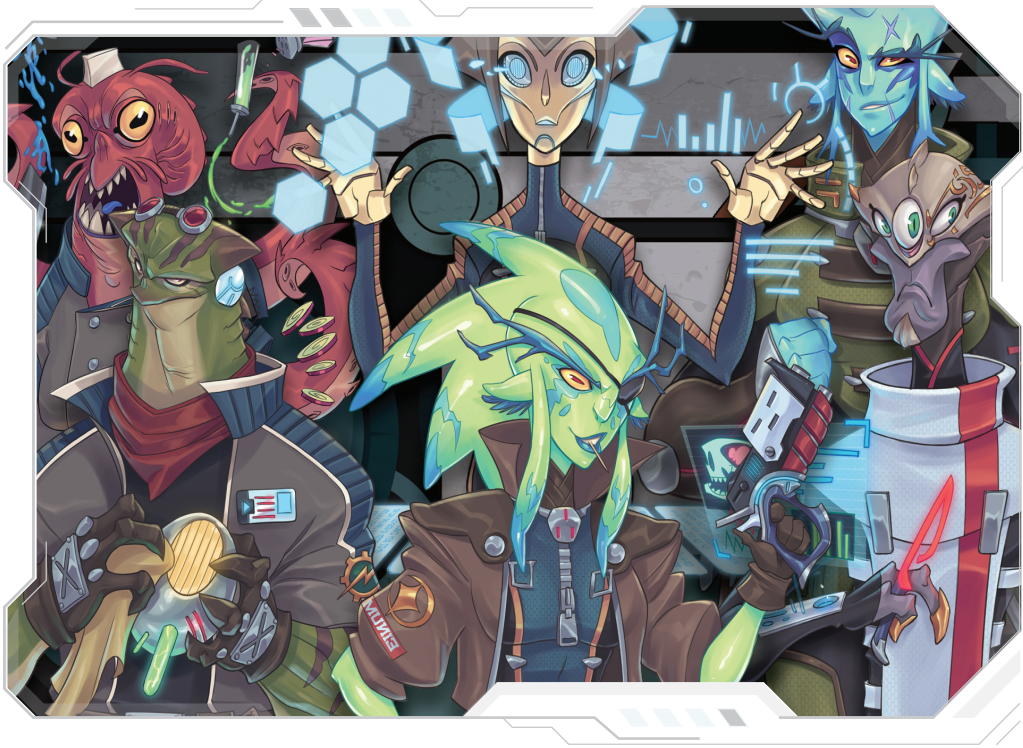


TEENS IN SPACE

FREE CONTENT FRIDAY

APRIL 2020

JEFF GUM



A MENACE AMONG THE TEENS IN SPACE

Doug's note: This is something that Jeff and I have been joking around about having him write for a while, and I'm glad it worked for Free Content Friday for him to do it. Jeff's the designer of my favorite social deduction game, *The Menace Among Us*. Set on a spaceship in crisis, players are trying to get their ship back up and running while keeping an eye on the oxygen levels. But some of the crew aren't what they seem: they're traitors trying to kill everyone on board.

Menace uses a wonderfully applied shufflebuild mechanic where your cards, representing the actions you'll perform each round to help or hinder your crew, come from two sets of cards you combine at the start of the game. One is your alien species. The other is your role on the ship. Your species is public knowledge. Your role isn't.

So it seemed only reasonable to have Jeff wrote up some of our favorite species for you to use in *Teens in Space*. He also whipped up an adventure for your players with the same element of tension and suspense as *Menace*. Enjoy!

SETTING INFORMATION

You and your crew have received a distress signal from a downed freight vessel, the ISV *Vigilant*. Via a prerecorded message, you are told by the captain of this ship the following information:

- The *Vigilant* has been sabotaged from the inside by a traitor, someone with access to most if not all of the ship's major systems, enough to overload the ship's engine and shut off the atmosphere generators.
- The crew has less than three hours before their emergency air supply runs out, and without assistance repairing the engines will not be possible in time.
- The Captain has reason to believe that the saboteur is a member of her own crew, and is therefore still on-board. They will presumably continue to covertly interfere with repairs until their mission is complete.

