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ADMIRAL'S COMMUNIQUE



Change in Command

Star Wars Adventure Journal #14 will be my last. West End management has shifted me from editorial duties to administration and game design. Steve Miller—a former TSR editor and game designer—has already begun work on *Journal* #15 and beyond. He is a welcome *Star Wars* team member at West End and will continue maintaining the *Journal's* high quality standards. No doubt I will still contribute some articles for the *Journal*, but I am turning the overall direction and day-to-day operations to Steve.

Since establishing the *Journal* in 1994, I've had the pleasure to work with many people toiling behind the scenes to make this project successful. I'd like to thank them. West End's Richard Hawran, Jeff Kent and Daniel Scott Palter have provided their support and much-needed encouragement. Timothy Zahn, Kathy Tyers and Michael A. Stackpole have supported the *Journal* with stories in which they return to the characters and galaxy they love. Up-and-coming authors have contributed articles which expand the *Star Wars* galaxy's scope and still live up to Lucasfilm's standards of excellence. Our loyal subscribers and readers have faithfully hunted down issues to fill out their collections and find the latest in *Star Wars* information. Lucasfilm's Sue Rostoni and Allan Kausch have guided the *Journal's* growth and watched over continuity concerns. Bantam editors Tom Dupree and Pat LoBrutto opened many doors of opportunity.

And, of course, none of this would have been possible without the imaginative vision and perseverance of George Lucas. Through their involvement with the *Journal*, everyone—readers, authors, editors, and creators—has become part of the *Star Wars* dream.

Commander Peter Schweighofer
Admiral's Attaché
May 1997

STAR WARS®

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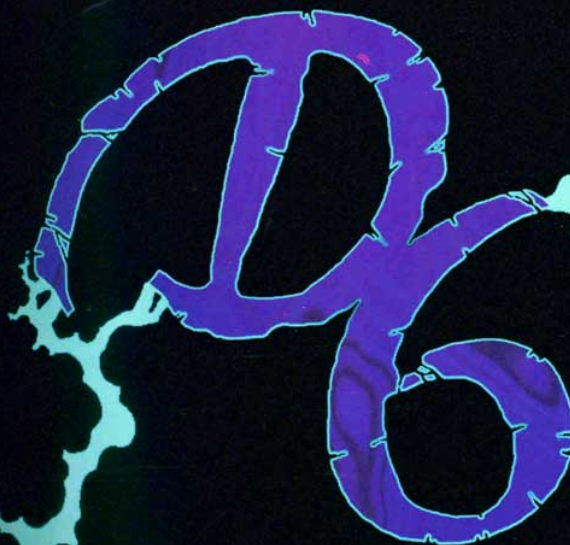
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MURDER IN *Slushtime*

By Barbara Hambly

Illustrations by Doug Shuler

There were places in the galaxy more depressing than the planet Gamorr in slushtime. Callista Ming had even been to some of them.

Kirido III in the summer, with the air temperature in the low one-hundreds and nothing to do between 400 kilometer-per-hour sandstorms but watch the inhabitants of the dunes wait for slugs to crawl into their mouths.

The garbage-moon of Shesharile VI when the first spring heat activates the bacteria in the underground waste-sinks.

Kessel, at any time.

But Gamorr in slushtime came close.

"Still no break in the weather?" Callista came three-quarters of the way down the metal stair from the upper deck of the freighter *Zicreex*, then swung herself lightly over the rail, dropping the remaining meter and a half to the metal deck.

Jos, the ship's engineer and the only other human in the crew, half emerged from under the console where he was digging out flakes of the pus-colored fungus that had sprouted there overnight. "No."

"And no word from Guth?" Callista tossed the plastene-wrapped parcel of assorted growths she'd scraped from the walls of her



cubicle down onto the Captain's chair. Captain Ugmush had spoken of making fug for dinner that night, to take advantage of their presence on her homeworld. There was nothing, she said, like the molds of home.

"No," said Jos again, and went back to scraping. When Callista first began traveling on the *Zicreex*, she'd thought Jos's impregnable gloom stemmed from being a slave on a freighter owned and operated by Gamorreans—enough to depress anyone. After six months, however, she had come to the conclusion that the scar-faced, stringy engineer would have been gloomy had he been the independent potentate of the best-stocked and most enthusiastically peopled Pleasure Planet in the Purple Systems. She fully intended to find some way of freeing him before she parted company with the ship, but doubted it would make a whit of difference.

As Callista walked to the open airlock door to regard the sodden vista of slowly thawing snow that lay between the *Zicreex* and the walls of the small clanhold of Nudskutch, Jos added, "The weather should clear for good in a week or so. The Fair at Bolgoink starts tomorrow; the big one over in Jugsmuk is next week, with traders coming in from all over this part of the continent. We should be restocked and gone in ten days."

He didn't sound particularly enthusiastic, about either the start of the planet's fair season or the prospect of departure. Callista went to the outer door and stood with one shoulder leaned against the jamb, the murky breeze lifting her long, rough, light-brown hair back from her face. Around the *Zicreex*, the makeshift landing-field was vacant and mostly flooded still. Unprepossessing as it was, Gamorr in slushime was preferable to imprisonment in the gunnery computer of an abandoned Imperial dreadnought, a disembodied consciousness slowly deteriorating into less than a ghost. Freedom had cost Callista her ability to use the Force—the very core of her personality as a Jedi Knight. It had cost her other things as well.

But still, she thought, touching the lightsaber that hung at her belt, it was very good to be free.

Captain Ugmush appeared from the woods, a huge sack of fungus on her back, and two of the three boars who constituted the Gamorrean freighter-crew trotting docilely at her heels. The third, Ugmush's husband, came behind, patiently herding a ring of snoruuk in the direction of the ship's ramp, an exercise that could take the remainder of the afternoon. Ugmush strode briskly up the ramp, a

middle-aged sow resplendent in a garish offworld glory of eyepaint and diamond nose-rings. Her long hair was dyed bright pink and half a dozen morrts—the Gamorrean parasite with which the *Zicreex* was infested—in evidence, clinging to her glabrous arms, bosom and neck.

"Stew tonight," she informed Callista, and reached back to rip aside the mold-tendrils that had snaked out of the sack and was trying to get a grip on her throat. "Teach you make stew." Owing to the difficulty Gamorreans have in pronouncing Basic, Ugmush wore a transliterator around her neck, which produced a mostly accurate rendering of her words in the honey-sweet, throaty purr of holovid star Amber Jevanche.

She prodded Callista in the ribs. "Skinny *v'ich*," she added reprovingly—the transliterator fumbling for and not finding a translation of the word for an unmarried sow. "Not find husband, all skinny. Morrts can't live on skinny. Feed you. Make you...."

The transliterator made another stab at the appropriate word in Basic, then gave it up with a tinny rattle. Ugmush flexed her biceps and pecs to demonstrate. "*Gweek*. You know *gweek*?" She picked one of the thumb-sized gray parasites out of her hair, held it to her shoulder where it could get a better purchase. Her pale, yellowish flesh was dotted with the scabs of their bites.

"*Gweek*. Good husband; two tuskers; nine morrts." She slapped her chest proudly. "*Gweek*."

"*Gweek*," repeated Callista gravely. During her travels on the *Zicreex* Callista had learned a good deal of Gamorrean, a tongue impossible to master for anyone with the slightest pretension to dignity.

"Next week, fair at Jugsmuk, we buy food." Ugmush grabbed a handful of fungus that was trying to climb out of her sack and shoved it back in.

One of the tusker boars—lesser members of the crew—who had come up the ramp at Ugmush's heels, frowned at the word Jugsmuk and pointed out, in Gamorrean, [Fair at Bolgoink tomorrow.] Eyes brightening visibly, he added, [See Guth fight in tourney.]

Ugmush whirled with a savage squeal and caught him a swipe with one hand that sent him smashing into the wall. What she said to him was at a volume and a speed that rendered it incomprehensible to Callista, who could only deal with Gamorrean if it was spoken slowly and distinctly, but she caught the name of the Bolgoink clanhold and a lot of negatives and emphatics before the

Captain went storming up the metal ladder into the upper regions of the ship.

The tusker got to his feet, rubbing the bloody place on his jaw with an expression more of aggrieved anxiety than of anger. He looked to Callista for explanation: [Guth Ugmush brother,] he said, [Guth one of crew. Why not see fight?]

To herself, quietly, in Basic, Callista replied, "Because she knows he's going to die."

A fury of squeals and shrieks went up outside. Callista turned, sprang to the airlock door, the two tuskers crowding after and leaning out in such a way that she couldn't have shut it had she wanted to. Across the vacant, sodden landing-field a boar was running, knees and arms pumping, the calf-deep water of the puddles surging and splashing around him in holocausts of spray. Callista cried "Guth!" recognizing him, and the tuskers, seeing their Captain's younger brother being hotly pursued by at least a dozen armed boars, let out shrill grunts of delight, grabbed weapons, and pounded down the ramp to his rescue. A moment later Ugmush came running, war-club in one hand and blaster in the other, firing as she ran.

Like most Gamorreans she was a truly terrible shot. Steam belched and spewed as the white-hot plasma touched water and mud, and Callista, with horrible visions of a wild shot taking out the *Zicreex's* heat-exchangers, sprang down the ramp also. They'd been stranded on Travnin for two weeks not too long ago as a result of Ugmush's shooting and she had no intention of letting it happen again.

Callista yelled "URRJSH!" at the top of her lungs—Gamorrean for *Stop!*—as she easily outdistanced Ugmush and her crew. She unhooked the lightsaber from her belt as she ran and activated it in a flash of cold yellow brilliance. Guth reached her moments before the pursuing boars would have seized him: she took the iron heads off two halberds and a war-club, and opened a thin, smoking slit in the arm of the leading boar. It stopped their attack, rather to her surprise—she'd seen Gamorreans take on buzz-droids without a second thought for life or limb—and the next instant she whirled and brandished her lightsaber at Ugmush, who was about to hurl herself into the attackers and re-start the fray. "Get back!"

Ugmush skidded to a stop in a huge spray of mud. "Put that down!" She made to get past Callista, and Callista stepped again in her path, lightsaber still raised. The boars of the *Zicreex's* crew



collided with one another and all piled into Ugmush from the back. It took a few minutes to get everyone sorted out, while Guth stayed close at Callista's side, panting and spent from his run.

[What is this?] she asked him in Gamorrean. [Who are these? Why did you return?]

[Need help,] panted Guth, in labored Gamorrean. [Vrokk. The tourney....]

[Did you fight Vrokk?] The young boar didn't look as if he'd been in even tourney combat with the most feared and powerful clan boar and warlord in the southeastern part of the continent—certainly not the combat to the death that boars faced when one challenged another for the right to wed a clan matron sow. [Win Kufbrug to wife?]

Ugmush shoved past Callista to seize her brother in a bone-

breaking embrace. For a moment they rubbed snouts and licked faces in greeting, then Ugmush demanded, [Vrokk dead?]

[Vrokk dead.] Guth's voice was very quiet and there was fear in his bright-blue eyes. He gestured at the armed boars who had pursued him, some of them bearing the badge, Callista now saw, of Rog, warlord of Nudskutch, others in the dark-blue tabards of the Clan of Bolgoink. [Not fight,] said Guth. [Murder. They say I did it.]



On the way to the Hold of Bolgoink, Guth explained as well as he was able the seriousness of the charge. [Battle good. Mating-fight good. Murder bad.]

It made sense, Callista reasoned. The incessant fighting among the Gamorrean boars ensured that only the physically strongest would mate, the ratio of boars to sows being approximately ten to one at birth. Murder was cheating. Murder was survival of the sneakiest, not the fittest.

The only problem was the arresting boars had seemed to be under the impression that Ugmush and her crew had something to do with the killing as well. [Soap-eating scabwit I was here!] Ugmush had screamed at their captain. [How could I do murder if I was here?]

The boar had cogitated on that one for a time, profoundly puzzled. At last he'd said, [Vrokk's brother Rog say, murder from—from starship. You in starship. Everybody in starship. Rog have vengeance, on Guth, on you, on everybody. All of you die.]

Bolgoink Hold lay at the center of vast fields, forest and pasture, a walled and moated fortress of squat stone towers and longhouses, surrounded in turn by a sizeable village, likewise walled with stone. Outside the gates merchants from other clans were setting up the tents for Bolgoink Fair, but there was an uneasy hush over the place, and as they trudged past the half-constructed flies and marquees, Callista saw a number of sows loading up their goods again onto wagons, litters and wheelbarrows, preparatory to mov-

ing on to Jugsmuk. Vrokk had been a warlord of enormous power. Too many other warlords were waiting to see what would happen following his death.

The household guard met them within the gates of the hold's inner fortress, led by a rather thin but extremely scarred boar with a gold ring in his ear. Guth whispered to Callista, [Lugh. Second warlord.] It did not escape Callista that the scarred boar's yellow eyes followed Guth with suspicion and hate; she wondered if Lugh had had thoughts of challenging Vrokk's strength himself, of trying to win the matron Kufbrug's hand.

Kufbrug, the matron of the Bolgoink clan, received them in the round tower hall. She sat cross-legged on a huge wallow of loosely-stuffed crimson cushions, while the children she had borne last spring ran squealing and shrieking around the hall under the guardianship of a stolid-looking veteran boar with a wooden leg and a missing arm. Had she been standing, Kufbrug would have topped Callista's hundred and eighty centimeters, and massed well over two hundred kilos. Her greenish-brown hair hung in braids past her massive hips, strung with green and gold trade-beads; more beads glittered dully on her eight enormous breasts. More morrts than Callista had ever seen on a single Gamorrean clung, sucking contentedly, to her shoulders, biceps, neck, jowls.

A week sow and no mistake.

And yet there was something wrong. Slushtime, the closing weeks of the harsh Gamorrean winter, was, Callista knew, a time of preparation for sowing, a time of readying the boars for spring training, a time of bustle and spring-cleaning, of gathering the fungus that was so plentiful in these damp weeks, of pickling, weaving and sharpening tools. The energy that was Ugmush's leading characteristic, the hallmark of the Gamorrean sows, was absent from this giant matron. When Kufbrug raised her curiously long lashes and met Guth's eyes over the crossed halberds of the guards, there was only a deadness, an infinite grieving weariness, in the glittering yellow eyes.

On the cushions beside her sat her daughter Gundruk, matron of the much smaller hold of Nudskutch, and on Gundruk's other side, huge and dark and terrible, stood Rog, Vrokk's brother and Gundruk's husband, warlord of Nudskutch.

It was Rog who spoke, jerking a heavy, clawed hand at Callista, and at Jos the engineer who stood, still chained, between Ugmush and her tuskers. "Muh," he cried—*outlander*—and turned to

Gundruk, to Kufbrug, to the three of four scholar sows sitting quietly in the background, the guardians of the clanhold laws. [What more proof you need, that Guth use outlander poison to kill my brother? See his sister, captain of an outlander ship! See how there are outlanders among his sister's clan!]

Ugmush threw herself at Rog, screaming invective—"Sithfestering slime-eater how dare you...?" crooned Amber Jevanche's voice out of the transliterator—backed by her husband and both her tuskers regardless of the fact that all were chained and none bore weapons. Callista, who had refused to give up her lightsaber or allow herself to be chained for either the journey or the audience, simply stepped back out of the way. Though she felt a pang of loyalty for her crewmates—especially poor Jos, who was chained between the two tuskers and hauled along willy-nilly into the melee—she reflected that in a way having them out of the hall would make matters a lot easier.

When the prisoners had been hauled away and the hall had quieted down again, Callista lowered her lightsaber and stepped towards the dais again, tall, slim and a little awkward-looking among the stocky, porcine Gamorreans.

[Outlanders in their ships come to



Gamorr all the time], she said reasonably. [Many outlanders live at Jugsmuk Station. Outlanders hate Vrokk for other reasons?]

Rog looked back at Gundruk for help on that one. The guards scratched their heads at such complicated sophistry and regarded Callista with suspicion. Kufbrug only stroked the morrts clinging to her arms and stared away into the cold shadows of the room without interest.

[Guth did not want to fight. Vrokk was strong.] Gundruk rose to her feet, smaller than Kufbrug—younger, darker, and less *gweek*. [He killed my mother's last husband in tourney challenge, and his strength was much renowned. Guth knew he could not win.] She took from the bosom of her embroidered gown a crumpled and folded hunk of parchment. [Vrokk had this in his hand when he was found, lying in his room with blood on his snout and in his mouth.]

Callista unfolded it. Large black runes spelled out a couple of lines: [I will not meet you in the tourney fair, like two tuskers scuffling over a mushroom.] Gundruk read along, tracing the runes with her heavy, curving nail. [Neither is the hour appointed to my liking. Meet me rather on the high ground behind the snoruuk pastures at sunrise. Bring with you as many guards as

you want. *I have no fear of you. Guth.*] She tapped the signature, then the seal, a heavy glob of dark-blue wax, cracked across where Vrokk had broken it to unfold the letter. [See? Outlander poison was here, under the seal. It flew up into his nose and destroyed his brain.]

Callista turned the parchment over in her hands. The brittle, cured leather under the seal was indeed stained greenish brown, and when she turned over the broken halves of the seal itself she saw that they were slightly hollowed, as if the hot wax had been dripped over something underneath. She fitted her thumb into the hollow, shut her eyes, emptied her thoughts and breathed.

Groping to touch the Force with her mind, as long ago her teacher had shown her. As long ago, in another body, she had so easily done.

But all she sensed was a deep evil, and the recurring thought that she would, after all, be justified in whatever she chose to do to these sloven, ugly beings, because they had dared raise their hands against her and those under her protection. They had, after all, done evil first.

Callista pulled her mind away. *Yes, she thought. Yes. The Lost Jedi defending her friends with the Force.*

She turned the parchment over in her hands again. [Anyone can sign Guth's name,] she said.

Gundruk turned to her mother and held out her hand. With great weariness, Kufbrug brought from the tassled pouch at her belt three more packets of parchment, thickly folded, and sealed as the note had been sealed with blue wax. Gundruk in turn handed them to Callista. [Love-poems,] she said. [See? Runes made same way. Name written same.] Her heavy lips lifted back from her tusks with loathing. [Guth.]

The oldest of the scholar sows stood and said, [This Guth has sent poems to Lady Kufbrug for many seasons now. Vrokk spoke of it often, with anger. It is true also, *V'ch Muh...*]—literally, Outlander Girl—[that Lady Gundruk, and Lugh, and others of the household have heard the spirit of Vrokk moving about at night in the room in which he died. Spirits only walk if murder was done.]

Callista, who had been examining the imprint of minute bubbles in the wax, raised her head sharply at that, cold panic lancing through her that had nothing to do with the spirits of murdered souls: [Is the room locked?]

The scholar sows exchanged a glance. It was Kufbrug who spoke,

her voice very deep, slow and infinitely weary. [Yes, Outlander Girl. The room is locked.]

[Good,] said Callista, slowly and carefully, fearful suddenly that there be no mistake about what she said. [Keep room locked. Let no one in. Not until I come back. May I take this away with me?] She held up the note.

Gundruk and Rog exchanged a glance, puzzled—clearly they'd envisioned Callista as a prisoner, too—but Kufbrug said, [You may, if it will help you, Outlander Girl.]

"I think it will." Callista bowed in a rough equivalent of the Gamorrean obeisance, though Kufbrug had gone back to stroking her morrts, and stowed the parchment in her belt. The most interesting thing on the document was, of course, the seal, but the second most important thing was Guth's signature. As far as Callista knew, Guth, like most boars, could not write.



It was almost a day's walk to Jugsmuk Station, a grubby agglomeration of moss-crustled offplanet pre-fabs built up around the walls of the Jugsmuk clan fortress. The matron of Jugsmuk had years ago invested her labor in clearing and paving a good landing-field—good for Gamorr, anyway—and as a result, Jugsmuk Fair was one of the liveliest and most profitable on the continent of Wugguh. Not only clan boars and traders came in the spring to exchange food-stuffs and weaponry, to hold tourney fights and arrange marriages, but offworlders arrived as well bearing products far beyond the planet's crude resources.

No ships reared against the dark sky as Callista came out of the woods, wet and chilled with the sleet that had fallen all day, but Ugmush had told her there were a number of permanent outlanders living at the Station. A week or so early, thought Callista—the atmospheric chaos of winter was still making landings difficult. The *Zicreex* had orbited for a week before a temporary lull permitted landing, and Guth had been in a panic the whole time for fear he'd

miss his chance to challenge Vrokk at the Bolgoink Fair. Jugsmuk Fair was, indeed, timed to begin with the clearing of the atmosphere and the advent of the first of the trader ships.

It didn't take Callista long to find the individual she sought in Jugsmuk. She'd guessed already there wouldn't be more than one.

"Ugmush-Guth, yes," said Sebastin Onyx, smiling a little as he cleared off a battered red leather chair for Callista to sit. "Can I make you a tisane? I hate slushtime." He switched over the power-line from the music system to the cooker and set a small white pot of water under the disc. The sleet that had blown all day hammered

fitfully on the room's wide transparisteel port, blurring the darkening vision of the street outside. The room smelled of mold-guard, molds and pittins—at least five of the soft-furred little carnivores dozed near the heater, the only way, Callista guessed, of keeping morrts at bay. "You're a friend of his?"

"I've been a crew-hand on the *Zicreex* with him for six months."

"And you're in port?" Onyx measured

out leaves and herbs into a silver strainer and carefully poured the heated water through. "Did he challenge Vrokk at the Bolgoink Fair? I've never met him," he added, with a quick grin. "But he subspaced me whenever he had the credits for one of my poems—and frankly, a couple of times I gave him cut rates.... It's a living." He gestured around him at the little room.

Onyx was younger than Callista had expected, an impoverished student rather than the broken-down drunkards one frequently encountered in this particular economic niche. He was probably of Coruscant or Alderaan stock, shorter than she, fair-haired, and a

"Well," grinned Onyx, "I admit there's only so much you can do in Gamorrean."

little shy, his large, blue shortsighted eyes blinking out from beneath the rims of a huge pair of vision-augmenters that he'd pushed up onto his forehead. "I work as a protocol liaison most of the year, but when everything locks down in winter, it's sometimes hard to make ends meet. Fortunately winter is when the boars can't get out and fight one another either, so they get all cozy and pleasant—they really do—and write songs and poems to their sows. Or, they hire *me* to write songs and poems."

"Songs?" Callista struggled to assimilate with a straight face the thought of Rog, or the snaggly-eared Lugh, serenading the massive Kufbrug by moonlight.

"Well," grinned Onyx, "I admit there's only so much you can do in Gamorrean. I did the same thing for some Bith for a season. Now, *there's* an unpromising tongue for the expression of the tenderer passions."

Regretfully, Callista bypassed the enticing speculation of languages less apt even than Bith—did Defel have love poetry? Did Givin?—and inquired instead, "Did you get a customer in asking for this letter?"

She held it out. Onyx nodded immediately. "Yes, five days ago. He said he was a friend of Guth's. Guth had told me he was going to challenge Vrokk, so I assumed.... Was there a problem?" He looked genuinely concerned.

"Sort of. Could you recognize the boar who came for it?"

"No. It was night, for one thing, and since I have a choice between lighting and heating—" He gestured to the single overloaded power-outlet "—I generally use oil-lamps or candles once it gets dark. Also, he wore a hood up around his face."

"What color wax did you seal it with?"

"I didn't," said Onyx. "Usually I seal Guth's with blue." He nodded at the basket of woven poltroop leaves on the table near the door, which contained a dozen or more stubs and sticks of sealing wax. "But he said no, he'd seal it later."

And the easiest thing in the world, thought Callista, would be to pocket a stub of wax out of that basket on one's way out.

"If someone wanted to purchase a poison, or some kind of off-world creature—a dangerous creature, like a spor crawler or a sovra—who would he go to in town?"

Onyx' face clouded. "There's two or three," he said. "Smugglers transport those things on spec, you know."

"I know." This had been the case thirty years ago, even under the

iron hand of Palpatine's New Order, and according to Han Solo the situation hadn't changed much. There were always those who blithely justified the hideous risks of alien infestation with phrases like "free market demand" and "if I didn't bring them in, someone else would" and "What, do you think I'm an amateur? I know what I'm doing!" Planetary economies had been crippled, civilizations destroyed, and literally billions of sentient beings destroyed by some smuggler saying, and truly believing, "Oh, they're really a lot safer than they look."

"Jabdo Garrink is one," said Onyx. "He's a Rodian. Sinissima Bel, but she hasn't stopped here since last summer. Gethnu Cheeve, a Devaronian. There was a clearing in the atmosphere a little while ago, you remember, so both Garrink and Cheeve were in town at the time I wrote that note." It hadn't taken him long, Callista noticed, to figure out that something was wrong.

"Does somebody around here have an enzymer?" Most interstellar merchants did, a necessary precaution if one were going to dwell on an alien world, much less in a spaceport with substances coming in constantly from who-knows-where, possibly adulterated with who-knows-what. Onyx directed her downstairs, to the bar-keep of the Irrational Number, a brisk little Bith who possessed not only an enzymer but a Registry bank program that wasn't more than a decade out of date. It told Callista what she needed to know about what it was that had been under that seal.

The knowledge brought her no elation however; only a sickened dread that remained with her as she made certain purchases in the grubby Jugsmuk emporia of interstellar goods. It was a dread that sat on the pillow of her rented room like the shadow of nightmare through the dark hours, and followed her, through the day-long slosh through knee-deep, freezing ooze, back to Bolgoink Hold.



Callista reached Bolgoink long after dark, half-frozen from the bitter tail-end of winter weather and exhausted from the effort of keeping the small team of dwoobs she'd hired to drag her pur-

chases from wandering away into the woods. She understood now why Gamorreans usually walked wherever they went, and carried their burdens in wheelbarrows.

In the courtyard she unloaded her purchases and wrangled the big squares of metal up the shallow stone steps to the main tower; one of the household veterans emerged from the longhouse and helped her, something it would never have occurred to one of the more aggressive and status-conscious tuskers to do.

[Guth and Ugmush all well?] she asked

The veteran belched assent. [Rog not happy, he said. Rog say, fight and kill Guth, fight and kill Ugmush, fight and kill you, then go home.] Like most veterans he was missing a couple of limbs, but was surprisingly handy with those he had left. [You fight Rog?]

[Not if I can help it.] Callista said. [Vrokk's room still haunted?]

Dinner was in progress in the main hall as they passed through, a sight worth seeing if one had a strong stomach and a low sense of humor. Since it was absolutely unthinkable that anyone in a Gamorrean household eat alone, Guth, Ugmush, Ugmush's crew and even Jos were present, securely chained to the trough among the minor household boars. Guth saw Callista and waved gallantly, a gesture of great self-sacrifice considering the share of victuals that break in attentiveness cost him: Callista felt deeply touched and honored.

[Still haunted,] agreed the veteran with another belch, as they wrestled their burdens down the upstairs corridor to the square tower room Vrokk had occupied. [Noises at night very loud, very bad. Vrokk spirit very angry.]

As well he should be, thought Callista, with sudden anger for the sake of anyone, no matter who, bereft of life's joy and life's light.

And the next second her heart leaped to her throat at the sight of a dark, heavy shape standing before the thick oak slabs of the chamber door. "Get away from there!" she cried, and then, recollecting her Gamorrean, [Don't go in!]

The massive head turned. The uncertain torchlight from the stairway gleamed on the gold earring, the network of scars.

[Not afraid of spirits,] grunted Lugh. [Not even spirit of Vrokk. Brave. Strong. Gweek. Look—seven morrts.] He held out his arm to demonstrate how many parasites his body could support. [This morrt, Kufbrug give me herself.]

[Gweek,] agreed Callista. [But still it is not good to enter the room. Kufbrug has said so.]

Lugh rumbled deep in his snout and strode off down the corridor. Callista stepped close to the door and pressed her ear to the planks. For a moment no sound came from within. Then, very softly, she heard a faint dry beating, like sheets of plastene or very fine metal whipping in a low wind. The sound should have been com-

[The creature itself can be made to tell us who truly sent the letter.]

forting—at least it was still in there—except for the horrible impression she had of size. Callista sent the veteran off to fetch the rest of her purchases and stack them in the corridor beside the door, but she herself remained there, sitting on the floor with her back to the planks, for what was left of the night. When day was fully come she unbarred the door and went in. The first thing she saw was a bowl, set on the floor a meter or so into the room, containing a sticky residue of what appeared to be day-old blood. Otherwise the room was apparently as it had been four mornings ago when members of the household had found Vrokk's body. Wide windows opened on two sides of the room, covered with shutters and heavy curtains, as she had observed all windows in the Hold were at night. They admitted a diffuse brownish daylight, and though Callista knew that even such dimness rendered the haunted chamber perfectly safe, she hastened to fling both curtains and shutters wide.

No evidence spoke of struggle or death-throes. Vrokk's weapons—war-ax, halberd, and a variety of spiked clubs—hung untouched on the wall. The scraps and strips of dwoob-skin on the floor were stained a little with blood, but unrumbled. It could be, thought Callista, that the place had been tidied after the body had been removed. Certainly the huge patches of fungus and mold so common in slushtime were mostly gone from the walls. When she checked the lamp on the table—a bowl of poltroop-seed oil with a wick run through its lid—she saw that it was entirely empty, the lid

smoked and scorched a little where the wick had guttered out.

She brought in her packages, and closed the door behind her. She unwrapped what she had bought with her entire six months' wages on the *Zicreex*: forty-two meter-square panels of agrinium, the lightweight metal coating used to repair solar sails; two large rolls of agrinium stripping; several boxes of quad-strength adhesive dots; and an observation-cage wrought of thick metal mesh. She assembled the cage first, installing it in the corner of the chamber closest to the windows. The agrinium she used to thoroughly plate the corner of the room most nearly opposite the windows—walls, floor, and ceiling—where the morning sunlight would strike brightest.

The chamber was big, easily ten meters long by nearly seven wide.

This is not, thought Callista, *going to be easy*. But as far as she could see it was the only means of getting the information she needed.

She took a deep breath, touched for reassurance the lightsaber that hung at her belt, and left the room, latching the door behind her. Then she went in search of Kufbrug.

The Clan Matron of Bolgoink lay in the tower's main hall, motionless in a great ruck of mildew-covered cushions. Callista halted in the doorway, disconcerted by the matron's stillness. Even at supper last night she had only lain there, bleakly watching the others in the hall, when most Gamorrean widows had advertisements up for new husbands before the previous officeholders' bodies were cold.

But Kufbrug only raised her huge head and regarded Callista across the empty space of the chamber with yellow malevolent eyes. Callista remembered that tomorrow was the day when Rog would meet Guth in combat to avenge his brother. And when Guth was killed—as he certainly would be, for Rog, like his brother had been, was an enormous and powerful boar—it was anybody's guess what the status of Callista, Ugmush, and the crew of the *Zicreex* would be.

She had intended to speak of the combat, but something prompted her to ask instead, [Is it well with you?]

The dark-fringed nostrils flared. [It is never well with me in slushtime.] Kufbrug looked down and stroked with huge tender fingers the round little back of the morrt that clung, drinking, to her arm. [The days are dark. Nor has it been well, since Guth came to

challenge Vrokk for my hand. I told him to leave, that it was no use. What did you find in your journey, Outlander Girl? That no outlander hated Vrokk, because he would not have anything to do with them?]

Callista shook her head, then remembered that headshakes meant nothing to Gamorreans and made the chin-thrust-and-grunt that signified "No," something that brought an unwilling, rumbling chuckle to the sow and a sudden flicker of amused life to the dead eyes. She went on, [But I have found the means by which Vrokk was killed. Not a poison, but an outlander creature that was frozen in a piece of ice, until the heat of the sealing-wax melted the ice even as it shut it in. When the seal was broken, it flew up into Vrokk's nostril and killed him.]

[Poison or outland-creature, it is Guth's name on the letter, signed as he always signed,] she responded dully. [Rog will not forgo his vengeance.]

Callista knelt on the floor beside her, took the parchment from her jacket pocket, and wrote on the back the runes for GUTH. [Does this make me Guth?]

Kufbrug's fingers stilled on the morrt, and she cogitated on that one for a time, studying the signature. For a moment enlightenment flickered in the cold jonquil eyes, replaced almost at once by despair. [Rog will not understand this. Who would write Guth's name but Guth? Rog will avenge his brother.]

[The creature remains in the room where Vrokk was found,] said Callista. Gamorrean sows were infinitely smarter than the boars—it was perfectly possible that Rog wouldn't grasp the concept of forgery, but would only repeat stubbornly that he wanted vengeance. [And the creature itself can be made to tell us who truly sent the letter. But I will need your help. Will you watch with me in the room tonight?]

There was long silence, the sow seeming to sink, almost visibly, into the darkness of her stillness and depression. Then with a sigh she emitted a vast belch. [Yes, Outlander Girl. I will watch.]



They entered the chamber an hour before sunset and bolted and barred the door from within. [This creature, it does not hurt morrts?] asked Kufbrug, stroking one of the fifteen or so that clung to her flesh, and Callista smiled and remembered to thrust her chin and grunt.

[You will be in this cage, to protect you,] she said. [All you must do is watch. Do not come out, for the thing is dangerous: a *kheilwar*, it is called. A homunculus-wasp of the dark world of Af'El.]

[And you?] Kufbrug watched her through the mesh as Callista shut the cage and showed her how to work the bolt.

[Someone must make it tell us what it knows.]

She had brought a bowl with her, slightly larger than the pottery bowl she had found there that morning, and this she filled with a solution of proteins and sugars, the analog, she guessed, of the more makeshift blood that had been left there the night before. She assumed that the blood had contained poison of some kind, set by whoever had released the *kheilwar* in an attempt to kill it, but there were very few poisons that would work on such a creature. Even the concentrate of mercury in her own protein solution would probably do no more than

take the edge off the *kheilwar*'s speed. The room was full of organic substances that the thing had been eating for all these days—she'd noticed this morning how chewed and small the dwoob-skin rugs were, and that most of the molds had been eaten off the walls.

She took the last of her purchases—three lamps—and flicked

[Sometimes...! want gweek. Gweek for me. More so in slushtime, in the cold and the dark.]

them on, setting them in the corners of the room where they would not be overset. Then she sat down with her back to the mesh of the cage, unhooked her lightsaber from her belt, and settled herself to wait.

[What shall we do if your *kheilwar* will not tell us what we wish to know?]

She looked up in surprise at the rumbled question from behind her. Most Gamorreans dealt with simple survival, simple mating, simple fighting. She had not expected a question about contingencies. Even Ugmutsh, who was one of the smarter sows, generally didn't think things out in advance.

[It will,] said Callista. [If we can force it into that corner]—She gestured to the reflective sections of the walls, the agrinium gleaming molten amber in the dimming light of sunset. [—And keep it in that corner until day comes.]

After a long silence, Kufbrug said, [I thought maybe Guth and I go away.]

Callista looked back at her again, startled, but Kufbrug was stroking one of her morrts, her eyes downcast, and did not see.

[I tell Guth, when he come to fight Vrokk. We go away, he not be killed. But, then Rog and Gundruk rule Bolgoink too. That is not good. So Guth say no, he will fight.]

Kufbrug raised her eyes. [Vrokk hate Guth. Guth is good. Vrokk was not good. Guth...] She hesitated, trying to formulate words for a concept seldom spoken of. [I am *gweek*,] she went on after a moment, and touched the morrts on her arms, gestured to the tower around them. [All this—*gweek*. Husbands and tuskers and fields and children—*gweek*. Sometimes...I want *gweek*. *Gweek* for me. More so in slushtime, in the cold and the dark. Guth....] She touched her massive chest sadly. [He is *gweek* in his heart. If he die, if Rog kill him....]

She stood silent for a time, her big, clawed hand resting on the mesh of the cage, staring dully into an empty future. Callista rose and touched the heavy fingers, Luke Skywalker returning to her memory, as he did every day. "Yes," she said softly. "I know."

A pebble clattered on the other side of the chamber, falling mortar crumbling from a crack. Callista swung around, the lightsaber humming to life in her hand. Her throat closed with shock and horror as the *kheilwar* threaded and crept from the cracks in the rough stone wall.

It massed at least twenty kilos. Huge, flat, it unfurled all its



razored fins, turning and flexing them in the cool white lamplight, which like many creatures of Af'El it absorbed, so that it appeared to be nothing but planes of shadow that appeared and vanished. Callista flattened back against the cage-mesh as the creature popped into the air with horrible speed, dropped on the bowl of poisoned proteins; she heard the whirring grind of its mouths as it sucked and ate. Thank all the gods and the lucky stars and the ancestral spirits of the galaxy, thought Callista, that they'd thought the room was haunted and kept that door locked at night....

It came at her. Suddenly, like a jump-cut in a holovid: heat or blood-smell or the electrical field of living cells, no one knew quite what drew the eyeless thing—no one had been able to study them very closely—but Callista dodged, sidestepped, slashed with her lightsaber, ducked away....

And she knew she was in for a long night.

Whirling, springing, a spinning buzz-saw of fins and wings, it followed her, and she was hard put to keep herself away from it, let alone drive in into the agrinium sheen of the corner she had prepared. At least it wasn't tiny enough to fly up her nose or into her eye or ear or mouth, she thought; at least it was big enough to fight. But its speed increased with its size rather than diminished; it was like being chased all over the room by a turbospeed remote, and though it hurt her even to form his name in her mind Callista silently thanked Luke Skywalker for the sheer physical rigor of his training. She might no longer be able to touch the Force, she thought grimly, but at least she was fast on her feet.

And the thought whispered to her, *But you can use the Force.*

She cut, slashed, dodged again.

The Force is anger, as much as it is serenity. It is hate, as much as it is hope.

The thing flew at her face as if fired from a projectile cannon, and among the tearing blur of wings she saw its mouths, its glittering black crystalline teeth. She barely got away that time, blood streaming down her face and arm where the threshing vortex had caught her, her long hair unravelling from its knot and catching in the blood.

The Force is in that thing as well as in you. Why limit yourself?

She plunged in, cutting coolly, cleanly, not hating, not feeling, only working to drive it towards the agrinium shielding in the corner. It slipped weightlessly from her and attacked, vanished for a nerve-twisting minute only to whirl out behind her from under the bed.

Why not use the dark side, if it'll save you? You're entitled. Which of course, she thought bitterly, was what the dark side was all about.

She put it from her mind, making herself see this as a contest of skill only, a deadly contest, but a physical one. The thing was big, and it was fast, she thought, but she could do it.... If her strength and her breath held out until morning.

Then she heard the metal of the cage clang, and glimpsed the great dark moving shape of Kufbrug from the corner of her eye. Most people thought of Gamorreans as clumsy, never having seen Ugmush in a fight. Kufbrug lunged to the wall where Vrokk's weapons hung, then went after the *kheilwar* like two hundred kilos of enraged thunderstorm, a double-ended halberd in each hand, a little like a very, very big *kheilwar* herself. Callista fell back, panting, almost spent, while the sow worked the spinning horror, keeping it off Callista until she could catch her breath. Then Callista waded in again, the two of them driving the thing into the corner with lightsaber and halberds.

It tried to slither into the wall again, but Callista had been very careful about sealing the cracks. So slick were the agrinium panels that the *kheilwar* slid to the floor, where it tried to run along the base of the wall to safety. Callista drove it back on one side, then Kufbrug on the other.

It was a long—an impossibly, appallingly long—night. Callista's knees and hands were shaking with fatigue and the exhaustion of concentration, her hair was dripping with blood and sweat, when the first threads of light began to show in the window. The mercury poison was finally working in the *kheilwar's* system, or else the effort of fighting two opponents had told on it, in its last five or six attacks. It crouched in its glimmering, reflective corner, spined fins waving, antennae shifting as it picked up the changes in the air.

And then, as Callista had been told *kheilwar*s did—as a defense or a bait, the researchers weren't sure—it changed.

A slouched, green-snouted Rodian stood in front of them. Jabdo Garrink, presumably, the shady importer who brought the thing to the planet in the first place. "You have to let me out of here," he said, and started for the edge of the reflective shields. "You have to let me out."

Kufbrug drove him back.

"You have to let me out!" It was no longer the Rodian, but Vrokk, or a boar Callista presumed was Vrokk, huge and black with a streak

of white down one side of his face. He lunged for the far corner of the room, and Callista met him in a stride, lightsaber slashing.

[Let me out!] Vrokk, or the echo of Vrokk—the echo of anyone the *kheilwar* had seen, anyone that might serve as a decoy—faded into Rog, only slightly smaller, eyes red and angry as he ran at Kufbrug, and Kufbrug slashed him—it—across the face with her halberd. [Let me out!] Gundruk's face and voice screamed out the words. [Let me out! Let me out! Let me out!]

She was still screaming thus when the light brightened in the window, the full-spectrum rays of the sun flashing from the agrinium, blinding and burning the *kheilwar*'s sensors so that it buzzed and bounced on the slick metal, helpless. Callista stepped forward and cut it in half with her lightsaber, and stepped back from the thick trail of brown filth into which it dissolved.



Rog and Gundruk fled from Bolgoink Hold the next day, rather than face Kufbrug's challenge to combat in vengeance for her husband's murder. Having seen Kufbrug in a fight, Callista didn't blame them in the least. Because the challenge was a legal one, the pair also abandoned their holdings in Nudskutch, which was taken over by another of Kufbrug's daughters. "And my guess is," Callista said to Jos and Sebastin, who had been invited to Guth and



Kufbrug's wedding-feast, "they'll have to get off the planet completely the minute trade starts up again."

"Pity the competition wherever they end up," said Jos. He'd been chained to the High Trough—a position of honor, for a slave—between the other two outlanders, but Callista had had a duplicate key made and unfastened him as soon as she thought Ugmush and her husbands too drunk to notice, which happened in fairly short order. Guth, Ugmush and Kufbrug were embracing happily and slathering one another with spiced wall-fungus and creamed fug from the High Trough—perfectly appropriate behavior, and everyone else in the enormous hall was doing more or less the same—and singing. Gamorreans are no shier about celebrating happiness and friendship than they are about aggression.

Sebastin dipped a bowlful of fug from the trough. He, Callista and Jos were all familiar enough with Gamorrean table-manners to bring bowls. Towels, too. "But what did Rog and Gundruk hope to gain?"

"Gundruk," said Callista. "Rog was only her pawn. I doubt he even knew why she sent him to get the note from you, and to buy the *kheilwar*. I suspected her from the first—very few boars would have the brains to plot a murder. All she had to do was make sure the letter was delivered to Vrokk at night, since sunlight burns out *kheilwar*'s sensory organs. As Kufbrug's daughter, she stood a good chance of stepping into the position of clan matron."

"Clan matron?" asked Sebastin, puzzled. "But..."

Up at the other end of the High Trough Kufbrug had dragged Guth down into the trough with her for a messy tussle, to the screaming approbation of the other guests.

"You don't think of Gamorreans as being subject to depression," she said quietly. "But it's fairly common, especially in slushtime. And most people don't think of Gamorreans as being capable of passionate love; the kind of love that almost cannot survive, if the loved one is gone."

Luke Skywalker's face returned to her mind, and she put the image aside, as she had forced herself to learn to do.

"But Gundruk knew," she went on softly. "Gundruk knew that Kufbrug is a depressive, and Gundruk knew that while Guth almost certainly would be killed by Vrokk, there was a chance that he would opt out of the fight at the last minute and simply stay on in the household as a tusk. But if Guth had no chance of survival—if he were charged with murder—it would be easy to pass off

Kufbrug's subsequent death as suicide. And, there would be no Vrokk to contest Rog and Gundruk's takeover of the clan."

Down in the main part of the hall a food-fight had erupted between Lugh's guards and several of Kufbrug's sons-in-law. Squealing with delight, the veterans and the children joined in, and in no time the entire place was one happy, howling brawl.

"I think it's time for an after-dinner walk," said Sebastin, ducking half a roast brognig.

"I think you're right."

Jos, Sebastin and Callista picked their way carefully around the outer edge of the hall and up the steps to the door through a maelstrom of fists, bread, heaving bodies and flying goo. From the door Callista looked back to see Ugmush and her crew plunge happily into the fray. Up at the High Trough, oblivious to it all, Kufbrug and Guth were clinched in a mighty embrace.

Nice, thought Callista, to forget that you were *gweek* for a while, that you were the mother-source and fountainhead of strength. To find someone to get you through slushtime. Someone to love.

Comforting also to realize that while at times the dark side of the Force seemed to permeate the very fabric of the universe, even among such unprepossessing subjects as the swinish Gamorreans could be found caring, and love, and light.

A glob of cream-soaked fug missed her head by inches and splattered on the wall. She tasted a fingerful. It was surprisingly good.

ROLEPLAYING GAME STATISTICS

■ CALLISTA MING

Type: Former Jedi Knight

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 5D, brawling parry 4D+1, dodge 4D+1, lightsaber 13D, melee combat 5D+1, melee parry 5D+1, running 6D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 5D, cultures 5D+2, intimidation 4D, languages 4D, planetary systems 4D+2, survival 4D, willpower 5D, willpower: resist persuasion 8D+2

MECHANICAL 3D

Archaic ship piloting 5D, astrogation 4D+2, beast riding 6D, capital ship gunnery 9D, ground vehicle operation 4D, ground vehicle operation: ark 7D, repulsorlift operation 4+1, sensors 5D, starfighter piloting 4D, starfighter piloting: Y-wing 6D, starship gunnery 4D+1, starship shields 5D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 5D+1, command 4D, hide 7D, investigation 9D, persuasion 7D, search 8D+1, sneak 8D+2

STRENGTH 2D

Brawling 3D, climbing/jumping 5D, stamina 4D+1, swimming 10D, swimming:

deepwater submerging 9D

TECHNICAL 3D

Blaster repair 4D+1, computer programming/repair 7D, demolitions 5D, droid programming 7D, droid repair 5D, first aid 7D, lightsaber repair 10D, repulsorlift repair 3D+2, security 9D, space transports repair 4D, starfighter repair 5D, starship weapon repair 5D

This character is blocked from the Force and can neither tap into Force powers or be detected by Force users.

Force Points: 3

Dark Side Points: 4

Character Points: 15

Move: 10

Equipment: Lightsaber (5D)

Capsule: Callista grew up on the water-world of Chad with her family, herding and cultivating wander-kelp, until Jedi Master Djin Altis arrived to show her the way and life of a Jedi, about 25 years prior to the first Death Star's destruction.

For five years Callista remained aboard the *Chu'unthor*—Master Altis' starship—learning the ways of the Force. During her journeys aboard the *Chu'unthor*, she met Geith, her lover. The pair met while the *Chu'unthor* had a brief layover at Bespin. She sensed his ability with the Force and asked him to come with her back to the *Chu'unthor*. He did, but his motivation was to get closer to Callista than to live the Jedi way.

While under the tutelage of Master Djin, Callista met Plett, a Ho'Din Jedi Master who was gath-

ering (and hiding) the children of the Jedi (in order to keep the Emperor from completely extinguishing the flame of the Jedi Knights). It was during this time that the Jedi learned of the *Eye of Palpatine*, a death ship being built for the sole purpose of extinguishing all traces of the Jedi.

After discovering that the Emperor knew about the colony of Plett's Well, Plett and Master Djin called for volunteers to take on the suicidal mission of destroying the *Eye of Palpatine*. Among others, Callista volunteered, and so did Geith, although it was obvious Geith's heart was not with the plan.

It was during this attack that she stopped the *Eye of Palpatine's* automated systems, but nearly at the cost of own life. Callista managed to save her "essence," joining her spirit with the computer banks of the *Eye of Palpatine*, alongside the Will, the powerful artificial intelligence that ran the superweapon.

Thirty years later, still "alive," Callista suddenly discovered that someone had used the Force to find and activate the death-machine, in turn reactivating the Will. As the *Eye of Palpatine* began going through the process of its program (the destruction of Plett's Well), the ship began to collect secretly "stashed" troops that had been stationed about the galaxy. The troops, now dead and or gone, were no longer where they were supposed to be, so the *Eye of Palpatine's* computer took what was there, not knowing it wasn't picking up the right material.

Among these collected beings were Luke Skywalker, Cray Mingla, Nichos Marr (a former Jedi whose conscious had been placed into a cyborg-android body) and C-3PO. Callista, weary and lost in her own world, watched Luke scramble about the *Eye of Palpatine*. Slowly she began to help the Jedi Master. Along the way Callista discovered that she loved him and he loved her.

But she would not yet allow that love to interfere with the mission at hand, the utter destruction of *Eye of Palpatine*, so she convinced Cray to stun Luke and put him into one of the shuttles they were going to use to evacuate the other collected lifeforms while she, Cray and Nichos destroyed the Will and the *Eye of Palpatine*.

As Cray and the cyborg-android Nichos fought to eradicate the Will, Callista watched as the shuttle departed the *Eye of Palpatine*, knowing that she loved Luke. Then suddenly Cray called out to her, told her that she didn't want to live without the "real" Nichos. Cray asked Callista if she would want to take her body, escape the *Eye of Palpatine* and have a chance at life once more. Callista, inspired by her love for Luke, eagerly accepted the chance.

The next thing she knew, she was being pulled out of a escape pod by Luke, Han, Leia and Mara Jade near Plett's Well. Despite her miraculous rescue, the newly resurrected Jedi did not emerge unscathed: she had lost all her powers and abilities in the Force. Despite her loss, she returned with Luke to the Jedi Academy on Yavin 4.

Callista's time at the Academy was one of sorrow and pain, full of reminders of her loss. Luke and the other Jedi searched constantly for records and clues to free Callista from her Force-blocking curse. Callista was beginning to lose hope. Luke decided to take Callista away from the



Academy and all its distractions to work on getting her Force powers back as well as to give them time together.

To Callista's horror she discovered that she could activate the Force, but only through the dark side. When she and Luke became stranded in a dead-floating ship in the Hoth system, he entered a hibernation trance while she awaited rescue in the only survival suit. She had never been so alone in her life, not even during her stay aboard the *Eye of Palpatine*. It was not long after that Callista discovered that she must leave Luke, if she was ever going to be with him. Her love for him was too much of an enticement for her to risk accepting the dark side.

After returning to Yavin 4, Callista discovered the planet was besieged by Admiral Daala's Super Star Destroyer *Knight Hammer*. During the battle Callista felt helpless among the Jedi defenders, especially Luke. Resentful of Luke's need to "protect" her, she went off on her own, determined to assist in her own way. Commandeering a downed TIE bomber, she made her way aboard the *Knight Hammer* and sabotaged the massive Super Star Destroyer.

Callista then set out to find Admiral Daala, tracking her as the Imperial made her way toward a bank of escape pods. Calling upon the dark side, Callista managed to block Daala's blaster shots with her lightsaber until the Admiral managed to stop the former Jedi with a stun blast.

Callista awoke minutes later as the *Knight Hammer* plunged uncontrolled into the atmosphere of Yavin 4. She managed to jettison away from the dying ship in an escape pod, then slipped aboard a ship leaving Yavin 4. Days later, on Coruscant, she left a message for Luke in his room, knowing that her disconnection from the Force would hide her. She would find a way to rekindle her powers, but it would have to be done by her...alone.

■ CAPTAIN UGMUSH

Type: Gamorrean Trader

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Brawling parry 4D+1, melee combat 5D+2, melee parry 4D, thrown weapons 5D+1

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Business 3D+2, intimidation 4D, languages 3D+2, streetwise 4D, survival 4D

MECHANICAL ID+2

Astrogation 3D, communications 2D+1, sensors 2D+2, space transports 3D+2,

starship shields 2D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, command 5D, persuasion 4D

STRENGTH 5D

Brawling 6D+2, stamina 6D

TECHNICAL ID+2

First aid 3D

Special Abilities:

Voice Box: Due to the configuration of their voice box, Gamorreans are unable to pronounce Basic, although they can understand it perfectly well.

Stamina: Gamorreans have great *stamina*; if they fail a *stamina* check, they may immediately make a second check.

Story Factors:

Droid Hate: Gamorreans hate droids and other mechanical beings, and often

destroy them for fun.

Reputation: Gamorreans are widely regarded as primitive, brutal, and mindless. Gamorreans who show thoughtfulness and manners are disregarded and ridiculed by fellow Gamorreans.

Character Points: 5

Move: 7

Equipment: Blaster (4D), diamond nose-rings, freighter *Zicreex*, transliterator, war club (STR+1D)

Capsule: The Gamorrean sow Ugmush is the owner of the *Zicreex* and founder of her own clan. With the aid of her husband, brother, crew of tuskers, human slave Jos, and the human Jedi Callista, she travels from Gamorr to nearby worlds. Ugmush makes a decent living trading whatever cargoes she can find, and manages to keep everyone fed. She returns to Gamorr in slushtime and croptime to trade, socialize, and eat her homeworld's ethnic foods. Ugmush is a *gweek* matron in her own right, with responsibility for property, a good husband and small household. Ugmush became a clan founder under Gamorrean law when she acquired non-inherited property (the *Zicreex*) not claimable by her own clan matron.

Ugmush owns a blaster for using against aliens. While she's a better shot than most Gamorreans, her aim is still pretty bad. She prefers to use her studded war club. Ugmush doesn't really understand the workings of the ship and relies on Jos to keep it running (administering a severe beating when she thinks he's not doing his job) and Callista to crew the gun. Ugmush is also a good cook, with a famous recipe for mold stew.

■ GUTH

Type: Gamorrean Boar

DEXTERITY 4D

Brawling parry 5D, melee combat 6D, melee parry 5D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 4D, languages 3D, streetwise 3D+2

MECHANICAL ID+2

Communications 2D, sensors 2D+1, space transports 2D+1, starship gunnery 2D,

starship shields 2D

PERCEPTION 3D

Command 4D

STRENGTH 5D

Brawling 6D+2, stamina 5D+2

TECHNICAL ID+1

Special Abilities:

Voice Box: Due to the configuration of their voice box, Gamorreans are unable to pronounce Basic, although they can understand it perfectly well.

Stamina: Gamorreans have great *stamina*; if they fail a *stamina* check, they may immediately make a second check.

Story Factors:

Droid Hate: Gamorreans hate droids and other mechanical beings, and often destroy them for fun.

Reputation: Gamorreans are widely regarded as primitive, brutal, and mindless. Gamorreans who show thoughtfulness and manners are disregarded and ridiculed by fellow Gamorreans.

Character Points: 4



Move: 8

Equipment: Vibro-ax (STR+3D+1), heavy leather vest (+1D physical)

Capsule: Guth is Ugmush's brother. He is small for a Gamorrean boar, although fierce at heart and dedicated to his goals. Guth is in love with the great clan matron Kufbrug and recently challenged her husband, Vrokk, to a death-match for her hand.

JOS

A Liannan human, Jos was the engineer on the *G'mi Moa*, a Liannan bulk freighter operating on the Perlemian Trade Route, when the

ship was captured by the infamous pirate Gunda Mabin. Mabin sold the survivors into slavery. Jos, scarred in the attack, was bought by a Gamorrean sow named Ugmush, who needed someone to maintain her freighter, an old Subla Ransom named the *Zicreex*. Jos is a deeply gloomy man. He was never particularly cheery when free, but several years of slavery to Gamorreans has wrapped him in a cloak of impenetrable depression.

Jos. All stats 2D except: *alien species: Gamorreans* 4D, *languages: Gamorrean* 4D, *Perception* 1D+1, *Strength* 1D+2, *stamina* 3D, *Technical* 3D, *computer programming/repair* 3D+2, *droid repair* 3D+1, *first aid* 3D+2, *space transports repair* 4D+1. Move 10. Character Points: 3. Datapad, starship repair tool kit.

ZICREEX

Craft: Subla Ransom Cargo Hauler

Type: Medium freighter

Scale: Starfighter

Length: 75.5 meters

Skill: Space transports

Crew: 5

Crew Skill: Varies, typically 3D-5D

Passengers: 5

Cargo Capacity: 450 metric tons

Consumables: 3 months

Cost: Not available for sale

Hyperdrive Multiplier: x2

Hyperdrive Backup: x12

Nav Computer: Yes

Maneuverability: 1D

Space: 5

Atmosphere: 335; 950 kmh

Hull: 5D

Shields: 2D

Sensors:

Passive: 30/1D

Scan: 65/2D

Search: 110/3D

Focus: 4/4D

Weapons:

1 Blaster Cannon

Fire Arc: Turret

Skill: Starship gunnery

Fire Control: 2D

Space Range: 1-5/10/17

Atmosphere Range: 100-500/1/1.7 km

Damage: 5D

Capsule: The *Zicreex* is a Subla Ransom medium cargo hauler, a reliable but little-known freighter from the Mid-Rim. Its crew consists of Captain Ugmush, a Gamorrean sow, and her husband, brother, two tuskers, a human slave named Jos, and the Jedi Knight Callista. Although the ship is armed, its main defense against pirates is the Gamorrean reputation for being unboardable. *Zicreex* was the name of the ship under its previous owner, but under Gamorrean law it technically should be the *Ugmush*. Captain Ugmush just never got around to filling out the BoSS datawork.

