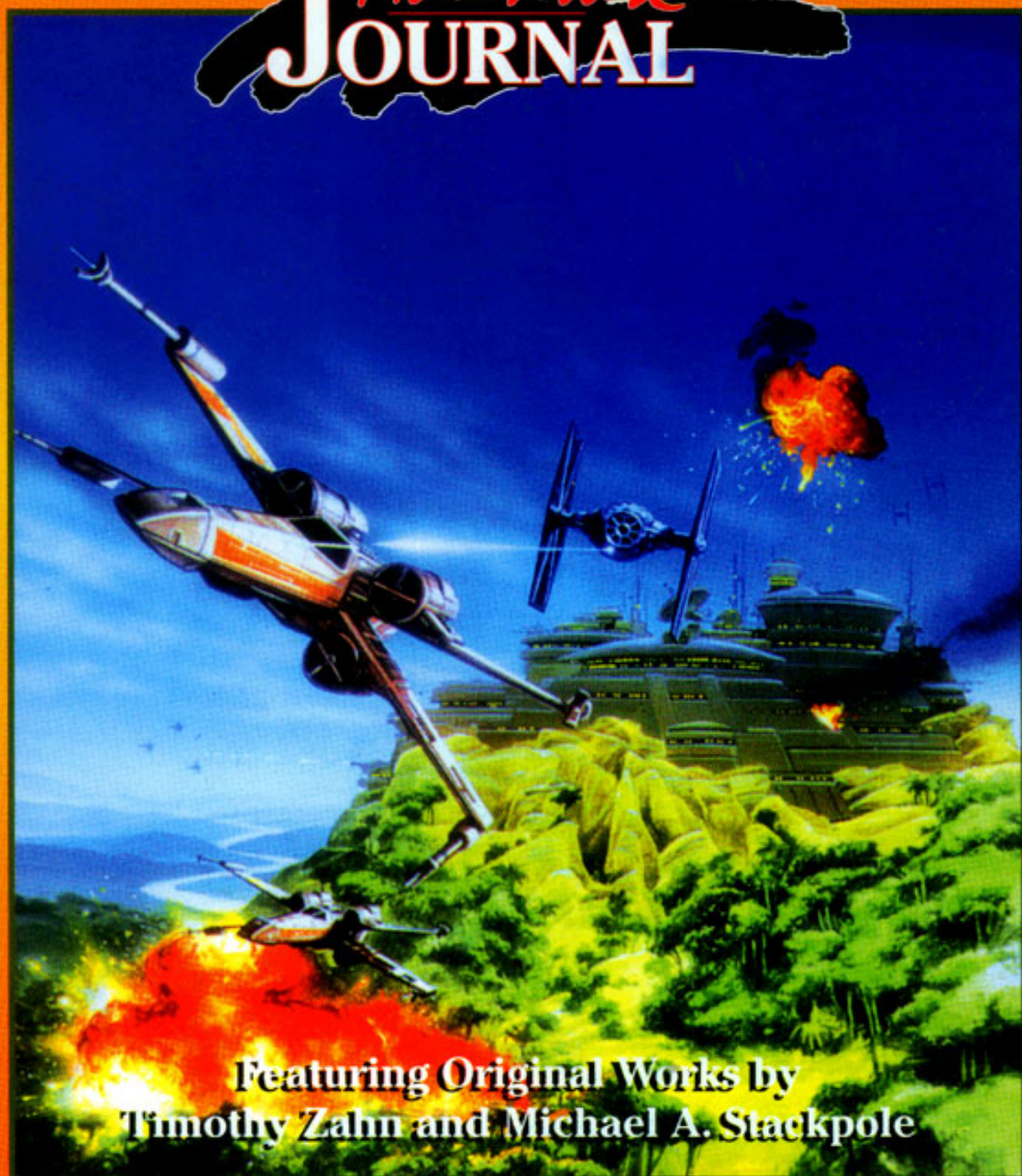


STAR WARS®

Adventure JOURNAL



Featuring Original Works by
Timothy Zahn and Michael A. Stackpole

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Special Guest Stars

West End has been working hard to showcase mainstream *Star Wars* authors returning to visit their favorite universe — to offer them "guest star" status in *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* publications.

Just take a look through this issue of the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*. *New York Times* bestselling author Timothy Zahn has returned to the *Journal* to fill in a small piece in the background on one of his trilogy's most infamous characters. And veteran game author and novelist Michael Stackpole offers *Missed Chance*, a special preview story based on a character from *Rogue Squadron* — the first in his series of four X-wing novels which won't be released until 1996! In past issues (*Journals* #4 and #6), *New York Times* bestselling author Kathy Tyers has created stories about Tinian I'att, a character who will later appear in her short story contribution to Bantam's bounty hunter anthology due out in late 1996.

But these special guest authors aren't restricted to the *Journal*. Readers have and will see more of them in other *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* products. Those who've already purchased *The DarkStryder Campaign* have read Timothy Zahn's introduction story, "The Saga Begins," which sets the stage for the entire campaign. And fans of *The Truce at Bakura* can look forward to *The Truce at Bakura Sourcebook*, co-written by Kathy Tyers. The sourcebook will be released in October, and will provide character backgrounds, more information about the Ssi-ruuk, and other details based on the novel.

Through such well-known authors as Timothy Zahn, Kathy Tyers and Michael Stackpole, West End Games and the *Star Wars Adventure Journal* provide a potent glimpse into the *Star Wars* universe.

Commander Peter Schweighofer
Admiral's Attaché
May, 1995

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STAR WARS®

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August, 1995

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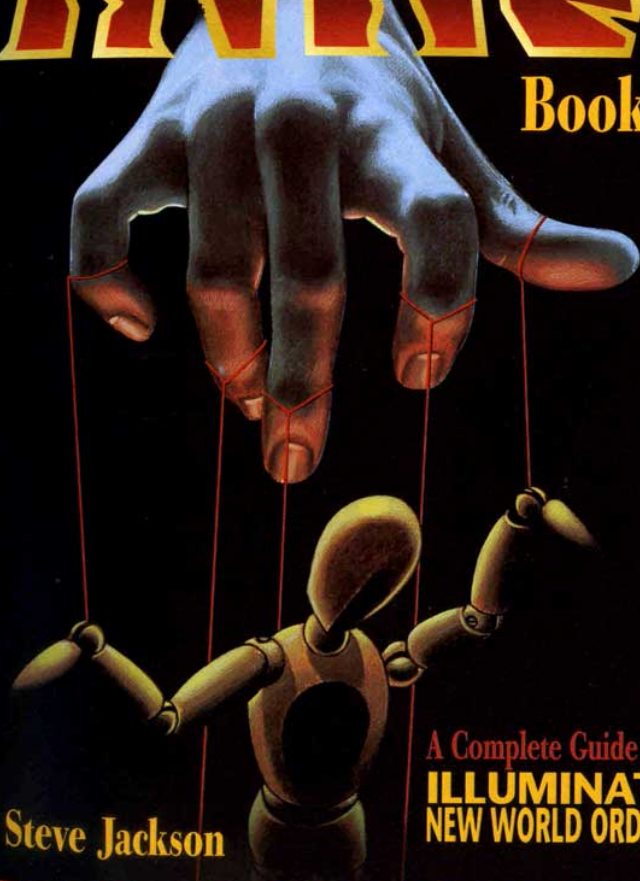
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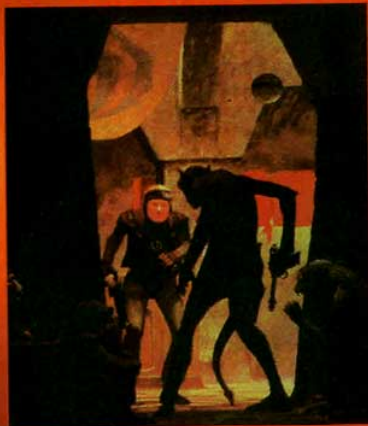
By Steve Jackson

A Complete Guide To
ILLUMINATI:
NEW WORLD ORDER

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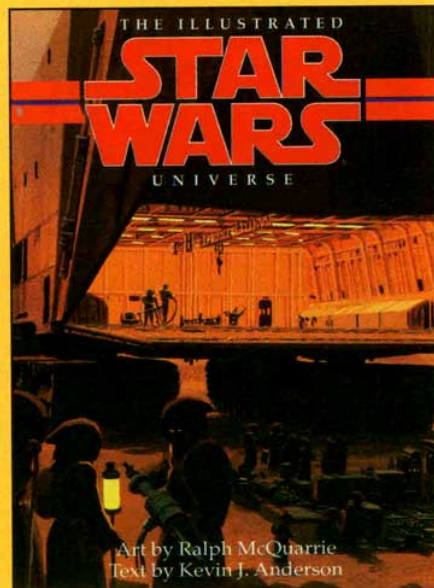
Anderson, McQuarrie Visit Star Wars Universe

Star Wars fans will soon be able to visit eight *Star Wars* planets with writer Kevin J. Anderson and *Star Wars* concept artist Ralph McQuarrie in *The Illustrated Star Wars Universe*.

This 208-page, full color book — to be released in November — will feature more than 125 images by Ralph McQuarrie, including 25 original images commissioned especially for this book. Each of the eight locations includes the brilliant color artwork, as well as a first-hand accounts of these planets

from fictitious *Star Wars* characters.

Readers will be able to visit Tatooine, described by Senior Anthropologist Hoole (a rare, shape-changing Shi'ido); the



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swampy world Dagobah, from the perspective of scientist Halka Far-Den; the gas giant Bespin and its floating Cloud City, promoted by councilman Po Ruddle; the forest moon of Endor, home of the primitive Ewoks, detailed in Imperial scout Pfilbee Jhorn's report; the frozen wasteland of Hoth, seen through the eyes of Major Kem Monnon, a Rebel Alliance engineer establishing a secret base there; and Yavin 4, the jungle moon, described by the late naturalist Dr-uun Unnh.

Star Wars fans will be treated to two other locations never

visited in the films — Alderaan and Coruscant. Princess Leia's homeworld Alderaan which was destroyed by the Death Star in *Star Wars: A New Hope* is memorialized by one of the survivors, galactic poet Hari Seldona. Pollux Hax, Imperial Advisor to the Emperor's court, describes Coruscant, the center of the Empire.

This vivid and close-up look at the exotic worlds and remarkable inhabitants of the *Star Wars* universe will be available in November at bookstores throughout the country for \$35.00.

Decipher Releases *Star Wars* Collectible Card Game

Decipher, Inc. — creator of the popular *Star Trek* Collectible Card Game — has announced that *Star Wars: The Collectible Card Game* will be released sometime this autumn. The card game will allow players to wage their own battle between the dark side and light side of the Force, using collectible cards representing characters, vehicles, aliens, droids, starships and locations from *Star Wars*, each enhanced with images directly from the films.

In an on-line posting, Decipher's president, Warren Holland, gave readers some insights into this exciting new

Star Wars card game. Decipher is going directly to the source for its card images. "Decipher has commissioned brand new, color-corrected 70mm film prints of all three *Star Wars* films, using the original internegatives stored in the vaults at Twentieth Century Fox," Mr. Holland said. "Individual frames of these new film prints will be 'cut out' and high resolution drum scans will transform the individual film positives into digital images. The images will be enhanced, and characters isolated with the enormous talent of Decipher's artists using state-of-the-art computer

graphics. Decipher also has access to the entire Lucasfilm library of character shots, matte paintings, props, etc., and we will be digitally creating some images you have never seen before. We expect this to be the highest quality reproduction ever made by a Lucasfilm licensee."

The initial card sets released this fall will concentrate on *Star Wars: A New Hope*. "The first expansion set will add cards from this film and subsequent expansion sets will bring *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* cards into play," Mr. Holland said. "Over 1,000 *Star Wars* cards are currently in development for release over the next two and one half years. I can also tell you from an insider's view ... they are remarkable!"

Collectible card games allow players to build individual decks — filled with both common and rare collectors cards — suited for particular strategies. "Many of the main characters in *Star Wars* appear as common cards in *Star Wars: The Collectible Card Game*," Mr. Holland said. "Cards which enhance the power of these selected characters are usually uncommon and rare, but there is a balance ... the most expensive deck is not always guaranteed to be the winning deck."

"The game is being devel-

oped with creative control by the same core team that developed the *Star Trek* Collectible Card Game, but we have many new, talented people making contributions," Mr. Holland continued. "For example, I am pleased to report that Decipher and Lucasfilm have commissioned West End Games as consultants to help insure factual accuracy in *Star Wars: The Collectible Card Game*. Decipher has a strong commitment to quality and we always seek the finest talent available to bring our products to fruition. We are pleased to have West End Games' contributions as a member of our development team. West End Games developed the popular *Star Wars* roleplaying games, published tons of written material and stories on *Star Wars*, and is generally recognized by Lucasfilm as a leading authority for facts about the *Star Wars* universe."

Card games such as the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* collectible card games are a spinoffs of the roleplaying game industry, attracting consumers from the gaming, card collecting and fan markets. Although no release date or retail price has been set for *Star Wars: The Collectible Card Game*, it will be available in most major comic book, hobby and book stores across the country.

Fisher Releases Rebel Fighter Pen

Fisher Space Pen Company has released the Rebel fighter pen and the Force pen — two designs featuring elements licensed from Lucasfilm and incorporating space-age technology.



The Rebel fighter pen features a design appropriate to either Luke Skywalker's flight suit or your own pocket, with a rubberized grip surface on a metal high-tech finish. The Rebel Alliance insignia on the cap is complemented by the stamped *Star Wars* logo on the pen clip. The Rebel fighter pen is the first in a series of *Star Wars* pens from Fisher Space Pens.

The Force pen is uniquely coated with high-tech titanium and features the laser engraved inscription, "May the Force be with you" and the *Star Wars* logo. With its high quality brass construction, this fine line pen has a solid, well-balanced feel.

Both pens use Fisher Space Pen's unique pressurized cartridge that allows the user to write upside down or even through water. The patented space pen technology will write smooth anytime, anywhere — even in the gravity-free

void of space — guaranteed for a lifetime.

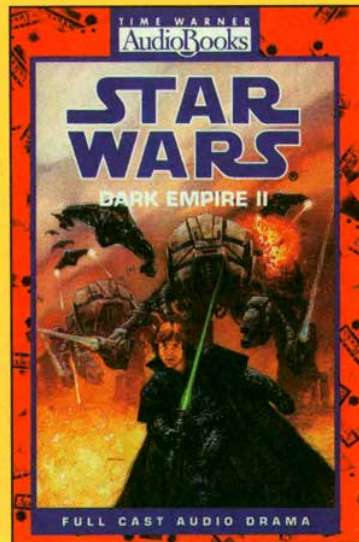
Time/Warner Audio Dramatizes *Dark Empire II*

In the tradition of the audio dramatizations of Dark Horse Comics' *Dark Empire* and *Tales of the Jedi* series, Time/Warner Audio is releasing the *Dark*

Empire II full-cast audio drama. *Dark Empire II*'s predecessor — the audio adaptation of *Dark Empire* — spent two months on the *Publishers Weekly* audio bestsellers list.

Six years after the Battle of Endor, Luke Skywalker discovered that the Emperor was still alive. In *Dark Empire*, the New Republic once again fought and defeated the Emperor's forces. Or did they? Now, as Luke searches the galaxy for clues to the history of the Jedi, Han and Leia lead the New Republic against a terrible new threat as an elite group of Dark Jedi fulfill the Emperor's final mission: Operation Shadow Hand.

This audio dramatization features all the sounds of *Star Wars* — strafing starfighters, colossal battledroids and the hum of lightsabers — brought to life by Lucasfilm's dazzling sound effects and enhanced by



John Williams' rousing score, all in Dolby Surround.

The *Dark Empire II* audio drama is available in major book and record stores, comic book stores and novelty shops. The two-tape set costs \$17 and contains two hours of exciting *Star Wars* adventure.

Bantam Releases More *Star Wars* Fiction

In the next few months, Bantam Books will be releasing several different books featuring new *Star Wars* fiction, including the final novel in Roger MacBride Allen's *Corellian Trilogy* and the first in a series of *Star Wars* short story anthologies.

The first anthology, *Star Wars: Tales from the Mos Eisley Cantina*, was released last month. The paperback book contains 16 stories centering around the creatures viewed in the famous *Star Wars* cantina scene — each character's story relates in some way to the

movie scene. Read about the cantina band, the intriguing Tonnika sisters, Greedo, and Sivrak, the Shistavanen wolf-man.

Contributors include Kevin J. Anderson (who also edited the anthology), Doug Beason, M. Shayne Bell, David Bischoff, A.C. Crispin, Kenneth C. Flint, Barbara Hambly, Rebecca Moesta, Daniel Keys Moran, Jerry Oltion, Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens, Jennifer Roberson, Kathy Tyers, Tom Veitch and Martha Veitch, Dave Wolverton and Timothy Zahn.

The anthology contains line art of the aliens by Al Williamson, Michael Manley and Aaron McClellan which originally appeared in *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game Galaxy Guides*. The anthology is dedicated to Bill Smith, *Star Wars* editor at West End Games.

Fans of this anthology can look forward to the next one,

Star Wars: Tales from Jabba's Palace, to be released in December. A third anthology based on the bounty hunters from *The Empire Strikes Back* is planned for 1996. *Star Wars: Tales from the Mos Eisley Cantina* is available in book stores across the nation for \$5.99.

Look for *Showdown at Centerpoint* by Roger MacBride Allen to reach bookstores in September.

This final paperback novel in the *Corellian Trilogy* culminates the action in *Ambush at Corellia* and *Assault at Selonia*.

When a ship approaching Selonia is blasted out of space, Han Solo realizes that rebel forces are turning planetary repulsors into weapons of destruction. Meanwhile, Luke Skywalker and Lando Calrissian discover the secret of Centerpoint Station — the infamous Starburrster. Its next programmed nova, hard-wired

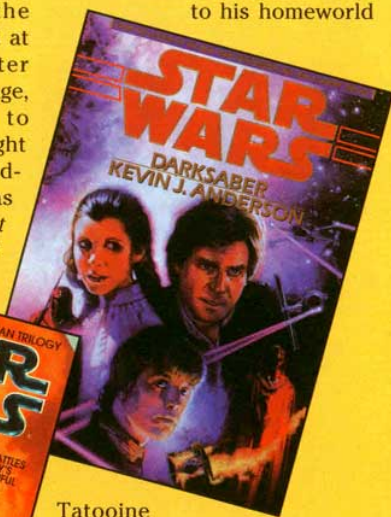
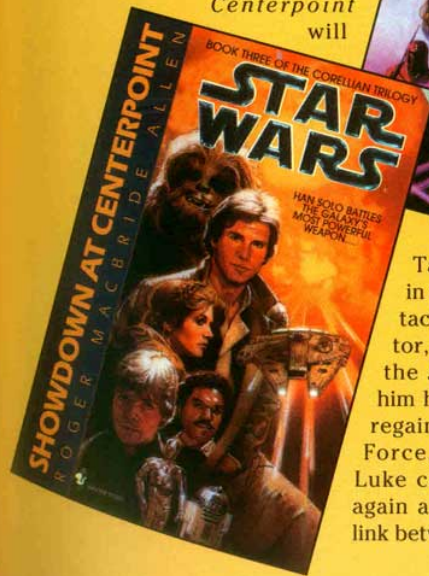
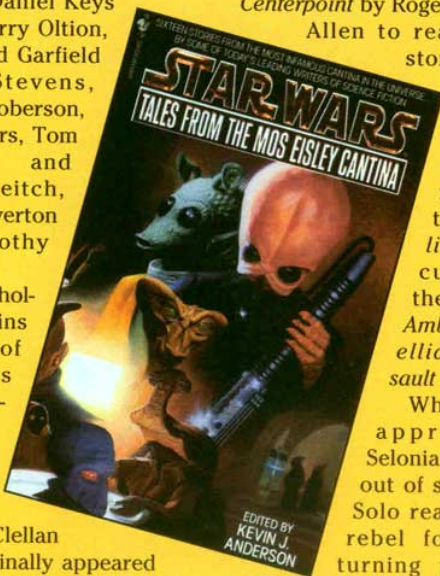
in, is set to annihilate a chosen star, its inhabited worlds, and millions of innocent lives. As a massive rebel fleet closes in on Centerpoint, Han, Luke and their friends discover time is running out.

Then the true leaders of the rebellion reveal their identities and issue their final ultimatum: the New Republic must withdraw all claims over the entire Corellian sector. With the future of Corellian freedom at stake, and the Starburrster holding a star system hostage, Han and those loyal to Republic must somehow fight back — and stop the deadliest weapon the galaxy has ever known. *Showdown at Centerpoint* will

be available in September for \$5.99.

In October *Star Wars* fans can expect another blockbuster novel from Kevin J. Anderson, *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Jedi Academy* trilogy. *Darksaber* continues right where Barbara Hambly's *Children of the Jedi* left off.

Luke Skywalker returns to his homeworld



Tatooine in the hopes of contacting his old friend and mentor, Ben Kenobi. Luke is hoping the Jedi Knight's spirit will tell him how to help his love, Callista, regain her lost ability to use the Force. Tormented and haunted, Luke cannot rest until Callista is again a Jedi, for only then will the link between them be restored.

But other trouble is brewing which threatens to destroy the New Republic. The evil Hutts, galactic gangsters, are building a secret superweapon, a reconstruction of the original Death Star they've named Darksaber. This planet-crushing power will be in the ruthless hands of Durga the Hutt, a creature without conscience or mercy. And Admiral Daala, still alive and determined to destroy the Jedi, has recruited Captain Pellaeon, the former aide to

Grand Admiral Thrawn. Together they are marshalling Imperial forces to wipe out the New Republic.

Luke, Han, Leia, Chewbacca, Artoo, and Threepio join forces with Callista and new Jedi Knights to fight on two fronts, outshooting and outsmarting the most formidable villains in the galaxy. Don't miss this exciting hardcover *Star Wars* novel, available in October for \$22.95.

Tyers Co-Authors Bakura Sourcebook

New York Times bestselling author Kathy Tyers has joined forces with *The Last Command Sourcebook* author Eric Trautmann to write *The Truce at Bakura Sourcebook* for West End Games' *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*. The \$25.00, hardcover sourcebook will be released in March.

The book is filled with information expanding the material covered in the novel. Both writers worked together to create a sourcebook which accurately reflected the novel and the author's intentions. "Eric provided some dynamite character backgrounds, invented a Ssi-ruuk civilization based on hints that appeared in *Truce*, and filled in many other gaps with solid new information," Kathy Tyers

said. Game stats and additional material elaborate on the Ssi-ruuk, Bakura's history and culture, and all the characters from the novel.

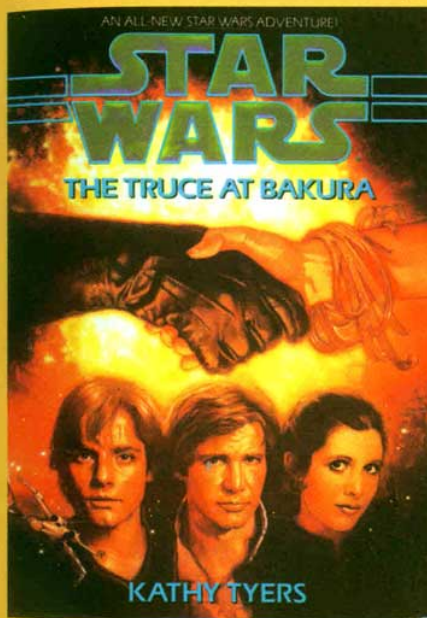
Through several original fiction vignettes, Kathy Tyers was able to elaborate on some of her characters, providing insights into their personalities and the action in her novel. "Working on *The Truce at Bakura Sourcebook*, I got to answer a few questions behind the novel, such as why Alderaanian Conn Doruggan joined the Imperial military, how Wilek Nereus was attracted to parasites, and what really happened to Pter Thanas at Alzoc III," she said. "Side stories like these rarely survive self-editing because I try to create fast-paced adventures

— so writing these 'flashbulb' glimpses was sheer self-indulgence."

Star Wars fans should also look for *Galaxy Guide 12: Aliens: Enemies and Allies* in

September. This 96-page supplement is filled with more than 30 aliens — brand new aliens and aliens shown in many *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* supple-

ments but never before examined in detail. The book is also the first ever detailed and official explanation of many aliens seen in the *Star Wars* films but never before described in detail, including the Weequays, Chevin, Gran and Niktos. Look for *The Truce at Bakura Sourcebook* and *Galaxy Guide 12: Aliens: Enemies and Allies* in Waldenbooks and B. Dalton's, as well as game, hobby and comic stores.



MIST ENCOUNTER

By Timothy Zahn

Illustrations by Doug Shuler

The last two jumps had been marginal, skating the *Starwayman* right to the edge of known space and even a little bit past it. The theory, at least as far as Booster Terrik's fatigue-fogged mind could remember, was that no commander would be crazy enough to risk a *Victory*-class Star Destroyer chasing a nobody smuggler into uncharted territory.

So far the theory hadn't worked. Maybe third time would be the lucky charm they so desperately needed.

Or maybe third time would bring the *Starwayman* out of hyperspace just in time to smash itself all over a planetary-sized mass. There were reasons why jumping blind into unknown space was considered to be a stupid idea.

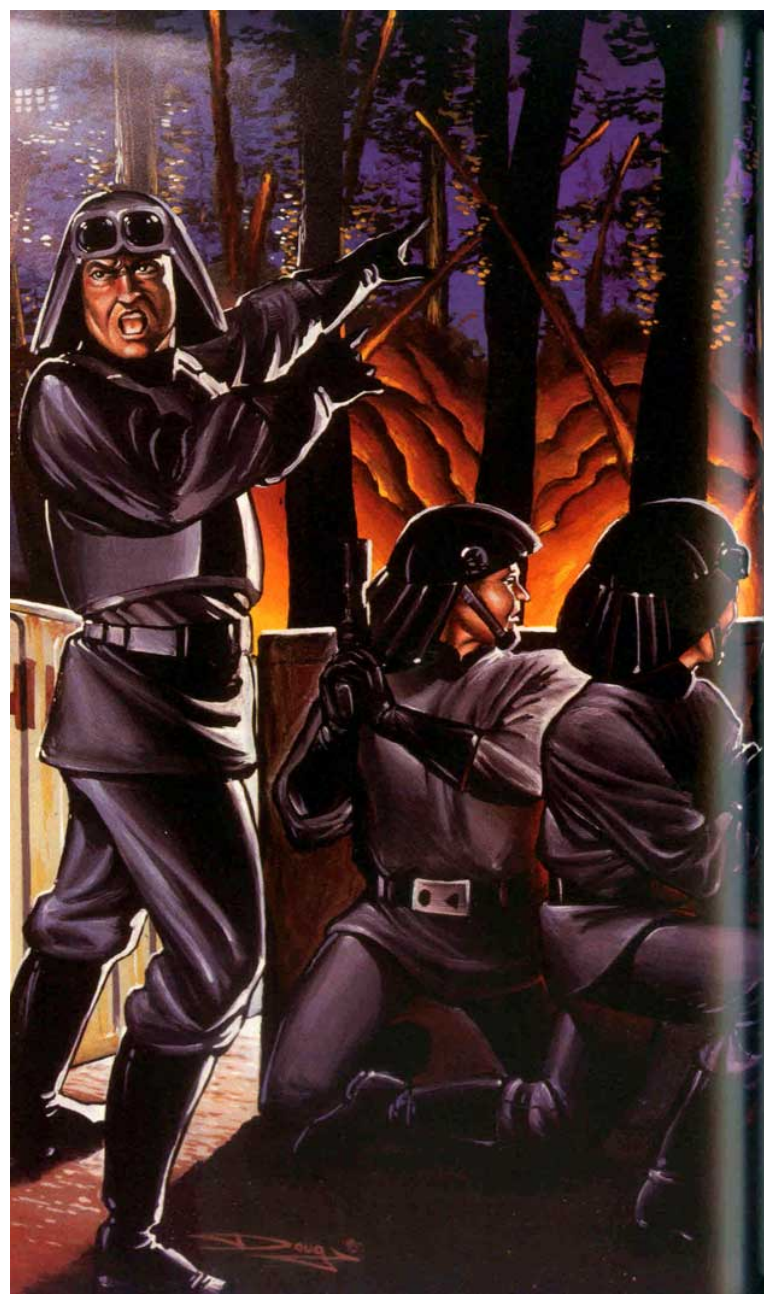
Beside Terrik, his Borlovian partner Llovlution gave a five-tiered whistle. "Yeah, okay," Terrik said, getting a grip on the hyperdrive levers and trying not to think about the unknown star system and its unknown planetary-sized masses directly ahead of them. "Let's see if maybe they were smart enough to give up this time."

He pushed the levers forward, and the mottled sky of hyperspace faded into starlines and then into a starry sky. Directly ahead, the system's star was a tiny distant disk blazing with yellow-white light. Bracing himself, Terrik peered into the aft display ...

And with a flicker of pseudomotion, the Star Destroyer appeared behind them.

Terrik sighed, too exhausted even to swear. So that was that. He couldn't lose the Star Destroyer, he couldn't outrun it, and he sure as mynocks couldn't outfight it. The options had squeezed down to surrendering, or getting summarily blown to atoms.

He could only hope that the latter option wasn't the only one the



commander back there was interested in.

Llollulion gave a sudden three-tiered warble. "You're kidding," Terrik frowned, turning to look. "Where?"

Llollulion pointed out the canopy to the right with his beard feathers. It was a planet, all right: full-sized, close enough to its primary for adequate warmth, its fuzzy edge evidence of a reasonably thick atmosphere.

And it was barely ten minutes full-throttle flight away.

Llollulion warbled again. "You got it, partner," Terrik agreed, throwing power to the sublight engines and turning the *Starwayman* hard to starboard. They couldn't escape, outrun, or outfight their pursuers.

Maybe they could hide from them.



"Target has changed course, Captain," a voice called up from the crew pit. "They're making a run for that planet."

"Acknowledged," Captain Voss Parck said through clenched teeth as he watched their quarry driving hard for planetfall. Of course the smugglers were making for the planet — what other options did they have? He'd anticipated this move from the moment the *Strikefast* had come out of hyperspace, and had already given orders to counter it.

Orders which inexplicably had not yet been carried out. "Lieutenant, what's keeping those TIE fighters?" he barked toward the comm officer.

"Hangar Bay Control reports they're having trouble getting them released from their racks, sir," the officer said. "They have two free, but the rest —"

"They have two free?" Parck cut him off. "What are they waiting for? Launch them!"

"Yes, sir."

Parck stalked down the walkway, swearing viciously under his breath. Between sky-headed techs who insisted on continually redesigning perfectly workable equipment and rule-bound officers who didn't have the brains to modify standard launch-order procedure when necessary, the entire Fleet was sliding straight into the dump tubes.

But that would be changing soon. Barely a week earlier the news had reached the Outer Rim that President Palpatine had declared

himself Emperor of the newly restructured Empire, and had personally committed himself to taking charge of this mess. Some of the ranking officers of the Fleet had already gone on record expressing reservations about the whole situation; for himself, Parck had no doubt that Palpatine and his visionary politics would soon whip things into shape.

A movement off the starboard bow caught his eye: the two TIE fighters, finally heading out in their belated pursuit of the smugglers. He looked back at the quarry ship, did a rapid mental calculation ...

"Tell Hangar Bay Control to get the rest of those TIEs in space," he ordered the comm officer. "The quarry is going to make it down before these two catch up. We're going to have to smoke them out."

But smoke them out he would. That ship was carrying cargo he suspected was for one of the small but noisy resistance groups that had been springing up lately in opposition to Palpatine's New Order. The location of that group would be a fine prize to present to the new Emperor ... and he and the *Strikefast* had not come all the way out here into Unknown Space only to lose that prize.



They were into the upper atmosphere, and looking for a good place to hide, when Llollulion began picking up the power emanations.

"Uh-oh," Terrik muttered, throwing a quick look at the display as he fought the controls against the atmospheric buffeting. It was a power source, all right, sitting all by itself in the middle of an equatorial forest a quarter of the way to the planetary horizon. "Not good. Double not good."

Llollulion multi-warbled a question. "Because it's just the right size for a small-base power generator, that's why," Terrik told him. "Out here in the middle of nowhere, that means either a smuggler or pirate base. Or maybe even a small Fleet exploratory outpost. Regardless, it's no one who's going to be happy to see us."

Still ... Terrik bit thoughtfully at his lip. Those two fighters behind them were getting closer by the minute; even if he ran the *Starwayman* to ground right now they would be able to lock onto the ship's power plant before he could shut everything down. But if he ran past that other power source first, there was a chance it would baffle the pursuers' sensors just enough to let him slip away without his landing being pinpointed.

It was worth a try, anyway. "Hang on; I'm changing course," he warned Llollulion, throwing the *Starwayman* into a flat sideways slip. "You got the triad on line yet?"

The Borlovian warbled an affirmative. "Okay," Terrik said. "Soon as those fighters get in range, see what you can do about taking them out."

They had reached the forest and were flying at treetop level by the time Llollulion opened up with the *Starwayman*'s laser triad; and it was quickly apparent that the pursuing TIE fighters hadn't spent nearly enough time in atmospheric combat training. A half dozen exchanges of intense laser fire, and Llollulion warbled a seven-tiered whistle of triumph.

"Yeah, great," Terrik growled, feeling a drop of sweat roll down his cheek as he hunched over the controls. One of the TIE fighters was already a blazing mass of rubble in the forest far behind them, and the other was spinning out of control a hundred meters to starboard, rapidly heading downward toward the same oblivion.

But the *Starwayman* had taken some damage, too, and they were almost to the unknown power source dead ahead. The inhabitants there were surely alerted to the approaching ships by now. If they weren't interested in receiving company ...

The second TIE fighter disappeared into the trees with a tremendous crash; and an instant later the *Starwayman* was shooting over a small clearing. Terrik caught a glimpse of a single small house, something that looked like a storage shed on one side and a pair of large metallic boxes on the other —

And then they were past, over forest again and heading for a rising line of crevice-pocked cliffs in the near distance. Llollulion warbled urgently — "Give me a second, will you?" Terrik growled back, throwing the *Starwayman* hard to the left. "I didn't forget we're going to ground. What, you want me to land right next to that place back there?"

Llollulion subsided, grumping audibly to himself. But Terrik didn't care. The trick had worked — maybe — and that was all that counted.

The *Starwayman* was in one of the cliffside caves, shielded from sight and powered down, before the next wave of TIE fighters went burning past overhead.



"This is not," Captain Parck's voice came darkly in Colonel Mosh Barris's ears, "precisely the news I wanted to hear, Colonel. You absolutely sure about this?"

"Yes, sir," Barris said, gazing at the tall rectangular boxes that stood beside the house they'd found in the clearing, a sour taste in his mouth. "The markings on the power generators alone show that much — our 3PO translator droid has never seen anything like them."

"That doesn't necessarily prove anything," Parck persisted. "These nearer edges of Unknown Space have surely been penetrated by the occasional trader or smuggler. This could easily be the home or retreat of such a Human or known alien, who just happened to pick up a couple of souvenirs along his way."

"That's possible, sir," Barris said. "But I think it unlikely. The buildings themselves appear to have been constructed out of local materials, but a fair number of the contents are also of unknown origin. My guess is that we're looking at the survivor of a shipwreck here."

"Who then wandered off somewhere and died," Parck grumbled.

"Or else ran when he heard us coming," Barris said. "We can't tell how long the place has been deserted. Either way, we're stuck with the fact that it's definitely an alien encampment."

There was the faint hiss of a sigh in Barris's ears. A sigh, and the hint of a curse beneath it. "And therefore stuck with the UAE Orders."

"Yes, sir," Barris agreed, silently seconding the captain's curse. The Unknown Alien Encounters section of the standing orders were a relic from the glory days of the Republic, when a new alien species was being discovered every other week and the Senate was falling over itself in its eagerness to throw full membership privileges at every shaggy or lumpy creature a Dreadnaught or Carrack cruiser happened to stumble across. The modern Fleet had no business handling such chores, and even less interest in doing so, and the High Command had repeatedly said so.

Barris had heard rumors that Emperor Palpatine had privately assured the High Command that the burden of the outmoded contact orders would soon be revoked. But for the moment they

The Unknown Alien Encounters section of the standing orders were a relic from the glory days of the Republic.

were still on the lists, and far too many of the Senators supported them. Which meant there was nothing to do but obey them.

"Very well," Parck growled. "Looks like you're going to be spending at least one night down there — better have your men make themselves comfortable. I'll have a tech analysis team put together and sent down to take a look. Keep an eye out in case your castaway comes back."

"We will," Barris assured him. "What about the smugglers?"

"The TIE fighters are still looking for them," Parck said. "If they haven't spotted the ship by the time you finish there, we'll switch to a ground search."

"Colonel Barris?" an anxious voice cut in on the circuit. "This is Lieutenant Kavren at the TIE fighter crash site just west of the encampment. Sorry to interrupt, sir, but I really think you'd better come see this."

Barris frowned across the clearing, to where the lights of the search crew could occasionally be seen illuminating the tendrils of evening mist that were beginning to waft through the trees. He wouldn't have pegged Kavren for the excitable type, but there'd been a definite queasiness in the man's voice. "I'll be right there," he said. "With your permission Captain?"

"Go ahead, Colonel," Parck said. "We'll talk later."

The reflection of the lights from the mist was somewhat deceptive, but it was still no more than a three-minute walk from the edge of the clearing to the blackened slash where the TIE fighter had blazed to the ground and its fiery death. A few more seconds in the air, Barris thought sourly, and there wouldn't have been anything left of the alien encampment for them to study. Pity.

Kavren and four troopers were waiting as Barris reached them. The lieutenant's back was unnaturally stiff; the faces of the troopers grim beneath the brims of their black helmets. Lying in the grass at their feet was the limp form of the dead TIE pilot, his flight suit burned and torn. "We found it right here, Colonel," Kavren said, gesturing down at the flight suit. "Several meters away from the main wreckage. Take a look."

Barris lowered himself to one knee beside the body. The helmet had been loosened from the neck of the flight suit, and the long front fastener opened.

And the flight suit stuffed with —

"What in blazes?" he demanded, frowning at it.

"It's grass, sir," Kavren confirmed, a slight trembling in his voice. "Grass, leaves, and a lot of those funny-smelling red berries. And

that's all.

"The body's gone."

Parck looked around him at the trees and the tendrils of mist floating between them on the light breeze, a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. "Have you looked for him?"

"Not yet, sir," Kavren said. "I thought it would be better to alert you first. If there are savages in the area ..."

He didn't finish the sentence, but he didn't really have to. Like most officers of the Fleet, Barris had had his share of run-ins with native savages. "Major Wyan?" he called into his comlink, straightening up. "This is Colonel Barris."

"Yes, Colonel," the major's voice came in his ears.

"I want a troop perimeter set up around the encampment immediately," Barris ordered. Something off to the side at the base of a bush caught his eye, and he stepped over for a closer look. It was the TIE fighter's survival pack, torn open. "We've got native savages out here."

"Understood," Wyan said, his voice suddenly brisk and professional. He'd had experience with native savages, too. "There's a troop carrier almost ready to leave the *Strikefast*; I'll call up and have them put another squad of troopers aboard."



"Better make it a platoon," Barris told him, crouching down beside the survival pack and pulling it open. "Looks like they've made off with the pilot's blaster, spare power packs, and concussion grenades."

"Terrific," Wyan growled. "Primitives with weapons. Just what we need."

"Maybe they'll be considerate enough to blow themselves to pieces before they get to us," Barris said, picking up the pack and standing up again.

"We can always hope, sir," Wyan agreed. "I'll get the security procedures started right away."

"Good. Barris out." Barris stepped back over to the knot of troopers and handed the looted survival pack to Kavren. "I want the flight suit and its contents taken back to the encampment for study, Lieutenant. Then take some troopers and start searching the area. I want the pilot's body found."



"Sir," Major Wyan said, stepping up to the examination table and stiffening briefly in salute. "The security perimeter is in place."

"Good," Barris said, glancing up through the roof of the transparent weather canopy at the sky. About time, too. Full night was here, and with nightfall inevitably came nocturnal predators. Not to mention unfriendly natives. "Any news from the search team?"

"Still no sign of the pilot's body," Wyan said. "They've found a lot of bits and pieces from the survival pack, though, scattered around like animals had been at it. Maybe our primitives just tore the thing apart without actually keeping any of it."

"Maybe," Barris said. "But until we actually find that blaster, I suggest you continue to assume someone's pointing it at us."

"Yes, sir," Wyan gestured at the table. "So that's what was in the flight suit?"

"Yes," Barris said, looking back at the collection of plant life spread across the examination table and the two techs still sifting through it. An odd aroma permeated the air, probably from the berries that had been crushed for analysis. "So far it seems to be just local grass and leaves and those berries. Some kind of religious ritual, maybe —"

And without warning, there was the flash and thundercrack of an explosion from behind them.

"Cover!" Barris shouted, spinning around and dropping to one knee as he hauled out his blaster. Halfway to the edge of the clearing a patch of grass was smoldering with the afterburn of the explosion; beyond it, troopers were running toward the closest part of the sentry line, blasters drawn and ready. Someone flicked a searchlight on behind Barris, the brilliant light sweeping across the forest and lighting up the thickening tendrils of mist flowing between the trees. Barris followed the spot of light with his eyes, gripping his blaster tightly as he tried to glimpse the enemy who was attacking them —

And was slammed to the ground as a second explosion came from practically right behind him.

"Colonel!" he heard Wyan shout through the ringing in his ears.

"I'm all right," Barris shouted back, twisting around on his stomach. A masterfully direct hit: the collection of grasses and leaves on the examination table was burning brilliantly, the table itself canted noticeably by the blast. On the ground behind it, the two techs were flat on their stomachs, doing their best to squeeze themselves into the grass.

The general comlink channel had come alive with terse orders and reports. Barris kept out of it, staying where he was and bracing himself for the inevitable third explosion.

But the inevitable failed to happen. "All perimeter troopers have checked in," Wyan reported a minute later, crawling closer to Barris's side. "They're doing a complete search of the first twenty meters of forest, but so far there's nothing. Whoever they were, they seem to have gone."

"Considering no one apparently saw anything in the first place, the fact they don't see anything now is not a lot of comfort," Barris retorted, getting cautiously to his feet and brushing himself off with his free hand.

"It's getting pretty misty out there," Wyan said. "Makes for poor visibility."

"Our natives don't seem to be having any trouble with it," Barris said pointedly. "What in blazes were those blasts, anyway? They weren't powerful enough to be concussion grenades."

"I agree, sir," Wyan said. "My guess is they were blaster power packs with the Sturm dowels pulled out."

An odd feeling shivered down Barris's back. "That doesn't sound like something savages would be able to figure out," he said.

"I know," Wyan agreed. "You suppose our alien has come back?"

Barris stared out into the darkness of the forest. "Or else our smugglers have."

"Mm," Wyan said thoughtfully. "Trying to scare us away, you think?"

"Or else trying to get us running in circles." Barris keyed his helmet comlink for long-range. "*Strikefast*, this is Colonel Barris."

"Captain Parck here," Parck's voice came immediately. "What's happening down there?"

"We were attacked," Barris told him. "Two explosions in the encampment, neither doing significant damage."

"The attackers?"

"No sign of them so far. We're still searching."

"Maybe they lobbed the explosives in from a distance," Parck said. "I'll have a wing of TIE fighters do a flyover. Stand by."

Barris keyed off and stepped back to the examination table. Yes; some sort of powerful catapult, fired from far outside the sentry perimeter. That would explain why no one had spotted anything.

He stopped, looking up at the strips of shredded weather canopy rippling gently in the breeze. No, that didn't work. Anything coming in from above would have had to get through the canopy before it hit the table. It couldn't have done that without him hearing something. Could it?

Something moved at the edge of Barris's eye. He twitched his blaster around, but it was only some small night creature scurrying across the clearing. "Major Wyan?" he called.

"Yes, Colonel?" Wyan said, stepping around the nose of the troop carrier.

"Get some floodlights set up," Barris ordered, pointing to the trees. "I want the whole rim of the forest lit up like the inside of a spark module — that should help burn off some of this mist, too. Also, fine-mesh the hemisphere sensor screen. I don't want any more explosives getting through without us at least knowing they're coming."

Wyan's reply was lost in the sudden roar as a pair of TIE fighters shot past at treetop level. "What?" Barris asked.

"I was pointing out that there are a lot of avians and avian-sized things flying around," Wyan repeated. "Small ground animals, too — I nearly twisted my ankle stepping on one a minute ago. If we fine-mesh the screen too far down, we'll have alarms triggering all night."

Barris grimaced; but the major was right. "All right, then, forget

the fine-meshing," he growled. "Just get those lights —"

And suddenly, directly ahead, the nearest trees were silhouetted by a fireball erupting out of the forest in the distance. "What the —?" Wyan barked.

"TIE crash!" Barris snapped, viciously keying his comlink. "Crash team to the troop carrier — now!"

He had keyed off the comlink, and was just starting to swear, when the distant thunder of the crash rolled across the encampment.



"You have no idea what brought it down?" Parck's voice asked in Barris's ears.

"Not yet, sir," Barris said, his stomach churning with a simmering anger. "The crash team just got back with the fighter's recording rod. And the pilot's body."

Parck rumbled something under his breath. "At least you got there before the natives had time to steal this one."

"No, sir, they didn't get the body," Barris said. "But they did have time to ransack his survival pack again. The crash team found it torn open and the contents scattered around, just like the last time."

"And no sign of the blaster, power packs, or concussion grenades?"

"No, sir."

For a long moment there was silence on the channel, and Barris found himself gazing across the encampment at the forest. The floodlights he'd ordered had been set up just inside the clearing, bathing the forest in brilliance. Insects and night avians swarmed and buzzed through the area, clearly confused by the artificial daylight, the larger ones throwing quick-moving shadows against the trees.

"You're the man on the scene, Colonel," Parck said at last. "But in my opinion, this has gone way beyond natives making a nuisance of themselves. Are you certain the smugglers aren't involved?"

"I've been wondering that myself, Captain," Barris said. "It could be there's something nearby they don't want us to find and are trying to pin us down here."

"That might explain the attacks themselves," Parck agreed. "What about the flight suit stuffed with grass?"

"Probably a feint," Barris said. "Something to convince us we were only dealing with native primitives."

The nearest trees were silhouetted by a fireball erupting out of the forest in the distance.

"Unless we're dealing with both the smugglers *and* primitives," Parck suggested. "That might — just a minute," he interrupted himself. "Colonel, did you examine the flight suit itself?"

"I —" Barris frowned. "Now that you mention it, sir, I don't think so. We were more interested in the —"

"Go look at it now," Parck cut him off. "Specifically, check whether or not the comlink has been removed from the helmet."

It took a couple of minutes to find where the techs had stored the suit. It took ten seconds more to confirm that the comlink was indeed missing.

"Clever little snakes," Parck murmured when Barris had given him the news. "One might even say inspired. What about the second flight suit, the one you just brought back to the encampment?"

"It's being checked now," Barris told him, looking over to where Major Wyan and one of the troopers were going over it. "Major?"

"The comlink's still here," Wyan confirmed. "They must not have had time to remove it."

"Or decided not to bother," Barris pointed out. "They could already eavesdrop on our communications."

"Not for long they can't," Parck said with grim satisfaction. "I've ordered the circuit that comlink is on to be shut down."

"Yes, sir," Barris said, wincing. Bad enough that the smugglers had gotten away with their theft this long. But to have his commanding officer be the one to pick up on it ... "They must still be in the area. I'll get some patrols organized and try to smoke them out."

"There's no rush, Colonel," Parck said. "As a matter of fact, I'd rather you stay put until first light. Your sensors are going to be of limited use in a forest, and there's no sense exposing your men to ambush in the darkness."

"As you wish, Captain," Barris said, feeling his face warming.

"Good," Parck said. "We'll speak further in the morning. Good night, Colonel. Stay alert."

"Yes, sir," Barris said between clenched teeth. "Good night, Captain."

He jabbed the comlink off. "Doesn't sound to me like the Captain has a very high opinion of our troopers," Major Wyan said, coming up beside him.

"Can you blame him?" Barris retorted.

"Under the circumstances, I suppose not," Wyan conceded. "What now?"

"We make our smuggler friends very sorry indeed that they tangled with us, that's what," Barris growled. "First thing I want you

to do is double-check the security perimeter again — I don't want *anything* else getting through tonight."

"Yes, sir. And after that?"

Barris looked out at the brightly lit forest, a fresh surge of anger mixing with the humiliation in his stomach. No smuggler was going to make a fool of him. Or if he did, he wasn't going to live to gloat about it. "After that, you and I are going to sit down with the aerial survey maps, the long-range tracking data from the *Strikefast*, and anything else we can get our hands on. And we're going to figure out how to find those smugglers."



Almost inaudible over the busy insect twitterings, another distant boom drifted in dully on the cool night breeze. Terrik paused in his work, cocking an ear toward the mouth of the cave and listening hard. It was the fourth such explosion in the past five hours, by his count, not counting that aircraft crash just after sundown. None of the blasts had sounded any closer to them than the first had.

It was the Imperials, of course. But what in space were they playing at?

A shadow moved silently against the starlight streaming through the mouth of the cave. Reflexively, Terrik reached for his blaster; relaxed as he saw it was only Lollulion. "You see anything?" he called softly.

The Borlovian's five-tiered whistle was equally soft, and as negative as each of the previous times. "You know, this doesn't make any sense at all," Terrik complained, walking over to his partner's side and staring down at the misty forest below. "There aren't nearly enough explosions for it to be a concussion spread. But there are too many for it to be nervous troopers throwing grenades at each other's shadows."

For a long minute there was just the sound of the insects. Terrik strained his ears, but there were no more explosions. And then, almost diffidently, Lollulion made a suggestion. "Oh, come *on*," Terrik scoffed. "That was definitely a one-man house — two-man at the very outside. Who in the galaxy would be crazy enough to take on a couple of troop carriers worth of Imperials by himself?"

Still, now that he thought about it, the sound of those blasts did seem to be coming more or less from the direction of the settlement they'd flown over. And the power emanations they'd picked up had

implied the place was currently occupied.

So who in the galaxy *would* be crazy enough to take on all those Imperials by himself?

Llollulion warbled again. "Okay, so a pair of Crintlians might take on odds like that to protect their territory," Terrik growled. "Don't try to tell me it would take the Imperials four grenades to deal with two Crintlians."

Another dull explosion drifted in on the breeze. "Five grenades," Terrik amended. "Anyway, it's none of our business."

Llollulion gave a six-tiered whistle — "I said it's none of our business," Terrik insisted. "You want to dodge a couple squads of Imperial troopers and try to contact whoever's out there, be my guest. Me, I'm going to stay right here."

The Borlovian reared his head back in surprise, his beard feathers stiffening. "Don't look at me like that," Terrik snapped. "I have nothing against picking up allies when it gains us anything. Only this time, it doesn't. We're in Unknown Space, remember? — odds are this is some unknown alien we wouldn't even be able to talk to. And even if we could, who says he'd even want to join forces?"

Terrik spun around and headed back toward the *Starwayman*. "Besides," he said over his shoulder, "all we really want from an ally right now is for him to keep the Imperials busy. And he's already doing that. Let's leave well enough alone, and get this bucket of bolts ready to fly again."



They had five casualties among the sentry perimeter troopers that night. Three of them had died by the hand of the unseen enemy, their chests or heads blown apart by concussion grenades. No one had seen anything, either before the attacks or afterward. The other two casualties had been accidentally shot by their own nervous comrades, who had mistaken them for intruders in the misty darkness.

And by the time dawn began to lighten the sky, Barris had had enough.

"I suggest you try to calm yourself, Colonel," Parck said, his voice maddeningly calm. "I know it's been a bad night for you —"

"Sir, I've lost five men tonight," Barris cut him off harshly. It wasn't the most politic way to speak to a superior officer; but Barris wasn't feeling especially politic at the moment. "That doesn't even count

the three TIE pilots and fighters we lost yesterday evening. I strongly recommend we abandon this site and return to the *Strikefast*. And that we then burn the entire forest down from orbit."

"You're tired, Colonel," Parck said. His voice was still calm, but it suddenly had an edge to it. "You're also not thinking straight. Killing the smugglers won't get us the location of that resistance group we're looking for. You think a burned-out freighter will be an appropriate prize to take back to Emperor Palpatine?"

"I'm not interested in prizes, Captain," Barris said stiffly. "I'm interested in not wasting any more of my men."

"You won't have to," Parck said. "A troop carrier is on its way down with two squads of my stormtroopers. They'll be relieving your troopers."

"They've already arrived," Barris growled, looking across the clearing to where the last of the faceless, white-armored stormtroopers was just disappearing into the forest. Their unasked-for presence was a blatant insult to the quality of Barris's own troopers; at the moment, Barris didn't care about that, either. "And if you want my opinion, sir, they're not going to have any better luck finding the smugglers than my troopers did. Smoking them out from orbit is our best option."

"I'll keep your recommendation in mind, Colonel," Parck said, his voice cool. "In the meantime, I suggest you get some rest. The stormtroopers can handle things from here on —"

And without warning, Parck's voice dissolved in a roar of static. Barris jabbed at the comlink control and the static cut off, leaving his ears ringing painfully. "Full alert!" he shouted, pulling his blaster and running toward the sentry perimeter. "All troopers, full alert. Major Wyan, where are you?"

"Here, sir," Wyan said, coming across the clearing from the perimeter to Barris's right. "All comlink channels are out."

"I know," Barris gritted. "Enough is enough. There are eighteen stormtroopers beating the bushes out there — send some troopers out to recall them. We're pulling out."

Wyan's mouth fell open slightly. "We're leaving, sir?"

"Yes," Barris bit out. "Any objections?"

The major's lip twitched. Perhaps he'd been listening in on Barris's conversation with Captain Parck. "No, sir, no objections. What about that?" He jerked a thumb at the alien encampment.

**"The stormtroopers
can handle things
from here on —"**

An encampment they hadn't much gotten around to studying; and there were high-placed idealists in the Senate who would probably make trouble for them if they left here without a thorough examination.

But there was an answer for that, too. "We'll take it with us," Barris said.

Wyan mouth dropped another couple of millimeters. "We'll *what*?"

"I said we'll take it with us," Barris repeated impatiently. "Plenty of room in the transport for all of it. Tell the techs to break out the heavy load lifters and get busy — I want everything aboard in half an hour. Move it!"

Wyan swallowed visibly. "Yes, sir," he said, and headed toward the alien house at a brisk trot.

Cautiously, Barris tried the comlink. But it was still being blanketed by the jamming static, and with a curse he shut it off again.

With a curse, and a painfully tight sensation in his stomach. There was only one reason to jam their communications: after the sniping of the previous night, the unseen enemy out there was preparing to launch a major attack. Stepping over into the partial cover of one of the troop carriers, making sure he was within shouting range of the entire Imperial encampment, he got a good grip on his blaster and prepared for battle.

But once again, the enemy refused to play to his expectations. Within ten minutes the first of the stormtroopers began to reemerge from the forest in response to the orders from Barris's messengers. The comlink jamming continued as the rest of the Imperials returned to the encampment, but the attack Barris had anticipated never materialized. And within his stipulated half hour, the alien encampment was packed aboard the transport and they were ready to leave.

Except for a single, tiny hitch. One of the eighteen stormtroopers was missing.

"What do you mean, missing?" Barris demanded as three of the stormtroopers headed purposefully into the forest again, four of their comrades taking up backstop positions just inside the clearing behind them. "I thought these were the new elite of Palpatine's new military. How could one of them be missing?"

"I don't know, sir," Wyan said, looking around. "But I've come to the conclusion you were right. The sooner we get out of here, the better."

Abruptly, Barris came to a decision. To blazes with the stormtroopers — if they wanted to go looking for more trouble, that

was their business. "Have all techs board the transport," he ordered Wyan. "The troopers will follow, in standard retreat/guard order. We'll leave as soon as everyone's aboard."

"What about the stormtroopers?" Wyan asked.

"They've got the troop carrier they came down in," Barris said. "They can stay behind and beat the bushes to their hearts' content."

He turned toward the transport the techs had just finished loading, caught sight of one of the stormtroopers standing rigid guard just outside the hatchway. "You — stormtrooper — go tell your commander —"

He never finished the sentence. Without twitch or warning, the stormtrooper abruptly dissolved in a brilliant explosion.

Barris was flat on the ground in an instant, his ears aching from the sound of the blast. "Alert!" he shouted automatically, searching the nearest forest edge for any sign of the attacker. But as always, there was nothing. A handful of troopers — brave or suicidal, Barris wasn't sure which — were charging that direction anyway. For all the good that would do.

Beside him, Wyan gave a sudden, awe-struck curse. "Colonel — look at that."

Barris swiveled on his stomach to face the transport again. The smoke of the explosion was clearing away, revealing that the ship itself had sustained only minor damage. Mostly cosmetic, in fact, and nothing that should interfere with flight operation or hull integrity. He lowered his eyes to the crumpled form of the stormtrooper —

And sucked in his breath in shock. The armor, no longer white, was scattered about in bits and pieces in a small radius around the spot where the stormtrooper had been standing.

The armor was all there was. The body itself had been completely disintegrated.

"I don't believe it," Wyan murmured under his breath. "That blast wasn't that powerful. How could it have destroyed the body so completely?"

"I don't know," Barris said, getting back to his feet. "And for the moment, I don't care. We're getting out of here. Now."

He eased his comlink on, discovered the jamming had finally ceased. "This is Colonel Barris," he said. "All Imperial troops are to return to the encampment at once and prepare for evacuation."

"Sir?" Wyan murmured, staring out at the forest. "Looks like they found him."

Barris followed his gaze. Emerging into the clearing were the



three stormtroopers who'd gone to look for their missing comrade ... and they had indeed found him. Or at least, what was left of him.

"The perfect end to a perfect mission," Barris growled. "Come on, Major. Let's get out of here."



Barris had half expected the transport and troop carriers would be attacked as they lifted from the forest and headed for the sky. But no missiles or laser pulses followed them up, and soon they were once again inside the shelter of the *Strikefast's* hangar bay.

Captain Parck was waiting beside the transport as Barris emerged. "Colonel," he nodded gravely in greeting. "I don't recall giving you permission to leave your position."

"No, sir, you didn't," Barris said, hearing the weariness in his own voice. "But as you yourself pointed out earlier, I was the commander on the scene. I did what I deemed best."

"Yes," Parck murmured. For a moment he continued to look at Barris, then shifted his gaze to the transport itself. It seemed to Barris that his eyes lingered for a moment on the minor blast damage caused by the impossible explosion that had disintegrated

that stormtrooper ... "Well, what's done is done. I'm told you brought the alien encampment up with you."

"Yes, sir," Barris said, frowning slightly as he tried to read his commander's expression. He would have expected Parck to be angry, or at least pointedly dissatisfied with the troopers' performance. But instead, he seemed merely thoughtful. "Do you want me to have the techs get back to work on it?"

"There's no hurry," Parck said. "For now, everyone is to report to debriefing. Those smuggler attacks were far too effective; I want to know everything about what happened down there." He brought his gaze hard onto Barris. "As for you, Colonel, I want you to accompany me back to my office."

So he was going to drop the hammer on Barris in private. A small favor, at least. "Yes, sir," Barris sighed.

They left the hangar bay; but to Barris's surprise they didn't go to Parck's office. Instead, the captain led the way up to the hangar bay control tower, the lights of which had been inexplicably darkened. "Sir?" Barris asked as Parck stepped to the observation window.

"An experiment, Colonel," Parck said, gesturing to the man at the control board. "All right, dim the lights in the hangar bay."

Barris stepped to Parck's side as the lights outside the observation window faded to nighttime levels. The transport and troop carriers they'd just left were prominently visible directly below; beyond them at the other end of the bay were three *Kappa*-class shuttles and a Harbinger courier ship. No one was in sight anywhere. "What sort of experiment?" Barris asked.

"The testing of a theory, actually," Parck said. "Make yourself comfortable, Colonel. We may be here a while."

They'd been there nearly two hours when a shadowy figure emerged stealthily from the transport. Silently, it slipped across the darkened hangar bay toward the other ships, taking advantage of the sparse cover along the way.

"Who is that?" Barris asked, straining his eyes to try to penetrate the dim light.

"The source of all your troubles down on the surface, Colonel," Parck said with obvious satisfaction. "Unless I'm mistaken, that's the alien whose home you invaded."

Barris frowned. One alien? *One* alien? "That's impossible, sir," he protested. "Those attacks could not have been the work of a single alien."

"Well, we'll see if one or two others join him," Parck said. "If not, I would say he was it."

The shadowy figure had moved across the floor to the other ships now. For a moment it paused as if considering. Then, deliberately, it stepped to the door of the middle Kappa shuttle and slipped inside. "It appears he was indeed alone," Parck said, pulling out a comlink and thumbing it on. "All right, commander, move in. He's in the middle Kappa. Set all weapons for stun: I want him alive and unharmed."



After all the trouble the alien had created for Colonel Barris on the planet surface, Parck had expected him to put up a terrific fight against his captors. To his mild surprise, the other apparently surrendered to the stormtrooper squad without any resistance at all. Perhaps he was taken by surprise. More likely, he knew when resistance was futile.

Which to Parck's mind merely made the creature that much more intriguing. And made the nebulous plan forming in the back of his mind that much more feasible.

The hangar bay lights had been restored to their normal intensity by the time the stormtroopers escorted the alien out of the shuttle, and Parck found himself staring in fascination as the prisoner was brought over to where he and Barris waited. He was generally very Human in size and build, though with some notable differences. He

was dressed in what appeared to be skins and furs, apparently hand-made from the indigenous animals from the forest where he'd been living. In the center of a square of armed

"If you plan to kill me, I would ask that it be done quickly."

stormtroopers, he nevertheless had an air of almost regal confidence about him as he walked.

"Look at that," Barris muttered, a note of disgust in his voice as he gestured toward the alien. "Reminds me of those dirty Jawa things on Tatooine. You know — with those —"

"Quiet, Colonel," Parck murmured as the alien and his escort came to a stop in front of him. "Welcome aboard the Victory Star Destroyer *Strikefast*. Do you speak Basic?"

For a moment the alien seemed to be studying him. "Some," he said.

"Good," Parck said. "I'm Captain Parck, commander of this ship.

What's your name?"

