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Important Errata From Last Issue!

Last issue the cover art was done by Dwayne Leonard, **not** Enrico Fermi, and Enrico Fermi is also incorrectly listed in his contributed articles, they should be credited to **Leptonica**. The people responsible for the credits in last month's issue have been sacked.

Editorial: Time to Play

Sometimes I wonder if our group has mental problems, or if it's just dedication. We have folks that have missed family funerals to get to a game, and we've had others (in the past) with excuses so lame you wonder if they have any control over their own lives. What I'm referring to is attendance and campaign continuity. When faced with the facts that a regular player may not be able to continue attending a session, we experiment with the same things game groups have for over 20 years:

Introduce a new player. This isn't always easy for most groups. There are always players looking for one another in game stores, online, or standing in line at Burger King. Our group doesn't really have this trouble. Jim and I have happily surrounded ourselves with an overabundance of rabid gamers ready to tackle anything Alternity has to throw at them. But what about story continuity? If you weave a story that involves multiple PCs and one player leaves, how does that effect your story? Do you quickly clean up such threads? What about the new player (or worse: *players*) who come into a campaign not knowing anything about the relationships, Supporting Cast, group history, or dynamics? Just tell them what happened and hope they fit in? There's also the question of how the regular players, set in their ways, who developed relations with the now-missing PCs, will deal with this new blood.

End the campaign and start a new group. This might not be an especially bad idea. And it doesn't even spell the 'doom' of a campaign necessarily. What if you started a new focus? For example, if your Star*Drive game concentrated on Concord Marines, you could all roll up deep space explorers and continue in the same universe. This isn't always practical, especially if you have players with widely erratic schedules or sudden changes in timing that can cause their absence. It also isn't fair for the reliable ones who want to create a long-term character and watch him grow to have to keep creating new characters because half the group had to change game nights.

End the campaign. Not even an option, really, especially if you dedicate yourself to running this one game a week. But in the old days I had my share of this. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, research shows the number one reason folks don't continue campaigns is schedule and player attendance difficulties. If you really enjoy the game and the time put into it, you should take the initiative to find a way for it to continue. Even if that means running a smaller group, or asking a player to run a few sessions while you concentrate on finding new game players in your area, a campaign running full speed only to fall victim to scheduling problems tugs at the heartstrings of a dedicated GM who must get up, get going, and save that game!

Some groups use rewards to encourage players with regular attendance to continue their good habits. Some groups don't even start a game until they have a signed contract that everyone will see it through! And others sort of lollygag through the situation, running stories that are little more than week-to-week one shots dealing with missing folks with excuses from "the artifact made him vanish" to "he has a hangover on spiked Yoo-Hoo and must sleep this night off in engineering!" How does your group deal with attendance difficulties, and more importantly, what kind of campaign do you run and how does that deal with missing players or problem schedules?

FLEET SYSTEMS GV-1M

By David A. Webb

Fleet Systems GV-1M

The GV-1 is the standard ground transport vehicle commonly purchased or leased by corporations for light duty in favorable environments. The GV-1M is the medical transport configuration most often encountered, although the GV-1 chassis can be heavily reconfigured to meet many different needs as well. Measuring 7.25 meters long by 3.6 meters wide and 4.5 meters high, the GV-1 is a tracked vehicle that uses triple lanthide cells with a Hi-Power Engine for a 72-hour range. The GV-1 can be staffed by as little as 1 person; it can carry up to 4 comfortably, or 12-14 in extreme cases, such as an evacuation.

The GV-1M has two staffed positions:
---Only the pilot is necessary for basic operation of the GV1-M
---Co-pilot is the primary medical attending.
Pilot's station (also controls the Comm suite)
Co-Pilot's station (also controls the Surface Search Radar and IR Detector)

Comm suite (Comm gear/Emergency Beacon/Inertial Compass)
Radar (Surface Search)
IR Detector
Medical suite
Rescue Gear
Hi-Power engine

Weapons   None
Armor   None

Skill   Vehicle Operation -> Land (Tracked)
Drv   0
Acc   48
Cruise 134 (83mph)

Max   240 (149mph)
Type   G
Durability   20/20/10
Avail   Com
Cost   75K

Game notes: This vehicle can be found in nearly any civilized area of the galaxy. Characters utilizing this vehicle for any reason will have to contend with the consequences of misrepresenting the universal sign of Non-Combatants/Medical Aid if they do so. (This is defined as "treachery" and illegal even on Earth today by nations that sign the Geneva Conventions.) This vehicle is not designed for combat or a combat zone and accordingly has no armor or weapons. The GV1 series is built on a well made chassis (20/20/10 durability of type Good) and is even superior to SUVs. As such, it can take a respectable amount of abuse for a civilian-grade asset. The lack of weight from armor allows the addition of fuel cells to achieve 72-hour operations. The main hatch on the right side either slides forward or lowers to form a 2.5m ramp to facilitate moving the sick or wounded. This particular vehicle bears the corporate logo of Bright Star Medical Services, a "mega-corp HMO" in my game world. This will print out at nearly the perfect scale for use with 25mm - 35mm miniatures; after all, this was designed by for use with Alternity. This design was created based on "Chapter 10: Vehicles" in the Alternity *GameMaster Guide*. Comments and suggestions are welcome at the following e-mail address: ROGUEMORGAN@BIGNET. NET

An image of this craft is on the following page.

FLEET SYSTEMS GV-1 M (MEDICAL)
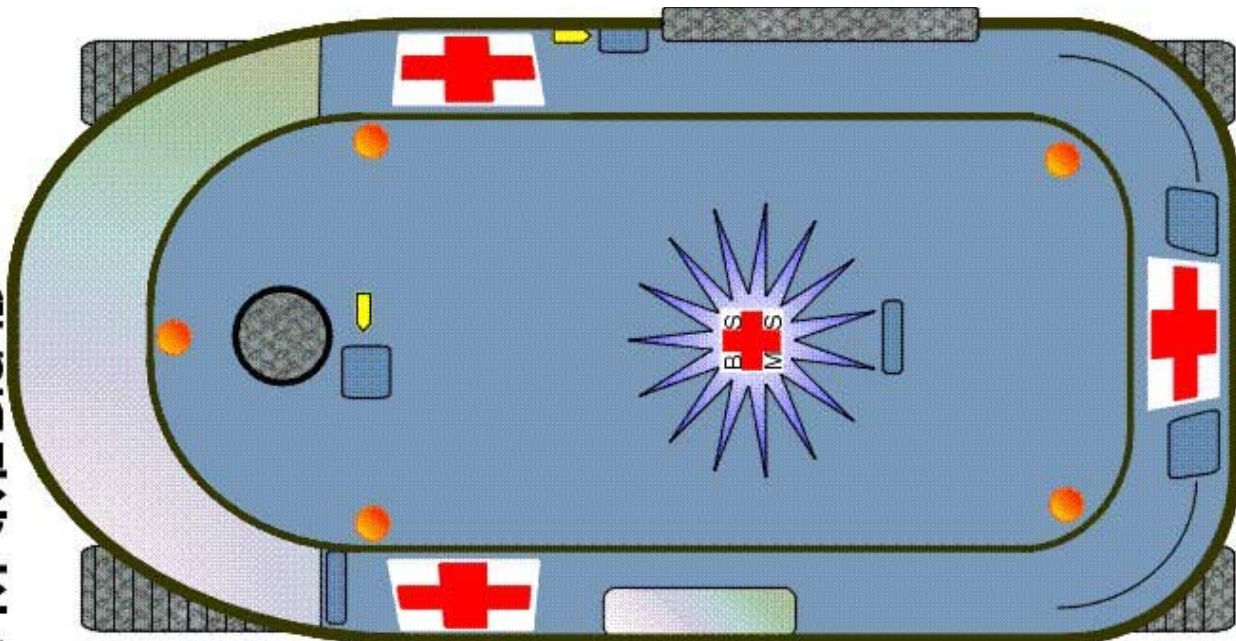
Life Support Systems
Non-Medical Supplies
Medical Supplies
Drive Controls & Navigation/ Comm Gear
Engine Equipment & Toolkit
Emergency Access

Length = 7.25 m
width = 3.6 m
Height =4.5 m

☐ = .5 m

B S
M S

Patient bed Beta (supplies overhead)

Rescue Gear (overhead)

Hatch

WC

Patient bed Alpha (supplies overhead)

Engine Room

Galley

S M
B S

5
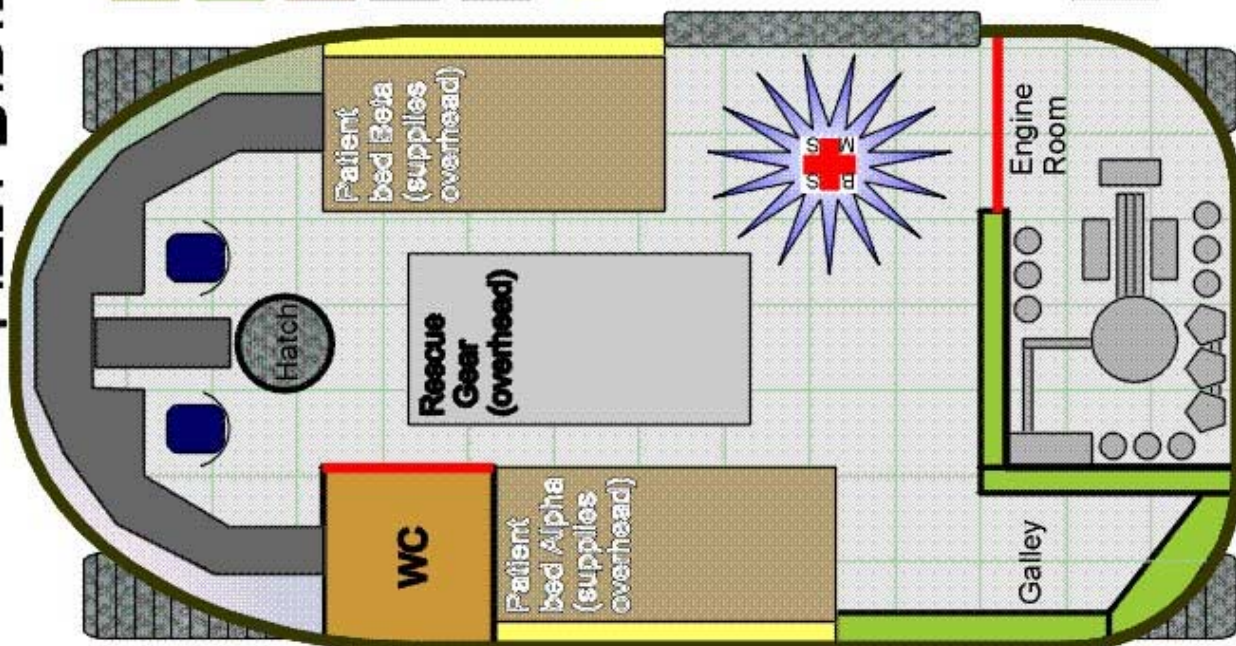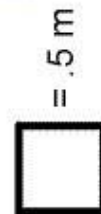
FAYE MACKEIGAN

By Neil Spicer

FAYE MACKEIGAN
(formerly KR905 22GNE)
A Free Agent SCM for Alternity Star*Drive

(Note: This SCM is designed using the alternate skill point system and the option for Psi Talents. If you don't use these rules, adjust her skills or level accordingly.)

