

FRONTIER EXPLORER

The background of the cover is a dark, starry space. A large, complex orbital structure, possibly a space station or a large satellite, is shown in a perspective view, appearing to recede into the distance. The structure is illuminated with various colors: bright yellow and orange lights, and cooler blue and green lights. A prominent feature is a glowing orange sphere, resembling a sun or a planet, which is positioned in the center of the letter 'O' in the word 'EXPLORER'. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and futuristic.

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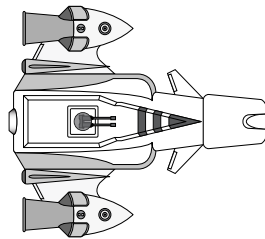
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<http://frontierexplorer.org>

<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 AND BACK ISSUES

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

You can find PDFs of all the old issues of the fan magazines, as well as print-on-demand physical copies of the Frontier Explorer, 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.

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ART BY JOHN BURR

FROM THE EDITORS

Hello Explorers!

And welcome back. Now that the recent sathar incursion is over and the worms have been driven back by Spacefleet, we can resume publication of the Frontier Explorer. We're picking up where we left off and several of the articles in this issue were already submitted and ready to go before the interruption happened. So it's a year later than we planned, but we're hitting the ground running.

You'll notice several changes starting with this issue. First, we've modified our logo. Although, I'm considering going back to the old one. Let me know what you think. More significantly, we have completely redone the interior layout. Shane Winter has been chomping at the bit to do layout for several issues now and I turned him loose on this issue. I really like the new look and there will probably be some tweaks in the next few issues as we refine things but for the most part, this will be the look of the magazine going forward. Let us know what you think about the layout and new logo at editors@frontierexplorer.org.

While some things are new, some are staying the same. We are continuing the Titian Rising comic along with the Jurak Hangna creature article in each issue. Additionally, we will continue the Escape Run comic on the back cover.

On the new side, we're explicitly looking to support the FrontierSpace RPG in addition to Star Frontiers. FrontierSpace is the brainchild of Bill Logan, the original creator of the Star Frontiersman magazine, the sister magazine to the Frontier Explorer and the game is definitely a kindred spirit to Star Frontiers. Our goal is to have one or more articles related to FrontierSpace in each issue and some of our articles will contain stats for both systems. If you are a fan of FrontierSpace, consider submitting arti-

cles. Regardless, look for the Nova Drive Travel Guide articles in each future issue of the Frontier Explorer.

I'm excited for the upcoming year. While this issue contains articles by authors who long-time readers will undoubtedly recognize, we have a number of new authors lined up with articles in future issues. In fact, unless the sathar strike again, I believe we already have most of the articles queued up for issues 25 & 26 and some for issue 27. That said we are always looking for submissions and I like to fast track articles by new submitters even if they bump already submitted material so don't hesitate to make a submission if you have something to share.

We also have several new artists who have stepped up to help (some of their works appear in this issue) and others who have volunteered to help with future editing. I wasn't able to marshal their help for this issue, but you can expect to see their names showing up in the credits on future issues.

In my letter over a year ago in issue 23, I mentioned a few projects that I wanted to get off the ground including a revised set of starship construction rules, updates to my old Knight Hawks computer game, a new issue of the Star Frontiersman, and possibly a podcast. Of those, only the starship construction rules have seen any progress with updates being posted on my Expanding Frontier blog (see the Frontier News section). The others got swallowed up in the sathar invasion. Those are still percolating in the back of my mind and may see the light of day this year depending on how things play out.

But enough rambling. Sit back, start reading, and enjoy this issue of the Frontier Explorer. And as always, keep exploring!

—Tom Stephens
Senior Editor

FRONTIER NEWS

UPDATED STAR FRONTIERS 5E MATERIAL

Back in issue 11 we ran an article by Michael Long providing a conversion for Star Frontiers to be played in Dungeons & Dragons Fifth Edition rule set. Michael has updated, slightly expanded, and produced a new version of that conversion. You can find it on the Tribality Blog at <https://www.tribality.com/2019/01/31/star-frontiers/>

STAR FRONTIERS SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNITIES

With Google Plus shutting down right as this issue is being published, I thought it would be a good idea to remind people of the various social media locations you can find fellow Frontiersman. This list are the more active areas I know about. If you know of others please let us know.

- Facebook Group—Star Frontiers: Alive & Well—<https://www.facebook.com/groups/starfrontiersrpg/>—This is by far the largest group at 2284 members (as of this writing) and growing weekly.
- Star Frontiers Revival Site—<http://starfrontiers.us>—Forum site originally created by Bill Logan in 2007 and kept alive by Tom Stephens. Lots of discussions that go into articles in the Frontier Explorer often start here.
- Discord server —There is a Star Frontiers Discord server that is open to join. You can get to it through the widget on the Frontier Explorer or Star Frontiers Revival web sites or by following this link: <https://discord.gg/vKfHPsE>
- Star Frontiers MeWe group—<https://mewe.com/group/5bbcdc7f2ee-15f2bb89cb6ed>—This group was created when a good chunk of the Google Plus RPG jumped over to MeWe. It's not very active but it's there.
- Twitter—The **@StarFrontiers** account has been posting a beginning random character every day for years. Just recently that account has been posting a day by day timeline of events during the buildup and execution of the Second Sathar War with the **#SFTimeline** hashtag. Also keep your eye on the **#StarFrontiers** hashtag as well. Senior editor Tom Stephens, who maintains the **@StarFrontiers** account, also posts, mostly game related material, as **@dagorym**.
- Not exactly a social media site but Tom S. also maintains the Expanding Frontier blog (<http://expanding-frontier.com>) that he started when the Frontier Explorer went on hiatus. His weekly posts contain material related to sci-fi RPGs, usually Star Frontiers or Frontier Space. Some of those posts will end up as articles in the magazine while others will just be on the blog.



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 up-coming 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:

- At the Station Master Level—John Blaylock & Fred Kauber
- At the Ship Captain Level—Wade Wilson
- At the Space Ranger Level—Richard Farris & Scott Holliday
- At the Explorer Level—Keane Peterson, Andrew Moore, Dirk Went, Tom Ladegard, and Shane Winter
- At the Scout Level—Dan Harlan, DW, and Tevel Drinkwater

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.

WARRIORS OF WHITE LIGHT STRIKE BACK

In 2013, during the normal course of material development for the Frontier Explorer magazine, we issued the Warriors of White Light (WoWL) Challenge. Based off the fact that an extensive number of starship deck plans and other materials were available, we felt that it should be easy enough to develop new naval adventures, a WoWL 2.0 if you will. There were several fruitful discussions on the www.starfrontiers.us forums and several collaborative and non-collaborative magazine submissions:

- "Assault Scout Standard Equipment", Frontier Explorer #22
- "Clarion Station Expanded", Frontier Explorer #23
- "10 Things on Clarion Station", Frontier Explorer #23

As part of the recent sathar incursion, sathar agents got involved and forced the Frontier Explorer to go on hiatus after issue #23 in 2018. It's been a year and we are finally publishing again. We present a great WoWL 2.0 adventure that lingered in the submission queue as the fourth installment of the series.

The challenge lives on. Be on the lookout for more WoWL material throughout the year and feel free to send in a submission yourself. The editorial staff can help with securing art and maps as well as editing as needed.



IMAGE BY TOM STEPHENS



IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN

DARK SHADOW'S REVENGE

BY RICHARD "SHADOW SHACK" ROSE

ALPHA SECTION: THE ASSIGNMENT

The *SS Dark Shadow* has been utilized to undermine Clarion's government. Her crew had been smuggling weapons that have undoubtedly fallen into the hands of the Clarion Liberation Party and the Planaron pirates, not to mention others seeking to usurp the Crown. During the ship's capture it was discovered that her crew had been operating under a Streel contract. The vessel is now safely in the hands of the Clarion Royal Marines (CRM) and her crew is slated for what should be a short

and swift trial. However, the Crown has intentionally withheld information about the capture from the public and for good reason: it is time to deal a crippling blow once and for all so that Streel may finally understand just how sincere Clarion's government is concerning their Demilitarization Act that the mega-corp has so blatantly ignored.

To this end several undercover agents have been operating with holoscreens and voice modulators, having visited the Streel office on Clarion Station in order to keep this plot. These agents have learned the source of the *Dark Shadow's* supplier in Streel's office aboard Triad Station in Cassidine, a ship captain named *Quintzee Thrum*. The players'

mission will be to take the *Dark Shadow* back to Triad and put an end to this operation. Since this is an "off the books" mission, the implication here is Thrum's assassination, although capture is certainly preferred. If the party is captured, the Crown will not admit to having any involvement in this act and will go so far as to claim the party went AWOL and broke the Shadow out of quarantine for their own motives.

The captured crew of the *Dark Shadow* was originally comprised of the following:

- Captain Lucius Strewt (human male), pilot
- 1st Mate Maggar Broub (yazirian male), engineer
- Cereeze K'zoot (vrusk female), astro-gator
- No'zan Z'keem (vrusk male), gunner

Four male humans were also registered among the crew as "enforcers".

Ideally the CRM roster should echo this as closely as possible, at least with the four officers. Each of the four officer impersonators will be issued a holoscreen programmed for each corresponding officer and a power backpack to help with their mission. The enforcers can always be replaced by whatever remaining members that make up the party. If there are no members matching the descriptions of the officers, they can always be appointed from the CRM roster (such as the vruskan officers of the CMS Wasp for example). The *Dark Shadow* can accommodate up to ten beings with its life support.

Whatever the final roster is, the player impersonating Strewt will have to report the new crew to the Streel office on Clarion Station. If done in person, this has an 80% chance for success with the holoscreen since it is a new holoscreen user and also require a successful LDR check. However, if the PCs suggest that the CRM agent who had been impersonating Strewt make the report, he will gain an automatic success. If a PC makes the attempt and fails, the previous agent can renegotiate a meeting in two weeks that will be successful.

The person portraying Strewt will also need to make arrangements at this time to receive another meet with the supplier for a new cargo, which sets the stage for this adventure (see **Delta Section: Encounter 2**). This can be done at the same time as re-

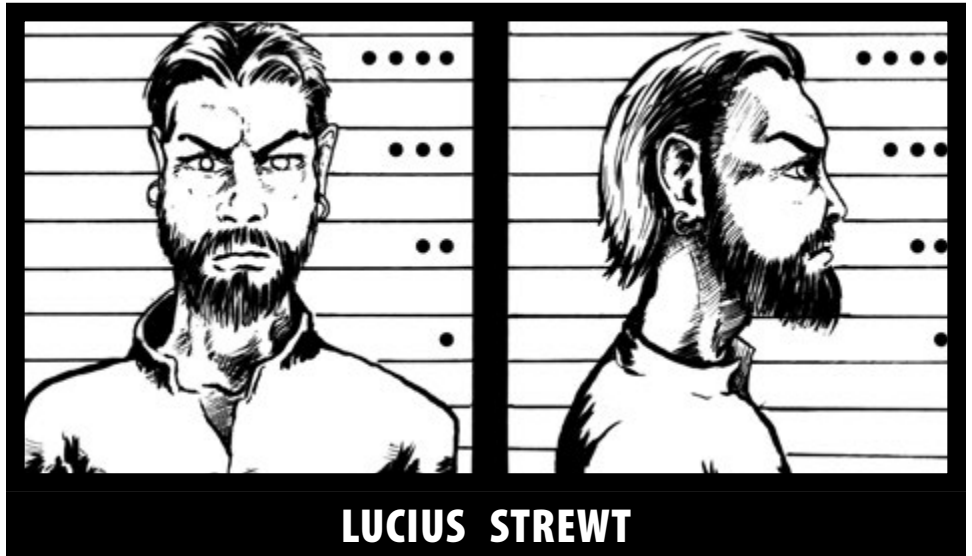


IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN

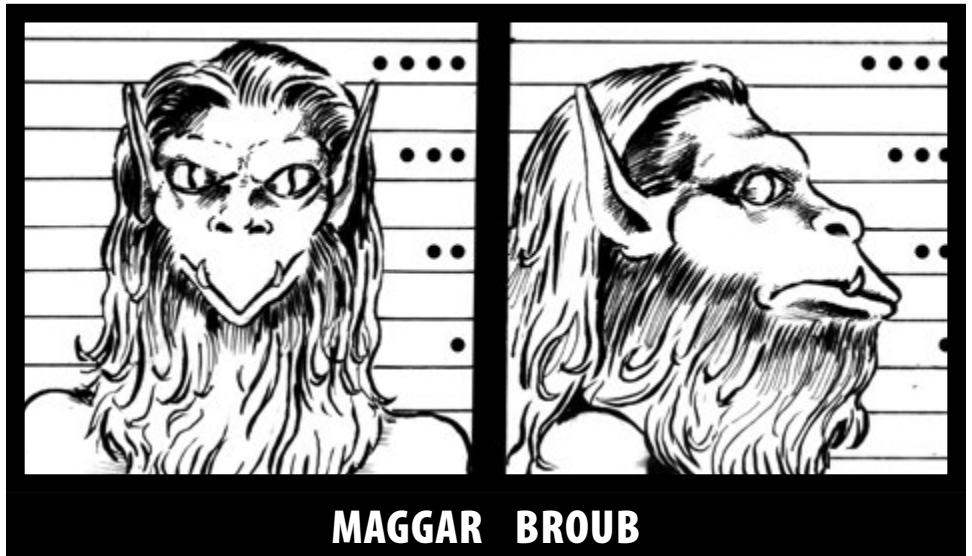


IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN

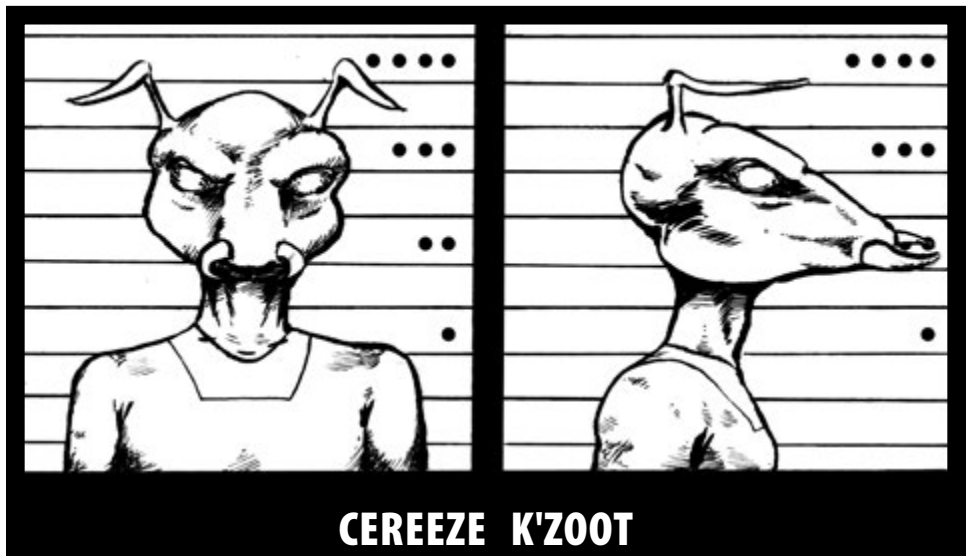


IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN



IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN

porting the crew change or as a separate encounter. The meeting will be scheduled for 21 days in the future, giving the PCs plenty of time to get to the Cassidine system.

BETA SECTION: THE VOYAGE

The *Dark Shadow* will have to make two jumps, one from White Light to Madderly's Star and the second from Madderly's Star to Cassidine. The drives will require an overhaul once they are in Cassidine. Neither system has a planetary militia, although Cassidine is home port to one of the Spacefleet Task Forces so caution must be exercised there. After all, for all intents and purposes, this is an illegal mission that the Crown is not publicly backing. The last thing the party wants is to be caught in possession of a craft that is not theirs under the guise of the former crew!

The specifications of the *Dark Shadow* follow (although they are not necessarily needed as the ship is not expected to fall into many combat encounters unless the crew so opts):

HS: 5 **HP:** 25 **DCR:** 35

ADF: 4 **MR:** 2 **Crew:** 4

Engines: 2 Streel "Big Bang" atomic class B

Weapons: laser battery (concealed, takes one combat turn to deploy)

Defenses: reflective hull

Communication/Detection: subspace radio, videocom, radar, intercom

Misc Equipment: camera system, skin sensors

Computer: level 4, 134 FP, 100 SP

Programs: Alarm 2, Analysis 4, Astro-gation 4, Commerce 1, Computer Security 4, Damage Control 2, Drive 5, Industry 1, Laser Battery 1, Life Support 1, capacity: 10, Maintenance 2

Cargo Capacity: 4

Crew Accommodations: 2 convertible single/double cabins, one quad cabin

Passenger Accommodations: n/a

Ship's Vehicles: small launch

Use the small freighter deck plans from the WoWL module inside cover to represent the *Dark Shadow*. The original owners upgraded the drives to "Big Bang" models (which is Streel's answer to PanGalactic's "Eureka" drives mentioned in *Dramune Run* that allow for additional acceleration) as the

addition of a laser battery took a hit on performance. As such the ship is not as maneuverable as a standard HS 5 freighter, but the extra acceleration certainly makes up for it.

In a perfect world they would have added bow and stern pod lasers to retain stock maneuverability and cargo space, but that technology was not available when the *Dark Shadow* was designed. The party would be wise to activate their holoscreens for any and all encounters, and the ship's power relay station (adjacent to the elevator on deck 3) has recharging equipment for powerpacks and parabatteries.

GAMMA SECTION: ENCOUNTER ONE

While in Madderly's Star, the *Dark Shadow's* radar lights up as the crew is preparing for the next jump. The ship is in deep space and a size 10 craft is approaching. The inbound craft is hailing the *Dark Shadow*, wishing to speak with Captain Strewt. They have identified themselves as the MalCo ship "*Nightshade*" and wish to board for a friendly meet & greet, the *Nightshade's* captain, Dablak, states he has heard of the *Dark Shadow* crew's accomplishments and would like to discuss a business proposal.

