh, young clone, and recently decided that she was homesick for the Marches. She visits Luis weekly simply because they like each other. Made aware that the Seneschal has been throwing roadblocks out based on loyalty to Santanochiev and a misguided belief that honoring Norris dishonors Duchess Delphine, Aunt Joan will roll her eyes.
- Aunt Joan takes the PCs to her usual side entrance, vouches for them, and gets them in to see Duke Luis is properly dressed down by Joan, and calls in his Seneschal. The Seneschal is unequivocally ordered to clear all problems and get a performance going.
- Within an hour animal quarantines are ended, venue offers are blipping in, and Duke Luis is offering to take any cameo available — even if it means having a tree rat steal his watch.

Tag

- The show finally opens. The crowds are the best yet — but there are still too many Zhodani in the audience for comfort.
- *Cirque* leaves for Dershon.



Episode 9: Prison Break

Derchon • Spinward Marches 2024

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

The galaxy is mostly black, without too much land to set foot on. What we set foot on mostly has a central star, and mostly that star is calm. More friend than foe. We like it that way. We keep warm, and we can grow things, and eat things that grow because that star is shining, reasonably constant. Not so many x-rays that we're bothered, less ionization, that sort of thing. A pleasant, friendly star.

Sometimes, though, we hang out around stars that think of us as bug infestations. They'd rather not have us there, and they spray that poison deep into the corners. Except it's worse than poison, it's all the kinds of fire the gods you believe in can invent to burn your soul for eternity. We wouldn't live in those systems if they weren't just plain convenient, but that's the rub — they're usually somewhere between where we started and where we want to be. So we end up living there, or at least the less sane amongst us do.

Derchon's a place like that. A gas-giant moon. Tide-locked to the gas-giant, more or less, so it has a day as long as its orbit, more than fifteen days. Far enough away that the gas giant doesn't do much harm, especially with the cities on the "far" side. But no big, pretty planet to look at in the sky, unless you're near the equator, or on that side.

It's an ice-capped, cold moon world with barely enough atmosphere to be considered "air." The air it has doesn't guard much against the radiation the primary blasts out often enough to make a difference. A couple of times a year the people there have to duck into the shelters and wait out a particularly nasty flare. It can get long, a week or more, depending on whether the radiation hits at early morning.

That's on top of mining ice to drink and such, and living under domes in the Scars.

And the Scars — I'm not sure I could forget I was living in deep rills melted in by a superflare. That's right, one of those. The gas giant's close enough to raise some extra havoc with the primary, and the secondary plays with that even more every thousand years or so. Last time was ten thousand years ago. Think it's about due?

Me, I'd be looking up at that primary every day, wondering when the next 'big one' was due. Another mass ejection of plasma, one that could actually slice into the crust. I'd just as soon live right inside an active volcano. Might die quietly of poison gas asphyxiation, that way.

There's not much water on Derchon, and it's concentrated mostly at the south pole. The locals use convicts to mine the ice, and believe me, the ice miners have it hard. They live on the edge of the ice cap, with nothing much but their barracks and their domes. And the pipeline, of course. The pipeline disappears into the distance, alongside a dirt track that leads back to the Scars.

Thousands of kilometers away from civilization in an airless waste makes for a pretty effective prison. Last time there was a prison break, someone tried to hijack a

crawler. The crawler broke down five kilometers short of a shelter just before a flare. X-rays are fine in small doses, even useful, but it wasn't a small dose. That batch of idiots turned ten years at hard ice mining into a death sentence.

But that's how they live on Derchon. Some of them even like it there. They prove on a daily basis that humanity is completely insane about what planets it infests.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1108.

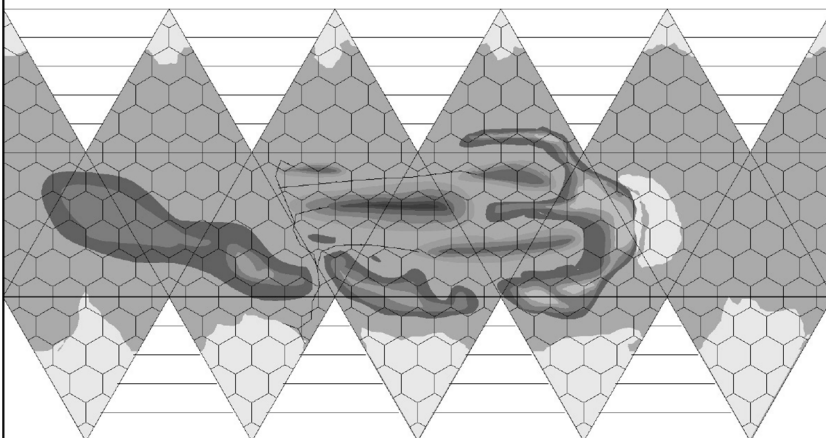
General Data (Players)

An Imperial-aligned world in the Lunion Subsector of the Spinward Marches, Derchon is an ice-capped, cold world with a trace atmosphere. Its population is about 90,000,000, concentrated in the "tropics" of this cold world. Derchon orbits the system's sole gas giant, Langmuir in a tide-locked orbit. This creates a day that is as long as its orbit, 15 standard days and 19 standard hours.

The system's primary is an M0 V "UV Ceti Variable," more commonly called a flare star. Every few days or weeks, radiation bursts (including deadly X-rays) are emitted. Langmuir and Derchon are on the edge of the deadly zone; thus, they are not close enough for the primary to provide real heat, but close enough that carbon-based life would likely die out entirely if the orbit was any closer. Only extremely hardy organisms survive, and they face a high mutation rate due to the regular bursts of radiation. Significant flares requiring humans and their animals to take shelter occur on average four times each standard year. Lesser flares also occur.

Derchon's secondary, an M7 V, is also a flare star, but has no plane-

World NameDerchon (Spinward Marches 2024)



tary bodies worthy of the designation. The primary and secondary orbit their common center of gravity in elliptical orbits, and thus B rarely has any effect on Derchon or Langmuir. The two stars make their closest approach every 835 years. Scientists are reasonably certain that a close approach about 10,000 years ago led to magnetic bridging between A and Langmuir, launching a devastating superflare toward Derchon.

As a result of the long-ago superflare, stellar-ejected mass struck Derchon and boiled away much of its then-thicker atmosphere. Deep rills now called “the Scars” were carved by glancing-and-rolling stellar matter. Pits and caves were also melted out by smaller fragments of the ejected mass. What native life existed prior to that cataclysm was decimated. Native life has regenerated to an extent, but consistent flare activity has guaranteed that only the hardiest life forms survive.

Derchon’s population resides in sealed flare-caves, roofed-over portions of the Scars, under domes, and in other airtight structures. Much of the necessary local agriculture takes place in sealed flare-caves and man-made underground structures; this protects both crops and livestock from ionizing radiation. Cave farms are thus also safety shelters for much of the local population. However, humans are insistent on seeing some hint of sky above, and so tend to reside where they can see it. The largest of the Scar complexes houses a population of seven million.

The relatively stable crust allows for deep burrowing and deep mining. Much of Derchon’s population is heavily involved to one extent or another in mining the various metals and material deposited by the superflare, as well as valuable gems formed by the great temperatures.

All habitats are all equipped with “flare shelters.” Many are simply deeply-buried structures connected by tunnels. Some are simply massive lead-and-concrete blockhouses. Some are deep-buried shelters of multiple levels. The last type is particularly common near the poles, and especially in the ice-mining prison facilities. Some of the pits and caves near the bases of mountains and in the walls of deeper canyons are large enough to have been sealed by the first settlers; they serve as underground farms and population centers, as well as shelters.

Native life on Derchon is limited to hardy but simple organisms due both to the cold and the regular bombardment by X-ray bursts from the primary. Despite the low overall TL of 8, Derchon has an effective TL of 10 in life support technology, reflecting local experience with surviving in caves and shelters. It also imports such technology to supplement local capabilities.

After metals, gems and radioactives, Derchon’s trade resources are products using or manufactured from the hardy organisms which have survived the harsh environment and regular radiation bursts. Harvesting these requires a presence on or near the surface.

“Air” travel is not common, as the atmosphere is too thin for lift bodies. While gravitic vehicles and spacecraft are imported, those are expensive to obtain and service. Thus, most travel involves locally-manufactured fuel-cell powered crawlers with wheels or tracks. Exploration crawlers tend to be massive and heavily shielded, carrying all of the

comforts and safety of home with them. Transport crawlers tend to be light and fast, and lightly shielded. They rely on short, straight lines and flare shelters to protect their occupants. Flare shelters are never spaced more than twenty kilometers apart. The long route to South Pole parallels the pipeline aqueducts, discussed below.

The very high local law level represents a rigid society in general. Survival on this world requires attention to detail. Shelter drills are planned and occur at least once a week. Failing to take shelter as ordered may result in serious penalties, including incarceration on the first offense and loss of the right to procreate after three offenses. As Comic Juggler will quip, “No one likes an overheated gene pool.” Weapons restrictions are also heavily enforced, as shelters can become tense during prolonged flare events. Avoidable waste or pollution of water carries a minimum sentence of one standard year at hard labor. Any abuse of or theft from a flare shelter carries a minimum sentence of twenty standard years, also at hard labor.

The penal system is administered by the Water and Power Authority (WPA, pronounced “Wippa”). The WPA is a critical government institution. It is more than a mere public works department of the local government. Much like the original Mars of the old Sol system, most of Derchon’s water is locked in ice and permafrost. However, while most major human settlements on Derchon are concentrated in the “tropics,” there is a concentrated, easily accessible water source at the southern ice cap. Several large facilities exist nearby to obtain water to replace what is inevitably “lost,” and to keep pace with increased need and demand as the population grows.

Because axial tilt exposes this pole less to the primary, it is somewhat sheltered from flare activity. However, the area is also much colder, its summer is brief, and conditions are harsh. Eighty percent of the workers in the “mine and melts” and related pipelines are convicts. On the other hand, Free Employees with experience (including former convicts) or with essential skills are paid very well for working half of the local year. Both convicts and paid workers are usually awarded “frostbite nicknames,” including some well-known old-timers known as “Three-Fingered Gilii,” “Joe No Toes,” “Ice-Spleen Vreen” and “Stumpy Susan.”

The pipelines themselves, which stretch thousands of kilometers over the exposed surface, are entirely enclosed in concrete-encased aqueducts. These aqueducts also support conduits for high-tension electrical power lines. The power is generated by fuel cells and imported fusion power plants; the water itself is heated to boiling or higher temperatures through the heat-exchangers. The water in the pipeline gradually cools through the concrete of the aqueducts despite plenty of insulation. This system requires workers to inspect the aqueducts. Critical failures can lead to steam burns, as well as radiation injuries from exposure to daily radiation.

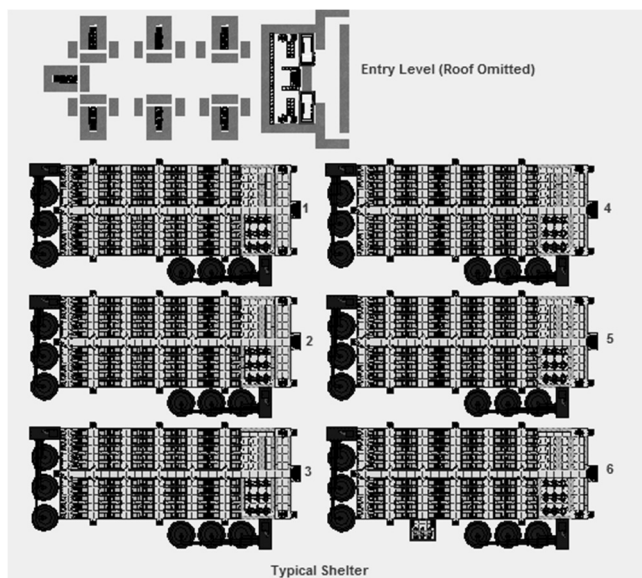
Serious flares are extremely dangerous. Failing to reach a flare shelter in time leads to radiation sickness on a good day, instant death on a *really* bad day.

Derchon hosts an orbital Imperial Interstellar Scout Service Base. The base is generally charged with communications, but is also specifically tasked with two functions, one military and one scientific. The first is watching the Sword Worlds. The second is continued study of the superflare.

The once-crucial watch on the Sword Worlds is being reduced, as such surveillance can now be conducted from Border Worlds (former Sword Worlds systems which aligned with the Imperium following the war). Study of the superflare is ongoing, as it may yield insights into the Darrians’ stellar trigger technology. In addition, the two stars are drawing close to their common barycenter for their closest approach in ten thousand years. Preparations are being made to observe the effect of this approach over the next hundred years.

Both the Scout base and Derchon’s government have placed automated solar observation satellites in orbit around the primary. Solar weather is carefully watched; computer algorithms model and predict likely flare activity on an ongoing basis. A dangerous flare can be predicted with about eighty-five percent certainty.

Flare alerts are sounded on a conservative basis; X-ray bursts travel at the speed of light, and thus would get to Derchon milliseconds *before* an actual reading. As the venerable ice miner “Twenty-Digits-and-All-Her-Organs Sam” said at a press conference on her 100th birthday, “I washed my hands a lot. An’ I never waited until I could see my buddy’s bones X-



rayed onto his skin before I got in t' shelter!"

The clip of that interview has been repeated every subsequent year on Sam's birthday. Her 110th birthday will take place during *Cirque's* visit.

An incidental issue in the system is piracy, as some local pirates have hardened their vessels and sensors to withstand the heavier radiation bursts that occur during the regular flare eruptions so they can take advantage of the reduced sensor acuity during significant flare eruptions (much the way the Red Baron of Earth's first World War preferred to dive out of the sun to pounce on his British adversaries. In this region, pirate crews may be mixed, including Imperial humans, Sword Worlders and Vargr. Despite higher-than-normal Scout traffic through the system and the risk of serious radiation sickness, piracy continues. Gems draw foolishness, after all.

Summary and Referee's Information

For future campaigns, the referee may note that magnetic bridging remains possible. A superflare will become possible at some future time, but should not be an element in this ongoing campaign.

As *Cirque* comes out of jump, it receives the usual coordination message from the Advance Sophonts. "Andii, you're all set here. And you'll like it – the starport's on a mesa beside a klick-plus deep canyon. Just make sure to park between the lines. They're picky about good parking. Hell, they're picky about everything, and the city's the liberal den of thieves. Don't get the conservatives mad at you. Don't forget to use your hand-sanitizer if you sneeze, either — you'll be fined. One thing, you have to put on a show the ice mines at the South Pole. They've put up a huge chunk of change for that. Make sure they pack their winter gear.

"And here's some great news – we've signed a miner named Twenty-Digits-and-All-Her-Organs Sam to do commercial spots for you. She's kind of a local hero. She wants to have a spot in the center ring to say hello, too. She's paid well for it.

"The Scout station in the belt is the best place for *Cirque* while you're down. Not a lot of protection from flares in orbit around this red-dish rock."

As noted, arrangements have been made to erect the performance tents deep in one of the large, roofed-over canyons carved by the long-ago superflare. Despite the long rotation period the planet follows a fairly standard human day/night schedule. Apart from the simple wonder of being in a city built between high walls of melted glass, nothing spectacular happens during performances. Sam tells some interesting stories, however, about two years as an "indentured" water miner, followed by sixty more as a WPA "Free Employee." At eighty (and already financially comfortable), she made a lucky find of superflare-formed sapphires. This allowed her to retire in real comfort. However, she is not known to spend foolishly or lavishly.

As noted, performances must occur at the WPA's main South Pole settlement. BT1, set up and ready to go, will simply hop from the starport to the pole. U'aii will be present and in command. The hull of the vessel is some protection against some radiation, but a serious flare will be strong enough to cause radiation sickness on board. Unfortunately, the flare forecasts are for a medium likelihood of serious activity. The landing area will be assigned near a large but older, largely disused underground shelter with bunks and supplies for about 1,200 people. A single performance is planned as a matter of logistics. A standing-room only crowd is expected.

The day of the performance is a balmy -50 degrees C. Both prisoners and Free Employees are allowed to come to the performance, with approximately 500 prisoners in old-fashioned "chain gangs" of twenty. These occupy the semi-obstructed "cheap seats." Their chains are released once the prisoners are seated.

Free Employees also attend, paying double the usual price for their own seats. Money and alcohol flow freely. Free Employees owing moral and other debts to various prisoners make sure that these debts are paid. A few curses are screamed and punches thrown here and there as chain gang grudges erupt.

One set of good seats is reserved, however, for the prison Boss, "Big Louie One-Fist" and his favored prisoners. Louie is the type of intelligent but murderous individual who fares well as a prisoner. Louie allegedly controls most of the prison vice, but no evidence ever comes to the WPA's administrative courts. Other prisoners and even guards treat Louie

with fear-tinged deference.

Flare activity takes an unexpected turn for the worse. After performances begin, new spots are observed on the primary. Reports are received by the settlement's comm shack of an impending high-magnitude flare. The flare warning comes midway through the second show of the day. If players are among the performers, they may be on stage. Otherwise, the aerial acrobats are in the middle of their death-defying swings when the alarms begin blaring. Everyone must rush out into the cold, and from there into the shelter. No one may remain behind or attempt to shelter in place on the ship, as BT1's shields and armor are insufficient against the prolonged high-magnitude flare which is predicted.

Any discussion of lifting ship and riding out the flare in Derchon's shadow are scuttled by the sudden failure of BT1's main power plant. The best engineers on board cannot get it restarted. Its local computer systems have been sabotaged, leading to a power surge which has damaged internal components. The PCs and others on board, however, will be unable to determine this in their hasty attempts at restarting the computer. They will simply know that the computer needs more time to repair than they have. Their only realistic choice is to join the prisoners in the shelter.

The aging shelter (once a barracks for prisoners) is cold. Attempts to bring the heat up using external power lines are made. The power then surges and fails. Power will kick in from the backup fuel cells, but a new set of alarms goes off. An inspection will reveal that the hydroxy tanks have been depleted. The plant can provide heat, light, and minimal air compression for no more than four hours, meaning that somehow external power must be restored. Big Louie One Fist, an expert on the electrical systems, believes that the step-down transformer about a half-mile from the shelter may be damaged. A standby should be present, though, and should have come online through simple safety systems. He seeks help from the players, as the extreme cold requires that all work be done in shifts.

Only one option is available: restore power flow from the nearby power lines. When the parties reach the heavily shielded station, they will discover that main transformer has blown. The transformer must be disconnected, then a replacement must be moved into position and connected. Convicts and Free Employees will work together without difficulty, no matter what grudges are held, in the interests of common survival. The most hardened convicts are released from their chains in order to join in the effort.

This process may temporarily distract everybody from the reality: the shelter has not been properly maintained. Clues suggest that it has not remained vacant except for drills. As is noted in the checklist, food and supplies are missing. Bunks have been slept in. Whole rooms have been turned into refuse bins.

Most interesting of all, Big Louie's quarters in the lowest section have been equipped for fairly regular use. Big Louie is known to disappear from the main prison habitat at least once a month.

The exposure injuries give medics amongst the PCs patients on whom to work. Insufficient hand insulation guarantees frostbite cases; the referee should review the rules relating to injury by extreme cold and similar conditions. Damage is severe enough that fingers, toes, and in some cases more will be too badly damaged to save with simple first-aid. A few injuries may also occur as more severe grudges are avenged. Medics will perform "meatball surgery" and new nicknames will be granted as a result of the effort to restore power.

Muttering about "Big Louie One-Fist and his scams" will be noted amongst some of the convicts throughout the exercise.

Once the power problem is resolved, the next problem emerges: most of the food stores and medical supplies are missing. The shelter should be able to support 1,200 occupants for at least a standard week. Currently there are at most two standard days of emergency rations for the 800 or so (including performers and animals) in the cupboards. Emergency lights are gone. Emergency oxygen supplies are missing. Blankets and bedding are missing or destroyed.

The shelter has been robbed.

Performers and other crew members will be ordered by the guards to use and stay on the shelter's second level (See the Shelter Section below, for a full description of the flare shelter). This level has suffered almost as much damage as the other levels. The guards will not enforce this if the PCs go down levels, but they will not be allowed to come up to the first level.

When the cupboards in the first level are discovered to be almost bare, the most malevolent of the guards will go down to the third and lower levels to confiscate sufficient food and supplies from the convicts for several days. They will, if necessary, do this at gunpoint. This adds to the ugliness of the scenario. Players and other members of the Cirque des Sirkas contingent will be told to mind their own business and stay in their level and guards will be set to keep them there if they notice and object.

Note that many of the guards are in on the theft and moonshine ring which has caused this shelter to be less than properly stocked, and to be used illegally. They will do what they must to avoid being exposed because WPA police and guards do not fare well as WPA prisoners. In addition, they profit because Big Louie pays them in one way or another. The guards cannot be counted on as allies for the PCs.

A renewed power outage darkens the shelter just as the PCs think they have things under control again. These blackouts will continue from time to time, at the referee's convenience. One of the few comparatively honest guards has been paid by an anonymous source to cut power at least once every two hours, though at unpredictable intervals.

The lights come back on, followed immediately by screaming. A body has been discovered within earshot of the players, who should be drawn to investigate. One of Big Louie One Fist's known lieutenants is the victim. He has been quietly strangled by an unknown assailant with a cord while the lights were out. The cord, thin nylon twine with grips designed to make it a garrote, is found nearby. There is no other evidence such as bloodstains on the victim's clothing, or defensive wounds. The standard medical kits available do not have DNA sequencers available to look for clues. Astonishingly, no one nearby can recall having heard a struggle, or the sounds of choking while the lights were off.

Only light, air, water pumping and heating are now functioning. These systems may fail from time to time, keeping repair crews busy. The shelter's computer (and with it communications) will be the most difficult to repair or work around, and will be the last restored. Personal comm units are useless; 1.5 or more meters of lead and concrete shielding will interfere with radio waves, which are far weaker in any event than the energy emitted by a flare.

The WPA guards in the shelter refuse permission for any further trips outside, as the flare is presumed to have fully erupted by this time. They have the weapons and manpower to enforce their decision ("No one likes an overheated gene pool"). They enforce the orders by staking out the stairwells and lift shaft, and locking the lift.

Big Louie has retired to quarters in the sixth level of the shelter. High-level members of Louie's organization are with him. Mid-level members of his prison gang are scattered throughout the other levels of the shelter.

Before the next standard day is done a total of ten bodies will be discovered, including four WPA guards, four convicts, one Free Employee, and Louie himself. Any killer actually caught in the act will refuse to speak. If a psionic is present or any attempt is made to use drugs for questioning, the culprit will attempt to inject him- or herself with a coma-inducing drug using a tiny and overlooked ampule. The available medical kits do not contain an antidote. The drug itself is commonly available and found in starship medical gear, as it is used to induce the low-energy state necessary for low passengers. It is also used in the shelters to make longer stays easier, though all of the drug is missing from the stores in this shelter. Each dose will remain effective for at least forty-eight hours.

If such a prisoner is unsuccessful at dosing him- or herself, s/he will not know who is behind the plot. The prisoner will simply tell of a large sum of money deposited in a WPA account, or other comforts arriving unexpectedly, along with instructions that a particular target be eliminated. Each prisoner was instructed to disable himself with the drug to avoid questioning.

Despite the crowding of the shelter, there will be no apparent witnesses to any of the killings. The people nearest would appear to be willfully blind, or at least deaf. With the exception of Louie, the victims were each lured into some small space or another, out of the visual range of others, or was killed in a power outage. Each was strangled using the same type of improvised garrote: a length cut from the cord used for dragging ice blocks in the mines, secured to rods at either end to increase grip strength.

While most of the locals will be silent, someone will, upon being questioned, point out that Big Louie One-Fist was originally sentenced to

only a year at the pole. During that year, he used similar garrotes to kill competitors in his growing illicit businesses. Those murders resulted in his life sentence. Since then, similar strangulations have been attributed to Big Louie and his cohorts, though insufficient evidence has been found to prove the connection. Some, though not all, have in fact been committed by Big Louie himself.

The cord is a red herring initially suggesting that Big Louie is behind the killings. It is in fact, a message to Big Louie. His preference for using a garrote to eliminate his enemies will be the means of his death.

Alert players listening to conversations and gossip in the shelter will hear whispers to the effect of, "There goes another one of those scum." If questioned, all of these individuals will refuse to say more. By the time several people are dead, at least one WPA guard will be staying close to the players, seeking the protection of non-local witnesses who do not know when to keep quiet. After the PCs see several hours of others in the shelter glaring at and otherwise trying to intimidate the witness, the witness may begin to speak, indicating that "I'm involved, we're all involved." At just that moment, the lights will again fail. A scuffle in the dark will result in the guard's disappearance before light returns. The guard eventually will be found dead, the expected garrote wrapped around his neck.

If the shelter is searched for the source of the garrotes or other evidence, cached sets of infrared/night vision goggles will be found in unusual places. No visible fingerprints or clues are apparent. The sixth level will become off-limits to guards, as Louie no longer trusts any but his closest lieutenants.

As much bad luck as possible must follow any attempt of the players to capture someone in the act of one of the murders. The referee has every right (this being a murder mystery) to invoke Special Mystery-Prolonging Procedure One: someone is behind the almost-capturing PC and hits the character on the head just before the suspect is apprehended. In other words, the referee should not allow the scenario to end too early.

Big Louie One-Fist will die last in the scenario. Louie's assassin may also have a personal motive in addition to the payment received from the anonymous source. The referee should designate a character appropriate to the campaign, including possibilities such as a jilted "consort," the betrayed spouse of Louie's current consort, the current consort, one of Louie's more ambitious lieutenants, and someone who has lost a loved one at Louie's orders. All of them may seek access through a combination of events and bribes.

During the time in the shelter, the adventurers may also deal with various moments of panic, revenge violence, a pregnant woman unexpectedly giving birth, and so on. Once the mother of the newborn child decides that the players are trustworthy, she may indicate that her pregnancy was caused by the same corrupt WPA guard who will come whimpering to the players. When that guard turns up dead, she will be the first to be happy about it. Other simpler accidents will occur, such as characters falling down the stairs during a blackout.

This portion of the scenario ends either when someone is able to restore the computer network and the communications lines, or a rescue party arrives (well after the 28 hour period discussed below). At that point, the people in the shelter will learn that no significant flare activity occurred, nor did any real threat exist. The "all clear" was given elsewhere about twenty-eight hours after the alarm was raised. The Scout Service satellites could not confirm the WPA satellites' flare data after more than six hours of study. Indeed, there was no significant flare activity, but great caution was exercised regardless, given the risk posed by a flare. The all-clear was given only after extensive examination of data from satellites in solar orbit.

A computer malfunction is blamed for the false warning. The nature of that malfunction is being explored.

The scenario can end here, or the PCs can move toward "closing the case."

"Following the money" will lead in part to the truth. A WPA computer technician received a large, anonymous payment to create the false alarm. The technician rewrote essential routines to falsify data and produce the alarm by altering the flare forecasting software to produce a false prediction upon the entry of a set of simple orders from outside. Appropriately convincing but false sunspot records and other details would be based on past flare activity. The technician will be found dead by his or her own hand. A note nearby says, "I can't go to the ice mines. I would

Cirque

die. Better to die here.”

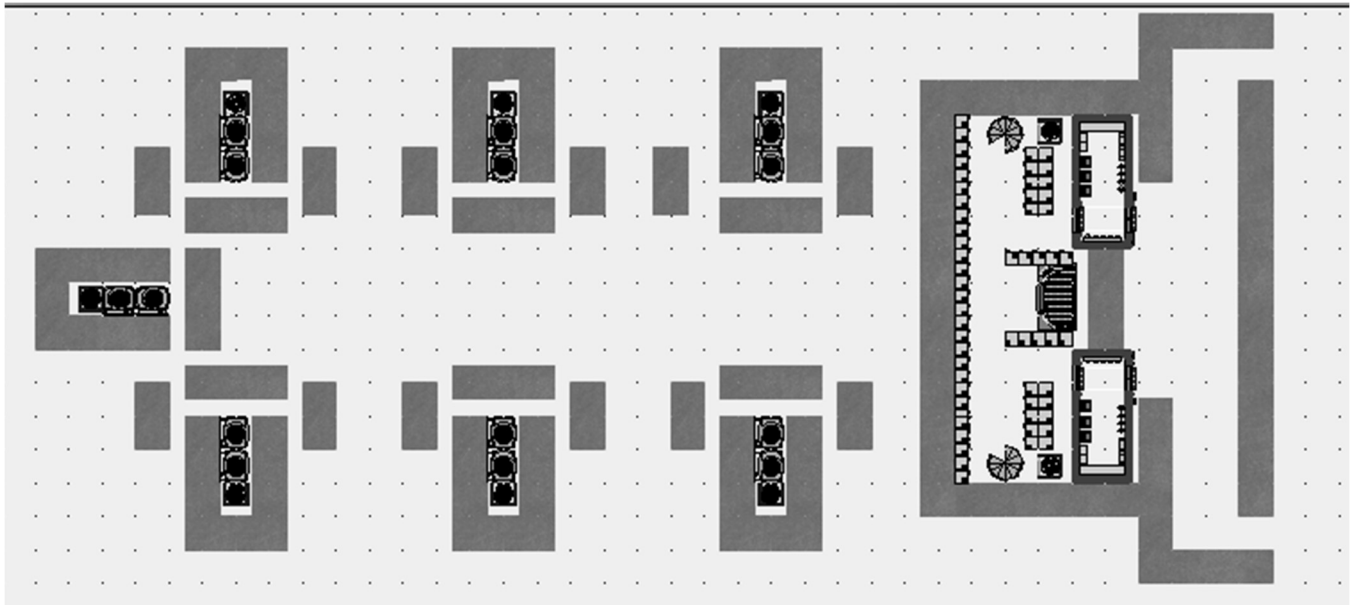
The account numbers lead back to the same account from which Cirque des Sirkas was paid to extend its visit, and to entertain the prisoners. Funds for individual assassins also came from the same account. Through several “false fronts,” the trail leads to Twenty-Digits-and-All-Her-Organs Sam.

If questioned, Sam will be matter-of-fact and deny nothing. She had heard about Big Louie One-Fist’s black market operations from contacts at the prison. Louie’s operations included theft from flare shelters and killing anyone in his way, and he had eventually begun to demand protection money from better-off ice miners, whether in cash or other forms. As can be seen by reviewing the Referee’s version of the Shelter Plans, Louie has been living rather larger than the average Lifer. Sam also knows, from contacts still in the ice mines, that WPA guards have been bribed to ignore Big Louie’s activities. Sam suspects, but cannot prove, that higher-level officials in the WPA are aware of the problem, but either have been bribed, or do not at all care what happens so long as the water flows through the pipelines.

equated defense counsel will cross-examine witnesses for the recorded testimony. Thus, despite the seriousness of charges, the PCs need not remain for trial. They will not be detained as material witnesses, or for any other purpose. They will be treated as having assisted the WPA and given due deference.

If charges are announced against the various hired killers, Sam will come to their rescue. She will simply confess to the WPA. Provided that all of her paid assassins are set free and a list of corrupt WPA officials join Sam in the ice fields with a life sentence, Sam will confess to having orchestrated the entire Trash Removal. She will obtain agreement that those who acted on her behalf will be treated with unusual lenience in this repressive society.

Sam herself is unconcerned about a life sentence. At the advanced age of 110, she has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Sam has not, after all, escaped untouched by the flares; the cancer, which has metastasized to multiple body systems, is a type strongly associated with extended exposure to low-level ionizing radiation, and death is expected within the year. However, Sam has paid one more massive bribe: her physicians



View of Surface Level of Shelter (Former Prison Barracks) (Slab Roof Not Shown)

Her wealth allowed her to quietly investigate the corruption in the WPA and the operations of Big-Louie One-Fist, and to fund the plan for handling it.

Having spent years at the Pole, Sam has long maintained a “Trash Removal List.” Through fronts and anonymous transfers Sam prepared to pay thirty young, strong men and women to remove the ten worst offenders. Each target had three possible assassins to increase to probability of success. While none were trained killers, each was known to have a grudge against Big Louie’s gang. Most also had a history of surviving fights in the prison, and several were known to be adept in the use of “ice cord.”

Big Louie was of course on the list of offenders.

Cirque showed up at the right time to accelerate implementation of the “trash removal” plan. Most of Louie’s accomplices and all of Sam’s executioners were guaranteed admission to the second polar performance. Although she is too old to have dealt with this on her own, she has found a way to resolve matters.

So long as the players are the only holders of this information, they face the next step of the scenario: they must decide whether to turn in Sam and her squad of executioners. On this world, a murder conviction carries a sentence of life in the ice fields. Where the WPA itself is corrupt, and certainly many of the corrupt officials remain in power, the players can determine whether or not to provide evidence. Andii is likely to shrug the matter off. “It’s a kind of war. People die in wars.”

If the players do provide evidence, it will be recorded. The local government does not provide substantial defense rights; a single and inad-

equated defense counsel will cross-examine witnesses for the recorded testimony. There is no evidence of her condition in any accessible public record. The WPA will not be told of the cancer until the deal is written in stone. She will, however, discuss this in confidence with the PCs.

With performances and investigations done, the tent packed is away, all hands go back on board, and Cirque sets out for her next destination.

Using Animals in this Scenario

With a horde of trained animals present in the shelter, their employment as semi-sentient tools cannot be ruled out. Tree rats and beakers are can be sent up and down shafts, for example. The referee should bear in mind that these are trained animals, and can carry out tasks they have been taught to do. Unusual instructions must be limited in complexity and duration. The trainer must be near enough to give directions.

Possible uses of smaller animals include having animals carry written messages, steal keys, or carry handheld computers and other communication units up and down shafts. Larger animals, such as miniphants and kians, may be used to cause havoc. The animal handlers will be adamantly against the misuse or abuse of their charges.

In addition, if the PCs are at all reluctant to come to the aid of the prisoners on other levels of the shelter, Javert (as an NPC) will understand that justice must be done. U’aili, as Cirque’s third officer and an honorable Aslan, will also propel the PCs toward involvement.

The animals can be used to propel them by escaping to other levels.

Cirque

The cleverest. The animals may also become part of the investigation, at least accidentally. The most clever of the tree rats may again escape, as it did on Old Station's Main Concourse. It will find its way into one of the ventilation shafts, sneak below, and go to the least safe of locations: Big Louie One-Fist's personal chamber. Other animals may join it, as they are used to working together in the act to befuddle clowns, jugglers, and others. Tripping and distracting Big Louie allows the animals to steal a tablet.

As the PCs track the valuable escaped animal, they will encounter Big Louie. He may well become overtly threatening toward both the PCs and the tree rat rather than smoothly charming (as he may have seemed before). He will make clear that the tablet's retrieval is of the utmost importance, and that the PCs' health depends on their retrieving the tablet.

The tablet will prove to contain bookkeeping records on Big Louie One-Fist's operations, including debts (favours as well as money) listed, and funds held in both the prison commissary account and private banks. Available goods for trade and consumption are inventoried. Big Louie's payroll records are also on the tablet, and they are clear and unequivocal as to who is connected to his gang.

Description of Shelter

This shelter is based on a standard WPA flare shelter floor plan, modified for its specific location at the South Pole. These are designed to comfortably house no more than two-thirds of the people for whom beds are supplied. Shelter construction has lagged behind in recent years, especially at the pole.

This shelter was in addition one of the first holding facilities for WPA prisoners. It originally provided showers and was designed to house fewer inmates. By this time, however ice mining has made a literal dent in the southern glacier, which is now kilometers away. New facilities have been constructed over the years, and this shelter has been largely disused. However, both custom and law calls for it to be fully stocked and properly maintained. Regular inspection reports have been falsified for the past three standard years, as Louie and his operations have taken advantage of the isolated and safe structure.

The uppermost level of the shelter, the entry vestibule level, is above-ground. The entrance vestibule is airlocked, and is surrounded and roofed by lead-lined concrete 1.5 meters thick. There are two "maze-style" entries 1.5 meters wide; additional walls and roof serve as a radiation baffle. As the radiation in question is largely in the X-ray and other electromagnetic radiation spectrum, baffles serve to reduce radiation to acceptable levels.

Seven ventilation shafts allow some external intake and compression of air, per the layout maps, but these again must be protected by 1.5 meter-thick baffles. The baffles effectively prohibit all but the most slender human beings from using these air shafts to exit the building. In addition, fans and compression equipment stand in the way. Note, however, on the referee version of the plans, that a vent fan which otherwise blocks climbers has been in fact been altered at the ground level.

The referee's plans show blank spots where a floor-level fan has been altered. The fans are present, but can be shut down with a makeshift switch. They can then be pushed or pulled upward on a hinged attachment at the rear. Fans one floor below those selected shafts are colored red in electronic copies, representing the likelihood of serious and bloody injury if a character falls into a spinning fan.

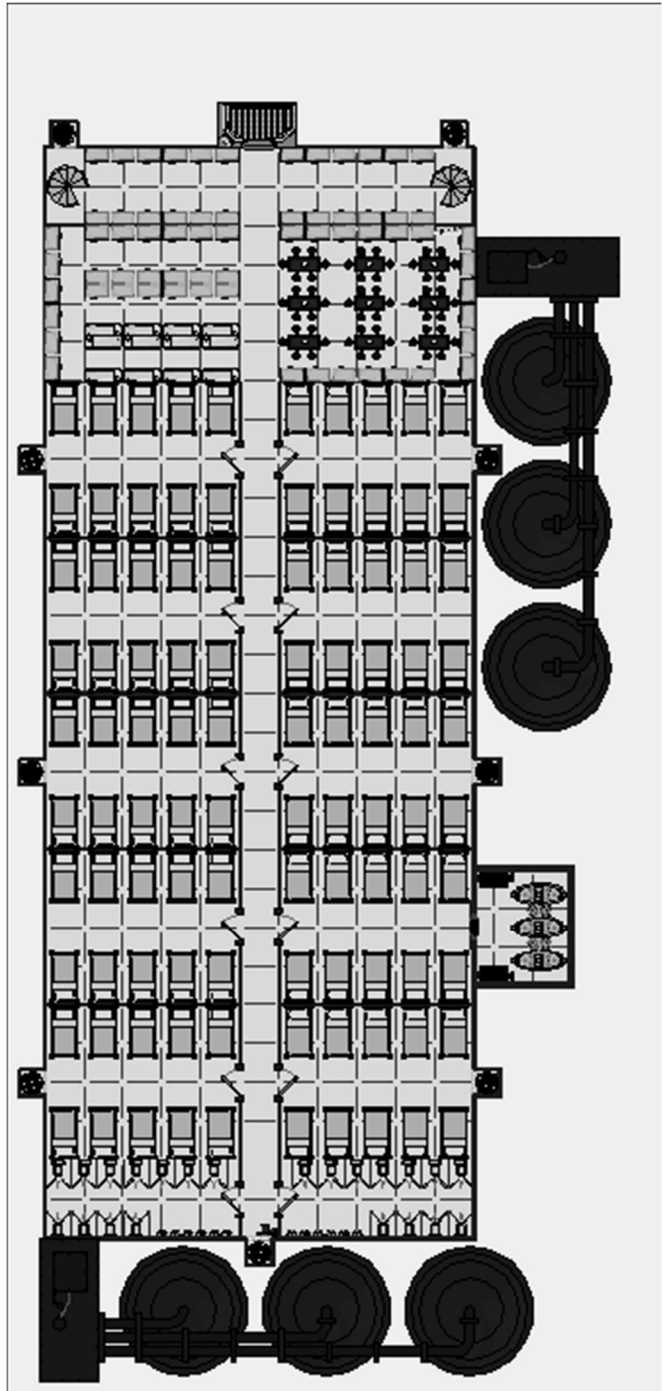
In the entry are two circular stairwells descending to the lower levels, along with one large lift. The walls are lined with lockers that should contain emergency equipment such as oxygen tanks, glow sticks, LED flashlights and similar small equipment. However, the lockers have been almost entirely emptied.

Note that another route from level to level exists: a ladder is built into the lift system. However, for this to be used to exit the shelter the individual must go through the common area used by the guards. Discovery is possible when doing so.

Although 1.5-meter deck squares are used, the ceiling height is not the standard three meters; they are no more than two and one-quarter (2.25) meters above the floors.

Six virtually identical levels are found below the entryway and surface shafts. Each level has 100 tightly spaced double-bunks to house up to 200 adults. The bunks are set in ten partitioned rooms of ten bunks (20 people) each.

Six of the bunkrooms have direct access to an air shaft. The grills are bolted into the sills, though some of the bolts have been loosened. As noted, each air shaft has a blower fan at each floor and ceiling level. Apart from the fans which have been altered, it is impossible to climb through the shaft to access another level unseen. The shafts are each one meter square and should have no hand-holds, rungs, or rope ladders installed (though the referee may choose to make one shaft so equipped). Three additional shafts can be found: one at the rear of the long entryway and one on either side of the entry vestibule for each level.



Official plan of the lowest level of the shelter. All five upper levels are identical, apart from lacking the large fuel-cell power generator.

Cirque

It is possible, with tools and effort, to cut power cords and remove blower fans. However, this reduces air quality, as any space-hand knows.

Each of the six residential levels is normally accessed from the circular stairwells or the lift system. The vestibule areas contain additional lockers, supposedly full of emergency safety equipment.

After entering a level, the next room is the common area, equipped with simple "Navy Mess" style tables with attached stools. The mess areas contain seating for up to fifty people at a time. The remainder of the space contains storage cabinets. These are normally fully stocked with rations, medical equipment and supplies sufficient to last at least one week. In addition, a small bank of sinks allows simple wash-up and access to drinking water.

At the opposite end of the floor are two washrooms. No showers or bathing facilities are provided, as only sinks and toilets are necessary for short stays. A single desk with a single console for communications and computer access is also found here. This console provides minimum communications with the surface through land lines.

Each level also has six water tanks with purification machinery. The purification machinery is accessible only through narrow access panels. This machinery is not depicted in detail, but is in essence a black box for the purposes of this scenario. Sufficient space exists inside the machinery for a single person to access the most important pumps and other equipment for maintenance. The access panels at each end are both bolted shut and locked with key-operated mechanical deadbolt locks at several points. Only guards are supposed to have access keys for these units.

The bottommost level (Level 6) is used primarily by Louie and his favorites. An alcohol still is located here, where power and water are readily available. The bunk rooms have reduced numbers of bunks. The only room with a full complement of bunks is that through which the power plant is accessed; this is a "courtesy fake-out" for the guards, who are well aware of the still (note that their lounge on Level 1 is supplied with barrels of Louie's moonshine). The boss maintains this level as his "Summer Home" and visits several times a year. The still is operated full-time by Free Employees within Louie's organization. There is a bar and lounge with an entertainment console. Louie himself has a Jacuzzi and kitchenette in his bedroom, as well as an oversized bed.

The lowest level has one additional structure, accessed through a key-locked manual hatch. This relatively small area is the independent fuel-cell power generator for the entire complex. This system is supposed to be sufficient to provide heat, light and electricity for water pumping for one month. Two backup batteries are also contained in this compartment. Each is supposed to be capable of supplying approximately six hours of power, depending on workload. However, the fuel cells are old, can barely hold a charge, and provide at most thirty minutes of power. If the fuel cell system fails, the batteries are designed to switch over within thirty seconds. This has been altered by an agent working for Sam; the switch-over now takes ten minutes, sufficient time for a killer to acquire and kill a target.

A bunk room on the lowest level has been made unusable because it contains an operating still. This works day-in and day-out, even when the solar weather is acceptable. The still provides alcohol for the inmates as well as the guards. A few convicts spend their time here at all times. Louie is well aware that creature comforts such as alcohol and hot tubs serve as bribes and rewards for good behavior and services rendered. Louie's various brews are a major commodity.

As the water systems in the mess rooms are difficult to access, the water systems in the back lavatory facilities may be used to hide bodies. The power room also may be used to hide a body.

Any of the air shafts may be used to hide a body at least temporarily (blood dripping or the smell of freshly-mutilated human may be a clue to discovery). In addition, as suggested above, it is possible to go between levels unseen using air shafts because at least one blower fan has been removed in each air shaft. Thus, although "hopscotching" may be necessary, it is possible to move between levels in this manner, largely out of sight. This fact will be carefully hidden, as most of the inmates know that something is up.

Each of Sam's killers has infrared vision goggles, a garrote, and a small blade. In this environment, these can be used to locate the intended victims and kill them. As previously noted, each killer has been assigned a specific victim, with one backup killer for each.

A number of the bunk rooms on each level have been rendered

unusable. Some have been rendered unusable due to simple vandalism, with destruction of the beds and bedding materials. Others have been rendered unusable as a result of neglectful maintenance which has allowed some damage. Some are unusable because the electric heating is malfunctioning; they are simply too cold to occupy. This results in crowding and increased tension among the living.

In addition, as is noted, the upper level (Level 1) and the lowest level (Level 6) have been altered to a degree for the comfort of WPA guards and Louie. Louie has sufficient rations (and alcohol) for the expected duration of the flare, and will resist relinquishing it. The WPA guards will confiscate what they need from Levels 3 through 5.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ *Cirque* docks with the IISS station in orbit. The station has internal docking, and is heavily shielded. Refueling will occur there. Bertii stays with *Cirque*. BT1 and BT2 go from there to Derchon, the mainworld.
- ☐ Landing and unloading. The week-long night has already fallen as the craft come down to the port.
- ☐ BT1 and BT2 get busy with the process of setting up for a circus. The entire crew is treated to the process of riding in various pressurized land vehicles from the starport, down a winding road with many switchbacks, and into the large pressurized area at the floor of the Deep Scar. Artificial lights abound. The brightest star in the sky is the companion star, "B," though it is still far enough away that it shows no disc.
- ☐ The tent is set up near an underground shelter very similar to the one the players will later be forced to endure. The players will be given a tour of this shelter during the course of flare indoctrination.
- ☐ The players meet Twenty-Digits-and-All-Her-Organs Sam for a rehearsal.
- ☐ Shelter drill. Players move themselves and all animals from the tent into the shelter, along with Sam and various others. Sam shows them the ropes, as it were. The drill lasts three hours. The local police watch closely and issue citations for improper behavior. The police use electric shocks for first offenses of serious misconduct or delay during the drill. The drill is repeated if any of the PCs show real reluctance.
- ☐ Later, while walking the city or socializing, players witness an apparently minor bit of negligence from a young person (e.g., failure to signal for turn). The youngster is arrested. The police officer lectures as the youngster is cuffed. "And maybe next time you'll forget to seal a hatch. And it'll be the Big One. Kill off your whole shelter. 'Oh, I just forgot.' That's stupid, kid."
- ☐ If the PCs make a minor mistake, they will be treated to a similar lecture, and possibly to mild electric shocks. "Don't think we won't send you to the ice mines just because you're off-world clowns."
- ☐ After these initial encounters, the week speeds by. Sam gets laughs. All goes reasonably well.

Act II

- ☐ The show is closing. Local "dawn" is at hand, a rapid and stark sunrise as the Scars are exposed to A's light.
- ☐ The PCs and other crew bring animals and props back to BT1. BT1 is prepared for performance. The tent and other shelters are to be taken down and loaded into cargo carriers while BT1 is away. These will be picked up by BT1 after the performance at the South Pole. BT2 remains at port to handle these details, along with a skeleton crew. No amount of volunteering will convince Andii to allow the PCs to be part of that skeleton crew; they are needed at the pole.
- ☐ BT1 flies to the South Pole and lands at the designated site, fifteen kilometers away from the current location of the main ice mining domes and barracks. A well-rutted vehicle path can be seen in the

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dry, rocky soil.

- Fourteen pressurized work buses arrive in convoy along the track. Prisoners are brought into BT1. The first group of prisoners is reasonably well behaved. The performance goes well. The prisoners are trucked away afterwards, and the characters rest before the next show.
- The next group of prisoners is trucked in about an hour later. This group is less calm.
- The prisoners engage in drinking, fighting and eating before the show. Louie makes himself obnoxious and makes demands such as meeting each performer at the end of each set. WPA guards act as if his demands should be met.
- A flare warning blares into all local comm frequencies, including the guards' comm units. Everyone must take shelter as soon as possible. BT1's shielding is insufficient, especially given the possible length of exposure. This is expected to be a significant flare, lasting at least four days. The players may be told that surprise flares are not unprecedented; the Flare of 1086 struck two days before planetary dawn, and pumped deadly levels of X-rays for eleven standard Imperial days.
- Consideration of leaving the ground ends when BT1's main power systems fail. To diagnose the failure before the shelter alerts become strident: Staggering (5D) < (Int + Power Plants) (15 minutes). Success results in the PC determining that several internal components have been damaged. While they can be replaced, not all are available. Replacement parts are on *Cirque*; all ships are grounded due to the imminent flare warning.
- Move people and animals to shelter. Chuckles of "This is convenient" are heard among Louie and his henchmen as they enter the shelter. Begin settling. The WPA guards are bossy and particular as to where performers are to go and stay.
- The players explore the space allotted and begin settling animals. Choices of where the animals stay should be made clear. The PCs are begin looking at equipment lockers and the environs.

Act III

- About thirty minutes after the WPA guards lock the hatches, sparks flash out from all of the computer consoles and links. Even the surge suppressors and old-fashioned hard-wired network sockets are smoking. Lights go off in the shelter, and then a few flicker back on powered by independent batteries. Most independent batteries on most emergency lights are missing.
- Auxiliary power comes on.
- Hypothesis: a transformer has blown along the main power lines, and in a major way. A secondary should be in place, but a party must go out to make the repair. Heat and atmosphere cannot be maintained without power.
- The clock is ticking. Attempts to link players' personal computers to the line and network will not be successful. A WPA guard who has received an anonymous payment has cut the communications cable at the entrance level, which is inaccessible to the players at this time. As noted, the shielding which protects the shelter from flare radiation also effectively blocks low-powered EM waves.
- Against the ticking clock, the players with the assistance of convicts must replace the blown transformer. As noted, there will be frostbite injuries.



- During this process, players should interact with Boss Louie. Despite his otherwise bad conduct, Louie is an expert electrician and knows that survival depends upon having sufficient heat and light. This also offers an opportunity for Louie to invite player characters down to his bar on the sixth level for a drink after the repair. As noted, the parties work in shifts. The PCs may have better suits and life support available, and thus may work under supervision. The prisoners have simple suits available.
- Return inside.
- The players are exiled to Level 2, one level below the guards. Guards are set on all known accesses to the first level. They have automatic weapons and lots of ammunition. No one but a teleporter can get onto Level 1 without injury until Act V — and the teleporter (if playing) should catch a non-fatal but highly instructive bullet at the hands of an alert guard. Drinking with Louie is optional, but gives the players a chance to understand that corruption is ongoing. It also gives them an unofficial chance to reconnoiter for future action. They are sent back to their level after one drink.
- Second power outage and first strangulation murder. When the lights return, screaming ensues within earshot of the players. The players discover the strangled body in one of the less useful hiding areas on the third level, such as at a table in the common eating area or hidden in a toilet stall.
- The WPA guards refuse to get involved. "If they kill each other, so be it." Players begin investigation but their equipment and knowledge are not sufficient to determine who did it.
- If the small animal trainer is present (or the Vargr Ringmaster, for referees who wish to exaggerate only a bit), a scent trail may lead back to the culprit. Note that tracking by scent in this environment should be a fairly difficult task due to the overlapping layers of stench from at least 50 years of prior use and minimal sanitation procedures.
- Second, third and fourth deaths occur. Two take place during power outages but one murder happens in a well-lit room occupied only by inmates. None of the inmates present apparently see anything. Referee should play out these killings.
- Add interruptions — pregnant woman, other injuries.
- Again, investigation is stymied. This must be played fast and loose by the referee. They may note the cords, however, and get hints and rumors about Big Louie's history. As noted in text, the first individual captured or cornered manages to use a drug to become comatose

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to avoid questioning. A scent may lead to one of the ventilation shafts, providing a hint for the PCs on secret movement between levels.