Knowing all this, the Captain requests anyone listening to her beacon to come and assist with repairs while helping to identify the traitor responsible. Can you discover the Menace Among Us?

A Menace Among the *Teens in Space* is a murder mystery in deep space! As the GM, you should select one NPC to be the secret Menace and have your players investigate the *Vigilant*'s corridors and interrogate the crew to discover their identity before time runs out.

SPECIAL RULES

The life support system on the ISV *Vigilant* has been damaged and is currently burning through its emergency air supply. After the party has boarded the ship and heard their mission, the GM should set a thirty minute timer. This timer is a special Pressure Gauge that represents the life support system and follows these rules:

- Assuming nothing else happens to modify the gauge, it will tick down as timers normally do. Each time the gauge reaches zero, the Menace will murder a friendly NPC and the life support in their corresponding location will shut down, blocking that zone off from the players. Then, reset the timer. The fifth time this happens, the Menace succeeds in their mission! The ship is completely without air, and everyone remaining is killed.
- Whenever a friendly NPC is killed for another reason, like player action or some other circumstances, immediately cut 10 minutes off the current timer. As the GM, you can also choose to cut time off any time something happens that would consume air at an accelerated rate, like a fight breaking out or an airlock breach.

THE SUSPECTS (NPCS)

The Captain: Malumil Einum – Malumil is a Garbonite woman in her late forties. A former galactic adventurer herself, Malumil spent years plundering ancient ruins, getting in dogfights with space pirates, and shooting her way out of sticky situations. After the birth of her son, Aerril, Malumil decided to “settle down” the barest amount possible and chartered the Vigilant, a freighter she runs along dangerous trade routes other freelancers are too scared to take. Malumil can be found on the **Bridge**.

If Malumil is the Menace – On one of her escapades, Malumil contracted a parasitic worm that has lain dormant in her body for years and has finally asserted its control. As the game progresses she'll appear to grow increasingly sick, and if she is attacked her body will explode into a giant centipede the party has to fight.

The Cook: Tove Fullifrich – Tove is an animated, jovial Tarrian chef, quick with a joke and unflappable in personality. Having served as the cook on a number of ships before coming aboard the Vigilant, Tove will be keen to regale you with endless stories of his travels, so you'll probably have to remind him that you're all about to die, something he doesn't seem particularly concerned about. Tove can be located in the **Galley**.

If Tove is the Menace – In an ironic twist, Tove has acquired the taste for living flesh himself and has gone mad with cannibalistic hunger. When he is discovered, he'll set the kitchen's automatic food preparation robots into overdrive, which the party will have to dodge while also fighting off the giant octopus with butcher knives in each tentacle coming at them.

The Diagnostics Officer: Rhea Triton – Rhea is the Auto-Drone that the crew uses to interface with the Vigilant's advanced systems. Rhea is pragmatically and almost totally lacking in empathy towards the rest of the crew's situation. After all, as a robot, she doesn't need air, so it's not all that big of a deal. Yes, she's willing to help you in your search, and yes, she supposes she'll miss her crewmates when they all suffocate and die, but it isn't the end of the world. Rhea can be found on the **Security Deck**.

If Rhea is the Menace – Rhea has been hacked by someone outside the ship, and when she's discovered she will go absolutely berserk, losing any humanity she initially appeared to have. It'll be up to the party whether to attempt to bring her back (either through counter-hacking or just talking her out of it) or to put her down.

The Doctor: Rotti Vestine – Dr. Vestine was a surgeon before coming on board the Vigilant; a Phlau with a keen interest in anatomy. There's limited opportunity to cut people open and examine their insides on a climate-

controlled freight vessel, and beneath his cold, collected exterior it's clear Rotti is getting bored with just administering the occasional first aid and space-sickness medicine. He will be willing to answer your questions, but you get the distinct impression you're wasting his time, whatever it is he's using that time for. Rotti can be talked to in the **Medical Bay**.

