

# FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



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Jeff Zeitlin

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Freelance Traveller is published monthly in PDF form by the editor. The current issue is available from the Freelance Traveller web site, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com>.

## From the Editor



Last month, I said I’d discuss the new *Freelance Traveller* Forums this month. Unfortunately, due to a case of “too much hands on my time” (read it again; I wrote it exactly as I meant it), they’re not up and running yet. We apologize for the delay, and hope that we will soon be able to announce their availability.

The new forums, as I said last month, will be oriented more toward support of the magazine than to general *Traveller* discussion; for the latter, there are already excellent forums for general discussion at Citizens of the Imperium, at Mongoose Publishing, at Steve Jackson Games, and at SFRPG. Overcoming the inertia of these sites is a difficult proposition at best.

So, what does “support of the magazine” really mean? First, it means that you’ll be able to provide feedback. We’re not abandoning the use of email for that; just providing another option. Second, it means that if you have a question about writing for us, you’ll be able to get an answer by checking out the “Writer’s Guide” and “FAQ” sections. Third, at the columnist’s

option, there will be a section where you can discuss the regular columns, and reasonably expect to see the columnist respond. There will also be forum sections to match the various departments of the magazine, where articles of the indicated type may be discussed. Fourth, any “community” projects to be undertaken under *Freelance Traveller*’s auspices will use the forums as both a discussion area and work-in-progress repository. We have one project we’d like to resurrect, and another that will soon be proposed to certain relevant individuals, and we hope that there will ultimately be more. Finally, the forums will serve as a combined “slush pile” and “writers’ workshop” for future articles to appear in the magazine—potential authors will be able to post drafts and get comments, both on the content and the writing. A separate subsection will be available for in-depth technical discussions relevant to articles posted for commentary, as well.

We hope you’ll join us when we’re ready; we’re looking forward to your participation in making *Freelance Traveller* the best magazine it can be.

### Mongoose Traveller Alien Module 3: Darrians

reviewed by "kafka"

*Mongoose Traveller Alien Module 3: Darrians*. Pete Nash  
Mongoose Publishing <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>  
168pp, hardbound  
US\$34.99/UK£24.99

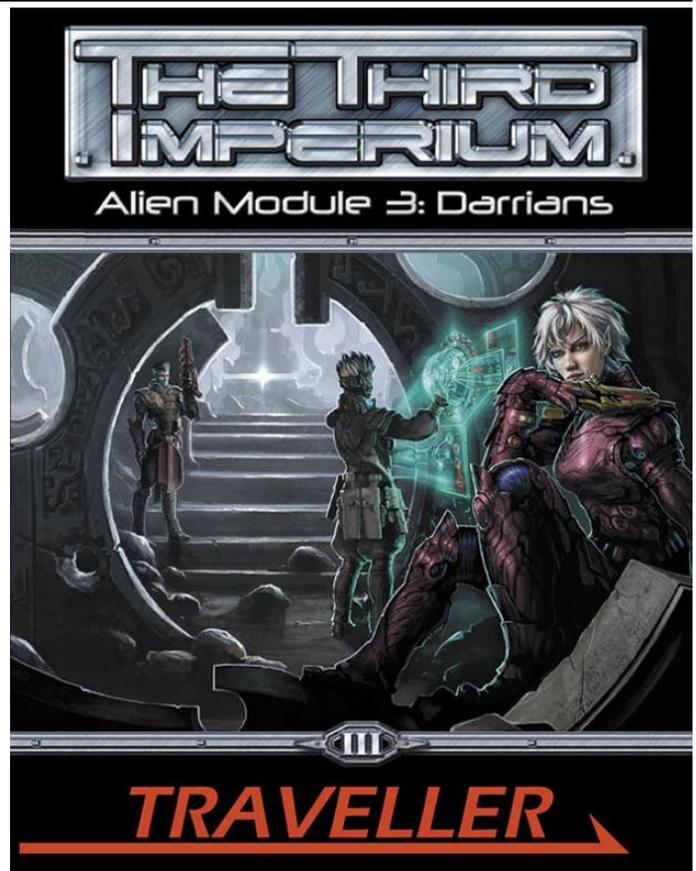
Again, due to Amazon cock-ups, I am late reviewing this item that I have long had a pre-order for but Amazon deciding when there is a publishing delay because they had not ordered enough copies decides unilaterally to cancel my order forcing me to go to a FLGS 800km away...

I must admit, I felt great trepidation when I saw this product announced. The Darrians had unfairly gained the reputation of being "Space Elves" and I feared that I might see yet another "Dragonstar" or "D&D in Space" rendition. As much as I loved Mongoose's race books for D&D, they have no place in my *Traveller* universe. However, I knew much of fandom clamoured for "Space Elves".

My own view of the Darrians was that they were a minor human race, found in the Spinward Marches, that managed to struggle against all odds to become one of the dominant minor players in the Marches – that is, they were in some ways the Israelis of Chartered Space – whether they had pointed ears or not was irrelevant. Not that one takes exception to looking at pictures of Darrian/Elven babes/beaus. Thankfully, I was rewarded with an excellent product.

Like the other race books that Mongoose has produced, it follows a similar pattern: New careers for aliens, a smattering of history, some starships and other toys, the worlds of the Darrian Confederation, possible patrons and encounters and a section on how to play them.

The careers section is well flushed out and contained excellent descriptions of the differences between the Darrians and the Imperial norm. Here, the right balance between skill acquisition and time spent in a career was perfectly balanced. The author clearly had GDW's original alien module as a guide but his own interpretation of it reconciles the internal contradictions and makes the society seem more "real". For example, equating Social Stand-



ing with knowledge acquisition was an absolutely brilliant move in the Darrian sphere.

There are deck plans but there are also illustrations of the starships; sadly, the pictures of the starships are sensor profile and in no way resemble the phenomenal starship art of the main rulebook.

While on the topic of art, the art in this book is truly some of the best *Traveller* art that I have seen in a very long time. Yes, the Darrians are portrayed as Elfinesque, but I was so impressed that I would routinely ignore the hypertrophic ears for the quality of the art contained within. Gone are the cartoonish and silly art that has marked much of Mongoose's line up to now. Hopefully, it marks a new era where gritty realism and photo-like illustrations come to the fore for at least their *Traveller* line. Especially commendable was their illustrations of the different character careers. True, there weren't any Darrian babes/beaus but I understand that their agreement with Marc prevents that.

Pete Nash did a great job reconstructing Darrian history, eliminating many of the grey areas that marked the original Alien Module and updat-

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ing it to more current understandings of science. For example, the super flares that were so much a paranormal fear in the 1970s get a realistic re-examination that is less paranormal although traces could still be found there - this is sad. I realize that Pete Nash would have had the limitations of the original module to contend with but there was apparently no consultation with some the old *Traveller* "grogards" who could have at least vetted the manuscript and perhaps incorporated some of the work that SJGames has done on the Darrians. Some of the tech such as the Meson egg cooker is quite fun but really is not *Traveller*. But other innovations like Pandora's Box were excellent and well thought through.