- Players and NPCs realize that rations are limited for an anticipated stay of a week. Open violence erupts on levels below the players. Again, The WPA guards shrug it off and refuse to help.

Act IV

- Finally, culprits are identified, or caught in the act. An escaping killer slips while climbing through a ventilation shaft. The character is injured but conscious, and has failed to drug himself. On questioning, the killer provides the essential facts. He/she received a written request to participate in an important “sanitation project.” The convict received Cr 10,000 deposited into his or her WPA account, and was promised an additional Cr 40,000 upon confirmed completion of the act. This culprit was, for the most part, a relatively good citizen with an excellent record and reputation since being shipped to the WPA facility. He/she understands that at least one other individual was assigned the same target, but knows no other names.
- A drunken brawl a few levels below again distracts the players. In the absence of the WPA guards, the players are becoming “the law in this here town.”
- One of the higher-level WPA guards comes to the players, seeking protection. He or she has figured out what is going on, and realizes that someone has been assigned to his/her elimination. He is frightened, because a WPA guard has managed to connect a hand computer to the external feed. News reports indicate that the massive flare has erupted. It is on a scale similar to the Flare of 1086, and is expected to go on for a week. The guard does not know this, but the communications are falsified. The guard monitoring communications has in fact cut the line, and is running a pre-programmed simulated news feed. The readings are accurate, in a sense, because they are based on reconstructed readings from the Great Flare of 1086.
- The WPA guard reveals what should be obvious: Big Louie One Fist is running most of the corruption in the WPA prison.
- Eventually one of the assassins targeting this guard will find a way to succeed despite the PCs’ protection. The referee must consider the exact steps taken by the PCs to protect the guard and present an opportunity; a power outage and a nearby ventilation shaft may be helpful. Other possibilities include someone disabling an NPC guard with an ampule of coma-inducing medication. Finally, a poisoned ration-bar for the guard is not out of the question, despite the usual preference for strangulation.
- A messenger comes from Big Louie One-Fist. Big Louie has declared Level 6 (the lowest level) off limits, and has his cached weapons out of mothballs. All access routes are under guard. PCs are welcome to maintain order anywhere else in the shelter (i.e., from Level 2 down to Level 5). “Look, I don’t wanna shoot me no clowns. So don’t be no clowns.”

Act V

- With the intelligence from the now-dead guard and the threat from Louie, the players will likely take control of the scenario. In many ways, the referee must react to PC plans such as fighting their way out, or using the shafts to contact or otherwise deal with Louie (whether in a positive or negative way).
- If the PCs have decided to “hole up and keep their heads down” because they do not wish to be the law in this here town, several clever animals may escape and force the PCs to act. These animals, including Episode 1’s Tree Rat/Escape Artist, may “take their act on the road.” More accurately, when their cage is accidentally broken or otherwise opened, one or more animals may take to the various shafts.
- For the grand finale, another power outage occurs. Screams can be heard through the air vents. Multiple assassins are attempting to kill Big Louie and others below. Riots are breaking out.

- Big Louie is fighting back, and will be holed up with a consort and a few bodyguards. The vast majority of the available rations are on Level 6, however, and hunger is a potent concern as the flare apparently continues to progress.
- When PCs attempt to overcome Big Louie’s defenses, they may fail. Even if PCs want to keep to themselves, NPCs (e.g., hungry WPA guards deciding to move on Louie) may try to get into the action and “help,” possibly dragging the PCs into the action.
- Players may seek to check on the flare data themselves. They will be denied permission to connect into the system. If they manage to force their way into that position, and connect their own hand computers, they will discover that there is no actual feed. If they then use this information as a reason to go to the surface and listen, they will be able to receive transmissions indicating that no flare has yet erupted, and that a question of a false alarm has arisen. Taking that information back into the shelter will be of little help. Neither WPA guards nor WPA prisoners are eager to believe that a flare warning could be falsified, despite the best evidence available.
- After twenty-eight hours, the Flare Alert will be terminated. BT2’s skeleton crew will be free to leave their own flare shelter (where they have been treated well and had no difficulties apart from dealing with small children and other sundry annoyances) and will try to contact BT2. Within a few hours, they will come south and discover the situation. They will be able to obtain parts for BT1’s power plant on short order and make repairs.

Act VI (Optional)

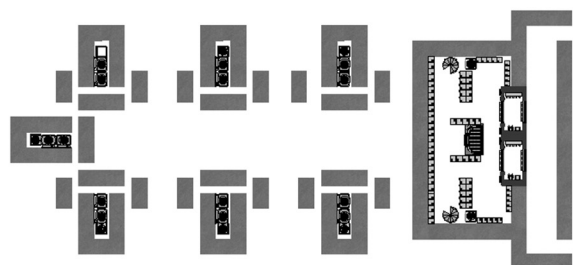
- On returning to The Scars, the PCs investigate the “money trail.” This can be done by making personal inquiries and generating appropriate computer tasks. As a general rule, to infiltrate a banking computer for direct analysis: Formidable (4D) < (Edu + Programming, +6 if the PCs have already correlated the bank account information from the clues provided). To correlate the bank account data determined as a result of various payments (information from hired killers, payments to Cirque des Sirkas, etc.): Difficult (3D) < (Int + Admin).
- If the PCs are noted in their investigation, local authorities will pressure them for what they know. As discussed in the text, the PCs will be questioned, cross-examined by a single appointed defender, and then released.
- Discussions with Sam will lead to truth.
- PCs may become involved in “plea negotiations” between authorities and Sam.
- Otherwise, Sam will simply walk it in.

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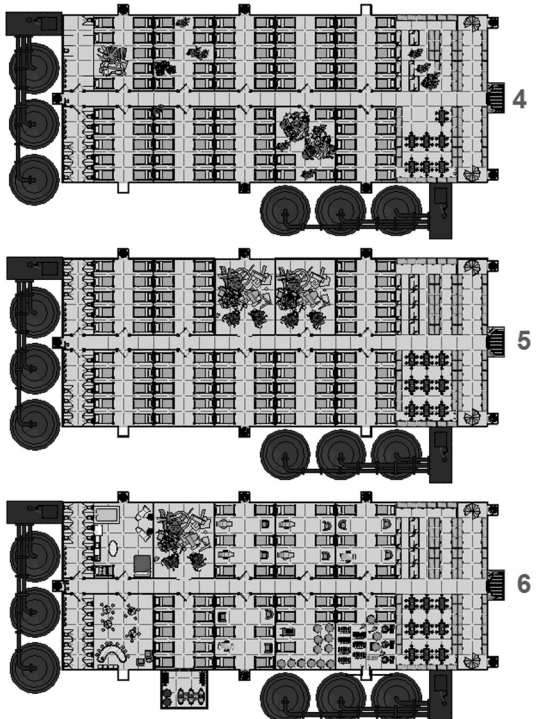
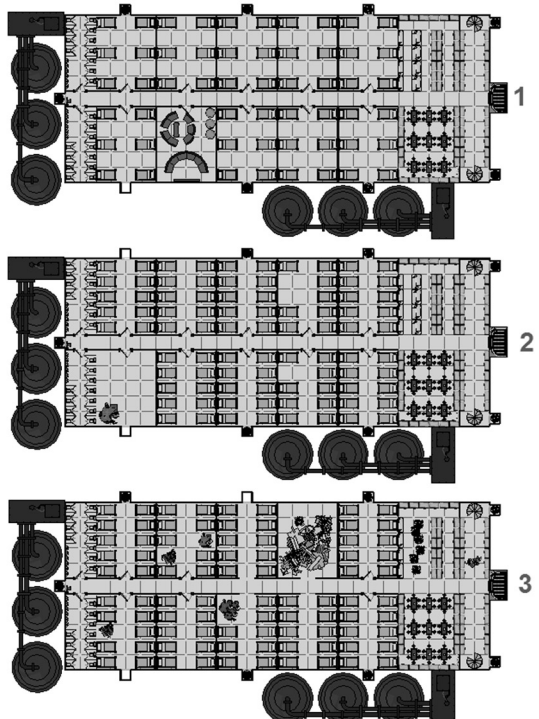
- As *Cirque* approaches the jump point, a transmission comes in from the Scout station: a powerful flare is predicted within twelve hours.



Cirque



Entry Level (Roof Omitted)



South Pole Shelter



Episode 10: The Devil and the Deep Sea

Rabwhar • Spinward Marches 1822

D5448BA-6 • S • Pa Ph Pi • 313 • Im • K5 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Never do business on a world run by someone whose only name is “The General.” For that matter, never live downstream of such people. They forget that the water they, um, *pollute* is the water their supporters need to cook in. No one gets to the top without a lot of people on the lower levels of the pyramid. You have to care about your subordinates. Not to the point that you get decision-paralyzed, but you also can’t just forget that they exist.

Rabwhar is a world where the downstream isn’t clear water, if you get my drift. The General and his pals have a good life. A lot of other people aren’t doing all that badly, but the wealth isn’t shared as nicely as it might be. The haves have, and the have-nots — well, they have less by a good bit. Their water rations are meager and none too clean. Getting dirtier by the day, in fact.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1104.

General Data (Players)

Rabwhar is not a garden world, but it has agricultural tendencies. Its economy is based around harvesting and processing of compounds derived from its plant life. The planet had a thicker atmosphere in the past, and thanks to millennia of outgassing, the local plants have evolved certain unusual properties that are useful in life-support system manufacture and chemical synthesis, such as hyper-oxygenation. Certain unusual properties of these plants, such as hyper-oxygenation, are useful in life-support system manufacture and chemical synthesis. It had a thicker atmosphere in the past; millennia of outgassing caused evolution.

The end result is that though Rabwhar’s atmosphere is thin, it is also comfortably rich in oxygen. This compensates to a degree for the lower air pressure, much as early spacecraft used higher oxygen percentages in their cabin to compensate for lower pressure.

Rabwhar is also a world which has failed to progress technologically much beyond the level of Industrial Age Earth, although the planet did enter its own Atomic Age about thirty years prior to the *Cirque*’s arrival. Plentiful fossil fuels exist, courtesy of multiple die-offs of both plant and animal life that resulted in abundant supplies of fossil fuels. Coal is by far the most plentiful. Petroleum fields abound in several areas. Natural gas can be obtained with little effort. Despite a much smaller population than Earth’s of the classic Industrial Age, the use of fossil-fuel combustion as a staple has tainted the atmosphere from an earlier “pristine” state. Despite the fact that the local technology level entered the atomic age about thirty years ago, the world is experiencing climate change due to its reliance on fossil fuels.

In an effort to stave off climate change before the ecology was irreparably damaged, prior charismatic rulers pushed the development of atomic energy. Simple fission plants have provided both energy and some weapons-grade fissionable material for the last three decades. Unfortunately, the General’s uprising in 1095 disrupted further advancement of atomic technology, or the importation of better equipment. Sixteen years

later, most of the earliest fission plants are close to retirement age and are subject to stringent safety regulations that have retarded efforts toward replacement or upgrading. This in turn means that much of local industry and society remains powered by fossil fuels rather than anything more technologically advanced.

This situation is allowed to continue by the repressive and technologically conservative ideas of the local ruling elite. The primary mode of transportation is therefore the internal combustion engine, which is used to power ground-based trains, some personal automobiles, and simple fixed-wing (but very light) aircraft.

In short, Rabwhar is not merely a backwater. It has become technologically and socially stagnant.

This was not always the case. Until 1095, Rabwhar was ruled by a series of hereditary monarchs, some notably charismatic and forward-looking. This state of affairs ended in 1095, when a particularly unpopular king was overthrown in a coup. He abdicated as revolutionaries seized the capital city, and was replaced by a new government, led by his popular niece. She in turn ruled briefly until the *local* military (*not* the Imperial Army) took control and forced the leaders of the Seventeen Day Democracy into offworld exile.

By 1105 the Democratic Government in Exile of Rabwhar (DGER), based in Shirene (Spinward Marches 2125, a hex away from Union) still claimed to be the legitimate rulers of Rabwhar, though the organization had largely degenerated into a band of pirates and raiders.

The Fifth Frontier War allowed the General to strengthen his grip on the government and on resources. Though Rabwhar was not a center of conflict, it is within Jump-3 range of several of the former Sword Worlds, and thus was occasionally attacked by commerce raiders in hit-and-run attacks. It was also briefly held by Sword Worlds forces. The General was largely viewed as a collaborator during this period and is still less than popular with the average citizen. He has not been deposed, however, as he is “the collaborator with all the guns.”

DGER gained new followers as a result of the General’s cooperation with Sword Worlds officials during the occupation. The popular niece remains alive, though she is still in exile, and now has a growing cadre of followers both off and on Rabwhar. She is working to rebuild DGER’s reputation as a respectable revolutionary force and her own status as a legitimate ruler rather than the leader of the rabble the DGER once was. Unfortunately, local elements of DGER are leaning toward terroristic attacks, rather than revolution, as they see no likelihood of future change without action.

The IISS base maintained at the D Starport is at least as large as the civilian port. Its repair facilities rely on expensive imports and parts rebuilt by the local staff. Most of the local staff are brought in from planets with higher technology levels, as local youths who aspire to more are viewed with great suspicion by the ruling junta. It is an “open secret” that the base is involved in covert surveillance of the Sword Worlds.

Loyalty to the Imperium is of course valued now that the Sword Worlds have again been defeated. Imperial service provides opportunities for education, advancement, and financial security that Rabwhar cannot currently offer. That said, youths who join the Imperial forces often find reintegration difficult upon their retirement from the service and their return

to their home world. They have had their horizons opened, only to have them shrunk by the local government and mores. Many thus either never return at all or leave again shortly after they come home. Those who stay are often the ones who find favor with the ruling junta, which values its superior technology-by-importation. Some who return have returned from the Fifth Frontier War, however, have been joining with DGER against the junta.

Though a backwater planet, Rabwhar was on the “official” dividing line between the pre-war Sword Worlds border and the Imperium. In addition, Sternmetal Horizons continues to maintain a small research facility in Rabwhar’s asteroid belt. The system was briefly occupied by Sword World units in 1108, forcing Sternmetal to temporarily abandon the station, but not before assuring itself of the utter elimination of all data and evidence of its work. The General and his ruling junta kept their collective heads down and collaborated with the invaders while claiming to be a captive government, thus managing to hold onto planetary authority.

Several skirmishes took place in the system, eventually resulting in the return of Imperial control. At that point, the junta reaffirmed its full authority as the local government. The Imperium gave it little thought; local government is a local matter, especially when at war with the psychopathic and psionic Zhodani and their belligerent Sword World allies.

Rabwhar also found itself delivering large loads of meat and produce to the railheads during the war, both Imperial and Sword World squadrons must be fed, after all. Thus, its standard of living was reduced for several years and has yet to return to pre-war levels. Needless to say, this has led to anger and discontent among the local population, which is not happy about the continued deprivation despite the return of peace.

Summary and Referee’s Information

When *Cirque* emerges from jump, the usual data packet awaits it.

“You’re all set, Andii,” the Advance Sophonts report. “Mostly standard stuff. The itinerary is in the files. The porta-johns are a little primitive – not much more than latrines. And don’t eat the glowing snow.”

“You have a command performance on the last day of the run. The General wants his pound of flesh. There’s also a veto right on any act and any costume. I hear he’s a bit of a prude, and so are his Cultural Ministers. They have their palms up for credits, but you’ll have to meet with them in advance and put on every act live. I showed them the vids and handed over credits, but they’re saying the acts might have changed.”

“Oh, and Comic Juggler – he can’t make fun of the General. He’ll use Juggler’s own knives to slice him up, I hear.”

“These people – they’re more than a bit touched, you know. Tell me again why you added this place to the tour? I know you said something about, ‘Even backwaters deserve to be uplifted. Or some such drivel, but let me tell you, these folks should be left to rot. Keep your eyes open and the sensors active.’”

No warning will keep Andii away from Rabwhar. For a short time during the Fifth Frontier War, Rabwhar’s people were occupied by Sword Worlds forces. Andii believes that to have been worse than the conditions imposed by the junta even though the average citizen may have done a little better during the short occupation of the system and world.

If that weren’t sufficient reason for the *Cirque* to include Rabwhar on its itinerary, the low technology level means that local audiences are used to simpler entertainments. The exotic elements of the performances should be seen as an added virtue, given how few off-worlders visit Rabwhar at all.

Before detaching BT1, *Cirque* receives a message in an old but valid INS code, accompanied by an INS serial number.

“Captain Houke, you don’t know me, but I served with the Imperial Army. You can verify that with my serial number. We need help here – we need to get rid of the General. We need to take our world back. Give it back to the proper family. You can help. You have weapons. You can take the General out for us. Please, please, one veteran to another – save us from trying something more extreme. Please contact me only on this frequency using this encryption code.”

The codes correctly identify an Imperial Army veteran whose specialty was infiltration and demolitions (land, sea, and air). If any of the player characters are ex-Army of the same era, they may be determined to know or know of the Veteran.

This will place Andii and perhaps others in a dilemma. However, as a reserve officer, she is not permitted to assist in the overthrow of the Imperially recognized planetary government absent specific orders, regardless of where her own sympathies may lie. In addition, such an action would violate *Cirque des Sirkas*, LIC’s charter, risking revocation. Thus, Andii must and will refuse. In any argument over this, Andii will win by virtue over her hold on the “car keys.” She can confine and refuse descent permission to anyone who disagrees. Bertii will back Andii with all available skills and resources.

Andii will attempt to contact the Imperial nobility. This will prove impossible; all have been off-world since the war, many in important roles. Defending the Imperium, they have unfortunately failed to keep home fires stoked. The IISS is also reluctant to do anything.

Andii makes one firm decision: the tent will not be erected at any site. All performances will take place in BT1. She advises all crew and performers to stay close, in BT2. Luxury hotels with private showers are not on the agenda for this world. She places all crew on the highest security alert.

If any character does further research, they will find out very little. The Veteran reportedly worked for the planetary power commission as a construction specialist. Nothing more is readily ascertainable. Persons who know or know of Veteran will recall an exemplary service record. The Veteran reportedly developed sudden health issues thirty days ago and died unexpectedly. His remains were cremated.

BT1 and BT2’s primary landing will be near the capital city. They have been scheduled for a full week, with the first day reserved for the Cultural Ministry to review all the scheduled acts. Even if the player characters are not performers, they will be present for this, as Andii is cautious enough to want security in numbers. In addition, the players will if possible be brought into the negotiations over limitations in costumes and material.

The Cultural Ministers’ no-no’s will include apparently silly costume rules (“A woman of propriety never shows her neck! Men do not wear red!”) and various words which may not be uttered in public. Comic Juggler is required to make fun of DGER, but forbidden to mention the General in any way.

Even more than Comic Juggler (who has heard Advance Sophonts’ message) Thespian is likely to chafe at the statement that he may not perform material which apparently favors the questioning of authority. He thus performs Marc Antony’s famous speech for the Cultural Ministers: “I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him!” If Thespian is played by a player, the referee may wish to prompt this, or a similarly subversive speech. The tension rises as some of the Ministers understand the apparent insult to the General. The tension can be decreased by a comment equating “Caesar” to the niece and her supporters, or it can be role-played into all sorts of threats, sputtering, and (ultimately) a more costly bribe.

Eventually the differences will be worked out and the slate of performances approved. Security officials and “tour guides” will be assigned by the Cultural Ministry. Some will be uniformed, others in plain clothes. All will be officious; none will readily respect reasonable limits of privacy. The PCs will be given clear directives on where they may and may not go. Observant PCs will note that many of these officials carry weapons of Sword Worlds design.

Touring is conducted by authoritarian guides. The characters are not allowed to go off on their own, or to look more closely at things that would possibly put the General into disrepute.

The public performances go well. For the most part, the audience is comprised of valued members of the junta’s ruling class. Few dissenters are in the audience. Some may appear, and may seek small bits of assistance. However, no major communications are received from Veteran or anyone else.

After a day of rest, BT1 and BT2 move to a narrow valley location near the city of Pasni. This coal-mining and steel-making center is nestled in a deep valley at which two narrower rivers (the Shadi Kaur and the Gleno) merge. The General has a residence upstream on the Shadi Kaur, a large compound consisting of numerous buildings in a secure area that he has designed as his “Country Villa.” A man-made lake, Lake Powell, is found 22.5 twisting kilometers upstream of Pasni; the Rowyank nuclear fission power plant uses the deep waters for cooling. The Shakidor Dam holds back the deepening waters, though it is old and in poor repair.

The Country Villa is a large compound with numerous buildings. It is in a secure area in the narrow, twisting valley totaling 22.5 kilometers long. It is downstream from the thirty-year-old Rowyank Nuclear Power Plant.

Rowyank is a fairly standard first-generation fission power plant with only one reactor core, which is maintained in a spherical concrete containment vessel. Cooling towers are an afterthought, and inefficient: water is pumped from the adjacent reservoir and returned despite being too hot for fish in the lake. The Villa is downstream from the aging dam which holds the reservoir in place.

The reservoir is two kilometers wide at its widest, and four kilometers long. It was originally constructed to supply water for a canal system that provided transportation for goods and people. After it was no longer used for transportation, the reservoir was repurposed as a private recreational space for the exclusive enjoyment of elite members of the old royal family. They constructed the Rowyank on the opposite shore to make a point about the need to adapt to newer technologies. Since they were overthrown, the "camp" has been only lightly used.

Dam maintenance has been neglected in recent years. Glacial melting caused by climate change has slowly raised the lake level to less than a meter below the middle level of the dam. Worse, the spillway and emergency release pipes are inadequate to handle any significant additional stress, such as a flood or unusually heavy rain. The lake contains over 18.2 million cubic meters of water (1,348,150 volume tons, almost three times larger than a *Tigress*-class dreadnought).

The Country Villa can be reached only by grav vehicle, or by an old rail line and associated dirt roads. The train itself is a museum piece, even by local standards, with a brightly painted antique steam engine powered by a coal-fired boiler. The train has an engine at either end, fortunately; even so, its maximum speed is about 75 kph.

The General wants to see all of the acts, and also to have his most valued underlings and families see them. He is particularly interested in a command performance of *Gilgamesh* by the Geezer Thespian.

With the many cottages available at the Villa, there will be room for many of the General's supporters, and their families. At least 200 adults and 400 children will be present from the junta's upper echelons. In addition, to show the General's beneficence, the Villa's many servants and support staff will also be invited to the command performance, as will be several hundred orphans and their caretakers.

BT1 cannot land in the Villa compound itself. Both space and security prohibit this, so the vessel will land several kilometers further down the valley. The valley walls at that point are no more than a kilometer away to either side, but the clearing is sufficient for both BT1 and BT2 to land. The valley walls to either side are steep, and tower above BT1's height.

There will be gatherings, games, and food for at least two hours before BT1 is opened for general admission. Despite heightened alert and security, no threat emerges during the show. Similarly, the train ride back to the Villa goes swimmingly; no DGER rebel forces storm the car. No rebel forces are reported storming the nuclear power plant, nor are any grav vehicles or more standard aircraft observed. Indeed, the referee should shock the players with just how boring things are.

In fact, the General has found the entertainment entirely wholesome and acceptable for his people, contrary to any worries. After the show, all and sundry are invited back to the Villa itself on the private railway leading further up the valley. Andii has no choice but to permit the major performers to join the after-party. However, BT1 and BT2 are left with pilots and essential crew. Lesser performers and most stagehands will be left behind, excepting of course player characters.

Like most dictators, the General is a charming host, so long as he does not feel remotely threatened. He is diligent about security. The entertainers will be allowed reasonable freedom at his country estate, but some areas will be off limits. Any attempt to violate his rules will result in what child specialists call "firm redirection:" the offending character will be escorted out of the area by a guard prominently equipped with a high-caliber firearm. Nothing more will occur.

Any successful attempt to sneak into a secured area will reveal that the General values his privacy. Each "off limits" area is a sleeping or other private area, including whatever comforts (bars, plush furniture, robotic and adult human playthings) the referee considers appropriate for his or

her campaign. In short, the General is not as prudish in personal life as in his or her public pronouncements.

The party is eventually interrupted by a communication from BT1. At least thirty armored vehicles are on the hills to either side, heavy weapons (low-tech cannons and higher-tech weapons) trained downward. There are also a number of aircraft in the sky. While many of the units conform to the local technology level, a number are higher-tech imports, including both grav-based tanks and ground-based tanks.

The units have identified themselves as belonging to DGER.

BT1 and BT2 have been advised that if either attempts to lift, it will be fired upon and destroyed. If the General's forces are mustered to attack, *Cirque's* auxiliaries will be attacked. A reasonable tactical assessment is provided: "They got the drop on us. We're toast if we move." Even if all of the available ship's weapons were fired in coordination, there is no chance of escaping serious damage or even destruction.

Within moments, the General's staff announces its own alert: the Rowyank power plant next to the dam is also surrounded by a second, smaller, but more than adequate squad of DGER fighting vehicles. DGER has announced that it has infiltrated the plant already, and has taken over the main control room.

DGER's spokesperson states that its operatives are prepared to drain the cooling water out of the pile and remove the cadmium damping rods. This will cause the old-style graphite-moderated uranium rods to superheat and melt their way down to the concrete containment shell, then through the concrete and into the ground.

It will eventually come in contact with groundwater, which will in turn superheat, explode, and propel radioactive gas into the atmosphere.

In essence, DGER is threatening to cause an old-style "China Syndrome" nuclear disaster. The referee can research this in more depth as needed to answer the objections of the players.

To demonstrate their seriousness, explosions rip through the building containing the electricity-generating turbines. This attack is shortly followed an announcement: "Next we'll blow all pumps and shut down all valves except for the cooling water outlet. We're ready to drain the pool. DGER is in sole control of Rowyank."

Main power at the Villa fails. Auxiliary generators kick in for the moment.

DGER's spokesperson comes onto the communication line. DGER's demands are simple: the General is to abdicate and leave the surface immediately. Captain Andii is trusted to place the General into custody and remove him for alleged collaboration with Sword World forces during the Fifth Frontier War. Andii has two hours to place the General under arrest. The prior popular rulers will be returned to power.

The General of course sneers at this, even as his personal security team surrounds him. He has no intention of surrendering to DGER terrorists. He has survived prior coups. The General is hustled away from the party by his security team. Andii and the rest of the Cirque des Sirkas party, as well as many innocents, are left alone.

Moments later the General and other top officials can be seen through windows. They rush into a convoy of ground vehicles and drive away under the cover of foliage. They are obviously headed up into the mountains on one side of the valley. A servant or aide, miffed at being left behind, will note that the General has a bunker a few kilometers away, sunk deep into the valley wall. A single truck sufficient to carry two people in the cab and perhaps twelve in the rear bed has been left behind.

Cirque's orbit will allow it to pass overhead within 15 minutes of the General's exit. *Cirque's* passive sensors can obtain EM imaging in all frequencies: "visible (human) spectrum," infrared, and ultraviolet. Active sensors (radar, lidar) can also scan the ground. Weather conditions are favorable, with no significant ground cover. BT1 and BT2 have similar sensors, but these are less effective due to line-of-sight limitations.

Andii and others have sufficient tactical training to interpret these scans. Once images are returned, they will confirm that both BT1 and BT2 are effectively surrounded. An attempt to lift under the current conditions would be disastrous. However, all DGER units are identified by their heat signatures.

The Shakidor dam itself is thick but poorly constructed, with a core of packed earth faced with granite blocks and rocks piled up the core. It is at least two meters thick at the top, with a causeway allowing for passage across the structure, and much wider at the base. Some leakage is visible a few meters below the causeway. A spillway to the right (facing outward)

is insufficient to release water. The granite blocks have been cemented together, but the cement is of low quality and much has eroded away since the dam's construction. Repairs have been made from time to time, but with cement and materials of even lower quality.

A causeway crosses the top. Numerous people are clustered near the center of the causeway, its lowest point. At least one appears to be in diving gear. Others are chipping at cracks in the downstream side of the dam; still others are placing objects into the resulting fissures and connecting wires strung from small objects along the top. The vehicles surrounding Rowyank are in a purely defensive posture.

Any demolition expert is likely to recognize the activity. If the players are unable to figure this out on their own, the referee can supply the necessary information through a non-player: "Geez. One of those old vids we picked up was about something called *The Johnstown Flood*. You think maybe they're going to blow the dam and flood us out? Maybe the Rowyank is a bluff."

That assessment is partially correct: the DGER forces will not suicide by letting the reactor run wild. However, once the artificial lake is released into the valley, no water will be available to cool the reactor. Assuming maximum insertion of the damping rods, the available cooling water and additional water from groundwater wells will be barely adequate to prevent a melt-down for more than a few hours. The deluge can thus be expected to be followed by a plant melt-down.

From this point, the scenario is likely very much up to the players, as well as Andii. Their assets are limited; BT3 is at least five (5) hours away on a refueling run. BT2 has one unarmed grav vehicle on board, sufficient to carry a cargo of weapons from the auxiliaries' lockers if it skims low under the trees and avoids detection. The General has left one low-technology truck behind, fully fueled; an old dirt road with substantial tree coverage leads up the valley toward the dam. In addition, people can be moved away from the Country Villa along the old rail line. Bursting the dam requires that explosives be rigged on both sides, near the causeway level. However, Veteran's time limits are unrealistic, given her less proficient subordinates. Thus, the characters have between three and four hours to assault the top of the dam.

If the players decide to pursue the General instead, they must pursue rapidly. The General's bunker is a few kilometers distant, drilled into the steep walls of the valley. It is accessible from one entrance. That entrance is easily defended by guards. Several pillboxes can be found to either side of the shaft's entrance. The players' assets and abilities will determine their likelihood of success. A limited missile assault from *Cirque* herself is possible at about two and one-half hours into this portion of the scenario, preferably applying PC or NPC forward observer skills to direct turret-launched missiles from orbit.

In any case (attack the dam, go after the General, or attempt to free BT1 and BT2), the players have little time in which to plan and act. However, they have the advantage of advanced weapons and surprise. Though the General may take steps to protect himself, if the players choose to assault the dam or attempt to free BT1 and BT2, the General's limited grav-equipped forces may assist.

A fourth obvious option is for the players to do nothing with regard to the threat against the General, and to merely seek to assist the innocents to escape. In this case, they will discover that the train operators have left. The players will have to fire up the boilers, which have been kept at low temperature. They will also have to figure out the controls and get the train moving. If they choose this simple act, things will seem easy – drive the train a few kilometers, get everyone on board BT1, and lift off as soon as BT3 and other assistance can clear the bluffs of tanks.

If the players choose this plan, they should of course discover that low-tech steam engines are finicky on their best days. They will also discover delaying tactics: Veteran and the DGER have anticipated that the General might seek to escape by train so they have cut down several large trees to block the train tracks about a half-kilometer north of BT1 and BT2. The woods there are thick and infested with all of the Spinward Marches' most dangerous forest-dwellers, including tree krakens. On foot and lightly armed, the players will need to survive several dangerous encounters before they can get any remaining non-combatants aboard BT1.

Once aboard, the players must still wait for the ideal time to shoot their way out (although they can also seek to attack the overpowering force on foot, with meager weapons and suicidal fervor). *Cirque* can (as previously noted) fire from orbit in approximately two and one-half hours.

Unless the PCs intervene, the Veteran's efforts to prepare the dam for demolition will go smoothly. The explosives will be detonated. The water cascade will start through the crumbling causeway center. The breach will open rapidly as the water pressure erodes and carves downward. Within minutes, the long artificial lake will be cut away much of the dam's structure. The wall of water (18.2 million cubic meters, 1,348,150 volume tons) and broken trees rushing through the narrow valley will easily reach a height of 12 meters.

The referee may give the players one advantage if the dam bursts: *Cirque* will be in an orbital position to focus its sensors on the dam and will be able to track the flood.

Initial estimates give the floodwaters fifteen minutes to travel to the PCs' location. However, a stone railroad viaduct at the downstream end of an oxbow will act as a temporary dam for about five minutes before it collapses. The flood-wall (water, trees, structural debris, and similar material) will resume its inexorable progress. BT1 will be hit about five minutes later if they have not launched by then.

The flood wall will continue downstream through the twists and turns until it reaches Pasni about twenty-five minutes later.

In this scenario, the players will likely be needed to prevent the melt-down of the Rowyank fission core. This will require a direct assault, as DGER troops are guarding the plant. The players may also be called on to coordinate emergency action, such as getting concrete-mixing vehicles to the plant to encase the melting core. This will involve firefights with the DGER, and possibly also with the General's troops.

The General's survival of the wall-of-water scenario is at the referee's discretion. The valley-wall bunker has narrow shafts designed to draw in surface air and expel carbon dioxide. Whether these shafts are both high enough (thirteen or more meters) and sealed in a timely fashion before the flood hits will determine whether the General survives to fight another day or drowns like a trapped rat.

Disaster relief to Pasni and the surrounding area will be requested by whatever "government" remains in charge. Andii and company can provide initial relief. If the scenario is taken to this extreme, it is the "maximum horror" scenario, with bloated bodies, makeshift morgues, whole families missing, fire at the stone railway bridge to the west, and starvation. The circus is unlikely to leave soon; there will be too much to do. The referee interested in this extended scenario should read accounts of significant floods, notably the Johnstown Flood of 1889.

Perhaps needless to say, despite giving warnings, DGER's acts will be seen as ugly terrorism by many on Rabwhar. While the General's reign may topple, DGER may not be in a position to claim the government thereafter.

The Map

Contours are depicted very roughly in green. The darkest green is the lowest contour, which descends a hundred meters overall from the dam to Pasni. The next layer up is lighter and represents a level sixty meters higher. The next lighter layer is likewise sixty meters higher. Other layers are less specific. The angles are obviously steep. Referees desiring more detail are free to draw in additional contour lines at intervals of their choosing. The region is based upon USGS maps and other public domain maps of the area of Johnstown, Pennsylvania; the referee insisting on more accuracy may substitute such maps. Historical maps from the early 1900's through the 1970's (the approximate technology era) are available online at no or minimal cost.

1. Pasni, a dense city catering to steel-making and coal shipping center.
2. The stone railroad bridge over the Shadi Kaur River.
3. BT1, landed near the railroad track.
4. The General's "Country Villa."
5. The railroad aqueduct, towering over the river basin.
6. The oxbow in the river, and the tall central hill forming it.
7. One of a number of small towns along the Shadi Kaur River. This town is about five to seven minutes downstream when the flood strikes. Parts of it may be high enough above the riverbed to survive.
8. The dam.
9. Rowyank Nuclear Power Plant.
10. Lake Powell.
11. Part of the old Royal Camp (abandoned).

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12. The Orphanage (built on the grounds of the old Royal Camp).
13. The Shadi Kaur River.
14. The Gleno River.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Arrival in-system.
- ☐ Veteran contacts Andii.
- ☐ Andii strictly orders no contact with or assistance to Veteran. No wink-wink nudge-nudge.
- ☐ Landing and auditions with Cultural Ministry.
- ☐ Cultural Ministry assigns “security” and “tour-guides” to the characters. Any off-vessel activity will be observed. Official tours are limited to the acceptable sites.
- ☐ Performances are begun in the main city.
- ☐ The players are allowed to wander the city in the company of tour guides. They encounter numerous old-style forms of transportation, such as gas-guzzling automobiles. These tend to be occupied by the well-off and powerful. Less fortunate citizens rely on feet, aging bicycles, and even animals for transport.
- ☐ An audience member with two young children asks for asylum. “My husband was DGER, and he disappeared two months ago.” She believes he has been taken to an internment camp.
- ☐ The PCs are taken on an official tour of a model housing development for workers. The units they are shown include fresh paint, well-maintained units, and smiling people all around. Other units further away look less well-maintained.
- ☐ If pressed about alleged internment camps, officials assure the players that the camps are appropriate working prisons for serious law-breakers. The players are taken on a tour of a model farm. All of the prisoners are well treated, and admit without question that they broke standard penal laws, and are in no way political prisoners.

Act II

- ☐ At the end of the formal run, the PCs are brought to a more remote region that is accessible primarily by train and a few paved roads. No major highways are in place. This somewhat isolated locale is in mountainous country supported mainly by coal mining.
- ☐ The PCs visit coal-fired steel mills. Pasni is a Company Town; the General is the Company.
- ☐ A DGER-supported wildcat strike is declared during the visit. The plants are suddenly off-line and the streets are filled with grizzled workers.
- ☐ Local police disperse strikers with tear gas. Tour Guide ushers the PCs away. If PCs resist, they will face the end of long guns, and be tear-gassed themselves despite their status as members of *Cirque*’s crew.
- ☐ The PCs are taken on a public relations trip to the Royal Camp, which is now a Summer Camp for Orphans. The PCs are invited into the cab of the archaic coal-fired train. They are shown how the train works and given a chance to operate it.
- ☐ Bright, smiling happy orphans are running all around. All of the orphans are purported to have lost parents to the brief Sword Worlds Occupation (even those under one year old). The Camp Counselors are all a bit old and some are armed. The Rowyank Plant is visible, across the lake. Men and women can be seen skimming dead fish from the surface across the lake.
- ☐ The PCs may note that the most direct route to the Shakidor Dam, an overgrown dirt road, goes to a branch of the lake. The lake waters have apparently flooded over the old dirt road, which is now only grassy ruts.
- ☐ A tour of the dam itself should give pause to any PC with a knowledge of civil engineering. To observe that the dam is in disre-

pair. Average (2D) < (Int + Sapper) (unskilled ok). To conclude that the dam is inadequate and in danger of eventual collapse: Difficult (3D) < (Int + Sapper OR Demolition). Warnings of the danger will not be heeded.

Act III

- ☐ BT1 and BT2 are moved to an area downstream of the Villa. Note that there is a significant military escort using craft and weapons above the local TL. Most escorts leave after power-down.
- ☐ The following day, a performance will take place for orphans and others brought via train, as well as high officials and their families. The orphans are treated with excessive sweetness.
- ☐ The General holds a party after the performances. The main performers and PCs are brought back to the Villa for a reception.
- ☐ DGER forces quietly move cannons, missile launchers, mortar launchers, high-tech weapons and troops onto the surrounding hills, allowing fire on BT1 and BT2. Stone walls, outcroppings, trees, and other cover render these more difficult targets. Grav vehicles also present.
- ☐ DGER infiltrators allow DGER forces to take over Rowyank Power Plant.
- ☐ The Veteran’s second message is transmitted.
- ☐ All communications lines are cut. Radio communications are limited due to the mountainous territory. No communication is possible with either Pasni or towns upstream. Neither cell towers nor local satellite relays are in place in this area.
- ☐ DGER’s forces may demonstrate their firepower against BT1 and BT2.
- ☐ The General leaves telling the PCs not to follow, and taking with him all vehicles but one. They are driven up a dirt road winding along a steep hillside. Alternate: if the referee prefers that the General have a lick of honor, the General may choose to lead an assault on the dam. As he represents the lawful government, and given other options, Andii may agree to rally with him. This option may be especially palatable to referees who do not wish to administer a flood, however inevitable is the collapse of the dam.
- ☐ In either event, the PCs will need to get weapons, either from the General’s supply or from BT1 and BT2. They should be allowed to get to and from the vessels in the remaining vehicle, though a few shells may come close.

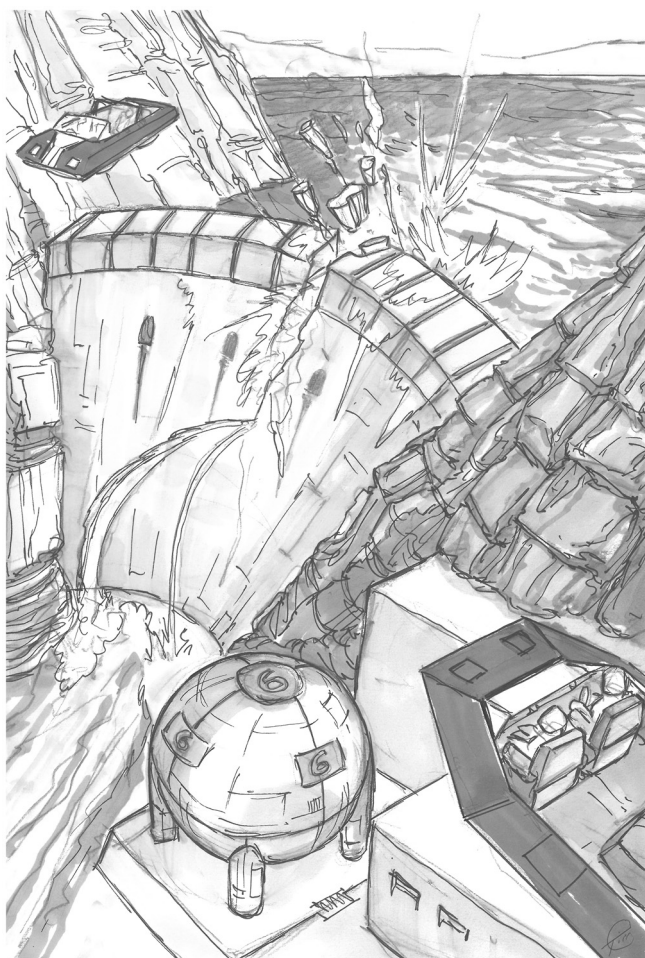
Act IV

Act IV depends heavily on player decisions.

Chasing the General

- ☐ If the PCs go after the General, they will have to follow along narrow dirt roads winding up the steep valley walls. The General will leave several rear-guards to ambush pursuers.
- ☐ An old coal mine entrance is found. Despite the winding and climbing, it is only about ten meters above the valley floor. A concrete bunker has been built near the entrance, and an armored door has been erected about a meter into the horizontal shaft. Guards are in place and will fire weapons.
- ☐ The PCs will likely note an outcropping about five to ten meters higher and a few meters to one side. It is large enough and flat enough for a grav vehicle to land. From their location, the PCs can make out an air shaft for the mine they are facing. One of the General’s guards appears on the outcropping and begins watching the sky. The guard has a laser designator and a communications unit.
- ☐ The PCs can get to the outcropping level along an old path. The overgrowth gives both cover and the opportunity to shake enough vegetation to be detected.
- ☐ As they close in on the outcropping, an armored grav vehicle begins

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to circle in toward the outcropping. The guard uses the laser designator to guide the vehicle in. Unless a PC gets off a very lucky shot, it will land.

- ☐ Two other guards pop out of the smaller mine entrance, followed by the General himself.
- ☐ Player action and combat results (if any) determines whether the General leaves, is captured, or retreats back into the mine. The armored grav vehicle is only lightly armed, and has only three soldiers inside.
- ☐ Depending on other actions and referee decisions, the dam may burst. If it does, the main hiding area of the mineshaft may be flooded, and all inside will be drowned.
- ☐ Here again, the mineshaft may conceal secret weapons – the General may have several Sword World grav tanks available here. If the General is not merely selfish, he may be planning to go to the dam and personally lead the fight against the DGER threat.

Starting the Train

- ☐ The old train has been left idle on an upper track, about 12 meters above the valley floor. Only a small fire is burning in the firebox.
- ☐ The PCs can use the train to move toward the dam in an attack, or away from the dam if it breaks.
- ☐ —If the train's boiler has been brought back to full steam before the dam breaks, the train can be used to outrace the flood and warn people downstream.

Saving the Dam

- ☐ Saving the dam can only be accomplished by preventing the demoli-

tion attack on it. The dam is in poor shape, and can be brought down fairly easily.

- ☐ The PCs most likely must attack the people on the dam using small weapons fire. Any hit on the dam using weapons mounted on BT1 or BT2 will by referee fiat hit a weakened joint between granite blocks. The PCs should be treated to evidence of water pushing through the cracks, though the dam will hold after the first such strike.
- ☐ As noted, it is possible to administer the General as a hero, despite his reputation as a Sword Worlds collaborator and a profiteer. Dictators are not fools, and sometimes strike the correct target in the grey-area reality.
- ☐ Combat should be determined through standard rules.
- ☐ The DGER staff, including the Veteran, will fight a defensive action to gain time to complete the installation of demolitions.
- ☐ For maximum tension, the battle occurs as attempts are being made to wire the charges, even if not all explosives are in place (due to the need to stretch its funds, DGER has not purchased modern systems using radio-controlled detonators).
- ☐ If the PCs succeed, the dam will hold. For now.
- ☐ Removing demolitions, including waterproofed demolition packs placed under the water on the lake side of the dam will take at least a day, assuming due care is taken in removal.
- ☐ If the DGER forces manage to set off their explosives, flares will also be launched high into the sky. DGER pilots will radio warnings to Pasni and other towns downstream.

Dam Burst Tasks Immediate Survival In the Flood Path

- ☐ To successfully run to higher ground in one minute: Staggering (5D) < (End + Str) (subtract one die for every minute of additional advance warning that the flood is coming).
- ☐ To stay afloat by swimming alone: Hopeless (6D) < (End + Str).
- ☐ To swim to and climb onto debris floating within four meters: Formidable (4D) < (Str + Athletics) (unskilled OK).
- ☐ To swim to and climb onto debris floating within two meters: Difficult (3D) < (Str + Athletics) (unskilled OK).
- ☐ To grab and hold onto debris floating within one meter: Difficult (3D) < (End + Athletics) (unskilled ok). If successful, the character ultimately is brought to a shoe or location from which he or she can crawl out of the flood waters.
- ☐ To stay above water long enough to reach a shore or other place of safety without debris: Hopeless (6D) < (End + Athletics) (no hasty or cautious tasks allowed).

The Rowyank

- ☐ As water rushes out of the artificial lake, it also drains from the power plant.
- ☐ Emergency sirens blare.
- ☐ PCs with knowledge of fission power plants will be dragooned into bringing the plant under control.
- ☐ To maintain cooling water over the rods long enough to use damping system: Staggering (5D) < (Edu + Engineering).
- ☐ The PCs will likely be called on to get the melting core encased in concrete. This requires access to a grav vehicle and concrete. The PCs will likely be exposed to significant radiation. To heal a PC of serious radiation poisoning: Formidable (4D) < (Edu + Medic) (+1 for every TL level above B).
- ☐ The PCs may also find themselves directing the emergency response activities, such as evacuations, repair efforts described above, and other tasks.

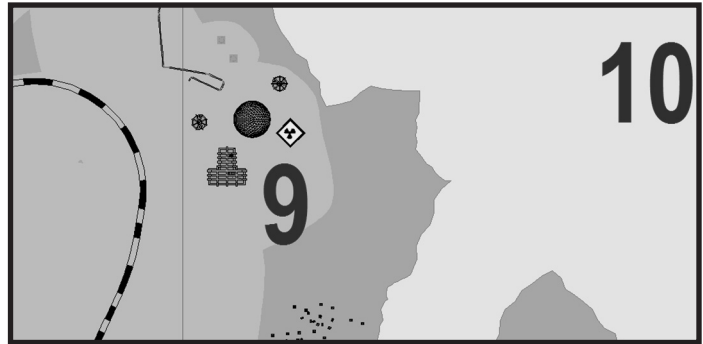
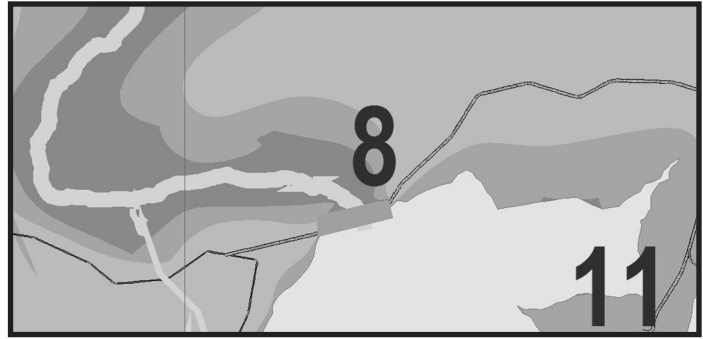
Cirque

Downstream

- ☐ The debris at the Stone Bridge Railroad Crossing will catch fire. The fire is too large to control.
- ☐ As noted in the text, the PCs may become part of the general relief effort.
- ☐ Relief effort will include tending to sick and injured.
- ☐ Relief effort will include looking for survivors.
- ☐ Relief effort will include using BT1 and BT2 to obtain food, clean water, and other supplies.
- ☐ Relief effort will include seeking help from Scouts.
- ☐ If the General has escaped and survived, he may find himself in serious trouble. The PCs or inhabitants may have to make a decision. Though a dictator, he has not destroyed a whole city recently, as DGER has.
- ☐ DGER will attempt to justify its destruction of an entire city to produce "regime change."
- ☐ New civil war may well erupt.

Tag

- ☐ If the flood has occurred, *Cirque* will be delayed at least a month, and the PCs will all be involved in the flood relief efforts. All characters should be faced with possible reduction of their sanity.
- ☐ Eventually, *Cirque* will be able to leave.



The General

Final UPP: 87888c. Age: 62 years. (Noble) Fame: 12 (World System)

Final Skills: Admin-5, Advocate-1, Animals-0 (Ride-1), Athlete-2, Comms-1, Computer-1, Driver-0 (Automotive-1, Grav-2, Tracked-2, Wheeled-1), Engineer-0 (Power Systems-2), Fighter-5 (BattleDress-2, Blades-1, Slug Thrower-1, Unarmed-2), Flyer-0 (Rotor-1), Gambler-2, Heavy Weapons-0 (Artillery-2, WMD-2), JOT-1, Language (Sagamaal-7), Leader-8, Liaison-4, Medic-1, Navigation-3, Pilot-0 (Small Craft01), Recon-1, Science (Chemistry-1), Sensors-2, Stealth-2, Strategy-2, Tactics-3, Trade (Electronics-2, Explosives-1, Mechanics-1, Programmer-2), Trader-1, Vacc Suit-1.

Mustering Benefits: Wafer Jack, Forbidden (Streetwise-1), High Passage, KCr 15, KCr 30, KCr 25, Retire x2 = KCr 42/year. ,): KCr 160, KCr 20, C2 +1 (Dex 7), Proxy (2D = 7).

Final Honors: General of the Cavalry, 1st Royal Cavalry Division, Rabwhar Royal Army, [CR-5, XS-1, MCG-1, MCGF-3, WB-1].

BW: Rabwhar (SM 1822) Pa Ph Pi.
HW Skills: Trader-1, JOT-1.

The General was generated using standard tables (Army, then Noble), but applying them only to the planetary level. This is an example of creatively adapting the existing tables to a specific purpose.

The Veteran (Ex-Imperial Marine Commando)

Final UPP: 9A9876. Age: 42 years. Fame: 0 (none).

Final Skills: Broker-1, Bureaucrat-1, Craftsman-4, Driver-0 (Wheeled-2), JOT-1, Fighter-6 (Battle Dress-2, Blades-1, Exotics-2, Slug Thrower-1, Sprays-2), Forward Observer-1, Heavy Weapons-0 (Ordnance-2, WMD-1), Hostile Environment-1, Leader-4, Navigation-1, Recon-1, Science: Biology-1, Stealth-1, Tactics-2, Trade: Explosives-2, Mechanics-1, Programmer-1, Trader-1, Vacc Suit-1.

