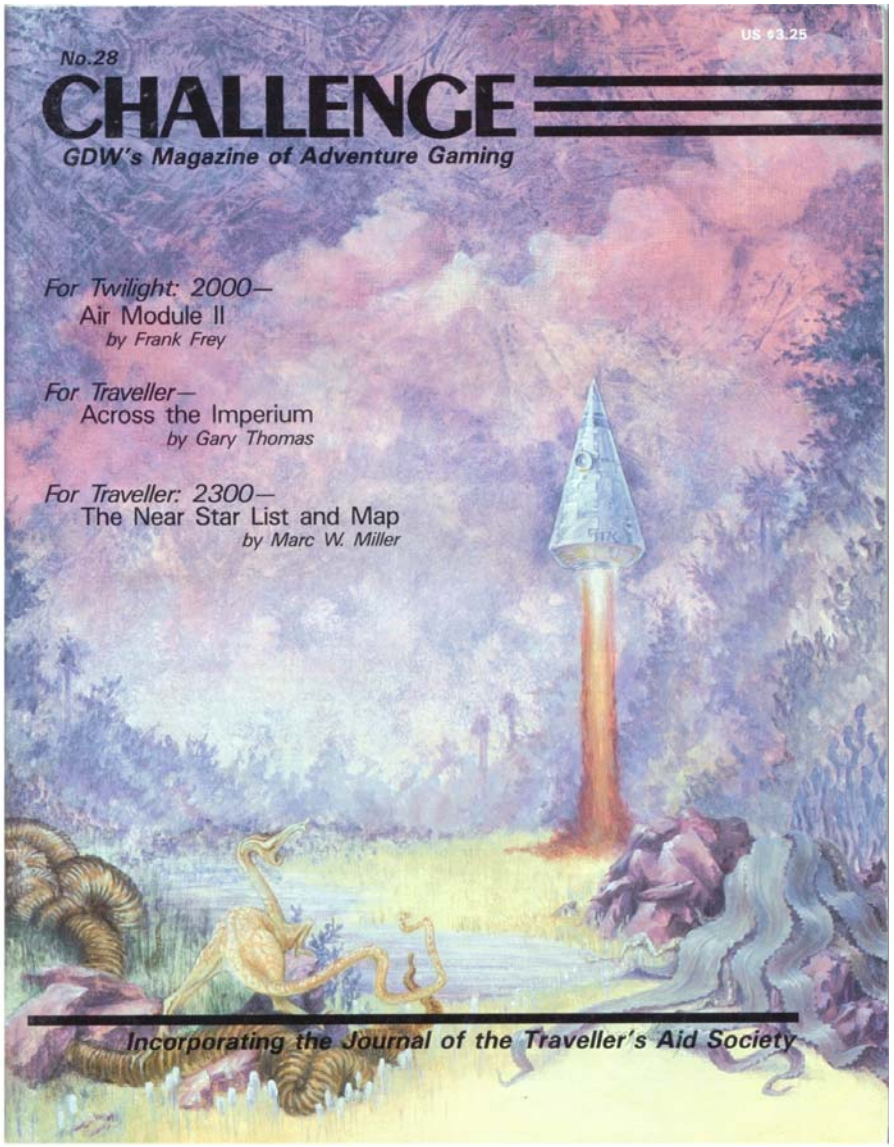

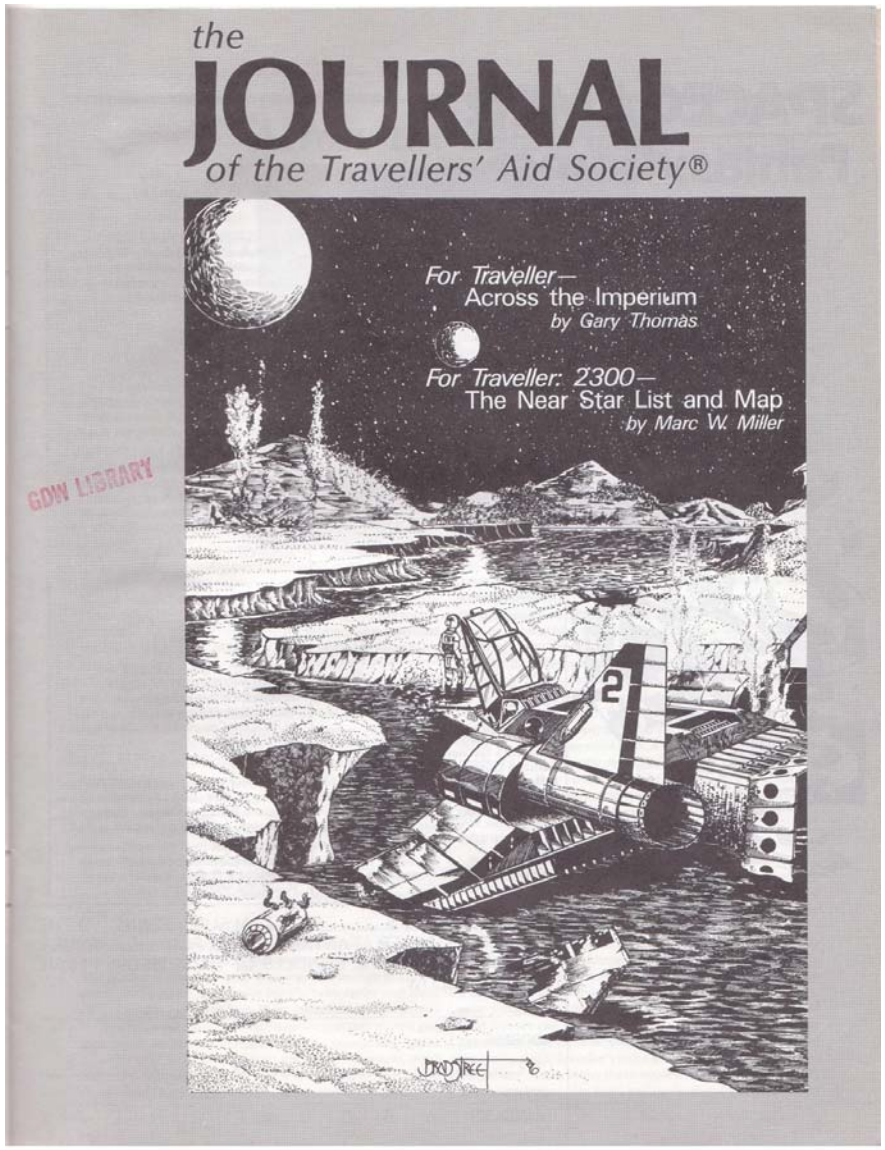

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The JOURNAL of the Travellers' Aid Society®

No. 28

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Dates in this issue of the *Journal* are given in accordance to an arbitrary Imperial calendar of 365 days. The date consists of a three-digit day number (the current day of the year), a dash, and a four-digit number (showing the current year since the founding of the Imperium).

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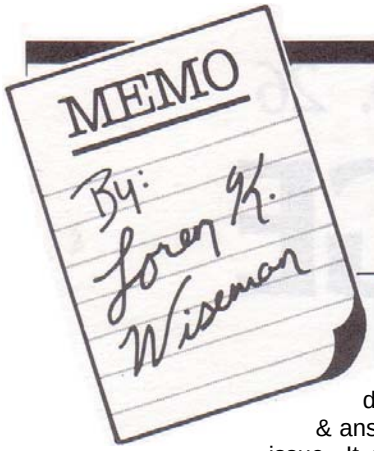

From the Management

Tim Brown and I (and a few others) have been talking it over, and we have decided that there is now sufficient demand for a combined errata and question & answer column, and we will begin one with this issue. It will be called E&C, which requires some explanation. E&C stands for Errata & Corrigenda. Everyone knows that errata are mistakes, but few people are aware that corrigenda are corrections, and that what most people call errata sheets are more properly called errata and corrigendla sheets (since they are a listing of both errors and corrections). For those of you with less technical outlooks (or less picky ones), you can simply think of E&C as standing for errata and clarifications, and leave it at that. In any case, the first installment of E&C appears on page 47, and clears up a few points about **Traveller: 2300** and **Airlords of the Ozarks**. Readers are encouraged to submit questions of general interest.

-Loren K. Wiseman

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JUST DETECTED

MAGAZINES

SECURITY LEAK

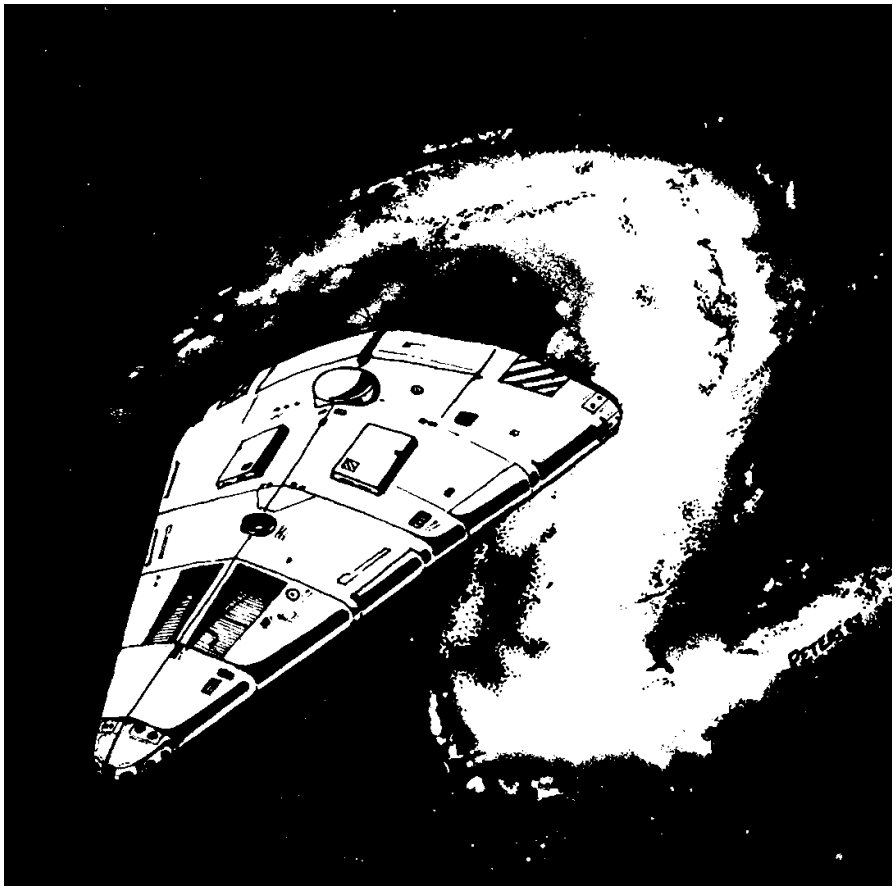
A new **Traveller** fanzine from Sorag Laboratories. They promise brand new adventures (each loaded with intrigue and action) with detailed background, floorplans, new technology, new weapons, new medicines, and columns on a diversity of subjects. Subscriptions are $12 for four issues, $4 per issue: please make checks and MOs payable to Gregg Giles (send no cash, please).

Publisher: SORAG Laboratories, 1408 Shady Lane 28, Bedford, TX 76021-5521.