If there was one thing lacking which was present in previous Mongoose Alien Module products, it would be a series of tropes or caricatures of how to actually play the Darrians from popular (Science) Fiction films/books. So, I was still left wondering whether the Darrians are "Space Elves" or not... I also would have liked to see more on the Sword Worlds-Darrians conflict played out - I

got the sense that the Darrians were as much akin to the Nordic countries who were facing off against a rising Germany as they were Israelis. *Traveller* claims that it does not ground itself in real world politics but as many know, the war gaming roots of *Traveller* often show up of simulacra of "the real world".

All-in-all this is an outstanding product. I look forward to future offerings and hope that Mongoose can keep the excellent cadre of writers that are now emerging on staff. Mongoose's Third Imperium is starting to look more and more like the Imperium that I know and love...their first independent campaign (Tripwire) left a bad taste in my mouth. Even though I am a big fan of the game system and the changes that Mongoose has made in it...they have to respect the history of *Traveller* as well as build the future. Despite its high price, I feel this product was worth every penny spent upon it.

Keep up the excellent work, Mongoose!

Style 5/5

Substance 5/5

## Fifth Imperium

Shannon Appelcline



*This column is intended to be a referee's guide to Mongoose's Traveller, the fifth incarnation of the Traveller game system. Often it'll talk about the many printed resources out there and available to the gamemaster, supplementing my own reviews on those topics, but sometimes it'll offer more specific advice for GMing the game.*

*Editor's Note: The initial Fifth Imperium column was published on the RPG.Net website in July 2009, and appeared in Freelance Traveller's initial issue in November 2009. This column originally appeared on the RPG.Net website in January 2011.*

A few months ago I finished running a year and a half long campaign of Mongoose Traveller. I'll again point you to my complete AP of all twenty weeks of play at <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=451150>. Along the way I learned a few lessons applicable to similar cam-

paigns. In my last article, I talked about some of the things I learned about *Traveller* publications, while this month I'm going to talk about more personal lessons learned about GMing *Traveller*.

### A Few More Lessons Learned: About GMing *Traveller*

6. A little bit at a time works well. I've been living and breathing *Traveller* on-and-off for the last twenty years. I skimmed through the little black books in my youth, voraciously read about the Rebellion in the 1980s, and enjoyed the awesome books put out by DGP in the years thereafter. So, I can pretty readily identify the difference between a Hiver and a K'kree and can otherwise thoroughly detail the universe of the Third Imperium.

That's a pretty good background to have as the GM of a setting, but I knew from the start that if I

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## Fifth Imperium

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tried to impart everything to the players at once, I'd lose them. So, I introduced just a little bit of the massive Traveller background at a time.

In the first week of play the players met some Vargr and I revisited that race now and again throughout the campaign to further explain and detail their culture. A pair of Aslan appeared, one week after another, halfway through the campaign's run in weeks #12 and #13. The Zhodani and the K'kree were mentioned in the background from time to time, but never actually took center stage. For most of the game, I kept the adventures pretty straight-forward, but toward the end of the campaign, I started talking about the politics of the Marches as well as the politics of the Third Imperium overall.

I think my strategy of slowly releasing information worked well: the players got to gradually learn about the rich background of *Traveller* at an appropriate speed.

If I pick up the game with Season Two in a few years' time, I'm sure I can build on that background.

7. Travelling can create real campaign challenges. Being that the name of the game is *Traveller*, I felt somewhat obliged to keep the PCs moving ... and as I learned over time that makes for a challenging campaign model. Most notably, it was somewhat difficult to raise the game up above the level of episodic plots (think: *Star Trek: The Original Series*). Settings usually just didn't repeat, while I always had to question whether it was believable to meet NPCs again. Even running plot arcs required thinking in original ways.

For the first part of my campaign I used the chasing-someone-across-space plot arc, which is a fine enough one, but it gets repetitive and you really can't use that trick very often. My second two plot arcs were simpler ones, of the things-that-happen-while-heading-to-a-destination type. (I suspect it's the most common travelling plot arc in *Traveller*.) I would have liked deeper plot arcs, but at least these held the game together, as I'll talk about shortly.

If you want some more ideas about how to cre-

ate plot arcs within the constraints of a travelling game, I'll point you to the excellent Dumarest of Terra books by E.C. Tubb. Not only are the books full of great plot hooks for *Traveller*, but they also offer two good continuing campaign arcs: searching-for-some-lost-thing (in the Tubb novels, Earth, but the same plot is used more than once in *Traveller* literature, usually with people hunting from planet to planet for some lost technology or else a lost ship) and being-chased-by-someone (in the Tubb novels, Dumarest is always hunted by the evil Cybers), which you'll note is the flipside of my first campaign arc.

Whether you use any of these ideas or not, I mainly want to note that figuring out travelling story arcs can require a different sort of thinking.

8. Sometimes visiting can be more interesting than travelling. My favorite adventures of the campaign were the initial three weeks spent on Nexine (which was partially based on the *Nomads of the World-Ocean* adventure) and the one-week return to it at the very end of the campaign. That's because thoroughly developing a setting can create a much deeper adventure than just travelling through it.

Mind you, this needs to be done as spice—not as the main course—if you want to stay true to a “travelling” game, but it's nonetheless something that I highly suggest as a part of such a game.

My campaign was really loosely shaped and so I was only able to create a returning setting like this by creating a nexus of plot hooks there. I think that developing them all out of the core characteristic of the planet (water world) held them together well, making it obvious why all these adventures happened at the same place.

I also had a second repeat setting in my campaign: Mora, which is a hub of trade in the Marches. That sort of repeat setting would probably work well in any *Traveller* game.

If I do return and run Season Two of this campaign, I'm going to think harder about building a couple of return settings into my original campaign design (probably by picking the planet that the players are actually stationed out of and a couple of nearby planets that should draw repeat visits due to their trade connectivity, their tech level, or other

## Fifth Imperium

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elements).

9. Plot arcs can really help to give form to a campaign. I already mentioned that I ran three major plot arcs in my campaign. More specifically, they were: hunting down the person who'd caused the crash of a star ship; getting to Mora to receive commendations; and delivering a person of importance to Vanejen.

Besides providing structure to the campaign, these plot arcs also ensured that every 6 weeks or so players could succeed at a goal they'd been working on. Two of the three arcs led to multi-week finales (where most of my sessions over the course of the campaign were one-offs) which just improved the sense of accomplishment. I love big, meandering plots, but I think these mini-arcs worked better within the strictures of an RPG, especially for a game that was sometimes run irregularly.