KUFBRUG

Type: Clan Matron

DEXTERITY 4D

Brawling parry 5D, melee combat 7D+2, melee parry 6D, thrown weapons 6D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Business 4D, intimidation 5D

MECHANICAL 1D+1

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, command 6D, persuasion 5D

STRENGTH 5D



Force Points: 2

Character Points: 15

Move: 7

Equipment: Bolgoink clan lands, household tuskers, fortress, arsenal, wardrobe of gowns, gaudy gold-bead necklaces, earrings, and nose-rings, 21 morrts, two double-edged hand halberds (STR+2D)

Capsule: Kufbrug is the matron of the Bolgoink clan. She is regularly courted by tusker boars who hope to win her favor. Some of these boars even dare to court her as a potential wife, and one, Guth, attracted her attention for his *gweek* heart. Unfortunately, her husband, Vrokk, was a massive and powerful boar, far too powerful to challenge in combat; although she did not love Vrokk, she believed he was unbeatable. Kufbrug was surprised to learn that Guth had challenged Vrokk, and it grieved her to know that Guth would die for her. It grieved her even further when Guth was accused of Vrokk's murder.

Kufbrug is almost two meters tall, weighs over 200 kilos, with yellow

Brawling 6D+2,
stamina 7D

TECHNICAL 1D+2

First aid 4D

Special Abilities:

Voice Box: Due to the configuration of their voice box, Gamorreans are unable to pronounce Basic, although they can understand it perfectly well.

Stamina: Gamorreans have great stamina; if they fail a stamina check, they may immediately make a second check.

Story Factors:

Droid Hate: Gamorreans hate droids and other mechanical beings, and often destroy them for fun.

Reputation: Gamorreans are widely regarded as primitive, brutal, and mindless. Those who show thoughtfulness and manners are disregarded and ridiculed by fellow Gamorreans.

eyes, and wears her long green-brown hair in braids. For a Gamorrean, she is resplendent and glorious. Kufbrug does suffer from seasonal depression, but this is not polite to comment on. She rarely travels without her guard, but is fully able to defend herself.

LUGH

Type: Second Warlord

DEXTERITY 4D

Brawling parry 5D, melee combat 7D+2, melee parry 7D, thrown weapons 6D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Intimidation 5D+2, law enforcement 3D, survival: Gamorr 3D+2, tactics 3D, willpower 4D

MECHANICAL 1D+1

PERCEPTION 3D

Command 5D+1

STRENGTH 5D

Brawling 6D+2, stamina 6D+1

TECHNICAL 1D+2

Armor repair 3D+1

Special Abilities:

Voice Box: Due to the configuration of their voice box, Gamorreans are unable to pronounce Basic, although they can understand it perfectly well.

Stamina: Gamorreans have great stamina; if they fail a stamina check, they may immediately make a second check.

Story Factors:

Droid Hate: Gamorreans hate droids and other mechanical beings, and often destroy them for fun.

Reputation: Gamorreans are widely regarded as primitive, brutal, and mindless. Those who show thoughtfulness and manners are disregarded and ridiculed by fellow Gamorreans.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 12

Move: 7

Equipment: Vibro-ax (STR+3D+1), chain and leather armor (+2D+2 physical, -1D to Dexterity and related skills), 2 throwing axes (STR+2), 7 morrts, gold necklaces, arm-bands, rings, and earring

Capsule: Lugh is the second warlord of Bolgoink, a position granted by Kufbrug to the most able warlord in the hold. Lugh is dark green, yellow eyed, thin for a Gamorrean, and heavily scarred from years of campaigning, with severely knocked ears. Lugh is in charge of the Bolgoink household tuskers and is entrusted with the security of the main fortress. Because of his loyal service, Lugh still holds the second warlord position, though his wife, one of Kufbrug's daughters, died two winters ago.

GUNDRUK

Type: Matron

DEXTERITY 4D

Brawling parry 5D, melee combat 6D+2, melee parry 5D+2, thrown weapons 6D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Business 4D, intimidation 4D

MECHANICAL 1D+2

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, command 6D, con 5D, persuasion 5D



Dark Side Points: 1
Character Points: 3
Move: 7

Equipment: Gaudy necklaces, earrings, and nose-rings, embroidered gown, 16 morrts, knife (STR+1D)

Capsule: Gundruk is one of Kufbrug's elder daughters, holder of the Nudskutch region of the Bolgoink hereditary claim. Smaller than her mother, darker, and less *gweek*, Gundruk was jealous of her mother's wealth and suitors, and decided to remove both her and her husband from the clanship head. When she discovered that Guth, a tusker with little political connection, was courting her mother, she began to work on a plan to clear the way to rulership of all the Bolgoink lands. Finally, she hit on a plan when Guth challenged Vrokk, Kufbrug's current husband and Bolgoink warlord, to a death-match and enlisted the aid of her faithful but thick husband, Rog.

STRENGTH 4D+2
Brawling 6D+2
TECHNICAL 1D+2
First aid 4D

Special Abilities:
Voice Box: Due to the configuration of their voice box, Gamorreans are unable to pronounce Basic, although they can understand it perfectly well.
Stamina: Gamorreans have great *stamina*; if they fail a *stamina* check, they may immediately make a second check.

Story Factors:
Droid Hate: Gamorreans hate droids and other mechanical beings, and often destroy them for fun.
Reputation: Gamorreans are widely regarded as primitive, brutal, and mindless. Those who show thoughtfulness and manners are disregarded and ridiculed by fellow Gamorreans.

Force Points: 1

■ ROG

Type: Warlord
DEXTERITY 4D
Brawling parry 5D, melee combat 8D, melee parry 7D+1, thrown weapons 6D
KNOWLEDGE 2D
Intimidation 5D, law enforcement 2D+1, survival: Gamorr 4D, tactics 2D+2, willpower 3D
MECHANICAL 1D+2
PERCEPTION 2D+2
Command 5D

STRENGTH 5D
Brawling 7D, climbing/jumping 5D+1, stamina 6D

TECHNICAL 1D+2

Armor repair 3D

Special Abilities:

Voice Box: Due to the configuration of their voice box, Gamorreans are unable to pronounce Basic, although they can understand it perfectly well.

Stamina: Gamorreans have great *stamina*; if they fail a *stamina* check, they may immediately make a second check.

Story Factors:

Droid Hate: Gamorreans hate droids and other mechanical beings, and often destroy them for fun.

Reputation: Gamorreans are widely regarded as primitive, brutal, and mindless. Gamorreans who show thoughtfulness and manners are disregarded and ridiculed by fellow Gamorreans.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 10

Move: 8

Equipment: Vibro-ax (STR+3D+1), partial plate armor (+3D physical, -1D to *Dexterity* and related skills), 8 morrts, gold necklaces, arm-bands, rings, and earrings

Capsule: Rog is the husband to Gundruk and warlord of the Nudskutch holding. Rog is a massive and powerful boar with a relatively small hold, who covets the large army his brother, Vrokk, can raise with his wife's riches. Rog is a bit thick, but smarter than the average boar. While he didn't really understand Gundruk's plot to gain political power by inheriting her mother's lands, he thought it sounded good, and helped her like a good husband should.

■ SEBASTIN ONYX

Type: Protocol Liaison

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 3D, dodge 3D+2

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 5D, business 4D+2, cultures 5D, languages 7D, scholar: poetry 7D, streetwise 5D, survival 4D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Communications 3D, repulsorlift operation 3D

PERCEPTION 4D

Bargain 5D, con 4D+1, investigation 4D+1, persuasion 4D+2

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D+2

Computer programming/repair 3D, droid programming 3D+1, droid repair 3D, first aid 3D+1

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 6

Move: 10

Equipment: Datapad with language database and programs, power generator, music system, parchment, sealing wax

Capsule: Sebastin Onyx is a young human protocol liaison and translator working at Jugsmuk Station. Sebastin is small, fair-haired, and shy, but cheery and enthusiastic. Most of the year Sebastin uses his extensive linguistic and protocol expertise to guide visitors to Gamorr in their dealings with Gamorreans and the local law and culture. Gamorreans positively despise droids, leaving a decent demand for organic protocol liaisons on their homeworld. Few traders want to insult a sow in trade agreements—not when she has a few big, strong and ugly tuskers to demonstrate her displeasure, and Sebastin makes a decent living in spring and autumn. Sebastin occasionally makes an extra fee for helping negotiate a mercenary contract.

In summer and winter trading dies down. In winter Sebastin makes ends meet by providing boars with love-songs and poetry to flatter their wives. In summer he hunkers down behind the Jugsmuk defense perimeter and hopes the blood-lusty boars remember that he's no threat.

■ KHEILWAR

Type: Predator

DEXTERITY 4D

Brawling parry 6D

PERCEPTION 4D

Search 5D, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 4D

Brawling 6D, stamina 7D

Special Abilities:

Razor-fins: Cause STR+2D damage.

Super-thinness: The kheilwar can flatten and fold itself out to an extraordinary degree, and slip into very small cracks, crannies, and niches to hide.

Impersonate: The kheilwar can momentarily take on the image and sound of another being or creature it has seen. It does not seem to use this ability to select a particular image, instead picking recent impressions as a decoy. This is probably some kind of telepathic projection, since the kheilwar can communicate simple concepts, and they are understood in the language of the observer.

Light Blind: The kheilwar is unable to "see" in strong light (and possibly other radiation) and is unable to attack while blinded. It's visual sense organs are often destroyed by direct sunlight.

Move: 20 (flight)

Size: 0.01–2 meters

Capsule: The kheilwar, the homunculus-wasp of Af'El, is a dark and dangerous creature, deadly to nearly all forms of life. In the larval stage it is near-microscopic—a kheilwar is only slightly larger when it first matures. It seeks warm, natural crevasses in which to feed and grow, often invading a live biological host. It is believed that a kheilwar can grow quickly if well-fed. Fast, deadly, strong, and mean, the kheilwar is a whirling storm of sharp fins, mandibles, and wings. Study of the

creature is, understandably, difficult. They are unable to use sensory organs (whatever they are) in strong visible-spectrum light such as sunlight.

(The statistics above reflect a roughly 10 kilo kheilwar. Subtract 1D–2D from attributes and skills for small specimens and add 1D–2D for larger ones.)



THE GAMORREAN YEAR

SLUSHIME

Spring—called slushtime for the snow-melt, rain, and omnipresent mud—is planting season for the sows and training time for the boars. The wet weather of early spring results in bumper crops of short-term fungi and gives the longer growing molds a good start. Early slushtime is the season when veterans whip younglings into

shape and unattached tuskers roam looking for adventure.

Early slushtime is a dreary, depressing time. The sky is almost constantly gray and it rains daily. The weather makes some beings grumpy or deeply depressed. This is not a polite subject among the Gamorreans, who usually prefer strong and fierce emotions.

Most of the year's births come in spring, about a Gamorrean gestation period after the boars returned from campaign in the fall. Gamorreans come in litters of three to nine, with a ten-to-one ratio of males to females. Females are born only every second litter or so.

Mid-slushtime is the marriage season. Marriages are arranged and performed in short succession. Clan alliances and mercenary contracts for the upcoming war season are proposed, negotiated, and finalized. Young boars are exchanged for fostering, and sows ready their boars for the coming war season.

In late spring, as slushtime dries up, clans begin to raid their rivals' lands. Loosely attached tuskers make up the bulk of these raids, trying to demonstrate their boariness. Clans use tuskers in these raids because their actions are easily dismissed as the actions of adventurous and rowdy bravos.

WARTIME

Summer is called wartime. The boars march off to battle in reprisal for raids, accompanied by unwed sows and young boars-in-training. Married sows, younglings, elders, and a small guard of reliable boars remain at the clan fortress.

Gamorrean strategic goals are straightforward: plunder, pillage, and occupy land. Early summer typically sees a number of small-scale testing battles, as each clan probes the strength of the others. By mid-summer the clans have settled down to the business of besieging each other, and with the heat of late summer comes grand battles, desperate sallies and siege breaks, crescendoing in mass slaughter.

In the clan fortresses, the matrons, sows, and younglings spend their time preparing for, waiting out and recovering from sieges. Gamorreans take sieges very practically, and while away the time in assorted ways. The newly born younglings are called feeders, because they mostly eat until weaned in croptime. Weaned Gamorrean children are called shoats until they mature enough to take on training appropriate to their sex, at about age three. (Although "feeder" and "shoat" are a gender-neutral terms, they usually refer to males, since they are vastly more numerous.)

GAMORR

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type I (breathable)
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Forest, jungle, mountain, plain
Length of Day: 28 standard hours
Length of Year: 380 local days
Sapient species: Gamorreans (N)
Starport: Landing field
Population: 500 million
Planet Function: Homeworld battleground
Government: Clans
Tech Level: Feudal
Major Exports: Mercenaries
Major Imports: Melee weapons

Capsule: Gamorr is a standard world in most physical respects. Although the hydrosphere is not wet enough to justify a Moist rating, the free water in the atmosphere is slightly high, leading to a high incidence of rain forests and dynamic, fierce weather. A high percentage of the land mass is covered in forest and jungle, often overgrowing mountainous terrain. Gamorrean forests are typically dense and damp. An amazing variety of fungi, including algark and snoruuk, is sheltered by the thick hardwood trees. No animals larger than a meter long or high are known to inhabit these forests. Larger animals may have existed previously and been hunted to extinction by the Gamorreans. Perhaps larger creatures are unable to compete with some of the deadlier fungi. Several smaller animals exist—birds, rodents, and primates—including the curious quizzers, morrts, and dwoobs.

CROPTIME

By autumn the clans have spent most of their strength. A few late mopping-up actions dwindle with the heat, and the boars straggle back home, triumphantly or quietly. By mid-season the clans have retired to their fortresses to settle in for winter.

The less-damaged tuskers are drafted by the sows to help harvest the crops and tend the wounded. Autumn fairs briefly flower as newly wealthy clans trade crops and plundered goods. Early seeds for new alliances are planted at these fairs. Tales of wartime's battles and heroics are told in verse and song, new widows advertise their availability, new veterans ceremoniously join their peers, a crop of new marriages (called widow weddings) are performed, and everyone feasts for the last time before winter.

COLDTIME

Winter—appropriately called coldtime—is a harsh season. Fierce storms are common and a clan too badly depleted in the summer may find itself starving and freezing. Winter raids sometimes result from this shortage, but these are more desperate than violent.

In more successful and powerful clans, boars and sows settle into a calm home life. Boars, ordinarily quite attentive, become positively docile, romantic, and cuddly. Boars sing songs and bring gifts to their wives, and court them in the same fashion as unmarried males of other species would a prospective mate. This continues into early spring, when whole flower fields are stripped of their blossoms to serve as gifts to wives. Tuskers spend their winters worshipping a select sow from afar, usually one of the clan matrons, making up songs, planning the next war season, and playing table games.

FAIRS

Local fairs spring up in slushtime and croptime. Fairs are places for sows to trade and boars to match muscles in semi-formal personal combat. Tuskers fight most of these contests to flaunt their desirability, although clan boars and veterans also show themselves off in combat to increase their wives' public standing.

Trade goods include foodstuffs, cheap weapons, household items, and personal adornments. Off-world traders come to these fairs with "rarities from exotic, far-off planets," consisting mostly of remaindered goods from neighboring systems. Off-world traders can't make a killing by selling hand weapons to the Gamorreans, but can turn a reliably modest profit. Gamorreans pay in precious metals.

Mercenary contracts are the other Gamorrean trade good of galactic interest. Gamorrean mercenary clans are an inevitable by-product of the regular warfare. Most clans occasionally fight with other clans for pay. Certain clans form small professional mercenary bands, and move from area to area selling their services to the highest bidder. Not completely driven by greed, the warlords of mercenary clans adhere to the ancient tradition of fighting a blood-battle to seal the deal. Once sealed, these clans go anywhere to fulfill a contract, and form the bulk of Gamorrean mercenaries commonly seen in the galaxy at large.

Most fairs are local, like the small Bolgoink Fair. It has a modest

tourney and a few dozen peddlers. Only a few are big enough to attract off-world merchants. One of the biggest fairs of the seasons is at Jugsmuk, attracting traders from all over Wugguh continent and from off world. Jugsmuk Fair has a huge tournament and days of fighting. Jugsmuk is a principle training fair, with young tuskers making their first challenges and older tuskers sharpening their skills and monitoring the competition.

GAMORREAN HONOR

Gamorrean honor is governed by a fairly simple set of rules and concepts.

Boars fight. Boars have no other function in Gamorrean society but to fight, or support fighting, such as standing guard or training others to fight. Boars who cannot or will not fight are killed by older boars, assuming their mother allowed them to survive childhood.

It is honorable for a boar to meet his opponent in combat and fight him with hand weapons, to first blood, to defeat, or to the death. This basic pattern is the basis for all Gamorrean combat, from individual tourney-fights to huge bloody battles.

Variance from this behavior is dishonorable. This includes using a weapon from a distance, using "magic" to kill, killing stealthily, or winning by cleverness.

Ranged weapons are of no use to a boar in combat against another honorable opponent (although they may be used against aliens or dishonored Gamorreans). The Gamorreans have no ranged siege engines, no bows, and only a few blasters acquired from off-worlders.

Using "magic" to kill is also dishonorable. "Magic" includes any advanced technology (like blasters), the Force, natural abilities the Gamorreans consider magic, and almost anything else Gamorreans don't understand.

Killing stealthily is extremely dishonorable. A Gamorrean can walk up to anyone armed, challenge him for no reason, kill him, and walk away without social disapproval. To sneak up behind someone and kill them when they're not looking (literally or figuratively) is an unforgivable wrong.

Being clever is moderately dishonorable for boars. Although there have been Gamorreans who used forethought and intelligence to help win battles, it is frowned on. Sows are generally more intelligent than boars, but even among them thinking too much is

socially unacceptable. Clever sows usually get around this without great difficulty, though, if they're not egotistical about it.

Sows rarely fight in pitched battles, although they often fight in single combat against raiders and besiegers, and occasionally in vengeance duels. Sows gain honor by being *gweek*: being matronly protectors, having many tuskers, having many children, owning land, and by managing their property well.

COMBAT

Gamorrean combat is almost exclusively hand-to-hand and usually muscle-powered. Gamorreans also use vibro-weapons, regarding their extra cutting power as the sign of a superior weapon. Once the power cells run down the weapons are replaced or recharged. The clans in regular contact with off-worlders (or "outlanders") no longer think of vibroblades as magic, as they did for a long time. To them, melee weapons of any kind are still better than magical "blaster weapons."

Gamorreans have little interest in ranged combat. They had made no development of ranged weapons before the arrival of Old Republic scouts, and once introduced to the idea, rejected it completely. The only way for a Gamorrean to prove his boariness is in close combat. Ranged weapons only show how good a shot you are.

Fair tourney fights are almost always to first blood, with a very few to the death. Fair tourneys are primarily to show off and attract attention, not risk one's life. Tourneys are also the site of prearranged death-matches to settle disputes between lethal enemies, including courting-matches, where a suitor for a sow's hand challenges her husband.

GAMORREAN SOCIETY

Gamorrean clans are ruled by clan chieftains, called warlords, and an important female, called a matron. Clan females are all related and trace their ancestry to a common matriarch. Males are exchanged between clans at a young age. Clans range in numbers from a few dozen to several hundred or more, but typical clans number about twenty sows and fifty boars, plus young. Clans control areas of land and are always interested in acquiring more. Traditionally, land can be acquired by either colonizing an area unclaimed or taking it away from another clan. Unfortunately, most arable land on the planet is already claimed, at least in name and

often by more than one clan. Gamorreans spend a fantastic amount of time fighting over it.

Female sows do all useful work, and own or lease all property. The sows can be as rough and violent as the males boars, though, and encourage boars to bloody deeds to prove their virility. For every sow born, there are ten boars, although a high fatality rate among boars results in a preponderance of elder sows. Sows can expect to have up to a dozen husbands over the course of a lifetime, and to have dozens of offspring. Gamorrean genealogy is an amazingly complex subject, attended to by a small class of sow scholar-lawyers who memorize long sagas listing genealogy, wars, heroic deeds, and property exchanges of all kinds.

All sows either own property or will, since land is divided among daughters evenly upon inheritance. Even unlanded sows have an income, since mothers lease out land to daughters to cultivate. These pieces of property range from small plots of land to vast acreages, or perhaps a portion of a business. Over generations these holdings are split into smaller and smaller sections, and matrons consolidating land are a chief factor in the ongoing Gamorrean wars.

Clan matrons are a small and select group of sows who own great tracts of land. Although boars battle to seize land from rival clans, they do so in the name of their clan matrons. These matrons usually have a number of household boar admirers, smitten with their beauty, grace, and personal power. Groups of matrons are led by a head sow; the most powerful, richest, and important matron in the clan. Matrons can be told from ordinary sows by their small, devoted bodyguard, and the high number of morrts they host.

Boars come in four basic varieties; warlords, clan boars, household boars (or tuskers), and veterans.

Warlords are the most powerful boars of a clan, both socially and physically, since they are husbands of the matrons. The greatest warlord of the clan is the general of all the clan armies, absolute ruler in all matters of war, and picked by the head sow for his skill at arms and past successes. The other warlords serve as captains of clan warriors. Warlords almost always come from the ranks of the tuskers. Warlords host up to twenty morrts at a time, and will sometimes favor greatly heroic boars with a morrt from their personal trove.

Clan boars are the married boars. They are important and respected because they have an income from their wives' lands and can afford good weapons and armor. Their relatively high position

is reflected in the ten or more morrts they proudly sport. Clan boars form the core of both the clan-guard and the clan armies. A clan boar cannot expect to become a warlord unless either his wife dies, a relatively rare occurrence, and he then happen, to marry a matron, or his wife inherits a matronage, an even rarer occurrence.

Clan Boars. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity 3D, brawling parry 5D, melee combat 6D, melee parry 5D+1, thrown weapons 6D, Knowledge 1D, intimidation 3D+2, survival: Gamorr 4D, Mechanical 1D, Perception 1D, Strength 4D, brawling 6D+2, stamina 5D, Technical 1D, armor repair 3D.* Ax (STR+2D), scale armor (+2D physical), 2-10 morrts, necklaces, arm-bands, rings, and earrings.

Household boars, or tuskers, are unmarried boars who have hired on with a clan. They form the bulk of the clan armies, and aside from a small stipend from the clan matrons, they live off the plunder they seize from rival clans. While usually poor, a successful tusker can hope to catch the eye of a sow, perhaps a matron. A typical tusker usually hosts only about a half-dozen morrts, although certain successful tuskers can amass a larger trove of morrts which they usually give to their clan matrons as tribute. Tuskers aren't completely loyal, and occasionally drift away to another clan matron, especially if the matron is looking to swell the ranks of her clan.

Tuskers. All stats are 2D except: *Dexterity 3D, brawling parry 5D, melee combat 5D, melee parry 4D+1, thrown weapons 5D, Knowledge 1D, intimidation 3D, survival: Gamorr 4D, Mechanical 1D, Perception 1D, Strength 4D, brawling 6D, stamina 5D, Technical 1D, armor repair 3D.* Ax (STR+2D), leather armor (+1D physical), 1-6 morrts, necklaces, arm-bands, rings, and earrings.

Veterans are retirees, sometimes from great age, but much more commonly from being maimed or crippled in some fashion. Veterans are usually amazingly tough, experienced, and respected. They are the main trainers of young boars until they march off to war for the first time. Veterans serve as advisors to warlords, who respect them as they respect no other boars, and they often command the clan-guards. Veterans can be identified by the lack of an important body part and the dozen or so morrts they can boast.

Gamorrean boars do not trade, but sows will. Their main interest is in hand weapons or long-lasting food supplies, and they pay in gold or other precious metals, if they have it, or mercenary con-

GAMORREAN COLORATION AND PHYSICAL FEATURES

Most non-Gamorreans think of Gamorreans as physically very similar—they all look the same: squat, dark green, and heavy. Not so.

Most Gamorreans are a dark greenish, at least over most of their bodies, but skin coloration does vary, especially among females. Light-skinned, even two-tone Gamorreans are not uncommon. Boars seem to have a greater tendency to be dark, perhaps because they are out in the sun more. Brown, black, yellow, pinkish, and even a rare and exotic white are possible. Eye colors vary almost as much, with blue, gold-yellow, brown, and black eyes almost evenly distributed. These colorations mean very little to the Gamorreans, and they have no color-prejudices, although there are some superstitions about certain markings.

Not all Gamorreans are huge, heavy, and squat, either. Although the ideal is to be very large, there are some Gamorreans who are comparatively lean, light, and lanky. While they are not the most common body types, they do indeed exist.

tracts if they don't. The safest time to visit Gamorr is in the late fall through the early spring while the boars are comparatively calm, and the sows still flush from last season's plunder.

GAMORREAN ANIMISM

Gamorrean beliefs have become less superstitious in the last hundred years or so, as more contact with aliens have introduced them to fairly reliable technologies, but many of the old beliefs remain deeply rooted.

Gamorreans are animistic, believing that natural features, communities, battle sites, animals, and people have a lingering spirit that can affect the world. While everything is thought to have some kind of spirit, the only ones Gamorreans are really worried about are the ones powerful enough to be a threat. Huge trees, ancient fortresses, deep forests, giant fungi, famous long-dead heroes, the spirits of the murdered, and sites of massive slaughter are thought to be able to help or harm the living. Most of these associations are

apparently based on how the spirit's source affects Gamorreans. Tree and mountain spirits are thought to be mostly beneficial. Trees provide wood and mountains rock to build with, so they are generally good. This doesn't mean they can't be dangerous—sometimes trees decided to drop huge branches or fall on travelers, which is usually fatal. Mountains have a similar sense of humor, and shed landslides on unsuspecting Gamorreans.

Forest and sea spirits are regarded as unfathomable. Sometimes they leave travelers alone and let them pass, other times they get travelers lost. Forests like to shift their paths around and sometimes swallow passing parties whole. The ocean is very unpredictable, and is thought to send winds and currents when properly treated and storms when not. Even if it sends a wind or current, it may decide to take the sea-going traveler far out to sea or to the wrong section of coast, or just pull the boat into its watery jaws. Most Gamorreans don't like to travel on the ocean.

Ancient fortresses have very steady and powerful spirits and are very good. The fortress lends power to the muscles of defenders in wartime and fertility to the sows in slushtime and croptime.

Giant fungi house spirits of fertility, so much so that the really huge ones are avoided since they like to spray people with their offspring. Giant fungi are treated with respect, but from a distance.

Clan spirits are important to every tribe. Heroic warlords who fell in combat are invoked to bring power into battle, while famous warriors who fell defending a fortress are invoked to make the defenders stronger. The most important clan spirit is the clan founder, the original matron from whom all the others are descended. The founder spirit is believed to be very wise, sending dreams to the current clan matron to advise her in times of trouble.

The spirits of the murdered are greatly feared by most Gamorreans. Victims are thought to be angry at being killed by treachery and walk the land of the living during the night, seeking their murderer and slaying any they come across. A murder spirit can be fought and defeated by a living warrior, but they are thought to be exceptionally strong and dangerous. A surer way to lay a murder spirit to rest is to kill its murderer. Murder spirits are thought to be physical entities without extraordinary abilities like turning intangible or flying, and can be trapped in a room or left outside of a sturdy fortress.

Sites of massive and famous battles have their own collections of spirits. The fallen are thought to return on stormy winter nights

to refight their battles, sometimes causing great calamity to nearby settlements. Since many of these battles were fought near inhabited fortresses, storm damage is credited to these spirits, who usually remain invisible.

GAMORREAN RUNES

Gamorreans do have a primitive runic alphabet, useful for accounting, record keeping, genealogy, recording epic stories, and poetry. Almost all writing is done by educated sows. Boars are thought to be better suited to training for battle, although a fair number of boars can read slowly. There are several variations, but this example is typical:



PITTINS

Type: Pet Pest Predators

DEXTERITY 4D

Brawling parry 5D

PERCEPTION 3D

Search 4D

STRENGTH 2D

Brawling 5D

Special Abilities:

Teeth: Inflict STR+2D damage.

Claws: Cause STR+2D damage.

Move: 12

Size: 0.5 meters

Orneriness: 3D

Capsule: Pittins are pesters, pet carnivores kept to rid homes and businesses of vermin. Their world of origin is unknown. They have been domesticated for millennia, but are generally found on worlds where droid pest-units are impractical or non-existent. They also make good and loyal pets, although their owners are occasionally frustrated with their natural independence.

DWOORS

Type: Draft animals

DEXTERITY 2D

PERCEPTION 2D

STRENGTH 3D

Lifting 4D, stamina 5D

Move: 10

Size: 1 meter long
Orneriness: 4D

Capsule: Dwoobs are small, semi-domesticated draft animals used on Gamorr. They are generally hitched to pull sleds in winter and early slushtime. Dwoobs are not a triumph of Gamorrean domestication, and are usually only used by skilled sled drivers. Most Gamorreans use wheel barrows to pack around large amounts of goods.

MORRTS

Type: Small topical parasites

DEXTERITY: 1D

PERCEPTION: +2

STRENGTH: +1

Special Abilities:

Bloodsuckers: +1 damage due to blood loss. Gamorreans are immune to this effect.

Move: 4

Size: 1–5 centimeters

Capsule: Morrts are small slug-like bloodsucking parasites that Gamorreans host as pets and status symbols. Gamorrean physiology is adjusted to host these parasites (a Gamorrean can host one morrt for every pip of *stamina*), but other species will lose -1 pip of *Strength* for every morrt attached. Morrts attach themselves painlessly. Their skin exudes a slime that acts as a local anesthetic, often used as the base of a local pain-killer. They usually remain in place until found visually, and can be easily detached by lifting them off by the tail.

Wild morrts are quite aggressive about attaching themselves to hosts, and group in clusters up to several dozen. A morrt swarm could easily drain a Gamorrean dry. Tame morrts are docile creatures, usually so fat from feasting on their host that they can barely move.

JUGSMUK STATION

Jugsmuk Station is a major port on Gamorr—a landing field with a cluster of pre-fabs and local longhouses abutting Jugsmuk Clanhome. The Jugsmuk clan matron realized years ago that outlanders had a great deal of wealth, and that fairs with outlanders around tended to be larger and richer. She had a large landing field cleared and extra longhouses built, and established a semi-permanent market. She has since become very wealthy with the additional taxes and tributes the Jugsmuk Station Fair brings in. The station is popular with off-world traders because they don't have to move around from fair to fair nearly as much. The station is, however, almost always subject to attack in wartime by the warlords of competing clans, who want the station land and resulting wealth. A high percentage of the Jugsmuk treasury goes to hiring tuskmercenaries.

The station is fairly typical of remote trading posts. Native-built structures mingle with imported pre-fabricated buildings. Traders of all speices mix, haggle, and quarrel. The landing field is conveniently much closer to the fortress than any Imperial-legal field, a dangerous arrangement if someone loses control on approach. The station has no landing control, so pilots must bring their ships in "eyes out, hands on," as pilot slang refers to landing with full sensors and without aid.

The station has a strong defensive perimeter with modern weapon emplacements—although the station and inhabitants are theoretically off limits in Gamorrean war, nobody really wants to test the theory, and in practice there are usually some over-enthusiastic tuskers who decide to raid it during the yearly sieges of Jugsmuk fortress. Summer is always a nervous time around the station.

Business is erratic, but decent. The station includes several businesses of note to the wayward traveler stuck on Gamorr.

The Irrational Number is the main local bar and inn, run by a Bith referred to as Numbers (Bith names being very hard for non-Bith to pronounce). Numbers runs a busy but organized place, with gambling in one corner, drinking in another, and an enzymer console with outdated Registry programming in a third, with rooms for rent upstairs. Usually the entertainment is recorded, but occasionally a hard-luck band passes through (as quickly as possible).

ENZYMER

Model: BioTech Mark 16 Enzymer

Type: Bio-identification unit and counter-agent producer

Skill: First aid

Availability: 1


Capsule: An enzymer is a device that grows and identifies biological residues and produces a counter-agent to known bacteria and viruses. The enzymer can only produce counter-agents to diseases and certain parasites.

Sheebareevadee's Emporium of Interstellar Goods is a shabby little general store and outfitter run by a Squibb merchant. Sheeb is positively lazy for a Squibb, and only runs fairly simple trades-swaps at best. He also accepts cash with only a little haggling, a decidedly un-Squibb-like attitude. Sheeb finds Gamorr deeply depressing, but lacks the drive to haggle away his store and leave.

Momma Reseros' Diner is a grease-ladle diner run by a female Chevin, Reseros Meh. Meh is a grumpy cook with few social graces, but she's fairly honest and hardworking. She doesn't like other

Chevins much—actually, she doesn't really seem to like anybody very much. Her cooking is the closest thing to home-cooked that any non-Gamorrean can find on the planet, and she knows dozens of dishes involving mushrooms.

Game statistics and information on Gamorreans created by Timothy S. O'Brien based on Barbara Hambly's "Murder in Slushtime." Callista game information created by Floyd Wesel based on Darksaber and Children of the Jedi.



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The Breath of Gelgelar

By Jean Rabe

Illustrations by Brian Schomburg

The young Glarsaur stood on its hind legs at the base of a maugesh tree, its belly brushing up against the knotty trunk, its dark eyes trained on the large, plump reeho overhead. The bird was a precious bit of sunlight come to life—an orange and yellow splash amidst the neverending green of the swamp planet Gelgelar.

The reeho was oblivious to the young Glarsaur; it was watching the two dozen adults in the clearing a few meters away. Nearly the size of men, the Glarsaurs resembled common curly-tailed lizards, with human-like front limbs that ended in formidable claws. They were covered from their spiky pates to their webbed toes with dull green scales that rendered them essentially invisible in the foliage. Their undersides provided the only contrast—segmented plates, smooth and shiny and the shade of wet earth.

The Glarsaurs were arguing about the Sullustans living in the nearby farming settlement. They were hissing about where to lay



their traps and what to use as bait to lure the wide-eyed men into the embrace of the trees.

To the young Glarsaur intent on the orange bird, the discussion seemed meaningless. What did it matter what bait was used—fat monkeys, iquazards, crelnuts—food was food, with the exception of the beautiful reeho. The Glarsaur began to climb. Just under the bird's eyes were feathers as red as one of the planet's rare sunsets. Its beak was black as night, like its eyes, and its feet were gray, the color of the clouds that almost perpetually shielded the swamp world. The young Glarsaur decided to pluck the bird before eating it, keeping some of the striking feathers to affix to a spear.

"Kell!" the largest Glarsaur in the clearing bellowed. "Come down from the tree. Listen to our plan!"

The loud words startled the reeho, and it twisted its head about just in time to see the looming claw of the young Glarsaur. The bird screeched shrilly and dove from the branch, arcing well above the heads of the plotting reptile-men and over the pile of spears waiting to be used against the Sullustan mold farmers.

Faster, T'laerean mentally urged the reeho. Hurry. Fly faster.

The bird had to get back to the Sullustan settlement quickly, where T'laerean could use his newly-learned Force skills to separate his senses from the reeho's. His mind no longer divided, his senses all in one place, he could warn everyone about the Glarsaurs' plans. All the Sullustans would be safe. And he would be a hero.

Faster, he coaxed the reeho. From a small secret place he'd reserved for himself in the bird's mind, T'laerean watched the leaves and branches blur before the racing reeho. He felt the damp, humid air rush about bright orange feathers, heard the rapid thrum of the reeho's heart, and took in the earthy scents of the world. Fly much faster.

The Sullustan hadn't taken over the reeho, wasn't so much controlling it or forcing it to do his bidding as he was persuading it—entreating it to fly this way and help him. Through the Force he had joined his mind with the bird's, mentally hitchhiked along in a grand experiment, so he could see through its eyes and ears. It had been a game at first, a simple practice session, a chance to test his growing awareness of the Force, the *Breath of Gelgalar*, the Wise Man of Kooroo called it. But the game ended when T'laerean had spotted the Glarsaurs and eavesdropped on their malicious plans. The Wise Man would be so proud of him—attempting a feat to meld with a reeho! And his fellow Sullustans, well, they would honor him,

shower him with praise for saving them from the Glarsaurs.

T'laerean wasn't yet so skilled in the Force that he could release the meld with the reeho from this distance, from any distance. He needed to be in physical contact with the bird—or thought he did, which meant indeed he must be in contact for a separation to succeed. However, someday soon he would be so skilled—like his mentor. Soon he would be a master of the Force, able to join his senses with creatures at the edge of his vision, beyond his vision, and perhaps with the very plants that grew in profusion on the swamp world. Soon he would be able to let his mind wander around the Shrine of Kooroo, where he could spy on the pilgrims; drift toward the Great Shore Marshes, where the giant sea beasts dwelled; and then roam across all of Gelgalar.

Faster. That's it. Time for rest later.

He urged the reeho to angle its course upward until it cleared the top of the jungle canopy, to fly past the edge of the climax trees. Below, the steamy marsh plains stretched out. At the edge of the bird's vision the farming settlement came into view, with its stark and sterile interconnected metallic box-like buildings that seemed so out of place in the swampy wilderness.

T'laerean, like all the Sullustans in the settlement, knew the Glarsaurs were warlike, and the only sentient species—if they could be called that—native to Gelgalar. But he also knew the creatures weren't all that plentiful and that they usually kept to themselves. Until now, the reptile-men had been striking only when farmers took their vohis mold crops to the planet's spaceport, and didn't take enough guards or blasters with them for protection. Lately the farmers had been toting a good number of blaster carbines along, sizeable weapons that seemed enough of a threat to keep the reptile-men at a distance. But if the Glarsaurs were actually going to lure the Sullustans into the jungle, blasters would be next to useless. How could you shoot something you couldn't see, something invisible because it was the color of the ferns and bushes?

You're far beyond the Glarsaurs. They can't hurt you. But you must keep going so I can warn the people.

Why the reptile-men were so intolerant—hateful—of the Sullustans, and of the humans, Quarren, Twi'leks, and various other species who had settled the planet—was unknown. The people posed no threat to the Glarsaurs, hadn't taken land from them, and had even tried to befriend them. But all attempts to

establish peaceful relations had failed—though there were rumors that some of the creatures cooperated from time to time with the world's criminal elements. And why the reptile-men were plotting to lure Sullustans into the jungle to slay them was a mystery to T'laerean. Glarsaurs didn't eat Sullustans. Or did they?

See the Krevk Settlement fence? The glittery silver net around the buildings? We're close now. Faster.

There wasn't much known about the reptile creatures—other than that they were decidedly unfriendly. They moved so easily through Gelgelar's swamps, and the shvash gas that habitually and unpredictably erupted from the sodden ground never bothered them. The Glarsaurs didn't need to wear breath masks like the Sullustan mold farmers did. But neither did the reeho. The bird was used to breathing the noxious gas.

Through the reeho's eyes T'laerean spied a group of Sullustans a few hundred meters outside the fence. They were searching through the tall grasses—sensor packs trained on the ground, repulsorlift sleds filled with mold hovering along behind them. Looking for the last of the mold patches to harvest this season, no doubt, he thought. The farmers were not yet near enough to the trees to be threatened by the Glarsaurs. But T'laerean knew if they continued along this course, they soon would come close enough and might be lured in by the promise of tasty food. Crelnuts were hard to resist compared to the simple bland fare of the settlement. Only Gelgelar Free Port offered native Sullustan cuisine.

The reeho banked toward the west, away from the Sullustans.

No! T'laerean's mind gently scolded. The mold farmers will not hurt you. Fly past them, to the settlement. The shiny buildings. Toward the glittery net. His mental words were soothing, powered by the Force, and were enough to relax the reeho. It banked toward the east, past the farmers, entranced by the voice coming from a secret place in its mind. *That's it, T'laerean communicated. Now, toward the buildings, my orange friend.*

The young Sullustan felt the energy of the Force teasing his mind even as he talked to the reeho, felt the near-palpable and indescribable energy that permeated Gelgelar and everything else in the universe. He felt the Force control him, at the same time he was controlling it, and he felt its tendrils wrap around his consciousness. He worked with it, channeling it into another suggestion—as the Wise Man had taught him. He urged the reeho to pull its wings in closer to his body, to dive. Practically skimming the tall green

grass of the swampy plains now, the sun-colored reeho beat its wings even faster, carrying T'laerean's senses across a brook swollen by the recent heavy rains, closer to the settlement, then over the simple chain wall dotted with sensor units.

You are doing well, sun-reeho. I will reward you with seeds for your cooperation.

The Wise Man would arrive in the settlement next week, T'laerean knew, and would quickly learn of his student's accomplishments—his most promising student's grand accomplishments. *Perhaps the Wise Man will spend more time teaching me more powerful Force skills,* he thought.

The reeho banked over three young Sullustan women who were just inside the fence. They were playing a game of Yastesh with a group of chattering children. Toward the center of the settlement, a circle of old farmers sat beneath an overhang, their words too soft for the bird to hear. *Old tales,* T'laerean mused. *My news will give them a grand new story to tell.*

He formed another suggestion, and inwardly smiled as the bird darted toward a small building at the far end of the settlement—T'laerean's home, a hero's home. The Sullustan's body waited inside.

As the reeho sped toward an open window, two small girls, barely four or five, darted out from the shadows, laughing and tugging on each other's ears, their wide faces flushed from play. The tallest child spotted the reeho and oohed and ahed, stood on her toes and waggled her hands.

"Pretty reeho! Here pretty, pretty reeho!" she called, her high voice muffled slightly by the breath mask. Most parents made their children wear the masks outside—just in case a shvash gas cloud erupted in the vicinity. "Here pretty reeho! Come play with us!"

Ha! The young Glarsaur came much closer to catching the bird, T'laerean mused from his secret place. He had to admit the reeho must indeed look inviting, it had captured his attention when he was looking about for a creature to meld his senses with. Slipping above the heads of the children, the reeho flew through the open window of T'laerean's home and lit on the metal floor. As the bird's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, it hopped toward the bed, its feet clicking against the metal tiles.

On the bed, T'laerean coaxed the reeho. Fly on the bed. Touch the Sullustan. The man there who looks to be sleeping. Then I will let you be, no more voices in your head. You can fly back to the jungle. The



bird moved closer, pausing only for a moment to pick up a small bit of crust T'laerean had dropped this morning. *Soon I will not need physical contact to make this work*, T'laerean thought. *Soon I will be strong enough in the Force that...*

"Pretty, pretty reehee!" The tallest child had entered through T'laerean's unlocked door and ran toward the bird, her arms outstretched.

On the bed! T'laerean's mind screamed. Hurry!

The reehee cast its head about this way and that, instantly frightened and looking between the prone form of the Sullustan and the charging girl. T'laerean could tell it considered the children every bit as much of a threat as the Glarsaurs.

On the bed! On the...no!

A piercing screech exploded from the reehee's throat, and T'laerean watched from his secret place in the back of the bird's mind as a basket was dropped over it. The other child must have climbed in through the window, used T'laerean's own basket to catch the reehee. The wicker was thick, but woven just loose enough in a few places so the terrified reehee could look out. Its small heart hammered wildly, sounding like rolling thunder to T'laerean.

"Oh, pretty reehee!" the tallest girl gushed with delight. "What a fine pet I have now."

"My pet, too, Raenyn," the other child said. "I caught him." She

dropped to the floor and peered between a tiny gap in the weave. "My pet. I will call him Sunshine!"

Pet, T'laerean fumed. *I am not a pet, I am a student of the Force, a student of the Wise Man of Kooroo. I am....* The pounding of the bird's heart made it difficult for the Sullustan to think. *Calm*, he urged the bird. *Relax*. But the pounding continued, and a raucous mix of sounds came out of the reehee's beak—irritating screeches and shrill screams.

Let the reehee out of here! T'laerean's mind cried. *Now what is this?*

The reehee had to hop as a piece of leng bark was pushed under the basket, creating a bottom to the prison. Then the bird and T'laerean felt the bark and the basket rising. The children were carrying the basket outside.

"Momma," the youngest called. "Look what we caught. A pretty pet named Sunshine!"

The basket was toted toward a Sullustan woman who was muddled from the mold fields. The reehee peered out at her, its heart slowing only because its fear had exhausted it. T'laerean instantly recognized her. She was one of the settlement council members, someone who should be warned about the Glarsaurs' ambush.

"Oh, children. The bird cannot be a pet," the woman said.

T'laerean breathed a sigh of relief. She would release the reehee, he could coax the bird to land on



him, and he would use the Force to free his senses. He could warn her about the Glarsaurs and then....

"The bird can't be a pet when fresh treats like this are so hard to find outside the port. This will be a special meal for your father. I'll make reeho stew."

Dinner!

The link with T'laerean allowed the bird to grasp the woman's words. And despite its exhaustion, the bird started clacking and screeching louder, as if the threat of death injected life into it. It hopped about on the bark and made shrill, piercing noises—like a Thull whistle.

You can't kill me, T'laerean fumed. You know me! I am T'laerean, the hero. T'laerean, master of the Force! If you eat this bird, why... T'laerean panicked. He didn't know what would happen if the bird died. Would his senses return to his body—in which case his problem would be solved, though at the expense of the reeho. Or would his consciousness drift away, leaving his body a mindless shell? Would he die as the bird died? He had never practiced this Force ability before, only watched the Wise Man do something similar to it. He had never asked the Wise Man the possible outcomes, nor listened none-too-closely as the Wise Man explained exactly how everything worked. T'laerean had been interested only in the opportunity to merge his senses with something else.

The bird continued to screech, and T'laerean felt his fear matching its, his resolve melting like butter left on the table too long. *If you kill this reeho, it will be like eating one of your own kind! And maybe you'll have no one to warn you about the Glarsaurs. Maybe all the mold farmers will die! You could be sealing the fate of the entire settlement in the quest for one tasty meal!*

As the reeho was carried across the settlement and into the woman's home, he tried to channel his thoughts through the Force to quiet the creature, to get himself to relax so he could think more clearly. Panic begets disaster, the Wise Man once told him. T'laerean wished he had paid more attention to that lecture and the meditating techniques the old human showed him.

We will be free, he told the bird. Do not worry. Do not panic. The Force is my ally and won't let us die. He hoped. We will escape to my home at the first chance, and then you will land upon my belly. I will release you, and as my senses return to my body you can return to the jungle—never to see this settlement again. He pictured trees and the sky, and for an instant the bird's heart slowed and its spirit lifted.

But then the basket was deposited on a gleaming metal counter and the smells of spices filled the air. Through a gap in the wicker, the reeho saw more metal objects it couldn't put a name to or fathom what they were for. But T'laerean knew. They were pots and pans.

They were in the kitchen, and the woman was heating a bowl, pouring levsh oil into it! His own fears resurfaced tenfold, and the bird's heart raced again.

"There isn't enough of him to share with everyone," the woman told the little girls. "But it is your father's birthday soon. And he so loves reeho. We'll tell everyone how you caught this bird—both of you—as a present for your father. People will be proud of you. And your father will be so pleased."

"Can we keep the feathers?" the smallest asked.

"Of course."

"But Mama," the taller child, the one called Raenyn, wailed. "I want the reeho—as a pet. Please."

"No." The woman's voice was stern now, tinged with parental authority. "The next time we take a mold harvest into the port, next week maybe, we'll find you a pet. Something you can cuddle. A wilwog, perhaps, a trained one that doesn't shed and won't soil the floor. Now go out and play. And put your breath masks back on." She reached for a knife.

What can I do? I must do something. If she kills the reeho, the mold farmers might die. I might die, too. The reeho screeched again, and this time T'laerean didn't try to hush it. He was trying to shut out the reeho's heartbeats, concentrating on the woman, on the Force, wondering if perhaps he could influence her. The Wise Man could do it, T'laerean knew, persuade people to look the other way, to change their minds. If only he could change the woman's mind.

Let us go. He stretched the thought outward, like it was a leaf blowing on the breeze, blowing toward the woman. *Look at us! Let us go!* Maybe if she looked closely at the reeho, saw how truly beautiful the bird was, she would not be able to kill it.

She started humming an old Sullustan tune, adjusted the heat pad beneath the pan, then left the room. T'laerean urged the bird to look through another gap so he could see where she went. This time, however, the bird ignored him and began pacing about the basket walls, nipping in frustration at the wicker.

Look out a gap! I want to see!

The reeho thrust the persistent voice farther to the back of its

brain, far into the secret place, and clacked its beak open and shut over a strand of wicker. T'laerean felt the dryness of the strand, the sourness against the bird's black tongue, the uncomfortable roughness. The bird persevered while T'laerean floated, fuming, in that secret place, and within moments it had created a hole large enough to poke its head out. The reeho tried to force the rest of its body through the opening, then finally gave up and resumed chewing on the wicker.

Good friend, T'laerean praised, suddenly realizing what the bird was up to. *So smart. I should have thought of that. Reehos are notorious wood-chewers.* He decided he would tell the bird which strands to attack, which looked the weakest and would be the quickest to cut through, but his thoughts were smothered, pushed aside by the bird's own thoughts of escape. T'laerean continued to watch and worry and to feel the reeho's throat grow dry, its tongue and beak sore from the effort.

Then he heard the humming again, the woman returning. It grew muffled, as if she turned and entered another room. Her voice was



sweet, and under other circumstances T'laerean might have enjoyed it. The bird heard it too, worked faster, then it hopped back to survey its work. Big enough. The reeho edged forward and squeezed out of the prison. T'laerean felt the pressure of the jagged edges of the wicker that poked at the bird's sides.

Free! T'laerean was elated.

The bird screeched in excitement and jumped from the counter, spreading its wings and flapping madly. The dizzying scents of the spices and the heating oil flooded the bird's senses, and T'laerean fought to emerge from the secret place and again persuade the bird which direction to go.

Through the doorway, T'laerean urged. He was focusing on the Force now more than the bird, concentrating on the Breath of Gelgalar, working with the energy. He let it control him, and he asked it for some measure of control in return. *The doorway! Yes, that's it, my friend. Free! Free!*

The bird flew through the kitchen doorway, through a study and over a dehumidifying unit and computer console. Toward another doorway, one open just wide enough, opening more—the way outside!

Free! Free! No!

The door opened wider still and the bird flapped madly, rushing forward and slamming into the chest of Raenyn. The impact startled the child and dazed the bird. It flopped on the ground, stunned, unable to comply with T'laerean's cries to run away.

"Pretty reeho!" Raenyn cooed, scooping him up and calling to the smaller child. "You are not supposed to be loose," she gently scolded the reeho. "You are supposed to be dinner for Papa."

She held the reeho tightly and carried him through a side doorway, one that led to a small room with two narrow beds and a desk between them. Sitting unceremoniously on the closest bed, Raenyn roughly patted the reeho's head. The other child sat next to her.

"Is he hurt?"

"It doesn't matter." Raenyn held the reeho up and stared in its round blinking eyes. Her hands were not nearly large enough to fit all the way around the bird. "Mama is going to kill him and cook him in the stew. I don't think I can eat a bite of him, though. He's too pretty."

The reeho kept blinking and T'laerean tried to focus. The impact with the child had rattled his senses, too, and he saw two of each

of the young girls. Two of everything.

"She will pull out all his feathers," Raenyn continued. "You cannot eat feathers."

"He will not be so pretty then. I won't eat a bite of him either. I wanted him to be a pet."

"I wonder if he is someone's pet?" Raenyn lessened her grip on the bird just a little. "If he was someone's pet, Mama couldn't cook him."

T'laorean felt for the Force, let it surround his mind like the marsh surrounded the settlement. Again he tried to clear his vision, saw the smaller girl purse her lips.

"He might be T'laorean's pet, the odd boy who doesn't farm mold," she suggested. "I saw him with a pretty reeho this morning. Maybe this one. We caught it in his house, after all."

"T'laorean? The Wise Man of Kooroo's student?"

The smaller girl nodded.

"T'laorean would not have pets," Raenyn said firmly. "The bird flew in through the window. We saw it. T'laorean is strange and unfriendly. He cares only about the Force, talks only about the Force and impressing the crazy old Wise Man. He would not care about a little bird or anything else. He only wants to be important."

T'laorean cringed. *Care only about the Force? Is that what people think? Of course I care about the Force. But I care about this settlement, too. About the people in it. I'm trying to save the mold farmers!*

"Besides," Raenyn continued. "T'laorean is dead. I saw him when we caught the bird. Dead in his bed. Dead. Dead. Dead. Even if the reeho is his pet—was his pet—it wouldn't matter. Dead people can't have pets."

"Maybe we should tell someone that T'laorean's dead."

"No. Then we would get in trouble for sneaking into his house and finding him. Let someone else find him and get in trouble. He's not going anywhere, after all. He's dead."

A soft clacking noise came out of the reeho. The bird was still frightened. But it was tired and thirsty, too. So very thirsty. Its black tongue was dry and was becoming swollen. It looked up at Raenyn and cocked its head.

"Poor reeho," the girls said practically in unison.

The smaller girl started to cry. "We just can't let Momma kill him." From beyond the doorway, the reeho heard humming, the woman's voice again. It was distant, signaling she was deeper in the house.

"No!" the woman hollered, her words sounding soft, but clear.



"The reeho escaped! Chewed his way out. Girls! Come help me find him. He's probably still in the house. Girls!"

The girls glanced at each other, grins spreading wide across their wide Sullustan faces. Then T'laorean felt the reeho stiffen, fight to break free, saw a darkness looming before the bird, felt the bird being stuffed inside a sack. The reeho opened its beak to screech, and T'laorean concentrated with all his might. *Quiet! he pleaded. Be quiet and we might get free!*

"Mama thinks he escaped," Raenyn whispered. "We will keep him hidden. Then she will not kill him and we can share him as a pet."

The younger one made a tsk-tsking noise. "You can't keep a reeho in a sack. He will make noise, unless he becomes dead like T'laorean. And if Mama finds him—alive or dead—we will be in trouble."

"And the bird will be dinner."

"But maybe we can keep him in someone else's home."

"Who's home?" It was Raenyn speaking.

"T'laorean's, of course. He's dead and doesn't need his home."

"But someone will find out he's dead and we will be in trouble and then we won't be able to use his home for the reeho."

"No one will find out if we bury T'laerean tonight, when no one is watching, when they think we're asleep. It's already starting to get dark outside anyway."

Raenyn softly giggled. "We could borrow Papa's shovel. But let's go to T'laerean's now, hide the reeho. We'll go back after dark to bury T'laerean. If the reeho screeches in T'laerean's home, no one will hear him."

"Well, they might hear him, but they won't pay attention. Everyone thinks T'laerean's weird."

T'laerean felt the bird being jostled, its fear rising to a fever pitch, and he suspected the girls were running. He heard doors open and close, sounds he knew but sounds that were alien to the terrified reeho. The jiggling and jarring sensation continued for several minutes, though it felt like an eternity, more doors opening and closing. Then he felt himself falling, landing abruptly and uncomfortably on something hard. The reeho shivered and picked itself up, stood in the cramped and dark confines of the sack and examined its wings and claws. T'laerean could tell that nothing was broken, though everything felt like it was bruised. The bird ached all over, and he tried to offer words that might comfort it.

But the reeho thrust T'laerean's thoughts to the secret place in its mind again and started pecking at the bottom of the sack, like a si-hen would peck at the ground for grain. Any movement seemed to cause the reeho additional pain, but it persisted, pecking faster when a bit of leather came loose in its beak.

"No, pretty reeho," Raenyn scolded. "Stop that. You will ruin my sack."

That is the idea, T'laerean thought. The reeho intends to ruin your sack—just like you are trying very hard to ruin our lives.

Again the bird was lifted inside the sack, its escape thwarted. Raenyn shook the bag as she untied it and thrust her hands into the darkness. She grabbed the orange reeho as the sack fell away, and she held it about the back, pinning its wings to its sides. It tried to bite her, but she had gripped it carefully enough so the bird's beak couldn't reach her small fingers.

Out in the open, the reeho could breathe again. It saw the Sullustan laying on the bed nearby. The Sullustan it remembered it was supposed to fly upon. The reeho relaxed in the girl's grip. T'laerean sensed it was conserving its strength, waiting. Her fingers

opened a little. Then a little more.

Let her think you are docile, he urged the reeho. Let her think you are wounded—which you are, unable to fly—which you are not. When she drops her guard, you will fly to the bed and....

The reeho again thrust T'laerean's thoughts aside, pushed off from the girl's opening hands and spread its wings. It flew through the open window and out into the growing twilight. It beat its wings hard, and ignored the ache in its body. It ignored the cries of the girls running behind it, their frantic footsteps. It ignored the old men who were going into their homes for dinner.

No! You're flying the wrong way! Fly back into the building! Land on the Sullustan—the one on the bed!

And it ignored T'laerean.

The reeho, though tired and sore, flew as fast as its aching wings could manage. It streaked across the settlement yard, then over the glittering fence and across the swampy plains. The bird's keen vision cut through the growing darkness, like a sharp knife could cut through a crelnut. And from the secret place in the back of the reeho's mind, T'laerean watched with growing terror. The Sullustan's awareness was being carried farther away from the settlement. He felt the Force, the Breath of Gelgelar, and he sensed that it was controlling him completely. He wasn't strong enough to exert any measure of control over it. His mind was careening along toward the trees, piggybacked onto the brain of the freed reeho.

How long can I live this way? In a reeho's mind? T'laerean wondered. Will they bury my body, ending my life? Or will my body die for lack of food and water? Will my consciousness drift forever in this small brain? When the bird sleeps, will I gain the strength to coax it to do my bidding again? And what about the farmers?

The bird spotted the Sullustan mold farmers, now using large glow rods to see by. Sensor packs still trained on the ground, datapads recording the yield, they were close to the trees now. And they were closing on a trio of iquazards, massive boarlike creatures that had been cleverly hobbled to tree roots.

The reeho idly wondered why anyone would tie the iquazards, and ignored T'laerean's attempts to explain about the ambush and make suggestions that it somehow warn the mold farmers. The reeho wanted only to return to the embrace of the jungle, to the safety of the tall trees, to never see Sullustans again.