Level 5 Human Free Agent Explorer
STR 9   (+1)   INT 11 (+1)
DEX 11 (+1)   WIL 10
CON 10   PER 9
Durability: 10/10/5/5
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4   #Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2
Last Resorts: 2
Perks: Photo Memory
Flaws: Moderate Infamy (trumped up charges), Powerful Enemy, Untrained Talent
Psionic Points: 5

Attacks:

Unarmed	12/6/3	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s
Pistol, 9mm	12/6/3	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m
Stutter Rifle	12/6/3	d6+3s/d8+3s/d12+3s

Defenses:

CF Softsuit	d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills:
Athletics [9]-*climb* [10], *jump* [10]; Acrobatics [11]-*defensive martial arts* [12]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]-*pistol* [12], *rifle* [12]; Stealth [11]-*sneak* [12]; Vehicle Operation [11]-*land* [12]; Movement [10]-*swim* [11], *trailblazing* [12]; Stamina [10]-*endurance* [11]; Survival [10]-*survival training: jungle* [11]; Business [11]-*corporate* [12]; ESP [11]; Knowledge [11]-*computer operation* [12], *first aid* [12], *language: Standard* [14], *language: Sheyan* [12], *stellar nation: VoidCorp* [14], *system: Corrivale* [12]; Navigation [11]-*surface* [12]; Awareness [10]-*perception* [11]; Investigate [10]-*search* [11], *track* [11]; Deception [9]-*bluff* [10], *bribe* [10]; Interaction [9].

Gear:
CF softsuit, Sirocco 100 stutter rifle, 9mm charge pistol, combat knife, and sensor gauntlet.

Personal Information:
Sex: Female
Motivation: Discovery
Attitude: Ethical
Traits: Suspicious, Helpful

Background:
From the perspective of her superiors, Faye MacKeigan was brought into the VoidCorp fold as an orphan twenty-seven years ago, though she has only officially worn the corporate mantle for five of them. Today, she is a fugitive, having fled to the jungles of Grith in order to hide from her masters. Since distinguishing herself as a capable explorer, she is privy to a number of secret VoidCorp survey missions in and around the Corrivale system. The company currently views her as a security risk to their plans for future development in the Verge.

Faye's parents were actually Lucullan Supervisors that fled Penates after being identified as practicing Mindwalkers. While trying to escape the system their ship was attacked and damaged, causing a range of navigational and life support problems just before making starfall. They inadvertently arrived in the Corrivale system and became easy prey for the Sesheyan corsairs operating in and around the jungle moon of Grith.

Both of Faye's parents and their servants were slain, but the looting of their ship was cut short by the arrival of an escort vessel from Iphus United, a former VoidCorp entity whose mining interests were reclaimed by the parent corporation upon its return to the Verge. After being rescued, Faye was taken in by a miner's family and immediately given an employee designation number. Since then she has joined the Division of Exploration and worked her way up the corporate ranks to the title of KR905 22GNE.

In her early years, Faye assisted her co-workers by surveying the landscape of Iphus for profitable mining sites, completely oblivious to her Mindwalking heritage. Though not a full-fledged Mindwalker, Faye is a psionic talent. Her skills manifested very slowly, taking the form of a photographic memory at first, which served her well in exploring and mapping the surface of her homeworld. She has always taken pride in the fact that she's never become lost

as a result. Since the arrival of VoidCorp and her reassignment to off-world exploration, her powers have grown to include rudimentary ESP. This discovery frightened her and to this day she is still reluctant to put the ability to frequent use. As a result, she is completely untrained in the various specialties of the skill.

After experiencing the hand of direct VoidCorp management for five years, and knowing its view of psionic abilities as just another corporate asset, Faye had no illusions that her life as an explorer would come to an end as soon as her supervisors learned of her powers. Therefore, she took an approved leave of absence to vacation in Downunder, a seedy trading post and shipyard near Grith's southern pole. She never reported back, and wandered off into the jungles in an attempt to keep her life just the way she likes it.

The jungles of Grith are no place for the inexperienced or foolish. Faye is neither. Her skills as an explorer, attention to detail, and minor precognitive abilities have enabled her to survive and flourish in the wilderness. She has had to avoid sable snakes, gandercats, Sesheyan criminals, and VoidCorp agents. To date, none of them have succeeded in threatening her freedom. She has even earned the respect of some of the local Sesheyans, gaining the nickname Ga'Talai, or "Hunter of Ghostly Fire," in honor of her tenacity, elusiveness, and reddish-brown hair.

Currently, Faye is interested in the ruins of Quenaalt. Her natural curiosity as a scout and explorer draws her toward them. She can also be found hiring herself out as a guide from the jungle cities of Uyellin or occasionally Diamond Point. She tends to avoid the latter because of the increased likelihood of encountering a VoidCorp agent. But Diamond Point also lures her because it contains the Mindanaoth Academy for the training of Hatire Mindwalkers. At least a small part of her wishes to better understand her psionic powers, if for no other reason than to control the unexpected precognitive flashes she receives.

Faye stands 5'7" tall and weighs about 135 lbs. She has light reddish-brown hair, pale skin, and blue eyes. She speaks a little Sheyan, dresses like a local of the Grith jungles and does whatever she can to avoid the attention of VoidCorp. Her personality is that of an adventurous free spirit. The chains of the corporate hierarchy were never really able to hold her. Even while in the employ of VoidCorp, she could still escape them through the autonomy of her position as a scout. She tends to be suspicious of those she meets nowadays, never knowing if a VoidCorp agent lurks nearby. In some ways her growing mental powers help to reassure her of most people's intentions, and after some initial shyness, she quickly adopts a friendly, helpful attitude.

Fitting into a Campaign:
Faye can be an adversary or an ally, depending on the GM's needs.

As an enemy, Faye can be someone the heroes are trying to track down on behalf of VoidCorp or a law enforcement agency. Her former masters have already filed a criminal record of trumped-up charges against her. Perhaps she has also run afoul of the local Sesheyan crime lords, and they seek to capture her for their own reasons. The heroes could be called in as neutral investigators who unknowingly turn over an innocent woman, and eventually have to rescue her again.

As an ally, Faye could hire on with the heroes as their guide through the Grith jungles, particularly if they desire a hunting excursion or a visit to the ruins of Quenaalt. She could just as easily rescue them from a less-skilled or deceitful guide. Alternatively, they could encounter her in Diamond Point seeking an audience with the Mindanaoth Academy to better understand her psionic talents. Or, they could also run into her while visiting Downunder on a resupply mission.

In either case, over several encounters, the GM can slowly reveal small details that allow the heroes to learn more of Faye's past. Eventually, VoidCorp will come knocking…even if they've already hired the heroes to find Faye for them. When that happens, they'll be more interested in eliminating her as a security risk than taking her back to stand trial for any crimes she might have committed.

If the heroes befriend her, Faye can be used as the catalyst for a number of future adventures. Whether it's helping her come to grips with her newfound mental powers, turning the tables on VoidCorp by investigating and revealing some of their secrets, or rediscovering her parents' origins, the prospects are bright for some very interesting adventures. She could easily become a recurring character in their lives.

STONES OF VENTRILOQUISM

By Dwayne L. Leonard

The Stones of Ventriloquism

I created this item to allow normal people to hold conversations over great distances. Originally designed as mystical wands for a fantasy setting, I think they definitely have a place in the Dark Matter Universe.

Hope you enjoy and let me know what you think.

The Stones of Izul Mahatseb

Izul was a man obsessed with communication. Over his lifetime he mastered twelve languages and learned the basics of at least sixteen more. He studied mirrors, the properties of materials and energy, and anything else that would improve his grasp of communication.

Even with all of his learning, Izul eventually turned to the study of magic to further his understanding of communication. He studied scrying, telepathy, and any other magic that would allow him to improve his grasp of conveying information.

While Izul created many devices and strange artifacts, the most commonly known are the Stones of Ventriloquism. Pairs of these stones will allow the two people who possess them to speak over great distances.

Ventriloquism Stones are made from rubies and amethysts. The two stones will typically be carved in such a way as to fit together perfectly. Each set comes in a hand carved box with instructions on its use. Some stone sets are made into matching rings or necklaces.

Game Information:

These stones allow the users to project their voices up to one thousand kilometers.

To use the stones the players must make a WIL feat roll or a Resolve-*Mental* roll. The difficulty is based on the range of the other stone. If the range is 10 KM or less there are no additional penalties to use the stones. A range of up to 100 KM gives the user a +1 step penalty to use the stones. A range of up to 1000 KM gives the user a +3 step penalty to the roll.

The stone users can talk only for a limited time, as the stones are very tiring to use. On an Ordinary success they can be used for 1 minute. A Good success allows the users to talk for up to 5 minutes. On an Amazing success the users can talk for up to 10 minutes. After the time has passed, the person who activated the stone suffers one point of Fatigue. If the users wish to continue using the stone, one speaker or the other must pay another point of Fatigue to continue talking.