10. Letting characters in on the creativity can work wonders. I used to jealously guard the creativity of my games, but thanks in part to some of the podcasts of *2d6 Feet in a Random Direction* I decided to try and get the players more involved this time with telling me what they wanted to see in the campaign.

I did a lot of different stuff, some more successful than others. The best was my "next time on

*Traveller*" segment, where I'd ask players to give me a scene, idea, or something else that they'd like to see in an upcoming game. On average I used about half of what I got, usually as some small element in a story. However, I also ended up running at least one episode entirely based on "next time" ideas and some pretty cool subplots appeared because of them, too. Even better, players would sometimes talk after the game about which plot elements had been based on previous "next times". As I sometimes changed things around, and there were always at least two weeks from one session to another, people rarely realized immediately what I was doing.

Player empowerment, player buy-in, ideas that I wouldn't have thought, and general grist for the creative mill were all excellent results of letting players into the creative process.

### Conclusion

Overall, I'm very pleased with how my *Traveller* campaign went, and I'm hoping to repeat the experience a few years down the road when I don't have quite as much other stuff in my life.

For now, I've got one more article coming up based on my campaign: a list of short plot hooks which will summarize the plots I ran and give you ideas for how to use similar hooks in your own campaign.

That'll be next month.

## In A Store Near You

The Gun Shop

### Stim Stix

by Ken Murphy

Stim Stix are a mixture of proprietary alchemical ingredients bonded to a pectin/gum based delivery system about 2.5cm long and about 6mm wide. Chewing the stick releases the mild stimulant, and the active ingredient should last for approximately one hour. Chewing a stick more often than that, or chewing more than a single stick at a time—both frowned on by the manufacturers—will inevitably increase the duration of the effects.

Sticks come twenty to a small pack (or occasionally the Lucky 21 pack), and one hundred (or

sometimes missing up to 14) to a belt-clipped pack.

Packaging is all smooth lines and a fast-looking typeface.

Unlike the cigarette butts found nearly everywhere humankind has managed to reach in his quest for the stars, the pectin/gum base makes Stim Stix a guilty pleasure with a conscience. They are easily consumed, rather than turned into an eyesore.

A small pack of Stim Stix costs Cr2, while the belt pack costs only Cr9.

Simulation Stats: Approximately 30 seconds after chewing, the stimulant is dumped into the

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chewer's system, increasing mental focus (+1 INT) and dexterity (+1) noticeably for the next 3 minutes, then not so much (either +1 DEX or +1 INT, but not both) for the remainder of the hour.

Stim Stix can be purchased almost anywhere, and their logo is seen on entirely too many caps and shirts. One can hear the ultra-annoying jingle (the kind that goes into your head and never comes out) in entirely too many places as well...

## Up Close and Personal

### Obion Joplin

*profiled by Ken Murphy*

Obion Joplin 988AC6 Human Female Age 36

3 Terms

Former Emergency Medical Technician

Current Passenger Liner Employee

Handgun-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Computer-0, Medical-2, Brawling-0, Heavy Equipment-1\*, Persuasion-2, Carousing-2, Streetwise-2, Admin-1, Linguistics-2 (Portugese) (Arabic), Imaging-1, Backgammon-3, Clarinet-2

*\*This skill covers use of various heavy cutters, manipulating jaws, powered frames, and the like. Ideal for rescue or damage control.*

On graduating from college, this native of Xerxes became an Emergency Medical Technician, responding to medical emergencies in a heavily-armored grav "bus" on the busy streets of Northeastern Sekunder, "Goofball" Alain doing the driving and providing minor medical care, and Obion working as the primary medical technician aboard. She, Alain, and Captain Kroll, the Station Chief, were also a trio playing works by the Atomic-Era composer Gershwin.

Eventually the stress of the job started getting to Obion, and she began to have nightmares, ache all over, not sleep, hate going to work—all classic signs of depression. Once the authorities were done with her on the evening her partner Alain was killed by sniper fire, Obion quite her job, took her savings and the clothes on her back, took a cab to the Starport, and, purchasing a High Passage ticket, left Xerxes and

At the time this issue of *Freelance Traveller* "went to press", no new chapter of *The Burrowwolf* was ready for inclusion due to other pressures. We are assured that the comic will resume as soon as possible.

its hot, sticky environment forever.

Once at the Highport over Falstaff, Obion, bright, personable, and quite persuasive, was able to forego he standardized computer-driven interview, and wrangled an actual face-to-face interview with someone in Falstaff Stellar Lines' Personnel Office.

With her medical experience and knowledge of emergency situations, Obion was quickly hired on as an Officer; the 4th Medical Officer and Physician's Assistant, but still an Officer.

Obion is 1.2m tall, with long, thick black hair, prominent cheekbones, and eyes the color of milky jade. Her skin is pale. Obion is athletic and has very large feet.

While the position rarely provides the adrenaline-dump associated with treating a patient with multiple gunshot wounds, Obion decided pretty quickly that there are worse things than tending to the minor medical maladies one finds aboard a dedicated passenger liner.

Fourth Officer Joplin is cool and professional on the job, as would be expected. Off-duty, Obion chews Stim Stix (a very mild stimulant with an annoying little jingle that's heard entirely too often on commercial media). She is also a compulsive hand-washer.

Although she hasn't found anyone to form a trio with, she still keeps her skill up with frequent clarinet practice. Sometimes one can, while travelling through the crew areas of the ship, hear her playing. Thanks to the proximity of a pair of ducts, this music can occasionally be heard in the passenger section.

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## Up Close and Personal

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At one point Obion had done some harmless flirting with one of the Drive Hands, Jimbo McWatt. A few months later, following a long shift, Obion went to her quarters only to find McWatt already inside, naked and greased up, with a large wrench in his hand. Neither she nor McWatt will discuss the incident.

Obion had been with Falstaff Stellar for four years, and had looked forward to eventually retiring with them, but after the McWatt incident, she decided to move on; getting a job with the Reynard Line, with whom she has been the past two years. She has since learned the use of a pistol and is a decent shot.

Obion loves playing backgammon, and is probably good enough to rack up enough credits to keep her in Stim Stix, but she isn't really a gambler, so rarely

plays for money, as she feels it fosters negative emotions.

Obion's quarters tend towards sheer fabrics draped in front of subdued light sources, and the presence of an almost mind-blowing number of candles. The life support in her stateroom has been modified slightly to produce slight breezes which are able to blow the different wind chimes. There doesn't seem to be a standard bed, but one corner has a huge mound of pillows. She has several pistols planted throughout her quarters.

