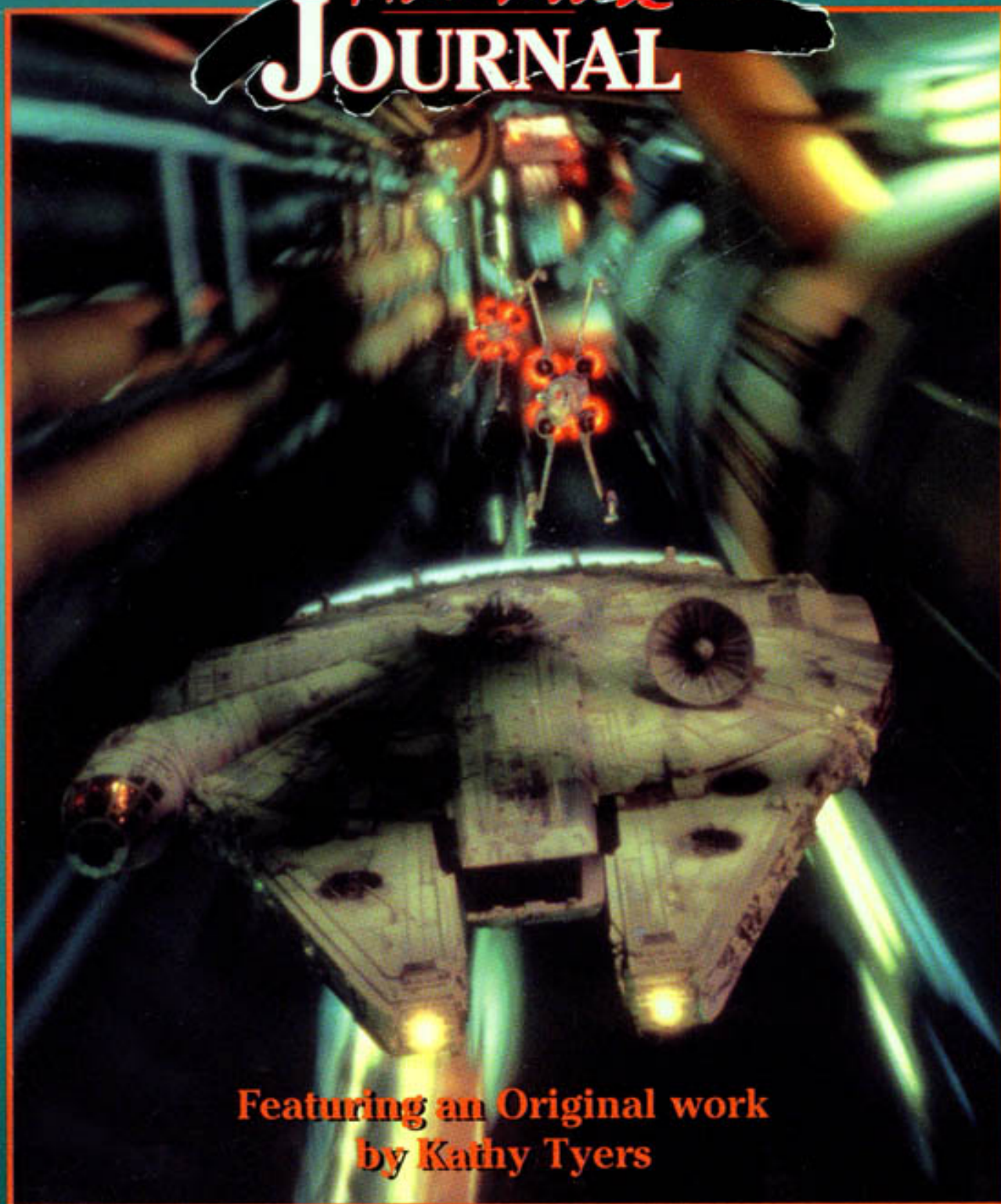


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Adventure JOURNAL



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ADMIRAL'S COMMUNIQUE



Only the Best Submissions ...

It's been a year since West End Games began publishing the *Star Wars Adventure Journal* (a few months more than that by the time you read this in *Journal* #6). I'll probably celebrate by putting my feet up, listening to my *Star Wars* soundtrack, and begin reading the five-inch thick stack of proposals and first drafts which have piled up on my desk while I've been busy pulling *Journal* #6 together. Only the best of submissions ever see print on the pages of the *Journal*.

And we get lots of submissions.

On my office wall are long spreadsheets where I keep track of all these submissions — when a proposal is first received, when I send out contracts, when first and final drafts are due, who's illustrating an article, when its final version is approved by Lucasfilm, and many other important dates and checkpoints. These spreadsheets also help form a picture of how many people want to become part of the *Star Wars* phenomenon through the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*.

So I took a moment and analyzed these spreadsheets. As of mid-January, 1995, the *Journal* had received 153 proposals. Twenty-one were rejected at some point in the submission process. *Journals* #1 through #5 included 30 source material articles, 21 game-related short stories, 13 adventures, five interviews and three miniatures battles scenarios.

These submissions prove there are a lot of people out there who want to write for *Star Wars*. The *Star Wars Adventure Journal* proves there are people out there who can craft good *Star Wars* adventures to keep fans entertained. And we'll keep entertaining you with the best of those many submissions, even if it takes me another month to read them all ...

Commander Peter Schweighofer
Admiral's Attaché
February, 1995

STAR WARS®

Vol. 1, Issue 6

May, 1995

Adventure JOURNAL

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Contributors: John Beyer, Laurie Burns, James Casabian, C. Robert Carey, Gary Haynes, Pablo Hidalgo, Wayne Humfleet, Charlene Neesham, Peter Schweighofer, George Strayton, Paul Sudlow, Kathy Tyers, Peter Woodworth

Editing: Peter Schweighofer **Graphics:** Tim Bobko, Stephen Brown, Richard Hawran, Tom O'Neill, Brian Schomburg **Cover Illustration:** Lucasfilm Ltd.

Cover Design and Graphics: Stephen Crane

Interior Illustrations: Kathy Burdette, Matt Busch, David Gray, David Tedrick, Robert Duchlinski, Scott Neely, Doug Shuler, Mike Vorel

Special Thanks To: Kathy Tyers; Allan Kausch, Sue Rossini, Julia Rogers and Lucy Wilson, Lucasfilm Licensing; Daniel Scott Palter and Richard Hawran, West End Games.

Publisher: Daniel Scott Palter • **Associate Publisher/Treasurer:** Denise Palter

Associate Publisher: Richard Hawran • **Senior Editor:** Greg Farslow

Editors: Miranda Horner, Bill Olmesdahl, Peter Schweighofer

Bill Smith, Paul Sudlow • **Art Director:** Stephen Crane **Graphic Artists:** Steven Brown,

Tim Bobko, Tom O'Neill, Brian Schomburg • **Sales Manager:** Jeff Kent

Licensing Manager: Ron Selden • **Warehouse Manager:** Ed Hill

Accounting: Karen Bayly, Wendy Lord, Kimberly Rice • **Billing:** Amy Giacobbe

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AUGUST 1995

BRIAN LUMLEY
NECROSCOPETM



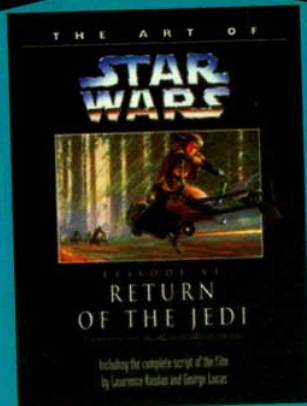
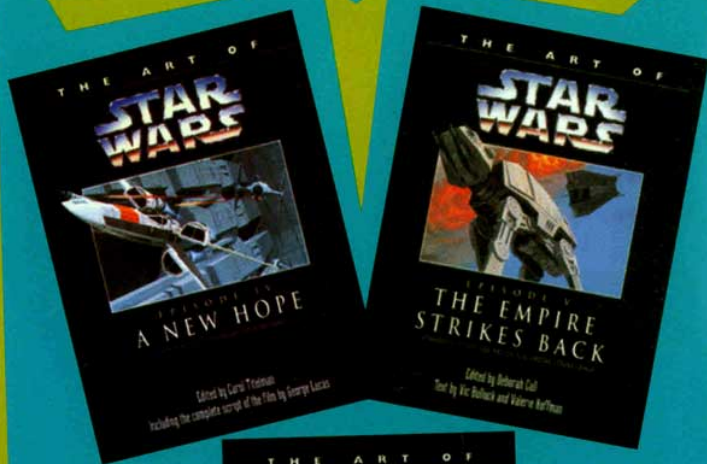
The Legend of the Undead

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STAR WARS®

NEW HORIZONS

Star Wars Is on Time/Warner AudioBooks

Now readers who enjoyed the *Star Wars* movie novelizations and Dark Horse Comics's *Dark Empire* can experience these exciting adventures on releases from Time/Warner AudioBooks.

Classic Star Wars: The Original Trilogy is available in a special gift set featuring the audio version of the *Star Wars* novel trilogy on both cassette tape and compact disc. The audio version features Tony Roberts reading the trilogy, and is enhanced by John Williams' original movie score and Lucasfilm's sound effects. Each section covers one movie novelization — *Star Wars: A New Hope*, *The*

Empire Strikes Back, and *Return of the Jedi* — and each audio novelization is approximately three hours long.

For both fans and *Star Wars* roleplaying gamers, the novelizations' audio version presents a feel for the storytelling nature of the *Star Wars* saga.

The *Star Wars* trilogy is available in major book and record stores in a set of tapes for \$50 or a set of compact discs for \$75. Recordings of the individual novelizations



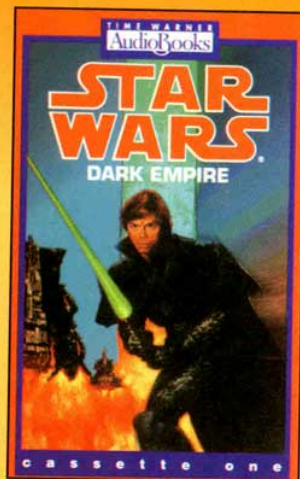
will be available later this year.

Dark Empire is an audio drama featuring a full cast of actors, John Williams' score, and Lucasfilm sound effects. The audio adventure also features the voice of Billy Dee Williams as Lando Calrissian.

Ground-breaking audio technology enhances *Dark Empire*, bringing explosive battles, zooming starships and exciting showdowns to life in Dolby Surround.

Fans of *Star Wars* and Dark Horse Comics' series will also want to look for the recently released, full-cast audio production of *Tales of the Jedi*.

Dark Empire is available in major book and record stores, as well as through comic book stores and novelty shops. The two-tape



set costs \$17 and contains two and a half hours of action-packed *Star Wars* adventure.

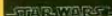
Zanart Publishes Star Wars Blueprints

Zanart has put some of the most popular *Star Wars* starfighters and assault vehicles into its *Star Wars Vehicle Blueprint Portfolio*. Each of the eight 11 by 14-inch blueprints contains detailed plans for one vehicle, complete with notations for major systems and weapons, a short mission profile, and several statistics describing the vehicle's capabilities. Blueprints detail the Rebels' X-wing, Y-wing, A-wing and B-wing starfighters, as well

as the Imperial Star Destroyer, TIE fighter, AT-AT walker and AT-ST walker.

Zanart's graphic artist Troy Vigil consulted with West End Games' *Star Wars* line editor Bill Smith and art director Stephen Crane to make sure the information on the blueprints accurately reflect information from many *Star Wars* sources, including *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game, Second Edition*.

"I used as reference West



AT-AT WALKER

West End Releases DarkStryder Campaign Setting

12 • Star Wars Adventure Journal

The *Star Wars* Vehicle Blueprint Portfolio is available for \$14.99 at Suncoast Motion Picture Company stores, fine comic book and collectible shops, or by calling Zanart Publishing Inc. at (818) 904-9797.

May, 1995

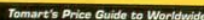
The set will include two 96-page books detailing the characters, starships, planets and adventures for the campaign, character recognition cards, ship recognition sheets, and a poster map of the campaign's pivotal starship, the *FarStar*. The boxed set will be available

Star Wars collectors and
omart's Price Guide to
vide Star Wars Collec-
a must-have book filled
information on Star Wars
abilia, price guides, and
hints on finding that
ible merchandise.
by Star Wars collectors

For collectors and those who grew up with *Star Wars* merchandising, the price

To get a feel for the *DarkStryder Campaign Set*, see "Finder's Fee," a story in this issue of the *Star Wars Adventure Journal* which introduces one of the main characters from the campaign set.

guide is an interesting read to see what all those action figures, puzzles, toys and books which brought the movies alive many years ago are worth today. For instance, you could find out how much a complete set of *Star Wars* first



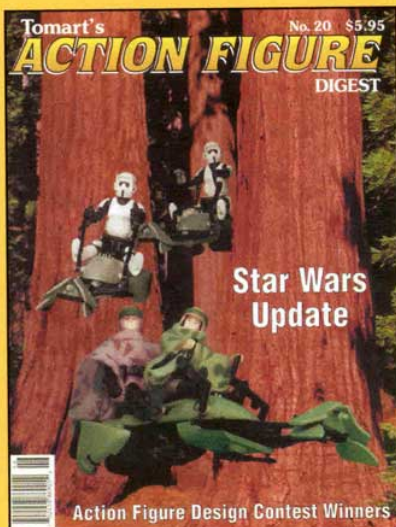
series, blue border trading cards are worth, or discover that a copy of *Star Wars Adventure Journal* #1 could be worth from \$15 to \$25. The comprehensive section on the Kenner action figures details price ranges for figures in their original packaging, loose, and in various conditions.

A brief introduction relates the story of *Star Wars* collectibles and provides newcomers to the collectors market several tips on collecting and handy hints on where to look for such items.

For those who want up-to-date information on *Star Wars* collectible merchandise, *Tomart's Action Figure Digest* features a *Star Wars* update in each bi-monthly issue. The full-

color update focuses on one-of-a-kind items, new products, variations, and other merchandise news.

Tomart's Price Guide to Worldwide Star Wars Collectibles is available at bookstores for \$26.95.



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The tramp freighter *Quandary*'s ruddy-cheeked second mate pulled off his headset. "Silver Station's under full alert," he exclaimed. "Somebody intends to blow it up in less than a day."

To Fight Another Day

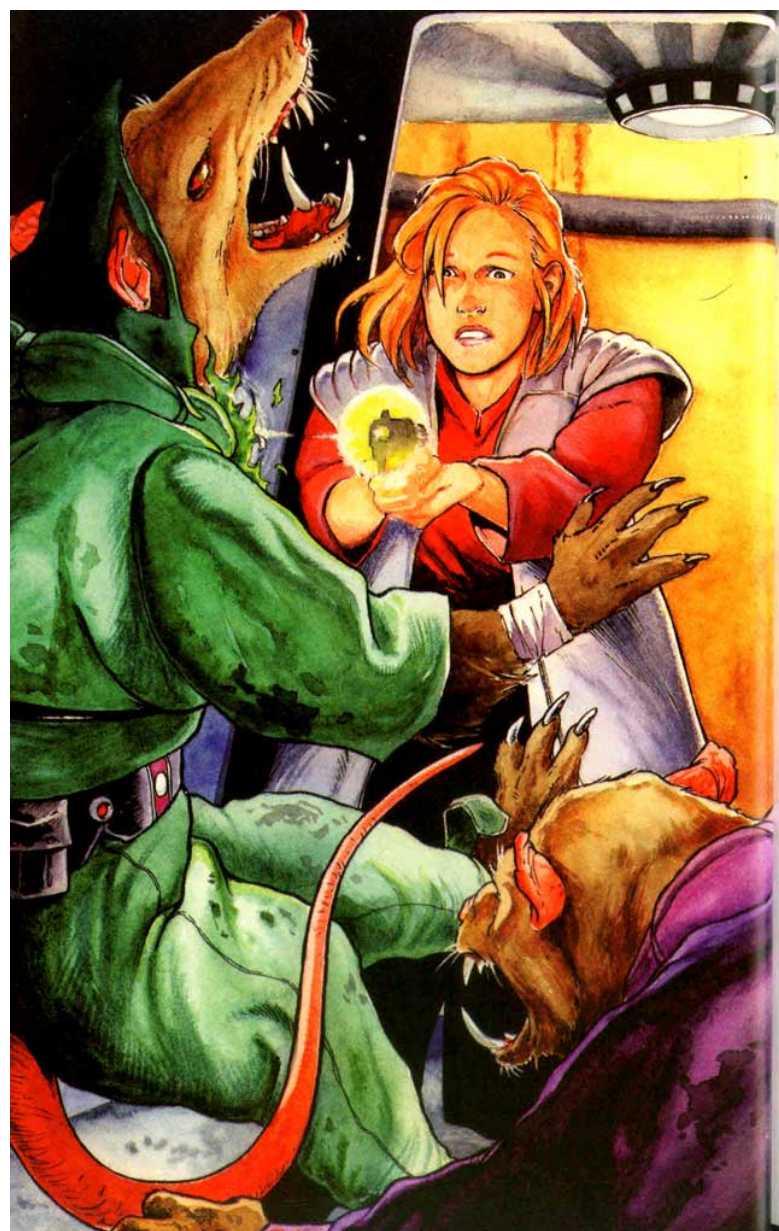
By Kathy Tyers

Illustrations by Mike Vilardi

Tinian l'att pushed a strand of red-blond hair behind her left ear. The news sparked no rush of fear, no clench at the pit of her stomach, and that disappointed her. Other people might die, people who had reasons to go on living. It seemed wrong not to care. "Who wants to blow it up?" she asked. "Why?"

Ten days ago, the *Quandary* had picked up Tinian and her traveling companions at Ksiczzic III. Tinian had never seen poverty before she started running from the Empire. She was getting a fast education. Half of the *Quandary*'s bulkheads braced the other half, and its crew took pitiful pride in mismatched uniforms that she would've been ashamed to wear on the job back at l'att Armament.

The second mate had taken a liking to her, although she hadn't



encouraged him. He shook his head. "All they told me is that it seems to be a vendetta. Smart saboteurs don't announce their intentions."

"Do we still have to dock there?"

"You bet your sweet ... hr'm."

Tinian felt a hand grip her shoulder. That must be Sprig Cheever, the musician who had lent her his wife's ID. Tinian had fled the Druckenwell system with Cheeve's troupe, eluding Imperial troops who wanted the contraband she carried. Cheeve's wife planned to follow as soon as Druckenwell calmed down.

The second mate stepped backward and spoke courteously. "Yes, ma'am. The *Quandary's* got a weakening hull section. Didn't want to alarm you passengers, but we've got to get repairs here at Silver."

"That's all right." Cheeve, a KeyBed player and songwriter, wore a short, neat goatee. He dropped his hand from Tinian's shoulder and leaned up against a bulkhead.

Tinian didn't mind when Cheeve hovered. She'd always been small for her age, and she'd grown up with bodyguards. Cheeve had kept his distance during their three weeks on the run, letting her cry when she need to cry, telling her stories when she needed to be distracted. At Druckenwell, an Imperial Moff had ripped Tinian's life into pieces and fed them to her. Every hour or two she choked on a memory.

"We've come to talk with Una Poot," Cheeve drawled. Una Poot equipped seven resistance cells in this sector of Imperial space. As soon as Tinian delivered the illicit prototypes she and her musical protectors had smuggled off Druckenwell, she could rest. She'd've fulfilled her last reason to go on.

Intellectually, she knew she must find a new purpose — but knowing didn't make her care. She'd lost too much.

The second mate raised a sparse eyebrow. "Good luck," he said. "You've got 16 resistance fighters lined up ahead of you to talk to her. And she's real busy right now."

Tinian had met the other passengers. They'd shared tasteless rations in a stale-smelling cargo hold that the crew called its "mess." Her fellow travelers were the last survivors of a decimated underground, trying to join the Rebel Alliance.

"She'll see me." Cheeve stroked his goatee. "She's my father's aunt. I've got a standing invitation."

The second mate's mouth made a small, round "o."

And she'll want what's concealed in our instruments, Tinian predicted.

Besides her alleged husband Cheeve, she was traveling with his fellow musician Yccakic — a multitalented Bith — and their droid Redd Metalflake. Biths stood out in a crowd because of their high, hairless craniums, quintuple mouth folds, and long knobby hands. She'd learned on this trip that they perceived sounds as precisely as other species perceived colors, and even called them by color names.

She stared out the freighter's tiny viewport. Across several degrees of arc, a deep, rosy pink aurora outshone the stars. Five dark vortices near its center radiated golden energy pulses that crisscrossed, forming visible waves of dark and light pink, amplifying and muting each other. Tinian wondered what they were.

A black square in front of the aurora grew and resolved into a cube surrounded by long cylinders joined at haphazard angles. The aurora showed between cylinders, except at the center, where Tinian guessed the original station remained inside its add-ons.

"Silver Station doesn't look like much," muttered Yccakic, "because it isn't. It's not even a good place to hide. I can't imagine why Una Poot headquarters here."

"Inertia," said the second mate. "We'll be docking in oh, about 17 minutes. I think you'll want to strap down."

Tinian followed Cheeve back along the ship's creaky corridor into the six-meter bunk space they'd been allotted. Cheeve and Yccakic had bunked together, gallantly giving Tinian the other barely padded shelf.

She climbed onto it and strapped in. At her feet, deactivated for the trip, lay a large, red, dented metal box mounted on treads. Redd Metalflake was the band's self-contained droid sound system. They'd shut him down in order to pass him off as luggage during this leg of the trip, to avoid theft. Their small lock box wasn't big enough to hold him.

Inside Redd Metalflake and the band's instruments nestled an armload of electronic components that was everything valuable she had left. She'd been an armament heiress. Her late grandfather, Strephan I'att, and her late fiancée, Daye Azur-Jamin (*Why can't I remember their faces?*), had developed a personal shield generator that could be mounted on stormtrooper armor, making it truly invincible. Moff Eisen Keriath had ordered her grandparents shot dead, so that he could claim the technology as his own invention (*At least I can feel hatred.*). Daye had sabotaged the factory and died beneath its debris, rather than let the Empire get away with murder and theft. A rubble-lined crater marked where I'att Armament had

stood. Searchers had found no survivors.

She blinked up at the bulging underside of the upper bunk. She must be getting better. She felt like dying most of the time now, instead of all the time. She only wanted to hurt the Empire before she vanished, by giving that armor technology to someone who could produce and use it. Una Poot had been the best bet.

Yccakic's huge, hairless head appeared over the top bunk's edge. Yccakic played a mean Bottom Viol. He was one of the sector's best bass men. "Tinian?"

"Still here," she said.

"Green up, kid. Stay close to Cheeve and me while we're on Silver Station. Okay?"

"Sure." She wished he'd stop worrying about her. She wanted the nightmares to end. She'd dreamed about Daye again last night, trying to warn him to get out of the factory before it exploded. "Yccakic?"

The Bith leaned over again.

"Is Cheeve concerned about the sabotage threat? The... vendetta that crewman told us about?" The band had learned to rely on Cheeve's presentiments. If he predicted trouble, they moved on.

Yccakic's shiny head vanished for a few moments, then reappeared. "He doesn't like it," relayed the Bith, "but he says, 'Out here in the galaxy, things aren't always easy.'"

"Isn't that the truth," she muttered.

A creaking old protocol droid escorted Tinian, Cheeve, Redd, and Yccakic up a cylindrical passage, around a 90-degree gravity anomaly, then left and right, up and down through three more reorientations until Tinian felt hopelessly lost. Silver Station seemed to be a veritable warren with tarnished walls. She'd never seen so many alien species. Creatures gawked as Tinian, Cheeve and Yccakic lugged two enormous instrument cases, followed by a boxy red droid. Redd Metalflake propelled himself around left and right turns, but each time gravity changed, his treads malfunctioned. Cheeve had to lift him, turn him, and set him on the new path.

Tinian offered to help.

"Sorry," Cheeve grunted. "He's only got one handle. You've got to stand guard, and Yccakic's got to steady the instruments."

She thrust a hand into her pocket. Cheeve's wife Twilit had lent her most of a wardrobe, including this long shapeless gray vest. Tinian was trying to stay inconspicuous.

At last the protocol droid led them to a hatch. As it extended a manipulator arm, its servomotors protested with a long squeal. "Wait here," it intoned. "You may consider it your bunk room."

Tinian stepped past the droid into the cubicle. Its bulkheads did not curve, so she guessed that she'd finally breached Silver Station's original construction. It smelled old. Because of her years at I'att Armament, Tinian could identify 31 explosives by odor. Here, thankfully, she didn't smell any — only staleness that came from one corner, as if some creature had nested there.

The station bunk room would have dwarfed their shipboard cubicle, though, and it had a washroom and a meal chute. Yccakic ordered a liquid concentrate. Some Biths had trouble pushing solid food past all those mouth flaps. "Is it good?" Tinian asked.

"Not particularly," admitted the Bith. "But it's cheap."

Tinian sighed. Watching credits took a lot of getting used to. She'd learned to eat nutritious bulk. She longed for a juicy gorss steak, or half a pot of savory likryt stew.

Several hours later, she got up and started pacing.

"Relax," suggested Cheeve. He slouched at the bunk room's narrow table, punching a datapad and tugging his goatee. Tinian guessed he was writing a song. "This could take a while."

"I'd like to get out and explore."

"I don't think that'd be wise," said Cheeve.

"Why not? Are we prisoners?"

"Not exactly. But your credentials, and Yccakic's, are being checked."

Tinian frowned. "My grandparents worked for the Empire. So did I. Will that count against me?"

"Depends. We're all deserters here."

"Don't go all purple on us, Tinian." Yccakic lounged on a bunk. He hadn't moved since he slurped down his meal. "See if you can interface Redd into that information port. We might as well check the Rebel rumor mill."

Redd sat in the corner farthest from that stale smell. "I'm not very good at that kind of thing," he warned as Tinian approached him. "I'm —"

"Get over here," she ordered, trying to sound serious, but she tended to laugh when addressing Redd. He didn't look anything like the shining protocol and line droids she'd once worked with. After she steered him close to the wall port, he extended his data attachment. "Find out about this bomb threat first," she said.

He downloaded silently. After almost a minute, he said, "It sounds

serious, Tinian."

She didn't panic. Redd was always pessimistic. "Cheeve isn't worried. What's up?"

"I'm not very good at —"

"Redd!" drawled Cheeve. "Just tell us."

"Silver Station has Ranats," Redd said.

Tinian blinked at Cheeve. "What are they?"

Cheeve punched a datapad key. "Con Queecon, they call themselves. Big rodents native to the Aralia system. They're nasty—smart enough to fight but too stupid to understand surrender. It's illegal to arm a Ranat. What are they doing here, Redd?"

"Evidently this Rebel matriarch you're looking for —"

"Una Poot," said Cheeve. "Come on, get with it. Edit function: fewer comments, more data."

"Una Poot found a colony of Ranats pilfering large quantities of station food. She ordered them eradicated. The survivors are out for vengeance."

"But if they blow up the station, they'll kill themselves too," Tinian exclaimed.

"I said they're stupid." Cheeve shrugged and shut down his datapad. "The Empire categorizes Ranats as semi-intelligent. It's legal to kill them in self-defense."

"How lovely." Tinian pushed hair out of her face. "I'll remember that if I'm attacked by one."

"The Imperial military has supposedly been trying to train Ranat mercenaries to send against the Rebel Alliance," interjected Yccakic.

"Uh-oh," said Tinian. "These might be mercenaries?"

"Vermin, more likely." Cheeve cocked an eyebrow. "Redd, give us general grapevine. What's the big story today?"

Redd paused, then said, "The Empire has constructed a huge space station capable of destroying an entire planet. They named it the Death Star. They tested it at Alderaan —"

"Alderaan?" chorused Tinian, Cheeve, and Yccakic. "But that's an enormous population center," Yccakic continued.

"The Empire blew it to boulders," Redd said mournfully.

Tinian gasped.

"But," Redd continued, "the Alliance destroyed the Death Star."

"That's better," Tinian exclaimed. She wanted to hear that someone was hitting the Empire. "What kind of explosives did they use?"

"One starfighter pilot got in a lucky shot."

"One?" Tinian breathed. That was no lucky shot. That was almost supernatural. It would've interested Daye ...

Startled, she blinked at Redd Metalflake. For a moment, she'd felt excited.

If Una Poot lost Silver Station to a few lousy Ranats, she'd never forgive herself. It'd serve her right for trying to live and let them live.

She sat down on a tabletop to wait for news. The door of her headquarters room — a modified galley that suited large groups — slid shut behind her rag-tag security people as they scattered into the Station. Ever since she'd arrived as a young merchant, she'd despised uniformed security and everyone else who looked official. Even the few uniformed troops the Rebel Alliance had scraped together gave her the mulligrubs.

Una and her first husband, Drogue, had delivered a tugship cargo of culson gas to Ord Segra spaceport. They hadn't known that Ord Segra customs exacted seven percent of cargo value in bribe money. They'd refused to pay. Customs officials had shot the Poots' tug tanks full of holes and given chase. She and Drogue had jumped blindly into hyperspace and emerged here. Drogue had died soon afterward, prospecting the Dragonflower Nebula for other valuable gases. He'd taken too many risks ...

Una studied her gnarled, spotted hands. There'd been two husbands since, and neither had survived. Now she was aging with Silver Station. Before she made the Final Jump, she wanted to light a few fuses that'd burn long and slow, and explode some day in the Emperor's face.

She glared at the galley door. If those blasted Ranats destroyed Silver, the Monor system would lose a vital shipment of blaster carbines. She ought to be out there hunting Ranats herself, but she couldn't move quickly enough to blast them anymore.

Her comlink buzzed. "What?" she barked. "Did you find them?"

"No. A Sprig Cheever to speak with you, with prior clearance. He has two companions. Their credentials check."

She made a fist and whacked her table. On another occasion, she'd've welcomed young Cheeve. His hot music and his cool attitude peeled years off the calendar. "What does he want?"

"He claims to have something you can use."

Maybe she should've trained a regular defense force, instead of relying on secrecy to protect Silver Station. But nothing lasted forever.

"All right," she grumbled. "Send them up."

When the hatch slid open, Tinian recognized the protocol droid who had met them at the docks. The same asymmetrical dribble of grease leaked from his mid-chest restraining bolt. "Una Poot has agreed to meet with you. Follow me."

Cheeve had dug Tinian's pieces of modified stormtrooper armor out of his KeyBed, Redd Metalflake's insides, and Yccakic's Bottom Viol. Carrying their stash, they followed the droid deeper into Silver Station.

Una Poot's "receiving room" looked like a galley — tables stood head to head, wall to wall. The crone herself sat at the head of one table. Threads of gray hair dangled over her shoulders. She wore an old green tunic and a pair of black pants that rolled at the top. Maybe they'd been half of some larger person's shipboards.

"Cheeve," she exclaimed in a rusty-sounding voice. "I wish I had time to chatter, but I don't. What is it you think I can use?"

"This is Tinian I att," Cheeve said casually. "She's got — you tell her, Tinian."

Tinian related her story. At the appropriate moment, Yccakic displayed the vital pair of smuggled c-boards. "I only hope someone can use them against the Empire," Tinian finished.

"Custom armor isn't cheap," snapped Una Poot. "Most resistance troops can't afford any armor. What's your price?"

"You don't understand. I'm giving them to you. You'll have to analyze them, and —"

"Everybody has her price. If I don't pay you, you'll come for me later."

Tinian considered. "Well, there's a favor you could do me."

"Hah. There's always a price. I told you. What's the favor?"

"When I was a kid —"

"You're still a kid."

Tinian flushed. Pain and loss had aged her. Didn't it show? "I had a Wookiee bodyguard who died helping me escape the Imperials. I'd like to find someone who was related to him, so I could make sure Wrrl's memory was honored. That would mean a lot to him."

Una Poot half smiled. "That's an unusual favor, missie. I'll think about it, if I've got time. It'd be nice to be rich enough to have bodyguards."

"It was," Tinian admitted humbly. "I've only begun to realize how nice it was."

"Good," Una Poot cackled. "The more the Empire took from you, the harder you'll fight."

Tinian glared at the crone. "In that case, they're in for trouble. They slaughtered my family while I watched."

Una Poot's eyes darkened. "There's more behind that pain in your eyes than your family or a bodyguard, girl. What was he like?"

He? How had the old woman guessed? Tinian pictured Daye in her mind: dark-haired, a long gentle face, and that odd gray streak at the center of one eyebrow. "He was brilliant," Tinian remembered. "Hard working. And — I never told anyone about this on Druckenwell, but he's dead now, so it can't hurt him, can it?"

"What can't hurt him? Come on, girl. I haven't got time to play whtsit."

"He was Force-sensitive. He read people perfectly. Including me. He had a generous spirit. He always tried to please."

Una Poot scowled. "Sounds like the Empire made an enemy in you, missie. I'll alert the ships docked here and see if anybody knows who might be related to this bodyguard of yours. What was his name? Wrrr?"

"Wrrl. Short for Wrrlevgebev."

"Wrrlevgebev," repeated Una Poot. "But don't call me. I'll call you. Oh, and thanks for the c-boards. It's a long shot, but —"

"I understand," said Tinian.

Una Poot stared after Cheeve and his adopted refugee rich-girl. The technology they'd brought? Extraneous equipage for wealthy, uniformed units. Now, if they could've resurrected Tinian's Force-sensitive sweetheart, that might've solved a crisis for her. Una needed to find someone sensitive, like her first man — Droque — had been. Her blaster carbines must reach the right people on Monor. It was a tricky system to negotiate.

But Droque was 30 years dead, and evidently this one was gone, too.

And she'd never turned down a windfall. She tossed Cheeve's contributions into a box, then reached for her comlink. One Wookiee berthed at Silver knew all the clans. She could pay for those pieces by making one call.

She thumbed the comlink.

To Tinian's surprise, Una Poot summoned her and her companions back to the galley that evening. Behind the crone stood a huge Wookiee of a color Tinian had never seen. His fur was dark

brown, but each guard hair glistened silver at the tip. The effect made him shimmer. "This is Chenlambec," said Una Poot. "He might be able to help you pass that message."

Tinian barked a short greeting. Chenlambec woofed back. Una Poot raised both of her scraggly eyebrows. "Where did you learn to speak Wookiee?"

"From Wrri," explained Tinian. "Does Chenlambec work for you?"

The Wookiee bent forward, laughing.

"Not at the moment." Una Poot smiled with both sides of her mouth this time. "He's a bounty hunter."

Tinian stared. She'd heard of beings who hunted others for money—who killed for profit, not patriotism. She despised the idea. She'd never dreamed that she might stand in front of a hunter.

"You two can talk in my private alcove, if you'd like." Grinning, Una Poot gestured toward a hatch on one side of the galley.

Tinian narrowed her eyes, repelled by the woman's sense of humor.

Chenlambec spouted a rapid stream in Shyriiwook, asking how she had known Wrrlevgebev.

She didn't think that the bounty hunter would appreciate hearing publicly that Wrri had been her family's slave. Evidently she'd have to address him privately, if she talked at all.

And this would have meant so much to Wrri. She could do it for Wrri. She led the big Wookiee into Una Poot's private alcove.

It was small and bare with a single ancient luma dangling from its ceiling. "I was 12 when I met Wrri." Tinian shut the hatch and backed up against it. She positioned her hand near the control that would open it again.

Chenlambec bent to stand under the alcove's low ceiling. He kept to a corner opposite her.

"There were slavers in Il Avali, the city where I grew up. One of them was beating him—it looked like they meant to kill him with a shock whip. Later, I found out he'd tried to keep them from selling a young female Kitonak away from her child. Anyway, I got loose from my grandmother and jumped into the ring." She'd never realized the danger. "I threw myself over the poor bloody creature and yelled at the slavers that I'd buy him. Grandmother argued with me, but I won. That's how I met Wrri." Wrri had been utterly ethical, totally loyal. How could any Wookiee stoop to bounty hunting?

Chenlambec crossed his silvery arms. A broad black bandolier spanned his chest from right shoulder to left hip, studded with odd silver cubes. He barked a question.



"I didn't know then about your people and the life debt," she answered. "But I found out as soon as I learned to speak Shyriiwook. Please tell his clan that he discharged his debt fully, Chenlambec. He died helping me escape the Imperial stormtroopers who killed my grandparents."

He bowed his head and woofed softly.

"You're welcome," she said, confused but impressed by his private manner.

Then he raised his head and told a strange story. Evidently several of the bounties that the Empire had paid him were wasted. He had actually helped several "acquisitions" escape to the Rebel Alliance, then donated most of the funds that the Empire paid him ... to Una Poot for buying arms, this time; last time, to a refugee group. He added that Una Poot was one of three people—four, now—who knew his secret. He asked her to honor it.

Tinian shut her slack jaw and wished Daye were here ... not just because she missed him so desperately, but he would've known if the huge stranger were lying. Left to herself, she had to trust her hunch that Chenlambec was what he claimed—someone whose mission actually excited her—and that he wanted her respect in return. Cheeve and Yccakic had tried to comfort her by caring about

her, but she needed to care about someone else.

She stretched out a hand.

He clasped it with a grip as gentle and strong as Wrri's had been. Gravelly he thanked her again. Then he motioned her away from the hatch.

"Wait," she exclaimed.

Chenlambec backed off a long step.

She wondered where — in all the thousand-thousand worlds — she'd gotten this crazy idea. But she was no musician. And she knew explosives. And Chenlambec made her want to live. "Would you let me apprentice to you?"

Chenlambec gave a startled woof.

"I'm serious," she said. "I grew up in an armament factory. My knowledge of explosives might be useful in your trade."

His blue eyes twinkled as he apologized and declined — she was too small and delicate for bounty hunting. He had survived the deaths of two partners, one very recently. From now on, he would hunt alone.

"I have no fear of dying," Tinian insisted. "In your profession, if I died, it would be clean and fast."

Not necessarily. He crossed his arms and looked half away, a pose Wrri had used only when adamantly refusing.

"I see," she said sadly. "Well. Thank you for carrying that news for me."

She pushed out of the alcove wondering what she would do with the rest of her life. She'd discovered how to care again, and that she wanted to care, and it was a relief ... if temporary. Maybe Una Poot had a place for her.

The crone wasn't waiting with Cheever and Yccakic. "Everything all right?" asked Yccakic.

Tinian shrugged. "Yes. Good-bye, Chenlambec."

The Wookiee raised a hand in farewell and then left her alone with her traveling companions. Dispirited, she trailed Cheeve and Yccakic to the bunk room. While she'd spoken with the bounty hunter, they'd agreed to play a special cruise-concert for Una Poot and her inner circle, tomorrow afternoon on board her personal tugship ... in lieu of rent on their cabin.

"Rent?" Tinian exclaimed. "On this hole?"

Cheeve shrugged. "It's a chance to perform. Feel like singing?"

Tinian cleared her throat. Cheeve's wife, Twilit Hearth, could scorch blast shielding with her voice. "I wouldn't do you justice. Do you know enough instrumental numbers?"

"We can carry the show if you'll fill in one or two songs —"

"Anybody tired?" asked Yccakic. "We'd better dim the lights and get some rest, if we're performing tomorrow."

Tinian lay down, but she couldn't sleep. Every time she shut her eyes, she saw Daye ... or Wrri, rushing the stormtroopers who finally killed him ... or saboteurs, threatening to blow holes in Silver Station —

Abruptly she sat bolt upright. She'd been asleep on her feet! She should be out sniffing the corridors for explosives.

Cheeve's hold-out blaster dangled out of a pocket on his pants, which he'd hung haphazardly over one end of his bunk. She slipped it into her vest pocket and crept out into the corridor.

Two hours later, she caught a faint whiff of something that made the hair on her neck stand up: JL-12-F, a product of one of l'att Armament's competitors. Manufactured for controlled planetside demolition, it exploded in a symmetrical, almost linear pattern. It did not belong on board a space station.

Sabotage. Following the whiff trail, she stole up a corridor that led toward the docking area.

That couldn't be right. She reversed herself and hurried in the opposite direction. The scent grew stronger. She followed it down an access ladder.

On the fourth level down, she lost it. She doubled back again and climbed off the ladder into an area that was marginally tidier than others, maybe housing for Silver Station's upper class ... such as it was. Down here, the odor grew so strong that she wondered why other people hadn't noticed. She gripped the little blaster in one hand and slunk forward.

Two dark, furry shapes crouched next to the flat outer bulkhead of Silver Station's original construct. "Hey!" Tinian cried. She leveled the blaster.

The aliens whirled toward her. Each had a long, pointed snout and small round ears. "Hey!" they echoed her in chorus.

Then they charged.

Tinian fired. One Ranat curled up, shrieking. The other kept coming. Long sharp teeth closed on her left leg. Tinian screamed and struggled to draw a bead on the vicious creature without shooting herself in the foot. The Ranat shook her leg so hard that stars danced in front of her. She flailed for balance.

A clear shot! Tinian took it. Powerful jaws released her calf, and the creature screamed at her. She backed off and fired again.

The Ranat charged at her other leg.

She squeezed off another blast. The Ranat collapsed at her feet.

She kicked it away, splattering it with blood from her leg.

The other Ranat hadn't moved. But what about that explosive?

She limped forward. Her injured leg trembled when she tried to bend down.

Be calm, she admonished herself. She crouched, even though it hurt. The JL-12-F was packed into a standard cylinder, heat-fused against the outer bulkhead. Fused to its other end were a primer and c-board. Somehow the Ranats had obtained a solid-state detonator, almost fail-safe.

The c-board had two vulnerable spots, though, where the main circuit entered and exited the timing mechanism. Tinian scrambled back to the first Ranat and frisked it. She found a belt knife, limped to the bomb again, and delicately cut the connections. That disabled the detonator.

She exhaled. Then she frowned. The c-board might be dead, but she couldn't leave an explosive canister this close to an outer bulkhead. If a spark set it off here, everyone on board would be at risk, from Cheeve to Chenlambec. She tried to pry the knife into a hairline crack between explosive cylinder and detonator. Its blade didn't bend, which worried her. The steel must be brittle —

It snapped without warning. She dropped it in time to save herself another deep, nasty cut.

This was nothing she could disarm without proper tools ... but JL-12-F did require a spark, not an impact, to detonate it. She backed up to the cylinder, balanced on her hurt leg, and kicked sharply with her heel. Fresh jabs of pain shot through her leg. The cylinder broke loose from the bulkhead and clattered onto the deck.

Gingerly she scooped it up and carried it deeper into the station. She glanced back to see if any Ranats followed. A red splatter trail marked her route. When she started walking again, she almost slipped in a red puddle. That'd collected quickly!

She set down the explosive canister at mid-corridor and hammered on the nearest door. "Hello?" she shouted. "This is an emergency!"

The Stationer took her to a medic on Level Three and called Cheeve. When Tinian emerged an hour later, leaning on Cheeve, a huge, shimmering Wookiee waited in the corridor outside. He howled somberly at her.

"I'm all right," she assured Chenlambec (*I have one more friend in the universe!*). "They don't have a medical droid, but there's a

competent Human in there. He fused the artery. I'm just supposed to take it easy for a few days."

He cocked his head and barked a peculiar question — did she realize that he and dozens of others owed her a life debt?

Tinian laughed. "No, no. I saved my own life, too. So it doesn't count."

He woofed an offer.

Tinian stared.

"What did he say?" asked Cheeve.

Tinian felt slightly rummy from chemical painkillers. "I, um, yesterday I offered to go into business with Chenlambec. He just invited me on board his ship to see what I knew about his trade."

"But isn't he a ..."

Chenlambec clasped his fur-draped hands, looking calm.

"It's your life." Cheeve touched her shoulder. "But I wish you'd stay with us. Who'll sing that gig tonight?"

"You've been kind, Cheeve. Much kinder than you needed to be, and I appreciate everything you've done. But I'm no musician. I need to find my own place. You want that, don't you?"

"Of course."

Yccakic turned so that Chenlambec couldn't see his face. "Tinian, be careful. He might —"

"I'll be fine." If Tinian understood one thing about Wookiees, she understood the life debt. Rightly or wrongly, Chenlambec considered himself bound.

Limping on her numb leg, she followed him back out to the docking area, then through an umbilical onto a small saucer-shaped craft with three mammoth engines. Like Silver Station, it had seen better days. Better decades, she decided as she rubbed a rust spot.

Still, this looked like her chance to hurt the Empire.

Chenlambec sat her down in front of his shipboard computer. He called up a succession of weaponry images. Tinian recited specs for an hour. Then he tossed her a blaster rifle. She disassembled and reassembled it in four minutes.

Then she yawned. Instantly, Chenlambec apologized. She mustn't walk clear back to the bunk room, he insisted. She could nap on board his little ship *Wroshyr*, named for the home trees of Kashyyyk. In the afternoon, after she'd caught a long healing nap, they could discuss terms — if she still wanted to apprentice to him.

She collapsed on a bunk that felt softer than clouds and fell asleep before she could thank him.

Daye Azur-Jamin shut his eyes and let his companions carry him through the little blockade runner's airlock. Delayed at Doldur Spaceport, they'd used up their last medpac two days ago, and the pain was back in full force. He couldn't feel one leg at all, but that was a blessing. The other leg made up for it. One hand, too, was crushed, and his companions had bandaged his shoulder and head with synthflesh, but beneath that superficially healed layer, they all throbbed.

Woyiq, a big beefy Human, carried the end of Daye's pallet nearest his feet. He let go with one hand and waved at a station droid. "Hey, you! You — how about a float bed? I've got an injured Human here!" It was indicative of Woyiq's strength that the pallet didn't wobble when he dropped one side.

The droid scurried closer. It was an aging protocol unit, probably in charge of docking.

"I am Toalar Yalom Yalom," said the Gotal who carried the pallet's head end. Two cone-shaped perceptor horns protruded from the top of his head. "Una Poot knows me. She will want this Human to be taken to a medic immediately."

"It is very early morning here at Silver Station," said the droid, "and we have just gone off saboteur alert. She may still be sleeping."

"This Human might still recover if she got him into bacta today." Toalar's knobby gray-brown brows lowered over red eyes. "Take us to your medical station."

"I am sorry. All arrivals must be interviewed before —"

"Fine. Take us for our interview now." Gotal spoke in monotones, but Toalar looked fierce. The horns helped.

Evidently the droid was also programmed to recognize fierceness. Either that, or he automatically allowed for emergencies. He led them deep into the gray-walled station.

"Saboteur alert?" Daye murmured as they carried him.

"Whatever it was, it's over," Toalar answered.

In a galley full of tables, Woyiq and Toalar set down Daye's pallet. Toalar walked up to an old woman who had incredibly cold eyes. Toalar had told Daye that Una Poot's incompetent crone act was her version of deep cover, though she was slightly crazy. Toalar claimed she had connections and resources that would surprise him. Evidently Toalar's resistance cell back on Druckenwell depended on Una Poot for tactical support.

"Toalar," she creaked. "Bless your horns. You haven't reported in too long. Has the resistance died on Druckenwell?"

Toalar's face twitched. It was flat where a Human would've had a nose.

"Far from it. All Druckenwell's stirred up at the moment. I need —"

She walked to Daye's pallet. "Who's this?"

Daye tried to sit up, but his hand and shoulder wouldn't bear weight. "Help, Woyiq," he called. The big Human stepped into position behind Daye's head and slid his hands down Daye's shoulders to lever him upright. "My name is Daye Azur-Jamin. I am an armament specialist. I want to join the Rebellion."

"Good. But why should we take you?"

"I worked directly with Strephan l'att, of —"

"l'att Armament on Druckenwell?" cackled the crone. "Then you served the Empire."

"Yes," Daye admitted. He sensed her sincerity, despite her unpleasant manners. She would trust him only if he were absolutely honest. "Strephan l'att and I developed an armor field that would have made stormtroopers invulnerable."

Instantly, he sensed that his news startled her. Did she know him? Should he know her? She turned her back and walked several steps away to rummage in a box on one table. She drew out a small square object. When she carried it back to Daye, she had regained her skeptical-crone expression. "Recognize this?"

Daye squinted his good eye. It was a c-board, and — by the Force, he recognized it! "That is a preliminary processing unit," he said. "The heat deflection function of the armor dissipated energy momentarily, until the anti-energy field —"

"Fine," said Una Poot. "You're real."

"Tinian," he breathed. "Has she been here? Who brought her? Is she still here?"

Una Poot's laugh sounded like a snort. "She's not on board, since that's what you really want to know."

His inner sense told him that her statement was literally true ... but misleading. "Where is she?"

Una Poot hitched one foot up on a galley bench. "Listen, son. I have buried three husbands in space. Young love doesn't last. So long as the Empire spreads, there is more important work to do than to sit staring into each others' eyes. Can you live with that ethic? Because if you can't, I don't want you."

"I can," said Daye. "I let Tinian think that I'd died when the factory was destroyed. When I blew it up — from inside."

The old woman's frown wrinkles smoothed out. "Oh," she said softly.

"I mean to dedicate what's left of my life to bringing down the Empire."

She grinned. "Good answer, boy. In that case, welcome to the Rebel Alliance. I'll call down to the medic and tell him you're on your way. But as soon as you're out of the soup, I'll have work for you."

"Of course. That's what I came here for. I had no idea you would have pieces to work with. That will simplify everything."

He sensed faint surprise; she hadn't meant to assign him R&D work. But she picked up his cue as if that'd been her plan. "We can't afford to build it here. That's the only problem. Toalar?" Una Poot turned to Daye's Gotal companion. "Do you remember where the medical center is? Deck Three?"

"I think so."

"Then get Daye Azur-Jamin down there on the double."

Tinian woke up with an alarm klaxon ringing in her ears. Her leg throbbed the same rhythm. "What is it?" she cried. Then she remembered she'd bunked down on a stranger's ship. Had she been betrayed?

Not by a Wookiee. If he thought she'd saved his life, the last thing he would ever do was betray her.

She stumbled in the only direction possible and found Chenlambec sitting in front of the *Wroshyr's* command console. "What is it?" she asked again.

He bared his teeth and pointed at the viewscreen.

A huge wedge-shaped ship had appeared near Silver Station. "Star Destroyer," she whispered. Adrenaline washed through her. A swarm of smaller ships, TIE fighters and others, swooped across the narrow distance between the Star Destroyer and the helpless station. Some had already reached it.

A light blinked on Chenlambec's console. He swatted a control. A cracked voice came over a cabin loudspeaker. "... now docked, this is Una Poot. We are under attack and outnumbered. Evacuate if you can. All ships now ..."

Chenlambec roared a challenge. Then he pointed at the other viewscreen. A squadron of Imperial fighters ran alongside Silver Station, pouring energy beams into the joint where two of its external corridors met. One long cylinder broke away from its neighbor. Gases spewing out of its cut end jet-powered the cylinder out to an even more desperate angle.

Tinian gulped. "My partners are in there somewhere! We've got to help them!"

Chenlambec roared a negative: he couldn't afford moments, and

she couldn't help her companions by dying with them. He slammed a shaggy fist onto a control, then flicked a row of linked switches.

"Are you powering up?" Tinian clutched an overhead conduit. "Are we going to fight or run for it?"

He didn't answer. The moment his ready lights glowed, he grasped a throttle momentarily — then flicked off the linked row. The *Wroshyr* lurched. Tinian assumed they'd just disengaged from the station. The Imperials, he explained, would fire on anything that was escaping under power, and his shields weren't strong enough to absorb energy at this close range.

"Why not?" she exclaimed. "You've got to have shields!"

He barked: full shielding would cost more than the ship was worth. More than he brought home from a good bounty job.

Tinian gaped. People died because they couldn't afford protection? She'd always taken armor for granted. Now she realized that poverty and peril sometimes traveled together.

Slowly, Silver Station seemed to drift away from the *Wroshyr*. Tinian caught herself holding her breath. This was just like before, waiting to be spotted and shot. Cheeve, Redd, and Yccakic —

Wait. She'd slept through the afternoon. By now, they should be on board Una Poot's private tugship. What luck! Cheeve did have a knack for leaving town before trouble arrived.

Chenlambec suggested that if she didn't want to watch, she hustle aft and strap down.

Tinian sank into his copilot's chair. "I'd rather help, if I can."

Chenlambec swept a hand across the row of engine controls: mains, laterals, retros. He would man the ship's laser cannon if she'd stand ready to fire up all engines simultaneously. He would program a burn into the nav computer.

Tinian had always learned best under pressure. "I'll do what I can," she promised.

Daye had tried to relax when Silver Station's Human medic lowered him into the tank and filled it with clear liquid. He tried to breathe normally through the mask. The synthetic fluid didn't sting his eyes.

Then the medic released a flood of brilliant red bacta into the tank. Billions of tiny creatures seemed to crawl over him. A weird smell slithered into his breath mask. His skin twitched where he'd been wounded and started to heal, either naturally or covered with synthflesh. The medic had warned him that his body might resist

treatment. He must relax and try to let the bacta work. It would seek out traumatized flesh. Healed tissue barred its way.

To keep from fighting it, he thought hard. He'd thrown everything away when he'd blown up I'att Armament. What was he becoming? A hopeless idealist, a freedom fighter?

He might survive now. The bacta might heal him.

(Microscopic creatures stung flesh, nibbling his scars —)

If the bacta healed him, he would run to Tinian —

No. He would still put Tinian behind him, both for her sake and so he could serve the Alliance freely. Besides, thinking about Tinian gouged fresh wounds into another part of him that was trying to heal.

He wondered if the bacta were dancing on his eardrums or if he heard an alarm. The medic had stepped out several lifetimes ago, actually only minutes, but —

Through red fluid and glass he spotted a huge dark form followed by one with Gotal horns. Woyiq and Toalar? The shapes came on quickly. The big one shrank again, moving away.

Then it returned, raising something overhead. Something with lots of right angles. A chair?

Daye's tank split wide open. Fluid splashed the clinic floor.

Toalar seized Daye and started unhooking his breath mask and harness. He talked quickly while he worked, putting an amazing amount of expression into monotone speech. "Silver Station's under attack. I don't know if the Ranats squealed or if our ship was followed, but the Empire is here. There are scan pulses bouncing through everything. Una Poot's got no defense force. The station's coming to pieces." Toalar had always claimed that his cone-shaped receptors picked up energy emissions.

"Here, Daye." Woyiq flung him a brown cloth bundle. "It's all I could find. I'm sorry. I hope it'll do —"

Before Woyiq apologized a second time, Toalar had slipped Daye into the cast-off Givin robe. Its sleeves dangled over his hands and its selvahe dragged past his feet, but it covered him.

"Can you stand?" Toalar asked. "Did the bacta take?"

"I'll try." Daye gritted his teeth and tried moving his legs. One tracked. The other didn't. "You'd better carry me."

"Right," said Woyiq. "Up you get." He turned around.

Daye wrapped his arms around the big man's neck. Woyiq straightened. Daye tried to grip Woyiq's middle with his legs, but only his right leg functioned. At least his shoulder didn't hurt as badly as before. "Go," he grunted.



He hung on until both arms and both shoulders ached, and then he hung on longer. Toalar dashed ahead of Woyiq. Brandishing a blaster, he peered around a corner and waved an all-clear.

Just as Woyiq followed around that corner, the corridor erupted in blaster fire. Laser blasts splattered the walls. Woyiq spun, and Daye flew off. He hit a wall feet-first. Newly regenerated nerves screamed bloody murder.

White armor appeared at the far end of the passage. "Go!" Daye cried. "I'll just slow you down!"

"Good try," muttered Woyiq as he bent over Daye. "We almost lost you once." He seized Daye by both arms and heaved him over one shoulder.

Daye raised his head to look behind. A stormtrooper dropped into a firing crouch. Woyiq's shoulder drove into Daye's stomach. He curled around that shoulder, trying to cushion the gut-pounding bounce — and present a smaller target.

"Stop!" Toalar shouted. Daye raised his head again, tried to orient himself, and felt himself fall. He caught hold of something. Yellow foam sprayed his hands.

"Here they come!" Toalar shouted again.

Woyiq lowered his shoulder and ran at a tightly closed hatch.

Daye squinted to see what he'd activated. It looked like a flame douser, mounted by one clip to the bulkhead. He lunged at the clip and detached it, then scooted backward to lean against the bulkhead. He aimed the thick yellow spray past Woyiq and Toalar up the passage.

A white shape dashed into his line of fire. It arrived upright, went diagonal, and skidded out of sight horizontally. Woyiq presented his other shoulder and rammed the hatch again. It rang like a huge bell. Light appeared along one edge. "You're through!" Daye cried, holding the spray steady. Another stormtrooper slid into the slime, through it, and past ... but now they had troopers on both sides.

Woyiq picked up Daye and pushed him at the narrow opening. Daye reached through, slapping the wall high and low. Something gave. The hatch sprang open. Daye fell through a 90-degree gravity shift and hit the deck again. This time he rolled, absorbing the impact. He was going numb all over.

Woyiq picked him up like a doll and carried him in both arms. Toalar covered their retreat, firing behind them.

Woyiq took a right turn.

"No!" Toalar shouted. "Straight! We're almost at the main dock!"

Woyiq sped up a final passage, around one more corner, and up a boarding ramp. He skidded to a halt at the sight of a blast rifle's muzzle.

"Friendly!" called Toalar. "Una, let us through!"

Thank the Force! "Hurry it up!" Una shouted. "Did you get him?" The tugship shuddered. Woyiq pounded down into its main passage. "They fired the explosive bolts," exclaimed Toalar. "We're underway."

"Is that Daye?" Una hated repeating questions. Especially urgent ones. "We need that boy."

Woyiq turned around and showed Daye and Una Poot to each other. Pink streaks on Daye's face evidenced an incomplete bacta treatment.

"Good," she said. "Bring him to the bridge."

Daye asked, "Are the armor pieces aboard?"

"Yes, though I don't know why." Una Poot seized Woyiq's arm and pulled the huge Human along. She felt like a Chadra-Fan hauling a Whiphid. "Our people can't afford body armor." Still, she knew

people who might be able to develop it. The uniformed Alliance sprang to mind. This time, she didn't dismiss the thought. With Silver Station about to blow, she'd have to lie low for a while ... as soon as her tugship delivered one shipment to the Monor System. "What took you so long?" she puffed.

"Sorry," said Woyiq. "Really, I'm sorry —"

"We stopped to play tag with stormtroopers." Toalar holstered his blaster and rubbed his perceptor horns. "Long day."

"Get up here," Una ordered. "Get Daye where he can see the main screen." This attack would cost him dearly. They would never get him into bacta in time for complete regeneration now. He would need prosthetics, and from the twitch in his face, he knew it. She must give him hope. These sensitives could be delicate.

The tugship shuddered. "We're hit!" cried a crewman.

"They worry," grumbled Una. "These shields'll stand four or five direct hits. The *Sitting Duck* was a fine ship even with two dozen culson gas tanks in tow. We'll make it. Over there, son. Look." She pointed out a vector.

Silver Station shrank in the near distance. Farther away, a small, saucer-shaped ship swooped back toward a TIE fighter, firing energy bursts. The Imperial exploded. The saucer streaked out of the nebula and vanished.

Still cradled by Woyiq, Daye tugged the Givin robe closed over his chest. "Somebody hit back, anyway," he said.

"That was your lady," Una crowed. "She got away safe, too." Tinian had also used precious comm time begging Una to rescue Cheeve, Redd, and Yccakic. Una had transmitted back: they were as safe as she was.

"Thank you," Daye exclaimed. "But how do you know it's Tinian?"

"She joined up with a friend of mine, a big strong Wookiee. Chenlambec needed a partner with her kind of abilities." Partnering that pair had been a rare stroke of serendipity. Another long fuse now sputtered under the Emperor's throne.

"Wookiee activists aren't known for leading quiet lives," Daye objected softly.

Drogue had been protective, too. He'd hurt when Una hurt. "You want to fight the Empire. So does she. But she needs someone to teach her. Are you going to deny her that?"