The stones also have a secondary, but important, function. Anyone who knows how to use the stones can use one to locate the other if it is within range.

Ideas for use:

One of the PCs or possibly an important NPC receives only one stone as a gift. The character will have no clue as to what its purpose is but it definitely has one. Any time the character is alone near the stone, it will tell him things. This could be useful information or an attempt to drive the character insane.

The PCs could attempt to retrieve a set of stones for some reason. Maybe they owe someone a favor or they need them to go somewhere radios won't function.

THE TIG ALIEN SPECIES

By TerroX

The Tig Alien Species
(illustration on front cover of this issue)

STR 12 d4+10 (+1)   INT 10 d6+6
DEX 10 d4+8   (+1)   WIL 8 d6+6
CON 12 d4+10   PER 8 d6+6
Durability: 12/12/6/6
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3   #Actions: 2
Move: sprint 26, run 18, walk 10
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks:
Claw/Punch   14/7/3   d4+1s/d4+1w/d4+3w
Rare Psionics (cannot affect own species except using contact)

Defenses:
Natural Exoskeleton d6 (LI), d6-1 (HI), d4 (EN)
Psionics (immune to harmful effects of own species)

Ecological Data
Biochemistry   Series V
Environment   Class 2
GRAPH   G2/R2/A3/P2/H2
Biome   Subterranean/Surface
Encounter Chance Rare
Group Size   5-100 Individuals
Organization   Community
Niche   Omnivore/Silicon Organism
Intelligence   Sentient

Skills
Stamina* [12]; Knowledge* [10]; Life Science* [10]; Awareness* [8]; Interaction* [8]; Telepathy*
* free Broad Skill

NOTES: Tigs encountered are usually level 8+ but do not possess many mindwalker psionic skills due to their inability to affect each other.

The Tig is a species capable of space travel and wielding highly advanced technology. The data that follows provides the GM with the information needed to use the species as supporting cast members or extras. Tig are not recommended as a hero species as they dislike earth atmosphere and cannot communicate verbally.

Form and Physiology

Tigs are a multi-legged, colourful, scorpion-like species. They have a volcano-shaped body with a circular mouth on top. Four multi-jointed legs are attached to the body in a manner similar to that of a spider, and two arm-like appendages with four-fingered pincers protrude from the front of the body similar to the claws of a scorpion. Lastly, a head-like appendage sits atop an apparent tail that springs from the rear of the creature's conical body - resembling a scorpion tail with a head in place of the stinger.
Although Tigs have mouths, they have not developed a verbal language. Instead their strange visual organs are able to both send and receive energy in the form of light and psionics. They also communicate using body language. Tigs have an exoskeleton covered in a tough skin of varying shades of orange, yellow and black. They are an oxygen-breathing, silicon-based life form, although their native atmosphere is poisonous to humans. They are very alien.

History

Tigs evolved on a world in the 'Humanities Edge' star system many millennia ago; they were long gone when humans stumbled across the habitable star system. Tigs colonised a few planets in the star system, using each for different purposes - burial ground, dumping grounds, study, etc. but eventually their homeworld's atmosphere became too toxic for the species to bear. Fearing the destruction of their race, they moved to a new star system many thousands of light-years away which could facilitate their unique needs perfectly.

Culture

Tig reproduction has an extreme affect on the type of society they can support. Essentially there are five different genders, four being similar in appearance and one gender being radi-

cally different, resembling a vertical, slow-moving small tower. These factors over time have forged an unbreakable community spirit among the entire race. All are equal; one life is as important as thousands. They will always attack as few targets at a time with as many attacks as possible, ensuring that at least one casualty is inflicted on the enemy, rather than minor wounds to many. From the Tig point of view, this is a far more devastating and personally offensive action, sure to bring fear to the rest of the enemy race.

Tigs do not tend to specialize in any field or profession, although they have excellent warriors and scientists. It is always through a lot of experience that a Tig will attain the high skill levels they have. They do not choose a profession. Average lifespan is 290 years with genetic technology; otherwise their natural lifespan is only 40 years.

Tig spend long periods of time socializing. For them, time seems to pass quickly; years can pass and they will not notice. Tigs have a hive-mind type government with no discernible ultimate ruler. Tig religion does not support a higher power, only a belief in their own species. They cannot affect each other with Psionic attacks except using contact to communicate within line of sight. They can also communicate using body language.

Psychology

Tigs are neither expansionist nor aggressive, but will defend and fight ferociously, mercilessly when threatened even slightly with death. They do not wear clothing, but do adorn themselves with trinkets, surgically inlaid precious minerals, and designs. Tigs are as likely to collect items as humans do.

A Tig will consider the death of a single fellow Tig as a very serious event, and they expect other sentient races to have the same belief. Tigs are intelligent and so scientifically advanced that nearly all of their tools are considered artifacts. They look like colorful, organic objects and sometimes seem to have a life of their own as the object digs painlessly into flesh and melds permanently with the host.

GRIDSITES

http://traveller.mu.org/archive/deckplans/

At this site are many available starship deck plans, nice and generic for all PL7+ Alternity needs. line art, nice small download sizes and interesting design work.

www.profantasy.com

Yes, Profantasy, the company who makes the maps in 90% of the worlds d20 products possible has some super starship deck plans too! Toward the bottom is a link for "Starship Library". There are over 20 designs ready to pilfer and adapt. "But wait," you say "don't I need to spend a bazillion dollars to get Campaign Cartographer 2 to view them?" The answer is no. At their site is a free downloadable CC2 Viewer package that lets you fully view CC2 maps from anywhere (file extension FCW) on your PC without the full registered version of CC2 installed.

Trust us on this, however: if you are at all comfortable with your computer and really enjoy making maps, investing in CC2 is a wise idea.
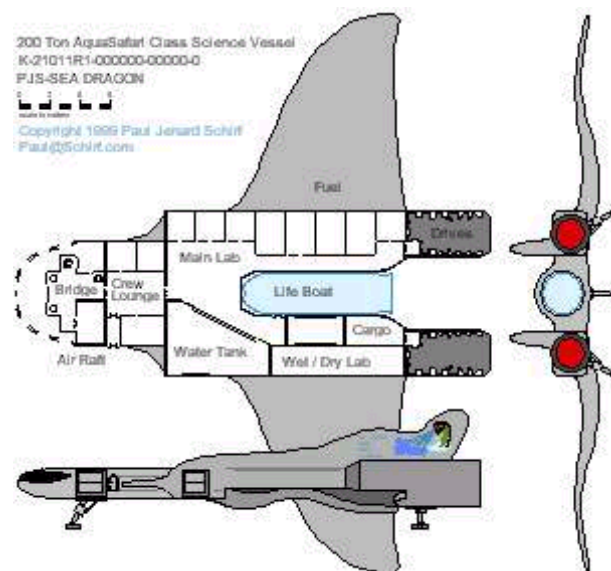
DRIVE COURIER

By Chris West

Drive Courier

Compartments:
1) Command
2) Cargo
3) Crew
4) Engineering
5) Separable Cargo

Key

Chairs	1 Square = 2m
Bunk	Cargo Container
Door	Forklift
Airlock Door	Floor Airlock
Viewport	Holoprojector
Toilet	Computer
Table	
Kitchen Unit	Gravity Induction Engine
Stardrive	
Mass Reactor	
Autocargo	
Autosupport Unit	
Separation Unit	