Leisurely, the alien let his gaze drift around the hangar bay. Not like a primitive overwhelmed by the size and magnificence of the place, but like another military man sizing up his enemy's strengths. And weaknesses. "I am called Mitth'raw'nuruodo," he said, bringing his eyes back to Parck.

"Mitth'raw'nuruodo," Parck repeated, trying not to mangle the alien word and not succeeding all that well. "First of all, I want you to know that we did not intend to intrude on your privacy down there. We were chasing smugglers, and happened upon your home. One of our standing orders is to study all unknown species we come across."

"Yes," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said. "So said also the K'rell'n traders who first contacted my people."

Parck frowned. K'rell'n traders? "Must mean Corellians," Barris suggested.

"Ah," Parck nodded. "Of course. I imagine dealing with them is how you learned Basic."

"What do you wish of me?" Mitth'raw'nuruodo asked.

"What do you wish of us?" Parck countered. "You went to a great deal of effort to inveigle your way aboard this ship. What did you hope to accomplish?"

"If you plan to kill me, I would ask that it be done quickly," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said, ignoring the question.

"We don't have to just ask you these questions," Barris put in harshly. "We have drugs and interrogation methods —"

"Enough," Parck said, cutting off Barris's tirade with an upraised hand. "You'll have to excuse Colonel Barris, Mitth'raw'nuruodo. You ran him and his troopers around in concentric rings down there, and he's not at all happy about that."

The alien looked at Barris. "It was necessary."

"Why?" Parck persisted. "What did you hope to accomplish here?"

"To return home."

"You were shipwrecked?"

"I was exiled."

The word seemed to hang in the fume-scented air of the hangar bay. "Why?" Parck asked into the silence.

"The leaders and I disagreed," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said.

Parck snorted under his breath, thinking about some of the louder members of the Imperial Senate. "Yes, we have the same problems with some of our leaders," he told Mitth'raw'nuruodo.

"Perhaps we can help each other."

The alien's eyes narrowed slightly. "How?"

"As you see, we have many starships," Parck said, waving a hand around the hangar bay. "There's no reason why we couldn't provide you with what you need to get home."

"In exchange for what?"

"I'll tell you in a moment," Parck said. "First, though, I'd like to know exactly how you were able to outmaneuver all those troopers down there."

"It was not difficult," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said, looking at Barris again. "Your spacecraft crashed near my place of exile, and I had time to examine it before your following troops arrived. The pilot was dead. I took his body and hid it away."

"And filled his flight suit with grass," Barris put in. "Hoping we wouldn't notice you'd taken his comlink."

"And you didn't," the alien reminded him calmly. "More important to me was that you would find the situation intriguing or disturbing, and that you would thus bring the suit and fermented *pyussh* berries back to your camp."

"Fermented berries?" Barris echoed.

"Yes," the alien said. "When fermented and crushed, *pyussh* berries are a strong lure for certain small nocturnal animals."

"Which you'd strapped the gimmicked blaster power packs to," Barris said suddenly. "That's how you got them in past our sentry perimeter."

"Yes," the alien said with a short nod of his head. "Also how I attacked the soldiers later. I used a sling to throw more of the berries onto their armor, which then drew the animals to them."

"You also caused a TIE fighter to crash," Parck said. "At least, I presume that was your doing. How did you accomplish that?"

Mitth'raw'nuruodo shrugged fractionally. "I knew the spacecraft would come to search. In preparation I had strung some of my monofilament line between two of the taller tree tops. One of the spacecraft hit it."

Parck nodded. And at such low altitude, of course, the pilot wouldn't have had enough time to recover from the sudden impact. "It wouldn't have done you any good to capture the TIE fighter intact, you know," he told the alien. "They're not equipped with hyperdrives."

"I did not expect the spacecraft to survive," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said. "I wanted the pilot's equipment. And his comlink."

"But you didn't take the comlink," Barris objected. "We checked

at the encampment and it was still there."

"No," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said. "What was there was the comlink from the first pilot."

Parck smiled in spite of himself. So simple, yet so ingenious. "So you switched the comlinks. That way, when we finally discovered the first one was gone and locked it out of the circuit, you still had one that functioned. Very ingenious."

"Very simple," Mitth'raw'nuruodo countered.

"So you killed a TIE pilot for his comlink," Barris said harshly. Clearly, he wasn't nearly as impressed by the alien's resourcefulness as Parck was. "Why did you keep killing my men? For the fun of it?"

"No," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said gravely. "So that soldiers with fuller armor would come."

"With fuller — ?" Barris broke off. "The stormtroopers? You wanted stormtroopers to come?"

"Your soldiers wore helmets," the alien said, tracing an imaginary brim around his forehead. "No good for me." He touched a hand to his face. "I needed armor that would cover my face."

"Of course," Parck nodded. "That was the only way you would be able to enter the encampment undetected."

"Yes," Mitth'raw'nuruodo agreed. "I used an explosive on one first, so that I would have a set of armor to study —"

"Just a minute," Barris interrupted. "How did you do that without anyone hearing the explosion?"

"It came at the same moment I began the communications jamming," the alien said. "Of course no one heard."

"Which you accomplished using the comlink you'd borrowed?" Parck suggested.

"Yes," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said. "I studied the armor and found a way to kill the soldier inside without noticeable damage. I did so, then walked into the camp and went into the large ship. No one was yet inside. With small branches I had brought I stood the armor upright and put it outside the doorway, with an explosive inside to destroy it."

"So that we wouldn't realize there were actually *two* missing stormtroopers," Parck nodded again. "Again, ingenious. Finally, then, where did you hide during the ride up?"

"Inside the second power generator casing," Mitth'raw'nuruodo told him. "It is nearly empty — I have been using it for parts to keep the first running."

Parck cocked an eyebrow at him. "Which implies you've been

here for a while. I can see why you wanted so desperately to leave." Mitth'raw'nuruodo drew himself up to his full height. "I was not desperate. It is necessary that I return to my people."

"Why?" Parck asked.

Again, the alien seemed to study him. "Because they are in danger," he said at last. "There are many dangers in the galaxy."

"Including us?" Barris growled.

The alien didn't flinch. "Yes."

"And how would you help protect your people from these dangers?" Parck said, throwing an annoyed look at Barris.

"They do not accept the concept of — I do not know the word. An attack made against an enemy before he attacks you."

"A preemptive strike," Parck supplied.

"A preemptive strike," Mitth'raw'nuruodo repeated. "I alone of our warrior leaders accept this concept as being within the correct bounds of warfare."

So he'd been a warrior leader, then. Obvious, now, really. "And you think you can now persuade your people to accept this concept?"

"I do not intend to try," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said calmly. "I do not need their permission to fight on their behalf."

"What, all by yourself?" Barris said, his voice half incredulity and half sneer.

Mitth'raw'nuruodo eyed him, and Parck thought he could detect a note of contempt in the alien's face. "If necessary."

"That's very gallant," Parck said. "Also very foolish. And potentially very wasteful."

"You have an alternative to suggest?" the alien countered.

Parck smiled slightly. "You're still studying us, aren't you?" he asked. "Even now, as our prisoner, with little hope of escape, you're studying us."

"Of course," the alien said. "You said it yourselves: you are potential dangers."

"True," Parck said. "On the other hand, how better to neutralize a potential danger than from within it?"

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Barris's mouth drop open. "Captain, what are you suggesting?"

"I'm offering Mitth'raw'nuruodo the chance at a position within the Fleet, Colonel," Parck said, watching the alien's face closely. There was no surprise there, no change of expression at all. Perhaps he was too shocked to react.

More likely he'd already anticipated the offer. Perhaps had even

deliberately maneuvered the conversation this direction. "Emperor Palpatine has many enemies," Parck continued. "The resistance groups sprouting up show that much. A warrior leader of Mitth'raw'nuruodo's skills would be a valuable asset to us."

"But he's an —" Barris broke off his sentence with a hiss.

"An alien?" Parck finished for him. "Yes, he is. But sometimes that doesn't make a difference."

"It does with Palpatine," Barris said harshly.

"Not always." Parck lifted his eyebrows slightly. "I'm willing to risk it, Mitth'raw'nuruodo. How about you?"

"The benefit to you is clear," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said. "What would be the benefit to me?"

"Access to the Fleet's files on aliens here at the Outer Rim, for one thing," Parck said. "A chance to use your skills to seek out and neutralize threats to your people that might exist within the boundaries of the Empire." He shrugged. "And who knows? Perhaps the Emperor would be willing to send you back here with a force strong enough to neutralize those other threats to your people that you mentioned. After all, a threat to your people would also be a potential threat to the Empire."

Mitth'raw'nuruodo's eyes flicked to Barris. "And if I am not acceptable to your people?"

"Then I give you my personal promise that I'll take you wherever you wish to go," Parck said.

"Sir, I strongly suggest you reconsider this," Barris said, his voice soft but urgent. "The Emperor will never accept this — this creature."

Parck smiled to himself. No, the Emperor did not in general think very highly of non-Humans ... but there were some notable if top secret exceptions. Such as the aliens Darth Vader had discovered on a ruined world and recruited into private service to Palpatine. The commander of Vader's ship on that mission — a cousin of Parck's and a former rival at the Academy — had been promoted to Vice Admiral for his part in that encounter.

Maybe Parck had finally found a way to match him. Or even to pass him up. "Have we an agreement?"

"The risk is worth taking," Mitth'raw'nuruodo said. "I will come speak with your Emperor."

Parck smiled, a warm sense of satisfaction flowing through him. He had his prize now, all right. A far better prize than the petty and totally insignificant smuggler still hiding on the planet below. "Excellent," he said. "We'll leave at once. One warning, though: you're

almost certainly going to have to change your name. 'Mitth'raw'nuruodo' is far too hard for the average Fleet officer to pronounce."

"Of course," the alien said, smiling. He looked at Barris, those glowing red eyes — as Barris had pointed out, so reminiscent of a Jawa's — glittering in deep contrast to the darkness of his blue skin and blue-black hair. "Perhaps my core name would be easier for the average Fleet officer. Call me Thrawn."

"Thrawn it is, then," Parck nodded. "And now, perhaps you'll accompany me to the bridge. Your Imperial orientation might as well begin now."



From the mouth of the cave, Lloallulion warbled urgently. "What are you talking about?" Terrik demanded, coming up beside him. "They're not going to give up now."

The Borlovian warbled again, handing over the macrobinoculars. Muttering under his breath, Terrik jammed them against his eyes and peered upward.

Just in time to see the Star Destroyer flicker with pseudomotion as it made the jump to lightspeed.

"Well, I'll be," he mumbled, lowering the macrobinoculars in disbelief. A sudden thought struck him, and he lifted them again, searching the sky from horizon to horizon. But there were no other ships in sight that might have come here to take over the search. Unless they were lying in ambush on the other side of the planet ...

Terrik grinned. If they were skulking in wait around the horizon hoping to draw him out, they were in for a rude surprise. The *Starwayman* might be old and battered, but given a halfway decent head start she could outpace most anything out there. "Go fire up the converters," he ordered Lloallulion. "We're getting out of here."

The Borlovian warbled acknowledgment and headed into the cave. Terrik gave the sky one last check; and then, almost unwillingly, found himself gazing across the forest toward where the encampment had been. Could something about that place have been the reason the Star Destroyer had left so suddenly? Terrik couldn't imagine how or why that might happen, but the connection seemed inescapable.

Still, it hardly mattered. Terrik had a cargo to deliver, and for whatever reason he now had a clear shot to do so. And whatever might have happened out there —

Looping the macrobinoculars around his neck, he turned and headed back into the cave. Whatever had happened out there, it certainly had nothing to do with him.

Roleplaying Game Statistics

■ Captain Voss Parck

Type: Victory Star Destroyer Captain

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D+1

Alien species 4D+2, bureaucracy 8D, cultures 5D, intimidation 6D+2, law enforcement: Imperial 6D, planetary systems 7D, tactics: capital ships 8D

MECHANICAL 3D+1

Astrogation 9D+2, capital ship piloting 7D+1, communications 6D, sensors 6D+2

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Bargain 7D+2, command 9D, investigation 8D, persuasion 8D, search 6D

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Computer programming/repair 5D, security 6D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 15

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink

Capsule: Voss Parck comes from a long and proud lineage of capital ship captains. Born into a prominent and wealthy family on Corulag, he attended the Corulag Academy with his many siblings and cousins. He soon rose through the ranks and distinguished his service in the navy, eventually gaining command of his own ship—the Victory-class Star Destroyer *Strikefast*. Although many of his siblings and cousins have moved from active line duty to other prestigious administrative ranks, Parck has so far been relegated to commanding his own Star Destroyer. Rivalry between other family members in the naval administration keeps him from rising any further.

Recent changes in galactic politics, however, have raised Parck's concerns over the quality of recruits in the navy and the efficiency in which Imperial policies are formed and en-



forced. He can be a stern man, and expects orders to be carried out to the letter once they are given. He considers himself a by-the-books officer, even if he doesn't always agree with the books. Parck tries to be tolerant of failure and inadequacy in others, but has been known to dismiss officers from active service for particularly severe mishaps.

Captain Parck's face is as stern as his manner, yet his eyes betray a hint of cunning patience and intelligence. His tall form often towers over the various officers scurrying beneath his gaze on the *Strikefast's* bridge.

Parck believes the glory of the past days serving on the line are gone. With new developments on Coruscant, he is slowly realizing that those within the Imperial bureaucracy wield the most power and have the best opportunities to gain prestige. He recently witnessed this bureaucratic power first-hand, as his ship was reassigned to patrol duties on the fringes of Imperial space, far from the mainstream patrol routes he and his crew enjoyed in the Mid-Rim. Parck has resented the transfer ever since, and has secretly vowed to regain his favor with the naval bureaucracy somehow. He keeps his ambitions to himself, slowly and silently building up his record. Parck believes his discovery of Thrawn will be the pivotal event to help him rise into the naval administration.

Booster Terrik and Llollulion

These two smugglers have joined the growing ranks of a resistance movement forming in the Outer Rim Territories. Many such resistance groups have been sprouting up lately, each opposing Emperor Palpatine's New Order. Booster and Llollulion offered their services to one of these groups — Booster knows that radical political changes often negatively impact legitimate and illegitimate business dealings. Especially far away from Coruscant in the Outer Rim, where administrative decisions can often be misinterpreted and abused by the authorities.

Booster has always been involved in shipping. Although piloting freighters for the larger corporations paid well, he found it severely limited his independence. He's since tried several independent shipping ventures, mostly with bulk or light freighters. After going bankrupt several times over, and wading into debt with a crime lord, Booster met Llollulion, a Borlovian noble who bailed him out. Llollulion's price was high — Booster had to promise to become the Borlovian's partner in flying the *Starwayman*, and teaching Llollulion everything he could about the spacer's trade.

Booster Terrik. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D+1, *blaster* 5D, *dodge* 4D, *Languages*: Borlovian 6D, *planetary systems* 5D, *streetwise* 4D, *Mechanical* 3D+2, *astrogation* 5D, *space transports* 7D, *starship gunnery* 5D, *starship shields* 4D, *Perception* 3D, *bargain* 4D+2, *con* 5D, *Strength* 3D, *brawling* 5D, *space transports repair* 5D+2. Move: 10. Character Points: 3. Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, starship tools.

Borlovians are a timid, feathered species with a medieval social structure. Mobility and change are feared, since most Borlovians value stability. Most Borlovians never leave their home city or village, and space travel (until recently) has been an unthinkable subject.

Llollulion is exceptional among his species. He is considered an explorer and traveler, although he has never fit in anywhere but his family's baronial estate. When he inherited his family fortune, he converted most of it to valuable metals and jewels. Around this time Booster Terrik arrived on Borlov in a stolen light freighter — on the run from numerous bounty hunters and indebted to several power-

Adventure Idea

The characters are contacted by a fledgling Rebel cell on the edge of Unknown Space which desperately needs a cargo of illegal weapons and medical supplies to aid its operations. The group was expecting a shipment, but word has come in that their previous smuggler contact, Booster Terrik, was intercepted and pursued by an Imperial Victory Star Destroyer. The characters could either be members of this Rebel cell, hired smugglers or transient spacers. They're asked to travel to Kobbahn — the last starport the *Starwayman* is known to have visited — and find the missing ship and supplies.

The characters must find some contacts in Kobbahn starport who know Booster Terrik and might know where he fled. Perhaps an Imperial Security Bureau agent discovers their inquiries interesting and tries to tag along to find possible links to a Rebel cell. The characters find a contact who knows several of Booster's hideouts (for a price, of course). But before the characters can leave Kobbahn starport, they must evade the ISB agent and possibly flee from a stormtrooper patrol investigating their Rebel ties.

The characters continue their search of several hideouts along the edge of the Outer Rim Territories, and finally find Booster on one hideout planet, where he's stopped to pick up some spare starship parts he's hidden away. Unfortunately, a small pirate band has discovered him, and has the *Starwayman* pinned down in the hideout cave. The characters must fight off the pirates and free Booster to deliver the much-needed supplies to the Rebel cell.

ful individuals. Lloollulion met Terrik and offered his assistance. In return for paying off his debt and purchasing the stolen ship from the owner, Lloollulion would accompany Terrik on his smuggler's travels, learning about the vast galaxy beyond Borlov.

Since then the two have become fast friends. Some of Lloollulion's noble sense of duty has rubbed off on Terrik, and the two soon agreed to aid the struggling resistance against Emperor Palpatine.

Lloollulion. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *dodge* 4D, *planetary systems* 3D, *willpower* 5D, *astrogation* 3D, *sensors* 4D, *space transports* 3D, *starship gunnery* 3D, *starship shields* 3D, *Perception* 5D, *search* 6D, *sneak* 6D, *Strength* 3D, *climbing/jumping* 5D, *first aid* 3D, *space transports repair* 3D. Move: 10. Character Points: 7. Borlovian noble's pendant, datapad.

Starwayman. Starfighter, maneuverability 2D, space 4, atmosphere 280; 800 kmh, hull 3D+2, shields 2D. Weapons: 1 triple laser cannon (fire control 2D, damage 5D).

■ Colonel Mosh Barris

Type: Imperial Army Officer

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 6D, blaster artillery 5D+2, brawling parry 4D, dodge 6D+2, grenade 5D+2, vehicle blasters 5D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

Bureaucracy 4D+2, intimidation 4D, planetary systems 4D+2, survival 5D, tactics: ground assault 5D

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Communications 4D, ground vehicle operation 5D, repulsorlift operation 5D, sensors 4D

PERCEPTION 2D+2

Command 5D+2, investigation 4D, persuasion 3D+2, search 4D, sneak 4D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 5D, climbing/jumping 4D+2

TECHNICAL 2D

Armor repair 3D, first aid 4D, repulsorlift repair 4D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 8

Move: 10

Equipment: Blast helmet (+1D physical, +1 energy), blast vest (+1D physical, +1 energy, torso only), blaster pistol (4D), comlink

Capsule: Mosh Barris is a hardened field soldier who fought his way to the rank of colonel. He's had plenty of experience on the battlefield, fighting with footsoldier platoons, artillery units and armored divisions. Although he's now in a command position, he always remembers what it's like to be one of the grunt troopers. Barris is concerned for his troops — to him they aren't the nameless masses driven into battle, but individuals filled with both fear and bravery.

Barris is proud of his service in the army, and often expects to be paid the respect he feels he deserves. He's put in his grunt time; now he's

ready for some of the benefits of an officer's life — an administrative position with relative power to shape the way the Imperial Army operates. Barris is often resentful of those in higher positions who don't realize the ramifications of their strategic orders. He hopes someday to become one of them — not to be like them, but to change the way the army is run from within.

Barris' noble ambitions are cast aside, however, when he's concentrating on his unit's latest operation. He runs a tight ground operation, always keeping track of where his men are and where potential threats could be. He dislikes those superior officers who drive him into situations without having all the facts or thinking through the possible results of a ground action. When it comes to how an army operation should be run, Barris is certain he knows best. Barris tries to respect authority, but sometimes resents it when he feels that authority has betrayed him and his soldiers.

Barris currently commands the Imperial Army trooper contingent aboard the Victory Star Destroyer *Strikefast*. Although he is a higher rank, Barris defers to the *Strikefast's* commanding officer, Captain Parck. Barris feels that Parck is a just and cool-headed officer, but sometimes thinks the naval captain is too detached from ground actions to make command decisions regarding planetary expeditions.



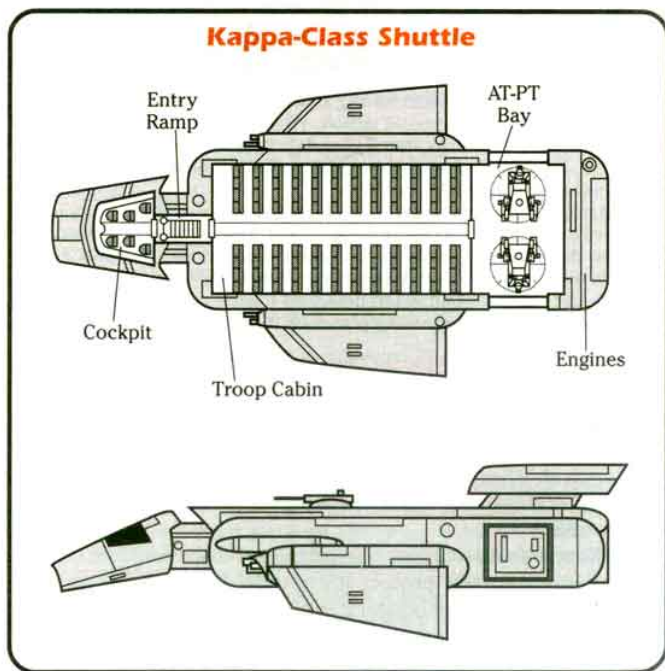
Kappa-class Shuttle

Designed back in the days before Republic Sienar Systems became Sienar Fleet Systems, the *Kappa*-class shuttle is an obsolete troop transport relegated to secondary ships in the Imperial fleet. The *Kappa* shuttles were eventually replaced by drop-ships which have greater troop capacity and the ability to transport AT-AT and AT-ST walkers.

The *Kappa* shuttle carries one platoon of troopers. Two double blaster cannon turrets protect the shuttle during flight, and two forward-firing repeating blaster cannons clear the landing area of any hostile forces and establish a safe zone for troopers to disembark. The *Kappa* shuttle has many features which were later incor-

porated into the Lambda shuttles, including the angled cockpit area with wide viewport, a ventral debarkation hatch, and three stubby stabilization fins.

The Kappa shuttle capitalized on a revolutionary and short-lived idea for its time—it has an aft vehicle bay for two AT-PT walkers (the AT-PT walker was another new concept for the time). The AT-PTs provide heavy firepower and armor support to ground troops landing in a combat zone. Port and starboard exit hatches from the vehicle bay allow the AT-PT walkers to disembark over low ramps. The concept saw limited use on the battlefield, since the *Kappa*-class shuttles produced were eventually replaced with more modern dropships holding more troops and AT-ST and AT-AT walkers. Most *Kappa* shuttles' AT-PTs have since been scrapped in favor of their more intimidating cousins—the vehicle bays are now used for cargo or other more conventional vehicles.



Steven Brown

Some Kappas found their way out of Imperial service and onto the general used starship market—some even with one or both of their AT-PTs in the vehicle bay. These shuttles and their walkers are highly illegal in civilian hands, and have been seen several times serving with certain mercenary groups.

■ Kappa-class Shuttle

Craft: Republic Sienar Systems Troop Shuttle

Type: *Kappa*-class Shuttle

Scale: Starfighter

Length: 35 meters

Skill: Space Transports: *Kappa* shuttle

Crew: 2, gunners: 2

Crew Skill: Space transports 5D, starship gunnery 4D+2, starship shields 4D

Passengers: 40 (troops)

Cargo Capacity: 50 metric tons

Consumables: 1 Month

Cost: Not available for sale

Hyperdrive Multiplier: x1

Hyperdrive Backup: x10

Nav Computer: Yes

Maneuverability: 1D

Space: 5

Atmosphere: 295; 850 kmh

Hull: 4D

Shields: 1D

Sensors:

Passive: 20/0D

Scan: 40/1D

Search: 80/2D

Focus: 4/2D+2

Weapons:

2 Double Blaster Cannons

Fire Arc: Turret

Crew: 1

Scale: Starfighter

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 2D

Space Range: 1-3/12/25

Atmosphere Range: 100-300/1.2/2.5 km

Damage: 4D

2 Repeating Blaster Cannons (fire-linked)

Fire Arc: Front

Scale: Speeder

Skill: Vehicle blasters

Fire Control: 2D

Atmosphere Range: 1-50/100/250

Damage: 3D+2

AT-PT Walker. Walker, maneuverability 2D, move 21; 60 kmh, body strength 2D. Weapons: 1 twin blaster cannon (fire control 1D, damage 4D), concussion grenade launcher (fire control 1D, damage 2D).

Mitth'raw'nuruodo

Type: Exiled Alien Military Leader

DEXTERITY 2D+1

Blaster 5D+1, bows 5D+1, brawling parry 5D, dodge 7D, grenade 5D+1, melee combat 7D+2, melee parry 7D+1

KNOWLEDGE 3D+1

Alien species 4D, art 9D+2, bureaucracy 5D, business 8D+2, cultures 4D, intimidation 8D, languages 4D+2, planetary systems 4D+1, streetwise 7D, survival 8D, tactics: ground assault 7D, value 7D, willpower 8D+2

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Astrogation 6D, beast riding 7D+2, capital ship piloting 4D, communications 6D+2, repulsoflight operation 4D+2, sensors 6D, space transports 5D+1

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Bargain 11D, command 9D+2, con 8D+1, hide 7D, investigation 9D, persuasion 8D+2, search 11D+1, sneak 7D+1

STRENGTH 2D+1

Brawling 6D+1, stamina 9D+1, swimming 4D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 4D+2, demolition 6D+2, first aid 7D, security 6D

Force Points: 5

Dark Side Points: 3

Character Points: 28

Move: 10

Capsule: A highly decorated warrior and respected tactician, Mitth'raw'nuruodo was always the black sheep of his government's ruling body. Although he always kept the welfare of his people as his highest priority, his methods in ensuring their welfare were sometimes less than acceptable to the more traditional thinking of his people.



Mitth'raw'nuruodo is an imposing figure with his tall stature, blue skin, blue-black hair, and his glowing red eyes. He exudes a strong presence and a sense of quiet pride. Although others may view his methods as unconventional and unnecessarily violent, Mitth'raw'nuruodo acts as if he is certain his methods are the best for his people. He is not a mindless killing machine—he is an intelligent, cunning and cool tactician who keeps his goal clear in mind and lets nothing stand in his way.

But Mitth'raw'nuruodo's determination to protect his people isolated him from his own culture. Although his society believed in waging war to protect its interests from enemies, that war had to be first

instigated by violence from the enemy. The concept of a preemptive strike against a known enemy was morally wrong—the only acceptable proof of an enemy's intent at war was war itself. Mitth'raw'nuruodo knew weapons production, troop and fleet mobilization, and increased espionage were preludes to an attack. Rather than suffer an initial attack—and possible defeat—at the onset of war, he felt it was better to head off that attack and possibly avert a full-scale war with a preemptive strike.

After Mitth'raw'nuruodo initiated a raid on an enemy ground installation manufacturing weapons for an upcoming attack, the government's ruling body acted against him. His actions were judged to be against all his people believed about not attacking without direct, violent provocation. Mitth'raw'nuruodo was exiled to a distant planet where his radical ideas wouldn't threaten to upset society.

Mitth'raw'nuruodo is a very passionate person. He has a great interest in art—although his exile has somewhat curtailed his pursuit of his artistic analysis. His passion overflows to his ideals and methods as well. Mitth'raw'nuruodo is determined to work for his people's best interest, despite his exile.

Game information created by Peter Schweighofer based on Timothy Zahn's "Mist Encounter."

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When an ambitious Imperial prefect entrusts his scheming advisor to eliminate a band of young, wanna-be Rebels, it can only lead to a ...

MISSSED CHANCE

By Michael A. Stackpole

Illustrations by Mike Vilardi

Corran Horn smiled broadly as the R2 droid's muted warble came to him from back in the darkened interior of the temporary hangar. "Yes, Whistler, you have done a good job of disguising this place." In his absence the droid had busied himself by strewing all manner of debris inside the abandoned vehicle shed. Between that and the growth of the purple *djorra* vine across the front of the shed, no one would guess that the structure hid the only X-wing fighter on Garqi.

Corran swung under the ship's sleek nose and squat-walked back to where the little green and white droid stood. Things had been moved around since he'd last visited Whistler and Corran suspected he was only seeing the latest in a long line of decorating schemes. "I'm sorry I haven't visited sooner, but the whole city is going quite insane about Rebel activity. The way everyone is being watchful, you'd think some slicers grafting New Republic slogans and graph-

ics onto computer screens and public data displays was the same as murder."

The droid extended his I/O jack and plugged it into the port on a small datapad resting atop a can oozing an oily gray substance. The screen flicked to life and displayed the blade assembly for an X-wing's centrifugal debris extractor. A chirp ran from low to high as the droid's head swung from the image around to Corran.

The pilot blushed, then shook his head. "No, I haven't figured out how to get the part out of the Imperial Guards' possession. With the Rebel activity around here they've not slackened their security the way they normally would. Finding the spare parts and those proton torpedoes on the *Star's Delight* was the biggest thing to happen to Imps on this backwater, and it got Prefect Barris all hot to root out the Rebels here. I don't know who he thinks that will impress — the Emperor is dead and there's enough infighting on Coruscant that we even get word of it out here."

The droid's whistle scolded Corran as the image of the debris extractor faded into the crest of the New Republic.

"No, it's not a question of joining the Republic or not — and we've gone over this before. There is *no* Rebel activity here. The 'Rebels' they think they have are kids — students at Garqi Ag University. They couldn't help me get those parts away from Imps if I gave them months of instruction. Moreover, they'd get killed in the attempt." Corran shook his head adamantly. "Look, this is my problem. Captain Nootka brought those torpedoes because he thought he could sell them to me, or move them to his Rebel contacts elsewhere. They got him caught, got his crew arrested and his ship impounded. *I might* owe it to him to try to spring him, but doing that without having this ship up and flying is not going to work."

As he spoke, Corran reached up and ran a hand along the side of the X-wing. It shared the green and white color scheme of the droid, though both of them could have used a few paint touch-ups. The fighter had been Corran's during his time with the Corellian Security Force, and Whistler had been his co-pilot and partner in countless missions to stop smugglers and other troublemakers from disrupting life in the Corellian system.

Whistler let the datapad's screen go dark, producing a mournful tone as he did so.

"I know, Whistler, I miss taking those night flights, too." When Imperial entanglements made remaining in CorSec impossible, he took off with the ship and the droid. His purpose in coming to Garqi had been to lie low and avoid drawing Imperial attention to himself.

Despite the fact that flying the X-wing put his life in jeopardy, he could no more refrain from flying than he could refrain from breathing — though he did make all of his flights at night to make it more difficult to locate him and his ship.

And dodging the local troops was simplicity itself. If I'd not sucked a rdava-bird into the starboard engine on that last flight, I'd still be flying and no one would think Garqi was a hotbed of Rebel activity. He sighed. "Now I'm stuck here because rich kids who have decided they want to shock their parents have started playing Rebel. It's all a game to them."

Again the droid scolded him with a sharp whistle.

"You're right, Dynba Tesc probably doesn't think of it as a game, but it's her own fault that she got caught last night. The Imps around here are not exactly stormtrooper caliber, but she left a trail that even our old CorSec Imperial Liaison officer could have followed." He reached out and patted the droid gently on the head. "She'll spend some time in the local jail, then get kicked loose. Yes, she'll be interrogated, but they'll see she knows nothing and let her go. I'm sure of it."

Whistler tooted another question.

"Yes, if she were in danger, I would do what I could — but not because she's a Rebel. I've got nothing to do with the New Republic and just because the Empire hates the both of us doesn't mean we're allies."

Corran frowned heavily. "The Rebels might have killed the Emperor, and they're saying they have the last living Jedi on their side, but they're still a far cry from having the Empire down and out. My priority is to lay low while they attract more attention than I do. The Rebellion, such as it is, has come to Garqi, and that means it's time we're out of here."

He held a hand up. "No, no more protests. In fact, I don't want to hear any more Rebellion squawk out of you, got it? I'll be spending all my time working to maintain my cover *and* to keep my eye on the extractor. I'll figure out a way to get it, then we're on our way."

Corran started to turn away, but the droid caught hold of his sleeve with his pincer attachment. "What is it, Whistler?"

The droid hooted derisively at him.

"Yeah, well maybe back on the job I wouldn't have been so blasé about Dynba Tesc's problem, but now we're running from the law, not working for the law." He pulled his arm free, but looked back at the droid and hung his head. "Okay, no promises, but I will see what I can do. I look to take care of us first, though, right?"

Whistler's head spun around as he crowed triumphantly.

"Yes, saving her and her friends would look good in my datafile." Corran nodded to the droid as he headed back out of the hangar. *Unless the Empire is the one to put the notation in it, but they'd have to catch me first. With that extractor, I can avoid them — and that is the notation in my datafile I most want to see.*

Prefect Mosh Barris sat back in the overstuffed chair that he decided was almost as deep and as black as the depression in which he found himself. He felt old and tired, as if he were at a point in the universe from which any other direction was *up*. The only thing Garqi had to recommend it as a post had been its utter isolation and insulation from the Empire, and even that shield had worn thin in his year's tenure as the military prefect under the current — and seemingly ever-absent — Imperial governor.

"You see, Eamon," he began, "I had not expected her to make it easy for us, but this Tesc woman's ability to resist narco-interrogation is incredible. She steadfastly claims she knows nothing of the Rebellion and claims no connection with Lai Nootka or his *Star's Delight*. Even so, she seems to have an encyclopedic understanding of the phantom X-wing's flights — which she claims is because studying it was a hobby for her — and full knowledge of her crime. Of this 'Xeno' she claims is the ringleader of her slicer circus we have

"Make your declaration about her execution public, my lord."

no record, and her speculation that he is a member of the *Delight's* crew that eluded capture is one more black mark against us."

Eamon Yzalli nodded slightly as he slid the silver tray with the refilled snifter of Cassandran choholl. "Regrettable, sir. On the whole, one could be led to believe by all this that she knows nothing beyond what she has already revealed."

Barris took the glass and warmed it in his hands for a moment. "Looks can be deceiving, Eamon. Looking at her I see a woman who is more a child than adult — but that is standard among the adults here. This damned world is so fertile that the great agri-combines need nothing more than droids to tend the crops and accountants to tend the profits. The people of Garqi are pampered and unrealistic, hardly fodder for the Rebellion."

He drank in just enough of the Cassandran liquor to fill the hollow of his tongue, and let it pool there for as long as it took for the fragrant, fruity vapors to fill his sinuses. "Of course, *that* is what she wants us to believe."

"What is, sir?"

"That she is too innocent to be part of the Rebellion." Barris looked up at his green-eyed aide. "I cannot and will not be tricked by her. A long time ago I did nothing in a situation that called for action. I was deceived and I have paid for it since. It was a long time ago ... but I have told you of it before, yes?"

The blond man returned to the sideboard and replaced the tray before turning and nodding to his master. "I do recall having been told something of the *alien* incident, sir."

"Yes, the *alien* incident." Barris stared darkly into the depths of the amber liquor. An alien — both humanoid and intelligent — had run him and his men around in circles on a planet that was — if it were possible — even more of a backwater than Garqi. This alien had killed his men, had brought down a TIE fighter and had even slain two stormtroopers using technology he stole from the Imperials in combination with native plants and animals. *I advocated a planetary bombardment to rid us of this menace, but Captain Parck invited this murderous creature to join the Empire. The Emperor chose that time to forego his normal xenophobia. He advanced Parck's career, gave this Thrawn a career, and started me on the long road from one humiliating post to another.*

Barris had hoped the Emperor's hatred for him would die with the man, but the Imperial institutional memory seemed to cherish the idea of taking him lower and lower. The man who had ousted Barris from his last post had been disciplined for having allowed the last Jedi Knight to escape Tatooine and murder the Emperor. That man's punishment had pushed Barris even further from the Galactic Core to the mottled red and purple world that was Garqi.

"I swore, Eamon, I swore that I would never let an opportunity to act decisively and forcefully slip away without redeeming myself. Uncovering and smashing the Rebels here on Garqi would allow me to do that."

"If I may be permitted, sir, you have an abundance of time in which to learn from Dynba Tesc what you need to accomplish this end. You have only had her for two days. She will break."

Barris tossed back the choholl and grit his teeth against the fiery feeling it ignited in his throat and gut. "Would that what you say was true. I just received a priority message via a courier droid that

indicated Kirtan Loor, an Intelligence agent, is being sent here by Coruscant to investigate. He will brief me on his arrival as to what his mission is, but we both know he is coming here to investigate *me*. He will find me deficient in some way and I will be sent to some other world that is even more wretched than this."

"I understand your alarm, sir."

"I think you do, Eamon, for we are alike, aren't we?"

"How so, sir?"

"We are both unhomed. I am hounded from post to post, with no claim to any world. You, on the other hand, are an Alderaanian, and without a world to call your own."

Eamon stiffened a moment, then nodded. "As you say, sir, neither of us has a home."

Barris' eyes sharpened for a moment. "I have a question I have to ask you, and I intend no disrespect. I've often thought of it, but I have said nothing because you have been so valuable to me. Had my predecessor not left you behind, and had you not made my arrival here so easy, I should have despaired of making any headway. Now that I will probably be gone from here soon, I think I have little to risk in asking it."

"Sir?"

"The Empire destroyed your world. How is it that you are content laboring for the servants of the Empire?"

Eamon's head came up and his hands disappeared at the small of his back. "Sir, Alderaan was a peaceful world. We were unarmed and our people believed in pacifism. Our leaders chose to rebel. I, and I was not alone, revered order as much as I revered peace and left the planet. As this Rebellion robbed my people of peace, it also robbed them of life. Even so, I am at peace *and* I still revere order. You, my lord, represent order on this world, therefore I am content and honored to be in your service."

"Well said, Eamon. I understand your feelings completely." Barris sat forward and rested his hands on the edge of his black lacquered desk. "The time has come for me to take action. To the Empire, failure to do *something* is seen as inability to do *anything*. I cannot afford that, not with Loor on his way. Though reminiscent of what the Death Star did to your world, I find myself forced to make an example of Dynba Tesc and publicly execute her. Once I do that her companions will scatter in terror. They will know I would have only killed her if she was of no more use to me, which means she gave me their names. We will learn who they are when they flee."

The military prefect smiled coldly. "Let Coruscant deny *that* is

decisive action!"

"Indeed, sir, it is decisive, however ... " Standing over by the sideboard, Eamon looked somewhat perplexed.

Barris reined his smile back in. Eamon Yzalli's perspective on Garqi had often proven useful and, not a few times, had steered Barris away from various *faux pas* that would have made his tenure more difficult. "You have an idea?"

"I do, sir, but only because of the question you asked before. It strikes me that if the local Rebels do have a way to defeat narco-interrogation — as the lack of success with Miss Tesc indicates — they may be sophisticated enough to wait out your action. More importantly, sir, I think it would be preferential to draw her confederates together, instead of scattering them, as making a martyr out of her would certainly do."

"Yes, I see that, but how, Eamon?"

"Make your declaration about her execution public, my lord. Schedule it for a week from now. This will agitate the Rebels. I will visit her covertly and tell her that I cannot abide seeing her die. I will arrange for her escape."

Barris' black brows collided in the depths of his frown. "You work for me. She will not believe you."

"But she will, sir, for even the most cynical of the Rebels would believe that I, an Alderaanian, have had a change of heart and wish to make amends for not acting against the Empire sooner. In addition, as they say, sir, actions will speak louder than words. I will arrange for her escape and prepare the way for her and her confederates to free the crew of the *Star's Delight*. We will even return to them their cargo of X-wing parts and munitions. The Rebels will all get together in the ship and prepare to leave. Your four TIEs will go after them and end the Rebel threat to Garqi in one dramatic fireball."

The military prefect tipped his snifter up and let the last drop of the choholl drip into his tongue as he considered the plan. "Are you sure my pilots can bring the ship down?"

"They will be able to if we render the shield generator inoperable." The ghost of a smile drifted across Eamon's bearded face as he started to pour more liquor into the empty glass.

"We will disable their blaster cannon, too."

"No, sir."

"No?"

"They need to be operable to provide verisimilitude, sir." Eamon inserted the cut-crystal stopper in the decanter. "If one of your TIEs

were shot down, its loss would prove the danger the fleeing Rebels represented to Garqi. Of course, the fact that the Rebels were running away *and* were destroyed will be a lesson here to any who would seek to emulate them."

"I see." Barris admired the way the light shifted and glowed within the choholl. "Then should we not keep the X-wing munitions to prove the *Star's Delight* was smuggling things in the first place, or is this more verisimilitude?"

"We have the initial scans to show the smuggling, sir, and piecing together debris from the destroyed freighter will give this Loor character a great deal to do, occupying his time fully." Eamon smiled weakly. "Finally, sir, I will use delivery of the contraband to secure my passage aboard the ship. This way I will know when it is to leave, so our fighters can be prepared to sweep it from the sky."

"But you will not be on it?"

"No, sir. You will plant a report in our computer system here for one of their codeslicers to ferret out. It will indicate you had me executed for crimes against the Empire — unspecified, of course, but they will take it to mean I was found out. They will leave the moment that message is accessed, so they will tell us when they are leaving."

"And I alert our fighters to go."

"Exactly, sir." Eamon's face darkened for a moment. "The only difficulty with all this is that we cannot have any trace of what we are doing entered into our computer system here."

"Yes." Barris nodded solemnly and sipped the choholl. "Since their slicers can put stuff into our databases, we know they can pull it out again. Were they to find any indication of our operation, all would be lost."

"Precisely, sir. I shall make the arrangements, sir, if you have no objections."

"Objections? No. I will want reports, however."

"Of course, my lord." Eamon smiled briefly. "For your ears only, until it is time to reveal what you have accomplished in service to the Empire."

Dynba Tesc felt cold and achy, or at least she thought she did. Curled up on the steel cot, with her back pressed against the rough stones of the cell wall, she knew she should feel uncomfortable. Her body definitely was giving her all the sensory input to tell her she was, in fact, not feeling very good at all.

The problem is that with all the stuff they've pumped into me to pump information out of me, I'm not certain what I know and what I don't know, what is real and unreal. She coiled a blond lock around her right index finger, then sucked on the ends of the hair. A sense of security washed over her briefly, then she angrily flicked the hair away. *I am not a child, I can't retreat into childhood things to find comfort.*

But retreat she really did want to do, because she had never been more scared in her whole entire life. There was no question in her mind about that — clear of drugs or dosed to the top of her cranium. The terror of being arrested and tossed into jail had been enough to make her tell the authorities everything she knew.

The problem was she didn't know anything.

To her the Rebellion had been a distant conflict, one full of romance and heroism. The last True Jedi fighting the monster that destroyed his predecessors and a rogue of a smuggler winning the heart of a princess from a dead world — these were the things she knew about the New Republic. They had destroyed the Death Stars and the Emperor, but other than a change of the military prefect, those events had no effect on her or her friends at the university.

Then the *Star's Delight* had come to Garqi and had been taken for smuggling supplies to Rebels. She and others she met on the computer comnets — in temporary areas they sliced open

She knew she was in very serious trouble.

and let close after the conversations were done — had mentioned suspicions that the New Republic had agents on Garqi. Dynba had found that prospect thrilling and not a little scary. People speculated about all sorts of things concerning the *Delight*, and a natural linkage was made between it and the phantom X-wing that had been reported flying at night all over Garqi.

Then she met Xeno. He sliced his way into one of the covert conversations — marking him as being better at codeslicing than anyone in the Imperial Security outfit on Garqi. Though he never said it, from his name and the fact that he only showed up after the *Delight's* capture, Dynba concluded he was one of the *Delight's* crew that the local authorities had failed to pick up.

Xeno organized her and her byte-friends, keeping them all anonymous. She never knew what she'd find on her datapad once she linked into the planetary network, but it was always an adventure. Xeno showed her and the others how to graft slogans and graphics

into the system, so datapad screens everywhere in the comnet would get New Republic messages at random intervals.

The shock and the outrage, as voiced by her parents and their friends, was wonderful. Dynba had struggled numerous times to maintain a straight face when some *atrocities* were being described to her by her apoplectic father, all the while knowing she'd composed the slogan and aimed it to hit his computer first. Doing things like that marked the highest point in her personal rebellion against his authority, and she found planning and executing new code assaults rather cathartic.

Dynba had long held the opinion that Xeno was grooming her and the others for something bigger — possibly the liberation of the *Delight* even — but she wanted to do something more. Abandoning the virtual realm of computers, she went out and bought a can of paint. In big, sloppy red letters she wrote "The death of a Tyrant is the triumph of Justice!" on the side of the Imperial Court building in the heart of the capital, Pesktda.

It had not occurred to her until later — about the time the local constabulary was putting her in binders — that having the store mix up a precise shade of red and charging the purchase to her personal account was not exactly the way to maintain her anonymity. The constabulary seemed to think her boldness meant she was dangerous and the interrogation to which she was subjected had been ruthless and efficient. Her lack of substantive answers angered her questioners and she knew she was in very serious trouble.

The door to her cell hissed open and the lights came up slowly. A small man with blond hair and beard entered and descended the metal-lattice steps to the floor. He turned back and gestured toward an unseen guard. The door clanked down, leaving her alone with this man wearing the uniform of the prefect's personal staff. She thought she recognized him, but she could attach no name to his face.

Dynba drew her legs up and tried to wedge herself more deeply into the corner of the cell. "I don't know any more."

The man nodded. "I know, child." He sank down in a squat, bringing his eye level down to hers. "It is my sad duty to tell you that Prefect Barris has decided to have you executed for your crime."

"What?" Dynba gulped air. "He can't."

"Oh, but he can." The man's green-eyed gaze flicked down toward the floor, giving her a moment to recover herself, then he looked back up. "I, on the other hand, cannot stand by and let this happen."

"What are you saying?" She thought she heard sincerity in his voice, and read it in his eyes, but the clothes he wore and the fact



that a guard had followed his direction argued against any compassion on his part. The fact that he was there and talking to her at all made her wary of a trick. "You work for him. You won't help me."

The man broke off his stare and color rose to his cheeks. "Please, this is difficult for me as it is."

"Were I not here I might be more considerate. You work for a monster."

"I know." His hands balled into fists. "I am his personal aide."

"You! You are Eamon Yzalli!"

"I am."

"Then you are here to trick me." Dynba let her anger flow fully into her voice. "You should be ashamed of yourself."

Eamon sighed loudly. "I am."

"What?"

"I am ashamed." He swallowed hard. "I should have seen sooner that to which I have chosen to be blind — the Empire corrupts people. I denied this truth and my denial is a crime that makes me complicit in the death of my homeworld, Alderaan. I came here and served here in hopes of forgetting. Then, when Prefect Barris was installed, I made myself a buffer between his capriciousness and the

people of Garqi. Even now I tried to get him to moderate your punishment, but to no avail. I cannot allow your death to be upon my head, so I have chosen to act against him and for you."

Dynba shook her head to clear her brain of the buoyant hope bubbling up into it. "What can you do?"

A broad smile split Eamon's beard and in that moment Dynba thought him just a little bit handsome. *Like a hero of the New Republic.*

"What I can do and will do is this: I will arrange for your liberation. You will have approximately two days in which to execute a rescue of the *Star's Delight* crew. You and your confederates will board the ship and leave with it. Garqi is no longer safe for you."

His eyes narrowed. "Captain Nootka will need things to trade if he is going to resupply the ship and get to the New Republic. I will arrange for the contraband he smuggled here to be placed aboard — I can tell the workers we want the evidence replaced in the compartments to show an Imperial Intelligence agent how we found it. They will believe that and it will save us having to move it ourselves."

Dynba's blue eyes widened. "You're coming with us?"

Eamon nodded solemnly. "I can cover *your* escape, but once the ship gets away there would be no concealing my part in all of this. When you are set to go, have one of your slicers get into the Imperial comnet and leave me a message as to where and when I should meet you."

"I'll do it myself." Dynba swung her legs over the edge of the cot and her toes touched the cold floor. "What you're doing, the people you lost on Alderaan would be proud."

Eamon closed his eyes and nodded. "It is my hope you are correct." He reached out and took her hand in his, gently stroking warmth back into her flesh. "You only have to endure this prison for a few hours more, then you shall be free."

She gripped his hand tightly. "And soon after that, *we* shall be free!"

Barris raised a nearly empty glass in Eamon's direction. "I salute you, Eamon. It seems as if everything is going perfectly."

"Yes, sir. Dynba Tesc is secreted away, bringing her confederates together to free the *Delight* and its crew. She is also altering her appearance so she can claim to be Kirtana Loor, Imperial Intelligence agent, and take the *Delight's* crew from custody without

having to notify you for authorization. Several landspeeders have been organized for transport."

"And the *Delight* is ready?"

The small man nodded solemnly. "Using TIE pilots as workers was difficult, but once I explained the necessity of limiting knowledge of the operation to them, they agreed they were the best people for doing the job. The X-wing munitions are on board the *Delight*, though the spare parts appear to have been pilfered. As a skilled technician can convert them to work in Incom's T-47 landspeeder, my assumption is that someone in property storage gave himself a bonus. I have a few leads in that regard."

"We will deal with him, later." Barris snorted, drank and set his glass down. "The shields on the ship are disabled?"

"Yes, sir. We replaced a duplex circuit with its triplex equivalent."

"But a codepatch will allow them to bring the shields up."

"Yes, sir, but an initial diagnostic run on the ship will report the circuits as complete. Only when they discover the failure will they begin to look for the triplex. At that point slicing the proper sequence out of it will take approximately an hour."

The Prefect tapped a finger against the empty rim of his snifter. "An hour they will not have."

"Precisely, sir." Eamon refilled the glass with choholl.

"While you have been busy, Eamon, so have I." Barris winked at his man. "I have composed the report about your execution."

"Not on the system, sir?"

Barris smiled in response to the urgency in Eamon's voice. "No, of course not." He tapped the fingers of his right hand against the side of his white-haired head. "I have it all up here. You were terminated for 'anti-Imperial activity.'"

"Very good, sir."

"I may modify it. I want it to be perfect."

"I am certain it will be more than suitable, sir."

"I thought I would enter it into the computer just around sunset tomorrow. Things should be ready by then?"

"Yes, sir. Agent Loor will be arriving then, so he should see the pursuit and how you handle it."

"Excellent." Barris hefted the glass and raised it again in a salute.

"The destruction of the *Delight* should make for great entertainment. I think I will have some friends in to watch."

Eamon nodded solemnly. "Very good, sir. I had already requested the kitchen prepare suitable refreshments for a gathering of ten. Will that be sufficient, sir?"

"Quite, Eamon." Barris sipped his choholl and smiled. "You anticipate my desires as well as my needs. What would I do without you?"

"A hypothetical question, sir." Eamon's expression became placid. "One hopes there is never need to answer it."

Her now-brown hair pulled back into a tight bun at the back of her head, Dynba stepped from the first landspeeder and tugged at the hem of her uniform jacket. She marched crisply to the door of the local detention center and drew from the jacket's breast pocket what looked to be an ordinary rank cylinder. She touched it against the I/O port beside the door.

Somehow, above the thundering of her heart, she heard a click and the door withdrew upward. At the other end of the short corridor she saw a guard standing behind a transparisteel shield look at her, then at the image on the screen of his datapad and back again. As he did so the blood drained from the man's face.

His clear anxiety gave Dynba a chance to conquer her own fear. Eamon had assured her that the rank cylinder he had given her

would identify her as an Imperial Intelligence agent sent out from Coruscant to inspect Garqi. It made her Kirtana Loor and made her answerable to no one on the planet. A word from her and anyone could be sent to Kessel to mine spice while awaiting interrogation. "You will be someone

they fear as much as you fear them. Use it and you will dominate them," he had told her.

And use it I shall. Keeping her steps crisp, and relishing the click of leather on stone, she approached the guard. "Are the prisoners ready for transfer?" She let the lilt of the common Core-dweller accent enter her voice, and underscored her words with impatient indignation.

The man's lower lip started quivering. "Transfer? I know nothing of ..."

"Of course you don't." She drew her black leather gloves off by tugging on each finger in succession, then slapped them against the palm of her left hand. "The inefficiency of Rim-world officials should not surprise me, should it?"

"Well, I ..."

"You were not going to venture an *opinion*, were you? What is your name?"

The man smiled weakly. "Which prisoners were those, my lady?"

"The crew of the *Star's Delight*." Her eyes became slits and she forced her nostrils to flare. "Returning them to the scene of the crime — you *do* know about using that investigative technique, don't you?"

The man furiously punched keys on his datapad. "Well, I ..."

"Of course you don't — the technique predates the Emperor's murder by a year, so it hasn't gotten out here yet. You probably think he is still alive."

"Yes, my lady, I mean, no ..."

Dynba barked a harsh laugh. "You don't know what you mean. Why the Rebels would strike at this witspare compost heap, I do not know."

"No, my lady."

The door to her right buzzed and slid into the ceiling. Three bedraggled figures, a small female Sullustan, a morose giant of a Duros and a Devaronian with several missing teeth and a broken horn shuffled through the doorway. They wore binders on their wrists and had another pair hobbling them. Each individual looked away from the dying sunlight pouring through the open doorway to the street.

Dynba looked up at the Duros. "Captain Lai Nootka, you and your crew are charged with treason. I am a representative of Imperial Intelligence and the resolution of your case is in my hands. Come with me."

She led the prisoners from the detention center and waved the landspeeders forward. Each prisoner was secured in a different speeder, then they headed off toward the hangar where the *Star's Delight* had been kept in impound.

The vehicles followed one after the other all the way to the spaceport. Dynba regretted not being able to tell the crew they were safe and with friends, but doing so would have put the mission in jeopardy. If the crew did not look scared and defeated as they rode through the streets of Pesktda, someone could note their happy demeanor and that would attract attention to them and the operation. Eamon had pointed out that people tended not to pay too much attention to those who appear to be doomed because they might attract attention in doing so. Even before he'd said anything, she'd known that was true.

In keeping with her role as Loor, she met the gazes of the curious

and held them until the others turned away. *I don't like making people afraid, but it is the only way to save these people and Eamon. And myself and my friends, too.* She kept her stare hard and terrifying throughout the ride until the speeders slid into the shade of the hangar.

The second her landspeeder stopped, she loosed her hair and shook it out over her shoulders. "Open the binders." She pointed at Nootka. "The ship is ready to go, complete with your X-wing munitions. Start pre-flight. The only thing on this world that can stop us from getting out of here are four TIE starfighters. Is that a problem?"

The Duros rubbed at his wrists as his driver tinkered with the binders on the starpilot's ankles. "We are matched for speed. We have hyperdrive, they do not. We have a blaster cannon, they have lasers. We have shields, they do not. I think we are not far from freedom."

"Dynba, you did it!" A Twi'lek woman came running down the gangplank of the long CorelliSpace Gymsnor-3 Freighter. With her head tails twitching excitedly, she brandished her datapad. "No alarms, no traces. We're clear."

"Good." Dynba looked past Arali Dil's shoulder, then frowned. "Are Eamon or Xeno here?"

Arali shook her head. "No one has been here except Sihha and me."

Dynba frowned. Prior to departing for the prison, Dynba had left a message with Eamon telling him when they planned to leave, and another to Xeno inviting him to reunite with his crew and escape. She had expected both of them to be present when she returned and she had especially wanted to see the look on Eamon's face when he realized his plan had worked perfectly.

"Arali, link into the comnet and see if you have anything from Xeno or Eamon."

"Right."

The Twi'lek and a Bothan had turned out to be the only non-Humans in Xeno's circle. The circle itself only had seven members, not counting Xeno, and all of them had thought it funny that even being so few in number, they had caused enough trouble for the Empire to send an Intelligence agent out from the Core to Garqi to deal with them.

Dynba had briefed everyone on their role in the Great Evacuation. Because of the Empire's xenophobic bias, neither Arali nor Sihha, the Bothan, would pass for Imperial officers, so they had remained with the ship while the five Humans used the speeders to get the

prisoners. Now back in the hangar, everyone hurried aboard the Delight and prepared for departure.

"Interesting."

Dynba glanced away from the hangar opening and toward Arali. "What is?"

"Message to all of us from Xeno. He says his work here isn't done. He'll catch up with us later and we will all laugh about this."

"I'd prefer it if he came with us. I hope they don't need him to run the ship."

"Sihha can fill in — he was an astrogation student here."

"Right." Dynba felt a heavy darkness begin to spread from her stomach out to her limbs and stab straight up into her heart. "Nothing from Eamon."

"By the foul hearts of the Sith!"

Dynba whirled at the sound of Arali's voice. "What?"

The Twi'lek held her datapad out and Dynba snatched it from her trembling hands. "By order of Prefect Mosh Barris, at the conclusion and in resolution of his personal investigation into the actions of Eamon Yzalli, ordered and carried out the discretion of an enemy of the state." Her voice dropped to a whisper as she read. "He's dead."

The datapad slipped from her hands, but the Twi'lek deftly caught it, then started pulling on Dynba's arm. "Come on, we have to go."

Dynba pointed back toward the doorway. "Maybe it's a trick."

"The Empire doesn't play jokes, Dynba. Eamon's dead." Arali pulled her friend up the gangplank. "Let's get out of here. We'll mourn Eamon on the trip, then when we get to the New Republic, we'll find a way to get even with the Empire."

Barris felt the comlink clipped to his belt vibrate like the warning scales on a Gorgarian buzzadder. He opened his arms to take in the whole of the crowd in his reception room, then pointed them toward the eastern balcony. "My friends, I have just been informed that the Rebels have taken the bait in the trap that had been set for them. If you will join me outside, I think you will find their end a spectacular disaster."

Pulling the comlink from his belt, he thumbed it on. "Garqi Eagles, you are clear to intercept and destroy your target."

Arali got Dynba into one of the jumpseats in the cockpit and strapped her in. "Barris got our last passenger, Captain. You better move now."

The Duros nodded to his mouse-eared pilot. The Sullustan chittered her way through a checklist. The low hum of the repulsorlift drives filled the ship, then a gentle tremble ran through it as the sublight drives began to push it forward, up and out of the hangar. The nose of the ship came around to the east, facing the ship away from the sun and on a course that meant they would be moving away from the star's mass as they left the planet. That would permit them to enter hyperspace faster, and everyone on the ship knew speed was a virtue when escape was the object of the exercise.

Through the forward viewport Dynba got a spectacular look at the lights of Pesktda. She found the city where she grew up quaint

"We have a fifth ship closing fast."

and even beautiful, with lights winking on and off as gently breezes stirred the dark, leafy canopy that covered everything. Part of her felt the loss of leaving the place of her

birth, but that regret was nothing compared to the pain she felt over Eamon's murder.

The *Star's Delight* picked up speed and shot out of the spaceport. The Sullustan pilot kept the ship at a steady angle of ascent. As they broke above the shadow of the world, sunlight lit the sky. It passed quickly as the atmosphere thinned, then the stars above stopped shimmering and just hung there like distant jeweled sparks on the inside of a vast black bowl.

Captain Nootka hunched forward over a screen. "We have four starfighters in our wake. Shields to full in the aft arc."

The Sullustan hit a button on the console, but it remained dark. She hit it again, then shrieked.

Nootka reached over and hit the button himself. "Saricia, we have not shields."

"Invert and give me a shot." The Devaronian's bass voice came from above the companionway that led into the cockpit. Dynba looked back and saw an open hatchway that allowed access beyond the passage's ceiling.

Arali tightened down her restraining straps. "The blaster cannon turret is up top. We have to invert for him to shoot at targets coming from behind and below, otherwise he'll hit the cargo pods."

"Not a good design, is it?"

Nootka turned around and gave Dynba a hard stare. "This is a freighter, not a warship. Saricia is good."

"How good? Good enough to stop them?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure?"

The Duros shook his head. "If I am wrong, I will not live long in regret." He hit some more switches on the console. "You said the ship was in working order."

"That's what I was told. Eamon said ..." Dynba's jaw dropped open. "He's not here."

The tips of the Twi'lek's headtails shook with a start. "We were set up, Dynba, set up to die by Eamon Yzalli." She flashed sharp peg-teeth. "I hope part of Xeno's work on Garqi is killing him."

Nootka glanced at his screen, then shook his head. "I would have hoped the situation would not get worse. We have a fifth ship closing fast." The ship shook violently and sparks shot through the companionway, while the thrummed rumble of Saricia's return-fire filled the cockpit. "Our armor will hold them back for a little while, but not long."

"Can we make the jump to lightspeed?"

"In the time we have left?" Nootka asked. "Not even if I knew where we were going and had the course already plotted into the nav computer. It looks now that where we are going is to the grave."

Corran Horn eased the X-wing's throttle forward and his speed started to climb faster as he left Garqi's atmosphere. "You should have told me sooner, Whistler, that's all I'm saying. It doesn't matter now, though. We can talk about it later. Now we have to get those TIEs."

The droid replied in a muted whistle that Corran found almost as depressing as the four-to-one odds on the fight. *Not how I wanted to do this, but I have no choice.*

Corran hit the thumb-switch on the X-wing's stick. The proton torpedo targeting system came up and painted a big yellow box around the slowest of the TIE starfighters. "That's target one. Give me the next closest one and mark it as target two."

Whistler complied instantly, then keened a question.

"Yes, if they're in range, get me comlink contact." Corran heard the hiss of static from the speakers in his helmet, then a clear channel opened up. "*Star's Delight*, the key-code for your shields is

349XER34, repeat 349XER34."

"Who is this?"

"Someone who just gave you your shields back. Eamon Yzalli sold you out. He's dead. What he *knew*, I *know*."

In the background he heard a voice excitedly shout, "It's Xeno!" The deeper voice, the one he decided belonged to Lai Nootka, overrode the shout. "349XER34 is the code."

"Exactly." Corran smiled. "Tell your gunner not to shoot the X-wing and I'll make his life easier. X-wing out."

Whistler tooted triumphantly.

"Not yet, buddy, not yet. Give me target one and lighten my acceleration compensator. I want to feel it when I move around." Nudging the stick over and back, he settled the box around the lagging TIE. The droid beeped intermittently as he tried to get a target lock. The target box went from yellow to red at the same moment Whistler's tone went solid and Corran hit the trigger.