Across the Imperium

THE BIG DIFFERENCE

From *The Traveller Book:* "To begin [playing **Traveller**], start out small, especially if you are also new to **Traveller**. Don't try to run something of breathtaking scope the first time out; the record-keeping alone will overwhelm you, and your players will rapidly lose interest." But now you've played those smaller campaigns. Both you, as the referee, and your players have learned



the basic **Traveller** rules, and they feel comfortable with the game. They're ready for a big challenge, and you want to give it to them.

But it isn't easy. Large scale campaigns have different problems than do smaller gaming sessions, or adventures that begin and end in a few sessions. Record-keeping is one of the biggest headaches in bigger games, but there are other problems, too. This article will give you hints and tips to simplify your life as the referee when you're ready to take this ambitious step and give your players a more complex large-scale campaign.

If large-scale campaigns are so much work, are they worth the trouble? Definitely! While shorter "one shot" adventures are fun, they don't equal the satisfaction you and your players can derive from a well-orchestrated campaign that spans a wider range of space and time in a consistent fashion.

My own expertise in this area comes from running what is now the largest scale campaign for **Traveller** ever published. As editor of the **Travellers' Digest**, I have helped shepherd four characters across five sectors, from the Spinward Marches to Core. Future issues will take these adventurers on to Terra, into Aslan space, and back to the Spinward Marches across the J 5 route. This grand excursion has taken the players 24 months of playing time so far, with eight quarterly issues already in print. (The characters have spent more than 36 months doing this.)

I'm still learning new tricks all the time from several sources. **Traveller** is a big enough game to keep learning more rules (which are more ways to keep excitement high for the players). The players themselves keep learning, and as they mature in terms of the game, they make my life both easier and more challenging as I strive to keep them interested and they think up new responses to scenarios. Player interraction should give you plenty of ideas about their desires concerning future adventures (if they're bored with the present scenario, don't make the next one similar to it: try something new). And the "real world" keeps growing, giving me new ideas for adventures, personalities, and technology.

TRAVELLER BOOKS

Don't cheat yourself. A wide-ranging campaign is difficult and there is no reason for you to make it harder than it needs to be. Make use of the many **Traveller** products available that will do some of your work for you. The **Atlas of the Imperium** is out of print, but you may still be able to find it in your local store, or a friend might have a copy you could borrow. That book alone will save you hours of sector generation. (Naturally, if you enjoy doing this, don't let the availability of the book stop you from rolling up your own personal universe.)

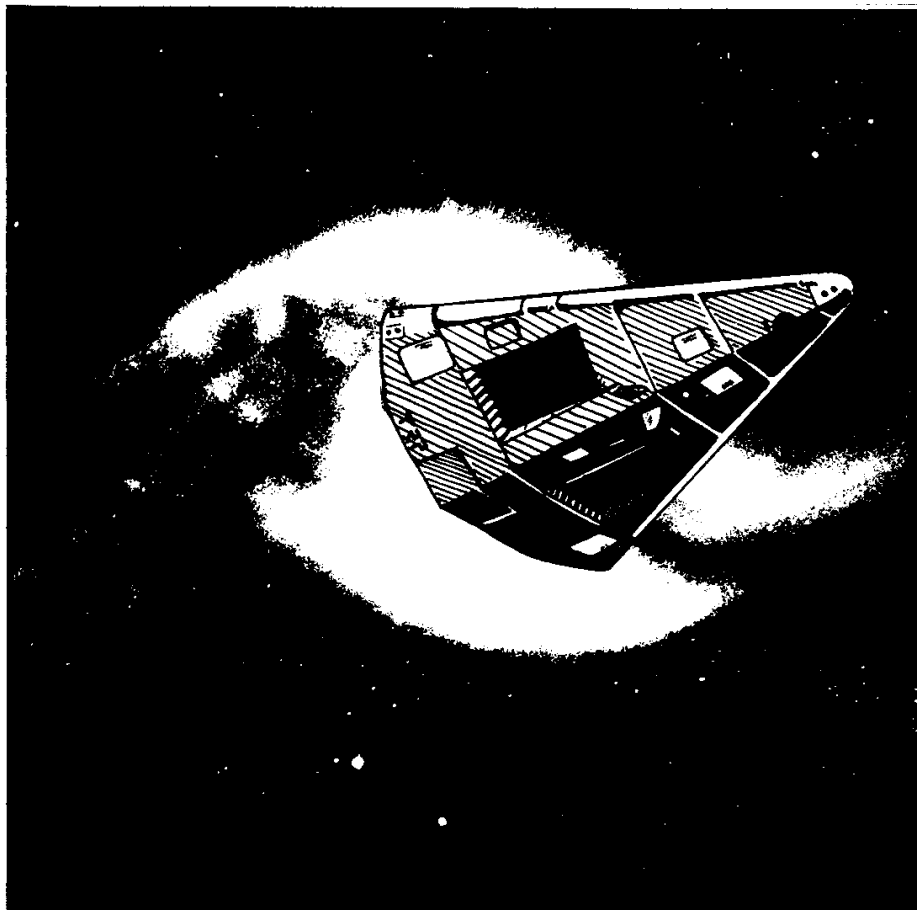
Book 6, **Scouts**, has a wealth of additional information for world generation as do the books **Grand Survey** and **Grand Census** by Digest Group Publications. The GameLords environment series can be useful for details of individual worlds also. For creating NPCs, books such as **1001 Characters**, **76 Patrons**, and **Citizens of the Imperiurn** can be precious time savers.

If you or a friend can program a computer, let it do much of your generating "grunt work." It's fun to hand-generate worlds and characters, of course, but in a large scale campaign you might need so many that you'll wear all the spots off your dice if you don't have some help. A computer can kick out hundreds of worlds instantly, letting you pick the good ones. Most importantly, this assistance gives you the time and mental energy to do the real creative work of the campaign, fleshing out the numbers to come up with a consistent world.

HELP FROM YOUR PLAYERS

You need not do all the work yourself. Let your players help out if you are short on time. They can each roll up a world's basic library data stats. You can then take up where they leave off to create the bells and whistles that the players will discover only as you lead their characters through the adventure.

This method also adds extra color just because your players will do things a little differently than you would have. Variety is the spice of life, whether that life is genuine or played in a game. Remember that **Traveller** has this solitaire playability. When the whole group cannot get together, you or some of your players can still play the game by doing such things as generating worlds and characters, conducting trade, and designing ships. **Traveller's** more advanced rules, such as **High Guard** and **Scouts** make these sessions almost as challenging and interesting as play itself, and more often than not sharpen everyone's **Traveller** skills.



A FEW WORDS OF WARNING

I can't tell you how to successfully run a large scale campaign in five words, but I can tell you how to wreck a large scale campaign using that many: let it grow too fast. Don't lose control of your game. When a player-character becomes a sector duke, or when they each have personal Ancient artifacts that disintegrate opponents with a thought, you'll find it harder and harder to think up challenging scenarios.

Keep things a manageable size. Naturally, a large scale campaign has more in it than a short adventure, but that's no excuse to let things get away from you. Stay on top of the situation with advance organization, and you'll find life a lot simpler.

Take your time in developing your campaign, and you'll find that it grows naturally by itself. Sure, it will need regular watering and fertilizing, but if you're spending all your resources pruning the overgrowth, neither you nor your players will find time to enjoy the game.

SIZE AND SPACE

The primary necessity for a large scale campaign is a large area of space. To get this, the easiest way is to pick two locations some distance apart. The first is the beginning and the second is the destination. This seems easy enough, but more important is a motive for the travel between the two locations. There are several approaches that can be used to develop these motives.

One of these approaches is the "courier" method. If the characters need to deliver a person or a package to the destination, the entire problem is solved. By making sure that there are plenty of interferences between the two locations, the adventure keeps moving.

A second technique is the "historical" or "tourist" approach. With this method, the referee presents a situation so that the characters are interested in travelling to the destination by virtue of its historical importance.

In the **Travellers' Digest**, for example, we have made use of both of these methods. In the first adventure of the campaign we set up a situation that would result in the characters being knighted by the Duke of Deneb. Emperor Strephon then desired that the characters come to Capital to be officially knighted in an Imperial ceremony. By providing them with Imperial space-required vouchers, he made travel there easy. This made use of the "courier" concept because the characters had to deliver themselves to Capital. The situation simultaneously solved the problem of travel expenses for at least part of the trip.

For the next major leg of their journey, we will use the historical method; the characters will continue on to Terra, which is interesting as the horneworld of the human race.

Since such travel must be made through the Imperium, to be a wide-range adventure, it is necessary to use an "imperial" reason for travel, something that involves more than one location. A local affair will not work for this.

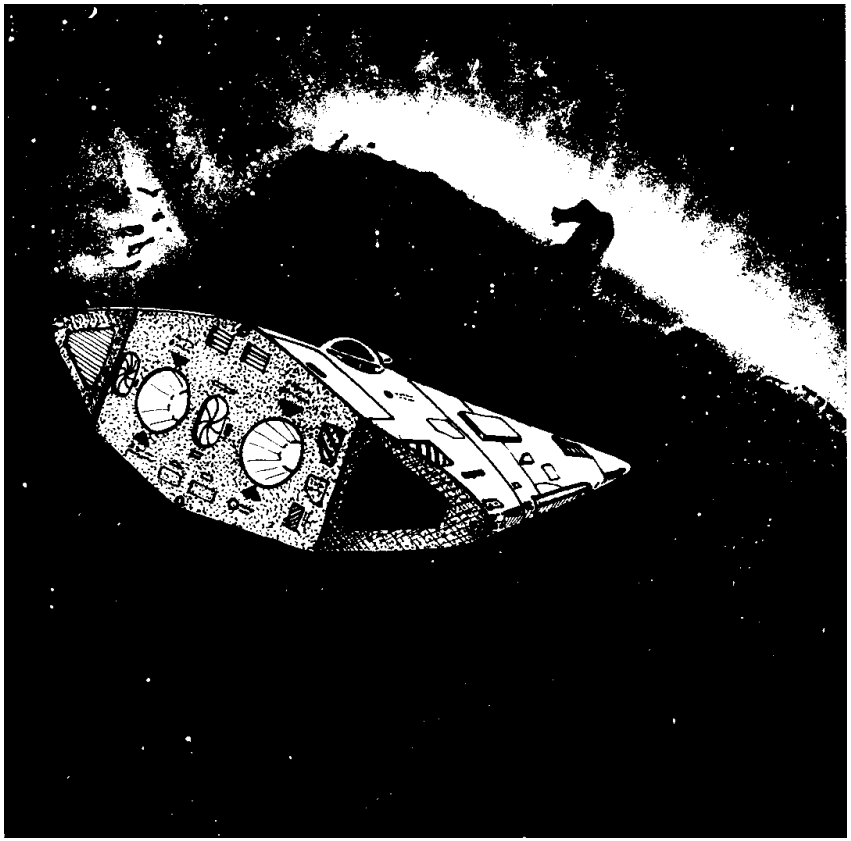
TRADE

Another more obvious source of interworld travel is trade. If the characters have a ship, you can manipulate the markets in such a way that their most

lucrative profits can be made by continuing to travel farther and farther in one direction. This works in a campaign only when there is no hurried time table that the characters must meet. Trade also has the advantage of providing a means of travel as well as a motive.