If the party wishes to fight, the *Nightshade's* specifications are as follows:

HS: 10 **HP:** 50 **DCR:** 50

ADF: 3 **MR:** 2 **Crew:** 10

Engines: 4 atomic class B

Weapons: 2 laser batteries

Defenses: reflective hull, masking screen (x2)

It will be easy to outrun the *Nightshade*. However, do not allow the craft to be captured or destroyed as it is needed in a future module (*SFKH: 1 Dramune Run*). If the *Dark Shadow* crew accepts the boarding, the following beings will enter with weapons slung and hands/pseudopods in plain sight:

Dablak the Enforcer (male dralosite)

RW: 70 **M:** 60 **PS:** 3 **IM:** 3 **RS:** 30 **STA:** 70

Equipment: laser rifle w/power back pack, electric sword, skeinsuit w/albedo screen; black sable cloak

Four Yazirians (all male)

RW: 60 **M:** 60 **PS:** 3 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 45 **STA:** 45

Equipment: two w/laser rifles & 4 powerclips, skeinsuit and albedo screens;

two w/gyrojet rifles & 4 jetclips, albedo suits w/inertia screens

If received, Dablak will sit down with "Strewt" in the ship's recreation area (deck 3) and offer employment with MalCo Enterprises, stating that the *Shadow's* crew has gained a reputation for smuggling and that is just the niche that MalCo is looking to fill these days. Dablak will offer a boarding pass and one complimentary week of docking with no expiration date at Darkworld Station (Outer Reach Dramune) should the crew wish to proceed. If a fight breaks out, allow Dablak to escape as the four yazirians cover as he is also needed for the future module (*Dramune Run*). While unknown to the party, none of the MalCo representatives have ever met the *Dark Shadow* crew so if they are not utilizing their holoscreens it will not matter ... but most likely the party will wish to activate them anyways.

Note that this encounter is not necessary for any Clarion adventures as MalCo is not conducting any illicit trade with Clarion, but it does serve to establish the platform for the module that follows. And it provides some tension if they are concerned that their cover might be blown. Should the players participate in the future module they will certainly recognize Dablak and the *Nightshade* when they are encountered during that adventure.

DELTA SECTION: ENCOUNTER TWO

Once the *Dark Shadow* arrives in Cassidine, it is to rendezvous with the SCS (Streel Corporation Ship) *Provisioner*, a HS 12 freight hauler currently under the command of Quintzee Thrum. Thrum is the Streel agent that has been supplying the *Dark Shadow* with contraband destined for Clarion. The *Provisioner* has been slated for one more meeting in what should be the final encounter, if all goes well...

Whether the party opts to perform the overhauls before or after the meeting with the *Provisioner* does not impact game play. However, unless they take it slow or something goes wrong, they should arrive early and will have sufficient time to do so prior to the rendezvous.

Thrum has agreed to meet the *Dark Shadow* in deep space where they are least likely to be interrupted while they transfer the

next cargo: a generous supply of armored hover transports. The transports are destined for Clarion's Liberation Party, and while not being illegal themselves, there is also a cache of automatic rifles that has been concealed under each transport's array of hoverfans. As such these weapons should be difficult to discover by an inspection team since the craft will be grounded (unless in zero gravity, they are too heavy to lift to view the undercarriages and without parabatteries they cannot be activated into hover mode). Four cargo units worth of transports are ready for transfer to the *Dark Shadow's* hold.

Once the airlocks have been joined, the two crews may mingle freely. The capture/killing of Thrum can occur at any point the party chooses, although it behooves them to allow the *Provisioner* crew to assist with loading the transports first as their ship has a cargo arm (equipment that the *Dark Shadow* lacks). It should be noted that Thrum has encountered the four officers from the *Dark Shadow* on numerous occasions so the party will have to pass their holoscreen checks as they meet him. Once they pass this check they can interact freely with Thrum. However, if Thrum finds anything odd about any of the four officers things can turn for the worse quickly.

Use the larger freighter deck plan from the WoWL module inner cover to represent the *Provisioner*. If for whatever reason a board game encounter breaks out (surviving crew members attempt to pursue the Shadow after Thrum is captured/killed, or if they simply have to retreat due to bad luck/planning, etc.), the *Provisioner's* specifications are as follows:

HS: 12 **HP:** 60 **DCR:** 56
ADF: 3 **MR:** 3 **Crew:** up to 12
Engines: 4 atomic class B
Weapons: LB (x2)
Defenses: RH
Computer: level 5, 240 FP, 300 SP
Programs: Alarm 4, Analysis 4, Astro-gation 4, Cargo Arm 2, Commerce 1, Computer Lockout 4, Computer Security 6, Damage Control 4, Drive 5, Industry 1, Installation Security 3, Laser Battery 1 x2, Life Support 1 (capacity 12), Maintenance 4

Note that the cargo arm program applies only if the cargo arm is operated at the terminal in the hold, it can be overridden by the Industry program and/or remotely

operated at either bridge deck. The main-frame is located on the Upper Bridge deck (2), additional terminal panels are located at each of the three duty stations on the Lower Bridge deck (3) as well as one more on in the workshop of the Maintenance deck (5). If Thrum manages to escape and the party can overtake the *Provisioner*, then they can still discover the nature of the operation via the ship's computer.

The *Provisioner* crew is as follows:

Quintzee Thrum (yazirian male)

STR/STA: 50/60
DEX/RS: 60/60
INT/LOG: 50/50
PER/LDR: 40/50
Battle Rage: 20%
Skills: Projectile 5, Melee 4, Computer 3, Technician 2
RW: 80 **M:** 70 **IM:** 6 **RS:** 60 **STA:** 60
Equipment: dual barrel automatic pistol* w/2 bulletclips, four spare bulletclips, sonic sword w/powerclip, skei suit w/albedo screen.

* 3 kg, double damage, double ammo capacity...all other stats as per AD rules

Notes: Thrum keeps a machine gun and two belts of ammunition stowed in his cabin (A, shared with the two pilots below).

Cassy Harper (human male)

Pilot (level 4)
RW: 60 **M:** 60 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 50
Equipment: electrostunner w/powerclip, albedo suit w/inertia screen.
Notes: Cassy stows a sonic disruptor and power backpack in hir cabin.

Oogli (dralasite male)

Co-pilot (level 3)
RW: 50 **M:** 70 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 70
Equipment: gyrojet pistol w/jetclip, stunstick w/powerclip, skeinsuit w/inertia screen

K'armas (vrusk male)

Astrogator (level 1)
RW: 55 **M:** 58 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 55
Equipment: laser pistol w/powerclip, nightstick. K'armas has a level 1 portable computer stowed in cabin B (shared with the engineer and security officer F'sir below), it has the following programs loaded: Analysis 3, Information Storage 1, and Robot Management 2. He can use it to independently coordinate the ship's

combat robot outside of its normal programming.

Z'armas (vrusk male)

Engineer (level 4)
RW: 55 **M:** 58 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 55
Equipment: laser pistol w/powerclip, nightstick. Z'amas keeps a robcomkit and techkit stowed in his cabin.

Mr. Mayer (human male)

Security Director
Skills: Beam 5, Gyrojet 4, Melee 3, Demolition 2, Thrown 1
RW: 80 (laser) /70(gyro) **M:** 68 **IM:** 6
RS: 60 **STA:** 75
Equipment: laser rifle w/5 powerclips, gyrojet pistol w/2 jetclips, sonic sword, two tangler grenades. Mr. Mayer keeps a heavy laser & power backpack in his cabin (C, shared with the two gunners below).

Gleep Wurp the Eyebiter (yazirian male)

Gunner (level 3)
Battle Rage: 25%
RW: 90 **M:** 90 **IM:** 6 **RS:** 60 **STA:** 50
Equipment: laser rifle w/power belt pack, skeinsuit w/albedo screen and separate backpack, electric sword w/powerclip

Glare Wurp the Earbiter (yazirian male)

Gunner (level 3)
Battle Rage: 25%
RW: 90 **M:** 90 **IM:** 6 **RS:** 60 **STA:** 50
Equipment: laser rifle w/power belt pack, skeinsuit w/albedo screen and separate backpack, electric sword w/powerclip; each of the Wurp clan brothers keeps a silver plated laser pistol w/black suede holster in their cabin as part of their clan heritage, each pistol/holster combo is worth 1000Cr.

Cotis (male dralasite)

Security
RW: 60 **M:** 60 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 60
Equipment: gyrojet rifle w/3 jetclips, skeinsuit and albedo screen, stunstick. Cotis keeps a grenade rifle and two each of doze, tangler, & frag bullets in his cabin (shared with the human & yazirian security officers below).

Vincent Royce (human male)

Security
RW: 50 **M:** 50 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 50
Equipment: laser rifle w/3 powerclips, albedo suit & inertia screen, stunstick.



IMAGE BY AARON O'BRIAN

F'sir (vrusk male)

Security

RW: 60 **M:** 60 **IM:** 6 **RS:** 60 **STA:** 50

Equipment: 2 automatic pistols w/3 bullet clips each, skein suit & albedo screen, stunstick

Manik (yazirian male)

Security

RW: 60 **M:** 60 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50 **STA:** 50

Equipment: gyrojet rifle w/3 bullet clips, skeinsuit and albedo screen, stunstick

LCD-2 "Elsie Dee" (level 2 Combat Robot)

MV: 150m/turn **STA:** 100 **IM:** 5 **RS:** 50

ATT: 50 **DMG:** two 5d10 shots/rifle

Type: Anthropomorphic-vruskan body w/two additional arms, passive electromagnetic feet for zero-G work, two laser rifles each powered by a separate power backpack set at 5 SEU; type 2 parabattery.

Programs: Attack/Defense, Search & Destroy, Computer Link

Mission: Seek out and destroy non-Streel corporate beings

Functions: Use Search & Destroy and Attack/Defense programs to neutralize anyone not bearing the Streel logo on their uniform.

Notes: LCD-2 is stowed in Lower Bridge Deck storage area when not in use.

The pilot, co-pilot, astrogator, engineer, and dralasite security officer all begin the encounter on the Upper Bridge deck (2). The two yazirian gunners, security director, and the yazirian security officer are on the Lower Bridge Deck (3) and any of them may dart into the storage area to activate the combat robot. Thrum meets the group at the airlock of the Crew Deck (4) along with the human and vrusk security officers, the human will stay near the elevator while the vrusk accompanies him and the party in the rec room for the business meeting.

All crew members have a separate power beltback to enable their defensive screens in addition to any ammunition listed. Naturally each crew member has the Streel logo emblazoned front & back on their uniforms and night shirts. If combat breaks out, crew members with items stowed in their cabins (save for the clan weapons of the yazirian gunners) will attempt to retrieve those items for use against the usurpers. Thrum will attempt to escape either in the launch or one of the two workpods while the security officers will

do their best to cover this escape. It should be noted that if the party obtains the astrogator's portable computer before he does, it can be used to activate, deactivate, override, and otherwise commandeer the combat robot as the ship's computer lacks a robot management program!

If Thrum escapes, the party can fairly easily recover the launch or workpod assuming the *Provisioner* has been disabled/destroyed. The craft will be moving at 1 hex/turn in a random direction from the rendezvous point (roll a d6 to determine direction). The chance to find Thrum's vessel will equal 100%–5% per Knight Hawks combat turn (10 minutes), after the first two, between when Thrum escaped and they start looking for him. So if five turns are spent fighting the *Provisioner* than the chance drops to 85%.

The *Dark Shadow* crew will not be skilled enough to commandeer the *Provisioner*. They may either leave it adrift or hulk it, but they can certainly help themselves to anything of value within. However, if the ship is destroyed they will have to force any needed information from Thrum once he is recovered. Otherwise, additional info about Streel can be obtained from the ship's computer (with the appropriate skill checks).

Whether they obtain it by interrogation or via the ship's computer, it will be learned that Thrum has been operating outside of Streel's interests when it comes to supplying weaponry to Clarion's enemies. Thrum's contact in Streel's Clarion Station office (the same person they set up the meeting through) is also part of the operation. Capturing and/or eliminating him will put an end to all that have been involved in this usurpation. If pressed, higher operatives of Streel will deny knowledge of the operation and even claim they have been searching for the mole that caused their ban on Clarion. If this can be proven to be true, stopping this operation could have a positive effect on Clarion/Streel relations.

EPSILON SECTION: THE JOURNEY HOME

If it hasn't been performed yet, the *Dark Shadow* crew will have to overhaul her drives before returning home with the intel and contraband cargo (both the vehicles and weaponry can easily be appropriated for Clarion's ground forces). This operation

will go off without a hitch. However, once the ship arrives in Madderly's Star, it will encounter a pair of pirate vessels that have happened upon the lone vessel. The ships are operating under the Star Devil's charter and will attack mercilessly, offering no quarter. Fortunately, the ships aren't overly challenging to the *Dark Shadow*, specifications are as follows:

Armed Freighter

HS: 8 **HP:** 40 **DCR:** 44

ADF: 3 **MR:** 3 Crew: up to 16

Engines: 3 atomic class B

Weapons: LB(x2)

Defenses: RH

Gunned Scout Ship

HS: 3 **HP:** 15 **DCR:** 29

ADF: 4 **MR:** 4 Crew: up to 12

Engines: 2 atomic class A

Weapons: PL*, LB

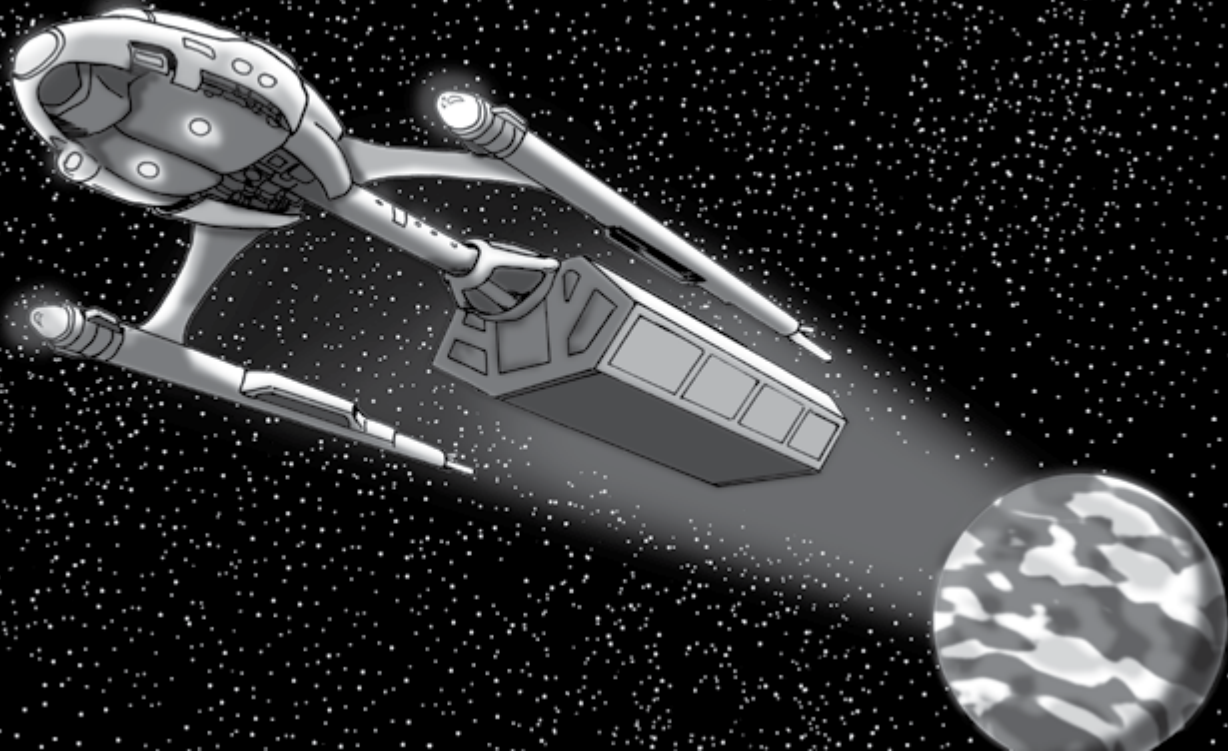
Defenses: RH

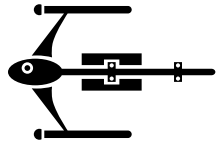
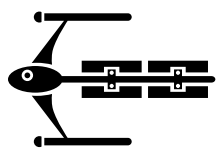

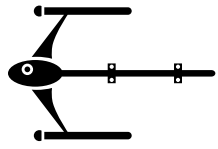

* *Pod Laser* - as detailed in *Polyhedron* #19 –
FF, RD, Range: 5, Damage: 1d10

While the pirate freighter can be easily evaded, the scout ship will have to be dispatched before the Shadow can escape. As long as they can avoid the punch from the scout's weaponry this should be relatively simple. Once free of the pirate menace, the rest of the journey home will be eventless.

ZETA SECTION: AWARDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

All characters that have successfully completed this mission are eligible for a base 2-4 experience points depending on participation. This base will be doubled if the party captured Thrum alive. Award one bonus XP for each player if they gleaned info about MalCo Enterprises as this is an operation that the Crown can keep an eye out for, and one more XP per player if they discover that Thrum and the Clarion Station contact are the sole masterminds of the operation. Award one bonus point if the Strewt impersonator was a party member that went to the Streel office on Clarion Station to arrange the meeting with Thrum. If Thrum escapes then experience points are halved at 1-2 per player depending on participation (plus any applicable bonuses).