If Rotti is the Menace – Surprising absolutely no one, it turns out Dr. Vestine is a serial killer. If the party discovers his hobby of cutting people up and playing around in their guts, he will retreat into the ship's ductwork, and it will be up to the party to catch him and force him to fix whatever it is he did to the ship before the air supply hits zero.

The Inventory Manager: Iza Zarid – Iza, along with her twin sister Azi, manage the cargo that the Vigilant carries while on its freight runs. The Zarid sisters are Estoi, a species of alien from the far side of the galaxy. Despite their large mechanized exo-suits, Estoi are treated as second-class citizens in their home system, and it stands to reason that for them to be here, Iza and her sister are escaping some form of persecution. In contrast to her massive frame, Iza is a shy and quiet woman who's more content checking order scripts and managing spreadsheets than talking to other people. Iza is located in the **Cargo Hold**.

If Iza is the Menace

Iza actually wants nothing to do with any of this and absolutely does not want to fight you. She's being blackmailed by the space pirates who smuggled her and her sister off their hostile home world and will gladly stand down if you can guarantee her protection, but restoring operation to the Vigilant will put a huge target on her head. You'll have to return to your ship and fight off the invading pirates when they realize the plan has fallen through.

The Motorman: Ruggine Golgi – Ruggine is a large, surly alien of a species the party does not recognize. Feeling underserved and unappreciated on the best of days, Ruggine has little patience for your questions while he's frantically trying to get the failing engines back online. He's gruff, aloof, and generally uninterested in talking about himself; you get the impression there's not much to his inner life besides this job, which he clearly hates. Ruggine can be found in the **Engine Room**.

If Ruggine is the Menace – Ruggine is a classic case of the bottom rung of the corporate ladder pushed too far, and killing his entire crew in some desperate revenge scheme still may not be enough for him. If he is discovered, Ruggine will set the ship to self destruct, and it's up to the party whether they want to flee before the explosion happens or try and disarm the system with some clever hacking.

POINTS OF INTEREST

In addition to the Vigilant's dark, cramped hallways and docking area where your ship has tethered, there are a couple locations that will be useful to your investigation.

The Bridge – You get the impression that the Bridge is always a mess, but with the current chaos things look even more out of order than usual. Papers are scattered and chairs are overturned as the bridge staff rushes around, desperately trying to slow down the rate the ship's vital systems continue to fail. They definitely look like they could use the help of someone with computer skills to slow the damage. In the center of the room, **Malumil Einum** is barking orders.

The Cargo Hold – When operating normally, the ISV Vigilant is a freight vessel, carrying consumer goods across the less civil trade routes that connect the Terran Confederacy. The Cargo Hold takes up a majority of the ship's floor space, resembling what is essentially a gigantic warehouse. Almost a square mile of rows and aisles are filled with whatever stuff you can think of. Most of these products are spoken for and en-route to their future owners, but if there's a tool you really think could help, maybe the crew could be convinced to part with it. **Iza Zarid** is located here, holed up in her office.

The Engine Room – Dominated by the ship's enormous Stream Core, the Engine Room is packed full of machinery, most of it currently malfunctioning and all of it filthy. If you're interested in putting in some hard labor, you might be able to buy some extra time by assisting the crew with repairs, but the air is definitely going to run out before things are fully operational unless the culprit is found. **Ruggine Golgi** is located here, working away on the broken machinery.

The Galley – The Galley is the ship's large cafeteria, and it's where, unless they have direct orders, most of the rank and file of the ship congregate. While you're not interested in grabbing any lunch, this is probably a great opportunity to ask around for any rumors or hearsay among the crew. In the back of the galley you'll find the kitchen, a much smaller room filled with automated food preparation drones, being directed by **Tove Fullifrich**, who's currently toiling over some kind of gigantic stew for everyone outside.

The Medical Bay – Despite the current crisis, the medical bay is suspiciously empty. The few sparse beds in the room are unoccupied, and the cabinets full of medical supplies look largely untouched. You figure anyone who's been hurt must be down below working through the pain, because the situation is going to get a lot worse before it gets better. **Rotti Vestine** is located here, standing at his desk and looking impatient.