THE WHEEL METHOD

A simple way to run a far-ranging campaign is what I call the "wheel method." Start the player-characters at a certain world and then let them radiate out into surrounding areas like the spokes of a wheel from a central axle. This allows you the pleasure of developing one world in more detail, since the characters will be returning to it again and again.



BACK AND FORTH CAMPAIGNS

Sometimes twice as much work is easier. That is, when planning a long range campaign, start it at both ends with two groups of characters (played by the same players, of course). They can work toward each other, meeting in the middle or retracing steps to get back to one of the original endpoints. This has several advantages. One is that the referee can use the two different locations to develop two different types of overall environment and culture, perhaps crossing an Imperial border to get two different "flavors" at the two ends.

By playing back and forth between the two locations, this method also gives the referee time to develop more intricate plots at one end while the characters are busy at the other. The players themselves are happy because of the variety of playing multiple characters. At the same time, less experienced players will learn good habits in playing more than one character. One common problem is that new players have an improper tendency to share possessions between their characters. If the characters are far enough away from each other that they don't even know each other, this possibility is eliminated.

This technique also makes it easier to use more than one race in the campaign, since different groups of characters at different locations would be more likely to be from different races. It would be easy, for example, to have a campaign span the border between the Imperium and Vargr space. Vargr player-characters could start at one location and humans could start at the other.

Very intricate plots can be developed by working both ends against the middle. It is difficult even for a good referee to think of all the ins and outs of a situation immediately. But if there are "vacations" from the campaign, the referee has an opportunity to develop events that will stimulate the players.

Remember that everyone is active, not only the player-characters. Political groups will continue to grow (or shrink, as the case may be). Trade will go on. Battles and disagreements will not disappear just because the players are busy with a different part of the campaign. To handle this, keep in mind that absent characters are still active, then think logically about what their actions would be. While the player-characters battle the intricacies of one adventure, you have time to invent new characters and new situations at another location, giving the illusion that all of these events were pre-planned. This way small acorns can grow into large oaks.

A VARGR EXAMPLE

For example, in our campaign we once prepared some library data for a sector that mentioned that a certain world was popular with Vargr because it was an Ancient site and an unnamed Vargr had written a number of books about it. The entire mention was only a line or two in the library data. Several months later, we wanted to center an adventure around an Ancient site a whole sector away. We also wanted to include some Vargr in the adventure to give it extra spice.

Naturally we thought of the earlier mention of the Vargr, although we had had nothing specific in mind at the time we invented him. He was just "color" added for no real reason. At this time we rolled him up as an NPC and put him in charge of an excavation at an Ancient site. Here the illusion for the players was that we had planned this whole scenario in advance.

To continue with the example, at that time we wanted some extra peculiarity in the Vargr. We took a small paragraph from the Vargr module which mentioned the Church of the Chosen Ones and developed a belief system for them. We put a few adherents in the adventure and they served their purpose

at the time. A few months later we dug this mine again to create another Vargr character for a later adventure.

Again the repeat of the earlier theme gave a sense of continuity to the campaign even though the ideas were developed at quite different times. Who knows? one of these themes may even appear again in another future adventure. We won't know until we decide to use one, but the players will not know this was not planned all along unless we tell them.

When themes reappear, the players have a sense of playing the game in a "real" universe, because over time they grow accustomed to old "friends" cropping up. As a referee, I get a real kick out of hearing one of my players say, "Oh, yeah, we met one of these guys at that adventure we played in Deneb last summer."

THEMES AND MORE THEMES

Where can the referee get these themes? Almost anywhere, as long as he knows how to look. Newspapers are an excellent source. We saw an article once about the problem of space debris becoming a hazard to satellites orbiting the earth. This became the basis of a piece of library data mentioning the destruction of a Vargr vessel that collided with just such debris; just more local color in that case, but it was food for thought for players, reminding them again that **Traveller** was different from their daily lives.

Another article on the possibility of new fruits and vegetables through the use of cloning is dipped and filed away. Some day we will use it in an adventure as flavor. It could end up as a library data entry, or as part of a continuing look at how life at high- tech levels is different by showing such advances in the course of an adventure. Such a description of a product would also add interest to a ship's cargo.

Any newspaper can fill the bill for this purpose, particularly if it is one that your players do not read. Go to the public library and find the *Christian Science Monitor* or the Sunday *New York Times* (this won't work if you live in New York) or another large newspaper with regular science and human interest sections. Find the science magazines and read them with an eye to how you can use new discoveries in an adventure setting. Almanacs and trivia books can serve the same purpose. Seek and you shall find.

PEOPLE AND OTHER LIVING THINGS

Personalities can make or break a campaign. No, I don't mean the personality of the referee or of the players, I refer to the personalities of the NPCs. If a campaign is wide ranging, characters will meet more NPCs than they would otherwise, and this means more work for the referee.

Fortunately, there are ways to make this effort easier and more worthwhile. As discussed before, re-use characters if possible to fit in with the theme of the campaign. Since the player-characters are "travellers" by definition of the game, the individuals they meet are more likely to be travellers also.

If your player-characters meet a certain trader in a spaceport on Junidy, it should not be too surprising if they see him again at the Regina spaceport. Don't overdo this or you will have an entourage tailing your characters, but an occasional "chance" meeting (you decide if the meeting was really accidental, of course) gives a sense of continuity to the campaign. If your characters go through Vland customs once and must deal with a pesky official, the next time they arrive at Viand you can use that official again.

MORE NPC ADVICE

Where can you get NPCs and how can you make them seem real to your players? Read a lot. Meet a lot of different people yourself. Learn the diversity present in your fellow man. Then draw upon this well in your campaign. If you have the time and the inclination, take a cultural anthropology class at a local university. Plutarch's *Lives of the Ancient Greeks and Romans* is a beautiful book for different personalities and motivations, and I guarantee you will be able to find it in your library.

One of my favorite techniques for "instant" personalities is to use a real person. When the characters question the clerk of the local TAS hostel, I think of a friend I knew in high school or college, or one of the teachers. I saw these people day in and day out for years, so it's pretty easy to guess their reactions, and to mimic their personality traits. This will take a little practice if you're not used to it, but your players will then always encounter three-dimensional characters instead of cardboard cutouts. Since everyone seems "real," your players won't know which of these encounters is important and which is "just some guy in the starport."

WAKING UP FROM THE BOOKKEEPING NIGHTMARE

How can you best organize all of this material? Get a three-ring binder with divider tabs. Label one tab for each world.

Then put in your information. Use books such as **Scouts**, **Grand Survey**, and **Grand Census** to create more world detail and put that in the book. Develop important NPCs ahead of time and put them in the book. Maps of the world and its important cities should also go in. If you can, put the gist of the information on a separate page which you can show to the players for library data. They should never see the material straight from your notebook because it contains too much information for their tender eyes.

If an NPC moves from one world to another, then move the page with this information to that section of the book. Keep a table of contents at the front of the book with each NPC's name in alphabetical order. When you move the pages for that NPC to another world, make sure that you update the table of contents so you can find that information later.

Moving these pages physically automatically makes sure that NPCs are "real." That is, you must not move a page more than once every week since travel time must be kept in account. When you move a page for a certain date, jot down the details of the trip, time, and means of passage so that you can refer to it later on. In effect, each NPC has his own diary page. If you keep these up to date, when the characters arrive at another world you can flip to that section of the notebook and instantly tell which NPCs they might run across while there. Different colors of notebook paper can be used to instantly alert you if an NPC is a particularly important patron, merely a clerk, or some shade between. Similar systems using note cards or computer files can be developed.

LIFE AND DEATH

Health in a long-term campaign is an important issue. If a character dies or is otherwise unable to actively participate, another character must be introduced for the player who has lost that character. If you use the wheel method, your players may play several different characters from a particular world (naturally, they play only one in any game session, while their other characters are "busy" with other activities of their own).

In this case, if a character is out of the action, the player can use one of his other characters from the same locale. You as referee must make sure that the introduction of the character to the rest of the group is believable. You just can't pick up a character and drop him somewhere else.

If a player does not have another character already available in the same area, then a new one must be generated and you must again make sure that the addition of this character into the campaign makes sense.

There are other methods that can be used to help characters continue in the campaign as long as these methods are not overused. If your players enjoy "puzzle" adventures that depend mostly on thought rather than gunplay, then the characters may live a long time without ever finding themselves in life-threatening situations.

This does not mean that you should "make life easy on the players." When combat happens, it happens, and you must not interfere with it when it does. If characters are hurt, they are hurt, and the players can only hope that medical science can bring them back up to full health. If you fudge rolls or give characters rewards that they have not earned, you will find your campaign becoming weaker rather than stronger. Anything worth having is worth waiting for.

In the field of medical science, there are some things that can be done to save a favorite character from the jaws of death. At higher tech levels, doctors can revive "dead" patients in some circumstances, and working toward a successful "rebirth" could form an adventure scenario in itself. (Naturally, the player involved would have to run a different character for these sessions.) See Journal #11 for the details of this medical procedure.

KEEP IT SMALL

The secret to having a successful wide-ranging campaign is not to let it grow larger than you can handle. The key is to start small. Begin with one or two worlds worked out to some degree of detail. Give your players characters on each of these worlds, then let them loose. if you have not decided on a theme or two you will probably find that your players come up with a few by themselves. A character that steals something precious may be chased halfway across the galaxy. The re-occurrence of his pursuers gives a (pleasant?) feeling of continuity to the campaign while with each new world reached for refuge, your campaign gets bigger. This step-by-step growth is easy to handle and you are not swamped with work by a sudden deluge of worlds.

If your characters move too fast for you, erect barriers to them. Make sure these barriers are genuine by thinking them up ahead of time, A high law level world can help by locking up part of the group. Once thought up, these barriers can be used whenever appropriate --- just keep a list of simple ideas in the back of your notebook.

Plots can come from a variety of sources. There are a few books which claim to provide a number of guidelines on how to construct plots. One of these books which I have used is *Steal This Plot: A Writer's Guide to Story Structure and Plagiarism*, by June and William Noble, published by Eriksson. It lists a number of possible motives for characters, many of which can be adapted to adventure situations.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

One thing to remember in a large scale campaign is the tip "wheels within wheels." You should have several plots going at once, if only because your characters are playing in several different areas. But you should also see to it that your plots interrelate somehow so that there is a sense of continuity to the campaign.

The simplest way to accomplish this is to think it up lateryou should never be in a hurry in a large scale campaign. When the valuable museum piece is stolen and the characters must look for it, let them spend some time. As the item is moved from world to world, they must chase after it, and in so doing you already have a bigger campaign. Just introduce smaller scenarios on the in-between worlds.

You should have a general idea ahead of time concerning who made off with this thing, but you can change this later as long as it fits with the facts so far. If this is too difficult, but you want to connect the incident to some other group some distance away, let the second group swipe it from the original thieves. Just remember to have a motive.

THE MAGIC QUESTION

Before any NPC does anything important, make sure you can reasonably answer "Why?" Practice this, and you'll soon find yourself with a multitude of usable ideas. In the incident just mentioned, think of five reasons for stealing something before reading on.