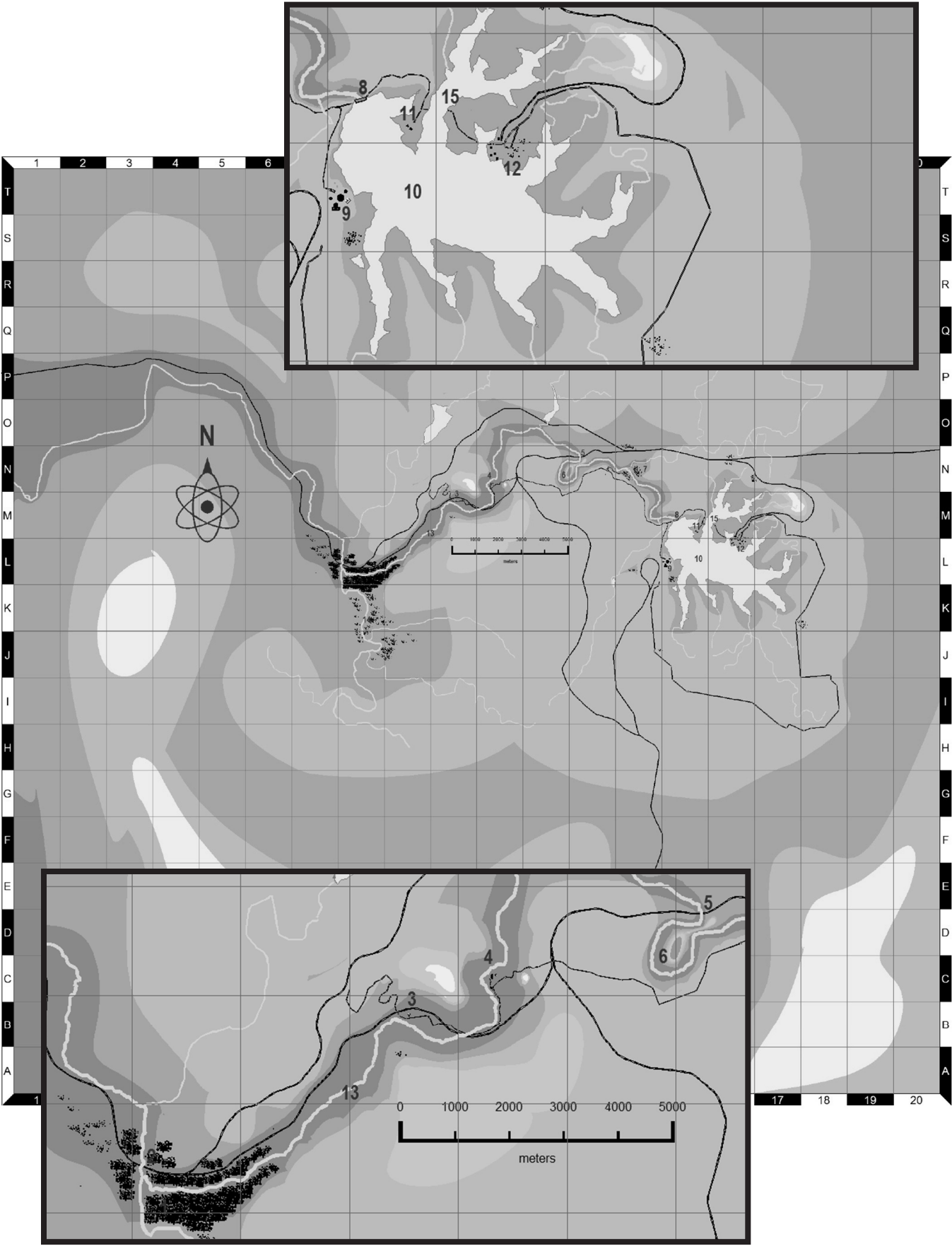
Muster Out (6 (4 Marine, 2 Citizen): KCr 40, KCr 50, Int +1, High Passage, KCr 20, KCr 20.

Final Honors: 1st Lieutenant, 3rd Commando Regiment, Imperial Marine, [CR-1, XS-2, WB-1]; Construction Specialist, Rabwhar Power Commission.

BW: Rabwhar (SM 1822) Pa Ph Pi.
HW Skills: Trader-1, JOT-1.

The Commando is a leader in the revived DGER, and a significant enemy in the battle for the dam.

Cirque



Episode 11: Ferris Wheel Zaibon • Spinward Marches 1825 B000544-B • Ni As Va • 512 • Im • M6 III M3 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

If you watch the aster-oater vids, you'd think all of the prospectors live in shiny new seekers, and all they ever dig out is pure gold and perfectly formed diamonds. You hardly ever see the truth — all the folks living and dying just like the planet-bound, farming and smelting and doing what's necessary to keep the old prospectors and their grimy old cutters and gigs moving from rock to rock. A whole belt grows up, though, and they grow a lot of old-fashioned Spinning Wheels for the growing, and the smelting, and the living, and of course the dying. A living belt has four or five or ten of them, and a hundred or a thousand bolas and bubble worlds...all sorts of things that were thought up before we figured out artificial gravity. Cheap and easy to run. Sensible, a lot of ways.

Spinning Wheels. The standard torus — that's a neat thing. A lot of systems have one or three still hanging around, that's why they're standard. Over two kilometers in diameter, most of them getting natural light at least as a supplement, and they can support ten thousand people easily. Some, more. Great way to farm, great way to manage resources. They make acceptable up-ports, too, and good places to do business, like Rhylanor's Old Station. Some people can't stand them — old-fashioned spin-for-gravity's too primitive for their delicate inner ears, I suppose. But I like them. I can't think of anything that'll ever make me dislike a Spinning Wheel.

That's why I like Zaibon. It has a lot of old wheels, and a bunch of variations. Too bad they took all the copper out of that belt. Soon enough, they're going to have a whole bunch of empty habitats. A played-out belt dies, mostly. It might live as a stepping-stone... Or, if it's far enough from any borders, it might make a good Depot someday. But Zaibon's a bit too close to the Sword Worlders for that. And worse, their tall pals the Zho.

Maybe the Imperium should plant a proper Navy base at Zaibon. The Zho didn't finish with us the last time they plowed into the Marches. They'll be back. An extra fleet near the border would suit me just fine. Keep the Vikings in line, too.

But they won't. They worry about places like Lunion, and Regina. Sure, Regina's interesting, but it's expendable. What does it have worth protecting? A duke with a buzz cut? Strephon should get off his butt and name Delphine to run the Marches, maybe all of Deneb. Mora, that's a place to protect. And Zaibon, right there on the edge. But it's just going to die away, I think. The Sword Worlders will be able to move in without a mumble. They'll bring the Zho with them.

And the Zho — people get all scared of the mind-reader types, and they're certainly a vile pest. But a lot more Zho are just Proles. 'Just Proles,' you say. Fed gruel and forced to be happy by mind control, that's what the Admiralty thinks. But you know, they make up most of the combat crews, and most of the boots-on-the-ground grunts. I'll bet some of the Zho spies are as telepathic as you or me. Right, *not*.

What? Oh, Zaibon. A dried up place unless they find something new and interesting. So they'll find something. Or they won't.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

General Data (Players)

The Zaibon Belt is fortunately located in Orbit 11 of its large M6 III star, outside the primary's 100-diameter "jump masking" limit. It was once a major belting community, with miners working a large lode of copper and other useful metals. As a result, it became a boom-belt, while planets closer to the star were largely ignored. A bare rock orbits in the habitable zone, a minimum of 33 days away from the belt at a constant 1G.

Though many of the population have lived inside mined-out asteroids all of the varieties of classic spinning colonies are represented in this system: several large O'Neill Cylinders, several Bubbleworlds, several Bernal Spheres, myriad bolas, and various other small habitats. There are also thirty-three (33) separate Standard Stanford Torus variants, each designed to and capable of supporting some 10,000 humans. While some belters live in Seekers or other ships and small craft, a belt community requires more care and attention to be successful. Communities require common living facilities, farms, smelting locations, trading posts, and more. Zaibon was and is no different.

The belt is all but played out now. With few other sources of income, the system's community is in decline. The Imperium has not, as yet, seen fit to take over the system as a major Imperial Navy port. Other systems are more threatened, and a new buffer zone has been created in the Border Worlds. Zaibon's population of 500,000 is already seeing a decline as young people seek other belts and other worlds — and as older people die.

With the residential/farming space stations now experiencing numerous vacancies, one suggested solution is for the system to re-invent itself as a tourist and retirement community — "The Old Belt Experience." For the moment, it is producing mild interest from investors. However, with proposed slogans like "Choose an Old, Comfortable Belt," "Come Have a Belt with Us," and the worst (and least grammatical) pun of them all, worst of all, "Suspenders Your Travel in the Old Belt," this plan certainly *can* fail. People rich enough to retire to space stations can do so in their home systems. The rest are at least cautious about Zaibon's proximity to former Sword Worlds systems.

Zaibon also boasts a new concept in the Marches: the amusement wheel. Like its on-world predecessors of other systems, the amusement wheel is devoted to recreation, for both residents and tourists.

The Ferris Wheel is a full-sized resort developed from a 200 year old dual-wheel torus. It was completely refurbished in 1106, before the outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War, with ten separate "theme parks" in its ten segments. The renovations were done as cheaply as possible to save money and time. The Advance Sophonts have arranged performances for *Cirque* in this unique facility.

During the war, the Ferris Wheel became a popular liberty port for smaller vessels. As a result, it also became a popular destination for lower-level spies from the Sword Worlds and the Zhodani Consulate. Since 120-1110, with the Armistice in place, significant attempts have been made to attract visitors from outside the system. The Ferris Wheel Entertainment Consortium considers this part of Zaibon's future: Zaibon will be both a

destination and a prototype for similar theme-stations in other systems throughout the Marches.

The Ferris Wheel is a dual Stanford Torus with a joint hub. One of the current tori is primarily a residence for employees and a food production facility. The second provides tourists with ten different “parks” to choose from, and ancillary recreation/dining/lodging facilities. Several of these parks have performance venues.

The basic functions of the park environment, along with the number of visitors from other systems combine to allow a number of adventures. Indeed, if *Cirque des Sirkas* is ahead of schedule, Captain Andii plans to spend an extra week here.

Colorful fictional characters roam throughout the less serious parks, drawn from hundreds of human traditions and thousands of years of entertainment memories. From enormous fictional cartoon rats to impossibly muscular super-heroes, these characters entertain children and expertly annoy adults. Some such characters are rumored to come from pre-spaceflight Earth; others come from the most recent animated creations of Regina. Even villains appear, in their more amusing and toned-down caricatures; Zhed the Vreeper is often seen retreating from Arturo the Adaptable and his crew. The Pink Beaker World park celebrates the mischievous animal’s adventures.

The belt is also ripe for redevelopment in a different way: station-grown crops familiar to humans fare well. One plan to revitalize the system calls for building new agricultural stations within the Habitable Zone, despite the long trip necessary to get out of the star’s massive 100-diameter limit. These tried-and-true “wheels-in-space” have low power requirements, all or most of which can be supplied by efficient solar panels to cut production costs. Lighting for plant growth can be supplied by the primary itself, with a day/night cycle provided by both mechanical shutters and higher-tech materials with varying opacity. A low rate of spin simulates gravity. Atmosphere recycling is handled by photosynthesis; most stations produce enough food to be self-sustaining. Stations with a low population density can produce a substantial surplus of food and other consumables. In addition, modern computer, robot, and nanobot manufacturing and construction techniques present real efficiencies. In essence, with sufficient energy and raw material, a massive new station shell can be erected without undue discomfort or loss of life. In-system freighters would bring the produce to stations in Orbit 11.

Local technicians and residents have sufficient experience to make this plan work. Though lacking in advertising skill, they hope to go from being miners working a dying claim to “Spinward’s Bread Basket” within two standard decades.

Other business plans include the design and manufacture of smaller habitats for the rich; plans to create retirement habitats for the Marches’ elderly rich; and, of course, plans to attract an Imperial Navy or Scout base to the port.

Summary and Referee’s Information

The Advance Sophonts’ tone is sardonic at best. “Welcome to Zaibon, the busiest bit of boredom in the Marches. You can swap a used Far Trader and a cup of coffee for a whole spinning wheel, and I wish I were kidding. People are leaving here in droves — make sure you sell the tickets while they’re actually here and not shipping out for the first star on the left.

“Seriously, Andii, this place is going downhill. It’s a good thing they have visitors in the hotels. This place is a boom town gone bust.”

After unloading the tent, animals and performers, *Cirque* and her auxiliaries will undergo basic maintenance in the Ferris Wheel’s hub. The controlled environment of the Ferris Wheel is ideal for this, as the characters can have a somewhat prolonged stay in the under-utilized hotels. The Advance Sophonts have booked several floors of the central-spoke hotel in the Pink Beaker World Hotel, which will also have its share of loud children and their rich, overly permissive parents.

Torus segments are set forth in the Table 1.

At the same time, one thing should become apparent: this is an old station that has not been nearly as well maintained as Rhylanor’s Old Station. The Ferris Wheel, an idea put into play shortly before the war, was haphazardly maintained during the actual fighting, and is being revived for civilians despite not really being ready for the masses. Its backers hung on through the war because Imperial Navy funds came in the

form of crews seeking liberty. Now the backers need to appeal to civilians with money before they will have the funds to do more than the basics — people who can and will travel away from home.

Underfunded entrepreneurs are not alone in devoting renewed attention to Zaibon. The Zhodani have also become aware of Zaibon as a result of the Fifth Frontier War. A small community of Zhodanis, mostly Proles, has taken up residence in the belt. Some were low-level agents obtaining information from low-level crews of Imperial Naval vessels. Others have left their lives as sleepers on other worlds behind, believing that the latest defeat is a harbinger of change in the Consulate. More than a few were spacers in the Zhodani fleets, forced to abandon their ships and slink to safe havens.

All told, over a thousand Zhodani have found their way to Zaibon.

These Zhodani are not likely converts to Imperial openness and freedoms. Most of these temporary residents prefer the regimented lifestyle of the Consulate. They appreciate the physical and mental health benefits available from a society which can resolve mood disorders without inkblots, daily medication regimens, and laser surgery to the amygdala.

For now, however, they must eat. While they hope to eventually repatriate to the Consulate, they must survive. New arrivals, taking their cue from the low-level agents who spent the war here, have often found residence and employment in the Ferris Wheel. Most work in the agricultural wheel, but some work in the entertainment wheel. The lion’s share of the Zhodani living in the station have found living space in the dwellings built into the terraces in the agricultural segment attached to the Team Sports segment.

Those who match the height expectations can suggest that they were raised in habitats with lower spin-generated gravity, or (as forged ID may show) that they were raised in Calit’s ill-fated Turduryev Habitat. They also fit into certain costumes in amusement segments dealing with tall cartoon characters (notably the Pink Beaker) and the Zhodani as historical enemies of the Imperium. Shorter Zhodani simply do their best to “blend” with the chaotic mélange of Imperial humans and pockets of other sophont races. They do not want to be found, and almost all expect to get back to the Consulate at some point.

Now, however, is a time for keeping their heads down. To that end, a good number of Zhodani have pooled resources and skills to take over an abandoned spinning wheel several hours away. Several hundred are already there, restarting systems and sowing crops.

Nemesis arrived at Zaibon about a week ahead of *Cirque*. He has already attempted to obtain help from the local Zhodani population and has been largely rebuffed, as the two local Zhodani with mental health training question his stability. Their view is simple: even if he is correct about their duty to the Consulate taking precedence, his growing obsession with Bertii is a danger to the vast majority of Zhodani currently keeping a low profile.

In all of his actions, Nemesis is attempting to draw Bertii out. He is, in fact, unhealthily obsessed in capturing Bertii.

The two available Zhodani mental health professionals have tried to assist Nemesis with telepathic treatment. He has refused to allow this, considering the refugee Zhodani cowards if not traitors. Because of this, he has no problem dangling them as bait to Bertii, whose own mental illness (in Nemesis’ view) renders him a threat to the Consulate. Under these circumstances, and given past failures, Nemesis has decided against making a frontal attack. Instead, he hopes to lure Bertii in, dangling the refugee Zhodani as bait, and hoping to entrap PCs or others to further goad Bertii into revealing himself so he can be disposed of as Nemesis sees fit.

Nemesis will likely be able to garner the assistance of a few Proles, if he can influence them. These will be spurred into the roles of costumed terrorists.

As with the Lunion campaign, many of the scenarios can be mixed into the main events. Thus, while the checklists follow the order set forth below, the referee may choose to either alter order, or to intermix scenarios for confusion’s sake.

Docking and Set-Up

Docking, moving the tent and animals down to the torus site, and setting up provide events worth playing out. *Cirque* will dock in the hub, where spin provides no more than microgravity. A massive, adjustable

Cirque

cradle/gantry accommodates the vessel. BT1, BT2, and BT3 are initially berthed on platforms containing standard docking cleats.

The main elevators for each segment ride tracks attached to the cables. Animals must be kept calm and “down-oriented” throughout the one-kilometer descent. This begins in microgravity and ends at one (1) standard gravity. Tent units must also move down these shafts. Their one-ton cargo containers are double-winch; cables are attached to pull them down until sufficient weight builds to move them downward. Characters can and should be assigned to supervise the essential tasks.

Air Emergency

A large chunk of rock or mislaid heavy-duty asteroid miner’s jackhammer tumbling through the orbit makes the trillion-to-one hit on the entertainment torus. All segments seal up, and air alarms blare. The players find themselves sealed into a segment with a hole big enough to allow significant air loss, and at risk of becoming larger through catastrophic failure. Repair nanobots and other systems cannot bridge the hole in time to catastrophic failure of a hull section three meters in diameter.

The station’s single external repair craft is currently unavailable due to engine maintenance. No small external work-pods are available; due to cost concerns, the Corporation only has one unit capable of the work, and it is currently on loan to another station. The nearest skilled, external help is at least three hours away, and the air is bleeding *now*.

Equipped with emergency equipment, sealing patches and even bits and pieces of carnival rides, the players must patch the hole and reinforce the structure. The referee should of course impose a timetable, and make failure possible. The referee may sacrifice a minor NPC to the first failed attempt to prevent escaping pressure from enlarging the hole; such events remind players that the referee need not be sentimental toward beloved player characters.

Once the emergency patches are in place and holding, someone will have to conduct an EVA to complete proper repairs. An excursion will include rappelling from the hub down the exterior of a cable to reach the correct location on the hull.

Ride Failure

Several segments of the torus (e.g., the Scout Adventure) have complicated “Flying Cables,” interlocked webs that allow individuals to “fly” through computer-controlled, pre-programmed rides. Much like the roller coasters enjoyed on many worlds, these are thrill rides. The riders are harnessed in and sent careening through the open air, past sights and sounds, their protective headgear transmitting images and sounds to supplement the frightening process.

Other rides and amusements of smaller scales exist. “Pink Beaker World,” geared toward younger patrons, has amusement rides comparable to any seen on old Vland.

Equipment of any type can fail. Failure can range from a simple jammed gear to a catastrophic failure.

Not surprisingly, such a failure will occur when the players are near. Whether it is simply a jam that suspends the riders for hours, or the partial collapse of a high-speed tumbling ride built by the lowest bidder (and thus built without the necessary elements to compensate for the additional stress of station spin), the players can expect to put their ingenuity and equipment to use in rescue, repair, medical care, and crowd control, as Ferris Wheel’s paid staff often flounders with these issues.

One notable delight of “gravity” generated by spinning a torus is that grav belts and other high-tech anti-gravity will be ineffective. The gravitic systems are too far from any large mass to properly interact. Thus, players will have to use ropes to lift, climb, and rappel down from higher points.

This event is a simple breakdown. Nonetheless, Nemesis will take advantage of it, leaving a note near the station management offices claiming that Ine Givar terrorists are behind the failure.

Foul Play

The PCs decide to take in a relaxing game of Capture the Flag, or are nudged into it by Andii at the request of a young Baronet who is at the Ferris Wheel with his/her retinue. Among them may be Javert, even if he

is a non-player character. The relatively bland Baronet (male or female) is from another system within the subsector, and is exploring the idea of investing in the Ferris Wheel.

Upon entry, they are thoroughly searched for actual weapons; any found are taken and stored. They are handed their non-lethal paintball weapons (the paint is fully washable and organic; each team is issued a specific color) and goggles, and are allowed to take the field and join a team for a tournament-style game of Capture the Flag. The players join with the rest of their new “team,” many of whom they do not know. The Baronet chooses to (or is assigned to) the PCs’ team to balance matters out; all of the members of his/her retinue are on the opposing team or teams.

The play begins. Some of it is rough, all of it fun. The referee should run the players through several combats and encounters. During the game, the players may have opportunity to note that Javert is really much better with a gun than a stage hand ought to be.

A burst of paintballs erupts from a thicket. The noble collapses and drops into a coma within seconds. His or her vital signs are crashing. Attempts to revive him/her are useless; the Baronet dies. The PCs or Javert will notice that the paintballs not only are a color not issued to any team on the field, they have an unusual odor as well. Anyone who touches the paint or the paintball’s shell will feel a tingling sensation; the paint contains a nerve-poison which (fortunately) evaporates and dissipates rapidly when exposed to the air. Special nano-transport molecules allow it to tunnel into epithelial tissues and from there into the blood stream. It is deadly when sufficient quantities contact the skin and are absorbed into the circulatory system.

The paintball attacker in the thicket cannot be found. The otherwise standard weapon has been left behind with more of the improperly colored paintballs. No fingerprints or DNA are to be found.

All individuals in the segment will be required to turn in their weapons. Each will be inspected for improper paintballs. No other weapon has them. Eventually, it will be noted that there is one paintball gun too many. The murder weapon is marked and numbered as property of the Ferris Wheel company, but is one that had not been issued for this paintball event. This should *not* be noted before the due diligence of questioning (obvious clues are always overlooked in mystery stories).

Javert may say something unintelligible into a comm. Regardless, the death is quickly noted. Loudspeakers and comms all carry the same message: “This Torus Segment has been sealed. All patrons will disarm and present themselves at their main base for inspection and searches.”

Legal arguments from the players will fail. The belt’s legal system is not overly particular about warrants, probable cause, or providing counsel during interrogation. The only good news is that none of the PCs fired the deadly paintball. A further announcement is made: everyone in the torus segment will be required to stay there for further questioning. The management notes that camping gear and meals will be provided.

If present, Javert will have been speaking softly in the comm during the searches. When done, he will suggest that a search be commenced for the culprit. Javert suggests starting by questioning everyone to determine who had opportunity and motive.

Most of the Baronet’s retinue had motive, as it turns out: there was a cheating spouse, a jilted lover, a rival noble, a vengeful cousin, a wronged subordinate, and an ambitious sibling. The referee can prepare details, or make them up on the spot. However, they are all red herrings. None of them had anything to do with the death. The actual killer is Nemesis, who teleported into and then out of the segment.

After questioning is done, the segment will be unsealed, and all characters allowed to go on their way.

This scenario may be used to highlight Javert’s decision to take charge, and his ability to handle criminal investigations. Halfway through the trip to Regina, Javert has started displaying an uncommon knowledge of simple interrogation and other basic forensic techniques. If they have not realized it before, the players will become aware that Javert is more than a stagehand through this interaction.

Biological Emergency

The players join a tour of the agricultural torus linked to Ferris Wheel itself. The management is showing off its efficient methods to an agricultural consortium considering adoption of the local techniques. The

Cirque

Segment	Name	Environment
1	Waterpark	Subtropical
2	"Pink Beaker World" (Basic Rides and Amusements based on the Ubiquitous Children's Animation series, "The Pink Beaker.")	Temperate
3	Aslan and Vargr and Droyne, Oh My! (Exhibitions and rides related to three other Major Races in the Marches)	Temperate
4	Primitive Worlds Resort ("Roughing It, As If")	Temperate/Rough Terrain
5	Zoo/Aviary/Aquarium	Temperate with Enclosures
6	Team Sports Park	Temperate
7	Scout Adventure Theme Park, Arcades and Museum (Includes Cable-Coaster Ride)	Temperate
8	Old Earth Adventures Theme Park and Museum (An Old-West Show Con-fabulated with Asian, Indian, South American Native, Middle Eastern, and Inuit Culture)	Temperate
9	Old Vland Theme Park	Temperate
10	Ultimate Capture the Flag Live Park	Temperate/Rough Terrain
11	Fruit Orchard 1	Temperate
12	Fruit Orchard 2	Temperate
13	Processing Plants	Temperate
14	Vegetable Protein	Temperate
15	Animal Protein	Temperate
16	Amber Waves of Grain 1	Temperate
17	Amber Waves of Grain 2	Temperate
18	Veggies 1	Temperate
19	Veggies 2	Temperate
20	Rice Paddy	Sub-Tropical

The Pink Beaker

The Pink Beaker is a non-speaking mischievous prankster. Its gender is unclear. It is pursued by a number of villains in the various short holo-films, including Inspector Inept, Victor Vargr, Lord Tree Rat the King of Thieves, Herbert Hoover (a bloodvark) and similar evildoers. In the time-honored tradition, the Pink Beaker is generally inoffensive and not the aggressor. More often than not, elaborate plans go wrong, and the Pink Beaker goes on its merry, jazz-accompanied way.

vegetation and animals in this torus are all essentially Terran or Terran-compatible.

Someone in the group notices some unusual: blue-grey spots on the green vegetation. A closer look and comparison with computer data reveals that the spots look like Gamer's Blight, a minor plant virus when found on its native world. Vilani plants are immune, but Terran plant stock has never developed any resistance. All of the crops aboard station are at risk. Indeed, all Terran flora within the system is at risk. If the blight is carried to other stations, food supplies could quickly grow short.

Standard precautions are immediately put in place. The contaminated segment (adjacent to the Team Sports segment) is sealed. No one may leave or enter until the spots are properly identified. Any players skilled in botany, including former scouts, will be dragooned into the research effort. Players with military or police skills will find themselves pressed into security tasks, preventing entry or exit. Entertainers may find themselves on the front lines of the battle against panic, looking for ways to calm the populace.

During the investigation, the PCs should be hard pressed not to notice the large number of tall, somewhat stoic residents of the segment. However, all of these Zhodani have adequate identification as Imperial citizens. Indeed, PCs aware of details of Bertii's cover identity may note with interest that at least fifty were born on Calit in the Tsudurvya habitat. Others are stated to be their children or descendants of such refugees. This is a clue which should not be sprung out as obvious; if an NPC, Bertii will maintain silence. He will know that it is better to stay quiet and work out the eventual capture of these Zhodani than to have the locals botch the matter.

Analysis of the plant virus eventually allays the concern: the spots are not Gamer's Blight. They are caused by a much less dangerous plant virus, one known to have originated in Zhodani space. It does not destroy the plants outright, but reduces the harvest yield. The precautions will be lifted after steps are taken to eradicate the contaminated plants and put monitoring systems into place to prevent a reoccurrence of the blight.

The fair question will be how the plant virus got into the station. Reasonable steps are taken to keep all sources of serious infection off of the torus, and from cross-contaminating other segments. For example, anyone who may have been exposed to dangerous flora or microorganisms must undergo a decontamination cleansing. Sabotage will of course be suspected, and of course it points at Zhodani agents.

Regardless, the clean-up will begin before all analysis is complete. All contaminated vegetation must be incinerated; the PCs can put their plasma and fusion weapons to good use. Surface soil is presumed to be contaminated as well, and it will be treated to hard UV light for several days by angling the mirror and opening filters on the segment's upper skin. People will have to stay out of the open areas of the segment during that time, or wear space-rated protective suits. The characters may be pushed into crowd control and technical support for this process. With some 5,000 people suddenly residing in the various segments of the entertainment hub, sanitation, crowd control, and feeding the overflow will have to be improvised. Looters with protective gear (or not caring about future serious skin cancers) may go through residences in the residential/agricultural torus (people are no different in the far future). Finally, other scenarios may take place against the crowding in the entertainment torus.

After all of this, however, soil samples will reveal that the plant virus was not heavily concentrated in any of the soil samples. This will be a surprise as it is a virus that takes advantage of nitrogen from the soil. The spots observed correlate to a much higher soil concentration. The evidence will suggest that it was instead applied to the affected crops by a single misting; only a little entered the plants through the soil. Once again, the culprit will have been Nemesis.

Costumed Terrorists

Nemesis will be able to convince a few Zhodani with military backgrounds that their duty requires an action against the Imperium. The war is not yet over in his view. Nemesis is prepared to use any weapon, including his own people, to flush out Bertii. His obsession is worsening.

Brightly colored costumes and masked characters present the perfect opportunity for a “no return” mission. A group of ten Zhodani, some with military training, are prepared to use stolen or mimicked entertainer’s costumes to hide their identities and weapons. Oversized masks conceal combat visual systems stripped from armor or vacuum suits.

Nemesis has planned this attack, and has used his telepathic skills to condition these Proles. They will start in the Pink Beaker World Park, take captives, and set explosives. A weak structural member has been identified along the highest terrace level of the northern wall. Properly spaced, the charges will open a breach several meters wide. Unlike the prior breach, this breach will result in rapid decompression.

A warning about the plan comes to *Cirque* shortly before it is executed. Andii receives an electronic communication routed through her personal (and private) comm. It states the time and place (under thirty minutes hence), but not the precise methods. Nemesis is behind this message, of course, hoping to draw out Bertii.

The message may be a fraud, or not. Andii chooses to err on the side of caution and contacts the Ferris Wheel’s security office, only to be told that due to cash flow problems, they have experienced severe layoffs since the end of the war. They have only ten individuals available for a response to a threat of that level. They beg Andii for assistance in trying to head off what would surely be a catastrophe.

Andii will field anyone capable of fighting and willing to do so. Thespian, among others, will offer to help, and may even share out some of his character wafers imbued with combat skills to assist. With only a short time before the terrorists’ h-hour, the characters must travel to the Pink Beaker World, get children and others out of the way, and look for clues. Park employees, entertainers, and patrons are asked to leave or shelter in place.

These announcements of course goad the costumed terrorists to act before they are all in position. Weapons come out and shots are fired. The terrorists with the explosives are not yet in position, but are moving toward the weak point.

The scenario plays out in the pandemonium. The PCs must deal with immediate violence, and are told in the midst of those events that costumed characters with their masks removed are attaching something to the exterior wall.

Crowd-Scene Chase

This will almost certainly involve one or more of the costumed terrorists, escaping after those setting the explosives have been thwarted. A small number of the terrorists strip off their costumes and make a run for it as the tide of their attack turns.

The fugitives will lead the pursuit through the various environments: amusement-park rides, an active paintball or laser-tag match, the exciting “cable-race” ride in the Imperial Battles segment, and possibly even the Pink Beaker Princess Castle. For this to be an exciting pursuit, the referee may allow the fugitives to elude capture several times by sacrifice, trickery, emotional blackmail, and simple misfortune.

Even in the seriousness of pursuing terrorists, lighter moments may occur. Plate glass may be shattered and food carts overturned. Staid and frumpy dowagers of any gender and species may be humiliated with overturned garbage cans and catapulted cream pies. This is the classic twenty-minute Hollywood chase through a crowded city/amusement park/sports arena. The fugitives may shake off pursuit at one point, requiring the PCs to backtrack. It may also include conflict with the local police/security forces, who (despite their low numbers and relative lack of competence) consider the adventurers to be interlopers rather than assistance. *Cirque*’s animals may be used, such as bloodvarks and kian.

If the fleeing terrorists are captured alive, they may live long enough to tell their story. If Nemesis can plausibly terminate them, he will. The referee should be reminded that Nemesis is a teleporter, and can use this to enter rooms he can properly visualize.

The Note

The station is on edge, to say the least. Incidents may occur against anyone tall, regardless of actual origin. Neighbor suspects neighbor. An accidental shooting takes place, injuring a child. Anyone with sense can feel an old-style witch hunt frenzy building and ready to burst.

A note written on old-fashioned paper appears on Andii’s desk aboard *Cirque*. The message on it is short, written both in Anglic and Zhdant. “We offer our surrender to the Commander of *Cirque* under the condition that we be treated in accord with the terms of existing treaties and agreements between our governments. We accept your right to prosecute some of us. Combatants request the right of repatriation. We will identify the source of the recent attacks on innocent civilians. A list of all Zhodani in the Zaibon belt will be provided to you if accept our surrender.”

The referee should treat this as a good-faith offer by the refugees (the PCs, of course, may be suspicious). Few of the Zhodani left behind after the war have intended to keep the war going. They have simply sought to return to the Consulate without risking trials or mistreatment.

The PCs may engage in debate with Andii over the decision. Others may attempt to interfere with Andii’s decision as well. Zaibon’s own Knight will be against treating them as “anything but the mind-ripping scum they are.” The commander of the Knight’s personal task force (two aging frigates and a corvette, or similar vessels) is not currently actively assigned to the Imperial Navy, but joins the Knight in that assessment. They will argue that they outrank Andii, who is in command of a reserve vessel, and currently without active rank (and they may be correct). The conflict may become interesting, and threats of denouncement made.

The referee may choose to roll through the conflict as arguments go back and forth, especially if Andii is a PC. In addition, the argument can lead to confrontation, as the Knight sends his/her few Huscarles to arrest Andii.

Fortunately, if needed, an active IN cruiser and its escorts enter the system. The commander of the patrol has the right to make decisions, and will decide to accept the surrender conditions. The surrender should be played out. The Zhodani will get their wish; they will be temporarily segregated in the old spinning wheel they are refurbishing, well away from others. The Knight’s forces and one of the cruiser’s escorts will be set to guard that wheel, and the Knight’s corvette sent ahead to the nearest IN base to obtain assistance.

Unfortunately (for the referee’s future information), seventeen Zho are missing when the roll is called. All are rumored to have been members of the elite Consular Guard with Commando training. Nemesis is also nowhere to be found. The yacht formerly owned by the Baronet murdered in Foul Play leaves the system though none of the Baronet’s retinue or crew are aboard.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I: Docking and Set-Up

- ☐ *Cirque* pulls close to Ferris Wheel. If a PC is an experienced pilot/astrogator, Andii may allow the PC to bring the vessel to the cradle. Auxiliaries enter separately. To safely cradle *Cirque* or any of her auxiliaries: Difficult (3D) < (C2 + Pilot) (a mishap causes minor bumps and dings; spectacular failure results in severe damage to the cradle, for which *Cirque* must compensate the station).
- ☐ With the locks sealed, tent containers are moved down the main shaft to the Water Park Torus. The performances are to occur in the open-air. The base frames, however, are to be set up, and screens will prevent non-paying guests from watching.
- ☐ During the moving process, the performing animals get fidgety. To keep animals calm during transition: Difficult (3D) < (C6 + Animal Handling). On failure, an animal acts out and panics. This is more serious with larger animals. On spectacular failure, the animal escapes the lift. If the animal falls, the result will be fatal.
- ☐ Small animals and performers are put up in a suite in the Water Park Hotel. Larger animals have an enclosure at “ground” level.

Cirque

Act II: Air Emergency

- ☐ Alarms wail. A major air leak emergency is declared.
- ☐ The segment in which the players are located seals off.
- ☐ Insufficient airtight shelters exist for all of the people in the segment (the owners of the Ferris Wheel have skimped, as did the owners of the *Titanic*).
- ☐ Repair crews cannot be located. See note above.
- ☐ Locate and exam the damaged hull. The players are fortunately close.
- ☐ To estimate the time before catastrophic failure: Average (2D) < (Edu + Engineering). A good estimate is forty-five minutes. The clock begins ticking.
- ☐ Until catastrophic failure, the pressure loss is the equivalent of a slow leak from an inner tube.
- ☐ Emergency over-rides to get help from other segments fail. See prior notes.
- ☐ The players must go below the “soil-holding” decks into a sub-deck, locate repair plating, repair epoxy, other tools and equipment and get all to the surface level. This will involve locating heavy lifting equipment (e.g., machinery recognizable today or “titan” battle dress).
- ☐ The hole is in the hull behind the third “glacial valley” tier. The players must cut or push through the store, restaurant and apartment walls to access the breach and glue the plate against the affected wall.
- ☐ Once the segment is secure, it can be re-opened.
- ☐ PCs (or other *Cirque* crew) may be asked to assist with the additional repairs and sealing, from inside and outside.
- ☐ Working from the outside may require rappelling down from the hub in order to give the PCs the experience of hanging from a thread on a spinning wheel. To rappel safely down from the hub: Difficult (3D) < (End + Zero-G). The alternative is to use BT2, BT3, or another craft unsuited for the job and to maintain a parallel trajectory with the hole in the hull without the proper grapples to latch onto the hull: Staggering (5D) < (Int + Pilot + (Computer Model Number - 1)). To repair and reinforce the structure: Average < (Dex + (Higher of Craftsman or Polymers)).
- ☐ PCs may wish to follow up with Ferris Wheel Entertainment Consortium executives to discuss shoddy work and insufficient equipment. Andii and U’aili will insist on civility, and absolutely forbid punching, kicking and spitting.

Act III: Ride Failure

- ☐ A ride fails. Referee should determine details of failure: snagged cables, a ferris wheel snagged, etc.
- ☐ Tasks: rescue trapped characters. This will include various tasks suited to acrobats, aerialists, and other performers, as well as more traditional PCs. The makeup of the PC party should determine the nature of the assistance provided.
- ☐ Generate medical tasks as appropriate to aide injured characters.
- ☐ Nemesis may interfere. Other Zhodani NPCs may use psionic skills to assist, perhaps clueing the PCs in to their existence (e.g., using telekinesis to slow a PC who has fallen).

Act IV: Foul Play

- ☐ PCs are brought into a game of capture-the-flag paintball. They are teamed with a young Baronet.
- ☐ The Baronet is struck on exposed skin (back of hand, neck) by several paintballs, and dies.
- ☐ The torus segment is sealed.

- ☐ Investigation begins. A paintball gun is found with unusually colored paintballs.
- ☐ Investigation of the paintballs and/or the Baronet’s skin demonstrates that a nerve poison was used.
- ☐ Paintball guns are collected. At some point, one extra will be noted.
- ☐ Go through red herrings by interrogation.
- ☐ Analysis of the nerve poison will demonstrate that it is of Zhodani origin.
- ☐ The murderer is not discovered.

Act V: Biological Emergency

- ☐ The PCs are brought on a tour of the agricultural wheel. This is one of those dull “noblesse oblige” things which must be done.
- ☐ While in the segment adjacent to the sports fields, spots are noted on the leaves of the Terran plants. To recognize the apparent signs of *Gamer’s Blight*: Average < (Edu + Biology). If a character does not recognize it, someone on station staff certainly will.
- ☐ Crowd control may be required as the torus segment is evacuated, rumors cause panic and overcrowding causes tempers to flair.
- ☐ Obtain samples of the soil and the plants in the contaminated torus segment.
- ☐ Obtain samples of the soil and the plants in other torus segments.
- ☐ Burn apparently affected plants.
- ☐ Expose the environment to UV light.
- ☐ To analyze the microorganism, including growing same and testing using appropriate chemicals and protocols: Average < (Edu + Biology) (process requires two days to grow, isolate and test the microorganism itself, including various chemical tests as well as DNA analysis).
- ☐ Re-establish appropriate microorganisms.

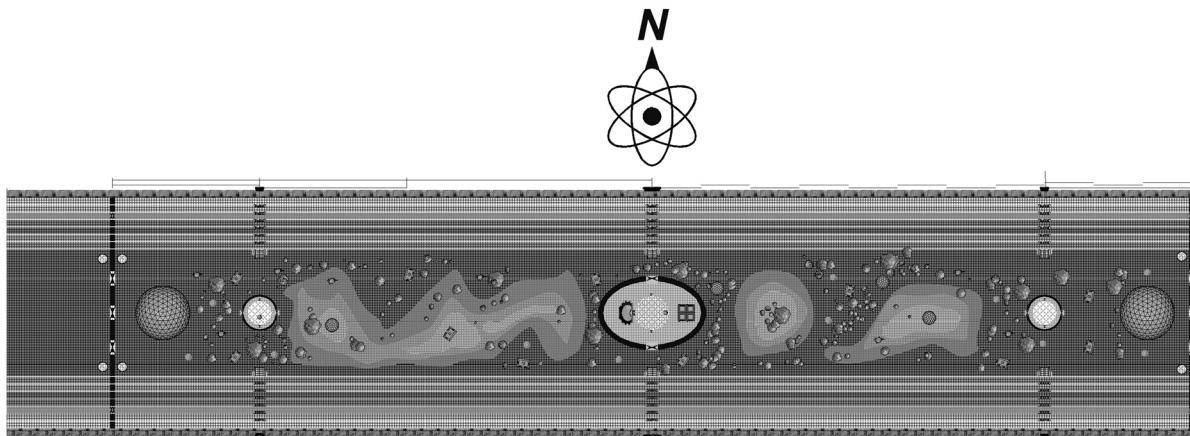
Act VI: Costumed Terrorists

- ☐ Andii receives an electronic communication warning of an imminent Ine Givar terrorist attack in the Pink Beaker World torus segment park. She has thirty minutes or fewer to get people in place to avert a bloodbath. Andii opens up her weapons cache and accepts service from anyone with appropriate training or mere guts.
- ☐ Evacuation and shelter in place communications are issued. Station security has an inadequate presence to field a proper tactical team. PCs start moving people out of public spaces.
- ☐ The attack begins as the PCs are getting ready. Ten Zhodani, most in character costumes, reveal weapons and start shooting.
- ☐ A subgroup group of costumed terrorists work toward the highest northern terrace level to set the explosives. This becomes a race against time to stop them before they place the explosives and blow the station. They should have sufficient cover and armor that they cannot be simply picked off using laser fire.
- ☐ Unless the PCs are very lucky, several of the terrorists escape, leading into the next scenario.

Act VI: Crowd-Scene Chase

- ☐ Several of the terrorists escape, and begin running.
- ☐ This is a running battle.
- ☐ The fugitives may get out of sight long enough to strip off their costumes.
- ☐ The chase takes the PCs through various milieus and situations, following as many clichés as the referee wishes to use.
- ☐ Cliché: captive child, gun to the head.
- ☐ Cliché: trash receptacles, boxes, and other random items pushed over to trip up the PCs.

Capture the Flag Segment



- ☐ Cliché: a fleeing suspect steals an electric vehicle to ride away.
- ☐ Cliché: a fleeing suspect rushes into a cable ride. A PC must also jump into a harness several behind. As the ride goes around corners and hanging obstacles, the PC and the suspect exchange fire.
- ☐ Cliché: messy things are thrown, and people are struck.
- ☐ Cliché: plate glass is shattered.
- ☐ Cliché: the pursuit leads the PCs into various shops, destroying merchandise.
- ☐ Cliché: the pursuit disrupts people eating.
- ☐ Cliché: the pursuit enters the "Capture the Flag" park. Game and reality become confused.
- ☐ Cliché: the pursuit ends in a glorious fistfight.

Act VII: The Note

- ☐ One or more incidents of nervous over-reaction occur. These can happen in the PCs' presence, or merely be reported.
- ☐ A note on paper appears in Andii's office. Literally appears, teleported by an adept. The note offers conditional surrender of about 1,000 Zhodani on the Ferris Wheel and a previously abandoned station (see text).
- ☐ Andii discusses the offer first with her trusted senior advisors. Bertii believes this is a genuine offer.
- ☐ Discussion with the local Knight indicates opposition. The Knight believes that the enemy should be engaged. The commanders of his/

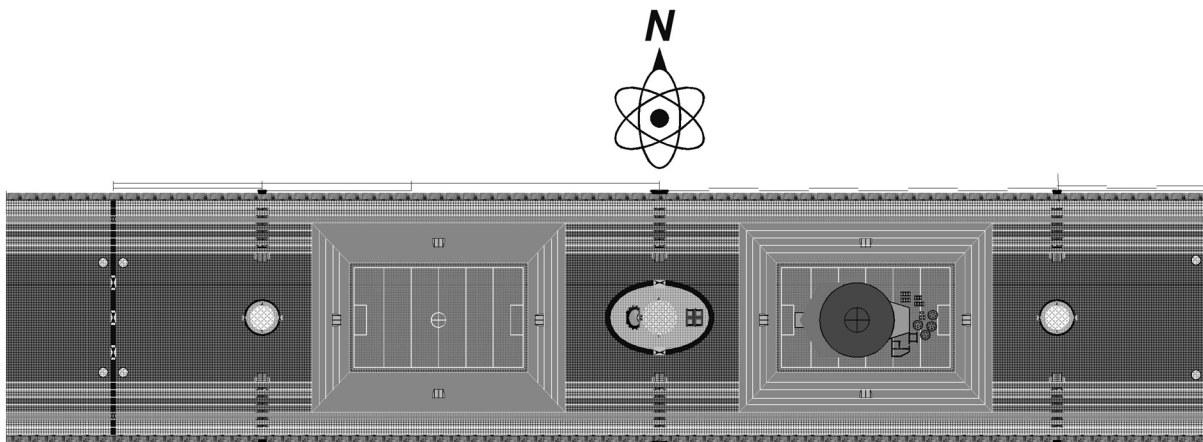
her private patrol claim to have the authority to make a military decision to refuse the surrender.

- ☐ Conflict may erupt between Andii and the other commanders. The Knight's few Huscarles will approach *Cirque* and seek to take control. Andii will prepare to defend.
- ☐ An Imperial Navy Patrol enters the system. Its commanding officer agrees with Andii. Indeed, Norris has expressly ordered that the terms of the cease-fire be observed. The surrender is to be accepted. The Navy Patrol activates the commissions of the Knight's vessels and places them under direct IN command.
- ☐ The local Knight is unhappy. For once, Cirque des Sirkas has made an enemy in the nobility. Fortunately, this one is not powerful.

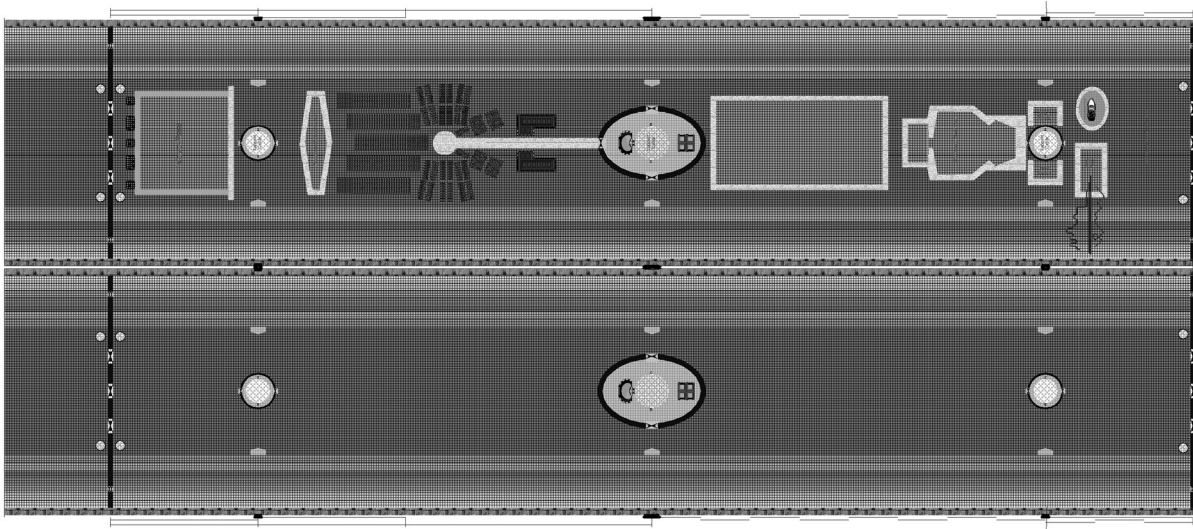
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- ☐ As *Cirque* exits Ferris Wheel's hub, another vessel is detected at far range. Its transponder identifies it as a Scout/Courier on detached duty. It is soon at a safe jump distance away, and disappears into jumpspace. The yacht owned by the estate of a recently deceased baronet (see **Foul Play**) is also gone. All of the yacht's passengers and crew remain on the Ferris Wheel, detained until the investigation is completed.
- ☐ A tall Zhodani suddenly appears in front of the PCs. "We surrendered because we are sane," the Zho says in impeccable Anglic. "Ezhiakla Chanjvliblsta is much less sane than your Bertii, and we do not consider Bertii entirely sane. Stay vigilant. The T'sirk is not yet done." The Zho disappears as silently as she appeared.

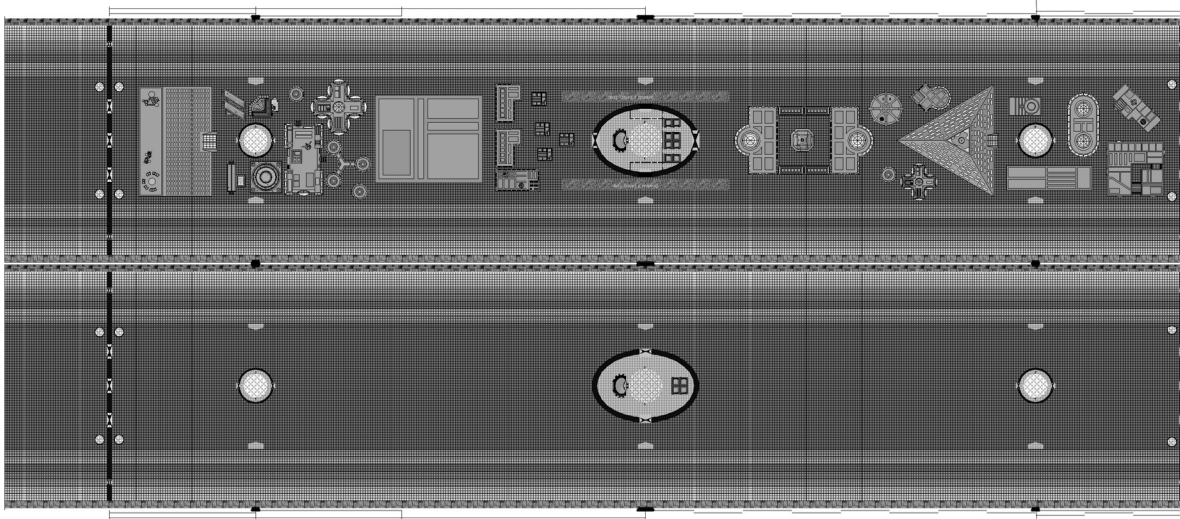
Sports Arena Segment



Water Park Segment



Pink Beaker World Segment



Episode 12: Harvest Moons

Hofud • Spinward Marches 1524

B666853-A • F • Ga Ri Pa Ph • 601 Sw/BW • G6 V M9V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Oh, I love farm worlds. You know that, right? Yeah. I've said that before. Farming. Guiding the plow behind yoked miniphants. Milking the chickens and getting eggs from the horses like they did on Old Terra. Fresh air and real food.

All that fresh air and good living's enough to make an old admiral suicidal. Give me the stink of a carrier any day.

Hofud, though, I can't complain about. Another sweet little farm world to visit. A little smaller and a touch drier than Vland or Earth. The Spinward Marches would be the breadbasket of the Imperium if it was just a little closer to Capitol. The difference between Hofud and a bunch of other farm worlds – well, the obvious one is that those damned Sword Worlders are running the show. That makes it a touchier place to visit, sometimes. They want to be friends, but then they look over their shoulder as if they expect the Zhodani Thought Police.

I'll say this for Hofud. It's well organized. Run on the scientific method. The people are a bit nicer than the average Sword Worlder. They make some money out of their exports, and they've built up a nice enough port. It has good facilities, too – military and commercial. Heck, Hofud would make a lovely addition to the Marches. I've said so more than once to the folks there, when I've been negotiating for Sharurshid.

A few of them even look a bit thoughtful. "One more foolish war," one high-end vintner said, before she shut up and got all tight-lipped. She taught me about the folly of looking over one nice figure instead of looking closely at a spreadsheet *full* of figures, if you get my drift. But it still worked out. That's one source of fine wine locked up nicely by Sharurshid, even if it cost a few extra credits.

Hofud runs up a particularly nice line of wines, ales, and other alcoholic beverages. They say that there's something a little different in the local fermenting organisms, probably caused by all of the dust that gets into their atmosphere. That ring of theirs drops a lot. Whatever it is, it's nice. I pick up a private stock of my own whenever I get the chance.

The Harvest Festivals are always good parties, too. That time of the year in the 'northern' hemisphere, almost all of the moons are bright and full – they're tide-locked, all but two, and in fairly low orbits. And there's a meteor shower at the same time – dust and rock streaming along behind the 'Three-year Swarm.' Even a few big rocks. So the harvest dances are lit from above, and open-air. Those are pretty nice times. Some of the dances are rustic, some of them are high-dress balls. If you don't get to at least ten dances after the harvest is in, you're either a nasty old spinster or you should bathe more often.

And that's the place to make friends and allies. That tight-fisted vintner...she does a tango that near enough fractured my hip the last time I was there. And she's a tease...keeps smiling and saying, "One more foolish Zho war, and I'll marry you." Not quite a reason to provoke the mind-melters, but...tempting. If you want to be married, anyway.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1107.

