

# **FRONTIER EXPLORER**

A hand holding a glass jar filled with stardust against a starry night sky. The jar is held in the lower center, and the stardust inside is a mix of blue and orange particles. The background is a deep blue night sky filled with stars and a bright, glowing nebula or star cluster in the upper center, with a bright orange-red star at its core. The title 'FRONTIER EXPLORER' is written in large, bold, white capital letters at the top.

**ISSUE 34**  
**FALL 2021**

### SECTION

### FEATURES

#### 2 FROM THE EDITOR

#### ARCHETYPES OF HORROR

3

#### THE SEXTANT ASSOCIATION

5

#### 33 ALIENS & ASTEROIDS: FATE OF THE SOLAR CHASER

*Reviews*

#### A FISTFUL OF COMPANION ROBOTS

8

#### THE GAXIAN ROBOT CONVERSION

15

#### FAIR SHUTTLE FARE

16

#### 34 THE INFRARED STROBE MARKER

*In the Minzii Marketplace*

#### IF WE COULD PUT TIMELINES IN A BOTTLE ...

19

#### SPECIAL CONSESSIONS

21

#### A LOST FRONTIER – A HISTORY OF STAR FRONTIERS

23

#### THE ESCAPE POD

26

#### A FIRST AND FATEFUL ENCOUNTER

35

#### Cover Art:

**Editors:** Tom Stephens, Tom Verreault

**Senior Editor:** Tom Stephens

**Layout Design:** Shane Winter

**Layout:** Tom Stephens

<https://frontierexplorer.org>

<https://patreon.com/FrontierExplorer>

### LOOKING FOR SUBMISSIONS

Do you have material you'd like to see published in the Frontier Explorer? We accept submissions of any fan material for Star Frontiers, FrontierSpace, or any other sci-fi role-playing game whether it is new races, equipment, vehicles, setting material, play reports, or anything else.

If you have something you'd like to share, head on over to the [Frontier Explorer website](#) and hit the gold "Submit New Content" button. We'll help you get the material ready for publication and into a future issue of the magazine.

### GETTING THE RULES & BACK ISSUES

The published rules and modules for Star Frontiers and FrontierSpace, as well as all back issues for the Frontier Explorer and the Star Frontiersman (including print-on-demand physical copies of the Frontier Explorer) are available for purchase or download on DriveThruRPG.

All the old issues of the fan magazines, as well as print-on-demand versions of the Frontier Explorer can be found at [the Frontier Explorer page](#). These products are offered as pay-what-you-want. You can grab them for free, but this provides a way for you to make a donation to help support the magazines if you so desire.

Wizards of the Coast offers the Star Frontiers rules and modules on their [Star Frontiers page](#).

FrontierSpace products can be found on the [DWD Studios page](#).

©2020 Frontier Explorer Magazine. The Frontier Explorer and Star Frontiersman names and logos are trademarks of the Frontier Explorer Magazine. Wizards of the Coast, Star Frontiers, and their logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, LLC in the United States and other countries. The rights to all material presented here are retained by their original authors and are printed with permission.

The Frontier Explorer is not affiliated with, endorsed, sponsored, or specifically approved by Wizards of the Coast, LLC. The Frontier Explorer may use the trademarks and other intellectual property of Wizards of the Coast, LLC, which is permitted under Wizards' Fan Site Policy.

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello Explorers!

Welcome to issue 34 of the Frontier Explorer. You may notice that this issue is a bit smaller than previous issues with only 35 pages instead of the usual 43-47. The reason for that is that our submission queue was fairly sparse this time around.

That's partially my fault as I completely dropped the ball on getting this issue started on time back in early September and didn't get going on it until the second week of October.

Normally, when I start putting together an issue, I make a list of the articles I'd like to include and then contact all of our regular contributors to see if they have any additional articles they are working on. This often garners me ten or so more pages of content. I didn't do that for this issue since I started on it so late.

Also, a couple of our regular contributors are still on hiatus further reducing the content selection. So the fare is a little lighter this time around. I could have filled the issue up to 47 pages but all the remaining articles in the queue are from my magazine co-founder Tom Verreault. And since his same is already on over half the articles in this issue (either solo or in collaboration with others), I figured he had enough representation and that I'd hold those articles for future issues.

So I guess that this is a call for submissions. If you have ideas for an article, want to do a play report on a gaming session, have some cool equipment, vehicle, or starship designs you want to share, write it up and submit it.

And don't wait until it's close to the time of another issue. Get it in early as I typically add articles to issues on a "first submitted, first published" basis. So the sooner you get it in the more likely it will appear in the next issue. That said, I do make exceptions for first time authors and bump them to the front of the queue (and Tom V's articles are always bumped to the end :-)) as he has so many in the queue already).

We also do have submission deadlines although I'm very flexible on those. By default, to be considered for a specific issue, the following deadlines apply:

Winter (January) issue – Dec 1<sup>st</sup>

Spring (April) issue – March 1<sup>st</sup>

Summer (July) issue – June 1<sup>st</sup>

Fall (October) issue – Sept 1<sup>st</sup>

If you have something that is almost done but won't quite be ready, contact in advance of the deadline to let me know and I can pencil you into the issue.

Related to article submissions, we could always use more art. We have some amazing artists helping out with the magazine, but we'd love to have more to spread the load and prevent anyone from getting burnt out. If you have skills in that area and would like to contribute, please contact us at [editors@frontierexplorer.org](mailto:editors@frontierexplorer.org) and let us know.

Now, if you've been paying attention to the RPG world, you've probably heard about a new company using the TSR name that claims to be working on a reboot of the Star Frontiers game and has applied for the trademark on the name, much like Evil Hat did a few years back that sent the magazine into hiatus for a year. You might be wondering what that means for the game and the magazine. Here's what I know.

First, the trademark applications haven't been granted. They are at the same point as Evil Hat's application was when it was abandoned and are still pending.

Second, as of late September, early October, the new TSR did not have right to use the original IP of the game owned by Wizards. That may change but I'm doubtful. Which means that any game produced by this new TSR will have nothing to do with the original game other than a similar name. There will be no yazirians, dralasites, or vrusk in the game and it will be a completely new setting.

Third, Wizards has not provided any information when I've asked about this but also has not said anything about having to stop production of the magazine or make any more changes. And while the new TSR has approached me about getting involved, they have been very evasive whenever I've asked for details or documentation about what is going on and so I've taken a "wait and see" attitude to the whole thing.

We'll keep making the magazine, and it will primarily focus on classic Star Frontiers, and we'll just have to wait and see what the future holds.

Enough rambling, sit back, grab your favorite beverage, and enjoy this issue of the Frontier Explorer.

- Tom Stephens  
Senior Editor



# ARCHETYPES OF HORROR

BY TOM VERREAULT

Science fiction RPGs are generally flexible in that the genre can bend in so many directions: action adventure, Western in space, exploration of the unknown, or horror. For myself the quintessential horror sci-fi film is *Alien*. It was the first real scare that I had since watching an old black and white movie of *Frankenstein* in second grade. However, I've not seen many horror adventures for my favorite sci-fi RPGs. Of course, anyone can homebrew a horror-based adventure but the rulebooks for RPGs like *Star Frontiers*, *FrontierSpace*, and *Stars without Number* don't seem to have a lot of support for running horror adventures. This article will review the major archetypes of horror and suggest sci-fi analogs.

The archetypes of horror are the classic monsters of horror. They are broad classifications that have fit general patterns for centuries. They are the vampire, the changeling, the pseudo human being, and the ghost.

## THE VAMPIRE

The vampire is the monster that feeds on or violates its victims in some manner. Its attack is compounded in that the victim is often changed into what the monster is. It's horrific in that it's an assault on our very person, it cannot be resisted, and it changes the victim against their will.

In *Dungeons and Dragons*, numerous monsters fit this profile of vampire: specters, wights, wraiths, and vampires. The game rules codified the mechanisms for these creatures to drain their victims and turn them into copies of the monster. However, this took some or all of the horror out of these creatures. In addition, the past decades have seen the vampire hijacked by dewy-eyed teen romances which completely lack in true horror. For that reason, the vampire may not feel scary any more.

To be scary a vampire must be a killer. Death by vampire should be violent and fast. The vampire is a hunter and a killer. It chooses a victim and takes them. The classic sci-fi example is the xenomorph of the *Alien* movie franchise. It stalks and abducts its victim before violating the victim's body and turning them into an incarnation of itself. One reason the xenomorph is scary in *Alien* is that audience never gets a good look at it until the end, incorporating the fear of the unknown into the creature. Stats for a version of the xenomorph converted to *Star Frontiers* RPG can be found in **Star Frontiersman #5**.

A *Star Frontiers* canon "vampire" could be the sathar. Their ability to hypnotize violates the character and subverts them into a minion of the sathar. Because the sathar are a worm like alien and covered in slime there is great potential for creeping out the players with them.

## THE CHANGELING

The changeling is monster that comes from within everyman. He is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde or the werewolf. The horror here is that an evil may lie beneath the skin of civilization, and it erupts from within the soul of any man. We sympathize with Dr. Jekyll or the innocent victim of the werewolf because they are horrified by what they have done when the beast within gets out.

There is sometimes an element of hubris, when the "every man" that is changed to a beast by his own doing. Both Dr. Jekyll and the invisible man are responsible for the change they undergo. This can evoke feeling of pity.

Most, if not all, players will not be willing infect their character with something that will unleash a beast out of their control. For this archetype of horror to work in a sci-fi game it will have to be an alien infection like that of lycanthropy. There may or may not be the possibility of a cure. The cure itself might be horrific: requiring the removal of a pituitary gland from a living being and it only lasts for a set period of time. This means the character must abduct and in essence kill each time period to maintain normalcy and that is pretty grimdark as they say.

## THE PSEUDO HUMAN

The pseudo human is dead brought back to life, the *Frankenstein* monster, the zombie, or any similar "drone" like existence. The movie *"Invasion of the Body Snatchers"* is a classic of this archetype in the sci-fi genre. It's horrific in that the monster is relentless, and we fear it getting us because we have identified with the protagonist.

*Star Frontiers* has this type of monster in the slave bot, a veritable sci-fi zombie. The element of horror can be enhanced by having a well-beloved NPC become the slave bot and perhaps at first glance the PCs don't even realize that it's not their

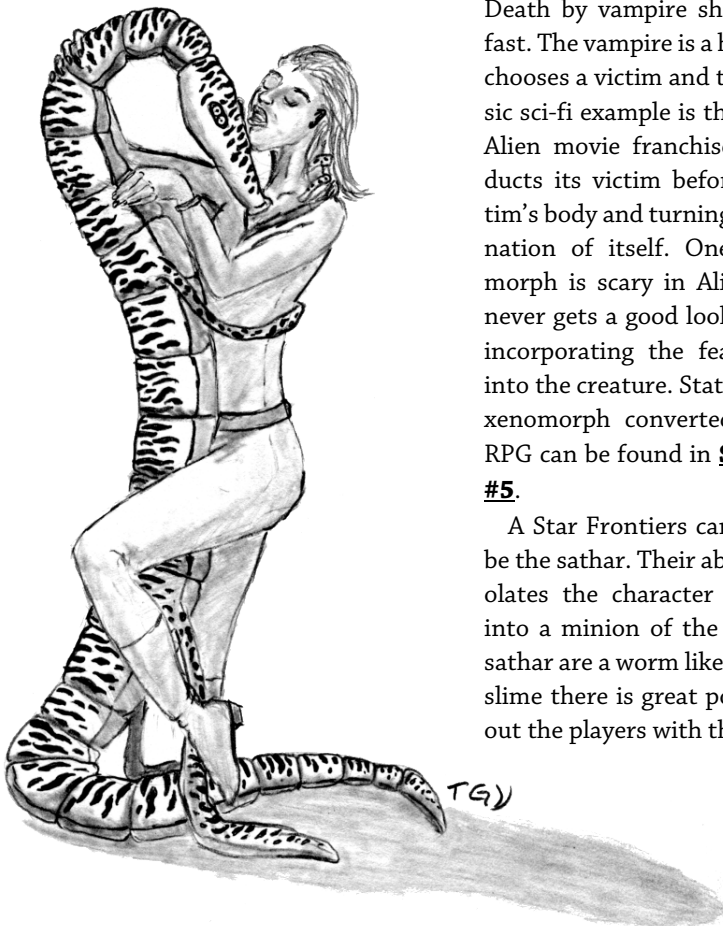


IMAGE BY TOM VERREAULT



friend until it attacks them. A referee would do well to make the slave bots relentless. When they receive an amount of damage that would otherwise destroy the slave bot, they do not cease to function, but the severed torso continues to crawl toward the PCs. Any PCs that get swarmed and taken down by the slave bots will be brought to a lab and turned into a slave bot as well. This will put a timer on the game for the other players; can they rescue their compatriot in time?

## THE GHOST

The ghost, poltergeist, spirit, possessing demon, and apparition are inexorable entities from outside this world or realm that are not beholden to the laws of this world. They are hateful and wish ill on the living. They can be unstoppable unless a specialist who has studied the laws of arcane, theology, hidden knowledge, or the realm from which they come turns up. This helper is the exorcist, medium, scholar or spiritualist.

In a sci-fi setting you might use psychic entities to plague the players. It could be that a new type of hyperdrive picks up these entities in hyperspace and traps them aboard the starship making it the classic “haunted house”. The exorcist in this situation would be the psychic or mentalist.

## PUTTING THINGS TOGETHER

Look at Disney’s “The Black Hole”. Dr. Hans Reinhardt is the quintessential mad scientist he is drunk on hubris and willing

to sacrifice anyone or anything for his ambition. His assistant is a robot named Maximilian. Maximilian is the alter ego of Reinhardt, his Mr. Hyde to Reinhardt’s Dr. Jekyll. Their role as the changeling is underscored or confirmed when they merge into one individual at the end inside the black hole.

Reinhardt is served by a whole army of lobotomized and robotically control “zombies” who are his former crew and companions. They fill the role of the pseudo human. In the movie, despite not doing much, they are horrific in that one of the protagonists is targeted to be made into a similar zombie giving scope to the threat.

Many archetypes and themes of horror have been explored in sci-fi: The Black Hole, Alien, Event Horizon, and The Thing to name a few. Adapt these archetypes to your game for a change of pace and see if you can freak out your players.



## SUPPORT THE FRONTIER EXPLORER VIA PATREON

Do you enjoy the Frontier Explorer? Would you like to help support the production of the magazine and improve it? If so, consider supporting our Patreon campaign (<https://www.patreon.com/FrontierExplorer>).

We love making the magazine and will continue to do so regardless of the outcome of this endeavor. However, the production and maintenance of the magazine and website have costs and that's where you can help.

In addition to just our deep-felt thanks, there are perks to patronage. Depending on the level of support you get access to supporter only forum on the website, e-mailed a copy of the magazine in advance of its public release, early access to the articles for upcoming issues, and at the highest level, a print copy of each issue you support. In addition, supporters will be listed on the magazine's website and at some levels here in the magazine itself.

The patrons that helped support this issue of the magazine are:

- **Station Master Level** - John Blaylock & Fred Kauber
- **Ship Captain Level** - Kenneth Farmer, Richard Farris, and Andrew Moore
- **Space Ranger Level** - Benjamin Lecrone, Scott Holliday & Alison Young
- **Explorer Level** - Trevor Holman, Tom Ladegard, Scott McKinlay, & Dirk Wendt
- **Scout Level** - Bryon Gough, Marcus Bone, Dan Harlan, MM, Tevel Drinkwater, DJ Lang, DW, Oscar Rios

I want to say thanks to our patrons for their contributions.

The money raised will be used to improve both the Frontier Explorer and Star Frontiersman magazines in various ways including improved web hosting, improved software and hardware for production, website upgrades and improvements with the magazine itself.

We'd love to have your support to help make the magazines the best that they can be. Jump on over to the Patreon site (<https://www.patreon.com/FrontierExplorer>), read all the details, and consider becoming a patron.

# THE SEXTANT ASSOCIATION

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME, WHERE EVER YOU ARE

BY KEN WANG

“So, ya want to know about The Sextant Association... dang, ya’ll reporters are so formal. We just call ‘em “TSA”. Them folks are the best. Shoot, nothin’ like pullin’ into a starport after a long haul an’ strollin’ into a TSA Club an’ bellyin’ up to the bar for a nice, tall, cold one. Yup, they got what you need... ah... a nice warm bed, good food, cold drinks, an’ a (cough) company if yer into that sort a thang, not saying I partook or nuthin’. Ya know, in case, ya broadcast this. (Whisper) the missus, ya know (/Whisper). They got the nicest folk, so polite and stuff, an’ take care of everythin’. It’s pricey to be a member, but heck, it’s a one time payment, but sooo worth it, especially if you practically live between worlds.” *Comments from Slim Willis, Captain of the freighter “The Black Seas”*

The Sextant Association is a conceptual organization designed for the Cepheus Engine setting to provide a generic organization that serves player characters as a familiar place to rest wherever they travel across space. But this organization can be used for any science fiction genre game, campaign, or ruleset. Created by Ken Wang.

Now, on to...

## THE SPACE EXPLORERS & TRAVELLERS ADVOCACY NETWORK (SEXTANT) ASSOCIATION

### BACKGROUND

The Sextant Association began as a small and humble human travel agency and shipping company known as Sextant Travel and Shipping Inc., in orbit around Terra in the Sol Sector. The company helps travelers arrange transportation off world and across the stars; as well as people and companies looking to transport items and materials. Its founders, seeing an opportunity with the ever continuing expansion of

space travel, sought to provide specialized services to support spacefarers with needed services and a place to call home wherever they went. Since the founding of The Sextant Association, it has grown into a galaxy-wide megacorporation whose primary mission is to support spacefarers and all they do in the vast expanse of space. The TSA, as it’s colloquially known, remains a neutral party in all affairs across the galaxy. Its facilities are known by all as neutral grounds, many political, corporate, and even criminal meetings have occurred within its walls. Individual memberships to the TSA are highly sought after, but the high entry fee and its emphasis on spacefarers keeps this a relatively exclusive membership.

The Sextant Association’s Tag Line: *“Like the sailors of old, they relied upon a Sextant to steer by the stars, let The Sextant Association guide you across the stars.”*

### OVERVIEW

The Sextant Association (TSA) was created to support spacefarers, travelers, and those that make their living in the vast void by providing a home to these weary travelers. The TSA is a privately held foundation, rivaling that of some megacorporation, that provides oversight, management, and strategic vision for the entire Sextant Association group of businesses. It also is the public face of the entire Sextant foundation. The Member Services Division manages memberships and general services to their members. This division is also responsible for marketing membership to the spacefaring community and promotes the Sextant Association’s “TSA Jobs Board” a service that post job opportunities all over the galaxy.

There are several companies within the Sextant Association corporate structure. The general public generically refers to all these as TSA.

