

For Referees Only

EPIC Adventure 1
Stoner Express

TRAVELLER^{®20}
*Science-Fiction Adventure in
the Far Future*

EPIC Adventure 1
Stoner Express

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Traveller for the *d20 System*
Science Fiction Adventure in the Far Future

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About This Book

This book contains a fully detailed adventure for *Traveller*. It follows the general style of the original 'Little Black Books' or LBBs published as part of the Classic Traveller product line.

This book contains a minimum of general background data and sufficient specific background to allow it to be used without reference to any other setting or adventure book. The adventure is presented in the standard 'EPIC' format developed by Marc Miller, creator of the *Traveller* game. It can be played straight out of the book or adapted to fit into an ongoing campaign.

It is possible to think of this adventure as being similar to the key episodes in a season of a TV series. Unrelated episodes can be slipped in between the key ones, but eventually the story will reach the series finale. Of course, there may well be another series, and so other adventures may follow this one.

Stoner Express is set in the Gateway Domain setting described by in the QLI in the Gateway To Destiny sourcebook. Possession of this sourcebook will be useful but is not necessary for enjoyment of this adventure. Indeed, the adventure could be set in almost any game universe with just a little tweaking.

This adventure ties in with other QLI products set in Gateway Domain. The Grand Adventure *Homecoming* is set just to Coreward in Ley sector. The Starfall Cluster is only a subsector away from the Grand Duchy of Stoner. The events of the *Traveller* Epic *Across the Glimmer Drift* are played out just a subsector to Rimward. None of these products is necessary to run this adventure, but Referees may wish to be aware of which other supplements and adventures deal with the region.

THE COLOR CODE

The *Traveller* Epics adventure series includes material set in the various major eras and settings of the Official *Traveller* Universe. While any of them can be tweaked to fit another region, era or even a totally different setting, each Epic sits best in its 'home' setting. To allow the home setting of any given book to be quickly determined, a color code is used for the cover-edge and central stripes. Books are coded as follows:

- 993-1000 period: Blue
- 1107-1116 period: Red
- New Era (1248) period: Orange
- Generic or one-off: Green

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Please note that this is not a standalone game. It requires that you have access to a set of Traveller rules. The adventure was created for use with the T20 rules system from QLI and the original Classic Traveller rules, but can easily be converted to other versions of the game or even other rules systems.

Assuming you intend to run this adventure with the T20 rules, you will require at least the T20 Lite rules from QLI. We recommend the following:

- The Traveller's Handbook (T20 Core Rulebook) plus either the T20 Player's Book or a d20 system core rulebook such as the *Dungeons & Dragons™ 3rd Edition Player's Handbook*.
- One or more of each of the following types of dice: four-sided (d4), six-sided (d6), eight-sided (d8), ten-sided (d10), twelve-sided (d12), and twenty-sided (d20).
- Pencil (or pen) and paper for keeping notes about your character and the adventure. Graph paper is also

recommended for making maps of places your character has visited.

- If you enjoy playing online, or are interested in playing *Traveller* online, you should also have a copy of *GRIP: Traveller*. *GRIP* (Generic Roleplaying for Internet Players) will allow a Referee and up to eight players to get together via the Internet or a local area network (LAN) and play *Traveller* (or any other RPG) no matter where they are located physically in the world. Visit <http://www.RPGRealms.com> for more information.

THE EPIC ADVENTURE SYSTEM

This adventure uses the EPIC adventure system created by Marc Miller. The EPIC system is a way around one of the most common problems with many RPG adventures; the fact that they are very 'linear' in design. In far too many adventures, encounter one typically leads to encounter two, which inevitably leads to encounter three, ad-nauseum. This has several problems. Firstly, the players may not notice a critical fact and thus be left in limbo with no clue how to find the next plot element. Railroading them is sometimes the only solution, and in general railroading is a common feature of this kind of linear adventure. This can lead to player frustration, since there is little worse than not being captain of your own fate.

Reducing the amount of leading-by-the-nose is fine until one of those gaming groups comes along, who insist on doing everything in the wrong order and generally do violence to the plot of an otherwise great adventure.

The Epic Adventure System provides a new way to design and organize adventures, incorporating enough flexibility that the player characters have the 'freedom to roam' without causing the referee nightmares. Asides, delays and additional adventures can easily be slotted into an Epic Adventure.

An Epic Adventure is broken down into 6 parts:

The Cast of Characters – A description of major characters encountered in the course of the adventure, possibly including pregenerated player-characters.

The Background – The background provides the Referee with the information needed to prepare himself, and lays the groundwork for introducing this adventure to the players.

Minor incidents and encounters – Referred to as Minor Scenes or just Scenes, are encounters or events that involve the player characters in some form. Many are directly related to the adventure, and may provide clues, equipment, or other information and materials needed to eventually complete the adventure. Others are merely to provide diversion and amusement. Scenes, unless noted in their descriptions, do not need to be played in any particular order, and may be sprung upon the player characters when the Referee deems appropriate.

Critical Plot Elements – Referred to as Plot Keys, Key Scenes or simply Keys, make up the heart of the storyline for the adventure. They contain vital pieces to the plot that must be played for the adventure to make any sense to the players in the end. You may play any number of Scenes before and after each Plot Keys, but all of the Plot Keys should eventually be completed in their proper order.

Chapters – A Chapter or Act is made up of one or more Plot Keys. They outline the plot to the Referee, and provide tips and information for playing the Scenes and Plot Keys that are contained in the Chapter. In order to complete a Chapter, each Plot Key within must be completed. Each Chapter must be completed, and played in order to successfully run the adventure. Due to the 'cinematic' nature of an EPIC adventure, it is easy for the Referee to allow the player characters to temporarily deviate from the current adventure

storyline to follow a false lead or pursue another short adventure that has interested them. When you are ready to return the player characters back to this adventure plot line, simply pick up with the next Scene.

Adventure Checklist – The Adventure Checklist provides the Referees with a recommended guideline of the order in which various Scenes and Plot Keys in this adventure should be presented to the players. As the player characters complete each Scene or Plot Key, the Referee simply checks it off the list. When every Plot Key in a Chapter has been played, that Chapter has been completed the Referee may begin the first Scene in the next Chapter.

REWARDS AND ADVANCEMENT

Before embarking upon a *Traveller* game or campaign, it is worth deciding what the pace of advancement will be for participating characters. For one-off games this is not important but if the same characters are going to have future adventures, advancement becomes a major issue.

If too little experience is given out, players may become frustrated. There is always a new skill or feat that a character could have done with having, or that the player really wants to have, and for many people working towards gaining such abilities is an important part of the game. If the distant mountains never seem to be any closer, what is the point of walking towards them?

On the other hand, characters who gain large amounts of experience and other rewards may become overpoweringly powerful. True, a shotgun in the back will be as detrimental to the health of a 20th level veteran as a beginner, but skill levels are critical to adventuring success; too much too fast is bad for a game even if it does not make the characters invincible. Thus the Referee should tailor the experience awards suggested by the T20 core rulebook to his or her own game style. In our experience it is better to keep characters a little bit hungry.

This brings up the question of whether to give out experience at the end of each Act or at the end of the adventure. Each Act can be treated as a separate adventure in terms of experience awards. Typically, each Act (or Chapter) is about equivalent to an Amber Zone or Signal GK adventure, leading to the conclusion that it should be worth around 2000XP X the Average party level. This is not a good parallel, since some Acts are quite short and besides, over a 5-Act adventure this adds up to a LOT of experience.

If experience is to be given out at the end of each Act, it is better to use the following system:

Base Experience for the adventure is calculated as per the THB – this is a full adventure so experience award is set as 4,000 XP multiplied by the average party level (at the beginning of the adventure). Half of this is saved up to be awarded at the end of the adventure. The other half is available to be assigned at the end of each Act. It is possible to simply assign 10% of the total to each Act (assuming 5 Acts), but the Referee should consider assigning greater or lesser percentages to certain Acts if he/she feels that the characters would learn more from the events in that Act than from another.

The experience available for any given Act is subject to the standard multipliers listed in the T20 core rulebook; some acts are just plain more dangerous than others! The 50% block of experience is also subject to multipliers for difficulty of the overall adventure.

Remember that all experience awards are totals, and are then shared among the participating characters. Only characters present in a given Act gain experience for it. When determining who gains experience from the adventure as a whole, the Referee

must use judgment. Obviously, characters who were there the whole time should gain the full amount. People who popped in for a single Act should not. If a player brought in a new character to replace one killed or otherwise indisposed, the Referee should count the character as being present for purposes of dividing up the experience but only award a portion of the total experience, based on how long the new character was involved. The rest of the experience entitlement was lost with the dead character.

Using this system, characters who were present for just one or two Acts of the adventure gain some experience, but do not share in the overall end-of-adventure award. Referees also are able to easily deal with the situation where a player brings along three friends to a session in the middle of the adventure, only one of whom comes back to play in the remaining Acts.

Example

Alice, Bob and Candy play 6th level characters through a 5-act adventure. Ignoring difficulty multipliers, this gives a base XP award of $4,000 \times 6 = 24,000$ points for the whole adventure. The Referee 'banks' 12,000 for award at the end, leaving 12,000 available to be divided up among the various Acts. She decides that Act 1 and 2 are worth 1,000 each, 3 and 4 (being much more complex) are worth 4,000 each and Act 5 is worth 2,000.

Alice's character manages to get killed during Act 2 and is replaced by a new one, who survives to the end of the adventure. She thus gains no experience for Act 1-2 (well, other than being a highly experienced corpse) but gains XP for Act 3,4 and 5.

Bob goes right through the adventure with no mishaps, but complicates matters by bringing his friend Dave along to Act 3. Dave misses Act 4 but manages to turn up for about half of Act 5.

Candy misses the very last session of Act 5 but plays throughout the rest of the adventure.

Experience is awarded as follows:

Act 1: Three characters participate. Experience is awarded: 1000 points divided by 3, or 334 points each.

Act 2: Three characters participate. Experience is awarded: 1000 points divided by 3, or 334 points each. Alice's character is dead, so this experience is buried with her.

Act 3: Four characters participate. Experience is awarded: 4,000 points divided by 4, or 1,000 points each.

Act 4: Three characters participate. Experience is awarded: 4000 points divided by 3, or 1,334 points each.

Act 5: Three characters participate in the majority of sessions in this Act. The Referee decides that Dave's relatively trivial contribution should not take experience away from the others and awards 2,000 experience divided by 3, or 1,667 points to each of the three main characters. She gives Dave a token award of a third of this – 555 experience points.

Final Award: The Referee decides that the adventure was carried by Alice, Bob and Candy, and that Dave's contribution was relatively minor. However, Act 3 was a big one and Dave not only made his character useful but also got involved in the roleplaying. She decides that the experience Dave got from the two Acts he was actually present for is enough of a reward and awards the overall adventure experience among the three main characters. This is 12,000 divided by 3 or 4,000 points each. However, Alice loses part of this award since her character is a replacement. A 3/5 award (the new character was present for Acts 3-5) does not seem fair, since the first two Acts were quite minor. The Referee decides to award the overall experience in the same proportions as the per-Act XP, i.e. Alice loses out on $2,000/12,000$ or $1/10$ of her possible award.

Candy missed a single session, but the Referee decides that this is of no consequence.

Background

Thus the experience awards for the Acts and the adventure as a whole work out as:

Alice: $1,000 + 1,334 + 1,667 + 3600 = 7,601$

Bob and Candy: $334 + 334 + 1,000 + 1,334 + 1,667 + 4000 = 8669$

Dave: $1,000 (\text{Act } 3) + 555 (1/3 \text{ of Act } 5) = 1,555$

The Referee has decided that although Dave was present in Act 3, a major part of the adventure as a whole, it would represent an isolated incident to him and thus he does not qualify for the overall experience award. This also avoids the problem of players who rarely turn up for a game possessing quite powerful characters whose experience was earned by other players.

Other rewards are of course possible within an adventure. Each Act will normally include opportunities for characters to gain advantages in terms of money, equipment, weaponry and contacts among rich and powerful individuals.

CHARACTER TYPES AND SKILLS

It is not the practice of QLI to list the skills a team of travellers will need in order to complete any given adventure (though skills required to get hired for the job might be listed). This is because *Traveller* is an open-ended game, and there are a great many possible paths to success. Almost any group, of any level, with any set of skills, can complete this or any other *Traveller* adventure if they are able to think creatively and maximize their strengths. There are no encounters or challenges in this adventure aimed at any type or class of character. Different characters will use different approaches and may struggle in some circumstances, but adventuring is not about having the right weapons, skills or equipment to meet a challenge; it is about meeting what the universe throws at you with what you have and finding a way to win – or at least survive.

Since the characters and their ship are somewhat impoverished, it is recommended that characters created specially for this adventure should not start with large amounts of cash from their mustering-out bonuses. The Referee should allow the purchase of a reasonable amount of equipment with this money prior to beginning play, then reduce whatever is left by 50-90%, leaving the characters with a few hundred credits to their name rather than tens of thousands.

Players who know about this in advance may decide to spend all their money before it is taken away. It is up to the Referee if this is acceptable or not. For example, it is entirely believable for a character taking a job as an engineer aboard a starship to invest her mustering-out cash in the very best hostile-environment suit available or for an amateur scientist to own an expensive personal computer. Characters who wish to buy a golf bag full of guns and a robot to carry it should be firmly discouraged.

QLI recommends the T20 *Travellers* Handbook for this purpose; it is really quite sturdy.

The following data is provided for the benefit of the Referee. How much of it can be determined by the players, and with what degree of accuracy, is a matter for the Referee to decide. In many cases a simple search on the ship's computer or any library terminal will suffice to provide at least the bones of the information.

Stoner Express is set in the Domain of Gateway, part of the Third Imperium, in the Year 993. The Domain is a somewhat turbulent place at present, after the controversial appointment of a new Archduke to oversee its affairs and a major war raging in the Solomani Rim just a couple of sectors away. However, life goes on, commerce continues, and starship operators need to make a living.

The characters are the crew of a small starship making a bare living performing courier work among the frontier worlds of the Domain, in Glimmerdrift Reaches sector. Their ship is old but the overheads are small, and it looks like the question of where next month's expenses are going to come from has just been answered...

THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The Third Imperium is a human-dominated empire of some 11,000 star systems. It is not a vast, monolithic structure. The time lag inherent in interstellar communications makes this impossible. Instead, the Imperium resembles a vast federation of worlds that agree to certain common practices, and allow the Emperor and his subordinates to deal with foreign policy, military affairs and similar multi-world considerations while maintaining control of their internal affairs.

THE IMPERIAL DOMAIN OF GATEWAY

Gateway Domain lies at the very fringe of the Imperium. As a result it is in some ways a backwater and in others a vital strategic area. The nominal area of the domain is the same as all others; four sectors. However, since much of the area that would be part of the Domain lies either in the two Rifts or else beyond the Imperial border, the territory administered by the Archduke of Gateway is rather smaller than that of other Imperial Domains.

The Domain of Gateway is protected by a single Named Imperial Fleet; the Ley Sector Fleet. Since the outbreak of the Solomani Rim War, force transfers have stripped the fleet of a portion of its vessels, leaving it understrength and still responsible for an area slightly larger than a normal sector.

The Imperium reached its present borders in the region about 200 years ago, and while a few worlds have applied to and joined the Imperium since then, there has been little deliberate expansion in the past two centuries.

Thus while still a frontier, Gateway Domain is also a settled area. There is some friction along the border, but for the most part the worlds and states close to the Imperial border are used to their status as clients or independent worlds. Relations are not always cordial, but understandings have been developed. Cross-border trade and travel is common and many businesses operate on both sides of the border. Law enforcement agencies usually co-operate, much to the detriment of criminals seeking refuge on the other side of the line. The Imperial Navy does make anti-piracy sweeps beyond its borders, usually but not always with the consent and cooperation of the local independent worlds.

INDEPENDENT WORLDS AND CLIENT STATES

Many of the worlds along the border of Gateway Domain are to a greater or lesser degree 'client states' of the Imperium. In effect, they are friendly independents who allow Imperial Navy vessels to use their ports and patrol their systems as a matter of course. Trade links are strong and relations generally cordial. Joint naval operations are not uncommon and extradition treaties are in place. Imperial-registered ships arriving in port on such worlds are treated more or less as if they were local shipping – papers are normally accepted at face value and customs checks are no more rigorous than usual. In return, client worlds are guaranteed protection against aggression and can request aid from the Imperium in times of trouble.

Some worlds have formal Client status and are listed as such in the star system data. Good relations with the Imperium and its citizens can be taken for granted. Some other worlds are a kind of 'informal client state' with friendly relations but no formal treaty in place. Some words listed as Independent fall into this group.

Other independent worlds are truly that; non-aligned. Some are actually quite hostile to the Imperium and will harass ships coming through their ports with endless paperwork or intense customs inspections. Actual violence against Imperial citizens acting lawfully would be a very stupid mistake, but some worlds will do everything they can to discourage Imperial attention and Imperial visitors.

The majority of Independent worlds are fairly neutral in their attitude to Imperial citizens, and treat them no better or worse than any other visitors. Attitudes do shift, however, due to internal or external factors.

THE GRAND DUCHY OF STONER

Situated along the Trailing edge of the Delphi Rift, the Grand Duchy of Stoner comprises a handful of worlds in the Alpha quadrant of the Glimmerdrift Reaches sector, and additional holdings to Coreward, most of which enjoy a fairly high technology level.

The original Grand Duke of Stoner was a Sylean noble who, not caring for what Cleon Zhunastu (Emperor Cleon I) was doing to the Sylean Federation, gathered his followers and headed out into the unknown in a fleet of starships with the intent of founding his own pocket empire. Centuries later, when the Sylean Federation had become the Third Imperium its scouts contacted the Grand Duchy which by then was well established and already a moderate success.

While the Duchy has no real love for the Imperium, there is no traditional enmity. Nevertheless, the Duchy is suspicious of Imperial expansion and works through legal and economic means to curtail it. Imperial corporations are not permitted to own facilities or even maintain offices within the Duchy.

Most worlds of the Grand Duchy are ruled by either hereditary Princes (there are several Princes, but the Grand Duke outranks them) or Appointed Governors, most of whom are Dictators with wide powers who answer directly to the Grand Duke.

The Grand Duchy annexed the world of Gazala in 960 through an economic masterstroke that saved the world's failing economy. Although Gazala gives its loyalty freely and wholeheartedly, its deeply religious citizens are not truly integrated with the population of the Grand Duchy as a whole.

The Grand Duchy of Stoner has a single armed force, the Ducal Household, which encompasses ground troops, security personnel, naval forces, emergency services and royal couriers. Local (non Jump-capable) defense forces are backed up by Ducal

Reserves and Expeditionary Forces.

The Ducal Household is well known for the arrogance of its personnel, and vessels entering Stoner space can expect to be stopped and searched by every naval vessel they encounter.

MIRACRU TRADECORP, LIC

Miracru is a large corporation based out of Core sector in the Imperium. Founded in 706, the firm has grown steadily (though not without the occasional upset) and now has offices in all the Domains of the Imperium. Miracru specializes in opening up long-term trade relations in areas that have traditionally been difficult. Success of this sort is often slow in coming, but the benefits can last for many years.