The proton torpedo shot away from the X-wing and curved only slightly to port before it slammed into the TIE's ball-cockpit. The explosion shattered the starfighter's hexagonal solar panels. It sent their shards spinning away from the roiling, red-gold plasma ball spreading out from where the cockpit had once been.

"Acquire two."

Brief beeps melded into an uninterrupted tone as Corran hit a pedal and the etheric rudder brought the X-wing's nose around to port. He hit the trigger again and saw a proton torpedo burn into and through the second TIE. The torpedo hit it solidly on one of the solar panels and blasted through. The projectile glanced down, crushing the fighter's ion engine exhaust port and clipped the far side solar panel before exploding. The TIE whirled off on a wobbly course before exhaust pressure from the engines tore the ship apart from the inside.

"Two down." Corran flipped his weapons control over to laser fire and linked the lasers for dual-fire. "Whistler, even out the shields."

The droid complied with the order as Corran brought the X-wing up in a quarter snap-roll. The maneuver stood the fighter on its port stabilizer foils. Tugging back on the stick, he brought the nose up and cruised onto the tail of one of the two remaining TIEs. It had broken left while its wing man had gone right — a strategy that was usually discouraged and went a long way toward confirming Corran's opinion of the Garqi garrison.

Whistler's excited hooting made Corran look up at his rear sensor monitor. *Coming in behind me. Not as bad as I thought.* "I see him,



Whistler. Now you know why I didn't want to fight them at all."

The TIE in front of him began a slow loop to starboard. The move was slow enough that Corran was tempted to follow and light the ship up, but he knew giving in to temptation would have a price. *In this case it will be the TIE back there shortening the loop and melting my ship's tail. Not for me.*

Corran chopped his thrust back and pulled the stick to his breastbone. He looped the X-wing, then punched the throttle full forward and rolled out to port. That dropped him in on an attack vector to the TIE that had been following him. Tightening up on the trigger, he tracked ruby laser bolts across one solar panel, through the cockpit and into the other solar panel.

The TIE didn't explode. It rolled slowly to port, little blue tendrils of energy playing over its myriad surfaces. The X-wing overshot the ship, so Corran rolled and dove down through a loop to keep an eye on it. The TIE did not react and just continued spiraling along on its previous course, bound for a fiery collision with Garqi's atmosphere.

Pilot's gone, ship's running on momentum. Corran shivered, imagining for one second what it was like to spend your last seconds of life in pain, in a breached cockpit with all the atmosphere leaking out

while cold poured in. *Not the way I want to go.*

Whistler's indignant yowl and the hiss of laser fire splashing against his aft shields shocked Corran. He immediately hit the right rudder pedal, whipping the X-wing's tail to port and out of the line of fire. Pushing the stick hard left, he rolled out to port, then pulled back and brought the ship's nose up and around in a loop. Halfway through that he rolled right and dove, but his sensors showed the TIE was still with him.

Why are the best guys always the last? Corran smiled at his own question. "Because the pilots who are bad die first. They were all probably daydreaming just like you." He sideslipped the X-wing to the right and the TIE followed him.

"Whistler, get me the *Delight* again."

"Nootka here, X-wing."

"Captain, this guy on me is good. Kill your shields and tell your gunner to shoot high."

"We just got our shields back."

"I know. Kill your shields."

"I do not understand."

"You will."

Corran rolled the fighter out to port, then kept a light hand on the stick. Nudging it left and right, up and back, he made the X-wing dance almost unpredictably. After every third or fourth move, when the ship had drifted to port, he'd push the stick down, then up right and right again. He'd level out and fly straight for a couple of seconds, then after that the random pattern would begin again.

When he saw the TIE begin to anticipate his pattern, Corran pulled the X-wing back through a big loop and dove straight in on an intercept course for the *Delight*. "Full shields aft, Whistler." Corran dipped and jerked the fighter through its pattern. Laser fire came in from the *Delight*, passing over his ship, but only by a margin of decimeters.

The TIE kept to Corran's tail as the X-wing turned and swooped down into a run that took it from bow to stern on the *Delight*. The TIE came in tight and sank below the level of the ship's fire. *He's low enough to strike sparks! This Imp's very good.* Corran smiled. *I gotta hope I'm better.*

As Corran's pattern ended, the X-wing drifted into a gentle glide along the *Delight*'s spine. The TIE dropped in behind him and lined up for a shot. The first laser blasts hit the X-wing's aft shield and rocked Corran in the cockpit. *Now or never!*

Corran killed his thrust and cut his repulsorlift drives in at full

strength. Acceleration jammed him down in the cockpit couch as the X-wing bounced up and away from the freighter's mass. The TIE starfighter shot through beneath the X-wing, pulling up abruptly to miss the freighter's engine cowling.

Punching the throttle forward and killing the lift drives, Corran sailed in on the TIE's aft. His targeting box went green. He pulled the trigger and filled the last TIE with laser fire.

The scarlet energy darts shredded the ship, puncturing the cockpit and melting their way through the twin ion engines. The TIE exploded brilliantly. The glittering plasma sphere burned like a star going nova, then imploded, leaving the void in its wake.

"X-wing, this is *Delight*. May we put our shields back up?"

"Affirmative, *Delight*," Corran smiled. "Captain Nootka, have you got a course plotted out of here?"

"We have a course, X-wing."

"If you don't mind, I'll slave my navigation to yours and tag along. After all, I still owe you for the debris extractor."

"Consider the debt paid, X-wing, but come on along." Corran heard gratitude in the Duros captain's voice. "This adventure will be a tale to tell, and I would have you there when I first tell it."

Prefect Mosh Barris bowed graciously amid the applause from his guests. The series of bright explosions and the spectacular light show of debris streaking through the upper atmosphere had been far more than he expected. *If you arranged that on purpose, Eamon, I shall give you rewards in excess of what I had already planned.*

He held a hand up. "Thank you, thank you all. I am pleased you have enjoyed how we have eliminated the Rebel threat to Garqi." Barris smiled proudly. "I was the architect of this event, but another carried it out. My aide, Eamon Yzalli. Eamon, where are you?"

"Indeed, where is he?"

Barris' head came up as a sharp voice asked the question from the balcony doorway. "Who are you?"

A tall, hatchet-faced man stooped slightly to make it through the door, then fixed Barris with a harsh stare. "I am Kirtan Loor, Imperial Intelligence. You have been expecting me?"

"Of course," Barris gestured up at the sky, spraying choholl from the glass in his hand. "You came too late to see what happened to the Rebels."

"Oh, I think I already know what happened to them." The Imperial officer's lip curled in a sneer. "As I came into the system, I was sent

a report by this Eamon Yzalli. It indicates you arranged for the escape of the local Rebel organization on the *Star's Delight*. The report indicates this action was the preliminary gambit in your bid to usurp Governor Tadrin and transfer Garqi to the Rebel Alliance."

Barris' stomach slowly wriggled into a knot. Kirtan Loor reminded him of a young Grand Moff Tarkin, and the resemblance did nothing to stop the fear flooding Barris' mind. "This is wrong. This cannot be. Eamon must have planned this. Ask him, the accusations are not true."

"I would ask him, but I cannot find him." Loor's blue eyes narrowed. "An appendix to his report said he feared for his life at your hands. When I arrived here I read that you had ordered and carried out his elimination. That message came from you, directly, I've checked."

"Yes, but it was all part of the plan, don't you see?"

Kirtan Loor shook his head solemnly. "I don't see what you want me to see. What I *do* see is a Rebel collaborator with much to tell me about the enemy."

"But I know nothing about them."

"I doubt that very sincerely, Barris." Loor smiled with a cold superiority that weakened Barris' knees and sent his glass crashing to the floor. "By the time your interrogation is barely started, you will wish you knew even more, so you could tell me everything. You will be surprised how much information there truly is in your *nothing* — and you will learn to dread your punishment whenever you seek to feign ignorance as a shield."

Corran had fully expected the look of surprise on Dynba Tesc's face when she first saw him. "Greetings, Dynba. I'm glad you made it. I apologize for the rough time the *Delight* had."

The war between horror and joy in her expression even proved entertaining, though the ultimate victor in the struggle proved to be a stunned look. "Y-you're dead ... at least you said you were dead. You're Eamon Yzalli, but you can't be."

Corran winced as hurt entered her voice. He scratched at his beard for a second, then shrugged. "I'm sorry for the deception. I intended for you to assume Barris had killed me and take off. I knew the TIEs would head out after you. I wanted to use you as a diversion one more time, so I could get away while the TIEs were busy with you."

A Twi'lek walked up behind Dynba and draped a head tail over her shoulder protectively. "The TIEs almost did us in because you



disabled the shields. You tried to have us killed."

"Not my intention at all." Corran sighed. "I meant to have a message sent to you that would give you the code to bring the shields back up. I wanted to blame the shield tampering on Barris and have you protected, but the old fool went and deactivated my message account when he entered his death declaration about Eamon."

Dynba dug a gentle elbow into the Twi'lek's midsection. "Arali, if he wanted us dead, he'd not have come after the TIEs and given us the code. He still could have gotten away."

"Right," Corran nodded. "Exactly."

"So what did you mean about using us as a diversion 'one more time'?"

"Setting up the *Star's Delight's* escape allowed me to get the spare parts I needed for the X-wing. I told Barris they had been stolen from storage, but I really just had the guys who helped me load the things put them in the back of my speeder. They were the TIE pilots, so now we're the only ones who know where the parts ended up."

Dynba smiled. "The parts, of course. The phantom X-wing flights ended about a month before the *Delight* showed up and was taken."

"I needed a debris extractor."

"So, then, you're Xeno. You got us together to eventually steal those parts for you."

"No, I'm Corran Horn, late of the Corellian Security Force." He smiled as Whistler came rolling up and patted the droid affectionately on the dome. "The droid here was Xeno."

Arali's head tails twitched with surprise. "A droid organized our little group?"

Whistler chirped emphatically and Corran beamed. "He worked with me in CorSec. In addition to astrogation programming, he's a fairly good codeslicer and had a facility for putting together sting operations. He was grooming you to get the parts for me, but he didn't mention it because he knows I don't really want anything to do with the Rebellion and the New Republic."

"It is a little late for that." Captain Nootka came walking over with two Republic officers in tow. "Helping us escape will lead Barris to figure out who you were, and you will be branded a Rebel."

"I don't think so. Barris is in plenty of trouble himself." Corran smiled broadly. "I once worked with Kirtan Loor, the Imperial Intelligence agent heading in to Garqi. This beard and dye job wouldn't have fooled him, so I had to move. That's the reason this whole operation got put together and involved you and your friends, Dynba. I would have kept you out of it, but I couldn't."

She shook her head. "You may think that, Corran, and may even want to believe it, but I think you couldn't leave us behind to face Barris' wrath if you weren't around to moderate him."

Maybe you're right, Dynba, but there is no true way of knowing. He nodded slowly. "Loor isn't the brightest of Imperial agents, but he can solve a case when it's handed to him in a package, and the package I left behind neatly implicates Mosh Barris in treason and Eamon Yzalli's murder. I should be clear."

One of the New Republic officers pointed at the X-wing. "That fighter just burned down four TIEs?"

Nootka tapped Corran on the shoulder. "He had the kills, Captain Dromath."

The other Rebel whistled. "They never got through your shields."

Corran shrugged. "Recharging shields is easier than finding paint to match."

The first officer nodded. "Look, Horn, I heard you say you don't want anything to do with the Rebellion or New Republic, but we need fighters like you."

"I'm not a joiner, Captain." Corran shook his head, then frowned down at Whistler when the droid jeered. "All I want is to be left alone."

Your fight isn't my fight."

Dromath shrugged. "Perhaps not, but you're smart enough to know the Empire won't leave you alone. You will fight them, just as you did in getting these folks out of Garqi. If you have to fight them, doing so with allies is a lot better than doing it alone."

"He's right, Corran." Dynba reached out and gave Corran's left hand a squeeze. "The New Republic needs you."

"I don't know."

"Not an easy decision to make, true." Dromath smiled. "Think about this, though — orders came through letting us know Rogue Squadron is being reformed and brought back to active duty. Any pilots who think they're good enough to join are encouraged to apply. From what Nootka said, you're good enough to at least look into it."

Whistler squawked derisively.

Corran rapped a knuckle on the droid's dome. "I'm better than that, and you know it. I could be one of the hottest pilots they've got. Of course, I'd need a new R2 unit."

The droid's blatted reply prompted laughter from everyone. Corran suddenly realized, as he heard their voices all mix together, that he'd not heard good, honest laughter in all the time he'd been on the run and in service on Garqi. Among the Imperials and their citizenry there was always something held back, a hedge against self betrayal. *People couldn't let themselves go for fear someone might think ill of them and report them to the authorities.*

He thought for a moment. He knew all he really wanted was to be left alone, but Dromath had been right — the Empire would never leave him alone. Even if they were not there directly, even if Loor wasn't hot on his trail, the Empire's shadow would touch him except in places where it could not survive.

Among the Rebels.

In the New Republic.

"As being left alone isn't an option, I guess I might as well chose the folks with whom I have to co-exist." Corran slowly smiled and extended his hand to Captain Dromath. "If I heard you correctly, I think Whistler and I just might have an interest in joining Rogue Squadron."

"It won't be easy, Mister Horn."

"From what I've heard, Captain, it wouldn't be Rogue Squadron if joining was easy. But easy I don't want." Corran winked at Nootka and smiled at Dynba. "Remember, I've just left a backwater world where my droid led a Rebel cell and I helped evacuate enemies of the state, all the while plotting to bring down the military prefect. After

that, the only place I'll find enough excitement to suit Whistler here is with the folks who have two Death Star kills to their credit. If I were willing to settle for anything less, I'd be joining the Imperial Navy and thinking it was a good career move."

It occurred to Barris, as guards dragged him toward the interrogation chamber, that his ears had been as deaf to Dynba Tesc's protests of ignorance as Loor's would be to his. It struck him as ironic that his descent had begun when he had done nothing on a world far away, and it would end because he *knew* nothing on a world far away. He sought to share this insight with the men beside him, but it would only leave his throat disguised as hesitant laughter, punctuated by sobs.

And, somehow, he knew they understood.

Roleplaying Game Statistics

■ Corran Horn

Type: Fugitive Pilot

DEXTERITY 3D

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

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Bureaucracy 4D, bureaucracy: Imperial 6D+1, law enforcement: Corellian Security

Force 6D, planetary systems 6D+2, streetwise 7D+1, value 5D, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 4D

Astrogation 4D+1, communications 5D, sensors 4D+2, starfighter piloting 5D,

starfighter piloting: X-wing 6D+2, starship gunnery 6D+2, starship shields 6D

PERCEPTION 3D

Command 5D+2, con 6D+2, forgery 4D, persuasion 5D+2, search 5D, sneak 6D+1

STRENGTH 3D

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

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 4D, droid programming 4D+2, droid repair 5D,

first aid 4D, security 6D, starfighter repair 3D+2

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), datapad, pilot's uniform and gear, R2 droid

(Whistler), X-wing fighter

Capsule: Corran Horn is a gifted starfighter pilot hiding from Imperial agents. He is apparently wanted for some crimes committed shortly before he deserted the Corellian Security Force under mysterious circumstances. Right now Corran's greatest fear is that Imperial Intelligence agent Kirtan Loor will find and recognize the former CorSec pilot. Oddly enough, Loor used to be an Imperial Intelligence liaison with CorSec — few know for certain the relationship between Loor and Corran, but it is suspected Loor might have ordered Corran's death for

Garqi

Type: Terrestrial

Temperature: Temperate

Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)

Hydrosphere: Moderate

Gravity: Standard

Terrain: Plains, ocean, hills

Length of Day: 29 standard hours

Length of Year: 388 local days

Sapient Species: Humans

Starport: Standard class

Population: 800,000

Planet Function: Agricultural colony

Government: Imperial governor

Tech Level: Space

Major Exports: Foodstuffs

Major Imports: Mid technology, metals

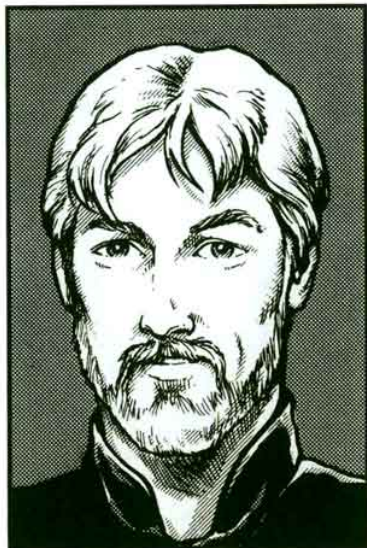
Capsule: Garqi is a very average, very unimportant agricultural world which supplies foodstuffs to its neighbors in a remote and insignificant corner of the Outer Rim Territories. The colony is officially ruled by an Imperial governor, but Governor Tadrin is seldom there. He entrusts the planet to the military prefect, while he attends to business (or more than likely, is prematurely mourning the downfall of the Empire) on some Core world resort.

The current prefect, Mosh Barris, is in charge of running affairs within Garqi's capital city, Pesktda, and it's nearby starport. Until recently, the Garqi natives have been rather docile, rather peacefully maintaining the agricultural droids and immense combines which plant and harvest crops from the planet's rolling plains. Most inhabitants are concentrated in Pesktda, where they maintain the harvester droids, carry out droll agricultural experiments, and run various agricultural companies. The only institute of higher learning is Garqi Agricultural University, although occasionally young natives find passage off the planet to more exciting parts of the galaxy with free-traders stopping over in the starport.

But the arrival of a mysterious X-wing flying over the planet at night has stirred several students from Garqi Ag University into believing that the new Republic has come to this galactic backwater. Prefect Barris has so far done a good job of keeping the populace in line with Imperial policies and his own demented ideas of law — he hopes to stop hope for the New Republic from spreading to a greater portion of the population. Why the New Republic would be concerned about a backwater agricultural world with no strategic importance is beyond his comprehension.

some knowledge of an Imperial cover-up.

After deserting CorSec, Corran managed to inveigle himself into the Imperial administration on Garqi. The ever-absent Governor Tadrin had his military prefect replaced, and a disguised Corran assumed the place



of the prefect's personal aide, Eamon Yzalli, in the confusion, Corran's false identity was further reinforced by seemingly legitimate datawork forged by his friend and former supervisor, Gil Bastra. It was the perfect way for Corran to lie low on a galactic backwater while keeping track of local Imperial activity. It also allowed him to subtly manipulate newly appointed Prefect Mosh Barris into softening his strategies for controlling the local populace.

All this time Corran had his X-wing fighter hidden away in an abandoned vehicle shed on the remote outskirts of Pesktda, Garqi's capital city and starport. Being a pilot in love with speed and his starship, however, Corran could not resist sneaking away from the prefect's offices and flying his

X-wing. His night flights baffled the prefect (who assumed it was some renegade Rebel come to stir things up on Garqi) and kindled a spirit of hope and rebellion in the more liberal-minded students at Garqi Agricultural University. But a flight mishap grounded Corran's X-wing—Corran's faithful R2 unit Whistler began repairs, and finally got essential replacement parts through Corran's grand deception of Prefect Barris.

After leaving Garqi, Corran thought he'd continue moving from one system to another, hiding from his nemesis Kirtan Loor and keeping his head down. But his love of starfighters won out, and he took an opportunity to join the New Republic—and test his skill for a chance at joining Rogue Squadron.

Whistler

Type: Industrial Automaton R2 Astromech Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

Law enforcement 6D+2, planetary systems 4D,

MECHANICAL 2D

Astrogation 6D, space transports 3D, starfighter piloting 3D, starship shields 3D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 6D+2, security 6D, starfighter repair 5D*

* Astromech droids, if acting in co-pilot capacity, may attempt starship repairs while in flight.

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)

- Retractable heavy grasper arm (*lifting skill* at 2D)
- Retractable fine work grasper arm
- Extendable 0.3 meter long video sensor (360-degree rotation)
- Small electric arc welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Video display screen
- Holographic projector/recorder
- Fire extinguisher
- Acoustic signaler
- Small (20 cm. by 8 cm.) internal "cargo" area
- Some additional small tools and equipment

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Capsule: Whistler is a spunky little R2 droid whose current master is Corran Horn, with whom he worked and flew while the pilot served in the Corellian Security Force. The loyal droid has a strong sense of conscience, if a droid could even be said to have one. Whistler often tries to inflict his sense of what's right and dutiful onto his master, who ignores the droid when suitable. Both droid and master share a love for flight—Whistler is most content when he's speeding along with Corran, performing his flight duties and keeping the X-wing at its optimum performance level.

Whistler is very faithful, and devotes his programming to his master. He's had some extra programming to aid Corran in his law enforcement duties with CorSec, and is particularly proficient in manipulating computer systems (also known in some circles as slicing). The willful little droid obeys his master, but, when left by himself, often pursues his own interests. Whistler is particularly fond of the New Republic, as he has heard stories of a brave R2 unit among that fledgling government which has helped the Rebels unite against the Empire.

Prefect Mosh Barris

Type: Imperial Prefect

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 6D, blaster artillery 5D+2, brawling parry 4D, dodge 6D+2, grenade 5D+2, vehicle blasters 5D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

Bureaucracy 6D, intimidation 4D, law enforcement: Imperial 5D, planetary systems 5D+2, survival 5D, tactics: ground assault tactics 5D

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Communications 4D, ground vehicle operation 5D, repulsorlift operation 5D, sensors 4D

PERCEPTION 2D+2

Command 5D+2, investigation 4D, persuasion 3D+2, search 4D, sneak 4D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 5D, climbing/jumping 4D+2

TECHNICAL 2D

Armor repair 3D, computer programming/repair 3D, first aid 4D, repulsorlift repair 4D+2

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 1

Character Points: 3

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad



Capsule: Mosh Barris started out as a colonel in the Imperial Army, and was well-known for his concern for his troops and his efficient operations. However, his failure to fully take advantage of some situations and a tendency to order retreats to save his troopers did not sit well in the eyes of his superiors. His complaints that the faceless Imperial stormtroopers were no better than his army troopers annoyed his superiors. Barris' vehement and loudly voiced dissatisfaction with Imperial military administration soon won him the first of many powerless diplomatic posts on backwater worlds.

Since then Barris has wallowed in a pool of self-pity — the ambition and motivation which brought him fame on the

battlefield withered to be replaced by sarcasm and petty scheming. No matter how discontent he became, Barris felt he was powerless to change his situation. Any actions he took were predestined to fail through his pessimistic attitude.

Barris' latest assignment was to replace the military prefect of Garqi. Officially, Garqi's prefect is in charge of ruling Pesktda, Garqi's capital city and starport. However, Prefect Barris runs all of Garqi in the absence of Governor Tadrin, who always seems to be off in the Core Worlds lamenting the crumbling state of the Empire and drowning his sorrows on some resort world. While the governor squanders his family fortune, Barris plots his petty schemes and issues his minor edicts. Barris is fond of creating elaborate plots for proving himself in the vain attempt to earn some misplaced promotion. Unfortunately, not all of his plots are firmly grounded in reality, and he is easily led astray by misinformation and misperceptions. Barris places much of his confidence in Eamon Yzalli, the personal aide who so faithfully served his predecessor (or so the prefect believes).

Barris is no longer the fit soldier he used to be. His inactive lifestyle has added some weight to his features, and his petty scheming and worrying has prematurely aged him. Barris rarely goes anywhere without a glass filled with some spirit, and he cherishes each sip as he enjoys whatever pleasures he can as an Imperial bureaucrat.

Dynba Tesc

Type: University Student

DEXTERITY 2D+1

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Business 4D, streetwise 4D, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 3D+1

Beast riding 3D+2, repulsorlift operation 4D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Con 4D+2, investigation 3D+2, sneak 4D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Computer programming/repair 5D+2, droid programming 4D,

repulsorlift repair 4D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Equipment: Datapad

Capsule: Dynba Tesc is a final-year student at Garqi Ag University studying computer automation and droid-operated combine systems. She is an eager young student who bores easily — she has been searching for something much more exciting than droid-operated combine systems to channel her energies.

When the night-time X-wing sightings began, Dynba's attention turned to the hope that the New Republic would liberate Garqi from the Empire. Unfortunately, most of the populace didn't really care, although they were mostly concerned this mystery X-wing would bring more Imperial regulation and taxation into their lives. Dynba saw this as proof that New Republic agents were on Garqi, so she and several friends she met on the university comnet began sowing the seeds of resistance — implanting computer systems with anti-Imperial slogans and pro-New Republic messages.

Although Dynba is attached to Garqi as her homeworld, she's slowly realizing that it's a boring backwater planet far from the excitement of the New Republic and the Empire. She longs to play a greater part in the galaxy, and has very romanticized notions of joining the ranks of the New Republic, meeting some handsome starship pilot, and defeating the Empire. Dynba's aspirations aren't very realistic, but she is still young and idealistic.




Game information created by Peter Schweighofer based on Michael Stackpole's "Missed Chance."

Michael Stackpole:



The Adventures of Rogue Squadron

By Ilene Rosenberg

Ilene Rosenberg 

Star Wars cult hero Wedge Antilles will finally star in his own set of Bantam novels, and a roleplaying gamer, computer game designer and roleplaying game writer is set to write the X-wing pilot's tales.

The four-novel *Star Wars* X-wing series, which is due to hit bookshelves starting in February, 1996, is being authored by former Flying Buffalo game designer and production manager Michael Stackpole.

This may be the 38-year-old Scottsdale, Arizona, resident's first *Star Wars* novel, but he is no stranger to military science fiction. Stackpole is a veteran of FASA's *BattleTech* and Game Designer Workshop's *Dark Conspiracy* Series. His first Bantam novel, *Once A Hero*, was published by Bantam in May, 1994.

Stackpole not only writes novels about roleplaying games, he plays them and designs them. A gamer from the "dawn" of the roleplaying genre, he has won the H.G. Wells Award for Best Role Playing Adventure in 1983 and 1984, and in July of 1994 was inducted into the Academy of Gaming Arts and Design Hall of Fame.

■ ■ ■

Q: How did you first become involved in writing and designing roleplaying games?

A: I first got involved in roleplaying games in 1976, when I ordered by mail a copy of *Tunnels and Trolls* and a solo adventure. It was back in the dawn of roleplaying times. The game came and it was totally unlike any game ever before, because I hadn't seen *Dungeons & Dragons* at the time. It was very unusual. No game board or anything like that. But they had a solo adventure; I played that and thought to myself, "Well, I can design a solo adventure like this."

By September of the next year, I actually sold Flying Buffalo a design for a solo adventure. When I got out of college, I worked for Flying Buffalo. That's where it all started.

Q: Do you roleplay?

A: I do some. One of the problems with working in the industry is everything you do becomes work, and I find that I don't have as much time for it as I would like. I do what I can, but not very often.

Back in the middle 80's, I used to game fairly heavily. One of the basic problems I have is I'm well known as the "Gamer from Hell." So, it has to be a very forgiving gamemaster, a very brave gamemaster who will let me play — and bravery is a very rare trait in gamemasters — from around here anyway.



Q: What aspect of roleplaying do you enjoy the most?

A: Really there are two aspects. One is the character play. The interplay between the characters, getting into character, repartee, that sort of thing is a lot of fun; and sometimes the most fun. And that could drive a gamemaster mad because the players are all carrying on as their characters, utterly ignoring whatever he's got planned for the scenario.

The other thing is the sense of discovery. If someone's laid out a

world and sort of laid out clues for you, it's a lot of fun to break that sort of thing down and figure out what's going on. That's the sort of thing I read for and try to write for, too — the "aliveness" in other worlds.

Q: How did you move from writing and designing games to penning novels, both game-oriented and completely original?

A: It was part of a process. The best thing about working with Flying Buffalo, Inc. — who was my employer when I got into the industry in 1979 — was that Rick Loomis, who's the owner and boss, allowed his employees to freelance if they were going to do it on their own time.

In going to conventions, you get to meet other people in the industry. In the tail-end of 1986, I finished a fantasy novel, and in 1987, I saw that FASA was bringing out *BattleTech* novels. I chatted with them, and they were willing to talk to me about maybe doing a *Renegade Legion* novel. *Renegade Legion* hadn't even been released at the time and *Renegade Legion* was what was going to be their *Star Wars* game if they had gotten the *Star Wars* license. They said "We'll send you some stuff. Why don't you send a sample of your writing." I sent them the fantasy novel, and within a month I got a call and they offered me a trilogy of *BattleTech* novels. It pretty much rolled from there.

Q: How did Bantam come to chose you as the author for the X-wing novels?

A: The situation is kind of interesting because what Bantam knew about me was that I'd done some military science fiction, because of

the *BattleTech* books, but they weren't really aware of what those were. And they knew that I'd done some computer games, but they weren't aware of what those were, either.

When they decided to do the X-wing books, they set out looking for an author who could do military science fiction, who could work fast, would do a good job, who had worked in other peoples' universes without a problem, who was one of their authors. When you start checking off all those different things and then start comparing that "want list" to Bantam's list of authors, I'm pretty much the only person who checked out on all of those things. It was a process of elimination.

"Star Wars meets Top Gun." I think that's pretty accurate.

Q: What can *Star Wars* fans expect from the X-wing series? Will we see any familiar faces, as we have in other recent *Star Wars* works?

A: Tom Dupree, in the letter that I got concerning the first book, *Rogue Squadron*, said "*Star Wars* meets *Top Gun*." I think that's pretty accurate.

Aside from Wedge Antilles and Admiral Ackbar, I've got a brand new cast of characters. Lucasfilm was really generous. They wanted a lot of aliens mixed in. They wanted both men and women in the squadron. They allowed me to give them a full mix of characters and to pretty much do with those characters what I wanted in the story.

Pretty much what you're going to get is action-adventure — everything you'd expect out of *Star Wars*: drama, humor, action, evil people involved with the Empire.

I thought it was real important that the only time the X-wing books would have Luke, Leia, Han and any of the major characters in them will be in cameo appearances. For me to put them into a book, I've got to ask permission specifically — find out if it's okay. These characters' lives actually are quite full.

I wanted to do some events that were really important in the history of the *Star Wars* universe. The top one on my list was the conquest of Coruscant, the taking of the Imperial homeworld, which we know is taken by the time we get to Dave Wolverton's book and Tim Zahn's books. So, I'm getting to do the cracking of the core of the Empire and I've got a four book set in which to do it.

Q: Have you found writing a *Star Wars* novel complex, since

you must take into account the pre-destined histories of the characters, as written by authors like Timothy Zahn, the Dark Horse comic series, West End Games sourcebooks and, of course, George Lucas's original trilogy?

A: One of the things I really do enjoy about working in other peoples' universes is pulling together all the material that's out there and making sure that everything I do fits as cleanly and exactly as possible, to the point where I have thanked Tim Zahn for making the defenses of Coruscant so tough.

When they read these books, I don't want everybody saying, "Well, this can't happen because of this," because I just want these books to fit seamlessly into what's been going on. So I've been studying all of the other books — even the ones that take place far in the future of where my story is — because, for example, Tim Zahn says that so-and-so did something for the first time ever, I certainly don't want him doing it in my book.

It's complex job, and it is to a certain extent time consuming, but, boy, it's a lot of fun.

Q: How have you used West End Games' *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* material as background for your novels?

A: In terms of cultural descriptions of how aliens live and things that are suggested as how a member of that culture would deal with the Rebellion and deal with the Empire, I use those as guidelines.

Wedge Antilles is a perfect example of where West End material is really important. A lot of people think because in *Star Wars* the movie the person in charge of the *Tantive IV* — which is the ship that Princess Leia was captured on at the very beginning of the movie — is called Captain Antilles that he's somehow related to Wedge. Well, that's an Alderaanian consular ship, so the guy's got to be from Alderaan. Wedge is from Corellia. And Wedge has got a whole history that West End has developed, and that's the history that I use as the background for Wedge Antilles.

Q: Have you used any characters from the West End Games books themselves, or from the *Star Wars Adventure Journals*?

A: Dirk Harkness and his crew get mentioned in one chapter of *Rogue Squadron*. They've been off on a mission and have to ground on a planet, and *Rogue Squadron*'s part of a rescue operation.

The *Adventure Journal*'s been real good in terms of a number of the articles that they've had deal with the particular time period that I'm

looking at; the post-*Return of the Jedi* time period. In the first or second issue there was an article on bacta, and that's turning out to be a real useful article for me in terms of writing some background for some characters and information that's necessary for later in the universe.

Q: How are you involved in Dark Horse Comics' X-wing series?


A: The X-wing comic series is going to be 12 issues delivered in three, four-issue story arcs. Dark Horse has me doing the story outlines for the story arcs. Between Dark Horse and Lucasfilm and me, we were able to work it so that the X-wing comics will pick up *Rogue Squadron* — what's left of it — from *The Truce at Bakura*, and do a number of adventures there. I'll get to introduce some of the characters who will show up in the X-wing novels. So I'm able to use those comics as prequels for some characters who will show up and will be able to develop stuff there that I will use later in the novels. Mike Baron is doing the actual comic book scripting.

I just want these books to fit seamlessly into what's been going on.

Q: What makes *Star Wars* a timeless story which can be enjoyed by all generations?

A: *Star Wars* has got all the different elements that you see in folklore. You've got the earnest, innocent young man who's coming of age, and righting a great wrong. You have the Darth Vader father-son conflict. You see it in folklore everywhere.

All these things have been part of stories that people have been telling since stories began. They really kind of resonate inside all of us who listen to these things.

The second thing — and I think the thing that is really important — was that goal of making *Star Wars* a lived-in universe. When you see that first film, it's not a sterile universe. People get dirty there, and they remain dirty. It's not the neat and clean future that science always suggested we'd have, but it's a real future. It lives and breathes and that makes it a lot of fun. 

Cracken's Rebel Operatives

Quite often people think of Rebel operatives as super spies or double agents deep under cover in the Core Worlds. But those kinds of operatives aren't

much help when you need supplies or ordinance for that last-minute mission or unexpected operation. Logistics is a little-appreciated but utterly crucial part of continuing the rebellion against the Empire. Without sufficient supplies the war would quickly grind to a halt. The Empire has vast resources and a gigantic logistics network to draw from, which — fortunately for the Alliance — is incredibly inefficient, unwieldy, wasteful, and slow. The draconian nature of the Empire encour-

ages slow transportation and warehousing of supplies in astounding quantities. They can afford a few losses to theft, misfiling and other forms of shrinkage.

The Alliance is quite the opposite. While we have few resources and little funding, we use every component, route it quickly to its destination, and have very little warehousing space, partially because we have little to store. This is a blessing and a curse, but there's little to be done about it.

The operatives included with this datafile perform an absolutely vital function — acquisition or transportation of supplies and funds for the Alliance.



Redda Macrebe

Operative Role: Supply purchaser, shipper, network coordinator

Current Location: Mobile within Trax Tube space lane systems

Species: Human

Sex: Male

Age: 33

Redda Macrebe is a roving Alliance supply agent working up and down the Trax Tube trade route. He is the center of a network of agents whose mission is to acquire supplies and ship them to supply bases. Redda's network of agents, sympathizers, contacts, merchants, shippers, and blind contractors is vast. He uses no regular method of transportation, and switches roles from free-trader and travelling businessman to product seller or transport spacer on an irregular schedule, usually at the beginning of a supply "sweep" or mission.

An Alliance operation is starting up, but 15 heavy tanks are needed? He'll either find a weapons merchant with the goods, or get creative — high-output repulsorlift generators from a high-g agriculture planet, armor from scrap yards or surplus, surplus heavy duty lasers from a mining corporation, shielded circuitry and computer components from a high radiation planet like Kubindi, and chassis from farm tractors. While he probably can't just provide a capital ship, he can probably find the parts and technicians to fix one, or to refit one out of mothballs.

Alliance technicians are famous for putting together components that were never meant to be used together, and it's people like Redda who find them the material. This can lead to some interesting situations, but that's part of the job.

Redda rubs elbows with all manner of criminals, black and gray marketeers, corrupt Imperial supply officers, privateers, smugglers, free-traders, corporate flunkies and other riff-raff. He has yet to be caught in his dangerous profession, even though local authorities know of him as a minor league space trader. The Imperial bureaus haven't heard of him, either as a civilian or an Alliance agent. He always uses a cover, doesn't stay anywhere for more than three days, feels no need for a flashy code name, and is physically non-

descript; brown hair, brown eyes, tan tunic or coveralls. He blends into starports, bars, and corporate offices. He avoids being the "man in charge," and prefers to work behind the scenes.

■ Redda Macrebe

Type: Alliance Supply Officer

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D+2

Bureaucracy 5D, business 6D, languages 4D+2, streetwise 6D, value 5D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 4D, space transports 4D, space transports: Gallofree medium transport 5D+1

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Bargain 6D, con 7D+2, forgery 6D+1, persuasion 5D+2

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Security 5D space transport repair 4D+1

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 8

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, hold-out blaster (3D), fake permit for concealed weapons, several fake IDs

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL

CRACKEN, AIREN/GENERAL...

Macrebe is a crucial component of Alliance activities in several systems along the Trax Tube. I met Redda while planning an operation in Trax sector; I nearly scrapped the mission because we lacked assorted supplies and logistical support. Redda heard about this and arranged to purchase and deliver our supplies to needed locations. He knew where they would be needed, when to deliver them, and how much to supply us for the next pick-up.

We were going to sneak in under cover of darkness on a small freighter. Instead, Redda arranged for us to travel first-class to a hunting park about 50 kilometers from our target. A young kid knocked on our rented hunting lodge door (where Redda had arranged for us to set up temporary ops) and asked, "Mister Nekarc? Got'cher BlasTech Quickshot rifles here, ammunition included. Sign, please." Next delivery was an older fellow. "Nekarc? All-weather gear. Sign." Next delivery was a young lady. "SoroSuub hunting rations. Have fun hunting the grizels." Over the next 36 hours, we marched to our target, completed the mission and picked up a few other supplies Redda had cached away for us, including three dressed out grizel carcasses, retrieved on the way back so our "hunting excursion" would look legitimate.

Mister Tislan

Operative Role: Financier, art retrieval

Current Location: Mobile between several art galleries

Species: Bith

Sex: Male

Age: Unknown

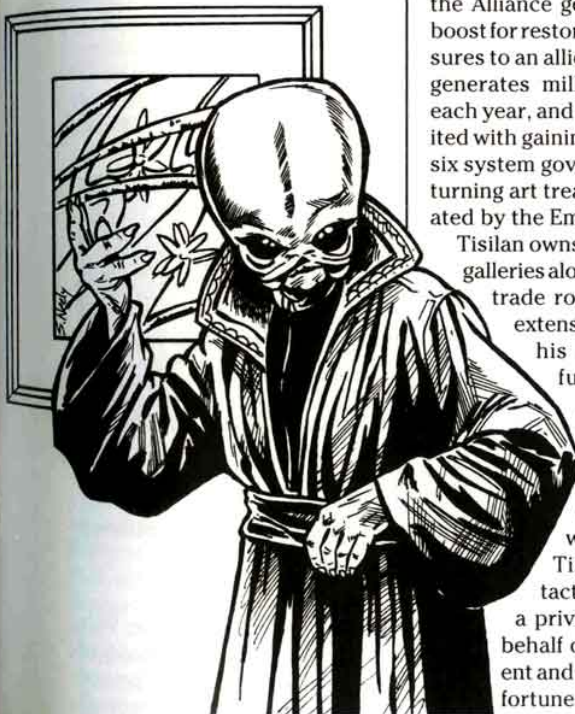
Mister Tislan is a Bith art dealer and Alliance supply agent in Redda's network. His mission is to generate funds for the Alliance and liberate cultural art treasures from the private collections of Imperial officials. Tislan is an ascetic; he has little need for material comforts and all surplus funds from his legiti-

mate business go to the Alliance.

He is also a good thief. The art treasures he relieves from Imperial grasp are either sold on the black market or returned to their world of origin, depending on circumstances. In the first case, the surplus funds are used by the Alliance. In the second, the Alliance gets a diplomatic boost for restoring cultural treasures to an allied world. Tislan generates millions of credits each year, and is partially credited with gaining the support of six system governments for returning art treasures appropriated by the Empire.

Tislan owns a half dozen art galleries along the Trax Tube trade route, and travels extensively to increase his collection and further his Alliance activities.

None of his employees are aware of his true affiliation with the Rebels. Tislan's favorite tactic is to approach a private collector on behalf of a mythical client and offer him a small fortune for the targeted



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artwork. If the collector accepts, Tisilan arranges to make payment and pick up the piece the next day, but instead steals the art overnight. If the collector declines his initial offer, Tisilan steals the artwork overnight, then approaches the collector again with a higher bid the next day. Either way, the deal is canceled on learning of the theft ("Shocking! Art thieves are running rampant these days!").

■ Mister Tisilan

Type: Alliance Supply Agent

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D, pick pocket 6D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 5D, bureaucracy 4D+2, business 6D, cultures 6D, languages 5D, scholar: art 7D

MECHANICAL 2D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 5D+1, gambling 4D+2, sneak 6D+2

STRENGTH 1D+1

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Security 5D+2

Special Abilities:

Vision: Bith get a +1D bonus to Perception skills involving objects less than 30 centimeters away; Bith suffer a -1D penalty for any visual-based action more than 20 meters away and cannot see more than 40 meters under any circumstances.

Scent: A Bith's sense of smell allows a +1D bonus to any Perception skill involving people or actions within three meters.

Manual Dexterity: Bith gain +1D to actions involving fine motor skills—including pick pocket and security—but not to gross motor skills such as blaster and dodge.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 6

Move: 7

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, security tool kit

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL CRACKEN, AIREN/GENERAL..

I've never worked with Mister Tisilan (whose real name is a glottal click followed by a descending palatal whistle, stop, and then a throaty raising hummed "lan" — I doubt any Human could properly pronounce it), but I've met him while moving through Trax sector. He's quiet and calm, even for a Bith. He's quite detached and always seems to be appraising whatever he's interacting with, be it sentient, droid, or art-form. I'm usually repulsed by the seamy sorts that take up illegal activities, but Tisilan is different. He looks on his work to recover art treasures as a philosophical devotion.

Vo Lantes

Operative Role: Droid supply and service

Current Location: Headquarters on Deysum III, but travels between other droid shop locations frequently

Species: Human

Sex: Male

Age: 40

Vo Lantes is the owner of a chain of used droid lots — and is secretly another link in Redda's supply network

throughout the Trax Tube. Vo's lots are crammed with droids of every kind and quality — junked R2 droids, shiny new treadwell

droids, rusting binary load lifters, and even mining survey droids. He also maintains workshops at each location to maintain, reprogram and repair droids for his clients. Vo boasts that each droid lot has the infamous "pile o' parts" — immense bins or mounds of scrapped droids and junked components often scavenged for replacement parts in other droids.

Vo's legitimate business is very brisk, due in part to his droid lots' availability throughout the Trax Tube and his advertisements on most major holovid stations in each system. Vo's ads are loud, obnoxious, and effective, just like Vo himself. He goes to considerable length to portray himself as a "Big Corellian" — he drives a "Big 'Lift,'" wears loud clothes and a big hat, and comes across as a big man. He speaks with a twangy accent that marks him as a native from an obscure backwater Corellian colony.

But Vo's covert activities include infiltrating Imperial offices with bugged droids, and supplying droids to Rebel cells throughout the Trax Tube.

Vo often modifies many commonly used droids (especially protocol, servant and worker droids) — extra circuitry and programming allow the droids to retain their loyalty to Vo or Rebel cell leaders while serving the Empire. Added components allow these droids to download important Imperial computer information for transmittal or retrieval later.

Vo even modifies some droids by circumventing their life preservation programming and rigging the droids with detonite. Triggered by remote, these explosions help create diversions or knock out secu-



rity systems while Rebel teams carry out infiltration or sabotage missions. Vo does not dabble in creating assassin droids — he programs any booby-trapped droids so they do not have the ability to initiate their destruct sequences themselves.

Vo's droids also find their way into the hands of Rebel cells as servants, workers, or surveillance droids. If a cell needs a droid with a specific function, Vo either finds it or creates it himself.

■ Vo Lantes

Type: Used Droid Salesman
DEXTERITY 3D
Blaster 4D, dodge 3D+2

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL CRACKEN, AIREN/GENERAL.

Vo is one of those odd operatives I enjoy more in observation than in operation. To my knowledge, Vo hasn't ever been on a mission. His value is not in his skills as an agent, but in his skills as a scrounger of droids, common and rare, nearly new and nearly scrapped. Vo's dealerships dot the Trax Tube, and he runs a series of well known ads featuring Vo and his "pet," a creature named Spot. "Spot" changes in each ad from one unusual beastie to another. He uses every promotional gimmick I've heard of — and a few that are new to me — to get customers onto his used droid lot. Once there, they're hooked. Vo uses a combination of showmanship and amazing financing deals, and often a warranty, to close a sale. Even if he doesn't offer a warranty, he'll always offer a price break on droid maintenance, repair, and upgrading. Trade-ins are always welcome, and unlike most used droid lots, Vo loves to get modified and unwiped droids.

His loud entrepreneurial flair helps cover up his quiet association with the Rebel Alliance. Operatives in need of droids often approach him as customers looking for "that special something" in a used droid. Vo identifies these Rebel operatives through a series of code words and phrases, as well as a series of gestures. Most operatives in the Trax Tube are aware of this protocol.

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Business 6D, streetwise 5D+2, value

4D, value: droids 6D

MECHANICAL 2D+1

Repulsorlift operation 3D+2

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 6D+2, con 5D+1, persuasion

5D+2

STRENGTH 2D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 4D,

demolition 5D, droid programming

6D+2, droid repair 5D+1, security 5D

Force Points: 1

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, droid

repair kit (+1D to droid programming

and droid repair), obnoxious clothes,

any number of common droids

This issue's operatives were created by Timothy O'Brien and illustrated by Scott Neely.

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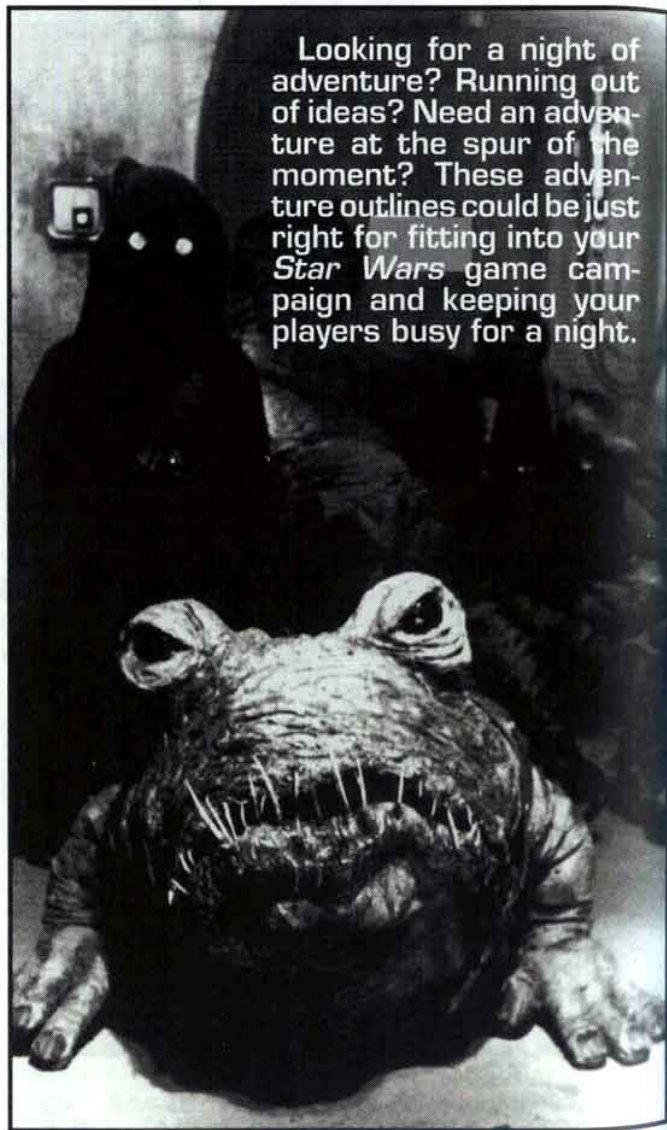
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Looking for a night of adventure? Running out of ideas? Need an adventure at the spur of the moment? These adventure outlines could be just right for fitting into your *Star Wars* game campaign and keeping your players busy for a night.

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A Taste of Adventure

By Tony Russo

Rebel Escape

In this *Star Wars* adventure, the characters are citizens of the galaxy who encounter a desperate courier for the Rebellion. Pursued by bounty hunters, the characters find themselves helping the courier escape. Their opponents, however, include the notorious Boba Fett and other infamous bounty hunters.

This adventure makes a good starting point to introduce new players to roleplaying in the *Star Wars* universe or to begin a campaign. All character types are acceptable, although few characters should have any background or connection with the Rebel Alliance. Characters may have heard stories about the Rebellion, but other than that, everything else they know about the Rebels is just rumor or speculation. At least one character should have a starship, preferably a light freighter.

Begin the adventure by reading this narration aloud:

It is a time of Civil War. The galactic Empire firmly maintains its grip of fear on the innocent of the galaxy. The only hope for the oppressed lies in a small band of Rebel freedom fighters striking from a hidden base. A bustling, commercial world is about to bear witness to one small battle in the quest to end the tyranny of the evil Empire ...

Episode One: There Will Be No Dying in My Place!

The adventure begins in a dim, crowded spaceport cantina. Many spacers and independent merchants flock to the central spaceport to conduct trade. Naturally, the spaceport cantina is host to a variety of patrons: Human and alien.

The characters begin in the cantina. They might be cantina regulars just stopping by for a little jet juice. They could be travelers, free-traders, or starship crews waiting planetside for the next job or the next shuttle to Dantooine.

After the characters get settled into their best cantina routines, read the following paragraph aloud:

The door chime sounds, indicating that someone tripped the light beam at the entranceway. A hush falls over the crowd. All heads turn to stare at the looming figure who fills the doorway. Hushed whispers fill the room. "Boba Fett? Boba Fett! What's he doing here?"

A section of the crowd parts near the bar. A Human male, someone you did not notice before, has been intentionally left all alone. Realizing who he is up against, his hand drifts to the blaster pistol in its belt holster. Fett's monotone voice drifts across the room; "You can come quietly, or die quickly." The man chooses the latter. A whining beam explodes across the room. The man, his hand still on the grip of his undrawn blaster pistol, falls to the floor in a heap.

The cantina's proprietor rushes forward. He angrily yells at Fett. "There'll be no dying in my place! Take your lousy mark and get out!" Fett tosses him a bag of credits. "This will cover the clean up. I'm looking for another. Human. Female. She's no good to me dead. I'll double whatever's in that bag to the first who points her out to me."

The crowd retreats. Fett glares at them in silence, then departs.

Sometime after Fett leaves, one of the characters spies a face in the crowd, hiding carefully in the shadows of the cantina. What makes this one face so noticeable is that not only is it the face of a beautiful woman, but a single glistening tear can be seen running down her cheek.

Before the characters can react, the crowd shifts. When the crowd parts again, the woman is gone. Where did she go? If the characters make an *Easy* search roll, they notice the swinging doors where servant droids rush in and out with food and drink. The characters may want to follow her. If they do so, they come upon a

set of back alleys and dark sidestreets.

If they fail the *search* roll, the woman simply disappears. The characters rush out front, hoping to find her on the streets. Once on the streets, the characters discover the back alleys that wind between numerous service buildings and warehouses along the spaceport corridor — the perfect hiding place for a woman on the run.

Episode Two: I'm Not So Sure This is a Good Idea

On an *Easy* to *Moderate* *streetwise* roll, a character might realize that they are heading for the rougher section of the central spaceport. Crime lords, gangsters and thieves rule the darker sections of the spaceport city. The Imperial presence is noticeably low here, too.

After cautiously exploring a few streets and alleyways, the characters hear a woman scream. Believing the worst, they charge down an alley, around a corner and straight into a confrontation. A gang of hoodlums, as many as there are characters, have encircled the woman. One of them, a large alien, is pulling her by the hand.

"C'mon!" he grunts. "You got such a big bounty on that pretty head of yours! It be a shame not to collect!" Many of the other hoods leer threateningly at the characters, inviting them to fight for her. "Let's make it interesting," the big alien demands, suddenly pulling the girl close and holding a vibro-shiv to her throat. "No blasters!" The rest of the mob pulls stun batons and vibro-knives.

Street Toughs. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D+2, *blaster* 4D, *dodge* 4D, *melee combat* 4D+2, *melee parry* 4D, *Strength* 3D+2, *brawling* 4D+2. Move 10. Vibro-knife (STR+1D), stun baton (STR+1D), hold-out blaster (3D).

Seeing his comrades go down in the fight, the chief tough pulls out a hold-out blaster and starts shooting at the characters while dragging the woman down a sidestreet. Suddenly, another woman comes somersaulting from the rooftops above. She crashes down upon the big alien, knocking the hold-out blaster from his hand with her force pike. It is the bounty hunter Zardra! With Zardra's attention shifted to fighting the big alien, the characters and the woman are given the opportunity to escape down another alley.

Given a chance to rest a moment or heal injuries sustained during the brawl, the woman thanks the characters profusely. If the characters convince her that they are not going to turn her in to collect her bounty, she reveals that her name is Mari. She is a courier for the Rebellion. She and her friend — the man gunned down by Boba Fett in the cantina — were delivering a message from an important Imperial diplomat to Alliance leaders. The bounty hunters are trying

to capture her and the message for the Empire so that the diplomat may be publicly revealed and executed as a traitor. The message reveals the identities of certain Imperial Security Bureau agents working to infiltrate the Alliance. Many Rebels have been killed or captured by these agents. The courier's friend was supposed to supply a transport off this world, but now that he is dead ... can the characters help?

Mari. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 2D+2, *blaster* 4D+2, *brawling parry* 4D+2, *dodge* 4D+2, *Perception* 3D, *hide* 5D, *sneak* 4D, *Strength* 2D+1, *brawling* 4D+1. Move 10. Blaster pistol (4D), datapad and datapad.

Read the following passage aloud:

As you consider helping the Rebel courier Mari, a booming, familiar voice echoes through the alleys. "This is Fett. I saw what you did, and I'm grateful you kept the mark intact." A bag of credits, even larger than the one Fett tossed the cantina keeper, falls into an open intersection before your eyes. "Walk away now,



or I'll start thinking you're helping her. Believe me — you don't want me to think that."

Fett's statement is a challenge to the characters' integrity. If they accept his offer, they are promptly blasted by Zardra and Boba Fett hiding on the warehouse roofs above. The gamemaster should warn the players that starting characters should never tangle with the combined likes of Boba Fett and Zardra (their roleplaying game statistics can be found in *Galaxy Guide 10: Bounty Hunters*). If the characters try to cross Fett by taking the credits and escaping with Mari, they have made a powerful enemy ... for life! The best option is for the characters to quietly slip away with Mari into the shadows.

Episode Three: Making the Escape

If the characters decide to head for their own ship and help Mari escape, the gamemaster should secretly make a *sneak* roll at 6D. This roll is for a gamemaster character who is trying to secretly follow the characters. Have each player make a *Perception* roll. If any character rolls *Perception* higher than the 6D *sneak* roll, that character suspects they are being followed and the gamemaster character does not strike. If nobody rolls higher than the secret *sneak* roll, the gamemaster character tracking the characters strikes!

Once the characters arrive at the docking bay, the last character inside the bay is ambushed from behind by a third bounty hunter. The alien hunter is trying to knock the character unconscious with a brawling attack. If she can make a Difficult *Perception* roll, the character being attacked has a chance to detect the attack, and respond with a *dodge* roll. If the *Perception* roll fails, the character does not realize she is under attack until after the bounty hunter's first attack.

Alien Bounty Hunter. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D+2, *brawling parry* 4D, *dodge* 4D+2, *melee combat* 5D, *melee parry* 5D, *Perception* 4D, *sneak* 6D, *Strength* 3D, *brawling* 5D. Move 10. Special Ability: Claws (do STR+1D damage). Heavy blaster pistol (5D).

If the bounty hunter succeeds in knocking one character out, he attempts to knock out the others using his heavy blaster pistol set to stun. The characters must either wound, chase away or kill the bounty hunter before they can make their escape in their ship.

Just as the characters take off in their ship, they see Boba Fett and Zardra entering the docking bay. With great relief, the characters leave the planet. There's only one small problem — Fett and Zardra have contacted spaceport control. A character who makes an Easy

communications roll can discover that Imperial vessels in the area have been put on alert to attack and detain the characters' ship.

Four TIE fighters race up to try to stop the freighter before it makes the jump to hyperspace.

4 TIE Fighters. Starfighter, *starship piloting* 4D+1, *starship gunnery* 4D, *maneuverability* 2D, *space* 10, *atmosphere* 415; 1,200 kmh, *hull* 2D. Weapons: two laser cannons (fire-linked; fire control 2D, damage 5D).

While the TIE fighters attempt to delay the ship, an Imperial Star Destroyer is trying to catch up and bring its tractor beams to bear. The characters must fight off the TIE fighters with their ship's weapons for four rounds before the nav computer can calculate the jump to hyperspace. If any of the ship's systems are seriously damaged, the nav computer is unable to make the jump unless someone makes a Difficult *space transports repair* roll or a Very Difficult *astrogation* roll.

Award four character points to all characters who successfully complete the adventure. The gamemaster may award additional points (up to four more) to individual characters for inventive roleplaying or creative problem-solving.

The Battle for Gap Nine

In this adventure, Rebel agents are trying to destroy an Imperial processing plant on a backwater world named Gap Nine. This adventure may involve any character type. It is assumed that one of the characters has a ship to carry all the other characters, or the Rebel Alliance has given the characters a light freighter to use for this mission.

Episode One: Shootout on Gap Nine

This adventure begins *in media res*: the characters were trying to sabotage the processing plant when they are discovered by a patrol of Imperial Army troopers. At the start of the adventure, read the following passage aloud:

As allies to the Rebel cause, you have been ordered to destroy

the fuel ore-processing plant on a swampy backwater world called Gap Nine. The planet is populated with alien natives who are overseen by a small Imperial force. The Imperial commander, Colonel Traft, understands the need for tight security. Your attempt to plant explosives in a delivery of spare parts has failed miserably. Six Imperial Army troopers now have all of you pinned down in a cargo warehouse.

6 Imperial Army Troopers. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 4D+1, *dodge* 4D+1, *grenade* 3D+2, *Strength* 3D+1, *brawling* 4D. Blast helmet (+1 energy, +1D physical), blast vest (+1 energy, +1D physical, torso only), blaster pistol (4D), 2 grenades (4D), comlink.

After exchanging blaster fire uselessly with the troopers for a round or two, alert sirens go off in the plant compound. One of the characters notices a cargo droid loading a droid-controlled skimmer in the cargo warehouse. With a Moderate *droid programming* roll, the droid skimmer can be taken over manually and used as an escape vehicle. The carrier compartments of the skimmer protect the characters from blaster fire long enough for one character to pilot the skimmer out the doors and crash through the barrier fence into the swamp.

Episode Two: The Swamp Seer

Eventually, the droid skimmer gets tangled up in the huge roots and fallen trees of the swamp. The sounds of Imperial scout bikes force the characters to abandon the loading skimmer and run deeper into the swamp.

After a while, the characters stumble into a clearing. The ruins of an ancient structure can be seen among the tangle of trees and vines. Passing through a doorway, they enter a remarkable, light-filled chamber. Huge, different-colored stones have been set in the floor, forming impressive circles and other patterns. On the walls, elaborate stone pictures depict scenes filled with creatures and heroic figures.

A shuffling sound alerts the characters that they are not alone. They discover a short reptilian biped, a native of this swampy world, cowering behind a bench and threatening the characters with a staff. Amazingly, the alien speaks a very eloquent form of Basic.

"Keep away from me, you Imperial worms! You will not desecrate this spot!"

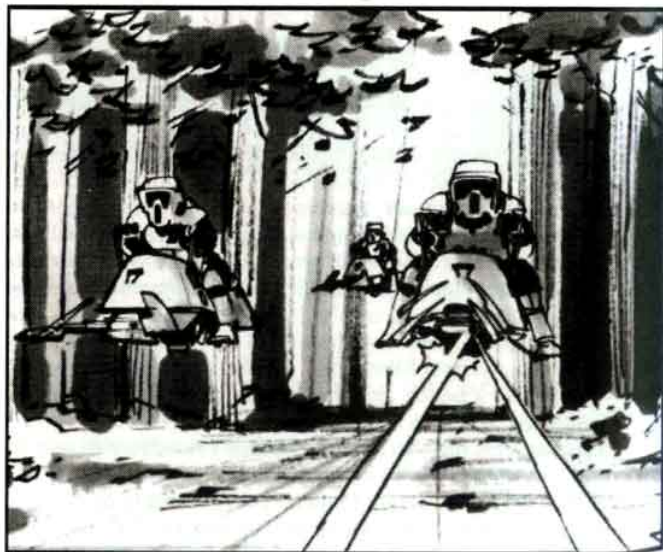
After the characters assure him that they are not Imperials, the alien declares that he is the Seer of the Temple. He describes how Colonel Traft has been robbing various temples and other ancient

ruins of their artifacts. Read the following aloud:

"Long before the Empire, travelers fell from the sky. They were monsters, beasts and foul vermin. They created temples dedicated to darkness and evil. Other travelers soon followed. They were noble warriors who carried with them swords of burning light. After a terrible battle, the creatures were finally destroyed and purged from this world. The warriors turned their dark temples into storehouses of knowledge and peace. Since that time, my descendants have been entrusted with protecting them. But Colonel Traft is robbing the temples, stealing precious symbols and artifacts!"

Colonel Traft is a greed-filled Imperial officer. Appointed to the boring task of insuring Gap Nine is run efficiently and without interruption, Traft spends a great deal of his time making personal negotiations with art dealers for rare objects he finds. He has heard of the "Travelers of Gap Nine" and wishes to rob as many of their temples as possible.

Colonel Icus Traft. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 2D+1, *blaster* 4D+1, *brawling parry* 3D+1, *dodge* 4D+1, *grenade* 4D, *vehicle blasters* 4D+1, *Mechanical* 3D, *astrogation* 3D+1, *capital ship gunnery* 4D,



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capital ship piloting 4D+2, *hover vehicle operation* 5D, *repulsorlift operation* 4D, *space transports* 3D, *starship gunnery* 4D, *Perception* 3D, *bargain* 5D, *command* 6D, *value* 7D, *Strength* 2D+1, *brawling* 3D. Move 10. Blaster pistol (4D).