	<p>DARK SHADOW</p> <p>DEFENSES: Reflective Hull</p>	<p>HP: 25</p>	<p>ADF 4</p> <p>MR 2</p> <p>DCR 35</p>	<p>SPEED</p>
	<p>NIGHTSHADE</p> <p>DEFENSES: Reflective Hull Masking Screen □ □</p>	<p>HP: 50</p>	<p>ADF 3</p> <p>MR 2</p> <p>DCR 50</p>	<p>SPEED</p>
	<p>PROVISIONER</p> <p>DEFENSES: Reflective Hull</p>	<p>HP: 60</p>	<p>ADF 3</p> <p>MR 3</p> <p>DCR 56</p>	<p>SPEED</p>
	<p>ARMED FREIGHTER</p> <p>DEFENSES: Reflective Hull</p>	<p>HP: 40</p>	<p>ADF 3</p> <p>MR 3</p> <p>DCR 44</p>	<p>SPEED</p>
	<p>GUNNED SCOUT</p> <p>DEFENSES: Reflective Hull</p>	<p>HP: 15</p>	<p>ADF 4</p> <p>MR 4</p> <p>DCR 29</p>	<p>SPEED</p>

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Nova Drive Travel Guide is a new series of articles that provide details and information on the setting of the FrontierSpace RPG. Somewhat modeled on the Zebulon's Guide to Frontier Space for Star Frontiers, the Nova Drive Travel Guide will provide information on locations, organizations, and other setting material for FrontierSpace. If you are a fan of FrontierSpace and want to contribute to the travel guide, we would welcome your submissions.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article was originally published on my Expanding Frontier blog (<http://expandingfrontier.com>) and was written as background material to be included in an upcoming module by DWD Studios, the publisher of FrontierSpace. I'm writing the module "in the open" and you can find other parts of it on my blog.

GALACTIC STANDARD

In FrontierSpace, the "Galactic Standard" values are simply the standard values from our own solar system. Thus, one standard gravity is just 9.8 m/s², a solar mass is the mass of the Sun, and a standard diameter is the diameter of the Earth. The following table gives the standards values (taken from page 157 of the Referee's Handbook).

GALACTIC STANDARD COVERSION TABLE	
GALACTIC STANDARD	EQUALS
1 Stellar Mass	1.99 x 10 ³⁰ kilograms
1 Stellar Luminosity	3.75 x 10 ²⁸ lumens, or 3.85 x 10 ²⁶ watts
1 Stellar Diameter	1,391,000 kilometers
1 Astronomical Unit	149,598,000 kilometers
1 Planetary Mass	5.97 x 10 ²⁴ kilograms
1 Planetary Diameter	12,756.2 kilometers
1 Planetary Gravity	9.81 m/s ² , or 1 g



DUERGAN'S STAR SYSTEM

BY TOM STEPHENS

STAR SYSTEM

In -391 GFT, a starship from a distant point of origin crashed on a terrestrial world orbiting a yellow star. The *Hawthorne* was a rather large science research vessel that supported a crew of 100 Human scientists and technicians. The captain of the vessel, Dr. Duergan Mindner, identified it as a safe place to set down the failing ship, saving its crew but stranding them far from home. This was the first time Humans set foot on any of the worlds of the Frontier sector and would become the start of their long legacy of influence. Just under 40 years later, Human migration vessels began their voyage from afar to make these worlds their homes.

Today, Hawthorne and Parnell have heavy Human populations. These two habitable planets reside within the habitable zone of the system's primary star. Its people share a cultural and economic brotherhood with those of the Kassel and Bhant systems, the three comprising a region known as "The Ring," a central hub of cultural, corporate, industrial, and economic activity for the Galactic Federation.

The local government of Duergan's Star, headquartered on Parnell, is a member of the Galactic Federation and has been since its founding. The Federation keeps a naval garrison here and operates three navigational buoys, providing secure trade routes to Kassel (4 LY away), Bhant (4 LY away), and Krighton (11 LY away, gateway to the Asimaar Prelacy).

The star itself is a yellow G7V main sequence star with a mass of 0.9 galactic standard solar masses (1.795x10³⁰kg). It has a luminosity of 0.693 stellar luminosities (2.69x10²⁶ W) and a diameter of 0.93 standard diameters (1.29 million km). Its surface temperature is 5,472K.

Most of the star system is relatively close to the planet (less than 13 AU) but it has one distant world in the outer reaches. The Duergan's Star system contains two asteroid belts, two habitable planets, an ice giant planet, and three other worlds. The FTL horizon is at 1.5 AU, 0.38 and 0.65 AU beyond the two habitable planets.

INNER BELT

The inner belt is a very high-density asteroid belt filled with smaller objects that orbit between 0.2 and 0.4 AU from Duergan's Star. There are considerable resources to be found by those that work the belt and numerous ships can be found here.

WESCOTT

Wescott is a large terrestrial planet orbiting 0.5 AU from the star. It has a surface gravity of 1.6g and is 1.34 standard diameters in size. It has six small moons that are asteroids captured from the inner belt. Its surface is covered with large impact craters—witness to regular bombardment by strays from the inner belt.

HAWTHORNE

Hawthorne was the first planet settled by humanity in the frontier. Despite its long history and large urban sprawls, Hawthorne is a remarkably clean planet. Founded by scientists who understood the need to be careful with their new world, the people have maintained that tradition over the centuries.

Hawthorne has a higher than average density, although it has a diameter of 11,097.9 km (0.87 standard), its surface gravity is 1.1g. It orbits 0.85 AU from the primary and has a warm pleasant climate with a day lasting 26.5 standard hours. It has four small moons.

PARNELL

Parnell was settled much later after the Hawthorne colony was well established. Parnell is an ocean world with only a few, very small island continents. These islands are completely covered with cities and overpopulated. The climate is very mild but not cold. The large oceans result in a bit more greenhouse warming and the planet is warmer than a typical terrestrial planet at this distance from its primary.

Parnell orbits 1.12 AU from Duergan's Star and has a diameter of 8,164 km. Its surface gravity is 0.9g and it rotates once every 21.3 hours. It has two moons. The mild climate, low gravity, and abundant beaches make tourism a major industry on the planet.

OUTER BELT

The outer asteroid belt is not as dense as the inner belt (rating only a moderate density), but the individual objects in this belt are very large, often bordering on being minor planets themselves. Outpost Osiris is located on a medium sized asteroid in this belt. The belt

is fairly wide with objects in this belt having orbits ranging from 1.6 to 2.8 AU from the star. Like the inner belt, there are considerable resources here and many mining operations are scattered throughout the belt.

DUNGANNON

Orbiting at a distance of 5.24 AU from Duergan's Star, Dungannon is a dwarf planetoid 6,250.5 km in diameter. It has a surface gravity of 0.53g and spins on its axis once every 75.5 hours. Dunganon has a single large moon that is tidally locked to the planet (orbiting and also rotating once every 75.5 hours). This moon has a surface gravity of just under 0.1g. It has a diameter of 1,722.2 km.

COOMBS

Coombs is the system's only Jovian planet and is classified as an Ice Jovian being composed of more methane and ammonia than pure hydrogen gas. It orbits 12.12 AU from the star and has a diameter of 44,646.7 km. It rotates once every 18 hours and has 37 moons ranging in size from small asteroids to objects that are small worlds in their own right.

WINTERBOURNE

The final, distant object in the system to be classified as a planet is the small dwarf planetoid Winterbourne. This cold, frigid planet orbits 78.83 AU from the star. It has a diameter of 3954.4 km and a surface gravity of only 0.21g. Like Dungannon, it rotates very slowly completing one rotation every 76.2 hours. Winterbourne is a solitary object with no moons. Lost in the clutter of small objects in the outer system, Winterbourne has only been considered a full planet for the past 43 years.

PLANETARY DATA FOR THE DUERGAN SYSTEM

NAME	TYPE	DISTANCE (AU)	DIAMETER	GRAVITY (G)	MOONS	PERIOD (HRS)	DESCRIPTION
Inner Belt	Asteroids	0.2-0.4					Small, very dense asteroid field
Wescott	Terrestrial Planet	0.50	1.34	1.60	6	44.1	
Hawthorne	Terrestrial Planet	0.85	0.87	1.10	4	26.5	Walled, urban sprawls. Clean
Parnell	Terrestrial Planet	1.12	0.64	0.90	2	21.3	Vast Oceans. Overpopulated island cities
Outer Belt	Asteroids	1.6-1.8					Huge, moderate density
Dungannon	Dwarf Planetoid	5.24	0.49	0.53	1	75.5	
Coombs	Jovian: Ice	12.12	3.50	4.60	37	18.0	
Winterbourne	Dwarf Planetoid	78.83	0.31	0.21	0	76.2	





IMAGE BY GREG BAHLMANN

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

The legend of the Flying Dutchman is that of a ghost ship doomed to never make port and sail on through eternity. This could not be more true of starships that become lost and derelict out in the black of space sailing off into forever. The legend of the Flying Dutchman started when sailors saw their sister ship which had been lost in a storm appear during another storm sailing as if to run them down and the story spread like wildfire in the nautical community. Just as the legendary Dutchman made a secondary appearance, derelicts and Flying Dutchman starships may also make a secondary appearance, though this is usually by referee fiat in the latest adventure.

The following article is a resource for game referees to generate a derelict ship.

OF LOST SHIPS AND DERELICTS

BY THOMAS VERREULT

Poorly calculated void jumps certainly account for some missing ships and this reason is written directly into the Knight Hawk rules for starships. The chance is usually low unless an astrogator is “smoking the jump”. Should a captain or ship owner be counting on refueling at their destination, a misjump can become a grave circumstance from which it could be impossible to recover. Inspiration: Star Wars; while we never see it happen, Han Solo states that poor calculations could bring the ship out in an asteroid field or too close to a supernova.

Piracy in the Frontier is affirmed a number of ways in the rules and modules. Space pirates play a significant role in 3 of the published modules and the grand pirate raid by the dread pirate Hatzk Naar is a major timeline feature that was the cause of the First Common Muster. Pirates have a haven in the Dramune system and some pirate vessels are officially flagged as militia for the Outer Reach colony. Piracy still happens even in the modern Frontier and some vessels will

disappear because of this activity. Naturally, pirates will desire to wring every credit out of a ship so many will be sold to a fence, but many may be just left to float derelict because the ship might be too recognizable to sell anonymously. [Movie inspiration: *Ice Pirates* (1984) and *The Island* (1980).]

While piracy is defined as violence or robbery in space, hostile action covers aggression that is not piracy. In the setting, space travel is dangerous and many civilian ships are armed. There is an implacable alien foe, the Sathar, who refuses to negotiate, suicides rather than be captured, and attacks without pity. The Zuraquor are the pawns of the sathar and equally act with aggression. Other alien opponents are hinted at like the klikk's which could very well be hostile and aggressive. Vessels encountering these species that lack the firepower to outshoot them will become drifting wrecks. [Inspiration: *Battlestar Gallactica* and *Star Trek* (almost any iteration of either TV series depicted hostile action in space).]

Hazards in space come in myriad shapes and forms. A common hazard, which all starship crews train for, is the “holing” of the ship by small bits of rock. Because of the speeds involved, a micro-meteor will go through a ship like a bullet. Radiation is another hazard that might well kill the crew and leave the ship to drift. Besides valid real world hazards, game referees may also invent hazards to harass the players. Well charted jump routes should be free of most outré hazards, aside from the occasional micro-meteor, and thus fairly safe. But ships far from home can encounter dangers that will cause it to never return. [Inspiration: Isaac Asimov’s “*The Sands of Mars*” depicts the holing of a space ship by micro-meteor.]

Intentional activity like mutiny can lead to the ship disappearing as mutiny is considered a crime in the Frontier and the mutineers obviously don’t want to be found. Mutiny is of itself a violent activity and could lead to damage of the ship or death of enough of the sapient beings on board such that the ship cannot be operated. In addition, personnel with legal access to a ship may simply decide to fly off with it. This could be an eccentric owner deciding to become a hermit somewhere, a religious group looking for an Eden, or simply a hired crew that is fleeing the law. [Inspiration: Star Trek TNG “*The Pegasus Incident*”, Star Trek TOS “*The Way to Eden*”, and *The Black Hole* (1979)]

Accidents or Acts of God are simply freak things that happen and result in the ship being left derelict. This would cover the takeover of the ship by a robotic or computer brain due to some glitch in the programming or even an encounter with biological organisms on a planet that leave the crew incapacitated or dead. These are by definition accidents and they just happen. [Inspiration: *Aliens* (1979), *Marooned* (1969), and *Gravity* (2013).]

If you wish to randomly determine why a ship has become derelict, roll on the table below:

CAUSE OF DERELICT TABLE	
ROLL 1D6	CAUSE
1	Misjump*
2	Piracy
3	Hostile Action
4	Innate Hazard in Space
5	Intentional
6	Accident

A ship will become a derelict on a miss-jump only with some other complication. This complication could be as simple as running out of fuel and supplies or more dramatic like hostile alien action.

WHICH SHIPS GET LOST

FIGHTERS

A fighter has a crew of one (or two) that relies on their vacuum suit for life support. They are not considered able to make a Void jump despite the ability to accelerate to Void speeds. Military organizations may build into their fighter craft a jump governor to prevent them from reaching Void speed as a security and safety measure. Most likely a derelict fighter will be due to hostile action or death of the pilot for some reason.

A fighter pilot that somehow overcame the life support issues and attempted a void jump would find that he has a biological governor and that the days spent attempting this feat would become unbearable being forced to remain in one spot and position unable to even scratch an itch. However, there is still a chance that this feat could be successful. Movies like *Enemy Mine* and *Six Days Seven Nights* underscore the romantic image of a lost fighter pilot surviving on a deserted island or planet and, while perhaps a bit unrealistic, there is no reason a referee cannot use this motif.

SHUTTLES, RUNABOUTS AND SMALL CRAFT

This category would include small yachts. These ships have proper life support and just enough space to move around provided they are not crowded with passengers. They could be operated by one being with great difficulty or by a small crew (2-3). Because the ship is small, its disappearance might not generate any news. A rich individual on a pleasure cruise or an eccentric deciding to go hermit could take such a ship off the charted space lanes where hazards increase. The small size of the ship and limited crew makes it more likely that even simple hazards could overcome the crew or resources of the ship.

EXPLORATION VESSELS

Exploration vessels seek out the unknown and are the first to encounter new hazards in space. Their crews train for conceivable contingencies and the ship carries redundant assets for emergencies but some nev-

er return. Zebulon’s Guide estimates that 10-20% of all exploration vessels disappear. This is quite a high number, but then space travel is dangerous in an RPG setting. There is an estimated 200 missing exploration vessels out there to be discovered but be careful that what ever happened to the exploration crew doesn’t happen to you.

PIRATE VESSELS

Pirates need to stay below the radar of the military and local law enforcement, thus they have a habit of looking for a hide-away in uncharted space. For this reason 10-20% of all pirate vessels will disappear simply because they are encountering some of the same hazards as exploration vessels on top of all the other complications (mutiny, hostile actions, poor maintenance and accidents).

PASSENGER LINERS

Because of cost and liability issues these vessels stick to established and well charted space lanes. While you would expect that most hazards of space travel will be minimized for passenger liner, accidents do happen and encounters with pirates or hostile aliens would generate a public tragedy. Since safety would be a major concern of most cruise lines, we don’t expect that there would be that many derelict or missing passenger liners out there.

COMMERCIAL CIVILIAN SHIPS

Freighters, mining ships, ag ships, and similar ships typically stick to the pursuit of their commercial interests but some captains might take chances to increase profits by “smoking the jump” (cutting short the time required to calculate a void jump) or looking for new untapped resources or markets. Freighters are the most likely to try “smoking the jump” and risk a misjump. Mining ships might go exploring uncharted areas looking for new resources. Private commercial vessels are a high percentage of the total number of starships in existence which will drive up the numbers of missing ships from this category. They are a prime target for piracy and their crews may be inadequate to handle exotic hazards.

Ag ships are a special case as there are just not that many of them out there. Growing crops on a planet is far easier and a colony that cannot grow its own would find it easier to ship in food on a freighter. Yet, ag ships do exist and are probably em-

ployed in specialized situations like new colony start-ups or as scientific research studying ecological issues in the controlled environment of a bio-dome. On the one hand there are not many of these ships out there but on the other their mission may require them to enter uncharted space so there is a chance of an ag ship being lost; it's just small.

MILITARY VESSELS

The purpose of military and militia ships in the setting is to “stand into danger.” They explore, hunt pirates, seek out hostile action, and attempt rescue of civilian ships. Military vessels are very likely to encounter dangers and hazards in space. On the other hand they have well-disciplined crews and are usually well maintained giving them better odds at handling accidents and emergencies. Still military vessels are going to be the highest percentage of missing and derelict vessels.

To randomly determine the type of derelict ship, roll on the following table.

TYPE OF DERELICT TABLE	
ROLL D100	SHIP TYPE
1-2	Fighter
3-12	Small Craft
13-33	Exploration Vessel
34-54	Pirate Vessel
55	Passenger Liner
56-66	Freighter
67-72	Mining Ship
73	Ag Ship
74-100	Military Vessels

EXPLORING A DERELICT

To set up an adventure exploring a derelict, a referee will need a handy deck plan. There are numerous horizontal deck plans that can be located on the internet for settings like Traveller or Star Wars. Horizontal deck plans may actually be the most numerous available. Some of these are commercially available but there are many that are free. However, Star Frontiers does not posit the existence of artificial gravity and thus its ships have simulated gravity from the ship's thrust requiring vertical deck plans. At the end of the article is an appendix of ships and deck plans to aid a referee in setting up this sort of adventure.