One current project is the opening-up of relations with the notoriously anti-Imperial Grand Duchy of Stoner. Stoner does not allow Imperial companies even to maintain an office in its territory, though it is willing to trade on a sporadic basis. Miracru is currently trying to win over the Grand Duke by presenting him with items of his family's traditional regalia.

The Grand Duke's family were powerful on Sylea just before the founding of the Third Imperium, but sold everything they had to finance a colonial expedition far away from Sylean space, meaning to place distance between their people and the society Cleon Zhunastu (first Emperor of the Third Imperium) was creating.

Miracru has managed to locate items that once belonged to the Grand Duke's family, and is returning them as a goodwill gesture. The firm naturally hopes to win over the Grand Duke, and plans to make its pitch for a regular cross border trade run sometime in the next few months.

Referee's Overview

The characters have been on Arkaene Highport for a few days when they are offered a charter contract – and quite a good one at that. A representative of Miracru TradeCorp, LIC wishes them to deliver a small cargo for him. The destination is over the Imperial border; the Grand Duchy of Stoner. The cargo (less than a ton in all) must be delivered to a contact on Stoner within three months. At Jump-2 the trip requires seven Jumps, so while the characters do not have time to hang around the job is entirely doable.

The package is nothing illegal, though it is quite valuable. It contains several items from the ceremonial regalia of House Stoner when they were nobles in the Sylean Federation 1000 years ago. The items are mostly of fairly low value (a few tens of thousands of credits each) but have a great deal of sentimental value to House Stoner. Miracru TradeCorp hopes to gain the goodwill of the Grand Duke with the gift. Already other collections of Stoner historical items have been delivered to a representative of the firm on Stoner (he is not allowed a trade office but the Grand Duchy is quite happy for him to hang around the starport running up a huge hotel bill).

The representative has an audience with the Grand Duke scheduled for 3 months' time and wants to make the presentation then. Most of the rest of the regalia was transported by armed courier ships hired specially, but the navy has called a lot of such vessels up as auxiliaries for the duration of hostilities, so Miracru is forced to make other arrangements.

The situation is entirely above board and as represented except for one minor detail.

Some of the regalia was bought from its current owners, but some was owned by House Randall, a minor baronial house in Fornast sector. The regalia had come into their possession at the founding of the Third Imperium and they were not willing to part with it. Miracru TradeCorp did not exactly steal the items as such, but certainly used underhanded methods to obtain the items or force a sale. House Randall is determined to track down its heirlooms and retrieve them.

Note that the heirlooms are *not* stolen. House Randall could make a case that illegal methods were used to force a sale, but the fact is that money changed hands on mutually agreed terms. A legal case would be expensive, lengthy and by no means guaranteed of success. Besides, it would embarrass some members of House Randall in ways that the family is not willing to accept. In short, House Randall has no legal means to recover 'their' treasures. If the regalia reaches Stoner, the situation becomes a diplomatic matter between the Grand Duchy and House Randall, and one that is not likely to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Randalls.

Therefore House Randall has decided to take direct action before it is too late. The means they have selected are a little borderline but quite legal – their agents plan to intercept the shipment and make the couriers an offer it would be inadvisable to refuse. House Randall feels it is acting in a justified and honorable manner. Legal means will not work once the heirlooms are across the Imperial border, so a direct retrieval is the only solution. Which leads to a more serious problem.

The task has fallen to Lady Elizabeth Randall-Hofnier, a junior member of the House determined to make a name for herself and move on to better things. She can be a little overzealous, especially when she thinks she is acting with full justification. Lady Elizabeth is something of a loose cannon and will do everything in her power to locate the her family treasures and retrieve them. Her resources are finite but she is clever and tenacious, and if push comes to shove is likely to forget all about legality and act upon her sense of justice, rightness and family pride.

Lady Elizabeth will try bribery and coercion first, and if that fails

she may resort to outright violence. The characters have a slight headstart and the advantage of anonymity – House Randall has not yet traced the missing items to Arkaene Highport – but pursuit is already on its way. It does not take a rocket scientist to work out where the package is headed and the route it will likely take (a decent Astrogator will do), and Lady Elizabeth's ship is faster than the characters' old Scout/Courier. She will try to head them off at one of the systems they have to pass through, after sending agents to other systems to catch the characters as they come through.

There are two efficient Jump-2 routes to Stoner from Arkaene. The one that makes best use of Jump-2 drives is as follows: Arkaene – Endpoint – Arlula – Phelina – Spirit of Orlaine – Gazala – Massen's World or Khad Khabar – Stoner.

The alternative route is as follows: Arkaene – Liga or Endpoint – Galik – Khirliish – Shur – Gazala – Massen's World or Khad Khabar – Stoner.

It is possible that the characters might take a completely different (and more roundabout) route, or make several Jump-1 hops to trade along the way. However, it is possible to make certain assumptions regarding the route, and Lady Elizabeth will do so:

- The only Jump-2 entry to Stoner space is through Gazala, and Gazala is only reached through Spirit or Orlaine or Shur.
- If the characters go via Liga, their most efficient route is via Khirliish and Shur.
- If the characters go via Endpoint, both routes are equally long.

Since Lady Elizabeth has a Jump-3 ship, she can get ahead of the characters and cross regions they will have to navigate around. She will try for an intercept before they reach Gazala, but she knows that the earliest the characters can arrive there is a little over 5 weeks after their departure from Arkaene. Failing all else, she will attempt to intercept the characters there.

Most of Lady Elizabeth's agents will be travelling on commercial vessels capable of only Jump-2. Communications lags are such that all she can do is place them ahead of the couriers and hope they can perform their tasks using their own Initiative. Some of her agents are House Randall personnel, but others are mercenaries and adventurers who have been paid well and convinced of the righteousness of their actions (where it was necessary). They will not sacrifice themselves for someone else's heirlooms.

PLAYING OUT THE ADVENTURE

Stoner Express will play out as a fairly routine starship trading mission at first. The characters are entitled to take on whatever freight or speculative cargo they wish so long as the package is delivered on time, and they have sufficient time to spend a few days on each planet they visit, perhaps even getting involved in sideline adventures.

There are many opportunities for roleplaying and adventure along the way. The characters' ship is not in the best of repair, and port authorities may decide to investigate its spaceworthiness. Customs officials and naval patrols will want to inspect the vessel from time to time. Most importantly, the characters will have to get out of their ship whenever they can. Living in a small starship is like being bricked up in an apartment for a week at a time with nothing on TV or the radio and only the same people for company. Scrubbed air and recycled water make the ship livable but humans are only able to tolerate the environment for a certain length of time. Most crews go planetside for at least a couple of days at every stopover, breathing air that smells of something other than recycling filters, seeing things that are not bulkheads, and sleeping

in beds that are not aboard 'that blasted ship!'.

Perhaps most importantly, crews that go ashore get to mingle with other people and relax for a while. Even in the military, shore leave is considered a necessity for a happy (or at least, sane) crew and while a naval ship or a messenger vessel may make several Jumps in rapid succession, every effort is made to ensure that the crew get adequate shore leave once the necessity for rapid operations is over.

The player characters should go planetside in the various ports they visit and have the odd 'day off', wandering around seeing the sights or pursuing their interests. Characters are people, after all. While it is possible to abstract this activity, *Traveller* games are much richer if the characters live the various aspects of their lives rather than just being assumed to do them in their off hours.

Thus, much of this adventure may be made up of events not relevant to the plot. This is fine – so long as the players are having a good time then it does not matter if an entire gaming session was spent finding a decent restaurant or sightseeing in a foreign city.

It should not be immediately apparent to the players that they have opposition, and the nature of the opposition should be slowly revealed rather than presented as a data dump. The first attempts at coercion or bribery may seem like random events, especially if the characters are 'living' the adventure in some detail.

However, in time it will become apparent that someone is determined to stop the characters from delivering their package. The level of violence will escalate into a serious attempt to kill them and take their cargo. Exactly where and when this occurs depends on what the characters do; this adventure does not have a linear plot/location structure. Instead the 'Plot Keys' – the critical incidents that make up the main story of this adventure – should be presented as and when they seem appropriate. Some naturally come after others but for the most part the structure of this adventure is flexible enough that even the actions of the most off-the-wall players should not derail it too badly.

PUSH, PULL, ENIGMA AND GIMMICK

Four elements of the typical adventure story are push, pull, enigma and gimmick. *Stoner Express* contains all four:

Push: The characters are 'pushed' to move on from their present location by the need to find a cargo and make enough money to refit their ship. Later in the adventure they may be 'pushed' by the knowledge that someone is hunting them.

Pull: The main pull in this adventure is financial, or rather the knowledge that the mission will provide finance for something the characters need (a refit for their ship).

Enigma: There are two enigmas to be uncovered in this adventure. First, there is the Grand Duchy of Stoner, a place the characters have never been beyond the Imperial border. What is it like? What new adventures will be found there?

The second enigma is not immediately apparent, but manifests itself during the course of play. Someone seems to be hunting the characters. Why? What do they want?

Gimmick: A gimmick is something special the characters get out of the adventure. There are two possible gimmicks in this adventure: the patronage of Miracru TradeCorp in future adventures and the possibility of improved relations with the Grand Duchy. Whether these or other unexpected gimmicks become available to the characters depends greatly on events in play.

Glimmerdrift Reaches Sector

Most of Glimmerdrift Reaches sector lies well beyond the borders of any major state, so while influences are felt the region is in fact somewhat fragmented. Populations are predominantly human, and Vargr are less common than in Ley Sector to Coreward.

Star density is rather low in the central area of the sector. Some astrographers consider this region to be an extension of the Darksy Gulf (or Delphi Rift), though it contains far more stars than what is normally considered Rift space. The low-density central area is known as the Glimmer Drift, since it contains numerous clouds of interstellar gas. It is bounded to Spinward-Rimward and Coreward by a region of true rift some 2-5 parsecs deep. This rift presents navigation problems, as it can only be crossed by Jump-2 ships at two points, though once across the gulf, traversing the Glimmer Drift is somewhat easier.

The Glimmerdrift Reaches sector is a battleground for Solomani and Imperial agents trying to create sympathy for their respective causes. The Solomani could use neutral worlds in the Reaches as a base for commerce raids into the Imperium (indeed, it is suspected that they already are doing so), and are constantly seeking alliances or basing agreements. Thus many worlds are equipped with Solomani weaponry sold at knockdown prices in return for a little political favor. Both sides are using all the tools at their disposal, from flag-showing naval vessels and economic assistance to covert action and blatant strongarm tactics to prevent the other from gaining an advantage.

THORSTONE SUBSECTOR

Situated at the very Coreward edge of Glimmerdrift Reaches sector and bounded by the Delphi Rift in Darkling subsector to Spinward, Thorstone subsector contains 12 Imperial worlds and 13 non-Imperial ones, of which two are formal Client States. A small Imperial patrol force is based out of 025-841. Most Imperial worlds are relatively undeveloped backwaters of no great importance.

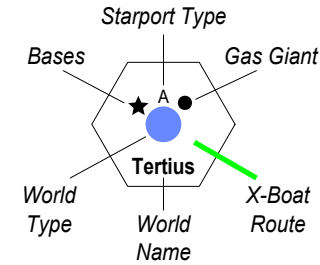
The main astrographic groupings are the Arkaene Group, the Phelina Main and the Amunkhan Cluster. The Phelina Main, while short, is important in that it provides a Jump-2 link to Rimward-Trailing from the Imperium out into the neutral space of Glimmerdrift Reaches sector.

WORLDS OF THORSTONE SUBSECTOR

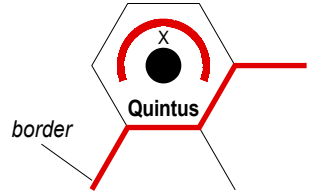
Allegiance Codes: X - Non-Aligned; I - Imperial (Domain of Gateway); Ic - Imperial Client State

<u>Name</u>	<u>Loc. UWP</u>	<u>Bases</u>	<u>Codes</u>	<u>PBG Allegiance/Stellar</u>
Gar	0905 E5677BB-4		Ag	340 I G0 IV M9 V
Khermi	1003 E100543-A		Ni Va	220 I K5 V
Esgiganuu	1004 B210300-C			920 I K5 V
Amunkhan	1008 B1009BB-F		In	450 Cs K0 V
Gidiilar	1009 E491100-6			640 Cs K4 V G2 D
Vacc City	1103 C100243-A		Va	120 I K7 V
Arkaene	1104 B100000-9		Va	630 I M9 V M3 D
Liga	1105 E200455-9		Ni Va	830 I M2 V F3 D
Endpoint	1106 D11079B-6		Na	431 X M2 V
Hovel	1109 D62389C-2		Na Po	341 X M1 V A6 D
Shur	1209 B333687-5		Na Ni Po	422 X M3 V A1 D
Lakeshore	1301 D676400-7		Ni	552 I G2 V
025-841	1302 A9B6631-A	N		940 I M2 V M6 D
Niish	1303 B631583-A		Ni Po	442 I K3 V M8 D
Galik	1306 C437678-8		Ni	932 X G2 V
Arlula	1307 E4568BC-2			700 X M2 V
Khirluish	1308 C110400-D			940 X K4 V M5 V
Ku	1404 D210444-6	S	Ni	930 I M1 V
Broad-C	1407 B76A636-B		Ni Wa	220 X G5 IV
Intrell	1507 C793578-5		Ni	700 X A4 V
Phelina	1508 B873984-8		In	820 X M2 V
Berdane	1509 A551378-9		Po	531 X M2 V
Spirit of Orlain	1510 D653538-2		Ni Po	630 X M0 V M2 D
Isda Kaille	1601 A453788-8		Po	821 I M2 V
Ugekur	1602 C472424-A		Ni	330 I M2 V

MAP LEGEND



Travel Zone Code (Red) No Gas Giant



WORLD CHARACTERISTICS

- No Water Present
- Water Present
- Asteroid Belt

BASES

- ★ Naval Base
- ▲ Scout Base
- △ Way Station

TRAVEL ZONES

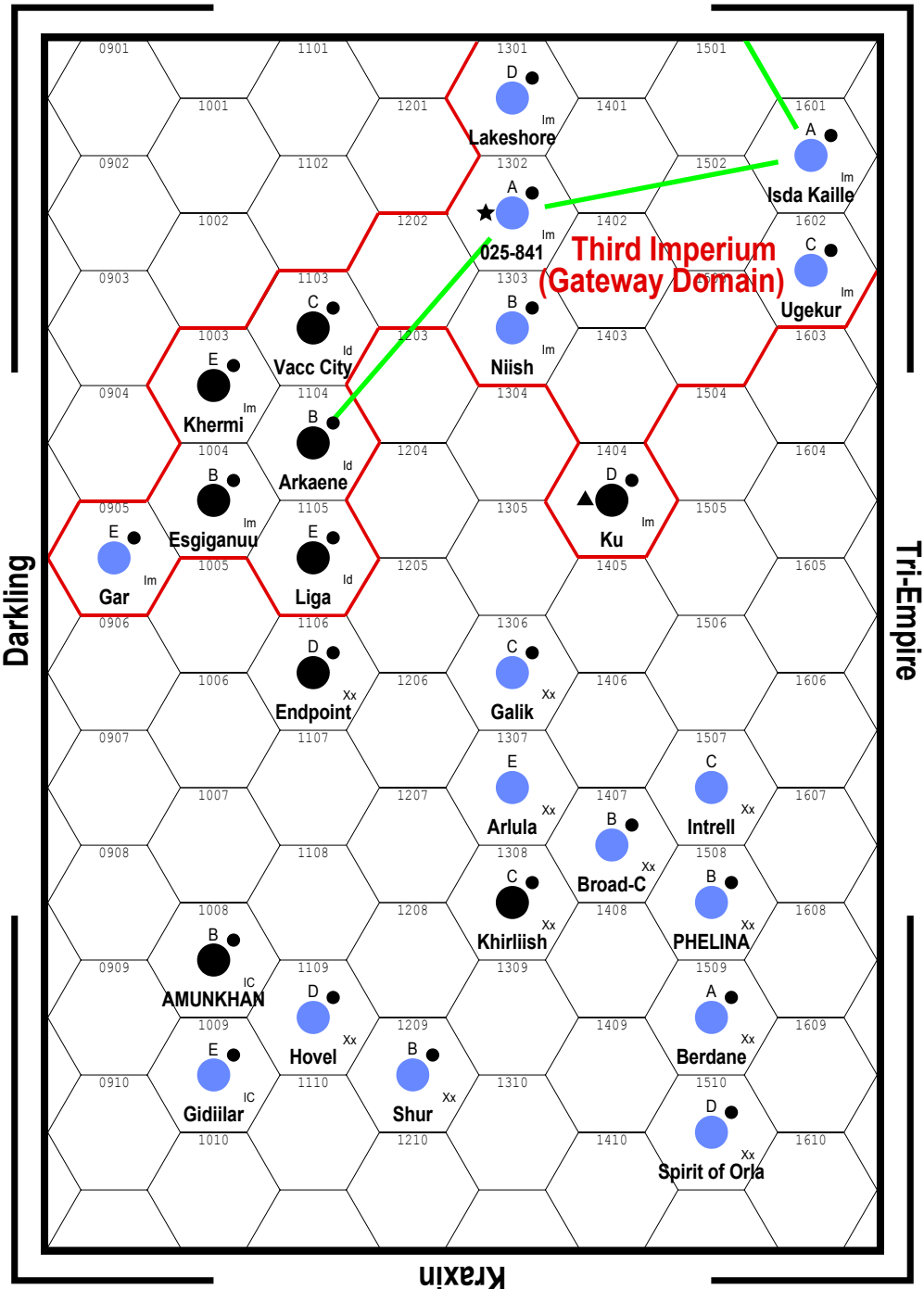


POPULATION

Secundus under one billion
 PRIMUS over one billion

World names in red are subsector capitals

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P



Thorstone Subsector

(subsector B of Glimmerdrift Reaches sector)

KRAXIN SUBSECTOR

Kraxin Subsector has only one multiworld state, the Grand Duchy of Stoner. It comprises nine star systems, of which eight are located in the Stoner Cluster. Only Gazala, important as a Jump-2 link Coreward, lies beyond the cluster.

The remaining 16 worlds of the subsector are all independent, and are mostly quite undeveloped.

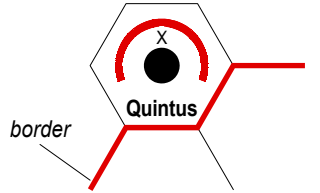
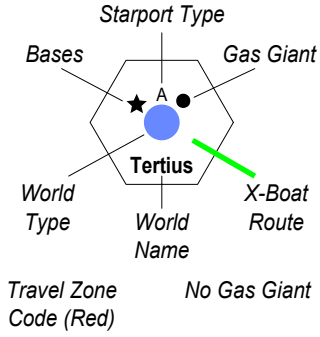
Just to Rimward of the midline of the subsector a finger of the Darksky Gulf (or Delphi Rift) divides the subsector and makes Jump-2 transit difficult.