The sound of speeder bikes sends everyone into hiding. There are two scout troopers out looking for the characters. One gets off his bike to investigate inside the temple while the other waits outside with his speeder bike idling. If the characters do not interfere with the scout trooper, he pokes around the inside of his temple. He calls to his comrade. "The Rebels are not here. Inform Colonel Traft that we have located another temple." The scouts then zoom off.

If the characters attempt to stun or overcome the scout trooper, his comrade zooms away on his speeder bike. Even if the characters stop both scout troopers, Colonel Traft has been informed of the whereabouts of a new temple to raid. He is bound to return here — in force.

Episode Three: Divide and Conquer

The characters have two options — make a stand at the temple and save the artifacts from being taken by Colonel Traft and his forces, or use the impending attack to allow a few characters to double back to the ore-processing plant and reset their demolition charges.

If the characters choose to stand and fight at the temple, they have a chance to dig in and form some plan for defense. Colonel Traft arrives in an armored command speeder armed with a heavy laser cannon (see *The Imperial Sourcebook*), six Imperial Army troopers, and four scout troopers on speeder bikes. The gamemaster should draw a map of the temple courtyard and the positions of the troops. The characters may designate their starting positions.

If the characters refuse to yield the temple to his forces, Traft orders the squad of Imperial Army troopers to advance under the protective fire of the armored command speeder and the four scout troopers on their speeder bikes. Traft does not leave the armored speeder unless he believes it is safe to do so. If his forces suffer major losses (casualties of most of the troopers and two or more scouts), he tries to drive the carrier back to the ore-processing plant and request reinforcements ... and a crackdown on all the natives. It is up to the characters to either capture Traft or prevent him from calling for more reinforcements.

If the characters decide to split up, the characters defending the temple must try to wage a delaying action — an outright confrontation would be futile. Back at the ore-processing plant, the facility is defended by six Imperial Army troopers and four stormtroopers.

The characters' original explosive charges have not yet been discovered in the box of spare parts left at the plant. They must infiltrate the facility and set off the charges before Colonel Traft overruns the group at the temple or returns to discover them at the plant.

If the characters damage the facility so severely that all ore processing is suspended, award each character four character points. If the characters save the temple from Colonel Traft and his attack, give each character six character points. If Traft escapes and calls for reinforcements, award only two character points.

Silent Fury

The characters are offered the chance to join an eccentric professor, his beautiful if remote daughter, and a dashing fortune hunter in an expedition to find the treasure hoard of the fabled Dread Buccaneer Hez Kragg. This adventure is highly suited for scouts, tramp freighter pilots, gamblers, and smugglers.

Once believed only a character from a child's fable, the Dread Buccaneer Hez Kragg was said to have brought fear and destruction to star travelers during the time of the Old Republic. As the story goes, only a great Jedi Knight was able to finally put an end to Kragg's terror and free the star lanes from his grip.

Jonas Durns, a noted scholar and researcher, has spent many years trying to prove the existence of Hez Kragg. Retracing locations described in the original fable, he was able to find evidence of ancient camp sites and bases. These sites may have been used by Kragg and his band since Durns found his personal mark on rocks and in other locations.

What interested Jonas Durns the most, however, was that according to the fable's last verses, a Jedi Knight defeated Kragg aboard his ship, *Kragg's Fury*. The Jedi Knight was terribly wounded during the battle and was forced to leave the ship adrift. If Durns' calculations based on the fable and actual events are correct, Kragg had ransacked the Nijune Treasure Fleet just days before. The treasure may still be aboard his ship!

After telling them this story, Durns approaches the characters with a business proposition — he believes he has located the derelict pirate ship. Durns produces holos taken of an ancient battle

vessel. One of the holos clearly shows Kragg's mark, a crimson fist surrounded by a circle, on the vessel's hull. Taking his findings to his higher fellows, Durns' university decided to fund an expedition to determine if this ship truly is *Kragg's Fury*. The endowment from the university is just enough for the professor to hire on several experienced spacers and a ship to take him there. If the characters are interested, they may sign up for the expedition. The contract is a standard salvage deal: 5,000 credits to hire the ship and crew to transport the professor, two other passengers, and their gear. In addition, the characters get a percentage of anything of value retrieved from the derelict.

Jonas Durns. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 2D+1, *dodge* 3D, *Knowledge* 4D, *alien species* 5D, *languages* 6D, *languages: ancient languages* 7D, *Mechanical* 2D+2, *astrogation* 3D+2, *Technical* 3D, *computer programming/repair* 3D+2. Move 9. Glowrod, portable data terminal.

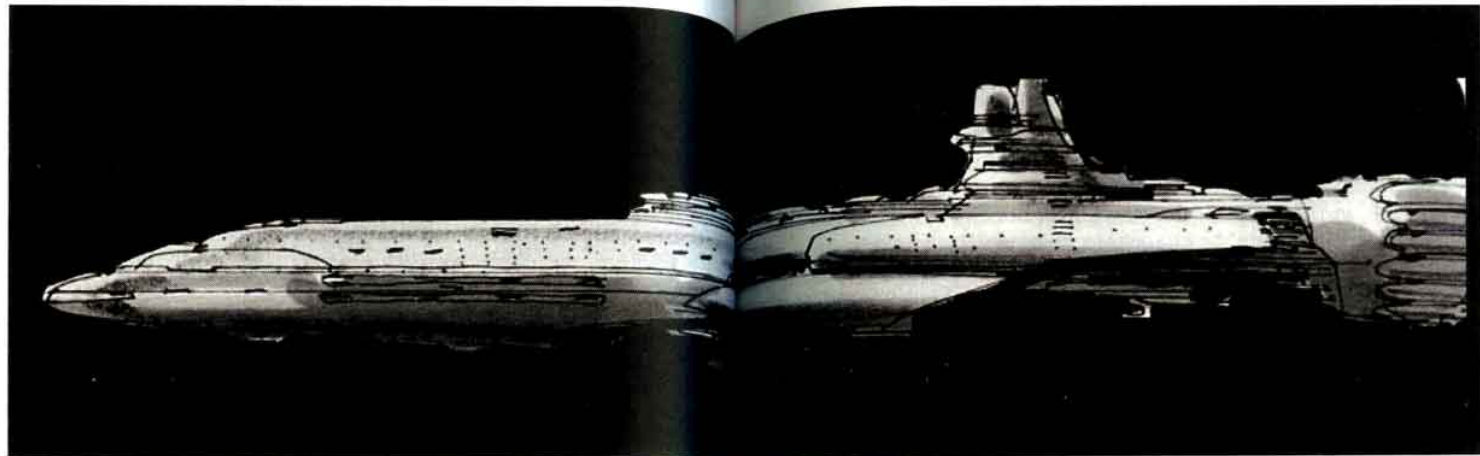
The other passengers are Keya Durns, the scholar's icy-eyed daughter, and a rugged, handsome man named Sig Coven. Coven introduces himself as an "independent fortune seeker and scout." It was Coven who accidentally happened upon the derelict *Fury*. Unable to identify the ship at the time, he was referred to Durns at the university. Coven has since agreed to join the expedition.

Keya Durns. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster: hold-out blaster* 5D, *brawling parry* 4D+2, *dodge* 4D+2, *Mechanical* 2D+2, *communications* 4D+2, *space transports* 3D, *powersuit operations* 3D+2, *Strength* 2D+2, *brawling* 4D, *Technical* 3D, *first aid* 5D, *space transport repair* 4D+2. Move 10. Glowrod, hold-out blaster (3D).

Sig Coven. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 4D, *blaster* 5D, *brawling parry* 5D, *dodge* 5D+2, *melee combat* 5D+2, *melee parry* 4D+2, *grenade* 4D+2, *running* 5D, *Knowledge* 2D+2, *planetary systems* 3D+2, *Mechanical* 3D, *astrogation* 3D+2, *space transports: scout ships* 4D+2, *starship gunnery* 4D, *starship shields* 4D, *Perception* 2D+1, *bargain* 3D, *sneak* 4D, *value* 5D, *Strength* 3D, *brawling* 5D, *climbing/jumping* 5D, *Technical* 2D, *computer programming/repair* 4D+2, *security* 4D+2, *space transport repair* 4D+2. Move 10. Blaster pistol (4D), glowrod, 25 meters thincord, grenade (5D).

Episode One: Voyage to Kragg's Fury

Sig Coven supplies the hyperspace coordinates as a direct-read-only astrogation datacard — only the ship's nav computer knows their final destination. Coven explains that he has come to rely upon



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secured astrogation chips from previous escapades: "You can't be too careful in my business." When asked what exactly Coven's business is, he merely smiles cheerfully and replies, "The same as you, my friend. Fortune and glory." It's also one of the reasons why the university had to hire Coven to participate in the expedition — he's the only one who knows where the derelict is.

Any character who wants to try and read the secured astrogation datacard has to make a Very Difficult *computer programming/repair* roll. A character who manages to break Sig Coven's secure astrogation chip can bring up information on the system where *Kragg's Fury* was

Report by Republic Scout Bshrah-Ky-Ushsj

Datafile on System VV-99-7JE-2N71: Dangerous ion discharge activity present. Sun: spectral classification orange-yellow; see reference note later in file. Sixteen main planetary bodies identified. Nine planets are gaseous; seven are solid matter. Five of the solid worlds have atmospheres. Planet Four has a breathable atmosphere; variety of lifeforms present, none are predatory to sapient. Unable to perform complete planetary survey. Alert: Detailed analysis of solar componentry has shown massive flaring and outgassing with potential for nova explosion. Standard warning beacons have been placed along outer system perimeter.

found. The information consists of a survey report performed by a scout during the days of the Old Republic. The gamemaster may either read the sidebar "Report by Republic Scout Bshrah-Ky-Ushsj" aloud or allow the one player to read it to himself.

If the characters confront Sig Coven about this information, he replies that it's all part of the business. "It's a calculated risk," he says. "You've taken risks, haven't you? The sun was there when I arrived. I'm sure it will still be there when we return. And I certainly don't plan on being there when and if it explodes."

Episode Two: The Pirate Ship

The gamemaster should read the following passage aloud when the characters arrive at system VV-99-7JE-2N71:

You arrive in the system where the *Kragg's Fury* should be found. As you pass around the far side of an unnamed world covered in yellow-orange clouds, a looming hulk slowly becomes visible. The battle vessel is huge, almost comparable to a Dreadnaught or Victory Star Destroyer. Power turrets, ancient blaster cannons, and missile tubes cover the ship from bow to stern. Sharp grapples and tractor beams adorn the ship's broadsides.

The huge derelict's outer skin is dark and time-worn, making it difficult for the rays of the weak sun to reflect off it. Since its maneuvering thrusters are not functioning, the ponderous vessel is listing slightly to one side. As you maneuver around the derelict,

the sun's rays finally catch a painted emblem adorning the ship's upper hull: a crimson fist set upon a circle of gold. Scholar Durns excitedly points to it — the personal mark of Buccaneer Hez Kragg!

The characters and other gamemaster characters must decide where to initially dock their ship and begin exploring. There are docking ports available at the bow, amidships, and there is an open docking bay in the belly of the vessel. The docking bay is large enough to accommodate the characters' ship.

Wherever the characters dock, the ship seems to have power, atmosphere, and gravity only in certain random areas. Pressure and blast doors open readily between pressurized areas, leading them deeper into the seemingly abandoned vessel. Coven warns the characters to be careful. It's not unusual for abandoned ships, especially vessels involved in criminal enterprise, to be rigged with explosives or other dangers.

The first trap the characters encounter is a cantilevered corridor floor. When too many characters are standing at one end of the corridor, the floor slants and drop those characters into a high-walled pit. Over their heads, a section of the ceiling slowly drops, extending razor-sharp spikes as it descends! If the characters cannot find a way to climb out of the pit, a wall panel, when pushed, sets a switch to reverse the spikes. Of course, the characters can be suitably embarrassed if Sig Coven and his trusty length of thincord saves them.

Now that the characters realize this ship is a flying booby-trap, they can be cautious. But as they maneuver closer to the ship's bridge, the passageways become more treacherous. The characters have to swing or climb around whole spaces where deck plates have been removed. On at least one occasion, Keya Durns has to be rescued from a particularly nasty trap by a valiant character. Her attitude toward that one character changes from icy hostility to mild appreciation. To extend the length of this adventure or to add to the excitement and perils, gamemasters might want to include their own traps or other obstacles.

As the characters press on further into the ship, mysterious clanging sounds begin to echo down the hallways. Entering a new corridor closer to the bridge, the characters see the source of the clanging sounds. Several ancient defense droids come charging down the corridor, as many as there are characters, swinging vibro-swords and other melee weapons.

Defense Droids. All stats are 1D except: *Dexterity 2D, brawling*

parry 3D+2, melee weapons 4D, melee parry 4D, Strength 2D, brawling 4D. Armor adds +1D to Strength when resisting physical attacks, +2 when resisting energy attacks. Move 8. Vibro-sword (STR+2D+2), vibro-axe (STR+3D+1).

After defeating the defense droids, the characters' group reaches a portal which leads to the bridge. The portal is sealed with a magnetically-shielded blast door (blaster fire only ricochets back at the characters). Ancient numbers protrude like huge buttons on the door. The numbers appear like so:

20	18
12	25
3	14
6	10
21	9

Four long marks or numerals, "IIII," are engraved atop the portal. After some consideration and argument, Jonas Durns believes the numbers on the door represent letters of the alphabet: 1 equals A, 2 equals B, and so on. Simple, right? The four marks above the portal indicate that they must press four letters. Thinking quickly, Durns surmises that the password might be F-U-R-Y since "Hez" consists of three letters and "Kragg" is spelled with five letters. Therefore, all the characters have to do is press the corresponding numbers in the right order to spell out F-U-R-Y. But Sig Coven is suspicious. True, all the letter-number codes for F-U-R-Y are present, but the puzzle looks ridiculously easy.

Have a player try it. Pressing the numbers that spell out F-U-R-Y (6, 21, 18, and 25) releases four more defense droids back up the corridor. These droids have similar statistics from the first droids, except they are also armed with blaster pistols (4D). And there is no cover to hide behind in the corridor leading up to the bridge blast door.

The key to the puzzle lies in the four marks or numbers at the top of the portal. The marks have a dual purpose — not only do they tell the characters that they must press four numbers to open the door, but that the spelling of "Fury" is in an ancient pirate dialect used by star pirates from Hez Kragg's homeworld. In this pirate dialect, "Fury" is spelled F-U-R-I (with an I instead of a Y). Pressing 6, 21, 18, and 9 opens the portal and deactivates the defense droids.

The gamemaster may allow characters to make Very Difficult languages rolls to figure out the puzzle at the last possible second. If they still can't get it, Jonas Durns finally realizes the proper spelling.

Episode Three: Fury's Bridge

If they manage to pass the portal, our brave explorers finally reach the bridge of the ancient starship. Something is seated in the command chair. It's a skeleton, possibly Hez Kragg himself, but Jonas Durns is not sure. Standing inert beside the command chair is a four-armed gladiator droid, much taller and dangerous-looking than the defense droids. The droid looks inactive ... but laying at the skeleton's feet are two open chests. One is filled with jewels and riches, the other appears empty. Durns is stupefied — there is nothing in the fable about which chest to take!

Cautiously, one of the characters may boldly step forward and examine the chests. The gladiator droid does nothing. There is no indication of any hidden switches or wires. A Heroic *Perception* or *search* roll might indicate that if either chest is lifted, something might happen.

If the characters opt for the chest that appears empty, a hologram appears of the fabled ancient pirate. The gamemaster should read Hez Kragg's message aloud:

"So, you star-scuffers finally reached my bridge, eh? My pirate's journey is at an end. Take what you have and leave!"

The gladiator droid activates, stepping down to a control console to activate the *Fury's* main drive. The vessel heads relentlessly towards the system's sun! Timed explosives destroy the maneuvering systems and the engineering controls — the vessel is locked on its final course! The characters must get back to their ship fast!

If the characters opt for the chest that is full of jewels and riches, then the hologram speaks a different message:

"You are as brave as you are greedy! What fine pirates you would make, if you live long enough to enjoy my treasure!"

The gladiator droid activates the ship's main drive as before — setting it on a collision course with the sun — and then attacks the characters! The characters have to defeat the warrior droid first and get back to their ship!

Ancient Gladiator Droid. All stats are 1D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *brawling parry* 5D, *dodge* 4D, *melee combat* 6D+2, *melee parry* 5D,

Strength 3D, *brawling* 5D. Armor adds +2D to *Strength* when resisting damage from physical attacks, +1D when resisting energy attacks. Gets two attacks per round. Move: 8. Vibro-swords (one for each of 4 appendages; STR+2D+2).

The characters have little time to get back to their vessel and abandon the pirate ship. As they watch from a distance, the *Fury* continues its arrow-straight course for the heart of the sun until it vanishes in a series of brilliant explosions.

If the characters managed to swipe the chest full of riches, the Empire will have heard of the characters' misadventure and confiscate the entire treasure when they return. All the characters will receive is their original 5,000 credits and a voucher for the remainder when the Empire finally gets around to processing their salvage request!

If the characters opted for the empty chest, the seal on top of the chest is far more valuable. It is a beautiful stone, encrusted in rare jewels, shaped as the crimson fist of Hez Kragg — undeniable proof the dread pirate once lived! The university eagerly accepts the stone as part of its collection, and reward the characters with 25,000 credits to split among themselves.

For surviving this adventure, the gamemaster may award five to eight character points, depending on the characters' courage and heroics.

Countdown to Disaster

In this New Republic adventure, a lunatic is holding a powerful New Republic senator and dozens of others prisoner on a out-of-control magnetic-lift train which is destined to explode! The characters can be agents assigned to protect the controversial senator, or they might be innocent passengers who are unlucky enough to be on the train during its appointment with disaster.

To begin the adventure, the gamemaster should read the following aloud:

Drextar Pym is an outspoken New Republic senator from Exarga. The senator leads the panel responsible for prosecuting

Security Alert

Threats have been made against Senator Pym's life. According to New Republic Intelligence, many of these threats originate from Imperial warlord factions and other remnants of the former Empire. The upcoming diplomatic conference may provide an opportunity for an attack against the senator. Any such attacker should be apprehended alive, if possible.

former Imperial officials and military leaders, a popular position among vengeful citizens. Pym's rise to diplomatic power, along with his controversial statements calling for stronger punishments, has made him numerous enemies. The senator and his staff are currently traveling to a diplomatic conference via a magnetic-lift train. Pym is using the trip as an opportunity to win friends in the galactic news media and spout about his own political agenda.

Drexlar Pym. All stats are 2D except: dodge 2D+2, *Knowledge* 2D+2, *bureaucracy* 6D+2, *business* 5D, *planetary systems* 6D+2, *Perception* 3D. "Pym for New Republic Council" holostickers, diplomatic identification, 2,500 credit voucher.

Drexlar Pym is a loud and boisterous Human male, approximately 50 years old. Make no mistake that Pym, a long-time bureaucrat, is hoping to reach the highest echelons of the New Republic government. His position as chief prosecutor for Imperial war crimes has made him a public hero and an outspoken media sensation. Although few would question his devotion or fanaticism, Pym's home-world of Exarga was quite distant from the fighting during the galactic civil war. Compared to the destruction that befell other worlds, Exarga and its ore processing companies made a healthy profit supplying materials to the Rebel Alliance. A deeper probe into Pym's past reveals he still is a secret stockholder for several of these companies and these firms still have ties with several Imperial factions.

If the characters are assigned to Pym's security detail, the gamemaster should begin the adventure by showing or reading them the sidebar marked "Security Alert." If the characters are simply passengers on the train, gamemasters should begin the adventure as if the magnetic-lift train were a routine journey.

The magnetic-lift train journey to the diplomatic conference takes three days. Despite all warnings against it, the senator refuses any other form of transportation. Pym wants the slower magnetic-

lift train ride so he can, "speak with the representatives of the citizens at length." Several reporters from various galactic news agencies have been invited to join the senator on the train.

In addition to Senator Pym, the entourage includes his wife and two young sons. In public, the Pym family is very much the model of the perfect household. Mistress Pym is a dutiful wife who smiles a lot for the holo-cameras. Pym's sons, Kyle and Dirv, are young, precocious, and full of mischief. During the trip they wipe news reporters' datacards, pickpocket objects from the characters appointed to the security detail, and continually run up and down the length of the train like out-of-control speeder bikes. A protocol-

series droid, V-3P5, has been appointed to watch over the boys. Needless to say, Vee-Three has his servomotors full.

The first two days of the trip are uneventful. Senator Pym spends much of his time before the holo-cameras, letting them record a "normal working day in his busy life." His wife, sons and even Vee-Three are interviewed and re-interviewed at length.

Much of the news media's attention is centered on Pym and his controversial attitude toward the treatment of Imperial prisoners. Many member worlds of the New Republic Senate have joined Pym's growing outrage at merely incarcerating and rehabilitating most convicted prisoners.



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Episode One: The Storm Breaks

On day three, the magnetic-lift train's path takes it through several rugged mountains and across long bridges before reaching the seashore. New Republic security craft and personnel are keeping a watchful eye on these stretches of track.

The senator and his family have scheduled a lunch-time meeting in the central dining car. This meeting is the last press conference before the train's arrival at the diplomatic conference. Holo-cameras have been set up for a live broadcast which will be watched by millions of beings in the surrounding systems as well as those attending the conference.

The senator and his wife appear. His wife expresses some concern that she cannot find the boys. On a Moderate *Perception* roll, the characters notice that the train is speeding up. Pym takes a moment to stand before a podium to address the holo-cameras. He speaks only a few words when the video monitors situated in each car of the train suddenly fill with static. A calm voice comes over the train's intercom system.

Read the following aloud:

"Pardon this intrusion, but the good senator will no longer be able to communicate with you. I have taken control of this train of fools — everyone aboard it will perish. Senator Pym, if you and your wife would kindly observe the monitor where you stand, I believe there is something there that will be of interest to you."

The picture snaps back on line. The camera shows Kyle and Dirv, the senator's sons, bound and gagged somewhere on the train. The background is hidden in shadow, making it close to impossible to tell where they are exactly. The camera pivots on Vee-Three, who has been magnetically attached to a wall. The disembodied voice returns.

"Senator Pym, I find you guilty of wrongful prosecution and treason against the Empire. If you watch carefully, I will demonstrate what will happen to traitors, and to those whom you hold dear."

The droid is shot apart, limb by limb, with precision blaster fire. Vee-Three clamors uselessly for help. Pym's wife shrieks in horror as the camera returns to face Kyle and Dirv. Again, the voice glowers.

"This train shall be the chariot of your misfortune, senator. I have placed several powerful explosives on board this train. Any attempt to get off or stop the train will result in the demise of the Pym children in the manner demonstrated. In less than half an

hour, this train will reach the conference site and explode — killing all of you and every being there while the galaxy watches. A suitable punishment for Senator Pym's crimes, I suppose."

The transmission ends, filling the train's video monitors with static. A timer, indicating the train's estimated time of arrival at the conference site, appears at the bottom of the flickering screen. The countdown has started. The characters have a little less than half an hour!

As he stands behind the podium holding his sobbing wife in front of the cameras, Senator Pym's face grows paler by the moment. Looking down, he pulls her back protectively. One of Pym's aides points at the podium and shrieks, "It's a bomb!"

Nestled inside the podium is an explosive device. A Moderate *demolition* roll reveals that the design of this device is extremely elaborate. Wires run down the sides into the train's own power linkage systems. Merely touching the outer casing of the bomb changes certain lights on the device from green to red — a sure indication that any number of things might set the bomb off. The bomber's voice mocks them from the monitor screens:

"Did you really think that I would leave my toys out in plain sight just so that you can disarm them? Those bombs are only the appetizers! The main course has yet to be served!"

Characters searching the entire train and making Moderate *search* rolls find more such bombs, one per car. With 12 cars making up the train, and each bomb slightly different in appearance and design, there isn't enough time to disarm them all! The voice on the monitors returns:

"There may be those among the senator who doubt my ability ... or my authority. You have exactly 10 seconds to get everyone out of the last car of this train."

Ten seconds later, the last car disconnects itself from the train. Its emergency brakes activate, slowing the car down before it explodes. All that remains of the abandoned lounge car is a smoking, twisted hulk on the tracks.

After the initial "demonstration," 11 cars are left, all pulled by a drive engine. From the back of the train there are four cars for general passenger seating, four more cars for sleeping accommodations, one for dining and special events like Pym's media conference, one for passenger luggage and other stowable items, and the last car which carries supplies and food for the train's journey as well as a section that doubles as train crew quarters. The destroyed car was

an observation and lounge car.

It is possible for characters to move around the train through the regular corridors and by climbing on top of the roof. The train is moving much faster than its safety limits — the cars rock back and forth violently as they shoot around curves. Moving around the top of the train is very dangerous; characters require Moderate *Dexterity* rolls to get around safely. Hanging on underneath the magnetic-lift train is also extremely dangerous; characters need to make Moderate *climbing/jumping* or *Strength* rolls to hang on. Jumping off the train could mean serious injury and probable death.

All train controls — like those for slowing down or disconnecting cars — are located in the drive engine up front. The train crew in the drive engine does not respond to the intercom or the train steward's personal comlink.

Personal comlinks work for the characters, and communications can be established between characters and New Republic security forces working down the line. They have been alerted to the danger at the conference site and a general evacuation is underway.

To make matters worse, one reporter from the galactic news agencies, Sella Marik, wants to follow the characters everywhere they go. She makes every attempt to report the whole story as it happens. This can result in some pretty humorous and dangerous situations as she noses around the train and gets into trouble.

Sella Marik, Galaxy 9 News Reporter. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 2D+2, *dodge* 5D+2, *running* 4D+2, *Knowledge* 4D, *Mechanical* 3D, *communications* 8D, *Perception* 3D+1, *bargain* 6D+1, *con* 7D+2, *hide* 5D+1, *investigation* 5D+1, *search* 6D+1, *sneak* 6D+1, *brawling* 5D, *climbing/jumping* 4D, *Technical* 3D+2, *computer programming/repair* 5D, *first aid* 5D. Move: 10. Holo-camera with live connection to Galaxy 9 broadcast central at conference, recorder wand.

Episode Two: A Plan of Action

The characters must come up with a plan to stop this mysterious madman, save the senator's children, the lives of everyone on the train, thousands of innocents at the conference, and their own lives! But if the bombs found by the characters are only the "appetizers," where are the larger ones?

If the characters look beneath the magnetic-lift train by climbing down from the gap between cars, they find an even more elaborate-looking explosive device (requiring a Very Difficult *demolition* roll to disarm, or a Heroic *demolition* roll to discover that the bomb is actually a fake) which cannot be reached unless the characters

climb under the train (a Moderate *climbing/jumping* or *Strength* roll to hang on). After the characters disarm it, a light on the bomb turns from green to red. The bomber's voice comes from the train's intercom system:

"Congratulations! After all that — you disarmed a decoy! You are wasting precious time looking in the wrong place! For such foolishness, you now have exactly seven seconds to evacuate everyone from the last car!"

After precisely seven seconds, the last car disconnects itself from the train and explodes. Passengers scream. News reporters capture the destruction with their holo-recorders. The voice laughs at them:

"Now if you had spent your time trying to stop me at the drive engine, none of this would have ever happened!"

The characters make their way up to the drive engine. The car just before the drive engine is the secondary stowage/train crew car. Racks of food containers, blankets, sheets, and other items are stored here. If the characters come through the regular corridors, the door locks on either end of this car activate, effectively sealing the characters inside. Before the characters whip out their blasters and other weapons to cut their way through the locks, a video monitor activates and the bomber's voice fills the compartment:

"Let us not be so hasty to use violence. Of course you must have seen the containers of ligatic acid I left open in here? Over there on the racks. One trace spark and, well, the explosion will kill all of you and set off every single charge I placed on this train."

Deactivating the door locks requires a Very Difficult *security* or *computer programming/repair* roll. If the characters cannot deactivate the locks, they must find another way out. There are no windows to kick or knock out in this car, but there is a loading door. The characters must open this door and climb on top of the car to try and get over to the drive engine.

Once the characters deactivate the locks or climb out, the disembodied voice from the monitors cheers them on:

"Good for you! You're only steps away from taking the drive engine. Perhaps I am inside with the senator's sons?"

The first character who sets foot on the connection that links the car to the drive engine is shocked with a electrical charge (causing 6D damage). Again, the voice taunts them:

"Oops. I guess I forgot to tell you that I wired the exterior of the

drive engine with its own power grid. You should have seen what it did to the engine crew. You might say they were fried. Ouch! So sorry. You can't stop the train from the drive engine! For your stupidity, you shall lose the last car ... in five seconds."

Five seconds later, the last car disconnects from the train and explodes, killing anyone who did not escape in time. By now, the remaining cars are crowded with panicking passengers.

During the countdown, passengers and characters notice that the video monitors are displaying financial data and other information. Pym is exasperated — the information being displayed is coming from his own personal files! An Easy *business* roll indicates that Drexter Pym is still receiving credits from stock transactions long after he became a senator for the New Republic. A Moderate *business*, *bureaucracy* or *Knowledge* roll reveals that many of these companies have associations with Imperial warlords and criminal organizations. The mad bomber's voice speaks again:

"Behold Senator Pym in all his glory — little more than a greedy bureaucrat with a taste for power. Take a good look at your hero now! He sentenced me to a life of misery when all I did was take orders! How much worse is the traitor interested only in lining his own pockets?"

Pym is flabbergasted and embarrassed. The news reporters capture his expression on their holo-recorders. Still, the senator rails angrily at the video monitors. "Who are you? What do you want from me? Just return my sons to me!"

Episode Three: Tunnel Vision

New Republic security forces contact the characters on a secure comlink channel. Another magnetic-lift train is desperately catching up to their train, pushing several empty cars. If the characters keep the bomber occupied, they can try to get everyone evacuated off the train.

Minutes later, the second train is seen catching up. The characters continue their efforts to keep the attacker occupied as the second train approaches. The gap closes between the two rushing vehicles. Passengers are frantic to leap across to safety.

The two trains plunge into a long dark tunnel. All lighting inside the train goes out, except for the video monitors, which continue to show only the timer and static.

Without warning, the last car disconnects from the ever-shrinking train and the emergency brakes automatically activate. Any passenger or character on that car is trapped unless they make a

Difficult *climbing/jumping* roll to leap to the next car. The pursuing train slams into the runaway car. A powerful explosion engulfs the wreck and destroys the surrounding tunnel.

The voice returns to goad the characters:

"My, what a recipe for disaster. I bet no one will be trying that again."

Senator Pym shakes his fist angrily. "You madman! What do you want? Leave these poor people alone! You want me? Take me!"

"Well said. By the way senator — have you seen your wife lately?"

The train's internal lights return. The characters and Pym check all around, but it is too late. Mistress Pym is gone.

The characters now have less than 15 minutes to put an end to the madman's plan and stop the train. Characters on top of the train or looking forward can see the rapidly-approaching seashore resort where the conference is taking place. The characters have looked everywhere. But have they?

The bomber has been slipping subtle hints about his identity into his messages. For example: "Those bombs are only the appetizers." "They (the train crew) must have been fried." "My, what a recipe for disaster ..."

If the characters can't quite figure it out, the train steward steps forward. He remembers an abrupt switch in train crew personnel before the train left for this trip. The head cook for the journey had taken ill and a new cook had been assigned to take his place.

The bomber is the new cook! But what is truly important about learning the identity of the bomber is that the cook is considered "on-call" at all times — the cook's quarters are separate from the rest of the train crew. The cook's quarters are in the dining car!

The characters rush to the dining car. The steward tries the door to the cook's quarters, and is blown back by a sensor boobytrap. The steward is knocked unconscious by the flying door but is not injured too badly. A character who grabs the door handle before the train steward takes 4D damage from the exploding door.

The characters find the senator's children tied up inside and knocked unconscious from some kind of sleeping gas, along with the remains of the protocol droid Vee-Three. The voice from the video monitors continues on, a recording from a datapad patched into the train's intercom network:

"Well done. By now you have rescued the senator's sons. Ah, but where is his beloved wife? Safe with me. You will never stop

the train in time!"

The characters check the timer. There are barely minutes left until the train reaches the conference station!

One of the characters sees something out of the corner of his eye. Something is twitching. It's Vee-Three! He's still operational! Seeing that he is safe among friends, the droid finally speaks:

"Oh my goodness! He's quite mad! I saw him do everything! He's carrying a data terminal that controls all of the train's functions. He said something about escaping! Hurry! He has Mistress Pym! You must stop him!"

An emergency window creaks open on its hinges. Outside the window a series of runs leads up to the roof of the train ...

Episode Four: Final Confrontation

As the characters follow the bomber up to the roof, doors connecting the passageways on the train seal themselves shut. Tiny explosives in the locks fuse the doors tight. The passengers are trapped inside the speeding train!

The bomber is a trim, gaunt Human male of indeterminate age, carrying a portable data terminal and wearing a jet pack. Mistress Pym is gagged and held firmly beside him. The conference site station is rapidly approaching. The bomber jeers at the characters:

"Come any closer and Mistress Pym is going to take a nasty fall! Why are you even bothering to stop me? At this speed, the train will crash at the end of the line — a sensor on the front of the engine will set off the explosives! That will teach the senator and all of you for turning me — an elite Imperial Storm Commando — into a prison cook!"

Former Imperial Storm Commando. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 7D, *brawling* 5D, *dodge* 5D, *jet pack operations* 4D, *Strength* 3D+1, *brawling* 6D+1, *climbing/jumping* 5D+1, *computer programming/repair* 6D, *demolitions* 8D, *security* 8D. Move: 10. Blast vest (+1 energy, +1D physical, torso only), modified blaster pistol (4D+2), data terminal, jet pack.

What the former commando does not see, however, is reporter Sella Marik, who ran ahead of the car before kicking out a window and climbing up on the roof. She approaches the commando from behind and calls out to him to get his attention, "Excuse me! Do you have anything to say to the viewers watching at home?"

Surprised, the former commando turns around. Mistress Pym

ducks under his grasp, slipping to the roof of the train and out of harm's way.

If the characters open fire on the commando, a torso shot can strike the jet pack. A character who states he's specifically targeting the commando's jet pack can hit it with a Very Difficult *blaster* roll. Blasting the jet pack sends the commando zooming out of control, the data terminal flying out of his hands. He crashes into the closest available obstacle of the gamemaster's choice, and although severely injured, he is captured by New Republic forces. The data terminal shatters on the rushing ground below.

If the characters' shots hit only the commando, he drops the data terminal while Mistress Pym frantically crawls away. The race is on for the characters to subdue the commando and grab the terminal. During the scuffle, the data terminal slips off the train roof and shatters on the ground below.

With the data terminal broken, the speeding train is now back in the characters' control. Someone has to stop it and soon — the conference station also happens to be the end of the line!

Since the passageway doors inside are still sealed, the characters have to run to the drive engine along the roof, (don't forget that *Moderate Dexterity* roll to stay on the roof!) Once they reach the drive engine, they no longer have to worry about the power grid trap — it was deactivated when the portable data terminal was destroyed. Once inside, a *Moderate Mechanical* roll turns off the engine throttle and activates the brakes.

Brakes screaming, the train still hurtles forward. Unfortunately, the commando was right — the train still has enough momentum to crash through the end of the line — and explode! A New Republic airspeeder has come down to assist, but there is little it can do to help. A character is going to have to climb down to the front of the engine (a Difficult *climbing/jumping* roll) and disarm the sensor (a *Moderate sensors* or *Technical* roll.)

Even after the character disarms the sensor and prevents the train from exploding, there is no time for the character to climb back inside the train before it crashes through the end of the line! Realizing this, the pilot of the New Republic airspeeder hovers close. The character has one slim chance to leap and grab onto the speeder's extended landing skid with a Very Difficult to Heroic *climbing/jumping* roll!

Just after the character is carried safely away by the airspeeder, the magnetic-lift train zips through the conference station, crashes through a bumper and goes off the rail. Plowing through deep sand

dumped by emergency crews to contain fires, the train careens along its mad course, knocking small structures and other vehicles flat until it finally stops. Characters who were not seated or prepared when the train crashed are automatically incapacitated with severe head wounds and bruises. Other passengers and characters receive either light wounds or injuries equal to stun damage.

If the former storm commando is still alive, he is taken into custody by New Republic security forces. He reveals how he rigged the train by first posing as a New Republic security officer and then later poisoning the cook to take his place. After he is debriefed long enough so all explosives on the defunct train can be disarmed, the storm commando is returned to a maximum security rehabilitation colony ... and sentenced to permanent kitchen duty.

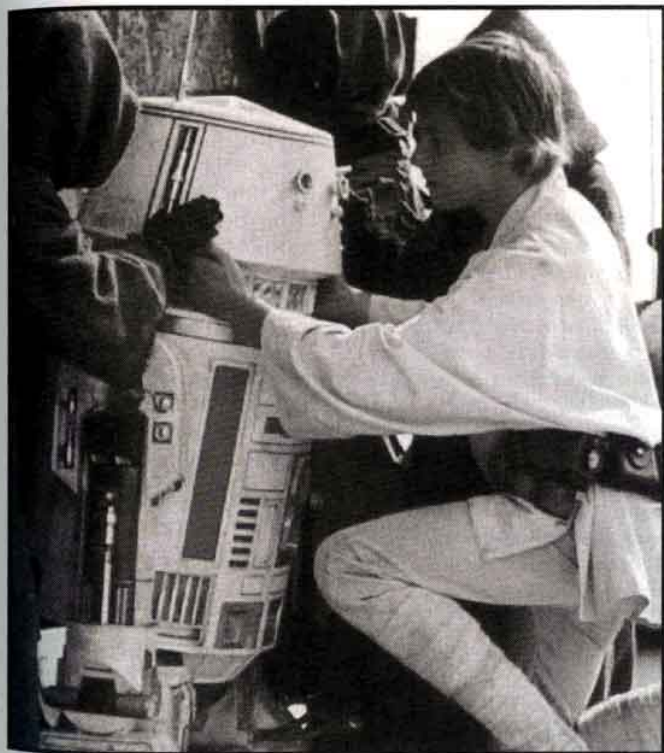
Unfortunately, there is little Senator Pym can do about his damaged reputation. Forever grateful that his wife and sons are safe, his senatorial privileges are nonetheless suspended until a complete senate investigation is conducted.

Reporter Sella Marik gets the story she has been waiting for all her life. Not only is she praised for her act of heroism, Galaxy 9 News promotes her from field reporter to central correspondent. She asks the characters to look her up some time so she can file her next big story.

Characters assigned to the senator as part of his security detail receive commendations, extended vacation leave, and six to nine character points. Characters who were just trying to help out as good citizens get to appear in an exclusive interview on Galaxy 9 News, their medical costs paid by the New Republic, and six to nine character points as well. The gamemaster may award additional character points for inventive roleplaying or character interaction.



The History of R-Series **ASTROMECH DROIDS**



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By Pablo Hidalgo

Illustrations by Matt Busch



Jhensara propped her feet on the console. Things couldn't be better. A paid-off starship, a full cargo-hold, and a promising destination. If only her nav computer agreed with her.

Alarm klaxons wailed, waking Jhensara out of her wistful reverie.

"Blast it," she cursed, "what now?"

She consulted her nav computer screen, but it was difficult to see it for all the smoke. Jhensara began to question the value of the bargain she'd received when she bought the ship.

Jhensara looked out of the viewport at the asteroid storm ahead. It didn't take long for her to determine that she wasn't in the Thrynka system.

The tired computer ran through its diagnostic cycle and spat impolite conclusions at her. Alluvial damper ... out. Lateral thrusters ... dying. Hyperdrives ... hyperdrives ...

Jhensara felt the need to curse again. She actually began to panic, but only for a moment.

"Artoo, Arfive, Arthree," she called. "You boys have work to do."

Machines break down — a fact with which every spacer has to deal. Across the galaxy, entire corporations have risen dedicated solely to repair and maintenance.

As spacefaring technology advanced over the millennia,

and repair systems became increasingly sophisticated, the average consumer did not have to worry about endless technical terms and numbers. It was only natural that as droid technology advanced to a state of full and near-full sentience in machines that the task of intricate repair was delegated to the droids.

Fifth-degree droids with marginal intelligence and few higher functions had existed for thousands of years, but only fulfilled roles of tireless assistants to living, sentient technicians. It was not until the pairing of higher-degree droid processors and tool-tipped appendages that the second-degree droid became successful.

The astromech droid is an example of a second degree droid. Industrial Automaton is the leader in this field, and continues to excel with the popular R-series astromech droids. It all started with an ugly business deal.

Humble Origins

During the Old Republic, a corporate merger between Automata Galactica and Industrial Intelligence led to the birth of Industrial Automaton. The circumstances surrounding the merger were less than amicable. Although not competitors, the two corporations were not friendly with each other, and

rumors ran rampant about how Automata Galactica acquired the economic strength to purchase Industrial Intelligence. As such, working relations were strained, and higher executives at Industrial Intelligence sealed all their data concerning their top-secret projects.

Slicers and datatechs worked for years to decipher the pro-

Intellex was the name of a powerful computer configuration used to sort incredible amounts of information. Besides being small, the Intellex featured a system that made it adapt and improve existing computer configurations.

The Intellex computer was originally designed to be an advanced "housekeeping" system

Corporate Secrets

Despite the efforts of some of Industrial Automaton's brightest computer specialists, there are still over 3,000 datafiles still encrypted in the old Industrial Intelligence memory vaults. Rumors persist that the encrypt programs were written by a prolific Givin theorist. Others say that secret techniques were invoked in the creation of the files' protection.

What the files may contain also remains a mystery. Industrial Intelligence was a think-tank of varied Human and alien technical theorists. Spacer rumor says that warped-space technology, temporal displacement theorems and unbelievable superweapons may be found in the files. New Republic specialists are attempting to crack the codes.

Industrial Automaton's official position on this has always been tight-lipped. "If a formula exists for turning carbonite into nova-crystals, I'm sure it would have been discovered by now." IA's president, Julynn Kentas said. "It's old data — pay it no mind."

grams, and eventually cracked through to them. Occupying much of the secret memory were corporate monetary records and other inconsequential information. The true prize for the newly renamed Industrial Automaton was a file named Intellex.

for starships. The computer system held 200 starship configurations and could perform up to 7,000 MPF operations a second. Despite such (then) impressive capabilities, the system was only meant to function in an advisory role to starship captains.

Automata Galactica—a dedicated droid hardware manufacturer—took the computer system and implanted it into a prototype maintenance droid called the P2. The P2 unit was sold exclusively to the Old Republic shipping fleet to test the prototype, and serve the massive shipping vessels.

P2 Astrodroids

P2s were the first of Industrial Automaton's astromech droids, and a precursor to the R-series. Never manufactured for public consumption, the large, cylindrical droid served aboard container vessels and other capital-scale space transports. The droid was equipped with many tools such as laser welders and buzzsaws, as well as a powerful sensor package. The droid was clumsy, however, and lacked aesthetic value. It served the Old Republic shipping fleet well. To this day, some of these larger droids are found operating on independent and privateer vessels.

■ P2 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton Astromech Droid Prototype

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

Space transports 2D

PERCEPTION 1D

Search 2D

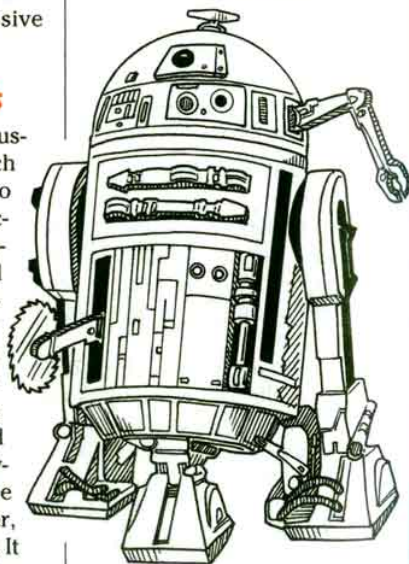
STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D

Space transports repair 5D

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Heavy grasper arm
- Three medium arms (retractable)
- Laser welder (5D damage, 0.5 meter range)
- Video display screen
- Buzzsaw (5D damage)



Special Abilities:

Strengthened Body: The P2's shell gives it +1D to STR when resisting damage.

Story Factors:

Outdated: The P2 cannot be purchased new anymore, and those encountered are often modified from the above stats.

Move: 4

Size: 2.2 meters

Cost: 2,500 (used)

Capsule: The P2 is an early precursor to the R2 astromech droid. P2s are very similar to R2s, except they are much larger. P2s have very simple minds, and

are very subservient. They are awkward, and tend to bump into things.

P2s can only communicate through their video screens or their input jacks.

The response from the P2 test was positive. Steps were implemented to bring the P2 into the market after some minor modifications. The Intellex II computer was created to facilitate the droid's new database system. The new system was capable of handling new and different starship types, including dedicated capital warships. Technicians even included a primitive nav computer program that could calculate one jump if given enough time and input.

Before the P2 production model hit the final development stage, however, executives formerly with Industrial Intellect sued Industrial Automaton's board for use of their systems. Given the state of the Republic's bureaucracy then, production was frozen for decades before the case ever went to trial. The longer the judicial system took to get to the case, the more millions upon millions of credits Industrial Automaton lost.

When Industrial Intellect discovered the case would create more attention for their secret datafiles and business practices than they were prepared to handle, Industrial Intellect dropped the case. Their board

dissolved, although some of the members went on to create other corporations—BioTech being one of the more successful ones.

Throughout the legal hassles, Industrial Automaton was left with millions of canceled pre-orders and bad publicity over the P2 name.

The R1 Unit

With restless creative, technical and marketing departments, Industrial Automaton was not going to sit still and wait for a questionable legal issue to churn its way through a labyrinthine legal system. In attempt to recover as many losses as possible, Industrial Automaton created the R1 astrodroid with very little overhead cost.

Incorporating the existing body shells of their successful Mark II reactor drone series, Industrial Automaton implanted their new Intellex III computer into the R1. The use of the Mark II shell lowered the overall production costs, and even added a new feature to their astromech droid that even the P2 lacked: extensive radiation shielding.

The R1's internal computer could handle large space transports and capital warships. The Intellex III system featured 500 starship designs and an operating speed of 10,000 MPF. The new droid design also had nav computer abilities for one-jump

calculation in unprecedented time.

The R1 was very unwieldy, moving along a single treaded unipod. For the most part, it sat about at rest, and the more intelligent ones would complain if asked to move. To increase communication between the R1 and other droids, an acoustic signaler was incorporated into the droid that allowed it to talk in

whistles and beeps.

The R1 was designed, marketed, and distributed in less than 10 years and proved to be an overnight success.

■ R1 Astromech Droid

Type: Astromech Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 2D

Astrogation 4D, space transports 3D

PERCEPTION 1D

Search 3D

STRENGTH 1D

Droidspeak

Almost all astromech droids speak in a high-pitched, information-dense binary code often referred to as Droidspeak. Even if having had years of interactive experience with droids, few Humans could ever be able to fully understand astromech droids when they vocalize with their acoustic signallers. The trilling code is very dense with information that other droids can understand. Industrial Automaton set the language standard with their astromech line. Now other droid types such as power droids, pilot droids, messenger units and even intelligent computer systems are using Droidspeak as their basic external language (Industrial Automaton accommodates this situation with only a small user fee for other droid companies to use Droidspeak).

Careful inspection of Droidspeak shows that it was constructed with perfect interaction alignment with the AA-1 VerboBrain, Cybot Galactica's language processor. This allowed Industrial Automaton's R-series astrodroids to have near-counterpart relationships with their chief competitor's successful 3PO-series protocol droids — without Cybot Galactica's permission or knowledge. This is noteworthy because Cybot Galactica's software and processing information are top secret, and Industrial Automaton has never been able to fully explain how their systems matched so perfectly. Questionable practices like these have led to the decidedly unfriendly competition between Industrial Automaton and Cybot Galactica.

TECHNICAL 2D

Capital starship repair 5D, space transports repair 5D

Equipped With:

- Treaded unipod
- Light manipulator (retractable)
- Heavy manipulator (retractable)
- Welding arm (1D to 4D damage)
- Small circular saw (3D damage)
- Laser cutters (3D+1 damage)
- Video screen
- Acoustic signaler
- Comlink

Special Abilities:

Strengthened Body: The R1's shell gives it +2D to STR when resisting damage.

Story Factors:

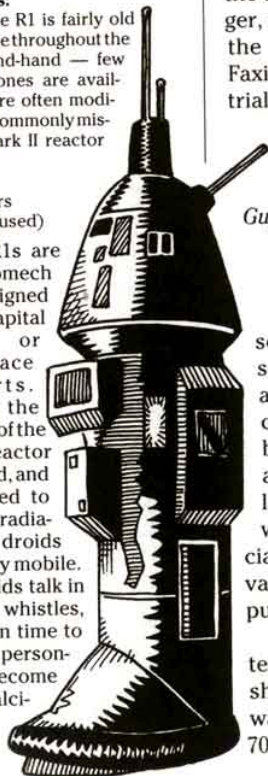
Outdated: The R1 is fairly old yet is available throughout the galaxy second-hand — few brand new ones are available. They are often modified and are commonly mistaken for Mark II reactor drones.

Move: 2

Size: 2 meters

Cost: 3,000 (used)

Capsule: R1s are large astromech droids designed for use in capital warships or large space transports. They use the bodysell of the Mark II reactor drone droid, and are armored to withstand radiation. The droids are not very mobile. These droids talk in beeps and whistles, and if given time to develop a personality can become quite recalcitrant.



The R2 Unit: A Galactic Success

The element's of the R2 unit's success were marketing and product positioning. When monitoring consumer trends, Industrial Automaton saw that small starship sales were up, making up nearly 40 percent of the starship market. There were more personal starships in the galaxy than ever. Furthermore, the trend in droids was for bigger, more imposing models like the Zubintech T-831, Delban Faxicorp DBX, and even Industrial Automaton's own R1. The designers at Industrial Automaton thought small.

No Job Is Over This Little Guy's Head

— Industrial Automaton's R2 Advertising slogan.

MechTech Illustrated described the R2's distinctive squat, barrel-shaped design as "cute." The R2 was a success story in mass-appeal, but the droid itself only came about because of the popularity of R1 droids on capital warships and large commercial freighters, as well as advances in the Intellex computer.

Sporting an Intellex IV internal computer, the R2's starship configuration database was upped to an impressive 700 designs. The droid's inter-

nal language telecom software allowed it to communicate with Republic Navy Transmission systems, (and later Imperial Navy Transmission systems) as well as Corporate Sector Standard systems.

The R2 featured a newly improved sensor package containing full spectrum transceivers, dedicated energy receptors and heat and motion detectors. The R2 also featured an improved hyperjump coordinate cache, allowing it to hold up to 10 jumps in RAM.

The droid's external appearance was streamlined, having many of its appendages tucked away. The R2 was available in a wide array of colors, including exclusive designer iridescents for the Core Worlds. Enhanced personality matrices allowed R2s to develop pleasant and distinctive personalities over time, but there was a noticeable tendency for stubborn independence in some R2 astromechs.

In a bold move, Industrial Automaton created the R2 as a starfighter interface droid, fitting the standard astromech socket requirements. This configuration was usually reserved for dedicated military droids, not commercial models. Industrial Automaton legal councilors used impressive clout to change the regulations concerning such matters. For a short time the threat of full slave-rig

systems hampered military sales, but the *Katana* fleet fiasco brought Industrial Automaton's profits back to number one.

■ R2 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton R2 Astromech Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 2D

Astrogation 5D, space transports 3D, starfighter piloting 3D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 4D, starfighter repair 5D*

* Astromech droids, if acting in copilot capacity, may attempt starship repairs while in flight.

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Retractable heavy grasper arm (lifting skill at 2D)
- Retractable fine work grasper arm
- Extendable 0.3 meter long video sensor (360-degree rotation)
- Small electric arc welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Video display screen
- Holographic projector/recorder
- Fire extinguisher
- Acoustic signaler
- Small (20 cm. by 8 cm.) internal "cargo" area
- Some additional tools and equipment

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 4,525 credits

Capsule: The R2 unit is easily the most successful astromech droid ever manufactured. It has spawned many variants across the galaxy. It can hold up to 10 hyperspace jump coordinates in RAM. This versatile droid has many features including a sen-

R2-D2 — Droid Of All Trades

One of the R2's most popular features is its adaptability. Not only is its software modular and upgradable, but its hardware components can be changed to fit various needs. Industrial Automaton, as well as other corporations, makes all manner of additional appendages, tools, manipulators, and storage devices.

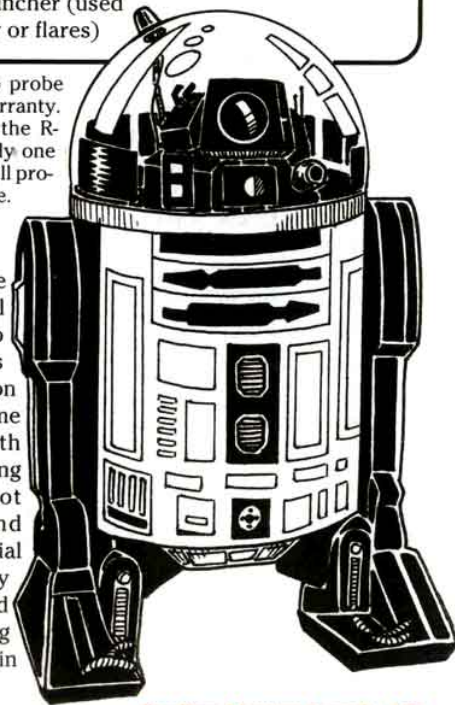
As such, the older an R2 unit is, the more diverse its tool collection. R2-D2 is one such example. Besides the standard tool and system complement, Artoo has the following equipment:

- Long range sensing array; includes radar, radiation counter and lifeform sensor, infrared receptors, electromagnetic field receptors (+3D to *search* at ranges up to 100 meters)
- Broad-band antenna receiver (can monitor all broadcast and communications frequencies)
- Compressed air launcher (used for Luke's lightsaber or flares)

sor package, an electro probe and even a three year warranty. Of the early droids in the R-series, the R2 is the only one Industrial Automaton still produces on a galactic scale.

The R3 Unit

The R2's incredible success led Industrial Automaton executives to reassess their business practices. The corporation was now finally on the same competing grounds with such droid manufacturing giants such as Cybot Galactica, Arakyd and Rebeton Kl'ian. Industrial Automaton seduced many highly skilled and talented droid engineers, allowing the corporation to excel in



fields such as protocol and medical droids.

Using the R2 as a starting point, Industrial Automaton engineers began improving the Intellex computer to higher performance levels. The R3 would be a droid dedicated to capital warship and battle station service, and would feature gunnery repair and security skills.

The same basic body shell was kept for the R3 (to reduce costs). The R3's head, however, was different. A clear plastex dome showed off the new Intellex V computer, and also gave the sensor package greater range and sensitivity.

The Old Republic purchased 125 million of the droids in its first order. They were put to service aboard all ships of the line, and lasted long enough to serve on Star Destroyers and the first two Death Stars. Although manufactured in a limited number, the R3's high price and full sales quota made the project highly profitable.

■ R3 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton R3 Astromech Droid, military issue

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 2D

Astrogation 4D, capital starship piloting 4D, space transports 3D

PERCEPTION

Search 4D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D

Capital starship repair 6D, capital starship weapon repair 6D, computer programming/repair 5D, security 5D

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Retractable heavy grasper arm (lifting skill at 2D)
- Retractable fine worker arm
- Small electric welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Video display screen
- Acoustic signaler
- Holographic projector/recorder
- Fire extinguisher

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 5,000 credits

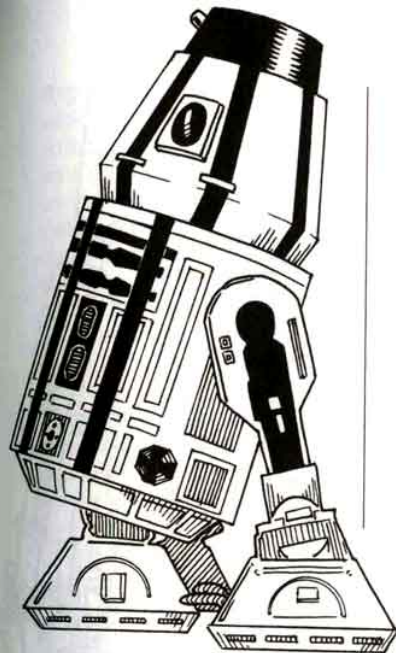
Capsule: The R3 served on many Old Republic capital warships, and has seen service on Imperial ships, privateer vessels and Rebel starships that stock up on stolen Imperial goods. Purchase of the R3 was restricted to government military agencies. Since the rise of the New Republic, Industrial Automaton has begun selling to planetary governments and private fleets. To maintain friendly relations with the New Republic, Industrial Automaton's policy restricts it from knowingly selling to the Empire or known Imperial factions.

The R3 is capable of storing up to five hyperspace jump coordinates in RAM.

The R4 Unit

Faced with complaints that the R2 was too expensive, and trying to undo the "elitist" image of the exclusive R3, Industrial Automaton specifically designed the R4 for the Outer Rim urban market.

Not technically an astromech droid, the R4 still incorporates the familiar R2 shell. The R4 can



be recognized by its truncated conical head.

To appeal to an urban market with limited income, the R4's Intellex VI computer features repulsorcraft designs as well as starship configurations.

The R4 sold well, and its low price made it very attractive to a fledgling Rebel Alliance. Many Rebel starfighters had R4 unit counterparts running repairs. This tradition has even extended to the New Republic.

■ R4 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton R4 Astromech Droid, urban issue

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 2D

Repulsorlift operation 4D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 1D TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 5D, repulsorlift repair 4D, space transports repair 5D

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Retractable heavy grasper arm (lifting skill at 2D)
- Retractable fine worker arm
- Small electric welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Acoustic signaler
- Holographic projector/recorder

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 3,000 credits

Capsule: The R4 astromech was designed specifically for the young urban crowd, and was marketed as a space transports and repulsorlift maintenance unit. This droid is popular among Rebel and privateer groups, although it can only hold one hyperspace jump coordinate in RAM.

The R5 Unit — The End of A Series

Corporate greed got the better of Industrial Automaton when it produced the R5. In an attempt to cash in on the popularity of the R2, Industrial Automaton President Julynn Kentas commissioned the R5 with nearly no market testing to see whether the general public needed or wanted a new astromech droid.

The product concept of the R5 was an economy model version of the R2. Industrial Automaton was attempting to sell

the R2's "product personality" without replicating its functionality. One of the biggest problems with the R5 was its personality matrix. Although advertised as "spunky as the little R2," its reduced manufacturing budget forced Industrial Automaton to cut corners in the droid. If given time, the R5s tended to develop sour and bitter personalities. The R5 was very unpopular, and became a marketing failure.

Industrial Automaton tried to reclaim some of its losses by incorporating the R5's body shell into another one of its lines. The R4 and R2-AG4 astromech droids use the same astromech shells. Neither sold very well.

R5 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton R5

Astromech Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 4D,
space transports repair 4D

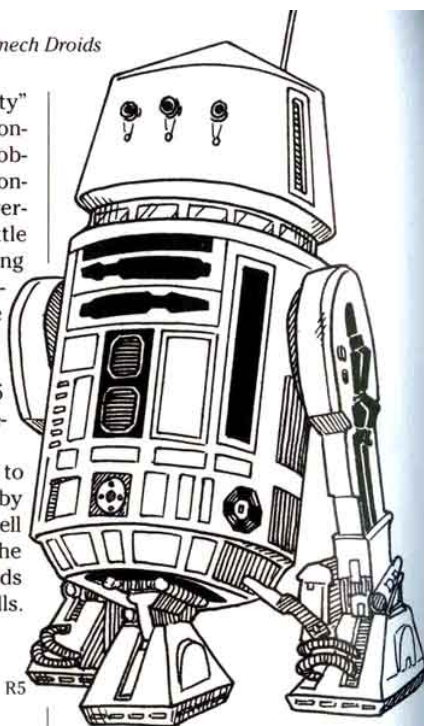
Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Retractable heavy grasper arm (*lifting skill* at 2D)
- Retractable fine worker arm
- Small electric welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Acoustic signaler
- Holographic projector/recorder
- Fire extinguisher

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 1,500 credits (used)



Capsule: The R5 was the cheapest of the R-unit series manufactured by Industrial Automaton. The line was quickly discontinued due to poor quality and poor sales. It was also a failure as a useful astromech droid, as it only held one set of hyperspace coordinates in RAM. R5s can be found throughout the Outer Rim Territories — they break down easily, and are often up for sale.

R6 — A Change In Politics

Following the deaths of Emperor Palpatine and Darth Vader at the Battle of Endor, and the subsequent rise of the New

Republic, many corporations which had "exclusive" contracts with the Empire approached the new government with peaceful overtures. Industrial Automaton did so, but received special recognition because of the role the R2 played in the Rebel Alliance's victory over the Empire.

To begin amicable relations, the New Republic commissioned a specially designed droid to serve in a new starfighter design being constructed by FreiTek Incorporated. Industrial Automaton, however, still wanted to pursue the general consumer market, as the entire galaxy was soon to be feeling a sensation of "a new beginning." Industrial Automaton's president, as ambitious as ever, ordered both projects to continue.

First on Industrial Automaton's production schedule was the R6. While research and development continued on the top secret R7, Industrial Automaton began an advertising campaign like no other, except the one that accompanied the release of the R2. The new R6 was small, had a pleasant personality, had incredible processing ability, was directed at the

general public, and, in a risky move by Industrial Automaton, was priced low.

R6 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton R6

Astromech Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrigation 5D, space

transports 4D, star-

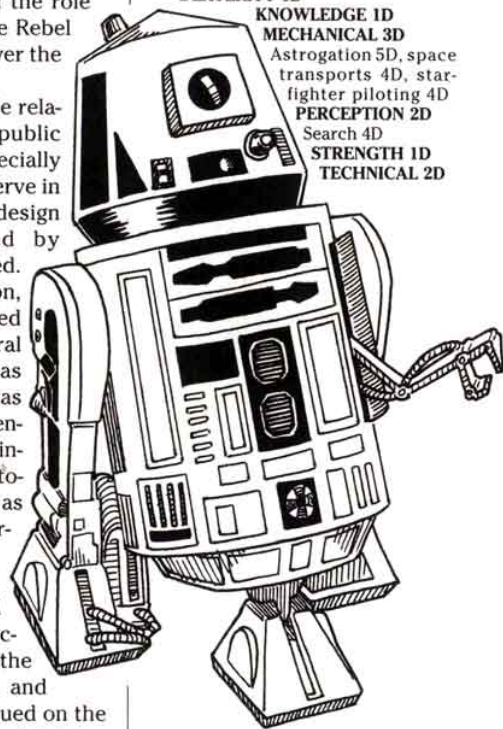
fighter piloting 4D

PERCEPTION 2D

Search 4D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D



Computer programming/repair 5D,
space transports repair 6D, star-

fighter repair 5D*
* Astromech droids, if acting in copilot capacity, may attempt starship repairs while in flight.