"Look!" T'laerean faintly heard from his small, secret place. "Iquazards! Three of them, and they don't seem to notice us." It was

one of the mold farmers talking. "Everyone, come on. They move slow. We'll catch them and have a fine feast tonight."

The farmers would have to get close to the beasts, T'laerean knew. The iquazards were so thick-skinned they could virtually ignore blaster shots, except from close range. And close range would be too close to the jungle.

T'laerean heard the swish of the marsh grass behind the reeho, the snap of a dry twig. And through his shared senses he smelled the Sullustans, the vohis mold, the musky iquazards, the heady loam of the looming jungle. Darkness and green filled his vision as the bird swooped over the backs of the iquazards and darted between the trunks of two willotum trees and glided into the jungle.

Then a brighter green appeared, scaly and slick, and right in front of the bird. Black reptilian eyes locked onto the startled reeho. A young Glarsaur rose from behind a thick clump of ferns—the one who tried to catch the bird several hours ago. The Glarsaur rose and started toward the reeho, flailing its claws and clacking its jaws.

The reeho screeched, an irritating sound now so very familiar to T'laerean. The bird banked away, retreating through the same gap in the willotum trees, heading back over the iquazards and toward the swampy plains.

The young Glarsaur followed, disregarding the cries of the older Glarsaurs in waiting—the curses that the ambush would be revealed. The young Glarsaur thrashed forward, intent on the reeho that it had been denied earlier, thrashed forward past the iquazards and into the path of the oncoming mold farmers.

"Glarsaurs!" one of the mold farmers bellowed. "Run! I'll cover you."

From his secret place T'laerean watched the mold farmers turn and sprint toward the settlement, their repulsorlift sleds filled with mold trailing behind them. One held his position for a moment, aiming a blaster in the vicinity of the iquazards and laying down a line of suppression fire to keep the band of now-revealed Glarsaurs from pursuing.

T'laerean watched the mold farmers melt into the darkness, heard the squeals of the disturbed iquazards, smelled the air tinged with the heat of blaster fire, felt a claw dig into the reeho's side.

The young Glarsaur pulled the bird in close to its body, and T'laerean picked up the reptile-man's foul, sickly sweet breath. The Sullustan was only vaguely aware of the continuing curses of the

adult Glarsaurs; he was more intent on the orange bird's pain as feather after feather was plucked. Then the Glarsaur bit into the bird, and T'laerean's world turned into agony and darkness.

"T'laerean. Wake up." The voice sounded weak at first, wobbly with age. But it was persistent. "Do not die, T'laerean."

The young Sullustan's eyes felt matted shut, but he forced them open and blinked. A little girl's blurry face hovered inches from his; Raenyn's. And beyond her was the wrinkled human face of the Wise Man of Kooroo.

"I thought he was dead," Raenyn announced. "Dead. Dead. Dead. I thought we would have to bury him and would never be able to tell him about the Glarsaur ambush and about how my father used his blaster to fight them all off. About how my father is a hero to the whole settlement, saved everyone. And..."

"Do not chatter so, little one," the Wise Man cautioned. "T'laerean has been through a great ordeal, it seems, a sickness perhaps. Or something more. And he nearly did leave us. But I think he will be all right now. The Force will continue to heal him."

The old human leaned over T'laerean, helped him up.

Glancing around, the Sullustan could see that he was home, on his bed. Pale light streamed in through an open window, hinting it was morning. His throat was dry, and he was quick to accept the glass of water Raenyn offered. His belly felt empty.

"It was a good thing I came to the settlement earlier than I had planned," the old man began. "I stopped by to see you and found you close to death. If the Force was not so strong in you, I suspect I could not have saved you."

"Perhaps the Force is strong in me," T'laerean answered after a moment. "But I am not yet so strong in it."

"You are most wise to know you have limitations," the old man said, his eyes narrowing almost imperceptibly. "Rest, my student. You need more rest—time for more reflections. We'll resume your lessons tomorrow."

"I have a lot to learn," T'laerean whispered. The young Sullustan relaxed, closed his eyes, and listened to the retreating footsteps of Raenyn and the Wise Man. Eventually he allowed sleep to claim him, and he dreamed of Glarsaurs and iquazards, and a colorful orange bird that would forever haunt a secret place in his mind.



Roleplaying Game Statistics

■ T'laerean Larn

Type: Sullustan Student of the Force

DEXTERITY 3D

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

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Alien species 3D+1, cultures 3D, languages 3D+2

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Communications 3D, repulsorlift operation 3D+2

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, con 4D, hide 4D+1, persuasion 5D, search 3D+2

STRENGTH 2D

Climbing/jumping 3D+1, lifting 3D, stamina 3D

TECHNICAL 2D+1

Blaster repair 3D, first aid 4D

Special Abilities:

Force Skills: Control 2D, sense 2D

Control: Accelerate healing, concentration

Sense: Life sense, magnify senses, merge senses

Enhanced Senses: Sullustans get +2D to Perception or search rolls involving vision in low-light conditions or hearing.

Location Sense: Sullustans get +1D to astrogation if familiar with the area, and cannot get lost if they have visited an area before.

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 6

Move: 10

Equipment: Sporting blaster (3D+1), datapad, several glow rods, breath mask

Capsule: T'laerean is a young Sullustan who was born on Gelgelar and only knows of his people's homeworld, Sullust, through computer datafiles and tales. His parents were among the first mold farmers to establish the Krevk Settlement. However, after nearly two decades of harvesting the crop in the midst of shvash gas eruptions, they grew disheartened with the work. They opted to return to Sullust, but T'laerean refused to go with them.



He had met an old human in the Gelgellar Free Port—the Wise Man of Kooroo. The old human sensed a bit of the Force in young T'laerean and accepted him as a pupil. T'laerean's parents, in turn, accepted their son's decision to stay behind and left him their settlement house.

Though the Wise Man is not a Jedi or especially skilled in the Force, he knows enough abilities and philosophy to pass them on to T'laerean. And he recognizes that the young Sullustan needs to learn patience and restraint, as much as he needs to learn about the Force.

T'laerean is rambunctious and eager to throw himself into his studies, becoming frustrated when the Wise Man is not around often enough to suit him. He has dreams of one day becoming a Jedi Knight, and suspects he will have to leave Gelgellar to accomplish that. To that end, he makes occasional forays to the Free Port, hoping to spot individuals with lightsabers strapped to their hips.

Gelgellar

If you're looking for more information on the soggy planet of Gelgellar, the Free Port there, or the Wise Man, check out *Platt's Starport Guide*.

■ Glarsaurs

Attribute Dice: 12D
DEXTERITY 2D/4D
KNOWLEDGE 1D/3D
MECHANICAL 1D/2D
PERCEPTION 2D/4D+2
STRENGTH 2D/4D
TECHNICAL 1D/2D

Special Abilities:

Bite: A Glarsaur's bite does STR+1D+2 damage

Claws: Claw attacks do STR+1D damage

Move: 10

Size: 1-1.5 meters tall

Capsule: The only native sentient creatures on the swamp planet Gelgellar, Glarsaurs are known for not getting along with anyone. They are brutish and warlike, highly aggressive and carnivorous—and they seem to be perpetually hungry.

They stand a meter to a meter and a half tall and are covered with small green scales that resemble leaves. Their coloration helps them to blend into the Gelgellar foliage, rendering them practically invisible until they strike. They are cold-blooded and muscular, and they are adept at using their claws or fashioning crude weapons such as spears and clubs.

Though dull-witted, they are not without the ability to make plans and set ambushes. And they have been known, from time to time, to work with some of Gelgellar's criminal element—stopping vohis mold shipments from reaching the port city in exchange for particularly tasty

hunks of meat and not-so-crude weapons.

Some of Gelgellar's settlers, primarily the humans and Sullustans, have tried to communicate with the creatures and establish at least a tenuous relationship. While the Glarsaurs are capable of reasoning, they have shown no desire to be reasoned with, and have on more than one occasion attacked the individuals trying to befriend them.

Typical Glarsaur Warrior. *Dexterity* 2D+2, *dodge* 4D+2, *Perception* 2D, *hide* 5D, *search* 4D, *Strength* 2D+2, *brawling* 4D+2. Special abilities: bite does STR+1D+2; claws do STR+1D damage. Move 10.

New Sense Power

Merge Senses

Sense Difficulty: Moderate. Modified by proximity.

Time to use: Three rounds.

Required power: *Magnify senses*

Effect: This power allows a Force user to perceive things through the senses of another creature, one with animal intelligence or less. He can see through the eyes of the selected creature, enjoying the benefits or being bound by the restrictions of the creature's vision. He can hear through the creature's ears; smell what the creature smells; and physically feel whatever the creature is feeling. The Force user does not control the creature, but can make suggestions. The simpler or less threatening the request, the more likely it will be agreed to. If a suggestion goes against the nature of the creature or would put it in an obviously hazardous situation, the Force user must make a *sense* roll against the subject's *willpower*. Failure means the suggestion is ignored.

While the Force user's senses are merged with a creature's, the Force user's body is motionless, its senses unable to function until, of course, the meld is broken. Releasing the target creature requires a Moderate roll. The link with the creature is also broken by the death of either the creature or the Force user. If the creature suffers damage or dies during a meld, the Force user suffers one-half the amount of damage.

SPECIAL OPS: DROP POINTS

By John Beyer & Kathy Burdette

Illustrations by Christopher Trevas

It had started to rain again. Colonel Stijhl knew it, even though he was in his office, because he smelled ozone and shvash gas coming from the hangar, and he wondered vaguely why the blast doors were open.

"Um...Colonel? Something bad just happened."

Stijhl looked up from the cargo manifests and shipping schedules neatly stacked on his desk. Kovings stood in the doorway, fumbling with his headset.

"What is it, Kovings?" Stijhl asked, not really interested. Kovings, who doubled as communications and deck officers, was a high-strung boy who panicked about everything.

"I just gave landing clearance at Ready-One to a light freighter," Kovings said.

"And?"

"It's registered as *The Maker*. The call-sign belongs to a Major T'Charek—"

Stijhl dropped his datapad. He finished Kovings' sentence. "Haathi."

"That's right."

Stijhl felt his neck pulsing.

"Sir?" Kovings was white now.

"Yes, Kovings." The colonel was about to put his head on the desk, but with Kovings watching, he just ran his hands over his thinning crew cut and took a deep breath.

"I should have said 'no' to her request, right?" asked Kovings, backing cautiously towards the door.

"No, it's okay. You shouldn't have said 'no.'"

Kovings smiled as if he'd just gotten a field promotion.

"You should have opened fire," said Stijhl.



Inside *The Maker*, Morgan was at work in a cramped maintenance alcove trying to fix the power grid. There was barely enough space for her to fit her entire body into the room; she stood almost halfway out the door, staring at the monitors, listening to the whirring sound of some piece of machinery which had activated itself somewhere amidst the crates. Morgan found it relaxing and closed her eyes.

While Morgan stood racking her brains in her own darkness, her life signs were being assessed. The killer amidst the crates prepared to eliminate them.



Alliance Drop Points

Scattered across the known galaxy in obscure locations and out-of-the-way places, secret meeting sites and weapon caches aid the Rebellion in its desperate fight against the Imperial war machine. Called "drop points," these locations are essential to most covert missions, allowing Special Operations teams to remain in the field for months at a time.

The Alliance High Command recognizes the importance of establishing drop points, and goes to great efforts to maintain their security. It has become the duty of all Alliance members to learn about drop point operations and to respect their proper use. Failure to do so may result in the sacrifice of hard-to-obtain resources and the irreplaceable loss of lives.

Alliance High Command has charged the department of Ordinance and Supply (OaS) with the duty of establishing and oversee-

ing drop points. In a program not unlike the Quartermaster Corps of the Old Republic Army, OaS has begun to post high-ranking supply officers and their staff members to front-line positions so that they may better interact with the teams. Using their superb organizational skills and talents, these field officers have already made significant changes in previous operational procedures. By establishing a series of drop point protocols and stocked equipment caches, Special Ops teams can now be quickly restocked with a larger variety of weaponry and support.

Fleet Intelligence officers also use drop points as field offices, allowing for faster transfer of intelligence reports and mission assignments. Whenever possible, both pre- and post-mission briefings are conducted, temporarily transforming the drop points into mobile command bases. Information flows both ways, which allows the Alliance to collect a great deal of knowledge regarding local Imperial activity—and to stay abreast of the larger Rebel efforts. The coordination of the times and sites of potential drop points has made it possible to brief several teams simultaneously, resulting in an increased number of joint missions and operations backed with fleet support.



"Atten-*hut*!" Haathi shouted.

At Haathi's order, Jayme exaggerated an attention stance. Nord panicked and did it for real. Stijhl came up the ramp and cringed.

"Knock it off," he said.

Haathi offered the Colonel her hand.

"Major Haathi," he said, shaking it. "Major T'Charek Haathi."

"It's nice to see you again, Colonel," said Haathi.

"Yeah, right. Who did you bring with you?"

"This is my executive officer, Captain Ivhin Jayme. I stole him from the urban commandos."

Jayme, a dark, wiry man, gave the Colonel's hand a solid but brief shake.

"And over here is Exalted Lord Dren Nord of Alliance Grand High Command," said Haathi.

"Captain Nord," Nord told him, stepping in front of Haathi. "I'm a doctor."

"Doctor Nord?" said Stijhl. "Didn't I see you on a Mon Cal cruiser near Ryloth?"

"Yes, sir! I was chief of surgery then."

"And what are you now?"

"He's my corpsman," Haathi said.

"You went from being chief of surgery on a capital ship to dusting off these weirdoes?"

Nord went a little pink. "It's always good to test one's limits, sir."

Haathi had already found Nord's. His first mission with the team was acquiring *The Maker*, and he had nearly gotten everybody killed. But she didn't mention that to Stijhl; the main reason she had come was to show off her promotion and her new ship. Although she was disappointed to find that Stijhl wasn't a major himself anymore.

"Sir," said Nord, "permission to disembark?"

"Oh, granted, I guess," said the Colonel. Nord filed past the others and clambered unsteadily down the entry ramp.

Stijhl commenced pacing slowly in front of Haathi and Jayme. "So," he said, watching his boot-tips as he walked. "Just happened to be in the neighborhood?"

Jayme gave a slight snicker. Stijhl looked up.

"Something funny, Captain?"

"Asthma," Haathi said, jabbing her elbow into Jayme's ribcage.

Stijhl stopped in front of Haathi and stuck his face right into hers.

"Tell me why you came here."

"Oh, sir," said Haathi, clasping her hands together, "not the mind-probe!"

"I knew it! You came here to upset me!"

"No, we need supplies! We just got back from an acquisition run."

Stijhl gave a low sigh. Then he pulled a comlink out of his belt.

"Pendower, would you come up here?"

In a couple of moments a dark-haired woman wearing a green day-suit and holding a datapad came striding up the entry ramp. She wasn't much taller than Haathi or Jayme, but with her straight, almost regal posture she fairly towered over the permanently-slouched Stijhl.

"Get me an inventory, Pendower," he said to her.

"Surely." Pendower typed rapidly on the datapad.

"This is Major Haathi and Captain Jayme, by the way. Special Ops."

"Juust a second," Pendower said, holding up a finger and still typing with three. "Okay, and what is it you need, Major?"

"We need, ah, some glow rods," said Haathi.

"Medpacs," said Jayme at the same time.

Pendower looked up. Her eyes were gray, reminiscent of Gelgelar's murky atmosphere, but darker, and with a sharpness to them. "Which is it?" she asked.

"Medpacs," said Jayme in his deep, smoky voice, as he sat down on the lounge sofa and put his boots on.

"And how many of you are there?"

"Four," said Haathi.

"Four?" asked Stijhl. "I only met three of you."

"Our techie is working on a faulty power grid. She said to tell you 'hi.'"

"Where is your corpsman?" Pendower asked.

"Didn't you pass him on your way into the ship? If you squint, he looks like Mon Mothma in pants."

Just then Morgan's raspy voice came over the ship's intercom.

"Hey, Cap'n!"

"Morg, for the billionth time, I'm a major."

"Are you ready for this? Brace yourselves."

"Yeah, okay, Morg, we're braced."

"Good, because I think the—"

There was a sharp blast of static from the intercom and the whole ship went dark. Two seconds later, the red emergency lighting kicked on.

"Morgan!" Haathi called. "What just happened?"

The intercom was dead. Haathi and Jayme locked eyes for a long, paralyzed second; Pendower shoved past them all and ran down the corridor toward the rear maintenance bay.

Jayme looked down the corridor after Pendower.

"Go," Haathi told him. "I'll get Nord."



Maglenna Pendower's heart knocked so hard against her chest that her arms shook. Near the power core, the red lighting was in a permanent flicker—combined with the hot smell of the various metals and oils, it gave the illusion that something was on fire. She took a deep breath, stepped into the maintenance alcove, and glanced around.

It was a very small room with big, looming crates taking up most of the space. To Maglenna's right was a steel wall studded with monitors and glowing fixtures, many of them drizzling sparks. She

glanced at the schematic on her datapad—yes, *that's the power grid*. Just as she confirmed this, she extracted the smell of burnt flesh from the other odors in the room, and caught sight of Morgan.

It wasn't hard to figure out what had happened: Morgan had been electrocuted by the grid and thrown against the bulkhead. At the moment, she was lying over the grillwork on the floor, clutching a half-melted hydrosponder.

Maglenna reached around the doorway and pulled a grounding rod out of its emergency box on the wall. "Morgan?" she said, gently tapping Morgan's shoulder with the insulated rod. "Are you all right?"

Maglenna's red reflection peered back from Morgan's welding goggles. The display at the tip of the rod said "negative"; Maglenna tossed it aside and palpated Morgan's cartoid pulse with her bare hand. Nothing. She had expected this, but her stomach lurched all the same. The girl couldn't even be twenty years old yet.

Maglenna got halfway out of the alcove with Morgan before Jayme appeared at the bulkhead door and took over. He pulled Morgan out into the repair bay, ripped her jacket open, and immediately started pumping at her chest. "Get help," he told Maglenna.

"I'm it," she said, pulling her medic ident-card out of her sleeve pocket.

Jayme looked up and focused on the card without stopping what he was doing.

She said, "Get me a medpac with a defib strip and a scanner. You can find one at the north end of—"

Jayme nodded at the locker array, at the base of which sat a deluxe medical backpack.

Maglenna absently retrieved it. Hadn't they said they needed...?

The scanner confirmed her suspicions—ventricular fibrillation. No point in arguing about medpacs. Maglenna peeled off Morgan's goggles and got the pressure resuscitator affixed to Morgan's face, held her jaw open while the decompression tube automatically located her trachea and fed into her lungs.

"Okay," Maglenna said, affixing an adrenaline patch to Morgan's neck and offering Jayme a thin package with her free hand. "This is an adhesive defib strip. It's got to conduct a signal across her chest, from this shoulder to just over the heart. Put it on her and get clear."

Jayme peeled the strip off its backing and positioned it where Maglenna had indicated. The two of them scooted away as the

Gelgelar

Type: Terrestrial
Temperature: Cool
Atmosphere: Type II (breath mask suggested)
Hydrosphere: Saturated
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Ocean, plains, wetlands
Length of Day: 30 standard hours
Length of Year: 287 local days
Sapient Species: Human, Quarren, Sullustans, Twi'leks, various other aliens
Starport: Limited services
Population: 10,000
Planet Function: Agriculture, criminal haven, trade
Government: Anarchy
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Shvash gas, vohis mold
Major Imports: Foodstuffs, high technology, starship parts

Capsule: Cloud-covered Gelgelar is a backwater planet providing a home to several thousand mold farmers, gas harvesters, and an increasing number of criminals and down-on-their-luck spacers. Shvash gas permeates the atmosphere; while it's not immediately toxic, it can cause severe nausea and unconsciousness. Breath masks are recommended.

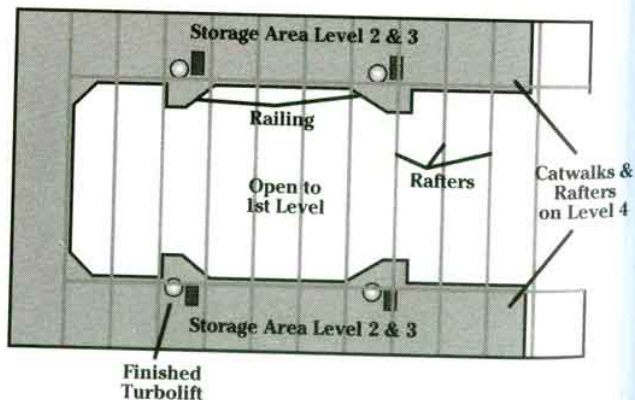
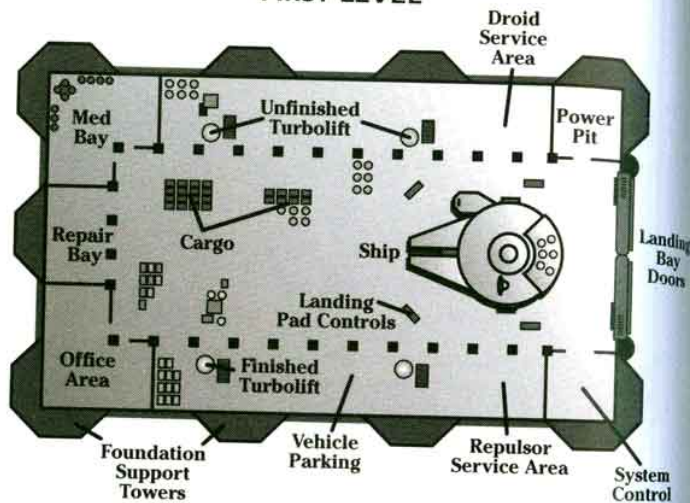
Gelgelar Free Port

System: Gelgelar system, Gelgelar
Starport Type: Standard class
Traffic: Slow
Control: Controller
Landing: Controller
Docking Areas: Landing platforms, docking warehouse
Docking Fee: 10 to 50 credits per local day for landing platform, 200 credits per local day for warehouse
Customs: None
Services: Food, lodging, repair facilities, spacer documents

Capsule: Gelgelar Free Port is chiefly run by an enterprising Sullustan named Loro Ecls and his rather extensive family. Offering numerous services, Ecls acts as the starport's unofficial mayor and protector of the economy. Recently, the Sullustan family's economic control of the free port has been challenged by Slerog Fenn, a greedy Rodian with criminal connections. Fenn's latest money-making schemes include the transformation of an aging warehouse into a secure landing bay able to accommodate light freighters. Eventually, the Rodian plans to offer starship repair facilities rivaling those of Loro Ecls. (For more detailed information consult *Platt's Starport Guide*, pages 58–78.)

Gelgelar Drop Point Warehouse

FIRST LEVEL



LEVELS 2, 3 & 4

device activated itself. An electric signal shot through Morgan's body, and she convulsed once. Twice. Three times. Four. The light on the side of the resuscitator turned green "She's breathing on her own, right?" Jayme asked. "You mean it worked?" Maglenna said, incredulous. "You mean it worked?" "Haven't you done this before?" "Of course." On a simulator, but she didn't mention that. Jayme didn't press the issue; he was suddenly fascinated by something on Morgan's left wrist.

"I got him!" shouted Haathi, who came running through the bulkhead door. She stopped cold on seeing the situation.

Jayme held up his hand. "It's okay, T'Charek. We got a pulse." Maglenna held Morgan's head steady while the decompression tube retracted itself. Behind her, she could feel Haathi, watching, assessing, judging. A security trooper jostled her way into the repair bay, bearing medpacs and a repulsor sled.

"Need some help," Maglenna said loudly.

A thin, scrubbed young man emerged from the deep red shadows of the repair bay door. "I'm here. You can relax now."

"Oh," said Maglenna. She squinted. "You must be Nord."

"None other." He edged Maglenna out of the way and descended on Morgan, the trooper following his lead. In short order they ascertained that Morgan had fractured a collarbone and three ribs but not her spine, loaded her onto the sled, and quickly exited the ship. Haathi and Jayme seemed to want to follow, but instead they turned to Maglenna, who was leaning uncomfortably against the bulkhead. Haathi's black eyes studied Maglenna's face for a long time.

"I thought you were a clerk," Haathi said. Her voice was steady, but very quiet.

"Not by choice," said Maglenna evenly.

"Pendower is your name?"

"Call me Maglenna."

"Maglenna, would you please make sure Nord doesn't extract Morgan's heart and donate it to science?"

Maglenna blinked. Haathi's tone had not changed at all.

"What?"

"I just mean, go make sure he's doing his job right." There was no malice in Haathi's tone. Beyond the wry remark, there was just a professional cool.

"Certainly, Major," Maglenna said.

Haathi's eyes finally diverted their attention to Jayme, who was rummaging loudly through one of the lockers.

"What's with you?" she asked him.

"Going to find out who did this to Morg," he said.

"Nobody did anything," said Maglenna. "It was an accident. She probably stumbled into the power grid. Captain, you saw how obvious it was."

"No," Jayme said, pulling two heavy blasters out of the locker and dropping them into their respective holsters. "I didn't."



A Rolling Stone Gathers No Imperials

Unlike large Alliance bases and command centers, drop points are established with no hint of permanency in mind. OaS realizes that there is very little chance of an active drop point remaining undetected by Imperial spies, as these sites are located as close to the action as possible. Instead, each site is considered to be a one-shot deal, often remaining in operation for only a brief period before being abandoned. OaS will never return to a closed drop point, regardless of resources left behind.

Prior to mission departures, Special Ops teams are briefed on the time schedules and locations of potential drop points. While there is no set number of sites required to be established for each mission, most mission planners don't feel comfortable without providing at least three. Code phrases, passwords and contact procedures are also provided and disseminated on a need-to-know basis. Due to the increasing threat of discovery by Imperial forces, some drop points may never be activated or may be abandoned prematurely, forcing the Special Ops teams to search numerous systems for of a useable site.

Locations and Security

Determining the location of the drop points themselves is often a greater undertaking than maintaining them. Using intelligence gathered from countless spies, operatives, and field agents, OaS must investigate hundreds of potential sites in each sector of operation. Warehouses, abandoned industrial centers and out-of-the-way docking bays are ideal locations for drop sites needed to transfer supplies or act as temporary havens for damaged ships.

Drop Point Gelgelar Duty Staff:

Colonel Arik Stijhl—Commanding Officer

Lady Maglenna Pendower—Administrative Aid/Field Medic

Lieutenant Bendlar Kovings—Communications Officer/Flight Deck Officer

Sergeant Lisa Mandrake—Security Team Leader, commands a 10-man security force

Sergeant Krugh Agovast—Cargo Master/Crew Chief, responsible for 16-man loader/maintenance crew, 8 B-1 labor droids, 4 maintenance droids, and 6 repulsor sleds

Sites used for the quick exchange of information may be nothing more than a vehicle garage or rooftop shelter.

Once the potential locations have been determined, arrangements for their use and security begin. Payoffs, deals and promises must be made to insure the sites will be safe from prying eyes and unwanted interruptions. It is at this juncture that the relationships developed by the Alliance are put to the test. Questions of trust and loyalty come into play, as all parties involved must balance risk of discovery against personal gain.

Site security is always a major concern, but providing it is not always an option. Resources are limited, so whenever possible drop points are established as unmanned equipment caches. Occasionally a droid or a hired contact may be nearby to give special instructions or last-minute briefings to the Special Ops teams. Physical security at these sites is minimal to non-existent, although materials left behind may be booby-trapped to self-destruct if tampered with.

Larger sites established as supply distribution centers or repair shops demand more stringent security measures. Armed guards, perimeter alarms and a network of lookouts and informants maintain a steady vigilance. Acting almost as micro-garrisons, some sites are crewed by several squads of security troopers equipped with heavy weapons and mobile gun emplacements for extra firepower.

Staff members, intelligence officers, smugglers and operatives gain admittance to these sites by following the security procedures laid down in previous briefings. Any ship or party not using a

recognizable call sign or password is subject to intense scrutiny and investigation. At the first sign of trouble or Imperial involvement the entire facility is placed on alert and the decision to evacuate is made by the commanding officer.



Morgan drifted through various levels of consciousness, but Maglenna couldn't make sense out of anything she was saying. They were in the medical supply cubicle; serious injuries were intended to be transferred to the nearest medical frigate, which meant that there were no bacta tanks for the odd disaster. So the only thing standing between Morgan and death was a quilted anti-shock blanket riddled with wires and sensors, a digital life-sign readout housed in one of the quilt squares near her heart, and dumb luck.

Maglenna sat next to Morgan's cot. Now that Nord had left, everything was almost oppressively quiet. It gave Maglenna too much time to think about everything that could have gone wrong. Would Jayme and Haathi blame her if Morgan died? Then again, didn't they thanked her, in their own strange way?

The thought of Jayme brought something else to mind. Maglenna took hold of Morgan's bandaged left hand and examined the wrist. Sure enough, something was there—a thin, reddish welt, totally unrelated to the electrical shock.

Suddenly Morgan's fingers twitched, and her eyes opened.

Pendower held Morgan's hand. "Morgan? Can you hear me?"

"Whu—?"

"Everything's all right. You're at the Alliance drop point on Gelgelar—"

"I'm not the Maker," Morgan said thickly.

"What?"

Morgan repeated it several times, and then slipped back into an incoherent mumble. Maglenna stared blankly at the digital readout. Of course Morgan's system was saturated with drugs, and Maglenna gathered from Nord that Morgan didn't make much sense even when she was healthy. Nonetheless, Maglenna knew one context in which "the Maker" meant something other than the ship, and if this had anything to do with Morgan's current state, Maglenna didn't want to think about what Jayme was going to find.



Jayme stood underneath *The Maker*, staring at the landing pad, listening to the sounds of droids and workers bustling around the warehouse. The logical path of Morgan's assailant had taken him through the engine compartment escape hatch and down to the ground. There was an open floor grating two meters to his left.

Jayme got down on his belly and slid headfirst into the opening. Presumably this led to a maintenance tunnel. He bent in half at his torso, braced his legs on the landing pad, and dangled there for a second while his eyes adjusted to the darkness. Except the crawl space wasn't totally dark. There was a glow emanating from a distant pair of red lights. Jayme thought they were part of a control

Fenn's Warehouse

The warehouse on Gelgelar is owned and operated by Slerog Fenn, a crafty Rodian with a shady past. Erected decades ago from prefab kits, the building is large enough to accommodate a light freighter; but years of neglect have taken their toll. Several renovations have been attempted, but were never completed. The floors are cluttered with rusting storage tanks, stacks of useless cargo and piles of rotting building materials. The upper gantries are relatively operational, although open shafts and missing floorplates can be hazardous to the unwary.

Fenn obtained the structure as a payment on a gambling debt, and immediately saw the potential it offered as a challenge to the economic monopoly of his rival Loro Ecls. At the cost of a few hundred credits, the warehouse was made operational again and can accommodate most light freighters. Fenn envisions the warehouse as the keystone of his upcoming criminal syndicate and leases the building to smugglers and legitimate spacers for an astounding 200 credits a day in advance.

Fenn doesn't fully understand the current inhabitants, a rag-tag collection of security guards, droids and official-looking men. As long as they pay their 200 credits per day, Fenn is happy to leave them alone with whatever work they're doing in there.

panel until they disappeared around a corner. It occurred to him that he might jump down and follow the lights, but then he thought better of it. He stood up, jumped off the landing platform, and snatched a base schematic placard hanging from one of the control panels. For a moment he studied the placard; then he jogged across the landing bay in the direction the lights had been heading.

At that moment, every light in the warehouse went out.

Jayme stopped dead. A half-second later the backup lights kicked on, bright, cheap lumas that left parts of the warehouse starkly lit and other parts in deep shadow.

Oh, no, no, no.

He sprinted across the hangar, nearly tripping over his feet. *It wants to trap us in here with it. If it gets to the hangar door controls, we're all dead.*

Suddenly he was there, standing at the control panel, ripping open the yellow-striped maintenance cover and absorbing the control schematic on the inside. With the power out, the whole system would have to be prepped before the doors could be opened manually. Two large levers disengaged the hydraulic braking system, and made horrible ratchety noises as he pulled them down; and then there was a massive clang from the hangar doors as the braking pins popped out of their slots.

"Okay," Jayme said quietly to himself, wiping his sweaty hands on his pants, "manual override, manual override."

The layout was not well-mapped. Jayme wished Morgan were there. She could have had the doors open in two seconds and drawn a better control schematic on the back of a candy wrapper.

Thinking about Morgan cleared his head. He found the black switch that would depressurize the automatic hydraulics and engage the manual systems. Then, with much effort, he locked the unit's auxiliary power cylinders in place, and finally got his hands on the giant lever that would unlock the hangar doors.

He would have pulled it, too, except that his own shadow suddenly rose in front of him, and a tiny red spot appeared on the panel slightly to his left.

Before the spot could position itself at the back of his head, before there was the sound of blaster-fire, before the whole panel exploded, effectively locking everyone inside, Jayme was up a length of cable chain, halfway to the second level. Below him he heard the beeping of his assailant, a small, sleek assassin droid.

And he and his crew had brought it here.



A Welcome Addition

Drop points can become an exciting and vital addition to any Special Ops campaign, both as a plot device and to add an appropriate *Star Wars* feel to the game. They provide a logical way to connect several unrelated missions, strengthening the reality of the game and adding purpose. Here characters can receive orders, replenish supplies and hole up when things get too rough. Recurring gamemaster characters can meet players at a specific site to

supply them with new information or some special gadget to aid them in their mission. In addition, new player characters may be introduced at a drop point, easily allowing them to join an existing campaign.

In the movies the Rebels were forced to relocate their base of operations several times to escape Imperial forces. From Yavin to Hoth (and several implied locations in-between) and finally to a secret rendezvous spot at the far edge of the galaxy, we were treated to a variety of exotic planets and fantastic settings. By using a series of constantly-moving drop points instead of a permanent base, the gamemaster is given the leeway to create as many settings and exotic locales as are needed to dramatically move the adventure along. The excitement of travel, new locations and the constant fear of discovery go a long way toward expanding the cinematic feeling.

Further drama is added when the players realize that their base camp may not be there when they get back, and a sense that they must beat the clock slips into game sessions. And as most players know, sometimes the best laid plans can blow up in their faces—at a safe haven they can regroup and resupply, potentially salvaging the mission and their reputations.

Played properly, this can be the dramatic pause before the final confrontation. In *Star Wars* the Rebels had such an opportunity on Yavin before attacking the Death Star. They had another aboard the medical frigate at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*. In fact, most adventure stories allow the lead characters a chance to regroup after facing a serious setback, to rethink their strategy and to strengthen their resolve. Remember that player characters are heroes too, and should be offered the same heroic options.



Haathi threw a datapad against the bulkhead, having spent the past twenty minutes trying to understand Morgan's notes on the power grid malfunction. Just as she considered jumping up and stomping on the pad, there was a tapping at the doorway.

"Major?" said Colonel Stijhl. "I thought you'd like some help."

"That's nice of you, sir, but do you know anything about circuit boards?"

"Not a thing. That's why I brought you a real engineer."

She squeezed in past the Colonel, a meek female Sullustan wearing

matted furs and carrying a tool box. Haathi got out of her way.

"This is Sergeant Nofre Ecls. She's one of our undercover operatives—she runs the Nofre Repair Bay," said Stijhl. "Don't tell her brother. He doesn't like Rebels much."

"Thank you, sir. I appreciate it."

"Don't get teary-eyed or anything. I have four other ships that are going to need this hangar today, you know."

"Speaking of which, is your hangar always this noisy? Sounds like you've got a riot going on outside."

"You wish. It sounds to me like a freight droid crashed into a pylon. Probably nothing."

"It's never nothing, sir."

"Not with you people around," said Stijhl, and he exited the ship.



Up the chain, through the second-level rail, on hands and knees, standing up now, running, leaping over a pile of boxes, running, running. Jayme remembered the obstacle course at the Imperial training base on Merikon, so difficult when he was a teenager. It hadn't occurred to him back then to be grateful that he wasn't being followed by a custom-made assassin droid. He could hear its repulsors whining behind him, pictured it hovering above the ground floor, slipping between the rails, gliding along behind him. The thought made his back prickle, and his heart felt as though it might explode.

Take it easy. Don't go crying about it yet.

He swung his blaster around and fired. The red bolt sputtered uselessly off the droid's shielding.

Okay, now you can cry.

At least the droid was slower than he was. Moreover, Jayme realized as he approached a stairwell, he had gotten a great running start. And running starts were perfect for one thing.

Jayme leaped over the stairwell edge and caught onto one of the metal steps above his head. An instant later, a yellow blaster-bolt hit the floor where his feet had been. By the time a second shot went off, Jayme was pulling himself up the back of the steps, hand over hand.

As soon as Jayme hoisted himself up to the railing, a barrage of shots went up the front of the steps in anticipation of his next move. But he didn't leap onto the steps. Instead, he dropped back down

Colonel Arik Stijhl



Type: Alliance Field Commander
DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 3D, dodge 3D+2

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 5D, bureaucracy 6D, bureaucracy: Alliance supply 8D, business 7D, intimidation 5D+2, languages 5D, law enforcement 5D, planetary systems 5D, streetwise 6D, streetwise: black market 8D, value 7D

MECHANICAL 2D+1

Astrogation 4D, communications 5D+1

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 6D, command 6D, con 5D, gambling 5D, investigation 4D

STRENGTH 2D+1

Stamina 4D+1

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Computer programming/repair 4D-2, security 5D+2

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, 450 credits

Capsule: Stijhl served in the Old Republic Navy but never saw any action; his talent lay in getting people what they needed as cleanly and efficiently as possible. His reputation for delivering the goods under any circumstance was such that Alliance High Command sought him out for its Ordinance and Supply Inner Rim division.

Stijhl's underlings are aware he runs a tight ship, and they respect him for it. Perhaps this is why his most frustrating assignment was serving as quartermaster at the same training base as flight instructor T'Charek Haathi, whose various training "improvisations" often required the unauthorized use of critical supplies. The two of them were always at odds; Stijhl was a complete stickler for timetables, rules and organization. If things were not running exactly according to his plan, his intricate schedules would be thrown out of whack. Haathi infringed on his authority as king of the supply domain—an unspeakable act in the eyes of those who depended on him. As far as he was concerned, that meant everybody.

Stijhl enjoys his current duties of running drop points like the one on Gelgelar, since locating and stocking them has been a real challenge. He has proven that his contraband acquisition skills and business acumen are as sharp as they were in his younger days, and that he's still the pride of OaS...as long as Haathi isn't around.

to the second level floor, on the opposite side of the stairwell. The droid stopped its barrage, confused. That bought Jayme enough time to simply run right up the steps. Jayme's head pounded. *What's upstairs? What can I use?*

The answer came in a sick flash. The rafters were upstairs, and once he got there he'd have nowhere to hide.



Alliance Drop Point Protocols

As Alliance operations progress in this and other sectors, the following policies and procedures for the use of drop points have been issued:

1. Purpose and Use: Drop points should serve primarily to restock equipment and personnel for Special Operations teams and deep cover operations. Secondary uses for such locations should include, when deemed appropriate, first aid, material repair, recruit pick-up, mission planning and supply procurement.

2. Drop Point Locations: Sites will be established throughout areas of ongoing Alliance operations as manpower and resources permit. Warehouses, docking bays and small isolated spaceports are prime locations, although deep space sites may be used as conditions dictate.

3. Duration of Activity: Unless specifically prearranged, drop points will be used only for a pre-determined period of time. The command staff will immediately cease operations or evacuate the site upon discovery or when the set time has elapsed.

4. Access: Mission planners will brief Alliance personnel as to the probable locations, duration and uses of specific drop points on a need-to-know basis. Comm frequencies, approach codes and passwords will be issued for specific sites, along with general distress and communication codes. Briefings should also include secondary procedures for establishing contact.

5. Crew Requirements: Guards, droids and personnel, when required, will be assigned to crew drop points as resources and situations dictate.

6. Priority Usage: All Special Operations teams shall be provided

with first priority use of any Alliance drop point and the resources contained there (excluding staff personnel and droids). Unless specifically designated for another operation or for the continued operation of the drop point, all supplies or equipment will be made available to these teams on a first-come-first-served basis.

7. Security: Every effort should be made to limit the access and use of Alliance drop points and to protect the identities of the personnel and droids assigned to them. Unauthorized use or deliberate disclosure to unauthorized entities is an offense punishable by court-martial, and could result in the loss of Alliance personnel and resources.



The Sullustan was working diligently at the power grid, with the main circuit board tucked under her arm. The grid was still smoking a little; it brought the smell of burned flesh to Haathi's attention.

She's alive. Don't think about it.

"What's the situation?" Haathi asked.

"The master circuit board is fried," Nofre told her.

"I know that. Tell me about the power grid."

"The, uh, the power grid is also fried."

Haathi had to stop a moment to keep herself from yelling. *It's not her fault.* "Could you please be more specific?"

"I need to rewire the whole thing."

"What?" Haathi shouted.

Nofre shrank back against the bulkhead.

Haathi cleared her throat. "I mean, uh, that appears to be a taller order than you're making it sound."

"No, ma'am, it'll just take a few days."

"I want my techie aboard a medical frigate by this time tomorrow."

"Sorry. Can't be done."

"Come on. There must be a way."

Nofre firmly shook her head.

"Couldn't we just hotwire the main engine to the power core?"

"You wouldn't want to do that."

"Why not?"

"You'd be flying without any safeguards."

"What does this mean, 'safeguards'?"

Nofre Ecls/Talana



Type: Sullustan Mechanic/Rebel Operative

DEXTERITY 3D

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

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Bureaucracy 4D, business: starships 6D+2, languages 4D+2, streetwise 3D+1, value: starships 6D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 4D, capital ship piloting 5D+2, capital ship shields 4D+1, sensors 4D, space transports 6D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Bargain 7D+1, command 4D+2, forgery 5D, gambling 5D+2, persuasion 4D+2

STRENGTH 2D+1

Brawling 4D, climbing/jumping 4D+2, lifting 4D+1, stamina 4D

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Capital ship repair 5D, computer programming/repair 4D+2, droid programming 4D+2, droid repair 4D+2, first aid 5D,

repulsorlift repair 4D+2, security 6D+1, space transports repair 8D+2, starfighter repair 7D+1, starship weapons repair 6D+2

Special Abilities:

Enhanced Senses: Sullustans get +2D to search and related Perception checks in low-light conditions.

Location Sense: Cannot get lost in location if visited before. Receives +1D to astrogation rolls if traveling to a planet visited before.

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 6

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), comlink, datapad, protective goggles, tool kit

Capsule Update: Nofre Ecls is an undercover operative for the Alliance, a secret she keeps from everybody, especially her brother Loro. She realizes that the Empire may not jeopardize their lives directly at this time, but she sees the need to curb the power of such a ruthless government. She is very unhappy with the way her people and homeworld are controlled by the Empire and has secretly vowed to help the Rebellion whenever possible.

She helps repair Rebel ships on the sly, often absorbing the massive costs herself. She also acts as an infochant—the same information she collects for her brother is often valuable to the Alliance as well. Nofre operates under the code name Talana, and eventually checks out anyone tossing the name around. Someday she will inform her brother about this secret side of her life, but for now he has too many other things to worry about running Gelgelar. (For complete information see *Platt's Starport Guide*, pages 68–70.)

SPECIAL OPERATIONS ORDERS #31894.98 A/891



OPERATION NIGHTHOOK DROP POINTS

CLASSIFICATION: TOP SECRET

MESSAGE AS FOLLOWS:

As a special operations team leader participating in OPERATION NIGHTHOOK, the following drop points have been established for your use:

Drop Point: Gelgellar

Location: Gelgellar Free Port

Services Available: Resupply/repair, minor first aid, orders, infochant

Primary Contact: Comm channel 3441.5—caution, open frequency; use your designated call sign when requesting landing instructions.

Secondary Contact: Operative code-named "Talana." Nofre Repair Bay

Challenge Phrase: "Do you have any references?"

Response Phrase: "We have a common friend on Bestine."

Planned Duration Available: 40 standard days from this order date

Drop Point: Laertos

Location: Laertos Spaceport

Services Available: Equipment cache only

Primary Contact: None (non-crewed), coded key-card Alpha 13 required

Directions: Proceed to docking bay #5662. On south wall, locate maintenance storage locker 13A1. Insert coded key-card designated as Alpha 13 in second key slot from bottom.

Contents: 4 blaster pistols, 2 hold-out blasters, 4 medpacs, 4 blank starport maintenance IDs, 4 starport maintenance coveralls, 2 vibroknives, 200 credits

Planned Duration Available: One use, will not be restocked

Drop Point: Condor

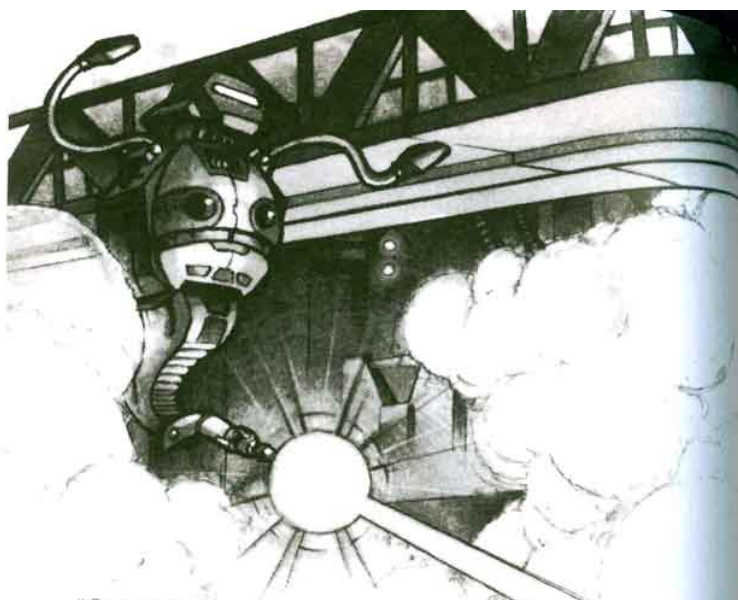
Location: System M132L4

Services Available: Orders, information exchange only

Primary Contact: Comm channel 2588.3, encryption code T33-A

Secondary Contact: Comm channel 7349.2, encryption code N21-H

Planned Duration of Operation: Comm channels will be monitored for 4 hours each standard day, from 0200–0600 Galactic Standard Time for the duration of this operation



"One power spike and the whole ship would blow."

Haathi felt a mad rush of relief. "Is that all?" she yelled, incredulous. "Why didn't you tell me that before?"

Nofre's eyes widened. "Colonel Stijhl told me not to."

"Boy, you're boring. Tell you what. You hotwire the power core and I'll rewire the main c-board."

The Sullustan held the c-board tightly to her chest.

Haathi leaned in toward her. "Sergeant," she said, and added the three words she almost never used: "That's an order."



Colonel Stijhl had stepped out of *The Maker* into chaos. Kovings had run up to him with a breathless report about the hangar doors being locked shut, comm channels being jammed and several dead technicians in the forward maintenance pit. Around Stijhl, the warehouse's limited security force was firing blindly toward the ceiling lights, underneath which a shadowy object was chasing someone across the rafters.

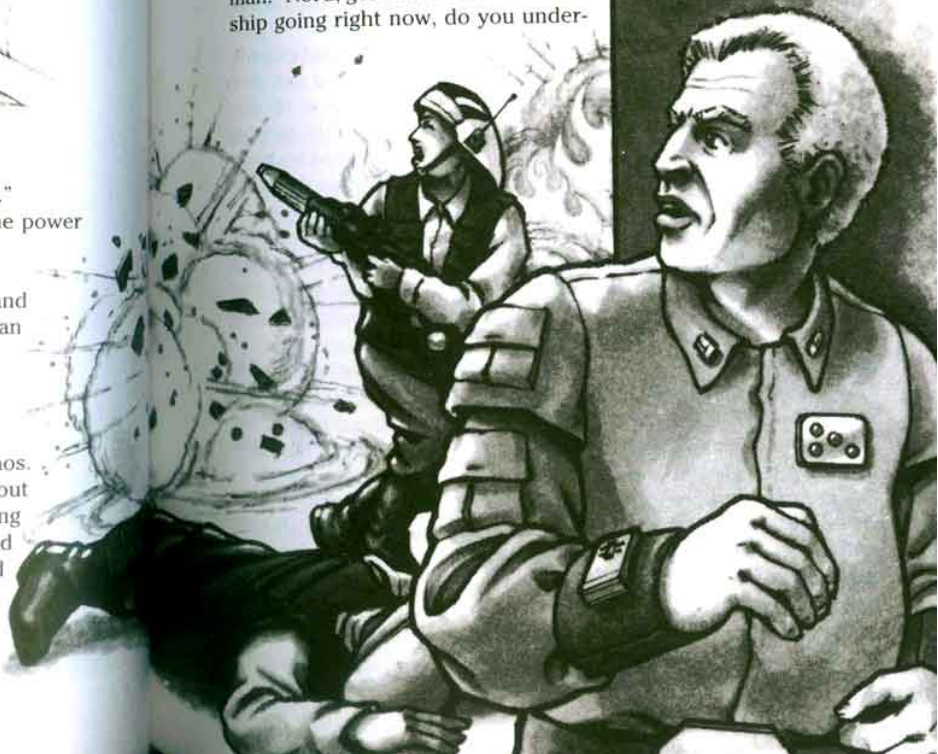
Then the explosions started. Massive stacks of crates on the west side of the hangar blew up and the ones with flammable contents caught fire. Tan-suited loaders came howling out into the open. From above there now came a salvo of blaster-fire, every single shot hitting home.

Stijhl, ducking behind a pylon, gaped as his people fell in quick succession. When the firing subsided, more crates began exploding, sending another flood of fresh targets into the open.

"Take cover!" the Colonel screamed. Some of them heard him and tried to find a safe place between the blazing supplies and the enemy's kill-zone.

"Sir!" somebody called as more blaster shots rained down. "Shouldn't we evacuate?"

Stijhl recognized Haathi's corpsman. "Nord, get Haathi! We need that ship going right now, do you under-



stand? Get everyone on board that ship!"

Nord might have heard him, but Stijhl wouldn't know, because at that moment he felt a burning across his back, and then nothing.



"Hey, loser!" Jayme called.

The droid stopped firing. Now that it was facing him, Jayme could finally get a good look at the thing: its snakelike body hovered over the girder, swaying gently back and forth as its flat head pivoted to face him. It looked very much like a metallic Sluissi. Except that it didn't have the sheen of normal metal; reflections seemed to melt off of it like random images washing across a monitor.

Jayme launched his own attack virtually point blank. Multiple shots from both blasters, a shrieking noise, a searing across his hands as the droid's shields sparked and collapsed. Then something black launched at him.

Jayme was at the end of the girder near the fourth-level catwalk. In a second he was over the catwalk guardrail, took a fast step toward the stairwell, and hoisted himself up, the balls of his feet balanced on the stair rails. Looking back, he saw what had erupted from the droid—a pair of whiplike tentacles. He dropped his guns, hurled himself into a backflip off the rails and landed on the beam directly behind the droid.

A second too late, the droid tore the rails apart with its tentacles. Before it could turn around and lash out at him, Jayme dove back over the rail and onto the catwalk, so close to the droid that it was startled. He scuttled away on hands and knees, then staggered to his feet.

Below him *The Maker* made occasional dead-start noises. He thought of Haathi and Morgan—warm, safe images. Suddenly his legs were jerked out from under him. He was falling, splintering noises in his ears and dust in his eyes, something cold wrapped painfully around his ankles. Then he stopped.

Jayme hung there for a moment, dizzy. Blood pumped into his head; everything was dark. He recalled seeing an open shaft covered by a length of plastiboard as he'd gotten to his feet—he must have fallen through. The droid wasn't strong enough to pull him out or smart enough to let him go. But he found himself wondering, as his limbs drained of sensation, just how strong the tentacles actually were.

He was answered by the sound of metal snapping and a falling sensation.

When he landed, Jayme shifted; shards of plastiboard slid off his back and a dull pain spread from his shoulder to his pinkie. He rose slowly, felt a yanking pain in his shoulder and the warm rush of blood draining from his head back into the rest of his system. Plastiboard had broken his fall at each level until he'd hit the ground floor. The droid was nowhere in sight.

He didn't see his blasters lying around on the floor, or buried in the splintered plastiboard. He decided the best thing was to keep moving. Clambering over a mountain of red metal crates, he got a good look at the carnage—the floor was covered with trashed repulsor sleds, charred B-1 loading droids, and human bodies giving off the overwhelming scent of blood iron and burned flesh. Techies and officers and loaders spilled out of dark corners of the warehouse, thumping across the floor and up the ship's entry ramp.

The Maker, however, still couldn't get itself started.

Jayme spied a clutter of tools down on the other side of the crates. He took a deep breath and clambered down into the unbearable heat and rummaged around until he found a pair of hull cutters.

"Captain!"

A female voice, ragged from coughing. He looked up, blinking in the hot, shimmering air. Maglenna Pendower was right in front of him, stooping over as she tried to manage the awkward load of an extinguisher in one hand and half-conscious Morgan hanging off her opposite shoulder.

"Maglenna! Are you all right? Have you got her?"

Maglenna replied by swinging the extinguisher at him. Jayme was so surprised that he didn't get the chance to move before she bashed his legs out from under him. He felt the agony across the leg that had taken the brunt, bile rising in his throat.

As he choked it down, an energy blast ricocheted off the floor.

Then he saw the sleek metal serpent hovering over the crates, shredded black cables dangling from it like intestines. From that angle the blast would surely have taken his head right off...had he been standing.

Jayme felt a massive surge of adrenaline. The droid swooped down at his face, but Jayme's hull cutters came right up to greet its underside. There was a ripping sound followed by a shower of

Doom Slayer

Model: Doom Slayer Assassin Droid

Type: Customized Assassin Droid

DEXTERITY 4D

Blaster 7D, missile weapons 6D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

Intimidation 5D

MECHANICAL 1D

Communications 5D

PERCEPTION 3D

Search 4D, sneak 4D

STRENGTH 2D

Brawling 4D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 4D, security 4D

Equipped With:

- Three Locris Syndicates MGL-1 Micro-Grenade Launchers (range 5-25/100/200, blast radius 0-2/4/6, damage 4D/3D/2D, ammo 30 each)
- Modified BlastTech T-21 Light Repeating Blaster (range 3-75/120/300, damage 6D, ammo 300)
- Repulsorlift generator (altitude: 0-50 meters)
- Comlink jamming array (jams most comlink channels up to 300 meters, opposed *communications* roll needed to break jamming)
- Two retractable heavy grasping tentacles
- Several retractable fine task manipulator arms
- Scomp-link (utilizes both standard commercial and Imperial jacks)
- Body armor (+2D to *Strength* to resist damage)
- Ray shield generators (+2D to *Strength* to resist energy attacks)
- Self-destruct mechanism (blast radius 0-50/75/100, damage 12D/6D/3D)
- Electro-chemical camouflage paint (+2D to *sneak*)

Move: 8

Size: 1 meter sphere (non-extended), 2 meters maximum height (fully extended)

Cost: Not available for sale

Game Notes: The protection provided by the shield and the armor is cumulative, giving Doom Slayer 6D against energy attacks (*Strength* plus shield and armor), but only 4D versus physical attack (*Strength* and armor).

Capsule: Doom Slayer is the latest creation of the underground droid manufacturer Sythluss Leethe, a Sluissi craftsman and criminal genius. Based on a common Sluissi security droid, Doom Slayer has been heavily modified from the power core out. The unit resembles an abstract sculpture of an adult Sluissi more than it does a hunter-killer

sparks, and Jayme rolled out of the way before the thing could land on his head.

The droid screamed, its repulsor unit destroyed, its broken, stubby whip-ends lashing uselessly out at nothing as it fizzed and sparked violently on the floor. Jayme was up on his good knee now, the cutters still in his hands. He just started pummeling.

He didn't know what parts of the droid he was hitting, but he felt

machine. When on standby, it can fold itself into a compact sphere approximately one meter in diameter; while in full operation a "head" and "tail" structure extend, bringing the unit to a menacing two meters in height. When dodging, or just before launching an attack, the droid adopts serpentine movements, the head and tail swaying ominously.

The droid is constructed of a lightweight armor capable of providing protection against both physical and energy attacks, and by a series of micro-shield generators capable of providing additional protection from energy attacks only. The armor is also coated with a layer of micro circuits and a special chemical paint which is highly reactive to electronic currents. The Doom Slayer alters the electronic charges of the micro circuits, causing the paint to adopt a pattern and coloration similar to its current surroundings.

A compact, custom-designed power core provides the vast amount of energy required to keep the droid operational. Six shaped fuel cells are packed tightly around the core, with multiple fuel injectors wired directly to the droid's CPU. If for any reason the droid becomes non-functional (or upon pre-programmed instructions), the fuel injectors automatically open full, allowing an unregulated fuel flow into the core. Within three minutes the power reaches critical breakdown, and a devastating blast follows.

The standard single heavy blaster mounted on the security droids has been replaced with a custom modified light repeating blaster mounted on the folding "tail" section of the droid. Multiple blaster gas canisters, augmented by the recycled gas discharge of the power core, give the weapon an unparalleled 300 shots between charges. Three micro-grenade launchers mounted equidistantly apart in the main body supply the droid with the ability to cause mass destruction and to flush out live targets.