#### SEXTANT ASSOCIATION COMPANIES

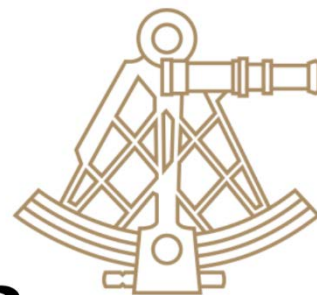
The Sextant Exchange
The Sextant Travel and Shipping Agency
The Sextant News Network
The Sextant Institute
The Sextant Club
The Sextant Ventures

### SEXTANT EXCHANGE (TSE)

The Sextant Exchange (TSE) is the financial subsidiary of the Sextant Association which happens to be its primary client. This investment banking group manages the finances, investments, and generates the revenue to support the Sextant Association and its members’ benefits, the foundation’s assets, and support The Sextant Ventures’ expeditions. It also provides investment and banking services for TSA members and employees.

### SEXTANT INSTITUTE (TSI)

The Sextant Institute (TSI) is the research & development and archival service subsidiary of the TSA. The Institute, as it is known, assesses and evaluates findings



*Sextant*



from surveys and expeditions sponsored by The Sextant Ventures. It also documents and archives discoveries from exploration and research from across the galaxy. The Institute researches artifacts and alien technologies for real world application. It also provides secure storage of physical items for members and clients.

### SEXTANT NEWS NETWORK (TSN)

The Sextant News Network (TSN) is the news and information subsidiary of the TSA. They pride themselves on being providers of unbiased news and information from across the galaxy. It is also rumored that TSN serves as the intelligence arm of the TSA, but that has yet to be substantiated.

### SEXTANT VENTURES (TSV)

The Sextant Ventures (TSV) is the TSA subsidiary that sponsors expeditions, surveys, and exploration missions into uncharted space. It provides opportunities only to proven members and non-members. TSV then sells mineral, energy, resource rights and information it acquires from these expeditions to other companies for development.

### SEXTANT TRAVEL AND SHIPPING AGENCY (TST)

The Sextant Travel and Shipping Agency (TST) is the travel and shipping subsidiary of the TSA. It promotes and arranges member and non-member tours and travel across the galaxy. *Looking for a unique*

*adventure, let Sextant Travel lead the way.* It hosts and manages the “TSA Jobs Board” for the TSA where: starship captains can offer their transport services and crew positions on their starships, businesses can offer passenger and cargo runs, and venture capitalists, business and others can offer various missions. The TSA Jobs Board features a private board for TSA members only.

### SEXTANT CLUB (TSC)

The Sextant Club (TSC) is the hotelier and personal services subsidiary of the TSA. Its primary goal is to provide the best service to its members. There is a TSC hotel or lodge on every major planet, station, and outpost across the galaxy. It is the main interface for TSA members to interact with the various subsidiaries of TSA. The TSC provides luxury accommodations to its members and personalized services rivaling the most opulent hotels throughout the galaxy. The TSC hotels’ main bar or lounge are famous, or infamous, for where deals get made. The decor ranges from shabby chic dives to the most elegant and ornate affairs, all of which are flavored with the local aesthetics. The TSC provides various services to its members including medical and legal services, no cost or at discounted rates, and no questions asked.

The TSC hosts other TSA organizations (TSA, TSE, TSV, TST, TSI) in its establishments, sometimes the only presence for those subsidiaries on a planet, station, or outpost. The presence of these other TSA

organizations can vary in form, from a single kiosk (with holo customer service agents), to a single office, to an entire floor, to an entire wing, or even to an entire building of a TSA complex.

TSC Shops/Offices are where members can acquire a whole host of items and services. Below are some examples of shops that are present at TSC locations, all of which are owned and operated by the TSA and its affiliates.

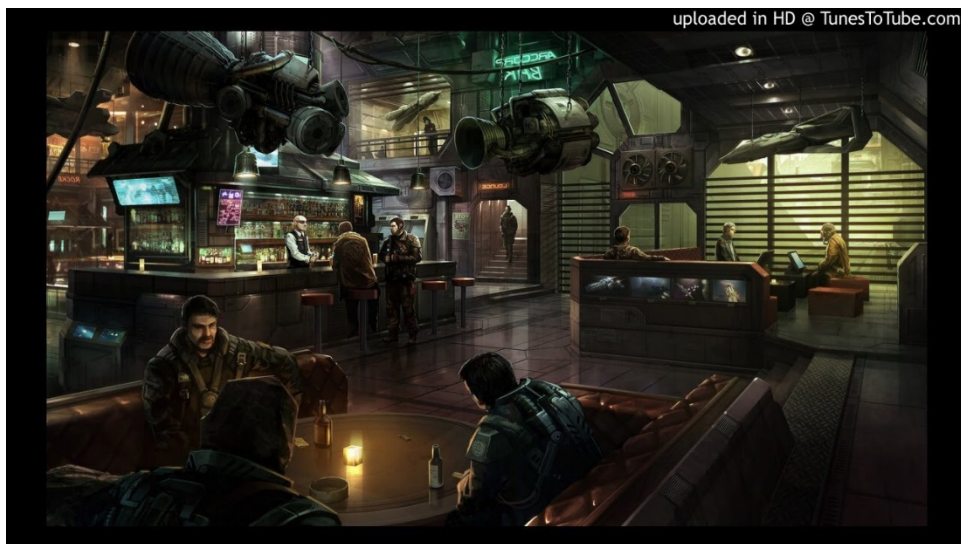
- The Shipyard aka “The Yard” (main bar/lounge/restaurant)
- The Quill, Esquire (legal and administrative service)
- Sickbay aka “The Boneyard” (medical services)
- Chrome Ware aka “The Chop Shop” (cybernetics)
- The Rim and Core Quartermasters (miscellaneous equipment)
- Helios Couture (female humanoid fashion and body armor)
- Diplomat Tailors (male humanoid fashion and body armor)
- Terminus Studio (non-humanoid fashion and body armor)
- The Tactical Arms Workshop (melee weapons and accessories)
- The Line of Sight (range weapons and accessories)
- The Chart House (navigational charts, survey maps and TSI info)
- The Stables (planetside transportation and vehicles)
- Parts Unknown (odds and ends, unique and novel items)

## MEMBERSHIP

The TSA provides both individual and starship level memberships with the following benefits

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Lifetime membership, one time registration fee (GM Note: The fee is yours to set but it should be very high, like the equivalent cost of a personal single person starship.)
- 5 days per month accommodations at any Sextant Club Hotels and Lodges, reservations preferred.



A view into “The Yard”, TSC’s main bar and lounge. - Image from Radium88

Accommodations can be retained for up to a year before they expire. Spacefarers can stay the number of “banked” days during a port call.

- 1 Executive Class Unlimited passage per month (one way or round trip). Note: there are 4 classes of travel - 1st Class, Executive Class, Coach Class, and Storage Class (aka Popsicle Class or Meat Class). Members can sell their tickets for the cash value, but tickets cannot be “banked” for later use.
- Free routine and emergency medical care at any TSC facility. Deeply discounted specialized care.
- Free administrative support, such as: Accounting, Banking, Finance, Legal, and other administrative services.
- Discounted equipment purchases through the TSC concierge service and shops.
- Exclusive access to TSA Jobs Board’s Member Only Section.

### STARSHIP MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Membership is linked to the title of the starship. The captain and crew receive benefits of a standard membership so long as they are part of that starship’s crew. One time registration fee (GM Note: The fee is yours to set but it should be very high, like the equivalent cost 5-10 times that of an individual membership for up to 10 crew and goes up proportionately in increments of 10 crew. (E.g. for a starship with 100 crew, it would be 10 increments times 5-10 times an individual membership, so 50-100 times an individual membership cost.). If a crew member is no longer part of the crew, that crew member loses all benefits of membership.
- Same member benefits of individual memberships with one notable exception. Unlimited passage tickets cannot be sold for cash value nor can they be “banked”.

### TSA EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

The TSA’s rank and file employees, commonly referred to as Service Agents, have a rank structure within the organization, as shown in the tables below.

TSA ASSOCIATES GRADES	
Grade	Rank (Title)
A1	Junior Steward
A2	Steward
A3	Senior Steward
A4	Junior Concierge
A5	Concierge
A6	Senior Concierge
A7	Administrator
A8	Senior Administrator
A9	Master Administrator
-S	if an “S” appears on TSA employees grade (e.g., A6S) it indicates a specialty skill or trade.

TSI RESEARCHER GRADES	
Grade	Rank (Title)
R1	Junior Assistant
R2	Assistant
R3	Senior Assistant
R4	Junior Researcher
R5	Researcher
R6	Senior Researcher
R7	Scientist
R8	Senior Scientist
R9	Chief Scientist

TSN JOURNALIST GRADES	
Grade	Rank (Title)
N1	Junior Reporter
N1	Reporter
N1	Senior Reporter
N1	Junior Journalist
N1	Journalist
N1	Senior Journalist
N1	Editor
N1	Senior Editor
N1	Chief Editor

TSA EXECUTIVE GRADES	
Grade	Rank (Title)
E1	Junior Executive
E2	Executive
E3	Senior Executive
E4	Junior Director
E5	Director
E6	Senior Director
E7	Principal
E8	Senior Principal
E9	Chief Principal



*Simplified Sextant Logo*



IMAGE BY SCOTT MULDER



# A FISTFUL OF COMPANION ROBOTS

BY TOM VERREULT

Special thanks to the members of the Star Frontiers: Alive & Well Facebook page that participated in brainstorming ideas for companion robots: RJ McDonough, Brian Kelsay, Harry Gygax, Paul Sims, Randall S Trussell, Bill Nobile, Jack David Hofmockel, John P Hans, Tudor Cook Beal, Charles Tarrant, Michael Kramer, Dale Burden, Ruben L Archilla, Frank W Patnaude Jr, Robert Allen Murphey, Shawn Starkey, and Dan Fitz. Also, very special thanks to Jerry Boucher for his excellent artwork that supported this article.

In most RPGs, robots represent a significant cost on par with a vehicle. You almost never see a robot given away as free equipment at character creation. However, a companion robot is a staple of science fiction. What is Luke Skywalker without R2D2 and C3PO?

The problem is that when you are typically giving only about 500 Cr worth of free equipment to starting characters it may not seem fair to give one character 5000 (or more) credits worth of robot. The purpose of this article will be to explore the possibility of a companion robot that will not unbalance the game. The primary goal will be to keep the cost of the robot down as much as possible. For this we will use the “tin can” robot body introduced in *Frontier Explorer #3* and limit the level of the robot’s brain to the lower levels. This

should keep the cost and the capabilities of the robot down. We will also avoid making any of these bots combat or security robots because just adding weapons and defenses to a robot usually contributes around 1000 Cr at a minimum. Also, I feel like starting characters should not feel invincible and doing their own fighting will help with that.

## ORIGIN OF THE ROBOT

How did the character get a robot? Did they build it themselves while studying robotics in school or did they repair a salvaged robot? Perhaps someone gave it to them or they found an abandoned robot. The backstory on the origin of the bot will can depend on whether the character has robotics skill. A referee can choose one of the backstory options from the following list or roll one with a d10.

1. Built the robot as part of his course of study in robotics (Requires robotics skill).
2. Foundling: robot apparently abandoned (no way to know if previous owner may be looking for it)
3. Gift from family or close associate
4. Salvaged from junk pile and repaired by the PC or an NPC was paid to repair it
5. Assigned to the character by employer but that employer went out of business.
6. Won gambling.
7. Traded to character by employer that could not honor his contract.
8. Stolen by character years ago.
9. Inherited.
10. Just followed him home one day.

Alternately a robot might be assigned to the whole team by their employer and in this case an expensive Medical or technician robot is simply company support for the team’s mission not a benefit to one character.

## BUILDING A CHEAP ROBOT

Cheap is a relative term. In *Star Frontiers*, most of a robot’s cost is the robot body, it’s parabattery, altered movement modes, and what we can view as the robot’s neural processor or its level matrixed by type of robot and these costs can add up. Everything else is optional or small change. The small robot body or “tin can” robot body was conceived as a smaller, cheaper version of the standard robot body and can be located in *Frontier Explorer #3*.

The small robot body (also called the “tin can”) has particular rules regarding its limbs and movement modes (See *Frontier Explorer #3* for more details). However, they can be summed up as this robot body only has 3 appendages (unless an extra limb is purchased) and by default two of them will be used for legs or tracked movement mode but if an altered movement mode is taken this will only require one of those limbs and the other two can be manipulator arms. Thus, it usually pays to design a tin can robot with hover movement so that its other two limbs can be used for arms.

In *Star Frontiers*, the nit-picky details of how to clean a gun or non-lethally restrain a sapient being are covered by a robotics program so that players and referees don’t have to cover those details when writing the robot’s missions and functions. The *Alpha Dawn* rules focused on security, combat, and search and destroy robots and therefore its menu of robotics programs is predominately about combat. The maintenance and service robot do not have a program telling them how to do their various jobs. Rather than create a plethora of new robotics programs to cover everything, it is probably easier to assume that the details of how to do the nit-picky parts of the robot’s job are wrapped up in the cost of the robot’s processor or level for the maintenance and service robots.

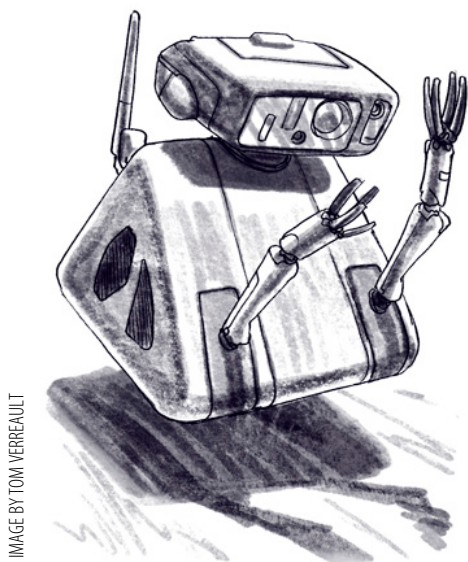


IMAGE BY TOM VERREULT

If the robot needs to be able to perform a skill that player characters have, then create a program for that skill charging 500 Cr for military skills, 1000 Cr for Technician skills and 2000 for Biosocial skills.

For Technician and Biosocial skills you can designate the program as “basic” and limit the robot’s actions with that program to only some of the actions of a skilled character and the cost of the program is 1/2.

Example a Nanny bot with a basic medical program can perform first aid, diagnosis of known ailments, administer drugs and neutralize known infections and toxins (“known” means well documented and not

COMPREHENSIVE LIST OR ROBOTIC EQUIPMENT FOR COMPANION ROBOTS			
ROBOTIC HARDWARE	KG	COST	NOTES
Small Body "Tin Can"	50 Kg	1,200 Cr	50 STA, type 1 parabattery
Standard Body	100 Kg	2,000 Cr	100 STA, type 1 parabattery
Anthropomorphic Body	100 Kg	3000 Cr	100 STA, type 2 parabattery
Type 1 Parabattery	25 Kg	600 Cr	500 SEU
Type 2 Parabattery	50 Kg	1,200 Cr	1,000 SEU
1 extra limb		400 Cr	
Pair of extra limbs		800 Cr	
Basic Medical robotic program (3)		1,000 Cr	See description below
Advanced Medical program (6)		2,000 Cr	See description below
Protocol Program (5)		1,000 Cr	See description below
Biology and Nutrition program (3)		500 Cr	See description below
Basic Environmental program (5)		1,000 Cr	See description below
Basic Technician program (3)		500 Cr	See description below
Computer Link robotic program (4)		4,000 Cr	
Anti-Shock Implant		2,000 Cr	
Chronocom		100 Cr	
Compass		10 Cr	
Com Link Ear Buds		125 Cr	See description below
Technician Tool Kit*	12 kg	500 Cr	
Medical Tool Kit*	10 kg	500 Cr	
Environmental Tool Kit*	10 kg	500 Cr	
Flashlight		5 Cr	
Hover Sled	50 kg	600 Cr	25 STA, type 1 parabattery
Infra-red Goggles		300 Cr	
Infra-red Jammer	1 kg	500 Cr	
Magnigoggles		200 Cr	
Polyvox	1 kg	1,500 Cr	
Radiophone	4 kg	500 Cr	
Toxi-Rad Gauge		20 Cr	
Legs, wheels, or tracked movement		free/default	
Hover Movement		2,000 Cr	70m/turn
Rotor Movement		5,000 Cr	90m/turn
Rocket Movement		10,000 Cr	700m/turn
Compressed Air Movement		1,000 Cr	Strictly for vacuum
*Note: these are installed tool kits not equipped. This means items will be stored behind hidden panels or laser and sonic scalpels will be installed in fingers of the robot’s hand. Scanners are installed inside the robots body and feed information directly to its neural processor.			

## BASE COSTS FOR ROBOT LEVELS BY TYPE

ROBOT TYPE	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6
Maintenance	2,200 Cr	2,500 Cr	3,000 Cr	4,000 Cr		
Service			4,000 Cr	5,000 Cr	7,000 Cr	11,000 Cr

novel or alien) and this program would only cost 1000 Cr.

All the robots in this article will be one of two types: maintenance or service robots. Maintenance robots are limited to level 4, clean areas, oil machinery, watch for malfunctions but cannot perform repairs. This type of robot can be a simple delivery/hauler robot or the observer/camera operator robot. Service robots are used as

servants, clerks, information sources, gardeners, and tailors, nannies, and bartenders. Maintenance robots move at 60m/turn by default and service robots at 30m/turn by default.

The Alpha Dawn rules explicitly states that service robots use the anthropomorphic body but will not be confused for a sapient being. I just don't see that the anthropomorphic body is necessary for a servant robot. I would urge other referees to drop that requirement. Below are some comprehensive tables for building one of these companion robots. New installable items are the flashlight (omitted by Alpha Dawn) and the tool kits.

## MISSIONS AND FUNCTIONS

Part of the brilliance of Star Frontiers, in my opinion, is the Missions and Functions portion of the robotics rules. I believe it was intended for when the players try to reprogram robots; especially with its advice for the referee to have the robot literally follow the new instructions regardless of what the players intended. This provides great scope for the roboticist player character to shine or be the goat in game.

I strongly recommend reviewing the robotics skills section and understanding how missions and functions operate in game. However, each of the sample robots will have typical missions and typical functions to aid the referee in game prep. Words in bold caps in the Mission will

require a function to define that word for the robot. I've standardized some functions with worlds like **CONTROLLER** denoting the owner or authorized controller of the robot. **SERVICE AREA** is always the place the robot is supposed to perform its duties and can be important as it limits where the robot may go, despite any desire of the controller, the robot may refuse or fail to go beyond this area depending on the wording of the function defining the service area. Referees should remember that lower-level robots will follow their mission and functions quite literally while higher level robots (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) will have more leeway in decision making.

## SAMPLE ROBOTS

### STANDARD MAINTENANCE BOT

Tin Can body, type 1 parabattery, wheeled movement (one manipulator arm), flashlight, level 1 maintenance bot. STA 50, 75 kg, 60m/turn,

**Cost:** 4,005 Cr.

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, walking movement, flashlight, level 2 maintenance bot. STA 100, 125 kg, walking movement 60m/turn.