Got'em? Compare yours to mine: 1) the obvious cash value; 2) religious or cultural importance; 3) desire to get others in trouble by leaving false clues that point to them; 4) the item is part of a set, and the thief owns the rest of the set; 5) the museum personnel were rude, and the thief is performing a quick snatch and run "revenge." If yours don't match, then that means you have more than five ideas now, and two or three of these already sound like the basis for a mystery adventure. Pick the one you like best, and then leave clues for one of the other motivations. Let your characters loose and presto, instant scenario.

Why is it so important to be able to come up with these "instant" scenarios? Because in a large scale campaign, you need a lot of things going on at once. Even if you aren't running a "solve the theft" adventure, you can still broadcast the loss over the evening news and leave your players wondering whether it's important or not.

RED HERRINGS

These false leads go by the general name of "red herrings." Over the course of time, you'll need hundreds of these in a large scale campaign. NPCs need interesting motivations; worlds must have their interesting features; events take place. Any of these not directly germane to the main adventure theme is a red herring. The fun of a large scale campaign is that you and your characters have the time for some real fishing. You'll find that some of these red herrings become important themes that later recur. You don't have to tell the players that this wasn't what you had in mind from the very beginning.

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN

Perhaps you've played **Traveller** for years, and you've run a few big adventures already. If you've read this far, you must have learned something you can inject into your campaign to give it some extra spice.

If you've never run a large scale campaign, your head may be spinning with all these tips. This issue's **Amber Zone** article shows you step-by-step how a large scale campaign can be developed. Try it out and let me know in a few years how your adventure is progressing.

Gary L. Thomas

Reading Gary's article reminds me of my first attempts to play **Traveller**. I set immediately to work mapping out a huge star cluster with perhaps three thousand systems in it. I designed about twenty worlds to my satisfaction, and then promptly lost interest before play could even begin.

My point is that the temptation to make things too large is hard to ignore. Gary is right when he suggests you keep even your large-scale campaigns as small and manageable as possible. If you don't, not only you, but your players will lose interest as well. If you plan to roll up the entire galaxy, go ahead, but don't expect to have an exciting campaign because of all your random data.

My two cents? Even in a campaign which spans the galaxy involves a most likely straight line journey. Design the worlds on the most likely route first, then go on to some of the more interesting worlds just off of that route. Only a spectacular event or attraction will draw the players far off their course, so design those last. Cut your work whenever possible.

Timothy B. Brown

K'kree Starships: A Human Perspective

Note: *The author of this piece is Brian Stokes, a Vilani Professor of Sociology at the Tomutov Institute, Antares. His travels have made him something of an authority on K`kree behavior and methods Mr. Stokes is a familiar face to holovision viewers throughout the Antares sector.*

The K'kree have not taken as readily to spaceflight as have their human neighbors. Among their own kind it is still the "madman" who will even submit to work within such a confining device as a spaceship. The Imperium relies heavily on its space lanes and the flow of people and materials between planets; they need thousands of ships to keep moving every standard day. The K'kree, on the other hand, call upon each of their worlds to support its own population; far fewer ships need move between K'kree stars.

But commerce does take place, nevertheless. K'kree merchant vessels carry mostly specialized materials such as exotic foodstuffs and scarce repair parts between worlds. Only in special instances are great amounts of material necessary to keep a world's population supplied, and these are generally taken care of by larger tug- type freighters.

Relatively small K'kree merchant vessels are still almost floating cities compared to human equivalents. The *Xeekrkir!* type merchant, for instance, carries relatively little cargo (only 34 tons are dedicated to cargo), but has sufficient space to accommodate 74 individual K'kree. It is their race's claustrophobia which prevents them from taking fuller advantage of ship design technology for their purposes K'kree ships must be enormous by human standards for two reasons. First, each K'kree requires considerable space for his personal comfort and sanity. Second, each K'kree actually involved in running the ship comes with a retinue, or family, which balloons the complement of the ship with non-productive personnel.

THE HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

For humans to understand K'kree ship design and method is difficult. The best way to arrive at such an understanding is to actually visit a K'kree ship, particularly while in operation, and observe the differences firsthand. This author has done just that, travelling as a guest of the Khiir' family in their *Xeekr'kirl* class ship from Antares to Kirur and back between 1109 and 1111. My experiences have led me to respect this herbivorous race in many areas, not the least of which is their ability to produce and operate ships despite their natural prejudices.

If possible, to more fully comprehend this essay, a tour of a K'kree vessel would be of enormous help to the reader. Such vessels can occasionally be found operating in the trailing portions of the Imperium. Proper petitions to the owners of the vessel might yield an audience on board. Care should be exercised in regard to diet; violent reactions can be expected from the K'kree if the correct precautions are not taken.

THE XEEKR'KIR!

We will examine the *Xeekr'kir!* vessel in the order it would appear to a new visitor. The diagrams here (holographic, video, or paper, depending on the version of this essay) will be referred to often; keep these available for occasional inspection.

The Hull: From the outside, the *Xeekr'kir*! is a huge vessel in the shape of a flattened sphere over a hundred meters across. In human terms, this would be a huge merchant vessel, but to the K'kree it is merely a run-of-the-mill ship capable of carrying a moderate amount of material.

The hull is a polished white poly-ceramic sitting on three support legs. Access to and from the vessel is gained through the rear of the vessel using a ramp which lowers from the hull to ground level. The upper front of the saucer shaped ship houses the bridge, and this area is a clear ceramic, allowing direct visual contact for the comfort of the otherwise confined bridge personnel. In the vessel I travelled in, this ceramic was one way, allowing light from the outside in, but appearing glossy black to the outside observer.

The Ramp: Entering a K'kree vessel for the first time will be something of a shock to an unprepared human. We are used to stainless steel, well-groomed spaceships, steward service to our staterooms and overall cleanliness of the ship and its passengers. Be warned that a K'kree ship is more like a stable than a starship. There is dirt and mud everywhere, tracked around from the central areas through the rest of the ship by the excessive number of individuals aboard. Sanitation is uncommon, to say the least (this will be discussed later), and the resulting smell is enough to deter any would-be humanoid visitor. I personally had to wear a filter mask for most of my trip from Antares into the Two Thousand Worlds: the smell will literally take your breath away!

Cargo: Directly off the large, grubby airlock are the two sections of dedicated cargo. These areas are rather confined, and would be difficult for a K'kree to enter and move about in. Therefore, each compartment has a specifically designed cargo-handling robot built into it. The robots can detach themselves and move freely (but only when in need of repairs); their only functions are to handle cargo in these locations.

The Main Compartment: Most of the ship's interior is dedicated to the main compartment, where the K'kree congregate during the long intervals between planets, comforted by their numbers. Any other comforts are artificial. The following K'kree-made disguises attest to both the cleverness of the designers and the psychological necessity for the illusion of nature.

At either end of the large open compartment are the entrances to the airlock (aft) and the bridge (forward). These entrances are hidden by hedges which stand approximately three meters off the ground level. Similar hedges circle the compartment, hiding the exterior walls of the compartment from the ground level up to the beginning of the smooth, featureless domed ceiling.

The compartment has a dirt floor literally, which is probably one-half meter thick. There is a ground cover of grass from end to end, and random plants growing all around the compartment. On my vessel there were gardens planted in various areas, where many of the non-specialized K'kree spent many hours each "day" tending crops of delicacies for both enjoyment and consumption.

The central feature of the main compartment is a huge tree at its very center. This is an artificial tree disguising a pillar/strut essential to the structural integrity of the ship. It also houses many of the environmental controls essential to the mental well-being of the K'kree on board.

For instance, the "tree" houses an image projector for the domed ceiling of the main compartment. When in use, the projector regularly simulates the light level of the K'kree home planet, Kirur, complete with a moving sun, an image of Kirur's large satellite Kirrixur, and a day/night cycle exactly simulating a standard Kritur, or K'kree day. Clouds are projected to move overhead, and storm clouds are timed to coincide with a light misty rain generated from the ceiling and the top of the tree.

The simulated rainfall is quite important to the K'kree passengers. It gives them a great deal of comfort and soothes them while it lasts, and is almost the sole contributor to their personal hygiene. With the rain and the simulated sunlight a variety of native plants grow and flourish within the ship. To complete the effect, there are breeze generators (fans) located in the tree which regulate the airflow in the compartment, creating winds which vary in direction, intensity, and temperature.

Also, I found out, much to my chagrin, that the odors readily in abundance from the K'kree complement on the ship were scarcely enough to simulate life on the plains of Kirur. To supplement these smells, special odor emitters are also housed in the tree which pump out all the native smells of Kirur, including natural plant odors, the smells of the sea airs, etc. However, to my nose these were "drowned out" by the emission of sufficient K'kree body odors to simulate not tens of K'kree, but a plains herd of thousands of them. Needless to say, my trips to the vicinity of the central tree were rare and of short duration.

Despite my objections, however, the area around the central tree was a preferred area among the K'kree themselves. My ship had in excess of fifty individuals in it, and except for occasional departures by a few K'kree to tend gardens or perform ship's duties, the entire group congregated around the tree for the entire voyage. The grasses flourished around the exterior of the main compartment, but were trampled flat around the tree.

As a side note, the fire control for the ship is located in the vicinity of the tree, but is concealed underground until needed. During an emergency situation an alarm is sounded. The K'kree assured me that this is a simulated cry of the long extinct Gnaak. However, to my human ears, the alarm was somewhat less threatening, sounding more like the gobbling of a Terran turkey. The fire control stations emerge from the dirt floor to be operated by K'kree gunners in the safety and comfort of the main compartment. Remote fire control is the rule among K'kree ships.

The methods of waste removal on the *Xeekr'kir!* are at once primitive and highly sophisticated. No specific facilities are apparent for the removal of K'kree waste, which, over the period of a one week jump, would be expected to pile pretty high in the simulated meadowlands. Instead, there is a symbiotic relationship between the grasses of the floor and a bacteria designed to immediately decompose K'kree wastes. The bacteria break the waste down much more quickly than nature would be able to, and the grass absorbs the nutrients more rapidly as well. The bacteria are also airborne, and is carried by the simulated breezes to be distributed more evenly around the main compartment. The grass/bacteria symbiont was genetically engineered especially for this task.

Certain Imperial worlds have taken great measures to isolate K'kree ships from their ecospheres out of fear of this bacteria use. They feel that the bacteria will be a danger when it leaves the ship during any landing on their planet, be it by air or on the hoofs of the K'kree themselves. However, this fear is completely unfounded. The bacteria are designed to cycle only through the grass on the K'kree ships. If it does not do so, it dies. Even if an area of the engineered grass were to be transplanted into the ecosphere, its related bacteria would only survive in that limited area, where it could be detected and removed if it were doing any harm. The bacteria have been thoroughly tested and is harmless to all lifeforms.

My "stateroom" on this flight was any particular place I wished to sleep. Obviously, my stay with the K'kree on their ship was more like a camping trip than an interstellar voyage. I had a tent to keep out the wind, the rain, and what smells I could. My foods were limited to what I brought with me and what I could stand to eat from the gardens of my hosts. In short, travel on a K'kree ship is really roughing it.