Planetside, Obion loves hitting all the TAS-recommended sites with her imaging gear. She certainly puts out the image of the enthusiastic, essentially helpless tourist, but the streetwise Ms. Joplin isn't that easy a mark. In addition, she has, when local law level permits (and occasionally when it doesn't), a pair of small pistols secreted on her person.

## The Shipyard

### Scot-Class System Probe

designed by Ewan Quibell

The *Scot*-Class System Probes are the latest design for the Home County Scouts, and are built by Yorin Corporation. The autonomous probes are designed to survey planetary bodies in a system while the mother craft is undertaking other duties. The *Scots* are piloted by built-in robot brains in primary/back-up mode with the master brain functioning while the other is in hot standby in case of failure. All data is duplicated to the back-up which will take over instantly in the event of failure of the master. Sensor data is continually recorded and analyzed. Data can be stored on board or transmitted to the mother ship as required.

As the *Scot* is completely autonomous the number of probes that can be run simultaneously is limited by the supervisor's capacity to oversee them. Scout protocol is that no more than 7 probes should be run by one supervisor.

The probe has 2G acceleration out to 10 diameters from a planetary body, dropping to 1G in open space.

With the expense of the probes and Home

County having been quite extensively surveyed already very few probes have been produced to date. All *Scot* class system probes are produced in the Yorin factories on Home.

```
CraftID: Probe, Type QN, TL10, MCr10.1166. UPP=AFx53x
Hull: 1/2, Disp=1, Config=0USL, Armor=40E,
      Unloaded=18.969t, Loaded=19.542t
Power: 1/2, Fusion=4.8Mw, Dur=47.38/142.14
Loco: 1/2, LowPowerH-GravThrust=40t,
      Cruise=900kph, Top=1200kph, NOE=n/a,
      MaxAccel=2G, Agility=0
Comm: Radio=System, Laser=System, Interface=Brain
Sensors: PassiveEMS=SubStellar, ActiveEMS=FarOrbit
          ActObjScan=Rout, ActObjPin=Rout,
          PasEngScan=Form
Off: Hardpoints=1
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Robot Brainx2, Panel=Comp linkedx2
Brain: CPU=Linearx15,Parallelx35,
        Storage=Standardx30, FundLogic=LowData,
        FundCmd=LimitedBasic,
        Software=Communications-1, Navigation-2,
        Prospecting-2, Ships Boat-1, Survey-2
Accom: None
Other: Cargo=0klitres, Fuel=8.187klitres
        ObjSize=Small, EmLevel=Faint
Comment: Construction Time=8 wks sing, 6 wks mult
```

## Diaspora: Hard Science Fiction Role-Playing with FATE

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

*Diaspora: Hard Science Fiction Role-Playing with FATE.*

B.Murray et alia.

VSCA Publishing <http://www.vsca.ca>

257pp, softcover (trade ppb)

US\$24.99

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The decision to run this review rests entirely with the Editor, who takes the position that, as with Starblazer Adventures, Hyperlite, or the 100 Plot Seeds articles, the product being discussed may be of interest to Traveller players as a potential source of ideas to mine. Publication of the review does not imply endorsement or further support of the product by Freelance Traveller (unless warranted by demand), and all reviews are solely the opinions of the authors.*

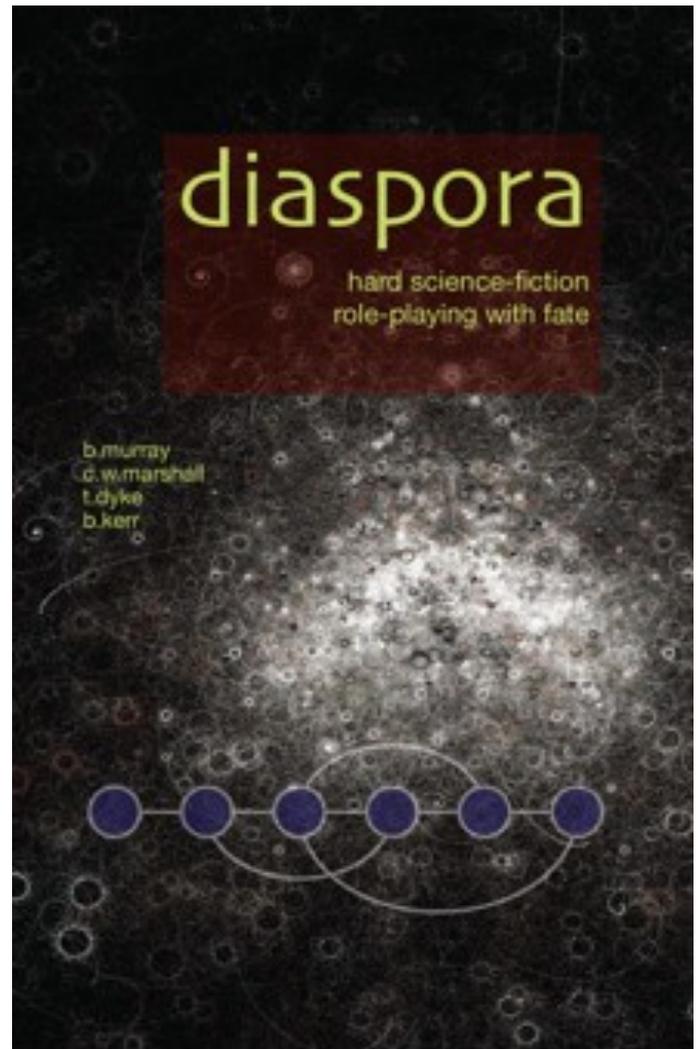
Though not itself *Traveller*, *Diaspora* is the heir to a non-commercial adaptation of *Traveller* to FATE, 'Spirit of the Far Future', by the same author, and seems to be a good candidate for introducing *Traveller* players to Narrativist play and the FATE (Fantastic Adventures in Tabletop Entertainment) system. *Diaspora's* debt to *Traveller* is explicitly acknowledged, and a minimal web search brings the impression that *Diaspora* could be considered 'FATE *Traveller*' with the serial numbers filed off.

### On The Shelf

Unlike so much of the role-playing industry, *Diaspora* eschews the large US-Letter/ISO-A4 format in favor of trade paperback/digest/A5 size. The black cover sports an abstract image which might be a representation of a particle cloud chamber, plus a diagram composed of connected circles (which turns out to be a representation of a 'cluster', an important concept in the *Diaspora* setting). The text is all in lower-case, in a sans-serif font.

### Initial Impressions

The book appears well-organized, presenting concepts in a logical order, using type that is a readable size and style. The basics of the FATE system are presented first, followed by sections on developing a 'cluster' (which serves as a setting for



a campaign), and developing characters. These are tied together with a chapter on play, and then chapters on personal, space, social, and platoon combat. Charts and sidebars, where needed, are simple, and clearly set off from the text - but never difficult to find when first referenced.