Before he could answer, Toalar pointed at the aft screen. "Look!"

Two squadrons of TIE fighters chased the tugship at full speed. They obviously wouldn't reach firing range before the *Duck* jumped into hyperspace.

"This is some ship." Daye tugged the Givin robe closed again. Una grinned. "That's why we held her for final evacuation. She's my own, and I've kept the crew current."

"But Silver Station's in Imperial hands." Daye shook his head. "We're defeated, aren't we, Una Poot?"

Una thought of the Rebel rabble waiting at Monor and the cargo stashed in her holds. She planted both hands on her hips. "Never. The Empire can't beat us, so long as one of us lives. Every time we escape, we live to fight another day. If enough worlds rise, we'll drive the Empire out of the galaxy."

Daye's dark eyes gleamed. "I hope we survive to see that."

Mission accomplished: his gloom had lifted. She patted his uninjured shoulder. "As soon as we jump to lightspeed and my medic looks you over, how about a little music to help you rest? You'll enjoy my nephew Cheeve's band—"

"Cheeve?" Daye's odd eyebrows shot up. "Sprig Cheever, of Druckenwell?"

Roleplaying Game Statistics

■ Tinian l'att

Type: Young Refugee

DEXTERITY 3D+1

Blaster: hold-out blaster 5D, dodge 4D, grenade 4D+1, running 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 4D+2, bureaucracy 5D+2, business 6D, languages: Wookiee 6D+1, streetwise 4D, survival 4D, value 4D+2, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 2D

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Bargain 6D, command 6D, con 4D+2, hide 4D+2, persuasion 5D+2, search 6D, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 2D

Climbing/jumping 3D+2, stamina 4D

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 5D+1, demolition 7D+2, droid programming 5D, droid repair 4D+2, security 6D

Special Abilities:

Explosives Expertise: Tinian is especially knowledgeable about explosives, including their composition, construction and applications. She gets a +1D bonus to any skill rolls involving explosives.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Bits of fuse wire, c-boards from prototype stormtrooper shield, several outfits



Capsule: Seventeen-year-old Tinian recently fled the industrial world of Druckenwell, where the Empire took over her grandparents' armament factory. Killed in the takeover were both of her grandparents, her beloved Wookiee bodyguard Wrrl, and — she believes — her fiancé, Daye Azur-Jamin. Tinian has turned cold — her ability to open herself up to others as she did with Daye is gone. She considers herself completely alone in the galaxy, overshadowed by her own grief, and seems to care about nothing. Tinian insists she'd just as soon die as live. But before she dies, she wants to hurt the Empire as badly as possible.

Growing up in the l'att Armament tradition, Tinian served in almost every capacity at the company's chief research and production facility on Druckenwell — droid programming, material procurement, line inspections, quality control and even security. Through her involvement in the l'att Armament, she gained an intimate knowledge of explosives, including the ability to identify certain explosive compounds by texture and odor.

Cheever and the Band

Sprig Cheever's band travels the space lanes, jumping from one system to the next, taking on whatever gigs they can get. Recently they've been on the run from Imperials while Cheever, his Bottom Viol player Yccakic and their sound droid help Tinian escape with c-boards stolen from prototype shielded stormtrooper armor.

Cheever is a slender Human sporting a neatly trimmed goatee. His easy-going nature is shown through his fluid posture. If Cheever isn't leaning on something he's slouching in a chair or comfortably draped over his KeyBed. Protecting Tinian is the closest he's ever been to concerned, since she has little experience out in the space lanes.

He has an uncanny ability to appraise situations, and often leaves an area just before trouble walks in. Cheever acts as the band manager.

Sprig Cheever. All stats are 2D except: *blaster 2D+2, musical instrument operation: KeyBed 5D+2, Knowledge 3D, bureaucracy 4D, cultures 4D+2, languages 5D, planetary systems 4D+1, streetwise 5D, Perception 3D, con 5D, gambling 4D+2, sneak 4D, musical instrument repair 4D+2.* Move: 10. Hold-out blaster (3D), portable KeyBed.

The band's Bottom Viol player is a Bith named Yccakic. He is always concerned the group won't make enough credits for passage to the next system, fears his instrument will be damaged in the cargo hold, and wonders if the band should rehearse a few new numbers now and then to keep the show fresh. He's also worried about Imperial entanglements, especially now that the band's traveling with Tinian.

Yccakic is also a very good Bottom Viol player, and keeps the bass line and the tempo going for the band's songs. He's also responsible for hooking up Redd Metalflake before each show and fixing the ancient droid whenever he breaks down.

Yccakic. All stats are 2D except: *dodge 3D, musical instrument operation: Bottom Viol 4D, Knowledge 4D, bureaucracy 5D+2, streetwise 5D, droid programming 3D+1, droid repair 4D+2.* Move: 8. Bottom Viol, droid repair tools.

Redd Metalflake helps process the band's music so everything sounds professional. He can also link into computer networks to access information useful in planning concerts — useful in helping his friends. Redd usually propels himself on a set of malfunctioning treads, but Yccakic has installed a handle on the droid's top side so band members can easily and quickly pick him up and carry him when he gets behind.

Redd Metalflake. All stats are 1D except: *Mechanical 2D, communications 3D, sensors 3D.* Can manipulate music and sound wired through him as a skill of 4D. Move: 3.

■ Una Poot

Type: Resistance Leader

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blast 4D+1, dodge 3D+1, grenade 3D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Bureaucracy 7D+1, business 6D+1,

streetwise 8D+2, value 6D, willpower 6D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+1

Astrogation 3D, communications 4D+2,

sensors 4D.

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 7D, command 6D+1, con 5D, in-

vestigation 8D, persuasion 6D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Computer programming/repair 3D+1,

security 5D

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 10

Move: 9

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), tugship

Sitting Duck

Capsule: Una Poot's stringy gray hair, round face with yellow teeth and shabby old clothing fool the unwary. This unlikable old crone masterminds Rebel operations in the Doldur sector. From Silver Station, she oversees seven planetary resistance cells; but she has no military expertise and depends almost entirely on stealth to keep Silver Station secure. Few know of the station's true location — those who do know are close contacts of Una's or have been



checked out by her intelligence organization. All visitors undergo background checks.

Una arrived at Silver Station, then Machenry Station, as a young merchant fleeing with her husband from Imperial Customs officials who tried to seize their cargo, two dozen tanks of rare conductive gases. Her husband died prospecting the nearby Dragonflower Nebula for valuable gases. Una remarried the engineer who attached the tanks to Machenry Station. They renamed the new facility Silver Station.

An unidentified microorganism later caused a plague on the station, killing 30 percent of the population, including Una's second husband. Her third husband vanished on a procurement mission for the infant Rebel Alliance. Una is now a single-minded warrior with no personal life.

Sitting Duck. Capital, *astrogation 3D, capital ship gunnery 4D+1, capital ship piloting 5D, capital ship shields 4D+2.* maneuverability 1D, space 8, atmosphere 365; 1,050 kmh, hull 4D, shields 3D. Weapons: 2 laser cannons (fire control 2D, damage 5D).

■ Silver Station

Craft: YsreTech Mining Outpost Station

Type: Modified space station

Scale: Capital

Length: 400 meters

Crew: 10

Crew Skill: Communications 3D, sensors 4D

Passengers: 100

Cargo Capacity: 1,000 metric tons

Consumables: 6 months

Cost: Not available for sale

Hull: 3D+2

Shields: 1D

Sensors:

Passive: 25/0D

Scan: 50/1D

Search: 75/2D

Focus: 3/4D

Capsule: Originally a base station for exotic gas prospecting in the Dragonflower Nebula, Machenry Station fell into disrepair as its major markets vanished. Nearly abandoned for several years, it was found by fleeing merchant Una Poot, who made it her home. Her first husband left her two dozen enormous, silver-lined tanks originally designed for hauling pressurized conductive gases. Her second husband, an engineer, attached the tanks to the station — now renamed Silver Station — and installed an array of gravitic generators stolen from an Imperial transport. The cubical inner structure of the original station is still visible inside a maze of cylindrical outer corridors lined in tarnished silver.

The station is now home to Una Poot's small Rebel support organization, coordinating activity throughout the Doldur sector. The station offers support and some services to ships and personnel stopping by. Ships may dock at any of several docking umbilicals or in one of two small

docking bays. Starship repairs are effected in one small-craft repair bay. The station also offers various illegal services, from information brokering and data-forging to transponder alteration and weapons trading.

■ Chenlambec

Type: Wookiee Hunter

DEXTERITY 3D

Bowcaster 11D, dodge 7D+2, grenade 3D+1, melee combat 7D+1

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

Alien species 5D+2, languages 4D+2, planetary systems 5D+2

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Starfighter piloting 4D

PERCEPTION 2D

Investigation 2D+1, search 2D+2

STRENGTH 6D

Brawling 7D, climbing/jumping 6D+1, stamina 6D+2

TECHNICAL 1D

Security 2D

Special Abilities:

Berserker Rage: +2D to Strength or brawling in berserker rage

Climbing Claws: +2D to climbing

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 13

Move: 15

Equipment: IPKC bounty hunter license, com-link, datapad, light repeating blaster (6D), magnetic binders, medpac, neural inhibitor (5D stun), synthrope, Wookiee bowcaster (4D), black leather bandolier studded with apparently decorative silver cubes, small aging ship (*Wroshyr*), 500 credits

Capsule: This determined Wookiee was once a peace-loving being far removed from galactic politics. One night he killed an Imperial officer he found beating a defenseless Wookiee child. Forced to escape Kashyyyk, he emerged in the galactic underworld with a false identity.

Chenlambec the Wookiee bounty hunter. He refuses to speak of his previous life.

Chenlambec accepts only "dead or alive" assignments for Rebels and escaped slaves. The Empire believes he has never brought back an acquisition alive. In reality, the Wookiee helps his "victims" escape to freedom. No one has ever connected the mysterious deaths of several Imperial officers to the "raging Wookiee," as he is known.

Chenlambec's appearance is stunning—he is 2.2 meters tall with blue eyes. His dark brown fur is tipped in silver, projecting a shimmering, grizzled "silvertip" image.

Wroshyr. Starfighter, maneuverability 2D, space 5, atmosphere 295; 850 kmh, hull 3D, shields 1D. Weapons: 2 laser cannons (fire control 1D, damage 4D).



■ Daye Azur-Jamin

Type: Young Intellectual

DEXTERITY 1D

Blaster 4D+2, blaster: hold-out blaster 5D, brawling parry 2D+2, dodge 2D+2, grenade 2D, melee combat 2D, melee parry 2D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 4D+2, bureaucracy 6D,

business 5D+2, languages 4D+1,

streetwise 6D, survival 5D+1

MECHANICAL 2D+1

Beast riding 4D, repulsorlift operation

3D+2, starship shields 4D

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 6D+1, command 5D+2, hide 7D,

persuasion 4D+2, search 6D+1, sneak 7D

STRENGTH 1D+2

Brawling 2D, climbing/jumping 2D+2,

stamina 5D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 5D, demo-

lition 6D, droid programming 4D+2, droid

repair 5D, first aid 4D, repulsorlift repair

3D+2, security 5D

Special Abilities:

Force Skills: Control 1D, sense 2D

Control: Control pain



Adventure Idea

The characters are smugglers who travel to Silver Station for starship repairs or supplies; but they haven't got the right passwords to suit Una Poot. She allows them to dock and offers them two choices—stay aboard the station as docking bay labor, or run a mission for her. She'll put an "enforcer" on board, to make sure the crew doesn't steal the cargo she needs delivered to a Rebel rendezvous point. Along the way they'll have to avoid Imperial patrols and criminals interested in stealing the cargo.

The characters might accept the mission, befriend the enforcer and join the Rebel Alliance when they finally make the delivery—possibly breaking ties with any former underworld employers. The characters could also betray Una Poot by selling Silver Station's location to the Empire, especially when they discover that the cargo consists of several crates filled with 50 stolen blaster carbines. If they choose to betray Una Poot, the enforcer tries everything to stop them—including sabotaging the characters' ship.

Sense: Life detection, magnify senses

This character is Force-sensitive

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 12

Move: 2

Capsule: Although severely injured, Daye is a young man of undiminished determination and intelligence, with a passionate belief in doing what's right — even if it means putting himself in danger again. He and Tinian intended to marry on Druckenwell, but when the Empire stepped in, he personally sabotaged I'att Armament's research and production facility to keep the prototype shielded armor out of Imperial hands. Toalar, a Gotal freedom fighter, and Woyiq, Toalar's Human companion, pulled Daye from the rubble. They are trying to get him to the Rebel Alliance ... and a bacta tank ... so he can offer his skills as an armament research and development specialist.

Daye is sensitive to the Force, and is a shrewd judge of character. Although untrained in the ways of the Jedi, he knows that those who use the Force are considered criminals by the Empire, so he has mentioned

Adventure Idea

The characters own the tramp freighter *Quandary*, which docks at Silver Station for much-needed repairs. But the station falls under Imperial attack before repairs can be made. The characters try to escape, but the ship is damaged even more, and the characters are captured and towed back to Silver Station, now under Imperial control. They're locked up with another prisoner in one of the smaller living cabins.

The other prisoner says he knows of a privateer's ship still docked at one of the station's umbilical docks — if they can break out and reach the ship, they could escape (the *Quandary* is too badly damaged to go anywhere). The characters must break out of the cabin, con or fight the guards and escape on the privateer ship. The other prisoner could be an Imperial spy, hoping the characters will lead him to some hidden Rebel base.

If the characters do not escape, they are brought before the commanding Imperial officer, who makes them an offer — take the privateer ship, but deliver a courier message to an Imperial outpost before going along on their business. Two Imperial Navy troopers are sent with them to protect the message and insure delivery. Characters may deliver the message, or they might overpower the troopers and head on their way — possibly allowing the Empire to use a hidden tracking device to follow them to a Rebel base.

his sensitivity to nobody but Tinian.

His present priority is to find healing before his disabilities become permanent. He is severely injured and depends on his traveling companions for everything. He has no strength in his left arm, and has crushed legs and undetermined head injuries.

Toalar and Woyiq

This Gotal and Human pair secretly work for the Rebel Alliance. They began as scouts and gunrunners and are now attempting to bring Daye Azur-Jamin to a Rebel cell where he can be useful. The two have been trying to forge new Rebel contacts and start Rebel cells on new planets where resistance could hinder the Empire.

Toalar Yalom Yalom. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 5D+2, *dodge* 3D+2, *streetwise* 4D+2, *survival* 5D, *Perception* 5D, *command* 6D, *investigation* 7D, *search* 6D, *sneak* 6D+2, *Strength* 2D+1. **Move:** 10. Energy sensitivity (+3D *search*), fast initiative (+1D on initiative), mood detection (for more information on Gots, see *Galaxy Guide 4: Alien Races*, page 48). **Force Points:** 3, **Character Points:** 11. *Blaster pistol* (4D), *datapad*, 250 credits.

Woyiq is Toalar's sidekick, offering his strength while relying on the Gotal's cunning. He is a hulking, good-hearted Human — when asked about his past, he has been known to weep, but never talks.

Woyiq. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D, *brawling* 5D, *melee combat* 5D+2, *melee parry* 5D, *intimidation* 4D+1, *Strength* 4D, *brawling* 6D, *lifting* 5D. **Move:** 10.

The Pii system — on the border of the Outer Rim Territories — is famous for the greel trees harvested there. But the company that harvests and exports them is no ordinary company. It secretly diverts most of its profits, as well as raw materials and spacecraft, to support the Rebel Alliance. Come meet the Rebel supporters who inhabit ...

The Greel Wood Haven

by C. Robert Carey

Illustrations by David Day

The Greel Wood Logging Corporation is a company which harvests the greel trees indigenous to the third and fourth planets of the Pii system. Owned by MK Enterprises, the company has a tight hold



on the greel wood industry. It also serves an important role within the Rebel Alliance.

Under the direction of Alliance financier and occasional informant Meysen Kayson, the Greel Wood Logging Corporation diverts funds to many Alliance operations within the Hexagon. The Hexagon is an Alliance Ops reference to one of the hot spots of Rebel activity just along the border of the Mid-Rim and Outer Rim Territories. In addition to the monetary contributions the company makes to the Rebel cause, it also contributes raw materials and spacecraft.

Corporate Origins

During the last decades of the Old Republic, a philanthropic entrepreneur named Meysen Kayson bought the rights to both Pii 3 and 4 with the intentions of founding a bi-planetary natural preserve. During the initial land clearing for the park's primary building

clusters, large portions of the indigenous plant life were cleared. Among the vegetation was found a species of greel tree—though its bark is rough and of absolutely no cosmetic or aesthetic appeal, the wood below is luxurious in both its deep scarlet-violet coloration and smooth texture. After consulting several xenoarborists and xenobotanists, Kayson learned the greel trees of Pii 3 and 4 had a very rapid growth rate and that the tree, if the stump was left intact, would grow back to its original height (35 meters average) within five years. Thus Kayson initiated a program of logging that would allow the trees ample time to regenerate, and the Greel Wood Logging Corporation was born.

Kayson uses manual labor supplemented by a few droids instead of any immense automated process to harvest the greel trees. Though in most markets such a business practice would spell certain doom for the company, such was not the case with logging company: automated harvesting processes on an industrial scale often damage the wood by rough handling.

Kayson owns all rights to the luxurious wood on both Pii 3 and Pii 4. The cones needed to reproduce the trees can only germinate in the exact combination of atmosphere, soil nutrients and various other factors found on the two planets, thus proving transplantation of this tree species impossible.

When the Empire arose and Palpatine declared himself Emperor, Kayson found himself the object of unwanted Imperial attention. Realizing both age or the Empire might eventually catch up with him, Kayson granted the rights to his trusted associate and fellow Rebel sympathizer Xenon Nnaksta. Nnaksta in turn hired some of the best pro-Alliance managerial consultants in the Empire, and the company became even more successful than previously. Greel wood is always in demand by many consumers, particularly craftsbeings—those who use greel wood to adorn the repulsorlift vehicles of dignitaries and senators, make opulent furniture for Imperial art galleries, and decorate the interiors of homes belonging to some of the richest beings in the galaxy.

Kayson eventually resurfaced, managing through his increasingly-strong political contacts to have his name cleared of all activities the Empire viewed as criminal. Soon thereafter Director Nnaksta was recruited into active duty with the Rebellion by an Alliance contact, and Kayson has since established a board of directors to administer the logging company while he becomes increasingly more involved in the struggle against the Empire.

For as long as the Empire has oppressed the beings of the galaxy,

Meysen Kayson and his employees have covertly supported the Rebel movement. A substantial fraction of the company's profit is directed to Alliance groups. Pii 3 and 4 are sometimes used as training grounds for Rebel infantry units and special ops teams, and as a safeworld for small groups of wanted Rebel operatives.

Meysen Kayson

A smuggler for many years, Meysen Kayson is now a rich entrepreneur. He owns several properties on Ord Mantell, Kemal Station, Cloud City, Cranan 12, and the Austan Asteroid Cluster. His numerous business ventures include the Greel Wood Logging Corporation, Galactic Recreational Equipment Industries (with 13,387 retail outlets Empire-wide) and seven other service and retail companies, all under the umbrella of MK Enterprises. He is also a financier of the Rebel Alliance and personal friend of several of its operatives. He currently owns a sizeable percentage of the holdings of Kwenn Space Station, and is working with pro-Alliance business partners to buy enough remaining properties to become the majority holder. In his various companies he hires many Alliance operatives who need

secure positions to conduct their surveillance operations. Among them is his close friend Kassar Kosciusko of Kwenn Space Station's Royal K Casino, who saved Meysen's life some time ago on Pernam Minor.

Meysen was born on Corulag 121 years ago, and has encountered many unsavory individuals, perilous events and ugly things in his extremely long life, but has all the while been a kind and friendly man. Decades ago, while visiting the Tatooine spaceport Mos Eisley, Meysen encountered an abandoned alien child of an unknown



species. Taking pity on the hungry infant, he took it into his care and taught his new-found foster child some of the finer points of his former gun-running profession. The child eventually matured and, taking his protector's name as his own, founded Kayson's Weapon Shop.

During the rise of the Empire, Meysen spent a good deal of time avoiding the Imperials, who went to great lengths to neutralize the "seditious" Meysen Kayson. He vehemently opposed Palpatine's rise to power. Years later, after "arranging" for his name to be cleared, publicly apologizing for his actions and paying several large fines, Meysen was allowed to resume his business activities unhindered — which continue to include covert Rebel operations against the Empire.

Despite his serious intentions and compassion, Meysen is only seen as a freewheeling, fun-loving old man with a humorous voice and money to burn. He showers his Alliance contacts with favors and material goods, and does everything in his power to grant favors. In one well-documented instance, Meysen guaranteed the safe escape of a team of Alliance operatives — he provided the Rebels with private security escort to the local spaceport, where a freighter just off the assembly line awaited their boarding, complete with clean transponder codes.

■ Meysen Kayson

Type: Aging Entrepreneur

DEXTERITY 1D+1

Dodge 4D+1, melee combat: walking cane 3D+1

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 4D+2, bureaucracy 6D, business 6D+1, business: Greel Wood Logging Corporation 7D, business: Galactic Recreational Equipment Industries 7D+1, business: Kwenn Space Station 8D, languages 5D, law enforcement 4D+2, streetwise 7D, value 4D, value: weapons 6D+1, value: retail merchandise 7D

MECHANICAL 2D

Space transports 4D

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Bargain 7D+2, command 5D+2, con 6D+2, persuasion 6D+2

STRENGTH 1D

Brawling 2D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 4D, security 4D

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 12

Move: 6

Equipment: Comlink, walking cane (STR+1), 10,000 credits

Xenon Nnaksta

Rebel Alliance Lieutenant Xenon Nnaksta was born on the swamp world Vodran. Xe is a well-built Vodran male in the physical prime of his life. He has experienced both the best and worst of life, and



currently serves the Rebel Alliance.

When Xe was young, his parents were killed in the Thruncon Insurrection, the urban uprising that destroyed many of the Vodran cities. After his parents' death Xe apparently developed a mild psychosis which causes him to appear somewhat reckless and fearless. His condition often proves to be of great misfortune to any adversary, but has never proven a hindrance or danger to any of his companions. On Vodran, where huge predators roam the steamy jungles and swamps at will, Xe learned quickly to survive in the hostile environ-

ments while living as a street urchin in the rural areas of the Kudor province.

Orphaned, Xe gained passage to Delassin Six, where he found work as a longshoreman on the docks catering to the primitive seafaring vessels of the Diniz and Zehr Seas. Having spent much of his prior youth alone, Xe enjoyed the friendship and camaraderie of his fellow dock workers, and though the work often involved contraband cargoes, Xe simply kept working, no questions asked. He was content loading and unloading freight, working alongside Humans, Wookiees, labor droids and others.

Xe was later personally hired by the industry magnate Meysen Kayson as a stockroom laborer for one of Kayson's retail outdoor outfitting stores. Within two years Xe went from laborer to foreman to executive of Kayson's chain. In those two years Kayson and Nnaksta had become fast friends. Kayson eventually transferred ownership of the Greel Wood Logging Corporation to Xe (as Kayson had been forced to go into hiding from the Empire). Xe arranged for a group of entrepreneurs to handle the company's operations and

ensure covert diversion of funds to the Alliance.

After two years Nnaksta took a six-year reprieve from work, attending a fringe survival school. Upon his return, Xenon took the to the field and worked as both a laborer for the Greel Wood Logging Corporation as well as its director. Several years later Xe's survival school classmate, good friend and Alliance officer Adazian Liebke appeared on Pii 3, seeking refuge. Xe hid his friend from the Empire, and Liebke eventually convinced Xe to actively join the Alliance. Now Xe serves in the Alliance ranks as a pathfinder and special operative.

Xe dresses in the standard loose-fitting pathfinder field dress, and carries his personalized vibro-saw as his weapon of preference, as he refuses to fire a blaster of any kind. He has piercing blue eyes and a kind manner about him, though as a result of his suspected psychosis he proves to be a fierce adversary when provoked.

■ Xenon Nnaksta

Type: Tough Native

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Brawling parry 5D+2, dodge 5D+2, grenade 4D+2, melee combat 7D+2, melee parry 5D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Alien species 3D, business 3D, business: Greel Wood Logging Corporation 7D, cultures 4D, intimidation 5D, languages 4D, law enforcement 4D, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 4D, survival 7D, survival: swamp 8D

MECHANICAL 2D+1

Repulsorlift operations 4D+1, repulsorlift operations: speeder truck 5D+1, space transports 4D+1

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Command 4D, search 4D+2

STRENGTH 4D

Brawling 5D, climbing/jumping 6D, lifting 7D, stamina 7D, swimming 6D

TECHNICAL 2D+1

First aid 5D+1, (A) medicine 3D+1

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 2

Character Points: 14

Move: 10

Equipment: Alliance pathfinder field uniform, comlink, vibro-saw (STR+2D+1)

Adazian Liebke

Born into a family with a long history of military service, Adazian Liebke (simply Liebke to his friends) has served in a military capacity since he came of age. Now reaching his middle years, Liebke is a major in the Alliance ground forces, and serves as a wilderness fighter in the Alliance SpecForces unit stationed on New Kiske.

Major Liebke served in the Dnalvec Militia during the Houk-Weequay conflicts on Sriluur. During that time he became a dark

wolf handler. Dark wolves are fierce nocturnal creatures indigenous to Sriluur. After the Houk-Weequay conflicts ended, the Empire entered Dnalvec and established a permanent presence in the form of a garrison along the Copper Coast and in the industrial capital Meirm. Resenting the Imperial occupation of the very territories his companions had died protecting against the Houk forces, Adazian packed his belongings, secured his best pack of dark wolves, left an offering at the Obsidian Shrine and defected to the Alliance.

It is also suspected Liebke spent a short period of time in an experimental cybernetics lab as either a guard or an assistant, but reports have not been confirmed and Liebke refuses to discuss the matter. Liebke is a veteran of a fringe survival school, and it was there that he met the his best friend, Xenon Nnaksta. Liebke recruited Xe into active service with the Alliance during an unplanned exodus to the Pii system where Xe was director of the Greel Wood Logging Corporation, and the two have been inseparable ever since. When on missions together he and Xe constantly bicker as to who will drive the airspeeders, and though Liebke is the better driver, Xe always seems to get there faster (though with his passengers under

extreme duress and the speeder with severe damage).

Since spending time on Pii 4 as a refugee, Liebke has advocated using the rough terrain as a training ground for Rebel infantry units. Liebke is Alliance contact for sending training teams to Pii 4 and also handles the integration of Rebel refugees in hiding among the laborers on Pii 3.

Unlike other Weequay, Liebke is friendly to his fellow Rebels, though he only openly speaks with his closest companions—those with whom he has survived many perilous adventures.



■ Adazian Liebke

Type: Weequay Mercenary

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Blaster 4D+2, brawling parry 5D+2, dodge 5D+2, grenade 4D+2, melee combat 5D+2, melee combat: force pike 7D+2, melee parry 6D+2, vehicle blasters 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Alien species 3D+2, bureaucracy 3D+2, bureaucracy: Dnalvec Militia 5D+2, intimidation 3D+2, languages 3D+2, law enforcement 4D+2, planetary systems 4D+2, scholar: dark wolf training 7D+2, streetwise 4D+2, survival 6D+2, survival: desert 8D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Beast riding 3D+2, repulsorlift operation 5D+2, starship gunnery 3D+2, swoop operation 3D+2

PERCEPTION 2D+1

Command 4D+1, hide 3D+1, search 3D+1, sneak 3D+1

STRENGTH 3D+2

Brawling 5D+2, climbing/jumping 5D+2, lifting 4D, stamina 4D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 3D+1, demolition 4D, first aid 4D, repulsorlift repair 4D, security 5D

Special Abilities:

Short Range Communications: Weequays of the same clan can communicate through complex pheromones. Aside from Jedi sensing abilities, no species are reputed to be able to notice this communication form. This form seems to be as complex and clear (to them) as speech is to other species.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 13

Move: 10

Equipment: Battle vest (+1D+1 physical, +2 energy), comlink, 2 dark wolf muzzles and tail stinger wraps, force pike (STR+2D), heavy blaster pistol (4D+2)

The Pii System

Located just within the Arkanis sector along the Mid-Rim border, the Pii system is a seven-day hyperspace journey from the Perlemian Trade Route. The entire area is a desolate expanse of space that has neither been developed nor invested in, yet can be quickly reached from many lucrative Imperial markets. The only two planets which have garnered a profit out of those in the system's immediate vicinity are Pii 3 and Pii 4. It is for their lack of mineral wealth the planets were left alone for so long by both the Old Republic and the Empire. Luckily, the one man who hadn't been interested in financial gain opted to investigate the planets' potential, and has generated a fortune as a result.

The Pii sun is an older red giant, with seven planets in orbit. The inner two are fiery balls of rock. Between the second and third planetary orbits is the first of two extensive mineral-poor asteroid systems. The third and fourth planets, referred to as "Teeda's Eyes" (a reference to the lovely green eyes of the long-deceased Empress Teeda of Arkanis Regency annals), are lush forested planets teeming

with life. The fifth planet is a barren orb of no interest. The system's second asteroid field — larger and further spread out than the other — sits between the fifth and sixth planetary orbits. Its pattern is much more erratic than that of its inner-system cousin. The sixth planet — the lone gas giant of the system — and the seventh planet — a frozen ice ball — are beyond the second asteroid field.

Pii 3 and 4

If Kayson's original plan to establish a bi-planetary preserve had been realized, Pii 3 and 4 would be unabashed tourist traps for the sole reason of their natural splendor. Rather, the privilege of viewing such beautiful landscapes is reserved for employees of the Greel Wood Logging Corporation, its investors, or the occasional Rebel training group or refugee. Both planets are home to tens of thousands of indigenous creatures, but contain few mineral deposits worth investment.

Pii 3 and 4 have similar compositions, though the weather patterns of the two differ greatly, as does the topography. Whereas the third planet is subject to little annual precipitation (105 centimeters) and has less tectonic movement, the fourth planet averages over 900 centimeters of annual precipitation and has sharp peaks and valleys in which no greel trees or other vegetation can survive. The weather differences in the planets cultivate two varieties of greel wood: the bushier grassland scarlet native to Pii 3 and the straighter, harder band crimson native to the Pii 4. The grassland scarlet is a lighter shade than its sibling, and much denser. The band crimson, though lighter in weight than the greel wood of Pii 3, is heavier in color, and demands a greater price due to its ornate spirals, waves and bands of near-black flaws. When polished and finished properly, a slab of band crimson appears as though it is a huge precious gemstone.

Whereas the fourth planet would have proven harsh to colonization by any settling peoples, the third planet was the site of the seventh Duro Relocation Colony. Eventually the Duros, a spacefaring people who have always longed to travel among the stars, became bored with the monotonous rolling plains of Pii 3 and abandoned the colonization effort.

■ Pii 3

Type: Terrestrial

Temperature: Temperate

Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)

Hydrosphere: Arid

Gravity: Standard

Terrain: Plains
Length of Day: 18 standard hours
Length of Year: 352 local days
Sapient Species: Humans, Sullustans, Reigat, Klatoonians, Vodran, Nikto
Starports: 2 Standard class
Population: 956
Planet Function: Agriculture
Government: Corporate
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Grassland scarlet greel wood
Major Imports: Laborers, foodstuffs, high technology

■ Pii 4

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Cool
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moist
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Mountainous
Length of Day: 21 standard hours
Length of Year: 361 local days
Sapient Species: Humans, Reigat, Vodran, Whiphids, Pascwa
Starports: Standard class
Population: 697
Planet Function: Agriculture
Government: Corporate
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Band crimson greel wood
Major Imports: Laborers, scouts, foodstuffs, high technology

Indigenous Wildlife

While the third planet of the Pii is home to mild and herbivorous creatures such as larkin nerfs and zronta grazers, the wildlife indigenous to Pii 4 is hardy and often hostile. Among the most feared predators roaming the forests of the fourth planet are the greel screamer and the behemoth timber renders. The nature of the wildlife of Pii 4 mandates the more experienced workers of the harder species to be assigned "crimson duty" (and receive increased wages as well), while the younger employees and those with little combat or survival skills work in the grasslands of Pii 3.

■ Greel Screamer

Type: Carnivorous avian
DEXTERITY 4D
PERCEPTION 2D
STRENGTH 3D
Special Abilities:
Bite: Does STR damage
Move: 14 (flying)
Size: 0.75 meters long, 1.5 meter wingspan

Capsule: The greel screamers, as their name so indicates, reside in the greel trees harvested by loggers. These avians have reptilian bodies,

toothy beaks and flexible wings which easily fold when nesting. They often nest in greel trees in groups of four to eight. Though measures are often taken to flush the nomadic flying creatures from a tree to be cut, on more than occasion the screamers have been known to attack in the middle of a cut. These avians are extremely hostile toward those who dare disturb them. Their name comes from the screaming cries they make when their territory is threatened.

■ Timber Render

Type: Omnivorous forest-dwelling mammal
DEXTERITY 2D
PERCEPTION 2D
STRENGTH 8D
Brawling 10D+2
Special Abilities:
Claws: Do STR+2D damage
Paw Crush: Does STR damage
Move: 9
Size: 3-4.5 meters long, 2 meters at the shoulder

Capsule: The huge four-limbed timber renders that inhabit the lower forests of Pii 4, and their territories, are easily avoidable, as they leave their trademark for all to see — slashed greel trunks. The timber renders are hulking behemoths covered in tawny, ragged fur. Their long snouts are filled with various teeth for gathering and eating a variety of foods found in the greel forests. But their preferred methods of attack are with their sharp claws and a crushing hold with their forelimbs. Though sightings of the renders are not unheard of, only on one occasion has a timber render attacked a group of the logging company's workers: the end result was a dead Esoomian, four dead Reigat, two dead Whiphids and a seriously-injured Wookiee. Company workers take measures to avoid contact with the timber renders.



Greel Wood Harvesting Equipment

Kayson's Greel Wood Corporation has developed new equipment to help harvest and process the greel trees. Drawing on his business contacts and his own corporate subsidiaries, Kayson develops and buys all the equipment for his logging operations in the Pii system — and markets them to other industries as well.

Repulsorlift Hauler

The Aratech Z-24 is large flatbed speeder truck very similar in design to the Z-12 model, though with three rear-mounted engines rather than two, an increased cargo capacity, and a forward cab. The truck is extremely popular among those who haul large freight over short terrestrial distances, and is the mainstay of the Greel Wood Logging Corporation's ground fleet. Many of the servo-assisted control grips and pedals of the speeder trucks have been programmed to accommodate a number of alien physiologies, since the company employs many aliens.

Though there is no need for the medium blaster cannon on the passive plains of Pii 3, the cannon has proven a useful means of warding off would-be predators in the more dangerous Pii 4 logging zones. The passenger and pilot's compartments are completely enclosed, though the platform upon which the cut greel wood is placed is left fully exposed.

■ Repulsorlift Hauler

Craft: Modified Aratech Cargo Master Z-24 Heavy Speeder Truck

Type: Repulsorlift freight truck

Scale: Speeder

Length: 30 meters

Skill: Repulsorlift operation: speeder truck

Crew: 2

Crew Skill: Varies, but typically repulsorlift operation 3D+2

Passengers: 14 (work crew)

Cargo Capacity: 7 metric tons

Cover: Full (crew), 1/4 (cargo)

Altitude Range: Ground level — 2.5 meters

Cost: 12,100

Maneuverability: 1D

Move: 20, 60 kmh

Body Strength: 2D+1

Weapons:

1 Medium Blaster Cannon

Fire Arc: Turret

Crew: 1

Skill: Vehicle blasters

Fire Control: 1D+1

Range: 300/500/900

Damage: 3D+2

Vibro-Saw

The vibro-saws used by workers to cut down the greel trees were designed and manufactured by the Greel Wood Logging Corporation. These saws use the same vibro technology used in vibroblades, and are in essence a more specialized version of a vibro-axe.

Some less-than-stable individuals, such as Xenon Nnaksta, choose

to use the vibro-saw as a close quarters weapon. While it is effective in this use, it's much better suited to cutting greel trees.

■ GLC 075 Vibro-Saw

Model: Greel Wood Logging Corporation Tree Felling Vibro-Saw

Type: Vibro-saw

Scale: Character

Skill: Melee weapons

Cost: 400

Availability: 1, R

Difficulty: 15

Damage: STR+2D+1

Lumberdroid

Although most of the greel wood harvesting on Pii 4 is done by hand, some lumberdroids are used to assist cutting on Pii 3, where the terrain and conditions are better suited for droids. Cutting crews on Pii 3 often include one lumberdroid to assist in calculating cuts and fall trajectories, and to help with the actual cutting.

Many crews don't like using the lumberdroid — it's clunky, rolling around on dual treads spaced enough to give it good footing when sawing into trees, and they break down easily if not properly maintained. But since the Greel Wood Corporation helped design the droid with Industrial Automaton, they have a vested interest in selling more to other companies — ones which furnish land-clearing droids for colonists or botanical collection droids for scouts. The droid is programmed to recognize over 150,000 different tree types throughout the galaxy, and can easily be downloaded with additional species with an adapter chip.

■ Lumberdroid

Type: Greel Wood Logging Corporation/Industrial Automaton FLR-series Logger Droid

DEXTERITY 2D

Adventure Idea

The Characters are pursued by Imperial forces and are forced to take refuge on Pii 4. They befriend a logging crew from the Greel Wood Corporation and — after hiding their ship — join the crew to blend in, hoping the Imperials will go away. However, life harvesting greel trees on Pii 4 is perilous, and they must help the logging crew fend off timber renders and greel screamers. They might also have to evade or bluff a small contingent of Imperial scouts sent to hunt down the characters.

KNOWLEDGE 1D
MECHANICAL 1D
PERCEPTION 2D

Search 4D+2

STRENGTH 4D+2

Lifting 6D+2

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Fabritech communications array
- Two heavy manipulator arms
- One heavy (tree-felling) saw
- One light (brush removing) saw
- Probability projection computer, for assistance in determining how and where a given tree will land
- Extendible video sensor
- Emergency audio alarm, for use in the event of a felling miscalculation

Move: 7

Size: 2 meters

Cost: 2,500



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NEW REPUBLIC
ADVENTURE

Rendezvous With



DESTINY

By Charlene Newcomb

Illustrated by Mike Vilardi

The walls were a weary shade of gray, and bare of ornamentation. Stale air whistled through ancient ventilation systems. This place had not seen the light of day in more than a millennia.

Alex Winger propped her elbows on the table, resting her head in her hands. How long had she been here? Four hours? Eight?

Her blue eyes shifted to the vid monitors suspended from the ceiling. She wondered who had been watching the earlier interrogation and her reaction to this isolation. Would they believe her story?

The door slid open. Two men, dressed in uniforms of the New Republic military, entered the room and sat down across from her. The lieutenant fidgeted slightly in his chair, obviously inexperienced in these matters. The major was expressionless, his eyes transfixed on Alex. She could sense that he remained skeptical of her story.

"All right, Miss Winger," the major said, slowly enunciating each word. "Tell me about this secret Imperial research facility one more time."

Alex met his gaze, trying to bury her growing impatience. She calmly explained — it had to be at least the fourth time — that her comrade, a research scientist named Carl Barzon, had been taken to the secret base. And that ore, mined on her homeworld of Garos IV, was being shipped there. The location of the base remained shrouded behind a veil of Imperial secrecy that her friends in the Garosian resistance had been unable to penetrate.

The major's voice was as cold as his icy stare. "And you expect us to believe that the daughter of an Imperial governor works for the resistance on Garos IV?"

"It's true," she said, slapping her hand down on the table in frustration.

Suddenly she heard a familiar voice call out to her. "Alex?"

Looking around the room, Alex rubbed her eyes. Computers, communications equipment, and displays of all sorts blinked a rainbow of colors in the dimly lit room. The tap-tap of fingers across a keyboard were the only sounds she heard. She was in the underground operations center — on Garos IV — worlds away from that interrogation room she envisioned on Coruscant.

Her friend, a comm operator by the name of Wink Tasion, frowned as he transcribed an incoming message. The concern on his face couldn't have been more obvious. But he wasn't looking at his display. He was staring at Alex.

"Are you okay?" he asked her even before he finished typing the transmission he'd received. "You looked like you were somewhere

Alex Winger



Type: Underground freedom fighter

DEXTERITY 3D+1

Blaster 7D+2, dodge 5D+1, grenade 4D, heavy weapons 5D, melee 5D+2, melee parry 5D+1

KNOWLEDGE 3D+1

Alien species 5D, bureaucracy 6D, cultures 5D, languages 3D+2, planetary systems 4D+1, streetwise 4D+2, survival 5D+1, value 5D

MECHANICAL 3D+1

Astrogation 4D+2, beast riding 4D, repulsorlift operation 6D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 5D, command 6D, con 6D, hide 5D+2, search 5D+1, sneak 6D+2

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 4D, climbing/jumping 5D, lifting 3D+1, stamina 6D+1

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 6D, demolition 5D, droid programming 5D+1, repulsorlift repair 4D+2, security 4D+1

Special Abilities:

Force Skills: Sense 1D

Sense: Life detection

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 7

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink

Capsule: Alex Winger is bright, attractive, and just shy of her 21st birthday. For someone so young, she has extensive experience with and knowledge of the resistance movement on Garos IV. Her expertise with weaponry and computer systems is well known to the freedom fighters she works with. She has participated in several commando and scouting missions, and has personally led several sabotage actions. As the daughter (by adoption) of Imperial Governor Tork Winger, she is in a unique position that allows her access to information about Garos' political and military structure.

Alex has been watching the Empire ship ore and other supplies from her homeworld to a secret base offworld. When her friend, resistance leader and scientist Carl Barzon is imprisoned at this secret facility — a facility on a snow-covered mountain that Alex has seen repeatedly in visions — Alex realizes she must go there, not only to rescue Barzon, but also to unravel a part of her own destiny.

else."

Alex sighed, smiling gently at him. "You could say that," she said, removing her headset. "You won't believe this, but I dreamt I was being interrogated by someone from New Republic Intelligence!" She shook her head and a broad grin swept across her face. "They were having a hard time with the concept of an Imperial governor's daughter working for the good guys."

Chuckling, Wink remembered his own introduction to freedom fighter Alex Winger in the ops center. He'd held a blaster on her until his comrades convinced him that Governor Tork Winger's daughter was indeed a member of the resistance movement on Garos. They'd had a lot of laughs over it since then. "Well," he teased her, "you have to admit it does sound a little far-fetched."

Alex's smile faded and she stared blankly at the display on her screen. "How will I ever convince them I'm telling the truth?" she said, ignoring his taunt.

"You're not in this alone, Alex," he reminded her.

But Alex didn't seem to hear him. "There's just not that much time," she said quietly. Thoughts of a snow-covered mountainside crashed in upon her senses — two figures, one hand reaching out to another, wind whipping around their bodies, hands ripped apart, falling — No!

"Huh? What do you mean?" Wink asked. He saw that far-off look in her eyes.

She sighed, shaking her head. "It's just a feeling that I've had."

Wink turned back to his monitor, his forehead creased with furrows. "Maybe that daydream of yours is a sign, Alex. Look at this message I just got."

Alex leaned toward him to read the display. Her senses tingled with anticipation. One of their operatives at Chado's Pub was reporting an interesting conversation with a freighter captain whose ship was taking on supplies at the spaceport. "Hmm. Captain of the *Star Quest* — is that the Suwantek light freighter that's in docking bay three?" she asked Wink.

"That's the one," he told her.

Free-traders had been a more frequent sight at Ariana's spaceport in the weeks since Grand Admiral Thrawn's defeat. With the Imperial fleet in disarray, these independents had been hired to transport supplies to the Empire's secret research facility. Alex and her friends in the underground were hopeful that word of this operation would finally reach the New Republic — perhaps through a contact like this freighter captain.

"I'm going to check this out," Alex said.

"I'll inform Paca."

Alex shook her head, cocking it toward the chronometer that read 0200. "No, don't bother him," she replied. "It's probably another false lead."

"Okay," he said as she got up to leave. "Hey, Alex?"

"Yeah?" She saw him studying her face.

"Good luck," he said. "May the Force be with you."

Alex wondered if Wink suspected that she planned to do more than just "check out" the crew of that freighter. She'd never told anyone about her visions of the snowy mountainside that harbored that secret Imperial base. Something, or someone, was drawing her to it. She had to go there. It was part of her destiny.

Nodding to her comrade, Alex headed into the underground tunnel system. She had a feeling about that freighter in docking bay three. A feeling that it wasn't just another ship hired by the Empire to move supplies.



Pink eyes and perked antennae studied displays on a dozen different panels in the *Star Quest's* cockpit. Satisfied that they were at the correct location, Captain Tere Metallo pulled back on the hyperdrive levers and watched starlines form into distinct points of light. Three hours earlier their freighter had departed Garos IV loaded with supplies. With orders from the Imperials to proceed to these coordinates, their instructions were to wait for another contact.

Picking up her datapad, Metallo quietly scanned the virus program she'd be releasing into the Imperial computer network on Sarahwiee — her little contribution as backup to Page's Commandos. She smiled to herself, thoughtfully tracing the jagged scar that tore across her pasty gray face.

Gil Crosear, Metallo's first mate, slipped unobtrusively into the cockpit. Metallo had decided long ago that his uncanny ability to move about unnoticed was a talent the wiry young man had acquired from nature. After four years of working with Gil, there were times even she could not spot him in a crowd.

Scanning the emptiness all around them, Gil tapped impatiently on one of the ship's long range sensors. "Well, where are they?" he

finally asked. His dark eyes shifted rapidly between the boards and the space beyond the viewport.

Metallo settled back into her seat, calmly twirling slender fingers around the meter-length silver braid that protruded from her otherwise hairless head. Her "scantennae," as Gil called her stamen-like sensors, picked up his increased pulse rate. Patience was one virtue Gil still had not mastered. "Relax, Gilly," she gently chided him. "They'll be here."

Gil took a deep breath and pushed a loose shock of dark hair from his eyes. "How far ahead is the other team?" he asked.

"One point three hours."

"So," Gil pointed at the datapad in Metallo's hand, "you think this virus will wipe out whatever Page and his bombs don't take care of?"

Metallo nodded. "No doubt about it."

"This is one strange supply run, Cap'n," Gil said, skillfully punching keys on one board to modify his sensor scan. "Sittin' out here in the middle of nowhere."

Eying her partner, Metallo's antennae twitched slightly. Though he tried to hide it, Gil was a bit more on edge than on their previous missions.

"According to reports Command briefed us on, this is standard procedure," she reassured him.

"Command?" a voice questioned from the rear of the cockpit.

Metallo and Gil turned at the same instant. Two blasters came to bear on the young stowaway. Then all of a sudden, an alarm began to blare on the *Star Quest*.

"Is that who you're waiting for?" Alex asked calmly, pointing toward the Imperial *Strike*-class cruiser that emerged from hyperspace about 1,000 kilometers off their port bow.

"Who the *krazsch* are you!" Metallo demanded, falling back into her native Riileb tongue.

"I'm Alex," she told them. "Don't you think you'd better answer their hailing signal?"

Gil stared wide-eyed, his blaster trained on Alex, as Metallo silenced the proximity alarm. Flicking a switch on her comm board, she called, "This is Tere Metallo, captain of the *Star Quest*."

"Transmit the recognition signal, *Star Quest*," an authoritative voice responded over the comm channel.

"Transmitting now," Metallo replied, glancing back toward Alex. Her antennae moved imperceptibly, sizing up the young woman who peered intently over Gil's shoulder. She picked up no sign of distress, only a calm resolve. And it struck her as odd, that instead

of feeling worried that their cover had been blown, she found herself thinking about that name — Alex. She'd only heard it used one other time for a Human female. Her former first mate, a man named Matt Turhaya, had talked of a young daughter he'd lost in an Imperial raid. Her name had been Alex, too.

"Stand by to receive new coordinates, *Star Quest*."

The harsh voice interrupted Metallo's musings. "Ready when you are," she called.

"Transmission commencing."

Metallo checked the display as their new destination was fed into the ship's nav computer. "Transmission received. *Star Quest* out," she replied. Clicking off the comm, Metallo diverted all her attention to their unwelcome guest. She could tell there was more to this young woman than met the eye. "What are you doing on my ship?" "I'm a member of the resistance on Garos IV," Alex told them.

Gil's eyebrows disappeared behind his dark locks. He threw a sidelong glance toward Metallo. Her eyes remained riveted on Alex.

"We've been waiting for someone like you for so long," Alex continued.

"Waiting for us?" Metallo asked.

"For the New Republic —"

"Hold on now! Who said anything about the New Republic? We're gettin' paid to transport supplies for the Empire," Gil insisted, painfully aware from the expression on Alex's face that any attempt at subterfuge was in vain.

"You may be getting paid by them," Alex replied, "but I overheard enough of your conversation to know where your loyalties lie."

Metallo remained indifferent. "Keep talking," she told Alex.

"Let's see —" Alex said, "*Command* said this was standard procedure, the *other team* is just ahead, bombs, computer viruses — sounds like you're planning to drop off more than just supplies."

"That still doesn't explain to us why you're here," Gil said.

"One of my colleagues was arrested on Garos. He's being forced to work at the research facility," Alex said, watching Metallo closely. "Please, Captain, I just want to get him out."

Metallo concentrated her scan on Alex — heart rate normal, blood pressure normal — the girl seemed to be telling the truth. Recalling the briefing the command teams had concerning Garos IV, Metallo knew a previous scout had reported resistance activity on the planet. "Did your leaders authorize this little escapade?"

Alex avoided Metallo's eyes. "Not exactly."

Gil shook his head in disbelief, and Metallo noticed he was more

Tere Metallo

Type: New Republic Commando

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 7D, dodge 5D, melee combat 5D+2, melee parry 5D, thrown weapons 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 5D, cultures 5D, languages 6D, planetary systems 6D+2, streetwise 5D+2, survival 6D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 6D+1, repulsorlift operation 5D+1, starship gunnery 7D, space transports 7D+2, starship shields 7D

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Bargain 6D, command 6D, con 7D, gambling 7D+1, hide 6D+2, persuasion 6D, search 6D, sneak 6D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 7D+2, demolition 4D, space transports repair 6D+1

Special Abilities:

Biorhythm Detection: Metallo's antennae

give her a unique perspective of other species. She can detect changes in blood pressure, pulse rate, and respiration.

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 4

Character Points: 10

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink

Capsule: Tere Metallo is a native of the planet Riileb. By virtue of her birth as eldest daughter to the MotherClan, Metallo would have taken her place (at the age of 30) as inheritor of the ClanRing. But a jealous sister arranged for her to be sold her into slavery when Metallo was 25.

Fortunately for Metallo, a Corellian smuggler named Bek Nataal rescued her from the slavers. The crusty old Corellian had a heart as good as gold. Nataal taught Metallo everything he knew about ships, trade routes, and the underworld during the seven years she worked with him. During an unexpected boarding inspection by Imperial authorities, Nataal was killed. Metallo was imprisoned briefly and tortured by her captors. She managed to escape before the Empire shipped her off to Kessel.

Metallo found working passage to Corellia, where she took a job repairing freighters. Eventually she saved enough credits to buy her own ship. For a while she made legitimate runs in the Mid-Rim (and some not-so-legitimate), but the Empire kept getting in her way. Aligning herself with the Rebel Alliance, Metallo began supplying ships in the Rebel fleet. After the Battle of Yavin, she accepted a commission in Alliance Intelligence. Her ability to move in and out of Imperially held worlds as a free-trader has given her the opportunity to perform valuable undercover work for the Alliance and its successor, the New Republic.

Metallo has light gray skin and is 2.27 meters tall, antennae, and hairless except for one long silver braid — only married Riileb females and all Riileb males have full heads of hair.



relaxed than he'd been in hours. "You mean, you decided to do this on your own?" he asked.

Alex looked from Gil to Metallo. "I had this feeling. I can't really explain it." She gazed out the viewport. "It just seemed that time was running out," she said quietly.

Metallo stared at the young woman, struck by the urgent tone in Alex's voice and that look in her eyes. Something about it reminded her of Luke Skywalker's expression at their mission briefing. There had been something in his eyes, too — that sense of urgency, the dread of uncovering another of the Emperor's secrets. Even after all he'd been through in recent weeks, all he'd said was, "We must go there."

"You took a big chance, kid," Metallo said. "What if we'd been loyal to the Empire?"

"Well," Alex hesitated, "then I guess I would have introduced myself as the daughter of the Imperial governor."

Metallo's pink eyes narrowed. "Cute, kid," she grimaced. "Real cute."

"Not a bad idea," Gil chuckled softly. "Just a rebellious teen out for a joyride, eh?"

"Yeah," Alex said, breathing a sigh of relief, "something like that."

"So — you have a plan for rescuing this friend of yours?" Metallo asked.

"Well, I've got a few ideas for getting around Imperial security," Alex told them.

Gil chuckled again, a broad grin crossing his face. "One thing's for sure, she's not short on guts!"

Alex smiled for the first time. Metallo frowned, but Gil was right. You had to admire the girl's spirit. She stared down at the nav computer. They had to get moving. "Gil, do a cross check on these coordinates."

"Looks like we're headed for the right place, Cap'n," he said, verifying their heading. "Our star charts show empty space. But, knowing the Empire, I bet we're gonna find us a secret research facility."

Metallo nodded.

Alex gently tapped Metallo's shoulder. "Captain?"

"Yeah?"

"I won't get in the way," Alex told her. "And I won't interfere with your mission."

"Sure, kid," Metallo replied. "Now let's get out of here. We've got a job to do." She turned her gaze from Alex to the stars in the

distance. "And our little underground friend from Garos has a lot more questions to answer."



Only three planets orbited the white dwarf the Imperials called Bseto. Bseto I and Indikir were uninhabited. The Lweilot Asteroid Belt stretched 90 million kilometers wide in an orbit once occupied millennia ago by their sister planet. And then there was Sarahwiee. It was an ice-covered world from pole to pole. Frozen continents rising above frozen oceans — a truly inhospitable place.

But even from several thousand kilometers out the Imperial presence was not hard to miss.

"Star Destroyer," Alex said, pointing off their starboard bow.

"There's our *Strike*-class cruiser friend off to port," Gil indicated as the *Star Quest* was scanned by sensors. A few tense seconds passed before they were cleared to approach the planet. With the coordinates locked in, the ship plunged through the upper atmosphere of Sarahwiee.

"Would ya' look at that," Gil said.

"Gorgeous," Metallo whispered.

The last sparkles of sunlight glinted off a glacier as the *Star Quest* crossed the terminator into night. Canyons of ice rose majestically thousands of meters into the sky. Here and there, chunks of the ice wall broke off, crashing toward a frozen riverbed that shimmered in the moonlight.

Alex stared, awestruck by the magnificent vistas. Then her grip tightened on the top of Gil's co-pilot seat. She saw the mountain — that same snow-covered mountain she'd rappelled down in her visions —

"Alex, take my hand!" The man with sandy brown hair and blue eyes shouted above the shrieking wind. His hand reached out to hers —

Sighing, Alex closed her eyes, not wanting to know how it would end this time. For a brief moment she sensed a calming presence. But it disappeared when she opened her eyes and caught Metallo staring at her. Alex smiled, nodding to the captain — in their two-day journey, they'd spoken of a thousand different things. But she'd never revealed her visions of this place.

"Okay, Cap'n, I'm takin' her in," Gil reported.

Through thin wispy clouds, the Imperial garrison loomed atop

Sarahwiee

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Frigid
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Saturated
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Glaciers, frozen oceans, mountains
Length of Day: 23 standard hours
Length of Year: 398 local days
Sapient Species: Humans
Starport: Limited services
Population: 1,000
Planet Function: Hidden Imperial research base
Government: Imperial military
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: None
Major Imports: Foodstuffs, raw materials

Capsule: Sarahwiee was established as a secret research facility during the reign of Emperor Palpatine. It had been uninhabited, a frozen world offering few natural resources that might be turned for profit. To be absolutely certain that Sarahwiee would be relegated to obscurity, Palpatine had all references to the system wiped from the Imperial archives.

During Palpatine's reign, and continuing during the uncertain years following the Battle of Endor, a select group of fleet captains supplied provisions to the Imperial troops and researchers stationed on the planet. It has only been in the weeks since the Imperial fleet's defeat at the Battle of Bilbringi that free-traders have been hired to transport supplies necessary to continue Sarahwiee's operation.

The garrison that houses Imperial forces is the only structure on the planet. It is situated in the southern hemisphere in an extremely mountainous region. There are no roads. The only way in or out is by ship. Access to the base's two docking bays is restricted to Imperial vessels and supply vessels which pass security clearance.

the mountain. Lit only by moonlight, its shadow painted one side of the mountain in darkness, hiding snow-covered crags and one New Republic commando team.

"Okay, everybody ready for the party?" Metallo asked as the *Star Quest* landed gently inside one of two landing bays that were carved into the mountainside several hundred meters below the garrison.

"Ready," Alex nodded.

"Let's go."

As they headed down the ramp, a supply skiff pulled away from the ancient Corellian freighter parked next to the *Star Quest*. The skiff moved deeper into the bay toward the cargo lift where a stormtrooper stood guard, his blaster rifle hugged to his armored

Gil Crosear

Type: New Republic Commando

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 5D+2, dodge 5D, grenade 4D, melee combat 4D+2, melee parry 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 4D, languages 3D+2, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 5D+2, survival 5D+1

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 6D+2, repulsorlift operation 5D, sensors 7D, starship gunnery 6D+1, space transports 6D+2, starship shields 6D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Hide 5D+2, search 6D, sneak 7D+2

STRENGTH 2D+2

Climbing/jumping 5D, lifting 4D+2, stamina 6D

TECHNICAL 3D

Demolition 4D+2, space transports repair 6D+1

Force Points: 2



Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, detonite with timer fuses

Capsule: Gil Crosear, a native of Dantooine, enlisted in the New Republic military shortly after the Battle of Endor. He distinguished himself in recruit training. During wargames, he led his unit in a surprise infiltration of an "enemy-held" facility. With a natural flair for everything from ship repair to computers, and excellent undercover skills, Gil was immediately recognized as a candidate for Special Forces. After training with the New Republic's best, he was assigned to work with Tere Metallo doing undercover work on Imperially held worlds. He holds the rank of lieutenant in the New Republic military.

Gil is 25 years old, with dark hair and eyes, of medium height with a wiry build. He is quite average looking — the kind of person who blends into a crowd, a very useful trait given his chosen profession.

chest. On the far side of the bay, with its forward section barely jutting out beyond the Corellian ship, a Kazellis light freighter was docked. Alex noticed the fleeting exchange between Metallo and Gil, the flash of recognition in Gil's face as he spied the ship — the other team's ship, she decided.

Massive shield doors groaned shut behind them. Tugging at the collar of her jacket, Alex tried to ward off the cold blast of air that swept the cavernous room.

"Look up," Gil whispered under his breath.

Alex nodded, casually glancing in the direction he'd indicated. Overlooking the entire bay, two technicians occupied the transparisteel-enclosed control room even at this late hour.

On the other side of the Kazellis freighter, a turbolift door slid open. An Imperial officer climbed aboard a waiting repulsor sled, waving the driver on. Moving past parked supply skiffs, the sled finally stopped midway between the *Star Quest* and the Corellian freighter.

The sled driver gawked at Metallo, whose tall, lithe frame towered over her companions. His passenger, a young lieutenant, appeared impatient as he waited for Metallo and her crew to approach him. Disembarking from the sled, he gave Metallo a cursory glance. Then, with all the authority he could muster, he purposefully addressed Gil. "Captain Metallo?" he asked.