The Bridge: The K'kree bridge is larger than one might be on a human ship. Obviously, K'kree are larger than men and they wish to be as comfortable as possible while on duty. The ceiling of the bridge is clear ceramic, giving the bridge crew a striking view of the stars around them. This also gives the room a very open feeling it would lose to walls and bulkheads.

The bridge area is characterized by its interesting K'kree work stations. Each station is recessed into the floor (a metal floor in the bridge) into which the K'kree sits with his four hind legs. This leaves his forelimbs free to operate the control panels spread out on the floor in front of each station.

The captain's station is in the center of the bridge, and can rotate as necessary. The navigational and engineering stations are fanned out on the floor in front of him. Scientific stations are located on either side of the bridge.

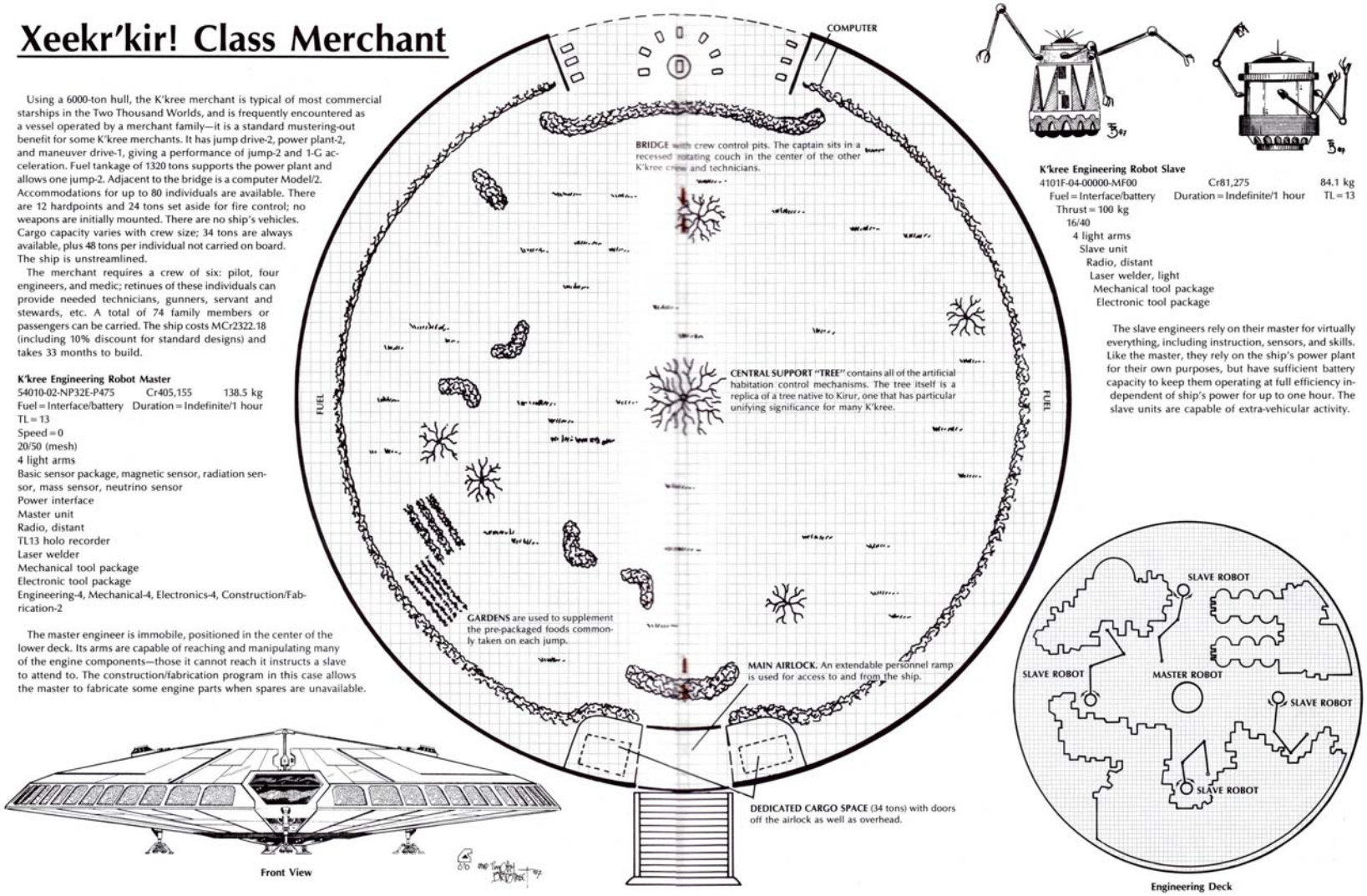
Below Decks: The engines and power plant of the *Xeekr'kir!* are located below the main compartment of the ship on a deck roughly one to two meters in height. This level has no gravity or atmosphere, and is the abode of a master engineering robot and his three slave robots. All engineering functions are taken care of by these robots. The level is too small for K'kree to enter. From the main compartment, occasional activity can be heard from below, but rarely

anything substantial. The engineering robots move about tirelessly, maintaining the machinery to which they are tied.

The *Xeekr'kir*! is designed specifically for the K'kree race. Humans would find it difficult to control the vessel or use it for their purposes without extensive modifications.

The Two Thousand Worlds can offer us in the Imperium endless possibilities for trade, cooperation, and fascination. Brief encounters such as mine can yield valuable information about their culture, their everyday lives and themselves. The K'kree, I'm certain, would also like to learn more about us. Contact on the personal level is the first step toward interstellar cooperation between our two races, and it is up to the interested individual to begin that contact in his own way.

Rob Caswell and Timothy B. Brown



Behind the Scenes

AmberZone

This Amber Zone is different from many that have been published in **Challenge** or in **The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society** in the past. For one thing, this Amber Zone is a large scale Amber Zone, covering a wider region than is typical. Second, this Amber Zone will allow the referee inside my own thought processes to gain a "behind the scenes" look at how to construct and run a large scale campaign.

IN THE BEGINNING

Every campaign, large or small, has to start somewhere. For this Amber Zone, I thumbed through the **Atlas of the Imperium** and chose the Antares Sector. Why? It was a new sector to me, so I could have free rein in whatever I did; but there is more to it than that. Look at the sector map more closely, and you'll see that it is chockful of opportunities for adventure situations involving many elements.

Most of its coreward edge consists of Vargr worlds, outside the reach of Imperial law. The coreward rimward corner contains part of the joint Action Confederation, labeled "ir" on the map. Just coreward of Antares lie the worlds of the League of Antares, labeled "Ia." Finally, this sector contains Sabmiqys (Antares 2117), and having some fore-knowledge of this world, I thought that an interesting scenario could be woven to include it.

The first thing I did, having chosen this sector, was to use highlighter markers to color in the "mains" of the sector. Starting with any color at any world, I proceeded to color in all the worlds that could be reached using only a jump 1 vessel. (Use a photocopy of the page so you can later use different color schemes for other information.) This was meant only as a rough rule of thumb indication, so I blithely included starport X desert worlds in my mains, even though such a world would effectively stop a jump 1 ship from arriving there. I did not include non-imperial worlds in the mains, and left them uncolored.

It turns out that most of the worlds in the central and rimward areas of Antares Sector belong to one large main, stretching from Antares 2505 at the top, clear down to the bottom of the sector. This looked good, but there were still enough gaps and travel inconveniences that I made a mental note to consider jump 2 transportation for the characters.

WORLDS AND MORE WORLDS

For the next step (still in preparation, without player assistance), I rolled up UPPs for some of the worlds around Sabmiqys. At this stage of the game, I am still drifting without a fixed goal, letting my mind wander into whatever nooks and crannies it can discover on its own. Genius, as they say, is 99 percent perspiration and one percent inspiration. Rolling up worlds is part of the perspiration.

I used a Pascal program to simplify the process. I let it print out 40 random worlds for each starport class, and then fitted world stats onto the map as appropriate. If you don't have a computer, roll 'em by hand. Keep alert in this step: we're looking for anything out of the ordinary that we can spin into an adventure.

Remember, too, that you are the referee; if you want to do something your own way, go ahead. You're the boss. Things don't have to come out randomly, and sometimes your flat decision is the key that turns the lock and makes the adventure click. When I was writing my Shudusham adventure, I hand rolled more than 25 different worlds until I got one that I liked. In the end, I combined the physical characteristics from one with the cultural characteristics of another world.

Was this a monstrous waste of time? No, because the random nature of the rolls made me consider some options I would have otherwise overlooked, and one of these options (the perspiration) gave me a good idea (the inspiration).

Of course, other methods may be used to come up with random world statistics. For instance, it is possible to steal them from **Atlas of the Imperium**, possibly mixing up the physical and social statistics from world to world. This way the random nature of the worlds is preserved, and your players are not likely to arrive at the next gaming session convinced they've been to this planet before.

Here's what we have generated so far for the Antares Sector:

2117	X160056-H	(Sabmiqys) Red Zone. De. Lo. nIn.
2118	C676416-8	nIn.
2216	B464321-C	nIn.
2218	D897000-5	Ba. Lo. nIn.
2219	D425553-8	nIn.
2220	B433231-D	Lo. nIn. Po.
2315	B898998-B	(Irale) Hi. In.
2316	E653967-6	Po.
2320	E798315-3	Lo. nIn.
2411	EAB4116-5	Fl. Lo. nIn.
2413	A8A6779-B	Fl.
2417	C898351-6	Lo. nIn.
2421	A762ADA-D	(Antares) Hi.
2422	X550544-0	De. nIn. Po.
2512	E638234-8	Lo. nIn.
2611	A243232-9	(client state) Lo. nIn. Po.
2612	C312202-9	(non-aligned) Ic. Lo. nIn.
2712	A56576B-A	(non-aligned) Ag. Ri.
2812	B554643-A	Ag. nIn.

We also need to name the worlds. I'll leave you to your own devices for this, but I will also give you a tip that will come in handy later on. After you have named these worlds, on a separate sheet of paper jot down some other world names for later use, and put this list in the back of your three-ring notebook. When the player-characters suddenly decide to investigate a world that you hadn't planned on, you'll be ready.

The players ask about this new world, and you can flip to your list and tell them the world's name with little hesitation. You'd be surprised how often a definite name adds veracity to a situation, particularly to red herrings. If it is "just some world," the players can guess that it is unimportant to the adventure, but if it's "Nove" or whatever, your players can't be sure without playing the situation out.

You might also keep a list of UPPs handy, too, for exactly the same reason. You don't need to assign these precisely until necessary, but when the players ask, "What tech level is Nove, anyway?" you'll be able to give them a ready answer with a straight face by picking a set of world stats from your list.

WHO AND WHY

Clothes make the man, so the proverb goes. In the same way, characters make the adventure, dressing it up in memorable ways. Besides, characters are the best sources for motivations, and without motivations, player-characters would tend to just sit.

Here's the idea for a patron then. A collector purchased an unusual artifact from an art dealer. The collector has shown the device to several technicians at a local university, but none of them knows where the device came from or how it works. The collector wants to find out.

Watching things from behind the scenes, you can probably guess that the artifact I have in mind came from Sabmiqys, with its tech 17 civilization. But your players won't know this unless you tell them the adventure concerns Sabmiqys. Mum's the word and we can proceed with some more frills.