MYSTERIES OF A DERELICT

You will need to have a good idea as to the "story" of why this particular ship is a derelict so that you can include appropriate clues as to what happened to it for the players to figure out this story. If a xeno-lifeform got on the ship and ran amok killing the crew then the evidence of this will be found and it will be different from a pirate shooting holes in the ship. You should ask yourself what happened to this ship. What did the crew do in response to the emergency they faced? Why did they not survive or succeed in saving their ship? Include clues that help the players answer those questions

DANGERS OF THE DERELICT

Role playing games thrive on conflicts and a derelict exploration will as well. By definition, a derelict is an empty ship so who will the player characters fight with? A lone and crazy crew member or passenger may lurk in the air ducts and believe the PCs are out to get them. A xeno-lifeform has managed to get loose on the ship and stalks the corridors. A pirate was betrayed and left behind by his crew and is looking to pass as a victim on the ship.

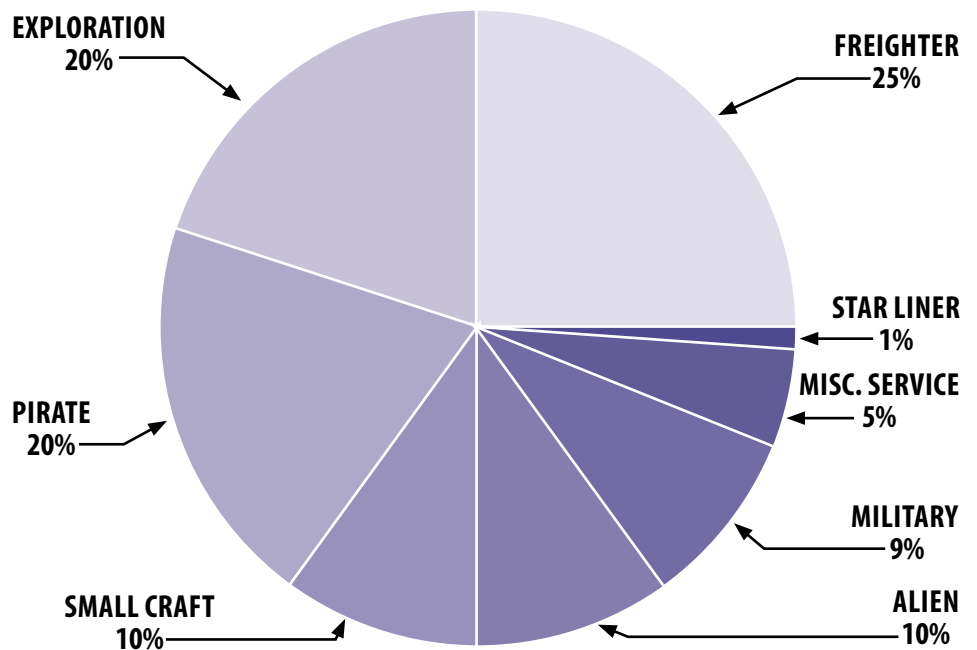
Robots are a common enough feature in the Frontier and the security and service robots will not recognize the PCs as authorized crewmembers on their ship. Security robots will focus on restraining and detaining the PCs. Service robots

may have had additional programming for them to assist the crew in hostile boardings. Robots can always be a default opposition.

Poor conditions will present hazards. In cases of extreme age, the derelict will be in poor condition. Space is a hostile environment. Even in cases of a few years drifting derelict, a ship will be in poor condition from exposure to radiation, having been holed by micro-meteors, and lack of regular maintenance. Some compartments may have vented their atmosphere to space. Getting the ship off of emergency power could be complicated and troublesome. Some equipment is just not going to work right or not at all. What are the state of the engines? They could be out of fuel or on the brink of an overload.

Flying Dutchmen and derelict starships are pretty much the science fiction equivalent of the fantasy genre's troll cave. The players will know that you planned this encounter, that its possibly a bit of “rail-roading” game wise but they will find it tough to resist the lure of exploring a derelict ship. The trick for the referee is to craft unique experiences so that it's not “another troll cave”. Hopefully this article equips you to begin to do just that. If nothing else a derelict starship will be a great campaign filler for the time strapped referee or the plot hook to start a major story arc; the void is the limit.

TYPES OF DERELICTS



APPENDIX: DECKPLANS IN STAR FRONTIERS

- Module SF0 "Crash on Voltumnus": the Serena Dawn (the Serena Dawn was pre Knight Hawks box set and doesn't conform well to the vertical deck layouts of Star Frontiers). Note: the Star Frontier's ReFrontier Explorerree's Screen had a second deck to go with the Serena Dawn deck.
- Knight Hawks boxed set: large and small freighter and the vaunted assault scout
- SFKH 1 "Dramune Run": the Gullwind
- SFKH 2 "Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes": the Eleanor Moraes
- SFKH 3 "Face of the Enemy": a sathar scout ship and a sathar carrier
- Star Frontiersman #5 "Starflight: Fighters in Alpha Dawn": doesn't provide any deck plans but proposes a number of interesting fighter variants for the game.
- Star Frontiersman #6 "East Indiaman Class Freighter"
- Star Frontiersman #7 "UPF Fighters": again no deck plans but more interesting fight variants
- Star Frontiersman #8 "Starships": Explorer class heavy scoutship
- Star Frontiersman #9 "The Jump Tug": what's interesting about this ship as a derelict is that it could be "towing" another ship so you get two derelicts for the price of one.
- Star Frontiersman #11 "The TSSS Dart"
- Star Frontiersman #13 "Voltumnus Desert Encounter": the Thruster Class privateer (note this ship was given statistics in Dragon magazine #86 "Yachts and Privateers Return")
- Star Frontiersman #13 "TT-456 Container ship": a variant of the freighters in the Knight Hawks boxed set
- Star Frontiersman #13 "S200 Assault Shuttle"
- Star Frontiersman #13 "S4 Corsair"
- Star Frontiersman #13 "The Christianna Class Torpedo frigate": note there is a breakdown of what is on each deck but no map
- Star Frontiersman #14 "The Meteor Class Assault Shuttle": no map
- Star Frontiersman #17 "The Steel Raven Class corvette"
- Star Frontiersman #18 "The Rick and Ki'rick Salvage Company": Able Hand salvage ship with cross section but no map
- Star Frontiersman #18 "The Cloverdale Ag ship": cross section but no map
- Star Frontiersman #19 "The Liberation of Voltumnus": E-1A Eorna Heavy Fighter & NME-16 Neo Mechanon Enhanced fighter- these have lots of details and illustrations but no map
- Star Frontiersman #20 "Starships": Razor and Star Hawk class assault scouts
- Star Frontiersman #21 "Starships": The Pacific Class freighter- a variant of the Gullwind
- Star Frontiersman #22 "Incident on the Sinca Maru": the Sinca Maru
- Star Frontiersman #22 "Starship Leo": a constellation class star liner
- Star Frontiersman #24 "Starships": Embecker's Dance—a luxury passenger liner
- Star Frontiersman #25 Freelance Exploration vessel; Wander
- Frontier Explorer #1 "CSS Nightwind"
- Frontier Explorer #2 "Sci-Cons 1 & 2": McCameron Shuttle
- Frontier Explorer #3 "E-1A Eorna Heavy Fighter" first seen in Star Frontiersman #19 but presented here with a deck plan map
- Frontier Explorer #3 "Dawn Trader Class Merchant Ship": the CFMS Venture
- Frontier Explorer #4 "Talnor Class Communications Ship": a frigate sized ship with details and stats but no map
- Frontier Explorer #4 "Saurian Spacecraft": statistics for various saurian ships but no maps
- Frontier Explorer #5 "Assault Scout": remastered assault scout deck plans
- Frontier Explorer #7 "Rise of the Plague Wind": details and stats on a sathar frigate no map
- Frontier Explorer #8 "UPF Supply and Fast Combat Support Ship": details and stats but no maps
- Frontier Explorer #9 "NGT-1000 Container Ship"
- Frontier Explorer #9 "Passenger Liner": The Passenger Class system ship liner
- Frontier Explorer #9 "Freedom Class Ships": details and stats but no maps
- Frontier Explorer #9 "Red Thunder": HS 4 privateer vessel
- Frontier Explorer #10 "Bounty Hunters": Seeker Class bounty hunter ship
- Frontier Explorer #10 "In the Shadow of the Prodigal Sun": this is an adventure set on a derelict vessel using the Red Thunder Deck plans from Frontier Explorer #9
- Frontier Explorer #11 "The Alpha Scout": a small exploration vessel
- Frontier Explorer #13 "The Trafalgar Trade Lines": Fair Trader Class, Trafalgar Civilian Scout, CU-37 Courier, Kri-Kkaa heavy shuttle, Margo class freighter
- Frontier Explorer #14 "Remus Shuttle & Romulus Runabout": the Remus and Romulus class of small vessels (same ship but difFrontier Explorerrent engines)
- Frontier Explorer #18 "Ships of the Frontier": SC-181 Courier
- Frontier Explorer #18 "Atlantic Class Freighter": a Gullwind variant
- Frontier Explorer #18 "Atlas Manufacturing Corporation, Comet": the Comet class research vessel
- Frontier Explorer #18 "New Era Commercial Survey Module"
- Frontier Explorer #21 "Assault Scout-Swift Class": assault scout variant
- Frontier Explorer #21 "Pelican Troop Transport": a troop ship for Star Frontiers
- Frontier Explorer #21 "UPFS Rescue Scout": a medical ship styled on the classic assault scout concept
- Frontier Explorer Presents The Sathar Destroyer Technical Manual: a whole manual on a sathar warship
- Frontier Explorer Presents The Assault Scout Technical Manual: a whole manual dedicated to two versions of the assault scout.

EXPLORING A DESERTED SPACESHIP

20 PLOT IDEAS FOR A SCI-FI CLASSIC

BY THOMAS VERREAULT

The proverbial deserted spaceship, a staple of adventure in science fiction. Ever since seeing *Alien* as a kid I've always known that deserted spaceships were where bad things happened and Red Shirts went to die. It's not entirely true in every case but the ghosts of the movie *Alien* clearly haunt me to this day.

Still, with it being such a staple of science fiction, it's only a matter of time before you'll encounter one in your campaign. The following list is some ideas to dress the ship and set the mood for adventure on such a ship.

- 1 Patches of fuzzy mold grow on the walls and floor of the ship's corridors and around air vents. Characters must step carefully to avoid slipping on the mold but anytime their focus is fixed elsewhere (like during combat) they cannot do this and 25% of the time they will suffer a -15% penalty to all ability and skill checks during combat due to slipping on the mold.
- 2 Bodies: mummified, skeletal or rotting. Cause of death can be violence, environmental, or unknown. If environmental the condition that lead to death can still exist and be a danger to the player characters.
- 3 Abandoned personal weapons left in odd places in corridors and rooms.
- 4 Signs of fire: either localized or systemic. If localized it's centered on one piece of equipment like the life support plant or power plant. If systemic the fire may have travelled through air vents or been intentionally lit with accelerant.



ART BY SCOTT MULDER

- 5 Wall panels have been removed to expose systems and equipment. It looks like slap dash style repairs and attempts to bypass wiring.
- 6 From within the walls and air vents comes the sound of vermin scurrying and chittering. Rats, vollosian spiders or Terledrom roaches.
- 7 The last coat of paint is chipping and underneath there seems to be a design or mural.
- 8 Creeping vines grow throughout the corridors and rooms holding doors open.
- 9 A bulkhead panel has been removed and behind it is an empty hidden storage niche.
- 10 A security robot stands with its head hanging by wires. Nearby is another security robot seemingly undamaged.
- 11 Splattered blood covers walls and floors. Surely somebody died here but where is the body?
- 12 The purser's safe has been cut into with a laser powertorch which lays nearby. Papers and credit chits are strewn on the floor.
- 13 Dirty clothes, blankets, and food wrappers litter the areas around work stations.
- 14 Noises and creaks seem to follow the player characters as they move about the ship. Shadows even seem to follow them.
- 15 Battle damage: the ship has sustained substantial damage. Damage control may or may not have occurred.
- 16 A floor plate shifts as a player character walks on it and drops him or her into the subfloor. Someone may have welded spikes beneath (1d10 damage, RS check to avoid). There could be evidence of someone living down there. OR there is something not someone living down there roll for initiative.
- 17 Graffiti is written all over the walls. It could be artistic, juvenile or crazy/religious/prophetic.
- 18 Initials and names of crew are etched into the walls.
- 19 A vicious creature prowls the corridors of the ship.
- 20 There is an egg. Why does there have to be an egg? Ok who wants to examine it closely?

STAR FRONTIERS

>>ID/

NAME :

PSA : MIL TECH BIOSOC

RACE :

PROFESSION :

GENDER :

WALKING :

HANDEDNESS : R L A

RUNNING :

BIRTHDATE :

HOURLY :

BIRTH PLACE

SYSTEM :

PLANET :

MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT

>>AB/

STR/STA :

DEX/RS :

INT/LOG :

PER/LDR :

INI MOD :

PUNCH DMG :



>>FOTO/



>>HL/

CRT STA :

RACIAL ABILITIES :

OTHER INJURIES :

XP :

SPC SKL :

>>SF//AD//CS01<<

STAR FRONTIERS

>>MIL//SKL

		BC%	+	LVL			BC%	+	LVL
WEAPON	BEAM WPN		%	+		MARTIAL ARTS	SETTING CHARGES	30%	
	GYROJET		%	+			DEFUSING CHARGES	50%	
	MELEE		%	+			TUMBLING		
	PROJECTILE		%	+			DEFENSE THROWS		
	THROWN WPN		%	+			NERVE COMBAT		

>>TEC//SKL

		BC%	+	LVL			BC%	+	LVL
COMPUTER	OPERATE	100%		+	ROBOTICS	IDENTIFICATION	100%		+
	WRITE PROG					ADD EQUIPMENT	100%		+
	DEFEAT SECURITY	60%		+		REPAIR ROBOT	40%		+
	BYPASS SECURITY	30%		+		ACTIVATE/DEACT.	100%		+
	DISPLAY INFO.	80%		+		REMOVE SEC. LOCK	70%		+
	MANIPULATE PROG.	50%		+		LIST FUNCTIONS	90%		+
	INTERFACE COMPUT.	30%		+		ALTER FUNCTION	60%		+
	REPAIR COMPUTERS	40%		+		ALTER MISSION	50%		+

ENVIRONMENTAL BC% + LVL

ANLZ SAMPLES	50%		+
ANLZ ECOSYSTEM	30%		+
FIND DIRECTION	50%		+
SURVIVAL	40%		+
MAKE TOOLS/WPNS	100%		+
TRACKING	30%		+
STEALTH	20%		+
CONCEALMENT	10%		+
NAMING	100%		+

PSYCHO SOCIAL BC% + LVL

EMPATHY	10%		+
PERSUASION	10%		+
COMMUNICATION	40%		+
HYPNOSIS	15%		+
PSYCHOPATHOLOGY	30%		+

TECHNICIAN BC% + LVL

OPERATE MACHINERY	50%		+
REPAIR MACHINERY	40%		+
DETECT ALARM/DEFENSE	60%		+
DEACTIVATE ALARM/DFS	40%		+
OPEN LOCKS	50%		+

MEDICAL BC% + LVL

ADMINISTERING DRUGS	100%		+
DIAGNOSIS	60%		+
FIRST AID	100%		+
MINOR SURGERY	40%		+
MAJOR SURGERY	20%		+
CONTROLLING INFECTION	50%		+
CURING DISEASES	40%		+
NEUTRALIZING TOXINS	30%		+
ACTIVATE FREEZE ELDS	30%		+

>>BSC//SKL

STAR FRONTIERS

>>SPS//SKL

PILOTING		BC%	+	LVL	SPACESHIP		BC%	+	LVL
EVASION					SHIP ENGINEERING				
INCRS ACCUR. FW WPN					SHIP DESIGN				
INCRAS MANVR RATING					DAMAGE CONTROL				
ASTROGATION		BC%	+	LVL	GUNNERY				
PL0T INTRSTEL. JUMP					IMPROVE ACCURACY				
RISK JUMPING					<< NRJ / RKT WPN				
FIND LOCATION					/				
CHART NEW RTS					SELECTIVE TARGETING				
>>SF//KNIGHT//HWK<<					<< NRJ / RKT WPN				

SEU

USED

>>WPNS//

WEAPON	DMG	AMMO	SEU	RATE	DEFENSE	PB	SHORT	MDM	LONG	XTRM	KG
--------	-----	------	-----	------	---------	----	-------	-----	------	------	----

RNGD >>WPNS//

WEAPON	DMG	MODIF.	DFS	POW	SEU	KG	DFS	KG	NRJ	VS
--------	-----	--------	-----	-----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----

MLEE <<

/DFS

>>SF//AD//CS03<<

STAR FRONTIERS

>>RBTS//

TYPE	MOVE	LVL	MISSION	PR0G	F0T0

>>CMPTS//

LVL	FN	PTS	KG	PROGRAM

>>VHCL//

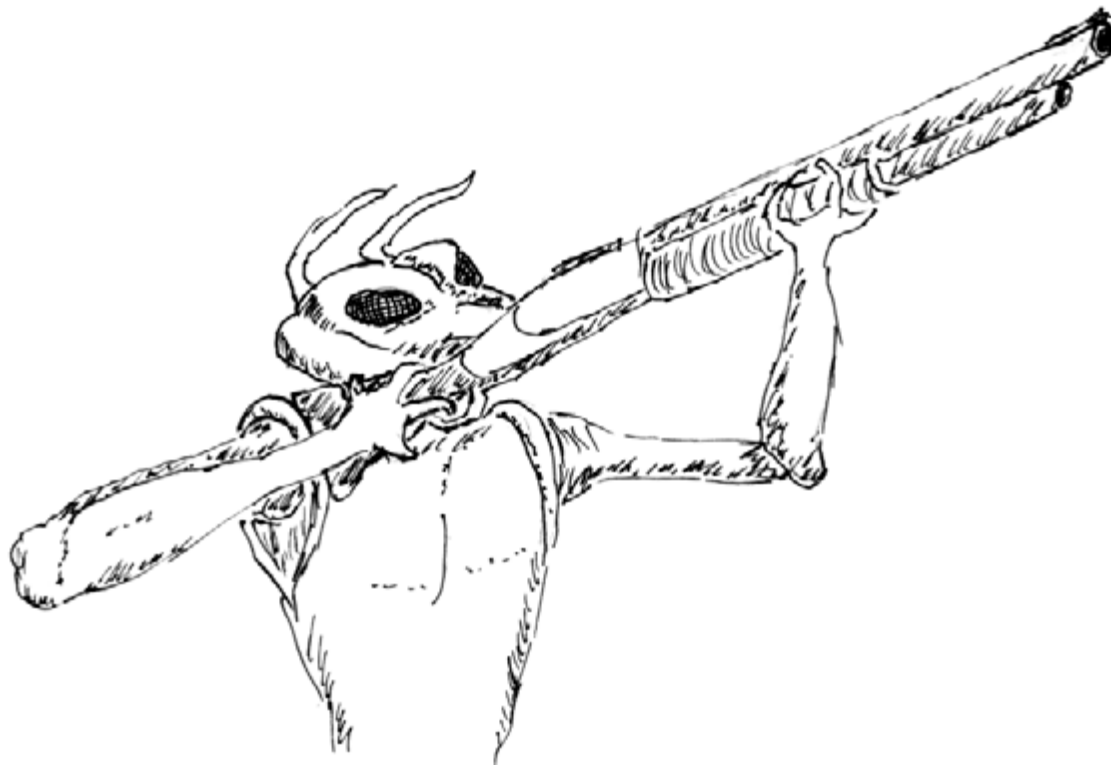
TYPE	AC-DC-TN-SP-CR	CARGO

>>EKPMT//



>>BCKGRND//





VRUSK OPTIMIZED EQUIPMENT

BY THOMAS VERREAU

IN THE MINZII MARKETPLACE

Hezred laid down controlled covering fire while his captain and ships engineer overcame the locks on the ignition systems on the two hovercycles. Which were, unfortunately, outfitted with vrusk conversion packages—making them more comfortable for vrusk riders and thus making operation of them uncomfortable for Hezred and his team. Although, Hezred did take comfort in the fact that the cycles probably belonged to the two Zenk agents he was holding off.