WORLDS OF KRAXIN SUBSECTOR

Alliance Codes: X - Non-Aligned; I - Imperial (Domain of Gateway); Ic - Imperial Client State; Gs - Grand Duchy of Stoner

<u>Name</u>	<u>Loc. UWP</u>	<u>Bases</u>	<u>Codes</u>	<u>PBG Allegiance/Stellar</u>
Adasha	0912 E785675-2		Ag Ni Ri	652 X M2 V
Modoc	0919 E65A303-5		Wa	232 X K6 V
Irda	1013 A4238BA-7		Na Po	500 GS K2 III M3 V
Gesham	1014 B10088D-9		Na Va	610 GS G2 V
Ember	1018 C989332-7			742 X M2 V K6 D
Massen's World	1112 B6468AC-6		Ag	551 GS G4 V
Stoner	1113 B100ACB-E	N	In	801 GS A3 V
Iikhi	1114 D100462-9		Va	551 GS M7 V
Khad Khabar	1212 B310885-6		Na	721 GS M4 V M6 D
Irge	1213 B879457-C		Ni	330 GS M3 V
Geon	1215 E647985-6		In	451 X G1 V M8 D
Lagu	1219 E100400-8		Va	830 X M0 V
Gazala	1311 D100AEC-D		In	210 GS M5 III
Urmek	1313 D788563-6		Ag Ni Ri	920 GS G4 V F7 D
Shinan	1319 C422594-A		Ni Po	402 X M0 V
Grand Endeavor	1413 A475769-A		Ag	120 X K8 III
Hope Rock	1414 E110489-5		Ni	141 X M2 V M2 D
534-817	1417 B6A2100-D			150 X M7 V
Uukishku	1420 B100574-B		Ni Va	510 X K2 V K6 D
Burukansse	1511 A542548-B		Ni Po	640 X M2 V
Kalder	1515 E200200-5		Va	410 X F5 III
Kalash Nain	1520 X696389-0			721 X M0 V
Kibarlimmar	1611 C756453-5		Ag Ni	800 X K2 IV A2 D
Gurgaliinash	1613 C672756-6		Ni	740 X M3 III
Drahcir	1616 E300A96-8		In	541 X A3 V

MAP LEGEND



WORLD CHARACTERISTICS

● No Water Present

● Water Present

● Asteroid Belt

BASES

★ Naval Base

▲ Scout Base

△ Way Station

TRAVEL ZONES

Amber Zone

Red Zone

POPULATION

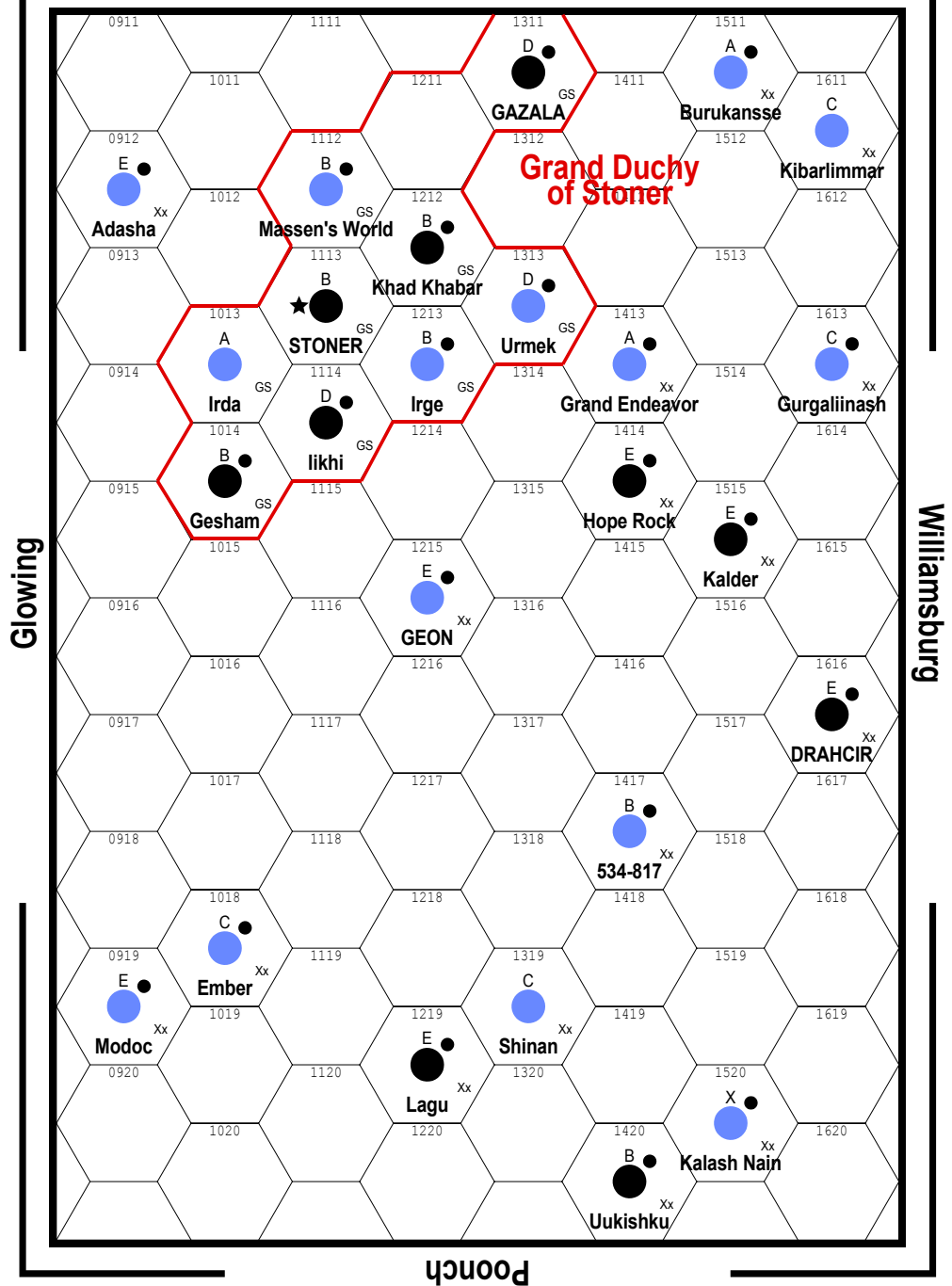
Secundus under one billion

PRIMUS over one billion

World names in red are subsector capitals

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P

Thorstone



Kraxin Subsector

(subsector F of Glimmerdrift Reaches sector)

World Data

Note that the adventure only details a few of the worlds on the route between Arkaene and Stoner. UWP data is provided for the Referee to extrapolate from when the characters visit worlds not detailed here. Further details on the Imperium, Glimmerdrift Reaches sector and the states within it can be found in *Gateway to Destiny: The Gateway Domain Sourcebook* from QLI.

ARKAENE

Arkaene 1104 B100000-9 Va 630 I M9 V M3 D

Situated at the heart of the Araekene Cluster, at the very end of the Express Boat link through Ley Sector and into the heart of the Imperium, Arkaene is a tiny rockball world of no significance other than the fact that it acts as a handy gravitational anchor point for Araekene Highport, a large Class B facility.

Arkaene Highport has the dubious distinction of being pretty much the end of the line for ships trading across the Imperium. It serves the local cluster but mainly acts as a transshipment point for goods crossing the border via the Phelina Main. The Highport is a corporate facility run as the sole asset of Arkaene Highport, LIC. Corporate security personnel maintain a standard Imperial law level of 4 on the port (sidearms and blades are permitted) and conduct rigorous checks on ships coming in across the border.

As might be expected this busy port sees a lot of shipping traffic and has been targeted by commerce raiders in the past. At present it is defended by several squadrons of System Defense Boats crewed by efficient mercenary personnel. An Imperial Navy destroyer is normally also present on a guardship deployment out of the base at 025-841.

All manner of goods are available in the shops of the port's retail concourse. Some of them are quite exotic, coming from far way or from alien cultures. Trade missions from various worlds in the region are also present, and the port's reputation as a good place to get an efficient refit at a reasonable price is beginning to bring in independent ships from across Glimmerdrift Reaches sector.

The staff of Arkaene Highport, LIC know how important it is that visitors enjoy their stay. Hospitality is excellent and generally inexpensive. The Arkaene Highport Corporation hosts regular 'networking dinners' and parties (usually fairly dignified and sedate ones) for visiting crews, at which it is possible to meet useful contacts. Of course, rowdy or inappropriate behavior results in not being invited to another event.

Arkaene itself has no indigenous population. A small community of miners and prospectors make a living from its mineral wealth. None of their communities numbers more than 100 souls. Each has its own landing area (equivalent to a Class E Starport).

SHUR

Shur 1209 B333687-5 Na Ni Po 422 X M3 V A1 D

A link on the Jump-2 route to Amunkhan and Gazala, Shur is a small, cold world with a very thin atmosphere (too thin for humans to breathe unaided). Despite this, it does have a reasonable ecosystem of its own, with many species of relatively primitive creatures. Life is more common in the shallow, cold seas than on land, and large areas of the dry inland areas are quite barren.

The world is home to around 400 million people, ruled by a complex, over-bureaucratic system whose myriad committees and sub-committees wrangle endlessly but never get much actual work done. The world has a well-established TL-5 society which can trace its origins all the way back to a Rule of Man-era colony. Life

support equipment is clunky but extremely robust.

Shur starport includes a small Highport built by offworld contractors many years ago. It is now somewhat run down but remains quite capable of servicing the ships that pass through. Facilities are fairly limited, so those vessels that can enter atmosphere tend to proceed directly to the Downport. This sprawling facility is situated adjacent to the world's second-largest settlement, Karain City. Some offworld technology is available. Obtained from Imperial, Grand Duchy and independent-world firms in fairly equal parts, high-tech equipment is something of a mismatch, making maintenance a nightmare.

Shuur sees a fair amount of through traffic, though it has little industry of its own. The economy is thus highly dependent on the Starport and the world's ruling committees are well aware of this fact. Service is efficient and friendly, though the port does seem to employ as many 'paperwork assistance officers' as actual technicians.

With the annexation of Gazala 20 years ago it seems like the Grand Duchy of Stoner is engaged in either a period of empire-building or else is trying to secure the Jump-2 routes into the Stoner Cluster. If this is the case, Shur is likely to be annexed at some point. Several committees are currently discussing what can be done about this, though they have been doing so for over a decade and have produced little beyond a system for rating and reporting incidences of Stoner encroachment.

Since Shur can afford only a handful of utility craft to serve the Highport, the system is virtually undefended. Corsair strikes have taken several ships in the past few years and incidents are becoming more common. Shur has vigorously refused offers of help from the Imperium and Stoner, both of which occasionally send a patrol through anyway.

The nearby world of Amunkhan, which sends all of its outcluster trade through Shur, has also offered assistance. No decision has yet been taken as to whether or not to accept this aid. In the meantime, Amunkhan has armed its merchant fleet for self-defense and occasionally sweeps the Shur system with units of its small but extremely advanced navy, ignoring the routine protests issued by the Shur Planetary Government.

PHELINA

Phelina 1508 B873984-8 In 820 X M2 V

Despite its rather uninviting nature (a hot dustbowl of a world whose atmosphere is so thick with airborne dust that masks are required outdoors), Phelina is an important population center in the region. Governed by an interlocking system of regional bureaucracies and industry-specific guilds, Phelina's 8 billion inhabitants have a peaceable and liberal society. Differences of opinion are generally resolved in vigorous debates that can go on for some time but are considered binding by the participants. A significant fraction of such debates result in the mutual recognition that the other party has a point but must be quite mad to stick to their view in the face of such overwhelming evidence. Having established that there is no point in attempting to convert such a lunatic to a rational worldview, both parties can honorably drop the subject.

Daily interactions on Phelina are characterized by such debates, on topics ranging from the morality of employing artificial intelligence robots of a sort that hypothetically might just be possible some day on dangerous tasks that a human would not be assigned, to why synthetic protein food costs more than animal protein, or what color socks should not be worn with a blue suit. In short, arguing is the national sport of the people of Phelina, and they are very, very good at it.

Despite the endless debates and hypothetical questions,

Phelina is an industrial powerhouse that exports a range of high-quality TL8 goods across the subsector and beyond. Some firms have contracts with Imperial and Stoner corporations to obtain TL10+ components, allowing Phelina to build limited numbers of grav vehicles and other equipment. Not as elegant as pure TL 10+ designs, Phelina's TL 8/10 hybrids nevertheless are popular on lower-tech worlds where an absolute minimum of high-tech components is an advantage in terms of usability and maintenance.

SPIRIT OF ORLAIN

Spirit of Orlain 1510 D653538-2 Ni Po 630 X M0 V M2 D

Spirit of Orlain is a fairly unremarkable world in physical terms – dry, with a thin atmosphere and large areas of undeveloped wilderness. Its 600,000 inhabitants are scattered in small city-states along the coastal plains or around the small inland seas of the main continent. Technology is based on the muscle power of local beasts of burden (many of which were imported long ago by the original colonists, or later by enterprising offworlders).

There is some evidence that Spirit of Orlain once has a higher-tech society but at some point (probably during the Long Night), the world fell into barbarism and has never recovered its technological base. The city-states are ruled by a hereditary nobles who retain all technology higher than TL-2 for their own use and that of their personal retinue. Possession of offworld technology or weaponry by the citizens is harshly punished. There is virtually no educated class to speak of, other than the personal households of the city-lords.

The only real asset Spirit of Orlain has is its position as a Jump-2 link between Gazala and the Phelina Main. Its rudimentary Starport is controlled by the most powerful of the city-lords and staffed by loyal retainers. The common citizenry are not allowed contact with offworlders to prevent the spread of undesirable ideas. Thus the Startown associated with the port is rather small, though quite pleasant to visit despite its low-tech nature. Most visitors prefer not to ask what conditions are like on the rest of the world; it is enough to enjoy the (rather servile) hospitality, refuel and move on.

With no Highport and no system patrol, the system itself is rather lawless. Stoner warships make the occasional sweep but for the most part traders passing through rely on their own armament and vigilance.

GAZALA

Gazala 1311 D100AEC-D In 210 GS M5 III

The world of Gazala is something of an oddity; a nasty little rockball inhabited by 20 million people. The world's population arrived in waves during the last days of the Rule of Man, and were thrown back on their own resources when the Long Night drew in. Somehow the colony managed to do more than survive: it thrived, never losing Jump technology and at one point becoming the center of a small empire covering parts of what are now the Stoner Cluster and the Phelina Main. The empire gradually crumbled until only Gazala was left, but by that time (late in the Long Night) its current form was well established.

Gazala is ruled by an extremely strict religious group whose practices are hidden from outside observers. What is known is that the citizens are devout and even enthusiastic followers of the True Faith, who labor contentedly for the greater glory of their deity or deities. Nothing is known of these to outsiders and to citizens it or they are perceived through the person of a single religious leader, an individual known only as the Glory of Faith. Living standards are quite good in the underground cities, which are more or less self-

sufficient, with vast parks and gardens filled with plants and small animals from Old Earth and worlds of the local clusters.

Gazala has an extremely insular society, which long ago lost interest in other worlds. As a vital Jump-2 link out of the Stoner Cluster it was considered important enough to annex. This act went virtually unremarked on Gazala itself; Stoner forces arrived and chased off the private firm based out of Phelina that was at the time operating the small Class D-equivalent port on Gazala's only moon. The port is now known as Outpost 1209, and its facilities are limited to say the least. It is little more than a refuelling point and a base for a squadron of Stoner warships that secure the system. Access is restricted and vessels passing through are carefully inspected by troops of the Ducal Household.

Although technically the world of Gazala now belongs to the Grand Duchy of Stoner, no attempt has been made to gain control of the cities. Their industrial and technological output would be an asset to the Grand Duchy, but the idea of taking on hordes of religious fanatics in close urban terrain is enough to scotch any plans to annex the cities by force. Instead, Stoner is content to hold the high ground and to patiently work towards an accommodation with the Glory of Faith. The Grand Duchy has what it wants – control of the system's port and refuelling station, a base from which to deny the system to intruders, and a secure Jump-2 route out of the Stoner cluster to Coreward.

STONER

Stoner 1113 B100ACB-E N In 801 GS A3 V

Stoner, seat of the Grand Duke, is an airless rockball. It was not the intended destination of the original colonists, but the opportunities offered by its vast mineral deposits were too good to pass up. Stoner was at first a mining camp, then an industrial complex, then finally the administrative capital for a pocket empire that controlled seven (now eight) other worlds. Its factories fuelled the colonization of the rest of the cluster, creating 'breadbaskets' at Massen's World and Urmek that in turn fed an explosive population growth.

Today, Stoner is inhabited by 800 million people grouped into large underground cities that are highly industrialized and have access to very high technology. The world is ruled by the Grand Duke through a number of city governors, and the regime is highly popular. Citizens are subject to strict laws but enjoy a very high standard of living. Access to facilities like university education is subject to a petition to the city governor, and if granted is salaried like any other job. Standards of education are quite high, comparable to those of high-tech Imperial worlds.

Service in the Ducal Household is prestigious, with naval service being most respected. Competition is fierce for places even in the 'lesser' branches such as medical, administrative or ground forces, and the efficiency of the Household in all its activities is famous.

The Grand Duchy is arrogant and high-handed in its treatment of outsiders, even in the impressive Starport. Foreign companies are permitted to maintain representatives at the port (living in expensive hotel accommodation) but permanent offices are not allowed. The Grand Duchy does not recognise trade representatives as anything but transient visitors, no matter how long they have been on-planet, and absolutely will not permit ownership of any property on-planet by anyone other than a citizen.

The Grand Duke does allow small embassies, but routinely ignores or snubs them. Even the Imperial Ambassador is treated with bare courtesy at best, though over the years the endless round of snubs and protests has evolved into a tired ritual and finally a strange sort of working relationship whereby both parties go through the motions of hating one another but actually get along

without much friction. Actual co-operation is a rare thing, and is fiercely bargained for.

Vessels passing through Stoner from outside the Grand Duchy are rigorously searched and certified. The port does not overhaul foreign ships for any price.

Rumors and Scuttlebutt

As they proceed through the various ports and worlds along their way, the characters are bound to talk to people. They will likely pick up rumors about current events in the local region and the wider universe. These rumors might or might not be true. They may lead to new adventures or merely add to the feeling of a 'living' game setting.

Rumors can be presented more than once. They can be rephrased or embellished at the Referee's discretion.