The collector's curiosity provides one motivation, but the more the merrier. Perhaps another N PC doesn't want the collector to find out, or perhaps wants the artifact himself, or... The beauty of a long term adventure is that we don't have to decide yet. We can play it by ear until we reach that crossroads, and then give the players what we think they would enjoy the most.

BEGINNING OR END?

We still have a little more work to do before we can let the scenario loose on the players. They have to start somewhere, with their own characters, in some situation. As mentioned in the accompanying article, we can choose a spot as the origin or as the destination of an adventure, we can fan out from a central point, or we can work both ends against the middle.

Since this is a "puzzle" type adventure, probably with some action thrown in, it's apparent that we have to work toward the answer, so let's start somewhere else. We'll have plenty of red herrings along the way; we may as well start with one, too. We can set this up then so that the search for the origin of the artifact is a "long leash," always pulling the characters in one main direction over time, even though minor incidents along the way may entail short detours.

Looking over the worlds above, Antares 2712 (A56576B A (nonaligned) Ag. Ri.) looks good for the characters' homeworld. With a tech level A and a starport class A, it is solidly within the interstellar community, and its position outside the Imperium may give us some advantages later. Since we have already thought up the name Nove, let's use it for this world.

The artifact is much higher tech than anything on the world or known as Imperial technology. Maybe it could be an Ancient artifact. I looked in Adventure 12, Secret of the Ancients, to see what I could dig up (sorry about the pun). Here again, perspiration led to inspiration. Listen to this:

"The Imperium has strict laws controlling traffic in artifacts, which cannot be legally sold unless registered with the Imperium ... there is an illicit traffic in artifacts. Any artifact besides a piece of rubble can usually be sold for more money in the illegal market than it can to the Imperium."

And this:

"The Imperium has long searched for Ancient sites, but it has never been able to find them all. Aware of this, the Imperium has established a series of incentive bonuses designed to encourage the reporting of newly located Ancient sites to the authorities. A payment of Cr50,000 is made for reporting a previously unknown Ancient site to the authorities. A subsequent bonus of between Cr100 and Cr1,000,000 is made depending on an analysis of the site in depth."

Notice that magic word, "incentive." Monetary reward could be a strong motivation for these characters, and the complete picture starts to fall into place.

The collector has an Ancient artifact, which he bought from some antique dealer who didn't realize what he had. The collector now wants to trace the source of this artifact, which must be a new Ancient site, since none have been reported in this part of Antares Sector. The characters' motivation is the initial discovery bonus, and perhaps an "extra" bonus depending upon each individual's sense of personal honesty: they could strip the site of the most valuable materials before they report it to the Imperium.

ON WITH THE SHOW

Simple so far, isn't it? We need to roll up the collector; someone rich and powerful but unable to travel himself to solve this mystery. Sounds a little like a noble. Use **Citizens of the Imperium** to roll one up, and put him in charge of some smaller area on Nove. Double check the world's UPP: the government type is captive government or colony. Let's use captive government, and that will help explain why this guy is here. Choose some nearby world to be the "big bosses." Antares 2812 could work, but I'll leave that decision up to you; I can't do all the work.

We want the characters to travel rimward. We may as well overshoot the distance we need to go because then we can have a bigger campaign and start new characters at the other end. Let's put that off for now, because your players can handle only one character apiece in any given gaming session, so let's begin with Nove.

Ansenz (Antares 2425) is a good distance away, but it's not even generated yet. No problem: we just look up our list of pre-generated stats and find one that fits. It's a high population world with a B starport, so we can use B656AD8 7. This one came out of my computer, and it has several salient features. Tech 7? Hmm. Religious dictatorship? Hmm. Possibilities already spring to mind.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

So the noble on Nove wants to find out exactly where his Ancient artifact came from, and he knows his dealer picked it up at Ansenz. Again the magic question comes into play: Why? Always, always, always, test NPC motivations, and your players will not detect any seams in your campaigns.

The situation here is that the noble is hiring the characters to discover the information. Why does he hire the characters? Why not travel to Ansenz himself? (We already solved this one.) Why not just talk to the dealer himself? (Maybe he's dead; that's simple enough.) Why not write to someone on Ansenz?

Look at what we have to work with: Ansenz is part of the League of Antares, and Nove is outside the Imperium, so communication may be censored. Ansenz's low-tech level may interfere with the mail. Its religious dictatorship may censor or totally prohibit incoming letters. Any of these could do the job, so let's use...

Hold it right there. This is the beauty of a large scale campaign. We know there's a reason, but we don't know what the player- characters will do over the next few months. It's good enough for the noble to say that he has sent inquiries to Ansenz over the past several years, but he has never gotten any response. He doesn't know why; so he's sending the characters to find out.

This way, the theme has a chance to "brew" in your subconscious. When you think of an interrelated theme for this adventure, you can choose the reason that fits with it the best. Or maybe you'll think up an entirely new reason. Maybe someone on Ansenz is intercepting these messages, and will be waiting for anyone asking questions. Maybe ... but you get the idea. I'm sure you've thought of a few yourself.

SLOW AND EASY

Now look at what we've done. Playing **Traveller** is an investment in time that pays off in fun, and with any investment it's better to get a bigger return than a smaller one. To develop this scenario, we've spent about an hour rolling dice and five or ten minutes looking over a map and talking to ourselves. This minimal investment already gives us the basis for a scenario, and at the same time protects us from unfortunate "losses" on our investment. Suppose the player-characters show no interest in this assignment: we've lost little time, and most of the work we've done can be adapted to another theme in the same part of space.

We do need a good rousing start, and we haven't yet solved the problem of transportation for the characters. Traders with a jump 2 vessel could work: if we use a subsidized vessel, we're sure that the characters are still "hungry" enough to take on some sideline work.

Mercenaries could also participate in this adventure. They were hired on to settle some petty, squabble on Nove and happened to meet this nobleman. How do we decide which setup to use? Let the players do it. They have their own preferences for the character types they like to play. At the game session, before you start this campaign, just ask them which they plan to use for the next scenario, then design accordingly.

THE FIRST STOP

Look at the stats: we generate worlds near Nove so we can decide on the first session's scenario. Antares 2611 is a client state, quite small, with only a few hundred people on the world, but a naval base in orbit. Antares 2612 is non-aligned, with only a few hundred people and no government at all. Antares 2512 is within the Imperium, again with only a few hundred inhabitants. If we come up with an idea that doesn't need very many people, we could use it anywhere.

I now turn to *10,000 Ideas for Term Papers, Projects and Reports*, a book I sometimes refer to for "idea seeds." (I got mine at the university bookstore.) Opening it at random, I find "genetic bases for aging." Fortunately, I don't have to write a thesis, but I can still use this as a jumping off point for a scenario. Maybe a world is doing special research. Anagathics spring to mind, but they need tech level 15 and these worlds are all eight and nine. But this still might work. After all, we invented these UPPs a while ago, so we can feel free to change them to suit our convenience.

But this isn't always the case, and I don't want to take the easy way out. Suppose we're stuck with eights and nines. We still have some loopholes: libary data is sometimes incorrect, after all. Sometimes the tech level in one specialty will be significantly higher or lower than the general tech level. But that still feels a little like cheating, and I don't want to do that in a how-to article.

So we scrap the anagathics idea, right? Wrong. As long as we went to the trouble to think it up, let's jot it down in our notebook. We'll encounter a tech 15 world sooner or later, and we might be a little dry on ideas at the time.

So back to the idea book this time with an entry on "factors contributing to organized crime." Here we have something. One of these worlds is actually run by hoodlums, say. If your players rolled up mercenaries, send them in to clean up the place. If they're using merchants, tell them after they get to the world. They'll find out soon enough.

We can also use more than one idea and meld them together. For example, we can go back to the idea book and look up another entry, this time we come up with "scientific research grants." Now add this to the hoodlums idea, throw in a little imagination, and see what we come up with. Perhaps the hoodlums are actually a front for a bogus research company accepting grant money from a university or the Imperium itself. Or maybe the scientists are for real, but they are oppressed and intimidated by the new thugs in charge. If the player characters are going in to clean things up anyway, these new problems might add flavor to the scenario. Maybe there is a reward for uncovering the fake researchers, or will there be some spoils from grateful scientists?

I won't give you the whole scenario for this adventure. Once you have the idea for an adventure with a small population overrun with thugs, it's easy enough to make it up yourself in a few hours. All I'm showing you here are ways to integrate these smaller scenarios into a bigger campaign.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ...

Speaking of bigger campaigns, you may be wondering whatever happened to Sabmiqys and the Ancients. See how the adventure is going later on: you may decide to switch horses in midstream. Maybe your characters get all the way to Ansenz before turning around and coming back. Maybe they get to the real source earlier. It's up to you and your mood. If they never reach Ansenz, you haven't lost more than about five minutes work. And you may come up with another theme that has more sparkle to it between now and then.

When the time comes and the characters do reach Sabmiqys, use the contact piece for more adventure ideas. If your players have already read the thing, or if you change your mind, there's nothing stopping you from choosing some world as an Ancient site, after all, and letting your characters dig it up. After all, if it was interesting enough to make a good red herring, you should be able to use it as an adventure.

PUBLISHED MATERIALS

Large campaigns such as this one will require quite a bit more legwork than will an adventure or scenario situated on just one or two worlds. Don't get me wrong; a single world can never be described in complete detail (think of the diversity of peoples and geography on Earth), and the task should not be taken lightly. But to come up with information on several worlds, or several dozen, will take time and effort. If you don't have the time, however, there are means for having the work done for you.

Obviously, if you're planning to set your long range campaign in the Imperium, **Atlas of the Imperium** will be a lifesaver. First, lots of the information is already there for you. Second, if you don't use **Atlas** you're running the risk that a rules lawyer player will complain that this is not the "real" Imperium.

But maps are not the greatest gift offered by already published materials. All the adventures ever published for science-fiction games (both **Traveller** and others) by any company (Game Designers' Workshop, Digest Group, etc.) are goldmines of information to fill in holes you haven't time to fill.

The most common misconception about adventures is that their locations are carved in stone. This is simply not the case. Any adventure can be adapted to take place somewhere else in the Imperium, or in any part of space for that matter. You simply have to make a few adjustments. You might have to change Vargr pirates to Aslan clansmen, a formidable task, but not impossible. You might have to change several of the planet names, but this is simplicity itself. In no time at all you can fill up your campaign area with interesting situations for the players to run across. These can tie in with the main theme of your adventure or be independent, as you desire.