Gil smiled and pointed toward Metallo. Her face wore a sour scowl. Obviously Metallo was used to Imperial officers assuming that Gil was captain of the *Star Quest*. But Alex could sense she was more amused than angry. She seemed to enjoy the man's discomfort.

"Lieutenant," Metallo frowned down at him, slowly running her thumb along the scar on her face, "what's our schedule going to be on your lovely little iceberg?"

The officer flinched slightly, staring up into her calculating pink eyes. "I am Chief Duty Officer Cdera," he said. "There are two ships ahead of you, Captain. We have you scheduled for unloading at 0300."

"Excellent. I think you boys can handle everything without us." "I wouldn't doubt it, Captain," the lieutenant snickered. He didn't even bother to hide his distaste for cocky freighter captains.

"Any place for my crew to relax around here?" Metallo asked, glancing around the bay as a second skiff pulled away from the Corellian freighter.

"You are restricted to this level, Captain. There is a lounge," Cdera pointed toward a hallway that ran beneath the second floor control room. "Perhaps you and your crew," he grimaced at Alex and Gil, "will find something there to occupy your time."

"I'm sure we will, Lieutenant," Metallo replied.

Cdera glared at her, then turned sharply in crisp military fashion and climbed back aboard the sled. He muttered something to the driver as the sled moved away.

Metallo shrugged. She'd put on a fine show, but the lieutenant had been unimpressed.



"I'm impressed, Captain," Alex replied quietly to Metallo's unspoken thoughts.

"Huh? How'd you —"

"Captain," Alex interrupted, "there's a computer workstation on the other side of the ship."

"Two techs unloading the Corellian in bay two, Cap'n," Gil noted. "Alex should be able to get to those computers for a few minutes."

"Keep an eye on that stormtrooper, Gil. Kid," she motioned toward Alex, "you come with me."

Within a minute, Alex had tapped into the base's computer system. Displays splashed across the screen showing the layout of the garrison. Alex waded through massive amounts of information as Metallo looked on.

"I hope your friends are aware of the security checkpoints in this facility," Alex told her.

"Don't worry about my friends. Did you find your Dr. Barzon?" Metallo asked.

"Level 18, room 14E," Alex replied, logging off the system.

"Okay," Metallo said, glancing around the bay. Her eyes came to rest on Gil, and her tough exterior melted away. It was clear that she cared for him, in a motherly sort of way.

"It's all right, Captain," Alex said softly, sensing Metallo's concern. "I'll take care of Gil."

Metallo forced down the lump in her throat. She turned back toward Alex, her feelings masked behind a stern expression. "Just remember, kid — you've got three hours to get back to the ship."

Alex studied the older woman's face. The stern look disappeared, replaced by the trust that had grown between them during the last two days.

"And make sure you don't trip any alarms," Metallo added with a sly grin on her face.

Alex smiled. "Right."

Metallo paused, then nodded confidently. "Good luck, Alex."

"Captain Metallo?"

"Yeah?"

"The Force will be with us."

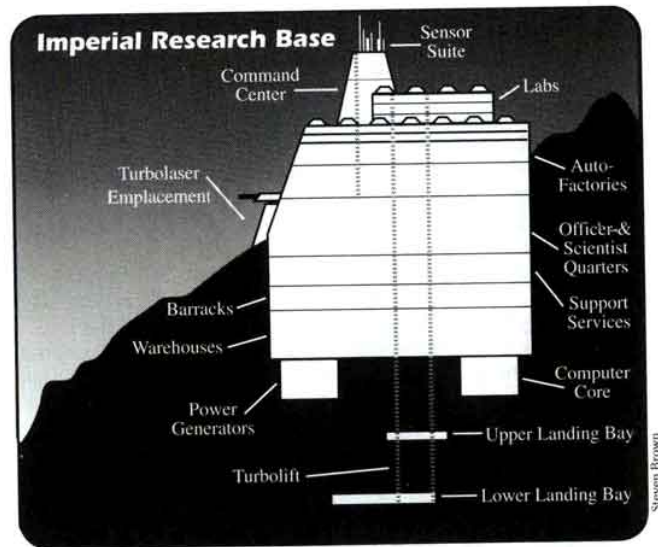


Metallo sat stone-faced, peering at her opponents over the best sabacc hand she'd had all night. Lucky for her, the off-duty tech and the two Corellians were unaware of Riilebs' polygraphic ability — they might actually accuse her of cheating!

Conversation at the next table had become more animated as the hour grew late, but Metallo concentrated on her game. She gave no indication that she recognized the female freighter pilot who entertained another off-duty tech with one fantastic story after another.

Taking a drink of her ale, Metallo eyed the old Corellian named Sapra, certain that he had a good hand. After the last cards were dealt his heart rate skyrocketed. Checking her own hand again, she smiled to herself. An 11 would give her the points she needed to win the game. Or even better, the Commander would give her a perfect 23.

Gil winked slyly at Metallo from across the room and took Alex by

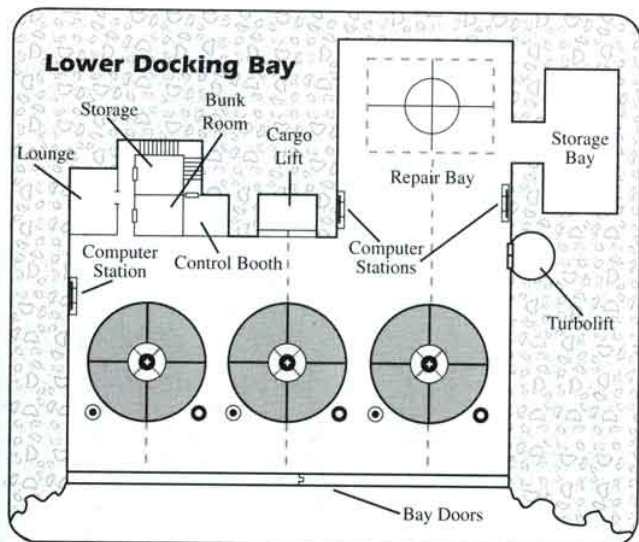


the hand. The final cards were dealt to the sabacc players. Bets were placed, and the dealer pushed the randomizer. The card values materialized. Metallo had gotten the Commander! She let out a shrill screech and all heads in the room turned to stare. Sapra threw his cards across the table in disgust as the scorekeeper announced the point total. The timing couldn't have been better if it had been planned that way — which it was. No one had noticed the departure of the two young people.



Across the corridor from the lounge, past the closed door that led upstairs to the control room, Alex and Gil slipped unnoticed into a storage room. Alex located the access panel in one corner of the room that she'd seen when studying the computer schematic of the garrison.

Silently they crawled through the ventilation system. Distant voices echoed over the hum of machinery in the artificial tunnel. The



hum grew to a dull roar as they neared the turbolift shaft that served the garrison's upper levels.

"We're in luck," Gil whispered, pointing to the liftcar that had stopped a half meter below them. "Ready?"

Alex nodded, grabbing his hands. Gil lowered her onto the lift then carefully jumped down beside her. His gloved hands worked feverishly attaching a time-delay charge to the roof of the turbolift — this explosion would coincide with ones that Page's team were planning in other parts of the garrison.

Alex watched as he set the timer for 48 minutes, watched as the seconds began to tick away. Taking a deep breath, she tried to relax. Forty-seven minutes. A chill crawled up her spine. "Someone's coming," she said, though several more seconds passed before Gil heard any footsteps.

The door below them whooshed open, and two passengers climbed aboard. The turbolift zipped upward, surrounded by walls of rock in the tunnel drilled through the mountain. Steel walls replaced rock as the lift entered the garrison. Gil tried to count the levels they passed. But one level blurred into the next until the turbolift finally jerked to a halt.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Lieutenant Page — Katarn Commandos

Lieutenant: New Republic Intelligence has determined that the Empire is secretly researching new weapons technology on the planet Sarahwiee.

Your mission is twofold. Intelligence feels it is imperative that the research labs on Sarahwiee be destroyed. Though we have been unable to confirm that the Empire is beyond the research stage, as a precaution, and based on Luke Skywalker's recommendation, the factories and storage/warehouse facilities must also be destroyed.

Secondly, destruction of the labs alone may not ensure that research might continue elsewhere. To circumvent such an event, the Imperial computer network on Sarahwiee must be violated, implanted with numerous viruses to assure destruction of their research thus far.

Timing will be critical to the safety of your people and to the success of this mission. You will have approximately three point five hours to accomplish these tasks. We are recommending that a second freighter serve as backup, offering an additional means of escape should that be necessary. Captain Tere Metallo, with whom you are familiar, has volunteered the *Star Quest*. Under the guise of free-traders, your ships will be loaded with supplies on Garos IV. You will be given orders to rendezvous with an Imperial contact who will supply the coordinates for Sarahwiee. Any other approach would alert the Imperials to your presence.

The Imperial garrison is accessible only by ship. Freighters dock in the lower of two landing bays that are hollowed into the mountainside. Freighter crews are restricted to the landing bay area. During down-phase (your arrival is scheduled for 0200 hours) one stormtrooper patrols the bay. Two or three tech crews will be on duty unloading freighters. Activity within the bay is monitored from the control room. See datafile 7631-M for base schematics.

Given the time limitations, Intelligence feels that you should consider a three-pronged approach. Team One should access the Imperial computer network. Reports indicate there are numerous workstations within the landing bay area, and with careful observation of the guard and tech crews, penetration should not be too difficult. Intelligence will provide you with the virus programs.

Team Two can be hidden in specially designed supply containers that will be moved into the warehouse (level 3) via the cargo lift when your ships are unloaded. Use of the lift beyond level 3 during down-phase would likely call unwanted attention to your people.

The approach to the research labs and factories (levels 19-23) is extremely dangerous. Because of the restricted movement allowed your teams within the garrison, these areas are best accessed through the top of the garrison. Team Three has to be dropped on the mountainside immediately before your ship enters the landing bay. This team not only has to scale the mountain, but also climb the sheer walls of the garrison. Access into the garrison can be gained through the buttresses on level 24.

Good luck. And may the Force be with you.

As the door slid open below them, Alex climbed off the lift into a horizontal shaft. "C'mon," she whispered to Gil.

Gil found himself hanging halfway out the shaft as the turbolift disappeared beneath him. "I could use a hand here," he called quietly.

Alex held out her hand, and for just an instant recalled the vision she'd had — a hand reaching out to save her, just as she reached out to help Gil now. Could Gil be the man from her visions? Gil, with his dark hair and eyes, looked nothing like the man she'd envisioned.

But if not Gil, then who could he be? Would she find him here?

With Gil safely inside the shaft, they continued their crawl. "Any idea where we are?" he asked her.

"We need to get up a couple more levels. And I think," Alex said, pointing toward a vertical maintenance crawlway, "I just found the way."

Twenty-five meters up, they entered level 18 through a supply room. Silently they moved down the corridor toward Dr. Barzon's room.

"Here it is," she told Gil. There was no security code on the door's access panel — which was unexpected, though not surprising. The mountain and Sarahwiee's harsh climate served as a deterrent to anyone who might ever think about escaping from this place.

Alex pressed the panel and the door slid open. Cautiously they entered the darkened room.

"Who's there?" a man called from the shadows. The chill is his voice matched the temperature in the small living quarters.

"Dr. Barzon?" Alex called quietly. "It's me. Alex."

A light flicked on. "Alex?" Carl Barzon scratched the beginnings of a gray beard in disbelief. "How in the worlds did you get here?" he asked looking past her toward Gil.

"We'll explain all that later," she told him. "This is Gil, a friend of mine who's here with the New Republic."

"We don't have much time, Doctor," Gil said. "We need to get out of here."

Barzon looked away, trying to hide the haunted expression on his face. "I can't leave," he said. "They will kill my son."

Outside, the wind cried. The room seemed colder than before. Alex took Barzon's hands into hers. Memories of that fateful day on Garos stampeded her senses. "Cord is dead, Doctor. We tried to get word to you before you were arrested —"

"Before I was arrested? What do you mean?"

"I — I'm so sorry. I was at the mining center. I sabotaged the shuttle platform," Alex told him, struggling to find a way to tell her friend what had happened. "I —" she paused again, and tears filled her eyes. "I saw them take Cord to the turbolift. I had no idea they were going to move him off-planet —"

Carl Barzon hung his head, and took Alex into his arms. "Oh, Alex!" he cried out.

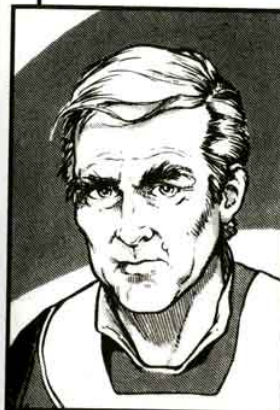
"I could have stopped them, Doctor."

Barzon looked into her eyes. He wasn't blind to the anguish that she had known. "No, Alex, I don't think so." He gently wiped a tear from her cheek. "I know you well, Alex Winger. Saving Cord would have compromised everything you and I, and our friends in the resistance, have fought for."

She nodded. Freedom had never been won without sacrifice. She'd told herself that a thousand times since Cord's death. But hearing it from Cord's father, her friend, finally put her mind at peace.

Gil, who'd been listening quietly, swallowed hard. His eyes grew wide. "Winger?" he asked. He recognized that name from the mission

Carl Barzon



Type: Professor, Resistance Leader

DEXTERITY 2D

Blaster 4D, brawling parry 3D, dodge 2D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D+1

Alien species 6D, bureaucracy 5D, cultures 5D+2, languages 6D, planetary systems 4D+2, scholar: geology 8D+1, survival 4D+1, value 6D

MECHANICAL 3D

PERCEPTION 3D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Computer programming/repair 4D, droid programming 4D+2, droid repair 4D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 4

Move: 10

Equipment: Data pad

Capsule: Dr. Carl Barzon was a professor and research scientist at the University of Garos in Ariana — he

became involved in Garos' resistance movement shortly after the Empire established a presence on the planet. He had spent more than 25 years quietly researching the natural cloaking properties of the ore hibridium, which is found only on Garos IV.

When Barzon's son, Cord, was arrested, many viewed the arrest as an attempt to blackmail Barzon into cooperating with the Imperials. When the doctor was arrested only days later, he was taken to the Empire's secret research facility to complete his research — he has secretly been trying to undermine Imperial efforts to complete his research on the hibridium ore.

briefing. "Did I hear you say Winger? As in Imperial Governor Tork Winger?"

Alex didn't say a word. She didn't need to. Gil's eyes shifted nervously from Alex to Barzon, then back to Alex where he fixed an accusing glare.

"You should have told us, Alex!"

"Gil, everything I told you was true. Does it really matter that I left out one little detail?"

"One little detail! That is not a little detail, Alex!" He turned away, throwing his hands up in disgust. "Good skies! I thought you were kidding when you said you'd introduce yourself as the Imperial governor's daughter," he groaned sarcastically.

"I'm sorry, Gil," she said, sensing he was more hurt than angry. "I should have trusted you."

"Yeah, right," he nodded. "You got any more surprises? Nevermind," he interrupted before she had a chance to speak. "I don't wanna know right now. We've got to get out of here," he said softly.

"Yes," Barzon agreed, "I have no reason to stay here now. In fact, Gil, I have information that your people should be quite interested in. But I must retrieve some files from the lab."

"That's probably not a good idea, Doctor," Gil said. "It's too dangerous and we're runnin' short on time." He looked at Alex. "You heard what Cap'n Metallo said, Alex. Get the doc and return to the ship."

Alex looked from Gil to Barzon. "Can we access the files from here?" she asked the doctor.

"No, they're my private notes. Research I didn't dare enter into the Imperial database," Barzon said.

Gil shook his head. "Alex, if we run into the commando team up in the lab —"

"It's all right, Gil." Something tugged at the back of her mind. "I have to go there," she said quietly but with such intensity that it caused Gil to stare. "You take Dr. Barzon back to the *Star Quest*."

Gil regarded her silently, then finally nodded his agreement.

A few minutes later, they parted company. Gil gave her a thumbs up before disappearing after Dr. Barzon into the supply room where they'd come in earlier. Alex turned, walking swiftly down the corridor toward the turbolift. She pressed the call button and checked her chronometer. Time was running out.



Even before the turbolift doors opened on level 23, Alex sensed someone was waiting for her. As she stepped off the lift, she saw a man standing in a doorway halfway down the corridor. Silhouetted by light from the lab, his face was hidden in shadows. But she could sense that he seemed to recognize her.

"I felt your presence," he said quietly, stepping into the dimly lit corridor.

Alex nodded and walked toward him, confident that this was the man she'd been destined to meet. "I've seen you in my visions of this place," she told him.

He smiled, a gentle sort of smile. "Mountain climbing?"

So he had had the same vision. "Yes," she said, as one of his comrades emerged from the lab.

"We're done here, Luke," the man said. "Lieutenant Page just signalled from the warehouse. He and Lilla are headed back to the landing bay."

"Good. Thanks, Korren," Luke said. "You and the others go ahead. Alex and I will be right behind you."

Luke? Alex's eyes grew wide. "Luke Skywalker?" she asked.

Luke nodded.

Alex never had placed a name on that face from her visions, never associated the feelings she'd had with the powers of the Force. Was her destiny somehow linked with his?

"There's so little time now, Alex," he said.

Alex heard the despair in his voice. She searched his blue eyes, eyes that seemed filled with fatigue. And beyond the fatigue, she sensed a forboding in Luke's mind. Something seemed to haunt him. Something, or someone, that he had to face. Darkness beckoned, and Alex stepped back, frightened by the swirling black clouds that threatened to swallow him.

Luke held his gloved hand out to her. "Remember, Alex, the dark side of the Force breeds on our fears. Be calm. Be at peace," he said quietly. "That is the way of the Jedi."

His words were familiar to her. She'd heard them in her visions. They had always been a part of her. "I understand," she nodded, firmly grasping his hand.

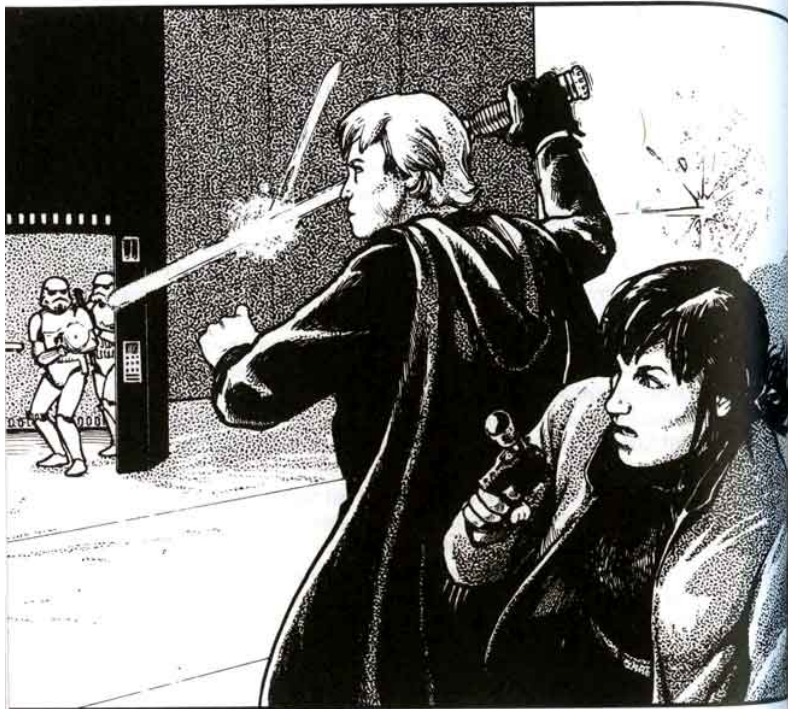
"You are strong in the Force, Alex —"

Whoosh! The turbolift door opened at the far end of the corridor. Two stormtroopers exited the lift, assigned what normally was a routine check of the labs.

"... and the lieutenant said that —" The stormtrooper stopped short, catching sight of Luke and Alex. "Hey, what are you doing in here!" he shouted, bringing his blaster rifle to bear on the intruders.

Alex whipped her blaster up and fired, hitting one stormtrooper. Luke's lightsaber hummed to life as the other stormtrooper peppered the hallway with blasts from his rifle. Blaster fire arced off the greenish-white blade as Luke deflected each shot. Sparks ricocheted off every wall, illuminating the corridor in a miniature display of fireworks. The trooper retreated toward the turbolift as Alex got off a second shot. The burst from her blaster sent him crashing into the wall.

"I don't think they had time to call security," Luke told her as he shut down his lightsaber. "But we'd better get out of here."



"Wait! I've got to get Dr. Barzon's files," Alex said. Rushing into the lab, she passed tables laden with scientific equipment and banks of computers while Luke kept a watchful eye on the corridor.

A half dozen cabinets lined one wall. But following the doctor's instructions, Alex keyed open the one on the far right. Reaching for Barzon's files, the vision of the mountain suddenly filled her senses again. Whatever happened — no matter which version played out here now — she knew Carl Barzon was safe with Gil headed toward the *Star Quest*. She had accomplished her mission.

"I'm ready to go," she called to Luke.

"C'mon, this way," he said, leading her down the hallway to a turret stairwell.

Seconds later they were outside standing on the battlement,

looking over a waist-high stone wall into the darkness. Far below on the mountainside, the shield doors of the two landing bays stood open — the lights would be their beacon.

The wind howled like a wild animal in the final throes of death. Swirling snow stung their faces. They worked in silence, securing themselves to rappelling gear the commandos had left behind. Jumping backwards from the top of the wall, they began their descent down the side of the garrison.

Every few meters Alex pushed off the wall, propelling herself down. She sensed Luke's calm presence nearby as they moved through the black void. At the base of the fortress they paused to adjust their ropes.

"Everything all right?" Luke asked, shouting above the shrieking wind.

"No problem," Alex called back.

All of a sudden, a gale-force wind knocked Alex backwards. Sliding uncontrollably down the mountainside, she quickly lost sight of Luke. She slammed into a rocky crag that protruded from the snow-covered slope. It knocked her breathless, but didn't break her fall. Searing pain shot through her body. Like an ominous shadow, memories of the vision clouded her thoughts with fear.

Calm. She heard Luke speak to her through the Force. *You must be calm.*

In her mind's eye, Alex saw Luke. She could see her rope flailing violently in the wind. Luke called out to it, and the rope flew into his outstretched hand. It went taut, abruptly jerking her bruised body to a halt. Shaken, she struggled to gasp for breath.

Alex?

Adventure Idea

The characters are members of Page's Commandos and must penetrate the Imperial research labs on Sarahwiee. They decide to access the upper levels of the garrison using the cargo lift. However, as New Republic Intelligence pointed out, the use of this lift is noticed by security within the garrison. Though the characters are able to get to level 19 and plant explosives, their work is interrupted by stormtroopers. The characters must fight their way back to the landing bay, gain access to the control room and open the shield doors so their ship can escape. Once airborne, they must avoid TIE fighters from the *Star Destroyer* in orbit around the planet.

Alex felt Luke's touch. She tried to relax, to envelop herself in his calm. Summoning what strength she had left, she fought to hold on long enough for him to reach her. Her arms ached as she clung to the icy slope. Her legs felt numb. But finally, above the wind's deafening roar, she heard him calling her name out loud.

"Alex, take my hand!" Luke was just above her, perched on a small rocky ledge. He leaned down, stretching his hand over the snow white slope.

Alex reached up, her hand trembling. Suddenly, the snow gave away beneath her. Dangling precariously over the newly-formed chasm, she clutched the rope with both hands.

"I can't let go," she shouted to Luke.

"You can do it!" he told her.

It was almost as if he willed her the strength to reach up and touch his fingertips. She could feel the Force surrounding her as Luke reached out to take her hand into his.

He pulled her safely into his arms. "You okay?" he asked.

Taking a deep breath, Alex forced the physical pain to the back of her mind, and nodded. "Yeah."

Luke studied her face for a moment. His hand reached up to wipe the blood from a small cut on her forehead. He could tell she wasn't in any shape to continue down the mountainside to the lower bay where the ships were docked. "Let's go in through that upper landing bay," he said, pointing toward lights some 30 meters away along the mountain slope.

Alex looked in the direction that Luke indicated. Then she peered up the darkened slope, just able to trace the outline of the fortress silhouetted against Sarahwiee's dawning gray skies. She hadn't realized how far she'd fallen. "Guess I took the short cut, eh?"

Luke smiled. "Some short cut!"

"I'll try to stay with you this time," she grinned.

They trekked across the mountainside to the bay where a *Lambda*-class shuttle was being prepped for departure.

"Alex, I want you to reach out with your senses," Luke told her. This seemed as good a place as any to begin a little Jedi instruction. "How many presences can you feel?"

Alex concentrated on the bay, ignoring the cold, biting wind. She closed her eyes. "Two." She paused, cocking her head to one side as she felt a distant shadow just at the edge of her subconscious. "No, three," she said.

"Very good. Okay, get ready."

Alex nodded, wondering what Luke had in mind. Suddenly, a loud

crash reverberated through the hollowed-out chamber.

"Let's go!" Luke said.

As they darted across the bay, Alex spied two harried technicians scurrying toward a pile of crates that had toppled from a supply skiff near the cargo hatch of the shuttle. The skiff driver stood, hands planted on hips, eyeing the mess.

The diversion worked. No one saw Luke and Alex steal aboard the turbolift. As it descended toward the landing bay where their ships were docked, Alex glanced at Luke, noting the troubled expression in his eyes. Reaching out through the Force, she sensed the unfriendly presence they were about to face.

Luke's hand moved toward the lightsaber hooked at his waist. Alex intercepted his hand, entwining her fingers through his. "Just follow my lead," she told him. Wrapping her arms around Luke, she pulled him close and kissed him.

The turbolift door slid open. A young supply tech blocked Alex and Luke's entry into the bay, not that either of them had noticed. For a few seconds, Alex managed to forget what deep trouble she and Luke could be in. She sensed he was enjoying the impromptu kiss as much as she was.

Smiling, the technician cleared his throat. "You getting off here?" he asked, as Luke slowly pulled away from Alex.

Alex blushed, her eyes lowered. Luke looked at the technician, peered past him into the bay, and nodded. Shaking his head in disbelief, the tech watched as Luke took Alex's hand and led her from the turbolift.

Adventure Idea

The characters are starfighter pilots attached to a New Republic task force. The small fleet is waiting in a system adjacent to Sarahwiee to offer assistance to Page's Commandos if needed. The fleet receives a signal from Page's Commandos — Imperial forces have been alerted to their presence and the commandos expect to meet some resistance as they attempt to escape the system. The characters are flying X-wings or Y-wings as escort for a Mon Calamari cruiser, and must provide cover escort for the light freighters fleeing Sarahwiee with Page's Commandos. The opposition includes an Imperial Star Destroyer and one *Strike*-class cruiser, as well as several flights of TIE fighters.



Alex spied Metallo near the hatch of the *Star Quest*. Lieutenant Cdera, the officer who'd greeted them earlier, was there, too, arguing with the captain. Cdera gestured vehemently toward the dozen stormtroopers exiting the cargo lift. Something told Alex their troubles weren't over yet.

But at least her little ploy seemed to have worked. The technician sauntered past them into the lift as Alex glanced nervously toward the stormtroopers. Then suddenly, an angry wave pounded her senses. She could feel the technician's expression blacken. It hit him like a bolt of lightning — only Imperial personnel were cleared to use the turbolifts that served the garrison. His hand reached out to block the lift door before it closed. "Hey — wait a minute!" he shouted.

Alex turned, reaching for her blaster, and fired. The technician

slumped to the floor of the turbolift and the door quietly slid shut.

Hearing the commotion, Lieutenant Cdera swung around. He pulled his own blaster to ready position. "Stop those people!" he ordered over the dull roar of ship's engines, motioning the stormtroopers to intercept Luke and Alex. He never saw Metallo pull her own blaster.

Up in the control booth, one of the technicians reached to sound the alarm. Blaster fire illuminated the booth, and two more Imperials fell.

The stormtroopers opened fire. Luke's lightsaber hissed to life, deflecting a shot meant for Alex as they sprinted across the bay. Near the *Star Quest*'s open hatch, Metallo was methodically picking off stormtroopers. A blast blackened a hatch strut next to Metallo's head as Luke and Alex came up beside her. Another shot bounced off Luke's lightsaber. From controls inside the cockpit, Gil lowered the ship's concealed laser cannon. A barrage of gunfire sprayed the Imperials.

Several stormtroopers seeking cover ran toward the Kazellis freighter. Caught in the open, they were surprised by the commandos who had taken up positions around the freighter and joined in the firefight.

In a matter of seconds, the battle was over.

"Thanks for your help, Metallo," Luke said as he hooked his lightsaber back onto his belt.

"Love to stay and chat a while, Luke," Metallo told him, "but I bet we're gonna have more company."

Luke seemed to be focusing on somewhere else. He glanced up and nodded at the figure standing in the control room. "Page has jammed communications. And he's got the turbolifts off-line. It'll be a few minutes before they figure out what's happened down here."

Metallo gave Luke a two-fingered salute as she headed into her ship.

Alex turned to face Luke. She finally understood — the visions, the unusual insights — all the pieces had come together. Luke Skywalker had opened up a whole new world of possibilities for her. He would always be a part of her. No matter that events would take them on different paths for now — they were a part of the Force, bound together by its energies. And perhaps, someday, she would come to know the Force completely. But, for now, they each had a job to do elsewhere.

"There's work to be done on Garos," she told Luke.

"You'll have some extra help now," he replied.

Alex glanced toward the cockpit of the *Star Quest* and nodded. Her

eyes came back to Luke's, and she held her hand out to him. A shy smile crossed her face. He took her hand into his and squeezed it gently. "We will meet again, Alex," he said.

He watched her walk up the ramp into the freighter. Alex took one last look back and waved good-bye.



The *Star Quest* rose into the sky just as the sun peaked its head through clouds in the east. Carl Barzon came up beside Alex in the cockpit, placing his arm across her shoulders. "I never thought I'd leave this place," he said. "Thank you, Captain Metallo."

"Alex is the one you should thank, Doctor," Metallo told him. "For the daughter of an Imperial governor, she's some kinda' Rebel."

Barzon smiled at Alex and gently kissed her on the cheek before heading back into the passenger compartment.

"Gil told you?" Alex asked.

"Yep."

"I —"

"Don't say anything, kid," Metallo said.

Alex nodded as Gil entered the cockpit, winked slyly at her, and strapped himself into the co-pilot's seat.

A brilliant explosion flared behind them as the *Star Quest* moved out of Sarahwiee's atmosphere and toward deep space. "Gil, plot us the quickest course outa' here."

"Course computed and laid in, Cap'n."

"We're away," Metallo called, pulling back on the hyperdrive.

Alex gazed out the viewport as the stars blurred into starlines. A feeling of calm pervaded her senses. Across the endless boundaries of space, she felt Luke's mind touch hers one last time.

HoloNet Hype



Where Are the Jedi?

To the Editor:

I started getting the *Journal* with issue two. One thing that I've never seen in the roleplaying game, novels, or the *Journal* is good roleplaying information about the Old Republic like the events in the *Tales of the Jedi* series. This, in my opinion, would be fun and interesting because more Jedi characters could play in a larger group. This would also be a good idea since the new trilogy is coming.

I really enjoy the stories, *Galaxywide NewsNets*, *New Horizons*, and the *Smuggler's Log*. I just read issue four and loved the new story by Kathy Tyers. I'm really mad about missing the Timothy Zahn story. Do you have any plans for stories by Dave Wolverton, Vonda N. McIntyre, Kevin J. Anderson, or even Tom Veitch? The *Journal* is great!

Justin Bell, Midland, TX

Regarding the Jedi and the Old Republic — right now we can't really venture into that realm, mostly because Lucas-film has asked us to avoid it.

I'm glad you enjoyed Kathy Tyers' story. Keep watching the *Journal* for more tales from her, Timothy Zahn and Mike Stackpole. At this time we don't have any plans for stories by other authors, but they're always invited to inquire about writing for the *Journal* — *Star Wars* fans would be delighted to see stories from them.

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WANTED BY CRACKEN



BRYCE AGORIS

Species: Human Sex: Male
Homeworld: Alderaan
Height: 1.9 meters Age: 32

Crimes Against The New Republic: Desertion, theft of New Republic military hardware

Reward For Capture: 5,000

Bryce Agoris was a lieutenant in the Rebellion's elite infiltrator brigade and was in very good standing — an exemplary officer. Then things began to go wrong. He became unruly and disobeyed orders. Shortly before the Battle of Endor, he deserted with the help of a freelance operative of the Gorvan Horansi species named Myrqaanti,

along with roughly two million credits worth of normal and experimental equipment. The most important equipment stolen was a prototype starfighter originally taken from the Empire.

The two were last seen in the Nal Hutta system — what they were doing there is unknown. They were travelling in the starfighter they stole,

Continued on following datapage



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■ AGORIS, BRYCE/TEXTFILE/CONTINUED

which they have named the *Warhog*. These two are only wanted for questioning — most of their recent activities has been decidedly anti-Empire.

Operatives approaching these two should be very wary, as it is unknown what state of mind the two are currently in. Also, Bryce, as a member of the Infiltrator branch of the Rebellion, is a highly skilled operative trained to kill many different ways, and skilled in the arts of subterfuge as to be difficult to track down.

■ Bryce Agoris

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Blaster 6D+1, blaster: blaster rifle 7D+1, brawling parry 5D, dodge 6D+2, melee 6D, melee parry 6D+1, running 4D, thrown weapons 7D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Streetwise 5D+1, survival 5D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Astrogration 3D+2, repulsorlift operation 3D+2, sensors 3D+2, starfighter piloting 6D, starship gunnery 4D, starship shields 3D+2

PERCEPTION 3D

Command 3D+2, con 6D, hide 5D, search 4D+1, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 5D

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Demolition 4D+2, security 7D

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: BlasTech A280 blaster rifle (5D+2), comlink, garotte (STR+1D), helmet with rebreather, infiltrator uniform, 3 medpacs, thermal detonator (10D), 3 throwing knives (STR+1D), 2 vibroknives (STR+1D)

■ ADDENDUM/PERSONAL

■ CRACKEN, AIREN/GENERAL..

I have actually met Lieutenant Agoris and have a hard time believing he would pull a stunt like this. By what little I know of him, I believe Bryce is probably attempting to launch his own personal vendetta against the Empire in retribution over the destruction of his homeworld. It is always a shame to lose the service of such a brave and able soldier, but the New Republic cannot afford to tolerate technology thieves, no matter what the reason for the theft.

This issue's Wanted By Cracken was created by Jason Knizley and James Taylor with illustrations by Kathy Burdette

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MYRGAANTI SHI-IKI

Species: Gorvan Horansi Sex: Male

Homeworld: Mutanda

Height: 3 meters

Age: 28

Crimes Against The New Republic: Theft of New Republic property, assault of New Republic personnel

Reward For Capture: 5,000

Myrngaanti was a freelance operative for the Rebellion, introduced to the Rebel Infiltrators by his constant companion Lieutenant Agoris. The two were inseparable and were extremely effective operatives by themselves or operating in groups. The only problem they ever had was discipline. It was this lack of discipline that most likely led to their rash and little understood act of piracy against the Rebellion, desertion, and theft of more than two million credits of military hardware, including a prototype starfighter.

Myrngaanti is a brawler and carouser — he loves good drinks, women, and fights. He prefers close-in combat to blaster combat, as shown by his weapon of choice: a large sword. He is strong and very agile, so it is extremely hazardous to engage him in melee combat.

■ Myrngaanti Shi-Iki

DEXTERITY 5D

Blaster 6D+2, blaster rifle 7D+2, melee combat 6D+1, melee: sword 7D+1, melee parry 6D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 4D, streetwise 2D+1, willpower 2D

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Space transports 6D, starship gunnery 4D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Hide 4D+1, sneak 3D+2

STRENGTH 3D+1

Brawling 6D, lifting 5D

TECHNICAL 1D+2

Computer programming/repair 2D+2, repulsorlift repair 2D, space transports repair 2D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 7

Move: 12

Equipment: Broadsword (STR-3D), comlink, 4 grenades (5D), heavy blaster pistol (5D), synthrope



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■ ADDENDUM/PERSONAL

■ CRACKEN, AIREN/GENERAL..

Myrngaanti was one of the finest warriors I have ever met—cunning, quick-thinking, skilled, unpredictable, and physically overbearing. What kept him from being a fine soldier was his rambunctious nature and lack of respect for authority. He is a very good man, and his friendship with Bryce Agoris means everything to him. Anyone trying to get to Bryce will have to go through Myrngaanti first.

■ The Warhog

Craft: Koonsayr VGK-3 Shooting Star class starfighter (prototype)

Type: Heavy assault starfighter

Scale: Starfighter

Length: 19 meters

Crew: 1, gunners: 1

Crew Skill: See Bryce Agoris and Myrngaanti

Cargo Capacity: 150 kilograms

Consumables: 1 week

Hyperdrive Multiplier: x1

Hyperdrive Backup: None

Nav Computer: Yes

Maneuverability: 2D

Space: 7

Atmosphere: 350; 1,000 kmh

Hull: 4D

Shields: 2D

Sensors:

Passive: 20/0D

Scan: 40/1D

Search: 90/3D

Focus: 3/4D

Weapons:

5 Laser Cannons (fire-linked)

Fire Arc: Front

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 3D

Space Range: 1-2/10/22

Atmosphere Range: 100-250/1.1/2.3 km

Damage: 7D

2 Proton Torpedo Launchers

Fire Arc: Front

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 2D

Space Range: 1/3/7

Atmosphere Range: 50-100/300/700

Damage: 9D

The *Warhog* — better known as the prototype Koonsayr VGK-3 Shooting Star — is slow but extremely well armed and durable. Its five-winged design gives it a star-like shape from the front — the addition of one laser cannon at the end of each wing gave this potent craft its name. Its proton torpedo launchers make it a danger to capital ships and it's rear firing ion cannon protects the slow ship from rear assaults. The theft of this ship has put Koonsayr behind schedule and destroyed most hopes of the Republic obtaining a supply of these ships.

■ ADDENDUM/PERSONAL

■ CRACKEN, AIREN/GENERAL..

It is believed that the *Warhog* itself is currently in very bad shape, as it has been extensively used, but it's "owners" don't have the necessary credits to properly maintain such a high-performance craft. The ship is believed to contain a large amount of weapons and various other military hardware stolen from the New Republic.

Twin Ion Cannons (fire-linked)

Fire Arc: Rear

Crew: 1

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 3D

Space Range: 1-3/7/36

Atmosphere Range: 100-300/700/3.6 km

Damage: 4D



RELIC

By George R. Strayton

Illustrated by Doug Shuler

With Grand Admiral Thrawn's recent defeat at the Bilbringi Shipyards, the New Republic has scattered the remnants of the Empire across the galaxy. Hundreds of systems throughout the Core Worlds and Mid-Rim have since thrown their support behind the fledgling government, but an equal number remain unaligned.

Over the past three months, the conflict between the New Republic and the Imperial warlords has diminished throughout the galaxy and the Provisional Council has therefore concentrated its efforts on bringing these remaining neutral worlds into the New Republic's sphere of influence.

But two days ago, New Republic Intelligence received unnerving reports from Corva Sector in the Outer Rim Territories. A relic lost for centuries has resurfaced, becoming fair game for the smugglers and pirates throughout the Outer Rim. Several powerful persons have offered enormous sums in exchange for the artifact and Intelligence has decided to acquire it before it falls into the wrong hands.

Any object that brings an asking price in the millions of credits must be dangerous to the continued existence of the New Republic ...

The characters are New Republic operatives waiting in a briefing room aboard the cruiser *Nova* for their newest assignment. After a few minutes, Corva Sector fleet coordinator Captain Naren Bluuis arrives with his Sullustan assistant. He sets down his datapad and turns on the holo-display.

Read aloud:

"As you are aware, Intelligence has discovered a potential threat to the New Republic, an object over which many have already lost their lives." Bluuis flicks a control on the holo-display, bringing up a near-perfect representation of Corva Sector. One of the pinpoints of light near the far edge of the sector glows a soft green.

"We have just learned that Mahk'khar, a crimelord from the Triitus system, appropriated the device approximately 15 hours ago. Intell has provided the coordinates of his palace on the system's second planet, Tuulab. You must infiltrate Mahk'khar's fortification and gain access to his computer records. Since he has probably encrypted his files, download every document in the portable computer we're providing you; Cryptology will have to decipher the files when you return.

"I must stress that this is a retrieval mission — avoid direct confrontation at all costs. Once you have obtained the information, return to this location to rendezvous with the *Nova*.

"No one outside this room must know about the mission. Those are strict orders from high up in the New Republic.

"This operation will commence immediately. Proceed to docking bay eight. You have been supplied with a Trianii RX4 patrol ship, designated the *Instigator*. Should anyone question your presence, inform them that you are investigating the disappear-

ance of a Corporate Sector bulk hauler called the *Star Streak*."

Naren Bluuis. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 5D, *Knowledge* 3D, *bureaucracy* 4D, *law enforcement* 8D, *Perception* 4D, *command* 5D+2, *persuasion* 5D. Move: 10, Force Points: 3, Character Points: 7. Comlink, datapad, heavy blaster pistol (5D).

The Trianii RX4 patrol ship *Instigator* awaits the characters' arrival in docking bay eight. Though streaks of carbon scoring stretch across the ship's surface, the vessel is in excellent condition. According to the nav computer, the *Instigator* will take 14 hours to reach the Triitus system.

■ Instigator

Craft: Trianii RX4 Patrol Ship
Type: Modified light patrol craft
Scale: Starfighter
Length: 33 meters
Crew: 2, gunners: 2, skeleton 1/+5
Passengers: 6
Cargo Capacity: 30 metric tons
Consumables: 2 years
Hyperdrive Multiplier: x1
Hyperdrive Backup: x14
Nav Computer: Yes
Maneuverability: 1D+1
Space: 4
Atmosphere: 295; 850 kmh
Hull: 5D
Shields: 2D+1
Sensors:
Passive: 20/1D
Scan: 35/1D+1
Search: 80/2D+1
Focus: 2/3D

Weapons:

2 Twin Turbolasers (may be fire-linked)

Fire Arc: Turret
Crew: 1 (may be locked forward and fired by pilot, but fire control is 0)
Skill: Starship gunnery
Fire Control: 2D
Space Range: 1-5/15/20
Atmosphere Range: 100-500/1.5/2 km
Damage: 4D (5D when fire-linked)

1 Ion Cannon*

Fire Arc: Rear
Skill: Capital ship gunnery
Scale: Capital
Fire Control: 2D
Space Range: 1-10/25/50
Atmosphere Range: 2-20/50/100 km
Damage: 3D+1

* The ion cannon draws off a special power generator and can only fire once per day

Episode One: Mahk'khar's Palace

Read aloud:

After 14.5 hours of lightspeed travel, the mottled sky of hyperspace bursts into starlines that immediately collapse into pinpoints of light against the blackness of space. Dead ahead looms the brown-and-green planet of Tuulab, the system's second satellite.

■ Tuulab

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Plains, hills, mountains
Length of Day: 18 standard hours
Length of Year: 452 local days
Sapient Species: Humans
Starport: Landing field
Population: 6,000
Planet Function: Colony, hidden smugglers' base
Government: Anarchy
Tech Level: Feudal
Major Exports: Minerals
Major Imports: Medical supplies

Capsule: Tuulab, the second planet in the Triitus system, has become a haven for those throughout the galaxy who desire a more pastoral life. The relatively docile weather and abundant natural resources provide these colonists with almost everything they need to survive, without forcing them to rely on high technology. During the height of Emperor Palpatine's reign, Ingas Lek of Corellia led an expedition of 721 Human settlers to Tuulab in the Outer Rim. As news of the freedom offered by the colony reached the Core Worlds over the ensuing months, a few Imperial citizens, who cared little for the Empire or for the Rebel Alliance, left their homes for the peaceful lifestyle of Tuulab. Over the years, the population of the planet swelled, at this point having topped 6,000 inhabitants. No government was ever formed, no Imperial nor New Republic outpost was ever constructed. The Tuulabi prefer to live out their rural existences without the burden of galactic politics, or galactic war.

Recently, a crimelord called Mahk'khar settled in an uninhabited portion of the planet. He has not bothered the populace, and they have not bothered him — so far a bearable but tense co-existence.

According to the coordinates provided by New Republic Intelligence, Mahk'khar's palace sits atop a large hill along the western coast of the planet's northern continent. Though Intell has the correct location, only 10 of the original 60 guards remain, left here by Mahk'khar to guard the installation in his absence.

Tall, pole-like trees — gray trunks with no leaves and no branches

—surround the compound. Between the palace and the treeline lies a 5-meter stretch of short grass, allowing guards atop the structure to immediately notice anyone who approaches the installation. The palace itself rises three stories into the air and is built of a gray-brown material trimmed in gold. Sharp angles and intricate carvings give the place a harsh appearance.

Twin staircases lead from the ground up to the set of massive doors that bars entry. Across the top floor of the palace are several shuttered windows, but not a single streak of light escapes from the structure.

Two guards, a Devaronian and a Kubaz, stand just inside the doors. If anyone knocks, the horned Devaronian pulls the door open and asks what the characters want. Should the characters attempt to con the guards, they completely fall for the ploy ... at least, that's what the characters think. The guards have specific orders to allow the infiltrators to enter the compound before ambushing them.

The guards show the characters to a waiting room off of the hallway, then return to their posts and alert their comrades to prepare for the ambush.

Strips of dim light panels line the ceilings of the palace, providing enough illumination to see about 15 meters away. The doors in the compound have security panels, requiring a Moderate *security* roll to disengage. To prepare for the characters' arrival, Mahk'khar ordered all valuable equipment and cargo removed from his palace.

Read aloud:

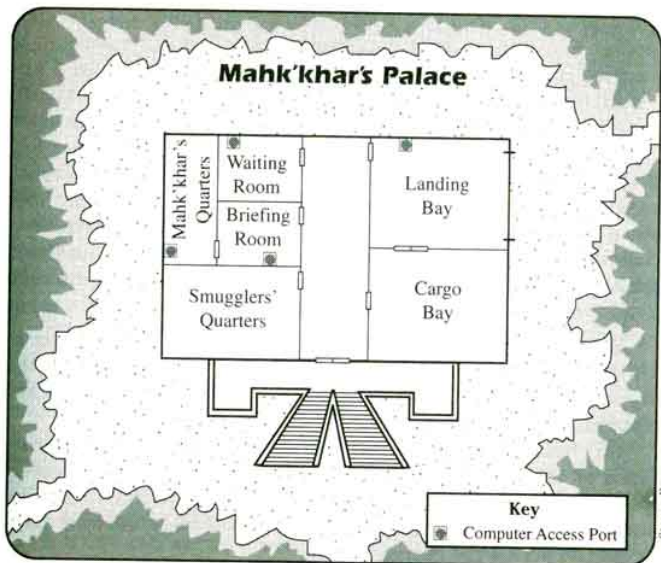
Three long, cushioned couches create a semicircle in the center of the waiting room. Exotic carpets woven with brilliant reds, oranges, and golds hang along the walls. All have similar symbolic patterns since they have their origin in the same, now-extinct, culture — the Kashi Mer.

Characters who make Difficult *planetary systems* or *cultures* rolls remember the following:

Many years have passed since your school teachers taught of the destruction of the planet Kashi shortly after the formation of the Old Republic. The reason for the star system's sudden supernova remains unexplained to this day.

The characters can recall nothing else about the planet Kashi or its civilization.

An Easy *search* roll allows a character to find a computer access terminal behind a concealed panel on the waiting room's back wall. To recover information from Mahk'khar's computers, a character



must make a *computer programming/repair* skill roll. On a Heroic result, it takes 3 combat rounds to download the files. For each difficulty rating lower, the download takes an additional round (4 rounds on a Very Difficult roll, 5 rounds on Difficult, etc.).

No matter how the characters entered the compound, whether surreptitiously or directly, eight guards open fire once the team begins to download the computer files. Should any characters be standing watch at the waiting room doorway, they notice several armed guards striding down the hallway in their direction.

10 Guards. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D, *grenade* 4D+2. Move: 10. Blaster rifle (5D).

The guards burst into the waiting room with blasters blazing. Four charge into the room while four others fire from around the doorway, ducking back behind the wall after each shot (2/3 covered, +3D to the difficulty to hit them). The remaining two, Ferran and Opf, take positions near the palace entrance in case the characters manage to blast their way through the eight other guards.

Opf, who is now experiencing his first battle, panics soon after the combat begins and triggers the internal security array. Moments

later, gray mist begins to shoot from vents throughout the compound. Everyone in the palace must make a Moderate *Strength* or *stamina* roll or immediately fall to the floor unconscious. If any characters resist the effects of the gray mist, Mahk'khar's guards beat a hasty retreat, firing a few more shots to discourage pursuit.

Unconscious characters can be revived by an Easy *first aid* roll. Should all of the characters succumb to the sleep-mist, they awaken several hours later just outside their ship. Their weapons have disappeared, but otherwise they still have all their equipment, including the computer to which they downloaded Mahk'khar's files. Once the characters have the files, they should return to rendezvous with the *Nova*. Read aloud:

As the *Instigator's* chronometer clicks down, you prepare to drop out of hyperspace. Three ... two ... one — you disengage the hyperdrives and, with a flicker of starlines, the familiar spacecape appears.

The *Nova* rests against the dark background and glimmering stars of the known galaxy while all around it smaller vessels swoop and turn, some thrusting to lightspeed, others dropping into realspace, then disappearing into the huge docking bays scattered across the cruiser's hull.

After receiving docking permission from the carrier's flight control, you set the *Instigator* down in the center of bay eight amidst several starfighters.

As you head down the ramp, a squad of ship techs swarms around your vessel and begins to scan the *Instigator's* exterior with various instruments.

You glance about the docking bay and finally see Captain Bluuis standing across the hangar, engaged in conversation with his Sullustan assistant. Bluuis hands a datapad to the short woman and she nods her head, then strides across the polished, black floor and out into the nearest corridor.

Bluuis looks up and waves you over. His mouth makes a straight, thin line across his face and his eyes seem dark and sunken.

"Report."

Captain Bluuis has just learned that several former Imperial ships attacked and destroyed a squadron of X-wings on training maneuvers in the H'ken system's 20 kilometer-wide asteroid belt. He is not in a good mood.

Once the characters report on their mission, Bluuis calls over an

Intell officer and tells him to rush the portable computer with the downloaded information to Cryptology. Before dismissing the characters, Bluuis orders them to report to the briefing room in one hour.

Episode Two: The Loremaster

When the characters report to the briefing room, read the following aloud:

Bluuis and his jowled Sullustan assistant look up from a datapad-covered table as you walk into the briefing room. With a nod, Bluuis dismisses his assistant. She gathers several datapads, then takes a seat in the front row of the terraced slope of chairs.

"Please." Bluuis motions toward the seats. "I'm afraid that grave times have come upon us. A squadron of X-wings was ambushed and destroyed in the H'ken system. Two of our best pilots were training recruits there when the surprise attack came.

"We do not know what force was behind this assault, but we have logged increased Imperial activity in this sector. The New Republic has given this the highest priority, so I have devoted most of my forces to defense and the rest to reconnaissance.

"But that still leaves the issue of the relic. I fear that the device may have some role in the recent activity and I have therefore decided to charge your team with its recovery."

Bluuis picks up a datapad and scans the text for a moment. "Here it is. We've located an archaeologist in the ... " he presses several buttons on the datapad's face, "... in the Delari system. His name is Professor Oron and he lives with his daughter on the binary system's first planet. You can download the coordinates." He walks toward you and hands over the datapad.

"Find out everything about the relic you can. The Professor seems the best hope for figuring out the key to this artifact's value.

"Unfortunately, this is the only information about him that we were able to discover before the ambush; since then I've had to reallocate all our resources to our newest problem." He walks up to the table full of datapads and slowly shakes his head as he stares at the mess.

"Report to me, and me only, as soon as you return. I fear that this conflict will escalate in the near future. If this relic can help ... " His voice fades as he stares above your heads, a mixed look of horror and sorrow upon his face.

After a moment, he glances down at you. "Good luck, and may the Force be with us all.

"Dismissed."

At this time Captain Bluuis cannot provide any additional information about the X-wing ambush or about the relic. Current circumstances have demanded all of his time — he can spare no more to speak with the characters.

Bluuis' assistant jumps up from her seat as soon as he dismisses the characters and the two begin going over the defense plans a fifth time.

The characters' lift off from the *Nova* and subsequent hyperspace journey to Delari are uneventful. When the characters reach the Delari system, read the following aloud:

As your ship drops into realspace, sensors indicate that you have arrived in the Delari system. With a blue-white surge, your sublight engines propel you toward the orange-rust planet in close orbit around the system's dual suns.

Gradually, the planet's features sharpen as you close on it. Jagged, black lines form a complex web that crisscrosses the entire world. At the poles, patches of green and violet sit in small, irregular circles. According to the information provided by the New Republic, these two areas are the only locations on the planet that support any manner of vegetation.

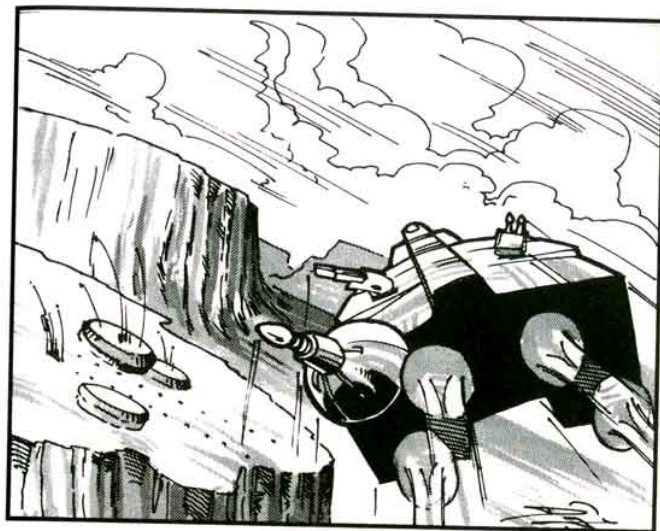
As you watch, the planet rotates, constantly hiding half of the world in darkness and forcing the rest into the twin suns' blazing radiation — records indicate that Delari Prime has only a 10 hour cycle.

The coordinates of Professor Oron's dwelling put it near the equator, about halfway into daytime. In a few more minutes you'll be on the surface.

The *Instigator's* engines whine as you plunge into the atmosphere. Violent jets of air slam into the ship, knocking it slightly off course with each impact. As you descend through the cloudless stratosphere, the details of the planet's surface come into focus.

What appeared to be jagged lines from high above the world now widen into intersecting chasms hundreds of kilometers long and at least one kilometer deep. The labyrinthine network of pathways must have resulted from severe fluid erosion over many thousands of years.

Up ahead, a dozen metallic poles jut from one of the rock islands created by the intersection of several chasms. The 10-meter tall rods bend this way, then that as gusts whip across the planet. You've arrived at Professor Oron's home.



■ Delari Prime

Type: Windswept terrestrial

Temperature: Hot

Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)

Hydrosphere: Arid

Gravity: Standard

Terrain: Canyons, rocky deserts

Length of Day: 10 standard hours

Length of Year: 113 local days

Sapient Species: None

Starport: Landing field

Population: 2

Planet Function: Former Imperial base

Government: None

Tech Level: Space

Major Exports: Information

Major Imports: High technology, foodstuffs, medical supplies

Capsule: At one time, Delari Prime was seething with life. Thousands of years ago, an asteroid several kilometers long crashed into the lush surface, knocking the world toward the system's twin suns, thereby shortening the planet's orbital distance. Within a few weeks, the oceans of the world began to evaporate, forming thousands upon thousands of rivers that crisscrossed the planet. This sudden and massive evaporation distorted the normal weather patterns, creating huge discrepancies in pressure between one location and the next. Fierce winds began to whip across the planet, furthering the cycle of erosion.

Over the next several millennia, the constant battering of the world

resulted in deep chasms that account for most of Delari Prime's surface area. The remainder, at the poles, which had been ice caps before the cataclysm, now spawned new forms of plant life that could withstand such an environment. The Empire set up a secret communications base on the planet. After the Battle of Endor, however, the base was abandoned and later sold to an elderly archaeologist.

Silent Welcome

Professor Oron has not used the subspace radio antennas since he took possession of this former Imperial outpost two years ago. He has no desire to converse with any being who wishes to use electron waves to project their voices across vast distances. Oron speaks to others only in person and therefore the characters receive no response if they attempt to hail him.

The planet's barren surface gives free reign to the wind storms that constantly rip into the pedestals of rock, eroding them ever farther. Should the ship's pilot decide to navigate the chasms, he must make a Moderate *space transports* roll or become caught in a gust that slams the *Instigator* into an outcropping — causing 3D damage to the hull.

When the characters attempt to land on Oron's island of stone, the *Instigator's* pilot must make a Difficult *space transports* roll. Should the character fail, the *Instigator* slams into the antennas, breaking them near the surface and causing 2D damage to the ship.

Once the characters exit the ship, they realize that the roar of the wind swallows any attempt at speech. Just a few moments later a cylindrical casing about three meters tall and three meters in diameter rises from the center of the island. A door slides open to reveal the interior of a turbolift.

Oron waits for the characters to board the turbolift. Then, by remote control, he closes its doors and brings it down to the lowest level of the outpost, the only portion of the facility with full power.

Once the characters reach the bottom of the turbolift shaft, the turbolift jerks to a halt. Light panels in the ceiling flicker and click, then resume their stable hum as the door slides halfway open.

The outpost has fallen into severe disrepair since the Empire left. Oron does not have the resources to maintain it; he barely had the credits to buy it from the Empire in the first place. The only remaining equipment in working condition is the *Lambda-class* Imperial shuttle that the professor and his daughter used to fly to Delari Prime.

When the characters step out of the turbolift, read the following aloud:

You step into a room lit by several rows of light panels in the ceiling. A few sections of panels flicker constantly, alternately throwing shadows into far corners and then obliterating them with an artificial blue-white glow.

It looks like a bantha just came through here. Piles of datapads cover the half-dozen tables scattered about the room and ancient databooks and devices lay strewn across the floor. Movement near the far side of the chamber draws your attention as a balding Human, a scruffy gray beard hanging from his face, pushes himself up from a metal chair and braces his hands on the desk in front of him.

(In a raspy voice) "Lost your way? Well, I've already charted the hyperspace route to the nearest inhabited system. Take it and be gone."

The professor does not want to be bothered by anybody. He has much research to do, and little time left to do it in. He believes he has only a few more months to live, though no physician has agreed with that prognosis — he just senses it.

Until a few years ago Professor Oron studied the ancient cultures of the galaxy, pouring over millennia-old text written in dead languages, scouring devastated planets for hidden remnants of their civilizations, and leading expeditions to unexplored worlds. But, since the fall of the Empire, Oron has locked himself away in this stronghold so he can, without interruption, create a master database containing the overwhelming amount of information he has collected over his lifetime.

The characters have several options to extract whatever information Oron knows about the relic. Bribery does not work on the Professor since he believes he will have no time to spend the credits. If the characters intimidate him (a Moderate *intimidation* roll), he reluctantly divulges what he knows about the relic.

After scrounging through his computer records for a few moments, he calls up the scandoc about the relic. He reads the display, muttering to himself every few seconds as he does so.

Apparently the artifact — a dark gray stone roughly in the shape of a prism — was an heirloom of the Kashi Mer monarchy. The device was stolen by a young student of the Force named Reda Jalooz. Several months after taking the relic, Reda returned to Kashi, saying she had uncovered a dark secret locked within the artifact, and that this was what had forced her to steal it. She had recently conquered the relic after realizing her misdeed and now came to ask

the forgiveness of the Kashi Mer people. But shortly after she arrived on the planet's surface, the Kashi system's sun went supernova, destroying in an instant the planet and its thousands-year old culture.