RUMORS

- Corsairs operating in the Shur system have lost three ships lately. All have fallen victim to Q-ships belonging to the Amunkhan navy.
- Endpoint has made representations to Archduke Erechs, asking for Imperial protection and possibly full membership.
- The Imperial Navy is stretched very thin in the region now that many vessels have been sent to the Solomani Rim. Smaller ships are being moved about a lot to maintain the illusion of strength.
- The world of Grand Endeavor, ruled by a Stoner planetary governor but not a member of the Grand Duchy, is to be given as a fief to a newly-elevated Hereditary Prince. The world will become a full member at that time.
- Imperial-registered trade ships have been turned back at Gazala in recent months. This is causing tension between the Grand Duke and the Imperial Archduke.
- Corsair activity in the Phelina Main has shot up in recent months.
- Ships of the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium have been coming into Stoner ports lately.
- A Solomani cruiser called at Grand Endeavor last year.
- War between the Farreach Margravate and the Loyal Nineworlds Republic, two states to Trailing-Rimward across the Glimmer Drift, is looking increasingly likely.
- Ruins have been discovered on Hope Rock dating from well before the Rule of Man. They look like human habitations.
- An Imperial trading firm, likamaruu Enterprises, has been sending small ships into the Coreward end of Glimmerdrift Reaches sector for some time now. It looks like they're being successful so maybe a larger follow-up mission can be expected.
- With the shortage of naval ships, the Imperials have started using Scout Service vessels for routine patrols. How much use they're likely to be is an open question.
- A ship came into Didan, over in Williamsburg subsector, a while back. It'd suffered a massive Misjump and been in J-space for nearly 20 years!
- There is good money to be made in Belting out in the Glimmer Drift. The asteroids of several systems have turned out to be surprisingly rich.
- Droyne ships all the way from Crucis Margin sector have been sighted in the region.
- The Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium, based out of the world of Fal over to Trailing, is quietly expanding. It has run into some trouble at Lunarmise in the Starfall Cluster, but this is sure to be transient.

Plot and Episodes

ACT 1: ARKAENE HIGHPORT

The characters are approached with a job offer.

SCENE 1: IN PORT

Some details of the port at Arkaene are listed under World Data. The port is quite busy, with several ships coming and going each hour. Express Boat tenders are always busy picking up the Xboats as they come in from 025-841 and bringing them to the tiny Scout Service facility at the Highport for replenishment and turnaround.

Much of the traffic in port is local, small Jump-1 merchants serving the local cluster, with here and there the rather grander (and generally cleaner) uniforms of one of the bigger merchant lines to be seen. MAE Lines runs a regular service up to Coreward; its personnel are the commonest of the corporates likely to be encountered. There are also a small number of Scout and Naval personnel on the Highport, and crews of prospectors enjoying a break from planetside operations.

In short, Arkaene Highport is constantly busy at a moderate level. Never crammed or bustling, it nevertheless has enough going on to keep most of the restaurants, shops and bars open round the clock. Cargoes are auctioned at regular times and deals are struck over coffee or wine by experienced frontier merchants from both sides of the Imperial border.

Among the ships in port is the Scout/Courier *Broadside of a Barn*, just arrived from Ley Sector by way of Lakeshore and Niish. After a week in Jump her crew are ready for some portside R&R, but there are other considerations on their minds too. For the *Barn* is an elderly ship and her last few refits have been skimped. Her drives are not dangerously run-down, not yet, but they are getting that way. Problem is, there is little money in the ship's coffers and virtually nothing for crew pay.

The *Barn* has delivered her cargo (standard freight for which she has already been paid) and needs to fill her holds again. Speculative cargo is one option, but with so little money available this would mean gambling all the remaining funds on being able to sell at a profit at the other end – and the *Barn* is unlikely to make so much profit that she won't have to gamble again and again. That way lies eventual ruin.

The alternative is freighting for standard rates, which doesn't pay all that well but at least is a fairly safe investment, or courtier work for whatever fee can be negotiated. Passengers are not really an option, not for a ship as dilapidated as the *Barn*.

One thing is certain as the crew stroll down the main Highport concourse. They need to find something profitable to do, and fast.

Referee

The characters should be allowed to wander about the port and indulge in recreation for a while. They've been in Jump for a week, they deserve to unwind. The crew may pick up rumors that will lead them to other adventures after (or even during) this one. At some point, however, Scene 2 will occur.

SCENE 2: NO CHANCE ENCOUNTER (KEY SCENE)

As the characters are going about their business in the port, they are approached by a port courier with a handwritten invitation to lunch at Shuuru Kaninii, an expensive Vilani restaurant just off the concourse. Lunch will be at the expense of a Mr Jasin Saliss. This can only be a business proposal. The question is, how lucrative will it be?

The restaurant is classy, with tables arranged in a traditional Vilani open-plan style around a central kitchen where several chefs work under the direction of a Shugili (a Vilani chef trained in the traditional cooking arts of Vland). The staff are dressed in traditional Vilani style and the floor manager wears big gloves to show his status – he never touches anything or does any work. There are waiters for that.

If the characters like Vilani food, the fare is excellent. Highly authentic Vilani food is hard to get this far from the cultural Vilani regions of the Imperium, but this is just like being on Vland. On the other hand, if the characters don't like Vilani food then they are forced to choke down one horrible mess after another, each slathered in some contrasting but equally yucky paste or dressing.

The restaurant does not serve anything but traditional Vilani dishes and makes no concession to special diets or preferences.

At the table waiting for the characters is Mr Jasin Saliss, a representative of Miracru TradeCorp LIC. As might be expected Miracru is a Vilani firm. Saliss wears a dark gray three-piece suit with a single medal ribbon on the left breast pocket. The ribbon is easily recognizable as an Honorable Discharge (Combat Veteran) medal issued by the Imperial Navy.

If asked, Saliss shrugs and mentions that yes, he was in the navy for a few years. He does not elaborate. If anyone wants to look up his record, it is listed in the Cast of Characters section of this adventure.

Saliss explains why he has chosen to buy lunch for the crew of a tired old courier starship. It's not very complicated. He needs a small ship to charter for a courier run, and true merchant vessels are expensive to charter – far too expensive considering he needs to deliver just one displacement ton of cargo. Given the state of the ship, it's obvious that the *Broadside of a Barn* doesn't have much else going on, which makes negotiations less complex.

The job is really very simple. Miracru TradeCorp wants a small cargo delivering to Stoner, capital of the Grand Duchy of Stoner. The cargo is a gift for the Grand Duke, to be presented in the hope of being granted a trade license for the Grand Duchy (something no other Imperial firm has achieved). It must be delivered to Miracru's representative on Stoner within 10 weeks – easily doable for a Jump-2 ship.

The cargo, Saliss is quite willing to admit, is a collection of items, some of them reasonably valuable, that belonged to House Stoner centuries ago when it was a noble house on Sylea. They were left behind when the first Grand Duke brought his people out to the frontier to found their own pocket empire. Now Miracru has tracked them down and plans to return them as a goodwill gift to the Grand Duke.

Miracru does have trading ships of its own, of course, but it is not worth pulling a ship off a profitable line for several months for the sake of 1 ton of cargo. Instead, the firm hired a courier. However, armed couriers are much in demand as Naval Auxiliaries, and the one Miracru hired was pulled for Naval service just last week. An alternative was needed... and here it is.

The trip to Stoner is about 7 Jumps, and the cargo must be delivered within the next 12 weeks. It is thus obvious that so long as the characters do not hang around on any particular world along the way, they can easily complete the delivery in time.

Saliss offers a charter fee for the whole mission. In fact, he is willing to charter the *Barn* for a full 12-week period. This means that if the delivery can be performed in a shorter time, the characters will have some of the charter fee left over as a bonus.

Charter for the *Barn* works out at a standard rate of Cr900 per cargo ton, or Cr 18,000 per week, for 12 weeks. This is a total of Cr216,000. Saliss offers Cr50,000 up front and the remainder payable by the agent at the far end – a fairly common arrangement.

He could be bargained up to Cr80,000 up front, but no more.

The characters will have to find their expenses and salaries out of the trip, of course. A quick look at the ship's projected budget and the starmap suggests that if the characters move fairly quickly (no more than 2-3 days at any world), and make the trip in 6 Jump-2s and a Jump-1, buying fuel rather than skimming it, the trip will take a little under 10 weeks and cost Cr15,600 for fuel, Cr42,510 in bank payments (assuming the 3rd month payment is taken early for ease of bookkeeping) and Cr7500 per crewmember for basic life support. Putting nothing into the maintenance fund, this comes to Cr80,610 for a crew of three. There will be some minor incidental expenses such as berthing fees and however much the characters want to draw as salaries, but it is obvious that the ship will come out of the deal with enough for its much-needed overhaul and still have a tidy profit in hand.

Saliss also points out that his cargo adds up to 1 ton, leaving plenty of space for any additional cargo the characters want to ship. He does insist that they agree not to take on passengers while under his charter (for security reasons), though.

This looks like a pretty good deal (it is) and a bit of checking will show Miracru TradeCorp is a firm with a reputation for fair and honorable, if occasionally highly competitive, trading practices.

Saliss wants to get his cargo underway as soon as possible, but he will reserve the deal for 24 hours to let the characters make a decision.

SCENE 3: LEAVING PORT

Arkaene is a busy port, so it should be possible to find some freight bound for the characters' next destination. Shippers will pay a standard rate for freight. When a ship is under charter it is sometimes forbidden to take on extra cargo, but Saliss specifically stated that he did not mind, so the characters have a chance to make some additional money on the side.

Departing the port is routine. There is a fair bit of traffic but the port authority's traffic control system is sound. Unless the characters do something monumentally stupid they will clear port and head out to Jump without undue incident.

The Referee should use this scene to determine the characters' routine when in transit. Questions about bridge watches, location of weapons and security procedures should be asked now and the answers noted to avoid alerting the players that something is afoot when the information is really required.

The Referee may wish to ask some or all of the following questions during the run out to Jump:

- What is the procedure for bridge watches? One person on the bridge throughout each watch period? One person 'on duty' but anywhere aboard the ship so long as they are available to answer alerts? No policy, whoever is nearest deals with an alert? (note that this is a small ship and reaching the bridge is normally a matter of seconds from anywhere in the ship.)
- Security procedures for the cargo? Is it monitored by cameras? Are they recorded all the time? Do they actually work at all? Does anyone ever go in the cargo hold, and if they do, do they conduct a close inspection of the cargo?
- Weaponry aboard ship? Does everyone keep their weapons in their cabin? Do they routinely wear sidearms, even in Jump? Are there guns lying about all over the place or is everything locked up until needed?

Some players will claim that their characters are in a state of hair-trigger readiness for danger at all times, and will usually claim that this is reasonable because they served in the military

at some time, or give some similar justification. In fact, even in the military the level of discipline necessary for such readiness is rare, and aboard a small ship that has been isolated in space for some weeks, the chances are virtually nil. Characters who insist on tight security regimes will find that after a few days things start to unravel and people get complacent or lazy. To simulate this, the following system can be used at the Referee's discretion to determine the state of readiness at any given time:

T20: A player who claims his character is alert, at his post and has the right weapons or other tools to hand when something happens should make a DC20 Will save. Success indicates that he is indeed entirely ready and in the right place. Failure means that he is going about normal business aboard ship and can at least remember where his sidearm, toolkit and vac suit are. Failure by 10, or a natural 1 in any case or more means that he is drunk, deeply asleep, in the fresher with a badly upset stomach, or otherwise completely unready.

If the characters try to stick to a system of alertness and security procedures, make a DC15 Leadership check for the character in charge, with a special modifier of -1 for every full week since the characters left Arkaene or had a major security alert to reflect increasing boredom and complacency. If successful, the procedure is in place. If not, it has unraveled to the point where everyone is goofing off.

CT: To determine a character's alert status, roll 2d, (DM +1 if END 7+, +2 if END 9+, DM +1 per term spent in any military or merchant service, or the Scouts) On a roll of 10+ the character is totally hair-trigger alert. On 5- (or in any case on a natural 2) he is totally unready as noted above. Otherwise, the character is partially ready – awake and not oblivious to the problem.

To enforce security procedures, roll 9+ (DM Leader skill) to succeed. Apply a DM of -1 per 2 full weeks since last major alert.

As noted, this is at the Referee's discretion. Characters who have recently had a good scare or have other reasons to be alert may not need to roll. The default state of alertness is not high; characters respond unhurriedly to alarms (false alarms are not uncommon), have to scramble about looking for vital tools or run to their cabin for a flak jacket they're supposed to be wearing (those things are HEAVY and HOT!), assume that someone else will deal with a given problem, forget to monitor the cameras that have been showing the same cargo crate for 2 months, etc. Total incompetence is rare, but even adventurers get complacent eventually, however determined they are not to do so. There eventually comes a time when a few minutes' snooze is just too tempting, especially when there is virtually no chance that anything will actually happen in that time....

ACT 2: EN ROUTE

It is 9 parsecs from Arkaene to Stoner as the crow flies. Unfortunately starships are not crows, so the characters will have to choose a more roundabout route to follow, stopping to refuel and perhaps take on cargo along the way.

SCENE 1: PORTS OF CALL

After the characters leave Arkaene, they have many choices of worlds to visit. Along the way they may have other adventures, perhaps even Misjump or make a navigational error. They will almost certainly want to trade or look for freight at the worlds they visit. The UWP data listed in the Referee's Information section can be used as a startpoint to make each world interesting. Even if the characters see only the starport at each world, it should be

distinctive. After all, they are beyond the Imperium. Some of the worlds that they visit have developed for their own culture and ways of doing things for many, many years with little outside influence.

Interstellar travel is a fundamental part of the *Traveller* game experience, but what makes it interesting is not rolling for cargo and Jumping on to the next set of UWP codes. What makes interstellar travel interesting is the places visited and the people met there. The Referee should thus mention a few little details about each world that will make it stand out in the players' imagination. Is it a scorched rockball or a vast expanse of blue ocean with just a few green islands? Are the cities towering arcologies or collections of rough concrete bunkers huddling against the desert wind. Are the locals friendly or surly? Is the port clean and efficient or a filthy, weed-choked mess?

It is not possible in an adventure of this type to detail every world the characters may visit. Indeed, the world descriptions that are provided are merely a starting point. It is up to the Referee to make the places visited memorable and interesting. Use the UWPs and the world descriptions as a starting point and work from there.

Referee

Don't be in a hurry to push on to the plot keys. Let the characters explore each world a little, involve them in local incidents, perhaps throw the odd short adventure at them. Apart from any other benefits, this will help put them off the scent when a plot key comes along. If they cannot tell an incident is critical to the plot, they are less likely to react in a contrived manner.

And it makes for a better game.

SCENE 2: BOARD AND SEARCH

The characters; ship is hailed by a vessel identifying itself as the Imperial Patrol Cruiser *Shaddalakkii*. The vessel has been sitting quietly, powered down and virtually undetectable in this system, monitoring traffic. Now it lights its drive and accelerates towards the characters' ship, sending a blunt message to power down weapons and heave-to for boarding.

The patrol ship matches the general parameters of a Type T patrol cruiser, a type of vessel that has been in service in one form or another for centuries. The transponder codes check out – it is virtually certain that this ship is what she says she is, an Imperial Navy vessel on cross-border patrol.

The Patrol Cruiser massively outguns the characters' ship, even though it is only 4 times the size. It is also faster. It might be possible to escape by entering Jump, but for the fact that running from an Imperial patrol ship is usually taken as proof of criminality. The Navy will open fire on fleeing vessels and cannot always shoot to disable. The description of any ship that successfully escapes is circulated on the 'known felon' list, and such vessels are given short shrift by naval ships they meet later on.

The only sensible thing to do is to comply with the instructions and await docking.

The Search

After the *Shaddalakkii* comes alongside and docks, the airlock opens to admit a squad of Imperial Marines in Combat Armor. The first four through have drawn cutlasses (an old tradition) which is quite intimidating to see but in fact indicates that they are not expecting a fight. If they were, the snub pistols at their belts would be in hand instead. The four form an honor guard for the lone naval officer (in uniform, not a vac suit) and her Marine bodyguard that come through next.

The Navy officer, an attractive young blonde Sublieutenant whose name tag reads 'Grantlee', halts and asks permission to come aboard. This is something of a formality, given how many

marines she has on call, but the answer is what differentiates a courteous inspection from a boarding action. If the answer is affirmative, Sublieutenant Grantlee thanks the captain, inspects the ship's papers, then says that she is empowered and ordered to conduct a search for contraband. She requests cooperation – and as every spacer knows, refusal is proof of criminality.

Assuming the characters agree to the search, another four Marines come through in combat armor, cradling Snub SMGs. They move to secure the bridge and Engineering (two each). Two Navy technicians come through and are escorted by two of the Marines to take a direct download of the ship's manifest and logs from her computers. This leaves two motionless Marines at the airlock with drawn cutlasses – and at least three more on the far side of the lock as a rescue and counter-boarding party. The Navy has lost ships on routine search operations. They do not intend to lose any more. For this reason the Marines at the lock will not allow anyone near the lock or themselves, a point that is made with a cutlass and a sharp challenge in the first instance, and with a gun if the Marine thinks it is necessary.

The Bridge and Engineering teams are similarly standoffish. They do not talk to the crew and do not allow anyone near a console. Bodyguards cover the back of the technicians and Sublieutenant Grantlee as they work. Naval personnel do talk to the crew. They are polite and courteous, but firm – they know their lives are at risk on any boarding and that the stringent security procedures are in place for a reason.

Grantlee is a little more friendly. She insists on seeing all the critical sections of the ship (bridge, engineering, weapons and, for some reason, the galley) and of course the hold. She questions the ship's captain (or appointed representative) as she goes. She is not brisk or harsh, but she wants answers and will accept no nonsense.

The captain is likely to sweat some of the inspection. Safety and rescue gear is substandard, which can get a ship grounded. Some systems are showing their age and certain backups have been running full-time to replace a burned-out main system for months now. However, Grantlee finally passes the ship with the words, "What a horrible vessel. Your ship needs an overhaul and it needs it badly, Captain. You're two points off failing the Spaceworthiness requirement, and that's after I gave you three discretionary ones because I know how robust the Type S is. Your galley is virtually a biohazard area... but at least your cargo seems to be legal."

Before departing with her guards, Grantlee adds, "Just a couple of advisories for you. We've got a suspected commerce raider operating on the Phelina Main. Probably a Solomani ship. And a pirate attack on a courier like yours just a couple of weeks ago. Looked like an inside job. They left the ship gutted and derelict. The crew are still missing, which is not good. But I have some good news for you. You're the only Imperial ship in system right now and we have 'extend every courtesy' orders. That means you get an escort into orbit or out to Jump...."

Escort Duty

As offered, the patrol cruiser *Shaddalakkii*, having ascertained that the *Barn* is a legitimate vessel, escorts her to planetfall or the Jump point. Her communications officer bids the characters a friendly, if somewhat formal, farewell as she breaks away to return to her patrol and they move on to their next destination.

Referee

The Solomani commerce raider may or may not be a factor in the adventure, at the Referee's discretion. The looting of the courier is directly relevant, however. The ship was an armed courier that

made the Stoner run quite frequently, and as such was a likely candidate to carry the heirlooms to Stoner. The ship's schedule was leaked to a pirate vessel operating in the area by one of House Randall's agents. The ship was taken and the crew murdered. The agent was disciplined for acting too zealously and with too little information, and of course the heirlooms were not aboard anyway.

This tragic incident may serve to alert the characters that someone is out to get them, though its significance may not be noted until later.

At the Referee's discretion, the characters might hear about the *Shaddalakkii* again, in a new report. Perhaps the ship has been at the heart of a protest about over-zealous searches. Perhaps she has heroically engaged and destroyed a pirate vessel – or perhaps she was lost with all hands trying to defend a merchant ship from a commerce raider.

Alternatively the ship may be encountered again as the characters return to Imperial space and may even become a regular contact.