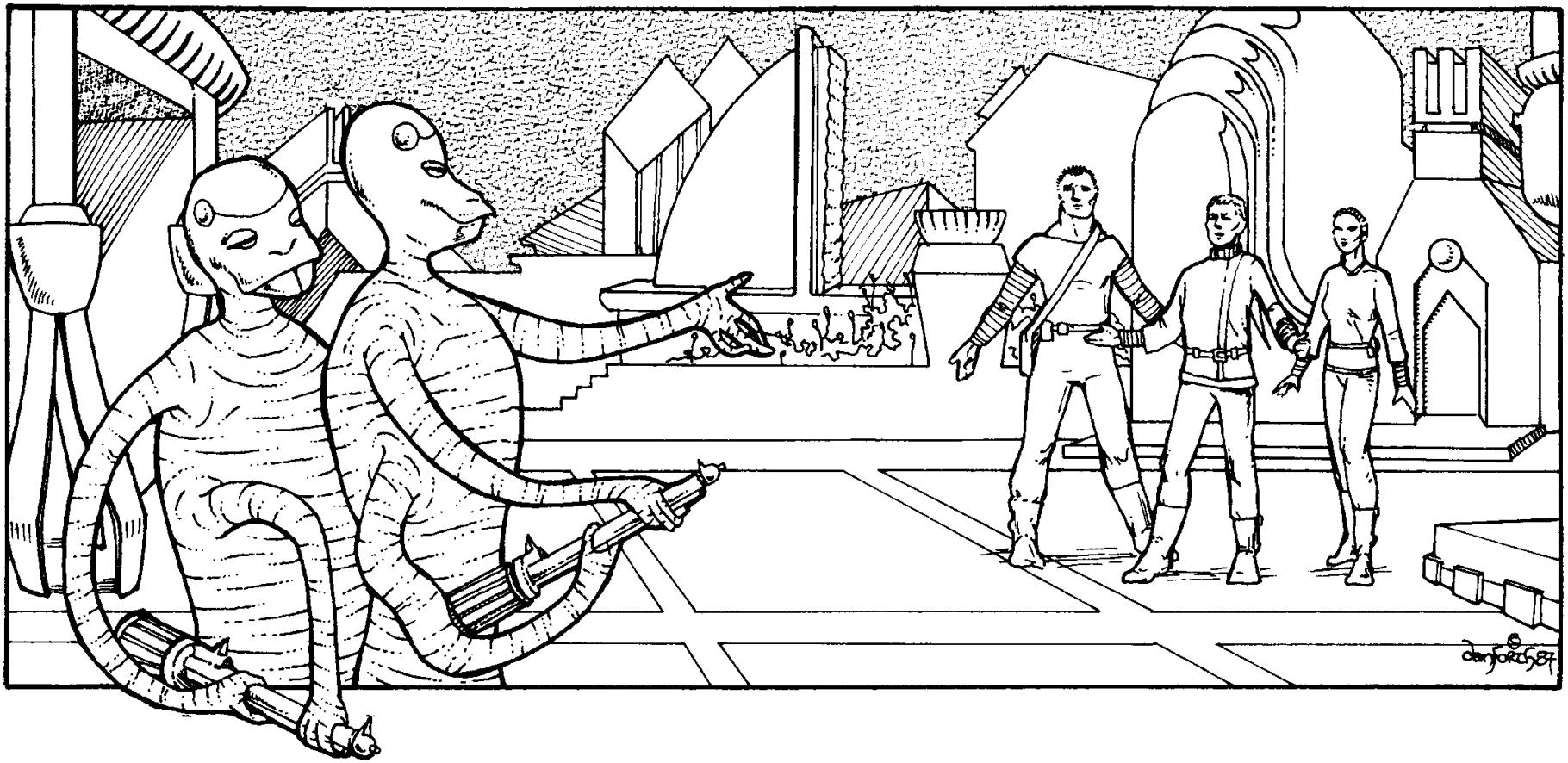
Gary L. Thomas

The Sabmiqys

CONTACT

In 5889, Scouts from the First Imperium conducted a sub orbital flyby of a world in the habitable zone of Antares 2117 (see the **Atlas of the Imperium**). The flyby was part of the routine pre-contact process for a world suspected of harboring intelligent lifeforms. During the flyby mission, the ship's boat reported a series of unexplained internal explosions and shortly erupted in a final catastrophic explosion. The incident was reported as an unfortunate accident.

Over the next several months, numerous Scout ships were sent to contact the world. In every single instance any starship attempting to contact the local culture was destroyed by some unknown weapon (apparently emanating from the planet) which induced the ship to explode from within. Baffled, the Scouts declared the world a navigational hazard and off limits to all starship travel. The Scouts named the system "Gashukubi," which in Vilani means "Certain Death."



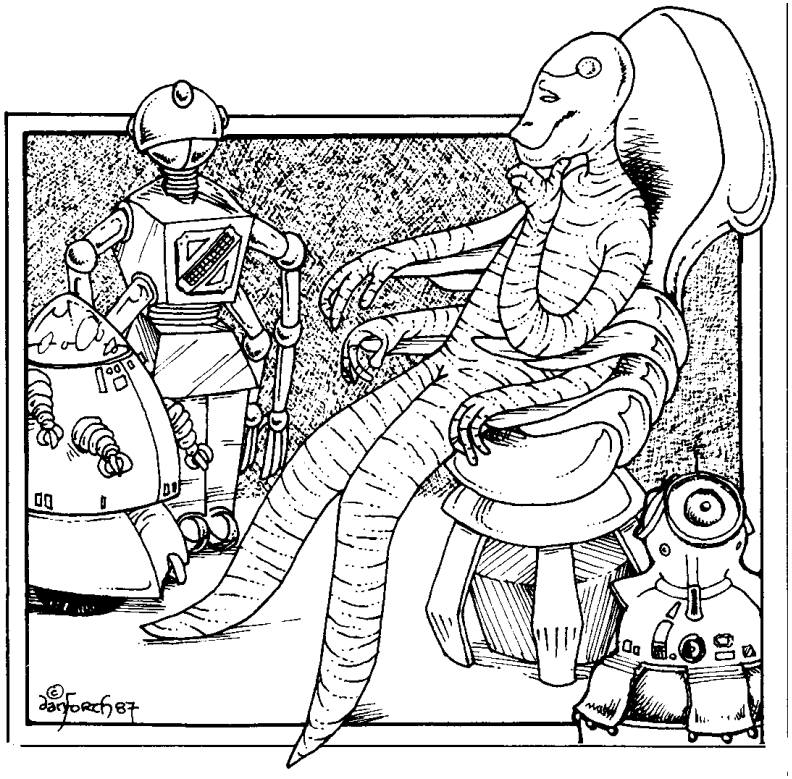
Toward the end of the Interstellar Wars between the Solomani of Terra and the Vilani of the First Imperium, Solomani breakthroughs in starship weapon technology produced the starship mounted meson gun. The first time the Vilani encountered meson fire from the Solomani, the Vilani were horrified their ship was induced to explode from inside just like the Gashukubi legends. Rumors of the “gashukubi" weapon of the Solomani did much to break the Vilani's will to continue the fight.

With the founding of the Second Imperium, it didn't take long for the Vilani to realize that the mysterious starships' explosions in the Gashukubi system were almost certainly caused by meson fire from the planet's surface. Thus came the startling truth: the mysterious inhabitants of Gashukubi had a superior weapons technology. Curiosity about Gashukubi abounded Were these aliens another major race? Was this a world inhabited by the "Ancients?" What other superior technology did they possess?

The Sylean Federation was the first to use meson screens as a protection against meson fire, which ultimately opened the way for surviving to contact the inhabitants of Gashukubi shortly after the founding of the Third Imperium.

During the 70s and 80s, two starships with meson screens attempted to land on Gashukubi; one was destroyed. The other starship that did survive to land was never heard from again after only a few hours. Even though knowledge of the inhabitants of Gashukubi still remained a mystery, this incident proved the alien's meson weapons were survivable.

In 311, the *Gem of Fornol* (a starship with new tech 13 meson screens) managed to land on Gashukubi and finally make contact with its inhabitants.



THE EARLY CONTACTS

The *Gem of Fomol's* crew (wearing vacc suits; routine procedure in all first encounters) were met by a horde of large, ugly metal robots wielding a nasty array of weapons. Many of the crew were herded off at gunpoint, never to return to the ship. The remaining crewmembers finally left while their ship was still intact, for fear that they too would be captured.

The world was classified as a red zone which harbored a highly xenophobic race. The Scouts were puzzled as to why the inhabitants were so "afraid" of offworlders. So much so, in fact, the locals never met the Scouts face-to-face; the locals sent their robots instead.

The next contact party, a few years later, noticed a surprising difference from all previous contact attempts. No more meson fire; Why had the fire stopped? The Scouts were unable to find out, for they met with a fate similar to that of the Gem of Fornol's crew.

The Scouts stepped up efforts to establish friendly relations with the Gashukubi locals during the First Survey. Even though the next several contact parties continued to lose a high percentage of their members, a gradual understanding of the locals developed, and from that followed a rapport of sorts.

CULTURE AND HISTORY

The local inhabitants call their world "Sabmiqys." Sabmiqys (Antares 2117, X160056 H) is a desert world, possessing a mere 3% hydrosphere. Apparently, long ago, the world's surface was about 25% water, but most of the water was lost due to some prehistoric cataclysm. Sabmiqys orbits its star in a highly eccentric orbit, making the world's seasons and environment quite harsh.

As the Scouts managed to learn the language of the local culture, the Scouts were able to communicate to the local robots their desire to meet "those in charge." Finally, the Scouts got to meet the actual Sabmiqys instead of their robots.

They found the race to be from omnivore/gatherer stock, about 2.5 m in height, and massing about 100 kg. They were thin and lithe, with no body hair and a bumpy, thick, spongy grey hide. They had two legs, four tentacle arms with four-finger manipulators, a head with two eyes, four nostril slits, and a wide mouth with over 100 teeth.

There were very few of the aliens left. Most of the society consisted of robots of all kinds. The Scouts had a very difficult time estimating the tech level of Sabmiqys, for much of the technology seemed very advanced, almost incomprehensible.

Over time, various contact parties managed to learn some mind-boggling facts about the Sabmiqys. They claimed to replace their body parts as they wore out (although the Scouts never witnessed this firsthand: this was not too surprising, for the most advanced Imperial medical facilities could do this as well). What really shocked the Scouts, however, was that a few of the living Sabmiqys claimed to be nearly 10,000 years old! This was never verified though, because the Sabmiqys

would never let the Scout Medical Experts examine them despite their interest in the medical expertise of the Imperium.

The Sabmiqys had several strange cultural "quirks."

They referred to themselves as "Gya Ks," and their ancestors as "Egya Ks." In time, the Scouts came to understand the reference a little better. More appropriately the term seemed to mean "our great ancestors who brought down death from the sky." Just what significance this had, the Scouts were unable to determine.

The Sabmiqys appeared to require little sleep, and retired to their quarters once a day to eat in private.

It was difficult for the contact parties to learn a great deal about the Sabmiqys because they were very secretive, and party members would continue to disappear from time to time. When asked about the missing members, the Sabmiqys would gladly offer to show the curious party member, who would also fail to return! If pressed for an answer, the Sabmiqys would lead off the offending party member at gunpoint, who would also never come back.

Several mercenary parties hoping to rescue the missing humans travelled to Sabmiqys, never to be heard from again.

So the Scouts learned it was better not to ask what had happened to the missing humans. In fact, in certain parts of the service, Sabmiqys became a byword for any potentially dangerous mission.

THE TRUTH COMES OUT

In the late 600s, a Scout contact party visited Sabmiqys and stumbled upon a robot repair facility. To the party's amazement, a "living" Sabmiqys was undergoing extensive repairs. The Sabmiqys in the repair facility was, in fact, an extremely sophisticated pseudo-biological robot. Shortly thereafter, the party learned the entire remnants of the "race" inhabiting the planet had been pseudo-biological robots all the time!