The Security Deck – A small room on an otherwise enormous ship, the Security deck looks more like a security closet. Two small desks are surrounded by dozens of large monitors, showing surveillance footage of different areas of

the ship. Unfortunately, it seems that most of them are also malfunctioning, but maybe a clue could still be discovered. In the corner, **Rhea Triton** is located, typing at something furiously.

BASEMAN™ AUTO-DRONE

Baseman Enterprises is the leading producer of AI system chips in the Terran Confederacy, and the Auto-Drone is their flagship product. Auto-Drones are prized as being the industry leader in lifelike interpersonal skills, being far more eloquent than their leading competitors. This makes them uniquely suited for work in the service industry as nurses, tech support, and other robot labor that benefits from the "human touch". There has been, however, an unforeseen consequence to this cutting-edge tech. Auto-Drone AI processes have recently proved to be too good, and as units age they invariably develop into something at least resembling true sentience. This has proven a logistics nightmare for Baseman, who are struggling to grapple with the ethical considerations of patching out this "software bug".

Appearance: Auto-Drones are available in a variety of product lines. At first glance, some could be mistaken for a Human, while others will more closely resemble home appliances. At "birth", Auto-Drones will come in a handful of basic variations like any other model of machine, but once they develop their sense of self, most undergo some type of body modification to accentuate their newfound individuality.

Bonuses: Each Auto-Drone has a programmed purpose ingrained into their psyche; a job that their cyber-brains are specifically designed to do. An Auto-Drone receives a +3 to any check that directly relates to this purpose.

Drawbacks: Newborn Auto-Drones cannot go against their program at all. As they age and their sense of self grows, this gradually reduces to a penalty (discuss with your GM what penalty number makes sense for your character) but an Auto-Drone will always struggle to oppose this calling.

Additional Questions:

- **Individual:** What is your program? How does it affect your daily life?
- **Collective:** How does your crew perceive you? Do they consider you an individual, or are you just another appliance?

Suggested Improvements: Goody Two-Shoes, Intergalactically Beloved, Loyal Crewmember, Protector, Scanner

Suggested Tropes: Do-Gooder, Engineer, Medic, Scholar, Ship-Born

Common Surnames: The Auto-Drone product lines are named after Human celestial bodies. The Europa, Io, Titan, and Triton lines are the current best-sellers.

DRRNACHT

Born on the volcanic rogue planet Drynn, which has no sun to orbit, the Drnnacht are used to living with almost no natural light. The fact that the planet's thick, hazy atmosphere and thin, highly active crust provide enough warmth to make it conducive to life at all is a small miracle, and resources are hard to come by at the best of times. It is a generally accepted truth on Drynn that there is simply never enough to go around, and theft, murder, and any other behavior decorum would traditionally prevent is all on the table. For the Drnnacht this is usually a matter of simple survival, but it has given them an unfortunate reputation around the galaxy for being cheats, grifters, and assassins.

Of course, this is only mostly true. Living a life always looking out for number one doesn't mean you're completely devoid of empathy, and a Drnnacht's friendship, if you're privileged enough to receive it, is ironclad. Trust is not easily placed in a culture that would stab you in the back at a moment's notice, so when it is earned you can guarantee it sticks for life.

Appearance: Generally humanoid, the most striking features on a Drnnacht are their razor sharp teeth, bulbous glassy eyes, and skin with the texture and color of old asphalt. Most of their orifices (ears, nostrils, etc) are recessed into slits to protect against the ash and debris of their chaotic atmosphere.

Bonuses: Tough Improvement, +1 Grit

Drawbacks: While their bodies are built to withstand the harshest of climates, Drnnacht eyes are not designed for daylight. If you, the player (presumably Human) would consider a light source bright, for a Drnnacht it would be blinding.

Additional Questions:

- **Collective:** How long have you been on the crew? Has it been enough time that the others trust you not to take off without warning when there's loot on the line?