General Data (Players)

Most of Hofud's 520 million residents live on the larger of the two continents, Ofrein. The smaller continent, Baaten, is far less populated, with a population of only 60 million.

Prior to the Fifth Frontier War, Hofud was a member of the Sword Worlds Confederation. Its proximity to the border with the Spinward Marches made it strategically important to the Sword Worlds. Its orbital bases had traditionally been important refueling and restocking centers for Sword Worlds military forces. As a result, Hofud was occupied by Imperial forces during the Fifth Frontier War. It was one of the first of the occupied worlds willing to support the Imperium, at least officially.

Sharurshid is credited with having a strong influence on this decision. From 1103 through 1108, Sharurshid built important links with the vintners and brewers of this temperate world. The higher prices obtained for their fine drinkables in the Marches influenced the local feudal technocracy to be favorably disposed toward the Imperial government.

The official friendliness, however, is not shared by all. To the contrary, a significant underground has developed. Opposition cells have formed, sometimes loosely interconnected, and sometimes entirely independent. Some members of the governing technocracy itself did not wish to leave the Sword Worlds in the first place, and are still in a position to aid the opposition. Small terrorist attacks have occurred, and though this activity has not been significant enough to merit an "Amber Zone" alert, safety in numbers is not guaranteed on this world at the current time.

On 067-1111, Sharurshid received significant terrorist threats, and several incendiaries were lobbed at the office building it rented. Thereafter, it relocated all of its off-port offices and personnel to the downport and surrounding startown. Increased security has been put in place.

Despite these issues, as of early 1111 complicated negotiations have been in motion toward the establishment of the Border Worlds Confederation. The new polity is expected to consist of the ten occupied worlds, plus Sacnoth and Tyrffing, with Sting expected to become the primary world in the client state. The end result is that the Border Worlds will become an Imperial client state, rather than an occupied territory. The factions pulling the Border Worlds together are relying on Hofud's reputation for rationality and its significant role as an agricultural producer to provide stability to the prospective buffer state.

Physically, Hofud is unusual in that it has no fewer than 11 moons (all captured asteroids) and a dust ring, unusual features for anything but a gas giant. The moons are generally small and in lower orbits. Most are tide-locked.

The large number of captured moons is believed to have originated with a cluster of asteroids which sweep through the system in an elliptical orbit every three years. The occasional intersection of the orbits allows for the occasional capture. The same intersections in the eons before human settlement resulted in a collision between a moon and an asteroid, disintegrating both and resulting in the dust ring. As noted by Admiral Lee, the northern hemisphere's harvests correspond to passage through this ellipsis.

The moon in the lowest orbit (Rousse), serves as Hofud's up-port. It is a roughly cylindrical, irregular rock twelve kilometers long and varying in thickness, but generally around seven kilometers thick. It orbits the

world once every four and one-half (4.5) standard hours. Docking towers have been erected at intervals along the surface. These allow ships of various sizes to latch on for fuel, cargo, and personnel transfers. Piping has been run from various tanks. Habitats have been drilled under the surface, eliminating the need for expensive radiation shielding.

Summary and Referee's Information

The Advance Sophonts await *Cirque* as she comes inbound. The initial reports are not encouraging. "Andii, some folks here aren't entirely happy with the Imperium, or Sharurshid. A lot of folks want to stay in the Sword Worlds, no matter what the government says, and all of that. You maybe ought to rethink this stop. Not that you will, I'm sure. And hell, you've been through a lot already, so maybe I should just let you be.

"Now, here's the deal. You have two options: a berth on the downport, with good security and limited access. Room to put up the tent. That's what I personally recommend.

"The other option is a huge vineyard run by an agro-combine. Good access, lots of flat fields – and it's one of Sharurshid's big customers. They've just signed an exclusive contract to ship via Sharurshid. They're bidding hard for the circus site, promising security, promising the world. The government's on board with them. It has good access, but it's a little mountainous. You'll have to keep your eyes open if you go this way. But it would be great PR, not that I like it."

As a major sponsor of the tour, Sharurshid has encouraged Andii to set up off-port wherever possible. In addition, Admiral Lee's favorite vintner, Gudrid Grettisdóttir, owns the land proposed for the performances. She has seen Lee within the past several weeks, though he has apparently left the planet on another Sharurshid errand.

Grettisdóttir is somewhat anomalous in the Sword Worlds culture. Though the culture is not fully homogenous, a level of sexism has been retained from the hard, early years of colonization. Women are not often found as leaders and movers of men, even on a relatively peaceful world like Hofud.

Grettisdóttir and the local Sharurshid representatives have received identical encrypted and verifiable communications from Lee. Lee urges that Andii accept her offer to host the performances, and indicates that she is an important link in Sharurshid's growing business ties. "And just now," Lee's message ends, "What's good for Sharurshid is good for the Marches."

Grettisdóttir is offering the use of a portion of her primary vineyard complex as the circus' site at no cost to *Cirque*. This represents a significant savings, and will render the vineyard a major sponsor. Grettisdóttir also has prepared a gift for Duke Norris: one hundred bottles of long-aged, high-quality wine. This is to be delivered by *Cirque* along with the other materials for the Holiday celebration. Thus, there will be contact with Grettisdóttir regardless of whether Andii accepts her offer or not.

Grettisdóttir's holdings are massive. Among the most beautiful is her personal estate, Himinbjörg, in the foothills of the Bifrost Alps. The estate is the centerpiece of her holdings, and includes a large working vineyard, a winery, several extensive wine cellars, and a number of dwellings for herself and friends. Himinbjörg's winery is also a tourist attraction of sorts, and so has parking for buses (both wheeled and gravitic). Several open-air "tourist trams" provide transportation for groups who visit the winery. Parking is sufficient for the thousands of spectators expected for *Cirque des Sirkas*' performances.

Save for the portions beneath the foundations, Grettisdóttir's main Villa is walled with massive windows and doors of vacuum-insulated double-paned glass, framed by the finest local hardwoods. The structural components are again hardwood, with external walls made of well-worn stones. A large main hall is made almost entirely of glass, including huge skylights which grant visitors spectacular views of the night skies when the lights are dimmed. The overall effect is lush, rich, and at the same time airy and open.

Before Grettisdóttir's Harvest Ball, the PCs will have encounters, both friendly and unfriendly. With the population divided upon the logical necessity of joining the Border Worlds Confederation and accepting the role of an Imperial client state, Sword World loyalists may willfully choose to make personalized statements such as sneering, spitting, punching, offering to duel, offering to brawl, and other shows of bravado.

While the security in place will prevent any weapons from being brought into performances, various acts of civil disobedience may occur. Some of the simplest will be the use of old-fashioned flash photography at pivotal moments during performances in the hope of distracting a performer. A coordinated burst of flashes while one of the aerial performers is involved in an intricate maneuver could cause a fall into the net. This might also provide the circus with a riot to quell, as Loyalists and Realists struggle in their seats.

The Sword World Loyalists have established a temporary base on another of the 11 moons, Blonde. This is only slightly higher in orbit than Rouse, completing an orbit in just over five hours. However, its orbit is not equatorial, passing over a large swath of the planet in successive orbits. Blonde has previously been used as a weather-recording station, but no other serious use has been made of the moon.

With assistance from the Sword Worlds, the Loyalists have obtained an artillery craft of the same design as BT1. Each of the bays contain two simple magnetic-induction mass drivers to launch iron-rich rock projectiles (essentially old-fashioned cannonballs) up to one meter in diameter. Each of the mass drivers are capable of launching projectiles in relatively rapid succession (one every 15 seconds). Projectiles can be fired on short or long trajectories, depending on desired impact place and time. These projectiles are quite large enough to survive entry through the atmosphere, but small enough to evade casual radar tracking. Projectiles strike with substantial kinetic force. This weapon tactic minimizes the projectile expense and maximize the effect of the unexpected multiple strikes.

The Loyalists plan to launch a burst during Grettisdóttir's Harvest Ball. Targets will include Grettisdóttir's estate and the circus craft, but will not take place during a performance. This will minimize deaths of children and other innocents (public relations must be considered by revolutionaries, even when the tactics are repugnant), while terrorizing and decimating the gentry who support the Border Worlds Confederation and the idea of an Imperial Client State.

At the same time, agents of the terrorist group will be embedded on the estate's grounds within the catering company handling the Harvest Ball. The agents and other terrorist operatives have two jobs: most are to use laser designators to indicate the coordinates of targets for the orbital attack, while the remainder are to video the attack for propaganda purposes while keeping the members of the party on the grounds to be victims of the attack. The catering staff brought in from outside (a business run by a long-trusted friend of Grettisdóttir who has secretly disdained her flirtation with the Imperium) will turn out to be very well armed.

Fortunately, despite the best efforts and plans of the Loyalists, BT1 and BT2 will not be damaged in the first volley. Consistent with standard Imperial Navy practice on worlds with an insurgency, Andii has required the vessels to relocate at by least twenty to thirty meters at random times in each day/night cycle. This lack of a discernible pattern is intended to keep any targeting system guessing.

This time, Andii is lucky in the extreme: the projectiles strike far enough away that only minimal hull damage is caused by ejecta. The on-call pilots immediately get BT1 and BT2 off the ground using lifters.

The tent itself will be spared. The vessels were the first and only target, for obvious strategic reasons.

The next target is a circle around the main estate buildings. While the buildings themselves will by intent be spared direct hits, the ejecta and noise are intended to make a significant impression. All of the expensive glass windows will be shattered; glass shards will spray down into the building, including the main ballroom.

Anyone who happens to be near the impact points will be injured or killed. At least one or two couples out romancing or playing croquet are likely to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The primary target is the winery itself, including all outbuildings and vehicles. The target will be hit accurately by numerous projectiles. Further projectiles will be aimed to damage roads, irrigation lines and other essential structures, with an eye to shutting down Grettisdóttir's "showcase" estate for several years to come. Grettisdóttir will be devastated by all of this. Sharurshid's exclusive contract to ship her wines will be affected as a result.

Following the aerial bombardment, guerilla forces of the local cells will attack to make an example of the "collaborating war criminal, Gudrid Grettisdóttir." She is to be kidnapped and publicly executed. She will be

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seized at gunpoint by a sufficiently large force in battle dress to make unarmed defense difficult if not impossible.

One of her servants advises the players, however, of the weapons cabinet in the East Wing. After protests about hunting rifles and such being useless against battle dress, the servant will make clear that the “cabinet is quite large, and quite well equipped with interesting weapons.” The cabinet is in fact an arsenal of various high-powered slug-throwers, and a few energy weapons as well. The players will have a fighting chance to rescue Grettisdóttir before she can be executed outside the ruin of the on-estate winery.

After the rescue, Andii and company will certainly offer assistance to the local government. Indeed, as commander of a duly commissioned reserve vessel, she can and will take military action. BT2 will be brought back and prepared for combat with all weapons ready. The players of course will be allowed to join if they have appropriate skills or experience.

This leads to space combat. *Cirque* herself will be searching for the launch point of the attack, along with BT2 and BT3. The opposing vessels will be the ortillery craft and one Tulgan Cruiser operated by the loyalists. This should present the referee with a good opportunity for a starship combat within 1000 diameters of the world, large enough to support full maneuver.

Whether or not the PCs succeed in destroying or capturing the Sword World contingent is not necessarily relevant. However, any Sword Worlders who escape may reappear later.

Andii may agree to be involved in the mop-up of the cells responsible for planning this attack. These cells will have their hideaway somewhere on the world’s surface. This provides a significant opportunity for a strategic attack.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ System entry.
- ☐ Make a point of describing the 11 moons and ring.
- ☐ Make a point of noting that the system is important to the Imperial plans to build a buffer between the Imperium and the Sword Worlds.
- ☐ Landing at the Estate: the referee should make a point of noting that security procedures are in effect. Automated drones circle to destroy aircraft entering Grettisdóttir’s airspace. Further information indicates that this has been provided by the government, as Grettisdóttir is important to the work of building the Border Worlds Confederation.
- ☐ Meeting with Grettisdóttir at the Villa. Andii and others are invited to stay in the Villa. They are assigned rooms on the second levels, and will have an opportunity to explore the building and the grounds.
- ☐ They are also invited to the Harvest Ball to be held near the end of the run of the show.
- ☐ At a performance, a group of low-level Loyalists disrupts the show by taking flash pictures. This results in an aerialist hitting the net (or dangling on the safety line). The crowd becomes unruly and near-riotous. This should be played out through the arrest of the Loyalists.
- ☐ Preparing for the Ball. Shopping in the big city for appropriate garb. A loyalist spits on a PC. This can and should result in a fistfight and an arrest. The local police take the Loyalist’s side, but release the player characters with a warning.
- ☐ During another performance, a drunken Loyalist starts heckling a Player Character’s act (if any).
- ☐ Preparing for the Ball: Weapons are limited (only ceremonial blades are allowed, no concealed guns or other significant weapons).

Act II

- ☐ The Harvest Ball opens. For security, guests arrive in the public parking area near the circus location. They are brought the Villa on vineyard tour trams.
- ☐ All PCs and many main NPCs are present, including Andii. All

guests are in high dress, announced at the entry, and so on.

- ☐ Play through various conversations and dances. Debates ensue on the issue of the Border Worlds Confederation, with players put on the spot (“What do you think, Imperial Clown?”). Some of the gentry remain loyal to the Sword Worlds, though many more see the Imperium as the future.
- ☐ The Geezer Thespian insults a woman in some way. He is challenged to a duel (swords, and only to first blood). Geezer Thespian appears quite afraid. He spends a few minutes in the bathroom, comes out claiming to be Cyrano de Bergerac, and then does amazingly well in the duel.
- ☐ Unless Andii is a PC, she apologizes to Grettisdóttir after a reasonable time; she is trading watches with BT2’s pilot to allow the pilot a chance to attend the latter half of the ball.
- ☐ People are wandering in and out. A PC may be lured out by attractive local. During the distracting conduct outside, the PC should notice the Head Caterer speaking into a communications unit.
- ☐ The rest of the catering staff quietly leaves the ballroom. All ballroom doors (including those between the Villa and the ballroom) are locked behind them and locking mechanisms disabled. Because this is a private facility, it does not have “crash bars” or other emergency exit provisions. Even if this is noticed, the glass is hardened enough to make it difficult for a character to smash it.
- ☐ Moments later, the players hear the first crack of ortillery striking ground in the distance (four 0.5-meter projectiles in quick succession). BT1 and BT2 launch and report to Andii. People attempting to leave discover the locked doors.
- ☐ Inside, as people are reacting, strikes occur (0.25-meter projectiles) within 3 to 6 meters of the glass-enclosed ballroom. This is a precise “make-a-point” bombardment. The hardened glass shatters inward, showering people. At least one person is seriously injured by a large shard through the belly, requiring immediate medical assistance.
- ☐ Pandemonium ensues. People need to be calmed down and treated. Others are wandering around, dazed.
- ☐ None of the catering staff are in the ballroom. The Head Caterer is gone. The Villa’s regular servants also appear dazed and confused.

Small Ortilery Kinetic Projectile Damage

Purdue University’s Impact: Earth website (<http://www.purdue.edu/impactearth/>) can be used to calculate and illustrate the effects of ortillery projectile impacts.

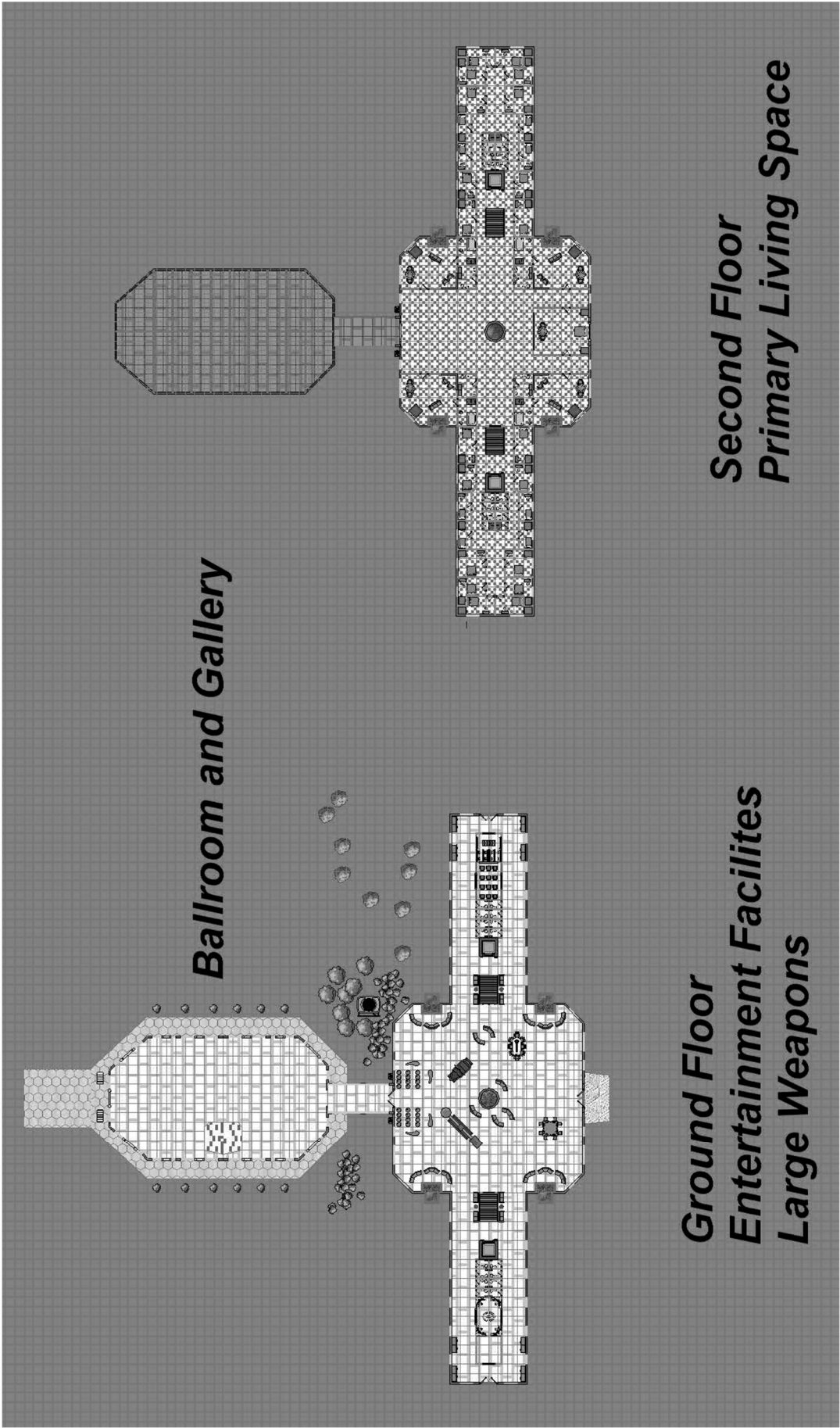
A 0.10-meter diameter projectile at 30 km/sec produces a blast crater over 1 meter wide and 28 cm deep. Notwithstanding the tables at pp. 55 and 415 in T5, anyone and anything within the 1-meter radius takes 5D damage. Anyone between 1 and 2 meters takes 2D of damage. Anyone sustaining a direct hit takes 20D of damage.

A 0.25-meter diameter projectile at 30 km/sec produces a blast crater over 3 meters wide and 67 cm deep. Notwithstanding the tables at pp. 55 and 415 in T5, anyone and anything within the 3-meter radius takes 10D damage. Anyone between 3 and 6 meters takes 5D of damage. Anyone sustaining a direct hit takes 40D of damage.

A 0.5-meter diameter projectile at 30 km/sec produces a blast crater almost 10 meters wide and 2 meters deep. Notwithstanding the tables, anyone and anything within the 10-meter radius takes 30D damage. Anyone between 10 and 20 meters from the impact takes 15D of damage. Anyone sustaining a direct hit takes 120D of damage (“many dice”).

Smaller projectiles are used for relatively rapid-fire applications, and often where a “wide spread” is desired. Large projectiles are used to level buildings, and where precise targeting may be less possible.

Huge projectiles (larger than those launched by the ortillery rider) can be used to cause massive planetary damage.



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Act III

- ☐ Bombardment continues elsewhere. Essential winemaking facilities and other outbuildings are destroyed (0.5-meter projectiles). Other outbuildings destroyed.
- ☐ Bombardment ends at Estate.
- ☐ BT1 and BT2 will be evasively circling nearby. Having tracked enough data to backtrack the projectiles' trajectories, Andii will order both immediately to orbit to intercept Blonde, the source of the bombardment. Each of the craft has a sufficient crew to handle flight and gunnery. Andii orders those on the ground to provide assistance.
- ☐ The enemy vessel then bombards the capitol city, destroying a num-

The Estate Building

The PCs and performers will be welcomed to stay in the Manor building during the run of the show. They will have the opportunity to explore it and get to know what it provides.

The ground floor contains the semi-public entertainment rooms, including the Main Hall and the connected Ballroom and Gallery. Dark hardwood paneling covers all of the walls. The Main Hall contains a large circular central fireplace; banked coals are maintained in that fireplace year-around. The corner fireplaces have fires in them during most of the winter months, though with central heating they are not necessary. Large wooden models of a Viking vessel and of a multi-generational space vessel serve as conversation pieces and a reminder of Sword Worlds' pride.

Some of the estate's best vintages are available from the wine bar at the back of the Main Hall. Tables, conversation couches, and other furniture provide guests with many places to mingle and talk. Apart from the recent war years, a large party has been held at least monthly, a tradition begun by Grettisdóttir's father. The ballroom allows for dancing or for banquets. Various portraits alternate with game trophies on its walls.

The West Wing contains a large closet for outerwear and other items deposited by guests. A well-equipped computer/entertainment room provides recreational and workspace. Ample lavatories provide for guest needs. The East Wing contains similar lavatories, a holotainment theater in place of computer consoles, and a locked, well-equipped weapons room containing anything from antique crossbows and hunting rifles to high-tech combat weapons.

The Second Floor contains five large suites (Grettisdóttir occupies the northeast as the Master Suite) and twenty-eight bedrooms. Suites have their own bathrooms; smaller rooms share. Grettisdóttir's children sometimes visit with their families. Grettisdóttir's room contains a picture of her with Admiral Lee looking comfortable together.

The Third Floor (see next page) is furnished on essentially the same floor plan. Large public space in the central northern portion of each floor is depicted without furniture, as Grettisdóttir's tastes are simple. Both are thickly carpeted and suitable for indoor exercise.

Several executives and other important retainers of the winery have apparent use of suites and rooms on the third floor.

The uppermost Third Floor is used as servant's quarters as necessary; the manor staff is currently small. For parties, however, temporary staff are offered housing. There are no central suits. Instead, most of the central area is walled off. The attic created contains various heirlooms, antiques, old exercise machines, cast-off children's toys, archaic technology, clothing, displaced art, greeting cards sent and received, old books, the last extant copy of a sublight colony vessel's manifest, and almost anything else of primarily sentimental value to past generations. Some would interest the Viking Barbarian Knife Thrower both as props and as an occasionally serious scholar. Much of this would be of real value if transported to a rich world. The referee may feel free to add some tidbit of interest.

The cellar area (see next page) contains the vast kitchen, a wine cellar to the east, a massive walk-in meat freezer to the west, the central heating system and local fuel-cell power generation, and vast empty space. Like the attic, the empty space may include items of interest.

ber of buildings and causing at least 200 deaths.

- ☐ The Caterer and assistants return, armed with automatic weapons. They are escorted by a squad of soldiers in battle dress of Sword Worlds design.
- ☐ In the inevitable confrontation between former friends, the Head Caterer disparages Grettisdóttir for her support of the Border Worlds and abandonment of the Sword Worlds. "You rich [SW expletive deleted] will all be dead when we push the Imperium back out! And you're first!"
- ☐ The armored troops remove Grettisdóttir at gunpoint. The Catering Staff keeps guns trained on the guests, including the PCs.

Act IV

- ☐ The Catering Staff can be defeated by guile and coordinated action, but not without a delay. The PCs will likely manage this through a plan. Exact details are likely to be situational.
- ☐ Once the Catering Staff is defeated, the estate staff will beg for help in rescuing Grettisdóttir. They will note that she was being taken toward the Winery at a quick-march. The battle-dressed Loyalists had no vehicle. It is unclear how and where they entered the Estate grounds.
- ☐ The Chief Butler or another servant advises of the location of the weapons vault in the East Wing.
- ☐ Loyalist servants have allowed other loyalists into the Villa proper. The referee can determine the appropriate number and armament based upon the number of useful player characters. However, it should be possible to fight using weapons obtained from the estate's weapons "cabinet."
- ☐ After heavier weapons are obtained, the players are able to pursue Grettisdóttir in order to attempt a rescue. They can utilize any vehicle, including the tour trams.
- ☐ They arrive in time for a good fight.

Act V

- ☐ After saving Grettisdóttir, the PCs may join in the pursuit of the Loyalist assault vessel. Grettisdóttir has one older modular cutter available on the estate; miraculously, it was not damaged in any way during the attack. It is lightly armed with a single laser on its firm-point. Trajectories will be favorable for either joining the fight in that small craft, or using it to rendezvous with *Cirque*.
- ☐ Going after the Loyalists is not quite as easy as it may seem.
- ☐ As soon as the Loyalists know that they are under pursuit, they will move the orillery vessel. The Tulgan Cruiser will block for them.
- ☐ The craft will flit from moon to moon, playing a game of hide and seek as it works its way back to its own Ringmaster. In addition, it will be joined by a fuel shuttle and a number of other appropriate vessels.
- ☐ The referee should prepare the combat in advance.



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- ☐ The referee should be aware that a well-aimed cannonball (one that makes a direct hit) WILL cause damage to *Cirque* or any other vessel.
- ☐ As *Cirque* must move on, it does not matter in the larger scheme of things whether the enemy is captured and boarded, is destroyed, or escapes. Players obviously prefer a win, however.
- ☐ If the PCs are among the group rendering aid on the ground, they will spend days digging through rubble, rendering first aid, fighting with looters, and generally discovering the horrors of orbital bombardment.
- ☐ Under the “main characters almost never die in series TV” rule, any damage to *Cirque* and her auxiliaries should be sufficient to be notable (even take them out of the battle), but not deadly. *Cirque* will be repairable in one to two weeks. During the down-time, all members of Cirque des Sirkas will be treated well, and their performances will be sold out.

Tag

- ☐ *Cirque* must, of course, move on. Grettisdóttir: “Not to worry, we’ll just raise prices and sell what’s in the cellars already while we rebuild. Even the vinegary wine will command a price. And I’ll increase production elsewhere. We expect an occasional bad season in the wine business. Now, when you meet up with Aramais, tell him it’s time to settle down with his favorite woman.”



Gudrid Grettisdóttir
The Vintner

Final UPP: 4A99BC. Age: 52 years.

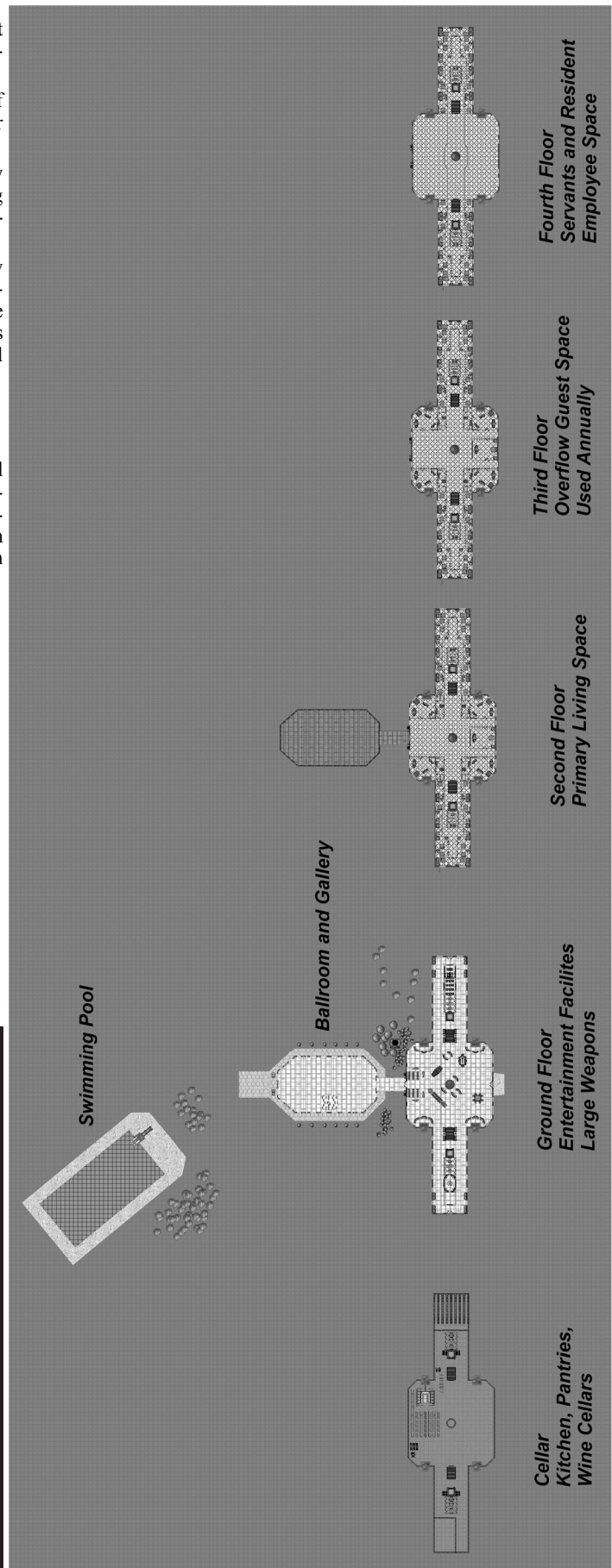
Final Skills: Admin-2, Advocate-5, Art: Chef-1, Broker-5, Bureaucrat-6, Comms-2, Computer-1, Counsellor-1, Diplomat-4, Flyer-1 (Aeronautics -1, Grav-1), Gunner-2 (Screens-1, Turrets-1), Language: Anglic-8, Leader-2, Liaison-2, Pilot-0 (Small Craft-1), Science: Chemistry-1, Tactics-1, Trader-2, Zero G-1.

Terms (9): 3 Education, 6 Noble.

Muster Out (6): KCr 260, KCr 240, C2 +1 (Dex A), Life Insurance, TAS Life Member, Directorship.

Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library.

BW: Hofiad 1524 B666853-AF Ga Ri Pa Ph 601 Sw/BW G6 V M9V.
HW Skills: Trader-1, Art: Chef-1, Trader +1.



Episode 13: Ice Follies of 1111

Dyrnwyn • Spinward Marches 1522

B958812-A • F • Pa Ph • 201 • SW (Former) • M4 V M8 V

Excerpt: *Diary and Dialogues*

I don't much like Dyrnwyn. I don't like any world with one sun that never sets and another one that plays periodic tricks. I shouldn't have to draw the shades to get to bed, or go to the other side of the world and risk slipping on the ice. I'm getting to an age where falling might be embarrassing. I might not be able to get up.

But it's an interesting world for all that. You expect most of the tide-locked worlds to be roasted rock, and most of them are. But occasionally wind, water and land surprise you, and somehow form systems that work for humans. Dyrnwyn's ocean and continents on the sunward side are set just right. The hottest point is at the "east pole," and it's almost dead center in the ocean basin. Water vapors up, begins to cool and move out, forms gentle breezes all the way to the edge. A little wobble in the twilight zone and a lot of volcanism melts enough ice to keep the oceans in water. In fact, there are some micro-continents, or big islands, being formed there in the mostly dark. They have some wonderful hot springs. I visited a set of them a ways back — 1098, I think it was — and they're great therapy for whatever ails you. Add a big blonde masseuse named Inga, or a little redhead named Freia, for that matter, and you'll go back to the sunlight feeling twenty years younger.

It's a brilliant planetary design, really. Almost makes one believe that the Norse gods found a new place to live after they left old Sol behind. The boring people think the Ancients fooled with it three or four hundred thousand years ago. How are they different from gods if they could do that? Anyway, apart from the general lack of night on the warm side, it's not the worst place in the world.

But I still don't really like it. Kind of dislike it, in fact. More than kind of, maybe.

Those ice-islands are kind of pretty when the second sun is in the sky, half the year. Not much warmer, because it's a bit of a distant companion, but pretty. And the cold-weather hardly lichens bloom in a few places. But I still don't much like it. I got frostbite right after one of those long baths in the hot-springs, had to have all my toes amputated and regrown, so I guess I don't like it.

I also don't love the Sword Worlders. Sure, they started out Terran, a long time ago. One or two at a time, fine people to swap a story with over a hollowed-out horn full of rancid ale. As a whole, though, how do you trust them? They keep tabs on the Zho mood, and when the Zho ships start swarming over the lines, Sword World ships are always nearby to lend a hand. Hard to trust someone who makes common cause with the mind-melters.

I like Dyrnwyn, some. A lot, really. Except that I hate it.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

General Data (Players)

A corporate-governed world in the Sword Worlds subsector of the Spinward Marches, located along the trailing border with the Imperium, Dyrnwyn was formerly a member of the Sword Worlds Confederation.

During the Fifth Frontier War, Dyrnwyn was invaded by Imperial troops on 233-1109 as part of Operation Azhanti Sunrise.

Following the defeat of the Sword Worlds forces, Dyrnwyn came under Imperial occupation and in 1110 was among the border systems that broke off from the Confederation to begin the formation of the pro-Imperial client state called the Border Worlds Federation. In 1111 control of Dyrnwyn is being returned to the Fortam Conglomerate, the planet's Gungnir-based (Spinward Marches 1221) corporate owners as part of a post-war goodwill package.

Dyrnwyn is tidally locked to its primary star despite sitting on the edge of the system's habitable zone. In spite of this unpromising situation, convection and currents render the world habitable, with a "land of the midnight sun" environment on the sunward face. Several larger moons circle the world in almost-perfect orbits. Together with Dyrnwyn's closeness to the primary itself, these contribute to a hot core and substantial volcanic activity. Volcanism is one of several keys to the unusual habitability of such a tide-locked world.

Dyrnwyn contains three main continents: Joekullvetur, Ny Groenland, and Eghvass. Other notable land masses include the coveted Jarthlaug Islands in the ocean circle, which contain the settlement of Katlar. Both the capital city of Svartgardur and the Ahgharad Starport are located on Joekullvetur. These continents ring the ocean on the world's light side, almost as if they were deliberately positioned in the warmest central area of the ocean.

The light side of the planet is mostly ocean with a largely temperate climate. The far side oceans are frozen to a depth of as much as one hundred meters, with average temperatures at the cold "West Pole" nearing -51 degrees C. However, as previously noted, volcanic activity keeps water liquid under a surface layer of ice that becomes relatively thin near the volcanic islands and micro-continents dotting the dark side.

The warmest portion of the ocean, the "East Pole," creates a regular upward flow of warmth and vapor into the atmosphere thanks to a combination of sunlight and volcanism. The atmospheric currents level off and flow outward, keeping the sunward side warm. As vapor moves toward the dark side, much of it precipitates and ultimately returns to the liquid ocean remainder eventually becomes part of the dark-side ice mass.

Currents caused by the core-based heating move water back to the light side oceans, creating a constant conveyor of cooling that prevents the light side from overheating. Without this conveyor effect, the light side would overheat, the temperature would rise dramatically, the oceans evaporate, and the atmosphere boil into space. Human habitation would become impossible as the comfortable "midnight sun" environment ceased to exist.

Most environmental scientists consider this an unlikely "Goldilocks Squared" situation, with some openly speculating that this world was deliberately engineered to be habitable by the Ancients. At least one major religious sect even suggests that the perfection of this system is proof of the Deist Design Theory, notwithstanding scoffers.

Interestingly, the distant companion provides some light to the far side each five planetary years. During this period highly efficient lichens bloom for about a quarter of the local year and then die off, with spores surviving for the next such year.

Cirque

This period is creatively named "The Five-Year Bloom," or "The Bloom" for short. Almost all of Dymwyn's 200,000,000 inhabitants save time and money to travel onto the dark side for a week or two during Bloom. Ice skimmers carry simple tourists on three-day excursions. The wealthier and more adventuresome spend more time, with loftier goals such as scaling a mountain peak or swimming in one of the suddenly-formed ice-cold equatorial lakes. Pre-fab shelters and tents dot the surface. A few more permanent facilities are also found there, primarily designated for corporate research.

Imperial researchers interested in these uniquely efficient lichens have long sought to study the Bloom, but until recently tensions between the Sword Worlds and the Imperial governments made this all but impossible. One positive outcome of the Fifth Frontier War has been the opening of Dymwyn for study. The first Bloom since the closing of the war began about two months before *Cirque's* arrival.

The ice skimmer is a standard vehicle, especially for far-side travel. This is long tradition from the days before local gravitic manufacturing. Whether logical or not, the locals simply do not trust gravitics and other flyers in the cold. They also enjoy the feel of skimming across the ice.

Little else is known about this world by Imperial citizens. It is, simply, an oddity.

Summary and Referee's Information

The Advance Sophonts as usual await *Cirque's* exit from jump. The message to *Cirque* is, for once, entirely serious. "Andii, the details for the performances are all in the attached file. We are of course going to hang around as usual for our final briefing. Waiting for you to match vector." Coordinates are transmitted for a rendezvous in near orbit of the planet for approximately three hours after *Cirque's* arrival.

This is of course not an "as usual" meeting at all, as the in-person meetings have been rare at best.

An encrypted message is contained within the main message advising Andii that her reserve commission has been reactivated, effective immediately. She is ordered to clear her upper deck to receive an important visitor. Only individuals she trusts implicitly are to be present. This likely includes the players, who have been active supporters in past encounters.

When vectors are matched, a line is fired from *Grendel's Mother's* rear cargo hatch. Several figures cross the zip line to *Cirque's* forward cargo hatch. When they are aboard and their helmets removed they prove to be Advance Sophont 1, a high ranking Sharurshid VIP, and Commander Rishsar of the Imperial Navy. They waste no time going to the officers' recreation area. Commander Rishsar convenes a "closed briefing" for individuals on a need-to-know basis.

Commander Rishsar explains the situation. Adm. Aramais P. Lee has been assisting the Imperial Navy through Sharurshid to strengthen ties between the Imperium and the newly-formed Border Worlds Confederation. However, Lee's official role for the IN has been deliberately kept out of sight, as he is purportedly operating only as a company official. The IN prefers not to operate by force at this time.

"We're at the hearts and minds phase, you know," Rishsar explains. "We need to stop being occupiers." Admiral Lee was felt to be in a perfect position to handle these arrangements, based upon his experience with commercial shipping, Imperial Navy practices, and ties to influential people in the nascent Border Worlds Confederation. Further, although he had retired from the Imperial Navy prior to the Fifth Frontier War, he had accepted recall for the duration, and undertook an

important role in supply logistics. Though he often openly denigrated his superiors for not giving him a combat command, his very practical solutions to shipping and supply issues proved useful, and he received a medal for his unique solutions to whatever problems arose. That some of his ideas clearly broke Imperial law was not deemed important given the circumstances.

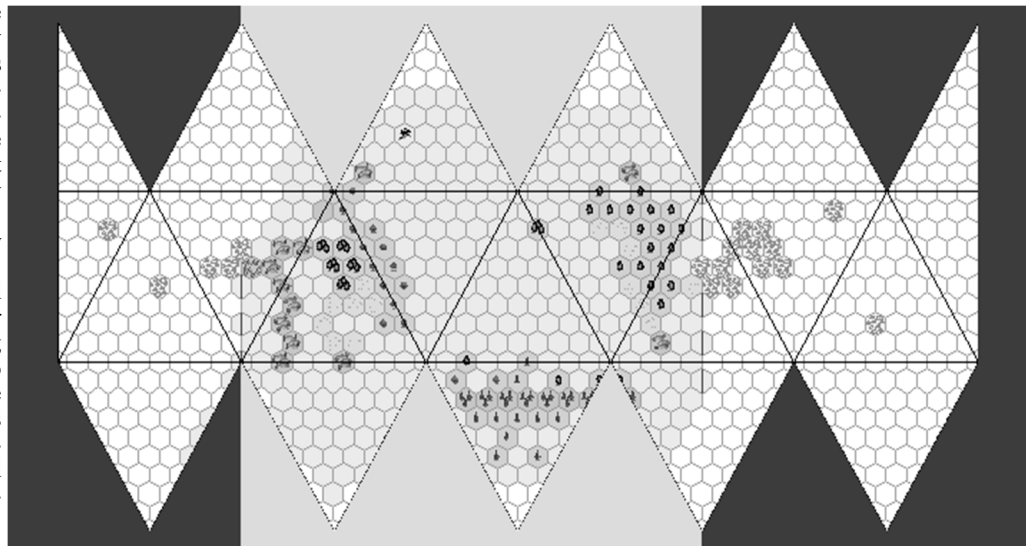
Truth be told, Admiral Lee's ideas, which involved calling on shipping corporations and passenger line corporations to assist in the war effort ("calling on" being an exceptionally polite term for direct threats of unlawfully seizing the vessels as needed for the war effort) was part of the program which ultimately brought Andy, Bertii and U'aii into mutual contact. As noted in her character description, U'aii temporarily served under Lee at the outset of the Fifth Frontier War.

Sword Worlds agents are still at work in the Border Worlds attempting to prevent the growth of diplomatic and trade ties between the Imperium and the new client state. Adm. Lee has been kidnapped by these agents. The IN has an intelligence operative in a cell connected to these forces, and has obtained information on Lee's situation.

The Sword World operatives believe Admiral Lee is privy to Imperial plans to prepare for a strike deeper into Sword World territory, and are employing every means at their disposal to force him to share this information. He has a reputation in the Sword Worlds, having once led an unlawful strike, as noted in his character history. He is being kept alive and is suffering through various attempts to obtain information. Lee in fact has no critical information about current IN operations, but only has a general knowledge of procedures and postwar fleet dispositions.

The Sword World agents present do not have the sophisticated equipment necessary to directly sift the information from a recording of Lee's mind, nor do they have access to a Zhodani or other telepath who can pull memories directly from Admiral Lee's mind. They must thus implant his personality and memories on a computer or robot brain and then make inquiries to sift through his recollections to obtain what they seek. Unfortunately for them (and him), the special conditioning Lee received as a Flag officer, his military training, and his obstinate personality will not permit him to disgorge such memories even if his recorded mind is "run" on a computer. Thus, his personality must be altered before it is installed.

As is noted in the T5 rules, personality transfers tend to be short-lived. In this case, the computer has actively committed digital suicide several times, intentionally shutting down and wiping Lee's imprint. However, IN Intelligence believes that even Admiral Lee's unique combination of training and personality will eventually break down enough for his captors to learn what they seek. Each unsuccessful attempt to overlay his personality and memory onto the computer gives his captors additional insights on how to bypass the security conditioning common to all Flag



Dymwn in standard mapping format. The sunward side is rimmed in yellow (light grey in grayscale); the sunless side is rimmed in blue (darker grey in grayscale).

Cirque

and general officers. Rishsar explains that the Imperial Navy has no hostage extraction teams available currently. In addition, it does not wish to show its hand at this time.

Cirque's timing is fortunate; Shururshid's own interest in Lee is reason enough for the company to mount a rescue. Andii has been reactivated in order to rescue Lee, or to terminate him if necessary, as it is believed that Andii and the unusual crew have the best opportunity to infiltrate the site where Lee is being held captive. In addition, it takes the operation a step away from the Imperial Navy. Time is of the essence.

What Rishsar will absolutely refuse to admit is that Lee has no significant secret information. His connections and bluster are useful at present, but this has not always been the case. The IN does not intend to leave any admiral in enemy hands, even though Aramais is not viewed with affection by many in the Admiralty.

Cirque des Sirkas' performances must go on as a cover for the rescue operation. Andii and the performers in the player party will allegedly fall ill to explain their absence during the actual shows, while *Cirque* herself must of course stay in orbit. BT2 will be used as housing; BT3 will be kept busy in refueling operations. BT1 will stay close to the tent and performers. In any event, intelligence on Aramais' prison suggests that it is well protected by defensive weapons. An assault landing is not considered a reasonable alternative.

Astute players who know that Adm. Lee's clone is available may suggest that it be brought to life and brought along. U'aii, who owes some of her success to following Lee's orders when the Zhodani invaded, knows the clone is present, and may also suggest it despite the fact that it amounts to clonenapping and arguably violates Imperial law (see *Episode 14: Clonenapped* for more details on the author's speculations on the legal ramifications of Insurance Clones).

The fly in the ointment is simple: Lee is arrogant, self-centered, and used to being in charge. His life insurance clone will be no less so, especially during a crisis situation or a covert mission. In fact, under these circumstances Aramais "Beta" could become so insufferable that his behavior may well risk the safety of the rescue party and the real Admiral Lee. Aramais Beta may actively seek to escape any self-sacrifice for Aramais "Alpha," regardless of exhortations to remember its duty to the old Admiral.

The players should by no means be told this, and the clone may well go along with the plan for a time. At some point, however, Aramais Beta will decide that it is better to stay alive and un-tortured regardless of the consequences. The best case scenario is that the players will eventually have to kill the clone to prevent it from wrecking the entire operation. If that fails, they risk unleashing a *second* Aramais P. Lee on the Spinward Marches.

The original Aramais is being held on a large volcanic island near the West Pole. Like old earth's Iceland, the area's current volcanism is largely near the surface, causing hot springs and pools to form. Geothermal energy is used to generate power and to provide heat. The more general cold, however, has always rendered approaching the island (and similar islands) difficult.

As noted, intelligence made available to Andii indicates that the island has become a base for an underground force of remaining Sword World personnel and sympathizers. Active Sword Worlds agents are also likely housed there. The perimeter is well equipped with sensors and weapons, including defensive weapons capable of repelling an approach from space. Andii will not risk either BT2 or BT3 in a frontal assault.

As a general rule, severe atmospheric cold causes malfunctions in many standard vehicles. As a matter of long tradition, the practical Sword Worlders travel on Dymwyn's dark side using specially designed ice skimmers. These stay low to the ice, in the radar "snow." These skimmers use fusion power to generate heat for their blades and motive thrust, simply by heating steam and air. This propels the vehicles at speeds of up to 200 kph, though sensor limitations may reduce those speeds. Starlight and moons-light provide some illumination against the stark, smooth icescape. Active sensors can extend the range. One ice-level approach to the island is relatively "sensor blind" at ice-level due to a rocky promontory situated between the sensor arrays and the ice itself. This provides a narrow vector for an undetectable approach.

The referee should gently steer the players toward using an ice skimmer. A dearth of gravitic craft equipped for the trip should be noted, as well as a concern of being conspicuous. As the players review the

available facts, they will learn that approach from the air is dangerous at best, given the effects of both the cold and heavy laser fire on air vehicles. Shururshid will provide the name of a trustworthy "bush pilot" with a relatively new skimmer. The players should be sent to the dockside bars to locate and engage the pilot.

Despite the almost-volcanism, air temperatures remain very low in the target area. All members of the rescue crew will require vacc suits as a bare minimum, Battle dress is preferred. Enough units for human use exist in BT2's equipment lockers for up to five (5) humans not otherwise equipped. Andii, the Documentarian, and the Security Chief each have a set. Andii also has battle dress for the Aslan acrobats, if they will be joining the rescue party. If any other non-humans will be represented on the rescue team, sufficient appropriate battle dress will miraculously appear, courtesy of the IN representative.

The island in question is off the coast of a growing micro-continent, and is about 2,000 kilometers away from the farthest spit of frozen wasteland to the east. The trip will take over a day, including stops for ice-fueling.

As noted in the task list, difficulties arise as the trek progresses. From malfunctions to bad navigation, delays will plague the party. Eventually, someone should start correctly suspecting that the bush pilot/driver is a saboteur.

If the mission appears to be going so badly that the players are done (if, for example, they are captured or so seriously wounded that they cannot escape), the referee may rescue them (and the remaining campaign) using Imperial marines who have been secretly held in reserve. At that point, a force of 80 will be deployed from a planetary landing craft.

After all is said and done, and regardless of success, Andii and company return to the Light Side and get on with the show.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Initial scene: meeting in *Cirque*.
- ☐ Determine where the Admiral is being held and study information obtained.
- ☐ Study information on brain scanning and programming.
- ☐ Neither Andii nor Shururshid will authorize use of *Cirque* or its auxiliaries in armed combat.
- ☐ Study maps of world and island.
- ☐ Plan rescue using available tools and vehicles, including means to gain access to the building in which Lee is being held.
- ☐ Assemble necessary equipment.
- ☐ Meet with driver.
- ☐ If anyone gets the bright idea to revive the Aramais clone, do so.
- ☐ Commander Rishsar supplies Imperial Marines in civilian dress (but armed) to guard *Cirque's* tent, day and night.

Act II

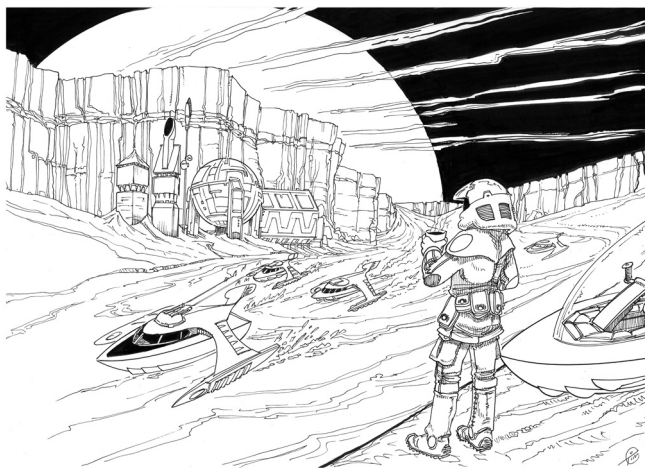
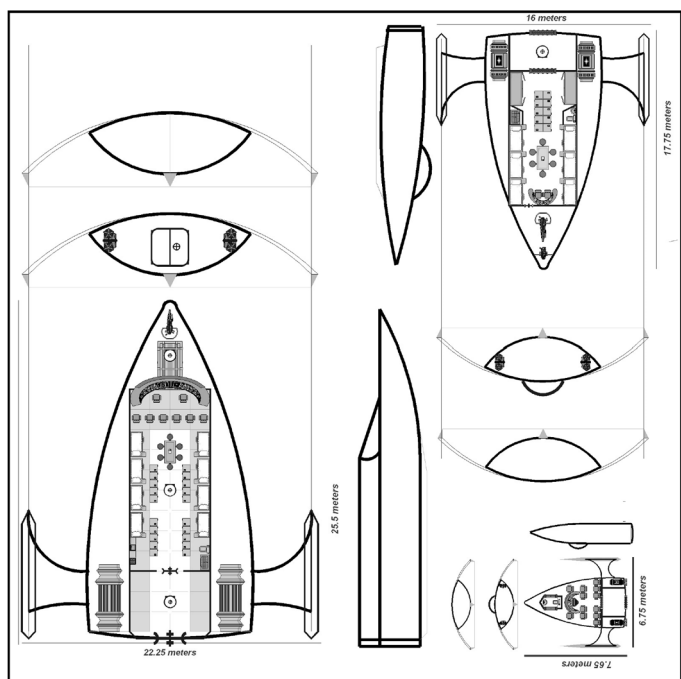
- ☐ Obtain the ice skimmer. Its size is the smallest suitable to rescue group, most likely the light skimmer.
- ☐ Begin the ice trek.
- ☐ Event during ice trek: refueling. Stop, deploy melting-tip hose, vacuum up melted ice. Malfunctions may occur, slowing the work.
- ☐ Event during ice trek: ramjet malfunction and repair.
- ☐ Event during ice trek: sensor malfunction; slow to 60 kph while repairing, or stop.
- ☐ Event during ice trek: discover that skimmer is off course.
- ☐ Event during ice trek: avoid rocks, jumbled ice, and other obstructions at high speeds. This should occur several times at 200 kph. Failure results in damage to skids or other systems.