Slowly, the sad tale of the "great ancestors who brought down death from the sky" unfolded.

Around -8000 (shortly after the Vilani had invented jump drive), the Gya Ks had sent out one sub-light ship to a nearby star system one parsec distant (their space travel technology was far behind their computer/robotics technology).

It appears that the sub light ship returned on robot autopilot, all its passengers dead from an unknown cause. Once the Gya Ks on Sabmiqys were able to determine the cause for the mysterious deaths, it was too late, for they too were infected with the deadly virus harbored on that ship.

The toxic effect of the virus was near symptomless until the very end. Medical robots frantically looked for a cure. Global panic struck overnight as millions that were fine one day were dead the next, for no apparent reason. The very fabric of Gya Ks' society unravelled overnight; bedlam and anarchy prevented the coordination of effort that might have otherwise led to a cure.

The study of the mysterious ship had lasted for 6 months, the incubation period of the virus. Once the deaths started, from beginning to end, it was all over in less than 10 days. The death of an entire world in 10 days.

The million or so robots left on the world decided that space travel is of little or no value, and thus have never put any effort into pursuing interstellar exploration.

SABMIQYS IN 1100

Currently, Sabmiqys is still an interdicted red zone world.

The second survey UPP stats for the world of Sabmiqys are X160056 H. Note the world UPP does not list the robot population, since the Imperium is divided over the question of whether or not the robots should even be considered "sentient." Prevailing opinion is that the robots should not be considered sentient, no matter what: The robots are not biological beings; they are artificial imitations, even if they are quite intelligent.

The robots that populate the world vary from highly intelligent pseudo-bios to dumbot servants. The bulk of the intelligent robots are of contoured configuration, resembling the Gya Ks.

The controversy within the Imperium over whether or not the Sabmiqys robots are true sentients continues to rage on.

Travellers are cautioned not to go to Sabmiqys for any reason. Many who have violated the red zone restriction by visiting the world have never returned.

REFEREE'S NOTES ON THE SABMIQYS

The following information is not common knowledge, and is available only to the referee.

Because Sabmiqys orbits its star in a highly eccentric orbit, the intense heat of the hot season would shrivel the 25% hydrosphere to a mere fraction of its original size as most of the surface water evaporated into the atmosphere.

The cooling season would bring on monsoon rains in certain areas, depositing much of the water in locations different from where it was in the prior season. The lakes, rivers, and seas would move about from season to season on the world's relatively flat surface.

Since the original pre-Sabmiqys of prehistoric times had few natural enemies, the harsh environment itself was the primary factor that drove them to intelligence.

The Sabmiqys developed an impressive skill in world terraforming in a few short millennia. At the time of the disaster on Sabmiqys, the environmental sciences had reached tech level 17. The other highly advanced science was computers and robotics, which had also reached tech level 17.

The other sciences were not so advanced. Energy technology was around tech level 15, as was communications and military technology. Because the Sabmiqys possessed few biological enemies on the world, their medical tech level was only 11. The Sabmiqys had never possessed a great racial drive to reach the stars, and had barely managed to achieve tech level 9 in space travel.

Globally, the Sabmiqys were discordant, often having disagreements and spats. The Sabmiqys' way of settling a harsh disagreement was to have a "contest." The contest consisted of a test wherein the contestants would each build devices to perform some agreed upon function. The builder of the best

device won the argument. This method of settling disagreements fostered many technological advances.

The Sabmiqys used their sophisticated environmental technology to store most of their world's water in vast underground aquifers. Their robots did all the work, including supervising the project. In fact, in many areas the robots really ran the world. They were the doctors, the policemen, the professional "contestants" (soldiers), the clerks, and the janitors.

Since the time of the ill-fated starship, the robots have always had a severe distrust of anything from space. When the First Imperium Scouts showed up on the scene, the robots naturally decided that destroying the "scourge from space" was the proper decision.

When the Imperial Scout ship was finally able to penetrate the meson defenses in the early 80s, the Sabmiqys robots (not the pseudo-biological robots), met the humans at their ship with guns in hand. The robots were expecting other robots or worse yet, infested alien Sabmiqys. They were totally confused by the humans who came out. The robots took the humans to the leader robots (the pseudo-biological models).

The robot leaders decided they needed to find out more about these creatures and "dismantled" several of them. The medical robots discovered these biological beings carried the virus which wiped out their creators long ago. They now had a source for the virus, and biological beings to experiment with. They must allow these beings to come to their world, so that they can pick other subjects to experiment with.

As various contact parties arrived, the Sabmiqys hand-picked their experiment stock, and began to breed their laboratory "animals." After about 150 years of experimenting, they finally isolated what they thought was a possible cure for the virus. Unfortunately, they had no live Sabmiqys to test the serum on.

At this point (around 500), the Sabmiqys took a strong interest in learning more of the Imperium's medical technology. They soon learned that the Imperium (then at tech level 13) was using high-tech cloning techniques to clone new body parts.

The robots had enough foresight to cryogenically freeze several Sabmiqys shortly after they had died from the virus; some of their body cells were still alive when they were frozen. With luck, a Sabmiqys could be cloned from suspended corpses.

After another 300 years of frustrating cloning experiments on humans, the Sabmiqys managed to push their medical tech level to 13. Another 175 years of experiments produced a successfully cloned full-grown Sabmiqys. The robots had succeeded in reviving their race!

Currently, in 1100, there are several hundred biological Sabmiqys on the world, immune to the effects of the death virus.

Unfortunately, now that the robots have solved the problem that plagued them for nearly 10,000 years, they have forgotten that their creators were their superiors. The Sabmiqys and the humans continue to reside in the labs, being used in further biological "contests."

A few humans and Sabmiqys have escaped the cities from time to time and are living a meager existence in the wilds. The harsh environment away from the cities makes life a constant struggle for these escapees, and some die during their first year in the desert.

664X2 A4 PQ522 MFE7(P)	Cr38,356,000
840 kg	
Fuel = 155.225	
Duration = 21.56	TL=17
50/122 (mesh)	
4 Med tentacles	
Head (10%)	
2 eyes (+2 pass IR), 2 ears, voder, 2 olfactory sensors,	
touch sensors (+extra sen), taste sensor	
2 Power interfaces, brain interface, TL17 holo recorder QD)	
Electronic circuit protection	
Admin 4, Emotion Simulation	

Joe Fugate

Double Feature

PLAYER INFORMATION

Palantir (D886644 9 Ag G) is an isolated world on a minor trade route. Recently its climate has cooled, and local meteorologists suspect that the change is the first sign of an ice age. Imperial experts disagree with this diagnosis, saying that the weather change is temporary. The cold weather has caused several successive crop failures, and the government has been forced to borrow heavily from the Sector Treasury to finance the purchase of extra power plants, cold weather seeds, soil heating equipment and fertilizers. Now the Treasury refuses to finance further imports and has taken the unusual step of freezing Palantir's offworld credit.

The Treasury demands MCr4570 in loan repayments and interest. The final repayment date is in six months. Palantir can't pay the entire debt, but Treasury sources have suggested that a token 5% payment will make the Governor extend the credit period and release Palantir's assets. If the loan isn't paid, Palantir will be bankrupt, and all external assets will be confiscated by the Imperium. The colonists will be forced to use a barter economy, and trade will probably come to an end. It seems unlikely that the colony could survive such a blow.

Apart from agriculture, there is only one industry on Palantir ExArts, Inc, an entertainments corporation exporting to several worlds of the sector. At present, this company has two films ready to sell. There's only one problem if they are exported legally; they will be confiscated by the sector authorities and held as part of the planet's assets.

AmberZone

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The adventurers should be the operators of a merchant vessel, and this scenario is best played as one of several ongoing plots involving their ship. It would fit in well with a long-term campaign, such as *The Traveller Adventure*. Palantir should be three or four jumps from the sector capital.

The films are science-fiction, the first two parts of a tetralogy set in the remote future. They deal with the routine use of magic-like technology and travel through time and parallel dimensions. The team will be shown excerpts, and the referee should imply that neither seems to be particularly good.

The small print of the contract with Makhidkarun, a company interested in distributing the films, contains several clauses, which all seem to relate to the status of ExArts after Makhidkarun takes control. Computer analysis (roll 9+, +computer, +administration) will reveal that they also give Makhidkarun the right to reach "reasonable" levels of artistic merit through editing. If delivery is refused, the contract will be void and no payment will be made. These are actually irrelevant standard clauses. Makhidkarun wants control of ExArts (and patents and shares owned by the company) and isn't especially worried about the merit of the films, provided they are delivered. A company with Makhidkarun's resources can afford an occasional tax loss, or may simply sell the films in a package with more desirable products. The films will be almost worthless to smaller distributors.

Professional holofilm masters are recorded on 20 cm wide plastic tape, on 85 cm reels. Each film occupies three reels, (one reel is approximately an hour's screen time) storied in humidity-controlled metal transport cases weighing 45 kg. These cases are fitted with combination locks and anti-theft beeper alarms. The alarms are extremely sensitive and will accidentally trigger on a roll of 8 + each day. Prolonged exposure to heat, cold, moisture, vacuum, radiation, or ultraviolet light will eventually ruin the masters. The films can't be shown on ship's entertainment projectors, since they must be transferred to one of the formats used in the Imperium. Transfer requires the use of a master decoding strip, a section of holofilm carried by Pascal Gratzar, the company president (described below). Formats used in the Imperium range from flatscreen optical projection, through videotape and videodisk technology, to storage in data chips and holographic memory crystals. They may also be converted into interactive computer games or sensory recordings.

The officials who will accompany the shipment are Pascal Gratzar, his wife Filar Gratzar, Trask Kimble, and Rezege, a male Vargr.

Pascal Graztar is the president of ExArt. He is secretly trying to break the contract. Although the government of Palantir has promised to compensate him for the loss of the company, he would prefer to retain ownership and sell the films on the open market. He has been out-voted by other directors and shareholders. He will attempt to sabotage the deal or find a way of making an extra profit. However, he won't talk to the Imperial authorities, since this would lead to confiscation of the films.

Filar Gratzar is a moderately well-known actress who appears in both films. She sees their sale as her big break, a chance to become known throughout the Imperium. She will do anything to make the deal succeed. She doesn't love her husband and may seek romantic interludes with other passengers or team members during the voyage. Her luggage contains several costumes from the film, including a tunic incorporating a concealed grav belt and a prop weapon which looks like an Ancient artifact, but is actually a modern laser pistol.

Trask Kimble is an actor/director, a former Scout and TAS member who was twice decorated while serving as a Navy auxiliary. He was once a brilliant star, but is now middle-aged and tired. He knows that the films aren't his best work and realizes that Makhidkarun isn't trying to buy ExArt just to own them.

Rezage is the charismatic leader of a small Vargr community on Palantir. The community owns 23% of ExArts, and he is present to protect their investment.

The player-characters will be asked to use their ship to transport these persons plus the films off-planet. Keep in mind that any constabulary will be watching for anything being smuggled off Palantir. Then, once safely away, the ship will be used for a meeting between the passengers and Makhidkarun officials interested in buying the films (and ExArts itself). Intrigues by interested parties should keep the player-characters guessing as the final deals are made.

Marcus L. Rowland