©2000 Christopher West
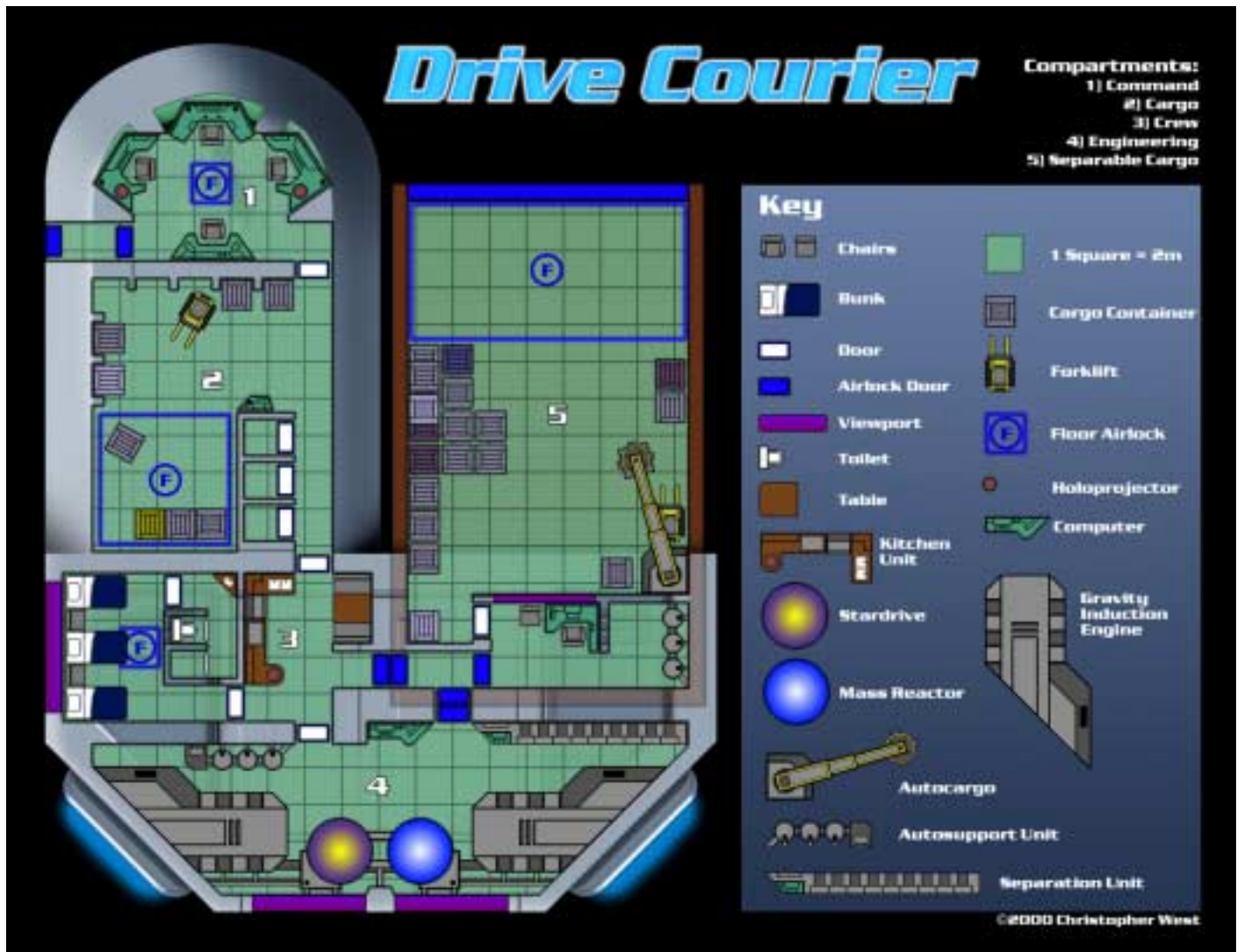
Drive Courier

PL: 7   Cost: $8,560,000

Compartments: 5
Dur: 24
Maneuver Rating: +1
Acc: 1 Mpp
Cruise Speed: 1 AU/hour
Armor:
  Light Alloy   d6-1 (LI) / d6-1 (HI) / d4-1 (En)
Computers:
  Computer Core (Ordinary)
  Navigation Computer (Ordinary)
Engines: Induction Engine
Power: 10
Drive: 5 LY per starfall
Perks: Popular Model, Separable Compartment*
Flaws: Legal

Roll	Comp't	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Durability
1-3	Command	Airlock (0/0)	9/9/4
		Reentry Capsule (0/0)	
		Air/Space Radar (0/0)	
		IR Detector (0/0)	
		Multiband Radar (0/0)	
		Laser Tranceiver (0/1)	
		Radio Tranceiver (0/1)	
		Computer Core (1/0)	
		Navigation Comp (0/0)	
		Turret (1/0)	
		Mass Cannon (2/3)	
4-6	Engineering	Mass Reactor (2/*)	20/20/10
		Induction Engine (2/2)	
		Stardrive (3/*)	
		Autosupport Unit (0/1)	
		Separation Control (1/0)	
7-9	Cargo	Cargo Space (2/0)	4/4/2
10-14	Crew	Crew Quarters (1/0)	6/6/3
		Escape Pod (2/0)	
15-20	Cargo*	Airlock (1/0)	10/10/5
		Autosupport Unit (0/1)	
		Cargo Space (3/0)	
		Autocargo (1/1)	

Weapon Data:
Mass Cannon (Turret)
  Range: 5/10/15 Mm
  Damage: d6+2s/d6+1w/d6+3w LI (p)

©2000 Christopher West

SUPPORTING CAST

By Angelo Sargentini

Concord Marine Gunnery Sgt. Raiko Vlasic

Age 28
Ht. 1.75 meters.
Wt. 100 kg.
Eyes: Brown
Hair: Black
Level 7 Combat Spec.

STR 11 (+1) **INT** 10
DEX 10 (+1) **WIL** 9
CON 9 **PER** 11

Durability 9/9/5/5 **Action Check** 14+/13/6/3*
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 **#actions**: 3**
Reaction score: Good/3 * **Last resorts**: 2

* -d4 achievement bonus to action check.
** Achievement bonus action.

Attacks
Unarmed-brawl 12/6/3
d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s LI/O
If-3 11mm charge rifle 13/6/3*
d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m HI/o
*-d4 cbt spc skill bonus
Tracer grenade 12/6/3
d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+2m HI/G

Defenses
Cerametal Armor: d6+1 (LI), d8+1 (HI), d6 (EN)

Skills:
Armor [11]-*combat* [12]; Athletics [11]-*throw*[12]; Heavy Weapons [11]-*direct* [12], *indirect* [12]; Unarmed [11]-*brawl* [12]; Modern 10-*Rifle* [13]; Vehicle op [10]; Stamina [9]; Knowledge [10]-*First aid* [11], *Marine history and protocol* [11]; Tactics [10]-*infantry** [14]; Awareness [9]-*perception* [11]; Resolve [9]; Interaction** [11]-*intimidate* [11]; Leadership [11]-*command* [15]

* Tactics - *Infantry* rank bonus -d4
** Reputation perk provides -d4 to interaction/encounter skills.

Perks/Flaws
Reputation, Code of Honor

Reputation- A veteran of numerous battles, Sgt. Vlasic has a reputation for being a courageous and aggressive field tactician. His squad follows commands without hesitation, confident that his knowledge of battlefield environment has snatched victory from the jaws of defeat on several occasions. Most notable was his performance against the Klicks during the battle of Rakke.

His position overrun by Klicks, the ammunition exhausted, and his men dying around him, Vlasic called in orbital bombardment on his coordinates. Miraculously, he survived the barrage. This action stalled the Klick advance and allowed dropships to evacuate survivors before the Klicks could rally.

Code of Honor- While some would consider this code a flaw, Sgt. Vlasic is proud to uphold the integrity of the Corps and those that fought before him.

Concordian Marine Uniform Code of Conduct

Article 1. Identity

I am a Concordian fighting being. I serve in the forces that guard my nation and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

Article 2. Vow
I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender my unit while they still have the means to resist.

Article 3. Priciples of the laws of war.

1. Marines only fight enemy combatants.
2. Marines do not harm enemies who surrender.
3. Marines do not torture or kill prisoners.
4. Marines never abandon fellow marines.
5. Marines do not attack medical personnel, facilities or equipment.

6. Marines do not destroy more than the mission requires.

7. Marines treat all civilians humanely.

8. Marines do not steal.

9. Marines do their best to prevent violations of the laws of war.

Gear

11 mm charge rifle; combat knife; cerametal armor; load bearing equipment; first aid kit; comm gear; imaging goggles, klick carapace necklace.

Profile

Sgt. Vlasic has spent the past 10 years in the Concord marines. 10 years is a phenomenal amount of time to remain on active duty in an age where non-powered infantry survivability is measure in seconds. Vlasic attributes his longevity to never forgetting the three constants of battle:

"Who ever controls the high ground, wins the battle."

"Never send a marine if you can send a bullet instead."

"He who laughs last usually initiated a pre-emptive strike."

To the casual observer, Vlasic gives the impression of a stern-faced warmonger and adrenaline junky. His eyes give the impression of a person who has witnessed events aging him more than his fit 28 year-old body shows.

His men revere Vlasic as a freakish lucky charm. Those that follow his orders without hesitation finish campaigns intact, those that don't get their remains shipped home in a poly-carbonate sack.

Sgt. Vlasic's unit is unofficially referred to as "Raiko's Raiders." They are members of Mercury company's 3rd platoon recon/marauding force operating in the Hammer's Star system. There is a mild competitive rivalry between Sgt. Vlasic and Sgt. Luis Sanvictores (see pg.211 of the *Star*Drive Campaign Setting*)

In action Sgt. Vlasic first uses his knowledge of infantry tactics to position his men, providing a 1 step penalty to the enemy. On subsequent actions he alternates using his command skill to provide a 1 step bonus to his men's actions. Raiko's Raiders is made up of three 4-man fireteams. Usual maneuvers involve a leap frog pattern of movement where one fireteam lays suppressing fire (providing up to a 3 step penalty to enemy forces), another engages the enemy with direct weapons fire, and Raiko's fireteam provides command and control and indirect heavy weapons fire as needed.

Sgt. Vlasic has learned that the Klick swarm maneuvers consist of closing rapidly with the enemy and "grabbing their belt straps." By engaging in close quarter combat, Klick forces utilize their bioweakness field to disrupt unit cohesion and make opposing forces reluctant to utilize heavy weapons fire.

To counter this, his squad trains intensively in "hitting the deck" and working with extremely close fire support. This training is made easier by upgraded Starmech smart munitions that can orient their blast patterns to have minimal effect on friendly signals.

Despite the increase in energy weapon performance, they are usually relegated to combat in vacuum or thin atmosphere environments. Battlefield lasers are usually used in the point defense role for their dazzling capability to defeat optically guided warheads or blind enemy personnel.

Man portable weapons lack the power to overcome the range limitations atmosphere causes. Additionally, most energy weapons when fired in a substantial atmosphere produce DEW (direct energy weapon) lines that disclose the shooter's position.

For these reasons, Raiko's Raider's use the 11mm charge rifle that remains the standard weapon issued to all marines. While operating in Klick territory, Raiko's Raiders use armor-piercing ammunition and two squad support recon body tanks mounted with grenade launchers outfitted with AP Blood Hound Smart grenades.

DARKNESS DESCENDS

By C. Kendrick Dunham

My campaign is a variant of the Star*Drive universe and can be easily adapted into any ongoing Star*Drive campaign. Let me know if this goes to publication by e-mailing me at kendunham@hotmail.com.

-C. Kendrick Dunham

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1. Campaign Background History of "Darkness Descends" Campaign
My campaign is based on the Star*Drive universe, with a few twists. In the beginning of the campaign, the heroes discover that the Fraal fled genocide by an alien race that they lived with on their original home planet. The history combines the lives of four alien races: the Fraal, Klick, Kroath, and the Illithids (Mindflayers adapted from the D&D campaign).

It appears that the Fraal and the Illithids share a common genetic heritage, and evolved from the same ancient species. The Illithids developed an amphibious nature in the core of the planet's underground seas, and they were highly psionic, like the Fraal.

When the two species met, an uneasy alliance was made. The Fraal were a peace-loving race that embraced the Illithids. The Illithids, however, were no so amicable. The Illithids saw the surface dwelling Fraal as abominations of the "pure" Illithid race. Racial hatred grew among the Illithid communities, and they launched a massive attack on the Fraal by scorching the skies and depriving the Fraal of sunlight. A war that lasted centuries soon followed. The Fraal were losing the battle with the much more militant Illithids, primarily because of their enemies' powerful mind blasts that shattered the psyches of even the Fraal. The Illithids discovered that consuming the minds of the Fraal enabled them to increase the power of their mindwalking abilities. They also developed psi-restraint devices and soon began enslaving many captured Fraal. Finally, the Fraal accepted defeat and abandoned their homeworld of Fra to move to a neighboring planet (New Fra) to settle, allowing the Illithids full control of their homeworld. The Illithids lacked space-traveling technology, and began plotting how to eradicate the Fraal from the neighboring planet.