### On Closer Inspection

It might take two readings of the first four sections to really understand just how much of a paradigm shift the FATE system and *Diaspora* represent. Where *Traveller* unarguably leaves the referee in overall charge of arbitrating the reality of the game, FATE virtually insists that the referee do no more than a basic outline, and then hand development of the adventure over to the group (which the authors of *Diaspora* refer to as the 'table')—and that the referee should also be a player, and not

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merely the hand in the back of the NPC puppets. Character creation is a group/table activity, not an individual one; the typical FATE character doesn't encounter the rest of the party for the first time while drinking his/her separation bonus—characters have reasons to know and contact with each other, as part of their backstories. Players are encouraged to develop their characters over time, from session to session, although the 'power level' of the campaign doesn't change—if a player increases one skill, it's at the expense of another, and taking new aspects or stunts means discarding old ones. The 'FATE Point' mechanic is a major impetus to playing 'in character', even when doing so might be to the character's—or party's—disadvantage.

Throughout the game, mechanics (based on four FUDGE dice) are minimal, being used only to support the narrative. Often, the mechanical results aren't a straight yes/no success/failure determinant; rather, they might affect the effectiveness of the narrated actions, and through reconciling the opposed narratives, describe the overall outcome—which may end up being neither complete success nor complete failure for either side. Even nonvio-

lent social interactions can be described as a metaphorical combat, and *Diaspora* models it as such—the *Traveller* scenario 'Exit Visa' (often considered boring in most *Traveller* implementations, if useful for introducing the mechanical aspects of the game) would become a series of 'social combats', and would provide a much better introduction to most aspects of a FATE-based game than it does to any version of *Traveller*.

### Summary

As presented, *Diaspora* doesn't need rule supplements, setting sourcebooks, or equipment catalogs—it is as complete as it needs to be in the core volume, and it can be argued, strongly, that pre-development detracts from the game, as it removes the table interaction that would 'connect' the characters—and the players—to each other and to the setting. With the strong (virtually overriding) emphasis on narrative, there is no reason that the table could not make a campaign more (or less) *Traveller*-like than the book presents. If you have to choose between *Traveller* and *Diaspora*, of course choose *Traveller*—but if you have the liquidity and are looking for something different to reinvigorate your group, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better choice than *Diaspora*.

## Active Measures

### Getting Off The Ground

### The Miasma

By Michael Brown

#### Synopsis

An industrial accident at the starport puts a community of natives at risk from a toxic cloud.

**Equipment required:** a starship, preferably a merchant class.

**Setting:** a backwater world with atmosphere 6 or 8, population 2-4, and a Type C or D starport without a Scout base.

#### Players' Information

The team has just taken off en route to their next destination. While still making the transition to orbit, the starport will summon the team's ship

on an emergency frequency. Moments after their departure, a storage building exploded, starting a fire that is now engulfing several other storage areas. Starport emergency personnel can handle the fire, but need help on another matter. Apparently, the storage areas held a number of toxic compounds destined for a nearby industrial world. The fire breached their containment and vaporized the chemicals, which have combined to create a large poisonous cloud. The cloud is moving away from the starport on the prevailing winds without dispersing. The port authorities are all tied up fighting the fire and cannot warn any settlements in the cloud's path. As the only ship in orbit in a position to do so, the port authorities would like the adven-

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## Active Measures

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turers to use their ship's sensors to detect any settlements in danger of the cloud and either warn or evacuate them. As an incentive to help, the port can issue a voucher good for a free refueling at their next port call.

The closest concentration of inhabitants to the starport is a village about 120 km (75 miles) away. A scan shows the village consists of a collection of prefab buildings set around a clear space, perhaps a town square, and about 150 Human biosignatures.

The cloud is being pushed along by a strong storm front at a speed of over 48 kph (30 mph) making its arrival in the village in 2 1/2 hours. Given travel time, locating a suitable landing area and travel overland, the team will have no more than two hours to make contact with the villagers and inform them of the danger.

The village appears to have been present for some time, as there have been wells, gardens, and shops established. The locals seem to be going about their daily business when the heroes approach, apparently oblivious to the approaching danger. The adventurers will have to try and convince the inhabitants that they are in danger and need to evacuate if they want to live.

### GM's Information

The cloud is horribly toxic and shows no signs of dispersing anytime soon. Anyone caught in the mist should be treated as though they were in atmosphere B for 15 minutes; of course, they will be dead long before that. Anything the PCs try to delay or disperse the storm will be useless.

There is little time for the villagers to make an orderly departure; they will have to leave with whatever they can grab in a few minutes. The adventurers can evacuate the natives in their cargo hold. It will be a tight fit for 150 people, but it is preferable to the alternative. Another solution is to simply hold the residents in the cargo hold for the duration of the storm (the starship can provide excellent protection against the poison) but the mist will damage the dwellings, possibly beyond repair, and leave behind precipitates that will remain lethal

for weeks afterward. And of course, there is the possibility that some of the natives may be claustrophobic.

Although not necessary, a quick sketch map of the settlement may be useful. The village is a number of small buildings clustered around an open area (forming a sort of town square) and surrounded by woods and rolling hills. The houses are not sealed in any way.

Since the PCs are working under a time limit, the GM should keep careful track of elapsed time and allow for such actions as getting the ship ready to lift off or travel time to and from the village (the town square is too small to contain a starship.)

Of course, there may be more to the settlement than meets the eye. The GM should choose (or roll 1D for) an appropriate scenario below:

1. The villagers will heed the warning but insist on trying to cart as much of their worldly valuables (GM's call as to what constitutes "valuables" to the natives) with them as they can. The resulting loss of time should be a concern to the visitors. The visitors will probably have to dust off their best diplomatic skills to persuade the people to concentrate on saving themselves instead.

2. The villagers are descendants of colonists from the planet's early days. They are a hardy, fiercely independent lot who insist upon rugged self-reliance and will refuse all offers of aid. Should the adventurers resort to force, make a new reaction roll for the locals with DM-4. If they attack, the visitors will face 10D able-bodied village men. Captured heroes will be locked in one of the village's storage sheds, to be dealt with later.

3. The villagers are a band of religious separatists that segregated themselves to embrace a more natural way of life, free of what they consider arbitrary government restrictions and the moral decay brought on by higher technology. They will view the team's arrival and offer of aid as some sort of governmental ploy, and refuse to fall for it. Attempts at force result in a situation as in 2, above.

4. The villagers are willing to accompany the PCs, but just as they are doing so, someone notices that several children are missing. A frantic search

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## Active Measures

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ensues, with hastily formed search parties scattering in every direction. The children will be found unharmed playing in an area outside the settlement on a throw of 8+, rolled every fifteen minutes; DM+2 if the group is employing handheld electronic sensors; DM+4 if they think to employ the starship's sensors. Regardless of how the children are found, they will be thirty minutes' walking distance from the ship.