Enter the Empire

On a Moderate *con* roll, a character may induce Oron to give up this information — anything to get the characters out of his lab. He also tells them about his encounter with the Imperials earlier today. Read aloud:

The professor begins to shake, then drops into his chair with a thud. His quavering voice sounds small and thin as it carries across the room.

"I'm sorry," he says as he presses several buttons on a control board to his right. "The Imperials arrived just a few hours ago. They took my daughter Meela and said they'd kill her if I refused to cooperate." He leans back, looking weak and tired as a pulsing red control casts a crimson shadow across his wrinkled face.

"They knew you were coming. Hurry, you don't have much time to escape."

Several hours ago, an Imperial force landed and captured Oron's daughter, Meela. They ordered the professor to hand over all the information he possessed regarding the relic and to alert them if any others came seeking the same data. If he refused, or they later discovered that he had held back any information, they would kill Meela. The Imperial leader told him that they expected a New Republic force to arrive within a few hours.

The comm signal Professor Oron just pressed alerts the hidden TIE interceptors that others have come looking for information about the relic.

If the characters threatened Oron, he fails to tell them about the Imperial's impending arrival — to escape, the characters must sprint across the space between the turbolift and their ship, about 20 meters, as the TIE interceptors fire upon the *Instigator*.

Once the characters take off, the four Imperial fighters close and engage. The fighters were left behind to deal with anyone seeking information about the artifact.

Unfortunately for the Imperial pilots, the interceptors were not created for operation in such a wind-swept atmosphere — their maneuverability drops by 2D. Their controls feel sluggish, their ships' responses slow. Any character who observes the Imperial

vessels immediately realizes this problem on an Easy *starfighter piloting* roll.

4 TIE Interceptors. *Starfighter, starfighter piloting 3D, starship gunnery 3D+2, maneuverability 3D+2 (1D+2 in Delari Prime's atmosphere), space 11, atmosphere 435: 1,250 kmh, hull 3D. Weapons: 4 laser cannons (fire linked; fire control 3D, damage 6D).*

If the *Instigator's* pilot descends into a chasm, he may successfully navigate the pathways by making a Moderate *space transports* roll during each round of combat. Every few seconds, the chasm abruptly turns in a different direction.

On the third round of combat, the *Instigator* turns down a rock corridor to find a dead end straight ahead. The pilot must succeed at a Very Difficult *space transports* roll or graze the cliff face while veering upward, causing 5D damage to the ship's hull. Centrifugal force presses the characters into their seats for the few seconds it takes for the acceleration compensators kick in. If the Imperials fail their *starfighter piloting* rolls, they smash into the sheer wall and explode in green-and-white spheres of sparks, gas and flames.

The characters leave the Delari system and return to their rendezvous with the *Nova*.

Episode Three: Imperial Interlude

Read aloud:

You arrive at the carrier cruiser to see a flurry of ships flitting into and out of the landing bays. It takes only a few minutes to set down and disembark. Bluuis' Sullustan assistant, Kiara, walks up to you and hands over a message from Bluuis telling you to report to the briefing room immediately.

You enter the briefing room to find Captain Bluuis already at the holo-display. Two Intell officers stand on each side of the display pointing at various locations on the hologram while they jabber streams of lingo you've heard from operatives before, but still haven't been able to decipher.

Bluuis looks up and nods toward the tiered rows of seats in front of him as the Intell agents continue their quick, monotone speech.

"Thank you, gentlemen," Bluuis says to the agents, cutting off their diatribe. They both nod once and head out of the briefing room.

Bluuis turns to you after the door slides shut behind the two Intell officers. "Cryptology has decoded the files. According to

this information, Mahk'khar sold the device to ... " he pushes a few buttons on the holo-display and the image flickers, then becomes a page of text, "... to Ree Shala, a known smuggler in this sector. Her organization has recently begun to expand. Apparently, she offers greater cuts to her employees.

"Intell has provided the coordinates of the bases we know about. I've already dispatched teams to four of the five — you will investigate the fifth." The hologram flickers again, changing to a familiar sector grid. A single point glows green. "Proceed to the Jaresh system. There you'll find Shala's base on the moon orbiting the third planet. I've already had the precise coordinates downloaded to your ship's computer.

"Now, what were you able to learn from Professor Oron?"

Bluuis nods with interest as he listens to the characters' tale. If they mention their bout with the Imperials, he says, "I knew this relic was important." After commending the characters on their efforts, he reminds them that this information must remain secret. At this time only Bluuis, his assistant and the characters know about the mission.

"Gentlebeings, this operation is of great importance to the New Republic. Good luck and may the Force be with you."

The control station gives them immediate take-off clearance when the pilot signals that they are ready to depart. Allow the characters to undertake whatever activities they like while cruising through hyperspace. But about five hours into the trip, read the following:

Without warning, the *Instigator's* hyperdrive cuts out — you don't know whether it's a system malfunction or ... then through the viewport you see three heavily carbon-scored Imperial system patrol craft and a single Skipray blastboat hanging in space a scant few kilometers away. The oblong patrol craft have the blastboat surrounded, but suddenly their sublight engines flare a brilliant blue and they begin to break formation.

The patrol craft jump to lightspeed as soon as possible, leaving the disabled blastboat behind. Should the characters successfully strike a patrol craft with a good solid shot from the *Instigator's* guns, the patrol vessel explodes in a violent ball of green-and-yellow flame. The other patrol craft quickly jump to hyperspace.

3 System Patrol Craft. Capital, capital ship gunnery 4D, capital ship piloting 5D, capital ship shields 4D, sensors 3D, maneuverability

Heavy Ion Cannon

After testing the character's sensors readings, performing many computer simulations, and proposing several theories, New Republic scientists discover that one of the warring Imperial factions has devised a new heavy ion cannon.

This Imperial faction has begun experimenting with a new weapon that has the potential to completely ionize a ship on the first successful strike. Unfortunately, the cannon has several drawbacks. On occasion, it backfires and ionizes the vessel that carries it, shutting down the ship's controls completely. The heavy ion cannon also leaves nano-scopic fields of highly ionized particles, telegraphing the presence of a vessel that bears this weapon.

■ Heavy Ion Cannon

Model: GenaTech Weapons Zeta One Heavy Ion Cannon

Type: Heavy Ion Cannon

Scale: Capital

Skill: Capital ship gunnery: heavy ion cannon

Crew: 2

Cost: Not available for sale

Fire Control: 1D

Space Range: 1-5/15/35

Atmosphere Range: 2-10/30/75 km

Damage: 7D

Game Notes: There is a 2 in 6 chance per use of the cannon that it will backfire and ionize all the systems of the ship that carries it. At this stage in its development, the cannon requires a large amount of energy to fire and therefore can be used only once per 50 standard hour period.

The development of this powerful ion cannon can be the springboard for further adventures in Corva Sector. Characters might be assigned to discover which Imperial faction developed the cannon and either steal the plans or destroy a manufacturing facility. Perhaps they discover a weakness they can exploit, and rig other cannons to backfire. And if more Imperial ships are armed with this cannon, the New Republic's Corva Sector fleet could be waging a full-scale campaign against a powerful Imperial faction — with plenty of opportunities for further adventures.

2D+1, space 6, atmosphere 300; 860 kmh, hull 1D. Weapons: 2 turbolaser cannons (fire control 2D, damage 4D), 1 heavy ion cannon (fire control 1D, damage 7D). *The ion cannon draws off a special power generator and has a 2 in 6 chance of ionizing all the

patrol craft's controls.

On a Moderate *sensors* roll, the characters discover a cloud of nano-scopic, highly ionized particles surrounding the blastboat. The blastboat seems abandoned, and similarly explodes should the characters fire on it. The equipment aboard the *Instigator* cannot determine the composition of the field's particles, but can store enough scientific data about them to keep Intell busy for several weeks.

After this brief encounter, the characters may recalculate their astrogation coordinates and resume their voyage to Jaresh.

Episode Four: Shala's Moon

When the characters arrive at Shala's moon, read the following aloud:

The whine of the *Instigator's* repulsorlifts slows then cuts off as you land on a world of gray shadows. Hundred meter-tall trees of black, ridged bark jut through the mists, eventually becoming lost in the haze that hangs over the entire moon.

Chitters and screeches mix with tiny splashes, but you cannot see any sign of movement around you. As you disembark and walk across the ground, the surface gives way slightly, leaving imprints that quickly fill with a dark liquid.

Twenty minutes of trudging through the swamp forest brings you to an large clearing. The buzz of repulsorlift engines drifts down from directly above you, but you cannot see any ship through the thick mist.

Jaresh

Type: Satellite
Temperature: Hot
Atmosphere: Type 1 (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moist
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Jungle
Length of Day: 29 standard hours
Length of Year: 98 local days
Sapient Species: Various alien species
Starport: Landing field
Population: 20
Planet Function: Smuggling base
Government: Organized crime
Tech Level: Space (only at base)
Major Exports: None
Major Imports: None

Capsule: Many lifeforms exists on Jaresh, though none of them are

sentient. Trees reach hundreds of meters into the gray mist that continually rolls across the surface and millions of other plant species dominate the jungle floor. The crime lady Ree Shala purchased this moon two years ago. After constructing a permanent base of operations, she was able to greatly expand her smuggling activities, and now, two years later, she needs a larger command center. This system is not on a well-traveled hyperspace route, so no one has bothered her since she established her base on Jaresh.

Shala's base floats 50 meters off the ground, suspended in the air by four powerful repulsorlift engines. Since the 70 meter-diameter base was crammed with equipment, Shala arranged for a single docking bay that would fit only a small vessel, forcing the rest of her followers to land their ships elsewhere and walk to the base.

A hidden lift disk (large enough for eight people) and concealed control panel on the ground provide access to the floating base platform. A character who makes a Difficult *search* roll can discover the lift disk hidden beneath some jungle ground foliage and the controls built into a nearby tree. To operate the device requires a Difficult *computer programming/repair* roll.

The disk rises slowly, bringing the characters through an opening cut into the base's platform. It stops once the top edge of the disk becomes flush with the base platform's main deck.

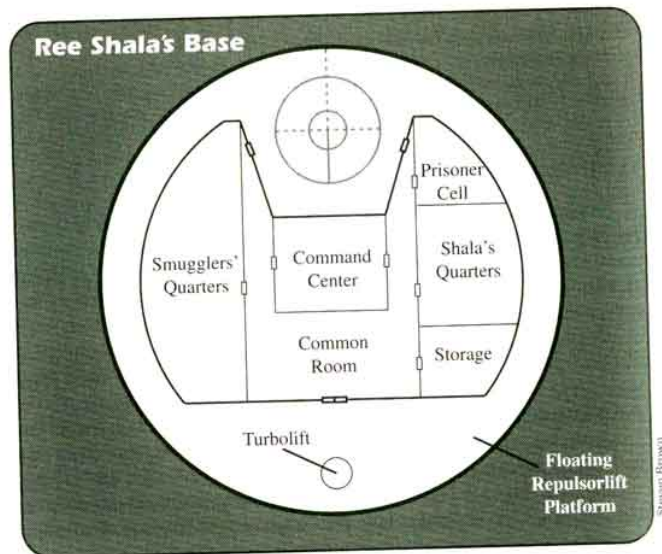
Shala built this base only two years ago, but she has recently outgrown it. The characters find only an abandoned complex. Half-eaten food and scattered debris hint that whoever was here left in a hurry, and sometime within the last few days.

The sole remaining device in operation is a modified Cybot Galactica AC1 surveillance droid. Though the AC1's standard configuration lacks weaponry, this one — altered by Shala herself — bears two fire-linked BlasTech DL-44 heavy blasters and reinforced plating.

The spherical droid waits for the characters in the briefing room. If the AC1 makes a Moderate *sneak* roll, it automatically surprises the characters when they enter.

AC1 Surveillance Droid. All stats are 1D except: *Dexterity 2D, blaster 3D, dodge 4D, Perception 3D, search 6D, sneak 4D, Strength 3D.* Two fire-linked blasters (5D). Move: 10.

After destroying the droid, the characters may inspect the remaining pieces. Any character who succeeds at either an Easy *droid programming* or *droid repair* roll knows that the AC1's power cell normally lasts for only 24 hours before it requires recharging. Since



this one has been modified with heavier plating and energy weapons, it couldn't last more than six hours without a recharge.

An Easy *search* roll in the briefing room turns up a single broken datapad with a large dent in the back and several long scratches across the front. Fixing the datapad requires a Moderate *computer programming/repair* roll.

Once the datapad is fixed, its screen flickers for a moment before displaying a profile of the gas-giant planet Galaan in the Galaanus system. Any character who makes a Difficult (Moderate if using the *Instigator's* computer) *bureaucracy* roll remembers that the New Republic has hidden a communications center and Intelligence outpost within Galaan's atmosphere. If the station were destroyed, all communication between Corva Sector and other sectors could immediately cease.

When the characters return to the *Instigator*, they see a blinking light on the communications control panel. A recorded subspace message arrived while they were investigating Shala's base. When they key for play-back, read the following aloud:

The image of Kiara, Captain Bluuis' Sullustan assistant, appears on the screen.

"Please be advised that your new rendezvous coordinates have been coded to the end of this message. You must return at once — the Imperials have begun an all-out engagement with the Corva Sector fleet. Hurry."

The transmission ends, leaving only the coordinate information for the nav computer on the display.

Any character who makes a Very Difficult *Perception* roll notices that the dark gray metallic wall behind Kiara does not match the interior design of the *Nova*.

Should the characters attempt to use the subspace radio to communicate with the New Republic, or anyone else, they discover that the comm system has experienced some kind of malfunction. An Easy *space transports repair* roll allows the character to learn that a tiny explosive device planted within the system caused the subspace transceiver coupling to short out. Without a new one, the comm unit can't be repaired.

If the characters head directly to Galaan from Shala's base on Jaresh — a two-hour hyperspace journey — go to the next episode. Should the characters return to the original rendezvous location, they find that the *Nova* has left the area.

If the characters jump to the coordinates Kiara gave them to meet the *Nova*, read the following aloud:

The *Instigator* drops out of hyperspace at the specified rendezvous coordinates, but the *Nova* is nowhere in sight. Suddenly, the energy receptor sensor array starts flashing. It seems that the sensors have picked up a huge field of ionized particles directly ahead.

Bluuis' assistant, the Sullustan woman Kiara, has betrayed the characters to the warlord controlling the Imperial forces in Corva Sector. A quick scan reveals two approaching Imperial *Carrack*-class light cruisers. The characters have only 30 seconds to jump to hyperspace before the cruisers come within range.

2 Carrack Light Cruisers. Capital, *capital ship gunnery* 4D+2, *capital ship piloting* 4D+1, *capital ship shields* 4D, *sensors* 4D+1, *maneuverability* 2D, *space* 8, *hull* 5D, *shields* 2D+2. Weapons: 10 heavy turbolasers (fire control 1D, damage 7D), 16 laser cannons (fire control 3D, damage 2D), 5 tractor beam projectors (fire control 2D, damage 4D), 1 heavy ion cannon (fire control 1D, damage 7D).

*The ion cannon draws off a special power generator and has a 2 in 6 chance of ionizing all the patrol craft's controls.

Episode Five: Assault on Galaan

When the characters reach Galaan, read aloud:

The *Instigator* slows to sublight speed. Ahead looms the massive gas giant Galaan, its green, gray and white gas clouds swirled into rippled tendrils that wrap around the planet. Bright flashes appear intermittently near the northern polar region as if an enormous lightning storm were battering the planet's liquid surface.

■ Galaan

Type: Gas giant

Temperature: Frigid

Atmosphere: Type IV (environmental suit required)

Hydrosphere: Saturated

Gravity: Heavy

Terrain: Cloudscape

Length of Day: 132 standard hours

Length of Year: 479 local days

Sapient Species: None

Starport: Standard class (at base)

Population: 3,000

Planet Function: Hidden communications and intelligence base

Government: New Republic military

Tech Level: Space

Major Exports: Information, communication services

Major Imports: High technology, foodstuffs, medical supplies

Capsule: The dense green, gray and white gases of Galaan limit visibility to only a few hundred meters. Gravity near the planet's core would crush any ship or space station, so the New Republic has constructed its base floating through the clouds in the planet's upper atmosphere. All communications between New Republic parties within Corva Sector and between Corva Sector and nearby sectors are routed through the Galaan installation, and few know of its existence. Even fewer know that the base acts as the headquarters of New Republic Intelligence for this and several other sectors.

Shala, in her stolen assault shuttle, and Mahk'khar, in his modified bulk freighter, have already begun their assault on the communications center. Two of Mahk'khar's associates have joined the battle in their Skipray blastboats. The characters must plunge into the thick gaseous planet and defeat the enemy vessels before they destroy the entire base.

Once the characters join the battle, Shala and Mahk'khar flee in their personal vessels, leaving the blastboats behind to finish off the New Republic base. Shala's vessel has a damaged hyperdrive, so she has disengaged and waits in orbit on one side of the planet — Mahk'khar flees to the other side, intent on escape.

The thick gaseous atmosphere of Galaan limits visual range to less than 50 meters. To fly their vessel, the characters must rely on the *Instigator's* sensors. Each combat round a character must make a Difficult *sensors* roll (adding the 1D to account for the *Instigator's* passive sensors) or those on gunnery lose sight of the enemy ships and cannot attack.

If the characters do not disable or destroy the attacking ships within 15 combat rounds, the blastboats destroy the New Republic base.

2 Skipray Blastboats. Capital, *capital ship gunnery* 5D, *starfighter piloting* 4D, *starship gunnery* 5D+1, *starship shields* 4D+1, maneuverability 2D+2, space 8, atmosphere 415; 1,200 kmh, hull 2D+1, shields 2D. Weapons: 3 medium ion cannons (fire-linked; fire control 3D, damage 4D), proton torpedo launcher (fire control 2D, damage 9D), 2 laser cannons (fire-linked; fire control 1D, damage 5D), concussion missile launcher (fire control 1D, damage 6D).

The blastboats use their missiles against the base and fend off the characters with their laser cannons. Should either ship be heavily damaged, they cease their attack on the base and concentrate their firepower on the characters' ship. Each blastboat has three proton torpedoes and three concussion missiles left.

When the characters fly out of the planet's atmosphere, they encounter Shala's assault shuttle, *Striker*, in orbit. Her vessel's hyperdrive motivator was damaged in the battle, so she has no way to escape. With no other recourse, she decides to con the characters, hopefully gaining her enough time for her crew to effect the repairs and jump to lightspeed.

Shala hails the *Instigator*. If the characters open communications, read the following aloud:

A female voice comes over the comm channel. "*Instigator*, this is Ree Shala. I have come to warn you of an impending attack on this planet by Mahk'khar. His vessels are in orbit on the other side of Galaan. I thought this information might put me in better, ahem, standing with the New Republic."

Shala is stalling for time, hoping her mechanics can repair her ship's damaged hyperdrive. If questioned about the relic, Shala says she has heard of the reappearance of a relic, but denies knowing anything else ... unless the character are willing to make a deal. If they promise her safe passage from this system, she reveals that Mahk'khar actually has the relic aboard his ship. He has been travelling Corva Sector to find a suitable buyer (and a suitable

price). Shala heard Mahk'khar mention that he intends to sell the relic at a rendezvous in the Jandoon system.

Shala has no intention of engaging the *Instigator* and attacks only to defend herself. It takes only ten minutes for Shala's hyperdrive motivator to be fixed. As soon as possible, she jumps to hyperspace, heading for a deserted area of deep space to plan out her next move.

Striker. Capital, capital ship gunnery 3D+2, capital ship piloting 5D, capital ship shields 4D, maneuverability 2D, space 8, atmosphere 415; 1,200 kmh, hull 3D+2, shields 4D+2. Weapons: 4 laser cannons (fire control 3D, damage 2D), tractor beam projector (fire control 4D, damage 5D+2).

■ Ree Shala

Type: Twi'lek Crime Lady

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D+1, dodge 4D, melee combat 5D, pick pocket 6D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Business 5D, intimidation 4D, languages 4D+2, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 6D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+1

Astrogation 5D+1, space transports 6D+2, starship gunnery 5D+2, starship shields 5D

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 5D+2, con 6D, hide 5D+1, persuasion 5D, search 6D, sneak 5D+2

STRENGTH 3D

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 1

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Capsule: Ree Shala started out as a smuggler working the spice runs. After many years, and many successful ventures, she decided to create an organization in which she set up the deals and others traveled the space lanes.

Over the past few years, the Twi'lek smuggler has managed to put together a mid-sized organization in Corva Sector. Recently, a mysterious Human approached Ree with a strange pro-

posal — he wanted her organization to work for him on a permanent basis. To entice Shala to agree to the arrangement, the Human offered a substantial sum as a "sign-on" bonus. She accepted the offer and took on her first assignment — to destroy the hidden New Republic communications center at Galaan. How the Human had obtained information about a hidden New Republic installation Ree did not know, nor did she particularly care.

If the characters rush to the other side of Galaan, they find Mahk'khar's modified bulk freighter, the *Dark Star*. Unfortunately, he escapes to hyperspace just as the characters arrive. If the characters make a Very Difficult *astrogation* or *sensors* roll, they can deduce that Mahk'khar had set a course for the Jandoon system.

Making a Moderate *planetary systems* roll allows the characters to recall that the planet Jandoon was the home of an ancient species of aliens who died out several centuries ago. No one has yet attempted to recolonize the world, as rumors of dark spirits inhabiting it continue to circulate the galaxy.

Episode Six: The Exchange

Mahk'khar is meeting his contact on the abandoned world of Jandoon. He plans to trade the relic to Durrei, a dark Jedi student working for one of the Imperial factions wreaking havoc in Corva Sector. In exchange for the relic, Durrei plans to trade Meela, Professor Oron's kidnapped daughter, and 10,000 credits. When the characters arrive at Jandoon, Durrei and Mahk'khar are meeting in one of the ruins on the planet's surface.

Mahk'khar doesn't realize that his buyer is part of an Imperial faction that has steadily grown in power over the past few years. He knows the appointed time, place and price for the deal — nothing more.

■ Jandoon

Type: Terrestrial

Temperature: Temperate

Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)

Hydrosphere: Moderate

Gravity: Standard

Terrain: Plains, hills

Length of Day: 25 standard hours

Length of Year: 273 local days

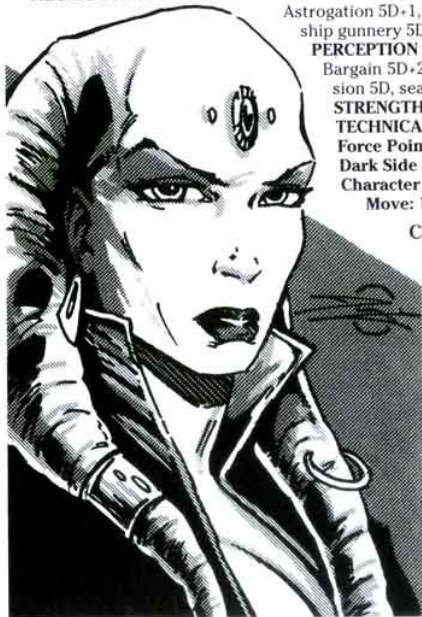
Sapient Species: None

Starport: Landing field

Population: None

Planet Function: Abandoned and ruined homeworld

Capsule: The ancient species which once filled this world mysteriously died out several centuries ago. No one has been able to discover what



caused this sudden extinction, and few would even dare venture to the planet to find out. Rumors of the wandering spirits of the dead continue to make their way through the galaxy. Ruined stone structures dot the planet's surface, but signs of technology have yet to be found. Some contend that the aliens hid their weapons and other technology deep within the world so that no one would ever find it — perhaps that was the key to their own downfall.

When the characters arrive, they may scan the planet for lifeforms. An Easy sensors roll allows the characters to pinpoint the location of two ships that have landed in a hilled area halfway between the equator and the southern pole. One ship is an Imperial *Lambda*-class shuttle. The other is a modified bulk freighter — Mahk'khar's ship, *Dark Star*.

The transaction is taking place among the remnants of an ancient stone structure built on the peak of a low hill. The characters may fly their ship into Jandoon's atmosphere and fire upon Mahk'khar and the Imperials from the *Instigator* — warn them, however, that they may accidentally destroy the relic.

The characters can land the *Instigator* within walking distance of the meeting place, concealing their ship behind one of the neighboring hills. Once they approach the stone ruins, read the following aloud:

Many of the walls of chiseled gray stone have collapsed, leaving a field strewn with jagged, moss-covered blocks. Near the center of the ruin, several figures stand around a large slab of stone about one meter high and three meters long.

One of the beings, its back to you, has two conical horns jutting from the top of its head. A blaster dangles from a hip holster as the alien places a dark, hand-sized object onto the makeshift table — the relic! Four other beings — possibly bodyguards — stand on the far side of the group, wearing blaster-scarred helmets and worn battle armor. Each carries a blaster rifle and a force pike.

Directly opposite the horned alien stands a dark-haired Human. His eyes are surrounded by shadows, his young face twisted with anxiety as he gazes at the object presented to him.

All Force-using characters (Force-sensitive if the team has no Force-users) hear a thick voice in their heads saying, "Do not let the artifact fall into their hands. Take it. Use what they desire most against them."

Continue to read aloud:

Two of the bodyguards place a crate on the stone slab, while a third pulls up a young woman and pushes her toward the horned



alien. The dark-haired young Human reaches for the relic ...

The young woman is Meela, Professor Oron's daughter. Since the Imperial faction no longer needs her, she has become a part of Durrei and Mahk'khar's bargain. The crimelord plans to sell her on the slave market. The characters must act quickly, before Durrei possesses the artifact and uses its powers against them.

When the battle begins, Durrei's bodyguards dive for cover amidst the ruins and return fire. Durrei, the Human, tries to sense any Force-users in the characters' group. He then confronts that character, igniting a lightsaber as he strides toward her. The brilliant red of his light blade stands out against the dulled tones of the surroundings.

Mahk'khar draws his blaster and ducks behind a large stone block — he grabs Meela, tells her to take the box with the credits, and slowly makes a fighting retreat, heading back to his ship. He uses his thermal detonator only as a last resort — if he is wounded, or if the characters prevent him from reaching his ship.

■ Durrei

Type: Dark Side Student

DEXTERITY 3D+1

Blaster 4D, brawling parry 5D, dodge 5D+1, lightsaber 7D, melee combat 6D, melee parry 4D+1

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

Cultures 6D, intimidation 5D, planetary systems 4D+1, willpower 5D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Astrogation 4D+1, repulsorlift operation 3D, starfighter piloting 4D, starship gunnery 3D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, command 5D+2, hide 4D+1, search 5D

STRENGTH 3D+1

Brawling 4D, climbing/jumping 5D, stamina 3D+2

TECHNICAL 2D

Lightsaber repair 5D

Special Abilities

Force Skills: Control 3D, sense 2D+1, alter 3D+2

Control: Absorb/dissipate energy, control pain, reduce injury, remain conscious

Sense: Receptive telepathy, sense force

Alter: Injure/kill

Control and Sense: Lightsaber combat

Control and Alter: Feed on dark side*

* See page 79 of *Galaxy Guide 9: Fragments from the Rim* for more information.

This character is Force-sensitive

Force Points: 8

Dark Side Points: 7

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, heavy blaster pistol (5D), lightsaber (5D)

Capsule: Durrei, a man of just 22 years, has become engulfed by the flames of the dark side. In his quest to learn to use the Force, he has fallen

The Relic

This prism-shaped hunk of unknown gray rock — 20 centimeters long and 10 centimeters wide — radiates an aura of evil, an aura of the dark side immediately recognizable by a Force-sensitive character. It was an heirloom of the ancient Kashi Mer monarchy stolen by a confused student of the Force, Reda Jalooz.

The relic provides a Force-sensitive bearer with a +3D bonus to one Force skill each round. The bearer may choose which Force skill receives the bonus, and it may be a different skill each round.

Each round a character uses the relic, it drains one Character Point. When the user runs out of Character Points, the artifact drains one Force Point per round. Once the character's Force Points have been completely consumed, the relic *gives* the character Dark Side Points.

Any Force-sensitive character who touches the relic feels a cold darkness flow through him, accompanied moments later by a surge of power. This character has full knowledge of the artifact's abilities and may use them at will.



into a pit from which he cannot return.

Many years ago a squad of Imperial stormtroopers arrived to Durrei's homeworld of Elrood and demanded that his family turn over his mother, whom they suspected of treason against the Emperor. When his father refused, the stormtroopers opened fire, blasting everything and everyone in their path. Durrei's rudimentary Force skills failed him in his time of need and his anger flared. He called upon the dark side to give him the power to destroy these ravagers. In that instant he felt the black power that had been granted to him rip through his body and he unleashed it upon his enemies, striking them

down one by one. Unfortunately, neither his mother nor his father survived the battle. Since then, Durrei has traveled in search of those few who could teach him anything about the Force, learning what he could. He has dedicated himself to learning as much as he can about the dark side so he will never be so helpless again.

Several years later, a stranger appeared at his home, asking if Durrei would like to join him in his battle against the remnants of the Empire. Durrei agreed without asking any further questions of the mysterious man. He discovered soon afterward that the man had stolen Imperial technology and planned to use it against those who had created it.

Recently Durrei learned of the appearance of an ancient artifact, which he believes, after researching it thoroughly, holds the key to tap directly into the dark side. He convinced his new master to give him access to troopers and former Imperial vessels so that he could retrieve the device.

Durrei's Bodyguards

Type: Bodyguard mercenaries

DEXTERITY 4D

Blaster 6D+2, brawling parry 6D, dodge 6D+1, melee combat 5D, melee combat: force pike 7D+2, melee parry 5D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

Intimidation 4D+2, streetwise 3D+2, survival 4D

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Repulsorlift operation 4D

PERCEPTION 4D

Search 4D, sneak 5D+2

STRENGTH 4D

Brawling 6D, climbing/jumping 5D, stamina 5D+1

TECHNICAL 4D

Demolition 4D+1, first aid 3D, security 4D+1

Move: 10**Equipment:** Blaster rifle (5D), mercenary armor (+2D physical, +1D energy, -1D Dexterity), force pike (STR+3D)**■ Mahk'khar****Type:** Gotal Crimelord**DEXTERITY 3D**

Blaster 6D+2, brawling parry 5D, dodge 5D+1, grenade 5D+2, melee combat 4D, melee parry 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Bureaucracy 5D, business 6D, cultures 5D+2, intimidation 4D+2, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 7D, value 5D+2

MECHANICAL 2D**PERCEPTION 4D+2**

Bargain 7D+2, command 5D+2, con 6D, persuasion 5D+2, search 6D, sneak 6D,

STRENGTH 3D**TECHNICAL 2D+1****Special Abilities:****Energy Sensitivity:** +3 to search when hunting in wide open areas; +1D in crowded areas; -1D in intense radiation.**Fast Initiative:** Gotal receive a +1D bonus when rolling initiative against non-Gotal opponents.**Mood Detection:** may receive Perception bonuses or penalties (for more information on Gotal's special abilities, see *Galaxy Guide 4: Alien Races*, page 48).**Force Points:** 2**Dark Side Points:** 2**Character Points:** 3**Move:** 10**Equipment:** Heavy blaster pistol (5D), thermal detonator (10D)**Capsule:** Mahk'khar has risen from his role as a lowly bounty hunter to become one of the most powerful crimelords in

Corva Sector. He has recently entered into an arrangement with a wealthy Human who would like to permanently hire Mahk'khar's services. The Gotal's first assignment was to acquire a relic that had recently been discovered. Mahk'khar did so, but soon after discovered that New Republic Intelligence had learned of the acquisition. To throw Intel off his trail, he planted some misinformation in his palace on Tuulab and left a skeleton force to "guard" it. The New Republic would hopefully believe the ruse and target Ree Shala as the new owner of the relic. Mahk'khar then received his second set of orders — to destroy the New Republic base at Galaan. The mysterious Human said only that others would accompany Mahk'khar's forces, but failed to reveal the identity of the allies.

Mahk'khar has always had a passion for any art or literature depicting the mythology of ancient cultures. "Legends spawn culture," he has been known to say. "I will one day be a legend. And that day will come soon."

If the characters defeat half of Durrei's bodyguards, Durrei attempts to flee with the relic, charging behind the remains of the stone structure while calling the shuttle over his comlink. He leaves his remaining bodyguards to deal with the characters.

After the battle, the characters might pursue either Durrei or Mahk'khar if they escape. Both ships could be recovered if their owners are killed or captured — they would be very useful on various missions for the New Republic's Corva Sector fleet.

Mahk'khar's Modified Bulk Freighter *Dark Star*. Capital, astrogation 3D+2, space transports 4D, capital ship gunnery 4D, capital ship shields 3D, maneuverability 1D, space 2, atmosphere 225; 650 kmh, hull 3D, shields 1D. Weapons: 2 laser cannons (fire control 1D, damage 4D).

Durrei's Lambda-Class Shuttle. Starfighter, space transports 5D, starship gunnery 4D+2, maneuverability 1D, space 5, atmosphere 295; 850 kmh, hull 4D, shields 1D+2. Weapons: 3 double blaster cannons (fire control 2D, damage 4D), 2 double laser cannons (fire-linked; fire control 3D+1, damage 4D+1).

Epilogue

After the characters return to the *Nova*, they brief Captain Bluuis on their findings. Bluuis commends them for their bravery and dedication. If the characters managed to retrieve the relic, it is taken to a hidden New Republic scientific outpost for further study.

If the characters mention anything about Kiara's betrayal, Bluuis tells them that she recently put in for a transfer and left for a diplomatic post on Coruscant yesterday. After this meeting he plans to issue an order for her immediate arrest.

Fragments from the Mind's Eye

by Pablo Hidalgo

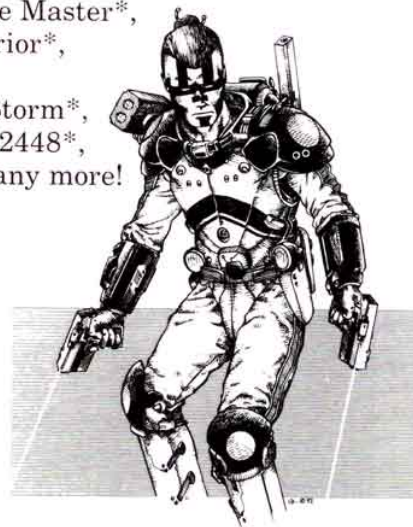


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RINGERS



By Laurie Burns

Illustrations by Doug Shuler

The kid was just too damned lucky.

Ignoring the bustle of the busy Stassia squad room around him, Sergeant Zeck Tambell watched the holo again with an odd mix of personal envy and professional disgust. Amid the clutter on his desk, a miniature Reye Sedeya was gloating over his credstick while a security droid stood nearby, stolidly guarding the skinny kid and his winnings.

Big winnings, too. The booth only accepted 1,000-credit minimum bets.

Tambell's mouth twisted and he thumbed off the holopad, shoving it further back in the mess. Grimacing at the taste, he drained the last tepid drops of caffia from his cup, crumpled it into a compact little ball, leaned back in his chair and carefully took aim.

It landed in the water garden with a satisfying splash, and across the room, Corporal Valon Rizz twitched as drops spattered across the list of Imperial stop-and-detains he was scanning.

"Blast it, Tambell, knock it off!" he growled, shooting a glare across the four desks that separated them. "You're killing my plants!"

Tambell grinned. "I'm perfecting my aim," he corrected the younger investigator. "You never know when I'll have to shoot a Rebel off your back."

"I'll take my chances," Rizz said, fishing the soggy ball out of the bowl on his desk. He frowned when he saw Tambell's latest toss had bruised one of the delicate white lilies floating in the water. "Look at that," he accused. "They're looking worse every day."

"Oh, relax. They're fine." Tambell swung booted feet up onto his desk, ignoring the pile of data cards that slithered off the edge and clattered to the floor below. He crossed his arms, looking thoughtful. "Say, Rizz, what do you know about ringers?"

Rizz snorted. "I'd stick with squad room sports, if I were you."

"I just caught this case," Tambell said, as if he hadn't heard. "Kid betting on ringer tournaments whose luck's just too good to be true. Six bets, six wins — he's gotta be rigging it somehow."

"Bribing some of the tossers to lose, maybe?" Rizz suggested.

"That's what I thought," Tambell agreed. "But the credits look clean, according to Franni." The Finance Retrieval and Net Investigations droid was a wonder at piecing together a money trail. "The kid's winnings match his bank deposits, and Franni can't find more than a couple hundred missing credits out of the whole pile. It would take a lot more than that to convince *me* to throw a tournament."

"So maybe they're getting something out of it besides money," Rizz said. Tambell looked skeptical, and the younger man shrugged. "Okay, so maybe he's got something rigged. Some kind of repulsor field or something, so they can't get the ring in. Or maybe he really *is* lucky."

"Nobody's *that* lucky," Tambell said. "Besides, the lieutenant says this one comes from higher up — someone on our glorious leader's staff wants this kid checked out."

Sergeant Zeck Tambell



Type: Imperial Investigator

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 5D, dodge 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D+2

Bureaucracy 4D, intimidation 4D+1, law

enforcement 5D, streetwise 4D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+1

PERCEPTION 4D

Command 4D+2, investigation 6D, per-

suasion 5D, search 5D+2

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 4D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 3D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 7

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, datapad, Imperial investigators' badge, security ID card

Capsule: As a special investigator for the Imperial Governor's office on Stassia, Sergeant Zeck Tambell's finally found the perfect job.

A native of Coriallis, he was an officer in his homeworld's planetary security service for four years before, dazzled by the recruiting holos and the opportunity to "see the galaxy," he joined the Imperial Navy. Assigned to the Imperial Star Destroyer *Arbiter* as a naval security officer, he found himself doing the same job he'd been doing at home — only for less pay, and a lot more headaches. He craved something more than tracking down AWOL troopers or guarding the occasional insubordinate in the detention center, and detested having to salute a superior every time he turned around (and those big ships carry plenty of brass). So, after two years on the *Arbiter*, he requested a transfer to a planetside assignment.

Stassia, Imperial Governor Tren Pergallis, and the Special Investigations squad are exactly what he hoped for. He likes looking into incidents and matters of interest to the Empire that, for one reason or another, local law enforcement isn't asked to handle, and he likes having Imperial resources and authority behind him while not having to advertise that fact by wearing a stuffy black uniform.

What he *doesn't* like is being made a fool of. While he can throw his weight around when it's required, Tambell's more inclined to be an affable, easygoing kind of guy. He hates having his good nature taken advantage of, or having it get in the way of closing a case, as he guiltily suspects may have happened four years ago in his investigation of Aalia Duu-lang.

In his mid 30s, Tambell has reddish-brown hair and brown eyes. His black vest is usually slightly disheveled, his desk is a downright mess, and he has an annoying habit of tossing things around the squad room.



Rizz frowned warningly at the reference to Stassia's Imperial Governor Tren Pergallis, under whose auspices their Special Investigations squad looked into local matters of interest to the Empire. Tambell ignored the look. "It's not our usual kind of case, but if someone up there wants him, then we gotta get him. These ringer tournaments are like watching duracrete set, but —"

The squad room's comm scanner cut him off mid-sentence, blaring out the piercing tones used to summon rescue-and-repair units, followed by the dispatcher's impassive voice. "Assist units at the swoop track with an accident," it said. "Swoop into a pit; confirmed fatalities. Please acknowledge."

Tambell met Rizz's eyes, and they both grimaced. Swoop racing was a popular sport, but its accidents were notoriously messy. "That reminds me, you working the Sweepstakes this year?" Rizz asked. Swoop jocks had been pouring in from all over the sector to compete in the annual race day after tomorrow, and local enforcement paid triple-time to Imperial officers who helped with crowd control.

"No," Tambell said shortly. Even the lure of triple pay wasn't enough to make him forget the sight of last year's grisly wreck.

Corporal Valon Rizz



Type: Imperial Investigator

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D+1, dodge 4D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Bureaucracy 4D+2, law enforcement 4D+2, streetwise 5D

MECHANICAL 2D

Ground vehicle operation 3D, repulsorlift operation 3D+2

PERCEPTION 3D

Investigation 5D, search 4D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 4D+2, droid programming 5D, repulsorlift repair 5D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 4

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, datapad, Imperial investigators' badge, locator, security ID card

Capsule: From an Imperial point of view, Valon Rizz is a success story.

The tall, dark-haired Stassian wanted more out of life than being a farmer. Normally his ambitions wouldn't have counted for much, but with the arrival of the Empire's New Order came new opportunities as well. He got into the local enforcement academy on a scholarship, and after three years on the force in Stassia City, his investigation into and subsequent arrest of a grain smuggler gained the attention of the Imperial Governor's Office.

Governor Pergallis, ever-aware of the value of a good public relations move to enhance one's standing with the populace, appointed Rizz the first Stassian on his elite Special Investigations squad, and held him up as an example of how far a native could go by availing himself of the generous opportunities for advancement the New Order has to offer.

While Rizz is grateful to the Empire for helping him get off the farm, he's not quite willing to give it all the credit for his career advancement. He's worked hard, he's a good investigator, and he knows it. And, he's not nearly as dedicated an Imperial as everyone seems to think — but right now, it's the only game playing.

Rizz looked at him curiously, but let it pass. "So, check out the ringers' equipment next," he advised. "See if this kid's rigged up some kind of device we haven't heard of."

"You're the tech-junkie. Come with me and see for yourself," Tambell invited. "I'll even buy you lunch."

Rizz shot him a look. "Gee, thanks," he said dryly. "The last lunch you sprung for happened to have contraband spice in it. Having my stomach purged so the inspector could get a sample was *not* my idea of a good time."

"It got us the evidence we needed, didn't it?" he reminded the younger man. "C'mon. It'll be fun."

"I thought you said watching ringers is about as fun as putting on your socks," Rizz grumbled, nevertheless switching off his datapad and standing up.

Tambell grinned. "Even lower," he promised.



Besides the ringers tournament going on in Pavilion C, there was an event Tambell vaguely recognized from the holovid going on down on the stadium's main field.

He watched as something resembling a humpbacked dromedary trampled across the synthturf with the rest of the beasts in pursuit, but the peak of the action was blocked from view when the spectators in front of them leapt to their feet, screaming encouragement. Tambell kept walking, and a quarter of the way around the stadium, tapped Rizz's shoulder to stop him in front of a refreshment booth.

"What's this?" Rizz asked suspiciously, eyeing the greasy droids behind the counter with trepidation.

"Lunch," Tambell said. "And hurry it up. I want to get there before the tournament starts."

He hid a grin as Rizz gingerly ordered, casting a glance around while the order was processed. For this time of day, a decent-sized crowd milled about the betting booths and refreshment stands. Mostly Stassians, but Tambell saw a fetching Twi'lek female studying the beast game on the holo monitors, and a gaggle of Bimms squabbling as they placed a bet at one of the far booths.

And behind them stood Sedeya, credstick clutched at the ready.

Tambell stiffened, eyes flicking to the booth's 5,000-credit minimum bet requirement. Not only was the skinny kid somehow flouting it, he was making a blasted fortune at it, too.

He nudged Rizz, nodded towards Sedeya, and they casually headed his way, stopping a few booths away. Tambell pretended to study the tournament program he'd bought downstairs while Rizz crunched his chipitas and covertly eyed the attractive Twi'lek. After Sedeya had placed his bet and hurried away, Tambell stepped up to the booth.

But not to place a wager.

Keying his security ID into the gambling machine, he tapped out a special access code. The machine hummed to itself for a few moments, then spit a datastub out of the slot into his waiting hand. The plastic stub contained information on the last dozen wagers placed at this booth, and it only took a moment to plug it into his datapad and discover that Sedeya had just bet 10,000 credits on Tosser Five to win today's tournament.

He looked up, gaze running over the various tote boards until he found the right one. With Tosser Five posting 12 to one odds, the kid looked poised to collect his biggest payoff yet.

Tambell gritted his teeth. "Let's get up there," he growled, showing Rizz the amount before pocketing the datapad and heading briskly toward Pavilion C. They were 15 meters from the entrance when he recognized the men standing alertly near the door.

Watchdogs. Hired muscle from the kennel of notorious Stassian crime madame Aalia Duu-lang.

The back of Tambell's neck tightened. Where Aalia went, larceny wasn't far behind. And, as he'd found to his personal and professional chagrin, the lady and her illicit doings were damn tricky to pin down. The aqua-eyed witch had brains, and she used them. Usually to get someone else to do her dirty work so her dainty hands stayed clean.

Beside him, Rizz slowed in slight hesitation.

"Yeah, I see 'em," Tambell said. They got to the door, and he stared at the first man, then the second; a deliberate gaze that both gamely pretended not to see. They recognized him, too, and attracting an Imperial investigator's attention wasn't in their job description.

He let Rizz precede him into the pavilion; a large room well-lit by the sun shining through the transparisteel skylights overhead. A stairway led down past several rows of seats to the tournament range, where multi-shaped rings hung suspended from the ceiling. Each odd shaped ring was worth a certain number of points, and the tosser with the most points at the end of four rounds won.

"How do they start 'em swinging?" Rizz asked, studying the metal tangle.

"Let's go see," Tambell said, and headed down the steps.

Up close, the rings looked deceptively innocuous. He'd been amazed the first time he'd seen a holo of it: the rings swinging back and forth in uneven arcs or gliding around in a spiraling orbit, while the tossers toed the competition line and carefully gauged the best moment, and with how much force, to toss their little metallic disks

Stassia

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type 1 (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Plains
Length of Day: 22 Standard Hours
Length of Year: 340 Local Days
Sapient Species: Humans (N)
Starport: Stellar class
Population: 1.3 billion
Planet Function: Agriculture
Government: Imperial governor
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Foodstuffs
Major Imports: High tech

Capsule: A minor bauble among the jewels that comprise the Core Worlds, Stassia is best described as "accepting" of whatever fate has in store for it. While the planet has been settled almost as long as some of the more well-known Core worlds, its history, fame, and contributions to galactic society don't begin to rival those of such Old Republic giants — and the Stassians don't even bother to try.

The same stoic attitude toward the vicissitudes of weather and soil conditions that govern the growing of Stassia's principal export carries over in its people's passivity when it comes to politics. Stassia's economy has been built on agriculture for as long as history remembers, and its people are used to working hard and seeing the results of their labor loaded onto freighters and flown away to feed other worlds, with the ensuing credits flowing into the government's coffers and, from there, down to its citizens. Because the exports are controlled by the government, not the growers, there's little personal correlation between work and reward, and with no basis for comparison, many Stassians have no comprehension of the economic clout their planet might wield in galactic society.

Stassia's former rulers liked it that way — as, currently, does the Empire. Previously governed by members of Stassia's 15 Head Clans (descendants of the original colonists), the planet and its resources are now overseen by Imperial Governor Tren Pergallis, whose task is made easy by its populace's traditional acceptance of authority, and the ready cooperation of former ruling clan members who now occupy key positions in the governor's office and enjoy certain rewards as loyal citizens of the Empire.

Long known for its indifference to the larger galactic picture, Stassia made the transition from Old Republic to Empire without a blink, and appears to be a staunch supporter of the Emperor's New Order. The planet is pointed out as a model of the kind of stability that the Empire brings to its subjects (of course, everyone seems to have forgotten it was stable before the Imperials arrived), and sedition seems unheard of. If the Rebel Alliance has managed to penetrate the Stassians' apparent placidity and set up cells of resistance, so far, nothing has happened.

to get them through some portion of the hoops. Though a pretty fair aim himself, Tambell was grateful his own squad room targets held still.

Rizz eyed the rings speculatively. "There's a couple of ways this could work," he said. "He could polarize the rings and the disks, or equip one or the other with some kind of repulsor field. Then, no matter how well they aimed, they wouldn't be able to make ringers."

"Except that all the tossers use the same equipment," Tambell pointed out. "A pre-set device like that would keep the winner from making ringers just as much as it would prevent the losers."

"Hmmm," Rizz said. "What if it were something he could control? With a remote, or something?" He half-turned to study the tiers of seats. "He could sit close by, and ..." His voice trailed off.

Tambell turned to see what had caught his attention. The headache that had threatened earlier when he saw Aalia Duu-lang's hired watchdogs announced its arrival with a piercing stab.

There was the lady herself, in a box seat near the edge of the range. Lush blond hair shimmered in the sunlight, and her sea-green eyes shone as she smiled warmly at the teen sitting beside her. Tambell wasn't fooled by her inviting manner, though he thought the bemused-looking Sedeya might be. Aalia Duu-lang hadn't clawed her way up Stassia's crime hierarchy on her womanly charms alone. The lady had a shrewd streak a kilometer wide, and greed was her middle name.

He sighed, absently rubbing his forehead in a vain attempt to stave off the headache. If Sedeya and Aalia were in this together, his work was definitely cut out. Aalia had a way of covering her tracks and protecting her — er, *assets*.

As if feeling their eyes upon her, she glanced up, gaze narrowing just a bit as she identified him and Rizz before negligently returning her attention to the kid at her side. "What now?" Rizz asked.

"What else?" Tambell shrugged. "We watch 'em. See what happens."

They found seats close to Aalia's box, where Tambell had a good view of Sedeya's hands as well as his face. Gazing at Aalia with an expression of shy admiration mixed with apprehension, the kid seemed completely unaware he was being watched.

The tournament began, and Tambell's mouth quirked as Sedeya leaned forward to concentrate on the action, the abrupt move leaving Aalia chatting to empty air after the first toss. But besides that, there wasn't much to see. Elbows resting on his bony knees and empty hands clasped before him in plain sight, all the kid did was

stare at the tossers with unblinking intensity.

After the first few tosses, Rizz stepped down to the edge of the range. Studying the tossers, their disks, and the rings for any tell-tale signs of trickery, he sent a look over his shoulder at Tambell, who gave him the same look right back. The tossers weren't scoring much, but he knew from the holos that wasn't unusual.

Then Sedeya's pick toed the line. Lightly fingering her disk, she swung her arm a few times as if to synchronize her movements with the swinging rings, then let it fly. Applause greeted her effort as she tossed a ringer — and through the tricky Ace ring yet, putting her into the lead.

Through it all, Sedeya did ... nothing. Not a twitch of the hand, barely a blink of the eye. As Tosser Five's name flashed to the top of the scoreboard, Aalia slanted a curious glance at her silent seatmate. Tambell wondered if she had placed a wager on the tournament, too.

The next seven tossers had varied success. One more managed an Ace, creating a tie going into the second round, and during the short break that followed, Tambell joined Rizz at the edge of the range. He watched as the kid slowly straightened up and blinked as if he'd been asleep, and Aalia leaned close to whisper in his ear.

"I don't know," Rizz said in answer to Tambell's unspoken question. "Hard to say without checking either him or the equipment out. But I didn't see anything obvious."

They glanced over at Aalia's box to find Sedeya looking back with a startled expression. Still pressing her shoulder to his, Aalia's eyes were amused, but she looked taken aback when the kid suddenly stood up. She said something in a low voice and he hesitated, then sidled towards the steps anyway. Her eyes chilled at his retreating back, and the two watchdogs sitting behind rose to their feet, clearly intent on following.

Whether to protect the kid, or get rid of evidence, the investigators didn't know. They looked at each other. "I guess we'd better take him in," Tambell said. "About time I had a chat with him, anyway."

At the door, they spotted him making tracks towards the turbolift cluster that serviced Pavilion C. Aalia's associates had lengthened stride to catch up, and he and Rizz did the same. Sedeya was waiting for a lift with the associates loitering casually nearby when they arrived. The kid glanced at them nervously, then looked away, chewing at his lower lip.

One of the turbolift's doors opened, and Sedeya slunk aboard. The watchdogs made to follow, but Tambell stepped in front of

Aalia Duu-lang



Type: Crime Madame

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 3D+2, dodge 4D, pick pocket 6D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Bureaucracy 5D+2, business 6D+2, intimidation 5D, streetwise 6D

MECHANICAL 2D+2

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 6D+2, command 6D, con 6D, gambling 5D+2, persuasion 6D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 2D

Security 3D+2

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 2

Character Points: 7

Move: 10

Capsule: When the speeder bus of life runs you down, you grab hold of the repulsor coils and hitch a ride to town anyway, and that's just what Aalia Duu-

lang did when she was orphaned at the age of 15.

She found work in a Stassia City cantina, where the customers' appreciation of her lush blond hair and sea-green eyes guaranteed she wouldn't starve. Her looks got her noticed by local crime lord Hek Dallan, but it was her shrewdness that earned her a place in his organization. Dallan started her out with easy flams, like dealing skifters to selected friends at the sabacc table, and then moved her up to more profitable scams, where she beguiled investors into dumping credits into real-estate and development projects, which invariably folded shortly after the funds reached Dallan's account.

It was while working these schemes that Aalia made the connections that would eventually launch her into business for herself. Part of the plot required bribing the proper officials to kill the proposed development projects so the losses looked legitimate to burned investors. Using that savvy that Dallan had so admired, Aalia began cultivating those officials as her own behind Dallan's back, and when she calculated she had enough money, power, and experience to get rid of Dallan, she did.

In addition to "adopting" Dallan's already up-and-running criminal organization, she's strengthened her position by making several legitimate investments, which often serve as fronts for her illegal activities. They give her cover as a "businesswoman," and also help muddy her financial waters, making it difficult for law enforcement officers (those not on her payroll, anyway) to pin a specific crime on her without actually catching her in the act.

A mistress of manipulation, Aalia's gotten where she is by knowing how to play the right people. Those who really know her are chilled by her ruthless ambition, so strikingly at odds with her guileless appearance.

them, casually pulling his vest away to display the Imperial badge and blaster attached to his belt. They hesitated, looked over his shoulder at Rizz and Sedeya standing in the lift, then reluctantly stepped back.

He nodded approvingly, watching their wary faces until the door slid shut, then turned to survey an unhappy-looking Sedeya. As the lift sank downwards, the kid clearly wished he were somewhere — anywhere — else.

"Sergeant Tambell, Special Investigator for the Imperial Governor," he identified himself, watching the other's face turn white. "You've had quite a winning streak at the ringers tournaments — haven't you, Citizen Sedeya?"

Sedeya flinched at the sound of his name, swallowed, and summoned the nerve to briefly look him in the eye. "I've been lucky," he managed.

Tambell nodded, pleased. If the kid was this intimidated now, perhaps with a little encouragement he'd spill it all at the station. "Well," he said, "I regret to inform you that your luck has just run dry."



The first thing Tambell found out was that Sedeya was clean. Neither the scan nor the physical search turned up any kind of device like that Rizz envisioned being used to tilt the results of the tournament.

The second thing he discovered was that the kid was incredibly innocent when it came to proper criminal behavior.

He was polite and well-mannered, albeit a bit skittish. He didn't fuss about having a Defender present, called Tambell "sir," and actually thanked him when offered a seat in Interrogation Room One.

Used to dealing with surly, uncooperative suspects, Tambell sat and simply stared at him. Sedeya gazed back apprehensively, looking younger than his 19 years, and far more vulnerable than any self-respecting flammer would ever let himself be seen.

"Um, am I under arrest, sir?" he asked tentatively. "You didn't say, earlier."

"If it's up to me, you will be," Tambell said, deliberately harsh as Sedeya's thin face paled, and he wilted further into his seat. "But no, you're not under arrest. You're being detained. For the moment," he added.

He let the kid think about that as Rizz fetched three cups of caff,

then pulled a chair over and sat down so they were both facing him across the table. The seating arrangement was more calculated than chance — it was his turn to play nasty to Rizz's nice. He waited until Sedeya was shifting uneasily in his seat before starting in. "You're aware that fraud is a crime against the Empire, punishable by deportation to a prison world, aren't you?"

Sedeya nodded hesitantly.

"Well then, explain to me how you were smart enough to figure out a way to pull it off, but too stupid to get away with it?" He watched as the kid's expression ran through a series of emotions: shock, and surprise, before finally settling on what appeared to be confusion.

"I — I don't understand," he said, uncertainly looking from Tambell's accusing eyes to Rizz's less judgmental ones. "What are you talking about?"

It was a good show, but Tambell wasn't buying the wide-eyed bit. "Six bets? Six wins?" He cocked his head skeptically. "Isn't that a bit too coincidental?"

The kid dropped his gaze. "I've been lucky," he mumbled to the tabletop.

Tambell snorted. "Some might say there's more to it than that."

"It's true," he said earnestly. "I've always been lucky. That doesn't mean I've done anything wrong. I haven't."

"Listen," Tambell said. "Nobody's *that* lucky. Not without a little help."

"There's no law against winning. I haven't done anything wrong." A trace of resentment crept into Sedeya's tone.

Tambell heard it. Sardonicly, he offered, "Take a word of advice, kid. Most flammers go ahead and lose a few, just to throw us off track."

Sedeya frowned, but didn't say anything. Tambell waited, hoping for more of a reaction. Getting suspects riled often paid rewards when they tripped up in the rush to defend themselves. "Okay, so tell me this," he said, changing tacks when it became clear Sedeya wasn't going to rise to the bait. "What's your relationship with Aalia Duu-lang?"

The kid looked startled — and vaguely alarmed. "I don't have one. I just met her today!"

"How?"

"Before the tournament. This guy I met last week introduced me to her."

"You know who she is, don't you?" Tambell pressed.

Sedeya hesitated, clearly uncomfortable. "Not really."

"Now, there you go again," Tambell admonished. "Six wins, no losses, and you've been seen with one of the most notorious crime madames on Stassia. What does that look like to you?"

Sedeya shrugged.

"So if you don't know her, what did Aalia want with you?"

The kid smiled humorlessly. "The same as you," he said. "She wanted to know why my luck was so good. How I pick winners. That sort of thing."

"Did you tell her?"

"Sure," he said. "It's no secret. She offered me a job."

Tambell raised an eyebrow, and leaned forward to give the kid his best I'm-gonna-get-you glare. "You don't want to get involved with her, if you're not already," he pointedly advised. "We'll take her down one of these days, and we'll take you right down with her."

Sedeya looked away without responding, and after a moment, Rizz took over the questioning. "So, how do you pick 'em?" he asked amiably.

The kid looked at him, confused. "Huh?"

"Which tosser's going to win? How do you pick them?"

"Oh." Sedeya thought about it for a moment. "Well, I watch them warm up before the tournament. See how they're tossing, and stuff. Usually there's just something I like about them."

Rizz asked another question, and listening to his gentle voice and careful verbal probes, Tambell was reminded of the time they'd had Aalia Duu-lang in that chair. That time, he'd played the nice guy while Rizz nipped at her heels.

Perhaps that was why Sedeya's innocent act rankled him so. He felt a dull burning at the memory. He'd been nice all right — *way* too nice.

Four years ago, when Aalia was still an associate slithering around doing her crime lord's bidding, they'd picked her up in connection with a credit counterfeiting scheme. He'd looked into those incredible eyes and dove into his role with relish, never noticing the serpent that swam just under her seemingly sweet surface. They hadn't been able to make the charges stick, and she'd gone on to forge her own little corner on Stassia's crime market. And they hadn't been able to touch her since.

But what really gnawed at him was the secret knowledge that he'd halfway believed her protestations of innocence. *She'd played him* — for a fool.

That wasn't going to happen this time.

He focused back in on Rizz and Sedeya. The kid was telling Rizz

how he'd always been good at picking winners. Color had returned to his thin face, and his voice was animated. "It got to be that they started betting on who would come in second, cause if I said one was going to win, it *won*," he said.

"Is that what it's like with the ringers?" Rizz asked.

Sedeya nodded. "Sort of. I just picture the winner making ringers, and the losers missing. And it happens. Luck." He shrugged.

Tambell rolled his eyes.

"Oh yeah. Right, kid," he cut in derisively. "You call it luck, I call it a flam. You don't really expect us to believe that load of munk?"