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Retractable heavy grasper arm (*lift-*

ing skill at 2D)

- Retractable fine worker arm
- Extendable 0.3 meter long video sensor (360-degree rotation)
- Small electric welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Video display screen
- Holographic projector/recorder
- Acoustic signaler
- Fire extinguisher
- Small (20 cm. by 8 cm.) internal "cargo" area

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 4,000 credits

Capsule: The R6 was the first astromech droid sold by Industrial Automaton after the fall of the Empire. It was built to redeem Industrial Automaton's image after the failure of the R5, and priced to sell in the turbulent economy of the New Republic. It's most impressive feature was the 12-jump memory capacity in RAM. The droid sold very well, until the rise of Grand Admiral Thrawn and the return of the struggle between the Empire and the Republic.

The R7 Unit

While the R6 was generating revenue for Industrial Automaton, the corporation's technicians and engineers worked diligently with FreiTek scientists to perfect the R7, the first R-series astromech droid designed for a specific starfighter: the New Republic E-wing.

By replacing the traditional Intellex computer with a dedicated FreiTek computer system, the engineers managed to obtain a higher counterpart

interactivity ratio than the old R2/X-wing configuration ever achieved. Before full testing could be completed, however, both the E-wing and the R7 were rushed into service to combat the resurrected Emperor's World Devastators over Calamari.

■ R7 Astromech Droid

Type: Industrial Automaton R7 Astromech Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 5D, starfighter piloting: E-wing 5D

PERCEPTION 2D

Search 4D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 6D, starfighter repair: E-wing 7D*

* Astromech droids, if acting in copilot capacity, may attempt starship repairs while in flight.

Equipped With:

- Three wheeled legs (one retractable)
- Retractable heavy grasper arm (lifting skill at 2D)
- Retractable fine worker arm
- Extendable 0.3 meter long video sensor (360-degree rotation)
- Small electric welder (1D to 5D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meter range)
- Video display screen
- Holographic projector/recorder
- Acoustic signaler
- Fire extinguisher
- Small (20 cm. by 8 cm.) internal "cargo" area

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

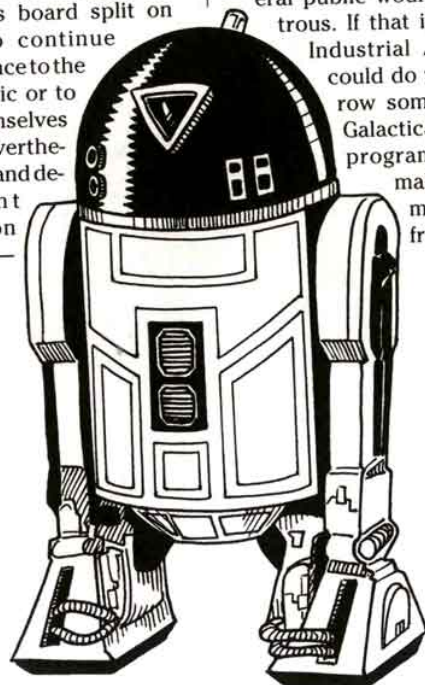
Cost: Not for sale

Capsule: The R7 is a dedicated astromech droid designed exclusively for use with the E-wing starfighter. Civilians cannot le-

gally purchase R7s, and they are somewhat limited in their abilities interfacing with craft other than the FreiTek E-wing. The R7 can hold 15 hyperspace jump coordinates in RAM.

Industrial Automaton is currently in a cautious relationship with the New Republic. Following the fighting on Coruscant and Calamari, Industrial Automaton's board split on whether to continue their allegiance to the New Republic or to declare themselves neutral. Nevertheless, design and development continue on the R8 unit —

a design rumored to be the first astromech droid to speak Basic. Although only rumor, reports state that when Industrial Automaton technicians attempted a direct link between an astromech's internal computer and a vocodor, the language and personality were so abrasive that sales to the general public would be disastrous. If that is the case, Industrial Automaton could do well to borrow some of Cybot Galactica's protocol program bases to make their R8s more user-friendly. ☐



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SMUGGLER'S LOG



■ A WORD FROM PLATT OKEEFE

Hey, there, spacer! I've just come back from an extensive business trip from the Expansion Region. You see, a few Wroonians and I had this deal going where we'd double-play the customs inspectors at Gruvia by smuggling goods into the starport in airtight containers buried under a cargo hold of foul-smelling vohis mold five weeks done rotting ...

Wait a minute, you've never heard of Wroonians? C'mon, they're about as near-Human as you can get while still having that cool attitude about them. Some of my best smuggler contacts are Wroonians. If you give me a minute, I can pull up this old datafile on Wroonians from the *Last Chance's* computers. It's a little outdated, but it can give you a decent idea of who the Wroonians are and what they're like.

◀ PREVIOUS

DATAPAGE: 144

NEXT ▶

■ DATA SEARCH ■ PROG41007 ■ FILEPATH 9506/07P//POK.NHK/RH
 ■ FILEFORM..D.PAD/DOWNLOAD ■ SOURCEFILE: SMUGGLER'S LOG ■ READING..

■ DATADUMP/EXTRACT/TRUNC ■ OKEEFE, PLATT..

WROONIANS

Appearance and Biology: Wroonians come from Wroona, a small blue world at the far edge of the Inner Rim Planets. These near-Humans' distinguishing features are their blue skin and their dark blue hair. They tend to be a bit taller than average Humans and are often slight of build. Wroonians look Human in most other respects. Their natural lifespan is a bit more than the average Human lifespan.

Temperament: Wroonians are a generally easy-going race — their prime concerns in life are obtaining wealth and enjoying themselves while doing it.

Wroonian society has always emphasized personal gain and material possessions. Each Wroonian has a different sense of what possessions are valued most in life, and what kinds of activities to profit from. Wealth could be measured in credits, land, the number of starships one has, or the number of contracts or jobs a Wroonian has had.

This need to obtain wealth is balanced by the Wroonians' carefree nature. If they were more dedicated and downright vicious in grabbing at their material possessions, they could be called greedy. But they're not. The typical Wroonian seems friendly and easy-going. Nothing seems to faze them. They're the kind of people who laugh at danger, scoff at challenges, and have a smile for you whether you're friend or foe. They always have a cheery disposition about them. Call them the optimists of the galaxy if you want, but Wroonians would rather see the cargo hold half full than half empty.

They're also concerned with having fun. To Wroonians, any action has to have some personal gain involved and a good deal of entertainment for them. They frequent spacers' bars, tell stories of past escapades, take up challenges (even if somewhat deadly), and never miss out on a wager. Almost the surest way to get a Wroonian to do what you want is to dare her to do it, or tell them they're not allowed to do something. Who cares if it's a little dangerous? As long as a Wroonian can get something out of it and can have fun while doing it, it's as good as done.

History and Culture: Wroona is a planet with vast oceans divided by long continents with thousands of kilometers of blue-sand coastline. Millennia ago, in Wroona's "dark ages," society was based on seafaring trade. Immense galleys and diagonally-masted galleons plied the oceans between Wroona's coastal kingdoms, trading in every good imaginable. Much of that daring seafaring tradition is still

◀ PREVIOUS

DATAPAGE: 145

NEXT ▶

■ DATA SEARCH ■ PROG41007 ■ FILEPATH 9506/07P/POK.NHK/RH
■ FILEFORM..D.PAD/DOWNLOAD ■ SOURCEFILE: SMUGGLER'S LOG ■ READING..

evident in their society today.

The ancient ways of the sea meant that Wroonians' lives were fraught with peril. They soon learned that to make a profit, one had to take risks. And if Wroonians were going to take such great risks without so much as flinching, they had to learn to laugh at danger and ignore death. Death among Wroonians means little — life for them is defined by what they do now, how much wealth they accumulate, and how much fun they have doing it.

Their independent nature and the constant instability of their government have led to a general distrust of authority among Wroonians. While they respect each other, they hold little respect for government of most sorts. Government to Wroonians is an easy excuse to relieve them of their wealth and restrict their freedom to pursue their fortune. The only time they submit to other authorities is when such an action has some kind of profit or sport involved.

Perhaps the Wroonians' life philosophy is best described by their principle folktale of Master Fate. Master Fate represents the winds and currents which drove the Wroonians' earliest sea-going vessels. It is said Master Fate is a jolly old man with a great blue beard — so blue that early Wroonians believed it was both the blue of the oceans and the blue of the skies. Master Fate blew the winds and currents where they most pleased him. Those who faithfully served Master Fate — from whom Fate had something to gain — were granted Fate's Pleasure, and carried out their business with his blessing.

Clear skies, a wind in your direction and good seas were signs that Master Fate favored early Wroonians. However, Fate's capricious nature also led him to cause wild storms to rear up, or entire regions of the ocean to be listless with no wind or current. Such bad fortune was not seen as punishment, but merely as a facet of Master Fate's capricious nature. Even today, some Wroonians swear by Master Fate, or invoke his name in either praise or curse, depending on the situation.

Since their dark ages, Wroonians have evolved along with the other major races of Humans. For a while Wroonian explorers expanded (on a very limited bases) known Wroonian space. But few Wroonians were interested in colonizing new worlds. When new species were encountered, Wroonian traders made the market by trading for new technology. When trade helped expand their sector, Wroonian pirates and smugglers plied the space lanes in search of their own fortune.

Although a longtime member of the Old Republic, Wroona was

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not interested in the general affairs of the galaxy. It's representatives to the Senate were mostly concerned about protecting the interests of Wroonian merchants, smugglers and pirates, and about making credits through bribes and illicit political deals. Even then, half the time Wroonians didn't care enough to send any kind of representative to the Senate.

With the advent of the Empire, Wroona gained tactical importance for its position on the outer edge of the Inner Rim Planets. An Imperial garrison was constructed on Wroona's surface, and an Imperial governor was sent to oversee the rowdy Wroonian trade guilds. High above Wroona, the Empire constructed the Wroonian stardock, an immense repair facility capable of containing an entire Imperial Star Destroyer. While not as large as other shipyards, it's viewed as a strategic resupply and repair post. (For more information about Wroona and the stardock, see *Star Wars Adventure Journal* #5, pages 283 to 284.)

Technology Level: Wroonians have evolved with the growing universe around them — although they haven't chosen to conquer the galaxy or meddle in everyone else's affairs. Wroona entered the space age along with everyone else. They're not big on developing their own technology, they just like to sit back and borrow everyone else's.

Trade and Technology: Wroona's economy is based on the activities of the Wroonian Guilds, a loose confederation of private interest trade organizations, Wroonian corporations, and shipping concerns. The guilds have limited authority over planetary affairs. Most guilds govern some aspect of trade or the economy, and a few try to bully their way as some form of government. Some guilds, such as the Guild of Honorable Technicians, or the Salvagers' Guild, are still reputable trade organizations which oversee the activities of Wroonians in those professions. Others, such as the Guild of Armament Distributors (gun-runners) and Spice Shippers have been shut down by the Imperial governor, for obvious reasons.

The guilds' powers don't reach much beyond the Wroona system itself. They govern those native Wroonians who still call the system home and base much of their business operations there. However,

**ADDENDUM/PERSONAL ..
OKEEFE/PLATT**

Wroonians are great to deal with, as long as you're not government. They don't care if you're Human or alien, and they'll treat everyone with the same friendly and carefree manner — just as long as you can fix them up with a profitable and exciting deal.

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many Wroonians who rarely return to their homeworld often pay petty tribute to a guild of their choice — it makes them part of an economic fellowship. Guild members anywhere can expect aid from other guild members, as well as guild house assistance while in the Wroona system.

Not that guild members are home enough to take advantages of such services. Most Wroonians travel the space lanes looking for fair profit in smuggling, transport, gun-running, privateering and mercenary contracts. They travel where-ever Master Fate takes them, accepting the fortune or misery he casts in their path.

Wroonians in the Galaxy: Wroona's early oceans were filled with merchants seeking their fortune, explorers seeking new and rich lands, and pirates waiting in the coves to take all the riches away from everyone else. This rich history carries into the lives of modern Wroonians. These people are renown for joining pirate and mercenary bands, and becoming successful free-traders, scouts and smugglers.

The average Wroonian is quite accepting of her fate — in most Wroonian professions, death is often a risk, yet the gain of credits and prestige (in the average Wroonian's mind) far outweighs this risk. Their easy-going nature makes them almost naturals at making deals and meeting the right contacts. They are infamous for their lack of planning, impulsive nature, and pursuit of wealth.

Humans: Wroonians

Attribute Dice: 12D
DEXTERITY 2D/4D+2
KNOWLEDGE 2D/4D
MECHANICAL 2D/4D+2
PERCEPTION 2D/4D+2
STRENGTH 2D/3D+2
TECHNICAL 2D/3D+2

Story Factors:

Pursuit of Wealth: Wroonians are always concerned with their personal wealth and belongings. The more portable wealth they own, the better. While they're not overtly greedy, almost everything they do centers around acquiring wealth and the prestige that accompanies it.

Capricious: Wroonians are also rather spontaneous and carefree. They sometimes do things because they look like fun, or seem challenging. Wroonians are infamous for taking up dares or wagers based on their spontaneous actions.

Move: 10

Size: 1.7 to 2.2 meters tall

Gamemaster Notes: Wroonians are fine smuggler stock, and make flamboyant privateer characters. A Wroonian's personal quest for

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL .. OKEEFE/PLATT

Strategy? Ha! Planning? What's that? Wroonians are about the most capricious folks in the galaxy. Fun and profit go hand in hand — and fate plays a large role in that.

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money or glory can drag other characters along a capricious and often chaotic chase for something which may seem unattainable.

Wroonians can make fun and impulsive gamemaster and player characters. They're the first ones through the hatch, the ones fast-talking the guards, and the ones cheering wildly during starfighter battles. For them, having fun is just as important as making some profit.

Personality Notes: Wroonians are pretty capricious — they'll do some things because there's profit involved, others they do because they were dared to, and still others they'll do because it's entertaining. They are quick to accept a challenge or dare, and they're often willing to put up a little wager that they'll succeed, even if the odds are grossly against them. Never dare Wroonians to do anything, and never tell them they can't do or have something — they'll take that as a direct challenge, and they'll instantly have a passion to do or possess whatever it is anyway. As the ancient Wroonian proverb reads, "To gain something today is to live today; tomorrow shall come soon enough."

Suggested Skills: Wroonians have many *Perception* skills — *bargain, con, gambling and persuasion* are a few good ones. However, characters should also have some competent *Mechanical* spacelaring skills, as well as some skills with which to protect themselves — *blaster* and *dodge* especially. Since they are often slight of build, Wroonians rarely develop their *Strength* skills, preferring to use skills of a less violent, more cunning nature.

ADDENDUM/PERSONAL .. OKEEFE/PLATT

Wow, those computer files can be dry. Rather than spending all your time reading about Wroonians, why don't I introduce you to one of my Wroonian friends, Nell Indigo ...

Nell Indigo

Nell Indigo is a Wroonian mercenary who travels the Outer Rim Territories, selling her combat skills to whoever's willing to pay her. She slowly passes from system to system, hitching rides from either her employers or sympathetic spacers heading in her direction. Sometimes she hires out as an armed security guard, other times as a member of a pirate boarding party. Nell sticks with a job until she's earned a good share of credits, or until she tires of it and finds some other endeavor to hold her interest.

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Nell Indigo

Type: Wroonian Mercenary

DEXTERITY 4D+1

Blaster 6D+1, dodge 5D+1, pick pocket 6D-2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Planetary systems 4D, streetwise 4D+2, value 5D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 4D-2, repulsorlift operation 3D+2, space transports 4D, starfighter

As a child, Nell traveled with her gun-runner parents, learning all about the smuggling trade and making a few business contacts along the way. Since she was a member of a smuggling family, she was expected to help out in many ways — from running their light freighter to helping blast customs officials, security officers, and others trying to keep them from making a profit. When she was old enough, her parents dared her to go out into the galaxy and make something of herself (the traditional coming-of-age protocol for Wroonians).

Nell quickly made a name for herself. She apprenticed herself to a Wroonian mercenary, and quickly learned her ropes.

When she was 20 she bought her way into the Guild of Glorious Mercenaries, and used the guild connections to land several successful and adventurous jobs in the Outer Rim. These days she hires her blaster out to the highest bidder — or to the one who can promise the chance at fortune and fun. An easy-going woman, Nell accepts both challenge and death with a laugh. It is far easier for her to enjoy today than fret about the future.

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ADDENDUM/PERSONAL .. OKEEFE/PLATT

Nell's a joy to work with. She's good with a blaster, and has little fear of danger — as long as she's properly motivated by wealth or entertainment. I've hired her on occasion to provide some firepower when I knew an extra blaster would count. And while I can't always pay her much, Nell doesn't seem to mind as long as she can have her fun along the way.

piloting 5D, starship gunnery 4D, starship shields 4D+1

PERCEPTION 4D+2

Bargain 5D+2, con 6D, gambling 5D, persuasion 5D+1

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D

First aid 3D, starfighter repair 3D+1

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), blaster rifle (5D), flight jacket, gear bag, 250 credits

This issue's Smuggler's Log was created by Peter Schweighofer and illustrated by Kathy Burdette

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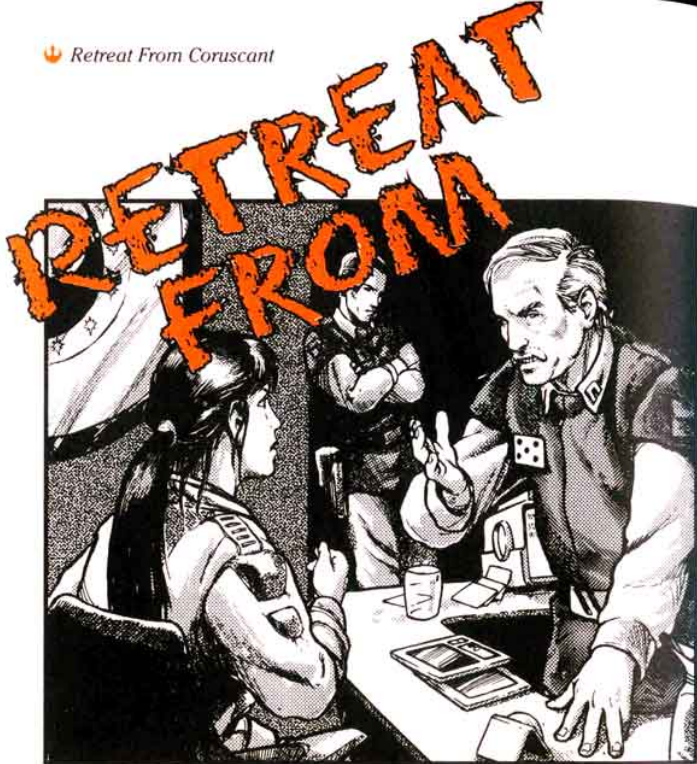
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CORUSCANT

By Laurie Burns

Illustrations by Mike Vilardi

Taryn Clancy idly watched a comm clerk notarize acceptance of the datacards piled on the repulsorlift cart beside her. Suddenly, the busy background murmur of the old Imperial Palace's message center disappeared under the hooting of alarms.

The clerk looked up, face draining of color as she identified the warning tones. "Oh my skies," she said, sounding stunned. "Coruscant's under attack."

Taryn's eyes widened too, but she moved fast. "If you'll sign that off, I'll be on my way," she said, swiveling to push the cart closer to the clerk's counter. "There's your mail," she added, pointedly holding out her hand.

The clerk blinked, looked at her datapad, punched a few keys, and mutely handed it over. Taryn swiftly inspected her authorization, keyed in her own code, then jerked the clerk's copy out and tossed it on the counter. "Thanks," she said over her shoulder, already three steps toward the door.

Out in the corridor the alarms continued at an urgent pitch, but as she squeezed aboard a turbolift, Taryn was relieved no one seemed panicked. Though the New Republic had made the transition from military force to galactic government, the former Rebels obviously hadn't forgotten how to react to an Imperial attack. She bit her lip, knowing her hopes of leaving were optimistic at best. If Coruscant really was under attack, the planetary shield had probably been raised, and she and Del were stuck for the duration.

But she had to try. After all, who wanted to be stuck on the palace's landing pads like a clipped mynock while the Empire tried to reclaim its former capital?

Not me, she thought, emerging onto the bright, wind-swept platform and blinking at the brilliance of the midday sun. Reverberations from half-a-dozen ships' engines thrummed around her, and ahead, the *Messenger* added its throaty roar to the mechanical chorus. Del had the ramp down and waiting, and as she dropped into the pilot's seat, a quick scan of the displays showed they were nearly ready to lift.

"Heard the alarms," Del said, already strapped in at the co-pilot's station. "What's up?"

"Us, I hope," Taryn said shortly. Another look at the displays, and she flipped on the comm and hailed palace flight control. Her heart sank as her request for liftoff was curtly denied.

Too late — the planetary shield had been raised. The Empire was up there, the New Republic was down here, and she and the *Messenger* were stuck in between.

Taryn slumped back in her seat. It wasn't just that she had a schedule to keep. The Core Courier Service promised prompt service among the Core Worlds, and with crates full of communications still filling half her hold, she didn't want to get too far behind.

But late deliveries were nothing compared to what Taryn feared was about to happen — an all-out war for possession of Coruscant. Port gossip had predicted that the Empire, despite the recent loss of Grand Admiral Thrawn, was gearing up to strike at the heart of the New Republic.

It looked like they'd been right.

"Well, heck," Del said, staring out at the platform where a transport — apparently in defiance of the controller's orders — was lifting off. "What're we gonna do now?"

Taryn watched the transport fade to a pinprick in the sky. If the *Messenger* belonged to her, she'd be tempted to do the same. But a smart captain didn't take chances with company property. "We wait," she said, reluctantly keying off the engines. "At least until help arrives."

If it ever did, she added silently. The Imperials would've knocked out the comm relays first thing, cutting off the New Republic's ability to call for help from its fleets scattered through the galaxy. They had orbital defenses, of course, but — A tiny flash caught her eye, and she leaned forward to squint out the cockpit's transparisteel viewport. "Blast," she whispered.

Del followed her gaze and saw the almost indiscernible flashes of turbolaser fire high in the sky. "We're stuck now," he said.

They watched in grim silence for a while before Taryn abruptly wondered, "How long can the planetary shield hold up?"

"I dunno," Del said. "Depends on what they throw at it, prob'ly. Couple of days, maybe ... or a couple hours."

She glanced at him. Under his gray mustache, her first mate's mouth was tight. And no wonder — after three decades with the courier service, he was just days away from retirement. Studying the lines on his face, Taryn mentally contrasted his years of experience to her own, and suddenly felt overwhelmed with her fledgling status as captain. It was only her fourth run at the helm of the *Messenger*.

And it was up to her to get them out of this.

For a second she felt a niggling of the old fear; the one with her father's voice that said she flew for the courier service because she didn't have the guts to do anything else. All through her childhood, Kal Clancy boasted of his own bravado at the helm of his freighter, then he'd spent her teen years trying to mold her in his image. He hadn't bothered concealing his disappointment when she hadn't lived up to his expectations.

She looked at Del again. He'd been delivering mail longer than she'd been alive, and hadn't ever made captain. That said something

Captain Taryn Clancy



Type: Courier Freighter Captain

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Planetary systems: Core Worlds 5D

MECHANICAL 4D

Astrogation 4D, repulsorlift operation 4D,

sensors 5D, space transports 5D+2, star-

ship gunnery 4D+2, starship shields 5D

PERCEPTION 3D

Command 4D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 3D

Repulsorlift repair 3D+2, space transports

6D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Equipment: Ghtroc freighter (*Messenger*), Core Courier Service uniform, comlink, blaster pistol (4D)

Capsule: At 26, Taryn Clancy is one of the youngest captains in the Core Courier Service, fulfilling a childhood dream when she recently took command of the *Messenger*. As a youngster, she repeatedly begged to accompany her free-trader father on his travels, once even going so far as to stow away in the hold, only to be returned home in humiliation after being discovered by a load lifter before they'd even made hyperspace.

When Taryn was 16, Kal Clancy finally relented and let her join him on board the *Lassen*. Being both the captain's daughter and pilot's apprentice wasn't easy, but Taryn grit her teeth and learned a lot, eventually acting as the *Lassen's* co-pilot. Unfortunately, while she loved the work, it only seemed to worsen the father/daughter relationship. Kal only spoke to her when he had some criticism of her performance, and she dreaded that sigh which signaled she'd fallen short of his expectations — again.

One day after a particularly scathing critique, Taryn went for a walk around the port and somehow ended up in front of the Core Courier Service's local office. Two exams and one flight test later, she emerged clad in a new uniform. In the five years since, her skills and dedication have garnered praise and promotions from her superiors, but her father's approval remains frustratingly elusive. Taryn doesn't realize that Kal is proud of her, but thinks flying a mail freighter too tame to truly challenge her. His continuing censure covers a hope she'll learn to trust her instincts and take chances, and will step out of her safe little job delivering mail to live up to the potential he glimpsed on the *Lassen*. After her part in the retreat from Coruscant, Taryn is considering doing just that.

for her, didn't it? *Didn't it?*

Stop it, Taryn ordered herself. So being captain of a courier isn't very challenging. That doesn't mean I'm not competent.

Shaking off her father's image, she tried to think what to do next. *Does it?*



After a few hours passed with no sign of Imperial ships slipping down from the sky, Taryn's nerves began to ease. Seven hours after the alarms first sounded, full night had fallen, and she was starting to get annoyed.

"Well, that's it," she declared after another request for information from flight control was politely sidestepped. "We can't leave, they won't let us move, and they won't tell us anything. I'm going in there to find out what's going on."

"Who you gonna ask?" Del asked.

"Mon Mothma herself, if I have to," Taryn said.

Del snorted, but getting into the palace proved unexpectedly easy. After an initial hassle with two New Republic security officers, once they discovered she captained the freighter on the platform, Taryn found herself ushered into a turbolift. One of the guards poked his head in after her and punched a button on the call panel. "Good luck," he said, giving her a mock salute as the doors slid shut.

That was easy — too easy, she thought, wondering what that salute thing meant. She was still puzzling over it when the doors opened on a corridor clearly far removed from the service section of the palace where she'd made her delivery earlier. Same basic decor, but this section had an unmistakably brisk military air.

As did the two armed troopers standing against the wall across from the turbolift. They eyed her alertly as she stepped out, then she saw the other two, standing on each side of the lift. Trying to ignore the four pairs of eyes trained on her, she glanced down the corridor. At one end, a blast door slid open and a frowning officer stalked toward her. Halting a meter away, he gave her a quick once-over.

"I'm Colonel Bremen," he identified himself. "And you're —?"

"Taryn Clancy, captain of the *Messenger*."

He nodded curtly. "If you're armed, you'll have to leave your weapons outside," he said, producing a hand-held weapons scanner.

"I'm not," Taryn said, but Bremen ran the device over her anyway.

"All right," he said, apparently satisfied. "Follow me."

A guard fell in line behind her as Taryn followed Bremen through the blast doors into another corridor. She glanced curiously into open rooms as they passed, feet faltering as a face she thought she recognized from the holovid flashed into view. Was that *really* Mon Mothma? And if it *were* the New Republic's Chief of State, just where was this Bremen taking her?

There was no time to speculate, as he stopped beside a door and gestured for her to enter. Taryn stepped into the small office and looked at the man seated behind the desk. Good-looking and about the same age as Del, he looked vaguely familiar but she couldn't place him.

That is, until Bremen shut the door and brushed past her. "Got another one for you, General Bel Iblis. Captain Clancy of the *Messenger*," he said, and Taryn tried not to stare. She'd expected to be pawned off on some palace flunky, not brought to the man in charge of Coruscant's defense!

"Captain Clancy," Bel Iblis nodded to her courteously as Bremen folded his arms and took up a position against the office wall. "I understand you'd like an update on the situation."

"Yes, sir, I would," she said, making a conscious effort to relax and not stand at attention. "What's going on? And when will I be able to leave?"

Bel Iblis studied her silently. Just as Taryn began to fear she'd been too brash, he grimly answered. "Coruscant is surrounded. Our defenses have been forced to retreat, and we estimate the planetary shield will fail by morning."

Taryn forgot not to stare. "What'll happen then?"

"We're not waiting to find out," he said. "We'll be pulling out tonight."

"You're leaving?"

"We have no choice," Bel Iblis said heavily. "There's no way to get word to our fleets in other sectors, and even if we did, they couldn't get here before the shield fails."

"But, what about the New Republic?" she persisted. Was the fledgling government really going to crumble that easily?

"The New Republic will survive," he said. "Only its headquarters will move." Something like old pain briefly shadowed his eyes. "We don't want Coruscant destroyed too, when all the Empire wants is to destroy us. Once we're off the planet, the populace ought to be safe enough."

Bremen abruptly unfolded from the wall and opened his mouth, but subsided at a look from Bel Iblis. Taryn glanced from one to the

Galactic Courier Services

Whether you're on the planet next door, or all the way across the galaxy, there are all kinds of ways to keep in touch. But from comm relays to message droids, they all cost credits — and some, such as person-to-person subspace calls, are staggeringly expensive. Consequently, for offworld business and personal communications where timeliness isn't essential and privacy is, the old-fashioned but relatively inexpensive audio, visual, or written "letter" is still very popular.

Under the Old Republic, a government-sponsored courier service conveyed such correspondence throughout the galactic community, and operated a comm-droid service as well, for those wishing to have their messages delivered to a comnet (similar to the way in which newsnets now operate). But when Emperor Palpatine came to power, he shut these services down, citing a need to stop wasting taxpayers' money on government "flab." In reality, his action played havoc with casual communications between worlds, making it easier to establish the New Order of his Empire.

Private courier services swiftly scrambled to fill the gap, but, years later, getting correspondence from here to there can still be a chancy proposition. Senders are faced with a bewildering array of courier services to choose from; some offering delivery within a system, while others service routes scattered throughout a sector. While these smaller couriers' rates tend to be less expensive, using them can be risky — as shown by the recent discovery of an immense letter-dumping ground just five light-years out of the Averill system. Investigation of the nearly thousand-kilometer-long stream of drifting datacards revealed

other, suddenly aware of the tension between them, then looked back at Bel Iblis. "Where will you go?"

"Good question," he said. "That's where you come in."

"Me?" she said, warily.

"We need all the lifting capacity we can beg, borrow, or steal for the evacuation," he said, watching her intently.

Taryn got it, right away.

"The *Messenger's* not that big," she protested. "Not that fast, either. Besides, I work for the Core Courier Service, not for you. The New Republic can't just hijack my ship!"

at least three services guilty of regularly jettisoning their holds.

However, a few reliable, well-established services maintain huge fleets of freighters and have delivery routes spanning entire regions. While the rates of a company such as the Core Courier Service or Stellar CommCour are slightly higher, most customers find that their wide range of destinations and prompt delivery records more than make up for the few extra credits.

With careful planning and complex scheduling, these services usually have ships dropping into each system or space station at least once a day, delivering containers full of datacards and small parcels to company warehouses for droid or electronic distribution, and picking up the outgoing mail. Routes are deliberately kept short, so correspondence gets back to the main warehouse, sorted, and sent back down the line within a reasonable period of time.

As part of its goal to become a functioning government in fact as well as in name, the New Republic has considered resuming the responsibilities of running the galactic comm-courier services. Unfortunately, the fledgling government barely has the resources to keep its own shipping going, and preliminary talks with the larger services about a combined venture have so far come to naught.

The market is ripe for expansion, and many of the larger services are buying out smaller ones, absorbing their ships and routes and adding to the number of delivery destinations they can offer customers. But even with the ongoing consolidation, it will be some time before they can rival the incredible organization, efficiency, and complete coverage of the galaxy that marked the Old Republic's comm-courier service in its heyday.

"Actually, we can," Bel Iblis said. "And will. But not for what you think." He leaned forward, looking grave. "We've got to get word to the sector fleets that the New Republic has evacuated Coruscant and will regroup at a new base. Secrecy is absolutely vital — we can't take the chance of the Empire tapping into any transmissions and overhearing the location of our rendezvous point. So," he spread his hands suggestively, "we send out couriers."

Taryn remained silent. She suspected he hadn't said "courier" by chance.

"Usually, we'd send out a messenger in an unmarked Intelligence

ship," Bel Iblis said. Bremen opened his mouth, and again, the general shot him a warning glance. "But we need everything we've got for the evacuation."

"What if I refuse?"

"You're welcome to remain here on Coruscant," Bel Iblis said. "Or leave on one of our transports. We'll recompense the courier service for use of the ship, of course."

Some choice, Taryn thought sourly. Stuck here waiting for the stormtroopers, or on the run with the New Republic.

She sighed. "So, when do we leave?"



Once she'd thought about it, Taryn had to agree using the *Messenger* for cover was actually pretty clever.

For one, the datacard — with its report on the retreat from Coruscant and the rendezvous location — was nicely anonymous, tucked in a crate with thousands of other datacards; communications bound for other Core Worlds. And that crate was just one among dozens exactly like it, stacked one on top the other in the *Messenger's* hold.

For another, the prospect of trying to sneak past an armada of Star Destroyers was almost made bearable by the sight the bulky Colonel Bremen made, stuffed into a spare uniform they'd scrounged up that was at least two sizes too small. Tugging at the too-tight collar, he stood in the cockpit doorway with the slight frown that never seemed to leave his face. Taryn didn't have to look away from her engine displays to know the uniform's pant legs ended somewhere above his ankles. Her mouth quirked slightly before she remembered Bremen was here to keep an eye on her and Del, and there was nothing funny about the situation they were in.

Her hands tightened on the controls. "Go strap in," she ordered Bremen. "We're almost ready to lift." When he didn't move, she glanced over her shoulder questioningly. "What?"

"I'll stay here," he said.

She shrugged.

"Do what you want," Del snorted. He and Bremen hadn't exchanged half a dozen words since the New Republic officer had come on board, but they clearly hadn't hit it off.

"You should let me pilot," Bremen said, again. "This isn't some simple mail drop, you know."

"No," Taryn said adamantly, as if this hadn't already been covered in Bel Iblis' office. "We made a deal. The New Republic can use my ship, but no one's flying it but me." Considering they were basically being shanghaied, she'd been surprised Bel Iblis had agreed. As it was, she half suspected the general had assigned Bremen to this mission just to get rid of him. The two clearly didn't get along. She glanced at Del. "Ready?"

"Ready," he confirmed.

She eased in the repulsors. Below, the comforting lights of Imperial City dwindled to pinpricks as they gained altitude. Bel Iblis had said the gaps between the surrounding Star Destroyers were guarded by smaller capital ships, so each pilot would have to pick their own escape route and make a run for it. "We got a course yet?" she asked Del.

"Nav computer's working on it," he said. She threw a quick look at Bremen, balancing himself in the cockpit's doorway, then checked the sensors. Nothing close enough to worry about, but she'd have to stay sharp. Bel Iblis wanted as many ships as possible in the air and moving when he dropped the shield. With the whole swarm fleeing at once, they hoped to at least create a little confusion as they tried to sneak past the waiting Imperials.

Flashes of light danced where the planetary shield was still getting blasted, the opalescent haze shifting and rippling as it was hit. Taryn changed course slightly, aiming for a clear spot, then checked her chronometer. Almost time.

Del flipped on the comm, already tuned to the escape frequency, and as Taryn stared at the shield, she wondered what the people left below would face. Would the Empire be content to simply retake Coruscant and leave its citizens in relative peace? Or would it feel the need to punish them for not repulsing the New Republic in the first place?

Either way, she was out of it now.

"Ought to be down any time," Bremen said from behind her, where he too was watching the shield flash under the Imperial assault. "Too bad this thing doesn't have much in the way of weaponry."

Taryn's mouth tightened at the slur to her ship. As she'd already pointed out, mail freighters weren't prime targets for anyone, even pirates. There was no need to go around bristling with armament — usually. At the moment, she conceded a little more firepower might come in handy.

Several large masses started to register on the scopes, indicating

the gauntlet ahead. Taryn had never seen so many Star Destroyers in one place, and another wave of self-doubt assailed her. She'd never done anything like this before, except in her imagination. Maybe she *should* let Bremen take the controls —

And then, it was too late.

"It's down," Bel Iblis' voice rang out over the comm. "Clear skies, people, and may the Force be with you!"

The planetary shield was down, and the scramble was on.

Far to port, Taryn was aware of a planet defender ion cannon being used from the surface to clear a path for some of the fleeing ships, but she kept to her own vector as they cleared the atmosphere and the waiting Imperial ships came into sight.

There it was — her path to freedom — straight between two Star Destroyers flanked by five smaller Dreadnaughts. They looked like two ferocious Dorax dogs surrounded by feisty puppies, and she swallowed, edging the drive up to full. Even at top speed, the *Messenger* couldn't be called fast, and she could only hope they'd be overlooked in the swarm fleeing from the surface.

And for a while, her hopes seemed answered. Aiming for a gap between the two Dreadnaughts furthest away from the Star Destroyers, the *Messenger* pelted along in the wake of another freighter, a transport, and a sleek starfighter. Alongside and slightly behind were two heavy transports. The Dreadnaughts fired, but with so many small targets, the shots were erratic and for the most part simply sizzled into space.

Their shield indicators were still green, they were nearly past the Dreadnaughts, and Taryn was beginning to think they just might make it unscathed when a sudden sharp lurch of the ship threw her and Del against their restraints, and sent Bremen tumbling forward to sprawl unceremoniously over the sensor scopes.

"Get off!" she gritted, then clenched her teeth as another hard *thunk* spilled him to the deck. With a jolt, she saw a lot more ships around them than had been there a moment ago. Identification was easy as a TIE fighter roared past, firing at the transport ahead of them driving for deep space.

"Del?" she said. The grizzled first mate needed no further urging, loosing a volley of laser fire at the TIE fighter harassing the transport up ahead. Behind them, a dull *clunk* indicated another hit, but Taryn kept going. Their course was calculated and set; if she could just get the *Messenger* a little further away from the planet, they could make the jump to lightspeed, and safety.

One of the transports off to their side suddenly exploded in a fiery



flash. Wincing, Taryn changed course slightly to steer clear of the twisted metal and spared a quick glance at the shield indicators.

Only to wish she hadn't. The indicators had gone from green to red, and they flashed with each hit. A diagnostic message was forming on the panel, the sensors showed another of those blasted TIE fighters swooping up behind them, and Taryn didn't think the *Messenger* could take too many more hits.

"Hang on," she warned Bremen, still on the deck, and threw the freighter into a dive. The TIE fighter shot past overhead, and as she brought the ship's nose back up, Taryn saw the starfighter ahead had circled back to help.

The X-wing's laser cannon flashed as it screamed toward them, and on the scopes, one of the dots behind them disappeared. The X-wing turned its attention to the TIE fighter she'd shaken while Taryn swiped at the sweat on her face and put the drive to full again. Up ahead, the freighter and transport were nowhere to be seen. Either they'd already made it to safety — or they'd been destroyed.

Del cursed as the *Messenger* shuddered from another series of

hits to the rear. The shield indicators flashed red, then went black, and the diagnostic message began to blink. "We've lost the deflectors," Taryn shouted. Swallowing back the metallic taste of fear, she was poised to plunge the ship into another dive when the console pinged, indicating they'd reached their hyperspace point.

Wrapping a hand around the levers and acutely aware of the TIE fighter closing in on them, she gently pulled back, and was rewarded by the sight of stars streaking to starlines, then fading into the mottled sky of hyperspace.



Hurting through hyperspace toward Coriallis, Del and Colonel Bremen had plenty of time to firmly establish their mutual dislike.

Bremen didn't hide the fact that, as civilians, he didn't trust Taryn and Del to be competent. He made it clear he thought Bel Iblis should have commandeered the *Messenger*, kicked off her regular crew, and used an all-military crew to complete the mission.

Taryn tried to shrug it off, but Del retaliated by offering up barely-concealed barbs concerning the New Republic's ignominious retreat from Coruscant, while Bremen grew tighter-lipped with each crack. She thought the game childish, but as long as Bremen was busy with Del, he wasn't breathing down her back, so she didn't say anything about it.

The two had disappeared into the hold more than an hour ago, and she stood in the wardroom, wiping grease off her hands. They would be changing course at Coriallis in a few hours, and she wanted to try out the newly-repaired deflector system before it was actually put to the test.

She never got the chance.

As she strode toward the cockpit, the *Messenger* seemed to hesitate underfoot, then gave an awful shudder as stressed hull metal squealed in protest. Caught mid-step, Taryn grabbed at the bulkhead for balance, then got thrown into the cockpit as the ship seemed to slam into some immovable force. Clattering crates and a yelp sounded from the hold, while in front of her, the mottled sky of hyperspace unexpectedly became starlines, and then, with a final sickening lurch, coalesced into the starfield of realspace.

They'd been forcefully yanked out of lightspeed, and Taryn didn't even have to check the scopes to know why. Straight ahead, filling the transparisteel viewport, was an Imperial Interdictor cruiser.

Colonel Jak Bremen



Type: New Republic Security Officer
DEXTERITY 3D+1
 Blaster 7D+2, dodge 6D+2, melee combat 7D
KNOWLEDGE 2D
 Bureaucracy: New Republic 6D+2, intimidation 6D+2, law enforcement 9D, planetary systems 5D+1, survival 6D
MECHANICAL 3D+2
 Repulsorlift operation 5D
PERCEPTION 3D
 Bargain 4D+2, command 7D+2, persuasion 4D+1, search 8D, sneak 5D+2
STRENGTH 4D
 Brawling 7D, stamina 6D+1
TECHNICAL 2D
 Computer programming/repair 7D, security 9D
Force Points: 1
Character Points: 11
Move: 10
Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol (5D)

Capsule: While some might consider unrelenting suspicion to be a character flaw, Colonel Jak Bremen figures it's just part of his job. The New Republic council's Director of Security for Coruscant's Imperial Palace, Bremen took it personally a few months ago when an Imperial strike team got past his forces and penetrated the Imperial Palace with the intent of kidnapping Councilor Leia Organa Solo and her newborn twins. The team's leader implicated the involvement of Mara Jade, a member of Talon Karrde's smuggling organization who was convalescing in the palace, and who has since been revealed as a former agent of the Empire known as the "Emperor's Hand."

Bremen wasn't able to prove Mara's alleged involvement, and his investigation was called off by the Council after Mara's subsequent actions helped New Republic heroes destroy the Imperial cloning facility on Wayland. However, Bremen remains unconvinced of her loyalties. A dogged, "by-the-book" kind of officer, he dislikes deviating from proper procedure — or taking chances on people. He can be brusque to the point of rudeness, and while this doesn't endear him to those he works with, he's also dedicated and efficient, which helps excuse it. Anyway, as he often points out, his job is to save New Republic lives, not "be popular."

Nor were they its first catch. A transport with New Republic markings drifted nearby, linked with an Imperial shuttle. Taryn wondered if it were one of the many that had so recently fled Coruscant.

"What happened?" Bremen demanded, pounding up the corridor

as she got to her feet. On his heels, Del sported a fresh gash on his forehead. No answer was necessary as the comm crackled to life and a brisk voice from the cruiser *Requital* ordered them to prepare to be boarded.

Taryn sank down in the pilot's seat, mind racing. The datacard was well-hidden, and unless the Imperials were determined to read each and every missive in the hold, she didn't think they'd find it. The thoroughness of their search would probably depend on how suspicious they were. Her and Del's identification was in order; Bremen might be harder to explain, but she'd think of something. Should she admit that they'd just come from Coruscant, or — ?

"I'll do the talking," Bremen announced, interrupting her thoughts. "You two keep quiet and let me handle it." He held out a hand, apparently expecting Taryn to hand over the captain's bars pinned to the front of her uniform. She stiffened.

"No, I'll do the talking," she corrected him with some asperity. "You looked in a mirror lately?" Clad in that ill-fitting uniform, the Imperials would never believe he was captain of the *Messenger*. Ignoring Bremen's flush of outrage, she told Del, "Go back to the airlock and wait to assist the boarding party."

"Yes, ma'am," he said crisply, backing out of the cockpit.

"Cooperate with them, *fully*," she called after him warningly. Outside, a shuttle from the *Requital* was approaching, but they still had a few minutes. Looking at Bremen, she raised an eyebrow. "Now. You were saying — ?"

"Do you have any idea how serious this is?" he snapped back. "What do you think they're going to do once they're on board? Take a look at your permits, tell you to have a good day, and just leave?"

"I certainly hope so," Taryn said. "That seemed to be General Bel Iblis' idea behind using us as the courier. Look, I'm the captain here, and I have the proper ID to back it up. You have any better ideas?"

His resistance was plain, but she did have a point. "Okay, then," Taryn said. "You don't talk unless you're spoken to, you do everything the Imperials ask, promptly and courteously, and if you're carrying any weapons, you lose them now, before they come on board. Understand?"

Bremen's face looked as stiff as a droid's and his eyes glittered, but he managed a short nod. "Good," Taryn said, releasing a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding. "Let's go back and meet our guests."

While the Imperial shuttle pulled alongside, she dug out the *Messenger's* permits datapad. She just had time to get back to the

airlock and straighten up authoritatively before it slid open and five Imperials strode in.

The lead, a middle-aged man balding under his naval officer's cap, halted just inside while the other four troopers, all armed, fanned out in the corridor. "Commander Voldt," he briskly identified himself. "Who's in charge here?"

"I am." Taryn stepped forward. "Captain Taryn Clancy, of the Core Courier Service. This is my crew."

Voldt eyed her, gaze lingering on the curves of her uniform, then slid a glance over Del and Bremen. He noted Bremen's exposed ankles, then flicked pale eyes back to her. "Courier service? This a mail ship?"

"Yes, sir," Taryn said. "En route to Coriallis."

"Where from?"

She'd already decided there was no sense lying. The vector on which they'd been yanked out of hyperspace pretty well spelled it out. "Our last scheduled stop was Coruscant," she told him. "But we dropped into the system, saw what looked like the entire Imperial fleet around the planet, and decided to give the place a pass. Didn't want to get mixed up in anything, you know?"

He nodded slowly, not looking entirely convinced. "You didn't deliver your shipment?" he asked. "Don't your employers promise prompt delivery?"

Taryn allowed herself to look slightly taken aback. "Well, yes," she said. "But they frown on dropping in on a war zone even more."

Voldt stared at her, then snorted. In amusement, or disbelief, she couldn't tell. At his casual hand gesture, two of the troopers disappeared to search the ship. "Let's see some identification," he suggested.

"Certainly." Taryn passed him the permits datapad. He transmitted the ship's license and registry information to the *Requital* to be checked out, then inspected their identification, raising an eyebrow when Bremen failed to produce an ID. Bremen managed to look both embarrassed and earnest as he muttered, "Sorry, sir. Got robbed in port."

Voldt flicked that speculative glance over his uniform again. "Looks like that's not all they took," he commented. "How inconvenient for you."

Bremen nodded. Voldt stared at him a moment longer, then glanced at the two troopers returning from searching the ship. "No one else aboard, sir," one reported, while the other stepped up holding two blasters.

"Who do these belong to?" Voldt asked.

"That one's mine," Taryn said, indicating the blaster she kept hidden under the sleep pad in her cabin. She looked at Bremen and Del. "Whose is this?"

"Mine, Capt'n." Del stepped forward. "I know you don't like us carryin' on board, so I had it stashed in my bunk. Sorry," he added, looking sheepish.

"We'll discuss it later," she said repressively, wondering where Bremen had "lost" his weapon so it wouldn't be found.

Voldt gave her an unfathomable look, then nodded to the trooper, who stepped back, still holding both blasters. He handed the datapad back to Taryn. "Captain, I'd like to see the contents of your hold, if I may."

Despite the phrasing, it wasn't a request.

Taryn led the way, trying to gauge how suspicious the Imperials were, and how complete they might insist on making this search. So far, Voldt's manner hadn't given anything away. Casually, she looked over her shoulder. "If you don't mind me asking, sir, why were we stopped? Is this some sort of checkpoint?"

There was no mistaking the amused snort this time. "You could call it that," Voldt said dryly. His eyes were fixed on the sway of her dark hair against her back. "It could be considered a checkpoint for traitors."

"Traitors?" she echoed, carefully.

"Traitors to the Empire," he said, finally looking up as they reached the hold. "Rebels, fleeing from Coruscant. We've driven them off and rescued the populace from their terrorist ways, but now, like the cowards they are, they're scurrying off to wherever they think they'll find safety." His thin lips turned up in an unpleasant smile. "We don't intend to let them run too far."

Taryn wondered if Interdictor cruisers were sitting along all of the most well-traveled hyperspace lanes leading from Coruscant. If so, a good many fleeing ships had undoubtedly fallen right into the Imperials' trap, including that transport she'd spotted earlier. Perhaps even themselves.

She shook off the thought. *No, so far we're doing fine.* The only thing to worry about was the datapad, and that was well hidden somewhere inside the crates that filled the hold. Reassured, she keyed open the door and gestured for Voldt to step in.

He did, glancing around the room and then stepping over to peer at the stacks of sealed crates. "These are bound for Coriallis," he noted, studying the labels on the outermost crates.



"Yes, sir, that's our next stop," Taryn confirmed.

"But where's the shipment you *didn't* leave on Coruscant?" He swung to face her, one eyebrow raised in query.

Where was it, indeed? Taryn's stomach clenched as she considered the question. Not only had they delivered the mail bound for the Imperial Palace, but they'd off-loaded the regular Coruscant mail, too. There was nothing here to back up her assertion that they hadn't landed on the planet.

Excuses vied for space on the tip of her tongue, but before she could blurt any of them out, Del stepped forward.

"I moved 'em out of the way, Capt'n," he said, and indicated three crates piled haphazardly in the far corner. Each was labeled bound for Coruscant, and she held her breath as Voldt insisted on opening up all three. But randomly picking out datapads to inspect, he found them all properly labeled with Coruscant destinations. Relieved, Taryn slanted a glance at her first mate, wondering whose mail had been borrowed to pull off this masquerade. Clearly, Del and Bremen hadn't spent *all* their time back here bickering.

"Hmmp," Voldt grunted as he replaced the last crate's lid, and looked around the hold as if hoping to find Mon Mothma herself hiding among the load lifters. Pointing at two of the troopers, he ordered all the crates examined. But the search was cursory, with the troopers merely opening them up and confirming there was mail inside.

Brusquely ordering the crates resealed, Voldt motioned for Taryn and crew to follow him, and strode back down the corridor to the airlock. Calling the *Requital*, he confirmed that the *Messenger's* permits were in order and then, looking somewhat disappointed, told Taryn they were free to go.

Trying not to let her relief show, she had to work harder to keep from shooting a told-you-so look at Bremen. The four troopers rejoined them, and after an unexpected handshake from Voldt, during which he held on a tad too long for Taryn's liking, the Imperials headed back to their ship.

She got the nav computer busy recalculating their course, then turned the freighter around and drove for the stars, trying to grab enough distance to jump to lightspeed. Glancing again at the captured New Republic transport, Taryn wondered what fate awaited its occupants.

When the console finally pinged, she cupped her hand around the hyperdrive levers, gently pulled them back, and gratefully left that particular problem behind.

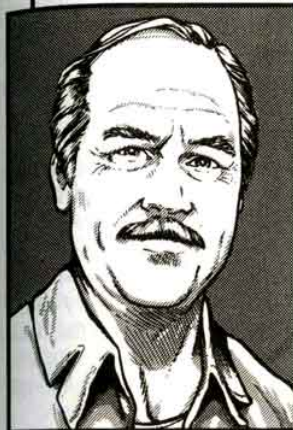


Not that she didn't still have problems, she thought in exasperation nearly a week later, staring out at the empty expanse of space before them and acutely aware of Bremen looking over her shoulder, as usual.

The rest of the trip to Coriallis had been uneventful, and once there, Bremen had programmed the nav computer with a new course. Since then, they'd dropped in and out of hyperspace a dozen times on their way to intercept one of the New Republic's battle fleets, somewhere in the Borderlands.

At least, Taryn thought it was the Borderlands. She didn't recognize the majority of the places they popped in on, and Bremen saw no reason to enlighten her — about their location, or anything else. He curtly informed her she'd get control of the *Messenger* back once they intercepted the fleet and delivered the message.

Del Sato



Type: Loyal Co-Pilot

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D+2, vehicle blasters 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Planetary systems 4D

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Astrogration 5D+2, powersuit operation

4D, repulsorlift operation 4D+1, sensors

4D+1, space transports 5D

PERCEPTION 2D+1

STRENGTH 3D

TECHNICAL 3D

Space transports repair 4D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Equipment: Core Courier Service uniform, blaster pistol (3D)

Capsule: As a young man, Del Sato was advised to "get a good job and dig in." And though ferrying mail for

the Core Courier Service isn't exactly a thrill a minute, it does pay well, so a lack of excitement is fine with him. An easy-going Corellian, "ambition" isn't a word in Del's vocabulary. He worked just hard enough to earn his co-pilot's position, then settled in for the long haul, spending the next few dozen years cozily ensconced at the helm of various mail freighters, agreeably taking orders from a series of progressively younger-looking captains and depositing his pay voucher with an affable grin at the end of every run.

Del's not a go-getter but he's good enough at his job. His retirement plans include settling back in his comfy repulsor chair, enjoying a cool glass of bubbly bitters, and checking out the latest maxi-series starring that enchanting (if a little over the hill) diva of the holos, Serra Hailey.

Well, here they were at the intercept point. So where was the fleet?

"They might be a little late," Bremen said, and Taryn glanced over her shoulder to see a furrow creasing his brow. "They *are* scheduled to be here," he added at the expression on her face.

"If they don't know we're coming, what are they scheduled to meet?" she asked. Bremen ignored the question; clearly, this was yet another bit of information that mere civilians couldn't be trusted with. Since they'd dropped into the outer edges of a system and were skulking around like thieves instead of getting closer to one of the planets, Taryn figured the New Republic had an outpost here that its

fleet was checking up on. Bremen just didn't want to get close enough for her and Del to take a look.

She sighed. Despite a week of close quarters living, or perhaps because of it, Bremen wasn't any easier to get along with. She'd finally had to order Del to stop his needling — if only she could order Bremen to knock off his condescending manner, as well. His attitude reminded her far too strongly of her father.

Because it was possible the fleet had been delayed, and because they really had nowhere else to go, the *Messenger* simply drifted for the next several hours. Taryn was sitting in the cockpit staring out at the stars and trying to recall astrogation charts of the Borderlands region when Bremen came in and dropped into the co-pilot's seat.

Mildly surprised, she glanced over as he studied the long-range sensors. He'd finally stopped hovering over her, apparently reassured she wasn't going to break into the nav computer to find out where they were if he didn't keep an eye on her every minute. Naturally, she had, only to find that all records of their past several jumps had been erased.

So it wasn't so much a matter of trust, as that it simply didn't matter.

"You don't think much of us, do you?" she said.

He took his time looking up. "Pardon?"

"It's not just you and your New Republic on the line here, you know. It's me and Del, too," she said. "If you're caught, we're caught. You think we're going to do anything to mess this thing up?"

"Not deliberately, no," he conceded. "But accidents happen. What about when Voldt wanted to see the Coruscant mail — you hadn't thought of that, had you? What if there hadn't been anything to show him?"

"That cloak and dagger stuff is *your* department," she retorted, but the comment stung. He was right; and instead of getting defensive, she should admit it and learn from the experience. "That doesn't justify treating us like dimglows, and keeping me in the dark about where we're going. I have a right to know."

He folded his arms and gave her a level stare. "Captain Clancy, it's no secret I don't think you or Del Sato should have been allowed on this mission. You're civilians, and more of a hindrance than a help. You can't be expected to make the kind of split-second decisions needed to keep us out of trouble."

Taryn flushed, and concentrated on keeping her temper as he continued. "But you're here anyway, so consider being 'kept in the dark' as your protection. If you don't know anything, you can't give

it away."

"What do you take me for?" she asked, affronted. "If I wanted to give you up, I would've done it when Voldt was aboard. You'll notice I didn't."

"No, you didn't," he agreed. "But it's better to be prepared than be sorry."

Taryn was debating whether it was even worth discussing any further when she was saved from a decision by a sudden blip on the sensors.

A ship, emerging from hyperspace about 30 kilometers away.

She reacted before Bremen did, flipping switches to start bringing the engines on line. "Del!" she yelled down the corridor, trying to maneuver the sluggish *Messenger* around to face the oncoming ship. As it came into view, Taryn identified it as a slightly battered-looking Skipray blastboat, with no markings indicating who it might belong to. But it clearly wasn't the fleet.

Great, she thought grimly even as the comm light flashed, indicating the starfighter was hailing them. She flipped it on as Del arrived, noting the engines were only up to point three-five power. They wouldn't be able to run, just yet.

A cool female voice came over the comm speaker. "Unidentified freighter, do you need assistance?" it asked, as the Skipray slanted to the side a bit, putting it just out of line with the *Messenger's* laser cannon. Taryn kept the freighter turning to face the potential threat as she answered.

"This is Captain Clancy of the *Messenger*, and thanks, but no, we're fine," she said quickly, before Bremen could jump in. He got out of Del's seat and stood in the small space between them, frowning out at the blastboat.

"Captain Clancy? You're just who I'm looking for," the voice said as Taryn took another look at her displays. Up to point six-five power; at least they could start moving. She started the ship sidling away as the Skipray's pilot asked, "I wonder if I might speak with your guest?"

An unexpected request, and there was a slight inflection on the last word that made Taryn glance up at Bremen. To her surprise, he appeared to be gritting his teeth. "This is Bremen," he said shortly.

"Ah, Colonel. This is Mara Jade," the pilot identified herself. "I see you made it off Coruscant in one piece." She sounded vaguely amused.

"Get to the point," Bremen snapped. Taryn and Del looked at him in astonishment. Even at his most supercilious with them, he'd

never been downright rude.

"The *point* is that your rendezvous with the Borderlands fleet is off," she said, clearly unruffled. "They took a detour, and won't be through here for days. High Command's already sent a new courier out to their location, so you're off the hook."

"I wasn't notified of any change," Bremen said.

"You're *being* notified."

"Why'd they send you?" he shot back.

"Because word of the fleet's location came through one of my contacts in the smuggler's coalition," she said. "Information *is* what we're getting paid for."

Now Taryn thought she understood Bremen's animosity. If this Mara Jade were a smuggler, Bremen's law-and-order stance wouldn't allow him much in the way of tolerance. "Do you have any confirmation of that?" he was asking.

"Just the fleet's new location," she answered coolly. "If you're ready, I'll transmit it to you." A data feed light on the panel lit up, and a series of numbers scrolled past on the display. "Not that you need it," she added. "High Command said you could go on home."

"Thanks, but maybe we'll just stick around here a while longer," Bremen said, clearly still suspicious.

There was a pause from the Skipray. "Suit yourself," Mara finally said. The comm light winked out as the ship swung around and started heading away. Before Taryn could ask Bremen how long he planned to wait, another ship suddenly dropped into space ahead of them.

Bremen swore viciously even as Taryn recognized the distinctive shape of a *Carrack*-class cruiser. "Go, go!" he barked at her as the comm light lit up again and a harsh voice ordered them to stop or be destroyed. Taryn turned the freighter away from the cruiser's ominous bulk and slapped at the thrust. She and Del were slammed back in their seats as the *Messenger* leapt forward, Bremen somehow managing to hang on as they drove for deep space. Out of the corner of her eye, Taryn saw the Skipray had turned and was coming back to their position, and a moment later, the sensors told her why.

The cruiser had launched TIE fighters.

"Oh blast it, not again," she muttered. Luck had seen the *Messenger* through its first encounter with TIE fighters; she doubted it would be any match for them this time. "Del, get us a course out of here," she snapped, trying to gauge how soon the two fighters would overtake them.

"I can't — I don't even know where we are!" he snapped back.

"What about those?" Taryn indicated the coordinates Mara Jade had transmitted, still displayed on the console.

"No!" Bremen objected. "She could have set a trap. That cruiser didn't just show up by chance." He lurched as a thump to the *Messenger's* rear indicated that the TIE fighters had caught up. "Now she's back to finish the job," he added bitterly, glaring at the Skipray as it headed towards them.

Lasers flashed as it neared, and Taryn wondered if he were right. But the Skipray zipped past overhead, and a moment later one of the dots on the sensor scopes blinked out. "I wouldn't hang around, if I were you," Mara Jade advised, and Taryn decided it was time for one of those split-second command decisions Bremen thought beyond her.

"Use 'em," she ordered Del, who was already busy with the nav computer. Bremen protested, but before he could intervene another hit rocked the ship, sending him stumbling. By the time he'd clawed his way back up to position behind Taryn, the *Messenger's* shield indicator flickered an ominous red again.

Hands tense on the controls, Taryn tried to avoid the laser fire which peppered their aft end. But the old freighter simply wasn't a match for the faster starfighter. If it weren't for the Skipray harassing the TIE and forcing it to split its attention between two targets, the *Messenger* would've already been blown to bits.

They still might be.

Another hard lurch threw Bremen against the back of Taryn's chair. Clinging to the seat, he looked over her shoulder at the sensors and shouted something. Just as she glanced down at the displays and realized with a jolt that the cruiser's remaining two TIE fighters were on their way to join the attack, the nav computer finally pinged.

She pulled back the levers, and they escaped into the blessed emptiness of hyperspace.



It turned out to be a rather short hop.

Barely an hour after their escape from the cruiser, the proximity alarm clanged, indicating a minute to breakout. Bremen had spent most of the trip threatening to abort the jump, but even he was unwilling to risk stressing the *Messenger* with a second unexpected emergence.

Despite Taryn pointing out that the Skipray had aided in their getaway, he remained convinced that Mara Jade had sold them out to the Imperials. He saw no other explanation for the cruiser's appearance. "A panthac doesn't change its stripes," he said darkly, but declined to explain the comment.