The Fraal moved to the new planet and encountered a semi-sentient species that resembled armored spiders. The Fraal domesticated the animals. Soon, the Fraal leaders decided that the "spider-aliens" would make useful shock troops against the Illithids with a little genetic and psionic modification. The entire technology of the Fraal went into developing a breed of species designed to protect the Fraal from the Illithids. Within a few generations, the Fraal had created the Klicks. The Klicks were designed to be sentient, highly organized tool users that had the capability to weaken the minds of all species except other Klicks and the Fraal. Thus, the Klicks' bioweakness field was designed by the Fraal. The Klicks were therefore

immune to the powerful mindblast of the Illithids.

Eventually, the Illithids did launch another attack. The Fraal countered by unleashing thousands of transport vehicles filled to the brim with Klicks and a few Fraal commanders to the now Illithid dominated world. The Klicks were an amazing success. Most Illithids were destroyed. The rest fled to the depths of the earth were they remained for centuries, but only after releasing a military grade virus that destroyed most of the Fraal commanders that accompanied the raiding party. Enslaved Fraal (called "thralls," a term that is used to describe any species enslaved by the Illithids) were either used to combat the Klicks (and died), were murdered, or were taken as slaves by the Illithids to the depths of Fra.

The Fraal rejoiced at the defeat of the Illithids and began to organize a recolonization effort of the original homeworld. However, the Klick invasion had had an unexpected side effect. The loss of so many Fraal commanders created a power vacuum among the Klicks. Infighting began. The Klicks were now warring among themselves. The Fraal discovered that the Klicks were irretrievable and destroyed the remaining crops on New Fra. The Fraal decided that the Klicks could be handled after their war among themselves ended.

Nobody really knows how the Klicks developed social strata that involved Leader, Tech, Warrior, and Social castes. Some Fraal believe that they were organized by surviving Illithids. Others speculate that it was just a by-product of the genetic programming and sentience given to the Klicks by the Fraal. Regardless, Old Fra became the home planet of the Klicks. They combined the psi-technology of the Fraal with the strange biotechnology of the abandoned Illithid cities and discovered black laser technology. They also became fiercely independent of other species and viewed themselves as genetic superiors to the Fraal and the Illithids. After all, they had defeated one, and could defeat the Fraal by simple numbers.

It wasn't long until the Fraal were being at-

tacked by the Klicks. The battle was devastating on both sides. The Klicks soon discovered how to utilize asteroids as weapons. Many Fraal cities on New Fra were lost in the initial onslaught. In panic, the Fraal cities on New Fra (designed as spaceships with Drivespace technology during the war with the Illithids) launched into space. The Drivespace technology was untested; there was no such thing as Drivespace Navigation. The Fraal abandoned their homeworld in Megacity sized ships to the unknown vastness of space.

No two Fraal cityships have come into contact with each other since they abandoned their planet. For thousands of years many ships wandered the galaxy. One of the ships stumbled upon a wormhole near their system and was accidentally sucked into this anomaly. This same ship eventually made its way to the Sol system and became the first aliens that humans encountered. Other Fraal cityships were simply lost. This one cityship is the source of all Fraal in Old Space and the Verge. All Fraal are taught their history (called the Great Story of Falling); all are also forbidden to tell it to other alien species. It is a crime to record the Great Story in any way. The Fraal cityship has spawned many other cityships, each becoming a kind of city-state, each with its own rules and regulations, all ruled under Common Fraal Law and in treaty with the Concord, except for one. This ship, the Xylos (translation, "explorer") has made it its mission to find Old Fra or the other Fraal ships that were launched into Drivespace. These Fraal are considered rebels to traditional Fraal.

2. Major Themes
The Heroes
This is a "space opera" theme with conspiracy and "Men in Black" components. The heroes are working as Concord agents under the operation code-named Black Shield. Their primary mission is to investigate External alien activities in the Verge per Concord Command. Their goal is to ensure the survival of the Concord and all those under Concord treaty from possible External threats. They have an HQ at the Lighthouse and access to a transport ship and scout ship, most weapons, armor and tech-

nology, and many other Concord resources. They have salaries as high-ranking Concord officers. the heroes all know the history of the Campaign and are well-informed on External alien profiles. However, they must follow the often enigmatic orders of the Concord, are considered Black Ops, and their existence as agents of the Concord may be denied at the whim of the governing body, and they can never, ever, leave the Concord. Listed below is information that the heroes of the campaign know or at least suspect.

The Concord

The heroes are only one circle of many working under the Black Shield operation. No circle knows of the other and each operates independently of the others. All circles are considered "expendable." The Concord uses the circles to keep tabs on External activities. Very few outside the Black Shield operation have knowledge of it, even within Concord command. The Concord is very interested in the Hammer, because due to the history of the Fraal's coming to this part of the Galaxy via a wormhole, the Klicks may have arrived the same way. Finding the location of the wormhole (a first for any in the Verge or Old Space) is of primary importance to the Concord.

The Fraal

Concord believes that the Fraal have double agents within Black Shield, but hasn't found a mole yet. The Fraal fear what the knowledge of their history with the Klicks would do, and strive to keep it a secret. The Fraal have agreed to help the Concord by providing them with elite special forces troops in the battles in the Hammer's Star System and Mindwalkers throughout the Verge and Old Space. In exchange, the Concord keeps the history of the Fraal and Klicks a secret and does not allow the Xylos Fraal near the Hammer's Star System. The Xylos Fraal are trying to negotiate with the Concord to allow the cityship in the system. They feel that knowledge of how the Klicks got to the Hammer would help them find their way back home. They illegally send unmarked scouting vessels into the Hammer system for recon and information.

The Average Verger

Believes that the Fraal are nice to help the Concord and that the Concord is nice to destroy the mysterious Klicks which may pose a threat to the entire Verge. As long as the Concord stays out of the Verger's business, the average Verger doesn't care what it does. They are clueless, in essence, to the real scheme of things.

The Klicks

One theory on the Klicks is that they are part of an initial scouting team that is terraforming the Hammer's Star system for eventual colonization. The current Black Shield theory is that the Klicks are still operating outside the power of the Illithids.

The Illithids--Featured as Alien External Species for Alternity in *Dragon* Magazine

Black Shield has holovid evidence of an assassin operating in Lisbon that shows an Illithid-shaped form underneath an exoskeletal armor suit. The assassin killed some Rhodium Miner Union officials. Autopsies of the officials reveals that one was missing all of his brain and had a 3 cm diameter hole in the back of his skull. It is believed that this is the work of an Illithid. Its relationship with the RMU and why it was at Lisbon is unknown. Black Shield xenobiologists have proposed that the Illithids have developed a taste for the brains of sentient species given the history of the Illithids devouring Fraal brains to increase their own mindwalking abilities.

The Kroath

One Kroath ship was recovered in an accidental discovery by a group of freelance Rhodium traders. The Kroath ship was built for speed and had little weaponry. Inside the ship, an exoskeletal armor similar to that worn by the Illithid on the holovid (above) was discovered. This exoskeleton is currently in the possession of Black Shield scientists. Any information linking Kroath to the Illithid is of primary concern to the BS.

The Thuldans

A Black Shield agent codenamed "Victor" disappeared after sending a secure DriveSat message suggesting that the Thuldans have formed some type of treaty with the Kroath. Any information discovered by agents about this issue is

of primary concern to the BS.

3. Illithid Verge Operative/Assassin
B'rorithid: Illithid, Biowarrior Mind Walker Lvl: 5

B'rorithid is the only known Illithid in the Verge. He receives his orders from the Highmind via an alien artifact. He was the assassin in the holovideo.

STR 11 (+1)   INT 14 (+2)
DEX 14 (+2)   WIL 14 (+2)
CON 16   PER 13

Durability 16/16/8/8   Action Check 16+/15/7/3
Action Check Modifier –d4
Move: sprint 24, run 16, walk 6, Easy swim 6, Swim 12   #actions: 4
Reaction score: Amazing/4   Last resorts: 3

Attacks
Can make 1 Psionic attack plus one of the above
Unarmed [untrained]: 5/ 2/ 1 d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s
unarmed combat modifier +d4

Weapons
  Psi Sword*   14/ 7/ 3   En/O
        d6+1w/2d6w/d4+3m*
  Pistol_laser   15/ 7/ 3   En/O
        d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m
  Tentacle knives(4)   12/ 6/ 3   LI/O
        d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w (4x)

Defenses
Illithid Exoskeletal Armor**   5/ 2/ 1   O
d6+1/d8+1/d6
Without Armor = 0

Psionic Energy Points: 14
Biokinesis [16]- *Bioweapon* [17], *Control Metabolism* [17], *Heal* [17], *Rejuvenate* [18], *Transfer Damage* [16], *Awe* [13] (costs 2), *Teleport* [14] (costs 3-13), ESP [14], *Clairaudience*, *Clairvoyance*, *Empathy*, *Postcognition*, *Precognition*, *Psychometry*, *Sensitivity*, *Mind Reading* all at [16]*, *Telekinesis*, *Levitation*, *Photokinetics*, *Psychokinetics*, *Pyrokinetics* all at [13], *Mind Blast* [18] cost 4

Melee Weapons [11]* - *Blade* [12], *Bludgeon*

[12]*, *Powered Weapon* [14]; Acrobatics [14]; Ranged Weapons Modern [14] – *Pistol* [15]; Stealth [14] – *Hide* [15], *Sneak* [15]; Movement [16]; Knowledge [14] – *First Aid* [15] *Life Science, Genetics* [17]; Resolve [14]; Deception [13]; Interaction [13]

Perks & Flaws: Alien Intuition (situational checks); Obsessed 1 (+1 penalty on all actions when triggered = Must have 2d4 Thralls under his command or will not follow his orders).