“We’re good!” shouted his captain, “Hezred! Time to leave. Now!”

Hezred drew disk smoke grenades from his bandolier, tossed one in the direction of the two members of the vrusk mafia, and dropped the other where he crouched before vaulting onto the flip up passenger seat on the cycle being driven by his captain and off they went with clouds of smoke covering their escape on the stolen cycles.

AN ERGONOMIC OPTION

In the Alpha Dawn rules, equipment was one-size-fits-all-species, which kind of

works for dralasites, humans, and yazirians, but begs credulity when it comes to the vrusk. Below is an optional rule for vrusk specialized equipment.

Most equipment is optimized for the traditional bi-pedal body arrangement of humans and yazirians and dralasites are not inconvenienced due to their special abilities. A vrusk can use such equipment but if a skill or ability check is required when using that equipment, the check is modified by a -10% penalty. Conversely, if equipment is optimized for vrusk physiology and being used by humans or yazirians, they suffer a -10% penalty on skill or ability checks. Again, dralasites have no issues due to their unique abilities.

Most manufacturers have dealer available conversion kits which are usually a swap out hand grip that are a trivial job (meaning no die roll required) for a technician or require a LOG check for a non-technician. The costs to modify most small items is 20% of the item’s original cost although small items like weapons and other basic equipment already come in vrusk optimized models at the standard price. The conversion

kit is for when you want to convert an item that you came into possession of from a source that is not the dealer. Ground and hover cycles are a special case.

THE VRUSK CYCLE CONVERSION PACKAGE

The vrusk cycle conversion kit (hover or ground) would include the extended swingarm and seat/tailpiece, a seat made of breathable material similar to dralassite clothing so the vrusk can breathe, a flip-up passenger seat that the vrusk abdomen slips under to accommodate a passenger, bulb-type hand grips, eight footpegs or an extended floorboard, and an extended pair of rear footpegs for any passenger.

Cost: 500 Cr.

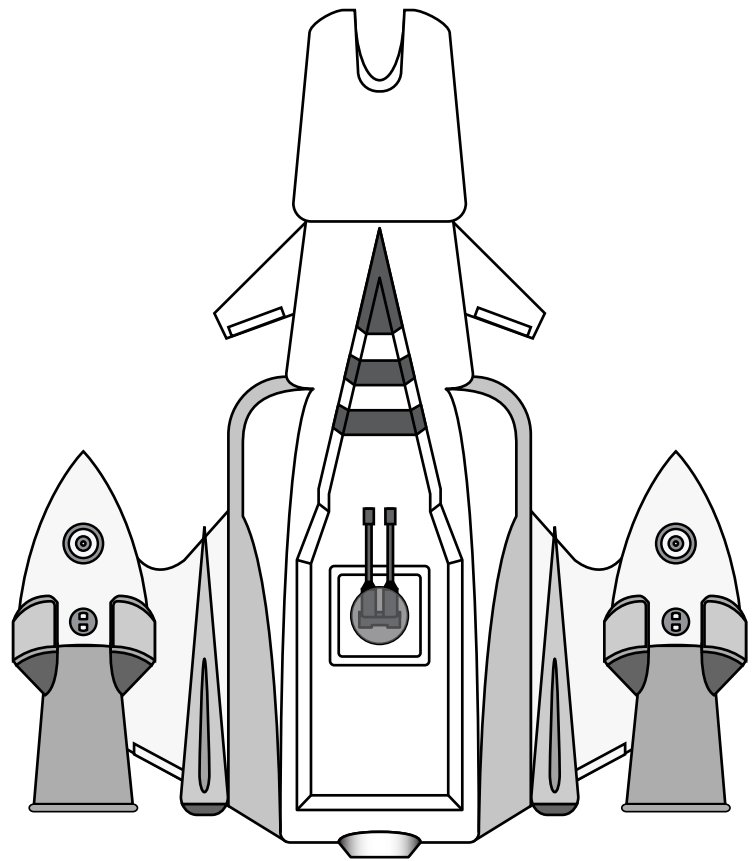


ART BY RICHARD ROSE

"John Knightrazor II here, captain and co-owner of the *SS Knight Owl*. My blood-brother yazirian comrade Rinny and I run things aboard this fine ship. She's a light freight-hauler from Rayax Transport Shipwrights, one of their finer models at that. Not the most profitable, but she makes up for it in speed, agility, and armament. We're contracted by the local Histran's outpost governor to charter goods from Gran Quivera and Yast. The income isn't much to talk about, but it allows us the liberties we enjoy from this fine vessel. We've made a few modifications to the basic RT design to suit our needs."

"Reputation? Whaddaya mean you haven't heard of us?!? Surely you recall that scuffle right here in my homeworld involving that no good upstart dictator Yan-Soon Sheadow and his Sovereign Domain Authority. Yeah, that's right...we're the ones that mustered a group of other independent haulers along with surviving Star Fighter Corps forces to retake the planet. These weren't your garden variety pirates or petty crooks mind you. No, we took down half of Soon's prized weapon, the Punisher Squadron, during that battle. One of my gunners dealt the blow that sent their squadron leader plummeting to the surface, and their entire operation fell apart after that."

"This *Owl* is under contract with Histran's local outpost governor with chartered routes to Gran Quivera and Yast for supplies. The citizens of this outpost world require a wide variety of goods, so this is a lucrative charter. Lucrative to the government anyways, we just operate the boat. But during our downtime sessions, we've developed something of a reputation on our independent runs."



ART BY RICHARD ROSE

MEET THE CREW OF THE SS KNIGHT OWL

A SAMPLE LOW LEVEL KH GROUP AND THEIR ENTRY LEVEL STARSHIP

BY RICHARD "SHADOW SHACK" ROSE

The *SS Knight Owl* is an RT-3100 merchant scout designed by Rayax Transport Shipwrights at their Dixon's Star facility on Laco. Rayax Transport is named after the Rayax, a small yet feral reptilian creature native to Laco's desert. As such, the RT ships tend to be on the small end as they are predominantly constructed on the surface, although they have a shipyard on the orbital station as well for any hull rating from 4 to 6. The RT-3100 Merchant Scout is an ideal place to start one's spacer career. Using a size 3 hull, it requires minimal skills and crews to operate. Using a cloned Assault Scout as a base, the Merchant Scout is shorter but wider at 40 meters long and 12 meters wide. All-in-all a 10% variance that is larger than your typical HS 3 craft. The

extra width comes via the under-belly cargo hold that extends around the hull.

HS: 3 **HP:** 18 **DCR:** 40

ADF: 5 **MR:** 4 Crew: 4-8

Engines: 2 PGC "Twin Hammer"* Atomic A

Fuel: 6 uranium or plutonium pellets

Weapons: 2 pod laser turrets; convertible FF Pod Laser** can be added @ -1 MR

Defenses: RH

Communication/Detection: sub-space radio, videocom, radar, intercom

Misc Equipment: streamlined, light hull armor, deluxe astrogation equipment, backup life support, universal airlock/docking collar

Computer: level 5 (464 FP) SP/
mass:300

Programs: Alarm 4, Analysis 6, Astro-
gation 4, Bureaucracy 2, Commerce
1, Communication 1, Computer
Lockout 6, Computer Security 6,
Damage Control 4, Drive 4, Industry
1, Information Storage 3, Installa-
tion Security 6, Language 3, Laser
Battery 1 x2, Laser Cannon 1, Life
Support (capacity: 8) 1 x2, Mainte-
nance 4, Robot Management 6

Cargo Capacity: 2 (1.5 main hold, 0.5
aft hold)

Crew Accommodations: 4 double
cabins

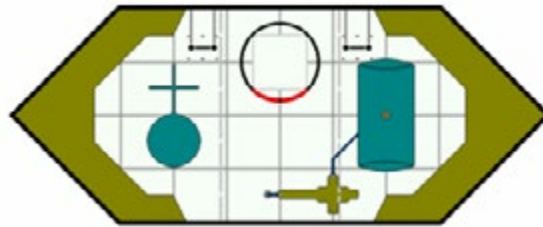
Passenger Accommodations: N/A;
although unoccupied crew cabins
can be chartered

Ship's Vehicles: none

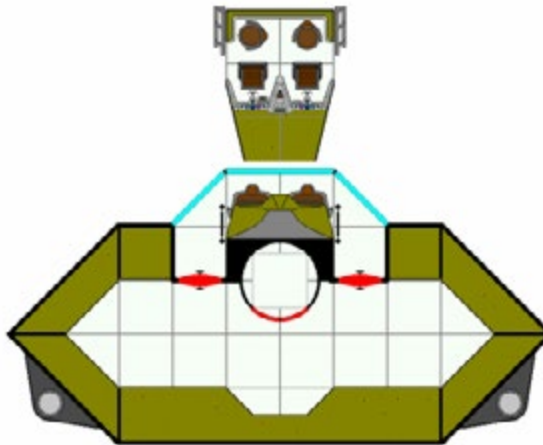
Home Port: Histran, Scree Fron

** PGC "Twin Hammer" drives are an
A-class drive somewhat equivalent to
the "Eureka" drives seen in SF/KH:1
Dramune Run. The Twin Hammer
drive is a single reactor mated to a pair
of thrusters that increases ADF by a
factor of one.*

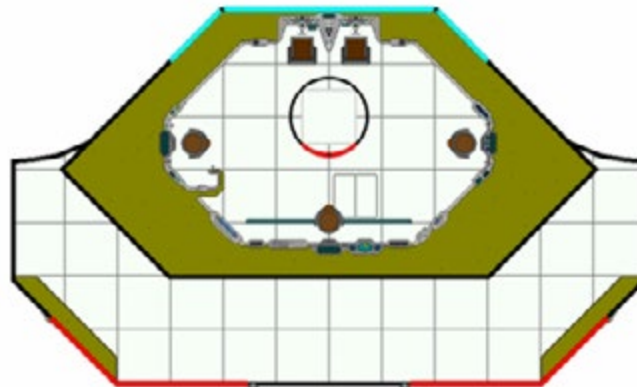
*** Pod Laser Turrets are simply
smaller scale versions of the Laser Bat-
tery. They have a range of 40,000km
and inflict the same 1d10 damage with
a minimum hull size rating of 1. They
use the same program as the larger bat-
tery weapon. Pod Lasers were detailed
in Dragon Magazine sporting a range
of 50,000km, with a MHS:1, inflicting
1d10 damage, and use the Laser Can-
non program.*



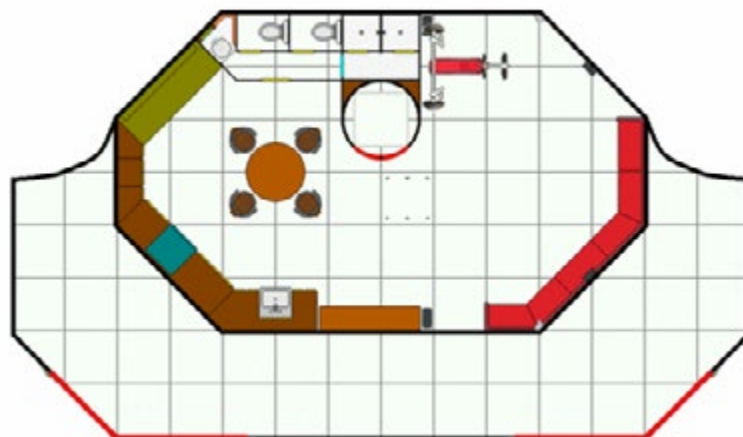
DECK 0: Forward Manibles



DECK 1: Flying Bridge



DECK 2: Bridge



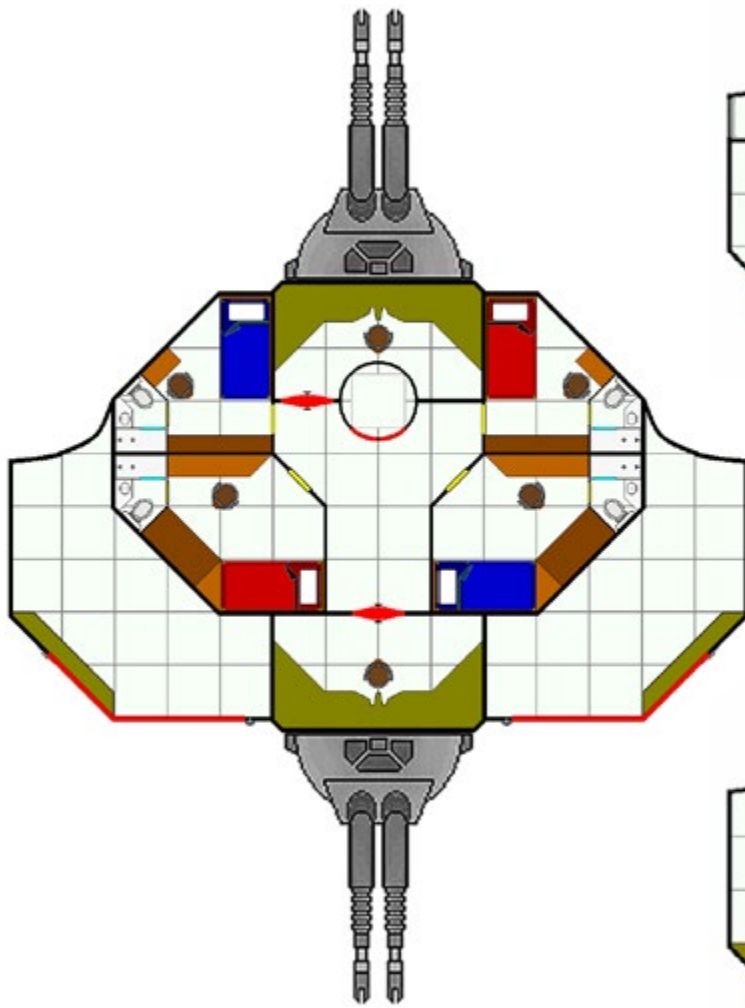
DECK 3: Recreation Deck

DECKS

Deck 0—Forward Mandibles: Back-
up life support equipment, water tank
& purification, forward RCS thrusters/
maneuver jets, ladder access to avionics
above.

Deck 1—Flying Bridge: 90° inverted
"cockpit" for fighter-jockey operation
stance, flanked by more RCS thruster/
maneuver jets. The Pod Laser nacelles
flank this portion of the ship.

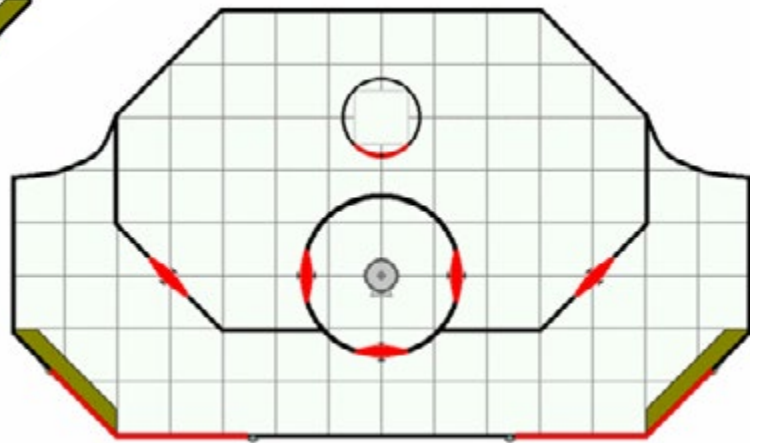
Deck 2—Bridge: the helm is at the dor-
sal (upper) side with provisions for the
pilots, the engineer station is to port
(right side of map) with the astrogator



DECK 4: Crew Quarters



DECK 5: Maintenance Deck



DECK 6: Aft Hold & Main Hold

ART BY RICHARD ROSE

position at starboard (left side of map). The ventral (bottom) side has a computer/sensor/radio operator station (a maintenance shaft runs down from this area to the recreation deck below). The top tier of the main hold flanks the port/ventral/starboard side, with the only access to said hold at the bottom deck.