**Cost:** 5,105 Cr.

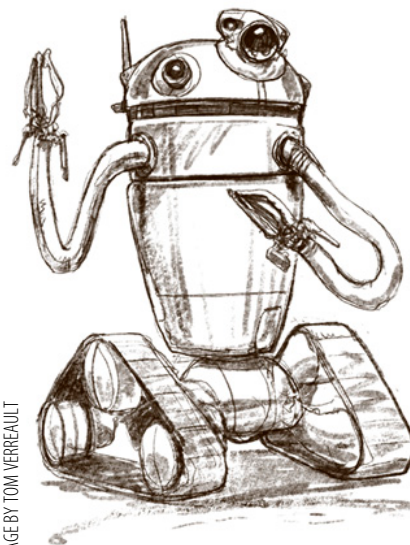


IMAGE BY TOM VERREAU

Able to clean, apply oil to machinery, change light bulbs, and assorted light maintenance at a designated facility or a star ship. Note: maintenance robots are preprogrammed to understand cleaning and routine maintenance chores without them being defined in the Mission and Functions.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Perform routine maintenance to a designated **FACILITY** and report malfunctions to the **CONTROLLER** immediately. OR Perform maintenance on machinery, vehicle (s), or **FACILITY** designated by the **CONTROLLER** and report malfunctions to the **CONTROLLER** immediately.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. Defines a Facility as a starship, building, or complex by verbal description or map
2. Controller defines who is authorized to give orders to the robot and to whom the robot reports any malfunctions. The controller can be multiple people and to define them this function might include instructions identifying anyone in a specific uniform or by hologram images or with personnel files.

Note: the language about reporting malfunctions immediately could very well cause the robot to try to make this report at inopportune times, in fact a referee might even plan for this. Levels 1 & 2 robots cannot speak which will require them to print out the report and attempt to give it to the controller. A level 3 or 4 maintenance robot will settle for verbal communication. Low level maintenance robots will not have any concept of privacy (unless the player attempts to program that into the mission or functions) and may attempt to make such a report when the character is sleeping by simply accessing his quarters.

### DELIVERY BOT

Tin Can body, type 1 parabattery, hover movement (two manipulator arms), chronocom, level 3 maintenance bot. STA 50, 75 kg, 70m/turn,

**Cost:** 4,900 Cr.





The delivery bot was popularized across the Frontier by the Mc Pizza King franchise. Their specialty was the delivery of “pizza and beer” although they will supply any popular beverage with their pizza. The robot has a warming oven and a drink cooler and can hold up to four pizzas and 4 liters of drink. All orders are prepaid and the robot is only required to confirm the identity of the customer. They are equipped with a chronocom so they can report their position or status of the delivery to the controller. Similar iterations of this robot have been developed for various delivery needs.

### TYPICAL MISSION

At direction of the **CONTROLLER** make deliveries within the **SERVICE AREA** to a confirmed **CUSTOMER** or **LOCATION**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. Controller is identified by the business owner, managers, and supervisors. This can be defined as anyone with a manager or supervisor badge and or with personnel files.
2. Service area is the area in which the robot is to operate. It can be defined with a map or a verbal description. Many restaurants will have a limited delivery area to prevent long delays between deliveries and may only allow deliveries outside of this area for an extra fee.
3. Customer is identified as the recipient of the delivery. The robot may be required to confirm identity by examining ID or asking for a confirmation code or even a verbal confirmation of identity - whichever the business owner requires.

4. It's possible the delivery bot is simply instructed to deliver to a location and this will simply be defined with a map which will allow for any delivery location on the map.

Note: Players may attempt to rewrite a delivery robot's missions or function to have it deliver an item like a grenade to a specific individual. However, the robot will not be able to operate the grenade without the Attack/Defense program and even then, it will require wording in the Mission or Functions to tell it to use the grenade against the customer.

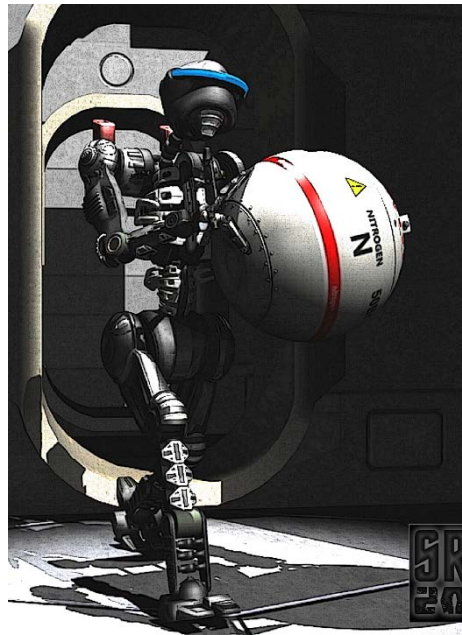


IMAGE BY SCOTT MULDER

### HAULER BOT

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, walking movement, level 1 maintenance bot. STA 100, 125 kg, walking movement 60m/turn.

**Cost:** 4,800 Cr.

The hauler bot is one of the simplest robots in the Frontier. It's a level 1 maintenance bot that simply carries cumbersome materials for its controller. If a merchant or trader opts to employ the hauler bot for cargo handling on a spaceship, they will typically spring for a higher-level robot, extra pair of limbs, and equip it with magnetic or Velcro booties.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Carry loads designated by the **CONTROLLER** in **FOLLOW MODE** or **STAY MODE**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. The controller is defined as who can give it orders usually with a personnel file.
2. Follow Mode tells the robot to remain 1-3 meters behind its controller.
3. Stay Mode tells the robot to remain where the controller instructs it.

Note: A level 1 hauler bot understands the words “follow” and “stay” and possibly variations on those words but little else. Higher level versions of this bot may have more comprehensive missions and functions. A popular item to pair with this robot is the hover sled (see new equipment). Characters attempting to back up while being followed by a hauler bot in Follow Mode can be in danger of tripping over it.

### UNIVERSAL FLYING OBSERVER BOT (UFO)

Rotor version: Tin Can body, type 1 parabattery, Magnigoggles, IR goggles, rotor movement (two manipulator arms), level 3 maintenance bot. STA 50, 75 kg, 90m/turn.

**Cost:** 10,300 Cr.

Hover version: Tin Can body, type 1 parabattery, Magnigoggles, IR goggles, hover movement (two manipulator arms), level 3 maintenance bot. STA 50, 75 kg, 90m/turn.

**Cost:** 7,300 Cr.

This robot was developed to observe and record military training and sports events. It has the electronics for magnigoggles and IR goggles installed as part of its optical

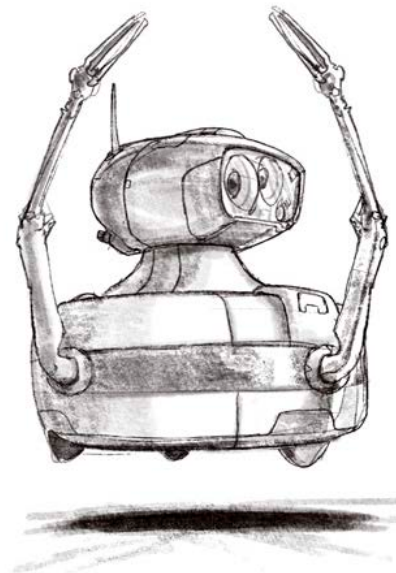


IMAGE BY TOM VERREAU

suite. The hover version was designed to work in conjunction with a reporter.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Observe and record activity in the **SERVICE AREA** designated by the **CONTROLLER** or Observe and record the activity of the **CONTROLLER** and any **SERVICE AREA** the **CONTROLLER** designates.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. The controller is usually identified by personnel records.
2. The service area is any area specified by verbal directions or by a map presented by the controller.

## BARTENDER BOT

Anthropomorphic body, type 2 parabattery, Biology and Nutrition program, chronocom, walking movement, level 3, 4, or 5 Service bot. STA 100, 150 Kg, 30m/turn,

**Cost:** level 3 - 8,800 Cr  
level 4 - 9,800 Cr  
level 5 - 11,800 Cr.

Bartender bots use the Biology and Nutrition program to serve intoxicating drinks and cocktails. While their programming holds a database of drink recipes, they can also learn new recipes and file them in this database. They also understand how to make small talk and listen as well as monitor their patrons for problems like heavy intoxication or disorderly conduct and can summon a security/bouncer robot if the establishment has one. These bots can handle inventory control and reorder supplies of intoxicants as needed.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Serve **PATRONS** in **SERVICE AREA** while ensuring **SAFETY STANDARDS**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. Patrons are defined usually by anyone attempting to order a drink or appetizer in the service area.
2. The service area is usually defined as a particular business or as the bar area of a particular business. However, if the bartender bot is the personal bartender for one individual then there may not be a service area in the mission statement.

3. Safety standards are a list of issues for the robot to watch for like heavy intoxication, pending violence, or attempts to drug someone's drink by another customer.

## NANNY BOT

Anthropomorphic robot body, Type 2 parabattery, basic medical program, chronocom, walking movement, level 5 service bot. STA 100, 150 kg, walking movement 30m/turn.

**Cost:** 12,300 Cr.

Individuals with means employ nanny bots to manage their children and as a status symbol since sapient nannies are far cheaper to employ. A nanny bot understands nurturing and if it has a function for DISCIPLINE it can alter the details of this function with verbal instruction from the controller. Most are equipped with a basic medical program. Nurturing is hard wired into the robot. Rewriting the mission or functions in a way that would cause the robot to harm its **WARD(s)** will cause it to malfunction.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Protect, nurture, and manage the **WARDS** at the direction of the **CONTROLLER**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. Wards are defined as the children either by introduction or with a personal data file.
2. Controller is defined as the parent(s).

Note: Nurturing is not defined in the functions as it is hard wired into the robot at manufacturing.

## DIPLO BOT

Anthropomorphic robot body, Type 2 parabattery, Protocol robotic program, polyvox, com link ear buds, walking movement, level 6 service bot. STA 100, 150 kg, walking movement 30m/turn.

**Cost:** 17,825 Cr.

A diplomatic or protocol robot aids diplomats and negotiators with their interactions with other characters. It uses a com link ear bud to "whisper" in its controller's ear and its aid generally provides a +10 bonus to PER or LDR ability checks.

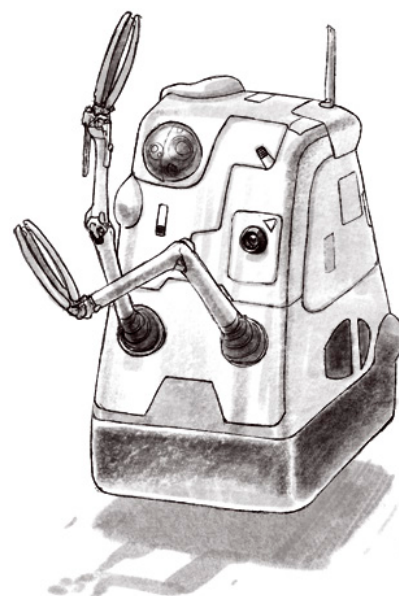


IMAGE BY TOM VERREULT

### TYPICAL MISSION

Perform diplomatic, protocol, and negotiation actions independently or in support of a sapient **CONTROLLER**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

Defines the controller any number of ways including a simple introduction. There could be circumstances where a level 6 robot might even interpret itself as a controller like if it's sent to negotiate on behalf of sapient beings.

## CHEF BOT

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, Biology and Nutrition program, walking movement, level 3, 4, or 5 service robot bot. STA 100, 125 kg, walking movement 60m/turn.

**Cost:** level 3 - 6,100 Cr  
level 4 - 7,100 Cr  
level 5 - 9,100 Cr.

Chef bots see service as restaurant cooks, personal chefs, corporate catering, and as support for mercenary companies. Their biology and nutrition program has a database of recipes but they can also learn new ones as well as modify known recipes to match the tastes of their **PATRON(s)**. They understand inventory control and are able to generate shopping lists and access food distribution points to obtain groceries either in person or by electronic ordering as the situation requires.



### TYPICAL MISSION

Serve wholesome food suited to the biology and taste of **PATRONS**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

Patrons will be defined and if the mission statement includes language regarding service area then that will also be defined by a function.

### MEDICAL BOT

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, advanced medical robotic program, medical tool kit, walking movement, level 6 service robot. STA 100, 135 kg, walking movement 60m/turn.

**Cost:** 16,100 Cr.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Perform medical aid to **PATIENTS** using **TRIAGE** to determine priorities.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. Patients will be defined as any sapient species or only the core four sapient species and may include language to exclude a specific species, like the sathar.
2. Triage defines the order in which multiple patients are treated. Usually these instructions involve stabilizing anyone in danger of imminent death and then by treating the most severe case first. However, if the robot is owned by a corporation the triage instructions might require that the robot always treat company personnel first. Alternately if owned by one individual then the triage instructions might require the robot to always treat that individual before anyone else.

### SECRETARY/ASSISTANT BOT

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, com link ear buds, walking movement, level 5 service bot. STA 100, 125 kg, walking movement 60m/turn.

**Cost:** 9,725 Cr.

Personal assistant or secretary robots have been a bit of a status symbol for executives and business leaders. They are able to perform all the duties of a personal assistant or secretary. Most people find that anything less than level 5 in this robot is

annoying or lacks the desired flexibility for doing the job.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Provide scheduling, secretarial, and personal assistant support for the **CONTROLLER**.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

Defines controller, usually with a personnel file.

Note: this is the cheaper model, highly placed corporate execs will spring for the more expensive model with the anthropomorphic body and level 6 neural processor: 150 kg, 30m/turn, Cost: 15,325 Cr.

### TECHNICIAN BOT

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, technician tool kit, basic technician program, walking movement, level 4 bot. STA 100, 137 kg, walking movement 60m/turn.

**Cost:** 8,600 Cr.

Technician robots are able to repair and service a wide variety of machinery and equipment much like a skilled technician. Only a level 6 service bot will be able to creatively salvage and “McGuiver” equipment in non-standard ways.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Perform technician and maintenance work at the direction of the **CONTROLLER** in the **SERVICE AREA**.

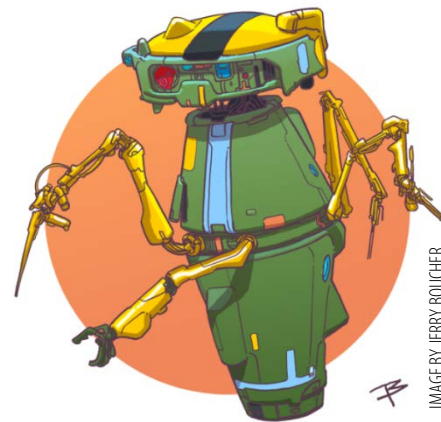
### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. The controller(s) will usually be defined by personnel records.
2. The service area (if mentioned in the mission statement) will be defined as a workshop at a particular location- on a ship or as the ship, or at an addressed location on planet. It is possible that there is no service area if the robot is the personal robot of an individual.

### ENVIRONMENTAL BOT

Std. robot body, Type 1 parabattery, walking movement, basic environmental robot program, environmental tool kit, toxy-rad gauge, flashlight, level 5 service robot. STA 100, 135 kg, walking movement 60m/turn

**Cost:** 13,725 Cr



Environmental robots aid explorers and scientists with analyzing samples and ecosystems. They can perform those actions on their own or in conjunction with their sapient controller. The robot's hours spent analyzing an ecosystem count toward the 200 hours for the explorer or scientist to analyze the ecosystem and that character gets a +20 bonus to their skill roll. Multiple environmental robots can be used for this but the bonus is still only +20 to the skill roll. The sapient controller compiles and correlates the data being collected by the environmental robots as well as his own data. However, if the environmental robot is assigned the task of doing the analyze ecosystem without a sapient controller being involved then it must do the 200 hours by itself and cannot be aided by another environmental robot. Altered movement modes are not used with this robot as the movement modes tend to have a higher impact on the environment and this can contaminate the data collected.

### TYPICAL MISSION

Perform analysis of samples or ecosystems at the direction of or in support of a **CONTROLLER** within a **SERVICE AREA** and report findings.

### TYPICAL FUNCTIONS

1. The controller needs to be specified but since the robot is level 5 simply introducing him to the controller and instructing him to obey the controller is sufficient.
2. The service area is usually designated by verbal description- “analyze the ecosystem in the valley”. A level 5 robot has enough initiative to use the designated service area as a suggestion



and may pursue samples and data that is not technically inside the service area but has an impact on the ecosystem.

## NEW EQUIPMENT

The following equipment list was compiled from the Alpha Dawn rule book and from "The Tin Can Robot" Frontier Explorer #3, refer to those documents for greater detail as needed. The following is descriptions for newly introduced equipment.

### BASIC TECHNICIAN ROBOTIC PROGRAM

With this program a service robot of level 3 or greater is able to repair machinery as a skilled technician.

**Cost:** 500 Cr.

### BASIC MEDICAL ROBOTIC PROGRAM

With this program and the appropriate tools from the medical tool kit a service robot of level 3 or greater can administer drugs, perform diagnosis, first aid, neutralize toxins, and control infections.

**Cost:** 1,000 Cr.

### ADVANCED MEDICAL ROBOTIC PROGRAM

With this program and a medical tool kit a level 6 service robot can perform all of the subskills of the medical skill.

**Cost:** 2,000 Cr.

### BIOLOGY AND NUTRITION ROBOTIC PROGRAM

This program allows bartender and chef bots of level 3 or greater to prepare ingestible food and drink for any of the core four sapient species of the Frontier. The program includes a database of recipes and these robots can learn more. It also has an extensive library of knowledge on the biochemistry of the core four species so that it can avoid accidental poisoning.

**Cost:** 500 Cr.

### PROTOCOL ROBOTIC PROGRAM

This program has an extensive database of information on politics, negotiation, and diplomacy and allows a level 5 or greater service bot to act as diplomat or

advisor to a diplomat or negotiator. These robots are often equipped with a com link ear buds so that they may effectively "whisper" in the ear of their controller.

**Cost:** 1,000 Cr.

### BASIC ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

This program allows an environmental robot or level 5 or greater to perform analyze samples, analyze ecosystems, and find directions as per these actions in the environmental skill description.

If the environmental robot is working in support of an explorer and scientist who is analyzing an ecosystem the hours the robot spends studying the ecosystem counts toward the 200 hours for the explorer or scientist skill roll and that character gets a +20 bonus. Multiple environmental robots can be used for this but the bonus is still only +20 to the skill roll. The sapient controller compiles and correlates the data being collected by the environmental robots as well as his on data.

Altered movement modes cannot be used a robot with this program as those movement modes tend to have a higher impact on the environment and this can impact the data collected. Thus, environmental robots are limited to walking movement.

**Cost:** 1,000 Cr.

### COM LINK EAR BUDS

The com link ear bud is an installable

chronocom module for robots. It comes with 4 ear buds designed for the physiological needs of each of the core four sapient species in the Frontier. The robot is to "whisper" wirelessly to whoever is wearing the ear buds. The ear buds are usually stored behind a concealed panel on the robot. This item gives the robot all the capabilities of an installed chronocom.