Cirque

- ☐ Event during ice trek: when PCs are finally suspicious enough, discover that the supplied skimmer pilot is a double-agent saboteur. Deal with him/her.
- ☐ Learn to operate skimmer. The skimmer operates like a hydrofoil watercraft for the most part, but faster.

Act III

- ☐ Approach the island, staying in narrow blind vector. Mishap or discovery leads to defensive fire and evasion.
- ☐ Locate parking space for skimmer out of line of sight of the base.
- ☐ Go up to the island, using natural cover.
- ☐ Avoid ice thinned by hot spring at edge of island. Mishap results in skimmer sinking through ice.
- ☐ If the skimmer is trapped in ice, the party must seek alternate skimmer/locate another transport means.
- ☐ Climb rock face to easier path. Deal with ice and such, loose handholds, etc.
- ☐ Cold causes battle-dress joint freeze malfunctions. Perform field maintenance.
- ☐ Disable automated sentries and sensor perimeter.
- ☐ Arrive at building exterior.
- ☐ Enter building using appropriate force (e.g. explosives, clever lock-picks, etc.).
- ☐ Evade automated guns and less automated guns (i.e., combat troops in Sword World Armor).
- ☐ Search for Admiral Lee, because there is no clear intelligence on the buildings. The buildings likely go back into the rock face, as building is partially underground to take advantage of hot springs.
- ☐ Encounter resistance. The base complement is at least four times the party's size (at least one-half of whom are trained in weapon use). All are equipped with weapons, or at least improvised cudgels. Trained fighters have some armor.
- ☐ Find Adm. Lee. He is in the middle of a mind-recording session.



Act IV

- ☐ Shut down the session without damaging Lee's brain.
- ☐ Get Lee up and functioning.
- ☐ Listen to Lee's cranking. He is actually angry. He was arrogantly trying to crack the computer in reverse. He thought he was close to success.
- ☐ Lee insists that team locate the computer to pull its drives.
- ☐ Determine that the computer has a more than adequate firewall and thus cannot be hacked from this location.
- ☐ Locate the main computer (elsewhere in the building).
- ☐ Go to the computer.
- ☐ Pull storage drives.
- ☐ Thoroughly destroy the remaining computer.
- ☐ Exit building.
- ☐ Return to the ice skimmer (or steal another).
- ☐ A larger skimmer with deck gun pursues.
- ☐ An early shot hits one of the fusion jets, reducing thrust and causing maneuvering issues.
- ☐ Return rear fire from the ceiling hatch position. Only one person at a time can do this.
- ☐ If a player insists on the "Hollywood Hang-on" while lying prone on the upper deck and firing too wildly to be effective, have him or her thrown off by a violent "S" maneuver. Improvise: a squad of pursuers may jump out to capture the player, or the enemy skimmers may simply run the player down.
- ☐ Remaining actives aim for the deck gun.
- ☐ Plasma/fusion/grenades may be used to disrupt ice just ahead of pursuing skimmer.
- ☐ Slug-thrower and laser fire at skids may disrupt enemy travel. After ten hits, the enemy skimmer spins out, flips, and provides a satisfactory explosion. In the alternative, the skimmer simply finally pulls away, disappearing into the darkness.
- ☐ As soon as the party returns to the starport, Aramais is snatched up by Commander Rishsar, who insists on taking him to be debriefed.

Tag

- ☐ Return Aramais to starport.
- ☐ Keep low profiles until the performances are completed.
- ☐ Cirque des Sirkas now has a new enemy: the Sword Worlds Confederation.

Episode 14: This Is the Forest Primeval

Saurus • Spinward Marches 1320

D888588-7 Ag Ni 820 Im • G8 V M1 V

Excerpt: *Diary and Dialogues*

We all know that Saurus got its name because it's a jungle full of largish reptile-sort-ofs, including some big ones. It would have been just as accurate to call it "Courtroom." Think about it, you'll get the joke. But the fauna and the jungle were just a first impression. There's a lot more to Saurus than that.

For example, jungle rot. If you want jungle rot, Saurus is a great place to visit. The stuff there isn't aggressive, exactly – it's more like it's tenacious. Anything there that figures out how to feed on you gets a grip and keeps it. It won't kill you, not fast, anyway. It wants to keep you alive and kicking.

It can be killed, too. It just takes time, energy, and a tolerance for nasty baths. Nothing like holding your breath and staying under, then coming up and breathing in the stink of sulfur. Ask any old-timer. They've all had the Greenfuzz Rot now and again. They just close their eyes up and enjoy the swim.

Not a tenth of the life there has been catalogued and studied. No one's made a big push, the way they should. Anytime you see that much life, you should drop an entire space station full of labs into orbit. There's probably a cure on Saurus for everything but ingrown toe-nails. Not to mention nice scents for perfume and shampoo.

We've been ignoring that nasty old jungle for a long time. What a waste.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1106.

General Data (Players)

Saurus is yet another agricultural planet with a garden world environment. With a relatively small population of approximately 800,000, the world has not been deeply penetrated by humanity, and much of its surface and native species remain a mystery. The lower technology and population limits the local manufacture of vehicles and exploitation of fossil fuels.

Many of the hardy locals like that.

The law level's implicit weapons restrictions are only enforced within 100 kilometers of "densely" settled areas for simple, practical reasons: local technology does not support enforcement. Weapons are needed in the "outback" to defend against the sometimes large, sometimes hostile, native life forms.

Much of Saurus' economy is supported by the simple and non-intensive gathering of biological resources. Its lush equatorial forests contain numerous life forms with use or potential use in medicines. A number of natural substances can be obtained and distilled. Because the local biochemistry is slightly different from that of standard humanity, the uptake of many of these substances is slower, as are their rate of breakdown in the human body. Thus, substances and drugs against various illnesses take effect more slowly, but they also work for a longer period of time. The same is true of substances and drugs with primarily psychotropic effects.

The more temperate zones are also lush with forests and vegetation of various types. Most communities and farms are located in these zones. The starport is located in the southern temperate zone, near the Amazon Ocean's eastern shore.

Saurus is a mass of life and biodiversity that has yet to be truly exploited despite a thousand years of colonization.

During the Fifth Frontier War, Saurus was subject to regular incursions from the Gram Fleet as part of the Sword Worlds Campaign. On 014-1108 the Imperial Admiralty officially declared the system to be a combat zone. On 168-1108, Saurus was occupied by Sword World forces. Most invaders were eventually pushed off-world when the system was retaken by Imperial forces.

Rumors continually pass through the local population that Sword Worlds troops remain on Saurus. Depending on the day of the week, these Sword Worlders either retain significant weapons and unit discipline, or are simple ragged pockets in rough terrain. Some claim to have seen Sword World vessels lift off from plasma-burned clearings. Many of the old-timers who come in from the "backwoods" with their gathered natural products are ridiculed when they mention these alleged sightings — sightings which are never properly confirmed.

Summary and Referee's Information

The Advance Sophonts await as usual. "Well, Andii, here's the jungliest jungle you'll visit. Just keep an eye out for Vikings – there are still at least a million down there. Probably training talking lizards... Anyway, we're all set. Be sure to double-dog your hatches if you don't want some weird spider in your bed."

Some reports suggest that native intelligent life exists on Saurus. These reports are not considered verified at this time. The Saurians mentioned in *GURPS: Behind the Claw* are of arguable canonicity. The Referee may choose whether or not to include them, but they are not included in this episode.

Toward the end of 1106, the Megacorporation SuSAG negotiated a ten-year monopoly on pharmaceutical exploitation of the abundant natural resources on Saurus. Plans were made to send a number of lab ships to the world to conduct research and develop medical and other products. Given the short duration of the monopoly, constructing a full space station was determined to be impractical.

The first five ships were in orbit when the Fifth Frontier War broke out. Most of SuSAG's vessels left the system. One ship was lost and never accounted for.

The Sword Worlds do not currently maintain or support any bases on Saurus. A few Sword World troops remain on the world, in pockets, either of choice or because they were missing in action and never retrieved, so there is a bit of truth behind the rumors. They may be found in makeshift bases, but are of little interest.

Gungnir's Bionir Corporation, however, secretly sends research teams to Saurus. These teams land biological science teams to sample the rich and varied life, searching for anything of potential pharmaceutical use. While Imperial megacorporations do the same type of research both here and elsewhere, trade embargos have outlasted the fighting. Thus, the

Cirque

Sword Worlders seek to mimic Imperial products, or even on occasion produce new pharmaceuticals ahead of the megacorporations.

Several plants and reptilian animals show promise of producing long-acting combat enhancement drugs. If an extraction and purification process can be perfected, the drugs can be used to increase alertness and other mental functions over many hours, and with few unacceptable side-effects. These would be of great use for pilots, gunners, and others involved in the long battles occurring in space.

A second effort involves a thorough geological survey of the planet. Significant liquefied fossil deposits can be found bubbling to the surface in some locations. Though higher-tech methods can be used to produce plastics, these methods are relatively expensive. One of the goals of the Sword World incursions during the Fifth Frontier War was to survey the oil fields for future development. The available reserves are thought to be sufficient to cover entire planets with cheaply made toys (as well as more useful items). The trade barriers will be lowered at some point and Bionir wants to know where to buy drilling rights as soon as it can, certainly before those barriers come down.

Scene and Task Checklist

Act I

- ☐ Arrival in-system. The usual information comes from the Advance Sophonts. Sensors note a lab ship (*Nobel-31*, sending a SuSAG transponder ID) in low orbit.
- ☐ The main tent is set up in the largest town (population 65,000).
- ☐ During discussions, the PCs learn that *Nobel-31* arrived over a month ago, well ahead of the expected SuSAG missions.
- ☐ Performances are held at the tent. In addition, BT1 brings performances to smaller towns.
- ☐ A small group attends a BT1 performance wearing SuSAG uniforms. They are from a nearby SuSAG research encampment. Several are noted to have accents, and several phrases in Sagamaal (the language of the Sword Worlds) are overheard.
- ☐ Later, the miniphants are used to help clear a path and move some supplies for the town.
- ☐ The PCs should have several encounters with various local animals. Many are smaller, but a few (as noted in the encounter tables) are larger. Consistent with the world name and some descriptions, many species look reptilian, though they are warm blooded.

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	1	Filter	4	0.75	Fph	6	32	6	Peds	F10	AP	B	HBS-T-WL-FF-T	11.8	8	Y	Good
2	O	1	Hunter	6	7.5	Fly	5	114	4	Peds	A9	F5	A	HS-TB-WL-MM-T	10k	10	M	Ofns
3	C	2D	Pouncer	3	0.2	Fly	4	33	1	Teeth	AS	AS+	T	N-TBS-WL-LN-N	0.5	6		Tast
4	S	2D	Reducer	1	7mm	Fly	3	23	3	Peds	A9	F8	B	HBS-T-WL-LN-N	0	9		Tast
5	P	3	Collect	4	0.75	Wlk	4	84	4	Peds	No	No	A	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	12	10	Y	Good
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	D*D	Grazer	2	75mm	Wlk	5	46	6	Horns	F8	A6	T	HBS-T-LN-LN-N	0	9	M	Ord
2	O	1D+2	Eater	6	7.5	Wlk	6	120	3	Sting	A10	F4	B	HBS-T-LL-LN-N	9k	9		Off
3	C	2D	Pouncer	4	0.75	Fly	7	68	5	Sting	AS	AS+	B	N-TBS-WL-LN-N	12.9	8		Good
4	S	1D+2	Hijack	5	1.5	Wlk	5	50	5	Thag	A12	F6	A	HBS-T-LL-LN-V	127.2	4		Bad
5	P	2	Collect	1	7mm	Wlk	4	3	5	Spike	No	No	R	HS-TB-LL-LN-N	0	12	M	Bad
6	E	----- Event -----																

#	C	Num	Type	Sz	Len	Loc	Spd	STR	END	Weapon	A__	F__	Sym	Struc	Kg	AV	E	Tast
1	H	2	Grazer	4	0.75	Wlk	2	16	2	Sting	F8	A6	T	N-TBS-LL-LN-A	20.8	3		Ord
2	O	1D+2	Hunter	4	0.75	Wlk	6	116	5	Sting	A11	F9	B	HBS-T-LN-LN-N	25	6	Y	Good
3	C	3	Killer	5	1.5	Fly	5	35	5	Claws	A13	F8	R	N-TBS-WL-WN-N	78.9	6		Ofns
4	S	3	Intimid	3	0.2	Wlk	5	42	4	Antlr	A7	F5	B	HBS-T-LN-LN-N	0.7	8	M	Tast
5	P	1	Basker	7	75	Wlk	5	168	5	Thag	No	No	B	HS-TB-LL-LN-N	5m	6		Disg

- ☐ In the process the players discover a squad of ragged Sword Worlds soldiers.
- ☐ The soldiers are armed and attempt to fight, but they quickly surrender. They have no choice; they are exhausted, hungry, and have little ammunition. This does not stop them from taunting and belittling the Imperials. On the other hand, the soldiers are very complimentary regarding the miniphants.
- ☐ The *Nobel-31*'s pinnacle comes, leaves supplies and equipment, then heads back to orbit. Someone will note the pinnacle launching. The SuSAG emblem has a noticeable mistake: it is reversed. To notice: Difficult (3D) < (Edu).
- ☐ The soldiers must be brought back to the main city to be dealt with by the local noble, a Baron (or Baroness). The PCs are given that task. The Baron will sigh and grumble; a growing tent city is cluttering the grounds, filled with more than a hundred Sword Worlders who have surrendered "since the last time an IN ship moseyed through and took them away."

Act II

- ☐ Another lab ship arrives (*Hedy Lamarr*), also sending a SuSAG transponder ID.
- ☐ *Hedy Lamarr*'s crew raises questions about the *Nobel-31*. It specifically advises that *Nobel-31* is not a SuSAG vessel. It seeks assistance in boarding the fake SuSAG vessel.
- ☐ Realizing that the jig is up, the *Nobel-31* boosts out of orbit without retrieving its ground crews.
- ☐ At the Baron's request, *Cirque*, BT-2 and BT-3 pursue. He does not know who is lying, but has to honor the SuSAG rights.
- ☐ *Nobel-31* gets a lead on *Cirque* and may reach jump range before it is disabled depending on combat tasks. If it reaches the jump range with its jump drives intact, it will jump and escape. However, like *Cirque*, it has only 1G of maneuver; on the other hand, *Cirque* is better armed.
- ☐ If it does not reach jump range, the PCs may engage in a boarding operation. The scientists on board are lightly armed, and pose little threat.
- ☐ If captured, careful review of computers and ship's transponder will show that *Nobel-31* is *not* the SuSAG vessel lost around Saurus at the opening of the Fifth Frontier War. To successfully rule out this

Cirque

vessel being the missing lab ship: Difficult (3D) < (Int + Programmer) (Uncertain). On full success, the PCs learn that the vessel is in fact the *Nobel-31*, but is now owned by Gungnir's Bionir Corporation. Gungnir is part of the Sword Worlds Confederation, and the vessel's true registry is out of Gungnir.

- The crew on board will initially refuse to speak to anyone from *Cirque*. Andii will put a small prize crew on board to bring the lab ship back to orbit. The lab ship crew will be taken off and held in BT2's Center Stage area under guard of Pounce (the Aslan Acrobat troupe).
- Inspection of the lab ship will reveal a number of samples and information relating to the local flora and fauna.
- Based on the Imperial crime of falsifying a ship's registry, the Baron must hold the ship and her crew. He grumbles that he must "put yet another batch of blasted Vikings where I was planning a rock garden."
- Nobel-31's computers also show the current location of the ground-based scientists' encampment.

Act III

- At Andii's request, the PCs go to *Nobel-31*'s ground encampment. They may choose their equipment from available stores, as they are acting on behalf of an Imperial noble enforcing Imperial laws against unlawful landing and (suspected) trespassing by Sword Worlders. When they get there, it is deserted. All computer data has been wiped from any larger devices left behind and no smaller devices are to be found.
- Close search of clothing and other materials prove conclusively that these are Sword Worlders. Bionir emblems are found on lab equipment (confirming their identity if *Nobel-31* has escaped).
- Chopped vegetation and other tracking signs indicate that the Sword Worlders have gone into the jungle, all on foot, but apparently not all in one group, as the tracks go into the jungle in several different directions. They have at least a day's head start on the players.
- The players must pursue the Sword Worlders who have made it into the jungle. Signs will indicate that there are seventeen scientists and assistants who have split into multiple parties.
- Two groups, comprising a total of thirteen scientists, are easily tracked. They will put up little fight.
- As each group is captured, arrangements must be made to have them picked up by air/rafts or other vehicles. As usual, the Baron will be unhappy at the crowding and "the mouths I have to feed. Do you realize that this comes from my own cash drawer? Norris is going to hear about this!"

Act III

- The last four of the escaping Sword Worlders are military-trained, not merely explorers, and will push ahead to a cache of military equipment. The cache includes weapons, armor, and supplies.
- This small group engages in a last stand with the players, one using Oversized armor and armed with a plasma weapon. The combat will continue either until the Sword Worlders surrender, are dead, or someone (possibly the PCs) breaks off the engagement and flees. Player ingenuity will likely extend or shorten the combat. The PCs may have to disengage to get their own armor, if they were not prepared for such an assault.
- Fortunately, fungus has gotten into the Sword Worlders' armor's internal systems; its electronics will malfunction after 24 standard hours.
- The real SuSAG contingent quarrels with Andii regarding ownership of any information derived from captured data from the Sword World encampment. They rely on their monopoly; Andii sees this as a case in which she must defend *Cirque des Sirkas*' right to intellectual property it obtains along the way. This may be played out, with the Baron acting as judge and the PCs taking the stand to testify as to their actions.
- This provides the possibility for an optional "courtroom sequence" in which each party makes its case to the Baron. The Baron will then "retire to consider."
- A Knight who also has his or her fief has been watching the proceedings and speaks to the PCs while the Baron is outside of the meeting house serving as courtroom. "You can forget it, you know. Apart from the fact that SuSAG has a monopoly, *Hedy Lamar*'s captain just promised to get a ship here to get all of those Sword Worlders off the Baron's hands. They'll probably get taken to Vilis and dumped there." In short, the local noble's complaints about money likely have been heard. SuSAG's offer amounts to a bribe. The SuSAG contingent will be awarded rights to any discoveries obtained through the Sword Worlders.

Tag

- The PCs discover several of themselves to be growing downy green fuzz on their faces. Local old-timers identify it as Greenfuzz Rot. When asked about the location of the sulfur baths or springs, the old-timers grin and laugh. "Oh, yeah...that was Hirb's doing! Convinced that stupid old admiral he had to stay in them for hours." The old-timers provide a tube of antibiotic ointment. "Just use this for a couple of days, you'll be fine."
- *Cirque* moves on the next system.

Code	Name	AV and Protection	Mass	KCr			
-----	-----	-----	----	----			
StLtOsExpD-13	Standard Light Oversize Exploration Dress-13	84 [6,6,6,54,2,106,90]	224	3080			
Code	Name	Damage and Hits	Mass	R	Bu	Cost	
-----	-----	-----	----	----	----	-----	
SnHPGMP-12	Sniper Heavy Plasma Gun Man Portable-12	(9) Pen-6 Burn-3	32.17	6	3	KCr 40	

Code: StLtOsExpD-13

Name: Standard Light Oversize Exploration Dress-13

Mass: 224 kg

AV: 84
 EMCage: 6
 Flashproof: 6
 Radproof: 6
 Soundproof: 54
 Psishield: 2
 Insulated: 106
 Sealed: 90
 Cost: KCr 3080

Code : SnHPGMP-12

Name : Sniper Heavy Plasma Gun Man Portable-12

Range : 6

Mass : 32.17

Burden: 3

Damage: (9D) Pen-6 Burn-3

Cost : KCr 40

Prepared using Rob Eaglestone's tools.

<http://eaglestone.pocketempires.com>

Episode 15: Clonenapped

Vilis • Spinward Marches 1119

A593943-A • Hi In • 820 • Im • G5 V M8 V

Excerpt: *Diary and Dialogues*

Vilis was a nice place once, a long time ago. A little small, but very dense with metals and such, so gravity's pretty normal. Smack in the middle of Goldilocks. Sweet air, dense, and enough water for nature's purposes. Enough for human purposes, anyway. Is anyone surprised that the Sword Worlders spread there and started farming? Really, anyone?

Well, that was fine, until they started mining, and then making, and then making more. Internal combustion and external combustion and sideways combustion. Putting needles through the planet's skin, sucking down fossil fuels because it's cheaper to drill than re-invent fusion, or better yet import it. Cheaper to drill for oil and strip-mine than it is to do a lot of things. They got lazy and stupid, smogged it up, dumped toxins in some of their nice almost-deserts... well, this isn't really intelligence. This is ants with an attitude.

Oh, and then we let them join up. How could we not? There's still metal to be mined. Ships to be made, rifle barrels to be bored. More pollution, less food production. You know you've made it in Imperial society when you have to import food from your own orbital stations.

What's that you ask? No, you misunderstand. I love Vilis. Someone needs to keep the Sword-Worlders and Zho at bay. Vilis does a good job at that. The cost of freedom is eternal pollution. A great, capitalist mecca.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1107.

General Data (Players)

Vilis was originally settled by Sword Worlders, but has been associated with the Imperium since 470 in current reckoning. Vilis is now a high population, heavily industrialized world with its originally standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere tainted by industrial pollutants. Like pre-Solomoni Earth, pollution has caused global climate change, though a switch to alternative energy has slowed the progress of the damage.

Vilis' exports are primarily manufactured goods, including some warships and of course weaponry. However, the relatively low technology level (in overall Imperial terms) limits its construction of larger warships.

Over eight billion people reside on this relatively small world, resulting in significant crowding, especially in the cities. Food is grown on-planet using efficient means, but as noted the ecology is stressed by the high population and the polluted air. Additional food is imported from orbital habitats, and from other systems. A strong manufacturing base has made all of this possible despite the ecological damage it has wrought.

While some orbital agricultural habitats exist (often older Standard Stanford Toruses), many other platforms were constructed after local manufacturing became capable of large-scale gravitics production. Thus, despite increased expense, many of the newer agricultural habitats are large domed plates. Like "spinning wheels," though, these habitats retain substantial shielding in their bases, which face sunward. Mirrors redirect light toward the domes, and the domes use advanced polarization techniques to simulate a fairly standard day.

The richest manufacturing tycoons of Vilis often reside on gravitically lifted estates. These are set to float above the worst of the smog at ground level, in the in the less dense air of the higher elevations, and above the worst of the smog below. Atmospheric currents move them around the globe, giving them the opportunity for many vistas. Needless to say, this is too expensive for most of the populace, who continue to live in less desirable conditions on the ground.

Vilis was spared direct combat during the war. Both the Zhodani and Sword Worlds seem to have largely bypassed the system. The people of Vilis credit this to the availability of basic defensive vessels and militarized forces, reducing the local effects of the war. As aggressive as the Outworld Coalition had been, they were not foolish enough to lay unnecessary siege to a prepared and fortified Imperial world. Numerous orbital bombardment scares and siege drills kept the populace vigilant. System defense forces were always at high alert. Despite the cessation of hostilities, they currently remain at higher alert than at any time in the twenty years before the war.

Although the planetary government is a representative democracy with a fairly liberal law level, Vilis is nonetheless only slowly ramping down from the war mentality. The people continue to take defense responsibilities seriously, to the point that there are still individuals who refuse to leave their homes without a sidearm in the event of renewed warfare. In addition, areas such as the construction facilities for lower-technology Imperial patrol vessels are heavily guarded.

Because it was deemed a safe haven, Vilis became the destination for many Imperial citizens fleeing combat zones. Some 50,000 people were lucky enough (or panicked enough) to cram into the cargo holds of vessels being evacuated from Saurus, Calit, Garda-Vilis, Frenzie, and other worlds, and were brought to (or dumped at) Vilis.

Summary and Referee's Information

On entry into the system, the Advance Sophonts communicate. "These folks here are still a lot touchier about the war than most, and that includes the locals down on Saurus. This isn't a place for some of those scatterbrains you keep on board to get caught at bad behavior. I'd probably keep them chained to their bunks so they don't get themselves into a big jam."

As it approaches Vilis, *Cirque* will be required to assume orbit 25 diameters away until it is properly identified, boarded and searched. Personal papers will be examined more than one might expect. Visa endorsements make clear that no one may stay more than two weeks on the planet.

Vilis' views will be reinforced on the customs inspection at the holding vector. The inspection will be very, very thorough, despite the fact that Andii and U'ailie maintain perfect paperwork. Even the Sharurshid cargo containers sealed to be shipped onward will be carefully examined to confirm that they have been properly sealed and checked at each prior port of call. Any container which has been opened and re-sealed will be even more closely inspected.

Weapons ports will be carefully considered. BT1's Center Stage will be inspected to assure the local defense forces that it cannot be easily returned to use as an artillery platform.

Finally, *Cirque* will be cleared to assume orbit, and the Advance Sophonts will leave for jump. BT1 and BT2 will be cleared to land only at the downport. The tent itself can be erected outside the starport near the transportation hubs of the nearest city. Appropriate alternate venues for plays and music performances have been arranged. Thus, the entertainment itself can run smoothly and without a great deal of jumping about by Andii and crew.

The tent has been located within 200 kilometers of a refugee camp containing over 5,000 people. Like most refugee camps, the accommodations are not stellar. The overcrowded camps as a whole have received just barely the supplies needed for survival. Most of the camps maintain prefabricated communal facilities for cooking, dining, hospitals, personal hygiene and other common areas, with large numbers of refugees are crammed into minimal tents and shacks.

Some of the tents are made of modern shelter materials, not unlike Cirque des Sirkas' tent, but many others are of far more primitive materials, even including old-fashioned canvas. Air filtration is insufficient. Many of the larger shelters lack filtration. Personal filter masks are often shared; the filters themselves are rarely replaced as required. Chronic coughs are almost universal, and lung infections are common. Infant mortality is higher than in the general population.

After several years living this way, the refugees have become restless. They want either to be properly absorbed into the population or sent elsewhere to make new lives for themselves. As none of the refugees are voting citizens, their desires and needs have been ignored, while the voting public has refused to elect representatives who will find work and homes for the displaced. At the same time, no funding is available to take them offworld.

The local government has simply stated that the war refugees are the Imperium's problem. The Vilis subsector is administered directly from Regina, without its own duke, and even a year after the end of the war Norris' bureaucracy simply has not focused on this issue due to other, more critical matters. People have been displaced throughout the sector, meaning that Vilis is far from alone in having a refugee problem.

As *Cirque* enters its parking orbit, U'aiili receives a message addressed to her personally. It carries electronic seals identifying it as coming from the highest levels of the local Sharurshid offices. The Aslan reviews the message alone.

The Plot

Porter Lyr once was Sharurshid's Vice President for the Vilis Subsector, and is now an independent shipping broker. He had become a key man in the Marches based on his hard work and acumen before striking out on his own, and has used his reputation, influence, and contacts to operate Lyr of Vilis, a small (in Imperial terms) but successful trading firm. The firm owns no starships of its own, relying on networks of independent small traders. It also has substantial contacts with Sharurshid.

Lyr's former spouse left him for another man. Thanks to a team of excellent lawyers, Lyr was able to cut her off with almost no money and with little contact with their daughters, four-year-old Angelica and two-year-old Constance. The children were raised by a succession of nannies and tutors on their father's grav-floating estate, with few close friends their own age.

Angelica came to view her father as cold, distant and punitive. She learned to keep her own counsel, however. She obtained her degrees and began to take part in her father's business. She believes that she is his rightful successor, and has some support within the father's business.

Constance, on the other hand, has desired nothing more than closeness with her father. She, too, has attended business school, and has worked with her father. She has less business acumen than Angelica, without any doubt, but more ability to work with people. Nonetheless, Lyr has given her the same salary and position as Angelica. They are on an equal footing, at least as far as can be seen in organizational charts.

Angelica has been plotting to take control of Lyr of Vilis from her father and sister. She has worked with one other employee and has devoted some of her personal funds to execute her plan. Other funds have been diverted from the company to further her scheme.

An expensive black-market forced-growth clone of her father was obtained. The cloned body contains no inserted genetic markers (see below), and has no significant transcription errors. Her father was to be

killed, but secretly, as an official record of death would trigger the applicable Life Insurance procedures. Her father's memory recordings were obtained and altered, with an eye to activating the clone and programmed with the most current memory recording available once Porter Lyr was eliminated. The memory recording, however, was altered to endure that the cloned Lyr would favor Angelica over Constance, and thus would have a specific imperative to alter both corporate and personal legal arrangements as soon as possible.

Angelica's collaborator (Shama Guraka, Lyr's personal assistant) was to prepare an ambush at which Lyr would be killed and the clone substituted. However, he had his own self-interest at heart, and created a fail-safe. He did not wish to be convicted of murder under the laws of Vilis, which carry the liberal and benevolent penalty of a life sentence at hard labor in deep mines. With no parole, this would amount to an unpleasant but slowly administered death penalty.

Guraka is nonetheless deeply, deeply in love with Angelica, and Angelica knows this. Her purported reciprocation, alas, is entirely manipulative. Angelica is in love with someone else (herself).

Guraka was supposed to have Lyr kidnapped and killed while on a private inspection of a Startown warehouse. Instead, he arranged to kidnap Lyr and dump the executive in a refugee camp. Sophisticated nanotech medibots were injected into Lyr; these have lodged in his brain to cause dementia (the medical term for the process which causes the condition of dementia). Lyr's memory is severely impaired and he has schizophrenic delusions.

The treatment is reversible. The nanotech medibots' structure will break down if exposed to significant electromagnetic forces, such as an MRI scanner or multiple EMP strikes. Post-infection memories will be vague at best, or entirely lost. If the scheme falls apart, Guraka can retrieve Lyr and claim to be his savior, or at least bargain for a lesser sentence.

The plan was initiated a month before *Cirque*'s arrival at Vilis. The relict has already made changes to the local organizational structure, moving Constance aside in favor of her sister. The Lyr relict no longer confides in Constance, and no longer recognizes the affection the real Lyr had developed for his younger daughter. Worse, the relict has wasted no time in altering "his" complicated estate plan to bypass Constance completely and give his entire estate to Angelica. The Lyr relict has already made a new brain recording so that these revised memories and attitudes will be passed on to any new relict.

The message to U'aiili is a plea for help from Constance. Virtually disowned and reeling from her father's seeming rejection, she has already spoken to the local police. They have discounted her suspicions, stating that whatever happened between her and her father is at best a mere civil matter, not a criminal. The police have spoken to Angelica, who has calmly suggested that Constance's grip on reality has slipped recently. The police have taken a word to the wise as enough, and are pursuing nothing. Others in Lyr of Vilis are shunning Constance as either ungrateful or unhinged due to the concerns she has raised.

U'aiili had met Lyr and his daughters in the course of her days on Sharurshid vessels. She admires Angelica's administrative abilities, but

The Nanotech Medibots

The nanotech medibots are sophisticated (TL-15) devices designed to clean out wastes from brains affected by various medical plaques and deposits causing blockage of synapses and memories. Earlier preventative treatments used early detection and plaque-production inhibitors. These medications, while effective enough, were not as effective as this new technology. The new technology can often restore blocked long-term memory pathways, thus "restoring" some memories. These medibots cannot reproduce, and eventually break down. They are washed out of the body within two months.

With only a minor alteration, the medibots can instead seek out and lock onto long-term memory pathways. This prevents access to the memories and interferes with creation of new long-term memories. The medibots also multiply in this configuration, thus increasing their numbers and maintaining the memory blockages. This alteration is of course illegal, and requires sophisticated laboratories to produce. One ampule (sufficient for up to three effective injections) costs Cr 1,000,000.00.

has heard Angelica's diatribes against Constance. More important, she has observed Lyr with both daughters and has noticed that this abrupt change in how he treats them is odd. Based on this, she is more willing to look into the matter than are the local police.

Footprints in the Sand

The scheme has left a trail of footprints in the sand. If they are not followed reasonably quickly, they will be washed away by the rising tide of time.

The reprogramming of Lyr's memories was performed by Dunalisii Jones, who was paid a large sum to do so. Jones, however, has become terrified that her work will be discovered, and has a tendency toward self-harm leading her to kill herself.

An expensive TL F semi-automatic cloning unit destined for a Life Insurance facility on Frenzie (one of a shipment of twenty from Rhyllanor) is missing. Its three-ton cargo container was reported lost in transit, and never recovered. This cloning unit is capable of providing a clone within twelve standard months with human input and supervision.

Dr. Aazu Dimmak retired from a Life Insurance clone facility five years ago. He had significant gambling debts, which have since been paid off. He has just died, or is about to.

Guraka handled Lyr's kidnapping himself, using a private meeting at a warehouse as a subterfuge. The warehouse surveillance was temporarily shut down, long enough for Guraka to inject Lyr with a tranquilizer and then the nanomedics, strip Lyr of all identification, and fly him via company air/raft to the camp, then simply dump him in the center. The surveillance videos at the warehouse note a gap of about eight hours, during which the air/raft was clearly moved. Despite his precautions with the warehouse security system, Guraka neglected to wipe the air/raft's travel records as well.

Guraka also injected Dr. Dimmak with a tranquilizer and then the same nanotech medibots used on Lyr. Unexpectedly, Dimmak experienced a complete psychotic break thanks to the medibots, and ran into ground traffic. He was struck and killed by a truck.

Guraka provided the last of the nanomedics to Angelica, who was falsely sympathetic to Constance. Angelica gave her a dosed glass of wine, and then injected Constance in her sleep. As a result, Constance suffered a mental breakdown that, combined with her previous accusations about her father, have resulted in her being declared so mentally unbalanced that she was involuntarily committal to a mental institution for evaluation.

The nanotech medibots were purchased from Yahk Khumbar, a local black marketeer. Khumbar has off-port offices in a questionable neighborhood, but resides in a small grav-estate.

The refugee camp's occupants have been together for at least a year. New refugees appear only infrequently. Lyr is not the first unwanted person to be dumped on the refugees, but as he has no memory of his previous life, the few who have noticed him view him only as an anomaly, not a possible victim.

The sudden changes in Lyr of Vilis' organizational responsibilities suggest that something radical has taken place. Old hands, though, recall how Lyr dealt with his daughters' mother and have generally simply shrugged the matter off as entirely consistent with Lyr's personality.

Once rescued, the real Lyr's genetic and other bio-medical records will clearly demonstrate that he is the original. Everything from micro-scars to tooth repairs will prove his identity. Deactivation of the nanotech medibots will restore his memory up to the moment he was injected.

Guidance on Clone Law

The following notes are *not* presented as potential Canon for any edition of Traveller. They are this author's attempt to reconcile the T5 Insurance Clone rules with the existing Canon. Reasonable referees may differ, and *future work from Marc Miller and others may provide contrary answers as Canon.*

Life Insurance Clones awarded as a result of service meet the minimum requirements to be granted Imperial citizenship. Indeed, T5 defines them as the continuation of an individual's life. However, Insurance Clones with the associated memory/identity transfer present several conundrums in Imperial law. This note provides opinion, not Canon, on

how relicts may be treated.

The Imperium provides Patents of Nobility, Land Grants, and other benefits to individuals. Pre-clone law made the death of the individual the end-point at which all such benefits expired. Patents were given to successors, however chosen, along with the land. Other benefits simply expired. T5 presents a question: does a noble's relict retain the Patent? Can a wealthy and powerful Archduke, or even an Emperor, wield power for hundreds if not thousands of years simply by keeping clones on hand?

The implied answer is found in the Rebellion Era. Strephon or his android (clone?) was assassinated. No insurance clone was activated to take his place. Publicly, at least, his pre-grown clone body could not be trucked out to say "All is well." Thus, cloning was not appropriate. Similarly, Norris chose to adopt his own infant female (but otherwise identical) clone as a daughter, rather than preparing his clone for a future as the next Duke Norris.

Based on these examples, it appears that bodily death generally forces the expiration of a Patent, at least in regard to significant titles. However, this is apparently contradicted by the example of Duke Adawulf of Efate (T5, pp. 119-120).

Does this mean that an insurance clone comes into the world naked, bereft of property?

As a matter of game mechanics, the answer is "no." The transfer of memory into a Life Insurance relict after the original person's death does not leave the relict naked as a newborn babe in vacuum. Even Nobles may be granted Life Insurance as a mustering benefit. T5 rules are clear on this: "Life Insurance activates a Relict when a verified report of death or disappearance is made to the company. The activated Relict has the memories and skills of the original and becomes the owner of the original's property." (T5, page 119-120) The example of Duke Adawulf states that the Duke died on Efate during hostilities with the Zhodani, presumably during the Fifth Frontier War. The example can also be read to note that a) the cloning and forced regrowth b) occurred only *after* c) violent death in a matter of Imperial importance.

Further, even this situation reveals concern: the relict's memories could be tampered with in advance by properly situated agents. In this situation, the Zhodani attack happens shortly after agents break into the computer or physical repository containing the Duke's recorded memory, tamper with the recording, and kill or kidnap the original in the attack on Efate. The Duke ultimately returns as a Zhodani dupe. This type of plot provides insurance against the loss of the Fifth Frontier War. The Zhodani will ultimately have someone high in Imperial circles to push for their interests. Considering that their interests include the survival of the Zhodani way of life, this ploy would probably be acceptable despite the highly honed Zhodani sense of honesty.

The relict problem becomes more convoluted due to the risk that an insurance clone could be force-grown to the same life stage as the original, awakened and imprinted with memories before the character's secretly arranged death or kidnapping. This is the essence of clonenapping. Such a non-relict could be used to impersonate the original character. In this scenario, Duke Adawulf's guest on Efate, Baronet Tim of Transylvania, has his DNA illicitly sampled by Zhodani about a year before the invasion. The Zhodani force-grow his body, duplicate all of his battle scars and aging features by careful surgery, arrange an updated memory recording as the war begins, and implant a suggestion that Tim go to Regina to offer his services to Norris. As a sleeper agent, Baronet Tim will provide intelligence to the Zhodani, turning the tide of the war, and changing the Canon history of the Fifth Frontier War.

With less powerful individuals — the mere rich, for example — the premature relict can be used to commit substantial criminal fraud, as suggested in this adventure. Clonenapping involves either producing or obtaining a clone prior to the individual's death, followed by removing and replacing the original person, just as Baron Tim was replaced. In this scenario, the relict is used to further another person's agenda. It does not matter whether the original is dead or simply put aside.

It is possible to synthesize a consistent, playable legal concept from the forgoing. It is a matter of clarifying Imperial law and custom. I suggest the following as rules underlying Life Insurance clones. Again, these are presented as suggestions, and not as a definitive statement of Canon.

1. The Life Insurance must be in effect at the time of death; it cannot be purchased after the death. Similarly, a cancelled policy cannot be revived after the individual's death.

2. The policy must be administered by an Imperially chartered corporation. “Off the Books” cloning does not meet this requirement. “Off the Books” clones are subject to termination (preferably by merciful means), regardless of when or how force-grown.

2. Death must precede cloning and growth of the relict. “Ready-in-the-Freezer” clones (such as those carried by *Cirque* in Sharurshid’s sealed cargo) are not generally permitted. This requirement reduces but does not eliminate fraud. However, it is possible in some cases to have a waiver, usually for non-noble citizens deemed essential to some Imperial effort. The waiver may be granted by Patent Nobles (those who have engaged in the Noble career) of Social Standing E or higher, or by the Moot. Duke Leonard Stephanos Kirgashii has granted the waiver for the clones in *Cirque*’s holds.

3. Noble relicts present additional issues. Death is necessary to “turnover” among the nobility. Continuity requires reasonably rapid replacement of nobles who have died. Because production of the relict may require more than a year, Nobles ranked C or higher may not receive the benefits of Life Insurance cloning, memory transfer *and* retention of the Patent absent the ultimate assent of the Iridium Throne. A presumption against retention of the Patent is generally exercised (and thus player characters receiving the benefit are engaged in a gamble). As a practical matter, the Iridium Throne may agree with a local higher nobility’s assessment of the value of a particular noble. Otherwise, the delay and potential for divided loyalties would likely foment local uncertainty and even rebellion. Cloning would also likely change historical Canon regarding the reigns of various Emperors, as well as other Canon events. This does *not* contradict the T5 example of Duke Adawulf. To the contrary, one might conjecture that Duke Adawulf was granted a boon by the Emperor, via Norris’ recommendation.

4. If Life Insurance is in effect, assent is granted to transfer of the Patent, and if cloning is commenced, death-related transfer of Patent title and property rights and titles are delayed for three years. A successful relict must be provided within that time. Other property rights pass pursuant to law.

5. No noble or high-ranking member of the military (the General Staff and Admiralty) may use more than one relict, regardless of status, unless permitted by advance decree of the Emperor with the advice and consent of the Moot. Imperial law and policy are based on the premise that personnel changes are beneficial. “A new broom-bot sweeps clean.”

6. All relicts, noble or otherwise, must be genetically identifiable as such. In relicts produced at lower technology levels, the DNA itself will show evidence of transcription errors. For those produced at higher tech levels (TL C or higher), marker DNA must be inserted into mitochondria and other discrete subcellular structures. Production of a relict without such markers is a serious criminal offense. If performed with the intent of subverting Imperial rule and order, the death penalty may be imposed without memory transfer or rightful preservation.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ *Cirque* arrives in-system. She must enter parking orbit at 25 diameters. Based on her recent travels in the Border Worlds, she is subject to a thorough search.
- ☐ Performers and animals may react negatively to the search. This may be played for amusement.
- ☐ After the ship is cleared, *Cirque* enters a lower orbit.
- ☐ U’aili receives an encrypted message.
- ☐ *Cirque* continues with regular deployment of BT1 and BT2.
- ☐ U’aili, with Andii’s assent, engages the PCs to assist in reviewing Constance’s concerns.
- ☐ PCs have encounters with locals carrying side-arms. It is not uncommon to be challenged and asked for identification. Most of these encounters become friendly if the PCs cooperate. “You can’t be too friendly.”

- ☐ The Fake Zhodani Mind Reader learns that he will be carefully scrutinized, regardless of whether he is in costume, due to his height. He is stopped a minimum of once per hour when in public.
- ☐ The PCs discover that they cannot contact Constance through any source. Attempts to contact her through Lyr of Vilis are rebuffed.
- ☐ If they visit Lyr’s airborne estate, they are allowed to land at the semi-public air/raft pad used for business visitors. As soon as they get to the door, however, Guraka personally escorts the PCs back to their air/raft and tells them not to return to the estate. He advises them that the estate security cameras have recorded them; facial and kinetic recognition software will identify them if they enter the estate again. They will then be arrested and jailed for trespass after notice.
- ☐ On computer searches, the PCs discover a judicial finding that Constance requires evaluation for a mental breakdown. Both her sister and father were petitioners. Constance has been hospitalized in a local facility to deal with these questions regarding her mental health. To discover the court’s record of temporary institutionalization: Average (2D) < (Int + Programmer) (success allows the PCs to find and then view the Court’s docket).
- ☐ The PCs go to the hospital. Constance is in the locked “Judicially Committed” ward. Security is low, however, with little surveillance. The PCs will note through the main guard booth window that small videos play from ever-changing surveillance cameras, with many of the views dark. The shift is changing, and the PCs overhear the guard leaving tell the new guard that “camera 546 went down. I reported it.” The new guard replies, “They’re going down a lot, lately. When they finally do the upgrade, the whole system will be replaced. It’s what, a hundred years old?” He settles in and starts playing a video game on his personal computer/communications device; the old guard tells the PCs to “shoo!” so he can go home.
- ☐ The PCs can obtain a floor plan of the hospital via computer. The floor plan comes from a security firm which is bidding on a job to improve the security. To obtain floor plan: Average (2D) < (Int + Programmer). The floor plan includes camera locations. It also shows an emergency-only stairwell which allows escape from all floors to the ground in the event of fire. The plan further indicates that upgrades will include replacing the existing old, broken hard-wired alarm and surveillance system with a wireless system. In short, the old building is a dangerous firetrap.

Act II

- ☐ The PCs may enter the stairwell by picking the purely mechanical locks (or shooting through them, if need be), as the doors can be opened with a key from either side. To pick each lock: Average (2D) < (Dex + Stealth) (assumes availability of a lockpick kit).
- ☐ The PCs will get into the ward unobserved, as long as they do not make excessive noise. Using lockpicks or lasers is quiet; using firearms is not.
- ☐ Constance is quickly located sitting in a dingy, dirty lounge. She is watching a holoscreen, and fails to respond to her name or any other form of address or query. She takes direction easily, however, and will follow the PCs if told to do so. To stealthily remove Constance from the ward without being noticed: Difficult (3D) < (Dex + Stealth) (a careful attempt, with a specific plan, renders this an Average task).
- ☐ If the above task fails, the facility staff will become aware the PCs are trying to remove Constance and will pursue them. The referee should administer the chase based on the preparations for escape made by the PCs. If captured or tracked back to *Cirque*, they will find themselves answering questions from the police and possibly subject to arrest. However, so long as Constance is returned and costs paid, Angelica will expressly request that the police not pursue the matter, believing that she is better off if the PCs have a scare thrown into them and the police do not take Constance’s prior statements seriously.
- ☐ Assuming that the PCs get Constance back to BT2, she can be brought to *Cirque*. U’aili will request that this be done.

Cirque

- A complete medical examination on the ship reveals little. However, the doctor notices bruising from a clumsily performed injection of intravenous medication. He will also suggest obtaining a full brain image using the available high-technology imaging system in *Cirque's* medical suite. The imaging includes MRI scanning. The magnetic forces destroy the nanotech medibots blocking Constance's long-term memory and return her to her normal state, as of the time of her drugging.

Act III

- If Constance is allowed to recover, she can assist in pointing out places to look for clues. The clues generally arise from interviews, computer research, and luck. If none of these occur and the PCs are stymied, they find themselves sent to a Refugee Camp for a charity performance, where they encounter Lyr. Finding Lyr should allow them to reverse the investigation and help wrap up Act III in reverse, as loose ends. Lyr can be recognized from photos, or by Constance or U'aili.
- Given the prior reception by the police, both Constance and U'aili suggest getting as much evidence as possible before going to the authorities again.
- As previously noted, Lyr's recent change in duties suggests something major has happened within Lyr of Vilis, but company staff interviewed – both old hands, and various junior staffers – attribute them to Lyr's personality and nothing unusual.
- A young computer programmer and neuropsychiatry expert, Dunalisii Jones, commits suicide. Her death is in the news media. The Geezer Thespian, himself a student of such technologies, knows of her, and knows that she was working with adjustment of relict personalities. Research into her bank records or an interview with her grieving parents reveals that she recently made a substantial cash deposit into her personal account.
- Jones' personal computer (found at her home or a university office, depending on where the players look) contains protocols for amending clone personalities. A link to a massive cloud-based storage director leads to an altered recording of Lyr's memories.
- Lyr's Life Insurance recordings are stored in a secure but cloud-accessible location (the latest, plus one prior recording as a back-up). To break into that account: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 240 minutes; on fourth or catastrophic failure, police will track the access attempt and arrive with an arrest warrant). Success provides both recordings for comparison. Comparison will show the alterations.
- As noted in the Footprints in the Sand section, a cloning unit was stolen from a Lyr warehouse over two years ago. Its three-ton cargo container was reported lost in transit (not stolen), and never recovered. This cloning unit is capable of providing a clone within twelve standard months with human input and supervision. The police never solved the crime, but media reports indicate that they suspected Yahk Khumbar, a black marketeer known to traffic in high-technology medical innovations. Referee: this is a red herring for the police because Constance and Guraka engineered the theft.
- Dr. Aazu Dimmak's death was reported in the media, or is discovered in computer records. His body remains in the morgue, as no family has claimed it. Research into his background will reveal the gambling debts, and will reveal that he had become a frequent visitor to the airborne Lyr estate over the past eighteen months.
- If the PCs retrieve Dimmak's body (or break into the morgue and bring the *Cirque's* Ship's Doctor) Dimmak's body can be autopsied. If the doctor is looking for the nanotech medibots blocking memory, the equipment at the morgue is able to locate it in the brain tissue.
- An interview with Yahk Khumbar at either his off-port offices or his grav-estate will make him laugh. "Do you think I need the Imperials down on me? No clonapping in my business! Now, get out of here." Khumbar advises them that the lobby (or estate) security cameras have recorded them; facial and kinetic recognition software will identify them if they enter the estate again. They will then be arrested and jailed for trespass after notice. Two of Khumbar's guards ensure that the players leave with a final "And don't come back!"
- The repetition of the phrase should trigger the PCs to consider the possibility that this is legal formality, and that someone stores these recordings. If the PCs do not inquire, U'aili may recall it from her prior time on Vilis.
- After making the appropriate inquiries, the PCs learn that both Lyr and Khumbar utilize the same security company. The company is controlled by Khumbar through various fronts, thus allowing him to keep his own security transcripts from the police. To break into that company's computers: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Programming, DM -1 if wafer socket), 240 minutes; on the fourth or catastrophic failure, the police track the access attempt and arrive with an arrest warrant). On success, the PCs discover that Guraka visited Khumbar's offices twice, both meetings occurring in the time period just before Lyr's attitudes changed. On the second occasion, he was carrying a heavy briefcase, and left without it. Note that no recordings of Khumbar or Guraka are found in Khumbar's office; no surveillance is found there.
- The PCs should notice that the surveillance system's menu includes a "Track this individual" option. If they click on that menu, they will discover that Guraka and Angelica have both been tracked to the entry of a restaurant at the same time, but arriving separately (no internal surveillance was performed). On at least one occasion, Angelica entered with a heavy briefcase that looks just like the one brought to Khumbar; Guraka left carrying the same briefcase. The records show that this meeting happened only two hours before the prior meeting between Guraka and Khumbar.
- The surveillance also links Guraka and Lyr to a warehouse in the Startown. As the two approach the warehouse from Guraka's ground car, the surveillance cuts off entirely — nothing is more is recorded inside or outside. It picks back up again about eight hours later; Guraka's ground car is gone.
- Review of the internal surveillance recordings from just before the cut-off and just after the resumption includes images of the company air/raft in the background. The air/raft has clearly been moved during the gap in surveillance.
- If the PCs go to the warehouse, the surveillance system notes them, but allows them to enter. It sends an alert to Guraka, but does NOT set off any obvious intruder alarms.
- Reviewing the air/raft navigation records shows that the air/raft travelled to a nearby refugee camp of about 5,000 people on the day the surveillance cut off (that is, the day Guraka dosed Lyr).
- When the PCs try to leave the warehouse they discover that all entrances and exits have been locked.
- Guraka arrives carrying a gauss pistol and is backed up by two not-very-intimidating-looking thugs carrying similar pistols. Guraka and his two henchmen attack immediately upon seeing the PCs. Their fire will not hit anybody, but the referee should score several uncomfortably-near-misses, to scatter the PCs. The PCs' counter-attack will take its course and end with them either capturing, killing, or wounding Guraka. Regardless of the outcome, he says nothing, and, if asked (assuming he survives that long) insists that Angelica had no part in the plan. He says nothing whatsoever to implicate Angelica in any way. He also refuses to admit where he took Lyr, but acknowledges that he is alive. Guraka's two thugs can die, flee, or be captured; they know nothing.

Act IV

- The PCs find themselves at the nearest refugee camp, whether by following clues or as a result of Andii sending them for *Cirque's* purposes, e.g. a charity performance.
- If the PCs interview camp residents they will be told of a strange fellow with no memory who appeared one day in the middle of the camp. New refugees sometimes appear but not like that, with no recollection of their identity or where they are. After several inquiries

Cirque

ies similar to asking directions of grizzled old locals on a farming world, the eventually locate Lyr.