5. The villagers are a group of plague victims that left the major city and settled this area of the wilderness years ago. The virus they carried has mutated over time; it is now harmless to the settlers, but they are still carriers. Taking them back to civilization will almost certainly infect others; the natives know they are still infectious and will refuse to accompany the heroes. Resolve attempts at force as in 2, above. Of course, the adventurers themselves will be infected on a throw of 10+ unless they have some form of immunity. The GM should create or select a suitable disease.

6. The villagers will act strangely upon the team's arrival, smiling broadly, treating the visitors with profound politeness and insisting that everything is okay; they don't require help, thanks anyway. PCs with a military, law enforcement or psychological background will see that the locals are under some sort of duress. Unknown to the heroes, a gang of desperate criminals has taken over the settlement. They have already killed several people to demonstrate their resolve and have threatened to kill more if anyone alerts outside aid. The GM should generate a number of thugs up to twice the number of team members (adjust for PC strength), and possessing various firearms. The leader and two lieutenants will be holding several people hostage in one of the larger buildings, while the rest of the gang circulates unobtrusively among the settlers keeping an eye on things. If at any time the team appears to be a threat, the gang will try to kill them.

As always, the referee should determine the flow of subsequent events.

## In A Store Near You

### The Showroom

### Caduceus Grav Ambulance

Designed by Ken Murphy

Craft ID: Caduceus Grav Ambulance, Type AV, TL 10, MCr4.905165  
Hull: 9/23, Disp=135kliters, Config=4SL, Armor=10E, Unloaded=49.1515t, Loaded=69.2793t, Hull=+13  
Power: 2/2, Fusion=18Mw, Excess=5.5348Mw, Dur=30 Days  
Loco: 2/2, Low Power High Grav, Thrust= 130 tons, NOE= 140 kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1000kph, Max Vacuum Accel= 0.816G, Space Agility= 1, Atmospheric Agility= +6/+6/+7.  
Commo: Radio- Very Distant×1  
Sensors: Headlights×12, Neutrino=Directional×1, Video Recorder×6, Adv Image Enhancement×1, Environmental×1, Radiation=Very Distant×1, Ladar=Distant×1  
Off: ---  
Def: -2 in Space Combat  
Control: Computer=0/fib×1, Panel=Dynamic Link×41, Special=HUD×1, Electronic Circuit Protection Environ=Basic Env, Basic LS, Grav Plates, Inertial Comp, Airlock x2  
Accomm: Crew=3 (Driver, 2 Med Techs; 1 or 2 Guards add'l if needed), Seats=Roomy×7, Low Berths=3  
Other: Cargo= 19.2206 kliters, Fuel= 12.96 kliters

Based on the successful Fenris Manufacturing *Bushman* (with a 99% commonality of parts between different models), the *Caduceus* is, at its core, a heavily armored *Helot* police vehicle modified for use as an ambulance.

The *Caduceus* (often referred to as a 'wagon', 'Meatwagon', 'Pig', 'Caddie', or 'Bus' by their crews or other emergency personnel) is, like the *Helot*, a large, angular, boxy thing that comes to a point at the front end.

The *Caduceus* normally carries a crew of three (Driver and two Med Techs, or, in more dangerous areas, Driver, Med Techs and one or two Guards). Toward the rear of the vehicle along one sidewall are a pair of racks holding detachable low berths. On the wall opposite, a single rack is mounted with its own detachable low berth. These can be maneuvered by antigrav sling directly from the *Caduceus* into the hospital. In the aisle between the berths is a padded bench, where up to three patients may sit

## In A Store Near You

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comfortably. If the bench is not being used for patients, the space can be used to allow for three more sophonts to ride along if needed.

The *Caduceus* mounts video cameras showing the front, back, and sides of the vehicle and its immediate surroundings. A pair of cameras record inside as well, one covering the crew from a vantage point directly outside the front windshield, and another recording the rear interior. Information can be sent in real time to the hospital acting as a base.

Should one of the crew need some down time on a long shift, he can always sleep in an opened, powered down, low berth.

Inside, at the rear of the *Caduceus*, on either side of the rear airlock doors, are a pair of very large equipment lockers.

The crew accesses the vehicle through an airlock on the left side, with a pair of steps jutting from the side of the hull. Access to the wagon for patients is through a wide airlock at the rear of the vehicle.

A TL10 standard, this lifesaver can routinely be encountered just about anywhere within the Imperium. Some surplus *Caduceuses* wind up in private hands being used for entirely different purposes, like the small fleet found cruising the streets of New Calumet on Nadj (A674A44-C) that have been converted to ice cream trucks.

## Doing It My Way

### Get A Life: Generating Character Background Life Events

by Glen Grant

*This article was originally posted to the website in 1998.*

#### Introduction

I'm one of those players who likes to know as much as possible about their character before the game starts. I want to know everything about their homeworld, the culture they were born into, what happened to them when they were young, what kind of family they had... anything that will help make the character live and breath as a unique and interesting individual.

Like most players, I like to let my creativity fly, sparking ideas from my UPP stats, homeworld skills and UWP, background skills, career history, and so on. A detailed homeworld write-up can be a source of lots of character development ideas, and if it isn't a world drawn from the game setting, I'll work with the referee to quickly sketch out the world's physical environment and cultural profile. Culture determines many aspects of the character's family—is it a small nuclear family, or a huge extended clan? It is dominated by one or the other sex? Healthy or dysfunctional? Eventually a gen-

eral character history suggests itself.

Still, there's a lot about the character I don't know. For more information, I'll need a detailed history of virtually everything they've ever experienced. Well, why not? Why not invent a system for sparking ideas for detailing major formative experiences and turning points in the PC's life?

The Life Events generation system is designed to serve this need. Don't expect it to do all the work for you: it's only intended to give your imagination a jolt in the right direction. It provides vague general suggestions which you're expected to flesh out in detail.

#### The System

The Life Events system consists of twelve short tables: six "Personal Development" tables and six "Transformative Events" tables. These labels are highly arbitrary: they could just as easily be called Group One and Group Two. Similarly, the tables themselves have vague names, some of them redundant or meaninglessly broad: Single Life, Love Life, Relationships, Career, Finances, Health, Change, Discover, Law & Crime, Turning Points, Social Conflict, and Major Event.

Depending on how much detail you're looking for, or how much time you want to spend on the process, you can roll up a separate event for each

## Doing It My Way

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year of the character's life, or for each two year period, or for each five year period. It's up to you. But one event per year is usually more than enough for an eventful life history.