The console pinged again, and Taryn eased back the hyperdrive levers. Mottled sky became starlines, which became stars. They'd arrived.

There was nothing nearby, but the long-range sensors showed a number of ships some distance off their port side. Within moments, they were close enough to identify. It was, indeed, the New Republic fleet.

She let Bremen do the talking when the Mon Calamari cruiser *Hope* hailed them. Its captain confirmed a messenger from the New Republic had already arrived. "But we're still glad to see you," Captain Arboga added in his gravelly voice. "The datacard he brought us appears damaged, and we'd like to compare it with yours to fill in the blanks."

The only thing left to do was drop Bremen and his datacard off. Greatly relieved at the prospect, Taryn headed for the *Hope*. They were still several kilometers out when Bremen stepped into the cockpit holding a small circular object.

Her eyes widened in horror when she saw it. "Where did *that* come from?"

"The hold," Bremen told her grimly. "Ironically, in the same crate the datacard was hidden. The Imperials must have planted it when they restacked the crates." The card in his other hand indicated that it, at least, had escaped Imperial treachery. "That must've been how they found us," he added grudgingly, a half-hearted concession that the cruiser's appearance hadn't been Mara Jade's fault, after all. Leaning past Taryn, he flipped on the comm. "Captain," he reported, "we've found a homing beacon —"

"And we've found who's tracking it," Arboga cut him off. "Take a look aft."

Taryn glanced at the scopes and stifled a groan. The cruiser they'd so recently escaped had appeared behind them. Jabbing the drive up to full, she mentally cursed as the sudden thrust shoved her back in her seat. She and Del had been so close to going home. Now here they were, stuck in the middle of another battle between the Empire and the New Republic.

"It's no match for the entire fleet," Del said, sounding surprised the cruiser continued to follow them.

"But it's more than a match for this scow, if we don't get out of range," Bremen added tightly. He glared at Taryn. "Can't you get a little more speed out of this thing?"

She clenched her teeth. Enough was enough. "Just shut up," she gritted. "If you'd done *your* job and found that damn beacon when they planted it, we wouldn't be in this mess."

Bremen opened his mouth, but a *thunk* to the rear cut off whatever he'd been about to say. The deflector indicator flickered weakly, and Taryn glanced down to see a diagnostic message scroll across the display. She looked at Del. His face was tense as he, too, summed up the shields' sorry state. The *Messenger* shuddered with another hit, and the diagnostic message turned red and began to flash. Del looked grimly resigned.

Leaning forward, Taryn tapped a button and a previously dark section of the board lit up. "The backup shield generator," she said shortly at Del's astonished expression. "I finished it while fixing the main after we got away from Coruscant."

"But, we didn't have all the parts," he said.

"You just have to know where to look," Taryn said, thinking of how she'd cannibalized the main generator to jury-rig the backup. Redundant shields were a precaution she'd learned from her father, and she'd installed a backup generator in every ship she'd worked on. Seldom needed, she hadn't hurried to get the *Messenger*'s up and running. But the retreat from Coruscant had changed her mind. "It won't hold up for long," she added, as another hit rocked the ship. "But maybe it'll last long enough."

Nursing all the speed out of the freighter she could, but still painfully aware it wasn't enough, Taryn drove for the distant safety of the *Hope*'s bulbous bulk. Lured into finishing off the tempting target, the cruiser followed.

It followed too far.

Just when the shields' diagnostic message was scrolling past in red again and Taryn despaired of lasting much longer, suddenly, they were there.

The *Hope*'s turbolaser punch was joined by two other Mon Cal cruisers, and the Carrack cruiser abruptly gave up the chase as its commander realized they'd strayed within firing range of the New Republic fleet. Flames danced along scorched sections of its port side, and small explosion briefly illuminated the hull above one of its dorsal exhaust ports. Apparently deciding retreat was the prudent course of action, the cruiser banked away, its powerful sublight engines driving for deep space.

The Messenger

Craft: Ghtroc Industries class 720 freighter

Type: Light freighter

Scale: Starfighter

Length: 35 meters

Skill: Space Transports: Ghtroc freighter

Crew: 1 or 2

Passengers: 10

Cargo Capacity: 135 metric tons

Consumables: 2 months

Hyperdrive Multiplier: x1

Hyperdrive Backup: x15

Nav Computer: Yes

Maneuverability: 1D

Space: 3

Atmosphere: 260; 750 kmh

Hull: 3D+2

Shields: 1D*

* The *Messenger* has 1D of back-up shields. When the 1D of regular shields is lost, if the shields operator can make an Easy *starship shields* roll, the 1D back-up shields come on line to protect the starship.

Sensors:

Passive: 15/0D

Scan: 30/1D

Search: 50/3D

Focus: 2/4D

Weapons:

1 Double laser cannon

Fire Arc: Front

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 1D+2

Space Range: 1-3/12/25

Atmosphere Range: 100-300m/1.2/2.5 km

Damage: 4D

Capsule: The *Messenger* is a standard mail freighter with one very handy modification Taryn made — back-up shields. Although Core Courier Service freighters are maintained by company technicians when in their home port, the company tends to look the other way if captains wish to tinker with them as well, making modifications to improve the ship's performance. Since Taryn has only recently taken command of the *Messenger*, she hasn't gotten as far on the planned modifications as she'd like.

But it wasn't fast enough.

The brilliant flare from the exploding cruiser lit up the *Messenger's* canopy. Out her port window, Taryn caught a glimpse of fast-moving specks — X-wings, returning to escort formation around the fleet after pumping deadly proton torpedoes into the ship's damaged areas. The fireball began to fade as she approached the *Hope's* hangar bay.



Behind her, Bremen was silent. Cycling back the repulsors and gently setting the ship down on the deck, Taryn waited expectantly for a critique.

"You didn't tell me we had extra shields," he said instead.

"You didn't ask."

"Yes, well —" He hesitated so long that Taryn half-turned to look up at him. The habitual frown was still there, but his eyes were direct as he admitted, "When the main generator went, I figured we were done for."

"We almost were," she said. "Credit my father — he's the one who taught me how to get things up and running on practically nothing but hope and air. After Coruscant, I thought we could use an extra set of shields."

"They certainly came in handy," Bremen agreed. He paused again, even longer this time. "Look," he finally said, "I know I objected to you two being on this mission, but ... all in all, it's worked out okay."

Okay? Taryn stared at him, disconcerted. They'd been shot at, yanked out of hyperspace and boarded, and had eluded an Imperial cruiser to successfully deliver the datacard. Was this his idea of a

compliment?

Bremen flushed slightly at her expression, but added, "We're always looking for good pilots, and if you've a mind for a career change, the New Republic could use someone like you."

She didn't know what to say.

"Think about it," he said. "I'll leave you some contacts to get in touch with, if you're interested. You, too," he told Del.

"Not me," Del said. "I'm retirin'."

Taryn glanced at him in surprise. That's right; after 30 years of hauling mail to the same old ports along the same old route, once they finished this run his piloting days were done.

Was that really what she wanted to look forward to?

"Thanks for the offer," she told Bremen. "I'll think about it. But right now, I've got a route to finish. Not to mention, figure a course back to Coriallis."

Bremen leaned over Del's shoulder. "This ought to help," he said, punching up a chart on the nav computer. Before leaving, he handed her a datacard and urged again, "Think about it."

As Taryn cleared the *Hope's* hangar bay and headed toward the first of a short series of hyperspace hops that would take them back to the Core, she tried to imagine what her father would say if she gave up delivering mail and started flying for the New Republic instead.

Would he say something patronizing — or would he be pleased? She considered it a minute, then shrugged. Gazing out at the stars, she realized she no longer cared what he said.

Taryn smiled as she pulled back the levers and the stars streaked, then faded to the swirling sky of hyperspace. She was back on course.

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THE KAAL CONNECTION

By Peter Schweighofer with Timothy Zahn

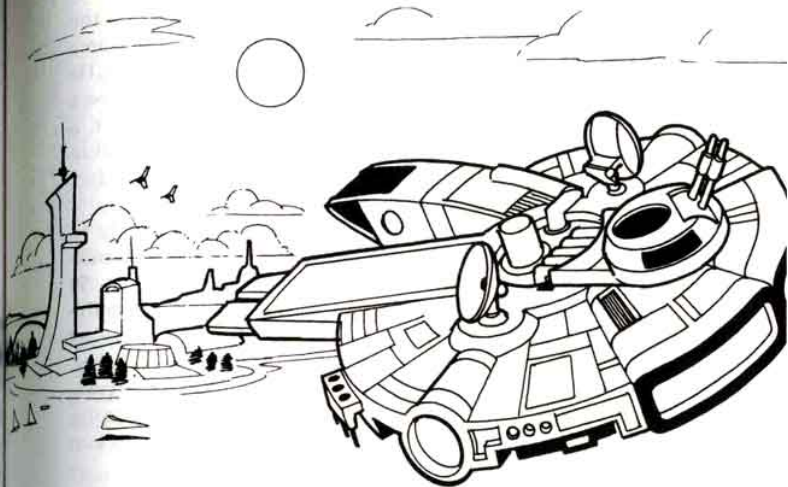
Illustrations by David R. Deitrick

Jeng Droga peered over the bridge of the Emperor's Shadow. The crew worked anxiously as they emerged from hyperspace and made headway toward a bluish world in the distance. He would await his master's orders here, until summoned to his side.

A horrible pain wrenched Droga's body, and a scream pierced the air. The entire crew looked to their dark Jedi captain. His robes whipped the air, his body twisted in agony. "No!" he cried. "It cannot be! I must go to him, I must ..."

The first mate approached. "My lord, you are not well ..."

Droga reached out with the Force and crushed the man's throat in his rage. Several other crew members stood around, watching Droga cry out. "Let me go to him!"



Two crew members approached, intending to restrain their captain. But Droga screamed again how he yearned to be at his master's side. His lightsaber flashed, slicing through crew members and control panel alike. In his rage he destroyed the bridge controls and killed the crew, all the while screaming in agony for his master and writhing in unimaginable pain.

When Jeng Droga next looked up into the viewport, the blue planet loomed ahead. Within seconds his agony was over as the ship crashed into the ocean, vaporizing water as it hit, and stirring up enormous waves ...

Halfway across the galaxy, the Rebel Alliance was celebrating its victory at the Battle of Endor ...

Since the formation of the New Republic, the Provisional Council has faced many military and diplomatic challenges. Mon Mothma placed Ral-Rai Muvnc, the Sullustan Supreme Commander of Ordnance and Supply, in charge of aiding the industrial worlds abandoned by the Empire after the Battle of Endor. Many of these worlds were left in ecological ruin, with few resources, little contact with the rest of the galaxy, and no means of providing their own food. Many systems have just barely survived the past two years, but if food isn't provided to some worlds soon, starvation and rioting could run rampant.

Ral-Rai Muvnc has been sending negotiating teams all over the galaxy to agricultural worlds freed from the Empire — these teams have been negotiating deals to supply hungry systems with food. He has called the characters together to negotiate one such deal on a planet called Kaal, in the Yushan Sector. Kaal's current ruler, a crimelord named Tirgee Benyalle, controls that world's aquaculture industry — Ral-Rai thought the characters would be the perfect choice for this delicate diplomatic mission.

Ral-Rai asks the characters to travel to Kaal immediately to participate in negotiations. The New Republic can offer Benyalle laborers to help her harvest food from Kaal's immense oceans, 50 percent of all profits from any sales, transport of the food to the various systems in need, and five million credits up front (provided to the characters in credit chips filling five large, security locked crates). Ral-Rai will allow characters to increase Benyalle's percentage of profits as high as 65 percent during negotiations — this is the only portion of the New Republic's terms of the agreement that can be varied.

Ral-Rai warns the characters that others are participating in the negotiations for Kaal's food products. He knows of at least two — Admiral Kermen, who represents the remaining Imperial forces, and Moff Prentioch, who has carved out his own little empire in the Mid-Rim. Both could be at each other's throats to gain this contract. Ral-Rai believes others will be there as well.

■ Kaal

Type: Water world
Temperature: Tropical
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Saturated
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Oceans, archipelagos
Length of Day: 36 standard hours
Length of Year: 210 local days
Sapient Species: Humans, various aliens
Starport: Standard
Population: 4.5 million
Planet Function: Aquaculture, entertainment
Government: Criminal organization
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Foodstuffs
Major Imports: Luxury items, high technology

Capsule: Kaal was an Imperial resort world in the Mid-Rim until Imperial troops withdrew after their loss at Endor. While here, the Empire did not exploit Kaal's rich ocean life to its full potential, harvesting only what it needed for the planet and allowing the seas to teem with fish, plankton and other possible food sources.

When the Empire left, Tirgee Benyalle, the crimelord who ran Kaal's many casinos and entertainment industries, stepped in to run the aquacultural industry. Using capital from her casinos, she purchased several immense repulsorlift harvesters, huge floating factories which ply the oceans, scooping up food from the sea, separating, preserving and packaging it for sale.

Kaal's only starport is located on a string of islands which form the resort city. Casinos, high class hotels and other entertainment establishments abound, attracting the galaxy's wealthy classes and underworld elements.

Episode One: Casinos of Kaal

The characters arrive at Kaal in their own ship or one provided by the New Republic. As they descend toward Kaal's starport, they pass two immense Imperial Star Destroyers in orbit. They don't seem to be orbiting in any formation, but are quite a distance apart, facing one another.

The characters are directed to land in a docking bay near the Grand Imperial casino and hotel. Once they have set their ship down, a lone alien figure emerges from the docking bay personnel entrance. The Duros is Boleb Hiiz, Tirgee Benyalle's casino administrator and major domo. He greets the characters, telling them he has reserved a luxury suite in the Grand Imperial for the duration of their stay, and has extended each character a line of 3,000 credits at the Grand Imperial casinos, all courtesy of Tirgee Benyalle. Boleb says the other representatives have all arrived, and are staying at the Grand Imperial. The negotiations begin tomorrow morning, but until then, the characters have the rest of the afternoon and all evening to explore Kaal and the casinos. Boleb offers to lead the characters through the city to their suite at the Grand Imperial.

Boleb Hiiz. All stats are 2D except: *Knowledge* 3D+1, *bureaucracy* 4D+1, *business* 5D+2, *streetwise* 4D+2, *value* 5D, *Perception* 3D, *gambling* 6D, *persuasion* 5D. Move 10. Comlink, datapad, hold-out blaster (3D).

If the characters are worried about the five security-locked crates filled with credit chits, Boleb assures them that they would be safe locked away in the hotel's vaults. Of course, some characters may stay behind (and miss out on all the action) if they decide the safest place for the credits is their own ship. But if they'd like to keep the crates in the hotel's vault, Boleb can summon a security crew to transport the credits. Characters would be wise to guard the ship until the security crew arrives.

Should Boleb leave to escort some of the characters to the Grand Imperial, the characters remaining to guard the ship soon see a cargo skiff pull into the docking bay. The five guards on the skiff are dressed in a variety of rough clothing, including blast vests and helmets, and look more like bounty hunters than security forces. The gruff alien leader says he's here to pick up the credits ...

However, these aliens really *are* bounty hunters, sent by one of the competitors in the negotiations. They intend to load the crates onto the skiff and disappear into the city. However, careful characters might question them further about where they're taking the crates of credits. They might even insist on going along with the aliens (hitching a ride to the hotel). If the characters unmask these bounty hunters, the aliens zoom off in the skiff — with or without the credits — after trading a few blaster shots with the remaining characters.

5 Alien Bounty Hunters. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity 4D, blaster 6D, dodge 5D, melee combat 5D, Perception 3D, hide 4D, sneak 5D, Strength 3D+2, brawling 5D.* Move: 10. Blast vest (+1 energy, +1D physical, torso only), heavy blaster pistol (5D), knife (STR+1D).

A few moments after the bounty hunters leave, the real security force — dressed in snazzy uniforms and all — arrives to transport the credits and the remaining characters to the hotel.

Welcome to the Grand Imperial

As he leads the characters through the starport, Boleb answers most of the characters' questions about Kaal and its aquacultural industry. Benyalle has 10 giant repulsorlift platforms plying the oceans, collecting, processing, packaging and storing food supplies. If asked about the Imperials, he knows that they left about two years ago (shortly after the Rebel victory at Endor). Just before the Empire withdrew its forces from Kaal, natives saw a "shooting star" or meteor flash in the sky. The resulting meteor impact with the ocean caused tidal waves which destroyed much of this section of the city, as well as island settlements throughout the hemisphere. Currently Kaal's resort includes only the islands around the starport, although there used to be a more rural retreat on the Unis Islands to the northwest, until the tidal wave washed most of the resorts from those islands.

The characters' suite at the Grand Imperial is perhaps the most luxurious dwelling space they've ever seen. The full-length windows overlook Kaal's sparkling blue ocean, the furniture is comfortable,



and servants are on call to cater to most of their whims (for a proper tip, of course). Once they have settled in, Targee Benyalle personally pays them a visit with her Twi'lek bodyguard, Sendir. Her intentions are simple: to welcome the characters, invite them to enjoy the comforts of the resort (including fine dining and gambling), and size them up. Targee is graceful and witty, seeming genuinely interested in their involvement in the negotiations. She tries to answer any questions characters have about the deal, although she promises everything will be discussed the next morning. Negotiations are to take place early (0900 hours) aboard her personal sail barge docked in the harbor below.

It is in Targee's best interest to see that her guests are cared for properly, in order to cultivate a good deal on Kaal's aquacultural industry. She leaves them with an invitation to join the other negotiators in a high-stakes game of sabacc later this evening.

■ Targee Benyalle

Type: Aging Crime Lady

DEXTERITY 3D+1

Blaster 7D, brawling parry 5D+2, dodge 6D+1, grenade 4D+2, melee combat 6D, melee parry 5D, pick pocket 5D+1, thrown weapons 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 3D+1

Bureaucracy 7D, business 7D+2, intimidation 4D+2, streetwise 8D, survival 5D,

value 6D+2

MECHANICAL 2D

Archaic starship piloting 4D+2, repulsorlift operation 5D+2, starship gunnery 4D, starship shields 3D+1

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 8D+2, command 6D+1, con 7D, forgery 5D, gambling 9D, persuasion 6D+2, search 5D+1, sneak 5D+2

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 6D, climbing/jumping 6D+2, stamina 4D+1, swimming 5D

TECHNICAL 2D+1

Demolition 3D+2, security 6D

Force Points: 2

Dark Side Points: 1

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, deck of sabacc cards, hold-out blaster (3D), blaster pistol (4D), 2 knives (STR+1D)

Capsule: Tirgee Benyalle is an aging woman with silvered hair and thin, skeptical eyes. She typically dresses in fancy clothes typical of those visiting resort worlds, and keeps a sea flower tucked above her left ear.

Benyalle is the crimelord turned administrator of Kaal. She was running the casinos and other illegal gambits on Kaal before the Empire came. Since the Empire left, she has capitalized on the aquacultural industry the Empire only dabbled in. Now she has 10 immense repulsorlift harvesters which hover over Kaal's endless seas, scooping up the food provided by the waters.

Benyalle is getting old, and has a matronly sort of manner and wisdom. She wants to retain control of Kaal, but doesn't have the resources to continue to run both the casinos and aquacultural industry. She hopes an agreement with an outside power to purchase Kaal's food products will bring more money to support both her endeavors.

That evening in the casino, the characters have an opportunity to size up their competition. The three negotiators are playing different games for most of the evening (at separate gaming tables). Later, Benyalle gathers all the negotiators for a friendly, high-stakes game of sabacc. Until then, the characters have most of the evening for learning more about their competition—as well as trying their hand at some of the many games of chance offered in the Grand Imperial casino.

Admiral Kermen

Admiral Kermen is playing sabacc at one of the lower-stakes tables, practicing his skills for the high-stakes game later. He is easily fleecing several fancily-dressed aliens, and would more than welcome the chance to fleece the characters.

Kermen is a haughty and confident sabacc player. He always acts as if his hand is the best, often inspiring other players to fold before he reveals his cards. The stakes are fairly low at this table, but



Kermen has been winning steadily. Two stormtroopers constantly stand behind him as bodyguards.

At one point during his game, an Imperial Naval officer steps up to Kermen and whispers something into his ear. Characters at the sabacc table actively engaged in the game might be able to overhear the officer's whispers to Kermen on a Moderate *Perception* roll. The officer informs Admi-

ral Kermen that "the plan is well under way," and that "prime candidates are already in place for insertion." This message seems cryptic to the characters at first.

Kermen is here at the behest of the Imperial Advisors currently running the remnants of the crumbling Empire. The New Republic has already taken several key agricultural worlds which supply the Core Worlds and the Imperial Army and Navy with food. The Imperial Advisors have their negotiating strategy, but Kermen has formed his own. He is determined to get control of Kaal's aquacultural industry for the glory of the Empire.

His Imperial Star Destroyer, *Belligerent*, is in orbit around Kaal, seemingly at a standoff with Moff Prentioch's Star Destroyer, aptly named *Prentioch*. The crew is on alert, prepared to counter any move Prentioch's ship makes against them.

Kermen is planning to force the deal with Benyalle at blaster point. His agents have already infiltrated Benyalle's luxury sail barge where the negotiations are to take place. During the past month, several sail barge crew members and officers have been affected by a rare strain of food poisoning, developed and spread by Kermen's agents. When the time comes, Kermen plans to take over

the sail barge and hold Benyalle and the other negotiators hostage (with the help of his spies who have replaced sick crew members) until given control of the planet. As an added precaution, Kermen has bribed Benyalle's trusted Twi'lek bodyguard, Sendir, to aid him if all else fails.

Admiral Kermen

Type: Imperial Admiral

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 4D+2, dodge 5D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Bureaucracy 5D, business 3D+2, intimidation 6D, planetary systems 5D+2, tactics 6D, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Capital ship piloting 6D, communications 5D+2, sensors 5D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Bargain 6D+2, command 7D, con 5D, gambling 5D+2, investigation 4D+1, persuasion 5D, sneak 4D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

Stamina 4D

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 5D, security 5D+2

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 3

Character Points: 13

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink

Capsule: Admiral Kermen is a tall officer with close-cropped black hair and a finely-cut moustache. He seems rather serious at all times, even when gloating over his victories.

Kermen is in charge of the remnants of the Imperial fleet currently defending the Core Worlds from the New Republic advance. Although he takes his orders directly from the few Imperial Advisors left, he makes most of the decisions — the Imperial Advisors, ineffective rulers at best, are too busy bickering over how to resurrect the Empire to give sound tactical orders to their fleets.

Kermen is devious and sly. His serious facade hides any hint of his true manner, attitudes and intentions. Kermen can be cordial and polite when he needs to be, but in truth he offers no mercy when the stakes are high.

Moff Prentioch

Moff Prentioch is playing at one of the Trin sticks tables, and losing rather badly. He has no idea how to play the game, but fancies himself an expert anyway. Anyone can beat him at this game. (He's even more clueless about sabacc, but he won't admit it.)

Any characters competing against him at the Trin stick table become the subject of Prentioch's demoralizing comments. Prentioch cannot believe anyone of such stature would challenge his mastery of the game, and harasses characters to no end about the inadequacy of their gambling skills — at least until he starts losing miserably.



A rather inexperienced advisor approaches him halfway through one game in which Prentioch is losing a considerable sum. He announces to the Moff that the bounty hunters have arrived and wish to discuss payment. Prentioch begins batting the man over the head with the few remaining Trin sticks in his hand, upbraiding his aide for blatantly announcing this to the entire casino. He throws his Trin sticks onto the table and leaves the casino in a huff.

Characters discreetly following the Moff find him meeting at the spaceport with a woman in bounty hunter armor and several surly bounty hunter types. If they are discovered, characters are chased away by the bounty hunters — they'll be back later to finish the job, and possibly finish the characters.

The Moff desperately wants Kaal's aquaculture industry, both for practical reasons and his own prestige. Prentioch has stretched his available resources in his fight with Moff Eyrgen for control of the Wornal Sector. But he is determined to succeed, and feels that Kaal's food products would help alleviate his current supply problems, as he has only a handful of agricultural worlds under his control.

To insure his success, he has brought along his personal Star

Destroyer, the *Prentioch*, to face off against Admiral Kermen's Star Destroyer if necessary. It is currently in orbit above Kaal, prepared for an imminent strike from Kermen's ship. He has also hired a band of bounty hunter rogues to assassinate any other small-time competition here for the negotiations, including the characters!

■ Moff Prentioch

Type: Former Imperial Moff

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 4D, dodge 5D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Bureaucracy 8D, business 5D, cultures 5D+2, intimidation 5D, languages 5D+1, planetary systems 6D, value 6D

MECHANICAL 3D

Communications 4D, sensors 4D+2

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 6D+2, command 5D+2, con 5D, investigation 5D+1, persuasion 6D, sneak 4D+2

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D

Force Points: 1

Dark Side Points: 1

Character Points: 5

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink

Capsule: Moff Prentioch was formerly the ruler of Sombure Sector. When the Empire began to fall after the Battle of Endor, he quickly gained control of the military, dominating the weak-minded officers of the Imperial Army and Navy serving in his region. He quickly pushed to gain more territory, making advances into neighboring sectors. Prentioch ran into trouble in the Wornal Sector, where he met another former Imperial Moff carving out his own little empire, Moff Eyrgen.

Prentioch is a short-tempered old man. He huffs around as if he deserved the glory of the Emperor himself. He can be demanding of his aides and soldiers, and cannot tolerate failure or incompetence. Prentioch is so sure of his own importance that he has forsaken his past uniform in favor of gaudy robes which make him look like a warped version of an Imperial Advisor. In his eyes he is always right, he is always the best, and he demands to be treated so.

Syndic Pandis Hart

The final negotiator is a rather dapper gentleman named Syndic Pandis Hart, chief purchasing agent for the Sif-Uwana Council. When the characters arrive, he's already challenging several local gamblers to a high-stakes game of sabacc.

Hart seems genuinely cordial and friendly toward everyone he meets. He welcomes other players to his table — in the course of conversation during the game, he tries to find out why they are here on Kaal, and what their offer to Benyalle could be. He's not the best



sabacc player in the galaxy, but he's good. And if he does lose, he loses gracefully.

At one point during the game, Hart excuses himself for a moment. He returns to his suite in the Grand Imperial hotel, where it sounds like he makes a call on a long range comm unit. Hart quickly checks in with someone called Tapper who seems to be searching for a ship of some sort at a location called the Unis Islands. Tapper believes he's found it, and gives coordinates to Hart. Hart then returns to the casino to get in on another high-stakes sabacc game.

Hart is really smuggler Talon Karrde, who came to Kaal to negotiate a specific deal with Benyalle to further his own goals.

Karrde is on Kaal to find a downed starship which is rumored to have a cloaking device. The ship — possibly the personal yacht of the late Emperor Palpatine himself — supposedly disappeared from the Imperial palace after his death and crashed on a water world. Karrde has investigated several worlds already, and believes he has found the yacht in the ocean near Kaal's Unis Islands, to the northwest of Kaal starport.

Although the yacht is supposed to be a large ship (as big as a Corellian corvette), Karrde intends to retrieve it intact. To do that in secrecy, he wants to negotiate with Benyalle to run his own aquacultural harvesting operation in the area of the Unis Islands. Karrde's

second in command, Quelev Tapper, is already searching for the Emperor's yacht using a submersible craft purchased from a dealer on Kaal.

■ Syndic Pandis Hart (Talon Karrde)

Type: Smuggler

DEXTERITY 3D+1

Blaster 5D+1, brawling parry 5D+1, dodge 6D+1, melee combat 4D+1, melee parry 4D+1, pick pocket 6D+1, running 5D+1

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

Alien species 7D+1, bureaucracy 7D+2, business 8D+1, cultures 7D+1, law enforcement 7D+1, planetary systems 5D+2, streetwise 8D+1, survival 4D+1, value 5D+1, willpower 6D+1

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Astrogation 7D+2, beast riding 4D+2, communications 6D+2, repulsorlift operation 5D+1, sensors 7D+2, space transports 8D+2, starship gunnery 5D+2, starship shields 6D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 8D, command 9D, con 7D+1, forgery 6D, gambling 6D+2, hide 6D+2, investigation 8D, persuasion 7D, sneak 6D+2

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 4D+2, stamina 6D

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Computer programming/repair 4D+2, first aid 4D+2, security 6D+2

Force Points: 2

Dark Side Points: 2

Character Points: 26

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink

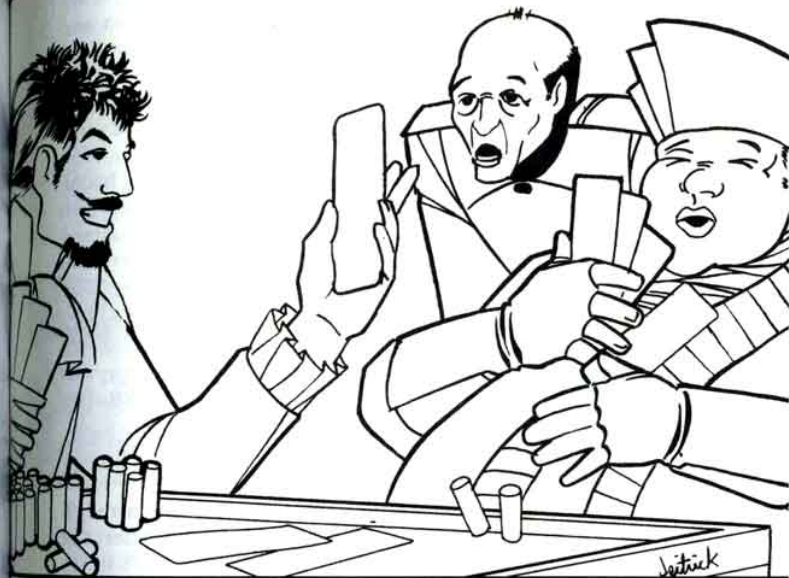
Capsule: Talon Karrde has been moving up in the world of smuggling since Jabba the Hutt's demise. Although Karrde's organization is on top of the smuggling pyramid, he keeps that fact a secret. He is more subtle and unobtrusive in his dealings, and puts more faith in accurate information than pure brute force. His latest pursuits have included tracking down a starship with an operational cloaking device. Karrde doesn't necessarily need the ship, but the cloaking device would certainly be a valuable prize useful to many other parties.

Karrde has a strong feeling of obligation to the people within his organization, and does all he can to help and protect them. He currently works off of a base on Myrkr which has served as a home to many in his organization, and he has become quite fond of the security and serenity he finds there.

Karrde is always investigating new and profitable ventures for his organization, especially with the greater resources available through his success. He and his lieutenant, Quelev Tapper, often check out business opportunities themselves.

Benyalle's Problem

Just before Tirgee Benyalle calls all the negotiators together for that high-stakes game of sabacc, her Duros major domo Boleb Hiiz approaches her. The two excuse themselves and head over to one



unoccupied corner of the casino. Characters won't be able to hear what's going on unless some are disguised or manage to sneak up close.

Boleb explains to Tirgee that more crew members aboard her luxury sail barge — where the negotiations are to take place tomorrow — have become ill, apparently of food poisoning. Tirgee orders him to replace the sick crew members immediately, and tells him to keep quiet about the apparent food poisoning.

The sabacc game is entertaining, as the characters get a chance to see how each of the negotiators and Benyalle fare in the contest, and how each reacts differently to winning and losing. After the game, Benyalle suggests everyone get a good night's rest, as they are meeting early the next morning at her sail barge to begin the negotiations.

Interlude: Bounty Hunter Ambush

When the characters return to their room, they have a surprise waiting for them. As they walk in the door, they notice a thermal

detonator on the floor of their suite near the entrance, blinking away! The bounty hunters around the corridor corner outside are waiting for the character to react by dodging out of their room, and into the bounty hunters' field of fire. There is one bounty hunter for each character in the group.

The thermal detonator is real enough, but the explosive innards have been removed. It continues ticking until the characters — or the bounty hunters — shut it off.

The bounty hunters aren't too stupid — if they're losing badly, they'll toss a few smoke grenades at the characters and retreat down the hall to escape down a turbolift. Any captured bounty hunters, however, are quick to confess that they were hired by Moff Prentioch to keep the characters from the negotiations.

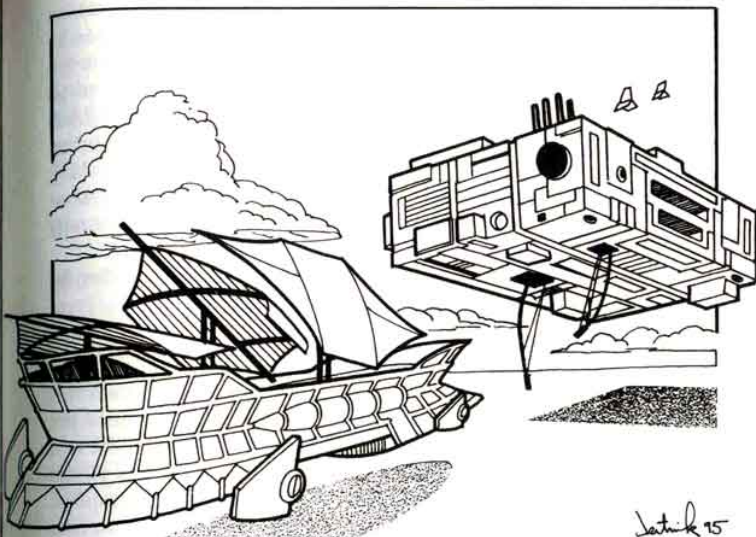
Bounty Hunters. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity 4D, blaster 6D, dodge 5D, melee combat 5D, Perception 3D, hide 4D, sneak 5D, Strength 3D+2, brawling 5D.* Move: 10. Blast vest (+1 energy, +1D physical, torso only), heavy blaster pistol (5D), knife (STR+1D), smoke grenade.

Episode Two: At Blaster Point

Should the characters survive the bounty hunter ambush, they'll be all ready for the negotiations the next morning. They meet the other representatives and Benyalle in the Grand Imperial's lobby and travel over the shimmering blue seas of Kaal on Benyalle's luxury sail barge. After a half hour's journey, they reach the *Sea Sprite*, one of Benyalle's immense repulsorlift harvester factories floating above the ocean's surface.

Benyalle's quick tour of the factory includes the huge water scoop units, several filtration and separation stations, an automated processing and packaging facility, and a hold large enough to contain enough food to feed a planet. As she leads the tour, Benyalle explains she has 10 such repulsorlift factories. However, because she has problems finding and distributing to new markets, only three factories are operating now — and those factories are operating at half capacity. With the proper distribution network, Benyalle claims such an aquacultural industry could run at full capacity, generating food for several worlds, and still not make a significant impact on Kaal's ocean life for 100 years.

After the tour, the group boards Benyalle's sail barge again and heads for the meeting room, just aft of the barge's bridge control area. Personal security guards, such as Admiral Kermen's two



stormtroopers and any characters serving as security for their negotiator, are also allowed to attend. Benyalle's bodyguard Sendir is also standing stoically behind her.

Benyalle outlines the basics of the aquacultural operation on Kaal — there are 10 repulsorlift harvester factories floating over Kaal's waters, and Benyalle is willing to sell 90 percent of the food to one buyer if the price is right. She favorably considers offers to help crew and command these factories, as long as no troops are stationed on Kaal. The buyer must provide transport and distribution for the food products.

Each group presents their offer, beginning with Moff Prentioch, then Syndic Pandis Hart, then the characters, and finally Admiral Kermen.

Moff Prentioch offers 10 million credits to seal the deal, and 500 credits per ton of food shipped off the planet (a substandard price — for Kaal's technology level, 1,800 credits per ton is standard). He also offers to construct 10 more repulsorlift harvester factories and provide crews.

Syndic Pandis Hart announces that the Sif-Uwana Council wishes to set up its own independent harvesting operations based within a

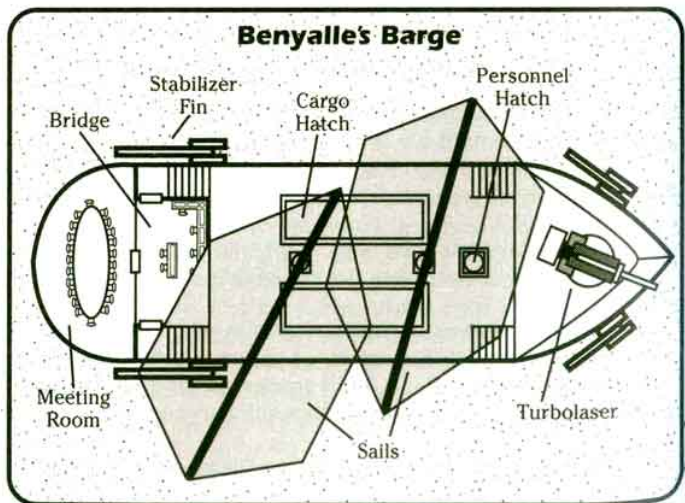
1,000 kilometer radius of the Unis Islands. He doesn't care who else gains control of Benyalle's main harvesting operation, as long as he is able to harvest his area with the Council's own equipment. He offers one million credits to sign the deal, with 50 percent of all profits from the operation going to Benyalle — 50 percent of 2,000 credits per ton of food shipped from Kaal is a rather generous price.

The characters must present their own deal. Perhaps Moff Prentioch puts it down or scrutinizes it. They should know what they're willing to offer, and how much the New Republic can actually deliver.

When it comes time for Admiral Kermen to present his offer, he begins a boring speech on Imperial power. Read aloud:

"Only two years ago," he says, "The Empire ruled this planet as a luxury world. Tirgee Benyalle here kept the entertainment aspect of the planet in order. The Empire saw no need to harvest Kaal's vast oceans, at least not on such a scale as this. Since the Empire left Kaal, Tirgee has capitalized on Kaal's rich sea life and the food it provides. She has turned aquaculture on this planet into a large industry. Now the Empire is hard-pressed for supplies, and her remaining worlds are hungry. So it is only fair that we take back what my former commanders so frivolously gave away."

At that comment, Kermen rises from his seat, blaster pistol raised



at the other negotiators — his two stormtroopers also level their blasters at the group. Benyalle immediately calls for the sail barge's commanding officer, Captain Huvis, to come in with his pistol ready. Several bridge officers enter with the captain, all with blasters at the ready. Benyalle orders the captain to throw Admiral Kermen and his guards in the brig. Before Captain Huvis responds, one of the bridge officers shoots the captain!

Most of the sail barge bridge crew has been replaced by Admiral Kermen's agents! They order everybody out onto the bridge.

This is the moment the characters should spring into action. If they don't start a firefight or a brawl, one of the bridge crew, still loyal to Benyalle, provides a diversion by screaming "Traitors!" and shooting several mutinous agents.

In the ensuing chaos, Hart, Benyalle and her bodyguard, Sendir, stay with the characters, while Moff Prentioch calls desperately for backup on his comlink. Admiral Kermen makes a dash for the door to help his accomplices — and possibly to escape to torment the characters another day. The characters must protect their allies while holding off the traitorous crew. And the only way out of the meeting room is through the bridge. Three traitors take cover in the door from the meeting room to the bridge — each firing a blaster bolt now and then to keep everybody's head down. But if the characters rush these thugs, they can break through to the bridge. Of course, there are a few more mutinous crew members out there.

Kermen's Mutinous Agents. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 3D, *blaster* 5D, *dodge* 4D, *sneak* 3D, *Strength* 3D, *brawling* 4D. Move: 10. Blaster pistol (4D).

Sendir Makes His Move

If the battle has been going easy for the characters, and they have taken the bridge with few problems, then Sendir — Benyalle's silent Twi'lek bodyguard — decides to make his move and betray Benyalle for Admiral Kermen. It's possible he's been debating whether or not to betray her, and thus hasn't acted so far. Perhaps he was waiting for a moment when he could be most useful ...

Sendir tries to kill Benyalle by knifing her in the back, then turns on the rest of the group with his blaster. Perceptive characters might notice Sendir acting suspiciously in the moments before this attack, and could avert it if they move Benyalle away from her traitorous bodyguard. Depending on the situation, Sendir may instead take Benyalle hostage, hoping to influence the characters to

surrender, or perhaps to bargain his way off the sail barge to safety.

Sendir. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity* 4D, *blaster* 6D, *dodge* 5D+1, *brawling parry* 4D+2, *melee combat* 5D, *hide* 3D, *sneak* 3D+2, *Strength* 3D+2, *brawling* 5D+2. Move: 10. Blaster pistol (4D), blast vest (+1 energy, +1D physical, torso only), knife (STR+1D).

If the characters manage to save Benyalle, she is grateful to them and offers to work out a deal with them in return. But the characters and the sail barge are still in the grip of danger.

During the fighting in the bridge, a stray blaster bolt has fried the barge's directional controls. It's now speeding straight ahead, on a crash course with the immense repulsorlift factory harvester!

To repair the damaged controls, a character needs to make a Very Difficult *repulsorlift repair* roll. The sail barge speeds closer to the repulsorlift factory, and a character manages to repair the controls just in time to steer clear of a collision.

Once the characters regain control of the sail barge, Hart steps forward and instructs them to hold the bridge and set a course for the Unis Islands — he knows a way to escape and get rid of Kermen and the mutinous crew at the same time, but the characters and Benyalle must trust him. Hart reaches for the bridge comm unit and begins hailing someone called Tapper. He instructs Tapper to "set the ship to blow" and then rendezvous with the sail barge near the Unis Islands.

In the mean time, the characters must hold off Kermen's agents trying to storm the bridge from the outer deck. Fortunately, crew members loyal to Benyalle are hampering their efforts, shooting back at the mutinous crew from hatches, portholes and other available cover. The characters have a good view of the battle from the bridge, which sits aft on the sail barge and overlooks the main deck.

Anyone able to get a view of the two Star Destroyers in orbit notices bright green turbolaser blasts flashing between the two ships. However, they also see a drop ship tearing through the atmosphere, heading directly for the sail barge!

The Unis Islands aren't far, and Hart brings the sail barge to a halt at a certain point several kilometers south of the islands. A submersible craft emerges from the sea and surfaces near the sail barge. Hart, Benyalle and the characters must make their way from the bridge to the outside deck of the barge, then jump into the ocean, where they are picked up by the submersible, piloted by Hart's associate, Quelev Tapper. As those crew members loyal to Benyalle

are being soundly beaten, many of them also leap off and head for the submersible. The sea-going craft is large enough (when surfaced) so the characters and the fleeing loyal crew members can ride on its surface. Once everyone's aboard, the submersible speeds away on the ocean's surface, putting as much distance between it and the now stationary sail barge as possible.

If he hasn't already revealed himself, Hart explains his true identity as Talon Karrde. He came to Kaal intending to steal a ship he believes is the Emperor's yacht which supposedly crashed here several years ago. Karrde wanted his exclusive "aquaculture" contract so he could recover the ship without anyone knowing. Unfortunately, with two Imperial factions battling for Kaal, a probable harvesting contract with the New Republic and Karrde's inability to secretly remove the craft, he ordered Tapper to destroy it. If Talon Karrde can't have the ship, he's going to make sure no one gets it.

The drop ship bearing Moff Prentioch's personal insignia soon hovers over the still sail barge. Its disembarking troopers clash with the remaining crew loyal to Admiral Kermen. As Karrde's submersible craft speeds out of range, the charges Tapper set aboard the Emperor's yacht explode. The entire sail barge and the drop ship are engulfed in a brilliant explosion from the submerged yacht, sending bits of metal and vaporized water into the sky. The characters have escaped safely with Karrde, saving Benyalle and her loyal crew, and getting rid of their antagonists.

When the characters return to Kaal starport with Karrde and Benyalle, the battle between the two Star Destroyers in orbit has


Adventure Idea

After somehow hearing of the Emperor's lost yacht, an Imperial undercover agent working for the Imperial Advisors hires the characters to find the remains of Jeng Droga, who he believes escaped the crashed yacht to live on the now uninhabited Unis Islands. During their island search, the characters explore ruined resort buildings, possibly being attacked by predators which have emerged from the islands' jungles.

There are remains of Droga on one of the Unis Islands — an isolated hovel, some robes, and his lightsaber. They also discover cryptic carvings in a nearby cave, possibly made by Droga in his last days. Once they discover signs of Droga, they report back to the undercover Imperial agent, who might try to kill them to keep what they know as his own personal secret.

reached a stalemate. Both ships are desperately trying to flee, while taking a few parting shots at the other Star Destroyer.

Karrde graciously bows out of any further negotiations, as his concerns on Kaal have been eliminated and he has no need for a harvesting contract. Since they are the only negotiating team left — and since they helped save her life — Benyalle works out a deal with the characters to sell Kaal's foodstuffs to the New Republic. As a reward for saving her life, she offers each character a position in her criminal organization (anything from bodyguard to hotel administrator or casino floor manager).

As for Talon Karrde, he's off to pursue some new venture he can capitalize on ... 



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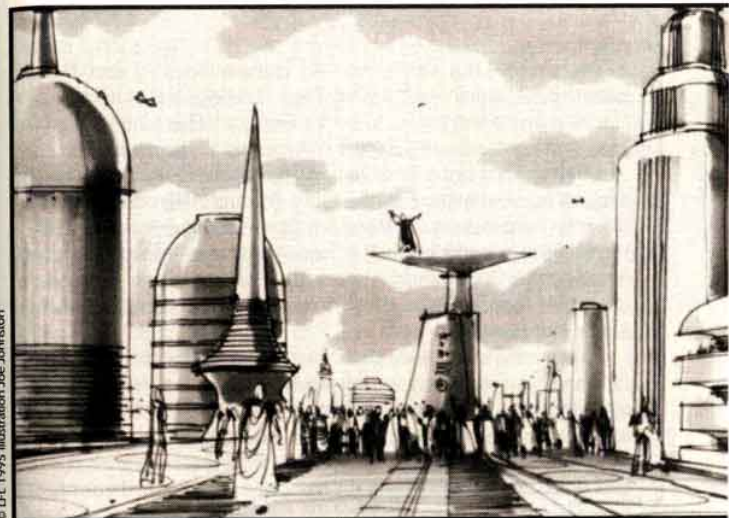
Mention the Core Worlds to any citizen of the Empire, or denizen of the most remote colonial outpost, and he, she, or it will speak of wealthy worlds of splendor, elaborate amusements, and political intrigue. The Core has birthed and nurtured a hundred-hundred empires and kingdoms, each succumbing to the next, and each more mighty than the last. All pale in comparison to the great Republic which eventually enveloped them all, and even the venerable Republic pales in comparison to the mighty Empire which in turn enveloped it.

The most technologi-

cally and culturally advanced Human settlements in the galaxy make their homes in the Core, and it is here — among terraced estates, urban palaces, and plasteel towers — that the wealthiest, most famous, and most powerful beings in the galaxy make their homes. In a life filled with the glitter and prestige so common in the wealthy Core Worlds, there are few signs of suffering, and little evidence of the oppression and tyranny common to more remote worlds languishing beneath the Empire's jackboots. At least on the surface, people enjoy an intense pride of being among

INTO THE CORE WORLDS

By Paul Sudlow



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the most fortunate beings ever to live.

Not all Core worlds are as developed and refined as those closest to Coruscant, the cultural center of the Empire. As one moves Rimward along the trade routes, the Human settlements grow younger, the planets increasingly able to provide their own raw materials, and the societies less steeped in history and traditions. The most ancient buildings and statues in the streets and parks of these worlds have barely emerged from infancy in comparison to their ancestors in the central Core.

Indeed, the transition from advanced Core world to merely robust Colony world is very gradual. However, though there

is no readily discernible cultural or anthropological shift which justifies separating the Core region from the Colonies region which surrounds it, the legal boundary is quite definite and significant. The origins of the boundary are lost in time, and today the border seems somewhat arbitrary, but there is nothing arbitrary about the manner in which the Empire manages worlds in the Core and those in the Colonies. The younger worlds of the outer areas of the Core can be thankful that they find themselves on the favored side of the border, where the Empire shows a kindly and benevolent face to obedient citizens. Beyond that border, a very different Empire rules.

Origin of the Species

Perhaps at the very heart of Human thought lies the question of beginnings and endings. The closing chapter of the Human saga has yet to be written, but there have been long and contentious debates concerning its prologue.

There is near universal consensus that the Human species originated somewhere in the Core (though there are those few who believe that the Homeworld no longer exists or is far beyond the current bounds of known space). Unfortunately, most of the Core World civilizations are as old as Human collective memory, and there is no conclusive record of one single Homeworld.

Entire crusades and civil wars have been devoted to resolving this question among worlds competing for the title, as well as many academic careers. However, to the date of the Imperial Period, no Core world has managed to produce an undisputed archaeological or fossil record to prove that it had once hosted the original pre-space Human civilization.

Core World Culture

Generally speaking, the typical citizen of the Core is highly educated, indulgent, productive, accustomed to bureaucratic government, and content to allow the government to provide his or her needs. People are proud of their status as Core citizens, and tend to consciously or subconsciously look down at those from the Colonies or beyond (an area often condescendingly referred to as "the Sticks"). After all, everything that is worthwhile comes from the Core, except, perhaps, raw materials, which requires no special talent to produce.

If one were to believe the stereotypes and cultural myths re-

garding life in the Core commonly perpetuated *beyond* the Core region, one might erroneously conclude that the Core Worlds are a homogeneous lot. Actually, thousands and thousands of centuries of history, expansion, warfare, and, occasionally, seclusion, have given each world a unique character. A visitor to Chandrila's capital could not possibly mistake it for that of Corellia, nor could a viewer of a Coruscant comedy holovid mistake it for a product of late Alderaan.

Nonetheless, there are certain similarities which Core worlds share. The introduction of the HoloNet, and the instantaneous communication it brought, en-

couraged a cultural cross-pollination among Core worlds, and there is now a certain amount of uniformity among them, enough so that one may safely designate certain accents, world views, and attitudes as being part of a distinct Core culture.

The Empire, which does not particularly approve of variety in its most vital worlds, has attempted to accelerate this cross-pollination process. It has devoted several hundred trillion credits in New Order Party funding, propaganda, and public education programs in a titanic effort to supplant local traditions with its own philosophy of universal Human High Culture.

Coruscant, as the Imperial seat, serves as the premier model of Human High Culture, naturally, and millions of bright young students from the upper classes of thousands of worlds are brought both to Coruscant and other model worlds to be indoctrinated. By educating the future political and business leaders of key worlds in the Colonies and Mid-Rim region, the Emperor hopes to expand his High Culture even further. However, though the Empire has had amazing successes among some sectors of the Core most strongly tied to Coruscant, the program has had less than incredible results elsewhere.

While it wasn't difficult for the Emperor to convince the Human

inhabitants of the Core that they were special, it was not a simple matter to convince them to abandon their own native cultures and traditions. Ironically, the Emperor sabotaged his own efforts by removing the means by which a common culture had first spread in the days of the Old Republic: the HoloNet. Without the instant communication the HoloNet provided, the impulse to draw together has actually reversed itself. Not only is the Empire fighting against thousands of years of culture and tradition, the loss of the HoloNet has discouraged the cross-pollination of cultures that would most quickly eliminate differences.

The Emperor did succeed in cultivating and amplifying feelings of distrust and discomfort toward non-Human sentient beings among the Core populous. Whereas aliens of all stripes were once welcomed and common in the Core, today they are rare sights indeed. A mild xenophobia grips the Human population, and many people regard aliens as less worthy of legal protection than themselves. This attitude is reflected in Imperial law, which requires that aliens traveling in the Core carry special permits allowing them to do so, or be traveling with a Human owner or supervisor who serves as a sponsor. Aliens do tend to be more common on younger

Core worlds closer to the Colonies (such as Esseles or Tallaan), especially when there is heavy labor or menial tasks to be done. However, some worlds, including Coruscant, have "underground" alien populations.

The Economy and Big Business

The Core worlds are the economic engines of the Empire. Were the thrumming economies of the Core Worlds to falter, the constant Imperial drive outward into the Outer Rim would slow and begin to fall back on itself. The Emperor therefore gives Core worlds and their client megacorporations a great deal of leeway in developing and managing their own economic policies.

It is a mutually beneficial arrangement. In return for considerable freedom in their activities, favored firms such as Sienar Fleet Systems provide the Empire with a non-stop supply of cutting-edge technology and the best in Human innovation. It is worth noting that such a technological marvel as the Death Star battle station could not have been realized without the contributions of thousands of Core-based defense contractors and space construction firms.

The exports of the Core Worlds are surprisingly similar from world to world. Each world has its own specialties, of course,

but the large number of megacorporations active in the Core almost guarantees that the bulk cargo shippers are transporting the same sort of holooids, droid persona software packages, pharmaceuticals, and so on, whether they are leaving Corellia or Corulag.

The import needs of the Core Worlds are likewise similar. For example, few Core worlds engage in wide-scale manufacturing or agriculture, and must import heavy machinery, food, and raw materials. Such activities as manufacturing and agriculture are reserved for worlds with large supplies of raw materials and a lot of open land. Most Core worlds have precious little of either resource. They have long ago depleted their systems of valuable raw materials, and cleared land is much too valuable a commodity to devote to dent beans or wroton grain. Raw materials must be imported from the Mid-Core or beyond.

Government

Government plays a large role in the life of the Core Worlds citizens. Fully 30 percent of Core inhabitants work for Imperial or world governments in some capacity, and an additional 10 percent work for government contracting firms. Feelings toward the Imperial government range from positive to indifferent. Few people feel enmity toward the

Empire, largely because life goes on much as it did in the latter days of the Old Republic for most of the inhabitants of the Core. The Emperor's policy of showing only a beneficial face to the Core populace has reaped great dividends of goodwill toward his Empire.

Because of the Empire's "hands off" policy, the governments of the Core Worlds have gone along willingly with a nominal Imperial occupation. Moff, as well as governors, preside over the semi-independent world governments, and their decisions and rulings are rarely challenged. While most worlds host at least one Imperial base, the soldiers keep to themselves, and rarely if ever interfere with local proceedings. If Imperial intervention is necessary, it is usually done behind the scenes at an upper level.

Many governmental organizations continue in the same bureaucratic orbits they traveled in the days of the Old Republic. This is true of both Imperial agencies and governmental organizations unique to each world. Some of these worlds are so tradition-bound that though the Imperial Senate is defunct, many of its subcommittees continue to perform their duties.

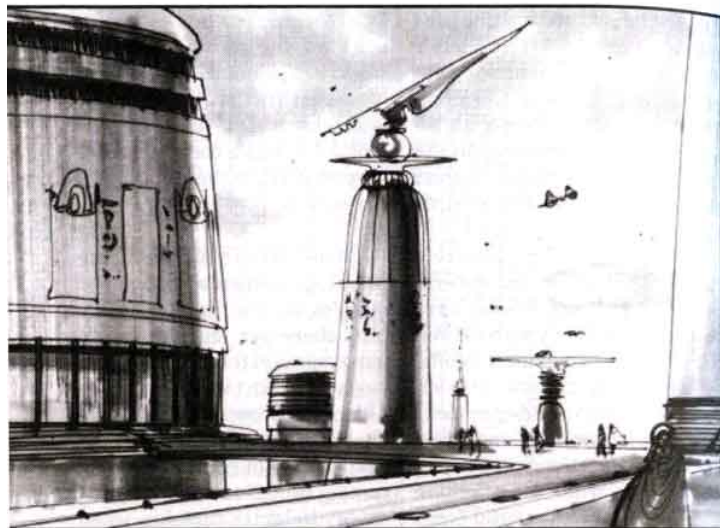
Since the Core worlds are so important to the Empire, Moffs supervise only a few worlds rather than one entire sector.

Most locate their homes and offices on the most prominent world in a prominent sector. Being assigned a Core World sector is a highly sought-after plum for Moffs. They and their staffs are very powerful in the Empire, and some even have the Emperor's ear.

Thanks to the successful Imperial propaganda campaigns masking the true face of the Empire, there are few subversive movements in the Core, and precious little in the way of pro-Alliance sentiment. Busy and industrious citizens have little time to spend mulling over unsettling rumors brought on planet by unsavory freighter captains, when there is no sign of the horrors described. Given bread and circuses, the people are quite prepared to tolerate Grand Moffs and governors, and are not receptive to those who suggest things might be better. This has been especially true in the days since the destruction of Alderaan showed the fate of planets not properly grateful for their honored positions in the Emperor's New Order.

The Ringali Shell

Perhaps the best way to get a handle on the Core is to visit its worlds. The Ringali Shell is a segment of space which runs from a mid region of the Core out to the Colonies region. Named for the dramatic violet nebula which



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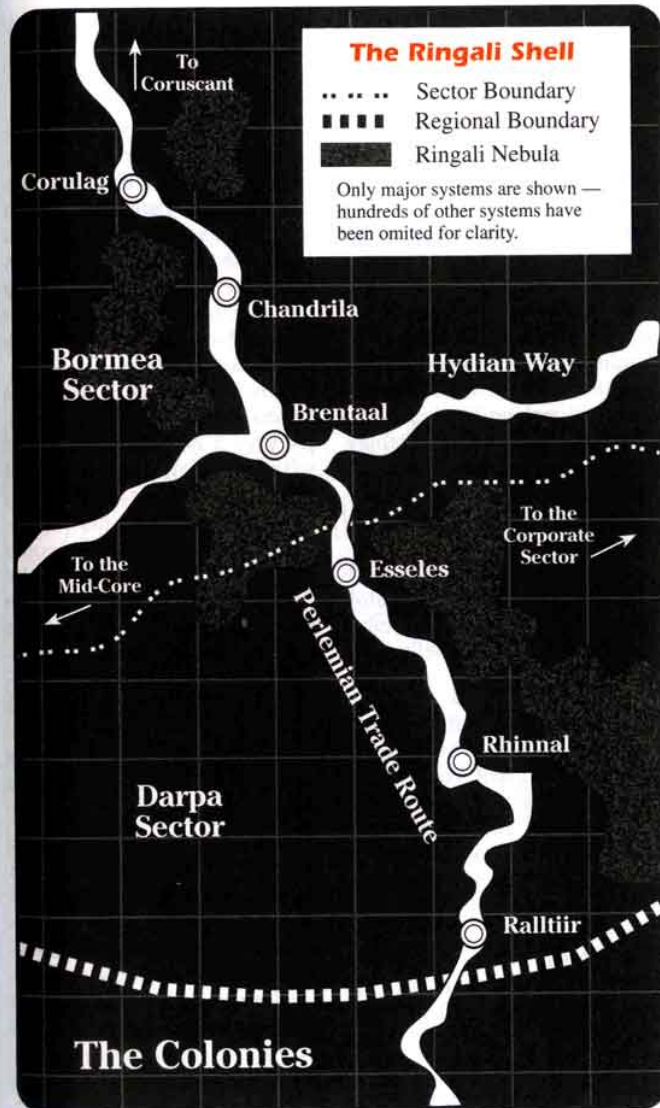
dominates to a lesser or greater extent the nighttime skies of nearly every planet in the two sectors which make up the Shell, the Ringali Shell serves as the wellspring of the Perlemian Trade Route.

Not every settled planet in the two sectors making up the Ringali Shell is featured here — only a few representative planets, the most important ones, have been sampled. As elsewhere in the Core, there are worlds which are not themselves places of beauty and the center of power. Some of these client worlds were terraformed relatively late in the Old Republic history, while others just never thrived as others did. Life in these client worlds is

still mighty fine by the standards of those living in “the Sticks,” but those hailing from a client world have a lower status than those from a true Core world. The worlds featured here are all main trading centers located on the Perlemian Trade Route itself.

Bormea Sector

Of the two sectors in the Ringali Shell, the Bormea Sector is the closer to the inner worlds of the Core such as Coruscant and Corellia. The worlds of the Bormea Sector have long and proud histories, and remember with pride their august positions in the Old Republic. Most world governments have chosen to ignore the subtle but definite ero-



Steven Brown

sion of their liberties and autonomy as the Empire grows, and have transferred their loyalties and source of pride to Palpatine and his visions of greater glory.

The Moff of the sector is Jamson Caglio. Moff Caglio is a relatively mild man of the Old Republic school, not at all the sort of fellow one would picture holding such a powerful Imperial post. A very early supporter and friend of Emperor Palpatine, Caglio has risen to his present position because he has the rare talent of making himself useful to the Emperor without displaying dangerous ambitions. He spends a great deal of his time on Coruscant, leaving the actual governing of the sector to Governor Zafiel Snopps. When not advising the Emperor, the Moff makes his home in the capital city of Corulag, Curamelle.

Corulag

It is often said that Corulag is a great place to live, but a rather bland place to visit. The weather is pleasant and unremarkable, disasters few and far between. The very model of an Imperial Core world, Corulag is cosmopolitan, devoid of provincial values and loyalties which might interfere with the New Order ideology, and totally devoted to the Emperor and his philosophy of Human High Culture. Its greatest distinction is that it has none.

Politics: The Corulag govern-

ment is run by a House of Citizens elected by the populace, and presided over by the Imperial governor. There are numerous political parties, but all are solidly in the Imperial camp. Local laws are relatively strict. Personal weapons may be brought onto the planet, but must be registered with the government, which holds the weapon until a 10-day waiting period has elapsed, during which a background check is run on the registrant.

Governor Zafiel Snopps is a no-nonsense captain of industry who is far more concerned with keeping his powerful economy chugging along than in currying favor with his superiors. He is popular with the people of Corulag, since he used to be Corulag's representative in the Imperial Senate before receiving a special appointment as governor when that body was disbanded. The Emperor, who rarely grants such favors, is reconsidering the wisdom of his decision as Zafiel's popularity rises.

Culture: The people of Corulag are wealthy and productive, and pay little attention to worlds less favored and fortunate. They bask in the knowledge that their success as a society is entirely due to their superior abilities and culture. Actually, their successes in the Imperial era are largely due to the fact that Corulag latched itself firmly to the for-

tunes of Senator Palpatine, and rode with him all the way up to the top. It also doesn't hurt that Coruscant is only a few hours away via the hyperlanes.

Economy: Corulag is the home of several major high tech firms, including Gowix Computers, Danthe Artifice, Ltd., Gwain Spices, and the Mansom Corporation. Sienar Fleet Systems maintains a major research and development complex near

Dammon University in Curamalle.