- The refugees in the refugee camp have been together for at least a year. New refugees appear only infrequently. Lyr is not the first person to be dumped on the refugees, but he is an anomaly.
- Lyr can be identified, despite the dirt and dishevelment. He is bruised; the refugees explain that he sometimes becomes combative and has to be restrained. A refugee doctor or nurse points out that this is common in some types of dementia which were once common, such as an old malady once referred to as Alzheimer's disease (virtually unknown to TL-10+ societies)
- If the PCs have not discovered that electromagnetic energy denatures the nanotech, the referee may make it easy and have Lyr become combative, assuming that someone has an EMP projector (those in charge of the camp do not, and instead use tranq guns). Use of this to disable Lyr will result in his ultimately awakening with memory fully recovered to the point of his kidnapping. Medical examination of Lyr will prove incontrovertibly that he is the real Lyr and that the Lyr currently running Lyr of Vilis is a clone.
- In the meantime, the PCs have an opportunity to meet with refugees and consider conditions in the camp. They are, to say the least, substandard for a world of this type. The residents have no visas to exit the camp. They cannot obtain work. They have been thoroughly scanned by facial and motion recognition software to ensure that local forces will be alerted if anybody manages to break out. The local government representatives insist, if contacted, that the problem is the Imperium's, not theirs. Any local nobility will indicate that the situation has been duly reported to the subsector administration, which is true, but . . . not only have insufficient efforts have been made to flag the situation as urgent, Duke Norris has been too busy with other post-war matters to notice the problems. In fairness to the

nobility, many have been off-planet and engaged in the war effort. Cirque des Sirkas may, through the PCs, take a role in publicizing this issue and presenting it to these nobles or to Sharurshid and thence, to the subsector government.

- Once the PCs presents their evidence to the local authorities, along with the admonishment that the evidence has also been forwarded through Imperial channels, the police will have no choice but to charge Guraka and Angelica on a variety of counts.
- The police are unable to locate Angelica. Once she learned of her sister's release at the PC's hands, she took Cr 2,000,000 in embezzled cash and left Vilis. She will not be encountered again by the PCs on this trip, but her escape may be a seed for future adventures.

Tag

- Lyr has lost the daughter whom he knew was better at business. He has gotten back the daughter who loves him more, for now, but that is meager consolation because Constance has realized that she does not wish to be involved in the business.
- As always, the show goes on. With its coffers full (Vilis has money), Cirque des Sirkas moves on to the next world.



Episode 16: In Congress Assembled

Arkadia • Spinward Marches 1217

E546845-6 402 Im

Excerpt: *Diary and Dialogues*

Most ambitious parents want their children to grow up to be doctors, lawyers, or Imperial Navy. Arkadia's the only place I can remember visiting where a kid with an admiral's braid on her shoulders plays second fiddle to the one who just got apprenticed to a master glass-blower.

The admiral may keep the commerce flowing, but delicate glassware is the commerce. The Arkadians like commerce. They like it so long as they approve it, anyway. They're snarky that way. Exports have to be approved. Low-grade stuff doesn't get out easily, at least what they call low-grade. Local families have china that a Count would cheat a Baron for. But that stuff doesn't get past the export inspectors. "Don't glut the market with crap," that's the motto.

And it works. When a setting of eight wine glasses goes for a thousand credits because it's certified Daneau of Arkadia stemware, hand-blown and hand-etched, the method works.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1107.

General Data (Players)

Located in the Vilis Subsector of the Spinward Marches, Arkadia has several large moons, producing both complicated tides and significant tectonic activity. As a result, it is a volcanic world, prone to frequent earthquakes and eruptions. It has a reasonably temperate climate and a thin oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere, slightly tainted with volcanic gasses. Its 400,000,000 residents live in well-sealed homes and use filter masks due to the environmental taint. These are locally produced and highly efficient.

Populated areas are often located along fault lines because minerals are mined and gathered there. As a result, construction techniques emphasize sturdy, low-height buildings of fewer than ten stories. Populations are less tightly packed than on many worlds.

Like many worlds in the sector, the local technology level is low. Local transportation is largely ground-based. Ores and deposits are moved via ground-based trains and similar forms of transportation rather than by gravitic or other air-based methods. More valuable items are well guarded. Arkadia's technology level of 6, combined with minimal starport facilities, renders it something of a backwater despite its population in the hundreds of millions.

Local artisans work with various minerals, ores, gemstones, and precious metals, producing everything from exotic jewelry to original sculpture to decorative items using only the planet's own raw materials. Glassware in particular is an unusual but highly prized specialty, as the local silica and mineral based can be used to produce vibrant colors and interesting patterns rarely seen on other worlds. Several artists' colonies have become well known due to the masterworks they produce. Master artisans living in these enclaves attract aggressive, ambitious apprentices from all points of the globe, and even other planets if the student is deemed worthy of the time and attention.

Other crafts and artistic forms are represented as well. Sculptors produce exquisite large and small works from the various types of marble,

granite, sandstone, basalt, and other available stones. Gems and jewelry are well represented, with a special emphasis on chryselephantine statues and other forms that combine precious metals, exotic gems, and organic material. Even the simple granite and marble slabs used for flooring and wall coverings are produced by highly skilled stonecutters. Arkadian green marble is especially coveted across the sector.

"If you want it hand-made, have it made on Arkadia." Arkadia is known for its individualized, often cottage-industry manufacturing. Though mechanization and mass production assuredly exists, it is less pervasive than on most worlds. Extended families often work together to manufacture particular lines of high-quality goods, with skills and styles passed from one generation to the next.

The starport is located in a tectonically secure location many miles away from major population centers. It is a classic E-class starport in its most literal form: a bare, flat, rocky place with a beacon. It is, however, fenced off. All official access points are guarded by the Artisans' Customs Service. All cargo entering or leaving the port is inspected carefully to be sure that proper export permission has been given, as only the highest quality items are allowed to leave Arkadia.

The Congress of Artisans maintains a single Type R subsidized merchant, the *Arkadia II*, which makes one round trip per month between Arkadia and Garda-Vilis. The most valuable cargoes are reserved for export on the vessel. In addition, a number of independent traders have cargo contracts for lesser cargos. The Congress of Artisans also approves all cargos offered for sale to independent purchasers, even down to personal purchases by individuals, as a way of maintaining Arkadia's reputation for producing only the highest quality goods.

The Viscountess Anoria assiduously supports the local government's strict policies. Her levies have concentrated on providing better than adequate system defenses for a world with no starport. Smugglers occasionally attempt to land off-port. They rarely meet with success; they are even less likely to leave with cargo bays loaded.

The artists' collectives are locales of interest to the occasional tourists. Tourists are allowed to purchase anything they want, of course, but must still apply for an export license for anything to be taken off-world. Some tourists have become irate when told that a product will not be approved for export, as "all sales are final" at the collectives, although their ire usually cools when their ships send messages advising of the final boarding call. Travellers' Aid Society materials on Arkadia advise all visitors to confirm that the artisans with whom they deal have an export license, and that items sold have been pre-inspected for minimum quality.

Arcadia's representative democracy is relatively standard among the many worlds which utilize such a system. It has an executive, judicial and legislative branch, each providing checks and balances. There is, however a fourth branch that is unique to Arkadia: the Congress of Artisans.

The Congress of Artisans is essential to this continued prosperity of this relatively low-tech world relatively low-tech world. As most of the planet's exports are high-priced handicrafts and fine decorative items, the powerful Artisan Guilds set and enforce standards for industries, including stone workers, sculptors, metal workers, glass workers, porcelain and china artisans, gem cutters and jewelers. This is to ensure that Arkadia's reputation for producing only the very best quality items is maintained.

Cirque

Rather than risking inferior products entering the stream of interstellar commerce and threatening Arkadia's good name, the Congress of Artisans regularly meets to evaluate and grade works proposed for export. The members also bestow statuses upon these creators of "hard art."

The Congress assembles annually at the capitol city, Tripolitsa, near the starport, to evaluate both large works of art proposed for export and samples of smaller items such as jewelry and glassware. As the various items are evaluated, lots for export are created.

As may be expected, placing a bottleneck on commerce can be upsetting to some. Most artisans understand that the vast majority of the creative individuals and groups maximize profit as a result of this system. However, others suffer from the strict quality control and occasional delay in approving a particular style or product line for export. Accusations of favoritism and prejudice fly during the always-heated congressional debates. Experienced artisans with a long history of solid off-world sales are often derided by their juniors as simply politically connected hacks. Other artisans, regardless of the true quality of their work, claim that their works are unfairly judged.

In addition, those outside the more powerful political circles have repeatedly lobbied both the day-to-day government and the Viscountess Anoria for an expanded starport facility. They argue (correctly) that keeping only an E-class starport minimizes the desire and likelihood that larger vessels will come to trade. A D-class starport would attract other vessels, and perhaps even a few major shippers. The outsiders are often unwilling to accept that their goods are indeed inferior, and exporting them would simply be diluting the value of higher-rated works.

Accusations of prejudice against various outside artisans and styles can be based on any perceived difference. Minimalists of no particular talent often suggest that the subcommittees of the Congress of Artisans simply do not understand their work, which they claim is innovative and deliberate rough rather than sloppy or unskilled. Producers of overly ornate goods accuse the same juries of failing to understand the importance of arcane, busy designs. Artisans from communities with strong religious beliefs claim that the Congress of Artisans are prejudiced against their work based solely on secular (not to say heathen) viewpoints.

Summary and Referee's Information

"Geez, you know how to time it, kid," the Advance Sophonts advise. "A week or two either side, and you'd have missed the *real* circus down here. But these folks are throwing a pair of big parties — the Ins versus the Outs. Keep your eyes open. Oh, and another thing, the marble for the base of that statue was late in getting polished. It'll be coming, and you can haul it. Sharurshid's going to clear one of its other three-ton containers out of the way."

Cirque's visit has by either the best or worst of luck coincided with the latest meeting of the Congress of Artisans, held in nearby Tripolitsa. The Congress is a solemn event, staged with appropriate dignity and formality. Masterpieces are acknowledged, and their craftsmen and crafts-women voted into the Congress as Local Masters, or even elevated by election to the status of Regional or Planetary Masters. Export licenses are awarded to various individuals and Collaborative Studios, (usually those with both skill and political connections). Sycophantic hopefuls offer anything they have of value to become apprentices to recognized Masters. Masters vie with each other to steal away journeymen who show real promise.

The Congress is not entirely objective, nor is it necessarily open to new ideas or artistic approaches. It is no less political than any other democratic body, even though it is composed and caters to those most elite and rare of creatures, artists.

The Conclave of True Artisans is simultaneously coming together in the dry lands between Tripolitsa and the starport. The Conclave is a free-wheeling event featuring decorated and even absurd temporary shelters, odd costumes, performance art, raucous music, shared food, barely sufficient sanitation, and angry protesters. It is a grass-roots mass of humanity seeking exposure to the interplanetary markets. Many of its members are simply less talented in their crafts, or less dedicated to the hard work of learning their crafts. These are properly excluded from obtaining export licenses, in the views of those who fight against "dilution of the Arkadia brand." However, some are truly talented, but either unwilling or unable to play Congress' politics, or working in such an avant garde style as to be

scoomed as unworthy of the Congress's imprimatur.

The Conclave is less objective about the quality of its devotees than the Congress is of its membership. Anyone with tools, materials and too much time on their hands can produce works such as those the Conclave claims to be art. Its politics are those of non-critical equality to the point of disdaining any artistic standard or objective judgment.

However, as in any politically sensitive situation, there are truths on both sides. The Congress plays politics, and sometimes fails to recognize quality. The Conclave has taken an extreme position which would substantially reduce the value of the phrase "Sophont-crafted on Arkadia."

Cirque is to set up its tent in a park on the outskirts of Tripolitsa. Trains hauling *Cirque's* cargo carriers must pass the Conclave and draw its attention. The location for the tent is sufficiently within the city to be accessible by primitive land cars and buses.

The Viscountess Anoria is well aware that Akardia cannot mass-produce much that is worth exporting to her higher-tech neighbors. Thus, she works behind the scenes to make sure that only high-quality, labor-intensive products are prepared for shipment offworld, both to maintain the planet's reputation and to prevent the wholesale strip-mining of what resources Arkadia has in the name of profit. The wealth is spread, in her view, and all benefit from this wise, albeit conservative, stewardship. Certainly the average resident of this planet owns the most beautiful "second quality" clothes, tapestries, artwork, and other locally produced goods to be found anywhere in the Marches.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Arrival in-system.
- ☐ Challenge by customs system defense boat. All cargo bays are checked. Strict landing instructions are received. No vessel may land off-port. The auxiliaries land.
- ☐ *Cirque des Sirkas'* cargo containers are loaded onto trains for the trip to Tripolitsa. The trains pass the Conclave. Rocks are thrown; one smashes a window, and glass showers the Geezer Thespian's wife.
- ☐ *Cirque des Sirkas* performs. At least one performance is held for the Congress of Artisans. Viscountess Anoria is official hostess for another.
- ☐ Viscountess Anoria arranges to have the PCs and others visit one of the Congress's meetings. This is very formal. They also visit a working session in which a Journeyman is elevated to a Local Master.
- ☐ Curious PCs also go to the Conclave. The referee should emphasize the difference between the two proceedings. At the Conclave, the PCs hear rousing speeches about freedom, equality, and the right of all people to produce art according to their desires, not outmoded standards. An old diesel train arrives, pulling decrepit flatbeds and other old cargo cars. Thousands of people climb aboard the empty cars. The train continues on to the city.

Act II

- ☐ Abandoned by the big party, the PCs start back to Tripolitsa. News reports on old-fashioned AM radio begin telling of the massive influx of people arriving on all train lines and roads.
- ☐ Upon arrival in Tripolitsa, the Conclavers begin actively protesting. The streets are over-run by "the other 98%." All of the city's police and public safety employees are too busy to deal with the possibility of theft or property damage. Andii calls back all crew and performers, deciding that the tent perimeter must be watched.
- ☐ Once the PCs are back from the now-empty Conclave site, incidents occur at the tent perimeter. None of the protesters is prepared or equipped to use deadly force, not to mention that Andii will not authorize the use of unnecessary violence against civilian protesters.
- ☐ Protesters get out of hand, pushing against the main gate, trying to break through, decrying *Cirque des Sirkas* as a tool of the establishment, an enemy of the people, etc. They must be repelled with non-

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lethal force. Andii cancels the last day of performances.

- Animals are frightened by the noise and crowds, becoming difficult to control. The PCs find themselves working with the other animal handlers to control and protect the animals. Large grav vehicles have to be commandeered to take the animals to the starport. This requires pushing through the crowds to a nearby rental facility to obtain the grav trucks, as well as several trips to and from the starport. Andii also orders the tent struck and moved to the port. Protesters may attempt to interfere with all of this; Cirque's security and Pounce's members will be called out in armor to convince the protesters to be calm.
- Fighting breaks out within the crowds by protesters with different views.
- A small group of high-profile members of the Congress of Artisans tries to move through the crowd. One is recognized, and the crowd becomes increasingly abusive. The PCs are near the perimeter, and in a position to assist (Andii, of course, will push through the crowd to help them).
- The planetary government mobilizes its forces only to keep the peace in the city.

Act III

- As the tumult continues, news reports indicate that the train carrying marble for the base of *Obstinate* (the sculpture destined for Duke Norris' court) and numerous other artworks (including at least one masterpiece) has been intercepted and taken off to a siding. By the time authorities arrive, the cargo pods have been removed from the flatcars. Trucks have taken the cargo pods elsewhere.
- No satellite imagery was obtained of the moves (this world has few satellites based on its local TL). Viscountess Anoria's satellites and forces were not in position at the right time, or had malfunctioning systems. The Viscountess declines any suggestion of using her limited personal forces against either side in the dispute, despite any argument that the marble is destined for Regina. This is a local dispute, and in any event "hostage situations should be negotiated." She also declines to relax the prohibitions against off-port landings. All travel must be using available transportation. The local police are too busy to help.
- Both Andii and the local Sharurshid representative want the marble recovered. Owners of the art to be exported are also concerned with Anoria's attitude. Andii gathers her useful PCs. She prefers, as she generally does, to use non-lethal action where possible.
- The PCs must get to the site of the train hijacking. As before, this will involve travel through the crowd.
- To track the cargo pods along the roads for five kilometers: Formidable (4D) < (Sensors *or* Survival + Int) (single roll; party may choose character with best DM) (+3 if bloodvarks are also used by competent handlers). This task is repeated a total of six times, as the stolen goods have been taken to an old mine about 30 kilometers away, in the nearby foothills. The mine can only be reached via unpaved, poorly maintained roads. Bloodvarks become ill from the atmospheric taint after three such segments.
- If tracking fails, the PCs will likely return to the city.
- Diligent research will reveal that nearby hills once contained a number of silver mines, all of which were closed at least a century before. The research also provides the name of an amateur historian of the area who has made a particular study of these mines.
- An interview with the amateur historian indicates that many mines had openings large enough to admit cargo containers. The historian can help, for a price: he/she wants samples of a promising (but not yet really ready) craftsman's work carried off-world. Without the historian's information, the PCs will have to investigate more than 100 separate mineshafts to locate the correct one. Andii will agree to take it aboard.
- The PCs finally locate (by tracking or luck) an abandoned dirt road. Brush has been dragged across the road. Recent tracks have been

swept and brushed away.

- The road leads up a sloping hill. The mine's opening is obscured by ledge and other cover. As the PCs work their way up the road, shots strike the ground near them.

Act IV

- Senior Conclave members communicate from the cave entrance, using old-style analogue video transmission. The video shows crates opened. High-quality works of art are on display in the shaft, including at least one recognized masterpiece, as well as the marble plinth intended for *Obstinate*'s base. They threaten to destroy these works if any attempt is made to attack. They have a list of demands, which in essence call for a tenfold increase in export permits and Master designations, seeking to spread the wealth.
- Viscountess Anoria is a primary patroness of the creator of the masterpiece, and will authorize any reasonable act to save it (including negotiating with the protesters).
- Negotiation may be attempted to buy time. Note that the art-nappers may be more likely to negotiate with skilled artisans like themselves, even possibly including the Ursa. U'aiil may also be useful. The art-nappers will be firm in their demands. After several hours, they will threaten to "destroy a hostage" every hour until their demands are met. To prove their savagery, they will toss a large, delicate glass sculpture out of the entrance to shatter on the rocks.
- The amateur historian can provide a map of the mine. The mine shaft slopes gently back into the hills, as it followed a rich vein for five twisting kilometers, with vertical shafts drilled approximately every kilometer. The shafts are about a meter in diameter, sufficient to lower individuals and their equipment. They must be located to be used due to years of neglect.
- Water has seeped into the mineshaft. It is about ten centimeters deep under the second vertical shaft (two kilometers of tunnel away from the entrance). The water becomes more shallow toward the front of the mine, but extends to within 1.4 kilometers of the main entrance. Sounds of sloshing through the water will be heard up the mineshaft.
- Cargo containers have been moved as far back as 1.2 kilometers. A scout lowered (or grav-belted) down the first shaft will be able to determine this, and to observe substantial human activity (at least 15 people are moving back and forth. Note that a trained tree rat or other animal, or a drone of some sort, may be more suited than a person to determine this, as a person will have to go down feet-first. The PCs should brainstorm this using available equipment, such as the Documentarian's cameras.
- The horizontal shaft has several short branches, including pits (pitfalls) dug from the floor level down. Mine-car rails and ties once bridged these, but those were salvaged when the mine was abandoned. Some have been covered over by old wood. Others are open. The PCs must avoid falls.
- A stealthy attack plan must consider the imperative that deaths are almost unacceptable to the ruling party. Damage to valuable trade goods, on the other hand, is *entirely* unacceptable. Andii may suggest a different scale of values.
- Success is achieved when the art-nappers are rounded up (killing them is not a preference) and the art is safe.

Tag

- After the art-nappers are rounded up and the art rescued, the protesters in the city will riot outside Viscountess's Anoria's city residence. Andii will shrug this off, as it is only a "local issue," and Anoria's compound is walled. Unless the referee decides to rule Anoria in danger (in which case, Andii's position as a reserve officer might require her to act), Andii sits tight and makes sure that the marble is loaded into BT3's cargo space (the upper deck's fuel tanks are collapsed for this purpose) for transfer to *Cirque*.
- With the marble secured, *Cirque* moves on to Mirriam.

Episode 17: A Shaggy Dog Story

1315 Mirriam

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Deserts. Good place for you if you have lung issues. Not so good if you like to drink water on a regular basis. But every now and again, there's a good reason to visit. Sure, dates and figs. You can get lots of dates and figs in a proper desert.

Mirriam...there's a damned improper desert. A worthless sandbox with a little water. Not much in the way of valuable minerals. It must have had better life at some point — breathable atmospheres usually come from life, not just with it — but what's there now is hiding. There are probably petrochemicals under the sand, too, but no one's really interested in drilling for those.

Now there's one reason, and only one, to be in the system: the Zho can use it as a stepping stone. They've tried before, and they'll try again. We can't let them have it, so we've had to put a Navy base in to protect a beach without a beachhead. We can't leave it all to the Darrians and their star-trigger in that little nub of space. Someday, the Zho will figure out a way to neutralize that thing. And anyway, it's not like the Darrians have a million ships and a million star triggers.

So we're defending a damned big ball of sand.

All in all, I'd rather be in Philadelphia. Wherever the Hades that is.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1108.

General Data (Players)

An unattractive and dry world, Mirriam is nonetheless useful as an Imperial Navy base. Its position near the Zhodani “spur” near the Marches’ border makes it tactically necessary to occupy and protect the system. The starport is primarily orbital, on a small moon. The ground facility is rated only “E” because it is lightly used. The Naval Base attached to it — an anomaly in the Imperium — began as an ad hoc defensive outpost during the Fourth Frontier War. Located on Mirriam’s airless, rocky moon, it has become permanent to maintain a presence in the system. The base provides refined fuel to Naval vessels only, using aging three-hundred-ton fuel shuttles in constant rotation.

Although desert training exercises are sometimes conducted on Mirriam’s surface, there is no ongoing surface base or presence. Mirriam proper is virtually ignored by the Imperial Navy. Approximately one thousand civilians lived on the world below until the outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War. Ten, including the world’s knight, resided at the downport, located near the almost-temperate north pole. Most of the remainder of the thousand permanent residents resided nearby, eking out a living in a small mining community. Another eleven arrived before the war: a purported research team chasing down alleged evidence of the Ancients on Mirriam.

All were present when the Zhodani invaded the system in 1108. The starport workers and many miners were able to leave in their single shuttle, but the researchers were away from the port. In the general rout and chaos of Imperial Navy forces attempting to disable the lunar station and cover a retreat, no effort was made to retrieve them. The researchers have not been heard of or seen since.

The general speculation is that these researchers were removed by the Zhodani. The Zho are known to have at least much interest in the Ancients’ 300,000 year-old high technology as the Imperials. Minimal postwar efforts to locate these researchers in the form of quick orbital sensor sweeps have found nothing. Diplomatic inquiries have borne no fruit. In fact, the Zho claim to have never stepped beyond the downport’s borders, a claim not credited by the Imperial Navy.

Summary and Referee’s Information

Cirque comes to Mirriam partly because the world is the only valid stepping stone between Arkadia and Calit. In addition, the Navy base has been fully re-invigorated, with at least five thousand men and women stationed at the base, and a number of attack squadrons regularly stationed in orbit. Thus, *Cirque des Sirkas* can and will perform. Indeed, it may find this a more grueling run of the show than usual. The service personnel here receive little live attention on this isolated but crucial world. They will applaud a Pink Beaker cartoon if played in a theater.

“You’re all set to erect the tent in the main administrative dome on that moon they use for the base,” the Advance Sophonts report. “These guys are wild for entertainment. And food. Keep a close watch on the animals, these guys don’t like their rations.”

This base does not rely on local food or supplies, though it has its own hydroponics. Indeed, civilians have been kept to a minimum throughout the base’s existence. All food is either brought in on supply ships, or produced using TL-14 “waste-to-food” technology incorporating various fast-growing geneered algae and nanotechnology. Mirriam is thus not a popular posting. Players looking to make a profit during the visit will find that reasonably fresh fruit, frozen dinners, and other tasty treats are fair exchange for chips at all back-room card games. These items can also be sold for cash credits.

The discussions at the base commander’s reception after the last performance will likely include variations on the tale of the unfortunate case of the missing researchers. The basic story set forth below will be told. It will already be given a “ghost story” aspect by some. Others will tell the tale as an eye-rolling warning against allowing fools to visit dangerous planets. The retellings may in and of themselves be enough to spark interest in and should key curiosity for a new search.

The PCs may overhear a passing reference to a yacht that passed through several months ago, making little contact and refueling after a water landing on one of Mirriam’s few large bodies of water. It left the system immediately. If the PCs pick up on this and investigate, they will be allowed to check the records. The yacht came through 83 days after the Baronet’s yacht was hijacked from Zaibon and was a Bakaal Sunflower-class yacht. However, its transponder codes indicate that it is *Flaming Sophont*, registered out of Amshal in the Deneb sector. Its crew claimed to be carrying a rich software developer seeking to relocate in the Spinward Marches. Imperial registries confirm the existence of such a vessel. The vessel was challenged, then allowed to land and leave again.

Orbital imaging will again provide an important first start for any search. Given a chance to look at surface images, the Vargr Ringmaster or another character familiar with Vargr tradition will note an unusual symbol

etched in a long sandstone ridge, but barely visible thanks to erosion and the passage of at least a thousand years. This symbol is a traditional Vargr "Signal GK" or "S.O.S," a set of Vargr letters preceding a Vargr wrist and hand. The tip of a claw points toward the location of those needing aid. This distress signal points to the Pueblo, of course (see below), and gives the Vargr Ringmaster a reason to investigate.

The commander's only comment will be, "I've met Baronet Kimargakkaasugish. He was strange enough to know something like that. Might even have been strange enough to actually follow it. I never thought of that before." Further orbital review will raise the question of whether an ATV body is partially buried in the sand near the pointing hand. It may be one of the expedition's vehicles.

The referee must provide some of the background on Kimargakkaasugish and his "researchers" (see below) but not all of it is public knowledge. Computer research will provide some evidence that Kimargakkaasugish was at best a fool and at worst a charlatan. Other references will suggest that Duke Norris was impatient with him. However, the actual machinations of the Noble Exile discussed below are not public knowledge.

The base commander's post-war orders are to consider the planet and its people expendable, should the Zhodani return. He or she will not provide personnel for a search. He has few vehicles suited for the harsh conditions in any event. Further, if pushed on the point that Kimargakkaasugish is nobility, the commander will think for a few moments, and then activate *Cirque's* reserve commission. "You're the closest thing I have to a free asset," the commander will note before handing the job over to Andii. Andii will approve (or, if need be, order) a brief search. If an NPC, the Vargr Ringmaster will insist on joining the effort; otherwise, Andii will ask him to do so.

Once commenced the search for the researchers (couple with the Vargr Ringmaster's curiosity over the distress carving) should be simple. It of course will not turn out that way. Vast sandstorms push through the hot, dry region that they will be searching, and one is moving in just about now. Thus, any landing must occur several hundred kilometers away, at the small downport. Only ATVs can push through the storm. Personnel at the surface starport and mining facilities will be unwilling to lend their best ATVs; old IN equipment will be provided.

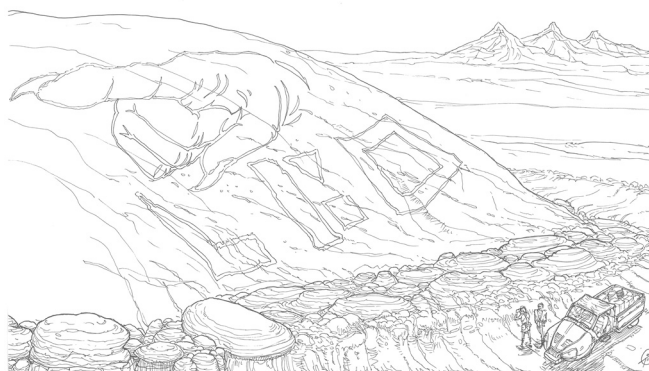
The ATVs available for a rescue attempt will be prone to breakdown, and minimally provisioned. With deteriorating weather conditions, the players must obtain whatever they can in under an hour before all craft lift for orbit, ahead of the grinding sand. There are no ground shelters for craft larger than a lifeboat. Andii will not allow BT1, BT2 or BT3 to stay on the surface to be scraped and infiltrated by grit and fine powder.

After several difficulties (breakdown, directional malfunction, and mere difficulty climbing rocks during a windstorm), the PCs will force their way through the sandstorm to the hills beside the sea. The winds have over the centuries cut channels through the rock, creating natural roads that eventually come to a dead-end. Through the blowing winds, the PCs can see a gallery of pueblo-style entrances in the rock. No ladders can be seen, nor other means of entry. To ascend, the PCs will need to use rope or other gear from the ATVs.

They have to wait for the sandstorm to diminish. When the players finally exit the ATVs they will be met by laser fire. The pulses are coming from heavy guns, not just man-portable units. They will have every reason to return fire, and also to run and hide behind outcroppings and freestanding boulders.

Kimargakkaasugish initially believes that the PCs can only be Zhodani, not Imperial or civilian rescuers. All of his actions are based on that assumption. He will fire, and return fire, until he is disabled or convinced that the PCs mean him no harm.

Once persuaded that the war is over and the PCs are Imperial citizens, Kimargakkaasugish will become convinced that the PCs have come to steal his discoveries and his vindication. He may again fire the lasers though his aim is (fortunately) poor. Most of the other faux-researchers, being a little weak in the logic circuits even before the prolonged camp-out, will join in the defense. At least one of the still-functional turret lasers is on a makeshift mount, and can fire. Other weapons gleaned from the tombs (weapons themselves salvaged from the high-tech ship's locker) may also be used. Only the still-present sandstorm minimizes the intensity of the firefight.



Once Baronet Kimargakkaasugish and his band are subdued, they can be rescued and brought back to the starport. In addition, the players will have the chance to explore the Pueblo.

Background: Kimargakkaasugish's Exile and Discovery

The missing "researchers" were never competent archeologists. These were a group of fairly dim and ineffective faux-scholars with too much family money, too many family connections, and very poor scholarship and research abilities. Their published papers were sometimes reprinted in the high-tech versions of supermarket tabloids. Their leader and patron was Baronet Kimargakkaasugish.

One of Norris' better ideas was to rid himself of the particularly annoying Kimargakkaasugish. This noble was of the considered belief that all prior theories regarding the Ancients are and were "lushkhenkhik" (Vilani for "poppycock"). In his view, Old Sol's original Mars was the true home of the Ancients. Mankind were the Ancients, possibly along with Vargr. Kimargakkaasugish's noble intrigues focused on securing funds for a major study of this theory.

Norris finally realized that failure disguised as success would rid him of a useless pest for a period of time. He thus convinced the University of Regina to funnel funds to the Baronet as a research grant to seek evidence of the Ancients on Miriam. Kimargakkaasugish was thus effectively exiled in 1105.

Sending researchers to Miriam also gave a plausible rationale for the existence of a Navy base orbiting an otherwise uninhabited world. Prior surveys indicated no serious likelihood of Ancient presence on Miriam, but the Zhodani were not going to discount the possibility if Norris was sifting through the sands. The presence of the Baronet's archeological team and published researchers eventually convinced the Zhodani to tarry on Miriam, if only slightly, during the Fifth Frontier War.

Three years of Baronet Kimargakkaasugish and his team foolishly riding helter-skelter about the sands in ATVs and other small vehicles did nothing to change the reality: no evidence was found to suggest that the Ancients ever visited Miriam. Kimargakkaasugish's work did, however, cause occasional annoyance to the Navy base above. On several occasions, fuel shuttles or other craft had to be diverted to ground to rescue members of Kimargakkaasugish's merry band who had gotten themselves into trouble.

The initial Zhodani invasion, when it finally arrived, came fast and furious. The Navy had little time to do more than take defensive postures and destroy all base computers before leaving. Advised that there would be no time to pull his group out, Baronet Kimargakkaasugish did the only thing he could: he gathered his people together and ran for the hills. In an unusual and unexpected display of good sense, Kimargakkaasugish chose not to surrender to the Zhodani. This crowning moment of the Baronet's life kept their skilled psionic interrogation officers from probing his mind and concluding that he was a dupe, a dope, and a decoy. Lacking this vital information, the Zhodani fought harder than they might have to hold Miriam, possibly affecting efforts to push onward to their more important goals.

Running and hiding from the Zhodani brought the researchers into hills near the largest body of water on the world, the highly saline Shalesu Sea. There, they stumbled onto a pueblo-type dwelling previously laser-carved into local sandstone. Kimargakkaasugish concluded that it was beyond ancient, when in fact it is no more than 2000 standard years old.

The researchers were able to hide their ATVs in deep water under overhanging rocks, but failed to make provisions to retrieve them. Thus, the ATVs remain under the water, slowly corroding despite advanced materials in the hulls. The researchers have been cut off from all communications, and thus assume that the Zhodani remain in control of Mirriam.

The researchers took refuge in this small but recognizable dwelling and the caves behind it. Much to their delight, they quickly discovered artifacts of intelligent beings – possibly (so they exclaimed to one another with excitement) “even the most ancient of the Ancients!” The artifacts include a still-functional fusion power plant beyond anything ever seen by these researchers, a desalination plant, a food processing and waste reclamation system of advanced design, and a lighting system in a number of cave galleries.

The prior inhabitants of the pueblo complex also left behind a small mainframe computer, which the faux archeologists have been able to power up. However, none of the symbols are from a known local language; the keys most closely resemble the old alphabet of the Darrian pre-Maghiz era. None of the researchers know Darrian, nor do they possess any computers programmed to read it.

Other ship components were found, including a damaged jump drive and an inexplicable but smaller machine reminiscent of a jump drive. Other starship components and equipment were found, including portions of hull and several powerful lasers. These latter were mounted on make-shift carts and were apparently used to carve out the cliff-dwelling fronts and square off caverns for living, limited farming, and other activities.

No functional communications equipment was located. None of the researchers has been able to create communications systems from the scrap. Their own comm systems failed over time, leaving them unable to monitor outside comm chatter or to broadcast a distress signal.

As interesting as all this is, there is one discovery that surpassed all others: the prior inhabitants left behind their bodies. The desert-mummified remains appear to come from two species known to contemporary Humanity: Vargr and Humans of the Darrian subspecies.

The researchers have been both studying and living in this dig since the original Zhodani invasion. Thus, the scientific and archeological evidence is utterly contaminated. With this, missing some important tools like a language translator, a Vargr, or a Darrian, and being (in general) fools, they have come to the wrong conclusion: Vargr and Darrian-stock Humans evolved on Mars (Sol IV), and were the Ancients. In the expert view of these faux-science experts, they have stumbled upon a proto-Ancient site.

The researchers have also failed to realize that vague remnants of equipment and electronics on the highest point above the pueblo were ship's beacons and radios. They do not realize that the vessel and the Vargr skeletons did not go together, at least originally. A review of the computer data by a competent person would show that the programming is not Vargr; its essential language is Darrian. The most recent information and entries, however, are in a Vargr dialect.

The vessel was a test-bed for an experimental Darrian hop drive. The Darrians had already achieved TL-16 2000 years before the Imperial present, and were advanced in some of their physics. They had commenced early experiments on the hop drive's tenfold range improvement over jump drive. The drive contained fatal flaws, however, and made only one successful “hop” before it “mishopped” into Vargr territory.

The Darrians were lucky. They were located by Vargr researchers — reasonable Vargr, by contemporary standards. A cooperative effort was made to revise the hop drive's control systems. This time, however, the on-board technicians made an almost deadly assumption: they assumed that the original researchers and designers had simply underestimated the drive's range potential. Thus, the programming exacerbated the likelihood of an uncontrolled hop.

The Vargr were so sure that they joined their friends for the return trip. They expected to be able to return home using the drive. Though they hopped in the generally correct direction, they arrived at Mirriam. As they dropped out of hyperspace, a power surge damaged both the hop drive and the standard jump drive beyond repair.

The proto-Darrians and their Vargr guests had come to Mirriam to stay.

Having no better choice, the crew brought the vessel down and began to live out their lives in the cliffs they found. They had plenty of food, fortunately; the ship's systems were admirable at recycling waste and combining it with produce, fish and other sources of local protein. Indeed, these systems functioned again, two thousand years later, keeping the faux-researchers alive.

The Darrian and Vargr survivors dismantled what they could of the ship and brought it into the pueblo-like caves, apparently carved out of sandstone by water and other natural effects. They made the caves comfortable, carving with lasers and tools. They used purified seawater in their efficient fusion plant.

The Vargr and Darrians slowly died. Efforts to reproduce proved doomed. Offspring were uniformly stillborn. The adults slowly died out due to dietary deficiencies. The bodies were each entombed in rough sarcophaguses carved out of the sandstone by the working lasers. Local conditions mummified the bodies. The last survivor (a Vargr) somehow managed to carve her own sarcophagus, lie in it, and shift the rock lid to cover herself before she, too, succumbed to final rest.

Hot, dry conditions also preserved much of the equipment. The Darrian hull, however, was long ago buried deep under drifted sand.

Kimargakkaasugish, in his foolishness, has entirely misinterpreted the realities of a brave survival struggle which might well shine a new light on the heroic potential of both Vargr and Darrians. He has instead concluded that this site is hundreds of thousands of years old. He theorizes that the bodies and technology came from Old Sol's Mars. In his eyes, humans and sophont canines evolved on a parallel course, and once were partners in space exploration. The War of the Ancients was a falling out between once-equal partners, or perhaps a rebellion by enslaved canines who resented their human masters. All of this pushed Earth back to the stone age, but not before the remaining humans killed off the last of their former intelligent partners in the original home system.

Mars was, of course, devastated in this war. Kimargakkaasugish has read a lot of “historical” planetary information written prior to 1960, Old Terran Calendar, but somehow ignored data collected by Mars rovers and eventual human explorers regarding the true origins of the dry red planet.

Kimargakkaasugish and his staff began with false assumptions, and have spent almost four years trying to think while lacking essential chemicals in their diets. Taken in that charitable light, the delusional thinking is possibly comprehensible.

Fortunately, some of the computer records can be accessed with some effort and bridging of systems to a handheld computer. The Darrians by all reports built machines to last (a fleet of TL-16 vessels from before the original Maghiz still function, and are still used as boogeymen to frighten the Sword Worlders and even Zhodani). The last entries in the records were made by a Vargr. The Vargr Ringmaster can read the archaic letters and words, and piece together the truth: a few Vargr had lost their lives helping a few Darrians.

The Vargr Ringmaster likely will insist on recording this small saga. He will see an aspect of his people to which many — even he — have not been exposed. Like humanity, he fails to see that the Vargr have greatness within them, whether it was engineered by the Ancients or simply evolved. Born to pirates, he has assumed himself an anomaly.

Once contacted, the Navy will take jurisdiction over the equipment found and the site. Though none of it is truly Ancient technology — certainly not “High Ancient” Technology — it is nevertheless of interest. The Imperium has not yet, after all, managed to achieve Jump-9, much less the Hop Drive.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ System entry.
- ☐ The Naval personnel and marines are appreciative.
- ☐ The station staff are also appreciative of better-than-usual food and such. A small bag of Terran popcorn kernels, for example, becomes worth at least a week's pay in gambling and other transactions.

Cirque

- ☐ After a performance, the PCs join the Station Commander at a reception. During the course of the reception the Kimargakkaasugish expedition is discussed. This outlines some of his group's more outlandish theories and explains a bit of why they were about.
- ☐ Study of high-resolution images. The Vargr Ringmaster or another Vargr recognizes the old "Signal GQ/S.O.S." symbol and the pointing claw.
- ☐ After discussion, it is agreed that members of *Cirque's* crew will take a look for Kimargakkaasugish's group.
- ☐ Due to sandstorms moving in, the base commander will not authorize any landing off-port. The starport has a beacon, at least, to guide craft in and out. The commander permits the use of INS craft and three (3) ATVs.
- ☐ Andii will choose a landing party to include the PCs. The Vargr Ringmaster is a likely member, as is of course the Documentarian.



Act II

- ☐ The approach and landing goes through the increasing sandstorm. The ride is rough.
- ☐ After landing, the PCs get the ATVs out.
- ☐ Using extensive maps, the ATVs proceed through the sandstorm toward the Vargr "S.O.S."
- ☐ Driving through the sandstorm is like driving through a warm, gritty blizzard. Visibility is low. Drifts change the face of the "maps." Wheels can become stuck. Equipment can fail. A major malfunction (fine sand penetrating several improperly sealed independent motors) requires the players to abandon one ATV. They must move their equipment and crowd into the remaining two.

Act III

- ☐ The PCs arrive at the rock outcropping bearing the tip of the claw. From there, they travel in the direction indicated by the claw.
- ☐ The PCs come to the more protected valley and outcroppings that lead to the "pueblo." The sandstorm is less severe here due to the protection of the higher rocks.
- ☐ The PCs are fired on by Kimargakkaasugish's group. The laser is a turret-quality laser. Fortunately, the aim will be bad and the ATVs are not hit.
- ☐ Kimargakkaasugish shouts words to the effect of, "Keep away, you Zho scum," demonstrating his state of mind.
- ☐ The PCs engage in personal combat. Kimargakkaasugish and his people are at reduced abilities, and have a -1 DM to all combat rolls, as a result.
- ☐ Through any combination of tactics and parlay, the PCs take control of the Pueblo and capture Kimargakkaasugish and his faux-scientists.

Act IV

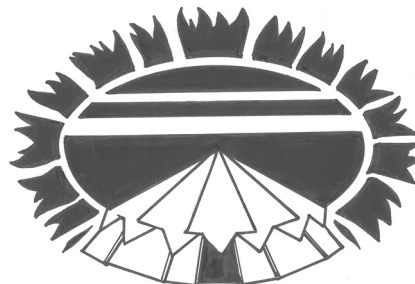
- ☐ After Kimargakkaasugish's people are calm enough, they begin to show their incredible discoveries.
- ☐ The PCs are shown the camp, the crypts, the remnants of jump and hop drives, the food re-processor, and power system.
- ☐ Finally, they are shown the ultimate prize: a ship's computer, and

multiple input devices.

- ☐ To recognize that lettering is Darrian: Difficult (3D) < (Edu (+1 if character's homeworld is within 15 parsecs of Darrian space)) (roll unnecessary if character's specific history includes close encounters with or experience with Darrians).
- ☐ A character with proper skill can bridge operating Darrian storage to a handheld computer. To create a working bridge: Formidable (4D) (Edu + Programmer + Electronics) (2D minutes).
- ☐ If the makeshift bridge functions, the download commences.
- ☐ A Vargr female appears on the display. She speaks, and her words are printed below in an archaic Vargr script. A Vargr or skilled Vargr translator can make sense of the archaic forms. Essentially, the woman tells the story of how she got there. She is sick, dying, and ready to climb into the last sarcophagus.
- ☐ Transmitting to the station above (during line-of-sight) allows the PCs to get additional help. For a find of this type, the base commander is quite helpful.

Tag

- ☐ No argument will wrest control of the site or any of the finds from IN control.
- ☐ Fortunately, the Documentarian will have gone along, and the IN personnel did not take his recordings. *Cirque* has copies of everything, including the data from the surviving computer media. It is primarily logs, and will not help anyone build an experimental hop drive, or even a Jump-7 drive. The logs, however, may prove of interest.
- ☐ *Cirque* must move on to her next stop.



Episode 18: Ghost Town

Calit • Spinward Marches 1515

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

I'm not a big fan of passive-aggression. I suspect that most "flag" and "general" officers are about the same. We're trained to apply force to resolve situations disliked by people who outrank us. It doesn't matter what the situation is — a war between two member systems, an invasion by the Zho, or some foolish trade embargo that threatens essential political interests. For what it's worth, we tend to start out with the odd view that an artillery bombardment here and a marine drop there are the best ways to get a mob to pay attention and hand us some respect.

Or fear. Fear will do in place of respect.

And our training and years in command — well, what do you think that does? Dilute our ideas about guns and bombs being useful? Really?

Now and again, though, it's wise to remember that there's more than one way to skin a beaker. You have to always consider the value of sitting back and fighting by doing nothing. Like a little thing I engineered for Sharurshid a few years ago.

Al Morai was getting a little up-starty and annoying, and its less savory sidekicks from Denotam's criminal operations were supporting it. I think someone on Denotam figured that Al Morai would somehow get inroads into the shipping business off Calit if they put pressure on a low-tech world with serious needs for imported atmosphere compressors and technology, what with the local population bursting at the seams.

So, there I was, trying to help both them and Denotam Traders, LIC — Sharurshid has a twenty-five percent interest in Denotam Traders, you never know when a backwater will blossom — and working on a fair deal. We were only looking to grab a five percent markup after all costs. So these mercenaries show up from Denotam. Calit would have had to keep plodding on with its crappy local low-tech solutions if it knuckled under and paid the Danegeld. (Danegeld. A very, very old Terran term that the Sword Worlds has kept alive, just for me to use at the right time.)

Stupid, right? Hundreds of millions surrendering to what, a thousand or so troops and a couple of artillery platforms? With me there, and me having good connections with the Navy, not to mention the IISS? I could have turned it the other way in a heartbeat, and that's not bragging. It's just true.

That wasn't how I decided to skin the beaker, though. I worked out the three-cornered double-cross of all time. I got Calit's government to capitulate. I mean, completely capitulate. Let Denotam win. Roll over, play dead, quiver in fear, and send all the right signals out. Done, and done. Suddenly, Denotam — the planet, not the company — was in charge of Calit. And suddenly, Denotam had the local nobility on its tail about importing improved life support and compressors and such. 'What? You don't think you should have to? You bought it broke, you fix it up.'

And the fun part of it? Well, I told you that the contract was all but done when those dummies showed up and started making threats. Sharurshid had suppliers lined up for all of that tech. A Denotam, LIC freighter was just short of getting loaded.

Why settle for five percent markup from a poor world when you can gouge fifteen percent out of Al Morai?

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1103.

General Data (Players)

Calit is ruled from Denotam. Denotam's ruling coalition is the only functional collaboration of its multiple criminal "governments" (and "functional," like "government" is a relative term). The Calit Governing Coalition Bureau (CGCB) rules with a light hand, taxes lightly, and otherwise keeps out of local "home rule" issues. Denotam became the distant ruler of the world in almost inexplicable circumstances: one of its factions "declared war." In more accurate terms, it decided to threaten Calit to extort "protection money". It sent a small task force (a mercenary contingent, "enforcers"), and made threats in order to collect a "stipend" to stay away. It was, in short, a "protection" racket.

Rather than pay, Calit's government chose passive aggression. They surrendered and handed over the reins of government. Calit was quite firm in its surrender, refusing to take "no" for an answer. The problems of running a world with minimal assets and an increasing population had exhausted many of the local pols. They simply gave in and told the invaders to solve their problems — and promptly notified the subsector Duke and other Imperial authorities of their acquiescence to rule from Denotam. The Duke accepted and enforced the surrender.

In short, the extortion plan backfired completely. As a practical matter, the CGCB is run by experienced bureaucrats hired from various corporations, including AL Morai.

Having become somewhat "stuck" with Calit, the government of Denotam and its Al Morai sponsors are doing everything possible to profit from the arrangement. Prodded into providing improved education, for example, the CGCB bureaucrats carefully test the local school children for their aptitudes. They are guided into skills and professions seen as useful to the economy in the long term. Talented mathematicians find themselves in high-tech "practical calculus" schools learning essential skills and analysis for starship pilots, navigators, and engineers. Those with hospitality skills are trained to operate liners and hotels. Aggressive fighters are often diverted into Imperial armed forces, or private militias and mercenary groups. In short, the population is being "mined" for its talented youth.

This process was briefly interrupted during the Fifth Frontier War. Zhodani forces occupied the Calit system and the world itself in 1108. Though they were expelled in 1109 after just over four standard months, the occupation left its mark. The majority of citizens on the world are openly prejudiced against psionics. Psionic shield helmets still abound. Suspected psions find themselves threatened with assassination or are attacked by mobs. Small businesses have been ruined by the suggestion that the owners have the slightest link to the Consulate.

One of Calit's seven notable symbols is a sky-blue octagon, often with a name or names inscribed in darker-blue lettering. These are memorials, and can be found at sites of public deaths, (especially deaths involving serious accidents or violence). Some memorials are unofficial and makeshift; others are officially sanctioned and permanent. It is both illegal and seriously uncouth to tamper with memorials marked with this symbol. Unofficial monuments must be removed after two standard years.

Summary and Referee's Information

The short Zhodani occupation of Calit during the Fifth Frontier War was not the most important contact the Zhodani have had with Calit.

Given its proximity to Zhodani worlds, low gravity, low technology level, connections to underworld sources, inefficient off-world government and high population, Calit has long been an entry port Zhodani agents. Tall humans are common on this lower-gravity world, just as they are in the Consulate. Birth certificates and education records are easily forged either using technology or by telepathic control on clerks. Clerks with access to "original" official records, many of which are still on paper, can easily create documents and histories. Older locally produced electronic records often have gaps in themselves, despite being supplemented by more advanced imported records technology.

Bertii is aware of the Consulate's activities on Calit. Like many agents, Bertii entered the Imperium through Calit. All of his documents state that he was born on Calit, and that he was orphaned due to the tragic and historically verifiable Tsuduryev Meltdown. The Tsuduryev Meltdown was a watershed event for the forgery of identity documents.

Tsuduryev was built hastily, laid out by colossally negligent civil engineers. To save time and money, power and essential environmental recycling systems were built next to each other near the lowest levels of the underground portion of the habitat. This produced significant savings, but left the environment susceptible to radiation poisoning in the event of any serious power-plant malfunction. Several other habitats were built in a similar fashion.

On 231-1089, the fission plant's cooling systems malfunctioned, leading to a steam explosion. All safety measures failed. Plutonium and other radioactive materials leaked into the city's air and water distribution systems. The seriousness of the leak was not immediately appreciated by city engineers. The entire Tsuduryev habitat was exposed to lethal radiation levels. Within two days, everyone in the habitat was dead.

The planetary government could and did do nothing to relieve the

TAHMAHNI RE-ELECTED TO CURLEY HALL CORNER OFFICE DESPITE CONVICTION FOR ACCEPTING BRIBES

CREDITS HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ELECTORATE

Despite his recent corruption conviction and expected jail sentence, Boris Tahmahni has been re-elected mayor of Tsuduryev. In yesterday's interview, Tahmahni patted the thick red-bound print of the city's daily census reports, kept on a coffee table in his office — the "Red Book."

"I know the people I serve, and I know what they need," he said. "The first thing I do every morning is find out who has a new kid, who's lost a husband or wife, father, mother — and my people reach out to them. New residents, we reach out to them. It's not about me getting a few dollars from the power company, or anything like that. It's because I know my people, and I make sure they know I take care of them. They don't care if I took a bribe."

Tahmahni lit his trademark stogie. "And let me tell you, that ain't gonna change. The main jail ain't that far from Curley Hall. And I can always remodel the holding cells in the police substation to be even closer. I'll be mayor from my cell, mark my words."

"The first thing I'll do every morning? I'll go over the daily census reports, and make sure my people reach out. Yup, update the Red Book. That's how I got elected the first time, got re-elected last week, and that's why I'll be mayor until the day I die."

—Headline Article of the 231-1089 edition of the *Tsuduryev Daily Chronicle*, local newspaper for Tsuduryev. This was the last daily edition ever printed.

suffering. The entire habitat was simply declared a graveyard. To prevent entry by looters and other idiots, blue octagons automated weapons were placed near entries. Very brief forays were made by demolitions teams through the four main surface locks. Elevators were sent to the lowest levels. Circular stairways were partially collapsed by explosives, and are unusable between the surface and the third level down. All of this security seem excessive to some, but humans are capable of excessive reactions, especially regarding the dead.

Eighteen large steel "sandwich-board" signs have been set at equal intervals around the main dome. The enameled outer surfaces display sky-blue octagons, each with the single word "Tsuduryev" inscribed in the center. Some of the more intrepid mourners of the past two decades have managed evade defensive systems to leave personal items at these signs. None of the airlocks, however, has ever been breached.