You can skip the PC's first twelve years and roll from that age onward (the system isn't specifically designed to generate childhood life events). Or you can start with the PC's year of birth, but in this case you should assume that most of the results apply not to the character but to their parents or guardians: changes in the parents' lives can have major influences on their kids' development. Thus, the character's parents might divorce, or the family might move to a new home (or planet, for that matter), or their financial fortunes might change radically.

When the character is over the age of twelve, continue to use this rule of thumb: if the result of a roll doesn't make sense for the character, interpret it as the experience of someone close to the character, such as a parent, sibling, lover, friend, whatever. For instance, if a roll determines that your PC "splits up or gets a divorce," but they aren't currently involved in a relationship, just assume that the PC's parents or best friend is going through a divorce.

The Events Tables refer to the character as "you", but, as above, feel free to change the reference to a friend or relative if it's appropriate.

The Events listed are supposed to be influential, pivotal, or in some way character-forming. Obviously the PC will have a lot of inconsequential experiences and relationships, but those aren't worth generating. Don't just jot down the result as listed, such as "try a new sport"; instead, work out the specifics of the event, and its consequences for the character, rolling results randomly if necessary: "Age 19: Ensign Phred takes a course in Free Fall Jujitsu, but quickly washes out, as the instructor delights in humiliating late starters."

Similarly, if the tables say the PC falls in love, work out the consequences. In love with whom? Roll up the lover's UPP; do the couple have radically different Social Standings? Are they badly

mismatched in Intelligence or Education? Is the love returned, or unrequited? Again, determine the outcomes with die rolls if you want, or make it all up. You can assume the relationship lasts a long time, at least until another roll determines that It's Over. If it's just an "affair," you can randomly determine its time limit.

Remember to take into consideration the world you're on at the time of the event—your homeworld, or a planet you're stationed on, or a ship for that matter. Make use of the local culture, geography, Tech Level, Law Level, whatever is appropriate. Sometimes, to determine the outcome of an event, the UWP stats can be used as target numbers for rolls. For instance, if you are "diagnosed with a serious disease or disorder", roll the world's Tech Level or less on 3D to recover fully (use more dice or less, depending on the lethality of the disease). A failure might imply that someone close to the PC died of the disease. Similarly, use your UPP stats for target numbers. If you are "involved in a lawsuit", you might roll your Social Standing or less on 2D to win a favorable ruling. If you "try a new drug", try rolling your Endurance or higher on 2D to avoid addiction. And so on.

Don't be a slave to the dice. It's your PC after all—you can make decisions for him or her at any time. If the PC settles down with a partner, it might make perfect sense that they have children, whether or not this comes up as an Event roll; after all, pregnancies can be planned or unexpected. However, since Traveller is about Travellers, it's generally a good idea to assume that the PC will begin the game single, or at least not living with a partner—unless you and your referee think that a marriage can be worked into the game.

The referee should be allowed to check the final character history for consistency with the setting (especially some of the large scale events such as wars and disasters). But the other players don't necessarily have to know any of it. You might have two versions—one the life story you tell to your shipmates; the other listing experiences even your lovers don't know about....

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# Doing It My Way

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## The Procedure

For each period:

1. Roll one die to select a group of tables:  
1-3: Personal Development group;  
4-6: Transformative Events group
2. Roll one die to select a table from that group.
3. Roll one die to select an event from that table.
4. Interpret the results very freely. Fudge as necessary. Slashes or the word “or” in tables indicate alternatives (e.g., “Reveal/Learn a secret” means “Reveal a secret” or “Learn a secret”).

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Other Involved People	
Roll	Involved Person
1	A child in your extended family who looked to you as a role model
2	A sibling
3	A parent, grandparent, or aunt or uncle
4	A lover, spouse, partner, or close friend
5	A friend, hero, mentor, or other figure you looked to as a role model
6	A rival or enemy, or an ex-lover or ex-spouse

Personal Development Events						
Roll	1. Single Life	2. Love Life	3. Relationships	4. Changes	5. Discovery	6. Turning Point
1	Start or End an Affair	Fall in love with someone	Get engaged or betrothed	Change your religious or philosophical affiliation	Try a new Sport or other Recreational Activity	Reveal a secret to someone, or learn one from them
2		Fall madly in love with someone	Get Married or enter a long-term committed relationship	Change political affiliation	Become an ardent fan of an athlete, artist, or performer	Become a colonist, pilgrim, seeker, or wanderer
3		Start a pregnancy	Have a fight with your partner	Move to a new home or remodel your current home	Become involved in a new art form	Become a recluse, loner, outcast, or hermit, or cease to be one
4		Begin a long period of celibacy	Enter counseling with your partner	Join a high-profile organization	Volunteer for charity, development, or community work	Encounter an important person from your past
5	Start or End a “Living Together” arrangement	Confront your lover with a serious problem	Separate from your partner	Complete an important Rite of Passage	Become a newsworthy person	Change your world-view
6	Have a falling-out, or a reconciliation	Question a fundamental issue in your love-life	End a long-term committed relationship	Become a celebrity	Try a new drug	Learn that a relative has died

# Doing It My Way

(Continued from page 14)

## When It's Not You

If you need to determine the identity of another person related in some way to your PC, you can roll on the “Other Involved People” table. For instance, if you roll an event that isn’t appropriate for your character, you might decide that it applies to a person determined by a roll on this table.

## Closing Comments

If you’re a real fanatic, you might roll up some of the more important people in your character’s life, and perhaps even roll up their life histories (though you might want to only roll fewer events). This can add whole new dimensions to your PC,

discovering how the lives of lovers, enemies, siblings, or children intertwine with your character’s life.

Bear in mind that a good referee will find a lot of inspiration in all of this. Expect people from your past to unexpectedly pop up in the middle of an adventure. That high school rival who ruined your first romance; that ex-wife you thought you’d gotten away from forever; that twin brother who’s supposed to be long-lost... But of course this is one of the best reasons for going to all the trouble. It brings the game to life and adds to the fun.

Feel free to adapt and modify the system to your liking, or adapt it to your game as necessary. Heretics who like icosahedrals or ten-sided dice might want to convert it into a single D100 system (not a bad idea, really—even if it just ain’t Traveler!).