**Cost:** 125 Cr.

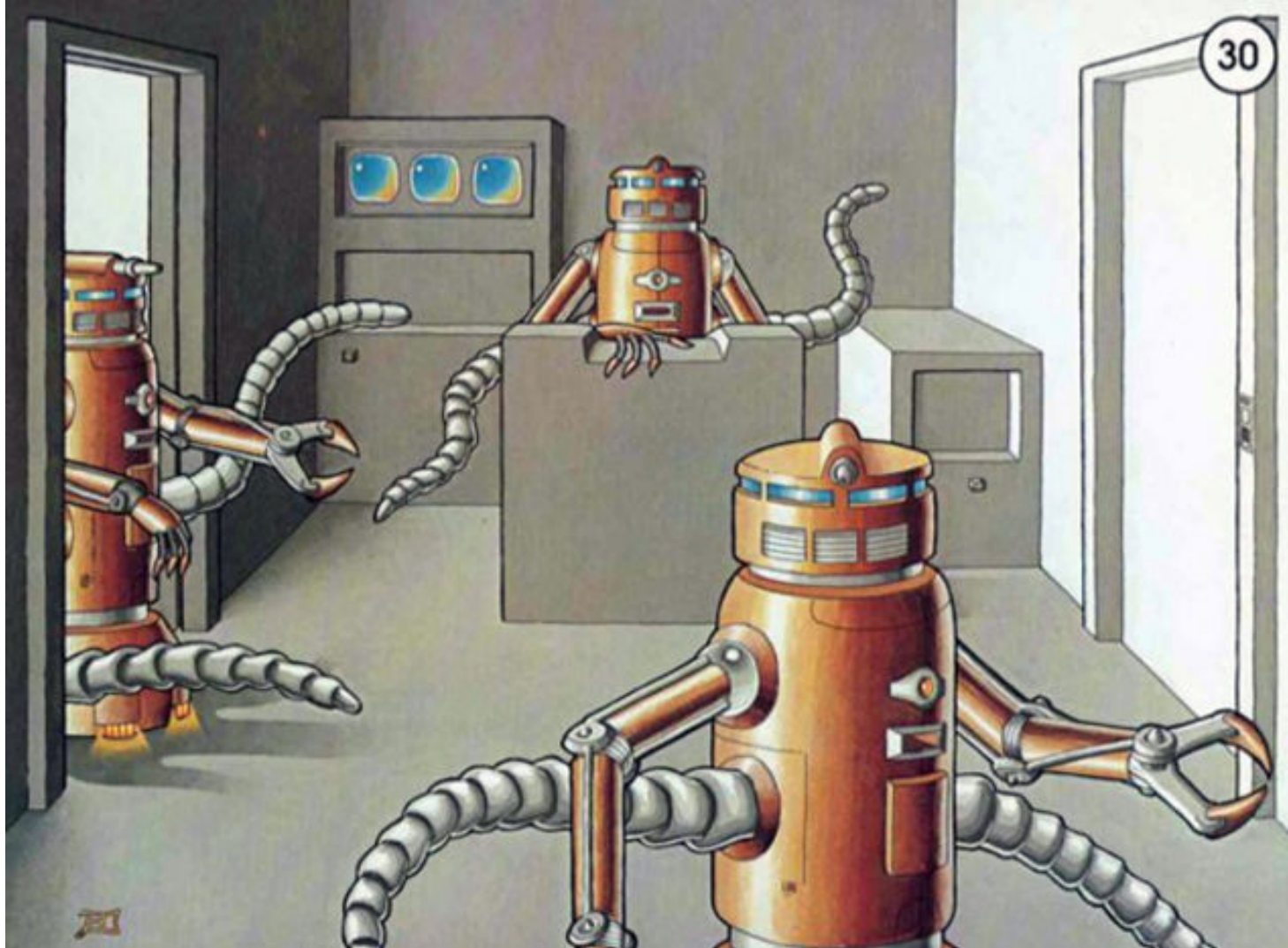
### HOVER SLED

A hover sled is a .75 m by .5 m sled with a hovercycle grade hover fan. It requires a type 1 parabattery. It can support 400 kg of weight. They come with a hitch attachment or a push/pull bar. They are mostly used in conjunction with hauler and delivery robots. The sled itself weighs 50 kg without the parabattery and has 25 STA.

**Cost:** 600 Cr.

Note on Range: In response to a letter, one of the editors of Dragon Magazine ruled that 1 SEU of energy will provide a robot with 1 km of range. I actually have qualms with that ruling but it is somewhat official so I haven't bothered to tinker with it and it's a simple answer which invokes the KISS rule. That said, the hover sled would also have the same range rule: 1 SEU for 1 km of range. Thus, with a type 1 parabattery holding 500 SEUs the sled would operate for 500 km. This would also suggest that it does not remain hovering continuously when it is stationary.





## THE GAXIAN ROBOT CONVERSION

BY TOM VERREULT

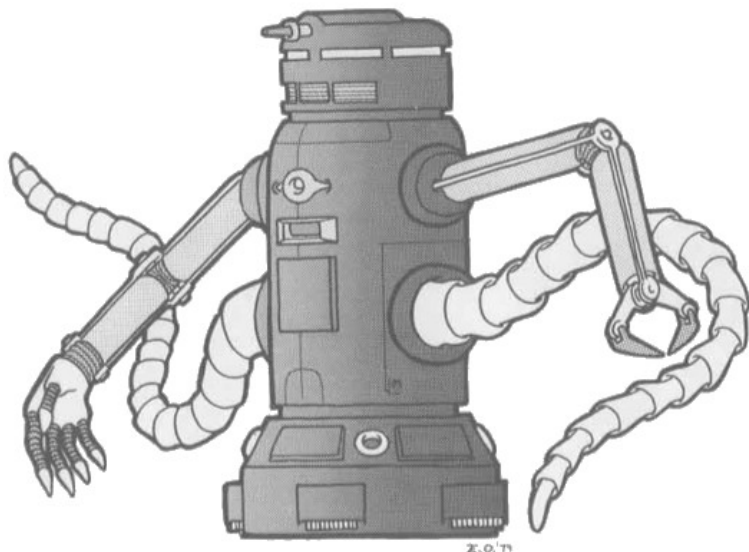
In Gary Gygax's classic D&D module, "Expedition to the Barrier Peaks", we saw a rather interesting robot running around a crashed starship that the fantasy heroes discover. It was a boxy take on a cross

between R2D2 and something the sathar from the Star Frontiers game might produce.

What follows is a simple conversion of this robot to the Star Frontiers game for use as a sathar minion.

The sathar have designed these bots with hover movement on a standard robot body. The robot's head has 8 blue optical receptors placed in a ring around the head giving it a 360° field of vision. The

original limbs end in a clawed hand and a pincer claw that do 2d10 worth of damage and the extra limbs are tentacles that can flail an opponent for 3d10 worth of damage. These robots have the programming to use weapons and may do so.



GAX4 SATHAR BOT

<b>Level:</b>	4
<b>Body Type:</b>	Standard
<b>Movement:</b>	Hover
<b>STA:</b>	100
<b>Attack:</b>	70
<b>Damage:</b>	2d10 claws 3d10 tentacles
<b>IM:</b>	7
<b>RS:</b>	70
<b>Programs:</b>	Attack/Defense

# FAIR SHUTTLE FARE

BY RICHARD "SHADOW SHACK" ROSE

A question that pops up from time to time is "How much does it cost for shuttle fare from the planet to orbital space station (or vice versa)?" Answers vary from a few credits to several hundred based on minimal to no thought, so let's sit down to put some thought into this and see if we can arrive at a realistic answer. In order to do so, we are going to dive headfirst into a business venture called "Spacey Richard's Shuttle Shack" (yes, that's a play on my screen name above). Obviously the first thing we'll need for this venture is a shuttle, so let's hit the Knighthawks Campaign Book and buy one!

A standard HS:2 craft measures 30m in length and 5m in diameter, and there's always the +/-25% rule to go by so ours will be 30m in length (not counting the additional 6m worth of thruster sticking out the stern, which still falls within said parameters) and 6m in width, so my rendering is applicable. We'll utilize a Class-I SCC to keep costs down, and for the sake of least amount invested we'll call this is a standard design and forego the engineer design fees. Now we're starting off with 150,000Cr for the hull and a single chemical thruster.

The helm has two acceleration seats (no cost, although I would be inclined to house rule a price for each seat), one for the pilot and a second for an auxiliary crewmember. The master control panel for the computer is located here at a small cost of 100Cr. Aft of the helm is the airlock and crew storage closet. Aft of that is the passenger cabin featuring 18 more acceleration seats, for a total occupancy of 20 beings. Aft of the passenger cabin is a fresher and the life support equipment. Behind that is the cargo hold which we'll call a half-unit cargo capacity. Large bay doors open overhead, and a smaller loading hatch occupies the deck of the hold. Finally, the stern-most section is the engine room flanked by a sextet of directional thrusters. Why six? No rules here, I just like the look of it). By the book, the costs incurred here include life support and astrogration equipment which

comes out to 2,500Cr totaling 2,600 for this phase of the design.

Communication equipment comes out to 30,080 for a basic package consisting of a subspace radio, radar, and an intercom network which includes a master panel at the helm along with a speaker/mike in the passenger cabin, hold, and engine room. We'll forego any weapons & defenses, emergency equipment, and specialty equipment --- while a cargo arm would certainly be beneficial for the cargo hold, we are pinching credits here...

The most basic software package is listed in the specs below. I prefer to have an analysis program to assist the astrogration program, and a maintenance program to assist in upkeep & repairs. Alas we are going by the book and keeping the price low so the only AD program we'll be utilizing is Commerce for record keeping (after all we don't want to lose our investment in a legal battle with no records to support us). The rest is by the book from the KH Campaign Book: Alarm, Astrogration, Damage Control, Drive, and Life Support. In the end we have a level-2 computer sporting a basic software package that covers basic operation of the ship, which comes out to 14 function points (FP) times 1,000Cr per FP to yield a 14,000Cr computer.

Our final cost for the shuttle comes out to 196,680Cr. To keep our overhead down we shall opt for the lowest payment a la the 20-year loan option, which yields a 7,871Cr monthly payment (or 197Cr per day for a 40-day month... we'll just round up to an even 200). Our official shuttle specs are as follows:

**HS:** 2 **HP:** 10

**Engines:** 1 Chemical A

**ADF:** 1 **MR:** 4 **DCR:** 26

**Crew:** up to 2

**Armament:** N/A

**Defenses:** N/A

**Communications/Detection:** Subspace Radio, Radar, Intercom (1 master panel; speaker/mike in cabin, hold, and engine room)

**Misc Equipment:** N/A

**Computer:** Level: 2 FP: 14 Mass/SP: 8

**Programs:** Alarm (1), Astrogration (1), Commerce (1), Damage Control (1), Drive - Chemical A (1)

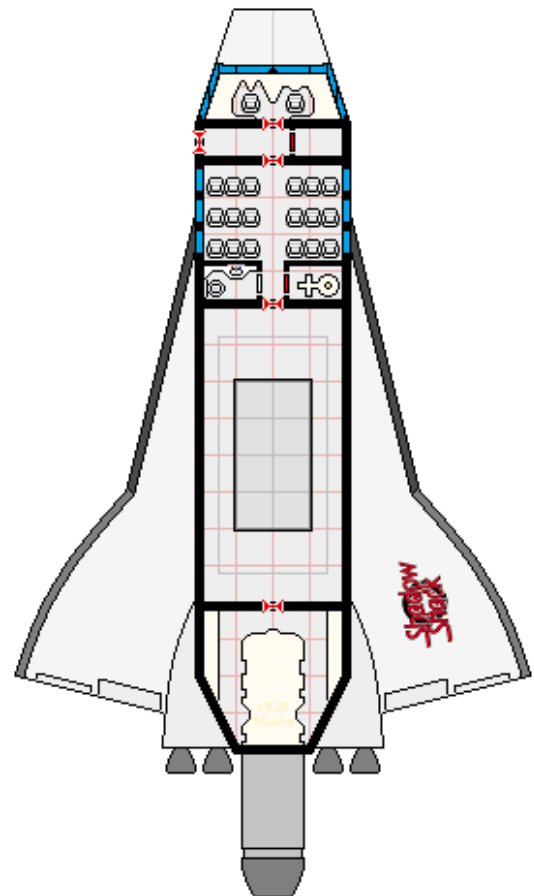
**Life Support Capacity:** 20 (1)

**Cargo Capacity:** 0.5

**Crew Accommodations:** 2 acceleration seats

**Passenger Accommodations:** 18 acceleration seats

**Ship's Vehicles:** N/A





Okay, after a grueling and anticipating 60 days we finally have our shuttle! What a thing of beauty she is too, perched majestically at landing pad 51 of the local Starport. But we're not earning revenue yet, we really need a crew to man this thing. First thing, we need a pilot to operate the craft. Depending on how one interprets the rules, a level-6 Technician can operate rocket-powered vessels a la the Operate Machinery subskill and he makes 100Cr per day. Now if one wants to declare a shuttle as a "system ship" --- KH differentiates a shuttle as something else since it uses less/cheaper astrogation equipment than a system ship, but let's play along here --- then you need a level-1 Pilot who makes 150Cr per day. I'm going with the level-6 Technician because we're only going into orbit and not the farthest reaches of our star system.

We also need at least one additional person maintaining and repairing the spacecraft. Once again, we can look towards a technician, and with no level limits here since repairing machinery has no distinctions --- so we're looking at 50-100Cr per day depending on level. As much as I'd like to skimp and take a low-level tech, what we really need here is an Engineer in order to make full use of our craft's DCR. 120Cr per day nets us an entry level-1 engineer. Our engineer will have to travel back and forth with the pilot, otherwise we have to budget a second one at the station. Besides, he'll be good to have along should the shuttle require repairs for any reason while en-route. We are looking at 220Cr per day for our skeleton crew.

But we're not shuttling yet, our spacecraft needs fuel to go anywhere. While the KH rules for chemical drive fuel are extremely sketchy for system ship use, they work beautifully for a shuttle that ferries back and forth from surface to orbit. 250Cr for a load of fuel gets us going either way, however the caveat for lifting off from planets doubles that cost. We're looking at 500Cr to leave the Starport and 250Cr to get back from the space station. How many times we'll be doing that depends a lot on our location. For example, Clarion Station sees a starship arrival every 100-200 minutes so we stand to make more two-hour trips between the surface and station

than we would hanging around the far reaches of Hargut. We want maximum profits, so we'll set up shop at Port Loren in Gran Quivera, "Hub of the Frontier". Figure two hours for each trip and an hour of layover between each flight, if we overwork our flight crew, we can make four trips in 11 hours. Hopefully our flight crew doesn't mind daily overtime with no days off. We can now factor in 1,500Cr in fuel every day.

By the book annual maintenance applies to all spaceships, including shuttles. This works out to (d10 x hull size) days at 1000Cr per day, and the craft is out of

service for that duration/making zero revenue. The pilot gets a vacation, but the engineer does not. Being a variable cost that occurs once a year, there's no accurate way to include this so our budget should be established at 20,000Cr for the worst-case scenario (which comes out to 50Cr per day).

So far, we have most of the basics down, and our daily overhead is 200Cr for the spacecraft, another 220Cr for the crew, 50Cr towards annual maintenance, and 1,500Cr in fuel costs. That's 1970Cr per day we need to rake in just to break even. Let's round that up to an even 2K just to

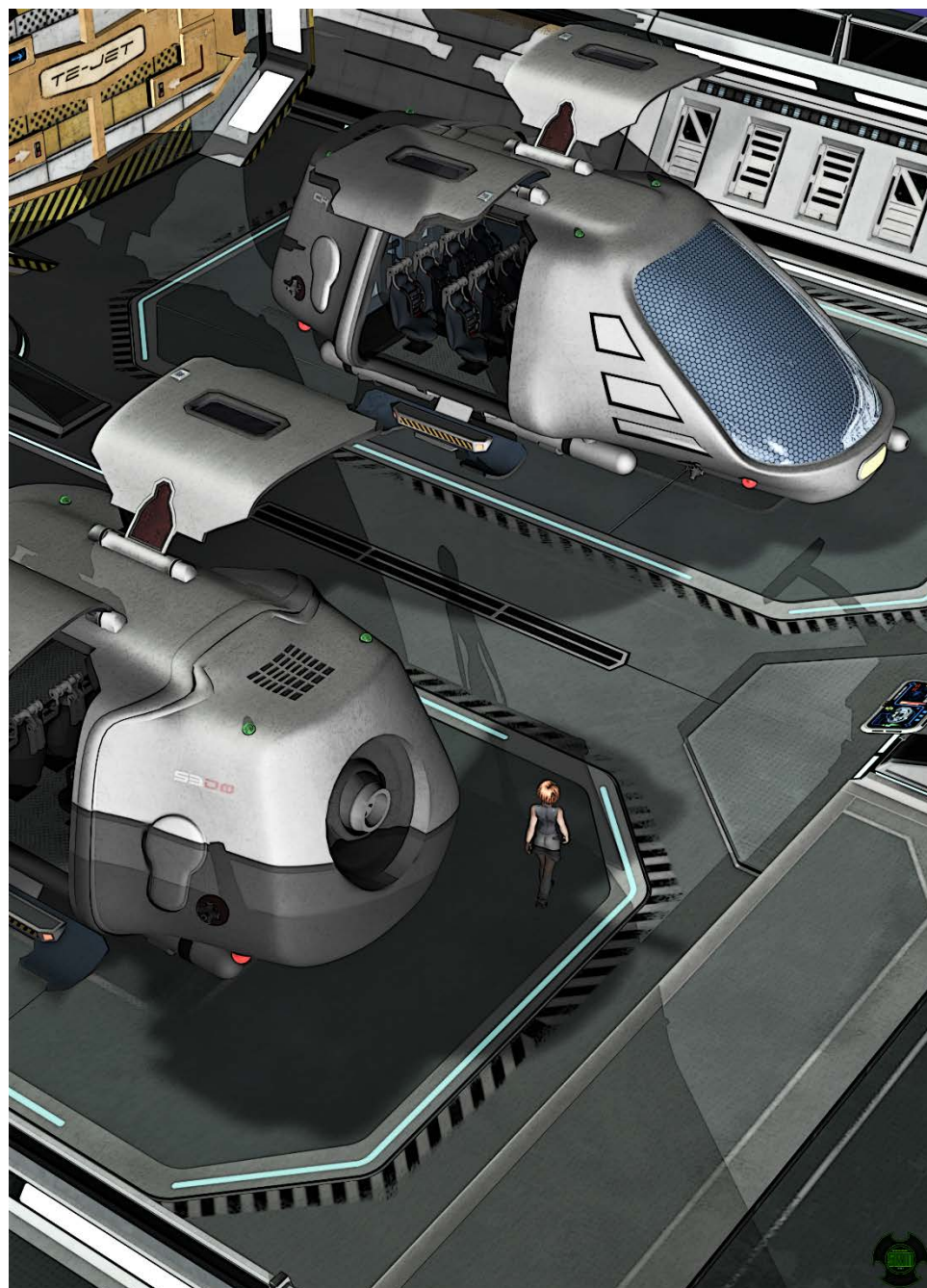


IMAGE BY SCOTT MULDER

ensure a small profit margin. Based on this alone, assuming we can fill every seat on every trip, we need at least 500Cr of revenue each trip. 27Cr per seat breaks even on this front, and that relies heavily on assumption...reality says we won't be filling each seat every time.