EQUIPMENT: Bioholster, Protective goggles, Pouches (2), 5 First aid kits, 5 RxPsi enhancers, Sensor gauntlet (in Illithid Exoskeletal Armor), 5 Psi-restraint collars, Illithid Highmind Necklace (contains parts of the HighMind's essence allowing B'rorthid to remain connected with his kin and communicate with the Highmind, also allows communication with his thralls).

4. The Xylos Fraal
M-Loi "War Mind" Fraal-Xylos Clan Female
Mind Walker Mind Knight
Honorable Deeper Meaning Honest, Confident

M-Loi is a Xylos operative agent. Her job is to determine where the Klicks are coming from. She has been given a tip by the Gardhyi that the heroes may know something about this information.

STR 7   INT 12 (+1)
DEX 7   WIL 16 (+3)
CON 10   PER 7

Durability 10/10/5/5   Action Check 11+/10/5/2
Move: sprint 14, run 10, walk 4, Easy swim 2, Swim 4   #actions: 3
Reaction score Good/3   Last resorts: 0

Attacks
Power Martial Arts: 11/ 5/ 2   d6s/d6+2s/d4w
unarmed combat modifier +d0

Defenses
CF softsuit   O   d6/d6/d6-1

Psionic Energy Points: 27

Athletics [7] – *Climb* [8]; Unarmed Attack [7] –

Power Martial Arts [11]; Manipulation [7]; Ranged Weapons Modern [7] – *Pistol* [8]; Stealth [7] – *Sneak* [8]; Vehicle Operation [7]; Stamina [10]; Biokinesis [10] – *Bioarmor* [11], *Bioweapon* [11], *Heal* [14]; Computer Science [12]; Knowledge [12]; ESP [12]; Awareness [16]; Telekinesis [16]; *Kinetic Blow* [17], *Kinetic Shield* [17]; Interaction [7] - *Interview* [8]; Telepathy [7] - *Contact* [11], *Illusion* [11], *Mind Blast* [11], *Suggest* [11]

Perks
Fast Recovery 3 ("Mindwalking" book)
Increased Energy ("Mindwalking" book)

Miscellaneous Gear
Passive ER
Cyber Tolerance 5/3/2

5. Hammer's Star Asteroid Klick Leader
Kl' Kl' Klickic Kl Klick Leader

Kl' Kl' Klickic Kl is a commander for an asteroid base in the Hammer's Star system (Use the Klick Clack module for more information on these asteroid bases). His asteroid has a special function, it has a Drive engine. Why? Only the Klick command knows. Klickic doesn't think the expense was worth it, but he's just following orders. His men have managed to capture a live Kroath (located in the prison cell of the base).

STR 13 (+2)   **INT** 12 (+1)
DEX 11 (+1)   **WIL** 12 (+1)
CON 12   **PER** 10

Durability 22/11/6/6   **Action Check** 16+/15/7/3
Move: sprint 28, run 18, walk 6   **#actions**: 2
Reaction score Ordinary/2   **Last resorts**: 2

Attacks
Pincers (x2): 18/ 9/ 4   d6+2w/d8+2w/d4+2m
Blk Laser SMG: 16/ 8/ 4   d6+1w/d6+3w/ d4+1m F/B/A 20/80/200

Defenses
Armor: d8+1/d68+1/d8+2

DURABILITY
Stun 22, Wound 11, Mortal 6, Fatigue 6

Athletics [13] - *Climb* [18], *Jump* [16]; Unarmed attack [13] - *brawl* [18]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11] –*SMG* [16], *Rifle* [16]; Stealth [11] - *Hide* [14], *Sneak* [14]; Stamina [12] - *Endurance* [16]; Movement [12]; Awareness [12] - *Intuition* [14], *Perception* [16]; Knowldedge [12] - *Computer Operations* [14]; Tactics [12] - *Infantry* [14], *Space* [14]; Leadership [10] - *Command* [12]

6. Alien/New Technology of Campaign
The Illithid equipment was inspired by the Illithid *Monstrous Arcana* D&D sourcebook. Also, some unique devices designed for Black Shield agents are presented

*The Illithid Psi Sword
Powered Psionic Weapon
Standard Damage: En/O
d6+1w / 2d6w / d4+3m
Skill for use --Powered Weapon and/or Bioweapon (see below)
Description--Like a Jedi Lightsaber except that the handle is filled with a viscous fluid made of the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) of the wielder, another Mindwalker (whose life is sacrificed in the process), and a rare crystal found in the core of the planet Fra. Each Psi Sword is unique and has a special ability (determined by the chart below). An Illithid who donates his CSF to the pommel may activate the Psi Sword by mere thought. When the sword is activated, the Illithid can use the standard damage (see above) or may seek to enhance the weapon's power by rolling against his Bioweapon skill (cost 10 psionic points). The results of that roll last for 10 rounds and are as follows:

Critical Failure = Psi Sword overloads and explodes causing 1d6+1w damage in a 15 meter radius. Psi Sword is ruined.
Failure = Psi Sword malfunctions and is inactive for 2d6 rounds.
Ordinary = Psi Sword acts as a Good grade weapon (En/G)
Good = As Ordinary, but damage is doubled unless victim struck is a Mindwalker (indicates extra damage caused to psyche of an untrained mind)
Amazing = As Good, plus can attack double the normal rate per round (indicates a mental

link with weapon that is beyond comparison)

Any Mindwalker or Illithid that tries to use a Psi Sword that wasn't designed for him can do so with the Bioweapon skill. He can NEVER enhance the weapons functions. To determine the capacity of the Psi Sword in the new owner's hands, roll the Bioweapon skill.

Critical Failure = Psi Sword overloads and explodes causing d4m damage in a 15 meter radius. Psi sword is ruined.
Failure = Psi Sword overloads and explodes causing 2d6w damage in a 15 meter radius. Psi sword is ruined.
Ordinary = Psi Sword is En/O weapon with 1d4w/1d6+1w/1m damage, user must reroll the next time he tries to activate the weapon.
Good = Psi Sword acts as normal. Must reroll to reactivate weapon.
Amazing = Psi Sword acts as normal and user has mastered control over weapon. As long as the Mindwalker is the only one that tries to use the Psi Sword, he does not have to reroll. If the Psi Sword is used by another mindwalker then the original mindwalker must reroll (despite Amazing result).

All users of a Psi Sword use the Melee Weapon – *Powered* skill to hit. In the hands of non-Mindwalkers, the Psi Sword does nothing. No other alien species has the technology to make a Psi Sword. If they studied for a year or two, a Fraal psi-tech team might be able to decipher its construction.

Illithid Exoskeletal Armor
Powered Armor acts as Cerametal Armor with the following exceptions.
Protection = d6+1/d8+1/d6 LI/HI/En
+2 step penalty added to a psionic attack directed at the Illithid wearing the armor
The helmet has Glare Goggles, Binoculars, and Sensor Gauntlet built in (activated by psionic thought of wearer) and may have Cybernetic Tentacle Combat Knife extensions each one ten feet long (makes 4 tentacles project retractable combat knives that make separate attacks to one or two opponnets in front of or flanking the

Illithid). Knives have combat values of LI/G d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w. Cannot use any other attack form (except psionics) when utilizing these extensions.
Suit acts as a hard e-suit when in space (adapted for Illithid skin/mucus secretion physiology, unacceptable for other aliens)
Undetectable to IR scans (suit AI matches heat signature to surrounding environment)

Black Shield Cyber Implant--Mental Armor
Cybernetic Enhancement (cost = 0 cyber tolerance points)
This top secret device gives a +3 step penalty to any Mindwalker trying to affect the mind of a Black Shield agent carrying this device (*Suggestion*, and *Mind Reading* for example). The device is permanent, and attempts to remove the device causes d4m damage to the agent and has a 19 in 20 chance of destroying the device. The device has antiscan properties and is undetectable by most top line security devices. All Black Shield agents have this implant

Black Shield Blast Ring
Military Grade Weapons Device
Every agent has access to an antiscan weave enabled ring that has one of the two following powers: Act as a Powered Cestus for 10+d6 rounds or fires 4 bolts as if it was a Laser Pistol. Using the weapons requires the appropriate skill checks. This weapon is generally used by agents in "tight" situations. Each ring is custom designed for use with an individual's biofield (thus, is unusable for others). On a Critical Failure the ring causes d6 stun damage to the wearer and is effectively destroyed. Once used the ring regenerates power in 1 Solar week.

7. About the author.
C. Kendrick Dunham has been playing RPGs for about 15 years. At the age of 26 Ken is now at medical school in North Carolina and can't seem to find the time to game anymore. If you are interested in Ken's Dungeons and Dragons (2nd edition) adventures, he has posted some at http://kendunham.tripod.com/rpg.htm

ASK THE ORACLE

By Neil Spicer

AKA "Sage Advice"

Q: How does the metal a weapon (melee and ranged) is made of affect its accuracy? Its damage? Its range? What about advanced ceramics?

A: Presumably the whole idea of weapons manufacturing lies within producing an item from the toughest material (so it won't break, chip, or lose its edge) while keeping it lightweight (so it's easier to wield, throw, and carry) and yet still preserve the original goal of causing the greatest damage. Of course, cost and practicality often follow closely behind these things. In addition, there are always trade-offs among these criteria, leading to the huge variety of weapons that are available on the open market, both today and presumably in the future as well.

No distinct rules have been set down in the Alternity system for denoting how different substances contribute to accuracy, damage, and range. It's more or less implied in the damage ratings for the weapons that are scattered across the various Progress Levels. A club, for instance, being made of wood, does less damage than a metal shortsword: d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w vs. d4w/d6w/d6+2w. A katana, after going through hundreds of folds in the forging process, is slightly better than a saber: d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m vs. d4w/d4+2w/2d4+1w.

Despite those examples, it's obvious that such factors do figure into the accuracy, damage, and range that are assigned to various weapons in the Alternity system. For example, in the Star*Drive campaign setting the T-Bar TN Blade is made from tungsten-neutronite, the toughest conventional alloy known to man in the year 2502. As such, it carries a much higher damage rating than a normal dagger: d6w/d6+1w/d4m LI/G vs. d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w LI/O. There's no explanation for exactly how to adjust the numbers based on whether a weapon is manufactured from such a superior alloy. It's pretty much left up to each Gamemaster to judge the effective-

ness of these weapons for his or her campaign style.