Youths who were away from home to attend college or for other travel lost their entire families. Inferior record-keeping systems were a major issue. The planetary government's central computerized registries were not properly updated from Tsuduryev for many years before the accident. Printed back-up documents were never delivered, or lost, for the years 1081 through 1088. This left large gaps in family data.

The disaster allowed many identities to be created by the Zhodani. Indeed, some conspiracy theorists have suggested without evidence that the Zhodani were behind the melt-down. The reality seems far more prosaic: inferior equipment, design and operator errors led both to the melt-down and to the environmental contamination.

The Zhodani have certainly taken great advantage of the situation. Most agents entering the Imperium through Calit through the start of the Fifth Frontier War were assigned Tsuduryevan identities, so long as they appear old enough to have been born there. New agents have not come through Calit since 1109, as the Consulate is reorganizing itself.

The Zhodani technique has been simple: a single local agent with weak teleportation skills has a tape-drive which handles the large spinning spools, and a supply of the tapes. A computer application emulates the database settings used by the birth, death and other registries once maintained on Tsuduryev's mainframe. When sufficient identities have been added, the agent teleports into the computer room with the tape, switches tapes, and disposes of the old tape by tossing it into a nearby waste chute. The agent then teleports back out.

Up to twenty years' worth of tapes are located in a dumpster at the bottom of the chute. Each successive tape is less irradiated than the original. Thus, apart from other clues based on minor transcription and logic errors (e.g., references to living units that existed only as incomplete plans, and not actual carved-out space), the tape currently in the machine is not as radioactive as it should be.

In addition, the Zhodani have removed all but one print copy of the pre-meltdown decade's census records maintained in the Tsuduryev City Hall. These were destroyed at the outset of the plot. A ten-centimeter gap can be seen in a records-room bookshelf, and in several other offices. However, unable to fully understand the potential dishonesty of political leaders, the agents failed to remove Mayor Tahmani's personal binder copy, the Red Book mentioned in the news story.

Some 20 years after the Tsuduryev Meltdown, ambient radiation levels have finally reduced to barely acceptable levels for short expeditions into the city to begin. The maximum safe exposure time is eight (8) hours. Higher technology level medicine can repair the damage done by such exposure, but this requires extended time receiving infusions of medicines which capture irradiated particles and repair DNA and other cellular structures damaged by the radiation. *Cirque* has been equipped with enough of the infusions to treat the PC party, plus one NPC (presumably Bertii).

The local authorities are preparing to enter the habitat for the first time. The initial goal will be to simply record conditions, to re-start the habitat's record-keeping systems, and to link those systems with the improved planetwide network. This expedition had originally been planned to take place about a standard year from *Cirque*'s arrival. Activities by the Anti-Denotam Militia, a group opposed to continued rule from Denotam, have accelerated plans.

The Anti-Denotam Militia has also taken advantage of the records gaps. It has not, however, edited the records. Its agents now plan to enter, power the computer, make edits, and return. The hasty edits will easily be discovered as soon as the database is searched. Indeed, this is one of the CBCG's goals in entering the city. They are seeking accurate records. "I

lost my family in the Tsuduryev meltdown” has become a catch-phrase for the rebellious group.

The threat to Zhodani espionage networks is lower, but of concern. The local cell tasked with assisting agents to create identities has regularly teleported agents into the deserted habitat over the years. However, the cell still has records relating to over thirty agents to insert, and wants those records in the system before the expedition makes the data link. Moreover, the cell is concerned that records of the various re-starts have not been fully wiped, and thus want to enter the records section to clean up the boot logs.

Bertii himself is interested in stemming the influx of Zhodani agents through Calit. He and Andii have concluded that the records must be obtained and turned over to Imperial officials. Bertii is familiar with the subtle signs of tampering left by the Zhodani, and can identify at least 75% of the forged records. Bertii and Andii hope to remove any remaining sleepers or still-active agents from the Imperial bureaucracy. Further, they do not want the files in the hands of either the government of Denotam or officials of Al Morai. Either could present the files without assisting Bertii in his goal of redemption. Worse, both Denotam and Al Morai could use the data to blackmail various well-placed Zhodani agents and Imperial officials who have had close contact with those agents.

Bertii helped plan the Tsuduryev leg of the *Cirque's* itinerary to obtain the information. He knows enough to have deduced that the Tsuduryev databases will contain clues about Zhodani agents' false identities. The Tsuduryev databases are expected to at least confirm and probably expand on the information he has already retrieved from Mercury.

Bertii did not count on having any competition, much less the presence of a risk that they might be caught in the process of stealing the records.

Pre-entry research is useful. During the research, the PCs may come across a newspaper article regarding the re-election of Tsuduryev's mayor, who also has a history of corruption. Part of the story is reproduced in the text box on page 168.

Entering the long-sealed dome requires stealth and various skills. In the process, the competing groups are likely to encounter one another.

Other Zhodani still loyal to the militaristic regime that launched the Fifth Frontier War are also concerned with Tsuduryev. They want to be sure that the data will never be retrieved for analysis. Chief among them is Nemesis.

Low-Tech Computers

This adventure relies upon prehistoric (in Traveller terms) electronic computing. Referees and players born after 1970 may well be unfamiliar with the massive mainframes and lack of connectedness assumed for purposes of this adventure, as may the characters they portray. The author, himself almost prehistoric, assures the younger referee that the technology described once existed to hamstring adventurers.

Calit's local technology and resources support large, early mainframes with data storage barely entering the silicon disk age. Manual input is performed at computer terminals (keyboards). Locally manufactured terminals rely on cathode-ray tubes or scrolled paper rather than flat screens or holographic displays. These terminals are hard-wired to the system, and are generally in close proximity to the computer itself. System “crashes” occur daily, and require hours to resolve.

Outside access to early computers generally relies on links via hard-wired analog telephone or communications systems. A modem connected to the analog lines translates keystrokes from the remote terminal into sound. The modem at the computer's end translates the sounds back into digital input. If the computer or modem is not functioning, there can be no outside input. The always-on Internet is wishful thinking.

Local governments, including Tsuduryev, rely on such mainframes to maintain various records (including birth and death records) in databases little better than text files. The “backup” for these records are physical output (printing on paper and similar substances). The central government periodically obtains backups using magnetized tape (those spinning spools shown in pre-1980's SF TV and movies highlighting the advanced technology of the time). If backup tapes are not recorded and physically delivered to the central physical library, nor print-outs delivered, the information is not backed up. It is available only if the computer itself is on and accessed at a terminal.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ Arrival in-system.
- ☐ The PCs will notice the low technology of the habitats. The technology is reminiscent of very old science fiction movies from the 1950s and 1960s. This is what the future looks like with early solid-state electronics commingled with cathode-ray tubes, bulky rubberized pressure suits, and oversized dials where higher-tech societies use flat screens and other electronic read-outs.
- ☐ Note a blue octagon here and there, possibly with personalized memorials.
- ☐ Performances. The performances go well, without any hitches or issues.
- ☐ Bertii hopes to obtain the evidence without entering Tsuduryev. He believes that at least one Zhodani agent remains on Calit.
- ☐ Andii is asked to be present at the dedication of the Resistance Octagon. This honors those citizens who actively resisted the Zhodani during the brief occupation. This will be a brief ceremony, and serves to highlight the respect given to any site marked with such an octagon.
- ☐ Attempt to locate the local Zhodani agent. Given local technology, an old-fashioned drop-spot is used to conceal a data card (e.g., a statue in a public park). Bertii then places a specific help-wanted advertisement on the local electronic newsfeeds (the closest local equivalent to a modern computer network). Under the protocols set long ago by the Zhodani, the agent seeking the new identity material is supposed to wait five standard days before returning and obtaining means to claim a package at a local (not starport) mail facility. Any Zhodani agent seeking a new identity knows this process. The referee may suggest other means consistent with his or her campaign, including the use of psionically recorded messages if allowed. In this case, Bertii does not follow protocol, and instead waits until a tall, elderly person arrives to take the item.
- ☐ The PCs and/or Bertii will decide how cautious to be regarding this agent. The agent is a teleporter, though a weak one. If captured in public, the agent can escape by teleporting away.
- ☐ Carefully following the agent leads to his/her home.
- ☐ The local Zhodani agent may recognize Bertii, as Nemesis has alerted known loyal agents of Bertii's presence. If so, the agent contacts Bertii offering a chance to “come in from the cold” with full forgiveness. This is a ruse to delay Bertii. If Bertii is a PC, he decides his own action. If Bertii is an NPC, he either agrees to a plan suggested by the PCs, or engages the PCs to help search the agent's apartment for evidence of the identity-creation plot. If the latter course is taken, the PCs find only a two-centimeter strip of old-fashioned magnetic data storage tape by the unit's disposal chute.
- ☐ If an attempt is made to interrogate the agent, the agent has final words for Bertii: “You are as mentally ill as these people. You should seek treatment.” The elderly agent then suicides, using his/her own Touch skill to make it simple and painless.
- ☐ Further search reveals an archaic data tape reading unit with specially made connections for a TL 13 hand computer. No tapes can be found. The PCs will also find a monitoring slug not unlike those discussed in the *Zhodani Watchers* section of the chapter on Fosey.
- ☐ A single piece of art hangs on the wall beside the tape drive. It is an oil painting depicting a stark landscape of dead trees and vegetation. The hint of a dome structure can be seen as an over-arching background. The painting is slightly tilted. If the PCs take the picture down, they find a safe behind it. The safe is locked with a simple key and can be opened using various methods including picking, breaking or the simplest possible, locating the key on the dead agent's body. Inside the safe is a single bound book containing handwritten notes in Zdetl.
- ☐ It is possible to locate the end-point of the disposal tube. The complicated method is to obtain plans of this portion of the main habitat's

The First Civilian Casualties?

Much of the history of the Spinward Marches is defined by the Frontier Wars. Four occurred prior to 1105, the beginning date for the Classic Setting. The Zhodani long felt that there could be no peace between the chaotic Imperium and the ordered Consulate. This supplement, set in late 1110, deals with both personal and societal elements of the Fifth Frontier War's aftermath.

The Zhodani Consulate began preparing the foundation for the Fifth Frontier War shortly after the end of the Fourth Frontier War. Before tactics and routes were set, the Consulate placed many kinds of eyes and ears into the Spinward Marches. These included covert listening vessels and boots-on-the-ground agents.

Playing a long game, the Consulate required its agents to be difficult to spot by background checking. Such checks are imperfect in an empire of 10,000 worlds with communications limited to speed-of-jump and data storage limits, but the Zhodani agents could not all pretend to come from the Solomani Rim.

A better plan was to pretend to come from worlds in the Marches. A group of agents was sent in 1088 to prepare the ground for the other. Calit was a logical first destination. The disaster at Tsuduryev came at a convenient time and place. A government already deficient in its record-keeping

could not access essential records of over 30,000 people. Many Zho agents entering the Marches in the 1090s and later were registered as citizens who had been off-planet at the time of the meltdown.

Some agents from the "Tsuduryev Class" (including Bertii) question whether the meltdown was merely a convenient accident. Some believe that early agents infiltrated and sabotaged the plant, causing the deadly irradiation of an entire city. This is consistent with the failure of all backup systems, a large-scale containment breach, and substantial leakage of radioactive waste. This simplified the creation of identities.

To be fair, there is no smoking gun. The long-distance investigation performed by the planetary government found nothing but massive human failures. Shoddy design and construction conspired with poor operator screening and training. A depressed supervisor failed to engage barely adequate safeties after a tremor; the system spiraled out of control.

Most of the Tsuduryev Class put aside any qualms about the possible mass murder. They accept that the war was necessary, and that agents inside the Marches were necessary to succeed. To them, the 30,000 dead at Tsuduryev were simply the earliest casualties of the war to preserve the Zhodani way of life against Imperial incursion.

Only one of the original Calit agents remains alive to answer any questions. Bertii himself does not know whether the meltdown was caused by Zhodani agents.

underground twists and turns, which likely will take days given the poor methods of local record-keeping (plans drawn on archive-quality sheets of plastic). The simpler method is to send a small animal down the tube, or the Contortionist, providing the intrepid explorer with a tracking device.

- ☐ The end-point of the disposal chute is a refuse-sorting facility. Recyclables are separated from bagged food and other waste by workers. Several dumpsters are filled high with refuse from numerous units. After searching, the PCs will find magnetic storage tape in a tangled mess.
- ☐ When spooled and read, the tape proves to be blank.
- ☐ The PCs update themselves on the situation at Tsuduryev. This is obtained by doing research into local news stories and library/database inquiries, and takes several hours' effort.
- ☐ During this research, a player will stumble upon information that the Denotam Bureaucracy plans to enter Tsuduryev for the first time since the subway routes were plugged after the disaster. The Bureaucracy does not want this to be known. Security forces will be involved in the expedition.
- ☐ The PCs research methods of getting to and into Tsuduryev. The habitat was largely underground, with a single surface dome. The fission plant was at a lower level. Deep subway tunnels provided links to some nearby habitats; these were sealed when the first leaks were discovered. Each tunnel has since been plugged with at least nine meters of cement. Surface locks have been disabled, and are both guarded and locked by computerized (not properly robotic) systems consistent with the local technology level. The dome itself is constructed of imported TL 12 improved crystalline materials; it will be resistant to explosives. Hatches can be manually operated, however.
- ☐ Gather essential tools and equipment to enter an airless but radioactive environment.
- ☐ First encounter with Anti-Denotam Militia (ADM). The ADM is organizing riots against their rulers.

Act II

- ☐ Travel to Tsuduryev. Andii will avoid using any of *Cirque's* auxiliaries for the trip. The players involved in the expedition can decide amongst various choices, including taking the subways to "the next dome over" and then using surface vehicles, or using surface vehicles from the beginning. Non-surface travel (gravitics or rockets) will be monitored and challenged by government forces.
- ☐ The travel will become something of a race. At various stages, the

PCs may encounter competitors (the ADM and the official expedition to retrieve the tape).

- ☐ Competitors (ADM or the official expedition) may attack, assuming that the PC group is its opponent.
- ☐ Mishaps are possible, including damage to crawlers, breakdowns, and loss of atmosphere.
- ☐ Reach Tsuduryev. The automated emplacements (powered by independent sources) will fire on individuals who approach without the proper codes (including PCs). These were put in place to prevent looting (and, as a side-benefit, also preventing entry by foolish curiosity seekers).
- ☐ Enter Tsuduryev. Externally power the doors and break the locking codes $DIF(3D) < (Int + Programmer)(DM - 1 \text{ for every TL difference between the player's hand computer and the local TL of } 7)$. OR: Use charges to open lock $(AVG(2D) < (In + Demolition))$. OR: Cut through door or dome using tools and equipment.

Act III

- ☐ The main dome contains a large green space with no dwellings or other major buildings. The habitat has leaked atmosphere over the decades, and is now entirely decompressed. The surface vegetation is desiccated. Bodies (vacuum-mummified in various stages of decomposition) can be seen at intervals.
- ☐ The PCs may again encounter one or both of the competitors.
- ☐ City Hall is on the tenth level of the main cylindrical space in the habitat. The PCs must enter the habitat at one of the elevator shaft buildings to get below.
- ☐ The nearest shaft building is within 90 meters of an entrance, and is ten levels directly above City Hall. No power is available. The PCs must find a way to descend. If they have planned, they will have ropes, grav belts, or other tools. If they have not, they may need to slide down cables of elevators below. They may also find an elevator at ground level and release the emergency brakes, allowing it to slowly descend. The PCs may, of course, find stairs or ramps, though these are out-of-the-way and difficult to locate. The PCs must use their own lighting as they penetrate the lower levels of the habitats.
- ☐ Radiation counts increase as the PCs descend.
- ☐ Once the PCs arrive at the tenth level they must move quickly through the corridors to avoid unnecessary radiation exposure.
- ☐ Encounters. The referee may add encounters with the ADM and official government expedition.

Cirque

The Diary

The diary contains a single, short entry in Zdetl. Translated, or read by a character who understands the language, it says:

Draft Report

The study of plans for various habitats on this planet located a poorly designed underground city. A significant human error would be enough to flood the city with radioactive particles, killing everyone breathing city air or drinking city water, and quite probably anyone in a vacuum suit. All that would be necessary: telepathic manipulation of one or two Imperials.

Scrawled below this:

*There can be no peace between us.
There can be no peace between us.
There can be no peace between us.
~~What have we done?~~
There can be no peace between us.
There can be no peace between us.*

The remainder is blank.

- A scene not played: Nemesis finally arrives on Calit. Nemesis knows of the Zhodani agent and goes immediately to his/her residence. Discovering his/her death, Nemesis will of course realize that proof of the long deception is at risk.

Act IV

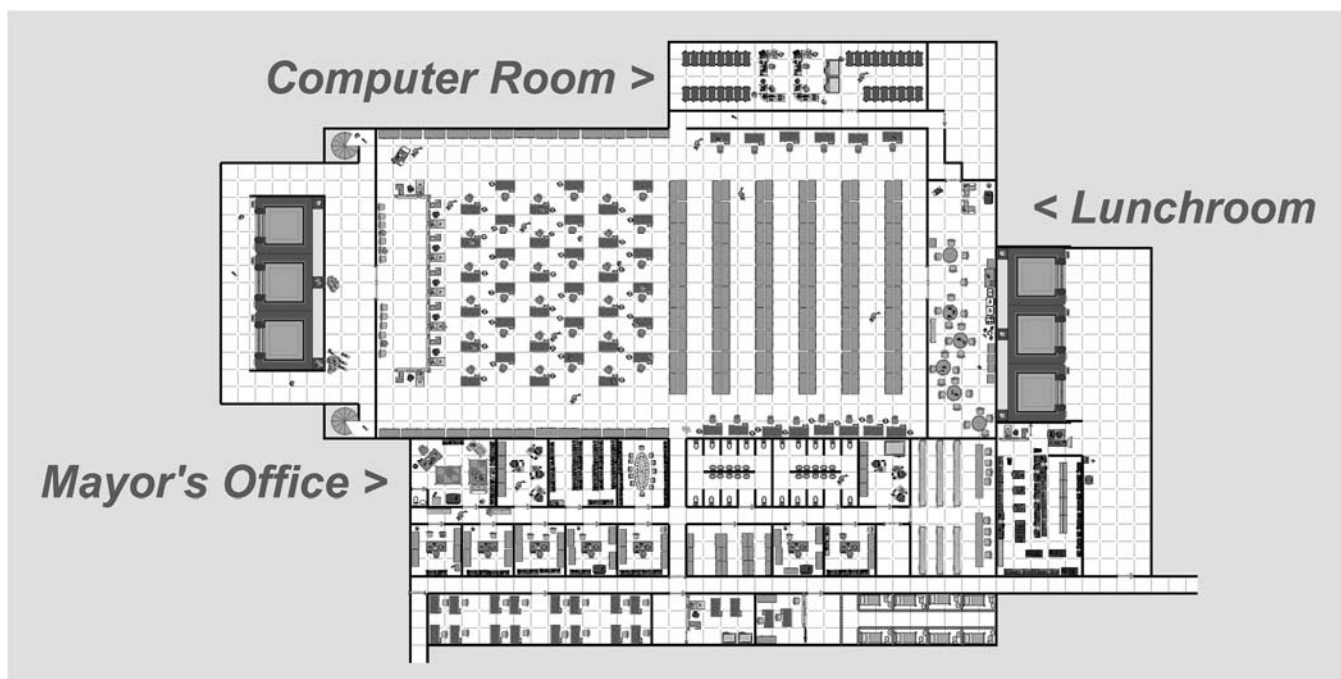
- Enter the City Hall rooms. Describe the gloom, doom, and dust. The main room contains numerous work stations and other standard fittings for a municipal office. A lunch room can be seen to one side. Desiccated human remains can be seen in various places.
- Newspapers can be found strewn throughout the room and the many desks. These are for PC groups which did not sufficiently research the history of Tsuduryev.
- Enter the computer records room. The machines generally show dust and disuse. Footprints can be seen on the dust on the floor. A large tape-drive holds a tape; the spool is marked "backup" and

dated 231-1089. Other tapes with earlier dates are stored in circular cases.

- If the PCs have noted the possible presence of written records, they may search offices, including the Mayor's large corner office.
- At some point, Nemesis finally teleports into the scene. Nemesis will use tactics appropriate to the size of the company, e.g., concussion grenades, gun fire, or other means of attack. Additional agents or troopers may be present if necessary for play balance and maximum use of the City Hall as a battle ground.
- Nemesis will try to take or destroy the tape on the spool. If he succeeds, or if success seems impossible, he will immediately teleport out. In either case, he will teleport directly to his vessel and break orbit.
- As they exit the PCs who look closely will note that multiple sets of footprints in the dust lead toward the lunch room. If followed, the prints lead directly to a disposal chute, and then stop. No footprints lead away (the agent teleported out of the facility from there).
- Shining a light down the shaft reveals what appears to be an open space only a level down. Computer tapes can be seen in a bin directly below the chute.
- The PCs are nearing the end of their safe time in the habitat. If they take the time to get down to the sorting facility, they can easily retrieve fifteen to twenty tapes. Taken together, the tapes demonstrate successive changes and chart the injection of as many as 1,000 Zhodani agents. All can claim to have lost their families in the Tsuduryev disaster.

Tag

- The retrieved tapes and other materials are radioactive, and must be stored in a heavily shielded cargo container. They will require careful study and reconstruction by experts; long exposure to radiation has likely degraded the data. This will occur when the tapes are presented to Norris.
- Bertii will likely regret even more deeply the actions of the Consulate.
- The PCs will be treated for radiation exposure.
- Perhaps sobered, the PCs and crew will move on to the next stop.



Episode 19: Counting Coup

Denotam • Spinward Marches 1413

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

Oh, that place? A balkanized kleptocracy. It's worse than Old Station for pickpockets, highwaymen, con-artists, siphon-snakes, hijackers, clone-nappers, hackers, black-marketeers and smugglers. Well, maybe not smugglers — Al Morai has a monopoly on that little bit of business, especially the ones who smuggle stuff stolen from the military. That makes it a little easier to track it down, at least until they find the next supply officer's weakness. Mostly it's a pallet of guns here, a cargo pod of missiles there, but I heard of one Petty Officer who liked the finer things.

He managed to sell drop suits destined for the marine landings on Calit. Calit, a place Denotam runs. In the middle of the war, mind you. Not something forgivable as a "bookkeeping error." I heard that the marines found him and got took care of it. Outside proper channels. They got a little sloppy, though. Two of them are doing time in the brig for leaving a mess. It led straight back to their platoon. A shame, really — those two missed the drop on Calit. They could have taken some Zho out instead of doing time. Remember, when you're punishing scum, neatness counts.

But that's just half of it. The other half — well, let's just say that the Seven Clans and umpteen tribes, or gangs, or whatever they call themselves, are always looking for some advantage over the other. Mostly it's little stuff, counting coup, that sort of thing. Once in a while, it's all-out-war, or something really foolish. A challenge gets issued, and they go out stealing hats from ladies, or swiping statues, or painting their names on buildings. Juvenile, until something touchy happens and there's a knife-fight, or a bomb set off.

Then there was this time that someone thought of a real challenge — see which clan could terrify another world most and get some protection money from it. Calit, they decided on.

Oh, I told you that story? Well, the other part is what it did back on Denotam. One clan, Glas, had hired the mercenaries, you see. A Clan with tight ties to Al Morai, and Al Morai was getting sucked in deep. They could have been stuck with the bill on their own, because Baroness Lucillian and Viscount What's-His-Name were pressing hard. So Al Morai stepped in and forced Glas to work with the others on Calit. That's how a small world got itself in charge of a big world, with Al Morai footing some of the bill.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1110.

General Data (Players)

A non-industrial Imperial world located in the Vilis Subsector of the Spinward Marches, Denotam has about 300,000 residents and a naval base. The population is almost entirely clustered around the down-port. Both the downport and most of the useful land is on a single small continent. The remainder of the surface is covered by ice under which can be found highly saline oceans.

Like other worlds lacking a breathable atmosphere, Denotam has numerous habitats. Unlike Calit, the habitats are not built deep. Instead,

the small population has spread laterally, building new domes as necessary. The largest dome is Denotam First, only a few kilometers from the starport. Denotam First is about twenty kilometers in diameter, and mostly residential at this point. About 150,000 people live in its neighborhoods. Smaller domes clustered nearby are far less densely populated. These are generally farmland or engineering sites. Several massive domes near the shore house fusion power plants. These generate both power and desalinized water.

The seven independent human governments are not bound by geography. They are instead a melding of clan/tribe/ethnic loyalties, business entities, trade guilds and competing criminal organizations. They are most often known as the Seven Clans.

The clans are not quite as dishonest as has been painted by Adm. Lee. "Kleptocracy" is an exaggeration. However, the Clans have a competitive and oppositional viewpoint born of the struggle to survive on a harsh, thin-atmosphere world orbiting a red dwarf star. The rivalry lives on between and amongst the Seven Clans. At their best, the Clans have been compared to the Aslan, though they lack the majestic propriety and dignity of that species. At their worst, the Clans have been compared to Vargr packs, with the Vargr coming out ahead.

Some, like Lee, oversimplify the system in place as little more than competing criminal enterprises feeding off commerce, the military and each other. The groups are constantly jockeying for position, hoping to unify the world under one rule — the rule of their own group. Each Clan has a single person at its head, though that head has significant support from below. Clans have different formal methods of selecting their heads, but (in the end) the individual with the highest number of loyal adherents wins.

The multiple-Clan structure provides a haven for lawbreakers, who can reside in one quasi-nation's vaguely-defined territory in which certain businesses are legal, while engaging illegally in those businesses elsewhere (often no farther than the next street over). When serious infractions are committed, extra-territorial arrests (which look more like kidnapping) may lead to more widespread conflict.

Clan membership is demonstrated by wearing the clan's emblem on one's clothing or as jewelry. Failing to wear an emblem is a sign of disloyalty.

It is rare to have a standard year in which one of the small nations is not in a declared conflict against another over such activities. Fortunately, the wars tend to be resolved on small battlefields and by specific challenges. The object is often to "count coup" against an opponent, without seriously injuring him or her. When matters get out of hand, just enough injuries and deaths occur to remind both loser and winner that it could have been worse.

The Clans certainly agree on essentials, and cooperate in protecting those. Power and environmental systems are sacrosanct, as are the water systems and many domes providing pressure and farmland.

The Imperium is as aloof to the Clans' spats as it is with other planetary concerns. The Imperial Navy and Baroness Lucillianni are primarily interested in keeping supplies moving and vessels maintained. Imperial forces act off-port only as reasonably necessary to recover its own occasional losses in equipment and materiel. Local gang-wars and shooting

matches are of no import so long as civilian employees report to work. However, Imperial officials attempt to limit the lawlessness from spreading offworld. Local customs agents monitor exports carefully, looking for unlawful shipments of illegally obtained trade goods.

The Al Morai shipping company has a major presence here. Some of its locally educated employees and executives have a poor understanding of “following the law” as expected within the Imperium. Opportunity need not bother to knock before locally raised Al Morai employees go to the door; they maintain a careful watch through every peephole.

Al Morai is more than merely a shipping company; it also privately owns fleet escorts and patrol cruisers to keep its own preferred trade routes free of difficulties. These private forces assisted the Imperial Navy during the Fifth Frontier War, freeing some smaller vessels for combat duty. It also undertook many shipments of essential supplies and war materiel at rock-bottom prices, seeing this as its patriotic duty.

Unfortunately, some of Al Morai’s locally raised employees have seen this as an opportunity to profit via diversion, mis-shipment, and other euphemisms for outright theft. Indeed, Al Morai’s extra-legal activities are currently under investigation by various offices within the Imperium. Rumors are even beginning to spread that honorable veterans have been accused of significant crime, and are on a quest across the Imperium to prove their innocence (see *The Spinward Marches Campaign*, also placed after the end of the Fifth Frontier War).

Summary and Referee’s Information

“Here’s a place that wants a show,” the Advance Sophonts comment as *Cirque* comes inbound from its jump. “Things couldn’t have gone better. A lot of people have trouble with the locals, I hear, but they couldn’t have been easier to deal with. We even got cost on portafreshers. This is going to be an easy run, for once. Remember to be polite to all the Clan heads. We paid them to keep their wars out of the performances, but they need to stay bribed, if you get my drift. It’s personal here, not something you can phone in.

“And remember, it’s near time for the annual Clan War. Never ever take sides, that’s what we hear.”

Alert PCs who have heard about Denotam may properly be concerned by such glowing praise. Such PCs would be correct in their worries. In fact, Clan Fleming has become particularly belligerent of late. It has been conducting multiple forays to count coup against high-level members of other clans.

Air-rafts and other gravitic vehicles are not used in the domes. Streets are somewhat neutral. Flying above territory is aggression, whether from another Clan or offworlders. Even Baroness Lucillianni will not do something that foolish without her full security force of Huscarles protecting her.

The few major roadways (four spokes of a wheel radiating toward the outer rim, and the circular Rim Highway) are “neutral” territory. However, local neighborhoods are controlled by various Clans. Travel through these neighborhoods requires obtaining a leave, or moving very quickly. Offworlders are generally given a “let” when they are merely

tourists. If an offworlder has business with another Clan, however, he or she must expect to negotiate safe passage if local streets will be traveled.

The annual Clan War is a pressure-valve event. Younger people seek prestige through counting coup. They equip themselves with marker weapons (paintball guns) and paintballs of their clan color. Each also wears a small camera with an automatic upload to verify that an enemy soldier is struck. The object is of course to avoid deaths. However, conflicts sometimes erupt into more dangerous fights.

BT1 will land with permission just outside Denotam First and connected to the city using large, portable pressurized gangways connected to three of its four main cargo locks. BT2 is similarly linked to the fourth lock. The tent has been erected at Northwest Park, about 250 meters away. The Security Chief, well aware of the planet’s reputation, has set up an extra buffer zone around the usual oval.

Performances will largely go smoothly, and with little trouble. However, the traditional “Amateur Day on Andii’s Stages” becomes as usual an opportunity for the optimistic youth of the Seven Clans to audition for the Heads as much as for Andii. At the request of the Durie, Andii has Comic Juggler serve as the day’s emcee, much to Juggler’s displeasure. “You know how I feel about working with animals and children,” he notes. Nonetheless, Andii is the boss, and he resigns himself to the task.

Note that the Amateur Day is a talent contest of sorts. The three top prizes are not huge (Cr 250, Cr 150, and Cr 50, with a guarantee that video of the performance will be forwarded to both local talent scouts and brought to the Regina Talent Agency on Regina (with no promises made). Andii assigns the PCs to be the judges for this stop’s show. U’aili will be present to enforce all rules, as *Cirque des Sirkas*’ contracts require objective honesty.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ System entry and contact with Advance Sophonts.
- ☐ The tent is moved into Denotam First’s dome to be erected in Northwest Park.
- ☐ Andii leads the Circus Parade through the neutral streets and back to the Northwest Park. The publicity event ends at the tent site, and the public is allowed into the enclosing fence (but not the tent). A number of children between the ages of 8 and 15 are sneaking through the security in twos and threes. They seem harmless enough, asking questions and chatting. As one child distracts a worker, another steals something small. Security is kept busy.
- ☐ One such child, Artphul (male or female, about 14), strolls around looking at the clowns preparing for their performances. While their backs are turned, the youngster starts the clown’s gravitic guggy and tries to fly away. The Clown clicks a remote and the guggy shuts down, its gravitics bringing it gently back to earth. The PCs are nearest to the landing; the Security Chief yells to “Get that kid.” If the PCs fail, an NPC will get the youth before he/she escapes.
- ☐ Artphul is sullen, but only about being caught. Otherwise engaging, the youth was seeking to gain prestige within Clan Amstruther. The youth explains that prestige will allow him/her to command a “counting coup” raiding squad against Clan Fleming, and eventually work toward an apprenticeship with Al Morai. “By the way, word on the street is that the Flemings will try to kidnap the thing with the double snouts,” Artphul notes, pointing at the duranthe. He holds



Artphul

Final UPP: 9C8959. Age: 14 years. Fame: 0.

Final Honors: None.

Skills: Driver-0 (Wheeled-0), Stealth-0, Dancer (Juggler)-0.

BW: Denotam (SM 1413) Ni

Artphul’s high social standing does not reflect the youth’s humble station in life. The youth has an engaging personality; characters generally react favorably to him/her. An Amstruther by birth, then orphaned and raised by a maiden aunt (Phalon), Artful’s goal is to gain enough prestige to obtain employment with Al Morai.

The Seven Clans

The Seven Clans arose on the first Vilani colony vessel which came to Denotam. The seven sections of settlers were originally denoted as Ay, Bee, Cee, etc. For amusement, they took names of Old Earth's Scottish clans and engaged in competitions. The head in each clan is referred to as "the [Clan Name]," e.g. "the Anstruther." Each clan's prestige of each clan is in reverse alphabetical order to simplify the referee's job. The referee is free to make his or her job more difficult by re-sorting the clans. The vast majority of people are uninvolved with day-to-day clan business.

Arnstruther was associated with operating the colony vessel, which was dismantled and used for the first settlement when the ship's systems failed. This Clan has the least prestige, as its workers were never properly trained or prepared to settle. The Arnstruther is rumped and appears harried; he deals with most engineering issues for the dome.

Bannatyne is often looked down upon by the other clans because it has stayed with farming. The Clan has a virtual monopoly on local food production. The Bannatyne is dapper and proper, with no evidence that she is an active farmer.

Clelland has recently taken to bootlegging intellectual property. The Clelland boasts of obtaining all recorded entertainment before its official release.

Durie controls most of the alcohol production and distribution on-world. The Durie is the most charming and hospitable of the Clan Heads, and has the refreshments to prove it.

Erskin controls the gambling vices on-world. Erskin himself never rolls the dice on any deal. "Gambling is how people lose money," she points out.

Fleming is the smallest and most belligerent of the Clans, protecting its territories jealously. It often issues challenges, and seeks a monopoly on weapons deals. The Fleming is always standing across the room from a target. He repeatedly throws a knife at the target, and hits it — but the Viking Barbarian Knife Thrower is a far better shot.

Glas is currently the most successful of the Clans, with the great majority of the off-port warehousing business. Glas' strong head mandates a nose-to-the-grindstone attitude, and maintains control of its ranks. Some dissent is coming from the ranks, as the Glas has imposed limits on petty graft within the Warehouses. The Glas has placed a number of people into Al Morai. The Glas is a pin-striped businessman who issues orders to buy, sell, or "Put that mook in his place" as calls interrupt.

out a hand. "Pay me and I can help a lot more."

- A commotion breaks out about 100 meters away from the duranthe. As the crowd moves to see what is happening, five teens move toward the duranthe, whose reins are being held by the Geezer Thespian. Artphul points this out to the PCs. The PCs and Security chief must act to prevent the theft. As usual, deadly violence is proscribed.
- Based on these encounters, Security Chief agrees to pay Artphul a salary for the week.
- Later, Artphul shows his basic juggling tricks. Comic Juggler notes his skills. "I'm going to hate myself for this," he notes, then offers to show Artphul some additional tricks.

Act II

- Later that day, the PCs are sent to make courtesy calls on the Clan Heads to ensure that they "stay bribed." Each Head is being given five ringside seats for a performance (none together), as well as five to "Amateur Day on Andii's Stages" (at which they will of necessity be in the same room). Artphul is their guide. As they move through the streets, the PCs should note that each cross-street sign has two symbols next to the name: one representing one of the Seven Clans and another representing a subset. These designate a Clan's control over a neighborhood. This is "local color."
- As Artphul escorts the party to a Clan Head's location, a Fleming foot-soldier rushes out of an alley. He or she fires a paintball pistol, splattering Artphul, and yells "Coup!" The Fleming foot-soldier

runs, and Artphul pursues. If the PCs join the pursuit they capture the Fleming foot-soldier. The foot-soldier is belligerent and accuses them of siding with the enemy. "I counted coup fair and square. He didn't catch back. You guys are outsiders." Artphul agrees. "Don't make me lose respect."

- If the PCs look closely, they will see that the paintball gun is entirely plastic, including the gas canister. The weapon was apparently produced using a 3D-printing process.
- This process repeats itself from one territory to the next. Most of the time, Artphul gets the draw on the other young foot-soldier.
- The remainder of the courtesy calls go without incident. The referee should play at least some of the meetings out, giving each of the Heads a different personality (see notes on The Seven Clans). Note that every Clan Head mentions a child, niece, nephew, or other youth who has registered for the Amateur Day on Andii's Stage. Each mentions that it would be nice for his favorite to do well. Each also expresses some respect to Artphul for his current "coup count."

Act III

- The break day comes. As noted, Comic Juggler is the Master of Ceremonies for "Amateur Day on Andii's Stages." The auditions are to be held and recorded in BT1's Center Stage. Operational portions of the ship are as usual locked.
- Artphul warns the PCs to keep an eye open. "The Clan Heads will all be there. People will try to look good for their Heads. And the Fleming — he's just crazy."
- Various youths (all about 17 or 18) audition. Some sing, others dance, still others juggle. A few are really good — but none of those are closely related to the Clan Heads. The best that can be said of those youths is that some are "not dismal." One, a young girl who is essentially tone-deaf, is the Fleming's daughter. The best of the bunch is a youth whose family is from off-world — Sharurshid's local Factor, who by the rules may participate but not be given a prize.
- U'aili is present. Any suggestion that the rules be varied is rejected. There will be three winners.
- While they wait, youths are climbing through BT1, roaming and looking for insecure points. One from Clan Clelland is found examining the personal video systems built into the chairs; his or her hand computer is running software seeking an encryption key.
- After all of the auditions are done, the audience begins arriving for the show. Security Chief steps up security, asking for the PCs' advice. It is reasonably obvious that every person entering BT1 will go through sensor columns at the entry. To detect a particular plastic weapon using BT1's entryway sensors: Difficult (3D) < (Int + Sensors).
- The show goes on, with each of the Clan Heads glaring at the PCs.
- Near the end, Artphul is put up by Comic Juggler as a surprise contestant. "I'm an investor. He who has the gold makes the rules."
- No matter who the PCs choose, they can please at most three of the Clan Heads and their supporters. The PCs come up to the judging break, in which they are allowed ten minutes to make a final decision. The crowd is restless. They must decide and then announce.
- One way or another, a brawl is certain. It is initiated by one or more Clan Heads angry that his or her favorite was slighted. It should be noted, however, that the Fleming knows just how awful his daughter is, and will fight on the PCs' side if his daughter is NOT named a winner. He will respect them for standing their ground.
- The Fleming's daughter winds up kissing Artphul for gallantry.
- This scenario ends in a free-for-all fist-fight spilling out of BT1.

Tag

- If the PCs have played this well, they have friends in low places on Denotam, and leave with gifts and well wishes.

Episode 20: The Dogs of War

Phlume • Spinward Marches 1611

C887624-8 Ag Ni Ga Ri 710 Im G5 V M8 V

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

You come in to Phlume's Altiplano and see those mountains towering over it. You see the channels of water cutting the rock from the high glaciers. They're impressive, I'll agree. They get so many sappy ooohs and aahhs, it makes me homesick for a nasty old swamp. But I get over it, so long as there's work to do.

Well, the first settlers there saw those channels every day, and eventually they named their world after them. They started out there, in the highlands, because the "thin air" up there is closer to human norms. Not many first colonies start high before they go low. Not that many high plains are meccas of fertility, either.

They're nice people, mostly. They argue a lot, and often. If a law needs to be passed, enough of the seven million have to agree for it to go in effect. These things go back and forth for weeks in their Citizen Media, with long speeches and short comments and so on. I don't know how anyone stays friends or married there, the way some of the posts and all go. But in the end, they vote, and it's so. Until someone tries to change the law, or add a codicil. Sometimes, that takes ten or fifteen minutes to come up.

You can become a citizen easily enough. Petition, then get vetted by about five million voting adults. They all get to ask questions. Mostly, they're sensible, and mostly they don't get too personal. You're allowed to keep your tooth-brushing techniques to yourselves, I'm told. Flossing's a different matter.

The only thing those folks tend to agree on is keeping their world nice. They're conservative conservationists, farmers, gatherers. You can stake out a place if you want and live off the land, or you can work the fields on the Altiplano. Either way, you have to treat the place well. Clean up after yourself. You'll never find drink cups tossed by the side of the road.

They even require ton-for-ton replenishment in their shipping contracts. Whatever nitrates and carbon and water leave the planet in crates of food has to come back in crates of...well, you get the drift. Good that they're close to Regina. A lot of that sort of thing gets produced by Imperial politicians, by whom I mean — never mind who I mean. The Phlumians — is that a word? — don't allow a lot of mining, and no drilling or industry that would seriously contaminate a section of the world, so they buy it from worlds that are poisoning themselves to death.

That sort of common sense can't last.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1103.

General Data (Players)

An Imperial, agricultural, non-industrial world located in the Vilis Subsector, Phlume is about the same size as Terra. However, it has a denser atmosphere at sea level. Phlume's 7,000,000 inhabitants engage in farming and gathering agricultural products, including some hunting. A well-managed safari business also operates in the wild lowlands, but strict limits are set on the numbers of animals which may be hunted.

Fruits and vegetables grown on Phlume tend to keep much longer than fruits from other planets in the sector, and thus are found in many ships' holds. Both Phlume and Regina benefit from this agricultural trade: Regina gets premium "gourmet" produce, while the people of Phlume satisfy their craving for luxuries. Phlumian fruit is a gourmet menu item on Regina. This trade works because consumers of Phlume's produce supply the funds to purchase luxuries the Phlumians have neither the technology nor the manufacturing base to produce on-planet, like music players small enough to fit into large ear-rings, robots to assist in the fields, and handheld computers capable of high-variable calculations.

Regina and other agricultural importers do, and they pay well. Also, they are required to return, ton for ton, the nutrients and other material removed from Phlume's soil, which keeps the trade sustainable.

The wisdom of Phlume's masses has been to limit ecologically harmful activities. New land is opened for farming only after extensive environmental impact reviews and much wrangling among the citizenry. As noted by Adm. Lee, mining, oil drilling and similar activities are severely restricted, excepting only a few natural gas extraction sites which also produce abundant helium. The natural gas is used for heating and relatively clean energy generation, while the helium is used to operate blimps, dirigibles, and other airships. These lighter than air craft greatly outnumber imported air/rafts.

Phlume's government, such as it is, is a participatory democracy that functions thanks to simple but effective computer linkages and "social networking." The networks and computers are often imports, though some "hardy individualists" make do with extremely simple units made by one small local company. Debate is often harsh. However, once the majority has determined the law, it is enforced until and unless it can be repealed by a new majority. The planetary government works ceaselessly to maintain an informed citizenry.

The Altiplano, with its majestic views and towering mountains, is the main human settlement location. It is in the temperate zone allowing for year-round agriculture, but also is currently near its capacity for farming and sensible development. Exploration has begun into the "lowlands," with their denser atmosphere and thick vegetation, but most human population is found on this extended highland.

Phlume has five small, airless moons in varying orbits. The nearest functions as such "up port" as the planet requires, and handles transshipping. The others are largely unexplored.

Summary and Referee's Information

The Advance Sophonts' comments are succinct. "Hey — welcome to paradise. Don't go stirring up your usual trouble here, ok? These guys argue a lot, but that's the worst of it."

Apart from occasional sightings of oddly tall people and Vargr, nothing at all of real interest happens on Phlume. The players find Phlume to be among the nicest worlds they have visited. The population treats the players well, the environment is pleasant, and after the chaos enjoyed on past stops, Phlume is a surprisingly delicious respite from strife.

Every crowd entering the tent is boisterous, involved, and interactive. In acts emphasizing audience participation, the "local talent" is enthu-

Sample Zhodani Consular Guard

Final UPP: 97987A. Age: 30 years. Military Fame: 1 (Parent).
 Final Honors: Specialist/Officer of 500, 33rd Commando Groupment, Zhodani Consular Guard [CR-3, XS-2, MCUF1].
 Final Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1, Trainer-1), Athlete-1, Driver-0 (Grav-1), Explosives-1 Fighter-0 (Beams-1; Unarmed-1), Heavy Weapons-0 (Launcher-2), Hostile Environment-1, Language: Anglic-5; Sagamaal-6, Liaison-1, Medic-2, Recon-1, Sapper-1, Stealth-1, Tactics-1, Trader-1.
 Psionics: $\Psi = A$ [3rd Stage Psionic]
 1st Stage: Basics; Direct-15, Remote-15, Self-0.
 2nd Stage: ESP; Psi-Vision-10, Psi-Hearing-0, Psi-Touch-0, Psi-Smell-0, Psi-Awareness-10, Psi-Perception-10.
 3rd Stage: ECM; Move-0, Teleport-15, EShift-5, The Touch-5, OOB-0, Mentation-5.
 Terms (3): 3 Consular Guard.
 Muster Out (3): Low Passage, KCr 30, Wafer Jack.
 Automatics & Non-Rolled Gear: BattleDress-D, PGMP-13, Grav Belt, Light WarBot-13 (optional), Dress Uniforms, Standard Uniforms, Hand Computer/Comm, Civilian Clothes, Personal Entertainment Library, Professional Library, Various Psionic Enhancement Drugs.
 BW: Ziafipians 2740 Lanse Sho' B A7A 435-B Z Ag Ga Ni.
 HW Skills: Animals-0 (Rider-1), Driver-0 (Grav-1), Trader-1.

siastic and willing to laugh at itself.

Characters may participate in a photo safari, or a hunt if that is of real interest. Nothing unforeseen happens, however. The biggest conflict the characters see is a fight between two young men over a girl. This occurs on a visit to a "pick-your-own" fruit farm that is on the schedule because the players are required to tour locations selected by the voters as part of the publicity junket.

Many of the characters are likely to be somewhat impatient by the time they arrive at Phlume, as the end of the tour is close. Andii intends to jump from Phlume to Regina. The players will find Andii and others crewmembers preoccupied with checking last minute details, from reviewing the cargo manifests to ordering repairs to costumes.

In short, Cirque des Sirkas has completed its "out of town tryout" and is preparing to visit "the big city." The circus closes down with practiced efficiency. Equipment is packed away and all personnel are brought back to *Cirque*. Andii takes *Cirque* out of orbit and begins its push toward a standard jump point. As *Cirque* gets approximately 75 diameters away from Phlume, a previously undetected vessel separates from the outermost moon and breaks orbit. Several more follow. The vessels clearly seek to intercept *Cirque* at high acceleration. Sensor scans will prove them to be at least one Tulgan Patrol Cruiser of Sword Worlds design, four Rrazaghz-Class Vargr Raiders, and a Bakaal Sunflower-class yacht. The Raiders each deploy a modular cutter. Sensor data will show that the vessels are maneuvering in concert, pushing hard to close on *Cirque*. Their transponders have been shut down and they answer no hails. They demonstrate no indication of friendly intent.

The vessels all exceed *Cirque's* acceleration. Despite her particle accelerators, *Cirque* is outgunned. However, *Cirque* may be able to reach the jump point before suffering significant damage.

While the situation is serious, the best apparent tactic is to accelerate for the jump point. One dangerous but acceptable tactic is to increase *Cirque's* acceleration using the rear-facing engines of BT2 and BT3. In addition, weapons of all riders can be prepared for firing.

The enemy vessels can match vector with *Cirque* before she reaches the 100-diameter safe jump point. If the referee has mathematical genius for players, the referee should prepare in advance to determine the exact timing. Otherwise, the referee may use "Loosey-goosey space opera calculations" by which the cutters will be able to match vectors and come into firing range about sixty minutes before *Cirque* reaches the safe jump range. They will be able to match and board forty minutes before *Cirque* reaches a safe jump distance.

Nemesis has arrived. Now as insanely obsessed as any Imperial citizen, the Zhodani agent had already recruited the members of the elite Consular Guard who escaped from Zaibon. These teleporting comman-

dos believe Nemesis' claim that Bertii has information which will help Norris to bring the Consulate to its knees; the Big Lie is often the best. They have thus taken their stolen yacht on a twelve-jump voyage (passing through Mirriam as the *Flaming Sophont*, now *Antonio*) to Phlume. Here, they were instructed to hide and wait, as a last-ditch force to stop *Cirque*.

On Nemesis' instructions, these Consular Guard members spent some of their waiting time recruiting Vargr pirates. They used both their psionic abilities and promises of interesting booty. The animals, for example, can be sold to private zoos. *Cirque* and her auxiliaries would make a useful support ship for piracy.

The Sword Worlds vessel is crewed by mutinous dissidents from the Border Worlds. These were recruited by Nemesis with the promise of bringing Andii herself to "justice" after *Cirque's* involvement on Hofud and Dymwyn. They have agreed to place themselves at Nemesis' orders.

Two of the Vargr cutters carry boarding modules. These modules are designed to latch onto the hull of a target vessel, then breach the hull by use of a combination of lasers and demolition materials. Once a target hull is breached, troops will board through the breach. At least one of the cutters appears to be equipped with a module with a missile launching module based on a firm point. Each of the remaining cutters are equipped with one laser on a firm point.

As an alternative, the referee may have the yacht claim to be in need of assistance to draw *Cirque* into the ambush. The remainder of the attack is essentially the same, but the yacht will likely be closer to *Cirque*, making it easier for the Consular Guards to teleport on board.

The odds are massively against fighting and winning a pitched battle, even with all three auxiliaries flying separately. In addition, the odds favor keeping the auxiliaries docked to *Cirque* to complete a jump. Andii, an experienced combat officer, knows this. The obvious tactic for Andii and crew is to prepare for jump, even within 100 diameters, while targeting the attacking vessels as they close. Once Consular Guards suddenly appear aboard *Cirque*, Andii will also conclude that it is better to kill or capture them inside jump space, even with the risk of misjumping. No new Zhodani attackers will be able to enter the vessel in jump space.

Nonetheless, PCs in gunnery or piloting positions can be put through their paces during this period. They will not be able to hit the smaller craft as easily as they would like, though they certainly will try. Andii will have all particle accelerators ready. Note that by rotating the vessel in quick maneuvers, all weapons can be brought to bear in a single combat round.

Before either of the Vargr boarding cutters can latch onto *Cirque's* hull, the new surprise party begins: seventeen Zhodani teleport troopers in light Zhodani battle dress appear aboard. Two teleport into each of the two main gunnery decks. Two more appear in the large engineering section. One appears in the bridge section, and some teleport into each of the auxiliaries. The troopers are seeking to shut down or disable critical equipment. Troopers attacking BT3 and the BACFUDS are prepared to cause fuel breaches. Finally, Nemesis teleports into the forward cargo hold, planning to work his way down to the bridge.

As the fighting erupts the Zhodani troopers have surprise and armor on their side. Those attacking BT3 will succeed in their goal either during the initial attack or by sabotage during jump. Those attacking the BACFUDS will be less successful. This is of the essence, and should occur in part by referee fiat.

The players have their wits, knowledge of the ship, numbers, trained animals, and a year of experience in unusual situations. The referee will play out deck-by-deck skirmishes as small bands of PCs outwit the scattered Zhodani troopers. Note that the teleporting Zhodani may evade attacks using short hops, albeit at risk of exhaustion.

The battle with Nemesis will also become personal, both for Bertii and any PCs. It should be played as the final death-struggle that it is. A powerful psionic, Nemesis has nonetheless made a fatal mistake. Like the other troopers, he is in a do-or-die situation. For the PCs, it is also do-or-die: Nemesis can teleport out of any confinement but cannot leave the ship while *Cirque* is in jump — a teleporter can travel inside the vessel, but cannot cross the "jump border."

Even if the characters are able to hold the invaders and attackers off until they achieve the 100-diameter safe distance, weapons fire will have occurred in the engineering sections. There will be unspecified damage to the jump drive, although it will not appear serious on its face or from short diagnostic tests. If instead the order is given to jump before any damage

Cirque

can occur (within 100 diameters), daring a mis-jump to occur, there will be no damage to the drive at that point.