SCENE 3: ROAD AHEAD CLOSED (KEY SCENE)

This scene will most likely occur on the Phelina Main, before the characters Jump to Shur (assuming they decide to go that way). If the characters are not planning to travel via Shur then this scene will present a piece of information that is interesting (and may be relevant later) but not critical.

As the characters make planetfall, one of their routine tasks is to check for news and current events in nearby systems. Normally this information comes back with the high points of local news over the past few months – the engagement of a planetary ruler's daughter, a major business merger and a military exercise in nearby systems, for example.

This time, however, the news is rather more grave. Among the usual rumors and gossip are a disturbingly large number of ship 'missing, presumed lost' notices. There have been three vessels lost in the region in the last 2 months. Wreckage from one has been found, and there are rumors that the crew of another ship lost some months ago were taken prisoner by a commerce raider which then destroyed their vessel. The crew spent some time aboard the raider then were transferred to a merchant vessel acting as a support and resupply ship, finally being released on a backwater world several parsecs away.

It is obvious that a commerce raider is operating in the region. Experienced spacers would prefer to be 'taken' by a raider than a pirate, since their chances are better with a lawful raider than with a crew of scum facing the death penalty if they are caught. However, losing your ship is never a good prospect.

Perhaps more immediately important to the characters is the reaction of the high-tech world of Amunkhan to these developments. Amunkhan, which possesses a small but highly efficient navy, has sealed off the Amunkhan cluster by deploying naval squadrons to Shur. All non-Amunkhan vessels entering the system are briskly turned around and fired on if the show the slightest sign of resistance. Amunkhan has issued a statement to the effect that it is allowing no traffic whatsoever (other than its own ships) through Shur, to any destination. Therefore there is no reason for foreign vessels to be in the system, and any that are detected run the risk of being treated as pirates or raiders.

In effect, the route through Shur has just been closed. The characters are going to have to take the longer route via Spirit or Orlain.

Proceeding Through Shur Anyway

It would be possible to try to get through Shur and on to Gazala. However, it will be necessary to refuel in the system

somewhere. The Starport is impossible, which leaves few alternatives. Skimming fuel from the system's two gas giants is the most likely option. However, the Amunkhan navy will be well aware of the possibility, and will almost certainly have patrols or, worse, mines, to prevent this.

Ice can be obtained from a suitable planetoid in one of the two belts or far out in the Oort cloud. However, this means searching for a suitable source, which can take weeks in the far outsystem. The planetoid belts are likely to be patrolled, and Jumping direct into one is rather hazardous.

The necessity for safe Jumps and movement into the search area, the search itself and the need for stealth all add up to considerable delays that the characters probably cannot afford. All the time the characters will be consuming shipboard stores and running down their life support, and of course there is the ever-present possibility of a sudden and violent death or a long period of internment as a result of an encounter with the Amunkhan navy.

The Imperium will be protesting the restriction of its free trade and the movement of its citizens, but it will be some time before this has any effect, if ever. Until then, travelling via Shur is not really an option.

If the players are sufficiently stubborn (or worse, they are the sort that think in meta-game terms like 'the Referee would not kill us off for this' then they may try the passage anyway. Let them.

The Amunkhan navy has only a few dozen ships, but its highly efficient TL15 vessels are backed up by sophisticated sensor drones and mines. The latter are little more than passive sensor drones with a pair of missiles aboard. Upon detecting an unidentified vessel they will obtain a good lock and launch their missiles before broadcasting a general alert. This system is cheap enough that coverage is considerable. Even if the missiles do not kill a ship (and being hit by a missile while skimming fuel is not a pleasant experience for any vessel!), a 300t patrol ship should be close enough to respond to the intruder.

It is up to the Referee and the players whether pig-headed insistence on going through Shur will lead to death, internment, a stern warning and turnaround or just severe damage to the ship, but in any event the Referee can use this incident to establish that the *Traveller* universe is a harsh place where bad things really can happen and where metagame thinking does not apply.

ACT 3: OBSTRUCTIONS AND COUNTEROFFERS

As the characters make their way towards the Grand Duchy down the Phelina Main, agents of House Randall attempt to intercept them and prevent the delivery of the heirlooms.

SCENE 1: SOFTLY SOFTLY (KEY SCENE)

Early in the journey, the characters enter port and clear customs without undue fuss. While looking for a suitable venue for some R&R, or maybe as they seek cargo or freight to ship to their next destination, the characters are approached by a female Vargr. Vargr are relatively uncommon this far to Rimward, but not unknown.

The Vargr (whose name is Gonusuen Ulo, but goes by the human name of Sue Ulo) says that she is an independent shipping factor temporarily based out of the port here. Her clothing (Solomani-style trouser suits worn with brightly colored shirts and loud ties) certainly screams 'well-off Vargr!', and she has records on file at the port showing several deals brokered over the past few weeks.

Sue tells the characters that she urgently needs passage for herself and a couple of tons of cargo. She needs to get back into

the Imperium to deal with a crisis that has blown up. The situation is quite complex but the short version is that her business partner has managed to get herself arrested on embezzlement charges and Sue needs to sort out the legal defense. Her first stop is the Scout Way Station at Ku (her partner sells a lot of supplies to the Scouts and Sue hopes to obtain transaction records to show the deals were above board), then she needs to go on to 025-841.

Sue offers to pay double High Passage rate per Jump (Cr20,000 per Jump) plus standard freight rate for two tons of cargo. This is mostly a collection of trade samples she has been using to build a client base out here beyond the Imperial border. If the characters bring up the subject of their cargo or the charter, Sue appears to think for a while, then suggests that one of her colleagues at the port might be able to find a vessel bound for Stoner to take on the freight. Sue can pay for that. The charter will still be completed and the characters get their fee plus what Sue is paying. They win both ways...

If the characters refuse, Sue will act disappointed but will not push the matter. She has orders not to jeopardize later attempts to obtain the heirlooms by tipping House Randall's hand.

If they agree to Sue's proposal, the characters will be paid for their services but sooner or later they will be confronted by representatives of Miracru TradeCorp, who want to know why the delivery never happened. Under Imperial law, failure to discharge the terms of a charter is a serious offense, and the characters can expect to be hauled in by the Ministry of Justice at some time. At the very least they will lose their ship and be sued by the firm. They may face prison if criminal charges are brought.

New adventures, involving a run for the border and a new life far from Imperial space, beckon – but this one is over.

Referee

The Referee should introduce this event early in the journey; perhaps at the first or second port of call. House Randall was hoping to spend a little money and quietly make the problem go away. They will now move to more direct methods, though they are still reluctant to use violence.

SCENE 2: A VERY OBLIQUE WARNING (KEY SCENE)

After the encounter with Sue, the characters move on to their next destination. Here, things begin to go steadily wrong from the moment the characters' ship enters berth. The ground crew are slow and inefficient, and are called away several times to deal with 'urgent' tasks elsewhere. The port authority insists on a full customs check and safety inspection before it will allow the ship to unload, refuel or take off. This is entirely legal of course, but taken to an extreme.

The inspection is particularly nit-picky and is more slow than thorough. However, by the time the port authority team have finished crawling over the hull looking for smuggling compartments and looking inside every ventilator grille, they have compiled an impressive list of defects that must be put right if the ship is to be declared spaceworthy.

The attitude of the port authority team is very different from that of the Imperial Navy crew who conducted the original inspection. Characters who are good judges of character (i.e. who possess skills such as Sense Motive, Leader or similar, may realize that something is going on here.

T20: Make a DC15 Sense Motive check to realize that something is amiss. A successful DC15 Interstellar Law check (at a –2 penalty for unfamiliarity with local regulations if the characters have never traveled this region of space before) indicates that the character is sure that some of the reasons for declaring the ship unspaceworthy

are invented on the spot and not covered in any regulation.

CT: Roll 8+, DM Leader skill to realize something is amiss. Roll 9+, DM Legal skill, to spot irregularities in the inspection procedure.

Observation of the inspection team suggests that the leader is prompting her subordinates to find or invent problems, or blatantly overruling them. She eventually comes up with a list of defects, which must be put right before the ship is allowed to unload, take on fuel or lift off. These include:

- Contamination in the ventilation system (slight long-term biohazard)
- Incorrect calibration of portside aft Contragrav lifter (in-port navigation hazard)
- Backup avionics software provision inadequate (advisory only)
- Unacceptable biological contamination in galley area (slight immediate biohazard)
- Fuel-flow regulation system slow to operate. Emergency cutoff inadequate (hazard to navigation)

Some members of the inspection team look surprised when the leader marks the ship down as unsafe. The faults all exist but they are well all within reasonable tolerances. However, the report makes it look like the ship is a flying plague bomb, liable to wobble across the landing area if its lifters are used, or simply explode due to fuel leakage.

The ship will not be permitted to take off until the lifter problem is sorted out ("and ideally the avionics backups should be brought up to standard"), it will not be permitted fuel until the fuel regulation system is overhauled ("in fact, I'd order you to pump your tanks dry immediately if that didn't pose such a danger of explosion"), and she cannot offload her cargo until the Biohazard label is lifted. To add insult to injury, characters will not be allowed to go 'ashore' – i.e. into the port and the world beyond – until they have either cleared the Biohazard situation or passed through a medical examination and a day-long quarantine period.

This is a shocking misrepresentation of the situation, but the characters are going to have to comply. They could probably just lift off and run for it, especially if the port has few defenses, but this would result in their ship being labeled as a 'suspect vessel' and the captain a felon. Every legitimate port in the region would be closed to them and every patrol ship would be a potential enemy. Running is a bad option, as any experienced spacer would realize.

The only options seem to be to fix the problems or to persuade the port authority to rescind the inspection result.

The Guilty Parties

House Randall has thoroughly bribed the port authority administrator, a middle-aged man named Garvin Dharikstaan, and the inspection team leader, a woman named Ruath Thierrell. They have been instructed to give the characters a very hard time while they are in port, to soften them up for an offer they really won't want to refuse.

Neither Garvin nor Ruath are willing to lose their jobs over the matter, so they will remain just within the outer extreme of legal conduct. However, they are willing to be very unreasonable. Other ships come and go without so much as an inspection while the characters attempt to obtain permission to just offload their cargo or go ashore.

Their adherence to the letter of the law means that if the characters can sanitize their ship to the satisfaction of the inspection team, they will be cleared. However, the standards are

insanely high.

Reason, Bribery and Influence

Since both Garvin and Ruath have been bribed to act the way they do, sweet reason will not work, and it is unlikely that the characters have the money to outbid House Randall. Both officials have received Cr10,000 already and have been promised another Cr10,000 if House Randall is happy with their performance. The characters would have to offer at least a similar amount to have any chance of success.

Attempts at intimidation are risky. The port has security personnel who would react violently to an attack on port staff, and a shootout with officials in any port is a good way to make it onto the 'wanted' list. However, if the characters manage to strike the right balance of subtlety and threat they have a chance.

Attempts at intimidation should be roleplayed rather than merely being the subject of a die roll. Both officials feel quite secure and thus will be difficult to intimidate.

T20: DC20 Intimidation check required to intimidate each official into cooperating. If the check is failed by 5 or more, the official becomes actively hostile.

CT: Roll 11+, DM +1 is STR A+, Intimidation skill, to successfully intimidate each official. Failure by 3 or more results in hostility.

Hostile officials may respond by calling security and threatening to arrest the characters. They will do this as a last resort, since they do not want to answer questions about why the incident arose.

A clever group may instead play the two officials off against one another, perhaps intimidating one and misdirecting the other. This is a matter for good roleplaying. The Referee should note that neither official is willing to jeopardize their job over this matter, so they will back down as gracefully as possible if outmaneuvered.

Arguing the Case

The characters can attempt to get the quarantine and safety downchecks rescinded through 'proper channels' if they choose. The easiest way to do this is to show the official in question that there is no way their assertion can be upheld within the letter of interstellar law, and perhaps threatening legal action of some sort. Arguing the case this way requires separate attempts for each problem.

T20: Each matter requires a DC15 K/Interstellar Law check, or a DC20 P/Administration check.

CT: Roll 9+, DM Legal skill, or 11+ DM Admin skill if Legal is unavailable.

If the characters think of it, they should have the results of a boarding an inspection by an Imperial warship just a few days previously on file. This would not be proof that the ship is spaceworthy, especially given how borderline the inspection was, but it could be used as a bargaining chip if they characters want to try to show the port authority is acting unreasonably. As already noted, the two officials want to avoid an investigation so will be influenced by such measures.

Getting the Restrictions Lifted

Ruath is responsible for the fuel and lifters, and Garvin for the Biohazard/quarantine issue. The relevant official must be persuaded in some way to lift each of the three issues before the characters can proceed. If wheedling, psychology intimidation and legal arguments fail the characters, the only solution is to fix the problem.

Biohazard: This one is fairly simple, but hard work. The

characters must renew their air filters and crawl around inside the air ducts cleaning out all the little crannies where biological contamination can grow, and must thoroughly sanitize the galley. The task is quite a big one and will take several man-days of work. Each 6-hour stint put in by a character allows them to make a check to see if they made any progress. Five successes are necessary before the ship's systems are squeaky-clean enough to satisfy a second inspection. Required skill checks are given below:

T20: DC10 T/Mechanical or DC5 P/Janitor skill (this is not one character are likely to have!)

CT: Roll 7+, DM Mechanical skill or JoT.

Fuel Flow: The fuel flow problem is a minor one, which could someday become quite serious. Fixing it will require some spares (costing 2d6X500 credits) which can be obtained by someone going out of the port (but remember the one-day quarantine) or ordered in from a supplier (which will take much longer as the parts get mysteriously held up at the port for 1-3 days).

The job is a long and complex one, and can only be carried out by a qualified engineer (i.e. someone possessing T/Engineering skill at a rank of at least 1 (CT: Engineering skill). Up to two other people can assist the task, which requires a total of 4 man-days of work.

Lifters and Avionics: Recalibrating the lifter can be carried out alongside improving the backup provision in the ship's avionics system. This one is actually a fairly simple, though lengthy, task which can be carried out by anyone with T/Computer skill at a rank of at least 1 (CT: Computer skill at any level. It takes 3 man-days, though this period is halved if assistance is available from a character with T/Gravitics skill (CT: Gravitics skill) at any level.

Reinspection: As might be expected, the port authority will drag its feet over conducting a reinspection, and can probably get away with this for a few more days. The characters can speed up the process in various ways. Their ship is an Imperial vessel, and even out beyond the border the Imperium has a lot of influence. Threats to lodge a protest (which would lead to an investigation) are likely to get results after a token period of delay. It is also possible to get the ship inspected by the chief engineer of another starship. Any character with K/Interstellar Law (CT: Legal) skill will know this. If the two engineers concur that the ship is spaceworthy, an immediate inspection by the port authority can be demanded in order to confirm this. Even in the backwaters, this practice is generally honored, since word gets around about ports that unnecessarily detain starships.

Getting another ship's engineer to assist is a matter for some roleplaying, and could lead to a useful future contact or an adventure hook if the engineer decides he needs a favor in return.

Resolution

Finally, after much delay and hassle, the characters will have managed to get their ship certified spaceworthy and have the run of the port. As they refuel and perhaps look for a cargo, they receive an anonymous, text-only com message. It reads:

YOU SEEM TO HAVE A PROBLEM.

I CAN MAKE IT GO AWAY.

REPLY WITH THIS MESSAGE FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

If the characters do reply, they receive an automated message directing them to Ander's Bookstore and Coffee House. They are instructed to ask for 'Mister Richardson' and wait there. Scene 3 will play out when they go to meet this Mr Richardson.

If they do not reply, they characters will eventually eave the world. As their ship climbs to orbit, another com message arrives, again anonymously:

LAST CHANCE.

THIS IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN EVERY PORT, ON EVERY WORLD.

IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE.

YOU WILL LOSE YOUR SHIP BEFORE LONG.

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS.

YOU CAN MAKE A LOT OF MONEY AND GAIN POWERFUL FRIENDS.

TURN AROUND AND LAND AGAIN.

REPLY FOR FURHTER INSTRUCITONS.

The same instructions to meet Mr Richardson will result from a reply to this message – and the crew will not be harassed by the port authority.

SCENE 3: AN OFFER AT ANDER'S

If the characters do decide to meet this Mr Richardson, they find that Ander's Bookstore is a popular coffee house that also sells the odd book – actual paper books, something of a rarity but popular among traditionalists. The place is always fairly busy, with 10-20 patrons sitting at tables or lounging on sofas chatting or reading their purchases. The coffee is pretty good, too.

The staff nod knowingly when the characters ask about Mr Richardson, and say he'll be here soon. Menatime, they are invited to select a coffee and a cake fee of charge.

After a few minutes a young female Vargr in nondescript workers' clothes approaches the table and sits down without being invited. The staff bring her a bowl of tea (she hates even the smell of coffee, but one must make sacrifices). This is of course the mysterious 'Mr Richardson'. Her real name is Sengknua Ruedharkaedh, though she will not reveal this.

"Please address me as Mr Richardson, and in case you feel belligerent, let me point out that this is a very public place. You don't know how many of my people are around. You understand?" the Vargr says briskly.

"I'll be blunt. You have something I want, or more accurately, you have something I have been asked to obtain. I am willing to buy out your charter for 150,000 credits in cash, right now. If you agree, there is more work for you in future, for a more influential patron than your current employer. If you decline... well, there are many ports between here and Stoner and you will run into delays and additional expenses in every single one. Maybe afterward too. None of us wants that, now do we?"

'Richardson' leans back in her chair and manages a fairly human grin, though coming from a Vargr this is more predatory than friendly. Her manner is one of absolute confidence and authority. Despite her clothing it is apparent that she is a Vargr of some power and influence, or at least is skilled at projecting that image (which in Vargr society amounts to the same thing!).

Richardson is not willing to divulge the identity of her employers, but she is quite happy to try an appeal to the characters' patriotism (if any). Most of what she says is based in fact, though it could not be said to be true in the strictest sense of the word.

"I'll level with you, gentles," Richardson says. "You are carrying objects that belong to an Imperial noble house. They were more or less extorted out of owners whose situation was vulnerable at the time. Your mission is to deliver them to the Grand Duchy so that they can be returned to House Stoner, their original owner. Now, this is House Stoner, staunch opponent of the Imperium, whose

founders turned their back on Emperor Cleon and headed out to found their own petty Empire. Hardly a deserving recipient. And you know why you've been hired to do this? So that Miracru TradeCorp can bribe its way into an exclusive freighting deal between the Duchy and the Imperium – a deal that will put folks like you out of business. How do you feel about that?"

Richardson shrugs (another very human gesture that looks odd on a Vargr) and goes on. "The people opposing you are doing it out of patriotism. These objects have been all but stolen from loyal Imperial citizens, to be presented to not-quite-enemies – and for nothing but commercial gain. That's the heritage of the Imperium you're shipping, Gentles. Can you stomach turning it over to the descendents of traitors?"

Richardson is deliberately hinting that the characters may encounter fanatical opposition along the way. She wants to plant seeds of doubt and fear in their minds. Characters with appropriate skills (Psychology, Sense Motive etc) may be able to determine that she is choosing her words more carefully than she appears to be, and that her patriotic fervor is a poise. However, most of what she says is more or less true.