Sedeya just looked at him. "It's true," he said stubbornly.

Tambell shook his head in disgust, sat back in his chair and took a sip of coffa, listening as Rizz led Sedeya on a roundabout query of his knowledge of electronics. The more ignorant the kid sounded, the more disgusted he got.

Then it occurred to him: maybe Sedeya really *did* think it was luck. Maybe he was as wet behind the ears as he sounded, and Aalia's associates were handling the mechanics of the fraud, rigging the equipment or bribing the tossers, while he was just the front they used to divert attention from themselves. Maybe the kid didn't know he was already working for Aalia.

Tambell sat considering all the angles that accompanied the theory. It was another avenue to explore, anyway. One that might end up giving them the goods on that aqua-eyed witch. He smiled.

Finishing off the coffa, he absently crumpled the cup and glanced around for a place to get rid of it. Not three meters away, a waste bin with a wide, inviting rim rested against the wall. An easy shot.

He missed.

Tambell stared as the crumpled ball skittered to a halt on the floor beyond. He couldn't believe it. The bin was easily three times as large as Rizz's water garden, and closer to boot. How could he miss?

Feeling eyes upon him, he glanced across the table. Sedeya was looking at him stubbornly, while Rizz looked amused. "Looks like your winning streak's come to an end," he said.

That dry observation bothered Tambell the rest of the interview.



The next morning, he checked the sports scores and discovered that Sedeya's winning streak had come to an end, as well.

After her promising start, Tosser Five failed to maintain her lead and ended up finishing fourth. The kid was out the 10,000 credits he — or, more likely, Aalia — had wagered. Tambell wondered if she

was annoyed.

He also wondered if she'd engineered the loss simply to throw them off the scent. He wouldn't put it past her, and the Hutts knew she could afford it.

He'd brought Rizz one of those spindly little lilies he liked so much to make up for the one he'd squashed yesterday, and after Rizz added it to the water garden and pointedly covered the bowl with a plastsheet, they went over their impressions of the interview again.

"The kid's dumber than a space slug about electronics," Rizz said. "He wouldn't have a clue how to rig up something to tilt the tournament. You're right; we should concentrate on his connection to Aalia."

"Franni's already on it," Tambell said. "Meanwhile, let's take a look at what she's been up to lately. This isn't her usual style, but she's probably looking for ways to expand business."

"Yeah, and let's head back out to the stadium, too," Rizz said. "Take another look at the equipment. She's either got to be bribing the tossers, or rigging the rings. I want a closer look at —"

The comm scanner in the corner cut him off, and they listened as another accident was reported at the swoop track. Tambell grimaced. One more hotshot swoop jock who wouldn't be starting in tomorrow's big race. *Yuck.*

He returned his attention to Rizz. "I want to put a surveil-cam on Sedeya, too," he said. "The kid looks too green to notice he's being followed, and if he meets with Aalia, I want to know about it."

"Good idea," Rizz agreed. They discussed the plan of attack a while longer, then got to work. Then the lieutenant came in and gave Tambell grief about the case update he'd filed, and he had to waste time pawing around under his desk for the data cards that always seemed to pile up down there, and then waste more time looking up details on the kid that some bit-pusher upstairs just *had* to have. Then Franni gave them a list of Aalia's recent financial transactions, and he and Rizz were following up on that when the surveil-cam reported that Sedeya had been seen with the crime madame that afternoon.

The end result was that by the end of the day, they still hadn't made it out to the stadium to take a closer look at the ringers' equipment.

But they had discovered that Aalia did indeed appear to be moving into the field of wager fraud, and that the main topic of conversation during her meeting with Sedeya had been who the kid thought would win tomorrow's swoop sweepstakes.

"I'll have you know I'm giving up triple-time pay for this," Rizz grumbled the next day as he and Tambell inspected the rings in Pavilion C. All 12 ringer tossers, clearly unsettled by the Imperial investigators' summons, clustered together at the edge of the range, watching uneasily as the pair looked for evidence of ring tampering.

"Isn't bringing down Aalia Duu-lang worth it?" Tambell countered.

"Yeah, if we can do it," Rizz said sourly. "We've been over these twice already. There's nothing here. I say we move on to Plan B."

Plan B was questioning the tossers. If they were going to nail Aalia, they needed to know whether to focus their attention on the swoop jocks, or their equipment, after she and Sedeya cleaned up at today's big race.

"There's no way any of us would cheat," Tosser Five declared, folding her arms and looking across the pavilion to where Rizz was interviewing Tosser Three. "It's *tough* to make a ringer. We practice for it every day. You think after all that work we'd go out and deliberately try to *miss*?"

"You might if there were enough credits in it for you," Tambell said mildly.

She glared at him. "No, Sergeant. I wouldn't," she said firmly.

"Okay, so maybe you wouldn't," he agreed. "Would anybody else?"

"No!" she repeated with a scowl.

He eyed her indignant expression, decided she was probably telling the truth. He sighed. "Okay, so help me out a bit here," he said. "If the tossers aren't taking bribes, and the equipment isn't rigged, is there any other way someone could cheat?"

"No," she said again, then amended, "Well, not really. It's not like there's any Jedi around anymore."

Tambell looked at her sharply. "What?"

"Jedi," she repeated, starting to look a little nervous. "I've heard stories they could move things with their minds. Something called the Force. That would be handy playing ringers."

"The Force is nothing more than a legend," Tambell told her repressively. "And anyway, the Jedi are long gone. Extinct."

"Well, sure, like I said," she hurried to agree. "Good thing, too. I bet we'd all like to just picture the competition missing a toss, and have it happen. But that's impossible."

She went on, but Tambell was no longer listening. His mind replayed her words, hearing Sedeya's voice instead. What was it the

kid had said? *I just picture the winners making ringers, and the losers missing. And it happens?*

He remembered his own missed toss the night of the interview, and Sedeya staring at him from across the table. He and Rizz hadn't been able to uncover evidence of bribes or rigged equipment, either. Was it possible the kid could do something that he wasn't consciously aware of?

Something like causing a competitor's performance to be off? Just enough to ensure a loss?

He suddenly remembered what day it was, and a chill ran down his back.

If such an unlikely thing were true, how might such a mysterious Force manifest itself in making sure that the right jock won a high-speed, close-quarters race, in which the slightest "off" performance could well prove fatal?



The huge domed arena that housed Stassia's swoop track was finally in sight. Glaring out at the sea of pedestrians clogging the street ahead of them, Tambell tried to strangle back his impatience and ended up thumping on the robo-hack's roof instead.

"There's no need to be abusive, sir," the droid brain running the robo-hack admonished him in affronted tones.

"Calm down, we're moving," Rizz added.

"Not fast enough," Tambell growled. Since Sedeya had lost his bet the other day when they'd pulled him away from the ringers tournament, he figured the kid had to be present for this Jedi thing to work. He had to get him away from the swoop track before the kid could start "picturing" losers.

Tambell's mouth tightened. He'd worry about how to keep this ridiculous Force stuff out of the report, later. If the lieutenant thought he'd actually bought into any of that junk that passed for Jedi legend, his next assignment would be in the spice mines of Kessel.

Fighting back frustration, he dug out his comlink instead. "Hey Franni," he said when the droid answered. "Hook into the betting booths at the swoop track, will you? I want to know if Reye Sedeya or Aalia Duu-lang have placed any bets. How much, and on who. I want it as soon as possible," he added.

They'd edged a few blocks closer to the arena by the time Franni called back and reported that Sedeya had bet 10 credits on Bike Six to win.

FRN-I (Franni)

Type: Investa Arts' Finance Retrieval and Net Investigations droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Bureaucracy 5D, business: finances 7D, law enforcement 4D+2

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 3D

Investigation 5D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Humanoid body (two arms, two legs, head)
- Two visual and audio sensors
- Three retractable information retrieval jacks
- Audio and electronic recording system
- Broad-band antenna receiver
- Vocabulator speech/sound system
- AA-1 VerboBrain

Special Abilities:

Financial Protocols: Programmed to understand the complexities of finance and to process financial information, picking out patterns, trends, and "red flags."

Financial Net Interface: Can scan and download any financial information that is available through electronic means, including automatic access to the FiNet.

Size: 1.6 meters tall

Move: 8

Cost: Not for sale

Capsule: Franni is a gleaming, jet-black droid programmed with a pleasant voice and demeanor — until some cheeky data bank gets her peeved by refusing to impart "confidential" information. There's no such thing as "confidential" to an Imperial model of the FRN-I droid, and Franni has full access to any financial information she requests, plus an arsenal of decrypting programs designed to overcome any reluctance to cooperate.

Establishing and auditing a money trail can be time-consuming, but the Empire knows that money is power, and the FRN-I droid's job is easier on Imperially held worlds, where electronic financial transactions are entered into the FiNet as they occur. By scanning the FiNet, Franni can determine when and where a financial transaction took place. Then, with the three information jacks that retract into her chest, she can plug into as many data banks at once and discover that you purchased a liter of Garwillian champagne at the market, ordered a half-dozen Alderaanian flame-lilies sent to a woman not your wife and — uh oh — paid last quarter's luxury tariff for citizens in the mid tax-bracket when your bank balance clearly shows that you should be in the high tax-bracket.

A droid like Franni is why experienced spacers say, "Always pay cash."

Tambell frowned at the news. Only 10 credits?

But his scowl turned to a smile when he learned Aalia had more than made up for it.

She'd gone for the exacta, wagering 50,000 credits on Six to win, and Nine to place. Exactas were dicier to predict, but paid bigger rewards, and he wondered whether Sedeya could not only make Six win, but ensure that Nine came in second. For Aalia to collect, the jocks had to finish in that order.

And then it occurred to him — maybe, just maybe, she'd hedged her bets.

All the swoop jocks wanted to win the big prize, of course, but the purses for third, fourth, fifth, and sixth places weren't cheap change either. Especially if they came with a little bonus for not finishing on top.

He got Franni checking on the right accounts, then took another look at the foot traffic flowing past outside. The entire city seemed out for a stroll. Tossing some change into the robo-hack's credit tray, he opened the door and fought his way out to the crowded curb with Rizz trailing in his wake. The way they'd been crawling along, they'd get there faster on foot.

Joining the swarm heading for the arena entrance, they flashed their badges at the ticket droid and were waved inside. They squeezed onto the first available lift plate carrying spectators up to the grandstand and, once on top, Rizz dug out a locator and flipped it on, keying in a code. A green dot winked in the grid's center, and after the device sent out its invisible feelers, a blinking red dot appeared at the edge of the grid.

Tambell looked at it, then glanced down at the several thousand packed seats surrounding the oval track. "Figures," he said sourly.

The surveil-cam tracking Sedeya wasn't that far away — but it was straight across the track, indicating that the kid and Aalia were seated somewhere on the far side. He and Rizz would have to go all the way around.

And they didn't have time.

The traditional call to the post peeled out of the grandstand's comm speakers and was promptly drowned out by the crowd's anticipatory roar. Tambell caught a glimpse of the jocks cruising out of the pits and onto the track, their swoops' lethal-looking steering vanes glittering like bayonets under the dome's bright lights. They looked well-protected in their colorful body armor and helmets, but he knew just how useless the stuff really was in a crash.

Tiers of seats marched down to where a six-meter high duracrete

wall marked the drop-off to the track below. If a jock lost control of his swoop, the wall theoretically stopped him from plunging into the grandstand. In reality, since swoops crash up as well as down, the wall wasn't much comfort to the spectators in the lower tiers.

Not that it mattered. The seats were the most expensive, and they always sold out.

The jocks finished their post parade and zipped down the track, engines whining as they accelerated over the warm-up obstacle, a metal gate that could easily accommodate most of the field as they raced abreast. Later, several laps into the race, the obstacles would get narrower, the jocks vying to get over, under, or through in the dwindling space. Tambell had always thought that for supposedly intelligent beings, swoop jocks had precious little common sense. Or else a death wish.

He and Rizz started down the steps. It was a long way to the track below, and by the time they were halfway down the swoops had lined up. The buzz of the crowd disappeared under a deafening chorus of mechanical screams as the jocks revved their thrusters, but even at full throttle, the swoops were stymied by the repulsor web holding them at the post.

The countdown blinked down on the displays covering the duracrete wall, and the crowd picked up the chant, stamping their feet with each number. At zero, the displays went green, the swoops plunged forward, the spectators went wild, and Tambell groaned.

"We'll never get there in time," he shouted over his shoulder to Rizz, who nodded agreement. They reached the bottom tier just as the field whined past on its ninth lap, the swoops bobbing like boats on a storm-tossed sea as they dipped to avoid one of the obstacles hovering over the track.

Rizz held up the locator. "They're practically straight across," he shouted, pointing out over the infield where mechanics and maintenance droids clogged the pits. Tambell looked around for some way to get to the other side before reluctantly concluding the long drop below was it.

"So, let's go across," he shouted back.

Rizz stared at him — *Are you nuts?* — but didn't protest as Tambell edged between the wall and the first tier of seats. A laser-link security fence glowed in front of them: criss-crossed thin red lines which discouraged over-enthusiastic onlookers from jumping onto the track. They stepped on toes and otherwise annoyed the spectators before Tambell finally found what he was looking for. He slid his security ID into a slot, and a 10-meter section of the laser-link fence

winked out.

He looked at the drop below and sighed, but swung a leg over the rim of the duracrete wall anyway. Boot bumping against the tote board display, now flashing with the numbers of the leading swoops, he swung his other leg over, took a deep breath, and let go.

About a third of the way down, he realized the six-meter drop was way beyond his capacity to comfortably land, and scrambled madly at the tote board as it flashed past. Catching an edge helped slow his descent, but gave his arms an awful yank, and his whole body felt the impact when his feet finally hit the ground.

Gritting his teeth, he tilted his head to look up at Rizz. The younger man didn't look enthusiastic, but tucked the locator away, carefully poised himself on top of the rim, and then surprised Tambell by making a sudden lunge for the nearest obstacle, hovering over the track a little less than two meters from the wall. It dipped under his weight as he caught the closest edge, and before its repulsors could compensate, Rizz had dropped lightly to the ground.

"You okay?" he asked in concern, seeing Tambell's pinched face. Nodding shortly, Tambell tried to take a step, and found his feet weren't done being numb yet. The whine of the swoops headed their way once more and, flattening himself against the wall, he tried not to wince as they roared by, steering vanes making little slicing noises in the air.

Once they were past, he and Rizz headed for the infield, stepping over hydraulic lines and containers of lubricant and avoiding greasy mechanics as they weaved through the pits. They were at the far side, staring across the track and wondering how they were going to get back *up* that blasted wall when a different sort of whine drew Tambell's attention to the side.

Their little jaunt hadn't gone unnoticed by track security. A small floater plat stopped a few meters away, and a stern-looking officer ordered them to come with her. They glanced at each other, shrugged, and agreeably stepped up. The woman's expression changed when Tambell showed her his badge. "Oh," she said. "How can I help you, Sergeant?"

She set them down near the top of the grandstand, and they had just stepped off the plat when a howl rose from the crowd, punctuated by scattered shrieks and screams. The officer squinted at the far side of the track, then yanked out her macrobinoculars and studied the spill. "It's okay," she reported after a moment. "No spectators hurt, anyway. Thankfully. We mopped up for weeks afterwards, last year."

Tambell grimaced. "C'mon," he said to Rizz. "Let's get that kid."

Aalia and her entourage weren't hard to find, not with the locator showing Sedeya practically dead ahead. Not that he needed it anyway; Aalia's bright blonde hair reflected the overhead lights like a mirror, and her eyes were unfathomable as she stared over her shoulder at them from where she held court in a comfortable box seat on one of the middle tiers. Sedeya, his skinny body radiating unease, sat beside her.

Two of the watchdogs took up positions on either side of the box as Tambell stepped up to its entrance, but he wasn't surprised when Aalia treated him and Rizz to the full force of her charm. "Corporal Tambell," she greeted him warmly. "I didn't know you were a swoop enthusiast."

"It's *Sergeant* now, and I'm not," Tambell said flatly. He nodded towards Sedeya. "We're here for your friend." The kid stared at him, looking stricken, but at least his attention was off the race going on below.

Aalia's perfect smile never wavered. "Do you have a detention order?"

"Will I need one?" he countered, looking into those incredible eyes and recognizing the cold contempt that lurked in their depths. At his belt, his comlink beeped and he pulled it out and handed it to Rizz without breaking the gaze. Rizz stepped to the side and handled the call.

"Yes, I think you will," Aalia said. "After that unpleasantness at the tournament the other day, Reye's had quite enough of cooperating with you. Haven't you, Reye?"

The kid squirmed in his chair and started to say something, but she put a warning hand on his arm. He gulped and shut up.

"Come back when you have a detention order, *Sergeant*," she advised, still smiling pleasantly. "Otherwise, please move aside. You're blocking our view."

Tambell felt anger start to burn. Four years ago, at least she'd had the proper respect for Imperial authority. Now she was downright arrogant. Before he could respond, Sedeya slid out from under Aalia's manicured hand and stood up. "That's all right, sir," he mumbled, not looking at the crime madame. "I'll come with you."

Aalia's smile remained in place, but her eyes were abruptly icy. "Are you sure that's what you want to do?" she asked. "You don't have to go with him, Reye. Not if he doesn't have an order."

"It's okay," Sedeya mumbled, edging towards the entrance. Tambell suddenly had the impression that the prospect of staying

Reye Sedeya



Type: Naive Youth
DEXTERITY 3D+2
KNOWLEDGE 2D+2
MECHANICAL 2D
PERCEPTION 3D+2
 Gambling 4D, sneak 4D+2
STRENGTH 3D
TECHNICAL 2D
Special Abilities:
Force Skills: Alter 1D
This character is Force-sensitive
Force Points: 2
Dark Side Points: 1
Character Points: 9
Move: 10

Capsule: Everyone said little Reye would need a lot of luck to survive after his mother died (some whispered she'd been murdered) and his father sought solace in the rigors of working their Stassian farm, leaving

the infant's care to a hastily-purchased and rather decrepit minder droid.

But Reye did, indeed, turn out a "lucky" kid. He's not sure why, or even exactly how he does it, but he's always had an uncanny ability for winning bets, and slipping unscathed out of messy scrapes — like that harvesting accident. Everyone said it was amazing that the flailer somehow shut itself down or he'd have been killed, and that close call convinced Reye there had to be an easier way than farming to make a living.

He found his calling in Stassia City — gambling — and in short order he'd accumulated a heady pile of credits. Tall, skinny and shy, he hasn't finished growing up yet, and it never occurred to him that his winning streak might draw some unnerving attention — not only from crime madame Aalia Duu-lang, but also from Imperial investigators, who think he's orchestrating a scam.

At least, that's what the investigators think they're looking into. Their orders came from "higher up" — so much higher up that it's probably safe to say neither knows what an Imperial High Inquisitor is, or why one would want Reye's lucky streak investigated.

with Aalia scared him even more than what might happen if he went with them.

"But don't you want to wait and see if you win your bet?" she prompted.

The kid scurried past him out the box and stopped by Rizz, near the stairs. "Uh, not really," he said. "I wasn't feeling very lucky when

I made it."

Tambell paused at the statement. Did it mean Reye had already decided not to play his part in Aalia's scheme? If so, he might be persuaded to tell them what he knew about it.

He turned back to Aalia. "I'll be back for you later," he promised softly. "After you've won *your* bet."

Her eyes narrowed, and the smile slanted into something suspiciously close to a sneer. "You just do that."

"Actually, I don't think we'll need to come back," Rizz interrupted, handing back Tambell's comlink as he stepped to his side. "I think we can take her in right now."

Tambell looked at him, raised an eyebrow.

"That was Franni," Rizz said. "Seems there's been a number of deposits posted to the accounts of several jocks in today's race — except for a notable few."

"Like the ones on Aalia's exacta ticket?" Tambell suggested.

"A coincidence, I'm sure," Rizz agreed. "Some of the funds come from a restaurant down south, some from a cantina in Stassia City, and some from a couple of other seemingly unrelated businesses. But they all do have one thing in common." He glanced at the crime madame. "It gets a little convoluted, but the upshot is that Aalia Duu-lang has a financial interest in all of them."

Aalia was no longer smiling.

"That doesn't mean anything," she said disdainfully, tossing blond hair back over one shoulder. "I have several business interests. I can't keep track of every credit they pay out, or who they pay them to. You're grabbing at drive trails if you think you can prove a connection."

The growing roar of the crowd nearly drowned her out. Caught up in the business at hand, Tambell hadn't realized the race was in its final laps, but suddenly the whole grandstand seemed to seethe as fans screamed their favorites to the finish. A small stampede headed down the stairs towards the laser-link fence, and Tambell glanced over to see Sedeya slipping stealthily up the steps.

The kid's face was wary but determined, and Tambell had taken a step after him when a whisper of movement to his left had him whipping the blaster off his belt instead. He pointed it at one of Aalia's watchdogs, who was pointing one right back.

The man froze when he saw that Sedeya's defection hadn't proven enough of a diversion. Rizz kept the other watchdog covered as the results of the race were announced. Aalia's mouth tightened as a smile spread over Tambell's face. "Congratulations," he said.



"You've just won a one-way ticket to Kessel."

Her eyes were glacial. "You'll never make the charges stick," she said coldly as they disarmed the two associates. "Your *real* suspect's gotten away, but don't think you'll be able to pin this on me."

"He isn't going far," Tambell said. "He can't shake the surveilcam."

"Oh? He already has," she said, looking pointedly over his shoulder.

Tambell half-turned, and saw the device hovering several tiers down, turning this way and that as if searching the crowd in confusion. He frowned, then shrugged nonchalantly for Aalia's benefit. "No problem. We'll just pick him up later."

Maybe by then he'd have thought up some excuse to explain the kid's involvement in all this. Something that didn't mention Jedi, or any weird Force. Not that he believed in such superstition, of course. But there was no sense even mentioning it to his superiors. It would only get him in trouble.

And meanwhile, there was Aalia.

After four long years, they finally had her. He smiled in satisfaction, pulled a set of binders off his belt, and handed them to Rizz.

"Is that really necessary?" Aalia asked haughtily.

"No," Rizz told her, snapping them around her wrists anyway. Spectators stared at them curiously as they filed past up the stairs, and Tambell searched the grandstand again for a glimpse of Reye.

Oh well, he thought. The kid was too dumb to elude them for long. Then again, he had seemed too dumb to elude them at all ...

Tambell shrugged. He'd worry about it later. Ignoring Aalia's vicious green glare, he thumbed on his comlink, called dispatch, and requested a prisoner pickup.

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SWOOP GANGS



By John Beyer & Wayne Humfleet

Illustrations by Kathy Burdette & Doug Shuler

The high pitched screams of multiple repulsorlift engines echoed through the narrow streets and alleys of Gallisport, announcing yet another clash between the authorities and the local residents. Barely ahead of pursuit, two repulsorlift swoops raced along at breakneck speeds. The drivers wore the distinctive red and black colors of a local swoop gang, the Rabid Mynocks. Behind the swoops a pair of lightly armored personnel carriers followed dangerously close, engines strained to the limit. The swoop riders had yet to lose the carriers in the maze of streets and buildings of the abandoned business district, despite some dangerous maneuvers.

Quayce, the raven-haired rider on the lead swoop, swore through clenched teeth, then activated the comlink headset she wore. "Why don't they go home already!" she yelled into the mike. "I mean, all we did was steal a few loaves of bread."

On the trailing swoop, Roy adjusted the throttles and pulled up aside Quayce's swoop before answering. "Raiding a food distribution center and picking it dry is more than just 'stealing a few loaves of bread.' Or don't you make such distinctions?"

"I don't make distinctions when I'm hungry," she grumbled. "Besides, they started this one. Just because a few factory workers go on strike is no reason to stop distributing food to the rest of us."

"Moot point now," Roy declared. "Besides, we've gotta get back before they give out all the good stuff!"

Quayce dared a quick look over her shoulder. Barely 10 meters behind her the two carriers hummed, the letters "L.A.L.A." in dark metallic blue visible on the drab gray hull. This was wrong, she thought. Legally Authorized Law Authorities (called LA-LAs by the gangs) were not supposed to be this dedicated. Hired by a corrupt government to keep control in places real security forces feared to go, LA-LAs amounted to nothing more than paid bullies. In some of Gallisport's outer suburbs, the LA-LAs were actually run by the very same gangs and criminal organizations they were hired to apprehend. Unless they were paid well, there was very little incentive for the hired help to risk their lives to this degree.

Today's raid — no matter how daring in nature — had been small in comparison to the usual food riots. Striking just as the center's guards were changing shifts, the gang caught the defenders by surprise. The Rabid Mynocks were just withdrawing when the counter-attack began. The gang retreated and split into small groups, allowing the ground transports to get away with the stolen food. By now the transports should have reached their various destinations and the distribution of food to a hungry populace should be well under way. For the past 10 minutes Quayce and Roy had been leading the two personnel carriers on a wild gundark chase, buying the transports additional time. Usually the LA-LAs would have given up by now and withdrawn pursuit, but this time they were actually serious about performing their duties. The idea of giving free food to hungry people must have hit a nerve with someone high up. Quayce was convinced that right now someone was pulling strings and calling in favors to get such a dedicated response.

"Loading docks up ahead," Roy called over the comlink. "Your call, Boss."

Quayce thought it over for just a second before answering. "Let's play some high-low. I got high!" She pulled hard left, off the main street, disappearing down a connecting service tunnel. Simultaneously, Roy repeated the maneuver, but banked to the right and turned into a service tunnel on the opposite side of the street.

The carriers predictably split formation, one following Quayce, the other, Roy. The service tunnels were only about five meters high and not much wider. Built primarily as subterranean access for power and communication lines, the confining tunnels ruled out any thoughts of fancy maneuvers. Although the carriers were lightly armed, there was little fear they would actually open fire. They were built for crowd control and not high speed pursuit. Any shot would probably miss the smaller, more agile swoops, and the power drain would cause the carriers to lose speed.

The tunnels would continue to descend under the loading docks in a gently curving semi-circle before climbing back to street level. Quayce opened the throttle full. Behind her, the sudden change in pitch from the carrier's engine told her the LA-LAs had done the same. Hunching over her controls, Quayce adjusted her repulsor field, gaining as much altitude as she dared. Bare centimeters above her head, the ceiling raced by at a dizzying speed. Quayce allowed a smile to cross her tightly clenched lips, knowing that right now Roy would be performing a similar maneuver. Instead of gaining altitude, however, Roy would be cutting his repulsor field to almost nothing, allowing his swoop to hug the ground at a suicidal level.

The tunnel ascent had begun, the late afternoon light marking the exit just ahead. Holding her breath and mentally humming her favorite tune, Quayce blasted through the exit and back onto the main street. Immediately she banked hard to the left and turned her swoop into the center of the road. Roy's swoop emerged from its underground run across from her, trailing sparks as it bounced onto the street. With less than half a meter clearance, Roy passed directly under the bottom of Quayce's swoop. He immediately banked to the right, not daring to raise his head.

Just seconds behind them, two personnel carriers emerged from their respective tunnels at maximum speed. Even if the pilots of the armored carriers could react, there was no place for them to go. In a massive and quite spectacular manner, the two vehicles tried to occupy the same portion of the street at the exact same time. The impact caused a resounding explosion that shattered glass and shook buildings for more than a kilometer.

Slowing to a halt, both swoop riders finally let out their breath and

rose up from cramped positions. Looking back at the fireworks display, Roy let out a shout that would have been deafening—if the roar from the explosion had left their hearing intact. Quayce waited until the ringing stopped before asking Roy if he wanted to go somewhere and grab something to eat. Laughing hard from relief as much as from humor, they revved their swoops and headed home.

Running Swoop Gangs

Swoop gangs. Mention these two words together at any gathering and be prepared for a barrage of conflicting images and opinions. To some, swoops and those who ride them conjure only images of criminals and anti-social psychotics reported by the NewsNets. Others see swoop gangs as rogue heroes of questionable means but good intentions. To a certain degree both images are correct. The goals, motivations, and morals of individual swoop gangs are as diverse as the environments they inhabit, making no two gangs exactly identical. By comparing and contrasting these two extremes, swoop gangs become easier to understand and integrate into *Star Wars* campaigns.

The Good

In some systems swoop gangs are the good guys. Drawn together for reasons of mutual protection and other causes, these gangs receive the support of the local citizenry and are hailed as heroes. On economically depressed worlds, criminal organizations and crooked officials dominate planetary governments. Caring only for power and profit, they do little for the general populace as the planet's economy spins out of control.

In places like these, swoop gangs often organize not as criminals, but to protect family and friends. Bound by detailed codes of honor and a strong sense of duty, they are often the only honest law enforcement on the planet. The members protect their communities from rival gangs and the so-called "legitimate government agencies." Where these gangs have existed for generations, entire feudal societies have developed. Rich in history and accompanied by elaborate rituals of membership, positions in these gangs are often hereditary, with weapons and swoops becoming family heirlooms.

In other instances, small but highly-organized street gangs have taken to swoops to rid their homes of Imperial forces. Although the Empire can muster countless troops and unimaginable firepower, catching these home-grown Rebels has proven to be a near impos-

sible task. The extreme raw power and high maneuverability of most swoops gives gangs an edge in an otherwise uneven fight. Striking from ground and treetop levels, gangs attack their Imperial oppressors' weak points with devastating results. If properly disciplined, the gangs retreat to safety, blending into the local terrain before the Imperial forces can mount an effective counter-strike.

This is not to imply that swoop gangs are pro-Alliance. Despite common ground, the Rebel Alliance has had very little success convincing these gangs to aid their cause. It seems that the gangs resent most forms of organized government, and consider the Alliance to be as much a threat to their way of life as the New Order. Undaunted, efforts continue to recruit the gangs into the Rebel mainstream.

The Bad

In contrast, many swoop gangs fall into the opposite category. Ill-tempered, undisciplined, and largely anti-social, these gangs are made up of career criminals and sadistic tyrants. With a callous disregard for lives and property, they terrify whole planets, taking what they want, when they want it. It is these acts of terrorism and their devastating after-effects that the NewsNets focus on. Often the only images the general populace can recall of swoop gangs are those reported on last night's holo-cast.

These gangs use various illicit means to finance and maintain their way of life. The most frequently used method is straight and simple robbery. Everything from quick smash and grab to full assaults are attempted by these mobile crime clubs. Bank robberies, hijackings of commercial transports, and armed raids on fortified corporate warehouses are not uncommon in gang territories. Occasionally, well-armed gangs attack military convoys and fortifications in order to obtain restricted gear and weaponry not available on the black-market.

Soon after establishing a territory to operate from, most gangs move on to extortion. Operating on a simple "pay or be hurt" system, gangs offer the local residents protection from physical violence and destruction of property. Often the only protection needed is from the extorting gangs themselves. Failure to make these voluntary payments starts with an unannounced visit from the gang and ends with a very unfortunate accident. Sometimes during territorial disputes the offer of protection is gratefully accepted. In these instances, violence erupts as the gang in question defends the territory from other gangs, criminal organizations, and law-enforce-

ment agencies. When the blood settles and the boundaries are re-established, the gang is now free to reinvest their ill-gotten profits into legitimate business fronts. Bars, concert halls, and repulsorlift supply shops are the most common choices, although just about any business can be used.

The Indifferent

Regardless of differences in morals and methods, swoop gangs share common ground. They hold little regard for regulations, laws and the agencies that administer them. They consider all forms of regulated government a threat to their way of life. It does not matter to them if the Empire or the Rebel Alliance rules the world they happen to occupy. Nor does it matter which side ultimately controls the whole of galaxy. Except for the few actually making money from the current conflict, most gangs remain happily ignorant to the true extent and meaning of the galactic civil war. On a daily basis, most gangs are too busy subverting or eluding law enforcement to concern themselves with broader events.

The only loyalty shown by swoop gang members is reserved for the gangs themselves. While each gang is guided by its own set of rules and traditions, a common street code and honor system does exist. The street code defines the gang's rank and standing among its peers, and is followed almost as closely as the gangs' own rules. Loss of respect and position on the street is more highly feared than an Imperial task force.

The unique symbols and markings of swoop gangs are collectively known as "gang colors." Whether simple jackets or elaborate logos and tattoos, colors represent the swoop gang's past history and current reputation. To slight a gang's colors is to insult the entire gang — a gesture not taken lightly by the offended, and often fatal to the offenders. The highest challenge and most difficult initiation for new gang members is to capture or disgrace another gang's colors and survive to tell about it.

Swoop Gang Characters

Swoop gangs are comprised of tough streetwise individuals who do not have the opportunity or desire to travel through the galaxy. As a result, most do not possess spacefaring skills. Instead, swoopers focus on the essential street skills needed to survive in tough urban environments. Several new templates are included specifically for swoop gang members, reflecting their most common skills. Standard templates can also be used, once gamemasters have

Swoop Gang Leader

Character Name: _____



Player: _____

Species: Human

Sex: _____ Age: _____

Height: _____ Weight: _____

Physical Description: _____

Background: You watched as your planet fell into economic ruin. You stood by when the Empire asserted control. You laughed when the gangs started running things, you even helped them torch the local security station. But when they canceled the concert tour of your favorite band, they went too far. Now you're mad and you're gonna make them pay (or at least reschedule the concert). You've gathered your gang and you're ready to ride!

Personality: You're assertive and tough — you prefer action to just sitting around. But you always have a plan first, then take the fight to the enemy. And, of course, one of your first concerns is the welfare of the gang and those

who depend on the gang.

Objectives: To deal some damage to the authorities and win back what you want. Also, to watch out for the best interests of your gang.

A Quote: "What do you mean canceled? Mount up boys!"

Connection With Other Characters: _____

DEXTERITY	3D	MECHANICAL	4D	STRENGTH	3D
Blaster	_____	Repulsorlift Ops	_____	Brawling	_____
Brawling Parry	_____	Swoop Ops	_____	Climbing/Jumping	_____
Dodge	_____		_____	Stamina	_____
Grenade	_____	PERCEPTION	3D+2		_____
Melee Combat	_____	Bargain	_____		_____
Melee Parry	_____	Command	_____		_____
Running	_____	Con	_____		_____
Thrown Weapons	_____	Gambling	_____		_____
Vehicle Blaster	_____	Hide	_____		_____
	_____	Persuasion	_____	TECHNICAL	2D+1
KNOWLEDGE	2D	Search	_____	First Aid	_____
Intimidation	_____	Sneak	_____	Repulsorlift Rpr	_____
Languages	_____		_____	Security	_____
Law Enforcement	_____		_____		_____
Streetwise	_____		_____		_____
Survival	_____		_____		_____
Value	_____		_____		_____
Willpower	_____		_____		_____

Special Abilities: None

Move: 10

Force Points:

Force Sensitive?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Dark Side Points:

Character Points:

- ☐ Wounded
- ☐ Incapacitated
- ☐ Mortally Wounded

Equipment: Comlink, gang jacket and colors, heavy blaster pistol (5D), swoop, vibro-shiv (STR-1D), 1,000 credits

Swoop Brute

Character Name: _____

Player: _____

Species: Human

Sex: _____

Age: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Physical Description: _____

Background: Your dad said you'd never amount to much, and he might be right. You're big and mean, and you tend to bully anyone that's smaller than yourself. While you might not begin all the fights, you're never far from them when they start. You took to riding swoops because they, like you, are loud and powerful. You're the enforcer of the gang, the leader's right hand man, and proud of it.

Personality: You're somewhat brash and bossy, and not afraid to throw your strength around and intimidate others. You're also intensely loyal to your fellow gang members.

Objectives: To have some fun with your swoop gang buddies and see some brawling action.

A Quote: "Hey you! Spot me five credits and I'll let you keep your teeth!"

Connection With Other Characters: _____

DEXTERITY	3D	MECHANICAL	3D+2	STRENGTH	4D
Blaster	_____	Ground Veh. Ops	_____	Brawling	_____
Brawling Parry	_____	Repulsorlift Ops	_____	Climbing/Jumping	_____
Dodge	_____	Swoop Ops	_____	Lifting	_____
Firearms	_____		_____	Stamina	_____
Grenade	_____		_____		_____
Melee Combat	_____		_____		_____
Melee Parry	_____		_____		_____
Vehicle Blaster	_____		_____		_____
KNOWLEDGE	2D	PERCEPTION	2D	TECHNICAL	3D+1
Intimidation	_____	Command	_____	Blaster Repair	_____
Languages	_____	Gambling	_____	Demolition	_____
Streetwise	_____	Persuasion	_____	Repulsorlift Rpr	_____
Survival	_____	Search	_____		_____
Willpower	_____		_____		_____

Special Abilities: None

Move: 10

Force Points:

Force Sensitive?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Dark Side Points:

Character Points:

- ☐ Wounded
☐ Incapacitated
☐ Mortally Wounded

Equipment: Blaster rifle (4D), comlink, gang jacket and colors, 2 grenades, riot suppression gun (6D stun), shades, swoop, 25 credits in change, credit pouch attached by chain

Outlaw Swoop Tech

Character Name: _____

Player: _____

Species: Human

Sex: _____

Age: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Physical Description: _____



Background: You've always had a knack for taking things apart and putting them back together (most of the time they still work). Add your fascination for speed and your destiny was set. Now you've hooked up with this swoop gang and can tinker to your heart's content — providing you can find the spare parts. It doesn't pay to much — it doesn't pay at all — and you spend a lot of your time watching your back. It could be worse, but you wouldn't have it any other way.

Personality: You're fascinated by anything technical, especially machines that go fast. You'll do almost anything to tinker with a new toy, or get your hands on some new

spare parts.

Objectives: To collect more spare parts and to keep modifying the gang's swoop bikes to be better and faster.

A Quote: "I just made a minor adjustment. It'll work. Trust me."

Connection With Other Characters: _____

DEXTERITY	2D+1	MECHANICAL	3D	STRENGTH	2D
Blaster	_____	Communications	_____	Brawling	_____
Brawling Parry	_____	Repulsorlift Ops	_____	Climbing/Jumping	_____
Dodge	_____	Swoop Ops	_____		_____
Pickpocket	_____		_____		_____
Running	_____		_____		_____
Vehicle Blaster	_____		_____		_____
KNOWLEDGE	3D+1	PERCEPTION	3D+1	TECHNICAL	4D
Business	_____	Bargain	_____	Armor Repair	_____
Languages	_____	Con	_____	Blaster Repair	_____
Streetwise	_____	Forgery	_____	Computer Prg/Rpr	_____
Value	_____	Hide	_____	Droid Program	_____
	_____	Search	_____	Droid Repair	_____
	_____	Sneak	_____	Ground Veh. Rpr.	_____
	_____		_____	First Aid	_____
	_____		_____	Repulsorlift Rpr	_____

Special Abilities: None

Move: 10

Force Points:

Force Sensitive?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Dark Side Points:

Character Points:

- ☐ Wounded
☐ Incapacitated
☐ Mortally Wounded

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, datapad, gang jacket and colors, multi-function tool kit, spare swoop parts, swoop, 250 credits

Street Thief

Character Name: _____



Player: _____
 Species: Human
 Sex: _____ Age: _____
 Height: _____ Weight: _____
 Physical Description: _____

Background: You sneak through the dark alleys and stake out your target. Get in quickly and blow the security, grab the loot and make for the exit. That's if all your calculations were correct, which they always are. The gang depends on you to provide those hard-to-get parts and banned music holos — you try to do your part and help out. After all, you're the best of the best. Growing up on the streets has taught you all the skills you need to survive, but it's a big world and everyone needs a place to call home. The gang is your home now, and your only family.

Personality: You're quiet and contemplating — always sizing up the situation, finding the best way in and out.

Your eyes are always open for opportunity and the chance to make off with a prize your gang really needs.

Objectives: To make sure the gang has all the equipment and items it needs, and to obtain them when needed.

A Quote: "You want the new Hyperspace holo-demo? That'll be tough, but I think I can squeak it."

Connection With Other Characters:

DEXTERITY	3D+2	MECHANICAL	2D+1	STRENGTH	3D
Blaster	_____	Communications	_____	Brawling	_____
Brawling Parry	_____	Repulsorlift Ops	_____	Climbing/Jumping	_____
Dodge	_____	Swoop Ops	_____	Stamina	_____
Melee Combat	_____	Sensors	_____		_____
Melee Parry	_____				
Pickpocket	_____				
Running	_____				
Thrown Weapons	_____				
KNOWLEDGE	2D+1	PERCEPTION	4D	TECHNICAL	2D+2
Cultures	_____	Bargain	_____	Computer Prg/Rpr	_____
Law Enforcement	_____	Command	_____	Demolition	_____
Languages	_____	Forgery	_____	Droid Program.	_____
Streetwise	_____	Hide	_____	Security	_____
Survival	_____	Search	_____		_____
Value	_____	Sneak	_____		_____

Special Abilities: None

Move: 10

Force Points:

Force Sensitive?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Dark Side Points:

Character Points:

- ☐ Wounded
☐ Incapacitated
☐ Mortally Wounded

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), fine work tool kit, gang jacket and colors, hold-out blaster (3D), rope and multi-grapple, swoop, vibro-shiv (STR+1D), 500 credits

Street Weasel

Character Name: _____



Player: _____
 Species: Human
 Sex: _____ Age: _____
 Height: _____ Weight: _____
 Physical Description: _____

Background: You grew up in a tough town where you had to have something to survive. For some it was money or muscle, but you had the gift — the power to charm people with a smile or an innocent look, the gift of fast talking and thinking faster. You became good at conning people into protecting you or giving you stuff. But now you're playing with the big boys — you're playing come-up flector for a swoop gang, helping them stay on top. In return, they protect you and help you out on the street. Because sometimes the gift isn't good enough. When the con fails, you hope you feel and your friends won't fail, too.

Personality: You're friendly, outgoing, and always on the you need to do to flam whatever you need from these folks.

Objectives: To use your gifts to survive and help your gang get whatever it needs.

A Quote: "Gentle-beings, have I got a deal here for you ..."

Connection With Other Characters:

DEXTERITY	3D+1	MECHANICAL	2D+1	STRENGTH	2D
Blaster	_____	Ground Veh. Ops	_____	Climbing/Jumping	_____
Dodge	_____	Repulsorlift Ops	_____	Stamina	_____
Running	_____	Swoop Ops	_____		_____
KNOWLEDGE	4D	PERCEPTION	4D	TECHNICAL	2D+1
Bureaucracy	_____	Con	_____	Computer Prg/Rpr	_____
Cultures	_____	Forgery	_____	First Aid.	_____
Law Enforcement	_____	Hide	_____	Security	_____
Languages	_____	Investigation	_____		_____
Streetwise	_____	Persuasion	_____		_____
Survival	_____	Search	_____		_____
Willpower	_____	Sneak	_____		_____

Special Abilities: None

Move: 10

Force Points:

Force Sensitive?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Dark Side Points:

Character Points:

- ☐ Wounded
☐ Incapacitated
☐ Mortally Wounded

Equipment: Datapad, various styles of clothing, 4 forged identities, hold-out blaster (3D), landspeeder, 1,500 credits

made simple modifications. Space-related skills should be replaced with swoop style skills on a one-for-one basis.

For instance, imagine a Young Jedi who's never seen a starship up close, let alone ventured into space. Instead, this Jedi has mastered the swoop, electing to use his limited abilities in the Force to battle injustice on a corrupt homeworld. The gamemaster may choose to eliminate the skills of *astrogation*, *beast riding*, *space transports* and *starship shields*. In their place the Jedi would receive *swoop operation*, *ground vehicle operation*, *firearms*, and *armor repair*. The gamemaster may also replace the Jedi's droid with a swoop or speeder bike.

Templates for the Curious Explorer, the Bounty Hunter and the Wookiee First Mate can also be easily modified for play. Other templates like the Kid and the Smuggler can be used just the way they are. Existing characters from other campaigns can be integrated into a swoop campaign by spending a few character points to learn the *swoop operation* skill.

Campaign Scope and Themes

Swoop gang campaigns can be played on an epic scale, with a continuing series of adventures lasting for dozens of gaming sessions, or they may last just a few games, giving the players and gamemaster a break from their usual campaigns. The adventures may be very dramatic in nature, focusing on strong moral dilemmas and deadly personal conflicts. The best swoop gang adventures, however, are run with a light touch. Humorous events occur when characters attempt to accomplish simple goals (like obtaining sold-out concert tickets) with the same intensity they display when destroying the Death Star. Once the size and tone of the campaign is chosen, the gamemaster should select its theme. The most common are the Local Hero Campaign, the Renegade Campaign, and the Gamemaster Character Campaign.

The Local Hero Campaign is played very much like a standard *Star Wars* campaign. In this setting, the characters are basically good guys, although their methods of operation may be questionable. In this setting, the characters' goals are to stop the injustice and tyranny running the local or planetary governments. The planet may be run by crimelords, corrupt officials, or the Empire. Be inventive — perhaps the characters' homeworld is a small forgotten colony established during the Old Republic. Several generations ago, a small fleet of ships arrived and took over the planet, enslaving the population. The slavers may be pirates, Imperial raiders, or a

strange alien race who's purpose for enslavement has yet to be discovered. The characters are the acknowledged heroes of the enslaved populace, receiving help and aid whenever possible. They are also the enemy of the oppressors who will stop at nothing to eliminate them.

The Renegade Campaign makes the characters fugitives on the run. Accused of numerous crimes, the characters seek refuge and adventure while trying to clear their names. It does not matter if the characters actually committed the crimes — they are be wanted felons, pursued by all law enforcement agencies on the planet. More importantly, the general populace also believes the characters to be violent criminals and may fear them, refusing aid. Bounty hunters and concerned citizens may attempt to capture the characters for the large rewards offered. If the characters value their freedom, they don't stay in one place for long. They might just move from hiding place to hiding place in a large city, or they may undertake a cross-country journey in pursuit of those who can prove their innocence. The plots for these adventures should allow the characters just enough time to make new friends and perform some heroic deeds before they are forced to move on again.

The Gamemaster Character Campaign is used by gamemasters to add swoop gang elements to existing games without creating an entirely new campaign. By using swoop gangs as bad guys, the gamemaster can pit blaster-happy Rebels and cautious free-traders against a new class of villains. The gamemaster's gangs should be populated by the scum of the universe. The leaders of these gangs could be sly, calculating power mongers, or deranged madmen who embrace all that is evil. Gamemasters will be challenged to create worthy opponents that have very limited resources. Unlike the Empire, most swoop gangs do not have countless troops to throw at the characters. The equipment and weapons used are equal to those of the characters, although their morals and temperament are much worse. The players may be Rebels who must infiltrate a swoop gang in order to prevent a terrorist attack on a pro-Alliance world. Perhaps the swoop gang has stolen an important item from the characters or kidnapped someone dear to them.

The Gallisport Campaign

The Gallisport campaign takes place in the Shesharile System of the Minos Cluster. More detailed information on the Shesharile system and the entire Minos Cluster can be found in *Galaxy Guide 6: Tramp Freighters*. Gallisport is home to some of the largest and most

notorious swoop gangs. Both player-run and gamemaster-controlled gangs can be easily integrated into this game setting.

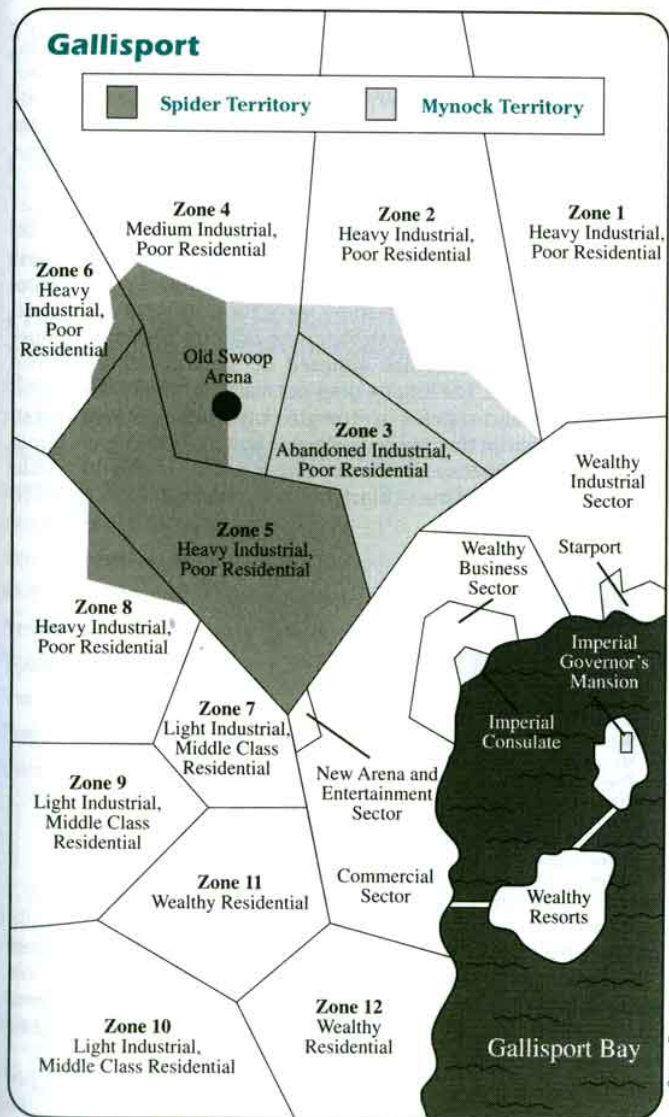
Gallisport is the capitol city of the Shesharile system, a small, relatively unimportant system at the edge of known space. Two populated moons, Shesharile 5 and 6, orbit a large gas giant. Both moons, commonly called the Twin Planets, share a common government and a common fate. On the verge of economic collapse, the moons are home to one of the most corrupt governments in the galaxy. Various criminal organizations have begun to fund the retirements of elected officials, receiving virtual *carte blanche* in return. As a result, the streets of Shesharile 5 are now ruled by the gangs.

Both moons are heavily settled with massive industrial complexes located amidst crowded population centers. The Twin Planets have never been terribly high-tech, and demand for their slightly out-dated products has dropped sharply, though the cheap cost of labor offsets this to some degree. In their headlong pursuit of wealth, the people of the Shesharile system have ruined the environment of their worlds. Both moons are heavily polluted and it has become impossible to escape the filth and mounting piles of industrial waste. There are resorts and private retreats on Shesharile 5 for the extremely wealthy, but even these places are considered dirty by galactic standards. Still, the people of the Twin Planets have become so accustomed to the filth that no one notices it anymore.

Gallisport is not only home to the system's capital, but also to the moons' largest commercial starport. The starport, the government sector, and the wealthiest residential sectors are located behind heavily patrolled security walls, offering an exclusive level of security for those who can afford it. The remaining industrial and residential sectors have been split into territories called zones, which are patrolled by private security firms hired by the city administrators.

LA-LAs and the Gangs

These Legally Authorized Law Authorities (laughingly called LA-LAs by the gangs) are in most cases composed of the exact same criminal elements they are supposed to apprehend. Granted complete autonomy, the LA-LAs may use whatever means they wish to maintain order. Most LA-LAs forcibly collect protection fees from the residents in order to maintain large private armies. Citizens who refuse to pay are arrested and convicted on trumped-up charges. The legal system is also rife with corruption, with lawyers and



judges siding with whoever has the deepest pockets.

Numerous swoop gangs have risen up throughout the system, and Gallisport is home to most of them. Some gangs stand apart from the others. Banding together, heroic swoopers fight insurmountable odds in an attempt to retain their individual freedoms. Still, the majority of the swoop gangs desire power and wealth, and attempt to destroy anyone who stands in their way.

The Empire maintains an Imperial consulate in Gallisport, housing some 5,000 Imperial Army troopers and a detachment of 400 stormtroopers. The consul-general and his two dozen staffers perform minimal duties, acting mostly as trade liaisons and tax collectors for the Emperor. They seldom leave the consulate compound and almost never interfere with the crime-ridden government. Imperial intervention, while not unheard of, seldom occurs in the Shesharile System. The Empire does not maintain large forces in the Minos Cluster and appears in strength only when riots and strikes threaten to disrupt the timely delivery of Imperial shipments. Imperial Customs corvettes maintain regular patrol routes in a vain attempt to stem the flow of black market goods being smuggled to and from Gallisport.

■ Shesharile 5 & 6

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Arid
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Urban
Length of Day: 26 standard hours
Length of Year: 377 local days
Sapient Species: Human
Starport: Standard class
Population: 12 billion
Planet Function: Trade
Government: Democracy (controlled by organized crime)
Tech Level: Information
Major Exports: Munitions, illegal spice
Major Imports: Food, illegal spice, luxury items

Gallisport Street Slang

The language of the street is often a completely different dialect than a planet's native language. Gallisport is no exception. Street slang is a common part of any swoop gang campaign — these terms can be integrated into any swoop gang campaign to add another level of atmosphere to roleplaying.

Back Door: An easy entrance or exit, usually created as needed.

Blinker: Narco-spice addict (because of their rapid involuntary eye blinking).

Boost-Bot: A droid designed to help steal repulsorcraft and parts.

Cherry Bombs: Grenades.

LA-LAs: Locally Authorized Legal Authorities — private cops who control the zones.

Lighter: A flame-thrower.

Popper: A riot suppression gun, named after the loud popping sound created when fired.

RT's: Real Things — real law enforcement officials, legitimate cops who seldom leave the protection of the walled sections of Gallisport.

Sissy Straps: Seatbelts.

Slag: A local swear word.

Slag It or Slag You: Choice curse phrases.

Sprinkle: Narco-spice.

Stonemen: Imperial stormtroopers.

Street Cleaners: Imperial Army troopers.

SUBAR: Slagged Up Beyond All Repair.

Swoopers: Swoop gang members.

Toaster: Thermal detonator.

Torch: Blaster.

Zones: Territorial divisions in Gallisport.

Zoomies: Professional swoop racers.

A Funny Thing Happened at the Cantina ...

Roy raised his glass in a toast, the azure liquid sparkling unnaturally in the cantina's dim lighting. The others followed his example, raising their drinks high.

"Mynocks take care of their own, and take care of their home," he proclaimed in his gruff manner. The others acknowledged the salute with a hardy cheer before downing their drinks.

"At least Zone Three won't be going hungry this week after the raid on that food center," Quayce chimed in. The other Mynocks sitting around the table gave a murmur of agreement.



"I'm glad we're done with that, I'm starving," Roy stated matter-of-factly.

"You would be, Roy," Quayce returned with a smile.

The din in the cantina was at its normal level: loud. The Mynocks usually came here to celebrate after a successful mission against the corruption that made up the government in Gallisport. Sevron Ta, the astute Sullustan owner of Ta's Roost, made sure that the Rabid Mynocks always had a table. Besides, having Zone Three's protectors as regulars was great for business, providing a sense of security to his other patrons.

An unusual hush fell over of the cantina. All eyes went to the entrance, where a group of newcomers stood. They wore the sandy tan ponchos of the Raging Banthas, a new gang that had banded with the Spiders to wrestle control of the zone from the Mynocks. The leader, a punk named Westwood, held a red and black flag in his hand — the flag of the Rabid Mynocks.

"I told you losers not to show your faces in Bantha turf again. Looks like you didn't listen to me." Westwood sneered, his words almost unintelligible due to the cigarillo clamped tightly between his teeth. Throwing the flag into the air, he drew his blaster and fired. The flag fluttered, smoking, to the ground.

Roy and Quayce exchanged glances, grins creeping to their faces. "What an idiot," Quayce said. "This is gonna be fun," Roy replied.

The Rabid Mynocks

The Rabid Mynocks have been a fixture in Gallisport since before the establishment of the zones. Gangs like the Spiders and the Raging Banthas usually band together for mutual profit, feeding off the weak. This is not the case with the Mynocks. The only reason for forming the gang was for protection in a violent city where gangs rule.

The gang has had numerous leaders and members over the years. Members came and went, but the Mynocks have never faded. They choose their leaders through a majority vote — after the death of their last leader, Roy was chosen to lead them. He declined the honor, suggesting Quayce take over in his place, and under her leadership the gang thrived. Her reign lasted six years, until they were framed for crimes they did not commit. The core gang members were arrested and the rest fled to join other gangs or hide.

Before they could be sent to the spice mines of Kessel, the Mynocks' core members escaped with the aid of friends. The Spiders — up to their old tricks — moved in on their turf and made yet another attempt to steal the Star Slinger, an advanced swoop prototype. The Mynocks, not yet recovered from their brief lock-up, foiled them and resumed control of their original territory.

After a brief recruiting campaign, and still running from the law, the Rabid Mynocks have once again resumed their original operations as Zone Three's guardians. The gang raids local food distribution centers and banks and distributes the wealth gained among the citizens of their zone. They are hailed as heroes, and the people of Zone Three would risk anything to protect them from the long arm of the law. The authorities in Gallisport are relentless in their pursuit. The Mynocks are attempting to clear their names, but their road to innocence is a difficult task.

Typical Rabid Mynock Gang Member. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D+1, *blaster* 4D+2, *dodge* 4D+1, *swoop operation* 6D, *streetwise* 5D. Move: 10. Blaster pistol (4D).

Rabid Mynocks' Swoop: Mobquet Nebulon-Q Racer. Speeder, maneuverability 4D, move 210; 600 kmh, body strength 1D. Weapons: 1 blaster cannon (fire control 1D, range 3-50/100/200, damage 4D).



Quayce

Not even Quayce knows where she was born. Without a backward glance, she left her homeworld as a stow-away. Unlike the other ten-year-olds at home, she yearned for adventure and excitement among the stars. Unfortunately for her, she had unknowingly chosen to stow away on a pirate ship.

The pirates accepted her into their band and she spent the next six years aboard their ship as the steward. This was definitely not the life of action she had imagined. She spent most of her time working her young hands to the bone, performing menial labor only fit

for a droid. The pirates said that the droids were too important to do such jobs. Quayce grew to hate droids with a passion. Because of this, she would often go out of her way to beat one senseless. Life on board ship was not all bad, however. The pirates taught her much, including the art of war, and she studied the captain's leadership style.

Upon setting down in Gallisport, Quayce jumped ship. If she could not find excitement in space, she would make her own fun on this planet. Gallisport proved challenging enough — she had dropped herself into the middle of a gang war. The safest place in the zones was to be a member of a gang. Being her only option for survival, she joined the Rabid Mynocks.

Quayce found that she loved the Mynocks like a family, and within a few years rose to lead them. Under her leadership the gang prospered, until the day they were framed. After the Mynocks escaped, she shaved one side of her head and put on her shades. Nobody messes with the Rabid Mynocks and lives.

■ Quayce

Type: Swoop Gang Leader

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 5D+2, brawling parry 4D, melee combat 6D, melee parry 5D, thrown weapon 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 4D+1, law enforcement 3D+2, survival: urban 5D, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 4D

Repulsorlift operation 5D, swoop operation 7D

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Command 5D+1, con 5D+2, gambling 4D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 6D+1, stamina 4D+2

TECHNICAL 2D+1

Repulsorlift repair 5D, security 4D+1

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 10

Move: 10

Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol (5D), red and black jacket, swoop, 400 credits

Quayce's Swoop: Modified Mobquet Nebulon-Q Racer. Speeder, maneuverability 4D+1, move 260; 750 kmh, body strength 1D. Weapons: 1 blaster cannon (fire control 1D, range 3-50/100/200, damage 4D).