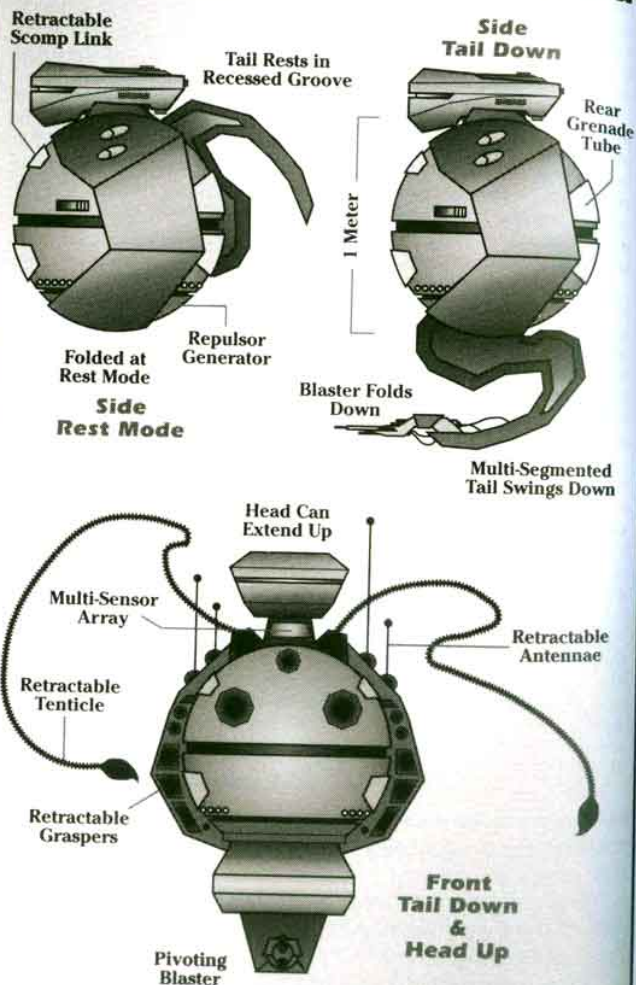
Due to the sheer expense of construction, Leethe only hires out Doom Slayer on hits that pay over 100,000 credits. To date the Doom Slayer has performed above expectations, successfully completing the assassination of five major smuggler lords in their own headquarters. Rumor has it that the Doom Slayer's next target was to have been a notorious Hutt. Needless to say, Sythluss might be in trouble if he has already accepted payment for the hit.

it denting under each blow, soft metal that nobody was supposed to get remotely close to.

"Yeah, you feel that? What's it like? Huh? You want some more? Take it! Drink it in, love it, yeah, it's pain, that's what you give and that's what you get!"

The droid stopped moving, but he kept hitting it, screaming at it, until he felt a hand on his shoulder.

Doom Slayer Assassin Droid



Major Haathi and Company

Looking for more information about this special ops team's previous misadventures? Check out "Special Ops: Shipjackers" in *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal* #13. You'll find game statistics for Major T'Charek Haathi, Lt. Morgan Q. Raventhorn and Captain Dren Nord, plus information on *The Maker*.

"I think you killed it," said Maglenna.

Jayme looked down, panting. Its picturesque grace was gone; it didn't look like a Sluissi anymore, or even a droid. The swirling electromagnetic paint was half beaten off and looked tacky instead of mysterious. Jayme felt a throbbing in his shoulder, and with it a pang of disappointment; he had expected the droid to drag him to his last breath, to expire right after he heard its own final noises.

The sound of Morgan coughing brought him back to attention. He came up underneath her with his good arm, put his weight on Maglenna while helping her support Morgan at the same time. He leaned over and spit onto the killer's remains.

That was when he noticed the readout in the smashed torso unit.

01:35

01:34

01:33

"Oh, no," he said.



"Listen up," Haathi called over the sounds of moaning and chattering. "Somebody have a roster or something? Do we know who's here?"

"I think this is everybody, Major," one of the loaders said.

Almost everybody.

"Who has piloting experience?" she asked.

One of the green-suits did. Haathi sent him up the cockpit, told him to take off once the engines turned over. Then she picked her way past the sweaty, bleeding bodies crammed in the corridors and lying on the floors, and stood at the open entryway. At that moment she despised being a commanding officer.

The warehouse was clouded in a swirl of black smoke and flames



with strange chemical tints to them. The smell burned the back of Haathi's throat, made her eyes sting, but she didn't move.

Come on....

A massive figure came hobbling out of the smoke. No, two figures, one slung over the other's shoulder. Haathi came down the ramp a short way and helped Nord get the Colonel inside the ship.

"Morgan? Jayme?" she asked Nord.

"Didn't see them," he said.

The ship listed as its repulsorlifts came to life. Haathi remained steady.

Then they emerged, covered in soot and blood—three people trying desperately to help each other run but only managing a

collective, crippled lode. Haathi stumbled to the end of the ramp, choking back toxic fumes and tears, pulled Morgan off of Jayme and Maglenna and carried her back up. Somebody in a tan uniform met her halfway and took Morgan inside.

The Maker lifted a meter off the floor. Haathi fell onto the closing ramp. She grabbed a support strut and heard the scuffling noises of Maglenna and Jayme. When she steadied herself she saw Jayme lying at the end of the ramp, breathing hard. One of his legs was soaked in blood; his face wasn't registering pain, but his body was nearly curled into the fetal position and he looked as though he didn't have another movement left in him.

Nonetheless he got himself turned around and thrust out his hand to Maglenna, who was still on the ground. Haathi threw herself down to the edge and grabbed Maglenna's other hand.

The ramp closed. The three of them were inside, coughing, their clothes wet and reeking of chemical smoke. *The Maker* smashed into the hanger doors with such a horrible sound of wrenching metal that Haathi's vision darkened, and she thought she saw the walls of her ship buckle and twist. Before she could focus, *The Maker* rocked violently as the assassin droid blew itself and the warehouse into white-hot oblivion.



When Stijhl finally felt like dealing with Haathi's team, he had them gather around a table in one of the medical frigate's large white utility rooms.

He spoke in measured tones. "Major, I'd really love to hear your explanation for why we lost an entire warehouse full of equipment."

"A case of mistaken identity," said Haathi calmly.

"What?"

"Tell him, Morg."

Raventhorn sat up straight and put her hands on the table, as if she were about to outline a major battle strategy. "Well, sir, first you got to picture something. Are you picturing?"

"Get on with it."

"Picture us all on Zelos II, stealing *The Maker*."

"Wait," said Haathi. "What am I wearing?"

"Major—" said Stijhl.

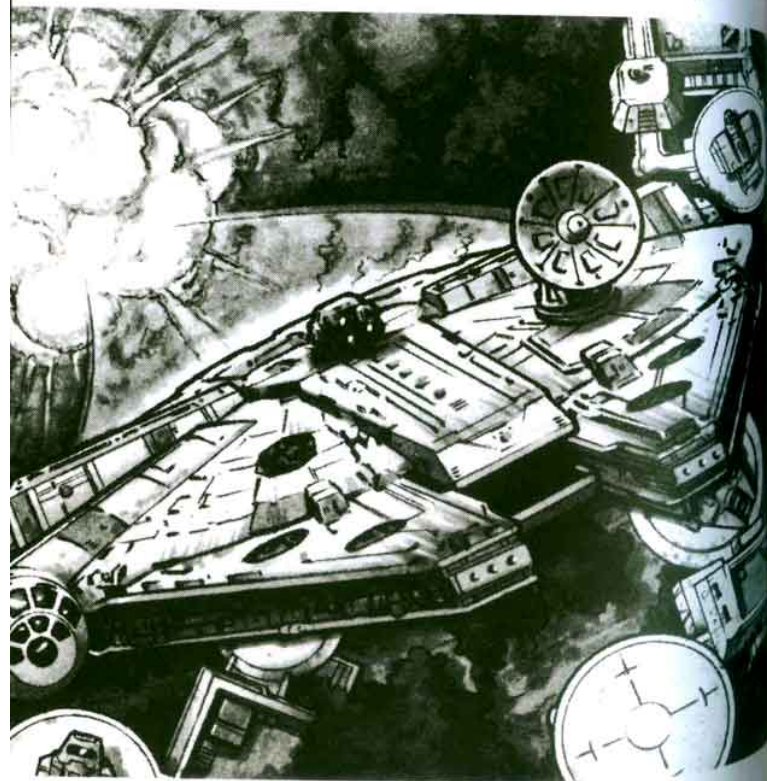
Morgan said, "We've got a limited time, so the only thing we really check out is the background of the ship and who it belongs

to—Sythluss Leethe. We don't actually look up Leethe's background. So I did some checking here, and you know what he does for a living?"

"I'm afraid to—"

"That's right—he's a droid manufacturer! Serving the underworld with quality merchandise for over twenty years. So when we take off with his ship, we're also taking off with his latest project, designed to do some bounty hunter or a Hutt or somebody gross like that.

"Anyway, the droid must have been on a timer and activated itself shortly before we landed. Its basic purpose was most likely to



wipe out a secure area and terminate the life-signs of those it came into contact with—like me—as well as anyone who tried to interfere with its agenda—like Jayme. When your people opened fire on it, I guess it declared open season on everything that moved. And in the end, even though Jayme beat it, it succeeded in its mission parameters anyway."

Haathi spoke. "All in all, we're pretty lucky."

Stijhl pretended to clean out his ear. "What? What was that word? Maybe you should listen to the damage assessment." He leaned out the door. "Pendower, get in here!"

Maglenna entered and handed him a datapad.

Stijhl began reading. "Six industrial grade power generators, 600 field medpacs, 82 perimeter sensors, eight B-1 worker droids, 200 blaster packs...shall I go on?"

"One warehouse," added Haathi.

"Just keep it up, Haathi, it won't save you from what's coming next."

"Which is what?"

"You're going on an acquisition run for me."

"What for?"

"Six industrial grade power generators, 600 field medpacs, 82 perimeter sensors, eight B-1 worker droids, 200 blaster packs...shall I go on?"

Haathi studied the colonel. "I'll need some supplies."

"Like what?"

"One medic."

"You have a medic."

"Not really."

"Hey!" said Nord.

"Come on, Nord, you like the Colonel, don't you?" She turned to Stijhl. "He saved your life, didn't he? Even purged your office data files for you after you went down?"

"What are you getting at?"

"You get Nord and we get Maglenna."

Stijhl looked at Nord, who shrugged. "Anything would be an improvement, sir."

"Pendower?" said Stijhl. "Is this what you want?"

"Yes, sir," said Pendower. "I discussed it with Haathi's team."

"She's qualified," Jayme said. "Obviously."

Stijhl gave a heavy sigh. The red tape was going to be murder, getting her transferred into Special Ops. Somehow that was noth-

Lady Maglenna Pendower



Type: Former Senatorial Aid

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 5D, dodge 3D+2, running 3D+2

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 4D+2, bureaucracy 5D+2, bureaucracy: Alliance Command 7D, bureaucracy: Imperial Senate 6D+2, culture 5D, languages 7D, value 5D, willpower 4D+2

MECHANICAL 2D

Communications 3D+2, repulsorlift operation 4D, sensors 2D+2

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 6D, command 5D, con 4D, forgery 4D+1, persuasion 4D+2, search 3D+2

STRENGTH 3D+1

Stamina 4D+1, swimming 3D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 5D+2, first aid 5D, (A) medicine 1D, security 4D

This character is Force-sensitive.

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

Equipment: Datapad, comlink, 1,200 credits

Capsule: As a member of Leia Organa's senatorial staff, Lady Maglenna Pendower was once witness to the inner workings of the corruption that was the Imperial Senate. Her status as an aide allowed her to interact with the underlings of the other senatorial staffs, often

ing in the face of sitting in the room with Haathi for another moment.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Pendower. "We'll also be needing those medpacs Major Haathi requested earlier."

"Take one. Take fifty. Go. Leave. Dismissed."

Haathi took the Colonel's hand and shook it. "A pleasure as

providing the Princess with vital information regarding the true activities of the Senate and the Emperor.

On several occasions she worked with the Princess planning Alliance activities, but when it came time to carry out a dangerous mission, Maglenna was always left behind. Someone had to cover everyone's tracks: to make excuses to the Senate, to feed false information to the newsnets, and to deal with the unexpected. Maglenna longed to get her hands dirty, but she was too valuable as a front to risk sending into the field.

A native of Alderaan, she lost her father and one of two brothers when the planet was destroyed. It was never confirmed whether the younger brother was off-planet at the time; attempts to locate him have so far been in vain. Maglenna's longing for action has since transformed into a deep need to never be helpless in a life-or-death situation again. Using her administrative abilities she finally managed to get herself enlisted in Alliance combat medical training program, with hopes of receiving a field assignment.

Although Maglenna graduated at the top of her class, Princess Leia was not amused—Maglenna, she said, was much more valuable to the Alliance as an agent. With that the Princess transferred Maglenna to Ordnance and Supply to assist with the revamping of the drop point program. Maglenna rightly believes that Leia is being overprotective and has requested a transfer several times since; however the Princess just has too much clout. Still, Maglenna looks forward to the day when she can leap straight into the face of danger. (For more information on Lady Maglenna Pendower, see the *Shadows of the Empire Sourcebook*, page 72.)

always, sir," she said, and then turned to her crew. "Let's be off, boys and girls."

They strolled out, Nord trailing behind them. Stijhl put his head on the desk and stared at the floor.

Someone came into the room. "Sir?"

"What is it, Kovings?" asked Stijhl without lifting his head.

"It's not too late to shoot them."

In Memoriam: Clifford Wilson III

Black Hawk Hobby Distributors President Clifford Wilson III died Tuesday, February 18, of a heart attack while driving. He was 38. Wilson is survived by his wife, Sheila, and two children, Lindsey, 12, and Clifford Keith Wilson IV, 8.

After graduating from college, Wilson bought into Black Hawk Hobby Distributors with partners. He eventually bought out his partners, becoming the sole owner, and later incorporated the company. Under his tenure, Black Hawk operated strictly as a wholesale organization, with no retail operations. Black Hawk has been distributing West End Games' roleplaying lines for over a decade, and is one of several distributors steadily supplying the hobby trade with *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* books and other products. Wilson was also the majority stockholder of Minifigs, a manufacturer of historical miniatures.

"Cliff set up all his companies as separate entities to provide for any occurrence," said Dan Matheson, Black Hawk's warehouse manager. "By all accounts, he did a good job."

For the interim, day-to-day operations at Black Hawk are continuing under Matheson and Black Hawk's other employees. "Business is continuing without interruptions, thanks to the way Cliff set things up," Matheson said. "I heard the inkling of a rumor that we were gone. No, we're not. We're here and working. It was an unfortunate tragedy involving a corporate partner, but Black Hawk is still shipping."

Funeral services were held Saturday, February 22, at Gloria Dei Church in Rockford, Illinois.

A savings account has been set up to benefit Wilson's children. Contributions should be made payable to Lindsey and Clifford Wilson IV Fund and sent to Macktown State Bank, Attn: Bonnie Gundry, P.O. Box 409, Rockton, IL, 61072.

Join Dr. Coreellia Antilles for a lecture delivered to assorted department heads and interested parties at the Galactic Museum shortly after the re-establishment of the New Republic on Coruscant. Dr. Antilles is a leading expert on artifact recovery and a chief consultant on the New Republic's efforts to recover dangerous artifacts.

From the Files of

Coreellia Antilles

By Timothy O'Brien

Illustrations by Matt Busch

The history of the peoples, cultures and civilizations of the galaxy is almost unimaginably long. Thousands of civilizations rose and fell before the development of hyperspace travel, with little contact with even their closest neighbors. Since then thousands more have come into the awareness of the galactic community. The sum recorded history of the galaxy is estimated to total about

500,000 years, and that's just the history we can decipher. Perhaps another 500,000 years or more of history lies unknown, undeciphered, or simply unrecorded. Some cultures left only ruins behind, others left artifacts and craft items, and yet others left only legends. History studies written records. Xenoanthropologists and xenoarchaeologists study the unwritten physical record left behind by unknown peoples.

Of course, many objects left behind tend to become valuable to scholars, museums and private collectors. That's where I come in. My name is Dr. Corellia Antilles, and I am a xenoarchaeologist specializing in artifact retrieval. I've been asked to go over the state of museum recovery efforts in the wake of plundering by certain Imperial officials. I am not here to discuss archaeology or site practices, but a brief overview is called for.

Archaeology is a slow and delicate art, requiring patience, gentleness, imagination, and insight. Excavating a site may take years, decades, or even centuries. The recovery of a physical record, usually buried under years of soil accrual, is performed more with brushes and hand spades than power tools and heavy machinery. Sensor scans and computer modeling speed this process by a factor of ten, but the actual excavation is still a tedious and lengthy physical process. This is a necessary evil, since many of the most important and interesting items are fragile due to age and require careful handling. Some of the most revealing objects recovered are small and difficult to detect—they require attentive sifting to recover.

Although this careful recovery process is the ideal, it is often ignored by potters—site raiders who steal the most obviously valuable objects to sell on the black market. In recent years, this problem has been compounded by Imperial officials seeking to expand their art collections, usually founded with pieces plundered from museums and native peoples. Local governors, Moffs, Grand Moffs, high-ranking military and COMPNOR officers, and Imperial Advisors rampaged through the most promising sites in the galaxy to sate their hunger for antiquities. By far the worst of these was the Emperor himself, who ordered dozens of digs apparently in an ongoing search for rare and powerful Jedi artifacts.

These Imperial digs were very successful in their own terms—hundreds of sites were excavated, and the choicest artifacts ripped from their resting places. The very best of these went into private

Doctor Corellia Antilles



Type: Adventurous Xenoarchaeologist

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 6D, brawling parry 4D+2, dodge 5D, melee combat 4D, melee parry 4D+1

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 6D, bureaucracy 5D, cultures 6D+2, intimidation 5D, languages 6D+2, law enforcement 4D+2, planetary systems 5D+1, scholar 6D+1, scholar: sapientology 8D, scholar: archaeology 8D, streetwise 6D+2, survival 6D+1, willpower 6D

MECHANICAL 3D

Astrogation 4D, communications 4D, repulsorlift operation 5D, sensors 5D, space transports 3D+1, starship gunnery 3D+1

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 5D, command 3D+2, con 6D, hide 5D+1, investigation 7D, persuasion 5D, search 5D+2, sneak 5D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 5D, climbing/jumping 5D, stamina

4D+2, swimming 4D+1

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 3D, demolition 3D+2, first aid 4D+2, security 5D

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 20

Move: 10

Equipment: Datapad, reference datacards, medpac, Merr-Sonn Model 434 blaster pistol (5D+1), 10 meters synthrope

Capsule: Educated in several of the finest university programs in the galaxy, Dr. Antilles is a fine xenoarchaeologist with thousands of hours on digs from the Core Worlds to the Outer Rim. She has a tendency to get involved with hazardous artifact recoveries, and her adventures have advanced her career considerably.

collections, and the remainder were displayed in public museums throughout the Empire. Unfortunately, in their haste to produce flashy trophies for their masters, the diggers often trampled crucial evidence and carelessly destroyed less interesting-looking items. These objects were poorly recorded and often misinterpreted. There's a tendency to assume everything dug up is of great cultural, usually religious, value, with only scanty evidence. There are several famous cases of this sort of thing—my favorite being the excavation of the "Voorlach Temple" on Krykis IV, the artifacts of

which toured three sectors. The "temple" turned out to be an indoor marketplace, and the "religious relics" were revealed as common market goods.

The threat of items of unknown technology and function is more dangerous. The Emperor was well-known as an acquirer of mystic objects. He was certainly not the only such collector. Many of his adepts and advisors remain unaccounted for, and may have access to Jedi objects, Sith relics, Gree artifacts, Tundan implements, or other powerful rarities. All represent an unknown danger to the New Republic. Dozens, perhaps hundreds of such devices now float through the legal and illegal markets, and are actively sought after by the New Republic, her enemies, and powerful collectors.

Such threats have already appeared in the forms of Dark Adept Glynis Tor's exploitation of his master's hoard, the Tundan sorcerer Rokur Gepta's quest to co-opt ancient species' power, and the attempt by Lord Vader to acquire the Kaiburr Crystal. Historically, the infamous Krath are thought to have begun their reign of terror with the aid of Sith relics. This trend can only be expected to continue.

Additionally, Imperial ravaging and lax enforcement of the archaeological codes have allowed culturally important artifacts to be squirreled away as art treasures and curios by greedy collectors. Return of such items can carry a great deal of weight in diplomatic circles.

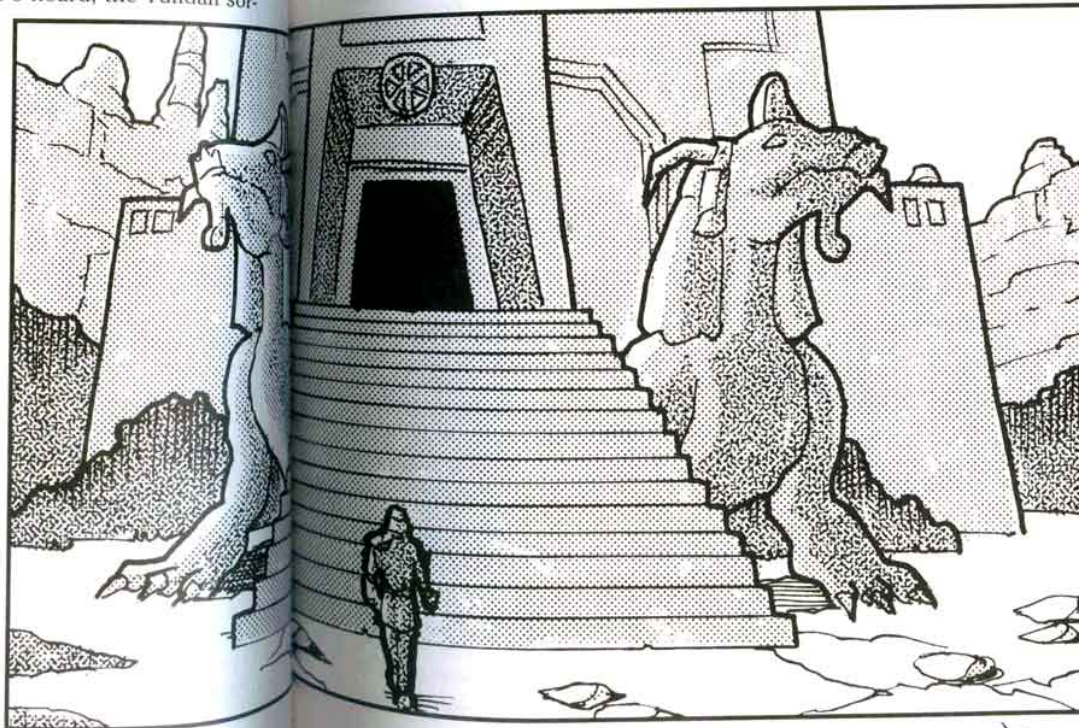
Lastly, there is the problem of general looting during the recent civil war on Coruscant. During the fighting, some thieves took advantage of the chaos to break into local repositories and museums, stealing what they could. The Imperial Museum on Coruscant was not immune. Although many of the exhibits and display houses were safe behind battery-powered security systems, many of them were not. Thou-

sands of museum pieces were stolen by scavengers during the Empire's brief resurgence, when Coruscant was without central authority. Hundreds have been recovered, but many hundreds more are unaccounted for.

The New Republic is always seeking more information about stolen treasures and pillaged digs. Here are several of the most important archaeological locations and relics we are currently concerned about.

The Sith Tombs on Korriban

Long ago, the Lords of the Sith Empire were the undisputed masters of the worlds in their grip. We know very little about their civilization, which fell about 5,000 years ago.



On the planet Korriban, a grim desert world, traces of the Sith Empire can be seen in monumental tomb complexes. Korriban is avoided by nearly all space travellers, even with the Imperial ban on such travel gone. It's remote, uninhabited, and eerie. The few visitors to the world describe whistling winds rising from the plains and howling sandstorms that cut through the wind-carved valleys and shred living beings in seconds. Savage predators wander the wastes, hunting the stringy rodents and scrub-grazing herbivores that scratch out a living here. Winters are bitter and summers blistering. It is a world of little moderation.

The funeral valley of the Sith Tombs is shadowy and nearly lifeless. Particularly vicious predators prowl the area, although there is no water near the place and their prey avoids the area. The tombs jut out of the valley's walls, some carved from solid rock, others constructed from huge blocks. At the center of the canyon is a large building, apparently a temple. These monuments are watched over by gigantic glowering statues of armored, horn-helmeted sentinels and fantastic predators. Legend claims that guardian spirits and droids attack tomb-robbers. The truth of this is not known, but very few Sith funerary objects are known to have appeared on the black market.

Ancient, decayed, and incomplete Sith records claim the tombs are full of funeral treasures, ornamental furnishings, and the corpses of sacrificial victims. The Lords of the Sith believed in taking their wealth with them, and a large portion of their accumulated riches were sealed behind tons of rock, including their personal ships and favorite slaves. This should be an archaeologist's playground.

During the Old Republic there were a few expeditions to the ancient Sith worlds, but they were small and closely supervised by Jedi. With the rise of the Empire, the Sith worlds were sealed and closely guarded. Only the Emperor's hand-picked adepts were allowed to enter Sith space, and data on the worlds was systematically deleted from the record-banks of the Empire.

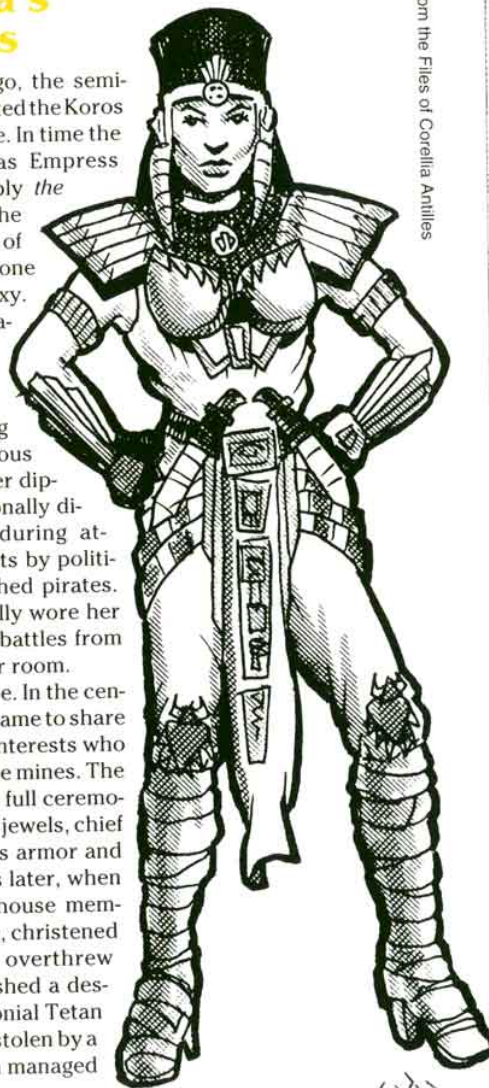
Today we stand threatened by our own ignorance. Many of the Emperor's adepts have evaded capture. Some of these may have escaped to an old Sith world to study in a lost fortress or library. We simply don't know enough about these mysterious planets. An expedition to the Korriban Tombs is an obvious starting place.

(For more information on the Sith Tombs of Korriban, see the *Golden Age of the Sith* series from Dark Horse Comics.)

Empress Teta's Crown Jewels

Five thousand years ago, the semi-mythical Empress Teta united the Koros system under her wise rule. In time the system became known as Empress Teta's system, then simply the Empress Teta system. The Tetan crown jewels, part of her personal artifacts, are one of the wonders of the galaxy. Teta's original royal treasures included her crown, ornaments, personal battle armor, and a matched pair of fighting knives. Teta was as famous for her martial skills as her diplomatic ability, and personally directed several battles during attempted coups and revolts by political enemies and entrenched pirates. While at war she habitually wore her armor when supervising battles from her throne room-cum-war room.

Her heirs were less wise. In the centuries after her rule they came to share power with commercial interests who ran the system's carbonite mines. The royal family still retained full ceremonial duties and the crown jewels, chief among which were Teta's armor and knives. A thousand years later, when two of the Tetan royal house members turned to Sith magic, christened themselves the Krath, overthrew their elders, and established a despotic regime, the ceremonial Tetan Crown Jewels vanished, stolen by a Tetan loyalist. The Krath managed



From the Files of Corellia Antilles

to reclaim select items, but most of the jewels stayed hidden away in secret caches all over the system. Even after the death of the Krath, the treasures remained hidden. Over the next four thousand years most of these caches were discovered and the Crown Jewels slowly restored. Today, only a few items remain missing, most notably Teta's Knives, the matched blades the Empress used as her personal hand weapons. They may be in the Empress Teta system, or perhaps have already been discovered and deposited in a private collection. A standing reward of one million credits is offered by the Tetan Royal Family for any of the Tetan Jewels.

(Empress Teta's crown jewels appear in the *Golden Age of the Sith* series from Dark Horse Comics.)

Ossus

The mysterious world of Ossus was once a planet of learning and peace—an important Jedi center. About 4,000 years ago it was abandoned due to the sudden supernova of the nearby Cron Cluster during the Sith War. (Legend claims that the Krath somehow detonated the stars, but no serious scholar believes that.) Ossus was almost completely devastated—all of the animal life and nearly all the plant life was killed. The creatures now on the planet are alien to the world and arrived in the intervening four millennia.

Ossus was never re-colonized. It slipped into obscurity behind the veil of the Cron Drift, the nebula-remains of the novas that laid waste to the planet. The only modern inhabitants are the descendants of crashed or marooned crews and a few squatters. The planet today is a wasteland of shadows, mists and ruins inhabited by bands of semi-barbarians. Vital clues about the Jedi may remain preserved under the accumulated debris and ashes of 40 centuries. It was on Ossus that Luke Skywalker discovered a trove of ancient lightsabers, and recovered old Jedi texts to aid him in his quest against the returned Emperor. It is nearly certain that more awaits recovery.

Ossus has many dangers: traversing the Cron Drift is hazardous due to ion storms and rogue asteroids, the local Ossun tribes may or may not be friendly, ruins are naturally unstable, the planet is reported to be plagued by violent electrical storms, and it's impossible to say how many Force-aware beings have wandered to this world in an effort to uncover old secrets.

(Ossus appears in the *Tales of the Jedi* and *Dark Empire II* series from Dark Horse Comics.)

The Dark World of Ossus

A number of Jedi, archaeologist, or Jedi archaeologist adventures could be set on Ossus. The characters must work their way to the remote section of space that holds Ossus, navigate the treacherous Cron Drift, make contact with the natives (some of whom aren't friendly), and explore the ruins. Excavating Ossus would probably take a thousand years, so there's no hurry. The characters settle in and start to investigate the planet's past.

Not all dark Jedi or evil Force magicians were servants of the Emperor. Some were as hunted as the Jedi Knights. One of these, Travgen, escaped Palpatine's purge and eventually wound up on Ossus. He sensed Luke Skywalker's arrival and departure, but didn't go hunting for the prodigy and was relieved when Skywalker left.

Travgen decides that the characters' expedition is a serious threat after they settle in. The dark Jedi isn't nearly as powerful as Palpatine was, although almost as twisted. After twenty years of practice, meditation, and oppression of the local tribes, he is about as powerful as Luke (as of *Dark Empire*). He isn't nearly as brave, though, and begins by sending one of his enslaved tribes to try to scare the characters off. When this fails, he attempts to overawe them, and quickly departs the scene if they stand up to him. Only if pursued to his lair—an old ruined administrative center—does he stand and fight. In his lair he has a home-ground advantage and has rigged the place with nasty surprises to hold off an attacking tribe.

Uueg Tching's Sayings

The original manuscript of Uueg Tching's *Sayings* was kept for the last 3,000 years in the Rare Books Department of the Atrisian Imperial Historical Library on Kite Phard. Uueg, the 54th Atrisian Emperor, was famous for his successful tyrannical rule, which he attributed to his insight in diplomacy, grand strategy, and effective use of spies. Uueg increased the Atrisian Empire to rule, directly or indirectly, the whole of Kite Phard. An enlightened despot, he is remembered by Atrisians for his skill in diplomacy, in war, and in

maintaining order. Uueg was fond of teaching his heirs with a combination of parables, analogies, and cold-blooded instructions. His *Sayings* were hand-recorded by the scribes who followed him everywhere.

The *Sayings* are a classic instructional text on political manipulation, grand strategy, internal rule, and conquest. They were intended to be a guide to his descendants, but few of the following Atrisian Emperors of the Tching Dynasty bothered to learn from his sayings (among the few who did are the famous Invisible Empress, Oeana Tching, and Eoaq the Expansive). This single manuscript signalled a great change in Atrisian politics, swinging away from the great bloody wars of the past (assault units and tactics are still modeled after the precedents of the Third Atrisian period) and toward subtle policies of infiltration, espionage, and assassination. About 1,500 years ago, the *Sayings* were printed in a small run for the Atrisian nobility to marvel over (a ploy by the Atrisian Emperor to display the superiority of his noted ancestor, and by extension himself). The *Sayings* were made available 550 years ago in a general database and in specially printed reproduction to raise cash and demonstrate the power the Atrisian Parliament had wrested from the throne.

Twelve years ago Emperor Palpatine "requested" the original manuscript for the Imperial Museum on Coruscant for its great historical value to the galaxy. It arrived with a small amount of fanfare, was briefly displayed, and soon vanished into the Emperor's private holdings. The Emperor had already displayed mastery of Uueg's ways, and it is likely he simply wanted the scrolls as a trophy.

During the New Republic's drive on Coruscant, most of the Emperor's prizes were spirited away in several shipments to, we believe, private strongholds. The *Sayings* are thought to be among them. At least one of these shipments crashed, and a few of the artifacts on board survived. What happened to the *Sayings* is not



known, although they were not on the manifest for the crashed shuttle. At least two other shuttles are unaccounted for (three were recovered, two vanished into the Deep Core, and another shipment is in an Imperial faction's control).

The original manuscript is hand-written in black ink on several long scrolls, in Atrisian script. Additions, clarifications, and notes were made in red ink. These red ink comments are thought to be Uueg's personal remarks, made in his own hand. They were at last report protected in an ornate durrellium scrollcase.

Recovery of the *Sayings* manuscript would be a great help in improving relations with the Atrisian Commonwealth.

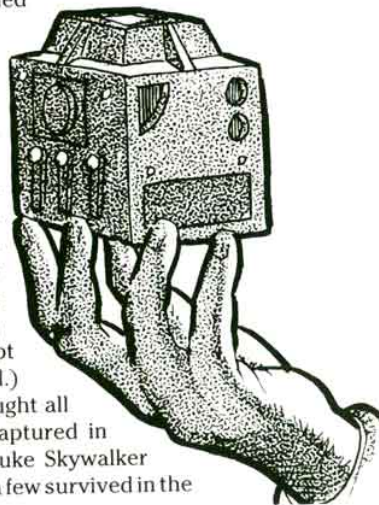
(A sample of Uueg Tching's wisdom can be found on page 29 of the *Imperial Soucebook*.)

Holocrons

Although the Jedi Masters insisted on individually training their students, they were not foolish and did not completely rely on oral tradition. Apparently the Jedi considered ordinary text or datalogs to lack an important transactive quality, and used pseudo-intelligent holographic chronicles ("Holocrons") as a primary form of recording. This method allowed a level of safety that no datafile could: the Holocrons only responded to a real Jedi.

The Jedi must have had very advanced techniques for such devices, for it is only recently that artificial intelligence and holography have been able to approach the level of quality that are attributed to ancient Holocrons. (Palpatine is reported to have dismissed the Holocrons as "primitive," but this may indicate that he had difficulty accessing them; he was known to express contempt for anything he could not control.)

Until very recently it was thought all Holocrons were destroyed or captured in Palpatine's purge of the Jedi. Luke Skywalker recently discovered that at least a few survived in the



Emperor's vaults, and he managed to recover one. This gives hope that others may yet be retrieved. It is even possible that a few lay hidden away, preserved by Jedi Masters who foresaw the black times ahead.

Holocrons were fantastically rare even before Palpatine's rise. Today, in a galaxy with only one Jedi Master, they are infinitely more precious. Of course, there are many competitors for such a fantastic rarity—collectors would pay millions for such a device, even though they could never use it. Since a Holocron is priceless, these millions of credits are likely to go to pay the thieves, mercenaries, and smugglers who would acquire, guard, and transport the item, not to tempt anyone who currently "owned" it.

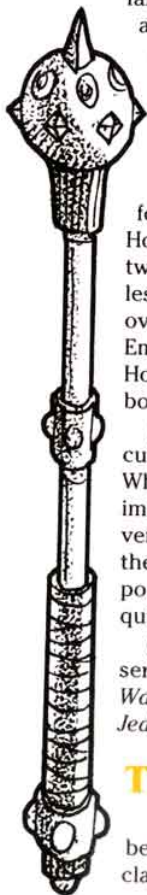
Then, too, there are Dark Adepts, Palpatine's former students, who would slay worlds to prevent a Holocron from entering Luke Skywalker's hands. These twisted beings have fantastic eldritch powers, bottomless hungers, and no longer have to answer to their overlord. I can't go into details, but I can say that the Emperor's Adepts have pursued even faint rumors of Holocrons with vigor and have littered their path with bodies. They are not to be underestimated.

Holocrons are generally simple geometric solids—cubes, pyramids, spheres, tetrahedrons, and so forth. When activated, a Holocron projects a particular Jedi's image, which answers questions and can hold a conversation with the student. The versatility and range of the holo-Jedi has yet to be determined, although reports indicate that interaction with the image seems quite real, as if speaking to a person via a hololink.

(Holocrons appear throughout the *Tales of the Jedi* series—including *Dark Lords of the Sith* and *The Sith War*—from Dark Horse Comics, and in the *Tales of the Jedi Companion*.)

The Cirra Mace

The Cirra Mace is an important ceremonial weapon belonging to the Cirra akia, the most warlike of the clans of the isolationist Aramandi people in Brak



Sector. The mace was stolen by an irate Seela (an Aramandi heretic-outcast) about 20 years ago. The Seela thief was caught before escaping the Aramand Cluster, but not before the mace was sold to an unknown third party. It vanished for fifteen years.

Five years ago, the Cirra Mace was offered for sale on the underground market in Brenn, the largest city of Genesis, also in Brak sector. Rumors claim that the mace was sold to a Nalroni merchant. Cirra warriors, most uncharacteristically off world, searched the city from one end to the other to find the mace, but it slipped through their fingers. Nalroni have been considered thieves by Cirra warriors since this incident.

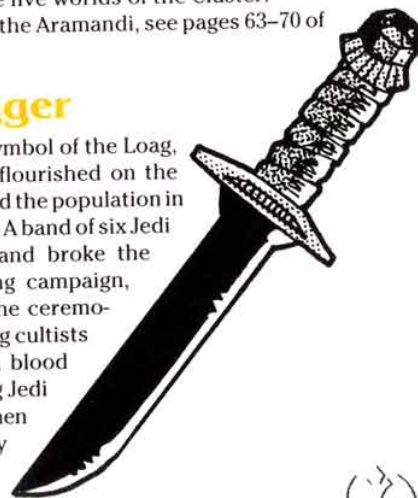
Recently, rumors have circulated that the mace is in Celanon City, on the Nalroni homeworld, Celanon. No Cirra are known to have travelled to Celanon City to pursue these rumors, although the Cirra are well outside the usual grapevines and simply may not have heard these rumors yet.

The Cirra Mace is an 80-centimeter-long black obsidian mace, crowned with emeralds and rubies. It is not said to have strange powers or curses (as so many legendary objects are), but is important to Cirra akia religious ceremonies, which we know very little about. Recovering the mace would go far toward improving diplomatic relationships between the New Republic and the Aramandi Cluster, which includes not only the Cirra akia, but three other akia spread among the five worlds of the Cluster.

(For more information on the Aramandi, see pages 63–70 of *Flashpoint: Brak Sector*.)

The Loag Dagger

The Loag Dagger is the symbol of the Loag, an assassin cult that once flourished on the planet Merisee and terrorized the population in the days of the Old Republic. A band of six Jedi Knights came to Merisee and broke the Loag's power in a year-long campaign, during which they seized the ceremonial dagger that the first Loag cultists and all candidates swore a blood oath on. The three surviving Jedi took the dagger with them when they left Merisee, eventually



Against the Loag!

The Loag cult never actually died out. When it became clear to the cult leaders that they would lose to the Jedi, the best and most able assassins went into hiding. The rest were gradually ordered on suicide missions against the Jedi, and it seemed that the cult was extinct.

Only certain people outside the cult were allowed to know that the Loag continued, and they became the contacts between clients and assassins. The veil of secrecy continued when the Empire rose. Now that both the Jedi and the Empire are gone, the Loag is willing to risk exposure, especially if it means they can regain their dagger. This doesn't mean they'll casually reveal their existence.

The Loag organize themselves into cells of three to five. Contact between cells is very limited. If the Loag are exposed, the cell revealed allows itself to be destroyed (the Loag commit suicide to evade capture) and the other cells go to ground. Anyone who exposes and destroys a Loag cell becomes a target for other cells, but not for at least six months, during which time the cultists are snow-pure, law-abiding citizens while they wait for the heat to die down.

What has happened to the Loag Dagger is up to the individual gamemaster, but it should have been removed from Coruscant. Once retrieved, which might take a whole game session, the

depositing it in the Galactic Museum on Coruscant.

It stayed there as a reminder of the Jedi's service to the galaxy (for the Loag were hired as assassins by many offworlders and had a fearsome reputation across the Old Republic). In the Empire, the dagger was displayed as an example of how insurrectionists could threaten public order (the Jedi were only referred to as "Servants of the Galactic Order" in the official Imperial version).

When the New Republic was restored to Coruscant after the Empire's resurgence, the Imperial Museum collection had to be inventoried to assess the damage done by looters. That effort continues, but the Loag Dagger is among the confirmed items missing. Anything could have happened to it. It might be used as a kitchen knife for all we know, but it is definitely missing.

What makes this particular item interesting is the partially

characters must battle first one, then three, and, if they can handle it, a band of five Loag cultists, all of whom are extremely deadly and committed to regaining the dagger.

Typical Loag Assassin

Type: Assassin

DEXTERITY 4D

Blaster 7D, brawling parry 6D, dodge 8D, grenade 7D, melee combat 7D, melee parry 6D, missile weapons 7D, pick pocket 6D, running 8D, thrown weapons 6D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 4D, intimidation 7D, languages 4D, streetwise 4D, survival 6D, willpower 6D

MECHANICAL 2D

Beast riding 5D, communications 4D, ground vehicle operation 5D, hover vehicle operation 5D, repulsorlift operation 5D, swoop operation 4D

PERCEPTION 3D

Command 6D, con 7D, hide 7D, persuasion 5D, search 6D, sneak 8D

STRENGTH 4D

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

TECHNICAL 2D

Blaster repair 4D, computer programming/repair 4D, demolition 5D, first aid 5D, security 5D

Force Points: Varies; typically 0-5

Dark Side Points: Varies; typically 0-5

Character Points: Varies; typically 3-15

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster pistol (4D), Merisee curved dagger (STR+1D, 3D for poison for five rounds), zolal poison vial (10 doses, lasts for four hits or two hours), camouflage clothing (+1D to *sneak* in darkness), comlink, molecular climbing spikes (+2D to *climbing*).

confirmed rumor that the Loag has been resurrected. It is suspected that Loag assassins have been the instruments of three recent political murders. If the Loag has returned, it would stop at nothing to reclaim the centerpiece of the cult.

The Loag Dagger is a 30-centimeter-long weapon with a one-sided curved and blackened blade. The hilt is wrapped in dark hide and the pommel has a dark red ruby as a cap.

(Material on Merisee and the Loag can be found on pages 159-160 of the *Star Wars Planets Collection*.)

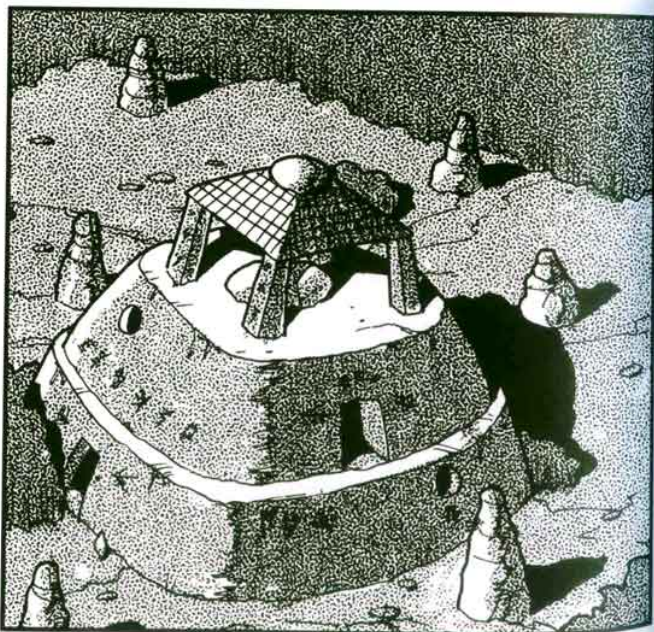
The Shrines of Kooroo

Scattered on remote planets in certain areas of the Outer Rim, the mysterious Shrines of Kooroo, all constructed of the same

natural stone (even on Gelgelar, where the only stone around is meters or decameters deep subterranean bedrock), are a source of scholarly and popular interest.

The shrines are simply and similarly constructed: three levels, two enclosed, and one, the top level, with a raised roof over a round solid stone structure with an unknown function. The center of the two lower levels is solid, to support the mound above. The rest of the shrine has openings and chambers, also serving unknown functions. Some of these chambers are covered with hieroglyphics, art, and in some cases, holographs. The shrines are surrounded by stone obelisks and monoliths in a regular pattern, radiating out in 100-meter circles around the main structure.

It is generally accepted that the shrines were constructed by an alien species, probably with limited telepathy. This species recorded no war, weapons, or armor, and is thus thought to have been deeply peaceful. The Kooroo species (the origin of the name is obscure) was never encountered by the Old Republic, their



homeworld has not been identified, and they seem to be extinct. Experts estimate many of these structures are over 20,000 years old.

Some of the shrines were taken over by native intelligent species for their own religious ceremonies and added to or reworked. On some worlds the co-opted shrines were claimed as the natives' own. On others they were remembered as the constructs of an ancient people. Only a few species recall that they had been built by off-worlders. Some shrines were destroyed by local cultures as alien and frightening.

Theories abound about the Kooroo Shrines. Stories of bloody sacrifices and obscene festivals circulated soon after the discovery of the shrines by the Old Republic. These were eventually discounted, although they remain popular. A mystic cult, the Fellowship of Kooroo, has appeared in recent times, claiming to have special insight gained from extensive contemplation and meditation in the shrines. This may or may not be true: Force-aware individuals have reported that the shrines "echoed" to their senses, although no practical use is known for this effect. It is true that several leaders in the Kooroo sect are known to be bilking their followers with simple tricks and nonsense. Nine Kooroo leaders are known to be siphoning off funds for their own use, this only in the few years since the establishment of the New Republic.

One theory is that the shrines served the Kooroo civilization as a kind of communication network, boosting their telepathic powers enough to overcome vast interstellar distances. This is an intriguing theory, but evidence is lacking.

Another popular theory is that the Kooroo had a very limited interstellar technology, and used the shrines to mentally visit other worlds without actually travelling to them. In this theory the shrines served as a focus for the visiting Kooroo mind.

An even more outlandish idea is that the Kooroo had vast mental powers, and used the shrines as translocation points for mentally moving themselves through space and time. This is generally considered bad fiction.

The shrines are not known to present any threat themselves, although the sometimes unpredictable Followers of Kooroo may. The shrines are still of an unknown quantity, and should be carefully monitored. Please report any newly discovered shrines to the New Republic Antiquities Office.

Some information on the Gelgelar Shrine of Kooroo can be found

Ideas Using the Shrines of Kooroo

The nature and powers of the shrines are up to the gamemaster to determine, but here are some ideas to play with:

- The shrines are ancient communication nodes for telepaths. Anyone using a telepathic power in one of the shrines transmits to any telepath also in a shrine anywhere else. With practice, the transmitting telepath should be able to communicate with a particular telepath in a shrine. Telepathy could include a particular species-specific power, any sort of mental communication, or only Kooroo telepathy, depending on the needs of the gamemaster.
- The shrines are psychic batteries set up in a network. Using the Force—including Character Points, Force Points, or Force powers—is much easier in a shrine. Two dice are rolled per Character Point, die codes triple for a Force Point, and difficulties are halved for powers. Of course, this doubles the chances of acquiring a Dark Side Point for questionable actions.
- The shrines are energy collectors for the ancient and evil Kooroo, who were banished to Otherspace millennia ago by their enemies. The Kooroo didn't need to make war—they took over planets by sheer mental power. The Kooroo still lurk in Otherspace, waiting for a gateway back to this universe. The rites

in *Platt's Starport Guide*. Sensationalist newsnet reporter Andor Javin's theories on the shrines' origins were originally presented in "Galaxywide NewsNets" in *Star Wars Adventure Journal* #13.

The Emperor's Yacht

For years, both Imperial and Alliance High Command were tantalized by rumors that a working cloaking device had been developed by an Imperial black project, a project so secret that no records were kept and no one outside the research group other than the Emperor knew anything concrete about it. Imperial ships had used stealth technology for years, of course, (and these systems were occasionally called "cloaks"), but the real goal of stealth technology was a full cloak, a device that made a ship undetectable.

and meditations conducted by the Fellowship of Kooroo feed the Kooroo, who plan to use the energy to make contact with a powerful Force-user or other telepath on this side. Once contact has been made, they will instruct the telepath on how to open a gate between dimensions—this requires a horrible dark side ceremony, which is long and difficult, needs rare materials, and requires the cooperation of a congregation of followers simultaneously performing the ritual at a minimum of three shrines.

- The shrines are repositories of the knowledge and experience of the wisest of the benevolent Kooroo. The Kooroo knew they were dying out, and mentally imprinted the shrines with the collected experience of a single great mind, something like a Jedi Holocron, to leave to younger species. This information can be accessed only by a properly trained telepath, using a technique encoded into the art and hieroglyphs that decorate the shrines. Each shrine requires a different technique, but once the cipher is broken the code is not hard to read. "Reading" the shrines might require a Heroic *Perception* roll for natural telepaths or a Heroic *receptive telepathy* roll for Force-users. Success cannot be achieved without weeks of study and contemplative meditation at one of the shrines.

Even today, in the wake of Thrawn's use of cloaking devices, we have very incomplete information on this project. We know that the Emperor had an operational cloaking model. It is believed that certain of the Emperor's personal ships, including his yacht and shuttle, were equipped with a full cloak. It is not known how many other ships were equipped with cloaks.

The Emperor's personal shuttle was destroyed at Endor. His yacht, the *Emperor's Shadow*, was under the command of one of his adepts, Jeng Droga, when it disappeared at about the same time as the Battle of Endor. The *Shadow* is thought to have been in the Mid-Rim, near Kaal, when it vanished. A ship equipped with a functioning cloak can be expected to vanish, of course, and New Republic Intelligence considered the *Shadow* untraceable; however, a report from a New Republic negotiating team indicates the yacht may have crashed on Kaal, possibly in a shallow area of its planetary ocean.

Expedition to Kaal

A few years after Endor, a New Republic diplomatic mission to Kaal encountered a fortune-hunter calling himself Pandis Hart (actually Talon Karrde) who was after the *Emperor's Shadow*. An associate of his, Quelev Tapper, located a likely vessel underneath Kaal's seas and rigged it to blow up by remote control. When Hart's attempt to gain exclusive access to the ship failed, he blew up the ship rather than let someone else have it (as described in "The Kaal Connection" from *Star Wars Adventure Journal* #7). This ship may or may not have been the *Shadow*.

If the yacht did crash on Kaal, but Tapper didn't find the right ship, it's still down there, waiting to be found. If the yacht crashed somewhere else, an expedition must go to Kaal to figure that out, then determine where it did crash.

Of course, news of a mission to recover the *Shadow* would reach the remains of the Imperial intelligence services, and possibly the ears of one or more of the more powerful corporations. Competition to raise the *Shadow* will be fierce.

The Dark Side Adept Jeng Droga's fate remains unknown. He was mentally affected by his master's death; if he survived it is likely he stands guard over his charge until his master calls him. Droga wasn't the most powerful of the Emperor's servants, but he was one of the most loyal and would take any attempt to recover the yacht very poorly...

A ship suspected to be the *Shadow* was demolished by an interested third party in order to deny it to the competition. There was no known confirmation that the ship was the *Shadow*, nor any confirmation a cloak was installed. Further investigation is called for. Excavation of a wreck on Kaal is likely to attract the interest of Imperial parties or other competitors, so any attempt to investigate or recover the *Shadow* should be under cover or in force. The Galactic Museum Artifact Recovery Office is willing to fund an undercover expedition.

Cloaking fields and other stealth devices are discussed on page 66 of the *Imperial Sourcebook*.

Sharka'k Noor

The Gree are an ancient species with a millions-year-old civilization. Their technology, very different from our own, mastered hyperspatial transit and picotechnology ages before most species discovered fire. Their golden age ended millennia before the Old Republic was founded. By the time the Republic encountered a Gree world, their culture had degenerated immensely.

Fantastic items still survive, operated by Gree masters who jealously retain old knowledge. Some of these relics are capable of feats in apparent violation of known physics. Each is unique.

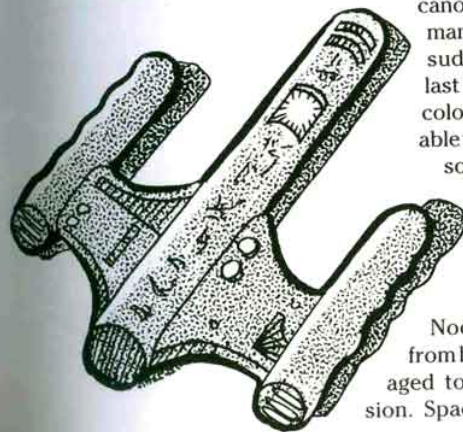
A few years ago, I was part of a small secret, expedition to the planet Asation, the doorway to the Gree Enclave. An attempt to acquire an abandoned Gree artifact failed, but I managed to leave the world with mind and body intact, unlike most of the expedition—the Gree are very proprietary.

Recently caught word that another expedition was more successful. A team led by Dr. IIs Ee apparently acquired a device called the Sharka'k Noor. The Noor was once the premier device in Sharka'k's collection. Sharka'k died on Asation without passing the secrets of the Noor on to any apprentice, so the Noor passed into the possession of the Te Hasan Gree, the Keepers of Artifacts. Before the Te Hasans could lay claim to the Noor, Dr. Ee, a person of dubious ethics, stole it. Ee escaped the remote Gree Enclave and was last seen on Tujiamoor shortly before the Talecalles volcanic eruptions. The Talecalles

volcano chain had been dormant for 3,000 years until it suddenly became active last month, killing 400,000 colonists. It seems reasonable to suspect that the Noor somehow activated the volcanoes. Perhaps

Ee was experimenting with the Noor. Perhaps not.

Assuming that the Noor protects the user from harm, Ee probably managed to escape in the confusion. Space traffic control sen-



The Noor

The Noor is a fairly small device, about 20 centimeters long, made up of three parallel tubes with odd glyphs engraved along the central tube. The central tube also has a color-coded display on one side. Each of the two outer tubes have four fingertip-sized depressions on them. The Noor was built to be operated by the four-tentacled Gree, and is hard for a non-Gree to work at all. Dr. Ee will never be able to correctly operate it. The Noor emits a deep bass tone that fluctuates in a slow, groaning melody as the controls are worked.

The Noor manipulates geologic activity. It can cause or ease earthquakes, create new volcanoes, stir a planet's mantle, or otherwise affect a planetary core. It could be a devastating weapon, of course, though it is primarily a planetary engineering tool.

If the Gree discover the Noor's location, they are likely to come after it, and have other devices to aid them; devices that actually are intended to be weapons...

More information on the Gree and their culture and technology is available in "The Gree Enclave" in *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal* # 8 pages 41-66, reprinted in *Classic Adventures: Volume Four*, pages 17-29.

sors were disrupted by lava flow and volcanic ash, and Ee could have easily lifted off without being noticed. Assuming that Ee will try to master the Noor, interested parties should keep a close watch on seismic reports from planets near Tujiamoor. Unusual seismic activity should be investigated.

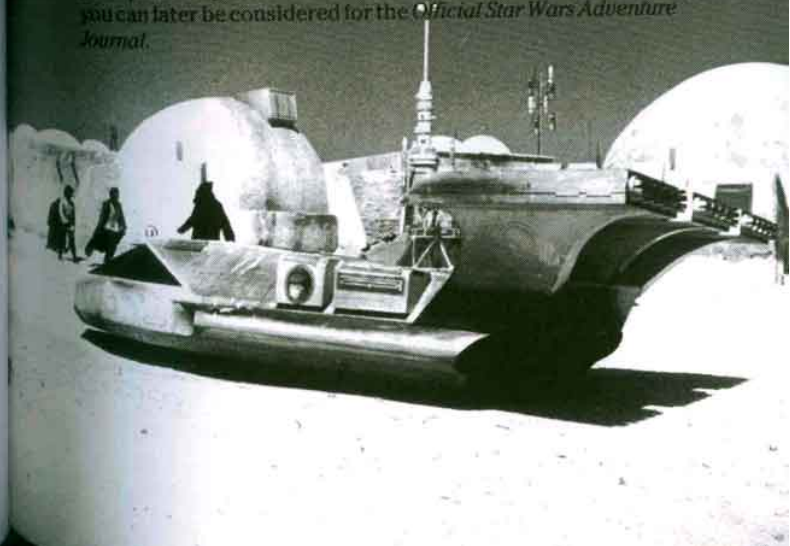
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If you are a published author, please send a brief cover letter outlining your interests in writing for *Star Wars* as well as your writing experience. Include a bibliography of previously published works and samples from that list. Please include your daytime phone number so we can contact you.