Richardson finally repeats her offer: "150,000 credits to walk away now, and I can broker you some very nice cargo deals or courier work if you want. Or help big business undermine the shipping trade and put yourselves out of business. What about it?"

Considering the Offer

Richardson is willing to be bargained up to 250,000 credits but has no budget for more. However, on the flip side there is the consideration that the characters have taken on a charter to deliver the goods in Imperial space and are bound by Imperial law on the subject, which takes a hard line with dealbreaking of this sort. If they ever go back to the Imperium, the characters can expect a summons to court and at least some considerable fines. They are likely to lose their ship-operator's license and maybe even spend some time in prison.

Of course, if the characters do not expect to return to the Imperium then they are free to accept the offer. If the subject is brought up, Richardson says she can 'sort that out'. In truth, she might be able to do so but would never bother. All that is important is the cargo.

If the characters refuse the offer, Richardson will try one last gambit after offering a little more money. She tells the characters they're traitors and they will regret their actions, then tries to goad them into attacking her. She is pretty sure that the security people she has planted among the patrons will be able to intervene in time to prevent any real harm coming to her, and the staff are primed to summon local law enforcement personnel.

With many witnesses to an assault (even one prevented by 'concerned bystanders'), Richardson should be able to get the characters locked up for a while. Once they are in jail, facing a trial and possible incarceration, they may be amenable to further persuasion.

Opposition:

- Richardson
- Security/Thugs
- Local Police, if called

ACT 4: DESPERATE MEASURES

The characters have rejected an opportunity to be bought out. Now the gloves come off.

SCENE 1: JOURNEYING ONWARD

As the characters continue their trade run, House Randall implements more decisive measures. Its agents are now authorized to use lethal force as well as harassing the characters using more legal means. It might be that the next two scenes do not occur for a while, and that all the characters encounter is increased bureaucratic hassle and nit-picking at the various ports of call.

If the characters are sociable and tend to talk to other ship crews, they may encounter the crew of a Scout/Courier similar to their own, the *Surplus to Requirements*. Over a couple of drinks, the crew talk about how dangerous the shipping lanes have become since the Solomani Rim War began. Just a couple of weeks ago they thought they were goners when a small vessel – a patrol ship or corsair of some kind – appeared on their passive detectors at very close range. It must have been lying in wait for a victim. After firing a warning laser salvo across their bows, the raider demanded surrender. At that range there was no chance of running and the raider was 3-4 times larger than a mere Scout. The *Surplus* surrendered and was boarded by several people in Imperial-style vac suits armed with snub SMGs, accelerator rifles and some lasers.

The boarders held the crew at gunpoint as they searched the ship from one end to the other (that doesn't take long in a Scout/Courier) and interrogated her computers. Then they locked the crew in a stateroom and ordered them to remain there. When they eventually broke out, the raiders were gone. They hadn't taken anything, though they had wiped part of the ship's records.

There was no sign of the raider, and the *Surplus to Requirements* made for the safety of port as fast as she could. The crew note that while they cooperated they were not harmed, though the raiders made it very clear that they were willing to deal harshly with resistance.

Referee

This incident should set off alarm bells among the characters, and may forewarn them to maintain a good sensor watch. The Referee should decide on a local star system as the scene of the incident. The Scout crew did not see the raider vessel clearly, but can guess at its performance. With a little prompting they make a best-guess at 2-g or better performance, at least two weapons turrets mounting lasers, and a displacement of 300t.

The most likely Imperial vessel matching that description is a 300t *Velvet Glove* class yacht, a Jump-3, 3g vessel designed more as a personal VIP transport than a flying palace; the vessel of a working noble.

Of course, there are many other vessels of similar characteristics, especially beyond the frontier. The Amun Khan Navy, for example, is known to operate 3g 300t patrol vessels.

SCENE 2: MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Emerging from Jump, the characters pick up a GK (Distress) signal. It is emanating from a moving position some distance from their location. A quick navigational plot indicates that the source is drifting without power and is on a collision course with a nearby moon. The characters' ship is the only one in range, and can make intercept with a couple of hours' safety margin if it changed course right away.

Interstellar law and the customs of star travel (the 'siblinghood of the void') dictate that a distress call must be answered if at all possible. The characters have no passengers aboard or any other real reason not to attempt a rescue of the distressed vessel.

The GK signal is an automated repeat beacon. There is no response to any attempt to open communications with the distressed ship, but the beacon does include some basic telemetry

data and the ship's transponder ID.

The vessel is an Imperial Interstellar Scout Service Scout/Courier registered out of the Scout Base at Ku. Its designation number is followed by an unofficial name – *Wild at Heart*. Telemetry data indicates that the vessel has some power but has suffered sudden and catastrophic damage. Parts of the ship are open to vacuum and she has fired her weapons. This suggests that the vessel was attacked rather than suffering a systems breakdown or other calamity.

No other data is available, except to note that the ship has a crew of 4 and was on active Scout Service duty – probably routine navigational survey work but possibly fill-in patrol duty replacing some of the naval vessels transferred Rimward.

The Wreck of the Wild at Heart

As the characters' ship closes with the wreck, instruments pick up a cloud of debris around the ship, most of it on slowly divergent courses. The wreck is tumbling slowly, making a direct docking problematical. There are clear signs that the vessel received several laser hits. Her bridge is open to space and her turret has been shot away, along with part of the port 'wing'. There are several entry points to the hull.

Access is possible by jumping across on a line; a tricky maneuver but one that most spacers end up carrying out at some point.

The floorplan of the vessel is almost identical to the characters' ship, so there is no problem moving around. It does not take long to search the vessel (about 30-40 minutes). The following will be found:

General: This was indeed a serving Scout ship. It is old but well-maintained, comfortably messy with the personal items the crew brought aboard. Clothing and small items are floating about all over the ship since internal gravity has failed. Emergency lighting is on and there is still power, but the loss of the bridge rendered the ship unable to maneuver.

It should be obvious to the characters that people not very different to themselves lived and worked aboard this ship. They left boots and coffee cups lying around. They drew sketches of sunsets over strange worlds and pinned them to cabin walls. They spent long hours processing survey data in the ship's common area.

And they died suddenly without even knowing why...

Bridge & Avionics Area: Shattered by laser fire. Smears of whoever was on bridge watch can be found on the walls, but the body is gone. Likely they did not live long enough to die of decompression. The bridge iris valve, leading to the rest of the ship, is distorted and jammed open.

Crew Staterooms and Common Area: Doors to all rooms have been blown off by internal pressure as the main section decompressed. In one stateroom is a deflated rescue ball containing a half-dressed human corpse. It is obvious that the crewmember was able to get into the ball and inflate it before the semi-airtight door failed, and that the ball was then punctured by several rounds from a projectile weapon of some kind. There is no sign of a weapon on or near the body.

There are data terminals in the common area. They are still functional but the central computer cores have been physically destroyed, rendering them useless.

Aft Section, Main Deck: The ship's Air/Raft is in place and intact. At the opposite side of the rear area the sensor room has been shot up with smallarms, probably to conceal the identity of whoever attacked the ship. The engineering section is still sealed and has life support. The drives have been disabled by weapons fire. There are brackets for two shotguns over the main engineering console. One is missing.

Upper Deck: The ship's 'loft' or upper gallery is open to space. The turret has been shot into wreckage, and near-misses have peeled open the hull along the length of the upper gallery. The storage area has been rifled and the forward sensor position deliberately smashed.

Lower Deck: The lower deck cargo area contains a few crates of supplies stenciled with Scout Service markings. They have been forced open but the contents (life support spares, mostly) have not been removed.

There is a vac-suited body on the floor between the crates. Her faceplate is cracked and her suit breached by several smallarms hits. An empty shotgun lies nearby. The corpse's nametag reads "Senior Scout A. Stevens." The corpse was once a middle-aged woman. Her ID, personal comm and wedding ring could be retrieved but the search would be rather grisly.

A blood splash on a back wall suggests that Stevens hit at least one of her attackers before they killed her.

Searching: The characters are on a tight time frame, since the vessel is on a collision course with a moon. It is obvious that the attackers took pains to conceal their identity, though they left behind several 10mm cartridge cases from snub weapons. These are all made by Instellarms, the biggest arms manufacturer in the Imperium. Instellarms sells its wares widely but does not have a very large market beyond the Imperial border. It is highly unlikely that a foreign navy would equip its personnel with Imperial ammunition.

It is likely that the vessel was not originally on a collision course with the moon but was redirected. This might have been possible from the emergency piloting console in engineering, though the drives are quite thoroughly wrecked. It is possible that the drives were still partially functional when the ship was boarded, and that the destruction was finished off as the attackers departed. This is in keeping with the general destruction of the ship's computers, an unusually thorough measure given that the ship has been sent to crash into a moon, which will destroy all evidence of the attack completely.

Referee

The Scout ship was simply the victim of mistaken identity. It was attacked from close range by the House Randall yacht, then boarded to finish off the job. The boarders knew they faced the death penalty for piracy if they left any witnesses, so have engaged in a fit of overkill.

The attack occurred about 4 hours before the characters arrived, but the yacht fled the area (perhaps Jumping out if the Referee thinks this is appropriate) immediately afterward.

The families of the crew, and the IISS, would be glad to learn what happened to the missing ship. Returning Stevens' wedding ring would be a gracious gesture that would win the characters goodwill with the grieving family.

SCENE 3: EXTREME PREJUDICE

At a planetfall after the attempted rescue of the *Wild At Heart*, the characters (who should by now be expecting a serious attempt on their lives) will be attacked by a team of thugs hired by House Randall. Their orders are to capture the crew and force them to turn over their cargo in return for their release. If this is not practicable, the thugs are to kill or hospitalize any and all members of the crew they can. If the ship can be prevented from moving on, the cargo can be obtained by other means.

The Referee must choose a suitable moment and situation for the attack. If possible, it will be carried out away from the Starport. If local law levels are very high, the thugs will not have access to firearms at all. However, it is safe to assume that they have

managed to obtain weaponry available a law level or two lower than that of the current location. The stats presented in the Cast section list two weapons options (one for low law, one for higher) but the Referee should feel free to give the thugs extra weaponry or a couple more personnel if the situation warrants it.

The Hit

The thugs are not fanatics. They are professionals in the field of violence and are willing to take risks, but they will not fight to the death. Ideally, they will ambush the characters and threaten them into surrendering without a fight. If that fails, a simple, brutal assault will be carried out. The thugs will try to have a clear escape route (vehicles waiting etc) open to them, and will withdraw if things go badly. They will usually try to rescue wounded comrades.

Tactics will be simple and direct, but the thugs are not stupid. They do not want a standup fight, they want a quick and easy victory. If guns are in use, some of the thugs will attack at close range while others give covering fire with longer-ranged weapons. All of them will use sensible basic tactics: using cover, moving from position to position to get a clear shot, and helping out comrades who are under fire. This is not a military unit but neither is it a bunch of amateurs who will stand in the open blazing away until they are shot down. Characters who attempt to do that will not last long.

The Referee should note that in firefight, some people (even experienced thugs) can become fixated on a single target to the exclusion of all else, while most will shoot at the easiest available target unless deliberately attempting to suppress someone.

Individual thugs can be driven into cover by several near-misses or hits on body armor, and will remain suppressed for 1-3 combat rounds before beginning to act offensively once again. Characters who respond to the attack with a hail of fire should be able to keep at least some of the thugs under cover and unable to shoot, perhaps gaining time to escape.

The hit might become a car chase, a running gunfight or a martial arts brawl at the Referee's discretion. Like most combats, it should rapidly go out of control and become a desperate, confused scramble rather than a neat set-piece of die-rolling and damage recording.

Opposition

- Several thugs (probably 3-5)

ACT 5: STONER OR BUST!

Having failed to stop the characters, Lady Elizabeth resorts to outright piracy in a final bid to reclaim her family's heirlooms.

SCENE 1: CONTACT!

As the characters prepare for Jump to Gazala (or perhaps as they emerge in the Gazala system), their sensors pick up an unidentified vessel closing fast. It masses 300t and matches the parameters of a high-Jump yacht. Its transponder seems to have been disabled (this is illegal in most civilized systems and is the hallmark of a military ship or a pirate).

Any doubts about the identity and intentions of the vessel are dispelled when it drops a tight maser communications beam onto the characters' vessel and broadcasts a curt message:

SCOUT/COURIER *BROADSIDE OF A BARN*.
YOU ARE IN POSSESSION OF CONTRABAND.
HEAVE TO FOR BOARDING IMMEDIATELY.
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO INITIATE COMMUNICATION WITH
ANY OTHER VESSEL OR INSTALLATION.
FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL BE MET WITH LETHAL

FORCE.

The message sounds quite official and military, which is the intent. In fact this ship has no legal power to stop other vessels and is engaging in an act of piracy. A visual message follows the initial contact. The screen shows a clean, orderly starship bridge. A pilot and another officer (astrogator or electronic warfare officer perhaps) sit at conn positions, with a raised captain's chair behind them. Beside this chair stands a regal-looking young woman. Like her crew, she wears a military style vac suit (helmets are off but secured for ready use on stands nearby), but hers has a long cloak attached – a fashion common to Imperia nobles. She has a sword and dagger on her belt rather than guns. Before the characters can say much, the woman starts talking over the top of them. Her tone is imperious, clipped and angry:

"I am Lady Elizabeth Randall-Hofnier. You have goods belonging to my family in your cargo hold. You will stand down your gunners and prepare to receive my boarding party. Be advised that I am quite prepared to destroy your vessel rather than allow our heritage to be turned over to traitors.

Cut your drive *now* and signal your surrender or I will open fire."

Options

The characters' options are rather limited here. Their vessel is armed, but it is almost certainly not a match for Lady Elizabeth's. Their ship is also slower than hers and she is already in weapons range. Any attempt to negotiate results in a repeat of the demand to surrender, though Lady Elizabeth does offer a personal guarantee that after she takes off the cargo and destroys the ship, captives will be safely delivered to the nearest starport and released unharmed.

There are a couple of rays of hope. If the characters are outbound, they may be able to run for Jump. If they can survive long enough to bring up the drive and reach a suitable Jump point, they can Jump out (though there is no guarantee that Lady Elizabeth will not catch up later).

If they are inbound, it might be possible to reach the safety of the Starport if it has any decent weapons. Lady Elizabeth will not chase a ship into weapons range of an installation, and will sheer off before she gets too close. She will have to leave the system almost immediately after that, since a piratical attack of this sort will bring warships after her either immediately or as soon as a patrol vessel arrives in system. However, reaching a safe Jump point or the port is a longish run and outgunned as they are, the characters can't take many rounds of fire from the yacht's laser batteries.

SCENE 2: SALVATION IS AT HAND

Just as things seem hopeless, a third option presents itself. A look at the long-range scope shows a warship on patrol in the system. It has been coasting quietly (as warships on patrol often do) and now activates its transponder, sending a standard greeting and please-identify message to the two vessels it has just picked up.

Depending upon circumstances and location (the Referee should decide), the ship's transponder might indicate it is a Stoner or Amunkhan vessel, or even an Imperial ship. Almost all navies are sworn to defend civilian ships from piracy, so it is a sure bet that this vessel will help if asked, or if it detects weapons fire.

However, if the characters open communication with the warship, Lady Elizabeth has said she will open fire (and she will!). It is some distance out, and will not be able to assist them

immediately. Lady Elizabeth will surely not chase the characters under the guns of a warship, especially one like this, in the 400t range and therefore more powerful than her yacht. It is safe to expect that as soon as the patrol vessel is in range she will admit defeat and enter Jump to escape.

If the characters intend to keep their cargo and their ship, their best option is to pretend to comply, then make a run for safety (Jump, port or the warship), calling for help as they go. They will take some hits but Scout/Couriers are built tough – maybe they'll make it. Their best hope is the warship.

Or so it seems...

SCENE 3: A RUNNING FIGHT

As the *Broadside of a Barn* comes about and accelerates like a startled rabbit towards safety, Lady Elizabeth's ship attempts to jam their communications and opens fire. A sudden lunge might surprise the gunners and gain a few moments, and the first salvo will be fired to miss – warning shots only. After that, the gloves are off and Lady Elizabeth will shoot to kill. If she cannot have the heirlooms back, Grand Duke Stoner isn't getting them either.

The scene should play out as a running fight between the scout and the much larger yacht. It will take two rounds of space combat to get close enough to the warship that a message can punch through the jamming, plus a third round to reach effective weapons range. The first round is 'free' (i.e. the characters' ship is not hit) unless they are especially blatant about their intention to run.

As the characters reach comms range, the warship is already turning to intercept them. It sends a simple burst transmission in a standard code which translates as 'close me; I will assist' – a standard warship signal straight out of the manual.

Straight out of the Solomani Confederation signals manual, that is...

SCENE 4: A MOMENT OF REALIZATION...

The characters realize that they are accelerating towards a Solomani commerce raider just as the vessel drops her false ID codes and starts to display her real ones. She is CNS *Gallant Liberty*, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Alexi Hastings. A voice-only message is sent to the characters' ship:

"Imperial Vessel: Commander Hastings conveys deepest apologies and regrets at his necessary *ruse de guerre*. This vessel's actions are legal under the Laws of War. She is a regular warship of the Solomani Confederation Navy. Your ship will be disabled but personnel who surrender are guaranteed safety and all consideration under the relevant treaties and conventions. Please surrender to avoid an unnecessary effusion of bloodshed. We will engage the pirate."

As the characters take this in, the Solomani vessel brings up her weapons and prepares to fight. The characters are headed straight down the throat of her batteries with the yacht in pursuit.

There are some decisions to be made here...

SCENE 5: ENDGAMES

There are several possible outcomes to this situation. Lady Elizabeth is fanatical in her quest to regain her heirlooms but she is an Imperial noble, and thus personally involved in the war against the Solomani. The Solomani ship thinks Lady Elizabeth is a pirate, but will not allow the scout to escape. The characters could in theory ally with either vessel against the other, or they could just run for it. Bearing in mind that whichever won the fight, the characters would have to surrender to, their best option would be to take advantage of the situation and run for port or Jump.

If they do so, the characters will have to endure 3 more rounds

of space combat. The two larger ships concentrate on firing at one another since each sees the other as the significant threat here. Both spare the odd shot for the characters' ship. The most likely outcome is that the characters just managed to escape as the two larger ships battle it out.

If the characters' vessel is disabled and the Solomani win the fight, they will indeed be treated with courtesy and respect so long as they do not resist their captors. They will spend several weeks locked in a secure stateroom doubling as a brig before being turned loose at a neutral world. A possible adventure opportunity might arise if the raider is badly damaged and the crew have to free their captives to help them operate what's left of their ship.

If the characters fall into Lady Elizabeth's hands they will receive quite a beating but she will not be able to bring herself to murder them. They will be dumped on a low-tech world somewhere after a thoroughly unpleasant few weeks aboard the yacht.

The situation becomes more complex if the characters ally with one of the ships and manage to contribute to its victory. This creates a moral dilemma for the group they aid. Lady Elizabeth will not allow her heirlooms to be taken away when she's come so close to regaining them, and Commander Hastings is not permitted to allow Imperial ships to go unmolested. Neither will like what they have to do very much, but they will do it.