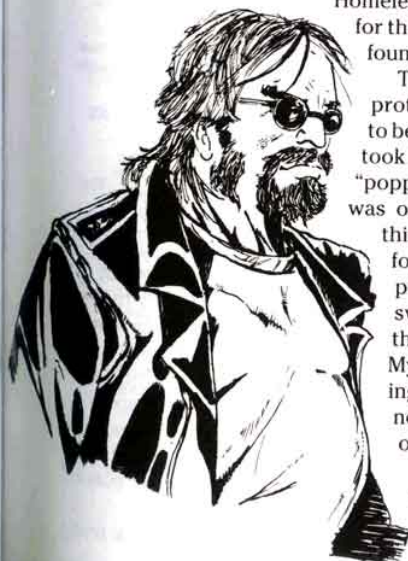
Chop Harlison

Chop Harlison had a promising future, having completed most of his degree in advanced repulsorlift design, when his parents died and the money ran out. One of the many gang wars that occurred in Gallisport killed both his father and mother and forced Chop to take over responsibility for raising his younger brother Roy. His father's debtors claimed their home and put the boys out on the street.

Homeless, the boys set out to find a place for themselves in the violent city. They found a home with the Rabid Mynocks.

The Mynocks took the boys in and protected them. They in turn learned to be useful members of the gang. Roy took to riding a swoop, and using his "popper" to defend their turf when he was old enough. Chop learned to fix things — lots of things. The techs found Chop to be a natural at repairing and improving their swoops. After few years, he took all the knowledge learned from the Mynock techs and earlier schooling and started experimenting with new swoop designs to begin development on the Star Slinger.

Life with the gangs is not all fun and war. Soon after joining the Mynocks, Chop met Sharda, the



woman he fell madly in love with. Sharda and Chop had a child they named Jardra, now the lead singer of the radical band Hyperspaze. A rival gang, the Spiders, killed Sharda on one of their numerous raids on Mynock territory. With Sharda dead, Chop saw no reason to stay with the gang. Removing Jardra from the gangs' influences, he opened his own legitimate tech repair shop and called it Chop's Shop.

Chop's main concern now is taking care of Jardra and keeping an eye on Roy and Bobi, a street orphan he took in. He would lay down his life for either of them. Chop maintains contacts with the Rabid Mynocks as a favor to Roy, helping the gang as much as he can. For now, he is happy tinkering with his experiments and watching Jardra's promising music career take off.

■ Chop Harlison

Type: Veteran Swoop Tech

DEXTERITY 2D+1

Blaster 6D+2, brawling parry 5D, dodge 6D, pickpocket 5D, running 4D+1, vehicle blasters 8D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D+1

Business 7D+2, languages 5D+1, streetwise 7D, value 6D

MECHANICAL 3D

Communications 3D+2, repulsorlift operation 6D, swoop operation 7D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Bargain 6D+2, con 5D, forgery 7D, hide 4D+1, search 5D, sneak 3D+2

STRENGTH 2D

Brawling 6D+1, climbing/jumping 4D

TECHNICAL 4D

Armor repair 6D, blaster repair 5D, computer programming/repair 8D, droid programming 5D, droid repair 5D, ground vehicle repair 6D, first aid 6D, repulsorlift repair 11D, (A) repulsorlift engineering 9D

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 17

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, datapad, multi-function tool kit, Star Slinger prototype swoop, work coveralls, 3,000 credits

The Star Slinger

The brain child of Chop Harlison, the Star Slinger is the result of years of tinkering and advanced repulsorlift engineering. By incorporating restricted parts with new design theories, Chop has made the Star Slinger the premiere example of swoop technology.

Starting with the body of a Mobquet-Q swoop racer, Chop replaced the standard repulsor coils with lift coils from the Empire's new Aratech 64-Y Swift 3 repulsor sled. The Aratech 64-Y uses the newly manufactured coils made of refined duralium — they are banned for civilian use, and may only be obtained on the black market, or from an Imperial production facility.

The coil chamber is flooded with a mixture of Tibanna gas and

chemical stabilizers. Chop uses a mixture of 85% pure Tibanna gas and 15% Tibanna stabilizer. Normal mixtures use only about 45% pure Tibanna gas. Chop has kept the exact formula for his stabilizer a closely guarded secret. The repulsorfield created as the charged coils interact with the gases is almost 50% greater than standard field strengths.

This mixture has also proven to be extremely volatile. An impact or blaster bolt striking the chamber coil results in a spectacular explosion, usually destroying the swoop and operator. Prolonged exposure to charged repulsor coils degrades the stabilizers' effectiveness, dramatically increasing the chances of an explosion. This problem was solved by exhausting the charged gas into the swoop's propulsion system. The burn-off of pure Tibanna gas acts as a turbo-booster, drastically increasing the swoop's cruising speed.

With the increase of lift and thrust, the swoop's maneuverability becomes virtually non-existent. Again the black market provided the solution. Using the guidance package and field manipulators of the Merr-Sonn PLX2 "Plex" missile, the Star Slinger can make over 1,000 critical adjustments to the repulsor field each second. The Star Slinger handles so smoothly that Chop is considering installing the same guidance system in other swoops as more missiles become available.

Currently there is only one functional Star Slinger in existence, although there are three prototypes in Chop's workshop. Two are being rebuilt as parts become available.

It would take years of expensive research and testing to duplicate Chop's results — or an operational Star Slinger to copy.

■ Star Slinger Prototype Swoop

Craft: Custom-built prototype swoop

Type: Swoop

Scale: Speeder

Length: 3 meters

Skill: Swoop operation

Crew: 1

Cargo Capacity: 5 kilograms

Cover: 1/4

Altitude Range: Ground level — 75 meters

Cost: Not available for sale

Maneuverability: 4D+2

Move: 330, 950 kmh

Body Strength: 1D

Weapons:

1 Blaster Cannon

Fire Arc: Front

Skill: Vehicle blasters

Fire Control: 1D

Range: 3-50/100/200

Damage: 4D+1

Roy Harlison

Roy Harlison was raised in Gallisport by his older brother, Chop. Gang wars killed their parents when Roy was 10 years old. For safety, Roy and Chop turned to the rival of the gang that destroyed their family — the Rabid Mynocks.

The Mynocks protected and educated the boys in the ways of the Gallisport streets. By the time Roy was 12 he was riding his first swoop, a pastime he enjoyed immensely. They gave him "Old Besi," a popper (riot suppression gun) which Roy still uses to aid in the defense of their territory.

Life was good for the Harlisons, until the day Roy was conscripted by the Imperial Army. The army taught Roy the ways of the Empire and he was assigned to a scout trooper support unit. Within the first week he discovered a way to increase the speed of the scouts' bikes. It was a simple process, removing the speed governor and the air brakes. Roy was going to inform the scout captain of the new modifications when they arrived for their daily patrol, but Roy, being a man of instinct, left to find some food. The scouts arrived early and started their patrol, which lasted about 30 seconds and ended when the captain's bike collided with a tree.

Court-martialed and discharged, Roy returned to Gallisport where he re-joined the Mynocks. He never strove to lead others, so when chosen to lead the gang he passed control of the Mynocks to Quayce. He has been happy to follow her as second-in-command ever since.

Roy Harlison

Type: Swoop Brute

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D+2, dodge 4D+2, firearms 6D, grenade 3D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 5D, streetwise 4D+1, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 3D+2



Repulsorlift operation 4D+1, swoop operation 7D

PERCEPTION 2D

Command 4D, search 4D+1

STRENGTH 4D

Lifting 5D, stamina 5D+2

TECHNICAL 3D+1

Demolition 4D, repulsorlift repair 3D+2

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 13

Move: 10

Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol (5D), red and black jacket, riot suppression gun "Old Besi" (6D/5D/4D stun), siderider swoop, 30 credits

Roy's Riot Suppression Gun — The Popper

The Talex-Delcor SWE riot suppression gun is a duel barrel, breach loading rifle used primarily by law enforcement agencies for crowd control during riots and public demonstrations. Only one shell may be loaded per barrel, although both barrels may be fired simultaneously. Empty shells are ejected manually. When fired, the chemical shell explodes inside the barrel and emits an expanding wall of over-pressurized air and chemical reactants capable of knocking down doors, people and minor barricades. The weapon has only been proven lethal at point blank range, but minor physical injuries can result from being knocked down. Ammo shells costs 25 credits each.

Riot Suppression Gun

Model: Talex-Delcor SWE/2 Riot Suppression Gun

Type: Sonic stun effect rifle

Scale: Character

Skill: Firearms

Ammo: 2

Cost: 800

Availability: 2,R

Fire Rate: 2

Range: 2-3/5/10

Damage: 6D/5D/4D (stun)

Game Notes: This weapon is highly dangerous. It's ammunition is an unstable chemical explosive compound that must be loaded manually every two shots. A character must make a Moderate demolition roll to reload the barrels. Failure causes an explosion that inflicts lethal damage to the loader (6D). It takes four combat turns to safely reload a popper, but this time can be cut in half by increasing the difficulty of the demolition check to Difficult. Both barrels can be fired at once in combat, but a one on the Wild Die means that the gun explodes, doing damage from both barrels to the shooter. The weapon's blast affects most targets in the gun's line of sight, with stun damage decreasing over range.

Siderider Swoop

The siderider swoop is a technological wonder in swoop design. In theory, it is impossible for it to fly at all. Chop, never one to worry about theory, found a way around the problem. He found that by

adding a large wing for counterbalance, along with additional compensators, allowed the swoop to actually fly. The swoop is harder to maneuver than its normal cousins — Chop has added an additional blaster cannon on the siderider to compensate for its lack of maneuverability.

■ Siderider Swoop

Craft: Modified Mobquet Nebulon-Q Racer with siderider

Type: Swoop

Scale: Speeder

Length: 3 meters

Skill: Swoop operation

Crew: 1

Passengers: 1

Cargo Capacity: 20 kg

Cover: 1/4

Altitude Range: Ground Level — 50 Meters

Cost: Not available for sale

Maneuverability: 3D+2

Move: 260; 750 kmh

Body Strength: 1D

Weapons:

2 Blaster Cannons

Fire Arc: Front

Crew: 1

Skill: Vehicle blasters

Fire Control: 1D

Range: 3-50/100/200

Damage: 4D

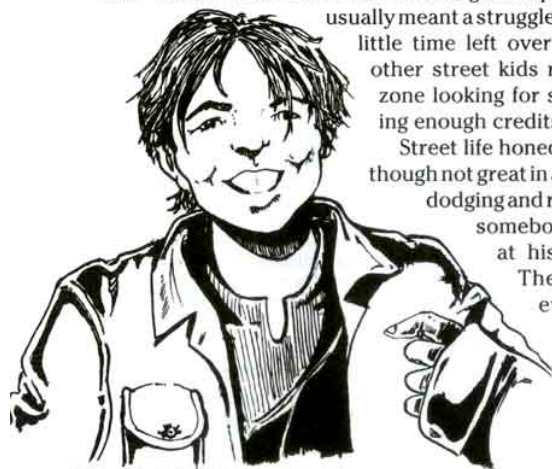
Bobi

Bobi wanted a life of adventure. Being an orphan in Gallisport usually meant a struggle for survival, with little time left over for fun. He and other street kids ran from zone to zone looking for shelter and stealing enough credits to survive.

Street life honed Bobi's skills. Although not great in a fight, he's quick, dodging and running whenever somebody takes offense at his petty thievery.

The only one who ever caught him was Chop.

Being bold, Bobi had attempted to steal



Chop's credit box. It almost worked. He was at the exit of Chop's Shop when the big tech returned. Bobi tried his usual tactic of dodging through Chop's legs, His heavy prize slowed him down and finally allowed Chop to catch him.

Chop, seeing himself in the young boy, decided not to exact any punishment. Instead, he decided to take Bobi under his wing and get him off the street. To Bobi's amazement, he found a home. Bobi apprenticed himself to Chop, aiding him in whatever he needed, including breaking the captured Rabid Mynocks from prison. Grateful for his help, the Mynocks invited Bobi to join the gang. Bobi, still very impressionable, jumped at this chance for adventure. He boosted his first speeder bike and has ridden with the gang ever since, earning the honor of wearing the gang colors. Bobi yearns for the day when he will be grown enough to handle a swoop.

■ Bobi

Type: Swoop Kid

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Blaster 4D, dodge 4D+2, melee combat 4D, pick pocket 4D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Streetwise 4D+2, survival: urban 4D+1

MECHANICAL 3D

Repulsorlift operation 4D

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Con 5D, hide 5D+1, search 4D, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 2D+1

Stamina 3D, climbing/jumping 4D+2

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Repulsorlift repair 4D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 8

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), red and black jacket, speeder bike, 50 credits

Bobi's Speeder Bike: Ikas-Adno 22-B Nightfalcon. Speeder, maneuverability 3D+1, move 160; 460 kmh, body strength 1D+2. Weapons: 1 laser cannon, (fire control 2D, range 3-50/100/200, damage 4D).

The Spiders

The Spiders have been an icon in Gallisport for years. Although they have not always been as large as their current numbers, Dean Lado — their current leader — changed that. Lado made alliances with other smaller, newer gangs, bringing them together under the Spiders' colors.

The Spiders are vicious. They have all the bad traits associated with swoop gangs — ruthless, calculating, terrorists. Through vari-

ous means the Spiders have managed to take control of Zone Five and portions of the surrounding zones, subverting many gangs, good and bad alike, under their banner. In recent times, the members have been concerned with Lado's obsession for the mysterious Star Slinger prototype swoop and his lack of concern for the day-to-day welfare of his gang.

Typical Spiders Gang Member. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D+1, *dodge* 4D+1, *swoop operation* 6D, *streetwise* 5D. Move: 10. Blaster pistol (4D).

Spiders' Swoop: Mobquet Nebulon-S Racer. Speeder, maneuverability 4D, move 210; 600 kmh, body strength 1D. Weapons: 1 blaster cannon (fire control 1D, range 3-50/100/200, damage 4D).

Dean Lado

Dean Lado was born in Gallisport, his parents abandoning him to the mercy of the zones when he was a child. The Spiders, one of Zone Five's many swoop gangs, found Dean and raised him as one of their own. Growing up in a gang as cruel as the Spiders affected him, and he took on the worst character traits they offered. One of those traits was his habit of making sure any who opposed him died for their efforts, usually in a spectacular manner.

When he was 20 he made his move for power. The gang's leader, an aging biker, decided to vie for control of the neighboring zone. Dean participated in the raid along with the leader and assassinated him when the opportunity arose. The Spiders unanimously elected Lado as their new commander. Some voted for him out of respect, most out of fear. Under Lado's rule the Spiders grew to dominate the entire zone and most of the neighboring zones.

■ Dean Lado

Type: Swoop Gang Leader

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 9D+2, brawling parry 5D, dodge 6D, melee combat 5D, melee parry, 6D, running 5D, thrown weapons 6D, vehicle blasters 7D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 8D, languages 4D, law enforcement 5D, streetwise 9D, survival 7D, value 5D, willpower 7D

MECHANICAL 4D

Repulsorlift operation 5D, swoop operation 8D

PERCEPTION 3D+2

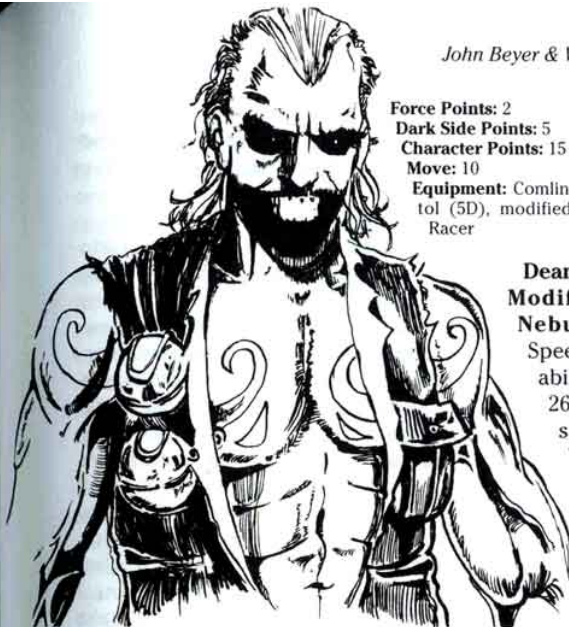
Bargain 5D+2, command 9D+2, con 5D, gambling 7D, hide 5D, persuasion 6D, search 5D, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 8D, climbing/jumping 5D, stamina 6D+2

TECHNICAL 2D+1

First aid 4D+1, repulsorlift repair, 6D+1, security 5D+1, demolition 9D+1



Force Points: 2

Dark Side Points: 5

Character Points: 15

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, heavy blaster pistol (5D), modified Nebulon-Q Swoop Racer

Dean Lado's Swoop: Modified Mobquet Nebulon-Q Racer.

Speeder, maneuverability 4D+1, move 260; 750 kmh, body strength 1D. Weapons: 1 blaster cannon (fire control 1D, range 3-50/100/200, damage 4D).

The Challenge

"He's going to cheat," Chop said, an unusual seriousness in his voice.

Quayce nodded in agreement. She pulled her shades over her eyes — as she keyed the ignition, her swoop roared to life. The noise of the modified swoop drowned out the jeers of the crowd. This wasn't going to be an easy audience to deal with. Fortunately, the code of the challenge kept the Spiders at bay. Knowing they wouldn't interfere, Quayce would only have to worry if she lost. She took a moment to fasten the sissy belt — it wouldn't do any good if she got thrown before the race started.

Beside her on his own swoop, Dean Lado sneered at her. Like most of the Spiders, he was cocky — a dangerous combination when mixed with a cold heart. Lado wanted the Star Slinger prototype swoop for himself, and would do anything to own it. How many of the Spiders had thrown their lives away trying to get the experimental swoop and failed? It was hard to tell.

This time was different. Dean Lado did not target the Star Slinger itself, but Chop's daughter, Jardra. Jardra was a good kid — Quayce wished she weren't caught up in this mess. Jardra's promising singing career had just started with the release of "Trench Warfare,"

a rock song that was already on the Empire's banned list.

"The belt won't help you any! You've already lost! Why not hand over the plans for the Star Slinger and forget it?" Lado yelled with a smile creeping onto his mouth.

"You're lap-happy, Lado!" she snapped back.

Quayce wished she were as confident as she sounded. Lado didn't know that she rode the Star Slinger prototype, the very prize he sought. He did have the advantage, though — Lado was an excellent racer, usually winning one way or another at every swoop gang rally he raced in. She, on the other hand, was a competent rider, but had never raced in any of the past rallies. Her only advantages were the Star Slinger and a special "equalizer" she hoped she wouldn't need. She would have to stay focused. Lado was known to set traps for his prospective opponents, and a mistake could prove fatal.

This race's only rule was no outside interference. The challenge was simple — three times around the ancient swoop track, which was littered with debris from years of neglect. There was no telling when a piece of the stadium would fall or where. The racers would have to rely on instinct alone to guide them. If Lado won, he would get the plans to the Star Slinger, and Quayce would give up leadership of the Mynocks. If Quayce won, Jardra would be returned to them and Lado would step aside as leader of the Spiders. The code of the challenge bound the loser to honor the outcome. Failure to do so would result in the entire gang losing face.

A hush fell over the stadium as two burly Spiders escorted Jardra to the center of the cluttered lane. In each hand she held flags bearing each gang's colors: red and black for the Mynocks, silver and blue for the Spiders.

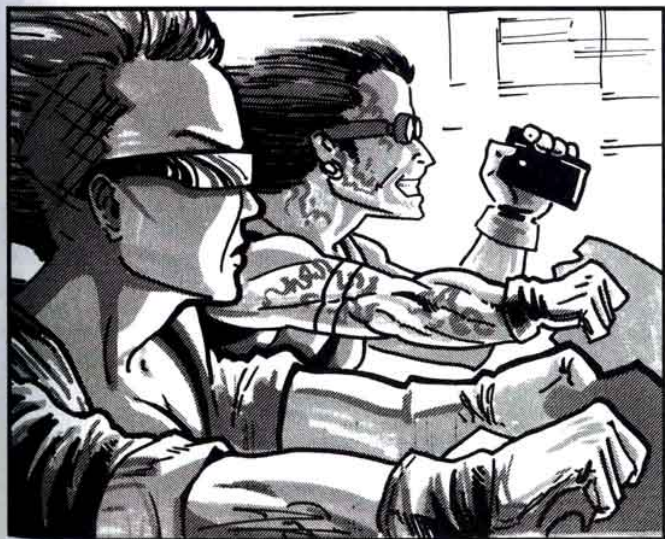
Frightened, she looked to Quayce for support. Quayce gave her a thumbs-up that brought a tiny smile to Jardra's face. She signaled both racers to get ready, raising both flags into the air above her head. Quayce and Lado both revved their accelerators in preparation for the upcoming signal. Chop backed off of the track, yelling and whooping loudly in support of the Mynocks' leader. Jardra looked at both racers. Then the flags came down. Both swoops rocketed forward with a fierceness that startled even the veteran gangers. The race had begun.

Lado took the lead easily, maneuvering his swoop over and between obstacles. Quayce lagged behind, though not by much. The Star Slinger performed much like a normal swoop. Its special boosters would remain dormant until activated. Chop had warned her

before the race to use them only in an emergency. While the Star Slinger could easily overtake the other swoop, its predecessor's first and only test run with the boosters had ended in a fiery explosion. If that didn't kill her, it would certainly kill the swoop's engine. She would have to risk the boosters as a last measure.

The first lap ended with Lado in the lead. Hardly surprised, Quayce raced on. Several times Lado attempted to force her to the far edges of the track where the debris lay thickest. Quayce managed to stay out of that danger zone, but each effort had cost her ground. Lado wore a smug grin as they began the second lap. He decelerated abruptly as they entered the first turn, smashing his swoop into hers. Again and again the swoops collided as Lado tried to force Quayce into the ruins of the crumbling arena.

Quayce adjusted her controls, compensating for minor damage. Below her the ground passed by at a phenomenal rate, causing the track and the spectators to merge into a distracting blur. As the racers entered the final lap, Quayce prepared for another attempt by Lado to force her off the track. To her surprise, he didn't even try. Instead he gave her a wide berth and was now moving at top speed toward the final turn. Trailing just behind, she saw Lado remove a small box from inside his jacket. The box appeared featureless



except for a small red button raised from its center.

"Two can play this game," Quayce told herself as she removed a small spherical device from inside her jacket — the "equalizer." Years of winning rallies had helped Lado master cornering techniques, and as they emerged onto the final straightaway, he held his lead. Pointing the small box before him, Lado pressed the red button. Suddenly, small green lights blinked on the track ahead of him, visibly announcing the presence of a very lethal repulsor minefield.

The repulsor mines, Quayce guessed, were probably rigged to detonate after sensing a second repulsorlift field. Lado would zip by, and, unable to maneuver to safety, Quayce would follow in his wake, blowing herself up in the process. Quayce prepared to activate the Star Slinger's boosters, but Lado had maneuvered ahead of her, making a clear run impossible.

Sensing victory, Lado let the black box drop from his hand. It fell to the ground, smashing as it bounced along the track. With a triumphant grin, Lado looked over his shoulder to measure Quayce's reaction. Quayce, however, had ignored his last stunt. To Lado's surprise, she was shouting something, her words impossible to make out. She tossed something toward him — the "equalizer." Lado turned pale as the unmistakable form of a mag-grenade sailed forward, and with a magnetic thump, attached itself to his swoop. Lado began to careen wildly, trying unsuccessfully to shake the mag-grenade off his bike. Seeing her opportunity, Quayce activated the thrusters. In a burst of speed, Quayce rocketed past Lado just as the swoops entered the minefield. Lado screamed in disbelief as the first mine detonated beneath him. The force of the blast tossed him further into the mines. The remaining mines detonated simultaneously in a massive explosion that shook the foundations of the arena. A fireball blossomed over the swoop track, shooting flames a hundred meters high. Quayce emerged from the fireball, jacket smoldering, her swoop in flames as the Star Slinger caught fire. She quickly cut off power to the boosters and unfastened her sissy belt. As the swoop crossed the finish line, Quayce jumped to the ground, rolling around to extinguish the flames on her clothes. The Star Slinger roared past, slammed into the arena wall, and exploded.

The challenge was over. Quayce had won and Dean Lado was dead. She limped over to join Chop and Jardra in an emotional reunion.

"When we saw the minefield, we thought you were a goner," Chop said. "What was that you did to distract Lado?"

"Do you remember the mag-grenade the Spiders tossed at us last week?" she asked. "I just returned the favor."

Chop's eyes widened. "But it didn't work. It was a dud. You must have known that."

Brushing soot from her jacket, Quayce responded, "I knew it. You knew it." Pointing over her shoulder towards the flaming wreckage that was once Dean Lado, she said, "Tell it to lap-happy!"

Adventure Outlines

Here are some outlines for adventures for swoop gang characters, and Rebel characters who can become involved with swoop gangs. Gamemasters are encouraged to tailor these outlines to their own campaigns, using their own familiar settings and recurring characters to flesh out the adventure.

An Unlikely Partnership

Alliance High Command has targeted a manufacturing complex located in one of Gallisport's outer zones. The factory produces stabilizing motivators for Imperial AT-STs. A successful sabotage attempt could cause setbacks to the Empire's war efforts. The complex is located deep within Spider territory, and previous Rebel attempts to infiltrate the zone have failed. The characters may use any combination of Rebel characters or swoop gang members.

Episode One: The Rebel operatives arrive in Gallisport and attempt to contact a swoop gang to assist in the mission. Rebel intelligence has identified the character's gang as the most likely to comply. The Rebels must negotiate a deal with the swoop gang despite the fact that the gang has no reason to get involved, and makes unreasonable demands.

Episode Two: The characters must infiltrate Spider territory to scout out the complex's defenses and develop a plan of action. Avoiding both Spider, LA-LA and Imperial security patrols, they must sneak into the complex. An encounter with some Spiders could liven things up.

Episode Three: Once inside the complex, the characters must split into two groups — one reprograms the production computers, while the other sabotages some assembly equipment. The characters must remain undetected despite plant security officers and security droids.

Episode Four: After completing their mission, the characters must quietly sneak back out of the complex, possibly drawing the attention of security guards. And if they've angered the Spiders earlier, they might run into a larger, meaner group of the swoop gangers just as they leave the complex.

The Show Must Go On

The characters' gang has recently befriended a local band. On the eve of the group's debut concert, the band's equipment is stolen. With only hours to spare, can the characters find enough gear to let the show go on?

Episode One: The characters arrive at the rehearsal site only to discover a robbery in progress. The thieves (possibly a rival swoop gang or thugs hired by a rival musical group) are well armed and take a few parting shots before retreating through a well-planned escape route. All the important and expensive equipment has been removed or destroyed in the firefight. The characters must protect their musician friends and secure the concert hall.

Episode Two: After driving off the thieves, the characters realize they have to replace most of the equipment. The instruments are fairly easy to find, but the special holo-sound system is much harder to replace. The characters help the band track down new instruments. They may have to buy, borrow or steal them. The characters scare most merchants if they arrive on swoops displaying weapons and gang colors. The merchants attempt to charge twice the normal price for the requested gear. Threats and violence could result in a visit by the LA-LAs. The merchants are greedy enough that bribes and cons may work very well.

Episode Three: The characters must replace the holo-sound system computer core. Without lights, holographic images and blasting sounds of a high-tech production, the concert won't be successful. Unfortunately, the only system the characters can reach in time is located in the Imperial consulate's communications lab. The characters must infiltrate the lab and remove the system core. The system is extremely fragile and quite awkward to move. The communications lab is a large maze of tunnels and workstations. Imperial stormtroopers guard the facility and high security clearance is required for admittance.

Episode Four: With the new equipment in hand, it's back to the show. The characters must get past any alerted Imperial patrols and other gangs. Once at the concert-hall, they must set up the equipment or fend off the Imperials long enough to get the show started.

The Big Breakout

The characters are gang members who have been arrested and are being held in a LA-LA jail. They need to formulate some kind of escape plan against impossibly tight security before they're transferred to a slave labor camp.

Episode One: During transfer the characters are freed by an outside party, an allied swoop gang which disables the transport. Seeing the opportunity, the characters make their move — they must get away before reinforcements arrive. The characters have no possessions and are manacled to the transport and to each other. The LA-LA guards carry only a few light weapons, but LA-LA escort vehicles are close by and offer pursuit.

Episode Two: The characters make it back to their old territory. They recover some credits that they've stashed away, but have nothing else. They need to re-supply and re-arm or they will be easy prey for rival gangs. The characters must call in favors and make deals in order to obtain the weapons and supplies they need. Everybody tries to cheat and swindle them, demanding outrageous prices or deals. The characters have to act tough to negotiate well.

Episode Three: The characters find out that their swoops and some other large equipment are being stored at a local LA-LA impound. They must reclaim their swoops before they are sold or destroyed. The impound site is patrolled by security droids and snarling guard beasts that look very mean and hungry ... W

The Cure

By James L. Cambias

Illustrated by David R. Deitrick

The characters are Rebel operatives called in for a briefing by Doctor Andros Hareel, the head of the Rebel Alliance's medical section. Read aloud:

"Six months ago, the planet Sedesia was hit by a devastating plague. The unknown virus spread uncontrollably through the population, infecting 90 percent of the inhabitants within the first month. Thousands died, and more were dying. During the chaos, the Empire quickly moved in and took control of the planet. They established a quarantine and set up medical facilities to combat the disease. Since then, we've had no word from Sedesia. Now the Imperial medical service claims to have ended the plague."

Hareel activates a holoprojector showing an Imperial news release about the plague. According to the tape, "the benevolent guidance of the Emperor has once again saved his subjects from harm. The Imperial medical service has ended the terrible plague on Sedesia. No new deaths from the disease have been reported in the past month. The quarantine of Sedesia will remain in effect until the Imperial medical service has determined there is no danger to the rest of the Empire."

Hareel turns off the holoprojector. "Needless to say, I'm suspicious—the Empire is seldom so benevolent. When Talleg had that outbreak of thorn fever, they just hauled all the sick off to isolation camps and let them die. Alliance Command shares my skepticism. We need someone to go to Sedesia and uncover the truth. What's really going on there? How are the Imperials coping with the plague, and how can we help the people of Sedesia?"



The team is provided with one of the Rebellion's vast supply of stock light freighters, along with coordinates for a hidden landing-field at a ranch on the surface of Sedesia, and the location of Rebel contacts in the capital city. The Alliance has had extensive contact with the people of Sedesia before the plague, so the Rebel database on the planet is detailed and accurate.

■ Sedesia

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Cool
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Dry
Gravity: Heavy
Terrain: Tundra, forest, mountains
Length of Day: 20 standard hours
Length of Year: 220 local days
Sapient Species: Humans
Starport: Limited services
Population: 1.5 million
Planet Function: Breedtash ranching, logging, mining
Government: Imperial Military
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Food, raw materials
Major Imports: Technology, manufactured goods

Capsule: Sedesia is a dry, cold world with vast expanses of steppe and tundra. Its economy is based on ranching and herding, with some logging in the wetter regions. The planet's axis is tilted 45 degrees, giving it very extreme seasons. During the winter, nearly a sixth of the planet's surface gets no sunlight at all. The combination of extreme temperature differences and fast rotation creates violent weather on Sedesia. Sudden wind storms of incredible violence can arise with little warning. Consequently repulsoircraft are seldom used on Sedesia — all transport is by ground vehicles.

The people of Sedesia are traditionally very stubborn and independent. Scattered across the surface in isolated ranches, they are very self-reliant and do not take kindly to being ordered around. Their planet's harsh climate and heavy gravity make Sedesians tough and determined. Before the plague struck, Sedesia was a center of Rebel sympathy and support. Fugitives from the Empire often found a haven on some outlying ranch, and a considerable tonnage of breedtash meat made its way into Rebel mess halls.

Though Sedesia has access to modern technology, most communities employ a mixture of imported space-level equipment and locally-made industrial-level goods. Six-legged riding animals called striders are the most common means of transportation, particularly in outlying areas where roads are bad.

Because of Sedesia's high gravity, all *Strength* tasks are increased by one level of difficulty on the planet. Natives of Sedesia all have an average *Strength* code of 3D. The inhabitants speak Basic, with a slight accent. Sedesia is located in the Mid-Rim region of the galaxy, and has been inhabited for several centuries.

Episode One: Quarantine

Sedesia is sealed off from the rest of the galaxy by an Imperial quarantine squadron. One old *Dreadnaught*-class cruiser is in orbit, accompanied by a strike cruiser and two Imperial Customs light cruisers. The two capital ships each carry a squadron of TIE fighters. This is an incredibly small force for an Imperial occupation — normally at least one Star Destroyer would be present. Experts in space tactics can tell that the squadron is deployed to control the space lanes around the planet, to prevent ships from travelling to or from Sedesia.

Dreadnaught Cruiser. Capital, capital ship piloting 4D, capital ship gunnery 4D, sensors 4D, maneuverability 1D, space 4, hull 5D+2, shields 2D+1. Weapons: 10 laser cannons (fire control 3D, damage 2D), 20 quad laser cannons (fire control 2D, damage 4D), 10 turbolaser batteries (fire control 1D, damage 7D).

Strike Cruiser. Capital, capital ship gunnery 5D, capital ship piloting 4D, sensors 4D, maneuverability 2D, space 6, hull 6D, shields 2D+2. Weapons: 20 turbolasers (fire control 2D, damage 5D), 10

turbolaser batteries (fire control 1D, damage 7D), 10 ion cannons (fire control 4D, damage 4D), 10 tractor beams (fire control 2D, damage 4D).

2 Guardian-class Light Cruisers. Starfighter, starship gunnery 4D, space transports piloting 5D, maneuverability 1D, space 9, atmosphere 400; 1,150 kmh, hull 5D, shields 2D. Weapons: 4 laser cannons (fire control 2D+2, damage 5D).

TIE Fighters. Starfighter, sensors 3D, starfighter piloting 4D+1, starship gunnery 4D, maneuverability 2D, space 10, atmosphere 415; 1,200 kmh, hull 2D. Weapons: 2 linked laser cannons (fire control 2D, damage 5D).

Lately, the blockade force hasn't seen much action. Nobody really wants to visit a planet wracked by a deadly disease, so merchant shipping has been avoiding Sedesia. There are no ships left on Sedesia except those of the Imperial medical mission. For months the squadron has been sitting idle. Of course, the Rebels don't know this.

To get past the blockade the Rebel characters must first evade the outer perimeter patrols of TIE fighters, then get through the main force in orbit, and finally get under cover on the surface. The Rebel Alliance has given the party the coordinates for a hidden landing strip on a ranch near the Sedesia's capital city of Besia Osurne.

The TIE fighter patrols extend out to the normal hyperspace jump radius from the planet. Evading the TIE perimeter requires a Difficult *space transports* roll to outmaneuver the fighters. The Rebels can also try to slip past the blockade undetected. Roll the Imperial pilots' *sensors* skill (3D); detecting a ship sneaking by requires the Imperial pilot to beat an Easy task by 15. Imperial success means two TIE fighters jump the Rebels immediately, and the two *Guardian*-class light cruisers move to attack the intruder. The two larger ships position themselves between the invader and the planet, and launch additional TIE fighters.

If the characters avoid the patrols, they must still get past the main force, orbiting closer to the planet. This requires a Very Difficult *space transports* roll to exploit a gap in the Imperial formation, or else another attempt to slip past the sensors. Failure means the ship comes under attack by the strike cruiser, while the dreadnaught and the patrol cruisers maneuver to block any escape.

Once the characters' ship enters atmosphere, there is a one in six chance of encountering one of Sedesia's terrible windstorms. The

pilot must make a Difficult *space transports* roll to avoid damage in the storm. The ship must shake any pursuers before landing at the ranch.

Episode Two: Angels of Mercy

The secret landing field is located on the ranch of Elodd Fask, about 30 kilometers west of Besia Osrune, the capital city of Sedesia. The Rebels can set down their ship at the hidden landing-pad, then conceal it within a barn fitted with a masking system to cover the ship's power output.

Nobody comes out to meet the Rebels when they land. The Fask ranch appears to be abandoned. There is no sign of a fight, and all the riding animals are in their stalls in the barn, hissing and growling for food. The main house of the ranch is tidy and undisturbed. But a horrid surprise awaits any character who ventures into the upstairs bedrooms — there are half a dozen bodies upstairs, all several weeks old and shockingly decayed. Apparently the virus breaks down all the soft tissues of the body, leaving only skin and bones behind. The bodies take on a grayish color, making them look like ancient mummies.

With the Fask family gone, the characters must seek other local help. There once were many Rebel sympathizers on Sedesia, and the characters have been provided with an identification code to locate any who have survived the plague. Their file on the planet lists a Rebel contact in the city of Besia Osrune, an old rancher named Sybogh Abya.

Besia Osrune

Besia Osrune is the biggest city on Sedesia, with a population of 250,000. The planet's small starport is located in the city, along with a large stockyard and processing plant for breedtash meat. In fall, when the ranchers drive in their breedtash herds for sale, Besia Osrune is full of herders carousing and spending their year's pay all at once. The rest of the year it is a quiet, businesslike town without much in the way of entertainment. The buildings of the city are all squat and solid, with narrow windows covered by heavy shutters for protection against wind storms.

One startling sight which the characters notice in the streets of the city is how friendly the citizens are toward the Imperial CompForce troops occupying the planet. Small children and old ladies wave as Imperial ground transports roar past. Shopkeepers give fruit or drinks to CompForce troopers on patrol. The whole city

looks like an Imperial propaganda holo come to life.

The characters also notice "health stations" set up in each neighborhood, manned by fresh-faced volunteers from COMPNOR's youth agency, the Sub-Adult Group (SAGroup). If the characters wait long enough, they can see an entire family lining up to get injections at a health station. The parents make pleasant small talk with the SAGroup volunteer, who tells them how exciting it is to serve the Emperor's New Order.

If the characters enter a health station, the volunteer in charge greets them politely. "Good afternoon, citizens — is it time for your booster immunizations? Just give me your ident numbers and I'll check your dosage records." The volunteer switches on a hand computer and waits expectantly.

The Rebels have no proper ident numbers, of course. When they cannot provide them to the health station volunteer, a look of

concern crosses his face. "You're in great danger, citizens! Without booster immunizations you are all vulnerable to the plague! You wouldn't want to get the Gray Death, would you? Go to the central medical facility and get yourselves registered at once."

SAGroup Volunteer. All stats are 2D except: *bureaucracy* 3D, *Perception* 4D, *Technical* 3D, *first aid* 3D+1. Move: 10. Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, medpac, hand computer.



Rendezvous With Abya

Making contact with Sybogh Abya requires the Rebels to meet him at a tavern he is known to frequent, a place called the Trail's End. The bar is located near the stockyards in Besia Osrune, and is popular with breedtash herders and meat packers. The identity

signal consists of drumming out a particular pattern on the tabletop with one's fingers. When the characters make the signal, Abya leaves the bar and leads them to his home on the outskirts of town, where they can speak freely.

Sybegh Abya

Type: Breedtash rancher

DEXTERITY 3D+1

Blaster 6D, dodge 4D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Business 4D, streetwise 6D, survival 5D

MECHANICAL 3D

Beast riding 7D, ground vehicle operation 4D+2

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 5D, persuasion 4D+2

STRENGTH 4D

Brawling 5D, lifting 6D, stamina 5D+2

TECHNICAL 2D

Ground vehicle repair 3D+2

Capsule: Sybegh Abya is a typical Sedesian. He is short and wide, built like a repulsortank. His personality fits his build — stubborn and determined. Abya doesn't easily change his mind, and having given his word he will keep it. He doesn't like anyone giving him orders. Abya began helping the Rebellion a few years ago, smuggling breedtash meat to the Alliance and supplying information on Imperial activities on Sedesia. His motive has always been simple: "I don't like the way those Imperials always try to boss people around."

Abya is almost always accompanied by his droid, Ayttoo Beefour. The droid handles most of Abya's business accounts, and is fully aware of his contacts with the Rebellion.

Ayttoo Beefour

Type: Accounting and business droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Bureaucracy 8D, business 8D, value 7D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

Bargain 3D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Hemispherical body with two fine manipulators
- Repulsor unit (2 meter ceiling)
- Visual and auditory sensors (Human range)
- Speech synthesizer
- Holographic recorder and projector

Move: 10

Size: 1 meter wide, 0.6 meters tall

Cost: 8,000

Capsule: Ayttoo Beefour is a small, non-humanoid droid built for business administration and accounting. It's first owner was a fabulously wealthy aristocrat of the Old Republic, Lord Anstaal. The droid never lets anyone

forget that it was once the trusted advisor of one of the galaxy's richest men. When things go wrong, Ayttoo invariably recalls, "When I was with Lord Anstaal this sort of thing never happened." Nothing on Sedesia can compare with the old days for Ayttoo.

Ayttoo records and keeps track of all Abya's business dealings, and helps negotiate contracts and prices for buying, herding, maintaining and selling breedtash.

Once they are all safe at his home, Abya greets the Rebels. "I didn't ever expect to hear that code again," he says. "Kind of figured the Alliance had given up on Sedesia since the Gray Death hit."

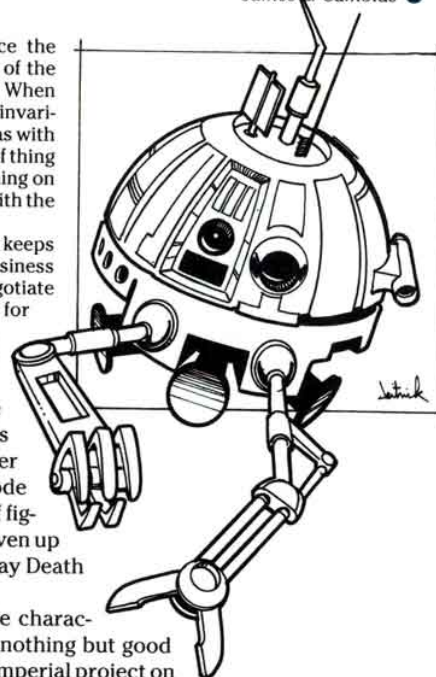
To their surprise, the characters find that Abya has nothing but good things to say about the Imperial project on Sedesia. According to him, almost 30,000 people had died by the time the Empire arrived, but as soon as their doctors got to work the death rate dropped to almost nothing. "You'll find few on Sedesia who mind the Empire these days," says Abya. "A few didn't trust the Imperials, and didn't get injections in time — they're all dead now. Just about all the leading Rebel sympathizers on Sedesia are gone."

According to Abya, the Imperials have not yet been able to find a cure for the plague. So once a week everyone must get a booster shot of antiviral drug in order to stay healthy. Anyone who misses more than two booster shots gets sick, and without rapid treatment, they die horribly of the Gray Death.

The characters may worry about catching the plague themselves. The gamemaster should encourage this by asking them to make *Strength* or *stamina* rolls to avoid contagion. Actually, they are in no danger, as they learn later. Only if they get shots at a "health station" can the characters catch the plague.

Abya informs the characters that Doctor Fesjo Negleem is the

James L. Cambias



chief of the Imperial medical unit. Characters must make a Very Difficult *Knowledge* roll to recognize the name. Negleem was once a prominent researcher in the Imperial Army's biowarfare division.

Snooping Around

The Rebel agents should try to learn as much as possible about the Imperial force on Sedesia. The Alliance can always use data on the Imperial troop deployment. While the Imperials do not advertise their military strength on Sedesia, it is not hard to determine the size of their occupation force. Any of the CompForce soldiers in Besia Osrune can be made to let slip general information on Imperial strength with an Easy *con* or *persuasion* skill roll. Alternatively, characters with a military background can deduce the force size from the amount of supplies moving through the starport — this requires a Moderate *Knowledge* roll.

The 3,000 Imperial Army troops aboard the dreadnaught in the blockade squadron are the only Imperial regulars in the system. The actual planetary occupation force consists of a regiment of CompForce troopers (soldiers from the military arm of COMPNOR). The regiment has two battalions of infantry and an assault battalion. Normally the regiment would have a battalion of repulsoircraft forces, but the terrible wind storms of Sedesia make repulsoircraft flyers dangerous. Instead, the battalion has been equipped with hoverscouts and wheelbikes. The regiment has 2,560 troopers (from a total complement of 3,380 men), with 88 combat hoverscouts and 22 wheelbikes.

The CompForce regiment is scattered across the surface of Sedesia, with units of company size in all the principal cities and towns. Besia Osrune, as the capital city, has the largest concentration of soldiers, including one heavy weapons company (armed with light repeating blasters), a regular infantry company, a hoverscout company, and a wheelbike company.

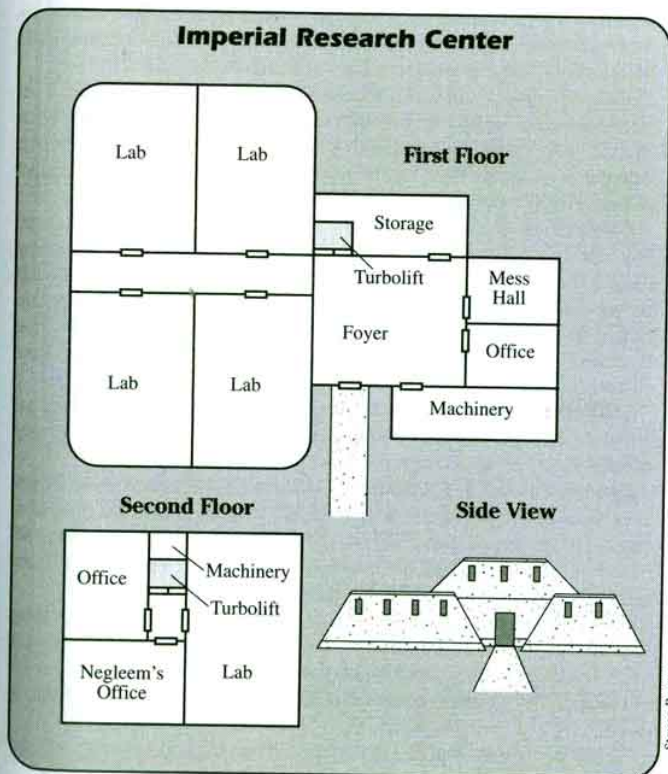
The CompForce troops are not as professional as Imperial regulars. They are highly motivated by loyalty to the Emperor's New Order. This makes them very difficult to bribe or *con*. In combat they are merciless and suicidally brave. Where regular troops pay attention to things like tactics and doctrine, CompForce soldiers rely on fervor and blind obedience.

If trouble breaks out on Sedesia's surface, the garrison commander can summon help from the Army regiment and fighters in orbit. The strike cruiser carries two AT-STs and an AT-AT walker, along with a company of stormtroopers.

Episode Three: The Laboratory

The Imperial medical team has taken over an old veterinary-medicine center outside Besia Osrune for use as a laboratory. The lab is surrounded by rangeland, and to get there the Rebels must ride striders, a native pack and draft animal trained to carry Sedesian ranchers. The medical center is surrounded by an ordinary fence, supplemented by fairly simple detectors. Characters notice the detectors on an Easy *security* roll, and can override them on a Difficult roll. Failure brings a squad of CompForce guards running to investigate.

The main building is guarded by CompForce troopers — to get in the characters must either *con* the guards (a Difficult task), *sneak*



past them (Very Difficult), waylay a researcher and steal his identification, or use Force powers to deceive the guards.

CompForce Troopers. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D, *dodge* 4D, *melee combat* 4D, *Perception* 3D, *brawling* 3D. Move: 10. Blast helmet (+1 energy, +1D physical), blast vest (+1 energy, +1D physical), blaster pistol (4D), comlink, force pike (STR+2D).

The research center's ground floor is divided into several large laboratories. Any scientist-type character examining the labs immediately notices something is amiss. Non-scientist characters must make a Moderate *Knowledge* roll. The scientific apparatus is all wrong for a biological laboratory — there are bits of chemistry and astronomy gear jumbled in. None of the lab benches are set up to perform actual experiments. The computers are all loaded with entertainment software. The place is a sham!

Doctor Negleem's office is on the second floor of the center. The door has a voice-operated security lock. Getting in requires either a Difficult *security* roll to bypass the lock, or a Heroic *Strength* roll to force the door open. Forcing the door sets off an alarm, and a squad of CompForce troopers responds quickly.

A search of the room reveals little. Negleem's office is kept obsessively tidy, and he is not one to leave important things lying around. His desk has an elaborate computer console equipped with its own security interlocks to prevent access by anyone except the doctor himself. It requires a Difficult *security* roll to defeat the interlocks before using the computer, and then a Difficult *computer programming/repair* roll to get into Negleem's secure files.

Once the characters get into Negleem's personal files, they find the draft of a report to COMPNOR detailing a pathogen-based loyalty enhancement program being tested here on Sedesia.

A second file includes notes on expanding the program to other rebellious planets. (At least one of the worlds listed should be a character's home planet.) There is also a downloaded newsnet feed concerning the outbreak of Candorian plague on Dentaal; Negleem has added a comment at the bottom: "Bunglers!"

Next to Negleem's office on the second floor is the only working laboratory in the entire complex. It is here that the drug is prepared for distribution to the health stations across the planet. The door to this lab has the same security systems on it as the door to Negleem's office.

To locate a pure sample of the drug in the lab requires a Moderate

Pathogen-Based Loyalty Enhancement Report

From: Dr. Fesjo Negleem, Sedesia Project Director

To: COMPNOR Coalition for Improvements, Redesign Bureau

Subject: Pathogen-Based Loyalty Enhancement Program Evaluation

The Sedesia test project has succeeded admirably. Six months after the virus was introduced to the planet by covert aerial spraying, a former hotbed of Rebel activity is now completely loyal to the Emperor. The plague, a modified form of my virus FNV-23, achieved 99 percent infection in the first two weeks. Mortality rate during that period was 35,310, or 2.3 percent of those infected. The disruption of government allowed a completely bloodless occupation, conducted entirely by a single regiment of CompForce personnel. Once control of the planet was secured, a program of inoculations was instituted, using volunteers generously provided by SAGroup.

This inoculation program is the key to the entire plan of loyalty enhancement. The drug (my own antiviral agent FNA-23-B) prevents replication and breaks down the outer protein coat of FNV-23. Normally, this would be followed by a complete cure as the victim recovers from the effects of the virus. However, each injection of antiviral drug also includes tiny globules of the FNV-23 virus encased in a polysaccharide coat. The globules break down after 10 to 20 days, releasing fresh viruses into the victim's system. Thus reinfected, the victim requires a fresh dose of FNA-23-B to avoid suffering the effects of the plague.

The shifting-antigen feature of the FNV-23 virus makes it impossible for any victim to become naturally immune. And the formula for antiviral agent FNA-23-B is an Imperial secret. The result of this is obvious — the inhabitants of Sedesia are now completely dependent on us for the antiviral drug. If we choose to deny it to them, they will die. For them, loyalty to the Emperor is now a matter of survival.

The success of this project is undeniable. All known Rebel sympathizers on Sedesia have been eliminated by the simple expedient of withholding the antiviral drug. I propose we expand this program, beginning viral spraying on other worlds. The attached document includes a cost breakdown of the entire Sedesia operation. Note the dramatic savings when compared with the price of a military invasion and pacification campaign.

search skill roll. Characters with the *medicine* skill can also find it with an Easy *medicine* roll. With a pure sample, they can synthesize FNA-23-B at any large modern medical facility — like the hospital in Besia Osurne, or the labs of the Alliance's medical section.

Face to Face

As the Rebels are leaving the building with the sample, they turn a corner in the hallway and find themselves face to face with Doctor Negleem. After a moment of startled surprise, Negleem cries out, "Stop them!"

■ Doctor Fesjo Negleem

Type: Imperial Scientist

DEXTERITY 2D

Blaster 3D, dodge 3D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 6D, bureaucracy 7D, intimidation 5D

MECHANICAL 2D

PERCEPTION 4D

Command 5D, investigation 6D, search 5D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 5D, first aid 6D, (A) medicine 8D, security 4D+2

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 3



May, 1995

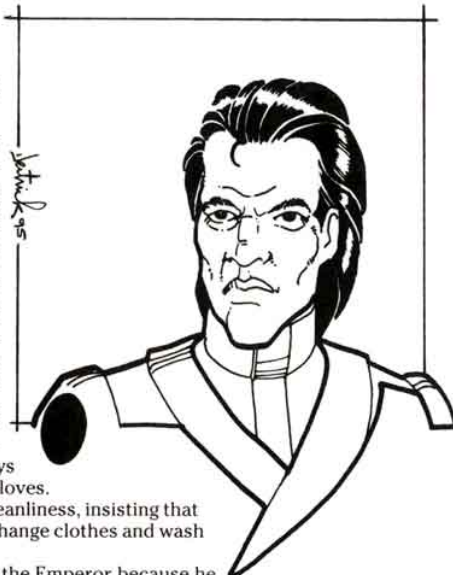
Character Points: 7

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, hold-out blaster (3D)

Capsule: Negleem is very ambitious. Through this Sedesia project he hopes to make the biowarfare division a separate branch of the Imperial military, with himself as its commander. He is a tall man, very slender and pale, with piercing eyes under heavy eyebrows. Negleem dresses in standard medical service whites, but always wears sterile plastic gloves. He is obsessed with cleanliness, insisting that all those around him change clothes and wash several times a day.

Negleem is loyal to the Emperor because he sees the Empire as a way to gain power for himself. Negleem is a great advocate of using disease as a weapon — a favorite saying of his is, "I can carry an entire division of my little soldiers in a test tube, and they can defeat any army in the galaxy."



Episode Four: A Plague of Imperials

Doctor Negleem is accompanied by a squad of four CompForce guards (plus a few unarmed scientist flunkies). The guards engage the Rebels in a brief firefight, but since their chief responsibility is to protect Negleem, they do not chase after the characters if they flee.

But the Rebels won't get away without a fight. As they gallop away from the medical center on their striders, they hear the whine of motors behind them as five wheelbikes follow in hot pursuit.

■ Striders

Type: Reptilian riding animal

DEXTERITY 2D

PERCEPTION 2D

STRENGTH 5D

Brawling 6D, stamina 7D

Special Abilities:

Tail: Does STR damage.

May, 1995

Tusks: Do STR+1D damage.

Move: 20

Size: 1.5-2.5 meters tall at the shoulder, 6-8 meters long

Orneriness: 3D (females), 5D (males)

Capsule: Striders are large six-legged reptilian creatures native to Sedesia. They are fast runners and have excellent stamina, which has made them the riding animal of choice on the planet. Striders are very cantankerous and hard to train, however. Females are merely willful (*Orneriness* of 3D), but male striders are downright vicious (*Orneriness* code of 5D). When angered, they attack with their long whiplike tails and sharp tusks.

■ Wheelbike

Craft: Gallis-Tech Scout Wheelbike

Type: Surface scout vehicle

Scale: Speeder

Length: 2 meters

Skill: Ground vehicle operation: wheelbike

Crew: 1

Crew Skill: ground vehicle operation: wheelbike 3D

Cargo Capacity: 20 kilograms

Cost: 10,000 (civilian version)

Maneuverability: 1D

Move: 35; 100 kmh

Body Strength: 1D+2

Weapons:

1 Repeating Blaster

Fire Arc: Front

Scale: Character

Skill: Vehicle blasters

Fire Control: 1D

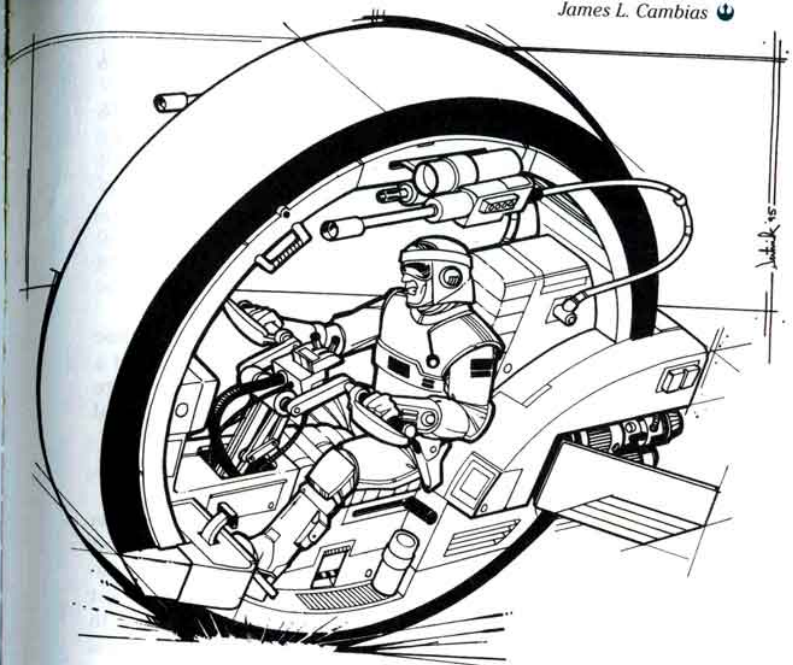
Range: 3-50/120/300

Damage: 6D

Capsule: Wheelbikes are a popular sport vehicle on many worlds, particularly where conditions make repulsorlift speeder bikes unusable. Many different brands are in use on Sedesia, of which this model is typical. A wheelbike consists of a single large wheel, two meters in diameter. The driver and power unit are located inside the wheel, and gyro stabilizers keep it upright. Civilian wheelbikes are generally two-seaters, but the Imperial scout bikes replace the passenger seat with a repeating blaster firing forward.

The CompForce soldiers piloting the wheelbikes are more heavily armored than the guards, with enclosed helmets similar to those of Imperial speeder bike scouts. These men normally use repulsorlift speeder bikes, and so are not as skilled with wheelbikes as one might expect.

Wheelbike Pilots. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D, *dodge* 4D, *vehicle blasters* 4D, *Mechanical* 3D, *ground vehicle operation: wheelbike* 3D, *repulsorlift operation* 4D. Move: 10. Blast helmet and armored leggings (+2 against all attacks), blast vest (+2 energy,



+1D physical), blaster pistol (4D), blaster carbine (5D).

Half a kilometer along the road from the research center to Besia Osurne, the fleeing Rebels encounter a vast herd of breedtash being driven to the stockyards. There is no way around the herd, and the CompForce bikers are gaining fast. Getting through the herd requires a *Difficult beast riding* roll. Failure means a character's strider refuses to move among the close-packed breedtash. Attacking the breedtash may cause them to panic — roll a die each time an animal is hit by blaster fire. On a roll of 1, a stampede results. Trying to ride a strider in a breedtash stampede is a *Very Difficult beast riding* task. The CompForce troopers are brave (or foolish) enough to try getting through the herd on wheelbikes — it is a *Heroic* roll to avoid having their bikes toppled and crushed by stampeding breedtash.

Breedtash. *Dexterity* 2D, *Perception* 1D, *Strength* 5D, *brawling* 6D. Special abilities: Barbed tail does STR+1D damage; trample does STR damage. Move: 18.

Once the characters escape pursuit, they must get the purified serum to the Sedesian medical authorities quickly. If they delay too long, Doctor Negleem will have a company of CompForce troopers seize the central hospital in Besia Osurne. Initially the hospital has only four guards, identical to the ones at the research facility, but if the Rebels don't go straight there, the place will soon be surrounded by CompForce soldiers.

At the hospital, the Sedesian medical authorities are shocked to learn that the plague is artificial. They quickly begin synthesizing the antiviral drug — without the virus globules — and transmit the formula to all the other clinics and hospitals on the planet.

Once news gets out about the plague, Sedesia becomes a time bomb ready to explode. Nearly everyone on the planet has lost a friend or loved one to the Gray Death, and would love to get revenge on those responsible. Mobs start to fill the streets as a general uprising against the Empire begins.

Further Adventures

Since most of Sedesia's native military leaders died from the plague, the inhabitants look to the Rebels to take charge of the revolt and defeat the Imperials. Though the CompForce troops are scattered and outnumbered, they do have better weapons and can get reinforcements from orbit. Unless the characters can come up with some swift, decisive plans to defeat the Imperials while they are still disorganized, the uprising may be put down.

Also, there are many outlying communities without medical facilities. Somebody must get a supply of pure antiviral drug to them, without using flying vehicles. Just making the journey across the rough surface of Sedesia would be an adventure, even without Imperial soldiers to worry about.