Points of Interest: Corulag hosts the Corulag branch of the Empire-spanning Academy. Corulag Academy is the sister school of Raithal Academy, and is only slightly less prominent. Like Raithal, Corulag Academy prepares the most talented young Imperial citizens for military service. The main campus is situated in Curamalle, and there is a

Adventure Idea

Dr. Aleq Armond of the Corulag Academy's advanced engineering department has been working in conjunction with Sienar Fleet Systems to develop a new generation of ion engine which is believed will significantly enhance the speed of TIE fighters. His best students are working on the project, one of whom is a Rebel sympathizer. The final prototype is being readied for demonstration to Sienar and Imperial Navy officials. The Rebel spy notes in a report that while the project is a success, if the demonstration fails, the whole project will likely be scrapped, since it is way over deadline and over budget.

Since Sienar would definitely acquire the new engine design and incorporate it into its designs if it were impressed, it would be best for the Alliance if the demonstration fails. To avoid involving the student spy, an outside team has been assembled to infiltrate the university and sabotage the project in some subtle manner.

In many ways, this won't be difficult, since security is somewhat more lax on the campus than it might be on more traditional military installations. Still, the Academy is a military post, and guards are armed. In addition, the advanced engineering compound within the Academy is a very intimate and closed community, and moving about in the labs and buildings unchallenged is very difficult, especially when outsiders such as repair crews and cleaners are usually university employees themselves.

training facility on the Imperial Navy base located on Corulag's largest moon. Corulag Academy accepts qualified students from most of the Core, and a smaller number from other regions. A surprising number of students from Corulag itself enter the Academy, and as a result, natives of Corulag often become senior Imperial officers.

■ Corulag

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Urban
Length of Day: 25 standard hours
Length of Year: 371 standard days
Sentient Species: Human
Starport: Imperial class
Population: 15 billion
Planet Function: Administration
Government: Imperial governor
Tech Level: Space
Major Imports: Raw materials, foodstuffs
Major Exports: High tech, luxury goods

Chandрила

Chandрила is a somewhat contrary world when compared to most of its fellow Core worlds. Culturally, Chandrilans dislike piling into huge cities, and have taken pains to keep communities small and populations at a low density. This has always been a characteristic of the planet, since Chandrilans have an unusually low birth rate. Families rarely have more than two children. Chandрила has only two continents, both of which are domi-

nated by large, grassy plains.

Politics: The Imperial Governor of Chandрила, Gerald Weizel, makes little effort to mix with the Chandrilan citizenry. He seldom stirs from his residency in the Imperial base located in the outskirts of Hanna, and keeps a careful eye on the political pulse of the planet from a distance. The Empire has had a great deal of difficulty convincing Chandрила to see things its way, and is convinced that Chandрила is fertile soil for rebellion. Weizel seldom intrudes in domestic politics, however, since he is wise enough to recognize that he and his aides are no match for Chandrilan leaders in their natural element, political debate.

Chandrilans, who display a quiet and contemplative nature in private, show a very different side in the world of politics. Since every citizen has a direct voice in government (and a direct vote on major issues), he or she tends to have definite and strong opinions. Special squares, plazas, and halls are centrally located in all cities and towns, where people gather to debate, argue, and discuss issues.

Deliberations in the Chandrilan House tend to get loud and rancorous, and downright shocking to those accustomed to the dignified Rules of Debate of the old Imperial Senate. Sarcasm is a very potent weapon. While proceedings and political

maneuverings on the House floor seem chaotic and somewhat boorish to outsiders, they are actually quite structured and surprisingly subtle. The politicians to watch carefully, however, are the quiet ones. They tend to be the ones manipulating the various cliques and alliances from behind the scenes.

Culture: While Chandrilans enjoy the same technological advances as other Core worlds, they reject entirely the notion that progress is linked to a divorce from nature. Everywhere

one goes on Chandрила, one sees naturalistic elements in every facet of life. Elaborate gardens are a mark of high status.

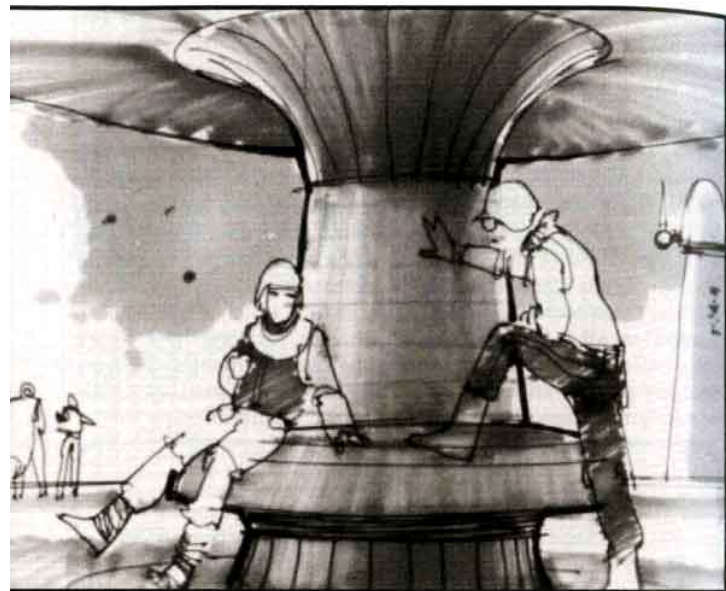
Economy: Agriculture is still a large part of Chandрила's economy. There are a huge number of agrifarms on the gently rolling hills and huge grassy plains of Chandрила's two major continents. Farmers specialize in foodstuffs which are difficult to preserve for long hyperspace trips, and are therefore well-positioned to compete with Mid-Rim merchants offering similar

Adventure Idea

The characters do a favor for Halbard, a well-connected shipping magistrate in the Mid-Core (and a native Chandrilan). As a reward, the characters are awarded a lucrative short-term contract to transport luxury fruits and vegetables from Chandрила to a Brentaal transport firm which ships such cargoes out to executives of the Corporate Sector Authority.

The run is a cake job, but the schedule is so grueling that regular ground-based maintenance routines must be abandoned, and those involved in the transport get little rest while the contract is under way. Halbard explains all this, but the money is so good few can turn it down.

Naturally, things begin to go wrong. If characters are pushing themselves to keep up some sort of in-transit maintenance schedule, they grow fatigued, and begin making small errors and miscalculations. If they bypass maintenance, minor breakdowns occur, culminating in a rupture of the refrigeration system in the main cargo bays, losing the entire shipment (exposing the cargo to vacuum also ruins it). Eventually, they might have to surrender a good deal of their profits to cover the cost of the lost shipment. Still, they come out ahead with a few valuable contacts on Brentaal and Chandрила, which may profit them at some point in the future.



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produce of unavoidably lesser quality. Chandrilan growers associations are the exclusive suppliers of certain fruits and vegetables for many Core-based Imperial class restaurant and hotel chains.

Points of Interest: The Giadean State Parks throughout the planet feature stunning gardens, and there is a popular wild game reserve near Hanna City, the capital. Chandrilans are avid hunters, and limited hunting is permitted in certain seasons.

■ Chandriia

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Warm temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)

Hydrosphere: Dry
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Plain
Length of Day: 20 standard hours
Length of Year: 368 standard days
Sentient Species: Human
Starport: Stellar class
Population: 1.2 billion
Planet Function: Natural resources
Government: Participatory democracy
Tech Level: Space
Major Imports: High tech
Major Exports: Foodstuffs

Brentaal

Brentaal is a rather dry and arid world, and its small oceans are very salty. Its eight continents are dominated by commercial starports, entire cities of warehouses and container storage facilities, trade markets for a

wide variety of goods, financial markets, and industrial centers. Pollution was once a very big problem, but most of the damage to the environment has since been corrected, and the air is now clean and safe (though offworlders still find reason to complain, since Brentaal's natural air mix smells slightly of methane).

Politics: On Brentaal, politics are a means to advance one's interests in the commercial world, and little else. Most of Brentaal's commerce is controlled by the hundreds of noble families which dominate the various guilds and shipping Houses. Representatives of each Brentaal House gather daily in a central Trade Hall in the capital to make public policy and coax the economy in desired directions. Proceedings are downright cutthroat, since there are thousands of intricate

alliances and factions, each vying to dominate the others.

Nearly all the Houses on Brentaal are organized on familial grounds. Once, owning a controlling stake in a Brentaal guild or House was restricted to family members or family controlled businesses. It still is, in theory, but a complex arrangement involving massive credit exchanges and permits now allows some foreigners limited access to certain Houses, namely those which are cash-poor enough to desire and require outside funding.

The Imperial governor, Jerrod Maclain, came to Brentaal to reshape the world into a model Imperial Core world. As time passed, however, he grew very, very wealthy, as friendly tips by various House members on investment opportunities led to spectacular returns, even at impossible odds. Curiously, he has

Adventure Idea

A flamboyant collector of antique starships named Gally Arc contracts the characters to accompany him to Brentaal to pick up the newest addition to his collection: a staff transport once owned by a famous Esselian general. This can be either a professional job to pilot the ship or provide protection, or a friendly social invitation. The characters travel in luxury to Brentaal aboard Arc's private yacht, which drops the group off and leaves.

While Arc is negotiating over the final points of the deal, the characters check out the new ship he's buying — only to find they have to defend it against a team of high-tech starship hijackers who try stealing the ship at every turn, even after Arc signs off on the deal.

developed a distinct appreciation for local tradition, and at any rate has little time to interfere with local politics—he is far too busy keeping Imperial daggers out of his back as other governors and Imperial administrators maneuver to seize his seat and the vast fortune sure to go with it.

Culture: Brentaal is not a newcomer to the commercial trade circuit. For several thousand years, it served as the major jumping off point from the settled Core worlds into the then wild, unsettled Colonies, and was the first stop for goods flowing back into the Republic. Its reputation for commerce and shipping is legendary. This heritage has colored its culture and society. The popular traditional folk hero image is that of the fearless spacefaring merchant trail-blazing new hyperspace routes for his or her vessels.

Brentaal citizens are no-nonsense when it comes to business, and their buildings are functional and stark, though oddly beautiful, since they favor organic-looking architecture.

Economy: Brentaal is situated at a major hyperlane junction — at the convergence of the Perlemian Trade Route and the Hydian Way, which runs from the Mid-Core out to the Corporate Sector. As a result, it is strategically located to serve as a major shipping

world, and handles a huge volume of traffic flowing into the Core and out to the CSA and Colonies and beyond. It is not much of an exaggeration to assert that just about anything one buys in the Core that wasn't manufactured there has passed through Brentaal. Most of the citizens of Brentaal are either directly involved in commerce, or in an industry or business which supports it.

Not surprisingly, Brentaal hosts a remarkable number of businesses involved in bulk cargo shipping. Several major megacorporations have their corporate headquarters located on Brentaal, and most of the thousands of major distribution chains in the Core have offices in Cormond, Brentaal's capital city. HavaKing is one such distribution chain, headquartered in Cormond. Perhaps because of its cosmopolitan nature, Brentaal also has a very well-regarded cuisine, which has developed over millennia of cross-pollination with other cultures.

■ Brentaal

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Dry
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Urban, ocean, mountain
Length of Day: 23 standard hours
Length of Year: 342 standard days
Sentient Species: Human
Starport: Imperial class
Population: 65 billion
Planet Function: Trade

Government: Guild
Tech Level: Space
Major Imports: All
Major Exports: All

Darpa Sector

Darpa Sector is a transitional area of space between the Core and the Colonies. Though the systems of the Darpa Sector have long been settled and brought up to Imperial standards, many of the worlds within it still retain vestiges of their ancient colonial heritage, and are a little individualistic and eccentric by Core standards. Until relatively recently in galactic history, Esseles dominated nearly the entire sector economically, politically, and militarily. With the rise of the Empire, the little Esselian empire came to a quiet and official end, though unofficially, Esseles still plays a dominant role in regional affairs.

Even in the days of the Old Republic, interstellar tax and tariff codes favored worlds in the Core region over those located outside this favored sphere. As a result, many corporations originally based in the Colonies, Mid-Rim, or even the Outer Rim eventually relocated their headquarters to worlds in the Darpa Sector in order to fall into the more favorable tax bracket. This trend only accelerated when Imperial activities outside the Core made Core real estate one of the few secure and stable places to do business outside of the Corpo-

rate Sector.

Because Darpa lies on the edge of Core space, Imperial policy here is just a little more direct and a good deal less kinder and gentler than in Bormea sector. This is due in a large part to the character and policies of Moff Jander Graffe.

Graffe's appointment came as something of a shock to the genteel governors of the Ringali Shell. As a former Moff of an Outer Rim sector, Graffe is accustomed to the simple and direct methods of imposing the Emperor's will — all involving fear and naked aggression. He has had quite a time moderating his managerial style to suit his new environment. He has had numerous clashes with some of his governors, who view his methods and ideas of rulership with considerable distaste. They know better than to directly confront him, and content themselves with subtly subverting his edicts. The Emperor is not particularly concerned with the resulting conflict. He put Graffe where he is primarily to look after Ralltiir, and a few other of the border worlds which have shown signs of nursing Rebel sympathies.

Esseles

Esseles was a highly volcanic world in its recent geological past (10 million years ago), and its surface is now densely covered in imposing young mountain

chains. The atmosphere is still fairly thick and the climate correspondingly warm. The large population centers are nestled into the narrow valleys and few plains which can be found on the rugged continents.

While friendly enough with the Empire, Esseles has traditionally held itself somewhat aloof from the ideologies and programs emanating from Coruscant. Most Esselians still consider themselves loyal to Esseles first, the Empire second. This is changing slowly with the rise of a local New Order party, which is attempting to take over Esseles' parliament and coax the people into the High Culture line of thinking.

Politics: Esseles is governed by a parliament of elected representatives known as the Hall, and governed by President Cambira Ralle, a popular but aging hero of the Clone Wars. Ralle has been resisting the total subversion of Esselian politics to Imperial ends, but is close to retirement. He is constantly butting heads with Governor Griff Takel over administrative rights and territory.

Takel is himself an excellent administrator, and strikes just the right balance between imposing the Empire's will on Esseles and giving the local political powers free reign. His background and breeding have helped Takel establish contacts throughout industry, domestic political organizations, and the

military and police forces. However, the Moff has been pressuring him to more aggressively push Imperial interests on Esseles.

The Esselian New Order party's members have been hard at work behind the scenes. They all but control the planetary media, and its leaders work closely with the offices of Moff Graffe and Governor Takel to coordinate pro-Empire rallies, benefits, and parades. That it hasn't yet completely taken over the government is largely due to Ralle's personal charisma.

Culture: In the days of the Old Republic, Esseles was a vastly influential world, and accustomed to having its own way, both locally and in the Senate chambers on Coruscant. Its territory spanned most of Darpa Sector, and its large and well-maintained navies patrolled its colonies constantly. Most this territory was lost in the pre-Clone Wars era, and the rest was shorn away by the young Empire. Still, the pride of Esseles is still very much alive, and the Darpa Sector is still very much under its influence and control in many informal and unofficial ways.

Economy: Esseles is a major high tech industrial center where advanced electronics systems are produced. Due to the extremely high concentration of engineers,

scientists, and researchers on the planet, most of the prominent megacorporations have major research and development facilities set up in and around the major urban hubs. Hypernavitics, and the development of more advanced hyperdrives, is a large concern.

Points of Interest: Esseles' rich history and mild climate have made Calamar, the capital city, something of a center of high culture. Its suburbs are given over to vast parks, art centers, colleges and universities, and

holo-production companies. New Calamar on the southern continent (popularly known as Camalar), is home to Terril Naval Base, the Imperial installation that supports the Star Destroyers which patrol the sector.

■ Esseles

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Urban
Length of Day: 22 standard hours
Length of Year: 405 standard days
Sentient Species: Human
Starport: Imperial class
Population: 24 billion

Adventure Idea

Gabrial Atanna, former Senator of the Old Republic for Esseles, has been living in quiet seclusion in a Calamar suburb, ignored by both the Empire and local political groups. Unknown to both, however, he is an Alliance spy who has been passing on information about defense industry-oriented programs under way on Esseles. He was recently compromised and captured while on a business-related trip offplanet. While another extraction team is preparing a rescue attempt on Atanna, the characters are assigned the mission of smuggling his wife and grandchildren offplanet to a secret rendezvous point, where they can be transferred to a safe world by the Alliance.

The family is being held under house arrest in Atanna's estate. There are only about 15 guards and a few security devices set up to prevent their escape, so an organized attempt to get them free of the Imperials can likely succeed. Getting them offplanet is far more difficult, since the Imperial governor commands that all ships leaving the planet be thoroughly searched. This is a drastic measure to take, since the planet sees a great deal of shipping traffic, but this is a high-profile case, and the Moff has told the governor he will be extremely displeased if he fails to recapture the family.

Planet Function: Service, luxury goods
Government: Representative democracy
Tech Level: Space
Major Imports: Foodstuffs
Major Exports: High tech

Rhinnal

Rhinnal is a world which has freshly emerged from its most recent ice age. The land masses are deeply scarred with majestic fjords and mighty rivers, and the climate, except in the tropics, is rather chilly in most seasons.

The people of Rhinnal live in both large communities and small, but almost always gather in ethnic groups based on clan kinship.

Politics: Life on Rhinnal has changed very little with the rise of the Empire — even less than elsewhere in the Core. As a former colony of Esseles, the Rhinnalians are accustomed to a certain lack of autonomy. People didn't take much notice when the moderate and benevolent Esselian governor was replaced by an equally moderate and passive Imperial one.

Governor Phadreas Kole is an inoffensive man who is far more interested in maintaining and restoring his vast collection of antique landspeeders than in making his mark on Rhinnalian history. Moff Graffe has been after him to crack down and make more of an effort to bring Rhinnal fully into the Imperial fold, but hasn't made much headway thus

far. Kole's bureaucracy is currently quite small by Imperial standards.

Public affairs on Rhinnal are mostly handled within periodical gatherings of clan heads if they are judged to be of little import to the outside galaxy, and by the governor when they are considered to be significant.

Culture: Rhinnalian culture values honor and style, and these traits mark the behavior of every native. Meetings and partings are attended to with great ceremony, and nearly every day on the calendar marks a commemoration of some sort.

Clothing, colorful and worn in many layers, is considered a very important part of social interaction. The dress codes are a way of maintaining independence and solidarity in the face of centuries of occupation. One had best know when to wear what, since a *faux pas* involving neck scarves can set one back considerably among one's peers. Fortunately for foreigners, outsiders are not held to the high standard that natives are. Still, visitors are advised to dress well at all times.

Economy: Long before the Empire, long before Esseles' occupation forces arrived, leaders of the Old Republic and other civilizations came to Rhinnal for advanced medical treatment. It is a tribute to the respect and awe of the galactic community towards Rhinnal that the

last intact Jedi chapter house in the Core is still standing and still accepting patients in its hospice, though no Jedi has walked its halls for many years.

Not surprisingly, Rhinnal is the location of a number of excellent medical schools, some of the best in the galaxy. The state Medical Academy in the capital city of Rhire sees student applications from throughout the galaxy, though only a mere fraction of the applicants are accepted. Some of the most talented healers and doctors in the Empire hail from or have studied at the Medical Academy. It is so well regarded by the Empire that doctors with a degree from the Medical Academy can name the planet

they wish to work on, and take whatever salary pleases them. However, because Rhinnalian healing is as much a matter of philosophy as medical science, a large number of doctors eschew such trappings and head for worlds where they feel they can do the most good. As often as not, these worlds are on the Fringe rather than in the Core.

Points of Interest: Rhinnal is also famous for its weaving industry, and Rhinnalian rugs adorn fine houses throughout the Core.

Rhinnal

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Urban, forest, mountains

Adventure Idea

While bumming around in outer systems, the characters get a job transporting an aging holo actress to Rhinnal for cosmetic surgery. She pays up to half her transport fee up front, and promises that the other half is waiting on Rhinnal.

The prima donna is a constant trial, full of complaints about her "poor" accommodations. Though she puts on an air and demands first class service, she won't explain why she must travel in a freighter instead of a first class starliner, or how she plans to pay for her surgery. All she says is that this move will revive her long-dead career.

The actress may be just what she seems, and is being given charity surgery by a doctor who is a fan of her early holos. The gamemaster may desire to spice things up a bit by making the actress completely crazy (the only appointment she has on Rhinnal is in her head). Alternatively, she may not be what she seems, perhaps an assassin on assignment or the aging moll of a gangster on the run with the pocket change she managed to steal before leaving.

Corporations of the Ringali Shell

Aether Hypernavics: Ushers academic hyperspace research into the realm of applied science by designing hyperspace generators and propulsion systems able to navigate the mysterious void more safely, efficiently, and with greater speed. One of many firms seeking to design the fastest engine in existence.

Cambriele SolidState: Manufacturer of a vast array of power cells, for use in everything from glowrods, blasters, and comlinks, to airspeeders, nannydroids, and gamepaks. The actual manufacturing plants are strategically located throughout the Empire — the headquarters are located on Ralltiir so the company can claim to be a Core-based entity.

Danthe Artifice, Ltd.: A designer of droid personality matrices. Danthe is a subcontractor for Arakyd Corp., and develops most of its droid interface systems. It also has a profitable subdivision offering third market personas directly to the consumer.

Gowix Computers: A subsidiary of TaggeCo which produces a variety of computers for industrial and consumer use. Gowix also markets a very popular series of electronic home management systems.

Gwain Spices: A huge company which has a near monopoly on the Core spice import market. Spices popular in Human cuisine are grown on company-owned agricombines located throughout the known galaxy and repackaged for Core consumption. The prepared foods industry is Gwain Spices' largest single market, followed by the consumer market. Gwain does not, of course, deal in illegal spice.

HavaKing: A prominent distribution chain specializing in discount furniture and appliances. HavaKing buyers can be found all up and down the Perlemian Trade Route, purchasing for resale everything from Grimwaldi sponge chairs to Spanthaer lava lamps (containing real lava).

Mansom Corporation: A construction contracting firm specializing in the design and construction of Imperial class spaceports. Mansom has spent more than a century building up a reputation as a provider of exclusive and unique designs, and now commits to no more than six projects a decade. A Mansom contract is highly sought-after (especially beyond the Core), and most applicants for Mansom designs are turned away.

Sienar Fleet Systems: Sienar is not based in the Ringali Shell, but does maintain a major research and development complex on Corulag. This site develops new propulsion designs.

Length of Day: 27 standard hours
Length of Year: 357 standard days
Sentient Species: Human
Starport: Stellar class
Population: 55 million
Planet Function: Research
Government: Imperial governor
Tech Level: Space
Major Imports: Raw materials
Major Exports: Pharmaceuticals, medical services, textiles

Ralltiir

Ralltiir, on the very border demarking the Core region from the Colonies, is the only world in the sector that managed to maintain its independence from Esseles over the past few centuries. Until recently, it likewise successfully resisted Imperial intervention. However, upon discovering Rebel sympathizers within the government, the Emperor decided to make an example of Ralltiir to other border worlds which might be tempted to harbor Rebel sympathies. The invasion, led by Lord Tion, was swift and brutal, and the subsequent occupation has been little better.

Today, Ralltiir is a sad sight. Its once formidable banking industry lies in shambles, and its economy is little better off. Many of the unemployed are routinely shipped to other Imperial worlds to work as petty clerks and industrial supervisors. It is still a beautiful, high-tech world, but its infrastructure is showing the first signs of decay.

Politics: Dennix Graeber, gover-

nor of Ralltiir, is a protégé of the Moff, and shares his enthusiasm for oppressive public policy. Unlike his boss, Graeber is eager and able to indulge himself in dealing with the locals with a harsh and firm hand.

A twisted genius, Graeber is growing very wealthy by smuggling weapons in via proxies to supply the Rebel underground opposition. He delights in bleeding the Rebel cells dry of funds, while using their armed status as a justification for initiating further crackdowns. Thus far, the Alliance has no idea Graeber is behind the network of "corrupt" inspection officials, smugglers, and intermediary contacts which move contraband military supplies onto the planet.

Ralltiir is ruled by a military tribunal with Graeber at its head. The High Council which formerly set Ralltiir's policies still exists, but is merely a puppet regime controlled by the Imperials, and subordinate to the tribunal. Armed troopers maintain a very visible presence in the cities, and patrols are numerous. There is considerable agitation on the part of the population at this man-handling, but few are courageous or foolish enough to speak out. Rebel activity has been sporadic and random, but is growing more organized. Their efforts thus far have done little more than amuse Graeber, but he is playing a far more danger-

Adventure Idea

At the request of one of the Rebel cells on Ralltiir, the Alliance is sending a shipment of explosives and arms to Ralltiir to be used in sabotaging Imperial shipping in the area. The characters are assigned the task of smuggling the goods onto Ralltiir and making the drop.

Smuggling goods onto the planet is a relatively straightforward matter, since the group has been given the name of the inspection officers most receptive to bribery. However, the amount the officers are asking for is enormous.

The delivery is complicated by the fact that the Rebel group no longer wants the explosives, which the characters don't know until they land and meet to arrange final delivery. Other anti-Empire groups have gotten wind of the sabotage plot, but feel it will only hurt Ralltiir's economy and people if it were carried out. In the interests of preserving unity among the various resistance groups on Ralltiir, the group has agreed to abandon the plot, and now require that the weapons be smuggled offplanet again to remove the temptation of having them around.

Unfortunately, smuggling items off Ralltiir is far more difficult than smuggling them on, since Graeber has told his men not to let known Rebels or their equipment leave the planet. And now that the characters have bribed a flunky of the governor to look the other way, they are very known. When they try to leave, they find their ship under impoundment for any number of minor violations, as the noose draws closer around their necks.

ous game than he realizes.

Culture: For all its independence, Ralltiir has always been a relatively mainstream Core world, which makes its debasement particularly galling to its people. Most have been perfectly loyal law-abiding citizens, and are in a deep state of shock at finding their beloved Empire suddenly cruel and impassive. Ironically,

the once small and insignificant Rebel movement which occasioned the invasion of Ralltiir is growing by leaps and bounds because of the brutal occupation. The more Graeber tightens his grip, the more people slip through his gauntlet ...

Economy: For many centuries, the financial markets of Ralltiir were politically neutral ex-

changes, and would accept the funds of any non-criminal being. Because Ralltiir had a centuries-old reputation as a safe haven for funds, it attracted a great number of clients from every corner of the galaxy. Ralltiir's financial markets were once its most powerful asset and ultimately became the source of its downfall.

As pro-Empire politicians began to infiltrate the fabric of Ralltiirian society, this careful balance of neutrality began to tilt to favor servants of the Empire. Aliens, and those who openly opposed the Empire, discovered that their investments began to suddenly vanish with no proof they had ever existed. Still more disturbing, it became known that the Empire was using the bank records of known Rebel sympathizers to track down other members through financial transactions. This violation of confidentiality and neutrality flew in the face of Ralltiirian culture, and began to cause unrest among the populace. It also resulted in millions of beings withdrawing their money from Ralltiirian banks.

Eventually, a group of pro-

Alliance politicians who were anxious to restore the reputation of Ralltiir's banks secretly infiltrated the High Council, and began to reverse the damage done by Imperial cronies. Within a month, the Empire invaded.

Today, the financial markets are limping along as best they can — the experts are still on Ralltiir, but not many people are interested in investing in Ralltiir banks and interests. The majority of Rim corporations which had offices on Ralltiir to qualify as Core concerns have packed up and pulled out, mostly for Esseles or the Corporate Sector. The primary planetary export now is high grade marble, a resource which is still plentiful.

Ralltiir

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Standard
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Urban, mountain, wetlands
Length of Day: 19 standard hours
Length of Year: 255 standard days
Sentient Species: Human
Starport: Imperial class
Population: 10 billion
Planet Function: Manufacturing, high tech
Government: Imperial governor
Tech Level: Space
Major Imports: All
Major Exports: Financial services, marble

Fragments from the Mind's Eye

by Pablo Hidalgo



A Star Wars Jump-Start

Old Corellian: A Guide for the Curious Scholar



By Patricia A. Jackson

Illustrations by Doug Shuler

Language is an organism. The entity of language is born, germinates, hybrids itself, and through the earnestness of social and political forces, languages can even die.

— Arner Figgis, Chief Linguist
University at Be'nal, Issor

Arner Figgis paced the uneven face of the dune, whispering inanely under his breath. Stumbling over a hardened crest of soot and sand, he exploded, "Again! Say it again, but slower!"

Trep Winterrs bit his lip as he fought back a caustic response to the old Issori's abrupt show of temper. Throwing his arms over his chest, the agitated smuggler firmly pursed his lips, prepared to hyper-exaggerate the necessary syllables. "*Doaba ol'val tru, olys guerlle*." He laughed softly, despite himself, listening to the troubled grumbling of his peculiar companion, a genuine university scholar, who had hired him out of Mos Eisley.

Figgis straightened, fretting over a wrinkle in the fine fabric of his ankle-length tunic and cloak. "Must make a good appearance," he whispered absently, licking his forefinger and then drawing the damp tip over his creased forehead. "*Doaba ol'val tru, olys guerlle*. That's it!" Patting Trep on the shoulders, he gushed, "I think I've got it!"

Straightening one of his long, black curls, Trep shook his head. "I still think it's a bad idea, professor. You can't just walk in there ... not alone."

"I'm paying you to pilot and to advise me of time-eccentric, idiosyncratic colloquialisms, not to chaperone."

"Fine!" Trep threw up his hands. "It's your neck. Remember that." He started down the dune crests, sliding along the smooth face of the black sand. "Don't say I didn't warn you."

"Good enough." Careful to follow in the smuggler's tracks, Figgis struggled down the steep incline, using one hand to hold his tunic up, while supporting himself with the other on Trep's shoulder. Panting for breath, he huffed, "Now, once again, tell me about this bartender."

"His name is Karl Ancher. Usually he's behind the bar, so you can't miss him."

"Yes, yes, of course. He's the one you mentioned on Mos Eisley."

As if regretting his decision to take on the job, Trep said, "Look, do us both a favor, Figgis. Don't just walk up to the man and start in on him about your academic credentials. Ancher's been around a long time — pay the man a little respect."

"Of course. This *olys guerlle* — is it a title?"

"Literally, it means old guard. It's a title of respect, meaning that you recognize Ancher's achievements as a self-made businessman." Trep growled irritably, exasperated by the implications of the scholar's work. "Why can't I go with you?"

Figgis made a peculiar face. "And have you do what? Blunder

through the methodology of linguistic science? Don't be absurd!"

"Why can't it wait until morning, when it's not so crowded? There are at least 150 people in there."

"Because discovery waits for no man! The precise calculates of research are a waking man's delight, not intended for the light sleeper." Watchfully observing a passing parade of Ibhaan'I nomads, he declared, "If I wasted one precious minute, I could be usurped by some young upstart from the university."

"If you make one wrong move in there," Trep pointed to the Black Dust tavern, "you won't have to worry about those young upstarts." He paused dramatically, "You'll be dead!"

"Make no promises you cannot keep," Figgis growled, glaring at the overbearing smuggler. Gathering his tunic, he stormed across the deserted streets to a side entrance into the bar.

Pulled into a raucous world of unusually tumultuous noise and boisterous voices, Figgis allowed himself to be swept along in a unruly tide of faces and bodies moving toward the bar. With so much stimuli, it was difficult for the scholar to concentrate, as choice phrases of Old Corellian and authentic Socorran found their way to his ears. Reeling from the sensory overload, Figgis leaned against the bar.

"What can I do you for?" the bartender inquired. Despite the good-nature inherent in his voice, it was obvious, even to Figgis, that the Corellian suspected something was amiss.

Karl Ancher was a powerfully built man, broad at the shoulders and chest, while showing a healthy thickness through the middle; exactly as Trep had described him. A lifetime of weather and scars had aged his handsome face, leaving only the brilliance of his eyes to betray the fullness of those long, enduring years. Figgis confidently stepped up to the counter and declared, "*Doaba ol'val tru, olys guerfel*."

Slamming his meaty fists against the counter top, Ancher's face flushed several angry shades of crimson. Rattled by the sudden explosion, bar patrons throughout the tavern turned to see the commotion as the smuggler bellowed, "What?" He clenched his teeth so tightly his jawbone cracked audibly. "What did you call me?"

At a loss for the first time in 56 years as a scholar, Figgis floundered, gawking at the infuriated stranger. Behind him, he could hear the subtle pop of blaster restraint straps being unsnapped, as anxious hands reached in anticipation of recompense for the newcomer's ignorant sin.

"Doaba-tru, Ancher," Trep Winterrs whispered from the bar's side entrance. In the stillness, his voice seemed to echo into the far corners of the tavern. "*Yke feln noh petchuk.*" When the tension in the room failed to ease, even slightly, Trep turned to the bar patrons, showing his best smile. Jerking his thumb over his shoulder to indicate Figgis, he joked, "*Min chumani, ... sahsahlah ...*"

The entire front room erupted in fits of riotous, bawdy laughter. Slipping blasters back into holsters, the spectators returned to their drinks and conversation, ignoring the frightened old man standing alone at the bar. Figgis hurried to Trep's side, using the smuggler as a shield between himself and the crowd. "What did I say?"

Never breaking that polished smile, Trep nodded to a few familiar faces. "You called Ancher an old fool," he replied between clenched teeth. The smuggler laughed softly, nodding appreciatively to Ancher to thank the Corellian for his understanding and patience with the eccentric stranger.

Moving only the wild brown of his eyes, Figgis stood motionless, afraid to flex even the slightest muscle. "What should I do?"

"The only thing you can do." Taking the linguist by the shoulders, he led him back to the bar. "Buy the man a drink. After all, it's his bar. He'll appreciate the thought behind the gesture."

"And then?"

"And then leave him alone. You've already pushed your luck too far."

"But my research?"

Leaning against the counter, Trep surveyed the numerous shadowy forms moving in and about the dimness. "You'll have to improvise, professor. If you want to learn Old Corellian, you have to study the people behind the language."

At a nearby table, a Sullustan, a Rodian, a Human man, and a woman were engaged in a heated argument over a misdealt sabacc card. While the Sullustan and the woman threw virulent threats and accusations at each other, the Rodian nodded to his partner and together they went for their blasters. Despite their artfulness, the woman was the fastest and repaid insult with blaster fire. Each of the three hapless culprits slumped to the floor, their chests smoking profusely from the point-blank blasts.

Trep grinned roguishly, approaching the woman with caution. Pulling a chair out from under the Rodian's body, he shoved Figgis down into the seat and deliberately tossed a few credits onto the table.

"*Aliha sel valle volgoth?*" she asked, with a suggestive smile.

As she centered the muzzle of the heavy blaster in the square of

his chest, Trep held out his hands in surrender. Smiling to reassure his anxious companion, he picked the nearest sabacc card, the Idiot, and showed it to her. "Mind if we play?"

Old Corellian

(From the datapad journal of Professor Arner Figgis: Day 9 of Unplanned Sabbatical):

Kinship knows no better bonds than the bonds of like-minded individuals. For the curious scholar in search of *olys Corellisi*, you'll find no greater individuals than the self-made entrepreneurs of the galaxy: smugglers. Though nearly 4,000 years extinct, Old Corellian survives as the last known cultural link between the modern-day smuggler and our early forebears, the original Corellian colonists, who dared to venture into the wild frontiers of space. Simply being a descendant of one of those early colonists does not mean that you speak the dialect. Not every family chose to carry on the language, affording rather to accept the broader vernacular of the time, which was Basic as we know it today.

There exists an underground, a secluded sub-culture, closed off from the rest of the galaxy, where Old Corellian is the traditional knot that binds these displaced persons together. The dialect is an inherited custom passed down from father to son, mother to daughter, mentor to apprentice, from generation to generation in cliques of pirating clans throughout both the known and unknown galaxy. While having few or no true connections to the basic foundations of society, the continued use of the language creates and supports several links to the past — historical, cultural, and social — allowing a bastion of sub-culture for those who deliberately choose to live outside the mainstream.

Variations and Dialects

Socorro was one of the first worlds colonized by those early pioneers of long ago. Isolated and remote from most of its sister colonies and later explorations, the language brought to the planet remained constant and conservative. As the original language continued to evolve, the sequestered dialect left behind on Socorro barely changed and is in fact much older than the dialects of Old Corellian spoken today. While the native Socorran speaker finds little or no trouble comprehending the modern-day variants, and vice-versa, the curious scholar finds no end to pitfalls and setbacks in his research.

The Socorran language, inappropriately termed Middle Corellian (*midys Corellisi*), tends to be the more colorful and difficult dialect, full of symbolism and idiosyncratic phrases. The Socorran "*ofax ets burin tehn*" literally means "the air is too heavy here." In Old Corellian, the translation is much clearer to the stranger looking in from the outside. Translated, the phrase means "the air is too dangerous (or thin) here." When spoken figuratively, both translations mean that there is some potential danger posed by the environment. For the Socorran, it is a forced difficulty, a fight or conflict. For the speaker of Old Corellian, the term could literally pass as a warning against biohazards or toxins on alien worlds.

Bharhulai is the name of a nomadic tribe living in the Doaba Badlands of Socorro. Isolated from other tribes by religious friction and a general fear of advancing technology, the tribe is believed to be the last bastion of true Old Corellian, give or take 50 standard years for inaccuracy.

Field Researching and Testing

Field research of Old Corellian is not to be taken lightly or even considered by the faint of heart. For the brave scholar, undaunted by the perils of participatory study, the best research is done in a social setting, preferably in a local bar or tavern frequented by smugglers and pirates. The best conditions can be generated before, during, or after a friendly game of sabacc. This is a potentially menacing situation, considering that your subjects can be considered heavily armed and quite dangerous, possessing weapons and skills which greatly outweigh your own.

Here are some suggestions and choice phrases to use during your encounter with those individuals who speak Old Corellian among their smuggler sub-culture:

- As you approach the sabacc table, you will be curtly addressed with, "*Aliha sel valle volgoth?*" or "What do you want?" In your reply, be succinct and courteous. Either leave promptly or commit yourself and your credits to the game.
- Greet all newcomers with a genuinely warm, yet fairly guarded *ol'val*. The term is used interchangeably for hello or good-bye. It's ever important to know which you are currently doing. Any confusion may lead to raised voices and shouting. The more formal greeting is *doaba ol'val tru*, which bids the recipient peace and hope. Use this greeting and you are assured at least one ally at the table.
- When referring to yourself, use the term *min min*. To clearly

emphasize, point to yourself, touching your nose with the tip of your index finger. Do this often and vigorously, in order to establish your rank among your companions. An article of clothing, a weapon, or a dominant sense of attitude can affect your ranking. You may point out these items at your discretion, but never show money.

- The term *chumani*, when spoken in cordial terms, means friend. The person speaking recognizes you as a companion, but not necessarily an equal. If the term is spoken in anger, and you feel as if you have been insulted, you have been. Effectively, the aggressor is referring to you as a nursemaid or weakling. When spoken by a child, smile with great pleasure. This is the youngster's way of showing respect.
- If you are in a great hurry or winning the current sabacc hand, vigorously cry out, "*Bhesj, bhesj!*" to indicate your impatience.
- Be careful not to mention your research, scholarly ideals, or even philosophy to your companions. Considering who they are and where they stand on the societal scale, political discussions are best avoided. If you mistakenly support the wrong side or belief, you may hear the term *sahsahlah* used in deference to you. The term means "promised land" or "place of wise fools." If you hear it, it's best to smile and bear it to avoid any unwanted confrontations.
- Arguments are often unavoidable. In the heat of the moment, an off-balancing remark may cool hot heads. If you do find yourself in such a precarious predicament, whisper, "*Min min volgoth noh petchuk,*" which means, "I want no bad blood between us." By doing so, you are showing yourself to be a non-aggressor and a good sport.
- If you are among Socorrans or if a Socorran is present, you may wish to petition for his aid by saying, "*Ihn Socorri nyeve min bhiq ohn suman ehn nyiad,*" which means, "A Socorran never turns his back on someone in need." Being that you are an outsider, the Socorran may refuse you. But if he or she feels that a fight is inevitable and that the sides are grossly unbalanced, they may come to your rescue.
- If this fails, do what any self-respecting gambler would do ... bluff. One choice phrase might be "*Yke hyon fhars obliwyn cnous obliwyn,*" meaning "He who fears nothing, knows nothing." If you get a bewildered expression from your rival or from your companions, you have successfully confused them. It will take at least a few minutes to think out whether or not you have insulted any one or all of them. Use this time to leave or make amends.
- If bluffing fails and your blaster skills are not what they should be,

Arner Figgis



Type: Issori Scholar
DEXTERITY 2D+2
 Archaic guns 3D, dodge 3D+2, firearms 3D, running 3D
KNOWLEDGE 5D
 Alien species 8D+1, bureaucracy 5D+2, cultures 8D+2, languages 9D+2, willpower 8D
MECHANICAL 2D
 Astrogation 3D, beast riding 3D+1
PERCEPTION 3D
 Hide 4D, investigation 7D, persuasion 4D, search 7D, sneak 5D
STRENGTH 3D
 Climbing/jumping 3D+2, stamina 3D+2
TECHNICAL 2D+1
 First aid 4D
Special Abilities:
Swimming: Issori gain +2 to their Move score and +1D to *dodge* in underwater conditions.
Force Points: 3

Dark Side Points: 1
Character Points: 10
Move: 9

Equipment: Datapad, recording rod, assorted datacard texts

Capsule: Arner Figgis is one of the more accomplished linguistic scientists in the galaxy. Despite his slight frame and his old age, his academic merits and temperament have lent him the menacing stature of a colossus. While it has never been confirmed or disproved, Figgis held a prestigious tenure at the Imperial Academy of Science and Methodology — quite an accomplishment for an alien — although his reasons for leaving that institution are unknown.

While his tenacious appetite for knowledge has garnered him numerous awards for his research, it is also a source of embarrassment to his colleagues, particularly when Figgis goes out of his way to successfully discredit the findings of his academic peers. However, there are situations where Figgis finds himself on so-called "unplanned" sabbaticals, unemployed, and bored. These are the times when he does his best work. His fieldwork often brings him to dangerous worlds. Figgis ignores (or more often, is not aware of) any risk, instead focusing his energy on his studies and collecting research data.

you have little choice ... leave while you still can. If you have made any amiable ties with your companions, one or possibly two of them will restrain the others. There is a tradition among smugglers, particularly those who still use the Old Corellian dialect — there is

no esteem or profit to be gained in preying on the weak.

- If all else fails or you choose to defend your principles, the appropriate insult may turn the tide in your direction. "*Koccic sulng*" means "shut up" and is almost guaranteed to escalate any heated confrontations; but "*Koccic sulng il pla*," which means "Shut up and play," could very well earn you the support and respect of the other smugglers or pirates at the table, who may not wish to be bothered with a bar brawl.
- If the brawl is inevitable, there is one final insult you can deliver to force your opponents to finally stand down or, more likely, encourage them to thrash you completely. Utter the phrase, "*Min min* (point to yourself vigorously) *vil ut valle Nharqis!*" and be sure to emphasize the last word. This literally means, "I will eat your ashes." It is the worst of Old Corellian oaths, capitalizing on certain cannibalistic myths carried down through the ages from their early, primordial progenitors.
- When parting with true, bosom companions, particularly among Socorrans, it never hurts to whisper, "*Ol'val, min dul'skal, ahn guld domina*" as you go, wishing them clear skies and good luck, or the literal translation, "May fate be with you."

A Rich Tradition

While many scholars believe that the mettle and integrity of those early colonists expired long ago with the spirit of the early pioneers, I would argue that the same courage and fortitude that propelled them into the wilds of unknown space is very much alive and well in the sub-culture of smugglers and even more so in the culture of native Socorran pirates and the nomadic tribes of Socorro.

Curious outsiders are most often shunned by this cautious fellowship. This is done for the sake of survival. While the language is a cultural identity link to the past, it is also a modern-day means to stay one step ahead of the double standards of societal dictates. When a smuggler makes a verbal contract with you in Old Corellian, you can rest assured that he or she has every intention of coming through and will risk life, limb, and ship while trying. Socorrans are particularly faithful to this unwritten code.

Friendship and loyalty are valued above all else. When a comrade is in trouble, you can be certain all who know and can come to his or her aid will be present when the first blaster bolt is fired. So if you happen to make an ally or two during your travels, think well of them. These are treasured friends for life.

With the encroachment of certain political factions, the last safe refuge for fringe smugglers may be in the use of Old Corellian, their last link to the historic and culturally rich tradition that belongs to all of us. To be a member of it or to share in that tradition is an experience to be reveled for a lifetime. Until next we meet, *ol'val, min dul'skal, ahn guld domina*, or as our more sublime ancestors would say, *mahn uhl Fharth bey ihn valle* (may the Force be with you).

In Memoriam: Nigel Findley

Nigel Findley, a prominent freelance author in the gaming industry, passed away on Sunday, February 19, 1995, at his home in Vancouver, Canada.

Nigel was born in Venezuela in 1959, and moved around with his family to Spain, Nigeria, the United States and England before settling in Vancouver in 1969. He later earned degrees in genetics and creative writing, and worked as a technical writer and marketing executive. In 1990 he began working full-time as a freelance writer. Over the next five years, he wrote more than 100 books, including 12 novels and numerous roleplaying game books for game companies like White Wolf, Wizards of the Coast, and FASA.

Nigel's contributions to West End Games were also numerous. He wrote several *Star Wars* supplements and adventures, including *Goroth: Slave of the Empire* and *Planet of the Mists*, and wrote the *Kanawa Personal Weapons Guide*, *Kanawa Heavy Weapons Guide*, and *Kanawa Land Vehicles* for Torg. His fiction included the Torg novel *Out of Nippon*, and a short story in *Shattered*, the *Shatterzone* anthology. Nigel's final project for West End Games, Padarr — a citybook for *Bloodshadows* — was published in June.

Nigel was a prolific and well-liked member of the roleplaying game community and will be missed by his friends and colleagues. May the Force be with you, Nigel.

WHEN YOUR OLD MAN'S GRIMOIRE JUST AIN'T
ENOUGH ... WHEN YOUR LAST SPELL COULDN'T
BEAT A RUG ... WHEN YOU'RE UP AGAINST A PAIR
OF FANGS WITH YOUR NAME ON THEM ...

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COMING IN SEPTEMBER

PASSAGES



By Charlene Newcomb

Illustrations by Mike Vilardi

Distant voices accosted the edges of his subconscious—voices droning lowly in a language he'd heard before but had never bothered to learn. Struggling to raise his head from the table, Matt Turhaya rubbed eyes glazed from drinking one too many ales. His head ached.

Music drifted across the room, the boom-boom of a KeyBed's bass notes accentuating voices that grew in intensity as Matt returned from his semi-conscious state. Focusing on his surroundings, he finally remembered where he was. *The cantina.*

Halfway across the room at the bar, a lively argument was under way. Matt recognized the Wookiee. But he'd never seen the huge alien's adversary in the cantina before. On further reflection, he couldn't recall ever seeing anyone like her. Her head was completely bald except for one long silver braid which hung loosely, falling well below her waist. She'd entwined within it a silky black tie, which did add an air of elegance to her appearance, an appearance which perhaps only the males of her species might find attractive.

Speaking in the Wook's native tongue, she stared him down with eyes that met his — she was only a centimeter or so shorter than he. Long, slender fingers poked rapidly into the Wookiee's hairy chest like a barrage of artillery fire. She was either stupid, or very brave, Matt decided as he wiped a hand across his scruffy face.

Matt noticed that other customers in the cantina had given them a wide berth. Her hand rested lightly on the DL-44 holstered at her waist. She turned her head slightly toward the bartender. Light illuminated her pasty-gray skin and for the first time, Matt could see the jagged scar that tore across her face just below her right eye.

The Wookiee barked at the female. She growled a heated reply, then looked around the room. Her pink eyes met Matt's. Her scowl vanished and the two stamen-like antennae atop her head twitched. Matt held her gaze. Everything in the room seemed to stop, frozen in time and space. Her eyes filled with pain — *his* pain — not the looks of pity or disgust he'd gotten from others a hundred times before. Something seemed to bind them together, as if they were of one mind. And somehow, though they didn't even know each other, he could tell she understood him more than anyone else ever would.

She spun back to face the Wookiee, barking another retort. His blue eyes widened, then he roared with laughter. She smiled, slapping him across the back. Everyone within earshot visibly relaxed.

Matt watched her for a few seconds more, unable to take his eyes off her. Trembling, he took a deep breath, then reached for the glass on the table. Empty. He eyed it, twisting the container in his hand and watching the light reflect a prism of colors, wondering if he ever again might marvel at little miracles. Wondering if he ever might care about anyone, or anything, again. For a heartbeat or two he was lost in another time, another place, when suddenly a familiar voice boomed across the room. Placing the glass down on the table, Matt cradled his head in his hands.

"All right. Where is he?" Even with the band playing in the background, Jamie Turhaya's melodic baritone voice carried above



the steady drone of conversation in the cantina. "Where's my brother?" he called.

The blond-headed, deeply-tanned man cut a handsome figure compared to most of the cantina's usual patrons. A strong jaw line and high cheekbones highlighted his face. He was taller than his younger brother, his frame more muscular. Jamie spied Matt, then picked his way past a half dozen tables. "C'mon, Mattie," he said. "Time to go home. Tomorrow's gonna be a busy day at the shop. You need a good night's rest so you'll be able to help out."

Grumbling, Matt draped his arm across Jamie's shoulders and willingly let his older brother drag him home. He tried not to listen to words he'd heard before.

"You know, Matt, you've been here for six months. You can't keep doing this to yourself," Jamie said, his tone not meant to be condescending.

Matt knew Jamie loved him dearly. He'd put up with Matt's drunkenness, nursed him through his melancholy, and refused to give up on him no matter what others had said.

"I know you've been through a lot," Jamie continued, "losin' Anii and Alex within a year of each other — it's a terrible burden. But, Matt, you've got to get on with your life ..."

Rubble. As far as the eye could see. Not one house stood on what once were the rolling green-covered hillsides of Janara III. A brownish haze blanketed the ruins. Smoke drifted toward a darkening sky.

Matt fell to his knees among the ruins of his family's home. He sifted through broken pieces of his life — plasteel from the table, a piece of pottery from a treasured vase, broken dishes. He grew excited when he found part of a marble holoframe his wife had given her parents. Using both hands, he combed through the dirt and found — burnt, half-shredded, with edges curled — a holo of Anii with Alex. It was the only piece of his wife and young daughter that he had left.

Trembling, he looked up, holding the holo close to chest. A figure far off on the horizon caught his eye — a ghostly shadow surveying the land — the white armor of an Imperial stormtrooper. The Empire he once served was responsible for this destruction.

Tears streamed down his face. "No!" he shouted. A cold unforgiving wind moaned, carrying his voice across the scarred landscape.

Curling up into a ball on the ground, Matt gripped the holo tightly as the sun said its good-byes to the city of Sreina ...

Peeking its fiery orange head over the horizon, one of the twin suns announced another hot and dry day on Tatooine. Sunlight streamed through a crack in the partially closed shades. As the sun drifted higher, a flood of light streaked across the sofa into Matt's face. Waking suddenly, startled by the glare in his eyes, he sat up abruptly as the nightmare fled his senses.

Jamie snored noisily in the back of the house. Matt fell back on the sofa where he'd slept off most of the effects of his visit to the cantina. His head no longer ached, but he felt numb, emotionally drained. For a long time he just lay there listening to the monotonous hum of the climate control generator. Finally he got up, dressed quietly, then slipped outside into the streets of Mos Eisley.

Cutting through a shadowy alley across the street from his brother's store, Matt passed a still-darkened Heff's Souvenir shop. For a town that rarely slept, Mos Eisley seemed unusually quiet this morning. Even the street corner preacher hadn't taken up his post yet.

Inside the entrance to the cantina, Matt let his eyes drift slowly around the room.

"Back again so soon, Matt?" Jaresh, one of the regulars, called to him from the bar.

Matt nodded to the crusty old man and ambled down the stairs to join him for a drink. But something at the far end of the room caught

Matt Turhaya



Type: Free-Trader

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 6D, dodge 3D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+1

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

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogration 4D, repulsorlift operation 5D, space transports 4D+2, starfighter piloting 4D+2, starship gunnery 5D+1, starship shields 4D+1

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 3D+1, gambling 3D+2, search 4D, sneak 3D+2

STRENGTH 3D

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 6D+1, first aid 3D, repulsorlift repair 7D+2, space transport repair 7D+1

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 6

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D)

Capsule: Matt Turhaya is the son of the late Corellian Arada Turhaya — a hero of the Clone Wars and commander in the army of the Old Republic. Matt had always dreamed of a career in the Imperial Navy. Encouraged by his childhood sweetheart, Anii Degarienne (who later became his wife), Matt attended the Imperial Naval Academy and graduated at the top of his class.

Unfortunately, Matt's accomplishments at the Academy were overshadowed only weeks prior to graduation when Anii died in a freak accident at a weapons manufacturing facility where she worked. Though he was devastated by this loss, Matt was determined to make a life for himself and the young daughter Anii had left behind.

Leaving his little girl with relatives on Janara III, Matt reported for his first assignment aboard the Star Destroyer *Relentless*. There he came to despise everything the Empire stood for. He was disheartened by the ship's involvement in subduing local populations through the use of brute force. Disgusted by what he witnessed, Matt deserted.

A year later, Matt made his way to Janara III, hoping to begin a new life with his daughter. But he discovered the Empire had arrived ahead of him and razed the town where his family lived. This was the final blow for Matt. With nothing to live for, he turned to drinking, moving from spaceport to spaceport, taking odd jobs. Now, more than two years after Anii's death, he has ended up on Tatooine, where his brother Jamie watches over him.

his eye. The female humanoid was there, immersed in a game of sabacc, gently tapping her fingers across the table.

Her gaze shifted around the sabacc table, her antennae twitching almost imperceptibly. Cha'ba, a Twi'lek "businessman," as he referred to himself, tinkered with his credits. Pira Bland, a Chandrilan spice runner, picked up his mug and took a swig of ale. And the Corellian smuggler to the female's right leaned back casually in his chair, cupping his hands behind his head. He acknowledged Matt's approach with a tilt of his head.

"Bets," the dealer called.

"I'm in for 20," the alien female said, tossing her credits into the pot.

"Twenty. Plus another 20," Bland replied.

Cha'ba shook his head. "*Do chonda*," he said, placing his cards face down on the table.

The Corellian straightened in his seat, picking his cards up from the table to study them. He looked from Bland to the female humanoid. Grinning at her, he said, "All right, Metallo, I want to see what you've got. Here's my credits."

Card values materialized as the dealer pushed the randomizer. Bland rolled his eyes. The Corellian shook his head as Metallo laid her winning hand face up and reached for the sabacc pot. "I don't know how you do it, Metallo," he mused, tossing his cards across the table. "Do all Rillebs have this natural talent for games of chance?"

A sly smile cracked her face. "We have no games like this on Rilleb," she replied. "My former master taught me how to play."

"Is that how you got the scar on your face?" he quipped.

Matt saw the brief wave of pain that washed across Metallo's face. The Corellian saw it, too, and his grin disappeared.

Metallo slowly ran her finger along the three centimeter scar. Her voice lowered, almost to a whisper, as she glanced from face to face around the table. "The Empire did this," she said. There was a hint of bitterness in her voice. Her eyes came to rest on Matt and for one brief moment she seemed to look right through him. "I know I'm not the only one who has felt their wrath."

All heads nodded slowly in unison. Only the sound of shuffling feet padding across the cantina's weathered floor interrupted their thoughts. A Wookiee approached the table and growled at the Corellian.

"The ship's all loaded?" he asked.

The Wookiee barked an excited reply.

"Okay, great. I'll be there in a minute." The Corellian stood slowly, flashing Metallo a cockeyed grin. "Well, Metallo, what can I say? This

game's too rich for me!"

"Good you quit now, you old pirate!" she laughed good-naturedly. "Before I take all your credits!"

"Yeah, right," he said, turning to leave.

"Clear skies, my friend," Metallo called to him. Her pink eyes shifted back toward the remaining players. "Well, how about another round?"

Matt cleared his throat. "You have room for one more?" he asked.

Bland chuckled, gesturing Matt toward the seat just vacated by the Corellian. "Metallo takes anyone's credits — even yours, Turhaya!"

Metallo looked up at Matt again. "Another Corellian?" she asked.

Matt was surprised. "How'd you know?"

"Your name — Turhaya — that's Old Corellian. If I remember correctly, it translates to 'bright star,' doesn't it?"

Matt smiled. "My father used to say it meant that the Turhaya family was destined to outshine all others." His face soured suddenly. His life these last three years had been anything but bright. A promising career in the Imperial Navy had been shattered by the death of his wife. Then less than a year later, his daughter had been killed during a raid against suspected Rebels on Janara III. Matt rubbed his hand across his forehead. "Can I get a drink?" he shouted toward the bar.

"Yes," Metallo called, "bring us some tea."

Matt frowned.

Metallo frowned back at him, her eyes locking onto his again. "I won't take credits from anyone playing drunk, Mr. Turhaya."

A smile tugged at the corner of Matt's mouth. "Deal," he said as a broad grin swept across Metallo's face.

"You did what!" Jamie Turhaya shouted, pulling the protective visor away from his face.

Matt cringed. He was glad the body of an XP-38 kept Jamie more than an arm's length away. He'd never seen such anger in his brother's face. "I wagered the landspeeder shop in a sabacc game," he repeated quietly.

"Matt, you had no right! It's my shop! You don't own a credit of it!" Jamie shook his head in disgust. "Good skies, Mattie, what were you thinking? I thought if I gave you a job ... oh, never mind. Just get out of here!"

"I'm sorry, Jamie," Matt said.

"Sorry won't get my shop back, Matt —"

Metallo, too curious to wait in the shop's well-kept office, stood at the entrance to the garage of Turhaya's Landspeeder Repair Shop. "Excuse me," she interrupted.

"Captain Metallo," Matt said, turning to face her. It was obvious from her expression that she'd heard most of their conversation. "I was just explaining —"

Metallo held her hand up to silence Matt. "You are Matt's brother?" she asked a wide-eyed Jamie.

"Yes," he replied. "I own this shop."

"So I heard, Mr. Turhaya." Metallo glared at Matt.

"Listen, Captain —"

"And Matt is not your partner in this business?"

"That's right, Captain," Jamie said. "Matt works for me, that's all."

"So, Matt," Metallo frowned, "you still owe me 150,000 credits."

"150,000!" Jamie shouted. "Matt, are you crazy? Were you so drunk —"

"Mr. Turhaya, please," Metallo said calmly. "Matt was not drunk. He's quite sober as you can see. Now tell me, is your brother a good mechanic?"

Jamie nodded. "When he puts his mind to it, he's the best."

Metallo studied Matt. "You know anything about starships, Matt?"

"He's good with ships," Jamie chimed in before Matt could answer.

"My freighter's in need of some repairs — not 150,000 credits' worth — and I have been looking for a co-pilot."

"Co-pilot?" Matt asked warily.

"He can work off what he owes you," Jamie added.

Metallo glanced from Matt to Jamie, then back to Matt. "The *Star Quest* is in docking bay 87. Meet me there in two hours," she told him as she turned to leave.

"He'll be there, Captain," Jamie called to her.

Matt sulked, glowering at Jamie.

"Maybe this is a good thing, Mattie," Jamie told his younger brother.

"I don't know, Jamie."

"I've got a feeling about her. I like her." Jamie grinned, then turned serious. "You know, this could be a new start for you, Matt. Working the space lanes — you always did like that sort of thing. Just try to stay sober —"

"No lectures please," Matt grimaced.

"Matt, I'm just sorry," he paused, trying to find the right words.

placing a hand on his brother's shoulder, "I couldn't help you put the past behind you."

A mist clouded Matt's eyes. Turning away, he swatted at tears that threatened to blur his vision. "It's not your fault, Jamie. It's something I'll always have to live with."

"Remembering them is one thing, Matt, but you can't hold on forever," Jamie said, choking back the lump in his throat. "You've got to learn to let go."

"It's so hard," Matt said, looking back toward his brother, no longer ashamed if Jamie saw the tears that trickled down his cheek. "You've never been in love before, have you, Jamie?"

"No, I haven't, Matt," he admitted. "But I know what Anii meant to you —"

"Do you really?" Matt's face was racked with pain, his eyes burned with a passion, a rage that had become all too familiar to Jamie.

"Maybe I don't, Matt. But, don't you see? You're gettin' another chance," Jamie said, his own eyes now brimming with tears. "All I'm saying is, don't let yesterday's shadows cloud your tomorrows."

Matt nodded, though he really didn't believe he had the strength — or the courage — to let go of those old memories.

"You're a good man, Matt Turhaya," Jamie hugged him tightly. "You can make this work," he added quietly. "I know you can do it."

Drayhar's Cantina. Eponte Spaceport. Kabaira. One month later ...

It was like a thousand other cantinas on a thousand other worlds. Dimly lit, smoke-filled and noisy, it was crowded with patrons from more than two dozen systems. Some sat huddled in corner booths plotting business transactions. A handful of music lovers sat near the stage mesmerized by the band's passionate rendition of the familiar *Ballad of Stars' End*. The lead vocalist's deeply rich bass voice melded in perfect harmony with his trio of backup singers from Wranag.

Matt leaned back in his seat, slowly nursing his glass of Zadarian brandy and wondering how he'd gotten himself mixed up with Captain Tere Metallo. She'd barely given him a moment on his own these last few weeks. Always driving him hard ... *fix this, do that* ... she reminded him of a drill sergeant he once knew.

Grimacing quietly to himself, Matt took a long sip of his brandy. Something made him glance toward the entrance of the cantina.

Kabaira

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moist
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Island, mountain, plateau, volcanic
Length of Day: 23 standard hours
Length of Year: 341 local days
Sapient Species: Humans
Starports: 1 standard class
Population: 8 million
Planet Function: Manufacturing, mining, natural resources
Government: Corporate
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Medicinal goods, metals, minerals
Major Imports: High technology

Capsule: Kabaira is the only habitable world in the Teilcam system in the Outer Rim Territories. The surface of the planet is nine-tenths water, dotted with more than two million islands formed by volcanic activity millennia ago. Only a half dozen volcanoes remain active, and they are all located in the planet's southern hemisphere. The population centers are found in the northern hemisphere, which is dominated by two large island continents — Maderi and Belshain.

The largest city and seat of the corporate government is Eponte Spaceport. It is located on the north central coast of Maderi on a plateau. With an elevation of nearly 1,400 meters, and mountain ranges to the south and west, the climate tends to be cool and damp.

Most of Kabaira's industries focus on mining the southern hemisphere islands as well as various underwater fault zones for raw metal ores. However, several corporations have offices and other facilities in Eponte Spaceport, the most notable including Hydrospeare Corp. and Delgas Medical.