Deck 3—Recreation Deck: a galley, fresher, and rec area fill this deck to pass the downtime. The second tier of the main hold flanks this area as well.

Deck 4—Crew Quarters: four double occupancy cabins occupy this deck, each furnished with a bunk bed, desk & chair, and fresher. Dorsal & ventral turret operator positions flank the cabins, with the ventral

gun splitting the third tier of the main hold.

Deck 5—Maintenance Deck: Equipment for monitoring and servicing the drives takes up the ventral portion of this deck, a machine shop is on the dorsal/starboard side along with the generator & power relay station at dorsal/port, main life support equipment to starboard, a storage closet, and port/starboard maintenance access to the wing-mount drives on each side. The fourth tier of the main hold flanks this deck as well.

Deck 6—Aft Hold & Main Hold Access: a smaller hold occupies the aft/lowest deck along with the universal airlock/docking collar. Access to the lowest/fifth tier of the main hold is also possible on this deck.

THE CREW

"There's currently four of us serving aboard the *Owl*: myself, Rinny, and a pair of female accomplices."—John

MEET CAPTAIN JONATHAN KNIGHTRAZOR II

"I'm the illegitimate son of my father from one of his adventures on my homeworld. I was named after my grandfather, he's some sort of hero in the Athor system, a military leader of the Knighthawk Special Forces, a predecessor of LandFleet. Grandpa has history dating back a hundred years prior to the formation of the UPE, most notably serving as a privateer under Pale's government to thwart PGC's efforts against Streel, Incorporated back then.

"My dad took decent care of me after I was born, although indirectly at that. He placed me in the care of the Pasamoria yazirian clan in Yast along with another ward, an orphaned yazirian child that was the sole survivor of a Hepplewhite, Inc. scout ship crash. I didn't quite adapt to the Pasamorian ways, rather I craved a more reckless life of thrills, risks, adventure, and overall danger. My Pasamorian fathers dubbed me as a "bad influence" toward my blood brother Rinny, but on the same token they never lumped me into the "bad seed" category either.

"Once I completed my schooling here in Histran Vocational University, my yazirian brother and I enrolled into the Star Fighter Corps where we learned all there is to know about spacing. Once we mustered out, we acquired this fine ship with a little help from my dad. Yeah, pop's alright in my book.

"By the way, I seem to be developing some sort of latent mutant ability of electrical manipulation. It's pretty cool..."

STR/STA: 50/60

DEX/RS: 60/60

INT/LOG: 50/50

PER/LDR: 45/50

PSA: Technical

Skills: Technician 6, Computer 2, Robotics 2, Projectile 5, Gyrojet 3, Beam 2, Melee 1, Pilot 2, Engineer 1

MEET 1ST OFFICER RIN-BLANKA (AKA "RINNY")

"John's dad rescued me from a scoutship that I was aboard with my parents. Wanna make somethin' of it?! I was the sole survivor of that Hepplewhite Inc. disaster, and if I learned anything from it, it would have to be a distrust for any business organization.

"I was placed in the care of Yast's Pasamorian clan along with John and we grew up together. I eventually grew tiresome of my childhood nickname of "Rinny", in fact John's the only one I allow the use of said moniker. Anyone else may face my battle-enraged state. I'm every bit of the thrill seeker as my human brother, although some claim I'm more of a down-to-earth type and that I'm the only voice of reason that John will listen to.

"My studies in the fields of all things technical have allowed John to develop his latent mutant ability. But we still have a long ways to go towards mastery of it, I'm constantly researching new experiments

for him to try out, oftentimes to the dismay of any onlookers.

"I co-pilot the *Owl* with John but my primary job is serving as the ship's chief engineer."

STR/STA: 45/55

DEX/RS: 70/60

INT/LOG: 60/50

PER/LDR: 35/45

PSA: Technical

Skills: Technician 6, Robotics 4, Computer 2, Projectile 4, Beam 3, Gyrojet 2, Melee 1, Engineer 2, Pilot 1

MEET ASTROGATION & GUNNERY OFFICER KATHRYN "NIKKI" NICHOLE

"John claims his foster clan fathers say he's no bad seed. Don't believe it for a minute! John's bad in every way imaginable, and I like that in a man. I met him during my stint as an astro-gunner in the Star Fighter Corps and flew many a mission with him. He's just as ruthless behind the stick as he is in person. Did I mention that I like that in a man? When he came calling for assistance with his new ship I signed on. As fate would have it, I had already put in for discharge requests when he returned. SFC offered a good living, but I'm enjoying the free life with the skills I learned from them.

"I serve as an astrogator on the *Knight Owl* now and am entrusted with the dorsal turret (I like being on the top) when we

encounter any unfriendlies. I also dabble in the medical profession, and as such I tend to be busy when Rin-Blanka's experiments with John's abilities don't go as planned."

STR/STA: 45/55

DEX/RS: 60/50

INT/LOG: 45/45

PER/LDR: 60/50

PSA: Technical

Skills: Computer 6, Beam 6, Medic 2, Astrogator 2, Energy Gunnery 2

MEET GUNNERY OFFICER & AUXILIARY ENGINEER LEAH-DIA

"I'm an Invia clan yazirian from Histran, and another former member of the Star Fighter Corps gunnery team. I served briefly with John and Rin-Blanka in their squadron, and when I was discharged I ran into them again back home. As luck would have it, they were looking for a gunner to work the ventral turret. I serve as an auxiliary engineer when I'm not blasting away at the bad guys.

"I've been calling the first mate by his childhood name lately. He doesn't like it, but he doesn't seem to hate it either..."

STR/STA: 50/60

DEX/RS: 60/60

INT/LOG: 45/45

PER/LDR: 50/50

PSA: Technical

Skills: Technician 4, Robotics 2, Beam 6, Engineer 1, Energy Gunnery 3



ART BY RICHARD ROSE

TITAN RISING: 2299

EPISODE #17.0: "WITH IN WAR"

V2.0



MEANWHILE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PURSUIT THE CENTAURAN FIGHTER PILOT PONDERS...

HASTLER SAYS, FLYNN ONLY NEEDS US TO KEEP THE FLEET BUSY...

IF I CAN LIGHT UP THE REACTOR CORE OF THAT SHATTERED TROOPSHIP THAT WOULD KEEP 'EM BUSY!

COMPUTER, SENSOR INQUIRY?

IS THERE AN ACTIVE FUSION CORE IN THE DEBRIS FIELD?

CONFIRMED, SENSORS DETECT ONE ALLIANCE FUSION REACTOR ENERGY SIGNATURE NEAR THE CENTER OF THE DEBRIS FIELD.

AS MY HUSBAND IS SO FOND OF SAYING, "IF IT EVER COMES DOWN TO A CHOICE BETWEEN YOU OR THEM..."

"BETTER MAKE THEM PAY."

HERE GOES NOTHING!

TO BE CONTINUED...



IMAGE BY BRIAN PHONGLUANGTHAM

KDIKIT BLUE BITERS

BY ERIC WINSOR

The past year has been a hard time for most of the Frontier but little blessings find their way even in the worst of times. The JHF has been grounded here on Hakosoar due to the Sathar incursions in the Frontier this past year. Spacefleet did a great job of keeping the battles from reaching planet side throughout the Frontier. Hakosoar, like most worlds, had ground forces deployed here as a precaution. Here at the JHF we had a detachment of MerCo troops direct from Kdikit. Fortunately, there was no excitement for them while they were here; but they did leave some excitement for Dwain when they left. Dwain counts some dangerous things as blessings.

BEWARE MERCO CRATES

Dwain was out one afternoon a few days after the MerCo detachment departed sorting through the empty shipping containers and arranging for their recycling when he heard something scuttling about inside the closed container. He poked a light into the crack of the door and caught sight of a large me-

tallic blue spider at the opposite end of the container trying to climb the metal walls to no avail. Dwain is no dummy, he shut the door and got help. I walked on to the scene when I saw Dwain directing a hover truck to wench up the container on its end so that the door was in the air. Dwain had decided that the best way to contain the unknown creature was to keep it trapped then bait it into a containment vessel lowered into the shipping container from above. That was a pretty good idea and it worked splendidly.

Dwain and Tik got the containment vessel connected to its environment control unit while I got on a video link with the MerCo commander in orbit awaiting departure for their voyage back to Madderly's Star.

MOLDOVAN SURVIVAL STORIES

The MerCo commander quickly described the spider accurately without any hints from myself. He called the creature a Blue

Biter and related this information to me.

MerCo conducts survival training in the Moldovan Rain Forests. Their biggest source of casualties in the early days was a mysterious metallic blue death. Lone troopers would fail to report in and search teams would later find their corpses with their skin pigmentation turned metallic blue. MerCo coroners quickly determined that the cause of death was a massive dose of venom which caused paralysis of the nervous system. Victims died quickly of paralyzed cardiovascular and respiratory function. The metallic blue change to the skin pigmentation is the side effect of the venom and its signature.

Dralasites, Humans, Yazirians, Ifshnit, and even Humma are all affected by the blue biter venom. Vrusk also are affected but only if the blue biter can bite at the joints where soft tissue is exposed. Osakar seem to be immune.

MerCo became so plagued by blue biter victims that it suspended all lone survival training in the Moldovan Rain Forest sectors where blue biters were found. They

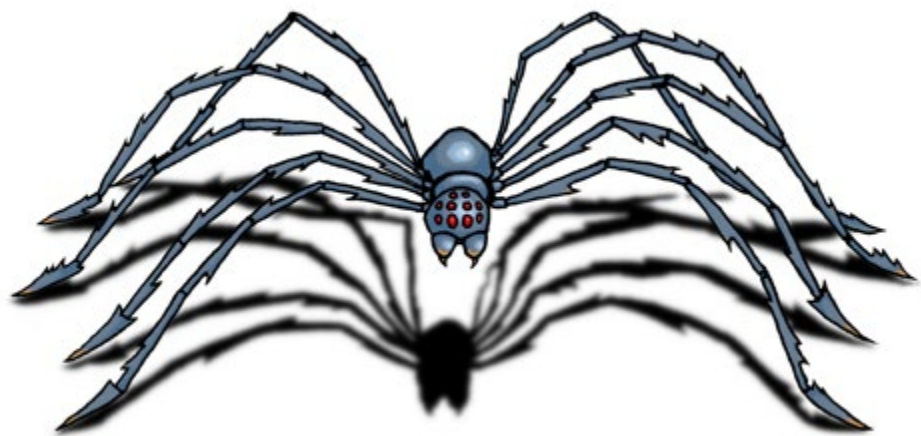


IMAGE BY BRIAN PHONGLUANGTHAM

switched to paired excursions with mandatory full cover military skeinsuits and supplemental armor as a precaution. Troopers watched each other's backs and killed any blue biters encountered. MerCo soon learned that the blue biters live high in the trees and drop upon their victims to attack with a quick bite. Troopers quickly learned that the fast reflexes of an alert partner can bat a dropping blue biter away before it lands. If the blue biter lands on its victim, it is best to smash it immediately. Crushing a blue biter takes plenty of force and your partner is going to both love you and hate you for it. Because the most available bat is the trooper's weapon most crushing saves are done by hitting your partner with your weapon.

Eventually a very unlucky vrusk trooper got bit with a doctor as his partner. MerCo doctors out to catch blue biters in hopes of developing an antivenom were packing satchels full of staydose, stimdose, and antitox. The doctor smashed the blue biter as it landed on the trooper's back but not before it embedded its fangs into the trooper's shoulder at a gap between armor, skeinsuit, and carapace. The doctor pumped the poor vrusk full of staydose emptying his satchel to stop the spread of the venom. He saved the trooper's life. The trooper later recovered after spending weeks in a freeze field while MerCo doctors developed their antivenom. The treatment for blue biter bites is quick application of fifteen doses of staydose all around the bite site followed by a direct dose of antivenom to the bite site. The victim must then be immobilized and rushed to hospital for recovery and further doses of antivenom as determined by medical observation.

MerCo troopers have shoot on sight orders for any blue biters seen. Lone survival training has only been resumed in areas

where blue biters are known not to exist. As a precaution, troopers now wear a panic antivenom injection harness which injects twenty doses of staydose mixed with antivenom all around the body. The harness also immediately broadcasts an emergency locator signal for the recovery of the incapacitated trooper. The MerCo commander then ordered me to kill the blue biter.

WARNING DWAIN AND TIK

I immediately called Dwain and Tik as soon as the video link with the MerCo commander ended. Neither Dwain or Tik answered. Jumping from my office balcony I glided quickly down to the ground below and sprinted to the outer lot with the shipping container where Dwain had found the blue biter. The hover truck driver was just unhooking his cables from lowering the container back on its feet.

"Where are Dwain and Tik!" I barked.

"Off to the South Lab," he said and I bolted, thumbing my chronocom for the South Lab as I ran.

One of the lab technicians answered the link and I barked, "Stop Dwain and Tik and quarantine the creature in their containment vessel now!"

The technician shot back, "They just went into room 102." and I could see him rushing to catch up to them.

I watched my chronocom as I ran and saw the technician open the door to room 102 then jump back and slam the door shut.

"The creature broke out!" he shouted.

A minute later I was standing at the technician's side peering through the window and panting.

Dwain and Tik were scanning the room with nets in their hands. The containment

GM NOTES

Blue biters have been weaponized by unknown entities, government, espionage units, and criminals. These weaponized blue biters have been implanted with tracers that release a sequence of staydose, stimdose, and a toxin into the blue biter putting it into stasis, waking it, and killing it when each desired tracer event is triggered or when the blue biter injects its venom immediately triggering the toxin release. These weaponized blue biters are slipped into a victim's room and released to perform their assassination and unwitting destruction.

BLUE BITER

HOME WORLD:	Kdikit, Madderly's Star
TYPE:	Carnivore
SIZE:	Small, 50cm
NUMBER:	1
MOVE:	Fast, 90 m/turn
IM/RS:	6/64
STAMINA:	25
ATTACK:	66
DAMAGE:	1d10
SPECIAL ATTACK:	Highly Venomous
SPECIAL DEFENSE:	None

For those who want to use the Blue Biter in Frontier Space, the stats for the creature in that system are given below.

BLUE BITER (FRONTIER SPACE)

BODY POINTS:	15
STRENGTH:	25
AGILITY:	70
PERCEPTION:	50
INITIATIVE:	3
MOVE:	12
BEHAVIOR:	Cunning Carnivore
ATTACKS & DEFENSES:	Bite: 65%, 1D. Successful bit injects moderate toxin (below). Toxin: 2D/turn damage starting first turn after bite. Neutralization of toxin requires use of 12 provision points from a medkit.



vessel was smashed open on one side. I tried the door but Dwain or Tik had activated the quarantine emergency lock from the inside. Quickly activating the room's intercom, I explained everything that the MerCo commander had told me about the blue biter to Dwain and Tik. Dwain nodded acknowledgment and understanding but kept his eyes actively engaged in searching for the creature. Tik went very still as his compound eyes scanned for the slightest movements all around. He clicked unmentionables about the situation under his breath.

I let go of the intercom and ordered the technician to get all the staydose he could find here in two minutes. I hastened to tell him that the MerCo commander had told me the average time to death for a human was three minutes. The technician doubled his speed running to the medical supply closet.

Dwain slowly moved to the center of the room and flanked the broken containment vessel opposite Tik. Something scuttled along the wall to Tik's left. His head swiveled swiftly in that direction. It was his only movement since taking a hunting stance. Suddenly Tik's net flashed towards the

floor and something shot away at lightning speed. Tik missed. All went still again as Dwain and Tik resumed their hunt.

Suddenly there was movement and the blue biter leapt upon Dwain's back. Dwain went soft, a trained response from so many years working with other creatures where a frightened response of going stiff put him in more danger. Slowly pivoting on his legs and hips Dwain turned his back toward Tik. Tik moved in one still, fluid, slow motion towards Dwain. The blue biter began climbing Dwain's back.

Dwain's eye never left his back shoulder as he watched for the blue biter to climb ever further up his back towards his neck. A bite at the neck may prove swiftly fatal, injecting venom quickly to the brain and his blood pumping it back through his heart. Tik's antennae aimed directly at the blue biter.

One instant can last a lifetime. I have shared several lifetimes with Dwain and Tik wishing against hope for Dwain's life. Dwain's death is a life enemy to me, and I was trapped behind a locked door helpless to fight my enemy. The rage and anger surged in me wishing to rip the door down while my brain forced me not to make any

sudden movements that would startle the blue biter and end Dwain's life. Tik's left hand formed into a deadly circle of sharp claws.

Dwain let out his breath very lightly and the hunter in me could hear it. Tik's hand struck with precision and primal speed. The blue biter was snatched away from Dwain's back like a tok'vzz from a precious flower. Not a fold of Dwain's shirt moved as the blue biter was swiftly plucked away. Tik held the creature pointing directly away from the two of them as Dwain realized the situation and gently moved to safety and readied his net.

Tik squeezed and the blue biter died. Dwain's expression fell to sadness. Tik spoke through his polyvox, "Friend, this one is too dangerous to be off Kdikit."

BLUE BITER ECOLOGY

Our later subspace communication with the doctors on Kdikit confirmed Tik's decision. Current antivenom is not deemed fully effective by the UPF Medical Services Organization. UPF MSO directive forbids the export of blue biters and requires their extermination offworld of Kdikit.