When the Imperials discover that Negleem's plan has failed, a task force shows up with orders to retake the planet by force. The gamemaster can run several adventures involving the Rebels helping in the defense of Sedesia — or even making a break to bring in more Rebel Alliance forces. The Imperials will probably be able to recapture Sedesia, but the Rebels can remain on the planet in hiding, conducting guerilla operations against the occupation force. The characters may have to run through the Imperial task force in order to summon aid.

If at all possible, Dr. Negleem should get away from Sedesia in order to hinder the Rebels in the future. As a brilliant and utterly

amoral bioweapon designer, he can show up on almost any planet, using diseases to fight for the Empire.

Sedesia can be the setting for a variety of other adventures, without involving the Empire at all. Characters might somehow acquire a ranch in some remote region of the planet, either by inheritance or as a gambling debt. Their foray into breedtash ranching can include dealing with rustlers, driving the herd to market, and all the other themes of Western movies. Characters might also get involved in a search-and-rescue mission for a crashed starship during the planet's long dark winter.

Future Releases

Check out these new releases from West End Games and order them early so you can have the latest games and sourcebooks as soon as they're released.

Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game:

- June — *Alliance Intelligence Reports* (40109) 96 pages, \$15.00
 July — *DarkStryder Campaign Boxed Set* (40209) 2-96 page books, poster map, cards, \$30.00
 July — *Classic Adventures #1* (40083) 128 pages, \$18.00.
 August — *Star Wars Adventure Journal #7* (41007) 288 pages, \$12.00
 August — *Galaxy Guide 12: Aliens: Enemies and Allies* (40087) 96 pages, \$15.00

Masterbook:

- July (*orig. May*) — *The World of Species* (29001) 160 pages, 16 pages of color, \$25.00
 August — *The World of Necroscope: Box* (25000) \$30.00; *Book* (25001) \$20.00

The World of Indiana Jones:

- June — *Indiana Jones' Lands of Adventure* (45005) 96 pages, \$15.00

The World of Bloodshadows:

- June — *Padarr Citybook* (33004) 128 pages, \$18.00

Shatterzone:

- July — *Hardware/Software* (21014) 128 pages, \$18.00

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- August — *War's End* (20590) 144 pages, \$18.00

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Medals of Honor



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Well, the competition was fierce, but we have several winners in the *Star Wars Adventure Journal's* *Star Wars* scavenger hunt from issue three. We received many cards from across the United States and around the world, from Niceville, Florida, and Puyallup, Washington to County Durham, England and Saskatoon, Canada.

For all of you who were wondering if you got the correct answer to all our questions, we've provided each question with its answer:

1) John Ratzenberger, who played Cliff Claven on the hit sitcom *Cheers*, appeared in *The Empire Strikes Back*. What was the name of his character? Major Bren Derlin.

2) For how long were the Jedi Knights the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic? "For over a thousand generations ..."

3) What group is mentioned in Timothy Zahn's *Star Wars* trilogy as having visited Dagobah before the events in *Star Wars: A New Hope*? The Bpfasshi Dark Jedi.

4) What is the name of the famous Rebel general introduced by West End Games, and what is the name of his son, who appeared in Timothy Zahn's *The Last Command*? General Airen Cracken and his son, starfighter pilot Pash Cracken.

5) Throughout all three *Star Wars* films, how many times was the line "I have a bad feeling about this ..." used? Well, we should have been saying "I have a bad feeling about this" as soon as we published this question. That particular quote or variations on it were used five times — but the exact phrasing was only used twice. As many astute *Star Wars* scholars pointed out, Luke said "I have a very bad feeling about this" when approaching the Death Star for the first time in *Star Wars: A New Hope*, and Han said "I gotta bad feeling about this" in the trash compactor. Leia said "I have a bad feeling about this" in the belly of the space slug in *The Empire Strikes Back*. In *Return of the Jedi*, C-3PO told R2-D2 "I have a bad feeling about this" inside Jabba's palace, and Han said "I have a really bad feeling about this" when the Ewoks are preparing their "feast." Any answers from two to five were acceptable.

And the Winners Are ...

Winners were randomly drawn from all correct entries by West End Games' *Star Wars* line editor, Bill Smith. And the winners are:

★ **Ashley Williams** of East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, wins a set of *Star Wars* collectible pins from **The Hollywood Pins**.

★ **Trent Rasmussen** of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, will receive a set of *Star Wars* Micro Machines® from **Lewis Galoob Toys**.

★ **ET1 Charles Motheral** of the USS Independence wins a complete set of *Star Wars* Galaxy trading cards from **Topps**.

★ **Key Fadri** of Dobbs Ferry, New York, wins \$150 worth of retail *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* merchandise from **West End Games**.

The following winners will each receive a four-issue subscription to the *Star Wars Adventure Journal* (added on to any current subscription they may have):

★ **Kathy Ventura** of Manhasset, New York.

★ **Rob Forsyth** of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

★ **John Gago** of Bloomington, Indiana.

★ **Ed Lindquist** of East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

★ **Raymond Rivera** of Puerto Rico.

Congratulations to all the winners, and to all who entered the contest with correct answers!

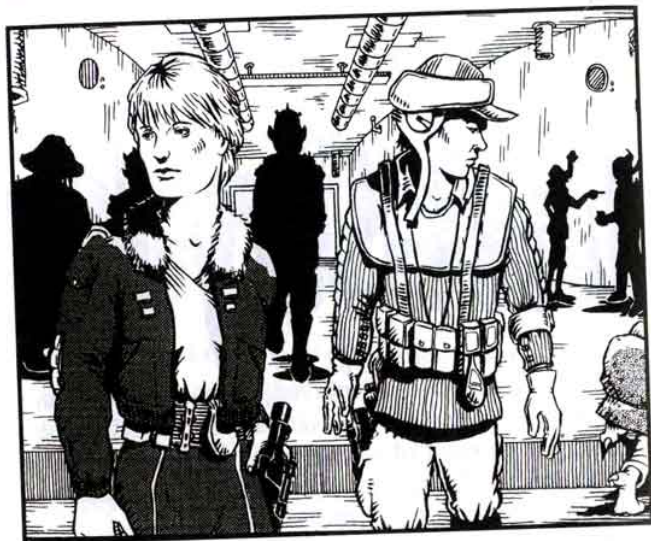
In July West End Games will release...

DarkStryder

the first boxed campaign set for *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*. *DarkStryder* follows the crew of the *FarStar*, a New Republic starship in pursuit of a renegade Imperial Moff. The pursuit leads them into unexplored space beyond the borders of the Empire.

DarkStryder encourages gamers to play different characters during the campaign, either their own or any of the *FarStar* crew. *DarkStryder* isn't the typical, heroic *Star Wars* campaign — it's gritty, harsh, and deadly. The crew is assembled from criminals, outcasts, Imperial prisoners and rogues, all held together by a few loyal New Republic soldiers. And gamers can choose to play any member of this ragtag crew — even switch in between or during adventures!

One of the *FarStar*'s command crew is a Twi'lek known as Loh'khar the Finder. He's the group's "procurement specialist" — he excels at finding needed equipment or information and retrieving it. Just don't ask where he got it. To tempt you with the flavor and character of the *DarkStryder* campaign, you can read on about Loh'khar's early days ...



Finder's Fee

By Peter Schweighofer

Illustrations by Matt Busch

Thella knew the Finder would be waiting for them at the back of Lorana's Labyrinth. And he just might be able to get their infiltrator team off the planet without the Empire crashing the party.

Thella took her first officer, a burly brute named Huffreys, and led him by the hand into the bar. Kelada starport's renown Labyrinth was a maze of crooked bar counter and counter-height tables arranged in a life-sized puzzle. Patrons of every species crowded their way, smoking, drinking, socializing in numerous sounds and tones. Several creatures skittered past them, no taller than their knees.

Thella reached over and checked the shoulder pocket on her flight jacket. The flap was snapped down and the data card inside secure. They had gone through a lot of trouble to get that information from the Empire ... she wasn't about to let a few difficulties get in her way.

Huffreys bullied a few beings out of their way, all the while looking back skeptically at Thella as if to question her judgment in coming here. Thella knew he didn't like dealing with aliens. But at this point, the Finder was the only one who could help them.

The only three booths in the entire bar were at the end of the maze, if the labyrinth could be said to have an end, and if one could find it. At times the dive seemed to stretch on endlessly. But after a lot of jostling and pushing and almost tripping on the short skittering aliens, Thella and Huffreys found the three booths at the maze's end. And sitting in one was the Finder.

He really wasn't as omnipotent-looking as Thella had imagined. The Finder was a Twi'lek, somewhat taller than average, wrapped in a gray tunic and black hooded cloak. His hands hovered gracefully over a few datapads scattered on the table. Two of the red-scaled, short aliens peered over his shoulder from the booth's corner, eying the datapads as if they were lunch.

"I am Loh'khar, the Finder," the Twi'lek said, looking up from his datapads as if salutations were an afterthought. "You are looking for safe passage off Kelada for you and your friends?"

Thella took a step back. "How did you know?"

Loh'khar looked back at her with sly eyes. "It is my business to know such things," he said. "It is not my business to tell you how."

Oh. Thella slipped into the bench opposite the Twi'lek. Huffreys stood just outside the booth watching Loh'khar and the bar's patrons, his hand on his blaster handle.

"Is this how you anticipate your host's hospitality?" Loh'khar asked, looking down at Thella over his upturned palms. The two red-scaled aliens tittered to themselves in the corner.

Thella bit her lip, then pulled a small pouch from her service belt. She tossed it, and the pouch landed with a thud near one of

Loh'khar's hands. He opened it, sniffed the contents gingerly, pulled the drawstrings and sequestered the pouch in one of the folds of his tunic.

"*Kav'lehalle so fendoon*," he said. "The guests are welcome. So, I hear you have run into some trouble with the Imperial constabulary."

"Let's cut to the chase," Thella said, leaning over the table. "I've got six team members to fly out of here. The Imperials locked up our transport in impound with two squads of stormtroopers as soon as they found us breaking their bank."

"To which system do you require transportation?" Loh'khar calmly asked.

"Anywhere there aren't any Imperials. Gelgelaar will do. We can catch another transport there for our final destination. I need a flight jockey who can blast us past the Imperial blockade upstairs. I need a field medic, or at least an Emdee droid who can fix up my security specialist. I need a decrypt unit."

"You are certain what you retrieved from the Imperial garrison post requires a decrypt unit?" Loh'khar chided. "I would have thought the processor you stole would require an interface pad ..."

"Whatever. And I need all this soon — before the stormtroopers combing this starport find the hidey hole where the rest of my team is lying low."

"What you ask is complex," Loh'khar sighed. "But it is possible ... for the proper compensation."

"Whatever I've got, you're entitled to it," Thella replied, giving Loh'khar the upturned palms sign.

Loh'khar smiled. "Rizzal," he called, turning to one of the red-scaled aliens. "Go tell Undermaster Neffron I could have some valuable information on the Imperials for him if he can give me his hard-coded interface pad. Deliver the device into my hands. And if you see Nizzal on your way out, have her report immediately." Rizzal tittered once, scurried beneath the table, and bounded out into the crowded bar, dodging the patrons at knee-height.

Loh'khar turned to the alien's companion, leaning attentively over the table. "Vizzal, go visit Fotane the droid dealer, and tell him I shall take my payment on that favor I arranged for him with starport customs — and remind him it can be revoked. Return with that Emdee droid. Yes, the one in the back room. Escort it to docking bay KB-101." Vizzal tittered some more. "And be quick about it!" Loh'khar snapped. Vizzal was off under the table and skittering through the bar.



Another red-scaled alien, almost identical to the other two, popped its head up from beneath the table. "Ah, Nizzal, so glad you could make it," Loh'khar said. "We have some clients here who need our help. I want you to go to docking bay KB-101. Find the Silver One. Gently remind her about that concussion missile tube I arranged to be installed on her starship, then escort her back here immediately." Nizzal nodded, a feral look in her eye as she peered at Thella, then sped off beneath the table.

"It will take them but a few moments if all goes well," Loh'khar said. "Please, let us order some drinks. Something to eat, perhaps."

Huffreys shuffled uncomfortably, watching the Twi'lek and being particularly careful not to let one of those red-scaled aliens sneak up on him. Thella watched Loh'khar as he sifted through his datapads, adding information here, checking data here, slipping a data card from one to another to transfer more notes.

An attractive Twi'lek waitress squeezed past Huffreys and set the drinks and a plate of some chandad nibbles on the table. Loh'khar absently fingered his glass, but didn't sip.

Thella began rapping her fingers on the table when one of the red-scaled aliens zipped beneath the table and popped up next to Loh'khar. It tittered at the Twi'lek, then brought up what looked like

a thick datapad with several extra keys and input jacks.

"Ah, Rizzal, nice job," Loh'khar said, removing the hard-coded interface pad from the creature's hands. The alien eyed the plate of chandad. "Go ahead," Loh'khar said, "You may have two." The alien's agile arms leaped out from its clothing and snatched up two nibbles. It gobbled them down without a second thought.

"This should help you decrypt the processor you acquired from the Imperials," Loh'khar said, sliding the box across the table to Thella.

"When can you get the other things we need?" she asked.

"I assure you, they will be forthcoming very shortly," Loh'khar gracefully reached for the chandad plate and took a nibble. "As for my compensation ..."

"I'm not paying out anything until everything is set," Thella said.

Another red-scaled alien popped up beside Rizzal and tittered at Loh'khar. A moment later, a woman with striking platinum blonde hair swaggered up to the booth. By her boots, vest and blaster, Thella could tell the woman was a smuggler. "You call?" the smuggler asked.

"Platt, how nice to see you," Loh'khar said, smiling a broad grin. "These kind folks and their friends require discreet transportation to somewhere out-of-the-way. Where did you say? Gelgelar?"

"Anywhere backwater," Thella said.

"I'm headed in that direction anyway," the smuggler said, eyeing Loh'khar with what Thella thought was contempt. "Is that why Vizzal brought that surgical droid over to the *Last Chance*?"

Loh'khar ignored her. "So, now that everything is satisfactory, we shall discuss my compensation ..."

"I don't have a lot of money on me for a finder's fee ..." Thella began.

"I said compensation, not payment," Loh'khar corrected her. "I have the perfect idea." He reached out gracefully toward Thella, seemingly intending to stroke her chin. Before his hand even stretched halfway across the table, Huffreys reached over from his guard post at the booth's edge and grasped the Twi'lek's wrist.

"Is this any way to treat your host?" Loh'khar asked.

"I think I know what he has in mind," Thella told Huffreys. The man released his grip on Loh'khar's wrist.

"Thank you."

"He wants this," Thella said, unsnapping the shoulder pocket to her flight jacket and removing a datacard. She glared at Loh'khar. "We went through a lot of trouble to get this ..."

"All I ask is to copy it," the Twi'lek replied, reaching for a datapad with an empty data card slot. "I have certain friends who would very much like to know what the sector fleet is up to. Besides, you never know what kind of information will be useful to others."

Thella reluctantly handed Loh'khar the data card. The Twi'lek slotted the card, typed in some commands on the datapad, removed Thella's datacard and inserted one of his own.

"Thank you. It is always a pleasure doing business with the Rebel Alliance."

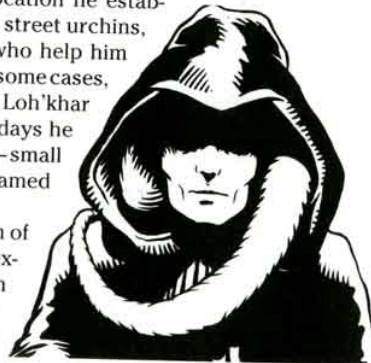
Roleplaying Game Statistics

Loh'khar the Finder

Loh'khar is a procurement specialist — he can often scrounge up anything you need in a matter of minutes to a few hours, depending on the size and rarity of the material. The tall Twi'lek is secretive about his methods and sources in obtaining equipment, and often explains his methods away by saying, "Don't ask where I got it. If you have to ask where I got it, you won't really want it."

Many years ago Loh'khar escaped from the Twi'lek homeworld Rylloth, apparently fleeing some clan conspiracy working against him, or so Loh'khar claims. Through unknown means he acquired a light transport, and now journeys through the galaxy as a sort of traveling salesman, bringing odd goods from world to world and matching them with the perfect buyers. At times he settles down and works his procurement wonders from a fixed base, often near starports and busy urban centers where entrepreneurs, smugglers and bureaucrats crave illegal, rare, or expensive items they couldn't obtain themselves. In each location he establishes a tight network of spies, street urchins, thieves and "buying agents" who help him obtain what his clients want. In some cases, especially when he is traveling, Loh'khar does the work himself. These days he also relies on a trio of Turazza — small red-scaled reptilian aliens — named Rizzal, Vizzal and Nizzal.

Loh'khar uses a combination of high perception, bribery and extortion when trying to obtain items. Sometimes what his clients need is within easy grasp,



either through payment or thievery. Other times he bargains with the complex network of the black market — using bribery, intimidation and blackmail where necessary, and often trading items or information he has for materials he needs.

Loh'khar continues his business — trading items and information to suit his clients — profiting from the greater conflict created by the galactic civil war. Granted, some of his best customers are representatives of the Rebel Alliance — always in need of materiel — or the Empire — seeking shadier ways to accomplish their military objectives. But Loh'khar plays off both of them, betraying them only when profitable.

Loh'khar wears a gray tunic with many folds and pockets where he sequesters datapads and datacards, handfuls of credits and other information useful in his trade. His great black hooded cloak is almost always drawn around him, the hood keeping his eyes in darkness. He's often accompanied by any one of his three tittering Turazza henchmen.

■ Loh'khar the Finder

Type: Twi'lek Procurement Specialist

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D, dodge 5D+2, pick pocket 7D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 7D, bureaucracy 6D+2, business 5D+1, cultures 6D, intimidation 6D, languages 7D, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 8D, survival 5D, value 5D, willpower 6D

MECHANICAL 2D

Repulsorlift operation 4D

PERCEPTION 4D+2

Bargain 6D, con 7D+2, forgery 5D+2, gambling 6D, hide 5D, investigation 6D, persuasion 7D, search 5D, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 4D+2, droid programming 3D, security 4D

Special Abilities:

Tentacles: Twi'leks can use their tentacles to communicate in secret with other Twi'leks, even in a room filled with other people.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 7

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad and data cards, heavy blaster pistol (5D)

Rizzal, Vizzal and Nizzal

These three Turazza serve as Loh'khar's henchmen, running errands, transferring messages, and helping him maintain his contacts. They are fiercely loyal to Loh'khar, and are said to share some kind of empathic or telepathic bond with him. Apparently the Twi'lek raised the Turazza from birth, and they bonded to their "parent."



the legs of larger beings (such as Humans).

Rizzal, Vizzal and Nizzal. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity 5D, dodge 6D, pick pocket 6D+2, running 7D, Perception 5D, sneak 6D+1, search 6D, climbing/jumping 7D.* Move: 18. Hold-out blaster (3D), messenger satchel.

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GALAXYWIDE NewsNets



A selection of newsfeeds culled from NewsNets major and minor throughout the Empire, which may or may not prove to be factual.

36:3:5/TRI/H5YT/GRO.5.GRO/MIL

Empire Smashes Batiiv Pirate Menace Grovner, Ord Grovner

The Imperial Star Destroyers *Bombard* and *Cru-sader* limped back to Ord Grovner Naval Base this week after dealing a death-blow to the arrogant and once-almighty Eyttyrmin Pirates of the Khuumin system. The two destroyers were dispatched by Admiral Freeda last week to destroy the pirate menace. The murderous rogues chose to stand and fight rather than abandon their base, confident in their ability to hold the system.

Though the pirate armada, consisting of over

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150 ships, boasted ample firepower to pose a serious threat to two *Victory*-class destroyers, superior Imperial tactics and training carried the day in the end. The three-day battle ranged across the entire Khuumin system, and culminated in the destruction of the pirate base itself. Of the 8,000 or so pirates who entered the fray, less than 272 survived, and their fleet was utterly destroyed. Imperial losses were light, but the two aging destroyers sustained significant structural damage in the conflict.

TriNebulon News

36:3:22/IHV/G76D/COR.1.IPC/POL

Imperial Advisor Calls Dentaal Plague Rebel Plot

Imperial City, Coruscant

The terrifying outbreak of the Candorian plague which wiped out the entire population of Dentaal was due to the efforts of the Rebel terrorist organization, announced Alec Pradeux, one of Emperor Palpatine's close advisors.

"I have, at the Emperor's direction, been engaged for the past few weeks in a close investigation of the Dentaal disaster," Pradeux said today in a Palace press conference. "It is now clear that the virus, long thought extinct, was reconstructed by Alderaan's biowar research labs. Our august Em-

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peror moved with haste to remove the threat of Organa's death labs as soon as he learned of his abominable experiments, but alas, not quickly enough to prevent an unknown number of canisters of product from being transported off planet by the Rebels."

According to Pradeux, it now appears that the release of the virus on Dentaal by the Rebels was accidental, and occurred as they loaded transport canisters onto a ship bound for Coruscant. "We can only be thankful that the vermin choked on their own filth before they were able to unleash it upon millions of innocent Imperial citizens," said Pradeux. "Naturally, we at the Palace mourn the passing of Dentaal."

The information from Pradeux's fact-finding mission remains classified, but the Imperial Advisor seemed confident that it will be released to the public in the near future. He stressed that the danger has not yet passed. "We must not relax our guard for even a moment. As long as the Rebellion festers unchecked, there exists also the possibility that other canisters, secreted in other sites, await their chance to inflict unimaginable devastation to our worlds."

Imperial HoloVision

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36:4:4/DSN/T11R/ESS.3.ALA/MIL

New Probot Contracts Awarded

Alabar, Esseles

In a move that will provide new jobs and revenue for Esseles, the Imperial Navy has awarded contracts for an additional 60,000,000 probe droids from the military contractors involved in the Imperial probot program, on top of the 150,000,000 already manufactured in the past two years.

Dynacorp and Sendarl Electronics, two Esseles-based primary contractors for the probot program, are providing the hull pod and the sensory array designs, respectively.

Darpa SectorNet

**36:4:10/TRI/T1SE/ESS.3.ALA/ENT/
J.Dixon**

Esseles Welcomes Jatz Singer Roi to New Home

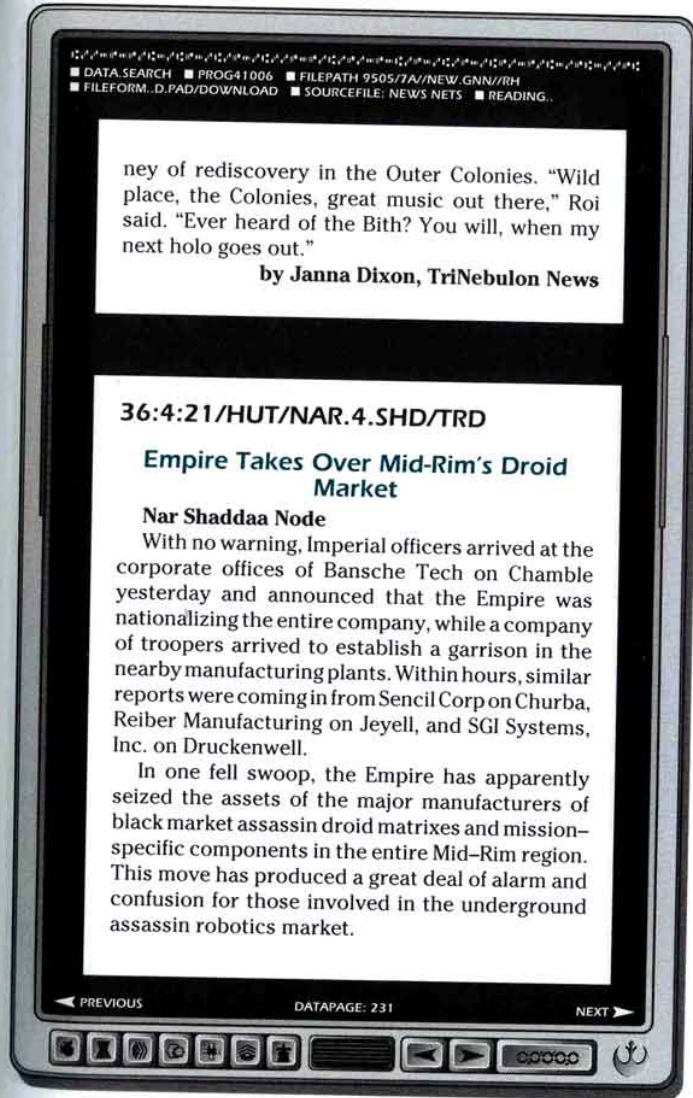
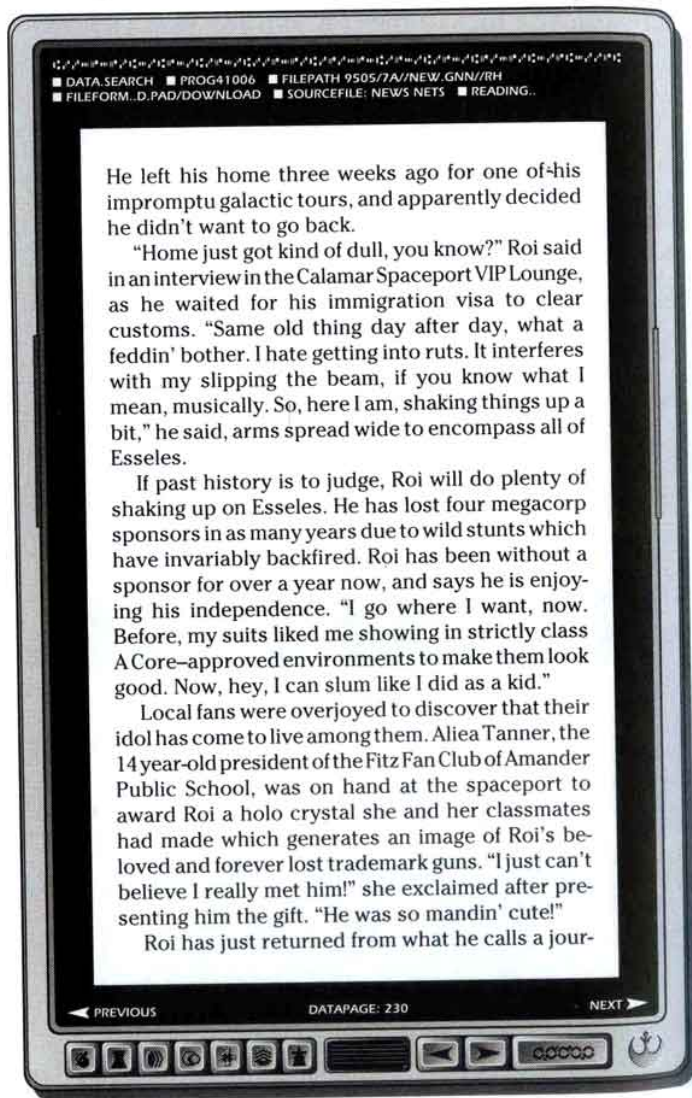
Calamar, Esseles

The famous and sometimes controversial jatz performer Fitz Roi has quite abruptly chosen to transfer his permanent residence from his family's estate on Lenniera to the capital of Esseles, Calamar.

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Clients and customers of the four companies have good reason to be nervous if Imperial investigators manage to obtain shipping manifests and delivery addresses from company records, since conviction of unauthorized ownership of an assassin droid carries a death sentence. Several prominent politicians and government officials have already vanished since the seizures, though it is unclear at this point whether they have fled to avoid arrest or whether they have indeed been arrested.

The legitimate financial markets were rocked as news spread of the sudden disintegration of Banshe and SGI Systems, both major megacorps with diversified legitimate holdings. Investors on Coruscant, Corellia, and other worlds were horrified to discover that their shares in these previously stable AAA-rated firms had become worthless in the space of two hours. The sudden move caused a major collapse in the Ralltiir Exchange, and delivered what is probably the final death blow to a market which has been crippled since the Imperial crackdown there last quarter.

Market experts predict that prices for black market assassin droids in the region will skyrocket in the near term, as supplies dwindle and as Imperial agents shut down existing pipelines. Buyers will likely be required to travel to the CSA and out to the Outer Rim to obtain models in the future, since local distribution channels are now compromised.

Nal Hutta Kal'tamok, Basic Edition

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36:5:16/CND/A35G/TIN.4.VAL/GEN

Tombat Raids Moff's Vault

Val Denn, Tinnel IV

In what local law enforcement officials are describing as yet another Tombat heist, the private vault of Moff Jerjerrod of Quanta Sector was burgled late last night local time. The theft came during or following a large party in his estates. The Moff himself would not comment, but is reportedly enraged at the theft.

This theft on the grounds of the Moff's estate comes as a grave embarrassment to the Moff's security staff, which is working around the clock to run down leads that will lead to the arrest of the perpetrator. The staff has rebuffed efforts by the local police to get involved in the investigation. "We'll do this our way," said Inspector Cammel Atarul. "We have a few leads, and are currently following those up. What we don't need is a gaggle of backwater jawacops mucking about." He refused to speculate as to who might have committed the crime. "But rest assured, we will find him!"

Another official in the Moff's staff was less sanguine. "Right, maybe we'd have a chance against a common criminal, but this was the work of that damned Tombat. He left his mark—who else could pull this off?" he said, displaying the small blue quella gem found only in the Alderaan system. The Tombat traditionally leaves such a gem at the scene of the crime to taunt investigators.

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Another characteristic of a Tombat heist is that only jewels and artwork are taken. An official close to the Moff stated that missing from the vaults are several priceless works from the Moff's famed art collection. Sensitive data disks also in the vaults were left undisturbed.

This is the first appearance of the Tombat in some time. His most recent appearance before striking on Tinnel was the Spira Heist during the annual Spira Regatta Open.

Moff Jerjerrod was celebrating his new appointment when the theft took place. Next month Jerjerrod officially assumes his new duties as director of Imperial Energy Systems, a new subdepartment of the Ministry of Energy formed to develop a new line of large-scale portable power plants for use in disaster relief efforts.

Core News Digest

36:5:23/COL/ALB4/ELR.3.ELN/GEN

JAN Terrorist Captured

Eldrooden, Eldrood

The fugitive leader of Findris' most violent anti-Empire underground group was captured by security forces after landing on Eldrood using false identity papers.

Eldrood Starport Command Security Chief Alden

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Kramer confirmed that Earnst Kamiel was a key leader of the terrorist Justice Action Network, which has claimed responsibility for the bombings of various civil authority buildings throughout the Colonies, each resulting in thousands of deaths.

Kamiel is being held in Eldrooden at an undisclosed location for extradition to Haldeen Sector, where he will be tried in Imperial Court.

Colonial News Nets

36:5:27/CND/CNK3/COR.3.CUR/ECO

New Bormea Tariff Disrupts Chandrila Exports

Curamalle, Corulag

COMPOR's move last week to place new tariffs on luxury agri-exports from Bormea Sector may have passed unnoticed by such member worlds as Corulag and Brentaal, which do not have significant agricultural exports, but it was a different scene altogether on Chandrila.

Chandrila, with one of the highest agricultural export rates in the Core Worlds, has had a virtual corner on the Core market in highly perishable luxury foods and spices, and this recent move will all but cripple this market.

The move was not altogether unexpected, since Chandrila has taken a rather hostile view of Impe-

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rial interests in the past. Governor Holleck promises to do his best to remove the tariff as soon as possible. In the meantime, he said, the Chandrilan government might take more robust measures to improve relations with Coruscant.

Core News Digest

36:5:30/COL/TO4H/BAK.4.SAL/MIL

Nereus Reaches New Accord With Bakuran Leadership

Salis D'aar, Bakura

After several months of negotiating, Governor Wilek Nereus and the Bakuran Senate have reached an uneasy agreement on the governance of Bakura. Under the accord, Nereus has agreed to leave the existing governmental infrastructure largely in place. In return, the Senate has agreed to voluntarily subordinate the Bakuran constitution to the Imperial charter.

"Our talks with Governor Nereus have proven to be quite constructive," said Orn Belden, the body's senior senator. "He would be perfectly within his rights to disband our body altogether and replace it with an Imperial committee. However, we were able to convince him we would all be better served if the current government were to continue operating." Belden noted that Nereus has promised Imperial

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aid for upgrading and streamlining Bakura's government and economy.

Nereus made this the centerpiece of his speech at the ceremony. "Contrary to mean-spirited rumors which have been circulating in past weeks, the Empire has not come to Bakura with some childish desire to run your affairs. Our primary goal is to build up and unify all Human worlds in one well-ordered union. To this end, we came to your world to see how we might serve you. We have already begun improving services and upgrading defense, a measure my good friend Blaine Harris will tell you is sorely needed." Nereus used the ceremony to announce the names of the first 4,000 Bakuran students to be awarded academic scholarships to prestigious Imperial universities under the SAGEducation program.

The accord seems to have put to rest rumors of revolution and riots, at least for the time being. "We have all suffered enough pain in the past few months," Belden said. "While we all have our doubts about the presence of the Empire on our world, it is time to realistically assess our current situation and try to see how we might best serve Bakura."

Colonial News Nets

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NEW REPUBLIC
SOURCE FILE

Scouts' Dispatch

Scouts in the New Republic are a hardy, self-reliant group, and with good reason. The perils of the galactic frontier require nothing less from those who would explore them. Time and trials weed out those who don't belong on the border — as a result, most scouts trust nothing other than what they've seen and used themselves.

Nevertheless, scouts do have their own network to pass along information of new places and equipment to the rest of the scouting community. One of the staunchest supporters of the network is Captain Korren Starchaser, a scout for the New Republic since

it's creation. Everything he and his crew come across — from a new use for conventional equipment to newly discovered planets, aliens and creatures

— is duly noted and passed along to inform and alert other scouts. While more experienced scouts often skim right to the new data,

younger scouts often find more value in the practical wisdom that can be found between the lines.

Whether it's the equipment, the information, the advice, or a combination of all three, almost every scout can find something to use in the dispatch. As Korren likes to say, "If it's out there, it'll wind up in here."



ADDENDUM/PERSONAL STARCHASER, KORREN/CAPTAIN ..

Being a scout is the next most important thing I can think of to being a Jedi Knight, and seeing as how there's a lot more scouts than Jedi Knights these days, I think we might even come out ahead in the long run. You see, the business of the scout is the business of the galaxy.

Governments come and go, beings live and die, but space stays right where it is, waiting for someone to come along and take note of it. And right now there's still a whole lot of it that no one's ever set eyes on before, let alone feet. A whole lot of it is free from the chaos of the galaxy, where you can be truly on your own. Any sane being can feel the tug of the wild in his soul—a scout just acts on that feeling.

But before you go about the galaxy in a rush for the next horizon, you have to remember the responsibilities that discovery brings. Too many scouts get lost in the wonderful feel of discovery to realize just how important their work is. Every planet carelessly documented is another facing Imperial pillage, every new species haphazardly encountered is another Corporate Sector exploitation in progress. Remember that the next time you step out of your ship onto strange soil, the next time you pull the hyperdrive lever.

You've got the most wonderful life in the galaxy—it's also your job to make sure that you do it right.

New Equipment

No scout is complete without a well-stocked supply locker, and no locker is better stocked than with equipment that's been tested under actual conditions. Captain Starchaser has assembled a short list of items that have either been modified or built from scratch. These items are very difficult to find outside of the scouting community — they're considered "tricks of the trade" by most scouts, who rarely divulge this information to others outside their own profession.

Scout's Survival Pack

A hodgepodge of surveying gear, rations, and field equipment, these packs are neverthe-

less carried faithfully by every member of Korren's crew and several other scouting groups that he's come in contact with over the years. They are highly recommended for scouts of all kinds, especially beginners and those exploring systems never visited before. Like their owners, most of these packs are unique, and have accumulated all sorts of gear over the years.

Despite personal variations, the most common items carried in a scout's survival pack include three weeks' rations, three medpacs, a glowrod, macrobinoculars, two recording rods, two thermal flares, two breath masks, a fusion grapple, 20 meters of syntherope,

holorecorder (12 hours of recording time), single-person dichrome shelter, a portable moisture vaporator, a hand-operated energy generator, a scanning kit for collecting soil and biological samples, and a journal-style datapad.

Most packs are built around frames with straps so they can be carried on a scout's back for long-range treks on foot. However, the more stuff a scout crams into the pack, the more he has to lug around.

A fully-loaded scout survival pack typically goes for about 900 to 2,000 credits (depending on what's inside), and may be quite hard to find, depending

on the scout's affiliations with a supplier. Nevertheless, these packs often pay for themselves in the long run, and more and more scouts are swearing by them in the field.

■ Scout's Survival Pack

Type: Custom survival pack

Cost: 900-2,000

Availability: 2

Game Notes: While each pack varies, they often consist of a backpack rig packed with any of the following items — breath mask, comlink, datapad, fusion grapple, glowrod, hold-out blaster (3D), macrobinoculars, medpac, personal moisture vaporator, rations, recording rod, survival shelter, syntherope, thermal flare. The pack may also contain other items added by individual scouts customizing their kits.

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL STARCHASER, KORREN/CAPTAIN ..

Anyone who's served in the military will recognize these right away — they're a basic soldier's survival pack, minus weapons and ammunition. I found 'em so handy while in the service that it was natural when I took one with me to my scouting post. When I'd replaced the military-issue gear with some stuff I found more useful, it hit me that this might be a good thing for every scout to carry. As I like to say, better off a few credits short in the pocket than a few items short on the trail.

Anti-Insect Cannister

The anti-insect cannister is a sealed container filled with a unique microorganism that Korren and his crew discovered in the dense southern jungles of the planet Barkhesh. Highly specialized, these organisms are airborne and infest any local insect life in the area, congregating inside the insect's body

and digesting the luckless creature from the inside. Fortunately, these plucky little things show no interest in snacking on higher forms of life, and have a relatively short lifespan once released from their container, thus preventing potential ecological disasters that might result from their diet. The microorganisms also cannot repro-

duce outside of their jungle environment on Barkhesh — once they've eliminated the local insect population, they die off.

The contents of the cannister may be sprayed on uniforms, some equipment and shelters which have become insect infested, or it may be sprayed into the air surrounding the scout's base camp or work area. The effects of an anti-insect cannister generally last from one to five days, depending on whether or not the microorganisms were sprayed directly onto a surface (effective but short-lasting) or sprayed into the atmosphere. The microorganisms die quickly as they scatter — releasing the cannister's contents in a windy environment is a futile gesture.

Sentient insectoid aliens subjected to the microorganisms experience an odd irritation beneath their carapaces, but are

in no danger of dying. Such aliens are often quite disturbed if they learn the cannister's true nature.

These cannisters are often available only on Barkhesh, where the microorganisms thrive in the humid jungle atmosphere. The cannisters are also specially designed to provide the microorganisms with a minimal food source to sustain life — the microorganisms can live up to one month inside the cannister's environment before dying and becoming useless.

■ Anti-Insect Cannister

Model: Barkhesh Insect Culture

Type: Insecticide

Cost: 275

Availability: 3

Game Notes: A cannister's contents can coat three full-sized Humans or protect the atmosphere within a small ship or within several meters of a small camp. The cannister is effective up to one month from purchase, when the microorganisms inside eventually die out.

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL OTEK, SENNI ..

These cannisters are a must when traveling to a particularly lush or humid world, and even better if one knows of any dangerous insect life in the area. They also work wonders against insect infestations and on decontamination jobs. Korren laughed the first time I whipped one up, but shortly after that we visited a swampy world and I came through without a bite. He changed his mind in a hurry. He still doesn't acknowledge it, but I see it when he stows one or two in his pack.

Excluder Device

Normally, a scout's job is to blend in with native life and not cause too much of a stir, and almost any scout worth the title goes to great lengths to avoid

harming local wildlife. However, there are times when native creatures take unhealthy interests in a scout, and it was for these times that the excluder was designed. When activated,

this hand-sized sonic device generates waves of high frequency sound, inaudible to Humans and many aliens, that ward off most creatures well before they become a threat.

The excluder's frequency may be adjusted manually to affect certain creatures who may only be warned away by certain frequencies. However, some creatures, especially tenacious predators, become enraged by certain sounds generated by the excluder, sometimes immediately and other times after prolonged exposure to the excluder.

As some sentient species with a delicate sense of hearing may be disturbed by the noise (such as Wookiees), headsets can be purchased that generate a frequency to cancel out the

excluder's aggravating sounds.

■ Excluder

Model: Merr-Sonn Excluder

Type: Animal excluder

Scale: Character

Cost: 350

Availability: 2, F, R

Game Notes: The excluder has three power settings — low power (2D), normal power (4D), and high power (6D). Each setting forms a protective "sphere" with a diameter of 10 meters, 20 meters, and 40 meters, respectively. Every round that a creature possessing senses in the affected range attempts to approach, it must make a *willpower* or *Strength* roll (whichever is higher) against the excluder's power setting to remain within the device's range. Failure means the creature retreats as far as it can until it is out of range; success means that it can advance, but suffers -2D to all actions due to irritation and distraction. Attempting to corner a creature with the Excluder, however, is not a wise move, as full fight-or-flight instincts remain in affected creatures.

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL GUNDEEB, MOWA ..

When walking dangerous trails, cast a large shadow.

Korren and His Crew

crew ply the unmapped regions of space in the *Jedi Dreamer*, Korren's ship. The scouting crew works as a team, charting and exploring new worlds, passing along their findings to the New Republic and their fellow scouts.

■ Capt. Korren Starchaser

Type: Cynical Scout

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 5D+1, dodge 5D, melee com-

bat 4D+2, melee parry 4D, vehicle blasters 6D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 5D+2, cultures 6D+1, languages 5D, planetary systems 7D, survival 7D+2

MECHANICAL 4D

Astrogation 5D+2, beast riding 5D+2, communications 4D+2, repulsorlift operation 6D, sensors 5D, space transports 7D+1, starfighter piloting 6D+2, starship gunnery 6D, starship shields 4D+2

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Command 4D+2, con 5D, investiga-



tion 5D+2, search 6D, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 2D+1

Climbing 4D+2, stamina 5D+2, swimming 3D

TECHNICAL 2D

First aid 4D+2, repulsorlift repair 4D, space transport repair 3D, starfighter repair 5D+2

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Breath mask, comlink, datapad, heavy blaster pistol (5D), macrobinoculars, medpac, scout's survival pack

Capsule: A veteran starfighter pilot, Korren has developed into a somewhat cynical and sarcastic individual over the years, though he's smart enough to realize that going all the way down that road leads to ruin. He also possesses a strong teaching instinct, and loves to pass on what he's learned to younger and more eager people — not that he'd admit it, of course. Korren also has a true passion and instinct for space travel, like

many scouts. This has not only helped him chart new territory in the past few years but has also saved his neck more than once when he trusted a gut feeling over a more logical analysis. He does not, however, believe in the Force, and stoutly refuses to believe that even Luke Skywalker — who he acknowledges is "a truly fine pilot" — has any special powers or abilities. When anyone attempts to ask him why he named his ship the *Jedi Dreamer*, however, he simply shrugs and says it was "for a friend."

The other area in which Korren feels deeply is that of his crew. His first mate, the Sullustan Mowa, saved his life in a gun battle several years ago, though to this day both of them refuse to say exactly when and where this fight occurred. He finds the somber Sullustan a fine traveling companion, one who has "a better head for listening than most of his kind," and they work well as a team, with Mowa's strong arm enforcing Korren's sharp wit. He shifts between exasperation and affection for CKO-171 and will grudgingly acknowledge the droid's invaluable position as the ship's interpreter. As for the tech, Senni, he has somewhat paternal feelings for the curious young woman, though these are put to the test by her deeds of youthful naiveté from time to time. She reminds him — too much, sometimes — of his own rather brash son, Darren, who is now a fighter pilot like his father.

Korren now knows he has open skies, a starship, and no place to go in particular, which suits him just fine.

Jedi Dreamer

Craft: Custom-built scout ship

Type: Deep space scouting craft

Scale: Starfighter

Length: 51.8 meters

Skill: Space transports

Crew: 2

Crew Skill: See Korren Starchaser and Mowa Gundeeb

Passengers: 4

Cargo Capacity: 10 metric tons

Consumables: 6 months

Cost: Not available for sale

Hyperdrive Multiplier: x1

Hyperdrive Backup: x12

Nav Computer: Yes

Maneuverability: 1D

Space: 7

Atmosphere: 350; 1,000 kmh

Hull: 5D+2

Shields: 1D+1

Sensors:

Passive: 30/0D

Scan: 75/1D

Search: 110/2D

Focus: 6/4D

Weapons:

Twin Laser Cannons (fire-linked)

Fire Arc: Front

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 1D

Space Range: 1-3/11/20

Atmosphere Range: 100-300/1.1/2 km

Damage: 4D

1 Tractor Beam Projector

Fire Arc: Turret

Crew: 1

Skill: Starship gunnery

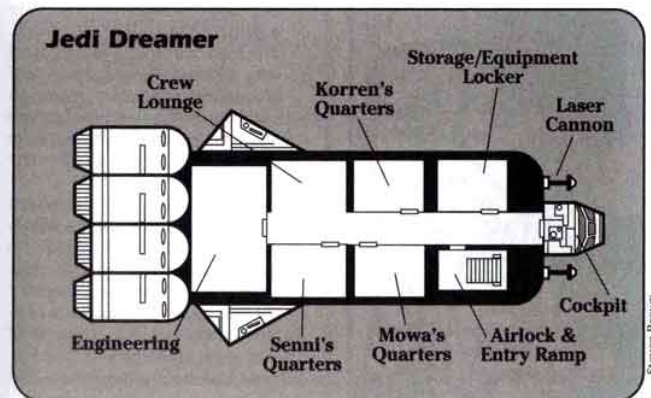
Fire Control: 3D

Space Range: 1-4/14/23

Atmosphere Range: 100-400/1.4/2.3 km

Damage: 5D

Capsule: The *Jedi Dreamer* is Korren's custom-built starship, and like most custom ships it suffers occasionally from fits and spurts of eccentric programming. Streamlined for atmospheric handling, outfitted with one of the better sensor package this side of Coruscant, and built with extremely sturdy alloys for rough landings and terrain, the *Jedi Dreamer* doesn't look like much, but as an anonymous smuggler once remarked "she's got it where it counts." The ship is still technically under construction, as Senni constantly modifies and refits her for better performance. Nonetheless, when it is running correctly, the *Dreamer* is one of the finest scout



ships to ever venture into unknown territory, and Korren is exceedingly proud of it.

■ Mowa Gundeeb

Type: Sullustan Mercenary
DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 7D+2, brawling parry 6D+2, dodge 6D+1, grenade 5D, melee combat 6D, melee parry 5D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 6D+2, planetary systems 4D, streetwise 5D survival 5D+2, willpower 4D+1

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Beast riding 4D, repulsorlift operation 5D, sensors 4D+2, space transports 4D+2, starship gunnery 5D+2

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Search 4D+2, sneak 5D+1

STRENGTH 2D+2

Brawling 7D, lifting 4D+2, stamina 6D+2

TECHNICAL 3D+1

Armor repair 4D+1, blaster repair 5D, first aid 5D, security 4D+2, starship weapon repair 4D

Special Abilities:

Enhanced Senses: Sullustans get +2D to search and related Perception checks in low-light conditions due



to their vision and hearing.

Location Sense: Sullustans cannot get lost in a place they have visited before. They get +1D when making *astrogation* rolls for a planet they've visited before.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 6

Move: 10

Equipment: Blast helmet (+1D physical, +1 energy), blast vest (+1D physical, +1 energy), comlink, modified heavy blaster pistol (6D), scout's survival pack, vibroblade (STR+3D)

Capsule: Mowa is somewhat of a rarity among his people: he's a quiet, no-nonsense being who has absolutely no sense of humor. Bored by the drudgery of life on his home planet, Sullust, and finding that he had a talent for warfare, Mowa sold himself to a small off-world mercenary group as a youth.

His life nearly came to an end, however, when the rest of his company was wiped out in a bloody space battle with a rival mercenary group. Had not a Rebel X-wing patrol happened upon the scene and routed the enemy fighters, the escape pod that Mowa had escaped in after the destruction of his ship would've been fair game as well. The leader of that X-wing patrol was Korren Starchaser, and Mowa, seeing no place else to go and figuring he owed the Human a debt of gratitude, immediately signaled his intention to join the Alliance.

When Korren shifted from starfighters to scout ships, Mowa went wordlessly with him. He has since discovered the quiet joy of exploration, and along with his very private interest in non-Human philosophy, it is one of the only pleasures in his life. That was several years ago, and

he has not looked back since.

Mowa now travels as Korren's second-in-command, co-pilot, and occasional strong-arm man. Though the antics of the droid and the young Human girl, Senni, drive him up the bulkhead from time to time, this Sullustan knows every time he sees a new star system or charts a new planet that this is the life he's meant to have.

■ Senni Otek

Type: Young Technician

DEXTERITY 2D+1

Blaster 3D, dodge 4D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Cultures 6D, planetary systems 4D+1, survival 5D, value 5D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Astrogation 5D, beast riding 3D+2, communications 6D, repulsorlift operation 4D, sensors 6D+2

PERCEPTION 2D+2

Bargain 3D+2, investigation 4D+1, search 5D+2, sneak 4D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

Climbing 5D+1, stamina 3D, swimming 3D+2

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 7D+1, droid programming 6D, droid repair 5D+2, first aid 6D+1, repulsorlift repair 5D, security 5D+1, space transports repair 6D+2

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 4

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, tool kit (+1D to space transports repair), 2 medpacs, scout's survival pack, vibro-knife (STR+1D)

Capsule: Senni is a native of the Imperial world Lianna, and both of her parents were engineers there for the infamous Sienar Fleet Systems. She inherited their curiosity and love of machinery, but she instinctively knew that what they worked for was wrong, and avoided the Im-



perial indoctrination films that were being shown at her school. Her excellent grades and genius with technology allowed this to be overlooked for a while by her schoolmasters, but when a naive Senni tried unsubtly to contact any Rebel operatives in her area, the Empire clamped down and took her parents hostage in an attempt to finally force her to their side. A team of daring Rebel agents managed to get the brash girl off planet before she was discovered, but her parents were killed during a subsequent attempt to free them.

Seeing her natural gifts for learning and for technology, the Alliance gave her a position as a repair technician on board a Mon Calamari cruiser, and it was from this vantage point that Senni witnessed the Battle of Endor. Seeing the Empire defeated eased some of the young woman's grief, but she still has nightmares about the moment

stormtroopers fired those fateful shots back on Lianna.

When Korren started gathering a crew for his custom-built scout ship, Senni jumped at the chance and helped him design the *Jedi Dreamer*. Now she serves as the resident repair tech on board and is broadening her horizons with every jump. She's still got a ways to go before she loses some of her naiveté, and her impulsive decisions still get her into trouble from time to time, but Senni is slowly turning into a valuable asset for Korren's scout team.

■ CKO-171

Type: Old Protocol Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

Dodge 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 6D+1, bureaucracy 5D+2, cultures 8D+2, languages 12D+1, planetary systems 5D+1

MECHANICAL 1D

Communications 3D+1, sensors 2D+2

PERCEPTION 1D

Persuasion 6D, search 5D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

Computer programming/repair 4D, droid programming 6D+1, droid repair 6D, first aid 3D+1

Equipped With:

- Humanoid upper body (two arms, head)
- 2 AutoTerrain treads for locomotion
- Two visual and auditory sensors
- Enabler I speech/sound system (grating human speech)
- AI-Prime Cybobrain
- TranLang I Communication module with over two million languages, and room for up to 500,000 additions

Special Abilities:

Unfazeable: CKO-171 is, unlike most modern droids, programmed to be completely unperturbable in any situation, and is not taken for a loss even when faced with excessive stimuli (such as a battle or crash

landing). He is never considered "surprised" for the purposes of die penalties, and always acts just as instructed when it is within his power.

Story Factors:

Age: CKO-171 is extremely old and, consequently, some of his programming has fallen out of date. When dealing with events that have taken place within the last year and a half (the time he's been reactivated), and when briefed on situations in advance, CKO-171 functions normally, but when he deals with anything outside the past year and a half he furnishes information that is 40 to 50 years out of date! He also has a tendency to translate things into dialects now years out of use, and once fascinated several New Republic senators by conversing entirely in Old Corellian.

Disdain: CKO-171 has a great disdain for newer model droids, especially what he calls "those skittish 3PO models," and is very condescending whenever he encounters them.

Move: 6

Size: 1.6 meters tall

Cost: Not for sale



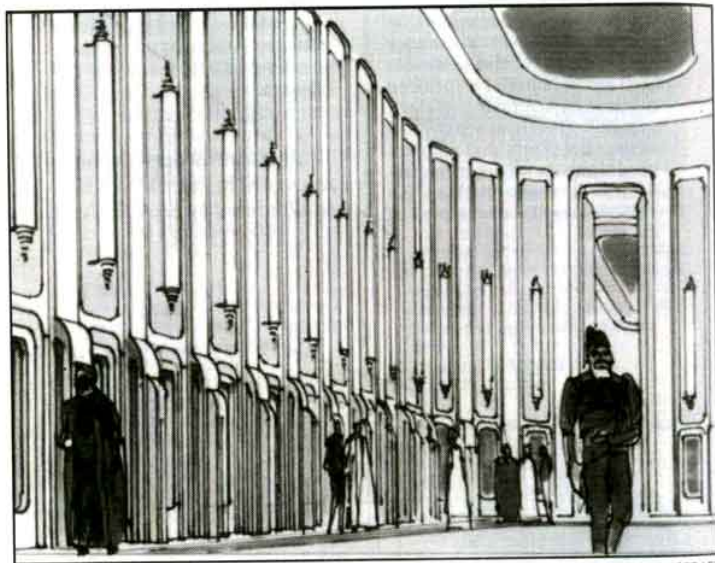
Capsule: CKO-171 was an old model protocol droid languishing away in a New Republic storeyard waiting to be dismantled when a clerk's error placed him on active status again and the almost archaic droid was powered up. When Korren saw what his requisition for a protocol droid had brought him, he nearly broke the droid down for spare parts. But the unfazeable CKO saved himself by speaking to him in an Alderaanian dialect, something that touched the idealistic pilot. From that moment on, despite the sometimes drastic gaps in knowledge that CKO-171 possessed, he was part of the crew.

Since then, CKO-171 has been Korren's faithful interpreter when the crew comes across new alien species to communicate with, and he knows no other place than to serve his master in the most expedient way possible.

Korren dubbed CKO-171 "Kay-Oh" after the droid inadvertently knocked Mowa Gundeeb senseless on one occasion, something which amused Korren.

This issue's Scouts' Dispatch was created by Peter Woodworth and illustrated by Scott Neely.

Kella Rand, REPORTING...



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By Laurie Burns

Illustrated by Robert Duchlinski

Just when Kella was sure the leader of the Indu San system was going to vote "no" to an alliance with the New Republic, he went and blew up instead.

Literally.

Sheer surprise momentarily froze her in place as security sirens began to blare and a cloud of hover-cams whirled overhead, resembling a flock of electronic birds as they converged on the smoking ruin. Then her news sense snapped back as the media gallery erupted and reporters scrambled to get to the Council Chamber

below, where what remained of Shek Barayel was sprawled against his chair. Pandemonium prevailed as hover-cams circled overhead, recording every grisly detail.

Surveying the chaotic scene, Kella tried to suppress an unbecoming thrill of satisfaction. She'd been with the Galactic News Network long enough to know that murder was almost always more interesting than politics, and while an assassination wasn't the story she'd set out to cover, it would certainly do.

Though for the sake of her audience's sensitivities, she'd try not to look like she enjoyed it too much.

She'd been on Indu San two weeks, yawning through the endless speeches and diplomatic wrangling leading up to today's big vote. All eyes had been on Barayel, for though the entire Indu Council voted, theirs was merely an advisory role. The chief councilor, like the Imperial governor he'd replaced, was the one whose word was ultimately law.

The problem was, no one knew where he stood on this alliance issue. Though most of the council seemed to support it, he'd been maddeningly reticent through the diplomatic talks, hadn't taken the floor at all during the council debates, and had curtly declared "no comment" when questioned by reporters. The New Republic ambassador, Dictio L'varren, seemed to take it in stride like the seasoned negotiator he was, but for the media, the story so far was a crashing bore.

Barayel's actions had all the characteristics of another Outer Rim system poised to decline an invitation to join the New Republic. Not that newsworthy — neutrality and a healthy respect for the Imperials still active in the sector were much too common for reporters to get excited about.

But throw in a little murder and mayhem, and newsnets across the galaxy would be snapping the story up.

Digging out her comlink, Kella keyed in the frequency for the local GNN bureau and fairly leapt on Bureau Chief Robbe Nostler when he answered.

"Hold the newsdroid!" she told him, shouting to make herself heard over the uproar echoing through the stone Council Chamber. "We've got a hot one! Barayel's just been assassinated!"

"What?" Nostler asked. "When?"

"Assassinated. At the Council Hall. Just now!" she said. "Turn on the holovid and take a look — the local stations should be carrying it." Holding the comlink to her ear, she heard the noise magnified on the other end as Nostler turned on the bureau's holovid and caught

Kella Rand



Type: Galactic Newsnet Reporter

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D, dodge 5D, running 5D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 5D, bureaucracy 7D+2, business 5D, cultures 5D+2, languages 5D, law enforcement 6D, planetary systems 5D, willpower 7D

MECHANICAL 3D

Communications 6D+1

PERCEPTION 4D

Con 5D+2, investigation 7D+1, persuasion 6D, sneak 6D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Equipment: Hover-cam, identi-credcard, datatote with datapad and assorted datacards, comlink, hold-out blaster (3D)

Capsule: Kella's specialty is versatility, and in her four years with the Galactic News Network, she's done everything from frothy features and celebrity profiles to coverage of war and crime, garnering grim reports from battlefronts in a dozen systems. An assignment might take her to a ritzy evening soiree with the galaxy's movers and shakers, or it might require six weeks of slogging around some backwater world — she never knows, and the unpredictability keeps her interested.

a live report transmitted by one of the in-system stations.

The story would have instantly hit all of the planetwide newscasts, but galactic reporters like her had to wait for their newsnets' courier droid to drop into the system, upload the local bureau's reports, then zip back into hyperspace to carry them further down the line for dissemination galaxy-wide. Fleetingly she envied the ease and immediacy with which reporters in the past had filed their stories on the HoloNet, but it was long gone and now only the couriers with their dratted timelags remained.

"That looks hot all right," Nostler said after watching the holovid a moment. "Can you confirm if Barayel's really dead?"

"Oh yeah, he's dead," Kella assured him, grimacing at the sight below. "Darn messy way to go, too." Watching a dazed counselor get cornered by a reporter wielding a recording rod, she was reminded of the business at hand. "So hey," she demanded. "When does the

Her amused hazel eyes, chestnut hair, and flip, easy-going manner often fool competitive news sources who underestimate her tenacity. The daughter of a refueling station administrator, Kella developed a wide streak of independence and self-reliance at an early age, as well as the ability to observe and analyze events around her without getting personally involved.

Growing up on the station, she was exposed to a wide variety of beings and their accompanying cultural differences, and found this brought her in good stead when she left at age 17 to attend university on Corellia. Interest in seeing all the worlds she'd heard about led her to consider a career in the diplomatic corps, but she soon discovered she didn't have the proper patience for the subtleties the work required.

A holocast provided the inspiration that led her to apprentice with a Corellian newsnet while finishing her schooling — she continued on as a paid reporter after graduation. Her break into the big-time galactic newsnets came when the local GNN bureau negotiated for the rights to broadcast an interview she did with a supposed childhood friend of Corellian native Han Solo, the smuggler who gained notoriety as a general with the Rebel Alliance.