Regardless, the net result is the same: *Cirque* mis-jumps.

Entering jump space does not end the players' troubles. Not all of the Zhodani will have been accounted for. Indeed, one or two may have managed to jump in surreptitiously; these only begin their attacks after the vessel is in jump space. In addition, a trooper or Nemesis may be able to teleport into and hide within the BACFUDS fuel tanks after they are emptied of jump fuel. Other locales for concealment may include cargo pods and cargo areas in the vessel. There are also spaces in the various auxiliaries which can serve to conceal a clever Zhodani. This provides an extended period of hunting. Thus, even after *Cirque* escapes into jump, all will be in danger.

The Zhodani goal is simple: neither Bertii nor the information he has is to reach Regina. The use of an assortment of vessels drawn from Outworld Coalition hold-outs was necessary, as Nemesis has no support from the Consulate.

The referee can stretch the scenario out through at least the first several days of jump, while at the same time letting the characters worry about whether their vessel will return to normal space anywhere near Regina.

Design details of all of the ships encountered in this episode (but not the cutters) are included in Program Notes A. Deck plans are not.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ *Cirque* comes in system, holds its check-in with the Advance Sophonts, and enters orbit within a few hundred meters of Phlume's small inner moon.
- ☐ BT1 and BT2 break orbit and head for the main starport on the Altiplano. There is room for sight-seeing as the ships come in and see the spectacular waterfalls from the higher surrounding mountains.
- ☐ Landing, set-up, and publicity go without a hitch. The extended interconnectivity of the 7,000,000 inhabitants makes the process easy, and all performances are sold out within a standard day. Andii intends to be out on time, however; she wants to be at Regina not later than two weeks before Holiday.
- ☐ Events are dull (a good thing!) and quiet. The players perhaps note a political argument in a coffee shop here, a vote-trading session in a bar there.
- ☐ The players take in a "safari" at the request of the local Sharurshid Factor who is seeking to garner business for a safari ship. This amounts to an uneventful air/raft trip to take photos, and the guide is a know-nothing. This is a "Red herring."
- ☐ The players are brought to tour an orchard and treated to a "pick-your-own" with a picnic. The orchard is seeking an exclusive arrangement with Sharurshid. While there, the players break up a silly fight over a girl. This is another "Red herring."
- ☐ Romantic nights are spent staring at the five hurtling moons of Phlume.
- ☐ Performances all go like clockwork. The audience is made up almost entirely of locals, though there always seem to be one or two spacers with nondescript grey coveralls. They are there just to make the players nervous and are another "Red herring".
- ☐ The shows go well to great acclaim, then close. The tent comes down as expected, on schedule.

Act II

- ☐ Planning discussions for Regina. Andii outlines expectations. *Cirque* will arrive, set up, and begin playing. Duke Norris will be invited to the Holiday Performance, and honored there. Andii also volunteers, for the first time, that some of her cargo includes "unknown soldiers and spacers" of all of the factions who fought in the Battle for Rhyllanor. She also notes, if it hasn't been discovered or revealed before, that clones of Aramais and other Sharurshid

execs are included in Sharurshid cargo.

- ☐ Supervise final loading of *Cirque*.
- ☐ Boost to orbit.
- ☐ Begin travel to jump point.
- ☐ Get beyond half-way point. Sensor contact!
- ☐ Ships depart from Phlume's supposedly uninhabited 5th moon. Sensors show them to be boosting for intercept. See ship details in the referee's summary.
- ☐ Alternative: a yacht with engine trouble calls for help. *Cirque* alters vector to assist. Thereafter, the attack begins.

Act III

- ☐ Pursuit stage. Build tension. Maneuvers are insufficient to throw off pursuit.
- ☐ Resolve combat through standard space combat rules (SMART).
- ☐ Run at least four (4) SMART combat rounds.
- ☐ Seventeen Zhodani troopers jump in after about four STAMP rounds. They are in an approaching cutter which has evaded all attacking fire.
- ☐ Nemesis jumps in last, attempting to be unnoticed and to search out Bertii.
- ☐ Cutters continue to attack while the Zhodani boarders try to take down jump drives and ship's weapons, as well as breaching fuel tankage. Multiple combat rounds should occur on multiple parts of *Cirque* and her auxiliaries. Use of all locales (even BT1's massive hold and animal compartments) turns this into a final battle worthy of song.
- ☐ BT3's collapsible fuel tanks should be explosively emptied during the combat. A team of several Zho either open the large upper cargo hatch and explosively breach, the main tank, or breach the tanks through the lower deck. The former is likely to be faster and impossible to stop; the lower creates a more interesting problem as streams of fuel burst out along the BACFUDS hull. This assumes that the Zho obtain and maintain control over the pumps in the lower deck. This fuel loss, however managed, is essential set-up for the next episode.
- ☐ If any players are on bridge crew, they must help Andii with "Now or never" assessment.
- ☐ An emergency jump, probably still within 100-diameter limit (or, in the alternative, with jump-drive damage from weapons fire), becomes essential as *Cirque* takes a pounding.

Act IV

- ☐ Clean up combat inside ship. STAMP rules (combat).
- ☐ Hunt for Zhodani troopers. "Internal sensor sweep" is not enough, as this isn't a sloppily written television show. Search is compartment to compartment using proper tactics. Note that it is possible to teleport within the jump bubble generated by *Cirque*. Experienced Zhodani troopers can keep a teleport ahead of searchers.
- ☐ Begin taking stock of losses and injuries.
- ☐ Calm the animals.
- ☐ Make essential damage repairs.
- ☐ If Nemesis has not been killed or captured yet, he may continue to plague the PCs.

Tag

- ☐ Interrogate captured Zhodani Troopers, possibly with Bertie's assistance.
- ☐ Determine how to deal with Zhodani troopers and, if captured, Nemesis (lethal versus non-lethal solutions).
- ☐ Optional: Note some queasiness (consistent with prior versions of

Cirque

Traveller, which indicate that misjump may cause physical symptoms).

- ☐ Optional. Drop out of jump space. No large central star is anywhere in sight. This may instead begin the next Episode.
- ☐ Optional: Leave the shocked players with little hope, but with the promise of an interesting next session. Andii orders that the ship get into survival mode and begin looking for rogues.

The Consular Guard's Route

Members of the Zhodani Consular Guard are highly trained elite fighters. All have psionic training, and most are capable of teleportation. Having accepted Nemesis' authority at Zaibon, the Guard in this scenario stole the murdered Baron's yacht. They are on a do-or-die mission: get to Phlume ahead of *Cirque*. Along the way, they are to work with other potential assets and forces Nemesis has identified.

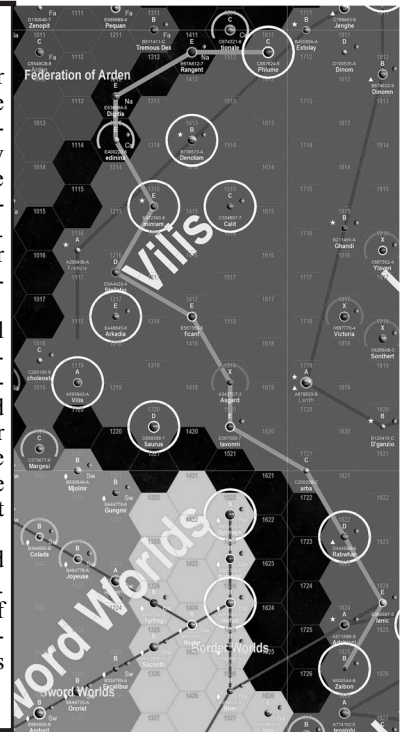
Using their variety of skills, they will alter the vessel's transponders and other identifiers. They will also add to the minimal armament in place, and retrieve or obtain armor and equipment. As pictured below, some wear traditional Zhodani designs, while others have Imperial armor and weapons. Some may have no armor at all, instead wearing a vacuum suit during the attack.

Referees interested in a Zhodani-based scenario may run this as a branching campaign. Success should of course be possible, even if Andii manages to jump before *Cirque* is destroyed. No one likes to know that a character is doomed from the start.

Marcus Antonius:

And Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war,
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

Julius Caesar Act 3, scene 1, 270–275



Episode 21: Not in Kansas Two Light-Years from 1910 Regina No Nearby Star or Known Planet

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

I've misjumped once in my years, just once. It was during the Fourth Frontier War, en route to [Deleted Per Intelligence Regulations] with the [Deleted Per Intelligence Regulations] Fleet.

When the first star-fix came out of the astrogation sub-systems, I nearly soiled myself, and I started to cuss out the Great Crank Turner for her malignant sense of humor. I'll probably go straight to the Coldest Pit of Tartaros for some of the things I said right that minute.

Then I calmed down and got to work. Got everyone on board who could read a screen on the sensor feeds – densitometer of course, EM sensors for infrared and helium traces and even visible light. I had transferred a captured Zho "spotter" – some kind of clairvoyant trick – just before the jump, and wished I'd disobeyed orders, but I hadn't. So no Zho to help with a mind-trick.

We got lucky and then some. After a few hours of sweating – stinky, nasty fear sweat that would have made a Vargr twitch – we spotted a rogue. A comet that must have escaped from its primary, or maybe never had one. And it was close, closer that I had a right to want.

Well, we got within 1000 diameters within two days, so we had full maneuver. A good thing, because we needed a long, hard boost to match vectors. Matched, kissed down, drove some pitons and tied her down, put the marines out with their heavy guns. Fusion guns to melt ice. The chief engineer rigged some melting blankets, and then figured out how to re-direct the plasma vents, and that gave us water, too. Food and water, two things I like to get into my mouth now and again.

Every crew member got out there in shifts. Took us two weeks, two deaths and three leg-killing cases of frostbite to melt enough ice and refuel, but we did it. We got back out, boosted fast and hard to 100 diameters, and made the jump to where we belonged.

Not something I'm aching to try again.

But then again, once in a while... well, there's the part where I almost got distracted from the job at hand.

You see, someone else made the same mistake we made, eons ago. Misjumped near where we did, maybe, or maybe they intended to come out where they did. Or maybe the rogue was just on their vector and forced them out of jump.

They must have hit at truly high vector, because they put up a crater nearly half way through the ice ball. OK, maybe a kilometer deep. All that good old Newtonian physics is still worth knowing. Hit something hard and fast, generate lots of heat.

Whoever it was left little to show for themselves ... just some metallic particles that eventually contaminated the ice and made our filters work overtime. But they were particles of refined alloys better than anything an Imperial shipyard can put out, and there were other impurities that come with jump drives and such. And then some other ones that we didn't have the equipment to analyze.

I wanted to go to the bottom of the crater and see what might be under the ice, but there was no time, no spare people, and a leader needs to focus on the job at hand. Keeping alive. I might just yet dig out my logs, someday, pull out the astrogator's numbers, and try to find that one rogue again. Get in closer, and carry enough fuel for a return jump. Get some

extra payback for the arms and legs we lost.

Told you the astrogator did some fancy math, figured out when that massive iceberg got slammed. I guess I'd like to see what sort of damn fool sophonts were misjumping at high vector 800,000 years ago.

You read the number right. Five-hundred thousand years before the so-called Ancients.

No, no one else believes me, either.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1095.

Player Information

Space between solar systems is very empty, lonely and dark. Few choose to risk those spaces. Misjump puts ships there. Few ever find their way back to a system if they emerge light-years away. This is one reason misjumps are bad for one's health.

The Imperial Navy's standard operating procedures call for seeking a rogue planet as a resource. Otherwise, a jump ending far from a system is a presumed death sentence. Despite evidence of matter between stars, it is of insufficient density to scoop and use as fuel for a jump.

Rogue planets are bodies found in interstellar space. Some escaped from their original system. Others are failed "brown dwarves," or "sub-brown dwarves." Many will have hydrogen in some form, and thus provide the potential for refueling a jump drive.

The IN manual's officially published probability of locating a rogue within reasonable range after a misjump into deep space is "not really worth writing down, as it robs all hope for the crew."

Referee's Summary

When *Cirque* emerges from jump-space, it is "in the deep black." No planets circle a central star, at least none in range of *Cirque's* sensors. No central star is within range. *Cirque's* emergency jump from Phlume has ended in a misjump.

The astrogation computer labors, then determines that *Cirque* is about two (2) light years away from Regina. This renders the misjump relatively minor, even infinitesimal (as such things go). It is deadly nonetheless. The best news the characters will obtain is that vector conservation has worked to their benefit: *Cirque* is moving toward the Regina system, and will arrive there eventually.

By then, all aboard will be centuries dead.

Andii will stay on the bridge until she determines how bad the situation is. However, it will be impossible to hide the situation. Most of the performers and non-spacers will be frightened; some may panic. One task for the PCs will be calming other characters. Other tasks include repairing jump damage, transferring food and fuel if necessary, manning the sensors to locate any possible assistance, and encouraging any Zho survivors of the assault to assist in locating any nearby rogue.

If the players seek information on rogue planets as sources of fuel, they will come across this material from the Adm. Aramais P. Lee's recently published memoirs. The information in the memoir is useful, to a

degree. It encapsulates the steps necessary to locate and use a rogue planet. It also discusses the risks of “mining” ice in deep space.

The search for a rogue may serve as a reminder that Aramais himself is aboard, in a sense. Whether or not his clone was disturbed in a prior episode, the databank containing his memories remains available. Aramais’ memories can be accessed by anyone with a wafer socket. His memories can be temporarily imprinted, if need be. Unfortunately, these come with his imperious attitudes. In those with the weakest sanity, such as the Geezer Thespian (who is also without doubt the most experienced at taking on alternate memories and characters), it may cause a complete psychotic break.

Damage to BT3’s tanks will require repair to use this information. The most likely available material to repair large ruptures is the tent’s external fabric. While some spare fabric is available, it will not be enough. Using BT1’s stage area as work space, some of the wall segments will have to be sacrificed.

The task difficulty for locating a rogue in the first three days should be so high as to render it essentially impossible. Problems in repairing BT3’s collapsible tank will also raise concern. Tension will rise on board. Each PC must determine sanity, if not previously determined. Each PC must make a daily roll against sanity to maintain sanity (or, to maintain secrecy, the referee may make the roll him or herself). If any PC fails, the referee may assign the form of breakdown endured by the character, or may roll it randomly:

- Openly homicidal;
- Secretly homicidal;
- Secretly suicidal;
- Openly suicidal;
- Hoarding expendables (food, water, oxygen);
- Inappropriate manic behavior (laughter, singing, performance, sudden indecent proposals, sudden decent proposals, etc.);
- Inappropriate depressive behavior (anger, crying, punching walls, staying in bunk despite orders).

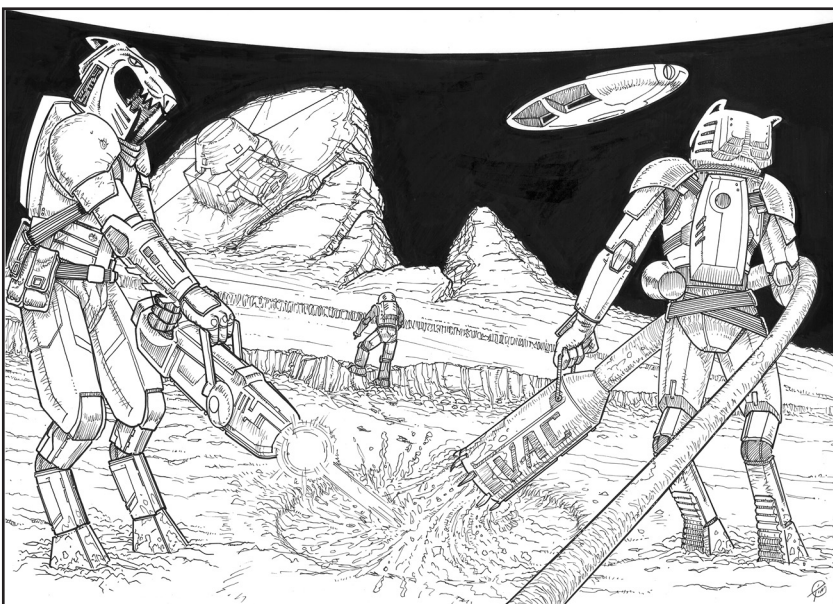
In the meantime, survival plans are discussed. Because no low berths are available, decisions must be made about how to best stretch the available resources and power. Apart from food rationing, heat and power rationing is essential. PCs should be encouraged to determine the best available space to occupy. If the PCs do not, Andii will order all aboard to cram aboard *Cirque* herself, preparing to abandon the auxiliaries (and the large animals in BT1) if necessary.

As efforts to locate a rogue continue to fail, the players may be allowed a few moments of despair, thinking themselves essentially dead. However, they are player characters, and thus not redshirts. Just as players are returning to the prayers of their childhood, the densitometer or a cooperative Zho detects a gravitic perturbation far ahead, but just slightly off the ship’s exit vector.

Electromagnetic sensors or psionic activity help confirm the existence and location of the rogue planet. After uncertain rolls on careful calculations, the players will determine that the ship has enough power to alter course and rendezvous with the rogue. Long-range scans will determine whether the rogue is a “failed Jupiter,” rendering a skimming operation entirely feasible, or (as postulated in this text) an icy rock.

The players face tasks and tasks and hurdles getting to the rogue planet. In addition, preparations must be made to match and make physical contact, or (for referees being kind) to skim. Lasers, plasma weapons and other sources of high heat will be necessary to melt sufficient ice to provide hydrogen for a jump. In addition, as noted below, the fuel shuttle has fittings to melt ice, but may require repairs.

While *Cirque* decelerates to match with the rogue planet, the characters can assess their jump drive and take measures to ensure that it will be back in good order before they commence their outbound jump.



As noted above, some members of the crew or performing complement may become unhinged. Openly unhinged characters can be sedated and confined to the medical deck or their own bunk. Less openly unhinged people may begin all sorts of dangerous conduct, from trying to “dig” out of their “underground prison” (scrape or cut through the hull in a secret location, such as a location within the BACFUDS) to secret attempts at homicide.

A referee desiring a quick end to this scenario can determine that the rogue is a “failed Jupiter.” Refueling tasks will be virtually standard, save for a lack of light from a central star. The only issue will be repairing BT3’s collapsible tank; *Cirque* herself is not designed to skim.

An icy body should follow the remainder of the scenario.

Once the players arrive at the rogue, they must complete their refueling exercises. As noted in Admiral Lee’s account, this may require substantial ingenuity and improvisation. It will almost certainly result in serious frostbite cases if characters work outside too long (and, in such cold, thirty minutes at a time may be “too long”).

Cirque and her auxiliaries have separate power plants. Thus, power from each can be used to melt ice. BT3 (the fuel shuttle) has hose fittings designed to melt ice for intake. Refueling will be a speedier job with that in mind.

As fuel is obtained, the power plants will continue to run past thirty days. However, the vessels have limited ability to recycle food. Also, the best of photosynthesis-based air purification systems will not replace air slowly bled away as airlocks are cycled. Power guarantees warmth, but (under these circumstances) not air or food. *Cirque* has no more than 33 days from the original outbound jump to emerge from jump near Regina.

The players have time and opportunity to check the deep pit described by Lee (against utterly astronomical odds, this is his rogue), as well as to refuel. However, Andii will insist that refueling is the priority, and that anything else is a dangerous waste. Indeed, she will initially order that exploration not occur, and will have to be wheedled into it. Once exploration occurs, very little will be found, apart from alloys and sophisticated ceramics melted by the energy of the impact. The evidence supports the theory that a vessel experienced a one-in-a-googleplex event: the rogue happened to be on the ship’s travel vector. The body precipitated a jump exit at 100 diameters. Conservation of speed and vector acted as it will; there was neither time nor sufficient power to change vector enough to evade the rogue.

The only hints of who might have piloted the vessel will be that the alloys are consistent with those used by some of the Ancients. In short, the exploration, with its attendant risks of additional frostbite, injury, snagged safety lines, broken safety lines, fracturing rock, and malicious mischief, will add little to Admiral Lee’s story.

As environmental systems are nearing eight days of total failure, the players will be rewarded by the fuel needle pointing to “full.” *Cirque* will be able to creep away from the rock and calculate the jump to Regina. By

Cirque

the best of luck, when they arrive in-system they will be near enough to a vessel to dock immediately and take on extra supplies and air for the trip from 100 diameters from Assiniboia (the gas giant Regina orbits) to Regina itself.

An additional benefit accrues from the icy rock: as noted, this is, in fact, Adm. Lee's own "Rogue Savior" of many years before. That rock has never been located or visited again. Too busy with the Fourth Frontier War, the Imperium at first sent no vessel back. When it finally did so, the rogue was nowhere within sensor range. Hypotheses for this disappearance have ranged from imperfect astrogation information (an "accusation" that enraged Lee, who engaged in significant outbursts) to the operation of some mysterious technology, to wild speculation that the rogue is some type of beneficent life form seeking to aid spacers in need.

Checklist of Scenes and Tasks

Act I

- ☐ *Cirque* comes out of jump. Discovery: not where she should be.
- ☐ Begin taking star sightings. Initial indications will make clear that they are close to intended location, but not very close. They are two light-years away from Regina.
- ☐ They do not have enough fuel to jump to Regina (this is the point of emptying BT3's ancillary fuel in the prior episode).
- ☐ They are not close enough to approach Regina within their short remaining lifetimes.
- ☐ Possible survival discussion: Makeshift Low Berths.
- ☐ Possible survival discussion: eat the animals and the useless people to prolong life.
- ☐ Possible survival discussion: this reminds me of something that blowhard Aramais claims he did.
- ☐ Interrogate any Zho prisoners to locate those with psionic skills useful in locating planets.

Act II (Optional)

- ☐ To successfully revive Aramais clone and reintegrate memories with equipment on hand: Formidable (4D) < (Edu + Medic).
- ☐ To scan Aramais data using wafer socket (no imprint; simple search) Formidable (4D) < (Edu + Medic).
- ☐ To imprint Aramais on volunteer with wafer socket: Formidable (4D) < (Edu + Medic). To maintain sanity during and after first imprint: Average (2D) < (Int). Each failure reduces Sanity by one point.
- ☐ Fights break out among non-crew.

Act III

- ☐ First person goes completely off his or her nut and into hysteria. The PCs must subdue the individual.
- ☐ To repair BT3's fuel tanks (roll four times for four major breaches): Difficult (3D) < (Int + Craftsman) (roll is made by the individual directing the repairs) (25 man-hours in tankage, with no more than 4 in tankage at a time; 25 man-hours fabricating patches).
- ☐ To discover the available rogue world using ship's sensors: Formidable (4D) < (Sensor Ops + Edu + 1 per day of search). This is rolled by a player once daily for the entire ship, and is based on Andii's skills or those of any one PC. An additional DM of -1 is applied for each cooperating psionic with appropriate skills assisting (Intuition, Psi-Vision, or OOB). Note that the DM is applied per individual, not per talent, due to the vast quantity of space to be evaluated.
- ☐ The miniphants, kian and other large animals sense the human fear, and begin acting out. On any given day, an animal may attempt to escape.
- ☐ To calculate the exact position of the rogue once discovered: Difficult (3D) < (Int + Sensor Ops).

- ☐ On any discussion of eating the animals, the handlers and those closest to them will go into a lockdown mode. This includes armed insurrection.
- ☐ The doctor starts handing out antidepressants like candy.

Act IV

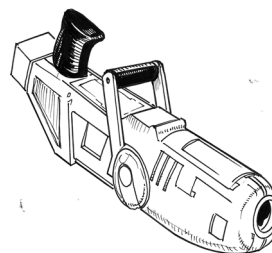
- ☐ Continue character interactions resulting from fear despite location of rogue world.
- ☐ To calculate and implement matching vectors: Average (2D) < (Edu + Astrogator).
- ☐ To maneuver for "landing" kiss without damaging the vessel: Difficult (3D) < (Dex + Pilot).
- ☐ PCs and others piton down the vessel. This is performed in micro-gravity. The referee may require the PCs to roll for every piton, or for a more general task. Failure results in a mishap such as damage to a suit, or the character floating away. Mishaps create new tasks.
- ☐ The PCs set up the melting and collecting of ice.
- ☐ If a PC stays out longer than thirty minutes, frostbite is possible for limbs in contact with the icy surface (e.g., feet through boots). To avoid frostbite: Difficult (3D) < (End + Vacc Suit).
- ☐ To surgically amputate frostbitten fingers and toes without complications: Average (2D) < (Dex + Medic).
- ☐ To repair the jump drive: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Jump Drives) (one attempt every twenty-four hours; the skill level used is that of the engineer supervising repairs).
- ☐ To cannibalize and adapt a critical power component for the main power plant drive from BT1 or its stores: Formidable (4D) < (Int + Power Plant) (one attempt each day; the skill level used is that of the engineer supervising repairs).
- ☐ During the EVAs, a PC notes a deep crater in the icy body.

Act V

- ☐ To safely maneuver in suits to impact crater: Formidable (4D) < (Dex + Zero-G). Referee: Mishaps result in all of the great SF EVA dangers, from punctured suits to floating away. Caution requires the use of pitons, ropes, and other means of securing characters as they traverse the open area.
- ☐ Search edge of impact crater. To notice an old piton that labeled as Imperial Navy equipment: Average (2D) < (Int).
- ☐ To descend into impact crater: Formidable (4D) < (Dex + Zero-G). Referee: Mishaps and danger as above.
- ☐ To safely maneuver in suits from the impact crater: Formidable (4D) < (Dex + Zero-G). Referee: Mishaps and caution as above.
- ☐ To calculate the jump to Regina: See T5, P. 149 for general rules. Because this jump is from an unplotted zone, it is treated as a Jump-2 roll (i.e., 2D, with 1D uncertain).
- ☐ *Cirque* jumps.

Tag

- ☐ Assuming that the calculations are correct and the repairs properly made, *Cirque* arrives in a star system.



Episode 21: Start of a Great Friendship

Regina • Spinward Marches 1910

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Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

If you don't make a system like Regina a sector capitol, you're just missing a great literary...what's the word, simile? OK, so I flunked Imperial Lit II. Twice.

I'm a military genius, not some writer with a funny hat and ten pens.

But it fits, doesn't it? Diagram it, it's spectacular. Three suns, two gas giants, a mainworld orbiting a gas giant, six other worlds with breathable atmospheres — a simile for politics. Simile? Metaphor? I've said before, I'm an admiral, not a grammar school teacher.

Strephon would move there in a second, if he thought he could make the Moot go with him. It's the ultimate political statement — everything circles around everything else, but there are big, important players.

All that — but it's also fairly sensible.

Plus, it's the only place in the Marches that makes a really good cromburger. Go to Noddio's and ask for Gatlifi, he'll treat you well.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1107.

General Data (Players)

The Regina system as a whole is set out as an example of system generation at T5 p. 430. As can be seen there, it is a fairly complicated system, with a Primary Star, a Companion star, and a Far Companion star. Numerous notes discuss Regina within T5.

In addition, Canon details of the Regina system are found in the online Traveller Wiki, as well as in other Canon sources. The referee may note that T5 places Regina in a different orbit around the gas giant Assiniboia; this is apparently to avoid tidal locking. Other than that, specifics regarding Regina may be gleaned from those sources, and may be provided to the PCs. In any event, this closing episode does not deal with Regina as such. It revolves around a significant experience in most Traveller PCs' lives — hobnobbing with a powerful subsector Duke. This episode is a denouement and potential bridge to future adventures.

That said, it is enough to know that Regina is somewhat similar to Old Earth, though its atmosphere is more dense and oceans somewhat more expansive. It is distinctive in that it orbits a gas giant, but is within the habitable zone nonetheless. It is worth emphasizing that despite its political and cultural importance, Regina is in some ways a frontier world, literally at the farthest border of the Imperium. It is at the same time a Subsector Capitol, the local seat of Imperial government. The hereditary Duchy has been held by the Caranda family for almost 500 standard years.

Though the Spinward Marches as a whole were seen as being administered from Mora prior to the Fifth Frontier War, that was never an official designation. When Emperor Strephon issued an Imperial Warrant allowing and commanding Duke Norris to prosecute the war, Regina assumed a new importance in the Marches. That position is still in flux — but some dare whisper that Norris is destined for further honor and recognition from Capitol.

Regina is not inhabited by humans alone. Its population of

700,000,000 is only sixty-three percent human (441,000,000 people). Twenty-four percent (168,000,000) are Amindii, a native sophont species not well known off the world. The Amindii are in evidence in the service of Duke Norris and the planet as a whole. The remainder of the population is composed of Aslan (about 21,000,000) and Vargr (about 42,000,000). Thus, the world provides an interesting mix of species.

All of these "Imperialized" races, even the Vargr, were very recently threatened with attack from members of the Outworld Coalition, including Vargr and Zhodani forces. Norris is highly regarded by all four of the sophont species sharing this comfortable world for his leadership and military prowess.

Indeed, at this moment in history, as Holiday Eve 1111 approaches (or, if *Cirque* has unduly delayed, recedes into memory), Regina's citizens find themselves at the center of the new diplomacy between the changing Zhodani Consulate and other polities. The Imperials are proud, unified, and ready for this diplomacy, but also aware that some prognosticators are already seeing a Sixth Frontier War as inevitable within the century. The Zhodani seem always ready to push again, despite the lack of significant territorial gains.

Summary and Referee's Information

For *Cirque*, Regina is a welcome sight for a singular reason: it is not deep space.

It is not a world that will deeply challenge the characters. It is a world which, by and large, is what it appears to be: the final and triumphant stop on a year-long tour.

Cirque will be greeted with great warmth, as her final battle was witnessed on long-range scans by at least one well placed vessel. Some of the attacking vessels may have been destroyed. Others likely escaped. When *Cirque* jumped, news of the battle followed in short order — and arrived at Regina before *Cirque* herself. *Cirque* has been feared lost for at least a week by the time she stumbles out of jump near Regina, and her survival is celebrated as little short of a miracle by the local press.

For the referee and characters, Regina is the denouement of an extended story arc. The players and characters can simply be dropped off ("You made it, see you later, don't forget to write"), or they can tie up loose ends and do what they planned to do: perform in honor of Duke Norris.

Scene and Task Checklist

Act I

- ☐ With any luck, *Cirque* has arrived in time for the Holiday festivities. Note that *Cirque* almost certainly has had time to make the scheduled stops and still arrive on time.
- ☐ If any Zhodani prisoners have been taken, they are teleporters. Depending on their exact combined skills, they may be able to teleport away if they are conscious once *Cirque* arrives in-system. If the referee or players have taken no precautions, they may do so. Their

Cirque

nearest refuge, however, will be the IN vessel *Snowcat*, a Tigress-class dreadnought assigned to the 23rd Fleet, as described immediately below.

- Arrival in-system. The astrogator takes star and planetary sightings, and happily confirms that the planet only 100 diameters away from *Cirque* is Assiniboia, the gas giant around which Regina orbits..
- The first hail comes from the Advance Sophonts. "Where in the coldest Purgatory have you guys been? We thought you were all dead when we heard about the ambush!" The parties chat with the Advance Sophonts.
- Shortly thereafter, official hails come from *Snowcat*. *Cirque* is directed to a parking orbit for "inspection and assistance." All identification is to be ready for inspection.
- Imperial Marines board via a cutter. They and several IN officers inspect carefully.
- Small indignities may occur, such as searches of clothes and personal items.
- Logs and data are checked carefully and compared.
- All PCs are questioned regarding the combat, as well as the misjump.
- Any surviving Zhodani prisoners are taken off *Cirque* to be interrogated.
- Finally, the vessel is declared genuine. *Cirque* is officially welcomed home. "Few enough ships find their way back from a deep-space misjump."

Act II

- *Cirque*'s landing approvals come through.
- The tent is erected at the Caranda Garden, a large park in Regina



City on Regina about a half-kilometer from the site being prepared for *Obstinate*. Both the marble façade for the walls and the statue itself must be delivered.

- The PCs (and others) are interviewed and debriefed at the INS Command School to determine how they were able to survive the misjump. They are treated exceptionally well.
- Andii and Bertii have hushed communications with various members of Duke Norris' staff, including his Seneschal.
- Local astronomers and scientists clamor for navigational information on the "Circus Rogue," as the rogue planet was quickly dubbed by the news media. Any protestation on behalf of Aramais as its original discoverer (his publisher is on Regina, and will seek to make the connection for publicity purposes) is quickly put aside. "That old windbag has plenty more to flap his gums about," some news wag or another points out.
- Similarly, legitimate scientists and archeologists will be eager to discuss the find on Mirriam. Photos of the hop drive and other data not already taken by the military will be of great interest to jump theorists, if nothing else, while debunkers will have a field day poking fun at the "scholars" who thought this find was proof of the Ancients' origin on Mars.
- Other scientific and cultural discoveries will be of interest, such as the perma-moss and the ancient Solomani videos found on Fosey.
- The tale of Vargr assisting Proto-Darrians will also interest many, and may make an interesting script for a holographic series. Producers will likely approach various PCs to interview them about this story, offer money for future film and publication rights, and so on. Note, however, that *Cirque des Sirkas* retains substantial intellectual property rights to this discovery. U'aili would be most happy to see such a series made, though *Cirque des Sirkas* LIC must get a piece of the pie.
- Aslan from the local population come to greet the Aslan Acrobats.
- Norris' bureaucracy will take due note of the refugee problem on Vilis, even if other officials closer to Vilis have begun to take action.
- Indeed, Andii and others will be carefully interviewed about conditions and problems on each of the worlds visited. Norris is interested, even regarding worlds outside his subsector jurisdiction.

Act III

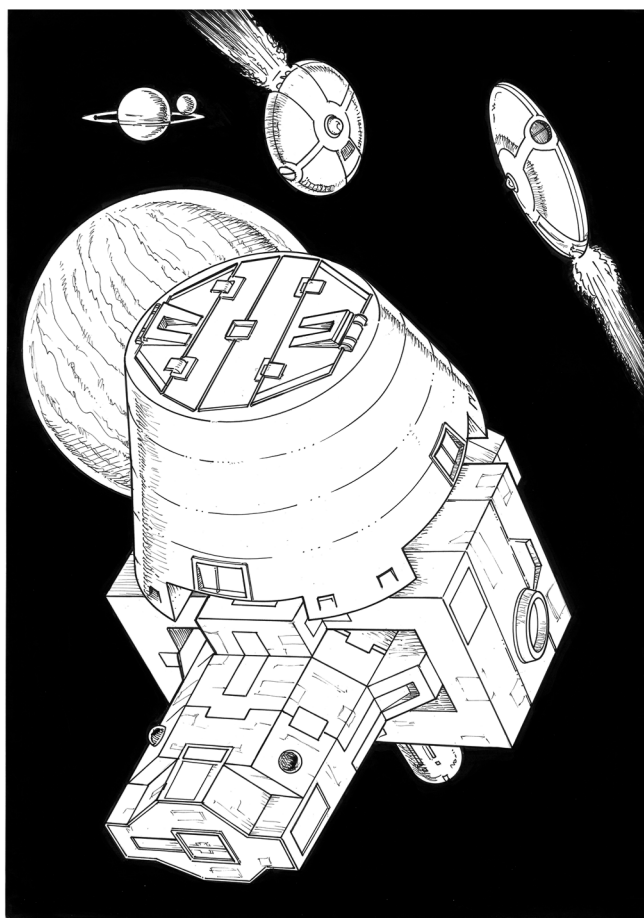
- The referee may need to bring character story arcs (stated or implied) to a close.
- The Geezer Thespian, the Makeup Artist, and Javert likely have serious unfinished business. The warrant from Rhylanor has finally caught up to *Cirque*, but it is sealed. If the PCs have been involved in this arc, they may have a vested interest in how it should be resolved. Otherwise, the referee may simply have Javert arrest the Thespian and the Makeup Artist, or let them go. It does not matter much in the larger scope of things.
- Similarly, if not resolved sooner, the Vargr Ringmaster's shipmates may eventually find their way to Regina, perhaps even carrying a legitimate cargo. The Vargr Ringmaster himself will hope and plan to stay with Andii and *Cirque*.
- The Aslan Acrobats may find themselves either staying with *Cirque*, or moving on in their search to find their path. Millions of other Aslan are here on Regina to assist them in whatever they decide to do. U'aili may have an interest in how this is resolved.
- Aramais P. Lee may catch up with *Cirque*. That idea for a lecture tour may have gotten to him, and he may want to at least tag along in his own ship. Andii is aware that he would be a draw for a future tour, though his proclivity for usurping command may be a problem. She will want to equip a stateroom as a brig, just in case...
- The Comic Juggler may forget his hard-learned lessons and marry again, or (worse yet) admit that he has been teaching the Faux Jabborwock some tricks that will fit into a juggling routine.
- The Zhodani ambassador learns that remains of unknown Zhodani

Cirque

war dead are to be entombed under *Obstinate*. The news media picks this story up; some local individuals protest. Andii may become embroiled in the controversy, as will any PC. Scenes can be played out. Norris will come out in favor of the plan. “When the war is over, you put aside barbarities.”

Act IV

- *Cirque*’s closing performance, ideally on Holiday, is held with Norris in the audience. This is a formal affair, with many VIPs in attendance.
- It of course is not fully understood by all; possibly Norris himself sees it as mildly frivolous. However, this is an opportunity to get close to the Duke, even bring him (or others) into the act. Other nobles and VIPs will be present a well.
- Light performers exist to tweak the noses of the powerful. Specific attempts will be made to get Norris into the act, as animals steal from him, Juggler revives the “Where’s Norris?” schtick, the Barbarian offers to put him on the target, and the Clown squirts him from flowers.
- Following the performance a formal reception is held. The PCs have a chance to hobnob. If the PCs wish to go on to an entirely new campaign, they have their choice of possible patrons, from Sharurshid VIPs to various nobles seeking yacht crews, musicians, or any other service that the PCs can supply. *Cirque des Sirkas* will probably be willing to continue to employ them.
- Norris’ Seneschal will find time for private conversations. He will make a point of asking anyone who has been involved in the Zhodani arc (i.e., all of the PCs) to speak to various working committees. He will also seek opinions on Bertii and Andii, as well as the PCs. Sufficiently interesting people may find themselves sitting in a closed room with Norris himself, though his own interviews will be perfunctory.
- Two days later, the PCs are brought to *Obstinate* for its formal unveiling. This is handled with suitable pomp and circumstance, including an honor guard from the 4518th Lift Infantry Regiment (The Duke of Regina’s Own Huscarles). The remains of the war dead are entombed.
- The official program is followed until just before the official dismissal. At that point, Norris’ Seneschal announces an addition to the ceremony: Knighting of certain individuals. Andii, Bertii, U’aili, the Vargr Ringmaster, all of the PCs, and any NPCs who have been particularly useful are called forward. For their service both to the Marches as a whole and to individual worlds and citizens, Norris invests each as a Retainer of the Duchy of Regina. They are now Knights, at least locally.
- The Knighting ceremony over, the Dismissal is sounded. Norris shakes a few hands. He specifically salutes Andii, Bertii, and the PCs, then leaves. He has work to do. The Marches still have ene-



mies, and the Imperium requires his attention.

Tag

- The PCs have work as well: Though it will play here on Regina for several months, *Cirque des Sirkas* has another tour to plan. It and the PCs also have a powerful friend in the Marches.

Knighthood as a Ducal Honor

Knighthood may be granted by Imperial subsector dukes, but it is not the same as becoming a Knight in the Noble career path. A Knight in the Noble career path has been given a very specific title, land, and a duty to a particular planet. That form of Knighthood is confirmed by the Iridium Throne’s occupant — the Emperor or Empress.

Other forms of Knighthood exist. These are honorary titles carrying no grant of land, nor any income, nor any more benefit than the title itself. These again are granted by the Iridium Throne, though many of those Knighted are nominated by the nobility and confirmed by the Emperor or Empress. These are often conferred in a specific Order.

Dukes may invest individuals as “retainers of the household,” a status carrying honorifics equivalent to knighthood, at least in the vicinity of the subsector. Such an individual may be referred to as a “Knight Retainer” for clarity. A male retainer of Duke Stephen of Rhylanor may thus be referred to as “Sir George, Knight Retainer of Rhylanor.” A female retainer of Duke Norris of Regina may be “Lady [or Dame] Georgette, Knight Retainer of Regina.” The shortened version for use in society pages and Signal GK messages is “Dame Georgette, KR/Regina.” Usages may vary from region to region.

Characters awarded such honors may be justifiably overawed with themselves, at least at first. They should be reminded, though, that such friendship from a Duke is not all warmth and sipping cognac on plush furniture. In fact, friendship with a Duke must be reciprocated, generally in difficult and dangerous situations, and for low pay. “I serve Norris” carries the affirmative obligation to *serve*. It may sometimes also open doors, but is not a guarantee of a comfortable life.

Note that a Ducal Knight Retainer may well be confirmed by the Iridium Throne as a Knight throughout the Imperium. Indeed, a Duke who creates Knights Retainer willy-nilly *without* nominating the majority for Imperial recognition is likely to be seen as incompetent or, worse, scheming at something seditious.

Epilogue

Somewhere Beyond Regina

Excerpt: *Diaries and Dialogues*

What? Why “traipse all through space and back?” What kind of idiot asks a question like that? No, sit, I’ll answer it. Foolish or not.

Traveling gets into your blood or it doesn’t. Most of the carbon-based sophonts I’ve met prefer real gravity and a load of dirt under their feet. They’ll put up with all sorts of rot because they can’t really imagine going all that far from home. It doesn’t matter whether home’s a big old sphere with plenty of fresh air and blue skies or a dinky little spinning wheel in the middle of a belt. People like to be home. Most of them.

But a few of us are pretty much crazy. Crazy like not being like over ninety-nine percent of humans, or Aslan, or Vargr. Maybe it’s crazy in a good way, or maybe we just cope with being crazy. Either way, we go to the next planet and the next star system and the next and the...yeah, right, the *next* next.

This isn’t something new. Human beings started out on old Earth walking out of Africa, to Asia and Europe — look them up, ignoramus — then over some tiny little land bridge to the Americas. The really crazy ones kept walking, the others set up markers to claim land for themselves. Bet you didn’t know I’ve read up on the history of old Earth, haven’t you? We started there. *We’re* the Ancients. Humanity. Not some other race. Well, I’d like to think so, anyway.

Travelling is something a few humans do, and they lead a few more humans after them, and a few more get born, and then they set down roots and build up cities and mess up pretty worlds and get into all sorts of silly squabbles because they haven’t gone far enough away from each other. That’s the way I see it.

And that’s why I have to get travelling again. Make sure your recorder got all that, kid. It’s one of my gems, sure to be repeated. And repeated, and...yeah, right. Repeated again.

—Adm. Aramais P. Lee, Imperial Navy (Ret.) and Sharurshid Trade Representative, circa 1112.

Referee’s Epilogue

When Cirque des Sirkas’ run ends on Regina, the lights go down and the tent is struck, but the tour hasn’t really finished. *Cirque* will not revert to combat support, nor will Andii find work as a commander for some Sharurshid liner or Norris’ yacht. She is already planning the next tour and shilling for

backing. She and Bertii are already signing some of the acts that have come this far as well as seeking out new talent.

Several ideas have been raised. Andii may set a course for the Zhodani Consulate, though Bertii isn’t so keen about that. Some of the more civilized Vargr worlds might become good audiences. Even the Aslan Hierate may be interested in the uniquely human diversion of a circus.

Both Sharurshid and Norris will seek to influence Andii’s decision. Both think that Cirque des Sirkas can continue to make money, support veterans, and bring goodwill throughout the Spinward Marches. Each will suggest routes that coincide with their interests, and both are powerful patrons. Norris, though, has matters he would like to take up (through appropriate proxies) with Emperor Strephon. These are matters that need not be rushed along official routes, but which require trusted envoys. A tour leading toward Capitol would thus please him. It would have a head-start on his agenda; he could send additional instructions behind via X-Boat or fast courier.

Andii will always make sure the show goes on, regardless of her backers’ and performers’ agendas. *Cirque* may put on a secret command performance for Norris, but Cirque des Sirkas will still put on a show. The circus has healed at least one veteran of the Fifth Frontier War.

Regardless of *Cirque*’s next stop, one thing is certain: there will always be *less clowning than expected*.



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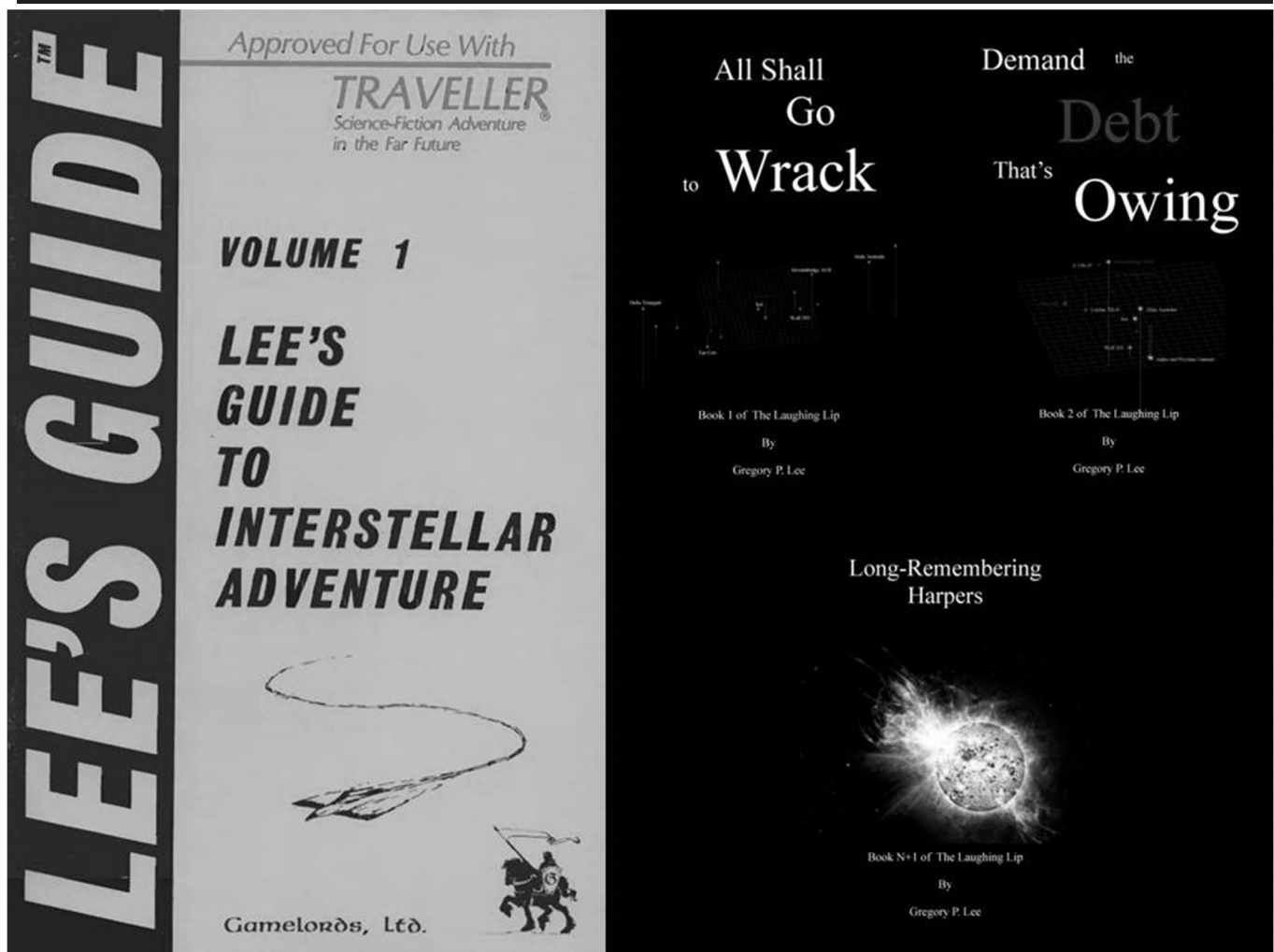
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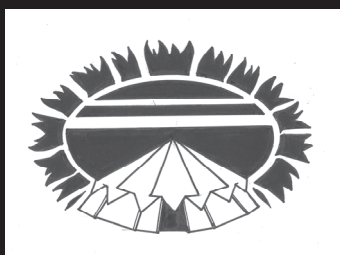
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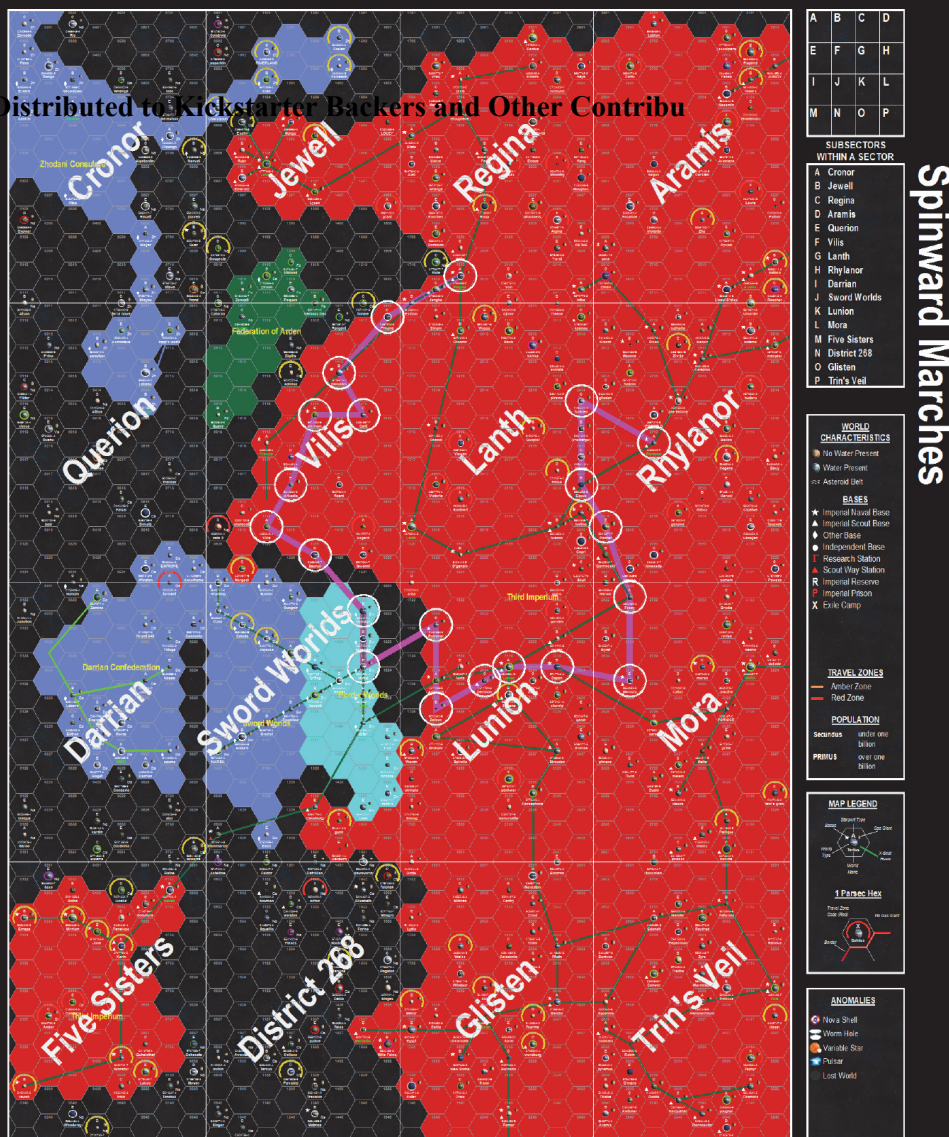
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Of interest, a close homophone is *T'sirk*, a Zhodani word meaning literally, "sand soaked with blood after a set duel," which carries a strong connotation condemning unnecessary bloodshed as insanity .



"It was either run away to the circus or the Imperial Navy. Sometimes I think I should have run toward the circus. Better hours, better food, and less being shot at."

-Adm. Aramais P. Lee, circa 1089, Retirement Address.



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