The characters are thus best advised to flee and let the others get on with it. If so, the fight will be inconclusive and both ships will break off, perhaps returning in future to encounter the characters in a new situation.

Assuming the characters manage to escape the fight with a borderline Jump-capable ship, they are now free to press on to Stoner.

EPILOGUE

The characters reach Stoner at last.

SCENE 1: ARRIVAL AND AFTERMATH

Imperial ships are not welcome in Stoner space, and so the characters can expect a frosty reception at Gazala and subsequent ports of call on the way to Stoner. In the Stoner system itself their vessel, like all foreign ships, escorted by fighter into the 'foreign quarter' of the extensive starport, here it is searched by brisk and rude Ducal Household troops. The characters are then kept waiting for half a day before being cleared to enter the port.

Foreigners are closely watched in the port, and ID checks are a frequent hassle. Even basic services like news and ship resupply are slow and subject to interference by openly hostile officials. It is obvious that non-Imperial crews are treated a lot better, and Stoner nationals suffer none of these delays.

While struggling through the procedures, the characters encounter a smartly-dressed party from a merchant ship berthed in the Foreign Quarter. This is the *Williamsburg Explorer*, a large merchant cruiser operated by the Glimmerdrift Trade Consortium which is based over to Trailing from the Grand Duchy. The crew are having a scarcely better time than the characters and are happy to spend the time of day swapping tales of places the respective crews have visited.

Finally, with all their business concluded the characters are able to meet the Miracru TradeCorp representative, a man named Andreas Gehricht. Gehricht is forced to live in a hotel in the foreign quarter and struggles daily with all the hassles the characters have just been through. But, he says, all that could change sometime soon. Now that he has the regalia to present at his audience with the Grand Duke in a couple of weeks' time, perhaps his petition for a permanent trade mission will be agreed. At that point Miracru will

establish a regular service from Arkaene to Stoner, the first Imperial company to do so.

But that's the future, he says. For now he has the remainder of the charter payment to give to the characters, and he has some funds available for reasonable expenses (such as combat damage). Getting anything more than emergency repairs here on Stoner would be an exercise in frustration, so Gehricht recommends the excellent starport at Grand Endeavor, just two Jumps away to Trailing, as a possible site for a good overhaul. After that, well, perhaps the characters will be headed back towards Imperial space, or maybe they might want to head onward to Trailing or Rimward across Kraxin or Williamsburg subsectors. The Glimmer Drift is an amazing sight in the night sky, and there are opportunities for a resourceful crew out here beyond the Imperial border.

But that's another story...

Referee

The characters will receive their payment and reasonable additional expenses. They should also gain experience, and will have time to train and learn new skills (if they gain a level) while their ship is being overhauled at Grand Endeavor. *Stoner Express* is a full adventure, so an experience award of 4,000XP x the average character level is called for. See notes at the beginning of this adventure for more details on experience awards.

EPIC ADVENTURE CHECKLIST

Act 1: Arkaene Highport

Key?	Done?	Scene
-	_____	Scene 1: In Port
K1	_____	Scene 2: No Chance Encounter
-	_____	Scene 3: Leaving Port

Act 2: En Route

-	_____	Scene 1: Ports Of Call
-	_____	Scene 2: Board And Search
K2	_____	Scene 3: Road Ahead Closed

Act 3: Obstructions And Counteroffers

K3	_____	Scene 1: Softly Softly (Key Scene)
K4	_____	Scene 2: A Very Oblique Warning
-	_____	Scene 3: An Offer At Ander's

Act 4: Desperate Measures

-	_____	Scene 1: Journeying Onward
-	_____	Scene 2: Mistaken Identity
K5	_____	Scene 3: Extreme Prejudice

Act 5: Stoner Or Bust!

K6	_____	Scene 1: Contact!
K7	_____	Scene 2: Salvation Is At Hand
K8	_____	Scene 3: A Running Fight
K9	_____	Scene 4: A Moment Of Realization
K10	_____	Scene 5: Endgames

Epilogue

-	_____	Scene 1: Arrival And Aftermath
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Cast of Characters

PEOPLE – MAJOR CHARACTERS

Skills and stats are not necessary for the majority of these characters as they are highly unlikely to be involved in a situation where combat or skill rolls are necessary.

MR JASIN SALISS

Representative of Miracru TradeCorp at Arkaene Highport.

Description:

Aged about 45, Saliss is a human of typically mixed blood who has been employed by Miracru since he left the Imperial Navy on a medical discharge some 12 years previously. Saliss' record with the firm has been excellent and his promotion to head the trans-border shipping operation when it is properly set up is a matter of course.

Saliss is in reasonable physical shape, though he walks rather stiffly as a result of wounds received in the service. He is somewhat fastidious about his appearance, even off duty, and is very fond of traditional Vilani food. His ready smile and easy, relaxed manner belie a sharp and calculating mind, but he is no corporate weasel. Saliss does not take himself too seriously and is prone to acts of charity prompted by a soft heart that even a decade in the shipping business cannot repress.

Saliss prefers to work with individuals he has selected himself and who he trusts than hotshot merchant-academy graduates. He considers a handshake to be as firm a commitment as any contract, and will never again trust someone who breaks a deal.

Notes:

Characters seeking to investigate Saliss' history will find that he served mainly in staff appointments, including a period in cruisers as flag lieutenant to Commodore Vinter on the Trailing border in Ley sector. He holds a MCG (Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry) but on a sealed citation. The relevant period in his personnel jacket simply reads; "It is known that during this period the officer served to the satisfaction of his superiors".

Saliss left the service as a Lieutenant-Commander on a medical discharge as a result of wounds incurred in Aid to Civil Government operations defending an Imperial embassy from a rioting mob. The location is not listed.

Saliss will not discuss these matters.

LADY ELIZABETH RANDALL-HOFNIER

Representative of House Randall and main opponent of the characters.

Description:

A less than attractive young woman of about 28, Lady Elizabeth has a chip on her shoulder. Lacking the grace and charm normally expected from nobles, she has found a niche for herself as a troubleshooter for her house. Her mother married a commoner and had the bad grace to have three elegant and attractive children before Elizabeth herself. Elizabeth thus grew up as a very angry and resentful individual, though she turns this anger outward rather than at herself or her family.

Something of a zealot, she is very effective in her chosen role and she has made it her goal in life to excel as a 'doer' rather than someone who gives orders or attends functions. She intends to inherit part of the family holdings, and is quite prepared to put the work in beforehand to earn the right. Already her siblings have

come to rely upon her to get things done for them, and in time she hopes the whole House will view her this way.

Although she is somewhat ruthless, Elizabeth is not amoral. She believes that the ends justify the means but unless one of her rages blinded her (it has happened before) she would not serve a cause she did not deem to be just. Her crusade to recover the family heirlooms from Miracru is of course (in her eyes) the most just of causes, and so almost any means are justified.

Notes:

Elizabeth has served as a ship's officer and a ground combat commander among her family's Huscarles (household troops). She has some experience and a little formal training, though she is to some extent still learning her trade. She has discovered the value of agents, spies and hired thugs, though she dislikes such underhand methods.

Elizabeth is competent with a range of weapons and enjoys kickboxing and fencing for sport. She carries a foil and dagger as tokens of her rank. However, her practical streak is such that if she fights she will normally use the most effective weapon for the circumstances, such as a combat shotgun or gauss pistol.

Lady Elizabeth Randall-Hofnier: Level 6 Noble Medium human

Stamina 48, Lifeblood 12 Init +5; Speed 9m (6 squares); **Armor Class: 15** (+6 Cloth, +1 dex), **Armor Rating: 6** (Cloth) Str 11, Dex13 Con11, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha16, Edu 17, Soc 15 SV Fort +2; Ref+3 Will +6;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Combat Shotgun	+4	3d6/2d6/1/d6	3	20 x2	1	10
Gauss Pistol	+4	1d12	80	18 x3	1/4	40
Foil	+4	1d4	1.5	18 x2	--	--
Dagger	+4	1d4	1.5	19 x2	--	--
Fist	+6	1d4	1.5	20 x2	--	--

Skills: Bribery +9, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +9, K/Interstellar Law +6, K/Imperial Noble Culture+ 8, Leader + 9, Liaison +8, P/Administration + 7, Sense Motive + 7,

Feats: Brawling, Armor (Light, Medium, Vac Suit), Iron Will, Natural Born Leader, Noble Presence, Noble Indignation, Trust Fund, Weapons (Marksman, Swordsman), Weapon Focus (Brawling)

Equipment: Cloth Armor, Combat Shogun, Gauss Pistol, Foil, Dagger, Vac Suit-14.

CT: Noble, 2 terms 7878BA

Skills: Brawling-1, Leader-1, Gun Combat-0

Equipment: Cloth Armor, Foil, Dagger, Shogun, Gauss Pistol, Yacht.

'MR RICHARDSON'

An agent of House Randall. Her real name is Sengknua Ruedharkaedh, and she is a Vargr.

Description:

A young female Vargr with silver-gray fur and a white muzzle, Sengknua is a covert operative of House Randall. As such, she dresses and acts as seems appropriate for the circumstances. Normally she pretends to be a humble office worker or port authority technician. She has a basic competence in a range of skills to allow her to at least pass a cursory attempt to determine if she is what she seems.

Notes:

Sengknua has been an employee of House Randall since she was a pup, and is completely loyal. She is a personal friend of Lady Elizabeth, one of only a handful of people who do not irritate Elizabeth.

Sengknua is skilled at bribing, coercing, intimidating and misdirecting people. She has handled innumerable confrontations, normally without recourse to outright violence. Depending upon circumstances and local laws, she often carries one or more concealed body pistols in addition to a large and ostentatious iridium-plated autopistol. She has found that while foes' attention is fixed on ensuring she does not reach for the hand cannon, it is relatively easy to palm out a body pistol and get the drop on them.

'Mr Richardson' Vargr Rogue level 9

Stamina 55, Lifeblood 12 Init +5; Speed 12m (9 squares);

Armor Class: 14 (+2 jack, +2 dex), **Armor Rating: 2** (jack)

Str9, Dex14 Con10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha14, Edu12, Soc11

SV Fort +3; Ref+8 Will +3;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Infighting (Claws)	+9/+4	1d4	1.5	20 x2	--	--
Bite	+9/+4	1d6+3	1.5	20 x2	--	--
Dagger	+8/+3	1d4	1.5	19 x2	--	--
Magnum Autopistol*	+8/+3	1d12	65	20 x2	1	10
Body Pistol	*8/+3	1d8	24	20 x2	1	5

Skills: Driving +13, Innuendo +12, Intimidate +12, Listen +14, Spot +14

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Armor (light, medium), Alertness, Toughness x2, Brawling, Improved Initiative, Spot Trouble, Quick Draw, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Equipment: jack armor, heavy autopistol*, 2 body pistols

* Mr Richardson's Magnum Autopistol has a built-in laser dot pointer, giving +2 to hit at close range only. Details of this weapon are found in Travellers' Aide Vol1: Personal Weapons of Charted Space.

CT: Rogue, 4 Terms 5A7787

Skills: Streetwise-2, Autopistol-1, Brawling-1, Bribery-1, Jack-o-T-1 Equipment: Jack, 2 body pistols, autopistol*

* Stats for the Magnum Autopistol in CT are included in TA1: Personal Weapons of Charted Space.

SUBLIEUTENANT GRANTLEE

A young and earnest Imperial Navy officer

Description:

A small, blonde woman not long out of Naval Academy, Alice Grantlee is an earnest and hard-working young officer with an excellent record. For someone with so little experience she has a rare trait – the ability to know when 'the book' must be followed and when individual initiative is appropriate. She is serving the obligatory hitch in small patrol ships but is destined for a rapid transfer to big fleet units and perhaps increased responsibility.

Notes:

Grantlee prefers to treat even the scruffiest free trader crews

with courtesy and respect, but will not take any nonsense. She knows her life is on the line during a boarding; things can go sour very fast. As a result she always maintains distance (physical and interpersonal) between herself and those she encounters in the line of duty. She is not afraid to put a hand to her sidearm and issue a chilling warning if necessary. She has worked with the Marine boarding team aboard her current ship for a few months now and has an excellent working relationship with them: trust where it is needed and backup as a matter of instinct.

Sublieutenant Alice Grantlee, Imperial Navy (Navy level 6)

Stamina 22, Lifeblood 10 Init +0; Speed 6m (4 squares);
Armor Class: 10 (armor not normally worn on routine boarding)),
Armor Rating: 0

Str 10, Dex12 Con10, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha10, Edu 13, Soc 13
 SV Fort +2; Ref+3 Will +5;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+4	1d10	21	20 x2	1	15
Fist	+4	1d4	--	20 x2	--	--

Skills: all: Pilot +9, T/Computer +10, P/Administration +9, Liaison +9, Gunnery +11, T/Sensors +10

T/Astrogation +10, T/Communications +10, T/Sensors+10,

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, laser), Brawling, Zero-G/Low-G adaptation, Zero-G combat, First Aid, Vessel (ship's boat), Weapons (ship's weapons)

Equipment: vac suit-14 (not normally worn for boardings), combat snub pistol

CT: Navy, Naval Academy Honors Graduate plus 1 term 787A99

Skills: Liaison-2, Admin-1, Handgun-1, Navigation-1, Vac Suit-1
 Equipment: Snub Pistol

LADY ELIZABETH'S HUSCARLES – SHIP CREW

Human Ship Crew (Navy level 6)

Stamina 22, Lifeblood 10 Init +0; Speed 6m (4 squares);
Armor Class: 13 (+3 vac suit), **Armor Rating: 3** (vac suit)

Str 10, Dex10 Con10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha10, Edu 12, Soc 11
 SV Fort +2; Ref+2 Will +5;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub Pistol	+4	1d10	21	20 x2	1	15
Snub SMG	+4	1d10	24	20 x2	1/4	30
Fist	+5	1d4	1.5	20 x2	--	--

Skills: all: Pilot +9, T/Computer +10, P/Administration +9, Liaison +9, Gunnery +11, T/Sensors +10

T/Astrogation +10, T/Communications +10, T/Sensors+10,

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, laser), Brawling, Zero-G/Low-G adaptation, Zero-G combat, First Aid, Vessel (ship's boat), Weapons (ship's weapons)

Equipment: vac suit-12, combat snub pistol

CT: Navy 2 Terms 777787

Skills: Gunnery-1, Pilot-1, Vac Suit-1, Handgun-1
 Equipment: Vac Suit, Snub Pistol or Snub SMG

LADY ELIZABETH'S HUSCARLES – MARINES

Regular Marine (Marine level 6)

Stamina 44, Lifeblood 14 Init +1; Speed 6m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 13 (+2 vac suit, +1 dex), **Armor Rating: 2** (vac suit)

Str 12, Dex12 Con13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +6; Ref+3 Will +5;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Accelerator Rifle	+11/+6	1d12	60	20	1/3	15
Snub Pistol	+10/+5	1d10	24	20	1	15

Skills: Spot +9, Demolitions +6, Pilot +5, Forward Observer +5, Survival +4

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, swordsman, high energy), Weapon focus (accelerator rifle), Brawling, Zero-G Combat, Second Wind, Toughness, High Morale

Equipment: combat armor-12, Snub Pistol, Accelerator Rifle, personal medkit, communicator

CT: Marines, 2 Terms 889777

Skills: Combat Rifleman-1, Brawling-1, Handgun-1, Vac Suit-1

Equipment: Vac suit, accelerator rifle, snub pistol

HIRED THUGS

The thugs encountered Act 4 Scene 3 are professional muscle. They are competent but nothing special.

Human Rogue level 6

Stamina 32, Lifeblood 12 Init +5; Speed 9m (6 squares);

Armor Class: 13 (+2 jack, +1 dex) or 15 (+4 flak jacket, +1 dex),
Armor Rating: 2 (jack) or 4 (flak jacket)

Str 11, Dex12 Con11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha10, Edu 6, Soc 5

SV Fort +2; Ref+6 Will +2;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Fist	+5	1d4	--	20	--	--
Baton/Cudgel	+4	1d6	1.5	19	--	--
Dagger	+4	1d4	1.5	19	--	--
Autopistol	+4	1d10	45	20	1	15
Shotgun	+4	3d6/2d6/1d6	3	20	1	10

Skills: Driving +10, Innuendo +9, Intimidate +9, Listen +11, Spot +11

Feats: Vessel (wheeled), Weapons (marksman, swordsman), Armor (light, medium), Alertness, Toughness, Brawling, Improved Initiative, Spot Trouble, Quick Draw,

Equipment: (High Law Level): Concealed jack armor and cudgel or dagger. (Low Law Level): Flak Jacket, Cudgel or Knife, Autopistol (possibly plus shotgun)

CT: Rogue, 2 terms 787755

Skills: Brawling-1, Gun Combat-1, Streetwise-1

Equipment: jack or flak jacket, cudgel or dagger, autopistol plus possibly shotgun

IMPERIAL MARINE BOARDING PARTY AND SOLOMANI MARINES

Very similar stats can be used for Marines serving both the Imperium and the Solomani Confederation. Solomani Marines do not use the cutlass. Ignore references to the weapon or its associated skill.

Regular Marine (Marine level 6)

Stamina 44, Lifeblood 14 Init +1; Speed 6m (4 squares);

Armor Class: 18 (+7 combat armor, +1 dex), **Armor Rating: 7** (combat armor)

Str 12, Dex12 Con13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha10, Edu 10, Soc 10

SV Fort +6; Ref+3 Will +5;

Attacks:

Weapon	Hit	Damage	Rng-M	Crit	ROF	Rnds
Snub SMG	+10/+5	1d12	60	20 x2	1/3	15
Snub Pistol	+10/+5	1d10	24	20 x2	1	15
Cutlass	+11/+6/+1	1d8	1.5	18 x2	--	--
Fist	+11/+6/+1	1d4	1.5	20 x2	--	--

Skills: Spot +9, Demolitions +6, Pilot +5, Forward Observer +5, Survival +4

Feats: Vessel (grav), Armor (light, medium, vac suit), Weapons (marksman, combat rifleman, swordsman, high energy), Weapon focus (cutlass), Brawling, Zero-G Combat, Second Wind, Toughness, High Morale

Equipment: combat armor-12, Snub Pistol, snub SMG, cutlass, personal medkit, communicator

CT: Marines, 2 Terms 889777

Skills Combat Rifleman-2, Brawling-1, Cutlass-1, Handgun-1, Vac Suit-1

Equipment: combat armor, snub SMG, snub pistol, cutlass

PEOPLE – RANDOM AND INCIDENTAL ENCOUNTERS

During the course of their travels, the characters may encounter and interact with a wide range of individuals. Combat or other interactions requiring skill rolls may occur with some of these. However, stats are only included in this volume for characters and groups with whom there is a high likelihood of conflict. If stats are needed for others, examples are available in the *T20 Core Rulebook* and in *Travellers' Aide #4: 76 Gunmen*, or in Classic *Traveller* materials such as *1001 Characters* and *Citizens of the Imperium*. Guidelines are given here as an indication of the sort of stats that may be needed.