Blue Biters are solitary creatures. They are extremely territorial and live one to a tree. The entire life of the blue biter is spent on the tree it dominates. They hunt anything that moves and will kill and eat their own kind. A blue biter may live off of a large kill for many months.

One in five blue biters are female. Females, when mature at the end of the year, turn metallic red in color. Test bait prey have shown that victims of mature females have their skin pigmentation turn a metallic red color starting at the bite location.

Mating is done once a year with the female killing the male and implanting her dozen eggs in the corpse of the male. The female then wraps herself around the corpse of the male while grasping around a tree branch to protect the eggs with her own body as she dies of exposure and starvation. Her own corpse will provide food for her young. The young who do not quickly grow from the flesh provided of their mother and escape will be cannibalized by the dominate sibling.

The largest blue biter recorded is 65 cm in diameter with its legs out stretched. It is mounted and displayed at the MerCo Lone Survival Training Base HQ in the Moldovan Rain Forest on Kdikit.



GHOST SHIP OF THE TERRAN QUEEN

BY EDWIN CINTRON

Since the death of my mother, I have been the matriarch of the Shimout family. Some would argue that position is held by my grandmother, but she rules the clan and has many families to worry about. With my mother gone it was I that soothed my siblings when they woke from nightmares or tended to their injuries. It was I who took care of my adopted sister Belinda who came to us due to my mother's sacrifice. When she grew older and other children of the clan would tease her, it was I who blacken their eyes and bloody their noses. Even my older brothers Rodworth and Barnes would refer to me as big sister Grail.

I was the glue that held the family together, but that glue began to lose its binding power when my father died. My brothers attempted to pick up his mantle, but they were too similar, Alpha dogs in a pack that had only room for one top dog. It climaxed on the bridge of granny's privateer, the *Long Knife*, and when it was over, Barnes laid unconscious on the deck, his right arm broken and Rod trembling in fear over what he had done. With

that Rodworth was gone, and now, four years later, granny and Xenon knew where he was.

Xenon had just finished the tale of how he and Rodworth won the last race between Timeon and White Light, his face was lit by the pride he had in his older brother's piloting abilities, and the rest of the family was adding their accolades but I had to ask.

"So when he's coming home?"

Both Xenon and Granny look down, and Granny finally raised her head and looked me in the eyes,

"Grail, Rod is happy where he is, I doubt he will be coming home anytime soon, dear."

I couldn't let it go at that, "And none of you even asked!"

My gaze swept from Granny to Xenon and then to my cousins, finally resting on Red. "Well?"

No one answered. It was then I came to a decision.

"Well, then I am going to Timeon and bring him home!" I announced. Everyone just looked at me, Granny shook her head to signal her disapproval, and everyone else looked

away as if they were trying to avoid a fight, everyone but Barnes.

"Sis, I think that's a bad idea. I would love Rod to return to the clan, but he's been on his own for a while and he may not be ready to come back to us. This could force him farther away. But I'm not going to try to stop you, just be careful." When he finished, he got up and left.

First thing was I had to find passage from Dixon to Timeon. None of the ships of the clans were heading that way, so I decided to try my hand on finding a merchant ship that was looking for a deckhand. Dixon had very little agriculture and depended heavily on food imports from Timeon, so there was always a freighter or two in orbit trading food-stuff for diamonds mined from the planet.

Since there was no station for heavy freighters to dock in orbit, Laco's small moon, Saucer, was a prime stopover. The moon had a dozen docking towers and a small base which was used in transferring cargo from ships unable to land on the planet to orbital ferries. The base also boasted one of the

few zero-gee bars on the Frontier, a watering hole for ship crews as they waited for the cargo to be offloaded.

I was in luck as several freighters were docked when I made my way from the airlock of my cousin's shuttle to the bar. The bartender, Paul Victor, was an old friend of the Clan, and he looked up from cleaning dirty drinking bulbs and greeted me.

"If it isn't my little angel Grail, what are you doing here darling?"

"Looking for a ship headed for Timeon which needs a deckhand," I answered as I drifted over and landed a kiss on his cheek. "Well you are in luck," he said as he cocked his head in the direction of one of the anchor post that spacers hooked lines to while they drifted in zero gee to drink, "see that guy over there? That's Rand Freeman, captain of the *Freebird*. I heard that he lost his comm and sensor operators to a rival captain."

"Thanks," I said as I push off in the direction of Captain Freeman.

As I drifted over to him, Captain Freeman turned and our eyes locked. I had to control myself as I found myself gawking. Captain Freeman was gorgeous. You got to understand, most space captains tend to be elderly, as the cost of paying for a freighter requires a lifetime of hard work and labor. Even captain positions on corporate ships tend to be rewarded to senior officers and employees. Freeman couldn't even be in his thirties. He also sported a lean greyhound like physique and chiseled facial features that look like they belong to a 3D holo actor and not a merchant captain.

He must have caught on to my discomfort and smiled, "yes, can I help you little lady?" he asked with a smile that was almost blinding.

"Captain Freeman?" I asked and he nodded in reply. "I heard you were looking to fill a few billets on your ship."

Still smiling he answered, "You're lucky, still have a position open. Can you operate a Mark seven radar repeater?"

"Know it like the back of my hand," I answered.

"Fine, you have the job. My ship should be finished taking on cargo in an hour, so why don't you grab your gear and meet me at tower five in thirty minutes."

I grabbed my space kit from Red's Shuttle and thirty minutes later I was at the airlock of Freeman ship. To my surprise and horror, Captain Freeman was there with his other recruit, my brother Barnes. I had to fight for control as the impulse to slug my brother came over me. Barnes smiled and Freeman

looked at the both of us, "You two know each other?"

The *Freebird* had a pretty small crew for a ship of its size. There was Jed Yazoox, cargo manager, Yasha Clare, ship's engineer, Ryo Moe, ship doctor, Robert Gavril, navigator and pilot, and first mate Manu Karl. Ship schedules and duties were tight, but Captain Freeman and his crew were experts and handled the ship with real professionalism. The week it took to get up to the speed needed to translate into the void went quickly and without incident other than the occasional episode where I and the good captain found ourselves flirting.

When we finally jumped, the *Freebird* emerged on the outer edge of the Prenglar system, while not exactly a misjump, being this far out meant several extra days of travel and having to cross the two asteroid belts of the system. Crossing these belts added an extra element of danger and would require that the radar scope be constantly scanning for a stray meteor or two. It was as we neared the edge of the inner belt that the scope picked up the echo of a comet nucleus that was intersecting the ship's course. We would be able to easily avoid it, but several anomalies were detected.

I called over to the captain, and as he approached my console he asked, "what is it Grail?"

I pointed to a spike that appears to be superimposed over the radar image of the comet, "that looks to be a ship buried in the body of the comet. A big one at that, at least several kilometers long."

He looked over the repeater display and pointed, "what's that static the repeater picking up?"

"I believe it's a signal, bursts of microwaves."

By now most of the crew were huddled around my console.

"That ship's comms system must be out and whoever manning it is using the radar to send us a message," uttered Yasha. She walked over to the comm console and fiddled with the setting, "but if it's a signal, it's not modulated in any known format." The speaker blared a series of beeps.

"It's Morse code," answered Barnes, "it's an old Earth code created before the invention of digital protocols."

"Can you decipher it?" Captain Freeman ask.

Barnes punched a series of buttons on his personal comm and he turned to the Captain.

"The message said 'Adjuta!'"

"Adjuta?" Freeman stared at Barnes, "What

does that mean."

"It means help in Interlingua, an old Earth language used by beltlers, and spoken by the clans on the Frontier," I blurted.

Everyone looked at each other, trying to take in what I just told them.

"Are you say they are from Earth?" Manu blared out in disbelief, "How do we know it's not some lost Clan's ship or one of the lost original colony ships?"

"Clans don't have ships two kilometers in length and all the original colony ships have been account for," Barnes answered while staring angrily at Manu.

"Whatever it is, this could mean salvage rights. Even if the crew aboard is still alive, they going to be grateful and if it is from old Earth, it could have a wealth of technologies that no one on the Frontier possesses." Yasha added.

"Well then mates, it looks like we got a rescue mission to mount!" Captain Freeman spurted, "Robert, I need you to match velocities with that comet and get us close enough for a look."

"Captain that's going to take at least of a day of hard maneuvering, we're already behind on schedule." Pilot Robert answered.

"We're already late, and the diamonds we are carrying are not going spoil. At worst, we have some ticked off buyers, at best we all become very rich men and women," Freeman countered.

"Aye Aye captain," Robert mockingly replied in his best pirate imitation. "I suggest everyone take acceleration positions." Everyone smiled and manned their positions as Robert began his intercept maneuvers.

It took over twelve hours to intercept the comet bearing the mystery ship, and Robert proved his worth as a pilot. Comets tend to have a debris cloud surrounding them. Approach too fast and it's easy to have an ice particle or micrometeor puncture the hull. Robert entered the cloud at a small enough relative velocity that the particles of cloud just pinged us like a mild hail storm.

We got close enough that the captain ordered us to focus our cameras on the comet and right away we spotted it. It looked like a dull, silver, two-kilometer high tower rising from the surface of the comet. The craft was at least two hundred meters in diameter, and we all gasp in wonder.

"There still about a kilometer of ship buried under the surface of the comet!" Barnes replied as he examined the radar scope. "Radar is picking up a lot buried metal down there."

"Unbelievable, she must be a tough ship to

survive an impact with a comet," Jed commented.

"She didn't crash, she buried herself on purpose." Barnes replied. Look at those structures at the base of the ship near the surface." Barnes point to series of legs like structures.

"She looks like a giant T2 bacteriophage virus!" commented Ryo Moe, the ship's doctor.

"That's correct doctor, those legs are designed to secure the ship to the comet. Bet the part that is buried's purpose is to drill down and suck out comet ice and trapped gases." Barnes added.

"Why?" Captain Freeman asked.

"Fuel. She must be running on fusion, the ice is going to contain hydrogen, and they use that to power and propel the ship," Yasha injected, entering the discussion. "Look there!" she pointed to a series of tube-like structures that ring the rear of the ship. "Those are laser cannons and they are focused on a single point. They must fire out pellets of hydrogen and the lasers zap it in order to induce fusion. Like a nuclear pulse rocket but using fusion instead of fission."

"No one ever got fusion to work correctly!" Manu countered

"No one on the Frontier. Been several centuries since we got stranded on the Frontier. The Earth was pretty crowded, they would have to develop fusion power before using up all the fissionable fuels. And the comet is one big gas tank," Yasha added.

Captain Freeman added. "Now how do we get in?"

We all examined the image of the mystery ship and spotted what appeared to be a large airlock with magnetic claps. Robert was confident that he could maneuver the ship to dock with the airlock and Captain Freeman chose the away team.

"Barnes, Grail, Doc, Jed, and Yasha, with me. Manu and Robert, I want you guys to be ready to get us out of here if we run into anything. Sidearms are to be issued and we are going in with vac suits. Doc, bring a few freeze bags in case we find any survivors that are too injured to treat."

Captain Freeman looked at us and added, "Okay let move, I'll meet you guys at the airlock." And off we went.

Me and Barnes were old hands at getting on a spacesuit in zero gee and we were completely dressed as the rest of the team were still struggling to don theirs. Barnes had a serious expression painted on his face, which seem to flow opposite of the general mood. Everyone else seemed excited and glad for a chance to board the mystery craft.

"What the problem, bro?" I asked. "You seem worried."

"Grail what do we know of Earth?" he turned to me and stared into my eyes. It kind of freaked me out. "Think about it. Everyone thinks Earth is some kind of mystical paradise. But what if that's not the case? We have been gone for a long time. The rest of humanity could have progressed in a way that we couldn't even understand. What if this is some kind of trap?"

His words hung over me like a dark cloud. Barnes was always the one to look at things and see the danger.

"Don't worry, you'll get us through this big brother. You always have a plan," I replied, hoping he did.

The rest of the crew had managed to don their space suits a few moments before the two ships docked. We took a gentle nudge as the docking clamp of the mystery ship locked on. The captain handed out laser pistols and belts with holsters and everyone strapped them on. We waited as the airlock cycled and we entered.

The mystery ship's airlock was similar to any standard ship airlock on the Frontier, but the controls were labeled in Interlingua, so I walked over to the panel. "Ready?" And when everyone nodded, I cycled the inner lock. The hatch rose, revealing the inside of the ship. There was a steel walkway that allowed our magnetic boots to latch on. All around us was a big empty space, we could see what appeared to be bots welding patches along areas of the hull. Other than that, this area of the ship appeared to be an empty cargo hold.

"Look at that!" The captain pointed to the area of the hull adjacent to a recently patched section of hull. "Laser burn. This ship was in a fight."

We watch as several of the bots turn in our direction and then without incident turn and resumed work.

"That rude!" Yasha spat over the radio.

"Captain, the atmosphere is safe," Ryo alerted us when the toxic meter flashed green.

"Okay everyone, we can take off our helmets. But don't lose them, we don't know if we'll need them later," Freeman barked. Looking around Freeman asked, "which way do you recommend Mr. Shimout?"

My brother looked around and his eyes fixed on a ladder that was at a right angle to the walkway. "That way, down toward the surface of the comet. The portion of the ship buried beneath the surface would have been shielded from any damage. If we are to find any survivors, they should be in that area of

the ship." Barnes answered and began making his way to the ladder.

The climb in microgravity was beyond easy. Basically, we allowed ourselves to drop using the ladder to guide our descent. After a hundred and thirty meters we came to a bulkhead with a hatch. We cracked the hatch and entered the space beyond. The compartment we entered was filled with an assortment of equipment. While the bulk of the gear was unrecognizable, we spotted what appeared to be cooling equipment and cryo-chambers. Ryo made her way to the nearest of the chambers and look inside.

"Human female, can't be more than thirteen." She looked into an adjacent unit and gasped. "Here's another one, a bit older but she has the same face."

Ryo walked to the third chamber and nodded her head. "This one appears to be a child but her facial features appear to be a younger version of the others."

"Clones?" Captain Freeman uttered.

"Looks that way, I'm going to bet that the rest of the chambers are the same," Ryo replied.

"Over here!" Barnes shouted. "I found a lift."

We poured into the lift and traveled downward. When it stopped, the elevator opened into a small chamber with a single massive blast door.

"What now?" Captain Freeman asked as he pointed to the door.

The door began to slide open, appearing to answer the captain question. As light began streaming in from the other side, a black mist poured through the opening. The mist began to condense, forming a black sphere. Jed drew his laser pistol and before anyone could say anything, he fired. The beam traveling harmlessly through the sphere. Jed fiddle with his pistol attempting to turn up the gain.

Before he could fire again the sphere exploded showering Jed with a torrent of black droplets. I have seen many of deaths, some by radiation from a solar flare, other by micrometeor impact, and even some in combat, but as I watched transfixed, Jed seem to melt. I turned away in horror and buried my face into the chest of captain Freeman. I began to pull myself away but then Jed started screaming and all I could do was bury myself deeper into Freeman's chest to escape it.

Then there was a high pitch whine of a laser discharge and Jed's cries stopped. I turned and saw Barnes, laser in his hand and a grim expression painted on his face. Our eyes met and they seem to broadcast the fact that what he did was simply an act of mer-

cy. The rest of the boarding party stared at Barnes, shocked at what just happened, but their shock turned to horror as the black mass seem to flow away from Jed leaving a shining white skeleton.

"What in the name of the naked singularity just happen?" Freeman shouted.

"Attack nanobots," answered Yasha as she pulled away from my brother. Apparently I wasn't the only one who sought comfort in the presence of the closest male. "Banned technologies at the time of colony fleet departure."

"Apparently not banned now!" answered Captain Freeman.

Suddenly a voice speaking in interlingua was broadcast around us from unseen speakers, "You have just seen a demonstration of my power. You are to drop your weapons or you will suffer the same fate as your comrade."

"Drop your lasers everyone!" shouted Barnes as he hurled his pistol to the deck.

At first, every one hesitated till I unfastened my holster and chucked it toward Barnes weapon. Captain Freeman followed my example and Yasha and Ryo joined in.

Barnes made his way over to me and pulled me toward him. "Are you all right sis?" he asked.

I felt his hand slip to the utility pouch of my suit, depositing a small package. I started to ask what it was, but from the look he gave me, I knew not to ask, and instead replied, "I'm fine bro."

My brother Barnes was a thinker, he always plans ahead for a whole array of possible problems. One of his catch-all solutions was a holdout pack. Made with a coating of Mu metal to shield against the magnetic fields, it made the contents invisible to weapon detectors, and was a perfect way to sneak a small pistol past a security scan. I could only imagine what was inside, but it had to be deadly.

There was a scraping sound that suddenly caught everyone attention and we look to see the discard weapons slide across the deck toward the gap in the doorway which began to expand. As the weapons cross the doorway, a figure emerged dressed in a nude color skin suit that left little to the imagination. Her!

She appeared ghostly, moving in the microgravity of the ship with a grace that defied logic. Combined with her pale skin and white hair, it would be hard to believe that she was real. I found myself filled with a sense of dread. I had to control the urge to cower. Looking over to my brother, I saw that he was entranced, staring at her with an expres-

sion of lust and desire. Glancing at Captain Freeman, he too seemed to be fixated on her.

She stopped. Behind her was a small army of robots. Some flew on flapping wings like insects, other bounced like fleas in the environment of the microgravity, and a couple even actually crawled like snakes across the deck. Her eyes roamed over us, stopping at first upon the figure of my brother. She gazed at him, her nose twitched, and she smiled, seeming pleased at his sight. Then her gaze moved to captain Freeman, and her eyes dropped down to his feet and then up to his face. Again, her nose twitched but no smile graced her face.