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STAR WARS
ADVENTURE

An aging storyteller weaves a tall tale involving the most notorious bounty hunter in the galaxy. But is it all just made up for entertainment, or is there a grain of truth to the fable?

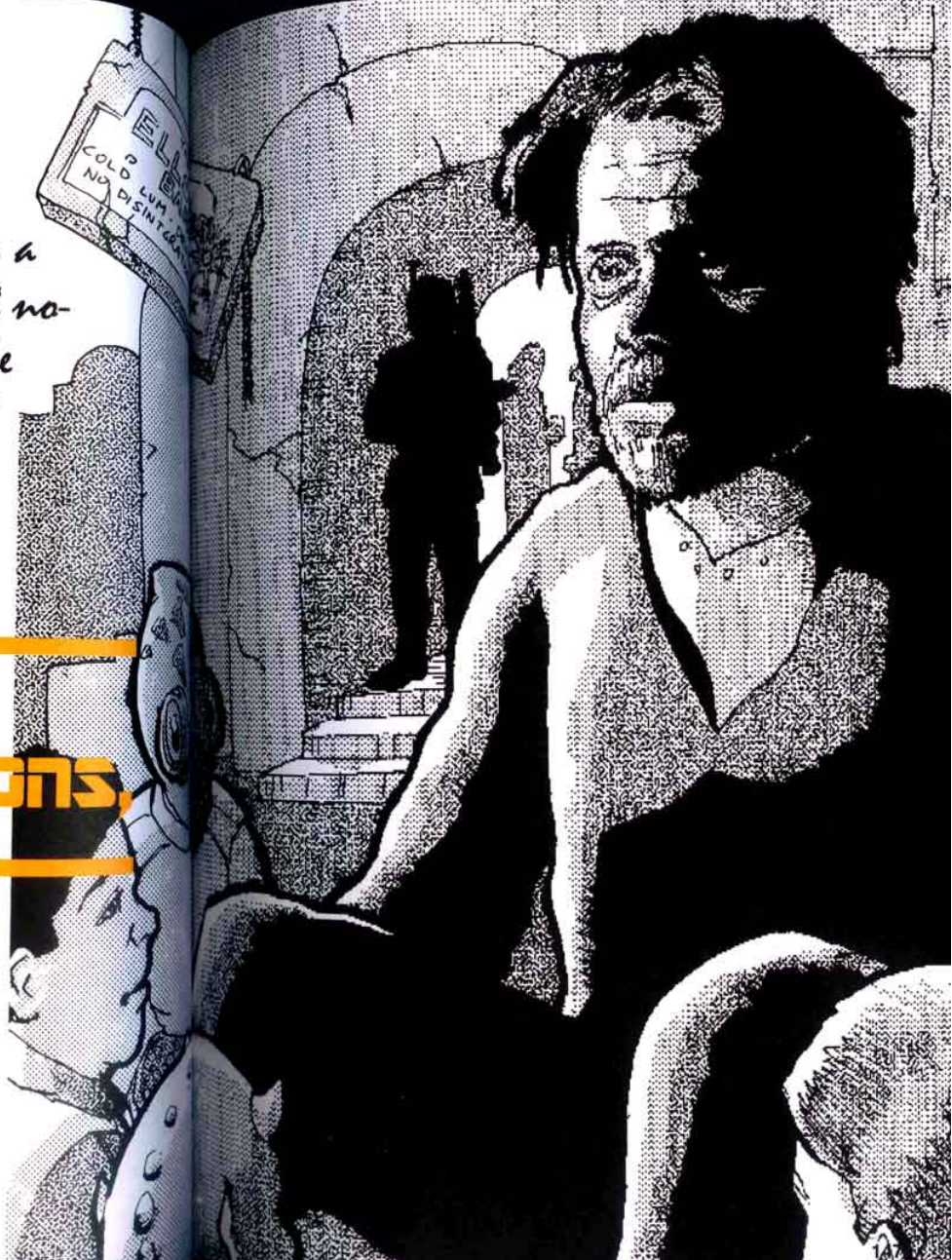
No Disintegrations, Please

By Paul Danner

Illustrations by Matt Busch

Squeak.
Squeak.
Squeak.

Most beings would have found the intermittent sound annoying. Some might have even gone so far as to blast the noisy repliwood sign into toothpicks. But the main street of the New Hope Settle-



ment was currently devoid of life. There were only a few dustballs moving in accordance to the fickle will of the wind. The row of stores that flanked the main street stood silently, sealed up and forgotten. The rust-colored sands of Ladarra were already returning to reclaim the land it had lost years ago...

And so the sign continued to squeak, hanging as it was by a single frayed duracable. The lettering was a bit faded, but the words were still legible: "The Ellstree Bar—Cold Lum; Droids Welcome; No Disintegrations, Please..." Like the rest of the shops in downtown New Hope, the bar looked to be long deserted. But as the old saying goes, "appearance and truth have as much in common as Jawas and Hutts."

The children sat in a semi-circle around the man. There were at least a dozen of them, mostly human, but a few other species were represented as well. They were orphans and urchins, the last generation of a failed colony—too poor to book passage off Ladarra and unwilling or unable to face the difficulties of life in the few larger cities on the planet.

The man had no name as far as the children knew. They merely called him the Storyteller. He was dressed as they were, in ragged clothing scrounged from a dozen wardrobes and cobbled together into a free-form garment. The Storyteller was an older human, with a heavily lined face and a shock of white hair. He had the look of a man who had seen too much and his eyes were unable to stay focused on any one location for longer than a minute—as if they were constantly searching for any possible threat.

"You want *another* story?" he asked in a weary voice.

The children nodded in unison. They rarely spoke and he wasn't sure all of them even knew how.

"How about the legend of the fearless young Jedi Knight who rescued a beautiful princess?"

A chorus of groans answered that question.

"Well, then. There's always the tale of the evil Imperial governor who wanted to conquer the innocent little world of—" He saw the looks on their faces and couldn't help but laugh. "No? My, but this is a tough crowd." He shook his head in mock irritation. "So what would you like to hear about?"

"Tell us a new one," one of the children said. She was a pretty little one, though it was hard to tell under all that grime.

"Come now, you've heard all of them at least once. Just pick the one you like."

The girl folded her arms and jutted out her lower lip. He fought to keep a straight face. "Okay, okay..." He scratched his chin in dramatic fashion. "A new story. Let me see...ah, yes I've got it!"

Their eyes lit up.

"No, no...that won't work."

The children frowned at him.

"Kidding, kidding," he chuckled for a moment, then quickly grew serious. "I do have one tale that I heard a long time ago. To my knowledge it has never been told again." He had their full attention. "How many of you have heard of..." His voice lowered to a dangerous whisper. "*Boba Fett?*"

Their eyes grew wide at the mention of the name, and one by one each little hand lifted into the air.

"Well, I happen to know a long-forgotten tale of the greatest bounty hunter who ever lived. Would you like me to share it with you?"

Every head in the room slowly nodded.

The Storyteller had his audience...he smiled briefly, then settled back into the comfortable chair and slowly closed his eyes. He began the story after a moment of dramatic silence. The children listened with rapt attention.



As the shuttle's exit hatch slowly descended, the sudden hiss of escaping gases nearly caused Rivo to jump right off the platform. As it was, he barely regained enough balance in time to prevent himself from unceremoniously rolling down the ramp.

General Gaega Xarran gave a dramatic sigh to indicate his disgust and extended an arm to steady his brother as he stumbled down the ramp.

Xarran quickly glanced at the sharp line of stormtroopers that served as an honor guard. The squad remained at such rigid attention that he momentarily wondered if the Dark Lord of the Sith had suddenly emerged from the *Lambda*-class shuttle. The Empire's

ivory-armored shock troopers weren't always the brightest specimens around, but at least they knew enough to keep their mouths shut and follow orders.

Unlike some people, the General thought as his gaze fell upon Rivo. Xarran suddenly felt his body grow flushed with anger and his lips twitched into an involuntary sneer.

"How could you be so stupid?" he whispered. Not that it really mattered whether the stormtroopers overheard; they had been privy to conversations of much greater importance than the scolding of a sibling.

Rivo might as well have been one of the silent group of guards, for he acted as if his brother had never spoken. His eyes were still darting around wildly, searching for a possible threat in every shadow.

Xarran lightly cuffed his brother with an open hand, striking the back of his head. If there was one thing the General did not like, it was being ignored. "Answer me!"

Rivo's response was swift—Xarran was doubly shocked as he stared down the stubby barrel of a hold-out blaster. First of all, the General had never imagined his own brother would point a weapon at him, and second Rivo was supposed to have been relieved of his armaments. Someone was destined to die for the oversight, but the General intended to avoid being the unlucky party.

It was his brother's life, however, that appeared to be in the most immediate danger....

The stormtroopers remained motionless, but somewhere in the span of an eye-blink nine blaster rifles had been expertly trained on Rivo.

The young man didn't seem to notice. His eyes held a blank stare that didn't quite focus on anything. The General wasn't even quite sure if Rivo still recognized him.

"It's only me, brother," Xarran said softly. "I'm the one trying to keep you alive." Slowly but steadily the General reached out with a gloved hand. The span was less than half a meter, but it took forever to close the distance between his fingers and the weapon.

When the General took hold of the blaster, Rivo's nervous energy drained out as if he were a leaking power cell. His entire body slumped down and the weapon spilled like liquid through his fingers until it was collected in Xarran's waiting hands.

"I'm sorry," Rivo managed through choked sobs. He wavered unsteadily, lost in his anguish.

Xarran pulled him into a hug, nodding to the guards over Rivo's shoulder. The gesture was unnecessary. Their blasters were already holstered.

The General cradled the back of his brother's head, in the same place where moments before Xarran had struck him. That now seemed like an eternity ago—it suddenly became clear to him how time, no matter how brief, could irrevocably affect one's entire existence. Every moment was a crossroad to infinite possibilities—Rivo's greatest talent besides drinking and gambling was picking the wrong path to travel. Fortunately the results, as bad as they were, had never ended with outright disaster. This time was different, however, for Rivo's latest mistake might end up costing his life.

Of course, it went without saying that Xarran would do everything in his power to prevent that occurrence. And as a General in the Imperial Army, that power was considerable.

Xarran gently supported his brother, helping him walk the long landing platform toward the garrison complex. The stormtroopers executed a crisp about-face and fell into line behind them. "You'll have nothing to fear anymore, brother. I doubt anyone could have tracked you here."

Rivo gazed up at his brother and for the first time, there was a glimmer of recognition in his eyes.

Heartened by the small gesture, Xarran continued. "And in the highly unlikely event that you were followed, one would have to be certifiably insane to even consider attacking an entire Imperial garrison."



In the distance, well-concealed high in the cover afforded by the dense foliage, a silent figure lurked in the shadows.

He watched, though he held no macrobinoculars—for a pair was conveniently built into his battle-scarred helmet.

He listened as easily if he were one of the stormtroopers, his broad-band antenna de-scrambling the signal of their comlinks and effectively turning the silent soldiers into eavesdropping devices.

Once again, nothing escaped his notice.

Just as no one escaped him.

He climbed down from his perch among the trees with surprising grace considering the bulkiness of his battered gray and green armor.

By the time he finished his descent, darkness had begun to fall like a velvet blanket, and the twin moons of Vryssa were steadily rising in the northern sky.

He paused only once to stare at the towering silhouette of the Imperial garrison base. The massive structure remained in shadow for a few moments longer, then its powerful spot-lumas ignited. The harsh light was coldly reflected in the figure's mask.

General Xarran had unwittingly issued an arrogant challenge. A challenge Boba Fett was more than ready to accept....



The speeder bike patrol caught him unaware. He had just climbed down from his overlook and was checking his equipment. His motion sensors didn't go off until they were right on top of him. The bikes were so fast they didn't register with enough warning time.

As he dove for cover in the thick tangle of bush, Fett saw one of the scout troopers gesture in his general direction. His two partners immediately circled around, moving into standard Imperial flanking position. Their vehicles were newer models, pure scout bikes by the look of them—very fast, but without any armaments or protection.

Fett needed to know how much they knew. He activated his antenna....

"...Saw something through those trees. Hard to tell, though. Could have just been a buldobeast."

"Keep your positions. I'll check it out."

"Acknowledged."

"Should we contact the other patrol?"

"You want to listen to their jokes about getting spooked by a little buldo?"

"Negative."

"That's what I thought. Now, stand by."

Fett watched as the lead biker approached, giving his vehicle minimal throttle. The repulsorlift craft drifted a few meters above the ground as the scout trooper conducted a grid search of the area.

Ever so slowly, Fett rolled onto his back and snaked his right arm up through the thicket. He took a single deep breath and then his body froze. The hunter was so still it seemed as if he were made of ferrocrete.

The scout biker moved overhead, directly above Fett's hiding place. The hunter could feel the backwash from the repulsorlift engines pressing against him. The scout was leaning over his vehicle, examining the area closely. The trooper's head jerked back suddenly as if he had spotted something.

Fett flexed his wrist and the rocket-propelled dart housed in his forearm compartment streaked silently through the air. The hunter's aim was perfect. The dart jammed into the soft black bodysuit between the scout's helmet and chestpiece. The poison worked fast, starting with the victim's vocal cords. The man silently jerked forward and then tumbled from his seat, leaving the speeder bike hovering in place.

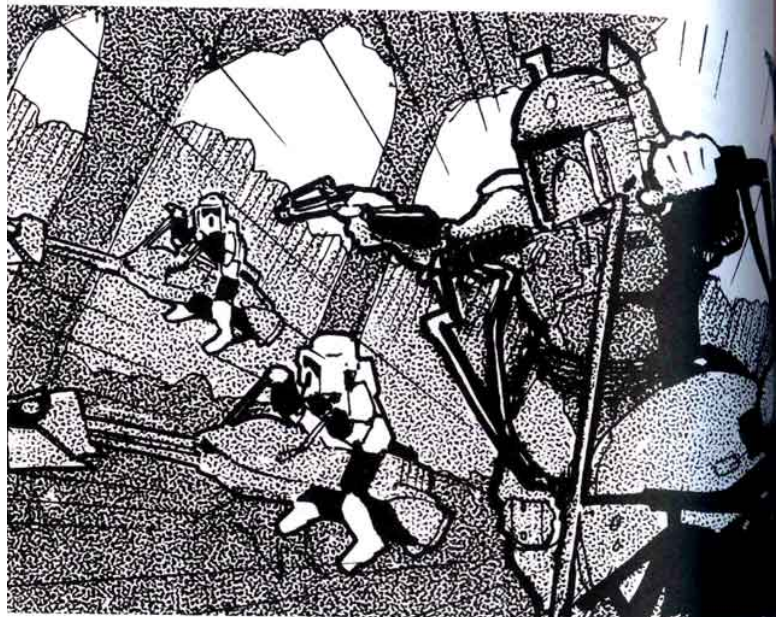
Moving quickly, Fett hopped up onto the bike and jammed the comlinks of the other two bikers. He opened up the throttle and veered off toward one of them. Without even a glance at the other, the hunter activated his armor's grenade launcher.

The trooper was shocked to see Fett streak past on the speeder bike going after his partner. Figuring he had the drop on the hunter, he gunned his bike forward—just as Fett's grenade finished its arc and fell into his lap.

The bounty hunter felt the shock wave of the blast but didn't bother to look back. He was too busy concentrating on his final target. This trooper was taking no chances. The scout was hightailing it out of the vicinity in order to escape the jamming and get some help. He already had a sizable lead on the hunter and was rapidly increasing the gap. Fett knew he couldn't catch up—the trooper was more familiar with the terrain.

Steering the vehicle with one hand, the bounty hunter drew his modified blaster rifle. Scomp-linked to the macrobinoculars in his helmet, the weapon finally locked on target at 300 meters. The scout trooper didn't even see the two angry crimson blaster bolts that slammed into his back and took him clean off his vehicle.

Fett slowed his bike to a stop and scanned the area for anyone else.



The hunter was not happy—he had expended unnecessary time and energy. And now they would know for sure he was on the planet. Perhaps that might be to his advantage....



Rivo's voice cut the silence, though it was but a whisper. "He's here. Now."

"Impossible," Xarran said, barely keeping the disgust from his voice. The General did not like to see his brother cower. Especially in front of his men. "You give this bounty hunter too much credit, brother. Our sensors would have detected his ship's approach."

Rivo shook his head. "This bounty hunter is not the simple-minded scum you are used to dealing with. Boba Fett is different. He has never failed. They say he is the best that ever was...."

Commander Tyrix checked his console. "The patrol *should* have reported in by now, sir."

"This confirms it!" Rivo said.

Xarran would have none of it. "There is no reason to make any connection with your situation and this incident. For all we know—"

"Sir," Tyrix said. "Another patrol has found the remains of the missing unit...." The Commander listened for a moment, pressing his headset against his ear. He paled considerably. "They're all dead."

The General was on his feet. "How?"

"Blaster, a grenade and some sort of poisoned dart. The troopers' weapons were fully charged...none of the men even got off a shot."

Rivo let out a nervous giggle. "I told you...he's coming for me."

Xarran ignored him. "Commander, send out two detachments. If this bounty hunter is indeed here, then I want him found and brought before me. Preferably alive...although a body will do just fine."

"Two detachments, sir?" Tyrix swiveled his chair around to face the General. "For just one man?"

Xarran's face did not so much as twitch. "I'm sorry, Commander, did you say something?"

"No, sir," Tyrix said, hurriedly swiveling back to his console to activate the comlink.



Fett sat in the hunter's blind among a thick tangle of coilwood branches. He watched as the first wave of speeder bikes roared below him, buzzing along like bloodgnats. He felt the impact tremors as a pair of Imperial walkers lumbered by flanked by half dozen of their comical AT-ST counterparts. He shook his head in amazement as squad after squad of stormtroopers marched into the underbrush. Their bright white armor was not exactly the best forest camouflage.

This massive show of force told the bounty hunter all he needed to know about his opponents....

Two detachments meant they certainly knew he was here. And

they were nervous.

Behind the tinted faceplate of his battered helmet, Boba Fett actually smiled.



Xarran leaned over the tactical screen watching proudly as his forces deployed into the forest. He listened to the excited comm chatter as his men moved into position and began an expertly coordinated, utterly systematic search. There would be no escape. Not from the might of the Empire. The General snorted and crossed his arms over his barrel chest. "He's as good as ours."

As he spoke, all communications went dead.



Boba Fett double-checked the comm jamming unit. It was an advanced prototype and very powerful. Unfortunately, its duration was also extremely short: 58 minutes. And then it would explode.

He set his chronometer to countdown mode. Seconds began to vanish. He had just under an hour to eliminate two Imperial detachments.

The hunter turned and hefted his blaster rifle. Fett only foresaw one problem: what to do with the three minutes he would have to spare....



Perched on the edge of his seat in the walker's cockpit, Lieutenant Byrga smacked his lips in nervous anticipation. The AT-AT drivers exchanged a quick glance, but wouldn't dare to comment on the habit of a superior officer. Even if it was extremely irritating.

Byrga was staring so hard at the sensor readouts that his eyeballs were on the verge of jettisoning themselves free of his head. The Lieutenant didn't like the fact that they had lost communications. Despite all efforts, they could not make contact with the rest of their detachment or the garrison base. That made Byrga anxious. His lips were smacking on overdrive.

"Don't worry," he said trying to reassure the rest of the command crew, who had learned to ignore his rantings and still do their jobs effectively. "We are the best the Empire has to offer. No one escapes us. We will find this fool who dares oppose the will of Palpatine and crush him in the iron grip of the—"



The magnetic grapppler connected with the armored underbelly of the AT-AT and locked into place. The 20-meter lanyard trailing behind it pulled taut and a small armored figure emerged from out of the dense underbrush. Fett calmly waited for the winch in his armored suit to elevate him up to the walker's stomach.

The hunter used the time to power up his wrist lasers.



Byrga's ramblings continued. The one good thing about that, at least for the rest of the command crew, was when his mouth was running there was a cessation of lip-smacking. "Make me proud, men. I want to be the one who finds this bounty hunter."

The Lieutenant abruptly cocked his head to one side. "Did anyone else hear that?"

The drivers shook their heads.

Byrga turned toward the dark tunnel leading back into the walker's passenger compartment. "That's strange. We're not carrying any troops." He activated the blast door and peered inside. After a moment's decision he placed one hand on his holstered blaster and slowly walked into the AT-AT's neck. "I'll be right back,

men. Carry on without me for a moment."
The drivers happily complied.



"I want all communications back on-line!" Frustrated, Xarran screamed into the internal comlink, "Immediately!"

Commander Tyrix sighed and gritted his teeth. "Uh, sir...the blackout is affecting the intercom as well." His voice lowered to almost a whisper. "The engineering teams can't hear you."

The General was at Tyrix's console in three strides. Xarran's face was so close the Commander could count the veins bulging in the man's forehead.

Xarran spoke through gritted teeth, the words slow and precise. "Then get down there and tell them."

"Yes, sir!" Tyrix said as he dove into the nearest turbolift.



The AT-AT drivers were so entranced by the wonderful silence in the cockpit they didn't even notice the unusually long absence of their commanding officer. That was their first mistake. When the blast door finally slid open again they didn't even bother to look up from their consoles. As it turned out, that oversight was their last.

Boba Fett lowered his smoking blaster rifle and took a moment to admire his new mode of transportation.



Lieutenant Grejj sat back in his command chair, fingertips steepled in front of his face. The walker's command crew was doing a fine job considering the circumstances. He only hoped they could

get communications back on-line as quickly as possible. Then they could eliminate the bounty hunter and resume normal duties. Grejj liked his routine. He did not like surprises.

"Sir! We're picking something up on sensors."

The Lieutenant leaned forward. "What is it?"

The driver shook his head. "Just another walker...must be Lieutenant Byrga."

"Let's go see if his hunting has been more fortuitous."

"He must have already seen us," the driver said. "Here they come now."

Grejj nodded, reaching for the cockpit release lever. "With any luck this will be over soon."



As a matter of fact, it was.

The remains of Lieutenant Grejj's AT-AT and a pair of AT-STs that had stumbled onto the fight were scattered along the ground. The two smaller walkers were so confused by the duel between their larger siblings that they had actually opened fire on Grejj.

Fett guided his AT-AT through the smoking debris as his sensors picked up a large grouping of stormtroopers nearby. The hunter checked his chronometer and noted that he was right on schedule.



"Communications have been restored, sir."

"Finally! Patch me through directly to our forces." Tyrix's fingers flew over his console and he quickly signaled his success with a nod to the General.

Xarran reached for his comlink. "Xarran to Alpha and Delta Groups. All units are to report status immediately."

There was silence.

Rivo gave his brother a meaningful glance, but Xarran ignored him and tried again. "I repeat, this is General Xarran ordering all

units to account current status. Alpha Group...report."

Nothing.

A bead of sweat trickled down the General's forehead. He leaned closer to the mike. "Delta Group...report."

Again, there was not a sound.

Xarran stared accusingly at Tyrix. "You must have been in error, Commander. The comm system is still down."

"I regret to inform you, sir. It is functioning within normal parameters. Our forces should be responding."

"Yet that is not the case." Xarran's voice had lost a bit of its hard edge. "Why?"

Rivo answered with a plaintive wail. "Because they're all dead!"

Xarran spun around, viciously backhanding his brother across the face. "Will you shut up!"

The unexpected blow sent Rivo crumpling to the deck where he cringed, holding up his hands in supplication. Xarran's face softened with regret immediately. He helped Rivo up and said in a low whisper, "Forgive me, brother...."

"Wait a minute!" Tyrix nearly jumped from his console. "General, sensors are picking up one of our walkers at the outer perimeter."

Xarran beamed. "Put it on the viewscreen."

Tyrix complied and the image of a battle-scarred AT-AT filled the viewer.

"Returning in victory?" the Commander said.

"Let's find out." Xarran tried the comlink again. "Base to walker. Report."

A gout of fire suddenly bloomed on the underbelly of the AT-AT followed by a loud explosion that sent a burst of static over the comlink. The walker lurched forward, like a mortally wounded behemoth, then fell. Its chin connected with the ground, and then the rest of its body followed suit, causing the soil to rumble. Then the metal monster disappeared in a haze of smoke and flame.

"What was that?" Tyrix blurted out.

"A message," Rivo said softly.

The base control room was absolutely still. No one dared to move or speak. Everyone was staring silently at the terrible image that loomed on the viewer.

Everyone that is, except for Xarran. The General stood up and slowly walked into his office, boots clacking on the deck plates. His voice echoed through the room. "Someone turn off that blasted thing...."

Tyrix shut off the screen, but as the rest of the base crew hurriedly resumed their duties he continued to stare at the dark viewer for a few moments. His gaze flickered across the room, and came to rest on Rivo. After 30 years of military service, the Commander had seen more than his share of horrible things, but the look of terror in Rivo's eyes sent a chill rippling down his spine.



Fett would have liked to have seen the General's expression when the AT-AT exploded. He probably shouldn't have wasted the thermal detonator, but the psychological effect on the man and his troops would be worth it.

Both sides had taken their feints and jabs—now it was time to move into the final round. Fett was almost sorry to see it come. The skirmishes before the main event always served as interesting diversions, especially since the outcome of his mission was never in doubt.

Boba Fett did not lose.



"What were you thinking of, Rivo?" Xarran was seated in the plush replihide chair behind a desk that dwarfed most landspeeders.

Rivo sat across from him in a much smaller seat. His eyes had apparently found something interesting on the floor. "Money," he mumbled after a moment. He finally made eye contact with his older brother. "What else is there? I was blinded by greed, Gaege. I never figured that Jabba would be able to track me as the source of his data leak."

"You didn't think that someone like Jabba the Hutt would have his own expert slicers? I always told you that your ego would be your undoing, didn't I? You may be good, but there will always be someone better. And that's true no matter if you're a slicer, a soldier, or a bounty hunter."

"The funny thing is, I didn't even mean to slice into Jabba's records. It was a complete accident. But once I found out what I had stumbled onto, I couldn't resist."

"You never could pass up a chance to make an easy credit," Xarran sighed. "Especially if it didn't involve honest work."

"I didn't come here for a lecture, brother. I came here for help." He stared out the transparisteel window that overlooked the lush forests of Vryssa. "Although from the looks of it, maybe I came to the wrong place."

The General's face twitched slightly. "Perhaps you'd have better luck out there by yourself. Feel free to leave anytime."

"Okay, so I messed up again. I apologize, Gaege...I know you're doing your best. I just never thought I'd be on the run from Boba Fett."

"You stole sensitive information from one of the most dangerous scumlords in the galaxy and then sold it to the highest bidder...how much did Jabba lose as a result of your actions?"

"Over 150,000 credits. But I don't think he really cares about the money. It's just the principle of the thing. The Hutt wants to make an example of me. And what Jabba wants, Jabba gets."

"Well, he isn't going to get you, brother. I don't care how many bounty hunters he sends."

"Do you really think Fett can be stopped?"

"The man is good. Very good. But I see his strategy now, and I refuse to play his game any longer. No more troops will leave the base. If he wants you, he will have to come here. And mark my words, no one can penetrate the 'death fence.' It's set for maximum voltage per my orders. The charge is so high the tiniest spark could fry a bantha in seconds." Xarran gave a thin-lipped smile. "No one gets out. And no one gets in."



Night had fallen on Vryssa.

Fett was crouched in the bushes, 20 meters away from the base's outer perimeter. The 10-meter-high wall surrounding the complex seemed to be alive, crackling as it was with azure arcs of electricity. The surges danced over the surface like writhing snakes.

The spot he picked was a good distance away from the nearest gate house, though stormtroopers constantly patrolled along the fortified catwalks set back from the fence. Observation towers were spaced about 100 meters apart along the catwalk and a combination of flood lights, detection sensors, and droids were used to maintain security. Fett's current position put him roughly 50 meters from the two flanking towers. It was a good distance, but he didn't think it would be enough to avoid detection.

Fett activated his internal comlink. It was time for a little distraction....



Slave I roared over the treeline, screaming toward the garrison base at full speed. Its sophisticated sensor-jamming array was fully powered and the hull itself was magnetically polarized to scramble and confuse enemy scans. As it was, the base was taken by surprise.

On its first pass the ship delivered a frighteningly potent volley of concussion missiles, proton torpedoes, blaster bolts, and ion blasts. The attack was so fierce that the base's powerful deflector shields fluctuated and the entire structure shuddered with the impact.



"See?" Xarran shouted from the command center. "The man has grown desperate! He knows there's no way in so he resorts to a suicide run." He focused his gaze on Rivo. "Everyone makes mistakes, sooner or later. And I will make sure it is his last."

Standing at one of the tactical stations, Tyrix turned to his commanding officer. "All turbolaser turrets are primed and ready, sir."

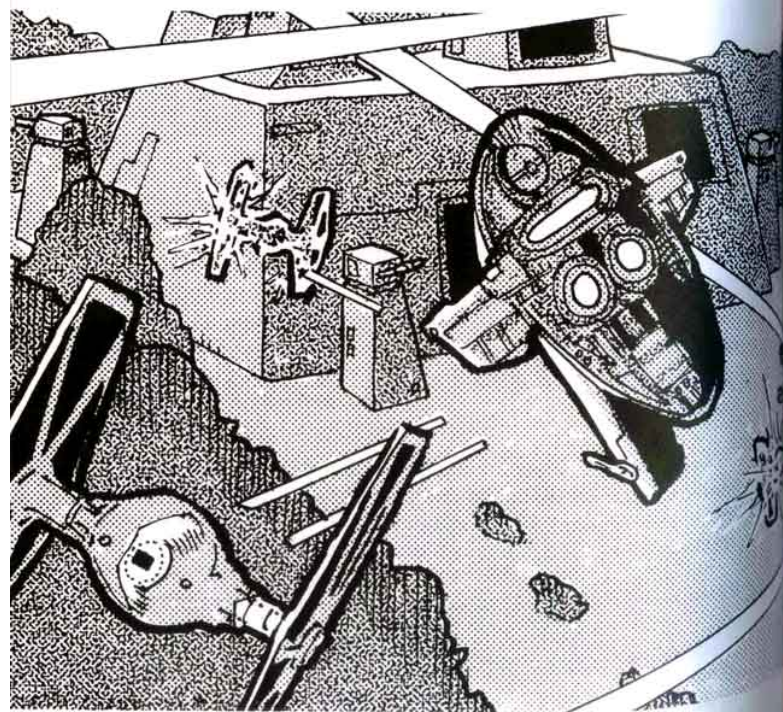
Xarran squeezed his gloved hand into a tight fist. "Fire at will! Blow him out of the sky!"

As *Slave I* circled for another pass, six heavy twin laser turrets

mounted around the building opened fire, followed by the thunderous roar of the three heavy twin turbolaser turrets from the upper level of the base. Unfortunately, the heavy weapons were slow to fire and even slower to track such a swift target.

Fett's ship executed an amazing series of maneuvers that allowed it to continue its strafing run while dancing around the green swarm of angry laser bolts. Twisting, turning and rolling, *Slave I* delivered a vicious counterattack capped by a full spread of proton torpedoes that punched a gaping hole in the base's deflectors. In return, Fett's ship took some minor damage, but easily eluded any critical hits.

Slave I executed a quick Segnor's Loop and moved into position for another assault.



"It's not working," Tyrix said, slamming a hand onto his console. "That ship's just too fast for our turrets to track. We're barely touching him and he's already knocked three quarters of our shield generators off-line." The damage control screen flashed the grim news. "Another run like that and he'll leave us defenseless!"

"No one is that good," Xarran thundered. The General was shaking with rage. "Launch the entire squadron. I want every TIE we have in the air now."

Nodding, Tyrix punched the intercom, calling for all pilots to report to their spacecraft. He turned to Xarran, "Should we sound the code alarm, sir?"

"No," Xarran said, his face flushing slightly. "I've served in the Imperial Army for most of my life and I will not be taunted into sounding full alert by one man, no matter how powerful he may appear to be. Besides, Fett will not breach the perimeter...the TIEs will see to that."

Tyrix paused a moment before responding—a sign of disapproval he would never dare to vocalize. "As you wish, sir."

Rivo shook his head. "Why won't you take the precautions? It won't hurt to—"

Xarran cut him off. "There isn't much good you can do up here, brother. Perhaps you should return to your quarters."

"But, I'm...fine." Rivo saw the look on Xarran's face and silently walked to the turbolift.



Slave I soared through the skies, taking potshots at the 40 TIE fighters giving chase. Fett hated to see such an unfair fight, but there was nothing he could do about it. His ship was faster, more maneuverable, and bristled with twice as much weaponry as all the

fighters put together. And unlike the TIEs, *Slave I* had shields. The Imperial fighters were hopelessly outmatched, even with the rather simplistic combat routines he had pre-programmed into the ship. The attacks on the garrison were typical Rebel strafing runs the Empire had so much trouble dealing with, while the evasive maneuvers against the TIEs were randomized according to sensor information. Fett avoided having *Slave I* be too aggressive with the fighters. Pre-programming was still no match for a live pilot.

All things considered, it was a good distraction, but would be over relatively soon. He was going to have to hurry.

Most of the stormtrooper patrols had cleared the catwalks—those that remained had their attention focused on the skies above.

Fett sprinted for the perimeter fence. When he closed half the distance he engaged his jet pack and soared into the air in a burst of flame. Elevating quickly, the hunter easily cleared the 10-meter-high fence, continued over the energy mine field between the fence and the base, and executed a perfect landing on the catwalk.

He checked his blaster rifle and quickly moved to the observation platform to his left. The first stormtrooper to step out caught a bolt in the helmet and went down. In mid-stride Fett sent a stun grenade arcing through the air and into the guardhouse. His faceplate tinted opaque as the flash-bang erupted, so the hunter didn't miss a beat when he dove inside the blast door on his stomach. Wild blaster bolts erupted overhead as Fett calmly picked off all five stormtroopers manning the tower.

He sealed the entrance behind him and calmly walked over to the computer terminal. Fett entered the encryption codes he had purchased from an unsavory Bothan and went to work. The first thing he pulled up was a three-dimensional schematic of the garrison base.



"Status?"

Tyrix glanced at the General and almost smiled. "We took heavy losses but the TIEs are routing him. Take a look."

The Commander stepped away from the tactical screen. Xarran studied the images for a few moments, watching as *Slave I* slowly

led the TIE fighters away from the base. "It's a feint."
"What?"

"Fett's not on that ship."

Tyrix was confused. "Then where is he?"

"Here." It pained the General to say it. "Inside the perimeter by now, I'd venture. Sound the code alarm—reference an intruder alert. Go to full battle stations and step up interior patrols." Xarran quietly walked back to his chair and dropped down as if the weight of an AT-AT was set upon his shoulders.



Fett stood at the command console of Sub-Level 3. Over a dozen stunned or dead technicians were scattered around the room. The hunter studied the illuminated panels which controlled the base's main power, back-up generators, tractor beams, and deflector shield generators. He went to work....



Tyrix nearly fell out of his chair. "Sir! We have him!"

"What?" The General was by his side in seconds.

"Someone's accessing the main control units on Sub-Level 3." He called up the data. "See? He's using a code from last month, and the computer flagged it."

"It has to be Fett. He's trying to shut us down." Xarran contemplated his response. "Send three squads down to...no, wait. Seal off that room immediately. We'll flood it with Chemtrox gas and that will be the last of our little bounty hunter."

Tyrix's voice lowered. "But what if it's not him...? And even if it is, he could have some technicians—"

Xarran pushed the Commander out of the way. His fingers flew over the console and a smile slowly dawned on his face. Fett was shutting down all systems and there was no time for moral debate. The race was on again and this time Xarran would win.



Fett whirled around as the heavy blast doors sealed and locked. He was effectively trapped. So, they finally discovered his trick and now knew where he was. It certainly took them long enough. Of course it was too late. Fett was about to cut the power.

He was so absorbed in his work that he almost missed it...luckily, his sound sensors picked up the recessed vents clicking open and the slow, steady hiss of gas being pumped into the room.

A quick scan revealed the substance to be Chemtrox—an extremely lethal agent. Fett had heard it delivered a particularly painful death. He didn't intend to find out firsthand if the rumors were true.

Fett activated his armor's enviro filter seal. It protected him from harmful or deadly atmosphere and there was a two-hour supply of air.

As the Chemtrox gas swirled around him Fett prepared to shut down the main computer.



"There..." Xarran wiped the sweat from his forehead and sat back in Tyrix's chair. "It's over. No one could have possibly survived that."

Everything went black. Every last bit of power in the entire garrison base. There was only darkness.

The Commander's voice rang out. "You were saying, sir?"

A blaster shot sent a crimson flash of light through the control room and Tyrix's body hit the floor. General Xarran activated a glow rod and hefted his blaster pistol. His eyes danced wildly in the soft light, then focused on the corpse of his Commander.

The terrified faces of the base command crew stared back at him as if he had suddenly transformed into a mynock. Xarran fired three bolts into the ceiling. "Everyone out. Now!"

The crew quickly obeyed, stumbling over themselves to reach the emergency stairs. The General entered his office and sat down in front of his console. There was one system that would not have been affected by the loss of main or back-up power. It ran off a special generator that only he knew about—well, he and Tyrix, but the Commander wouldn't be talking any time soon.

Xarran activated the panel and smiled as the base's self-destruct system lit up with crimson letters. The General lowered his head to accommodate the retinal scanner and began reciting the code to activate the countdown.



Fett moved through the darkened, deserted corridors of the base. Except for the steadfast stormtroopers, nearly everyone had fled the once mighty garrison. With his sound, motion, infrared, and targeting sensors all activated, picking off the ivory-armored opponents was ridiculously easy.

Of course, the one person who mattered was also present...somewhere in the bowels of the garrison.

Fett had paid a small fortune to have the unwitting fool tagged with one of his special microscopic subdermal trackers back on Inat Prime. It was a wise investment.

Jabba had not placed an open bounty on Rivo Xarran; rather, His Bloatedness had offered the job solely to Fett...50,000 credits. Dead or alive.

Fett suspected the Hutt wanted to see just how good Fett really was. Jabba knew Rivo would run to his big brother for help and an entire Imperial garrison would stand between the hunter and his prey.

Fett didn't like the Hutt, but he paid well and on time. That was more than he could say for most. Besides, one day Jabba would get what was coming to him. After all, justice was a patient hunter.

Fett knew the value of that particular virtue very well, so he continued his careful ascent through the garrison's main tower. There was no need to rush. The end would come soon enough. And no matter how novel the hunt had been, the conclusion was always the same.



With a high-pitched giggle, General Gaege Xarran, executive officer of the Imperial Garrison Base on Vryssa, moved down the stairwell. He had holstered his blaster in favor of a larger carbine. A spotluma was mounted on top of the weapon, and a stubby microgrenade launcher barrel hung underneath. "Come out, come out wherever you are...."



Fett emerged from the stairwell on Level 5. His tracker unit informed him that Rivo was less than 50 meters away, in the barracks adjoining the base's recreation facilities. The hunter moved down the shadowed corridor, stopping at the last door. Fett imagined the slicer was hiding under the bed, probably clutching his hold-out blaster and promising that if he survived this situation he'd never do anything bad again.

Fett slapped a small explosive charge to the entrance and stepped back. He activated the detonator and watched as the door evaporated into a fine mist. The hunter paused for a moment, half-expecting Rivo to fire a few desperate shots out the doorway.

Holding his rifle at the ready, Fett carefully made his approach. When his motion sensor alarm activated, the hunter froze and took aim, figuring Rivo was making a run through the door.

Fett was so intent on the situation, it took him a split second longer than usual to realize that the motion alarm had not come from in front of him. He whirled around, though even as he did, he knew it was too late. He braced for the impact.

The heavy blaster bolt took the hunter in his left side with such force that it knocked him off his feet. He landed hard—hard enough to knock the wind out of any ordinary man. But Fett was no ordinary man.

He was firing his rifle from the moment he recovered from the



impact. The furious volley sent his attacker scurrying back around the hallway for cover. Daggers of pain began jabbing at his side, but the wound was not serious and would have to be ignored for the moment. Fett had more important things to worry about.

His attacker suddenly swung back around and began shooting. As Fett returned fire, he recognized Gaege Xarran's features. The exchange exacted a toll on both men... Xarran took a bolt in the left leg, sending the General stumbling back behind cover; Fett was grazed in the right arm and his feeling in the limb abruptly tingled into numbness. The rifle tumbled from Fett's grasp and he had to make a choice. Quickly.

The hunter threw himself into the room just as a blaster bolt singed the floor where he had been microseconds before. Fett rolled into the large office and came up with his remaining wrist laser ready to go; however, his tracker unit told him that Rivo must

be in the refresher. That door was closed, so Fett kept most of his attention focused on the room's entrance. He was suddenly sorry he had vaporized the front door.

Fett crawled over to the wall, pushing his back against it. His right arm still dangled uselessly at his side. Luckily his left arm was uninjured, allowing him to keep the wrist laser aimed at the doorway.

The bounty hunter didn't have time to admonish himself for carelessness. Time was too precious now. Rapid yet rational decisions would mean the difference between life and death, success and failure. He could feel his heart surging in his chest. The outcome was in doubt for the first time. Oddly enough, he rather enjoyed it.

Fett began with a quick appraisal of his situation. Rivo would have to be mostly ignored at the moment. Even if he did come out shooting, the man was not combat-trained. Gaege Xarran was trained, however...Fett had learned the man once served as a member of the Imperial Royal Guard. And while the General might have been past his prime, he was still very well-armed.

On the other hand, Fett's armor had lost many of its secondary systems. While the basic suit was functioning, his sensor arrays were off-line and he could not direct any power to most of the weapons. The communication units were undamaged, but relatively useless at the moment. The only intact item that could prove helpful was his jet pack.

Things were not looking good....

Without his sensors, he had no way of knowing if or when the General would come around the doorframe firing. Even worse, Fett could not defend himself, other than in hand-to-hand combat. And at the moment he was short one hand.

Fett reached into one of his pouches and withdrew his final thermal detonator. He would not allow himself to be captured. He would take his enemies with him.

Then he saw it....

Xarran's blaster had been equipped with a spotluma. In his frenzied state, the General must not have realized that it also gave away his otherwise stealthy approach.

By watching the halo of light increase in intensity, Fett could estimate exactly how far away Xarran was at the moment. Fett quickly performed another analysis of the room and formulated a new plan. The bounty hunter barely resisted the urge to grin as he

quickly set the delay on the thermal detonator.

He glanced up once more at the ever-brightening light outside the door and lowered his left hand, gently rolling the silver sphere toward the doorway.

A moment later, General Gaege Xarran whirled around the corner expertly scanning the room with his blaster. "It's over!" he screamed triumphantly, just as something clicked against his boot. Xarran looked down at the thermal detonator in horror.

"Yes," Fett said. "It is...." And a microsecond-long burst from his jet pack sent the hunter streaking across the room.

Before Xarran could even think about reacting, Fett was at the far end of the office and safely hidden behind a large desk.

The explosion that followed rocked the entire floor.

Fett's chosen cover was of typical Imperial design—big, bulky, and quite resilient. Just as he had hoped, the durasteel monstrosity absorbed most of the impact while his armor had deflected any burning debris.

He brushed himself off and approached the refresher door. Rearing back, he kicked it open and prepared to beat Rivo into unconsciousness one-handed if need be. As it turned out he didn't have to....

Where Rivo should have been Fett saw only a small holopad. There was a possibility the device was rigged, but the hunter didn't think that was the case. He swiveled the viewscreen forward and was greeted by the smiling holographic visage of Rivo Xarran.

"Hello, Fett. I'd ask you how you're doing, but the answer is sort of obvious. An encounter with my brother, perhaps?" Rivo paused. "Well, are you going to say something or just stand there?"

Fett was a bit surprised with the live feed...he had mistakenly assumed it was a recorded message. "What do you want?"

"Oh, yes. I forgot. You are a man of few words, aren't you? Well, as I'm sure you've figured out by now, I discovered your wonderful little tracker. I bet you'd love to know how. Sorry, I can't give away all my secrets...I must say I am impressed. I never thought you'd actually foil an entire Imperial garrison," Rivo said with a sneer, "even if it was commanded by my idiot brother. Of course, there's no sense in taking any chances, either. Which is why I safely removed myself from your reach."

"For the moment," Fett said, studying Rivo's image. "You are not quite the sniveling coward you appear to be."

"No, I'm not. But neither am I a truly evil individual. My only

weapons are my computer and my mouth. Unfortunately, they are both boon and bane at times." He waved a hand. "But enough about me. Let's get down to business. I cannot get back to my normal life with you chasing me around the galaxy, and I know you will not rest until you drag me or my corpse before the great Bloated One. Correct?"

Fett didn't reply.

"So, I propose a compromise...and to show my good faith, I'll even let you in on a little secret. My brother has set the garrison base's self-destruct system. Relax, you have 10 minutes before it blows; however, I'll make this quick. You can tell Jabba that I died in the explosion, collect your fee, and go about your business. I will assume a false identity, go underground, and never, ever reveal what has transpired within this building so long as I live. We both win." Rivo's confident gaze faltered somewhat. "What do you say, bounty hunter? Is it a deal?"

After a moment, the bounty hunter nodded. "Very well. But one day I will find you, Rivo. And on that day, I will finish this job."

Rivo grinned. "Ah, yes. It may take longer than usual, but Boba Fett always wins. Very good, then. Until that day...." His image flickered away into darkness.

The hunter checked his chronometer. At least that was still working. He had better get moving. Fett had a feeling the little sithspawn might have "accidentally" overestimated the countdown to detonation. As he headed for the roof, Fett sent out a beckon call to *Slave I*....



The Storyteller stopped, enjoying the eager stares of the children.

"How does it end?" asked the little girl breathlessly.

Her question was taken up by the other kids as they demanded a resolution to the tale.

The Storyteller smiled appreciatively and continued. "Well, after

many, many years Boba Fett managed to track Rivo down to a backwater planet in the Outer Rim Territories, to the very cantina where the slicer was hiding—" he paused for effect and then said softly. "—And then the greatest bounty hunter of all time finally completed his task. You see, Boba Fett *never* loses." He glanced at his chronometer. "Now, it's way past your bedtimes. Get off to sleep, all of you. And no bad dreams or no more stories before bedtime."

Satisfied, the children filed up the stairs to their rooms, still chattering about the story. All except for the little girl. She paused at the top of the steps with a quizzical look on her face. "Is Boba Fett a good guy or a bad guy?"

He considered that for a moment. "That's a question only you can answer," he said finally.

The girl shrugged her shoulders and bounded up the stairs, leaving the Storyteller alone with his thoughts.

Well, not quite alone.

"How long have you been sitting there?" the Storyteller asked.

"You tell me," came the flat, filtered response.

The Storyteller turned toward the shadowed booth from which a gray and green-garbed figure emerged. Boba Fett stood before the Storyteller, arms folded across his armored chest.

"After all these years you actually managed to find me." Smiling, the Storyteller stood up. "At least my little tale will be authentic now."

The bounty hunter slowly reached into one of his pouches and the Storyteller took a deep breath. Fett withdrew something silver and shiny and the Storyteller suddenly had visions of thermal detonators.

Fett casually tossed the object toward the man, who caught it out of reflex.

The Storyteller braced himself for the end, but when it didn't come he looked at the object in his palm. It was a credit chit.

Fett was already walking toward the exit.

The Storyteller held it up, confused. "What is this?"

The bounty hunter didn't turn around. "Many things, Rivo. An end, a new beginning...and maybe even an answer to a little girl's question." Fett glanced back once, then disappeared through the doors.

The Storyteller (he no longer really thought of himself as Rivo) examined the chit. It contained 50,000 credits. The exact bounty

put on his head by Jabba. Suddenly, everything became clear. He grinned and ran outside.

Boba Fett was gone...vanished into the wastes of Ladarra.

The Storyteller stood there in silence. And realized something was wrong. For a brief moment, he couldn't quite figure it out—then it suddenly hit him.

There was no squeaking.

The Storyteller looked down...and found himself staring at the disintegrated remains of the bar's repliwood sign. He threw back his head and began laughing.

Roleplaying Game Statistics

■ Boba Fett

Type: Bounty Hunter

DEXTERITY 4D

Armor weapons 6D, blaster 9D, brawling parry 5D+1, dodge 6D+1, grenade 7D, melee combat 6D, melee parry 6D, missile weapons 6D+2, thrown weapons 5D+2, vehicle blasters 7D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Alien species 5D, bureaucracy 5D+2, cultures 5D, intimidation 7D+1, languages 5D+1, planetary systems 6D, streetwise 8D, survival 6D, value 6D+1, willpower 6D

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Astrogation 6D+1, jet pack operation 5D+2, repulsorlift operation 5D, repulsorlift operation: speeder bike 6D, space transports 7D, starship gunnery 8D, starship shields 6D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 7D, command 4D+2, con 6D, gambling 6D, hide 4D+2, investigation 9D, persuasion 7D, search 8D+2, sneak 6D+2

STRENGTH 3D+2

Brawling 6D, climbing/jumping 4D, lifting 5D, stamina 7D, swimming 5D

TECHNICAL 2D

Armor repair 6D, computer programming/repair 4D, demolition 6D, droid programming 4D, security 8D, space transports repair 6D

Force Points: 5

Dark Side Points: 6

Character Points: 22

Move: 10

Equipment: Blaster rifle (6D), Mandalorian battle armor, comlink, Wookiee scalps dangling from belt, *Slave I*.

Capsule: One of the most notorious bounty hunters who has ever lived...some say the best. The only certainty about the man behind the mask is that he is extremely dangerous.

Other than that, Fett remains a mystery.

■ Boba Fett's Battle Armor

Model: Modified Mandalorian battle armor

Type: Modified personal battle armor

Cost: Not for sale

Availability: Unique

Game Effect:

Basic Suit: Provides +4D to *Strength* for physical attacks, +3D for energy attacks. Covers head, torso and arms. No *Dexterity* penalties.

Wrist Lasers: 5D damage, uses *armor weapons* skill, ranges: 3-5/25/50.

Rocket Dart Launcher: 6D damage, uses *missile weapons* skill, ranges: 3-5/10/25, poison-tipped (causes 5D damage for five rounds). Can use alternative poisons and stun serums.

Turbo-Projected Grappling Hook: 20-meter lanyard, uses *missile weapons* skill, ranges: 0-3/10/20, magnetic grappling "hook."

Flame Projector: 5D damage, uses *armor weapons* skill, creates cone one meter wide, variable one to five meters long.

Concussion Grenade

Launcher: Grenades cause 6D damage over a five meter blast radius. Uses *missile weapons* skill, range: 1-250/350/500, magazine carries 20 grenades.

Jet Pack: Has a Move of 100 meters horizontally, 70 meters vertically. Uses *jet pack operation* skill, base difficulty is Easy, modified by obstacles. Has 20 charges can expend up to two per round.

Sensor Pod: +2D to search.

Infrared/Motion Sensor: Integrated infrared and motion sensor adds +1D to *Perception* in darkness or with moving objects ahead and to both sides.

Macrobinoculars: Add +3D to *Perception* or search for objects 100-500 meters away. Scamp-linked into blaster rifle; reduces range two levels (for example, long range becomes short range).

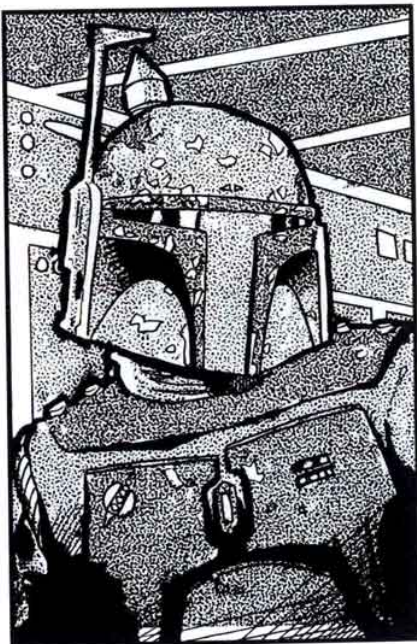
Sound Sensors: Adds +1D to *Perception* or search. This bonus only applies in quiet situations.

Internal Comlink: Can be linked into *Slave I*'s control system (with beacon call), adjusted to other standard frequencies. Also has external speaker.

Broad-band Antenna: Can intercept and decode most communications made on standard frequencies. As a result, Boba Fett can patch into shipboard communications.

Winch: Capable of lifting 100 kilograms (Fett and his equipment only).

Sealed Enviro Filter: Filter system can block out harmful molecules, or in case of insufficient or deadly atmosphere, the suit can completely seal, drawing upon a two hour internal supply of oxygen.



■ Rivo Xarran

Type: Slicer

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Blaster 4D+1, dodge 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Business 6D, languages 4D, streetwise 5D+2, value 5D

MECHANICAL 2D

Communications 3D+2, repulsorlift operation 4D, sensors 4D, space transports 4D+2



PERCEPTION 3D+1

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

STRENGTH 2D

Brawling 3D

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 7D+1, security 5D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 15

Move: 10

Equipment: Personalized computer, datapad, datacards, hold-out blaster (3D+2), chronometer

Capsule: Rivo grew up in the shadow of his older brother, Gaege. The elder Xarran was always successful at whatever he did, while Rivo couldn't seem to do anything right. Gaege went to the Imperial Academy; Rivo was thrown in jail for petty theft.

With no other way to get attention, Rivo constantly misbehaved. Quick-witted and sarcastic, more often than not his mouth tended to get

him into trouble. He became so proficient at fast-talking his way out of danger, people began to say he should have been an actor...or a politician

Leaving home at a young age, he made a career as a swindler and thief until he discovered a talent for computers (after he stole his first one from a store). Rivo decided to make use of his newfound ability the only way he knew how...he became a slicer.

Rivo is a handsome young human in his mid-thirties. He has short, unevenly chopped dark hair, and light eyes. A roguish grin is never far from his lips.

■ General Gaege Xarran

Type: Imperial General

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Blaster 5D, brawling parry 4D, dodge 4D

KNOWLEDGE 3D+2

Bureaucracy 5D, intimidation 7D, survival 4D+1, tactics: capital ships 5D, tactics: fleets 4D+2, tactics: ground assault 6D, tactics: squads 5D+1

MECHANICAL 3D

Repulsorlift operation 4D, sensors 5D, starship gunnery 4D, starship shields 4D+2

PERCEPTION 2D+1

Command 7D+2, search 5D

STRENGTH 3D+1

Brawling 5D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 5D, security 5D+2

Character Points: 12

Move: 10

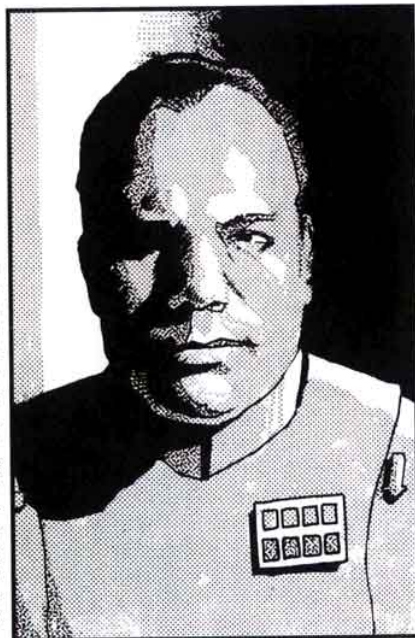
Equipment: Datapad, blaster pistol (4D+1), comlink, rank cylinders

Capsule: Gaege Xarran was the perfect son. He did everything he was asked, never got into trouble, and excelled at whatever it was he chose to do, unlike his younger brother Rivo. The two siblings never really got along, being such opposites. Their parents often compared them to order and chaos. When Gaege entered the Imperial Academy, that was the last straw for Rivo, who ran away from home.

With a promising career in the military, Gaege had everything going for him. He served briefly as an Imperial Royal Guardsman, then returned to the regular Imperial Army. He quickly attained the rank of general and was recently assigned as executive officer of the garrison base on Vryssa.

While Gaege appears to be perfect, he has always suffered from a fiery temper, though he usually manages to keep it concealed.

He seldom hears from his brother, except of course, when Rivo wants something....



Aliens! The Mos Eisley cantina, Jabba's palace and the many encounters in between and beyond have forever endeared *Star Wars* fans to the myriad aliens that span the galaxy. Bizarre aliens are a crucial part of the *Star Wars* mythos and provide colorful background for roleplaying adventures.

The following entries detail a handful of new aliens from all corners of the galaxy, as well as Professor Tem Eliss, a prominent scholar who studies aliens and their cultures.

Professor Tem Eliss, Sentientologist

Professor Tem Eliss is one of the most respected and well-known sentientologists in the galaxy. Head of the University of Sanbra's Sentient Studies Department and infamous for his blatant disregard of Imperial "protocol," Professor Eliss has studied sentient species and their cultures for decades. A native of the lyra homeworld F'tral, Eliss was raised among the stars rather than within the oceans, and was not immersed in lyra culture: this upbringing largely attributes to his being so unlike most of his kind.