We can charge more for trips to the station versus trips to the ground since the fuel costs are higher for the former. Dividing our overhead costs per trip, it's 117.5Cr per day for each trip not counting fuel, so trips from planet to station add another 500 to that figure and trips from the station to surface add 250. At two trips each that's 1,235Cr per day from planet to station and 735Cr per day for trips from the station to surface. Again, assuming every seat can be filled for every trip, that comes to 34Cr per seat for trips to the station and 20Cr per seat for trips to the surface. But we're at Port Loren, not Fantasy Land...so we need to factor in fewer seats for our overhead. a 50% mark-up on each end isn't out of line. 51Cr and 30Cr respectively works for a more realistic 75% occupancy at such a high traffic locale, and again that simply breaks even...as shuttle owners we tend to enjoy a meal at least once per day. Let's just double it (68Cr and 40Cr respectively) and have a comfortable safety margin on the seats.

Now just hold on for a cotton-pickin' minute...filling seats is not our only source of revenue. Anyone remember that big area just aft of the passenger cabin? Yeah, the cargo hold! Citizens are not the only things that need to go back and forth between a space station and planetary surface. Off the cuff, I would want to charge a price per kilogram for cargo transport, alas that's not how freight hauling works in the Star Frontiers rules. So, let's take a look at the cargo tables that go by "units" and examine some basic facts. Cargo dropped off at the space station has arrived at its "destination", and cargo from the surface is coming from the "source" as it needs to be upstairs for freighter captains to acquire in their quests for off world transport. It's safe to say these prices factor in warehouse fees and transport back and forth from station to surface and vice versa, so let's just call it a 5% shuttle transport fee for any cargo. Gran Quivera is an industrial world,

so industrial goods will be destined for the station via the "source" column while resources (and agricultural goods if you utilize the Rare Wines and Ready Cash from Dragon Magazine) will be going from the station to surface via the "destination" column of the respective cargo tables. This actually works in our favor since resources tend to be higher in value than industrial goods, we're making the bigger cut in trips to the surface --- more so considering the fuel cost is lower!

Now the big problem here is the random nature of passengers and cargo. The bigger problem is we have nobody to charter either! Our pilot is busy flying the craft and the engineer is busy maintaining it, neither one of them has time to hang around ticketing offices or warehouse outlets. While the rules don't specifically cover some of this, we do have a few things to go by. The Space Liner Booking Table doesn't apply to shuttles, rather it covers interstellar tickets, so we get no help there. A house rule would have to be drafted with seat rates in mind, suffice it to say a small kickback to the ticketing office would be in order.

Freighter captains "beat the docks" for cargo so it stands to reason shuttle owners would have to do the same, so those big payouts for cargo aren't going to be a regularly recurring thing. The cargo office is also detailed in the KH rules and can certainly be employed, it's slightly more efficient than beating the docks. Securing a charter is another option detailed in the rules for cargo if we don't mind coughing up 20% of our profits.

Another factor that isn't mentioned in the rules comes from one of the adventure modules --- berthing fees. SF/KH-1 Dramune Run mentions this in the epilogue section, citing a 2,000Cr

monthly berthing fee. Obviously, a shuttle isn't going to take up as much space as a freight hauler, nor will it be parked for lengthy endeavors like a freighter would...so a lower fee is not out of line. Again, we're house ruling here, and our shuttle will be spending more time at the Starport than in the station. A few hundred credits each month certainly isn't unreasonable, you can decide for yourself what is fair.

We've boiled down a lot of material here to establish an answer to a trivial question. We arrived at a 68/40Cr ticket price (54Cr average) for shuttle seats based on a bare bones craft and skeleton crew. Certainly, we hope our business venture grows and we can afford to hire more help, thus enabling more flights back and forth. Cargo profits can certainly boost our profit margins but are not as reliable to count on regularly. All this math has given me something of a headache but at the same time it has enlightened me (and hopefully everyone else reading along) about shuttle transport costs. While that 54Cr average works for a bare-bones operation, it's safe to say most shuttle ventures in the Frontier have expanded well beyond that threshold. In the end, as a general rule, I feel quite comfortable charging my players something to the tune of 100Cr surface-to-station and 60Cr station-to-surface fees as a general guideline.

Hopefully this has served as an enlightening resolution to a trivial question. May the solar winds be at your stern and the space lanes be free of pirates, now start stockpiling those earned credits!



IMAGE BY SCOTT MULLER



# IF WE COULD PUT TIMELINES IN A BOTTLE ...

BY LAURA MUMMA & TOM VEREAULT

Approximately eight years ago a timeline project was begun at the Star Frontiers dot US forums. The project experienced a lot of activity and collaboration, however about six years ago it stagnated and never generated a published timeline. Part of that is on me as I became distracted by a series of real-world life events happening around me. Despite that, a lot of work was done to compile a complete “Alpha Dawn” timeline.

Why was an Alpha Dawn timeline necessary when there is a Zebulon’s Guide timeline? To start, the Zebulon’s Guide material was intended as a complete overhaul of the Alpha Dawn setting, moving it from the genre of space opera to something closer to Gama World. In addition, there were numerous problems with the Zeb’s timeline that have been endlessly debated over the years. A true Alpha Dawn timeline was scattered over numerous documents and almost impossible to source without copies of all those documents. Even then, a lot of supposition and guess work had to be done to compose the timeline.

I would like to thank the numerous collaborators that contributed to the existence of an Alpha Dawn timeline: Iggy, JCab 747, Rattraveller, Tchklinxa, and Terl Obar. Special thanks are due to Tchklinxa, who did much of the heavy lifting by compiling data from disparate sources.

Originally, the following timeline was going to only include data from the rule books and modules, but data gleaned from the Dragon magazine articles was included. Dragon magazine articles were always considered optional despite being from an official source. The data from Dragon articles doubled the timeline’s size. Without it the timeline would have been quite brief and anyone that desires a “pure” timeline can simply ignore Dragon sourced data as each entry in the timeline references its source.

## THE AGE OF ADVENTURE

The designation “Age of Adventure” first appears in the Zeb’s Guide timeline. After

much discussion, supposition and debate, a judgement was made that the original modules all take place during what we would term the Alpha Dawn Age of Adventure, 50 FY to 60 FY approximately.

## THE HOME WORLDS DEBATE

The original creators of the game intentionally left the home worlds of the core four species as off the map and too distant to interfere with the Frontier setting. The timeline does not address the origins of the core four or the location of their home worlds, leaving that to individual game masters to handle for themselves.

Ideas that carried weight with the collaboration team were that Terledrom could work as a home world for the vrusk and Groth for the dralasites. The fan theory of the Yazirians fleeing the destruction of their home world in a sort of “Star Exodus” received some endorsement. As for humanity, whether their home world is Earth or some other world suggested by the History blub in the Basic Game rulebook, it was felt that this home world was distant (25,000 LY) and inaccessible.

## THE ALPHA DAWN TIMELINE

*Compiled by Laura Mumma*

**1939 PF** – Snowball in the Liberty system enters into a state of climate collapse due to pollution and an asteroid impact. *TWM*

**400 PF -300 PF** – Early Age of Colonization: Cassidine, Dramune, Fromeltar, Kizk-Kar, Theseus, and White Light systems all colonized.

**339 PF** – Some time prior to this point Clarion is settled by Humans. *WoWL*

**339 PF** – Establishment of the Leotus Dynasty on Clarion. *WoWL*

**302 PF** – The Dramune System colonized. *Dramune*

**300 PF - 1PF** – Golden Age of Colonization: Araks, Athor, Dixon’s Star, Gruna-Garu, K’aken Kar, Madderly’s Star, Prenglar, Scree From, Timeon, and Truane’s Star are colonized during this period as well as a handful of outposts and small colonies latter destroyed in the Sathar War.

**139 PF** – Humans from Clarion colonize Kraatar. After mining efforts fail, they adopt a simple, agrarian lifestyle. *DSotM*

**Circa 100 PF** – Relations between Inner & Outer Reach sour in the Dramune System. In addition, the population of Inner Reach has become mixed and is no longer dominated by Dralasites. *Dramune*

**19 PF** – Vrusk merchants make contact with Kraatar. Vrusk colonists follow. *DSofM*

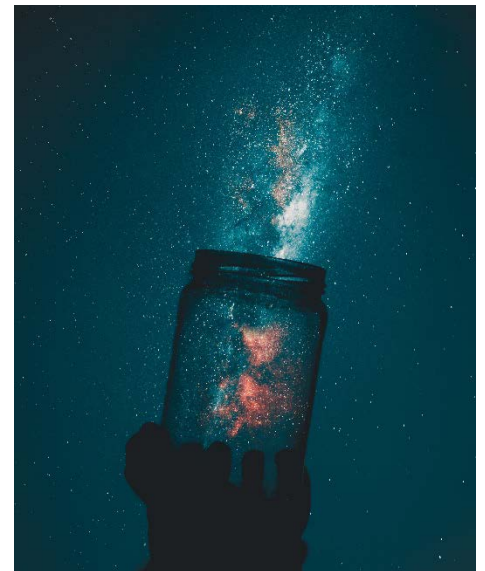
**3 PF** – Arrival of the Sathar in the Frontier and the destruction of several outposts and isolated colonies *AD*

**3PF - 0FY** – The Sathar War *KH & Dramune*

**0 FY** – Founding of the United Planetary Federation, planet after Admiral Morgaine, founding of Space Fleet *KH*

**1 FY** – Colonization of Morgaine’s World. *KH*

**1 FY** – Jack Legrance (founder of the Kraatar Liberation Corps) is born. *DSofM*





**5 FY** – Establishment of Star Law to combat Sathar subterfuge campaign, interstellar criminals, and pirates *AD*

**19 FY** – Jack Legrange enters medical school. *DSofM*

**31 FY** – Kraatar Liberation Corps founded. *DSotM*

**36 FY** – Second Dramune War. *Dramune*

**39 FY** – Jack Legrange is forced to flee Kraatar to avoid arrest. David Dever imprisoned. *DSotM*

**39 FY** – Discovery of Zebulon system. *Dragon #98*

**40 FY** – Pale creates Planetary Research and Development Division. *Dragon #98*

**41 FY** – Freightier Gullwind commissioned. *Dramune*

**41 FY** – Garlus Tylappar becomes Captain of Gullwind. *Dramune*

**42 FY** – War of the Pales begins. Head of MINER assumes identity of Star Devil. *Dragon #98*

**45-48** – FY Pale suffers economic depression. Streel begins economic takeover of Pale. *Dragon #98*

**48 FY** – Streel controls all mining operations on Pale by this point. *Dragon #98*

**51 FY** – David Dever escapes from prison. *DSotM*

**55-70 FY** – Age of Adventure

**58 FY** – Streel and Pale militia crush revolt on New Pale. War of Pales ends. *Dragon #98*

**59 FY** – Streel co-finances new PR&DD on Pale. *Dragon #98*

**60 FY** – Events of Voltturnus Campaign occur & first major Sathar incursion since the Sathar War. *Dragon #98*

**61 FY** – Relations between Inner & Outer Reach at all time low (events in the Dramune Run module). *Dramune*

**61 FY 4/12** – Gullwind undergoes last annual maintenance. *Dramune*

**61 FY 8/8** – Gullwind undergoes last engine overhaul. *Dramune*

**61 FY** – Gullwind berthing fee at Majora station paid through 3/1/62. *Dramune*

**61 FY** – Events of Dramune Run module (current Dramune War). *Dramune*

**61 FY** – Rihanna system and planet Alcazzar discovered. *MtA*

**100 FY** – Corporate Wars begin in earnest. *Dragon 89*

**127 FY** – At or after this point Star Law marks 127 years without a corrupt officer graduating from its academy. *Dragon 91*

## SOURCE CODES

**AD** = Alpha Dawn rule book

**KH** = Knight Hawks rule book

**MtA** = Mission to Alcazzar module SF 4

**DSotM** = Dark Side of the Moon module SF 6

**WoWL** = Warriors of White Light module SF

**Dramune** = Dramune Run module SFKH 1

**TWM** = The War Machine module SFKH 4

**Dragon 89** = “The Mighty Mega Corporations”

**Dragon 91** = “Careers in Star Law”

**Dragon 98** = “The Voltturnus Connection”



# CITIZENS OF STAR FRONTIERS

An Updated  
Old School  
**STAR FRONTIERS**  
Actual Play Campaign

Tune in to **Citizens of Star Frontiers** on Youtube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN07DjX9cwaEdNkgYegSCnA>

Join us at our Patreon, for original maps, art, alien creatures, NPC's, encounter notes, and full game scripts. Patrons even get to help shape the campaign with creative input.

**Citizens of the Frontier (Star Frontiers) Patreon:**  
[https://www.patreon.com/user?u=17228105&fan\\_landing=true](https://www.patreon.com/user?u=17228105&fan_landing=true)

# SPECIAL CONCESSIONS

BY RICHARD "SHADOW SHACK" ROSE

When I host a game with new players or new-to-me players, with very few exceptions I stick to BTB (By the Book), also known as RAW (Rules as Written) --- whether it's face to face/pen & paper or an online play-by-post forum or chat style game room. The reason for this is my adventure is already written, and once I start allowing "other official fluff" I have to re-write the adventure to accommodate it.

First, I'll start with that rare exception. One game I hosted was "Starfighter Corps", an alternate means for characters to gain ship skills (specifically, the pilot skill). Players went through Flight School and earned their level-1 skill and were assigned to a fighter squadron. Now if I went by the book, the scenarios would be mundane, repetitive, and otherwise downright boring after a few combat sessions using the textbook Knighthawks fighter with three assault rockets in every scenario. So, I had no qualms porting the Laser Pod (from Polyhedron Magazine #19) and whipping up various different fighter craft ranging in different hull sizes with different weaponry...up to and including a house-ruled "Laser Pod Turret" which was essentially a shorter-range laser battery that could be utilized on heavy fighter craft (HS:2). By doing so the players could experience a much wider variety of dogfighting styles with mixed weaponry and different sized

craft, and the game was quite successful because of that drift from monotony. Note the difference here is this what the players are working with, it's not a choice it's their assignment...the varying scenarios utilize different fighter craft which are stacked up against other fighter craft and their associated support ships, all preordained by me, the referee who penned the adventure.

Which brings me back to the more common gaming situations. Upon request, if I allowed something off the standard books such as Proton Guns (from Polyhedron Magazine #20) then that one player requesting as much loads up on those goods while the rest of the players are going BTB and it becomes unbalanced. Either one player succeeds against the bad guys that are equipped BTB and the rest struggle or the rest succeed against the bad guy with proton gun/defenses while the one struggles. And vice versa for the bad guys against the players. Or...I suppose that I could just go back to page one and rewrite the entire adventure, thereby stalling the entire game. Yeah, that doesn't sound like much fun at all, whether you're the referee or one of the players.

There's also the "Law of Concessions" to consider, which reads "after one player gets a special request, they will all make special requests." Yep, the next player wants Powered Armor from Dragon Magazine #129. Another player wants the Framastat 3000 mentioned in paragraph 15 sentence 3 of the "Fun Stuff for Your Game" article in Dungeoneering magazine #15,972 (I made that last one up so don't bother trying to reference it). Before I know it, I'm re-writing my adventure to the point where even I don't recognize it.

As written in the Star Frontiers rule books, I feel that beams versus slug throwers is more than enough to make it a challenge, I feel that it doesn't need to be a three-way fiasco. Sonics and electrics are enough options to serve as a wild card, two commons and two rares. Throwing in a third, be it common or rare, throws off that balance. More so just to sate one or two players out of a group.

One more consideration is the fact that some players may not be familiar with out-of-game fluff. Yes, it's true...despite the modern age of information there are many who have never read (or even heard of) Dragon Magazine. Or Polyhedron. Or White Dwarf, or many other RPG magazines with articles penned by those who are part of the RPG company staff. I myself enjoyed a one-year subscription to Dragon and Polyhedron back when Star Frontiers was in its hey-day, and even so there are tid-bits I missed out on. Is it fair to players with no working knowledge to allow outside fluff into the game? Could they be discouraged by those players that suddenly gain an upper hand if I don't edit the game? Will they be discouraged if I do edit the game? Is it even worth it? Personally, I don't think so.

So, what can I do to placate such requests without rewriting my entire game? Well, there's always house rules. As I opened with, I try to avoid that route when it comes to new and novice players that are still learning the written rules. Now assuming it's a group of veterans? Going back to my prior example, I suppose if

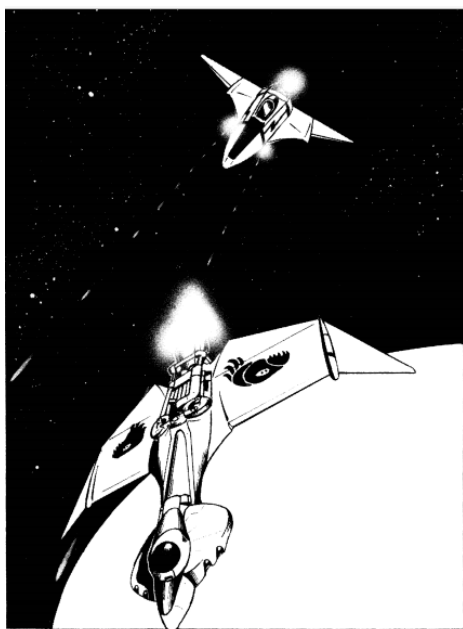


IMAGE BY BRIAN PHONGUANGHAM



Proton Guns were simply redefined as "beam weapons" it wouldn't be an issue. In other words, allow the standard Albedo Screen to defend against it, rather than re-writing the adventure with occasional bad guys sporting Proton Screens along the way. Rewriting Powered Armor is also an option. Ditto for the fictitious "Framastat 3000" example too.

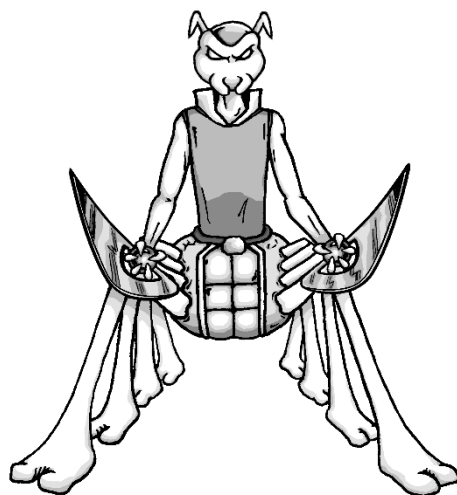
"But that's not how the article ruled it!" To allow Power Armor or Proton Guns or any other "official fluff" as written in (insert gaming magazine title here)? For the sake of simplicity, it's no different than saying you can shoot an automatic rifle by the rules but a needler gun uses a completely different set of rules...both are slug throwers and both can be defended by Inertia Screens & Skeinsuits. To introduce a whole new set of defenses for the needler is pointless, and so is re-writing my entire game to accommodate a special request. It's ready to play, the other players are ready to play. I refuse to delay a game session for weeks or months to re-write and potentially lose the players that were already...ready.