A number of house rules can be put forward to explore such an element of realism in the game. Titanium javelins might enjoy a greater throwing range. Depleted uranium or tungsten ammunition would certainly cause greater damage and possibly enjoy a greater level of accuracy. Regardless of what new alloy a Gamemaster chooses to make available within the game, certain aspects must be kept in mind when deciding how to adjust a weapon's statistics based upon it. Weight, flexibility, etc. all factor into the equation. A titanium sword might be incredibly durable but would be more flexible than steel. A weapon like the T-Bar, although made out of the toughest alloy, would be incredibly heavy. These things make the alloy less useful in some weapon designs and more useful in others. The bottom line is to fully research any real-life metals that you choose to use in order to preserve the realism. Otherwise, just go with what the game system already provides or use your imagination.

Q: In Gamma World, What advantages and disadvantages are there to having a duralloy sword and shield? In addition, can the current duralloy be cut like the old version? Is it still a total conductor of heat?

A: Duralloy is a fictional metal in the Gamma World universe that has gone through almost as many incarnations as the game itself. Originally, it was described in the 1st edition of Gamma World as being virtually impervious to all other substances and most energy sources. Duralloy was to Gamma World what tungsten-neutronite is to Star*Drive; it was quite simply the toughest substance known at the time. You couldn't even dent it.

Later, the 4th edition of Gamma World changed or elaborated upon duralloy's description as having the "…unusual property of absorbing and dissipating most forms of energy as heat."

It further described the metal as no longer being immune to physical abuse. It could be dented or broken, but not melted. It was also impossible to carve it into a particular shape without the advanced technology of the Ancients. As such, a duralloy sword would be almost impossible to create, but duralloy shields were certainly possible and were included as a Tech Level VI artifact capable of partially dispersing any energy attack directed against it (i.e., reduce damage by 50%).

Unfortunately, with the revisions to the 5th edition of Gamma World in the Alternity system and the introduction of the Shadow Age alien invasion, duralloy didn't receive the same attention as before. As such, there are no game statistics for it in Alternity terms. It does receive a brief reference as a component in the Shadow Age armor known as body tanks, but little else. This means that Gamemasters are free to reintroduce the material as they see fit. A good guideline might be the T-Bar TN Blade in the Star*Drive *Arms & Equipment Guide*. Since it's made of tungsten-neutronite, it represents the toughest material for its Progress Level, too. The metal is incredibly dense and therefore deceptively heavy, lending itself better to a dagger than an actual sword. Duralloy could be interpreted in much the same way, and provided it could be reshaped, it might produce a weapon similar to the T-Bar in terms of damage rating. Duralloy shields could also be reintroduced, scaling up the protection of the Plasteel Shield with the following statistics:

PL	Armor	Skill	AP	Type
S	Duralloy Shield	combat	+2	O

LI/HI/En	Hide	Mass	Cost
+2/+2/+2	-	7	5000

Q: In the Star*Drive universe, if the Medurr have no FTL drives for their ships, then how do they get from system to system? And why did Admiral Sun attack them if they cannot move FTL?

A: The Medurr were first introduced in the *Alien Compendium II: The Exploration of 2503* as a very expansionistic race of dragon-like lizards. They constantly seek to expand their borders because of the intense competition that exists between the family members of each clan. Although the Medurr don't have Faster-Than-Light drives on their ships in the way that humanity

and its allies do, they still have the means of traveling from system to system. They accomplish this through star rifts and gate activators.

A star rift is actually an energy tunnel temporarily brought into existence between two locations through an immense power source. Power is something the Medurr have in great supply, enjoying a PL 8 technology that allows them to glean more power from vacuum fluctuations than they have to expend to produce it, i.e., zero-point energy. With such an endless resource available, the Medurr and their servant races developed PL 7 technology for matter transmission in two distinct forms: permanent star rifts as dark metal circles orbiting a sun at a distance of about 1 AU, and large riftships which carry smaller-scale devices inside them.

The permanent star rifts are huge constructs that actually use a sun's energy to generate the vacuum fluctuations to power themselves. They are invoked by special devices called gate activators on all Medurr ships wishing to journey to another star system. They can do this by keying their destination to another known star rift gate, or they can attempt to blindly jump to a random location where a terminating star rift doesn't yet exist. A blind jump sends the ship d20+4 light-years into the unknown and can be even more dangerous than starfalling without a set of coordinates. A controlled jump, however, to a known location that contains another star rift, can traverse even longer distances. Regardless, the actual journey takes much less time than other FTL technologies. For example, the Medurr in the Cambria system can make the trip to Lucullus in only d8 hours as compared to the mandatory 121 hours of a comparable Verge Alliance ship with a sizeable stardrive. No one knows exactly how long it takes to travel from the Verge to the center of the Medurr Imperium, but undoubtedly the star rifts make the trip in much less time than anything humanity has ever encountered.

The second method of star rift travel involves the use of Medurr riftships. These huge vessels were first described in *Zero Point*, the Star*Drive novel by Rich Baker. Often they are sent out into unknown space under the power of their sub-light engines as "sleeper" ships carrying several Medurr in suspended animation. The ship's computers continue to monitor its sensors until a suitable system is found for conquering or colo-

nization before waking the crew. If the riftships are discovered by another sentient species, they also serve as a "Trojan horse" trap capable of delivering an invasion force directly into the enemy's stronghold through the star rift gate carried on board. These ship borne star rifts are even sizeable enough to gate in more ships from another location, as demonstrated in *Zero Point*, making the appearance of a Medurr riftship a bad omen indeed. As the crew of a riftship establishes a viable colony or beachhead in a particular system, the star rift on board is carefully dismantled and then reassembled with additional components to put a permanent one in orbit around that system's star. From that point on, Medurr ships may freely come and go from the system through any other star rift gate as long as they know the correct command code sequence to initiate the transfer.

Lastly, within a star system, Medurr ships still possess very capable sub-light engines and can travel to and from individual worlds with the same speed as a Verge Alliance ship. Their vessels also contain a formidable semi-organic compound as resistant to damage as the heaviest neutronite plating. This combination of limitless power and incredible durability makes for a dangerous opponent. Also, since their ships don't have to make room for a stardrive, significant space is freed up for more weapons and systems to enhance their combat effectiveness. The Medurr are simply born to fight and their ships reflect that personality. They also don't respect anything that can't fight back. A show of weakness toward them is an invitation to start a war.

With this attitude, the Medurr definitely represent a threat to the Verge Alliance during the External War, especially the Lucullus system. Humanity hasn't really come to a complete understanding of the nature of Medurr society, specifically their internal strife between competing clan members. According to the timeline of the war, a diplomatic mission to Cambria resulted in an unexpected attack by the Medurr. In reality, the attack was orchestrated by Stykor's scheming sister, Teran, in a power play to dominate the region for herself. The Verge Alliance has no way of understanding this, or who to believe. In addition, humanity can't afford to wage a war on two fronts, and the Medurr only seem to recognize and respect a show of force, which is why Admi-

ral Sun was directed to teach them a lesson. By showing the Medurr enough strength to convince them not to attack the vulnerable Verge Alliance, they hope to preserve the peace with them long enough to deal with the I'krl Theocracy.

Q: What races make the ships described in Externals? (i.e. which are N'sss/Ravan, Klick, Bareem, etc.)

According to the *Externals ESD* there are only a handful of races among the I'krl Theocracy that hold the technology to manufacture starships. The Sifarv, Thaal, Kadarans, and N'sss/Ravans were starfaring races before joining the Theocracy. The Ghardyi also have the capability to travel the universe, but they use their cybernetic/psionic starwebs rather starships. The Klicks, Kroath, Bareem, and Teln are all liberated races that were introduced to the stars by the other members.

As for which ships are manufactured by what races, the Kadarans are the quintessential Tech Ops for most of the I'krl Theocracy, using their technology to grow weapons and ships making up more than 65% of the External fleet. The Sifarv contribute the Raptor light fighter and presumably several other ships considering their longer history of traveling the stars, especially the carriers that house their fighters. The Thaal obviously craft the mammoth Cathedral ships. And the Nsss/Ravans could probably make a good case for having contributed the Ray, Skate, and Shark class vessels considering their jellyfish description and origins as aerial swimmers of Jovian worlds. Anything beyond that isn't discussed in the *Externals ESD*, so it's all open to interpretation.

Q: If the Lighthouse was destroyed in the External War, why didn't they use their superweapon as a last ditch defense?

A: There's actually no clear description of how the Lighthouse met its fate in the External War. All we do know is that it was lost in the Battle of Aegis while facing the External fortress ship, Phlegethon. According to the *Externals ESD*, Administrator Wakefield intended to cripple the alien ship and then board it in order to capture its Precursor tachyon cannon so it could be delivered into the hands of the Verge Alliance. If

this was his goal, that could explain his reluctance to use the Lighthouse's superweapon as it would have resulted in the loss of not only the Lighthouse (which would have been crippled as a result of using the weapon), but also the Phlegethon's tachyon cannon. Would the trade-off have been worth it? Perhaps. But there are a few other reasons why the Verge Alliance might have withheld using such a last ditch effort.

First, Administrator Wakefield never knew about the superweapon. Michael Thayne was the real power behind that secret and only shared it with a select few individuals. Secondly, ejecting the station's stardrive as a projectile weapon would have totally wrecked the entire engineering section and killed any crewmembers in that section of the Lighthouse. Third, the remnants of the station would also have been crippled, largely without power, the ability to function, or even move. It would have been totally defenseless, and without quick relief anyone in the station's city would have perished as well. Lastly, it would have been more worthwhile to the Verge Alliance to keep the Lighthouse operational for as long as possible in order to save their planetary headquarters and the lives of the population of Aegis. Trading the station for the Phlegethon would not have staved off the inevitable. The Externals still had enough forces to finish off the remainder of the Verge Alliance. So, the Lighthouse would probably have valiantly fought until the bitter end, unwilling to cripple its remaining guns by using its superweapon in a single attack that may or may not have worked against the superior technology of the Externals.