Whereas most lyra have a reputation for being condescending, egotistical and downright obnoxious, Eliss is a gifted scholar and friend to many. In fact, many representatives of lyra culture and society rather dislike Professor Eliss for his keeping company with beings from other species.

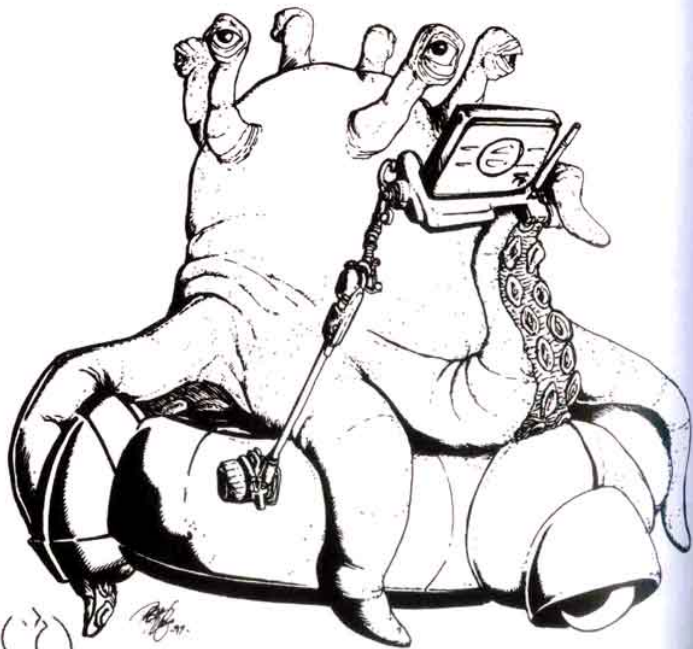
By Trevor J. Wilson and Craig Robert Carey

Illustrations by Pablo Hidalgo

Eliss's anti-Imperial rhetoric has gotten him into trouble on more than one occasion, and finally came to a boil a few months ago. At the request of the faculty, Eliss was preparing *The University of Sanbra Guide to Intelligent Life* (see *Galaxy Guide 12: Aliens—Enemies and Allies*)...but he was not adhering to Imperial doctrine while doing so. COMPNOR loyalists on the Professor's staff alerted Imperial officials of the matter, and shortly thereafter Professor Eliss fled the University campus, taking his research materials with him. Subsequent attempts to locate and detain Eliss have met with failure.

Three weeks after his disappearance, Professor Eliss released *The Guide* to the student communication nets: it has since been forwarded to more than 25,000 comm nodes on thousands of worlds (much to the Empire's displeasure).

Following are additional entries to the University's *Guide* that Professor Eliss has drafted from wherever he is taking refuge and has posted to the comm nets. Imperial forces continue their search for the fugitive....



Professor Tem Eliss

Type: lyra Sentientologist

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Dodge 3D+2

KNOWLEDGE 4D

Alien species 10D+1, bureaucracy: University of Sanbra 5D+1, cultures 9D+1, intimidation: students 6D, languages 8D, planetary systems 8D, scholar: xenoarchaeology 8D+2, survival 4D+2, survival: aquatic 6D, willpower 5D

MECHANICAL 2D

Astrogation 3D+2, communications 3D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 5D+2, command 4D, investigation 5D

STRENGTH 2D+2

Swimming 5D+2

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Computer programming/repair 4D+2, droid programming 4D, first aid 4D, security 4D+2

Force Points: 2

Character Points: 11

Move: 13 (swimming); 4 (walking)

Equipment: Datapad

Note: For more information on the lyra, see pages 56–58 of *Galaxy Guide 4: Alien Races*.

An Extinct Guest

It had been a busy week for Professor Tem Eliss. The University of Sanbra had been thrown into turmoil by the recent Imperial removal of instructor Callow Batta in the History Department—continued pressure by Imperial officials regarding Eliss' work further hindered his progress. He had numerous projects to grade and conferences scheduled, and the Sentient Studies Department was hoping to receive the first volume of his University of Sanbra *Guide to Intelligent Life* sometime before the end of the term.

Tem sank into his old aquachair, numerous tentacles wrapping around the arms securely. He had over the last few days read portions of Rin's *Catalog of Intelligent Life in the Galaxy*, and that sickeningly pro-Imperial work only further prompted him to complete more of his own project. Unfortunately for Eliss, however, one lyra could only do so much in a 27-hour day. He switched off his terminal and sipped from a salty mug of brinebrew.

The door chimed and Professor Eliss sat up. "Come in," he called. He glanced at the wall chrono; student appointments didn't begin for another hour or so. For a moment he expected the sector Moff to enter with a guard of stormtroopers, ready to haul him off to

some interrogation center. Instead, a short reptilian being stood in the dimly-lit hallway.

The alien was less than a meter and a half tall, with a split tail nearly as thick as its body trailing behind.

"Professor Eliss?" the visitor asked quietly, bowing his head at the doorway.

"Yes," Eliss responded. "Can I help you?"

The slight reptile looked about the room suspiciously. "Are we alone?"

Eliss looked about his office, not quite sure of what to expect. He set down his mug of brinebrew.

"We are," the Professor answered tentatively. "Have a seat," he said, and motioned to a gravcouch opposite where he was sitting.

"Thank you," the alien acknowledged, and slipped into the couch.

"So what can I help you with?" Professor Eliss asked the slim creature.

There was no pause; the caller had come with his appeal already planned. "I ask you to write the truth about my people."

It then occurred to Professor Eliss that he did not even recognize what species his unexpected guest was. He reached for his datapad. "And what is your species?" he asked.

"I am Abinyshi," the reptile replied curtly.

Professor Eliss set his datapad down on one of the arms of his chair. "The Abinyshi have been extinct for decades," Eliss said slowly.

"We have been under the servitude of the Empire," the reptile said. "We have been all but wiped out. But a few of us survive, despite Imperial propaganda claiming we destroyed ourselves in some absurd civil conflict."

"I see." The sentientologist was on dangerous ground here, and he suddenly hoped COMPNOR hadn't installed any sort of surveillance devices in his office.

Each of Eliss's hearts skipped a beat.

"All right," he said. "Tell me of your people and I will make sure the truth is told." Eliss looked out over the campus through the office's streaked windows. "I probably won't be here much longer, so I might as well get as much work done as possible." He turned back to face his guest.

"My name is S'itl Thirr," the being began....

Abinyshi

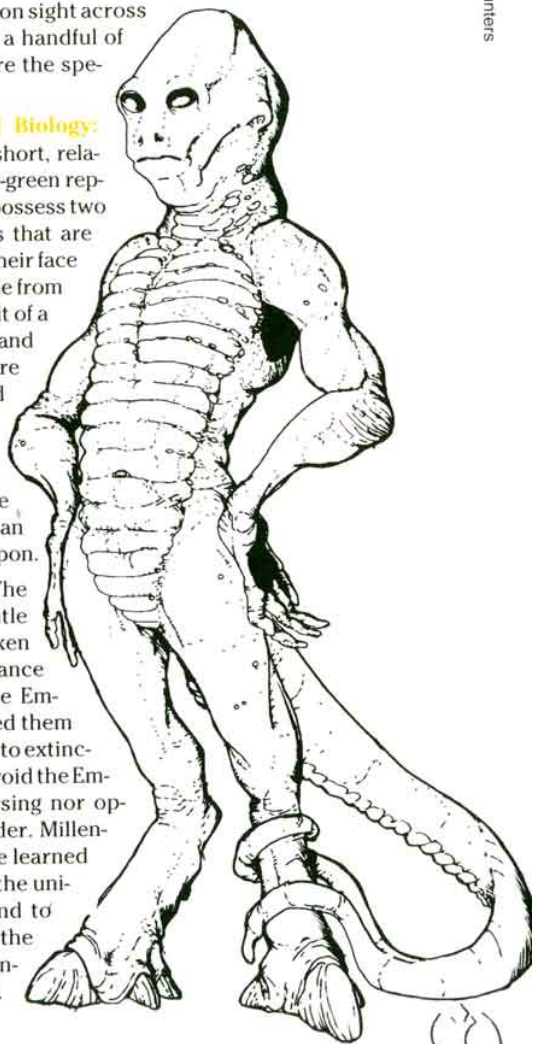
Long believed to be extinct, the Abinyshi are a people that have been nearly destroyed by the Empire's exploitation of their homeworld. Once a common sight across the galaxy, perhaps a handful of individuals are aware the species still exists.

Appearance and Biology:

The Abinyshi are a short, relatively slender yellow-green reptilian species. They possess two dark, pupil-less eyes that are set close together. Their face has few features aside from a slight horizontal slit of a mouth; their nose and ears, while extant, are very minute and barely noticeable. The species has a large, two-forked tail that assists in balance and is used both as an appendage and weapon.

Temperament:

The Abinyshi are a gentle people and have taken a rather passive stance in opposition to the Empire; this has allowed them to be pushed nearly to extinction. They largely avoid the Empire, neither endorsing nor opposing the New Order. Millennia ago their culture learned to live with all that the universe presented, and to simply let much of the galaxy's trivial concerns pass them by.



History and Culture: The Abinyshi have played a minor but consistent role in galactic history. Their primary contributions have included culinary and academic developments; several fine restaurants serve Abinyshi cuisine and Abinyshi literature is still devoured by university students throughout the galaxy. The popularity of their contributions have lost some of their strength in recent years, as the species was believed to have destroyed itself in a civil war approximately two decades ago, and no further contributions have been made.

In truth, the Empire found the Abinyshi homeworld, Inysh, had massive kalonterium reserves. Kalonterium is a low-grade ore used in the development of weapons and some starship construction. The Imperial mining efforts that followed all but destroyed the Inysh ecology, and devastated the indigenous flora and fauna.

Those Abinyshi who weren't enslaved for the purpose of mining the kalonterium and managed to escape numbered in the low thousands. After the need for kalonterium diminished with the increased frequency of higher-grade ores such as doonium and meleenium, the Imperial extraction units left Inysh. The Abinyshi were left to suffer in their ruined world.

Technology Level: The Abinyshi were among the first species to reach the stars, and though their techniques and technology never compared to that of the Corellians or Duros, they have long enjoyed the technology provided them by their allies. Their small population limited their ability to colonize any territories outside their home system.

Abinyshi In the Galaxy: Abinyshi are now seldom encountered. Years ago they were a relatively common sight; continued persecution by the Empire has prompted them to become rather reclusive. They now tend to inhabit regions with relatively light Imperial presence (such as the Corporate Sector or the Periphery). Even when they are seen, they very rarely discuss anything pertaining to their origin; individuals who come across an Abinyshi most often take the being to be just another reptilian alien.

Gamemaster Notes: An Abinyshi gamemaster character should be an extremely rare—if not singular—occurrence. An Abinyshi player character might have among his ultimate goals the development of an Abinyshi colony, perhaps on an Alliance safe world far from the grasp of the Empire.

Personality Notes: To the casual eye, an Abinyshi will seem shy—they make a point to avoid attention. Once befriended, however, an Abinyshi is a gentle and soft-spoken companion, with a penchant for the arts and eagerness for new projects.

Suggested Skills: Many older Abinyshi are likely to have high *Knowledge* skills, including *scholar*. Some of the younger Abinyshi who have only known Imperial rule will likely have improved *survival*, *hide* and *sneak* skills.

Notable Personalities: Alliance SpecForces operative Thi'in Lis; the late poet Si Qurr.

Average Abinyshi. *Dexterity* 2D, *Knowledge* 3D, *Mechanical* 1D+2, *Perception* 2D, *Strength* 2D, *Technical* 1D+1. Move: 10.

■ Abinyshi

Attribute Dice: 12D

DEXTERITY 2D/4D

KNOWLEDGE 1D+2/4D+1

MECHANICAL 1D/3D

PERCEPTION 2D+2/4D+2

STRENGTH 2D/4D

TECHNICAL 1D+1/3D+2

Special Abilities:

Tail: The Abinyshi can use their tail as a third arm at -1D their regular die code. In combat, the tail does *Strength* damage.

Story Factors:

Believed Extinct: Nearly all beings in the galaxy believe the Abinyshi to be extinct.

Move: 10/12

Size: 1.2–1.6 meters

Jiivahar

The forest world Carest 1 has long been a favorite location for tourists throughout the galaxy. On this tranquil planet the tree-dwelling Jiivahar evolved from hairless simian stock. Millions of the species inhabit the giant conifers of the northern continents that make Carest 1 such a popular vacation site.

Appearance and Biology: With their slender frame and long limbs, the Jiivahar appear lanky and ungraceful. Despite that appearance, their bodies are exceptionally limber, allowing for leisurely travel among the branches of the majestic *thykar* trees.

The Jiivahar's bodies are narrow and streamlined. They have no hair, and are perfectly built for racing along the treetops. They have long, thin fingers and toes that are capable of wrapping completely around small limbs and branches. Their heads are flat and linear,

and their large, round eyes are spaced wide apart.

The skin of the Jiivahar ranges from light green to dark brown, depending upon geographical location. Though appearing to be smooth, Jiivahar skin is actually covered with tiny pocks. These help them to climb by giving them added traction.

To aid in their climbing, the Jiivahar secrete a highly sticky substance from the pores of their hands and feet. This substance, known as *sarvin*, is remarkably adherent; it will stick to all but the smoothest materials. When no longer required, the *sarvin* is simply washed away through controlled perspiration.

Though the Jiivahar tend to be of average size for a humanoid species, they have a light frame with hollow, bird-like bones. Such structure aids in their climbing, but also makes them susceptible to physical damage.

The Jiivahar are omnivores; their diet consists primarily of large vine-nuts and sweet *trarra* berries.

Temperament: Amiable by nature, the Jiivahar have always sought peace—both with others and within themselves. Because they have only a few natural predators, they have never developed any heightened sense of caution or suspicion. This manifests itself in their



extreme curiosity; they actively seek out any new experience, no matter how insignificant it may be. This can get them into serious trouble when dealing with those who are not quite as innocent as they are. Jiivahar who deal with other species are often taken advantage of—especially by gamblers, smugglers and the like—until they learn to be not quite so trusting.

History and Culture: The woodland of Carest 1's northern continents is a tranquil environment. With few predators, the local wildlife has flourished, its population kept in check only by massive storms that enter the region every decade or so.

The Jiivahar evolved in these relatively calm forests, and the serenity which surrounds them has left its mark on their lifestyle. Jiivahar society is egalitarian in almost all regards, and there have only been two wars in their history, both during times of great scarcity.

Social organization is virtually nonexistent among the Jiivahar. They tend to gather into small *talins*—usually numbering around 5 to 10 families—which have some qualities of a formal tribe, but where membership is not limited to those born within the group. Anyone can enter or leave these *talins* at any time.

Jiivahar *talins* are semi-nomadic. They have permanent settlements by the shores of lakes, rivers and oceans, but they only stay in them part of the year. During the cold season they use these settlements—consisting of primitive wooden huts insulated with thick leaves and bark—as shelter from the harsh weather. The rest of the year the Jiivahar roam the treetops of their particular range in accordance with seasonal variations.

Since the Jiivahar have permanent settlements where they can store their possessions, some accumulate more goods than others. Such inequality is remedied through great redistributive feasts that are called once each season by the leaders of a *talin*.

During these feasts, or *Kinn-taas*, all members of a *talin* are compelled by social pressure—not law—to give to the *talin*'s leaders as many of their possessions as they can afford. In return they gain prestige and respect among their peers. The leaders then redistribute these goods to the neediest among them, thus leveling the wealth of the entire *talin*.

Politics: The leaders of a *talin* are not chosen by election or birthright. Rather, the *talin* chooses its wisest, most experienced members to lead. While exhibiting some qualities of a chief—

specifically the privilege to settle disputes and throw feasts—these leaders hold no title, possess no regalia of office, and are considered equal to all other members of the *talins*. There is no fixed number of leaders a *talin* may have; they can have as many or as few as they deem necessary.

Leaders of a Jivahar *talin* have only limited authority. They lack the power to carry out their demands with the use of force, and must instead rely on persuasion and the respect given them by others to effect their wishes.

There are no written laws in Jivahar society; individuals are expected to act on behalf of the community and with respect toward the rights and well-being of others. Those few who choose to ignore these basic guidelines are physically branded and banished from the *talin*.

Technology Level: Jivahar technology is limited to primitive muscle-powered tools that aid in foraging and fishing. They have developed few weapons.

Trade and Technology: Tourism is by far the largest industry on Carest 1. Beings from all over the galaxy are drawn to this little planet because of its natural beauty, tranquility, and the magnificent *thykar* trees—some standing well over 150 meters—that dominate the northern continents. Many enterprising Jivahar earn a considerable living as guides for the frequent tourists.

Many tourists have brought advanced technology; a few Jivahar have acquired these items. The curiosity of the Jivahar has made them quite enthusiastic about acquiring these “wonders,” but the items have been the source of recent stress within Jivahar society. Unwilling to give away their most treasured items, some Jivahar have found themselves victims of theft. Worse yet, some Jivahar outcasts have managed to obtain advanced weaponry and have begun to terrorize some Jivahar *talins*. Time has yet to tell how this will affect Jivahar society.

Jivahar in the Galaxy: Driven by their uncontrollable curiosity, many Jivahar have left the safety of Carest 1 for the adventure and excitement offered by the countless worlds beyond their own. These Jivahar travel throughout the galaxy, exploring new worlds and typically searching for any experiences that might make for a worthy story.

Some Jivahar have become involved in the galactic struggle for freedom. They see the oppressive Empire as contrary to everything

they believe in. Many have joined the Rebel Alliance, where they make effective woodland pathfinders and wilderness fighters.

Personality Notes: The Jivahar's unbridled inquisitiveness can sometimes get them into trouble. Their prying ways have angered more than a few shady characters from time to time. They are particularly prone to enraging members of species with limited patience, such as Wookiees and Houks—a fault that can sometimes prove to be quite dangerous...if not outright fatal.

Suggested Skills: Most Jivahar will have high *climbing* and *survival: forest* skills.

Notable Personalities: Jannpyr, famed tour guide of Carest 1; Klebv, outcast and terrorist-for-hire.

Average Jivahar: *Dexterity 3D+1, Knowledge 2D, Mechanical 1D, Perception 3D, Strength 1D+2, Technical 1D.* Move: 10, 12 (climbing).

■ Jivahar

Attribute Dice: 12D
DEXTERITY 2D/ 4D+2
KNOWLEDGE 1D/3D+2
MECHANICAL 1D/3D+1
PERCEPTION 2D/4D
STRENGTH 1D/3D
TECHNICAL 1D/3D

Special Abilities:

Produce Sarvin: The Jivahar can secrete an adhesive substance, *sarvin*, from the pores in their hands and feet. This substance gives them a +1D bonus to their *climbing* skill. In addition, it also gives them a +1D bonus to any *Strength* rolls for the purposes of clutching objects or living creatures. The Jivahar cleanse themselves of the *sarvin* through controlled perspiration; it takes one round to do this.

Delicate Build: Due to the Jivahar's fragile bone structure they suffer a -2 modifier to all *Strength* rolls to resist damage.

Story Factors:

Curiosity: Jivahar have an inherent curiosity of the world around them. They will actively seek out any new experiences and adventures.

Move: 10/12 (running), 12/14 (climbing)

Size: 1.55–1.85 meters tall

Poss'Nomin

The Poss'Nomin, hailing from Illarreen, are a species of adventurers. Upon contact with other cultures, the Poss'Nomin were quick to take up the challenge and explore the rest of the galaxy.

Appearance and Biology: Somewhat larger than an average human, the Poss'Nomin have a thick build that is due more to their sizable bone structure than muscular bulk. Their skin is almost

uniformly red, though some races have black- or brown-spotted forearms.

Poss'Nomin have wide faces with angular cheek bones—rimmed with cartilage knobs—and a broad, flat nose. They have great, shovel-like jaws filled with a mixture of flat and sharp teeth that betray their omnivorous nature.

Certainly the most striking aspect of the Poss'Nomin's physical appearance is their three eyes; they are positioned next to one another horizontally, giving them a wide arc of vision. The large eyes are orange except for the iris, which ranges from dark blue to yellow. Each eye has two fleshy eyelids, the outer one used primarily when sleeping.

Temperament: The temperament and personality of the Poss'Nomin, like that of most species, varies greatly from individual to individual. In general, however, they possess a fundamental eagerness to explore. They quest for both knowledge and adventure; the drive to uncover the mysteries of the universe is rooted in their very being.

History and Culture: The Poss'Nomin evolved along the eastern shores of Vhin, an island continent in the northern hemisphere. The area was rich in resources, but due to sudden and intense climatic changes—possibly the result of a solar flare—that took place within the span of a few centuries, the place became an uninhabitable wasteland.

Having few options, the Poss'Nomin left the shores for better lands beyond. They quickly spread throughout the continent, eventually building boats that could take them to new regions. Civilizations blossomed throughout the world and society prospered.

Within a few millennia, several powerful nations had emerged, each with differing priorities and forms of government. Conflicts began that soon led to war on a global scale, something the Poss'Nomin had never before experienced.

It was during this period, scarcely a century ago, that Illarreen was discovered by a party of spice traders. As the planet was previously unexplored, the traders decided to investigate. What they found was a fully developed species engaged in massive global warfare.

The Poss'Nomin immediately ceased their fighting in order to comprehend the nature of their visitors. Less than a decade after

their initial contact with outsiders, the warring nations put aside their grievances and united in an effort to adopt the galaxy's more advanced technology and become part of the galactic community.

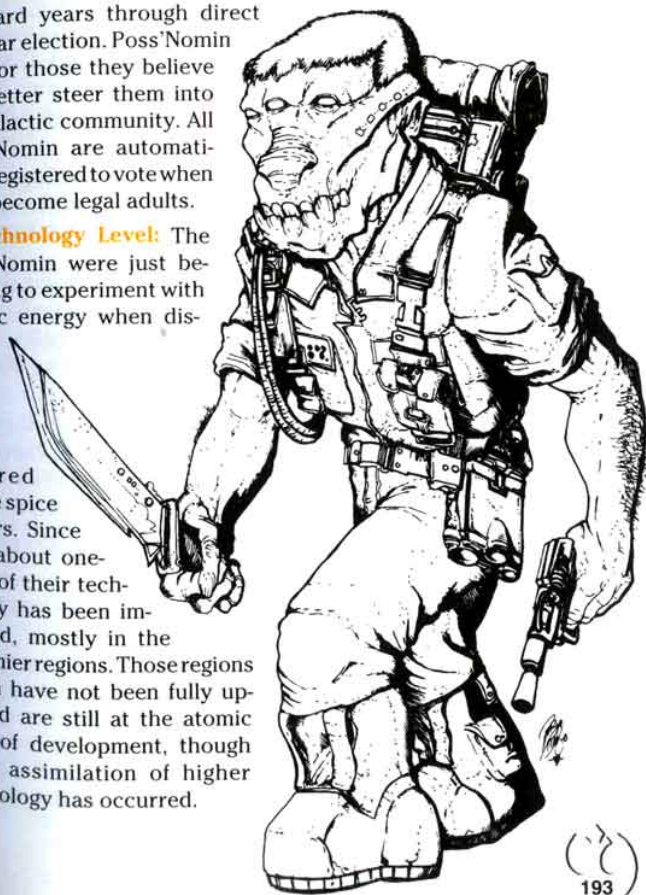
Today approximately one-third of the population has adopted galactic standard technology.

Politics: Since the nations of Illarreen have united, they have essentially become one giant government. The power base is loosely structured, with most of the authority resting in the hands of quasi-independent regional governments.

Leaders of all government levels are chosen once every three standard years through direct popular election. Poss'Nomin vote for those they believe will better steer them into the galactic community. All Poss'Nomin are automatically registered to vote when they become legal adults.

Technology Level: The Poss'Nomin were just beginning to experiment with atomic energy when dis-

covered by the spice traders. Since then about one-third of their technology has been improved, mostly in the wealthier regions. Those regions which have not been fully upgraded are still at the atomic level of development, though some assimilation of higher technology has occurred.



Trade and Technology: The effects of standard technology on Poss'Nomin society have been tremendous. The entire population is undergoing a fundamental restructuring of their facilities and way of thinking.

However, this technological restructuring is extremely expensive. In the past, the Old Republic helped fund the modernization, and change was rapid. But ever since the Empire came to power, the Poss'Nomin have been left to fend for themselves. The rate of conversion has slowed dramatically, the local economy has become stagnant, and a substantial gap has widened between the wealthy and the poor.

To raise funds for restructuring, the Poss'Nomin government has recently auctioned off large chunks of public land. This property is primarily purchased by influential offworld mining companies (since Illarreen is rich with beryllium ore) who care little for the plight of the Poss'Nomin.

Poss'Nomin in the Galaxy: The need to explore has been part of the Poss'Nomin psyche since their migration from the eastern shores of Vhin. The recently acquired access to space travel has opened up a whole new realm for them to scout.

Since they were discovered, many Poss'Nomin have taken to the stars. They left the depressed economy of Illarreen in search of the adventure and riches to be found within the rest of the galaxy. Many have traveled to the uncharted regions at the edge of the galaxy and even beyond.

Personality Notes: Though the Poss'Nomin have a strong desire to explore new territories, they have never displayed an expansionist agenda or need to conquer. Instead, it is the thrill of adventure and the drive to discover that is at the heart of their exploration.

Suggested Skills: Many Poss'Nomin will have *planetary systems, survival, investigation* and *search* skills.

Notable Personalities: Kiv'arwa, explorer for Rim Commercial Mining.

Average Poss'Nomin: *Dexterity 2D, Knowledge 2D, Mechanical 1D+2, Perception 3D, Strength 2D, Technical 1D+1.* Move: 10.

■ Poss'Nomin

Attribute Dice: 12D
DEXTERITY 1D/4D
KNOWLEDGE 1D/4D

MECHANICAL 1D/3D+2
PERCEPTION 2D/4D+2
STRENGTH 1D+1/4D
TECHNICAL 1D/3D+1

Special Abilities:

Wide Vision: Because of the positioning of their three eyes, the Poss'Nomin have a very wide arc of vision. This gives them a +1D bonus to all *Perception* and *search* rolls based on visual acuity.

Move: 10/12

Size: 1.7–2.1 meters tall

Tarc

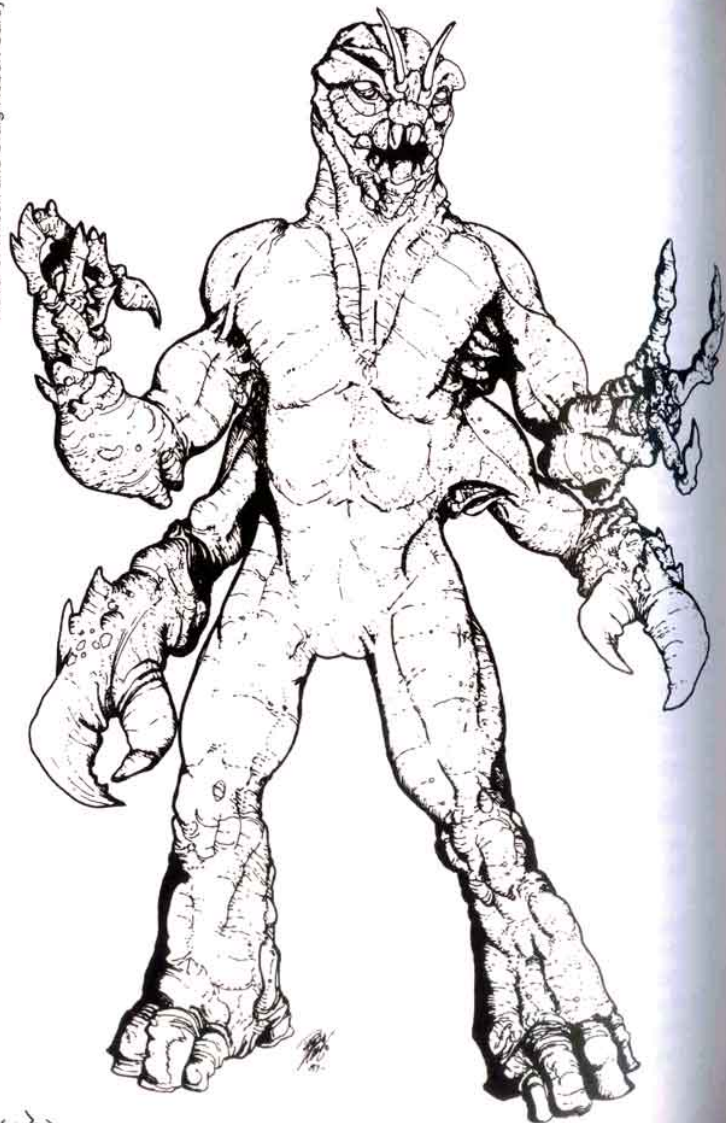
The isolationist Tarc live on the arid planet Hjaaff—they are a species of land-dwelling crustaceans that have removed themselves from the rest of the galaxy. These fierce aliens attack anyone who dares to enter their “domain of sovereignty,” even the Imperials, who have recently mounted a military campaign against them.

Appearance and Biology: Though they are crustaceans evolved from large sea creatures, the Tarc are well-adapted to life in the desert terrain of Hjaaff. They are resistant to high temperatures and can go without fresh water for long periods of time. They are entirely covered by a chitinous exoskeleton with a large dorsal shell that stores water and helps maintain body temperature. The shell and exoskeleton also provide strong protection against physical damage.

The Tarc are a bipedal species with four arms. The upper two are used for grasping and manipulating objects. Each possesses a “hand” that consists of three wide spiny digits, one of which is opposable. The lower two arms end in large pincers that are used for self-defense and hunting. These pincers are exceptionally powerful and capable of causing tremendous damage.

Though standing just about two meters tall, the considerable bulk from their shell and exoskeleton makes the Tarc much larger and heavier than a standard human. The added weight causes them to be quite slow when moving on land.

The Tarc are carnivorous—they feed mostly on sand mollusks and other soft meats. They have no lips, teeth, or tongue, but the inside of their mouth is filled with small, hollow-tipped spikes that excrete a strong acidic saliva. When “chewing,” these spikes easily shred and dissolve the soft meat, which is then directly ingested through the hollow tips of the spikes and used to nourish the body; the Tarc have no stomach and cannot eat tough or sinewy meat.



Since they possess no tongue or lips, Tarc are unable to speak Basic and most other languages.

With their large, spiked, trap-like jaw and darting eyes, the Tarc give the impression of being predators on the hunt. Their sand-colored bodies are strong and imposing, their movements sharp and precise. All this, along with their vicious pincers, give them an intimidating presence.

Temperament: Since they believe that emotions are best kept to oneself, the Tarc appear to be a cold and often ruthless people with little care for anything except their own survival. This perception is true, to a limited extent. Tarc can be cold and ruthless, but this type of behavior is derived more from their culture and environment than from any lack of emotion.

The Tarc believe in action and appropriate reaction. Any action they take must be necessary and decisive. It must produce the desired results within a defined period of time—usually short term. If a plan fails, they do not hesitate to replace it with another; lengthy deliberation is not a cherished value among the Tarc.

In the past, war was often seen as a necessary action to maintain the sovereignty of individual nations. But despite their conflict-ridden history, the Tarc are neither a hostile nor warlike species, and they have since unified their nations.

Still, war is an acceptable action when necessary. Whether the fighting is between individuals or planetary armies, the Tarc believe in the use of quick and overwhelming force to defeat and subsequently dispose of the enemy; mercy is never an option.

History and Culture: Having originally evolved in Hjaiff's few small oceans, the Tarc began inhabiting the shores at an early stage of development. As they migrated deeper into the deserts, the Tarc began developing complex tools to help them survive in the hostile environment. As a result, society advanced and the population spread.

Tarc civilization was once divided into many nations: some powerful, some weak, but all dedicated to protecting their sovereignty and culture from the others. As communications technology advanced and national economies became more dependent on the world economy, these differing nations slowly began integrating into one union—a union that craved stability and therefore a single culture.

It was just after the creation of this union that the Tarc began

actively exploring space and nearby worlds. When they first encountered intelligent alien lifeforms (most likely the Abinyshi, since they inhabited a neighboring sector) they were horrified, but not surprised. The prospect of alien societies infecting their culture drove the Tarc to immediately halt their exploration of space and to isolate themselves from the rest of the galaxy.

To protect themselves from outside influence they created a large buffer zone between themselves and other species. This "domain of sovereignty" consists of a boundary formed by twelve nearby systems, four of which contain military outposts. Several other systems also exist within this buffer zone, but the Tarc are the only intelligent life within it.

With the creation of their domain, the Tarc formed a large, highly trained navy to police its borders. This navy, the *Ivlacav Gourn*, has followed a policy of zero tolerance for intruders. They ferociously attack any who enter.

This policy has resulted in recent skirmishes with Imperial scouts trying to cross the borders. Though the Tarc have so far won all such skirmishes, Imperial Moff Joss Leskwin is currently forming a strike force so strong that the Tarc will be incapable of defeating it. It is only a matter of time until the Tarc are engaged in full scale war against the Empire; the conflict is unlikely to last long.

Tarc culture can seem cold and impersonal to those unfamiliar with the species. Their disdain for showing emotion gives the impression that they lack any feelings entirely. This is untrue: though Tarc society is indeed brutal, the violence is always rooted in what the Tarc perceive to be appropriate actions and reactions—rarely anger or hatred.

Politics: Tarc politics reflect their quick and decisive nature. They are hierarchical and short on deliberative bureaucracies. This helps to speed decision-making and the process through which orders are carried out.

The Tarc are governed by two main political bodies, the continental leadership and the *Keddek*—the supreme ruler of Hjaff. The purpose of the continental leaders (there are three) is to advise and assist the *Keddek* in his responsibilities. Though the *Keddek* has nearly complete control over the Tarc, he must obey the Hjaff constitution. In theory, the continental leaders can oust the *Keddek* through their combined military control.

All the leaders of Hjaff are voted into power once every eight

standard years (10 Hjaff years). Every eligible Tarc must vote in these elections. Failure to do results in immediate punishment—usually a prison sentence or indentured servitude.

Technology Level: The technology level of the Tarc is comparable to the galactic norm. Their domestic technology is perhaps a bit below the average, but their military advances are as sophisticated as the rest of the galaxy.

The Tarc are quite adept at creating desert survival gear and transportation vehicles. Since their survival gear is designed specifically for their own unique physiology, other species are generally unable to use it. Their desert transports—especially those intended for military application—are quite advanced.

In order to protect their culture from the "evils" of the galaxy, the Tarc stopped advancing their hyperspace technology when they first discovered other intelligent species. They do, however, possess spacecraft with hyperdrives equal to those of modern craft, but these few ships (which have been stolen from their early contacts) are unknown to the general populace. Only top military officials and politicians have access to these transports, which are used only in special circumstances.

Only those of eminent stature may leave the Tarc territories; it is a serious crime for private citizens to attempt to do so. Those caught leaving are publicly executed as soon as possible—no trial is required.

Trade and Technology: As can be expected, the Tarc do not engage in interplanetary trade; they are in no way part of the galactic economy.

Tarc in the Galaxy: Tarc rarely venture outside of their realm. Only a few have left their home, and they are outcasts or criminals. As such, most Tarc outside their home territory are employed by various criminal organizations where they make excellent enforcers, assassins, and bounty hunters. Some are employed as bodyguards, where their fierce appearance alone is often enough to change the mind of any would-be attacker.

With the growing conflict between the Tarc and the Empire, some "progressives" are suggesting the Tarc break their isolationism and seek help from the Alliance. They realize that their culture, though it would be subject to the galaxy's influences, would be better preserved as allies of the Rebellion than as subjects of the

Empire. Though few in number and virtually without representation, these new views are gaining some support among the Tarc citizenry. Still, they are the extreme minority and have yet to make any impact on government policies.

Suggested Skills: Many Tarc have *survival: desert skills*, and those who reside near the oceans possess *swimming*.

Notable Personalities: Visacc the *Keddek*, ruler of Hjaiff. Fascyn, assassin/bounty hunter for House Salaktori (see *Galaxy Guide 10: Bounty Hunters* for more information).

Average Tarc: *Dexterity 2D+1, Knowledge 2D, Mechanical 1D+2, Perception 2D+1, Strength 3D, Technical 1D+2. Move: 8.*

■ Tarc

Attribute Dice: 13D
DEXTERITY 1D/4D
KNOWLEDGE 1D/3D+2
MECHANICAL 1D/3D+2
PERCEPTION 1D/4D
STRENGTH 1D+2/4D+2
TECHNICAL 1D/3D+2

Special Abilities:

Natural Armor: The Tarc's shell and exoskeleton give them substantial protection. They receive a +1D+2 bonus to *Strength* against physical damage and a +1D bonus against energy damage.

Pincers: The Tarc's pincers are sharp and very strong, doing STR-2D damage.

Intimidation: The Tarc's fierce appearance and relative obscurity give them a +1D intimidation bonus.

Rage: The Tarc's pent-up emotions sometimes cause them to erupt in a violent frenzy. In this state they attack anyone or anything near them, and they cannot be calmed. These rages can happen at any time, but usually they occur during periods of intense stress (such as combat). To resist becoming enraged a character must make a difficult *willpower* roll. For each successful rage check a player makes, the difficulty for the next check will be greater by 5. A rage usually lasts for 2D+2 rounds, but for each successful rage check a player makes, the duration of the next rage will be increased by 2 rounds.

Story Factors:

Isolationists: The Tarc are fiercely isolationist. They feel that interacting with the galactic community would poison their culture with the luxuries, values and customs of other societies. If forced into the galaxy, they will look upon all other species and cultures as wicked and inferior.

Language: Due to the nature of their vocal apparatus, the Tarc are unable to speak Basic or most other languages. As the Tarc have so effectively isolated themselves from the galactic community, it is exceedingly rare to find anyone who is able to understand their language; even most protocol droids are not programmed with the Tarc's language. As a result, most Tarc who have left (or been banished from) Hjaiff have an extraordinarily difficult time trying to communicate with other denizens of the galaxy.

Move: 7/9

Size: 1.75-2.2 meters tall

Reference Materials

There are numerous other sources for those interested in learning about more *Star Wars* aliens. Dozens of supplements for the *Star Wars* roleplaying game published by West End Games describe new species in detail. Here are just a few:

- Chapter 15 of the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game, Second Edition—Revised and Expanded* and Chapter Eight of the *Star Wars Sourcebook* detail the major alien species from the films, from the mighty Wookiees to the rodent-like Jawas. The rulebook also provides guidelines for creating your own alien species.
- *Galaxy Guide 4: Alien Races* provides descriptions of several prominent aliens who inhabit the galaxy, including popular species such as the Defel, Barabel and Gotal.
- *Galaxy Guide 12: Aliens—Enemies and Allies* covers even more alien species, including many of those seen in *Return of the Jedi* such as the Nikto and Weequay.
- The *Thrawn Trilogy Sourcebook* discusses many of the species introduced in the bestselling novels by Timothy Zahn: *Heir to the Empire*, *Dark Force Rising* and *The Last Command*.
- The *Han Solo and the Corporate Sector Sourcebook* details the major species introduced in Brian Daley's novels *Han Solo at Star's End* and *Han Solo's Revenge*.
- The *Star Wars Planets Collection* provides information for dozen of planets across the galaxy, along with the aliens who populate them.
- Every issue of *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal* has introduced new alien species. *Journal* #11 featured the first "Alien Encounters" article, and "Shape Shifters" in *Journal* #12 provided a glimpse of some of the galaxy's rarest and most bizarre species.

STAR WARS
ADVENTURE

Crimson Bounty

By Charlene Newcomb and Rich Handley

Illustrations by Steve Bryant

"Blast you, Kaj Nedmak!"
Crimson shouted, drenched
in sweat. Red curls were
matted against her forehead
and her eyes stung with
tears.



A shot whipped past her starfighter. Crimson grasped the ship's controls with both hands and banked sharply to port. "Is this what I get for helping a friend? I guess I'll never learn!" Breaking to starboard, she shouted, "You got me into this mess! You and your gambling debts—paying off Rass, double-crossing Bwahl! If you're still alive..." She paused just long enough to throw the Y-wing into a diving roll, desperately attempting to outmaneuver her pursuer, "...I'll kill you myself!"

Another shot rocked her craft. Behind her, the bounty hunter's freighter mirrored her every move. Laser fire arced across the black void of deep space, momentarily invisible against the backdrop of Ord Simres before it pounded her starboard bow.

"I'll never forgive you for this, Kaj," she said softly. Guiding the ship into a 180-degree turn, Crimson locked her laser cannons on continuous fire. She set the Y-wing on a ramming course and bore down on her attacker. In a few seconds, it would all be over.

Her adversary's ship rapidly filling the screen, Crimson whispered silent good-byes to anyone who had ever meant anything to her, as her vision narrowed and consciousness ebbed away....



"You know, Red, the problem with you is that you have such narrow vision."

Celia "Crimson" Durasha turned in her co-pilot's chair, arms crossed defensively, the fire in her eyes matching the fiery red of her hair. "So we're back to that? Can't think of anything more original to say, so you insult my vision? That's so typical, Kaj. So blasted typical." She rubbed her knotted legs wearily, fixing the damaged thrust manifold had taken all day, and this argument—not the first she and her Corellian partner had had in the past few days—did not help her soreness any. "Well, my vision works just fine, thank you, and right now I'm looking at a man who's walking face first into trouble." She turned back to look him in the eye. "And don't call me 'Red.' You know I hate that."

Kaj Nedmak smiled a toothy grin at his partner, kicking back in the custom bantha-leather pilot's seat of their YT-2400 freighter,

the *Tryan Kajme*. "Trouble? Ahh, I'm not worried about Bwahl. It's just one cargo. We can pay him back eventually. Have some faith!"

"Eventually..." See, there you go again, Kaj. You never take anything seriously, and I always pay the price. When Bwahl comes looking for his money, he's not gonna care whether or not I had anything to do with your little scheme—he'll just kill us both, take the ship, and be done with it. *That's* what my 'vision' tells me."

"Well, maybe you need glasses, then."

"That's not funny, and you're avoiding the issue."

Exhaling loudly, Kaj planted his hands on his knees. "Look, Red—" At her narrowed stare, his expression softened. Gently, he took her hand into his. "Crimson, I'm not trying to avoid any issue here. I just tend to look at things more optimistically than you do, that's all. Things'll work out fine—trust me."

Crimson snorted, but some of the ire had left her voice. Standing, she stretched her legs. "I do trust you, Kaj. I wouldn't have stuck around as your partner for two years now if I didn't trust you. But this isn't a matter of trust, and it's about time you faced the facts. You're taking a big risk here with both our lives—when Bwahl finds out what really happened to that gun shipment, he's gonna be madder than a hungry rancor. No, I take that back—it'd be easier to face a hungry rancor. You're underestimating him if you think he's going to buy our 'pirate' story at face-value. We need to re-think this."

"Ah, he'll buy it. Bwahl the Hutt's no fool—he won't want to miss out on a chance to make back his money with interest. At heart, he's a businessman."

"A businessman with a reputation for killing anyone who double-crosses him..."

"Who's double-crossing him?"

"...Whom you've already managed to tork off, not too long ago..."

"That's all in the past, Crimson. I'm sure Bwahl's forgotten all about the Gordian Reach by now!"

"...Who's way too smart not to realize you're lying to him."

"He'll get his money eventually. When this is all over, he gets paid, Rass gets paid, you live, I live, everyone's happy, no harm done!"

She fixed him with a pointed stare. "What if *he* doesn't see it that way?"

"Well, then, we'll just have to navigate that asteroid field when

we get to it, won't we?"

"Yeah, well, I don't want to end up debris in that field, Kaj, so you'd better top your record for talking your way out of a bad spot when we get to Yefowr."



The spaceport at Taskeed was bustling with traffic, yet somehow seemed as dark and foreboding as the black sands of the Wasted Plains that bordered it. Shadows embraced streets where the unsuspecting might meet with deadly surprises. Yefowr, similar to smuggler havens like Mos Eisley, Soco-Jarel, or Nar Shaddaa, was not a safe place to visit unless one knew what one was getting into.

Paying the dock-master a slew of fees they barely had enough credits to cover, Kaj and Crimson walked to a halfway respectable-looking cantina, the Saber's Tooth. They took seats at a booth in the back, where they'd been instructed to wait. A strong essence of carababba tabac hung in the room, mixed with the stale odor of numerous intoxicants. Crimson noticed various games of chance in progress: sabacc, Nierer's folly, two-hand, even dootch. None of those games appealed to her, though; card and dice games somehow just never held her interest for long, much to Kaj's annoyance as an avid sabacc player. Holo gameboards were another matter...*oh, to be back on Vorzyd 5 for a game of Cosmic Chance!*

Now was not the best time to be thinking about games, Crimson reminded herself as Kaj tapped her foot and nodded almost imperceptibly toward the back door. Few would have even seen his gesture, but they'd grown quite accustomed to each other's body language—perhaps a bit more accustomed than either was willing to admit—and she knew immediately what it meant: stay sharp...now the fun begins.

Through the shadows of the wide door stepped two Elomin and a Weequay who stared silently at the seated smugglers. None of them were visibly armed, but Crimson had no doubt that all of them could produce any number of deadly weapons at a moment's notice. A minute later, a large hoversled glided into the room, upon which sat the revolting, heaving mass that was Bwahl the Hutt.

Repugnant even by Hutt standards, Bwahl was missing one eye and had a sickly gray pallor to his unctuous skin that gave him the appearance of being made of clay.

Bwahl and his three bodyguards approached the table. Crimson, following Kaj's lead, stood slowly. The Hutt looked them both over, sizing up Crimson's curves as his tongue waggled hungrily. She felt nauseated but forced herself to put it aside.

Kaj frowned, shifting his stance and positioning himself protectively between Crimson and the giant slug. Able to speak Huttese with some proficiency, he greeted Bwahl in his native language.

"*Kaj! Mal shoda, mi buki!*" The Hutt's raspy, bass voice reverberated around the room.

Kaj changed to Basic so Crimson could follow the context of the conversation. "You, too, Bwahl. We're here to pick up the, uh...shipment, as requested."

"*Ba naska po feda tos numa wenghi!*"

"Ah, clearances ain't a problem—already taken care of that."

"*Nerota datcha Tammuz-an.*"

"Tammuz-an? Well, I don't know why you'd be interested in a



dirt-patch like Tammuz-an, but hey, your call. I can have 'em there in two days, three tops."

"*Wanani no dutche Torqua-na!*"

Kaj's jaw tightened. "Hey, now *that* wasn't my fault! Who knew the Empire would decide to blockade the Gordian Reach? There was no way to get to Torque. You shoulda told me—"

"*Bal forta meecha koj?*"

Crimson drew in a breath, realizing Kaj's mistake. Luckily, Kaj realized it, too. "Uh, no...no, of course not—my fault completely. Should have checked my clearances before arrival, you're right. Won't happen like that this time, don't you worry."

"*Kal navu boska! Trory na.*" As Bwahl turned to leave, Hutt laughter filled the room, joined by chortles from his underlings. The Weequay indicated for them to follow, which they did.

"What was that last thing he said?" Crimson whispered.

Kaj's eyes were set on the Hutt hoversled heading out to the dock. "He said, 'I'm not the one who should be worried. You are.'"

"I told you this was a mistake, Kaj."

For once, Kaj Nedmak had no snappy answer for her.



An hour later, the *Tryan Kajme* lifted off from Taskeed, its hold filled with an assortment of blaster parts, spare power packs, glow-cutters, vibroblades, and other weapons.

From her co-pilot's chair, Crimson turned to Kaj. "Okay, now what?"

"Now we set a course for Tammuz-an. I'm sure Bwahl is tracking us, and this way he'll think we're delivering the weapons there, as planned."

Crimson pursed her lips, nervously shaking her head. "You know, this is gonna take us a good deal out of the way, Kaj—Tammuz-an is nowhere near Ord Mantell."

Hoping to lay her fears to rest, Kaj gently placed his hand atop hers. "We're not going all the way to Tammuz-an—just far enough to fool Bwahl's tracking sensors. Once out of range, I'll turn this ship for Ord Mantell so we can make the rendezvous with our old friend Rass." When she didn't answer, he turned to his navicomputer and

punched in the necessary coordinates.

Crimson eyed her partner skeptically, refusing to let on that his plan just might work. "Some day, Kaj, one of these schemes of yours is gonna backfire, and when it does, I hope I'm *not* there to see it." A hint of amusement betrayed the corner of her mouth.

He grinned back at her. "Well, that makes two of us, then."



Arriving at Ord Mantell an hour before their meeting with Rass, the smugglers visited the Nobody's Inn for some cold raava. Most tables had built-in game boards, either holographic or manual. Noticing Crimson's interest in the games, Kaj laughed. "I just don't know what it is with you and boardgames, Crimson. If you ask me, you need to play a real smuggler's game."

"Like sabacc? If I recall, it was your obsession with that particular *real* game that got us into this mess in the first place."

"Hey, I had a bad night, okay? It happens. I had a possible Idiot's Array going there until some nerf-herder with a skifter produced a Three of Flasks and cleaned me out. I couldn't prove the guy was cheatin', and Rass covered my bets. It's not like that usually happens."

"No, not at all. Usually, you don't even come close to winning."

Kaj threw his hands up in submission. Crimson caught herself watching him from the corner of her eye, noticing the stark difference between him and Adion Lang. They were different, and yet there was something about Kaj's bravery, his cockiness, that reminded her of the man she'd once loved. *Maybe when this mess is all over*, she told herself.



Rass M'Guy was a massive individual, well aware that his bulk intimidated others. Still, despite his size, he was not a brute. A con man, loan shark, thief, and smash-and-grab man, yes—he was all of

those things, and this had made him a top player in the criminal underworld in recent years. But he was still a man with style, his creed that toil and enjoyment should be combined whenever feasible.

Thus it was that, when Kaj Nedmak called to arrange to pay his old debt, Rass opted to meet them in Ord Mantell's ritziest flanthouse, the Grass Hutt.

As they entered the eatery, checking their blasters and vests at the door, Crimson and Kaj spotted Rass at a table in the back, already devouring a broiled flanth steak with sauteed balka greens and giviots. Oddly enough, he was unaccompanied. Without waiting to be seated, Kaj sauntered to Rass' table, a box under his arm. Warily, Crimson followed.

"Ah, Nedmak, please have a seat." Rass said, then spied Crimson behind him and stood. "And you, my dear, please join us as well. 'Mak and I have some business to take care of, but I think you'll find the food here unparalleled." He smiled appraisingly at her, and she recalled Bwahl's leering gaze with distaste.

"Thanks, but I'm not hungry." She and Kaj took seats at the table.

"Very well. But excuse me for eating in front of you—I haven't eaten in almost two hours, and I'm starving." He lifted a fork full of giviots to his mouth, then noticed the box on the table and dropped the fork, reaching for a blaster with amazing speed for a man his size. "What is this, 'Mak? You tryin' somethin' on me?"

Startled by Rass' abrupt change, Crimson silently questioned the intelligence of checking their blasters at the door.

Carefully, Kaj replied, "No stunt. Just a sample."

Rass did not lower his weapon. "A sample of what?"

"Let me show you," Kaj said, reaching to open the box. In the next second, three distinct clicks told the smugglers that Rass was not, in fact, unaccompanied. Turning slowly, Kaj saw three brawny humans with blasters trained on him, the safeties off. "Hey, guys, take it easy. I'm just repayin' yer boss what I owe him." Blasters still trained on him, he slowly opened the box and turned it so Rass could view its contents. Inside the box was a small sampling of the weapons they'd been hired to take to Tammuz-an.

Rass hefted a blaster barrel from the box, scrutinized its craftsmanship, estimated its range, then studied a glow-cutter and BlasTech power pack. "Not bad quality. Not bad at all." He set them down again, looked the smugglers over for a moment, and then

nodded to his entourage who pocketed their blasters and retreated out of sight. "Okay, 'Mak, whatta ya' got?"

Kaj smiled that infuriating grin of his, crossed one leg over the other knee, and spread his hands out in an open gesture. "Well, Rass, I happen to be sitting on an entire hold full of these little troopers, all of them in excellent shape, none of them traceable back to their original source. Consider them your payment."

"Consider them your interest," Rass corrected him, popping a grizzled chunk of flanth in his mouth.

Kaj sat up sharply. "Interest? Are you crazy? I said I got an entire hold full of these things, just outside!"

"And I said 'interest.' You owe me a lot of money, 'Mak, and my interest rates compound daily. By all rights, I should kill you, and if you were anyone else, I would've long ago. However, I like you, and so I'm cutting you a deal. The weapons you brought me will cover all interest up until two weeks from today, which is how long you have to get me the principal. After that, well...."

Kaj said nothing, and Crimson just shook her head, getting no enjoyment out of seeing her partner's carefully laid plans go to poodoo.

Smiling, Rass called over a Gamorrean waiter. "Look at it this way, friends—it's so much more civilized than a carbonite bath, and a good deal more pleasant for you, I should think. Ah, waiter, please bring these two a plate each of this excellent flanth. Thank you." He turned back to his stone-faced dinner companions. "You really will enjoy it, I promise—the food here is simply exquisite." Locking eyes with Kaj, he stabbed a balka green and said, "Consider it a gift."



Crimson glanced sidelong at her partner as the *Tryan Kajme* rose into the star-filled skies above Ord Mantell's spaceport. He'd said nothing since their meeting with Rass. While Rass's cronies had unloaded their "interest payment" at the docking bay, Kaj remained unusually pensive, avoiding her gaze the entire time. She wasn't sure if she should be angry or frightened.

Finally, Kaj let out a long, slow breath. "Set course for Yefowr." Crimson's eyes widened. "Yefowr? Are you crazy? We can't go back there. Might as well walk into a Sarlacc pit if you're gonna do that. Let's head to Nar Shaddaa. We can pick up a few spice runs there, get the creds we need for both Bwahl and Rass—"

Shaking his head, he placed a hand gently on her arm and replied with disarming calmness. "It's gonna take more than a few spice runs to pay both of 'em off."

"You have a better idea?"

Kaj turned to stare at her, his dark eyes a portrait of uncharacteristic vulnerability. Leaning over the armrest on his pilot's chair, he shifted close enough that she could feel his warm breath on her face. Crimson's heart beat faster. She wanted to move away but found herself drawn toward him. What harm would it do—for only a little while—to forget the dire straits they were in?

She closed her eyes as his lips gently brushed hers. He pulled away slowly, his fingers moving across her cheek. Crimson smiled and opened her eyes. She noticed the intense look on Kaj's face. But his next question was not what she'd expected:

"What would you think if I told you I wanted to start running guns for the Rebel Alliance?"

Crimson's smile disappeared abruptly. A lead weight tugged at her heart. Shaking her head slowly, she whispered, "Don't."

Kaj reached back toward her, tilting her chin slightly so he could see her face. "What's wrong?"

Crimson swallowed the lump in her throat. "My dearest friend in the galaxy was caught smuggling goods and information to the Alliance." A single tear glazed her cheek. "I tried to help him and ended up on the Empire's Wanted List myself."

Kaj gently wiped away her tear then took her hand into his. "So that's how you ended up in the Oasis," he said, recalling where they'd first met. "What happened to your friend?"

"He's dead," Crimson said, her voice sad yet tinged with anger. "Kaileel tried to sell me his 'good cause,' his Rebellion, and I almost bought into it. But what did it get him? He died and nobody cared." Pulling away from Kaj, she glanced out the viewport. "What good is any cause where you end up risking your life? Or losing the people you love most?"

"What people?" Kaj asked.

"Forget it," she replied curtly, wishing she could sweep the

painful memories away forever. But in the back of her mind she knew that would never happen. How could she forget the brother who died at Ralltiir, the father she hadn't spoken to in years, the lover who served the Empire and killed her best friend?

"I'm sorry about your friend, Crimson. Really, I am. But I don't plan on dying just yet. And 'good causes' have nothing to do with it. Maybe it's wrong not to have such high and mighty ideals, but you know us free-traders...we work where the credits are."

"Credits? The Rebels have credits?" she asked sarcastically. "That's news to me."

"Well, maybe not so much now. But I have a gut feeling the Empire is headed toward supernova, if ya' know what I mean. I wanna be on the right side when all's said and done. And the right side for me is the side that pays."

Suddenly, the *Kajme* shook violently.

"Stang!" Kaj shouted. His hands and eyes raced across the ship's controls.

"Three Headhunters coming in at zero-nine-zero," Crimson reported as another shot raked the ship. She looked up. "It's Bwahl."

"Can't be."

"Who else could it be?" Crimson asked. "You have some other old debts you forgot to mention to me?"

"No," Kaj said defensively, "no other debts."

"Bwahl had us followed," Crimson said matter-of-factly as red lights blinked harshly on her nav panel. An alarm blared and she reached to turn it off as the ship took a third hit. "There's a fourth ship out there, too, coming in behind those starfighters. A Y-wing. Oh, and that last hit just took down our starboard shields."

Breaking the *Tryan Kajme* hard to port, Kaj guided the freighter toward open space. "Can't be Bwahl. Can't be," he repeated, his concentration focused on a readout from the navicomputer. "Stand by. Five seconds to hyperspace."

Kaj pulled back on the hyperdrive, but the familiar lines of the jump to hyperspace never materialized. Crimson shook her head as Kaj cursed. Fire burned in his eyes. "No one's adding my name to the history texts. Not yet," he said calmly as the ship took another hit. "Extra power to the forward deflectors."