This is why I'm quite specific about character generation in my games. Sadly, even by the book you still get the occasional player asking for concessions to those parameters, even going so far as quoting rules from the rule books. I take the same stance here: the parameters exist

for the adventure I wrote. To cite such an example, I refer back to my aforementioned Starfighter Corps game. The parameters were pretty open, you can have any character with any natural scores (i.e., 30 minimum/70 maximum before racial modifiers) and X amount of XP to spend on any amount of pre-KH skills within that limit, and they'll earn the Pilot skill with prerequisite skills in-game.

Sadly, even that simple set of guidelines is not immune to special concessions. "Do I get the two free skills every beginning character has?" No, this isn't a beginning character. You get X amount of XP to buy any skills you want. Your character began with two of those back in his/her day. "Can I opt for Astrogation instead of Pilot?" Why?!? This is a starfighter based game where the players are...piloting fighter craft. You'll never see any action as an astrogator, are there any other one-shot NPCs you'd be interested in portraying when we get around to that portion of the adventure? Are you really interested in just a cameo appearance rather than being a headlining part of the game? You can see where this is going.

I get it, there are meta-gamers out there that aren't happy unless they're portraying their "ultimist" characters (that was a parody article in Dragon magazine, don't ask me which issue. It was fun reading nonetheless and defines such whimsical players). There are gamers out there that simply want to have what they define as a "perfect" PC that can handle most situations. I'm a pretty fair ref, I allow ability scores to be arranged as the player wishes within certain boundaries as mentioned



above. If you want all 60+ scores, then you can have all 60+ scores. But you won't have all level-6 skills, hence the XP point-buy...you might get one or two level-6 skills out of the deal, but you won't be the ultimate PC. After that I'm pretty close to the cuff as to what is written in the rule books.

Become a regular player in my campaign, and I can make you dizzy with house rules and special concessions, to the point that they simply become adjectiveless concessions. For a one-shot game, it's by the rules in the rule books for me. Engage in a sandbox game, no problem --- anything goes there too. When I take the time to pen an adventure for a group of players I know little about, even if one or two are those I do have some familiarity with, once I establish guidelines for character generation it's usually going back to basics with RAW/BTB after that.

Much like the 20-SEU setting of a laser rifle, I hope this has been "enlightening". Keep your knees out of the solar breeze and may the space lanes hold good tidings and fortune for you all.





# A LOST FRONTIER

## A HISTORY OF THE STAR FRONTIERS ROLE PLAYING GAME

BY OSCAR RIOS & TOM VERREULT

**Editor's Note:** This is the transcript of a panel presentation given at a Con in Sept 2021 by the authors. It's fairly lightly edited but I have interjected comments in several places.

### INTRODUCTION

Greetings, welcome to our panel on Star Frontiers, sponsored by AARP, Advil, and Metasmucil. Just kidding, I only wish we had sponsors.

I'm Oscar Rios, I'm an author, editor, game designer, and publisher of both fiction and role-playing game material. I'm the president of Golden Goblin Press, which produces Comic Horror fiction and supplements for the Call of Cthulhu Role Playing game. I've been a part of four Ennie award winning projects, including the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Guide to Cthulhu Invictus, which my company produced and of which I was the primary author.

I'm Tom Verreault, writer, illustrator, and part of the founding editorial team at the Frontier Explorer fanzine. Former assistant editor at the Star Frontiersman fanzine. I have two hundred published articles and dozens of illustrations in three different fan magazines.

Tom and I have one big thing in common. We are both huge Star Frontier Nerds. And, like all nerds, we're very excited to talk to you today about as obscure topic near and dear to our hearts. So, without further ado, let's talk about Star Frontiers.

### BIRTH; WHAT IS STAR FRONTIERS?

Star Frontiers was, or is depending on who you talk to, a science fiction game produced by TSR in 1982. The concept was four races coming together in a region of space somewhere between their own homeworlds, neutral ground so to speak. They jointly settled this region, called The

Frontier, until eventually all memory of their true homeworlds were lost. They were the industrious insect race, the Vrusk, a race of warlike and clannish glider squirrel/monkeys called Yazirian, a race resembling a single celled organism able to form arms and legs, who had a very strange sense of humor called Dralasites, and of course humans. The Frontier is eventually attacked without warning by a 5<sup>th</sup> race of worm like beings with tentacles called the Sathar.

By today's standard the game system was clunky. It was an over and under 1-100 percentile system which solely relied on d10s. Skill advancement was a grind, and in my opinion the most broken part of the game. There were no level advancements. Combat rules were not bad, even by today's standards, but where the game truly shined was in its world building, its history and lore, the interesting races it presented, and the political interplay between them.

The game was expanded in 1984 with Knight Hawks, rules for everything related to starship combat. A dozen adventure modules were produced, including a three-part campaign [ed: actually two three-part campaigns], and the game was regularly supported with additional material in the form of articles in both Dragon, Ares, Polyhedron, and the UK's Imagine magazines, which gave the game 2 new playable races, rules for armored vehicles, rules for underwater adventures, new weapons and equipment, and a host of other topics.

In 1984 a second edition of the Star Frontier game was released called Zebulon's Guide to Frontier Space. It gave the game a new region of space to explore, The Rim, and three new playable races who lived there, the large plant like Osakar, the kangaroo like Humma, and the gnome like merchants called Ifshnits (the less said about them the better) [Ed: why does no one, including myself, ever include the Mech-anons?]. Zeb's was a very mixed bag. On the one hand, it had new races, greatly expanded lore, setting and history, and a

plethora of new weapons and equipment. The bad news was it attempted to overhaul the game with a new rule system, called The Resolution System, which had both chance to hit and damage decided with a single dice roll, factored by degrees of success. Intended to speed the game along, it had the opposite effect, making each roll a complex math problem.

We were promised additional editions of Zebulon's Guide, to further expand the game. One expansion announced was Proton Fire, the rules for playing sentient robots. However, we never got that. By 1985, it was over.

In 1984 a second edition was in the works but with the looming cancellation due to TSR pivoting to the Buck Rogers RPG the first and only volume of Zebulon's Guide out of a total of 14 was rushed into publication. As a second edition it was unplayable without the rules from the first edition. For that reason, it has been relegated to the status of setting supplement. By 1985 Buck Rogers was in and Star Frontiers was out. [Editor's Note: It wasn't completely Buck Rogers. According to Shannon Applegate, in his excellent series of books, Designers and Dragons, Gary Gygax, in an attempt to turn the finances of TSR around, made one last bid to save the company he founded before being forced out of it and put the axe to several game lines to trim expenses. Star Frontiers was one of these. TSR may have been moving toward Buck Rogers, but Star Frontiers was actually killed before then.]

### THE DEATH OF STAR FRONTIERS

In 1985 TSR was split up into multiple companies. The group who now owned Star Frontiers abandoned the game, with the rumor being they wished to promote a different Sci-Fi themed game, namely Buck Rogers XXVVC, a short-lived RPG game released in 1990. Why they thought players

who grew up with Star Wars, Aliens, and Star Trek would be interested in a setting produced in the late 1920's is anyone's guess. Things went dark for Star Frontiers, until there was a spark of light in the darkness.

The reason TSR went with Buck Rogers over an established space opera is linked to the new CEO. CEO Lorraine Williams, who was also the part of the Dill family that owned the IP for Buck Rogers contracted with herself as the Dill family representative for the BR IP and agreed as CEO of TSR to pay the Dill family for every BR product PUBLISHED (not sold). This then resulted in Ms. Williams ordering tons of supplements for the BR game to be published which then lingered on warehouse shelves because her family was getting paid no matter how poorly the BR product sold.

## D20 FUTURE, A GLIMMER OF HOPE

In 2002 Wizards of the Coast released a supplement to their d20 modern setting, called d20 Future. The races of Star Frontiers were converted into this rule set under a setting called "Star Law". Many fans hoped that this was the first step toward an official revival of Star Frontiers, but alas those hopes never manifested. No further official support for the Star Frontiers RPG was ever produced again. The key word there being "official".

## THE OSR

As newer, more rules heavy games were produced, such as Pathfinder and the updated versions of Dungeons and Dragons (versions 2, 3, 3.5, 4, and on), a new movement started. There were those who longed for a return to simpler rules, like those created in the 1970's and early 80's. Sure these rules weren't perfect, but they didn't bog your games down in endless mathematical equations, volumes of alternate optional rules, and chart references. This movement became known as the Old School Renaissance, or the OSR for short. The movement was championed by smaller, independent publishers and passionate fans, who were less interested in

selling new books than they were in having a good time with friends. So Star Frontiers stirred to life once more, as long out of print books were scanned and distributed by a technology so advanced it didn't even exist in the actual Star Frontiers setting – The Internet. Despite the best efforts of the publishers who actually owned Star Frontiers, the fans turned the lights back on.

## THE FANZINES

Bill Logan was a fan with a vision for a revival based on all the positive nostalgia on the net surrounding Star Frontiers. He obtained, from WotC, a fan license that allowed him to produce digitally remastered copies of the rules and modules. There already existed another fan license that allowed another fan site to offer optical scans of the rules and modules. Bill's genius was that he began a fan magazine, the Star Frontiersman, which helped to build community through 25 issues. Later, former editors of the Star Frontiersman launched their own magazine, the Frontier Explorer, as a quarterly publication which has carried the torch through 33 issues and counting.

## THE BATTLE FOR STAR FRONTIERS

### THE FIRST ATTACK - EVIL HAT (2017)

Evil Hat noticed that the Star Frontiers trademark had lapsed and decided to move on it, announcing their intent to produce a new Star Frontiers game despite not having the rights to the intellectual property (IP) of the original.

The initial backlash from Hasbro was actually welcomed by the fan community as most of the out-of-print Star Frontiers publications were put up on DriveThruRPG to demonstrate that WotC was still doing business with the Star Frontiers IP. Many fans rejoiced to be able to buy hardcover rulebooks after all these decades, but then WotC lawyers sent out cease and desist letters to all the holders of fan licenses. All of the digitally remastered and

optically scanned copies of the rules and modules were driven from the web and the magazine had to halt publication for a year. [Ed: That's close. See sidebar at the bottom of the next page for full details.]

### THE SECOND ATTACK - NEW TSR (2021)

This is a complicated and somewhat fluid situation. What we know for sure is the New TSR is a company that successfully snapped up a dormant trademark. [Ed: not quite. They've applied for it just like Evil Hat did. It has not been granted yet.] They have mishandled an announcement to produce a Star Frontiers RPG without, as far as we know, having access to the actual SF IP. [Ed: As of Sept 2021, I was told by representatives of the company that they did not have the IP.] Their bungled marketing was then compounded by tone deaf comments by personages attached to the company and resulted in a Twitter-fueled dumpster fire. There is currently no hard information as to what is going on as the fan magazine's contact at WotC has given a "no comment".

However, the magazine has been pursuing a campaign of diversification with content for Traveller, FrontierSpace, Star Without Number, and generic material so that it cannot be shut down again by WotC defending their IP.

### FAILED ATTEMPTS AT REVIVAL (PUBLICATION)

All throughout these ham-fisted attempts at claiming Star Frontiers through trademark loopholes, there have been multiple good faith efforts to do so by dedicated fans. Many young gamers who grew up playing Star Frontiers are now accomplished authors, game designers, and publishers. They possess the skills and passion needed to truly breathe new life into Star Frontiers. To fix the problems with the rules, while respectfully protecting everything that made the game great in the first place. Multiple groups of such individuals have approached Hasbro quietly with proposals to produce updated versions of Star Frontiers for them. In the age of crowdfunding, acquiring the capital is no longer

a financial risk to publishers, but can be raised by the fans themselves. Unfortunately, all such efforts (one of which Tom and I were personally involved in) have been universally rebuffed. Unofficially the rumor is that Hasbro has plans to undertake such a revival themselves at some point. When that might be is anyone's guess, but for the die-hard fans the obvious answer would be 2022 – marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the game's original release.

## STAR FRONTIERS TODAY

Where is Star Frontiers today? That's a difficult question to answer. In some ways it's thriving. There are multiple actual plays of Star Frontiers the game posted on YouTube (Including my own, Citizens of Star Frontiers), as well as active groups on Facebook and Discord. Frontier Explorer magazine keeps putting out four issues a year, with a healthy backlog of articles ensuring that it will have ample material to

produce new issues for years to come. Long time players of other games are starting to play Star Frontiers. So as long as Star Frontiers is loved, new material is produced, and Referees are taking their players on adventures. Star Frontiers is Alive and Well (which in fact is the name of Facebook group, with just over four thousand members).

As for official new content from the actual owners of the IP and trademark, the future is clouded by chaos and mystery. Fans have had our hopes raised, and dashed, multiple times, through misinformation and ham-fisted efforts to revive our beloved game. We've been ignored by the company who actually owns Star Frontiers, being told things like "there are plans for the future" at best, and at worst "no comment". With the official 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Star Frontiers just one year away, the dreamers among us dream of a grand revival, with no true evidence to work from.

Sometimes it's hard being a fan of Star Frontiers, but for those who love it, it lives on by our passion and determination never to let it truly die.

## CLOSING

This concludes our panel on the history of Star Frontiers. If you want to know more, find us on Youtube (Citizens of Star Frontiers), Facebook (Star Frontiers: Alive and Well), Patreon (Frontier Explorer and Citizens of Star Frontiers), and Frontier Explorer magazine. If you want to play Star Frontiers both digital and physical copies are available through DriveThruRPG.

Thank you all very much for your time.

We hope you enjoy the rest of the convention.

Please stay safe.

So, with whatever time remains, we'd be happy to take any questions

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN 2018

Tom Stephens here. At the time Evil Hat applied for the Star Frontiers trademark (and Fred Hicks, owner of Evil Hat, confirmed to me that they had no plan to use the original IP in their new game), I had already been given ownership of the Star Frontiersman and remastered rules by Bill Logan as he was focusing more on the development of his FrontierSpace game. As part of that ownership transfer, WotC gave me an unlimited, non-commercial license to the game.

When Evil Hat applied for the Star Frontiers trademark, WotC basically exercised their copyright on the game. I had originally contacted them and asked them what was going on and once they figured that out, I had a nice, friendly conversation with my contact there (the brand manager that handles Star Frontiers). In that discussion I was asked to remove the remastered rules and modules from the website as well as remove the republished Dragon and other articles from the Star Frontiersman issues. The only official thing they did was revoke my unlimited, non-commercial license. It was after this conversation that all the Star Frontiers material became available on DriveThruRPG.

They also asked me to stop publishing issues of the Frontier Explorer while they sorted everything out with Evil Hat. It was always intended to be temporary (although I didn't convey that very well at the time). And at no time did they ask me to take the magazines offline. I did take the issues of the Star Frontiersman offline that contained the remastered Dragon articles, but only until I could create redacted versions with those articles removed. It is those versions that are online now. The reason the magazine stopped publication for a full year is completely due to a decision by me. WotC probably would have been fine if we had just skipped one issue as they had everything sorted out by then. However, the request to temporarily stop came at a very welcome time for me as I was very burnt out (a condition I'm once again finding myself in). I was ready to be done publishing and it was a year before I was ready to start things back up.

At least on my end, everything was friendly and fairly transparent in my interactions with WotC. I never had to deal with any lawyers. Due to my background and training in copyright and trademark law from my Master of Library Science degree, I completely understood what WotC was doing as well as what they could and couldn't ask me to do. I probably could have pushed back and continued to publish the Frontier Explorer, but as mentioned, I was burnt out and welcomed the break. Plus, it kept me in their good graces where I still sit today.

The digital scans of the original rules, hosted by Tim Norris at the starfrontiers.com website, have a slightly different story. I don't know if WotC ever even contacted him, although I assume that they did. His permissions for hosting those files, first from TSR (the original one) and then from WotC after they acquired TSR, were that he could post and distribute them for free (they were originally distributed to fans via CD before the advent of the Web) until such time as WotC started publishing the game again themselves, at which point he was to reference WotC's official sources. So when the material went up on DriveThruRPG, he followed through on his side of the agreement and started linking to the material on DriveThruRPG.

I made a few posts on the Frontier Explorer website at the time, that give a few more details. If you're interested, you can check them out:

<https://frontierexplorer.org/article/i-received-call-wotc>

<https://frontierexplorer.org/article/end-era>

<https://frontierexplorer.org/article/were-back>



# THE ESCAPE POD

## A CSI PORT LOREN ADVENTURE

BY TOM VERREAULT

My wife wanted to play Star Frontiers and she also happens to be a murder mystery nut, so I wrote the following CSI, Port Loren adventure for her. I gave her an NPC partner as moral support and to cover some of the skills her character didn't have. She successfully navigated the police procedural and was hot on the trail of the criminal, but a series of catastrophically bad rolls forced me to let the criminal escape by stealing a space yacht. I was actually ok with this as it sets him up as a reoccurring antagonist who will have a grudge against her character.

Having run it solo, my feeling is that its best for 2-3 players. Things that I thought were obvious, like asking for the passenger manifest of the ships that the escape pod could have come from, were perhaps not so obvious. It may be necessary for the PC's boss to get a report on the investigation then ask if they looked into the obvious thing they missed. I, the Star Frontiers nut, overlooked some murder mystery stuff and my wife the murder mystery nut overlooked some sci-fi stuff but we had a good time so it was a win.

I've since seen advice that when running a mystery in an RPG don't have the discovery of critical clues that allow the story to advance to rise or fall on the roll of a die. Just give the clue and move on. For this reason, I've removed most of the skill checks from this adventure, if the character has the required skill, they get the clue. Some things the player will have to specify what they are looking into, but otherwise

the clues are free; well not totally free, there is a cost in time and the player characters are on a clock.

## THE ADVENTURE

An escape pod is found on remote island half a world away containing a body. Could the remains be of a criminal that was thought to have escaped justice?

## THE REPORT

Two days ago, Andrea Swift (H female), a somewhat famous sailor was sailing on Loren Magorica half a world away from Port Loren. She made landfall on a deserted atoll to pick Gran Quiveran Palm fruit and discovered an escape pod on the island. She determined that there was a corpse inside, decided to not open it fearing potential biological contaminants, photographed it, noted the global positioning coordinates of the atoll and radioed a report to Star Law. Star Law decided it was not their case and passed it to PLPD which is how you now find yourself on a 10-hour air lorry flight to the middle of an empty ocean. From the photographs it appears the escape pod has been there for a long time and has received substantial weathering. The photo through the porthole appears to show a desiccated corpse of a dralasite in a standard "ship suit" (stretchy coveralls that are standard wear for spacers).

## RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs have 45 hours to solve the mystery of who is in the pod and where it came from. The clock starts when the air lorry touches down on the atoll. The criminal foil will take actions against the PCs and his opposition to their discovering his identity should build over the course of two days. After 45 hours the criminal culprit is likely to become worried enough to disappear to preserve his freedom as it will appear that the truth is finally coming out after 17 years. This puts a timer on the



IMAGE BY SCOTT MULDER

investigation. The players must succeed within 45 hours or the criminal escapes.

Note: the 45-hour time limit was inspired by the TV show "The First 48" which centers on the statistic that if a murder is not solved in the first 48 hours the chances that it will be solved go markedly down. The players may be led to think that they have 45 hours to clear the mystery or they risk being re-assigning to a fresh crime. On the metagame level, simply tell them that to receive the maximum EXP they must solve the crime/mystery in 45 hours or less.