Despite these reasons, we don't actually know if the Lighthouse refrained from using its superweapon or not. Like many other products in the line of Alternity Star*Drive, the *Externals ESD* leaves much of the truth clouded in mystery, mostly so that Gamemasters are free to decide their own interpretation. It's important to note that three other possibilities exist. The Lighthouse could have used the superweapon and had it turned aside by Phlegethon's shields. Or, it could have attempted to use the superweapon and had it foiled by the sabotage of an External spy or a VoidCorp traitor. Or, it could have used the device and succeeded only partially in damaging the Phlegethon, thereby driving it away, but falling victim to the rest of the Exeat forces as it lay defenseless in the void of space following the attack.

The first scenario is certainly possible given the incredible technology and psionic powers of the I'krl Theocracy. In that event, the Lighthouse would have expended itself in a single fruitless attack before falling victim to the rest of the Exeat forces. This seems unlikely, however, considering that the Battle of Aegis ended with the Verge Alliance driving away the invaders.

The second scenario seems more likely. Only a handful of people knew about the Lighthouse's secret weapon. Michael Thayne, Captain Wistzec, Engineer Kevin Ochoa, the First Prophet Galindus and his peers in the Orlamu Theocracy, Prelate Tassina as their on-board representative, and lastly, Commander Jacob Cohn, who was the weak link whom Captain Wistzec informed about the Lighthouse's capabilities despite Thayne's blanket order to keep the secret to himself. Commander Jacob Cohn could easily have fallen prey to a Teln tangle or a VoidCorp interrogation team that would have taken steps to disable the superweapon so it couldn't be used in the battle. This would have forced Wakefield to continue the fight with just his conventional weaponry.

The third scenario certainly provides us with the most heroic image possible. In a last-ditch effort to deny the Externals the use of the Precursors' tachyon cannon and win the Battle of Aegis, Michael Thayne and Administrator Wakefield may have agreed to fire the superweapon. Their victory in retaining the system would have been short-lived as they realized that the Phlegethon still survived and was simply starfalling in order to regroup. And, as the rest of the External ships bore down on the defenseless space station to finish it off before following their flagship into drivespace, the two Concord representatives would have realized their sacrifice had accomplished very little except to buy the Verge Alliance more time.

Any of these are possible scenarios. Without future products from Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast for the Alternity Star*Drive line, we may never know exactly what happened to the Lighthouse. But in the interim, feel free to choose your own interpretation. And, in the words of one well-respected member of the A-list…Good gaming!

LETTERS

By Action Check Staff

"Worst column name ever."
-Comic Book Guy.

So, in the footsteps of so many magazines and comics before us, we're holding a contest to name our new Letters page. Yes, Action Check is getting feedback, more and more feedback, and there's a lot of wisdom out there to be shared. So send in your ideas to actioncheck@hotmail.com! Send us your letters on any Alternity topic. We may edit for content, but not necessarily editorial errors!

PREPARATION FEEDBACK I

First, let me congratulate you for your excellent "Action check" monthly magazine. I am a veteran GM (first game in 1983, with the D&D red box!) and I really appreciate all the efforts you put in that great magazine.
In your last magazine, you requested some feedback on the game preparation work we find invaluable. So here is some information I'm willing to share with you.
Here is how I get ready for my gaming sessions:
After reading the adventure many times, and writing down the npc sheets on my custom made template, then I print some random names from a name generator (just in case I need them), after that I try to find some "messages" in the adventure that I could record in MP3 format. Exactly like the one on the TSR web site from the silver bell colony. I usually end up with more messages that I have time to record. Could be a simple voice mail from a PC friend to the enigmatic "Mission impossible" type message from their superior. You can have a look at the messages I've done so far at http://alternity. homeip.net/Sounds/, they are all in french and so is the web site...sorry.
The messages are done with Goldwave and Multiquence, great sharewares available on the net. The background noises and special effects are taken from all over the internet, I still have some great sites on my other computer bookmarks so I can send them to you later if you're interested. Once the messages are done, if a message is private (means for a single Character only) then I sent it via email to that player. Other than that, they will be played during the game. I had a really good feedback from many players about those messages and I think it's really worth it. Your players look at you with big eyes saying Wow!
The gaming session setting is quite impressive I think. Over the years, we added some really nice features to our sessions.
The table, we use no ordinary table. We covered the ta-

ble with a white board fitting the exact dimension of the table. We can write everywhere on the table with a dry ink pen. A true white board is quite expensive, but you can use a white sheet that goes in the bathroom walls to "look like" ceramic. Around 25$ Canadian for a 4 X 8 feet sheet. Cut the sheet to fit the size of your table and put it on the table. Now you have a really large drawing board on your table....but you need some scaling markers to help you out for drawing the maps on it. You could draw a grid with a permanent pen on the board but we found a better way. Instead, use a hammer and a nail and make a tiny hole at each inch on your white board. You'll get a grid made of tiny holes that won't go off when you wash the board.
A sound system is installed in the gaming room for music and the room is lighted with 5 oil lamps and some candles, for intimacy and ambiance. The room also has a computer for use by the DM and the players. On the computer, we display scanned maps, we play the MP3 messages I've done earlier, we use it as our mailing list server, and we also use it to webcast our game to our remote players or spectators.
Yes, we do live webcast our gaming sessions via the web. This is useful for the player that could not make it at this week gaming session, also for the occasional remote player and to the friends that wish to take a look at our games. The game is recorded and made available for one week. It is broadcasted via a cable modem at a 56k quality. 2 Microphones and a webcam are used to broadcast, along with the microsoft windows media encoder. Roger Wilco is used and hosted on the gaming room computer for people wishing to exchange comments on our game channel during the live broadcast.
Our mailing list. Any player that wish to talk to our comrades may use our lyris free list manager to send an email to everyone. No need to know the emails of every player, he just sends in the email to the designated address and the list manager will do the job. All the messages sent to this mail list are available on a news server and also on a web server. This feature is really useful and appreciated from the players.
After each game, the DM does a resume of the gaming sessions and put it online. Then, he sends a message to the mailing list to notify everyone.
Our web site is used to keep track of the group finances and ship status, it's the center of all things for the campaign. The mp3s, the maps, photos, links to roger wilco, webcast, maillist server, the resumes of each gaming sessions, etc. we could not do it anymore without the internet and the computers...funny ehh...where are the good old games with dices, pc sheet and a pencil?

One special note on our gaming sessions. You know, when the players all have kids, wife, home and work occupations it may be difficult for them to be present each week for each gaming session. Some of them are more absent then others, so to give some reward to the players that are always present and to help everyone being on time (which is also a problem)....when the games begins at exactly 19h00 we throw 1D4. If it's a 1, then everyone present will get 1 experience point for his character. If not, then better luck next week :-)

Hope this helps, if you could put together an article with the best suggestions from everyone that would be great, I'm sure there is something we did not think of and we'd like to try in our gaming sessions.

-Steven Boudreault
steven14@videotron.ca

Technically, we have, Steven, this column! In future months we'll be asking more direct questions in our editorials for feedback and your suggestions are not just state of the art, but in some ways may present the future of gaming, excellent suggestions!
-JEFF

PREPARATION FEEDBACK II

My name is Oliver and I guess I am one of the very few Alternity - Players in Germany. First I wish to thank you for the great work, you are doing with the Action Check magazine. I like it very much. Next, you ask in the last issue, which kind of preparation a gamemaster does for the Alternity RPG. Thus, I have to say, that it is a lot of work.

In December 1998 I bought the core - rulebooks and I figured out, that these rules are some of the best I ever had the pleasure to read (we are also playing CoC, Shadowrun, Vampire and a german RPG, calld "Das schwarze Auge").

After this I bought the Stardirve books too and I was fascinated about the possibilities to create a mainstream SF - plot with a whole new background, unknown by my friends and players. You know, I like it to have my "own universe", not just Starwars, older Startrek, which everyone knows very well, and perhaps to well.

My problem was the fact, that only three of the members of my RPG - group could understand your language. Thus I have to translate some rules and the background.

At first I translated the timetable and after that I whole historical story of human kind. After this I translated the Character Creation with skills and vehicle- and combat rules. Finally I took the *Mindwalker*, *Dataware* and *Starships* books and get

the most important rules to German language. Thus, I have now a fully 200 pages Rulebook and sometimes I write on (at the moment I translate the different Stellar Nations).

Before I start to play a game session, I always translate some few lines about the different star-systems my people are going to visit. After this I always make copies of the maps and then I am going to figure out the plot of the adventure. This is also one reason I write this email, because in my opinion, it could be a good thing to collect some of the adventure ideas of all the Alternity fans out there, just like in the Alternity and Stardrive books, and share it to everyone who reads your magazine.

-Oliver Bischoff
ElNebu@aol.com

I secretly can't help but wonder how many requests you'll get for that translation work! I know what you mean about Alternity being the perfect engine for running a sci-fi campaign of your own creation. That was my first draw to, and experience with, Alternity as well. Sounds like your group appreciates the efforts, long live your campaign! -JEFF

WHATS IN A NAME?

www.kabalarians.com
This is an incredibly useful site, both for the player and the GM. One thing which I and others have had some trouble with is deciding on a good name for a character, whether my own PC or an SCM that I'm introducing (usually with no forward planning whatsoever). This website boasts over half a million names, male and female, and I've found quite a few interesting ones that I've used for my characters. But this site goes far beyond simply listing thousands of names, it also includes a brief analysis of what it means to have a particular name. The Kabalarians have devised a systematic method for determining a person's personality traits, gifts and hindrances, as well as health tendencies. In short, the brief description that goes with a name gives one a great guideline for an interesting personality to go along with it. I've gathered quite a few different names, with the personality descriptions and printed them out so that I have at my fingertips a unique and memorable SCM to interact with the players on the fly. And for the player who's stumped on what kind of character to try next, a good name and Kabalarian analysis can really jump-start the creative juices. Check it out: click the button that says "What's in YOUR Name? - demonstration analysis."

-Fredric Stewart
-ZomBvision@cy-co.com