"What?"

"Just do it!" he said, maneuvering the ship in a tight overhead loop that brought it face-to-face with their attackers.

"We've got power on the front end," Crimson replied as Kaj opened fire. Laser blasts from the *Tryan Kajme* streaked through the darkness. One Z-95 took a hit and burst into a ball of flames.

"One down!" Kaj exclaimed.

"Uh, Kaj, we've got a leak in—" Another powerful blast nearly threw Crimson from the co-pilot's seat.

"Hold on! We're going down!" Kaj shouted.

"Down? Down where?"

"Back to Ord Mantell—"

"This bucket's gonna crack apart before we get back to the spaceport, Kaj," Crimson shouted above the blaring alarms as more shots flew past the viewport.

"We can make it to the plateau."

"The old stellar-energy station?"

"That's the place."

"There's nothing there, Kaj!" Crimson yelled as her partner banked the ship sharply to port.

"Sure there is!" Kaj insisted. "We can find salvage materials to repair the ship."

"Yeah, right," Crimson replied. "If there's anything left to repair." She studied the dozen lights blinking before her. "Rear deflectors aren't gonna hold much longer, Kaj. Better get us on the ground, quick."

"Hold on tight, Crimson. This won't be pretty."

Thick black cumulus clouds covered Ord Mantell's rough back country. Lightning crackled through the clouds like a whip; bursts erupted staccato-fashion one after another, illuminating the *Tryan Kajme* in an eerie whitish glow. Caught in violent wind currents, the ship rocked as it plummeted through the skies.

Sweat poured from Kaj's face as he fought to maintain control.

"Well, where is it?" Crimson asked.

"If sensors are still working, we should practically be on top of it," Kaj replied. "Initiate the landing cycle."

Crimson, surprised her hands weren't shaking, deftly ran them across a half dozen buttons. "Stang!" she yelled. "One of the landing struts is jammed!"

"Too late now! Here we go!"

Kaj gripped the controls tightly as the freighter touched down, bounced off the pockmarked landing strip a couple of times, then tipped its nose to the ground before skidding to a halt. A Head-

hunter whooshed overhead, strafing the ship as Kaj and Crimson opened the hatch and ran for cover inside the abandoned energy station. Behind them, the second Headhunter and the Y-wing landed.

"Split up!" Kaj shouted as blaster fire ripped the air between them.

Crimson ran down a darkened corridor and heard Kaj's footsteps fade in the opposite direction. Shots rang out in the distance. Crimson stopped, pressing herself against a wall as she pulled her DL-44 from its holster. Ready to greet the enemy, she listened for signs of pursuit, forcing herself to take several long, deep breaths. Her heart was pounding.

There were muted voices in the distance, sounds of a scuffle, voices shouting, and more blaster fire. Then, suddenly, dread silence filled the night.

Crimson swallowed the lump in her throat. *Kaj!*

"What about the girl?" she heard someone call out.

The response was unintelligible. No footsteps tread in Crimson's direction. And within a few moments there was the unmistakable sound of two ships departing. Unconvinced they'd left without her, Crimson remained rooted in place for nearly an hour. Finally, she decided their attackers were gone and cautiously ventured out to determine what had happened to Kaj.

She took in her surroundings. The storm had stopped. The ruins of a great steel-and-plastone factory loomed before her, dilapidated and overgrown with mosses and lichens. Silent save for a few distant hoots and cries, the area seemed devoid of life. The remains of a loading crane extended from one side of the building, ending abruptly over a craggy ridge, next to which sat the smoldering, cracked freighter she'd shared with Kaj.

She walked toward the ship, then stopped and drew in a sharp breath. Beyond the wrecked crane, not more than six meters past the final resting spot of the equally wrecked freighter, the ridge fell away into a steep, mountainous chasm.

She couldn't see the bottom.

A chill pricked her nerves as she realized how close Kaj's blind landing had come to making them a permanent part of the beautiful rocky terrain.

Shaking, Crimson picked through the wreckage of the ship, but the comm system and sensors were all dead. *It's amazing we even*

lived...she realized with a shudder...assuming Kaj is still alive. She noticed a jagged crack that ran the length of the outer hull of the freighter. Salvaging this hunk of debris was probably out of the question.

Well, Tryan Kajme...looks like you've finally been caught.

At the clang of hard boots on metal, she instinctively whipped around, blaster in hand. A tall, thin, muscular woman with close-cropped blonde hair stood at the entranceway to the station. She wasn't conventionally attractive, but had the fit-looking physique of an athlete, of someone used to hard work. But it was her blaster—holstered from a thin soldier strap—that made Crimson nervous.

The other raised her hands deferentially. "Hey, relax, I'm not going to hurt you," she said in an even, controlled voice. "I'm not the enemy."

Uncertain, Crimson kept her blaster leveled. The woman made no move for her own weapon.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" Crimson asked. "This station's been abandoned for years."

"Thune," the woman replied. "And you are...?"



"I'm the one asking questions, and so far, you've only answered one of them."

Thune silently eyed her. "All right. I was looking through the ruins. When I heard all the noise, I thought someone had spotted me and I came out to check."

A scav? Crimson's eyes narrowed. Most scavs she'd known had a look of desperation about them, borne of the hard times that had driven them to scavenging. Thune looked too clean, too self-assured, for the role. Crimson said nothing, kept the blaster trained.

Slowly, the woman lowered her hands but didn't reach for her blaster. "Would you mind stowing the gun?"

"Why, so you can shoot me?"

"No, because I don't like having blasters pointed at me. One nervous twitch and I'm livin' with the Jedi." Sensing Crimson's uncertainty, she added, "Look, you can see I'm armed—if I'd wanted you dead, I'd have shot you in the back before you even knew I was here."

The truth of Thune's words unnerved Crimson. She was right. But was it worth the risk? Right now, Crimson was Kaj's only chance for survival. And it seemed that this scav might be her only way to leave the plateau. She decided to trust the woman. For now, Thune smiled as the blaster lowered.

"Thanks." She looked past Crimson. "Nice ship. A shame you had to scut her. She's not going anywhere."

Letting out a breath held too long, Crimson leaned against the dead freighter. "Yeah, well, neither am I, apparently."

"What happened out here?"

Unsure of her companion, Crimson decided to be sparse with details. "Pirates. Opened fire at us as we neared escape velocity. Caught us unaware. Hit our stabilizer."

"Us?" Thune indicated the freighter. "Someone else in there? Are they hurt?"

Crimson winced at the slip. "Just me and my ship. I tend to think of her as a partner."

Thune nodded. "I understand. Me and the *Faceted*, we've been together for a lot of years, and if I ever lost her, it'd be like losing a friend."

"Where's your ship?"

"Hidden."

"Listen, I have two hundred credits on me. That's all I have.

They're yours if you'll take me back to the spaceport."

"Two hundred...that's not much for a ride these days, you know."

"Well, like I said, it's all I have. Is it a deal?"

Thune considered, then nodded and started walking around the building. "Done. Follow me." She stopped short and turned. "One thing, first...."

Crimson tensed.

"...What's your name?"

Crimson considered lying, but decided not to bother. "Crimson."

"Nice to meet you. Especially now that you don't have a blaster trained on me. Come—my ship's around the bend."



The YT-1300 freighter *Faceted* had clearly been highly modified in its lifetime. Jury-rigged equipment littered the gray exterior, some recognizable as weaponry and sensory devices, others Crimson couldn't begin to identify. Too drained to ask about them, she followed the taller woman inside. A contrast to the chaotic exterior, the ship's interior was immaculate, inordinately so for a ship owned by a scav. Or a smuggler, Crimson mused, remembering how "relaxed" she and Kaj tended to let the *Kajme* get.

At Crimson's surprise, Thune chuckled. "Yeah, that's pretty much everyone's reaction...not that a lot of people see the inside of this ship. Luckily, I have help."

As though on cue, a greenish-tinted droid entered the corridor from astern. A variation on the standard 3PO Human-Cyborg Relations model, the droid was slightly bulkier than its predecessor but had that same perpetually quizzical expression that had amused or annoyed so many owners over the years.

The droid raised its metal arms. "Oh, goodness gracious me! Mistress Thune, I had no idea you were taking on a visitor! I'd have frightened up! Oh, this mess is simply dreadful. You really should inform me of—"

Thune cut the droid off. "Uthre, this is Crimson. She's going to be traveling back to the spaceport with us."

"Back to the spaceport, Mistress Thune? But I thought you—"

"Shut up, Uthre, and go check the alluvial dampers."

"But I—"

"Go."

Miffed, the droid complied, his voice trailing off as he headed for the cockpit. "Goodness, I simply don't know how I can be expected to function efficiently with so many changes of plans. Why, I..."

Thune shook her head as she doffed her jacket and holster. "Sometimes that blasted machine can be incredibly annoying. One of these days I'm just gonna leave him somewhere."

Crimson laughed, having known several protocol droids in her time. "I pity you. I'd never want to own one."

"Well, despite his fretting, U-THR is a valuable resource—he has an amazing file storage capacity and can locate whatever data I need at a moment's notice. Comes in handy in my field."

"Your field? I thought you were a scav—that is..." Crimson's complexion approached the color of her hair. "Um, no offense."

"None taken. I do some scavenging work, but my main line of work is the appropriation of goods without the hindrance of certain interested parties, if you follow my meaning."

Crimson blinked. A smuggler. Like her, Thune was a smuggler. "Yeah...I think I know what you mean."

Thune looked her in the eye. "I have a feeling you do."

Crimson met her gaze, calculating how much to tell this woman she'd just met.

"What were they after?" Thune's direct question caught her off guard, and suddenly she felt a very strong need to tell someone—anyone—what had happened to her and Kaj. For the better part of a quarter-hour, she outlined her situation.

"Sounds to me like your friend Bwahl didn't share your partner's perspective on the situation," Thune noted when Crimson had finished.

Sighing, Crimson remembered the unfinished argument about gun-running for the Rebels. "No, and I'm not even sure I did, half the time. Why I even went along with his ronto-headed scheme is beyond me."

"Bounty hunters have him, you know."

Crimson looked away. "Yeah, I figured that. Bwahl said we'd soon have his reply...I guess we got it." She rested her head on her hands. Kaj...you idiot.

"I can help you get him back."

That snapped Crimson's head up. "How? There's no way of

knowing who has him, or where they took him."

"I already told you about my valuable resource." Thune toggled an intercom switch. "Uthre, I need you in here."

"Coming, Mistress Thune, I—" the droid's cheerful voice was cut off as she closed contact.

"I can't pay you. I gave you the last of my credits."

Thune merely nodded. "Don't worry about it—you seem pretty handy. You can work it off."

With no other options, Crimson accepted the terms.

A moment later, the droid entered. "How may I help you?"

"Uthre, it seems our visitor's partner has been captured by bounty hunters—"

"Oh, dear, that's unspeakable, that's—"

"Quiet. I need you to access our database on bounty hunters known to work in this sector." She turned to Crimson. "Through various contacts, we've been able to track the efforts of some bountymen, but not all of them. This might not tell us anything, but it's worth a try."

"Thanks." Crimson listened as the droid immediately spit out data.

"Skorr, Gribbet, Giles Durane, Valance, Cypher Bos—"

"Uthre. Most of them are dead. What good does a list of dead hunters do me?"

"Oh, most dreadfully sorry, Mistress. Of course, I shall limit my search parameters to those still actively seeking bounties."

"Thank you," Thune replied tiredly.

"Oh, you're most welcome, Mistress," the pleased droid replied, then proceeded to list some seventeen other names, none of which had been spotted near Ord Mantell within the past month.

Crimson sank lower into her chair as each name was ruled out. "Well, that didn't help much."

Thune turned to her and raised an eyebrow. "On the contrary, it allowed us to rule out a lot of major players in the game—Fett, Natas, Goa, Dengar. Now that we know who it's not, it's time to figure out who it is."



Crimson scrutinized her opponent, her emerald-green eyes narrowed. "Your move."

U-THR studied the holo gameboard, head tilting from side to side, hand perched beneath metal chin, thumb running back and forth along his "jawline"—if Crimson didn't know better, she could almost imagine the droid was more human than mechanical.

"I must say, Mistress Crimson, you are a most skilled player. I have not had the opportunity to play against someone of your caliber since before my acquisition by Mistress Thune."

"Thune doesn't play holo games?" Crimson asked.

"Oh, no. Mistress Thune prefers sabacc."

Crimson chuckled. "She'd get along well with Kaj."

"Who'd get along well with Kaj?" Thune asked, walking into the central cabin of the Faceted.

"We were talking about you and sabacc."

Thune pursed her lips thoughtfully. For a moment, Crimson swore she detected a small measure of concern, or perhaps empathy. "You and Kaj were close?"

Crimson gazed down at the gameboard. She wasn't sure what she felt for Kaj. There was something there all right, she couldn't deny that. Was she ready to admit she might see him as more than just a business partner? She liked him...probably more than she should. But his schemes were crazy. And this latest idea of working for the Alliance...how could she risk losing someone else she loved? She looked back up, her face a stone mask. "We've...been working together for a while."

"Do not worry, Mistress Crimson," U-THR piped in. "Mistress Thune is an expert at tracking people; I am certain we will find your friend."

"Expert?" Crimson asked, her eyes roving from the droid to Thune then back again.

"Indeed," Uthre replied. "That is how I came to be in her service. My previous master, before his death at the hands of—"

"Uthre—shut up!" Thune growled.

Crimson grinned. Typical smuggler, unwilling to have the past laid out for just anyone to see, especially where questionable business dealings were involved. She understood because it had been her own creed these last two years. There had been so many things she hadn't shared yet with Kaj...

Thune stared disdainfully at the droid, then turned back to

Crimson. "Sorry to interrupt your holo game, but we have a slight change in plans. We're heading to Ord Simres."

"You've heard something?" Crimson asked.

"I was on the comm with an info broker pal of mine on Ord Mantell. There's a chance your partner was picked up by a bounty hunter named Treytis Prash."

"But, Mistress Thune, Prash works for—"

"Quiet, Uthre," Thune barked nastily. She faced Crimson again. "Prash was last seen at the CardSafe, a fancy pub on Ord Simres. He was bragging about a bounty he was expecting from your pal Bwahl."

"Prash? He must be the one who took Kaj!" Crimson said, hopeful for the first time in hours that she might see him alive.

"Care to join me in the cockpit?"

"Sure," Crimson replied. Standing, she stretched her limbs. "Uthre, maybe we can finish this game later."

"That would certainly be most delightful, Mistress Crimson."

"Thune, I might take back what I said about protocol droids. Uthre is quite the competitor. I haven't had such a great game of B'shining in ages."

"Why, thank you, Mistress Crimson. I have been programmed for various levels—"

"Okay, fine," Thune interrupted. "Uthre, check the rear deflector shield projectors. I'm getting some odd readings from them."

"I do not understand," Uthre said. Wandering toward the rear of the ship, he continued to mutter under his breath. "I ran a complete systems check after I corrected the problem with the alluvial dampers. They seemed perfectly all right..."

Thune rolled her eyes.

"He's not such a bad 3PO unit, Thune," Crimson said as she followed the other woman into the cockpit. "You should be more...humane."

"It's just a droid, Crimson, a tool. I'm the boss. He just does what I say. I don't like the idle chatter, and I'll shut him up whenever I want."

"Okay," Crimson shrugged and sat down in the co-pilot's seat. From the corner of her eye, she watched Thune's expert hands manipulate a dozen different controls in rapid succession. Good pilot, she thought, nearly as good as me.



Forty minutes later, the two women staked out the CardSafe on Ord Simres. Fancy? Crimson chuckled. If this was Thune's idea of fancy, she'd love to see her impression of seedy. But, Crimson had to admit, the CardSafe was four times nicer looking than the other establishments they'd sped past on their way from the nearby spaceport.

"Thune," Crimson said, "I want to thank you again for helping me."

"My services aren't free, remember? You agreed to work off my fee."

"Yeah, I know. But—"

"That's him," Thune said. "That's Prash."

Crimson studied the suave gentleman who walked toward the cantina's entrance. He was a well-dressed human, tall with jet-black hair and muscular good looks—not at all typical of the bounty hunters she'd seen or heard about. His two companions had the look of bodyguards. The Rodian's eyes captured every movement on the streets, his hand perched lightly atop the handle of his holstered blaster, while the Krish was more blatant, swinging a very illegal BlasTech Sharpshooter V in a wide, sweeping motion.

Prash and his friends disappeared into the pub. "C'mon," Thune said.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Crimson asked as Thune took off across the street.

"Yes, I'm sure," Thune called back to her in that impatient tone she used so often with U-THR.

Shaking her head, Crimson took several long strides across the dimly lit avenue and caught up to her. "I don't suppose we'll be able to talk our way through this," she said as they slowed their pace to a walk.

"It'll have to be quick and dirty, I'm afraid," Thune replied softly. "Those two bodyguards won't mince words. Let's take them out first, then we'll talk nice with Prash."

Crimson nodded glumly as they entered the pub. All eyes in the place were rooted on the stage, where a curvaceous female and her

back-up singers crooned softly. Thune unobtrusively clicked her comlink on, whispered something into it, then clicked it off. She pulled her blaster, cocking her head toward a table near the back of the room. Crimson gripped her own DL-44 tightly and walked beside Thune.

The Krish spotted them first. As he brought his blaster rifle to bear, Thune opened fire, killing him instantly. Crimson's shot a half-second later took down the Rodian. Prash stared at the two women, his face a mixture of anger and surprise. He knew better than to reach for his own weapon.

"Where's Kaj?" Crimson half-shouted.

Prash's brow furrowed. "Who?" he said.

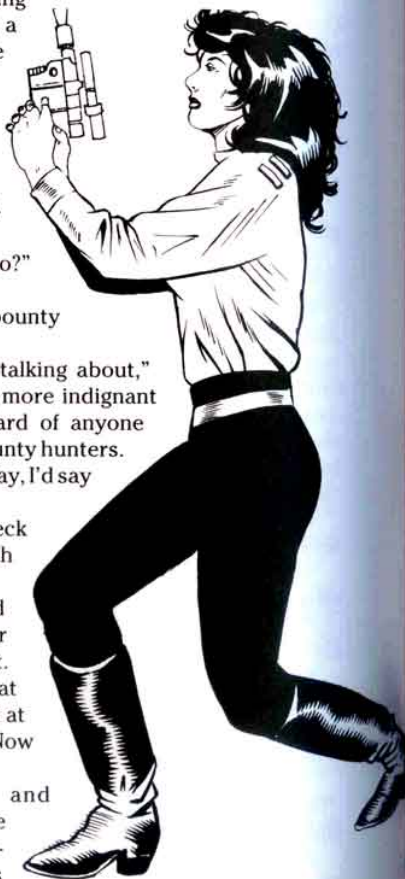
"Kaj Nedmak, the pilot your bounty hunters captured."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Prash spat, his voice growing more indignant with each word. "I never heard of anyone named Kaj. I don't have any bounty hunters. And if anyone's out hunting today, I'd say it was you!"

"Quiet!" Thune barked. "Check the backroom, Crimson. I'll watch this one."

Suddenly, Prash dove toward Crimson, knocking the blaster from her hands. A shot rang out. Prash collapsed to the floor at Crimson's feet. Crimson glared at Thune. "Why'd you kill him? Now we'll never find Kaj!"

Thune shook her head and laughed. "You're too naive to be a smuggler, Red," she said, bending to scoop up Crimson's blaster. "Besides, he's not dead."



"What?" Crimson cried, confused and angered by Thune's attitude.

"Grab the man's arms and help me get him outside," Thune said. Her tone was not pleasant. Her remark was an order, plain and simple. "Uthre should've brought the speeder around by now."

"What's going on, Thune?" Crimson asked, her heart pounding as she watched her blaster disappear into Thune's loose-fitting jacket.

"You've just helped me capture one of the Rebel Alliance's leading gun-runners. There are so many Imperial bounties on Prash's head I could live like the Emperor himself and never work another day in my life."

"Wait a minute. You're a bounty hunter? Prash was telling the truth?"

"Gettin' quick there, Red," Thune snarled as they walked through the door. Outside, she dropped Prash's body and stared up the street impatiently until U-THR appeared in a rented OP-5.

The droid hastily emerged from the landspeeder. "I was not programmed for this type of work, Mistress Thune," Uthre complained as he helped Crimson drag Prash's body into the vehicle. "My primary function is—"

"Your primary function will be sitting in a scrap heap in a minute, Uthre. Just do what I say so you don't end up in bits and pieces."

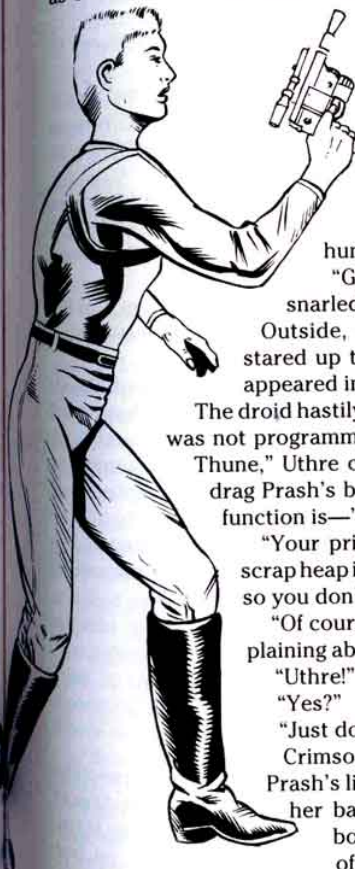
"Of course, Mistress Thune. I was not complaining about the work, merely explaining—"

"Uthre!"

"Yes?"

"Just do it!"

Crimson climbed into the speeder beside Prash's limp body. Thune sat beside U-THR, her back pressed against the door. Her body was half-twisted, facing the rear of the vehicle, her blaster pointed at Crimson's head.



"Why are you pointing that thing at me?"

"Because I know something about you, too. Something about a former cruise ship navigator who conspired to free a Rebel collaborator and viciously assaulted an Imperial officer. Oh, yes. You've got a nice bounty on your head, too, my friend."

"You knew all along?"

Thune answered with a laugh.

"Where are we going?" Crimson asked.

"After we rendezvous with my men, I'm making a delivery to Bwahl the Hutt."

"You're gonna turn me over to Bwahl?" Crimson's mind raced. Making a deal with Bwahl might be easier than escaping from an Imperial prison. "I didn't realize I was so popular," she added with a smirk.

"Don't flatter yourself, Red," Thune spat. "Bwahl couldn't care less about you, but he'll be quite pleased to see your friend Kaj."

"Kaj?" Crimson's eyes lit up despite the seriousness of her own situation. "You have Kaj?"

"Sure do. Some 'employees' of mine have been holding him for me. Yep, a nice profitable trip for me—I get Bwahl's bounty on Kaj, then I give you and Prash to the Empire."

As the landspeeder came to a stop beside the Faceted, Prash moaned. Crimson wondered if he felt as bad as she did. How could she have been so blind? Why had she trusted Thune so readily? To help a friend? Friendship...that's what started this whole mess to begin with. Her entire life had been turned upside down because of friendship.

Come to think of it, though, she wouldn't change a thing.

Somehow, some way, she was going to rescue Kaj. Or she would die trying.



Aboard the *Faceted*, Thune sent U-THR to the cockpit to prep the ship for takeoff. She bound Prash to a chair near the technical station and tied up Crimson at the gameboard. Pecking away at the communications board, she maintained a watchful eye on her prisoners.

Crimson cursed her own idiocy. How would she get out of this mess? A moan told her Prash was awake. With a cough, he took in his surroundings, looking first at Thune, then at the blaster beside her. Finally, he turned to Crimson, the venom in his eyes making her pale.

"Why?" he demanded.

Crimson just stared at him, at a loss for words.

"What do you want from me?"

"I'm sorry," said Crimson, overwrought with guilt.

"Oh, cut the blasted melodrama," Thune barked at them. "I need both of you alive for payment, but that doesn't mean you have to have all your limbs. So shut up."

Prash looked from one woman to the other. "I thought you two were—"

Thune laughed.

He turned to Crimson. "Then why did you kill Beidlo and Skurvis?"

"I thought you were holding my partner," she stammered. "I'm sorry."

He said nothing, merely looked at her, confused and angry.

Another ship landing nearby was a welcome sound—anything to distract Crimson from the feelings of guilt that pervaded her thoughts.

"Move it, Red!" Thune growled. "Time to throw out the welcome mat."

Thune escorted Crimson to the bottom of the Faceted's extended entrance ramp. She calculated her chances of escaping, but the binders at her wrists and the blaster at the back of her skull made her think twice.

The hatch opened on the Y-wing. A Gank hopped out of the cockpit and turned to his rear-seat passenger. Kaj! There was a brief scuffle in the cockpit, then the Gank backhanded Kaj and his struggling ceased. He bodily hauled Kaj out of the seat and threw him to the pavement. Kaj groaned, blood flowing from a gash spanning his forehead. It pained Crimson to see him like this, but there was nothing she could do.

"Bring him aboard," Thune said, pulling Crimson back into the ship. "I don't want to attract attention."

The Gank silently obeyed, dragging Kaj to his feet and prodding him up the ramp. Once inside, Kaj stopped short and gaped. "Crimson! What the—! Stang! They got you, too?"

Before she could answer, the Gank hit him again, knocking him to one knee. Using the fall to his advantage, Kaj yanked the Gank's legs out from under him, sending the guard sprawling down the ramp. Thune leveled her blaster on Kaj, but Crimson twisted around, her fists knotted, and landed a powerful punch. With a sharp yell and the crack of a rib Thune bent over, her shot shattering a monitor in a shower of sparks. Kaj jumped to his feet and dove at her, pinning her to the deck and grabbing her blaster.

Crimson ran to his side and he severed her bonds with the blaster. She did the same for him, then turned on Thune, her voice shaking in fury. "Now, bounty hunter—I think I'll access Uthre's memory banks and find out how many people you've sold out! Maybe I'll sell you to the victims' survivors—one piece at a time!"

Thune glared at her in pain. "You're no different than me, Durasha. You killed that Rebel in cold blood because you thought it would get your precious lover back. He stood in the way of your goal, and you murdered him. Just like I would have. You, me, Lang..." she paused, gloating over the shocked look on Crimson's face, "...yes, even your old friend Lieutenant Lang dangled five thousand creds in addition to that Imperial bounty on your head! At heart, we're all the same. So you can drop the sanctimony."

Guilt washed over Crimson, mixed with rage at the truth in Thune's words. Grabbing the blaster from Kaj, she raised it above her head so as to bring it down upon the hunter's head...

...And in the next second she rolled to the floor, nursing her burned hand and dropping the half-melted slag.

The Gank, forgotten in the struggle, stood at the doorway, a blaster leveled at the smugglers. "Step away from Captain Thune. You will not be told twice."

Cursing, Kaj got to his feet. But as Crimson stood, she slipped her own blaster from Thune's jacket and opened fire, blowing a hole in the Gank's face-plate. He dropped out the door with an agonized, filtered scream.

Kaj hauled Thune back to her feet. "Get up, lady. I got half a mind to scrag you now."

"Kaj, wait." Crimson stayed his arm.

Kaj stared at her fiercely. "These scum almost sold us out for money, Crimson—do you have any idea what Bwahl would have done to me? Do you know what the Empire does to traitors? She deserves to die—you were ready to kill her yourself a moment ago!"



Crimson Bounty

"I know, but there's been enough killing already. I don't want to be a party to it anymore."

They locked eyes for a moment, then Kaj furrowed his brow and turned to Thune. "All right, you live today, bounty hunter, but don't make any long-term plans. Now, move it!"

Thune glared as he pushed her toward the cockpit. Kaj glanced back at Crimson. "I overheard the Gank speaking—his buddies will be here any second. We'll tie her up and get outta here in that Y-wing."

"That won't work, Kaj. Too many of us. We need the Faceted."

"You're not taking my ship—"

"Quiet, Thune, or I'll change my mind about putting you permanently out of commission," Kaj said.

Crimson turned abruptly and led them deeper into the ship, back to the technical station. Kaj noticed Thune's other bound prisoner and raised an eyebrow. "Who's he?" he asked.

"An ally." Crimson said, untying a confused Prash. "Treytis Prash, Kaj Nedmak." The two men nodded uncomfortably at each other. "Look, whether or not you want to believe it, Prash, we're on the same side. Kaj and I, we...we're thinking of working for you Rebels. Come with us." She held out her hand.

Prash stared hard at her, then stole past her, ignoring the hand. "All right, let's move. You can start by finishing what Beidlo started—delivering a shipment of blaster rifles to a Rebel base. After that...we'll see."

"Prash," Kaj asked, "how about keeping an eye on Thune until we get this ship outta here?"

"With pleasure," Prash replied, taking the blaster from Kaj's outstretched hand.

Kaj and Crimson locked eyes. She smiled, nodding, and they turned toward the cockpit. But before they reached the corridor, Thune produced a knife and brought it up hard into Kaj's chest. He let out a gasp, stunned at the thick metal handle protruding from his body.

"Kaj!"

Thune reached for Prash's blaster, but Kaj managed the strength to launch himself at her. All three went down.

"Crimson, run!" Kaj yelled.

She was frozen in place, unwilling to abandon him.

"Go! I'm not gonna make it, Red!" Kaj coughed up blood, then

looked down at his scarlet-stained tunic. He chuckled hoarsely. "Actually...looks like I am gonna...make it, Red..." Thune aimed a solid punch at his jaw. He ducked, pinning her to the deck, as Prash rolled away from them. "Go! Get out! I've got you covered!"

"No!"

Kaj yelled to Prash, "Get her out of here!" Prash saw the pool of blood surrounding Thune and Kaj, then grabbed Crimson's arm.

"C'mon!"

"No..." She resisted his pull.

"C'mon!" He urged again, pulling harder.

"No! Kaj!" She tried to break Prash's hold, but he dragged her out to the parked Y-wing. The engine was still running. "Blast it, let me go!"

A familiar sound filled the air, and they looked up to see a Headhunter in the distance. The sight broke through Crimson's hysteria, and she jumped into the front seat of the starfighter.

A scream behind her, however, told her Prash hadn't made it.

She turned sharply to see him roll clumsily to the ground, a smoldering hole in his back. Thune stood at the doorway, her blaster trained on Crimson. That meant Kaj was...

No! she screamed in her mind. Not again! No more!

"Get out of the ship, Durasha." Thune's steel voice was unpromising.

Ducking, Crimson slammed the Y-wing's hatch button and gunned the accelerator without even waiting for the click of the hatch-seals. As she blasted out of the spaceport, she opened fire on the Headhunter. The pilot would never know who'd delivered his death-blow.

Taking to the skies, she exhaled loudly. It was not over yet.



A blast from Thune's freighter rocked the Y-wing.

I don't believe this! How did I get into this mess...?

Drenched in sweat, Crimson cursed her partner, his affinity for gambling, and his blasted schemes.

Another shot whipped past the Y-wing.

Friendship. Ha! Why in the worlds did I decide I needed to rescue

your hide, Kaj Nedmak! Why?

"If you're still alive..." she paused just long enough to take the Y-wing into a diving roll, desperately attempting to outmaneuver Thune, "...I'll kill you myself!"

Laser fire arced across the black void of deep space, momentarily invisible against the backdrop of Ord Simres before it pounded the starfighter's starboard bow. The ship shuddered and Crimson realized that the outcome of this battle was not in her favor.

"I'll never forgive you for this, Kaj," she said softly. Guiding the ship into a 180-degree turn, Crimson locked her laser cannons on continuous fire. She set the Y-wing on a ramming course determined to take out the woman who once claimed to be a friend. In a few seconds, it would all be over.

The *Faceted* filled the viewport, its guns ablaze. Yellows and greens danced around the Y-wing, growing in intensity as the shields buckled. Then there was a flash inside the cockpit.



Floating...

Stars...

Red...

Bright...

Starlight...

Red...

Red...

Starlight...

"Red?"

Crimson opened her eyes, disoriented. What...? Alive...? But—She tried to sit up, immediately wished she hadn't done so, blinding pain forcing her back down.

Not just pain...a hand...metal...What...?

She opened her eyes and stared up into the quizzical face of U-THR.

"Oh, thank the stars, Mistress Crimson! You're conscious!"

Uthre...but—that meant she was back aboard...

She sat up abruptly, ignoring the pain as she scanned for Thune. The bounty hunter was seated at the tech station, facing a screen.

"All right, Thune, I—" She stopped, her attention caught by two peculiar facts.

First, Thune seemed to take no notice of her.

And second, she was tied to the chair.

"Red..."

Crimson whipped around at the raspy voice.

There, lying on a portable grav-bed, bound and bandaged, was Kaj Nedmak. Pale and bruised, his breath came out in ragged spurts.

"Kaj! You're alive? But how?"

"I...didn't expect to be..." he coughed, "but our...green-metal friend here...had other plans."

Uthre gently placed a metallic hand on her shoulder. "Please, Mistress Crimson, you must lie back. That explosion in the cockpit left you unconscious. You must allow some recovery time before exerting yourself."

"But what happened? How did I get aboard? Why wasn't this ship destroyed?"

"Really, Mistress, you mustn't concern yourself with that right now. Now—"

"Uthre, I need to know. Please."

The droid looked at her, his head tilted to one side. "Very well, but then you must rest."

"It's a deal."

The droid explained what had happened. After Crimson escaped in the Y-wing, Thune left Kaj for dead near the freighter's tech station, headed into the cockpit, and took off in pursuit of the smaller vessel. The battle was quick, the Y-wing hopelessly outclassed. Uthre, seated at the co-pilot controls, nearly shorted out his empathy circuits watching Thune try to kill the only human to treat him as an equal since the death of his former master. Thune ordered the droid to go to the airlock and prepare for a remote docking with the starfighter—she planned to keep Crimson alive, determined to collect her bounty. Passing by the tech station, Uthre accidentally knocked a blaster toward the wounded Kaj. Kaj managed to crawl to the cockpit and shoot Thune. And luckily, Crimson blacked out before completing her ramming attempt. Kaj took the controls and moved the *Faceted* out of the fighter's path while Uthre bound Thune. After remotely docking the two ships, Kaj brought Crimson aboard with Uthre's help.

Crimson stared at the droid, amazed. "You did all that?"

"Why, yes—as I've often told Mistress Thune, my primary programming has never been for committing acts of unspeakable violence, hunting down fugitives, or abetting in their deaths." Uthre paused, and Crimson swore that he almost seemed to shiver. "As it happens, my primary function is to observe the practices of protocol, foster accordant communication, and above all, provide peaceful solutions to insure the preservation of sentient life. Acting as an accomplice to Mistress Thune's utterly abominable trade was beginning to degrade my ethics sub-routines."

Crimson smiled at the droid's speech, and Kaj uttered a short, raspy laugh from across the room. "Uthre," he coughed, "you'd...make one great...smuggler."

"Oh, Maker forbid, Master Nedmak! I do believe my ethics sub-routines have taken all they can for one day—"

Crimson laid a hand on his shoulder. "Actually, Uthre, I think it's right up your alley. Don't think of it so much as smuggling as...free-trading."

"Free-trading?"

"Sure. You wouldn't have to do anything unethical. No violence, no killing...maybe an occasional run in with conniving dock-masters or Imperial Customs."

"Imperial Customs, Mistress?"

Crimson threw a frown toward Kaj. "Running guns for the Rebel Alliance could get a little sticky."

Kaj smiled, nodding weakly.

"Think about it, Uthre," Crimson said. "But for now, how about taking your former master down to the cargo hold? We'll drop her off where she can't cause any more trouble."

The droid wandered out of the room, his voice trailing behind him. "I simply don't understand the behavior of most humans..."

Crimson walked shakily to Kaj's side and sat on the edge of the grav-bed. She held his hand.

"So...changed your mind about...the Rebels, I see..."

"I've had some time to think, Kaj." She tightened her grip and smiled at him. Weakly, he smiled back.

"At least...we got a...newer ship in the deal."

"Yeah." Crimson looked around the cabin. "She needs a new name, though."

"How about the *Uwana Buyer*?"

"Naaah. It's been done." She thought for a moment then smiled. "I've got it. The *Starlight Red*."

"*Starlight Red*? What kind of name is that?"

"The right one."

Kaj eyed his partner skeptically, refusing to let on that the name just might work. "Some day...Red...one of these schemes of yours is gonna...backfire, and when it does, I...hope I'm not there...to see it." A hint of amusement betrayed the corner of his mouth.

She laughed at having her words thrown back at her. "Well, that makes two of us, then."

Roleplaying Game Statistics

■ Celia Durasha

Type: Smuggler

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 6D, dodge 5D+1, melee combat 5D+2

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

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

MECHANICAL 4D

Astrogation 6D+1, capital ship piloting 4D+2, sensors 5D+1, space transports 6D, starfighter piloting 5D, starship gunnery 5D

PERCEPTION 3D

Bargain 4D, command 5D, gambling 5D, hide 3D+1

STRENGTH 2D+1

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer programming/repair 4D, space transports repair 4D

Force Points: 3

Character Points: 10

Move: 10

Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol (5D)

Capsule: Ten generations of the Durasha family served in the military under the Empire and its predecessor, the Old Republic. Like her father and brothers, Celia "Crimson" Durasha had planned to continue that tradition. When her father blocked her application to the Academy, Crimson broke all ties with him and left her homeworld embittered.

Undaunted, Crimson was determined to sail the stars. After her graduation from Baylagon Technical Institute she was hired by Galaxy Tours. As a navigator for the cruise liner *Kuari Princess*, she became fast friends with its security chief, Detien Kaileel. Unbeknownst to Crimson, Kaileel was an agent for the Rebel Alliance and was under investigation by the Imperial Security Bureau, whose field agent turned out to be Crimson's former boyfriend Adion Lang.

To make matters even worse, during this same time Crimson received word that her twin brother was killed during a Rebel ambush on the planet Ralltiir. Hours later, the destruction of Alderaan was announced. Crimson was confused—her brother died at the hands of



leave the *Kuari Princess*. Lang killed Kaileel and was going to arrest Crimson for treason, but she slashed him with a knife and made her getaway into the Maelstrom Nebula.

Crimson headed for a place deep within the Nebula known as the Oasis. It was a hideout for pirates and smugglers, as well as a faction associated with the Rebel Alliance. Scared, and now with an Imperial price on her head, Crimson needed a refuge, not only from those pursuing her, but also from her own thoughts about the conflict between the Empire and Rebellion. She chose to ignore making any decision, hoping to blot out the painful memories.

Crimson refused to stay long in the Oasis—it was too close to where her whole life had been turned upside down. Taking a chance, she stowed away on smuggler Kaj Nedmak's freighter. When he discovered her, she made a deal with him to work off her passage. Kaj took a liking to the young woman and was impressed enough by her abilities to offer her a permanent position as his co-pilot. Crimson has been working with him about two years and realizes he is a trusted friend.

Rebels; her best friend, a Rebel collaborator, was arrested and sitting in the *Princess's* detention area; and the Emperor openly admitted that a new super-weapon, a Death Star, had destroyed an entire planet. The Empire had never touched her life before, and suddenly she found herself questioning both the Empire and the Alliance. Who was right?

Crimson had no answer to that question, but she knew she could not let her best friend die at the hands of the Empire. She helped Kaileel escape but they were confronted by Adion Lang while trying to board a shuttle to

■ Kaj Nedmak

Type: Corellian Smuggler

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 5D, brawling parry 4D+2, dodge 4D+2, running 3D+2, vehicle blasters 5D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Alien species 3D+1, business 3D+2, languages: Huttese 6D, streetwise 7D, survival 5D, value 4D

MECHANICAL 3D+1

Astrogation 5D+2, sensors 5D, space transports 6D, starfighter piloting 6D+1, starship gunnery 6D+1, starship shields 6D



PERCEPTION 2D+2

Bargain 5D, con 6D, gambling 4D, persuasion 5D, sneak 5D+2

STRENGTH 2D+2

Brawling 5D, lifting 5D

TECHNICAL 3D+2

Blaster repair 4D+1, droid programming 4D, droid repair 4D, space transports repair 6D, starfighter repair 5D, starship weapon repair 5D

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 10

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, heavy blaster pistol (5D)

Capsule: Thickly muscled, with tousled light-brown hair, and dark eyes, Kaj Nedmak grew up on Drall, in the Corellian Sector. Orphaned at age nine, he stowed away aboard the freighter of a Corellian smuggler named Zevel Hortine. Zevel took a liking to the boy and taught him

the arts of smuggling and gambling. When he grew too old to continue in his profession, he left Kaj, then 17, his ship and reputation.

Kaj worked alone as a smuggler for 13 years, running guns and spice for Bwahl the Hutt, Moruth Doole, and others. At that time, a need for work took him to the Oasis, a smuggler's den inside the Maelstrom, where he made several contacts and ran up a number of gambling debts.

After leaving the Oasis, Kaj discovered a surprise in his cargo hold: a beautiful young woman. Obviously in some kind of trouble, she seemed frightened and alone. Taking pity on her, as Zevel had done for him, he let her work off her passage. In time, he and Crimson became

friends, and eventually partners. He'd often wondered what had driven her to such desperation, but she'd never been comfortable talking about it and so he never pushed.

A year after taking Crimson on as a partner, Kaj accepted a job from Bwahl, running a shipment of spice to distributors on Torque. However, in an effort to ensnare Rebel forces, the Empire blockaded the entire Gordian Reach, making travel to Torque impossible. Bwahl had the spice delivered by other means, and Kaj was never paid for his efforts.

This was the beginning of a bad turn of luck for Kaj and Crimson, one they're still trying to get over.

■ Thune

Type: Bounty Hunter

DEXTERITY 3D

Blaster 7D, brawling parry 5D, dodge 6D, melee combat 5D+1, running 5D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 4D, bureaucracy 4D, business 6D, intimidation 6D, law enforcement 7D, streetwise 6D+1, tactics 6D

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Astrogation 5D, sensors 4D+2, space transports 7D+1, starfighter piloting 7D, starship gunnery 7D, starship shields 5D+2

PERCEPTION 3D+2

Command 6D, con 5D, investigation 6D, search 6D

STRENGTH 2D+2

Brawling 5D, stamina 5D+2

TECHNICAL 3D

Demolitions 3D+2, droid programming 4D, security 6D, space transports repair 6D+1, starfighter repair 5D+2

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 10

Move: 10

Equipment: Comlink, heavy blaster pistol (5D), hunting knife (STR+1D)

Capsule: Very little is known about Thune's origins. Hers is the trade of the stealthy—the whispered title of those who walk a fine line between killer and law-enforcer. An expert at her chosen profession, she's a rarity among bounty hunters—a woman in a field dominated by men. However, despite her unblemished success as a hunter, she is a relative unknown to her peers.



Which is exactly how she likes it. Thune enjoys the anonymity—it's an asset.

Thune has taken great pains to eliminate all evidence of her past, and aside from a sister, no one alive knows the truth about her. No matter how deep one could probe Imperial memory-banks, one would find no references to the young child who'd dreamed of joining the Imperial Academy and serving the Empire with glory. No amount of research would reveal the frustration that child felt at seeing so many men get accepted over her...men less well-educated, less fit, less deserving than her. No analysis of aging databases would document her rejection of such limitations, or her decision to prove them all wrong and succeed where the military failed—by making a living as a bounty hunter. She's made sure of this.

Likewise, no record exists of Thune's encounter with a peaceful young businessman from Alderaan named Deckland Carper. Aside from a certain Imperial Admiral, no one even knows she'd been hired to eliminate Carper as revenge for a childhood squabble, how she'd blasted him in cold blood and provided his head as proof of his death upon payment, how she'd taken the job without a second thought, her previous idealism long buried by the nature of her job.

Well, no one except for Carper's droid, her droid now. But in Thune's mind, that doesn't matter. U-THR is nothing more than a machine, a tool, and to the victor go the spoils.

■ U-THR (Uthre)

Type: 3PO Human-Cyborg Relations Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

Dodge 2D

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien species 4D, bureaucracy 5D, languages 5D+2, planetary systems 4D+1

MECHANICAL 1D

Repulsorlift operation 2D+2, sensors 2D+1

PERCEPTION 1D

Bargain 3D, persuasion 4D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

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

Special Abilities:

Life Preservation Programming: A droid's programming prevents it from injuring a sentient, even in self-defense.

Move: 7

Force Points: 1

Character Points: 4

Capsule: If a droid had emotions, then U-THR's service to his first master, Alderaanian businessman Deckland Carper, could only be described as happy. Uthre always accompanied Carper on business trips offworld, not only serving as companion on long space voyages, but also acting as interpreter and as databank with millions of bits of information about the cultures and species Carper met. It was common on most of those trips for Carper to engage in holo boardgames with the



droid to pass the time.

When Carper was murdered by bounty hunter Thune, Uthre became Thune's property. He is not happy serving a master who displays no ethics, who kills without any remorse. But as a protocol droid, Uthre's primary programming requires service without question. However, that does not prohibit his constant complaining about doing certain unsavory tasks for Thune.

Aboard Thune's freighter, the *Faceted*, Uthre's responsibilities include monitoring cockpit information and repair work. Thune has added records about other bounty hunters and their quarries to his databank.

STAR WARS

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About the Authors

John Beyer is an ex-Navy brat, ex-Coast Guardsman who absolutely fell in love with *Star Wars* on opening day. He's currently working for UPS and Barnes & Noble, and spends whatever free time is left sleeping and working on roleplaying game ideas. John keeps his friends busy subjecting them to adventures for *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* and *The World of Indiana Jones*.

Kathy Burdette is a freelance writer and artist living in Virginia enjoying the life of a shiftless science fiction addict. In her spare time she writes short fiction, plays in a band, works part-time at the College of William and Mary, and annoys Rebel drop point commanders.

Drew Campbell—a former resident of Milwaukee, Wisconsin—is a self-described “actor-magician-musician-writer-coffee drinker.” Drew has been playing and gamemastering the *Star Wars* roleplaying game for 10 years and has recently completed work on *Cynabar's Fantastic Technology: Droids*, his first published *Star Wars* material. Drew currently resides in California (not far from where the Battle of Endor actually took place) where he works as a computer technician. He hopes one day to write an “About the Author” bio without feeling silly.

WANTED FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE EMPIRE: **Paul Danner**. Species: Human. Gender: Male. Age: 23. Homeworld: Earth. Bounty: 18,007 credits. Crimes: Production of Unlawfully Creative Short Stories, Conspiracy to Entertain the Public (*Star Wars Roleplaying Game* supplement, *Hives of Scum and Villainy*), and Wanton Disregard for Deadlines (additional 11,000 credits posted by West End Games editors). If you spot this individual, contact the proper authorities immediately. He is armed and considered humorous.

Barbara Hambly's contributions to the *Star Wars* universe include the novels *Children of the Jedi* and *Planet of Twilight*, plus short stories in *Star Wars: Tales from the Mos Eisley Cantina* and *Star Wars: Tales from Jabba's Palace* anthologies. Her non-*Star Wars* novels

range from high fantasies to historical mysteries to vampire tales. She holds both a master's degree in medieval history and a black belt in Shotokan karate. She has also been president of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America. “Murder in Slushtime” is her first contribution to the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*.

Rich Handley is clinically insane. Even though he and his wife Jill just had their first child, Emily Megan, he naively believes he can still find time for his career as an editor, story-writer, and freelance journalist. Obviously, he is delusional and needs help. He is a reporter for *The Oyster Bay Guardian* in New York, writes a regular column on collecting comics for *The Star Wars Collector*, and maintains *The Exhaustive Guide to Star Wars Comics* at <http://www.asb.com/usr/cardsafe/intro.htm>. Assuming his doctors will allow it, he hopes to continue writing for *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal*.

Greetings from the Mid-Rim. **Charlene Newcomb** here, surviving the perils of full-time employment—meetings, cataloging journals, supervising, meetings, attending conferences, swearing in Old Corellian at computers that don't work...did I mention meetings? But in the midst of it all, she squeezes in time to write. This is Char's tenth story for the *Journal*, a sequel to “A Certain Point of View” from *Journal* #8.

Across the mighty Cascades, through the tremendous Rockies, across the Dakota wastelands and urban rust belt, came **Timothy S. O'Brien**, a quick and clever game writer, equipped only with a car, books and the promise of a job. Now he toils in the service of West End Games, a ceaselessly serving sales assistant in the great and growing game industry. When not answering customer questions or mailing game prizes, he works on new books like the *Rebel SpecForce Handbook*, due out soon.

Jean Rabe lives in rural Wisconsin, wedged between a corn field and a dairy farm. She is the author of several fantasy short stories and novels, including *Dawning of A New Age*, the first novel in the *DragonLance Fifth Age* line. She is the editor of two science fiction gaming magazines—*JTAS: The Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society*, and FASA's *MechForce Quarterly*. And in her spare time she proofreads computer game manuals. She worked for TSR for many years as the coordinator of its Role-Playing Game Association Network. Prior to that she was a newspaper reporter and news bureau chief covering courts and police in the Midwest.

Eric S. Trautmann began his professional writing career on such projects as *The Politics of Contraband* and *Galaxy Guide 9: Fragments from the Rim* and has worked as an on-staff editor and designer for West End Games since mid-1995. A native of Malone, New York (not the end of the world, but you can see it from there), Eric wrapped up the *DarkStryder Campaign* with *Endgame*, and is rather excited not to be working on droids anymore.

Trevor J. Wilson (Beast) is a part-time author and member of the infamous Gotham Highlanders campaign. He recently captured his outlaw gamemaster **Craig Robert Carey** and turned him over to the Fugitive Gamemaster Retrieval Corps for a bounty of 50,000 credits. Beast plans to spend it on fine Thikkiianan brandy and Dilonexa cigars. Alas, Craig recently escaped from the Correctional Facility for Cruel Gamemasters (CFCG) and was last spotted traveling southeast across the Horn Plateau in Canada's Northwest Territories.

About the Artists

"Who do I have to kill?" was **Steve Bryant's** response when asked if he wanted to do *Star Wars* work for West End Games—leading to his work in *Galaxy Guide 12: Aliens—Enemies and Allies*, *Heroes and Rogues*, and *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal*. In addition to the movie trilogy, Steve cites Al Williamson's seminal *Star Wars* work as a major influence. A former art director for Game Designers Workshop, Steve currently works freelance and lives in the suburban wilds of Chicago with his wife and four companion animals.

Matt Busch began drawing "stick" TIE fighters at the age of four. Aside from the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*, Matt has contributed to other *Star Wars* sourcebooks for West End Games. As an entertainment illustrator living in Los Angeles, he has worked on many television commercials, books, magazines, comics and trading cards. He has also worked on many advertising campaigns for motion pictures, including the recent film *The Devil's Own*. When asked where he gets his talent, Matt claims that, "The Force runs strong in my family..."

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.

Brian Schomburg is an expert blacksmith, master negotiator, and the reigning ultimate fighting champion. Sadly, he accidentally sheared off his right arm and is unable to complete the moody self-portrait intended to accompany this bio.

Doug Shuler has been a freelance artist for ten years and has done work for many prominent game companies, including GDW, Steve Jackson Games, ICE, TSR, White Wolf, FASA, and West End Games. His illustrations continue to appear on new cards for *Magic: The Gathering* and *BattleTech* by Wizards of the Coast. A *Star Wars* fanatic, he lives in Boulder, Colorado, with his wife Jordi and daughters Brianna and Ashley.

Chris Trevas is an illustrator and graduate from the Center for Creative Studies in Michigan. He has been a *Star Wars* fan since the beginning and enjoys depicting new characters and situations from that far away galaxy. While currently working in the gaming industry, Chris' artwork can be found in many projects for West End Games, including *The Official Star Wars Adventure Journal*, the *Wretched Hives of Scum & Villainy*, *Black Sands of Socorro*, and *The Star Wars Introductory Adventure Game*.

Cynabar's DROID Datalog

Version 4.7.220

Cynabar/38:3:2:05/Hut • Welcome to the latest installment of Cynabar's Droid Datalog. I was frankly stunned at the interest generated by the last version (which hit the newsnets about four months ago). The Datalog was originally just a fun experiment for me; since so many smugglers own or traffic in droids, it seemed logical to distribute information concerning automata (information geared toward all you "freelance law-breakers" out there).

Where possible, I've screened the responses to the droid entries, and they are as accurate as far as I can determine. But, given how most smugglers operate, I'd take the information contained herein with a grain or two of salt. Remember the old smuggler's axiom: "If it looks too good to be true, it probably is."

Droid Classifications

Droids are classified into five degrees, as follows:

• **First Degree Droids.** Droids of this type are generally designed with mathematics, medicine or science in mind and are usually teamed up with an organic counterpart. As such, first degree droids have more sophisticated personality programming and can be expensive. (The 2-1B surgical droid is an example of a first degree droid.)

• **Second Degree Droids.** This type of droid is designed purely for function, typically in the areas of engineering and maintenance.

STAR WARS
Adventure Journal • August 1997

Often, second degree droids have only the most basic of personality programming. (The famed R2-series astromech unit is an example of a second degree droid.)

• **Third Degree Droids.** The most common models to be seen with organic beings are third degree droids. Such units are designed to specialize in social sciences: protocol, education, diplomacy, and so forth. (The 3PO-series protocol droid is an example of a third degree droid.)

• **Fourth Degree Droids.** This type of droid is designed for combat applications (and is illegal in virtually every system in the Empire). Assassin droids and other forms of combat automata, while banned in the Empire, are occasionally used by legitimate military forces. (The IG-series assassin droid is an example of a fourth degree droid.)

• **Fifth Degree Droids.** Similar to more primitive robotic units, fifth degree droids are usually designed for menial duties: salvage, sanitation, mining, and cargo hauling. Fifth degree droids are very common, largely due to their low cost. (The ASP-7 is an example of a fifth degree droid.)

Droid Personalities

There are five basic categories for classifying droid personality types: none, simple, elementary, advanced and complex:

• **None.** The droid has no personality. While such a droid can communicate, it will typically respond with simple "yes" or "no" answers; more complex communicative skills are often beyond the ability of zero-personality droids. Fifth degree droids are typically devoid of personality matrices. (A standard cargo lifter requires no personality or creativity. It must simply take commands and perform its programmed duties.)

• **Simple.** Droids with simple personality matrices are seldom required to spend time with organics. Personalities of this type can usually be described in a single word: ornery, cruel, timid, fearful, and so on.

• **Elementary.** Droids that occasionally interact with organics are usually programmed with elementary personality matrices. For example, astromech droids that are required to interact with a single pilot for short periods of time typically have elementary

personality modules.

• **Advanced.** Droids that are required to interact with organics on a fairly regular basis (such as medical or surgical droids) often have advanced personality programming. This type of personality allows the droid to engage in limited conversation (typically for the purpose of information exchange) and simple pleasantries.

• **Complex.** Droids with complex personality matrices are generally required to interact with organics. Often this personality is so convincing that the droid appears to possess sentience. Protocol droids, for example, can realistically simulate fear, pain, annoyance and other emotions.

(For more information on droid degrees, droid personalities, and droid modification guidelines, see pages 3-48 of *Cynabar's Fantastic Technology: Droids*.)

Second Degree Droids

■ IC-M Utility Droid

Model: Cybot-Galactica IC-M General Utility Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 2D

PERCEPTION 2D

STRENGTH 3D

Lifting 5D

TECHNICAL 4D

Computer programming/repair 5D, general repair 8D+1, machinery repair 5D

Equipped With:

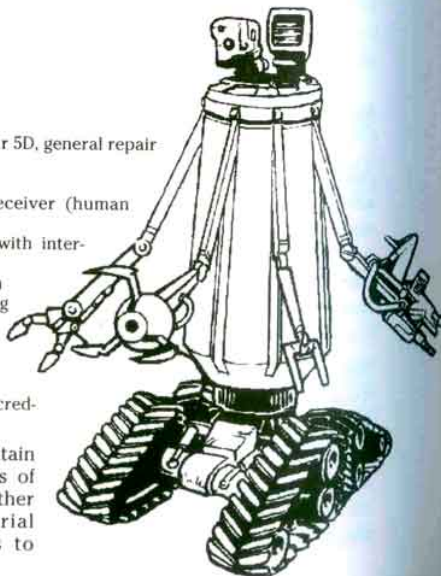
- Photoreceptor/auditory receiver (human range)
- Seven manipulator arms (with interchangeable fixtures)
- Heavy Treadwell locomotion
- Rear storage bay (containing various cleaning and repair tools)

Move: 7

Size: 1.5 meters tall

Cost: 1,700 credits (new), 500 credits (used)

Capsule: Designed to maintain and clean the lower levels of Coruscant, the IC-M is another example of Industrial Automaton's willingness to



serve the Empire. The IC-M's programming allows the unit to effect minor structural repairs (changing dead light fixtures), to minor landscaping (weeding walkways). The droid's two heads allow it to access data (such as information on Imperial building codes, scheduled tasks, and so forth) while performing the job at hand. Many IC-M's have been purchased by other system and local governments to save on the cost of organic workers.

Availability: 2, R

Personality Matrix: None

• **"Corewatch"/35:7:2:81/Clg** Since the Alliance uses IN-4s for message drops and such, the Imperials tend to monitor them pretty closely. As an alternative, I recommend that covert communications on Imperial Center be carried out in the memory buffers of IC-Ms. Since they operate deep in the underlevels of Coruscant, they are harder to keep under surveillance and are easier to co-opt for illegal purposes.