There she was, hands planted firmly on hips, with a scowl that ran from ear flap to ear flap.

Matt folded his arms across his chest and stared up into her eyes as she approached the table.

"Loading will be completed in about two hours, Matt," she said.

He nodded, waiting for her to comment about the half-empty glass on the table.

"The adjustment you made on the backup hyperdrive checks out 100 percent. You did a great job!"

"Ah, thanks," he replied, caught off guard by her compliment.

"I'm gonna get in one last game of sabacc before we head out. Would you like to join me?"

"No. I think I'll just finish my drink and head back to the ship."

"All right. But why don't you come over and meet my friends. A couple are free-traders, like us. The others are businessmen here. And since we'll be doin' lots of business on Eponte, these are people you need to know."

"Sure," he said, "if you think so."

"I do."

Four beings sat at the sabacc table in the back corner of the cantina. One, a middle-aged woman, was dressed in a silky-looking blue jumpsuit. Obviously one of the free-traders, she nodded as Metallo and Matt walked up to them. If she'd been hardened by life in the spacelanes, it certainly didn't show on her cherubic-looking face. She studied Matt as the Twi'lek on her right smoothed his flowing red robes. He frowned, his one good eye narrowed. The other two men were dressed in conservative gray suits — Metallo's Kabairan business associates.

"Gentlebeings!" Metallo greeted them.

"It's about time you showed up, Metallo. We were ready to begin without you!" the older Kabairan said, running his hand through hair that was streaked with white.

"Hunter, you know I wouldn't leave Eponte without giving you the chance to win back all that you lost last night!"

"Who's your friend?" the female free-trader asked.

"Matt Turhaya of Tatooine, meet my friends — Menise, from Dantooine," she said pointing toward the woman, "Branak, from Ryloth, and two of the locals, Treimar and Hunter."

"Turhaya? From Tatooine, eh?" Menise asked. "You wouldn't by any chance be related to the Turhayas from the Landspeeder Repair, now would you?"

Matt sighed. Lights years away from Tatooine, word had already spread about his big loss to Metallo. "That's my brother's shop," he nodded glumly.

Menise laughed so hard it brought tears to her eyes. "So, Matt, the story I heard last week in Mos Eisley is true?"

"What are you talking about, Menise?" Treimar asked.

Menise rubbed her eyes dry. "Metallo won Matt's services after he wagered his brother's business in a sabacc game. I don't know, Tere," she said, studying Matt from head to toe, "are you sure you got the best end of the deal?"

Metallo smiled. "I'm sure of it, my friends. Matt's a great mechanic, and a good co-pilot. He knows more about ships than all you fools put together."

"Fair enough," Menise said. "You must've impressed your boss,

Matt. I didn't mean to give you a hard time."

"That's okay," he replied.

Hunter smiled up at Matt. "I bet that was the best game you ever lost, son."

Matt nodded, eyeing Metallo from the corner of his eye. "Yeah, you may be right."

"So, are you headed back to Tatooine?" Menise asked.

"Not this trip," Matt said.

"Well, Matt, I think these gentlebeings," she waved her hand gracefully around the table, "would like a chance to empty my pockets."

"Yes," Branak grunted. "Have a seat, Metallo."

"How about you, Matt?" Hunter asked.

"No, I've got some work to do on the *Star Quest*."

"That can wait, Matt," Metallo told him.

"I don't have a credit on me," he said.

"That's okay, I've got enough for the two of us. You can pay me when we get back to the ship."

Matt studied Metallo's face. He didn't understand this Riileb female one bit. What did she mean, pay her back? With what? At their port stops she'd given him just enough credits for a drink or two. Well, he thought, I already owe her a fortune, what's a few credits more?

Two hours later, Metallo had won back nearly everything she'd lent him. Stretching, she glanced around the table. "Well, my friends, our ship awaits. I'm afraid I'll have to take your credits and depart."

"You mean we have to wait until your next run to get even?" Hunter asked, grinning broadly.

"My dear old friend," Metallo said, "how many years have we been repeating this scenario? When will you learn?"

Hunter laughed. "Now, wait a minute, Metallo! I seem to recall that it was me, only six months ago, who wiped you clean!" He smacked his lips, the taste of victory still fresh in his mind. Smiling knowingly to the others seated around the table he told them, "That's why it took her so long to come back to Kabaira."

Laughter filled the air, then suddenly Hunter paled to a shade whiter than the snow-wolves that roamed the mountainsides of his homeworld. He stared toward the door of the cantina. Matt looked up briefly but quickly turned his head, covering his face with one hand. His heart raced.

Metallo followed Hunter's eyes, spotting the Imperial Navy lieutenant and the two stormtroopers who accompanied him. "What do you suppose they're looking for," she said calmly, shifting back in

Tere Metallo



Type: Free-Trader

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 6D, dodge 5D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 5D, cultures 5D, languages 6D, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 5D, survival 4D+2

MECHANICAL 3D

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

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Bargain 6D, command 5D, gambling 7D, hide 4D+2, search 5D, sneak 5D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 6D, space transports repair 5D

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)

Capsule: Tere Metallo is a native of the planet Riileb who was betrayed and sold into slavery by a jealous sister. Fortunately for Metallo, a Corellian smuggler by the name of Bek Nataal rescued her from the slavers. The crusty old Corellian had a heart as good as gold, and took her aboard his light freighter as an assistant. Nataal taught Metallo everything he knew about ships, trade routes, and the underworld during the seven years she worked with him. She learned quickly and proved to be a loyal crew member.

Nataal was killed during an unexpected inspection by Imperial authorities. Metallo was imprisoned briefly and tortured by her captors. She managed to escape before the Imperials 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 the last few years she has been making legitimate runs (and some not-so-legitimate) in the Outer Rim Territories. She's avoided getting involved in the conflict between the Empire and the Rebel Alliance — capitalizing from conflict is one matter, but getting directly involved is another. She has no love for the Empire, but Metallo also has no ties to the Rebels.

her seat and finding to her surprise that Hunter had disappeared. "That's strange," she frowned, scanning the room but seeing no sign of her old friend.

"Damn Imperials," Treimar said softly, trying inconspicuously to peer past Metallo's shoulder. "Always up to no good."

Branak cursed an agreement.

"Quiet, you two," Menise mumbled.

"Yeah," Metallo agreed, gathering her credits from the table. "C'mon, Matt. I think we'll leave now."

Walking behind Metallo, Matt realized the buzz of conversation in the cantina had come to a standstill. All eyes focused on the Imperial visitors. The scrutiny didn't seem to faze them one bit, the lieutenant in charge walked confidently from table to table scanning faces. Strutting past Metallo, he eyed her with more curiosity than suspicion, oblivious to everyone else for several seconds — until he crashed into Matt.

"Sorry," Matt mumbled.

The young lieutenant glared at Matt, then frowned, a most peculiar expression on his face. "Have we met before?" he asked.

"No, I don't think so," Matt said, not bothering to stop.

The lieutenant grabbed Matt's arm. "No, you *do* seem familiar. What's your name?"

Staring past the officer, Matt saw that Metallo had stopped in her tracks, her antennae twitched noticeably. The band had stopped playing, and the room was still, except for the two stormtroopers who seemed to be moving in slow motion toward the lieutenant. His heart pounded in his ears. "Name's Jamie Brightstar," he said, wondering if anyone else could hear the slight tremble in his voice. "You must be confusin' me with someone else."

The officer cocked his head to one side, his eyes narrowing as he studied Matt in the dimly lit cantina. Raising one brow, he finally shook his head and released Matt from his grip. Without looking back, Matt scooted past Metallo out the door into the cool early evening air.

Fog blanketed the city, a fog as thick as the shadows that haunted Matt. Walking toward the bay where the ship was docked, he couldn't bring himself to look at Metallo, his eyes fixed on the ancient brick-lined streets of Eponte. He clenched his fist, mentally punching himself.

Metallo finally broke the silence. "You know," she said, "if that officer knows his Old Corellian, it'll come to him —"

"Huh?" Matt asked.

"The name you used — Brightstar."

"Oh, yeah," he said, scuffing his boots on the pavement. "I — I just couldn't think fast enough."

"Well, hopefully we'll be long gone before he figures it out," she said.

Matt nodded, shivering as a light breeze blew in from the mountains to the south.

"You gonna tell me where he knows you from?"

Matt looked at her, a lump forming in the back of his throat. All the old memories of Anii and Alex — yesterday's shadows — stirred deep within him. "Yeah, I guess you should know," he began, "I was in the navy —"

"And you left, shall I say, under circumstances which the navy might find inappropriate?"

"I deserted."

Metallo nodded. "It's gonna be impossible to avoid the Empire at some of the ports we hit, Matt. Guess you'll just have to stay out of sight on those occasions."

Matt stared wide-eyed. "You mean you'll keep me on?"

"Well, of course."

"No questions asked?"

"No questions —"

Suddenly, blaster fire echoed through the streets. An explosion rocked a building two blocks to the west.

"C'mon," Metallo shouted, "let's get to the ship and get outa' here!"

"Right behind you, boss!"

Running the last block to docking bay 10, they scrambled for safety as another explosion lit Eponte's skyline.

Metallo activated the *Star Quest's* hatch release. "Let's hope they haven't shut down flight ops," she said, slowing down to duck so her head wouldn't rake the entry as she bounded up the ramp into the freighter.

"Maybe it's just some local trouble," Matt added, breathing heavily.

"Awfully big explosion for local trouble," she replied, swiping a hand across the panel to close the hatch behind them. "You missed Treimar's comments last night about Rebel activity here. They've been getting bolder in the city. Could be they're up to something."

"The Rebel Alliance?" Matt asked, two steps ahead of her, as he headed into the cockpit.

Metallo nodded. "Yeah," she said, coming up behind him, practically jumping into her pilot's seat. "They've been stealing medical

supplies from the Delgas Corporation right here in Eponte."

"Are they crazy?" Matt cried, as he keyed up spaceport control. "All the Empire has to do is send in one Star Destroyer and wipe 'em all out!"

"You sound like you've seen that happen before."

"Yeah," he said, his voice filled with pain, "I've seen too much." He wondered if he would ever be able to tell Metallo the whole truth about his past. Frustrated, he slapped the comm panel. "Spaceport's denying us clearance, boss."

"Not surprising," Metallo replied. "Guess we're stuck —"

A loud crash reverberated through the ship.

"What the *krazsch!*" Metallo shouted, climbing out of her seat back toward the ship's hatch. Pulling her blaster, she pressed the hatch release and cautiously headed down the ramp.

Blaster fire sounded much closer. An armed transport zipped past the docking bay, screeching to a stop less than a block away. Quickly scanning the bay, Metallo caught sight of the prone figure lying beneath her ship.

"Tere, please —"

"Hunter? Good skies, man, what happened?"

"Help me!" he pleaded. "Please —"

"C'mon, Hunt, let me get you inside the ship."

"No, no — not your ship," he gasped.

Matt came up behind up them, recognizing Metallo's old friend. "What the —"

"Matt," Metallo called, "give me a hand here."

"Right, boss."

Together they helped Hunter up the ramp into the *Star Quest*.

"Matt, I've got him," Metallo said, leading Hunter toward the aft cargo hold. "Get the medpac."

"Tere, you shouldn't be doing this —" Hunter grimaced as a pain shot through his shoulder.

"Quiet, old friend. Just tell me, what's going on?"

"The Imperials discovered I was working for the Alliance," he told her as Matt rushed back with the medical kit.

"You? A Rebel spy?" she asked, more surprised than ruffled by his announcement.

Hunter nodded weakly.

Matt looked anxiously toward Metallo. How could she be so calm? Her entire career as a free-trader could be on the line. Matt hated the Empire, and knew Metallo had no fond thoughts for anything Imperial. But getting tied up with the Rebels was not something that had

ever crossed his mind. Of course, he'd been too drunk the last few years to even think about it. But what would she do?

Near the cargo hatch, Metallo keyed a special sequence of numbers into the access panel. One of the deck plates popped open, revealing a concealed storage chamber.

"Matt, get him fixed up," she said as they gently lowered Hunter into the tiny room.

Matt pulled burnt clothing away from flesh. Hunter nearly passed out from the pain.

"He's in bad shape, boss," Matt said, applying salve to the blaster burn on Hunter's shoulder. "He could use a bacta tank."

"No, I'll be okay," Hunter grimaced. "The others —"

"What others?"

"Must help —" he coughed, "my friends —"

"You're not goin' anywhere, Hunt," Metallo told him. "Now just lie back there and rest."

A metallic rapping sounded on the hull of the ship. "Open up in there!" an authoritative voice shouted.

"More company," Metallo sneered, rolling her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Tere," Hunter said. "I didn't mean — to cause you trouble."

She shrugged. "Hey, what are friends for?" Grinning, she pointed a finger at him. "Stay quiet until I come back. C'mon, Matt."

Hunter grasped Metallo's hand, squeezing it tightly. "Thanks."

Sealing the deck plate to the concealed storage chamber, Metallo gave a sidelong glance toward Matt. "Never imagined this trip would be so exciting, eh? You know, Matt, I don't want to drag you into this," she said, turning to head up the corridor. "But Hunter and his friends could use our help. It might put us on the run —"

Matt took a deep breath, released it. "It's okay, boss. I told you I was in the navy. I saw things the Empire did — things I could never condone," he paused by the doorway, closing his eyes briefly to shut out the old pains. "I guess I didn't think there was any way to fight something so big," he said softly. "Maybe I was wrong."

Metallo placed her hand on Matt's shoulder. "Shall we see who's knockin' on our door?" she asked.

As the hatch opened, Metallo caught a glimpse of white armor. "Stormtroopers," she said quietly.

Without thinking, Matt followed her down the ramp of the ship.

"Is there a problem?" Metallo asked, approaching one trooper, noticing a second one poised near the aft cargo hatch of the *Star Quest*.

"We have orders to search every ship in the area," the stormtrooper

told her.

"What's going on? I'm carrying legitimate cargo for an Imperial general on Ord Traga," she told him.

"Rebel spies were seen headed in this direction," another familiar voice said, stepping out from behind the stormtrooper. "So, you won't mind showing us your supply manifest and orders."

Metallo hid her frown, eyeballing the Imperial lieutenant she recognized from the cantina. "No, of course not, Lieutenant," she said.

"Yes," he continued, confidently walking up to face Metallo, "the Empire does not look lightly upon treason."

"Treason?" she asked. "What are you talking about?"

Pushing Metallo aside, the lieutenant approached Matt. His hand reached out, lifting Matt's downturned chin. He nodded self-assuredly. "Really, Matt," he said, shaking his head, "I was almost convinced you weren't my former classmate from the Academy."

Matt glanced toward Metallo.

"Yes, I had always wondered what happened to the number one graduate of our class," the lieutenant continued. His voice reeked with sarcasm. "When I'd heard you had deserted, I was quite shocked. After all, we'd expected you to captain your own ship one day."

Matt's face reddened. He clenched his fist, and took a swing at the officer. He didn't see the stormtrooper's blaster rifle butt that came down across his head.

"Search this ship," the lieutenant instructed his subordinates.

"Yes, sir."

"Then take the deserter to the detention center at Imperial headquarters," he ordered. Turning, he faced Metallo. "You have no problem with that, I presume," he said smugly.

"No," she replied, knowing there was nothing she could do to help Matt — at least for the moment.

"Report to sector headquarters in the morning, Captain," the lieutenant said. "You may be able to convince them that you had no knowledge of your crewman's crime. Perhaps then you will be allowed to leave Kabaira."

Metallo nodded as the two stormtroopers emerged from the ship.

"No one else on board, Lieutenant," one of the stormtroopers reported.

"Have a nice evening, Captain," the lieutenant said. "Let's move out, men."

Metallo pursed her lips and watched them drag Matt's unconscious body away. Outside the docking bay, there were no transports racing by, no blaster fire. Eponte's streets had turned dead quiet.

Del Hunter

Type: Businessman

DEXTERITY 3D

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 4D+1, bureaucracy 6D+1, business 7D, cultures 5D, streetwise 4D+2, value 5D

MECHANICAL 2D+1

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Bargain 6D+2, command 4D+2, gambling 4D+2, hide 5D, search 4D, sneak 5D+1

STRENGTH 2D+2

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 9

Move: 10

Equipment: Business clothes, blaster pistol (4D), datapad

Capsule: Hunter is a 48 year-old native of Kabaira, employed by one of the planet's largest enterprises — Delgas Medical — manufacturer of medical equipment and medicines. Unhappy with the Empire's activities and its interest in Delgas Medical, Hunter was a founding member of Kabaira's underground. His position as a sales representative for the company has given him the opportunity to conduct seemingly legitimate business with Rebel Alliance operatives offworld. He has arranged numerous shipments of medical supplies to ships in the Rebel fleet, while at the same time conducting other covert operations against the Empire on Kabaira.

"**F**eeeling any better," Metallo asked when Hunter woke up. Groaning, he tried to grin. "Being dead couldn't feel much worse," he said, rolling his shoulder to relieve the stiffness that had set in. "What's happened? How long have I been out?"

"Two hours. I found out that a half dozen of your friends were killed. Two others are in the detention center," she told him.

Hunter looked away, burying his face with his hands. "Six killed," he repeated quietly. "Someone tipped off the Imperials. They knew exactly where my people were meeting."

"Is that why you rushed out of the cantina?"

He nodded. "But what they didn't know was that I would be late."

"Because you were playing sabacc with me."

"Yes," he said. "If I'd arrived on time, I doubt I would be here now."

"It's been a long time since things seemed this bad," Metallo grimaced. "I've got a wounded Rebel spy hiding out beneath the deck plates of my ship. And my co-pilot's been arrested."

A puzzled look furrowed Hunter's brow. "Matt was arrested?"

"Do you believe this? Out of the millions of planets with Imperial

troops, we ended up in a port where one officer recognized him."
 "What's he wanted for?"
 "He's a deserter," she said.
 "Since when did you take up with wanted criminals, Tere?"
 "I didn't know Matt had been in the navy until a few hours ago. Speaking of criminals — since when did *you* take up with the Rebel Alliance?"

He smiled. "Almost three years now. We've been doing little things here on Kabaira. You heard Treimar."

"He's not one of yours I hope —"

"No, no. Talks too much," Hunter laughed, grimacing when another pain ran down his arm.

"So, stealing medical supplies —"

"And weapons," Hunter added. "The medical goods have been shipped offworld to the Rebel fleet. They desperately need our help."

"And the weapons?"

"We were storing them here to use against the Empire."

"You think someone in your organization is a traitor?"

"Certainly looks that way," he nodded.

Thoughtfully, Metallo ran her finger along the scar on her cheek. "Any ideas?"

Hunter's eyebrows raised in question. "A jailbreak? Aren't you in enough trouble already?" he asked her.

"I'm not gonna let Matt rot in an Imperial cell. You've got friends locked up, too," Metallo told him. "Maybe we can smoke out your informer in the process."

Hunter looked at her. "I knew there was a reason why I came to you for help."

"Look," she insisted, "I'm only doing this to get Matt —"

"Sure," he nodded. "In a rancor's eye!" Turning serious, he said, "You know, you may never work —"

"I know, I know," she said. "Now, c'mon. We're gonna need more help for this operation. And I bet your people know that HQ building better than they know the backs of their hands."

"Yeah," Hunter agreed, holding his arm out so Metallo could help him up.

Grinning, she shook her head. "This is real cute, Hunter. What a pair we make — one slightly obvious female from Riileb, carting around a man with a blast wound. Do you think anyone'll notice?"

"This was your idea, remember?"

"Right," she nodded, helping him to his feet. "Let's go."

Matt rubbed the knot on the back of his head and grimaced quietly to himself. Sunlight filtered through his prison window. He'd been unconscious for quite a while. Across the cell, one man snored loudly. The third occupant of the cell lay awake, staring blankly at the ceiling.

Matt sat up, placing both feet on the floor. Gripping the sides of the bunk with both hands, he pushed off hoping he wouldn't fall flat on his face. Dizzy, he pressed the back of his legs against the bed rails to steady himself. He took a deep breath, then plodded across the cell toward the window. Its lower edge appeared to be less than a meter above his head. He stretched, and one fingertip just touched the ledge.

"Can't get out that way," the man who'd been snoring said.

"No, I didn't really think so," Matt replied, turning to face his cellmate. The man was old, his slicked-back hair was completely white. Wrinkles lined a face that time had not been kind to.

Sitting up, the oldster threw his legs over the side of the bunk. "Don't think I know you, son. How'd you get stuck in a cell with a couple of Rebel spies?"

Matt shifted his gaze from the old man. Their cellmate still hadn't moved. He solemnly scrutinized the checkerboard pattern on the ceiling, seemingly oblivious to the conversation.

"My name's Matt Turhaya," he told the old man. "You were involved in those explosions last night?"

"Yep. Me and Chaz there," he pointed toward the wiry teenager. "I'm Blaide, by the way. Yep, old Imps caught the two of us."

Chaz came to life suddenly, jumping off the bunk. He walked up to Matt and eyed him suspiciously. "Watch it, Blaide. He could be a plant."

"Knocked him 'round pretty good for a plant, Chaz," Blaide grinned.

"That doesn't prove a thing," Chaz said. He raked his fingers through the long blond hair that fell across emerald-green eyes, eyes that were filled with experiences far beyond his years.

"Yeah, you're right, Chaz," Blaide conceded, "there's no way we can be sure Mr. Turhaya's who he says he is. I must be gettin' old."

"I'm no spy," Matt insisted.

"So, why'd they lock you up?" Chaz asked.

"The Imperials were looking for one of your friends. They got me instead."

"I knew it!" Blaide said, slapping his hand across his leg. "Told

you, Chaz, didn't I?"

"Knew what?" Matt asked, puzzled by Blaide's outburst.

"Our friend — it's gotta be Dodger. I told you he got away!"

"Dodger?" Matt repeated.

"Our cell leader."

"We still can't be certain it's him, Blaide." Chaz' voice trembled slightly. "Could have been one of the others."

"Keep your spirits up, young Chaz." A subtle smile crept across Blaide's face as he rose from his bunk. He walked toward the two younger men and placed his arm across Chaz' shoulder. "If Dodger's still alive, I'd say we have a pretty good chance of gettin' outa' here," Blaide nodded confidently. "Yep, I'm beginnin' to feel a lot better about this mess we're in."

But as the day dragged on, Matt began to wonder if anyone could do anything to help them. He heard the change of guards down the corridor at the security station. The dinner trays had just been picked up, and the lights had been dimmed in the cell bay. The sun had dipped low in the early evening sky. Shadows fell across the cell.

Then out of nowhere, a whining female voice echoed down the hallway.

"Sergeant," the woman was saying, her high-pitched tone grating on Matt's ears, "what do you mean you have no record of this call?"

Blaide walked toward the bars that separated them from freedom. Chaz sat up in his bunk leaning on one elbow, ears perked. They couldn't hear the guard's response to the woman's question. But her retort was even louder.

"Do you mean that some *incomp* called me when I'm supposed to be getting off duty and got me over here for nothing!" There was a moment of silence. "Look, it's right here, Sergeant — 1842 hours — EDO call, prisoner ill, come immediately."

Chaz groaned, falling back onto the bunk. Matt jerked around and stared at him, then smiled to himself. Groaning again, Chaz writhed on the bed.

"There," the female called, "I told you there was a sick man here!" She took off down the cell bay.

The stormtrooper pounded the floor right behind her. "You'll have to wait and let me verify this with the EDO," he insisted.

Chaz was gagging now. Matt had never seen a man turn that shade of blue before.

"Hurry up," Blaide yelled from their cell, "he's havin' trouble breathin'!"

Matt eyed the short, dark-browed young woman who came into

view. A cap hid what little hair was on her head. Her black tunic was sharply pressed, an Imperial uniform with insignia of the medical corp and the rank badge of lieutenant. "Open this door, Sergeant," she ordered.

"He's just a Rebel spy, Lieutenant. They're going to terminate him in a few hours anyway," the stormtrooper grunted.

"Sergeant, if you want to execute him, that's fine. But my duty is to make certain he's well enough to stand up in front of that firing squad. After all," she said sarcastically, wrinkling her nose at the men behind the bars, "we want to be sure all their friends know that we mean business. Now," she insisted, "open this door."

"Stand back, you two," the stormtrooper motioned toward Blaide and Matt. He keyed the security code into the access panel. With his blaster rifle held ready, the trooper stepped into the cell. The lieutenant was two steps behind him already digging into her medical bag when the turbolift door slid open at the far end of the corridor.

Two shots rang out near the security station.

Reacting swiftly, the trooper turned, stopping in mid-motion when he realized the lieutenant was pointing a blaster pistol at his head. "Drop your weapon, Sergeant," she said.

Another pair of footsteps echoed down the corridor as the trooper's blaster rifle clattered to the floor. Matt stared in disbelief as Metallo trotted up to the cell. "Everyone okay?" she asked. The tension in her face drained when she spotted Matt in the corner of the cell.

"Just a few lumps, boss," Matt told her, rubbing the sore spot on the back of his head.

"Let's get out of here," Blaide suggested, bending down to pick up the stormtrooper's blaster rifle. In one swift movement he straightened, ramming the butt of the rifle into the trooper's chest. The man pitched backwards and Blaide tackled him to the ground grabbing his helmet and twisting it until the trooper's neck snapped.

"Was that necessary?" Metallo asked.

"We can use the rifle. Who asked you anyway?"

"That's enough, Blaide," the lieutenant scowled.

"Good to see you again, Midget," Chaz greeted the young woman, bounding down off the bunk.

"Your performance was commendable, Chaz," she replied. She pointed toward the dead man's uniform. "Now, let's see how well you play stormtrooper."

Five minutes later Midget guided their skiff along Eponte's streets

as the sun crept below the horizon. Fog had settled over the city. Street lamps glowed as if a sheer curtain encased them. One burnt-out building still smoldered from the brief battle of the evening before.

Blaide glanced around nervously when stormtroopers stopped them at one checkpoint. Chaz, standing stiffly in the back of the vehicle, held a blaster rifle across his armored chest. Midget handed a datapad to one of the troopers. Cocking his head, he studied the orders it displayed, then slowly eyed her prisoners.

"Experimental research, eh, Lieutenant?" the stormtrooper asked.

"That's right, Captain," Midget replied.

"Never saw anything like that one before," he said, pointing toward Metallo.

"Interesting, isn't she?"

"What about the other two?"

"I'm just the delivery person, Captain. I have no idea what they've got planned for them," she replied as two other troopers approached the skiff.

Shifting uncomfortably, Blaide bumped into Chaz and knocked him off balance. Alarmed, one of the stormtroopers brought his blaster rifle to bear on the group.

"It's okay," Chaz said, "I've got everything under control."

"You'd better, Sergeant," the captain replied.

"If you don't mind, Captain, I need to move on," Midget said.

"One moment, Lieutenant," he replied.

Matt threw a worried look at Metallo. Calm and cool, she turned slightly so her hands were hidden from view. From the corner of his eye, he noticed Blaide behind him, nodding subtly at Chaz.

The captain turned to one of his subordinates. "Sergeant —"

Before he'd had a chance to say another word, blaster fire lit the checkpoint station. Midget fired her pistol at the stormtrooper captain. Metallo whipped her own blaster up and took out a second trooper as Chaz exchanged fire with the third.

"Get us out of here!" Metallo shouted.

Midget gunned the controls as a blast ripped into the back end of the skiff. Blaide got off one last shot, hitting the stormtrooper that Chaz had missed.

"I knew I shouldn't have taken that shortcut," Midget said.

"It's okay, Midget. We're all safe," Metallo told her.

"Incompetent idiots," Blaide mumbled under his breath.

"Lucky for us," Chaz said.

"Hey, Midget, where are we headed anyway?" Blaide asked.



"Docking bay 10."

"No sign of pursuit," he told her as the skiff whipped down the street past a row of darkened warehouses. "What happened to Dodger?"

"He's waiting for us."

"Told ya', didn't I, Chaz?"

"Yeah, you were right, Blaide," Chaz replied, breathing a sigh of relief.

"Docking bay 10," Blaide repeated. "Are we goin' somewhere?"

"I'll be glad to take you offworld if you don't think you're safe on Kabaira," Metallo said.

"You've got a ship?"

"Yep. It's an old Suwantek freighter. I usually transport supplies, but I think I can smuggle out a few Rebel spies without any problem."

Blaide nodded. "Good," he said quietly. He aimed his blaster at Metallo. "I think that's all I need to know."

"Blaide?"

"Sorry, Chaz. Maybe I'm just an ol' fool. But I plan to be on the winnin' side when all's said an' done." Shrugging, he squeezed the trigger on the blaster rifle.

"No!" Matt shouted, diving toward Blaide just as the rifle discharged. Struck by the blast, Matt collapsed as the skiff swerved

Star Quest

Craft: Suwantek Systems TL-1800 Transport
Type: Stock light freighter
Scale: Starfighter
Length: 30 meters
Skill: Space transports: TL-1800 transport
Crew: 1 to 2 (can coordinate)
Crew Skill: See Tere Metallo
Passengers: 7
Cargo Capacity: 110 metric tons
Consumables: 3 months
Cost: Not available for sale
Hyperdrive Multiplier: x2
Hyperdrive Backup: x10
Nav Computer: Yes
Maneuverability: 1D+2
Space: 4
Atmosphere: 480; 800 kmh
Hull: 4D
Shields: 2D
Sensors:
Passive: 10/0D
Scan: 25/1D
Search: 40/2D
Focus: 2/3D
Weapons:
2 Laser Cannons (fire-linked)
Fire Arc: Front
Skill: Starship gunnery
Fire Control: 2D
Space Range: 1-3/12/25
Atmosphere Range: 100-300/1.2/2.5 km
Damage: 5D

sharply around a curve. Chaz stumbled headfirst into Blaide. Blaide shoved him aside, trying to regain his balance. He pulled himself upright. Wide-eyed, an expression of disbelief on his face, he found himself staring down the barrel of Metallo's blaster. She fired. Clutching his belly, Blaide gasped for one last breath and fell to the floor of the skiff next to Matt.

Metallo knelt beside Matt. "Don't you die on me, Matt. Not after all the trouble I've gone to!"

"I'm all right, boss," Matt grimaced, sitting up slowly as the skiff rounded another curve in the road.

"What were you tryin' to do? Get yourself killed?"

"He just nicked me, boss. You're not gonna get rid of me that easily."

Metallo smiled, squeezing his arm. "Thanks, Matt," she said as the

skiff pulled up to docking bay 10.

Hunter emerged from the ship greeting his friends at the bottom of the ramp. Smiling, he grasped Chaz in a bear hug. "Thought I'd lost you, son," he said.

"I'm okay, Dad," Chaz whispered into his father's ear, hearing the sharp intake of breath as the older man winced in pain. "What about you?"

"Fine. Everything's fine now."

Outside the docking bay another skiff screeched around the corner.

"We've got company!" Midget shouted.

"Time to leave, friends," Metallo said, heading up the ramp into the ship with Matt right behind her.

Hunter slapped the hatch release as soon as everyone was on board. "Go, Tere! Get us out of here!" he shouted toward the cockpit.

The ship lifted slowly off the duracrete floor of the landing bay. Kicking up dirt, it left a cloud behind as a dozen stormtroopers rushed into the bay.

"Matt, can you handle —"

"No problem, boss. Plottin' us a course straight away from here," he told her, feverishly punching keys on the co-pilot's console. "Spaceport's hailing us. They're ordering us to turn back."

"Picking up several signals, Matt."

"What are they?" Hunter asked, scanning the skies as the *Star Quest* left Kabaira's atmosphere and headed toward the star-studded blackness of deep space.

"Three Headhunters," Matt replied. "Probably the local space patrol."

Chaz came up beside his father in the cockpit. "Did I hear you say Headhunters?"

"Yeah."

"You got a fast ship, Captain?" Chaz asked.

"She's pretty good, young man," Metallo replied.

"Shields up," Matt reported. "Thirty seconds 'til we jump."

Metallo studied the ship's sensors. The Z-95s were gaining a little ground on them. "Fancy flyin' time, boys. Better strap yourselves in," she told them as the *Star Quest* banked sharply to port. She winked at her co-pilot. "Remind me, Matt, when we reach a safe port, we need to do some engine mods if we're gonna stay in this line of work!"

Matt smiled. "Right, boss," he said as the ship twisted through a series of curls. Several shots whipped across the bow.

Adventure Idea

The characters are Rebel operatives meeting with the Kabairan underground in an old warehouse on the outskirts of Eponte Spaceport. While discussing arrangements for the characters to pick-up and deliver stolen medical supplies to the Rebel fleet, their meeting is interrupted by Imperial stormtroopers. The characters must fight their way out of the warehouse and find safe refuge within the city. Unfortunately, the Empire has taken possession of the medical supplies and impounded the characters' ship. They must find a way to steal the medical supplies from a heavily guarded Imperial impound warehouse, then break through the platoon of stormtroopers guarding their ship to deliver the supplies safely to the Rebel fleet.

"Time?"

"Five seconds."

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

Mottled stars filled the viewscreen as the *Star Quest* made its passage into hyperspace. Matt watched the stars blur into starlines, marvelling at the incredible beauty of it all. And for the first time in longer than he could remember, he felt whole again. He wasn't sure what the future held in store, but for now it was a beginning, a new passage in his life, with new friends, new battles ... and new enemies.

In Memoriam: Martin Wixted

Martin Wixted, former West End Games salesperson and editor, and a great friend of the company, passed away in November, 1994. Martin was an avid *Star Wars* fan, and was one of two people on staff who knew all three *Star Wars* movies by heart. In addition to his editing and sales duties, he wrote *Galaxy Guide 7: Mos Eisley*.

We'll miss him personally and will miss his contributions to our products. Clear skies, Martin.

About the Authors ...

"Retreat from Coruscant" is **Laurie Burns'** third contribution to the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*. When not staring into space day-dreaming about goings-on in the *Star Wars* galaxy, she's crouched over the computer producing and publishing a West Coast horse magazine, writing short stories, and spending entirely too much time chatting on-line with the fun folks in the *Star Wars* section of CompuServe.

Pablo Hidalgo is a 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.

Patty Jackson is an administrative assistant at Jackson Elementary School in York, Pennsylvania. When not chained to a computer, she enjoys playing *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*. Her various contributions to the *Star Wars Adventure Journal* have each contained snippets of Old Corellian.

Charlene Newcomb has three children, ages 7, 8 and 13. She spends her few spare hours each day doing exciting things like housework, grocery shopping and shuffling children to basketball practices and gymnastics. Currently working part-time at Rollins College and the Central Florida Library Consortium, she is working on a masters degree in library and information sciences at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and hopes to graduate in the spring of 1996. Her hobbies include *Star Wars* collecting, reading and surfing the InterNet.

Tim O'Brien is secretly *mercenarius scriptus*, a mysterious character who aids the forces of gaming. Years ago in the Occident, Tim acquired the power to enlighten people's minds, which he uses to fight the forces of boredom and mediocrity.

Ilene Rosenberg has a masters degree in magazine journalism from New York University. When she isn't playing *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* or *Magic: The Gathering*, she spends her days lounging in the tropical splendor of southwestern Connecticut.

Tony Russo is a technical writer and graphics specialist for a computer consultant in northern Virginia. Besides trying to branch

out into other areas of fiction (including comic books and novels), he has already developed and run a live action version of *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* — and hopes to generate interest in running more live action *Star Wars* adventures.

A roleplaying game industry veteran, **Michael Stackpole** has designed computer games, written novels and developed roleplaying games. He has written several novels for FASA's *BattleTech* series and GDW's *Dark Conspiracy* series. The first of his four-part series of X-wing novels, *Rogue Squadron*, will be released by Bantam in February, 1996.

Paul Sudlow recently hitched up the wagons and moved to exotic Carbondale, Pennsylvania, the cultural capital of the universe. He has joined West End Games as a *Star Wars* editor, and is having a fine time.

Timothy Zahn is the author of *Heir to the Empire*, *Dark Force Rising* and *The Last Command*, all *New York Times* bestselling *Star Wars* novels. His most recent book is *Conquerors' Heritage*, the second book in his *Conquerors Trilogy*. The trilogy's first novel, *Conquerors' Pride*, was published by Bantam last year.

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, works part-time at the College of William and Mary, and smuggles nerfs onto Wroonia.

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 also 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 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 with his wife, Lori, two sons, and a dog, Punkie.

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. In addition to illustrating the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*, Mike recently helped illustrate the *DarkStryder Campaign* for *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*.

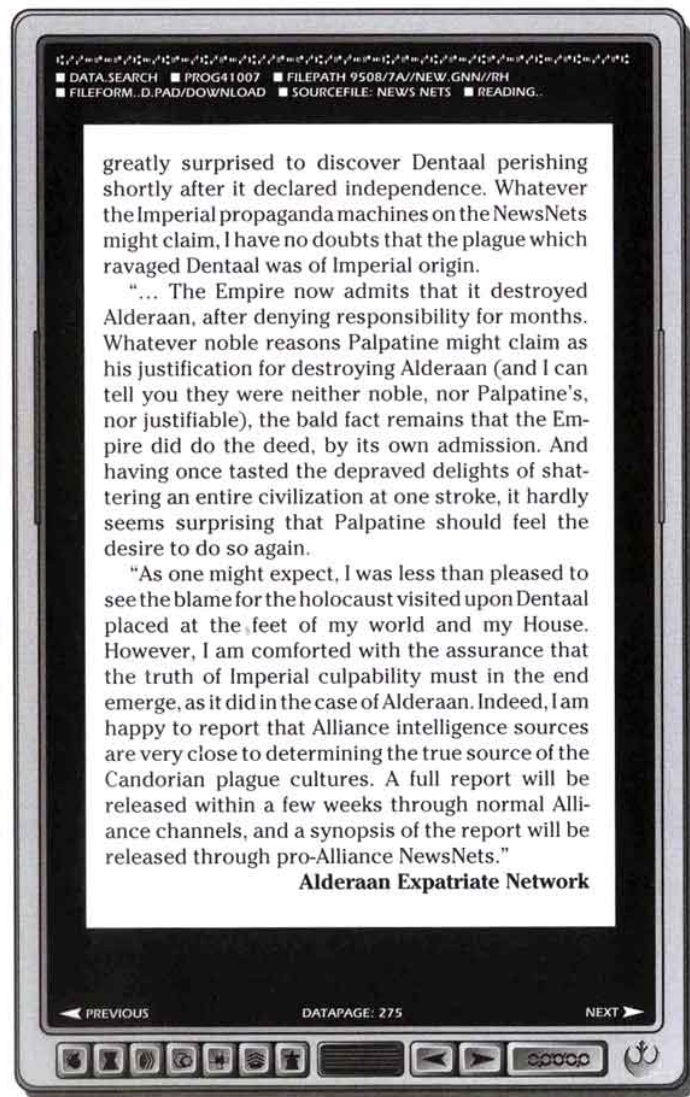
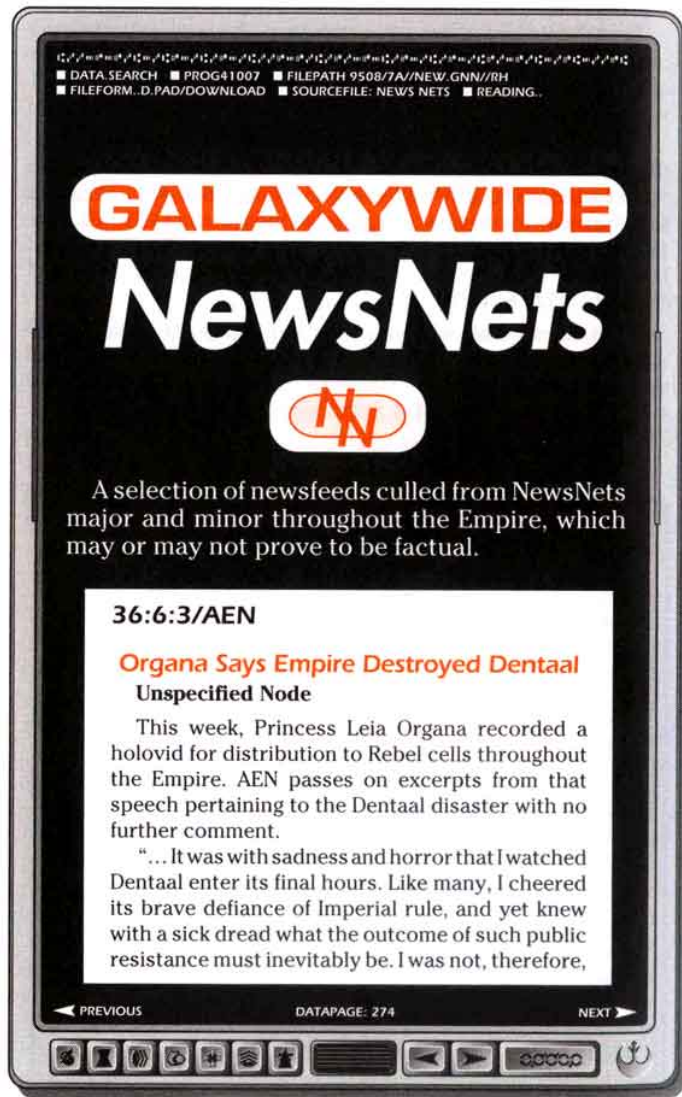
Journal Submission Policy

The *Star Wars Adventure Journal* has been asked by Lucasfilm to solicit material only from previously published writers. Therefore, we must require potential writers to meet the following guidelines.

If you are a published writer interested in writing for the *Journal*, please send a brief cover letter outlining your interest in writing for *Star Wars* and your writing experience. Include a bibliography of previously published works, as well as samples of this work. Please include your daytime phone number if we would like to commission you to write an article for the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*.

Please do not send any *Star Wars* manuscripts or proposals with your query. Lucasfilm Ltd. has a strict policy forbidding any member of its company from reading, reviewing or accepting unsolicited submissions or ideas. As Lucasfilm's licensee for *Star Wars*, we are obligated to abide by this policy.

If you are not a published writer, we encourage you to pursue publishing your writing in other areas. It has been our experience that some of our industry's best writers are newcomers to the field. Newspaper, magazine and fanzine editors often seek freelance writers to help fill their pages — this is a good place to gain some writing and publishing experience so you can later be considered to contribute to the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*.



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36:6:7/BSN/BAC.2/AMM/POL

Imperial Forces Quell Amma Riot

Amma, Bacrana

Imperial forces quickly subdued a large riot today in Amma's Central Sector. Under the command of Moff Ramier, military forces met thousands of "demonstrators" in Central Sector Square and ordered them to disperse. Although the "demonstration" was promoted as a peaceful protest against "oppressive" Imperial decrees, the crowd responded with explosives and blaster fire. Stormtroopers and Imperial Army troops easily routed the attackers, with no losses of their own. The crowd quickly scattered and fled, though sporadic fighting continued for hours afterwards.

Amma has been put under martial law. Moff Ramier released this statement: "Further demonstrations will not be tolerated. Those responsible will be punished. In order to insure their safety, all citizens are ordered to remain at their homes and lodgings until this crisis has passed. Curfews and restrictions will be transmitted to all NewsNets and comm stations immediately following this broadcast."

Imperial sources indicate that the leaders of the demonstration have been captured, but the search continues for collaborators and participants. Hundreds of arrests have been reported. There are also widespread rumors of Rebel agents organizing the "demonstration." If true, today's riot would be the Rebellion's first attack in Brak Sector.

Brak Sector News

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36:6:7/BSN/HITCHED/AGAIN

Amma Deception Revealed

Invisible Node

Now that you've heard the official version, we bet you want to know what *really* happened in Amma, right? So here it is, right when you need it! (What would you do without us?)

Actually, our friends at BSN aren't too far off this time. (Someone must have distracted the Imperial censor.) There was a demonstration in Amma. Thousands of people of all species showed up and marched through the city, all under the banners of peaceful protest and calls for reinstatement of lost rights. (Our particular wish is an uncensored press, could you tell?)

The Empire joined this party with a few hundred of their troops and armored walkers. Apparently, Moff Raimer doesn't want citizens marching around his capital while his troops are on parade (with good reason, his troops don't march nearly as well). Anyway, when the crowd was ordered to go home, some of them went crazy and shot up a few stormtroopers. Must have been the radicals up front, all 40 of them. Impatient fools. The Imperials routed the protestors, all right. A few dozen squads and walkers against a few thousand unarmed, frightened civilians. A few hundred injured or killed, no one knows for sure. Now we have martial law and a few hundred false arrests.

Throughout all of this, did anyone notice who

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was missing? We did. The Bacrana System Defence Force was nowhere to be found. Kind of strange. You would think that the local police forces would be ordered to aid the Imperials in "crowd control." Guess what? They were so ordered. Seemed that General Reskan didn't want to shoot up his own people, so he ordered the BSDF to pull out. It took a bit for the Imperials to notice, and by the time they did, he was gone. We think we'll see him again, someday.

Finally, this was no Rebel action. The Rebels are much more organized, less public, and have more effective methods. This was way too public for Rebel tastes, for reasons that should now be obvious. That's it for now.

Invisible NewsStack

36:6:14/COL/H77N/TRI.2.KNA/MIL

Armistice Announced in CSA-Trianii War

Knanan, Fibuli

After three years of bitter fighting in the Tingel Arm of the Corporate Sector Authority, the border war between the CSA and the Trianii Colonies has ceased — at least for the moment.

Trianii and CSA delegations are meeting for a series of talks here on Fibuli, once the site of a major Trianii colony, and now a wasted neutral land after three years of fighting. The armistice

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was declared after seven months of delicate negotiations between diplomats on both sides of the conflict.

The war has been fought to a bloody stalemate along a chain of systems settled by the Trianii and later claimed by the CSA as property ceded to it in its corporate charter with the Empire. Both sides have invested tremendous resources in the conflict. "The Trianii's basic goal has been to make our taking their land more trouble than its worth," said Halbreck Dodd, one of the CSA negotiators. "They have certainly succeeded, but at a horrible price. Fully a third of their young have been consumed and destroyed in this jihad. I suspect both sides are ready to come to some sort of accommodation."

Ceenda Bekkar, the Trianii chief negotiator, agreed. "We do not fight out of natural aggression, but out of a deep-seated sense of self-preservation. Remove the cause of conflict, and the hostilities will cease." Both sides have signaled they would be willing to compromise.

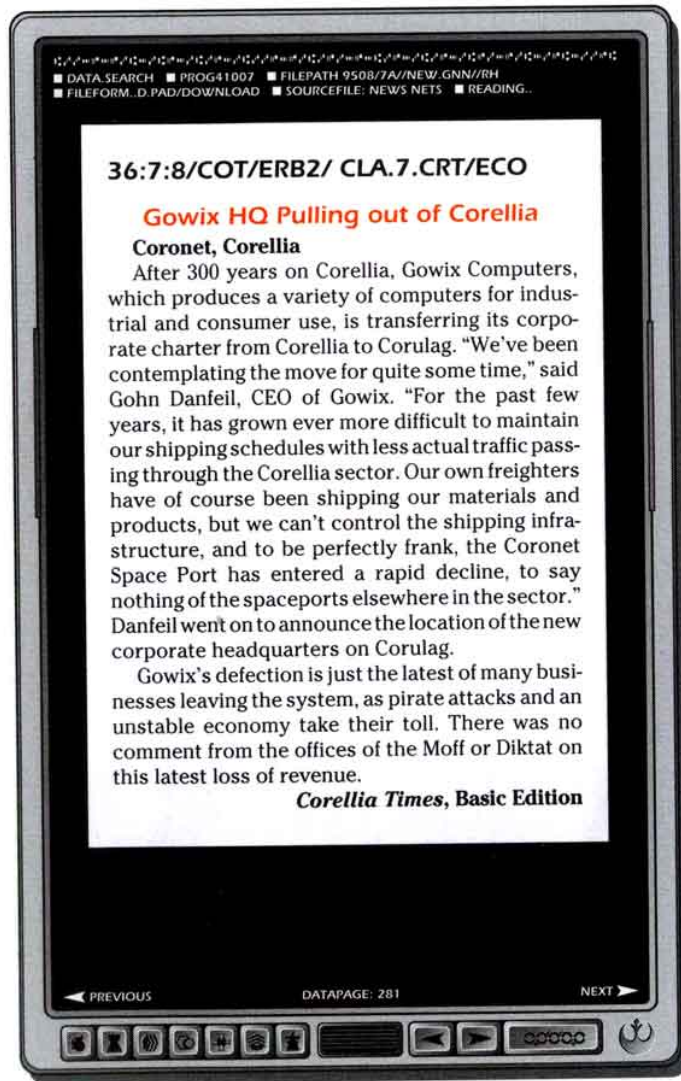
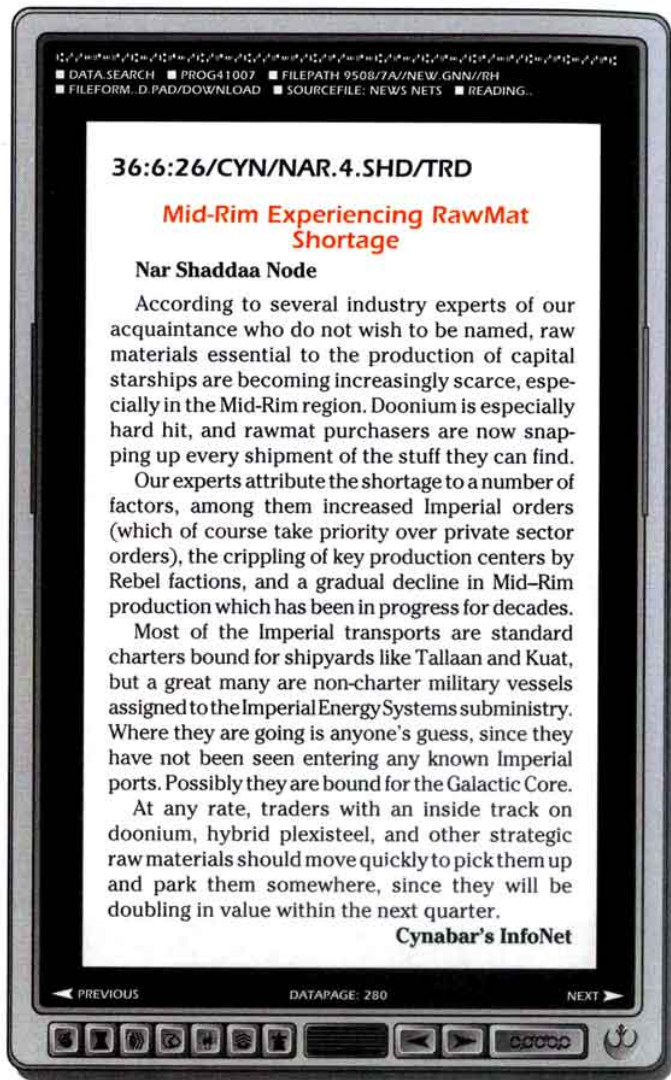
The talks have not moved beyond the opening statements, making it difficult to gauge the likelihood of success, but there is a feeling of optimism about the chamber which makes one hopeful that the time for blood has been overtaken by the time for words.

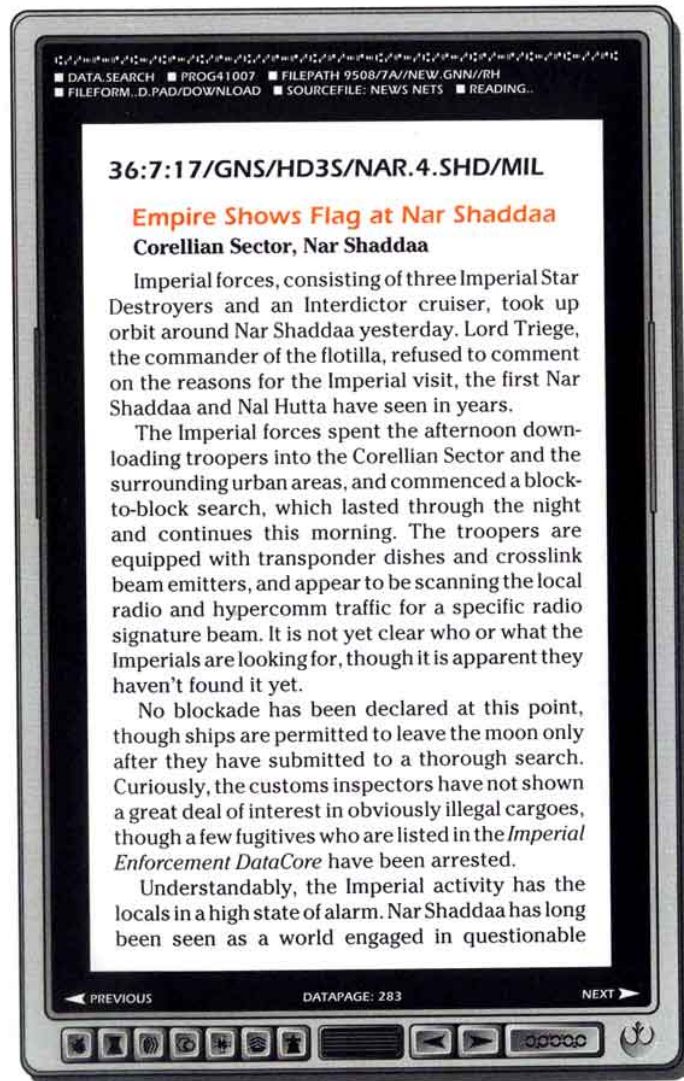
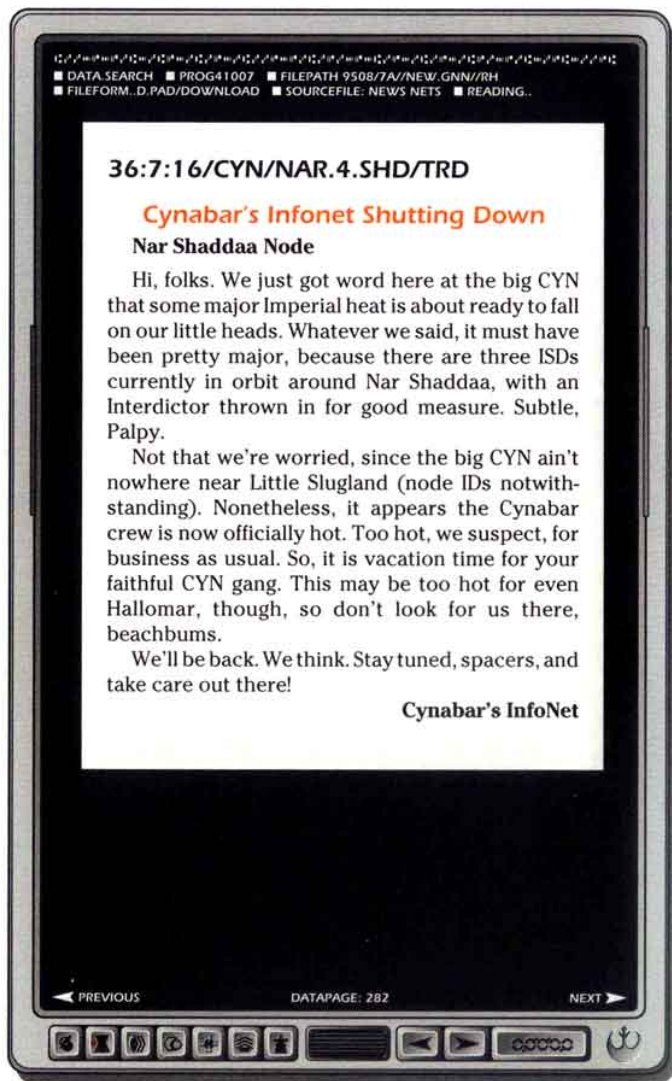
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activities the Empire frowns upon, but the Empire has never before shown much official interest in it. The sudden turning of the blinding light of Imperial scrutiny onto this unsavory world has sent its denizens darting down every spunk hole they can find.

Smebba Dunk, the current head of the Clan Council, vigorously protested Triage's actions early this morning in a broadcast from his estates. "We cannot let this gross violation of Hutt space pass without comment," he said through an interpreter. "Nal Hutta and the Empire have long held to a policy of non-interference in one another's affairs, and it pains the Hutt people to see the agreement violated without so much as a by-your-leave. We request an immediate explanation." Thus far there has been no such explanation.

Galaxy News Service

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Emperor Appoints New Governor to Chandria

Imperial City, Coruscant

In a ceremony in the Candreal Gardens Center in Imperial City, Emperor Palpatine announced the appointment of Gerald Weizel as Governor of

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Chandria. Weizel will be replacing Governor Grandon Holleck, who tendered his resignation early last week.

Weizel is former Governor of Dakshee in the Colonies, where he came to the attention of the Imperial Court due to his handling of the Brella Temior crisis. "Weizel has a certain flair for handling problem worlds," according to Amier Candle, department head of the Imperial University's School of Public Policy. "Like the Dakshee affair. Who would have guessed the union heads were JAN ringleaders? But Weizel sniffed them out, and resolved the issue without bloodshed. He has the savvy to hold his own with Chandria's formidable political personalities, and obviously, Coruscant hopes he has what it takes to bring Chandria further into the Imperial fold."

Grengr Tabbe of the Imperial Public Policy Foundation agrees. "I don't think we'll be seeing any of the weak vacillation and chronic self-doubt we saw in Holleck. Weizel has a track record for forging ties with political leaders in potentially unfriendly territory."

In his resignation letter to the Emperor, Holleck cited failing health and a desire to leave Chandria for his native Ganthel as his reasons for retirement.

Coruscant Daily NewsFeed

In addition to Paul Sudlow, Sterling Hershey also contributed to this issue's NewsNets.

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HoloNet Hype



Fuel in the Star Wars Game

To the Editor:

I enjoyed Platt Okeefe's tour of her ship in *Smuggler's Log* in issue #4 of the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*. However, one thing that has been given little attention in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* is the use of fuel for starships. While the game emphasizes action over technical details, it seems more than slightly unrealistic to be able to travel across the galaxy without knowing what makes your ship go. Plus, a scene in *Star Wars: A New Hope* seemed to show Rebel fighters being fueled before they attacked the Death Star.

As explained in the *Star Wars Sourcebook*, ships are propelled through normal space by Horst-Kessel ion engines. Ions are charged particles that come from the breakdown of atoms. Unless the ions are created out of nothing (that would take a lot of energy!), some substance must be used as a fuel to produce ions. Different fuels require varying amounts of energy to be ionized, but since the substance is only being used for reaction mass (exhaust), the most convenient and cost effective fuel would be a commonly available liquid or a liquified gas like air, hydrogen, oxygen, water, or methane. It wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that refueling with "bulk fuel" for the ion engines is part regular restocking routine, and the cost is included with the other items.

The energy to operate the ion engine and other ship functions comes from power cells or a reactor. The nuclear fuel in the cells or reactor is different than the bulk fuel. It wouldn't be inconsistent with the material published in *Galaxy Guide 6: Tramp Freighters* to say that the cells are sealed units which can store large amounts of energy that is drawn out as needed by nuclear reactions, and then can be recharged (i.e., the reactions driven backwards) by supply-

ing energy from an outside source.

Since the ion engines are very efficient, not much bulk fuel is needed. A fighter might carry a ton or two of bulk fuel, while a tramp freighter has perhaps 20 tons. The consumption of bulk fuel would be proportional to that of other consumables, except when a ship does a lot of take-offs and landings or other high speed maneuvers. When fuel gets low, perhaps because of a leak, characters might be forced to choose between drifting or ionizing part of their air, water or food supply or even pieces of their ship.

Larry Granato, Denver, CO

I've deferred comment on this letter to Bill Smith, *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* line editor here at West End Games. Bill is the definitive voice here on rules for *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game, Second Edition*, and I felt he could best address concerns about starship fuel in the *Star Wars* game. Bill?

"Starships in the *Star Wars* universe are powered by specially formulated fuel blends or by power cells. As noted in the *Star Wars Sourcebook* and *Galaxy Guide 6: Tramp Freighters*, ships fitted with the appropriate fuel converters can convert just about any substance — from hydrogen on up to heavy metals — into fuel-grade material. Ships without such converters and that run out of fuel in uncivilized systems are just plain out of luck: scouts had better plan ahead!

"There's no need to be more precise at this point. Rather than debating how a drive system in *Star Wars* works, we just assume that it does and get on with the adventure. Remember that even in the 1940's many scientists said it would be impossible to go to the moon — scientific advances that we don't now understand make the 'impossible' possible!

"You bring up a valid point when discussing fuel consumption for starships. However, we tend to favor roleplaying over bookkeeping. Instead, we suggest you use the 'consumables' statistic to come up with ballpark figures for when ships need to refuel and otherwise use fuel consumption as a convenient plot device for your adventures.

"At this point, it is assumed that a ship's consumables for fuel matches its consumables for food, air, water and the like — it would make no sense to have a ship that can carry a year's worth of food and only a week's worth of fuel. More detailed customization of ship's supplies may be addressed in future supplements."



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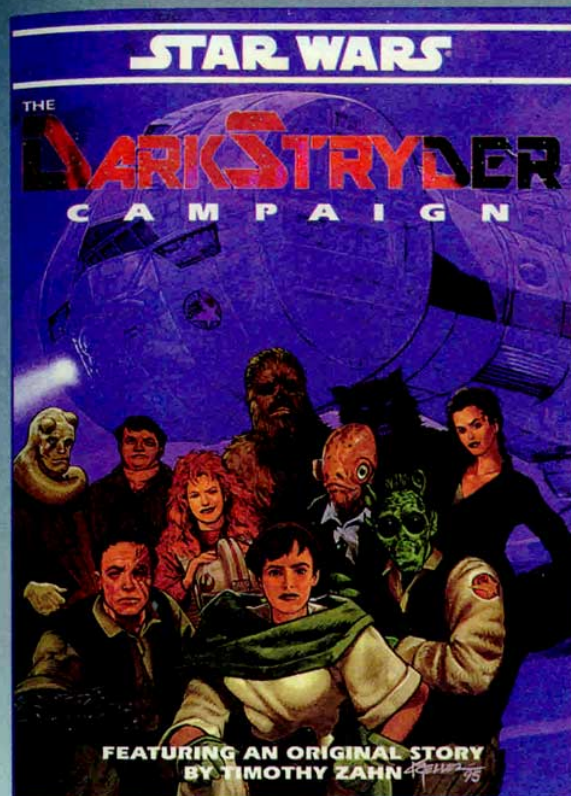
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