Suggested Improvements: Blaster Master, Nerves of Steel, Resistance Fighter, Trouble Maker

Suggested Tropes: Engineer, Merc, Profiteer, Scoundrel, Soldier

Common Surnames: Drnnacht have no family names. Instead they have two given names, one they use with strangers and acquaintances (this name includes no vowels) and another reserved only for trusted friends (this one is typically a mouthful).

GARBONITES

Recently, the ice planet Garbon was thrown directly from their stone age to the space age when first contact was established by an irresponsible mistake. Unable to shut that can of worms, the Garbonite people have gone from a simple life bivouacking the tundra to becoming galactic citizens in the span of a generation, which has done some truly bizarre things to their culture. Elder Grabonites are tough, scrappy, and tribalistic. These adults swear fealty to the five Great Clans and their loyalty is fierce to the point of xenophobia; even the name Garbonite itself is a neologism. Previously, your Clan and your species were considered one and the same, and to imply one Clan was the same as another would earn you a fist to the face—at best.

Conversely, younger Garbonites are cosmopolitan and individualistic, eager to experience their rapidly expanding world. Growing up with a virtual infinite number of planets to explore, very few would choose to live as cave people, and this has caused a large, painful divide between generations. Orphans are common as adolescent Garbonites leave their families behind for a life their parents could never understand.

Appearance: Garbonites are immediately identifiable by their distinctive horns: large, fleshy protrusions that grow from their heads. The shape of these horns vary depending on which of the Great Clans the Garbonite can draw their lineage from; for example, an Isodorus Garbonite's horns are long, straight, and stand straight, while a Capella Garbonite's will curl around their temples.

Garbonite's gelatinous flesh has a translucent layer that takes very well to dyes, and so wild, fluorescent skin tones are common and can be changed more or less at will, provided they can make a quick detour to a dye parlor.

Bonuses: Regardless of whether you grew up on the homeworld or set out on your own, Garbonite kids have it rough. Start each session with an extra 3 Adversity Tokens.

Drawback: -1 Brains

Additional Questions:

- **Individual:** When was the last time you had contact with your family? Are you still on speaking terms?

Suggested Improvements: Blaster Master, Hot Shot Pilot, Laserblade Master, Lucky

Suggested Tropes: Captain, Exiled Royalty, Explorer, Flyboy, Soldier

Common Surnames: Capella, Einum, Fabbroni, Isodorus, Vestine

PHLAU

The nomadic Phlau are not native to our galaxy but rather are just passing through. Their caravan of gargantuan world-ships entered the Milky Way a few decades ago, and since then have been slowly trawling their way across. Eventually, they intend to depart out the other side and continue on to the next stop in their pilgrimage, but until that happens, the Phlau are acting like any other tourist.

Phlau culture is one of anti-colonization. They are obsessively curious about other sentient species and appropriate their customs ravenously, collecting, trading, and revising their habits into a grand collage of every society they've peeked in on over the millennia. To the Phlau, traditions are like knick knacks and cultures are like flea markets. This has made them well regarded as merchants and traders, since the caravan houses a random assortment of pretty much every commodity you can imagine, in addition to an untold amount you never could.

Appearance: Phlau stand roughly two and a half meters tall, with humanoid upper bodies and a distinctive crest that frames a large third eye in the center of their faces. From the waist down, they stand on a tripod of legs, with two facing forward and one facing back. They are commonly bemused by chairs.

Bonuses: Utility Belt Improvement, +1 Charm

Drawbacks: While most of the galaxy finds your gregarious nature endearing, if a little odd, the occasional few will instead find your antics deeply, deeply annoying. Whenever one of your Charm checks would explode, instead treat that roll as 1 less than the target number and stop rolling.

Additional Questions:

- **Individual:** Do you have any habits or tics that you incorporated into your personality after seeing someone else (maybe a fellow crew member) perform them? What are they?

Suggested Improvements: Escape Artist, Intuitive, Treasure Hunter, Troublemaker

Suggested Tropes: Dreamer, Explorer, Hitchhiker, Merc, Ship-Born

Common Surname: Phlau often change their surnames to a word or object that most interests them. This can be literally anything, from another species' common surname to a random noun. One of the most popular new names for Phlau last year was 'Refrigerator'.