When her gaze turned to Doc Ryo Moe and Yasha Clare, her face twisted in scorn. Both Ryo and Yasha were shivering in fright. Eventually, she glanced at me. Her nose twitched again, and her eyes open wide as if she was surprised. Her entire face turned into a friendly smile and she purred in interlingua.

"Greeting little sister. Such joy to find you! I need your help."

"You killed Jed!" I sputtered.

"Sorry am I, but he was a flatlander - the enemy. I had to show that I was not helpless. You are here, we are family, fear not. I will not harm you and your blood," she replied with her head nodding toward Barnes.

I then realized that the feeling of dread, and her abilities to detect that me and brother were clan, was a feat of genetic engineering. Granny once told us that the spacers from old Earth were enhanced. Small changes made to our genes to increase our reflexes and more tolerant to prolonged exposure to zero gravity. Apparently, the woman in front of me had additional changes such as enhancement to her sense of smell, and maybe the ability to produce pheromones on demand. I could only imagine what other changes she had, but at least she still recognized that Barnes and I share with her a common ancestry.

"Will you help me little sister?" she asked again.

"Of course, sister!" I replied, not wanting to anger her and to play for time. "What about my brother?"

"He will be well. The effects of my pacifier scent should wear off in a few hours. Hopefully, he will not be angry with me. I would like to get to know him better," she purred. "Good. I will not be needing these." She added pointing to Ryo and Yasha, and her army of robots surged forward.

"No!" I cried, "This one is an engineer and can help in repairs, and that one is a doctor

and I may need her if I am injured."

She motioned and the robots stopped. "Wise little sister, not to waste them. These two can be useful. As for the male, his sight is pleasing and may prove to be entertaining."

She walked over to me and placed an arm around my shoulder, I felt a closeness to her, but I realized that it was very likely due to phonemes. She guided me into her chamber. The rest of the landing party was herded by her robots into the room. A massive bed-like acceleration couch was in the center of the chamber. Holograms shone around the couch, displaying information from all over the ship. No physical consoles were in sight and series of chairs rose from the deck and she motioned me to sit.

She began explaining about the war that broke out shortly after the colony fleet left the Terran solar system, both sides blaming the other for the disappearance. The spacers were overwhelmed by the superior numbers of corporate flatlanders and were driven from the asteroid belt to the outer planets. Eventually, the Belters and other Spacer factions fled to the Oort Cloud. It was a long journey, lasting fifty years, and many ships were lost. Upon arrival, the Spacers began a program of building, using the material wealth of comets to expand their number.

The first fusion ships were created, and when they were ready an armada of warships plunged inward. Mars fell first, then Luna. Earth was bombarded by meteors guided toward it by the Spacer armada. The survivors surrendered and only Venus remained. But the humans of Venus decided to flee, converting their flying cloud cities to space arks. She told me how her ship and others of the armada gave chase. A running battle arose, and when a fleeing Venusian ship reached one percent of *c*, they translated into the Void, along with the pursuing vessels.

When her ship emerged, she was alone, no other vessel in sight. Damaged and lost, she explored the unknown system until she was attacked by an alien craft. Deploying her crew in fighter crafts, she attempted to flee, only to translate back into the void, losing her pursuer and her crew. Her ship emerged here in the Prenglar system. She attempted repairs, but her main fusion plant was down. Due to the powerful magnetic field which contained the super-heated plasma, her robots were unable to make the repairs needed to get it back online. That's where I came in. She needed me to replace the damaged fuel emitter. It was perfectly safe she assured me, but it was very demanding labor. She direct-



ed a repair bot to come over.

"The bot can explain what needs to be done, but will not be able to enter the reactor with you. Once the new emitter is in place, we should be able to start up main power. Take that one with you, she should be useful. Be careful little sister, we will have much to discuss when you are done."

I motioned to Yasha and we followed the repair robot. We descended in a lift, deeper into the comet. Eventually, the lift stopped and we enter what appeared to be a storeroom with a large hatch.

"A spare emitter array should be there my lady," the robot said, pointing to a locker. "You will need to change into work suits as

the metal in your space suits will be attracted to the superconductive coil of the reactor."

I had to take a chance, hand speak was a common language among space cadets of the Frontier, used when a suit radio is out to communicate complex commands. I made the gesture, "understand?"

Yasha gesture back, "Yes."

"Distract the robot while we are changing," I signed.

The robot led us to a couple of lockers that contained work suits. I grabbed one and began changing. Yasha started to make a big production of finding a suit, grabbing several off the hook and comparing them to her body. She threw several to the ground, which

the robot scrambled to pick up and that's when I slipped Barnes's holdout kit from my vac suit pouch into the work suit I donned. I gestured to Yasha that I was done, and she selected a suit and began dressing.

The robot explained the procedure on the replacement of the emitter, I translated for Yasha. The robot handed me a pouch with an array of plastic tools that would not be affected by the intense magnetic field of the reactor. As we opened the hatch, the robot retreated. As we entered, I felt a slight vertigo. I staggered and Yasha caught me.

"Lorentz forces from the magnetic field are affecting ions in your brain. Move slowly and you should feel fine," Yasha whispered.

As we entered the fusion reactor chamber, Yasha stared in wonder.

"This is an actual working fusion reactor!" She screamed in excitement.

As she stopped to examine the chamber, I decided to check out the content of Barnes's kit. As I slipped the pouch from my suit, Yasha said: "What do you got there?"

"It something that my brother cooked up. The case is Mu metal so the contents should be shielded from the magnetic field of the reactor."

"We have to be careful," Yasha replied and look around. "There," she pointed to spot in the donut shape room. "That should be a null point where the fields balance themselves out. It should be safe to open it there."

I walked over to that point and opened the case. At first, I was disappointed. as the first item that came into view was a two-shot deringer needle gun. Then I spotted the pellets of Tornadium D-19 and several binary time triggers.

Yasha whistled. "Your brother likes to be prepared. So what are we going to do?"

"We have got to sabotage this reactor. If this gets online, there no telling what she is going to do next." I sputtered.

"But she's one of your kind. She was all friendly with you. Why turn on her," Yasha asked.

"Cause's she a liar! She said her ship was damaged and her crew was lost when she came under attack after a misjump in the void. Remember the laser burn marks? Those were from the inside. Something went down; I'm not sure what, but there's no way she can be let free to roam the Frontier." I turn away from Yasha. "A ship like this could hold thousands, yet all we have seen is her and her clones. I think that she eliminated the crew. She's a danger to all of the humans on the Frontier."

Yasha looked around and answered, "Well if that's the case, then give me the pellets. We will need to plant them in a way to destabilize the magnetic field and cause the plasma to be released after the fusion reaction starts. With any luck, the ionized plasma will strike the walls of the chamber and create an EM pulse that will disable her robots. Then we can overpower her and take the ship."

"The chamber should be shielded. How is the pulse going to affect the rest of the ship?" I asked.

"Easy! We place a couple of pellets on the door. It's not enough to blow it open, but along with the plasma, it should force the door open and allow the electromagnetic

radiation to escape and fry all the electrical systems on the ship," Yasha countered.

"Need these?" I handed her the triggers.

"Not really, the heat and x rays when the fusion reaction starts should set off the Tornadium." Yasha started scoping locations to place the charges. While she did that, I went to work replacing the fuel injector. It took over an hour to complete the repairs - even with Yasha's help after she completed placing the charges. When we finished, we both exited the chamber. The repair bot was waiting.

"Mistress commands your presence as soon as you are done with the repairs." The robot commanded and pointed to the lift.

We entered the lift and it ascended. I was nervous and did my best to maintain a facade of calm, but I feared that she would have detected our sabotage attempt. As we entered her chamber, my fear turned to anger, I spotted her perched naked on her couch with my also naked brother.

"Oh, little sister you are done." She noticed anger in my eyes. "Sorry, but your brother is such an irresistible bravo. He will be my consort and our children will unite my people and yours." She stood and walk toward me. With a wave of her hand, a holographic console sprung up between us. "Oh you have done a good job, diagnostics show the new fuel emitter working properly."

I looked around and noticed that both Captain Freeman and Doc Ryo were missing. She smiled, "Do not worry, your friends are safe. I've sent them on a little errand." She sounded confident that her statement had put me at ease and continued in the startup of the reactor. There was a mild hum that reverberated throughout the ship as the reactor came online, the smile on her face widened and that is when I braced for what was to come.

As the fusion reactor came online, the charges Yasha planted detonated, the hum turned into a roar and then all the power went offline. The ship's interior became dimly lit by strips of tritium infused paint, a standard emergency light used by Clan ships and apparently our lost cousins from Earth. Her face was framed by the glow and was filled with rage.

"What have you done?" she screeched, her voice filled with venom. She gestured, to her robot horde but soon realized that they were nonresponsive. The EMP that Yasha predicted would accompany the collapse of the fusion plant's magnetic field had done its job. But that did not stop her, she turned to my brother Barnes. "Kill her!" she ordered him

pointing to me.

Barnes advanced on me, so I shot him with the needler from his holdout kit. Both needles hit him and he went down. That just seemed to inflame her, and she screamed and leaped toward me. I was confident that she posed no threat at this point without her robots and nano weapons. I had spent countless hours sparring with Barnes in zero-g hand-to-hand combat and was his equal. She surprised me, her first attack was not a wild strike but a careful feint design to slip past my guard. Someone less skilled would have fallen for her maneuver. I brushed it away and attempted a counter hold, but she blocked it with a nerve strike to my left arm that left it numb. I began to realize that she was in a totally different league; while I was skilled, her technique demonstrated an experience of someone like my grandmother.

I pushed off the bulkhead and slammed my shoulder into her midriff, sending her flying backward into the opposite bulkhead. I launched myself toward her, but she recovered quickly and pushed off the bulkhead to intercept me halfway. We collided with a bone-jarring crash. I had little time to recover, as we both kept trying to gain a hold against each other. She finally slipped a choke hold around my neck and I found myself struggling to break free. In the microgravity of the ship, I had no leverage and attempted to strike an exposed nerve point in her arms, and found myself failing. It was then I heard a small explosion and her cry out. She released her lock, and she was screaming in pain. It was then that I spotted, Yasha holding Barnes' detonators in her left hand. She had thrown one at her back. The blast, while not enough to kill, did leave her dazed and hurt. While the bitch was down, I saw my chance and snapped her neck.

Yasha looked shocked, but asked: "Is she dead?" Looking at her still body I simply nodded but fixated on her still form. In cheap horror vids, the fiend would somehow come back to life after the heroine assumed that they were dead, maybe this is what made me stare or was it the look of horror on Yasha face at what I have done, but it took the quaking of the ship to break the spell.

"What's that?" I stammer to Yasha.

"I think that the reactor blowing has destabilized the ship. The craft is starting to break up. It's time to leave," she answered. All I could do was nod in agreement, and we grabbed my unconscious brother and carried him between us to the airlock.

Manu was waiting at the lock and cycled it

the minute we got on board. "Good thing you guys got here. The Captain and Robert are prepping the engines. You are the last ones to get here," he muttered as he locked down the hatch.

"I'm taking my brother to sickbay," I announced. Yasha nodded in agreement.

"Well, at least he won't be alone," Manu stammered.

"What you mean by that?" I asked, curious about what he meant.

"The Doc and captain brought a young girl on board. She was unconscious and they took her to medical," he answered. I flung Barnes over my shoulder and headed to Sickbay.

I barely made it to medical bay before the engines came online and turned the microgravity of the ship to a solid G of acceleration. I struggled to put my brother onto the only open bed in medical. The other was occupied by a younger version of Her.

"What's she doing here?" I asked Ryo as she came over to examine Barnes.

"You know I am a doctor and we take an oath to treat the injured. I don't care how wicked her genetic donor was, she is innocent of any crime of her gene mother." Ryo answered without taking her eyes off Barnes. "Your brother's lucky. Another dart and he would have overdosed," she commented while removing the tranq needles.

Before I could answer, Captain Freeman came over the intercom. "Grail I need you on the bridge!"

Rushing on to the bridge I saw on the main viewer the break-up of the Terran ship. I sat down at the radar console.

Freeman turn to me. "I need you to watch out for any good-sized chunks of ice, we are going to do an emergency burn to get us away from here before that blows," he said pointing to the viewer. I nodded as Robert threw the throttles open and I felt myself pushed into the seat. We got lucky, our passage out was clear of any major ice and we got around a hundred kilometers away before the comet was lit by a series of explosions. "She must have been carrying some atomic warheads," Freeman said. All Robert and I could do was nod in agreement. We were safe, but one doubt plagued my mind.

"Captain, can I have a word in private?" I turned to face Freeman.

He looked puzzled, but replied, "Sure." The captain pointed to the hatch leading to his cabin. As he open the hatch, I had to stop to admire his quarters. You can tell a lot about a person from what they choose to keep when

space is at a premium. On the bulkhead opposite his bunk was mount a framed picture of his family, Freeman appearing as a teenager with his parents and a girl that must have been his sister. His desk bore a model of the *Freebird*. And on his bunk a book of translated Vrusk love poems. I had to hold my breath as I felt him gently push me into his quarters. The close quarters made me flush.

"So Grail, what do you want to talk about?" he asked apparently not noticing my discomfort.

"What are you going to do with our new passenger?" I asked pulling myself together.

He stared at me and said, "Well, I think that I should turn her over to the authorities of the first world we dock at."

"And then let the whole Frontier in on the possible wealth of technologies that the wreck would yield. You know that among the wreckage of that bitch's ship, are clues to mastering fusion or even nanoweapons. It would be a shame to give that away," I said as I turn to face him.

Freeman stared. Across his face was painted with his struggle to come to term with what I said. "What should I do with her?" he asked.

"Give her to the Clans. We will keep her a secret and you will be free to come back and check out the wreckage. I can check the comms and see if there are any Clan ships in the system," I countered placing my right palm on his chest. Maybe that was a mistake as Freeman, grabbed my shoulders and drew me near and kissed me. Not that I minded but this was not the time or place. Every second would draw the ship closer to the system station and reduce the chance of spiriting away the woman's clone daughter. I struggled against my own instinct, but the decision was taken away from me as Freeman pushed me away.

"Sorry. I lost control," Freeman apologized.

"Nothing to be sorry for, if we had more time..." I stopped as Freeman's eyes stared through me. "Yeah maybe next time. Go ahead get her off my ship as soon as possible," he uttered as he opened the hatch to his cabin.

I fled his cabin and made my way to the comm room. I broadcasted a Clan distress signal and within a few minutes received a reply from an armed Starbeam Clan Freighter, the *Fractured Spiral*. I asked the Captain of the freighter to switch to an encrypted frequency and explained the situation.

The captain, Gaby Starbeam, listened with an intensity that unnerved me. She waited

until I finished before bombarding me with a host of questions focusing on nanoweapons and Her. When the questioning was complete, she nodded and added, "You did the right thing calling for Clan help. Will the captain of this ship keep quiet?"

"Yes. There is potential salvage at stake that is too valuable to risk if others find out. We get the girl, he gets the wreck." I hoped that she did not decide to destroy the *Freebird* and her crew to ensure their silence.

"Then we match orbits in fifteen minutes," she barked and the vidscreen went blank.

I informed Captain Freeman and he ordered Robert to match course with the *Clanship*, he turned to me and asked, "Sure you will not change your mind and stay?" I smiled and answered sadly, "Not this time, not that I don't want to, but I have to make sure my brother and our little hitchhiker make it back to the Clans. I don't trust her, especially around Barnes."

"Well, next time I'm in Dixon, I'll look you up. And I won't take no for an answer," he said with a determined look on his face. I made my way to medical and my suspicions were not far off. Barnes and the younger Her were sitting close talking in a hushed tone. "Brother, we are leaving, we are going to dock with a *Clanship* in fifteen minutes. And we're taking her with us," I blared, angry at how friendly they have become. Barnes go up and left after sneaking a last glance at Her.

Ryo walked over to me. "I wouldn't be too angry with your brother, especially in light that he's going to be a father." She uttered, not looking at me as she stated it.

"What!" I shouted. Ryo looked at her feet as she answered. "When you were gone helping to repair the reactor, the *Space Bitch* had me revive her clone and had me inseminate her with your brother's sperm. Apparently, she wanted to breed with him without the burden of carrying their child. I'm sorry I had no choice, she would have killed me otherwise."

The comm speaker announced that we were ready to dock. I grabbed the younger Her by her arm and headed to the airlock. Barnes was waiting. In silence, we enter the airlock. "Sis?" Barnes asked as he saw the look on my face. "Don't worry brother, I'm okay," I said, realizing I really wasn't. We had survived the *Ghostship* of the *Terran Queen*, but not without a price, and it had changed everything. And I was not sure what the future would bring, but I couldn't shake the feeling it was not for the better.

**THE
ESCAPE
PLAN**
EPISODE #3

...OK, LET'S REVIEW,
JUST SO I HAVE YOUR
STORY STRAIGHT.

**"FRIENDS
IN NEED"**

WE'VE BEEN
ABDUCTED BY A SPACE
PIRATE SYNDICATE?

CORRECT

THESE COLLARS
ARE TO PREVENT
OUR ESCAPE...

YUPI...

...AND THIS
OLD ABANDONED
STATION IS THEIR
HIDE OUT.

...AND WILL
EXPLODE IF WE
ATTEMPT TO
LEAVE THE
STATION?

YOU CATCH ON
PRETTY QUICK
THERE.

YOU'RE A
VID ACTOR; NOT A
COP, AGENT OR
SOLDIER?

WELL, 'MM, 'ER,
UGGH, YEAAAH.

**WHY
ME ???**

...AND YOU
HAVE A PLAN TO
GET US OUT OF
THIS PLACE?

...AND I HAVE
A SHIP IN THE
HANGAR BUT
NO PILOT TO
FLY IT.