■ M4 Message Droid

Model: Cybot Galactica M4 Message Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

Dodge 5D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Holographic projector/recorder
- Repulsorlift drive unit with 4-meter flight ceiling
- Body armor (+2D physical, +1D energy, military version only)
- Internal sporting blaster (3D+1 stun damage, ranges: 0-5/10/20, military version only)

Move: 30

Size: 0.3 meters tall

Cost: 2,000 (civilian issue), 4,000 (military issue)

Capsule: The M4 droid line is designed to make quick information exchange less risky than standard data transmission methods. The M4 is capable of playing prerecorded messages and datatapes, as well as recording holo messages on the spot. Encryption codes must be entered by the receptor of any given message. The M4m (the military model) comes with a light blaster to protect any given information.

Availability: 1 (civilian issue), 2, R (military issue)

Personality Matrix: Simple

Source: Fantastic Technology

■ MN-2E Maintenance Droid

Model: Industrial Automaton MN-2E general maintenance unit

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 2D

PERCEPTION 1D
STRENGTH 2D
TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Wastestream Systems refuse recycling unit
- Vibro-shears (*Strength +2*)
- Extendable arm, with buffer and polisher attachments
- Extendable cleanser applicator
- Refuse collection scanning computer
- Binary vocoder
- Repulsorlift system

Story Factors:

Easy Programming: The MN-2E can be easily modified to perform gardening, light equipment maintenance, or sensitive sanitation duties. Any character attempting to program one of these functions into the unit may do so at one difficulty level below the normal roll.

Move: 7

Size: 1 meter

Cost: 800 credits

Capsule: Industrial Automaton developed the MN-2E droid at the request of the facilities director of the Imperial Palace on Coruscant. He required a droid capable of doing simple janitorial work in the dark recesses of the palace's vaulted ceilings. The MN-2E is what he received, a simple droid capable enough to perform the easiest of cleaning duties, with a high level repulsorlift able to reach a flight ceiling of 75 meters. The droid is among the least advanced of all of Industrial Automaton's line, though it has fulfilled its role admirably.

Availability: 1

Personality Matrix: None

Drevk/34:6:2:72/Set • Despite what you see in the holothrillers, most smugglers don't like to live in squalor. I always keep a few cleaning droids around to make sure that my bulk freighter looks presentable. A clean, orderly ship will help deflect suspicion away from you when the Customs ships come calling.

■ **WED-15-D3 Treadwell**

Model: Cybot Galactica WED-15-D3 Treadwell

DEXTERITY 2D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

Languages: droid languages 4D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 3D

Search 3D+1

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 4D+2, machinery repair 6D, repulsorlift repair 4D, space transports repair 4D+1

Equipped With:

- Video sensor
- Dual-tread locomotion
- Fine manipulation arms (+1D to repair skills)

- Extendible video microbinoculars (+2D to search for micro-scale work)
- Various tools
- Cybot acoustic signaler (droid languages)

Move: 8

Size: 1.6 meters tall

Cost: 3,200 (new), 650 (used)

Capsule: The WED15 was the first commercially successful droid to implement tread locomotion. Though older, Cybot Galactica's WED15 remains one of the more popular and widely used general repair droids on the market. Its six-arm capacity allows the droid to perform finite repairs at a near-microscopic level. The delicate arms the WED15 uses to facilitate its repairs do cause much trouble; the droid has a tendency to get its appendages caught in various parts of machinery. The repairs needed to bring the droid to peak performance make the upkeep of the WED15 very costly.

Oddly enough, the original production model WED15 was discontinued due to lackluster sales. However, shortly after the production run was curtailed, Cybot Galactica consumer services received numerous complaints and requests for new Treadwells. Several months later, the WED15-D3 was "introduced" (essentially a more affordable version of the original Treadwell).

Availability: 1

Personality Matrix: Simple

Braco/35:4:9:12/Lia • I once heard of a crime lord (I think it may even have been Doole) who tried to modify the Treadwell to process glitterstim...an attempt that failed utterly. The poor droids were tearing, shredding, scattering and otherwise destroying millions of credits worth of glitterstim. (My uncle in CorSec got a big laugh out of that!)

Tredum/35:5:2:04/Gam • I retrofitted my Treadwell with a repair database and six more manipulator arms; it didn't cost much and now my droid is now quick as blaster fire when it comes to repairing my freighter.

Third Degree Droids

■ **434-FPC Culinary Droid**

Model: Cybot Galactica 434-FPC Personal Chef Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Culinary arts 6D+2, cultures 3D, cultures: galactic cuisines 5D, cultures: food preparation 5D, home economics 4D+2

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 2D

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Humanoid body (two arms, two legs)
- Two visual and auditory sensor recorders—human range
- Vocabulator speech/sound system
- Various cooking attachments (replaceable; attach to left arm)
 - Verbobrain

- TranLang I Communication module
- Food Preparation Database
- Food Sample Analyzer

Move: 6

Size: 1.4 meters tall

Cost: 4,000 credits

Capsule: Cybot Galactica—which has long catered to the affluent—developed the 434-FPC culinary unit as a high-end servitor droid. The FPC is equipped with a database that contains over 17,000 recipes (with the processing capacity to learn millions more), as well as a complete food-sampler sensing package. The sensing package assists the droid in food preparation, selecting spices, meats and other ingredients that are at the peak of flavor and freshness and rejecting others that may be spoiled or contaminated.

Availability: 2

Personality Matrix: Advanced

Gunman/36:8:3:02/Cor* When I first signed on with Churhee's Riflemen as a

combat tech, my first operation was against a Corporate Sector exec who was involved with a slaving ring. His home defenses were pretty formidable and we were pretty worried about civilian casualties. Then I figured out how to reprogram his cook droid to drop the exec's defense net. We actually took the whole estate (several square kilometers of droids and guards) without firing a shot.

■ A9G Library Droid

Model: Industrial Automaton A9G Series Data Storage Unit

DEXTERITY 2D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Bureaucracy: library science 4D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 1D+2

TECHNICAL 2D

Computer programming/repair 3D

Equipped With:

- Kraren XI Superprocessors, allowing rapid data collation
- Cybot Galactica Data-Sifter software package (adds +1D to all computer pro-

- gramming/repair rolls involving data searches)
- Humanoid body construction (head, two arms, two legs)

Move: 9

Size: 1.7 meters tall

Cost: 8,000 credits

Capsule: The A9G series was designed by Industrial Automaton to handle the arduous task of cataloging and maintaining vast amounts of datafiles possessed by libraries both public and private. The droid is capable of processing catalogs of information at an incredibly high and accurate rate, making it perfect as a retrieval device. However, the unit was given a substandard memory core, making its primary function of high-end storage too "glitch-prone."

The unit is still acceptable for markets where smaller amounts of data need to be tracked. Many larger libraries have either replaced the faulty memory core or purchased several A9Gs to take care of specific departments.

Availability: 2

Personality Matrix: Moderate

Gunman/35:1:1:07/Nar* Alliance scientists were able to obtain and modify several of these droids to assist in military stratagems based on previous Imperial military activities. I've heard that these were pretty useful in some of the Rebels' early battles (though I wonder how much of that success was based on luck and the skill of the front line troops).

Nunbar/36:3:6:12/Ryl* Hey, smugglers! Somebody is buying up large numbers of these droids on Ryloth. I've heard the price is good, the risk is low, and I may have a lead on a source for a bunch of these units. Anybody interested, contact me at StarForge Station.

■ XI-Lioness TDL Nanny Droid

Model: Industrial Automaton XI-Lioness TDL Nanny Droid

DEXTERITY 4D

Blaster: arm blaster 7D, dodge 5D+1

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Cultures 6D, languages 5D, scholar: child care 9D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 2D

Hide 3D+1, search 3D, sneak 4D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 1D

First aid 5D, security 4D

Equipped With:

- Humanoid body (two arms, two legs head)
- Armor plating (+2D against physical and energy attacks)
- Two heavy blasters (4D+2 damage, 0-3/10/20), concealed in lower set of arms.
- Two visual and two aural sensors (human range)
- Vocabulator speech/sound system
- Verbobrain
- Tran-lang III Communication module with over seven million languages

Special Abilities:

Synthskin: The X1-Lioness is equipped with synthetic warmed flesh to soothe organic babies.

Move: 10

Size: 1.9 meters tall

Cost: 9,000 credits (new)

Capsule: The TDL nanny droid is an advanced protocol unit designed specifically for the duties associated with child rearing. Because of the success of this droid-type, executives and politicians favor the TDL for taking care of their children.

The TDL's primary feature is its synthskin, warm artificial flesh that youngsters—still struggling with the concept of artificial intelligence—find considerably less disturbing than the metal "skin" common to most droids.

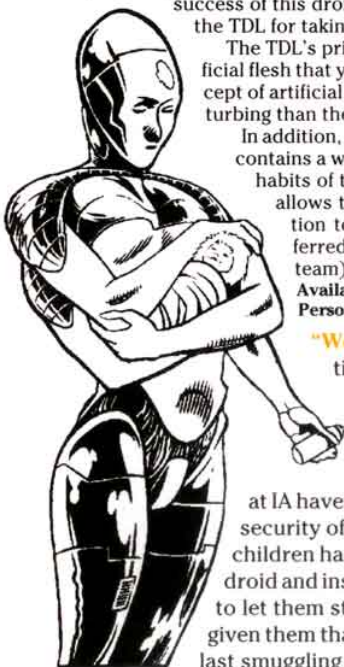
In addition, the TDL's primary programming module contains a wealth of information on the child-rearing habits of thousands of species. The programming allows the droid to demonstrate extreme affection to young charges (a system jokingly referred to as "hug circuitry" by the TDL design team).

Availability: 2

Personality Matrix: Complex

"WompRat"/33:7:1:04/Tat IA's advertising campaign for the TDL droids paints a glowing picture of the "behavioral programming subroutines" that allow them to handle child-rearing duties. What the folks

at IA haven't devoted a lot of attention to is the security of the TDL's processors. My brother's children had no problems computer-spiking the droid and inserting routines that forced the droid to let them stay up late. (I guess I shouldn't have given them that computer probe I picked up on my last smuggling run.)



Dreven/33:9:2:01/Els I've heard some ugly rumors about corporate execs and Imperial higher-ups reprogramming the "family nanny droid" into extremely effective bodyguards. Those heavy blasters built into the TDL are pretty efficient, especially with a military-grade targeting package.

Fourth Degree Droids

■ Class I Defense Unit

Model: Ulban Arms Class I Defense Droid

DEXTERITY 2D

Blaster 5D, blaster artillery 4D+2

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 2D

Search 4D

STRENGTH 5D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Four heavy-duty legs
- Medium anti-vehicle laser cannon (speeder scale, *blaster artillery*, 10-500/1.5/2.5 km, damage 5D)
- Medium repeating blaster (character scale, *blaster*, 3-75/200/500, damage 7D)
- Lighting package

Move: 17

Size: 3.2 meters tall

Cost: 20,000

Capsule: The Class I defense unit—originally conceived of by Imperial Army Captain Kist—was designed to bolster the ranks of Imperial ground troops by acting as an unmanned defense platform. Unfortunately, Kist's efficient design was rejected by his Imperial overseers and the Class I defense droid was never adopted into the Empire's stockpiles.

A few years after the design was rejected by the Empire, the Corporate Sector Authority produced a droid that was shockingly similar to Kist's defense unit; the Empire believes the specs for the Class I droid were stolen by CSA spies. (Others quietly claim that Kist himself—unhappy with the rejection of his "masterpiece"—secretly transferred the specs to the CSA for a large amount of ready cash.)

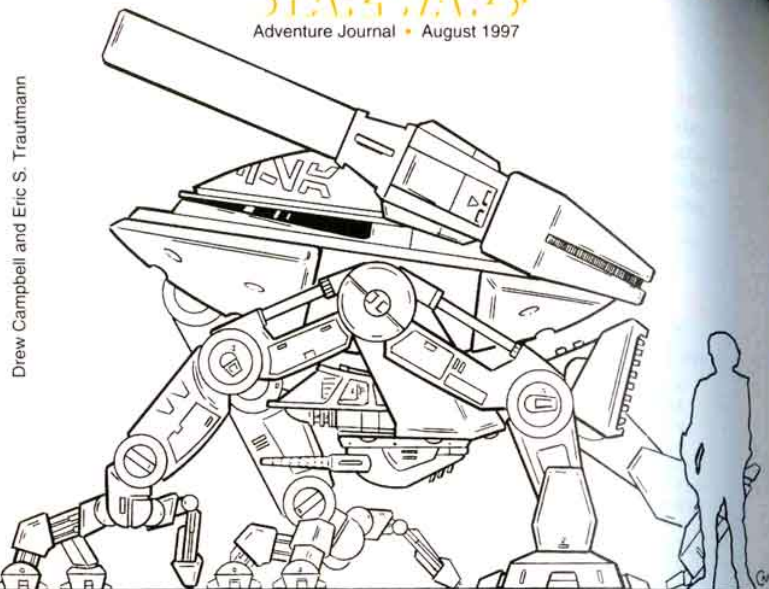
Despite the Empire's rejection, the Class I defense droid is extremely reliable and has served the security needs of the Corporate Sector Authority with distinction.

Availability: 2, R

Personality Matrix: None

Vox/35:4:6:21/Hun I've heard that the Espos just unleashed a flood of these things against the Trianii.

Ransom/35:4:2:09/Sel The Corporate Sector Authority has been



taking some really heavy shots at the Trianii lately; I've heard that the Class I was deployed against one of the few remaining Trianii ports and leveled it.

Delgad/35:4:5:11/Tra• And Imperial HoloVision actually failed to mention the skirmish? Surprise, surprise...

Platt/35:4:9:01/Byb• I plan on running some relief supplies out there; anything that makes life more difficult for the Espos is fine with me.

Garnet/35:5:2:11• There's no doubt that the Trianii can use the food and meds you're shipping, Platt. But they *want* weaponry. I'm planning a little raid on an Espo ordnance depot. Anybody interested can contact me at Whistler's Whirlpool on Trogan. I need some ships to fly high cover and somebody handy with droid slicing to handle interior security. It is a high risk run, but the high profit margin makes it look like a good idea. (Besides, it'll be fun to kick some Espos around.)

■ G-2RD Guard Droid

Model: Arakyd G-2RD Guard Droid
DEXTERITY 3D

Blasters: 5D, dodge 4D, melee combat 4D+1, running 4D
KNOWLEDGE 2D
Bureaucracy 3D, intimidation 4D, intimidation: interrogation 5D, languages 3D, law enforcement 3D+2

MECHANICAL 2D

Repulsorlift operation 4D, sensors 5D

PERCEPTION 4D

Command 5D, investigation 5D, search 7D

STRENGTH 4D+1

TECHNICAL 2D

First aid 3D, security 5D

Equipped With:

- Repulsorlift engine
- Visual/sound sensor package
- Vocabulary speech/sound system
- Broad-band antenna receiver
- Stun appendage (stun damage 6D)
- Blaster appendage (damage 5D, ranges 3–7/25/50)
- Grasping claw (+1D to *lifting*)

Move: 10

Size: 1.2 meters

Cost: 6,000 credits

Capsule: Security departments and law enforcement agencies use guard droids to augment automated defense systems and help organic personnel; guard droids often serve as sentries, protectors, and even prison wardens.

These droids have modestly sophisticated personality modules, typically given to demanding—even abusive—behavior, though the operational record of such units is quite good.

Availability: 2, R

Personality Matrix: Advanced

Kraemr/36:2:1:02/Gel• These things are extremely nasty. My last partner got vaped by a G-2RD when we were breaking through an impound lock to get back to our ship. The droid just swooped in and blasted him down where he stood. I did three months in the local lockup before I managed to bust out. I do miss that ship, though...

Fuller/36:5:1:52/Par• I heard once that some fool smuggler actually wired a blaster power cell to a restraining bolt and managed to short out the safeguards on a G-2RD's programming. Personally, I think that smuggler was lucky not to blow his own arm off...

■ Guardian Droid

Model: Cybot Galactica *Guardian*-class Droid

DEXTERITY 2D

Blasters 4D, brawling parry 2D+1, dodge 3D+2, melee combat 4D, melee parry 4D, running 4D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

Alien species 2D, intimidation 4D

MECHANICAL 3D

Communication 2D, sensors 4D

PERCEPTION 2D

Search 3D

STRENGTH 3D

Brawling 4D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Four legs
- Hinged, grasping jaw with retractable blade incisors (*Strength* +2 damage)
- Two visual and auditory sensor recorders (human range)
- Retractable blaster (3D damage, ranges 0–3/10/20)

Special Abilities:

Loyalty Imprint: Absolute obedience to master and designated family members. Will react in potential threat situation to defend would-be attackers unless directly countermanded by designated family member.

Move: 13

Size: 1.5 meters tall

Cost: 4,000 credits (new), 2,000 credits (used)

Capsule: The Cybot Galactica *Guardian*-class droid—made extremely popular by a series of childrens' holotexts—is a favorite of parents who require a protector/companion for children. The *Guardian* (roughly canine in appearance) is extremely loyal, obedient, and fairly inexpensive, features which have helped bolster the unit's popularity.

Availability: 2, F

Personality Matrix:

Elementary

Zeb/35:6:2:09/Ryl• The

Guardian—originally designed as a glorified child-watcher—actually makes a good scouting assistant. I added some sensors, tracking SkillWare and an automap to mine and it has performed extremely well.

Morsai/35:7:1:01/Min• A fellow smuggler of my acquaintance actually modified a *Guardian* (that he no doubt stole) into a guard for his freighter when he's dirtside. He modified the personality matrix to make it extremely aggressive, amped up the resident combat SkillWare and added metal claws and fangs. The blasted thing actually *grows* now...



■ IT-O Interrogator Droid

Model: Imperial IT-O Interrogator Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

Dodge 3D, melee combat 3D, melee combat: interrogation tools 4D+1

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Allen species 4D, humanoid biology 5D, intimidation 6D, intimidation: interrogation 7D

MECHANICAL 2D

Sensors 3D

PERCEPTION 4D

Investigation 5D, search 5D

STRENGTH 3D

TECHNICAL 2D

First aid 5D, (A) medicine 5D, security 4D

Equipped With:

- Repulsorlift engine
- Visual/sound sensor package
- Vocabulator speech/sound system
- Laser scalpel (2D damage)
- Hypodermic injectors (4D stun damage)
- Power shears (5D damage)
- Grasping claw (+1D to *lifting*)

Move: 3

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 4,000 credits (new)

Capsule: Interrogation droids are designed to extract information from living beings by whatever means possible. The IT-O interrogator droid in particular combines sophisticated medical science and the cold, calculating nature of its Imperial masters, making it one of the most brutal and effective torture devices ever developed.

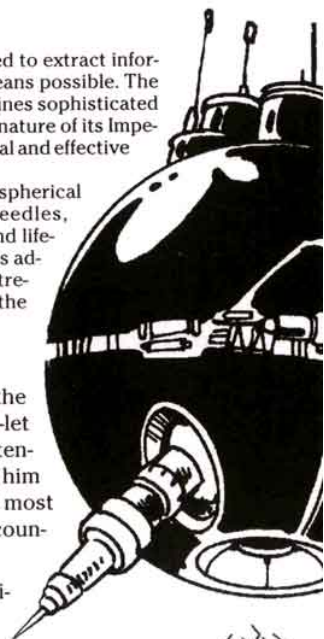
IT-O interrogator droids are glossy, spherical constructs, covered with probes, needles, medisensors and other pain-producing and life-support equipment. Because of the droid's advanced medical knowledge, it can cause tremendous damage to a victim and still keep the subject alive for further interrogation.

Availability: 1, X

Personality Matrix: Advanced

Kellimin/32:3:1:06/Dan• The fact that the Emperor allows these things to *exist*—let alone allows his troops to use them extensively—is reason enough to want to see him dethroned. Interrogation droids are the most impersonally evil things I've ever encountered.

Javin/33:1:6:05/Cst• There is no definitive evidence that the Empire uses the



IT-O interrogation units, Alliance propaganda notwithstanding. While there have been cases where individual officers have used IT-Os (and have been severely disciplined for it in most cases), the Imperial military does not have an established policy concerning interrogation droid use.

"KesselRunner"/33:2:7:02/Kes• Tell that to those of us who have been interrogated by those blasted things. The Imperial officer who "interviewed" me before I was shipped out to Kessel used an IT-O on me while his superiors watched. Don't tell me the Empire doesn't condone the use of interrogation droids, you naive little asteroid grub!

■ LIN Mining Droid

Model: Cybot Galactica LIN Demolitionmech Mining Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

Blaster artillery 4D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 3D

STRENGTH 6D

TECHNICAL 3D

Demolitions 6D+1

Equipped With:

- Video sensor
- Dual-tread locomotion
- Fine manipulator arm under dome (for planting explosives)
- Cybot acoustic signaler (can only speak droid languages).
- Armored housing (+2D to *Strength*)
- Minelayer mount (ammo magazine, storing up to 60 mines of varying types; military models only)

Move: 3

Size: 0.7 meters

Cost: 12,000 credits (Black Market), 6,000 credits (military issue)

Capsule: Due to the dangerous nature of extracting some of the Empire's more precious resources, Cybot Galactica developed the LIN series demolitionmech mining droid to handle the placement of the highly sensitive charges often required for deep excavation. The droid moves slowly about, strategically planting explosives so that they will make available any ore the mining teams have detected. The LIN is easily modified for military use, either planting, or removing mines from a battlefield.

Availability: 2, R

Personality Matrix: None

Weptec/35:3:8:91/Der• It actually surprises me that the Empire classifies the LIN as a fourth degree droid. Sure, it has military applications (particularly as a minelayer), but the programming is far from combat-grade.

Gunman/35:4:6:14/Els• Interesting point. However, the programming module on the LIN isn't terribly difficult to slice. Add a few hardpoints for distance weapons (concussion missiles, grenade launchers, flame projectors, and so on) and the LIN can be a formidable opponent. Such droids are best suited for night engagements, since they have extremely sensitive sensor apparatus.

■ W2 SPD Patrol Droid

Model: Industrial Automaton Hound-W2 SPD (Scanning Patrol Detail) Droid

DEXTERITY 2D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 5D

Search 6D, search: transmitting devices 8D+2

STRENGTH 1D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Fabritech communication/sensory array
- Four retractable extensor arms, capable of extending up to 15 meters
- Retractable fine work grasper arm
- Extendible video sensors
- Four sensor modules (one per arm), including thermal imaging (+1D to *search*), audio receptors, laser scan and pulse scan emitters
- Probability projection computer, for assistance in detail search procedures

Move: 7

Size: 0.4 meters tall

Cost: 3,500 credits

Capsule: IA's SPD-series droids are small, boxlike machines that roll on treads. W2 SPD droids are equipped with several sensor appendages that are used in locating and identifying potential breaches in security.

One limitation to SPD units is their method of communication: these droids communicate in the same high-pitched beeps and chirps common to astromech droids. While such communication can contain a great deal of information, organic security officers require a scomp-linked translation system to decipher the droid-speech.

Availability: 2, R

Personality Matrix: Elementary

Croy/36:5:2:43/Nar• The W2 SPD is the bane of "fringe types" on virtually every civilized world in the Empire. Despite their limitations, these droids are extremely good at locating covert transmissions, hidden weapons and the like.

Gyntal/36:8:2:02/Hel• I've heard that a Rodian crimeboss in the Outer Rim has a number of SPDs that he uses to search his fortress constantly. According to the rumor mill, the Rodian has a huge stockpile of spice and he has been augmenting his organic security force with automata. I'd hate to mess with him, no matter how much money is involved.

Tychin/36:9:21/Nai Interesting. I wonder if it would be possible to slice into the SPD's communications system? Since these droids have to scomp-link into a comm system to "talk," it should be relatively easy to plant a false "all clear" into them. They'll think they are reporting in as normal, but their comm system will translate their message into something a little more conducive to outside larceny.

Fifth Degree Droids

■ 850.AA Maintenance Droid

Model: Publictechnic 850.AA Public Maintenance Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

Command 4D

STRENGTH 7D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Repulsorlift system (flight ceiling of 20 meters)
- Publictechnic power cell system
- Beamcleaners
- Coarse cleaning brushes
- Sensorlink network system
- Equipment bay
- Various repair droids

Move: 30

Size: 13 meters tall

Cost: 75,000 credits

Capsule: The 850.AA droid from Publictechnic is an immense unit capable of handling almost all of an urban region's maintenance duties. The droid has an internal bay for housing various models of smaller maintenance units, which the 850.AA controls by regulating the droid's scheduled maintenance and work-load.

Availability: 2

Personality Matrix: None

Cormun/36:2:8:11/Cor I've heard that these things have been banned on Kothlis. Apparently, during a clan squabble, one Bothan faction reprogrammed an 850.AA to move past the home of a rival group. As the droid passed, it opened up and disgorged dozens of assassin droids; needless to say, local authorities were not thrilled with the firefight that broke out. Apparently, the whole conflagration was classified as a "minor geologic upheaval" in the newsnets.

Sel'lya/36:4:4:02/Kot That is not entirely true. (Believe me...I was there.) The 850.AA passed by and launched hundreds of repro-

grammed Arakyd Seekers, which slammed into the building's defenses and exploded. Anyone with any verifiable information concerning who actually launched the attack (there is only circumstantial evidence that other Bothans were involved) should arrange contact with me at Margath's on Elshandruu Pica. A substantial reward is offered for reliable intel.

■ CLL-8 Cargo Droid

Model: Cybot Galactica's CLL-8 Binary Cargo Load Lifter

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 6D

Lifting 8D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Two gyro-stabilized heavy lifting legs
- Two heavy cargo arms
- Armored systems housing

Move: 7

Size: 3 meters tall

Cost: 2,500 credits

Capsule: The CLL-8 is a standard binary cargo lifter found throughout the galaxy's starports. Its legs and arms are reinforced and filled with hydraulics that allow it to lift heavy cargo. The load lifter is a simple fifth degree droid, and it responds

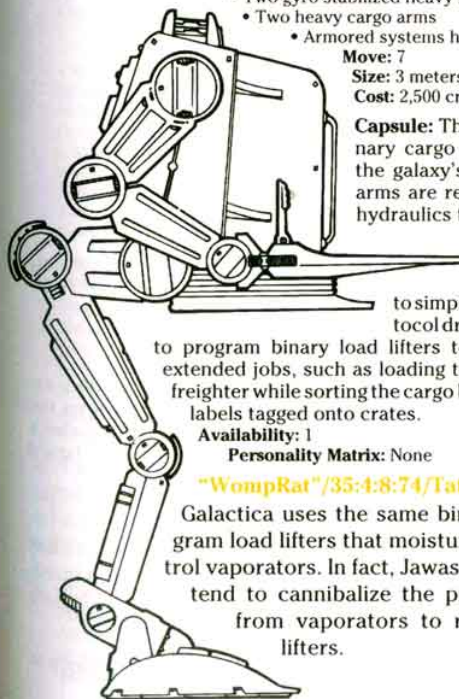
to simple verbal commands. Protocol droids are sometimes used

to program binary load lifters to do more complex or extended jobs, such as loading the entire cargo bay in a freighter while sorting the cargo by the data identification labels tagged onto crates.

Availability: 1

Personality Matrix: None

"WompRat"/35:4:8:74/Tat Apparently, Cybot Galactica uses the same binary language to program load lifters that moisture farmers use to control vaporators. In fact, Jawas and other local scavengers tend to cannibalize the programming modules from vaporators to repair damaged load lifters.



Commun/35:5:2:01/Mri• Thanks for the anecdote, farm boy. Personally, my favorite modification to the CLL-8 was some combat SkillWare, weaponry and additional armor. Comes in handy when the Customs gunslingers start prowling around the cargo hold.

Dharus/35:9:3:81/Els• You're kidding, right? If you equip it with weaponry powerful enough to stop armored combat troops, it could easily punch a blaster shot through the hull and you and the Imps can all make the Final Jump together. CLL-8s aren't terribly bright.

■ DC5-1 Freight Droid

Model: Serv-O-Droid DC5-1

DEXTERITY 2D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 4D

Lifting 10D

TECHNICAL 1D

Security 4D

Equipped With:

- Four extendible manipulators
- One pair of heavy treads
- One pair lifting claws
- Cranial turret with audio/video sensor
- Remote directional transponder
- Armored chassis (+1D physical and energy)
- Laser scanner

Special Abilities:

Cargo Code Database: A laser scanner identifies each cargo module's identity band (on the side of the module) and correlates it to where it should be off-loaded. The scanner can also re-code an identity band for new cargoes.

Move: 6

Size: 2.8 meters

Cost: 4,500 credits

Capsule: Serv-O-Droid's DC5-1 series labor units are yet another example of the standard cargo and lifting droids found throughout the galaxy. The added feature of being able to catalog cargoes and check manifests adds to the popularity of this droid on Imperial-aligned worlds.

Availability: 1

Personality Matrix: None

Bolton/37:7:0:21/Hal• The nice thing about the DC5-1 is that Customs officials tend to believe the droid's internal cargo manifests. With a little creative reprogramming, falsifying records isn't very hard.

Hugard/37:8:3:17/Ulb• Slicing into the droid's primary memory is

easy enough, but if the Customs official is smart enough, he might think to check the unit's backup memory. The DC5-1 has a hardwired memory backup that most amateurs forget to alter if they mess with the manifest programming. Anytime primary programming is altered, the droid automatically dumps a copy of the original system parameters into the memory backup.

■ L2 Unit

Model: Industrial Automaton L2 Base Labor Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 2D

Lifting 4D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Two heavy grasper arms (+1D to lifting)
- Retractable fine work heavy grasper arm
- Two tractor feet
- Two visual and two auditory sensor recorders
- Small circular saw (4D damage, 0.3 meters range)

Special Abilities:

Skill Duplication: Since L2 Labor droids record all visual and auditory instruction, they attempt to duplicate these instruction to the letter. An L2 can perform a *Mechanical* or *Technical* task at the same skill level of the instructor, providing all steps to complete the task have been explained in exacting detail to the droid.

Move: 5

Size: 1 meter tall

Cost: 1,200 credits

Capsule: L2 Base Labor Droids are Industrial Automaton's design, ideally suited to the units' role: cheap, reliable, menial workers. L2s can be programmed to complete tasks with up to 100 separate steps and they can repeat the task any number of times without further instruction. They are popular among owners who need a unit to function in a wide variety of industrial activities, but are also commonly used for maintenance, construction, and mechanical repair.

Availability: 2, F

Personality Matrix: Simple

Hardin/33:1:9:09/Clg• The L2 is a typical IA design: clean, uncluttered and very functional. What I particularly like about mine is that it has been modified so extensively that it barely resembles a stock L2. But the blasted thing just keeps running....

■ PackTrack 41L-R (MULE Droid)

Model: Mechanical Universal Labor Eliminating Droid, PackTrack 41L-R

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

MECHANICAL 3D

Repulsorlift operation 4D+1

PERCEPTION 3D

Search 3D+2

STRENGTH 6D

Lifting 7D

TECHNICAL 2D

Droid programming 4D, droid repair 5D

Equipped With:

- One heavy lifting claw
- One large storage bay (2 cubic meters) protected by +1D *Strength* armor
- One repulsorlift, maximum altitude one meter
- Four legs

Special Abilities: The MULE can carry up to 1 metric ton of cargo. Also, the MULE is capable of assisting in its own repairs. It cannot effect its own repairs, but may assist using the Combined Actions rules on pages 82 and 83 of *The Star Wars Roleplaying Game, Second Edition, Revised and Expanded*.

Move: 7 (legs), 4 (repulsorlift)

Size: 1.5 meters

Cost: 3,500 credits standard

Capsule: The Mechanical Universal Labor Eliminating Droid—MULE—was designed to assist corporate scouts while on a mission. The droid moves at a steady pace (albeit, a fairly slow one) and carries most of what the typical scout could need. When terrain becomes difficult or dangerous for the droid to maneuver through, a backup repulsorlift kicks in and assists the droid in crossing whatever barrier it has found.

Availability: 2

Personality Matrix: Simple

Rudd/35:7:1:99/Yag• The MULE isn't just a good idea for a scout to own; most smugglers and tramp freighter captains make trade runs to low-tech worlds and can use the help.

Toril/36:8:2:21/Gyo• True enough; when dealing with superstitious locals, unfamiliar terrain, and vicious local predators, it is nice to know that you don't have to lug around a pile of equipment, too.

■ RA Servant Droid

Model: Cybot Galactica RA-series Servant Droid

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 2D

Cultures 3D

MECHANICAL 1D

PERCEPTION 1D

STRENGTH 2D

TECHNICAL 2D

Equipped With:

- Two photoreceptors and auditory receptors (human range)
- Vocabulator (capable of speaking one programmed language)
- Humanoid frame (two arms, two legs)

Move: 5

Size: 1.7 meters tall

Cost: 1,500

Capsule: Cybot Galactica answered the galactic call for a more appealing servant droid with the RA-series. Based on the popular 3P0 protocol unit, this droid provides its owners with a low-end affordable servant droid capable of doing minor cleaning and attendance duties.

Availability: 1

Personality Matrix: Complex

Votomo/34:7:1:29/Gel• The RA-series is innocuous and inexpensive. Consequently, it is very easy to upgrade an RA into a combat or espionage unit.

Trebbie/35:5:2:02/Cel• I heard that the Tombat (a well-known thief) once reprogrammed an RA droid to give him the layout of a manor house. He was able to "case" the house without ever setting foot inside, simply by reprogramming the droid and adding a holocam and automap to the unit.

■ Robo-Hack

Model: Go Corp/Utilitech Metrocab Robo-Hack Landspeeder

DEXTERITY 1D

KNOWLEDGE 1D

Streetwise: local shortcuts 6D

MECHANICAL 1D

Repulsorlift operation: landspeeder 6D

PERCEPTION 1D

Con 5D

STRENGTH 3D

TECHNICAL 1D

Equipped With:

- Armor plating (+4D exterior and droid brain/credit compartment)
- Internal passenger compartment (seats 3)
- Heavy suspension repulsorlift motors
- Internal street map/database with uplink to local communication and transportation network
- Credit operation box
- Vocabulator panel

Special Skills:

The Robo-Hack is but an example of the many droid-operated vehicles that can be found throughout the galaxy. There are (less reliable) airspeeder hacks that have *repulsorlift operation: airspeeder 5D*, that are available for around 25,000 credits standard.

Scale: Speeder

Move: 105; 300 kmh

Size: 6 meters long

Cost: 15,000 credits (Landspeeder included), 25,000 credits (Airspeeder included)

Capsule: Throughout the galaxy, cities have long required public transportation. As an alternative to the expense of hiring organic drivers, many communities have turned to the various automated landspeeders made available from corporations like Go Corp and

Utilitech Metrocab. The "Robo-Hack" landspeeder was designed with an advanced knowledge database allowing it to be intimately familiar with all local citywide thoroughfares. With its constant uplink to systemwide communication and transportation networks, the Robo-Hack is able to modify its preset routes to avoid traffic, bad weather, or other events that would make travel dangerous, or inefficient.

Availability: 2, F

Personality Matrix: Simple

Holcolo/35:4:6:09/Den• A friend of mine working the Corporate Sector used to have a sweet scam: he'd reprogram a few "Robo-Hack" units to kidnap the local gentry. For example, a local exec would be transported to a waiting freighter; the transport droid becomes an instant abduction machine.

Toria/35:6:1:12/Lli• You've got to be kidding! Why did he stop?

Holcolo/35:6:1:21/Den• The local Espo droid-security division reprogrammed his own "abduction droid" into bringing him right to the local lock-up. It seemed my friend liked to use his reprogrammed Robo-Hack as his own personal conveyance.

Cynabar's

DROIDS

Datalog

This particular version of Cynabar's Droid Datalog was sheered by Drew Campbell and Eric S. Trautmann

NEWS • GALAXY WIDE • NETS

A selection of newsfeeds culled from NewsNets major and minor throughout the Empire, which may or may not prove to be factual.

TRINEBULON NEWS

38:4:7/TRI/16DE/SEC.4.HPC/MIL

Empire Called in to Stop Hreas Riots

LENTHALIS, HREAS PORT CITY: Martial law was imposed throughout Spirva sector this week in response to uncontrolled rioting and skirmishes with Imperial troops and starport security on Lenthalis. Moff Shinda made the announcement hours after Hreas Port City was consumed by a gang war between rival underworld factions.

Several masses of rioters converged on Hreas Port City's Commerce Concourse. Each faction's forces consisted of swoop gangs, local youth mobs and the enforcement arms of several local crime lords. All were armed with a variety

of modified combat equipment. Many items were from Galladinium's Datalog, which had been banned by Moff Shinda four months ago. Among the most noticeable equipment in the skirmish were five suits of AV-1A assault armor and a squadron of gladiator walkers with the light laser cannon and shielding replaced with dual medium repeating blasters. Other participants used a variety of sidearms and explosives to wreak havoc on the Commerce Course.

Although rioters did not attack the Imperial garrison outside Hreas Port City, smaller installations throughout the area were overrun by zealous gang members desperate for weapons and other supplies to aid their escalating conflicts. Imperial biker troops and airspeeders called in to quell the commotion were snared by repulsorlift grappling gun lines and automated picket blasters set just for such a purpose. By the time Imperial AT-ST walkers and heavier support craft moved in, the rioters had dispersed, taking their heavy combat gear with them.

Violent criminal activity has increased throughout Spirva sector despite a ban on importing goods from Galladinium Galactic Exports. Many items in the Galladinium Datalog could easily be modified for combat applications. Moff Shinda blames the recent rioting on an influx of contraband slipped through sector security. "Smugglers make huge profits running these banned items through customs," the Moff said. "What they don't realize is their profitable activities have spawned violent disorder throughout my sector." Shinda warned smugglers against interfering with sector security. "We will no longer tolerate elements of the Fringe disrupting the lives of loyal Imperial citizens in Spirva sector. Rest assured our forces are even now closing the net on those who prosper from the misfortunes of others."

Moff Shinda has returned from his sheltered country estate to personally oversee operations from the Imperial garrison on Lenthalis. He has ordered authorities throughout the sector to crack down on smugglers, and to show no mercy for anyone causing trouble in major population centers. Reports indicate that elements of the sector fleet are returning from various patrols and sorties against suspected Rebel strongholds to blockade Lenthalis. Analysts suspect the rest of the fleet will be deployed to Spirva sector's most vital systems to enforce order and put an end to the gun-running. Local garrison forces have been sent into cities to maintain order, and many expect naval-based Imperial Army units to arrive soon and aid garrison troops.

Moff Shinda has not yet asked for assistance from outside the sector. "At this time there is no need for additional Imperial intervention," the Moff asserted. "Although this initial uprising took us somewhat by surprise, we are now fully prepared to confront any other such disturbances should they arise." Shinda did not speculate when martial law would be lifted.

Nal Hutta Kal'tamok

Basic Edition

38:4:15/HUT/NAR.4.SHD/TRD

No Reports on Imperial Death Squadron

NAR SHADDAA NODE: Despite efforts by free-traders and *Kal'tamok* reporters throughout the Outer Rim Territories, no traces of the Imperial Death Squadron have been

found lately. The fleet's last reported engagement was the unprovoked attack on the Syvris shadowport (see the *Nal Hutta Kal'tamok* report 38:3:31 for more details on that assault). Although the Death Squadron's leaders, Admiral Ozzel and the feared Lord Darth Vader, are charged with rooting out and annihilating Rebel military forces, they have recently detained independent spacers and attacked smuggler bases.

With Ozzel at the helm and Vader leading the hunt, such an unexpected disappearance can only bode ill for the spacer community, especially in light of the sudden and merciless Syvris shadowport assault. The *Nal Hutta Kal'tamok* would like to reaffirm its advisory to smugglers and free-traders in the remote areas of the Outer Rim Territories. Until the Death Squadron's true motives are revealed, anyone traveling the hyperlanes seems subject to Imperial suspicion.

CORE NEWS DIGEST

38:4:21/CND/CN5BR/BRT.4.CMD/BIS

Brentaal Breaks Trade Records

BRENTAAL, CORMOND: The Brentaal League of Guilds declared a Landmark Holiday to celebrate a record week of commodities trading. More stocks and credits changed hands on the Brentaal market than ever before during a five-day period.

Corporations based in the Core Worlds benefitted from the brisk trading, posting record-breaking profits and divi-

dend increases. Among the most successful were HavaKing, Santhe/Sienar Technologies, MerenData, Imperial Mining Corp., and the Tagge Company. Brentaal locals who cashed in on the furious market activity include House Brentioch, the Dajaa Family and Hall Jo'uda. Warehouses and stockyards were cleared out in anticipation of new goods flowing in from every end of the galaxy. Imperial Governor Jerrod Maclain also scored big in the markets, moving some of his slower stocks and acquiring more lucrative interests with valuable potential.

The week-long Landmark Holiday celebration will be marked with parades and parties as Brentaal's noble trading houses commemorate their good fortune. The Brentaal Hall Conservatory plans to present an encore performance of highlights from the Kallea Cycle operatic epic before it embarks on its Core Worlds and Colonies tour next month. Most noble guilds and even the Imperial governor will be throwing lavish receptions. Commerce officers will take this opportunity to make deals among the guilds and prepare strategies for the coming months. New noble house alliances are expected to emerge to accommodate what Brentaal analysts believe to be an unprecedented era of prosperity for the planet and its innumerable commercial interests.

Although the Brentaal commodities exchanges will be closed during the holiday, several expediting houses will continue to make sure market goods flow through the busy commerce world.

Cynabar's InToNet

38:4:31/CYN/COR.1.IPC/GEN

Smuggler Activity Update

CORUSCANT NODE: We've been trying to keep track of all our usual smuggler friends, but with everything they've been up to, it hasn't been easy. This hasn't been a great year so far for those in the "independent transport" business, especially with Vader's Death Squadron lurking in the darker corners of the Outer Rim, but these enterprising smugglers still seem to make ends meet.

Tru'eb's been making a fortune running guns into Spirva sector, though with martial law imposed, the savvy Twi'lek will probably pocket his credits and find less dangerous markets to exploit. Tru'eb wasn't the only one to take advantage of lucrative markets making the "Spirva Run," as it's been dubbed. Bettle and Jaxa seemed to have worked things out long enough to cash in on the Spirva riots. To'iir and Liadden hauled a few loads of gladiator walkers until they got caught. They're probably headed for Rithgar's little shadowport near Kothlis for much-needed repairs on the *Seventy-Seven Stars*.

The Mon Calamari smuggler Basz Maliyu has blown the Outer Rim for the Colonies. Some suspect he's responsible for betraying the shadowport on Syvris the Empire assaulted last month. Others (mostly his friends) say he had nothing to do with the attack—it was sheer luck that Basz got out in time. Nobody's quite sure who he's working for in the Colonies.

Solo has all but disappeared from the scene. Short of a

small incident involving some bounty hunters on Ord Mantell, nobody's seen Solo or his Wookiee sidekick, Chewbacca. We're wondering if he's still hanging around that fireball Alderaanian princess and some wide-eyed idealistic kid. Han's old buddy Calrissian hasn't made the headlines since his involvement in the Battle of Taanab nearly two years ago. The scoundrel's probably setting up some elaborate scam to swindle some poor idiot.

We ran into Platt rather unexpectedly at the premiere of the *Kallea Cycle* on Brentaal. It's amazing how many underworld notables managed to sneak in past security to enjoy the opera and the festivities surrounding the performance. We hear the Tombat even made his presence known. Platt wore a stunning gown, had her hair dyed to avoid the authorities, and had two very handsome escorts with her. As usual, Platt would neither confirm nor deny the rumor that she's a direct descendent of the Kallea who forged the Hydian Way.

Bryce-Kelley and Rypka made their annual sojourn to Ryloth. Problems with slavers, Twi'lek political intrigue and a few bad bargains for ryll aside, they had a pretty normal visit. They're still trying to make ends meet while running the unofficial smuggler's benevolence society. Wish them luck, because you know they'll need it.



Imperial Defense Daily

38:5:6/IDD/L23BS/BYB.2.CT133/MIL

Arakyd Probots Enter Wider Service

BYBLOS, CORPORATE TOWER 133; Arakyd Corp. repre-

sentative Allion Vlenda unveiled a plan for the company's Viper probe droid series to be modified for additional military, corporate and civilian roles. "The Viper program has been extremely successful in Imperial naval operations," Vlenda said. "With the Empire's endorsement, Arakyd's Research and Development teams have pursued new probot designs for various applications."

"Arakyd's probots have performed admirably in the Navy," noted Admiral Baavil, commander of Imperial forces on Byblos, where the company has one of its major corporate facilities. "We anticipate the probot can master other duties currently performed by humans and obsolete droids." The Admiral would not point to any one incident in Imperial service which characterized the probe droids' success, but called the probots "the most versatile and effi-



cient droids currently serving the Empire."

Analysts speculate that the Imperial Navy has used Arakyd's Viper probots to scout out new or seemingly uninhabited worlds used by smugglers, fugitives and Rebels. The probe droids use a hyperspace pod to travel vast distances, increasing the range which a single Star Destroyer can thoroughly search. Admiral Baavil said more droids were needed to fill other roles within the Imperial military infrastructure. "Arakyd's Vipers are perfect for patrol duties near garrisons, temporary bases and prison facilities," he said. "They can help monitor starship traffic in busy fleet formations and perform valuable search-and-rescue missions."

Vlenda outlined the program to produce streamlined versions of the military probe droid model for commercial use. "We can replace much of the military-grade armament and programming with the commercial-grade equivalent," he said. "Probe droids have many valuable applications supplementing starport security and traffic control. They can analyze cargo, pursue criminal fugitives, and locate crashed spacecraft. We also plan to exploit the probot's value as a security droid." These streamlined versions of the Arakyd Viper—tentatively called the C-Viper series—would be more affordable for public operation.

Arakyd has already established a civilian sales division at its corporate facility on Byblos. This section will be responsible for finding new C-Viper markets and customers. Once operational prototypes are completed, sales associates will spread throughout the Colonies and other regions of the galaxy, demonstrating the C-Viper's capabilities.

In anticipation of massive production requirements, Arakyd has purchased a site on Kelada where plans are

already underway to construct a new assembly factory. The plant will specialize in manufacturing C-Viper components and the droids themselves. "The factory on Kelada is a sign that Arakyd's success benefits the general public," Vlenda said. "Its construction and operation will provide much-needed jobs for the people of the Anarid Cluster."

CORE NEWS DIGEST

38:5:11/CND/CN5BR/BRT.4.CMD/POL

Governor Maclain Under Investigation

BRENTAAL, CORMOND: After his tremendous personal gains in last month's record economic trading, Brentaal's Governor Jerrod Maclain has come under the scrutiny of several Grand Moff's. Two of the Governor's aides and numerous, high-level bureaucrats from nearby systems have accused Maclain of behavior unsuitable for an Imperial diplomat.

The Governor is suspected of underhanded dealings in the Brentaal commerce exchange. The accusations surfaced after five commerce officers from the Dajjal Family were arrested last week for breach of market confidentiality. They claim they passed important speculative data about the Brentaal exchange to the Governor in return for political favors and monetary incentives. Although no solid proof has been uncovered, Imperial officials are wasting no time looking into the allegations.

Upon hearing news of this scandal, Emperor Palpatine himself assigned Grand Moff Rufaan Tigellinus to head the investigation. Imperial Court observers were stunned to hear such a prominent player in court politics—and a member of the exclusive Order of the Canted Circle—had been relegated to the duties of a criminal investigator. "The Emperor's choice in this matter is final," announced Imperial Advisor and newsnet liaison Alec Pradeux. "In choosing Tigellinus to lead the inquest, the Emperor acknowledges the severity of this matter. Such impropriety in an Imperial official, if the accusations are true, deserves the most intense examination."

Some analysts speculate that Maclain's good economic fortune was part of an elaborate scheme to divert credits to pay off criminal elements. Rumors abound that the Governor has already used some of his new-found wealth to help agents of the Rebel Alliance operating within the Core Worlds.

"Governor Maclain has served the Empire loyally," Tigellinus said. "I am aware of several individuals who have been scheming to usurp Maclain's position. Whether or not there was any crime on the Governor's part and any role his rivals had in this affair remains to be seen. We will carry out a thorough investigation to discover if there was any wrongdoing and what the requisite punishment should be."

Grand Moff Tigellinus will be travelling immediately to Brentaal as soon as his staff is assembled. He also plans to interview several Imperial bureaucrats in Bormea and Darpa sectors. Tigellinus would make no announcement regarding how long his investigation would take.

Cynabar's InfoNet

38:5:20/CYN/COR.1.IPC/GEN

Calrissian Resurfaces as Baron-Administrator

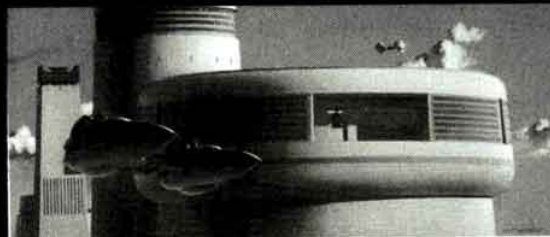
CORUSCANT NODE: Just when you thought he had disappeared from the Fringe, Lando Calrissian shows up where you'd least expect him. Cynabar sources confirm that Calrissian has somehow conned his way into the position of Baron-Administrator of Bespin's Cloud City.

Calrissian's last big show came at the Battle of Taanab nearly two years ago. Nobody really followed his activities since then. Rumors abound of minor scams and illicit operations here and there, but nothing so successful as to gain the gambler any notoriety beyond his already slick reputation.

The story surrounding Calrissian's appointment is still obscured by rumor. Apparently the Cloud City Exec and Parliament had been having trouble with Calrissian's predecessor, Baron Raynor. Since its construction, the Tibanna gas mining facility has had a succession of Administrators ranging from the businesslike to the criminal. Raynor was gifted with great corporate skills, but was also afflicted with vices which included greed and gambling. Rather than resorting to tedious political means or less savory methods, the Exec and Parliament supposedly set Baron Raynor up. Calrissian had been in Cloud City for several months, first touring the various casinos, then becoming a house gambler at one of the flashier establishments. Through the machinations of various political forces within Cloud City,



Lando challenged Baron Raynor to an all-or-nothing game of sabacc. Raynor wagered Cloud City, though it is unclear what kind of backing Calrissian had. Although the details on the game are still shrouded in mystery, Lando came out as the winner...and Cloud City's new Baron-Administrator.



Speculation continues to run rampant regarding the legitimate transfer of power. By right, the Baron-Administrator should be appointed by his predecessor, or by a joint vote of the Cloud City Exec and Parliament. Though those governing bodies did not give the entire gambling affair their official approval, they did nothing to stop it. Soon after the sabacc game, both groups gave Calrissian a confirmation vote indicating their satisfaction with the new Baron-Administrator. Some of those involved also indicated that the city's mysterious cyborged computer liaison officer had some influence in this twisted plot.

We weren't able to confirm exactly how long Calrissian has held the Baron-Administrator title, though he's been there long enough to turn Cloud City into a somewhat respectable, efficient enterprise again. If he can keep the local guilds from his throat, maintain the vast Tibanna gas mining machinery and avoid the notice of the Mining



Guilds, Calrissian just might make this gamble pay off.

HUMAN EVENTS *Network*

38:5:25/HEN/43VB/BRT.4.VOT/ENT

Kallea Cycle Tours Core Worlds, Colonies

BRENTAAL, VOTRAD: The company which performed the Kallea Cycle to massive audiences on Brentaal three months ago is taking the show on tour. The troupe will perform a special program featuring highlights from the marathon three-part operatic epic during week-long runs on Esseles, Corellia, Corulag, Kuat, Byblos and several other worlds throughout the Core and Colonies. The entire opera will be sung over three evenings on Coruscant, a performance which will no doubt be attended by the Emperor and the Imperial Court. The classic opera depicts the life of Freia Kallea, the legendary Brentaal explorer who single-handedly charted the Hydian Way hyperlane 3,000 years ago.

The Kallea troupe includes members of the prestigious Brentaal Hall Conservatory: the Conservatory Epic Orchestra and the Brentaal Illustrious Choir. The group has chartered the Sullustan cruise liner *Starlite Cloud* for transportation during the tour. Members of the cast, chorus and orchestra will be entertaining high-level dignitaries from throughout the Core Worlds and Colonies while they travel from system to system.

Kallea will be portrayed by Neile Janna, whose popular holo, *Kallea's Hope*, helped translate the opera into a popular format. Famed Chandrilan singer Gelod Vothran will reprise his role as Sival Brentioch, the prominent Hall Brentioch seneschal who financed Kallea's explorations and would eventually marry her. Mistress of the Hall Vessa Brentioch, who portrayed Kallea in the Brentaal performances, will not be accompanying the tour, as she is already committed to several business engagements with various noble trade houses on her homeworld.

The Kallea Tour is sponsored by Brentaal's Council of Human High Culture and two of that world's most prominent commerce houses, House Brentioch and Hall Jo'uda.

Herglic Trading Journal Basic Edition

38:6:2/HER/ICH3/COR.1.IPC/ECO

Shipping Corporations Post Rising Profits

CORUSCANT, IMPERIAL CITY: Two of the galaxy's largest mass transport companies reported rising activity and increased profits. Ororo Transportation and Xizor Transport Systems both announced breakthroughs in earnings for the first half of the year. Economic analysts suspect the bolstered activity might be a direct result of the recent record-breaking upsurge in the Brentaal commodities exchange. Both corporations reported unprecedented num-

bers of new shipping contracts, with increased movement of bulk goods.

XTS newsnet liaison Egalla Rennta said her company was optimistic about the new economic life the increase has brought. "XTS has always maintained a solid foundation," she said. "Now we can continue to grow into new markets and greater diversification." Rennta indicated the extra capital will be used to construct a new fleet of container ships to expand service throughout the Outer Rim Territories. Investments will also improve current shipping routes and schedules along the company's established hyperlanes.

Oro-ro Transportation division head Adion Var'alich credited his corporation's success to its increased security measures on all its vessels. "Oro-ro has invested in protecting our shipments against smugglers, pirates and other criminal elements," Var'alich stated in an announcement from Oro-ro's corporate complex on Eredin. "We will continue to improve our current level of security and service to all our customers throughout the galaxy."

Analysts compute that Oro-ro's earnings were somewhat higher than XTS's, though the two transport corporations have been vying neck-in-neck for supremacy over the mass transport industry. The two corporations are known to be long-time rivals, though their adversarial relationship has rarely flared in overt violence. "Our friendly opposition is to be expected," XTS's Rennta said, "Especially in the commercially competitive society in which we co-exist." "The competition between our two companies can only foster better service and pricing for our customers," Oro-ro's Var'alich noted.



IMPERIAL HOLOVISION

38:6:9/IHV/157N/COR.1.IPC/MIL

Fleet Smashes Rebels on Hoth

CORUSCANT, IMPERIAL CITY: In a stunning announcement, Imperial Advisor Alec Pradeux released information about a massive victory against a Rebel Alliance stronghold in the Outer Rim Territories. "After several months of meticulous searching, Lord Vader's Death Squadron discovered and annihilated a key Rebel fortress on an ice planet called Hoth," Pradeux said. "This is indeed a great triumph for the Emperor in restoring order to a galaxy ravaged by the terrorist Rebellion."

Pradeux outlined the major points of the battle. After discovering the base, the Death Squadron jumped to Hoth. As soon as the fleet emerged from hyperspace, the Rebels raised a protective shield around their citadel, preventing the squadron's Star Destroyers—including the Super Star Destroyer *Executor*—from bombarding the planet with turbolaser fire and TIE bomber concussion missiles.

A detachment of AT-ATs and Imperial snowtroopers was deployed to Hoth's surface to enter the Rebel-held territory beneath the edges of the planetary shield. General Veers led the desperate AT-AT charge directly at the main Alliance stronghold. Veers had been serving in the Imperial garrison on Corellia before transfer to the Lord Vader's flagship as commander of ground forces. His determina-

tion and tactical skills helped deal a crushing blow against enemy forces. Veers's AT-AT units managed to withstand continued assaults from well-armed Rebel airspeeders, powerful gunnery installations and columns of elite Alliance troops. After destroying the shield generator, Veers led his snowtroopers through the Rebel fortress, eradicating any resistance and gathering vital intelligence about Alliance activities throughout the region.



Among the numerous Imperial casualties was Admiral Ozzel, commander of the Super Star Destroyer *Executor* and leader of the Death Squadron Fleet. Ozzel was killed when the Rebels punned the Admiral's vessel with salvos from a powerful energy weapon on Hoth's surface. The blasts disabled the *Executor* for only a few moments—long enough for several Rebel ships to slip past the Imperial blockade and jump to hyperspace. Imperial snowtroopers later penetrated and destroyed the weapon after a daring and costly assault against the massive gun emplacement.

Ozzel's remains will be returned to his homeworld of

Corulag, where ceremonies honoring the Admiral are planned at the Corulag Academy. Ozzel's first officer, Captain Piett, was awarded a field promotion to take the Admiral's place as military commander of the Death Squadron and captain of the *Executor*.

With the Hoth base destroyed, the Imperial Fleet is planning to deploy in pursuit of the numerous fleeing Rebel craft. Piett hopes to prevent these fugitive elements from finding shelter and establishing other secret Alliance posts throughout the Outer Rim.

Newsnet reporters were not allowed direct contact with the fleet. No communications with the Death Squadron are allowed except at the highest levels and through the most secure channels. Imperial HoloVision will continue to cover the Empire's successful campaign against the Rebel terrorists until peace and order are established once again.



This issue's Galaxywide NewsNets were reported by Peter Schweighofer.



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