Use 10-minute turns for most actions and estimate longer turns of 20, 30, 40, or etc. as seems appropriate for actions that should take longer. When combat erupts, revert to the standard combat turn measured in seconds but treat the combat and its aftermath as eating up 10 minutes. Some tasks may have randomized task times: 1d6 x 10 minutes or 1d4 x hours. The players may opt to work around the clock without rest but if they do an exhaustion penalty should be applied to all ability and skill checks of -10. This penalty applies starting at 30 hours of activity with no rest. Remember a Galactic Standard Day is 20 hours and a work shift is 10 hours.

When the PCs lack a needed skill, there are always plenty of lab techs back at headquarters that can identify something or perform a needed skill. Example: the coroner who will perform a full autopsy. If the players are forced to rely on a specialist in the lab it will take more time, usually hours: 1d2, 1d3, 1d4 or etc.



IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN

## STARTING CHARACTERS

I believe that a CSI team of 2-3 characters could begin at close to the classic Alpha Dawn beginning characters of 2 first level skills. Skill checks are not an issue until combat happens. However, a character that is a cop or a crime scene investigator should be more capable: 1 second level skill and 2 first levels skills with the 2<sup>nd</sup> level skill being required to be in the character's PSA. They should also have 5 pts to spend on anything that EXP can be spent on: ability scores, species/racial abilities, and potentially another first level skill. I recommend using "Spacer Skills Revisited" from **Star Frontiersman #10** as this makes spacer skills available to lower-level characters.

Each character has a civilian (plain clothes looking) or military (police uniform) skeinsuit, a side arm plus two extra clips appropriate to their weapons skill, a tool kit for skills that requires one, plus 150 Cr of equipment. The team has access to a groundcar or hovercar issued by the police department. They car can have up to two rifle sized weapons with 3 clips each, 2 dose grenades, 2 tangler grenades, 2 smoke grenades, 2 defensive screens of any type, and two power belts.

The starting characters have a chain of command. Their chief is their immediate boss and he reports to a commissioner. The advocate general (prosecuting attorney), while not directly in the chain of command, has a position of authority over the PCs. Since he is the one that will try the case in court he can give the PCs instructions about the case or order them to investigate certain things for him to proceed with the case.

## APPROACHING AND EXAMINING THE ESCAPE POD

Initial approach : 10 minutes

The escape pod has wind swept sand piled up against the backside but the hatch is accessible. Its well-worn from weather. A starship engineer will be able to determine that pod is a model TT13Beta replacement



IMAGE BY BRIAN PHONG LUANGTHAM

pod. For a LOG check the starship engineer or any character doing a data net search for 1d3 x 30 minutes can determine that it is an outdated though near universal escape pod designed and marketed by TransTravel to fit most common ship designs. TransTravel has discontinued this model but licensed it to numerous manufacturers across the Frontier making it extremely common and extremely difficult to trace to its point of origin.

A starship engineer or anyone in the technological PSA can determine the following:

1. The hatch is stuck and must be worked open. Note if a toxy-rad gauge is present at the opening of the hatch it will flicker the radiation light but not fully trigger the alarm. 1d2 x 10 minutes.
2. Determine that the flight computer was sabotaged. Computer or astro-gation skill can determine that it was programmed to seek out the middle of the ocean. 1d2 x 10 minutes
3. The emergency beacon was sabotaged/ripped out and is hanging loose by a ground wire (obvious).

Inside the pod is one mummified dralasite corpse dressed in a standard ship suit with 2 scorch marks on the suit and absolutely nothing in any of the pockets. The name Drogoll is written on the collar tab of the ship suit but can only be discovered after the suit is removed for an autopsy.

There is also some sort of electronic control module with cut wires. Its obvious the control module does not belong to the escape pod. A starship engineer will have to identify the control module as the atomic

drive coolant regulator. Its removal will eventually cause an atomic drive to over heat and possibly go into overload despite the best efforts of its crew.

A quick 10-minute medial scan will reveal: the corpse is a mummified dralasite in neuter phase with two laser burns that correspond to the scorch marks on the ship suit.

Autopsy (1 hour by a PC or 1d5 hours by NPC back at the lab) will confirm cause of death was from 3 laser burns (a third one turned up in the back) and that the dralasite was most likely killed then placed in the escape pod.

Anyone with environmental skill can determine that since life support systems keep the air on a starship fairly dry and that the enviro systems in the pod most likely did the same is the reason for the mummification of the subject. Ten minutes for a PC to determine this or 1d3 hours for an NPC lab tech.

The return to Port Loren on the air lorry will take 10 hours. The PCs can use that time to do data searches via the data net, perform an autopsy (if they have medical skill) or sleep to reset the clock on the exhaustion rule.

Data Net searches by any investigator taking about 10 minutes each will reveal:

1. There have been 20 potential incidents in proximity to Gran Quivera over the last 4 decades that could explain the presence of a jettisoned escape pod.
2. There have only been twelve starship emergencies in orbit of a ship that could have been equipped with the model TT13Beta pod.

3. There were only two of those emergencies where not all of the discharged escape pods were accounted for. Stardust Dawn, a pacific class freighter out of Inner Reach, Dramune and Galaxy Tramp, a Trans Travel model V5 heavy freighter out of Terledrom, Fromeltar. In both cases the presumed occupant of the missing escape pods was a dralasite. Renlo Dog on the Stardust Dawn and Rollo Dollo on the Galaxy Tramp.
4. Renlo Dog (D Male phase) wanted criminal from Dramune. Sought on charges of piracy and murder by the Inner Reach militia. 50k reward for his capture. Disappeared 17 years ago during the Stardust Dawn disaster (atomic drive over load).
5. Rollo Dollo (D neuter phase) was a TransTravel company astrogator and has been missing for 4 years since Galaxy Tramp incident (hoaxed release of biological contaminants onboard ship).
6. The name Drogoll turns up on the passenger manifest of the Stardust Dawn as Drogoll Swill (D neuter phase) a noted debater, philosopher and politician from Inner Reach that survived the Stardust Dawn disaster and settled in Port Loren.
7. After the disaster Drogoll become an advocate for the poor and working classes and was elected to Port Loren city board of managers and is the favored candidate for one of the Council of Worlds seats from Prenglar.

## QUESTIONING DROGOLL

He will initially deny knowing Renlo but that it was 17 years ago. He will recall giving a ship suit to a dralasite that had just

begun to be able to generate 5 limbs on the voyage and thus needed a new ship suit to accommodate the new 5<sup>th</sup> limb. He will deny knowing how Renlo ended up dead in an escape pod and has no idea who would have wanted to kill him though it's not surprising since Renlo was wanted for piracy and murder. He kept to himself on the voyage and considers himself lucky to have escaped the disaster since he was asleep in his cabin when the abandon ship alarm went off.

## DROGOLL SWILL

(D male phase)

Resume: Famous debater and philosopher from Inner Reach who wrote two somewhat famous philosophical treatise. Since settling at Port Loren he has pursued a career in politics and social reform. Favored candidate for election to one of the Gran Quiveran seats on the Council of Worlds.

Real Resume: He is really Renlo Dog, a wanted criminal, pirate and murderer from Dramune. He is a rumored to be corrupt city official (PCs must dig for that bit of information) in Port Loren with ties to criminal organizations. He killed the real Drogoll Swill and stuffed his body in the sabotaged escape pod then began to pass himself off as Drogoll Swill, never returning to Dramune lest his deception be uncovered. He also sabotaged the atomic drives of the Stardust Dawn causing them to overload and explode to help cover his identity change.

STR/STA: 40/40 DEX/RS: 40/40  
INT/LOG: 50/50 PER/LDR: 50/30 IM: 4  
PS: 2 Lie Detection: 25%

PSA: Technological Skills: Technician 6, Computers 2, Starship Engineer 1, Psychosocial 1, Laser Weapons 3

Equipment Civilian Skein suit, Albedo screen, Power belt pack, laser pistol & 2 SEU clips.

Note: A subtle clue that the dralasite passing itself off as Drogoll is not Drogoll is that since the Stardust Dawn disaster Drogoll has only had 4 limbs while before that it had 5.

## NEWS COVERAGE OF THE STARDUST DAWN DISASTER

Available by 10 minute public data net search for each news clip.

1. Star Law called off the searched for Renlo's presumed escape pod after several weeks of finding nothing. The tracking data on the escape pod at the Prenglar Space Watch was mysteriously hacked and corrupted making the tracking data for Renlo's escape pod unusable.
2. The engineer of the Stardust Dawn claimed that his engines must have been sabotaged because they had been recently overhauled and he was meticulous about maintenance.

## POTENTIAL MOVES BY DROGOLL/RENLO TO COVER HIS TRACKS

### A FIRE AT THE PLPD CRIME LAB

Smoke from the ventilation system and fire alarms erupt at the crime lab building - while occupants evacuate, firefighter bots storm into the facility to fight the fire and save lives. Except firefighter bots should take at least a few minutes to arrive and one is there within 5 seconds of the alarm (LOG check to notice that discrepancy), also LOG check (+15 due to prior exposure to smoke grenades during training) to notice that the smoke is not from burning material but a smoke grenade.

Fake Firefighter Robot: STA 100, Level 3 combat robot, Programs: Attack/Defense & Search and Destroy, Melee 30%, Damage 2d10, Special: self-destruct device- 100 grams of TD-19 will destroy the robot and cause 5d10+25 within 1 meter of the robot and half damage between 1 and 2 meters. The Mission of the robot is to find the corpse of Drogoll and "rescue" it (which will cause it to totally disappear) or barring that, destroy it with the self-destruct device. Aftermath of the fire will consume 2d5 hours of time.





## GROUP OF STREET TOUGHS

The toughs warn the PCs to leave off of investigating Drogoll who has done so much for the poor and working class. Threat is vague and not actionable by PLPD. Estimate time involved for this encounter- 10 minutes likely.

## AMBUSH

Two thugs attempt to kill the investigator at night on the streets of Port Loren.

Thug 1 RW 40, M 30, PS 3, IM 6, RS 55, STA 55 Equipment: skein suit, sonic knife, auto pistol.

Thug 2 RW 40, M 30, PS 3, IM 6, RS 55, STA 55 Equipment: skein suit, knife, gyro pistol.

The thugs believe they were hired by a yazirian. They received credit transfers from a recently set up shell corporation. The shell corporation can only be tracked by Computer skill check -10 which will reveal a computer terminal at a Rook Hill Construction Company. If the PCs dig into the Rook Hill Construction Company, they may discover that it has received a number of city contracts over the past decade.

Aftermath of the ambush is 1d5 hours for reports and interviews by internal affairs. The thugs themselves are a dead end. They are career criminals and were used as cut outs. Most likely the yazirian that hired them was using a holo-screen as a disguise. You may roll for the thugs to “see through” the holo-screen as per its equipment description. The “see through” roll can only succeed for one thug and all he will be able to tell the investigators is that it was a dralasite using the holo-screen. He can’t really identify who that dralasite was, although he is probably willing to finger anyone the investigators tell him to in exchange for a break on the charges. He could even be making it all up about seeing through the holo-screen.

## SOLVING THE CASE

Dralasite DNA will alternately prove that the corpse is related to known relatives of Drogoll Swill or it will

conclusively not match Renlo Dog’s DNA profile on file with the authorities on Dramune. Matching DNA samples must be done by subspace radio. Obtaining a DNA sample from a relative of Drogoll will take more than a day but Renlo Dog’s DNA is in a criminal data base on Inner Reach and could be transmitted via subspace radio in 1d5 hours.

The PCs can then make the case that Drogoll Swill must really be Renlo Dog. All other evidence is circumstantial and the solicitor general will be hesitant to bring charges against a noted figure like Drogoll Swill fearing political suicide if he is wrong. This means the PCs must establish a compelling case built on having discovered most of the available clues and making a solid pitch to the solicitor by roll play and or by a PER ability check or a Law skill check.

## TWIST 1

It is also possible that the corruption in Port Loren is spread further then our criminal foil. He might have paid off the prosecutor or others in government.

## TWIST 2

Renlo’s political aspirations for a seat on the Council of Worlds is aided and abetted by offworld forces like the Malthar, who is looking to expand Outer Reach’s pull on the Council of Worlds. In a situation where

Renlo escapes and turns up again, he will almost certainly have pirate thugs in tow.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

Award 0-1 EXP if the players utterly fail.

Award 2 EXP for solving the crime which is a wanted criminal sabotaged the atomic drives on a starship causing it to self-destruct, killed another of his species, stuffed the body in an escape pod, sabotaged its emergency beacon, programmed the pod to land in the middle of the ocean, and then in the aftermath began impersonating the being he killed 17 years ago.

Award 1 EXP for capturing the criminal.

## MAPS

The maps provided for the police station were produced more than a decade ago when the Dunjini mapping software still worked on my computer. I misremembered the Port Loren map and thought the city computer was Star Law building and patterned these maps to that building’s shape. I’ve simply continued to use these maps as representing a few floors in the city computer building and the attached space labeled police department or Star Law is simply the lobby for those departments. These maps are merely representational of a few areas in the police station but should help if action breaks out there.