Hired by GNN a month later, Kella's first offworld assignment was to cover a mining revolt on Elom. Despite the frigid temperatures and the difficulty in dealing with Imperial bureaucrats, she emerged with a report that both pleased her superiors and mollified Imperial censors. She has been on the move ever since.

Kella likes the traveling and the excitement of a reporter's life, and her greatest satisfaction comes from slipping the "real" story past Imperial newsnet censors — something that's gotten easier of late as the fragmenting Empire has less time and resources to devote to punishing the purveyors of less-than-flattering news reports.

courier show up? I don't want to get scooped on this."

"It'll be tight," Nostler warned. "Newsdroid's due in later tonight, but so is TriNebulon News'. First in the system, first out with the story, Kell."

She scowled. There was no way she was going to get scooped by TriNeb — *that sleazy excuse for a newsnet* — just because its courier showed up first. With its slant towards the sensational, TriNeb's reporters could make even the dullest debate sound interesting, if not quite accurate. She hated to think how they'd blow this whole thing up. She told him so, adding, "You keep an eye on the local reports, and I'll follow things down here. Call me if you hear anything good."

"Right," Nostler said, and signed off, but Kella wasn't listening. Below, a squad of Council Authority officers had arrived and were attempting to restore some sort of order to the chaos. Blasters

drawn and bellowing orders, they cleared a path to the late chief counselor, herding his horrified colleagues to the sides of the chamber and forcing back the pack of overeager reporters as well.

But what caught her attention was the sight of a man slipping out a small door on the far side of the chamber, followed by one of the blue-uniformed officers. Recognizing Tev Aden, she raised an eyebrow, wondering what the authorities wanted with Ambassador L'varren's aide.

Scanning the crowded chamber below, she found the New Republic diplomat huddled in conversation with several Indu councilors, clearly too involved to have noticed Aden's departure, or be aware he was apparently being detained. Indeed, between the shouting of the authorities, the anxious babble of the councilors, and the gruesome spectacle at the head table that kept them all riveted, no one at all seemed to have noticed the two men slipping out. From her spot in the media gallery, Kella had the best view in the room, and her nose for news whispered that it just might be worth investigating.

Taking the gallery stairs two at a time, she activated the beckon call for her hover-cam. A transponder in the comlink would tell the hover-cam where to find her, and she hoped it would hurry. Downstairs, word of the assassination was making its way through the government building and council aides, functionaries and bureaucrats clogged the corridor trying to get in the chamber so they could see their slain leader.

More authorities arrived, adding to the confusion. Kella weaved through the crush, trying to reach the side corridor where Aden had disappeared. Traffic thinned considerably when she reached the corner, and she paused to glance back for her hover-cam, relieved to see it emerge through the main chamber door and float towards her above the sea of bobbing heads.

She headed briskly down the hall with the hover-cam whirring at her shoulder, but as she approached the door Aden had slipped out of, it swung open and a burly Authority Officer with a short haircut and an even curter disposition stepped out and blocked her way.

"This section's being sealed," he said, ignoring the bright yellow media badge clearly visible on the front of her vest. "I've got orders to clear the hall."

"Kella Rand, Galactic News Network," she said, tapping the badge anyway and glancing impatiently past him down the corridor. Another 15 meters away, it intersected with another hall, from which there was an exit leading to the hall's south portico and the city streets

beyond. "I've got media clearance, and I need to get through."

"Well, consider your frippin' clearance revoked," he retorted. "I told you, this section's being sealed. So move along, or I'll have you removed."

Kella's eyes narrowed. This kind of hassle she didn't need. But following Aden was just a hunch. Maybe she'd do better to worm her way back into the Council Chamber to watch them sweep up what was left of Barayel — get some on-the-scene reaction, maybe talk to L'varren. On the other hand —

Undecided, she and the guard were still glaring at each other when the distinctive retort of a blaster shot echoed from around the corner.

They looked toward it, back at each other. "Stay here," the Authority ordered, drawing his blaster and heading for the corner. He eased an eye around the stone edge, then hurried on.

Kella followed, hover-cam whirring behind.

The corridor they turned into was empty except for several closed doors, but there was another intersection 25 meters down. She trotted after the guard, followed him around the next corner —

And came to an abrupt halt. She'd found Aden, but it didn't look

Hover-Cam

Model: Data-Link Industries 250 Hover-Cam

Type: Audio, visual, and holo-recording device

Cost: 900

Availability: 2, F

Capsule: Hover-cams free up users from having to hold, aim, or focus a recorder at their intended target. Using small repulsors, hover-cams float about a meter above and slightly behind their user. They follow spoken directions to record information on a standard datacard. How a hover-cam takes direction varies according to how sophisticated the device is. They come in many different models, from a simple "family-cam" capable of following limited directions and serving the average family's recording needs, to a "watch-cam," a more sophisticated model which can be used for surveillance or residential security.

Because of their maneuverability, reporters throughout the galaxy find them extremely effective tools. Most reporters prefer the DLI-250 hover-cam manufactured by Data-Link Industries, as this model not only takes spoken direction, it also "learns" on the job just what sort of actions its user wants recorded. Thus a reporter doesn't have to constantly direct its every move, and an "experienced" hover-cam can be sent out into a crowd and be trusted to come back with useable, newsworthy recordings. The DLI-250 has a flight ceiling of 50 meters, and can be summoned to return to the user with a beckon call.

like L'varren's aide would be up to an interview anytime soon.

At least his death had been neater than Barayel's. He lay sprawled on the floor, the charred hole in his chest evidence of the blaster shot that killed him. The officer she'd seen follow him out of the Council Chamber knelt at his side while the burly one gave her a hard look and slowly lowered his blaster.

"I told him to stop, but he just kept going," the Authority kneeling by Aden said, staring down at the body with a furrowed brow. "He just ignored me, acted like he didn't hear. Then he turned around sudden-like, went for his pocket ..." He shook his head, voice trailing off. "I didn't think I had a choice, y'know?"

"Just sit tight, Darne, we'll get this cleared up," the other officer said, pulling out his comlink and calling for backup.

Kella took advantage of the momentary distraction. "Hadn't you already checked him for weapons?" she asked.

Darne glanced up as if noticing her for the first time, gaze sharpening as he took in her media badge and the hover-cam recording the scene. "No," he said. "How could I? I never got close enough."

"I had the impression he was under detention when you left the Council Chamber," she persisted. "That wasn't the case?"

He stared at her, a hint of wariness creeping into his eyes. "No. I saw him leave, and followed. We had orders to seal this section, and that meant clearing out anyone wandering around back here. All I wanted was to catch him and tell him to leave."

Kella opened her mouth but, done with his call, the other Authority stepped forward and brusquely cut her off. "You, be quiet. No more questions." Holstering his blaster, he squatted down on the other side of the dead aide. "Let's take a look at what he has in there."

Avoiding the charred spot, he carefully ran his hands down Aden's front and patted his tunic pockets, then slipped a hand into one and pulled out a small, flat device. Holding it up, he turned it over in his hand thoughtfully.

Kella craned her neck to see what it was, then remembered the hover-cam humming over her shoulder. "Close-up," she told it, and a green light on its front panel flashed, indicating acknowledgement. At the sound of her voice, both men looked up again.

"Turn that burnin' thing off," the burly one ordered with yet another glare, but he promptly forgot her as a squad of booted feet thundered around the corner and he rose to consult with its commander.

Moving aside, she flattened herself against the stone wall in hopes of not being noticed. Already, with the discovery of what

Indu San

Type: Terrestrial

Temperature: Temperate

Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)

Hydrosphere: Moist

Gravity: Standard

Terrain: Ocean, forests, mountains, plains

Length of Day: 25 standard hours

Length of Year: 382 local days

Sapient Species: Humans

Starport: Standard class

Population: 1.4 billion

Planet Function: Homeworld

Government: Congressional Council

Tech Level: Space

Major Exports: Luxury stone items

Major Imports: High technology

Capsule: The only habitable planet in the system of the same name, Indu San sits in the Outer Rim Territories region. The planet's main claim to economic fame is its export of high-quality, exquisitely-patterned marbled stone, which is polished into items such as floor tiles and table tops, and sells well as a luxury good throughout the galaxy. Not surprisingly, stone figures prominently in Indu architecture, with many of the buildings utilizing not only the beautiful polished marbles, but also less prized rock such as granite and serpentine. Buildings are kept to a relatively modest height in comparison to modern galactic standards, and this makes for attractive, uncluttered-looking cities.

Although an active member of the Old Republic, Indu San enjoyed a fairly low-key existence until the Empire moved in. Facing a lukewarm reception from the populace and finding the prospect of throwing his weight around distasteful, then-Imperial Governor Stant Rosswell decided to curry favor with the business community by loosening up import and export regulations. In turn, the business community pressured the politicians to accede gracefully to Imperial rule. It was a fine scheme that worked admirably for many years, in large part due to Rosswell's genuinely friendly personality and way of looking out for his "friends."

But when Rosswell was replaced by the stricter Governor Ekam Ouwwray shortly before the battle of Endor, the credits continued to flow for the business people, but the pleasantries between the governor's office and the politicians ended. This paved the way for Indu San's eventual showdown between the Empire and New Republic. Faced with a revolt by Indu freedom fighters — accompanied by the appearance of a small New Republic battle fleet — Ouwwray called for help from the rapidly-fragmenting Empire and panicked when only a single cruiser was sent to aid him in restoring order. Within hours, he ordered the evacuation and retreat of Imperial personnel on the planet, vowing to come back at a later date and crush the Rebels.

Indu San currently finds itself a choice bone in the war between the Empire and the New Republic, and while the planet's Congressional Council was restored, the political climate is currently undergoing rapid change. Indu San is seriously considering joining the New Republic, but there is still the very real threat that the Empire may return.

appeared to be a detonator in Aden's pocket, she'd found an angle none of the other newsmen had. And as the only reporter on the scene, if she stayed quiet and inconspicuous, she might get still more vidclips of the action as it unfolded.

But no such luck. As several of the new arrivals ringed Aden and a few more took up positions at each end of the corridor, their commander turned away from the burly officer and bore down on her. Cool eyes flicked to the hover-cam still humming beside her and he ordered, "Cease recording, and clear the area immediately. This section is being sealed."

Kella tried, though she knew it was probably useless. "Kella Rand, Galactic News Network. I've got media clearance for the entire Council building."

"I don't care if you're the late Emperor himself," the man snapped. "Media access has been revoked. You and the rest of you newsfleas can get the down-and-dirty later, at the media conference. So get moving, or I'll have you arrested. Then you won't be able to even go to the conference, now will you?"

She opened her mouth to protest, shut it again as he beckoned to the near guard. "Okay, okay, I'm going," she said, quickly stepping away from the wall and moving away from the group gathered around Aden's body. She hated backing down, but she could hardly file her report from the local lock-up. And it might be hours before GNN authorized funds for her bail — if the Indu legal system even allowed prisoners to post bail. She'd found out the hard way that some didn't.

Half expecting to be hauled around and escorted from the building, she headed back down the corridor towards the Council Chamber. She'd go, but she wasn't through. There were still sources to contact, leads to follow, facts to confirm, and a media conference to crash.

Kella lengthened her stride, prepared to barge past the guard at the chamber entrance. She'd have to hustle to get it all done before deadline.

The setting sun was casting a spectacular golden-red glow over the city's streets by the time Kella finally trudged up the steps to the Indu GNN bureau. Rustling through her datatote, she dug out her GNN identi-credcard and slid it into the slot on the door.

The scene that greeted her was in sharp contrast to the media circus she'd just left. Two reporters sat at desks, Juloff reading a datapad and Crislyn typing at her terminal, while over in the corner

Nostler had both feet up and was scratching his chin as he watched a holo rising from the pad on his desk. The only sounds were the comm scanner spitting out occasional snatches of City Authority chatter, and the muted music accompanying the report that had Nostler engrossed. He looked up as she came in.

"Hey, Kella. Thought maybe you'd gotten lost," he greeted her.

"No, just stuck," she said, looking around for an empty chair. Nostler pointed to a desk opposite his own, and she slid gratefully into its seat. "You wouldn't believe the crush at the conference — every two-bit station in the system must have sent someone."

"Not that it was all that exciting," she added. "The Authorities gave us a statement, answered about four questions, and walked out." She shrugged — *what's new?* — then asked, "So, how long do I have?"

"Deadline's at 2200, the droid'll arrive sometime after that." Nostler said. "Have your piece ready to go by then, and I'll give you the newsbank access code so you can transmit any updates direct, right on down to the wire."

"Okay." She was silent a moment, considering. Roughly three hours to dig up anything more, then her story would have to stand until she could update it with the next scheduled courier droid in four days. Although, with the apparent political scandal brewing, GNN might consider the story hot enough to send a special courier to collect an update sooner —

Nostler interrupted her train of thought. "I hear the assassination's getting pinned on the New Republic," he said.

She looked back up. "Yeah, so it seems. The Indus haven't actually come out and accused them, but everyone's pretty much thinking it."

"Based on what?"

"Nothing conclusive, but it's probably enough," she said. "Almost certainly enough to nix any possibility of an alliance. It'll take a few days for the investigators to figure out exactly how the explosion occurred, but the Council's already announced its intention to elect a new chief and rush ahead with another vote tomorrow. Sounds like they've made their minds up to me."

"What does the New Republic have to say about all this?" Nostler asked. "You ought to be able to get the inside story since you know L'varren so well."

"Not *that* well," she said, for what felt like the hundredth time since that incident on Corellia last year. Would she ever live it down? "He's shocked, appalled, horrified — about what you'd expect when your aide's suspected of blowing up the system's leader."

"Uh huh," Nostler said. "Any chance he didn't?"

Robbe Nostler

Type: News Bureau Chief

DEXTERITY 3D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Bureaucracy 7D, business 6D+1, languages 5D, law enforcement 6D+2, streetwise 5D+2

MECHANICAL 3D

Communications 5D, repulsoflight operation 4D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, con 4D+2, investigation 6D, persuasion 5D

STRENGTH 2D+2

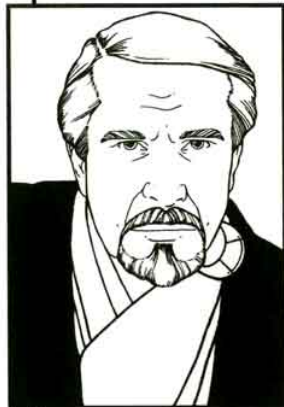
TECHNICAL 2D+1

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 3

Move: 10

Capsule: Chief of the Galactic News Network's Indu San bureau, Nostler has been stationed on Indu San for the past dozen years. A decade of



tailoring stories so that they're acceptable to Imperial censors has dulled his reporter's edge, although he did take a certain satisfaction in filing the recent report of the Imperial governor's retreat. A pragmatist, he doesn't have any particular feelings for either the New Republic or the Empire — in his opinion, all governments try to influence the news to reflect their own particular viewpoint.

He leaves the "hot" stories to roving reporters like Kella. Nostler's goal is to simply produce the most accurate reports possible under the circumstances and stay out of trouble long enough to retire, move somewhere remote, and only turn on the holovid long enough to catch up on the doings of his favorite musical entertainers.

"The Authorities don't seem to think so. That detonator thing makes Aden look real bad, and L'varren didn't help by claiming diplomatic immunity to keep the rest of his people from being dragged down to the Hall and questioned."

"What do you think?" he asked.

Kella hesitated. "I'm not sure," she admitted. "The circumstantial evidence certainly *points* to Aden, and if they have any other suspects, they're not telling *us*. But on the other hand, what's the point? Why would the New Republic want to knock off Barayel?"

"Maybe he was going to vote no," Nostler suggested.

"Yeah, but getting rid of him only means they start over with someone new who might also vote no," she said. "And it's a good bet

this whole mess has soured the Indus on the idea of an alliance, anyway. Unless the New Republic plans to storm in and take over, all it really accomplished is to virtually assure that Indu San will end up staying neutral until the war is over.

"And," she added, "You might find this interesting. Some Indus are even taking it in the opposite direction. I talked to a lobbyist for a business consortium who basically wants to kick the New Republic out of the system and invite the Empire back."

Nostler nodded, unsurprised. "The Empire wasn't all that unpopular here, at least not with some of the people in power," he explained. "Sure, the resistance groups were glad to see them go, but there's also a lot of people who made a lot of credits from the Imperials, and they don't want to give that up."

"Unless," he added, "the New Republic wants to work out the same sort of kickbacks the Imperial governor offered to keep them fat, happy, and loyal ..." He shook his head. "No. Probably not."

"Well, it's beside the point now," Kella said. "Looks like they're going to sit the fence like everyone else."

"Can you blame them?"

"Not really," she conceded. "With all the skirmishes still going on, why irritate the Imperials with a big show of support for the New Republic when there's always a chance the Empire might be back in charge someday?" She dug into the datatote, came up with a handful

Adventure Idea

An Imperial warlord, aided by former Imperial Governor Ekam Ouwray, is plotting to reestablish the Empire's presence in the Indu San system.

If the characters are smugglers or free-traders, they are hired to deliver a mysterious cargo to a group of Imperial supporters on Indu San. The cargo actually contains weapons and explosives. Instead of being paid, the characters are to be arrested for running arms, and their ship confiscated by the warlord for use in his battle fleet. The characters must uncover the warlord's treacherous plans and avoid the fate planned for them.

If the characters are New Republic intelligence operatives, they arrange to transport the shipment in hopes of discovering the warlord's contacts on Indu San and derailing the warlord's plans for the Indu system.

of datacards. "Well, I guess I'd better get busy. Got a booth I can use?"

"Make yourself at home."

"Always do." She grinned her thanks.

Settling into the small editing cubicle, Kella spent the next hour and a half going over the vidclips she'd collected during the past two weeks. In the face of the new direction the story had taken, with the focus shifting from the alliance to the assassination, most of them were unusable, but a perverse sense of curiosity made her study all the ones pertaining to Barayel again.

Perhaps they'd show some clue that revealed the way he'd planned to vote, or some hint he'd known things were about to blow up. Just in case she'd missed anything important —

Above halfway through, she discovered she had.

The clip came from the datacard she'd used yesterday when, as usual, after a curt "no comment" from Barayel, she'd gone on to corner his assistant. The hover-cam showed that she'd caught him near his chief's chair in the Council Chamber, and they'd spent several minutes chatting.

But as she watched, it gradually dawned on her that the real item of interest in the interview wasn't the conversation itself. Rather, it was what she could occasionally glimpse going on in the background.

Someone was messing around with something at Barayel's place at the table. The place that, a mere 26 hours later, had so messily erupted in the chief councilor's face.

Hitting the hold button, she froze the image and studied the screen. Visible beyond the assistant's shoulder, someone dressed in the blue uniform of Council Authority crouched in front of Barayel's spot at the head of the long U-shaped council table. The back of the chief's comm and voter panel was removed, and while she couldn't quite make out what the man was doing, she did recognize who it was.

On his knees, again, was Darne, the same Authority who had shot Aden.

Kella sat back and frowned thoughtfully at the screen. She'd seen so many of the blue-coated guards at the Council Hall the past few weeks that she'd ceased to even notice them anymore. In charge of security, they were everywhere, all the time, doing all sorts of things. Above notice, and above suspicion.

But given the current circumstances ...

Running the vidclip back to where the hover-cam had begun recording the interview, she circled a spot on the viewscreen with

an editing pen and that section instantly magnified. Though of poor quality, the image was clear enough to see what Darne held in his hand and, heart suddenly pounding, she advanced the clip forward click by click.

And as she watched, she smiled.

Some beings thought the best way to hide something was to just put it out in plain sight. It looked like Barayel's assassin agreed. Quite by accident, she'd caught Darne placing a tiny but powerful bomb inside Barayel's comm panel. And as far as she knew, she was the only reporter who knew about it, much less had a visual recording of it.

TriNeb, eat your heart out!

Thumping the console with excited delight, she leapt to her feet and flung open the editing booth door. It slammed against the wall, startling everyone into looking up.

"Take a look at this!" she yelled, and disappeared back inside. Juloff and Crislyn glanced at each other questioningly, but Nostler hit the hold button on his holoclip and followed, leaving an Ithorian entertainer suspended mid-warble over his desk. Both reporters strained to follow the conversation filtering out the open door.

"You know that old saying about hiding out in the open?" Kella asked Nostler. "Well, check this out!"

A brief silence, then — "What in blazes? Is that what it looks like?"

"It's a bomb," she confirmed. "And that guy there is the same Authority who shot and killed L'varren's aide. The one they found the detonator on," she added significantly.

Out in the newsroom the reporters exchanged glances. "This I've got to see," Crislyn said and got up to stand in the editing booth doorway, peering over the pair's shoulders. Juloff waited a few moments to make sure they were all engrossed. Then, pulling out his comlink, he headed for the bureau door.

Excited by Kella's discovery, no one in the editing booth even noticed that he'd left.

Satisfaction still sang through her veins a short time later as Kella left the bureau, hover-cam humming behind like a tethered vartlett. After some discussion, she and Nostler had agreed they couldn't simply turn the vidclip over to the Council Authorities. If one guard were involved in the assassination, others could be too, and they didn't want to chance it ending up in the wrong hands.

That left just one other person that Kella thought might be able

to help: L'varren. With the New Republic being blamed for Barayel's death, the ambassador might have a certain interest in helping her make sure her datacard — and its evidence to the contrary — got to the proper people.

Her report, waiting in the bureau newsbank for the courier to arrive within the next hour or so, included the incriminating clip, and a second copy was nestled among the cards littering the bottom of her datatote. If she hustled, she might have time to add an update.

L'varren and his diplomatic entourage were staying in the same hotel as she was, just a few blocks from the GNN bureau, and paying only cursory attention to the light evening traffic bustling past, Kella mentally ran down her reporter's checklist as she walked. The who, what, when, where, and how of the explosion seemed clear, but not the why.

She was still mulling over possible motives when a blaster shot sizzled a mere meter overhead, cracking against a marbled storefront and spattering hot stone chips down about her shoulders.

Kella was on the ground before it really even registered — fortunate, since a second, lower shot followed the first, a bright shower of sparks striking the wall where her head had been. A sharp crack to her left made her look, and with a chill, she realized that a stone planter full of perky flowers had just saved her life.

Hissing for the hover-cam to get down, she wiggled further into the limited cover and tried to assess the situation. She thought the shots were coming from somewhere across the wide street, but wasn't sure of the exact direction, and didn't dare stick her head up to take a look. Pinned down like this, she was horribly vulnerable. The few pedestrians she could see nearby weren't going to be much help — like her, they'd hit the walkway, or ducked into nearby

Adventure Idea

The characters are contacted by galactic reporter Kella Rand, who's heard the group's latest adventure and wants to interview them. This is a great chance for them to brag about their exploits — until the resulting newscast brings them unwanted attention from a mysterious (or menacing) figure from one of the characters' past — possibly a crime lord, Imperial adversary, or bounty hunter. The characters must evade whatever traps and deadly plans the mysterious figure has for them, and escape alive to brag once more of their exploits.

doorways. Nobody seemed to be raising an alarm.

The tiny hairs on her arms prickled. Even now as she hesitated, her attacker could be moving into position for the kill. She reluctantly decided to draw her blaster and try to lay down some covering fire while making a desperate dash for safety when, just a couple of meters away, a door swung open and a man in an amazing purple suit stepped out, demanding to know just what in the galaxy was going on out here?

Kella saw her chance. Crab-like, she scuttled past him, scurrying through the ornate doorway and bursting, not into a store as she'd expected, but a fancy eating establishment. A golden droid with a black bow tie gaped at her as she crouched in the tastefully-decorated foyer, and well-dressed diners goggled in astonishment as she got to her feet and meandered through the tables toward the back of the building. She caught quick glimpses of fancy red tablecloths and gleaming flatware as she searched for another door. There should be a rear entrance through the kitchen area, and from there, she could make a run — where?

Bursting through a door at the back, she narrowly avoided a waiter droid loaded down with a tray of steaming entrees. Flattening herself against a counter to squeeze past, she spotted another door, this one labeled "exit" in blocky Basic, and emerged into a poorly-lit alley, startling some leathery-skinned rodent nosing through an overflowing waste bin. Wrinkling her nose at the unappetizing smells wafting up from the sticky pavement, she hurried down the narrow passage with the hover-cam whirring along behind her.

There was still no sign of pursuit by the time the alley emptied into a street a few hundred meters later, so Kella stayed in its concealing shadows while she caught her breath and pondered her next move.

With the datacard and its incriminating clip in the bottom of her datatote, it wasn't hard to figure out why somebody was after her. What was a mystery was who, and how they'd found out what she had.

Her thoughts flicked to Nostler, and the other two reporters back at the bureau. She hated to think one of her own might be involved in this, but there weren't many alternatives. Grimly running through her options, she decided to stick with the original plan of contacting L'varren. At least he had a bevy of security officers who could offer some protection while she and the ambassador decided what to do with the vidclip.

Cautiously peeking out of the alley, she uneasily identified at least

a dozen potential hiding spots for a sniper. But there was no other way. Hyper-alert to every little flash of movement, she started down the street. Ten tense minutes later, she arrived at the hotel.

Rising majestically into the the night sky, it was a thoroughly modern transplant which towered over its surrounding stone companions. While an impressive sight, it was the crowd milling about on its steps which caught Kella's eye. Pausing at the foot of the long sweep of stairs leading up to the entrance, she surveyed the scene ahead.

Placard-carrying protesters provided visual fodder for the hovercams floating up and down the steps, while their reporters interviewed some of the demonstrators — or lounged around on stone planters, apparently prepared to wait all night, if necessary, to catch L'varren and wring a quote out of him regarding this new development. A few choice placards stood out, and Kella wryly noted that the "Indu Imperialists," as she'd privately dubbed the business consortium she'd talked to earlier, were making the most of the day's events to register their anti-New Republic sentiments. The newsnets seemed eager to help them fan the flames.

We'll just see about that, she thought smugly, starting up the steps. Intent on her destination, hurrying through the lobby and heading for the turbolifts beyond, it didn't register at first.

But then her eyes snapped back in startled recognition to the man standing next to a decorative holosculpt at the front of the lobby. Juloff, one of the reporters from the bureau. And next to him —

Darme.

They'd seen her. Her heart sank with belated realization. Of course, they'd probably been waiting for her. Juloff nodded in response to something Darme said, and as they began to purposefully weave through the lobby toward her, Kella studied their implacable expressions and knew she was in trouble.

Well, that's that, she thought, and bolted for the turbolifts. A car was just unloading as she arrived, and she shoved through the departing passengers, slapping the "close" button as soon as she was inside. A couple who hadn't had time to get off the lift stared in alarm as she drew her blaster and punched L'varren's floor number on the call panel.

As the doors slid shut, she caught a glimpse of her pursuers' angry faces, and as the lift accelerated upwards, Kella pulled out her comlink and did what she'd sworn she'd never do again after that incident last year — keyed in L'varren's personal frequency.

He answered on the second beep, sounding guarded. "L'varren."

Kaleb Darme



Type: Council Authority Officer

DEXTERITY 4D

Blaster 6D, brawling parry 5D+2, melee combat 6D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Bureaucracy 4D, intimidation 6D, law enforcement 5D+1, streetwise 4D+2

MECHANICAL 3D

Repulsorlift operation 4D

PERCEPTION 3D

Con 4D, persuasion 4D+2, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 6D, climbing/jumping 5D

TECHNICAL 2D

Demolition 4D, security 4D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 4

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, Indu Council Authority officer's uniform

Capsule: Kaleb Darme was only 10 years old when he saw the holo-epic *Armor of Honor*, and the elite stormtroopers' story had a profound effect on the direction of his life. A cool thinker with a firm belief that "right equals might," he became an Indu planetary security officer. Darme saw his assignment to the Council Authority as the next step toward a prestigious post as one of Imperial Governor Ekam Ouwray's bodyguards.

He made friends in the right places and subtly tried to strengthen the governor's position in the face of underground revolts, fully expecting to be rewarded for his efforts. But when Ouwray fled the system in a panic, he asked his ardent supporter to show his loyalty to the Empire by remaining behind and helping pave the way for his eventual return. Darme, with his ambitious eye still firmly fixed on the eventual goal, gladly agreed.

"Ambassador, it's Kella Rand," she identified herself. "Sorry to bother you, sir, but I need to see you right away."

"Kella?" he asked doubtfully. "I'm a bit tied up at present. Perhaps tomorrow —"

She recognized the hedge, rushed forcefully to cut it off. "Sir, I apologize, but I need to see you now." Briefly, she wondered how to explain the situation, then just bluntly plowed ahead. "I have some pretty good proof that your aide didn't kill Barayel, and who did, and why. Surely that's worth a moment of your time."

"Proof?" the diplomat questioned sharply. "What sort of proof?"

"A vidclip," she said, "showing the bomb being placed. Not by

Aden, either. This guy's very much alive, and after me as we speak. Unfortunately, he's not too far behind." Across the lift, the couple's eyes widened and they shrank back against the wall. "Sir, I'm on my way up. I can show it to you."

"I'd like to see it," he assured her dryly. "Have the Authorities been notified?"

"There's a slight problem with that," Kella told him. "At least one Authority was involved." Briefly she wondered if their conversation was being monitored, decided that at this point it didn't really matter.

"I see," he said. "Well then, I'll see you in a moment, Kella. I'm looking forward to it."

"Likewise," she muttered under her breath. Shutting down the comlink, she dropped it into the tote, where it made a tiny clink against the incriminating datacard. A quick glance up at the turbolift indicator showed they were nearly there, and she wondered uneasily just how far behind her pursuers were. She hoped she wouldn't have to try to outrun them — or a blaster bolt — down the long hallway to L'varren's corner suite.

A sudden idea struck, and she hit the "halt" button on the call panel. Her unwilling passengers tensed to make their escape, but were visibly disappointed when the lift stopped between floors and the door remained closed.

"Hover-cam, down," she snapped, digging out the precious datacard. As the device hummed closer to the floor, she flipped up its access panel and pulled out the fresh, unused datacard it was carrying, slipping the other datacard in its place. A light on the hover-cam's rim began blinking red, indicating the datacard was full and couldn't record any more information. She routinely fixed all her cards after use, so there was never any danger of accidentally recording over them.

In this case, if she didn't make it to L'varren's suite, the hover-cam's blinking light would alert them there was something there to be seen.

Tapping the turbolift's release and flipping the hover-cam's panel back down, she ordered it, "Go straight to Suite 44-1." Almost as an afterthought, she reset her blaster's setting to stun. If there was any shooting, she didn't want anybody killed. Dead assassins couldn't confess.

When the doors slid open, she cautiously stuck her head out and glanced both ways down the corridor. The path looked clear. Taking a firmer grip on the blaster, she stepped out, but before she got past



the other turbolift's doors, they opened, and with startling speed, Darne lunged out and grabbed her.

He captured her gun hand with professional ease, and pressed a painfully strong arm across her throat, dragging her back into his turbolift. Gasping, Kella saw the hover-cam whirring down the hall towards L'varren's suite. The doors slid shut and she gasped again as he wrenched her wrist, sending a white-hot flare of pain up her arm, followed by numbness. She only knew she'd dropped the blaster when he kicked it to the other side of the lift and it skittered to a halt against the wall. With a fresh surge of awareness, she realized he held a vibro-knife near her face.

"How about you be smart and hand over the vidclip, huh?" he said softly in her ear, and she shivered to hear such a cool, conversational tone from a man holding a knife to her throat.

Forcing a calm to her voice that she didn't feel, she carefully agreed. "If you insist on it."

"I do," he said. Switching the weapon to his other hand, he reached around and slipped his fingers into the datatote at her side. Acutely aware of the vibrating blade so close she could practically feel it snipping off strands of hair, she stiffened but kept silent as he conducted his search. Her identi-credcard, datapad, room key, and

some local currency were raised for his inspection before being unceremoniously dropped to the floor.

The handful of datacards he kept, shoving her away and stuffing them into his jacket in the same quick motion. Kella stumbled into the lift's wall, turned around, found him scooping up her blaster and pointing it at her. She froze.

"It really won't do you any good, you know," she told him, unable to suppress a sudden spurt of defiance. "Just getting rid of my copy of the vidclip won't get rid of the one I already filed in the newsbank. Once the courier picks up the message packet, you won't be able to cover this up, no matter what you do to me."

He smiled, a mere showing of teeth. "The report you filed no longer exists," he corrected politely. "When the newsdroid arrives, there will be no report on this incident at all from the infamous Kella Rand."

She frowned at him.

"A tap of the keypad here, a deletion of a file there ..." He shrugged. "It's not so hard to make a report disappear. Especially with the help of someone with the proper access codes."

Juloff, of course. So the bureau reporter truly had betrayed her. Somehow, making her news report disappear seemed even worse than taking potshots at her on the street.

"Why?" she asked. "Why would he do that?"

"Because he's a loyal citizen of the Empire," Darne said flatly. "Just as I am. And no upstart Rebel government is going to set up shop on Indu San, or get its slimy fingers into our people. Not while we have any say about it."

She stared at him blankly, then the why suddenly fell into place and realization dawned. "Is that what this is all about?" she asked.

"Of course," he said. "And it's working brilliantly, too."

And it was.

Nostler had said that before they'd been forced out, the Empire's rule hadn't been that unpopular; and Kella had seen for herself that the Empire still enjoyed some support, such as that from the business consortium she'd so aptly dubbed the "Indu Imperialists." By actively supporting the Empire, the Imperialists made more credits, both through excess profits gouged from their own citizens, and from contracts and contacts gained through Imperial intercession.

Here was a group that would clearly adore seeing the New Republic discredited. What better way to accomplish that than to pin an assassination on them?

Kella briefly remembered the grisly scene in the Council Chamber. "But why kill Barayel?" she asked. "All indications were that he was going to vote no to the alliance."

Darne snorted. "He might have — or he might not. He's been a slippery worrt all along. This way was better."

She tried another tack. "But what about what the people want? A lot of them seemed happy that the Empire was gone."

"The people!" he said scornfully. "The people don't know what's best for them. Lower the prices, and they'll follow anyone, anywhere. They don't understand how it works."

But now, she did. Like the Empire he admired, Darne clearly thought in terms of profit and loss — the bottom line, not right and wrong. She opened her mouth to speak again when the turbolift abruptly shuddered to a halt, as if its power had been suddenly cut off. Darne's eyes narrowed with anger, and he cursed as he slapped at the call panel, then tried opening the door. It wouldn't budge.

Kella looked up at the indicator, which showed they were stopped between floors. Keeping Kella's blaster pointed at her and snarling "Don't move," Darne brought out the vibro-knife again, and carefully pried at the seam where the doors joined in the center. When he'd pried open a crack, he used it to pull the doors open, exposing the flat wall of the turbolift shaft. Sticking his head into the small space, he studied the shadowy wall and grunted in satisfaction upon seeing a service ladder within reach.

Then he turned back to her, a cold glint in his eye.

Alerted, Kella ducked to the side, but there was nowhere to go. As the blaster beam struck her in the side and she fell to the floor, her last thought was to be grateful she'd reset her blaster from "kill" to "stun."

She woke to a rising sensation. Just as her brain cleared enough to realize that the turbolift was again on the move, it stopped, and her stomach lurched. Blearily, she raised her head as the scarred door opened and a forest of legs rushed in and knelt down around her.

"Kella! Are you all right?" L'varren asked, helping her to a sitting position. Still groggy, she nodded and glanced around. Besides two of his own officers, she recognized the red-seamed pant legs of hotel security standing just off the lift.

"You saw the vidclip?" she asked, looking up at him.

"We did, and we've got the suspect, too," he answered. "Security

Dictio L'varren

Type: New Republic Diplomat

DEXTERITY 2D+2

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 4D+2, bureaucracy 8D, cultures, 6D, languages 5D, planetary systems 6D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+1

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 6D+2, con 6D, investigation 5D, persuasion 8D

STRENGTH 3D

TECHNICAL 2D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Capsule: Due to his serious manner, Dictio L'varren appears older than his years. Even as a child on Alderaan, he was affectionately called "Senior" by his mother because the aura of deliberate contemplation he brought to every situation was so out of place with others his age.

This childhood hindrance proved a boon as he matured. Trained as a mediator, his professional career flourished as he arbitrated labor disputes and advised politicians, as well as privately used his persuasive powers to encourage others to join the growing revolt against the Empire. Offworld at the time of Alderaan's destruction, L'varren linked up with the Alliance. In the years since, he's served as an ambassador for it and the fledgling New Republic, visiting neutral or newly-liberated worlds and, more often than not, convincing their leaders to offer their support.

Dedicated, honest and sincere, L'varren is of medium build, with graying dark brown hair and patient brown eyes. Although he has a good sense of humor, it rarely peeks through — emerging only occasionally as a dry observation of the proceedings around him. He takes his obligations too seriously to risk offending someone with ill-timed humor.

caught him prying his way out of the shaft a few floors down. He's been arrested and, I expect, will be charged with Barayel's murder.

"Thanks to your sharp eyes, my aide and the New Republic have been cleared of suspicion," he added.

Kella smiled weakly. "Just doing my job, Ambassador."

The words seemed to echo in her head, and she felt a sudden jolt of alarm. "What time is it?" she asked, freeing an arm from L'varren's grasp and checking her chronometer. In horror, she saw it was 2354.

Was she too late to catch the newsdroid?

"Where's the clip?" she demanded, scrambling to her feet and heading off the lift on startlingly woozy legs. L'varren and the troops followed, the diplomat eyeing her with concern.

"In my suite," he said. "Along with your hover-cam."

"I've got to do a whole new report!" she told him urgently. "The one I filed earlier was deleted and there's nothing on the assassination for the newsdroid to pick up. If it hasn't already been here." She scowled fiercely at the thought.

Not waiting for permission, she barreled through the door to his suite. Finding the comm unit, she hurriedly keyed in Nostler's frequency, leaping on him without preamble when he answered. "Has the courier picked up yet?"

"Kella! Where are you?" Nostler yelled back. "Something big's going down at L'varren's hotel. They're sealing it off, aren't letting any reporters in, but maybe —"

"I'm already here," she cut him off impatiently. "Robbe. The newsdroid. Has it picked up yet?"

"No! You still have time for an update," he assured her. "Little close to the wire, but it'll dump its message packets before uplinking our reports. You'll still get the scoop, if you make it quick."

Kella cut off the transmission and beckoned to her hover-cam, mind racing over what had to be done next. Grab a quick statement from the local law enforcement, get a few quotes from some Indu councilors, maybe a hopeful prediction from L'varren about tomorrow's vote, do a quick re-edit — all at lightspeed.

With a tight smile, she keyed in her newsbank access code and got to work.

About the Authors ...

John Beyer is very excited about the resurgence of *Star Wars*' popularity. He spends his spare time creating roleplaying game worlds, and is usually three adventures ahead of himself. *Swoop Gangs* marks his first appearance in the *Journal* — he wishes to thank all the Rabid Mynocks, both real and imagined, who made the article possible.

Laurie Burns' first foray into fiction was a story for her freshman English class — *Ant Wars* — with characters like Obi-Ant Kenobi and Princess Leiant. Wisely deciding to steer her writing career in a different direction, she's worked as a newspaper reporter and editor and, with her husband, Kevin, publishes a horse magazine in northern California. Deciding to try fiction writing again, she turned to — what else? — *Star Wars* for inspiration.

James Cambias is a free-lance writer and game designer who lives in North Carolina. He is the author of the game supplement *Arabian Nights* from Iron Crown Enterprises. In addition to roleplaying games, he also writes non-fiction about history and aviation.

C. Robert Carey is an undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Barbara majoring in history. He contributed to *Cracken's Rebel Operatives* and is also gamemaster of the Gotham Highlanders campaign, a position which has made him a prime target of five very persecuted player characters.

Gary Haynes is an civil engineer from California. He is also the Role Playing Gamers Association West Coast regional director. His adventure *Free Time* appeared in West End Games' *The Politics of Contraband*, and he helped troubleshoot some of the rules in *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game, Second Edition*.

Pablo Hidalgo is a beginning freelance artist from Winnipeg, Manitoba, who specializes in illustration and animation. He is a member of the Manitoba Society of Independent Animators, and co-instructs animation courses for young people. He has a disturbing amount of *Star Wars* trivia kicking around in his head, and does a mean Lobot impersonation.

Wayne Humfleet is a computer instructor for the United States Air Force. When not scheming and writing game adventures, he raises two ferrets, Kiki and Eyolf, who have a combined *Orneriness* of 20D (beat that, Patty).

Journal readers have been following **Charlene Newcomb's** tales of Alex Winger since the *Journal's* first issue. She is still a graduate student at the University of South Florida in Tampa studying library and information science. Her three children still can't understand why their playroom is filled with *Star Wars* memorabilia.

George Strayton is the resident computer programmer and copy editor at a small consulting firm in New Jersey. In his spare time, he helps coordinate RPGA events at conventions throughout the Northeast, tries to complete his masters degree in computer science, and struggles toward his goal of becoming a full-time writer.

Paul Sudlow is a freelance writer who has spent altogether too much time writing news blurbs for real newspapers to not enjoy making them up for a change. He has written for the *Journal* since it's first issue, and has contributed to various other West End Games publications, including *Cracken's Rebel Operatives* and *Shadows of Selastos*. "Eschew obfuscation" is the motto he lives by. No, really.

Kathy Tyers is the author of *The Truce at Bakura*, her New York Times best-selling *Star Wars* novel, as well as four other science fiction novels published under the Bantam Spectral line. New projects include one story each for upcoming *Star Wars* short story anthologies, as well as another science fiction novel, *One Mind's Eye*. She is a flutist and Irish harper, teaches several flute students, and has made two recordings of folk music. She lives in Bozeman, Montana, with her husband and teenage son.

Peter Woodworth is a high school student from Cherry Hill, New Jersey. An avid reader and roleplayer, he enjoys writing all kinds of fantasy and fiction and is hoping to make a career out of writing full-time some day. He considers the *Star Wars Adventure Journal* a great chance to contribute to the *Star Wars* legacy as well as to have some fun with a galaxy he and his friends enjoy visiting.

About the Artists ...

Kathy Burdette is a freelance artist living in Virginia enjoying the life of a shiftless science fiction addict. In her spare time she writes short fiction, swims and looks forward to wreaking more havoc on the streets of Gallisport with her fellow Rabid Mynocks.

Matt Busch spent a great deal of his childhood creating his own *Star Wars* comic books, fan clubs, "pop-up" books, fanzines and graphic novels. His first real job creating *Star Wars* art began in the

Journal. Matt recently designed and illustrated 20 items for the *Star Wars* game supplement *Fantastic Technology*. Currently living in Pasadena, California, Matt freelances for various magazines and motion picture companies.

David Day has been publishing in the comic book field since 1986 on such titles as Spider Man, Doctor Strange, Nightmare on Elm Street, and numerous other movie merchandise projects. The 29-year-old artist lives in Lansdale, Ontario, Canada, and enjoys playing hockey. His artwork has appeared in game products from TSR, Chaosium and West End Games.

David Deitrick has illustrated over 100 covers for clients such as St. Martin's Press, TOR Books, Skybox Cards, Game Designers Workshop and West End Games. He was also a consultant for GDW's *Space 1889* game, and designed the look and feel of the game world. He lives in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Robert Duchlinski resides in South Amboy, New Jersey, and is a recent graduate of duCret School of Art and Design. Besides illustrating, he enjoys escaping into the *Star Wars* and TSR Realms through the various roleplaying games and novels. His ultimate career goal is to become a special effects artist for George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic.

Scott Neely is a self-taught artist from Pennsylvania who has grown up with *Star Wars*. "I've always been fascinated by the story and the ships," he said. He started his art career doing freelance work, then moved into advertising art.

Doug Shuler has been a freelance artist for eight years and has done work for many prominent game companies, including GDW, Steve Jackson Games, ICE, White Wolf, FASA, and West End Games. His illustrations continue to appear on new cards for *Magic: The Gathering* and *Jyhad* by Wizards of the Coast. A *Star Wars* fanatic, he lives in Boulder, Colorado, with his wife Jordi, their infant daughter, Brianna, and five maniac cats.

Mike Vilardi works at a microelectronics plant in Rhode Island and freelances art for the gaming industry in his spare time. His artwork has appeared in many West End Games *Star Wars* products, most recently in *Goroth: Slave of the Empire* and *Platt's Starport Guide*.



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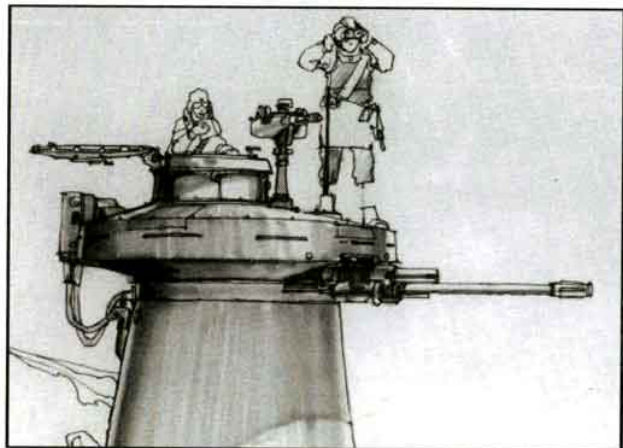
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The Trap

By Gary Haynes

Hidden away in one corner of the galaxy is the planet Saarn. During its struggles against the Empire, the Rebel Alliance practiced military tactics and honed the skills of new recruits. The Empire has since suffered the defeat at Endor, and the New Republic has tried to bring peace to the galaxy. Since moving the New Republic's headquarters to Coruscant, Saarn has been all but abandoned. However, it is still used as a remote outpost for surveillance of starship traffic in this part of the Outer Rim.

A small contingent of technicians and soldiers was dispatched to Saarn in a New Republic cruiser. The technicians were to remove sensitive equipment that is now needed on Coruscant and the soldiers were to conduct field exercises while waiting for the technicians to complete their tasks at the outpost. However, after the technical team had embarked for Saarn, the outpost personnel failed to transmit their regularly scheduled status report — all attempts at communication have been answered with static.

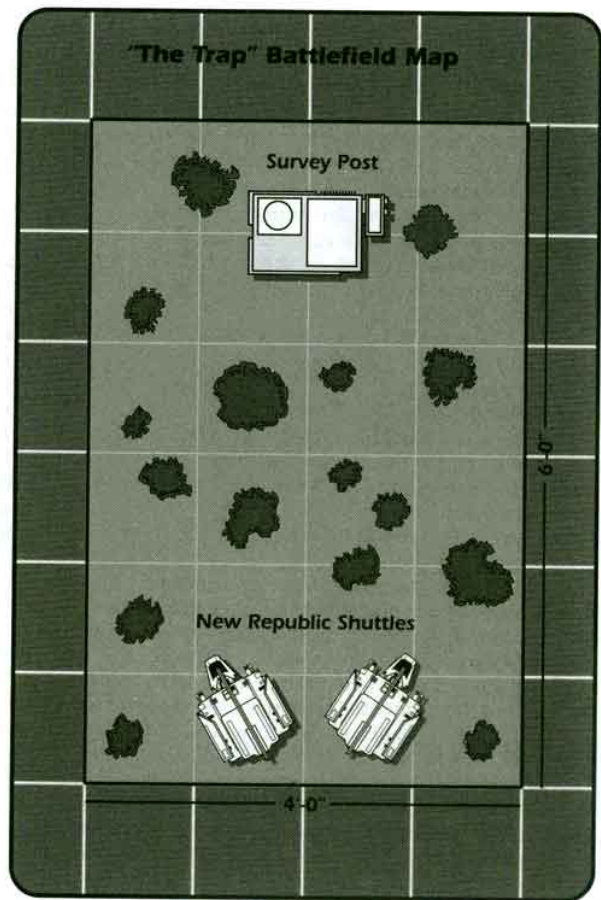
Since this began as a routine mission, most of the soldiers are fresh recruits with little battle experience, accompanied by a handful of veteran soldiers intent on shaping them up. Shortly after exiting hyperspace, the group contacted New Republic Intelligence and received an update on the situation. After a lengthy discussion and several scans of the planet, the commander received permission to land on Saarn, assess the situation first hand and give a preliminary report. His gut feeling tells him that the post may have been raided by pirates. The commander knows he has a group of green recruits and has dismissed the fact that an Imperial contingent could be on the planet since Imperial forces have been scattered and in disarray since the Battle of Endor. He has decided that this situation can test his recruits' skills at reconnaissance and combat by removing any pirate or smuggler activity and prove what kind of troops they are.

The situation on the planet, however, is different than the New Republic commander perceived. One of Grand Admiral Thrawn's Star Destroyers, *Stormhawk*, exited hyperspace a week ago in a strike-and-fade mission to knock out any resistance that may be on the planet, then set up an Imperial listening post to guard the fleet's rear. The New Republic base had no real defenses and it was quickly subdued by several Imperial assault squads. Several squads and technicians were left behind to set up their listening post.

Even though the post is not fully functional, the Imperial forces on the planet detected the New Republic cruiser as it exited hyperspace. The Imperials have assessed the situation and decided that they can handle a few New Republic troops with the forces at hand. The Imperial forces have the advantage of surprise, and they intend to lure the New Republic team into a trap.

The Battlefield

A sample battlefield map is provided. The area should be large enough to allow movement of the vehicles so their turns fall well



within the playing area. The area between the landing site and the command post is light woods to allow the vehicles to operate as mobile heavy weapons and prevent speeds from increasing too high. Do not allow the battlefield to get too large or the New Republic side may take too long to reach the command post.

The command post structure has a door in the center of the forward wall and several windows on the three forward walls. Computer equipment lines two of the walls and twin turbolifts allow access to the lower levels. There are desks, chairs and other miscellaneous furniture in the command post that should be determined before play begins.

There are no waterways or large obstructions (except the trees) to prevent the repulsorlift vehicles from operating normally.

New Republic Objectives

The New Republic player begins within 12 inches of the shuttles.

The vehicles may move independently or with the squads and may separate during the movement phase. To play this scenario with vehicles you need the *Star Wars Miniatures Battles Companion*. The scenario may still be played without vehicles — the vehicles may be removed from the game completely and the sides will still be balanced. The vehicle crews remain as a squad, but their vehicles would be removed from play.

There are two technical specialist personnel with each squad (note these with a small piece of tape on the base). The New Republic player's mission is to infiltrate the command post, remove

Orders of the Day

Alliance Commander, Tech Team Senth

Commander: A week ago all contact with the New Republic base on Saarn was lost. You are to carry out your initial mission to remove the vital equipment from Saarn base, but you are also to find out what has happened to the base and why it has not transmitted its usual reports.

Your transfer shuttles will land so the forward cannons are allowed to generate as wide a field of cover fire as possible in case hostile forces have occupied the base. The four assault landspeeders are to deploy first from the front while Red and Green squads disembark from the rear of the shuttle and spread out.

Blue and Gold squads are to remain as reinforcements until called for. Spread out and be careful. If the base has been overrun, these forces aren't friendly and we need to get that equipment from the base before they stumble across it. Good luck and may the Force be with you all.

at least 12 pieces (or as much as possible, see below) of the small (light) equipment as possible, return to the shuttles and take off.

Once inside the command post, the technician must roll a medium *computer programming/repair* skill check to remove equipment (if the technician died along the way, use the squad's technical skill rating). If it fails, the squad may try again next round. Once the roll succeeds, the squad rolls a single die once for two consecutive rounds. This is the total amount of equipment the squad can acquire from their present position. Each squad may attempt to gain equipment as many times as possible but only half of the required equipment total may be taken from each of the two computer stations within the command post.

The two squad members carrying the equipment may not fire any weapons while walking or running. If the squad member is hit they drop one to three pieces (1D divided by 2) of equipment that they may pick up if the squad stops for one turn. If the squad member is incapacitated, another squad member may pick up the equipment if the squad stops for one turn. If the player chooses, the six pieces of equipment may be placed in each of the assault speeders, but lower the pilot and gunner's skills by one due to the bulkiness of the items and the crowded conditions of the craft.

The New Republic player's secondary mission is to destroy the base, thereby denying the Imperial forces of the major equipment within. This task is performed by setting at least one charge at each of the two computer stations inside the command post. After exiting the post, two difficulty 4 *demolition* skill checks determine if the explosive detonates. These checks may be performed at any time by a squad member not carrying equipment or firing weapons. This task is one action and takes place during the fire phase. The task may be performed by two different members on one turn or one member in two different turns.

Imperial Objectives

The Imperial players may place their squads anywhere on the board, but must maintain a distance of 12 inches from any New Republic soldiers or transport at the beginning of the battle. The Imperial mission is to simply crush the New Republic forces and possibly capture one shuttle to use in a deception to board the New Republic cruiser in orbit (in another scenario). Once a boarding party has invaded the New Republic cruiser, the Imperials hope to launch an attack with their ships hidden on the ground. The Imperial players have no idea that the New Republic is here to collect

Orders of the Day

Imperial Commander, Saarn Outpost

Commander: You and your technicians are to set up a listening post on Saarn in the former New Republic base. Defend your operations against any incursions, including New Republic forces sent to resupply or reinforce their base. It is highly likely that the New Republic will return to check on its listening post. Should any forces land on Saarn, two Imperial army squads shall remain at the base as back-up with the blaster cannons, while one army, one scout and one speeder bike squad investigate the landing area.

anything — Imperial forces are only looking forward to destroying their opposition.

New Republic Forces

"Red" Squad

- 12 Average Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster* 4, *vehicle blasters* 4; KNO 2; MEC 2, *repulsorlift operation* 3; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster carbine.
- **Commander:** *command* 4.
- **Specialists:**
 - 1: *computer prog./repair* 4.
 - 2: *computer prog./repair* 3.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 461

"Green" Squad

- 12 Average Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster* 4, *grenade* 4, *melee combat* 4; KNO 2; MEC 2; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster rifle, *grenade* (1 per squad member), *vibroblade*.
- **Commander:** *command* 3.
- **Specialists:**
 - 1: *computer prog./repair* 4.
 - 2: *computer prog./repair* 3.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 640

"Blue" Squad

- 12 Average Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4, melee combat 4*; KNO 2; MEC 2; PER 2; STR 2; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster carbine, vibro-axe.
- **Commander:** *command 3*.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 361

"Gold" Squad:

- 12 Average Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4, melee combat 4*; KNO 2; MEC 2; PER 2; STR 2; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster carbine, vibro-axe.
- **Commander:** *command 3*.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 361

"Indigo" Speeder Squad:

- 6 Veteran Troopers (one in each XP-38, two in each Arrow-23).
- DEX 3, *blaster 4, vehicle blasters 5*; KNO 2; MEC 2, *repulsorlift operation 4*; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster pistol.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 422

Indigo One, Indigo Two: Two Arrow-23 Landspeeders

Indigo Three, Indigo Four: Two XP-38 Landspeeders

(Stats for the landspeeders are on pages 88 and 89 of the *Star Wars Miniatures Battles Companion*.)

Imperial Forces

"Streen" Squad

- 10 Average Scout Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4, vehicle blasters 4, melee combat 4*; KNO 2; MEC 2, *repulsorlift operation 3*; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster carbine, vibroblade, concussion grenade.

- **Commander:** *command 5*.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 503

"Thent" Squad

- 10 Average Army Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4, vehicle blasters 4, melee combat 4*; KNO 2; MEC 2, *repulsorlift operation 3*; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster rifle.
- **Commander:** *command 5*.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 433

"Brantz" Squad:

- 7 Veteran Biker Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4, vehicle blasters 5*; KNO 2; MEC 2, *repulsorlift operation 4*; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster pistol.
- **Craft:** military speeder bike.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 1400

"Danex" Squad (at Command Post):

- 8 Average Army Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4*; KNO 2; MEC 2; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster rifle.
- **Commander:** *command 3*.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 321

"Arati" Squad (at Command Post):

- 8 Average Army Troopers.
- DEX 3, *blaster 4*; KNO 2; MEC 2; PER 2; STR 3; TEC 2; Move: 10.
- **Walk Rate:** 8"; **Run Rate:** 13".
- **Weapons:** blaster rifle.
- **Commander:** *command 3*.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 321

Base Personnel:

- 6 Average Technicians.
- DEX 3; KNO 2; MEC 2; PER 2; STR 2; TEC 3, *computer prog./repair 4*; Move: 8.
- **Walk Rate:** 7"; **Run Rate:** 12".

- **Weapons:** blaster pistol.
- **Squad Generation Points:** 180

Gamemaster Notes

Although this scenario may be played with two advanced players, it has been found to play well with one advanced team and one team of beginners. The New Republic side (advanced player) has a mission and several tasks to accomplish, whereas the Imperial objective is to attack the New Republic forces and prevent them from accomplishing their missions.

The forces for this scenario may be modified by adding or deleting squads or vehicles, adding heroes to each side, or increasing or decreasing the battlefield depending on the number of players at hand or the length of game time desired.

This scenario can be played by four players, each player coordinating at least one infantry squad, then dividing the vehicles (if used) as desired.

The two reinforcement squads on each side are given as an option for longer battles. The New Republic player places one in each of the transports, while the Imperial player places both Imperial reinforcement squads in or within six inches of the command post. The Imperial technicians remain in the command post, and use furniture or equipment as cover.


The New Republic player may have one reinforcement squad enter the battle no sooner than turn three and one in turn four (this accounts for the time lag in getting prepared once the battle has begun) or one squad may enter if a New Republic squad has been shaken. Both may enter the battle immediately if an Imperial weapon is fired at or within 12 inches of the transports.

The Imperial reinforcement squads remain where positioned unless the New Republic reinforcements enter the battle or the Imperial players have lost half of their forces.

The rally point for the New Republic side is half the distance from their present position to the transports, or 24" from the closest Imperial squad directed toward the transports. The rally point for the Imperial side is the command post, half the distance to the command post, or 24" from the closest New Republic squad directed toward the command post.

If a vehicle's crew member is wounded or incapacitated, another infantry squad member (of either side) may take control of the vehicle and operate it either as part of the squad or operate it as an

independent squad. All vehicles may operate as one-unit squads or as multi-unit squads, but are noted as such before each initiative roll.

For purposes of this scenario, the shuttles may not fire upon the Imperial squads (the note in "Orders of the Day" is presented as color to the game) or be fired upon and destroyed by the Imperials, unless agreed upon beforehand by the players. If players choose to allow shuttles to play an active role in the battle, use the scale limitation rules as given in the *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game, Second Edition*. 



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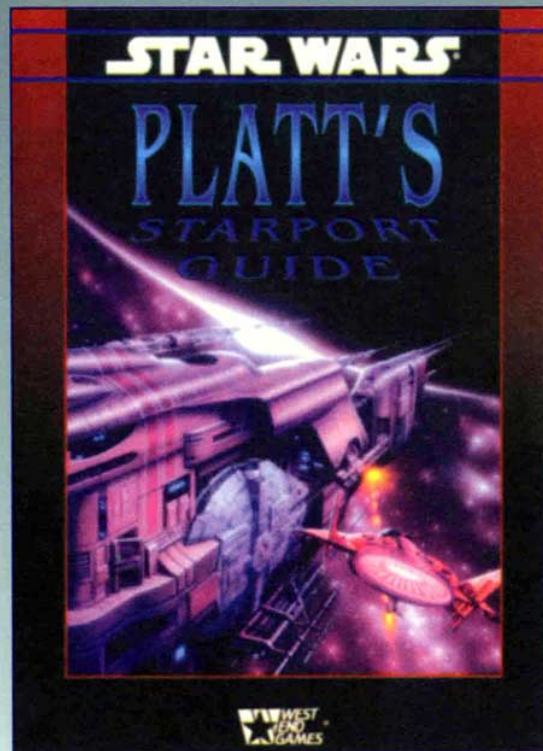
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