T20 uses a standard rating system for NPCs, as follows:

Green: Inexperienced or unready: Level 3 characters

Regular: Experienced and capable members of their profession: Level 6 characters

Veteran: Highly experienced members of their profession, alert and ready to react: Level 9 characters.

Elite: Extremely capable or dangerous individuals. Level 12 characters.

Note that these levels may be split between classes. For example a regular army technician might be a 6th level character with 3 levels in Army and 3 in Professional.

Incidental Encounters:

Stats will probably not be needed for incidental characters. If they are, use the guidelines below:

BAR PATRONS AND PASSERS-BY

T20: Random people encountered can be considered to be Green (level 3) in most cases. Ordinary people will be Professionals. Spacer crews can be considered to be Scouts or Merchants, and are more likely to be Regular (level 6) due to their more adventuresome lives. It is unlikely that these individuals will be carrying weapons illegal at the local law level, and if weapons are legal they will be armed with handguns and/or blades that can be carried comfortably. People rarely lug heavy weapons around in their daily lives unless there is a clearly perceived need.

CT: Assume stats of 777777 and no real combat skills (e.g.

gun combat-0 for armed civilians)

BARFIGHTERS AND BOUNCERS

T20: People of a sort likely to actually brawl (rather than fleeing from an incident) are likely to be fairly experienced: Regular and in some cases Veteran members of their profession. Tough guys can be considered to be Rogues while professional security personnel such as bouncers or door supervisors will be Mercenaries. In most establishments, the security staff are 'officially' unarmed but able to grab an implement very similar to a baton that 'just happened to be there'. Some low-law worlds may have armed bouncers on the door (usually with pistols) and heavier weaponry available at need.

CT: Assume stats of 889777 and Brawling-2, Handgun-1

LAW ENFORCERS, GUARDS AND CUSTOMS OFFICIALS

T20: Guards and customs personnel at various starports, and indeed law enforcement officials, can be considered to be Regular (Level 6) Mercenaries. They are normally equipped with a flak jacket and a sidearm (autopistols or snub pistols are common) and a baton. Most guards have access to heavier firepower (shotguns, SMGs or rifles) if necessary.

CT: Assume stats of 889888 and Brawling-1, Handgun-2, Shotgun, Rifle or SMG-1

Starships

SCOUTSHIP BROADSIDE OF A BARN

This adventure presumes that the characters have access to a small starship such as a Scout/Courier. If an existing group of characters has a ship available, then obviously they can use that vessel. If not, they might be hired as the crew of a ship such as the one described below.

The Scout/Courier *Broadside of a Barn* is old; over a century and a half old. She has had many owners, and few of them were particularly careful. Passed from hand to hand, sold on, refitted in less than reputable ports and occasionally shot up, the *Barn* is prone to a range of annoying glitches from landing gear that refuses to retract to an intermittent short that dims the galley lights (Murphy's Law being what it is, this seems to happen whenever anyone tries to use a sharp implement!). But overall she's a good ship; she gets her crew and whatever they are carrying from place to place safely, on time, and only drives them slightly nuts in the process.

Unable to carry much cargo or any passengers, the *Barn* has been making a living doing courier work along the very Rimward frontier of the Imperium. Small-package freighting of this sort is not commercially viable for most ships, but an almost-paid-for Scout/Courier can make a reasonable living at it if the crew will accept less than standard salaries or a cut of the meager profits.

The *Barn* is a standard Type S Scout/Courier in most respects. She mounts a dual turret containing twin missile racks, and carries three missiles for each rack. Spare missiles could be carried in the cargo hold and manually transferred to the turret while the ship is grounded; otherwise no reload is possible outside a starport.

A Scout/Courier is nominally worth MCr42 if purchased new. However, as the *Barn* has changed hands and aged her value has dropped. Her existing mortgage is for MCr 3.4, with a monthly payment of 14,170. This is quite a lot of money to find for a ship that can make only Cr20,000 per jump freighting with a full hold.

In addition, the crew must provide for annual maintenance. A proper annual refit would cost Cr42,000, requiring an additional Cr 3500 to be put away each month to cover the costs. However, maintenance is usually skimmed somewhat (this carries some risks that add up over time). It is possible to get a just-good-enough refit for about Cr25,000 if the crew are willing to bear an increased chance of Misjump and the general deterioration of the ship over time.

Life-support costs add up to Cr750 per week per crewmember. The ship will happily run on unrefined fuel (though her purifiers are becoming slow and erratic as a result of skimmed maintenance), which costs Cr100 per ton. This works out at Cr2400 per Jump-2.

Overheads for a month of operation, assuming two Jumps and purchasing fuel rather than skimming it, add up to Cr 18970 plus Cr750 per Jump per crewmember (or passenger, though it is unlikely that a vessel of this type would carry any). If funds are put away for a minimal refit, add Cr2100 per month, and for a standard refit Cr3500 per month must be found. This is of course in addition to any funds the crew draw for themselves or take as salaries. A crew that never leaves the ship and eats only ship's rations can live very cheaply right up until they go stir-crazy and knife one another.

Referees who dislike book-keeping should assume that Cr70,000 per month will cover fuel for 2 Jumps, life support, annual maintenance, berthing fees and such like for a crew of 2-4 individuals, leaving only personal cash to be found.

SHIP STATUS

At present *Broadside of a Barn* has Cr9,000 in her general coffers and an additional Cr12,000 put away for annual maintenance. This is not a great situation to be in. The next annual maintenance is due in 5 months and it really needs to be a full-price one. The ship has had too many skimmed refits in the past and she is becoming unreliable. It is only a matter of time until she becomes dangerous or is condemned as a hazard to navigation.

The vessel is short on all necessary tools, rescue gear and so on. Lost or damaged items have not been replaced, and the air/raft that comes as standard with ships of this type long ago broke down and was sold off for spares. The Air/Raft bay now contains an assortment of spare parts, tools and random junk picked up here and there on the offchance it might be useful someday.

SHIP'S LOCKER

The contents of the ship's locker varies from vessel to vessel. Supposedly it should contain emergency equipment, a few weapons for security, spares, tools and other items necessary for operation of the ship and conduct of missions aboard it. In the case of older ships like the *Barn*, the locker tends to be a dumping ground for all manner of junk, magazine collections belonging to crewmembers who retired years ago, old shoes, sports gear and anything else that does not have a place of its own aboard the ship.

The Referee should 'personalize' the contents of the ship's locker. For example, there is indeed a toolkit, but it contains components from several other kits, a set of sockets that don't fit any bolt aboard the ship and a Blade that has clearly been used to lever up deckplate at some point and become very bent in the process.

If the crew needs a relatively trivial item, they may be able to find it after a period of uncomfortable rummaging around in the back of the locker, even if it is not listed here. Note that there are some items (such as vac suit spares) that will always be present. They are literally lifesavers and no sane crew would go into space without them. How accessible they are is a different matter – especially if the crew have been rummaging about looking for other items.

Suggested contents of the Ship's Locker include:

Survival Kit, Personal – A small backpack or belt pack containing personal survival equipment. There should be one per crewmember plus a couple of spares. Contents include:

- Small knife
- Fire-starting equipment
- Blanket/poncho
- 4 days' preserved rations
- Water bottle
- Compass
- Light cord or string
- Mirror
- Water purification tablets
- Survival manual

Survival Kit, Vehicle – A standard kit carried aboard lifeboats, vehicles and starships, the Vehicle Survival Kit designed to equip 4 people. Imperial Law requires that all spacegoing vessels include one kit per 4 passengers or crew. The one aboard the *Barn* has probably been pillaged several times to deal with minor emergencies and may lack much of its listed contents at the Referee's discretion. Contents include:

- 1 Survival Rifle, plus 50 rounds shot and 50 ball
- 1 Hatchet
- 1 Field Medical Kit
- 4 Personal Survival Kit
- 4 Field Kit, Personal
- 4 Sets/Emergency Cold Weather Clothing
- 4 Combination Masks plus extra filters
- Field Rations for 60 person-days (15 days for 4 people)
- 4 Bulk water storage containers with filters
- 1 Water Purification Kit
- 2 Pressure Tent

Arms and Protective Equipment:

- 1 Snub Revolver
- 1 Shotgun
- 3 Blade
- 8 Combination Mask
- 8 Life-Support Mask
- Assorted Vac Suit Spares
- 1 Standard TL 12 Vac suit per crewmember

The Locker also includes slings, holsters and a few dozen rounds of ammunition for the two guns.

Survival and Emergency Equipment:

- Rescue Balls (Located throughout the vessel)
- Emergency Softsuits: (1 per duty station, 8 spares in Locker)
- 1 Portable Airlock
- Emergency Bulkhead Patches
- 4 Emergency Radio Distress Beacons

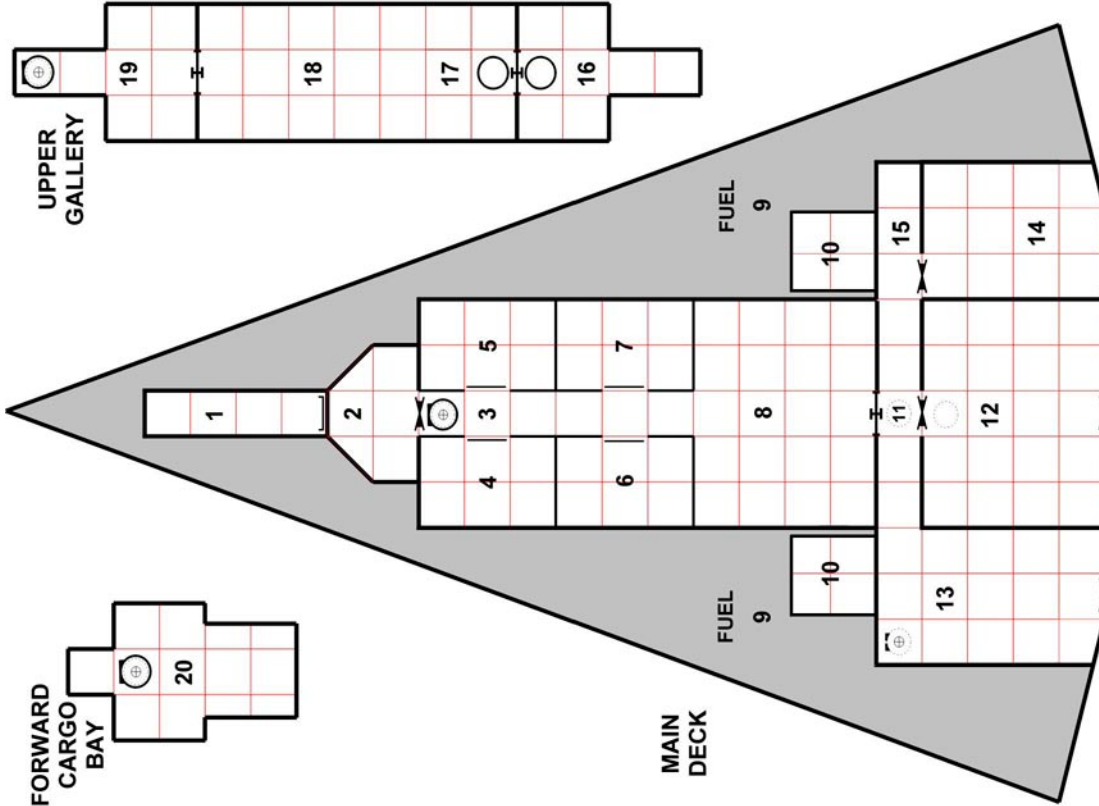
Tools and Other Equipment:

- Electronic Toolkit (Originally quite comprehensive)
- Mechanical Toolkit (Originally quite comprehensive)

IMPERIAL SCOUT/COURIER (Type S)

Class: Starship, type S	EP Output: 4 (2 excess)
Tech Level: 11	Agility: 2 (+2 EP)
Size: Medium (100 tons)	Initiative: +2 (+2 agility)
Streamlining: Yes	AC: 12 (+2 agility)
Jump Range: 1x Jump-2	Repulsors: 0
Acceleration: 2-G	Nuclear Dampers: 0
Fuel: 24 tons	Meson Screens: 0
Duration: 4 weeks	Black Globes: 0
Crew: 1	AR: 0
Staterooms: 4	SI: 100
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/1 (5 CPU)
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Close (Mod/1)
Couches:	Comm. Range: Close (Mod/1)
Low Berths: 0	
Cargo Space: 20 tons	Cost: MCr42.578 (new)
Atmospheric Speeds: NoE = 275kph	
Cruising = 825kph	Maximum = 1100kph
Other Equipment: Air/raft, fuel scoops	

Double Turret: (empty)



The Type S Scout/Courier is the most commonly seen ship in Chartered Space. Small, cheap, and reasonably economical to operate, these ships have become a workhorse for both the government and military fleets; some are encountered in commercial use. Most Scout/Couriers are actually former Scout Service vessels either purchased as surplus from the government or are assigned for the private use of former Scouts currently on Detached Duty. In return for use of the ship the Scouts (and the ship itself) are subject to recall at any time for temporary or indefinite duty, as the Scout service requires.

The ship itself is built using the smallest available hull for a starship, 100-tons. The vessel carries a Maneuver drive capable of up to 2-G acceleration and a Jump-2 drive. The power plant provides just enough energy to power the maneuver drives or the Jump drive. If laser or energy weapons are installed, a larger power plant will be needed. Most ex-Scout vessels have had their powerful computer and sensor arrays removed and replaced with a standard Model/1bis computer. 4 staterooms are available for crew and passengers. Small cargoes may also be carried in the ship's compact 20-ton cargo hold. The vessel also carries a small vehicle bay, usually containing an air/raft.

The Scout/Courier requires a crew of one to operate; the pilot who must assume the duties of pilot and astrogator, and also oversees the highly automated drive section. A second crewmember is desirable. The Type S costs MCr42.578 new, and takes 5 months to build.

- 15. Ship's Locker
- 16. Gunner's Position
- 17. Storage
- 18. Upper Gallery
- 19. Forward Sensor Position
- 20. Forward Cargo Bay

- 1. Avionics Bay
- 2. Bridge
- 3. Central Corridor
- 4. Stateroom One
- 5. Stateroom Two
- 6. Stateroom Three
- 7. Stateroom Four
- 8. Common Area
- 9. Fuel Tankage
- 10. Landing Pylon Bay
- 11. Gallery Access
- 12. Drive Room
- 13. Commo Bay
- 14. Air/Raft Bay

Solomani Confederation Light Patrol Cruiser *Gallant Liberty*

Class: Starship, type ST	EP Output: 30 (6 excess)	1x Triple Turret: Beam Laser; Attack Bonus +4 (+4 USP), Damage: 4d8, Range Increment: 30,000km.
Tech Level: 13	Agility: 2 (+1 EP)	1x Triple Turret: Pulse Laser; Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage: 3d10, Range Increment: 45,000km.
Size: Medium (400 tons)	Initiative: +2 (+2 agility)	1x Triple Turret: Missile Rack; Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage: 3d10 (Bomb-Pumped Laser), Range Increment: 90,000km.
Streamlining: Partial	AC: 12 (+2 agility)	1x Triple Turret: Sandcaster; Bonus +4 (+4 USP).
Jump Range: 1x Jump-4	Repulsors: None	
Acceleration: 4-G	Nuclear Dampers: None	
Fuel: 190 tons	Meson Screens: None	
Duration: 4 weeks	Black Globes: None	
Crew: 9 + 10 troops	AR: 0	
Staterooms: 8	SI: 145	
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/4bis	
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Short/4	
Couches: 0	Comm. Range: Close/4	
Low Berths: 10 emergency		
Cargo Space: 19.2 tons	Cost: MCr 223,588 excluding smallcraft and supplies	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising 200kph	NoE 75kph Max 300kph	
Other Equipment: Sickbay, Engineering Shop, Extra Airlock, 3 Missile Magazines (60 missiles total).		

Velvet Glove-class Yacht

Class: Starship, type Y	EP Output: 13 (0 excess)	2x Double Turret: Beam Laser; Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage: 3d8, Range Increment: 30,000km.
Tech Level: 14	Agility: 0	1x Single Turret: Sandcaster; Bonus +3 (+3 USP).
Size: Medium (300 tons)	Initiative: 0	
Streamlining: Streamlined	AC: 10	
Jump Range: 1x Jump-3	Repulsors: None	
Acceleration: 3-G	Nuclear Dampers: None	
Fuel: 103 tons	Meson Screens: None	
Duration: 4 weeks	Black Globes: None	
Crew: 10 + 5 troops	AR: 0	
Staterooms: 15 + 1 double	SI: 130	
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/2bis	
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Short/2	
Couches: 0	Comm. Range: Close/1	
Low Berths: 2 +2 emergency		
Cargo Space: 14.6 tons	Cost: MCr 130,0248 excluding smallcraft and supplies	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising 825kph	NoE 275kph Max 1100kph	
Other Equipment: Sickbay, 10-ton Boat Hangar, 2x Air/raft bays, Office space (equivalent to 3 staterooms), Extra Airlock.		

Imperial Scout/Courier *Wild at Heart*

Class: Starship, type S	EP Output: 4 (2 excess)	Double Turret: empty
Tech Level: 11	Agility: 2 (+2 EP)	
Size: Medium (100 tons)	Initiative: +2 (+2 agility)	
Streamlining: Streamlined	AC: 12 (+2 agility)	
Jump Range: 1x Jump-2	Repulsors: None	
Acceleration: 2-G	Nuclear Dampers: None	
Fuel: 24 tons	Meson Screens: None	
Duration: 4 weeks	Black Globes: None	
Crew: 1	AR: 0	
Staterooms: 4	SI: 100	
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/1	
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Close/1	
Couches: 0	Comm. Range: Close/1	
Low Berths: 0		
Cargo Space: 20 tons	Cost: MCr 42,258 excluding smallcraft and supplies	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising 825kph	NoE 275kph Max 1100kph	
Other Equipment: Air/raft, fuel scoops.		

Imperial Patrol Cruiser *Shaddalakkii*

Class: Starship, type P	EP Output: 26 (4 excess)	1x Triple Turret: Missile Rack (x3), Attack Bonus +2 (+2 USP), Damage 2d6
Tech Level: 12	Agility: 1 (+1 EP)	1x Triple Turret: Missile Rack (x3), Attack Bonus +2 (+2 USP), Damage 2d6
Size: Medium (400 tons)	Initiative: +1 (+1 agility)	1x Triple Turret: Beam Laser (x3), Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage 3d8
Streamlining: Partial	AC: 11 (+1 agility)	1x Triple Turret: Laser (x3), Attack Bonus +3 (+3 USP), Damage 3d8
Jump Range: 1x Jump-3	Repulsors: None	
Acceleration: 4-G	Nuclear Dampers: None	
Fuel: 140 tons	Meson Screens: None	
Duration: 4 weeks	Black Globes: None	
Crew: 9 + 10 troops	AR: 0	
Staterooms: 20	SI: 145	
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/3	
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Medium/3	
Couches: 0	Comm. Range: Medium/3	
Low Berths: 20		
Cargo Space: 24.8 tons	Cost: MCr 227,76 excluding smallcraft and supplies	
Atmospheric Speeds: Cruising 200kph	NoE 75kph Max 300kph	
Other Equipment: 6 Missile Magazines (120 missiles total).		

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