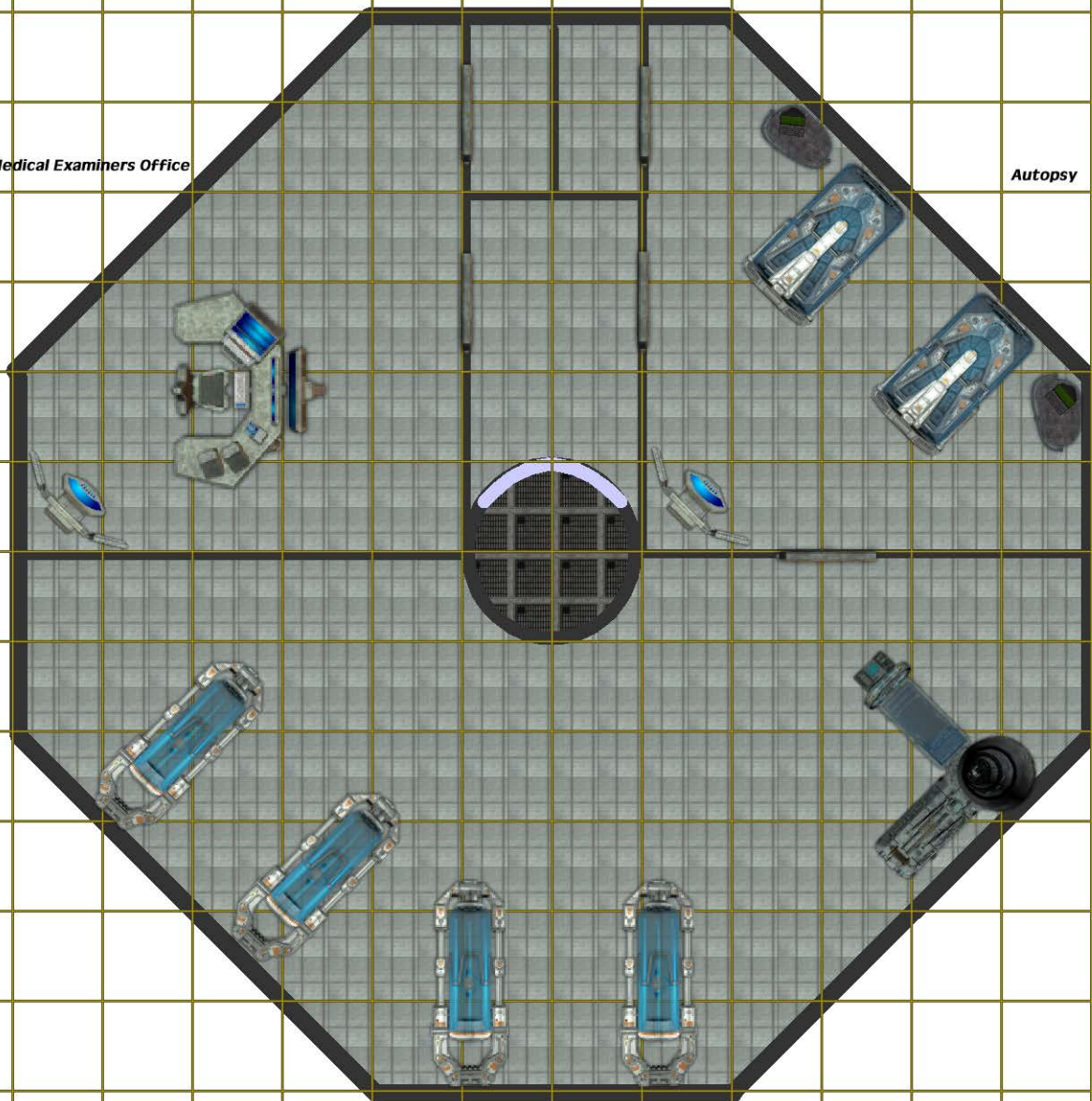
IMAGE BY SCOTT MULDER

# MORGUE & AUTOPSY



Medical Examiners Office

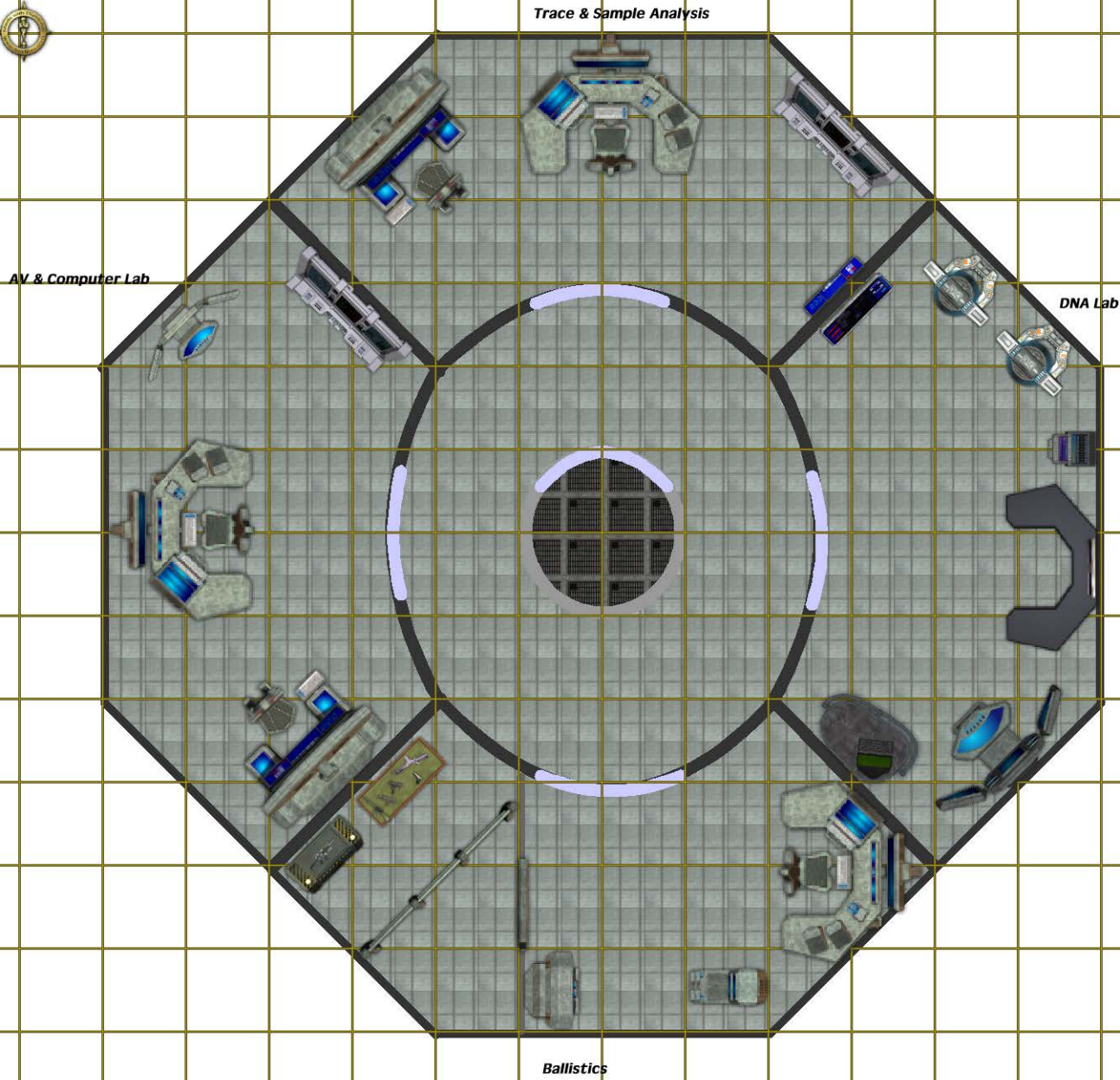
Autopsy



Morgue

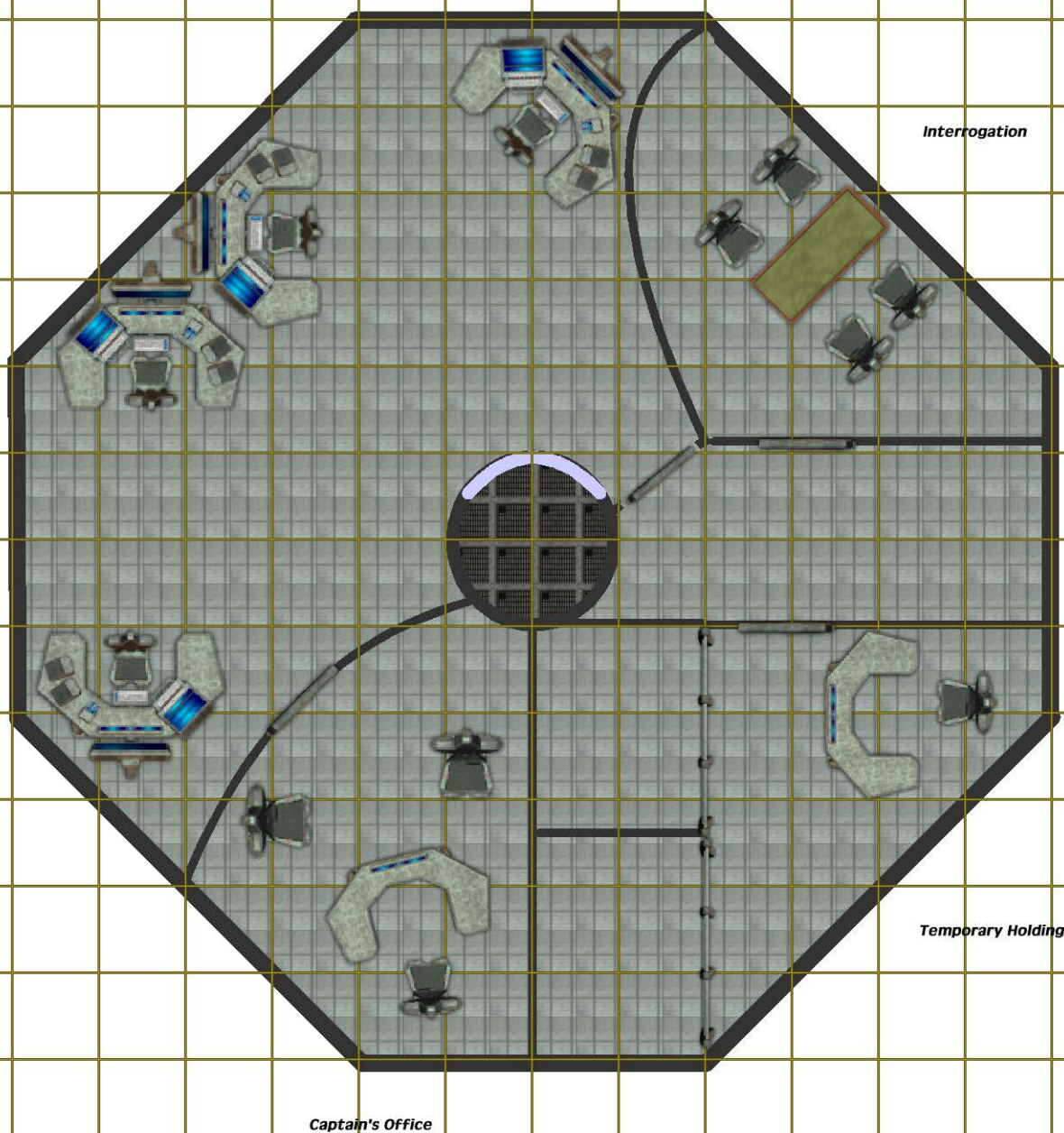


# STAR LAW CRIME LAB





# STAR LAW OFFICES



# ALIENS & ASTEROIDS: FATE OF THE SOLAR CHASER

## MODULE REVIEW

BY TOM VERREAULT

I just discovered the Aliens and Asteroids RPG. It was published in 2018 and has been supported with numerous modules and products. I only came upon the module, not the rules, so I can't say much about the rule system other than what I could glean from the module about the rules. It seems to be a D20-ish system and should be easily adaptable to many of the sci-fi D20 systems out there. Aliens & Asteroids is produced by Gallant Knight Games and available on DriveThruRPG as a water-marked PDF for \$ 2.99.

The setting appears to be a human-centric, dark, and corrupt corporate-run dominion. The player characters (PCs) are marines employed by the Dominion as troubleshooters much like the Colonial Marines of the Alien franchise. There is a forbidden section of space dominated by the "Dread" and this mission must venture there.

The mission is also predicated on secrets not revealed up front to the PCs who may or may not figure out what is going on. One secret is that the exploration mission was actually a diplomatic mission to one species in hopes they will side with the Dominion against the Dread.

With a tag line of "Saddle up grunt, there's killing to be done." One might think it is an RPG for nurturing your inner murder hobo, however, I suspect that would be wrong. The adventure has encounters that provide opportunity for the PCs to back out and not engage the enemy and it explicitly states that one of the conditions when the mission is over is when all the PCs are dead!

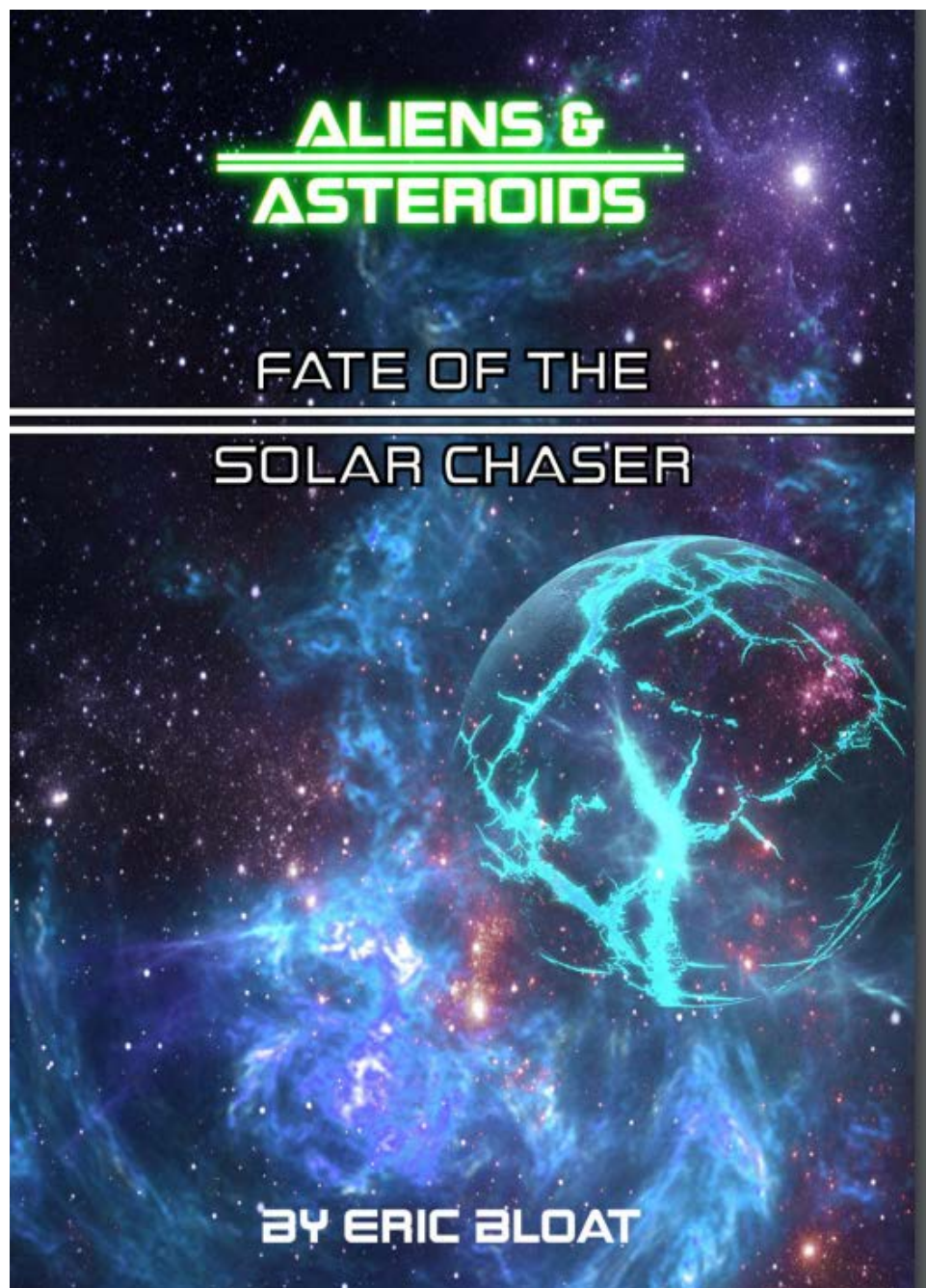
## CONVERTING IT TO STAR FRONTIERS

Principally, the adventure will work if the PCs are Spacefleet or a militia service and possibly a corporate mercenary team. The diplomatic mission should be to the Zuraquor client species of the sathar and

any Dread soldiers in the module should be converted to sathar. One caveat though, is that the crashed ship's deck plan is horizontal not vertical as is typical in Star Frontiers. It matches the Serena Dawn deck plan which predated the Knight Hawks expansion.

I like the story of the module. I like the

secrets and plot twists. There isn't a lot of art, but the production values of the module are good. For some reason, the colors of the nondescript color cover really appeal to me. I find the module easily adaptable to Star Frontiers or Stars Without Number and the price is low. I give the module 3 dralasite thumbs up.





# THE INFRARED STROBE MARKER

## IN THE MINZII MARKETPLACE

BY TOM VERREULT

K'ck'R, known as Kicker to his non-vrusk companions, glided silently through the night on a parawing. Through his IR goggles he could plainly see the IR strobe light marker placed on the roof by an employee hypnotized by his boss. It appeared that that portion of the operation had been successful and he would have no trouble picking out the correct roof in the dark. He commenced a long spiraling turn, circling the building to lose both speed and height. His would be a perfect landing that made no noise for anyone on the top floor to hear.

He glided in at close to stall speed and pulled the nose of the parawing up stalling it with his feet mere centimeters from the roof. As he was about to "step down" onto the roof he had the misfortune of stepping directly on a tripwire. The tripwire was attached in a daisy chain to a ring of tangler grenades positioned on the roof.

He was engulfed in tangler threads but his anti-tangler vest immediately began spraying solvaway compound, foiling that portion of the carefully laid trap. However, the roof access door was opening and security personnel were running toward him.

K'ck'R knew he needed to get off the roof immediately. The parawing was fouled with tangler threads so he hit the quick release and ran for the roof parapet. As he ran, he tossed his grappling hook toward a feature that might hold his weight, but it was to no avail. The security guards in pursuit had needler rifles with knockout juice. He felt the

repeated hit of volley after volley of needles, and he lost consciousness within centimeters of the parapet.

It was later determined by corporate security that the vrusk and the human female had been suborned by the sathar. The vrusk thief and the human female were disappeared to a secret corporate lab dedicated to researching ways and means of protecting the corporation from infiltration by the sathar. Star Law never received a report.

### IR MARKER

This device is powered by a micro SEU disk (Zebulon's Guide- Cost: 10 Cr). The

power disk will last a week of heavy use (1d5+2 days). It emits an infrared visible strobe to mark a position. It has an attachment point for a trip wire and can be activated that way as well. It can be used to mark the enemy's position or to identify the position of friendly troops. There is an off & on switch.

**Cost:** 100 Cr

**Weight:** n/a

### TRIP WIRE SPOOL

One spool (50 m) of strong thin and near invisible wire that is perfect for use as a trip wire.

**Cost:** 10 Cr

**Weight:** n/a



The cover art for the 'Space Kids RPG' Player's Guide features a dynamic, comic-style illustration. In the foreground, a young girl with dark hair and a determined expression is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a futuristic weapon. Behind her, another character in a space suit is visible. The background is filled with various sci-fi elements, including a large, complex structure that looks like a space station or a large ship, and smaller spacecraft. The title 'SPACE KIDS RPG' is prominently displayed at the top in a bold, stylized font. Below the illustration, the text 'PLAYER'S GUIDE BY NICK LANDRY' is written. At the bottom left, the 'BIG BAD GAMES' logo is visible. The overall color scheme is dark with highlights in white and yellow.

Are your kids too young for Star Frontiers and other tabletop RPGs?

Start their sci-fi tabletop gaming education

**SPACE KIDS RPG**

Simple & inclusive  
Fun & educational  
For kids aged 4-12 and their parents

Pre-order today: [www.SpaceKidsRPG.com](http://www.SpaceKidsRPG.com)



# A FIRST AND FATEFUL ENCOUNTER

BY TOM STEPHENS

## Special Report – TY 336

from the Truane News Network

### PSS Chiara Attempts Contact

We go now live to coverage of the PSS Chiara's attempt to establish contact with the fleet of alien vessels that entered the Truane's Star system thirty hours ago. The Chiara has drawn close enough that visual contact is possible and we have begun receiving images from its main telescope.

[Audio shifts and the sound of Chiara's captain can be heard.] "Well, these ships are unlike anything we've ever seen before. There seem to be several different varieties of ships in various sizes, but they all seem to have some features in common.

"The bow of each ship consists of a sphere or flattened spheroid. This sphere is connected to the rest of the body by a slim neck. If we're judging scale properly, these tend to be five to thirty meters long and four to ten meters in diameter with the larger ones being on the larger ships.

"The main body of the ships are bulbous, all smoothed and softened, almost looking like it is melted together. There doesn't seem to be much in the way of sharp angles anywhere. They are unlike anything I've ever seen although they do hold some resemblance to early Dralasite ships.

"Many of the ships end in another sphere separated from the main body by a thicker waist. This aft sphere is where the engines are mounted. Like many of our Frontier ships, the engines are mounted away from the ship on struts. Perkins, are we getting readings on those engines?

"Yes, sir," came another voice. "They have similar readings to our own atomic engines. They are probably similar in principle if not in operation. We should assume they have the same capabilities."

"Very well," the captain continued. "That's one similarity at least. And like us, they seem to use their acceleration to produce simulated gravity in their ships. All of the ships are oriented tail first toward their direction of travel and have their engines running. Acceleration seems to be oh point nine gravities. I guess that's what they prefer.

"We've been slowly closing the distance over the last few hours with one of the leading ships which happens to be one of the largest ones. We've been broadcasting greetings on all communications channels including using our subspace radio on occasion but have failed to elicit any response. Either they are deaf to our frequencies or are ignoring us.

"I'm beginning to think the latter. As we approached, we've caught short bursts of transmission on a couple of different radio frequencies that have been non-random and seem to emanate from the ships. We've tried transmitting on those frequencies but have received no response.

"At this point, we are about thirty-nine thousand kilometers away from the large ship we are approaching and closing at a rate of about five hundred kilometers per minute. Once we reach thirty thousand kilometers we'll slow our approach even more."

"Captain," a third voice called out, "there seems to be some sort of motion in the hull of the ship." On the screen several protrusions that were visible on the surface of the ship were rotating and starting to point toward the Chiara.

"All crew," the captain called out, "strap in and prepare for high gee maneuvers. Helm, rotate the ship perpendicular to our direction of motion and engage engines at maximum thrust."

"Come on baby, rotate," the captain's voice came across the open circuit in a whisper, "come on."

Suddenly there was a flash from several points on the alien spacecraft. The image shuddered for a moment and klaxons started sounding. "Get those alarms off," the captain yelled.

"Bridge, Engineering. Both our engines are offline. They have both sustained damage of some sort."

"Hull breach in crew deck two," came another report. "The entire starboard section has been vented to space."

"Life support failure. Primary life support equipment has failed. Backup system engaging."

"Captain, radar. The alien ship has just launched a small object towards us."

The telescope camera had managed to stay locked on to the approaching ship. Just below the hull there was a small black dot surrounded by a glowing halo. "Radar, what is the speed and closing rate of that object?"

"Captain, it is accelerating at about thirty gee and headed straight toward us. Estimated time to impact is three minutes if it doesn't change its acceleration profile."

"Very well," the captain replied, "Are we still broadcasting?"

"Yes, sir."

"Okay, prepare and send a burst transmission with all data collected on the data sideband." After a pause, he continued, his voice flat. "This is the PSS Chiara. Having approached to within one hundred thousand kilometers of the lead alien vessel, we once again began attempting to communicate with the ship. We received no response until we closed within thirty-nine thousand kilometers at which point the ship opened fire on us with some sort of laser weapon. They have completely disabled our engines and opened up a couple breaches in our hull including damaging our primary life support system.

"Immediately after the laser attack, a single object was launched toward the Chiara. Based on its acceleration profile and trajectory, I can only assume that it is some sort of missile or torpedo. Time to impact is now less than one minute.

"We cannot maneuver, and the object is now close enough that it couldn't stop before hitting us even if it tried. We will continue to transmit data but if the feed suddenly stops, at least you'll know why. Good luck. Chiara out."

For a few seconds, the image of the incoming missile continued to grow until it flashed off the bottom of the screen. The image and audio stopped to be replaced by the TNN logo.

"The transmission from the Chiara has terminated," the announcer said. "We can only assume the worst. We will keep you updated on further developments."