### Transforming Events

Roll	1. Health	2. Career	3. Financial	4. Law and Crime	5. Social Conflict	6. Major Event
1	You are diagnosed with a serious disease or disorder	You get a new job, or a new assignment in your present job	You make a major purchase (e.g., home, vehicle, land, etc.)	You become involved in a crime or conspiracy	You betray someone who trusts you, or are betrayed by someone you trust	You survive a major disaster, natural or otherwise
2	You are badly injured	You lose your position	You find yourself deeply in debt	You are the victim of a crime or conspiracy	You join a controversial social movement, or oppose one	You are caught up in a war or armed uprising
3	You have a mental or emotional breakdown or disorder	You get a new supervisor or partner	You pay off a debt, or declare insolvency	You are involved in a lawsuit	You are caught up in a feud or factional conflict	You experience a famine or other severe shortage
4	You require an organ transplant, or donate an organ to someone who does	You are recognized for a major success	Investments you have made yield significant profit to you	You get in trouble with the law	You encounter discrimination or intolerance	You are caught up in civil disorder, rioting, or protests
5	You get a minor body modification, such as a tattoo or piercing	You are censured for a major failure	Investments you have made result in serious losses to you	You are publicly accused of a crime	You encounter oppression or exploitation	You experience a kidnapping, hostage crisis, or terror attack
6	You decide on a major body modification (e.g., prosthetic limb or artificial organ)	You feel your career is stagnating	You go on public assistance, or you receive a grant	You are affected by a new law or an enforcement crackdown	You make an enemy, or encounter an old one.	You are caught up in a political upheaval or revolution

### EF2 Emergency Flare Gun

by Bo Wozniak

The EF2 is a flare gun that fires a light emitting disc that also contains a radio transmitter to send a distress message. You can use the standard distress message or record your own.

The EF2 is somewhat larger and heavier than a standard pistol. The muzzle is shaped to accommodate the “flare” discs, and the chamber is larger to accommodate the propellant cartridges. Unlike a pistol, the EF2 does not automatically eject spent propellant cartridges. Additionally, there is an energy cell and a small data transfer unit built in to the butt to facilitate loading the EBD-2 discs with a distress message (and, on the EF2-GPS, location data).

The EF2-GPS variant can be linked to GPS receivers that output location data in standard format. There is no inbuilt GPS capability. A thirty-second voice recording may be stored on all discs that support user-programmable distress messages; discs that support recording of location data can also store up to four hours of it.

The EF2 and EF2-GPS are intended to be used on worlds with atmospheres (very thin or denser); the propellant cartridges are unsuitable for use in vacuum and near-vacuum.

Discs are about 10cm in diameter, and 1.5cm thick. They are loaded into the gun edgewise from the muzzle. Propellant cartridges are loaded into the gun from the breech.

There is a variety of discs available:

The **EBD** (Emergency Broadcast Disc) can store a thirty-second voice recording as a distress message. These discs are shipped preloaded with a standard message; once activated, they will broadcast continuously for 48 hours. It may be used with the EF2 or EF2-GPS, but it cannot take advantage of the additional capabilities of the EF2-GPS. The EBD emits a bright, actinic light for a maximum of 60 seconds of flight, if activated with a propellant cartridge. If activated without the propellant cartridge, the disc remains in the gun, acting as an emergency radio transmitter only.

The **EBD-2** is a modification of the EBD which includes the ability to record up to four hours of location data, if used with the EF2-GPS. When used with the EF2, it is not possible to record location data.

Both the EBD and EBD-2 come in “S” variants (the EBD-S and EBD-2-S) where the light flashes in a stroboscopic pattern, extending the life of the light to a maximum of 120 seconds.

Propellant cartridges come in three variants:

**L** cartridges are intended for use in low-gravity environments, to a maximum of 0.4g. If used in higher gravity, the disc may not achieve sufficient height to be noticed. Care should be used in gravitational fields of less than 0.1g, as there is increased risk of the disc achieving escape velocity.

**S** cartridges are intended for use in standard-gravity environments, from about 0.4g to about 1.6g. Use in lighter-gravity environments may allow the disc to drift too far away during flight to act as a reasonable locator beacon (or, in extremely light gravity, the disc may achieve escape velocity); use in heavier gravity may not permit the disc to achieve sufficient altitude to be noticed.

**H** cartridges are intended for use in environments where gravity is between 1.6g and 3g. Use in very light gravity will cause the disc to achieve escape velocity; use in light gravity may allow the disc to drift too far to be a useful locator; use in heavier gravity, coupled with the increased atmospheric density normal for such environments, risks bursting the chamber at the breech and causing serious injury to the user.

Discs are not self propelled; a single-use propellant cartridge is required for deployment to altitude (and to activate the visible light beacon). If “fired” without a propellant cartridge, the disc will remain in the gun, but the distress transmission, including both recorded voice and location data, will be initiated. The gun can be stored with the Broadcaster Disc inserted but for safety reasons the propellant should not be inserted until the gun is ready for use. Lights indicate the status of the propellant cartridge and disc. A yellow light indicates the disc is inserted; a green light indicates both the disc and the propellant are inserted.

## Feedback

We'd like to hear what you think of Freelance Traveller, both the magazine and the website!

We want to know what you think of the basic idea of Freelance Traveller as a magazine, not just a website; what you think of the articles we publish, and how we can make our magazine better and how we can make our website better.

We want to know what kind of articles you want to see, and what you *don't* want to see.

We want to know what you think of our look, and how we can make it better.

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:

You can send e-mail to us at [feedback@freelancetraveller.com](mailto:feedback@freelancetraveller.com).

You can use the feedback form on our website, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html>.

If you're a member of the SFRPG Forums, we monitor them, so you can post comments in the **Traveller Fanzines** section, at <http://www.sfrpg.org.uk/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36>. Please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

If you're a member of the Citizens of the Imperium forums, we monitor them as well, so you can post comments in the **Lone Star** section, at <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13>. As with the SFRPG forums, please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

## Traveller on the Internet

## IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

Freelance Traveller sponsors a channel for Traveller fans on the Undernet IRC network, and RPGRealms sponsors one on the Otherworlders IRC network—and the two channels are “bridged” so that if you're visiting either, you can see what's going on in the other, and talk to people there. For more information about both channels, see our informational pages at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC> and <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travchat/index.html>. Come talk “live” with other Traveller fans about anything at all, Traveller or not. It's generally quiet in both channels—but you can change that, and make both channels “jumping” places to hang out!

[www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC](http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC) and <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travchat/index.html>. Come talk “live” with other Traveller fans about anything at all, Traveller or not. It's generally quiet in both channels—but you can change that, and make both channels “jumping” places to hang out!

## Traveller on the Internet

## The Freelance Traveller Forums

Effective November 1, the Freelance Traveller Forums were taken off-line, with the intent of returning, completely revamped, at the beginning of 2011. Although the revamped forums will have areas for general Traveller discussion, and for general off-topic discussion, the new forums will be more focused on the magazine (and website), with areas specifically for feedback and discussion of published articles, and for ‘slushing’ (and discussing) possible future submissions. We will be using new software to support them, so expect a different experience when we return.

Because of the changes, we will not be able to reload the old system's message or user databases. However, we expect to be more feature-rich in the new version, and hope that you'll be willing to join us anew and make the Freelance Traveller reader community as vibrant and active as the Traveller community as a whole.

Thanks for your patience!