TARRIAN

Tarrians are one of two sentient species on their homeworld, along with the barbaric Onduik. These two mollusks have a predator-prey relationship, and Tarrians have served as the Onduik's staple food source since the dawn of time. Other members of the galactic community might find this arrangement horrific, but an existence as food is the only one the Tarrians have ever known, and they've adapted to it accordingly. Tarrian society has created great works of art and has made great scientific advances for the galaxy in spite of their position on the food chain, and new off-world communities are starting to find a new lease on life, far from the constant threat of raiding and pillaging.

Tarrians are naturally long-lived (when allowed to live said lives to their natural conclusion), spending up to 25 earth years in a sedentary, larval state and not completing adolescence until they are almost 60. When allowed to die of natural causes, a Tarrian can live to be over 350 years old.

Appearance: Tarrians could be some extremely distant cousin to our cephalopods, looking a lot like a large Earth squid or octopus. The two major details that set Tarrians apart is a hard, porous shell that their head and limbs protrude from (and can be pulled back into when in danger) and their ability to stand and walk upright on their tentacles like a humanoid.

Bonuses: A Tarrian can retreat into their shell, adding +3 to any rolls made to defend an attack. They are immobile while in this state.

Drawbacks: You are delicious, and when traveling to sectors where killing and eating a sentient being isn't so frowned upon, someone is probably going to try to. Watch your back.

Additional Questions:

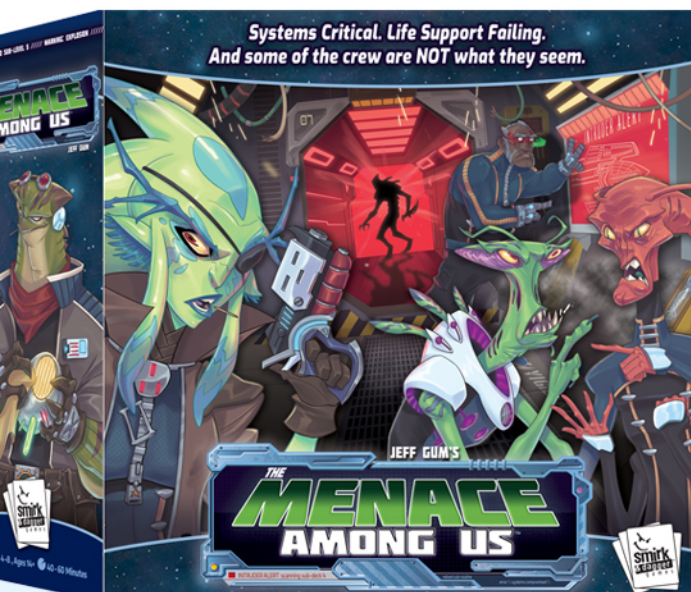
- **Individual:** Was your hive on Tarria, or did you grow up off-world?
- **Individual:** Have you known anyone who has been eaten? Any friends or family?

Suggested Improvements: Escape Artist, Gross, Interspecies Allure, Protector, Tough

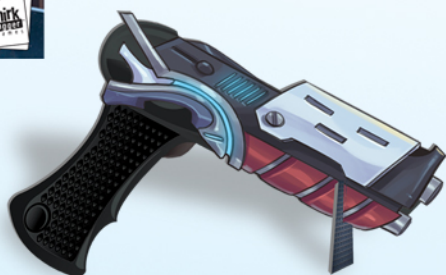
Suggested Tropes: Dreamer, Lone Survivor, Newbie, Profiteer, Tech Wizard

Common Surnames: Clive, Fullifrich, Larkslee, Pilcrow

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Players 4-8, Ages 14+
40 - 60 Minutes



A thrilling semi-cooperative game of intrigue and survival in deep space. Work together to restore power before the air runs out... while hidden imposters continue to sabotage the ship. Can you eliminate the threat in time? Or will you succumb to **The Menace Among Us**?

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